

HUNTER

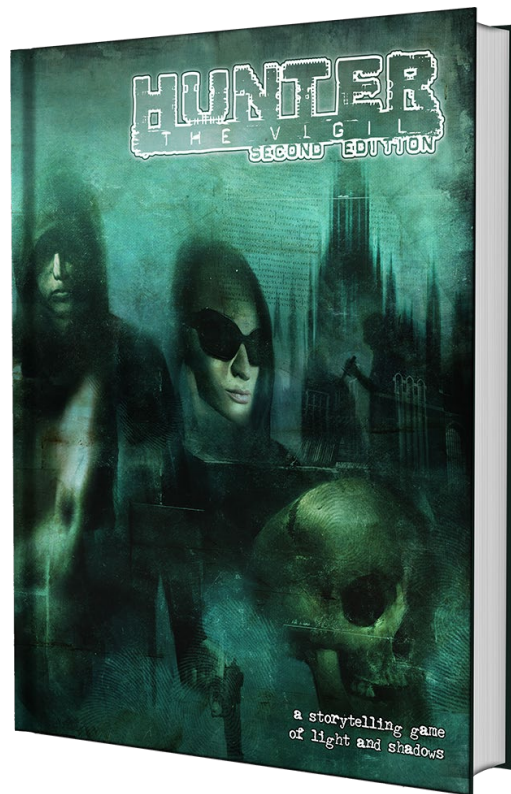
THE VIGIL

SECOND EDITION

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview

Character Creation

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 hunters' core identities and beliefs.



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).