

The Hunters Hunted II



20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

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The Anarchs Unbound live outlining panel attendees at Atlanta by Night for the best World of Darkness panel in recorded history.



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Here Goes Everything

Everyone has a breaking point. Remember that.

It took me a long time to sit down and write this letter. Not only did I have to work out exactly what I was going to say, but writing it also represents, in some fashion at least, that I have come to the realization that I might fail in what I'm about to do. I hope to God, though, that this is not the case and that this message will be read by none other than my own eyes.

I'll dispense with an introduction, because who I am is unimportant in the grand scheme of things. It's what I've *found* that's important. Besides, I don't think we ever really introduced ourselves properly when we met, so I doubt you'd remember me all that well anyway. I just hope that after what I have to say, you will look at the reports, the photos, the video footage, all the evidence I have collected for you on the enclosed USB key.

To put everything in context, I'll lead you through the events that led to my revelation. To simply state the end result in a couple of words or a simple sentence would, I suspect, simply result in you tearing up this letter and throwing it in the trash. To be honest, I have a seed of doubt in my mind that says this might well be the case anyway, even when you finally reach the heart of the matter, but I have to proceed in the manner that I think will ensure success.

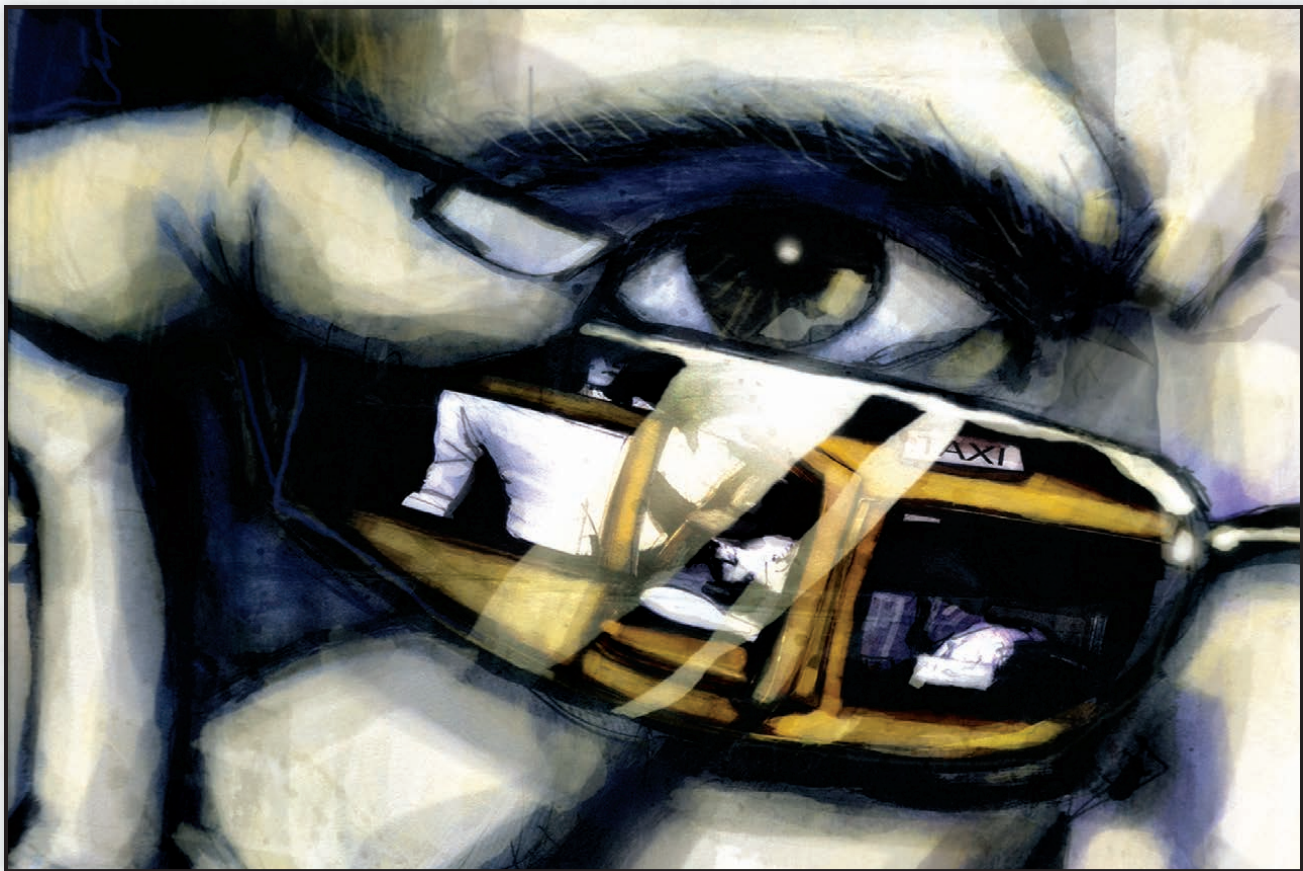
On a more jovial occasion, I'd probably write something like "here goes nothing." In this case, it's more like "here goes everything...."

