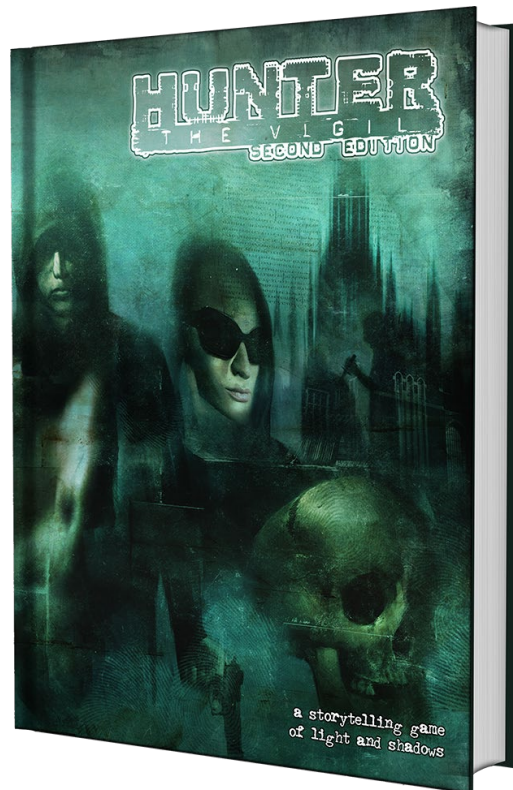


HUNTER

THE VIGIL
SECOND EDITION

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview



Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition

Credits

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Introduction: Heed the Call

“But these words people threw around — humans, monsters, heroes, villains — to Victor it was all just a matter of semantics. Someone could call themselves a hero and still walk around killing dozens. Someone else could be labeled a villain for trying to stop them. Plenty of humans were monstrous, and plenty of monsters knew how to play at being human.”

— V.E. Schwab, *Vicious*

Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition is a roleplaying game about people who are committed to saving a world overrun by monsters. Once they light a candle and hold it up to the darkness, they cannot turn back. They’ve taken their first step to uphold the Vigil, despite knowing the costs. After they peer into the shadows, they become so obsessed with the monsters lurking there, every hunt pushes them further and further away from a normal, humdrum life.

Hunters are underdogs who never stop feeling that chill running up and down their spines. For every bloodsucker they put down, for every haunted house they clear out, another horror lies waiting to strike. Sure, they might make sacrifices or suffer losses along the way, but to them there’s never a time when they’re not hunting. Either they stay sharp and focused, they become hunted themselves, or worse: They become the monster.

The Gathering Dark

Hunter: The Vigil debuted in 2008 on the heels of several Chronicles of Darkness game lines including **Vampire: The Requiem**, **Changeling: The Lost**, and **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. Since that time, more game lines have emerged introducing new monsters, such as **Beast: The Primordial** and **Deviant: The Renegades**.

Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition takes note of these new additions by introducing a premise: There are more monsters today than ever before. The rules found in this book are designed to give players and Storytellers new, flexible tools to identify, hunt, and capture monsters while enhancing the definition of hunter.

Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition is a standalone game that can be played by new or existing players. The lore has been updated to not only reflect the uptick in monsters, but also the fact that hunting monsters is not exclusive to a location, group of people, or time period. There may be more monsters than ever before, but there are more ways to fight them, too.

Themes

Most people grow up believing monsters exist in fairy tales and on television. The Thin Man is the product of conspiracy theorists on message boards. Bloody Mary is just an urban legend cooked up by teenaged girls, and the Chupacabra is a rabid dog.

You’re not most people, because you know that monsters are real. You’ve seen one. Maybe it murdered your grandfather. Maybe it targeted your dog. Whatever the reason, however you encountered one, the truth shattered you. Instead of running away or hiding in a bunker, you’ve decided to do something. You’ve chosen to heed the call of the Vigil and become a hunter.

How? By finding similarly minded people who will fight alongside you. You know you’re outmatched. You *know* you’re outgunned — but you don’t care. Sometimes you’ll win.

Sometimes you'll lose. As long as you draw breath, you'll never stop fighting, even if you go down screaming.

Or, at least, that's what the Vigil requires.

Explained vs. Unknown

To be a hunter is to linger in the dark. The character doesn't know all there is to know about the supernatural — even if player *does*. Hunters know the unnatural things go bump in the night aren't regulated to nightmares. Cells understand they're real — and those “things” can be hunted provided they figure out how to track, capture, contain, or kill them.

The strange and unknowable are mysteries for the cell to figure out. A hunter encountering one flesh-eating humanoid might assume they know exactly what's feeding on people, until another flesh eater comes along and doesn't fit the profile. When combined with mysterious places — haunted houses, monsters' lairs, and roadside shrines with statues that bleed — hunters have their hands full when piecing together what's happening in that area before moving onto the next.

Storytellers are encouraged to leverage what hunters don't know as narrative tools to remind them they don't and *can't* know everything, no matter how hard they try — and that's what being mortal in the Chronicles of Darkness is all about.

Sacrifice vs. Self-Preservation

Hunters are pushed to the edge, but they don't have to hunt alone. In a cell, they can rely on other hunters to pitch in and get the job done. Compacts and conspiracies add to a hunter's community but, when push comes to shove, it's a cell that's doing the heavy lifting. Sometimes, however, hunters are forced to make hard choices. They must choose between taking down a monster or saving a victim. They must decide if they'll risk taking a perfect shot at a slasher when their buddy stands in the way.

Sometimes, however, hunters don't just sacrifice other hunters or the victims they're trying to save. They might be cornered or even kidnapped by a monster who wants to use them to find other hunters. They might be the hunter guarding an exit and, after all their cellmates have fallen, they're standing between the monster and freedom. When upholding the Vigil, hunters may say they're willing to sacrifice everything — even their own safety — to fight the darkness. Only the hunt will prove whether there's any truth to their claims, because somewhere along the way, each hunter will face their darkest fears and be forced to confront their own mortality.

In **Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition**, thematic devices and rules governing a hunter's place in the world remind them of what they stand to lose. Upholding the Vigil exacts a heavy toll, but it's ultimately up to the hunter what they're comfortable sacrificing or preserving.

Hope vs. Despair

Sometimes, hunters win. Sometimes they lose. Eventually, however, hunters come to the realization that the shadows won't stop gathering and monsters won't suddenly give up and remain in the darkness. This realization can happen during a hunt or investigation. It might occur before the cell starts fighting back. Once this terrifying truth is known, however, the hunter and their cell must find a way to keep going — otherwise they'll lose to utter despair.

While despair might be all-but guaranteed, hope is the only thing that can keep it confined. The candle hunters light is a representation of their burning desire to hold the line, but it's also a

visual way to show how important it is to feel hope even when the darkness is winning. As long as a hunter has hope in their heart, the darkness can't truly win.

Providing ways for hunters to feel hope in a chronicle is crucial to ensure the game isn't so dark and depressing it's no longer enjoyable to play. Storytellers are encouraged to give cells opportunities to win, even if it's small or temporary. These moments are fuel for the fire and will keep the Vigil — and the players' interest — burning bright.

Will you pledge to uphold the Code? Will you light a candle and stand against the gathering dark? If you do, don't worry. The flame you hold is not the only fire that burns. You'll have help from your fellow cellmates, and together you may burn bright enough to hold the line and keep the darkness from swallowing you whole.

Lexicon

In the world of **Hunter: The Vigil**, cells do the best they can with the knowledge they have. Often, they can't find the right words or don't know a monster's name — for good reason. As the underdogs, hunters possess varying degrees of knowledge that may or may not be relevant.

Though hunters may not understand what they're in for, a common vocabulary is used in **Hunter** to present narrative advice and relevant rules. These terms are setting-specific and, when appropriate, notable rules are mentioned in the description.

cell: A group of hunters who fight together. They share the emotional, psychological, and physical burdens the hunt requires, and often have similar views of the Code.

cellmate: An individual hunter in a cell.

blessings: Hunters belonging to a conspiracy receive gifts from their organization that are imbued with the supernatural. They often refer to these gifts as "blessings." In the rules, these are represented by Endowments (p. XX).

bloodsucker: A slang word used to describe a vampire or other monster who drinks human blood.

cleansing: A word hunters often use to describe the process of removing the supernatural from a physical location or object.

Code, the: The Code represents an individual hunter's pledge to fight the darkness. This has both a thematic and mechanical effect in the game (p. XX).

compact: A regional organization to which multiple cells belong. Compacts (p. XX) may be formed around hunting a specific monster, a view of the Code, a method of hunting, etc. Each compact allows its members to earn status in exchange for additional benefits or resources. Structurally, compacts are represented in a tier-two chronicle.

conspiracy: A global organization to which multiple cells belong; each conspiracy often holds many factions. Conspiracies (p. XX) wield considerable resources to fulfill their unique agenda in the fight against the supernatural. Each conspiracy allows its members to earn status in exchange for additional benefits, resources, and Endowments. Conspiracies are represented in tier-three chronicles.

cryptid: A strange and unusual animal that may or may not exist. Examples of cryptids include the hodag, bunyip, wendigo, and yeti.

cursed object: A dangerous mundane or well-crafted occult item that displays supernatural properties. In **Hunter**, these are also called Bygones (p. XX).

darkness, the: A term hunters use to describe the world of the supernatural or its denizens.

demon: An infernal monster. Hunters often use language to describe demons through their cultural or religious lens, unaware of their true origins.

enemy, the: Anything that threatens a human or animal life.

ghost: The spirit of a mortal who has passed.

horror: Another word for monster. May also be used to describe disembodied entities or spirits.

monster: The primary term used to describe all of the entities hunters fight.

mythic: Hunters often use the word “mythic” to identify legendary monsters, locations, or relics that either don’t exist (and therefore can’t be hunted) or are a once-in-a-lifetime find. Examples include: the phoenix, the Lost Continent of Mu, and Poseidon’s Trident.

mysterious place: Phrase used to describe locations or areas that have had reports of supernatural activity (p. XX). A nest is a monster’s lair, a tainted place displays supernatural effects, and sentient places are monstrous locations.

nest: A common term used to describe a monster’s home. It is a type of mysterious place (p. XX).

relic: A term some hunters use to describe a supernatural item that may, with time and study, be safe to handle and provide further benefits. In game terms, a relic is a true Bygone (p. XX).

rival cell: A competitive group of hunters that turns the hunt into a contest, whether the other cell wants to compete or not.

rogue cell: A group of hunters who operate on their own. Rogue cells are also referred to as “cancer cells.”

slasher: Serial killers and mass murderers who, for **Hunter**’s purposes, are treated as monsters (p. XX). A *ripper* is still considered human, whereas a *slasher* is not.

spirit: A ghost-like entity that may or may not have been human at one time. Hunters refer to anything that isn’t a ghost, but displays traits like one, as a spirit.

supernatural: A term that refers to the strange and unexplained; it is often used as a description for the darkness. Hunters often struggle with the definition and how it affects their view of the Code.

Twilight: A word a few hunters use to describe the world in which ghosts and spirits reside. Some hunters use this term without fully understanding what it means.

Vigil, the: A hunter’s never-ending fight against the darkness.

warlock/witch: A term hunters use to loosely describe occultists, summoners, necromancers, and other types of magic users treated as monsters.

How to Use This Book

Welcome to **Hunter: The Vigil**. **Hunter** presents a core set of rules and three options for gameplay. This toolkit is supported by additional rules and narrative systems that can be customized to fit different playing styles.

Chapter One: Flickering Candles provides an overview of a hunter's world, the types of hunters you can play, and three, separate types of gameplay included in this book: tiers one, two, and three. You'll also read more about **Hunter** lore and the history of the compacts and conspiracies.

Chapter Two: Compacts and Conspiracies are specialized hunter organizations that may be used for tier-two or -three games. In this chapter, you'll find write-ups for six compacts and six conspiracies, along with rules for tier-three Endowments and how to make them.

Chapter Three: Character Creation allows you to build and customize a character. You'll learn how hunters retain one foot in an unsuspecting world and another in the Vigil. Plus, you'll discover more about the Code and how it shapes their core identities and beliefs.

Chapter Four: Rules of the Hunt dives into the rules for gameplay. It also offers rules for specific aspects of **Hunter** that includes investigation and socializing.

Chapter Five: Monsters Around the World offers a taste of the strange and unusual monsters hunters may come across during the hunt. Sample monsters are presented according to the type of terrain from which they originate along with notes for how these creatures may be modified. Additionally, monster-creation rules, ephemeral-entity rules, and Dread Powers are found in this chapter.

Chapter Six: Mysterious Places takes another look at the **Hunter** setting by introducing where monsters live, locations the supernatural has tainted, and which places are actually monsters themselves. It offers new rules to handle each type of location, along with several examples.

Chapter Seven: The Slasher Chronicle is a sample chronicle setting. Yanked from the slasher-movie genre, The Slasher Chronicle is a horror movie-themed setting that includes rules for building slashers; customized approaches for tier-one, -two, and -three gameplay; new Storyteller characters; and more!

Chapter Eight: Storytelling offers advice for Storytellers to help build and manage a chronicle while fleshing out rules for Storyteller characters. Additional content includes advice for creating player-facing compacts and conspiracies.

Appendix 1: Equipment presents lists of equipment and rules for modifying and customizing gear. Equipment is covered in Chapter Four.

Appendix 2: Tilts is a list of Tilts that may be used in a **Hunter** game. Rules for handling Tilts are addressed in Chapter Four.

Appendix 3: Conditions is a list of Conditions provided for ease of reference. Rules to use Conditions are found in Chapter Four.

Other Chronicles of Darkness Games

Hunter is a standalone sourcebook that presents all rules necessary to play the game. It is compatible with the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, which acts as an introductory game for a player's first brush with the supernatural. The rulebook may be used to build a prequel for a group of characters who haven't committed to the Vigil or to expand options for hunters and

monsters. Additional rules found in that book range from specialized systems for ghosts to psychic abilities, as well as the God-Machine Chronicle.

Dark Eras, the **Dark Eras Companion**, and **Dark Eras 2** are historical collections of chapters set during unique time periods. The line offers Storytellers a deeper look at each **Chronicles of Darkness** game line through a historic lens; the **Hunter** chapters offer deeper options for roleplay while highlighting the rich lore of compacts and conspiracies such as The Cheiron Group.

Introduction to Roleplaying Games

Chances are, you know what a Storytelling — or roleplaying — game is already. But, just like hunters, we enjoy finding new people to uphold the Vigil. So if you're new here, let's talk about the basics.

In **Hunter: The Vigil**, you play out stories following a core cast of characters as they fight their way through the *Chronicles of Darkness*, a version of our own everyday world filled with monsters. It's a lot like a TV drama, something like *The Walking Dead* or *The X-Files*. Individual gaming sessions, generally running two-to-four hours, are like weekly episodes. Secrets will be revealed, relationships will be tested, and blood will be spilled.

Around three-to-five players are recommended to play **Hunter**, but the game can be played with two people. Each player slips into one character's role: a hunter. You'll make decisions for your hunter — when their best friend betrays them, you'll plot a scheme for revenge. When another hunter picks a fight, you'll decide whether they run or negotiate with them. Perhaps most importantly, you'll tell the story of how you stand up to monsters even though you're terrified, to uphold the Vigil.

One player, the Storyteller, is responsible for portraying characters who don't belong to specific players and presenting fictional situations that challenge the other players' characters. Think of these as the supporting cast of our imagined TV series — both ongoing characters who help or oppose the core cast, and guest stars of the week who turn up to cause unique kinds of trouble.

As for challenging the player characters, it's the job of the Storyteller to come up with scenes where the players must make decisions fraught with conflict and danger. In *Hunter*, these scenes are often related to the hunt for the supernatural. The Storyteller narrates a situation, then the other players say how their characters respond. The most important question a Storyteller can ask is: "What do you do now?"

When a character acts, the outcome of the action is determined by rolling a handful of 10-sided dice. The basics are simple. You add a few numbers on your character sheet (a mini-dossier) and roll that many dice. You'll find out whether your action works or fails. Failures affect your story by getting your character into more trouble, while successes provide opportunities for your character to move forward as they intended.

While players other than the Storyteller will generally be advocates for their characters' success, planning ways in which they can succeed, a lot of drama and fun comes from those moments when an elaborate plan turns to ash. Again, think of a television series: The most interesting episodes are often the ones where everything goes wrong for the characters until they find a way to turn it around. That said, the Storyteller should make sure characters have a way to bounce back rather than constantly dumping ways to suffer on them.

Player Responsibilities

Each player is responsible for a different part of the story. When combined, your group will weave an elaborative narrative as you fight monsters together.

The Storyteller is responsible for...

- ...bringing the Chronicles of Darkness to life through description.
- ...deciding where scenes start and what's going on.
- ...portraying characters who don't belong to other players.
- ...involving each player and their character in the ongoing story.
- ...putting players' characters in tough spots, encouraging interesting decisions.
- ...making sure poor dice rolls affect, but don't stop, the story.

The players are responsible for...

- ...creating their own individual characters as members of the cast.
- ...deciding what actions their characters take.
- ...making decisions that create drama and help keep the story moving.
- ...highlighting their characters' strengths and weaknesses.
- ...confronting the problems the Storyteller introduces.
- ...developing their characters' personalities and abilities over time, telling personal stories within the game's overarching narrative.

Everyone is responsible for...

- ...giving other players chances to highlight their characters' abilities and personal stories, whether that's by showing them at their strongest or weakest.
- ...making suggestions about the story and action, while keeping in mind the authority of players over their characters and the responsibility of the Storyteller to occasionally make trouble.

Sources & Inspiration

Hunter: The Vigil is a monster-hunting game where mortals form groups, called "cells" to take back the world from the monsters that slither in the Chronicles of Darkness. Gameplay can be gritty, downright terrifying, or both.

Sources include materials drawn upon for the first edition of **Hunter: The Vigil** and new books, movies, comics, and games to round out the list.

Non-Fiction

Alien Dawn by Colin Wilson is a nonfiction look at all manner of bizarre phenomena and monstrous incursions into our world. Folklore, ghosts, lost time, psychic weirdness, aliens, and monsters all appear in some form or another.

The Science of Vampires by Katherine Ramsland, Ph. D is a deep dive into vampire lore from a scientific perspective. The techniques used in this book can be fuel for science-minded characters and cells.

Parasite Rex by Carl Zimmer is a compelling, easy-to-read book about real parasites: worms, bacteria, and flies. They bore into bellies, bloodstreams, and brains.

The Element Encyclopedia series, written by several authors, offers a wealth of knowledge that covers spirits, psychic phenomena, cults and secret societies, witchcraft, spells, monsters — even birthdays that can be used to build compelling and unique characters with their own personalities.

For urban legends, check out books by Jan Harold Brunvald, who's known for popularizing the term. *London Urban Legends: The Corpse on the Tube and Other Stories* by Scott Wood, *Urban Legends: The As-Complete-As-One-Could-Be Guide to Modern Myths*, by Ngaire E. Genge, and *Encyclopedia of Beasts and Monsters in Myth, Legend and Folklore* by Theresa Bane are also great materials to check out. Reference books on urban legends, often tied to myths and folklore, are also published by small presses and sold in museums. Some introductory books, like *Yokai Attack! The Japanese Monster Survival Guide* written by Hiroko Yoda and Matt Alt, may be found in the comics section or in specialty bookstores, too.

Lastly, several dictionaries can offer new tools to describe strange phenomena. One such reference book is *Weird Words: A Lovecraftian Lexicon*, written by Dan Clore.

Fiction

Stories are a great way to dive into monster hunting through different perspectives.

Modern fantasy and horror are rife with wonderful stories featuring characters who must deal with the supernatural in their own way. *The Dresden Files* series by Jim Butcher, the *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series by Laurel K. Hamilton, and *The Mortal Instruments* by Cassandra Clare each focus on fighting the darkness in their own way. Additional books to check out are *Adventures of a Demon-Hunting Soccer Mom* by Julie Kenner, *Trail of Lightning* by Rebecca Roanhorse, *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* by Carrie Ryan, *The Good House* by Tananarive Due, and *Hunting Monsters* by S.L. Huang.

Resources for The Slasher Chronicle

The Slasher Chronicle (p. XX) taps into the darkest recesses of the human soul, scoops out whatever's there, and exposes it for all to see. Slashers in **Hunter** were first featured in a standalone supplement titled *Slasher*, published in 2008, and are the titular monster for this chronicle.

Want great source material? Read *Goth* by Otsuichi, *Exquisite Corpse* by Poppy Z. Brite, *The Shining Girls* by Lauren Beukes, and *A Killer's Mind* by Mike Omer. Watch *It Follows*, *Bloody Reunion*, *The Slit-Mouthed Woman*, *Nadja*, and *Session 9*. Serial killers can also be found in the Japanese manga series *Death Note*, *Monster*, *Erased*, and several others.

Hellblazer, from DC/Vertigo comics, spawned occult detective John Constantine and inspired a movie, *Constantine*, and a TV series of the same name. Along those same lines, the *Lucifer* TV show, a spin-off from the *Sandman* comics by Neil Gaiman, dives into the L.A. scene with a touch of the infernal. *S.P.O.O.K.S.* from Rosarium Publishing is an investigative comic where the characters unravel modern conspiracy theories — perfect fodder to weave behind the scenes of a chronicle while commenting on race.

The Walking Dead by Robert Kirkman is a stellar example of humans trying like hell to win the unwinnable fight, and the popular TV show of the same name highlights how necessary it is to find *something* to hang on to in our darkest moments.

Of course, no list of monster-hunting comics would be complete without mentioning the *Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense* or *B.P.R.D.* from Dark Horse Comics.

Films and TV

In addition to previously mentioned shows, *Supernatural* is an American monster-hunting series that aired 15 seasons from 2005 to 2020. As the story swells, brothers Sam and Dean join forces with allied hunters at “The Roadhouse” for several seasons until they join the Men of Letters. This show, while tightly focused on the Winchesters’ perspective, offers story hooks and ways to shape a chronicle around a larger mystery. *The X-Files* is like an ongoing Hunter chronicle, maybe even featuring a pair of Task Force: VALKYRIE hunters.

Monster-hunting movies range from the serious to the comedic and everything in between. *Fallen*, directed by Gregory Hoblin, is about a detective in pursuit of a supernatural serial killer — a demon that jumps from body to body. *Lake Effect* is a movie about hunting the Yeti, perfect for cryptid-themed hunts. *Dog Soldiers* is a spectacular werewolf-hunting movie and *The Babadook* is about a strange, inexplicable creature who terrifies a young, single mother.

Video Games

Yes indeed, games can inspire games. The number of monster-hunting video games is limitless, but some bear special mention: *Alone in the Dark*, *F.E.A.R.*, *Half-Life 1 & 2*, *Silent Hill*, *The Witcher*, and *Monster Hunter* can all serve as inspiration for a cool, action-oriented **Hunter: The Vigil** game.

INTRODUCTION OPENING FICTION

August 25, 2001, 3:55 P.M. That dark day was the last time we saw Victor Cheng. He'd been one of us. Great guy. Excellent with numbers. You'd be surprised how useful that is. Big data matters. With the right tools, you can taxonomize anomalies, divine the correlation between disappearances in two counties, even triangulate hot zones with only a 0.025% margin of error. Our cell wasn't — *isn't* — very big, but with Victor's help, we made do. We kept Kuala Lumpur safe.

But then Victor vanished.

It should have been a routine hit. Like always, it was Victor who'd flagged the first occurrence for investigation: a skirmish in Petaling Street that ended with a mamak owner being bitten. The local rags joked about zombies, but we knew better. We'd seen this before.

Twenty-five confirmed incidents over a two-week period. Five sightings of a bipedal rat thing skulking in the back alleys. Our cell was discreet. We didn't go in guns blazing. Instead, we tightened a slow noose, applying cunning and poison where necessary, thinning food supplies. A month later, we were ready, having pushed our quarry into Lok Ann Hotel.

It should have been cut and dry. Nine fully equipped hunters, with a back-up team of recruits. Clearance to investigate the building without interference from civilians. The enemies went down quick in spurts of gore and gristle. They were rats the length of your forearm. Chimerical monstrosities. Wet and squirming newborns, toothless but still ravenous.

It should have ended there. But as we made a final sweep of the perimeter, the air sharpened with the reek of salt, and reality became a muzzle flash at point-blank range. When the incandescence burned itself into an afterimage, Victor was gone.

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In the five years following Victor's disappearance, our numbers exploded. Kuala Lumpur was sectioned into quadrants, each monitored by multiple cells. The increasing commonality of high-speed internet let us talk easier, find each other. The cybercafes became hubs, spokes radiating outwards, that let us connect to other hunters calling out in the dark. We developed a system: 20-somethings in corporate wear and teenagers in sweats, old men with bleeding hearts, all slouching behind encrypted VPNs, anonymous amid the cacophony of LAN games. Calling into the worldwide void: *Can anyone hear me? Are you there?*

Throughout that time, I kept Victor's servers alive. There were reams of data spooled tight as family secrets, acres of untapped knowledge. I didn't have the knowledge to unravel them. Victor was the computer whiz; I was the homebrew demolitionist. But I might one day.

August 25, 2006, 3:55 P.M. I sat down at Victor's computer and trudged through his archives, hoping I'd find something, anything. An explanation as to what happened to my brother, a lode of information, a string of cryptographed jokes. Anything that might offer a sense of connection.

And I did.

J-O-H-N, my name spelled in ASCII drawings.

F-I-N-D M-E.

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August 28, 2011, 12:05 P.M. Alone, I went to the coordinates Victor provided, arms laden with what he'd asked for: the polished femur of a werewolf we'd saved from a hunt, frangipani petals, slivers and squares of gleaming metal. It was a risk. I knew that. Nine out of ten chance it was a trap. But it could also have been Victor and I wasn't about to throw that away.

I set the stash down at the mouth of the river, the sun transforming the jungle to emerald, and waited. Fifteen minutes after noon, he said.

Right on schedule, the air flashed white. When I reopened my eyes, my offerings were gone.

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I married a civilian earlier this year: Anita Lau, an anesthesiologist I'd met by while recovering from a botched sting. Things were getting bad in Kuala Lumpur. Bad everywhere. There were more hunters every year, more dead bodies, more amber-eyed girls with hair that hissed and whispered, more toys, more stories of people dead, dying, and dismembered.

Maybe that's why I married her so quickly. She was kind, quiet, competent. Not once did she ask me about the scars intaglioed on my skin, or why my arm had been broken so many times, or who were the people who'd sometimes come to our door, smelling of coal and blood. Anita understood I had a responsibility. She never asked what.

August 25, 2011, 3:55 P.M. I sat down at the desk Victor once ruled, its surface still littered with junk. As I dug into the repositories of his hard drive, the screen flickered:

J-O-H-N, my name written again in quivering block letters.

A-G-A-I-N.

• • •

This time, his directions led me to Mount Tahan. At the top the highest peak of the peninsula, I set down the items he'd asked for: bottles of bone dust, petrified entrails, the victuals of necromancy.

Again, the air roared white.

And again, my offerings vanished.

Somewhere, my brother was fighting something I could not see.

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August 25, 2014, 3:55 P.M.

His message was different this time, more refined. No more ASCII text. Instead, he wrote two words in a Google document I had open: *Be ready*.

There were no coordinates this time, no list to fulfill. *Be ready*. That was all he had to tell me. Anita would divorce me later that year. It was amiable, a mutual decision negotiated over several nights of cheap wine. I gave her the house but kept the car. An aging hunter needs to stay mobile. When she moved out, Anita asked me if I had anything to add, a eulogy for what we'd had.

I said nothing.

But the truth was that I wanted to tell her I was grateful, that I was thankful she'd walk away. The Vigil is a promise. To uphold the Vigil is to uphold the promise you'll fight the supernatural. Even if it costs you everything.

Having said that, I'd sooner die than see her name on a headstone.

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August 25, 2016, 3:55 P.M.

I knew before Victor wrote the words that something was coming. Something big. Something that smelled like the monsoon boiling over the city, warm, wet, reeking of burnt ozone. The forums teemed with rumors. Indonesia and Australia, both overrun with ghost stories, myths that bled over into the cities. Coyotes with human eyes, men and women who chattered like spiders, smiling. Always smiling. No one knew if any of it was real, or if it was just the result of living our lives on subforums haunted by fuckers who couldn't tell fiction from fact.

Coming back, Victor wrote across my search bar. *So many things to show you.*

Fifteen years, I kept the secret of Victor's messages. Waiting, hoping that it was my brother and not some ghost in the machine, praying that I hadn't outfitted a demon for escape. Next year, we'll find out if my gamble paid off. There was still time to tell someone, prepare contingencies, but even if something that looked, talked, and walked like Victor Cheng emerged into the light on the next anniversary, I knew precisely what my peers would do.

So, heart banging against my ribs, I wrote instead: *Where?*

END OPENING FICTION

Chapter One: Flickering Candles

"Light thinks it travels faster than anything but it is wrong. No matter how fast light travels, it finds the darkness has always got there first, and is waiting for it."

— Terry Pratchett, *Reaper Man*

A hunter stands between the people they want to protect and the monsters threatening their safety. You toe the line, knowing your life is at risk, because you made a vow. Night after night, you step into the darkness to track down the enemy. If you are very lucky, you deal with the threat and tie up loose ends before the sun rises. If you're still in one piece, you'll patch yourself up, get some rest, and prepare for your next hunt — tomorrow, the next night, or the night after that.

You call yourself a "hunter" because you've pledged to uphold the Vigil. You don't get the luxury of a vacation or a day off. The Vigil is a commitment that requires dedication, sheer willpower, and bravery. You, along with your fellow hunters, are taking a stand against the supernatural. Maybe you're convinced one day you'll win the fight. Maybe you're aware you won't. The Vigil doesn't care about how you feel, what you know, or what you stand to lose.

Every secret you glean is another bullet in your gun. Every mystery you unravel makes the enemy vulnerable. It's your job, after all. You are a hunter. You will not back down from a fight, not even when you're staring into the cold, soulless eyes of death itself.

Will you light a candle? Will you be the hunter your friends need you to be? Will you help battle the encroaching darkness and force the shadows to retreat?

Time to find out.

Preparing to Hunt

The Chronicles of Darkness are filled with horrors that lunge at mortals from the shadows, kidnap victims in broad daylight, and plot elaborate schemes to wield power over human societies. Hunters *know* this to be true, because they've had an encounter with the supernatural and somehow, in some way, survived. Now, they've pledged to uphold the Vigil by committing themselves — in body, mind, and heart — to the hunt.

For the Player: A Hunter's Prelude

Every hunter remembers what it was like before they made a commitment to uphold the Vigil. This, in game terms, is called a “prelude.” If this is something you or your group wants to do, you have two options. First, you can play through your prelude by building characters and playing a chronicle with the **Chronicles of Darkness** core rulebook. Second, you can play a prelude in **Hunter** as a tier-one hunter in a cell. Some rules adjustments may be required if you prefer to use this book instead of **Chronicles of Darkness**, so be sure to discuss options with your Storyteller before your chronicle begins.

In **Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition**, hunters are assumed to be competent hunters with a few hunts under their belt. Hunters have also figured out how to team up with others by forming a cell, joining a compact, or pledging membership to a conspiracy. Some hunters might hold status in their hunter organization or have figured out how to balance the demands of their day job with those of the hunt.

Hunters are different from other mortal characters because the needs of the Vigil often eclipse their foothold in society. The choices a player makes when they create a hunter will reflect how they've dealt with changing priorities while retaining one foot in their day-to-day life. A priest who joins the Long Night might switch parishes to accommodate their erratic schedule. A former celebrity might avoid the limelight until they can figure out how to use their fame to their advantage. A teacher might take a sabbatical, transfer schools, or switch jobs altogether.

While your hunter *could* pack up and abandon their old life, their ties to other people keep them grounded and remind them what they're fighting for. Sacrificing everything to hunt the enemy has a drastic impact on a hunter's psyche, and the fewer connections they have, the harder it is for them to make the right choices.

As you read about hunter society and the types of hunters you can play, think about what life your character led *before* they encountered the supernatural. Were they a programmer who blogged at night about urban legends? Were they a stay-at-home parent who volunteered at the local fire department? What types of hobbies did they have? Did they go to church regularly? Volunteer at an animal shelter? Most people aren't defined by their day job; they are shaped by their actions and role in their community. You'll also be required to identify their connection to the world they're trying to save, so think about who your hunter loves and trusts, too.

Who your character was prior to becoming a hunter doesn't negatively impact their ability to uphold the Vigil. In **Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition**, *anyone* can be a hunter — there are no barriers or entrance exams preventing someone from tracking down the supernatural. All you need to become a hunter is the willingness to take a stand knowing your fight never ends.

Hunter Backgrounds

Hunters are people who pay their bills, buy groceries, and maintain their apartments. The Vigil is expensive to maintain, because most hunters aren't being rewarded for eliminating a threat. After all, the people they're fighting to protect don't believe monsters are real. Most hunters know that upholding the Vigil is often costly. Sometimes, even a "thank you" can be hard to come by.

Many hunters join a compact or conspiracy to collect a paycheck or benefit from a pool of shared resources. Despite this, most hunters still have day jobs where they collect a salary and remain tied to the people they're trying like hell to protect. Listed here are 10 sample recommendations you can use to create a hunter. Each job offers a way to make money and a potential benefit that can be used to study, track, or capture the enemy.

When reviewing professions, think about what type of character and game you want to play. Your hunter's day job might influence which hunter organization you choose. A compact like The Union, for example, would be thrilled to have a mechanic on hand, whereas the conspiracy Council of Bones may be more inclined to welcome a freelancer or occultist into their ranks.

Academic: People who work in academia often have access to papers, books, peer research, and relics others may not. Depending upon what job the hunter has, they may be able to spend time away acquiring new materials for an archive or take a sabbatical.

Business Professional: White-collar workers who show up from nine to five may not have the flexibility other jobs do but can be great for a steady paycheck and office gossip. Often, stellar business professionals are chosen by compacts because of their ability to navigate office politics and their expertise in their chosen field.

Criminal: From gang members to petty thugs, con artists, and thieves, hunters sometimes begrudgingly look to criminals to help them out in a pinch. Being a criminal in **Hunter** can be challenging in a cell of do-gooders, however, so be sure to talk to your group beforehand.

Detective: Investigative skills are crucial to the hunt, and detectives have a knack for tracking down leads and opening cold cases for information. Police detectives also have an "in" with law enforcement, while independent detectives have more freedom to get the job done.

Doctor: Medical professionals are crucial in **Hunter**, because they can provide medical treatment without forcing hunters to fill out paperwork that might raise eyebrows. Doctors are also familiar with what it means to pledge their lives to the greater good, via the Hippocratic Oath.

Freelancer: The benefit of being a freelancer is a flexible schedule and the ability to work from anywhere, at any time. The downsides range from getting paid on time to finding fulfilling assignments. Freelancers can be great hunters because networking is part of their day job, so they know how to ask the right questions when needed.

Journalist: Journalists come in a variety of shapes and sizes and write everything from gut-wrenching feel-good articles to hard-hitting features. Some may work at newspapers, while

others blog from home to cover the news from day to day. Their value is often measured by how many connections they have — and how much they can spin the truth.

Mechanic: Every hunter has equipment that will break down sooner or later. A gun gets jammed, a car's brakes go bad, a two-way radio is on the fritz. Mechanics can operate out of a garage or vehicle they own or rent. Some mechanics might even work at an old junkyard — the perfect place to set up a command center when needed or find dated parts.

Occultist: Modern occultists, in a post-new-age world, tend to linger on forums and in private channels discussing auspicious signs, strange phenomena, and tools of the trade. Usually, occultists don't "just" uncover the secrets of the supernatural; this, however, is the exception rather than the rule. When choosing an occultist, think of them as an "expert" in their area of study.

Religious Leader: Faith is important in the world of **Hunter**. All hunters, whether they're religious, spiritual, or atheist, believe in *something*. The religious leader has a deep connection to their faith and the community they serve. Practitioners include imams, ministers, priests, shamans, rabbis, shepherds, and many more.

Scientist: Scientists are familiar with the unexplained. Their purpose is to test, research, hypothesize, and study what they don't know in their field, whether that's figuring out ways to increase the production of grain or identifying the reason why a cryptid's blood was green. Scientists also ground the hunt in analysis and, often, find inventive weaknesses a monster might possess.

Want to get started playing **Hunter**? If you prefer to play in a tier-one chronicle, flip to Chapter 3: Character Creation on p. XX. Additional professional backgrounds are listed on p. XX.

Not sure just yet? Read on for a brief overview of equipment followed by cells, compacts, and conspiracies. Then, check out tier-two and tier-three hunter organizations in Chapter 2: Compacts and Conspiracies on p. XX.

Tools and Equipment

Combat-heavy **Hunter** chronicles force hunters to think creatively and improvise with the tools and equipment they have on hand. Whether they're stocking up on tripwires or not, hunters typically have an array of weapons they'll use to threaten or kill the enemy.

Hunters require access to weapons to uphold the Vigil. How many guns, knives, and bullets they acquire from night to night will depend upon what resources they can safely tap into without fear of being caught or arrested. A hunter who owns a gun range will have more armaments than someone who works part time at one, for example. If that part timer gets reported, a cop isn't going to buy a wild story that they're only trying to kill a *thing* with glistening fangs and sharp claws.

Many hunters join a compact or conspiracy because they realize hunter organizations have more weapons than they could acquire or maintain on their own. Often, members don't realize that the access to greater resources comes with a price: Hunters are expected to perform according to the needs of their group. When they do, they gain status. When they don't? Every move they make is put under scrutiny. For this reason, some hunters avoid having anyone look over their shoulder, and partner with other cells or individual hunters who have what they need.

Savvy hunters partner with others to improvise equipment, build traps, and scope out sites to locate the entrances and exits. Some rely heavily on their professional background — especially if they're a member of law enforcement, freelance security, or the military — to plan an ambush. Others possess encyclopedic knowledge of the supernatural and help pinpoint a monster's strengths and weaknesses. Lone hunters who favor a gun over a book often find they're not as effective as groups of hunters who share knowledge, resources, and tactics. Groups of hunters, called "cells" in hunter society, excel because their burdens and costs are shared among members.

Experienced hunters know the difference between winning and losing isn't a well-timed bullet — it's information. Data, firsthand accounts, and lore can be gleaned from books in the library or online, but also through a hunter's social network. Sometimes, having a friend in an unusual place, like an independent bookstore, university department, or even a church rectory, helps a hunter cover their bases and ensure they're not just searching for intel on the internet all day, every day. Other times, these networks aren't tucked away in a business, university, or house of worship. Regular customers in a coffee house might know more than they're letting on about a businessman who never takes off his sunglasses. A knitting circle might gossip about what really happened to the mayor that fateful night. A co-ed basketball team that plays in the park might shiver whenever *that* human-seeming creature walks by.

In addition to weapons and information, hunters often work with occultists and collectors who specialize in the supernatural. This aspect of the hunt can generate more frustration than facts, because occult materials are often rife with dated perspectives, myths and folklore, conspiracy theories, and disinformation. If a hunter can get past the 27 different versions of how to perform an exorcism, they might find the one that works. Once they know a demon can be affected by an exorcism, then it's just a matter of time before a cell finds the right one.

Hunter Society

Hunters often start fighting monsters because someone they knew got hurt and they want payback. At some point, they'll decide whether they *can* commit to the Vigil. Once they do, there's no going back. Once you pledge to uphold the Vigil, you will always be a hunter.

Hunters often whisper that the Vigil isn't just a promise — it's a curse that tears you up inside and spits your heart out. If you're not careful, if you don't remember to celebrate the small wins and forget your losses as best you can, you could lose yourself to the hunt. Every back alley, basement, or cemetery you see becomes a potential battleground where you'll fight the enemy. If not this night, you grimly think, it'll only be a matter of time before you will.

The emotional burden of upholding the Vigil is not something hunters can easily bear, because they must keep their job a secret. Humankind is either unaware or intentionally ignorant of the horrors that surround, threaten, and prey upon them. What's more, hunters are often the first suspects in a sketchy murder investigation. That unusual bite mark? Can't be supernatural. There must be an explanation, after all.

Most people either won't believe monsters are real or don't want to know they are. At least, not until they encounter the supernatural and they're willing to accept the truth. Hunters don't have the luxury of being skeptics. They know the enemy is real, they understand most people won't call them heroes or realize somebody saved their lives, and they hunt monsters anyway. Often,

hunters feel more comfortable in the company of other hunters because they don't have to hide this part of their lives.

The global community of hunters forms a society that is split into three types of groups: cells, compacts, and conspiracies. In **Hunter** terms, each aspect of society is its own tier or style of gameplay. As a rule of thumb, the higher the tier, the more resources and knowledge of the supernatural the players will have — in addition to a greater emphasis on conspiracy-related politics and a higher threat level.

Tier One: Hunter Cells

A hunter cell is a small unit of likeminded hunters who fight together night after night. Typically, three to five hunters pool their resources and expertise for the benefit of the cell.

All hunters fight in a cell, but not every cell is considered a tier-one group. A tier-one cell operates on a local level, with limited knowledge of the supernatural. Usually, a cell watches out for other people in their neighborhood and patrols each night to ensure no monsters infringe on their turf. That does not mean cells are restricted to hunting the enemy in a small area. A cell might investigate a sighting in a different town, track a monster from their suburb to a bigger city, or take a road trip to research a cold case.

At tier one, chronicles tend to be grittier and more immediate. One cell can't possibly possess the resources required to eliminate every monster. What they do have, however, is the mobility to deal with emergencies and immediate threats. Their view of hunter society, the supernatural, and the Vigil is limited by what they encounter firsthand as a group. Sometimes, this means a cell will be forced to make the tough call no one else wants to. Do they set a trapped monster on fire knowing there are witnesses nearby? Or, do they let that human-seeming fake go free until nobody's watching?

With no one to answer to, a tier-one cell calls the shots. If hunters have a falling out, then the cell falls apart, and they must look for a new one or abandon the Vigil knowing what's out there. Most well-populated cities contain dozens of hunter cells that protect the streets when no one else is watching. A cell can become so fixated on dealing with "its" problem, it often operates without knowing another cell is tracking a different monster just one block over.

Each cell's mobility is hampered by the larger pattern of supernatural activity they cannot see. Their lack of knowledge and resources hurts them where it counts. Many cells form, fight, and then fall apart within months if they're not careful. The physical risks hunters take pale in comparison to the psychological and emotional toll on their psyche, which often results in behavioral quirks or unhealthy habits that, if left untended, can lead to trauma and self-harm. Some hunters are aware of the risks and become obsessed with self-discipline to reduce the Vigil's heavy toll.

While outsiders may not notice why a hunter always sits near an exit or why they make sure their phone is charged and handy, those closest to them will eventually notice any change in their behavior. Unless hunters are extremely careful, their personal relationships may become strained or even broken. Some worried family members might even call a doctor or therapist on their behalf, and unwittingly share details hunters prefer to keep secret. Sometimes, cells can also draw unwanted attention from local law enforcement, rival cells, or rogue hunters just by scoping out a haunt, too.

Hunters who survive multiple confrontations with the enemy will sometimes take a break and put the Vigil on pause. They know what novice hunters don't: When you're always fighting, you sometimes forget who you're fighting for. Hunters who return to their everyday lives, hoping to forget what horrors they've faced, have a hard time readjusting simply because they know that peace is an illusion. There are more monsters emerging from the shadows than hunters realize, and their ignorance is not bliss — it's deadly. The Vigil once required dedicated hunters, but now? When the stakes are higher? Every hunter has a part to play in the fight against the supernatural. Members of tier-one cells know that better than most, because when a fight breaks out on their turf, they're the first hunters at the scene.

Forming a Cell

A typical hunter cell is composed of three to five people. New cells often draw less-experienced hunters who are just starting to learn about the supernatural. Cell creation typically occurs when:

- A veteran hunter is actively recruiting other hunters to fight a specific threat.
- One or more veteran hunters have left an existing cell.
- A worried neighbor, friend, or loved one asks for help without realizing what they're up against.
- A hunter seeks peers to replace fallen or missing friends and rebuild their cell.
- A member of law enforcement seeks outside help to close a case.
- A family who lost a loved one decides to hunt together.
- A hunter (or cell) wants to pass on what they've learned.
- An existing group (gang, patrol, team, etc.) accidentally crosses paths with the enemy.

The size and composition of a cell can fluctuate over time for multiple reasons. Some hunters have obligations to their family or career they can't ignore. Other members leave after they're seriously injured to piece themselves back together. More than a few hunters have unfinished business they must deal with before it's too late. Absences in a cell used to operating with four people can be catastrophic; one fewer expert shot, driver, or medic leaves a hole the cell must try to fill. Most cells are always on the lookout for other likely recruits.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The primary strength of a hunter cell is its size — with only a handful of members, the team is stealthy and agile, able to react to changing situations quickly, take action, then blend back into the crowd. If they are careful and keep their numbers small, cells can operate invisibly for a very long time, avoiding notice until they are ready to strike. By drawing on the individual skills and resources of their members and using their wits, the cell is self-contained, self-reliant and, with time and experience, can become extremely effective. Some cells can survive for years simply because they learned how to pick the right people, plan their hunts, and when to walk away.

A cell's small size is also its number one drawback. Its operations are limited to the availability, resources and skills of its members, and it's difficult to replace losses quickly. The members of the cell have no one to turn to in a crisis except one another, and no safety net in the event things go catastrophically wrong. These shortcomings are the primary factor in driving hunters to band

together when possible by taking on hunts with other cells, or by joining a compact or conspiracy.

Tier Two: Hunter Compacts

Many hunter compacts take shape by starting out as a collection of isolated cells that come together to pursue the Vigil on a larger scale. Cells facing a common enemy or an increased threat level across vast distances often pool their knowledge and resources for a shared purpose. Over time, an elaborate network of contacts forms to support their goal. Greater numbers and more resources often lead hunters to more success on the streets. Before long, multiple cells are given orders to ensure they're not tripping over each other and they're more effective on the hunt. Together, these cells form a compact.

A tier-two chronicle broadens the scope of the hunt to cover more ground, offer more resources, and explore a greater view of the supernatural to reveal patterns or predict the enemy's behavior. Hunter compacts are more capable than a single cell because they have a longer reach; a compact tends to operate in a major metropolitan area or entire region and has the means to keep their operations running smoothly and their hunters well-equipped. Most compacts, like SWORN, the Union, and Null Mysteriis, have set up localized chapters in different parts of the world, as well as private forums and chatrooms to facilitate communication.

Keeping the Vigil Secret in an Internet Age

Chat rooms, private work groups, email, forums, etc. have proven to be effective tools for cells, compacts, and conspiracies. Not only do they help facilitate communication, privacy-related apps can help hunters retain some peace of mind. Unfortunately, some hunters forget that. An email can be copied and posted. A file can be downloaded and shared. An anonymous query from a worried victim could have been sent by the enemy.

Despite the likelihood that a hunter's data will be leaked, most groups don't worry about the occasional file share. Fortunately, the internet is rife with misinformation and hunters often joke that undeniable proof of the supernatural is just a few search terms away. Savvy hunters are extremely careful not to share anything they wouldn't want repeated online, while others are too paranoid to conduct hunter business in a public forum. Most groups ensure that at least one member of their cell, compact, or conspiracy knows how to protect their identities and data lest they fall into the enemy's claws.

Larger cities and metropolitan areas offer many opportunities for compacts to set up shop. Most compacts place a representative or cell in a city that doesn't have a satellite office to ensure they're receiving reports of supernatural activity in that area. These hunters are free to form alliances with other compact members and chip in when necessary. Sometimes, a compact member might even lend a hand to a cell without ever revealing which organization they're working for.

While rivalries, turf wars, and bitter feuds do affect hunters in their communities, most compacts discourage disagreements. Hunters understand this in theory, but have a hard time wrapping their minds around conflicting orders during a hunt. Null Mysteriis wants to keep that werecrocodile alive, while The Union doesn't. The Loyalists of Thule steer clear of that person who seems

possessed, while The Long Night wants to perform an exorcism they're not sure will work. When the stakes are high and tension increases, hunters often bicker. If they're not very, very careful, the enemy will pick up on their differences and use them to their advantage.

Philosophical disagreements aside, hunter compacts have what many new hunters need: resources, lore, and skilled veterans who've spent more time in the field than their other members have. Experienced hunters prefer the camaraderie of other hunters, and compact sub-groups provide a framework to connect with other, likeminded hunters. Though cells don't always have to be compact-centric, many hunters find it's easier to hunt monsters when your cellmates have the same view of the Code or answer to the same authority. Cells don't get to make decisions the same way a tier-two group might. Sometimes, a cell is ordered to grab extra supplies, free a kidnapped hunter, help another friendly cell, retrieve a Bygone, etc.

Still, hunters know organization leaders have a plan to which they're not always privy. Tier-two hunters are far less concerned about hidden agendas than tier-three hunters, however. Compacts might want to explore a new area or expose a group of monsters, but they're not big or powerful enough to treat the supernatural as their plaything. For security reasons, most compacts prefer their agendas to remain secret, and sometimes that doesn't sit well with other hunters — but not because they've changed their minds about the enemy. Though hunters treat the monsters as “them” and people as “us,” people still abuse power, commit crimes, and hurt others. When someone steps out of line, leaves, or is thrown out of the compact, members want to know what happened — especially if that someone turns out to be the enemy.

Hunter compacts don't have the same longevity conspiracies do, but last far longer than an individual cell or alliance. The main reason they don't stick around is because compacts aren't thinking long term. Most tier-two groups don't plan their futures, simply because they don't have time to. For every enemy they put down, two more pop up. For every hunter they lose, more time must be spent recruiting and training their replacement. Additionally, they must deal with group politics, cell dynamics, economic downturns, and a host of other problems.

Forming a Compact

Hunter compacts are often formed out of necessity. There is no minimum or maximum number of cells required to form or maintain a compact. If a new compact is created with two cells, however, the hunters should be expected to handle threats in a larger region while recruiting more cells to join their ranks. Compacts typically boast between 50 and 200 members.

Unlike cells, compacts typically recruit members with a few hunts under their belt. While new hunters can join a compact, they don't have a grip on how they feel about other hunters. After all, there's nothing worse than joining a compact and getting stuck hunting with people you can't stand.

Compacts form when:

- A group of hunters from different cells band together to fight a specific threat.
- A group of hunters splits off from another compact for ideological reasons.
- A community or organization needs more hunters than it currently has.
- Tier-one cells hunt together on a regular basis.
- Tier-one cells start pooling their resources together.

- Hunters in an existing organization or community decide to formalize their activities.
- Hunters attracted to a specific philosophy or spiritual belief want to apply those precepts to the Vigil.

The compact's approach to the Vigil is often a deciding factor for new members, and it's one that shouldn't be ignored. Compact leaders are aware of this, too, and occasionally allow hunters to shadow existing cells for the purposes of recruitment. Sometimes, the more secretive compacts, like the Loyalists of Thule and Null Mysteriis, will help in a fight to gauge whether or not hunters have what it takes to join them.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths of joining a compact are the money, information, and ammunition it provides and the hunters who'll pitch in when needed. While compacts don't have infinite resources, they give gear, finances, medical assistance, and lore to their hunters. Some have deep connections to law enforcement and political figures and will leverage those relationships should a hunter face jail time. Most own or rent a safe house hunters can use when they're on the run, and help cells connect with one another if they need help or have to lay low.

Compacts do tend to be picky, however, and will often favor cells over a lone hunter. Some also care about their members' loyalty and activities outside of the hunt. The Union, for example, doesn't peer into their hunters' lives provided they show up when called. The Long Night won't double check to make sure their hunters show up to church every Sunday, either, but unlike The Union they expect their hunters to represent their faith. Some hunters feel a compact's expectations are a strength, because they have an authority to whom they report. Others see their oversight as a weakness, and often resent criticism — especially if they're asking for help to clean up a monster's mess.

Most hunters rely on compacts for more information about the supernatural. Lore, whether that's gained from experience, books, and footage or not, is crucial to knowing where to fire and when. Hunters are acutely aware that cells who get cocky wind up missing or dead, and often need verified data drawn from painstaking research. Compacts understand how valuable good intel can be, but they struggle to sift fact from fiction. Many supernatural creatures are described as urban legends, fairy tales, or myths because most people don't know (or refuse to believe) they're real.

The lack of factual details to which hunters have access is a problem for cells, compacts, and conspiracies. Hunters have a challenging time classifying monsters, because they're not sure of the best way to do that. Are all living and undead blood drinkers vampires? Are all shapeshifters a type of werecreature? Once they answer those questions, hunters must figure out how many types there are, their strengths and weaknesses, and where they live. The second a cell encounters a monster whose attributes and behavior don't add up to what they already know, they question the facts they've gathered. At best, hunters are guessing how to confront the supernatural. When they win, they cheer. When they lose, their compact helps them pick up the pieces.

Compacts do possess a weakness: their size. The more members they have, the greater the risks. Information leaks. Identities can be shared. A poorly executed hunt can cause casualties and property damage. Hunters can go rogue. Worse: some monsters can pretend to be hunters. When these problems combine, they can expose a compact's existence and get it mislabeled as a threat

to the very people they're trying to save. Every time a cell gets arrested or disbands because their loved ones were slaughtered by the enemy, Network Zero sends out a reminder: Yes, we still believe the supernatural should be exposed. Just don't forget to watch your back, too.

Though compacts don't suffer the same bureaucratic nightmares conspiracies do, they are run by people who often disagree. Those arguments often start small. Maybe a cell shouldn't have been given that much ammo. Maybe they should've told a hunter more about the slasher they were tracking down. Maybe they should close ranks and stop recruiting members for a while. If they're not careful, bickering can negatively impact the group. Some hunters will abandon their compact and join a different one or worse — resort to sabotage. Others might form a new faction within the compact, rally other members to take a side, or wage an internal war.

Compacts also suffer from a lack of communication and camaraderie. Their operations are spread out over a larger area, and no leaders can possibly know what their members are doing from night to night. While the Vigil demands sacrifice, hunters still have lives. They still possess wants and needs that eclipse hunting monsters. Sometimes, hunters want to have a say in how their compact approaches the Vigil, raises funds, treats its members, and archives its information. Compacts, like any other human-led organization, change over time for different reasons. Just like any corporate stooge or politician, members can abuse their power, resort to corruption, or execute secret agendas that hurt the compact and its role in the Vigil.

Tier Three: Hunter Conspiracies

Hunter conspiracies are influential and well-financed hunter organizations capable of challenging the world's monsters on an even footing. Many are far older than any existing compact, and surviving conspiracies tend to be longer-lived than any other hunter group. While cells operate on the ground and compacts in the shadows, conspiracies move behind the scenes to install members in foreign and domestic governments to keep one eye on politics and the other on the supernatural. In general, conspiracies know the most about the supernatural denizens who linger in the world, but even so, they don't know everything.

Conspiracy leaders pride themselves on their organizations' legacies. What a conspiracy believes is worthy of remembering differs from group to group. The Ascending Ones prize their ingenuity to adapt ancient traditions to a changing world. The Children of the Seventh Generation are grateful they aren't following in the footsteps of their infernal ancestor. The Council of Bones holds ceremonies to honor the dead they've helped. While their perspective helps shape the conspiracy's approach to its members, it also speaks to what each conspiracy values. The Ascending Ones value the ability to remain self-sufficient, the Lucifuge cares what its hunters do from night to night, and the Council of Bones concerns itself with dead victims to set things right.

Tier-three groups regard the supernatural as a tool that can be wielded against the enemy. Each conspiracy has its own methods, secrets, Endowments, and hands-on resources to better equip hunters — or so they tell themselves. While compacts care most about hunting monsters and helping humanity, conspiracies possess long-term agendas. Each conspiracy wants *something*. The Cheiron Group blends capitalism with monster hunting. The Malleus Maleficarum judges who is and isn't an "agent of darkness" — including mortals. Task Force: VALKYRIE patriotically fights for all Americans to keep them safe from ENEs.

The Cheiron Group Exposed

Recently, hunters have begun to realize conspiracies often intentionally keep their members — and each other — in the dark as much as possible. One such conspiracy is the Cheiron Group who, up until a few years ago, was believed to have been founded in Europe in 1904. While Edward Barrett did own a small pharmaceutical company and *did* operate under the Cheiron Group name, the conspiracy has been using different aliases for centuries. One of these aliases, the Acheron Shipping & Trading Guild, operated under that company moniker for well over 300 years. This revelation has led other hunters to wonder what *else* the Cheiron Group is hiding, and if other conspiracies have used the same tactic to obscure their presence over time.

While compacts tend to focus on eliminating threats, conspiracies do so much more. Hunters are tasked to carry out short-term missions like acquiring resources, pursuing an enemy, or researching a location. Long-term goals entail spying; public relations; forming relationships with political, commercial, and community leaders; and sourcing funds for expensive equipment. Often, conspiracies expect hunters to remain obedient. Hunters might be told to spy on specific targets, unaware to whom (or what) they're listening; some are even ordered to infiltrate other cells in the spirit of friendly competition.

Of course, hunters do ask questions. Conspiracies skirt the law as much as they can, because they prioritize their activities in the name of the Vigil. Sometimes, the law makes hunting monsters that much harder. If a conspiracy can't access a private library they *know* belonged to a vampire, their hunters are forced to break in and steal books. If they can't sway an up-and-coming politician to their point of view, they might blackmail or bribe that senator to get their way.

Should hunters start asking questions, they quickly realize conspiracies are far from the upstanding, innocent groups they'll profess to be.

Forming a Conspiracy

Hunter conspiracies take months, if not years, to form. Their operations require more funding than compacts do because wealth takes time to accumulate. Conspiracies boast their membership is high, but numbers can fluctuate from as little as 500 to as high as 10,000 hunters worldwide. Those figures include personnel who never step out into the field and are only marginally aware of what threats hunters face.

Most conspiracies are careful to not assign all available hunters to investigate known encounters and prioritize cases to ensure they're not taxing members and exposing their operation to the enemy. For this reason, approximately 100 to 300 hunters are assigned to active cases worldwide from night to night. When they're not in the field tracking down a monster, conspiracy members spend their nights on the investigative aspects of the hunt or performing tasks to improve and maintain their status within the conspiracy.

Typically, a conspiracy forms when:

- A powerful financial, religious, or political organization creates one.
- A compact significantly expands their operations.
- The remnants of several compacts are reformed to become a conspiracy.
- A once-defunct conspiracy is revived.

- Multiple cells knowledgeable about the supernatural band together.

The creation of a conspiracy can follow the same trajectory a large corporation with satellite offices does — but not always. Unlike most conglomerates, hunter conspiracies operate in the shadows. Some, like the Cheiron Group, Ascending Ones, Task Force: VALKYRIE, and Malleus Maleficarum, benefit from having one or more public faces. The Lucifuge and Council of Bones don't have that luxury, however, and recognize that puts them at greater risk of exposure.

A public face offers many benefits and some drawbacks depending upon the group's financial needs. Most conspiracies require a stream of income to benefit hunters and keep the lights on. When a conspiracy doesn't have regular funding, members are often stuck footing the bill. For some hunters, that's not a problem because their weapons of choice are their supernatural gifts and they've partnered with other cellmates who do have access to more resources.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Most strengths conspiracies offer are tangible: medical services, intellectual assets, safe houses, connections, etc. Increased threat levels often demand greater firepower; when a city is in danger, conspiracies offer capable, well-equipped hunters who can make the difference between winning and losing. Their longevity, on the other hand, is both a strength and a weakness. The longer a conspiracy exists, the more lore they tend to accumulate. Conspiracies, however, are rife with flaws because they are extremely slow to change. Leadership takes a long time to discuss new approaches because they understand policy adjustments have long-term ramifications. Members, on the other hand, don't always understand why a simple request generates multiple meetings and endless discussions.

Uncertainty among members is rampant, because hunters eventually see themselves as a cog in a greater wheel. The sense of camaraderie with fellow members tends to become muted or downplayed, and small wins are barely acknowledged. Conspiracies want to see results, and they favor outcomes that benefit their overall goal. After all, the advantages they gift their operatives, in the form of Endowments, aren't free. Hunters are expected to use their Endowments to uphold the Vigil and their edicts regardless of threat level. Most hunters know this, too, and usually join a group based on what it offers. A hunter who's more interested in using cutting-edge munitions than holy rites is likely to join Task Force: VALKYRIE instead of Malleus Maleficarum. What's more: Members forget Endowments are not guaranteed to work, and often affect them physically and psychologically.

Lastly, conspiracies should be treated as large and powerful organizations that are buried in layers of red tape. Members rarely encounter a conspiracy's leader and when they do, it's usually for a serious reason. Operatives are expected to fulfill the conspiracy's missions to the letter, and when they don't carry out their orders, they may suffer unforeseen consequences. To many conspiracies, an individual hunter's life is not as important as the integrity of their organization. When a conspiracy decides between rescuing a kidnapped hunter or capturing a monster they've been desperate to track, they prioritize the hunt — and members have to suck it up or deal with the fallout.

History of the Hunt

For as long as there have been monsters, there have been hunters. The history, and often the names, of hunter compacts have been lost to time for various reasons. Sometimes, a short-lived

hunter compact will form out of necessity to deal with a terrifying and unusual threat that wipes out half its members. Other times, a hunter compact suffers simply because their very existence intimidates politicians and citizens who either don't know the supernatural is real or have been infiltrated by monsters who want to keep their presence a secret.

The Vigil is not a modern concept. Monsters have prowled in the shadows since time immemorial preying on mortals. Brave and desperate people have walked out of the protective ring of firelight to pursue what lurks in the darkness. Some die. Many go mad. But someone else always picks up the torch because they want to fight. They *must*. The Vigil is not an exclusive pledge that can only be upheld by the rich and powerful. Hunters can be heroes, criminals, or *both*. The Vigil doesn't care who a hunter was before. It exists because wherever there are people, there are supernatural predators, and the hunters who stand between *them* and *us*.

Tier-one hunters who work in cells are often fighting a losing battle, because they suffer from a lack of information and resources that other hunters do not. Still, the one thing cells often rely on is their experiences and the archived materials of other hunters. Sometimes, a journal is passed down from one generation to the next, or a grieving best friend will receive the codes to a locked computer in the mail. Of all the groups, tier-one hunters have the mobility to slip in and grab a notebook, file, etc. without anyone noticing them, because other members of hunter society tend to pay attention to the bigger fish.

Tier-two hunters start to understand the costs of the hunt when they research the history of their selected groups, or compacts. Some compacts, such as the Keepers of the Weave or the Scarlet Watch, are relics of the past that reflect hunters who are caught between hunting monsters and living their lives in an uncertain world. Most, however, survive for 100 or 200 years, because they form to deal with an immediate threat. Over time, as the compact's needs, resources, and efficacy changes, membership wanes and the group's rallying cry falls to a whisper. The Barrett Commission, for example, was founded in the 1790s to prevent vampires from infiltrating the U.S. government — right up until they lost their funding and were reassigned to other agencies.

Tier-three hunters claim they know how widespread the threats are, but they face different challenges in their long-lived groups, called conspiracies. Though they do understand the supernatural is not a local or regional phenomenon, tier-three hunters are subject to the bureaucracy and needs of their chosen conspiracy. Many conspiracies have been forged from a political body, like Task Force: VALKRYIE and the Vanguard Serial Crimes Unit, or a religious organization, like Malleus Maleficarum or the Knights of Saint George.

The One and the Many

Most hunters don't like to boast about fighting monsters, because the more they think about that writhing mass of worms and venomous fangs, the more they'll want to write about it. Still, quite a few hunters have sat down to write their magnum opuses over the years. To date, however, not one manuscript has ever been published. Of course, other hunters will blame the lack of "leaks" on a secret cabal of warlocks who've targeted hunters or a cluster of vampires. Few dare to whisper an infamous rumor: The supernatural never set eyes on a single autobiography thanks to the work of a subversive hunter called the One.

No one — not VASCU's psychics or the Circle of Bones' mediums — knows the identity of the One. Some hunters suspect the One is a group of hunters who believe

the Vigil should be kept secret at all costs. Unlike a compact or conspiracy, the One doesn't have a hierarchy and can't bestow benefits on its members — because there aren't any. Others think the One is either a single hunter who upholds the Vigil by themselves or acts as a supernatural mole to ensure the truth doesn't get shared publicly. Either way, hunters are curious how the Vigil has been upheld for this long and the truth of their identities hasn't been broadcast to the enemy. Some fear it already has.

Most of the time, conspiracies outlast cells and compacts not because they possess more wealth, but because the organizations touch different locations around the world. Should the conspiracy suffer great losses, as the Council of Bones has time and time again, its members regroup and fall silent until they're strong enough to emerge and hunt. And, unlike compacts, conspiracies actively maintain their secrecy to protect the identity of their hunters and ensure their organization isn't exposed to the supernatural. Despite this, the history of most conspiracies is uneven at best, because no hunter has lived long enough to accurately document their pasts.

Every member of hunter society knows their greatest weakness is their mortality. Unlike long-lived creatures of darkness, a hunter's short life expectancy affects their physical, mental, and emotional prowess in battle. Most hunt monsters out in the field until they're no longer able to, and a hunter's last battle could be anywhere from five years to 20 — but often not much more than that.

Recently, hunters have speculated their need for secrecy is affecting their success rate, and are allying with historians, archivists, and students of the occult to piece together a more accurate history and to identify all known and unknown groups. Despite this, most hunters are fully aware hunter society may be older, larger, and more widespread than they ever thought possible. Unfortunately, getting access to ancient scrolls and texts isn't always easy and dead-language experts who don't ask questions are hard to come by. Several hunters are concerned the evidence hunters leave behind puts future hunters at risk, even if that means new recruits wrongfully assume the Vigil's long and storied history is concentrated in western countries.

Still, if evidence of the Vigil is scarce in the modern world, it's all-but vanished from the ancient. Some stories continue to linger, leading many hunters to wonder just how much lore has been intentionally erased or lost during the passage of time.

The Nibiru

Some hunter historians claim that the earliest evidence of the Vigil can be found on tablets recovered from the Lost Library of Ashurbanipal, an Assyrian library that predates the Library of Alexandria. These tablets describe the first hunter — Marduk — and his cell, the army of the Nibiru. Though others believe Marduk was a Babylonian deity, hunter historians are convinced that his mission, to recover the Tablet of Destinies, was predestined. After all, they say, Marduk was a holy and righteous son of Ea. It was only a matter of time before Marduk would fulfill his destiny by attacking the monstrous goddess Tiamat and her ally, the god-king Qingu, who was using the Tablet of Destinies to command her armies.

Hunter historians downplay why Marduk was hunting Qingu and Tiamat, and often focus on the Nibiru and their unflinching loyalty. Not one of the Nibiru had a divine birthright or purpose like Marduk did, and yet they fought alongside him anyway. The tablets tell the story of how Marduk fought Tiamat and was so vicious her body tore in half when he slayed her. When her corpse

split in two, Marduk unwittingly released scores of terrifying enemies: scorpion-men, howling dragons, the undead, and demons. Of course, Marduk and the Nibiru had no chance of killing all of Tiamat's children. A handful of hunter historians believe this is the reason why hunters must battle the forces of darkness today.

The majority of hunters scoff at the idea that the Vigil exists to rectify a Babylonian god's mistake. Most laugh when a superstitious hunter whispers about the Nibiru in hallowed tones and point to similar myths, like the story of Pandora's Box, as more "proof" that one of their ancestors is probably responsible for unleashing the denizens of the supernatural into the world.

Hunter societies are filled with tall tales and too-good-to-be-true stories cooked up to inspire and add a certain gravitas to the Vigil and to their legacy. It is not uncommon for friends and family members to hunt together, and occasionally they point to the lore of the ancients or a common ancestor to prove their worth.

Aves Minerva

Hunters can be found in almost every ancient civilization, including ancient Rome, simply because the enemy has lived alongside humankind from the very beginning. Rome had been besieged by monsters since it was first founded near the Tiber River by the brothers Romulus and Remus in 753 BCE. Its long and storied history, stretching from village to republic to empire, is filled with inexplicable terrors ranging from the undead to skin-stealing owl women.

Despite its might, Rome's mighty armies weren't enough to fight monsters both home and abroad. Its push to expand into foreign territories was bloody and violent, and the scores of peoples Rome attacked did not go quietly into the night. While its armies were commanded to conquest and subjugate occupied countries, Roman citizens struggled to battle fierce enemies that were more terrifying than a barbarian from Gaul and turned to its gods for help.

Some hunter historians believe that cells formed from cults devoted to a specific god or goddess. Desperate for help, worshippers would flock to the temples asking for divine intervention. Eventually, worshippers tired of waiting for the gods and pledged to protect their neighborhood — with their deity's blessing, of course. These hunters would then form a cell to patrol the streets of Rome. The Aves Minerva, hunters dedicated to the Etruscan-turned-Roman warrior goddess, was one such cell that fought to protect the homes on Aventine Hill.

Specific references to the Aves Minerva are scarce, and hunter historians often use poetic license to piece fragments together to infer their deeds. The Aves Minerva, or Birds of Minerva, were rumored to protect Rome from the cannibal Cacus, the god-child of Vulcan who lived beneath Aventine Hill in a labyrinthine cave, who'd nail dismembered body parts to doors in the neighborhood. Modern hunters think Cacus wasn't a god at all, but a former soldier turned slasher who terrorized Rome because his bloodlust was insatiable. After all, what Roman emperor would allow the story of a monstrous soldier who attacked fellow Romans to circulate broadly? Instead, turn the soldier into a supernatural creature, and publicly thank the Aves Minerva for eliminating the threat. Then, suggest the hunters drag a trussed-up corpse down to the Forum Boarium (cattle market) to proudly display their hunting trophy.

Other Roman hunter cells existed alongside the Aves Minerva to deal with werewolves, the undead, vampires, and ghosts. Some cells who worshipped Quirinus were formed for political reasons. Eventually, these cells were commandeered by the Roman senate, given an official-sounding name and became one of the first western compacts. The Ordo de Quirinus was a

secretive compact that was ordered to follow the armies of Rome into foreign lands. Their mission was simple: Destroy inexplicable threats. With the blessing of Rome, the Ordo de Quirinus killed everything and anything in their path and hunted the dog-headed Cynocephali, the long-headed-and-toothed Macrocephali, and the shadow-footed Skiapodes to extinction alongside witches, warlocks, and resistance fighters who did not exhibit any signs of supernatural gifts.

Some hunters point to the Ordo de Quirinus as an example of what not to do. Unlike the armies of Rome, hunters don't think of themselves as genocidal; they are simply people fighting to prevent the enemy from attacking humankind. No matter what decisions a hunter makes, whether that's to treat monsters as part of the natural order or not, they believe what they're doing will keep people safe.

No wonder it's easy for a hunter to justify their actions from night to night. It's far more difficult to think about who they're attacking and, perhaps most importantly, *why* that enemy had to die.

Scenes of the Forbidden

While the Roman armies marched to conquer and colonize, the Xianyun tribe left their homes in northwestern China to reclaim sacred lands from their sworn enemies. The Xianyun wreaked havoc on Western Zhou and its capital city, Haojing, before continuing south. Following this devastation, the spring and autumn period blossomed from the ashes to build the great Eastern Zhou empire, while the Xianyun's legend continued to spread.

Claiming to be descended from two white dogs, the Xianyun carried a sacred relic — a white hound — with them wherever (and whenever) they traveled. Their beliefs in the white hound were popular among many, inspiring poets and artisans to paint violent tales of their attacks on hand scrolls. Over the course of a few seasons, the stories of the Xianyun morphed from a simple tribe into half-man, half-wolf creatures, and the rumor that they were werewolves reached the ears of the Zhou court. Fearing there was some truth to the tales, an unnamed court official sought out the hand scrolls and destroyed all but one. The last hand scroll, which historians now refer to as Scenes of the Forbidden, depicted the Xianyun protecting a giant werewolf.

Court documents indicate that a small group of hunters, accompanied by a court academic, was sent to explore the Tian Shan Mountains to find and capture the wolf. Myths speak of the hunters' heroic deeds, and how they did manage to track down the giant wolf. When they discovered the white wolf could predict the date and cause of a supplicant's death, however, they abandoned its side and left the cryptid to its fate.

The wolf was grateful for their wisdom and told each hunter how they'd die: one by fire, one by blood, one by silver, and two from grief. On their way back to King Ping's court in Wangcheng, the cell was ambushed by a necromancer who turned one of the hunters into a zombie. To stop it, the dead hunter was lit on fire, and its body burned to ash. The next morning, the hunters found one of their cellmates had died from heartbreak, and couldn't live knowing their lover had been killed, revived, and brutally murdered once more.

With three hunters left, the cell grew paranoid, and traveled all day. Just as the sun fell below the horizon, the remaining hunters found an abandoned shack they believed was unoccupied. It wasn't, and a vampire snatched one of the hunters and fled into the night. The next morning, a pair of disheartened hunters set out for another day's worth of travel, and before reaching the next town the duo was attacked by a werewolf. Only one hunter escaped injury-free.

Just before the final hunter reached the city, however, they were attacked by a werewolf — their former cellmate — and were forced to kill them with the only remaining weapon they had left: a ceremonial knife adorned with silver and jade. That night, the last remaining hunter told their story but then took their own life, unable to cope with the guilt of surviving such horrors.

While the truth remains elusive and lost to time, Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty did comment that thousands, if not millions, of people still paid tribute to Xianyang's great wolf. Modern hunters tend to gloss over the folkloric aspects of the story without realizing that the lesson buried deep within the Scenes of the Forbidden has nothing to do with how the hunters died, but how they lived, and the choice they made after encountering the wolf.

Incomplete Histories

Modern hunter archivists have pieced together an uneven history of compacts and conspiracies using what they can find in the written record. They've recently discovered there are more gaps in the historical record than they first realized. In the past, hunters often used flowery language or code when describing the Vigil in written correspondence; others relied on urban legends, fairytale retellings, and oral histories to share information in a colorful way. The lack of a historical record is sobering to many hunters who want to know if a cell, compact, or conspiracy encountered the enemy before, what methods they used to hunt, and what failures they suffered. These hunters are beginning to wonder if the Vigil should be kept secret but aren't willing to risk expose hunter society to a public that includes human-seeming enemies.

Hunter historians disagree on many aspects of the Vigil's history and are often conflicted when attempting to reconstruct a timeline of compact formation. Sometimes, a cell is referred to as a compact or conspiracy and vice versa when it doesn't make sense to do so. Take, for example, the Ahl al-Jabal, which formed during the medieval Crusades to hunt vampires. While it's commonly accepted that the Ahl al-Jabal did continue to fight monsters well into the 15th century, no one knows if the group is still active in the Middle East. If the rumors are true, it's possible that modern Ahl al-Jabal hunters are upholding the traditions of the oldest surviving compact in the world today. Hunter historians argue that modern hunters may have simply adopted the name and reformed a compact that hunts bloodsuckers. Others think Ahl al-Jabal wasn't a compact at all, but a cell of skilled soldiers who hunted on horseback.

The Bear Lodge is another group that shows how murky a compact's history can be. Some archivists speculate its founders may be related to members of Les Voyageurs who learned to hunt werewolves after the official group disbanded in the early 18th century. Though the Bear Lodge has since collapsed in modern times, active hunters have continued to uphold the Vigil by joining other compacts like Ashwood Abbey. Those hunters remember what the Bear Lodge was like when it existed, and unless a hunter historian is willing to find and interview surviving members, what they remember will eventually fade.

Unfortunately, the modern era and uneven support from ruling bodies has caused many specialized hunter organizations to rise, fall, or be subsumed into other organizations. In American politics, several government-sanctioned groups have been absorbed, disbanded, or reorganized. Both the vampire-centric Barrett Commission and the witch-focused Division Six have been dissolved and active members were reassigned to Task Force: VALKYRIE. The Merrick Institute, on the other hand, was not able to survive a private congressional inquiry, and its activities were immediately halted. All that remains on the books is Task Force: VALKYRIE, and only time will tell if TFV falls apart or expands to include other allied government forces.

Recently, some hunters have begun to actively erase and target hunter organizations who “do not hunt in an exemplary manner.” Rumors have begun to circulate that a new group — perhaps a global conspiracy — of hunters is forming to ensure that hunters uphold the Vigil to hunt, capture, and otherwise deal with supernatural threats. Some hunters worry that members of the Promethean Brotherhood, Ashwood Abbey, the Cheiron Group, and the Faithful of Shulpae have forgotten which side they’re supposed to be on. Of course, other hunters point fingers at the morally righteous members of the Long Night, Los Angelitos, and the demon-hunting conspiracies Utopia Now and the Knights of Saint Adrian as the main culprits.

Archiving the Hunt

Tracking down the historical record of compacts and conspiracies has been challenging for historians who are not members of a given group. Often, hunters look to the publicly available body of artistic works for evidence of the supernatural and the Vigil. On rare occasions, some groups (namely the Circle of Bones and the Aegis Kai Doru) will purchase texts, scrolls, tablets, and archived materials from third parties, hoping to find the evidence they need.

Though ancient literature doesn’t always speak of hunters and horrors unseen, some key pieces of linguistic artistry and occult books have survived — only to be copied, mistranslated, or sold to other hunters. Other texts, like the *Thet Oera Linda Bok*, have been widely denounced as fake. Surviving lore is of great value to many hunters, however, and many groups actively collect private letters and journals knowing that these, too, can also be fabricated by their enemies or be thinly veiled tools used for political or religious propaganda.

One of the earliest surviving texts is the 11th-century work *Ghayat Al-Hakim*, a handbook for astrological magic. Written in Arabic, members of Null Mysteriis point to this text as the source of the scientific method and, when used in conjunction with the lunar cycles, can accurately predict the behavior of werewolves and other creatures of the night. Of course, other hunters scoff at the text’s usefulness in the modern era. Other literary works, like the ever-popular *One Thousand and One Nights*, not only prove monsters have always existed — hunters have, too. What could an ancient archive teach modern hunters they don’t already know?

Several conspiracies including the Circle of Bones, Aegis Kai Doru, Ascending Ones, and now-disbanded Five Roses Empire have all tried (and failed) to convince modern hunters they should not automatically discard or reject the distant past’s relics and literature. Unfortunately, most hunters don’t have the resources required to study Sumerian cuneiforms, Mayan glyphs, or Akkadian, not to mention the hundreds of other languages that have fallen into disuse. Despite what scholars might profess, investigating the supernatural requires modern hunters to spend at least half their time in the field. Still, some historians point to the lessons learned in western literature, and often speculate what else might be found should they compare notes with other scholars worldwide.

Often, supernatural-themed literature blends myth, folklore, spirituality, and social mores of the era. While it can be hard to pinpoint whether the true monster is a metaphor or a real creature, in many cases stories do hold a grain of truth. Take, for example, the Old English epic poem about Beowulf, the Scandinavian hero. Beowulf is noted for the destruction of the legendary monster Grendel (and that monster’s mother), and theologians have often postured the epic poem has overt Christian themes. However, many hunters believe the poem, like the tablets of Marduk’s battle with Tiamat, proves hunter society has coincided with the rise and fall of many civilizations.

Of course, most hunters know the Vigil demands secrecy and that comes with a price. The names of many heroes and heroines throughout history have been intentionally erased. Hunter scholars who are searching for traces of cells, compacts, and conspiracies in the historical record are careful not to jump to conclusions, but know they're often searching for evidence that doesn't directly tie to hunter activity. Despite the challenges they face, new historic compacts and conspiracies are being discovered all the time. These include hunter groups from pre-Colombian Mesoamerican civilizations, all-female Celtic hunters called the Ban-Gaisgedaig, and several Japanese groups active during the Edo period, namely the Ama-San and Bijin, among others.

Shifting Perspectives

Hunter scholars who study the enemy know that definitions change over time, and popular references in one century can mean something very different in another. When the Age of Reason replaced a prominent belief in witchcraft and the supernatural, hunters leaned on scientists like Anthonid Cornelis Oudemans for answers. Witches and warlocks were reclassified as psychics and werewolves were simply undiscovered species of *homo erectus*. All denizens of the supernatural were explained through the lens of science, and the word "magic" became associated with antiquity.

Oudemans, a reputable 19th-century biologist and director of the Royal Zoological Gardens in The Hague, was a hunter who attempted to expose the supernatural using his scientific knowledge. Unfortunately for Oudemans, his goal backfired and his first brush with the supernatural led to an unhealthy obsession and a failure to cope with a changing world.

Oudemans claimed he encountered a sea serpent and quickly became obsessed with hunting the creature of folklore. Ignoring his fellow hunters' advice, Oudemans published his findings in *The Great Sea Serpents of the World* (1892). The book was unpopular among members of the scientific community but was well received by a Victorian audience hungry for more penny dreadfuls. Oudemans was convinced his peers would recognize his brilliant discoveries and tried to present his findings at a conference. Shortly afterward, Oudemans was forced to resign his position and his credibility was never restored.

Of course, Oudemans is not the only notable 19th-century biologist turned hunter. The German naturalist Amalie Dietrich, known for her studies in Australia, and the Czech botanist and paleontologist, Josephine Ettel Kablick, both made strides in their discoveries of cryptids that are now believed to be extinct. Still, while scientific discoveries did prevail during that time period, several occultists and spiritualists grabbed the public eye.

Despite the popularity of groups such as the Order of the Golden Dawn and spiritualists like the suffragette Laura Cuppy and the medium Emma Hardinge Britten, the general public eventually favored science and technology over "superstitious" belief. Hunter organizations founded in the 19th and 20th centuries reflect this cultural shift and, whenever disinformation needs to be spread, most often the supernatural is regulated to oddities in weather patterns; alien abductions, sightings, and landings; or other urban legends that fall well within the range of what may be true versus what can't be believed.

Modern Methods

In modern times, most cells, compacts, and conspiracies collate, store, and share their own data for their members' use. The information each group carries is unique to that organization's

needs. The Lucifuge, for example, is rumored to have an archive containing the names and histories of every hunter who has joined their conspiracy since its inception. Even stranger, rumors persist that this archive also includes clandestinely gathered samples of every member's hair, blood, and uniquely personal articles that include things like family photos, an art project from elementary school, and the desiccated ear of a beloved family pet. No member of the Lucifuge has ever confirmed the existence of this archive, which is believed to be stored beneath Mount Hermon's Syrian peaks, where Jesus was reportedly tempted by the devil.

Most compacts, including The Union, Null Mysteriis, and Network Zero, grant members access to their archive after they've been welcomed into their ranks. Unfortunately, new hunters struggle with the secretive nature of their groups. They don't see why it's important to keep their information secret because they believe a well-informed hunter has a better chance in battle than one who's kept in the dark. SWORN takes a different approach, however, and prefers to give hands-on training to members to teach them how to deal with monsters. Both the Long Night and the Loyalists of Thule aren't secretive, per se, but they are careful to hand out knowledge because they're both uniquely aware that the denizens of the supernatural — and the greater threats pulling their minions' strings — have eyes and ears everywhere.

While cells and compacts tend to share materials freely, conspiracies have a reputation for doling out intel on a need-to-know basis. Hunters suspect this allows the conspiracies to spot infiltrators when they pop up from time to time, and point to the groups' longevity as proof that erring on the side of paranoia is sometimes warranted. Still, rumors abound. Task Force: VALKYRIE reportedly uses highly encoded computer databases to keep track of its members' training and assignment history, the Circle of Bones has been known to send ghosts to "spy" on cells out in the field, the Cheiron Group often encourages regional supervisors to assess its members' activities, and the Ascending Ones may have cells whose sole purpose is to monitor the reagents, rare ingredients, and formulas provided to its members.

More recently, compacts and conspiracies have started to reassess the value of printed and digital materials for non-members. Several groups, including Network Zero and Task Force: VALKYRIE, use publications to calm a wary public or to placate determined conspiracy theorists. Unfortunately, these efforts have caused an unintended side effect: New hunters who treat these materials as evidence aren't sure how to tell fact from fiction, either.

Hunters are often given information with a friendly warning: "Sure, this intel could help you take down the enemy. But it might also get you killed." Many hunter groups don't always share their findings until they've verified their data will be effective during a hunt. Unfortunately, when it comes to the enemy, there's no such thing as a guarantee.

OPENING FICTION

Every field agent has a story that ends in a long pause followed by a heavy sigh. We've all lost someone: a father, fellow operative, best friend, mentor, lover. We never forget.

My story? Our unit was taking a little R&R near Prospect and Downer when we got a call. An ENE had been reported attacking civvies in broad daylight near Bradford Beach, and we were asked to check out the scene and wait for further instructions.

I made the decision to go light on munitions. HQ almost always ordered us not to engage the enemy in our first encounter, and I suspected the beach was filled with people. I was able to pop a few grenades, knives, and traps in our backpacks; I also wrapped a handgun in one of our beach towels, just in case, right next to a beer bottle. Sharp glass wasn't a sanctioned weapon, but our unit knew that emergencies often called for unique solutions.

With all the civilians around, we opted to wear shorts, tank tops, and sandals instead of our approved gear. ENEs were dangerous, sure, but nothing was scarier than a mob of angry drunk people on a hot, sandy beach. Despite our casual appearances, each of us had roles to play: Miles sat at a nearby restaurant overlooking the water to run ops, Theron interviewed witnesses, and I was there to back them up.

Miles kicked off the mission by revealing our target. "Theron, HQ says you're green to go. You're looking for a white man wearing blue basketball shorts."

Theron spoke up. "I see him. He's sunbathing next to a cooler down by the lake."

So far, so good. I managed to keep Theron in my sights, but it was hard not to stand out. The beach wasn't covered with people, but there were just enough clusters of volleyball players, families, and sunbathers I had to be careful not to seem creepy or out of place. I found a nice, sunny spot approximately 30 yards from the witness. To blend in, I laid out my towel, grabbed a small bottle of suntan lotion and a book, and secured my ear buds and tiny microphone.

"How're you doing up there, Jennifer?" Miles asked me. "You have line of sight?"

"For the moment. There's a lot of civvies around, sir. Timing's off."

"I'm sure we'll have to come back later. For now, let's make HQ happy and grab some intel for our initial report, okay?"

"Yes, sir," I mumbled. It's just that—"

That's when I heard Theron yell, "I didn't mean to kill them!" Then, I heard him scream followed by a loud crackling noise.

"Jennifer! Theron's feed went dark." Miles barked. "You need to—"

Miles did not have to finish their command. Without thinking, I dropped everything, and sprinted to where Theron once stood. I looked around, but he wasn't there. I saw his footprints, obvious signs of a scuffle, then...nothing. He simply disappeared.

"What happened?" I asked the man in the basketball shorts. Thankfully, I managed to avoid breaking cover. "I heard a scream..."

“Friend of yours?” the man asked, glaring at me. The man’s face was odd and angular, as if the skin was stretched too tight over his cheeks, and his lips were so thin they were as white as his teeth.

“Just worried,” I replied. I opted to play the concerned-citizen card. “A scream like that? I hope no one got hurt.”

The man snorted. “Yeah, hurt. I guess you’d worry about them more than me.”

“Sorry?” I said, praying Miles wouldn’t interrupt. I ripped my earbuds out just in case. “What did you say?”

The man lowered his voice, then said: “Go ahead and call the cops. You won’t find him.”

My heart was pounding. Was this the ENE we were supposed to locate? “I-I-I don’t understand. Did someone go missing? Here? In front of all these people?”

I was telling the truth. How could Theron vanish like that? I wasn’t that far away!

“If you are who I think you are,” the man hissed, his eyes flashing yellow. “Take this as a warning. No hunter will ever take down our nests and attack our hatchlings. Never again.”

My heart was pounding. I didn’t know what to do. I couldn’t risk exposing my identity, unit, or VASCU to an ENE. I couldn’t ask Miles for guidance, either, not without looking suspicious. Carefully, I said: “I’m just worried about his safety. Can you tell me if he’s still alive?”

The man grabbed a water bottle from the cooler beside him and exposed his forearm. There were gills flapping — no, gasping — in the summer heat. Then, he poured the water on his forearm, whistled, and pointed at Lake Michigan.

“You’ll find the body in there, human.”

“Body?” I tried not to cry. Soldiers never did. “Why?”

“A life for a life. You think that’s sand you’re standing on right now? Where do you think we hide our eggs?”

My body tensed and I felt a shiver run up and down my spine. I looked at the sand — *really* looked — and realized the ENE wasn’t hostile because they hated humans. They were grieving for the loss of their kin. Thousands of gold-colored egg clusters were nestled together all along the shoreline, and their protector, whoever or whatever this human-seeing ENE was, watched over them until they hatched. Theron must have unintentionally smashed them, and that’s what triggered a confrontation.

I could tell the ENE was waiting for my next move. No doubt, Miles had already called the police, and I was a witness. I had no weapons — all my gear was stashed by my towel — and I was facing an ENE who had already murdered a member of my unit. My gut told me to scream, to cry, to run, to pummel the ENE and smash all their eggs. Instead, I let my training kick in.

I kept my voice steady and said, “Local police are probably on their way. You can either slip back into the water, retrieve the body, and be celebrated as a “hero” or you can be certain my people will wage all-out war. What’s it going to be?”

“And the eggs?” the ENE asked.

“Body first.”

Wordlessly, the ENE dove into the water and dragged Theron's body to shore just as the police and Miles arrived. The ENE glared at me, nodding slightly toward the sand, and I jumped to attention.

"This man's a hero!" I yelled, lying through my teeth. Getting the ENE on camera was more important than putting the locals' safety at risk. "But we have to be careful. This area isn't safe. Theron," I swallowed hard, "drowned."

I barely remember what happened next, and I never saw that ENE again. The next day, I led a team of agents down to the site and all the eggs — and our perp — vanished. I will never forget the hard lessons I learned that day, and those yellow, yellow eyes haunting my dreams.

END OPENING FICTION

Chapter Two: Compacts & Conspiracies

"Know your enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster."

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Hunters who've seen their fair share of pitchfork-wielding scarecrows, green-skinned kappas, and spooky hitchhikers grimly acknowledge a painful truth: There is no such thing as a world without monsters. Tier-one hunters struggle with this knowledge more than most because, deep down, they pay a higher price to fight. Not only are they shouldering the emotional and psychological burdens of the hunt in one cell, they aren't fighting alongside other hunters who could help tip the odds in the cell's favor.

While a tier-one hunter is capable, their hunts tend to be tightly focused because they don't have the luxury of time. When a cell gets a whiff something's wrong, they drop everything to save an innocent life. The reasons a tier-one cell hunts are often personal, and they're not afraid to bloody their knuckles when they need to. Their willingness to do what needs to be done costs them dearly, however, because guarding the Vigil's secrets requires them to tread carefully when dealing with their coworkers, friends, family, and lovers.

Some hunters can't balance the needs of the hunt with their daily lives and withdraw from the people they love to protect them from getting hurt. Most, however, understand those connections prevent hunters from falling into the darkness. Some hunters become so bitter and jaded they avoid forming attachments because it's easier; these cells almost always forget what they're fighting for, and eventually turn into monsters themselves.

Often, a cell's lack of connections and resources leads to more challenging and often deadlier hunts. There's been more than a few tragic cases where two cells were hunting the same monster and didn't realize it, not until it was too late. The high costs of hunting with a small group almost always means someone they know, at some point, will die. Some cells disband, some throw themselves even harder into the hunt, and the rest? They team up.

Tier Two: Compacts

Compacts are regional groups filled with multiple cells who swap intel, stories, even ammo. The difference between a tier-one and tier-two group is scope: Compacts glimpse the bigger picture and are just beginning to understand the extent of the hunt. Tier-two hunters have a little

breathing room, because they trust their compact has their backs. In exchange for membership in the organization, cells gain access to knowledge and so much more. Often, joining a compact is an act of validation, because a cell's instincts are finally confirmed: Monsters aren't a new phenomenon, and all those bedtime stories they heard as a kid are probably real.

Hunting is dangerous, and while compacts provide hunters with camaraderie, resources, information, and status, they can't guarantee their members will be safe. Compacts can, however, help hunters shoulder the burden of loneliness by giving them a higher purpose within their organizations. Compacts form for similar-but-different reasons and are shaped by a common purpose, view of the Code, or shared experience. These hunter organizations ensure hunters remain grounded and offer them a sense of community. No longer do hunters track monsters whenever a cell's leader makes the call; compacts often shape and coordinate the hunt, giving hunters a leg up in the fight.

When tier-two hunters want to learn more about the Vigil, they often turn to their compacts for guidance. Unfortunately, the history of compacts is filled with holes. As far as most hunters can tell, most compacts fold within 100 years but can survive for 200 to 300 if they're lucky. Unlike many monsters, hunters are mortal and can only fight so long; when they stop hunting, if they're still alive, they mentor and recruit — but it's hard to replenish their ranks. Some compacts, like Network Zero, struggle to stay on top of technology, while other organizations are decimated by monsters or infiltrators. Other compacts such as the Keepers of the Weave, Les Voyageurs, and the Scarlet Watch were caught between hunting monsters and living their lives in an uncertain, often turbulent world.

In this chapter, several compacts are presented from which hunters may choose. Each compact possesses different layers of status for hunters; the higher the status, the more ingrained in a compact's structure a hunter is. These compacts are:

- **Long Night:** Christian hunters who believe the surge in monster activity is a sign of the end times, and they're now fighting in the Tribulation War, p. XX.
- **Loyalists of Thule:** Occultists and German descendants from the Thule Society who are in debt to humanity and uphold the Vigil to serve others, p. XX.
- **Network Zero:** Savvy hunters who use technology, photographs, and film to warn people by revealing the truth that monsters are real, p. XX.
- **Null Mysteriis:** Scientists who research the paranormal and selectively share their findings to combat the supernatural, p. XX.
- **SWORN:** Indigenous hunters living in urban areas who defend and help local communities from predatory human and supernatural monsters, p. XX.
- **The Union:** Blue-collar hunters who band together to stop the supernatural from infringing on their home turf, p. XX.

In addition to these compacts, Storytellers can create new hunter organizations with the rules on p. XX, using the Scottish thrill-seeking Ashwood Abbey as an example. A new, Hong-Kong-based compact of detectives and police officers, Nine Stars, is found on p. XX in the Slasher Chronicle.

Is There Such a Thing as Dual Membership?

While hunters may have enjoyed the benefits of joining more than one compact or conspiracy in the past, the brutal demands of the hunt coupled with a spreading paranoia have all but made dual membership impossible. Hunter organizations are clamping down on outsiders who don't fall in line with their ideology in some fashion, and while this has caused a lot of members to question their loyalties, it has decreased incidents of rogue hunters, cancer cells, and supernatural infiltrators. This approach, however, has also led to an unfortunate side effect: While compacts and conspiracies want allied hunters to work with them, they are also wary of divulging their secrets to unknown or new hunters in their corner of society. Organizational leaders blame their anxiety on past transgressions and the uptick in supernatural activity, but most hunters understand why they're distrustful. Anyone, at any time, can become a hunter — and joining every group that approaches them is a bad idea. Sure, some people need to find where they “fit” in hunter society, but building trust requires a lot of time and commitment.

Tier Three: Conspiracies

If cells are local and compacts are regional, conspiracies are globally active, complex organizations that provide hunters with a purpose. Unlike tier-two compacts, tier-three hunters do more than hunt monsters; their roles aren't always dedicated to capturing and eliminating threats. Conspiracies can trace their members back decades, if not centuries, and they have an awareness of the supernatural tier-one and tier-two hunters only dream of.

Hunter conspiracies represent an interconnected global network of groups that not only know monsters are real but have decided *how* they want to deal with them. These conspiracies range from legacy organizations like the Cheiron Group to newer groups such as Task Force: VALKYRIE. Hunters who join a conspiracy benefit from the well-documented experiences of hunters who preceded them, enjoy more resources to use on the hunt, and often work toward a clearly defined purpose.

Most conspiracies have smaller, regional factions that function similarly to a compact. Due to most conspiracies' size, tier-three hunters often deal with more bureaucracy and disagreements. While a conspiracy might claim their method is the best way to deal with monsters, all the philosophies in the world don't matter when a life is on the line.

Motivated by a deeper desire, conspiracies add a layer of storytelling to a **Hunter** chronicle that intersects with the advantages and disadvantages of not only knowing the supernatural is real, but also understanding more about its denizens than most hunters.

Conspiracies introduced in this chapter are:

- **Ascending Ones:** Spiritual and practical alchemists who use rare elixirs to deal with the supernatural, p. XX.
- **The Cheiron Group:** Corporate-minded hunters who experiment on monsters and modify their bodies with supernatural flesh, p. XX.
- **Council of Bones:** Scholars, archivists, and occultists who serve the living by contacting ghosts and spirits, p. XX.

- **The Lucifuge:** Children of the Seventh Generation who claim to be descended from Lucifer, pledged to fight evil and drive the darkness back, p. XX.
- **Malleus Maleficarum:** Devout Catholics, blessed by the Pope, who serve the Church by upholding the Vigil, p. XX.
- **Task Force: VALKYRIE:** U.S. government agents who use high-tech armaments to identify and kill monsters, p. XX.

In addition to these conspiracies, Storytellers can create new global organizations with the rules found on p. XX using the relic-wielding Aegis Kai Doru hunters as an example. A new slasher-based conspiracy, VASCU is found on p. XX. Each conspiracy also offers hunters the chance to wield the powers and resources at their disposal to round out their hunts. These special abilities, called Endowments, follow at the end of the chapter beginning on p. XX.

The Long Night

The Tribulation Militia

Quote: *“The End Times are upon us, and we must stand against the darkness.”*

The signs of an impending apocalypse are clear. Markets crash, entire governments fall, and horrors gather in the shadows waiting to strike. The world isn't just going to end soon — for members of the Long Night, the slide into decay has already begun. Some cling to a shred of belief that, one day, God will pluck His true believers and carry them to heaven. A few acknowledge the Rapture may have already happened. Most hunters, however, don't have the luxury of hope because they're too busy fighting the oldest battle between doing what is right and what is necessary. This is the Tribulation. This is the war, and prayers aren't enough. Good Christians can't rely on a promise they might be saved; they must save themselves from the forces of darkness that have come to prey on us all.

The roots of the Long Night are tied to American survivalist movements that gained traction in the mid-1970s. Members cannot pinpoint any one specific founder and take issue with anyone pointing out similarities to any other group. Its past is murkier than other compacts, for its former members have included Branch-Davidian-style, gun-worshipping cults and anti-government doomsday preppers that have fought alongside ultra-conservative “family values” campaigners, affluent Southern fundamentalists, and middle-class Midwestern evangelicals.

Now, members of the Long Night have spread beyond the southern United States. They tend to cluster around notable preachers in states like California and Texas, but may be found in Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, and England. What they share is a belief in God and the grim philosophy that Satan is winning — and it will take more than guns and their tight-knit communities to drive the devil back to hell.

Hunters in the Long Night do not share one nationality, one belief in God, or one view of the Code. What they do have in common, however, is the realization that mortals are living in desperate times. The Long Night knows there are more monsters than ever before, because they can no longer count the losses they've experienced. Some monsters have dared to wear the skin of their members and profess to uphold God's will while punishing “those wicked liberals.” This tactic worked right up until some hunters started realizing they'd devoted their energy to fighting other people and were forgetting how to battle the true monsters.

Many Long Night members agree their faith is being examined through the lens of the Code. After all, the Vigil isn't about helping "some" people, it's about saving human lives — even if they don't agree with or like them. To set aside their hubris, the compact has an open-door policy; all hunters are welcome, even if they don't necessarily ascribe to conservative ideals, provided they share Christian beliefs and the fear a biblical apocalypse is nigh.

When hunting, the Long Night views the war against the supernatural as their God-given duty. Though some members are convinced the Tribulation must happen before humanity can spiritually evolve, they fear the costs of the war more than they'd care to admit. To end the current crisis, members are given the support and encouragement to step up and fight. Some turn to their churches, to take comfort in sermons that preach every person has the power to prepare the way to bring about the Second Coming. Others recruit their families to fight, knowing a painless victory cannot be guaranteed, and keeping the Vigil a secret does more harm than good.

The Enemy

More monsters prowl, feed, and manipulate the innocent than in decades past. The Long Night struggles to categorize these creatures neatly, as the Bible doesn't mention them. Some hunters are convinced all new monsters are infernal. They point to the seven deadly sins — wrath, lust, sloth, pride, gluttony, envy, and greed — as proof that demons are not a figment of a good Christian's imagination, and they could be to blame for the creation of new monsters.

Most members agree that the cause of supernatural activity isn't as important as saving the souls upon whom monsters prey. Many hunters are convinced that wicked or cursed mortals, namely warlocks, witches, mediums, fae-touched victims, and some slashers can be saved, if not redeemed. Of course, the Long Night isn't naïve. They understand a spiritually compromised person will lie when desperate. After all, reformation takes time and a willingness to renounce the darkness that has already seeped into their souls.

The Long Night's members work tirelessly to hunt and convert. The damned, whether they are vampires, werewolves, demons, or other abominations, must be dealt with swiftly lest they tempt or feed on the living. Wayward souls, however, must be carefully approached and brought into the fold slowly and considerately. In both cases, vigilance is required for the compact understands their hunters aren't free from sin either, and their members can fall to the darkness just as easily as the lambs they're trying to save.

Hunters

You hit rock bottom, reached out, and no one was there to catch you. You have reveled in your sins even though you knew every heinous crime was wrong. The taint spread so deep inside your soul that you convinced yourself you were beyond redemption, but just after you knocked that *thing* unconscious in the alleyway you had a moment of clarity. Sure, you peered into the darkness and it stared back at you with beady yellow eyes, but you were saved. There can be only one explanation: The Lord smiled upon you and gave you a chance for redemption. Now, you atone for your misdeeds by putting the monsters to the torch, cleansing your sins one screaming demon at a time.

You see the truth. You see how others turn their backs and ignore the headlines. Destabilized governments, mass protests, acts of terrorism, falling markets. The signs of the apocalypse are everywhere, and they're getting worse. You've spent decades filling scrapbooks and journals with evidence, and years trawling forums and chat rooms. Other people laugh at you, call you

paranoid, crazy, a conspiracy nut. Before, you could only shake your head, but the signs are unmistakable. The apocalypse is here. You're going to save them even if they won't save themselves.

You are a Good Samaritan. You saw a woman cornered in the parking lot just after midnight. At the time, you weren't one of the faithful; you just didn't want to see another woman get mugged. When you stepped up to help her, she told you the man cornering her was her brother. You had a choice: Fight or run. You stayed. She tossed you a tranquilizer gun, and you managed to help subdue him. When you asked her what he was on, she told you the truth: vampire blood. At first you didn't believe her, not until you helped cleanse him of his addiction. Then, you realized other people need help, too. Now, you save others from the taint of the supernatural.

Doctrines

The Long Night contains several factions and religious denominations. They all are unified on one major idea — Armageddon is here. Despite this, there are particular doctrines of how and why they fight for God that divide them.

The Hopeless are sinners who hunt to redeem themselves. Maybe they tasted a bloodsucker's blood and killed for more. Maybe they were a powerful warlock and used spells on the innocent. Or, maybe they stole, carjacked, dealt drugs, or trafficked people. Whatever the cause, the Hopeless feel the weight of their sins, acknowledge the stains on their souls, and fight the darkness to absolve themselves of their past or prevent others from falling like they did.

The Faithful believe they are ordained by God to fight in the Tribulation Army and are convinced their actions are justified in the eyes of God. They see everyday life as a battle between “them” and “us,” and people who get in the way are casualties of war. To them, the apocalypse is God's last warning that the monsters must be wiped out by any means necessary — and they're the only hunters blessed with this understanding. The Vigil is God's will.

The Merciful use compassion and empathy to redeem mortals who've been tainted, used, or manipulated by the supernatural. They believe that God loves all His children and it is their job to save souls when possible. While they will use violence when necessary, the Merciful seek ways to rehabilitate the fallen, awaken victims to God's will and service, and bring warlocks and witches back into the fold.

Status

Hunters in the Long Night gain status by serving the compact's evangelical needs.

- You understand why the Long Night must fight, and effectively argue its theological beliefs with ease to recruit other likeminded hunters. Gain Evangelism as a free Specialty of either the Persuasion or Expression Skills.
- Your growing reputation has impressed other members of the Long Night, and they've entrusted you with secrets of the hunt. Take two dots in the Merit: Allies (Long Night).
- You've established yourself as a popular internet evangelist who uses colorful metaphors to spread the Good Word and talk about the hunt. Gain three interns who work for you; this is equivalent to three, one-dot Retainer or Staff Merits.

Loyalists of Thule

The Indebted

Quote: *“Our debts can never be repaid, but we have no choice: we try or we die trying.”*

In the early 20th century, German occultists of the Thule Gesselshaft believed that the Aryan race, the inhabitants of Lost Thule, planted the roots of modern society. In time, the Thule Gesselshaft's belief that Germans were descended from a master race spread like a cancerous plague. Two of their members helped establish the German Workers' Party that led to the formation of the Nazi Party.

While many of Thule's early members were Nazi sympathizers, most left after Hitler severed ties with the group in 1920. The group slowly fell into decline and Loyalists studied privately until after World War II. Some Loyalists remained obsessed with finding the Aryan race and left Germany to explore hidden cities, sunken ruins, and ancient necropoli. Eventually the scattered members realized the truth: they were wrong. There was no such thing as a master race.

In the aftermath of WWII, disbanded members regrouped in Germany to discuss their next steps. Most were shocked to learn how the Thule Gesselshaft's beliefs had been weaponized by the Nazis to justify attempted genocide. Recognizing the role they played, hunters aided Allied forces by pointing out supernatural creatures, facilitating reparations, and identifying Nazi survivors they once knew.

Despite their earnestness, the once-revered professors, archaeologists, and philosophers of the Thule Gesselshaft were largely ignored or forgotten. The Allied forces were more interested in German technology and scientific discoveries than the occult. Devastated by the lukewarm reception, the Thule occultists spent the next decade forming the Loyalists of Thule. Their mission: Use their occult knowledge to save lives.

For many years, the Loyalists of Thule fed valuable intel to other hunters. The organization's founders, three former members of the Thule Gesselshaft, orchestrated assistance from Munich. The elusive founders met weekly to prioritize the Indebted's activities and spent hours arguing with a spiteful bitterness that grew into deep hatred. Despite their lack of camaraderie, the founders decided what information to act on, what data to share, and which secrets to keep.

Largely, the organization's secretive nature and tightly controlled modus operandi have remained static for over 50 years. Members are descended from one of the Indebted, recruited aggressively, or blackmailed into joining. Intel is doled out to members using antiquated equipment and World War II-era ciphers, and hunters are expected to carry out orders without question. Unfortunately, no one has met or talked to the Munich-based founders for a few years, and Loyalists who've done the math have realized the elders, *if they're still alive*, would be well over 100 years old. So who's issuing orders now? Some higher-ranking members are threatening to break protocol and fly to Munich to find out what's happening, but thus far the Loyalists have yet to do so.

Now, the Loyalists of Thule remain suspicious, if not worried, that their organization is compromised. Its members cannot deny the growing threat of fascism spreading across the world yet struggle to understand why supernatural activity is clearly on the rise. While the Loyalists are not naive enough to believe that real world atrocities should be blamed on the occult, every act of fascism reminds them of their organization's dark past. Most Indebted believe that hate-filled atrocities caused by mortals are just as bad — if not worse — than the soulless creatures who prey on humankind and help where they can.

The Enemy

While the Loyalists of Thule are trained to defend themselves, they pride themselves on their intellectual prowess. Members are academics, investigators, reporters, antiquarians, auctioneers, bibliophiles, occultists, ritual magicians, archaeologists, and curators. As scholars, first and foremost, the Indebted seek to understand the true nature of monsters by identifying, monitoring, and studying them for the benefit of others.

As an organization, most of the Indebted understand the importance of studying the supernatural but are anxious they'll lose sight of the people they're trying to save. Members deal with this plight in different ways by adding charitable works to their day-to-day studies. Some volunteer in their communities to prevent hate crimes, bring transgressors to justice, and help victims; others study cold cases to track down serial killers and mortal predators; and a third group has started a mentorship program to replenish the organization's numbers with eager proteges and talented, college-aged intellectuals.

Ideally, the astute Loyalist passes the information they've learned (or have received) to the best equipped hunters. The Indebted have traditionally viewed themselves as supportive of other hunters in The Union and SWORN but actively seek contact with other groups. Despite their scholarly reputation, many Loyalists are training to become more physically capable in response to their recent findings. Of all the compacts, the Indebted have their finger on the pulse of supernatural activity, and they have proof that the creatures of the night are more aggressive than ever before.

Hunters

You are a data analyst who recently lost your wife in a car accident. At the funeral, you met the German side of her family, and noticed how they kept exchanging looks whenever a certain uncle tried to get your attention. You were grieving too much to deal with family drama, so you let him corner you and tell you the truth: Your wife was murdered by a poltergeist. After everyone else left, you read old letters and discovered your wife's other life and why she felt compelled to keep secrets from you. Your wife's uncle then asked you to honor her memory by joining them.

You are studying to be a naturalist at the Free University of Berlin. While reviewing the works of Elisabeth Schmid, the world-renowned author of the *Atlas of Animal Bones*, you found an odd folio filled with fantastic anatomical sketches of no known animal. You were tersely informed Schmid had an overactive imagination, but you couldn't let the academic's findings go. Eventually, you were approached by the head of your department who asked you to return the folio. You refused and told her you had a hunch the sketches were based on real bones. She quietly asked if you'd continue her work by studying live subjects in the field.

Your ability to skate that line between good and downright evil worked for years — until you were caught. You are a father of five who traded securities by day and sold fake mutual funds at night, bilking millions out of the elderly. Unfortunately, you hustled the wrong grandpa, and he came knocking on your office door with a pair of bodyguards and a dossier filled with proof of your illicit activities. You asked him what he wanted, and he gave you a choice: Serve “time” by putting your skills to good use, or he'll hand over all the evidence he's collected — and more — to the feds. Now, you work for him.

Philosophies

The Loyalists of Thule study the supernatural by researching its denizens to death, both literally and figuratively. Most of the time, the Indebted agree how to hunt, capture, and kill monsters based on communications received from Munich. Beyond this, the Indebted tend to follow one of three approaches.

Many Loyalists are **Scholars** who feel the best way to save humanity is by quietly gathering intel, sharing valuable information, and forming better connections with well-armed hunters who can act on their findings. Scholars hold differing views on their personal stake in the fight but agree they have a job to do and will take orders from other Loyalists when needed.

Some academics, called the **Penitent**, refuse to sit on the sidelines. These hunters raid haunted tombs, track down mystical artifacts, and dig up mausoleums to “cleanse” the supernatural taint from ancient, hidden places. While the Penitent do work with other hunters, their methods are often dangerous and highly illegal. They believe that getting their hands dirty is the only way to atone for the sins of the past.

The **Advance** loudly proclaim they, of all the Loyalists, are “true” members of the organization. Not only do these hunters pledge to atone for *all* the Indebted’s sins, they prefer to be the first hunters called to help. Other Loyalists worry their grand speeches will attract new members who want to join the Indebted for all the wrong reasons. Still, though members of the Advance lack humility, they are effective recruiters and spokespeople who shed the organization’s veil of secrecy when Munich asks them to.

Status

Status within the Indebted is earned by repaying the organization’s debt to humanity.

- You have to atone for past atrocities and understand the knowledge you gain will save lives. When risking Willpower on an Academics- or Occult-based roll, gain two Willpower instead of one regardless of your current rating.

- You have reached out to other Loyalists and formed a bond with an experienced member to whom you report. Gain a two-dot Mentor: Loyalist of Thule Merit.

- You were summoned to Munich and “spoke” to the founders hidden behind a screen. You’ve been given the names and addresses of three expert scholars in the occult. Pick three, one-dot Contacts who study a specific monster type such as vampire, werewolf, ghost, demon, etc.

Network Zero

The Secret Frequency

Quote: *“The truth about the supernatural will set humanity free, and it’s our job to make sure that happens.”*

Almost everybody’s seen that grainy video of two glowing orbs taken in a haunted Romanian castle. There’s also a popular clip of a tall, thin man dressed in a neat black suit hovering behind two kids camping in the Appalachian Mountains. Oh, and who could forget that viral, eight-second gif of pitch-black, red-eyed lions lunging at a tourist’s jeep in the savannah. The videos

are unsettling, they're shared across social-media platforms, and most of them are fake. A few, however, are very real — thanks to Network Zero.

An “ancient” group by internet standards, members of Network Zero also call themselves the Secret Frequency. This organization has been using its members' camera phones, tablets, handheld video cameras, and expensive production equipment to capture and broadcast occult secrets for almost 30 years. Their mission is simple: They know the supernatural is real, and they believe the best way to save humanity is to show them the truth.

Network Zero was founded by an independent filmmaker, Jim Harrison, who aired anonymous footage from the 1970s on a public-access cable show in Dallas, Texas on Sunday, September 22, 1991. Each clip showed the impossible: a giant black dog with red eyes, a man with horns, and a building-sized mass of writhing, translucent tentacles. Not long afterward, Harrison received letters and additional reels from other people who'd seen the impossible.

Whenever Harrison received footage he could verify as authentic, he publicly shared it on his show. Over time, other people chipped in to review clips. As Jim's web of contacts grew, he noticed patterns he could not ignore. The more Harrison saw, the more he became obsessed with the hidden world of the supernatural. Eventually, his obsession cost him his job, marriage, and his friendships, too.

Not to be deterred, Harrison kept pushing his videos and eventually his cable show's popularity exploded thanks to the internet. In 1999, Jim launched the Secret Frequency online and set up Network Zero as a fully-fledged hunter organization accessible by anyone with an internet connection. Just when Jim thought people were starting to believe him, his real footage was engulfed by a never-ending stream of disinformation and internet trolls debunking his reveals.

At first, Harrison responded by putting out an SOS to members for help, but eventually succumbed to paranoia and became a shut-in. Unfortunately, Jim's erratic behavior deterred modern viewers, and ad revenue plummeted despite boasting active members in places like Helsinki, New Delhi, Cape Town, Rio de Janeiro, Dallas, San Francisco, and Shanghai. Fortunately, one of Harrison's former friends, Tony Pizzelli, returned to help him get his life back in order.

Now, Network Zero is officially “rebuilding” its operation by recruiting members with backgrounds in programming, telecommunications, and computer networking. Several online personalities, including social-media darling Gracie Jefferson, have stepped up to organize crowdfunding campaigns to help pay for private proxy servers and encryption software. Most members, however, are focused on combating disinformation by sharing the truth, one video at a time.

The Enemy

Members of Network Zero know monsters are real, and want everyone — the police, the mayor, local reporters — to come to the same conclusion. Despite their efforts, most people either don't listen or laugh off their warnings, but that hasn't stopped the Secret Frequency from trying. With Jim's health in decline, members worry the future of their organization is in jeopardy.

While most Network Zero members aren't out to kill monsters, they do understand the enemies they digitally capture must be dealt with. Still, members have conflicting views on what to do next. Some feel they should observe and remain neutral, while others hunt with a live feed. Even

when that's the case, members are more likely to partner with seasoned hunters than go off on their own.

Members of the Secret Frequency split their time between scouring the web for misinformation, uploading new content, managing their communities, and networking with other hunters. They are acutely aware of a change in hunter society. Serious hunters are not as approachable as they were in the past, and many avoid the spotlight. Instead of agreeing to being on film, hunters in the field often refuse or wear disguises to avoid being recognized. Still, that doesn't stop Network Zero's hunters from filming the hunt despite their struggles to find funds and traditional avenues of distribution.

Despite the volume of evidence at their disposal, members simply want to capture the supernatural on film and don't want to be considered experts. While they know what lens to use and which equipment to manage, they're not academics. Members of Network Zero are desperate to share what they know because they believe it's their duty to open people's eyes. Unfortunately, this can and does lead to unwanted attention from monsters who want the truth to remain hidden.

Hunters

They ridicule you at school for being a quiet nerd who prefers a camera to people. You've never told them why you hide in your dorm's stairwells at night, what you've captured on film, or why you spend hours online. You're too busy to care about all their petty bullshit. You've had the veil ripped from your eyes and know what really matters. If your parents only knew half the things you've done and seen they'd shut down your internet access. But they don't. No one suspects you're a hunter documenting the supernatural, and a damn good one, too.

You were prone to blackouts and woke up with strange bruises on your wrists and neck. Your doctors couldn't figure out what was causing them and accused you of taking drugs. Desperate for answers, you set up a hidden camera in your bedroom, and eventually it captured a flickering image that turned your blood to ice. While you were sleeping, the footage captured something crawling through your window to suck on your flesh. You found help online in a chatroom, set a trap for it, and you killed that thing. Now, you hunt with your new friends.

You're a detective who's always prided yourself on being rational; you've never bought into those viral videos you see online. At least, not until you uncovered a web of lies covering up a rash of John Doe victims that suddenly disappeared from the morgue. You dug a little deeper, and your boss told you to forget the case. When you wouldn't, you were reassigned to a new precinct and given a job issuing parking permits. You can't let that case go, but know you're being watched. Now, you've carefully rebuilt your contacts and hunt down the truth.

Crews

"The truth will set humanity free" may be Network Zero's overarching ideology, but members of the Secret Frequency don't always agree on how the facts should be treated. Among its crews, three notable groups stand out.

The **Record Keepers** are the largest, and most conflicted group. Members are citizen journalists, vloggers, and amateur filmmakers who take an objective stance when filming the supernatural. They try not to judge the scene or a hunter's methods to ensure their footage is authentic, but often do — especially when a victim's life is in danger. Several Record Keepers have taken a

more active approach by wearing a wire and live cameras for a first-person perspective of the hunt.

Soldiers in the **Army of Truth** are activists who use more aggressive tactics. Members thrust the truth into the public eye and will hack websites, news feeds, and broadcasts to insert their clips. Unlike other members, the Army of Truth doesn't rely on other hunters outside the organization; they form cells with clearly defined responsibilities to find leads, verify activity, and confront the supernatural on their own terms.

Lastly, the **Secret Keepers** believe assaulting the public with proof won't gain their trust. Members are convinced the harder Network Zero fights the constant stream of misinformation and internet trolls, the more their organization is at risk of being compromised. Instead, members vet contacts who might listen to them and scour through videos, digital photographs, and other forms of evidence to piece together supernatural activities.

Status

Members in Network Zero gain status by smartly extending their influence or reach without causing harm to themselves or the organization.

- You're a talented filmmaker who's been given access to a private network and has mastered how to encrypt and decrypt files. Gain a free Skill Specialty in Computers or Crafts reflecting your technological prowess or skill with filmmaking.
- You know how to blend in with other influencers online and network with other, higher-ranked personalities in Network Zero. Take two dots in Contacts that represent popular social-media icons who'll spread the word when you need them to.
- You believe in the Secret Frequency and know how to share vital intel while protecting yourself. You've acquired a free dot in the Safehouse Merit; if you don't already have it, you gain the Merit for free.

Null Mysteriis

The Organization for the Rational Assessment of the Supernatural

Quote: *"There's no such thing as supernatural. Want an explanation? Try science."*

The Members of the Null Mysteriis do not believe in magic or the paranormal. They often quote Arthur C. Clarke's third law: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Thus, there are only natural phenomena that mortals have yet to observe, study, and experiment on long enough to understand what they are, how they work, and where they fit in nature.

Despite its modern, rational leanings, the origins of Null Mysteriis sit at the intersection between the occult, religion, psychology, and science. In 1893, Jean-Pierre Brattel attended a few Theosophical Society meetings and was eventually inspired to create a group of his own. The first members included Jean-Pierre's lover, Michel Pouget; his sister, Mireille Brattel; and his mentor, Sophie Lisowski, who was rumored to be good friends with Madame Blavatsky. Despite his kinship with fellow Theosophists, Brattel felt his approach was more scientific. A true scientist, in Jean-Pierre's mind, would approach the supernatural as a skeptic.

Brattel established the nascent beginnings of the Null Mysteriis to study the paranormal. Eventually, Jean-Pierre's group took on a life of its own; members swore by the Latin phrase "Nullum Mysteriis Processit" which translates loosely to "out of the unexplained comes nothing." Alongside Theosophy, Brattel's group gained momentum across Europe. By the time the Great War began, the Null Mysteriis grew to 1,000 members. During WWI, the organization spread to the Americas through academic and military circles.

Unfortunately, human losses eclipsed the organization's lofty goal. Not only did the Great War claim millions of lives, many great minds died, research funds were swallowed, and the public turned its back on anything that didn't help them cope, survive, and rebuild. Following WWII, Null Mysteriis was decimated, with only a few clusters surviving, and the Organization for the Rational Assessment of the Supernatural was largely forgotten — along with the once-popular Theosophic Society.

One Null Mysteriis group managed to survive post-WWII by privately selling their services to interested parties without any bureaucratic entanglements or police interest. Though many European governments turned them down, a few eccentric collectors and intellectuals funded their London-based operation until the 1970s. Then, following advances in quantum theory and particle physics alongside a growing interest in science fiction, the organization replenished its numbers by claiming they would prove the supernatural was not "super" after all.

Over time, Null Mysteriis expanded its base of operations from London to other metropolises including technology-rich cities like Tel Aviv, Dublin, and Osaka. Despite this, the organization's membership remains small and focused. Null Mysteriis isn't a corporate, government, or academic entity buffered by layers of red tape and funding; its members are hobbyists who pay membership fees to cover administrative salaries, newsletters, and some supplies. While this loose structure has attracted experts in physics, zoology, biology, chemistry, psychiatry, etc., it has also drawn a lot of marginally skilled hobbyists who practice more pseudoscience than science.

Currently, the organization is disarray. The former general secretary, Scottish astrophysicist Alexander Watt, and his rumored replacement, Watt's charismatic rival and eccentric psychologist, Vincent Fielding, have both gone missing. Until their absences can be satisfactorily explained by a member of Null Mysteriis, their positions won't be filled.

The Enemy

Members of Null Mysteriis are savvy investigators who don't *usually* care about killing monsters or cleansing tainted places. To them, the paranormal is normal, and predators are neither good nor evil: they're merely a different species, if not genus. This approach gives them an edge when tracking predators, because members spot details others might overlook. Most Null Mysteriis hunters can be difficult to work with, however, because its members are a tight-knit group who know each other by name — or at least by reputation.

While other hunters are convinced the supernatural is real and the Vigil is a call to action, Null Mysteriis hunters want to disprove its existence using math and science. Then, after years — perhaps centuries — of scientific discoveries, no one will have to sacrifice their lives upholding the Vigil any longer. Thus, creatures, humanoid monsters, relics, weather events, and places that register as anomalous will draw the group's attention. This includes psychic phenomena, ghosts, UFOs, ancient civilizations, cryptozoology, etc.

Unlike other groups, Null Mysteriis hunters are not told what to do, where to hunt, and how to handle a situation; they're expected to investigate, experiment, and report back — but that's about it. Still, newer hunters romanticize the idea that *their* findings could “cure” vampirism or lycanthropy, even though there is no cure to be found. Others are convinced the right formula, released as a gas, could stop ghosts from manifesting. This cultural shift could yield new results or spell disaster for its members, and veterans are becoming more selective with their investigations and choice of friends.

When it comes to the hunt, members of the Null Mysteriis aren't known for their physical acumen. They excel at subterfuge, stealth, and analysis, and prefer avoiding one-on-one confrontations whenever possible. As such, members of the Organization for the Rational Assessment of the Supernatural will voluntarily work with other hunters, provided they get to use their EVP recorders, Kirlian cameras, and petri dishes in the field to collect data and samples while their cellmates eliminate threats. Of course, hunters are discouraged from sharing their findings, but until Null Mysteriis gets its house in order the group cannot dictate what its members can and cannot do.

Hunters

You're a professor of earth science who doesn't buy into all that fringe crap. You've witnessed anomalous events firsthand, have seen demons speaking in tongues, and even managed to translate a word: “machine.” If you can't give a rational explanation, you return to the scene and investigate it even more thoroughly. Then, perhaps you'll publish your findings in the next newsletter.