I first came to the city a couple of years ago. I used to work in the North for one of the national papers. I did pretty well for myself, even if I do say so myself, but not enough for any widespread recognition. Having long had the ambition to segue into more literary circles, I moved here upon my resignation to pursue a career as a writer.

The initial plan for my first book was to write a modern homage to Joyce's "Dubliners," using our very own city here as the backdrop in the modern day: an examination of modern life in the metropolis, albeit with a darker slant perhaps. After all, I think the world has become a much darker place since Joyce's time.

I began by looking for interesting sites around the city and researching historical events that I could use as inspiration for my stories. The more I dug, the more I ran into the face of recent events that overshadowed the past. You might recall some of these from the papers. I know that when I pored over some of those archives, I remembered the eye-catching headlines, so if you tend to keep an eye on the media like I do, you might well recognize them if you saw them again.

Around the spring of last year, police recovered a body from the shoreline, and the headline of "GANGLAND TRASH" splashed across the front page the next day. (No prizes for guessing which publication ran that particular piece of sensitive and respectful reportage.) A presumed gangland hit, the body had washed up on the riverbank just out from the suburbs and was found by a young boy fishing one morning. What the reports didn't mention was the odd



condition in which the boy had found the body. Its throat had been torn asunder, as though savaged by a madman.

Now, I can't remember how long you said you'd been in town over the coffee we shared. Likewise, I don't recall asking if you'd ever been down on the south side, a couple of blocks from the park, to what, up until last year at least, had been one of the more popular, albeit smaller, live music bars in the city. Jake's Place was situated down an alley off the main street, the name of which escapes me now. The story ran in the paper that Jake's Place was closing down after the owner had died in a fight on the premises one night last autumn. It was quite an extensive article, recounting the man's life and achievements at the popular venue over a two-page spread near the front of the paper. It was a pleasant, artistic piece meant to say "farewell" to the place.

Well, I've got a few friends in that particular publication from my days up north — they're part of the same syndicated group for which I worked, so we bump into each other every so often — and I mentioned in passing to one such friend about how good I thought the article was. He promptly went off the record, stating that the first draft would never have been published, owing to the disturbing details it had originally included. When I inquired as to what he meant, all he said was "That wasn't a barroom brawl. It was a slaughter."

After a little more digging, I found that he was right. Seven people, including the owner Jake, had all died there that night. The first officer on the scene after an anonymous tip-off said that it looked just like a wild animal had torn them to pieces. The police promptly made an arrangement with the media to spare the public from the more gruesome details. Given the horrific nature of the deaths, the police said it would only upset people.

I could go on listing anecdotes, but there's no need to dwell on the lurid elements. I must admit, I just thought it was a run of odd killings at first, and for a while, I even contemplated basing the short stories for my collection upon the more macabre of these events. That soon changed.

My own involvement in events unfolding on our doorstep occurred a few days before Christmas last year. Another headline you'll probably remember: "CHRISTMAS CHAOS!" No one knew the exact reason why riots broke out across the city on those cold December nights. The media speculated they arose from the economic problems facing the people, compounded by the almost obligatory consumerist frenzy of the holiday season. I saw them with my own eyes, though I wish to God I hadn't.

I was heading back from a party that night. I'd drunk enough to mean I couldn't drive home, but not enough to impair me beyond reasonable action, so I took the subway most of the way back across town. I was coming out of the station... I still remember the moment, all too vividly. The cold wind, the rain on the verge of turning to snow, the sound of crying and screaming, and the wild sound of feet rushing past on the streets around me. And then they came around the corner....