You live to wonder, and your imagination is captured by the fringe stuff. The Lunar effect. Megalithic geometry. Orgone and ley lines. Unfortunately, not everyone shares your passions, and you barely graduated. Now, you can't land an academic position — but that doesn't stop you. You're on the verge of identifying the chemical composition of ectoplasm and, thanks to your new friends, you'll one day reveal it to the world.

You were camping at a state park with your family one night. When you came back from your beer run, you found your family slaughtered, their tents covered with acid burns. How was that possible? You sent email after email to every scientist you could find until you got a response. Their rational reply didn't sit well with you. Now, you realize the close-mindedness of a hyper-rational scientific community is hiding behind their facts. You intend to correct their ignorance at all costs, before it's too late.

Theories

Null Mysteriis prides itself on being open to new theories until they can be disproven. The theories that have stuck around the longest can be categorized into one of three groups.

The **Rationalists**, who've sided with Alexander Watt in the past, make up half of the organization. Hunters believe anything can be proven (or disproven) given enough time and data. Members have recently started to apply their expertise to forensic investigations to find Watt, and some hunters have concluded the astrophysicist may have staged his disappearance.

The second largest group is the **Cataclysmicists**, who currently follow Zane Abara, a naturalist working at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum in Vancouver. Once passed off as “loud-mouthed doomsayers,” Abara boosted the Cataclysmicists reputation after discovering several, new

invasive avian species that could not be explained by climate change. Other tenured scientists have shared similar findings, and they've concluded a cataclysmic event is nigh.

The smallest, and often socially ostracized, group is called the **Open Minds**. These hunters, who followed Vincent Fielding, argue that each case must have a plausible explanation and their methods aren't as important as the conclusion. Other members might shy away from the Open Minds because they believe their push for results is unscientific and don't always trust their findings. Currently, the Open Minds have theorized that Fielding has evolved to become a higher being, and this is the reason no one can find him.

Status

Status within Null Mysteriis is gained by finding and sharing scientific revelations with other members.

- You are an academic who's welcome to attend any Null Mysteriis meeting you wish. You gain a free Paranormal Skill Specialty in either Academics, Occult, or Science.
- You maintain regular contact with several Null Mysteriis members hailing from different scientific backgrounds and know many of them personally. Gain a free dot in Contacts, representing a Null Mysteriis hunter who specializes in a different field of science than you do, and a dot in Allies (Null Mysteriis).
- You've been in the field a long time, and you're considered a veteran member of the organization. You may raise Academics, Occult, or Science to five dots to reflect your expertise.

SWORN

Strong Warriors of All Red Nations

The Indian Termination and Indian Relocation Acts of 1956 pulled many Native Americans away from their homes on reservations, forcing them to relocate to urban areas under the pretense of rehabilitation. The public was told indigenous families were encouraged to move to find vocational skills necessary for employment, but the government's end goal was to depopulate the reservations in the wake of decreasing subsidies and increasing urbanization.

Relocated Native Americans struggled to navigate their new environs and social circles, and naturally connected with other Natives to form new communities. The more stories they swapped, the more they realized how unsafe their cities were. They'd talk about how they never walk down a certain dark alley or how they ignore a strange man who doesn't feel right. While some did report their sightings to local authorities, Native Americans were either ignored or patronized, so they turned back to their own. They found Native circles gave these stories more attention than other groups would. When people were afraid, they listened. When they started to disappear, they sought answers.

The roots of SWORN, or Strong Warriors of All Red Nations, grew from tragedy. Chicagoan Michelle TwoCrow, a member of WARN (Women of All Red Nations) and AIM (American Indian Movement), was desperate to find her son Eddie, who never came home from work one fateful night. At first, Michelle sought help from the police, but after hitting a dead end she turned to her local Native community for assistance. Unfortunately, they didn't help Michelle either, because they claimed Eddie had been spotted hanging around with a known drinker and drug user; some community members assumed Eddie was probably still out partying — even

though Michelle knew that couldn't be true. To her, it seemed Native resistance groups were so focused on fighting oppression they had little time to wage war in the shadows.

When Michelle investigated deeper, she not only discovered Eddie had been attacked by the undead, the police had covered up the incident, too. Turning back to her community for help, several members threw their hands up and said the problem was beyond them. Michelle was determined to bring Eddie home — dead or alive. Many people told her to give up because they didn't feel safe; forced out of their homes due to the Relocation Act, they were frightened by what Michelle was telling them. Worse: the Native community was aware monsters were real but since their traditions to deal with the monsters had been lost, their response was to look away. Ultimately, the community decided they had to deal with bigger threats. Eddie TwoCrow was disposable and not worth the fight.

Michelle disagreed and managed to find help by drawing on the other communities of which she was a part. Because of her determination and the things they'd seen, Michelle sought help from Angie Decora, a lesbian biker; Ida Miller, a mixed black and Lakota bartender; Danny Romero, a LagunaChicano man who worked as a gang intervention social worker; Kara Dittami, a Pequot literacy worker; and Derrick Moser, an Ojibwa homeless man to form a cell.

The hunters found Eddie, but unfortunately it was too late. After hunting and killing the creature responsible for his death, the Native hunters swore an oath to never give up, no matter how intimidated they were, to keep fighting. Soon afterward, the cell broke up and each member formed a new cell of their own to create SWORN.

The Enemy

There are countless stories circulated through hundreds of tribes warning others about strange spirits and predatory creatures. The little tree-dwellers, *Canoti*, from Lakota and Dakota nations. The humanoid tricksters *Mannegishi* from Cree folklore. The half-human, half-animal cannibalistic *Kee-wakw* from the Abenaki tribe. For thousands of years, tribes and Native nations had their own ways of dealing with the supernatural and bands of warriors and warrior societies devoted to slaying them.

As the forces of colonization swept across the land and survivors were compelled to adopt Christian religions and erase their cultural knowledge, more and more of these groups — and their secrets — were wiped out and the monsters they kept at bay were better able to operate and propagate. Now, SWORN operates in large cities and keeps an eye out for creatures that hunt in their members' shadows. Initially, their focus was geared toward protecting the marginalized Native population, due to the uncertain, if not dangerous, sociopolitical climate that forced intertribal communities together, creating fresh opportunities for predators to hunt vulnerable people. As time passed, their approach has broadened to be more aggressive rather than defensive.

SWORN reframes supernatural denizens and their categorizations often shape what they're members do next. Hunters identify two primary types: natural monsters and predators. Natural monsters have a place in the ecological system much like a bear or wolf, whereas predators are intelligent creatures that harm. Among natural monsters, Native hunters may further distinguish between an invasive or hybrid species.

Today's members benefit from Michelle TwoCrow's efforts to catalogue and cross reference strange phenomena and known monsters across Native urban environments, reservations, and

folklore. With this information, hunters work to contain natural monsters, manage their numbers, and eradicate predators when they can. While SWORN is not opposed to helping or working with other hunters, members tend to avoid outsiders who try to roll in and “take charge” of their hunt.

Hunters

You’re a Native daughter who has seen the ugly side of the world. You’ve got a long history of activism in your family. You weren’t much for protesting, but eventually you spoke up their way — even though you knew something was wrong. That time, that protest, was different and something was more wrong than anyone knew. Then, you lost some sisters. When you started fighting back, you brought the fire with you, and you’ll never be the same.

You joined a gang for safety. Running the streets, you saw somebody get jumped and had to run. What you thought were rival gangbangers turned out to be something far worse. You had nowhere else to go, so you begged the Indian Center to let you stay. The janitor let you in, asked you what was going on, and taught you how to fight. Now you’ve got a new posse and a real enemy to take down.

You’re an ecologist focused on water rights. You didn’t see why everyone made such a big fuss about developing that bad area. You assumed a little urban development could help clear the waters and reclaim the woods around it. Then, you found out why the woods were that way and what lived in those waters. You knew it should never be set free. Now you make sure the sacred creatures are left alone and help maintain their domains.

Factions

Members of SWORN are broken up into three groups who help communities in different ways.

Most follow the path of Cante Glonice (chan-TAY glow-NEE-chay) or **Unyielding Hearts Society**. These hunters focus on their local Native communities and quietly investigate reports. Cells work hard to extend their protection to all people who claim Native blood or traditions, regardless of identity. Additionally, some hunters in Norway, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and New Zealand have adopted some of SWORN’s monster classifications. Now, they actively establish protected zones while maintaining boundaries between people and monsters.

A modest-sized faction is called **Lugh’s Fist**. Founded by ethnobotanist Choctaw Kathy Owens, this group teaches outsiders Native ways in emergency situations. While she was in Ireland presenting a talk about how Natives helped the Irish survive the potato famine, Kathy learned famine threatened a Ghaeltacht area near the western coastline. After identifying that hungry grass was to blame, Kathy established a new faction and taught the people in the area her ways.

The smallest group is the **Tribal Investigation and Protection Initiative (TIPI)**, a militant, sexist organization that emerged in the early 1980s. The initiative is a male-dominated faction that only hunts monsters threatening Native people on reservations; they also only recruit Native people who can present their tribal registration. Other SWORN members knock heads with them due to TIPI’s lack of multiculturalism and their attitudes toward women and queer-identifying Natives.

Status

Members of SWORN gain status by helping members of their community stay safe using the lessons they've learned.

- You've been taught how to deal with monsters according to your Native traditions and know how to apply lessons to the hunt. Gain a free Skill Specialty in Investigation, Streetwise, or Stealth.

- You are a respected member of your community and other SWORN hunters look up to you. You gain two dots in the Mentor Merit to reflect the SWORN elder who teaches you how to lead.

- You've applied the lessons you've learned, taught others, and saved the lives of many grateful people. Now, you can call in favors when needed. Distribute three dots among Resources, Allies, or Contacts to help you continue your great work.

The Union

Regular Schmoes

Quote: *"Not here. Not today. You're on our turf now."*

At the dawn of the 20th century, the Labor Movement thrust socioeconomic inequality into the spotlight. Unions organized in response to the growing divide between greedy capitalists who preyed on everyday workers struggling to put food on the table, not fully realizing their members were battling more than one type of monster. In Pennsylvania, people scoffed when coal miners told them they heard someone scraping the ceilings above them and ignored their warnings even after the mine collapsed. In Chicago, no one batted an eye when a strange "disease" swept through a shoe factory manned by children. In New York, shirtwaist makers shouted, telling their bosses something was preying on them from the rafters, but no one listened — not even after the factory burned down. Every industrialized country around the globe, from England to Australia, is filled with stories of common laborers fighting for their lives, both figuratively and literally.

Though skilled laborers continued to protest and organize throughout the 20th century, some workers noticed that, despite their conditions slowly growing better, people were still dying. As stories spread, the common worker began to understand they weren't as powerless as they believed. Alone, each worker was weak and vulnerable. Together? They were unstoppable. Over time, casual conversations led to local investigations and coordinated hunts. As workers developed a common lexicon to name monsters and identify where they slept, hunters organized "work parties" to deal with the problem, clean up the aftermath, and then disband.

For decades, most "work parties" were small, localized, and short-lived. Unlike other hunting organizations, members dealt with monsters only when they had to. Sometimes, groups would disband because a certain warehouse would burn down or a company would suddenly go out of business. Other times, laborers would move around to find work or to forget what they'd seen. Most workers were happy to forget what they'd done and preferred the pretense of a normal life for them and their families.

Officially, The Union didn't form as a hunter organization until Holly Ramirez, an active "work party" member, started connecting cells together in 1999. Having survived her own encounters, she began to reach out using the internet and noticed how similar other stories were to hers. Of course, hunters used colorful metaphors to disguise their fear and what they knew, but Holly

knew what was really being said and was confident they could help each other. In March 2000, Holly set up a public bulletin board online to help coordinate and connect other members around the globe. Less than four months later, the board was gone and several of its more visible members were reported missing or dead.

Devastated but not defeated, Holly and her trusted associates learned their lesson and adopted anonymous profiles on a private forum they moderate. Each time they upgraded the forum, they changed addresses, passwords, even web hosts to secure their communication. Now, members use a private-message service that's invite only. Still, that doesn't stop the occasional spy from stumbling onto their turf, but Holly developed a rigorous method to test and deal with what she referred to as "the enemy." Occasionally, she'd release false intel using herself as bait; other members believe that's what got her killed back in 2005.

Now, The Union has taken on a life of its own. New and secure forms of communication allow members to talk face to face, and several micro-communities have branched off the main network. Holly Ramirez' community is stronger than ever. New community managers, like Bob Saltzman and Jefferson Willis, have emerged to help coordinate the hunt and, if necessary, funerals and fundraising for hospital bills.

The Union's "work parties" are typically composed of skilled laborers and everyday people who don't work a nine-to-five job. Often, hunters step up because there's a need for a warm body, an improvised trap, an electric fence — or bait. Sewer workers and cable-service people know unseen, less-trafficked routes, beat cops know the crime hot spots and have access to weapons, and ambulance drivers and emergency responders have access to medicine. Though most of its members are blue-collar workers, The Union is inclusive and pragmatic because to them? There are enough problems in the world without monsters. The Regular Schmoes will take all the help it can get — and that includes migrant workers, homeless, and sex workers, too.

The Enemy

The thing about The Union is that they don't care what makes a monster tick, what its powers are, or what kind it is. Vampire, werewolf, ghost, demon, or the occasional slasher — they're all just targets. Members aren't obsessed with the hunt; they focus on getting through the day, living their lives, and raising their families. As such, they don't become obsessed with myths or legends or conspiracy theories. If they catch wind of a monster who might be in the area, they don't make a move until a sighting has been confirmed.

Unfortunately, their lack of organization is also a weakness. While they can respond quickly, they don't have the resources or knowledge other groups do. Members chip in where they can, but they're not rolling in dough. Unfortunately, other compacts know it, too. Often, when Regular Schmoes partner with other cells they provide manual labor or muscle — and that sets their teeth on edge. The Union knows there's a storm coming. When and if they get their numbers up, maybe then they'll finally organize. Until then, if you're a hunter who can aim and fire, The Union will gladly take you.

Hunters

You fight fires and saw the flickering shape of a child-sized shadow right before the mayor's house burned down. You were told not to say anything, but you can't get that image out of your mind. Every time you ride your truck, you pay close attention to the scenery, and you've managed to put your buddies on high alert, too. Now, your chief calls you a "human smoke

detector,” because you’ve stopped a few fires well before they’ve had a changed to spread — by killing the thing that caused them.

You’re a streets-and-sanitation worker who made a gruesome discovery: piles of skeletal bodies deep in the sewers, their bones gnawed on and the marrow sucked out. You’ve stumbled across larders filled with harvested organs, and underpasses where dark rituals were being performed. You know what happens beneath the city’s notice and you’re obsessed with ensuring that others do, too.

You’re a traffic cop who monitors the street cameras all over town. Every so often, you catch a blurry glimpse of a creature that gives you nightmares. You take images when you can and share them with local hunters. The only thing keeping you upright is knowing that every time you find one of those monsters, you are saving somebody’s life. Watching them through your cameras is the only way you can stay one step ahead of them.

Factions

Alliances in The Union tend to form out of shared interests as opposed to bigger, philosophical ideas. There are three such groups.

Most people within The Union advocate for a simple, defensive approach: **Home First**. Hunters look after their own friends, lovers, families in their neighborhoods, factories, and schools, and they never bring the fight *to* the monsters.

Hunters who claim membership in **The General Strike** take a more aggressive stance. They believe it is their duty to fight monsters, because they are the worst kind of oppressors. There aren’t many members left, however, and most are either missing or dead. A few have even “come back” to prey on their cellmates, right before they were lit on fire.

Politicals, on the other hand, hunt and organize to ensure their people are free to live the life they choose, in the way they want to live it, despite their fear of the supernatural. Though their members used to be extremists living on the fringes of society, their numbers have grown in response to a general anxiety about the future. Most Politicals range from protestors fighting for gun rights to doomsday preppers. These hunters join other demonstrators and protestors, moving from city to city, hunting enemies under cover.

Status

When the shadows grow longer, and people are reported missing — The Union swings into action. Something, somewhere, needs to die and they gain status when it does.

- You’ve been invited to join The Union, and your expertise has helped you on the hunt. You may use the 8-again quality when performing Teamwork or Tactics relevant to your trade.
- You’ve managed to develop several friendships with other Union members, and they’re ready to pitch in when needed. Gain two dots in Allies (The Union) representing individuals who specialize in killing two, separate types of monsters.
- You’ve saved lives, raised funds to help survivors rebuild their homes, and bailed somebody out of a tight spot from time to time. Your efforts have paid off, and your reward is two dots of Resources you can use to help yourself or your cellmates.

MIKE: THIS NEXT SECTION REPRESENTS THE CONSPIRACY SPLATS.

Ascending Ones

The Cult of the Phoenix

Quote: *“Our war is eternal. Our sacrifices, endless. Our draughts, prepare us.”*

According to legend, by the time Upper and Lower Egypt unified around 3150 BCE, the Cult of the Phoenix and the Cult of Set were already ancient. Both sects of soldiers fought the darkness in a time beyond memory, one by day and one by night. The Cult of Set lit their fires, stayed near the people, and protected their villages during the long nights. The other sect, the Cult of the Phoenix, hunted the shadows by day and slayed the monsters they found with righteous fury.

Unfortunately, no mortal group of hunters is infallible, and the Cult of Set slowly fell to corruption. Nightmares wormed their way into the night warriors' ranks, and infiltrated the sect forcing the hunters to fall. Over time, the two sects grew more and more distant. The compromised Cult of Set faded away, absorbed by the shadows with which they unwittingly comingled, leaving the Cult of the Phoenix to hunt on its own.

The burden of an endless hunt quickly overwhelmed the remaining hunters in the Cult of the Phoenix. Their leaders sought answers by brewing potions to bolster their soldiers' resolve and tonics that enhanced their physical prowess in battle. The first elixir was successful and gave the soldiers an edge; its formula required constant consumption, however, and the ingredients were toxic. Eventually, the elixir proved fatal and their numbers fell.

For several years, the Cult of the Phoenix devoted itself to the art of alchemy experimenting with wondrous herbs and mystical components to concoct the perfect formula. Over time, they also realized how certain ingredients destabilized their essences, and had to be neutralized in the body. By developing a metaphysical training regimen that blended alchemy with their faith, members learned how to metabolize poisonous concoctions after ingestion.

Elixirs gave the Cult of the Phoenix power to rise from the ashes as the Ascending Ones, restore their membership, and renew their pledge to fight. Once the alchemists built a stable of potions that yielded predictable results, their methodology remained stable for 1,000 years. The Ascending Ones spread their influence from Egypt into other parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and into Roman-occupied territories; they courted members who hailed from different faiths, incorporating the followers of Christ, Muhammad, Hermes, Horus, Ashoka and others.

As cultural traditions, laws, and boundaries continued to change, the Ascending Ones shifted tactics and applied their alchemical knowledge to a mercantile craft. Their potion-brewing skills created a sustainable trade to sell legal and illicit medicinal powders, tonics, drugs, and spirits which in turn funded their operations, allowing them to follow trade routes and extend their reach — and their hunt — globally.

While the Ascending Ones thrive in the modern era, many of them are conflicted. They no longer possess the freedoms they once enjoyed in ancient times to distribute narcotics, alcohol, and illicit herbs. Some members have turned to organized crime to sell drugs while others sell formulas and rare plants to pharmaceutical companies. Most members apply their alchemical knowledge to a trade of some kind; this allows them to remain vigilant while earning a living.

In recent months, leaders have grown concerned that their organization is at great risk of falling prey to the same forces that claimed the Cult of Set so long ago. Not only have they tasked the

Ascending Ones to walk a righteous path, they've also been keen to check in with members more frequently by conducting face-to-face meetings. Alchemists whisper that their leaders are up to something, but don't possess the means to unlock their secrets — yet.

The Enemy

The Ascending Ones protect people by keeping the supernatural a secret, dealing with threats, and putting the lives of others before their own. Stopping monsters often means the hunters kill them, but not always. As one of the oldest (and most secretive) surviving hunter organizations, the alchemists have a reputation and are known to the elder denizens of the supernatural. Time and experience have taught members that monsters don't always have to be slayed; some can be reasoned with, others can be calmed or convinced that murdering people is not in its best interests.

Most of the Ascending Ones lean heavily on their faith for answers. The Cult of the Phoenix has many legends, and the alchemists know several of them are true. One such legend is the idea that monsters live in communities of their own. When war is brewing, a designated alchemist acts as an intermediary and engages in diplomacy to broker a peace between monster factions in an Arabic tradition called *Sulha*. Much like a cop trying to mediate a fight between rival mobsters, the Ascending Ones know neither side is without sin, but they also know a battle would claim innocent lives.

Despite the organization's history, the Ascending Ones do not possess an encyclopedic knowledge of monsters or their societies. In part, this lack of understanding is because most cells operate independently of one another, and it is very rare that the organization gives a top-down order.

Hunters

You're an imam who serves an Islamic community in the inner city. You've heard the cries of the faithful and want to protect them as best you can. When you visited Egypt, you were approached by an alchemist who told you about the ancient ways. You were skeptical but agreed to a strict training regimen. Now, you've found a few likeminded members of the faithful and together you keep the peace.

You watched a new type of drug being brought into your neighborhoods, and immediately knew something was off. You saw how the people controlling them were not what they appeared to be. You played the game, joined a gang, even wound up in jail. After you got out, you were approached by someone who told you the truth: You weren't crazy, and the skills you learned could help people. Now, you're back on the streets but playing an altogether different game and keeping the peace.

You follow the seven Hermetic Principles for Self-Mastery and uphold the traditions of Hermes Trismegistus. A practicing Gnostic, you walked a spiritual path in deed and word — but that didn't stop you from being kidnapped by a creature beyond your understanding. For several days you were trapped in a sewer, until a group of mysterious people rescued you. After you were freed, you begged the hooded heroes to let you help, to save others from the horrors you experienced. Now, you hunt from the shadows, too.

Factions

The lineage of the Ascended order is ancient and its branches are varied. Sometimes, individual cells may not recognize each other because they practice their alchemical arts through the lens of their specific faith, culture, or community. Within the order, most groups are connected to one of three main factions.

The militaristic, faith-based **Knife of Paradise** can trace its roots back to the Cult of the Phoenix. While some alchemists still follow Ma'at, members also include Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Members hold the belief they are *Shurat*, which translates to “having sold their souls to god.” The Knife does not denounce Egyptian or Gnostic mysticism and avoids petty squabbles about religion. Instead, they prioritize the needs of the hunt and seek common ground among the faithful to ensure they remain on task.

The **Order of the Southern Temple** emerged as the influence of western mystical traditions spread and settled on Hermeticism as the foundation for their beliefs. Members have embraced the writings of Hermes Trismegistus and practice the Hermetic traditions to live by example and explore new formulas for elixirs. Unlike other alchemists, the Order does not recognize any Egyptian gods, such as Thoth, Seshet, Isis, Neter, or Heka, and considers Hermes Trismegistus to be the inventor of all occult knowledge.

The **Jagged Crescent** is the most modern faction of the three. Located in urban areas, many alchemists focus on survival. The Jagged Crescent spurred interest in mercantile trade and has profited from drug trafficking and organized crime. While many alchemists have been selling formulas to pharmaceutical companies and government agents, members are often moles planted deep within society's underbelly where monsters thrive.

Status

To be an alchemist is to practice discipline of body and mind. Status is gained by applying the knowledge you've learned to endure the hunt.

- You've completed the intellectual, spiritual, and physical tests required to become an alchemist. You may use the 8-again quality when attempting to regain Willpower once per session.
- You have devoted time, energy, and knowledge to raise funds for your fellow alchemists. You now possess two extra dots of Resources you can use to help you hunt.
- You are considered a “master alchemist” and have obtained the services of an initiate, represented by a three-dot Retainer.

The Cheiron Group

The Field Projects Division

Quote: *“Let me tell you about our benefits package. The perks are out of this world.”*

The European-based Cheiron Group (TCG) is one of the few organizations whose origins remain unclear. The name “Cheiron” was first used in 1905, but the Cheiron Group is far older and may have formed in antiquity. No one — not even its own members — is certain, because the organization has used many names including the Acheron Shipping & Trading Co., the House of Katz, the Helios Society for the Infirm, and the Octavian Apothecary. The one constant found throughout its history is the Cheiron Group's logo — the head of a horned, bearded man wearing a laurel wreath superimposed on a caduceus. This symbol has been found engraved on a 15th-

century Bavarian suit of armor, a third-century Roman centurion's short sword, a 2,400-year-old Greek ship, on cuneiform tablets describing the location of Mardaman, and in the Temple of the Flayed Lord in Mexico.

Only the board of directors — whose identities have yet to be revealed — know the truth. In fact, only one director has ever been listed: founder Edward Barrett, who retired in 1921 and died in 1983. Portfolio managers who've paid attention to the company's inner workings often wonder how TCG has managed to maintain a high profile, stable stock prices, and ever-increasing profitability for so long by avoiding the public eye. In fact, the Cheiron Group's public face is far less enigmatic than its history. To the average citizen, TCG is a progressive, philanthropic corporation that globally distributes affordable drugs and treatments covering a wide range of ailments and diseases. Its growing list of partners manufactures prosthetics, radiation technology, and monitoring equipment — even pacemakers and artificial hearts.

Now, of course, the newly-appointed brand manager, Melanie Sweetwater, appears so often in the news and online some broadcasters have jokingly wondered if she's been cloned. The Cheiron Group's salaried employees can't always explain how Sweetwater seems to be in three places at once, and why she reports solely to the board of directors. What they don't realize is that Sweetwater's appointment is tied to the corporation's *true* interest: the supernatural. In recent months, Sweetwater has emerged in the field to oversee investigations, containment areas, experiments, and surgeries carried out in the Field Projects Division of TCG. Despite her presence, most TCG employees don't know anything about her, because she has yet to act on her observations. Often, she'll pop in and out of a scene without saying more than two words and never takes notes. The going theory is that Sweetwater is the first of several brand managers who'll be assigned to different regions in the coming months.

On the books, the Field Projects Division (FPD) is the so-called experimental arm of TCG that deals with cutting-edge science — if you can call capturing, dissecting, and experimenting with monster parts science. In exchange for their service, FPD employees sign an ironclad contract to receive a hefty salary, full health benefits, and a pension. The legalese is hard to read, and agents often don't realize what they're signing up for. In addition to extensive surgery, implants, and body modifications, FPD employees also sign the rights away to their bodies before and after death. While their enhancements help them face down the supernatural, employees aren't always happy with the terms of their deal.

Over the past decade, reports of “rogue agents” have skyrocketed, and it's rumored more than a few new recruits have been forced to sign contracts simply because they knew a missing FPD employee. Many fear what will happen if TCG decides to renegotiate their contracts, and assume Sweetwater is pooling data to making suggestions.

The Enemy

The Cheiron Group doesn't view the supernatural as a threat. They think of them as “assets” and their victims as “casualties.” Most of the time, members speak in code using words like “potential asset” or “PA” to describe a monster they haven't captured yet, and agents as “field resources.” Each agent is given the power to conduct their operation the way they see fit, provided they meet their PA quota. When a field resource has identified and captured a PA, they call in a Dedicated Pickup Team (DPT) to retrieve and remove it. Dedicated Pickup Teams are glorified security guards who'll only transport a PA if it is secured and neutralized; they won't

assist in the field under any circumstance. Many agents learned how unhelpful the DPT is the hard way — because they didn't decode or read the handbook.

Most agents think the current edition of their field resource manual is a joke; it's an encrypted book of "first-person accounts" given to agents after their contract has been signed and delivered to HR. It has no TCG identifiers, never actually names the company, lists no authors, and has no ISBN or other book coding. The previous edition, a plain brown book that was billed to be a comprehensive guide, was far more official-looking than its successor. While that handbook contained a great deal of information, most of the data was either useless or severely outdated. Unfortunately, that bad intel led to "the incident" — an event so horrifying, management is forbidden to speak of it.

While recruits don't always feel prepared for field work, they have memorized three rules: Directives 53, 68, and 99. Directive 53, which refers to Safety Phrase 53 in an old EEC Council Directive (67/548/EEC), instructs companies to avoid public exposure to dangerous substances and to obtain special instructions before using them. Directive 68, on the other hand, states that field resources must ensure no member of the public believes a threat exists. Lastly, Directive 99 demands its field agents comport themselves as exemplary employees both on duty and off.

Most field resources don't have time to worry about the details, because they're too busy working to fulfill their quotas — which are often moving targets. Sometimes, field resources will work with the competition (e.g. other hunters), to bag and tag a PA, while others will intentionally mislead their peers. The competition is fierce, the requests are piling up, and bonuses are being paid...for now.

Hunters

You were a top salesman who was told your skills were wasted and then offered a top, commission-based position at the Cheiron Group. You jumped at the opportunity to work for them and believed in their politics. Now, you miss your phone and wish you could surrender the new ears you got after you signed up.

You trained as a special forces agent and toured all over the world. When you were finished, your country thanked you, but you couldn't find a job for someone with your talents. You started taking odd jobs and one of them landed you in jail. That's where the Cheiron Group found you. They paid your bail, gave you a lawyer, and you signed a contract. Now, you have new nightmares.

You worked in Human Resources. You liked your job. You loved crushing candidate's dreams and enjoyed watching your fellow employees squirm when you denied their raises. You thought no one was watching. Unfortunately, someone was. At first, you thought your boss was going to fire you. Then, you were offered a promotion to work with the Field Projects Division. You took the job. When you told your coworkers, one of them started laughing. The irony was lost on you then. It isn't now.

Field Projects Divisions

TCG is a global corporation with satellite offices in dozens of countries. In the Field Projects Division there are three sub-divisions to which field resources are assigned.

Most agents report to the **Retrieval Division**. Field resources take a file, hunt down a target, and neutralize them — or die trying. Then, they call in a DPT, which consists of two agents and a driver or pilot who'll transport their catch to a secure location.

The **Recruitment Division** agents focus on finding potential new hires. Often, these agents infiltrate the competition by feigning victimhood to watch other cells work. They also visit prisons, high schools, colleges, and mercenary units to broaden their search and replenish lost field resources.

Lastly, the **Field Research Division** represents FPD's information-gathering and retrieval arm. Agents masquerade as other hunters to spy on conspiracies who have access to supernatural powers or equipment. FRD spies infiltrate cells and lend assistance until it's time to disappear — often taking files, relics, elixirs, formulas, and anything else they can get their hands on.

Status

To earn status in the Field Projects Division, you must know when to use flattery, when to keep your mouth shut, and how to get results.

- You've been given an encrypted handbook and managed to break the code. Gain a free Skill Specialty reflecting your talent in Academics, Computers, or Investigation.
- You've allied with other agents and can call in backup when needed. Gain two dots in Allies (the Cheiron Group) representing hunters who'll lend a hand.
- You've earned several bonuses and well-deserved raises. Add three dots in the Resources Merit to spend how you see fit. Oh, and one more thing. Sweetwater is watching.

Council of Bones

The Marked

Quote: *"Death is not the enemy you should fear."*

For centuries, the Council of Bones has attracted hunters who believe the denizens of the supernatural are subverting the natural order. The Marked view the undead as abominations that should not exist, and work with ghosts to set things right. Members include wise elders, occultists, religious seers, post-war spiritualists, and television mediums who hide in plain sight to investigate the supernatural in a crowd of pretenders and novice hunters, keeping mostly to themselves and their cellmates.

Most hunters do not realize the Council of Bones is one of the few conspiracies that continues to resurface through the ages. Throughout its long and uneven history, membership has waxed and waned in different parts of the world. Following the end of the Cold War, as many as 3,000 hunters reported to the Council before its untimely collapse. Every time the Council falls, more than half of its members disappear or die. Veterans believe communicating with ghosts and seeing into the spirit world, which few members recognize as Twilight, puts all members at risk. Whole chapters have been wiped out after the undead targeted councilmembers who unwittingly crossed paths with ancient, dangerous foes aided by a ghost; other chapterhouses have collapsed because they couldn't physically defend themselves from a major attack.

The current incarnation of the Council of Bones has formed in response to a growing number of incidents, wars, and natural disasters occurring over the past 40 years. The conspiracy recognized

that the supernatural was intentionally making these events worse, and wanted to leverage their resources to help survivors find closure. Local chapters stepped in after the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City that claimed over 10,000 lives, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, the earthquakes in Gujarat, India, and following Hurricane Katrina. Where there is fear, the Council of Bones knows the supernatural will prey on survivors. Members feel it's their duty to step in and offer aid, comfort, and closure when they can.

Members who are initiated into the Council of Bones are told their organization is the oldest among hunters. During the ceremony, they learn the Council was formed after the first monster's victim suffered an untimely death and became a ghost. That unfortunate soul became so desperate for justice, they begged Death for help. Death responded by gifting a living hunter with a unique mark enabling them to communicate with the dead. This symbol, called the Mark of the Scythe, is made from pure ectoplasm. Of course, most members don't believe the Mark of the Scythe is real — though it very much is.

The Council of Bones is organized into independent chapters. Unlike its past incarnations, the Council does not have a headquarters that oversees all. Chapter headquarters are now led by an elected president and can be found in Mexico City, New Orleans, Karachi, Manila, and other cities across the globe. Presidents use code words to keep their identity secret; the Mexican president prefers to be called Calavera, for example, while the New Orleans chief is Monsieur Os. Whatever secrets the conspiracy possesses are found in a chapterhouse — if a president is willing to release them.

While the Council of Bones heavily recruits scholars, archivists, mediums, and diviners to investigate the supernatural, the conspiracy doesn't dictate a hunter's spiritual, religious, or cultural beliefs or require its hunters to possess certain skills. Of all hunter organizations, the Council of Bones is perhaps the most egalitarian because they know death does not discriminate. Eventually, everything dies (or at least, in their eyes, everything *should*).

The Enemy

The Council of Bones is painfully aware the supernatural is real and the ambulatory dead threatens the natural order. When living beings are murdered before their time, the Council of Bones steps in to investigate potential threats.

The Council's approach to the supernatural prioritizes dead creatures over living threats. Vampires, zombies, and ghosts are much higher priority than a sorcerer. If a witch or member of the fae isn't killing anyone, the Council won't pursue them, putting them at odds with other hunters. Slashers, rogue hunters, and cryptids are also considered dangerous, but aren't typically found until after they've killed.

In its current incarnation, the Council of Bones is reforming its ranks to brush up on lore, spy on the dead, and help other hunters deal with vengeful ghosts. Most councilmembers agree that communicating with the spirit world offers a mutual exchange of information to help both parties. As such, the Council of Bones prohibits using spirits and their knowledge for personal gain and forbids its members from working as mediums or spiritualists.

The Marked favor a secretive approach to the Vigil and avoid any unnecessary attention. As such, other hunter organizations stereotype the Council of Bones as a needlessly cryptic, snobbish organization. In turn, the Marked often feel they're operating behind the scenes, because they don't treat the supernatural as a tool as the Cheiron Group or Ascending Ones do.

The Council views the darkness as a deadly infection that will worsen in time, and are wary of other hunters who use potions, relics, augmentations, and the like to hunt. Of course, councilmembers don't regard themselves as tainted; their natural gifts serve Death.

Hunters

The last time you spoke to your kidnapped mother, you had a fight about your then-fiancé. You regret not picking her up after her car broke down, but you needed time to cool off. Three weeks later, after you'd reported her missing, she spoke to you in a dream. She showed you a gray house with a red window. You woke up in a sweat. The next morning, you drove around for hours — and you found it. You snuck inside, discovered your mother's body, and found a creature sleeping. Then, you remembered the rest of your dream, and you killed it. You've been listening ever since.

You were a tarot-card reader at a renaissance faire. You liked meeting people and reading the cards, but you never really believed in the symbols. At the end of the faire, a man asked you to read his fortune. You rambled off some generalities. Then, he showed you a technique to read the cards, and asked you to try again. You did what he asked, and possibilities appeared in your mind. You told him what you saw. Afterward, he invited you back to his "club." Your world has never been the same.

You were a mortician who's always been dedicated to bringing your clients peace. Your colleagues said you could calm a grieving heart just by being in the same room with them. Your family has always wanted to know if you believe in ghosts, but you've never been a believer — not until you helped bury an elderly gentleman. During the wake, his friends spoke to him as if he was still in the room. When you asked to whom they were talking, they showed you. Now, you serve the living in other ways.

Chapters

The modern incarnation of the Council of Bones is organized into regional chapters and local chapterhouses formed around three primary approaches to the hunt:

Councilmembers in the **Mediums Chapter** solve cases by conversing with spirits to find answers. The method of communication is not as important as getting results. The Marked's goal is to identify and work with certain ghosts to help them bring justice, find survivors, etc. Most members belong to this chapter, and often compare notes with one another to ensure they're not being manipulated by the ghost.

The **Academics Chapter** takes a scholarly approach to the hunt. They treat occult texts as investigative tools and won't discount a manuscript's age as readily as other hunter organizations might. Councilmembers are convinced that no monster is "new" to this world, and the secrets to trapping, confining, and killing them are found in a book or scroll. Academics spend hours poring through stacks of books referring to a specific subject or monster type, scrutinizing them for answers.

The smallest group forms the **Diviners Chapter**. They believe ghosts and spirits are no longer human and should be treated as threats. Instead of talking to ghosts for answers, councilmembers rely on divinatory tools such as crystal balls, tarot cards, runes, marked bones, pendulums, tea cups, scrying mirrors, etc. for answers. Members are savvy enough to know when a spirit is

“pestering” them but can’t always tell the difference between friend or foe. They will often attempt to cleanse or exorcise a spirit, even when it’s benign, to put the ghost to rest.

Status

Status in the Council of Bones is earned whenever a councilmember upholds the organization’s traditions without being forced or prompted.

- Your expertise helped you solve a case no one else could. Gain a free Skill Specialty in Occult or Investigation relating to the case you brought to a satisfying close.
- You’ve successfully navigated hunter society and have made friends in unique places. Gain two dots in Allies (Hunter Conspiracies) representing other hunters who belong to different conspiracies.
- You’ve kept secrets, saved victims, and have unraveled enigmas while maintaining the Council’s ideals. Gain a three-dot Retainer (Ghost) with which you can interact to retrieve information or spy on targets.

The Lucifuge

Children of the Seventh Generation

Quote: *“Our souls may be damned, but we still have free will.”*

For millennia, humankind has sought undeniable proof of evil. The Great Adversary is referred to by many names in religious and cultural traditions in both the east and west including Little Horn, Lucifer, Set, Shaitan, Yen-Lo Wang, Baal, etc. Some people believe the embodiment of evil is not one entity, but myriad lesser creatures, while others are convinced there is one Deceiver at work. In the western world, some believers have identified this Accuser as a single figure: Satan. To the agents of the Lucifuge, however, they know the Devil by another name: patriarch.

Once or twice a century, Lucifer and his companions seduce mortals for pleasure, producing sons and daughters prone to evil, greatness, and guilt. These children then grow up and have children of their own, spawning an infernal lineage of people who move around, intermarry, adopt, and create their own families. Over time, the mark of the Devil is naught but memory, and falls dormant. Every seven generations, however, the mark flares back to life. Suddenly, a woman dreams of a fiery throne and an imp begs her to sit upon it. A man hears cryptic whispers in the shadows, begging him to reveal the names of his enemies. All, however, feel the infernal power burning in their minds and hearts, whether they want it to or not.

Some of the Devil’s children succumb to their dark heritage and deceive, betray, and harm unwitting victims. Other Children of the Seventh Generation recognize the darkness lingering in their veins and fight against the urge to hurt. The progeny who reject their heritage find the Lucifuge in Milan — or she discovers them.

The Lucifuge is a mysterious noblewoman whose actions can be traced back to 853 CE. Using the resources at her disposal, the Lady employed a group of genealogists and occultists to track down the awakening bloodlines of Lucifer found in Europe. After watching the families for many years, after a child was born and its heritage became clear, the Lady’s messengers would approach them with an offer: renounce Satan and his wiles, and fight hell’s forces instead. Those who refused were either killed or kidnapped and forced to comply.

Now, over 1,000 years later, the Lady of Milan and her team of occultists, genealogists, and messengers remain ever vigilant. Headquartered in Milan, the Lady only answers to one name — the Lucifuge — and her statuesque appearance has not changed since the ninth century. Unlike other hunter organizations, the Lucifuge is the only authority, and only she can issue commands to the Children of the Seventh Generation — whether they want her to or not.

The Enemy

When facing a creature of darkness, most agents of the Lucifuge will investigate the monster, its purpose, and its nature. By taking a careful approach, agents can accurately assess whether their target is connected to the Devil, either as an enemy or ally, and deal with it accordingly to stave off destruction. Agents take special interest whenever a monster claims demonic heritage and alert their allies when such a creature reveals themselves as infernal. Some vampires believe they're descended from Baal. Certain werewolves are devoted to the spirits of vice, and some warlocks traffic souls with demons.

The Children of the Seventh Generation possess a great deal of lore referring to angels and demons, and this knowledge is not limited to Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religions. Recently, agents have expanded their studies to include cryptids, and have become convinced they do not commonly exist in nature, but are mutated animals tainted by a supernatural or alien power. This has led some agents to question their heritage and beliefs, while others have renewed their commitment to the hunt and avoid thinking too deeply about the nature of good and evil.

Agents of the Lucifuge regard demons as beings to hate and angels as entities to fear. Unfortunately, some agents are stuck with small, demonic companions, attract the occasional devil, or possess the ability to summon, command, or banish them. Most of the time, agents only address demons as a last resort — especially since most angels aren't as forgiving as the Lucifuge and have been known to destroy the Children of the Seventh Generation before an exchange of words. Agents are also wary of working with demons, because the forces of evil often treat the Children of the Seventh Generation as royal celebrities and follow them around hoping they'll issue a command to do harm.

Despite the leniency agents show other creatures of darkness, when crossing paths with other descendants of Lucifer they go for blood. Satan's children who revel in their infernal powers have either slipped through the Lucifuge's fingers or can no longer be redeemed. Though many tools exist, records aren't infallible, and many Children of the Seventh Generation remain undiscovered for years before their dark deeds are noticed.

Hunters

You didn't join the Lucifuge, you were born into it. You have always been aware of your lineage as a Child of the Seventh Generation and hold the names of your ancestors close to your heart. You are descended from former agents of the Lucifuge and know there are many others who share your burden. Satan spread his seed far and wide, and your "relatives" are diverse indeed. Despite your differences, you are committed to fighting evil. Some might say it's your birthright.

You've had invisible friends since you were a child. Strange little imps whose whispers landed you into more and more trouble. They asked you to do worse and worse things. One day, you were kidnapped by agents of the Lucifuge, dragged to Milan, and thrown into a cell where they brainwashed you to repent your evil ways. Now you force your imps to "be good" and they hate you for it. Sometimes, you fear you hate yourself.

You've never believed in the Christian God or Devil. Then, you were approached by a shadow in the dark who begged you to command them — but you resisted. You'll never forget what happened next: the Lucifuge found you and revealed the identity of your ancestor. Her story went against everything you were taught, but it was the only answer you had. Now, you fear the idea of Satan is a distraction and a colonization of an older idea of which your people spoke. Your truth can only be found by battling the darkness.

Factions

The Lucifuge's team in Milan acts as the head of a large "family," and monitors genealogies and global news using modern technology. Individual agents are given free rein to work with other hunters and are unaware who their fellow agents are — save for 13 other Children of the Seventh Generation who are geographically close to their location. Despite this, some philosophies have emerged among agents.

The Denial believes anyone connected to the Devil, who's the source of all evil, must renounce him and their infernal nature. Those who relish and embrace the Devil, however, cannot be saved and must be destroyed. If a monster displays signs of guilt or remorse, agents will either leave them alone or help them find the path to redemption in rare cases.

The Reconciliation believes the steps they take to destroy evil in the world create an opportunity for Lucifer's redemption. According to them, if Lucifer is redeemed, then Hell will cease to exist, and humanity's suffering ends forever. The followers of this ideal believe this is the Lucifuge's destiny, and they are tasked with reversing the Fall.

The Truth represents the smallest number of agents, and those who hold this philosophy don't express their beliefs openly. Members of The Truth are skeptics who are suspicious of the Lucifuge, her motivations, and the secrets she keeps from them. They want to know who she is, why she's so old, and what her real connection to Satan is. Though they'll continue to fight the forces of evil, The Truth is worried they're mere pawns in a greater game.

Status

The Lucifuge operates at the head of the organization and is the only one who can grant status. Typically, status is earned when an agent successfully fights a monster, recruits a target, or fosters trust with other Children of the Seventh Generation.

- You have just joined the Lucifuge and now have access to answers. Choose a free Skill Specialty that reflects a supernatural creature, such as angels, demons, or witches, about which you wish to know more.
- You have developed a reputation among your kind for being trustworthy. You've visited Milan and may consult the library upon request. You've been granted access to two extra dots of Resources, which can only be used to uphold the Vigil.
- You've met with the Lucifuge and she has personally tasked you with secret missions. You suspect her agenda and may have guessed her identity — of course, you'd never tell. Gain the Lucifuge as a four-dot Mentor.

Malleus Maleficarium

The Shadow Congregation

Quote: “*Show no mercy to heretics and evil-doers, no matter how human they seem.*”

The persecution of witches and warlocks predates modern history, and remnants of ancient, anti-sorcery laws such as the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi’s description of a trial by water are still ingrained in superstitious belief. Throughout history, witches were hunted during eras of great socio-political change and devastation caused by plagues, wars, and environmental catastrophes. The words “witch hunter” conjure images of a black-clad Inquisitor recruited, trained, and commanded by the guiding hand of the west’s oldest institution: the Catholic Church.

During the Middle Ages, grim-faced Inquisitors throughout Europe were granted power to arrest and torture anyone deemed a heretic, whether they wielded magic or not, to force their confession whether they were guilty or innocent using scourges, brands, thumbscrews, and chains. Then, in 1487, Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger published the *Malleus Maleficarum*, a witch-hunting book whose popularity was only eclipsed by the Bible. This tome, which primarily targeted women, was so influential it whipped the populace into a frenzy resulting in the deaths of thousands. Within a few years, the pope condemned the *Malleus Maleficarum* as heretical, but that did not stop the hysteria or the witch hunters from abandoning their interrogations.

Officially, Church records show that Pope Paul III did not form the Shadow Congregation to fight the forces of Satan until 1567. Modern archivists have pieced together an unconfirmed secret history of the conspiracy drawing on letters and journals written by Mother Mary Margaret, High Inquisitor Matteo Napolitano, and others who were charged by the Church to fight Satan’s forces. According to Isabella Calderon, these firsthand accounts prove the Shadow Congregation operated in secret, without the pope’s formal blessing, for several years prior to the 16th century.

To date, no evidence of Pope Paul III’s true goals has been found. Some Church scholars believe he needed to officially recognize the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Others are convinced the pope was being manipulated by dark forces, and the formation of the *Malleus Maleficarum* allowed the Church’s enemies to infiltrate and expose witch-hunters to discredit the organization. Unfortunately, few people alive today know the true founder of the *Malleus Maleficarum* was a man named Ambrogio Baudolino, a savvy political influencer who inspired the pope to formally recognize the Shadow Congregation for his purposes: to hunt vampires.

Baudolino was a slave to a vampire for many years, until he managed to break free of the creature’s power and slay it. Following this, Baudolino pledged to hunt Satan’s ilk so no one else would suffer as he had. While others believed witches were to blame for society’s ills, Baudolino not only knew vampires were real, he was convinced they were manipulating political and religious leaders. Following the formation of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Baudolino quietly asserted control and taught witch hunters how to redirect their efforts to hunt vampires, instead, forcing many bloodsuckers to go into hiding.

Now, in modern times, the *Malleus Maleficarum* is in danger of losing their war against vampires. Not only has the Church’s political influence waned over the years, previously colonized groups that were forced to welcome members of the Shadow Congregation are now declining help and dealing with the supernatural in their own way. Recent talks among interfaith organizations have encouraged the *Malleus Maleficarum* to share its knowledge with other religious groups and participate in group hunts. Strangely, this has resulted in the addition of new

members who are loosely connected to the Church, and the Shadow Congregation has been recruiting lay people in greater and greater numbers.

Despite their outreach, the Malleus Maleficarum's methods haven't changed much since its inception. Members know evil is real and find strength in their devotion to prayer and meditation to slay Satan's forces brutally and viciously. Sure, innocents sometimes get caught in the crossfire, but the needs of the many always outweigh the soul of one.

The Enemy

The Malleus Maleficarum specializes in hunting vampires, and studies the living dead as much as possible. While their knowledge is impressive, members have only skimmed the surface of vampiric lore. The Shadow Congregation is aware that vampires congregate in societies and have their own traditional and radical factions but avoid focusing on politics to concentrate on how to isolate, locate, trap, and kill them. Members might catch wind that vampires are meeting in an abandoned warehouse or high-security office building, for example, but will avoid groups of vampires. Hunters are much more likely to set fire traps or attack vampires during the day.

The Shadow Congregation also knows vampiric blood is addictive, and mortals who drink it fall prey to the vampire's influence. They *aren't* aware this blood can grant immortality to humans under the right circumstances, because this secret has been kept from them by Baudolino, himself, who is still alive.

Officially, Ambrogio Baudolino died in 1601. In truth, Baudolino, who doesn't look a day over 60, maintains his immortality by sipping vampire blood sourced from different vampires before they die. There is a handful of people within the Shadow Congregation who know about Ambrogio and were charged to keep his secret, and even fewer know he meets secretly with the Lucifuge in Milan, who's even older than he is.

While vampires are its specialty, the Shadow Congregation also investigates witches, warlocks, demons, and anything that smacks of infernalism. Their libraries, many of which have been digitized, contain investigations into the world of warlocks and witches, which led to them pulling together a rather complete and somewhat accurate bestiary of demons and devils. Though the Malleus Maleficarum concentrates on hunting Satan's forces, members will participate in hunts to address other threats if necessary. Most often, however, they'll follow the pope's orders, never realizing Baudolino is still issuing commands.

Hunters

You were a priest trained as an exorcist. Your parish thought you were an embarrassment and begged the bishop to send a replacement. The Shadow Congregation stepped in and recruited you, confirming your belief that evil was real. You agreed to join them and are proud to take your orders from Rome. Now you are kept so busy you don't have time to think about the weird rumors you hear while hunting vampires and demons.

You were a devout believer whose mother fell gravely ill. You attended to her every need but knew something wasn't right. When she died and came back, you were forced to hunt her down to put her to rest. You were horrified and confessed what happened to your local priest. Not long afterward, the Malleus Maleficarum approached you and asked you for help.

You were in a gang, but you were still a good Catholic at heart. When you heard Father Gutierrez had gone missing, you went to look for him. Eventually, you found him trapped by a

possessed parishioner and freed him. Then, Father Gutierrez taught you evil was real, and showed you how you can help keep the streets safe. Now you've got a new gang, and you do God's work.

Brotherhoods and Orders

Within the Malleus Maleficarum, unofficial sub-groups have formed, each operating with their own focus and methodology.

The **Order of St. Longinus** was named to honor the Holy Lance's original bearer. Strangely enough, the Malleus Maleficarum found some vampires venerate Longinus, but don't understand why. The order is filled with ruthless and dedicated vampire hunters who give no quarter to vampires or their servants, however innocent they may seem.

The **Order of Saint Ambrose** welcomes scholars, archivists, occultists, and investigators who take a careful and measured approach. Members rely heavily on their cunning strategies to take down foes. Often, their desire to increase their occult knowledge forces them to cross paths with sorcerers who want the same thing, and the two groups compete for rare tomes and magical artifacts.

Working alongside the Order of Saint Ambrose is the **Brotherhood of St. Athanasius**, a militant wing that delivers swift and violent resolution to supernatural threats. Usually, the Brotherhood waits for Ambrosians to uncover enough evidence pinpointing a creature's identity and locations, and then goes in guns blazing. Though the two groups need each other, they bicker over minutia and the need for caution.

Status

Though the Malleus Maleficarum is a religious organization, status is granted to members who defeat and destroy the forces of Satan.

- You have been initiated into the Shadow Congregation and have been taught how to identify and hunt vampires. Add a free Skill Specialty to either the Occult, Investigation, or Streetwise Skills to reflect this knowledge.
- You've gained respect among faithful Catholics for your loyalty to the conspiracy, without saying who you are. Gain one extra dot in Status (Malleus Maleficarum).
- You have access to Rome's ample coffers. Forces within the Vatican have gifted you with additional resources. Take three dots in Resources to help you fight the forces of evil.

Task Force: VALKYRIE

Agents in Black

Quote: *"We'll save your life, but you'll never know our names."*

America is the land of the free, home of the brave, and a conspiracy theorist's playground. Fact: in December 1927, the U.S. Army raided several coastal towns in Massachusetts for reasons unknown. Fact: in 1947, an unidentified object crashed near a USAF base in Roswell, New Mexico. Fact: in the 1960s and 70s, the Zodiac Killer stalked northern California. Though no one caught him, the killings stopped.

If Roswell was just about a weather balloon crash, why the smoke and mirrors? What happened to the Zodiac Killer? Ultimately, conspiracy theorists want to prove a secret government organization is behind every mystery. Enter Task Force: VALKYRIE. Sure they know who killed Kennedy, but they also know the truth about demons, vampires, and werewolves, too.

Though Task Force: VALKYRIE was a rumor for years, modern records date back to World War II. After learning the Nazis had recruited the supernatural to fight alongside them, TFV allied with US and British forces to invade Europe from June 1944 to April 1945. Together, they eliminated threats with naught but their fists and guns. In fact, they were so good at taking down ENEs, the government kept assigning them to fight ENEs right up until Roswell.

After Task Force: VALKYRIE successfully employed a disinformation campaign following the Roswell incident, the agency covered their tracks and disappeared. Their new mission? Secretly protect the U.S. from extra-normal forces. For decades, only a handful of government officials — excluding the president — knew TFV existed. All that changed, however, after the identities of several TFV agents were leaked online in 2013.

Since then, TFV has refocused its efforts to ensure its operatives' safety remains a priority and spends considerable resources to spread misinformation. The average conspiracy theorist will point to tales of "Agents in Black," special-forces units forcing entire towns to disappear, alien cover ups, strange black ops, and aliens in Congress as proof of TFV's existence. It's no accident that Task Force: VALKYRIE seems to be behind every modern conspiracy — that's just what they want people to believe.

Despite lost funding, scandals, and political upheaval, TFV is a little-known government agency that suffers from the same bureaucracies and nepotism rampant in Washington, D.C. With the agency on high alert, intelligence gatherers are generating miles of red tape to ensure they're giving field operatives the right information. Unfortunately, every TFV agent knows intel doesn't matter if they're staring down an ENE. Sometimes, they need an address right now. The delays in information are compounded by a tiny budget.

Now, Task Force: VALKYRIE operatives have stopped griping and wonder if a mole — or several — has infiltrated their ranks. If they've been charged to protect the U.S., why are there so many restrictions when it comes to killing highly dangerous ENEs? If they're a task force, why have they been discouraged from working with foreign organizations? Why is there an underground prison filled with captured ENEs? Why is it that, when an agent asks too many questions, the operative is reassigned or disappears?

Task Force: VALKYRIE has always been a shadow organization, but their new specialty is to create illusions. Unfortunately, their operatives can't always tell the difference between fact and fiction — even when a civilian's life is on the line.

The Enemy

Despite its problems, Task Force: VALKYRIE is a well-oiled machine that uses strict procedures to deal with ENEs. Every operative is trained to report, observe, assess, report again, then neutralize or call for backup.

Most agents can't apply internal procedures in the field but will file reports making it seem like they've followed orders. Somebody at HQ is clamping down on agents who don't have the authority to take command, however, and cells that don't follow orders tend to disappear. While

there is a strict cell structure in place, operatives know layers of red tape prevent them from acquiring immediate resources to hunt that rampaging beast tearing down 6th Avenue. Often, agents refer to the rules as “guidelines,” and actively reach out to other hunters and cells with whom they cross paths.

Most TFV operatives do what they can to survive in the field. However, any agent who gets comfortable bending the rules might find themselves dragged to an offshore prison complex or worse. In general, TFV agents hunt because they love their country, know their skills are needed, and are uniquely poised to use the advanced weaponry at their disposal. Unfortunately, the push to keep their identities, activities, and locations secret often leaves agents feeling more isolated and at risk of being exposed.

Hunters

You were once an FBI agent. You started digging into the archives and suspected aliens were real. Curious, you dug deeper and found another conspiracy. All that alien info you read? Not only was it fake, the “evidence” was covering up a stranger truth: Demons are real. You started keeping your own files and added data when you found it. Then, one day, your files disappeared. That same day you got a call and were transferred. Now, you wish you never learned the truth.

You were a children’s librarian who specialized in folk and faerie tales. The kids used to tell you their own stories of the weird things they’d seen and you were inspired to write about them. One day a strange, intense, suit-wearing man approached you at the library; he wanted to talk to you about your new book on cryptozoology. The problem was you hadn’t told anyone about it. The next day you had a new job at TFV.

You’re a former member of a special-forces unit. One night an op went bad, real bad. Your target, a weapons dealer, shrugged off your bullets then turned into a hairy beast with teeth. Your team freaked, but you kept your cool. You fought all night but managed to kill it and made it to the rendezvous point on time. Your extraction team was filled with unfamiliar faces, and when your helicopter rose into the sky you knew you’d never see your squad again.

Departments

Task Force: VALKRYIE is a conglomeration of special units and departments that, for the most part, operate independently of one another. Most units have their own leadership, funding, and miles of paperwork that are routinely audited by HQ. Once an agent is recruited to TFV, they may list their unit preferences for assignment.

Many field agents work with **Project TWILIGHT**. This department oversees missions targeting human-seeming ENEs classified as P (Para-human) and S (Social). These ENEs tend to operate in groups and infiltrate covens, tribes, cabals, conspiracies, and other hidden societies. Field agents are often told to avoid wasting resources to take down one SP/ENE and are directed to track their movements and gather intel instead. Agents assigned to Project TWILIGHT are not afraid to go deep under cover in enemy territory to find the truth, even if that means infiltrating a friendly cell of civilian hunters.

Agents assigned to **Operation FORT** specialize in ED (extra-dimensional) and ET (extra-terrestrial) ENEs and phenomena that includes aliens, fairies, ghosts, demons, and so-called gods who hail from another plane of existence. While some technology exists to track ED and ET ENEs, FORT agents don’t have the funds or the scientific resources to back up their findings.

Often, they rely on info gleaned from folklore, mythology, and urban legends to identify their targets as well as unsolved cases and missing persons reports. Despite their reputation for being cranky, most FORT agents are up to date on gossip and conspiracy theories and will share rumors in exchange for better resources.

Operation ADAMSKI agents fabricate and spread disinformation to cloak TFV missions and prevent the truth from leaking to civilians. This department was named after a notorious hoaxer who convinced many people he communicated regularly with advanced beings from Venus. ADAMSKI agents intentionally leak falsified documents, faked photographs, doctored videos of alien autopsies, etc. to self-righteous conspiracy theorists and “truthers” hungry for proof that the government is keeping secrets from them.

Status

Status in Task Force: VALKYRIE is nebulous, and agents are promoted for a variety of reasons ranging from nepotism to merit-based rewards.

- You’re a new recruit and have a small chip implanted in your shoulder or thigh, enabling you to access and operate TFV’s high-tech resources. Gain a free Skill Specialty in Weaponry reflecting your armament of choice.
- You’ve survived several missions, and someone back at HQ was paying attention. You’ve earned two dots in Allies (TFV Backup) you can call on for help. Better use the backup when you really need it, though.
- You have your pick of missions and, when you go out in the field, you’re provided the best equipment and vehicles TFV has on hand. You keep trusted secrets, know who really killed Kennedy, and have the ear of several government officials. Assign a different government agency to three dots in Contacts representing these relationships.

THIS ENDS THE CONSPIRACY SPLATS.

Endowments

For tier-three hunters, Endowments are the difference between winning and losing the fight against the supernatural. While not always inherently supernatural, Endowments are powerful tools that imbue a hunter with the ability to deal with the supernatural on their level — but that kind of power always comes with a price. Endowments represent both the learned power and institutional wisdom of an entire conspiracy, and the struggle to maintain a Code while still protecting the ones who are the most important to the hunter.

Conspiracy leaders encourage their hunters to acquire Endowments and are willing to risk hunters leaving their hallowed halls with that knowledge if it means the monsters in the dark have a deadly opponent. Endowments themselves are a dangerous gamble, but the conspiracies are willing to take risks despite any backlash that may come crashing down upon them or their members. With the seemingly endless stream of monsters on the move, the risk is more than worth it.

The cache of supernatural relics, potions, rituals, and spells, when combined with stockpiles of armaments and psychic abilities, is far more than the average hunter dreams about. Sometimes these abilities are accepted as a gift from the heavens, while other times they’re wielded as a

shield to force the darkness back into the shadows. Whatever the methodology, Endowments mark their wielders in some way and, like the Vigil, it's not something you can un-see.

The Endowments provided in this book are some of the bread-and-butter Endowments used by their respective conspiracies. These are the ones that most hunters in a conspiracy will know or learn over time, but we also include rules for making your own using select Relics from the Aegis Kai Doru in Chapter Eight: Storytelling on p. XX.

Conspiracy-related Endowments include:

- **Advanced Armory:** Task Force: VALKYRIE, p. XX.
- **Benediction:** Malleus Maleficarum, p. XX.
- **Castigation:** The Lucifuge, p. XX.
- **Elixir:** The Ascending Ones, p. XX.
- **Perispiritism:** Council of Bones, p. XX.
- **Teleformatics:** VASCU, see the Slasher Chronicle on p. XX.
- **Thaumatechnology:** The Cheiron Group, p. XX.

Using Endowments

Each conspiracy has access to a completely unique set of powers. While they may look similar in structure, how they function is vastly different. One may look as mundane as high-powered weapons while another is literally fueled by the hunter's demonic blood.

How a hunter gains access to his Endowments, how he activates them, and what kind of backlash comes from using them is defined in each individual Endowment. For our purposes though, Endowments are distinctly supernatural powers and using them creates some internal conflict for the hunter who is bound by a Code to defeat monsters. This isn't to say that hunters view using Endowments as Code violations, otherwise only the most unscrupulous hunter would use them. But it does mean that using them often or choosing to use an Endowment instead of a mundane solution is a conscious choice the hunter makes, and she justifies it however she can. This is where Touchstones come in handy, as she uses these people to remind her why she is different from the monsters she hunts.

Hunters are not supernatural, but the Endowments they use are. As such, they can be used by any hunter regardless of their physical abilities. There is, however, a cost to using them. Sometimes the toll of using these powers shows itself in the way of a backlash. Particularly powerful or overtly supernatural Endowments have a backlash listed for each use. Some Endowments have a baked-in backlash that isn't specific to the individual powers.

Against the Supernatural

Hunters fight the supernatural. They fight against the creatures of the night and to protect the ones they love. Every now and then, they might fight another hunter, or a mortal in thrall of a monster, but they reserve their most dangerous Endowments for the creatures themselves.

Some Endowments are contested or resisted. The dice pools listed are for use against normal mortals and monsters alike. But some monsters have a better ability to resist powers. If a monster has a Supernatural Tolerance rating (see p. XX), then it applies that rating as normal to Contested

rolls against a power. Additionally, sometimes an Endowment's powers will directly oppose a monster's power (or another Endowment). For example, a Lucifuge who commands a demon to attack a child of the Seventh Generation who can *also* command demons may find themselves in opposition, and a hunter who uses an Endowment to see the hidden may come into direct conflict with a monster that has a Dread Power that makes it invisible.

When this happens, there is a Clash of Wills. All characters using conflicting powers enter a contested roll-off, each using a pool based on her type. Hunters use their Highest Resistance Attribute + Occult, while Monsters use their Potency + their Dread Power rating. Supernatural creatures without Dread Powers, such as those found in other Chronicles of Darkness games, use different rolls depending on what they are. Ties reroll until one player has accrued more successes than all others. The effect invoked by that player's character wins out and resolves as usual, while all others fail. Victory of one power in a clash does not mean the immediate cancellation of the others, save in cases where only one power can possibly endure.

Characters may spend Willpower to bolster the contested roll, but only if they are physically present and aware that powers are clashing. Certain powers, such as those with exceptionally long durations, are more enduring in a clash. Night-long effects add one die to the clash roll, weeklong effects add two, month-long effects three, and effects that last a year or longer add four.

Gaining Endowments

You may purchase Endowments related to the conspiracy of which your character is a member. She must have at least one dot in the correct conspiracy Status Merit (p. XX) to purchase new Endowments. Each hunter begins the game with two Endowments at character creation. Purchasing a new Endowment costs three Experiences each. Some Endowments are collections of powers, which are rated one through five (such as Elixir, Benediction, and Advanced Armory). In this case, when you purchase an Endowment, you gain a dot rating in that collection. This purchase still gives you an individual Endowment, but it might also serve another purpose such as dictating how many items you can carry, or how powerful your Endowment is.

A hunter can only learn Endowments from the conspiracy to which she currently belongs. If she leaves a conspiracy and joins another, she does not lose the Endowments she gained in the old conspiracy but cannot learn new Endowments from her past organization. The only exception to this is if the hunter belonged to Task Force: VALKYRIE, as they no longer have access to the armory when they leave, and even if they take equipment with them, they are likely to run out of ammunition. Using Endowments from a past organization may cause that group to come asking questions. Conspiracies might allow the risk of a hunter running off with their secrets, but that doesn't mean they don't act to prevent a hunter from doing so. Lucifuge who leave the conspiracy are particularly at risk for their past to come hunting them down. A hunter who leaves a conspiracy and chooses to lose her Endowments — or has to, in the case of TFV — benefits from the Sanctity of Merits rule, which allows her to regain her spent Experiences on the Endowments to spend elsewhere on her sheet, or on new Endowments from a new conspiracy.

Advanced Armory

Task Force: VALKYRIE isn't in the business of supernatural wares. They don't send prayers to gods who won't listen, they don't drink poison hoping it isn't worse than the monster's bite, and they certainly don't treat with monsters to gain their powers. Instead, they rely on the cold, hard

truths of guns and ammunition. Now, those guns might be barking something as dangerous as hellfire, but at least agents know it is technology that fuels their fight, not magic. Or at least they hope so.

While no one would slight the courage of TFV operatives (at least, not within earshot), no one can deny the surge of monsters is dangerous, unpredictable, and often extremely hard to capture. Thankfully for TFV, if there's one thing the American military-industrial complex is good at, it's *overkill* — but unlike rites or special abilities, ammunition is not a renewable resource. An agent must keep their weapon in proper working order and replace ammunition when spent.

Task Force: VALKYRIE recognizes that it operates on a fine line. Since they don't use supernatural methods to fight monsters, their operatives are at greater risk than other hunters. They take security and the safety of their agents extremely seriously. Each agent gets a small RFID chip implanted in their body shortly after recruitment. This RFID chip serves two purposes. The first is that it gives the agent access to the armory and every item inside contains a reader that recognizes TFV RFID signals. Each weapon is built with hard locks that will not disengage unless it can detect a chip's frequency. The second is to store information about the agent in case they are lost in the line of duty.

Accessing the Armory

All TFV Endowments are readily available to any agent with an RFID chip, but they are also consumable; even if the advanced weapon is still in working condition its ammo gets depleted. This is represented by the item's Loadout, which is how often an agent needs to bring the advanced armory weapon back to base for ammunition, cleaning, or changing out.

Loadout is automatically refreshed when operatives resupply by checking in with their local field office. At that time, a TFV operative may swap out their existing Endowments for something new, provided their RFID implant is working correctly and the weapon is available. Though TFV is capable, it is also a small agency and some of its armaments are unique.

If a hunter leaves TFV, they deactivate her RFID chip and deny her access to the armory. She still knows where they keep their armories, but only a heist will give her access to equipment. She effectively loses access to the Endowment and any Experiences she spent are refunded to her.

TFV encourages agents to change out Endowments as often as necessary depending on what they are hunting. This flexibility in the agent's repertoire is represented by the Endowment's cost. Advanced Armory is rated one to five; each dot she purchases represents access to a new piece of equipment from the armory. Essentially, it represents what she's allowed to check out at one time. Instead of purchasing each Endowment separately, the hunter simply picks a number of Endowments at the beginning of each session based on her Advanced Armory rating, and that is what she has. If she wishes to change out an item through the course of the game, it may require a scene to make the exchange, but she can easily do so.

Equalizer Grenade

Monsters come in all shapes and sizes, though plenty of them wear human faces, hiding their true form from humanity in the slim chance no one will notice them. They lose all precepts when in a fight though, turning into the monstrosities that they are, and making it harder for a team to take them down. The equalizer grenade stops that kind of activity right in its tracks.

Using a flashing light that tricks the brain, it somehow disrupts the shape-change process before it can start. As long as the grenade is flashing, the monster is incapable of changing its form, for good or ill. Agents aren't sure why it works, but some squint in a lab somewhere figured it out, probably with several failed field tests no one talks about. Either way, the agency has them in abundance and agents can get as many as 6 grenades per Loadout.

Loadout: Two sessions

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The agent simply has to pull the pin and throw the grenade. It doesn't do any damage, but emits a flash of light. If a monster attempts to use a shapeshifting Dread Power, such as Animal Shift, it provokes a Clash of Wills, with the hunter rolling the highest of his Resistance Attributes + Advanced Armory instead of Occult. If the hunter wins, the monster remains in its mortal guise.

Etheric Goggles

Ghosts and spirits reside just beyond the veil, biding their time and building strength. These creatures gain influence, manipulating people's souls and energies in places until they finally have enough power and influence to manifest and cause all sorts of havoc. With Etheric Goggles though, Task Force: VALKYRIE agents can pierce the veil and take sight of their targets before they come across. Etheric Goggles look like normal, night-vision goggles, but have a small button on the side to transfer vision into the Twilight. They work for every hunter, regardless of sight.

Loadout: Three sessions

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

With a quick flick of a button, the agent can peer into Twilight. Any entity in Twilight appears to glow a phosphorescent blue. The goggles don't let the agents touch or speak with the entities, but they can trace or track them. Additionally, if an agent is trying to locate something with the Anchor Condition, the goggles grant a +3 bonus to investigation rolls.

Etheric Capsule Rounds

Etheric Capsule Rounds resemble normal bullets — save for the glossy tips that glow faintly in the dark. When fired, the propellant excites the etheric compound inside the projectile, causing it to expand violently upon encountering another etheric field or when striking a physical target.

Nicknamed "Ghost Paint," EC rounds directly injure ephemeral entities. When shot at an ephemeral entity who is Manifested, the soft-shelled bullet causes a painful burning sensation on the target's exposed skin and mucous membranes. Against mortals, EC rounds aren't as effective, though they will sting and cause welts when they contact the skin. Otherwise, EC rounds are nonlethal.

Loadout: 1 session

When used against an ephemeral entity that is Manifested, the bullets deal lethal damage instead of bashing. Additionally, if the entity is not Manifested, the bullets can affect entities in Twilight and deal bashing damage. EC rounds deal bashing damage to objects, mortals, and monsters.

Teaming Up with Who? Missing Scientists What?

Task Force: VALKYRIE know it's better to take orders than to ask questions, but some operatives are starting to feel that their commanders are keeping more secrets than usual. TFV operatives recognize the need to change or alter their munitions, but don't understand why they've seen other conspiracy members visiting headquarters. Thus far, the Ascending Ones and the Cheiron Group's field agents have both been spotted chatting up Operation ADAMSKI agents, leading some TFV operatives to believe the rumors are true. For months, operatives have been receiving the all clear, signaling nothing is wrong at HQ — even though one of Project FORT's team leaders, Rodrigo Garcia, *knows* this can't be true.

According to Garcia, several TFV scientists have either been kidnapped or were found dead of natural causes. Garcia speculates this can only mean one of two things: either TFV's command is compromised, or their leaders suspect an enemy has infiltrated their ranks. In any case, it's clear TFV has suffered from a security breach, which would explain why the conspiracy is forging alliances with other hunters they normally wouldn't.

Huginn Visor

Monsters of all stripes have ways of trying to manipulate the minds and hearts of their prey. Task Force: VALKYRIE technicians have learned that this invariably requires eye contact to perform. The Huginn visor appears as a set of normal dark sunglasses, but it is coated with a special film that gives the agent some protection against mind-altering powers.

Agents joke that whatever chemical they put on it must come from space. Maybe it does, but no one really cares when it keeps their heads on straight.

Loadout: One session

Whenever a monster's Dread Power (or other supernatural creature's power) necessitates eye contact or needs line of sight to the victim to function, the creature suffers a -3 penalty to activate the power against any hunter who wears the visor.

Mjolnir Cannon

Nothing in the TFV arsenal represents overkill like the Mjolnir Cannon. The portable version of the system consists of two elements: a heavy battery, typically carried in a backpack, and a modified rocket launcher with integrated lenses, electrodes, and heavy shielding. At its lowest power setting, the Mjolnir functions as a long-range taser, paralyzing the target with rapid pulses of electricity channeled down the ionized path created by the taser.

At higher power levels, the Mjolnir earns its name, firing nothing short of a man-made lightning bolt — hearing protection and grounding equipment are required for all teams employing the Mjolnir Cannon. The etheric battery used to power the Mjolnir is notoriously finicky, and, if overused, has been known to detonate.

Loadout: One session

On its low setting, the Mjolnir Cannon is a ranged weapon a damage rating of 1, range 20/40/80, Clip 4, Initiative -1. When the Mjolnir deals damage, it inflicts the Stunned Tilt on the target. When its Clip is exhausted, the Mjolnir must recycle its batteries for two turns.

When used on its high setting, the Mjolnir Cannon is a ranged weapon with a damage rating of 4, Clip 2, Initiative -3. The Mjolnir Cannon inflicts the Knocked Down Tilt to its target if it hits. Any targets within shouting distance of both the weapon and the target suffer from the Deafened Tilt unless they're wearing hearing protection.

Muninn Serum

No matter how well prepared, how careful, and how special ops a Task Force: VALKYRIE team may be, there's always the chance someone might witness the action going down. It isn't always the team's fault, either. It might be a case of bad circumstances, or just the fact that they had to save someone from a monster's grasp. Every hunter knows that once you've had a brush with the supernatural, you'll never forget it.

That is, unless someone helps you along with a little chemical assistance. Task Force: VALKYRIE scientists have developed a more potent and targeted form of the strongest drugs that cause temporary amnesia and short-term memory loss. The result is Muninn Serum and, with a single injection, an agent can wipe away a whole night's worth of bad memories.

Loadout: One syringe per session.

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The operative must administer the dose intravenously. If the target is unwilling, the agent must make an attack roll to inject the serum. The drug has a mild burn to it, but nothing worse than a tetanus shot. Once injected, the subject is inflicted with the Drugged Tilt. During this time, the agent can ask the subject to recount memories, which the subject will do to the best of her ability. Once recounted, she forgets it ever happened. Even if she chooses to lie about specific portions of the event, she forgets everything at the end.

Odin Reticle

The all-seeing eye of Odin is, in this case, a small LCD screen and camera combination that feeds a specialized display to the wearer. This device is designed to attach to any other goggle type, such as the Etheric Goggles or the Huginn Visor. It isn't perfect, but few things can trick the various cameras attached to the Odin Reticle's display.

Loadout: 3 sessions

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

When activated, it grants a Clash of Wills against anyone attempting to hide themselves using supernatural means that trick the mind. Hunters using the Odin Reticle for the Clash of Wills roll their Highest Resistance Attribute + Advanced Armory rating instead of Occult.

V.D.S.B.

Every TFV operator knows monsters prefer shadows to sunny daylight and understands that sometimes the difference between winning and losing is a well-lit field of battle. While creatures like vampires might be allergic to sunlight, most monsters aren't happy when the full force of ultra-bright, white light hits them directly in the eye.

The V.D.S.B. (Victim-Detonated Sun Bomb) is a rigged explosive device that is triggered with a combination of infrared, motion, and thermal sensors. Coded to find vampires specifically, anything that falls within a specific infrared spectrum or motion profile will detonate the bomb. Agents have found that most monsters seem to fit the bill, though they don't know how the technicians programmed the device to be so precise as to not trip with human activity.

The resultant effect is a flash of light bright enough to blind anyone and everyone in the vicinity. Agents often wear special sunglasses that protect them from the bright light as they come in to deal with the hopefully stunned monster. The agency generally only provides one such bomb per Loadout.

Loadout: One session

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

When tripped, a searing, bright, phosphorescent light fills the space. Anyone in view of the bomb when it detonates must roll for surprise. If they fail, they gain the Stunned Tilt. For the rest of the scene, sighted players who are not wearing special eyeglasses will acquire the Blinded Tilt.

Benediction

Arcane rituals and rites codified within the Catholic Church from before ancient times, Benediction rituals serve as a bulwark between man and monster. Used throughout history to protect the masses from the darkness, from exorcism rites to the creations of holy and blessed weapons, Benediction is not just a toolset the Catholic Church uses, it is a holy scripture the Malleus Maleficarum use to smite evil.

With the aid of God and the intercession of the saints, the Malleus Maleficarum's hunters produce miracles in their war against wickedness. In modern times, knowledge of these rituals is not enough to perform them; a hunter must be Catholic and receive the pope's blessing to get a hotline to Heaven. Should any hunter fall from grace, the penalty is the revocation of their membership in the Catholic Church and, as a result, the Malleus Maleficarum conspiracy as well. Malleus Maleficarum hunters are not required to be clergy members, but they are expected to walk the path of the just and righteous by maintaining the Code, their Integrity, and their Touchstones.

Virtuous Rituals

Benediction comes in the form of rituals. The Lucifuge must spend time, effort, and possibly even small material sacrifices to draw upon the blessed. Malleus Maleficarum hunters learn their Endowments slightly differently than others. When the player purchases Benediction she gets a dot in the Benediction Endowment (each dot costing three Experiences) and learns a ritual. She

can purchase additional rituals for 3 Experiences each. Her Benediction rating affects both her activation roll on rituals, and how powerful her rituals are. The highest her Benediction rating can ever be is 5.

Additionally, Benediction requires the user to be appropriately virtuous to work properly. The hunter's Benediction rating is modified by her Integrity beyond 5. Each dot below 5 subtracts one from her effective Benediction rating for purposes of roll results and ritual benefits.

When the hunter wishes to cast a ritual, she must spend a Willpower and say a specialized prayer. Each ritual specifies a target success total the ritualist must gain to complete it. Rituals last until the next day unless otherwise noted in the text. A hunter cannot benefit more than once from the same ritual at a time. For example, she may be able to call upon the blessing of St. Luke multiple times a day to heal someone, but she can only gain the blessing of St. George once a day.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Benediction

Action: Extend. Target successes are listed per ritual. Ritualists may roll as many times as their unmodified dice pool. The base time per roll is one hour. A ritual must be completed in one attempt. The ritual automatically fails if interrupted, and the ritualist does not gain the benefit of her Defense while casting. Many rituals are also contested or resisted, as noted in their description.

She gains the benefit of Merits that may reduce the time it takes to take an Extended action.

Duration: One day (or variable)

Roll Results

Success: The ritualist accumulates successes as normal. If the target number of successes is met, the ritual finishes immediately.

Exceptional Success: The ritualist makes great strides in finishing the ritual. The player decides which of the following effects takes place in addition to accumulating successes. If the target success total is met, the ritual finishes immediately.

- Reduce the target success total by her dots in Benediction.
- Reduce the time per roll by 15 minutes.
- Apply the Steadfast Condition if and when the ritual succeeds.

Failure: The ritualist is having difficulty and accumulates no successes. The player decides whether to abandon the ritual or continue. If the ritualist continues, she gains the Stumbled Condition.

Dramatic Failure: The ritualist is having a crisis of faith. Not only does the ritual fail, but she gains the Shaken Condition.

Armor of St. Martin

Target success total: 7

The forces of darkness against which the Malleus Maleficarum hunters stand are numerous and dangerous, with claws, fangs, and terrifying powers that shred the faithful. The hunter prays to

St. Martin, the patron saint of soldiers, to provide a shield against the darkness. The hunter gains an armor rating equal to her Benediction rating against both general and ballistic attacks, with full-body coverage. When the Armor of St. Martin is active, its presence is imperceptible to the natural senses. This armor does not stack with other forms of armor.

The Boon of Lazarus

Target success total: 8

Calling upon the power of God himself, the hunter channels his power like he did with Lazarus in the tomb. The hunter prays over the corpse and imbues it with holy light and life. The target comes back to life with full health, but no Willpower. The ritual takes a toll on the ritualist as well. Instead of the normal 1 Willpower cost, performing the ritual costs a *dot* of Willpower. The ritual cannot restore missing limbs, and if used on someone decapitated or dismembered, then they remain so after the ritual is complete.

This ritual can only be performed on the recently deceased and must start within minutes (no more than five) of death. If the ritualist attempts to perform this on a body that has been dead longer, it comes back alive, but has the Soulless Condition, which can never be resolved.

Epipodian Safeguard

Target success total: 7

The ritualist says a prayer to St. Epipodius, the patron saint of the betrayed, to help protect her mind from attacks that would cause her to betray her friends. She gains a bonus equal to her dots in Benediction to resist mental domination, either by a Dread Power, Numen, or other supernatural ability. If this is a contested roll, she gains that number of dice to the roll; if it is resisted, the number is subtracted from her attacker's pool along with any other resistance she may have.

Fortitude of St. George

Target success total: 6

The hunter calls upon the blessing of St. George, slayer of dragons and one who endured great torment and hardship at the hands of the Romans. The ritualist is imbued by his strength, allowing them to continue forward against all odds. The ritualist gains a single dot of Stamina (which increases her Health by one as well). If she would suffer from a Condition or Tilt from exertion, hunger, thirst, or exhaustion she may roll her Stamina + Benediction to resist having it applied.

A Malevolent Force Within the Church?

Buried deep within the Order of St. Ambrose's archives is a pamphlet so insidious it is under constant surveillance and guard to prevent other hunters from laying eyes on it. The tract, published and distributed in 2012, urges the Shadow Congregation to abandon the Vatican and side with a rising power — led by a so-called “black pope” or anti-pope — to end the spreading darkness once and for all. The pamphlet goes on to list the benefits of siding with the anti-pope, which includes the stunning proclamation that hunters who receive the anti-pope's blessing may retain use of Benedictions as a sign that God favors this new authority.

Malleus scholars have verified the authenticity of the tract, but don't know how many copies were distributed or printed. Within the Order of St. Ambrose, hunters argue, wondering why this tract must be kept hidden and why more resources aren't being dedicated to its investigation. Only Malleus hunters with the highest status know the truth: A secret order, named after the patron saint of desperate situations, was founded within the last year. Dubbed the Order of St. Jude, the hunters have been charged to go so deep undercover even other Malleus members don't know they exist.

Hands of St. Luke

Target success total: 8

With a prayer to St. Luke, the patron saint of physicians and surgeons, the hunter can call upon his divine power to fix limbs and reduce hurt in an instant. Once the ritual is complete, the hunter immediately heals a number of bashing or lethal damage either on herself or another target equal to her dots in Benediction. Or, she can reduce aggravated damage down to lethal damage at the same rate. Additionally, the target resolves the Crippled Condition. If the hunter spends a Willpower *dot* on activation, she can resolve the Persistent version of the Crippled Condition.

Shepherd's Blessing

Target success total: 6

The hunter makes a short prayer, though this can go to any saint. He asks for general protection, sight unseen. For a scene, people overlook the hunter as though he isn't there. This isn't the same as being invisible. Cameras will still pick him up on film and people still *see* him, they just don't register him as there at the time. They may remember him being there if recalling the scene later, but he does not alert people or arouse suspicion, even if no one else is supposed to be around. If someone is using a supernatural power that lets them see through illusion or protects against mental effects, it provokes a Clash of Wills, and the hunter adds his Benediction rating to his roll.

Vade Retro Satana

Target success total: 7

Contested by: Power + Resistance

The hunter calls upon the Vade Retro Satana, a prayer designed to exorcise spirits and ghosts. Using repeated prayer, religious symbols, and calling upon God's aid, the ritualist damages an ephemeral entity with his holy wrath. Not only does this ritual count as a successful use of an exorcism, abjuration, warding, or binding, but the ritualist inflicts lethal damage to the ephemeral entity target equal to his Benediction rating.

Wrathful Sword of St. Michael the Archangel

Target success total: 7

The hunter calls upon St. Michael, the general of the heavenly host, to imbue an Earthly weapon with the divine power to smite the devils that haunt humankind. The ritual must be performed in the presence of a melee weapon the hunter is attempting to bless. Upon success, the weapon glows with a bright, white light. When wielded against a monster, the weapon has a lethal damage rating equal to the hunter's Benediction rating.

Castigation

The Lucifuge sit as living contradictions. They pledge their lives to fighting off the darkness, but they use that very same darkness in their veins to do so. Using these dark powers is a struggle for even the oldest Lucifuge. They justify it to themselves; they tell themselves that if they don't use their darkness for the good of all, then no one will. But in the end, they are addicted to the rush of the power, and simultaneously terrified of what that means. No one wants to wake up in the morning and realize she is the very monster she hunts, though the Lucifuge wonder this upon waking every day.

For centuries, members of the Lucifuge have performed the rites of Castigation by sacrificing fresh, human blood. The source of this blood, whether it flowed through their own veins or through another's, did not matter until recently. Whether by design or circumstance, Lucifuge hunters must now hurt themselves and use their own blood in their infernal rites. This has impacted the conspiracy in subtle and significant ways, and many hunters wonder what this means. Did the Morningstar find the means to punish the Seventh Generation? Is the Lucifuge herself involved? Or, is there another mechanism at work, tampering with the infernal to experiment on this unique lineage of infernalists turned hunters? Many members of the Lucifuge are troubled by their experiences and are secretly investigating the nature of demons and the infernal when they're not on a hunt. While the Lucifuge members can and do hunt in mixed company, the side effects of their Castigation rites may make other hunters skittish or openly hostile.

Unlike other hunters, a Lucifuge can't just leave their conspiracy and decide to eschew their Endowments. Sure, they could try to stop using Castigation, but the singing in their blood brings them right back around to it. They cannot rid themselves of it any more than they could teach another to utilize it. If a Lucifuge attempts to leave the conspiracy, she becomes hunted, painted as a creature who finally embraced her demonic roots. Though this might be farthest from the truth, the Lucifuge feel they need to keep a tight rein on their members and the infernal power they control, for the sake of all humanity.

Using Castigation Rites

Castigation is both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, the Lucifuge has access to a terrifying and effective set of powers. On the other hand, the use of those powers marks her as demonic in the eyes of others, and leaves a mark on her soul. It's a balance that all Lucifuge must maintain, otherwise get hunted by their peers. That mark on her soul is one she cannot will away, and one that haunts her even as it tempts her. Using Castigation in a scene in which a character also suffers a breaking point counts as a -3 modifier to the roll. Additionally, the player must immediately roll Resolve + Composure after using Castigation for the character to resist the temptation to do it again. This roll suffers a -1 cumulative penalty for each time she has used a Castigation in the same day. If she fails, she gains the Addicted Condition for using Castigation. She can shake the addiction by resisting the urge to use Castigation for a full day.

Despite all this, the Lucifuge have an ally in the Lady of Milan. She helps them hone their ability, learn to control their urges, and gives them a path to walk that keeps them from trouble. The Lady calls the Children of the Seventh Generation to stand before her and make a terrible choice: to join her and fight the darkness in all its forms, or to die. When they join the Lucifuge,

she gives them a gift: a virtuous path that may, one day, save them from their unholy heritage. Hunters who are active members of the Lucifuge gain the Will of the Lucifuge Condition.

Demons or Demons

The Lucifuge are the mortal descendants of Lucifer, a literal demon and ruler of Hell. For the purposes of **Hunter**, the demons Lucifuge hunt are monsters with the Infernal Dread Power. There are other creatures called demons in the world, but unless they are infernal demons, the Lucifuge have no power to command or call them.

[THE FOLLOWING IS A CONDITION, FORMAT APPROPRIATELY]

Will of the Lucifuge (Persistent)

In exchange for a hunter's vow to uphold the Vigil and to do the Lucifuge's bidding, hunters may treat the Will of the Lucifuge as a second Virtue. When the hunter acts in accordance with the Lady of Milan's decrees in a way that poses difficult or risk to their personal safety, they regain all their spent Willpower points.

Resolution: When the hunter's membership in the Lucifuge ends.

Beat: If the character resists the Lucifuge's Will, gain a Beat.

[END CONDITION]

Calling Forth the Pit

The Lucifuge hold a tenuous connection to their dark ancestor, and as such a connection to all he is and does. When Lucifer was cast down to Hell, he used his power and will to create a home for himself and his demonic followers. He put his own flesh and blood into making the unholy city, and as such is an intrinsic part of it. This means the Lucifuge, too, have a connection to Hell and even the very demons who reside there. A Lucifuge may command the pit to either bring forth a demon or cast one back into it. This summoning is, in effect, both within and outside the mortal realm. Summoned demons may be treated with and bound to oaths but the Lucifuge does not have control by default when it arrives — care should be taken, lest the demon break free and wreak havoc.

Cost: 1 point of lethal damage

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult – Resistance

Action: Extended. Each roll represents 30 minutes of ritual casting and the ritualist must achieve 10 successes to summon or banish a demon.

Roll Results

Success: The ritual acquires successes. If enough successes are gathered to finish the ritual, the demon is summoned (or banished). If summoned, a demon acts of its own free will unless the Lucifuge immediately uses the Mandate of Hell Endowment. In general, the demon will recognize the Lucifuge as one of its own and not attack her, but that protection does not extend to her friends. If banished, the demon immediately leaves the mortal world.

Exceptional Success: The ritualist makes great strides in summoning the demon. Choose one of the following: Reduce the number of successes required by the character's Occult dots, reduce

the time between rolls by 10 minutes, or gain the 8-again rule for future interactions with the demon once it's summoned.

Failure: The ritualist falters, and the demon struggles against the ritual's pull. The ritualist can continue but must take the Spooked Condition.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter loses control over the ritual and the demon lashes out (even from afar if a summoning). The ritualist gains the Shaken Condition. The demon is immune to similar ritual attempts for the next 24 hours.

Forged in Fire

Hell is well-known for its fiery pits and brimstone décor. The very concept of infernal recalls the idea of burning flesh and intense heat. It's little wonder then that the Lucifuge are also drawn to fire in all its forms. Those who have the blood of Hell's creator running through their veins have a bit more resilience toward it than the average person.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

Duration: One scene

A Lucifuge may activate this Endowment to become immune to damage caused by fire for the rest of the scene. While her clothes and armor may burn up in flames, her skin remains undamaged by fire's effects. And while smoke won't burn her lungs if she inhales it, she is not immune to the after effects of filling her lungs with ash, or the lack of oxygen that comes along with it. If she is in an area where she suffers from the Extreme Heat or Inferno Environmental Tilts, she suffers no damage from the fire itself. She halves any damage or penalties that come from smoke or inhalation.

Backlash: The Lucifuge's skin isn't fire-resistant exactly, instead her infernal blood acts to shield her from the fire's effect. This means that any time she is exposed to fire or the Extreme Heat Tilt, her skin lets off a soft red glow, which imposes a -2 penalty to Social rolls with most people.

Gaze of the Penitent

If there's one thing the Lucifuge know better than anything, it's a desire to repent. To scour the soul of its stains and sins and be reborn anew. Hell, to them, is a place not only of eternal torment, but one where those fires cleanse souls, a place of penitence and understanding of guilt.

The Lucifuge can draw upon Hell's burning wrath to inflict the pain of guilt and the desire for repentance on someone else.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy vs. Resolve

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Success: The hunter's victim feels a burning desire to repent all his sins and seek forgiveness. The victim suffers from the Guilty Condition. Additionally, for the rest of the scene, the Lucifuge gains +2 on Social rolls against her victim.

Exceptional Success: The victim suffers the Broken Condition instead of Guilty.

Failure: The Lucifuge brings forth the wrath of Hell, but his victim fails to care.

Dramatic Failure: The Lucifuge brings forth the burning pain of Hell but inflicts it upon himself. He gains the Guilty Condition.

Hellfire

In western occultism, the infernal realm called "Hell" is marked by fire and brimstone that burns ever more. Lucifer Morningstar, the fallen "Light Bringer," wields hellfire to smite his enemies and punish the wicked — and his Children of the Seventh Generation may do the same.

Lucifuge members bear a hidden flicker, a tiny flame of white-hot hellfire they may call forth at will. Hellfire is no ordinary incendiary device, however, its flames ache to spread and burn. Its fires reek of rotten eggs, alerting all who near them the infernal is nearby. Hunters who are careless (or arrogant) with hellfire often watch in terror as the flames spread, claiming innocent lives.

Cost: 1 point of lethal damage

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

The hunter summons hellfire, which quickly sets everything else on fire. If the Lucifuge attempts to use this as an attack, it counts as a +2 lethal weapon modifier to an athletics attack as he hurls the flame at his target. If the victim is wearing armor, it works as normal against the fire attack, but does catch on fire. Otherwise, the hellfire catches the surrounding area on fire. The next turn, the area (size of a small room or the confines of whatever room the Lucifuge is in) gains the Inferno Environmental Tilt. The Lucifuge cannot control this fire once its spread and suffers any ill effects of the fire just like anyone else caught in the blast unless he has the Forged in Fire Endowment.

Mandate of Hell

By their very nature, the Lucifuge carries Lucifer's blood within her veins. No matter how diluted that blood, every demon recognizes her position as akin to royalty. The Lucifuge can leverage this blood tie to bend demons to her will. With time, she can learn how to subjugate these demons, giving a command with a simple look or single meaningful word used to convey her desires. Of course, mastering such a trick is one that most Lucifuge have no interest in doing, as it only cements their place in hell.

If the hunter knows the name of the demon she is commanding, she gains a +2 bonus to her dice pool.

Prerequisite: Calling Forth the Pit

Cost: None or 1 Willpower (see below)

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation vs. Resistance

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Success: Without spending Willpower, the hunter can issue a single, short command, no more than a few words. This command has to be direct and actionable such as “attack him” or “bow to me” — it cannot be something vague such as “listen to me” or “do what I say.” If the hunter spends a Willpower at activation, she can give a more complex command with no more than two steps in it: “Go to the church and bring me back the priest” or “attack him, but do not kill him.” The demon acts immediately to enact the command given, though it chooses its route or how to go about the action. If the hunter wants to give it more actions to take, she must use this Endowment again.

Exceptional Success: The hunter may give an additional command to the demon or add an additional step to a complex command.

Failure: The demon ignores her commands.

Dramatic Failure: The demon listens to the order and carries out the exact *opposite* action, wreaking chaos and havoc.

Sense Weakness

Everyone has a weakness, for most people it's their connection to their loved ones, or a vice they can't help to indulge. Monsters also have weaknesses, though never as mundane as vice or love. Lucifer, The Great Deceiver, uses it to infiltrate, undermine, and tempt. His descendants have a knack for sensing weakness in their prey and utilizing it to great effect.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy vs. Finesse

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Success: With a quick study of its name or just a description, the Lucifuge learns his foe's greatest weakness. He can learn one of the following about his enemy: one of its banes, any Dread Powers that give it a weakness, or the name of an infernal demon.

Exceptional Success: The Lucifuge also gains the Informed Condition about his subject.

Failure: The hunter cannot glean any information about her target.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter looks too far and sees a darkness within. She gains the Spooked Condition.

Tongue of Babel

Shortly after the flood, humanity was united under a single language in the ancient city of Babel. But they reached too far and sought too much and, when God noticed, he dispersed humanity across the globe and ensured they all spoke different languages. Rumor abounds that this was a design by Lucifer to grant humanity access to heaven. His attempt failed, though remnants of his language persist today in everything humans do.

While the language is lost, the Lucifuge can hear it singing still in their blood. Those who have studied it know it forms the foundation for all other languages in humanity, and through their connection can parse understanding from any spoken language.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The hunter may activate this Endowment to understand any spoken language for the rest of the scene. He can speak and understand literally any language on Earth. He does not necessarily know those languages, but instead knows the universal language well enough that when he speaks it, his blood works to allow anyone who hears it to interpret it as their own language. As well, when he hears someone speak, he translates it automatically into a language he understands. This doesn't always translate to the written word, as the ancient humans in Babel didn't write their language down. Nor does it allow him to understand languages supernatural in nature, such as those spoken by demons or monsters, or incantations used by witches.

Whenever using Tongue of Babel, the Lucifuge can pick up on all aspects of language use, including social cues and body language. When she attempts a Social Maneuver against a person while Tongue of Babel is active, she moves up one position on the Impression chart (p. XX).

Elixir

Alchemy is the art of transforming one substance into another. Truly advanced practitioners of the art need no laboratory or tools to perform their miracles — their own body and enlightenment suffices. The Ascending Ones guard the secrets of internal alchemy, for they are easily abused and dangerous to the uninitiated. Many elixirs are highly toxic without an alchemical touch, and a few may seriously harm or cause a fatal reaction.

Elixir Endowments represent the knowledge and training needed not only to prepare the alchemical cocktail the hunter imbibes, but to transform the reagents within herself and redirect that energy as needed.

Elixir Endowments require consumable exotic reagents and substances. The Ascending Ones have stockpiles of reagents available to their members, and members know where and how to acquire new reagents for their most used Endowments. Ingredient lists for elixirs are well-kept secrets to which members only gain access after demonstrating ability and knowledge. While members are assumed to have ready access to the reagents they need, rouge hunters using elixirs have a harder time procuring reagents. The Ascending Ones warn that reagents bought outside of their auspices can be dangerous or impure. Despite these warnings, there is a growing number of reports that rogue alchemists are stealing and stockpiling ingredients to sell on the black market. At present, the conspiracy has not revealed how it plans to resolve the issue and appears to be more concerned about their current members.

When Ascending Ones first learn alchemy, they learn not only to mix potions and brews, but how to imbibe such without poisoning themselves. This process is not fast, and hunters in the field using elixirs have been members for years before finally mastering the technique. But each new elixir requires a new skill set. Learning a new elixir, both how to make it and how to proper

imbibe it takes time and training which is represented by several days of uninterrupted study (and spending the requisite Experiences).

Developing a whole new concoction used to take months, if not years, but with access to a few specific lab spaces, an abundance of reagents, and proper training, making new elixirs now takes a matter of weeks. To invent a completely new elixir (never seen before), the Ascending One must perform an extended action and net 10 successes using her Intelligence + Medicine, with each roll representing a week of time. New elixir creation is subject to Storyteller approval.

Using Elixirs

Elixirs are by nature one-use items. When a hunter purchases the Elixir Endowment, she is buying the ability to utilize new recipes. She purchases dots in Elixir instead of each individual Endowment. At each dot of Elixir, she gains a new recipe for free. She can purchase additional recipes for three Experiences each. The Ascending One can only hold as many prepared elixirs on her person as she has dots in Elixir plus her Stamina rating. Making a new elixir takes an hour, but does not require a roll. When the hunter wishes to use her elixir, she must apply the elixir to herself in some way (apply a salve, imbibe a liquid, inhale a smoke). Elixirs may have additional costs other than this action to activate. Using most elixirs requires an instant action using the following rules. Some may be extended actions in which case they have their own roll results.

If someone without at least one dot in the Elixir Endowment attempts to use the elixir (or it is applied to someone without training) then they suffer the dramatic failure result. Applying an elixir this way requires a touch attack, or a maneuver during a grapple.

Cost: Variable

Dice Pool: Stamina + Elixir

Action: Instant (Some actions may be contested or resisted)

Duration: Variable

Roll Results

Success: The hunter succeeds in converting the alchemical compound and produces the desired effect.

Exceptional Success: Variable depending on the effect.

Failure: The reaction fizzles and the Ascending One gains the Drugged Tilt.

Dramatic Failure: The alchemist fails to convert the alchemical compounds and suffers the lesser version of the Sick Tilt. If it is used outside of combat, she suffers the moderate version of the Poisoned Tilt instead.

Amun's Water

Taking their cues from the monsters they hunt, the Ascending Ones have developed an elixir that allows them to pass unnoticed. By drinking this potion, they can become invisible to the naked eye.

The potion is a combination of adder venom crushed with queen of the night flowers and mixed with ethyl alcohol. It tastes cloyingly sweet but burns as it goes down.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

The alchemist becomes invisible to the naked eye. This isn't just a trick of the light, or a psychic impression. Cameras fail to pick her up and electronics fail to register her presence. If she takes a hostile action, she breaks the effect.

Someone with the ability to see the unseen or view something that is invisible prompts a Clash of Wills.

Exceptional success: If she takes a hostile action, she does not break the elixir's effect entirely. Only the attacked person can perceive the hunter, but others may be able to follow her movements based on situational cues in the middle of a fight.

Backlash: The elixir acts as a hallucinogen. While active, the hunter suffers a -2 penalty to all actions as she has a hard time determining reality from mental images.

Breath of Ma'at

Though the Ascending Ones walk the path of righteousness, that path regularly leads them into shadow and sin — often, they must commit wickedness in the name of fighting wickedness. The Breath of Ma'at is a thick, musky incense, the vapors of which must be inhaled and transmuted by the Ascending One. Once under its effect, the whispers of their soul contort to justify once-indefensible behaviors as entirely reasonable courses of action.

Cost: None

Duration: One scene

The hunter does not roll for breaking points while under the effects of the Breath of Ma'at. Once the elixir wears off, she makes a single roll for a breaking point no matter how many acts she committed. If she is under the effects of a hunter Condition, she gains a +2 to resist the breaking point.

Exceptional success: She gains the 8-again quality on her breaking-point roll when the effect wears off.

Backlash: If, while under the influence of the Breath of Ma'at, the Ascending One takes an action that would violate the Code, she automatically gains the Demoralized Condition, even if she is successful on her breaking-point roll.

Breath of the Dragon

Breath of the Dragon is a fine, silvery powder consisting of sulfur, finely milled magnesium shavings, and several rare reagents. When transmuted in the alchemist's body, the "breath" becomes weaponized and poisonous. This powder must be inhaled to be properly activated; afterward, the alchemist can expel a powerful jet of toxic gas.

Breath of the Dragon is harsh on the user's throat and the hunter is left hoarse afterward; overuse can even lead to temporary laryngitis at the discretion of the Storyteller.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Stamina + Medicine vs. Stamina

Action: Contested

The hunter expels the toxic gas at her victim, which inflicts the grave version of the Sick Tilt. Additionally, the vapors act to increase the severity of pain sensors in the target. Her next attack gains an additional weapon rating of 2 bashing, which stacks with any other weapon damage.

Exceptional Success: Instead of Sick, the target gains the grave version of the Poisoned Tilt.

NOTE TO LAYOUT: THIS SIDEBAR CAN BE PLACED ANYWHERE IT FITS.

Harvest Markets and Silent Auctions

Hunter conspiracies may profess they want to work together but behind the scenes several organizations have been clamping down on cooperative hunts, sharing tips and connections, as well as the occasional drink. The reason? There's been a run on phoenix feathers, rare-earth alloys, crystals — even necrotic blood and holy water. Someone — or a group of someones — has been buying up every icon, organ, relic, and reagent hunters are bidding for. The Cheiron Group, who once enjoyed a healthy, if not friendly, relationship with Task Force: VALKYRIE to exchange money for monster parts, has forfeited payment for the last three transactions, claiming they “stole” the parts from their Retrieval Division and were trying to resell them. The Ascending Ones are pointing fingers at the Cheiron Group, the Council of Bones, Aegis Kai Doru, and Malleus Maleficarum, claiming they're attempting to hinder the conspiracy by making it even more challenging to find their needed ingredients. Meanwhile, the Lucifuge, Aegis Kai Doru, and Task Force: VALKYRIE have forged a temporary alliance to find the culprit, be they hunter or monster — or both.

Bennu Feather

The Bennu is the mythical bird revered by Egyptians for rebirth, the sun, and creation. Thought to be a part of Ra's soul, the Bennu inspired legends of the phoenix who is immortal and everlasting, a symbol of rebirth.

The feather, pulled from the tail of a living bennu, is ground with potent opiates and antiseptic and analgesic plants. The resultant thick, brown paste can help speed up a hunter's natural healing.

Cost: 1 Willpower

For each success garnered on the roll, the hunter heals two bashing damage or one lethal damage, which come from the character's rightmost health boxes first.

Exceptional Success: Additional successes are their own reward.

Eye of Ra

A mixture of sandalwood, sacred herbs, and kohl (ground stibnite commonly used as a cosmetic in southwestern Asia and Africa), the Eye of Ra grants the user heightened visual acuity.

Traditionally, the elixir is applied in the shape of the Wedjat, an ancient Egyptian symbol of protection, but it retains its effectiveness if applied in other shapes, such as the Eye of Jibril, or simply used as eyeliner.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: One scene

When attempting to notice something or investigate for the rest of the scene, gain exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

Exceptional success: The roll gains the 8-again quality as well.

Incense of the Next World

This carefully concocted incense releases a powerful hallucinogenic fume, which the user must breathe in while meditating for at least an hour. During this time, the alchemist's awareness and connection to their body gradually fades, until their soul detaches from it.

Though Incense of the Next World has its uses, especially when investigating a haunted house or crumbling temple, most alchemists have heard cautionary tales. Rumors swirl that some hunters are stuck, waiting for someone to rescue them, or had their bodies slain by monsters while their souls still walked. Worse: some alchemists believe the Council of Bones is actively trying to buy ingredients to prevent the Ascending Ones from using this elixir.

Cost: 2 Willpower

Duration: One scene

The user leaves her physical body behind and walks unseen. She is free to move about in this state for the rest of the scene, but her body remains comatose in the physical world. In this state, she can identify ghosts and spirits. She may take actions as normal but cannot use her Endowments. If she gets into combat, she uses her Willpower as her Corpus rating. If she loses all her Willpower in this state, she returns to her body unconscious and with the Soulless Condition.

Exceptional Success: As a success, but the user may transfer any active Endowments along with her soul as she leaves her body. These have their normal durations.

Backlash: If she is not near her body when her soul returns at the end of the scene, her soul is forcibly pulled toward her body, leaving the Ascending One confused and dissociated. She suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls for the next scene.

Mesmeric Vapors

Classically, this elixir takes the form of specially treated herbs, which resemble loose-leaf tobacco in their unburnt state and are lit in an urn. Its odor varies according to the individual smelling it. When the leaves are rolled into a cigarette or packed into a pipe, the smoke takes on a warm, golden hue.

The Ascending One has to inhale the smoke first to catalyze it, then breathes it out to affect her victim. Inhaling the Mesmeric Vapors the hunter emits erodes a target's will, making them so suggestible they might as well be a puppet. Some modern Ascending Ones, conscious of inhaling burning plant matter for any reason, use vaporizers instead — the effect is no different.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Stamina + Presence vs. Resolve

Action: Extended and contested; each roll takes one minute. The target success total is equal to the victim's Stamina.

Duration: One scene

Roll Results

Success: If the target success total is met, the victim is completely under the Ascending One's sway.

Exceptional Success: No additional benefit other than additional successes.

Failure: The Ascending One is having trouble with the target. She can choose to stop the treatment or continue. If she continues, she suffers the Drugged Tilt.

Dramatic Failure: The attempt fails. The Ascending One suffers the moderate Sick Tilt and the target snaps out of their false sense of security and might lash out at the Ascending One.

Upon completion, the victim is completely pliable and will answer any questions asked of them. If the Ascending One wants to command or manipulate the person into acting in a specific manner, then rolls to do so gain the 8-again quality. The victim is under the Ascending One's sway for the rest of the scene.

Backlash: Breathing in the vapors can be a heady process, and though the alchemist is immune to its effects, she is not immune to the feeling. Each time she uses this elixir she must succeed on a Composure roll or gain the Addicted Condition to her own elixir.

Perispiritism

The Council of Bones knows the human soul, though imperishable, is only tenuously anchored to the flesh, and once that link is severed the soul cannot truly return. However, that anchor, the perispirit, may be flexed like a muscle and with proper tools and training the living may commune with the dead and reach across the veil to seek hidden knowledge.

Perispiritism is an induced trance state that draws on several historical techniques appropriated, aggregated, and syncretized by the west following the American Civil War and Victorian era. Some techniques require time to achieve a trance state, while others are states of mind that can be entered at will. Costs are typically (but not always) paid through the strenuousness of the technique itself, rather than through some form of sacrifice.

To some Council members, these methods are considered modern, but they agree the techniques should not be limited to popularized western approaches just because they might be easier to visualize. What most won't say, however, is that the only reason these (or any other) methods work is because each hunter is marked as part of their initiation into the Council — and no one knows why. This mark, which takes the form of an invisible, skull-shaped tattoo with two numbers in place of eyes on the bottom of their foot, uses an ink made from ghost corpus and as-yet-to-be-identified materials. Though most members don't believe that to be the case, it's assumed the Mark of the Scythe grants the bearer the ability to use common tools of divination — and not *just* Bygones — to talk to ghosts. Others think the mark allows the Council to find its members beyond the veil should they get lost; of course, a third rumor circulates that the mark is necromantic, and is an undying flame that attracts ghosts to the hunter.

After witnessing how hunter society at large has treated the now defunct Les Mystères, the Council is reticent to reveal its secrets. Members may come and go, but using Council Endowments in front of others, or specifically sharing their secrets to outsiders, is a crime punishable by death.

Mark of the Scythe

While the Council of Bones avoids necromancers and the undead as much as humanly possible, more than once their chapters have fallen prey to the creatures of the night. In modern times, the Council now goes to great, if not unnecessary, lengths to ensure their members are mortal and are *not* agents of darkness. When a hunter pledges to become a member of their organization, they are initiated barefoot in an elaborate, formal ceremony. During this ritual, which takes place in a cemetery during twilight, the hunter contacts their dead ancestors and asks them for protection.

This night is largely symbolic, grandiose, and intentionally designed to impress its members, for it covers the true reason for the rite of passage: following this rite, the bottom of the hunter's foot is branded with the faint outline of a skull that fades by midnight. The mystical tattoo, which has been rumored to contain secret messages, grants the user the ability to learn Perispiritism Endowments. Thus far, no reason has been given for the mark following its discovery, but that doesn't stop members from speculating widely. Few know the truth: the Mark of the Scythe can only be placed on a living host.

Having the mark is what lets members learn new Perispiritism rituals. Lore keepers dole out rituals freely but check the mark each time someone requests a piece of legend or a scroll. Older and more experienced hunters know that their mark is the real key, allowing them to tap into the collective knowledge of the ghosts under their command, even if they do so unwittingly. Most Perispiritism rituals focus on the hunter's own innate power and simply understanding ghosts. Communication and seeing them are the strict limit, though these things rarely net the kind of information councilmembers are looking for. Council elders suggest that ghosts just can't remember their lives well enough to impart any useful information, but other hunters think there is something deeper going on. But since the Council forbids anyone to enter Twilight, they can't really go looking for answers.

Councilmembers may conflate the idea of ghosts and spirits as one, but in truth, they only ever deal with ghosts. Their power is fueled by ghost ephemera, and not spirit ephemera, which means they cannot see or contact spirits unless they are manifested in front of them, just like any normal mortal. See ghost rules on p. XX.

The mark serves another purpose, which is that it grants a loose communion between all people who have one. A hunter with the Mark of the Scythe can read and write ephemeral messages that only she and other people with the mark can read. She spends a Willpower when writing with her finger, or some other instrument on any kind of surface, and anyone with the mark can read the written words, even if there is no ink left behind when she wrote it. The hunter is manipulating ephemera, even if she has no idea what she is doing.

Auric Shield

The elders of the Council of Bones consider this Endowment an essential tool. The Auric Shield is a visualization technique that hunters use to bolster their psyche. Some hunters picture the Auric Shield as a flexible, golden bubble, while others picture a translucent orb or a circle of brightly lit flames that's tied in a knot above the crown of their head.

The Auric Shield, rumored to be a technique perfected by occultist and fabled Council member Dion Fortune, is activated through force of will. It is unknown whether the shield is visible to ghosts, but hunters tend to ignore the specifics because of its effectiveness during a hunt.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One Scene

The hunter's aura is bolstered by meditation and training. While the Auric Shield is active, any use of ghost Numena, or Dread Powers that deal with death or the hunter's soul, provokes a Clash of Wills. The aura provides armor 2 against a ghost's physical attack if it is Materialized.

Backlash: The Auric Shield is draining on the user. She takes a -2 penalty to actions the scene after she uses this power.

Borrowed Power

Ghosts have little-to-no agency in the world without a lot of power or without the help of someone who can know their desires and act for them. Mediums can call forth ghosts and banish them, but sometimes speaking just isn't enough. While the Council of Bones forbids its members from entering Twilight in body or soul, and has many prohibitions against allowing ghosts to manifest in their presence, little is said about this power, which skirts the lines of both.

The ritualist reaches into the Twilight, not for long and not with his soul. As he does, he grasps the power of a ghost, giving it a small, manifested life through him. This isn't a partnership though; the ghost doesn't have agency over its own powers. While most councilmembers ask for a ghost's consent before borrowing their power, there is nothing stopping them from just taking what they want.

Cost: 2 Willpower; a ghost must be in the vicinity to use this Endowment.

Dice Pool: Stamina + Occult

Action: Instant (see below)

Roll Results

Success: The hunter pulls a part of the ghost into this realm and can use it as he wishes. If the ghost is unwilling, it can make a contested roll using its Finesse. This is not a Manifestation and the ghost has no control over what is happening. The hunter may use a single ghost Numen from the following list: Awe, Blast, Drain, Firestarter, Regenerate, and Speed. When using a Numen, the hunter uses Willpower in place of Essence. Once the hunter uses the Numen, the ghost regains control and separates from the hunter.

Exceptional Success: As with success, but the hunter may use the Numen a second time before the ghost separates from him.

Failure: The councilmember cannot bring the ghost forward but deals one bashing damage to it.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter does not pull the ghost forth and is partially in Twilight. He suffers a -3 penalty to act until the next sunrise.

Backlash: Reaching into Twilight and ripping a ghost forth is traumatic, not only for the ghost but also for the ritualist. Both the ghost and the hunter suffer one lethal damage from the contact. Additionally, the hunter gains the Open Condition toward the ghost for the rest of the scene.

Command Ghost

The Council of Bones treats with ghosts for a variety of reasons. The most widely accepted reason is to find out information, generally to gain clues about an area or something they are investigating. They view ghosts as complex entities with complex motivations and actions. Though one thing is universal: They belong on their own side of the veil, though ghosts are rarely so obliging. In fact, ghosts are rarely obliging regarding any requests a Council member may have, at least not without coercion from the hunter. But many have learned how to express their will in no uncertain terms.

The Council frowns on members who command ghosts for personal gain, claiming they are not servants of the living. But that doesn't stop members from sometimes commanding ghosts to perform tasks for them.

Prerequisite: Ghost Speech

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation vs. Resistance

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Success: The hunter can give the ghost a single simple command. The command can be a few words or a single sentence. It can't be something vague, such as "do what I say," or "listen to me." The command must be simple enough for the ghost to comprehend in a single step. Such as "lead me to your anchor," "attack that target," or "leave the area." The ghost will attempt to follow the command to the best of its ability, though it chooses its route or how to go about the action. The hunter may command a ghost to attack a target, but not which Numen to use to do so. If the ghost is not in the Manifested Condition, the hunter can make the command after activating Ghost Speech. If the hunter wants to give it more actions to take, she must use this Endowment again.

Exceptional Success: The hunter may give an additional command to the ghost after it has finished the first.

Failure: The ghost ignores her commands.

Dramatic Failure: The ghost listens to the order and carries out the exact *opposite* action, wreaking chaos and havoc.

Dark Reflection

The practice of scrying for messages from the other world is as old as time itself. It's rumored that some divinatory practices happened entirely by accident: a hunter peered into the surface of an ice-covered lake and saw their death, a merchant glanced at a polished brass plate and received a vision they'd be destitute by morning, an ancient astronomer stared up at the stars and witnessed the rise and fall of the Mayan civilization.

Dark Reflection allows Council members to use a time-honored scrying tradition: peering into a treated mirror to share their visions with others nearby. Upon activating this ability, hunters pierce through the veil, see into the beyond, and project their impressions onto the reflective surface. Such colorful images are fleeting, blurry, and often ghastly.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The hunter can project his visions onto a reflective surface. Usually this takes the form of a mirror he holds, but a still lake or reflective glass works just as well. Anyone who can see the reflective surface can see the vision he projects. If he is using an ability to peer through time and space, such as using the Clairvoyance or Psychometry Merits, or the Ghost Speech Endowment, the vision appears as it would to him on the reflective surface.

Those without access to Merits or Endowments that would give them such visions can help the character interpret them. This does not grant the ability to speak with ghosts in Twilight through Ghost Speech, though everyone can see them and hear them if they speak.

Ephemeral Weapon

Ephemera is the substance by which ghosts and spirits exist. It exists almost entirely within Twilight, unless an ephemeral entity currently has the Manifested Condition. Members of the Council of Bones have learned that they don't always need to deal with a ghost directly to accomplish their goals, and sometimes the best weapon is one born of the same essence as the monster you're attacking.

The Council member reaches just enough into the Twilight to pull forth a small portion of ephemera. While normally just goop, the hunter's ephemera is hard and jagged through her will.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The hunter fashions a small, bladed weapon out of ephemera with a weapon rating of 1L. If wielded against an ephemeral entity, its weapon rating increases to 3L. This weapon can harm ephemeral entities even if they are not manifested, though the hunter must have a way to see them to attack them.

Backlash: Reaching into Twilight is a dangerous practice that opens the hunter up to whatever might be on the other side. She sometimes sees things in there, things she would rather not see. Each time the hunter uses this Endowment, she must roll Resolve + Occult to resist gaining the Shaken Condition.

Expulsion

While the Council of Bones recognizes that some ghosts have unfinished business and other ghosts can assist in hunter investigations, most members are wary of stereotypes — with good reason. Plenty of books spew dangerous ideas that ghosts are always here to help the living, and Council members know this isn't the case. Some ghosts are jealous, some are hateful, and some aren't ghosts at all, but spirits of vengeance or even demons.

Expulsion is a type of warding that comes with a supernatural oomph from the hunter. Unlike abjuration, which pits the hunter's soul against the ghost's, or needing to know its bane for a ward, the hunter uses her knowledge of ghosts in general and her Mark of the Scythe to protect

an area and remove ghosts. The area must be self-contained, such as a house or a fenced-in parking lot. The size of the area may affect the dice pool (see Warding and Binding on p. XX). The roll is modified by the hunter's Integrity as in abjuration, p. XX.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult

Action: Instant

Duration: One day

Roll Results

Success: The hunter makes the area act as a bane for any and every ghost who might want to enter the area for the duration. If the area has the Open Condition, then it is reduced immediately to Anchor. Ghosts who are manifested in the area immediately disincorporate.

Exceptional Success: Additionally, if the area serves as an Anchor to a ghost, the Anchor is immediately broken, and the Condition resolved.

Failure: The hunter falters and fails to complete the ritual.

Dramatic Failure: The ritual fails and the hunter gains the Anchor Condition for a ghost in the area. If a ghost is not in the area at the time of the ritual, then the failure summons all nearby ghosts to the area.

Ghost Speech

Any medium can hear the voices of the dead, and even concentrate and speak to them. But the Council of Bones has perfected the ability, making it easier and less unstable to do so. With just a simple utterance, the member can turn on his ability to detect and interact with ghosts. He does not suffer from hearing their voices constantly, and he does not have to open himself up to them and endanger himself with an attack or possession. Instead, he peers beyond Twilight and just sees them.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The hunter peers through Twilight and can sense all ghosts in the area. If he concentrates on one ghost, he can communicate with it just by speaking. As long as it understands the language, it can understand him and speak back. If that ghost has an Anchor nearby, the hunter can sense it. While he's concentrating on this one ghost, the other ghosts in the area can hear him, but he must spend all his concentration to hear just the one he's talking to.

Backlash: Looking into Twilight is both disorienting and dangerous. While the hunter doesn't have to open himself with Conditions to speak to the ghost, he draws their attention to him.

Know Death

Councilmembers use mental techniques to view Twilight and ghosts in their mind's eye. Even when she isn't attempting to speak with the dead, she knows how to glean all she can from those

on the other side. Know Death takes this ability one step further, by allowing the hunter to perceive the wrongfulness of death through a ghost's eyes — even when carefully hidden behind a mask. Monsters, such as vampires, revenants, zombies, possessed corpses, etc. wear a death mask that allows them to interact with the living, and councilmembers can “crack” this illusion, revealing them for what they really are.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation vs. Composure

Action: Contested

Roll Results

Success: The hunter causes a Clash of Wills against ghosts and dead monsters attempting to hide their true nature through any means (such as invisibility or just an illusion to make them look human). If the hunter is successful in the Clash of Wills, the masquerade breaks. Without the Unseen Sense Merit, the hunter may not know what kind of monster she is dealing with, but she still reveals it.

Exceptional Success: As with a success, but the hunter can identify details of the monster's nature, letting her know it if she has come across it before.

Failure: The ghosts reveal nothing to her.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter doesn't just miss her mark, she thinks she has it right, seeing death where there is none. She gains the Spooked Condition.

Third Eye

Trained to look beyond the body's mundane senses, a medium can intuitively *feel* the presence of spirits and the psychic residue on objects, places, or living subjects. How she registers this sense varies, but clairvoyance typically operates through synesthetic means — flashes of sound, sensations, and bright colors — which the medium must learn to interpret through time and practice. This effort, honed by the Council of Bones' particular predilection to dealing with the dead, leaves councilmembers with a slew of heightened senses and the ability to puzzle out even the strangest of enigmas.

Hunters who have learned to use psychic impressions to aid them call it Third Eye, but others call it a sixth sense, or sometimes just a higher sense of awareness. Whatever she calls it, no one can doubt that the flashes and impressions of Twilight guide their hand.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The hunter opens her senses to the supernatural for the rest of the scene. It gives her impressions and information about anything she is investigating. Over the course of the scene, if the character rolls for research or investigation to uncover general Clues, she gains an additional Clue element on a success. If her roll is a failure, her Clue does not gain the Incomplete Tag.

Backlash: While the hunter is hyperaware of her surroundings, she is also open to the psychic impressions on people, places, and the objects surrounding her. Such stimuli can result in information overload. At the end of the scene, the player must succeed on a Composure + Occult roll or her character will suffer from the Shaken Condition.

THIS SIDEBAR MAY EITHER BE PLACED IN THE COUNCIL OF BONES ENDOWMENTS SECTION OR IN THE MALLEUS MALEFICARUM'S.

Hammer and Bone

As a conspiracy, the Council of Bones takes a neutral stance with respect to exorcising ghosts, because they understand death is not unique to a religion or culture. The identities of their members are an indication of this, for they may be Buddhist, Hindi, Christian, Muslim, or atheist, and entire cells may share a moment in prayer while on the job. Mostly, the conspiracy doesn't want to dictate their hunters' beliefs knowing how widely variable perspectives are, and they find this increases their efficacy and willingness to support the conspiracy when investigating haunted houses, mysterious places, possessed people, Bygones, etc.

The Malleus Maleficarum, however, is firmly rooted in the Catholic Church and the rituals they use have been handed down through the Vatican's long and storied history since the days of the Holy Roman Empire. They veer toward a more conservative stance with respect to exorcisms and will often politely insist their rites are "better" because they can be used on multiple malevolent forces instead of just ghosts. In any case, the Council has left the decision to work the Malleus hunters up to individual cells.

Thaumatechnology

Members of the Cheiron Group have convinced themselves they're being pragmatic, rather than terrifying, when they surgically replace a human's limb with a monster's. Sure, other conspiracies realize that, no matter their agenda, they must still protect the innocent.

Unfortunately, the Cheiron Group's definition of what passes for innocent these days is sketchy at best. Viewing their hunters as sacrificial lambs to a greater cause, leaders are desperate to find answers by demanding each member be subjected to their experiments.

Thaumatechnology is the literal bleeding edge of science. Hunters who work for the Cheiron Group have barely understood supernatural flesh, fur, teeth, or scales grafted onto their bodies. Some hunters benefit from the edge these surgeries provide, while others go mad before their bodies and minds have had time to process that thing attached to their arm. While the Cheiron Group tells its members to hunt and harvest supernatural monsters, their thaumatechnologists actively try to reverse engineer them through body modification. Hey, it's a living.

Hunters who leave the Cheiron Group face a world of hurt, because no one asks to leave the conspiracy. Members who do leave are forced to spend time in a hospital the organization owns and operates. After a period of trials, to test the efficacy of the hunter's thaumatechnology modifications, doctors perform extensive surgeries to remove the implants, which result in fatality more often than not. Hunters who go on the run instead become targets; their Endowments are too expensive and the research too precious to just let it walk away.

Surgical Installment

Getting a new Endowment from the conspiracy is an act of bureaucracy that can take a great deal of time and patience. Typically, a hunter files a requisition naming her preferred Thaumatechnology Endowment, her request goes to human resources, who sifts through her file and reviews her hunter status at that time. Weeks later, the hunter arrives at a hospital where a Cheiron doctor performs the surgery in a sterile operating theater with bleeding-edge medical equipment and a host of shadowy onlookers from the Thaumatechnology Division watching carefully from the viewing gallery.

Installed implants are sometimes mechanical and sometimes biological, but always inhuman. The Cheiron Group has instituted an artificial limit to the number of implants a hunter may have. The maximum is her Stamina + Size. Doctors will refuse to perform a new surgery unless it is to remove an implant if a hunter has her maximum allotment. Hunters with more obvious implants begin to look inhuman after a while, and Cheiron doctors claim that more than their limit in implants makes the person completely inhuman. This doesn't account for the subtler replacements, but the Cheiron Group is firm in its insistence.

The surgery takes time, and if not done with precision could lead to a slow, painful recovery. When gaining a new Thaumatechnology Endowment (or having one removed for that matter), the player must roll for her character to resist becoming overtaken by the monstrous nature of the implant. This is both a pain issue and one of becoming the monster inside. Better-connected hunters get more skilled surgeons, leading to better results all together. Changing out one implant for another takes a single surgery.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Stamina + Resolve

Action: Extended. Each roll represents one hour of surgery and the player must gain successes equal to 10 – the character's Status (Cheiron Group) rating.

Roll Results

Success: The hunter resists the implant's nature. If she has enough successes the surgery is completed satisfactorily.

Exceptional Success: The hunter resists the implant's nature and makes things easier for the surgeon. Choose one of the following effects.

- The hunter gains the Steadfast Condition when the surgery is completed.
- Reduce the time between rolls by half.
- Heal a point of lethal damage.

Failure: The hunter fails to resist the implant's nature but does not become monstrous. The surgery does not end, but she takes one point of lethal damage.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter cannot resist the monstrous effects of the implant. Not only does the surgery fail, but the hunter suffers a point of aggravated damage and gains an appropriate Persistent Condition (such as Amnesia, Crippled, Fugue, or Soulless). The hunter can resolve the Condition by undergoing another surgery to remove the corrupted implant.

Devil's Eyes

No one is entirely sure from which monster the Devil's Eyes were extracted — or if the muckety-mucks *do* know but won't tell anyone. This pair of oversized, glistening orbs has vibrantly yellow irises and vertical black slits for pupils. When grafted onto a human patient, they quickly change and take on the appearance of the subject's natural eyes. A computer chip moderates and translates the nerve impulses of the eye for the human brain — early tests resulted in messy side effects without this filter in place.

The filter is programmable, and with specific movements of the eye the subject can increase and decrease the degree to which the eye's visual input is moderated, in effect granting her superhuman visual acuity.

Costs: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The hunter gains an overlay over his normal vision into Twilight. She can see ephemeral entities, though she cannot interact with them. She also gains a chance to see things that would otherwise be invisible, such as a vampire using a power to make itself invisible, or an Ascending One using Amun's Water, provoking a Clash of Wills.

If the hunter has the Unseen Sense Merit (p. XX), she can forgo gaining the Spooked Condition to pinpoint where the source of her feeling is coming from.

Backlash: Seeing into Twilight draws the attention of ephemeral entities nearby, who might be overly interested in the hunter who is looking at them.

New Field Project Division: P.R. Retrieval

Tucked away in a small arm of Cheiron Limited, the parent company of the Cheiron Group, is a new office that has the words "P.R. Retrieval" stamped on the door. Members working in Recruitment whisper about this secretive arm of the conspiracy and wonder why they've been kept in the dark about its day-to-day operations. Certain veterans in Field Research and Retrieval are cheering the new division on, because they know *exactly* what P. R. Retrieval's purpose is: to catch and capture rogue Cheiron agents who've attempted to leave the conspiracy's ranks.

The initials "P. R." stand for the Pruth River in Romania, a suspected location where a rogue cell of Cheiron agents has recently been spotted. The cell, which kept its augmentations before going on the run, uses a coded messaging system that creates anagrams of its messages. While a few veteran Field Research agents have spied on the cell, it may take weeks — if not months — to decode their schemes. In the meantime, Cheiron Group members are encouraged to be on alert and report any suspicious activity to their local Retrieval contacts.

Hand of Glory

The Cheiron Group's new-and-improved version of the Hand of Glory represents the latest in hand-reattachment technology. Enhanced with post-biological materials engineering, the

conspiracy can “all-but guarantee” a patient’s body won’t reject the augmentation. In layman’s terms, a dead hand is grafted onto a living subject’s stump, and functions from that point forward as a perfectly ordinary hand. Though occult tradition demands the Hand of Glory be “manufactured” from a thief’s left hand, the Cheiron Group doesn’t appear to follow folklore. Many hunters wear a glove on their replaced appendage to cover its wrinkled and discolored appearance with makeup. The hand is curiously resistant to fire, and the fingers may be lit like the wicks of candles —when they do, they burn with a mesmerizing, resilient flame.

The specifics of the Hand of Glory’s manufacture aren’t important for test subjects, but are rumored to involve a hanged corpse, pickling the relevant limb in disgusting and bizarre reagents, and letting it sit under the light of a new moon for several hours. Subjects are repeatedly warned to only douse the flames in cow’s milk — other substances will not work. Some members suspect the Cheiron Group stole the formula to create a Hand of Glory from the Ascending Ones.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult vs. Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance

Action: Contested

Duration: One scene (see below)

Roll Results

Success: Anyone who can see the hand is fascinated by its light. They gain the Immobilized Tilt as long as they can see the flames. Additionally, this fascination effect fills their mind, occupying it to the detriment of all else. Those affected by the flame’s light forget anything that happened while under its spell. They do not remember the hunter using the hand, nor the hand itself.

When the victim can no longer see the flames, she regains her ability to move and remember within a minute. An attack or threat of attack immediately breaks the spell’s effects. While active, the hunter suffers a –2 penalty to rolls that require manual dexterity. The flames on the hand are not enough to deal damage or set anything other than paper or small items aflame.

Exceptional Success: Attacks against the victim no longer immediately break the spell. Instead, the victim must roll Resolve to break the spell when attacked or threatened.

Failure: The hand does not catch flame, and the power fizzles.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter is mesmerized by his own hand and suffers from the Immobilized Tilt until the flames are doused or he can no longer see the flame.

Backlash: The Hand of Glory periodically takes small actions of its own without the user’s consent or knowledge. The Storyteller may impose a –2 penalty to rolls for one scene each day due to the hand’s antics.

Personal Defense Swarm

Unlike other implants, this device doesn’t replace a vital organ or limb. Instead, a small, flexible, silicon sac is implanted just above the wrist. Inside are tiny metal beads that, when injected with a special solution, come swarming out of the sac in the user’s defense. Even the scientists who made the swarm aren’t sure where they came from. One night, a box full of tiny mechanized

creatures was dropped on their desk. After playing with them for some time, they figured out that vampire blood activated them.

Cheiron didn't question its mysterious benefactor, and doesn't really care where they came from. Whatever they were before the Cheiron scientists got ahold of them, they were certainly not living creatures on their own.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The user summons a small swarm of insect-like creatures that defends the hunter. The swarm cannot be directed, but it won't fly more than 10 yards away from its host. It attacks anyone it perceives as aggressive toward the user. The swarm can make simple actions, mainly to attack with 4 dice, with a weapon rating of 1L. The swarm has a Defense rating of 4 and can take up to 4 damage (of any kind) before it stops functioning. Otherwise, it does not go away unless the user recalls it by cutting open his arm. If he does not recall it before the end of the scene, the swarm deactivates and falls to the ground.

Backlash: Activation of this power is particularly painful. The user suffers one lethal damage each time he uses the swarm. Recalling them causes the user to suffer an additional one lethal damage. If he doesn't recall them before the end of the scene, he needs to collect each creature for later reinsertion.

Regenerative Nodule

This wad of meat and scar tissue may not be much to look at, but it's a medical miracle. When attached to a patient's circulatory system — a surgical feat in and of itself, considering the thing heals over almost instantaneously — it vastly augments the subject's natural healing capabilities. Wounds that would require a lengthy hospital stay vanish in days.

When physically triggered by the subject, the nodule kicks into overdrive, hyper-saturating the bloodstream with, well, whatever the nodule contains, causing the subject's wounds to knit themselves closed while someone watches. If there's a downside, it's the metabolic cost — early test subjects died of dehydration in less than an hour.

Users are advised to gorge themselves — constantly — when employing the nodule to quickly heal their bodies of serious or deadly wounds. Otherwise, they may rapidly starve to death before they realize they're hungry.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

By simply pressing the nodule, the hunter can initiate quick healing. Aggravated damage heals at a rate of one every two days, lethal damage heals at a rate of one every 15 minutes, and bashing damage heals at a rate of one per turn. While the Regenerative Nodule is in use, the user ignores wound penalties.

The user may trigger the Regenerative Nodule as a reflexive action before they fall unconscious from damage.

Backlash: The Regenerative Nodule can only be used once per story. Every bashing damage healed counts as a day without food; every lethal damage counts as a day without food or water. The Regenerative Nodule does *not* heal damage caused by this deprivation. If the user doesn't eat, they suffer a -3 penalty to all actions until they do.

Sonic Resonance Attenuator

This tiny implant goes just behind the ear, a small bump barely noticeable to anyone who isn't looking for it. The device is derived from something the Cheiron Group doctors call "special pets" because they pull a great deal of implants from whatever the monster is. They claim it is a reverse engineer of their hearing apparatus, but most hunters just assume they are getting a monster's cochlear bone implanted directly into their skulls. They aren't wrong.

The device enhances hearing, but not just by a little bit. It somehow drowns out all background noise and lets the hunter listen in on the one thing she wants to hear, no matter how unlikely it is she would normally hear it.

Costs: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene (see below)

Roll Results

Success: The hunter concentrates on something she wants to hear within 10 yards per success, and everything else but that thing fades out of her awareness while it comes into sharp relief. She doesn't have to see it, but she must know it is there. For example, she could concentrate on a conversation going on behind a closed door down the hallway, but she couldn't try to listen in on a conversation she has no idea is happening, even if it's in the same room. She could listen in to the other side of a phone conversation though, knowing the person she is watching is surely talking to someone else.

Exceptional Success: The hunter can pick up on conversations she doesn't know are happening.

Failure: The hunter fails to narrow down the conversation to which she wants to listen.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter focuses on a conversation but cannot tune out everything else. The feedback is painful, causing one lethal damage.

Backlash: The dampening of sound is not without consequence. The hunter gains a -2 penalty to react to situations in her own vicinity, and is always surprised unless she can see an attack coming.

Time Attenuator

Time moves on, marching ever forward without fail. Except some monsters seem timeless, or even in some cases separate from time. They interact in a way that defies all logic or physics, and yet it exists. And of course, Thaumatechnology researchers are fascinated by these abilities. And while many of them are impossible to capture, collect, or even recreate, someone clever has

come up with the Time Attenuator. This small device goes at the base of the hippocampus in a relatively easy surgical procedure that inserts it via the nose.

The user can use the attenuator to slow down how time affects her body — just for herself, and only for a short amount of time. Her body stops bleeding, bones do not break, and skin does not burn as time refuses to pass.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

Roll Results

Success: The user's body resists the effects of time for the rest of the scene. Anything that would worsen with time, such as bleeding out, diseases, or poisons and toxins, stops affecting her. She does not suffer from new Tilts or Conditions while this is active.

Exceptional Success: The hunter does not suffer the ill effects of Persistent Conditions while the Time Attenuator is active.

Failure: The hunter's body functions in normal time.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter not only fails to slow time but speeds up the process for a vital organ, dealing one aggravated damage.

Backlash: While the attenuator is active, the hunter cannot heal normally, nor can she benefit from medical care or Endowments to heal wounds. Her body resists the changes being applied to her.

The Twitcher

Cheiron Group scientists are adept at thinking outside of the box — it's a basic job requirement for them, considering what they work with. Take the Twitcher, for example: only Cheiron Group professionals would ever have the inspiration, much less the skill, to take a strange stick-insect-like creature and implant it in the base of a human's spine. The little pink symbiote makes itself right at home, tapping the user's senses and sipping on cerebrospinal fluid.

Whenever the host is threatened, the Twitcher drives the host's nervous system to hyperactive levels, leading to reaction and reflex times that verge on superhuman. Unfortunately, the creature doesn't seem to understand that dreams aren't normal sensory stimuli, and tends to react to REM sleep as though it is violence — most hosts report a significant increase in night terrors, anxiety, and paranoia compared to their pre-implantation norm.

Cost: None (see below)

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

Duration: Indefinite (see below)

The hunter receives a +3 bonus to all Initiative rolls, which is always in effect. As a reflexive action, the hunter may spend 1 Willpower to use the higher of her Dexterity or Wits to determine Defense, rather than *lower*, even when surprised for the turn.

Backlash: The Twitcher causes the hunter to suffer from terrible nightmares. If she uses her inhuman reflexes, that night she has night terrors that leave her feeling unrested. She suffers a -2 penalty to Mental actions until she gets a good night's sleep.

Tools of the Trade

Not every job requires a lot of firepower and a little flash; the Cheiron Group values subtlety — at least in the Silent Acquisitions Division. In cases where a mystical flaming hand might be overkill, the Cheiron Group offers the Tools of the Trade when stealth and finesse are required. These weapons are claws or fangs surgically removed from monsters, reconditioned, and then grafted to a host's living tissue. Special care has been taken to ensure the augmentations are easily overlooked when not in use.

With physical therapy and exercise to work the affected muscles, the relevant grafts are fully retractable, allowing the patient to live a normal life — and bring an unexpected “weapon” into areas or fights where it might otherwise be impractical or impossible.

Costs: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: None

The user's unarmed and bite attacks act as weapons with a rating of 1L. While not in use, the Tools of the Trade are undetectable without close medical examination. The hunter can spend a Willpower after a successful bite attack to inflict the Immobilized Tilt on her victim.

OPENING FICTION

Everyone has a story about how they became a hunter. Most of these stories end on a sentence fragment, with an exit wound of a full stop. Dead fathers, dead mothers, dead spouses, an ocean of lost children. Every hunter has a story that starts in blood.

But only some of us get to see that joke to the punchline.

Before the world went to black, I was just another college student trying to get by, trying to fit their biracial self into the jigsaw of Tokyo's cultural landscape. Because of circumstances, I shared a dorm with another kid, Akira Sakamoto. Engineering enthusiast but artsy, despite that. He had a thing for creepypasta, too. SCP foundation, those Korean webcomics that came with a nasty GIF, r/nosleep — if it had anything to do with urban legends, he'd be on it.

I remember when he did a fan film of the Red Room.

I wasn't okay with that.

But overall, Sakamoto was a great dude. We bonded over *takoyaki*, McDonald's specials, and too many crates of cheap beer. Life eventually happened, though. The months wound by. Examinations took center stage. We drifted. Sakamoto did his thing and I did mine. Then, graduation came and it was time to move on.

Except —

Three weeks before we graduated, Sakamoto took up with a girl. At least, that's what he told me. He didn't actually say much. Men don't do that. We don't talk to each other. But from what I saw, it was love. Whoever she was, Sakamoto was absolutely smitten. They'd talk for hours into the night. I'd hear him whispering to her. Giggling. A foreigner, I thought, given that they'd only talk at unreasonable hours.

The human mind is funny that way. Confronted with the unknown, it cozies up with excuses. I'd known something was wrong. I'd seen the truth. But I hid from myself because a lie's always the easier fit.

I knew he was lying when he told me she was local. When I asked if we could meet, he'd paused and told me she was not a people person. "Sorry, I don't think she wants to meet you," Sakamoto mumbled, staring into the gloom. I didn't push.

I wish I had.

Sakamoto's relationship ate him up. By graduation, he'd transformed into a full-time recluse. I suspect he'd flunked out of college at some point, but no one showed up at the dormitories to kick him out. And throughout that time, I did nothing at all.

I remember the evening I left. I remember looking back into the room and catching sight of something between the slats of the cupboard. A dart of motion. Hair. I didn't think too much about it. I left, quickly, the hairs on the back of my neck standing on end. Somewhere in the recesses of my memory, eyes blinked back at me. Dark and thoughtful. Staring from between the cupboards, a half-smile suspended between the gap.

Years later, I'd regret walking away like that.

•••

The Girl from the Subway. That's what the internet called her. There were myths, mixed stories of how someone would not leave their house because she was watching, because she was waiting for them through the crack in the door, because she was hiding under their beds. The accounts get confused.

She played games with people, sometimes. Hide and go seek.

We met her a few times, my cell and I. Always too late. Always ending with someone folded through a slit between the doors, pleated, mashed-up, broken to component parts. She'd never confront us head on. She always ran away. Each and every goddamned time.

Until one day, she said my name. She said my name exactly the way that Sakamoto used to say it, complete with the messed-up umlaut, and that was when I *knew*.

• • •

I couldn't find Sakamoto online. No trace of him. No relatives on Facebook. No one from our year knew his whereabouts, either. As far as anyone could tell, he never left.

So I went back on a hunch.

Sakamoto was still there. Still alive. Still talking to the girl of his dreams. Still whispering to her, their fingertips touching, through the slats in the cupboard.

How she'd kept him alive like that, I'd never know. But she did. He was — there wasn't much left of him. Sprawled on his side; you could count the descent of his vertebrae, his ribs against his skin. His skin hung in flaps, puddled between the crevices of his bone.

He stank.

Of piss, bedsores, his own excrement. A crusting of cockroach eggs sleeved his legs. I was surprised that they hadn't eaten him. But I guess that had to do something to do with the Girl from the Subway. See, I think she loved him back in her own way.

He didn't notice us until she did. The Girl from the Subway hissed and Sakamoto rolled his eyes up so he could look at us, and he smiled, and his lips cracked and bled from the effort. And at that point, it was all I could do not to throw up.

"We see you," I told the Girl from the Subway. "Let's play a game."

• • •

Usually, this is where the narrator says they lost.

But not this time.

We won. With hook and no small amount of research-powered crook. And Sakamoto screamed as the Girl from the Subway evaporated into curls of smoke and the reek of burned meat. He scraped his fingers raw against the *tatami* as we dragged him back out into the sun. Sakamoto screamed for her. Eight years is a commitment, I guess.

Shockingly, Sakamoto didn't die from sepsis. He's in the ICU right now, to be fair, and the doctors aren't particularly happy with our unwillingness to explain how he ended up in this condition. But he should come out in one piece.

When he does, I'll give him the talk. It's time to light our candles. It's time to fight.

END OPENING FICTION

Chapter Three: Character Creation

“Come,” he said, “come, we must see and act. Devils or no devils, or all the devils at once, it matters not. We must fight him all the same.”

— Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Hunters see the shadows move in dark corners and recognize them for the monsters they are. Others force themselves to forget, choosing to bury their heads in the sand for a chance at sanity and comfort. Hunters can’t look away, because when they do, someone dies. They are driven to confront the monsters, because they lurk in their own backyards. Then, when their homes are safe, hunters realize the terrible truth: Someone must stand up to the darkness, and that someone is them.

An individual hunter is a candle in the dark — just one small light— until they join forces with other hunters. Then, they can truly make a difference. Hunters gather in cells, compacts, and conspiracies because with greater numbers comes greater effect. For a hunter, the cell is the lifeblood of successful work, and the only real protection against the darkness.

This chapter gives you everything you need to create your own hunter persona: the character with whom you’ll explore the Vigil. Characters in **Hunter: The Vigil** are mostly just like any other human being, with a few key differences. We suggest that when you go to create your hunter character, you do so with all the other players who will be part of your cell. Let your Storyteller guide you, and let the other players help shape and craft a cohesive cell among all characters at creation. This is only the beginning; the cell will grow and change from here, but it should have a solid foundation.

Character Creation

The following is a review of character creation, step by step. Later in the chapter, there is more detailed information on character options. You can find a handy quick reference for character creation on p. XX.

Step One: Character Concept

Your **character concept** is a short phrase that quickly paints your hunter’s place in the world, your character’s rough sketch that grounds them. One way to formulate a basic idea is to figure out what your character is good at and what habits or tendencies they have. They might be a “savvy detective with a drinking problem,” a “scientist and overprotective parent of three,” or a “skeptical religious scholar.” If you’re not sure, that’s okay. Your hunter will emerge through the choices you make to customize their rules and purpose. Right now, all you need is a loose framework to help shape your character.

Are you completely stuck? The previous chapters are filled with compacts, conspiracies, and setting details that can help you brainstorm what type of hunter you want to play. Once you have an idea, jot it down — that’s important to your concept. Don’t worry about why your character hunts or who your companions are. That’ll come later.

All characters start the game with three **Aspirations**. An Aspiration is a goal that you, as a player, want to make part of your character’s story. Aspirations are a way for you to signal to

your Storyteller the kinds of stories you want to tell and ways to connect with the other characters at the table. You and the other players may decide to give your characters similar starting goals to help give the cell cohesion at the beginning of the game. Unlike personal goals, Aspirations don't have to positively affect your character; they are storytelling tools that impact gameplay and help your character advance by earning Beats (p. XX). Your Aspiration can be a goal you want to accomplish, such as “banish a ghost,” or it could be an unlikely, dramatic event that affects the shape of your character's story, such as “sacrifice myself for my cell.”

For the Storyteller: Cluing Players In

Prior to character creation, let the players know what type of chronicle you're running. Each tier will affect how players build their characters. Some players may prefer more physical characters to hunt in a tier-one chronicle while others may want hunters knowledgeable in the occult for a tier-three story. Lastly, if you decide to run **Hunter** with the Slasher Chronicle (Chapter Seven, p. XX), tell players up front so they can appropriately plan and prepare for that style of game.

Consider how long it will take you to accomplish an Aspiration in your chronicle. **Short-term** Aspirations are goals that should be easy to accomplish in a single game session. **Long-term** Aspirations are goals that might take many sessions to accomplish. Try to pick a mix of goals that are short- and long-term; we suggest starting with two short-term and one long-term Aspiration at game start. Try to choose at least one Aspiration that pertains to your character's life as a hunter — maybe you want to convince another hunter to change their mind about the Code, meet a werewolf, or even learn how to perform an exorcism. This Aspiration can also pertain to your life or history outside the cell: Your girlfriend is suspicious of your late-night activities, you're dealing with a past criminal record or professional rival, or you want to find a more forgiving day job. The more general and flexible an Aspiration is, the more likely it is you'll fulfill it.

Aspirations are the main way your character is going to earn Beats and thereby Experiences (p. XX), but they are also the main tool for you to communicate to your Storyteller what you want to do in the game. The Storyteller should take note of them and provide opportunities to bring them into play often. Sometimes the plot of a chronicle takes an unusual turn and your Aspiration is suddenly irrelevant. That's okay. If that happens, you can replace an Aspiration with a new one between sessions. Be sure to let your Storyteller know what changes you're making, too, to help you earn more Beats.

Step Two: Create Anchors

With a basic idea of who your character is, you can flesh out their drives and what's important to them. A hunter has three **Anchors**: A Virtue, a Vice, and their Touchstones. A hunter's Anchors help define who they are as a person and motivate them to hunt when a situation looks bleak. They're important ways to regain spent Willpower during play, and they provide hooks to get your character more involved in the story.

Virtues and Vices are one-word traits that describe your character's personality and defining motivations, such as Ambitious, Righteous, or Greedy. Your character's **Virtue** reflects their best self, a strength that's difficult to act on and easy to ignore but fulfilling when they do act on it. Your character's **Vice** reflects their worst self; it's a weakness they fall back on easily for instant gratification.

A **Touchstone** is someone whom you feel safe around but isn't a hunter. This character is someone whom your character trusts, reminds you what you're fighting for, and helps keep you grounded. Every hunter starts the game with one Touchstone. You can begin with additional Touchstones by purchasing the Touchstone Merit (p. XX).

Step Three: Select Attributes

Attributes represent essential traits every character possesses by default. These serve as the foundation for most die rolls in **Hunter: The Vigil**.

Every character has nine Attributes that are slotted equally into three, separate categories: Mental, Physical, and Social (p. XX). Each Attribute begins with a one-dot rating. Decide which of the three categories is most important, second-most important, and least important to your character. Consider what type of character you'd like to play and how they'll be of use during the hunt. At this stage, you should review your character concept one last time. Is your character a skeptical researcher who's also a crack shot? You'd rank them Mental, Physical, then Social. Is your character a chatty socialite who easily makes friends? You'd rank them Social, Mental, then Physical.

After ranking your categories, distribute five dots to the Attributes in your primary category, four in your secondary, and three in the tertiary. You can allocate dots wherever you like, but no Attribute can have more than five total dots.

Step Four: Select Skills

Skills represent areas of expertise or tasks your character learned through training and studying. Skills are divided into the same three categories as Attributes: Mental, Physical, and Social. However, Skills do not start with any dot ratings. Just like with Attributes, determine which of the three categories is most important, second-most important, and least important to your character. After ranking your categories, distribute 11 additional dots to Skills in your primary category, seven in your secondary, and four in the tertiary. You can allocate dots wherever you like, but no Skill can start higher than 5.

When selecting Skills, review your character concept and make sure you're comfortable with your choices. Using a Skill with no dots incurs a penalty. For Physical and Social Skills, it levies a -1 die penalty to the roll. For a Mental Skill, it's a -3 die penalty.

Your character's Skill categories don't have to be prioritized the same way as her Attributes are. For instance, you may prioritize Physical Skills for your chatty socialite, even though you chose Social Attributes as most important; she may have dedicated herself to learning the art of self-defense. Alternatively, you may decide your skeptical researcher who's excellent on the shooting range needs to prioritize Mental Skills to better reflect their training and insight.

Step Five: Choose Skill Specialties

Skill dots represent training and experience with a broad range of techniques and procedures. Skill Specialties allow you to refine a few Skills and show where your character truly shines. You define your own Skill Specialties. They reflect a narrow focus and expertise in a specific Skill. For example, your character may have an Occult Specialty in Demons or a Brawl Specialty in Grappling.

After allocating dots in your Skills, choose three Skill Specialties. This is an opportunity to better understand who your character is, and who they were before they took up the Vigil. A character with Persuasion (Seduction) is wildly different from a hunter with Persuasion (Fast Talking).

You can select Skill Specialties from the suggestions in the Skill descriptions, or you can create your own. The Storyteller is the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes a Specialty and what doesn't; Specialties that are too broad or too narrow can hurt the story or never come into play.

Step Six: Apply Tier-Specific Rules

The Storyteller ultimately decides the tone and shape of the chronicle at tier one, tier two, or tier three. Characters may (or may not) all belong to the same compact for tier two or conspiracy for tier-three chronicles, but they must belong to the same *tiered* group. The list of compacts and conspiracies is found in Chapter Two. Additionally, the Storyteller may also create new custom organizations for characters to join; these rules are found on p. XX in the Chapter Eight.

All hunters, regardless of tier, may employ the use of specialized teamwork actions called Tactics to help them hunt monsters. Any hunter can perform any Tactic, provided they're willing to risk Willpower (p. XX). However, the cells that learn how to play to their strengths will favor certain Tactics above others. There is a full list of example Tactics on p. XX, as well as advice on how to create your own custom Tactics.

In a tier-one chronicle, the player characters are part of an individual cell. They may partner or communicate with other hunters from time to time, but they hunt primarily on their own. Unlike other characters who may have a brush with the supernatural, tier-one hunters are fully aware of the dangers that await them in the shadows and they've promised to fight back. The scope of these chronicles tends to be tightly focused on a specific, localized area.

At tier two and three the players' characters are members of a compact. Tier-two hunters belong to regional groups that are well-organized and have their backs. Tier--three hunters understand there are larger mechanisms at work that may pull the monsters' strings. The scope of these chronicles tends to be global.

Choosing Tactics: Hunter cells of any tier may choose three favored Tactics for the cell. Any time the cell performs these Tactics, the primary actor's roll gains the 8-again quality. Players may purchase additional Tactics with Experiences. When purchasing new Tactics, all players may contribute Experiences to meet the required amount.

Joining a Compact or Conspiracy: Hunters are granted a free dot in the Status Merit for their compact or conspiracy and may purchase additional dots during character creation. They also gain the Status benefits presented in their compact or conspiracy's writeup beginning on p. XX.

Selecting Endowments: Tier-three hunters also have access to their conspiracy's Endowments. These gifts are unique techniques, powers, or resources that give members an edge both on and off the battlefield.

Characters begin play with two Endowments from their conspiracy. Endowments represent the hunter's commitment to the conspiracy and learning a new one often takes time or a request to the higher ups. Provided a hunter has at least one dot in his conspiracy's Status, he can continue to learn new Endowments by spending the requisite Experiences.

Restrictions for which Endowments may be purchased during character creation is at the Storyteller's discretion.

Tactics and Cell Creation

The hunter you create starts out as a capable member of a cell. This is by design; the characters your troupe creates during this process have already been through a few hunts together. They've learned how to shore up each other's weaknesses and how each of their strengths can best serve the cause. They've adapted to the dangers they've faced together and practiced certain useful Tactics enough to perform them admirably even under duress.

If your group would rather play out the cell's formation as part of the game, you can save this step for later and choose favored Tactics one by one as you go along, responding to the trials your cell faces during the first few sessions of your chronicle.

This is also a good time to consider other aspects of how your cell operates as a unit. Do they have a safe, clandestine place to meet up and keep their hunting gear? If so, consider pooling some of your starting Merit points for a Safe Place. Have they already made enemies by treading on another cell's turf, or stumbling into a much larger problem than the original hunt they thought was over? Have they attracted the attention of some underground monster society? If so, consider giving the characters an Aspiration they all share that pertains to these intrigues.

Consider, too, what brought your cell together, and what *keeps* them together. They might have Allies, Contacts, or a Mentor in common, which you can represent through Merits. Some of them might even share a Touchstone — a prime opportunity for interpersonal drama as the story progresses and shit gets real.

Step Seven: Select Merits

Merits are important facets of your character that don't fall under other Traits. A Merit can represent a knack, special training, people your character knows, or even things she owns. Merits are a good way to make your character more unique.

You have seven dots to distribute across any combination of Merits. Your character must meet all a Merit's prerequisites to purchase it.

Additionally, every hunter has (or had) a life outside the Vigil. Your character also receives a free dot of the Professional Training Merit (p. XX) which represents a field of knowledge the player either already has or seeks to acquire knowledge in.

The Merits you choose might affect other Traits on your character sheet. Make sure you review them when calculating Advantages in the next step.

Step Eight: Determine Advantages

Hunter characters have certain advantages, some of which depend on their Attributes, Skills, and Merits. Determine the following advantages with the given calculations and note them on your character sheet. A specific Merit or Endowment that modifies your character's Advantages calls that out in its text.

- **Size:** 5
- **Health:** Size + Stamina
- **Speed:** 5 + Strength + Dexterity
- **Willpower:** Resolve + Composure

- **Integrity:** 7
- **Initiative:** Dexterity + Composure
- **Defense:** (Lower of Wits or Dexterity) + Athletics

A starting hunter also receives three additional Experiences to spend on any Traits the player wishes. This reflects the need for characters pursuing the Vigil to adapt quickly and stay on their toes. Experience costs for character advancement are on p. XX.

[THE FOLLOWING IS A QUICK-REFERENCE TABLE]

Character Creation Quick Reference

Here are the basics for creating a **Hunter** character.

Step One: Character Concept

Choose a concept for your character and three Aspirations.

Step Two: Anchors

Choose a Virtue, Vice, and Touchstone(s).

Step Three: Attributes

Prioritize categories. You have 5/4/3 dots to assign within each.

Step Four: Skills

Prioritize categories. You have 11/7/4 dots to distribute within each.

Step Five: Skill Specialties

Choose three Skill Specialties.

Step Six: Apply Tier Template

Decide which tier you're playing: one, two, or three.

All hunter cells may choose three Tactics.

Choose a compact (tier two) or conspiracy (tier three) if applicable. Choose two Endowments from your conspiracy.

Step Seven: Add Merits

Select seven dots of Merits. Receive Professional Training • for free. Tier-two and -three characters also receive compact or conspiracy Status • for free.

Step Eight: Determine Advantages

Calculate the following advantages: **Size:** 5, **Health:** Size + Stamina, **Speed:** 5 + Strength + Dexterity, **Willpower:** Resolve + Composure, **Integrity:** 7, **Initiative:** Dexterity + Composure, **Defense:** (Lower of Wits or Dexterity) + Athletics

Spend three starting Experiences on any Traits you like.

[END QUICK REFERENCE CHART]

Character Advancement

Characters in **Hunter: The Vigil** advance through earning **Beats** in a variety of ways. A Beat is a measurable moment of drama that reflects how your character has grown in some way. Often, the Beat is earned after a character fulfills an Aspiration.

When characters earn five Beats, they are converted to one **Experience**. You can spend Experiences to acquire or increase character Traits.

Earning Beats

You gain Beats when one of the following occurs:

- Your character fulfills an Aspiration, take a Beat. Replace it at the end of the session.
- At the end of a game session, take a Beat.
- Once per scene, when resolving a Condition, take a Beat.
- Some Conditions provide Beats for actions other than resolution.
- Any time you fail a roll, you may opt to make it a dramatic failure and take a Beat. This doesn't apply to rolls on which you risked Willpower (p. XX).
- If your character surrenders during a fight, take a Beat.
- If you succeed in a roll that risks Willpower (not including Tactics, p. XX), take a Beat.
- If your character takes damage in one of her three rightmost Health boxes, take a Beat.
- Any time your character risks a breaking point (p. XX).
- If your Storyteller deems it appropriate following a major or dramatic event.

You can only receive one Beat from each of these criteria per scene.

Beats and Storyteller Characters

The Storyteller doesn't earn Beats. Whenever a Storyteller character does something that would earn a Beat, such as resolve a Condition or participate in a Tactic, they gain a Willpower point instead. This point vanishes at the end of the current scene if it's not used.

Group Beats

Hunters do not work alone; the cell functions almost as a single body. This means that when the members of a cell work together in a meaningful way, they learn and grow together and from one another. This reflects not only their growing experience with the Vigil, but their growing loyalty to each other. The cell's high-risk, high-reward lifestyle, delving into dark mysteries and confronting terrifying foes, teaches them lessons ordinary people never learn.

Group Beats are the reward for these kinds of actions, and they are simply another way to earn Beats. Unlike how players normally earn Beats, with each character earning them individually by default, these Beats are shared by the entire troupe. When a Group Beat is rewarded, all members of the cell earn a Beat.

Players earn Group Beats based on the criteria listed, but only during scenes in which the cell confronts the supernatural directly in some way. Investigating a monster by following it back to its lair is a confrontation; doing so by researching it at the library or examining a day-old crime scene is not. Likewise, chatting with a vampire ally who isn't currently endangering anyone doesn't count, but a tense negotiation or exchange of threats with a vampire does.

- Whenever two or more members of the cell experience a breaking point during *any* scene, take one Group Beat instead of gaining normal Beats.
- Whenever the cell successfully performs a Tactic in a qualifying scene, take a Group Beat.
- Whenever more than one member of the cell fulfills or make significant headway toward an Aspiration that is directly related to the Vigil during a qualifying scene, take a Group Beat instead of a regular Beat.
- Whenever the cell destroys a monster or otherwise renders it permanently harmless to humanity, take a Group Beat.

As with regular Beats, each of these criteria only grants one Group Beat per scene.

Optional Rule: Beats for Everyone

If the players and Storyteller wish, players can pool their regular Beats together into a shared pool. Then, following a session, they may divide all Beats equally. This methodology means the characters advance at the same rate, but it also means advancement is affected by how much the players engage with the rules.

Grouping Beats can be a boon and a detriment. A shy or nonconfrontational player will benefit from this way of earning Beats; they may also feel embarrassed they didn't earn enough Beats to help their cell advance. However, this system can offer an incentive to be more involved without feeling pressure to perform for advancement. Grouping Beats can also incentivize *not* being involved, since their character continues to advance without as much engagement.

Earning Beats this way is an advancement system that can be used at the beginning of a session as a trial run or for an entire chronicle. Though there is no hard-and-fast rule, Storytellers are not encouraged to switch between the two systems on a regular basis.

Players and Storytellers are encouraged to open a dialogue to choose which advancement system would work best for their group before gameplay begins.

Experiences

Each time you earn five Beats, they combine to make one **Experience**. You can spend Experiences at any time to increase your character's existing traits or purchase new ones. An Experience is a sign of meaningful progress in your character's story. Traits have varying Experience costs, as follows:

[START TABLE]

Experience Costs

Trait Experiences

Attribute 4 per dot

Skill 2 per dot
Skill Specialty 1
Merit 1 per dot
Integrity 2 per dot
Endowment 3
New Tactic 5
Lost Willpower dot 1
Replenish Willpower points 1 Beat*

* Willpower dots increase whenever Resolve or Composure increases, and have a maximum rating of the combined dots in both Attributes. This cost is to replenish Willpower *points*; at any time, the player may spend 1 Beat (not a whole Experience) and roll Resolve + Composure with no modifiers. The character regains Willpower points equal to successes rolled, up to their maximum; even if the roll fails, they still regain one Willpower point.

[END TABLE]

Experienced Starting Characters

Storytellers may allow players to make more experienced hunters prior to their first session. These bonus Experiences allow characters to start with more hunts under their belt, in addition to the three, free Experiences every starting character receives.

Membership in a compact or conspiracy does not necessarily reflect greater experience with the hunt; a member of Task Force: VALKYRIE can be just as green (or greener) than a hunter on meaner streets. A hunter with more experience has simply been on the road far longer than the rookie fresh out of training.

When advancing your character, refer to the table (p. XX) and the cost for purchase using Experiences.

[START TABLE]

Rank	Bonus Experiences
Survived First Contact	15
Been At it a While	25
Seasoned Soldier	35
Seen Too Much	50
Grizzled Veteran	100

[END TABLE]

Anchors

Hunters may function well in their cells, but they are still just human. They suffer from isolation, fear, desperation, and depression maybe more than a normal person does. Anchors are what keeps the character level — they define her personality, how she acts, and what she cares the

most about — and affirming them assures her she is still just a person, not a monster like the things she fights. Every hunter has three Anchors: Virtue, Vice, and Touchstones.

All Anchors provide ways to recover Willpower. Virtues are exemplary attributes the character aspires to, and acting on them is difficult, but rewarding. Vices are actions to which the character falls in times of stress, and ones from which she tries to abstain when possible. Touchstones provide multiple ways to regain Willpower. The easier option recovers a single Willpower point, while the harsher refreshes all Willpower.

A hunter's Virtue and Vice are one-word descriptors that form the core of their personality. They should reflect behavior, beliefs, or motivators, rather than capabilities. "Athletic" is not a Virtue, because your character already has an Athletics Skill to define how athletic they are; but "Competitive" makes a good Virtue because it describes how they behave. Acting on their Virtue or Vice reaffirms their sense of self.

The hunter's Touchstone is something that keeps her grounded, a person or ideology that reminds her why she keeps the Vigil and is a touchstone to keep her human.

Virtue

While your character's Virtue is undeniably a positive influence in their life, they should absolutely be able to fulfill their Virtue while suffering a breaking point (p. XX) at the same time — even Virtues can drive people to do terrible things.

Whenever your character acts in accordance with their Virtue in a way that poses difficulty or risk to their personal safety, they regain all their spent Willpower points. They may regain Willpower this way up to twice per chapter.

Example Virtues are:

- **Competitive:** Your character always pushes themselves to excel and be the best at whatever they do. It's not about defeating others, but about the rush they get from honest competition, and the thrill of knowing they pushed themselves to stay ahead of their rivals. Regain Willpower when you honestly compete with someone who outclasses you, for stakes that you will feel if you lose.
- **Generous:** Your character feels best when giving to others. They may give to charity or simply lend items to friends with no questions asked. A Generous character may be taken advantage of sometimes, but they aren't in it for thanks or hope of repayment. They give because other people need. Regain Willpower when deprive yourself of an important resource or put yourself at risk because of your Generous nature.
- **Just:** A sense of fairness and justice drives a Just character. They want everyone to get what they deserve and will stick their neck out to make sure it happens. Regain Willpower when you set your own goals aside to ensure justice is done.
- **Loyal:** Loyalty to a person or a group is your character's guide. This group could be other players' characters, a company, a family, a community, or even a country. This Virtue may also extend to your hunter's cell, compact, or conspiracy. The character is not necessarily foolish or blind to the flaws of his chosen group. Regain Willpower when you risk yourself rather than act against the group's interests.

- **Patient:** Your character is a solid rock, waiting for the right moment to act or accepting of others who take their time. She does not fluster easily, and she makes sure to take careful consideration before committing to an action. Regain Willpower when you miss an opportunity for a personal goal while waiting for someone or something else.

Vice

A Vice is the personality trait your character falls back on when they're taking the easy way out. Indulging your Vice is a cop out to avoid dealing with your feelings and problems. It makes you feel better for that moment even if it's self-destructive, but it's not healthy behavior in the long term.

Whenever your character indulges their Vice, they regain one spent Willpower point. This doesn't have to pose any difficulty or risk to your character.

Example Vices are:

- **Ambitious:** Your character wants to get ahead, to move up the ladder — no matter the cost. They want advancement, rank, and authority in advance of what they've actually earned. Regain a point of Willpower when you jockey for position or try to advance socially instead of pursuing a more constructive goal.
- **Arrogant:** Your character is good at something and makes sure everyone knows it. They define themselves by being "better" than everyone else to a degree that exceeds justifiable pride in their abilities. Regain a point of Willpower when you take an opportunity to lord your superiority over someone else.
- **Cruel:** Your character has a mean streak. Her first instinct is to twist the knife and inflict pain even when a character begs for mercy. She might habitually refuse surrender in combat or be the bastard boss who humiliates employees just because it makes her feel better. Regain a Willpower point when you needlessly victimize someone in your power.
- **Lazy:** Your character would rather let something fester than do work. His first instinct is to give up when things get hard, even if continuing would result in a benefit for him. He might shirk work duties, forget important dates, or simply neglect his friends and family rather than do the work it takes to keep up relations. Regain a Willpower point when you neglect important tasks.
- **Violent:** Your character loves getting their way through physical means. They frequently settle conflicts with fighting, and they fight because they want to hurt people. Regain a Willpower point when you resolve a scene by using needless violence.

Touchstones

A **Touchstone** is an "in game" term that describes someone a hunter feels safe around when they're not spending time elbow deep in monster guts and thwarting demonic sacrifices. Fellow hunters don't qualify — you trust your cellmates with your deepest secrets and your life every time you hunt. Cells already share a common bond: your pledge to uphold the Vigil and the Code. The hunting life has a downside, however, because hunters who become too insular and spend all their time researching, tracking, interviewing, and fighting lose their edge. Hunters who forget the people, pets, and places they're desperate to protect are in danger of becoming so hardened they're not much better than the monsters.

Your character's Touchstone is your lifeline. Touchstones are deeply personal, and can often keep you from falling into despair, becoming overwhelmed, or lashing out at someone who doesn't deserve it. Hunters instinctively understand the need to take a break from the hunt or share the horrors they've seen with someone who won't judge. Deep down, hunters know it's not healthy to abandon everyone they know and love to immerse themselves in the hunt.

Touchstones are not without conflict. Arguments often break out among hunters about who should know the truth. Is it better to lie to a lover than drag them into their dangerous life? Or, are hunters putting families in danger when they *don't* know their next-door neighbor was a werewolf? If someone hasn't witnessed a monster firsthand, can they believe a hunter's "tall tale?" Or, do hunters push people away the more they try to convince them they're in danger? Most Touchstones are people. Sometimes, a hunter finds another way to deal with the emotional and psychological burden of the hunt. When choosing a Touchstone, consider how your character might lose it. Think of how your hunter protects it, how they react when it's threatened, how they smooth tense situations over when the Vigil encroaches on it.

Systems: Touchstones help a hunter maintain Integrity (p. XX) by adding dice to breaking-point rolls. You gain +2 dice when the hunter has one attached Touchstone, or +3 when she has more than one. These affects do not stack; in other words, if she has two Touchstones, you don't receive +5 to breaking-point rolls. When a hunter has no Touchstones attached, you make breaking-point rolls at -2 instead.

Mark your character's Touchstones next to her Integrity track, with her first one next to her sixth dot of Integrity. A Touchstone is attached when there is a dot next to it. For example, if your character has five dots of Integrity, her first Touchstone is no longer attached. Any time your character defends their relationship to an attached Touchstone or engages in a scene of positive or cathartic engagement with it, they regain a Willpower point. If this causes your hunter serious setbacks or harm, they regain all spent Willpower points.

Touchstones hold thematic and material weight in your story. Your hunter's Touchstone is something they need to maintain, and only regaining lost Integrity will reattach a Touchstone. She may lose a Touchstone through death, or extreme alienation. An ideology may be challenged so drastically that it is lost to the hunter. When she loses a Touchstone, it is a breaking point whether the Touchstone was attached or not.

If the character loses her last Touchstone, she has a choice. She can lose a dot of Integrity immediately and attempt to replace the Touchstone. She has a month to do so but establishing the right kind of relationship can take longer and hunters are slow to trust. Close friends and confidants take time to cultivate. This is by design; this means hunters are encouraged to build and maintain relationships with other characters that aren't mandated by Touchstones, Merits, and their cell. If she can't find a new Touchstone in that time, she gains an appropriate Condition, such as Obsession. The player can also choose to take the Condition immediately. The character isn't choosing so much as resigning herself to the Vigil forcing her to lead a life of isolation. This happens whether Touchstone was attached or not.

Your character can gain additional Touchstones with the Touchstone Merit (p. XX). Write the new Touchstone next to the appropriate Integrity dot. Replacing a lost or dead Touchstone requires the character to regain a dot of Integrity. Replace the Touchstone on her Integrity track.

Sample Touchstones

The following is a list of Touchstone examples. You can choose one from this list “as is” or customize your own — after all, your hunter’s Touchstones should feel real and personal.

Blissfully Unaware

Your girlfriend doesn’t suspect a thing, and you plan to keep it that way. You love the way her face lights up whenever she talks about your happy future together. You don’t have the heart to tell her about all the blood and secrets that stand in the way and you know she’ll think you’re crazy if you try, so you just keep on pretending.

The Child

Your daughter just wants to spend more time with you, but you refuse to drag her into the Vigil. You bring her gifts to make up for the way you always drop everything and leave when duty calls. Soon, she’ll be old enough to realize those aren’t enough, and to ask why you own so many guns.

Confessional

The priest listens to you confess your sins and tells you how to repent, no matter what outlandish shit you tell him. He can’t possibly believe the things you say, right? But he says God will forgive you anyway, and that’s enough. Who knows, maybe he *does* believe you, and roots for your crusade against evil.

In on It

He’s a dedicated cop or part of the local underworld, and he knows what you do for this town. He doesn’t want to be personally involved, but he helps you out when you need a body to disappear, records falsified, or evidence from classified files, so you tell him everything. Maybe someday he’ll decide you’ve stepped over the line — but of course, he’s complicit.

Nosy Neighbor

She lives down the street and invites you to her book club every week. She’s the neighborhood gossip, and you like the way she keeps you connected with people’s everyday lives. You just have to make sure the thing you buried in the backyard doesn’t become next week’s gossip.

The One You Couldn’t Save

He was a monster’s victim, and now he’s gone. Maybe his death drove you to take up the Vigil in the first place, or maybe you just failed him. You visit his grave whenever you’re nearby and spill all your regrets to a tombstone. You secretly hope his ghost will come back and forgive you but, so far, it’s just you and the worms.

The One You Saved

She was a monster’s victim, and you saved her from the jaws of death or worse. Now she knows what’s out there, and she’s terrified of it. Your presence makes her feel safe, and hers makes you feel like you’re making a difference. You fear letting her down more than anything.

Part-Time Lover

He knows your name and ID are fake, and he’s seen you stumble into bed with wounds you can’t explain, but he never asks questions or whispers a word of it. He lets you forget for a night here and there, and that’s enough for you both. You just hope you’re not followed next time.

The Regulars

Your favorite bar is a dive with the same clientele every night, and you like it that way. It's a place where nobody knows your name, where you can shoot the shit and play some pool and smoke a cigarette or two, and nobody's lives are in your hands for once. You didn't used to be this change-averse, but now you hate when newcomers show up.

The Rookie

He might be your kid or someone else's. A teen who stumbled across the pastor's stash of exorcism rituals and shotguns. A student at the haunted high school who can see the spirits. Whoever he is, he knows what you do and he wants in. He wants you to train him. You can't keep dodging the question forever.

Separated

She couldn't bring herself to sign divorce papers, but she kicked you out of the house. She says you've changed and she can't handle all the lies. She likes to have coffee on the weekends, and she says she'll take you back anytime — just as soon as you tell her the truth.

The Therapist

He's the only one you trust not to judge you when you admit to all your blackest thoughts and most paralyzing fears. He thinks you speak in metaphors when you talk about ghosts and monsters, and that's fine with you. You hope you never screw up so royally that he'll have to share your file with the court.

Your Rock

She's your sister, your best friend, your mentor. She's been through it all with you. You know she'll support you no matter what, and that's the problem. You're desperate to keep her from tumbling down the Vigil's rabbit hole with you, because you don't want to lose the one person who makes you feel like yourself again.

Integrity

Humans in the Chronicles of Darkness have a trait called **Integrity**, which represents their psyches' stability. It measures their acceptance of their own self-image and how secure their psychological well-being is. When they perform terrible acts, witness atrocities, or experience supernatural things they can't explain, they risk losing Integrity via **breaking points** (p. XX). Their Integrity score, in turn, measures how well they handle further trauma.

Hunters have Integrity just like other human beings, but the unnatural stresses to which they constantly expose themselves affect them more deeply than anything most people ever see or do. Someone who hunts monsters has a choice: Let it fundamentally change them or lose all ability to cope. Those who succumb to the latter can no longer function in society. Those who choose the former take up the Vigil and call themselves hunters. Their Integrity changes with them; Integrity is still a measure of their stability, but it's impacted differently because of their new role in the fight against the darkness.

A hunter's greatest saving grace is her companions. A lone hunter doesn't make it far before she spirals into self-loathing or forgets why she's fighting, living from one bloody thrill to the next. She needs people — not just any people, but people she can trust. People she can open up to and be vulnerable with, even if it's just for a night here and there. Without the occasional reprieve

from living on a hair trigger, paranoia consumes her. Touchstones help remind her why she took up the Vigil to begin with and who she is behind the flamethrower.

System

A hunter's Integrity trait ranges from 10 to 0. Characters start out with seven dots of Integrity. Whenever a hunter violates the Code (see below) or experiences something that drastically shakes his confidence, his player rolls a breaking point and risks losing a dot of Integrity. A player can buy Integrity dots with Experiences (p. XX), but to purchase a dot of Integrity, a character must first spend a scene opening up to someone in a frank and honest manner, trusting that person with his rawest feelings and deepest secrets, or with his life or the lives of those he cares about. It could be anyone — a fellow hunter, a Touchstone, even an enemy, as long as he's genuine. This trust must not be betrayed before the player purchases the Integrity dot.

Characters with **high Integrity (7-10)** see themselves in more or less the same way they always did. The Vigil is a major part of their lives, but they can see beyond it to pursue other things — relationships, hobbies, even careers. They can draw a clear line between themselves and the monsters they despise.

Characters with **middling Integrity (4-6)** fully internalize the hunt, reacting more instinctively to perceived threats. They tend toward the paranoid and are more prone to violence or Machiavellian behaviors. They wonder whether their actions are justified while the Code pushes them to keep hunting anyway, or they double down on their lifestyles and become cynical. Characters at this level of Integrity gain the persistent Vigilant Condition (p. XX).

Characters with **low Integrity (1-3)** allow the hunt to consume them utterly. They lash out at the slightest hint of a threat, throw themselves gleefully into bloodshed at every opportunity, or scheme like a spider to take out the enemy before it makes a move. They can't remember or imagine being anything but a hunter. Some hate themselves for what they've become. Others steadfastly refuse to admit they've fallen from grace, thoroughly fixated on the job. Still others survive more than they live, jaded to the point of singlemindedness. Characters at this level of Integrity gain the persistent Merciless Condition (p. XX).

A hunter who falls to Integrity 0 is barely recognizable as human anymore, a relentless engine of violence and obsession. Characters who drop this far become Storyteller characters and are prone to becoming slashers (p. XX).

The Code

You go from hunted to hunter when something inside you hardens to steel, sharpens to a knife's edge, and you take a stand. You leave your old life behind so you can act as torch, sword, and shield. Once your eyes are open and your fist clenched, you can never go back to the halcyon days, try though you might. Yeah, ignorance is bliss, but you've left bliss far behind. Maybe you made a pact, or you just feel it in your bones, but either way you recognize the Code as your new compass for what's okay and what isn't.

When a hunter takes up the Vigil, she vows — whether out loud or just to herself — to abide by certain precepts, ones that separate her from common murderers and unnatural predators. She justifies her life of violence, crime, and paranoia with strict rules which, if followed, keep her from being like *them*: the monsters that prey on the innocent, kill for fun, leech off society, and care about nothing but themselves. The hunter tells herself she's different, that she's doing it all

for the greater good. If she can cling to her Integrity, she might even be right. The more she violates this Code, the hollower her insistence rings. She builds a wall of scars around her heart so she can live with herself. Do the job, slay the fiend, save the day. But the more Integrity she loses, the less she knows herself anymore. The further she falls, the harder it is to see the difference between herself and any other killer.

For the average person, excessive violence and exposure to the dark supernatural underbelly of the world cause trauma — she questions her sanity or the truth of everything she’s ever known. Brutality shocks her, numbs her. This is true of hunters when they start out, too, but at some point, they make a permanent choice to stop being victims. They draw a line in the sand and say, *not me. Not my people. Never again.* An ordinary person becomes a hunter in that moment. She may not realize it at first, but she has dedicated herself to the Code, trading away her safe worldview for the unforgiving mentality it takes to fight the impossible.

Psychological stress destabilizes a hunter’s self-image the same way it does for anyone else, and in fact this self-image is the crux of what hunters call the Code. It’s just a question of what constitutes “psychological stress” for people who obsess over monsters for a living. The basic aspects of the Code are universal, like the idea that human lives have inherent worth and monsters are a threat to them, or that a hunter’s first duty is to the Vigil. No mystical force makes these tenets true; it’s just that the mindset necessary to take up this torch — whether to light the darkness or burn it down — affects the human psyche in these ways. Anyone who lasts more than a few weeks in this gig learns to follow these instincts.

For characters, the Code is sometimes an unspoken understanding, and sometimes a tangible set of principles that hunters vow to each other to uphold. It could be a mission statement for a conspiracy that every member signs. It could be an oath a cell swears over a freshly dug grave. Some just wax philosophical about it over beers late at night. Whatever the form it takes, when two hunters’ interpretations of the Code come into conflict, they’re willing to shed tears and blood over it.

Breaking Points

Characters in **Hunter** suffer breaking points. *Innate* breaking points are those a character carries with her from before she took up the hunt, and those that remind her of just how unsettling her life has become. Most innate breaking points involve doing or encountering something traumatic for the first time; even the most seasoned hunter hasn’t seen *everything* that’s out there, and surprises in her line of work are never pleasant. A character also reaches a breaking point when she violates the Code.

The Code’s fundamentals may be universal, but no two hunters interpret them exactly the same way. They argue over what constitutes a “monster” or a “person” all the time, although the Code draws a few indelible lines that guide a hunter’s hand when things get messy enough that she needs something concrete to fall back on. The Code’s breaking points aren’t indicative of how a hunter *feels* or what she *wants*; they’re ways in which her psyche has had to adapt, subconsciously, to her life of darkness and deliberately exposing herself to terrible things. If it hadn’t, her lifestyle would have already reduced her to Integrity 0 long ago.

If a hunter believes that a kind zombie who chooses not to eat brains is not a monster, that’s fine; however, when that zombie loses control of himself and preys on someone, a hunter who’s come far enough down this road to dedicate herself to the Vigil can’t just *ignore* the fact that the

zombie is dangerous for ordinary people, and an ordinary person's life has value in and of itself. Thus, letting that happen is a breaking point — a moment of personal crisis and a difficult decision. Breaking points aren't a punishment; they're a mechanical representation of wrestling with the stresses of experiences human beings weren't meant to have.

From an out-of-character perspective, Code breaking points consider any creature that wields Dread Powers or Numina a monster — as long as the hunters know it is such a creature — as well as slashers and other obviously inhuman beings; this is because horrors, slashers, and ephemeral beings make up the totality of supernatural antagonists presented in this book, giving the Storyteller the ability to create any sort of dangerous mystery they like. This doesn't mean a Storyteller character who is human but uses Dread Powers to express psychic abilities is a literal monster; it just means that for purposes of the Code's breaking points, the hunter psyche considers the psychic a threat to humanity that's more unnatural than someone with a gun.

Code breaking points usually don't count ordinary humans or other hunters as monsters, no matter what kind of terrible deeds they perform, unless they exhibit obviously monstrous abilities; however, most hunters can give at least a partial pass to hunters wielding supernatural Endowments if they know that's what they're seeing, reflected in the modifiers in the chart below. If a hunter sees someone summoning a demon and she *doesn't* know they're a member of the Lucifuge doing it to take down something worse, the Storyteller should treat the situation as though that member of the Lucifuge is a "monster" for purposes of Code breaking points until the hunter learns the truth; once she does, it's up to her player to decide how she views such powers wielded in service to the Vigil.

Systems

Whenever a hunter suffers a breaking point, her player takes a Beat and rolls Resolve + Composure, with a modifier based on the level of the breaking point (listed below). Only breaking points *at or below* a character's current Integrity score apply to her.

Other modifiers may apply to the roll as well, at the Storyteller's discretion; modifiers can't exceed + or -5. The following are some examples:

[BEGIN TABLE]

Breaking Point Modifiers

Situation **Modifier**

Deliberate act of significant personal sacrifice +3

You have more than one Touchstone attached +3

Acting in defense of another person or on behalf of a cell, compact or conspiracy +2

Your quarry is another hunter +2

Interacted meaningfully and positively with someone you trust within the last full scene +2

You have one Touchstone attached +2

Acting in accordance with your Virtue +1

- Acting in self-defense +1
- Acting in accordance with your Vice -1
- Acting under duress or coercion -1
- You have no Touchstones attached -2
- With no control over your actions -2
- Betrayed by someone you trusted within the last full scene -2
- Actively and willingly helping a monster -3

[END TABLE]

Roll Results

Success: The character keeps her Integrity, forging scar tissue around her soul thick enough to take the strain. She gains the Obsession (temporary), Stoic, or Vendetta Condition.

Exceptional Success: The character not only keeps her Integrity but pushes a wedge between herself and the rest of humanity, justifying it all in the name of the Vigil. She gains the persistent Addicted Condition with regard to some visceral or unsettling aspect of the hunt, such as earning a monster’s flattering attentions, killing one, or causing one pain or the persistent Obsession Condition with regard to a particular monster. In addition, gain a Willpower point.

Failure: The character loses a dot of Integrity and questions herself. She gains the Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked Condition (or a custom one with Storyteller approval).

Dramatic Failure: The character loses a dot of Integrity and experiences a moment of awful clarity, as the full weight of what she must do to keep the Vigil descends upon her like a crushing avalanche. She gains the Demoralized or Violent Condition.

But What Is a Monster, Really?

This book uses the word “monster” as a general term for “unnatural things hunters investigate.” That’s because characters in **Hunter** aren’t assumed to be hunting the protagonists of other Chronicles of Darkness lines. The Vigil necessitates a worldview wherein dangerous supernatural beings and phenomena are threats to humanity; their Integrity works differently from that of **Chronicles of Darkness Core Rulebook** protagonists because the tone and themes of a **Hunter** game differ, too.

A hunter is someone who goes out of their way to hunt down the weirdest, darkest, most threatening occult entities, to stop them from being threats. That doesn’t mean they always kill such entities, though the nature of the supernatural world means that’s often the most expedient solution to “something is preying on people.” They may want to reform their behavior, or lock them away, or expose their secrets to the world — but *all* of those goals come down to “stop the supernatural from threatening ordinary humans.”

Therefore, the Code differentiates between “monster” and “person.” Hunters are perfectly capable of befriending sympathetic monsters or helping a ghost

communicate with its living loved ones; they're also perfectly capable of taking matters into their own hands when the law can't sufficiently protect people from a mundane serial killer. The Code doesn't prevent or even discourage any of that.

What the Code *does* do is draw a line between how ordinary people approach unnatural threats and how hunters do, *when those worlds collide*. A hunter whose vampire friend minds his own business needn't stake him to avoid a breaking point. When she faces a choice between saving a human life and protecting that vampire friend, and she chooses the vampire over the human, *that's* when the Code kicks in and she must justify that choice to her own Vigilance. When such situations get in the way of empathy for the plight of a creature that had no choice in becoming what it is, or one that's trying its best not to harm anybody, it forces a hunter to confront the consequences of the Vigil she swore to uphold. That's what creates dramatic story hooks and personal horror: The further you go to dig up what's hidden for good reason, the harder it gets to tell right from wrong, friend from foe, or person from monster.

List of Breaking Points

The following list includes the universal tenets of the Code, as well as baseline innate breaking points. The Code allows for indirect actions in the spirit of its edicts, such as collecting or sharing information about a monster so that someone else can trap it.

Storytellers and players should work together to decide whether other actions or experiences in play constitute innate breaking points for a character, depending on his circumstances and his past. Estimate the level of such breaking points using the list below as a guideline.

If a single action or event would fit multiple breaking points at once, use the one lowest on the Integrity scale.

High Integrity (7-10; -0 modifier)

- First time personally encountering a particular type of supernatural trait or power (Innate)
- Causing significant harm to a person (Code)
- Allowing harm to come to a person in pursuit of your Vigil (Code)
- Causing a person to suffer a breaking point from exposure to the supernatural (Code)
- Refusing aid to a fellow hunter in need (Code)

Middling Integrity (4-6; -1 modifier)

- First time killing a particular type of monster (Innate)
- First time enduring physical torture (Innate)
- First time enduring psychological torture or a mental or emotional supernatural attack (Innate)
- Killing a person (Code)
- Learning a monster harmed a person when you could have stopped it but didn't (Code)
- Putting the well-being or autonomy of a monster over that of a person (Code)

Low Integrity (1-3; -2 modifier)

- First time torturing a particular type of monster (Innate)
- Torturing a person (Innate)
- Suffering a significant loss (e.g. a loved one, a home) at the hands of the supernatural or because of the Vigil (Innate)
- Gaining or bestowing power from an obviously monstrous source (Code)
- Betraying a fellow hunter (Code)

Breaking Points and Tiers

When a hunter joins a compact or conspiracy, she's joining a likeminded group of people just as obsessed and driven as she is. Together, they agree on certain rules of engagement with the Vigil, whether unspoken or written. members of the Lucifuge vow to use the power of their own monstrous blood to strike back at the darkness. Network Zero tacitly encourages members to expose the truth as blatantly as they dare. Upholding these agreements sometimes means violating the Code — after all, exposing the truth may sound noble, but it also gets people killed, and hunters of demonic heritage struggle with questions of how human they really are every day. For many, these hard choices are simply what they signed up for.

Hunters are nothing if not resourceful, though. A character who runs afoul of this conundrum can, if she chooses, dedicate herself to the creed of her compact or conspiracy so completely that her Code shifts to accommodate it. When she reaches a moment of truth, the evil she decides is lesser may forever change the compromises she's willing to make to get the job done.

Systems: A tier-one hunter character experiences breaking points as above. At tiers two and three, whenever a character would suffer a Code breaking point in *direct* pursuit of the Vigil, she may instead trade that breaking point out permanently for a new Code tenet specific to her compact or conspiracy, which is always at low Integrity on the breaking point scale. She may only do this once. The player and Storyteller should work together to come up with an appropriate new breaking point that embodies the character's commitment to her organization.

A hunter whose Code deviates from that of the majority of her brethren is hard to trust; if a player trades out a breaking point this way, she suffers a -3 penalty on Social rolls to deal with any hunter who's not part of her compact or conspiracy.

The Code and Switching Memberships

Characters may switch their compacts and conspiracies. While it affects their membership, it does not impact the *hunter's* definition of the Code. Just because a hunter joins The Long Night after hunting with Network Zero doesn't automatically mean their beliefs have changed to reflect their new membership. When a character switches membership to a different compact or conspiracy, let the player discover what happens to the Code through roleplay. Then, should they suffer a breaking point, they may reexamine their feelings and redefine the Code to reflect their commitment to the new group.

Attributes

Every character possesses nine Attributes that measure their innate capabilities, split into three categories: Mental, Physical, and Social. If a game rule refers to a “Social roll,” or a “Mental action,” that means the dice rolled will include the appropriate Attribute category. Each dot represents one die you’ll add to your roll.

One dot in an Attribute reflects below-average capacity. Two dots represent the human average. Three and four reflect a high level of competency, while five reflects the height of human potential in that arena.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes reflect your character’s acuity, intellect, and strength of mind.

Intelligence

Intelligence is your character’s raw knowledge, memory, and capacity for solving difficult problems. This may be book smarts or a wealth of trivia.

Attribute Tasks: Memorizing (Intelligence + Composure, instant action)

Wits

Wits represents your character’s ability to think quickly and improvise solutions. It reflects your character’s perception and ability to pick up on details.

Attribute Tasks: Perception (Wits + Composure, reflexive action)

Resolve

Resolve is your character’s determination, patience, and sense of commitment. It allows your character to concentrate in the face of distraction and danger or continue doing something in spite of insurmountable odds.

Attribute Tasks: Resisting coercion (Resolve + Stamina, reflexive action)

Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes reflect your character’s bodily fitness and acumen.

Strength

Strength is your character’s muscular definition and capacity to deliver force. It affects many physical tasks, including most actions in a fight.

Attribute Tasks: Breaking a barrier (Strength + Stamina, instant action), Lifting objects (Strength + Stamina, instant action)

Dexterity

Dexterity is your character’s speed, agility, and coordination. It provides balance, reactions, and aim.

Attribute Tasks: Keeping balance (Dexterity + Composure, reflexive action)

Stamina

Stamina is your character’s general health and sturdiness. It determines how much punishment your character’s body can handle before it gives up.

Attribute Tasks: Staying awake (Stamina + Resolve, instant action)

Social Attributes

Social Attributes reflect your character's ability to deal with others.

Presence

Presence is your character's assertiveness, gravitas, and raw appeal. It gives your character a strong bearing that changes moods and minds.

Attribute Tasks: Good first impressions (Presence + Composure, instant action)

Manipulation

Manipulation is your character's ability to make others cooperate. It's how smoothly she speaks and how much people can read into her intentions.

Attribute Tasks: Poker face (Manipulation + Composure)

Composure

Composure is your character's poise and grace under fire. It's his dignity, and ability to remain unfazed when harrowed.

Attribute Tasks: Meditation (Resolve + Composure, extended action)

Skills

While Attributes represent innate ability, **Skills** reflect behaviors learned and honed over a lifetime. A character can learn them through practice or from a book. Similarly to Attributes, Skills are divided into Mental, Physical, and Social categories.

A Skill without dots means your character is deficient or barely capable. Skills with a single dot reflect a cursory training. Two dots are sufficient for professional use. Three is a high level of competency. Four is outstanding, and five is absolute mastery of the discipline.

Each Skill lists sample actions; these lists are common acts and are by no means comprehensive. Further, each action suggests dice pools, but it's important to look at the context of the scene and apply the best Attribute + Skill combination for the events at hand. Also, remember that equipment and environmental modifiers can shift a dice pool. Each Skill lists some sample equipment and factors that could enhance its usage.

A **Skill Specialty** is a tightly focused area of expertise attached to each Skill. If a Specialty applies to your roll, add a die. Multiple Specialties may apply to a single roll, within reason. If you find yourself going to great lengths to justify a Specialty, it probably shouldn't apply. Multiple suggestions are offered for each Skill; you will add Skill Specialties in the next step.

Mental Skills

Mental Skills are largely learned, as opposed to practiced. They reflect knowledge and procedure, lore and understanding.

Academics

Academics is a broad Skill representing your character's higher education and knowledge of the arts and humanities. It covers language, history, law, economics, and related fields.

Sample actions: Recall trivia (Intelligence + Academics, instant action), Research (Intelligence + Academics, extended action), Translation (Intelligence + Academics, extended action)

Sample contacts: Head Librarian, Lawyer, Rare Book Dealer

Suggested equipment: Internet access (+1), Library (+1 to +3), Professional consultant (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Law, Literature, Religion, Research, Translation

Computer

Computer is your character's advanced ability with computing. It allows her to program computers, hack into systems, diagnose major problems, and investigate data. This Skill reflects advanced techniques and tricks; almost everyone can operate a computer for email and basic internet searches.

Sample actions: Hacking a system (Intelligence + Computer, extended action, contested if against a security administrator or other hacker), Internet search (Wits + Computer, instant action), Programming (Intelligence + Computer, extended action)

Sample contacts: Anonymous Network Zero Liaison, Hardcore Computer Gamer, White-Hat Hacker

Suggested equipment: Computer system (+0 to +3, by performance), Custom software (+2), Passwords (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Data Retrieval, Graphics, Hacking, Internet, Programming, Security, Social Media

Crafts

Crafts reflects your character's knack with creating and repairing things. From creating works of art to fixing an automobile, Crafts is the Skill to use.

Hunters have options when it comes to crafting and modifying equipment. The system for building equipment and improvising is on p. XX, and optional systems for customizing existing equipment — including vehicles — and setting traps start on p. XX.

Sample actions: Appraisal (Wits + Crafts, instant action), Counterfeit item (Intelligence + Crafts, instant action), Create art (Intelligence + Crafts, instant action), Repair item (Wits + Crafts, instant action)

Sample contacts: Custom Weapons Expert, Neighborhood Mechanic, Police Sketch Artist

Suggested equipment: Point of reference (+1), Quality materials (+2), Tools (+1 to +3, depending on utility and specialty), Well-equipped workplace (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Automotive, Cosmetics, Fashion, Forging, Graffiti, Jury Rigging, Painting, Perfumery, Repair, Sculpting

Investigation

Investigation is your character's skill at solving mysteries and putting together puzzles. It reflects the ability to draw conclusions, to find meaning out of confusion, and to use lateral thinking to find information where others could not.

Sample actions: Examining a crime scene (Wits + Investigation, extended action), Solving riddles (Intelligence + Investigation, instant or extended action)

Sample contacts: Medical Examiner, Paranormal Blogger, Private Investigator

Suggested equipment: Forensic kit (+1), Unrestricted access (+2), Reference library (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Autopsy, Body Language, Crime Scenes, Cryptography, Lab Work, Riddles

Medicine

Medicine reflects your character's knowledge of the human body, and of how to bring it to and keep it in working order. Characters with Medicine can make efforts to stem life-threatening wounds and illnesses.

Sample actions: Diagnosis (Wits + Medicine, instant action), Treating wounds (Intelligence + Medicine, extended action)

Sample contacts: Cheiron Group Researcher, Chronic Patient, EMT

Suggested equipment: Medical tools (+1 to +3), Trained assistance (+1), Well-stocked facilities (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: First Aid, Pathology, Pharmaceuticals, Physical Therapy, (Specific Types of Monsters), Surgery

Occult

The Occult Skill is your character's knowledge of things hidden in the dark, legends, and lore. While the supernatural is unpredictable and often unique, the Occult Skill allows your character to pick out facts from rumor.

Sample actions: Identify the sliver of truth (Wits + Occult, instant action), Relate two similar myths (Intelligence + Occult, instant or extended action)

Sample contacts: Anthropology Professor, Compact or Conspiracy Mentor, Former Demon Cultist

Suggested equipment: Well-stocked library (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Casting Lots, Divination, Hauntings, Phrenology, Specific Types of Monsters, Urban Legends, Exorcisms, Witchcraft

Politics

Politics reflects a general knowledge of political structures and methodologies, but more practically shows your character's ability to navigate those systems and make them work the way she intends. With Politics, she knows the right person to ask to get something done.

Sample actions: Cut red tape (Manipulation + Politics, extended action), Identify authority (Wits + Politics, instant action), Sully reputations (Manipulation + Politics, extended action)

Sample contacts: Governor's Personal Assistant, Mob Associate, Political Blogger

Suggested equipment: Official position (+1 to +5, by Status)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Bureaucracy, Church, Compact or Conspiracy Intrigue, Democratic, Local, Monster Societies, Organized Crime, Scandals

Science

Science is your character's knowledge and understanding of the physical and natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, and physics.

Sample actions: Assess variables (Intelligence + Science, instant or extended action), Formulate solution (Intelligence + Science, extended action)

Sample contacts: Experimental Physicist, Geology Professor, Mad Inventor

Suggested equipment: Reference library (+1 to +3), Well-stocked laboratory (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Physics, Neuroscience, Virology, Alchemy, Genetics, Hematology

Physical Skills

Physical Skills are those practiced, trained, and learned through action.

Athletics

Athletics reflects a broad category of physical training and ability. It covers sports, and basic physical tasks such as running, jumping, dodging threats, and climbing. It also determines a character's ability with thrown weapons.

Sample actions: Acrobatics (Dexterity + Athletics, instant action), Climbing (Strength + Athletics, extended action), Foot chase (Stamina + Athletics, contested action), Jumping (Strength + Athletics, instant action, one foot vertically per success)

Sample contacts: Neighborhood Skater, Physical Therapist, Yoga Instructor

Suggested equipment: Athletic shoes (+1), Rope (+1)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing, Jumping, Parkour, Swimming, Throwing

Brawl

Brawl reflects your character's ability to tussle and fight without weapons. This includes old-fashioned bar brawls as well as complex martial arts.

Sample actions: Breaking boards (Strength + Brawl, instant action), Hand-to-hand combat (covered in the combat section, p. XX)

Sample contacts: Club Bouncer, Self-Defense Teacher, Sparring Partner

Suggested equipment: Brass knuckles (+1)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Boxing, Dirty Fighting, Grappling, Martial Arts, Threats, Throws

Drive

Drive is the Skill to control and maneuver automobiles, motorcycles, boats, and even airplanes. A character can drive a car without Drive dots; the Skill relates to moments of high stress, such as a high-speed chase or trying to elude a tail. It's assumed that most modern characters have a basic ability to drive. Drive can also reflect your character's skill with horseback riding, if appropriate to her history.

Sample actions: Impressive maneuvering (Dexterity + Drive, instant action), Pursuit (Dexterity + Drive, contested action), Tailing (Wits + Drive, contested action)

Sample contacts: Bush Pilot, Mechanic, Street Racer

Suggested equipment: Performance vehicle (+1 to +3)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Defensive Driving, Evasion, Off-Road Driving, Motorcycles, Pursuit, Stunts

Firearms

Firearms reflects your character's ability to identify, maintain, and otherwise use guns. This Skill covers everything from small pistols, to shotguns, to assault rifles, and anything else related.

Sample actions: Firearms combat (see p. XX for more on how firearms combat works)

Sample contacts: Gun store owner, Local law enforcement, Sharpshooter

Suggested equipment: See p. XX for a full list of firearms

Suggested Skill Specialties: Handguns, Rifles, Shotguns, Trick Shots

Larceny

Larceny covers intrusion, lockpicking, theft, pickpocketing, and other (generally considered) criminal activities. This Skill is typically learned on the streets, outside of formal methods. However, stage magicians and other entertainers learn these skills as part of their repertoire.

Sample actions: Bypass security systems (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Lockpicking (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Pickpocketing (Dexterity + Larceny, contested action)

Sample contacts: Parole Officer, Shady Pawn Shop Owner, Three-Card Monte Dealer

Suggested equipment: Crowbar (+1), Crowded area (+2), Lockpicks (+2), Partner in crime (+1)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Breaking and Entering, Concealment, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Safecracking, Security Systems, Sleight of Hand

Stealth

The Stealth Skill reflects your character's ability to move unnoticed and unheard, or to blend into a crowd. Every character approaches Stealth differently; some use distraction, some disguise, and some are just hard to keep an eye on.

Sample actions: Losing a tail (Wits + Stealth, contested action), Shadowing (Dexterity + Stealth, contested action)

Sample contacts: Bow Hunter, Burglar, Lookout from a Former Job

Suggested equipment: Binoculars (+1), Dark clothing (+1), Smokescreen (+2), Spotters (+1)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Camouflage, Crowds, In Plain Sight, Rural, Shadowing, Stakeout, Staying Motionless

Survival

Survival represents your character's ability to live off the land. This means finding shelter, and food, and otherwise procuring the necessities for existence. This can be in a rural or urban environment.

Sample actions: Foraging (Wits + Survival, extended action), Hunting (for animals, Wits + Survival, extended action)

Sample contacts: Homeless Person, Off-the-grid Survivalist, Scout Master

Suggested equipment: Survival guide (+1), Survival knife (+1)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Foraging, Hunting, Navigation, Shelter, Weather

Weaponry

Weaponry is the ability to fight with hand-to-hand weapons, from swords, to knives, to baseball bats, to chainsaws. If the intent is to strike another and harm him, Weaponry is the Skill.

Sample actions: Attacking another (see p. XX for more on Weaponry combat)

Sample contacts: Fencing Instructor, Gang Member, Martial-Arts Enthusiast

Suggested equipment: See p. XX for a full list of weapons

Suggested Skill Specialties: Chains, Clubs, Improvised Weapons, Spears, Swords

Social Skills

Animal Ken

Animal Ken reflects your character's ability to train and understand animals. With Animal Ken, your character can charm beasts or even rile them to violence, under the right circumstances.

Sample actions: Animal training (Manipulation + Animal Ken, extended action), Cowing an animal (Presence + Animal Ken, contested action)

Sample contacts: Cat Lady, Rodeo Horse Trainer, Zoo Veterinarian

Suggested equipment: Treats (+1), Whip (+1)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Canines, Felines, Reptiles, Calming, Training

Empathy

Empathy represents your character's ability to read and understand others' feelings and motivations. This helps discern moods or read deceptive behavior in discussion. It is not inherently sympathetic; one can understand another's positions without agreeing with them.

Sample actions: Finding someone's pain (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Sense deception (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Soothing nerves (Manipulation + Empathy, instant action)

Sample contacts: Shoulder to Cry On, Police Profiler, Psych Student

Suggested equipment: Muted clothing (+1), Relaxing environment (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Calming, Emotion, Lies, Motives, Personalities, Specific Types of Monsters

Expression

The Expression Skill reflects your character's ability to communicate. This Skill covers written and spoken forms of communication, journalism, acting, music, and dance.

Sample actions: Composing (Intelligence + Expression, extended action), Performance (Presence + Expression, instant action)

Sample contacts: Investigative Journalist, Political Speech Writer, Reclusive Poet

Suggested equipment: Quality instrument (+1 to +3)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Dance, Drama, Journalism, Musical Instrument, Performance Art, Singing, Speeches

Intimidation

Intimidation reflects your character's ability to influence others' behavior through threats and fear. It could mean direct physical threats, interrogation, or veiled implications of things to come.

Sample actions: Interrogation (Wits + Intimidation, contested action), Stare down (Presence + Intimidation, contested action)

Sample contacts: Barroom Tough Guy, High-Powered Executive, Police Interrogator

Suggested equipment: Fearsome tools (+2), Gang colors (+2), Isolated room (+1)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Direct Threats, Interrogation, Stare Down, Torture, Veiled Threats

Persuasion

Persuasion is your character's ability to change minds and influence behaviors through logic, fast-talking, or appealing to desire. It relies on the force of your character's personality to sway the listener.

Sample actions: Fast-talk (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action), Firebranding (Presence + Persuasion, instant action), Seduction (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action)

Sample contacts: Car Salesman, Speech Coach, Trial Lawyer

Suggested equipment: Designer clothing (+1 to +3), Reputation (+2)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Confidence Scam, Fast-Talking, Inspiring, Sales Pitch, Seduction, Sermon

Socialize

Socialize reflects your character's ability to present herself well and interact with groups of people (or monsters). It reflects proper (and setting-appropriate) etiquette, customs, sensitivity, and warmth. A character with a high Socialize is the life of the party.

Sample actions: Carousing (Manipulation + Socialize, instant action), Fitting in (Wits + Socialize, instant action), Getting attention (Presence + Socialize, instant action)

Sample contacts: Diplomat, Drinking Buddy, Society Matron

Suggested equipment: Drugs (+1), Knowing people (+1), Money (+1 to +5)

Specialties: Bar Hopping, Church Lock-in, Dress Balls, Formal Compact or Conspiracy Ceremonies, Frat Parties, Political Fundraisers, The Club

Streetwise

The Streetwise Skill is your character's knowledge of life on the streets. It tells her how to navigate the city, how to get information from unlikely sources, and where she'll be (relatively) safe. If she wants to get something on the black market, Streetwise is how.

Sample actions: Finding a shortcut (Wits + Streetwise, instant action), Working the black market (Manipulation + Streetwise, instant action)

Sample contacts: Bartender in a Rough Part of Town, Drug Dealer, Undercover Cop

Suggested equipment: Burner phone (+1), Known nickname (+2), Valuable contraband (+1 to +3)

Suggested Skill Specialties: Black Market, Gangs, (Monster Type) Territories, Navigation, Rumors, Undercover

Subterfuge

Subterfuge is the ability to deceive. With Subterfuge, your character can lie convincingly, project hidden messages in what she says, hide motivations, and notice deception in others.

Sample actions: Disguise (Wits + Subterfuge, instant action), Lying (Manipulation + Subterfuge, contested action)

Sample contacts: Con Artist, Crooked Politician, Out-of-work Actor

Suggested equipment: Costume supplies (+2), Fake ID (+1),

Suggested Skill Specialties: Detecting Lies, Doublespeak, Hiding Emotion, Little White Lies, Misdirection

Merits

Lacking the tremendous innate powers of their targets, hunters rely on their own capabilities as well as their social networks in order to even the odds. **Merits** represent additional benefits a hunter may possess to help them hunt. Often, hunters must weigh the costs of tracking a monster in broad daylight, hacking into a security system, or breaking a fellow hunter out of jail.

Before making their final selection, it is strongly recommended that players coordinate with their fellow players and Storyteller. Merits often look good in the text, but their benefits may not be apparent to your group until you mull over how they'll be used in your game. Merits may also be selected independently of the character's tier.

Style Merits

Merits marked as Style Merits allow access to specialized maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next in its sequence. So, if a Style Merit has a three-dot and four-dot maneuver, you must purchase the three-dot maneuver before accessing the four-dot.

Sanctity of Merits

While Merits represent assets, innate traits, characters, and other items that support your character in your chronicle, most Merits are out-of-character resources that are functions of character creation and advancement. Merits often represent things that can be lost, stolen, destroyed, etc. Retainers can be killed. Mentors can get impatient and stop dispensing wisdom. So, while Merits may represent temporary facets of your character, most Merit dots continue to

exist. At the end of any chapter where your character has lost Merits, you can replace them with another Merit.

For example, say your character has a three-dot Retainer, a collector of occult artifacts you've paid handsomely for information. One day, that collector purchases a haunted locket and is murdered by a spirit of vengeance. At the end of the chapter, you may reallocate the three Retainer dots. You may decide to find an exorcist, or you may opt to purchase dots in the Safe Place Merit, to reflect your character's choice to rest and recover after losing such a valuable ally. How you distribute the three dots is entirely up to you; you may use them to purchase three separate Merits or concentrate on one.

When replacing a Merit, consider what makes sense in the story. Pursue the new Merit during the course of the chapter if possible and make the new tie meaningful to your character.

With Storyteller permission, you may "cash in" a Merit voluntarily and replace it with Experiences (p. XX). This should not be used to purchase a Merit, take advantage of its benefits, and then cash it out for something else. But if a Merit's run its course and no longer makes sense for your character, you may use those points elsewhere.

Merits such as Ambidextrous, Eidetic Memory, and the various Fighting Styles reflect abilities and knowledge your character has, and therefore shouldn't be cashed in or replaced. Then again, if an Ambidextrous character loses his left hand, exceptions can be made.

For the Player: Switching Compacts or Conspiracies

Your character selects which compact or conspiracy to which you belong to during character creation. Over time, however, you may decide your character want to break ties with that organization and join a different group. The ability to switch is ultimately up to the Storyteller and must reflect the fiction. If you are a member of the Lucifuge, for example, you cannot suddenly "stop" being part of that conspiracy.

Switching compacts or conspiracies is difficult by design. If this is allowed in your tier-two or -three chronicle, you must adjust your Status dots to reflect your new membership. For example, if you are a three-dot member of the Aegis Kai Doru and want to join the Cheiron Group, your dots do not automatically transfer to your new conspiracy. Remaining dots may be reallocated to other Merits or cashed in for Experiences. However, you may not repurchase Status in your new group with those Experiences. If you want more Status, you must earn it through roleplay.

Mental Merits

Area of Expertise (•)

Prerequisites: Resolve •• plus one Skill Specialty

Effect: Your character is uncommonly specialized in one area. Choose a Specialty to assign to this Merit. Forgo the +1 bonus afforded by a Specialty in exchange for a +2.

Back Road Atlas (•)

Prerequisites: Wits •• and Drive •• or Athletics ••

Effect: Your character has a knack for memorizing local back roads, shortcuts, detours, and other routes that don't pop up on a digital map or GPS system. All rolls that require you to travel discreetly to escape an antagonist's notice receive a +2 bonus. Additionally, your hunter has the Edge in a chase scene (p. XX) provided you're not on highways or main streets.

Back Road Atlas most often applies to vehicular travel but can just as easily apply to foot or bike chases as well. However, there must be a visible road or path for you to follow.

Drawback: This Merit does not apply to trackless wilderness. It applies to any area in which the character has travelled; to employ this Merit for unfamiliar streets, the character must make a successful Intelligence + Wits or Drive roll after reviewing a physical or digital map to commit the routes to memory.

Danger Sense (••)

Effect: You gain a +2 modifier on reflexive Wits + Composure rolls for your character to detect an impending ambush.

Your character's reflexes are honed to the point where nothing's shocking

Direction Sense (•)

Effect: Your character has an innate sense of direction and is always aware of their location. They always know which direction they're facing, and never suffer penalties to navigate or find their way out — even when trapped in a haunted house or labyrinthine cave. Provided your character is conscious, they can accurately estimate how far they've traveled and in roughly what direction, regardless of the clues they have at their disposal.

Eidetic Memory (••)

Effect: Your character recalls events and details with pinpoint accuracy. You do not have to make rolls for your character to remember past experiences. When making Intelligence + Composure (or relevant Skill) rolls to recall minute facts from swaths of information, take a +2 bonus.

Encyclopedic Knowledge (••)

Effect: Choose a Skill. Due to an immersion in academia, pop culture, or a hobby obsession, your character has collected limitless facts about the topic, even if they have no dots in the Skill. You can make an Intelligence + Wits roll at any time your character is dealing with her area of interest. On a successful roll, the Storyteller must give a relevant fact or detail about the issue at hand. Your character knows this fact, but you must explain within the scope of your character's background why she knows it. For example, for Encyclopedic Knowledge: Medicine: "Do you remember that time on that show, when the doctor said it doesn't manifest before puberty?"

Fast Reflexes (• to •••)

Prerequisites: Wits ••• or Dexterity •••

Effect: +1 Initiative per dot. Your character's reflexes impress and astound; she's always fast to react.

Good Time Management (•)

Prerequisite: Academics •• or Science ••

Effect: Your character has vast experience managing complex tasks, keeping schedules, and meeting deadlines. When taking an extended action, halve the time required between rolls.

Gut Feeling (••)

Prerequisites: Occult ••

Effect: Deep down, your character knows when something's out of place. They might not suspect the supernatural is to blame, but their gut tells you when something's otherworldly or unnatural. After reviewing testimony, photographs, or other forms of evidence, you can determine the presence of the supernatural and trace it back to its source. Receive +2 to Occult-based rolls during an investigation.

Drawback: Hunters who peer deep into the shadows can't look away. During an occult-based investigation, the hunter suffers from the Obsessed Condition until the case is solved.

Holistic Awareness (•)

Prerequisites: Survival ••• or Medicine •

Effect: Your character is skilled at non-traditional healing methods. While life-threatening wounds are beyond their abilities, they can provide simple relief and basic medical care with natural means. They know what herbs can stem an infection, and what minerals will stave off a minor sickness. Unless their patient suffers wound penalties from lethal or aggravated wounds, they do not need traditional medical equipment to stabilize and treat injuries. With access to woodlands, a greenhouse, or other source of diverse flora, a Wits + Survival roll allows your character to gather all necessary supplies.

Indomitable (•••)

Prerequisites: Resolve •••, Occult ••

Effect: Your character possesses an iron will and are firmly grounded in the real world. The powers of the supernatural do not shake their resolve, and they are resistant to a monster's attempts to scare or manipulate them. They've learned how to stand up to a vampire's mind control, how to thwart a warlock's charms, and how to ignore a ghost's scares. Any time a supernatural creature uses a Dread Power to influence your character's thoughts or emotions, add two dice to your pool to contest their action. If the roll is resisted, the Storyteller subtracts two dice from the monster's pool.

This Merit only applies to a monster's Dread Powers and does not affect non-supernatural forms of manipulation.

Investigative Aide (•)

Prerequisites: Chosen Mental Skill at •••+

Effect: Your character has a knack for applying a certain area of expertise to an investigation. Choose a Mental Skill when purchasing this Merit; when making rolls to Uncover Clues (see p. XX), they achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five. As well, Clues that come from their use of that Skill start with one additional element.

Natural Tinkerer (••)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Crafts •••

Effect: Your character has an affinity for piecing together useful equipment out of piles of junk. Whether it's a natural aptitude or something they've developed over time, their inventions come in handy when they least expect it. Ignores penalties for using improvised materials or equipment, as well as penalties involved in making scratch repairs. Additionally, the Storyteller may adjust the cost of your spare parts, depending upon the components involved.

Language (•)

Effect: Your character is skilled with an additional language beyond her native tongue. Choose a language each time you buy this Merit. Your character can speak, read, and write in that language.

Library (• to •••)

Effect: Your character has access to a plethora of information about a given topic. When purchasing this Merit, choose a Mental Skill. The Library covers that purview. On any extended roll involving the Skill in question, add the dots in this Merit.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times, to reflect different Skills. Additionally, its benefits can be shared by various characters, with permission.

Professional Training (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has extensive training in a select profession. When choosing this Merit, choose or create a Profession for your character (see the sidebar). Then, mark the two Asset Skills on your character sheet. The advantages of Professional Training relate directly to those Asset Skills when applicable.

Networking (•): At the first level of Professional Training, your character builds connections within her chosen field. Take two dots of Contacts relating to that field.

Continuing Education (••): With the repeated efforts in her field of choice, your character tends toward greater successes. When making a roll with their Asset Skills, they benefit from the 9-again quality.

Breadth of Knowledge (•••): Due to their advancement in their field, they've picked up pieces of information and skills unique to their work. Choose a third Asset Skill and take two Specialties in your character's Asset Skills.

On-the-Job Training (••••): With the resources at their disposal, your character has access to extensive educational tools and mentorship. Take a Skill dot in an Asset Skill. Whenever you purchase a new Asset Skill dot, take a Beat.

The Routine (•••••): With such extensive experience in their field, their Asset Skills have been honed to a fine edge, and they're almost guaranteed at least a marginal success. Before rolling, spend a Willpower point to apply the rote action quality to an Asset Skill. This allows you to reroll all the failed dice on the first roll.

Special: The term profession is deliberately defined loosely. So long as it has Skills that are employed regularly and a community of similarly dedicated individuals that can be consulted for advice and tradecraft, any field may potentially qualify for this Merit.

Tactical Insight (••)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Survival •• or Streetwise ••

Effect: Your character has a keen eye for reading body language and can anticipate where an antagonist might strike. You've quickly scouted the field of battle and are crystal clear on what you should do next. Once per session, after Initiative has been decided, you may roll Wits + Survival or Streetwise. On a success, you may choose when you'd like to take your turn. On an exceptional success, you may also Dodge as a free action.

Tolerance for Biology (•)

Prerequisites: Resolve ••• or Medicine ••

Effect: Most people turn away at the sight of blood, other bodily fluids, or exotic biology. Your character has seen enough that nothing turns their stomach. When other characters must resist shock or physical repulsion from the disgusting and morbid, your character stands their ground. You do not need to make Composure, Stamina, or Resolve rolls to withstand the biologically strange. This doesn't mean your character is immune to fear; they're just used to nature in all its nasty forms.

Trained Observer (•, or •••)

Prerequisites: Wits ••• or Composure •••

Effect: Your character has spent years in the field, catching tiny details and digging for secrets. They might not have a better chance of finding things, but they have a better chance of finding *important* things. Any time you make a Perception roll (usually Wits + Composure), you benefit from the 9-again quality. With the three-dot version, you get 8-again.

Physical Merits

Ambidextrous (•••)

Effect: Your character does not suffer the -2 penalty for using their off hand in combat or to perform other actions.

Cover Tracks (•)

Prerequisites: Survival •• or Stealth ••

Effect: Sometimes, a hunter needs to cover their tracks to avoid being caught by the security guard or worse — by a monster. From obscuring their route through a muddy alleyway to wiping up fingerprints, hunters with this Merit know how to make it seem as if they were never there. The player makes an Intelligence + Survival or Stealth roll after leaving a specific location. On a success, your character automatically wipes all physical traces of a desired target's movement *after* they've left the scene. Each success covers a different target's tracks. On an exceptional success, all traces of suspicious movement are automatically erased. Leftover successes cannot be banked and are immediately discarded.

This Merit's effects does not erase significant damage (cracked TV screen) or pieces of evidence (bullet holes in walls or corpses) from a scene.

Drawback: This sought-after ability is known to the supernatural. Monsters may attempt to manipulate or charm the character to Cover Tracks for *them*. The player may resist this attempt with a Wits + Resolve roll.

Crack Driver (•• or •••)

Prerequisites: Drive •••

Effect: Your character's an ace at the wheel, and nothing shakes their concentration. When tightly focused on driving and keeping the car safe, add their Composure to any rolls including Drive. Any rolls to disable your character's vehicle suffer a penalty equal to their Composure as well. With the three-dot version, once per turn you may take a Drive action reflexively.

Double Jointed (••)

Prerequisite: Dexterity •••

Effect: Your character might have been a contortionist or spent time practicing yoga. She can dislodge joints when need be. She automatically escapes from any mundane bonds without a roll. When grappled, subtract her Dexterity from any rolls to overpower her, as long as she's not taking any aggressive actions.

Face in the Crowd (••)

Effect: Your character has an ordinary and unremarkable appearance. You can blend into a crowd and make it difficult for witnesses to accurately recall you. Your character receives a +3 bonus on any rolls involving tailing or evading in a crowded place; due to your natural anonymity, antagonists trying to find you suffer a -3 penalty to such attempts.

Drawback: This Merit is used in place of the Striking Looks Merit. Face in the Crowd does not make the hunter invisible, just harder to find. Monsters may utilize Dread Powers or other senses to track the hunter down.

Fleet of Foot (• to •••)

Prerequisites: Athletics ••

Effect: Your character is remarkably quick and runs far faster than their frame suggests. They gain +1 Speed per dot, and anyone pursuing them suffers a -1 per dot to any foot-chase rolls.

Hardy (• to •••)

Prerequisites: Stamina •••

Effect: Your character's body goes further than it rightfully should. Add one die per dot purchased in this Merit to any rolls involving the resistance of disease, poison, deprivation, unconsciousness, or suffocation.

Iron Stamina (• to •••)

Prerequisites: Stamina ••• or Resolve •••

Effect: Each dot eliminates a negative modifier (on a one-for-one basis) when resisting the effects of fatigue or injury. For example: A character with Iron Stamina •• is able to ignore up to a -2 modifier brought on by fatigue. The Merit also counteracts the effects of wound penalties. So, if all of your character's Health boxes are filled (which normally imposes a -3 penalty to their actions) and they have Iron Stamina •, those penalties are reduced to -2.

This Merit cannot be used to gain positive modifiers for actions, only to cancel out negative ones.

Last Stand ••

Prerequisites: Resolve ••• or Stamina •••

Effect: Once per session, your character has a burst of adrenaline. Your sheer determination to shake off your injuries and get back into the hunt gives them superhuman strength. With a successful Wits + Resolve or Wits + Stamina roll on your turn the character may immediately attempt a penalty-free action of your choice.

Lucky Charm (•)

Prerequisites: Resolve •, Occult • or Academics •

Effect: When the chips are down and all seems lost, hunters sometimes need a reason to keep fighting. Lucky Charm represents a symbol into which the hunter has put their faith. Its presence steadies their nerves, strengthens their resolve, and gives them an edge.

Lucky Charm is a Merit that represents a physical object the character favors. It might be a cross, pentacle, four-leaf clover, coin, amulet, worry stone, favored weapon, etc. This object boosts the character's resolve in dire situations. Provided the hunter is wearing or holding their Lucky Charm, you may make a Resolve + Composure roll once per session at the beginning of a scene for a maximum of two per session.

Roll Results

Success: Conditions affecting the character's mental state do not affect them for the remainder of the scene.

Exceptional Success: Conditions affecting the character's mental state do not affect them for the remainder of the session.

Failure: No positive or negative effect.

Dramatic Failure: The character believes their luck has backfired and obtains a Condition relevant to the scene at the Storyteller's discretion.

Drawback: A Lucky Charm may be lost, damaged, stolen, or destroyed. When a Lucky Charm is no longer in the character's possession, the Sanctity of Merits rule applies.

Masked Scent (•)

Prerequisites: Survival •• or Streetwise ••

Effect: Experienced hunters know all mortals have a scent dangerous predators know how to track. A hunter with this Merit is adept at masking their scent to prevent an antagonist from catching up with them during a chase (see p. XX). On a successful Wits + Survival or Streetwise roll, the character finds something nearby (mud, blood, swamp water, garbage, sewage, oil, etc.) to throw their pursuer off their trail. The characters have the Edge (p. XX) and gain a +1 modifier to all rolls during the chase.

Quick Draw (•)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, a Specialty in the weapon or fighting style chosen

Effect: Choose a Specialty in Weaponry or Firearms when you purchase this Merit. Your character has trained in that weapon or style enough that pulling the weapon is their first reflex. Drawing or holstering that weapon is considered a reflexive action and can be done any time his Defense applies.

Relentless (•)

Prerequisites: Athletics ••, Stamina •••

Effect: Your character will not stop running, whether away from a pursuer or toward prey. In any chase (see p. XX) your opponents must achieve two additional successes against yours to catch or elude them.

Robust Health (••)

Prerequisites: Survival •••

Effect: Whether due to extensive training, a lifetime spent recovering from injuries, or a quirk of genetics, a hunter with this Merit heals quicker than the average person. To heal their injuries, you may roll Intelligence or Dexterity + Survival instead of Medicine.

Sleight of Hand (••)

Prerequisites: Larceny •••

Effect: Your character can pick locks and pockets without even thinking about it. They can take one Larceny-based instant action reflexively in a given turn. As well, their Larceny actions go unnoticed unless someone is trying specifically to catch them.

Social Merits

Allies (• to •••••)

Effect: Allies help your character. They might be friends, employees, associates, or people your character has blackmailed. Each instance of this Merit represents one type of ally. This could be an organization, a society, a clique, or an individual. Examples include the police, a secret society, criminal organizations, unions, local politicians, or the academic community. Each purchase has its own rating. Your character might have Allies (Local 543) ••, Allies (609 Style Gang) •••, and Allies (Barrens Community College) •. Each dot represents a layer of influence in the group.

One dot constitutes small favors and passing influence. Three offers considerable influence, such as the police overlooking a misdemeanor charge. Five dots stretches the limits of the organization's influence, as its leaders put their own influence on the line for the character. This could include things such as massive insider trading or fouling up a felony investigation. No matter the request, it has to be something that organization could accomplish.

The Storyteller assigns a rating between one and five to any favor asked. A character can ask for favors that add up to their Allies rating without penalty in one chapter. If they extend their influence beyond that, their player must roll Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies, with a penalty equal to the favor's rating. If the roll is successful, the group does as requested.

Failed or successful, the character loses a dot of Allies. This dot may return at the end of the chapter (see Sanctity of Merits, p. XX.) On a dramatic failure, the organization resents them and seeks retribution. On an exceptional success, they don't lose the dot.

One additional favor a character can ask of their Allies is to block another character's Allies, Contacts, Mentor, Retainer, or Status (if they know the character possesses the relevant Merit). The rating is equal to the Merit dots blocked. As before, no roll is necessary unless the target's Merit exceeds the character's Allies. If the block succeeds, the character cannot use the Merit during the same chapter.

Alternate Identity (•, ••, or •••)

Effect: Your character has an alternate identity. The level of this Merit determines the amount of scrutiny to which it holds up. At one dot, the identity is superficial and unofficial. For example, your character uses an alias with a cheap, basic, forged driver's license. Only the most cursory examinations will be fooled; they haven't established the necessary paperwork to even approach a bureaucratic background check, let alone pass one. At two dots, they've supported their identity with paperwork and identification. It's not likely to stand up to extensive research, but it'll turn away private investigators, internet hobbyists, and even minor arrests or court proceedings. At three dots, the identity can pass a thorough inspection. The identity has been deeply entrenched in relevant databases, with subtle flourishes and details to make it seem real, even to trained professionals.

Additionally, the Merit reflects time the character has spent honing their persona — learning to respond automatically to an assumed name, having a life story ready, and other common tricks for maintaining a false persona. At one or two dots, they gain +1 to all Subterfuge rolls to defend the identity. At three dots, they gain +2.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times, each time representing an additional identity.

Barfly (••)

Prerequisite: Socialize ••

Effect: Your character is a natural in bars and taverns and often gets invited to fancy cocktail lounges, private parties, or VIP areas where other characters wouldn't normally be welcome. Whereas most characters would require rolls to blend into social functions they're unfamiliar with, you don't. You are a natural partier who blends into a backyard BBQ with brews and burgers just as easily as you do at an EDM club. Rolls to identify you as an outsider suffer your character's Socialize rating as a penalty.

Contacts (• to •••••)

Effect: Contacts provide your character with information. Each dot in this Merit represents a sphere or organization the character can leverage for more intel. For example, a character with Contacts ••• might have Reporters, Bankers, and Local Homeless for connections. Contacts do not provide services, only information. This may be face to face, via email, by telephone, or even by séance.

Garnering information via Contacts requires a Manipulation + Social Skill roll, depending on the method the character uses, and the relationship between the characters. The Storyteller should give a bonus or penalty, dependent on how relevant the information is to that particular Contact, whether accessing the information is dangerous, and if the character has maintained good relations with the Contact by paying them, performing favors, or keeping them safe. These modifiers should range from -3 to +3 in most cases. If successful, the Contact provides the information.

One use of a Contact is to dig dirt on another character. A Contact can find another character's Social Merits, and any relevant Conditions (Embarrassing Secret is a prime example.) A character can have more than five Contacts, but the Merit's rating is limited to five, for the purposes of Allies blocking.

Custom Gear Broker (• to •••)

Prerequisites: Socialize ••

Effect: Your character is known locally, or throughout their compact or conspiracy, as the one to see when a hunter needs hard-to-find modifications and strange equipment. She might do the work herself, or simply act as intermediary, like an under-the-table pawn shop for custom gear.

Once per chapter, you may swap out any piece of equipment of an Availability equal to your character's dots in this Merit for any other of the same Availability or lower, without a roll. Additionally, once per story you may treat another Merit's rating as one higher per dot in this Merit, to a maximum of five total dots, for purposes of acquiring custom gear. This usually benefits Resources, but could apply to others as appropriate, such as Allies or Status.

Fast-Talking (• to ••••, Style)

Prerequisites: Manipulation •••, Subterfuge ••

Your character talks circles around listeners. They speak a mile a minute, and often leaves their targets reeling but nodding in agreement.

Always Be Closing (•): With the right leading phrases, your character can direct a mark to say what they want, when they want. This trips the mark into vulnerable positions. When a mark contests or resists your character's Social interactions, apply a -1 to their Resolve or Composure.

Jargon (••): Your character confuses their mark using complex terminology. You may apply one relevant Specialty to any Social roll you make, even if the Specialty isn't tied to the Skill in use.

Devil's Advocacy (•••): Your character often poses arguments with which they don't agree in order to challenge a mark's position and keep them from advancing the discussion. You can reroll one failed Subterfuge roll per scene.

Salting (••••): Your character can position themselves so a mark pursues a non-issue or something unimportant to them. When your character opens a Door using conversation (Persuasion, Subterfuge, Empathy, etc.) you may spend a Willpower point to immediately open another Door.

Easy Mark (•••••): Your character can take advantage of their mark's greed and zeal. When the mark does particularly well, it's because your character was there to set them up, and to subsequently tear them down. If a target regains Willpower from their Vice while your character is present, you may immediately roll Manipulation + Subterfuge to open a Door, regardless of the interval or impression level.

Inspiring (•••)

Prerequisite: Presence •••

Effect: Your character's passion inspires those around them to greatness. With a few words, they can redouble a group's confidence or move them to action. Make a Presence + Expression roll. A small group of listeners levies a -1 penalty, a small crowd a -2, and a large crowd a -3. Listeners gain the Inspired Condition. The character may not use this Merit on themselves.

Iron Will (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve ••••

Effect: Your character's resolve is unwavering. When spending Willpower to contest or resist in a Social interaction, you may substitute your character's Resolve for the usual Willpower bonus. If the roll is contested, roll with 8-again.

Mentor (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit gives your character a teacher who provides advice and guidance. They act on your character's behalf, often in the background, and sometimes without your character's knowledge. While Mentors can be highly competent, they almost always want something in return for their services. The dot rating determines the Mentor's capabilities, and to what extent they'll aid your character. Mentors are not required to know you're a hunter, nor do they need to be a hunter themselves.

When establishing a Mentor, determine what the Mentor wants from your character. This should be personally important to him, and it should reflect on the dot rating chosen. A one-dot Mentor might be incapable of dealing with modern society and want to live vicariously through your character. This might mean you go to them and tell stories of your exploits. A five-dot Mentor wants something astronomical, such as an oath to procure an ancient, cursed artifact that may or may not exist, in order to prevent a prophesized death.

Choose three Skills the Mentor possesses. You can substitute Resources for one of these Skills. Once per session, the character may ask their Mentor for a favor. The favor must involve one of those Skills or be within the scope of their Resources. The Mentor commits to the favor (often asking for a commensurate favor in return) and, if a roll is required, the Mentor is automatically considered to have successes equal to his dot rating. Alternately, you may ask the Storyteller to have the Mentor act on your character's behalf, without their character knowing or initiating the request.

Resources (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit reflects your character's disposable income. Characters are assumed to have basic necessities without Resources unless the player specifically desires otherwise. The dot rating determines the relative amount of disposable funding the character has available, depending on your particular chronicle's setting. The same amount of money means completely different things in a game set in Beverly Hills compared to one set in the Chicago slums. One dot is a little spending money here and there. Two is a comfortable, middle class wage. Three is a nicer, upper-middle-class life. Four is moderately wealthy. Five is filthy rich.

Every item has an Availability rating. Once per chapter, your character can procure an item at her Resources level or lower, without issue. An item one Availability above her Resources reduces her effective Resources by one dot for a full month, since she has to rapidly liquidate funds. She can procure items two Availability below her Resources without limit (within reason). For example, a character with Resources •••• can procure as many Availability •• disposable cellphones as she needs.

Retainer (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has an assistant, sycophant, neighbor, servant, or follower on whom they can rely. Establish who this companion is, and how they were acquired. It may be as simple as a paycheck. They might owe your character their life. However it happened, your character has a hold on them. A Retainer is more reliable than a Mentor, and more loyal than an Ally. On the other hand, a Retainer is a lone person, less capable and influential than the broader Merits.

The Merit's dot rating determines the relative competency of the Retainer. A one-dot Retainer is barely able to do anything of use, such as a pet that knows one useful trick, or a homeless derelict that does minor errands in exchange for help. A three-dot Retainer is a professional in their field, someone capable in their line of work. A five-dot is one of the best in their class. If a Retainer needs to make a roll, and it's within their field, double the dot rating and use it as a dice pool. For anything else, use the dot rating as a dice pool.

Special: This Merit can be purchased several times to represent multiple Retainers.

Safe Place (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Resources •

Effect: This Merit represents access to a site where the hunter can rest and recuperate. The Safe Place also acts as a place where the hunter may stash their weapons, relics, and trophies and train for the hunt without fear that someone's peeking in through their windows to see what they're up to. The hunter who is attacked in their Safe Place cannot be Surprised (p. XX) even if their Home Security Feature has been disabled.

Regardless of dots purchased, a Safe Place gained during character creation also comes with one Feature. Features are building modifications used to accommodate a hunter's needs. All players may select one Feature during character creation for free. (See Special, below.) They may also propose a new Feature to the Storyteller to meet their needs. Unless otherwise noted, Features may not be installed more than once at a time.

Anathema: This Feature is a sigil, ward, or other physical enhancement that repels a specific type of monster as defined by a Dread Power the creature possesses. When this monster attempts to infiltrate the Safe Place, it must make a Wits + Resolve roll. The number of successes required equals the number of dots purchased in the Merit. On a successful roll, the monster suffers -3 on its next attempt to enter. On a failed roll, the monster suffers from an appropriate Tilt (Immobilized or Stunned) and may not attempt entry until it's resolved. The hunters are free to engage the monster however they see fit.

Arsenal: The Arsenal offers hunters additional storage for munitions and provides facilities for repairing and modifying equipment. All rolls involving cleaning, fixing, or improvising equipment enjoy a +2 bonus when the hunter is present.

Concealed: Safe Places that are Concealed are impossible to find on a digital or physical map. When installing this Feature, the hunter pulls in some favors, camouflages the exterior, and erases the address from most directories and physical records to obscure its location. Having a Concealed Safe Place doesn't mean no one can find it, however, but it does make it a lot harder. Characters attempting to track down the Safe Place's location suffer a -2 to all relevant rolls.

Escape Hatch: This Feature provides the Safe Place with an emergency exit. Trapped or fleeing occupants may quickly and covertly escape the premises whenever needed. The location of an Escape Hatch should be clearly stated after purchasing this Feature to avoid confusion. Suggested locations include: garage, attic, basement, etc. Provided the characters reach the Escape Hatch in time with a successful Dexterity + Athletics or Survival roll, they may leave the Safe House without suffering damage caused by environmental hazards (collapsing floors, fire, etc.).

Infirmary: With this Feature, a Safe Place is stocked with essential medical supplies and functions as a field hospital. Surgical procedures may be performed here without penalty or risk of infection. Medicine rolls receive a +2 bonus, provided the hunter has at least one dot in Medicine. For the purposes of healing and recovering from injury, the Infirmary may be treated as any other hospital provided at least one person with medical training can supervise a patient's recovery.

Home Security: A well-protected Safe Place has basic defenses that may include sophisticated home security systems, reinforced steel doors and hardened locks, or homemade traps and tripwires around the perimeter. This Feature's strength is tied to dots purchased and reflects the Safe House's defenses. At one dot of Safe House, intruders suffer a -1 on attempted break-ins conducted through supernatural or non-supernatural means. At five, they take a -5 penalty. Storytellers should note the Home Security Feature is treated as a defense system tied to the Safe House. Depending upon the nature of the system, Home Security may be affected by electrical outages, storms, fire, etc. In the event of a loss, this Feature may be repurchased.

Library: The Library is a secure room in the Safe Place loaded with antique books and maps, prized journals, or a protected server filled with digital files. This Feature represents ownership of a substantial collection of useful lore and information beneficial to hunters. A permanent installation, the Library cannot be moved on a whim. Hunters who need to research the occult or track down additional clues on a target gain a +2 to relevant rolls. It should be noted the Library is filled with information and a wealth of important facts; having this data doesn't automatically mean the hunter has read, translated, or memorized the library's contents.

Special: The Safe Place and its Features are not immune from harm and may be damaged following an attack or through a monster's use of Dread Powers. When the Safe Place is lost, refer to the Sanctity of Merits rule. If your character's well-stocked cabin in the woods burns down, for example, you may repurchase the Safe Place Merit to rebuild it or reallocate your dots to a different Merit.

Additional Features may be purchased at the cost of two Experiences each after character creation. Hunters may only install one new Feature at a time; doing so takes at least one chapter and may have more requirements at the Storyteller's discretion. An Arsenal might require a separate Resource expenditure, for instance.

If an additional Feature you installed is irreparably damaged, you regain two Experiences. If the primary Feature is destroyed, you may purchase a new Feature but you don't gain two Experiences for the loss.

There is no penalty for remodeling a Safe Place; new Features do not grant a bonus until they are fully installed.

Séance Devotee (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Occult ••

Effect: Your character knows how to conduct a séance. You understand that sometimes you need willing participants to contact the other side; believers you can rely on to show up at the last minute who'll free up your fellow hunters during an investigation. Each dot you purchase in this Merit reflects one person who will drop everything to help you perform a séance. Unlike other Merits, you do not have to maintain a close relationship with or reward your participants for their

service. Just being there, close to the spirits, is thanks enough for them — provided they return home safe.

Drawback: A Séance Devotee will be on call and at the character's disposal unless they suffer from a damaging Tilt (Insane, Insensate) during the night of the séance or Condition that occurs as a result of the contacted spirit attaching itself to the participant. When they get hurt, they are no longer at the character's beck and call — and the hunter may have to rescue them.

Spin Doctor (•)

Prerequisites: Manipulation •••, Subterfuge ••

Effect: Your character can fast-talk and sell bullshit stories as if they were completely flawless. When suffering from tainted Clues (see p. XX), your character does not ignore successes. Instead, apply a –1 penalty for each relevant tainted Clue. Using a tainted Clue only levies a total –2 penalty with this Merit, which includes the –1 taken in lieu of ignoring successes.

Staff (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has a crew of workers or assistants at their disposal. They may be housekeepers, designers, research assistants, animators, cheap thugs, or whatever else makes sense. For every dot in this Merit, choose one type of assistant and one Skill. At any reasonable time, your staff can take actions using that Skill. These actions automatically garner a single success. While not useful in contested actions, this guarantees success on minor, mundane activities. Note that your character may have employees without requiring the Staff Merit; Staff simply adds a mechanical advantage for those groups.

Status (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has standing, membership, authority, control over, or respect from a group or organization. This can reflect official standing or merely informal respect. No matter the source, your character enjoys certain privileges within that structure. Hunters can purchase the Status Merit to reflect their organization at each of the three tiers. With a single dot of a conspiracy's Status, the hunter gains access to the conspiracy's Endowments.

Each instance of this Merit reflects standing in a different group or organization. Your character may have Status (The Luck Gang) •••, Status (Network Zero) ••, and Status (Police) •. Each affords its own unique benefits. As you increase dot ratings, your character rises in prominence in the relevant group. Hunters may have Status in only a single conspiracy, but may belong to a conspiracy and a compact, or multiple compacts.

Status only allows advantages within the confines of the group reflected in the Merit. Status (Police) won't help if your character wants to smuggle drugs to another state, for example. Status provides a number of advantages:

Your character can apply her Status to any Social roll with those over whom she has authority or sway.

She has access to group facilities, resources, and funding. Depending on the group, this could be limited by red tape and requisitioning processes. It's also dependent on the resources the particular group has available.

She has pull. If she knows a character's Mentor, Resources, Retainer, Contacts, or Allies, she can block their usage. Once per chapter, she can stop a single Merit from being used, if it's of a

lower dot rating than her Status, and if it makes sense for her organization to obstruct that type of person's behavior. In our Police example, if your character knows a local reporter has Contacts (Police Insider), they may opt to block usage by threatening to reveal the insider if they continue to talk.

Each compact and conspiracy offers specialized benefits (starting on p. XX) related to increasing dots in the Status Merit.

Drawback: Status requires upkeep, and often regular duties. If these duties are not upheld, the Status may be lost. The dots will not be accessible until the character re-establishes her standing. In our Police example, your character may be expected to work the beat, sit in on additional training, or give an assist to a colleague.

Additionally, hunters who dive deep into their conspiracies find it difficult to care or concern themselves with lesser issues. A hunter's Status in non-conspiracy or -compact organizations is capped at 6 minus her maximum dots in a compact or conspiracy Status. Meaning if she has Ascending Ones Status 4, the maximum rating her Police Status (or any other Status) can be is 2. If increasing her compact or conspiracy Status makes her lose Status in other organizations, the Merit is subject to the Sanctity of Merits, p. XX.

Striking Looks (• or ••)

Effect: Your character is stunning, alarming, commanding, repulsive, threatening, charming, or otherwise worthy of attention. Determine how your character looks and how people react to that. For one dot, your character gets a +1 bonus on any Social rolls that would be influenced by their looks. For two dots, the benefit increases to +2. Depending on the details, their appearance might influence Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge, or other rolls.

Drawback: Attention is a double-edged sword. Any rolls to spot, notice, or remember your character gain the same dice bonus. Sometimes, your character will draw unwanted attention in social situations. This could cause further complications.

Sympathetic (••)

Effect: Your character is very good at getting close to other people. Their ability to sympathize with others' feelings gives them an edge, and helps them get what they want. At the beginning of a Social maneuvering attempt, you may choose to accept a Condition such as Leveraged or Swooned in order to immediately eliminate two of the subject's Doors.

Table Turner (•)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Manipulation •••, Wits •••

Effects: Your character can turn any attempt to leverage their social skills into an opportunity. Any time a character initiates a Social maneuvering action against yours (see p. XX), you may spend a Willpower point to preempt that attempt with one of your own or take another Social action.

Tight-Lipped (••)

Prerequisites: Resolve •• or higher.

Effect: Your character excels at keeping secrets. Gain +2 for Social rolls when being interrogated by non-supernatural means.

Touchstone (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has an additional Touchstone. (See p. XX.) Dots purchased do not reflect a “stronger” Touchstone or one to whom you’re more attached; they indicate how many Touchstones your hunter has. For example, if your character rekindles a friendship with an ex-boyfriend and decides to treat them as a Touchstone, you would allocate one dot. The ex is then treated as your second Touchstone. If, however, they have five ex-boyfriends with whom they’d like to interact, you’d purchase five dots.

Special: Purchased Touchstones do not replace a missing primary Touchstone; they count as secondary or additional. This Merit may be purchased multiple times to a maximum of five.

Untouchable (•)

Prerequisites: Manipulation ••, Subterfuge ••

Effect: Your character commits crimes and is always one step ahead of their pursuers. Because of their methodical planning, any roll to investigate them suffers the Incomplete Clue tag (see p. XX) unless it achieves exceptional success.

Fighting Merits

Some Merits in this section have other Merits as prerequisites. These are refinements of form and additional areas of expertise. For example, Armed Defense requires Defensive Combat. This means you must have one dot in Defensive Combat before buying dots in Armed Defense.

Many Fighting Style Merits require a character to sacrifice their Defense. Defense cannot be sacrificed multiple times in a turn; this prevents certain maneuvers from being used together.

Armed Defense (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity ••, Weaponry ••, Defensive Combat: Weaponry

You’re able to use a weapon to stop people who are trying to kill you. Often deployed by police officers using riot shields or telescoping batons, it’s just as effective while using a chair leg.

Cover the Angles (•): Whenever you take a Dodge action, reduce the Defense penalties for multiple attackers by 1. You can apply your full Defense against the first two attacks, suffer a –1 penalty against the third, and so on.

Weak Spot (••): Your character swings against their opponent’s arm, rather than their weapon. Use this ability when defending against an armed attacker. If your Defense reduces their attack pool to 0, they’re disarmed. If you Dodge, you disarm your opponent if your Defense roll reduces their attack successes to 0.

Aggressive Defense (•••): Anyone careless enough to come near your character is liable to get hurt. When you take a Dodge action, if you score more successes than any attacker, you deal one point of lethal damage to the attacker per extra success. Your weapon bonus doesn’t apply to this extra damage.

Drawback: You must spend a point of Willpower and declare that you are using Aggressive Defense at the start of the turn. You cannot combine this maneuver with Press the Advantage or Weak Spot.

Iron Guard (••••): Your character is one with their weapon. At the start of each turn, you can choose to reduce your weapon bonus (down to a minimum of 0) to increase your character’s

Defense by a like amount. If you take a Dodge action, add your full weapon bonus to your character's Defense after doubling your pool.

Press the Advantage (••••): You create an opening with a block and lash out with a fist or foot. When you're taking a Dodge action, if your Defense roll reduces the attacker's successes to 0, you can make an unarmed attack against that opponent at a -2 penalty. Your opponent applies Defense as normal.

Drawback: Spend a point of Willpower to make the attack. You can only make one attack per turn in this way.

Cheap Shot (••)

Prerequisites: Street Fighting ••, Subterfuge ••

Effect: Your character is a master at bait and switch and fights dirty. They can glance in an odd direction and prompt their opponent to do the same or step on their toes to distract them. Make a Dexterity + Subterfuge roll as a reflexive action. The opponent's player contests with Wits + Composure. If you score more successes, the opponent loses their Defense for the next turn. Each time a character uses this maneuver in a scene, it levies a cumulative -2 penalty to further uses since the opposition gets used to the tricks.

Choke Hold (••)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••

If your character can get her grip on someone, they're putty in her hands. When grappling, your character can use the Choke move:

Choke: If you rolled more successes than twice the victim's Stamina, he's unconscious for (six - Stamina) minutes. You must first have succeeded at a Hold move. If you don't score enough successes at first, you can Choke on future turns and total your successes.

Note: Choke Hold cannot be used on monsters that don't need to breathe.

Close Quarters Combat (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Wits ••, Athletics ••, Brawl ••

Effect: Your character knows that hitting someone in the face is an easy way to break the little bones in their hand. To that end, they've perfected the art of using the environment to hurt people.

Firing Lines (•): In some situations, your character's best option is a tactical retreat — especially if they've inadvertently brought a knife to a gunfight. You can run for cover as a reaction to a ranged attack instead of dropping prone. You give up your action for the turn, but your character can get to any cover that's within twice your Speed.

Hard Surfaces (••): Bouncing someone's head off a urinal, computer monitor, or brick wall is a handy way to increase the amount of hurt inflicted. When your character is grappling someone, you can bounce them off a hard surface with a Damage move. You deal lethal damage, then immediately end the grapple.

Armored Coffin (•••): The problem with protection is simple: The very things that protect your opponents can be turned against them. That holds true for body armor just as much as anything else. Sure, it blocks bullets and knives, but get in a clinch and your character's opponent might as

well be wearing a straightjacket. When grappling an opponent, add their general armor rating to your dice pool. When they use a Damage move, ignore your opponent's armor. This technique can't be used in conjunction with Hard Surfaces.