The papers made it out that there were dozens of people in the gangs of "rioters." There were just five in the group that found me, but they were far from rioters. Blood-splattered, fingers extended as though they were claws, reddened eyes, and extended canines... fangs....

Do I need to spell it out for you? Do I need to state exactly *what*, rather than *who* stood before me on that street corner?

This is the point where I pray that you will carry on reading. This is the point where I hope that it's all been worth a damn. This is where you either believe me enough to carry on, or you cast aside what I have to say and move on with your life. Here's hoping.

If you're still reading, thank you. Those two simple words can't express just how much I appreciate your leap of faith right now. I know how insane it sounds. I know how unbelievable it is. I know – I was there and felt it all in those few seconds as I stared into those hungry eyes that looked back at me. I did what any rational human being would do in my position: run like all hell.

I ran all the way back home, losing them a couple of blocks before I got there. And I don't really think I lost them. I think something else seized their attention, someone they surprised, but who was too paralyzed by fear to run. That didn't stop me from going straight inside, locking and barricading the doors and windows, turning out the lights, and hiding in a corner with a baseball bat for the rest of the night. It was mid-morning when I finally summoned enough courage to open the door and check outside.

I must have picked up the phone a good half a dozen times, deciding whether or not to call the police and report what I'd seen. In the end, I couldn't do it. What the hell would I have told them? "Hi, officer, I'd like to report, um, vampires." I knew if I'd got some smartass ringing through to me with that, I would have a sarcastic reply ready and waiting for them about

April 1st being a few months away. I had no proof, nothing but my word to go on. No one was going to believe me on my say-so alone. I couldn't sit by and do nothing, though. I had to make people believe.

Then again... what if it was all a drunken delusion? Trust me. There were plenty of moments when I questioned myself that way, too. In the end, I went back out there to find what evidence I could. No one would admit to anything besides seeing "rioters" running through the streets. The look in some of their eyes told me there was something more to it, though. They were too scared to say anything, too scared to believe what they saw was real. In the end, though, the evidence wanted to be found.

The first file you'll find enclosed (001.avi) shows you my first piece of hard proof. Taken a couple of blocks north of the docks, in an alleyway not far from the main road, I was following up on a tip I got that a lot of the rioters had come from there that night. When I arrived, I found that one of the creatures had taken a warehouse worker down an alley and had *fastened itself to his neck*. Thankfully, from a distance, in the dark, with it distracted, it didn't see me. I didn't push my luck though – as the length of the clip demonstrates.

I must have replayed the file a hundred times to confirm once and for all in my mind that there was no longer any doubt. Strange, and more than a little stupid, that even after the first half-dozen viewings, some small part of me still denied the truth. When I finally came to accept it, I had to consider my options. I mean, what do you do when confronted with that kind of realization? You don't simply move on and accept it as an interesting quirk in life you simply hadn't noticed before. "Monsters are real." It's a hard fact that slaps you in the face and changes your worldview, not something mundane like "scientists estimate there to be between six and ten million species of insect life on Earth."

I had proof, but even so, it wasn't enough. If I had trouble accepting it, the rest of the world would as well. Skeptics would declare it was just a couple of actors and a sketchy piece of camera work. Hell, they might even think, "It's blatantly CGI." I'd have to gather enough evidence to metaphorically fire a cannon-load of grapeshot at them to make them believe. I invested in a safe, kept the file backed up, physically copied, and hidden, and then I set about gathering more proof.

After a while, I was able to recognize the signs of their movements and could identify the types of places

where they congregated. Solitary for the most part, they had some things in common, so observing one helped to learn the habits of the many. They certainly aren't stupid. That much was evident. Appearances to the contrary, at least based on that cold December night, they are not monsters all the time. At least not when they don't want to be, anyway. They walk and talk like us, they dress like us, and if you didn't get close enough to realize that they weren't breathing and that they had no pulse, you'd be excused for thinking that they were just like you or me.