Prep Work (••••): If your character has a second to look around, they can catch someone by surprise almost anywhere. When launching a surprise attack, your Dexterity + Stealth roll becomes a rote action.

Drawback: Your character can't use this Merit to set up sniper attacks — their ambush must use Brawl or Weaponry.

Turnabout (•••••): If your character is caught short in a fight, his opponent's weapon suits him just fine. When they attempt to Disarm their opponent, step the results up one level — on a failure, the opponent drops the weapon. On a success, your character takes possession of their opponent's weapon. On an exceptional success, your character has the weapon and the opponent takes two points of bashing damage.

Defensive Combat (•)

Prerequisite: Brawl • or Weaponry •; choose one when this Merit is selected

Effect: Your character is trained in avoiding damage in combat. Use her Brawl or Weaponry to calculate Defense, rather than Athletics. Your character can learn both versions of this Merit, allowing you to use any of the three Skills to calculate Defense. However, you cannot use Weaponry to calculate Defense unless she has a weapon in her hand.

Heavy Weapons (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Stamina ••, Strength ••, Athletics ••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is trained with heavy weapons that require strength, wide range, and follow through more than direct speed and accuracy. This Style may be used with a two-handed weapon such as a claymore, chainsaw, pike, or an uprooted street sign.

Sure Strike (•): Your character doesn't always hit the hardest or the most frequently, but they guarantee a deadly strike when they do hit. You can reflexively remove three dice from any attack dice pool (to a minimum of zero) to add one to your character's weapon damage rating for the turn. These dice must be removed after calculating any penalties from the environment or the opponent's Defense.

Threat Range (••): Your character's weapon is immense and keeps opponents at bay. If you opt not to move or Dodge during your turn, any opponent moving into your character's proximity suffers one lethal damage and a penalty to their Defense equal to your character's weapon damage rating. This penalty only lasts for one turn. This cannot be used in a turn the character is Dodging.

Bring the Pain (•••): Your character's strikes stun and incapacitate as well as causing massive trauma to the body. Sacrifice your character's Defense to use Bring the Pain. Make a standard attack roll. Any damage you score with Bring the Pain counts as a penalty to all actions the victim takes during their next turn. So, if you cause four lethal damage, the opponent is at -4 on their next attack.

Warding Stance (•••): Your character holds her weapon in such a way as to make attacks against her much harder. If her weapon's drawn, spend a point of Willpower reflexively to add their weapon's damage rating as armor for the turn. This will not protect against firearms.

Rending (••••): Your character's cuts leave crippling, permanent wounds. By spending a Willpower point before making an attack roll, her successful attacks cause one level of aggravated damage in addition to her weapon's damage rating. This Willpower point does not add to the attack roll.

Improvised Weaponry (• to •••; Style)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Weaponry •

Effect: Your character is good at making do with what they've got. Sometimes they're lucky — if your character's in a bar, they have a lot of glass bottles, or maybe a pool cue, with which to improvise. They've got something like a sixth sense and can find a weapon almost anywhere. For hunters, this Merit can make or break a fight.

Always Armed (•): Your character can always get their hands on something dangerous, and they have an instinctive understanding of how to put it to good — and deadly — use. At the start of your turn, make a reflexive Wits + Weaponry roll to grab an object suitable for use as a weapon. (The player is encouraged to work with the Storyteller to determine an appropriate item — a large, jagged rock in the wilderness, for example, or a heavy, glass ashtray with one broken edge in a dive bar.) Regardless of what you pick up, the weapon has no weapon modifier -1 Initiative penalty, Size 1, Durability 2, and Structure 4. On an exceptional success, increase the weapon modifier and Size by 1, but the initiative penalty increases to -2. Whatever your character grabs doesn't cause them to suffer the normal -1 penalty for wielding an improvised weapon (see p. XX).

In Harm's Way (••): Your character's got a knack for putting their weapon in the way of an oncoming attack, no matter how small or inappropriate for blocking it might be. While they're wielding an improvised weapon acquired with Always Armed, you can treat the Structure of your character's weapon as general armor against a single Brawl or Weaponry attack. Any damage they take inflicts an equal amount of damage to the improvised weapon, bypassing Durability. Your character can use the weapon to attack later in the same turn but can only use this ability when applying his Defense to an attack.

Breaking Point (•••): One sure way to win a fight is to hit a monster so hard they don't get back up, even if that means losing a weapon in the process. When making an all-out attack with an improvised weapon acquired with Always Armed, you can reduce the weapon's Structure by any amount down to a minimum of 0. Every 2 points of Structure spent in this way adds 1 to the weapon modifier for that one single attack. Declare any Structure loss before making the attack; this Structure is reduced even if the attack does no damage. If the weapon is reduced to 0 Structure, it is automatically destroyed after the attack. You can use this technique in conjunction with In Harm's Way, allowing your character to parry an attack made on a higher Initiative and then go on the offensive, provided that the weapon wasn't destroyed.

Light Weapons (• to ••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Wits ••• *or* Fighting Finesse, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is trained with small, hand-to-hand weapons that favor finesse over raw power. These maneuvers may only be used with one-handed weapons with a damage rating of two or less.

Rapidity (•): Your character moves with swiftness to find just the right spot to strike. You can sacrifice your character's weapon damage rating to add his Weaponry score to his Initiative for the turn. The weapon becomes a zero-damage weapon for the turn.

Thrust (••): Your character knows when to defend himself, and when to move in for the kill. At any time, you can sacrifice points of Defense, one for one, to add to attack pools. This cannot happen if you've already used Defense in the same turn. If you use this maneuver, you may not sacrifice your full Defense for any other reason. For example, you cannot use Thrust with an all-out attack.

Feint (•••): With a flourish in one direction, your character can distract an opponent for a cleaner, more effective follow-up strike. For example, if Feinting with a two-damage weapon with three successes, the attack causes no damage. However, your next attack ignores five points of Defense, and causes three extra points of damage.

Flurry (••••): Your character moves quickly enough to stab opponents with numerous pricks and swipes in the blink of an eye. As long as your character has their Defense available (if it's not been sacrificed for another maneuver, or denied from surprise, for example), any character coming into their immediate proximity takes one point of lethal damage. This damage continues once per turn as long as the enemy stays within range, and it occurs on the enemy's turn. This can affect multiple opponents and cannot be used during a turn in which the character is Dodging.

Vital Shot (•••••): Your character can use their smaller weapon to get into an opponent's defenses and hit where it hurts most. Sacrifice your character's Defense for the turn to use this maneuver. If the attack roll succeeds, the attack causes one point of aggravated damage, in addition to the damage rating of the weapon.

Marksmanship (• to ••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Resolve •••, Firearms ••

Effect: When prepared and aimed, a gun is an ideal killing machine. Your character has trained to take advantage of the greatest features of a gun, usually a rifle, but this Style can be used with any gun. Because of the discipline and patience required for Marksmanship, your character cannot use her Defense during any turn in which she uses one of these maneuvers. These maneuvers may only be used after aiming for at least one turn.

Through the Crosshairs (•): Your character is a competent sniper, able to sit in position and steel her wits. Usually, the maximum bonus from aiming is three dice. With Through the Crosshairs, it's equal to her Composure + Firearms.

Precision Shot (••): With this level of training, your character knows how to effectively disable a victim instead of focusing on the kill. When attacking a specified target, you may reduce your character's weapon's damage rating one for one to ignore penalties for shooting a specified target (see p. XX). For example, if your character is using a sniper rifle (four damage weapon) and attacking an arm (-2 to hit), you could choose to use three damage for -1 or two damage to eliminate the penalty entirely.

A Shot Rings Out (•••): A master sniper, your character has no worries or lack of confidence. She can fire into a crowd and strike a specific target without penalty. If she misses, it's because her shot goes wide. She will never hit an unintended target.

Ghost (••••): Your character has trained to shoot unseen and vanish without a trace. Her Firearms score acts as a penalty on any roll to notice her vantage point, or any Investigation or Perception roll to search the area from where she was shooting.

Martial Arts (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Resolve •••, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Brawl ••

Effect: Your character is trained in one or more formal martial arts styles. This may have come from a personal mentor, a dojo, or a self-defense class. It may have been for exercise, protection, show, or tradition. These maneuvers may only be used unarmed, or with weapons capable of using the Brawl Skill, such as a punch dagger, or a weapon using the Shiv Merit (see below).

Focused Attack (•): Your character has trained extensively in striking specific parts of an opponent's body. Reduce penalties for hitting specific targets by one. Additionally, you may ignore one point of armor on any opponent.

Defensive Strike (••): Your character excels in defending herself while finding the best time to strike. You can add 1 or 2 points to your character's Defense. For each Defense point you take, subtract a die from any attacks you make. This can only be used during a turn in which your character intends to attack. It cannot be used with a Dodge.

Whirlwind Strike (•••): When engaged, your character becomes a storm of threatening kicks and punches; nothing close is safe. As long as your character has her Defense available, and is not Dodging, any opponent coming into arm's reach takes one bashing damage. This damage continues once per turn as long as the enemy stays within range and occurs on the enemy's turn. If you spend a point of Willpower, this damage becomes two bashing until your next turn.

The Hand As Weapon (••••): With this degree of training, your character's limbs are hardened to cause massive trauma. Her unarmed strikes cause lethal damage.

The Touch of Death (•••••): Your character's mastery has brought with it the daunting power of causing lethal injury with a touch. If she chooses, her unarmed strikes count as weapons with two damage rating.

Police Tactics (• to •••; Style)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••, Weaponry •

Effect: Your character is trained in restraint techniques, often used by law enforcement or security guards. This may reflect formal training, or lessons from a skilled practitioner.

Compliance Hold (•): Gain a +2 bonus to overpowering rolls to disarm or immobilize an opponent.

Weapon Retention (••): Opponents attempting to disarm your character or turn their weapon against them must exceed your character's Weaponry score in successes.

Speed Cuff (•••): Against an immobilized opponent, your character may apply handcuffs, cable ties, or similar restraints as a reflexive action.

Unarmed Defense (• to ••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity ••, Brawl ••, Defensive Combat: Brawl

Effect: Your character is better at stopping people from hurting them than they are at hurting other people. Maybe they practice a martial art that redirects an opponent's blows or are just very good at not being where their opponent wants them to be.

Like a Book (•): Your character can read their opponents, knowing where they're likely to strike. When facing an unarmed opponent and not Dodging, increase your character's Defense by half of his Brawl (round down).

Studied Style (••): Your character focuses on reading one opponent, avoiding their attacks and frustrating him. Attacks from that opponent do not reduce your character's Defense. If your character's Defense reduces their opponent's attack pool to zero, their further attacks against you lose the 10-again quality.

Redirect (•••): When your character is being attacked by multiple opponents, they can direct their blows against one another. When they Dodge, if their Defense roll reduces an attack's successes to zero, their attacker rolls the same attack against another attacker of your choice.

Drawback: Your character may only redirect one attack in a turn. They cannot redirect an attack against the same attacker.

Joint Strike (••••): Your character waits until the last possible second, then lashes out at their opponent's elbow or wrist as they attack, hoping to cripple his limbs. Roll Strength + Brawl instead of Defense. If you score more successes than your attacker, you deal one point of bashing damage per extra success and inflict either the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilt (your choice).

Drawback: Spend a point of Willpower to use this maneuver.

Like the Breeze (•••••): Your character steps to one side as his opponent attacks and gives them enough of a push to send them flying past. When dodging, if your Defense roll reduces an opponent's attack successes to zero, you can inflict the Knocked Down Tilt.

Drawback: Declare that you're using this maneuver at the start of the turn before taking any other attacks.

Supernatural Merits

Hunters often run across the supernatural and develop a sensitivity to them. This can be honed through training with a cell, compact, or conspiracy, and sometimes just because the longer you spend with the supernatural, the more like it you become.

These Merits require the character to remain human. If she loses her last dot of Integrity or becomes a monster, the Merits disappear. Per the Sanctity of Merits (see p. XX), these Merits can be reallocated.

Note that the Children of the Seventh Generation are considered human and may purchase Supernatural Merits, just like any other hunter might.

Aura Reading (•••)

Effect: Your character has the psychic ability to sense auras, the ephemeral halos of energy that surround all living things. This allows her to perceive a subject's emotional state, and potentially

any supernatural nature. The colors of an aura show a person's general disposition, and the ebbs, flows, tone, and other oddities reveal other influences. Note that your character may not know what she's looking at when seeing something odd in an aura. For example, she may not know that a pale aura means she's seeing a vampire, unless she's confirmed other vampiric auras in the past.

To activate Aura Reading, spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Empathy minus the subject's Composure. Perceiving an aura takes an uninterrupted moment of staring, which could look suspicious even to the unaware. For every success, ask the subject's player one of the following questions. Alternatively, take +1 on Social rolls against the character during the same scene, due to the character's understanding of their emotional state.

- What's your character's most prominent emotion?
- Is your character telling the truth?
- What is your character's attention most focused on right now?
- Is your character going to attack?
- What emotion is your character trying most to hide?
- Is your character supernatural or otherwise not human?

Determine how your character perceives auras. Maybe she sees different hues as different emotions. Perhaps she hears whispers in the back of her mind, reflecting subtle truths about her subject.

Drawback: Because of your character's sensitivity to the supernatural, she sometimes appears to know a little too much. No more than once per chapter, when first meeting a supernatural creature, the Storyteller can roll Wits + Occult for the creature, penalized by your character's Composure. If successful, they get a strange feeling that your character is aware of their nature. They're not forced to behave in any particular way, but it could cause complications.

Clairvoyance (•••)

Effect: Your character can project her senses to another location. She sees, hears, smells, and otherwise experiences the other place as if she were there. This ability requires a point of Willpower to activate, successful meditation, and a Wits + Occult roll.

Suggested Modifiers: Has an object important to the place (+1), never been there (-3), scrying for a person and not a place (-3), scrying for non-specific location (-4), spent significant time there (+2), touching someone with a strong connection to the place (+1)

Drawback: When choosing this ability, determine how your character can scry. It may be through a crystal ball, through a drug-induced trance, with esoteric computer models, or any other reasonable method. She cannot scry without that tool or methodology.

Medium (•••)

Prerequisite: Empathy ••

Effect: Your character hears the words and moans of the dead. If he takes the time to parse their words, he can interact with them verbally.

Your character has more than just a knack for knowing when ephemeral beings are lurking nearby: He can reach out and make contact with them. By conducting a ritual, meditating, or otherwise preparing to commune with the unseen, and succeeding at a Wits + Occult roll, he temporarily increases the relevant Condition one step along the progression from nothing to Anchor or Resonance to Open. (see p. XX for more on Conditions as they relate to ephemeral entities). The effect lasts until he spends a Willpower point, but if an Influence was used to progress the Condition further, doing so only reduces it by one step.

Drawback: Speaking with ghosts can be a blessing, but your character cannot turn the sense off any more than he can turn off his hearing. The character hears the words of the dead any time they're present. Once per game session, usually in a time of extreme stress, the Storyteller may deliver a disturbing message to your character from the other side. You must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll or gain either the Shaken or Spooked Condition.

Psychometry (•••)

Effect: Psychometry is the psychic ability to read impressions left on physical objects. Your character can feel the emotional resonance left on an item or perceive important events tied to a location with this ability. The ability automatically homes in on the most emotionally intense moment tied to the item.

Spend a Willpower point to activate Psychometry. The successes scored on a Wits + Occult roll determine the clarity of the visions. For each success, you may ask a single yes or no question of the Storyteller, or one of the following questions. For questions pertaining to specific characters, if your character hasn't met the person in question, the Storyteller may simply describe them.

- What's the strongest emotion here?
- Who remembers this moment the most?
- Am I missing something in this scene?
- Where was this object during the event?
- What breaking point caused the event?

Suggested Modifiers: Character has read impressions from this item before (-2), important event happened more than one day ago (-1), more than one week ago (-2), more than one month ago (-3), more than one year ago (-5), item was used in a violent crime (+2), item is only vaguely tied to the event (-2), spirits pertaining to the event are nearby (+3)

Drawback: Once per chapter, the Storyteller can force a Psychometry vision any time an important place is visited, or an important item is touched. This doesn't require a roll or a Willpower point to activate. The Storyteller can give any information pertaining to the event in question. Additionally, the Storyteller can impose one Condition relevant to the event.

Unseen Sense (••)

Effect: Your character has a "sixth sense" for a type of supernatural creature, chosen when you buy the Merit. For example, you may choose Unseen Sense: Vampires, or Unseen Sense: Fairies. The sense manifests differently for everyone. Her hair stands on end, she becomes physically ill, or perhaps she has a cold chill. Regardless, she knows something isn't right when she is in the immediate proximity of the appropriate supernatural being. Once per chapter, the player can accept the Spooked Condition (p. XX), in exchange for which the character can pinpoint from

where the feeling is coming. If the target is using a power that specifically cloaks its supernatural nature, however, this does not work (though the Condition remains until resolved as usual).

OPENING FICTION

May 7th, 2016, at approximately 7:30 p.m., we made contact on Tinder with an individual named Michael S. In his profile, he appears to be a Caucasian male, blonde with strong bone structure, somewhere between his late 30s and early 40s. During our brief conversation, he divulged he was a professor of medieval literature at the University of Oxford, an Akira Kurosawa aficionado, and a mediocre cook. The aforementioned data matches our reports and several verified testimonies.

We — or more specifically, Lesley, our designated Judas — have set up a date for next weekend.

•••

May 14th, 2016. It was always going to have to be Lesley. She was precisely his type. Young, with an Eastern-European cast to her features and something coquettish about the crooked line of her mouth. We dressed her for innocence: knee-length skirt and cardigan, opaque tights and sensible flats — attire reminiscent of a college student. No weapons were provided. Instead, I, Bishop, and Saraswati would function as back-up.

At approximately 8:20 p.m., Lesley convened with Michael S. for their scheduled encounter. He appeared exactly as he did in his photos; at worst, slighter paler, as though the winter had blanched his skin. Michael S. brought flowers for Lesley. Red carnations, with a sheaf of baby's breath. She accepted them genially, threading her arm through his proffered elbow, before they meandered into a side street.

Through the microphone we'd taped to the inside of Lesley's collar, we heard their conversation:

LESLEY: "Thanks for coming out on, well, such relatively long notice."

MICHAEL: "The pleasure's mine. Tinder moves too quickly for an old man like me, so I appreciate this opportunity to savor a courtship."

LESLEY: "Why go on Tinder, then?"

MICHAEL: *hesitation* "Because I am told that it is the only way to meet people."

LESLEY: "I suppose. There are other dating sites, too."

MICHAEL: "None with the same immediacy of contact. Too much stalking. Too much circling profiles, like a wolf out of time. I suppose I'm just hopelessly complicated."

LESLEY: "I can get behind that. Anyway, I was thinking — do you want to do Chilango, or a bar, or — have you eaten yet?"

MICHAEL: "I have. But there's no reason you shouldn't be able to eat."

LESLEY: "Oh! I'm sorry! In that case—"

MICHAEL: "No. Please. If you haven't had dinner yet, I'd be more than happy to accompany you. I like watching people eat."

We followed the pair to the local Chilango without incident. Michael S., despite rumor, behaved in an exemplary fashion, and the meal concluded without event. The two did not extend their encounter past dinner. Instead, they exchanged chaste kisses on the cheek before separating, Michael S. citing the need to attend family obligations.

•••

May 16th, 2016. Two more incidents were reported on campus. Michael S. made contact again, this time through Telegram. Since the initial encounter, we have maintained close communications with the man, building a rapport and exchanging anecdotes. Throughout these conversations, Michael S. made no overtures towards a second encounter.

So we did it for him.

•••

May 21st, 2016. We spent the afternoon rigging a rental coupe for this evening's encounter. IEDs beneath the seats, inside the headboard, and in the trunk. Anywhere they'd go. Whatever space remained we then lined with pressurized canisters of kerosene.

Once prepared, we had Lesley drive to the gates of the university, where Michael S. waited. The latter evidenced mild surprise at the manifestation of the vehicle, but Lesley was able to convince him of its innocuousness. Said it was easier than walking. Satiated, Michael S. entered the car. Together, they proceed through the motions of early courtship: small talk, an uninteresting movie, drinks in a bar.

At the end of the night, Michael S. acted as we'd predicted. He asked to see her again. Here, Lesley escalated with a direct proposition, which her counterpart laughingly accepted. Because of course, he fucking would.

The two agreed to make their way back to Michael S.' accommodations, although not before first picking up essentials from Lesley's apartment. Michael S. exhibited neither interest nor suspicion as Lesley exited the car.

Then, I hit the button.

For the purpose of minimizing collateral damage, we chose a site slightly outside the center of Oxford. We'd scouted the location beforehand. The few people who lived in the wide cul-de-sac worked nights; the worst they'd come home to was property damage.

Which was a pity, I think, because the resultant bonfire was beautiful.

The explosion sent the car geysering upward into flames and black twists of ruined metal. It spun over itself to land on its roof with a brittle shriek of broken glass. It took our target two long minutes to writhe from the wreckage, skin boiled away in places, yet somehow still impossibly, horrifically alive.

Or at least whatever passed for alive with his kind.

Lesley and I didn't waste any time. I came out of my car, swinging a bag of bullets on one shoulder, a shotgun over the other. Lesley emerged with an axe. There was nothing supernatural about what we did next. It was old-fashioned human brutality: hosannas of lead, heavy steel through the point. Michael S. didn't go down easy. But between our weapons and another canister of gasoline, we succeeded.

Don't know if you knew, but old bones burn bright.

The public nature of our assault, however, required us to evacuate sleepy Oxford as quickly as humanly possible. As of the time of writing, our cell is fine. No one is injured or at risk of

discovery. We have temporarily relocated to [REDACTED], but we have every intention of coming back.

In the meantime, should you wish to continue the fight for us, included is an inventory of everything we've learned: names, social-media accounts, peekyou reports, whatever other dirt we could dig up.

To our knowledge, there are over 100 members of the undead living on the campus. Let's not talk about the rest of Oxford.

Be careful.

It is easy to assume that your proximity to London puts you in the aegis of the local compacts. But London is subsumed by its own problems and frankly, that city doesn't give a rat's arse about anyone else.

You're on your own out here.

But you already knew that.

END OPENING FICTION

Chapter Four: Rules of the Hunt

“Being brave means to know something is scary, difficult, and dangerous, and doing it anyway, because the possibility of winning the fight is worth the chance of losing it.”

— Emilie Autumn, American Singer-Songwriter

This chapter contains the basic rules for playing **Hunter: The Vigil**. It also includes additional rules that expand your options when your characters take risks and work together in the name of the Vigil.

Rolling Dice

When your character is trying to accomplish something and the outcome is in doubt, you roll a number of 10-sided dice. The result of that roll determines whether your character *succeeds* and accomplishes their goal, or whether they *fail* and don't do what they set out to. Failure doesn't mean “nothing happens,” just that your character doesn't get what they want and they're in for complications.

You might also score an *exceptional success* or suffer a *dramatic failure* (p. XX).

Dice Pool

The number of dice you roll depends on the action your character is taking. Most of the time, it's the value of one of your Attributes plus one of your Skills, or the value of two different Attributes put together; for example, fast-talking your way past a bouncer might be a roll of Manipulation + Subterfuge, which means you roll a number of dice equal to your Manipulation rating plus your Subterfuge rating. (Sometimes you'll roll a different pool, but those are special cases the text calls out when necessary.)

Circumstantial factors, appropriate equipment (or lack thereof), or opposition from another character can add or subtract dice from the total; see below.

The total number of dice you roll is called your *dice pool*.

The Storyteller determines the appropriate dice pool based on what you're trying to do and how you're trying to do it, using the descriptions of the various traits involved. In the above example, if you explained to the Storyteller that you weren't trying to lie your way past the bouncer but schmooze her into liking you enough to let you in, the Storyteller might revise the dice pool to Manipulation + Socialize.

Most of the actions described in this book tell you what the dice pool should be, but it's fine to come up with dice pools for other actions on an ad hoc basis. Just try to be fair and consistent — if you decide bashing down a door is Strength + Stamina in one session, it should always be Strength + Stamina unless the situation radically changes.

Roll Modifiers

Sometimes, fortune favors your character, or they're packing the right tools for the job. Other times, the odds are stacked against them or they don't have the right gear at all. The Storyteller should weigh how circumstances or equipment affect a character's chance of success and assign an appropriate *modifier*. A slight advantage — picking an old and damaged lock — might be worth a bonus die, while a stressful situation — trying to pick a lock while people are shooting at you — might subtract three dice from your pool.

Dice Rolling Basics

- **Building a Pool:** Unless otherwise noted, a dice pool is always Attribute + different Attribute or Attribute + Skill.
- **Modifiers:** Bonuses add the indicated number of dice; penalties remove them. Unless otherwise specified, modifiers never exceed +/-5. Add all bonuses *before* subtracting penalties.
- **Successes:** Any die showing 8, 9, or 10 counts as a *success*.
- **10-again:** Any die that shows a 10 is counted as a success, then rerolled. Rerolled dice count successes as normal. Continue counting successes and rerolling as long as you keep rolling 10s.

Chance Die

If penalties ever reduce your dice pool to 0 or fewer dice, roll a single die anyway. This single die is called a *chance die*, and it follows slightly different rules.

Chance Die Basics

- **Success:** A chance die showing a 10 counts as a success.
- **No 10-again:** Do not reroll 10s on chance dice.
- **Dramatic Failure:** A chance die showing a 1 is a *dramatic failure* (p. XX).

Roll Results

Once you've rolled all the dice, counted all your successes, and finished any rerolls or other permutations, it's time to see how your character fared. On most actions, you'll only worry about

whether your character succeeded or failed. Sometimes, however, the outcome of an action is more dramatic.

Roll Result Basics

- **Success:** 1-4 successes. Your character's action succeeds.
- **Exceptional Success:** 5+ successes. Your character's action succeeds *and* your character gains a beneficial Condition (p. XX). Usually, the Inspired Condition is the most appropriate. Specific actions might have additional effects on an exceptional success.
- **Failure:** 0 successes. Your character's action fails.
- **Dramatic Failure:** chance die shows a 1. Your character's action fails and something goes significantly awry. Specific actions might have additional effects on a dramatic failure. Otherwise, the Storyteller decides on an appropriate turn of events.
- **Voluntary Dramatic Failure:** Take a Beat and convert a failure into a dramatic failure, up to once per scene.
- **Risked Willpower Dramatic Failure:** 0 successes for an action on which you risked Willpower (p. XX). Take two Beats and apply the effects of a dramatic failure.

Additional Rules

These additional rules explain options that are unlocked through various Merits, Endowments, or other rules which intersect with the dice-rolling mechanics.

- **9-Again:** Reroll dice that show 9 or 10, as opposed to just 10. Keep rerolling until you get a result that isn't a 9 or 10. Certain Conditions, Merits, or other special circumstances may award you 9-again on specific kinds of rolls. If you gain 9-again on a roll that already had that quality, it becomes 8-again instead.
- **8-Again:** Reroll dice that show 8, 9, or 10 — any successful die — and keep rerolling as long as your dice show successes. Certain Conditions, Merits, or other special circumstances may award you 8-again on specific kinds of rolls. If you gain 8-again on a roll that already had that quality, it may become a rote action, at the Storyteller's discretion.
- **Extra Successes:** Assuming your roll succeeds, you get a number of extra successes added to your total. This permutation mostly applies to weapons, which add their damage bonus as extra successes on your attack roll.
- **Rote Actions:** When you've got plenty of training and the steps you need to follow are laid out in front of you, you've got a significant chance of success. When you make a roll with the rote quality, reroll any dice that do not show an 8, 9, or 10. If you're reduced to a chance die on a rote action, don't reroll a dramatic failure. You may only reroll each die once. Certain Conditions, Merits, or other special circumstances may award you the rote quality on specific kinds of rolls.
- **Successive Attempts:** When you fail a roll, you may be able to try again. Normally, you make successive attempts with your full dice pool. If time is short and the situation is tense, each subsequent attempt instead has a cumulative one-die penalty — so the third time a character tries to break down the door that's keeping her from chasing her prey, her roll suffers a -2 penalty. Successive attempts do not apply to extended actions.

- **Teamwork:** Working together is crucial for hunters fighting to overcome impossible odds. See p. XX for rules about teamwork, as well as special group actions called *Tactics*.

When to Roll Dice

You don't need to roll dice for every action you want to take. If your character isn't in a stressful situation — nobody's actively trying to tear his throat open or demolish the building as he works — you don't need to roll; as long as it's something your character could reasonably do, he just does it. As a general guideline, roll dice when a success or failure impacts the narrative.

When the dice hit the table, the Storyteller should have some idea of what happens if the roll fails or succeeds. Sometimes that's coded in the rules. If you fail on an attack roll, for example, you don't deal any damage. Other times, it's up to the Storyteller. If you fail a roll to jump between buildings to catch a group of necromancers, do you make it but fall on the other side, grab the next building by your fingertips, or plummet to the alley below?

Time

Time in the story can speed past or slow to a crawl compared to time in the real world. Weeks or months might pass in the space of few words, while a tense negotiation plays out in real-time — or takes even longer.

In addition to years, days, hours, and so on, **Hunter** also uses five units of dramatic time. These build upon one another, from shortest to longest.

- **Turn** — The smallest increment of time, a turn lasts for about three seconds. A character can perform a single instant action and move their Speed in a turn. Turns normally only matter in action scenes, like fights, chases, and other dramatic and stressful situations.
- **Scene** — Much like a scene in a play, a scene in a roleplaying game is the time spent dealing with a single, specific event. The Storyteller frames the scene, describing what's going on, and it's up to the players to resolve the event or conflict. A scene might be played out in turns (called an *action scene*), progress in real-time, or skip forward depending on dramatic necessity.
- **Chapter (or Session)** — A chapter is the collection of scenes that happen during one game session. From the moment you sit down and start playing to the point where you pack up your dice, you're playing out a chapter of your story.
- **Story** — A story tells an entire tale, following the dramatic arc of a related series of events. It might comprise several chapters or be completed in just one. It has an introduction, rising tension, a number of twists, and a climax that brings things to a conclusion.
- **Chronicle** — The big picture, a chronicle is the collection of interlinked stories that involve your characters. They might be linked by a common theme or overarching plotline, or they may only share characters and locations. As your story progresses, the players and Storyteller work together to create an ongoing chronicle by linking chapters together in thematic and dramatic ways.

Actions

Hunter: The Vigil rates each action by two criteria: how long it takes to attempt and whether another character opposes it. All actions fall into one category in both arenas: an action might be

instant and simple (usually just abbreviated to “instant”), extended and contested, or reflexive and resisted, for example.

Actions by Time

- **Instant:** The action is resolved in a single roll. Unless otherwise noted, an instant action only takes a few seconds and takes up your *turn* in an *action scene*.
- **Reflexive:** The action takes no appreciable time or effort, and is resolved in a single roll, or may not require a roll at all. In an action scene, you can take reflexive actions on other characters’ turns, and reflexive actions don’t take up your turn. *Contesting* someone else’s action is always reflexive.
- **Extended:** The action requires multiple rolls over time to complete; as such, an extended action is not usually an option in action scenes, unless otherwise noted.

Actions by Opposition

- **Simple:** No opposition. Calculate dice pool and roll results as normal.
- **Contested:** Calculate dice pool as normal and roll. The target rolls a dice pool specified by how they contest the action. If your total successes exceed the target’s, your action succeeds; if their total successes exceed yours, your action fails. If you and your target roll the same number of successes, both of you reroll the same pools until someone comes out on top. The exception is when hunters use teamwork; the primary actor always wins ties on contested actions in that case.
- **Resisted:** Calculate dice pool, then apply a penalty equal to one of the target’s Resistance Attributes (Stamina, Resolve, or Composure) or Defense. Roll, and calculate roll results as normal.

If you’re not sure whether to use resistance or a contested action, use this guideline: Resistance applies in situations where the number of successes on the roll is an important factor. If what matters is just whether the roll succeeds or not, use a contested action. For example, combat applies Defense as a resistance because the number of successes on the roll determines how badly the attacker messes up his victim. A Tactic that traps a demon uses a contested action, because the number of successes you roll doesn’t matter.

Extended Actions

Some actions require a great deal of effort over time and represent the sort of project you can abandon and resume later. Such actions are modeled as extended actions, and they’re a little more complex than instant or reflexive actions.

When you take an extended action, the Storyteller determines how many total successes you require. Most actions require between five and 20 successes. Five reflects a reasonable action that competent characters can achieve with the right tools and knowledge. Ten represents a difficult action that’s still realistic for a professional in the field. Twenty represents a very difficult action that even a particularly skilled character has trouble pulling off.

The Storyteller also determines the interval between rolls. If an action would take weeks to complete, she might consider one roll per week. If it’s likely to take a day’s work, one roll per hour makes for a solid timeframe.

Once those factors are determined, you make a number of rolls, counting up the total number of successes across all your rolls. If you earn the required number of successes before you run out of time, you accomplish your goal.

Extended Action Basics

- **Multiple Rolls:** You roll your dice pool multiple times over the course of the action. Successes earned on all rolls count toward completing the action.
- **Roll Limit:** You can make a total number of rolls equal to your base dice pool for the action, before factoring in any modifiers. The Storyteller may reduce this value if time is short.
- **Time Interval:** Each roll takes a certain amount of time, determined by the Storyteller.
- **Required Successes:** The Storyteller sets the total number of successes required for the action, usually between five and 20.

Extended Action Roll Results

These apply to each roll of an extended action. Specific extended actions may have additional effects.

Success: Add the successes earned on the roll to your running total. Work with the Storyteller to determine what steps your character takes toward his goal.

Exceptional Success: Choose one: Reduce the total number of successes required by your character's Skill dots, reduce the time interval for each following roll by a quarter, or apply the exceptional success result of the entire action when you complete your goal.

Failure: You face a setback. The Storyteller offers you a choice: Take a Condition (p. XX) of her choice or abandon the action. You can offer a different Condition if you think it makes sense. If you refuse or cannot agree on a Condition, you lose all accumulated successes.

Dramatic Failure: Lose all accumulated successes. In addition, the first roll on a subsequent attempt suffers a two-die penalty.

Use the following guidelines to decide when to call for an extended action vs. an instant action that takes a defined amount of time:

- **Time Pressure:** If the hungry ghosts manifest at dusk and the characters need to fix their car before that happens, the question of "how long does it take?" has real stakes and tension. If the characters aren't under time pressure, extended actions can feel like a lot of tedious rolling for no reason.
- **Take a Break:** Extended actions are best suited for things the character could conceivably abandon for some time and then resume later: fortifying a safehouse or researching a monster, for example. If it's something that has to be done all in one go, like preparing a magical binding ritual or casing a scene, it's probably better modeled as an instant action unless time is short.

Common Actions

The following list represents some of the more common actions characters might undertake in a **Hunter: The Vigil** game.

[PRODUCTION: DO A QUICK REFERENCE GRID FOR EACH OF THESE, AS IN COFD CORE P. 70]

Argument (Instant and Contested; Intelligence + Expression vs. target's Resolve + Composure)

You try to sway someone with a rational argument. (If arguing with a crowd, use the highest Resolve in the crowd.) (See also Social maneuvering, p. XX.)

- **Success:** They accept the truth (or apparent truth) of your words.
- **Exceptional:** They're convinced and become recruits to your point of view, though they might change their minds if they find themselves at risk.
- **Failure:** They listen but are ultimately unaffected.
- **Dramatic:** You convince them of quite the opposite.

Carousing (Instant; Presence + Socialize or Streetwise)

You mix with a group, bringing fancy cocktails and flasks filled with whiskey, and use your gifts to loosen tongues and help strangers feel at ease.

- **Success:** You impress a party-goer for the night who might be willing to whisper secrets or go with you somewhere private.
- **Exceptional:** You make a friend you can contact again.
- **Failure:** You're a wallflower sipping on a drink in your hand you don't want.
- **Dramatic:** A faux pas reveals you don't belong in this social circle, and some people are wondering what you're really up to.

Fast-Talk (Instant and Contested; Manipulation + Subterfuge vs. victim's Composure + Empathy)

You may not be able to win the argument with facts, but you can try to get out of trouble with a little judicious spin.

- **Success:** The other party swallows your story.
- **Exceptional:** The other party believes you so thoroughly they're even willing to offer a little aid...though they won't put themselves at any kind of risk.
- **Failure:** The other party doesn't believe you.
- **Dramatic:** The other party has a good idea what the truth is.

Hacking (Extended and Contested; Intelligence + Computer vs. victim's Intelligence + Computer)

You overcome network security and computer passwords to gain access to digital files and resources.

- **Success:** You access the computer or network as though you had proper clearance, but you only have a short time before someone notices.
- **Exceptional:** You access the computer or network, and no one notices until you've got what you came for.

- **Failure:** You're locked out of the system and you can't access anything.
- **Dramatic:** You trip an alarm or corrupt your own flash drive beyond use.

Interrogation (Extended and Resisted; Manipulation + Empathy or Intimidation – victim's Resolve)

You try to dig secrets out of a reluctant informant. (See also Social maneuvering, p. XX.)

- **Success:** You get the information you were looking for; one piece per success rolled.
- **Exceptional:** You get the information you were looking for, and the informant is willing to continue cooperating.
- **Failure:** The informant blabs a mix of truth and falsehood — even he may not know the difference.
- **Dramatic:** The informant is so alienated or injured that he no longer reveals information.

Intimidation (Instant and Contested; Strength or Manipulation + Intimidation vs. victim's Resolve + Composure)

You try to get someone to do what you want by making them afraid of you.

- **Success:** They're coerced into helping you.
- **Exceptional:** They develop a lasting fear of you, which could make them easier to coerce in the future.
- **Failure:** They're unimpressed with your threats.
- **Dramatic:** They don't take you seriously, even if you knock them around a bit. They won't be doing what you want.

Investigating a Scene (Extended; Intelligence + Investigation)

You look for clues to what's happened in the recent past...or tidy up so that no one else can find them. (See also Investigation, p. XX.)

- **Success:** You find a clue of exactly the sort you need or manage to significantly confuse future investigators.
- **Exceptional:** You find a clue, and know exactly how it fits in, or you leave the scene immaculate and impossible to decipher.
- **Failure:** You find evidence, but it's damaged and hard to interpret. Or you miss a spot in your clean-up that you won't find out about until later.
- **Dramatic:** You find clues but you contaminate them, or you leave evidence of your presence.

Jumping (Instant; Strength + Athletics – (yards or meters of distance))

To get past an obstacle or out of danger, you leap into the air.

- **Success:** You clear the obstacle or avoid the danger.
- **Exceptional:** You may attempt another instant action in the air or upon landing.

- **Failure:** You don't achieve any significant distance at all — you jump too early, get a false start, or lose your nerve.
- **Dramatic:** The task not only fails, but you lose your balance.

Research (Extended; Intelligence + Academics or Occult)

Using your existing knowledge, you look for information on a current mystery. (See also Tactics, p. XX.)

- **Success:** You find the basic facts you were looking for.
- **Exceptional:** You find what you were looking for, which leads towards a much bigger score of information.
- **Failure:** You turn up a lot of promising leads, but they're all dead ends.
- **Dramatic:** You learn something, but it doesn't help. In fact, it sets you back. If using Occult, this could mean dangerously false assumptions.

Shadowing a Mark (Instant and Contested; Wits + Stealth or Drive vs. Wits + Composure)

You follow someone, perhaps in the hopes of ambushing them, or of finding out their destination. (See also Tactics, p. XX.)

- **Success:** You follow the mark to his destination.
- **Exceptional:** You find some means by which you can continue following the mark, such as an unlocked entrance into the building he arrived at.
- **Failure:** The mark senses he's being followed and manages to lose you.
- **Dramatic:** You're caught, either by the mark or some observer that's become suspicious of you.

Sneaking (Instant and Contested; Dexterity + Stealth vs. Wits + Composure)

You're trying to avoid notice by someone, or something...or multiple somethings. Maybe you want to get into a place undetected. Maybe you're trying to break out.

- **Success:** You avoid notice and get closer to your goal.
- **Exceptional:** You avoid notice and get away before anyone has another chance to catch you.
- **Failure:** You're noticed but still have the chance to slip away.
- **Dramatic:** You attract a lot of attention...enough that now it's going to be hard to get out.

[END QUICK REFERENCE]

Willpower

A hunter's Willpower represents their determination and ability to go above and beyond what should be possible to achieve their goals.

Spending Willpower

- **Reflexive Action:** Unless otherwise specified, spending Willpower is a reflexive action.

- **Roll Bonus:** Spend 1 Willpower to gain a three-die bonus on a single dice pool.
- **Increased Resistance:** Spend 1 Willpower to gain +2 to *resistance* (see above) against a single action.
- **Other Expenditures:** Other abilities may require Willpower expenditure, as noted under their **Cost**.
- **Per Turn Limit:** Characters may only spend 1 Willpower per turn.

Regaining Willpower

- **Rest:** Regain 1 Willpower after a full night's sleep.
- **anchors:** Regain full Willpower when meaningfully acting in accordance with your Virtue, up to twice per chapter; regain 1 Willpower when meaningfully acting in accordance with your Vice, up to once per scene (p. XX).
- **Touchstones:** Regain 1 or full Willpower when defending your relationship with your Touchstones (p. XX).
- **Experiences:** Spend 1 Experience (p. XX) to roll Resolve + Composure, with no modifiers. Regain 1 Willpower for each success rolled, up to your maximum Willpower. Even on a failed roll, regain 1 Willpower.
- **Risking Willpower Successfully:** Regain the Willpower you risked on a successful action *and* one more. (See below.)
- **Maximum Willpower:** Your total Willpower can't exceed your maximum (p. XX) unless otherwise indicated by a power or Condition.

Risking Willpower

Lighting a candle against the darkness isn't easy. By dedicating themselves heart, body, and soul to the Vigil, hunters can call upon reserves of dedication that far surpass anything an ordinary person can muster. Hunters who use Willpower stick their necks out, ignore the voice inside their head screaming for self-preservation, and stand up to powers beyond human ken.

A hunter's player can *risk* one point of Willpower instead of spending it to enhance a single action, once per scene. They may only do so when the action their character takes is in direct pursuit of the Vigil and carries some risk. The outcome of risking Willpower is determined by the roll results.

Examples of eligible actions include: attacking or defending oneself (or others) against a monster in a fight, interrogating a known monster's minion, sneaking into a monster's lair or a place that holds information about a known monster, resisting a monster's powers, and setting a trap for a monster.

The following actions are *never* eligible for risking Willpower:

- Perception-based actions and actions to investigate *possible* monster involvement, unless it's a Tactic.
- Avoiding ambush, resisting toxins or fatigue, and other actions to preserve the hunter's own safety at the expense of the hunt. However, protective actions on behalf of other people, such as warding someone else's house against a monster's entry, *are* eligible.

- Activating Endowments.

When a player risks Willpower, they may choose two of the following benefits to apply to a single roll:

- Gain a three-die bonus.
- Achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five.
- Gain +1 to an attack's weapon damage bonus.
- Gain the 9-again quality.
- Remove the 10-again quality from an opponent's roll that contests yours.
- Enact a Tactic (p. XX), which counts as two benefits.

Risking Willpower Roll Results

- **Success:** In addition to the action's success, gain one Beat and regain the Willpower you risked *plus* another point of Willpower, up to your usual Willpower maximum.
- **Exceptional Success:** As success, with the action's usual exceptional benefits.
- **Failure and Dramatic Failure:** As the action's usual dramatic failure effects, and you gain two Beats. Your risked Willpower point remains spent.

Conditions

Conditions represent ways in which the story affects a character, and what they can do to move past those events. Players cannot “buy” Conditions; events in the game apply them and they remain until certain *resolution* criteria are met.

A character can only have one instance of a specific Condition unless each applies to a distinctly different circumstance — for example, they may be Informed about both the occult symbol he stayed up all night to research and the innerworkings of the corporation they infiltrated. Each Condition is resolved independently of each other. Various systems and supernatural powers bring Conditions into play, and the Storyteller can do so based on story circumstances.

For a full list of sample Conditions, see p. XX.

The listed resolutions for each Condition are the most common ways to end its effects; other actions may also resolve it if they would reasonably cause the Condition's effects to end. When a character resolves a Condition, the player takes a Beat. However, if a Condition has a natural time limit and then fades away without proper resolution, he doesn't take a Beat. If a Condition lingers beyond its relevance in the story, the player and Storyteller may agree to simply let it fade.

Some Conditions are marked as Persistent. These Conditions last for a long time and can only be resolved permanently with a specific and impressive effort. Once per chapter, a player may gain a Beat when a Persistent Condition impacts their character's life.

Improvising Conditions

A Condition typically consists of a modifier between +2 and -2 dice to a certain type of action, or to any action taken with a certain motivation. Conditions can also consist solely of roleplayed

effects until resolution, such as the Shaken Condition (p. XX), in which the mechanical effect *is* the resolution.

A Condition resolves when the character does something significant to act on it, or when she addresses the original source. The sample Conditions in this book (p. XX) give examples of how to resolve them, but players can also resolve them following the conclusion of an event if the Storyteller feels that makes sense in the story. Resolution criteria for improvised Conditions offer a way for the Storyteller to encourage certain kinds of dramatic action, especially when they want a story point to have lingering effects on characters. For instance, a Condition that resolves when the character deals lethal damage to someone clearly reflects the violent nature of that story point.

It's best to keep the resolution criteria for a new Condition somewhat general, rather than requiring one specific action. For example, a Condition that resolves when the player commits any act of vengeance allows the player flexibility in exactly what the character does, while a Condition that resolves when the character kills a particular person restricts the player's options. More options are usually better.

Exceptional successes are the most common opportunities for creating new Conditions. When none of the given example Conditions seem to apply, or the player has an idea for a different way the momentous event affects their character, Storytellers should feel free to invent a Condition. The Storyteller can also invent Conditions whenever they want to offer Beats for roleplaying significant behavioral or situational shifts, or for some mechanical effect that they want to impose, such as a lingering penalty.

Action Scenes

Sometimes it's useful to zoom in on the action and track movements moment by moment. Having a clear understanding of who does what in what order is useful and necessary in a game of **Hunter**, to prevent misunderstandings regarding who shot first.

Action scenes take place when multiple characters take actions in a short (or simultaneous) unit of time. To keep everyone's actions straight, they proceed by *turns* in order of *Initiative*. The most common action scenes are fights but are not limited to combat. They may also extend to tense, dramatic events where the hunters are pressured to act. These might include an escape from a burning haunted house or crumbling mine, a heist to steal a relic from a warlock's well-guarded library, or rescues to save victims trapped by their captors.

Turns

- **What You Can Do:** On your turn, move up to your Speed and take one instant action, *or* move twice your Speed.
- **How Long It Lasts:** A turn is roughly three seconds. If an effect says it lasts "until your next turn," it lasts until the beginning of your next turn.
- **Order of Action:** Characters involved in an action scene take turns one at a time in order of Initiative, from highest to lowest.
- **Cycle:** Once all characters involved in the scene have acted, the order of action returns to the character with the highest Initiative. Initiative can change from turn to turn, if for instance one character delays his action, or a supernatural power makes a character faster or slower.

Initiative

- **Calculating:** When you come into the action scene, roll one die and add the result to your Initiative modifier (p. XX). This is the only roll in the game on which you treat the result of the die as a number rather than a success or not. Wielding a weapon inflicts a penalty to Initiative based on the type of weapon (p. XX).
- **Delaying:** You may choose not to act when your turn comes up and instead act at any point later in the scene, even if the order of action resets. When you do act, change your Initiative to the Initiative you acted on for the rest of the scene.
- **Surprise:** If the start of the action might take a character unawares, the Storyteller may call for a surprise roll. Roll the character's Wits + Composure, possibly contested by an opponent's relevant dice pool (Dexterity + Stealth for an ambush, Manipulation + Subterfuge if they lull you into a false sense of security, etc.). If the surprised character's roll fails, they cannot act or apply their Defense until their second turn.

Speed

Your character's Speed is the number of yards or meters they can travel in a single turn. This trait is a combination of their Strength, Dexterity, and a species factor that reflects age, physical configuration, Size, and other considerations. The species factor for a human adult is 5; that of a human child is 3.

Other species, such as horses and many monsters, have physical configurations that lend themselves to high travel rates.

Defense

Defense measures your character's ability to react to danger and mitigate harm to oneself. It's most often used when violence breaks out but is sometimes used to resist harm from other sources as well.

Defense Basics

- **Resistance:** Defense counts as a Resistance Attribute (p. XX) for any rule that interacts with Resistance (e.g. spending Willpower).
- **Multiple Hazards:** In an action scene, each time you resist an action with your Defense, you suffer a cumulative -1 penalty to Defense. This penalty goes away at the beginning of your next turn. You can choose not to resist an action with Defense; if you do, the penalty doesn't increase.

Tilts

Tilts apply temporary circumstances to both characters and the environment during action scenes. Outside action scenes, use Conditions instead.

Tilts do not grant Beats when they end, but the effects of a Tilt can easily cause a Condition. For instance, a character in a fight gets a handful of road salt flung into his eyes and receives the Blinded Tilt. When the action scene ends, this shifts to the Blind Condition. Resolving this Condition grants a Beat as usual. If the character enters an action scene again before the Condition is resolved, the Blinded Tilt applies again.

Tilts come in two forms: Personal and Environmental. Personal Tilts only apply to one character and include ways in which that character can overcome the effect. Environmental Tilts affect the whole scene and offer ways for individual characters to mitigate their effects.

For a full list of sample Tilts, see p. XX.

Violence

Few hunters avoid violence for long. Even those who prefer research to rifles come face to face with a monster eventually, and the Code doesn't like letting threats to humanity walk the streets unchecked. Protecting the innocent usually means spilling blood when the thing you're protecting them from has claws bigger than your head, and some hunters live for the kill more than anything. Hunters might even come into conflict with each other that can't be reconciled without them beating the living shit out of each other...and sometimes, other people get in the way of the Vigil, and have to be removed. Below are rules for resolving violent conflict.

Intent

Everybody wants something out of a conflict. The very first thing you need to do — before worrying about who attacks first — is determine what each character wants to get out of the fight. Boil it down into a simple sentence that starts with the words “I want.” “I want to kill that vampire,” “I want the book Frances is holding,” or “I want to rescue my cellmate.”

Declaring Intent

- **By Violence:** Intent must be something achievable by violence within the current scene.
- **The Price:** If your intent doesn't include causing harm and your character ends up killing someone, lose one Willpower point.

Down and Dirty Combat

The Storyteller might decide your character can get what they want without focusing on the details of the fight. Maybe they're picking on a weak antagonist. Maybe the details of the fight aren't all that important. In these cases, the Storyteller can opt to use Down and Dirty Combat.

This system resolves the entire fight in a single roll. If multiple hunters have separate intents, such as one character trying to exorcise a spirit while another beats information out of a flunky, resolve each intent as a separate Down and Dirty Combat action. If the group only has one intent but multiple hunters are participating, they can use teamwork (see p. XX) on the roll. Players and the Storyteller must agree to reduce a fight to Down and Dirty Combat.

Action: Instant and contested; takes anywhere from 30 seconds to a few minutes.

Dice Pool: Combat pool (Dexterity + Firearms, Strength + Brawl, or Strength + Weaponry) versus either the opponent's combat pool (as above) *or* an attempt to escape (Strength or Dexterity + Athletics).

Roll Results

Success: Inflict damage equal to the difference in successes + weapon modifier and achieve your intent — including killing, if that was on the table.

Exceptional Success: As success and gain 1 Willpower.

Failure: You don't achieve your intent. If the opponent rolled a combat pool, suffer damage equal to the difference in successes + opponent's weapon modifier. Opponent escapes if they want to.

Dramatic Failure: The opposite of your character's intent happens, they're knocked out, or they suffer other serious consequences.

Detailed Fight Scenes

When the fight is a significant event in the story, or Down and Dirty Combat doesn't suit, these rules apply for this type of action scene.

Fight-Related Actions

The most common action in a fight is to *attack*. Characters can also *dodge* or push themselves to the limit, sacrificing Defense for greater effect.

Attack

All attack actions are instant actions. Unarmed, melee, and thrown attacks are resisted, while ranged attacks and touching an opponent are simple actions.

- **Unarmed Attack:** Strength + Brawl – Defense; bashing damage
- **Melee Attack:** Strength + Weaponry – Defense; lethal damage
- **Ranged Attack:** Dexterity + Firearms; lethal damage
- **Thrown Attack:** Dexterity + Athletics – Defense; lethal damage
- **Touching an Opponent:** Dexterity + Brawl *or* Dexterity + Weaponry; inflicts no damage.
- **Damage:** A successful attack inflicts damage equal to the number of successes rolled + weapon modifier (p. XX), if any.
- **Pulling Blows:** Set a maximum damage value up to the highest trait in your attack dice pool and grant the target +1 Defense. Your attack cannot inflict more than the maximum damage you set.
- **Offhand Attack:** Take a two-die penalty to attacks made with the character's non-dominant hand.

Specified Targets

A normal attack is aimed at the target's center of mass. You can aim for specific body parts by taking a penalty on your attack roll. Attacking a specific body part can bypass armor (p. XX) or inflict a Tilt (p. XX) on the target. Attacks against specified targets aren't a way to inflict extra damage or instantly kill people; that's covered by simply rolling a lot of successes on the attack action.

The following modifiers assume a target roughly human in size and shape. The Storyteller can adjust these for more unusual targets.

- **Arm (-2):** If damage exceeds victim's Stamina, inflicts Arm Wrack Tilt.
- **Leg (-2):** If damage exceeds victim's Stamina, inflicts Leg Wrack Tilt.

- **Head (-3):** If damage equals or exceeds victim's Size, inflicts Stunned Tilt.
- **Heart (-3):** If damage equals or exceeds 5, the attack pierces the victim's heart. This isn't instantly fatal but may have special effects against certain monsters (like vampires).
- **Hand (-4):** If the attack deals any damage, inflicts Arm Wrack Tilt.
- **Eye (-5):** If the attack deals any damage, inflicts Blinded Tilt.

Dodge

Dodging is a reflexive action, but after dodging your character loses their next turn.

- **Contested Attacks:** Attacks made against your character become contested instead of resisted until your next turn. Contest attacks with double your Defense as your dice pool, and unlike a normal contested action, your successes cancel out the attacker's successes on a one for one basis.
- **Multiple Attackers:** Apply the Defense penalty for multiple attackers before doubling. If your character's Defense is reduced to 0, roll a chance die.
- **Dramatic Failure:** Defense suffers a -1 penalty until your next turn.

Special Maneuvers

To enact any of the following instant actions, the character sacrifices their Defense until their next turn. If the character has already lost their Defense, by being surprised or attacked by enough opponents in one turn to reduce their Defense to 0, they cannot take any of these actions.

- **Charge:** Move up to twice your character's Speed and make an unarmed or melee attack.
- **All-Out Attack:** Make an unarmed or melee attack with a two-die bonus.
- **Aim:** Keep an opponent in your sights with a ranged weapon to gain a one-die bonus per consecutive Aim action on your next attack against that target, to a maximum of three bonus dice. Incompatible with autofire (below).

Other Actions

These are all instant actions.

- **Drop Prone/Stand Up:** Ranged attacks against prone characters suffer a two-die penalty but unarmed and melee attacks against prone characters gain a two-die bonus if the attacker is standing.
- **Reload a Weapon:** If rounds must be loaded individually, lose Defense until your next turn.
- **Killing Blow:** Inflict damage equal to your attack's dice pool + weapon bonus. Requires an unconscious, immobilized, or otherwise helpless target. May prompt a breaking point.

Unarmed Combat

These rules present special cases that come up when fighting without weapons.

Bite

Biting counts as an unarmed attack action.

- **Damage:** Human teeth inflict –1 bashing damage (so an attack that rolls only one success inflicts no damage). Animals and monsters may treat their teeth as weapons, with a bonus between +1 and +4.
- **Grapple Required:** Humans must first grapple an opponent to bite them.

Grapple

Grappling counts as an unarmed attack action. To start grappling, you have to grab your opponent.

- **Grab:** Make an unarmed attack. On a success, inflict no damage but start a grapple. On an exceptional success, also choose a grapple option to enact reflexively.
- **One Action:** All participants in the grapple act on the highest Initiative among them. The only action they can take is the grappling action.
- **Grappling:** Instant and contested; Strength + Brawl vs. Strength + Brawl. The character with the most successes chooses a grapple option to enact immediately, or two grapple options on an exceptional success. On a tie, the characters continue to grapple but nothing else happens.

Grapple Options

- **Break Free:** The grapple ends, and your character may take another instant action immediately.
- **Control Weapon:** Take firm hold of a weapon, either your character's or her opponent's. Lasts until your character's opponent chooses Control Weapon. Required for other grapple options.
- **Damage:** Treat the grapple action as an unarmed attack, inflicting damage equal to your rolled successes. If you have control of a weapon, this counts as a melee attack with the weapon's modifier.
- **Disarm:** Remove a weapon from the grapple entirely. Requires Control Weapon.
- **Drop Prone:** Throw all participants to the ground. Requires Break Free to stand back up.
- **Hold:** Immobilize an opponent. Both characters lose Defense.
- **Restrain:** Your opponent suffers the Immobilized Tilt (p. XX). Requires Hold. If your character uses equipment to restrain her opponent, she can leave the grapple.
- **Take Cover:** Any ranged attacks against your character automatically hit her opponent. Lasts until your next turn.

Ranged Combat

These rules apply when shooting at a moving target that can resist being shot by firing back, using Dread Powers, dodging, taking cover, etc.

Autofire

Automatic weapons can fire a short, medium, or long burst in place of a single shot.

- **Short Burst:** Uses three bullets. +1 bonus to attack action.

- **Medium Burst:** Uses 10 bullets. +2 bonus to attack action. Can attack multiple targets, up to three.
- **Long Burst:** Uses 20 bullets. +3 bonus to attack action. Can attack multiple targets, with no limit.
- **Multiple Targets:** -1 penalty per target after the first. Roll individually against each target.

Range

Ranged attacks suffer a dice penalty the farther away the target is. Ranged weapons have a short, medium, and long range listed on the weapons table (p. XX).

- **Short Range:** No penalty.
- **Medium Range:** -1
- **Long Range:** -2

Concealment

If the target of a ranged attack is partially or fully obscured, they are concealed. Concealment applies a penalty to the shooter's dice pool.

- **Barely Concealed:** -1 (hiding behind an office chair)
- **Partially Concealed:** -2 (hiding behind the hood of a car, with upper body exposed)
- **Substantially Concealed:** -3 (crouching behind a car).
- **Shooting from Concealment:** Barely concealed: no penalty; partially concealed: -1; substantially concealed: -2. You can ignore this penalty, but if so, you lose your own concealment until your next turn.

Cover

If a target's entirely hidden by a substantial object, they have found cover.

- **Tough Cover:** If the cover's Durability (p. XX) is greater than the attacker's weapon modifier, the attack can't penetrate the cover.
- **Less Tough Cover:** Subtract the cover's Durability from the attacker's damage roll. Both the object and the target take any remaining damage.
- **Transparent Cover:** If the cover is transparent (bulletproof glass, for example), subtract *half* the cover's Durability, rounding down. Both the object and the target take any remaining damage.

Covering Fire

With a weapon capable of autofire, a character can lay down covering fire to keep anyone from entering his target area.

- **Action:** Instant
- **Dice Pool:** Dexterity + Firearms
- **Bullets:** Uses 10 bullets.

- **Characters in Area of Effect:** On their next turn, they must either take cover within range of their Speed or drop prone, to avoid suffering damage equal to successes on covering fire roll + weapon modifier.

In Close Combat: Wielding a ranged weapon larger than Size 1 in close quarters grants the opponent (weapon's Size +1) as a bonus to Defense.

Shooting into Close Combat: Take a two-die penalty for each character involved in close combat with your target that you want to avoid hitting, or a four-die penalty if they're grappling your target. You can't selectively avoid targets this way with autofire.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons are one of the fastest ways to end a fight and help level the playing field between hunters and monsters. Armor keeps hunters safe and shields them from an antagonist's deadly attacks. Traits for specific weapons and armor are in the Appendix starting on p. XX.

Weapons

Ranged and melee weapons share certain common traits.

- **Type:** A weapon's type is a general classification that fits any number of specific weapons. A metal club might be a crowbar or a length of rebar, while a light revolver might be one of any number of .22-.38 caliber weapons.
- **Damage:** Added to successes rolled on attack to determine total damage inflicted.
- **Initiative:** The penalty to Initiative when wielding the weapon.
- **Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.
- **Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Improvised Weapons

Characters who grab lamps and pool cues still stand a chance of dealing serious damage.

- **Use Existing Weapon Traits:** If it's close enough to a weapon in the chart on p. XX, use the associated weapon traits. For example, a pool cue might count as a sap.
- **Improvised Weapon Traits:** If it's not similar to a weapon in the chart, its damage modifier is (object's Durability -1); Initiative penalty and Strength requirement equal to weapon's Size.
- **Attack Modifiers:** -1 to attack roll. If successful, the improvised weapon takes the same damage it inflicts; Durability applies.

Armor

Armor provides protection against a variety of attacks and reduce damage from bullets, knives, and fangs.

Armor Basics

- **Ballistic Armor:** Each point of ballistic armor downgrades one point of lethal damage from firearms to bashing.

- **General Armor:** Each point of general armor reduces the total damage taken by one point, starting with the most severe type of damage.
- **Order of Operation:** If armor has both ballistic and general ratings, apply the ballistic armor first.
- **Minimum Damage:** When applying armor to an attack inflicting lethal damage, you always suffer at least one point of bashing damage from the shock of the blow.

Armor-Piercing Damage

Some weapons have an armor-piercing rating, usually between 1 and 3. When attacking someone wearing armor, subtract the armor piercing rating from the target's armor. Subtract from ballistic armor first, then general armor. Armor-piercing attacks in close combat subtract from general armor only.

When shooting at an object — or a person in cover — subtract the armor piercing quality from the object's Durability.

Injury and Healing

Characters can suffer three types of damage. Fists and feet, along with other kinds of low-impact trauma, deal *bashing* damage. Brass knuckles, knives, and speeding trucks deal *lethal* damage. Some horrifying powers deal *aggravated* damage. When something deals aggravated damage directly, it's quite obvious. Flesh bubbles and sloughs away. Foaming pustules taint the victim's flesh. Blackened veins streak out from the site of the injury.

The following rules apply to humans and animals. Monsters have their own rules regarding the effects of damage (p. XX).

Suffering Damage

When a rule tells you to suffer an amount of damage, you mark off that many Health boxes, starting from the leftmost side and continuing to the right. A box marked with any kind of damage is called a *point*.

Damage Basics

- **Bashing:** Mark bashing damage with a (/) in the leftmost empty box of the Health track.
- **Lethal:** Mark lethal damage with an (X) in the leftmost box that is empty *or* filled with bashing damage. If you mark over bashing damage, move that bashing damage to the rightmost empty box of the track. If no empty boxes are left, that damage is overwritten but not moved.
- **Aggravated:** Mark aggravated damage with an (*) in the leftmost box that does not already contain aggravated damage. If you mark over bashing damage, move that bashing damage to the rightmost empty box. If no empty boxes are left, that damage is overwritten but not moved. If you mark over lethal damage, move that lethal damage to the rightmost box that is empty *or* contains bashing damage. If no empty boxes *or* boxes containing bashing damage are left, that damage is overwritten but not moved.
- **Upgrading Damage:** If your character suffers bashing damage but has no empty Health boxes in which to mark it, upgrade each point of bashing damage to lethal damage. If she suffers lethal damage but has no empty Health boxes *or* boxes marked with bashing damage, upgrade her leftmost Health box that's filled with lethal damage to aggravated damage.

Effects of Damage

- **Wound Penalties:** If your character has any damage marked in their third-to-last Health box, they suffer a -1 penalty to *all* actions except Stamina rolls to stay conscious. This increases to -2 when their second-to-last Health box is filled, and -3 when their last Health box is filled.
- **Unconscious:** If your character's rightmost Health box is filled with bashing *or* lethal damage, roll their Stamina every turn as a reflexive action. Failure means they fall unconscious until their rightmost Health box is empty.
- **Bleeding Out:** If your character's rightmost Health box is filled with lethal damage, they suffers 1 lethal damage per turn until they receive medical attention (p. XX).
- **Dead:** If your character's rightmost Health box is filled with aggravated damage, she is dead.

Example of Marking Damage

Cassidy has seven boxes of Health. She's just taken two points of bashing damage. Her Health boxes look like this:

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES, FIRST TWO CONTAINING A SLASH]

If a vampire later bites her and deals a point of lethal damage, her Health boxes looks like this:

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES, FIRST ONE CONTAINS AN X, SECOND AND THIRD CONTAIN A SLASH]

If Cassidy next suffered a point of aggravated damage, her Health boxes would look like this:

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES. FIRST HAS AN ASTERISK, SECOND HAS AN X, THE THIRD AND FOURTH CONTAIN SLASHES]

Healing

Characters need time to heal once they've been beaten to a pulp. Normally, a character can heal without medical attention, though use of the Medicine Skill helps them recover (see below). The only exception is if a character has all her Health boxes full of lethal damage — they're bleeding out. they can't recover from that without urgent medical attention and emergency surgery.

Healing Basics

- **Rightmost Box:** Natural healing only affects the rightmost point of damage. Once the rightmost box is cleared, healing time for the next-rightmost box starts.
- **Bashing:** Clear bashing damage after 15 minutes of in-game time.
- **Lethal:** Clear lethal damage after two days of in-game time.
- **Aggravated:** Clear aggravated damage after a week of in-game time.

Example: Cassidy escapes the scuffle with the vampire and lays low for a while, eschewing hospitals to avoid awkward questions. Her health track looks like this at the end of the fight:

[PRODUCTION: SEVEN HEALTH BOXES. FIRST HAS AN ASTERISK, SECOND HAS AN X, THE THIRD AND FOURTH CONTAIN SLASHES]

Her rightmost wound heals first. Since it's a bashing wound, she clears it after 15 minutes. After another 15 minutes, her second bashing wound clears. Her lethal damage then heals over the course of the next two days. Finally, her aggravated wound heals over the course of the next week. In all, it takes a little over a week and two days for her to recover from her injuries.

Medical Care

Characters can use the Medicine Skill to speed up healing.

- **Action:** Extended and simple
- **Dice Pool:** Dexterity + Medicine with a one-minute interval, for emergency treatment; Intelligence + Medicine with a one-hour interval for long-term hospital care.
- **Benefits of Emergency Care:** Requires total successes equal to total damage the patient suffers. Successful treatment heals one point of bashing damage.
- **Benefits of Long-Term Care:** Successful treatment downgrades one point of aggravated damage to lethal, or one point of lethal damage to bashing. Requires 10 total successes per aggravated wound, five per lethal.
- **Long-Term Care Limitations:** Heals the leftmost injury first and can only downgrade one wound per patient per day.

Optional Rules: Beaten Down & Surrender

These optional rules only apply to people who would incur a breaking point for committing (or attempting) "murder." Monsters that don't have a problem killing people can ignore Surrender and never suffer the Beaten Down Tilt from damage taken. Hunters only abide by these rules if they suffer a breaking point (p. XX) in the process of taking damage or ignoring surrender.

- **Beaten Down:** A character who takes more than his Stamina in bashing damage or any amount of lethal damage suffers the Beaten Down Tilt (p. XX): they've had the fight knocked out of him.
- **Surrender:** A character can choose to surrender and give their attacker what they want. If your character surrenders, regain a point of Willpower and take a Beat. This signals the end of your participation in the fight. Your character's opponent must spend a point of Willpower to attack you.

If one side's intent involves violence for its own sake, their intended victims don't get Beaten Down and can't surrender. When someone wants to kill you, the only thing you can do is to try to stop them. Run like hell, unload a clip, or fight until one of you is left standing.

Sources of Harm

In addition to damage suffered in fights, characters face peril from a variety of sources. These are just a few of them.

Disease

Supernatural horrors and mundane diseases can expose hunters to sickness.

Disease Basics

- **Tilt:** During action scenes, sick characters suffer the Sick Tilt (p. XX).

- **Moderate Disease:** Outside action scenes, moderate sickness might impose a –1 or –2 penalty on actions where concentration or stamina are required.
- **Grave Disease:** Outside action scenes, grave diseases inflict a certain amount of damage at specified time intervals, as determined by the Storyteller. The sick character's player makes a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll to resist; success means no damage this time.
- **Recovery:** Most diseases simply run their course over a certain amount of time. Others require a minimum number of successful resistance rolls, require medical intervention, or merely go into periodic remission as determined by the Storyteller.
- **Conditions:** The Storyteller may represent short-term illnesses with Conditions and long-term illnesses with Persistent Conditions, which earn players Beats whenever the illness causes significant harm or inconvenience for the character.

Poison

Whether from the sting of a venomous monster or a pinch of arsenic in the food, poison can lay even the craftiest hunter low.

Poison Basics

- **Tilt:** In action scenes, poisoned characters suffer the Poisoned Tilt (p. XX).
- **Toxicity:** Outside action scenes, the Storyteller assigns the poison a Toxicity rating. The poisoned character suffers lethal damage equal to Toxicity. Mild poisons only inflict damage once. More severe poisons may inflict damage every hour or even every turn for a period of time determined by the Storyteller.
- **Resistance:** The poisoned character's player rolls Stamina + Resolve – Toxicity every time the poison inflicts damage. Each success cancels one point of damage.

Drugs

Many hunters turn to alcohol and narcotics to escape the stresses of their lifestyle, and subtle menaces might drug a hunter to keep him off their game.

Drug Basics

- **Tilt:** In action scenes, drugged characters suffer the Drugged Tilt (p. XX).
- **Effects:** Drugs can have a wide variety of effects, ranging from dice penalties to imposing Conditions. Most drugs last for a scene, but some burn through a character's system more rapidly or linger for more time.
- **Resistance:** A drugged character can shake off the effects temporarily by succeeding on a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. Depending on the potency of the drug, this roll might be required every hour, scene, or even turn.

Overdose

- **Poison:** Characters who overdose on drugs treat the drug like a poison, with a Toxicity somewhere between 3 and 7. The drug inflicts damage once per hour.
- **Duration:** The overdose typically runs its course after (8 – Stamina) hours, though the Storyteller may adjust that.

Electricity

Electric shocks inflict damage based on the strength of the current.

[BEGIN CHART]

SourceDamage

Minor; wall socket 4B

Major; protective fence 6B

Severe; junction box 8B

Fatal; main line feed/subway rail 10B

[END CHART]

Electricity Basics

- **Damage per Turn:** Electricity inflicts damage every turn if the current is continuous.
- **Breaking Away:** Characters in contact with a continuous electrical current must succeed on a reflexive Strength roll to pull away.
- **No Armor:** Worn armor provides no protection against electrocution.

Falling

In their line of work, hunters run the risk of getting shoved off rooftops by flying monsters or mind-controlled into jumping from bridges.

Falling Basics

- **Damage:** Falls of fewer than 30 yards inflict one point of bashing damage per three yards fallen. Falls of 30 yards or more inflict 10 lethal damage.
- **Armor:** At the Storyteller's discretion, armor may reduce damage from falls of less than 30 yards.
- **Reduced Damage:** If there's a reasonable way for a character to slow her fall, she makes a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll. Each success reduces damage from a fall of fewer than 30 yards by one point.
- **Soft Landing:** Landing in water or snow, or on another soft surface, may automatically reduce damage from falls of fewer than 30 yards at the Storyteller's discretion.

Fire

Hunters often play with fire, as it makes an effective weapon against monsters that are otherwise difficult to harm, but isn't easy to control. Fire automatically inflicts lethal damage per turn of exposure (no attack roll is required). The damage inflicted depends on both the size and intensity of the flames.

[START TABLE]

Size of Fire Damage

Torch	1
-------	---

Bonfire	2
Inferno	3

[END TABLE]

[START TABLE]

Heat of Fire Damage Modifier

Candle (first-degree burns)	—
Torch (second-degree burns)	+1
Bunsen burner (third-degree burns)	+2
Chemical fire/molten metal	+3

[END TABLE]

Fire Basics

- **Combustion:** Exposure to fire for longer than a turn ignites anything combustible on the character; they continue to take full damage even after escaping the source of the flame.
- **Firefighting:** Fighting a fire typically requires an instant action but no roll. At the Storyteller’s discretion, an action might immediately put out the fire (e.g. diving into water) or reduce its size by one level (e.g. stop, drop, and roll).
- **Armor:** Most armor can block its general rating in fire damage automatically for a number of turns equal to that rating.
- **Uncontrolled Blaze:** If an area containing flammable objects is set on fire, it may acquire the Inferno Environmental Tilt (p. XX).

Objects

Objects such as lead pipes, walls, and cars have three traits: Durability, Size, and Structure. Mostly, these relate to how easy the object is to destroy.

Object Traits

- **Durability:** How hard the object is to damage. Subtract Durability from any damage inflicted on the object. Durability has no effect against attacks that inflict aggravated damage.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Durability	Material
1	Wood, hard plastic, thick glass
2	Stone, aluminum
3	Steel, iron
+1	per reinforced layer

[END TABLE]

- **Size:** How large the object is. Objects smaller than Size 1 can fit entirely in a person’s palm.

[BEGIN TABLE]

Size	Object
1	Pistol
2	Crowbar, sawn-off shotgun
3	Assault rifle
5	Door
10	Sports car
15	SUV

[END TABLE]

- **Structure:** An object's Structure equals its Durability + Size.

Damaging Objects

- **Damage:** Each point of damage removes a point of Structure. Objects do not differentiate between bashing and lethal damage.
- **Reduced Functionality:** Once it's taken more damage than its Durability, anyone using the object suffers a -1 die penalty.
- **Destruction:** When an object's Structure hits 0, it is destroyed.
- **Repair:** See p. XX for rules on how to repair damaged objects.

Equipment

Equipment, tools, and technology help to solve problems. Having the right tool for the job can mean the difference between life and death — or in **Hunter: The Vigil**, the difference between life and a fate worse than death. There is a list of sample equipment in Appendix I, starting on p. XX. This list is not all-inclusive but features many of the tools that hunters might have at their disposal.

Equipment is divided up by the Skills with which they typically assist. Mental equipment typically assists with Mental Skills, for example.

Equipment Traits

- **Availability:** The minimum level of a relevant trait a character must have to acquire the equipment with a single roll. Resources is the most often used trait, but other Social Merits or Skills may work at the Storyteller's discretion (e.g. Larceny to steal it, or Compact Status to take it out on loan from The Union's stockpile).
- **Size, Durability, Structure:** See above.
- **Dice Bonus:** The bonus the equipment adds to relevant actions.
- **Effect:** Any special rules that apply to using the equipment.

See p. XX for rules on how **Hunter** characters can build their own equipment, and p. XX for optional rules expansions for customizing gear and building monster traps.

Vehicles

A hunter may need to get across town in record time before the sun goes down, navigate rough terrain in an off-road vehicle to find the reclusive priest who can properly bless a specific talisman, or just run down a monster in the street with something that deals more damage than a bullet can.

Vehicle Basics

- **Dice Modifier:** Dice subtracted or added from the driver's Dexterity + Drive pools.
- **Size, Durability, Structure:** See "Objects," above.
- **Speed:** How fast the vehicle can safely go. Apply the vehicle's dice modifier (positive or negative) as an additional dice penalty when operating the vehicle above its safe Speed and treat all failures as dramatic failures. Penalties can't exceed -5.
- **Dangerous Maneuvers:** At safe speeds, only particularly dangerous maneuvers call for a roll; above the vehicle's safe Speed, sharp turns and other relatively common maneuvers also may require a roll. These are instant and simple actions unless characters are engaged in a chase (p. XX) or a contested action.
- **Acceleration:** Vehicles normally increase their Speed by 5 per turn. With the High Acceleration modification, they gain 10 Speed per turn. Characters can take an instant action with Dexterity + Drive to increase normal acceleration by 5 Speed per turn.
- **Examples and Modifications:** See Appendix 1: Equipment, starting on p. XX.

Crashes

Vehicles can crash into characters, other vehicles, or objects like lampposts and walls.

- **Hitting Light Objects:** vehicle hits something equal to or less than half its Size. Object suffers one-tenth the vehicle's current Speed in bashing damage + half its Size (rounded down). Driver rolls Dexterity + Drive - vehicle's Dice Modifier; failure means the vehicle takes damage equal to half the struck object's Size + one-tenth its own Speed.
- **Hitting Light Objects Deliberately:** requires an instant action with Dexterity + Drive - Defense if applicable. Add successes to damage inflicted on the victim, but not the vehicle or people inside; however, the driver must still roll again to avoid damage, as above.
- **Hitting Heavy Objects:** vehicle hits something greater than half its Size. Both objects suffer one-half the other object's Size (rounded down) + damage based on one-tenth their relative Speeds. If the objects collide head on or perpendicularly, add the Speeds together and divide by 10; if they're moving parallel to each other, subtract the lower Speed from the higher and then divide by 10. Both drivers roll Dexterity + Drive; each success reduces vehicle damage by two.
- **Damage to Driver and Passengers:** Damage that exceeds a vehicle's Durability is also applied to anyone in the car as bashing damage; safety equipment such as seat belts and air bags halves this damage.

Chases

A hunter may find herself running for her life when a witch calls for reinforcements or chasing down a fleeing pack of werewolves in a pickup truck rigged with silver weapons. In most action scenes, a character's Speed trait determines how much she can move. This means you can

usually figure out who is faster without dice. The following rules let you turn the chase into the focus of the scene instead, adding excitement and drama.

Chase Basics

- **Set the Terms:** By default, each party requires five total successes to prevail. Apply modifiers to this total as follows.

[BEGIN CHART]

Circumstance Modifier

Opponent's Speed is higher than yours	+1
Opponent's Speed is twice yours	+3
Opponent's Speed is at least 10 times yours	+5
Initiative modifier is higher than opponent's	-1
Initiative modifier is twice the opponent's	-2
Initiative modifier is at least three times the opponent's	-3
Your character knows the territory somewhat	-1
Your character knows the territory intimately	-3
Your Size is lower than your opponent's	-1
Opponent immune to fatigue	+2
Actively dangerous environment	+1 to +3, Storyteller's discretion
Opponent starts with a one-turn lead	+1
Opponent starts with at least a two-turns' lead	+2

[END CHART]

- **Determine the Edge:** Whoever has better manipulated the environment, terrain, and circumstances to his advantage based on the ever-changing situation gains the Edge, not counting circumstances listed above to modify required successes. If the character with the Edge isn't obvious, make a contested roll for each involved character using a relevant pool determined by the player, with Storyteller permission. Relevant Skills could include Athletics, Streetwise, Survival, etc. If the context of the scene changes significantly, determine who has the Edge again.
- **Turns:** Each turn represents roughly 30 seconds to a minute of chase time. The character with the Edge rolls first. If she accumulates the requisite total successes before others have a chance to roll, she wins immediately.

Optional Rule: Seizing the Edge

In **Hunter: The Vigil**, characters often contend with foes who outclass them in sheer physical power, speed, or supernatural advantages. Introduce this optional rule if you want a chase to favor the underdog.

After the side with the Edge determines the dice pool for the turn, each side predicts how many successes they will roll that turn. Write down these predictions and don't show them to anyone. After each roll, uncover that party's prediction. The first person to correctly guess how many successes they would roll gains the Edge for the next turn, regardless of contested rolls or circumstances.

Pursuit and Evasion

Both pursuit and evasion use the same chase action.

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Determined each turn by the side with the Edge, based on the current situation. You *can* use a different pool, but unless you have the Edge, you lose the 10-again quality on your roll and suffer a cumulative one-die penalty that increases each turn you don't have the Edge and use the wrong pool. These turns don't have to be consecutive.

Roll Results

Success: You overcome the immediate challenge and make headway. Add rolled successes to your running total.

Exceptional Success: As success and inflict the turn's terms of failure upon your opponent regardless of his roll.

Failure: Determined each turn by the side with the Edge, before dice are rolled. Choose from among the following: lose one accumulated success from your total, suffer two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal, or suffer an appropriate Tilt.

Dramatic Failure: As failure, and the Storyteller may impose a negative Condition as well.

Other Kinds of Chases

The chase system may also be used to represent other kinds of contests that fall outside the immediate timing of an action scene, such as tracking a monster through the woods by its trail, or as an alternative to the Social maneuvering system to finesse another character into a particular position or behavior.

Social Maneuvering

A hunter tries to banish a ghost by convincing it to let go of its obsession with its murderer. Two cells struggle to resolve their compact's desires to deal with a monster that affects both organizations. Agents from two conspiracies make equally tantalizing offers to recruit the cell, each with its own private agenda. All of these scenes are rich with potential drama and complexity, which might be undercut if they're resolved in a single throw of the dice. When you want to spotlight interpersonal relationships and conflicts that may be solved without violence, Social maneuvering is the system to use. It is a flexible set of rules that can work in tandem with other systems and offers more choices for Storytellers and players who prefer to resolve conflicts without always resorting to combat in their **Hunter** chronicles.

In a Social maneuver, you start by stating your character's *goal*. Maybe you want to convince the police chief to keep his officers out of the Tenderloin tomorrow night or get One-Eyed Jack to tell you where the Reverent Lodge of the Crow holds their sacrificial rites.

Once you and the Storyteller have agreed that the goal is reasonable, you'll have to overcome the other character's resistance by taking actions that make them more likely to agree to your terms. Successful actions open *Doors* (as in, "the door is open for further discussion," not literal doors).

How often you can try to open Doors depends on the *impression* your character makes — the more they like you, the more often you can try to sway them.

Goals

When using Social maneuvering, the first step is to declare your character's intended goal. This is as simple as stating what you want the subject to do and how your character is going about making it happen. You need only announce the initial stages, as the effort will likely occur over multiple rolls, reflecting different actions.

At this point, the Storyteller determines whether the goal is reasonable. A character might, with time and proper tactics, convince a rich person to give him a large sum of money. He probably isn't going to convince the wealthy individual to abandon *all* of his wealth to the character, though it might be possible to get him to name the character as heir, at which point the character can set about speeding up the inheritance process.

Doors

Once you've declared your character's goal, the next step is to determine the scope of the challenge. We represent this with Doors, which reflect a character's resistance to coercion: her social walls, her skepticism, their mistrust, or just his hesitance with intimacy. It's abstract and means different things in any given case.

Calculating Doors

- **Baseline:** The subject starts with Doors equal to the lower of their Resolve or Composure.
- **Breaking Point:** If the stated goal would be a *breaking point* (p. XX) for the subject, *and* the subject is aware of that fact, add two Doors.
- **Aspiration:** If the stated goal is in opposition to one of the subject's Aspirations, *and* the subject is aware of that fact, add one Door. If the goal would clearly help the subject achieve an Aspiration, remove one Door.
- **Virtue:** If the stated goal is in opposition to the subject's Virtue, *and* the subject is aware of that fact, add one Door.
- **Adding Doors:** If things change such that the Breaking Point, Aspiration, or Virtue rules above apply during the Social maneuver, add Doors to the remaining total (two for Breaking Point, one each for Aspiration or Virtue). If your character goes back on her word during the maneuver, add two Doors.

Impression

The Storyteller sets the first impression based on any past history between the characters, the circumstances of their meeting, the nature of the favor being asked (if the acting character is asking right up front — sometimes it's a better idea not to lead off with what you want!) and any other factors she deems relevant. Most interactions default to an average impression, which makes the maneuver a long, drawn-out process. Your character can take steps to improve that

such as meeting the subject at their favorite restaurant, wearing their favorite perfume, and so on. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of whether any particular action raises the impression level, but she should be open to working with the players to develop a plan.

Impression level determines how frequently you're allowed to roll to open the subject's Doors — the more they like your character, the more often you can roll. If the impression is too hostile, you might not be able to roll at all.

[BEGIN CHART: SHOULD BE ON THE SAME PAGE AS “IMPRESSION”]

Impression	Time per Roll
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Perfect	One turn
Excellent	One hour
Good	One day
Average	One week
Hostile	Cannot roll

[END CHART]

Adjusting Impression

- **Favorable Circumstances:** A comfortable environment, appealing clothing, or similar pleasant situations can raise a hostile impression to average, or an average impression to good.
- **Actions:** Success on an appropriate action, like a Wits + Socialize action to create the ideal guest list for a party, can raise an average or good impression to excellent.
- **Soft Leverage:** A bribe, gift, or offer of service or payment raises the impression level one step if the subject accepts the offer.
- **Vice Leverage:** An offer that indulges the subject's Vice (or equivalent trait) raises the impression level one step if the subject accepts the offer.

Opening Doors

At each interval, you may make a roll to open Doors and move closer to your character's goal. The roll might be different each time, depending on the character's tactics. Some of the rolls might not even be social. For example, if your character is trying to win someone's favor, fixing his computer with an Intelligence + Computer roll could open a Door.

As Storyteller, be creative in selecting dice pools. Change them up with each step to keep the interactions dynamic. Similarly, consider contested and resisted rolls. Most resisted actions or contested rolls use either Resolve or Composure, or a combination of the two, but don't let that stand as a limit. Contested rolls don't necessarily require a Resistance trait. For example, Wits might be used to notice a lie, Strength to help a character stand up to threats, or Presence to protect and maintain one's reputation at a soiree.

Roll Results

Success: Open one Door.

Exceptional Success: As success and open an additional Door.

Failure: Open no Doors. Subsequent actions as part of the Social maneuver suffer a cumulative one-die penalty. The Storyteller may choose to lower the impression level by one step; if she does so, take a Beat.

Dramatic Failure: The Social maneuver fails utterly. No further rolls can be made. Any attempt to achieve the same goal must start from scratch, likely with a worse impression.

Resolution

The outcome of a Social maneuver is either success or failure. Don't confuse this with the success or failure of any particular action that's part of a Social maneuver; here we're talking about the whole thing.

Success

Once your character opens all the Doors in her path, the subject must act. Storyteller characters abide by the intended goal and follow through as stated. How they feel afterwards might vary, but they always do what you and the Storyteller agreed on.

Failure

A Social maneuvering attempt can fail utterly under the following circumstances:

- **Dramatic Failure:** The player rolls a dramatic failure on an attempt to open a Door.
- **Deception:** The target realizes that he is being lied to or manipulated. This does *not* apply if the target is aware that the character is trying to talk him into something, only if the target feels betrayed or conned.
- **Bad Impressions:** The impression level reaches "hostile" and remains so for the rest of the current story. The character can try again during the next story.

Forcing Doors

When a character just can't wait to get what she wants, she can *force* Doors open instead. This degree of urgency is high risk, high reward. Forcing Doors leads to burned bridges and missed opportunities but provides instant gratification.

- **One and Done:** Forcing Doors achieves the character's goal immediately in a single roll if successful. The roll takes a penalty equal to the opponent's Doors and the subject contests it as normal.
- **Hard Leverage:** Forcing Doors requires a threat, drugs, intimidation, blackmail, kidnapping, or other heavy-handed forms of coercion. Hard leverage that makes the character employing it suffer a breaking point removes two Doors if the base modifier would be -3 or less, or one Door if it would be -4 or higher.
- **Roll Results:** On a success, proceed to resolution as normal. On a failure, the subject is immune to further Social maneuvering from the character.

Social Maneuvering and Consent

Social maneuvering is designed to allow one character to manipulate or convince another character to perform favors or undertake actions. This system can be used for a variety of actions ranging from conning a mark or convincing a shell-shocked witness to provide them with information. It can work on groups as well.

Under a strict read of the rules, this system can also be used to seduce or abuse an intended target. A member of the Ashwood Abbey compact might seduce a vampire or a charming hunter turned slasher could lure a nurse back to their hotel room. The specific goal would be to “get that character to sleep with my character,” the number of Doors is the decided, and impressions along with other factors play into the final result. This is not too different from how seduction and other, less carnal forms of persuasion actually work — the persuader tries to make the offer as enticing as possible.

The rules were designed to put the spotlight on the player and some hunters may opt to use Social maneuvering instead of resorting to violence. But, because the persuader’s *player* makes the roll determining the outcome, the target is left without a way to say “no.” As such, this system is intended for use by player-controlled characters vs. Storyteller characters instead of player vs. player. Storytellers are encouraged to let players make their own decisions. If one player’s character wants to seduce, persuade, convince, or intimidate another’s, let the players make their own decisions about what their characters do through roleplay.

Optional Rule: Negotiating Outcome

Social interactions in **Hunter** aren’t always cut and dry. Sometimes, two players may want to willingly participate in a Social maneuver when one character is an antagonist attempting to undermine or thwart a fellow hunter. This modification may be used in the Slasher Chronicle (page XX) when appropriate, provided all affected parties consent to this rule. Further, Social maneuvering does not prevent or stop a hunter from become a slasher; it can, however, slow them down.

In this situation, the characters’ identities matter to the fiction; one player character is a subject and the other is the initiator. One is a hunter and the other is either a hunter turned slasher or one who’s in danger of becoming one. For the purposes of this example, the subject is a hunter and the initiator is a hunter turned slasher. The slasher’s goal is “come into my van alone.”

First, gameplay proceeds as previously described up to the resolution stage. Once the player characters reach the resolution stage, the subject must choose a resolution:

Go with the Flow: If the subject does as requested and abides by the initiator’s intended goal, their player takes a Beat (p. XX). The initiator’s player does not earn a Beat. The hunter decides to go into the slasher’s van alone; their player earns a Beat.

Offer Alternatives: The resolution stage proceeds as a negotiation, rather than a mandate, with two possible outcomes. The subject may choose to offer an alternative that benefits the initiator in some way. Instead of heading into the slasher’s van alone, the hunter proposes they take her car instead.

This offer occurs between players and does not need to exist in the fiction — though it can when appropriate. The alternative must be truly beneficial and not a twist of intent. The Storyteller is the final decision maker to ensure the negotiation is fair. In some cases, it might make sense that one (or both) of the player characters incurs a Condition following their negotiation. Any further rules applied following the resolution are at the Storyteller’s discretion; they should, however, be applicable to the fiction.

Investigation

Monsters hide their existence and predations from common awareness, lurking just beneath the everyday reality to which humanity clings. Police reports don't include the strange wounds on homicide victims' bodies that the medical examiner can't explain. People whose nightmares are more than just dreams deny anything is wrong, desperate to believe the horrors aren't real. A hunter trying to get to the bottom of these mysteries so she can get rid of what's causing them has a daunting task ahead of her — and connecting the dots can make for exciting stories.

When you want an investigation to play a large role in the tale, with entire scenes, chapters, or even stories dedicated to a single mystery, you can use this system rather than boiling it down to a single action. Characters uncover Clues they can use to benefit the later actions the investigation enables — for instance, hunters who investigate the scene of a gruesome killing to determine what kind of monster was involved can later use that information to track the monster down.

Investigation Basics

- **No Hard Answers:** The Storyteller doesn't need to come up with all the potential Clues and answers ahead of time. Letting the players fill some of them in themselves as they succeed in finding Clues gets them invested in the outcome and creates “a-ha!” moments. If players put Clues together to reach conclusions that don't match the outcome the Storyteller had in mind, she should consider changing it to match.
- **No Binary Rolls:** Failing to find information crucial to the characters' progress when players roll unsuccessfully only slows the game down to no satisfying end. Instead, the Storyteller should raise the stakes or introduce complications when a roll fails. Failure doesn't mean the players didn't find a Clue — instead, it means they miss out on extra benefits success would have afforded them and must adjust to new challenges.
- **Frame the Action:** The Storyteller can intersperse Clue-finding actions with other events in the story to keep the momentum going and give players opportunity to choose which set of heightening stakes to address first.
- **Clues:** Clues are a specialized type of equipment that represent objects, facts, and deductions. They have *elements* players can spend for benefits, either to solve a particular mystery or to stockpile for other uses: leverage in Social maneuvering, proof of supernatural influences in someone's life, etc.

Scope

First, the players declare a goal to accomplish via investigation. Decide how many total Clues the characters need to uncover to achieve their goal. For smaller-scope investigations, this usually falls between one and five Clues. For broad investigations spread out across the chronicle, the total should equal at least half the number of planned chapters and can range up to twice the number of planned chapters in an investigation-focused chronicle.

Interval

Each roll to find a Clue is an instant action but takes some amount of time based on the kind of action the players take. For instance, if a hunter cases a room from which a monster fled, it might only take a few minutes. If she's diving to a sunken ship to find a chipped goblet the monster owns, that could take an hour or more. The Storyteller can add challenges and obstacles to these attempts to turn simple die rolls into interesting scenes of their own — maybe the monster left

behind a dangerous contaminant the characters must overcome to case the scene, or maybe the characters must traverse shark-infested waters to get to the ship. If they perform particularly well in these efforts, the Storyteller can offer bonuses to the roll to uncover the Clue.

Uncovering Clues

Once the characters get where they need to be, they roll to uncover the Clue.

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Varies. Players can use any pool that matches the action they take to uncover the Clue. The Investigation Skill is appropriate to case a scene or search through files and evidence, while other Mental Skills can be used to perform research, experiments, or autopsies. Social Skills can be used to interview witnesses or interrogate a monster's lackeys.

The pool suffers a cumulative one-die penalty each time the same Skill is used again in an investigation. However, if hunters use teamwork to uncover Clues, only the primary actor suffers this penalty, and only his roll contributes to further such penalties in the same investigation.

Roll Results

Success: Clue is uncovered, with one element plus one more if the character has four or more dots or a Specialty in the relevant Skill; each Specialty or Skill can only contribute to extra elements once per character per investigation.

Exceptional Success: As success, and the Clue gains one bonus element; character gains a beneficial Condition.

Failure: Clue is uncovered but incomplete: Its elements may only be used to uncover other Clues.

Dramatic Failure: Clue is uncovered but tainted. Each accumulated tainted Clue forces the player to ignore one success rolled on any future actions pertaining to the investigation; these are cumulative and all apply to each such roll. The Storyteller may impose an appropriate Condition as well.

Clue Elements

Players can spend Clue elements to add a one-die bonus per element to any roll pertaining to the investigation, including, but not limited to, rolls to uncover more Clues. A player can only spend elements from one Clue at a time, or Clues equal to her character's Investigation dots, whichever is higher. She may spend any number of elements at a time from a single Clue.

Elements from tainted Clues impose a two-die penalty when spent instead of a bonus; however, this is the only way to get rid of tainted Clues, since once all its elements are spent, it sheds its tainted nature.

Uncovering the Truth

Players don't need to roll to put their Clues together once the investigation is over. Once they accumulate the requisite number of Clues specified by the investigation's scope, the characters learn the truth.

Players may choose to uncover the truth before they've accumulated enough Clues, as long as they have at least one that isn't tainted. If they do, they still learn the truth, but the Storyteller

introduces one major complication per Clue they fall short. Perhaps the monster escapes or takes a hostage. Perhaps cornering the monster would risk legal consequences or attract the wrong attention. Perhaps the monster is part of a larger group of monsters with which the hunters must now contend.

Building Equipment

While hunters can gain access to equipment of all kinds through purchase, borrowing, blackmail, or theft, some prefer (or are forced) to make it themselves. Sometimes, a hunter has to scrounge up a contraption made of duct tape and hairpins in the middle of an infiltration. Sometimes, she needs to pull together an ad hoc shotgun-toting mob before the undead horror catches wind and leaves town. If it will offer a bonus to an action, or would make actions possible that were previously not, it can be considered “equipment,” and you can build it.

Equipment Types

- **Physical Objects:** the most common type. Items listed in the Appendix (p. XX) are physical objects, as are weapons and armor. Creative works also fall into this category.
- **Organizations:** small groups of people assembled to address a particular need, like a cadre of bodyguards or research assistants. Organizations built as equipment disband after one chapter unless purchased as Merits afterward.
- **Repositories:** collections of research materials and information sources on a particular topic, like a library of books, a database, or an assortment of security footage. This reflects gathering materials for repeated future use, not benefiting from an existing source. Repositories linger; if you purchase the Library Merit (p. XX) for a repository your character built, it stacks with the equipment bonus, to a maximum of +5.
- **Plans:** abstracted plans that orchestrate complex encounters with specific goals involving multiple people, like heists or rescues. A plan grants its bonus to all participants but ceases to exist when the endeavor succeeds or definitively fails. Plans can’t grant bonuses to Tactics, as they are already plans.
- **Mystical Equipment:** anything that carries minor supernatural potency, such as a circle of protection using salt and bone, a protective amulet, or a werewolf trap made of silver.

Build Equipment Basics

- **Scope:** Build Equipment actions never take longer than the time between one scene and the next. If it can’t reasonably be built in a few hours or less, the character needs to acquire it another way.
- **When to Roll:** If the character has plenty of time, isn’t under any duress, and has dots in the relevant Skill equal to the equipment bonus a standard example would provide, don’t roll. If the character is under pressure or in danger, roll. Likewise, if she’s trying to build something beyond her casual expertise — i.e., something with an equipment bonus greater than her dots in the relevant Skill, something with higher traits than the standard example, or something the Storyteller determines is too complex — roll.
- **Built-In Penalty:** The roll always suffers a penalty equal to the intended equipment bonus. Each other intended benefit, like a new function, an increased trait, or access to a resource, counts as a one-die bonus for this purpose, as well as to determine whether

to roll in the first place. Weapons impose a penalty equal to their weapon modifier; armor imposes a penalty equal to its highest armor rating (general or ballistic). Penalties can't exceed -5.

- **Requirements:** The Storyteller may require the use of Resources, Contacts, or other Merits, or a separate research action, to reflect extra effort necessary before you can roll. This should only apply to enhance the drama of the story or introduce interesting plot elements to the action.

These rules don't replace the need to discover a creature's weakness before creating ritual equipment to bind or ward against a particular monster; the best you can do is an equipment bonus or minor benefit without that information. See p. XX for how to use Tactics for more powerful rituals.

- **Time:** ranges from a few minutes to a few hours, but the important factors are whether you finish before something else happens, and what else happens in the meantime.

During an action scene, a Build Equipment action takes a number of turns equal to the built-in penalty; the Storyteller may rule that something can't be built during an action scene.

Build Equipment Action

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Determined by the type of equipment. Wits + Crafts for physical objects, or Wits + Expression for creative works; Presence or Manipulation + Socialize or Streetwise for organizations; Intelligence + Academics for repositories; Wits + Occult for mystical equipment; Wits + Composure for plans. The Storyteller or player can suggest alternatives if appropriate.

Roll Results

Success: You build the equipment.

Exceptional Success: As success and add one equipment bonus die or other benefit; bonuses still may not exceed +5.

Failure: You build the equipment, but it carries the Fragile (p. XX) or Volatile (p. XX) Condition.

Dramatic Failure: You fail outright and suffer a consequence at the Storyteller's discretion, such as taking damage from an explosive reaction, suffering a Condition like Leveraged or Embarrassing Secret, or leading a supernatural threat directly to your location.

Improvise

When you're dangling from a grappling hook 30 feet above the cold concrete with an angry vampire on your tail, you don't have the luxury of time. That Molotov cocktail you're mixing gets done now or never. That's where improvising comes in.

Improvising always takes place in action-scene timing.

Action: Instant; takes one turn

Dice Pool: Same as above. The Storyteller may rule that some equipment is too complex to be improvised.

Roll Results

Success: You build the equipment, but it carries the Fragile (p. XX) or Volatile (p. XX) Condition.

Exceptional Success: You build the equipment.

Failure: As dramatic failure.

Dramatic Failure: You fail outright and suffer a consequence at the Storyteller's discretion, such as taking damage from an explosive reaction, suffering a Condition like Leveraged or Embarrassing Secret, or leading a supernatural threat directly to your location.

Repair, Modifications, and Upgrades

A character may want to fix or alter a piece of equipment that already exists. These actions usually only apply to physical objects, though exceptions are possible.

These rolls use the normal Build Equipment action, with the following exceptions:

Repair, Modification, and Upgrade Basics

- **Built-In Penalty:** equals the *difference* between the object's current state and the bonus or benefits the player wants to add. Broken objects are considered to have an equipment bonus of 0. Partially functional objects may have a bonus only one or two dice lower than their usual bonus. For instance, if a computer would normally grant +2 to research rolls but won't start and is therefore currently at a 0, the roll to repair it would suffer a -2.
- **Increased Traits and New Functions:** treat each modification or upgrade as a +1 equivalent. You can replace one function with another at no penalty — for instance, reversing the function of a walkie talkie to cause interference instead of receiving signals.
- **Modifying Vehicles:** see p. XX.
- **Customizing Gear and Traps:** see p. XX.

Taking Your Time

You may build equipment as an extended action instead; you'll take no built-in penalty to any of the rolls. Instead, the target number of required successes equals the total intended bonus and benefits of the equipment +1.

Typically, players do this to avoid taking large penalties for complex equipment, or when they have small dice pools to begin with and don't want to risk a chance die. The Storyteller determines the time between rolls as usual. Overall success and failure work as normal for the Build Equipment action.

The Storyteller may also allow a player to build equipment that normally lies beyond the scope of this system, such as a car or a business, with an extended action. In this case, the time between rolls and total successes required should match the effort involved. Building a car may take a week between rolls and require 15 total successes, for example. Storytellers should keep in mind, however, that it's usually much easier to acquire such equipment in other ways, like stealing or purchasing a car, or using Social maneuvering to convince a potential business partner to take the bait. As a result, building this kind of equipment with extended actions should only be done if the player really *wants* to make it from scratch.

Teamwork and Tactics

A living nightmare of teeth and whirling shadows lunges for a lone hunter when they least expect it. Without backup, a solitary hunter is vulnerable and often finds themselves in mortal danger. When the shit hits the fan, hunters must find a way to uphold the Vigil. When they don't, they're in danger of falling into despair, taking dangerous risks, or becoming so corrupted they're no better than the monsters themselves. Even hunters who hate each other grudgingly acknowledge they must set aside their differences when it matters. Otherwise, they're easy prey for the darkness.

Hunters have two ways to work together. The first is *teamwork*: one person performs a single action, like breaking down a door or researching Bloody Mary, and the others help. The second is with *Tactics*. A Tactic is a specialized group action that is usually more complex than a single action. Tactics allow participants to roll dice in pursuit of a specific, desired outcome.

Teamwork

When two or more characters wish to help unravel a clue, break into a safe, or pick a lock, one person takes the lead. That character is the *primary actor*, and others who wish to help are called *secondary actors*.

To use teamwork, the following steps must occur in order:

- Primary actor assembles their dice pool.
- Secondary actors assemble their dice pools to match the primary actor's.
- Secondary actors roll dice.
- Primary actor rolls their dice pool. Secondary actors' roll results are then added or subtracted.
- Primary actor's roll results are calculated as normal.

While there are no prerequisites for teamwork, remember Skills are not interchangeable. The Skills in the roll *must* match for all participants; the primary actor sets which Skills they want to use. Each success from a secondary actor gives the primary actor a bonus die. If one of the secondary actors rolls a dramatic failure, the primary actor takes a four-die penalty.

Tactics

A hunter alone may not have what it takes to deal with a situation, no matter how well-prepared or trained he may be, but with several highly trained professionals working together, there is little they can't get done. Tactics are not just teamwork actions professionals can use, but instead represent self-contained group activities that require coordinated training and specialized instruction.

Only hunters can use Tactics, as learning them requires the cell to work together regularly to perfect the technique. They allow hunters to accomplish larger-scale goals using different dice pools by leaning on each other's strengths. Each Tactic is unique. Some have prerequisites that shape the dice pools and what the outcome might be. Others only function in specific situations, or may fail, even when successful, depending on the monster. Any hunter may choose to participate in any Tactic, but *only* hunters can. Many Tactics are designed for use in desperate or otherwise-impossible situations to save the day. A cell tracked a venom-spitting humanoid back to its lair and wants to corner the monster. A group found a nest of slimy, oozing eggs and plans

to burn them. Tactics allow hunters to face the darkness because they're putting their faith in a leader and upholding the Code *together*.

Teamwork Vs. Tactics

Teamwork draws on similarities between hunters, while Tactics allow any hunter to participate. While Tactics do not necessarily involve a monster, in many cases they will — unlike teamwork. Tactics also exist as a tool to do something one hunter could not typically accomplish by themselves, whereas teamwork increases the chance for a single action's success.

Storytellers should note that increasing threat levels may incur a greater desire for team-based actions, and Tactics are a great way of facilitating a possible win.

Tactics work similarly to teamwork actions with the following notes:

- **Risking Willpower:** To perform a Tactic, the primary actor must risk a Willpower point (p. XX) on its outcome, and they do so before anyone makes any rolls. Once the Tactic begins, the group must follow it through to its end, even if it goes horribly awry in the middle. Enacting the Tactic takes up both benefits of risking Willpower for the primary actor. All usual roll results for risking Willpower apply. Secondary actors may risk Willpower normally on their rolls if they wish.
- **Participants:** For a Tactic to work, multiple hunters are required. However, sometimes the number of players isn't enough. Storytellers are encouraged to be flexible during gameplay when a cell comes up short. Should more characters be required, consider adding Storyteller characters as secondary actors to round out the difference. Then, let the players roll dice for any additional secondary actors to complete the Tactic.
- **Multiple Moving Parts:** The secondary actors in a Tactic each perform their own actions, meaning they roll their own dice pools based on what they are doing rather than the same dice pool as the primary actor.
- **Initiative:** If a Tactic takes place during an action scene, all participants must delay their actions to the lowest Initiative among them so they can all act at the same time.
- **Time and Place:** Tactics aren't supernatural powers and don't automatically function if the situation doesn't allow it. For instance, Controlled Immolation doesn't work if the target is immune to fire, or if the environment is soaked in gasoline, and the primary actor requires a method to set the fire in the first place. Hunters work to set up situations that make their best options viable. If the characters enact a Tactic and discover through doing so that it was never possible to begin with — e.g. they didn't know the monster was immune to fire or the place was soaked with gasoline until after they used Controlled Immolation — the Tactic automatically fails.

Tactics Overview

The following is a view of what you will find in every Tactic description.

Requirements: Some Tactics have basic requirements the participants must meet to perform without penalty, such as a minimum number of dots in a particular Skill or Merit, or a type of Specialty. A participant without these requirements suffers a -1 for each dot or Specialty that falls short, in addition to suffering from any untrained penalties, on their roll.

In some cases, the requirements include a required action or presence of a circumstance, such as “target must be injured” or “during an investigation for Clues.”

Action: Each Tactic specifies the type of action it uses; some Tactics may give options.

Dice Pools: Each Tactic includes a list of its dice pools for the primary and secondary actors, with a note in parentheses to indicate which roll goes with which action. Numbers in the parentheses after a listed pool for secondary actors denote the minimum and maximum number of participants for that pool. For instance, Dexterity + Firearms (1/2) means that one participant must use Firearms for the Tactic to work, but more than two using Firearms won’t contribute any dice to the primary actor’s roll.

Occasionally, an optional dice pool is included for secondary actors whose successes don’t contribute dice to the primary actor’s pool; instead, they grant the Tactic some other benefit, noted under the roll results. These optional pools include (ND) in parentheses after the listed roll, meaning “no dice.”

Primary Actor Roll Results: The roll results given for each Tactic generally affect the primary actor only. Secondary actors abide by the usual roll results for teamwork, given above, unless otherwise noted.

For the Player: Tactics, Teamwork, and Endowments

Tactics are all-hands-on-deck plans to perform a specific action, usually during a hunt. Teamwork, on the other hand, represents a considered effort to complete a task among similarly-skilled characters. Endowments are unique gifts a tier-three conspiracy grants to each, individual hunter as rewards for their service and status in the organization.

Teamwork and tactics are group undertakings that carry more risk than a typical action and reflect cell members’ natural desire to help one another. Action-related Endowments are tied to a specific hunter just like any other Endowment that does not require a roll. As such, only that hunter may utilize their conspiracy’s blessings when a situation calls for it. If two hunters possess the same Endowment, they simply make two separate die rolls (or actions) if necessary.

Mental Tactics

The following Tactics use primarily Mental Attributes and Skills or are useful in primarily Mental contexts.

Bind/Ward

Hunting a spirit, a ghost, or a demon isn’t as straightforward as shooting a monster with silver bullets; it requires arcane lore and a way to pin down the incorporeal or keep it out of a cell’s safehouse.

Secondary actors gather the necessary materials and prepare runes, talismans, and rites in prescribed ways, marking out the desired area — drawing a binding circle, for instance, or lines of salt across doors and windows. Once the hunters have the monster where they want it, the primary actor finishes the job with the right kind of chanting or ritual actions, either trapping the foe within a particular area or warding a place against its entry. These materials and rituals vary

depending on the specific entity; the hunters must learn what they are, per the Tactic requirements below.

This Tactic doesn't ensure the monster enters or leaves the desired area once the characters have prepared it; that requires other actions, or Tactics such as Corral or Lure.

Requirements: Primary actor: Occult 2. Secondary actors: Occult *or* Crafts 1. The characters must already know a weakness the creature has that can be used to bind or ward against it, and its identity if it's unique. If their information is wrong, the Tactic fails.

Action: Contested: Each secondary actor's roll requires 15 minutes to prepare the area. The primary actor's roll is Instant and Contested.

Dice Pools: Primary: Presence + Occult – Potency (for monsters) or Rank (for ephemeral entities). Secondary: Intelligence + Occult (preparing the area, 1/2); appropriate Attribute + Skill roll or possessing dots of an appropriate Merit equal to or exceeding Availability (procuring required materials, 1/3).

The primary actor's roll may be modified by the size of the area being warded:

[TABLE]

Area Modifier

Small area within a location, up to a six-foot area +1

Single room, a vehicle 0

Two story, suburban building -1

[END TABLE]

Larger structures levy increasing penalties; an additional -1 for every equivalent of a family home. Most superstructures, like skyscrapers, trains, government buildings, and hospitals are too large to be effectively warded.

Roll Results

Success: The ritual binds the monster within the confines of the area or prevents it from entering a warded location for a number of days equal to successes rolled. The monster can't break the binding or ward no matter what, but someone else can by disrupting the proscribed area.

Exceptional Success: As success, and the binding or ward lasts for an extra day.

Failure: The hunters fail to perform the Tactic.

Dramatic Failure: The monster disrupts the proscribed area before the ritual is complete or is too powerful for the hunters to contain. It may immediately use an automatically successful supernatural power without paying its cost or inflict a Tilt on a character or the environment.

Identification

Hunters must take care not to jump to conclusions about a potential monster too quickly, lest they accidentally murder an innocent human being. With careful observation, they can make a definitive call without having to show up on someone's doorstep and douse her with holy water when she comes to the door.

The secondary actors tail the target, collect evidence, and perform research. Then, the primary actor puts it all together.

If a secondary actor fails dramatically, the target captures or compromises that actor in some way in addition to the usual effects.

Requirements: Primary actor: Occult 2.

Action: Contested: Everyone must spend one hour researching or putting information together before rolling.

Dice Pools: Primary: Intelligence + Occult vs. Manipulation + Subterfuge + Potency. Secondary: Wits + Investigation (collecting evidence, 1/3, or 0/3 if someone tails the target); Wits + Stealth (tailing target, 1/1, or 0/1 if someone collects evidence); Wits + Occult (research, 0/3).

Roll Results

Success: The hunters discern whether the target is an ordinary human, a hunter, or a supernatural creature; if the latter, they learn the type of creature. They also learn one of the following about the target: one Anchor, one Aspiration, the location of her lair or home, or the identity of one character important to her. All participants gain the Informed Condition regarding the target.

Exceptional Success: As success, but players learn two specific pieces of information.

Failure: The hunters fail to learn anything.

Dramatic Failure: The target becomes aware of the investigation and takes one group of secondary actors by surprise with an ambush, an automatically successful supernatural power, or a disadvantageous circumstance.

Monster Lore

Too often, the information hunters need to prevail against their foes is badly diluted by urban legends and pop culture or hidden in forbidden tomes that haven't seen the light of day since their writers perished centuries ago. Even monsters that loom large in the public imagination, like vampires, usually don't follow the rules everybody "knows," and a hunter who relies on television for his lore is usually a dead hunter.

The secondary actors call in favors, consult with experts, locate hard-to-find resources, and shake down information brokers in the supernatural underground. Then, the primary actor hits the books and finds the key to stopping the threat. Each roll represents one hour of work.

Requirements: Secondary actors: 2+ in a relevant Social Merit, such as Contacts or Compact Status. Characters must research a specific type of monster.

Action: Extended: Successes required are 2x the monster's Potency.

Dice Pools: Primary: Intelligence + Occult. Secondary: Presence or Manipulation + Socialize (calling in favors/consulting with experts, 0/3); Resolve + Academics, Investigation, or Computer (tracking down rare resources, 1/3); Strength or Presence + Intimidation or Streetwise (interrogation, 0/2)

Roll Results

Success: For each successful roll within the extended action, the hunters learn one weakness the creature type in question generally possesses, one common Dread Power or other capability it

usually has, or one piece of information about where it comes from and how it came to be. This doesn't grant information about a *specific* monster unless it's the only one of its kind. The primary actor gains the Informed Condition about the monster type.

Exceptional Success: As success, and the hunters learn one additional piece of information. They also learn whether a specific monster they're hunting follows the usual pattern or not, but it requires further investigation to find out how it differs.

Failure: The hunters fail to learn anything useful about the monster.

Dramatic Failure: The information the hunters discover is not only wrong but will lead to catastrophic results when used.

Profiling

Some monsters crawled out of malefic hellholes or were built by human hands, but many were once human themselves. Others have mortal minions whom savvy hunters can exploit, or cover stories that give them false human identities. Those who can uncover dirt on who a monster or its lackeys really are and where they came from has leverage to use against them.

Secondary actors talk to witnesses, hack into databases, take incriminating photos, or dig into public records to collect information, and then the primary actor uses the gathered intel to profile the target and match it up to a human identity. It could be that of a monster's previous life or its current fake persona, or it could be someone who works for the monster — whichever is most relevant to the characters' goals.

At least two secondary actors must participate, and at least one must perform a non-research action. If a secondary actor fails dramatically, the target captures or compromises that actor in some way in addition to the usual effects.

Requirements: Primary actor: Empathy 2 and Investigation 2. Secondary actors: 2+ in the Skill used for the Tactic. Characters must already have basic knowledge of the target, such as from casing a crime scene or personal interactions.

Action: Contested: Everyone must spend one hour researching or putting information together before rolling.

Dice Pools: Primary: Intelligence + Investigation vs. Wits + (Subterfuge or Investigation) + Potency. Secondary: Presence or Manipulation + Persuasion (talking to witnesses, 0/2); Intelligence + Computer (hacking, 0/2); Wits + Stealth or Expression (taking photos, 0/1); Intelligence + Academics or Occult (research; 1/3)

Roll Results

Success: The hunters profile a monster and pinpoint a human identity associated with it, as above. They learn the following about the monster: its Anchors, one of its Aspirations, its Potency, and the rating of one of its Mental or Social traits (players' choice).

Exceptional Success: As success, and the players may ask one yes or no question of the Storyteller regarding what the target is likely to do next and receive an accurate answer.

Failure: The hunters fail to gather information.

Dramatic Failure: The monster catches wind of the investigation and deliberately plants false information, pointing the hunters definitively to the wrong person. The monster also learns information about one of the secondary actors as though it had successfully profiled her.

Tactics and Investigation

Tactics such as Identification, Monster Lore, and Profiling may be regarded as a shortcut in an investigation, since they take less time and effort than using the full-blown investigation system (see p. XX). This is by design; a Tactic is a risky gamble a cell can take to cut to the chase more quickly in exchange for potential dire consequences. Use the full system for larger and more complex mysteries, or when the characters want to play it “safe” (at least, more so). Use these Tactics for smaller, more focused investigations, or when the characters are ready to throw caution to the wind for a chance at pay dirt.

Sweep

Sneaking into monster lairs to find human hostages or steal powerful tomes from vampiric scholars is risky business. A cell needs to sweep the perimeter and meticulously check room by room to make sure no nasty surprises await them, both swiftly and thoroughly.

Secondary actors ensure access to every nook and cranny of the area, kicking down doors or picking locks, and uncover any hidden passages or cubbyholes where a monster could be lying in wait. Then, the primary actor does a final sweep to make sure the area is clear — and if it isn’t, to clear it out by any means necessary or make sure everyone escapes with their limbs intact.

Action: Instant or Contested

Dice Pools: Primary: Wits + Composure. If one or more foes lie in wait in the area, each one contests the roll with Wits + Stealth + Potency. Secondary: Strength + Athletics or Dexterity + Larceny (opening portals, 1/5); Wits + Investigation or Survival (spotting hiding places/traps, 0/5)

Roll Results

Success: If the area is clear, the characters confirm this and need fear no ambushes or traps for the rest of the scene; the primary actor gains a +2 equipment bonus to any rolls to investigate the area. If not, the characters avoid any trap they come across, find anyone hidden in the area, and gain +2 to Initiative, Speed, and Defense for the first turn of any action scene that ensues.

Exceptional Success: As success, but the dice bonuses are +3 instead.

Failure: The characters find nothing of note.

Dramatic Failure: The characters miss something crucial — a trapdoor with zombies behind it, a monster behind a curtain, a trap they spring in their haste, or a prisoner they mistake for an enemy. Every foe present gets a surprise attack or other immediate advantage, such as grabbing an allied Storyteller character to use as a hostage or escaping without the possibility of pursuit. If a trap is present, the primary actor springs it and falls prey to its effects. If a prisoner or other ally is present, the primary actor makes an attack against them, ignoring Defense.

Physical Tactics

The following Tactics use primarily Physical Attributes and Skills or are useful in primarily Physical contexts.

Called Shot

Some monsters have particular weaknesses that require unwavering accuracy and a good, clear shot to strike. Others have claws, fangs, or bestial speed that give them the edge while standing toe to toe; taking them out first is a hunter's best chance to even the playing field. Either way, a cell can work to set one among their number up for the perfect blow.

The secondary actors bait the target into exposing the crucial part of its body and then tackle it to hold it in position. Finally, the primary actor takes the shot, whether with a hand-held weapon or a ranged one.

The primary actor takes the usual specified target penalty to his roll in addition to the target's resistance, as noted on p. XX.

Action: Resisted

Dice Pools: Primary: Strength + Weaponry or Dexterity + Firearms – target's Defense.
Secondary: Manipulation + Persuasion or Subterfuge (baiting, 1/2); Strength + Brawl (tackling, 1/2)

Roll Results

Success: The opponent suffers the appropriate Tilt for a successful hit on the specified target, and the hunter's attack deals damage as normal with a +1 to his weapon modifier. The target takes a penalty to Initiative equal to the number of participants for the rest of the scene.

Exceptional Success: As success, and the Storyteller offers an immediate surrender in exchange for a non-lethal outcome to the scene. If the players accept, the Tactic's target submits to whatever fate the hunters choose that can be enacted within the current scene, such as capture or giving something up, as long as it doesn't involve further violence against the target.

Failure: The target evades the attack.

Dramatic Failure: The target twists or ducks at the last minute, and the primary actor makes a reflexive attack against the secondary actor closest to the target, ignoring Defense.

Capture

Hunters may wish to capture a monster rather than kill it, for any number of reasons. It's dangerous, but worth the risk — hunters can force a captive monster to provide information or perform services, use it as a hostage or lab specimen, or harvest it for parts.

The secondary actors corner the target and wrestle it to the ground, so the primary actor can secure it with rope, chains, a metal box, or whatever else is on hand.

Action: Contested

Dice Pools: Primary: Dexterity + Survival or Crafts vs. Dexterity or Strength + Athletics, or Brawl + Potency. Secondary: Wits + Athletics (cornering, 1/3), Strength + Brawl (wrestling, 1/3)

Roll Results

Success: The target suffers the Immobilized Tilt and takes a penalty equal to the number of participants to attempts to break free.

Exceptional Success: The target cannot attempt to break free at all for the rest of the current scene.

Failure: The target evades capture.

Dramatic Failure: The target breaks free, ruining whatever the characters tried to capture it with, and makes a reflexive attack on the nearest hunter, who loses Defense. Alternatively, the target fools the participants into thinking it's restrained, and may break out at any time.

Controlled Immolation

Fire is a staple weapon in a hunter's arsenal. It is a primal force that lights, warms, purifies, and destroys with primal abandon — the bane of many creatures that otherwise defy harm.

Unfortunately, fire burns hunters, victims, and their gear, too. Controlling a blaze to target a monster without causing an accident requires bold and decisive action.

The primary actor sets the monster on fire and keeps it burning. Some secondary actors ensure it doesn't escape, while others keep the flames from spreading to other flammable objects (and people) in the area.

Action: Contested

Dice Pools: Primary: Stamina + Firearms or Athletics vs. Stamina + Athletics + Potency/Rank. Secondary: Wits + Weaponry or Brawl (contain the monster, 1/4); Wits + Survival or Science (contain the blaze, 1/5)

Roll Results

Success: Target is set on fire at the bonfire level, with torch-level intensity (see p. XX), and suffers the Blinded Tilt (p. XX). The flames don't spread beyond the target, and the target cannot put them out, no matter what it does. The hunters may continue to make the contested teamwork roll each turn to keep the Tactic going; as soon as the primary actor fails a roll or anyone decides to stop, the Tactic ends and the fire goes out immediately.

Exceptional Success: The monster remains on fire even after the hunters end the Tactic and must douse the flames in usual fashion.

Failure: The monster puts itself out.

Dramatic Failure: The monster is not set on fire, and all flammable objects in the immediate vicinity combust instead, giving the area the Inferno Tilt (p. XX).

Corral

Forcing giant, albino alligators to steer clear from snatching New Yorkers or head straight for a trap is no mean feat. Whether they're targeting an unusual cryptid or not, hunters must figure out what the monster fears to temporarily control their movement.

The primary actor threatens the monster, causing it to move in a specific direction at its full Speed. Some secondary actors ensure the monster has nowhere to hide while others herd it toward a dead end or trap.

Action: Contested

Dice Pools: Primary: Strength or Manipulation + Intimidation vs. Composure + Empathy + Potency/Rank. Secondary: Wits + Composure (keeping target in sight, 1/5); Manipulation + Subterfuge or Survival (herding target, 1/3)

Roll Results

Success: Target goes where the hunters wish. If it takes more than a turn to get there, the hunters must continue to make the contested teamwork roll each turn to keep the Tactic going until either the target arrives, the primary actor fails a roll, or anyone decides to stop. If the target arrives, the players may declare that something reasonably likely happens when it gets there, such as the monster opens a particular door or loses line of sight to someone in another room.

Exceptional Success: The hunters surround the monster upon arrival and may choose one character to take an immediate instant action regardless of Initiative.

Failure: The hunters lose track of the monster.

Dramatic Failure: The monster catches wind of the ruse. It may take an action immediately, regardless of Initiative, even if it has already taken one before Initiative resets.

Harvest

Not all hunts are about the kill. Hunters who want to study their prey or claim supernatural advantages for themselves need to harvest samples from monsters in the field, and few monsters sit quietly for the syringe.

The primary actor collects the sample, while some secondary actors hold the monster still and others provide the necessary knowledge to ensure they collect what they need.

Requirements: Any actor: Occult 2. Any actor: a Specialty related to the target's monster type in any Skill.

Action: Contested

Dice Pools: Primary: Dexterity + Medicine vs. Strength + (Athletics or Brawl) + Potency. Secondary: Strength + Brawl (restraining, 1/3); Intelligence + Occult (knowledge, 1/2 or 0/2 if characters have previously researched the monster)

Roll Results

Success: The primary actor collects one sample — they yank out a fang, extract a vial of blood, cut out a venom sac, etc. The hunters may continue to make the contested teamwork roll each turn to keep the Tactic going and collect another sample per additional turn. As soon as the primary actor fails a roll or anyone decides to stop, the Tactic ends. The primary actor gains the Informed Condition regarding the creature.

Exceptional Success: As success, but the hunters may also either collect a number of samples on the first turn of the Tactic equal to the total participants, or fully restrain the monster, inflicting the Immobilized Tilt.

Failure: The monster eludes the hunters.

Dramatic Failure: The monster lashes out at the primary actor, inflicting the Stunned Tilt, and automatically escapes any grapple or restraints.

Lure

Setting traps to turn the tables on would-be predators is useless without bait. Hunters who want to lure a monster out of hiding or to a particular location use this Tactic to make use of hard-won knowledge.

One secondary actor presents — or is — the bait, while others draw the target in with rituals or clever word of mouth, and carefully hide the ruse. Once they're ready, the primary actor drops the other shoe.

Requirements: Any actor: Occult 2. Characters must know something about the target they can use to entice it, such as an Aspiration, a weakness, or a favored type of victim.

Action: Contested: The primary actor's and baiting secondary actor's rolls take their actions, while other secondary actors' rolls take half an hour each

Dice Pools: Primary: Wits + Composure vs. Wits + Composure + Potency; Secondary: Presence + Persuasion or Subterfuge (bait, 1/1); Manipulation + Occult or Streetwise (drawing target in, 1/2); Dexterity + Larceny (concealing lure, 0/2)

Roll Results

Success: The target falls for the ruse or is drawn to the hunters by arcane rites, and comes to a place of their choosing, taking the bait. If the primary actor springs a physical trap, she automatically catches the monster. If she attacks, she takes it by surprise (p. XX). Other actions should similarly have their desired effects as long as they only take one turn; for instance, she may snap the perfect photo that proves the monster's existence or tear away a tarp to let in sunlight. However, the character who offered the bait remains within arm's reach of the monster — inside the trap, if they spring one.

Exceptional Success: The hunter who presented or posed as bait manages to get out of the trap or line of fire, and the monster can't target him for a full turn.

Failure: The monster does not fall for the ruse.

Dramatic Failure: The monster wises up to the lure and takes the hunters by surprise instead, ambushing them or preparing some worse fate that they walk into unawares. This reverse trap needn't be sprung immediately — the Storyteller can hold it in abeyance for a later dramatic moment.

Scatter

When a plan falls apart disastrously, the cell has to get the hell out of there and live to fight another day. Hunters are rarely so lucky as to stumble across opportunities to do that against superhuman foes, though, so usually, one of them has to take one for the team.

The primary actor coordinates the group's efforts to scatter and ensures they know where to meet up later, while most of the secondary actors find places to hide and escape routes without giving the plan away. One secondary actor instead stays behind to distract the threat.

Action: Contested

Dice Pools: Primary: Wits + Composure vs. Wits + Composure + Potency. Secondary: Dexterity + Stealth (escape, 1/5); Presence + Expression or Intimidation (distraction, 1/1)

Roll Results

Success: All participants except the distraction escape the scene immediately with no further harm or risk, and the primary actor gains the Informed Condition regarding the threat they escaped. The one left behind must fend for herself.

Exceptional Success: As success, and the character left behind automatically finds a way to escape the scene as well after a number of turns equal to the total number of participants.

Failure: The hunters fail to leave the fight, which continues.

Dramatic Failure: The players have a choice. The ruse fails completely, inflicting the Beaten Down Tilt on all participants and no one escapes; or they can successfully escape at the cost of letting the threat catch the distracting character outright and achieve its intent in the fight, as long as it isn't lethal. It might capture her, put her under a spell, or knock her unconscious and leave her lost and alone without her phone, for instance.

Social Tactics

The following Tactics use primarily Social Attributes and Skills or are useful in primarily Social contexts.

Adrenaline Rush

Taking on a foe with unholy advantages is daunting, to say the least. Hunters can pump each other up beyond reason to push themselves past their usual limitations and banish fear, for a time.

The secondary actors enact a ritual of sorts, and the primary actor leads it. It could be a literal rite, with focusing chants and blessings of aid, or it could be more akin to a football team's pregame traditions — or a little of both. The primary actor provides a capstone for the ritual to shove all the participants into overdrive.

Action: Instant

Dice Pools: Primary: Presence + Expression; Secondary: Resolve + Occult (rite, 1/6, or 0/6 if someone pumps the group up), Resolve + Empathy (pumping up, 1/6, or 0/6 if someone performs a rite)

Roll Results

Success: For the next full scene, the participants don't fall unconscious if their Health boxes fill with bashing damage, and they don't suffer wound penalties. They gain the successes on the primary actor's roll as a bonus to all Resistance traits for the purpose of resisting (not contesting) actions or supernatural powers that would inflict fear or cause them to question themselves, to a maximum of +5 or the number of participants, whichever is higher.

Exceptional Success: The primary actor may grant a beneficial Condition to all participants, rather than just herself.

Failure: The hunters fail to rile themselves up.

Failure: High on danger, the participants work themselves into a frenzy, losing their better instincts in the rush of adrenaline. They all suffer the Insane Tilt for the next full scene and can't end it early.

Freeing Mind

As people who survive on hard-won trust in their comrades, hunters fear mind control and demonic possession more than most horrors. When one among them is compromised, the other cell members exhaust all their options before admitting defeat and losing one of their own. This Tactic lets them fight through the false memories and feelings to restore someone's mind to the state it was in before a ghost, spirit, demon, or other antagonist took over. It is a social means of connecting to the person's mind as opposed to an exorcism which uses occult and religious methods to drive an unwelcome antagonist out of their body.

The primary actor antagonizes the target to force her subconscious into fighting the influence, while the secondary actors call upon bonds of friendship and shared experience to remind the target what she's fighting for. In certain circumstances, another secondary actor might need to fend off interruptions or outside attempts to poison the target against her fellows or stop the target from fleeing the scene.

This Tactic is an extended action, and the time each roll takes depends on the effect the hunters are up against. For an effect that would last a scene or less, each roll represents five minutes of work. For an effect that would last longer than a scene, each roll represents one hour of work.

If any participants devote rolls to controlling the situation and succeed, nothing from the outside may interrupt or sabotage the extended action. The target cannot attempt escape. If any of these secondary actors fails dramatically, the hunters must deal with an interruption, such as the target escaping or a monster crashing the party; the extended action can resume later without ending the Tactic, but all participants suffer a cumulative one-die penalty for each such dramatic failure rolled.

Requirements: The target must suffer a Mental or Social effect imposed by a supernatural power or phenomenon that causes her to act counter to her best interests or out of character. Examples include possession, a magical command, false love, or unnatural memory loss.

Action: Extended and Contested: Successes required are 2x the monster's Potency.

Dice Pools: Primary: Manipulation + Intimidation or Subterfuge vs. subject's Composure + Resolve + the Potency of the monster that inflicted the effect. Secondary: Presence + Persuasion or Empathy (appealing to emotions, 1/2); Wits + Brawl, Weaponry, or Intimidation (controlling the situation, 0/3, ND)

Roll Results

Success: The target spends a Willpower point; if she can't, the Tactic fails.

For simple effects like Tilts or single commands, the effect ends immediately. For more complex effects, such as those represented by Conditions or those that would last longer than a scene, the effect is suppressed for the rest of the current scene and the Storyteller offers a new, alternate way for the target to resolve the Condition or end the effect permanently, such as sacrificing something significant, gaining Willpower through their Virtue, or harming the monster that inflicted the effect.

For Persistent Conditions or effects that last longer than a day, the effect is suppressed for the rest of the current scene but can't be ended this way; however, the target gains bonus dice equal to their Resolve on the next roll they make to resolve or end it permanently. Conditions that resolve as a result of this Tactic still grant Beats as normal.

Exceptional Success: As success, but the target's player (or Storyteller, for characters they control) may instead end the effect immediately even if it's more complex. If they do so, Conditions grant no Beats for resolution.

Failure: The hunters fail to goad the target.

Dramatic Failure: The hunters do or say the wrong thing and prompt the target to either attack someone, ignoring Defense, or succumb to some side effect or worsening of the influence, and then escape the scene.

Expose

Sometimes it's more important to shine a light on the darkness and expose it for all the world to see than to simply get rid of it. With the right combination of investigative technique and clever setup, hunters can force their prey into tipping its hand.

The secondary actors find the right times and places to take pictures, catch the target on surveillance cameras, and record incriminating statements. Then, the primary actor corners the target and either holds the evidence over their head or blurts it out in front of just the right people — to hell with consequences.

If a secondary actor fails dramatically, the target captures or compromises that actor in some way in addition to the usual effects.

Requirements: The characters must already know or have the means to easily discover the identity and nature of the target, represented by a Condition like Informed, a previously successful Tactic like Identification or Profiling, Clues from an investigation (p. XX), or information the characters gained another way.

Action: Contested: Secondary actors spend an hour before rolling, the primary actor must spend five minutes.

Dice Pools: Primary: Wits + Presence or Manipulation vs. Manipulation + Subterfuge + Potency; Secondary: Wits + Investigation or Stealth (gathering evidence, 1/4); Wits + Socialize (finding key people to tell, 1/3)

Roll Results

Success: The hunters may inflict either the Leveraged (Primary Actor) Condition or the Notoriety Condition (p. XX) on the target, depending on whether they choose to blackmail the target or expose it once and for all. If they choose Leveraged, the target must submit to two requests to shed the Condition. If they choose Notoriety, their impressions for Social maneuvering with other hunters in the area improve by one for the rest of the story.

Exceptional Success: As success, and each hunter gains a temporary dot of a relevant Merit thanks to their efforts for the rest of the story. For instance, one might gain an extra dot of Status in his compact, while another gains a new Mentor eager to capitalize on her success, or a dot of Fame as a paranormal reporter.

Failure: The characters all gain the Leveraged or Notoriety Condition instead, at the Storyteller's discretion, depending on how the target turns the tables.

Creating New Tactics

Players may want to create their own Tactics in play, as situations arise that seem ripe for complex, team-based actions. A Tactic doesn't need requirements unless it's hard to imagine succeeding without a specific background or piece of knowledge. Most Tactics give players more options in combat than kill or be killed and help introduce fun complications to the story as the drama of their risks pays off — whether in success or in failure.

The Storyteller should work with the players to create a new Tactic using the following guidelines.

Concept

A good Tactic has a specific, desired outcome. Some Tactics can have any kind of target, while some only make sense when used against a monster. In general, Tactics can:

- Combine what would normally be multiple and separate rolled actions into a single Tactic to save the characters time
- Grant benefits a simple teamwork action doesn't by itself
- Create new actions the characters can't otherwise perform with mundane Skills
- Allow the characters to do something in action timing that they otherwise can't
- Allow more people to contribute to a teamwork action than normal

Remember, Tactics incur great risk, so they should always confer greater benefits than a simple teamwork action on its own could achieve. Likewise, since every failure is dramatic, the stakes should be higher than usual.

Dice Pools

Keep in mind that secondary actors usually use different Skills than the primary actor does. Typically, Tactics also offer secondary actors more than one way to participate. Tactics allow all characters to shine with their various strengths as they work together to achieve a common goal, so keep that in mind when you're forming dice pools for your new Tactic.

OPENING FICTION

I saw the girl again: black hair, a slender frame in silhouette, the warm circle of a child's face. Between each slant of shadow, her appearance flickered. Wolf to youth, youth to wolf. No footprints followed behind.

I exhaled into my scarf. My breath unwrapped in slow plumes of white.

Not an amarok, though I'd thought she was one in the beginning. Werewolf was my second guess. But once, I saw her transform into a gargantuan boar, tusks curving from her snout, four too many. And once, when the moon was a cut of silver, I thought I saw her untangle from her skin and take flight.

"Aswang," my Greenland contact had said. But what could one be doing here in Duluth so many miles from home?

• • •

It had been three weeks since the aswang arrived in my woods.

Three weeks and no reports of death on the radio. No disappearances. No miscarriages, no deflated wombs pierced by a proboscis tongue. Nothing.

Yet.

I dialed down the volume of my little box radio and flipped through the channels until I found something jazzy. Rose as Skip James began to moan, fingerpicking through the chorus of "Be Ready When He Comes." Small ironies. Far below, the aswang continued pacing through the pines.

I sighed. At some point, the aswang would need to eat. Even the dead require nourishment. And what kind of watchman would I be if I permitted such to happen? So, I loaded my rifle cartridges with salt, holy water, the dirt from the church. I holstered a bolo and unwound the cured tail of a stingray from my right wrist. There are so many ways to kill an aswang. It is a wonder they aren't just myth.

Then, I waited as the dusk gorgeted the horizon, rose and drips of gold, staining the mountains orange until the stars seeped into the encroaching blackness before descending from the watchtower.

The air shivered with ice. The wind dragged veils of snow across the air, thick upon the steps and my shoulders, the brim of my Yankees cap.

The woods were quiet, of course. If the aswang noticed my entrance, she made no sign of it. Nonetheless, I paused at the foot of the steps, gripping my rifle. Nothing emerged to challenge the loud *clack* when I cycled the bolt. Somewhere, something howled — a ragged sound, full of grief.

Still nothing.

I slid a vial from a pocket and decanted its contents onto the snow. The oil — a rare attar, imported at considerable expense — began to smoke at once, the substance lurching forward as though propelled by some invisible breeze. I followed its tendrils into the dark.

I went deeper, the pines closing like teeth behind me, their shadows transformed into an oil slick. Between their branches, the constellations burned softly, like candles at a midnight mass.

“I am not afraid to die.” Her voice was soft, older than her appearance let on, a puff of sound and heat against my ear. It carried in its lilt decades in America but also decades more in the monsoon-steeped Philippines. For all of its proximity, I could see nothing of its owner.

I stilled. “I’m not here to hurt you.”

“No? But you brought so many, many toys to hurt me with.” A rattling laugh, tired. “I can smell all of them. Liar. It is alright, however. I understand your kind.”

“Precaution.” I told her. “You are dangerous, after all.”

“I am exhausted. That is what I am.”

Slowly, I unslung my rifle and placed it atop the snow. “In that case, I have something for you. A gift.”

“A gift.” She repeated, her voice swooping upwards. The aswang had moved into the trees. I could hear a flutter of wings pulled together, rested against a slim spine.

From my bag, I pulled a thermos and unscrewed the lid. A warm, copper scent flooded the cold. “I figured you might be hungry.”

“Blood?”

“Body-temperature blood.” I held the thermos aloft. Sometimes, to kill a monster, you have to give them what they need most.

There was twitch of motion and she took the container. I heard the rustle of leaves and branches settling as the aswang returned to her perch. “Why?”

“You haven’t fed in three weeks. I don’t want anyone to get hurt.” I paused. “You are an aswang, right?”

The darkness returned no reply.

“Why are you here?” I said to her.

“Because there is no safe place for us left in America. I came here with those who were once my family, who were my blood, and for a while, it was a place of plenty. Hard work, certainly. Thankless work. But we did what was needed. And now, with what is unfolding, it’s no longer a place I wish to be.” She stopped then.

“You’re not making any sense.”

“The truth, then? The werewolf you hunt slaughtered my kind. I want it dead just as much as you.” The aswang laughed. “My turn for questions: We share a common enemy. Can we...set aside our differences for now? You know you are outmatched.”

I swallowed the sourness that rose — a lode of bile at the base of my tongue — at the thought of teaming up with a monster. In my spit, I could taste sulfur and cinders, but I knew the vampire was right. “For now.”

She laughed again, slow and rich. “A hunter with manners. Interesting.”

I smiled. “Make no mistake. We are not friends; we are enemies. When this is over, I will find you. Do we understand each other?”

“Yes.” And she rose into the firmament, a spiral of flesh and bare spine, membranous wings, the curve of a smile flashing bright.

It was only much later that I realized she’d had taken my thermos as well.

I sighed, went home, and tried not to think about the aswang. At least, not until that werewolf was dead.

END OPENING FICTION

Chapter Five: Monsters Around the World

“Villains used to always die in the end. Even the monsters. Frankenstein — Dracula, you’d kill them with a stake. Now, the nightmare guy comes back.”

— Benicio del Toro, American Actor

Since the dawn of time, monsters have always preyed on the innocent and naïve. Their existence is so terrifying most people can’t accept the truth: Their nightmares could be real, and the darkness teems with life. Human fears manifest when personal anxieties and phobias take the form of crawling spiders crawl and mysterious humanoid shapes linger in the shadows. To help them cope, victims share urban legends about bizarre animal attacks and spirits of vengeance to warn people away. To know fear is to be human. To understand what shape those fears take, however, is to be a *hunter*.

In **Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition**, the definition of monster can range from a giant alligator slithering through the sewers in New York City to a shape-shifting soucouyant from Trinidad. Monsters fall into several different classifications including cryptids, spirits, humanoids, elementals, bloodsuckers, were-creatures, fae-touched, and more, and they exist all around the globe. Some monsters are fiercely intelligent while others act on pure instinct — which forces hunters to ask questions they may not want to answer.

Some hunters like to keep it simple: Monsters are supernatural creatures that attack and harm victims. Those who don’t wrestle with their conscience. Should a cell feel sorry for a werewolf who’s desperate to find a cure for their condition? Is it right to exorcise a ghost simply because they’re a nuisance? Or kill a cursed shapeshifter who helped the cell track a dangerous warlock? When the hunt is easy and the monster is no longer a problem, hunters feel like heroes. When it’s not, however, they’re forced to examine their thoughts and feelings before making a move. Either way, it’s up to the hunters to figure out how to deal with the strange and unusual, because if they don’t act, the monster will.

Footprints and Sightings

The core of a **Hunter** chronicle is the hunt. Sometimes, to track down a monster a hunter needs more information than witnesses or evidence can provide. Experienced hunters know all too well how cloudy a victim’s memory can be and must learn how to distinguish coyote from werewolf. To help point a cell in the right direction, leverage the strengths of your chronicle’s tier. Tier-one chronicles could benefit from a legendary hunter’s journal filled with clues, tier-two chronicles might leverage what information compacts such as Network Zero have gathered, and

conspiracies in tier-three chronicles could tap into their considerable resources to provide internal memos and reports.

The second way hunters can find information is by introducing knowledgeable Storyteller characters. Hint that tier-one hunters are not alone and lend the cell a hand with a grizzled veteran when the situation calls for it. Introduce a tier-two compact to which the player characters don't belong and round out their expertise with like-minded or competitive hunters. Show how other members of a tier-three conspiracy have their own goals that coincide and oppose a cell's.

By offering two different ways to find information, hunters will have plenty of opportunities to expand their knowledgebase during a hunt and delve deeper into hunter lore and relationships.

This chapter first explains the nuts and bolts of building your own monsters for this chronicle, including rules for ghosts and spirits. Storytellers are encouraged to create their own monsters or customize existing creatures presented in this chapter. Storytellers looking to drop a slasher into their chronicle may reference slasher-creation rules found on p. XX.

Then, this chapter provides a sampling of monsters found in different parts of the world rooted in modern myths and urban legends. Some monsters are portents to warn players they're about to face a bigger, nastier threat while others are more straightforward to hunt. These creatures comprise, by no means, an exhaustive list of threats hunters might face, because sometimes the "monsters" are human. A broad range of examples have been included to give Storytellers more tools to add plot twists and reduce "monster-of-the-week" hunts that may feel too repetitive over the course of a chronicle.

Building a Monster

Hunter antagonists can range from a cult leader bent on protecting their master to an epidemic of parasitic plants, a rogue hunter cell, or a spirit forced to do its summoner's bidding. What makes a monster unique is its set of Dread Powers and its place in a hunter's world.

When building a monster, save the rules for last. Instead, figure out what place the antagonist has in a chronicle, and build its purpose and backstory first. Otherwise, one monster is indistinguishable from another — save for its Dread Powers. This method will help ensure Storytellers are better prepared to handle how hunters explore an antagonist's storytelling potential in their cell, compact, or conspiracy.

Step One: Concept and Motivation

What does it want? All monsters want or need something — even if they act on instinct. A spirit of vengeance's motivation may be clear, while a ghost's desperate attempts to contact a cell may not be. Frame the monster's motivation according to what role it has in your story. Then, think about what the hunters might assume the monster wants. The space between why a chupacabra is terrorizing Phoenix, Arizona and why the hunters think that creature is doing so creates tension and drama.

How does it achieve that? What sort of actions would a demon take? Does La Llorona convince people to help her find her children and, when they don't, share visions of her grief with them? Is the Bell Witch the source of nightmares? This is where you get an idea of the monster's place in the setting and how the hunters may first hear about them. Be sure to sketch out a few ideas to help you decide which Dread Powers are appropriate.

What are the physical details? What does your monster look like? Is it humanoid or more animalistic? What color are its eyes? What's the shape of its mouth? How old is the monster? Details allow Storytellers to embellish what a monster looks like through the eyes of a witness, police officer, or fellow hunter. Appearance is important to hunters, because sightings are often counted as evidence. When deciding your monster's appearance, think about how this affects its Dread Powers, too.

What is its history? Does the monster "belong" to the location in which it was sighted, or does it appear to be out of place? Where does it come from? How old is it? Flesh out the monster by deciding what secrets it holds. Hunters may unlock these details over the course of a chronicle to track a monster down. Monsters with mysterious origins or dark pasts may be harder to track; the Storyteller should have answers so the hunters may uncover them. During this step, you may want to assign a Storyteller character who possesses one or more pieces of the puzzle.

Step Two: Potency

Potency measures a monster's raw supernatural power and is rated from 1 to 10 dots, with 1 being the weakest and 10 being the highest. This trait determines a suggested range of points you'll spend on Attributes, Skills, Merits, and Dread Powers.

All monsters have a minimum Potency of 1. Additionally, Storytellers should note how Potency confers the following effects:

Willpower Capacity: Monsters add their Potency to their Resolve + Composure to determine their Willpower.

Willpower Expenditure: A monster may spend 1 point of Willpower in a turn per dot of Potency. It may not, however, spend more than 1 Willpower on the same effect. A Potency 3 monster may not spend 3 Willpower points to give itself a +9 bonus on an action, for example, but it can spend those 3 Willpower points to bolster its action, increase its Defense, and activate a Dread Power in the same turn.

Supernatural Tolerance: Monsters are more resistant to the supernatural. Add the monster's Potency dots to any contested roll to resist a supernatural power. This power may originate from a variety of sources including an Endowment, Bygone, or Dread Powers used by other monsters.

INSERT TABLE

Potency	Trait Limits*	Attribute Dots	Skill Dots	Dread Power Ranks	Merit Dots
1	5 dots 15-18	10	3	3	
2	6 dots 19-22	15	5	5	
3	7 dots 23-26	20	7	7	
4	8 dots 27-30	25	9	9	
5	9 dots 31-34	30	11	11	
6	10 dots 35-38	35	15	13	
7	10 dots 39-42	40	19	15	
8	10 dots 43-46	45	23	17	
9	10 dots 47-50	50	27	19	

* Maximums are permanent ratings, not Traits boosted by Dread Powers.

END TABLE

Step Three: Anchors and Aspirations

Monsters generally have Virtues and Vices (p. XX) like most characters. Monsters are not human, however, so what they might believe to be virtuous (Gluttony, for example) could be the exact opposite to a hunter. Virtues and Vices are strongly recommended for recurring antagonists and human-seeming monsters: vampires, werewolves, ghosts, shapeshifters, warlocks, demons, etc. The more animalistic or elemental a monster is, the less a Virtue and Vice will matter in a chronicle.

Storytellers must choose a minimum of one Aspiration, up to three, per monster. These may build off the antagonist's motivation or spin the monster's purpose in a new direction. Aspirations connect the monster to the setting and give it something to do in the story.

When creating Aspirations, think about what the monster knows about hunters. Are they aware they're being tracked? Have they had run ins with it before? This detail adds a layer of intrigue and deepens a cell's reason to find out more about the monster.

Sample Aspirations are as follows:

- Locate a safe place to hibernate for the season.
- Enact vengeance on the people who tried to murder me.
- Find food to satiate my ravenous hunger.
- Make myself invaluable to a hunter cell, compact, or conspiracy.
- Erase evidence of my existence.

Step Four: Dread Powers

Choose a number of Dread Powers (p. XX) as determined by your monster's Potency. Some Dread Powers have multiple dots you can purchase; each dot typically counts as an additional Dread Power. The dot ratings are noted in each description when applicable.

During this stage, take note of which Dread Powers support your vision of the monster's appearance. Remember: hunters often use evidence to track down a monster; visual cues and witness testimonies are part of every **Hunter** investigation. As the Storyteller, use what hunters don't know to throw them a curveball. After all, more than one type of creature can have glowing red eyes or the ability to shapeshift into a slithering pile of snakes.

The Dread Powers you choose also help inform the decisions you make when allocating dots in Attributes, Skills, Skill Specialties, and Merits. If you do not wish to spend all of the Dread Power dots, you may allocate them to Merits.

Step Five: Attributes

Unlike characters, monsters do not prioritize Attribute categories (p. XX) for point allocation. They simply receive a lump sum of points that are spent according to the Storyteller's wishes.

Though you may want to build a monster by evenly distributing points, most antagonists function best when their strengths and weaknesses are clear. A monster with five dots in Intelligence and one in Strength is more compelling than one with three in each. Hunters can quickly form strategies to attack an intelligent monster who's not strong but won't know where to start if they're average at everything.

When assigning points, identify in which Attribute the monster is strongest and in which they're weakest. For example, if you decide the witch in the woods with a Potency of one is best at Presence but weakest at Dexterity, assign five dots to Presence and one or two to Dexterity.

Step Six: Skills

Now that you've assigned Attributes, it's time to figure out what Skills the monster has. You may assign points to Skills derived from the monster's Potency as you see fit, and do not have to prioritize categories.

Before assigning Skill points, cross out the Skills that don't make sense for the monster. Then, determine two Skills at which the monster is best and two in which it's weakest; max out its Skill points for the first two, and assign one dot for the second two. Following this, distribute Skills that make sense for the monster's abilities. Monsters don't really bother with Skill Specialties; just assign an additional dot.

In some cases, you may get stuck. A wendigo may not physically be able to pick up a gun, so that Skill isn't relevant to it. It can, however, use its claws to attack, so put dots in Brawl instead. After exhausting all options, if you can't select any more relevant Skills, you may move on to the next step. After monster creation, leftover points are discarded.

Step Seven: Merits

Assign Merits (pp. XX-XX) if applicable but be careful to balance them against any Dread Powers the monster might have. You may safely ignore innate Merits that modify the monster's traits. Size and Speed are calculated in the next step and feel free to give them a little more than they would have based on their Attributes.

When considering in which, if any, Merits to purchase dots, review Social Merits (p. XX). Humanoid monsters who can pass as everyday citizens may have Allies, Contacts, Retainers, and Staff. These Merits provide more hooks to draw players into the monster's orbit.

For physical, violent monsters, refer to the Dread Powers you've chosen. Additional Physical Merits may tip the scales in the monster's favor and force the hunters into a vicious, extended battle when confronted. This is not necessarily a bad thing, because hunters possess teamwork, Tactics, and other gifts like Endowments geared toward dealing with a wide array of threats. The key here is *balance*. If the hunters have an impressive set of physical skills, you might decide the monsters need to match their prowess so a fight is more satisfying.

Step Eight: Advantages

Finally, calculate the monster's Advantages. If any of the numbers derived here don't feel right, you are free to change them. The formulae for calculating Advantages are there to give you a ballpark range and are based on the values for an average person.

Willpower

A monster's Willpower equals its Resolve + Composure + Potency. A monster may spend a number of Willpower points to activate Dread Powers equal to its Potency each turn.

Integrity

Monsters with Dread Powers do not have Integrity. A human being who possesses an innate supernatural gift, however, is still mortal and has Integrity. Some monsters, like shapeshifters and warlocks, may seem human. Ultimately, it is up to the Storyteller if a monster has Integrity or not. Should you decide that Integrity is crucial to your antagonist, refer to p. XX and assign an appropriate rating.

Size

There is no restriction on a monster's size. It can be as big or as small as needed. A typical adult human's Size is 5. Remember that Size factors into a monster's Health as well.

INSERT TABLE

Size Object

1	Handheld Object or Tool, Rodent
2	Infant, Cat, Sword, Shotgun, Skateboard
3	Mid-size Dog, Child, Window, Two-handed Tool, Stool
4	Spear, Teenager, Chair
5	Adult, Door, Electric Scooter
6	Large Adult, Deer, Bicycle
7	Alligator, Bear, Coffin
8	Vault Door, Compact Car
10	Sports Car, Moose
12	Shark, Luxury Car
15	SUV, Elephant
20	Light Airplane, Yacht, Semi Truck
25	Dump Truck, Houseboat, Tour Bus, Semi with Trailer
30	Small House, Whale
40	Large House, Small Cemetery
50	Massive Airliner, Mansion
60	Small Apartment or Office Building
80	Large Apartment Building, Retail Store
100	Skyscraper, Shopping Mall, Stadium

END TABLE

Speed

A monster's Speed is equal to Strength + Dexterity. Some monsters may have a Speed of 0 if stationary. Some monsters have multiple Speeds that vary according to their shape or method of locomotion. If your monster can fly, swim, slither, burrow, etc., note those movement modes and Speeds here as well. For more overtly supernatural forms of movement, like turning into fog or stepping through mirrors, see Dread Powers.

Health

A monster's Health is its Size + Stamina.

Initiative Modifier

A monster's Initiative Modifier is equal to the monster's Dexterity + Composure.

Defense

Defense is equal to the lower of a monster's Wits or Dexterity, plus its Athletics Skill.

Weakness (Optional)

Not all monsters have an explicit weakness, but many do. If it seems appropriate, give your monster a Ban or a Bane, or both, as described on p. XX. Use the monster's Potency (halved and rounded up) as its Rank for determining the severity of the effect.

Finishing Touches

Do one last check to make sure your monster is doing what you need it to in the story. If you anticipate the monster confronting players head on, spot check its dice pools against the characters'. Check the cell's teamwork, Tactics, Endowments, Skills, and equipment to see what capabilities the hunters have.

If, at first glance, it looks like the monster will completely outclass the players, even the playing field by giving the players another way to survive the monster or by toning down the creature's rules. Conversely, if the players' dice pools outmatch the monster's, don't be afraid to beef up the monster's traits.

Dread Powers

Dread Powers are a streamlined way of handling the staggering variety of supernatural abilities possessed by targets of the Vigil. These rules do not make a distinction between different creature types — vampires, shapeshifters, witches, and stranger things all make use of the same Dread Power system. This allows the Storyteller to customize each creature's powers without worrying about whether a monster is "eligible" to own or use a specific ability. Dread Powers, when used, are also clues the hunters can use when researching, identifying, and encountering a specific monster.

Storytellers will note that while costs are provided in each Dread Power's entry, there isn't a suggested dice pool for use. This is because different creatures might activate the same power in different ways according to their nature and abilities. Storytellers are encouraged be creative when determining what dice to roll. Some Dread Powers do not require a dice roll, however, and only cost Willpower. For example, an occultist unleashing a Blast of unholy energy might use Intelligence + Occult – Stamina, representing how she uses her knowledge of the dark arts to cast a deadly spell. By contrast, a hellhound's howl might also be a Blast, but use Strength +

Intimidate – Stamina to reflect the unearthly hound’s physical power. Then, if successful, inflict an appropriate Condition to narratively reflect how the hunter responds to a show of force.

Likewise, the Storyteller should feel free to adjust a power’s name and description to better suit the creature they’re introducing in a chronicle. For example, the Fire Elemental power might be renamed to Heart of Darkness for a demonic warlock. Instead of being wreathed in flames, the warlock is described as a roiling nimbus of cold shadows. The game mechanics are the same, but the narrative effect is unique to the monster. This technique can also help Storytellers increase the more mysterious aspects of the hunt and avoid revealing a tell that gives the hunters a boring win.

As a general guideline, Dread Powers do not have range restrictions or suffer from other penalties by design. The monster you create is not natural, and their Dread Powers often defy logic; this is partly what makes them so terrifying — even for hunters. But also consider what your monster is and if a range is necessary, a demon might need to have a conversation to steal someone’s soul, while a more esoteric monster may suck it straight from a person 10 yards away.

Most Dread Powers are recurring abilities a creature can use multiple times in the same session; the Willpower cost applies each time the power is used. A few Dread Powers may only be used once, like Last Gasp, and have been included to add variability and help Storytellers increase tension.

Agonize

Since I joined my cell I’ve been shot twice, bitten six times, and broken more bones than I can remember. Hell, we were even been struck by lightning after a warlock spit at me. Bad as those were, though, I don’t ever want to feel what the headmaster did again. Not for an instant. My advice? If he’s got you cornered, use that last bullet wisely.

The creature spends 1 Willpower and rolls to cause excruciating torment for a specific target who is incapable of saying more than a few pained sentences at a time. On a success, Agonize inflicts the Immobilized Tilt as the monster maintains eye contact with the victim or concentrates on the target in some other manner.

Animal Shift (•-•••)

I was visiting a friend in Japan, touring several historic sites, when we found ourselves in front of a waterfall. I stopped to admire its beauty, and heard a woman singing. I turned around, and saw a gorgeous lady draped in cobwebs. She reached out to me, but my friend stopped me cold. “Don’t do that. Just run!” “Why?” I asked. “Look! She’s a jorōgumo!” When I looked at the woman, I mean really saw her, I could tell she wasn’t human. When she turned into a spider, we ran so fast and hard we never looked back.

Animal Shift allows the monster to change into the form of a specific animal by spending 2 Willpower. Shapeshifters can turn into ants, spiders, snakes, wolves, bears, seals, or any other animal the Storyteller deems appropriate. This effect lasts as long as the monster wills it; if the creature falls unconscious in their animal state, it may revert to its natural form after several hours.

This Dread Power may be purchased up to three times with each purchase granting an additional animal into which the monster can shift.

Special: Willpower does not need to be spent when reverting to the creature's natural form. It only needs to be spent when activating the power.

Black Gate

Got a text that the tooth fairy was spotted all over town. Sounded strange. The tooth fairy? Gotta be a hoax, right? Managed to correlate a series of thefts with the tooth fairy's appearance. The perp had a fondness for ivory, of course. Anyway, we figured it'd hit the local museum eventually, so we hacked into security and watched for signs of movement outside in the van. We didn't have to wait long. Of course, the tooth fairy wasn't a fairy at all — it was a shriveled thing that ate old bones. We decided to rush it, but never had the chance. Damn thing opened a portal right next to a mummy, stepped into it, and vanished.

The monster has infernal knowledge allowing it to instantaneously travel. The method for creating a Black Gate may be a ritual sacrifice, spell, or some other mechanism chosen at purchase. The monster can travel a distance based on its Potency at 20 yards per dot for a maximum of 200 yards. This allows the creature to enter locked rooms, vaults, and other secure locations.

To open the porthole, the creature spends 3 Willpower and takes an appropriate extended action. When a Black Gate is created, it opens a direct route from a fixed point in the physical plane to another of the creature's choosing for minutes equal to the monster's Potency. When the time expires, the doorway slams shut. The monster may step back and forth through the Black Gate as much as it likes during that time. The portal can only be used by the monster who opened it and any victims it drags through.

Blackout

We thought we were well prepared to take on the mothman. We heard every witness' testimony, read every article, even did a little surveillance of our own. We had all the right tools to capture it: stun guns, tranquilizers. Hell's bells, we even had an electric net. So what went wrong? We managed to draw the creature into a trap we set up in a storage unit, but before we got inside? The damn thing sucked the shadows into its body, spit 'em back out, then everything went dark. We didn't stand a chance.

When successful, the area is plunged into total darkness. The creature gains a +2 on subsequent rolls to reflect its ability to hunt, hide, or run better in the shadows. Blackout costs 2 Willpower.

Damnation

I can't explain it. I wish I could. It's like nothing else could satisfy me — not food, not sleep, not the hunt, nothing but...you know. Pick any sin, and that's what I did. Shoplifted. Armed robbery. Driving drunk. Even... Well, I don't want to think about that. I swear, I didn't mean to fall so hard so fast, but what could I do? Being wicked was my new normal, and anything else felt so wrong it hurt.

A monster with this Dread Power taps into a character's Vice and forces them to take quick action to fulfill their darkest desires. The roll is contested, and the character does not regain Willpower should they fall prey to this power.

Special: If Damnation is used during combat, it inflicts the Stunned Tilt. Following a success, the character then suffers -2 to any action that does not indulge their Vice.

Discorporate

“Don’t let a single rat get away!” Seanan yelled, stamping furiously on the squeaking, biting rats that poured out of the shapeshifter’s discarded dress. Becca stomped on a rat and nearly vomited at the sickening crack; there were so many. Too many. How could they possibly kill them all? And if they didn’t, how long until the shapeshifter returned to human form?

Discorporate is used when the monster wants to escape the scene. When the creature suffers damage, is cornered or captured, or wants to quickly escape notice, it discorporates. The monster’s body dissolves into a huge swarm of vermin, carrion eaters, or similar small, repellent beasts, running in all directions. If even one tiny pest escapes, the creature’s spirit survives, and it may return whole after a period of time (hour, day, week, etc.) passes.

Dread Attack (• or ••)

When we signed up for our first hunt, we were told to track a nest of bloodsuckers that had sharp teeth. I remember cracking a joke. “What?” I said, “You mean we’re hunting Dracula? Nice pearls that vamp had. They’d look good as a pendant.” Then I saw a picture of what we were hunting. Didn’t know its name, where it was from, how old it was. Didn’t care. All I could see were rows and rows of needle-thin teeth. “We gotta fight that thing?” I asked. “Do they sell body armor for your neck?”

The monster has an innate natural weapon it can use for attacks. Examples include fangs, claws, spiky spines, or a whip tail, which act as weapons. When this Dread Power is chosen, decide if the weapon has a damage rating of 2 lethal or inflicts a Condition or Tilt upon a hit. With the two-dot version, the attack does both. This Dread Power can be taken multiple times to represent different natural weapons.

Eye Spy

“It’s these creepy oil paintings,” Morgan explained. “I’m telling you, it’s something in the paintings. Every room in the damn place has at least one, and it seems to know what goes on in there no matter what. If we want to surprise it, we’re going to have to take those down quickly and quietly. Just trust me.

The creature falls into a trance to practice its preferred form of remote viewing. The creature has a specific form of remote viewing it can practice. It might be able to see through any surveillance camera attached to a network it is accessing, or view from the eyes of a raven it touched; perhaps it can pluck one of its eyes out and leave the bloodied organ behind to observe. Using this ability requires the expenditure of 1 Willpower per hour. The creature remains aware of its surroundings while surveilling.

Glitch (• to •••••)

We managed to follow the warlock into the middle of a grove of trees. There was an altar in the center, but no victim. I tried to warn my fellow hunters. “Hey!” I cried out. “Something’s wrong. Watch out for—”, but it was too late. The warlock managed to put Roberto in a headlock and dragged his unconscious body to the altar. Wasting no time, I grabbed my rifle and aimed at the warlock’s head. I...I don’t know what happened. I had that infernal warlock. I took my shot, but the bullet missed the summoner’s head and curved to hit Roberto in the leg, instead.

Glitch comes into play once per scene when the monster spends Willpower to add dice to a pool, or to bolster a resistance trait. After the roll, reroll a number of failed dice up to the monster’s

Glitch dots. When spending to bolster a resistance trait, you may force the opponent to reroll successful dice equal to the monster's Glitch dots.

This manifests as subtle shifts in expectation, or bouts of remarkable luck. Really, what's occurring is that the fabric of reality shifts to suit the monster's immediate needs. Sometimes insignificant objects appear or disappear from the environment in order to facilitate the monster's desires.

Hex

We were visiting some friendly hunters in Brighton when they got a call from a biology student. Three-eyed toads, they said. A bad omen, they said. We'd never dealt with one, so we weren't sure what to do. We joined our mates and dropped by the uni to investigate. By the time we got there, the entire lab was covered in three-eyed frogs from floor to ceiling. "Looks like you've been hexed," I said. Simple explanation, right? The problem was we didn't know who did the hexing.

The monster causes its victim to suffer through magical means. On a success, the monster inflicts one of the following Tilts on their victim: Arm or Leg Wrack, Blinded, Drugged, or Winded. Hex costs 1 Willpower.

Home Turf (• to •••••)

I'll never forget how it felt heading into Echo Hill Penitentiary that dreadful night. We were all there — Luke, Cameron, Jack, Sean, even the doc. We knew it was the warden's territory, but we had to finish the job, because that's what hunters do. If we'd known just how much scarier that damn ghost was on his own turf, though, we might have said our goodbyes first.

The creature has a lair that is well-protected. The location might be an abandoned warehouse, forgotten cemetery, condemned sanitarium, mystical grove, or a network of caves, subway tunnels, or sewers. While on its Home Turf, the creature adds a die, one per dot purchased, to its rolls to reflect its supernatural and natural defenses.

Special: Effects for Home Turf linger when the monster is not present. Characters who tread on a monster's Home Turf suffer a penalty equal to its dots in this Dread Power to investigate it there.

Infernal

Lawrence told us that he was going to Hell one day. We didn't know that he meant he was literally a spawn of Hell and intended to go there to kick his great-great-great-something or other's ass. But when one of those infernal, fire-and-brimstone types came around fucking up the neighborhood, the thing just bowed down to Lawrence and called him "my liege" or some shit. Anyway, I'm glad Lawrence is on our side.

The monster is an infernal demon from hell. This Dread Power must be taken on any infernal demon. Infernal creatures are immune to the effects of fire and can spend 1 Willpower and make an appropriate roll to inflict the Inferno Environmental Tilt in an area.

Special: All demons have a true name. If anyone knows and uses that true name, they gain a +2 bonus to all rolls against the demon. The demon has an additional ban that it must come when it hears its name called, though it does not have to reveal itself.

Know Soul

That damn cult didn't bother torturing me. I was waiting for that, for the razor blades and pliers and hooks to come out, but they never did. The cultists just brought a big bowl over, and I looked inside at a giant orb — a ruby-red eye — and that was it. The eye chittered to them and suddenly the cultists started reciting my whole life story. How the hell did it do that?

The creature peers into the depths of its victim's soul. Spend a Willpower and make a contested roll. On success, it automatically learns the victim's Virtue, Vice, Aspirations, and current Integrity. By spending an additional Willpower point, it learns the circumstances of the character's most recent failed breaking point. Subsequent Willpower points reveal older breaking points. If the creature uses its knowledge against the victim, it earns an exceptional success on a roll of three successes or more.

Last Gasp

"Whatever you do," Connor said, staring at each member of our cell. "We take our final shot, we drop that asshole to the ground, and we run like hell. You all remember what happened to Sam and Desi? Don't you dare hesitate. We kill this thing, we're not safe yet. And we are not putting another hunter in the ground. Not today. Don't ask me why. Just do it."

After a creature dies, its corpse explodes into hot fiery lava, acidic slime, shards of ice, or some other deadly substance. Treat the Dread Power as a weapon with a rating of 3 lethal damage, and no trace of the monster's body remains. This Dread Power may create an appropriate Environmental Tilt instead of causing direct damage.

Special: One-time use. After Last Gasp is activated, the monster is no more.

Madness and Terror

I used to walk my dog in the park. I used to go grocery shopping, run to the post office, drop by my neighbors, go about my day. I used to have a life. Now? I know what's out there. What's lurking everywhere in broad daylight. Yellow, yellow, all of them yellow, whispering, shrieking, begging me to unwrap their blood-stained bandages fluttering in the wind like autumn leaves. I used to go outside, you know? But not anymore. Not while it's so yellow.

The monster destabilizes a target's mind. By expending 1 Willpower and making a roll of an appropriate dice pool contested by the victim's Composure, the monster may inflict the Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked Condition for the duration of one scene. For 3 Willpower it may instead inflict the Broken, Fugue, or Madness Condition for a scene.

Maze

Took us a while, but we figured out who was attacking all those athletes: a skinwalker who wore a soccer mom's face. We had no idea where a skinwalker might sleep, but we figured it probably moved into the victim's house — and we were right. Damn thing settled into that three-bedroom house on the corner of Pine Street, and nobody suspected anything was wrong. So, we snuck in through the back door but didn't see anything. After we wandered inside, we were led right back out again. There was no basement, no attic, not even a second floor. How did we get lost?!

The creature can turn a physical structure into an impossible maze. By spending 3 Willpower and touching the building, this Dread Power contorts the space into a tangled mess of doors, corridors, stairwells, and rooms. This effect is not permanent, however, and lasts for the duration of one hour or one scene when activated.

Visitors in the monster's maze must succeed at a Wits + Composure check minus the creature's Resolve each time they attempt to leave an intersection or progress through the labyrinth to find a specific door, room, etc. On a failure, the maze swirls and the visitors must find their bearings once again.

Multiply

We were underground in this mine, scouting out some strange noises for this corporate stooge. We figured it was good money. I mean, sure we're hunters but we gotta eat, right? Anyway, we hit a corridor and heard an eerie, hissing sound. We turned into a cramped area and saw clumps of eggs stuck to the ceiling. The minute I saw those, I gave the signal. "Light 'em up." I swear, when those eggs started to catch fire? I thought I heard them scream, "Help me!"

Multiply allows the monster to replicate and reproduce through supernatural means. Maybe it lays eggs or converts a normal person into one of its own. For egg laying or creating new monsters that does not require a victim, the monster simply spends 1 Willpower to do so. Eggs hatch new monsters in a matter of days or weeks.

To convert a person, the monster spends 3 Willpower and makes an extended action of an appropriate roll contested by the victim's Stamina. This effect is limited to corporeal creatures and does not work on ghosts, spirits, or other disembodied entities such as demons. Multiply can, however, be a power the undead possess.

Numen

We thought the thing was just a normal run of the mill shifter. That is until it pulled out some fire-starting shit and started throwing blasts of energy at us like some ghost. It wasn't a ghost though; the thing was material as you or me. Good thing silver did the trick, or we'd be goop by now.

In lieu of a Dread Power, the creature may select a Numen from the Ephemeral Entities rules (see p. XX). The Numen costs Willpower instead of Essence, and if it has a dice pool, select an appropriate Attribute + Skill for the monster.

To select additional Numen, this Dread Power may be purchased multiple times.

Poison Mist

We chased a grandmother of four who ran on all fours into an alleyway. She glared at us with the eyes of a cat. Then, she asked us, "Are you hunting me?" Tommy couldn't help but laugh. "Not anymore." The rest of us, we just started giggling, too. Grandmothers aren't monsters. They bake cookies and put bandages on sore knees. Right? Then, she started to laugh. So now we're all laughing, right? Yeah, so funny. Granny winked at us, then shifted into a cloud of mist. Floated right over our damn heads and got away!

By spending 1 Willpower, the creature shifts into a gaseous form such as toxic air, a nauseous miasma, or headache-inducing fog. Its movement is equal to its base Speed. In this form, which lasts for a maximum duration of one scene, the Poison Mist may affect targets that come into contact with it. On a successful attack roll, the victim suffers from the Poisoned Tilt.

Predator's Sense

I'm the last. I'm sure of it. I don't know what my family did or why, but that insurance salesman was so angry. He picked them all off, one by one, and now I'm the only one left. I thought I lost it

for a little while. Tried ditching him by flying up north, but he was waiting for me when I got there, watching me jog in the park. I can't run anymore. But maybe I can fight back.

The creature has incredibly honed senses for a specific type of prey, chosen when this power is selected. Against that prey — redheads, beginner occultists, families descended from hunters who killed it long ago — the creature gains a +3 bonus to all rolls related to tracking and identifying those targets and applies 8-again to these rolls.

Raise Dead

I sleep with the lights on. Everybody makes fun of me, but I don't care. When we hunt, I don't want to go out alone. When I grab a cup of tea, I don't want to be on my own, either. My cell thinks I'm needy, but I'm the only witness left breathing after my last cell fell. We were hunting a warlock, and, after an anonymous tip, we found the bastard in a cemetery. By himself, no less! We lined up a shot but missed the mark. Then, he raised his arms, called to the sky, and a hand — a skeletal corpse's hand — shot up right through the ground.

The monster can raise the dead to create an army of mindless servants. This can be used on anything Size 5 or lower. The monster spends 3 Willpower and makes an appropriate roll to infuse the servant with a modicum of life. The roll is penalized by how long the subject has been dead. For a week -1, a month -2, a year -4, and anything longer -5. Anything that's been dead less than a week retains its Attributes, Skills, Health, Size, Stamina, and Speed. They do not possess any other traits, including Dread Powers, and can communicate using a limited vocabulary. Otherwise, it loses a single dot in an Attribute or Skill for each week it's been dead to a minimum of 2 in each Attribute or Skill.

The necromancer may manipulate or control the creature with subsequent rolls. The summoned corpses will remain in a state between life and death until either the necromancer or the risen bodies are destroyed.

Reborn

Everyone else in my class went off to college, to jobs, to travel the world. They think because I stayed, I'm just some small-town nobody. That's okay. They don't know what I know. I had to. My family has been living in this damn town for hundreds of years. No matter how many times we've torched that damn cypress tree, it keeps growing back...and every time it does, it brings the nightmares back with it. Nothing works — not even exorcisms!

The creature has an immortal soul and can be reborn into a new, supernatural body of its own making. As the monster dies, it can reflexively spend all its remaining Willpower to separate its soul from its body. It loses all its Traits and Dread Powers except its Willpower rating and instead functionally becomes a Rank 1 ghost with the Numen Drain. It must drain enough Willpower to refill its Willpower completely to reconstitute a body. This can occur over a long period of time; there is no time limit for the use of Reborn. Once completed, the monster takes the guise of a typical, mortal child and grows at a preternatural rate. At this time, it regains all its previous Traits and abilities. When corporeal, the Reborn creature suffers -2 to all its die rolls until it grows into an adult.

Regenerate

We heard werewolves could heal, but we didn't know how fast. Oh, we hunted our fair share of werewolves, but this one? Every time we shot it, the bullet pushed out of its fur. Every time I

slashed its arm, the cut healed. To put it down, we were forced to fill it up with tranquilizers until it fell unconscious. Thank God we were prepared!

The creature possesses incredible powers of regeneration. As a reflexive action once per turn, the creature can spend 1 Willpower, healing one point of lethal damage or two points of bashing damage. The monster must reactivate this Dread Power to heal more severe wounds. Bashing damage is healed first, then lethal.

Special: The monster's body still heals when unconscious or stunned, even if the creature can no longer take an action.

Shadow Attraction

"It went this way," Micah said, pointing down the ruined hallway. "Careful." The rest of the team followed, flashlights and silver stakes in hand. We went room by room, checking the corners carefully, leading with the light, hitting each dark patch with at least two beams. It could use the barest scrap of shadow to hide. But we knew. We weren't losing anyone, this time.

Shadows are pulled toward the monster. By spending 1 Willpower, the creature becomes cloaked in shadows and effectively invisible. Monsters may not attack, move quickly, or use other Dread Powers without breaking the effect. The creature may whisper, slowly manipulate small objects, open unlocked windows and doors, and move up to its regular Speed while maintaining this power.

Sigh

I was working at a senior center to keep an eye on my dad. I heard the place was haunted, but I couldn't afford Whispering Pines. Too fancy for a truck driver like myself. Anyway, I was happy Pops was making friends, until I noticed a specific gentleman was taking interest in him. Sure enough, I found the damn thing hovering over my dad's body in the middle of the night. I didn't have a gun on me, but I did have a scalpel. I lunged for that creature and slit its throat. It fell to the ground, hard, blood everywhere. Then, it looked up at me and sighed. Damn thing vanished!

The monster may willingly shed its corporeal body and become a ghost when it has only three health boxes remaining without lethal damage. When it does so, the creature leaves no trace of its existence behind save for its clothes and worldly possessions. The monster spends 3 Willpower and makes an appropriate roll to disincorporate and become a ghost in the next session. The monster is remade with the Ephemeral Entity rules (p. XX) with a Rank equal to half its Potency rounded up. If unsuccessful, the monster simply remains in its body and continues to suffer damage as normal. The creature may make subsequent attempts provided it has Health left.

Special: This Dread Power may not be used in conjunction with Reborn.

Skin Thief (• or ••)

Everyone thinks we're crazy. Why shouldn't they? The fingerprints match. The dental records match. Even the damn DNA is perfect. And this time, I'm sure it got rid of what was left of Ryan's body. But we saw the whole thing. We know that's not Ryan. And if we can't prove it in court, we'll just have to take care of it ourselves.

The creature can steal the face and skin of another. At three dots, it must kill the victim first, then spend 2 Willpower to merge the corpse's features with its own. At five dots, the victim may

already be dead. The change is permanent; it cannot return to an earlier face and appearance. However, the disguise is flawless; only supernatural powers of perception have any chance of seeing that the creature is anything but the person whose skin it has stolen. Scientific tests detect nothing out of the ordinary.

Special: This Dread Power does not work on the living.

Soul Stealer

We finally killed the Painter, so our nightmare should have been over, right? Wrong. To get Lucky's soul back, we had to find their portrait and release it. When we finally broke into the Painter's vault, there were thousands of tiny paintings, stacked floor to ceiling in impossibly neat rows. And the paintings? Each one had a human face with eyes that moved as we walked past, silently pleading, begging us to set them free. But how?

The creature is capable of stealing and collecting human souls. When you give a creature this Dread Power, specify some restriction or condition it must fulfill for the soul extraction to work. Maybe the monster tricks the victim to sign a contract, sacrifice it willingly, or sit in a specific chair. Once the restriction is met, the creature may spend 3 Willpower and roll an appropriate dice pool, contested by the victim's Resolve.

If successful, Soul Stealer inflicts the Soulless Condition on a victim. This Condition is persistent, but it is not permanent. The target or their allies may find a way to restore the soul by freeing it from its prison. The Storyteller should determine how the Condition may be resolved. Perhaps when the creature is killed the soul is restored, or maybe the object in which the monster is storing it only needs destroying.

Taint

We were told the rotting seaweed and bloated fish corpses washing up on the beach were caused by climate change, but none of us were buying it. Sure, that's a logical, rational explanation, but monsters don't care what's scientifically possible — that's why I want to catch and study them. This one I've been tracking? Haven't seen it yet, but I am analyzing patterns to find its lair. Nature is giving us signs to point the way: Wherever this predator walks, its footprints taint the sand and poison the salty water.

Monsters aren't always aware of the damage they cause. Whether they force wood to age or skin to blister, their touch is an unnatural taint. This Dread Power occurs after the monster interacts with its environment. When it nears a living thing, the body mutates or starts to break down. When it interacts with an inanimate object, the material begins to disintegrate. Hunters use evidence of this Dread Power to track a creature's movements, but even they must proceed with caution. A tainted area has one of the following Environmental Tilts: Filthy, Unstable, or Viscous.

Unnatural Step (• to •••••)

This time we didn't bother trying to fight the old man. We just blocked the doors from the outside and burned the place down. Seemed like the smart move, and we felt pretty good about it, at least until we saw that Neanderthal climbing out of the wreckage. It was using the smoke like a ladder and kept climbing higher and higher until it was out of sight. We didn't find it again until days later. Well, more like the old man found us.

The monster has an unusual mode of travel. Maybe it can walk on walls, hover, or appear to teleport between steps, warping the world around it as it does. Each time Unnatural Step is purchased, choose a new mode of movement or terrain type the monster can cross with ease. It moves its Speed, though it may appear to teleport, float across fire, or walk on water.

If the chosen substance is normally harmful or toxic, the monster suffers no harm from walking on it. By spending an additional Willpower point, it can choose not to leave tracks behind.

Weathervane (• to •••••)

When I was growing up, I heard the stories of thunderclouds that followed naughty teenagers wherever we went. Of course, I never listened to them. Oh, I got into a lot of trouble. Sure. But then, one day a cloud started chasing me and I was zapped by a bolt. I had nightmares for weeks after that, but I straightened up my act. Now, after I found out the creepy crawlies are real? I have to wonder if a witch was to blame. Time to find out.

After concentrating for 10 minutes, the monster can affect the earth, air, fire, or water. One dot purchased in Weathervane equals one element. The range of a monster's abilities is tied to how much Willpower the creature spends to achieve a desired outcome. See table below for suggestions. After Willpower is spent, the targeted area is affected by a related Environmental Tilt; the characters then deal with the Tilt as they normally would.

INSERT TABLE

Dot Rating Weathervane

Effect

- Trembling soil, slight breeze, candlelit flame, glass of water freezes
- Bumpy ground, strong wind, roaring fire, icicles
- Boulders move, biting winds, whipping flames, falling snow or rain
- Rock or mud slides, wind or sandstorm, towering inferno, thunderstorm or blizzard
- Earthquake, tornado, raging wildfires, hurricane

END TABLE

Making New Dread Powers

This chapter includes a wide range of powers, each of which can be tweaked or customized as needed. Given the variety of monsters in the Chronicles of Darkness, however, more Dread Powers may be required to serve a chronicle's needs. When creating a Dread Power, think about how similar that ability is to existing rules. If it's too similar, tweak the original rule instead.

Concept: First, decide what you want the power to do. Try to think in terms of an essential concept: move, fight, sense, alter, control, etc. Beware of "one size fits all" abilities — Dread Powers are intended to be focused. If it starts to cover too many situations, it's probably best to break it into several distinct powers instead.

Field Guide: How will you describe the power in your chronicle? Strive to make powers engaging from a descriptive point of view. Generic powers are dull and lifeless, but an evocative Dread Power can add tremendous mood and atmosphere to relay how terrifying a monster can be.

Assign Ranks: Many powers scale from one to five dots, which equates to their rating in Ranks. Some powers do not need to scale — for instance, breathing underwater doesn't really have degrees. Other powers might have two versions, a weaker and a stronger, such as being able to glide and the full power of flight. In such cases, assign a static cost in Ranks — minor or rarely useful powers at Rank 1, serious or commonly useful powers at Rank 2, and devastating or far-reaching powers at Rank 3.

Create Dice Pool: Not every Dread Power requires a dice pool, but if it does, it is formed as Attribute + Skill. Select the Attribute and Skill that make sense for the power and how the creature operates. If something provides a bonus to Resistance, such as wearing a certain color that makes it harder to affect a target, list that bonus as well. Some dice pools may be better decided during a scene, so be flexible when thinking about these rules.

Determine Resistance: If a Dread Power affects other characters, select a Resistance attribute targets can roll; if it's an attack, decide whether targets apply Defense against it instead. As a rule, supernatural beings add their Supernatural Tolerance rating to any resistance rolls unless something about the power specifically defeats it (which should be rare).

Determine Action Type: Decide whether the power is a reflexive, instant, or extended action. If it is extended, figure out how long each rolling interval is and how to determine how many successes are required for the power to work.

Assign Cost: Unless it is a constant, low-level ability such as night vision, every Dread Power should have a Willpower cost. Most common powers cost 1 or 2 points per use, but truly impressive or permanent powers can cost as much as 5 points. Any Dread Power that affects targets or areas beyond the creature itself should *always* have a cost.

Determine Results: Figure out what dramatic failure, failure, success, and exceptional success mean after the power is activated. Success and failure are usually straightforward — the power either works or it doesn't — but a dramatic failure may invert a power, deny use of it for a time, or grant a target heightened resistance to it instead. Exceptional success typically adds a bonus: extra effect, wider area, extended duration, or similar benefit. If the power inflicts a Tilt or Condition, specify its duration and any special conditions to remove it ahead of time.

Note Special: You may decide a Dread Power has a unique requirement, such as the purchase of another Dread Power or limited use. To wrap up your Dread Power, note any special circumstances to ensure this stands apart from the rest of the rule.

Ephemeral Entities

Monsters encompass a large array of inhuman creatures, from blood-sucking vampires to shape-changing werewolves to witches. But the one thing they all have in common is that they are all very much in this realm of existence. Other entities lurk in the worlds connected to our realm through tenuous gates and a between area called Twilight. Incorporeal and mostly invisible, these entities stay just on the other side waiting for the right conditions to Manifest, and can cause just as many problems as a monster.

Crossing Over

The physical world is not the only realm, and a multitude of other realms lie just on the other side of a barrier, in parallel to our own. These barriers are porous, though, and entities come

through all the time for various reasons. These inhabitants are not material creatures like monsters, and often their thoughts and motivations are inscrutable to hunters.

Hunters know little to nothing of the realms from which these creatures hail, other than knowing there are far worse things that never deign to make their way into our world. Hunters deal with these entities in the physical world, unprepared and unwilling to take the fight into an alien place.

Hunters don't always know what they are dealing with when an ephemeral entity shows up but they have two general categories they use to define and describe these entities.

Ghosts are the remnants left behind when people die. They are not souls, but afterimages given form and function. Ghosts can range from weak creatures unable to Manifest or affect the physical world to powerful entities bent on revenge or filled with rage over their deaths. Hunters deal with both kinds, knowing full well that a weak ghost left alone could eventually grow into one of these vengeful entities. At least, that's what they tell themselves. Some hunters view this as putting people to rest, as ghosts often form after a particularly violent or traumatic death, meaning monster victims are more vulnerable to leaving a ghost behind.

Spirits are anything else that is not a physical entity. While this classification is a gross mischaracterization of the variety of entities that exist outside the physical world, hunters don't care provided their methods can remain the same when dealing with them. Hunters rarely deal with spirits and don't know much about them; spirits' actions tend toward subtle and covert manipulations. Hunters are more likely to run into a spirit in the presence of a witch or werewolf rather than on its own. That isn't to say they don't find spirits around, but when they do it's because the spirit has Manifested in the physical world.

Manifestation and Possession

Ephemeral entities do not have a physical form. Instead, they are made up of something called ephemera, a kind of spiritual essence that is both invisible and intangible to anything not made of the same ephemera. Ghosts and spirits do not interact with one another, as they rarely even know the other exists. Normally, they cannot affect the physical world, but they all have the ability to Manifest, which gives them enough of a solid form to both become visible and touch the physical, and even possess physical entities — including people. Manifestation can only happen if the situation is right. Ephemeral entities require Conditions to ease their passage, otherwise they cannot cross over.

Ghosts require Anchors — people, places, or things that link them to who they were when they were alive. Spirits require emotional or spiritual resonances in a person or area to match their own. Manifestation comes in stages, from simply reaching across to full Manifestation, and each of these requires a different level of Condition to accomplish.

When dealing with these creatures then, a hunter must change the environment allowing these entities to Manifest. And, for the people attempting to contact these entities, they must create favorable conditions in which to attempt.

Game Systems

Ghosts and spirits share a broad set of rules, with minor variations.

The State of Twilight

While an ephemeral entity might make it into the physical world from their own realm, that doesn't mean they get to Manifest immediately. Most spend their time in a spiritual in-between state. This is called "Twilight." While hunters may describe Twilight as a place, it is more a state of being in which ephemeral entities exist when incorporeal. Nothing in Twilight can affect a material object, and the reverse is true.

The only things that exist in Twilight are the entities there, and ghost structures. Whenever a physical building or structure is destroyed, its afterimage lingers in Twilight, made up of the same ephemera as ghosts. Ghosts cannot pass through these structures, which are as real to them as buildings are to hunters. Without a ghost structure to stop them, ephemeral entities can move at a walking pace in any direction. There is no gravity or physics really guiding Twilight, though ghosts tend to stick to what they knew in life, rather than flying about.

A Manifested being leaves this Twilight state, and no longer exists there. Some hunters can see and interact with Twilight beings through the use of Endowments, allowing them to deal with threats before they ever Manifest. Though these fail to be useful once the entity has Manifested. Some hunters have learned how to separate their consciousness from their own body to walk around in a Twilight state, gaining an ephemeral body much like a ghost.

Ephemeral Traits

Ephemeral beings aren't alive the way humans are alive. They aren't biological creatures, and don't have the divides between body, soul, and mind mortals and once-mortal supernatural beings possess. In game terms, ephemeral beings are represented by simplified game traits.

Rank

All ephemeral beings have dots in an Attribute called Rank, which notes how self-aware and powerful the entity is. Rank ranges from one to five dots for the purposes of what hunters will deal with. Anything more powerful than that just doesn't cross over from its own realm.

Rank determines not only the entity's power, but also the maximums it can have in its traits, as described in the table below. All ephemeral entities have the ability to sense the relative Rank of other entities and may attempt to conceal their own Rank by succeeding in a contested Finesse roll. Success means the entity appears to be of the same Rank as the being sensing the relative Rank. Ghosts can't increase Rank outside of the Underworld and come into existence as either Rank 1 or 2 depending on how much self-awareness they have. Nonsapient ghosts are Rank 1, while those that retain most of their living memories are Rank 2. Ghosts summoned back from the Underworld, however, may be of any Rank. Spirits run the full range of Ranks, depending on how old and successful a spirit is.

[THIS IS A TABLE]

Rank

Rank*	Trait Limits**	Attribute	Dots	Maximum Essence	Numina
•	5 dots	5-8	10	1-3	
••	7 dots	9-14	15	3-5	
•••	9 dots	15-25	20	5-7	
••••	12 dots	26-35	25	7-9	

••••• 15 dots 36-45 50 9-11

*Each Rank gives a -1 penalty to attempts to bind that entity and acts as a Supernatural Tolerance trait.

** These represent permanent dots, not temporarily boosted ones.

[END TABLE]

Essence

Essence is the life force and fuel for ephemeral entities. Without Essence they go dormant, and they use Essence to fuel their powers, Manifest, and do myriad other things. Essence is much like Willpower in that each entity has a permanent maximum Essence rating and an equal number of Essence points it can spend to achieve effects. Maximum Essence is determined by Rank. Entities can sense sources of Essence appropriate for their needs up to a mile away. The Seek Numen (p. XX) increases this range. Entities can use Essence in the following ways:

- Ephemeral beings must spend a point of Essence per day to remain active. If they have run out of Essence, they fall into hibernation until something happens to regain at least 1 point, which can then be spent on returning to activity. Such dormancy is dangerous — the entity remains in Twilight and can be destroyed if it loses all Corpus and Essence at the same time.
- Ephemeral beings outside of a suitable Condition bleed one point of Essence per hour. The Influence and Manifestation Conditions, starting on p. XX, state whether they protect from Essence bleed for different types of ephemeral being. Entities that run out of Essence due to bleed suffer a single point of lethal damage and enter hibernation.
- Ephemeral beings can spend Essence to boost their traits for a single scene on a point-per-dot basis. They can't boost a single trait by more than Rank + 2 dots; boosting takes a turn and they can only boost a single Attribute in a turn.
- Ephemeral beings regain 1 point of Essence per day that they are in proximity to any Condition relating to them.
- Ephemeral beings can attempt to steal Essence from beings of the same type — ghosts from ghosts and spirits from spirits. The attacking entity rolls Power + Finesse, contested by the victim's Power + Resistance. If the attacker succeeds, it steals up to the number of successes in Essence, as long as the victimized entity has Essence remaining to lose.
- Ghosts regain a point of Essence whenever someone remembers the living person they once were. Visiting their grave, simply sitting and remembering them, or recognizing their Manifested form as the person they used to be all qualify.
- Spirits may attempt to gorge themselves on a source of appropriate Essence. Once per day, when in proximity to a suitable Condition, a spirit can roll Power + Finesse, regaining successes in Essence.

Attributes and Skills

Ephemeral entities use a simplified set of the Power, Finesse, and Resistance categories into which mortal Attributes fall. When creating an ephemeral being, look at the Rank chart earlier in this section to determine how many dots are available and what the trait maximum is. Ghosts

usually use the average rating in each category from when they were alive — for example, a person with Strength 3, Intelligence 2, and Presence 2 would become a ghost with Power 2.

Power describes the raw ability of the entity to impose itself on other ephemeral beings and the world at large. It is used in all rolls that call for Strength, Intelligence, or Presence.

Finesse describes how deft the entity is at imposing its desires with fine control. It is used for all rolls that call for Dexterity, Wits, or Manipulation.

Resistance describes how well the entity can avoid imposition from its peers, and how easily it is damaged. It is used for all rolls that call for Stamina, Resolve, or Composure.

Ephemeral beings don't possess Skills, but don't suffer unskilled penalties as long as the action they're attempting is appropriate to their former self or nature. They roll the appropriate Attribute + Rank for actions relating directly to their concept, or Attribute + Attribute for actions like surprise and perception.

Advantages

Ephemeral beings differ in how they treat Integrity, Virtues, and Vices. Ghosts retain their Virtue and Vice from life, but they are reversed in effect — ghosts regain all spent Willpower by fulfilling their Vice, but can only do so once per chapter, and regain up to 1 Willpower point per scene by fulfilling their Virtue. Alone among ephemeral beings, ghosts also possess Integrity, set at the level they had before death. Their Integrity scores don't change, however, as ghosts do not suffer breaking points. Their self-image is fixed, unless something happens to push them back to the level of cognizance and self-awareness they had in life. If this should happen somehow, they can suffer breaking points the same way living people can.

Spirits don't have an Integrity trait, a Virtue, or a Vice. Instead, they regain 1 point of spent Willpower per 3 points of Essence they consume by gorging or stealing as described above.

Other Traits

Because they have simplified traits, ephemeral entities calculate derived traits a little differently from mortal characters.

Corpus: This replaces Health and is a measure of how intact the Twilight form is. Permanent Corpus is equal to Resistance + Size, and grants Corpus boxes, filling when the entity suffers injury. Corpus boxes don't have wound penalties associated with them.

Willpower: Entities have Willpower dots equal to Resistance + Finesse, with a maximum of 10 dots for entities with the Ranks presented in this book. In addition to the Willpower-gaining methods described above, all ephemeral beings regain 1 spent Willpower per day.

Initiative: Initiative is equal to Finesse + Resistance.

Defense: Defense is equal to the lower of Power or Finesse, except for Rank 1 spirits which use the higher of the two Attributes.

Speed: Speed is equal to Power + Finesse + a species factor. Spirits of inanimate objects usually have a species factor of 0.

Size: Ephemeral beings can be of any size. Ghosts are usually Size 5, while spirits often use Rank as Size, growing larger as they become more powerful.

Language: Rank 1 ghosts can't communicate verbally; they don't have enough of their sense of self left to employ language. Rank 2 and higher ghosts know whichever languages they knew in life. Spirits all speak the native tongue of Shadow, a strange, sibilant language that resembles ancient Sumerian, but often learn the human languages common around their Essence feeding grounds.

Bans

All ephemeral entities suffer from a mystical compulsion known as a ban, a behavior the entity must or must not perform under certain conditions. A ban can be as simple as “the ghost cannot cross the street,” complex as “the spirit must always follow the scent of fear,” or difficult as “the ghost must have candles lit in her honor weekly at a Catholic church or lose Essence equal to Rank.” Bans increase in both complexity and consequences with Rank.

Rank 1 entities have mild bans that do not endanger or deeply inconvenience them. *The ghost of a musician must sing along when he hears music.*

Rank 2 and 3 entities have moderate bans that curtail the creature's activities. *A ghost of a serial killer must visit his crime scenes once a month or lose all Willpower.*

Rank 4 and 5 entities have complicated bans that put an end to whatever the creature is trying to do — often in an explosive fashion. They have consequences in game traits or long-term actions, but esoteric requirements. *Lady White, the ghost of a schoolteacher, is immediately banished to the Underworld if anyone can recite the roster of her first class.*

Banes

Ephemeral entities are not of the material world and react strangely to some elements of it. The interaction between their ephemeral Twilight form and physical substances always contains a flaw — a bane — that damages the entity's Corpus through symbolic or mystical interference. The bane is a physical substance or energy the entity can't abide.

- Ephemeral beings voluntarily attempting to come into contact with the bane must spend a Willpower point and succeed on a Power + Resistance roll with a dice penalty equal to their Rank.
- Banes are solid to entities, even when they are in Twilight.
- Simply touching the bane — even voluntarily — causes a level of aggravated damage per turn if the entity is Materialized and causes the relevant Condition to end unless the entity succeeds on a roll of Rank in dice. The roll must be repeated every turn if contact persists.
- If a subject being possessed by an entity touches the bane, the entity takes a point of lethal damage per turn it remains in contact.
- Touching the bane while in Twilight causes a point of lethal damage per turn to non-Manifested entities.
- If the bane has been used as a weapon against the entity, the wounds suffered are aggravated for Manifest entities and lethal for entities still in Twilight.

Banes are increasingly esoteric and obscure for entities of increasing Rank.

Rank 1 entities have common substances and phenomena as banes. *Ghosts burn at the touch of salt. The spirit of a forest is poisoned by the fumes of burning plastic.*

Rank 2 and 3 entities have difficult-to-obtain, but still “natural,” banes. *A powerful ghost is repelled by holy water. A spirit must be killed by a sharpened stake made of pine.*

Rank 4 and 5 entities have highly specific banes that require great effort to acquire. *The Gray Lord, a powerful ghost, can be killed by an obsidian blade marked with the names of his biological parents. The spirit of the U.S. Treasury Building can be killed by a silver bullet made from a melted-down silver dollar minted prior to 1850.*

The hierarchical nature of ephemeral beings also plays a part — Rank isn’t a social convention for them, but a fundamental part of their nature. Ephemeral entities of two Ranks or more above an opponent of the same type (a Rank 5 spirit attacking a Rank 3 spirit, for example), count as their opponent’s bane when using unarmed attacks, claws, or teeth.

Combat

Ephemeral entities apply Defense against all attacks, even firearms. They roll Power + Finesse to attack. Their attacks inflict bashing damage unless the nature of the entity (a spirit with metal fists, for example) indicates it should inflict lethal wounds instead. Some entities use weapons, in which case roll Power + Finesse, then apply weapon damage on a successful attack.

Entities in Twilight can only attack or be attacked by other ephemeral beings of the same type, unless the attack utilizes the entity’s bane.

Physical attacks on a Manifested entity that would normally cause lethal damage only cause bashing damage unless the attack utilizes the entity’s bane. Despite appearing to the naked eye and being solid, a Manifested ghost or spirit doesn’t have any internal organs to injure.

Ephemeral entities record and heal from wounds in the same way as material characters but lose one point of Essence for every aggravated wound they suffer. Ephemeral entities that lose all Corpus from lethal or aggravated wounds explode into a burst of ephemera, stylized to their nature. A forest spirit dies in a hail of rapidly vanishing pine needles, while ghosts crumble, screaming, into the ground. The entity isn’t dead, though, unless it has also run out of Essence. If it has even a single Essence point remaining, it reforms, hibernating, in a safe place (a Conditioned location, usually). Once it has regained Essence points equal to its Corpus dots, it spends an Essence point and reawakens. As the entity can’t act while hibernating, this means it must wait for the one Essence a day for being in a suitable area to slowly build up to Corpus, and that more powerful entities take longer to recover from being “killed.”

Influence

All ephemeral entities have a degree of Influence over the world, which they can leverage to control and shape the basis of their existence. Ghosts have influence over their Anchors while spirits influence elements that align with their natures. Entities begin with dots in Influence equal to Rank. Although Rank is also the maximum rating for an Influence, ephemeral beings can split their dots to have more than one Influence. A Rank 3 ghost, for example, might have Influence: Childhood Home •• and Influence: Car Crashes •.

Entities may reduce their number of Numina granted by Rank to increase Influence dots, at a cost of 1 Numen per dot. Ghosts have influence over their particular Anchor, but not all instances of it, while spirits have Influences that relate to their natures — the dog spirit, for example, has Influence: Dogs, not Influence over a particular dog.

Influence is measured in both scale and duration. To use an Influence, compare the entity's Influence rating to the total dots of the intended effect and how long it will last. The total must be equal to or less than the entity's Influence rating in order for the Influence to be attempted. The entity pays the listed cost in Essence and rolls Power + Finesse, with success creating the desired effect. If the Influence is altering the thoughts or emotions of a sapient being, the roll is contested by Resolve or Composure (whichever is higher) + Supernatural Tolerance.

[THIS IS A TABLE]

Influence Effects

Level Effect

- **Strengthen** The entity spends 1 Essence to enhance its sphere of influence. It can add to someone's Defense, make an emotion stronger, or grant Health or Structure to an object. This influence can also shift the Anchor or Resonant Condition to Open for its duration.
- **Manipulate** The entity spends 2 Essence to make minor changes within its sphere of Influence. It can change the nature or target of an emotion, change an animal's actions, a plant's growth, or an object's functionality.
- **Control** The entity spends 3 Essence to make dramatic changes within its sphere of influence. It twists emotions entirely, dictates an animal's actions, makes an object function, or changes how a plant grows.
- **Create** The entity spends 4 Essence to create a new example of its sphere of influence. It instills a new emotion, creates a new sapling or young plant, a new animal, or brand-new object. The entity can cause a temporary Anchor or Resonant Condition in a subject for the duration of the Influence.
- **Mass Create** The entity spends 5 Essence to create multiple examples of its sphere of influence, just like Create. Alternately, the entity may create one instance of its sphere of influence — including creating the base Condition for its type — permanently, although an ephemeral entity can't permanently alter the mind of a sapient being.

[END TABLE]

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Influence Durations

Level	Duration	Cost
0	One minute per success	No additional Essence cost
•	Ten minutes per success	No additional Essence cost
••	One hour per success	1 additional Essence
•••	One day per success	2 additional Essence
••••	Permanent	2 additional Essence

[END TABLE]

Manifestation

Ephemeral beings can interact with the mortal world in many ways, but the one that hunters know about and deal with most is Manifestation. Just as Influence traits determine what level of control the creature has over their environment, Manifestation traits define which forms of Manifestation are possible for an entity.

Entities begin with the Twilight Form Manifestation and a number of Manifestation Effects equal to Rank. Some effects are only available to certain kinds of entities. Entities may increase their capabilities by reducing the number of Numina they are granted by Rank, at the cost of 1 Numen per Manifestation Effect.

All Manifestation Effects require a Power + Finesse roll to use. Most have an associated cost in Essence, and some are contested or resisted.

If something falls into an ephemeral being's sphere of influence, this is handled mechanically by declaring an Influence Condition. Influence Conditions resemble Tilts and character Conditions. The different forms of Manifestation Effects are also Conditions, applied to the location, object, or character into which the entity is Manifesting, or in cases like Reaching, to the entity itself.

Unlike many Conditions, Influence and Manifestation Conditions are tiered and interrelated; Manifestation Conditions have Influence Conditions as prerequisites and vice versa. The lower tiers are naturally occurring, while the higher ones must be created by entities using Influences and Manifestations.

In the most advanced forms of Influence and Manifestation, entities may attempt to create a long-lasting Condition that has a prerequisite of a very temporary one. When one Condition is advanced into another, the remaining duration of the prerequisite Conditions is "frozen."

If a prerequisite Condition is removed from a character (for example, a Possessed character's Open Condition is removed by exorcism) any Conditions relying on it, any Conditions relying on them, and so on, are immediately removed. The most advanced remaining Condition then resumes its duration.

The Gauntlet

Spirits rarely spend their time in Twilight unless commanded to do so by another monster or attempting to Manifest. Hunters have no way of piercing the Gauntlet or dealing with spirits in Shadow, meaning they mainly deal with spirits who are already in Twilight. For this reason, we won't talk much about the Gauntlet or its effects on spirits.

If you would like to use the full Gauntlet rules for spirits in your **Hunter** game, use the information on pp. XX-XX in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

[[TABLE]]

Manifestation Effects

Manifestation Effect

Twilight Form If the entity enters the material world, it does so in Twilight (see p. XX). The effect has no cost.

Discorporate In emergencies, the entity can voluntarily Discorporate as though it had lost all its Corpus to lethal injury — a painful way to escape a greater being threatening to permanently kill it. The effect has no cost.

Gauntlet Breach (Spirit Only — requires the Resonant Condition) By spending 3 Essence, the spirit forces itself through the Gauntlet — returning to Shadow from the material world or appearing in Twilight Form by entering the material world.

Gateway (Requires Open Condition) By spending 3 Essence, the entity opens a portal into its home realm, and can pass through the Gateway. This is a one-way trip and only the entity using the effect can use the Gateway.

Image (Requires Anchor or Resonant Condition) By spending 1 Essence, the entity may make its Twilight Form visible to material beings for a scene.

Materialize (Requires Open Condition) By spending 3 Essence, the entity may shift from Twilight Form into the Materialized Condition.

Possess (Requires Open Condition) By spending 3 Essence, the entity gains temporary control over an object, corpse, or creature, applying the Possessed Condition to the subject. Living subjects contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.

[[END TABLE]]

[THE FOLLOWING ARE FORMATTED LIKE CONDITIONS]

Conditions

Anchor

The subject of this Condition — usually a location or object, though it can be a person in rare cases — is within the sphere of influence of a ghost. Ghosts in or within (Rank x 3) yards of their Anchors do not suffer Essence bleed.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is immediately created when a new ghost is formed, based on whatever subject anchors the ghost's identity. Summoning rituals intended to release ghosts from the Underworld or call them from elsewhere temporarily create this Condition in their target. Finally, a high-Rank ghost can use a Create Influence to mark a target as an Anchor.

Ending the Condition: The easiest way to end an Anchor Condition is to destroy the subject. Some ghosts cling to Anchors that represent unfinished business, in which case resolving those issues can remove the Condition. Abjuration temporarily suppresses the Condition, as described on p. XX, forcing the ghost to retreat to another Anchor if it has one. Ghosts without Anchors bleed Essence until they fall into dormancy, at which point a Gateway Effect happens immediately and the ghost is banished to the Great Below.

Materialized

The entity has shifted from ephemeral to material substance, manifesting in physical form. All the rules for ephemeral entities' traits still apply, except for the effects of being in Twilight. This Condition protects the entity from Essence Bleed for its duration.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Materialize Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. If the Open Condition used is on an object or person, the entity must materialize within its Rank in yards.

Ending the Condition: Materialization lasts for one hour per success on the activating roll. When the duration ends, the entity fades back into Twilight. Physical contact with a Bane or removal of a prerequisite condition can cause the Condition to end early.

Open

Prerequisites: The Anchor or Resonant Condition for the same phenomenon to which this Condition is tagged.

The place, object, animal, or person covered by a previous Condition has now been conditioned to accept the entity. It can attempt to Possess the subject of the Condition, or, if the Condition is on a location, Manifest.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is usually the result of an entity fine tuning the prerequisite Condition as part of an extended action involving the subject and entity acting in concert, for a number of scenes equal to Rank or a living subject's Resolve, whichever is higher.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends if the prerequisite Condition is removed. Exorcism rituals work by removing this Condition, reverting it to the prerequisite.

Possessed

This object, corpse, or living being is temporarily controlled by an ephemeral entity. Living hosts are put into a coma-like state while Possessed; they experience the possession as missing time, aside from flashbacks that might come out in dreams or times of stress such as losing Integrity. The entity may not use Numina or Influences while controlling the host but is safe from Essence Bleed for as long as the possession lasts.

The entity may pay one Essence per turn to heal a lethal or bashing wound or a point of structure lost to damage. Corpses that died from damage begin Possession incapacitated and must be "healed" with Essence. Entities possessing inanimate objects or corpses have a great deal of control over their host. An entity controlling an object can't make it do anything it couldn't do while being operated, but it can turn switches on and off, operate machinery, use keyboards, and turn dials. Use the entity's Finesse if dice rolls are necessary. Corpses and other articulated hosts capable of movement, like shop mannequins or industrial robots, use their own Physical Attributes, but use the entity's Attributes in Social or Mental rolls. By spending a point of Essence, the entity can use its own Attributes instead of the host's for Physical tasks for a turn but doing so causes one point of lethal damage or structure loss to the host.

Living hosts require more time for the entity to gain full control, and always use their own Attributes. The entity may read the host's mind with a Finesse Roll at a -4 penalty, use the host's Physical Skills at a -3 penalty, and use their Social and Mental Skills at a -4 penalty. These penalties are all reduced by one die per day that the entity has possession of the host.

To possess a host, the entity must remain in Twilight, superimposed over the host. This means that if the host touches the entity's bane or is injured by a weapon made of the bane, the entity will suffer wounds to its Corpus.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Possess Manifestation Effect. The object or victim must be under the Open Condition, tagged to the entity.

Ending the Condition: The possession lasts for a single scene, unless the entity abandons it early or the host is killed or destroyed. Abjurations, exorcisms, strong bans, and forced contact with banes can all motivate an entity to release a host.

Resonant

The subject of this Condition is within the sphere of influence of a spirit.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is common and occurs naturally; if an object, phenomenon, person, or place matches the spirit’s purview in some way, it has this Condition. Anything matching the description of one of a spirit’s Influences counts as having this Condition tagged to the spirit.

Summoning rituals intended to entice a particular spirit to a location work by instilling the qualities that result in this Condition. Finally, a high-Rank spirit can use a Create Influence to cause the prerequisites for the Condition itself.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends if the phenomenon creating it ends. A forest stops being Resonant for a tree spirit when all the trees are logged, a grief spirit can’t Influence someone who has healed and let go of his pain, and a fire spirit must move on when the fire is extinguished. Abjuration and exorcism may temporarily suppress the Condition or be the cause of it “naturally” ending, if the ritualists remove the causal phenomenon as part of the ritual.

[END CONDITIONS LAYOUT]

Numina

In addition to Influence and Manifestation, all ephemeral entities have a number of discrete magical powers called Numina. Each Numen is a single ability — activated by a successful Power + Finesse roll unless stated otherwise — linked to the entity’s nature.

The Numina described here are deliberately generic. Individual ephemeral beings display their Numen in ways reflecting their type, theme, and biases — a ghost’s Blast is an empty, freezing cold in the bones of its victim, while a spirit of light’s is a jolt of energy.

Aggressive Meme

The entity speaks to a person (it must have a Condition making it capable of doing so), and plants an idea in their mind. When that person tells someone else the idea, it takes hold in their mind, too, as well as in the minds of whomever *they* tell. The Numen costs 7 Essence to activate and is contested by Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.

Awe

The entity causes terror in anyone who can see it. The Numen costs 3 Essence, and its activation is contested with Presence + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance individually by anyone looking at the entity. Anyone achieving fewer successes than the entity is unable to move or speak for a turn. If the entity gains an exceptional success, the effect lasts three turns.

Blast

The entity may wound opponents at a distance. Range is equal to 10 yards per dot of Power, and the entity does not suffer range penalties. If the activation roll succeeds, the Blast wounds as a lethal weapon. The entity may increase the lethality of its Blast by paying Essence — every 2 Essence spent increases the “weapon” by one lethal damage. The maximum weapon bonus is equal to the entity’s Rank.

Dement

The entity may torture its victim’s mind via psychic assault. The Numen costs 1 Essence, and the activation roll is contested by the victim’s Intelligence + Supernatural Tolerance. If the entity succeeds, the victim suffers the Insane Tilt (p. XX) for the rest of the scene.

Drain

The entity can steal Essence or Willpower (chosen at activation) from a material being. The activation roll is contested by Stamina + Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Whichever character — entity or target — gains the most successes receives points of Willpower or Essence equal to successes, while the other party loses the same number.

Emotional Aura

The entity sends out a wave of powerful — and distracting — emotion. This Numen costs 1 Essence, and lasts for a scene, or until the entity uses another Numina. The activation roll is made once, but anyone coming within five yards of the entity must make a Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance roll. If the activation roll had more successes, the victim suffers a -2 dice penalty to all actions as long as the aura remains. If the victim gains more successes, he is immune to the aura unless the entity uses the Numen again.

Essence Thief

The entity may steal Essence from and consume ephemeral beings other than its own type — for example, spirits with this Numen may consume ghosts and angels. The Numen costs 1 Essence to activate.

Firestarter

The entity causes flammable materials to combust. This Numen costs 1 Essence and causes a small fire to break out per activation success within the entity's Power in yards.

Hallucination

The entity may create an illusion experienced by a single target; anything from a sight or sound to an imaginary person that holds a conversation. The Numen costs 1 Essence and is contested by the victim's Wits + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. Each success over the contesting roll alters one of the victim's senses.

Innocuous

This Numen does not require a roll to activate and has no cost. The entity is very good at being overlooked. Rolls to notice the entity suffer a -2 penalty.

Left-Handed Spanner

The entity disables a device, paying 1 Essence and touching the object if Manifested, or moving its Twilight Form to superimpose over it if not. The device must be a human-manufactured object with at least three moving parts. If the activation roll succeeds, the device malfunctions for the number of successes in turns. Using this Numen in combat requires the entity to Grapple and gain control of the object, so it can't be used this way in Twilight unless the target is as well.

Mortal Mask

This Numen disguises a Materialized entity as a human and can be used at the same time as the Materialize Manifestation Effect. Using the Numen costs 1 Essence, and the human seeming lasts for activation successes in hours. The human "costume" is flawed — witnesses may make a Wits + Composure roll penalized by the entity's Finesse to realize that something is wrong. Characters able to sense the entity in Twilight do not suffer the penalty.

Pathfinder

This Numen allows an entity to know the quickest route to a destination. The fastest route isn't always the safest, and the Numen doesn't reveal any dangers on the way, only a set of directions to the target. If the destination is the subject of the Safe Place Merit, the activation roll is contested by the lowest Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance among any owners. The Numen costs 1 Essence and lasts for a scene. If the destination is too far away to reach that quickly, the entity must use the Numen again.

Regenerate

The entity can use Essence to heal bashing and lethal wounds on its Corpus. This Numen does not require a roll to activate, but costs 1 Essence and heals one level of damage. The entity must reactivate the Numen each turn to heal more severe wounds. Bashing damage is healed first, then lethal.

Seek

The entity can sense the presence of suitable Conditions from a distance. The base range is two miles per Rank; entities may spend an Essence to multiply this by 10. If successful on a Finesse roll, the entity becomes aware of the direction and distance to the nearest suitable Anchor or Resonant Condition.

Speed

The entity accelerates into a blur of movement. The entity chooses whether to spend 2 or 4 Essence when activating this Numen. Spending 2 Essence doubles its Speed for the remainder of the scene, while spending 4 Essence triples it.

Sign

The entity creates messages or images in any media in the same way that media can be used by a mortal— it can write in the condensation on cold glass, produce images on computer screens, and send audible messages via phone lines. The Numen costs 1 Essence to activate, and if successful creates a single message.

Stalwart

The entity appears armored in Twilight form and uses Resistance instead of the lower of Power or Finesse as its Defense score.

Telekinesis

The entity can manipulate objects without using a Manifestation Effect. This Numen costs 1 Essence, and successes on the activation roll become the entity's Strength when attempting to lift or throw an item. Fine motor control is impossible using this Numen.

The Hunt

Mortals can interact with ephemeral entities in more ways than just as victims. Some people actively seek out ghosts of their loved ones with whom to speak, or seek spirits from whom to entreat power. Characters with an Unseen Sense for spirits or ghosts can sense their presence even in Twilight. Hunters seek them out to fight them and eliminate the threat they pose to humanity.

Research

Just like everything else hunters have to deal with, the best way to handle an ephemeral entity is to learn everything they can about them first. Finding out a ban or bane is the best way to deal with an ephemeral entity, though some hunters have Endowments that let them bypass the need.

If met with an ephemeral entity mystery, hunters can research them just like anything else. Generally, the roll is Intelligence + Occult, and all sorts of information from Anchors, resonances, bans, and banes are the result of Clue gathering.

Exorcism and Summoning

For dealing with an ephemeral entity, the ability to summon or banish is the most basic tool in a hunter's repertoire. These aren't perfect, and they don't always work. The concept behind them is that if the hunter knows the ideal atmosphere the entity needs to exist in the physical world, then he can manipulate it and force the entity to comply with his wishes.

As such, exorcism and summoning are functionally the same. They require a series of research actions (Intelligence + Occult rolls, with bonuses and penalties depending on access to proper literature) to narrow down the requirements for the rest of the rites. The remaining actions serve as alternate ways to cause the Manifestation Conditions in the desired source.

For the most part, hunters engage in exorcisms more than summoning, though some hunters want to end the fight quickly by demanding an entity appear before the cell. Some other mortals, cultists and the like, summon entities for more nefarious purposes. These people tend to pose severe moral questions to hunters, especially those whose Code prohibits harming other humans.

Abjuration

While exorcism is an attempt to tackle the Conditions underpinning an entity's presence by mundane means or the use of bans and banes, abjuration fights the supernatural with the supernatural, pitting a hunter's soul and Resolve against the entity he is attempting to force away.

Hunters learn exorcism through necessity, and while some exorcists tend to be religious, it is not necessary for either exorcism or abjuration. By concentrating on the higher self, a skilled abjurist can cause his soul to affect Twilight, forcing ephemeral beings away and clearing an area of Influence. The abjuration effect must be performed as a meditative exercise that helps the user stay calm, even in the face of a rampaging, Materialized ghost. Religious abjurists use repeated prayer, while more secular occultists rely on incantations learned from their research. Anything that instills the proper calm and reverence will work, though — a soldier might attempt to abjure a ghost by reciting the patriotic oath of his country.

The abjuration itself is a Resolve + Composure roll contested by the entity's Power + Resistance. As abjuration channels the higher self, working the ritual by a means that matches the abjurist's Virtue provides a +2 bonus to the dice pool. A strong psyche is also useful — characters with Integrity 10 receive a +3 bonus, Integrity 9 characters gain +2, and Integrity 8 gain +1. Conversely, if the abjuration calls on the abjurist's Vice, the dice pool is penalized by two dice. Low-Integrity characters suffer a cumulative -1 penalty per Integrity dot below 6: -1 for Integrity 5, -2 for Integrity 4, and so on.

If the abjuration is successful, all Conditions tagged by the entity in the abjurist's Willpower in yards are suppressed for one day. On an exceptional success, the abjurist also becomes an extra bane for the entity until its Conditions return.

Warding and Binding

Beyond just sending an ephemeral entity away for a day, hunters can ward an area, or bind a particularly difficult entity into a specific location. By using the entity's bane and a specific kind of abjuration, a hunter can force it to stay away from or remain in certain areas.

Instead of confronting the entity directly as in abjuration, the ritualist marks the boundary she intends to protect with the entity's bane. She doesn't have to mark a complete boundary — her concept of the area she's protecting is what's important. Marking doors and windows with lamb's blood to keep out a ghost who can't touch it will prevent that ghost from simply floating through the wall while in Twilight, and carefully drawing a sigil on the floor will serve to trap the ghost whose name it is.

If the ritualist doesn't have the proper bane for her ritual's subject, it fails automatically, so the most important part of warding is getting that detail right. Once that's done, and the area has been marked, the ritualist performs whatever abjuration method she knows, focusing on suffusing the area with the essence of the entity's bane. Performing the ritual requires a Presence + Occult roll, modified by the ritualist's Integrity as per an abjuration, and further penalized by the entity's Rank. A further modifier depends on the size of the area being warded.

[TABLE]

Area Modifier

Small area within a location, up to a six-foot area +1

Single room, a vehicle 0

Two story, suburban building -1

[END TABLE]

Larger structures levy increasing penalties; an additional -1 for every equivalent of a family home. Most superstructures, like skyscrapers, trains, government buildings, and hospitals are too large to be effectively warded.

If successful, the entity described in the ritual treats attempting to move into or out of the warded area as though it is against its ban. The effect lasts for successes in days or is broken if the marking of the boundary is disturbed — a determined entity can suffer the injury from touching the bane material marker in order to break the ward.

Monsters by Region

Any Time, Anywhere

Ghosts and spirits are the most common types of monsters that can appear at will. The ghosts that don't haunt a house or the bones of their corpse are often tied to a possessed object, relic, or person, while others manifest because someone summoned them. Ghosts that inhabit physical objects are still ghosts, however; if a doll, computer, mirror, or mannequin is destroyed, the ghost isn't automatically vanquished. These physical items are often Anchors for the ghost and add flavor to the hunt, a touch of misdirection, and a deep sense of history that isn't grounded in a set of coordinates. Spirits don't have Anchors, but they usually have bans that give them a predictable pattern of behavior. Sometimes, the effects of a witch's curse or a supernatural virus

may be misidentified as a ghost's or spirit's handiwork — most people admit ghosts are real, and pass everything else off as anxiety or superstition.

For the Storyteller: Hunting on a Map

The monsters and examples provided scratch the surface of a world filled with the strange and unexplained. It is assumed that a local hunter will have more knowledge, resources, and connections to deal with an incident at home than an outsider would. When switching locales, keep in mind the hunters are strangers to a new location and will have to earn trust of local experts or ally with other, local hunters before taking action.

Take Robert the Doll for example. Originally owned by Key West painter and author, Robert Eugene Otto, this life-sized doll is possessed by a ghost with a taste for mischief and violence. The doll was once a display piece in a toy store in Germany, gifted to Otto by a wealthy relative. In the past, Robert the Doll allegedly attacked household staff, started fires, and played pranks on the humans with whom he's lived. Robert the Doll has straw-blond hair, glass buttons for eyes, faded rosy cheeks, and wears a blue-and-white sailor's suit. Despite being possessed by a ghost, the Doll is made of cloth. When the ghost speaks through Robert, his button eyes glow softly with an aura of lurid light most visible in the darkness. Burn the doll, however, and the ghost moves on. So, while the mischief Robert caused may seem like it's been dealt with, the true monster hasn't been.

Spirits and monsters aren't bound to an environment or any one place. They don't need a grassland or a swamp to survive, and they aren't tied to a specific gravesite or ancient battlefield, either. Creatures that can appear anywhere are still connected to the world of the living, however, and often reveal their malicious intent after they strike.

Black Dog

You are a British assistant manager working at a fish-and-chips restaurant in Sheffield. After your shift, you walk back to your car when you hear a loud, menacing bark. Is that a stray dog? No, you think, it can't be. You don't see anything. You ignore the noise as each ear-splitting bark grows louder and louder. Whatever it is — it's coming closer! You suck in your breath and don't make a sound. You feel goosebumps up and down your arms. That's when you see it: a massive, ink-black hound with glowing red eyes is running right for you.

Location(s): Prominent in Great Britain. Can be found in any country.

The Black Dog is a malevolent spirit tied to ill will and fear. Witnesses refer to the Black Dog by many names including Black Shuck, Church Grim, El Cadejo, Lobizon, Perro Negro, or Padfoot. Black Dogs are often portents of ill will; anyone who sees the creature is doomed to a dark fate, disaster, or death. Some report seeing the dog before a large-scale calamity such as a hurricane, an earthquake, or a terrorist attack. Still other reports state this dog is a familiar summoned by witches and warlocks to murder their intended victims.

In some Latin American legends, the Black Dog's counterpart is a White Dog that appears as a benevolent force trying to warn victims they are about to befall a great tragedy.

Appearance: This spirit manifests as an enormous black dog with glowing red eyes and possesses the combined qualities of the fiercest breeds: snapping jaws, rippling muscles, and

flesh-tearing claws. The dog's bark or howl can always be heard by the intended, doomed target no matter where they may try to hide, and they possess excellent hearing.

Storytelling Hints: The Black Dog is a storytelling tool perfect for any tier. When it makes an appearance, this malevolent canine can serve Storytellers as a thematic clue. For example, the Black Dog may show itself to a hunter who's been cursed and is in danger. On a less-personal scale, a cell might wake from a dead sleep, right before a supernatural or natural disaster, to hear Black Dogs howling at the moon. In this way, the Black Dog adds fear and tension to the chronicle because hunters may not always have opportunities to capture, study, or murder it.

Storytellers may also use the Black Dog as a sign that they've run afoul of a different monster; a cell may have crossed paths with a shapeshifting warlock who summoned the Black Dog and commanded it to pursue them. The Black Dog may also be used as a standalone monster that haunts a sleepy neighborhood.

Power: 5

Finesse: 4

Resistance: 4

Manifestation Effects: Gateway, Materialize

Numina: Aggressive Meme, Blast, Emotional Aura, Seek

Ban: The Black Dog must spend one day out of every seven in a forested area or take 1 lethal damage for each day it cannot get to a forest.

Bane: Any blade carved from obsidian.

Rank: 2

Influence: Fear 2

Willpower: 8

Essence: 15

Corpus: 9

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 15

Size: 6

Slender Man

You are a South African hunter who has a few hunts under your belt. This time, however, you're facing your first real threat: A mythic impundulu has been spotted near Johannesburg, feeding on its citizens. You and your cell are stumped. You have no idea why such a creature would fly into a well-populated city, so you decide to track it with a spell you'd found. It's your first time using magic, but you have no time to find a different solution. You perform your spell and you're not sure if it worked — but now you've got bigger problems. Out of the corner of your eye, you

spot an impossibly tall man. You whirl around, don't see anything, and return to your task. When he reappears, you know the impundulu is not the only monster you need to tackle head on.

The Slender Man's origins are as obscure and mysterious as the reasons for its appearance. Some speculate that the Slender Man is attracted to people who open a grimoire or try a spell for the first time and preys on their curiosity, while others believe he targets the young and emotionally vulnerable. The briefest contact with him inflicts paranoia and nightmares, while prolonged exposure to the otherworldly creature can be fatal.

Whether it's an internet construct or a spirit made flesh, the Slender Man is one of the most dangerous monsters because it's shrouded in one too many mysteries. Why appear now? Why target magical initiates? How would a force connected to technology become real?

Slender Man also inflicts "slender sickness" on his victims, a pathology that drives the afflicted to fits of rage and violence. Those who survive prolonged contact with the monster often leave behind an "operator mark" (a circle with an X through it) to warn others of its presence.

Slender Man rarely aggressively attacks his victims and instead frightens them by looming at the edges of a target's perception. Hunters are searching for ways to lure or trap the Slender Man, but the process is slow going; the monster's presence causes electronic devices to malfunction within a wide radius, and files have been known to disappear.

Appearance: Slender Man is commonly described as an impossibly tall, thin, spectral man dressed in a fine black suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He has a blank, featureless white face, and unnaturally long arms that, according to some accounts, are replaced by tentacles. Often, the edges of his silhouette are blurry, as if he hasn't fully materialized.

Storyteller Hints: Slender Man adds a layer of mystery to any chronicle and may be introduced as a recurring antagonist. People are uncertain if he is a ghost or a spirit, so making that determination for your game is important. Attracted to magic, this entity may end up in the same places as the hunters. If an unfurling mystery suits the tone of the chronicle, Slender Man poses an unknowable, insidious threat that seemingly targets people at random and leaves those who survive the encounter shaken and unstable.

The Storyteller is encouraged to shape the Slender Man into a monster the hunters can, with a little creativity, track and hunt. The monster can lead the cell into deeper mysteries of the supernatural, or he can simply cause chaos and panic. Either way, this spirit is more than a vision in the dark. He appears and attacks, but the hunters can unlock his weaknesses eventually.

Power: 10

Finesse: 8

Resistance: 9

Manifestation Effects: Image, Materialize, Possess

Numina: Aggressive Meme, Dement, Drain, Innocuous, Left-Handed Spanner

Ban: The Slender Man cannot use Aggressive Meme, Dement, or Drain without touching the skin of his victim. He cannot use Left-Handed Spanner without touching the object.

Bane: A blade etched with the Slender Man's true name.

Rank: 4

Influence: Fear 2, Death 2

Willpower: 10

Essence: 25

Corpus: 15

Initiative: 17

Defense: 8

Speed: 24

Size: 6

Cities, Towns, and Villages

Where there are people, there are monsters. Cities are filled with humanoid predators that require a mortal's blood, flesh, and soul to survive. Most hunters believe a supernatural predator's motivation is simple and straightforward: they track, pursue, haunt, study, or feed on mortals. For this reason, many cells operate under the assumption that anyone who can pass as human — vampires, ghosts, were-creatures, shapeshifters, witches, and warlocks — might be more dangerous than the unusual and bizarre because they can blend in or infiltrate hunter organizations. Hunters are often warned that they, themselves, are a target, and their cell should take precautions even before they realize what they're dealing with. When they don't, however, that's when the real challenge begins.

Large, concentrated populations are often the source of fast-spreading urban legends that spawn rumors and hints of truth. Sometimes, these beliefs are grounded in cultural, personal, or location-specific experiences that may be unfamiliar to the players sitting around the table. Take, for example, Nurse Janet. In East Malaysia, there is a story of how a young nurse named Janet went missing in the 1960s. Her disappearance was linked to the construction of a local bridge. It was said that whenever development was delayed, its owners would offer human sacrifices to something: restless spirits, perhaps, or demons. Any number of dark forces demand worship; the account is never clear. What is known, however, is that these sacrifices invariably involved decapitating the victims and embedding their heads in the concrete. This was the fate many believed befell poor Janet. True enough, her parents would eventually find her headless corpse a few days later, untouched save for that one act of mutilation. In their despair, her parents did the only thing they could: They dressed her in scarlet, hoping to help their child one last time.

Ghosts, whether they are out for vengeance or a poltergeist, are tied to cultural experiences, identities, and beliefs. Each one has a history grounded in a living person's former life. In Nurse Janet's story, the color red holds cultural significance. In Chinese culture, some believe if you clothe a corpse in red, its spirit will find its way back to our world, seeking the vengeance it's been owed. As a spirit of vengeance, hunters who hold similar beliefs know Nurse Janet may act like other types of ghosts, for instance a Woman in White, but she isn't one. She's an example of a different threat, a Woman in Red, who is just as determined to wreak havoc on the living as other spirits.

The monster selected for a chronicle is more than a thing to hunt; it adds depth and layers of meaning to the city it inhabits. The Cheonyeo Gwishin are another excellent example of how urban legends are not only tied to locations, but to the people who live there. While these women

are native to South Korea, the Women in White can be introduced in any city where tragedy has befallen a victim.

When introducing a chronicle, the Storyteller is encouraged to treat a city, town, or village as its own character that has its fair share of beautiful flaws and ugly scars waiting to be uncovered.

Cheonyeo Gwishin

You are a South Korean student who's recently moved into a new apartment building. You hear someone knocking on your door. You open the door and call out, "Who's there?" A feminine voice answers, telling you to close your eyes and count to a hundred. Is this a game, you wonder? Then, the voice tells you that if you don't start counting — you'll die. You're not sure if someone's playing a prank on you or not. You double check the abandoned hallway, go back inside, and close your eyes. Then, you start reciting the numbers. You feel silly, so you stop counting at fifty. When you open your eyes, you are shocked to find a ghostly figure — a woman in white with dark, flowing hair — glaring back at you.

Location: The Cheonyeo Gwishin hail from South Korea. They are a type of apparition known as the Women in White; these ghosts may be found worldwide.

Depending on who you ask, the Cheonyeo Gwishin are either the ghosts of virgins or unmarried women, pinioned by whatever traumatic event prevented them from moving on. In some stories, that event is the grief of never having fulfilled their purpose as Korean women: to uphold the family name, to experience matrimonial bliss. In others, it is a case of innocence betrayed.

Cheonyeo Gwishin can be found haunting abandoned buildings and schools — the quiet places in the bustle of South Korea. Many are simply visual aberrations, a flicker at the periphery of the eye. They are echoes, suspended in their moment of agony. Other Cheonyeo Gwishin, however, move with purpose.

Every prefecture, every town in South Korea possesses some variation of this story: sightings of a girl in a white dress, her black hair trailing like a veil, accompanied by accounts of how she caused death and madness. In life, that unfortunate girl is always said to have been lovely and kind, the paragon of girlish virtue, adored by those who knew her. Yet, somehow, no one ever takes notice when she goes missing for days, and no one ever presses charges against her murderer.

Hunters investigating Cheonyeo Gwishin will inevitably find more than the town is willing to confess, because the oldest legends always come back to blood. That said, the Cheonyeo Gwishin are a type of apparition called Women in White and are only found in South Korea. Women in White that appear elsewhere possess unique histories and sets of abilities tied to their personal background and the location they haunt.

Appearance: Cheonyeo Gwishin are pale, alluring Korean women. Their black hair is worn long and loose, and often ripples behind them — even if there is no wind. Typically, the Cheonyeo Gwishin are spotted in a traditional sobok — a white funerary gown that stretches from the corpse's neck to their ankles. The sobok has billowing sleeves that reach from shoulder to wrist and may be tied with a long bow at the neck.

Storytelling Hints: At first, the Cheonyeo Gwishin may seem harmless. They are an apparition that has perhaps terrified a family from their home, or an interloper in a small neighborhood. As the cell continues to dig deeper into the local history, the Cheonyeo Gwishin moves with

purpose. One way to point out morally gray areas is to present a Woman in White as a tragic ghost who deserves vengeance for what has happened to her. Depending upon her backstory, a cell might struggle with their next move.

At increased threat levels, the Cheonyeo Gwishin lose any pretense of innocence. Suicide cults rise in chat channels. A video circulates on the internet. Anyone who watches the clip drops dead, frothing black at the mouth. Of course, that makes everyone want to send the cursed video to their enemies.

Power: 4

Finesse: 5

Resistance: 5

Manifestation Effects: Materialize, Possess

Numina: Aggressive Meme, Dement, Hallucination, Speed

Ban: If the Cheonyeo Gwishin harms an unwed woman, she suffers 1 lethal damage for doing so.

Bane: Salt

Rank: 2

Influence: Family Home 2

Willpower: 10

Essence: 15

Corpus: 10

Initiative: 10

Defense: 4

Speed: 14

Size: 5

Fatal Fare Passenger

A panicked passenger enters your cab. You can't quite make out what she looks like; her hood is pulled tight against the rain and obscures her thin face. "Where you headed?" you ask. "Make a left here at the light," she responds. "No, wait! Make a right on this side street!" You barely manage to make the turn and miss rear ending a semi. Your passenger shivers, then tells you to head for a quiet neighborhood — it's just off the highway. Anxious to be rid of your eerie passenger and get paid, you follow her instructions as best you can. Deep down, you fear you're one bad turn away from flipping your cab over.

Location(s): Worldwide

The Fatal Fare Passenger or Haunted Hitchhiker is a global phenomenon. In the reported cases of "fatal fare," almost every story begins the same way: A stranded citizen, desperate to go home, hails a cab. Some accounts report the ghost can also be a hitchhiker or a passenger waiting for a pick-up from a ride-share service. Upon entering the vehicle, the Fatal Fare Passenger gives the

driver directions “home.” As the ride continues, the ghost frequently changes their instructions to force the driver to crash their vehicle and die. Though a Fatal Fare Passenger may seem like a class of ghosts or the work of a serial killer, each individual passenger acts on its own. An untrained eye may not realize a Fatal Fare Passenger isn’t human until it’s too late.

Appearance: A Fatal Fare Passenger is a ghost who Anchors almost solely to the location of their death. Unlike other ghosts or undead, this monster is a near-perfect fit to the village, town, or city they wander in. The Fatal Fare Passenger even goes so far as to adopt the mannerisms and dress of the local population to blend in as best they can. The only way to tell if a Fatal Fare Passenger exists is to closely inspect their translucent skin and hair. For this reason, these monsters often target victims at night or during inclement weather to better conceal their true identities. Hunters should be wary of anyone begging for a ride who does not show their face, even after entering their vehicle.

Storyteller Hints: A Fatal Fare Passenger is a good choice to open a session or chronicle, because this monster type doesn’t possess a lengthy history or elaborate agenda. Storytellers are encouraged to make this attack personal; a Fatal Fare Passenger might target a hunter’s Touchstone, ally, or mentor. To ratchet up the tension, shroud the Fatal Fare Passenger in mystery. Drop in newspaper clippings, forum chatter, and cryptic texts to breathe personality into the hitchhiker.

Eventually, a Fatal Fare Passenger will target a cell when all the hunters are together; one of the best ways to ensure the cell is together, is to encourage safety in numbers. Then, when the Fatal Fare Passenger attempts to hitchhike or share a ride with them, the hunters will fight for their lives in a swerving vehicle. This monster can also be employed as a red herring to distract or slow the hunters down while on another hunt. To step away from its ghostly origins, the Fatal Fare Passenger can also be undead or a warlock in disguise, intent on targeting the hunters.

Power: 6

Finesse: 4

Resistance: 4

Manifestation Effects: Image, Materialize

Numina: Emotional Aura, Left-Handed Spanner, Mortal Mask, Speed, Telekinesis

Ban: The Fatal Fare Passenger must try to hitch a ride and kill a driver once a month or lose all its Willpower.

Bane: Turmeric

Rank: 2

Influence: Cars 2

Willpower: 8

Essence: 15

Corpus: 9

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 15

Size: 5

Rawhead the Bogeyman

Rawhead and Bloody Bones/Steals naughty children from their homes/Takes them to his dirty den/And they are never seen again.

Location(s): Great Britain, United States. Rawhead is a type of bogeyman present in several myths. Depending on its guise, it can be found worldwide.

Rawhead is a type of bogeyman that targets ill-behaved children and terrorizes families. The bogeyman can possess masculine, feminine, or animalistic traits. Other known guises include: Mummelmann, Popelmann, Homem do Saco, El Roba-chicos, Złota Baba H'awouahoua, Gurumapa, Cuca, and the Jersey Devil.

Almost everyone grew up with a story that the bogeyman would snatch a naughty kid out of bed if they misbehaved. Rawhead and Bloody Bones is one such monster. In Great Britain, Rawhead is the reason you don't peek between your ankles at the slats under the stairs. Parents caution their children away from ponds; children tell each other to watch out for old, dark cupboards. That is where Rawhead lives, scalped and streaked in blood.

In America, the story is told a little differently. Rawhead was the favorite pet of a woman named Old Betty, and when a hunter made the mistake of killing the boar, she moved its soul into another body to let it get revenge. He came back from the dead, swaying on two legs, because the hunter had eaten up everything that he was and Old Betty could only find a poor farm boy's corpse. But the head was right. He still had his porcine skull.

Now the monster he wasn't before, Rawhead staggered off to look for the man who killed him. He found him, of course. The boar ate its murderer, but he didn't drop back dead. Instead, he went on to the woods to look for more meat — young meat, preferably fresh from the warm bone of a child.

Of course, this means Rawhead doesn't seem to have respect for international borders. Hunters have found the beast haunting staircases and armoires in Bristol, Kentucky, Wyoming, Scotland — wherever his story is told. They always find him on a pile of bloody bones, ravenous, even as he smiles at them from hollow sockets, blood running tracks down his eyes.

Appearance: Rawhead's appearance can differ depending on region. In Europe, he is hunched under a drape of leather, with bloodied bones and overlong limbs, always smiling from within the gloom. Americans say that Rawhead is a massive creature and frighteningly powerful, a hideous amalgamation of pig and man. His head is always the same: a boar's skull, its eye sockets burning with red light.

Storyteller Hints: If Rawhead is dropped into a chronicle to add tension and make people uneasy, he's usually a household nuisance straight out of a fairy tale. When he's hungry, he preys on the innocent and easy pickings. As soon as he's thwarted, however, he'll move on to another town or city and try to find fresh meat.

Storytellers who want to add a twist to the bogeyman may expand his pool of victims to include the elderly or infirmed. In a house, Rawhead is scary but can be thwarted. In a hospital filled with patients, this monster emerges as a deadly threat. Storytellers may also treat Rawhead as a

summoned spirit bound to a set of bloody bones. Hunters will then have to figure out who — or what — had the power to call forth Rawhead and determine what, if any, plans they have for his victims.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 4, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 7, Survival 3, Stealth 4, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 4, Streetwise 1

Merits: Choke Hold, Cover Tracks, Relentless

Potency: 5

Willpower: 11

Virtue: Naïveté

Vice: Gluttony

Aspirations: Eat naughty children and adults who misbehave.

Initiative: 7

Defense: 6

Size: 7

Speed: 17

Health: 13

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool
Bone Fists	2L	Melee	13
Bite	2L	Grapple	13

Dread Powers: Dread Attack (Bite, Bone Fists), Home Turf 2 (Nest), Predator's Sense (Children), Regenerate

Deserts and Sandy Terrain

Monsters spotted in the deep desert are not hunted by the faint of heart. Though not as devoid of life as stereotypes proclaim, sandy terrain is challenging for inexperienced hunters who don't have the right gear or training. Filled with myths, local hunters may venture into the deep desert on a dare or to hone their survival skills. After all, a hunt in the desert requires a vastly different set of skills than scouting out abandoned warehouses and condemned office buildings.

Some deserts can be found just outside a metropolis. These include Las Vegas, Nevada; Tucson, Arizona; and Casablanca, Morocco. Many deserts, however, stretch for miles and miles like the Mojave, Gobi, Thar, Sahara, and Atacama Deserts. Hunters called in to help must weigh the

benefits and drawbacks of venturing out into the desert, knowing how dangerous hunting under the hot sun can be. For this reason, some cells tack on an extra hunt or two when they're visiting a desert-adjacent village or city, just in case.

For the Storyteller: Relics and Rumors

Remote environments, whether they're in the Sahara or the middle of the Atlantic, are perfect locations to drop into a chronicle when the hunters want to find mystical or ancient relics owned by the supernatural. Occult bookstores and black markets can only yield so many artifacts, and some hunters may want to do their own legwork. Tier-one hunters may abandon the hunt to find a cursed object, called a Bygone (p. XX), to give them an edge. Tier-two hunters may stumble across a Bygone someone tried to get rid of — but couldn't. Tier-three hunters may acquire anything they find for the benefit of their organization. The Aegis Kai Doru, for example, could launch an expedition to Namib, the world's oldest desert, to retrieve an unusual object rumored to be a mythical Wheel of Fire.

Storytellers who want to set a session or a chronicle in the desert can research other reasons for the hunters to travel in sandy regions that range from assisting a local cell at their request to tracking a different monster that's in hiding.

Devalpa

You and your brother are hunters from Tehran. You heard rumors that visitors have gone missing in Kavir National Park, so you pack your gear and plan for a long trip. You reach an immense stretch of desert that, at first glance, seems harmless enough. As you start to cross the expanse, however, you hear an old man cry for help! You rush to the man's side, and he begs you to help carry him. That's when you notice something strange — the man is half-buried in the sand. Your brother, who's close behind, wonders why you stopped. You tell him something's not right, but he doesn't listen. He rushes in to help the man, and as soon as he lifts the creature from the sand, long tentacles wrap around your brother's body.

Location(s): Iran (Deserts)

The devalpa is a type of shapeshifter that preys on people's desire and need to help others. It communicates with its victims telepathically, so they "hear" its voice in their native tongue. Unlike other humanoid creatures, the devalpa is telling the truth: It does want its victims to help it carry out tasks it normally cannot and enslaves those who pick it up off the ground by wrapping its long, thin tentacles around their bodies.

Once attached, the devalpa takes control by telling its victims where to go and what to do. Its motivations range from helping it escape the desert and scavenging for food to finding others of its kind. Despite its seemingly benign needs, the devalpa does not care about the safety or health of its victims and will often make demands that cannot be fulfilled. To date, no one knows much about the devalpa other than the occasional eyewitness report, because most people first encounter the creature after reading the tale of *Sinbad the Sailor*. People are quick to point out disappearances — even in the deep desert — should be thoroughly investigated to rule out criminal activity first, before claiming a devalpa is to blame.

Hunters are beginning to suspect the devalpa is a symbiotic creature that cannot survive for long periods of time on its own. Because so little is known about its strengths and weaknesses, however, hunters who encounter the devalpa are often unprepared to fight it.

Appearance: The devalpa is a reptilian shapeshifter that preys upon the kind-hearted. At first glance, it appears to be an old, deeply wrinkled man with long, white hair and thin arms stuck in the sand. Scrutinizing the creature further doesn't yield any clues; it's not until the creature is removed from the sand that its tentacles are revealed.

Storyteller Hints: This type of predator is an example of a monster that appeals to a victim's emotions. Though its natural habitat is the desert, the devalpa can move from place to place by wrapping its tentacles around a victim's body.

Depending upon what Dread Powers are used to flesh out this antagonist, the devalpa might feed off a victim's emotions, blood, or soul. This food is how the devalpa retains its strength; its grip tightens as its victims become more fearful or anxious. The opposite could also be true: The devalpa might deposit a hallucinogenic toxic when its tentacles contact a target's skin, reducing inhibitions, fears, etc.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 6, Wits 5, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 5, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Investigation 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2

Social Skills: Persuasion 5, Subterfuge 3

Potency: 4

Willpower: 11

Virtue: Altruistic

Vice: Petulant

Aspiration(s): Attach myself to a mortal and ensure they carry out my every command. Multiply and make more devalpa.

Initiative: 3

Defense: 3

Size: 2

Speed: 5/15 (tentacle)

Health: 5

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Grasping Tentacles		2L	Melee 5	Inflicts the Drugged (Hallucinogenic) Tilt

Dread Powers: Discorporate (Tentacles), Dread Attack 2(Tentacles), Multiply (Eggs), Numen (Hallucination, Mortal Mask)

Special: When the devalpa lays its eggs in a victim, they don't necessarily know they're in their system.

Mongolian Death Worm

You are a Chinese biologist who studies the flora and fauna of the Gobi Desert. Your predecessor was recently fired, and you never bothered to ask why. While preparing for your next expedition, however, your peer tracks you down and begs you not to return to that area. You don't want to listen to their warning but when you turn away, they hand you a file packed with reports and photos. You part ways and examine the file as soon as you get home. One photo in particular catches your eye. It shows a massive, segmented worm spitting vivid green liquid from a ringed maw into the air against the backdrop of the afternoon sun. Included is a sticky note that reads: No photo manipulation.

Location(s): Gobi Desert

The Mongolian Death Worm has been sighted in the most desolate areas of the Gobi Desert. A predatory beast, the worm can grow several feet long and threatens the safety of travelers, residents, and livestock that wander near it. Reports attribute many supernatural abilities to this monstrous worm. It can spit acidic venom, attack with electrical discharge, lay eggs in the bodies of its prey, and is lethal to touch. As far as the average hunter is concerned, all stories *could* be true but are hard to verify. While rumors swirl that Mongolian Death Worms can survive in captivity, they have never been spotted out of their natural habitat.

Many hunters believe the worm is a natural anomaly, while others argue that the creature is the product of a Cold War experiment. The latter is demonstrably false, as Mongolian Prime Minister Damdinbazar cited its existence back in 1922. Still others speculate that the worms are not from Earth; they are creatures who slipped into our dimension from their nightmarish home.

Provided the Mongolian Death Worm remains in the remote regions of the Gobi Desert, most hunters avoid the area at all costs. Unfortunately, Mongolian and Chinese hunters have recently discovered evidence that hatchlings are venturing further and further into well-populated areas.

Appearance: Mongolian Death Worms are massive, segmented worms with thick, spiked exoskeletons. Its toothy maw is wide enough to bite an adult in half, and its eyes are sheltered behind curving, chitin plates. Some death worms have metallic nodes in place of spikes on their shells which they use to conduct electricity. Sand-colored Mongolian Death Worms are non-venomous while those capable of generating venom display bright colors: violent yellows, deep indigos, and angry reds.

Storyteller Hints: The Mongolian Death Worm is the kind of monster players can hunt down for a good, old-fashioned fight. The creature is a giant, aggressive predator; it has no agenda, it's not secretly hiding in plain sight, and it doesn't vanish at daybreak. The worm is a mindless monster that slithers and eats.

For Storytellers who want to add more mystery to the hunt, place the Mongolian Death Worm in a different desert or worse — a zoo. What was once a simple hunt takes a darker turn when the hunters realize someone has managed to snatch the Mongolian Death Worm from its home to

test its ability to survive outside Asia. If successful, the worm's presence in other habitats has frightening implications.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 2, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 7, Survival 3, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 5

Potency: 3

Willpower: 11

Aspiration: To hunt.

Initiative: 4

Defense: 5

Size: 60

Speed: 12

Health: 65

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool
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Maw	2L	Melee	14
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Dread Powers: Dread Attack (Bite), Home Turf 3, Numen (Blast), Weathervane 1 (Wind)

Fields and Forests

Monsters that make their homes in fields and forests can be found near remote villages or in Central Park. Often, those who need to live in these environments are fiercely protective of their homes and attack if threatened regardless of intelligence. Some creatures, like the dryad, unicorn, or satyr, are simply the stuff of fairy tales, while there may be truth to some creatures' existence, such as Jenny Greenteeth and the Finnish Ajatar.

Storytellers are encouraged to leverage fields and forests as common locations hunters can investigate. These areas complement urban landscapes and enhance the hunt by adding a different set of challenges they must overcome. City parks are perfect hunting grounds for predators waiting to ambush the unprepared, and hunters trying to catch a monster *before* a victim's life is claimed must deal with concerned parents, pet owners, sports enthusiasts, and local police. After all, vampires, werewolves, and shapeshifters may lurk in a spooky grove, but they don't *need* a specific environments to survive. Humanoid monsters who use parks, botanical gardens, arboretums, and abandoned fields to live near, but not next door to, the people upon whom they prey know their backyards well.

Despite all their efforts, sometimes hunters come up empty and can't find the source of harm. A jogger disappears without a trace. A couple takes a stroll with their dog and all three never return home. After exhausting all other options, they might discover a humanoid monster isn't to blame

after all. Eventually, hunters learn supernatural threats aren't restricted to monsters such as the Bulgarian Vrkolak, which shifts from a werewolf to a vampire after it dies.

Sometimes, the trees and plants are monsters, too. Storytellers should treat a lone weeping willow that's possessed by a mournful lover as an antagonist that's part of a location; if, however, the entire swamp or grove is haunted, then that wider area is a Mysterious Place (p. XX). Some plants, regardless of size, can move of their own volition or be transplanted to freshly tilled soil.

Hungry Grass

You're an Irish tourist taking a stroll through a part of your country you've never seen before. You're enjoying your walk through the emerald-green fields when you approach the base of what the locals call "Hungry Hill." You've heard them warn you. You've been told to avoid it but you don't bother listening. You take your first step and laugh. You feel a little peckish, but you're okay! With each step you take, your hunger grows: Now, there's a gnawing pit in your stomach, you feel lightheaded, and your body starts to shiver. Suddenly, you begin hallucinating. Long, thin tendrils of grass slither around your ankles. Damn! Your blood sugar must be dropping — or is it? It isn't until you stumble and fall, yanked hard by the Hungry Grass, that you realize you shouldn't have been rude to the locals.

Location(s): Ireland. It may grow elsewhere when transplanted.

While its precise origins are unclear, Hungry Grass (or Cursed Grass) originates in Ireland and reports trace back its existence to the Great Hunger in 1840. Others believe that Cursed Grass is extradimensional in origin — a product of the fairy world — and should be left alone lest its disappearance attract darker forces. Still others believe Hungry Grass marks the location of a sinner's corpse.

Thankfully, Hungry Grass cannot move its entire mass on its own; it drains and weakens anyone who's unfortunate (or stubborn) enough to walk through the blades of grass. The length of time spent crossing Hungry Grass does not matter; it distracts victims by igniting a terrible hunger. Some reports state that the grass whispers hateful curses to solitary listeners, while others claim the grass instead tries to lure bystanders to walk through it. Following capture, it "grows" around the victim so it can devour their flesh. Any clothing or inorganic items are then swallowed up by the grass, leaving no evidence behind.

Hungry Grass disorients victims who walk through it, forcing them to wander through its blades long enough to inflict them with its starving curse. While native to Ireland, Hungry Grass can be uprooted and planted anywhere grass grows. It takes root immediately and spreads until all ordinary grass is gone, as far as the eye can see.

Appearance: At a cursory glance, Hungry Grass is indistinguishable from normal sod. With a moment's study, the viewer realizes the grass has a bluish tint and wide blades that reach upwards like miniature, snaring vines. If an observer spends additional time watching the grass, it moves subtly of its own accord and independently of any breeze.

Storyteller Hints: Hungry Grass is an interesting threat to throw at hunters who are neck-deep in an investigation of a creepy location or other monster. Thematically, Cursed Grass is excellent for chronicles set in Ireland, but its nature may be adjusted to fit any location. Storytellers planning to introduce Hungry Grass as a threat should weigh its placement. Another monster, for

example, might transplant a patch of Hungry Grass in a hospital lawn or a public park. The question is, “Why?”

Hungry Grass is a fun antagonist to drop into hints and rumors, because it’s an unexpected plant-based creature. Eventually, hunters might grimly suspect that Hungry Grass can spread after being buried along with a corpse. Others could learn Hungry Grass is immune to fire, can survive in low-light conditions, and is hardier than most types of sod.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Occult 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 4, Survival 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 3

Potency: 4

Willpower: 12

Aspiration(s): To suck the nutrients out of victims. To multiply.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Size: 10

Speed: 0

Health: 15

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Strangling Grass	1L	Melee	6	Will only attack if victim doesn’t have food.

Dread Powers: Multiply, Numen (Drain), Regenerate, Reborn

Owl Man

You’re a British minister tending to your church in the village of Mawnan. You’re surprised to find several large owl feathers. Could it be? You’ve heard the stories — two young girls spotted a hybrid creature all those years ago — but you’ve never put much stock in them. ‘Course, you can’t deny you find the idea fascinating. More than one villager has confessed seeing the Owl Man, and they’re terribly embarrassed about it. When they first asked you if the Owl Man was a devil in disguise, you told them you weren’t sure. You still aren’t. But, just in case, you grab a vial of holy water and make sure you’re not out too late tonight.

Location(s): England

First sighted in 1976 in the village of Mawnan, Cornwall, the Owl Man is a shapeshifter who’s half-man, half-owl. Two young girls spotted a giant birdman with great feathers and black claws hovering in the sky just above the village’s church tower. Others reported the creature had

glowing, red eyes and hissed when it swooped near them in the woods nearby. Strange, glowing red lights hanging in the night sky are often thought to be the Owl Man peering down from high above.

The story of the first sighting was published in “Morgawr: The Monster of Falmouth Bay,” a pamphlet distributed locally. Since that time, there have been several other sightings outside of the village in Cornwall. Witnesses report the Owl Man has tall, pointed ears like a bat and is covered in mottled, gray-brown feathers. It peers at them with an intelligent malevolence and studies passersby. Some have even started referring to it by another name: Death Raptor.

Hunters are curious about the Owl Man because no reported deaths have been attributed to the creature. Still, that doesn't stop them from wondering — is there more than one Owl Man? Is he related to the Mothman and other similar creatures? Is he tied to the appearance of the Black Dog? Still others believe the church of Mawnan holds answers but understand investigating the area without just cause may incite a panic.

Appearance: The Owl Man has a unique and specific appearance that is easily recognizable. It stands between five and six feet tall, its ears are sharply pointed, its eyes glow red, and its sharp, black talons threaten to rend flesh from bone. Covered in giant, spotted feathers, the Owl Man's coloring is gray and brown, and it possesses the ability to fly. The Owl Man doesn't force an encounter with groups of witnesses and will hover in the sky so it cannot be attacked. It is not known how the Owl Man's appearance changes if it interacts with only one person; hunters suspect it may change color or return to human form.

Storyteller Hints: To drop the Owl Man into a chronicle, determine what it wants and where it might get it. Its motivations are unclear, and its physical nature is also mysterious, leading to a deeper investigation that could stretch across the Atlantic. The Owl Man could either be a shapeshifter who dons a human guise during the day, or a summoned demon who's lost their warlock. Maybe the Owl Man is searching for a cure for their condition and believes they're suffering from a witch's curse. Maybe the Owl Man is an accident of nature — a cryptid — and wants nothing more than to be left alone. Or, maybe the reason the Owl Man remains in proximity to the church is because something's buried beneath it, something old and forgotten, something that could help the shapeshifter return home.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 6, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 4, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Firearms 2, Survival 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Alert, Masked Scent

Potency: 3

Willpower: 8

Virtue: Stalwart

Vice: Pride

Aspiration(s): Glean secrets from those I watch. Use their weaknesses to ensure my safety.

Initiative: 9

Defense: 8

Size: 5

Speed: 14/20 (Fly)

Health: 8

Dread Powers: Animal Shift (Owl), Eye Spy, Numen (Emotional Aura, Mortal Mask, Pathfinder), Home Turf 2

Hills and Mountains

Rocky, hilly terrain is often a deterrent for hunters, because of the technical challenges hunting in a variable environment. From sudden shifts in weather to falling rocks, hills and mountains are beautiful to hike but can be dangerous for unskilled hunters who don't have the right gear or allies.

Monsters native to a giant hill or mountainous region often hitch rides with an unsuspecting hiker to infest or plague people in larger populations. Though several creatures, like the Mountain Giant or Yeti, tend to remain in caves or on plateaus, other, smaller monsters blend into the local flora and fauna so well they're harder to spot. Most of the time, the supernatural live out their days until they are disturbed. When they're homes are threatened, either because they're being attacked by a different predator or resources are scarce, they'll migrate toward settlements to find food and shelter. Then, once their appetites are sated, that's when the real trouble begins.

Storytellers should keep in mind vast mountain ranges incorporate other types of varied terrain ranging from freshwater lakes to dark, underground caves. Several cities are also bordered by steep hills and mountains. In the United States, these cities include Boulder, Colorado; San Francisco, California; and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Other locations include Cusco, Peru; Shimla, India; and La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland. Unusual sightings, animal attacks, and missing-person reports are rampant in these areas, and anyone who owns a cabin in the woods suspects something unnatural may be lurking nearby — they're just not sure what.

Brain-Eating Ants

You are a Brazilian travel writer who's just returned from a week-long scenic hike near the Pico da Neblina. Exhausted, you fall asleep for two days and promise to call the doctor when you wake up. Though you're still tired and have a killer headache, you have an article due yesterday. So, you break out your laptop and start to write about your travels. Unfortunately, the words won't come, and you're worried something is very, very wrong with you. You try typing a sentence but can't work with all those scritch-scratch-tsk'ing noises. Pissed, you pack up your things and head to the nearest cafe. That's when you realize why you can't think. Those terrible sounds? They're coming from something that's eating away at your brain.

Location(s): Worldwide. There are multiple species of Brain-Eating Ants that flourish in mountainous regions.

Almost everyone has heard an urban legend about what happens when you neglect to take care of yourself. Brain-Eating Ants, however, don't crawl into your ears because you forgot to clean them. These common insects devour flesh and brain matter because they've been altered to be unnatural. Whether they're the byproduct of a horrific experiment or an accident caused by a supernatural taint or side effect, Brain-Eating Ants exist when they shouldn't.

The popularity of these myths makes it easy to brush them off as hearsay, but the problem is they're real. Medical personnel say hornets can't possibly burrow through a human skull to lay their eggs, but it is entirely feasible for a cockroach to scurry up the nasal cavity. More than one camper has gone to their doctor, begging to be rid of the beetles that had taken residence in their ears. As for tapeworms? Those parasites can squirm and burrow their way into any organ.

Knowledgeable hunters will tell you that these medical personnel are both right *and* wrong. *Ordinary* ants might not be able to tunnel through bone, but Brain-Eating Ants are anything but normal and they are always cruel. More than one hunter has gone to a retirement home to find elderly victims transformed into living nests, their muscles and bones hollowed out, the pores of their skin seeded with eggs and newborn larvae.

Appearance: Most hunters have trouble preventing Brain-Eating Ants from claiming a victim, because they look like the common ant. Usually, a cell stumbles onto a giant anthill at a remote camp or an understaffed hospital. Each time a cell tracks these cryptids down, there is almost always evidence a deliberate, malevolent force is at work: bright yellow slime, hollowed brains, cold spots. What's more, for every report that is publicized, hunters say there are 10 more that unmentioned.

Storyteller Hints: Brain-Eating Ants are an everyday horror that can infest mundane locations or natural locales and can be commanded or controlled by non-supernatural means. They prey on humans and animals alike — which is part of the reason their colonies grow larger in remote regions. This monster is perfect for mortal Storyteller characters who operate with malicious intent. To introduce them, focus on the mundane. Maybe a group of neighbors keeps rushing to the doctor for headaches. Maybe doctors are threatening to call the CDC. Then, up the ante by devising an infestation of a specific location. A prestigious hospital has been shut down, but there are still patients in the facility, all sitting quietly in their rooms, dying in degrees.

The moment the cell has a grip on the infestation, encourage the hunters to identify patterns of intent. Maybe the infestations aren't random. They're moving. *Somewhere*. Maybe, the Brain-Eating Ants can be traced back to a specific location, and when the hunters investigate they discover something much, much worse.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 1, Resolve 1

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 0, Manipulation 0, Composure 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 5, Survival 2

Potency: 1

Willpower: 3

Aspiration(s): Find a warm, bloody, living organ. Lay eggs.

Initiative: 4

Defense: 5

Size: 1

Speed:

Health: 8

Dread Powers: Madness and Terror, Multiply (eggs), Taint (Viscous)

Nekomata

You are a Japanese veterinarian who enjoys keeping animals healthy. You grew up hearing about the yōkai, but never quite believed the stories. Oh, you saw your fair share of strange and unusual animals and have spent a lot of time reassuring your clients that the supernatural isn't real. You stuck to that theory — until someone brought a stray, older cat in from the cold. Its mottled fur was thick, its claws were broken, and the poor creature was missing several teeth. You examine the cat further and listen to its heart — but you can't find a pulse. You try to draw blood next, but before you can pierce the cat's skin it turns to glare at you with an intelligent malevolence. That's when you notice other signs of decay — festering wounds, distended belly, milk-white eyes — and realize the yōkai are very, very real.

Location(s): Japan

Prominent in Japanese folklore, *yōkai* is a word that describes the denizens of the supernatural ranging from demons to spirits. The nekomata is a type of cat *yōkai* that possesses the power of necromancy. Some believe the nekomata were once domesticated cats that were abused and unloved, while others say they hail from the mountain regions of Japan, which includes Mounts Fuji, Kita, and Haku. Once the cats reach old age, their bodies begin to mutate and during this process they become nekomata.

The nekomata are shapeshifters who wield the power of necromancy, can transform from cat to human, and feed on human flesh. Vengeance drives them, for they never forgive those who hurt and neglected them in life. According to legend, the nekomata are capable of steering reanimated corpses with the flick of a paw. Despite these powers, the nekomata aren't as antagonistic as other *yōkai* and are often confused with the *bakeneko*. Though they aren't aggressive unless provoked, the nekomata have been known to torment their victims.

The nekomata are not harmless, however; they're evil cats that often begin tormenting a victim with commonplace annoyances. A grouchy neighbor complains of strange, eerie yowls in the middle of the night. Dead birds are dragged onto their doorstep. Then, the nekomata attacks — biting their ankles and shredding their flesh.

Japanese hunters have heard reports of cat *yōkai* but have a hard time sorting fact from myth. These hunters believe that the nekomata have migrated from the mountains to the cities, compelled by necessity and lured by the chance for vengeance.

Appearance: Some nekomata grow a second tail while others dangle their molted skin from the base of their spines. Though they can possess a variety of physical characteristics, the nekomata share common traits. In cat form, they can appear as any breed, but are almost always old. In human form, they can take the guise of any person they come across, but retain certain feline features such as their fangs, eyes, and whiskers.

Storyteller Hints: The nekomata can be challenging for hunters to identify because they may be mistaken for were-creatures, other yōkai, or rabid animals. When signs of necromancy start to appear, a cell might assume a witch or warlock is to blame. The connective tissue between strange claw marks and the dead rising to life is the human form of the nekomata. Introduce an encounter with a cat-eyed shapeshifter who eerily resembles an eyewitness and give the hunters an opportunity to hunt the nekomata before they claim a victim.

Storytellers who want to add a twist may hint that competing forces are hoping to trap, capture, and study the nekomata to unravel their shapeshifting and necromantic powers. These forces may range from cults, to black-market opportunists, or other hunters.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Occult 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3 Stealth 4, Survival 2

Social Skills: Persuasion 4

Potency: 3

Willpower: 7

Virtue: Loyal

Vice: Demanding

Aspiration(s): Find a new owner who will take care of me. Take revenge on the owner who didn't. Make new (undead) feline friends.

Initiative: 6

Defense: 7

Size: 2/5

Speed: 8 (Cat)/11 (Human)

Health: 4 (Cat)/7 (Human)

Dread Powers: Animal Shift (Cat), Hex, Know Soul, Raise Dead, Skin Taker

Rivers, Lakes, Oceans

Deep, dark waters hold secrets waiting to be uncovered beyond the occasional lost shipwreck or underground ruin. Mortals have long been fascinated by the aquatic creatures that swim oceanic depths, but have also wondered if other, more predatory beasts breathe underwater. For centuries, giant kraken and lake monsters, like Bessie, Champ, and the Lariosauro, have been blamed for strange weather conditions and unfortunate accidents in open waters. Sometimes, when a lover drowns or a boat crashes, the best and easiest explanation is to blame a monster instead of human error.

Hunters know there may be some truth to fish tales about bunyips, snallygasters, and sea monks. Finding evidence is tedious and time consuming, however, and superstitions are rampant.

Everyone has heard of selkies, nymphs, and mermaids, and yet most people are too embarrassed to admit they might believe in them and that if they are real, they may not be benign. Worse: stories of haunted ships and ghosts of drowned sailors are so common, eyewitness accounts favor spirits as the cause for most strange sightings in open waters. Mysterious fog, bouncing lights, and eerie screams are often attributed to local tragedies that never took place.

Smaller lakes and rivers can yield unexpected clues when hunters participate with the Coast Guard to find survivors — a scaly carcass, a waterlogged trunk, a cache of gold coins. Monsters, too, know that deep waters shield them from sight. Creatures who can breathe underwater, hold their breath, or swim great distances can hide for months, perhaps years, without anyone noticing they've holed up in an underwater cave. While the hunters are chasing after a vampire in their car, the bloodsucker ditches them at the marina. Frustrated, members of the cell don't understand how a slasher is choosing victims; days later they find out the slasher pretends to fish near a popular swimming hole.

Wise hunters know that they can't rule anything out, but all-too often bodies of water are overlooked during a hunt. Hunters need to consider all types of terrain on a hunt, and the ones who do will find more than they bargained for.

Muldjewangk

You are an experienced Australian fisherman who avoids certain fishing spots near Lake Alexandrina, because you know what lurks beneath the waters. You spot a group of tourists on a boat sailing up the Murray River, and you feel a chill crawling up and down your spine. You beg them to turn back. After an uncomfortable silence, they ask why, so you tell them how your best friend died. You describe the giant, scaly hand that exploded from the water and snatched your friend off your boat. Then, you tell them you sailed away as fast as you could before the creature attacked you, too, and you will only return when you are skilled enough to hunt it.

The muldjewangk is a monstrous mercreature native to Australian waters that is part human, part fish. Rooted in aboriginal legends, the muldjewangk is the name for an ancient creature that lives underwater — only emerging to claim a victim.

Eyewitness accounts stretch back hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Most people do not heed the warnings that giants live under the water and pass them off as tall tales or rumors. Survivors who share their encounters often tell similar stories, however. Sometimes, a tourist rents a boat and accidentally provokes the ire of a great river monster. Other times, a fisherman spots movement in the water and doesn't realize they're attacking the muldjewangk. In most cases, the muldjewangk mauls the boaters and smashes their craft. In others, the monster is annoyed and curses them instead. The afflicted then contract rare diseases, or break out in itching, painful boils.

Muldjewangk are intelligent predators that prefer to be left alone. Fiercely territorial, they tolerate boaters unless they linger or cross paths. These giant fish monsters protect their homes at all costs and have been rumored to attack commercial freight liners and cruise ships. Historically, the muldjewangk were thought to be creatures that only existed in aboriginal lore, until a viral video proved otherwise. Rumor has it they attack by filling their mouths with water and spitting it out at sailors nearby.

Appearance: Some reports describe the muldjewangk as an immense merperson, while others give it more serpent-like qualities. Most images of the creature are blurry, as it is almost always

caught in motion, but they all reveal glistening, triangular scales in shades of murky- or bluish-green — whatever best helps it blend in with its watery environment.

Storyteller Hints: More cunning than most, the muldjewangk plans its ambushes and strikes when its prey least expects it. After all, who expects a giant fish person to destroy their boat? Muldjewangk aren't discerning about who or what they consider prey, and any Australian hunters sailing on the Murray River are warned to keep their wits about them. Storytellers are also encouraged to introduce different types of aquatic creatures, such as the bunyip or fabled taniwha, to increase the threat level.

Storytellers who want to introduce rumors and intrigue might introduce rival hunters or a group of commercial business owners who are hoping to capture merfolk such as the muldjewangk. With the right motivation, a clever person could even train one of these aquatic monsters to attack specific crafts. While one trained Muldjewangk is terrifying enough, opportunists might use them to seek out even bigger, more terrifying sea creatures like the kraken; the ancient Filipino sea dragon bakunawa; or the giant, island-shaped turtle aspidochelone.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 5, Brawl 4, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Social Skills: Animal Ken 4, Intimidation 2

Potency: 4

Willpower: 9

Virtue: Courageous

Vice: Territorial

Aspirations: To capsize boats that come near me.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 7

Size: 15

Speed: 24

Health: 20

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Massive Webbed Fists		1B	Melee 10	Inflicts the Stunned Tilt

Dread Powers: Dread Attack (Fists), Home Turf 4, Numen (Blast, Pathfinder), Poison Mists

Special: To use Blast, the mercreature gathers water in its mouth then spits it back out at its targets.

Sea Trow

You've never been whale watching before, but it was on your bucket list and it sounded fun. You and your husband hop onboard a boat docked in Dalvik, Iceland and settle in to see the sights. You're told you can see humpback whales on the fjord, so you excitedly lean on the rail, hoping you'll spot one. You spend several minutes but the only thing you see is a small fishing boat. Before you turn around, you spot movement along the shoreline. Is that...a rock? Whatever it is, it's swimming fast, and it's headed right for that lone fisherman!

Location(s): Atlantic Ocean

The Sea Trow, or Trowis, is a type of aquatic vampiric creature that capsizes boats and feeds on entire crews. Known as a Draugr Sea in Iceland, the superstitious claim the shapeshifting revenant is a curse from the fae who “gifted” the victims with immortality. After drowning in the sea, the victim’s corpse begins to mutate, and its unconsecrated spirit lingers on to plague the living. The newly formed Sea Trow develops powers and succumbs to its darkest urges, targeting sailors, feeding on their fresh blood.

Some sailors are convinced the Sea Trow is a myth cooked up to ensure drowning victims receive a proper burial, while others wonder if the dark, shadowy shapes moving under the surface of the water will lunge and attack them. Scandinavian hunters suspect that both theories are correct, for the Sea Trow only shows itself to its next victim. Its chameleon-like abilities allow the supernaturally strong creature to blend in with its surroundings — which makes hunting it a challenge. Worse: The Sea Trow’s hide is so thick an ordinary blade cannot pierce it, and bullets cannot puncture it.

Like other vampires, most hunters believe the Sea Trow was once human. It is a grotesque mimicry of its former, human self and has its own personality, memories, and terrible hatred. A rank monster, the Sea Trow does not lure or speak to its victims, but its intentions are clear: It hates mortals, and will gorge on their blood even when it doesn’t need to.

Appearance: The Sea Trow is a giant humanoid creature; its charcoal-colored body is bloated, filled with dead blood, and is covered with tangled hair and seaweed. Its shapeshifting ability is unusual, even among vampires, and it can shift into boulders, rocks, and other debris usually found along a shoreline.

Storyteller Hints: On the surface, the Sea Trow is a clear-cut antagonist: it’s a hard-to-kill vampire that drinks blood, murders freely, and wrecks boats. It’s so vicious, it might even pose as a lone survivor to target a rescue ship. To leverage this monster in a chronicle, think about the identities of the Sea Trow’s victims. Does the creature target all the ships in a specific area or is the Sea Trow more selective? An entire session can be built around investigating who’s at risk of being attacked and killed. Then, from there, the hunters may scout around to discover who the Sea Trow *used* to be.

Clues about the past can help a cell find justice for a wrongful death by drowning, or it can present clues to prevent another attack. Though the Sea Trow represents a dangerous supernatural threat, its connections to the living have a lot of storytelling potential and offer a twist on other maritime monsters.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Investigation 3, Occult 4

Physical Skills: Athletics (Swim) 4, Brawl 3, Drive (Boats) 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 4

Potency: 8

Willpower: 17

Virtue: Pride

Vice: Gluttony

Aspiration(s): To feed. To destroy all things I cannot eat.

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4 + Athletics Skill

Speed: 8

Health: 9

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Claws	1L	Melee	7	N/A
Bite	2L	Grapple	7	Inflicts the Drugged Tilt

Dread Powers: Black Gate, Dread Attack 2 (Bite), Multiply, Numen (Drain), Predator's Sense (Swimmers) Raise Dead, Shadow Harvest, Unnatural Step 1 (Water)

Special: The Sea Trow uses Multiply by first biting and weakening its victim. Then, the Trow dribbles its toxic blood into their mouth, drowns them, and waits for them to be reborn as a Sea Trow. The Sea Trow can use Black Gate underwater.

Ice, Snow, Tundra

Frozen wastelands and vast, empty spaces are filled with urban legends many people recognize. The Himalayan yetis are creatures of the most common myth; it is so common, in fact, that hunters often argue whether the giant, hairy, two-legged beasts exist. Omnipresent in fictional and nonfictional accounts, some hunters point out many explorers romanticize the “abominable snowman” and its North American cousin, Bigfoot. Cells might scoff at the idea and think only amateurs believe they're a lost species waiting to be found. After all, wealthy magnates have spent millions exploring remote areas hoping to find proof of their existence — but have come up empty-handed. Other hunters suspect the beasts have been misidentified and believe yetis are either subterranean humanoids who live in underground caves or yet-to-be-named were-creatures.

Though yetis are infamous, they aren't the only monsters who prefer wintry conditions. Some hunters grudgingly admit that the more they hunt across snow and ice, the less they know. Polar regions are demanding environments in which to travel, and outsiders often find themselves in over their heads if they venture off on their own without help from local hunters. Due to

changing climates, however, monsters native to Antarctica and the Arctic Circle are on the move. Some travel by boat. Some never make it that far south. Others, however, can and will.

Amarok

You are an Inuit professor and hunter who teaches at the University of Lapland. A group of Finnish hunters claims a giant, yellow-eyed wolf is attacking the citizens of Rovaniemi; the last cell that ventured out into the cold never came back. You mark the incidents on a map of the area and assess possible locations of the creature. There can be only one place sturdy and safe enough to house such an impossible wolf: an ancient, winding network of caves rumored to be haunted. You grab your gear and extra medical supplies. You're not sure if you can corner this wolf, but you do know one thing: Your fellow hunters won't face this terror alone.

Location(s): Primarily in the Arctic Circle; it may venture further south into Canada, Finland, Norway, Greenland, Iceland, and Alaska in the United States during the winter months.

More than one Arctic hunter has spoken of the Amarok, a lupine creature that stalks victims in the bitter cold. Most hunters agree the Amarok is a species of wolf but have yet to confirm if there's more than one creature or species.

Though the word has found its way into different languages, the word "amarok" originated in the languages of the Inuit people and holds special significance to their cultures. Most hunters, however, agree that while the Amarok they seek possesses the same name as the Inuit's legendary wolf, the monster they seek is a deadly threat and not the benevolent creature found in those legends.

Hunting the Amarok is difficult for several reasons. The Amarok shows itself to victims who are isolated; survivors' accounts describing the wolf change from one to another. Further, many academics and cryptozoologists want to believe there's nothing otherworldly or supernatural about the creature, so they lean too heavily on the 19th-century works of Danish geologist and explorer Hinrich Johannes Rink. Because of this, some hunters abandon a scientific study of the Amarok and claim the reason they're hard to identify or capture is that they are not wolves — they're reclusive were-beasts that have shunned civilization.

Finding the Amarok is difficult, but not impossible. Given that most hunters have only encountered the Amarok in isolation, and never in the company of their cells, it is difficult to say who is right.

Appearance: Eyewitness accounts shift frequently. The Amarok is often described as a colossal wolf, but unfortunately that's where the similarities end. Some say the creature is big enough to take down a grown reindeer, while others are convinced the Amarok is the size of a small glacier. Its eyes are bright yellow, green, or blue, and its fur has been described as shades of smoke and ash. A few witnesses claim the Amarok can speak in human tongues but have never seen more than one giant wolf at a time.

Storyteller Hints: The Amarok only shows itself to an isolated individual and possesses an above-average intelligence. Storytellers are encouraged to use this to their advantage. To increase the threat level, change the Amarok's behavior and location. Instead of isolating and attacking victims in the wilderness, place it near a small town or village. Mimic what a slasher might do and let the bodies pile up. Then, when the hunters believe they know what they're dealing with, introduce a broken claw or torn fur to get them back on track.

Longer chronicles featuring the Amarok have room to address contemporary themes. Think about how climate change affects this wolf in its natural habitat. With temperatures shifting in the Arctic Circle, ecosystems must now adapt or die. The Amarok, a hardy breed of wolf, will not perish with the ice. Like many cryptids, it does whatever it takes to survive — even if that means adapting to city life.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 2,

Potency: 3

Willpower: 8

Virtue: Protective

Vice: Wrath

Aspiration(s): Find new hunting grounds. Keep my hunting grounds safe.

Initiative: 7

Defense: 5

Size: 6

Speed: 17

Health: 10

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Claws	2L	Melee	5	N/A
Bite	2L	Grapple	4	Inflicts the Poisoned Tilt

Dread Powers: Animal Shift (Wolf), Dread Attack 1 (Claws), Dread Attack 2 (Fangs), Multiply, Regenerate

Special: If introducing the Amarok as a large cryptid instead of a werewolf, the Amarok has Size 4 and does not inflict the Poisoned Tilt when it bites. The Amarok can spread its taint through its saliva. After the Amarok bites a victim, they inflict the Sick (Virus) Tilt. If the virus isn't purged from the victim's body in days equal to the Amarok's Potency x 2, they begin exhibiting signs their body is changing.

Snow Wasset

You are a Canadian deer hunter. Though you're no stranger to the beauty of Canadian forests, you didn't come out today to hunt a buck. One of your sister's friends went missing overnight, and you're worried they were accidentally shot, trapped in their tree stand, or worse — mauled

by a bear. You manage to find their stand and a shredded, camouflage coat covered with stains. You try to find tracks in the snow, but you discover something else: a gnawed, human hand. You pray you have enough time to return to camp for more ammo before this monster hunts you.

Locations(s): American Upper Midwest around the Great Lakes region in the wintertime. It migrates north to Canada in the summer.

The Snow Wasset is a creature that migrates north during the summer months but remains in colder areas during the winter. During the summer, the Snow Wasset is easy to avoid; its green fur allows it to blend in with lush foliage, and it moves slowly on short, stunted legs. A fierce predator, it preys on animals during the summer months and typically avoids human encounters — unless it can't find food. Thankfully, the Snow Wasset spends half the summer hibernating in marshes that camouflage its presence.

The Snow Wasset's attacks more frequently during the winter than in the summer. Often, it is mistaken for a large beaver or weasel during the warmer months, and some hunters don't recognize the monster until its body changes. As the nights grow cold and dark, the cryptid migrates further and further north. Eventually, its front and hind legs break off and its fur turns white, allowing it to blend in with the snow-covered bushes, trees, and grass. With each passing winter day it grows hungrier and hungrier. Scurrying rabbits, deer, badgers, and other woodland creatures do not satisfy the Snow Wasset's appetite, and eventually the monster starts to prey on people.

Unlike other creatures, the Snow Wasset is solely interested in one thing: satisfying its voracious appetite. The monster is incredibly quick and can burrow its way through several feet of snow in mere seconds. Its size, when combined with its speed, forces it to consume several times its weight in fresh meat just to survive. Unfortunately, changing climates is forcing the Snow Wasset to relocate to new areas — and fresh victims.

Appearance: The Snow Wasset is approximately 150 feet long and has a medium-sized snout and beady black eyes. During the summertime, its fur-covered body is green, and it grows four, stunted legs. Its limbs die and fall off by the first significant snowfall, and its fur turns white.

Storyteller Hints: The Snow Wasset is an example of a creature that may be misidentified as two separate monsters due to its migratory habits. If introduced in a chronicle, the monster may make an appearance twice: once in the summer, in its less fearsome state, and again in the wintertime.

Some cells may think the monster is fabricated by deer hunters who want to tell a wild story. As a standalone monster, the Snow Wasset may represent a challenge for hunters and taking it down can be a good way to encourage teamwork. Storytellers may also want to relay a sighting in an unusual location to reflect its changing migratory patterns. Perhaps the Snow Wasset was sighted in Montana or Colorado during ski season instead of Minnesota, Wisconsin, or Michigan.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Stealth 2, Survival 3

Potency: 2

Willpower: 5

Virtue: Opportunistic

Vice: Gluttony

Aspiration(s): Feed until I'm full, then feed again.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 6

Size: 30

Speed: 15

Health: 33

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Claws	2L	Melee	8	N/A
Body Slam	0L	Melee	8	Incurs the Stunned Tilt

Dread Powers: Dread Attack (Claws, Slam), Unnatural Step (Snow)

Caves, Sewers, Subways

Hunters are aware that some monsters require deep, dark places to survive and others, like slashers, live underground to hide. They build nests where it's safe, but they do not stay dormant beneath the streets of Tokyo, London, Paris, or Chicago. When they emerge, they lure their prey underground to torture and feed on them in forgotten necropolises, crumbling tunnels, and condemned mines. Creatures that live beneath the surface are terrifying on a good day, and when they attack, they cause panic and mayhem.

Most people don't want to think about what can and *does* live right beneath their sleepy suburbs and sprawling communities. When an animal is to blame for collapsing pillars beneath a city street, citizens breathe a little easier. But, when a pair of glowing red eyes glares at them through a sewer grate? They walk just a little faster, hoping to get home where they think it's safe.

Underground, hunters may investigate a network of tunnels or a secret road that snakes beneath the city. They might head to a long-forgotten necropolis tourists don't know about, or an ancient cave that's barely been explored. What lurks beneath the soil can emerge in the cellar of a city mayor or a condemned sanitarium. Vast underground cities of the dead, like the French Necropolis of Bougon, date back to Neolithic times and are rife with legends of the intelligent undead snatching tourists from the surface. When logical explanations don't suffice, however, people claim monsters are to blame for accidents caused by human error.

Whether the things that go bump in the night are spirits of forgotten victims buried beneath a building or not, hunters forced to search in dank basements and old root cellars have their hands full. Cells are often one or two flashlights away from total darkness and nothing but the dripping of a leaky pipe. In these conditions, hunters have no choice but to rely on each other to unlock the deadly mysteries that slither and crawl right beneath them.

Subterranean Humanoids

You are a sanitation worker from Chicago. It's your day off, but that didn't stop your boss from calling you in to check out a busted pipe. You immediately see the problem: Part of the pipe's been crushed. You turn to grab a wrench when your phone rings. The office tells you to come back up on the double. When you ask why, they tell you police are on their way. Then, they play you a message from the last worker they sent down: "Hey! You, you can't be in here. Hey! Oh, fuck. Oh, my God. Don't kill me!" Pissed, you stomp over to the nearest ladder and hope the traffic isn't too terrible. You get halfway up when something grabs your ankle.

Location(s): Worldwide

Reports of subterranean humanoid species are rampant. Some are two-legged creatures who possess animal characteristics: fur, scales, or claws. Others, however, are humanoid predators that lurk beneath the surface and use urban legends as a means of scaring off inquisitive teenagers, local officials, and hunters, too. Sightings that occur are almost always traced back to a specific location, however, which makes finding the truth challenging. Reptilian humanoids who shun sunlight are often "spotted" in mining colonies, sewers, subways, and old tunnels used during wartime maneuvers — but not always.

Many hunters suspect that there may be more than one species of subterranean humanoid living beneath the surface of most villages, towns, and cities. These hostile monsters likely view surface dwellers as predators intruding on *their* territory, coming into *their* homes to attack *their* children. Some hunters believe these creatures won't attack unless they're provoked; others, however, are more vocal about the need to map, track, and clear out any underground nests and lairs they find.

Hunting underground is a technical challenge, because most underground creatures navigate perfectly in their domain. They know which boulder will cause a cave-in to kill miners or wayward spelunkers. They know where to snatch victims from the surface and take them back to their nests for feeding. They know which root cellars make perfect hiding places and which entrances to the surface are they should avoid, too.

Appearance: Descriptions of subterranean humanoids vary widely, but are almost always alien in nature. The reptilian species are lithe, scaly humanoids with clawed hands and lashing tails. The human-seeming creatures are paler and hairier than surface-dwellers but can pass for a modern human with the right clothes. Some have learned to dress like miners, but don't do so out of modesty. As intelligent predators, subterranean humanoids think, plot, and plan for their survival first, and sometimes that means learning how to blend in with their surroundings.

Storyteller Hints: Subterranean humanoids are a great tool and a starting point for many chronicles. Rumors of their existence beneath the surface can facilitate several different styles of gameplay ranging from investigative to action-oriented. Hunters may head to City Hall to speak to officials, scour old maps and architectural plans, or get permits for construction. Others may hit up a supply store and head down into the sewers with guns blazing.

This type of creature, however, can highlight what hunters don't know. The terrain and this type of monster introduces storytelling possibilities that can be tailored to a cell's needs.

"Subterranean humanoid" might also simply refer to a feral murderer — a slasher — who *seems* inhuman. It could refer to a vampire who uses the tunnels to travel about the city by day, a crocodile that escaped from the zoo, or the undead that shambles through the subways to distract the hunters from a necromancer's true quarry.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth 5, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2

Potency: 3

Willpower: 8

Virtue: Tenacious

Vice: Envy

Aspiration(s): Deter outsiders. Reach the surface. Force other mortals to stay underground.

Initiative: 5

Defense: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 13

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool
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Claws	2L	Melee	7
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Dread Powers: Blackout, Dread Attack (Claws), Home Turf 2, Weathervane 3 (Earth)

Teke-Teke

You are a policeman patrolling the Yokohama Subway. Someone called your unit, and your sergeant wants you to make sure everyone is safe. You reach the general area you were told to investigate and ask the passengers if they saw anything strange. Suddenly, you hear a scream! You ask the passengers to move aside and hope there hasn't been an accident. You spot a lump on the tracks. It's a girl, but it's not. It's half of a girl. You pull out your gun and your phone. You feel your hand shaking, and almost forget to call for backup. Whatever that thing is, it can't be real. Can it?

Location(s): Japan

The teke-teke is a dangerous creature that stalks the subways in Japan. It is a monster created after a person commits suicide by throwing themselves in front of a subway train. The victim's distressed spirit remains attached to the upper half of their body, and the possessed corpse hungers for human flesh. A ravenous predator, the teke-teke has an insatiable appetite and preys on the living. These undead creatures drag themselves towards their victims by their arms, and frighten victims with their unusual appearance. Their name is tied to the unsettling sound they make as they inch closer to their victims.

Though teke-teke are stealthy, their victims have a moment's warning before they strike as the scuttling sound of the approaching monster resonates through the subway tunnel. After leaping onto their target, the teke-teke tear the body in half and feed on its legs and torso. Following this terrifying sight, the victim slowly awakens as a teke-teke after they die. Japanese hunters know if one teke-teke is found, it must be eliminated quickly. Otherwise, more are sure to follow.

Appearance: At first glance, a teke-teke looks like any other ordinary Japanese citizen. Witnesses are often shocked to realize a teke-teke is only *half* a person; they drag their bodies along the ground with clawed hands, and have matted hair, wild eyes, and blood-stained mouths. Some teke-teke still wear the tattered clothes they wore when they died, while others are naked and covered with blood, dirt, and grime. Where their severed torso ends, some of the teke-teke's bodies are cleanly cut, while others drag a wet train of entrails and shredded flesh.

Storyteller Hints: The teke-teke are both undead and spirits of vengeance. It is a type of revenant perfect for a survival horror-themed chronicle, because the teke-teke can quickly replicate. Though this antagonist's motivations are clear — to feed on flesh and create other teke-teke — an encounter can quickly spiral out of control. To balance the threat level, consider where potential victims might be located before springing the teke-teke on an unsuspecting group of hunters. Storytellers are encouraged to drop clues through eyewitness reports, too. After all, the teke-teke's abilities are simple but deadly.

To add a twist, introduce the teke-teke to a different subway. As the hunters investigate, hint how the teke-teke hails from Japan, and this flesh-devouring monstrosity *shouldn't* be crawling through the Shanghai Metro, London Underground, Madrid Metro, or New York Subway. If encountered elsewhere, the teke-teke's presence creates chaos and havoc — a perfect distraction for a rogue hunter who's captured the teke-teke and has released it to make the hunters' lives miserable. The teke-teke might also have accidentally escaped after a well-meaning cell wanted to study it abroad.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 5

Potency: 5

Willpower: 12

Virtue: Adaptable

Vice: Greed

Aspirations: To make more like me. To feed.

Initiative: 9

Defense: 4

Size: 3

Speed: 12

Health: 6

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Claws	2L	Melee	7	Inflicts the Immobilized Tilt
Bite	1L	Grapple	7	Inflicts the Poisoned Tilt

Dread Powers: Dread Attack 2 (Claws), Dread Attack (Bite), Multiply, Madness and Terror, Regenerate, Unnatural Step 2 (Walls, Ceilings)

Special: When introducing this monster, the Storyteller is encouraged to present more than one in the initial scene.

BEGIN CHAPTER FICTION

The man on the sofa could have been anywhere between 28 and 39, but his sister-in-law said he was 22. He sat with a knee pulled to his hunched frame, stomach concave, sucking at his teeth like he was trying to get rid of some meat fiber. Blond hair fell across his face in oily clumps. He rarely blinked.

“Sorry, Charlie don’t like strangers,” his sister-in-law explained. Cara Cook was tall for a Peranakan woman, blocky, mostly hip and grimace. In contrast, her husband — Mr. Cook, no known first name — was rotund and squat, with a sparse thatch of chestnut hair and worried eyes. He did not smile, only wrung his gloved hands endlessly.

“Mhm.” Sasha grinned, all teeth, and sat the rest of us down at the dining table. The Indian woman was a bona fide psychic, but we’d set it up so that Singapore would only look at her like a fraud: hoop earrings, tasseled skirt, even the mandatory crystal ball. We needed people to tell her stories, but we didn’t want anyone to believe she could do something about them.

“So, tell me. When did these disturbances start occurring?” Sasha had a fake Cajun accent for customers who wouldn’t take the word no. She laced her fingers together and set her chin on them.

The Cooks’ residence wasn’t unimpressive. The interior decor was dark wood and antique furniture where it wasn’t Norwegian chic. Photos of the couple, airbrushed into near anonymity, lined the beige-colored walls.

“L-last week?” Mr. Cook said. He looked to his wife for affirmation.

She nodded.

“Funny,” I said. “Thought you visited Sasha three weeks ago.”

Cara’s smile faltered. Her left hand — sleeved in yellow latex — lacked two fingers: the index and the pinky. Beside her, William rolled his eyes and mouthed a warning. I shrugged.

“We go to see Sasha for different reasons.” she said.

“Fertility charms.” Sasha didn’t miss a beat. She stretched out her arms — mahogany-brown, more muscular than they had right to be — with their palms turned up, a slight crooking in her fingers to denote invitation. I laced my fingers with hers.

I hated this part. The ceremony constricted my range of motion. It’d been a problem before. But ritual needed to be obeyed. “Let us call the spirit of this house to this table. Let it speak through us, we simple mortals. Let its desire be known so we may help it find it peace.”

The house was too hot. The ceiling fan creaked as it wafted damp air through the room. Even in the suburbs, Singapore smelled of heat and smog. For all their money, the Cooks didn’t seem to believe in air conditioning. I could see Charlie staring at us from the threshold of the living room. He’d hardly moved.

“Some spirits are shy, Mrs. Cook. But if we can visualize the entity together, it may become easier to summon it. How would you describe the manifestation?”

“Very scary.”

Mr. Cook hesitated and then added: “It was very, very skinny.”

“Very tall also.”

“I’m beginning to see something, yes. Something old. Something sad.” Sasha paused. “What did its mouth look like?”

“Like someone’d used a needle to prick a hole in its face.” said Mr. Cook.

“And what did it *do*?”

Both Cara and Mr. Cook froze, their mouths drooping into nervous grins.

“It—” began Cara.

“—watched us.” finished her husband. The man slotted his thumb between his teeth and began to gnaw at the pad of meat. “It followed us from room to room.”

“Did it do anything else?”

“I don’t think — no, nothing.” said Cara. She bit her knuckles once. “Nothing else. Not that I remember. But we want to have privacy again, so we call you, people.”

“Mmm.” Sasha exhaled. “The spirits bless your truths.”

That was code for “something is wrong.” I released Sasha’s hand and covertly hit the red button on Fatimah’s app. Thank god for the public university wunderkind.

“Has the entity appeared to Charlie?”

“Charlie—” Cara worked the stub of a finger into her mouth and chewed. “He said that the thing liked to watch him hurt himself.”

“Hurt himself how?”

I flexed my hand into a fist. Tried to loosen the seized-up tendons in my right arm. The other continued to hang limp. Across the table, William did the same. I glanced down as my phone began to thrum. *In position*, said the message.

“Can you call the spirit or what?” Blood ran down Cara’s forearm in dark, thin tributaries. However, the woman took no notice.

“Can,” said her husband, sweating rivers.

We discovered early that certain incantations could be recorded for repeated use. Every line still had to be recited in full for the spell to activate, but there was a difference between relying on a human and trusting in the audio output of a warded machine.

I hit the button on the app just as William and Sasha kicked away from the table, weapons freed. The program might be able to say the words, but all rites of Castigation required sacrifice. I slammed my knife into my left palm and cut between metacarpals, splitting the web of skin between my third and fourth finger. Blood gushed and splashed onto the runes we’d inked onto the Cooks’ expensive floor. I shuddered as the unholy psalm drove its hooks into my soul and pulled. Nothing gave.

William speared Cara through the shoulder. The woman did not scream. Charlie did. The air rippled like oil and something torpedoed from his screaming mouth.

It was exactly as the Cooks had described: too many vertebrae, its maw a pinhole in its waxy face. A proboscis unrolled from the opening. The thing — gluttony spirit, Fatimah had guessed

— had only one target: William. No one, especially not abominations like this, appreciated it when you messed with the food supply.

Unfortunately for the thing, we were ready. We knew this house was haunted, and the Cooks weren't the first victims to call a hunter for help.

The entity slammed into a barrier before it could reach William and wailed its rage.

“Are you sure you're up for the next part?” Sasha asked hesitantly, angling a look toward me. “Yeah.”

Other people had the benefit of deciding what they wanted to do with life. Not me. Not as a member of the Lucifuge. I dragged my tongue over my bleeding flesh, savoring the salt and the copper pang. I breathed in and began to murmur the words to the second invocation. One day, Lucifer will be redeemed.

END CHAPTER FICTION

Chapter Six: Mysterious Places

“It was a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or for love or for hope. Exorcism cannot alter the countenance of a house; Hill House would stay as it was until it was destroyed.”

— Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

The hunt takes a cell to strange and mysterious places that are more dangerous than they first appear. A vampire might hang out in a pub to find a victim, lure them into the back alley by the dumpsters, and then feed before disappearing into the night. The victim may never know who or what they encountered. Hunters hot on a bloodsucker's trail want to know one, important thing: Where is the vampire going *next*?

In **Hunter**, the supernatural can be found in mundane and remote locations — and monsters are on the move. Often, hunters have their hands full and don't formulate elaborate criteria when investigating a new, unknown place to determine how much the supernatural has tainted it and what type of location it is. A house may be haunted, sure, but beyond that? Hunters don't typically categorize locations based on what they find there for a variety of reasons, because they concentrate on dealing with the monster who lives there. Toss in a healthy dose of urban legends, unreliable eyewitness accounts, and historical mysteries rooted to individual locations, and it's easy to see why hunters don't shuffle places into neat categories.

Though hunters don't share a common vocabulary to classify mysterious places, **Hunter** does to accommodate attached rules. In game terms, mysterious places fall into one of three broad categories of sites: nests, tainted places, and sentient places.

Classifications

Nests are the homes and lairs of monsters. A nest is defined and shaped by the monster using it. Typically, a nest is a mundane, perhaps abandoned location with features that suit the monster's needs. It is possible the nest itself is supernatural, either twisted by the monster or it already was prior to occupation. What makes it a nest, however, is that the creature rests, recuperates, feeds, hides, etc. in this *specific* location. In other words, a nest is where the monster feels safe — which means that, for hunters, it is very, very dangerous.

Tainted places are locations that are just...*wrong*. They are twisted, cursed, or corrupted in such a way that a mortal's mere presence in that place is a hazard. What makes a tainted place dangerous are the strange effects it has on those who try to access or use it. A tainted place will force people to see shadows that don't exist or say and do things they wouldn't normally dream of. Tainted places may drive people mad, alter the flow of time, or even change their physical nature independent of a monster's touch. Like an unnatural form of radiation, *something* permeates each tainted place to alter the environment through instinct. Entering one is always a risk.

Perhaps strangest of all are **sentient** places. Unlike nests or tainted places, sentient places are intelligent monsters that actively pursue agendas known only to themselves. A sentient place can think and reason. It feels. It *hates*. It may even communicate, move, or alter its dimensions to attack those within its reach. Hunters who encounter a sentient place often do not know what they are dealing with until it is too late.

Mysterious places attract people for a variety of reasons. Because they are static, these locations often have well-documented histories outlining who owned or occupied that space, who lived or died in it, and what it was used for. Anchored in a physical place but steeped in urban legends, these locations often attract hunters, police officers, detectives, and amateur investigators who are hoping to find more than a monster's lair.

Bygones and Strange Places

In the Chronicles of Darkness, some physical objects may radiate with a supernatural taint. This type of object, called a **Bygone**, is a rare and unusual find.

In **Hunter**, a Bygone may be found in a mysterious place, and is further defined as an object of a reasonable (and manageable) size that possesses strange abilities. An eerie crypt is not a Bygone, for example, but an urn found inside might be. Bygones fall into one of three types: temporary, semi-permanent, or true.

Temporary Bygones

A *temporary* Bygone is an object of manageable size that contains supernatural power but isn't irrevocably tainted by it. They are considered temporary Bygones because despite appearances they are still dangerous and should be handled with care. Temporary Bygones may be spelled or hexed to inflict a Condition when opened, tampered with, or broken.

Ghosts and spirits inhabiting objects act as their source of supernatural power. A ghost that possesses a porcelain doll technically creates a temporary Bygone; when the doll is destroyed, however, the ghost remains and must be dealt with. After the ghost is exorcised or moves on, the doll reverts to its (hopefully) less-frightening state. Other temporary Bygones include locket, amulets, poison rings, urns, etc.

Some temporary Bygones may eventually shift into semi-permanent Bygones with the passage of time depending on their power source. When one does so, anyone who comes near the item begins to experience strange side effects, and it's no longer safe to handle without training.

Temporary Bygones may be discovered in nests and tainted places. On rare occasions, a sentient place may create a temporary Bygone, as another monster might, to lure the unsuspecting to come near.

Semi-Permanent Bygones

A *semi-permanent* Bygone is an object that inflicts a variety of strange and unusual effects. Mechanically, these effects are represented by Tilts and Conditions that are activated by touch or by proximity to the object. Thematically, the object may whisper or sing to the owner, begging to be used. The source of this Bygone's power is variable and can be caused by witches, warlocks, or demons creating cursed objects that inflict two opposing effects. A Hand of Glory, for example, promises to grant the user who lights its grisly wick wondrous powers — but at what cost? An auctioneer might gain the Connections Condition, for example, but suffer the Shaken Condition at the same time, so they're too afraid to socialize and use the hand's "gift."

Semi-permanent Bygones are found in undiscovered or locations lost to time. Sometimes, other monsters live near a Bygone of this type because they are unwittingly drawn to its supernatural power. Often, however, this type of Bygone may be responsible for a variety of unusual behaviors told through the guise of an urban legend. In this way, a mysterious place may not be *that* strange after all; a Bygone may be to blame.

True Bygones

Lastly, a *true* Bygone is a legendary object drenched in supernatural power. For **Hunter's** purposes, storied relics that bestow Endowments to tier-three hunters may be considered true Bygones. This type of Bygone is usually one of a kind, shrouded in myth, and incredibly powerful — even warded. Often, true Bygones are priceless, ancient relics or mechanisms that have been lost to the ages. Those who know they exist may become obsessed with finding them to unlock their secrets, not knowing their mysterious source of divine or infernal power. Some true Bygones are terrifying relics that have been soaked with the blood of 1,000 martyrs, while others are rumored to be blessed by the gods. No one knows for sure.

Unlike other types, true Bygones require years, if not decades, of study to piece together how they work, how they can be safely stored, and how they're best used to mitigate any unwanted side effects. Their very existence is a lure, however, and true Bygones can be stolen and possibly destroyed with concerted effort. Most hunters would be reticent to set fire to a true Bygone because as far as mythic relics go, no one can be certain what would happen if such an attempt were made. Examples of rumored-but-unconfirmed Bygones include: Hades' Helm of Darkness, the Monkey King's staff, the Book of Thoth, and Dagda's staff.

True Bygones are a once-in-a-lifetime find and require considerable time and resources to discover. If semi-permanent Bygones are rare, true Bygones are even rarer. Often, these mythical relics defy the laws of physics because they each go against the natural order in their own way. As far as the Chronicles of Darkness are concerned, Bygones that bestow blessings are not of this world. True Bygones are also more than a legend; to find one is to fulfill a collector's wildest dreams.

Of course, hunters who *do* manage to track a true Bygone down are in over their heads. Raw, supernatural power is not to be trifled with, and *most* hunters know better than to fidget and experiment with the unknown.

The Response

Mysterious places can be area-specific or draw cells, compacts, and conspiracies from a broader region. Everyone knows the Varela family's house is haunted, for example, and can tell you in

exquisite (if not strictly accurate) detail about the death of a young couple on a specific stretch of road.

Tier One: Backyard Hunts

Local mysterious places do more than provide a novel or unusual encounter for any cell; they can make up a part of the setting's character or reflect the themes of a chronicle. For example, the Theatre Royal provides local history while spinning lies. Many of these locations grow out of local communities or are hidden in remote places with little connection to — or influence on — the outside world. Strange places in villages, towns, and cities are not unknown to residents. Someone knows about them. Someone *must*. Either they live nearby, brokered a deal to sell the land, or always shiver when they walk by.

Tier-one hunters might not always track a monster back to its nest. A cell of hunters who stumble into a tainted or sentient place may be capable of tackling it, but they can just as easily be overpowered due to their small numbers. When that's the case, the cell must find the allies and resources required to make their move. Often, cells suffer from a lack of knowledge and resources that forces them to do more research, interview more witnesses, and take extra precautions.

Mysterious places can be challenging for cells depending upon their size, location, history, and occupants. The older the place, the more time is required to know what the cell is dealing with. They can also teach cells a lot about the paranormal, because they sit between the world of mortals and the supernatural. Though they are not imbued with darker powers, nests can yield proof that a witness wasn't telling tall tales. They can also, however, act as lures to ensnare victims and trap hunters who've put their faith in the wrong informant. Tainted places may force tier-one hunters to confront their worst fear: The fight against the supernatural never ends. Then, if they confront a sentient location, they might decide to collaborate with multiple cells and form a compact — transitioning the characters from tier one to tier two.

Often, confronting or cleansing a mysterious place in a local area means tier-one hunters must face the darkness that gave rise to them. Unfortunately, that taint isn't always caused by the supernatural, and hunters who peer into it may not like who or what they find.

Tier Two: Amassing Resources

For compacts, mysterious places may require all hands on deck to investigate, explore, study, control, and neutralize them. Even when small or confined, some locations cast long shadows and compacts may have dealt with that place before. Other times, the targeted area has an important purpose that has nothing to do with the supernatural. Entire counties can depend on the output of a copper mine for economic survival; when that mine is revealed to be a nest, hunters who clear it out save more than people's lives. Towns and villages built near ancient wellsprings might depend on the fresh water a stream provides; the stream is protected by a sentient shrine. Now the hunters have a choice: clear out the shrine and potentially affect the water or leave it alone? Mysterious places such as these are likely to attract a compact's attention for a variety of reasons. The bigger the rumor, the more likely it is a compact will order its members to scope out the mysterious place. After a while, more cells might show up — or even competing compacts.

Compacts won't tell hunters they can't investigate a mysterious place or acquire a Bygone. Their attitudes will affect how easy it is for hunters to find resources or pull favors, however. Their positions are rumored to be as follows:

- **The Long Night:** Religious leaders have their finger on the pulse of the faithful, and are often called in to say a prayer, cleanse a cursed house, or even perform an exorcism. While their methods don't always work, the Long Night will reach out to other compacts as needed to deal with a mysterious place on behalf of its congregations.

- **Loyalists of Thule:** The Loyalists struggle to figure out how important mysterious places are to the hunt. While their primary focus is disabling (or disarming, as some members put it) Bygones when they appear, they're not sure if spending considerable time and resources dealing with a mysterious place is worth the effort. That said, the Loyalists aren't above helping when needed, but they likely won't investigate an area by themselves without seeing a benefit for their time.

- **Network Zero:** Compact members were some of the first to realize the increase in monster activity had certain side effects on various locations. Rumor has it that additional factions within the compact are forming to investigate haunted houses and monster lairs to prove the supernatural is real. However, for every area that's been filmed there are dozens of false reports — often about the same locale.
- **Null Mysteriis:** Members of Null Mysteriis are excited by the prospect of expanding their research opportunities and knowledge of the supernatural. Several hunters are thrilled that they can study where a monster feeds or sleeps, while others are eager to test the properties of inorganic materials that are clearly imbued with the supernatural. Of all the compacts, however, Null Mysteriis comes across as more authoritarian when dealing with Bygones and mysterious places, because they want to control the field to produce great results.

- **S.W.O.R.N.:** Every major metropolitan area is filled with forgotten or derelict buildings, and S.W.O.R.N. is aware of which places to avoid. They know their city well and will gladly share intel — especially if other hunters are willing to investigate. Unless someone is in danger, however, compact members tend to agree with The Union and leave dangerous areas alone.

- **The Union:** Members of The Union are hyper-vigilant, and their frequent patrols to keep the neighborhood safe act as a deterrent to outsiders — including monsters who need to find cover for the night. When their hunters find a mysterious place, it's usually one that's just out of reach or several miles away. Thus, when a cell does investigate, it often stumbles because they don't have the experience other compacts do. While some compacts — like the Loyalists of Thule — closely guard knowledge, others — like Network Zero — gladly share their findings. Banding together to investigate or fight in a mysterious place could even lead to the formation of a new compact. Larger and more powerful threats introduce the possibility of additional allies or enemies as well as conflicting motives. Hunters may gladly enjoy the added resources their compacts provide to cleanse a mysterious place or mount a fact-finding expedition. Of course, to do so a cell must first figure out what they're investigating and, when it comes to hunting, no two compacts hunt precisely the same way.

Unless a compact has a history investigating Bygones, tier-two hunters are marginally aware that they exist. The reasons for this are simple: Hunters capture, study, and eliminate monsters because they represent an *active* threat and a higher priority. John Dee's grimoire by itself isn't as compelling as a scary clown stalking and killing tourists at a county fair.

Compacts filled with hunters can go bankrupt, and their resources are not unlimited. Members are aware of supernatural threats but weigh the benefits and risks of investigating each one. Though most compacts have their own goals and motivations, they tend to agree that keeping a community safe is more important than hunting down a rumored Bygone unless it's actively threatening or causing harm.

Tier Three: Global Effort

Conspiracies understand that civilizations are built upon common and scarce resources. Control certain assets or information and entire nations can be manipulated with a well-timed phone call. Mysterious places scattered across the world are a draw for many conspiracies, because they have what hunters seek: a better understanding of the supernatural world. Though no hunt is ever guaranteed to produce information or rare and unusual Bygones, like the Dropta stones, such sites draw the attention of global conspiracies seeking an edge in their fight against the supernatural.

Because mysterious places and Bygones hold supernatural secrets, the conspiracies tend to react to the “bigger fish” as opposed to the haunted shack down the street.

- **Ascending Ones:** The Ascending Ones are less interested in mysterious places than they are in experimenting with Bygones. Unlike other conspiracies, hunters want to explore their uses by either coating them with potions, using them to contain their magical elixirs, or crushing them into fine powders that can be used as ingredients. Ascending Ones haven't shared their intent with other hunters outside the conspiracy, and there's no telling what other hunters will do when they learn how far this conspiracy is willing to go.

- **Cheiron Group:** The Cheiron Group is tight-lipped and hasn't revealed its stance on mysterious places or Bygones — not even to their own members. Naturally, this has spawned several rumors and conspiracy theories. Some recruits are being forced to experiment with acquired Bygones to test their effects. The leaders of the conspiracy are draining the Cheiron Group's war chest to purchase mysterious places under the name “Lambent Development Corporation.” What members are figuring out is that the Cheiron Group seems to be tightening its belt, even outright refusing equipment requests, while simultaneously increasing its recruitment efforts.

- **Council of Bones:** The Council of Bones has an unusual stance on mysterious places and Bygones, because it's only concerned with relics and locations connected to the spirit world. Some members believe they need to protect what they find, while others agree each instance should be treated as its own case. In general, hunters aren't opposed to investigating or sharing information provided the Council's interests to guard the living are protected. Secretly, some hunters fear the Council could lose sight of the Vigil by focusing too much on places lost to time and artifacts better left untouched.

- **The Lucifuge:** Members of the Lucifuge are concerned that demons and spirits of vengeance are gathering in abandoned places and are using them as a base of operations. While hunters aren't panicking, they will investigate leads that reek of the supernatural. The Lucifuge are often the first to show up at a scene marked by satanic symbols or evidence of a rite. Sometimes, this results in a case of mistaken identity, which is partly why hunters have began working with local authorities to ensure they're viewed as allies rather than antagonists.

- **Malleus Maleficarum:** In its storied history, the Malleus Maleficarum has investigated sites plagued by vampiric, demonic, and ghostly activity. For centuries, with the backing of the Vatican, hunters — and some conspiracy theorists — believe they've acquired several Bygones and a stockpile of cursed relics. While there may be some truth to the rumors, conspiracy members have been told to check in before proceeding. Additionally, leaders are considering the formation of a new order within their ranks to specialize in cleansing cursed objects and places.

The promise of undiscovered supernatural power when combined with the hunt brings an equal measure of excitement and danger, and hunters wishing to neutralize dangerous sites have their work cut out for them. Entire chronicles may be built around the acquisition, exploration, and defense of such mysterious places; subsequent chronicles could be built on unlocking a Bygone's power or freeing a trapped creature. Some, like Haw Par Villa, may even act as a Black Gate (p. XX) frozen in a moment of time, allowing the wielder to travel wherever they wish.

Though conspiracies tend to have more resources at their disposal, their members deal with more politics and approvals than tier-one or -two hunters. Information — the *right* intel — is at a premium, because the story of what happened shifts depending upon who's telling it. Rival factions within a conspiracy might sabotage each other to get their hands on the Pettakere cave's latest, untouched map; competing cells or conspiracies might easily do the same. The more hunters involved in the search, the greater the chance a hunt may go terribly, horribly wrong — especially when investigating a sentient place.

Unlike monsters, mysterious places don't usually up and relocate on a moment's notice, and their place in the world does not go unnoticed. After all, if one conspiracy shuts down a tourist attraction, like the Khewra Salt Mines in Pakistan or St. Patrick's cemetery in New Orleans, other interested parties are sure to take notice. As much as conspiracies want to control the supernatural to various degrees, their members uphold the Code to remind themselves of their humanity.

Nests, tainted places, and sentient places may attract tier-three hunters, but the real challenge is figuring out how dealing with these locations fits into their agendas and how they affect other mortals who have no idea conspiracies exist. Should the Cheiron Group reveal all its secrets to accept an archaeologist's help? Will the Council of Bones stretch its view of the Code to work with a warlock who has more information? Just how far will the Aegis Kai Doru go to get their hands on a new Bygone?

No mysterious place surrenders its secrets easily, and conspiracy members need to tread carefully when dealing with the unknown. Setting their concerns about the supernatural aside, conspiracy members must balance the physical requirements of the hunt against the resulting politics and ethical considerations of such an undertaking.

Nests

Even monsters need a place they can call home. A pack of dog-sized creatures covered in rusting metal plates hides within an old junkyard. The old lady's house, abandoned since she died, is a nest of catlike beasts she unwittingly cared for. Some nests might be more accurately called a "haunt" or a "resting place" for the ghosts within.

Whatever you call it, whatever form it takes, a nest is a monster's lair or refuge. Nests are suited to the creatures living in them, and hostile to any hunters who dare enter. Going into a nest is extremely dangerous, because the monster has the upper hand. Unfortunately, hunters often need to follow their prey back to its lair to save a victim, capture or kill the monster, and make their city a bit safer — at least for a night.

Using Nests

Nests are often the setting for confrontations with a monster. This might be the set piece for the climax of a story or a set up to highlight how the hunters aren't fully prepared. In either case,

dealing with a monster on its home ground should always be presented as a dramatic and dangerous scene.

A nest can also be used a setting for tense investigation scenes. Entering the lair of a flesh-eating beast to find more information is common, but risky. In this case, the nest itself is a source of clues, but also represents a terrible gamble — will the information hunters gain be valuable enough to make it worth their while? What happens when they find out another monster also lives there?

Savvy hunters should pay attention to the nest's environment. What kind of lair a monster chooses can tell you a great deal about it. A nest will often provide hints about a monster's weakness; a condemned factory with blacked-out windows probably indicates the creature is sensitive to light. Additionally, the nest might provide hints as to its abilities or Dread Powers. Hunters can enter a nest of a creature they assumed was unintelligent and find a collection of museum artifacts, instead.

The specific nest a monster chooses can also tell hunters something about its background. Its proximity to a hospital, police station, house, or other building says a lot about its habits. The activities it conducts inside can also deepen the mystery. Why does a slasher always drag its victims to the Oncology Ward in an abandoned hospital before carving them up? Why would a vampire sleep beneath a popular jazz club and never feed or interact with the musicians?

By fleshing out a monster's home, hunters have more information when deciding what to do next.

Destroying a Nest

The easiest way to neutralize a nest is to destroy a monster. Unlike other types of mysterious places, nests are typically not threats by themselves. Once the monster is destroyed, the nest itself is no longer a problem in most cases.

However, abandoned nests can still harm those who wander in. A cave on the verge of collapse or a dump site full of toxic chemicals are both extremely hazardous. Some intelligent humanoid monsters might set traps to catch or deter unwanted visitors, too. And, if the nest remains intact following its destruction, it could attract *other* monsters who need a home or are trying to find out what happened to the previous occupant. For cells and compacts, focused on immediate, local problems, cleaning up nests is a strong motivator to ensure their communities remain safe.

Hunters who physically destroy a nest deprive a monster of its lair (or drive a group of creatures out into the open) and can confront it in a new area. Fire, explosives, or other types of demolition equipment are obvious choices for hunters, but outright destruction of public and private properties can create headaches. Abandoned places are usually owned by *someone*, and authorities will want to know who blew up the old cistern without a permit.

Driving a monster out of its nest may cause other complications, as well. If the hunters aren't thorough, destroying a haunted house may cause the scattered ghosts to latch on to a new location — or the hunters themselves. A collapsed cave might cause the monsters within to attack more frequently, as they desperately search for a new home. Or perhaps there are more monsters in the nest than the hunters initially expected, and now they are pouring out of a burning building, howling for blood.

Systems

A nest is notable because it favors its monstrous occupants and hinders unwelcome visitors. Mechanically, the hindrances are represented by Conditions and Tilts. Some monsters may set traps (p. XX) as well, reserving their Dread Powers for the real fight.

The relationship between the monster and its nest, or the structure of the nest itself, can make navigating or exploring difficult. A living doll chooses a lair in an apartment building full of narrow hallways and cluttered with old furniture, where it can move freely, but the hunters can't easily defend themselves from its knife. The doll's nest would have both the Detritus and Tight Tilts. A featureless slasher in a gas mask swinging a pickaxe takes up residence in chemical factory, where the fumes inflict a Poisoned or Sick Tilt on anyone else who enters. The slasher stalks the weakened invaders and picks off the hunters one by one.

The Tilts inflicted by a nest are almost universally Environmental and apply to any unapproved visitors attempting to navigate the nest. Unless otherwise noted, leaving the monster's nest will remove the Tilt or Condition. Abandoning the nest to remove these effects will not grant Beats, however. Additionally, a monster may have Dread Powers that further shape the environment.

Mechanically, destroying a nest requires an extended action that may be opposed by a monster or Storyteller characters. The difficulty of starting a fire or determining *just* the right amount of explosives to level a nest is at the Storyteller's discretion.

Arthur Kill Ship Graveyard

Quote: *"Sure, we know about that ship's graveyard, but nobody's fool enough to actually clean it up. Why? Pick a reason: too expensive, too dangerous, too many nasty migraines."*

Location: New Jersey, New York. U.S.A.

Description: Records indicate the official name of the Arthur Kill Ship Graveyard is the Donjon Iron and Metal Scrap Processing Facility. It is an array of rusting hulks and broken-down engines that sits on the Staten Island sound, staring across the water at New Jersey. Around 100 ships have found their final resting place here, mired in mud and muck. Most have been stripped of their useful parts, and their skeletal hulks decompose at differing rates.

Decaying ships from as early as 1901 can be spotted in the graveyard. These range from a NYC Fire Department boat, to a random assortment of tugboats and merchant vessels, to a World War II submarine chaser. Many of the corroded ships are not worth salvaging and are hazardous because they contain toxic substances; they've been left to rot at the sound's marshy edges, staining the water red with rust.

Gaining access to the site is difficult and dangerous. Hunters must trudge through mud and seven-foot-tall reeds or try to navigate unstable paths made of broken boards.

All of this makes the graveyard a perfect hiding place for monsters to hide and find shelter in.

Storyteller Notes: Over the decades since the salvage yard was established, monsters have taken up residence within on at least four separate occasions. The combination of access to potential victims, the difficulty of getting into the place, and the vast array of hiding places within the ship graveyard have proven irresistible. At least two of the monsters are rumored to have been amphibious; some hunters believe the creatures swim out and attack people far away from their lair. Tracking these creatures back to the ship graveyard was as much a case of luck as good hunting.

To introduce this location into a chronicle, think about how much time the cell may spend there. Maybe the cell has tracked a dangerous monster to its hiding place in the Arthur Kill Ship Graveyard. Maybe there's a wrinkle: another hunter cell has tracked a completely different monster there. How are these two creatures coexisting within the same nest? And can both cells work together to flush them out?

Suggested Tilts: Detritus (Environmental), Filthy (Environmental), Tight (Environmental)

Theatre Royal

Quote: *We were just about to leave, when we heard someone shout, "Goddamn you for a blackguard, rascal!" Turned out to be Charles Macklin!*

Location: Drury Lane, London, England

Description: Several different buildings claiming the title of Theatre Royal have loomed over Drury Lane throughout London's long and storied history. The first and third iteration burned to the ground, and the fourth still stands.

Each theater has claimed its fair share of lives and plays host to the ghosts of its predecessors. The most famous spirit is known only as the Man in Gray, a ghost with a penchant for 18th-century attire, complete with tri-corner hat. Many believe the spirit is connected to a body discovered in 1848, sealed up in one of the theater's walls with a dagger between its ribs.

The Theatre Royal's ghosts are not the only challenge hunters face. London is a busy metropolis and its police, citizens, and tourists frequently stroll past. To top things off, the titillation of the theater combined with a good old-fashioned ghost hunt may be just the thing to attract the interest of local hunter cells, debunkers of the supernatural, or even stranger denizens of the night.

Storyteller Notes: The Theatre Royal is an iconic part of London and is a wonderful example of a haunted nest. The theater is the source of many superstitions that grant ambience and mystery to a chronicle featuring its renowned stage. The ghost light, for example, is a single light left on to placate ghosts. Supernaturally touched plays, such as *Macbeth*, Goethe's *Faust*, and *The King in Yellow*, might even be performed during an investigation. The ghosts — and actors — will resist efforts to cleanse or exorcise the site.

The Theatre Royal isn't the type of nest hunters can burn down on a whim; they must deal with the spirits if they want to cleanse the site. Its fame, however, may attract other monsters. Maybe an enterprising director scheduled performances of a newly discovered play with occult overtones. Since rehearsals started, there's been an uptick of paranormal activity in and around the theater. Eventually, the hunters may learn the play is riling up the ghosts haunting the old theater. But is the director doing it deliberately? And, if not, who is?

Suggested Tilts: Faltering, Reeling

Ophiology Lab

Quote: *Why didn't anybody tell me we're investigating snakes?*

Location: Ota, Gunman Prefecture, Japan

Description: Hidden almost in plain sight among the newer facilities of the popular tourist attraction, the Japan Snake Center, is a collection of rotting, wooden shacks. Filled to bursting

with decaying specimens, preserved ophiological treasures, unknown piles of research, and other paraphernalia, the neglected lab space is unnaturally permeated by the stench of decomposition.

The Ophiology Lab is no longer routinely used, and while it has every appearance of being securely locked up, it's hard to tell for certain. With so many specimens in such disarray, the lab is rumored to attract several types of snake yōkai: Nomori, Uwabami, and Nure-onna to name a few.

Whether the Ophiology Lab is protected by its rumored inhabitants or not, some hunters are skittish and may not investigate it because the area taps into their fears and phobias. Cells that want to visit this nest must research it thoroughly before paying it a visit by investigating former reports and interviewing spooked witnesses.

Storyteller Notes: The Ophiology Lab's placement is so close to the Japan Snake Center, it works best as an introductory, unexplored mysterious place that may or may not be a nest. The appearance of snake yōkai could turn out to be a rumor, falsified report, or frantic statement from a tourist scared of snakes. It could, however, also be a place where thieves scope out the Japan Snake Lab to steal from tourists, or simply a set of extra storage units that a scientist hasn't gotten around to cleaning up.

If one of the snake yōkai has moved in, the cell will need to figure out how to gain access to the site. Maybe they befriend a scientist who witnessed something strange, or maybe they ask the facility's administrator if they can help clean up the site.

Suggested Tilts: Detritus (Environmental), Filthy (Environmental)

Tainted Places

A sturdy oak tree where victims were once hanged until dead is eternally cursed. An isolated military base where experiments in psychic warfare were conducted has a lingering aura of pain and fear. The forest where a group of invaders slaughtered the families hiding from the ravages of war and famine twists the perceptions of anyone who draws near. That cistern in the basement of a centuries-old farmhouse is believed to be a doorway to hell. Whatever the reason, these places are dangerous. They are tainted.

Tainted sites are the places that have weird and terrible stories about them, places that people avoid without entirely knowing why. This is for good reason. In areas around a tainted site, nature often acts...*odd*. Plants grow in unusual ways; animals skitter strangely. Rain falls sideways. These oddities extend to people who spend too much time in a given site. As the taint of the place begins to take hold, their perceptions are altered, followed by their innermost thoughts and behavior. Eventually, they may become a danger to themselves and those around them.

Tainted places are not aware, however. They don't have goals or feelings. They simply *are*. And their very existence is a powerful threat.

Cleansing Tainted Places

Hunters tell a wide variety of tales about how they have dealt with tainted places. In some cases, burning down the cursed house was a simple (if unsubtle) way of cleansing the site. In other cases, more elaborate rituals were required. No one has been able to discover a surefire way for dealing with the dangers of these places, as each tainted site is unique.

For many places, destroying the physical location is enough. If the curse or taint is tied to a specific building, tree, or landmark, then destroying that landmark will remove the threat of the tainted place. Fire, explosives, and demolition equipment attract attention, and anyone who owns a building is unlikely to be happy with someone burning it down. Worse: Some tainted places are immune to fire and may act strangely when attacked.

Some tainted places cannot be cleansed so easily. If the land *beneath* the building is cursed, then bulldozing the house is meaningless. In these cases, hunters will need to dig deeper into the history and cause of the tainted place, to find another means of cleansing the site.

Tainted Systems

Tainted places, though dangerous, are not monsters who think, feel, or plan. Tainted places simply react. The following rules apply.

- **Potency:** All tainted places have a measure of a curse (or taint). This is reflected by its Potency rating and the Dread Powers it possesses.
- **Dread Powers:** Dread Powers are often a sign of a malevolent presence at work. Unlike monsters, tainted places do not *choose* to use Dread Powers the same way they do, because they're not alive or sentient. Dread Powers are activated reflexively.
- **Types of Actions.** A tainted place can only take a reflexive action when a Dread Power is activated. They do not have Initiative, nor do they participate in combat. If necessary, defensive rolls comprise the tainted site's assigned Potency rating plus or minus modifiers. If an unusual roadside attraction has a Potency rating of 8, the tainted site's dice pool is eight dice. If, however, the tainted site is attempting to use the Agonize Dread Power, the victim's Stamina is subtracted from the roll as normal.
- **Durability.** The physical objects (doors, windows, traps, etc.) within a sentient place have a Durability rating; they are treated as form of equipment (p. XX) and is rated 1 to 5. In general, the higher the Durability rating, the more challenging it is to destroy.
- **Structure.** A sentient place may have several structures within a given location. When calculating Structure, add the object's Size to its Durability.
- **Variable Size:** Tainted places can vary in size but start at Size 10. Often, they are large or sturdy enough that destroying them may require explosives, construction equipment, or a long-term project that need permits and additional crewmembers. The amount of damage required to physically destroy a tainted place is at the Storyteller's discretion. If a tainted place is destroyed before it's been neutralized, its ruins will still present signs of the supernatural.
- **Other Threats:** Any location, whether it's a nest, tainted place, or sentient place, can be home to other threats. When assigning traps, monsters, Bygones, etc., specificity is required to help hunters clearly understand what they're dealing with.

Dread Power Adjustments

Dread Powers represent a tainted place's ability to inflict Tilts and Conditions or alter its environment in response to actions characters take.

The Dread Powers used by tainted places do not require Willpower, because they are activated reflexively. This means that Dread Powers requiring Willpower expenditure beyond initial

activation won't work in a tainted place. Tainted places don't use Numen either, but ghosts who haunt a tainted place will.

Dread Powers are purchased according to their rank and are tied to their Potency rating.

Dread Power Triggers

Dread Powers become available to tainted places after initial purchase and are not powered by Willpower. Each Dread Power has a unique *trigger*.

The Dread Power trigger is a thematic device that causes the Dread Power to activate in a specific location within the area. They represent the years, decades — even centuries — of malevolent power that's seeped into wood, drywall, bricks, and stone. Dread Power triggers are activated by characters and cannot be created by them (or by monsters); they are firmly connected to the tainted place. Once tripped, the trigger will not be reactivated.

Tainted places are not considered neutralized until hunters perform a successful ritual to cleanse the site. The ritual should be thematically appropriate to the tainted site and may be performed as teamwork or Tactics. Tripped Dread Power triggers will reactivate after a period of one week if the hunters don't neutralize the taint. They will, however, appear in the same place as before; savvy hunters will take note of where the effect occurred and avoid that location in the future.

INSERT TABLE

Potency	Number of Triggers	Dread Power Ranks
1	10-15	3
2	16-20	5
3	21-25	7
4	26-30	9
5	31-35	11
6	36-40	15
7	41-45	19
8	46-50	23
9	51-55	27
10	56+	31

END TABLE

Multiple triggers tied to a specific Dread Power may be found in a tainted place but may not be activated more than once per session. The trigger is considered "tripped" when the Dread Power has successfully affected a single character. Technically, a cell *could* temporarily neutralize a tainted site by activating all its triggers; doing so will not cleanse the taint.

The trigger for a Dread Power may require a specific interaction with an object, stairwell, hallway, or room; they may also necessitate a character's specific action. A tainted place triggers Maze whenever someone accidentally trips. A hospital that traps ghosts may force Agonize on a monster who dies inside. A cave may have several, hidden caverns that inflict Blackout on the hunters once they venture further in.

Storytellers are encouraged to place triggers in unusual places and think about using interesting Dread Powers to give the tainted place its own personality. Part of the mystery will be to figure out how to avoid getting hurt while exploring and neutralizing the site, saving trapped occupants, and dealing with monsters who've taken up residence.

Joelma Building

Quote: *"Thirteen deaths multiple times? That's too many tragic losses to be a coincidence."*

Location: São Paulo, Brazil

Description: Standing 25 stories tall, the Joelma Building is a towering skyscraper in the middle of São Paulo. It is also a historic site because of the tragedy that occurred three years after it was built. In 1974, an electric fire started on the 12th floor of the building, trapping people on the upper 13 floors. Soon, the entire building became a towering inferno, and claimed so many lives it forced the world to take notice and spurred fire-safety discussions and laws to prevent future disasters. By the time the fire died out, 179 people were dead and over 300 people injured.

Wherever there is tragedy, urban legends swirl in its wake. Paranormal researchers believe the land is now cursed, and the stories blend fact with fear. During the blaze, 13 people were trapped in one of its elevators and died. The victims were never identified, and no one came forward to claim the bodies. These unknown 13 souls haunt the Joelma Building site and never leave. Since the fire, there have been numerous reports of people seeing ghostly figures on the upper floors of the Joelma Building.

To this day, these hauntings continue. Workers see apparitions in the reconstructed building's offices and hallways and consider this to be a normal, everyday occurrence.

Storyteller Notes: Through careful research, the hunters can discover the truth of stories claiming the terrible Joelma fire was not the first tragedy to happen on the site. One story asserts that, at the founding of São Paulo, 12 cursed Jesuit priests and an altar boy committed suicide at or near the site. Another states that, before the Joelma building was built, a home on the same land was the site of a murder-suicide: A young chemist returned home and shot 11 people before killing himself. After emergency personnel arrived, one worker became ill and was forced to leave the scene. That worker died the next day, of an infection apparently contracted at the scene, bringing the death toll to 13.

In addition to being a tainted place that claimed the lives of 13 victims, the Joelma Building could *also* be a nest, haunted by the 13 souls who died during the fire. Cleansing an office building in the middle of a busy city is a daunting task for any hunter, especially since there's no telling if the site is actively attempting to claim 13 new victims or not.

Systems: The Joelma Building is Size 100 and Potency 3. The Dread Power triggers are found in odd places that been built up or reconstructed since the fire took place. Suggested Dread Powers include Blackout, Agonize, Madness and Terror.

Haw Par Villa

Quote: *"Welcome to the horrific ride of your afterlife!"*

Location: Singapore

Description: Crowning a hill in Pasir Panjang, Haw Par Villa is a theme park dedicated to Confucian ideals and Chinese folklore, myths, and legends. Built in the 1930s by Aw Boon Haw

for his brother, Boon Par, Haw Par Villa was a popular tourist attraction when it first opened. Over the years, however, interest in Tiger Balm Gardens waned despite its cultural prominence among Singaporeans, and the colorful attractions have continued to gently age or fall into disrepair. Despite this, Haw Par Villa holds a place in many a tourist's imagination and has spawned a peculiar urban legend: The site is thought to conceal a literal portal to hell.

Though many of its attractions are beautiful renderings, the Villa is most famous for its gruesome depictions of the 10 Courts of Hell. Abandoned, expanded, and renovated repeatedly over the years, the villa has been a staging point for the Japanese army and a "moral excursion" for thousands of children.

Some believe the infernal gateway is only open at midnight or during certain astronomical events. Whether or not these urban legends are true, the rumors persist. Several sections of the park are closed off or no longer in use, and the location is often shut down for months at a time to ensure the public's safety. When the park is operational, it is only open during the daytime, which further complicates matters.

Storyteller Notes: Aging theme parks, carnivals, traveling sideshows, and tourist attractions are interesting sites for hunters to explore even without the presence of the supernatural. These locations may seem perfectly innocuous during the day but take on horrific attributes at night when shadows fall ominously on cheerful statues. Haw Par Villa is a unique cultural site because it combines the mundane with the supernatural. The location isn't tainted in its entirety; the supernatural is only active in the 10 Gates of Hell exhibit.

A gateway to hell represents a significant threat for hunters and acts as the reason a site is tainted while pointing to the source of its Dread Powers. Chronicles that include Haw Par Villa's 10 Courts of Hell or similar exhibits may take a dramatic, if not demonic, turn. The goal is straightforward: Shut the gate and figure out how to keep it closed. The methodology, on the other hand, may not be. Demons, witches, warlocks, spirits, and other thematic monsters may prowl around the hellmouth, while others might try to escape. Hunters may have to prioritize or call for backup to deal with an increasing threat.

Systems: Haw Par Villa is not the tainted site — but the 10 Courts of Hell exhibit is. It is Size 50 and Potency 6. The Dread Power triggers are hard to find, because they're located in, near, and around the exhibit in the underground tunnel. If hunters visit when the park is open, they'll attract attention for being too hands on with the demonic statues and icons in the tunnel. Suggested Dread Powers are Black Gate, Damnation, Hex, and Maze.

Fairchild Oak

Quote: *"That tree...I think it wanted me...to hurt."*

Location: Florida, U.S.A.

Background: The Fairchild Oak, which is also known as the Haunt Oak, is a centuries-old Florida landmark tainted by death. Many believe the tree attained supernatural qualities in 1880 when Norman Harwood killed himself beneath its outstretched limbs or following the immigration of Scottish plantation owner James Ormond II and the fight led by Seminole resistance leader Coacoochee — though its origin may precede the horrors of colonialism. Regardless of origin, the Fairchild Oak is neither benign nor malevolent. After witnessing centuries of grief and trauma that escalated during the Seminole War, the Fairchild Oak can no

longer be sustained by water and sunlight alone. The oak tree thirsts for human blood and grief. It compels anyone nearby to sit beneath its boughs; when they do, it drives them to self-harm or suicide.

The massive, ancient tree stands at least 200 feet tall and 30 feet wide. The oak's immense, spidery limbs twist in unsettling rows from the mass of its trunk like gnarled, grasping arms. The tree dwarfs the palms that grow around it and draws the viewer's eye. Visitors to the state park feel compelled to stop and admire the impressive tree. Those who are wise feel its quiet intent and do not linger on.

Storyteller Hints: The Fairchild Oak is a stationary force of nature stained by historical events that stretch back thousands of years. Unlike other threats, Storytellers are encouraged to build a session's plot or chronicle around the landmark's locale. A chronicle involving supernatural events in Floridian state parks is ripe with possibility, because the story can incorporate a larger mystery in addition to the Fairchild Oak's use as a tainted place. The threatening presence of the Fairchild Oak might also be a beacon for other, dangerous monsters: slashers, cryptids, and even weirder threats.

Hunters who approach the Fairchild Oak may not find anything wrong with it at first; the longer they linger, however, the more they'll experience intrusive thoughts of self-doubt and anxiety. This inner monologue grows in intensity, culminating in thoughts of despair and self-harm. The longer a hunter is exposed to the Fairchild Oak, the harder it is to escape its boughs.

Systems: The Fairchild Oak is Size 30 and Potency 3. The Dread Power triggers are found in the tree's branches and roots. Suggested Dread Powers are Agonize, Dread Attack, Eye Spy, and Soul Stealer.

Sentient Places

Strangest of all, sentient places are far more than accursed buildings or haunted forests. These places are aware. They think; they plan. In some cases, they move. They almost always hate.

The mountain overlooks the town, and locals swear it controls the weather on a whim. A sprawling haunted house lures new buyers and then murders them — trapping their corpses and ghosts inside. A shrine in a cave whispers secrets, turning visitors into its agents of destruction.

Every sentient place is a unique monster and should be treated accordingly. They plan, attack enemies, and repel intruders. They also have deep desires — and these goals usually spell trouble for anyone nearby. Hunters believe these places are motivated by a specific need that can only be fulfilled with time and careful planning. It has reasons for what it does, even if those reasons don't always make sense to anyone that isn't a ravenous ghost train or a malicious grove of trees.

Defeating a Sentient Place

For many sentient places, particularly smaller locations, hunters might try to destroy them outright. A house can be burned down, a glass tower smashed, a railway station blown up. Some sites are just too large for this to be practical. A sentient mountain, cave complex, or ghost town are not only extremely dangerous, but are too large to be reasonably destroyed without notice. Some compacts and conspiracies *might* be able to muster the means to wipe a place off the map. Doing this without further investigation or approvals is often too risky — even for them.

When dealing with a sentient place, there are so many factors for hunters to consider that often they can't neutralize one in the span of a single session. The only true way to neutralize a site, is to deal with its spirit. Identifying that spirit presents a challenge to most hunters, especially when other ghosts and monsters inhabit that physical location.

After the Sentient place is destroyed, a tainted place may eventually emerge from its ashes.

Nautilus: a Hunter's Urban Legend

Tier-two hunters are not immune to urban legends pertaining to compacts they've never encountered before. Nautilus is rumored to be an internet-based compact that organically formed online in chat rooms, private channels, and the comment sections of multiple websites. Its members are anonymous and immensely wealthy, operate on the Dark Web, and are known only by their cryptic handles. Nautilus, which takes its name from the submarine in Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, was formed for a specific purpose: to deal with mysterious places in its own, unique way.

Hunters whisper that Nautilus specializes in buying and selling real estate; the compact's mission is to collect mysterious places until they have the means to neutralize them. When Network Zero visits a church and gets caught trespassing, they blame Nautilus. When The Union gets ready to throw down in an abandoned field and ends up interrogated by the cops, they also blame Nautilus.

For some hunters, Nautilus is too good to be true. A mysterious force that buys and sells property? Only to flip over a site after it's been cleansed? And what, if anything, does specializing in real estate have to do with the Code? The hunters who believe Nautilus exists would love to expose its members' identities and find out if the *other* rumors are true: that all their members have already pledged their loyalty to other compacts who have access to the information Nautilus requires.

Sentient Systems

Sentient places are caused by spirits wreaking havoc in the physical plane. Unlike haunted houses, sentient places are extremely rare. Most hunters encounter a sentient place once or twice in their lives — if they survive the experience.

Use the Ephemeral Entities rules found on p. XX to create an ancient spirit trapped in the physical world.

Transi De René De Chalon

Quote: *"There is nothing I wouldn't do to get my heart back."*

Location: Bar-le-Duc, France

Description: Standing on display at the Saint Etienne church in Bar-le-Duc, France is a funerary statue of René de Chalon, the fallen 25-year-old Prince of Orange. The figure was rendered in the 1540s by French sculptor Ligier Richier after the prince died from an injury suffered during the siege of St. Dizier. The statue, referred to as "The Skeleton," is a life-sized rotting corpse; strips of decaying skin flap over the deceased's ribs, and one hand is raised to heaven, empty. The grasping hand once held the prince's heart, which was removed, dried, and concealed in a

reliquary placed in the statue's hand. The heart has since disappeared and may have been stolen during the French Revolution.

Thought to be an immortal corpse, the limestone statue is an eerily accurate depiction of a decomposing body three years after its death. Since the heart was lost or stolen, the Cadaver Tomb of René de Chalon has exhibited strange properties, and its grisly features have spawned rumors and urban legends, despite its sacrosanct location. Visitors sometimes report leaving the church with a terrible longing, a deep desire to find the statue's reliquary and return the heart to its rightful place.

Storyteller Notes: The site is a manageable size for a cell of hunters to deal with, but its placement inside a place of worship raises more issues than it solves. The statue is more likely to be active on the anniversary of the prince's birth and death, or those times of day and year when the veil between this world and the next grows thin: twilight, Samhain, etc. Cleansing the Transi isn't simple as smashing the stone and, even if the cell does so, it's possible the restless spirit of René de Chalon will appear to avenge the destruction of his tomb.

Power: 3

Finesse: 4

Resistance: 3

Rank: 1

Essence: 10

Corpus: 28

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 7

Size: 25

Ban: De Chalon flexes his fingers when someone inside the church says the word "heart."

Bane: The statue burns when sea salt touches it.

Influence (Statue): 1

Numina: Emotional Aura, Essence Thief, Hallucination

Bhangarh Fort

Quote: *"Was that rock there a minute ago? Why is that wall shaking?"*

Location: Rajasthan, India

Description: Bhangarh Fort is a 16th-century complex built in the Indian state of Rajasthan. The site is popularly believed to be the most haunted and mysterious location in the entire country, and the sprawling ruin is off limits to explorers, academics, and tourists to ensure their personal safety. To this day, the Archaeological Survey of India forbids anyone to enter Bhangarh Fort after sunset or spend the night. Bhangarh Fort presents other challenges, however, for while it is

located outside major population centers, the complex is a protected cultural landmark and hasn't been outfitted with electrical wiring. After the sun falls, the ruins are plunged into darkness even when the moon is full.

Its construction and history have spawned many rumors and folktales attempting to understand the site's unusual and paranormal activities. One popular theory is that Bhangarh Fort suffers from a warlock's curse, a punishment incurred after a Bhangarh princess named Ratnavati rejected him. One story tells how the warlock, named N.K. Sinhai, tried to bewitch the virtuous princess by offering her a dangerous love potion. The princess refused to drink it, and when she dashed her cup against a nearby boulder, the seductive potion immediately set to work. The potion was so powerful the land itself fell in love with the warlock, and the boulder began to roll, crushing him to death.

Many believe the warlock's death released the black magic stored in his body and triggered a terrible curse on Bhangarh Fort, one that can only be removed by Princess Ratnavati herself, reborn.

Storyteller Notes: Hunters wishing to explore Bhangarh Fort find themselves in a difficult situation. The Indian government would never allow the site to be razed, nor would they allow local or foreign hunters to investigate without proper approvals. The fort's place in history, pop culture, and Indian culture is significant and not to be ignored or downplayed in a chronicle. Some Indian hunters wonder if the sprawling complex contains hidden Bygones created by the warlock, while others think the site may not be haunted in the traditional sense.

Though Bhangarh Fort can be treated as a nest filled with trapped, mournful ghosts and spirits of vengeance, its walls *move* with a darker intent. The ruins long for all who come near — mortal and monster alike. The fort's size, when combined with its significant ability to defend itself, requires coordination on a massive scale. Worse, spirits trapped within Bhangarh Fort cannot be released by any means the hunters possess until the site is neutralized and the warlock's curse is lifted.

Power: 12

Finesse: 10

Resistance: 11

Rank: 4

Essence: 25

Corpus: 111

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 21

Defense: 10

Speed: 22

Size: 100

Ban: Bhangarh Fort's spirit will immediately return to the underworld if a descendant of Princess Ratnavati successfully performs an exorcism at the site.

Bane: Areas of Bhangarh Fort will fall dormant if the hunters can recreate the love potion the warlock presented to the Princess.

Influence (Bhangarh Fort): 4

Numina: Blast, Dement, Drain, Emotional Aura, Essence Thief, Hallucination, Telekinesis

Special: Zombies, spirits, and other monsters present at the site are treated as their own monsters and should be presented with their own rules.

Following the death of a mortal, newly created ghosts will remain haunting Bhangarh Fort until it's neutralized. These spirits can be treated as discrete monsters at the Storyteller's discretion.

Bhangarh Fort is an example of an ancient site that has multiple locations within its sprawling area. When introducing the site into a chronicle you may reduce the Rank, per the Ephemeral Entity rules, and treat each unique location as its own mysterious place.

Nan Madol

Quote: *"What we're looking at here is proof our ancestors were geniuses. What monster wouldn't want to take advantage of that?"*

Location: Pohnpei, Micronesia

Description: Rising from the waters off the eastern coast of Pohnpei is the megalithic city of Nan Madol, built over 2,000 years ago. The stones of the millennia-old city are so massive and well-placed, no modern historians have been able to figure out how Nan Madol was constructed. A historic and notable landmark used for religious purposes, Nan Madol is a testament to human ingenuity to some. Its architecture and unique features have spawned several myths, however, leading others to speculate that Nan Madol, which translates to "spaces between," is a surviving relic of the lost continent of Lemuria.

Local legends point to a supernatural reason for the site's construction. The twin warlocks Olisihpa and Olosohpa, who hailed from Lemuria, arrived near the site to build an altar for god worship. After failing time and time again, their efforts were eventually successful, and the twins' altar was built near Temwen Island.

Formerly the royal seat of the Saudeleur Dynasty until the 1620s, there is no fresh water nor naturally growing food present within the city. Modern efforts to preserve the site have recently increased, and along with them renewed interest in the brothers and their altar.

Storyteller Notes: Nan Madol is an ancient city rife with history, and without the presence of the supernatural it is a wonder to behold and investigate. Many of the basalt outcroppings were used for funerary purposes and the altar was used to perform many rituals lost to time.

Physically, the way the stones are situated, the movement of the tides are likely to play an important part in exploring the city. Low tide may reveal entrances and chambers usually drowned and inaccessible, while high tide presents physical challenges to navigate the area safely.

Nan Madol is a rich, mysterious location that's well-equipped to fuel a solid story arc. It may point to a Bygone, the altar built by the brothers, or evidence of fabled Lemuria. As a sentient site, the city may not have been built to harness the supernatural, but over time the spirit summoned and wielded here has remained in the stones. Now, Nan Madol resonates and vibrates with power, hungering for more. To what end? Thus far, no one knows.

Power: 7

Finesse: 9

Resistance: 9

Rank: 3

Essence: 15

Corpus: 109

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 18

Defense: 7

Speed: 16

Size: 100

Ban: The spirit must reveal a path to the altar during the Summer Equinox or it loses half its essence.

Bane: The stones react to blessed water by falling dormant.

Influence (Nan Madol): 3

Numina: Awe, Drain, Hallucination, Regenerate, Telekinesis

Other Mysterious Places

The world is vast and is filled with modern and ancient secrets. The older the site, the more mysterious it is, and the more likely it is to remind hunters of their mortality. The sites they explore may be older than recorded history or may have been constructed for bizarre and inexplicable reasons. Hunters may not know “why” they explore a nest, tainted or sentient site, other than the simplest of reasons. Wherever the supernatural is found, they must deal with the threats to hold back the lingering dark — even when those shadows or spirits creep from the most unlikely of places.

Blue Lake Grotto, Brazil

Gruta do Lago Azul, or the Blue Lake Grotto, is part of one of the largest flooded cavities on Earth. Its waters are hundreds of feet deep and fed by no known source. When a beam of sunlight shines on the lake via a hole at the surface, the waters turn the bluest of hues. Among the lake’s secrets is a vast trove of bones, culled from ages past. The skeletons of giant sloths, saber-toothed tigers, and other extinct creatures are piled beneath the waters. It prompts the question: what *else* might swim in the waters’ depths?

The grotto’s remote location makes it more straightforward to access than other well-trafficked and protected sites, provided cell brings the right equipment. Unprepared hunters may be hurt through non-supernatural means, like falling or drowning. If Dread Powers are used, either by the site itself or the supernatural horrors concealed within, the area could be deadly. The promise of long-forgotten secrets concealed within the grotto’s depths may draw more inquisitive hunters who seek to discover ways to increase their own power — for good or ill.

Recommended Use: Nest, tainted place

Aokigahara Forest, Japan

Covering the northwestern flank of Mount Fuji is the forest of Aokigahara. The trees grow thick and unnaturally dense in the forest, and scientists claim this is due to the rich, volcanic soil upon which it sits. Others believe the trees are sustained by a grislier source of nutrients: the hundreds, if not thousands, of people who have committed suicide here for centuries.

Aokigahara, or Suicide Forest, is an important icon in Japanese culture. It's said in times of famine and strife, many suffering people came to die in the forest. Structurally, the area is difficult to explore; caves lead deep into the hardened lava beneath the trees. Between the denseness of the foliage and the sound-swallowing volcanic rock, the forest can be unnaturally still and its eerie quiet is a silent tribute to its tragic victims. Despite the quiet, the forest is well-trod; many come to wander through the trees, either to honor and mourn the dead or to discover if it's truly haunted.

Recommended Use: Nest, sentient place

Mount Mulanje, Malawi

Mulanje is a monadnock, a lone mountain rising out of the surrounding plains in the East African country of Malawi. The highest peak is often shrouded in clouds and is nicknamed "Island in the Sky." Some believe Mulanje inspired the Lonely Mountain, Erebor, in *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien. A massive landmark, Mulanje is home to many local legends as well. Strange, diminutive creatures are believed to live on its higher plateaus, a mythical flying serpent has been spotted in the clouds around the peak, and countless mysterious disappearances have occurred on its slopes.

Mount Mulanje possesses several sub-peaks, valleys, and plateaus lush with life. A complex ecosystem of the mundane and supernatural, the area is a preserved and well-maintained landmark. Finding the source of strange activity is challenging due to mountain's sprawling size. Hunters might find more than one mysterious place in, around, and on Mount Mulanje, should they choose to hike this beautiful mountain.

Suggested Use: Nests

Canfranc Railway Station, Spain

The once-beautiful Canfranc Railway Station sits nestled in the Spanish Pyrenees near the village of Canfranc. Many of its buildings have been falling into elegant disrepair for some time. The entrance to a monumental tunnel pierces the mountain range, and once allowed trains to carry supplies and passengers through to France on the other side. The station, which first opened in 1928, was once called the "Titanic of the Mountains." Over the years, the train station has seen many uses, from a luxury railway connecting Spain and France to a key strategic holding of the Third Reich. Rumors of lost gold shipped by the Nazis persist throughout the years, and some hunters believe this gold carries a terrible curse.

Though the railyard carries a handful of trains to local destinations, the station is no longer in use and is overgrown with bushes, trees, and grass. After several years, and at great expense, the Canfranc site was recently renovated into a posh hotel that caters to the wealthy.

Suggested Use: Tainted place

House on the Rock, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

House on the Rock is a tourist attraction that prompts many urban legends and reports of supernatural activity due to its ever-expanding collections and exhibits. The house's construction took several years before the site, precariously built upon Deer Shelter Rock by the architect Alex Jordan, Jr., first opened to tourists in the 1960s. Since that time, House on the Rock has expanded significantly over the years to include warehouses filled with several collections of museum relics and icons.

Besides the house, each building contains a small museum's worth of items including the nautical exhibit "The Heritage of the Sea," an indoor carousel, vintage posters, a large collection of room-sized automated music machines displayed in "The Music of Yesterday," and thousands of other oddities. Some relics are rumored to be mere replicas while others may be priceless. With the multitude of artifacts contained within the site, local hunters believe a Bygone must be present. Reports of supernatural activity include feelings of being watched, judged, and followed.

Suggested Use: Tainted place

Karak Highway, Malaysia

A stretch of asphalt bridging the capital of Malaysia and one of its bordering states, the expressway looks like every other road that has ever been made. But there've been stories. Terrible ones. Over the years, the highway's become associated with a multitude of tragedies and natural disasters such as freak landslides and car accidents, some fatal, some not. Unsurprisingly, this has given rise to numerous ghost stories and urban legends.

Most people in Malaysia have heard of the Karak Highway's haunted nature. There are accounts involving beautiful women lingering at the side of the road calling to drivers, begging for safe passage; creatures in the jungle, waiting to strike; accident victims dialing radio stations, mournfully recounting the events of their own demise; and a boy with glass shards in his eyes, whimpering over and over, "Have you seen my mother?"

But one of the most repeated stories is that of a yellow Volkswagen. According to legend, when the night is deepest, drivers sometimes find themselves cruising behind the vehicle. It is always moving too slow, an unhappy nuisance but one easily overtaken. However, each time the driver moves past the Volkswagen, they inevitably find themselves behind the vehicle again.

Suggested Use: Nest, tainted place

BEGIN CHAPTER FICTION

Friday, 17th May 2016, at approximately 4:25 PM, our precinct received a distress call from a local firefighting unit. We were informed someone was attempting to disrupt attempts to extinguish a house fire in the Belmont neighborhood. I, Officer Lopez, along with Officer Huang, Officer Jacobs, and Sergeant Akintola were dispatched to the location to assist.

It took us 17 minutes to travel from the station to the site of the disturbance. We arrived to witness a massacre.

The residence was burned to cinders. Strewn across its front yard were dismembered remains, heaps of offal, bones cooked black. We believe the viscera belonged to the seven firemen who arrived on scene. The number of uniforms found in the area matches that assumption. There appeared to be no survivors. Their fire truck remained parked outside of the house. There were keys in the ignition. Peculiarly, despite the breadth of the disaster, we didn't encounter any bystanders. Nor we find any traces of the possible assailants.

Once we secured the perimeter, Sergeant Akintola gathered footage from the body cameras still tethered to the victims. What we saw was horrific. Included below is the collated transcript of what we saw:

•••

When the team arrived, the fire was beginning to wick from the second-floor windows. However, the blaze was largely contained. None of the adjacent vegetation had caught fire yet. The first leg of the operation proceeded as normal.

Halfway in, an unshaven man in tattered clothes arrived on the scene. He resisted attempts to move away from the area. Two of the firemen were forced to physically remove him. Footage from their bodycams showed the man rambling about "his red lady of sawdust and smoke," "celestial alignment of their wedding gifts," and "his dreams of her subtle lines," before he drove his fists into their chests.

There was no blood. There was no crunch of bone.

There was a soft hissing instead.

Like a hot knife through a slab of steak.

The noise corroborated with the injuries we found. The wounds had been cauterized and the ribs were pulverized to bone meal. The hearts were missing. After the man extracted the organs, the two firemen collapsed. The footage from the bodycams showed him moving back toward the burning house.

At that point, smoke began billowing from the house, reducing visibility. From what we stitched together, the man attacked the remaining firemen in turn, and always in isolation. He moved quickly and with purpose, contrasting initial impressions. Each time, he used his hands.

His target was not always the heart.

With one, he extracted the intestine; the gray coil incinerated in his hand. With the others, he removed a lung, another heart, several unidentifiable pieces of organ meat, and judging by the dribble of green bile, one fireman's stomach. Jonathan Carpenter, who contacted our precinct,

was the last to die. At no point was the suspect visible to any two firemen at a time. They went down quickly, most without even the time to scream.

Throughout the butchery, the man droned unceasingly in French. Officer Jacobs translated some of what we heard in the recording.

Oh, red lady, red lady of / Sawdust and smoke, / Grant me your benediction, / Your candlewick kiss, / Your divine presence, the / Red gold of your lips.

We cannot accurately determine what followed as the bodycams lost any advantage of perspective. But in the last clear shot of the suspect, it appeared as though he was burning, embers wicking through his melting cheekbones. He didn't seem unhappy. The man entered the house.

No one emerged after.

•••

I, believe that there was a second suspect at the crime. The original suspect's methods seemed precise. His interest was not to cause suffering, but to eliminate opposition as efficiently as possible. The corpses of the firemen show the attention of someone far less neat, someone who relished the messiness. Both culprits possessed an unusual facility with high temperatures. There was minimal blood at the scene. It is unknown how the first suspect accomplished the murders. Officer Huang suspects military-grade augmentations.

The house revealed no trace of the suspects. According to records, the residence had been unoccupied for over five years. Its last occupants were the Robinsons, a family consisting of a husband, a wife, and three children. Five years back, they vacated the premises and put the house on the sale. It has remained untenanted since.

However, we discovered two anomalies requiring possible investigation. The first could be the result of pareidolia. In the basement of the building, Officer Jacobs discovered what appeared to be drawings of a woman's face seared into the concrete, along with ideograms of unknown origins. Sergeant Akintola was able to make out the face as well. Officer Huang and I saw nothing in the charcoal strokes.

Regardless, we have sent photographs to relevant departments.

The second item of interest is more sinister. Preliminary research revealed a similar case in Corvallis. Another house burned down. Another team of firefighters was found dead at the scene. This occurred two years ago. The case was never solved. Three years before that, a similar incident took place in Salem. Again, a culprit was not found.

Eleven firemen dead. There should have been a national manhunt. Yet, not even cable news paid the incidents any heed. Every case was quietly shut down, relegated to anonymity. No one spoke up for the murdered men. Their obituaries were a brief square of facts, tucked away between news of collegiate sports and advertisements for hiking gear.

Something is wrong.

I believe that someone is actively targeting firemen within Oregon, although for what reason I cannot begin to imagine. I believe someone in the government is protecting them. But whatever the case, I will not rest until the culprit is brought to justice. I cannot. I refuse to let these men die

like this. Eighteen firemen. There won't be another. I refuse. Even if it means bringing the roof down on whoever did this, I'll find a way.

END CHAPTER FICTION

Chapter Seven: The Slasher Chronicle

“Becoming a monster sometimes isn't a choice that you have. We're all that; we're all 'the other' in one way or another.”

— Emil Ferris, American Writer and Cartoonist

The Slasher Chronicle contains tools Storytellers can use to run a chronicle featuring this type of monster in a unique story. The chronicle may be introduced for tier-one, -two, or -three games and requires some customization to fit the needs of a particular group. It is strongly recommended that Storytellers sketch out scenes and sessions before running a slasher-based chronicle to manage the pace and mood.

Recently, reports of serial killers have dramatically increased all over the world; this rising tide of murderers birthed from the darkest recesses of the human soul threatens everyone in some way. The world's authorities struggle against the outbreak of brutality as best they can, but they are not aware these killers aren't human — at least, not anymore. The police might refer to them as killing machines, but hunters have a different, more accurate name for these monsters: slashers.

For the Storyteller: Trauma and Personal Horror

Though the world is filled with shadows, the Slasher Chronicle is set in its darkest and most violent corners. By focusing on slashers, stories set in this chronicle will be squarely placed within a genre built upon the villains found in slasher movies. The type of horror that emerges during gameplay may be generated from human failings but will ultimately veer toward terror, body horror, and death.

Storytellers are advised to closely work with players before running the Slasher Chronicle and, if needed, after sessions to ensure players retain their agency. These discussions should include preferences regarding gore, phobias, and personal comfort levels, but they should also offer ways for players to communicate their needs during a session, like the X-Card p. XX or a consent form, to help facilitate strong themes and moods. Additionally, the Storyteller is encouraged to use downtime p. XX to help players mitigate trauma through therapy sessions or a debrief.

In every cell, compact, and conspiracy hunters feel palatable tension — even fear. Though no obvious links connect the uptick in slasher activity and sightings, paranoid hunters have shared dozens of theories pointing fingers at what (or who) is behind the global phenomenon. Storytellers are encouraged to customize or create rumors for their chronicle to help give players a long-term goal that goes beyond stopping a slasher from claiming yet another victim. These whispers include:

- *There is no reason.* The epidemic is a statistical aberration, an unlikely confluence of events that cells, compacts, and conspiracies are misinterpreting as evidence of some grand

design. The plague will recede, eventually, having winnowed the ranks of hunters down to a bloody, traumatized few survivors, but no greater purpose or intent lies behind it.

- *Mass hysteria spawned a nightmare.* The world is more interconnected than ever. Horror stories, nasty viral videos, and filthy internet memes sink their claws deeper into humanity's collective unconscious. The slasher epidemic is a manifestation of that psychological obsession with fear, the accidental genesis of a new, deadly type of mass hysteria.
- *Humanity is sick.* The slasher epidemic is an expression of humanity's fallen state. Too much sin, too much cruelty, too much *hurt* has finally taken its toll. Every atrocity, every dehumanizing act, is just another symptom of the larger disease — as some slashers might even proclaim. Now, the pressure is too great, and the virus must spread. Every slasher is a victim overwhelmed by that shared illness, their soul and mind unwittingly affected by centuries of crime and sadism.
- *Hunters are turning into slashers.* Even though movie-goers are still transfixed by silver-screen killers, the real monsters stalk them on crumbling city streets and in moonlit neighborhoods. Most people have trouble believing monsters are real — but not hunters. Despite their efforts to contain the epidemic, the slashers just keep on killing, carving their red journey through humanity's collective flesh and psyche with cruel acts of depravity. Some hunters believe this batch of slashers is more skilled and enhanced than their predecessors and that points to one of two chilling scenarios: Either hunters are helping slashers or the slashers are former hunters. This spells doom for hunters everywhere, whether they're active in a cell, compact, or conspiracy, and will force hunters to face their deepest fears.
- *Monsters are using slashers.* Most hunters agree that slasher sightings are more prominent than any other. While many cells are preoccupied with resolving the immediate threat, some hunters are noticing that other monsters have all but disappeared. This has spurred several conspiracy theories, but only one has caught on: Other monsters are using slashers to cull the population and weaken hunters. Some hunters, who are comfortable working with supernatural creatures, worry an "all monsters must be hunted" stance will affect their ability to hunt slashers. Others fear the exact opposite is true: Slashers have become so great at murder and mayhem, they've emerged as the dominant monster.
- *Hunters are creating slashers.* All hunters understand that upholding the Vigil puts themselves, their friends, and their loved ones at risk. For centuries, hunters have suffered tremendous, personal losses — but no longer. For some bizarre reason, this new crop of slashers is *not* targeting hunters or their loved ones. To explain this phenomenon, some hunters have concluded that other hunters must be experimenting with slashers and have found the means to create, control, and command them to hunt other monsters.

The Slasher Chronicle is marked by blood, screams, and sweat. Slashers live on the edge of a knife; they can only sate their impossible hunger by snatching victims and torturing them. What is the nature of the disease that drives this eruption? What will it take to bring it to an end?

Only a hunter knows the answer to these questions. Only hunters can rescue victims from slashers, put them down for good, and stop the epidemic.

Defining a Slasher

A slasher is a monster wearing human skin, because a slasher is part human, part something else. This type of mass murderer is more terrifying than the gut-churning horror of a serial killer's compulsive murder spree. A slasher's human soul has been bathed in blood and pain until it shattered and there's nothing left to do except force others to feel what it feels. Make no mistake: Slashers are serial killers, but most serial killers are not slashers. Murderers are often angry or desperate people, but they're not legendary butchers. At least, not yet. Not until the light in a slasher's psyche is snuffed out, drowned by silent waves of darkness, and replaced by a sinister, living force. This supernatural shadow brings power in its wake, a profane vigor that grants a slasher preternatural conviction, capability, and utter lack of compassion.

Sometimes, slashers are ex-hunters. Most cells won't admit they lost a soul to the darkness and are terrified to think of the implication that each hunter can, if they're not careful, fall into darkness. Other hunters believe it's just a matter of time before they lose their way. What is a hunter other than a weapon cutting through the veil to fight an eternal war against the darkness? When hunters forget they're more than a sharpened blade, they start to lose faith in themselves, in their lovers, friends, families, and in the Code. Abandon all that, and hunters start looking for excuses to murder that bully who clearly deserved it, to track down that kidnapper who should never have stepped foot in their backyard, to exact justice turned vengeance when they want to, however they want to. For these hunters, killing "bad guys" overpowers reason, and that morphs into a self-righteous addiction. Oh, they may be great at tracking down bloodsucking vampires, all right, but can cells look away when a hunter doesn't differentiate between a bully and a flesh-eating zombie?

Hunters turned slashers are terrifying reminders of just how necessary the Code really is.

Most of the time, slashers are born from the bloody chrysalis of a career in mundane murder, killing until their integrity is so ruined, their identity is re-forged into the shape of slaughter. Some slashers are experiments by darker forces; their unending abuse and torment is not the kind of hurt from which they can heal. To find refuge, they must carve apart the world that wrecked them — starting with their tormentors. Other slashers are forged by outright supernatural influences, the cracked and castoff vessels of spiritual possessions gone wrong, or the cursed victims of a furious entity's malice. Then there are some who just...*snap* one day, for the pettiest of slights, and suddenly the yawning chasm within their soul craves death.

Types of Slashers

Slashers are defined by **Undertakings**. An Undertaking is part modus operandi, part compulsive craving, and part supernatural force that slithers in the back of their mind whispering, watching, and waiting for the opportunity to strike. Within an Undertaking, the slasher is either a **ripper** or a **scourge**.

A ripper is still mortal. They may be hollowed out by the need to kill, but they're largely held in check by the limits of human ability. They are no longer mentally shackled by society's restraints, however, and a ripper may demonstrate monstrous will or incredible determination. Everything they *can* do can be explained in criminal or scientific terms, which is why they're often easy to miss. Hunters might never identify a ripper as a slasher, and let the authorities handle their viciousness until they have no choice but to deal with them. Sometimes, cells cross paths with a ripper and a monster, choose to fight the monster instead, and later realize that the ripper is now a scourge.

A scourge, by comparison, is no longer considered mortal. Rippers can become scourges, and scourges can manifest on their own. They represent a slasher who's emerged from a bloody, gruesome trail of carnage with a stain on their soul; this stain is represented by dark, supernatural powers. One scourge shrugs off a hail of bullets with an irritated grunt and just keeps coming, hatchet hefted. Another dies, doused in gasoline and set alight by terrified teenagers, but is reborn a week later, unharmed, waiting for them. A scourge is formed from nightmares and urban legends, a horror that has flesh and blood and a simple purpose: kill, and keep killing.

Undertakings

Undertakings present two sides of one infernal coin. Each slasher archetype may either be a ripper or a scourge.

Avengers seek vengeance; each ripper is obsessed with a supposed wrong which they can never forget and never forgive. Relentless and deeply personal in their pursuit, these rippers can be found wherever one mortal feels maligned by another. **Legends** are scourges who have lost themselves to the stories sprouted from their murderous deeds. Most Legends spring up in urban areas or tightly bound communities, where the terrified whispers of their heinous acts quickly spread as urgent warnings.

Slashers, Bygones, and Mysterious Places

Every slasher needs to find the right creepy morgue, run-down factory, or abandoned warehouse to do their grisly work. In the *Slasher Chronicle*, the areas they frequent are considered tainted (p. XX). While a slasher might *also* have a nest (p. XX), either inside or at a different location, tainted places are a consequence of the the unnatural tide of murder, death, and mayhem sweeping through communities at an alarming rate.

While slashers have been given supernatural heft for the purposes of running the *Slasher Chronicle*, they do not use or have access to Bygones. Their traits, abilities, and Dread Powers are specifically honed to torment and kill their victims according to their Undertakings, and their knowledge of the supernatural is limited at best in most cases.

Brutes are rippers that embody pure, angry strength. Everyone is a target to a ripper of this Undertaking; bestial in behavior, they cannot be reasoned with, only driven off or killed. A Brute isn't necessarily less intelligent than other slashers and can often maintain shallow relationships. Ultimately, their purpose for interactions is to lash out and kill. **Masks**, on the other hand, are scourges who've shed all pretenses of their humanity. While a Mask's behavior and choice of victims may be bound by taboos and compulsions, they are otherwise more like a force of nature, a machine made just for killing.

The **Charmers** are serial-killing stereotypes made flesh — murderous intent hidden behind a cold smile. These rippers are often selective in their choice of victim and use their charm and guile to achieve positions of respectability or influence in society that let them take their pick of prey. **Hypnos** are scourges driven by their darkest urges to force people to their point-of-view; they see their charnel achievements as the fulfillment of their beliefs, purifying the world or testing their philosophy's strength through murder. Killers burdened with this Undertaking are more common in regions where strong political or religious ideologies clash.

Undesirables are rippers who lash out because they've either been rejected by society or they see themselves as superior to it. Though Undesirables are often stereotyped physically, the Undertaking draws its power from the slashers' perception of themselves as outcasts. A **Mutant** is that feeling of rejection and self-loathing in a physical form; these scourges are atavisms, prisoners of truly distorted flesh, or with bodies warped by supernatural power. Slashers of this Undertaking, rippers and scourges alike, usually dwell in the margins of society and civilization, and are the most likely to band together.

The greatest weapon a **Virtuoso** ripper possesses is their mind. Whether they're tormented by their twisted thoughts or are convinced of their superiority to "lesser" humans, these sociopathic rippers plan elaborate murders to play games of cat and mouse with the detectives they know will pursue them. **Puppeteers** believe they possess brilliant insights the human mind cannot conceive and are destined to share their tainted theories with unsuspecting victims. Each scourge is a corrosive element in society that brings about madness in all its varied and terrible forms.

Slasher Undertakings

The Avenger (Ripper)

You'll pay for what you've done. You'll all pay.

As the name suggests, the Avenger wants vengeance. Sometimes, the motivation is a desire for justice; sometimes, it's just furious retaliation. The Avenger may feel they've been individually wronged or might lash out because of a perceived problem in the wider world; either way, the Avenger *hurts*, and the only way to ease the pain is to inflict in on those responsible. An Avenger's journey of vengeance might be deeply personal at first but will rapidly include more victims as the ripper never stops blaming others for all that's wrong in the world. The Avenger can never move on, will never be satisfied, and can never have enough blood on their hands.

An Avenger usually follows a chain of twisted logic to hunt, either working down a list of chosen prey or investigating connections between victims to find more. Many an Avenger believes they're fulfilling the letter of their moral law; they're so girded with self-justification they've rationalized murdering a victim after a petty slight. Innocent bystanders caught in the blast are either acceptable collateral — or were clearly guilty themselves.

The quest for vengeance is a story as old as civilization itself, but while Avengers are a global phenomenon, they're thickly clustered in societies and cultures that hew to myths of nation and identity centered on self-reliance or suspicion of authority. It's no surprise they're most common in Western countries, namely the United States.

Tell: An Avenger's Tell relates to the justifications she lives by. Whether a calling card or a particular form of execution, the Tell proclaims that none of the guilty are safe, or that she is acting where the regular authorities cannot.

Examples: Doctor Guilt is a hunter turned slasher, a broken surgeon who rages at his former cellmates for turning on him in their darkest hour and forcing him to uphold the Code no matter what. Lars settles in the frigid snow, rifle in the crook of his arms and axe lying ready, waiting for the hikers who violated the sanctity of the serene wilderness he protects. Seong-ja brings a slow, agonizing death with her power tools to all those she deems responsible for her family's death — the thugs, their boss, everyone in their whole jopok, the corrupt cops who take the gangsters' bribes, and her husband's employer who sent him out to that place on that day.

Talent: Working the Room — An Avenger’s Defense does not suffer any penalty from being attacked by multiple opponents over the course of a turn; always apply the slasher’s full Defense to all incoming attacks. This does not protect the Avenger from attacks that completely circumvent Defense, such as firearms.

Frailty: Mission-Focused — An Avenger is utterly obsessed with their mission. If the slasher must choose between pursuing their target or another course of action, the Avenger must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll or be forced to pursue their prey even if it puts them in harm’s way.

The Legend (Scourge)

I’m baaaaaack!

The Legend can’t stop killing and is bound by the story told of their murderous deeds. The details say the Legend only kills certain people under specific circumstances. Leashed to the narrative that has sprung up from the scourge’s deeds, the Legend is caught in a prison of rumors and empowered by the fearful whispers that follow them. This is no mere psychological compulsion; the *story* is in control now, and it’ll twist the Legend to fit, even bend reality around their actions to keep the narrative going.

Whatever the Legend’s original motivations, their past actions had an identifiable pattern; perhaps the slasher preyed on hunters, abusers, or police; perhaps they always killed at a crossroads, on a certain street, or after a loud party. It doesn’t matter what the Legend’s reasoning was, the pattern has been woven into the story’s logic. Now, that pattern of behavior is set, and the Legend *must* obey it; if the wild tales say The Dentist is toothless and that’s why he always plucks victims’ teeth out, he must yank them out — even if he’s never lost one.

Traditionally, the stories that fuel Legends emerge in large populations or tight communities where urban legends have a chance to take on a life of their own. The rising tide of the slasher plague has mixed with the viral nature of the internet, however, and this has allowed Legends to flourish in unusual places on a global scale.

Tell: The Legend’s Tell is the all-consuming underpinning of the scourge’s existence. Whether murdering young lovers out by Devil’s Lake or leaving victims alone if a specific prayer is repeated in their presence, the Legend is defined by the rules storytellers have laid out as their modus operandi. Crucial to hunters, the Legend is uniquely vulnerable provided their urban legends outline a weakness, location, or clue that can lead cells to a confrontation.

Examples: The Painted Bride murders husbands-to-be, clad in her blood-spattered wedding dress as she stalks her victims; they say she was murdered by her own fiancé, and claws her way out of the grave to visit vengeance on his ilk. When a maintenance worker vanishes in the metro tunnels under Moscow, the passengers shake their heads and agree he must’ve crossed to the wrong side of the tracks without greeting old Artyom and offended the slasher. Rusty Nail goes after drunks, and pounds nails into their skulls; the story’s been circulating since the Prohibition, and always seems to find a new copycat whenever the newspapers run a story on the serial killer’s morbid history.

Talent: Living Legend — Once per scene, when someone fulfills one of the tenets of the Avenger’s “rules,” the player can roll the slasher’s chosen Attribute + Occult. Successes on this roll may be applied on one of the following: restoring spent Willpower, healing damage (one

success for a bashing wound, two for lethal, three for aggravated), or applying the bonuses to rolls in pursuit of their goal.

After this has been activated, successes that haven't been spent are discarded. They may not be banked to use in a following scene. Additionally, the Legend may use Dread Powers that *specifically* highlight its storied nature. These might include: Eye Spy, Taint, or Hex.

Frailty: Narrative Chains — The Legend gains a unique and specific frailty enforced by the nature of the tales surrounding them. Additionally, characters investigating the scourge's Tell (see p. XX) gain an exceptional success on three successes rather than five.

The Brute (Ripper)

People ain't nothing more than animals.

The Brute is rage, strength, and a hunger for killing all wrapped up in one unstoppable package. Pushed to the edge of their humanity, the Brute lashes out to satisfy their rage by crushes windpipes and breaking necks. The Brute gains pleasure from watching the life slip from their victims; murder validates their every action to keep their anger at bay.

Brutes can't be reasoned with. Any attempt to persuade them *not* to kill either won't work or will backfire. A Brute isn't necessarily a monster frothing at the mouth. Despite their reputation, a Brute can function in society and often does — right up until their interactions reinforce why the Brute prefers killing to socializing. Murder is easy. Resolving conflict in nonviolent ways is infinitely harder.

Most Brutes live at the fringes of a metropolis or larger community. Often, the Brute wanders near a city to keep up appearances, but never stays longer than the time required to pick up supplies. In the current crisis, Brutes stand out as slashers of pure rage. When a Brute is on the prowl, reports circulate widely of their vicious murders to ensure hunters know to take them out.

Tell: Brutes don't think of people as *people* anymore; other humans exist for the Brute to ignore or kill. As a result, the Brute rarely attempts to communicate through their Tell; the slasher's not making a statement by killing. They just *do*. Brutes' Tells lie in the savage acts caused by their raw, uncontrollable anger.

Examples: Phelps' superiors feared her excessive use of force on the job would one day cause her to snap, and she did. A former police officer, Phelps believes she must kill "the enemy," and *everyone* is a potential villain in her mind. When customers drop by the butcher to pick up their orders, Arturo invites them in, then hangs them up with the rest of the carcasses in the meat locker. They call him "Pig Man" because all he does is grunt like an animal.

Talent: Unstoppable — A brute never suffers wound penalties for any reason, and automatically passes any roll to remain conscious due to damage or pain.

Frailty: Tunnel Vision — A brute suffers a -3 penalty to all Perception rolls, and to rolls to avoid being surprised in combat.

The Mask (Scourge)

(Heavy breathing)

All traces of the scourge's humanity have gone. All that's left in the Mask is a body and the burning need to kill. The Mask does not understand compassion, guilt, or mercy; some targets

simply do not interest them, but they aren't spared because the scourge is kind. The Mask doesn't speak or try to communicate. This scourge is the embodiment of murder in a human body.

Masks often wear physical masks that further distance themselves from society. The Mask is faceless; their former identity is subsumed beneath a desperate need to kill. These remorseless slashers may be able to feel heartache, guilt, and remorse, but they don't show it. To their victims, the Mask is an organic machine, deriving no pleasure from murdering victims, and following the only routines left in their shattered mind.

Hunters who believe the slasher epidemic is the work of a greater organization wonder if Masks have been captured and experimented upon. Has someone twisted these mindless puppets for their own, merciless purpose? The evidence isn't clear, but patterns are suspicious. As new Masks emerge, they appear to be preying on one, specific target: hunters.

Tell: Some Masks grasp the scraps of their former, mortal lives; a Mask can never pretend to be human, but might react oddly to stimuli like colors, songs, or pictures that remind them of who they once were. This insight into the Mask's origins might offer some clues to predict the scourge's next move. Once a hunter has studied their patterns of behavior, they are easier to find — but not necessarily to catch.

Examples: The Tin Angel is a failed experiment by a venture capitalist; he comes for anyone who takes from his junkyard lair in Philadelphia and impales their corpses on metal debris like a shrike. In the favelas of Rio, they say the *imparavel* is a brutal secret agent who was shot during a drug raid and got up again to keep on killing; he never left the city, and emerges to exact his brand of "justice." They tortured Sumeyye until her mind took refuge in its own recesses, and something *else* stepped into the gap; now she stalks Ankara's suburbs, butchering anyone who looks like her tormentors.

Talent: Killing Machine — Like a Brute, a Mask does not suffer wound penalties and passes rolls to remain conscious due to damage or pain. Additionally, the Mask does not need to sleep or eat, and only suffers a single point of damage from any attack regardless of the damage or number of successes. This applies to mundane and supernatural forms of attack; only environmental damage such as fire, electrocution, or falling bricks applies damage normally.

The Mask might use Dread Powers like Agonize, Dread Attack, or Unnatural Step.

Frailty: Only the Kill — A Mask has lost the ability to communicate. They are illiterate and are limited to simple gestures or grunts. To understand what's been said to them, they must succeed at an Intelligence + Composure roll.

The Charmer (Ripper)

Good morning, ma'am! Have you heard the good news?

The Charmer is compelling and magnetic. Their warm smile masks the chill behind their eyes; the trustworthy tone in their voice allows them to push boundaries and kick in doors before victims understand what's happening. The Charmer has a knack for seeking out vulnerable people and exploiting their frailties. Many of these rippers manipulate their way to positions of social influence and authority to get a bird's eye view before selecting their next victim. It's just so *easy* to con trustworthy people to do whatever the Charmer wants.

Deep down, Charmers are disgusted by other people and find them repulsive. Some may even go so far as to make analogies about culling the herd or forcing animals back in their place. This is because the Charmer is a sadist who craves power over everyone and anyone they encounter. A Charmer is a wolf in sheep's clothing who easily blends in because they've pulled the right strings to pick off weaker prey.

Charmers are drawn to well-populated urban areas that teeter on the edge of growth and decay. Some hunters have heard a terrifying rumor: Charmers are building a *network* of slashers. Others heard a puzzling observation; other slashers are picking off Charmers when they can to even the playing field. If the most paranoid conspiracy theorists are to be believed, Charmers are now organizing grotesque little business conventions.

Tell: Charmers usually loathe *something* that gets under their skin. The moral question of whether their angst is valid doesn't matter. They might stroll by a burlesque club and be pissed off the dancers were too exposed, drop by a church and berate a priest for not being faithful enough, or enter a bookstore and lament how nobody reads those books anymore. Whatever that thing is, that's a Charmer's Tell, because it breaks their charming façade and temporarily topples their sense of superiority.

Examples: "John Smith" is an identity thief *par excellence*, sliding into a target's life like a murderous cuckoo and killing them once he's passed for them; he doesn't remember who he really is any more. The Passenger, a late-night Lagos hitchhiker, is armed with a battery of probing questions for anyone who offers her a lift; those she deems sinful won't survive the drive. The Little Green Man uses drugs and sedatives to torture his victims; he likes to leave a survivor or two behind, too confused and traumatized to properly recall who cut their tendons and flayed their skin.

Talent: Disarming — The Charmer is a master manipulator and knows how to use Social Maneuvers (p. XX) to produce excellent results. They enjoy +2 dice when rolling to open a Door, and get a bonus die when making a first impression.

Frailty: Thin Veneer — During a scene, when a Charmer fails to maintain their persona after falling prey to their unique trigger, the ripper must spend a point of Willpower or lash out at the target of their ire. Further consequences to their Social Maneuvers may result depending upon which character the Charmer has shown their "true face" to.

The Hypno (Scourge)

This is all a battle between our beliefs, detective. Whoever is right, lives. Whoever is wrong, dies.

The Hypno's driven by an ideal that underpins every kill. Much like the Charmer, the Hypno is disgusted or repulsed by a specific some element of the world, and that belief of their superiority has hardened into an unstoppable force. The Hypno sees the world as a bigger picture, a clash between philosophies and ideologies. All that matters to the slasher is fighting in this great war, proving their warped beliefs are *correct* through the medium of murder.

Hypnos tend to fixate on rivalries with those in their orbit; they see everything through the lens of a challenge — whether real or imagined. A Hypno will taunt and provoke an investigator to push the boundaries of their beliefs against the detective's. Every time the scourge gets away with murder, it validates them. Often, hunters who encounter Hypnos fall prey to their aggressive force of personality, and stumble when they can't hold on to their own ideals.

Scourges of this kind are a hunter's bane. The Hypno might watch a cell deal with *another* slasher with great interest, and "help" point out what they missed just to mess with them. Other Hypnos might target hunters who struggle with the Code and show them why they've gone horribly wrong. Then, when hunters are vulnerable and confused, the Hypno strikes to emerge as their superior.

Tell: A Hypno's choice of victims is paramount, because it is an expression of her ideology. Right or wrong, the Hypno acts as judge, jury, and executioner to anyone *they* feel deserves to die. One might murder con artists, for example, because the Hypno feels justified ridding the world of charlatans. Another targets coma patients and pulls the plug because they're "wasting" too much money. The Hypno's calling card is the pattern of the tell, the confessions they leave behind, and the desperation they have to inform hunters and criminal investigators their murders serve a purpose.

Examples: Camo Mike is a trophy hunter playing the most dangerous game: He claims mortals were born to hunt and picking off weaker prey is a favor to others. In Argentina, the police chase the Confession Killer, who arranges her victims in grotesque caricatures of their greatest vices; the hypocrisy of sinners disgusts her. In Italy, Mio Padre selectively targets politicians, reporters, and academics to sway public opinion, hoping to "return" l'Italia to the 1600s, because unification of the city states clearly isn't working.

Talent: Compelling Words — When making a Social roll of any kind to get a target to drop their guard for a moment or to heed the slasher's words, the Hypno treats any success as an exceptional success. If using this moment to get close to the target and attack them, the scourge treats the victim as vulnerable to a Killing Blow, dealing damage equal to their dice pool for the attack plus any bonus for a weapon, with no roll required. If using this to demoralize or sow doubt in a target's mind, the scourge can instead drain a point of Willpower from the victim to regain it; they cannot drain Willpower from a target more than once per scene.

The Hypno has access to an array of Dread Powers that might include: Know Soul, Agonize, and Predator's Sense.

Frailty: Can't Let Go — Whenever a Hypno experiences a failure on a Social roll against a target she intends to kill, she becomes absolutely obsessed with the desired victim. She loses a point of Willpower at the end of every scene wherein she does not directly attempt to torment or attack the target. This effect ends when the target dies, or if the target manages to inflict damage on the Hypno.

The Undesirable (Ripper)

I've seen the disgusted glances you give me when you think I'm not looking!

The Undesirable glances in the mirror, sees a disgusting monster, and wants murderous revenge on those responsible for their twisted features. It's all someone else's fault — the burn scars, the wiry, unkempt hair, the haunting shadows in their red eyes — and they need to suffer in kind. In some cases, the rejection fueling the Undesirable's hatred either did happen, or didn't quite occur the way they remember. In other cases, being spurned is a fiction repeated by the slasher; they've convinced themselves they're unlovable, that everyone laughs at their repulsiveness, or some other delusion fanning the flames of self-loathing and resentment to a bloody crescendo.

Some Undesirables revel in their status as an outcast and monster, and feel free to inflict punishment on a society that judged them by its own cruel standards. Others are miserable wretches, unable to control their own monstrous impulses and desperately wishing for a way out. In both cases, the Undesirable *acts* bestial because they believe they are a monster — even if they don't fit the conventional definition of one.

Hunters are terrified of Undesirables because of their unusual tendencies for camaraderie amongst other slashers. Undesirables naturally gravitate toward others of their kind and form hateful cabals at the fringes of society. Some go a step further, seeking out “true” monsters to emulate and serve.

Tell: Undesirables usually limit their depredations to specific geographical areas; denied the gregarious bonds of society, the slasher instead builds and maintains a well-protected nest for reassurance. Leaving their nest can be disorienting or even frightening for the Undesirable. The Undesirable's physical appearance is often memorable, whether due to an actual deformity or a self-inflicted harm caused by their self-loathing; this trait looms large in urban legends once they're spotted.

Examples: The Nurse hides in an abandoned hospital; she covers her bleeding mouth, a festering wound of blackened teeth and roughly cut edges, with a thin hospital mask while cutting her next victim's face. The Contortionist hangs from the ceiling of an ironworks by hooks in their bare skin, and “invites” their victims to do the same. Buck can always be found with a cigarette in his hand; he squashes the lit butts on his bare skin, obsessively scarring it until he can find a pristine canvas to start all over again.

Talent: Natural Compass — A Undesirable has a near-perfect sense of direction, and gains a +3 bonus to Perception, Athletics, Investigation, and Survival rolls when present in their nest.

Frailty: Rejection — The Undesirable suffers a -4 penalty on Social rolls that do not involve slashers and other monsters.

The Mutant (Scourge)

So weak and flimsy, this frail human flesh of yours. Comes apart so easily.

The Mutant stares down at their body and doesn't see a human being anymore. Their flesh and features are no longer recognizable as mortal, and those who encounter the Mutant may wonder if they're a cryptid. A Mutant's grotesque appearance may be a terrifying accident of birth, a side effect incited by an experimental drug treatment, or a symptom of a warped influence. In rare cases, the weight of a nascent slasher's self-loathing is enough to stir a cancerous transmutation, sculpting skin and bone to match their broken self-image.

A Mutant cannot blend in; most dwell in remote nests or in a city's underbelly. The Mutant's appearance is not the *source* of their inhumanity; the scourge wants and *needs* to kill. Some Mutants cling to twisted ideals justifying this urge; their slithering thoughts convince them the next step in humanity's evolution is to transform the body through pain and torture. For others, the driving force behind their transformation is a desire to become a knife honed and pointed at their next victim.

Mutants are the easiest Undertakings to track in the current epidemic, because they stand out as soon as they are spotted. While they are rarer than other scourges, their nests have been found with increasing frequency across Europe and Asia.

Tell: A Mutant often leaves clear signs of their horrific nature behind after they strike. These might include shed hair or fingernails, claw marks on the walls, ichor that has dripped from their sores, or bloodied instruments of torture.

Examples: The Crocodile Killer squeezes through pipes, then savages his chosen victims in their private pools with his filed teeth; he indulges in the luxuries of their palatial homes for a day or two, then escapes back into the sewers. The Taotie craves the taste of human viscera and shovels the guts of his prey into an impossibly wide maw. Contagion Chrissie kills doctors and nurses, blaming medical professionals for the infections that have warped her body into a cauldron of festering diseases.

Talent: Warped Form — A Mutant possesses natural weaponry that has a weapon modifier and armor-piercing quality of 2, with no Initiative modifier, as well as 2 points of Armor. This Talent is supported by the Mutant's available Dread Powers like Dread Attack, Crushing Blow, and Regenerate.

Frailty: Sensitivity — As well as the Social penalty suffered by Undesirables, a Mutant is sensitive to a stimulus chosen by the Storyteller. This might include bright light, the scent of roses, the feel of velvet, the sound of classical music, cats, extreme heat, etc. When exposed to the stimulus, the Mutant must spend a Willpower point or attempt to flee the scene immediately; if unable to flee, they either attempt to hide, or lash out to destroy or remove the stimulus. Regardless of spent Willpower, they suffer a -2 penalty on all dice pools provided the stimulus remains present.

The Virtuoso (Ripper)

They call that game "cat and mouse," right? Well, I'm the board.

The Virtuoso *knows* they're better than everyone else. Their keen intellect separates them from the dullards sleepwalking through their pointless little lives. Virtuosos see the "truth" where others stare at the ground in front of them, and this justifies their actions. Where others might stick to a moral code, the Virtuoso revels in the ability to judge idiot peers, treat naïve customers as playthings, or exercise their hateful spite on unwitting stooges before murdering them in a glorious-to-them fashion. When it comes to the kill, it's the Virtuoso's intellect that serves as their greatest weapon. Each murder is a clear demonstration of their superior mind.

Slashers of this Undertaking are in their element when devising elaborate plans, traps, and careful profiles of their targets. The Virtuoso lures victims into their well-defended nests when they're not present. If the victims get hurt, of course, the Virtuoso has an alibi. The ripper will often make their efforts *personal* to get under their victims' skin. Every time the victim succumbs to their baser instincts, or the detective can't figure out the riddle, it's proof the Virtuoso is still in control.

Most of these rippers emerge in densely populated cities, and they're comparatively rare elsewhere. They're often on the move, perhaps more so than other Undertakings, and gravitate toward areas where existing slashers have achieved a high profile — to compete with them by putting another deadly challenge on the board.

Tell: Most Virtuoso rippers have an area of expertise that features strongly in their killings. This misguided sense of pride is a chance to show off how skilled they are — but also acts as a potential lead. Of course, the Virtuoso is often smart enough to realize this, so the fact that every

killing features a clever use of chemicals might just be a bluff to lure hunters down the wrong trail of chasing maintenance workers or chemists.

Examples: Cinderella's Prince Charming never turned up, so she used her abusive stepmother and stepsiblings as guinea pigs to refine her understanding of the poisoner's art; now everyone's a lab rat in her eyes, and she does love to experiment. The Red Librarian drops his captives into absurd death-trap puzzles that test their intelligence with lethal consequences; he picks his prey from those he deems academic bores or frauds. "Judge" Kelly's victims consider her attention a privilege; she serves as spiritual adviser in a demented cult, setting supplicants life-threatening tests that will — if they survive — reveal a flaw or weakness within them that she has observed.

Talent: Profiling — After observing a target, the Virtuoso may roll Intelligence + Empathy, contested by the victim's Manipulation + Subterfuge if they are actively attempting to conceal their motives or disguise their nature. Should the Virtuoso succeed, they can predict the victim's actions with alarming accuracy; they win ties in contested rolls against them, may raise Initiative one higher than the target's Initiative result at the beginning of combat.

If able to spend an entire scene socially interacting with the target before making a roll, the ripper learns *one* unique trait: Virtue, Vice, Integrity or Willpower rating, Conditions suffered, Endowments, etc.

Frailty: Control Freak — Whenever a Virtuoso fails on an Intelligence-based roll, or on a roll using one of the Skills bolstered by their Undertaking, they lose two points of Willpower.

The Puppeteer (Scourge)

I need you to understand. Let me cut away your ignorance.

The Puppeteer's perspective is irretrievably cleft away from any understand a hunter might possess. The scourge is in thrall to an inexplicable belief or insight that seems utterly rational to them and must be shared with others. The Puppeteer may be frantically attempting to communicate this message to an unwitting public or may believe their knowledge is a gift bestowed on victims they torment and kill. The Puppeteer is more than just an irredeemable killer with a shattered mind; they're a vector for a corrosive perspective and eager to let it spread.

Puppeteers are often followed by cultists beguiled and manipulated to believe their mad gospel. Some Puppeteers never actually kill in person and work entirely through the hands of their faithful. Other scourges prefer to corner and torture each victim in delicious isolation, hoping to find a glimmer of truth in the eyes of their prey. The Puppeteer might believe a shadow god waits behind reality's pallid skin and it must be sated with blood. Or, they might be convinced no more murders will be required if just the right amount of lives is brutally taken within a specified period.

Hunters worry that emerging Puppeteers are connecting to "hash out" an infernal doctrine on which they can all agree. Some hunters scour the internet grasping for fraying threads of their presence online. To this end, some cells have devoted all their efforts to hunting Puppeteers because they perceive them to be the most dangerous of all.

Tell: Everything the Puppeteer does is filled with meaning, albeit filtered through their delirium. This meaning is often expressed by details found in the slasher's crime scenes; they might daub the killing room with prayers to impossible gods or bloody sigils. A Puppeteer plans their murders to match greater, often mundane, patterns investigators can follow. Since Puppeteers are

often surrounded by a cult of true believers, their presence can also point to where and when they'll strike next.

Examples: The slasher called “Y” is a self-proclaimed liberator of the downtrodden, abused, and mistreated—their “problems” can only be solved by killing. The Orchid Killer travels across the Middle East and into Southeast Asia, hunting with a deft touch; she carves flesh and bone into gruesome flowers to understand the secrets hidden in the natural patterns she sees. The Prophet of Black Frequencies sends his cult to carve out the brains of the “agents” serving alien angels on the dark side of the moon, but now he’s at war with the New Messiah of the Static Song; his former protégé became his rival.

Talent: Compelling — A Puppeteer can profile a victim much like a Virtuoso, but additionally benefits from the 8-again quality on any contested roll against a profiled target. They also impose a penalty equal to the scourge’s Intelligence on victims’ rolls to notice traps or react to ambushes set for them in their nest.

Additionally, the Puppeteer may use Dread Powers. These might include Agonize, Eye Spy, and Madness and Terror.

Frailty: Falter — Whenever a Puppeteer fails a Social roll, it becomes a dramatic failure.

Creating a Slasher

In the Slasher Chronicle, rippers and scourges are emerging at an alarming rate while other monsters fade into the shadows. This epidemic of broken murderers with their dizzying variety of methods and motivations follows one of three patterns notable for slasher creation.

Each slasher has one of the 10 Undertakings that cover the possible methodologies and purposes of slashers, divided among the five rippers and the five scourges. The Storyteller chooses whichever Undertaking best fits the antagonist’s backstory, modus operandi, and intended place in the chronicle.

The Tell

Every slasher has a Tell, a consistent and identifying marker that acts as the killer’s personal signature for every murder they commit. The Tell might be tied to a slasher’s preferred victim type, the way they stalk victims, the methods used to “decorate” the crime scene, the torture implements they use, or the way they interact with investigators. The Storyteller determines the slasher’s Tell after creating the character to flesh out the killer’s thematic representation in the story.

The Tell is a source of pride for slashers, but it’s also an extension of their personality. It acts as the last remaining shred of their mortality to say: “Here’s *why* I kill and am such a monster.” A slasher might engage in infernal rituals or even prayer during their slayings; one may be due to a feeling of guilt, the other a sense of power. In either case, the Tell is the linchpin of a slasher’s identity.

Slashers *must* perform the Tell each time they kill. If they don’t, they suffer the Deprived Condition if unable (or unwilling) to do so. The resolution to the Deprived Condition is to perform the Tell for *that* murder; implementing the Tell restores one Willpower point. This can happen in a few different ways. Maybe the slasher finds *another* victim and returns to that scene.

Maybe the slasher records a video marking or marring a different crime scene and delivers it to police, to “sign” their murders. Or maybe they inflict self-harm to do what’s required.

The Tell is also crucial to hunters, because it gives them a way to find and deal with the slasher. Tracking a murderer, while using the Investigation Rules (p. XX), will uncover the Tell as an important Clue. Despite this piece of knowledge, the Tell may be too unsettling or gruesome for the hunters to bear, as no two Tells are precisely the same. Storytellers are encouraged to balance the needs of the investigation against the potential for psychological and emotional trauma by using Tilts and Conditions when appropriate.

Slasher Rules Summary

Rules adjustments provided relay a frenetic and desperate feel to this story, as the slasher is the primary antagonist and monster the cells will encounter. This may be summarized as:

- A newly created ripper emerges to prey on a village, town, or city and, if not dealt with, they quickly become a scourge after the bodies pile up. Rippers are created similarly to other antagonists (p. XX) and intentionally seek ways to inflict pain, push characters to breaking points, and force them to suffer Tilts and Conditions. Following the death of their fifth victim or the end of a chapter, whichever comes first, the ripper becomes a scourge. Rippers can, however, be saved *prior* to their first kill.
- A scourge crawls and creeps to prey on victims whenever and wherever they can. Scourges, for the purpose of the Slasher Chronicle, are imbued with the supernatural, have limited Potency, and can wield certain Dread Powers. Suggestions have been included in their Undertakings. Keep in mind slashers cannot fundamentally and significantly alter reality, nor can they actively manipulate their environment by changing the weather, affecting electronic objects, etc. While narrative effects may occur reflexively in their presence, the Dread Powers chosen *must* be a good narrative fit for the slasher’s Undertaking. If they don’t, the scourge is no longer a slasher and should be treated as a new monster.
- Once a slasher is aware the hunters are on their trail, they may retaliate by conning, stalking, kidnapping, or even murdering people they know. These characters could be a hunter’s Touchstones or connected to applicable Merits such as Allies and Contacts. When these characters die or are terrified and no longer want to communicate with the hunter, the hunter feels this loss. The Touchstone needs to be replaced, and the Merit dots are redistributed. For more, refer to the rules for losing Touchstones (p. XX) and the Sanctity of Merits (p. XX).
- A hunter may become a slasher. First, they become a ripper; when they do, they retain membership in their cell, compact, or conspiracy *until* they are discovered. As a new ripper, they may be saved from the darkest parts of themselves. The fallen hunter must work to regain Integrity before killing a victim; when it’s clear the hunter has been permanently changed into a ripper or scourge, they can no longer be redeemed. At that point, they become a Storyteller character. The Code has been shattered, and the hunter has fallen back into the shadows to become a monster.

If using a slasher in a regular chronicle, the following modifications apply:

- Rippers appear and transform at a more reasonable rate. They are treated as deadly antagonists that may eventually become a scourge. The chance for their redemption is at the Storyteller’s discretion.

- Rippers close to becoming a scourge may acquire Potency and start to use Dread Powers at the Storyteller's discretion.
- A scourge's appearance is notable, and sightings occur in a wider region rather than within the confines of a city. When they do, their presence does not typically go unnoticed.
- A scourge may have a Potency rating like other monsters, at the Storyteller's discretion, but it is not required. Supernatural effects surrounding scourges may also be subdued depending on its Undertaking.
- The phenomenon of hunters becoming slashers is infrequent and ultimately rare. When a hunter turns into a ripper, this becomes the focus of an entire chronicle. The same rules apply, but the scope is tightly focused on dealing with that hunter as the antagonist. Ultimately, it is up to the Storyteller if their group wants to explore this theme.

Creating a slasher may be treated as building a type of monster (p. XX). In addition to Dread Powers (p. XX) and slasher-specific Merits, their Undertaking shapes which type of slasher they will be.

Ripper Systems

Rippers appear more frequently in the Slasher Chronicle than they would in a typical **Hunter** game. The rate of sightings depends on the Storyteller's focus and the cell's capabilities. One group may decide to tightly focus on hunters becoming slashers (p. XX), while another wants to prevent rippers from becoming scourges. The number of rippers in an area will vary accordingly.

To create a ripper, keep the following in mind:

- **Attribute:** Each ripper gains a favored Attribute appropriate to their Undertaking. This Attribute rating is raised to five at no cost.
- **Skills:** Next, the Storyteller picks two Skills that best represent the slasher's motivations or methods; the slasher receives a free Skill Specialty in each.
- **Virtue and Vice:** Rippers must be assigned a Virtue and Vice.
- **Slasher Merits:** Rippers have access to slasher-specific Merits when created; the Storyteller must decide if the ripper has already made their first kill or not.
- **Size:** Rippers may have a Size of 4, 5, or 6 at character creation.
- **Integrity:** All slashers have an Integrity score of 0 as a representation of their murderous intent. The lack of Integrity doesn't mean the slasher has suffered trauma or abuse, however, nor does it automatically speak to a history of ghastly acts; some slashers "break" for trivial or banal reasons.
- **Addiction:** Every slasher possesses the Addicted Condition to reflect their addition to killing. The specifics of the Condition vary from slasher to slasher; some are possessed of a bloodlust that means they crave the release of regular murder, whereas others can bide their time and are satisfied with only the occasional spot of brutal carnage.

If the Condition is suppressed (or removed) but the slasher's Integrity is not raised above 0, it will eventually resurface in a later session at the Storyteller's discretion.

- **Mortality:** Unlike scourges, rippers do not possess Potency. For all intents and purposes, rippers are still human. They may be monstrous, but they are not supernatural with few exceptions.
- **Rehabilitation:** Rippers may be rehabilitated before their first victim dies. To save a ripper from themselves, two things must happen: The Addicted Condition must be resolved, and their Integrity rating must be raised to 1.
- **Transformation:** When a ripper becomes a slasher, their Merit dots may be reallocated to purchase up to three relevant Dread Powers. The total number of Merit dots informs the new scourge's maximum Potency rating. For example, if a ripper has a total of nine allocated Merit dots, then their maximum assigned Potency as a scourge would be five. The Storyteller is encouraged to make further adjustments to the scourge's Potency rating to balance them against the cell's capabilities.

Scourge Systems

Like rippers, scourges are preying on communities at an alarming rate. The number of sightings depends on the Storyteller's focus and the cell's capabilities. A chronicle focused on dealing with scourges increases the threat level and the grisly details.

To create a scourge, keep the following in mind:

- **Attribute:** Each scourge gains a favored Attribute appropriate to their Undertaking. This Attribute rating is raised to five at no cost.
- **Skills:** Next, the Storyteller picks two Skills that best represent the slasher's motivations or methods; the slasher receives a free Skill Specialty in each.
- **Virtue and Vice:** Scourges also require a Virtue and Vice.
- **Slasher Merits:** Scourges have access to slasher-specific Merits when created in addition to Dread Powers.
- **Size:** Scourges may have a Size of 4, 5, or 6 at character creation.
- **Integrity:** All scourges have an Integrity score of 0.
- **Addiction:** Every scourge possesses the Addicted (Murder) Condition. If the Condition is suppressed (or removed), but the slasher's Integrity is not raised above 0, it will resurface in the following session.
- **Taint:** Scourges have a Potency rating and may purchase Dread Powers applicable to their Undertaking. However, Scourges have a maximum Potency rating of 6 and cannot have more than three Dread Powers.
- **Rehabilitation:** Scourges may not be rehabilitated, even if their Integrity raises to 1.

Hunter's Fall from Grace

The grim truth of the Vigil is that it exacts a terrible toll from the hunters who uphold it. The world is revealed to be a terrible place of nightmare powers and devious conspiracies, where predators wait in the shadows for the slightest opportunity to kill, maim, or torment. A hunter risks — and likely loses — life and limb on a regular basis, for little or no reward beyond the

immediate satisfaction of doing what is right. The wages of the Vigil are often pain, madness, and eventually death.

It's little wonder that an alarming number of slashers emerges from the embattled ranks of hunters. Hunters are exposed to a mix of thoughts, feelings, and experiences that can incubate the slasher's broken mind and soul. A hunter can become a slasher via several means.

Hunter-to-Slasher Systems

For the Storyteller: Winning Scenarios

The Slasher Chronicle offers a set of tools to tell a story and isn't presented to introduce horror for horror's sake. As such, you'll need to decide if, when, and how the players can earn a win. While the supernatural may be overwhelming, reminding the cell that the odds are always too great doesn't encourage them to fight.

One way to balance the pace, tone, and emotional weight of the story is to give hunters opportunities to win. All hunters, regardless of tier, can save victims, solve crimes, help other hunters, or figure out how to stem the rising, red tide. These moments of hope give the narrative heft and keep the players' interest to see the chronicle all the way through. So how does a hunter become a slasher?

The hunter may simply be ground down by the relentless weight of the Vigil. Each time the hunter kills, she loses a little piece of herself; each time, it becomes easier to justify the loss of an innocent. Convictions give way to practicality and idealism gives way to bitterness and spite. The hunter might decide it's acceptable to torture a cultist because, after all, they *really* need that information to catch up with the monster they seek. Soon enough, that hunter pushes the line because it gets the job done.

- **Integrity:** When a hunter's Integrity score falls to 0, they are in danger of becoming a ripper.
- **Losing Touch:** Touchstones, Allies, Mentors, and other supporting characters are not automatically lost. When they come into the hunter's orbit, they become part of the hunter's rehabilitation or fall. Rules for losing them continue to apply as normal.
- **Rehabilitation:** A hunter who hasn't transformed may be saved before their first victim dies. Their Integrity rating must be raised to 1.
- **First Transformation:** When a hunter becomes a ripper, their Merit dots may be allocated to purchase relevant Slasher Merits that fit the fiction.
- **Addiction:** The hunter acquires the Addicted (Murder) Condition after making their first kill. If the Condition is suppressed (or removed) but the slasher's Integrity is not raised above 0, it will eventually resurface in a later session at the Storyteller's discretion.
- **Victims Claimed:** When a fallen hunter can no longer regain Integrity and it's clear they've permanently become a ripper, they are no longer playable as a character. The Storyteller may make an exception to increase drama and tension by extending the number of victims to three instead.

Additionally, hunters with low Integrity begin to have an impact on their cell, compact, or conspiracy, but they aren't lost yet — not until they emerge as a ripper before or after they make their first kill.

Across the Tiers

Mechanically, a hunter may be a ripper — but the characters may be unaware that's the case. The following adjustments occur when the hunter has shattered the Code and thwarted the Vigil.

- **Tier One:** The cell may not know their cellmate is a ripper, but it's clear something's off. Teamwork and Tactics no longer work as intended, as the ripper cannot participate in them. This effect is a clue to help the cell uncover and deal with what's wrong.
- **Tier Two:** As above. When the hunter is discovered, they immediately lose membership in their chosen compact and any other benefits, including Hunter Status, they may have enjoyed. This may also strain relationships the hunter forged during their time in the compact. The Storyteller is encouraged to leverage Social Maneuvers to help facilitate this part of the story.
- **Tier Three:** As above. In addition to losing the ability to use teamwork and Tactics, the hunter cannot use their Endowments at an Integrity rating of 0. This may occur before they leave (or are forced out of) their conspiracy.

Once a hunter leaves their cell, regardless of tier, it is assumed their participation in the story builds to a climactic moment. However, narrating a session of underdogs when one character is acting as the antagonist can be incredibly difficult — *especially* since **Hunter** is a game about teamwork.

Ultimately, how to handle the finite details of hunters becoming slashers is up to the Storyteller.

Slasher Merits

The following new Merits are only available to slashers. They may either be used for the purposes of the Slasher chronicle or in a regular chronicle.

Atavism (•)

Prerequisite: Dexterity ••• or Wits •••

Effect: The slasher is a throwback, closer to beast than human in either body or mind. They run on instinct, completely lacking any hesitation or restraint when it comes to violence and reacting swiftly in accordance with fight-or-flight reflexes rather than taking the time to stop and think. They use the higher of Dexterity and Wits when calculating Defense, rather than the lowest, and cannot be subject to the Beaten Down Tilt.

Drawback: In the heat of the moment, the slasher finds it tricky to think and plan rather than just go with what their instincts are saying. They always suffer the untrained penalty for using a Mental Skill while undertaking vigorous physical activity — whether combat, pursuing, or fleeing — regardless of whether they actually have any dots in the Skill.

Cover-Up (••)

Prerequisite: Intelligence •••; one of Crafts •••, Investigation •••, or Medicine •••

Effect: The slasher is an expert at covering their murderous tracks; they disguise their killings to mask the method or motivation of each deed. If the slasher spends at least an hour in either

preparation for the killing or clean up afterwards, roll Intelligence + Crafts, Investigation, or Medicine (depending on the method used) to implant false clues into the scene. Success means any Clues derived from the scene via investigation are tainted.

Damnably Certain (•••)

Prerequisite: Composure ••• or Resolve •••

Effect: The slasher possesses utter conviction that what they're doing is right. Every time they kill, it scours away even the slightest traces of doubt or guilt that worry them. Once per scene, when the slasher kills another character, they regain a single point of Willpower.

Hands of a Killer (•)

Prerequisite: Dexterity •••, Weaponry ••

Effects: Everything is a potential weapon for this slasher, and every environment a plethora of opportunities to kill in intriguing new ways. They ignore the penalty for using an improvised weapon, can reflexively grab an improvised weapon from her environment if unarmed, and add their Weaponry dots to their Initiative score when doing so.

Telltale Murder (••)

Prerequisite: Intelligence •••, Investigation ••

Effect: The slasher can use their Tell as just another weapon in their arsenal — a way to avert would-be pursuers or taunt an investigator. The character spends at least five minutes arranging the scene of the crime to match her message — moving bodies into a symbolic display, carving messages into flesh, or other macabre stagecraft. Afterwards, any character who attempts to use the slasher's Tell to investigate must spend a point of Willpower before doing so.

Weaponry Obsession (••)

Prerequisite: Weaponry •, a specialty in the chosen weapon

Effects: For whatever reason, the slasher is obsessed with a specific weapon and it has become their murderous signature. When using that favored weapon — the *specific* knife with which the teenagers stabbed them, the *specific* rifle they used while deployed in the war — they gain the 8-again quality on all dice pools involving its use.

Drawback: The slasher cannot voluntarily dispose of the weapon; it's almost a part of them, and they can't bear to let it go. If separated from it by circumstances outside of their control, they gain the Deprived Condition until they get it back.

Slashers Around the World

In the Slasher Chronicle, an epidemic of remorseless killers erupts across the globe. It is a chronicle setting Storytellers may customize for their purposes.

In **Hunter: The Vigil**, slashers are not a new phenomenon — but the fact that hunters are bombarded with slasher sightings and police reports on a weekly basis certainly *is*. Whatever's happening, the increase in slasher activity is driving other supernatural denizens into hiding. Slashers are so terrifying they've become what other monsters fear.

This chronicle setting is tightly focused on an increase in slasher sightings and activities all around the world. To facilitate this view, the rest of the supernatural community has fallen silent,

and waits anxiously to see who'll emerge from the oncoming storm: hunters or slashers. Storytellers seeking to add more variety to a chronicle may drop in brief encounters with other antagonists who are either on the run or who've ended up in a slasher's crosshairs and need help.

Who are the slashers? They're not all freshly minted murderers or copycat killers. Many slashers have been forged in the brutal crucible of modern life; their empathy for the rest of humanity has been choked out of them by the growing urban and industrial sprawls where most people are reduced to mere cogs in the vast, unfeeling machine.

For the Player: New Slasher Compact and Conspiracy

A new compact and conspiracy have been added for use in the Slasher Chronicle. Nine Stars is a brand new concept inspired by true crime movies set in Hong Kong. VASCU, which appeared in first edition, is a conspiracy filled with chemically-modified hunters who exhibit psychic powers. Both Nine Stars and VASCU may be used outside of the Slasher chronicle in regular gameplay. The Storyteller will have to make an adjustment to their view of the enemy and their motivation to hunt in a setting where slashers are not the primary antagonist.

Crime enthusiasts have picked up that something's feels unnatural in their city and long-forgotten urban legends are getting revived. Unfortunately, there's more truth to the rumors than hunters are comfortable admitting. Masked figures drag themselves out of the dirt to take up the knife and the hunt once more. Wily old predators, once soaked in the blood of 100 screaming victims, know it's time to set aside that whole idea of retirement. Murderous cults and wild-eyed sects that were long since disbanded start to drift back together, looking to foster a fresh generation of executioners.

The addiction to cruelty, to the sense of power over life and death, never really releases its grip. Whatever tide of darkness now rises, it's like an alarm bell in the psyche that wakes the monster within. The wolf in sheep's clothing can only lie to itself so long that it's just another face in the herd.

Of course, no one's clear how many slashers there are, because the authorities are tight-lipped. Cells have their hands full trying to extract information out of allies, because local governments are desperate to prevent a widescale panic. Most people sense the world's that much more dangerous around the edges. Those who uphold the Vigil, though? Oh, hunters know. They know, because the darkness nestling in the human soul is coming for *them*, eager to snuff out their candle, and threaten the peace they're so desperate to maintain.

Tier One: Neighborhood Killers

Tier-one chronicles tend to be the most reminiscent of the horror movies that inspire them, because the scope of the story is focused and can be resolved within hours, weeks, months. That does not mean a tier-one cell cannot make connections between similar events or understand that the issue is happening elsewhere, however. The challenge of running the Slasher Chronicle for tier-one hunters is simply the knowledge they possess and the resources they have at their disposal.

All games thrive on personal connection. In a tier-one chronicle, the cell doesn't have the framework of a compact or conspiracy to back them up, so they'll be forced to forge new connections with law enforcement, lone hunters, or cells new to the Vigil. Somebody needs to

stand up and do *something*, and new Storyteller characters can be introduced as allies to show just how bad the problem is. This helps keep the cell in the spotlight as the experts: they've taken down a monster or two, after all, and they can teach or even mentor other characters. This may also point to a deeper tragedy should one of the cellmates fall.

The Slasher Chronicle may be the cell's first brush with the supernatural, or it may not be. A good narrative tool to use is a series of hauntings caused by recently deceased victims; though technically these ghosts would be considered monsters, for narrative purposes they may simply inflict the Obsessed Condition on the players, and the nature of that Obsession is "Solve My Murder." Once that Condition is resolved, the spirit departs, satisfied justice has been done.

Tier Two: Forging Connections

Tier-two chronicles have a larger scope that narratively weaves in and out of hunter compacts in a tangled mess of fallen hunters, pointed fingers, and conflicting motives. Tier-two chronicles allow Storytellers to broaden a cell's knowledge of who *else* is out there trying like hell to uphold the Vigil and failing miserably.

Members of The Long Night act as moral compasses — until one of their own becomes an Avenger. The Loyalists of Thule suddenly fall silent and test each of their members to ensure they haven't fallen. Network Zero hunters question exactly how and when were they able to take *that* particular video. Null Mysteriis is hard at work, attempting to find a reasonable and scientific explanation for what's happened; its leaders might even give members ultimatums to ensure they solve the problem quickly. The Union, S.W.O.R.N., and Nine Stars take a more pragmatic view. People are dying, and that means hunters must step up and help when they can, wherever they can.

The scope of a tier-two story can reveal more of the mystery behind the epidemic, but at the same time it doesn't necessarily *have* to. Some Storytellers may decide that hunters becoming slashers is enough, and concentrate on that as both the hook and foundation for the chronicle. Should supernatural elements be dropped into the chronicle, either through ghosts and spirits, scourges, mysterious places, or other monsters, the Storyteller should prepare a compact's reaction that will affect the cell.

Tier Three: Impossible Design

Tier-three hunters have more abilities, resources, and knowledge than other hunters, but they also have something else, too: a greater chance to lose Hunter Status in their chosen conspiracy should they take matters into their own hands.

VASCU will assume command as the authority in most cases — whether other hunters want it to or not; Task Force Valkyrie will back them up by lending firepower to their investigations while keeping an eye on them. The Ascending Ones will be hard at work trying to find a "cure" for the slasher condition, while The Cheiron Group will be in disarray as many of its members refuse to play ball with those in charge. Upper management has given an unusual order to "monitor, but not capture" at all costs, even when the hunt becomes personal, when a slasher is one of their own. What most of their members are unaware of, is that The Cheiron Group considers the slasher epidemic is a perfect opportunity to sit back and watch a full-scale gruesome experiment.

The Lucifuge has turned its attention to *other* pressing matters, fearing the epidemic is designed to spread until it claims the Lady of Milan. Members understand how violent and deadly slashers

can be but must weigh their dedication to finding Lucifer's children and protecting the Lady's interests against the other demands of the Vigil. The Malleus Maleficarum is more fixated on the other troubling news it's learned and sends its hunters to investigate scourges and mysterious places that inflict supernatural harm.

Lastly, the Council of Bones is busier than it has ever been, instructing members to conduct séances and communicate with victims whenever possible. Unfortunately, the uptick in victims has caused a surge of ghosts, and the Council isn't always getting the right information on which to act. What's more, some members feel uncomfortable interacting with VASCU agents and fear they've assumed control to learn the Council's methodology and secrets.

Storytellers have a wealth of possibilities for a tier-three chronicle that can focus on the epidemic, figuring out why scourges are imbued with the supernatural, or simply getting their house in order. Because there's so much story for tier-three hunters to explore, the Storyteller is encouraged to think of its scope and, if necessary, plan an additional chronicle to explore desired themes.

Teleinformatic Endowments

Teleinformatic Endowments are available to VASCU agents (p. XX) and may be selected during character creation. The Wintergreen Process is a free Endowment all agents receive, but it is their choice whether or not they want to go through it. It is, however, required if a VASCU agent wants to use Teleinformatic Endowments.

Wintergreen Process

Named after Dr. Barbara Wintergreen, this process uses a series of chemical and unconventional therapy techniques to unlock an agent's mind. Dr. Wintergreen's process is a refinement of methods used in the 50s and 60s for altering human mental patterns. Agents undergo an extensive process where they are injected with a series of psychoactive drugs from hallucinogens, growth hormones, dimethyltryptamine (DMT) with a heavily modified Harmala alkaloid, to other chemicals to spur a physiological change in their brain. This is followed with a number of therapy techniques used outside their intended purpose, such as EMDR, hypnosis, and ASMR sensitization. The unlikely result of these techniques is that the agent is able to "unlock" a part of her mind she could not access before, giving her access to Teleinformatic Endowments. Not every VASCU agent receives the drug therapy, but to use Teleinformatics, one must undergo the process.

When agents use their power, it is an act of will. Her mind goes into overload and it can sometimes cause damage, such as a nosebleed or headache, as her body tries to keep up with her mental capacity.

When purchasing a new Teleinformatic Endowment, the agent must go through another chemical process for the Endowment to take hold in the hunter's mind. VASCU administers the treatment to any agent in good standing, though the process generally takes a day in the labs to complete. At this time, it is not clear if the Wintergreen Process can be reversed, but agents suspect several attempts have been made. Agents who leave VASCU undergo monitoring and, as long as they don't use their abilities in an overt way, are often left to their own devices. Hunters who might pose a threat to others are not treated with such leniency and are instead returned to VASCU headquarters indefinitely.

Codex

A side effect of an increased mental capacity and processing power is the ability to remember literally anything an agent has ever read, and to recall, collate, and process that information at speeds of which most people could only dream. This doesn't just make recalling information easy, but it makes the hunter a hyper-effective researcher and investigator.

Cost: 1 point of lethal damage and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Halve the time it takes for the agent to perform a single investigation or research action as she cross-references available information with information she has already read. Additionally, she achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five successes when performing these actions.

Hall of Mirrors

The Hall of Mirrors is a mental meditation technique VASCU agents use to meditate on the future. These agents take what they know about a situation and meditate on it while viewing possible futures. While VASCU claims the Hall of Mirrors is not a physical place, but some a hallucination shared among all agents, many agents believe they go somewhere else when they do this meditation. They claim they don't just look inside themselves for answers but go to an actual place. There, they view the future through "looking portals" stationed throughout the hall.

The Hall of Mirrors shows probable futures — the most likely outcomes if nothing changes. Because the future is malleable by action, the Hall of Mirrors is unable to show anything more than a week into the future. Unfortunately, the experience is trying on operatives and visiting the hall causes them pain.

Cost: 1 point of lethal damage

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult

Action: Extended. Each roll represents 5 minutes spent meditating and searching in the Hall of Mirrors for a specific subject, such as a person or event. The meditation requires five successes to complete.

Success: The hunter advances toward finding information in the Hall of Mirrors. If the required number of successes is met, the character is successful.

Exceptional Success: The agent is so positively overwhelmed by visiting the Hall of Mirrors, they gain the Inspired Condition until the end of the session, may ask an additional question regarding the information they seek, and reduce the time between rolls by two minutes.

Failure: The agent fails to acquire information. She can abandon the attempt or continue in meditation but must gain the Spooked Condition.

Dramatic Failure: The agent gets too deep into her own mind and cannot reach the Hall of Mirrors. The attempt fails and she gains the Guilty Condition.

Upon completing the mediation, the player may ask the Storyteller a single question pertaining to her subject's future. This cannot be more than a week out, or the meditation fails. The question must pertain to the subject and be specific: "Will Marcel get the job he's interviewing for?" or

“What does Janette plan to do tomorrow?” The Storyteller determines what is going to happen in the future and gives the player information, though it doesn’t have to be perfectly detailed: “Marcel doesn’t get the job, but he interviews elsewhere.” or “Janette follows her daily routine without any changes.” The hunter gains the Informed Condition about her subject.

Polygraph

Every investigator knows that sometimes suspects lie. VASCU agents can tune into the churning emotions of a target’s thoughts and can draw the truth out from their treacherous emotions.

Cost: 1 point of lethal damage

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The agent attunes herself to her subject, watching the rise and fall of emotions during the interrogation. For the rest of the scene, the player’s rolls achieve exceptional success at three successes rather than five successes when dealing with the subject.

Postcognition

Some people have the ability to feel the psychic impressions left on an area, recalling emotional resonance and gathering clues about what happened. A well-trained VASCU agent can relive a crime scene as though she were the victim, taking what little she already knows and turning it into hard facts by extreme deductive reasoning. She can even will herself into seeing the crime as it happened through the victim’s eyes.

The agent must be at the location the crime took place to use this power, she cannot simply look at pictures to recreate the crime. The psychic residue of a location touches the echoes of what has gone before. Unfortunately, this causes some agents to suffer due to the excruciating toll reliving traumatic events takes on their mind.

Cost: 1 point of lethal damage (and 1 Willpower, see below)

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation – Time (see below)

Action: Instant

This power’s roll is modified by how old the crime scene in question is: over a day old (–1), over a week old (–3), over a year old (–5)

Roll Results

Success: The agent concentrates on the crime on which she wants information as she activates this power. She gains a Clue per success on her activation roll, pertaining to this crime. If she spends a Willpower during activation, she may instead relive the last five minutes of the crime as though she were the victim. This nets the same number of Clues, but additionally gives her the Informed Condition about the crime for further investigation.

Exceptional Success: Additional successes are their own reward.

Failure: The agent is overwhelmed by the psychic impressions left in the area and she cannot make sense of the scene.

Dramatic Failure: The scene grips the agent. Though she cannot make heads nor tails of what is happening, its violence marks her. She suffers a breaking point.

Speed of Thought

Every VASCU agent needs an edge, but Speed of Thought gives them several. When active, the agent kicks their nervous system into overdrive, becoming hyperaware of the world around them. Details come through with crystal clarity and time itself almost seems to slow — though they're bound by physical limitations as they struggle to cope with the flood of information crashing into their mind.

Cost: 1 point of lethal damage

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

Duration: One scene

The agent may immediately move to the top of the Initiative order. Additionally, he may use the higher of his Wits or Dexterity to determine his Defense, rather than the lower.

Talon

The agent focuses their thoughts and feelings into a honed spike of anger, fear, and confusion. Then, the agent rams that psychic talon into the mind of a target, punching through their psyche in a disorientating surge of emotions.

Cost: 1 point of bashing damage

Dice Pool: Resolve + Intimidation vs. Composure

Action: Contested

Roll Results

Success: Through sheer force of will, the agent focuses on a single target to attack them with a toxic mix of emotions. The attack acts as a mental assault with a weapon rating of 2 bashing damage. A successful hit inflicts the Insane Tilt on the victim.

Exceptional Success: The agent inflicts the Insensate Tilt instead of Insane.

Failure: The hunter is unable to affect her target's emotional state.

Dramatic Failure: The agent's emotional spike rebounds and slams into her instead. She gains the Shaken Condition.

Tag

The agent can extend her senses into nearby cameras and through an unseen network to spy. The cameras do not need to be networked together for the hunter to utilize them; anything from a smartphone's camera to a CCTV camera works. She can even jump between cameras as long as they can see each other. The agent can co-opt the senses of simple animals, such as rodents or small birds, but nothing larger than that. This is a one-way viewing window — she can't command or direct animals to, say, follow her target.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

The agent can send her sense into any nearby camera or small animal to begin spying. The agent can then follow the network to find her target instantly. Each viewing target (such as jumping from one camera to another or one animal to another) must be within line of sight of one another. The agent doesn't need to know where the next camera is, she just flows into it. She can watch her target for up to one scene. Her cell gains a +2 bonus to track the target or on investigation rolls regarding the target's location for the duration of this power. Additionally, the hunter gains the Informed Condition regarding her target once the scene is over.

Backlash: The hunter must concentrate to use this power. She suffers a -2 penalty to take any other action and cannot react to being surprised.

Slasher Sightings

Slashers are appearing all over the world and hunters are on high alert. Many struggle to balance the demands of the Vigil while keeping their loved ones safe, fearing someone they know will be a slasher's next target.

No matter how or where the slashers are presented, it is strongly recommended that cells have a few successful hunts and lingering mysteries under their belt to make the story more compelling. This will also allow more opportunities for players to master and create new Tactics, acquire more equipment, and beef up their characters before tackling the horrific epidemic.

Rumored sightings and reports may be modified at the Storyteller's discretion to fit their chronicle's needs. Each city yields more clues for the hunters to piece together, and reveals more about the supernatural and their connection to slashers.

Philadelphia, United States

Philadelphia's homicide rate has always been high, and the official figures don't account for the tally of kills the city's many hunter cells rack up each year. Now, though, both have shot up. Every single one of Philadelphia's seven regions that hunters recognize as being a distinct territory has seen the emergence of its own terrifying slasher, all within the span of roughly six months.

All seven slashers are rumored to be connected. One may be a former minister, a hunter turned slasher who's widened her net to encompass any "sinner" who catches her attention. Another is a Brute who masquerades as a maintenance worker and likes to leave his victims on the city's train tracks. The Blood Mummer is a Mask with a craving for the red stuff; Crimson Blade is a grotesquely warped Mutant, their flesh broken and twisted by a spirit of murder. The rest are just as strange and varied. They all share the same Tell, though, and leave a message in the crime scene; a Sator Square, accompanied by the statement *You will reap what you sow*.

As far as anyone knows, the slashers are not acting in conscious concert; they may be largely unaware of each other — though at least one copycat has sprung up in their wake. What little communication leaks out to the press indicates they all experience the same dream of an endless field of black soil under a red sun.

Some veteran hunters, remembering stories passed between those who uphold the Vigil — of a slasher called “the Sower” — are frightened of what this may portend. Has the bloodshed of the Vigil here in Philadelphia primed the city as some sort of hunting ground for the Sower? Does the Sower come to aid the hunt, to take a bloody toll, or both? Is there anything they can do to stop what the signs seem to be pointing toward — the return of the legendary slasher?

For now, the fractured hunters of Philadelphia struggle to contend with the killers painting their territories red, refusing to look across their borders for help from one another and instead tackling each symptom separately. As the killings intensify, hunters wonder if or when the harvester of this grim crop will arrive.

They have yet to figure out that it’s already here.

The Sower (Legend)

Quote: *“You’ve let this whole mess get out of hand. I’m here to clean everything up, you included.”*

Background: There’s always been a Sower, so the stories go. When the Sower walks the Earth, hunters die — and so do monsters. One life for one life; the Sower slays a beast, and a hunter pays the tithe. Over the centuries, hundreds of men and women have taken the Sower’s mantle, letting the Legend live on in their bodies and minds for a little while. Now, it’s back — but vastly more powerful than ever before.

All the bloodshed in Philadelphia has served as a libation in its honor, and it rides the tide of slashers unleashed across the globe. The Sower’s not behind that wider epidemic, and it doesn’t control the slashers currently tearing paths of carnage through Philadelphia — they’re just symptoms of its arrival. It’s only here as a presence, for now, a lingering chill at the nape of the neck, a stirring of anger deep in the gut. It’s watching the hunters as they work, waiting for one of them to step over the mark, and then it’ll call to them, and they’ll come to the field of dark earth, and accept its bargain.

Then, the Sower will kill them all: all the monsters of Philadelphia, the sick broods of parasites left to fester and grow fat by the discord in the Vigil, and all the hunters, a grand tithe paid for this great cleansing. Once it’s done, the City of Brotherly Love will be clean of darkness, all traces of the Vigil washed away in a tide of blood.

Appearance: Whoever becomes the Sower displays the traits associated with its legend: hands and feet caked in dirt, a burlap sack over the head with eye slits cut into its fabric, and a physical frame that seems to strain and bulge at its fleshly limits, barely containing the power within. The Sower can take on a mundane appearance if they desire but stepping on bare earth immediately sheds the illusion and shows the slasher for who they truly are.

Storytelling Hints: Once the Sower appears, they will begin to systematically purge the city of hunters and monsters, hitting each in turn to grow matching tallies of kills. The very slashers who precede the Sower’s coming are on the target list, too. The Sower isn’t obeying their usual protocol of two monsters for every hunter killed and will attempt to take down multiple targets in one go. They can restrain themselves from killing for a week at most while gathering information on potential prey and maneuvering for their next attack, after which they are compelled to strike again.

Virtue: Conviction

Vice: Wrath

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 3, Investigation 4, Occult 5, Medicine 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Foot Chase) 5, Brawl 4, Firearms 3, Stealth (Shadowing) 4, Weaponry 5

Social Skills: Intimidation (Physical Threats) 4, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Fast Reflexes 3, Fleet of Foot 3, Hands of a Killer, Iron Stamina 3

Health: 10

Willpower: 9

Integrity: 0

Size: 5

Speed: 17

Defense: 8

Initiative: 10

Armor: None

Special: Suffers from the Addicted (Murder) Condition. For the purposes of the Slasher Chronicle, the Sower has a Potency rating of 5 and may use the following Dread Powers: Regenerate, Madness and Terror, and Dread Attack.

Tier One

Small cells of hunters focusing on the local picture mirror the wider problem in Philadelphia — everyone's looking after their own backyard, and few take kindly to anyone nosing into their turf. A cell is likely having to deal with both the slasher marauding its section of the city and a population of monstrous horrors who are increasingly active, as if something were stirring the hornets' nest. Pursuing leads is tricky, though; the moment the cell leaves its usual stomping grounds, its hunters face delicate negotiations with belligerent hunters who have little interest in helping them out.

Old and the New: Many of the fresh crop of slashers are somehow linked to the city's old problems. Spirits, monstrous denizens, and old traitors serve as the source material that instigates the creation of the new killers. If someone brings the district's slasher down, a new one will pop back up from among such lingering scars. If the cell can catalog such relics of Vigils past, it might be able to predict where or how the next slasher will come to be.

Building Bridges: It should rapidly become clear to the cells on the ground that the fractured situation of Philadelphia's Vigil is untenable. The boots on the ground need to start working together, if they want to make any headway. Building those bridges requires the cell to make itself vulnerable, take a risk, and reach out — and given the fear of slashers emerging from among the ranks of the hunters, everyone is *exceptionally* paranoid of outsiders right now.

Tier Two

Compact members will struggle with the slasher outbreak in the city for a variety of reasons. Locals are fiercely territorial, rival cells and compacts have little patience or inclination to give ground, all while the slashers keep anointing the city's streets with libations of blood. Something dark and horrific is coming, but the compacts might have the power and influence needed to put a stop to it.

Active compacts in Philadelphia include:

The Hunt Club: Things are about to take a sharp turn from bad to *worse*. The situation in Philadelphia has garnered the attention of a sinister compact with a blood-soaked history: the Hunt Club, a gentleman's club of serial killers and even outright slashers, with a hankering to hunt for the most dangerous game and pat one another on the back for the cruelest or most stylish murders. Sometimes the club's efforts coexist with real hunters, going after exciting and supernatural prey, but more often it picks its victims from average citizens. The outbreak of slashers in the city has caught the club's eye, and members wonder if it's time to extend an invitation to increase their ranks. More broadly, though, club members speculate about hosting a grand hunt of slashers in the city, ignoring its old, entrenched divisions in favor of a wide-ranging spree of killing the killers. The fact that *new* slashers may emerge from this bloodbath isn't a downside — it just makes the city into an incredible hunting ground of challenging targets that will restock itself after each hunt.

The Union: Slowly but steadily, the Union is getting ready to make a move. Naturally predisposed to a decentralized structure built from informal ties, the Union's inherent flaws resonate with those of the wider Vigil in Philadelphia — but when ties are forged between comrades in the compact, they're strong as steel. Many in the compact remain deeply suspicious of VASCU, and component cells are having a tough time overcoming their naturally territorial tendencies, but the Union's efforts are gaining pace. They've cottoned on to the fact that taking one slasher down just seems to bring another out of the woodwork, and now realize they need to seek a permanent solution to the problem.

Tier Three

The connections between the slashers has caught the attention of several conspiracies who are converging on the city in record numbers. Understanding the slasher phenomenon could yield incredible insights into the connections between slashers on the wider, global scale, a prize that can hardly be passed up. Once the nature of the Sower's great harvest becomes clear, it could stir the conspiracies into more drastic, even unwise, actions.

Active conspiracies in Philadelphia include:

Task Force: VALKYRIE: Until recently, the TFV presence in the city was pared down to a lean, efficient team called the Liberty Unit, whose commander can count his agents with one hand. Now, the diminished unit struggles to cope as the situation in Philadelphia threatens to flare wildly out of control. Agents attempt to keep a lid on news of the slasher sprees, strong-arming whatever local government assets they have influence over into cover-ups and damage control. Local hunters assume the shadowy TFV agents are just trying to stop anyone finding out the truth, but they're hoping to keep the problem contained until back-up arrives. Thankfully, reinforcements *are* on their way; the Unit's commander has finally managed to hammer the

critical nature of the crisis through to the high-ups. Once their ranks are bolstered, the conspiracy is likely to take a heavy-handed approach to the problem.

VASCU: VASCU hoped for a fresh start but its members worry Philadelphia may be their undoing. Their relationship with the FBI remains frosty but the detente between the two agencies should have ensured a smooth transition to the new order of things. Obviously, that hasn't happened. The global reach of their operations means most agents spend their time deployed in far-flung regions, and the HQ staff grows nervous that a lack of manpower in Philadelphia could leave them open to attack — whether from slashers or paranoid hunters. Agents primed with the Wintergreen Process are attempting to investigate the slasher sprees in the city, but they're often rebuffed by unfriendly locals who feel the psychics are intruding on their turf. Of all the organizations caught up in the crisis, though, it's the VASCU agents who have the best sense of the bigger picture here; through psychic analysis of potential future outcomes, they've come to believe the Sower is already present in the city.

London, England

In London, the uptick of slashers has started a rash of copycat murders, inspired by timeless slasher villains and the resurging interest in horror movies. Each attack is splashed on the covers of weekly rag magazines throughout the city, chronicling the gruesome course of killers as they act throughout the city. The surge has caused a significant upswing in tourists and fans hoping to see a real-live slasher. Sensationalism is the word of the day, and “helpful” vigilantes, reporters, and curious tourists do little more than clog up any serious attempt to identify and locate the serial killers.

Another result of the phenomenon is that Scotland Yard has received multiple confession letters, detailing recent crimes as well as crimes planned for the future. These letters appear to come from several sources, and it is difficult to determine which to take seriously until a crime is committed. The letters were sorted, and some of the less-graphic sections were published in local papers, in order to ask the public to assist in finding the perpetrators of these violent crimes.

The local tabloids are taking it all in stride. Some assert these murders are occurring because of a government conspiracy to give the economy a boost, others because the Queen's family is actively hiding a scandal that could rock the throne;, or because the killings are nothing more than a publicity stunt for a new novel. There are hundreds of reasons given for these occurrences, each more fanciful than the last. What is certain is that people are dying, and there seems to be no clear path to the end.

Smiling Jake (Puppeteer)

Quote: *“It's all about the story.”*

Background: Jake Edwards is the editor of the Daily Windmill, a cliché-spouting political newspaper that makes its money from sensationalist headlines, illegal wire-tapping, and reckless paparazzi. Although Smiling Jake has a degree in business from Oxford, Jake turned his minimal writing talent (and proclivity to be bombastic) into a career, and his weekly newspaper is now one of the most widely read in the city. He hires private detectives, solicits tips from corrupt police, and buys interviews or pictures from anyone who comes to him with a good story. He's currently making a grip on the copycat killer fad for an insidious purpose: to throw detectives off his trail. No one suspects the oh-so-charming Jake Edwards is a scourge who selectively targets anyone who manages to put the pieces together. Surrounded by groupies and socialites, Smiling

Jake is well integrated into London society and knows exactly which strings to pull to get his way.

Appearance: Smiling Jake is tall and lean; he has a sharply angled face and clear blue eyes. His hair is dark, and his clothing is carefully chosen to maintain his crafted image as a middle-class scion — while still carrying designer labels and high price tags. Smiling Jake is recognized by his winning, world-class smile.

Storytelling Hints: Smiling Jake has no conscience, no need for ego, and an almost incalculable greed. Before he became a slasher, he was driven to use one person after another, burning them out in pursuit of a story or greater revenue.

Virtue: Determined

Vice: Egotistical

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 3, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy (Vices) 2, Expression (Writing) 1, Persuasion (Readers) 3, Socialize (Politicians) 3, Investigation 3, Weaponry 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Contacts 4 (Informants, Journalists, Police, Politicians), Resources 4, Fame 1, Staff (Investigation, Streetwise) 2, Cover Up 2, Hands of a Killer 1

Health: 7

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 0

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Defense: 3

Initiative: 4

Armor: None

Special: Suffers from the Addicted (Murder) Condition. In the Slasher Chronicle, Jake has a Potency rating of 4 and uses the Know Soul and Eye Spy Dread Powers.

Tier One

At the local level, hunters with minimal resources and only a handful of connections are going to interact with the slasher problem as a very personal issue. In London, these hunters have become reactive and intuitive, responding when they hear a crime has happened, and trying to put together enough information to predict — and hopefully stop — the next one. They watch hotspots of activity, staking out alleys and well-trafficked areas of the city, and listen to police broadcasts in order to get ahead of the slasher. Due to the high-profile nature of the cases, many

of the city's local hunters have bumped into significant police and political resistance to their efforts, and the curfew continues to restrict these hunters from operating at their full capability.

On the Beat: The killer has their finger on the pulse of the city, and their methods can be studied. A London hunter or hunter cell might stumble upon the aftereffects of their activities: ritual circles, possessed innocents, or a cursed implement. Worse, the murderer may be creating spirits of vengeance to possess a new host — one of the hunters. That knowledge could cause the cell to come under fire both from the slasher (who wants to get it out of the way) and the police (who will arrest its members for possible involvement). How can hunters trust anyone when ghosts are being weaponized against them?

Rescue Mission: An overeager tourist is taken captive in the London Underground, and is being held in a condemned tunnel by one of the copycats sending letters to the police. Clues in the letters lead the players toward the copycat's hiding place and their hostage — but an ambush is certain. When the hunters follow the trail and rescue the tourist, they discover the kidnapper was a front for the *real* slasher, who manipulated the post and engineered the trap to throw hunters off their scent. The real killer's out there, using a network of groupies as a front to keep the police guessing. However, the groupies are starting to get out of control and may turn into slashers themselves. Can the information they know be turned against their master?

Tier Two

Compacts in the city of London are well-established, and their years of investigation might help stem the bloody tide.

Active compacts in London include:

Ashwood Abbey: These hedonists and thrill seekers are all but native to London and the U.K. While they have been instrumental to many London-based investigations for decades, their loyalty to the Vigil is in question. The latest uptick in slashers has caught their attention, but there's some reticence to dig deeper as members are concerned that this moment could be the compact's fall from grace. They've all heard of the fabled Hunt Club and worry that the steps they take to solve the hunt will finally, irrevocably, shatter the Code and spawn the very thing they've been tasked to hunt.

Null Mysteriis: Local Null Mysteriis members have been fixating on the problem, using the latest scientific advancements to perform handwriting analyses, test recovered forensic evidence, and build a "foolproof" method of determining who has the potential of *becoming* a slasher with 99.9 percent accuracy. Further, hunters have focused their attention on connected crimes: hauntings, false accusations, breaking and entering, petty theft, and car accidents. These scientists are also hard at work extrapolating new data from old evidence, utilizing ultramodern techniques and technology they hope will shape the course of slasher investigations going forward.

Tier Three

A campaign centered on global conspiracies and overarching hunter agencies might see the copycat murders in a larger perspective, related to the global uptick of slashers worldwide. England occupies a select place in pop culture, and conspiracies worry the popularization of slashers will eventually spread to reviving historical killers in body or spirit.

Active conspiracies in London include:

Council of Bones: Members of the Council of Bones are angry with the way London’s media and government are dealing with the outbreak. Some members think the unusual ghost sightings prove the supernatural is real, and welcome new hunters who want to join their ranks. Other council members believe the coverage of the slasher epidemic is a total disaster, because it’s forced hunters to spend more time sifting fact from fiction and dealing with charlatans who have no business conducting a séance without training. This level of infighting in the London chapter threatens to bring the conspiracy’s hunts to a standstill. Should the two factions resolve their differences, they might be able to utilize their swelling numbers in a more productive way to solve the matter at hand. Unfortunately, the conspiracy may be unaware that introducing more members without careful procedures can lead to monsters infiltrating their ranks.

The Lucifuge: Members of the Lucifuge have been drawn to London to investigate a series of copycat killings rumored to be demonic sacrifices. As one member put it, “London’s a mess.” Some of the “murders” are elaborately staged mannequins with fake blood and prosthetic scars — and real demonic sigils. Others are gut-wrenching scenes that *seem* demonic but are regulated to the dark and twisted corners of one slasher’s mind. To date, members of the Lucifuge haven’t found any signs of demonic activity or cults in the area, but that doesn’t mean they don’t exist. The conspiracy is worried, however, that what’s happening in London is a ruse to distract their members while they strike elsewhere — maybe at the Lady of Milan, herself.

New Delhi, India

New Delhi’s developers have a unique vision to integrate information and communication technology into the municipality. This includes local information systems, schools, transportation systems, law enforcement, and other community services to protect them with advanced technology and updated security measures. Facial-recognition systems are utilized through every security camera watching the city, and new chip cards maintain individual information on a secure level. Sensors integrated with real-time monitoring systems provide up-to-the-minute data that’s collected from citizens and their smart devices; this information is then processed and analyzed by law enforcement and other agencies maintaining city security.

With all these modern techniques, slashers in the city of New Delhi tend to possess high intelligence and big-picture ideologies that veer toward their vision of a hopeful future — with only the *right* kinds of people, of course. Some scourges find targets on social media and dating apps by evaluating their activities, profiles, and reach. Meanwhile, other slashers are rejoicing in the ability to scrub their identities by hacking into the tech on which law enforcement is so keen on relying. Any hunter who wants to catch this new breed of slasher must be able to think three — or five — steps ahead of them, or they will simply vanish away into the populace, never to be found.

For the Storyteller: It’s a Slasher’s Bloody World

The cities, Storyteller characters, and hints provided can be woven into a single chronicle or act as the set piece for a unique story. When building a chronicle, start with the truth. You, as the Storyteller, *know* who is murdering innocent people, why they’re doing it, and where they can be found — even if that “who” is a cabal of scourges or a nascent community of rippers. You also know why the slasher epidemic is occurring, too. Maybe a rogue hunter cell is the cause of it all.

Using the truth as a starting point, create a rumor at the other end of both spectrums. Instead of five scourges, there's none. Instead of rogue hunters, a devious monster is to blame. Following this, you can flesh out the story's clues and enigmas to offer plausible leads on which the hunters can follow up regardless of tier. Lastly, attach one or more leads to relevant characters who radiate around the slasher in a wide arc. Be sure to give them movement and placement in the setting, to ground the epidemic in a place the hunters can explore. For more Storytelling advice, visit p. XX.

One of the more popular slashers in New Delhi has recorded their kills, releasing the victim's complete personal data along with a video file of their horrible demise. The slasher calls themselves the "Herald" and claims the victims were all high-profile members of the upper class; the division in caste is less important than the individual's wealth and corporate success. This has brought a great deal of interest to these cases, and technology experts worldwide have been brought in by the New Delhi law enforcement, to investigate the crime and hopefully catch the individual(s) involved.

Hunters, however, have recently learned from artist Amrita Vyarawalla that the Herald isn't just *one* slasher, there's a group of them who are working together. Amrita, who hasn't decided whether she'll take up the Vigil yet, accidentally uncovered the connection after reviewing the audio and visual recordings from her most recent installation, "The Body", a gallery-sized exhibit that mimicked the functions of the human body. In place of eyes, Amrita used monitors. In place of a brain, she connected a giant server — and even went so far as to use LED lights, dry ice, and battery acid to replicate certain functions. The popular exhibit spawned several thousand visitors over the course of six weeks, and Amrita is convinced she's found evidence the Herald is kidnapping and torturing in greater numbers than ever before. Rumor has it the slasher even managed to hack into the city's power grid, to selectively shut off power in the dead of night.

Amrita Vyarawalla

Quote: *"Through technology, we upgrade not only our world, but the very nature of the human soul."*

Background: Amrita Vyarawalla is an installation artist in New Delhi, specializing in exhibits that utilize technology and modern instrumentation — computer parts and working mechanical assets, among other materials — to create three-dimensional works designed to transform the perception of space and time. Her art has been featured in many popular areas of New Delhi, usually in lower-wealth neighborhoods as limited-run installations.

Appearance: Amrita is extremely tall but has a great deal of grace and elegance. She is often a featured speaker for artistic workshops and seminars, as well as for corporations interested in utilizing the most updated technologies within their organizations.

Storytelling Hints: Amrita is an artist, and enjoys both the creation and installation of modern art. She has several disciples and students, and a great deal of pull in the society pages (as well as a number of social invitations). Many of her works contain cameras and other recording devices, even accessing and recording in wavelengths humans can neither see nor hear. She uses her art to maintain a watch throughout the city, alerting her whenever anything supernatural or violent

happens near the art piece. Amrita is not aware she sits at the fulcrum of events in New Delhi, but often knows more than she's willing to admit.

Virtue: Vigilant

Vice: Obsessive

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Crafts 3, Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics 1, Science 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Stealth 3, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Contacts 2 (Artists, High Society), Fame 1, Fast Reflexes 3, Resources 3, Trained Observer 3

Health: 7

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Defense: 5

Initiative: 10

Armor: None

The Dollmaker (Charmer)

Quote: "Don't cry, honey. This is really for your own good."

Background: Bette Sleet doesn't remember a time when she didn't play with her dolls. From a young age, she loved her dollhouse and spent hours rearranging the toy furniture and her dolls to her satisfaction. Sometimes, Bette would recreate scenes she'd watch on television, and carefully craft new pieces of doll furniture to match her vision of an idealized world. Her parents let her play by herself and she would spend all her time rearranging dolls and staying out of trouble — at least until someone tried to mess with her carefully arranged creations.

As she grew older, Bette abandoned her dolls. Her plastic figurines weren't as much fun to manipulate, because they were always within her control. Instead, she found a new plaything: real people. At first, they were more of a challenge for someone like her; it was fun to watch them squirm. Of course, she could never make someone do what she wanted them to. That's why she had to pick the right person: someone vulnerable, maybe even lost.

Bette is interested in only one thing: control. She treats people like inanimate objects. When they do what she wants, they make her very, very happy. When they don't, she flies into a rage and shows them who's in charge. "Just a little cut," she tells herself. A tiny punishment — or so she

believes — until there's so much blood pooling all over the floor. Of course, she'll clean it all up and put her toys away. It's what a good girl should do, and Bette is always *good*.

Bette is now a self-appointed guru who attaches herself to people seeking the help of an expert. Under her direction, hopeless souls can learn to dress and talk and act the way they should. That is to say, the way Bette *thinks* they should — which is often a problem for her clients. The socialite decides his new makeover isn't the look he wants. The technophile realizes Bette isn't getting his grand vision. The couple knows their therapist isn't helping them work out their problems, but they're afraid to leave and find someone else. When her clients are unhappy, that's when Bette throws a tantrum, causes an accident, and then cleans up yet another mess right before she finds someone else to play with.

Eventually, the police will get another call: another body was found in the same condition as the others. The corpse was carefully dressed, hair fashionably styled, even their makeup was perfect. Next to each corpse lay a doll, dressed and styled to match. By the time the police think they have a lead, the Dollmaker has already moved on.

Appearance: Bette is an attractive woman in her 30s who uses makeup, wigs, and clothing to change her appearance. She can look up to 10 years younger or older, and dresses according to the needs of her personas. Bette is never spotted with a wrinkled shirt or a missing button; she is impeccably neat and is on top of the latest styles.

Storytelling Hints: Bette's behavior toward an intended victim comes across as earnest because she's convinced herself that she can help them. At first, she'll show no signs or hints of a temper and will cringe at the sight of blood. Right from the beginning, though, she won't hesitate to incapacitate, disable, or kill anyone she believes threatens her relationship with her target. When an established relationship begins to sour, she'll concoct an elaborate plan to "put away" her latest toy and will carry it out with no remorse.

Virtue: Idealistic

Vice: Jealousy

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 4 (Fashion), Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Gymnastics) 4, Stealth 2, Weaponry (Knives) 3

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Intimidate 3, Persuasion 5, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Barfly, Contacts 5 (Celebrities), Trained Observer 4, Damned Certainty 3, Hands of a Killer

Health: 7

Willpower: 4

Integrity: 0

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Defense: 7

Initiative: 5

Armor: None

Special: Suffers from the Addicted (Murder) Condition.

Tier One

On the local level, New Delhi is a microcosm of the modern world. The slasher in the city uses updated technology, illegal tracking and investigation programs, and has their thumb on the pulse of the city — however fast it moves. To keep up (and hopefully get ahead), the hunters must be capable of predicting the city’s movements and adjusting to a constant flow of information. Slashers have a keen eye even for forensic technology, and no bodies have been recovered by law enforcement. Most of the evidence obtained comes in the carefully recorded and processed video and audio files released by the Herald.

Lost in Recording: For every rumor about the Herald, another one pops up to relay that the slasher is only one killer — but a powerful one, an elite citizen with brains and connections. Certainly, the slasher’s access to technology is remarkable: They find ways around every precaution that law enforcement puts into place. As such, New Delhi police are constantly searching for more cutting-edge and creative solutions to track down the murderer. Hunters who focus on social connections will become embroiled in New Delhi’s high society of venture capitalists, social-media darlings, and technophiles. Can technology solve these murders before other victims are claimed?

Ghost in the Machine: Some hunters believe the killer was made of flesh and blood at one time — but no longer. Through the wonders of modern technology, the Herald is more machine than mortal and now “inhabits” a fleet of identical drones — some human-shaped, and others more utilitarian — to remotely murder their victims as a warning to humanity. Unfortunately, catching one of these drones does little to harm the killer’s true purpose, and gives investigators even less to go on. Hunters worry the drones are not inert, even when turned off, and wonder if the slasher is setting up deadly targets at police, fire, and hospital stations.

Tier Two

Compacts in New Delhi operate with a great deal of latitude. The population of the city is massive, and it’s easy to operate in secrecy — so long as hunters don’t get caught on the city’s security grid.

Active compacts in New Delhi include:

Network Zero: In a city like New Delhi, you might expect Network Zero to have a significant edge. Certainly, members are attracted by the city’s patronage of technology, and their attitude toward integrating the best tech into their law enforcement and communications technology. Several Network Zero servers are hosted in New Delhi, and many of their agents spend their time protecting those valuable assets. However, the Herald’s activities have put a significant hold on Network Zero’s operations. The slasher’s technology seems to veer more paranormal than cutting-edge science, and even their best agents have difficulty keeping up with the curve. Several cells are dealing with the issue by forging stronger ties with local police and coroner’s offices, instead, to uphold the Vigil by watching out for *them* and warning them of suspicious activities.

Together Now: Together Now is a Hindu-based compact that focuses on the comfort of the survivors and their families by encouraging them to light a candle and stand united against the darkness. Together Now feels the best way to deal with the slasher epidemic is to keep their communities alert but not paranoid. Often, they provide the muscle for weddings and other celebrations, hold midnight vigils to light up the night, and maintain city watches to keep New Delhi safe. When they do encounter a possible suspect, there are plenty of Together Now members that can go toe to toe with a slasher, but some hunters think the only way to deal with the slasher is to use more teamwork than bravado. As such, Together Now has managed to do in real time what tech does automatically: build an unstoppable whisper network.

Tier Three

Every time a conspiracy devises or acquires new technology to capture the Herald, its members realize the slasher has *already been utilizing* the same advancements to cover up their murders. This killer is connected to the hunting community, has a significant amount of money to dedicate, and has a keen eye for up-and-coming scientific disciplines and techniques.

Active conspiracies in New Delhi include:

Aegis Kai Doru: The Aegis Kai Doru has suddenly taken an interest in New Delhi, believing the cause of all the city's ills is due to a rumor so bizarre even conspiracy members question its accuracy. Some members think a lost relic holds the key to the slasher's gift with technology. The item in question? The Iron Pillar of New Delhi — or at least that's what the conspiracy theorists believe. Buried far beneath the city, lost to time, some members propose that a series of Iron Pillars built to act as a supernatural conduit has been manipulated by a slasher. Somehow, this monster found the means to not only get underground, but also manipulate the fabled relics for supernatural purposes — to turn New Delhi into their personal playground.

The Cheiron Group: One of the largest global conspiracies, the Cheiron Group has a long history of sticking its nose in the fringes of science. In New Delhi, it maintains corporate interests in the medical field, from chemists and burgeoning pharmaceutical companies, to hospitals and large-scale research initiatives for new treatments and modern medical advancements. Unknown to most, the Herald's killings have come uncomfortably close to the Cheiron Group's interests — several of the dead are Cheiron researchers or employees, and those murders utilized the Cheiron Group's most secret, potentially explosive research methods.

Hong Kong, China

Like other major metropolises, Hong Kong has always been a draw for supernatural predators to attack its everyday citizens. The stresses of modern life, when combined with the feeling of disconnection, also create opportunities for the criminally-minded to prey on the lonely. Now, the rising epidemic of slashers has had an interesting effect on the city's dark underbelly: Gangs are working with police to anonymously inform them of suspicious activity, violent crime is down 40 percent as vigilante patrols (a mix of rogue hunters, gangs, and off-duty cops) watch the streets, and victimless crimes have skyrocketed. The police believe there are at *least* six slashers operating in the city and have been recruiting members of gangs, such as the Triad, and local police. Whenever one murderer is caught, another pops up to take their place. Worse, these are just the slashers of whom the authorities are directly aware.

Some of the slashers gaining notoriety in Hong Kong seem like they've stepped out of a movie and onto the streets. The gluttonous Dumpling Wife is a Mutant so warped in form and hunger

she can't possibly be mistaken for anyone else. The Needle Man is aggressive toward other slashers and actively chases them out of the nests he claims. Copycats are a problem, though, and in some cases it's not clear if urban legends are professing the situation is worse than it seems.

Unfortunately, the sensationalized Dinner Party Killer murders has frightened tourists and the city's economy is showing signs of wear and tear. Despite the slasher's capture, the gruesome depiction of the crime scenes has had a profound effect on the city's psyche; victims were strangers plucked off the streets, their bodies carefully arranged in different apartments at tables, and the meats were their organs cooked into grisly, "gourmet" meals. In one terrifying video, the victims were dressed as police officers and were still alive.

Despite this, neither Hong Kong police nor its citizens are giving up and won't abandon the city to a grisly fate. Instead of stepping down, the police force's numbers swell as capable citizens step up to help analyze and process evidence. Some officers are so desperate to find answers, they are hunting slashers by using themselves as bait. Their aggressiveness has driven some monsters out into the open, but not the slashers they were hoping to find. Now the police are just starting to realize slashers aren't the only terrifying creatures to fear.

Out of their desire to save Hong Kong from the supernatural, a new compact has formed — Nine Stars — while other police officers, like Kenneth Hua, contribute to the problem by becoming slashers themselves.

Kenneth Hua

Quote: *"The only good hunter is a dead one."*

Background: Kenneth, a former marathon runner, was a rising star in the Hong Kong Police Force until his temper got the best of him. When the Dinner Party Killer first began cutting their bloody path through the city, Kenneth was the one who made the decision to release early information about the investigation to the media, hoping to protect future victims and to encourage anyone who knew more to come forward. Unfortunately, the affair blew up into a media circus, driving journalists to perform their own investigations that resulted in the slasher's capture. Heads had to roll, but luckily Kenneth wasn't in the line of fire — not until he beat up a hunter with their own camera. Despite having been relieved of active duty, Kenneth's still hounded by the media and faces accusations that he's withholding key details about multiple cases — even from his former colleagues.

Appearance: Kenneth is wiry, and his long years of marathon training have kept his body in peak physical condition. Though some find him affable, he has a temper that gets the better of him. Kenneth rated top of the class in firearms training and is always prepared to fight. Usually soft-spoken, Kenneth's voice begins to rise whenever he talks about the Dinner Party Killer, Hong Kong's rising problem with serial murderers, and the hunters' interference in police investigations.

Storytelling Hints: Kenneth's a dedicated officer who believes he was wronged by the journalists, a.k.a. Network Zero hunters, who brought the Dinner Party Killer to justice. While Kenneth cares for his city, he firmly believes law enforcement, rather than vigilante hunters, should be in control of the slasher epidemic. He's aware of the existence of the Nine Stars compact (see p. XX) and has already turned down a membership offer. With each headline, Kenneth's anger grows, and it's only a matter of time before he replaces the Dinner Party Killer as Hong Kong's number-one slasher to murder hunters, and let the real police do their job.

Virtue: Loyal

Vice: Stubborn

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 1

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts 1, Investigation (Hunters) 4, Occult 1, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 3, Brawl (Subduing) 3, Firearms (Sidearms) 4, Stealth (City Streets) 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidate 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Criminal Gangs) 4, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Contacts 2 (Criminals, Police), Fleet of Foot 2, Iron Stamina 2, Resources 2, Small Unit Tactics 2, Trained Observer 3, Damned Certainty 2

Health: 9

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 0

Size: 5

Speed: 14

Defense: 7

Initiative: 6

Armor: None

Special: Kenneth's rash of violent acts have gotten him fired recently. He is a ripper — even though he hasn't made his first kill...yet. Hunters have the option of working with Kenneth to save him or may wind up pushing him over the edge. When Kenneth encounters a hunter, he must successfully roll Wits + Composure to retain his sense of calm.

Tier One

The city's a target-rich environment for a hunter cell; leering hives of nightmares made flesh lurk in the city's forgotten spaces, plucking their prey from the teeming masses, and a fresh crop of dangerous monsters is on its way to Hong Kong.

Hunters must navigate a complex and tense situation to figure out where they fit in the city. Hong Kong's tightly knit communities may reject well-meaning local and foreign hunters, and a sense of loneliness and isolation among some civilians translates to an overall feeling of distrust. Despite the police's best efforts, plenty of citizens are still falling through the cracks, and are victims in one sense or another.

Spreading Cancer Cells: Hong Kong-based cells that hunted before the slasher epidemic are seeing a rash of new hunters form poorly organized teams. They worry these new hunters don't care about The Code or solving the problem, and are simply using the murders as an excuse to stalk people and rough up witnesses. Some hunters believe these cancer cells are causing bigger

problems in the city and wonder just how many there are. They may not know there's only one cancer cell — because the amateur cell's M.O. is to make it seem like there's more hunters than there are slashers.

Desperate Cover-up: The Dinner Party Killer case is a sore spot for local cells. Shoddy investigations, rushed analyses, missing evidence, lost eyewitness accounts, and a questionable arrest is forcing hunters to wonder if the Dinner Party Killer was one of Hong Kong's finest. Was the department struck by freakish misfortune, or is someone like Kenneth Hua actively covering for the real slasher? Worse: some hunters are convinced the Dinner Party Killer is still on the loose, and it's just a matter of time before they strike again.

Tier Two

Compacts in Hong Kong must navigate the city's bureaucracy and cultural kaleidoscope to track the movements and activities of slashers within the city.

Network Zero: Despite a clear and desperate need for other compacts to work with Nine Stars in Hong Kong, hunters are reticent to form ties because they fear that once the slasher epidemic is resolved, the compact will fall apart, leaving their operations exposed to the authorities. Network Zero is one of the few compacts that has a chance to monitor Nine Stars while providing assistance when needed. Though local members have informed American cells to "keep out" due to heightened fears Hong Kong's slashers will trash the city and move on to other major metropoli, the compact's leaders don't want them to leave just yet. Increasingly, however, the slasher outbreak is dragging Network Zero's attention toward more sensationalized cases, which distracts some members from lending a hand to Nine Stars. Should they be able to regain their focus, Network Zero may be able to find key intel needed to end the epidemic once and for all.

Nine Stars: Nine Stars (see p. XX) is a Hong Kong-based compact; its formation is a reaction to the police force's recent cases involving slashers and the supernatural. As police officers, Nine Stars is a hidden organization that operates within the framework and limitations of their precincts while exploiting their connections when they can to help keep citizens safe. That said, Nine Stars has recently told its members that they're going all in, In the founders' minds, either their members prioritize the hunt over everything else — jobs, families, friends, etc. — or they can leave the city and uphold the Vigil elsewhere. Some officers believe the push for a round-the-clock hunt is not going to work, but for now tensions are running high and the compact is desperately trying to get the slasher epidemic under control.

Tier Three

In a world where violent crime is sharply on the rise everywhere, Hong Kong's bustling streets easily swallow up the symptoms of its bloody illness caused by slashers. Only when the conspiracies dig a little deeper will they see the particularly strong and malevolent thread of commonality that binds the slashers of the city together. The killers of Hong Kong are hungry, driven, and gluttonous; many are cannibalistic, or mutilate their mouths or their victims'. Slashers who burn out are often driven to stomach-churning self-mutilation. The same gory message is daubed on walls by murderers who have never met one another and share nothing but that whispering voice in the back of their mind: *Eat your own name. Swallow it down. Kill who you are and find freedom in murder.*

Regardless of what's happening on a global scale, something monstrous and ravenous simmers in the bones of Hong Kong, taking the minds of the vulnerable and the cruel firmly in its grasp

and twisting them to a darker purpose. Conspiracies with the power to capture and question true creatures of the night will find some horrors are just as afraid as the hunters are, because the slashers of Hong Kong are targeting them, too. Like rats fleeing a sinking ship, the transient population of monsters is thinning out; more flee the city than come into it. Given enough time, will the slasher epidemic simply purge the iconic city of its monstrous parasites?

Aegis Kai Doru: Several agents of Aegis Kai Doru live and work within Hong Kong, operating as leaders of prominent business and financial interests within the city, and utilizing Hong Kong's thriving black markets to deal in the acquisition of unusual, historical, or supernatural items. Though Aegis Kai Doru has not found any mythic relics to add to its considerable collection, it has uncovered several cursed objects. In fact, local members are convinced a cursed object may have been wielded by the Dinner Party Killer; an eternally sharp knife once owned by a Qing emperor that has a white jadeite scabbard and a bronze handle.

The knife, which vanished from the Hong Kong Museum of History, was linked to decadent feasts held for nobles, politicians, and wealthy merchants while the less fortunate starved to death. Similarly, Aegis Kai Doru agents who were hoping to purchase a bronze funerary jar etched with a taotie motif have noticed most objects depicting the Chinese demon have all but disappeared. Unfortunately, the answers to these riddles may lead members to the truth: A slasher has infiltrated their ranks hoping to use their considerable resources to acquire the Sword of Goujian, which some scholars compare to Excalibur.

Ascending Ones: While other hunters focus on saving victims, the Ascending Ones have figured out that some slashers can be saved — before their first kill. Their presence in Hong Kong has not gone unnoticed by other hunters, because while cells often track down slashers to confront them or rescue kidnapped victims, the Ascending Ones have been capturing murderers to rehabilitate them in an unnamed facility. Local members are tasked with capturing, detaining, and transporting rippers to random locations throughout Hong Kong, no questions asked. Others have been ordered to wipe out any scourge they see and have clearly been told that any inhuman-seeming murderer must die.

Those who catch wind of the conspiracy's comings and goings see a pattern but have leapt to the wrong conclusion. Cancer cells believe the conspiracy is coming for *them*, even though that's not the case. Police are beginning to draw lines tracing the conspiracy's activities to certain murders and have assumed the group is a criminal organization snatching slashers to release them in other cities all over Southeast Asia. Though this is not the case, it has caused some Ascending Ones to second guess their orders to avoid being harassed by the cops. Unfortunately, no one is certain if the conspiracy's efforts have made a difference or if the Ascending Ones have managed to save a few blackened souls from themselves.

Nine Stars

Quote: *"We will not let slashers destroy the people of Hong Kong."*

Like a rising tide, slashers crawl from the margins in ever-greater numbers, indulging their monstrous appetites upon Hong Kong's unwitting populace. Blood pools in the gutters of Hong Kong. The city's lights are ever bright, bathing its streets in a neon glow through the deepest hours of night, throwing the shadows into even starker contrast. The growing epidemic throws officers of the Hong Kong Police Force face to face with relentless killers, weird phenomena,

and stomach-churning crime scenes caused by the supernatural. In this roiling crucible of horror and carnage, Nine Stars is forged.

Nine Stars is a recently formed compact founded out of necessity following the plague of slashers terrorizing Hong Kong. The compact is almost entirely embedded within the city's police force, drawn from among officers who have witnessed a slasher's anomalous capabilities or experienced the terrifying wake of a rampage — but held their nerve and asked the questions no one else dared to. It's convenient for the administration to treat slashers as nothing more than serial killers, brushed under the carpet of the yearly violent-crime figures, but Nine Stars members know how dire the situation truly is. They know the supernatural is real.

The compact principally values investigative skill in its members, backed up by a selfless dedication to duty. Members know that, at any point, they could be fired for taking the law into their own hands and disobeying orders. Ultimately, Nine Stars often prioritizes saving victims over killing slashers, and many members join the compact because they want to save the city from the supernatural. Other hunters believe that the sooner an individual slasher can be studied, predicted, and brought to a halt, the lower the cost in innocent lives will be. The compact craves a greater understanding of the slasher epidemic; discovering the cause might let them strike at the root of the problem, rather than always chasing after the gore-spattered symptoms.

Strung out across the departments of the Hong Kong Police Force as an informal network, members share information and evidence, use their leverage to promote other compact agents, and shift cases featuring supernatural or anomalous elements onto the laps of their own people. Agents are well-equipped, highly motivated, and backed by colleagues willing to cover up their trails and make problematic paperwork go away. They are often skeptical of outsiders, however, and don't always treat visiting hunters as allies until they've proven they can be trusted. Members worry they have more to lose because their careers are a tangled mess of pursuing justice while upholding the Vigil.

The closest Nine Stars has to a leader is Chief Superintendent Annie Kin-Lau, one of its founding members. She's a tough-as-nails hunter who's willing to go toe to toe with any slasher, but also has the political instincts the compact needs to survive. Under Kin-Lau's oversight, Nine Stars has gone from a last-ditch effort to wielding considerable power behind the scenes. Now, though, Nine Stars risks becoming a victim of its own success; it's drawn the attention of the Complaints and Internal Investigations Branch. After all, from the outside Nine Stars looks like any other conspiratorial network of supposedly crooked cops. Rules, when broken, tend to draw interest and hunters need to balance the weight of the Code against the demands of being a police officer.

The Enemy

Nine Stars members hold the line fearing no one else will. They know something's wrong, deep in the city's bones. It's a hunger, a ravening appetite that seethes in Hong Kong's shadows and twists citizens into monsters. Nine Stars may not know the source of this malign presence, but they do recognize the fruits of its human corruption — the slashers plaguing the city. The compact focuses its efforts to end the corruption that threatens the safety of all and is slowly piecing together ways to capture, detain, and find new slashers before they strike.

Despite this focus, Nine Stars' members do not intentionally shy away from dealing with other supernatural predators. At its core, the compact is served by retired veterans who were

traumatized by overseeing cases in areas that now spawn urban legends, such as Sau Mau Ping in the Kwun Tong district in Kowloon, the Lake Ad Excellentiam (or Lotus Pond) at Chung Chi College at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Bride's Pool Road. The compact has learned the hard way that spirits of vengeance may be more dangerous than a cold-blooded slasher but has its hands full. Until the slasher epidemic subsides, its primary focus will be figuring out how to keep Hong Kong safe.

Hunters

You literally stumbled onto The Glutton as he was hunched over a victim, plucking out viscera and feeding it into his wide mouth as if each goblet was a delicacy. You welcomed the Hong Kong Police Force's counseling afterward, until they kept trying to convince you your memory was faulty, that the slasher hadn't shrugged off bullets or picked you up with one hand. You were there later, in that dimly lit room, with the other officers who were too disgusted, scared, and anxious to do something. You swore the oath that forged Nine Stars.

No one could figure out how the Cardboard Killer got into her victims' homes, but something in your gut told you Mrs. Fang was next on the list. You broke the rules, broke into Mrs. Fang's home, and saw the stomach-churning way the Cardboard Killer entered the apartment. You were disciplined for your actions — but you also saved Mrs. Fang. The superintendent pressed a single gleaming star into your lapel and told you to come meet him in the bar that night.

You're on the Serial & Spree Killer Special Response Task Force, a hotshot young officer armed to the teeth with the best gear your precinct could provide. The veterans keep muttering about killers who are inhumanly strong or tough. You haven't yet gone on your first dispatchment, but you'll show the timid old timers you've got what it takes. You're not afraid of anything and scoff at urban legends about bulletproof murderers and hungry ghosts.

You never caused trouble. You spent months methodically putting together the villain-hitting case; the woman practicing *da siu yun* who made sure her petty "curses" always worked because she brutally murdered the targets. You carefully cracked the mysterious Cure Murderer cases and discovered a doctor who was injecting a deadly cocktail of drugs and viruses that drove his patients mad. You dutifully excised every part from the reports that would upset your senior officers. One day, Chief Superintendent Kin-Lau called you to a meeting, more interested in what you'd been leaving out than what you'd been keeping in.

Fellowships

Compact members are awarded stars following their service to the people of Hong Kong. A case or incident where an officer successfully saves any lives wins them one star — with nine stars being the highest grade that can be achieved. Additionally, Nine Stars is roughly divided among three fellowships.

Those officers under the umbrella of **Special Response** focus on the slasher epidemic troubling Hong Kong. Forming the bulk of the compact, Special Response coordinates the analysis of slasher outbreaks and helps reassign members to cases involving suspected or confirmed slasher activity.

By comparison, **Five and Nine** is a smaller, informal network of retired officers. Five and Nine is assigned to investigating other supernatural phenomena the Hong Kong police stumble upon and includes the compact's most learned occultists and experienced agents. When a breath-

drinking vampire or shapeshifting demon rears its head, Nine Stars looks to these grizzled veterans for guidance.

Most Nine Stars members are officers on active duty in the Hong Kong Police Force, but the **Friendly Hands** are outsiders who've been temporarily welcomed into the fold. Used as a sarcastic term, the Friendly Hands are kept at a safe-but-useful distance, for its members are a motley group of gang members, ex-cons, petty thieves, and dirty politicians who'd rather work with police to end the slasher epidemic than flee the city. Though many members believe this branch will fold following the arrest or capture of the last remaining slasher, for now the officers begrudgingly accept their help to save Hong Kong.

Status

Members of Nine Stars earn recognition by performing a service to their community. Exemplary deeds are also awarded with the gift of a star-shaped pin.

- You've saved a family's life from a slasher through your savvy investigation. You gain a free Skill Specialty in the Investigation or Occult Skill.
- You know success doesn't come from being a loose cannon, but from working together as a team. When you participate in a Tactic, your successes gain the 8-again quality.
- You're a founding member of Nine Stars, or you've reached the full nine stars on your lapel and just kept going. You gain the three-dot Trained Observer Merit, even if you don't meet the usual prerequisites.

VASCU

Quote: *"There is no mind we can't unlock. No secret we can't find."*

The Vanguard Serial Crimes Unit (VASCU) discreetly serves an international portfolio of clients that includes a mixture of governmental bureaus, law-enforcement agencies, and wealthy magnates. Officially, VASCU's specialists aid with the investigation and profiling of serial and spree killers on a freelance basis through a corporate front called the Vanguard Initiative; the Unit also produces reports and writes papers tracking rates of mass murders and violent crime on an international scale. Due to the dramatic rise in monster activity, VASCU has branched out to include hunting true monsters as well slashers.

Most of VASCU's clients know their agents possess unusual talents — every operative is a psychic — and they specifically hire the conspiracy for this reason. Only certain retirees who once worked at the Federal Bureau of Investigation know the full truth, because they were part of VASCU's creation and oversaw the group's efforts through its final reorganization in 1982. For most of the 1980s, despite a dramatic rise in violent crimes, the FBI allowed VASCU to lead the charge, expecting their newly reconstructed arm to step up where other agents could not. For over 30 years, VASCU agents doggedly tracked serial killers and mass murderers all over the country, informing FBI agents when they could of a suspect's hideout or a victim's location. In fact, VASCU's success rate was a little too high for some FBI agents, who began to distrust their psychic abilities and favor data, hard sciences, and cutting-edge technology instead of what some agents called "an artifact of the Cold War."

Following yet another change in leadership, VASCU eventually lost enough funding it could no longer maintain its core function and was officially shut down in 2008. Then, a few years later,

an anonymous private citizen broke ground on the Vanguard Institute in Philadelphia, collected what remained of VASCU's agents and administration, and allowed them to move in and resume operations on a freelance basis. To date, rumor has it no one inside VASCU is certain who's footing the bill for their expenses — which is extremely odd for a group that prides itself on its psychic abilities. Most members believe VASCU is being secretly funded by a bipartisan committee in Congress but is largely left alone to avoid undue scrutiny.

Using a bioengineering research group called the Vanguard Initiative as a front, VASCU remains headquartered in Philadelphia, and continues to work with US government interests as a contractor — including, upon occasion, with the few VASCU agents who remained in the FBI. However, as word of the institute's talents worm their way through the dark underside of international law enforcement, VASCU increasingly sees profitable opportunities overseas.

VASCU psychics now operate on every continent, whether in long-term partnerships with law enforcement branches and wealthy private citizens, or short-term deployments for emergency situations. Thankfully, the group is profitable and can refuse services when required. Some VASCU agents are rumored to abandon their duties, however, and take on extra work themselves.

VASCU's secret weapon is the Wintergreen Process, a drug-based therapy that inductees undergo in order to overclock the information-processing centers in the brain to preternatural heights. The process is dark fruit born from the sinister tree of the MK-ULTRA psychic research program run by the CIA, and VASCU's possession of this classified information is one of the key sources of contention between them and FBI.

The Enemy

Much like its previous incarnations, VASCU is under attack. Someone — or something — fears its psychic agents and will stop at nothing to destroy the agency despite the fact that its existence is well-cloaked within the Vanguard Initiative. Reports of slasher attacks against agents and support staff, uncannily timed warnings to slashers, and political sabotage have forced VASCU agents to face the possibility they've been compromised. Worse, many VASCU agents are starting to think the only reason they're still around is because the FBI wants them to find Doctor Wintergreen, the missing pioneer who championed the Wintergreen Process.

Modern VASCU agents share a burden with their predecessors — their actions are restricted by the laws and regulations of the countries in which they operate. “I know he did it because I read his mind” won't pass as evidence in most courts. This fosters an atmosphere of cynicism mixed with frustration, as VASCU agents often believe themselves to be superior to other hunters. After all, they've managed to do what other conspiracies could not: tap into the power of the mind.

Of course, when it comes to dealing with monsters, the rules don't apply. New VASCU recruits are even taking their cues from other agencies such as Task Force: VALKYRIE or the Cheiron Group.

Hunters

You were part of VASCU before the conspiracy went freelance. So many dark secrets, so many cold truths you can't tell anyone after you signed all those ink-smearred documents. At the end of your first term of service, you signed on to work or you were packed off to the bright new Vanguard Institute, with its sterile Philadelphia headquarters and its new, international remit.

You remember your old buddies in the FBI, though, and the price VASCU paid in blood, sweat, and tears.

The college recruiter had a funny look on her face when she read through your test results. Next thing you know, you were being offered a chance to join some hotshot bioengineering group with a serious pay package. Once you got to the Vanguard Institute, you were put through even weirder tests, and apparently, you're psychic. Things can't *possibly* get any stranger than this, right?

You're an angry ex-pat who left your country after losing everything you loved. It's a cold rage, burning in your guts, and it won't ever go away. You can't get them back, not after the killer finished with them. VASCU offered a way to take that fury and harness it, to steal something back from the killer and make it your own. You keep an eye on VASCU's reports to glean news from your homeland. One day, you're going to tear that bastard's mind apart, thought by agonizing thought.

A career in law enforcement left you disillusioned. It was corruption and brutality from top to bottom; you joined to serve and protect, and instead you found out that bad apples filled the whole fucking barrel. Thing is, you were a damn good investigator — so good that VASCU's recruiters were waiting to pounce when you handed in your notice to the police chief. Retirement's going to have to wait a little longer.

Departments

Most of VASCU's staff are professionals who are not gifted with psychic abilities. Candidates suitable for the Wintergreen Process are rare, and VASCU treats every agent as a valued asset.

By far the largest department is the **Operations Department**, consisting of agents deployed to clients in order to profile, investigate and, when necessary, aid in bringing down serial killers and slashers. Ops agents deal with the vicissitudes of the conspiracy's rather mercenary approach to clients, and sometimes compete with one another for the choicest assignments.

Agents are assigned to **Field Liaison** based on operational need or prior experience with the supernatural. This department deals with other organizations like its front, the Vanguard Institute. Liaison's agents build contact networks among other hunters to work with local cells in areas VASCU visits. These agents also trawl through such communities for potential recruits; the conspiracy is not above poaching conspirators suitable for the Wintergreen Process.

Finally, the innocuously named **Synergies & Market Growth Potential** takes up the darkest corner of VASCU's organizational chart. The name's just another veneer; this department is dedicated to exploiting psychic potential for more than just tracking down slashers in the wild. Synergies agents use their Teleinformatic Endowments to conduct industrial espionage, sway politicians, and dig out blackmail material VASCU can use to protect itself. The department justifies its operations through its outrageous claims: Plenty of inhuman monsters dwell in the upper echelons of government and corporate power, and until mortals are back in charge they'll do what it takes to stop them.

Status

Status in VASCU is earned when the conspiracy's goals are met. For the time being, the conspiracy is less concerned about personal glory and is more focused on bigger initiatives — at least until the Slasher epidemic ends.

- When you signed up for VASCU, you didn't know they'd run you through a series of tests for psychic aptitude you'd pass with flying colors. Your new job scares the shit out of you, but you *know* this is the best place for you to hunt. Gain a free psychic-related Skill Specialty in Occult.

- You've been doing this for a while. You've traveled the world, worked with law enforcement and investigators across the globe, and have seen how the horrors of human atrocities are repeated time and time again. You're hardened by what you've experienced, and you've earned respect among those who matter. You gain a bonus dot of the Status Merit with the government or law enforcement agency of your choice.

- Few hunters understand what it's like to get a bird's-eye view of the Vigil on a global scale. You've seen and stopped innumerable killers in more countries than you can count. You gain the Tactical Insight Merit, whether you would normally qualify for it or not. If you already have the Merit, you may reroll your dice pool when performing a Tactic once per session.

BEGIN OPENING FICTION

Administrator's note: Yo, this is your boy Goliath, coming straight at you from you don't need to know where, motherfucker. We intercepted this recording from Austin earlier this week and let me tell you: this ain't a good look, hunters. Do not — I repeat, do not — use public areas to conduct your business unless you're ready to tell the public the truth. Especially not in surveillance-happy US of A. And for god's sake, don't mess with the enemy.

Since I believe in freedom of information, at least among trusted peers, here's the incriminating clip transcribed. Now, have a good fucking day.

INT. SMOKY DIVE BAR

The footage shows two men and two women in the back room of a seedy bar. There are three tables but only one chair, which is occupied by one of the two men. Empty bottles cover every flat surface. One woman is smoking an e-cigarette, its tip flaring neon blue.

Door opens. A woman walks inside. She is 40-something, East Asian, with black hair worn short. Her attire is functional: jeans, shirt, and denim jacket.

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN is silent at first but then she staggers backwards.

“What—who the hell are you? Your face. Your...your face—”

SMOKING WOMAN pushes from the wall. Her features, though younger, bear a strong resemblance to those of the new arrival's. Unlike her counterpart, she is dressed for war: black leather, functional boots, gloves. The headlights of a passing car reflect off the buckles of her leather jacket.

“The person whose life you stole.”

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS looks up from under the brim of a cowboy hat; he's a big man in his 30s, thick muscle already going to fat.

“Easy, Lin.”

SMOKING WOMAN

“My name is Clementine, asshole.”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“What is going on here?”

WOMAN IN HIGH-COLLARED COAT joins the conversation. Of the five, she appears the youngest, dark-skinned, with chandelier earrings.

“Guys, you're scaring her. Don't forget the point of what we're doing—”

CLEMENTINE flings her e-cigarette at the wall.

“The point? The point? The point is that she's wearing my face. Sixteen years. She's been living my life for sixteen years. Holding my children. Sleeping next to my husband. Sixteen years—”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“Please, I don't understand what's happening.”

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS gestures with a hand, expression kind.

“Just relax, darling. We’re going to tell you some things that might seem real strange, but there’s nothing to be afraid—”

CLEMENTINE snarls and pulls out revolver.

“Fuck. That. If you don’t say what I wanna hear, you’re dead.”

The DARK-HAIRED WOMAN screams and staggers back. She is caught by the BESPECTACLED MAN that had been silent throughout. He is bespectacled, pale, and slim-built with a kind face. His voice is a deep, comforting bass.

BESPECTACLED MAN

“Don’t scream.”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“But she...but she—”

WOMAN IN HIGH-COLLARED COAT

“Clementine is — I’m sorry for, uhm, how our friend reacted. But this isn’t anything personal.”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“She pulled a gun on me.”

BESPECTACLED MAN

“We know, we know. But you have to understand her circumstances. And yours. Your kind is—”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN writhes away from the BESPECTACLED WOMAN, stumbling until she has her back pressed to a wall.

“What are you trying to tell me? You keep dancing around the subject. My kind? And I’m — I’m wearing her face? What is going on?”

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS.

“Keep your voice down.”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“I don’t understand. Please, someone tell me what’s going on.”

CLEMENTINE’s features ripple.

“You really gonna do that? You really going to pretend that you’re some kind of helpless housewife? No clue at all as to what you’ve done and what you are?”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“I don’t—”

WOMAN IN HIGH-COLLARED COAT

“We’ll explain later, if you want us to. Tell you everything. But I promise we’re not here to harm you.”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN sinks to her knees, hands over her head.

“No, no. None of this makes sense. Who are you? Who are you people?”

BESPECTACLED MAN.

“Maya, be careful.”

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS

“We’re — it’s not important who are, darlin’. What you need to know that we’re here to help.”

CLEMENTINE

“Why are you being nice to it? This is just a pile of walking kindling.”

WOMAN IN HIGH-COLLARED COAT

“You’re in no position to talk, Clementine.”

CLEMENTINE

“Excuse me? Am I the monster here?”

WOMAN IN HIGH-COLLARED COAT

“You tell me. Would the woman from sixteen years ago raise a weapon at an unarmed person?”

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS

“Maya, what are you doing—”

CLEMENTINE

“What the fuck?”

MAYA

“Our role is to protect the innocent from things like you. Of the two of you, only one of you has pulled a gun.”

CLEMENTINE jabs her gun in MAYA’s direction, fury and despair warping her features.

“You’re taking its side over mine—”

BESPECTACLED MAN

“Everyone needs to calm down right now. We don’t need—”

CLEMENTINE

“Back the fuck off or I’m going to put a bullet between her eyes.”

BESPECTACLED MAN lowers to a squat, frowning, an arm encircling the DARK-HAIRED WOMAN’s quivering shoulders.

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS

“You have five seconds to lower your weapon.”

CLEMENTINE glances away from MAYA.

“You gonna make me? I— ”

MAYA blurs into motion; a flash of steel is all the camera captures. CLEMENTINE goes down, crumpling forward, hand about her bleeding throat.

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS

“Shit, Maya.”

MAYA wipes down a gleaming icepick as she gazes at CLEMENTINE’s spasming body. Her voice is soft.

“I should have listened to you. But I had to give her a chance. Now, let’s go before someone comes in to check on the noise.”

BESPECTACLED MAN

“What about her?”

MAN WITH MUTTONCHOPS and MAYA come to flank the DARK-HAIRED WOMAN, who is still weeping.

MAN WITH MUTTON CHOPS

“Darling, we’re going to have to ask you to follow us.”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“W-where?”

MAN WITH MUTTON CHOPS

“Don’t matter. Right now, we’re your best chance of staying alive.”

DARK-HAIRED WOMAN

“You killed...I...am I in danger?”

BESPECTACLED MAN assists DARK-HAIRED WOMAN to her feet, expression grave. His smile is apologetic.

“At the risk of sounding crass, that depends entirely on how willing you are to cooperate with us.”

END OPENING FICTION

Chapter Eight: Storytelling

“Gore isn’t required for a good story, but adversity is.”

— Celeste Ng, American Author

The Vigil forges heroes. The Vigil spawns nightmares. The Vigil is a duty, a burden, and cathartic for anyone who wants a little payback at those *things* that snatched their father, sister, kid, or lover from them. Above everything else, the Vigil is a promise that a hunter will keep battling the darkness no matter if the fight costs them their soul.

The Storyteller’s role in a **Hunter** chronicle is to facilitate the story and be the arbiter of the rules that support it. There will be times when the hunters are successful. Somebody will stake a vampire on their first try, thanks to a roll of the dice, and tell stories about their heroics. Then, other times, a monster will slip through their grasp and that escape will *hurt*. The cell might

witness the moment when that same monster snuffs the light from a victim they couldn't save. They might even watch a monster they killed walk again — a terrifying thought — and learn that some creatures just won't die.

The Vigil is never easy, but for many hunters, it's the only option. Either they fight, or they suffer. Sometimes, hunters do both.

Out for Blood

Hunter: The Vigil is a game about being the underdogs in a fight against the supernatural. Even characters who join conspiracies with ample resources and Endowments to aid them face supernatural threats who form communities and guard ancient secrets. Nothing makes monsters more willing to lash out and risk their privacy than an organization dedicated to wiping them off the planet or dissecting them for parts. Hunters seek answers in darkness for countless reasons and they don't all start out looking for blood, but ultimately, protecting themselves and those they care about is dangerous, and they must fight for it.

That's not to say every encounter hunters have with monsters is a matter of life or death. Not only does that make it hard to keep a chronicle afloat and explore the characters to their fullest potential, it also tends to flatten the mood and diffuse a story's drama. The *characters* might live their lives on a hair trigger, but the *players* shouldn't.

Each encounter with a monster should be unique and fraught with complications. Maybe the hunters want to kill the undead thing preying on their neighborhood, but they don't know *how* yet, so every time they cross paths with it they must get creative. Maybe they have no choice but to team up with a witch to get to the undead thing — but nobody said they had to be nice about it. Monsters have an infinite variety of reasons to not want to just kill the cell outright; they can get more use out of living humans than dead ones, after all.

As the Storyteller, save violent confrontations for story climaxes and major dramatic moments. Make strategic use of the Beaten Down and surrender rules (p. XX). When the characters have every reason to want blood — and they will — make sure they have reasons to do other things on the way there. Tactics are a great way to encourage players to think outside the box of deadly violence and pace the story according to a satisfying arc.

Hunters and the Code

All hunters wrestle with their conscience eventually, because while the denizens of the supernatural may struggle to gain power and dominion in the mortal world, hunters must abandon part of their life to hold them back. Unfortunately, not every monster is a clear-cut villain that must be dealt with to save lives. Sometimes, what a hunter calls a “monster” is a human being who possesses supernatural powers but doesn't pose a threat. Sorcerers, witches, and mediums — even other hunters — may study and use supernatural forces to varying degrees.

When hunters pledge to uphold the Vigil, they're often not aware of the nuances they will deal with. Their promise, reflected in the Code, might start off simple. “I hunt monsters because they don't belong.” That phrase frames every action they take to ensure the supernatural doesn't step foot in the daylight, but it also creates conflict the longer they hunt. Their worldview shapes everything they do. Does the hunter trap a monster and kill it no matter what? Or hear a human-seeming horror's side of the story and *then* decide what to do next?

The Code doesn't have to be vague, either. When framing the Code through a faith-based context, for hunters pledged to the Long Night or Malleus Maleficarum, the statement might change to: "I hunt monsters because God wills it" or "I hunt monsters to protect God's creation." In this way, the Code is practiced through a religious lens, and when a hunter's core beliefs of the Vigil are challenged, it's usually because their faith is as well. Keep in mind that the Code doesn't have to frame hunters as "good" and monsters as "evil," but it may imply that's the case.

Sometimes, the Code can be more practical to fit a hunter's style. A member of the Cheiron Group might claim, "I hunt monsters to use their bodies against them." A scientist belonging to Null Mysteriis would say, "I hunt monsters to study, find, and test their weaknesses." Hunters who attach themselves to an organization's interpretation of the Code are treading water, however, because should they change groups, lose status, or have a revelation, more than their loyalty will be tested. Hunter organizations can shape a hunter's view of the Code, but even within these groups differing views exist.

The Code shapes a hunter's worldview and provide a framework for their actions and beliefs. This agreement may be spoken or unspoken as the player sees fit; they are not required to write down what their interpretation of the Code is and uphold the letter of the law. The space between why the character believes they hunt and what happens when they do is where you'll find narrative potential. Ultimately, it is up to the player to decide how defined they want this aspect of the hunt to be.

As the Storyteller, you'll poke and prod a hunter's conscience to challenge them and see what they really think. These trying moments are represented by rules for breaking points (p. XX) and the Code (p. XX). When combined, the player characters will not only hunt monsters, they'll deal with what it *means* to fight, too. When they agree, cellmates get along great. When they disagree, usually due to differing views of the Vigil — outlined by the Code — is to blame. In those moments, that's where you'll find great, narrative conflict.

Types of Conflict

Fear. Fury. The unknown. The forbidden and the impossible. Hunters interact with the denizens of the Chronicles of Darkness as outsiders peering in through a dusty window. The longer hunters linger on the fringes, the more desperate they become to fight anything that preys upon their communities. Should they stop to think about when the fighting will end, they might realize that it's only a matter of time before they'll die holding the line, praying another hunter will take their place.

Hunters versus Society

Hunters don't always recognize their underdogs, but they do see themselves as outsiders. In the supernatural world, they're stumbling around in the dark, picking off monsters when they can. In the human world, they're trying to maintain a life without exposing everyone they know to the dangers of the Vigil and the knowledge that the supernatural is real.

Despite the threat monsters pose to human society, not everyone is ready to acknowledge they exist, and even the precious few who do have different ideas on how to deal with them — well beyond what the Code requires. Should the government, after finding out vampires exist, tell everyone they're real? Or, by exposing this truth, do political bodies increase the risk and likelihood monsters will wage war on humankind?

In most cases, society looks the other way by framing supernatural sightings and attacks using language they're familiar with. A werewolf didn't shred that schoolteacher; they died after a vicious animal attack. A ghost didn't haunt that old house on Elm Street; the floorboards creaked and a gas leak caused hallucinations. Oh, that tunnel no one wants to use at night? That's just a group of teenagers being superstitious.

In this way, a hunter's greatest challenge isn't the monster they've fought, it's dealing with the people they're trying like hell to save. Most people will pretend the supernatural isn't real, even when they suspect otherwise, because it allows them to sleep at night instead of worrying about those "things" that are crawling around in the sewers. Hunters, however, not only want to know what those "things" are, they also want to know if they're dangerous, and how to stop them. They must extract information from people who don't listen to their gut and convince themselves the shadows won't yield monsters — at least, not the supernatural kind.

Cells don't always interact with other hunters; sometimes they must call in a favor from a local detective or ask a clerk at the mayor's office to waive the need for a permit. These connections, reflected through the characters with whom a hunter is allied (see Merits, p. XX), don't always know the supernatural exists. Sometimes, they're happy to help because they've known that hunter for a while. Other times, they might suspect something is up, but know better than to ask too many questions.

When a hunter doesn't have these connections, the hunt is that much more difficult. Suddenly, when they have a dead body on their hands, they become suspects in a murder. Oh, that building that just burned down? Traffic cams recorded the hunters blowing it up. The allies and resources a hunter may access determine how easy (or how challenging) it is to uphold the Vigil. Smart players will discuss their Merits ahead of time for this reason.

Hunters versus Cults

Sometimes, hunters don't just fight monsters. Sometimes, a monster will slip through their grasp because the cell encounters their protectors: a cult of believers. Cults appear in two broad types. One type of cult serves one or several monsters (be it something that walks the Earth or something that lurks in some other realm), while another cult has crafted its own dogma.

The first type serves its monster in various ways. The adherents may bring it food. They may do its dirty work. They may simply worship it. The fiend gains something, whether blood (drained as wound levels) or Willpower (granted as one point per 10 cultists worshipping the monster, gained once per week) depending upon which Dread Power the monster uses.

Cult leaders can gain up to five total dots of Dread Powers if the monster so chooses — note, however, that usually only one or two cultists gains this boon. It's typically only reserved for the leaders or those who truly please the beast. The cultist who uses Dread Powers in this way can do so because the monster gifted them with that ability. Once the monster dies, the cultist's power wanes at the Storyteller's discretion. In either case, the cultist is mortal and should be treated as such.

Sodality of Licentia

At the top of Lomax Street lies a former church turned hot nightclub called Licentia. The club, which has been around since 2004, is so popular that any time other nightclubs or cocktail lounges move nearby they shut down within a month or two.

Licentia attracts socialites, technophiles, venture capitalists, and social-media darlings who funnel money and resources to the venue. Some detectives have suspected the nightclub is a front but haven't been able to uncover what's being smuggled or dealt there.

Hunters know the truth: Licentia's patrons form a cult worshipping a demon named Licentia, the Daughter of Sitri and Calipha of Sin. Many years ago, the club's founders performed a ritual hoping to solve their academic problems — and it succeeded. Two of the original owners, Michael Palmer and Walter Sorvino, are dead and no one ever sees Cynthia Lomax who spends all her time in the basement. Rumor has it that Cynthia only emerges on Tuesday nights to DJ the club's members-only, ecstasy-filled parties. While hunters have been able to get inside the club, thus far they haven't been able to find Licentia or figure out why Lomax has been acting so strangely.

The second type of cult cobbles together a bizarre dogma that often only makes sense to them. Cults of this stripe may be religious, scientific, political, social, or academic — any field of study that can be used to justify their beliefs.

Cultists of this type are also mortal, but they do not manifest Dread Powers nearly as often. Some still develop strange powers as a provenance of their devotion to the cause. Any time one of these cultists performs an action in service to their cult, they may gain a new dot in a Dread Power, though they may never gain more than three total dots of Dread Powers.

Hunter Versus Hunter

Whether through conflicting interests, overlapping territories, misperceptions, or other extenuating circumstances, hunters can often be one another's worst enemies.

Hunters may face several types of conflicts when interacting with other hunters. They include:

- **Turf Wars:** Some hunter cells may protect a specific location and won't entertain any competition. This may especially be true for cells operating under orders.
- **Conflicting Motives:** Cells, compacts, and conspiracies may incur rivalries over time for a variety of reasons, including differing views of the Code, and can range from friendly to antagonistic. Most often, however, hunters understand that a petty feud can and does interfere with the hunt, so they tend to set feelings aside unless one group is actively antagonizing them.
- **Hunting Methods:** Hunters might share similar views, but they won't always agree how to best deal with a monster. Whether they kill a zombie by decapitating or shooting them may not matter, but some hunters operate with conviction.
- **Coincidental Targets:** One cell might be tasked with exorcising a demon, while another cell might want to capture and study it. When two cells have the same target, their conflicting goals prevent them from finishing the job.
- **Desperate Measures:** Over time, the Vigil takes its toll on a cell — especially if its members have been hunting a specific monster who just keeps eluding them. The more desperate hunters get, the more likely they are to be at odds with another cell, and each other.

Individual hunters operate according to their conscience and beliefs. Sometimes, hunting with other hunters is easy. Members of a cell can all agree that a vampire needs to be staked — no

matter what. Other times, hunters can't decide what to do next. Maybe a cell is outgunned and outmanned. Maybe a pair of hunters wants to head into a haunted house while the others think they should do more research first.

Hunters Versus Monsters

Conflict with the supernatural is the driving force in **Hunter**. The threats cells may face are dreadful abominations that defy what hunters once considered normal. Increased threat levels and sightings spell disaster for hunters who must face a terrible truth: Monsters won't stop emerging from the shadows.

A cell's encounter with a monster teaches them more about the denizens within the Chronicles of Darkness each time they hunt. They might learn that some monsters...

...have infiltrated human (or hunter) society.

...have human-seeming desires and beliefs.

...can reproduce.

...can influence human behavior.

...are tragic, more than horrific, figures.

...may be immortal.

...can't be stereotyped.

...are willing to exchange information.

...use mortals to cover up their existence.

...don't fit a neat definition of "evil."

... feel pain.

... use their powers to fight other monsters.

...could technically be considered mortal.

What a cell does (or doesn't) learn about a monster will differ based on its type and how that encounter is resolved. Each time a hunt begins, hunters find clues and test theories to successfully end a hunt. Over time, these pieces of information add up and hunters become more confident in their capabilities, but as every hunter knows — what a hunter doesn't know can kill them.

Compacts and conspiracies understand the value of information and do their best to either share data broadly or restrict its access to members only. As more monsters appear in greater numbers, however, all hunters must eventually decide what they value more: their pride or the hunt.

Horror and the Unknown

Everybody, whether they're hunters or not, knows about monsters. Omnipresent in stories, games, comics, and films, monsters fill pages' worth of media and are often defeated by a plucky hero or three. Only hunters understand that monsters are *real*. Some creatures, like demons, are easily defined while other monsters, like La Llorona, are passed off as urban legends and therefore are "nothing to worry about" when the lights are on.

Until a cell's members get a few hunts under their belt, they can't tell the difference between this version of the haunted hitchhiker legend or the eyewitness accounts of the ghost that's possessing college students. The space in between what the hunters think they know, what they don't, and what story you're trying to tell is where you'll find the means to leverage their worst fears.

For most monsters, a well-placed bullet or stab wound might end them, but the second-greatest weapon hunters can wield is knowledge. Almost everyone knows a zombie can be killed by aiming for their brain, but few hunters learn about the ritual of filling their mouth with salt and sewing it shut as they recite the prayer to silence the zombie's spirit forever. This knowledge often comes at a price and discovering where to find occult knowledge is just as important as practicing with weapons.

The X Card

The X card is a technique to help participants signal moments in a session that don't work for them. Designed by John Stavropoulos. A card or sheet of paper with an "X" drawn on it is placed in the middle of the table. At any point, a player or the Storyteller may touch the X card to call a halt to any action that makes them uncomfortable or is causing harm. If they would like to explain themselves, they may, but none is needed. The Storyteller should continue gameplay after everyone is settled and ready to start again.

Fear and Trauma

The world isn't black and white. The shadows aren't always pitch black, and sometimes hunters see more shades of gray than they're comfortable with. Simple philosophies and scientific equations cannot accurately describe the reason why horrors are emerging in increasing numbers to prey upon mortals. Hunters may try to find one, but the more they pull back the veil the less they'll be able to stomach what they find.

Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition gives narrative tools that allow players to deeply experience the costs of the hunt. Unlike supernatural characters, hunters are mortal, first and foremost, and they must pierce the veil that separates them from the world of the supernatural. Tilts (beginning on p. XX) and Conditions (beginning on p. XX) are tools that serve a significant role in **Hunter**; they temporarily, and sometimes permanently, affect a character's psyche, body, and environment as a result of their encounters. They are mechanical effects that should not be used to reflect a character's permanent disability. They are designed as a response to sudden acts of violence or harm caused by interacting with the supernatural.

Hunter Rules vs. Personal Safety

Rules shouldn't be used to punish players or make the hunt more difficult for its own sake. Rather, they exist to present a more realistic view of the hunt and tap into experiential horror. Sometimes, these experiences can be challenging for players and a little *too* gritty. Other times, their interpretation of the Code might cause an escalating argument that can't be solved through roleplay.

Supporting the narrative is important, but the comfort and safety of your players should come first. Should you desire to drag them deeper into the darkness, talk to your players about what you want to do. Strong sessions can emerge with a player's

investment, still yield shocking surprises, and be enjoyable for everyone at the table.

Once a hunter suffers from a Condition or Tilt, they may seek ways to resolve it, so they can proceed with gameplay to finish a hunt. This may impact their next action or movement in a scene. Other times, the resolution isn't obvious, and the player doesn't know what to do next. When this happens, leverage Storyteller characters in the scene. Maybe their best friend calls them on the phone and talks them through possible solutions. Maybe a cop nearby sees they're in trouble and wants to help. In both cases, the story doesn't stop because the player didn't know how a rule affected their character.

Horrors and Invisible Threats

Sometimes, a monster's origin can be traced back to a story told around a campfire. The boogeyman lurks under your bed and swipes at your feet as you hop into the sheets. Sasquatch roams the great forests of North America. Trolls live under bridges. Ghosts haunt graveyards. These words immediately conjure images that are as recognizable as Santa Claus.

In the *Chronicles of Darkness*, these horrors are obvious: there are so many urban legends about that condemned house on the next street, no one buys the lot when it's up for sale. The monsters that creep and crawl and lash out are typical threats hunters will face; these are the obvious creatures who can, if encountered, cause serious harm.

The longer a hunter upholds the Vigil, the more they'll start to realize some monsters intentionally keep themselves hidden and do not want to risk being exposed. Creatures that defy description lurk in alleyways or in abandoned homes on the fringes of major cities, and hunters know them for the danger they pose. Horrors who operate behind the scenes take longer to expose, because they surround themselves with the naïve and unsuspecting and often have considerable resources at their disposal, too.

Of course, no hunter wants to admit the reason some monsters can hide in plain sight is because they are able to somehow pass as human beings. The most potent and deadly threats can not only shield their existence from hunters, they also know how to blend in. Worse: a hunter may even begin to glean words like "circle" or "prince" that make no sense at first, until they begin to realize some monsters don't just hide in plain sight, they've formed complete societies that operate in the shadows.

What a hunter knows about humanoid monsters is impacted by the chronicle's tier. In general, tier-one hunters are often left wondering what the hell they just learned, tier-two hunters may eventually piece together that some monsters organize, and tier-three stories often deal with the political upheavals and conspiracies as part of the hunt. This knowledge, however, doesn't always hold true and a horror can have a strange immunity to fire or be slain with an iron dagger.

Still, fighting a smart cryptid is dangerous for hunters, but encountering an intelligent humanoid carries more risks than potential rewards. Cells who rush into an encounter risk exposure of the Vigil and getting arrested. To witnesses, the bloodsucker they've cornered *is* human. This makes the hunt extremely difficult because to the rest of the world, that vampire is an ordinary human being — and the hunters are trying to murder them. Knowing the town mayor is possessed is one thing but being able to prove it beyond a doubt is entirely another. Throwing salt at a news anchor can be considered a misdemeanor—and the law doesn't end there. Kidnapping, identity

theft, car theft, selling drugs, breaking and entering, and attempted murder are a few ways monsters can use the law against their pursuers. The confines of living in a just and lawful society often shield the monsters more than they help hunters.

Recurring Nightmares

Sometimes, a cell can't exorcise a ghost or stake a vampire. Sometimes, hunters do everything right, and they still lose. Eventually, they *learn*. Some monsters defy human understanding. They dissolve into a poisonous mist or a flock of ravens. Sometimes, their body does die — but their spirit is reborn a few days later.

Recurring nightmares in **Hunter** deepen the mysteries of the supernatural, increase the threat level, and remind hunters that no matter how much they win, they're still mortal. These nightmares never walk alone; they actively plot and scheme to fulfill their own agendas of which hunters may not always be aware. In game terms, these agendas are described through the antagonist's Aspiration (p. XX).

Cells who encounter a recurring antagonist shouldn't lose heart, however. Hunters may not be able to stop an immortal, but they can put an end to a cult's schemes or save the victims on whom they're feeding. If hunters realize they can't take down a demon, they must shift their focus to figure out what they *can* do.

Mister White (Greater Demon)

Quote: *"You call yourself an instrument of justice. Can a murder be justified?"*

Background: In the space between dreaming and meditation, Mister White imagines he has been sent home. His home isn't the one his body occupies now. No, Mister White belongs in a quiet corner of hell where he can't hear a sinner's screams. Reveling in his vision, Mister White almost forgets his mind is trapped in the body of a man who's seen death. When he snaps back to reality, he remembers his other name: Detective Max Robinson, homicide. He recalls a party where his peers celebrated his retirement. Can demons ever retire? No, not really. Not when there's a murder to solve. Not when there's a murderer to punish.

Mister White can't remember what he was like before he became Max Robinson. His memories aren't like his dreams. In his mind's eye, he pictures a basement. There's a rat that squeaks past him and a cobweb glistening in the window. He almost forgets the dark blood that's congealed on the floor, the limp hand with broken fingernails, the long hair tangled up with brain matter. He remembers the cold knot at the pit of his stomach, the clenched fists, the hair standing on the back of his neck. Then, he spots something out of order that everyone else missed. One of the bricks in the wall doesn't look right. Hmm...he pushes it, the door swings open, and the killer's just sitting there. Waiting. For him.

Who's "him"? Mister White or Max Robinson? Whatever the truth, Mister White is a demon now, one who punishes murderers. Those killers, they're gumming up the works. The machine won't work the way it's supposed to, and that can't happen. Mister White stands up, sighs, then leans on his cane. Reality isn't supposed to be messy. There's a natural order to it, a clockwork mechanism, and it's his job to maintain the system. His wrath? It sets things right.

Appearance: Mister White is an elderly gentleman. The lines in his thin face betray the years he's lived, and his black eyes are filled with personality. White is tall, lean, and requires a cane to walk. Sometimes, he'll wear a trench coat. Sometimes, he'll wear an old suit. True to his

name, several details of his appearance are ghostly white: his teeth, the whites of his eyes, the jasmine boutonniere pinned to his chest.

Storytelling Hints: Mister White is careful not to reveal his name to just anyone. He splits his time between enjoying life as a charming, older gentleman and a hard-nosed homicide detective. If he stumbles across any hint of a murder, his back straightens and his demeanor sharpens. When he's on the case, he calls himself "Max" and let the detective's expertise take over.

A convincing and capable impersonator, Mister White might approach hunters when they're stuck. He will ally himself with their interests under the right circumstances, provided they bring the murderer to justice. If hunters respond to the enemy by killing them (or others), Mister White will make a citizen's arrest and drop them off at the authorities. If they don't, Mister White will urge them to take violent retribution, and then do the same thing.

True Name: Anamalech

Aspiration: Find murderers and turn them in for justice.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Investigation (Crime scene) 3, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Cane) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1

Merits: Contacts 4 (Police, Forensics, Morgue, Journalists), Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 2, Face in the Crowd, Untouchable

Potency: 9

Willpower: 9

Integrity: 0

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
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Cane	1(B)	n/a	7-1	Improvised
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Dread Powers: Black Gate •••, Dread Attack (Balefire) •, Know Soul •••, Looming Presence •, Predator's Sense (Murderer), Madness and Terror •••, Reborn •••••

Special

Forensic Reminder: By spending a Willpower point, Mister White can cause forensic evidence to return from obvation or to appear more readily. His breath restores fingerprints on glass. Bloodstains blossom again in his shadow, and skid marks reappear at accident sites. Animals expose the corpse of a monster returned to its human form. Once restored, such evidence is indelible. Efforts to wipe away blood simply result in it appearing again: a re-buried body turns up in a dumpster next to police headquarters.

Burning Obsession: When Mister White is on a murderer's trail, he suffers from the Obsessed Condition (Find Murderer) until their identity and location is revealed.

A Losing Fight

No matter how hard a hunter fights, eventually they will lose touch with their lovers, families, and friends. Sometimes, strained relationships are perfectly understandable. It is difficult for hunters to maintain friendships outside of hunter society due to the demands of the hunt. It might be hard to get excited when your favorite sports team comes into town when you have to focus on deciphering a cryptic message. It's hard to attend PTA meetings or meet with probation officers when your fellow hunters need your help to stop the Mothman from swooping down on unsuspecting hikers in the mountains.

Losing touch with friends and family is a heavy burden for hunters. It is also dangerous. The ties a hunter has to their life keep them grounded, remind them for whom they're fighting, and ensure they remember the hunt isn't the only thing worth caring about. These relationships are represented by Touchstones (p. XX), and indicate who the hunter was before they pledged to uphold the Vigil.

Hunters sometimes forget how important these characters are, because they're so busy fighting monsters or trying to cover their tracks. Eventually, these relationships fray and the hunter remembers what they have to lose.

The Vigil incurs a lot of loss, because sooner or later hunters realize they're not "just" fighting monsters. They're also fighting to retain a sense of self — especially since the horrors just keep coming.

Crafting The Hunt

Hunter: The Vigil is roleplaying game that presents a toolkit of ideas and rules you can use to facilitate multiple styles of gameplay. Before planning a chronicle, it's important to recognize that each player might want something different. Some players might only be interested in fighting, while others will want to focus on investigations and interactions with Storyteller characters. To find that careful balance, ask the players up front what they want before deciding on a tier and style.

What types of characters do you like to play? Instead of asking a player what kind of game they enjoy, talk to them about their character. Ask them leading questions like: "What do you think your character looks like?" "What do you feel they're good at?" "What do they need to improve upon?" These types of queries help players visualize who they want to play and get to know their character. Their answers will also guide your decisions along the way. If the entire troupe isn't interested in learning more about the occult, for example, then that element may be subdued in your chronicle — at least at first. If, however, your players say they want to infiltrate

supernatural communities, their characters must be better equipped to face them, and you'll likely run a tier-three chronicle.

What kind of stories or scenes should I avoid? While **Hunter** touches upon real-world phobias, fears, and body horror, the story isn't as important as the player's comfort level. Some players might want to explore darker themes, while others may not at all. Typically, players are much more willing to play a horror game if they have help and reassurances their character won't be unduly punished. Violence, even in **Hunter**, is part of the story and represents both conflict and cost. Before the chronicle begins, find out what types of violence make your players uncomfortable. This can open more discussions about what types of scenes the player would love to explore, too.

What long-term goals does your character have? While every character has an Aspiration, they may want to accomplish a longer-term goal. Some players might want to give the character a rich backstory and their goal is "to avenge my father's killer" or "rise in rank to control the Loyalists of Thule." They may form loftier goals such as "learn how to read this occult tome" or "explore the Pyramids of Giza." These goals help shape characters and give the players something to look forward to outside of the hunt. These goals can also be pursued during downtime between sessions, too.

Are your players hoping to hunt, capture, and kill week after week? Or, do they want a deeper story that allows them to explore the mysteries of the world through their unique, and often outmatched, perspectives? Finding out this information ahead of time will give you more options to plan your chronicle.

Creating Storyteller Characters

Storyteller characters surround the characters and help weave your narrative's threads together. In a chronicle, treat your supporting cast members as dynamic characters who act independently of the player characters. By doing so, the hunters' relationship with other characters doesn't remain static.

Hunters, whether they're allies, rivals, rogues, or fallen, should be built using the character creation rules on p. XX. Mortal characters can be created using **Hunter** character creation rules with the following guidelines and modifications:

- All Storyteller characters, whether they're antagonists or not, need a character concept. Aspirations are optional.
- Storyteller characters can have a Virtue and Vice, but it's not required. These rules are recommended for recurring antagonists. Storyteller characters do not get Touchstones.
- Attribute categories and Skills are prioritized as normal. Storyteller characters may also have three Skill Specialties.
- Hunter characters can have Status and use Endowments. They can't use Tactics or teamwork without the involvement of the player characters, however. Storyteller characters who are hunters should have access to rules that fit the fiction. Fallen, disgraced, or rogue hunters should not have Endowments, for example, if you can't justify why they still have them.
- Storyteller characters spend Merit dots as normal, but they do not receive Professional Training or Status for free.

- A Storyteller character may start with variable advantages as best fits the narrative. For example, they can be Size 4, 5, or 6; have a lower (or higher) Integrity or Willpower rating; etc.

The rules for monster creation are found on p. XX, and cover characters who are supernatural. For **Hunter**'s purposes, all *potential* members of the Lucifuge who possess demon blood are treated as mortal unless they are clearly monstrous. Likewise, any fallen or rogue hunters with supernatural body modifications (e.g. they once belonged to the Cheiron Group) are also regarded as such.

The rules for mysterious places, which expand the setting and provide locations in which monsters can live, are found on p. XX.

Plotting Chronicles by Tier

Each tier requires different Storytelling techniques to balance the player characters' role in Hunter society against the needs of the hunt. Now, more than ever, hunters are faced with threats in that put them — and everyone they know — in harm's way. While every chronicle focuses on an individual cell of hunters, some aspects are unique to each tier.

Tier One: Eyes Wide Open

Tier-one hunters are usually new to the Vigil or come from a long line of hunters in their family or neighborhood. Most often, they tend to be more focused on the demands of everyday society than the world of supernatural. Tier-one hunters are the nurses who work at night clinics so they can help their cell stalk an undead creature who steals organs. They are the janitors who pilfer dusty books from the campus library to ensure a local warlock doesn't find what they're looking for. They are the hunters who prefer to fight alone, and are too jaded to ask other cells for help.

Often, tier-one hunters suffer from stereotyping, which shapes how other characters treat them. They're "weak," because they don't have back up. They're "anti-social," because they're not immersed in hunter society. They can't be challenged, because they're not strong enough to hunt.

When plotting a tier-one chronicle, keep the following in mind:

- *An individual cell doesn't have to hunt alone.* Hunter societies can form in a tier-one chronicle, and cells may team up with other hunters or compete with rivals. These societies might form around a bar hunters frequent, a shooting range, or even at the back of a bookstore.
- *Tier-one hunters have more to lose.* Tier-two and -three hunters have more resources and connections at their disposal, and hunters can switch their allegiances if necessary. Tier-one hunters don't have that option. If they tarnish their relationship with their cell, most hunters don't have any place else to go. Worse: Should they also lose their ties to their daily lives, they might not find a couch on which to crash.
- *Cells can and should have a route they patrol.* Hunters who defend their home turf know those streets better than any digital assistant will. No matter where they live — inner-city neighborhood or sleepy suburb — tier-one hunters care about what happens in their backyard. To facilitate this, suggest the players form a route they monitor from night to night. They might swap routes with another cell or edge a little further out, too.
- *Hunters are not restricted by their location.* While tier-one chronicles tend to be set in a hunter's backyard, cells are not *required* to stick close to home. A hunter is a hunter no matter where they sleep at night, and their confined hunting grounds tend to keep the scope of a story

smaller than a tier-two or tier-three chronicle. That said, if a cell only wants to scout out their immediate area, they'll need a variety of monsters and mysterious places to explore. Otherwise, another night on the town becomes routine.

- *Cells do have backup if they know where to look.* By leveraging the cell's connections, hunters may be helped by local police officers, detectives, doctors, security guards, etc. Yes, the cell might have to get creative when they explain why they need the architectural plans for a sewage system or explosives that will level a building, but they can still ask.
- *Hunters who don't know anything about the supernatural, can learn.* From lesser-known museums to eyewitness accounts, a cell can glean information they need to keep hunting. Rumors and gossip can also yield invaluable clues about a monster's whereabouts or the secrets they've been hiding.
- *The rule of law still applies to hunters.* A hunter who accidentally smashes a store window during a fight is still subject to arrest or questioning. A cell who's speeding to get away from a monster can't always explain they're running from a slasher. A dead body, even if it's a supernatural one, is hard to explain to the authorities. Mortal laws still exist, reminding hunters that the rest of the world doesn't know or care about the Vigil.
- *Hunters are capable.* In **Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition**, hunters are given powerful capabilities to accommodate greater threat levels. Hunters are accomplished in their chosen field and have less restrictions to practice teamwork and Tactics. These rules support player characters who can and should be confident in their abilities.
- *Hunters can get creative.* Sometimes, the players will surprise you. No matter how many times you drop hints that the monster is using Know Soul to find out more about them, the hunters might accuse other Storyteller characters of being spies, instead. Though you might feel pressured to steer the hunters back on course, let them choose how they deal with the problem at hand.

Tier-one chronicles are also a great way to introduce new players to **Hunter** without pressuring them to learn more about the Chronicles of Darkness. Hunter does have lore, but often that knowledge is regulated to one of two things: the history of a hunter's organization or the monsters themselves. Both are sketchy at best, because what hunters know about the supernatural and the history of the hunt changes depending upon who's archiving what. Many hunters, after all, intentionally spread disinformation when they can to throw others off the scent.

By starting with players who are in the dark, you can slowly introduce other narrative elements over the course of a chronicle. This cuts down on character interactions that focus on explanations of **Hunter** politics and deeper mysteries.

Going it Alone

Sometimes, a player may want their character to go off on their own. Maybe they need a breather from a heated argument or maybe they're hoping to follow up on a new lead. When a character leaves the cell, what happens next depends upon several factors. Sometimes, the player may split from the group because they're bored and are hoping for more action. While the *hunter* may claim they found a new clue, the *player* may have abandoned the cell because they're spending too much time figuring out what to do next. Differing views of the Vigil may also cause players to take a time out or do something rash — especially if they're hoping to be the hero that night.

A player whose character breaks away from the cell has the potential to be disruptive or antagonistic. When they do, it's important to figure out what the character wants. During the session, a Storyteller character might call them or run into them on the street to find out what's up. In this way, you can use the narrative to weave their departure into the story without resorting to a monster's surprise attack. If this technique doesn't work, try finding a natural way to take a break. Maybe you've reached the end of the scene or maybe the character's departure has signaled a shift in the story. Then, take the opportunity to pull the player aside and find out what their plans are and how you can help.

Using Downtime for Research

Downtime, or the time between sessions, can be leveraged to manage the finer, more painstaking details of a hunt. Instead of spending an entire session surfing the internet for clues, for example, the characters can search through a few email exchanges. This can yield a lot of interesting developments, because you'll have more time to respond to their questions and drop hints or names the group can check out when it's back together.

Research is a necessary evil in a lot of **Hunter** games, because most cells won't know the difference between one werewolf and another. They might *think* they know, but hunters often win through sheer perseverance and a whole lot of luck. The more knowledge they glean, the more informed decisions they'll make, and the better you'll be able to cue off their actions. Therefore, some sessions can open by ascertaining what the hunters *want* to do, instead of what background info they must learn before taking that next step.

Tier Two: Clubs, Gangs, and Rivalries

Compacts allow hunters to feel like they belong to something greater and more important than themselves. Sure, compacts can supply more guns and intel than another cell might, but they also sharpen a hunter's purpose by giving them a place in hunter society. That oh-so-important sense of teamwork motivates a hunter to keep fighting even though they're bruised and bloody, because they're not just fighting for their friends, family, and cellmates — they've got an entire compact of hunters they don't want to disappoint, too.

Working together to face enormous threats is not a new concept. Though some hunters go rogue because they're convinced their way is better, many find solace and friendship in their chosen compact. Knowing someone has their back is essential in the heat of battle and knowing everyone is fighting for the same goal gives them hope.

When working with compacts, here are some things to keep in mind:

- *A cell can contain members of more than one compact.* A four-character chronicle containing only members of Null Mysteriis is much easier than a chronicle filled with Network Zero, The Union, the Long Night, and SWORN. However, just because it's harder to narrate a multi-compact story doesn't mean it can't be done. The main, and perhaps most important, thing to remember is that the player characters should have similar interpretations of the Code. Without that, the cell will eventually fall apart — more quickly than you might think — because some differences of opinion can't always be resolved without someone getting hurt.

- *Hunters don't automatically get access to everything their compact has to offer.* Just because a hunter suddenly has the backing of The Union doesn't mean the entire compact will converge on a rundown sanitarium when needed. Nor does it mean the compact's secrets will be revealed, either. Hunters who join a compact, regardless of status, must work for what they want by talking to other members, putting in requisitions, or even swapping favors.
- *The members of a compact are not homogenous.* Though it is easy to stereotype what a typical Loyalist of Thule might do or say, the reality is that compacts comprise several different kinds of people. Compact members may share similar beliefs or even interests, but each member is a unique character who acts of their own volition.
- *A hunter's compact status is not static.* The Status Merit (p. XX) shapes the player character's role in their compact. In the narrative, this status is something that should be maintained, nurtured, and acknowledged from time to time through character interactions. Hunters who ignore their role may lose status and cause tension between members.
- *Favors can be expensive.* Hunters, like anyone, can get into trouble they can't fix on their own. Their car breaks down and they need a tow — but all their credit cards are maxed out. They've learned a skinwalker may be at a fancy party with the nouveau riche, but don't have an invitation or a thing to wear. Compact members enjoy many benefits to their membership, but they don't *always* get a favor for free. Sometimes, a kindness must be repaid.
- *Each compact has its own culture.* Members of The Union might kick back with beers and brats, while the Long Night's hunters prefer to get together during a Friday-night fish fry. While compacts provide a great many benefits to a hunter, each organization also has its own quirks and nuances that makes it unique. This, too, is part of what it means to be a member of hunter society and deepens the player characters' connection to the Vigil.

At the core of any chronicle is the hunt. Tier-two stories tend to be broader in scope and cover a wider area, but not always. When compacts are involved, chronicles are enhanced by their involvement and presence, and hunters are required to check in. For this reason, you are encouraged to ask the player characters to devise a compact-related Aspiration both during character creation and after they've completed their first one.

Roles for Compacts

The compacts operate in a variety of ways. Some, like The Union, consider themselves to be regular people who keep in touch with their friends and kin across the globe. They fight monsters lurking in cornfields or on the streets of Chinatown in San Francisco. Others, like Null Mysteriis, confront the unknown through their scientific approach, to find answers where others have failed.

Though they may differ in their goals, culture, location, and method of operation, all compacts are willing to work with other hunters when it matters.

Here are some tips for unlocking a compact's potential in your chronicle:

- **Long Night:** Members of the Long Night must balance the needs of the Vigil against serving the faithful, and they are often caught wondering if they made the right choice. Hunters can experience crises of faith when they must choose between pursuing a demon and baptizing the newest member of their congregation or conducting a hunter's funeral. The Long Night's members feel they've got their finger on the pulse of monster activity, and they can predict —

with some accuracy — when a storm is brewing in their neighborhoods. Partly, this is because many compact members are leaders in their own right and watch over their communities. Sometimes, however, this means members tend to be short-sighted, because they can't appear or be everywhere at once. Most hunters still breathe a sigh of relief when a member of the Long Night steps up, because their ability to inspire hope is greatly needed in these dark and dangerous times.

One of the best ways to broaden the scope of a Long Night chronicle is to expand their reach by connecting them to other communities. Until they start interacting with Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu religious leaders, they may not know what else is happening in their town or city. Then, when they find out which monster is in the area, they can put their knowledge of the hunt to good use. Other members may face a crisis of faith along the way when they realize that, despite all their efforts, the monsters just keep coming.

- **Loyalists of Thule:** A compact of scholars, the Loyalists of Thule tend to know more than they're letting on. They work well with other compacts because they have what they need: occult knowledge. While Null Mysteriis leans heavily on science, and the Long Night relies on its faith, the Loyalists of Thule are somewhere in between. Their pragmatism allows them to remain clear-headed when hunting the supernatural. The Loyalists excel in this, but often fail when trying to make sense of current events. In this way, they're split between two ideologies that shape their desire for atonement: Make sure the Nazi party never regains power, in any form that might take, and help other hunters deal with the supernatural.

A chronicle involving the Loyalists of Thule can involve modern politics as well as new discoveries of occult artifacts (see *Bygones*, p. XX), investigation of mysterious places, and trying to ascertain why so many monsters are appearing in greater numbers. Of all the compacts, the Loyalists of Thule are the most likely to piece together theories and unravel dusty rumors to find out what's really going on. This can put the compact's members in the spotlight or force them into an uncomfortable position as they try to convince other hunters their insights are correct.

- **Network Zero:** One of the biggest challenges members of Network Zero will face, regardless of how many monsters lurk nearby, is the volume of information they must sift through and process — or produce. In the age of too much information, hunters might have a hard time collating and analyzing data without the help of a computer program. The rapid spread of information via the internet is, by far, the biggest threat to this compact's members. Fortunately, Network Zero can couch raw footage as “modern fantasy” or “science fiction” when asking outsiders for help. Members of this compact pair extremely well with members of Null Mysteriis who can help analyze data.

Researching or producing content for its own sake isn't enough to sustain a chronicle. The compact needs something to do, whether that's investigating a cryptid or tracking the movements of a monster. To get hunters off their tablets and computers, leverage Dread Powers and Environmental Tilts that impact electricity. You might also kick off a chronicle with a missing hunter who's gone off the grid. For a higher-stakes chronicle, rogue or fallen hunters in Network Zero could be trying to expose other hunters in the Vigil.

- **Null Mysteriis:** Though it may sound cliché, some scientists take exception to god-fearing or even blue-collar hunters while others will be more accepting. Members, however, aren't “just” scientists who sit in a lab all day. They practice their own faiths and have hobbies

and interests. One of the biggest challenges when using this compact is its push for secrecy to control its research. While a Storyteller character may be reluctant to help, try not to make them needlessly antagonistic. Members of Null Mysteriis make great Storyteller characters when introducing cells to other hunters, too, because they enjoy discussing the finer aspects of the hunt with a curious mind.

When plotting a chronicle, make sure there are questions that can be explored through a scientific lens. Chronicles involving a mysterious place or a monster behaving oddly work well for Null Mysteriis members.

- **SWORN:** SWORN members are new to the fold, but they're not new to hunting monsters. As a compact formed around its members' cultural experiences, SWORN's hunters have a strong bond and set of beliefs that helps them fight the supernatural and keep each other safe. The compact's newness is its biggest strength; because they don't have decades of experience that others do, they also don't have as many preconceptions about other hunters, compacts, or monsters. Members reach out when they can and have been focusing on making friends with other cells, hunters, and compacts to build and maintain their community. They're also likely to join other hunters to help them fight.

Chronicles set in a major metropolitan area like Chicago offer a wealth of storytelling potential beyond the hunt. Maybe members of SWORN stumbled upon a group who's covering up for a mysterious donor keeping the city police afloat. Maybe they are welcoming a lot of new members over the course of a few weeks, and this triggers internal discussions to find out what's responsible for terrorizing their fresh batch of new hunters.

- **The Union:** Through and through, The Union's members are hard workers who hold factory jobs, drive trucks, and are loyal to their friends and families. Some hunters might look down on their members because they equate blue collar with less intelligent — though this isn't true. The Union exists as an "every hunter" compact, where anyone with an honest day job can join. While members try to keep the hunt simple, the proverbial devil is in the details. Hunters don't always know how to fight a monster, just that they should. Members can work well in mixed player-character groups for this reason.

Threatening friends and families is a good way to start a chronicle, but may not sustain it. Think about introducing monsters who live in plain sight or houses that keep hurting the new owners to broaden the scope of the story.

Creating a New Compact

Can't find a compact that fits your needs? As the Storyteller, you may create a compact your players can join.

Concept: When thinking about the compact you want to make, sketch out a few generic details. Then, think about whether it makes more sense to open a new location for an existing compact instead of creating a whole new one. For example, members of The Union are pro-labor, pro-family, and pro-safety from monsters. Based in the United States, they can be found anywhere those three things matter. These three tentpoles aren't unique to the U.S., however, so a similar compact could be based in Iceland, Sweden, Belgium, or Italy, where membership in labor unions is high. Though the relocated compact would culturally be unique from The Union in America, its core purpose and status remain the same. This technique also grants built-in allegiances among compacts and gives hunters an excuse to travel.

Example: You want to create a compact that takes a different approach to the hunt, so you form a hedonistic society based in Scotland called Ashwood Abbey, which hunts monsters for sport and pleasure.

Choose a Foundation: If you have your heart set on a new compact, try to find its roots. The basis for a new compact could be to hunt a monster type, use a specific methodology to hunt, reveal a truth or fact, keep a community safe, or hunt because your faith or morals demand it. You may have already done this in the previous step and, if so, this is a good opportunity to codify that idea.

Example: Ashwood Abbey's members are thrill-seekers who put themselves in dangerous situations to hunt monsters.

Write Its History: Every compact has a history that is known to its members. It doesn't have to be pages' worth of information, nor do all the facts have to be true. The history helps frame the compact and give it a place in hunter society.

Example: Shortly before it became an official compact, Ashwood Abbey was one of the notorious Hellfire Clubs found in Great Britain during the mid-1850s. Its leader, the Reverend Doctor Marcus Ogilvy, was a hedonist who sought pleasure in forbidden places — even by today's standards. One fateful night, Ogilvy and a handful of partiers wandered into the woods to have an orgy and stumbled upon a sacred artifact used by a pack of werewolves. Outraged by this slight, the werewolves attacked them and several members died horribly. Following this, Ogilvy, unable to find the werewolves again, began hunting monsters shortly afterward until his untimely death 10 years later.

Now, Ashwood Abbey's members continue to hunt for the thrill of it, and often scare other hunters with their lurid and sadistic methods that push them right to the razor-sharp edge.

Note Factions: Following the history, each compact has three sub-groups, or factions, that make up the larger group. Factions are distinguished by their differences in ideology that add a nuanced perspective to the hunt. Each compact may also rename what their sub-groups are called.

Example: You decide that Ashwood Abbey calls its factions "cliques." **Competitors** treat the Vigil as a sport, and other hunters — even within Ashwood Abbey — as competition. Members of the **Pursuit** are obsessed with learning and archiving dark, forbidden secrets. Some hunters record their experiences to analyze encounters. **Libertines** are taboo breakers. They push the limits of what's considered "acceptable," and frighten most other hunters.

Assign Status: Player characters can earn dots in Status within their compact, rated one through five. Three of these ratings are described per compact; they provide hunters with an in-game benefit. When assigning Status, think about how a hunter might gain or lose it, too.

Example: Status within Ashwood Abbey is gained when other members recognize the boundaries you've pushed.

- You've already done things you'd never tell anyone else about, but you still know how to party. You gain the Barfly Merit for free, if you didn't have it already.

- You can use rooms in the local chapter's clubhouse as a place to stay. This is equivalent to a two-dot Safehouse, with the dots assigned to Home Security, Arsenal, and Escape Hatch.

•••• You can call Ashwood Abbey and get the address lists of members across the world, who will supply arms, sex workers, and bait, and arrange hunting parties for you. You just need to ask. This is equivalent to four new dots of Contacts. These dots are assigned to Legal Aid, Vice, Arms Trafficking, and Ashwood Abbey Networking.

Following this step, consider how your new compact might be used in a chronicle. Ashwood Abbey members, for example, can be employed as rogue or fallen hunters who ignore the Code and their consciences.

Tier Three: More Theories Than Facts

Members of conspiracies know more about the supernatural than other hunters do, but even then, their knowledge might be outdated or downright false. When running a tier-three chronicle, consider the following:

- *Hunters usually don't think in the long term.* A mortal's short lifespan is nothing compared to an immortal creature's. Unlike hunters, monsters understand how to plan in the long term, because they can hide for decades if needed by surrounding themselves with cultists or others of their kind. So, while conspiracies may have existed for centuries, their organization and goals may not be the same as they were 10, 50, or 100 years ago.
- *Conspiracies don't know everything.* Many conspiracies' members suspect the denizens of the supernatural have communities of their own and have adapted to modern society. Other than a few monsters' names or identifiable types, however, most conspiracies fail to recognize that what they know is a drop in a deep and vast ocean of occult knowledge.
- *Conspiracies can be arrogant.* Some conspiracy members have the audacity to think they will win the fight against the supernatural, not knowing a monster has already infiltrated their cell and will pounce when they least expect it.
- *Hunters benefit from a conspiracy's resources.* The conspiracies are global hunter organizations that wield their considerable resources and knowledge to achieve their goals. Whether they own meticulously curated libraries of forbidden lore or the latest computational-behavior algorithms, conspiracies have the power, knowledge, and willingness to go toe to toe with the most powerful and brutal of terrors — or so they think. What's more, conspiracies often have contingency plans and alibis set up for their members when things go horribly wrong.
- *Conspiracies don't dictate belief.* A conspiracy's overarching view of the Code tends to be more flexible to justify how its members use their occult knowledge against the supernatural. Often, a conspiracy's agenda is more important to it than taking down an over-sized sewer rat, especially if it means putting one of its own at risk.

Tier-three chronicles that incorporate conspiracies tend to include the supernatural, but often involve politics and a fair number of rumors, enigmas, and mysteries that surround each organization and their members.

Roles for Conspiracies

While the conspiracies seem like they should be unstoppable forces who serve humankind, ultimately their agenda is more important than the occasional casualty in battle. Hunters who belong to these groups are bound by even tighter codes of conduct and political intrigues than others — but the others don't require constant check-ins.

When plotting a chronicle with a conspiracy, consider which faction the player characters belong to and how that puts them at odds with other hunters. Conspiracy factions are so different from one another that a group of Ascending Ones might argue more than a mixed group. Below are some ideas for using these conspiracies in your next **Hunter** game.

- **Ascending Ones:** The Ascending Ones are interesting to drop into a chronicle, because their members can be scientists engineering the perfect potion, alchemists mixing science and faith, or mystics embracing the magical aspects of their art. They can be holy warriors for their faith or criminals who trade drugs. This level of nuance grants their members agency in many social spheres; threads connecting characters often form the basis for a scam or front. What's more, the players may not necessarily be aware of what they've gotten themselves into. Conspiracies often have secrets for a reason, and what the player characters learn will affect what they do next.
- **Cheiron Group:** The Cheiron Group is secretive, manipulative, and can be brutal. Members are recruited and then forced to alter their bodies using the flesh and bones of supernatural creatures. Chronicles involving the Cheiron Group can be horrific or conspiratorial — even vicious. This conspiracy is also a good candidate for infiltration by characters who belong to a different group; after all, catching and experimenting upon monsters with the intent of grafting their skin is terrifying, but what happens when that “monster” is a psychic member of VASCU? Or a medium? Ultimately, the Cheiron Group can be used as antagonists or unwitting allies, but they aren't necessarily the heroes their members believe. This, too, can underline an all-Cheiron Group chronicle as the player characters discover their innermost secrets.
- **Council of Bones:** On paper, Council of Bones' members say they don't believe in necromancy, but that doesn't mean some hunters aren't exploring that forbidden rite. Certainly, the Council of Bones has a reputation for being creepy, since its members prefer dusty books to electronic files and don't let outsiders in unless it's necessary. This conspiracy can veer toward arrogance because it believes it's the authority on death. Hunters who can talk to the dead *do* solve problems, but they don't always know to whom they're speaking.
- **The Lucifuge:** Members of the Lucifuge are usually treated as outsiders in hunter society because of the possibility that demon blood runs through their veins, and this is something that should be avoided when possible. Despite their heritage, the Lucifuge's hunters are mortals who wield innate powers to serve humanity. In a chronicle, the Lucifuge is an excellent choice whenever demons are involved, but an unlikely one when attempting to redeem a rogue hunter organization.
- **Malleus Maleficarum:** As conspiracies go, Malleus Maleficarum is the most straightforward of the bunch. Its members want to put an end to the supernatural, and they justify their actions through their faith. Though the organization can and does specialize in vampires, its hunters are not restricted by monster type. Constant hunting, even when using Endowments, doesn't make for a good story. In a chronicle, leverage the conspiracy's history and that vampires survive far longer than any mortal does. When an old vampire starts pulling the characters' strings, they find themselves peering into history's darkest corners. Maybe, Malleus Maleficarum isn't as straightforward as it seems, after all.
- **Task Force: VALKYRIE:** TFV chronicles can be more political than supernatural because of their secret connection to the American government. As a conspiracy, it's centered on American interests, both domestic and overseas, and could serve as a model for similar

conspiracies for other, foreign governments. Simply, TFV members recognize they don't have the jurisdiction to work with NATO or the United Nations, but desperately want other countries to be empowered to protect their own interests. What works against TFV is, of course, the lengths its members go to obscure their identities and actions. The conspiracy that shouldn't exist is one other hunters want to track down, however, and TFV hunters may have to choose between confronting a monster and risk exposure or forging alliances with other hunters.

The trade off to any limitations a conspiracy has is the immense payoff hunters gain. Tier-three hunters have more freedom of movement than tier-one or -two, because they're located worldwide and aren't restricted to a single area. Running a tier-three chronicle means the hunters do not have to focus solely on one threat at once, instead keeping tabs on numerous problems at the same time. Their contacts allow them to find out the knowledge needed to face these threats head on, which is an incredible boon to their fellow hunters.

For an example of a conspiracy thematically tied to a chronicle, check out VASCU on p. XX.

Creating a Conspiracy

If you'd like to create your own conspiracy, the guidelines follow.

Concept: The greatest challenge when creating a new conspiracy is to remember its size and influence will have weight in hunter society — but it is still mysterious enough that non-hunters don't know they exist. Start with a basic concept that frames what the conspiracy does. Do they experiment on monsters like the Cheiron Group or create potions like the Ascending Ones? Once you have a basic concept, think about how similar or dissimilar it is to existing conspiracies. Each tier-three organization has a lot of room to spread its influence, and their sub-groups can facilitate different methods or beliefs.

***Example:** You've decided you want to create a conspiracy that searches for magical relics.*

Choose a Hook: Unlike cells or compacts, conspiracies tend to be more flexible with the Code. The reasons for this are varied, but usually a conspiracy simply doesn't have the time to watch over a hunter's daily activities or encounters with the supernatural. Their goals are big-picture and often world-shattering, should they be achieved.

***Example:** You want to add a mystical nuance by forging the Aegis Kai Doru: an ancient conspiracy shrouded in myths and legends. Its members hunt for relics and use their knowledge against the supernatural, but don't dictate how or when that information must be used.*

Write Its History: Conspiracies have what the Cheiron Group calls "the company line." This is the information new recruits get before they start training, and often it's an account that can leak to other hunters without revealing the group's innermost workings. Note: the Aegis Kai Doru has a mystical, otherworldly feel, and this is reflected in its history.

***Example:** Members of the Aegis Kai Doru, the Shield and Spear, believe it is their sworn duty to guard the magical treasures of countless lost worlds and use them against the supernatural.*

It is the oldest conspiracy known to humankind. The Guardians tell initiates that their ancestors can be traced back across the ages, before the great flood, to a mythical island. Some even call it Atlantis, or Lemuria, or Pan, or Mu. On the island, or so they say, the Guardians lived in a vast labyrinth that contained powerful magical relics.

Unfortunately, at some point the Guardians disagreed with the island's other inhabitants and a petty quarrel resulted in their forced ejection. The Guardians had planned to return, but by the time they set sail, the island had already sunk to the bottom of the ocean.

Soon, escaped islanders joined the Guardians, and blamed the loss of their paradise on shape-shifting invaders who'd broken an ancient taboo. The Guardians refused to be fooled, however, and held a grudge — that remains to this day — against the islanders who cast them out.

Now, while the Aegis Kai Doru's leaders continue to practice their ancient traditions at the heart of Greece, Guardians scour the Earth searching for magical relics in the hopes they'll restore their power one day.

Decide Recruitment: Unlike most compacts, conspiracies may want to keep their numbers small and ensure that they don't actively recruit hunters who don't "fit" their group. Most conspiracies have an arm that specializes in searching for initiates.

Example: *The Aegis Kai Doru is extremely selective about who it welcomes and makes sure that individual is thoroughly vetted before making an offer.*

Note Factions: Following the history, each compact has three sub-groups, or factions, that make up the larger group. Factions are distinguished by their differences in ideology that add a nuanced perspective to the hunt. Each compact may also rename what their sub-groups are called.

Example: *You decide the Aegis Kai Doru has three separate groups. There may be more, and as a global organization you have room to explore new possibilities if a situation calls for it.*

The Sword comprises militant and proactive hunters who use their physical prowess to fight monsters.

The Temple is made up of guards and locates the relics that give the Aegis Kai Doru its power.

The Scroll employs archivists and lorekeepers who test, record, and catalogue items of power.

Assign Status: Like compacts, conspiracies grant player characters dots in Status, rated one through five. Three of these ratings are described per conspiracy; they provide hunters with an in-game benefit they've earned as a reward for belonging to the compact. When assigning Status, think about how a hunter might gain or lose it, too.

Example: *The Guardians of the Labyrinth gain Status through finding relics, discovering what relics do, and using them against their ancient enemies.*

- *You own at least one relic. When investigating a new, potential relic, you gain +2 to your Investigation roll.*

- *You've spent so long doing research that it's second nature to you. You get +1 on Academics-based dice pools pertaining to relics and archaeology.*

- *You've experienced the Second Initiation; your senses don't work the way they used to. You begin to be able to sense the old enemies of your sect. You gain the Gut Feeling Merit.*

Create Endowments: Endowments are blessings the conspiracy offers in exchange for loyalty and, occasionally, devotion. The rules for creating Endowments are found on p. XX. For the Aegis Kai Doru, their Endowments involve using a relic the hunter guards with their life.

Following this step, think about how your tier-three chronicle intersects with your new conspiracy. A hunter organization that specializes in the acquisition and study of magical relics adds a layer of intrigue to any hunt or exploration of a mysterious place.

Endowment Research and Development

Hunters are coming up with new ways to fight against their chosen enemies all the time. While the Endowments presented on pp. XX-XX might be fine for the basic hunter, eventually players will want new Endowments to use during a hunt. This section discusses the design philosophy behind Endowments to give guidelines on how to create them.

Keep in mind, these guidelines are suggestions to try to make balanced powers. There are some effects or factors that you might think about that aren't covered here. If that's the case, you can still use the following to best extrapolate.

Every Endowment contains the following pieces:

- An effect that is represented by a price (or cost of effects).
- A cost of activation, generally in Willpower or damage, which gives a discount.
- A backlash that gives a further discount.

This means that the most basic powers may cost nothing to activate and have no backlash. More serious powers may have high costs in terms of what the hunter must spend to activate, or in the subsequent backlash. Some limitations, such as the limitation on equipment from Advanced Armory, the Integrity limitation on Benediction, or the inherent backlash built into Castigation further modify the cost.

Every Endowment is designed by using a simple equation:

(Cost of Effects – Discounts)

Effects

Effects grant mechanical benefits and narrative license to accomplish great feats, represent special attacks or powers, or place restrictions or penalties on targets. The wider or more extreme the Effect, the higher the value associated with it.

Because all Endowments start with at least a baseline experience cost, there is a level of effect already baked into that cost. This is why there is a value of 0 for effects. Any Endowment can have at most two 0 value effects before those effects start to add +1 to the value.

START EFFECTS TABLE

Effects Table

Value*†	Mechanical Effect	Narrative Effect	Duration
0	Give a specific roll the 8-again quality	“You can smell fear.”	Immediate effect
1	Inflict a Condition or mild Tilt	“You can open any door.”	One scene
2	Provoke a Clash of Wills, inflict a severe Tilt Multiple scenes	“You can speak with ghosts.”	
3	Exceptional success at 3 successes rather than 5	“You can breathe anything.”	24 hours

4 Apply a Persistent Condition “You can fly.” One week

5 Give a specific roll the rote quality “You can walk between worlds.” Indefinite

* If the Endowment modifies a dice pool, the number of dice added or removed is equal to the value – 1.

† If the Endowment deals or heals damage, the damage modifier of the Endowment or the amount of Health restored is equal to the value – 1.

END TABLE

Costs

Endowments are often fueled with Willpower or damage to the user. A Willpower expenditure represents an act of will or focus necessary to trigger an Endowment, or the psychological or physiological cost of doing so. More extreme physiological effects are represented by using lethal damage as the cost; such Endowments are always fatiguing and often painful to use.

Endowments with variable results, or that directly affect a target require an activation roll.

Additionally, certain Endowments require circumstances such as having proper materials, maintaining equipment, or saying the right words. These minor actions are considered circumstances, and factor into the cost. For the purposes of example, we use specific requirements found within Endowments as our examples.

START COST TABLE

Cost Table

Value* Action Equivalent Willpower or damage** Circumstances†

–1 Instant Action with an activation roll 1 - Common; saying a prayer, speaking a passphrase

–2 Contested or Resisted Action 2 Uncommon; e.g., access to a holy relic; hard to find ingredients; a consumable††

–3 Multiple Actions 3 -

–4 Extended Action (minutes) 4 -

–5 Extended Action (hours) 5 -

*For extended actions, base target number of successes is 5, increasing the target number changes the value by –1 per.

**Lethal damage. This may reduce to bashing damage in some cases where a narrative effect is between two number values. Increase to aggravated damage for an additional –1 value.

† Circumstances that generally benefit the player should read the value as positive rather than negative.

†† If an Endowment has an expendable component, such as ammunition, read the number of uses as a cost instead of a refund, and then subtract the –2 refund for being consumable.

END TABLE

Backlashes

Backlashes are the downsides to using Endowments. Backlashes are often something bad that happens to the hunter for using the supernatural. It might just be the aftereffects of a particularly vivid vision, or it could be the visible ramifications of the type of Endowment she was using. Most commonly, they impose a small penalty to certain actions but can also impose Conditions.

START BACKLASH TABLE

Backlash Table

Value* Example Backlash

- 1 Minor Drawback; lack of sleep, being hunted
- 2 Significant Drawback; imposes a Condition
- 3 Painful Drawback; imposes a Persistent Condition

* If the backlash penalizes a dice pool or imposes damage, give a -1 value on a one-for-one basis.

END BACKLASH TABLE

Creating New Endowments

The first step in creating a conspiracy's Endowments is to think about its concept; this informs how they'll be used and designed. Here's a summary of the Endowment concepts presented thus far:

- **Advanced Armory:** Following the implant of an RFID chip, Task Force: VALKYRIE members gain an impressive array of armaments, p. XX.
- **Benediction:** Blessed by the pope, the Malleus Maleficarum receive divine Benedictions, p. XX.
- **Castigation:** The Lucifuge's hunters gain power through their infernal ancestry, and Castigation rites are powered by their blood. These rites cannot be unlearned even if they leave the conspiracy, p. XX.
- **Elixir:** The Ascending Ones use rare potions that must be alchemically manipulated in their bodies, and these create an array of dizzying effects, p. XX.
- **Perispiritism:** The Council of Bones employs a variety of techniques, powered by the mysterious Mark of the Scythe, as if they were natural mediums, p. XX.
- **Teleformatics:** VASCU agents undergo extensive processing with chemicals to unlock potent mental powers, p. XX.
- **Thaumatechnology:** The Cheiron Group members are augmented with the blood and flesh of monsters. Hunters acquire these Endowments by having surgery, and installation is permanent unless removed by a specialist, p. XX.

Each Endowment concept addresses the source of its power: potions, surgical grafts, a mysterious tattoo, infernal blood, divine blessing, a security clearance, and a chemical enhancer. This helps understand not only how the hunter is accessing the Endowment, but the kinds of Endowments hunters from each conspiracy would create. Also think about the way hunters get their Endowments through their Conspiracy. Is it an item they can walk away with, or a special

magical tool they must spend hours researching and learning? How does the Endowment work? A potion must be imbibed or inhaled, but a ritual must only be spoken.

Before creating a new Endowment, think about the conspiracy to which it's tied. Are you creating an Endowment for an existing conspiracy? Or a new one like the Aegis Kai Doru?

Relic Concepts

The Aegis Kai Doru is an eclectic mix of hunters who devote their time to unlocking the secrets of strange, mystical artifacts and using them in their hunts against witches and shapeshifters. These Relics are called Bygones, p. XX. They believe that if the Relics fall into the wrong hands, they could cause great harm to innocent people. The threat of a supernatural creature or rogue hunter getting their hands on a Relic is omnipresent.

Right off the bat, there's a significant idea that needs to be incorporated into the Endowment concept — Relics can be stolen. If we look at the costs table, "access to a holy relic" is considered a -2 value. Since this will apply to every Relic Endowment, every Relic Endowment must have that cost associated with it. If a Relic is lost for more than a chapter, the Storyteller should allow the player to select another Relic Endowment to stand in for the missing one, provided it make sense in the story.

Something else to consider is whether these mystical artifacts are unique, or whether it's possible for two people to wield the same type of Relic. To avoid limiting Endowment creation, especially in instances where a Relic may be created or consumed, some Relics are truly unique, while others may be twins, triplets, or one of many. Perhaps the rituals needed to create them are even known to modern savants but exact such a heavy price they cannot be manufactured lightly. Even the least powerful Relic is still so mystically great it empowers its wielder to do the impossible.

Relic Endowments

Relic Endowments require membership in the Aegis Kai Doru. They also represent items to which the hunter has access and has learned how to safely use. It may have some trick of activation, or a word or incantation necessary for use that only the hunter knows. Relics may describe a class of objects with a similar or identical function, or a unique artifact with no true equal.

Combining these concepts, we're ready to use this to determine how Aegis Kai Doru hunters gain access to their Endowments. Maybe they have a reliquary full of Relics they must check out, much like Task Force: VALKYRIE, or they make them as they need them more like the Ascending Ones. Maybe each hunter has their own stash of Relics and some arcane force which allows them and only them to activate them.

Since the conspiracy deals in Relics, it makes sense to have a cache of these somewhere in which agents can get new ones. But since the Relics are rare and obscure, it also makes sense that they wouldn't be as easily exchanged as items from say TFV's Advanced Armory. Instead, let's say that Aegis Kai Doru characters are gifted with Relics, and these Relics stay with them.

Based on this, we know that the Relics should not be single use, or consumable the way Advanced Armory is. Instead, a Relic's power should be something that either has unlimited use or recharges on its own. On that note, a Relic is a powerful, likely magical, artifact. This means

they should have some kind of activation, maybe a chant or an action, that the hunter must perform to unleash its power.

With that in mind, build this into the basic Endowment structure. Each Relic is an item, it's something rare that you must get from the conspiracy to use. But because it's an item, the hunter could possibly lose it, or it could get stolen. Each Relic requires a certain activity, let's say a keyword or activation gesture to use, and if the user doesn't know the correct sequence or word, it won't work. Once again, there is a built in, general -1 value of needing an instant action to use into each Relic. So that means it has a -3 value to start. Below are two examples of Relics with differing power levels.

Aegis Talisman

The Aegis Talisman is unique and powerful, so it should have a lot of punch. First, assign its effects to figure out what the Talisman can do before it's negated with costs and backlashes. To start off, the Gorgon's Skin makes the user incredibly durable: Armor 3, for 2 points of value. Second, Gorgon's Solitude guards against magical attacks: a +3 to contested rolls for another 2 points of value. This effect lasts for a scene, which is another +1 value.

Right now, our Endowment value is 5. We have one more effect to add. Gorgon's Terror paralyzes the target with a relevant Condition or Tilt (+1) which incurs a cost of 1 Willpower (-1). These costs are baked into the Endowment, bringing us to a new total of 5. To drop the value back down to 0, we'll subtract 2 due to the talisman being a Relic and another 2 because it takes a contested action to activate, but it's still at a +1, so the armor activation should also cost a Willpower, bringing the Willpower cost value to -2. Now, the calculation is as follows:

$$(Effects: +2 + 2 + 1 + 1) - (Costs: 2 + 2 + 2) = 0$$

The resulting Endowment looks like this:

Legend describes the Aegis as a shield or as the skin of a goat, sometimes bearing the head of one of the Gorgons. This indestructible shield, wielded by the gods, struck terror in all who beheld it, and thus made the user all-but invincible in battle. The Aegis Talisman, forged from silver, is roughly the size of an outspread hand and bears a relief of a gorgon's face. The talisman is not as powerful as its mythical cousin, but it guards against both physical and mystical assault and, with a focused and trained will, can even paralyze onlookers.

Cost: 1 or 2 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult vs. Resolve

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

Upon activation, the talisman provides 3 armor, which applies to both general and ballistic attacks. This armor also provides a defense against supernatural attacks, giving her a +3 to rolls to contest an action or a -1 to her resistance Attribute when targeted by a Dread Power or supernatural effect.

Additionally, if the hunter spends an additional Willpower on activation, she can attempt to freeze a target in their tracks.

Roll Results

Success: The hunter inflicts the Stunned Tilt on a single target who can see the talisman.

Exceptional Success: The hunter inflicts the Immobilized Tilt instead.

Failure: The talisman fails to catch anyone's eye.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter blinds herself with her own talisman. She gains the Stunned Tilt.

Skeleton Key

This Endowment is called the Skeleton Key. It's a useful Relic and isn't one of a kind, but is the kind of object the Aegis Kai Doru might lend to its hunters.

The Skeleton Key's concept is simple enough: It opens doors. Before deciding its costs and backlashes, think about its potential effects. The Skeleton Key should be able to unlock any door. Keep in mind the Skeleton Key is a Relic that can be stolen, so we'll need to remember that -2. Our equation would be:

$$(Effects (+1) - (Costs 2)) = -1$$

Right now, this Endowment is a little underpowered and isn't compelling. Anyone with a lockpick can open a door. What if the door has a monster guarding it with a ward or some other Dread Power? In this case, our hunter should have to make a roll, which is covered under Clash of Wills. Add "provoking a Clash of Wills," which is a +2 Effect.

$$(Effects (+1, +2) - (Costs 2)) = +1$$

Now, we're at a +1, so it should cost a Willpower to use for a -1 value. That is balanced, but because there is already an expenditure of 3 Experiences to make this effect, apply some free effects to give it a little more oomph. Apply the 8-again quality to the hunter's Clash of Wills roll for free.

$$(Effects (+1, +2, +0) - (Cost 2+1)) = 0$$

The Skeleton Key Endowment is now ready for a hunter to use, and its new effects make sense in the context of the narrative. Though the hunter doesn't have to pay a point of Willpower or roll the dice every time they want to open a door, the Skeleton Key's usage reflects its common availability. Besides, opening doors is far more interesting than leaving them closed.

The resulting Endowment looks like this:

It's said that no lock, no matter how sturdy, can keep out death. Bar yourself behind doors and wards and mystical barriers all you like, but death has a key for all of them. The Skeleton Key Relic might not literally be death's enchanted key, but it does give hunters an uncanny ability to bypass obstacles in their path.

The Skeleton Key is a small, silver key in an archaic style, tarnished from long use. The teeth are grooved in such a way as to suggest human dentition, and the bow is an intricately detailed model of a human skull with tiny flecks of sapphire in the eye sockets. The key is always cold to the touch, even if carried in the hand or worn next to the skin for hours.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

The Skeleton Key unlocks any locked door. If a monster used a Dread Power to seal the door, or made it difficult to pass through (such as Maze, p. XX), the key prompts a Clash of Wills, and the player gains the 8-again quality on the hunter's roll.

Now you're ready to develop your own. Start with what effect you want the Endowment to have, then think about how its rules might affect its usage. From there, you can write up new Endowments to model various powers. Remember that any new Endowment should get approval from your Storyteller before purchasing. Good luck and happy hunting!

Appendix One: Equipment, Custom Gear, and Traps

This appendix lists sample equipment, details an optional system for further customizing hunting gear, and provides rules for building traps.

Equipment

The following are lists of basic equipment **Hunter: The Vigil** characters can use. For additional Mental, Physical, and Social equipment, see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, starting on p. 270.

Weapons

Melee Weapons Chart

[BEGIN CHART]

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Sap	0	-1 1	1 •	Stun		
Brass Knuckles	0	0 1	1 •	Uses Brawl to attack		
Baton	1	-1 2	2 n/a			
Crowbar	2	-2 2	2 •			
Tire Iron	1	-3 2	2 ••	+1 Defense		
Chain	1	-3 2	2 •	Grapple		
Shield (small)	0	-2 2	2 ••	Concealed		
Shield (large)	2	-4 3	3 ••	Concealed		
Knife	0	-1 1	1 •			
Rapier	1	-2 1	2 ••	Armor piercing 1		
Machete	2	-2 2	2 ••			
Hatchet	1	-2 1	1 •			
Fire Axe	3	-4 3	3 ••	9-again, two-handed		
Chainsaw	5	-6 4	3 •••	9-again, two-handed		
Stake*	0	-4 1	1 n/a			
Spear**	2	-2 2	4 •	+1 Defense, two-handed		
Stun gun (melee) modifier for damage	1	1 1	1 •	Stun; bonus successes don't add to		
Stunbolt/stakebolt gun*	2	-3 3	1 ••••	Armor piercing 2; stun		

[END OF CHART]

Type: A weapon's type is a general classification that can apply to anything your character picks up. A tire iron might be any metal club, such as an antique mace, a metal baseball bat, or a hammer, while a hatchet might be a meat cleaver or an antique hand axe.

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage against ordinary people. The type of damage may vary against supernatural opponents.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase by 1.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

Size: Size 1 items can be hidden in a hand; two Size 2 items can be hidden in a coat; Size 3+ items cannot be hidden.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or the level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Concealed: A character that wields a shield but doesn't use it to attack can add its Size to his Defense and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.

Grapple: Add the chain's weapon modifier to grappling dice pools.

Stun: Halve the victim's Size when aiming for the head with intent to stun.

Two-handed: This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.

* To pierce the heart, a stake must target it specifically (-3 to attack rolls) and must deal at least five damage in one attack, or four with a stakebolt gun.

** The reach of a spear gives +1 to Defense against opponents who are unarmed or wield weapons of Size 1.

Ranged Weapons Chart

[BEGIN CHART]

Type	Damage Example	Range Clip Special	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability
Revolver, light Special)		20/40/80	6 0	2 1	••	SW M640 (.38
Revolver, heavy Magnum)		2 35/70/140	6 -2	3 1	••	SW M29 (.44
Pistol, light	1	20/40/80	17 + 1 0	2 1	•••	Glock 17 (9mm)
Pistol, heavy ACP)	2	30/60/120	7 + 1 -2	3 1	•••	Colt M1911A1 (.45
SMG, small* (9mm)	1	25/50/100	30 + 1 -2	2 1	•••	Ingram Mac-10
SMG, large*	2	50/100/200	30 + 1 -3	3 2	•••	HK MP-5 (9mm)

Rifle (30.06)	4	200/400/800	5 + 1	-5	2	3	••	Remington M-700
Assault Rifle*	3	150/300/600	42 + 1	-3	3	3	•••	Steyr AUG (5.56mm)
Shotgun**	3	20/40/80	5 + 1	-4	3	2	••	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Crossbow***	2	40/80/160	1	-5	3	3	•••	
Repeating crossbow***		1	20/40/100		9 + 1	-3	3	3 ••••
Stun gun (ranged)*** successes don't add to the modifier for damage	1	5	1	0	1	1	•	Taser Stun; bonus
Pepper spray no damage	0	1/2/3	n/a	0	1	1	•	Stun; Penalty, deals no damage
Civilian flamethrower Incendiary****	max 4	10/30/—		30	-4	3	4	••• N/A
Military flamethrower Incendiary****	max 4	30/50/—		30	-5	3	4	•••• N/A
Homemade flamethrower Incendiary****	max 3	5/10/—		10	-2	1	1	• N/A

[END CHART]

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage against ordinary people. The type of damage may vary against supernatural opponents.

Ranges: The listed numbers are short/medium/long ranges in yards/meters. Attacks at medium range suffer a -1 penalty. Attacks at long range suffer a -2 penalty.

Clip: The number of rounds a gun can hold. A +1 indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase it by 1.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 on attack rolls.

Size: Weapons of Size 1 can be fired one-handed; Size 2 weapons must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; Size 3 weapons can be fired two-handed, but not hidden on one's person.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or the level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Stun: Halve the victim's Size when aiming for the head with intent to stun.

Penalty: Pepper spray inflicts a -5 to all actions, reduced by one for every turn the victim spends rinsing his eyes.

* The weapon is capable of autofire, including short bursts, medium bursts, and long bursts.

** Attack rolls gain the 9-again quality.

*** Crossbows and ranged stun guns take three turns to reload between shots (stun guns must replace the compressed air cartridge); a repeating crossbow takes five turns to reload fully. A crossbow can also be used to deliver a stake through the heart (−3 to attack rolls; must deal at least five damage in one attack).

**** Flamethrowers inflict the Burning Tilt if they deal any damage to the target, but each attack can only deal damage up to the flame’s size + heat. See p. XX for details.

Armor

[BEGIN CHART]

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
Modern						
Reinforced clothing*	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar vest*	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak jacket	2/4	1	−1	0	••	Torso, arms
Full riot gear	3/5	2	−2	−1	•••	Torso, arms, legs
Archaic						
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	−1	0	•	Torso, arms
Chainmail	3/1	3	−2	−2	••	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	−2	−3	••••	Torso, arms, legs

[END CHART]

Rating: Armor provides protection against normal attacks and firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

Strength: If a character’s Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by one.

Defense: The penalty imposed on a character’s Defense when wearing the armor.

Speed: The penalty to a character’s Speed when wearing the armor.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or the level of Social Merit needed to acquire the armor.

Coverage: The areas of a character protected by the armor. Unless an attacker targets a specific unarmored location (see “Specified Targets,” p. XX), the armor’s protection applies. Wearing a helmet increases the armor’s coverage to include a character’s head.

* This armor is concealed, either as normal clothing (e.g. biker leathers) or from being worn under a jacket or baggy shirt. Attackers have no idea the target is wearing armor until after they land a successful hit.

Services

[CHART]

Service	Availability	Die	Bonus
Academics			
Historical specialist consulting	•••		+3
Research assistance from grad students	••		+2
Translation of a dead language	•••		+2
Computer			
Custom phone application	•••		+2
Digital image enhancement	••		+3
Graphic design/forgery	••		+2
Crafts			
Antiquities restoration	•••		+2
Auto repair	••		+3
Custom equipment modifications	•••		+2
Investigation			
Consultation on evidence	•••		+3
Investigative photography	•••		+2
Private investigation/background check	••		+2
Medicine			
Black-market surgeon	••••		+3
Expert medical witness	••••		+2
Rush plastic surgery	••••		+2
Occult			
Esoteric consultant/sage	••••		+3
Exorcist	•••		+2
Protective amulets or wards	••••		+1
Politics			
Campaign assistant	•••		+3
Cutting red tape (read: bribe)	•••		+2
Spin doctor	•••		+2
Science			
Fact checking	••		+3
Falsifying research/coverup	•••		+2

Lab access •• +2

Athletics

Meditative assistance ••• +2

Personal trainer ••• +3

Throwing an athletic competition •••• +4

Brawl

Arrange underground boxing ring ••• +2

Bodyguard service ••• +3

Self-defense classes • +1

Drive

Chauffer •• +2

Stunt performance/mock crash ••• +3

Tour bus rental •••• +2

Firearms

Antique gun repair ••• +2

Cover fire from gangs ••• +3

Procuring smuggled military arms •••• +2

Larceny

Breaking and entering ••• +2

Security consulting ••• +2

Stealing a protected relic •••• +3

Stealth

Strategic distraction ••• +3

Tailing a suspect ••• +2

Targeted vandalism •• +2

Survival

Field dress and preserve an animal ••• +1

Trail guide •• +3

Weatherproof a shelter •• +2

Weaponry

Properly forged sword ••• +2

Identify wound from obscure weapon ••• +2

Training in archaic warfare ••• +2

Animal Ken

Buy a trained animal	•••	+2	
Identify animal droppings	••	+1	
Rule out natural causes of death	•••	+2	

Empathy

“Good cop” interrogator	•••	+2	
Neutral arbitrator	•••	+2	
Therapy session	••	+1	

Expression

Document forgery	•••	+3	
Ghostwriting	••	+2	
Motivational speech	•••	+1	

Intimidation

Anti-interrogation training	••••	+3	
“Bad cop” interrogator	•••	+2	
Deprogramming therapy	•••	+2	

Persuasion

Defense attorney	•••	+3	
Hostage negotiator	••••	+3	
Pickup artist	•••	+2	

Socialize

Catering	••• or ••••	+1 or +2	
Elocution consulting	•••	+1	
Escort	•••	+2	

Streetwise

Arrange a rave or block party	•••	+2	
Black market access	••	+2	
Find crash space	••	+1	
Smuggling contraband	•••	+1	

Subterfuge

Amateur actor/actress	••	+2	
Con artistry	•••	+2	
Gambling ringer	•••	+2	

[[END CHART]]

Vehicles

[BEGIN CHART]

Vehicle	Dice	Modifier	Size	Durability/Structure	Speed
Motorcycle	-1	7	2/9	100	
Compact car	-2	8	3/11	90	
Station wagon	-3	12	3/15	80	
Sports car	-1	10	2/12	140	
Limousine	-4	20	3/18	60	
Van	-3	18	3/21	80	
Pickup truck	-2	15	4/19	80	
SUV	-2	15	4/19	100	
Motorboat	-2	10	2/12	60	

[END CHART]

Customizing Gear

While a hunter has plenty of options for acquiring fieldwork gear, sometimes even the military and the black market can't help with the kinds of modifications necessary to bring down a werewolf or detect spirits. Some hunters just don't have the resources or connections for the fancy stuff and must make do with what they can scrounge up at the hardware store. And sometimes, all they've got is a pickup truck, a fence post, barbed wire, and five minutes. That's where custom gear comes in.

This book presents basic rules for building and modifying equipment on p. XX. If players want to dig a little deeper into the world of custom gear, use these optional expansions.

Vehicle Modifications

A vehicle can support a number of modifications equal to twice the mechanic's Crafts rating; each modification requires four hours to install. Characters don't need to roll unless the character is under stress or lacks proper tools, in which case the Storyteller can require an Intelligence + Crafts instant action for each modification.

Example Vehicle Modifications

- +1 dice modifier, to a maximum of +5
- +2 dice to a secondary equipment bonus, e.g. a masterful paint job granting a bonus to Persuasion rolls
- +2 Structure
- +5 Speed
- Two modifications add the High Acceleration modification

- Two modifications add 1 Size rank, which also increases Structure
- Two modifications add 1 Durability, to a maximum of 5

Long-Term Modifications

Hunters are in it for the long haul, which means most eventually end up with a personal arsenal of signature weapons, gadgets, and gear. A member of the Lucifuge doesn't want to recalibrate her EMF reader to pick up the presence of different kinds of demons each time, so she modifies it to easily cycle through the three frequencies she needs in seconds. Someone who hunts primarily vampires has a variety of creative ways to put a pointy wooden object through a dead heart on hand at all times. Every hunter's private cache is unique, and some turn a decent profit by buying, selling, and trading modified equipment to other cells.

Below is a more detailed list of common modifications hunters make to various kinds of equipment. The Availability of a modification adds to that of the original item and reflects how difficult it is to acquire the materials necessary to make the modification. If this would increase an item's Availability beyond five dots, it requires multiple intervals of a Merit's use or multiple Skill rolls to acquire the custom version, or clever bartering and roleplay; nothing can have an Availability beyond ten effective dots. Modification penalties given are the built-in penalties imposed on Build Equipment rolls to modify the original item.

[THIS IS A CHART]

Modification	Equipment Type	Availability	Build Equipment penalty/Vehicle mods
+1 weapon modifier	Weapons	••	-1 per +1 bonus, max. +3
+1 general <i>or</i> ballistic armor rating	Armor	••	-1 per increase, max. +3
+10 short/medium/long range	Ranged weapons	••	-1 per 10 yards, max. double original range
Bane mods*	Weapons/Armor	•••••	-1-3 depending on complexity
Balance optimization/recoil reduction (-1 Str req., min. 1)	Weapons/Armor	••	-1
Built-in flashlight	Weapons/Armor	••	-2
Vehicle ramming weapons**	Vehicles	•••	2 vehicle mods

* Salt shells and salt-and-pepper spray (p. XX) are simple examples of bane mods; others include using antiballistic gel made with holy water in a bulletproof vest, making bullets or knife blades out of silver, or sewing bells into a suit of body armor.

**For example, blades or stakes jutting from the front bumper. When hitting light objects, the weapons take the reciprocal damage on a failed Dexterity + Drive roll instead of the vehicle, and damage dealt to the target is lethal.

[END OF CHART]

Sample Custom Gear

Below are some examples of modified gear hunters keep handy to even the odds against monstrous foes or track down the untraceable.

Armaments

Bayonet

Availability • or ••, Modification Penalty -1 or -2

Effect: A rifle or shotgun can mount a bayonet, which is a blade attached to the barrel so the wielder can engage in melee combat without switching weapons, onto a built-in metal lug; but many hunters simply duct tape a knife to a gun and call it a day. The former has higher Availability and levies a greater Build penalty but is more stable. Any long-barreled firearm with a bayonet attached can use the traits for a spear (p. XX) at close range. The Availability 1 version snaps clean off when the wielder rolls a dramatic failure. Many hunters attach knives made of silver or iron to their rifles for use as bane weapons.

Flamethrower

Effect: Ordinary flamethrowers come in two types: civilian, for clearing out vegetation, and military, for dealing with enemy fortifications. See the Ranged Weapons chart above for their traits; the capacity given is its equivalent clip size for purposes of knowing when to reload the tank with fluid or propane. Flamethrowers are *incendiary*, meaning they inflict the Burning Tilt if they deal any damage to the target, but each attack can only deal damage up to the flame's size + heat. Normal flamethrowers inflict flames of bonfire size (Damage 2) and Bunsen burner heat (+2 damage). Attacks use Dexterity + Firearms but suffer a -2 if the attacker doesn't have an appropriate specialty. A flamethrower is capable of short, medium, and long bursts just like an automatic firearm (p. XX), and the target's Defense doesn't apply against long bursts. Armor only applies if it's specifically fire-resistant, or a monster has a particular power that protects it.

A hunter can customize a flamethrower with an adjustable nozzle that changes the kind of stream it creates, with a modification Availability of • and penalty of -3. A focused jet stream increases its ranges by 10 yards each and the heat of its flame by +1. A wide spray reduces the total multiple target penalty for medium and long bursts by 2. A mist spray allows the weapon to fire only at its short range but eliminates the multiple target penalty entirely and allows multiple targets on a short burst. Such nozzles have a normal setting as well. Switching nozzle modes is an instant action.

Actual flamethrowers can be hard to come by, not to mention cumbersome to carry into a fight, but fire is such an essential part of a hunter's arsenal that few leave home without knowing how to make one in a pinch. A character can jury rig a civilian-level flamethrower with a gun casing or garden hose, fuel, and a lighter. She can also make a homemade version (modification Availability •, penalty -1) that's much cheaper and easier to build but less effective and more dangerous. Rigging a lighter to line up with the barrel of a water gun and ignite when someone pulls the trigger, and then filling the gun's chamber with lighter fluid, WD-40, or another flammable liquid, is a quick-and-dirty way to set monsters on fire. These flames are smaller (Damage 1), and they only cause the Burning Tilt after at least one full turn of continuous fire. Dramatic failures with such weapons set the wielder herself on fire. Hunters can jury rig less-permanent versions of this in the moment with nothing more than a lighter and an aerosol can of hair spray.

Mirror Darts

Availability ••, Modification Penalty -1

Effect: Cautious hunters take few chances when it comes to a deadly monster spotting them before they're ready. By attaching small mirrors to magnetic or sticky darts loaded into an air

rifle or blowgun and fired at strategic points on walls or other surfaces, a hunter can keep out of sight while spying around corners and give themselves better line of sight for shooting past obstacles. Placing a mirror dart requires a successful Dexterity + Firearms roll, which the target may oppose with Wits + Composure -2 to notice the dart. Using it to help aim a ranged attack reduces all penalties for concealment by one, including those for firing *from* concealment.

Repeating Crossbow

Availability ••, Modification Penalty -3

Effect: The crossbow's biggest downside is its incredibly slow rate of fire due to the time it takes to reload a single bolt. Hunters rig repeating crossbows that can load and fire additional bolts quickly from a magazine atop the shaft or replace the string entirely with a compressed air mechanism that can propel bolts from a rotating cylinder. These don't fire as far or as forcefully, but six tries in a row can make up for that.

Retractable Weapons

Availability •, Modification Penalty -2

Effect: Hunters who prefer small melee weapons like daggers, stakes, and batons rig them up to spring-loaded mechanisms they wear on their forearms. This way, they can hide their weapons under jacket sleeves and bring them to hand with a flick of the wrist; a character can draw a loaded retractable weapon reflexively, but it takes three turns to reload the mechanism to do it again.

Salt-and-Pepper Spray

Availability •, Modification Penalty -1

Effect: While pepper spray does a good job of distracting everyday assailants, monsters often don't react the way a human would to an eyeful of capsaicin. Dissolving a measure of salt into the mix makes creatures that can't abide salt flinch like anyone else, suffering the normal effects of pepper spray in addition to the usual bane effects. The victim suffers the Stun Tilt. An opponent struck suffers a -5 penalty to all actions. This penalty can be reduced by one for every turn spent rinsing the eyes with water.

Salt Shells

Availability •, Modification Penalty -1

Effect: Normal shotgun shells are filled with shot — a cluster of tiny, round metal pellets. A hunter can fill a shotgun shell with rock salt instead, a trick for making the guns less lethal to normal targets (-1 damage modifier) but also allowing them to fire a spread of salt at a monster that treats it as a bane.

Stun Gun/Cuffs

Availability •, Modification Penalty -2

Effect: An ordinary stun gun is either handheld or fires darts tethered to the gun itself by wires up to 15 feet long. The handheld version can attack up to 50 times before its battery must recharge, and uses Dexterity + Weaponry - Defense. The ranged version has similar battery life, but the attacker must reload the darts after each shot, and it uses Dexterity + Firearms - Defense. Either version only deals one point of lethal damage on a hit, but the rolled successes subtract

from the target's next dice pool. The ranged version leaves the darts embedded in the target's body, adding three successes automatically each turn; the target can remove them with a Strength + Stamina roll, penalized by the initial rolled successes. With the handheld version, the attacker can roll Strength + Weaponry – (greater of the target's Strength or Defense) to similarly maintain the shock. Once accumulated successes exceed the target's Size, the target collapses into neuromuscular incapacitation. Once the shock ends, this lasts for (10 – target's Stamina) turns.

Hunters who need to capture prey can attach a stun gun's leads to a pair of handcuffs or set of shackles and run 15-foot wires from the cuffs to the trigger mechanism, creating a convenient way to restrain (and potentially torture) creatures that shrug off mere steel. Once the character successfully restrains the target (p. XX), no attack roll is necessary to apply the shock each turn, and he may leave it active continuously or not as he chooses.

Stunbolt/Stakebolt Gun

Availability •, Modification Penalty –1

Effect: A stunbolt gun, or captive bolt pistol, delivers a swift blow of incredible force at close range using compressed air or a blank firearm round to propel the rod inside just a few inches. Hunters use them as-is to punch through thick monster hides, but those who fight things that die when you drive wood through their hearts can replace the steel rod with a sharp wooden stake. When used to target the heart, the stakebolt version only needs to deal 4 damage in one attack to penetrate rather than 5.

Hunters can substitute other things for the rod as well, such as a syringe or silver knife that needs extra oomph to pierce thick skin.

Despite the name, a stunbolt gun is a melee weapon, with traits on p. XX.

High-Tech Devices

Radiation Imaging

Availability ••• or ••••, Modification Penalty –5

Effect: A hunter can modify a camera, either still or video, to pick up more of the electromagnetic spectrum than just the visible range of light. Infrared is the most common wavelength viewed this way, to find fluctuations in temperature that reveal the presence of living things (or ghost possession) even in complete darkness; but if a monster's known for giving off ultraviolet radiation or x-rays, a hunter could find those too with some work. At Availability ••••, she can also add software to a modified digital camera (or pair of augmented reality glasses) to recognize and filter for specific radiation patterns that suggest the presence of certain kinds of monsters.

Signal Jammer

Availability •• or •••, Modification Penalty –1 or –3

Effect: A hunter can modify anything that transmits signals, from walkie talkies to cell phones and Bluetooth devices, to jam signals or cause feedback instead by flooding usable frequencies with noise. Most do it to stop monsters that pretend at civilization from calling for backup, but in some cases the monsters themselves or their inscrutable devices receive otherworldly signals that

use radio frequencies. Disrupting these can give a hunter precious seconds that can turn a fight around.

If a hunter knows the specific frequency she wants to jam, the modification has lower Availability and a lower penalty. Jamming a wide spread of common frequencies requires much more specialized equipment, a generous power supply to drown out other signals, and delicate work.

Hunters can also simply acquire a signal jammer without modifying other equipment; these have Availability ••••.

Investigation Aids

Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Detector

Effect: An ordinary EMF detector is a handheld device that electricians use to pick up traces of electromagnetic fields in appliances and wiring. It has an equipment bonus of +2, Availability •, Durability 1, Size 1, and Structure 2. Hunters use them to detect the presence or recent passage of ghosts and other spirit-like entities, some of which emit electromagnetic fields of varying strengths depending on the Potency of the entity. If the character actively watches an EMF detector when such an entity uses a Dread Power nearby, no roll is required to notice the spike in results.

Some EMF detectors are narrower in usage, picking up only a certain frequency of readings. Others are broadband, picking up a wide variety. A hunter can modify an EMF detector to quickly cycle through a selection of specific frequencies common to various types of spirits, increasing the equipment bonus to +3 to find evidence of those types. This modification has an Availability of • and a penalty of -1 per specific type of spirit for which the hunter wants to calibrate; switching frequencies is a reflexive action.

Hunter's Best Friend

Availability ••, Modification Penalty -3

Effect: The so-called "Hunter's Best Friend," or "Vigil knife," is like an oversized Swiss Army knife containing a collection of fundamental monster-hunting necessities. Any given example may provide different tools depending on who made it, but the basics include several pocketknives made from different materials, like silver and iron; lockpicks; wire-cutters; penlights; blacklights; lighters; and tubes of useful substances, such as C4, blood for leaving false trails, poisons, chemicals, holy water or oil, and ritual components.

Building and Setting Traps

The Build Equipment rules on p. XX detail how characters can make five types of equipment: physical objects, organizations, repositories, plans, and minor mystical talismans. Hunters can also make a sixth type of equipment: traps. Making a trap can involve actually building it from scratch, or just setting it up to await its prey. The dice pool for building a trap uses either Crafts or Survival.

A trap doesn't grant an equipment bonus to actions. Instead, it imposes a penalty to all attempts to escape its effects, whether the victim must free itself from captivity, avoid triggering the trap in the first place, or dive clear of an explosion. Building a trap uses this trait instead of an equipment bonus to determine the built-in penalty for the Crafts roll.

For roleplaying purposes, a trap's Build Equipment penalty can reflect different things. Traps that rely on electronic components or explosives require more care and more skill to set in the first place, while cruder mechanical traps are relatively simple to set but harder to hide effectively.

A trap with the Fragile Condition (p. XX) can only hold a monster until it falls apart, even if the monster fails its roll to escape. Traps meant to deal damage, like a land mine, simply become inert after Fragile resolves. A dramatic failure to build or set a trap usually results in the hunter herself falling victim to the trap's effects. Hunters can risk Willpower (p. XX) to set or spring traps for monsters and can Jury Rig (p. XX) traps during action scenes, but can't combine the two, since every failure on a Jury Rigging action is already a dramatic one.

If a character uses a creature's bane in a trap's construction, the creature suffers all the usual effects of coming into contact with the bane (p. XX). The Storyteller may impose additional penalties to the creature's attempts to escape in this case, but these don't factor into the Build Equipment penalty. However, characters can only build physical traps with these rules, which are only capable of affecting corporeal creatures. To catch ghosts, spirits, and other things that require mystical binding to contain, hunters must use the Bind/Ward Tactic (p. XX).

Trap Triggers

Some traps take effect when the victim activates a certain trigger, like stepping on a pressure plate or turning a doorknob rigged with a hidden switch. Each type of trigger carries an innate trap penalty of its own, reflecting how difficult it is to notice or avoid. A trap's overall penalty is a combination of the trigger's penalty and the effects' penalty, rolled into one as an abstraction of the trap's overall effectiveness, to a maximum of -5.

For instance, a bear trap triggers when someone steps on its pressure plate, which carries a -1 penalty. The trap's effect is a pair of metal jaws that shut tightly on the victim's leg; escaping those represents another -1 penalty, bringing the total trap penalty to -2. Players and Storytellers improvising traps on the fly can estimate the penalty imposed by its intended effects and then add the necessary trigger penalty.

Here are some example triggers:

[THIS IS A CHART]

Trigger	Penalty
Pressure plate/Spring	-1
Tripwire/Snare	-1
Hidden switch/Booby-trapped device	-2
Manual trigger (detonator, lever, etc.)	-2
Motion sensor	-3

[END OF CHART]

Avoiding a Trigger

A character who's about to trigger a trap rolls once to both notice and avoid it. This action is only contested for traps with manual triggers, such as an explosive that a hunter must detonate by hand.

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure — trap penalty vs. Wits + Dexterity

Roll Results

Success: The character notices the trigger in time to avoid the trap's effects.

Exceptional Success: The character avoids the trap's effects and manages to deactivate the trap, ruin it, or make it temporarily inert without another roll.

Failure: The character sets off the trigger but notices it immediately.

Dramatic Failure: The character sets off the trigger and doesn't even notice until the trap's effects take hold; he forfeits any rolls to escape these effects for a number of turns equal to the Crafts rating of whoever set the trap.

Example Traps

Below are some example traps that hunters build or set. The trap penalty listed here is for the trap's *effects only*; any trap that notes activation by trigger adds the appropriate trigger penalty, as above.

Bear Trap

Trap Penalty -1, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5, Availability ••

Effect: A bear trap is a large metal contraption that looks something like a set of deadly jaws. For this reason, they're also commonly called jaw traps. When a creature steps into the bear trap, it triggers the built-in pressure plate, snapping the jaws shut on the creature's leg. Due to the serrated edges on the trap, this can cause massive bleeding or even broken bones.

The jaw trap deals three points of lethal damage and ignores two points of armor or Durability. In an action scene, it also imposes the Leg Wrack Tilt (p. XX). A character trapped in the jaws can attempt to escape as an instant action. Doing so requires a Strength + Stamina roll. Failure causes another point of lethal damage as the jaws dig in further. Creatures without opposable thumbs cannot escape this way and must rip themselves free.

Rolls to hide a bear trap suffer its trap penalty. It's difficult to hide due to its awkward shape and weight.

Deadfall Trap

Trap Penalty -1, Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 7, Availability •

Effect: At its simplest, a deadfall trap is a heavy object or pile of rubble suspended above a trigger. When activated, the object falls and crushes the victim beneath its bulk. Controlled demolition can also create a deadfall trap by destroying structural supports and causing a wall or ceiling — or even an entire building — to collapse on top of the victim.

A deadfall trap deals three levels of lethal damage and imposes the Immobilized Tilt. Escaping requires a Strength + Athletics roll to shift aside the object or rubble. Dramatic failures often inflict the Arm or Leg Wrack Tilt to reflect twisted ankles and the like.

Mine

Trap Penalty -2, Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •••

Effect: A mine is anything designed to do harm when a victim activates the trigger. It could be a proper land mine, but more often hunters create makeshift explosives using gunpowder or chemicals. A mine could release toxic gas or flames instead of exploding or could deal additional shrapnel damage with nails or other sharp objects.

Mines that release tear gas or toxins use the rules for poisons (p. XX) but apply to everyone within a few yards. An incendiary mine sets the victim and objects nearby on fire, per the rules on p. XX. Explosive mines have the following traits: Damage +2, Blast Area 1, Force 2. An explosive mine packed with shrapnel has Damage +3 instead. Mines built to deal damage to vehicles as they pass, rather than individuals, have Blast Area 3 and Force 3, and increase the trap penalty to -3.

The character who triggers a mine doesn't get a roll to dive for cover; he's already doomed himself by failing to avoid the trap in the first place. The Storyteller might allow other characters in the area to roll depending on circumstances.

Explosives

Explosive equipment, such as a grenade or a land mine, has the following traits:

- **Damage:** automatically inflicted on everyone and everything in the blast radius. Aggravated at ground zero, lethal in primary blast area, bashing in secondary area. Objects downgrade levels equal to Durability; remaining aggravated damage bypasses Durability entirely.
- **Blast Area:** listed blast area is the primary area; secondary area is twice that. Ground zero is a smaller area in the explosive's immediate vicinity.
- **Force:** roll Force as an attack dice pool to inflict additional damage; only apply Defense if a victim has supernatural speed. Mundane armor only counts for half its ballistic rating. Add the explosive's Damage trait as a weapon modifier to the rolled successes.
- **Tilts:** anyone who takes damage from an explosive also suffers the Deafened Tilt. Individual explosive types may impose other Tilts also.

Net

Trap Penalty -1, Durability 1, Size 3, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: Characters can deploy nets in many ways. The Restrain grappling move (p. XX) and the Capture Tactic (p. XX) are the most common, but hunters can fire a weighted net from a net gun, or from a camouflaged rocket-powered launcher to catch monsters unawares (which counts as a manual trigger). They can also rig a net with a snare trigger, hiding it underfoot until the prey stands in its center and then hauling it up to hang suspended with the creature inside.

The key to trapping a monster in a net is to entangle it in the mesh, limiting its movements. An entangled target suffers the Immobilized Tilt (p. XX) but attempts to free itself don't cause any damage unless the net is made of razor wire or something similar, in which case it deals one point of lethal damage per escape attempt and has Durability 3 instead.

Pit Trap

Trap Penalty -1 or -2, Durability 1, Size 6, Structure 7, Availability •

Effect: By default, a pit trap is just a deep hole dug into the ground, then covered with foliage, a tarp, rickety planks, or something else to keep it hidden. If it's a permanent feature, it might have walls lined with wood, stone, or another material, which could increase the Durability. Hunters usually build pit traps near something that will attract a monster, like enticing prey or the entrance to a building. If the concealment fools the creature, it falls into the pit when it steps on whatever hides the hole from view and can't climb back out. Ordinary pit traps are usually about two meters deep, but hunters dig them deeper to keep foes with superhuman abilities from leaping out.

Regular pit traps inflict falling damage as normal and impose a -1 total trap penalty, increased by one for every additional meter of depth beyond two meters. A hunter can line the pit with barbed wire or sharp spikes to deal an additional one point of lethal damage and impose a -2 trap penalty instead. She can even tip the spikes with poison to make the trap even meaner. Escaping a pit trap requires a Strength + Athletics - (trap penalty) roll to climb or jump out.

Rigging a pit trap with a trapdoor that the hunter can operate with a lever or electrical controls is an equipment modification with a Build Equipment penalty of -1 or -2 depending on how complex and reliable the mechanism is.

Silent Alarm

Trap Penalty -2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A hunter can rig a silent alarm by pairing a trigger with a device that sends out a signal. A character might receive the signal via radio, cell phone, or something else. Hunters set silent alarms when they want to know when a monster has taken their bait, or when it's too dangerous to directly engage. The alarm has no effect on the monster.

Spring Gun

Trap Penalty -1, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability ••

Effect: Characters can rig a gun, such as a shotgun or rifle, or anything else that launches projectiles, to fire when a victim activates the trigger. Hunters most commonly use these to trap a door, shooting anyone who opens it. Ordinary firearms deal their usual damage. A hunter can use this type of trap to launch just about anything: tranquilizer darts, weighted nets, or even a distinctive scent for tracking. Such a trap might not target the victim directly, but simply exist to make a loud noise and alert the hunters to an intruder's presence.

Appendix B: Tilts

Tilts provide Condition-like mechanical expressions that may be employed during an action scene. This section contains Tilts to add further dimension and flavor to your chronicles. Each presented Tilt is optional and intended for use to set the tone of the story you desire to tell; new Tilts may be created by the Storyteller to accommodate their needs.

Many of these Tilts are mechanical expressions that reflect a sudden and immediate impact to a character's physical or mental health following a dramatic moment or act of violence. They are not to be used to represent long-term disabilities in your game. It is assumed that disabled characters uphold the Vigil just as well as abled characters do.

Arm Wrack

Personal

Description: The character's arm is painfully (and debilitatingly) injured.

Effect: The affected character drops whatever they're holding in that arm and can't use it to attack opponents. If this effect spreads to both limbs, roll only a chance die on any rolls that require manual dexterity, and take -3 to all other Physical actions.

Causing the Tilt: Supernatural power or targeted blow (-2).

Ending the Tilt: Mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by the attack. The Tilt ends when the damage that caused it heals.

Beaten Down

Personal

Description: The character has had the fight knocked out of him.

Effect: The character cannot take active part in the fight without extra effort. The player must spend a point of Willpower each time he wants the character to take a violent action in the fight. He can still run, Dodge, and apply Defense. If he wishes to take another action, the Storyteller should judge whether the action is aggressive enough to require the expenditure.

Causing the Tilt: The character suffers bashing damage in excess of his Stamina or any amount of lethal damage.

Ending the Tilt: The character surrenders and gives the aggressor what he wants. At this point, the character regains a point of Willpower and takes a Beat but can take no further action in the fight. If the aggressor's intent is to kill or injure the character, obviously surrendering isn't a good option.

Blinded

Personal

Description: A sighted character's eyes are suddenly damaged.

Effect: The character suffers a -3 penalty to any rolls that rely on vision — including attack rolls — and halves his Defense if one eye is blinded. That penalty increases to -5 and loss of all Defense if both eyes are affected.

Causing the Tilt: The normal way to inflict the Tilt is to deal damage to the target's eyes, a specified attack with a -5 penalty (see Specified Targets, p. XX). A successful attack normally damages one eye. It takes an exceptional success to totally blind an attacker. An attacker can inflict temporary blindness by slashing at her opponent's brow, throwing sand into his eyes, or kicking up dirt. This requires an attack roll of Dexterity + Athletics with a -3 penalty, and the victim's Defense applies to this attack. If it succeeds, the target is Blinded for the next turn.

Ending the Tilt: If an attack against the character's eye does any points of damage, mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by that attack. If the damage inflicted is aggravated the character loses vision in that eye permanently. Otherwise, the condition ends when the damage that caused the Tilt is healed.

Crowded

Environmental

Description: Bodies press in on all sides. Sweat and perfume cling to the air. Passers-by in a hurry give you little room to move.

Effect: After every missed attack, roll a chance die. On a dramatic failure, something or someone in the background gets harmed. Ranged attacks are also made at a -1 penalty, as aiming for a specific target is difficult when droves of others are in the way.

Causing the Tilt: Any place packed with people can cause the Crowded Tilt. The Tilt can also be used to reflect any location crammed full of objects. Either way, when the Tilt is in effect, it means that collateral damage matters.

Ending the Tilt: Waiting until the crowd clears or taking the fight elsewhere.

Crowded: Traffic

Environmental

Description: For places crowded with people and things, the Crowded Tilt provides an ideal mechanical expression for the dangers of collateral damage. Use this Tilt for a more traffic specific environmental threat.

Effect: The chance that cars or people will get damaged is the same as the Crowded Tilt — roll a chance die. Roll damage against cars as you normally would for any large inanimate object. This fight is highly visible and dashboard cams or cell phones are certainly recording the altercation, which may have dramatic repercussions later. Every other turn, the Storyteller rolls a chance die. On a success, traffic starts moving again.

Causing the Tilt: Fighting in traffic.

Ending the Tilt: Getting the fuck out of there.

Deafened

Personal

Description: The character suddenly can't hear.

Effect: If the character is deaf in one ear, he suffers a -3 penalty to hearing-based Perception rolls. A character deaf in both ears only gets a chance die on hearing-based Perception rolls and suffers a -2 penalty to all combat related dice rolls.

Causing the Tilt: A particularly loud noise within 10 feet of the character may cause temporary hearing loss, as though the character were deaf in both ears. Alternatively, a targeted attack on the ear — at a -4 penalty — can deafen a character.

Ending the Tilt: Deafness caused by loud noises fades after (10 - the victim's Stamina + Resolve) turns. If an attack against the character's ear does any points of damage, mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by that attack. The Tilt ends when the damage that caused the it is healed.

Desperate

Personal

Description: You're on your last legs, but that's not going to stop you.

Effect: A character at the end of her rope may exchange two dice from her attack rolls to increase her damage by 1 (of the same damage type she'd normally cause). This cannot result in more than a -6 penalty for 3 damage. This supersedes the normal limit of -5 on penalties. For example, if her Dexterity + Firearms is 7, she may reduce herself to a Chance die to add 3 damage.

Causing the Tilt: To become Desperate, a character must be suffering a wound penalty and have no Willpower points remaining.

Ending the Tilt: Tilt ends at the end of the scene, or when the character becomes unconscious.

Detritus

Environmental

Description: Fragments of rock litter the ground. Shards of glass gleam and the flickering light of a streetlamp.

Effect: Crossing this area, moving faster than half Speed requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll. Failure means that the character loses his footing and tumbles onto the loose detritus and takes 2 bashing damage. At the Storyteller's discretion, shrapnel or glass may deal lethal damage instead, or inflict the Arm or Leg Wrack Tilt (p. XX).

Causing the Tilt: Any other circumstances in which characters fight somewhere with dangerous fragments on the ground.

Ending the Tilt: The best solution is to take the fight elsewhere, unless the combatants desire to spend their time tidying up the area instead.

Drugged

Personal

Description: The character's mind is addled by mind-altering substances, such as alcohol or drugs.

Effect: A generic narcotic can be represented with one set of modifiers; the character suffers a –2 penalty to Speed (and static Defense, if used) and a –3 penalty to all rolls in combat, including Initiative. The character also ignores wound penalties.

Causing the Tilt: If the character has chosen to take drugs, he suffers their effects. To administer drugs to another character is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a –1 modifier for the improvised weapon. If the drug has to go into a specific body part (such as an arm or mouth), it requires an attack against a specified target.

Ending the Tilt: A generic narcotic lasts for (10 – the victim’s Stamina + Resolve) hours. Medical help, such as pumping the victim’s stomach or flushing his system, halves this time.

Extreme Cold

Environmental (sometimes Personal)

Description: Bone-chilling winds bite through the character or trudging through knee-deep snow takes all of the sensation from his limbs.

Effect: When the temperature is below freezing, characters can’t heal bashing damage. Characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a –1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits –5, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: A frozen environment, outside in the Arctic tundra, a walk-in freezer, etc.

Ending the Tilt: The best way to escape the freezing cold is to find a source of warmth. A character with hypothermia requires medical attention.

Extreme Heat

Environmental (sometimes Personal)

Description: The character might be in a desert with the sun beating down on him or running through the steam tunnels surrounding an old boiler room. This Tilt can also be personal, the result of a fever.

Effect: Characters can’t heal bashing damage — the extreme temperature deals damage at the same rate normal characters heal it. Characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a –1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits –5, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt is usually caused by environmental factors — being out at noon in the desert or spending too long in a sauna or forge.

Ending the Tilt: Get out of the heat. Find shelter or shade or remove yourself from the heat source.

Filthy

Environmental

Description: Stratified filth covers the ground. The smell of decay and refuse clings to the air. Flies buzz at your ears and cockroaches slither at your feet.

Effect: A character with open wounds in a Filthy environment runs the risk of becoming infected, resulting in the Sick Tilt and potentially a worse Condition. For the purposes of this Tilt, define an open wound as any levels of lethal damage or a wound caused by the Bloodied Tilt (p. XX). Depending on the type of filth represented, assign a -2 penalty to Speed and -1 to Dexterity rolls (mounds of trash to navigate, slippery decomposing things on the ground), perception-based rolls (the cloying stench of garbage), fighting rolls (uneasy footing, distractions) or anything else applicable; though unless characters are wading waist-deep into bio-hazardous material, the penalty should not be higher than -1.

Causing the Tilt: Entering a rat-infested, trash-strewn area. Spilling hazardous waste, upending a dumpster or emptying a garbage truck could cause an area to become Filthy.

Ending the Tilt: Leaving the area. Any place befouled enough to be considered Filthy can't be cleaned up in any small amount of time.

Immobilize

Personal

Description: Something holds the character fast, preventing him from moving.

Effect: The character can't do anything but wriggle helplessly. He can't apply Defense against incoming attacks and can't take violent actions. If someone's holding him down, he can spend a point of Willpower to deliver a head butt or similar attack, but even that might not free him.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt may come from the Restrain grapple move, and some monsters' Dread Powers may inflict the Tilt.

Ending the Tilt: An Immobilized target can break free by escaping from a grapple or snapping whatever binds her. If held by an item, roll Strength + Athletics penalized by the item's Durability. If a character's arms and legs are both bound, gain a -2 penalty, up to -4 if hogtied. On a success he breaks free. Each roll, successful or not, deals a point of bashing damage. If held by a Dread Power, the power's effect will fade at the end of the scene. The character can spend a Willpower to gain a Clash of Wills to break free.

Inferno

Environmental

Description: The area is on fire. Anything flammable is either already burning or will be soon.

Effect: All characters suffer a -2 to all rolls due to smoke and heat. After two turns, any character that breathes also suffers 2 bashing per turn due to smoke inhalation. After three turns, the character also suffers 1 lethal per turn from burns and must succeed on a Dexterity + Stamina roll each turn to avoid catching fire (see p. XX).

Ending the Tilt: Different types of fire require different methods to extinguish; in general, cutting off the fire from its fuel sources does the trick. Water, carbon dioxide, sand, and baking soda can be useful, depending on the size and type of the fire. Eventually all fires burn themselves out, but that can be cold comfort in the aftermath of a destructive blaze.

Insane

Personal

Description: The character suffers from a panic attack, sudden imbalance, or a full-on psychotic break.

Effect: The character gains a +1 bonus to all combat rolls but takes actions after everyone else (if two characters suffer from the Insane Tilt, both act after everyone else but compare Initiative as normal). A character suffering from this Tilt cannot spend Willpower in combat and suffers a -3 penalty to all Social rolls.

Causing the Tilt: Any character with an appropriate Condition may acquire the Insane Tilt. The Storyteller can call for a Resolve + Composure roll to resist a general anxiety that gnaws at the character's mind. If the character witnesses something truly horrific the Storyteller can rule that the Tilt is unavoidable.

Certain monsters with mind-affecting powers can apply this Tilt, even to characters who do not have an appropriate Condition.

Ending the Tilt: The specific effects of this Tilt don't normally last beyond the end of the scene. To end it earlier, roll Resolve + Composure as an instant action, contested by a dice pool of (10 - her Willpower). She can't take any other actions that turn and doesn't apply Defense against any attacks.

Insensate

Personal

Description: The character shuts down, either due to extreme fear or sudden pleasure.

Effect: The character can't take any actions until the Tilt is resolved. He can apply Defense to incoming attacks, and if he takes any damage from an attack, he's knocked free of whatever fogged his brain.

Causing the Tilt: Several supernatural powers can leave their victim in a trance-like state of heightened emotion. A great deal of alcohol or a hallucinogenic drug might have similar effects; administering such a drug is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, which suffers a -1 modifier.

Ending the Tilt: The Tilt wears off at the end of the scene. The victim can spend a point of Willpower before then to act normally for one turn. A successful attack will also end the Tilt. If a character has been knocked insensible by drugs, then when this Tilt ends it is replaced with the Drugged Tilt.

Knocked Down

Personal

Description: Something knocks the character to the floor.

Effect: The character is knocked off her feet. If she hasn't already acted this turn, she loses her action. Once she's on the ground, a character is considered prone. The character can still apply Defense against incoming attacks and can attempt to attack from the ground at a -2 penalty.

Causing the Tilt: A melee weapon with a damage modifier of +2 or greater, or a firearm with a damage modifier of +3 or more can be used to knock a character down with the force of the blow. Alternatively, a melee weapon or unarmed attack can knock an opponent down with a targeted attack against the legs (-2 modifier). The attacker declares that he wants to knock his

opponent down, and halves the total damage done (rounding down). On a successful attack, the target is knocked down.

Ending the Tilt: The easiest way to end this Tilt is to stand up, which takes an action. A character who hasn't yet acted can make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, minus any weapon modifier, instead of her normal action. If successful, she avoids the effects of this Tilt.

Leg Wrack

Personal

Description: Pain or numbness in the leg.

Effect: If the leg is broken, sprained, or dislocated, halve your Speed and suffer a -2 penalty on Physical rolls that require movement (and Defense). If both of your legs are wracked, you fall over — taking the Knocked Down Tilt — and cannot get up. Your Speed is reduced to 1; moving precludes other actions. Physical rolls that require movement are reduced to a chance die.

Causing the Tilt: Some supernatural powers can cripple a victim's limbs. A character can have his leg knocked out by a targeted blow to the leg (-2 penalty) that deals more damage than their Stamina.

Ending the Tilt: If the Tilt is inflicted as a result of an attack, mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by that attack. The Tilt ends when that damage that caused it has healed.

Moving

Environmental

Description: Your stage of battle charges forward, shuddering beneath you as it goes. It's a struggle to keep your footing and fight at the same time.

Effect: At the end of every turn, characters must make Dexterity + Athletics rolls or suffer the Knocked Down Tilt. Other movement rolls (such as leaping from seat to seat on a bus or a subway car) and Dodge rolls are penalized by -1, -2 if the ride is rough or the vehicle moving extremely fast. If the struggle takes place in a small vehicle, such as the back seat of a car, apply the effects of the Tight Tilt (p. XX) as necessary. If your characters fight on the outside of a moving vehicle, failing the roll to stay upright may have other consequences, such as falling a great distance or into traffic. Fighting outside the vehicle imposes the full -2 penalty, and may also require that your characters dodge debris, overpasses, low-flying birds, and so on.

Causing the Tilt: Fighting in a moving vehicle. The vehicle may already be in motion before the fight breaks out, such as a clash on an airplane. A bus or a train may lurch into motion after the fight has already begun, or a driver may floor it when his passengers draw knives.

Ending the Tilt: When the drive slams on the breaks, when the vehicle reaches its destination, or when the object in motion is enacted upon by another force.

Poisoned

Personal

Description: You've got poison inside you.

Effect: This Tilt applies a general sense of being poisoned to a character without worrying about Toxicity during combat. For the purposes of this Tilt, a poison is either “moderate” or “grave” — a moderate poison causes one point of bashing damage per turn of combat, while a grave poison ups that to one point of lethal damage per turn. If the Storyteller cares to continue the effects of the poison outside of combat, he can apply the standard rules for handling poisons and toxins when combat is complete.

Causing the Tilt: Ingesting a poison inflicts this Tilt. Injecting your opponent with a poison counts as a Dexterity + Weaponry attack and suffers a -1 modifier. Certain monsters may inflict this Tilt as a part of a normal attack.

Ending the Tilt: Immediate medical attention. Roll Stamina + Resolve as a reflexive action each turn. If your character intends to act (meaning, takes a non-reflexive action), the roll suffers a -3 penalty. Success counteracts the damage for one turn.

Pinned

Personal

Description: Your limb is caught or trapped beneath something heavy.

Effect: Your character is held down by an inanimate object, rather than grappled. The character cannot move as her body is pinned. If the object has a Size less than the character's Strength, she may move at half Speed but risks taking damage for doing so. Depending on how the character is pinned (one arm trapped between a dumpster and a wall, for example), she may still take other actions with her free appendages.

Causing the Tilt: A character may force her target between two objects, or throw an object with the intent to pin, both requiring opposed Strength + Athletics rolls. Scenery can also tumble down and entrap characters who do not get out of the way fast enough. An attacker may also throw knives or fire arrows to pin her target, which functions as a called shot. If the attack hits, rather than dealing damage, this Tilt is applied.

Ending the Tilt: A character must spend the time and effort to work her body away from whatever has her pinned. She may need the assistance of other characters. Depending on how the character finds herself pinned, she may also suffer from the Arm or Leg Wrack Tilt after being freed.

Sick

Personal

Description: The character suffers symptoms related to illness, such as nausea or fever.

Effect: The sickness is either “moderate” or “grave.” A moderate sickness causes a -1 penalty to all actions during combat. That penalty increases by one every two turns (the first two turns, the character suffers a -1 penalty, the next two turns the penalty is -2, and so on up to a maximum of -5 on turn nine). A grave sickness inflicts the same dice penalties as a mild sickness, plus 1 point of bashing damage per turn of combat.

Causing the Tilt: Certain supernatural effects may cause sickness. Otherwise, exposure to the disease or a sample may cause it.

Ending the Tilt: Penalties fade at a rate of one point per turn once the character has a chance to rest, but any damage inflicted remains until the character can heal.

Stunned

Personal

Description: The character is dazed and unable to think straight.

Effect: A character with the Stunned Tilt loses her next action, and halves her Defense until she can next act.

Causing the Tilt: A character can be stunned by any attack that deals at least as much damage as her Size. Some weapons have a “stun” special ability. These double the weapon modifier only for the purposes of working out whether the attacker inflicts the Stunned Tilt. Attacks against the target’s head (see Specified Targets, p. XX) count the character’s Size as 1 lower. Certain Dread Powers may cause this Tilt.

Ending the Tilt: The effects of this Tilt normally only last for one turn. The character can end the Tilt during her own action by reflexively spending a point of Willpower to gather her wits, though she suffers a –3 modifier to any actions she takes that turn.

Tight

Environmental

Description: You and your opponent can barely throw punches in these close quarters. You stand close enough to smell each other’s sweat and resort to knees and elbows.

Effect: The characters fight in a narrow or enclosed space, which leaves little room to maneuver. Any of the following options can be used to reflect fights in a tight space:

- Size 3 or higher weapons cannot be used
- –2 penalty to fighting rolls actions requiring space, such as Firearms, thrown weapons, two handed weapons, or lavish kicks and punches
- Halve Speed
- Reduce all damage ratings by 1

Causing the Tilt: Fighting in a cage match, clashing with an opponent in a narrow hallway, ambushing a target in an airplane bathroom, and so on.

Ending the Tilt: Moving to a less cramped space. A character with a Specialty in close-quarters fighting may also ignore applicable penalties while fighting in tight spaces.

Unstable

Environmental

Description: The structure beneath your feet shudders as you move. It’s moments from collapsing beneath you.

Effect: Any kind of movement requires extreme care, imposing a –2 penalty to movement rolls, which can include violence at Storyteller’s discretion. Characters may move at half Speed without issue but must make Dexterity + Athletics rolls to move faster than that. Failure leads to

a swift fall onto whatever lies below, incurring damage as appropriate. Depending on how far your character falls, a slip from an unstable place may be fatal.

Causing the Tilt: A condemned building, hastily erected barricade, a makeshift ladder or any other construct on the verge of breaking can be sources of the Unstable Tilt. A character could also sabotage something stable.

Ending the Tilt: The Tilt ends when the combatants move away from the Unstable area, when the unstable structure is secured or collapses.

Viscous

Environmental

Description: Mud, tar, swampy water or worse clings to your legs, pulls on your shoes and threatens to suck you in.

Effect: Clinging goop halves Speed. The longer characters fight in viscous material, the more difficult it becomes as the wet and sticky substance weighs down clothing. For every turn after the first, characters accumulate a -1 penalty to physical actions, to a max of -3. If at any point a character falls or is thrown into the viscous goo, he automatically accumulates the maximum penalty.

Causing the Tilt: Throwing down in a swamp, mud-soaked vacant lot, tar bed, or something stranger or more horrifying. An area could be flooded with goop ahead of time, or a fight could take place in a small room rapidly filling with mud or sewage.

Ending the Tilt: Getting out of the affected area.

Winded

Personal

Description: The character's chest tightens, and she can't breathe.

Effect: As the character struggles to breathe, all Physical rolls actions suffer a -1 penalty. Depending on how the character lost her breath, this penalty may increase as high as -3.

Causing the Tilt: Air may be knocked from an opponent by a targeted strike with a -2 penalty. If this inflicts at least 1 point of damage, the default -1 penalty applies. If this exceeds the character's Stamina, inflict a cumulative -1 as she struggles to breathe. Similarly, a character that falls and lands hard can become Winded. Any damage taken from a fall exceeding Stamina incurs the full -3 penalty.

Ending the Tilt: Taking at least a minute to do nothing but catch your breath ends the Tilt. In the thick of a fight, a character may try to pause and catch her breath, requiring a success on a penalized Stamina + Composure roll.

Appendix C: Conditions

Conditions in Hunter may be acquired after visiting mysterious places, encounter a monster's Dread Powers, or through normal gameplay. They represent mechanical effects a character experiences following a dramatic moment in a chronicle, and are not to be used to add rules to a character's permanent disability.

The use of Conditions is at the Storyteller's discretion, but should be addressed with players prior to gameplay.

Addicted (Persistent)

Your character is addicted to something, whether it's drugs, gambling, or other destructive behaviors. She needs to indulge her addiction regularly to keep it under control, and it takes over her life. Choose a specific addiction upon taking this Condition; characters can take this Condition multiple times for different addictions. Being unable to feed the addiction results in the Deprived Condition.

Possible Sources: Alcoholism, substance abuse, an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Resolution: Gain or lose a dot of Integrity.

Beat: Your character chooses to get a fix rather than fulfill an obligation or causes significant complications for her cell by indulging her addiction.

Amnesia (Persistent)

Your character is missing a portion of her memory. An entire period of her life is just gone. This causes massive difficulties with friends and loved ones.

Beat: Something problematic arises, such as a forgotten arrest warrant or old enemy.

Broken (Persistent)

Whatever you did or saw, something inside you snapped. You can barely muster up the will to do your job anymore, and anything more emotionally intense than a raised voice makes you flinch and back down. Apply a -2 to all Social rolls and rolls involving Resolve, and a -5 to any use of the Intimidation Skill.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose a dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You back down from a confrontation or fail a roll due to this Condition.

Crippled (Persistent)

Your character has limited or no ability to walk. Her Speed trait is effectively 1. She must rely on a wheelchair or other device to travel. A manual wheelchair's Speed is equal to your character's Strength and requires use of her hands. Electric wheelchairs have a Speed of 3 but allow the character free use of her hands.

An injury can cause this Condition temporarily, in which case it is resolved when the injury heals, and the character regains mobility.

Beat: Danger or severe inhibition due to the disability.

Demoralized

Your character is shaken by the harsh realities of the Vigil and hesitates in the face of the enemy. Spending a Willpower point only adds one die to the pool rather than three when she takes an action against a monster, and you cannot risk Willpower at all. Take a -4 to Initiative rolls, and a -2 penalty to contested actions and resistance rolls that use Resolve or Composure.

Resolution: Achieve an exceptional success on an attack or contested roll against a monster, win a fight against a monster, or escape an encounter with a monster unharmed.

Deprived

Your character suffers from an addiction. Because your character is without it, she's unable to focus and contain herself. Remove one die from her Stamina, Resolve, and Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits; it simply influences dice pools that use these Attributes.

A character suffering from addiction may take this Condition as a Persistent Condition.

Resolution: Indulge in the deprived Vice, therapy.

Embarrassing Secret

Your character has a secret from his past that could come back to haunt him. If this secret gets out, he could be ostracized or maybe even arrested. If the secret gets out, the Condition becomes the Notoriety Condition (below).

Resolution: The secret gets out.

Fragile

The equipment the character is using to aid his action won't last long for some reason, whether because it's an object put together with duct tape and bubble gum, or because his relationship with the people involved sours, or because his computer ends up suffering a blue screen of death and the data is corrupted. A plan may be Fragile because of disrupted communication between the characters, or because of an unexpected hurdle, etc. The equipment ceases to exist in any usable form after a number of uses equal to its creator's dots in the Skill used to build it.

Possible Sources: Achieving a failure on a Build Equipment roll.

Resolution: The equipment falls apart one way or another. Plans grant one Beat to each player whose character is involved when this Condition resolves.

Fugue (Persistent)

Something terrible happened, and rather than deal with it or let it break you, your mind shuts it out. You are prone to blackouts and lost time. Whenever circumstances become too similar to the situation that led to you gaining this Condition, roll Resolve + Composure. If you fail the roll, the Storyteller controls your character for the next scene, but your character, left to his own devices, will seek to avoid the conflict and get away from the area.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose a dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You suffer the effects of this Condition.

Guilty

Your character is experiencing deep-seated feelings of guilt and remorse. This Condition is commonly applied after a failed breaking point roll, for hunters. While the character is under the effects of this Condition, they receive a -2 to any Resolve or Composure rolls to defend against Subterfuge, Empathy, or Intimidation rolls.

Resolution: The character makes restitution for whatever they did; the character confesses their crimes.

Informed

Your character has a breadth of research information based on the topic she investigated. When you make a roll relating to the topic, you may shed this Condition. If the roll failed, it is instead considered to have a single success. If it succeeded, the roll is considered an exceptional success. The roll that benefits from the Informed Condition can be any relevant Skill roll. For example, a character with Informed (ghosts) might gain its benefit when using researched information to build a weapon from its bane using the Crafts Skill. Combat rolls cannot benefit from this Condition.

Resolution: Use the Condition for its benefit.

Inspired

Your character is deeply inspired. When your character takes an action pertaining to that inspiration, you may resolve this Condition. Gain a Willpower point and consider the roll an exceptional success on three successes, instead of five.

Resolution: Use the Condition for its benefit.

Leveraged

Your character has been blackmailed, tricked, convinced, or otherwise leveraged into doing what another person wishes. Note this Condition as Leveraged (Character). You may have Leveraged multiple times, for different characters. Any time that character requests something of yours, you may shed this Condition if your character does as requested without rolling to resist.

Resolution: Shed the Condition as noted; turn the tables on the person.

Madness (Persistent)

Your character saw or did something that jarred her loose from reality. This isn't a mental illness born of brain chemistry. This madness is the product of supernatural tampering or witnessing something that humanity was never meant to comprehend. The Storyteller has a pool of dice equal to (10 - the character's Integrity). Once per chapter, the Storyteller can apply those dice as a negative modifier to any Mental or Social roll made for the character.

Beat: The character fails a roll because of this Condition. If you regain a dot of Integrity, lose another dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point, you can shed this Condition.

Merciless (Persistent)

The hunt is all you are. You can't imagine a life without it anymore. Maybe you love it so much you can't give it up, or maybe you just forgot who you were without it. Monsters lurk around every corner and you're ready to do what's necessary to stop them, one way or another. You must spend a Willpower once per chapter to avoid following up on evidence that might indicate a

new monster's presence or activity, within one full scene of your exposure to it. Each distinct presence or activity requires a separate Willpower expenditure. You no longer regain Willpower when you sleep unless you've made progress in finding or eliminating a monster that day. The first failure you experience on an Empathy or perception-based roll in a chapter inflicts the Spooked Condition.

When you risk Willpower on an action that would fulfill your Vice, the Willpower point you gain from doing so may exceed your maximum Willpower pool by one. This excess Willpower point must be spent before the end of the chapter or it vanishes.

Resolution: Gain a fourth dot of Integrity.

Beat: Alienate an ordinary person *or* another hunter in pursuit of your Vigil. You may choose to automatically fail a Social roll against such a person to gain the Beat.

Notoriety

Whether or not your character actually did something heinous in the past, the wrong people think he did. This causes disgust or ostracism by the common public. Your character suffers a -2 on any Social rolls against those that know of his notoriety. If using Social Maneuvering (p.XX), the character must open one extra Door if his target knows of his notoriety. Oftentimes, this Condition comes from rumors and smear campaigns.

Resolution: The story is debunked, or the character's name is cleared.

Obsession

Something's on your character's mind, and you just can't shake it. When you're abiding by that obsession, exploring that emotion, or otherwise pursuing the object of the obsession, enjoy the 10-again quality on all rolls. When you're not, you lose the 10-again quality.

Resolution: Fulfilling the obsession, therapy.

Shaken

Something has frightened your character extensively. Any time your character is taking an action where that fear might hinder her, you may opt to fail the roll (before you've made the roll) and shed this Condition. This Condition can be imposed by a successful breaking point roll.

Resolution: Fail a roll, as noted.

Soulless (Persistent)

A creature or phenomenon has stripped the character of their soul. Without a soul, they can't attempt abjuration, warding, or binding. They are also more susceptible to possession – any dice pools to resist being take over or possessed by another entity are at a -2 dice penalty.

The effects on Integrity and Willpower, though, are more severe. For as long as they have this Condition, they do not regain Willpower through surrender or rest, and their use of Virtue and Vice is reversed. They may regain on Willpower point per scene by fulfilling their Virtue and regains full Willpower once per chapter by fulfilling their Vice. Regaining Willpower through Vice, however, is now a breaking point with a -5 penalty unless the character has reached Integrity 1.

Resolution: This Condition is only resolve when the character regains their soul.

Beat: Gain a beat whenever the character loses Integrity because they indulged their Vice.

Spooked

Your character has seen something supernatural — not overt enough to terrify them, but unmistakably otherworldly. How your character responds to this is up to you, but it captivates your character and eats their attention. You can shed this Condition when your character's fear and fascination causes them to do something that hinders the group or complicates things (they go off alone to investigate a strange noise, stay up all night researching, runs off instead of holding their ground, etc.)

Resolution: Shed the Condition as noted.

Steadfast

Your character is confident and resolved. When you've failed a roll, resolve this Condition to instead treat the action as if you'd rolled a single success. If the roll was a chance die, you may resolve this Condition and roll a single die instead.

Resolution: Use the Condition, as noted.

Stoic

Your character shut down the parts of herself that care. She won't open up to anyone and pretends she's fine when she isn't. Gain a two-die bonus to Subterfuge rolls to hide her emotions or avoid talking about a traumatic experience. She doesn't suffer the untrained penalty for any Subterfuge roll. Until she resolves this Condition, she can't purchase dots of Integrity, and she can't spend or risk Willpower on actions that would reveal her true feelings.

Resolution: Opt to fail a roll to resist Empathy or a supernatural effect that would read your character's emotions or mental state.

Swooned

Your character has butterflies in his stomach. Note this Condition as Swooned (Character). He may have multiple instances of this Condition, reflecting affection for multiple characters. He suffers a -2 to any rolls that would adversely affect the object of his affection. The object of his affection gains +2 on any Social rolls against him. If the object of the Swoon is attempting social maneuvering on the Swooned character, the impression level is considered one higher (maximum of perfect; see p. XX).

Resolution: Do something for the object that puts your character in danger; opt to fail a roll to resist a social action by the object.

Vendetta

Your character will stop at nothing to punish whoever she blames for what's happened to her or what she's done. Her vengeance needn't be violent, but one way or another it must ruin her nemesis. Until she resolves this Condition, she gains *Vengeful* as an additional Vice, though she still may only gain Willpower through a Vice once per scene. She enjoys a two-die bonus to rolls that work toward her vendetta and suffers a two-die penalty to those that don't.

Resolution: Achieve revenge or suffer another breaking point that convinces your character to abandon her vendetta.

Vigilant (Persistent)

The hunt is bone-deep. It's your life now. You accept that some things must be done for the good of humanity, and you're the one who has to do them. Monsters could lurk around any corner and you're ready to do what's necessary to save innocent lives. You must spend a Willpower point once per chapter to avoid following up on evidence that might indicate a new supernatural danger to a human being, within one full scene of your exposure to it. Each distinct danger requires a separate Willpower expenditure. The first failure you experience on an Empathy or Perception-based roll in a chapter inflicts the Spooked Condition (p. XX).

When you risk Willpower on an action that would fulfill your Virtue, the Willpower point you gain from doing so may exceed your maximum Willpower pool by one. This excess Willpower point must be spent before the end of the chapter or it vanishes.

Resolution: Gain a seventh dot of Integrity or lose your fourth dot.

Beat: Alienate an ordinary person because of the Vigil. You may choose to automatically fail a Social roll against such a person to gain the Beat.

Violent

Your character throws herself into the hunt with a single-minded fervor, driven to senseless acts of violence by a spate of self-loathing and a rejection of common sense. Violent actions gain a two-die bonus, while nonviolent actions suffer a two-die penalty. At the end of each scene during which this Condition applies, if she has not committed a violent act in that scene, she must spend a Willpower or attack the character that is closest to being an enemy in her vicinity, even if that's just someone who disagrees with her.

Resolution: Deal damage to another character equal to or exceeding the hunter's Resolve.

Volatile

The equipment the character is using to aid his action is ready to blow at any moment, figuratively or literally. One wrong word, one badly placed rune, and it's time to duck and cover. A plan may be Volatile because it backfires terribly, or because a Storyteller character betrays the group, etc. Any failure achieved while benefiting from the equipment is automatically a dramatic failure. The equipment may continue to exist after this Condition is resolved, but if so, reduce its equipment bonus by two dice. This can create equipment *penalties* if the original bonus was fewer than two dice.

Possible Sources: Achieving a failure on a Build Equipment roll.

Resolution: The character suffers a dramatic failure while using the equipment. Plans grant one Beat to each player whose character is involved when this Condition resolves.