The more I watched and recorded them, the less I came to think of them as beasts. They are more like drug dealers. They move with purpose to mix with normal folk and then act out their vile practices in the darker corners of the world. Backstreet bars, shady clubs, alleys in run-down parts of town... I could find them there feeding, preying on the poor souls they found. Surprisingly, after subsequently following a number of those victims, they appeared to show no signs of turning. Evidently the stories of "one who is bitten by a monster becomes a monster" seem to be bullshit. Short dossiers on 10 people I saw being fed on who I observed for about a week and a half after the event are listed on the flash drive in the "victims" folder.

Thinking of folders, you'll find a few other short clips in the file marked "powers." It looks like the bullshit can be scraped off a few of the other myths. Exceptional speed, enhanced strength, mesmerizing gaze, etc. all seem to be real. I caught one using a mind-control technique on a cop who had stopped him. I can tell you now, that freaked me out. If they can manipulate people like that, turn what people know on and off, no wonder they've remained hidden for so long.

The more evidence I gathered, the more I wondered.... It wasn't easy for me to gather all I've been able to, but it wasn't remarkably difficult, either, after I knew what I was looking for. However, if I could do it, out of the millions upon millions of others in this world, why hadn't it been done before? Why hadn't it been publicized on TV, shouted on the radio, dominated the chats or video sites, or otherwise been shown to the world in all its dark glory? I started some more research.

You know if you look hard enough on the Internet you can find anything. I found a couple of message boards and blogs where people have been trying to get in touch with others who have learned the truth.

After a while, they all came to the same conclusion: People wouldn't listen, or those who did make a stand to try and tell the world simply ended up disappearing. Most ended up walking a lonely path, keeping their heads down and doing the best they could to make their neighborhoods safe.

Some folks out there, if the monsters don't get them, the police sure as hell will eventually. Forget *The Anarchist Cookbook*. Those crackpots have posted a whole load of ideas on how to turn stuff found in your kitchen or cleaning closet into a full-blown armory. They treat it like urban guerrilla warfare against these monsters. I never thought I would end up walking that path myself.

I changed my mind one night about a month ago when I was out following one of the vile things. I watched her go into one of the goth clubs on the east side of town. It's not really my scene, so I stayed outside. I'd stick out like a sore thumb in there. When I finally spotted her again, she was with a guy, and they headed around the back of the building. I followed when I thought I heard a cry above the dull throb of the music from the club. I arrived in time to see her vanishing around another corner. The guy she'd lured outside had been thrown into the gutter with his neck broken. I can only guess that he realized what was happening and cried out at the last moment, so she silenced him as quickly as she could.

The poor guy didn't stand a chance against something like that. I kept thinking for a while what I would do if I had been there to intervene. I guess I would have just ended up as another corpse beside him. Even so, as I stood looking down at him, I realized that I couldn't just observe and record anymore. That was my breaking point: I had to do something. *Something*. Whereas before I had run away from them, now I ran after them. I ran as fast as I could to keep up with her, trying to work out which way she'd gone, and I finally found her again. I followed her out to the poor neighborhoods, working her way through the underpasses and down the back streets to a house on Oakwood Avenue. I think you know that part of town... that's one of the reasons why I've left this to you rather than anyone else.

I've been watching the place ever since, trying to work out how many of them are inside, what their movement patterns are, what defenses they have on the place. I've seen tripwires they step over going inside. Oh, yes, they like to keep their little dens well defended, not just from the sun, but from the

people who *know*, as well. In all, I think there are four of them staying there. I've detailed exactly what I've found there in the "Oakwood" subfolder.

It was after one long night, observing and following them to and from the house, that I went into the coffee shop two blocks away, which is where we met. I remember you saying that you were used to pulling the night shift in your line of work. Hell, after doing this for months myself, it still doesn't get any easier, so I envy you for that.

I remember what you said, that you had to bring in the money because the baby was on the way. I wish I'd found someone special with whom to share my life. Actually, I hope I still get the chance. And that's why I hope you'll never read this. If all goes well, the guy who runs the coffee shop won't need to hand this over to you, as I'll have come by to collect it after I do what needs to be done. I have a good memory, you see. I remember you saying that you come by every morning on the way back from the night shift to grab a coffee. If he's handing it over to you, it's because I won't be around anymore.

I hope this doesn't come across as some kind of suicide note because that's not what it's meant to be.

I'm hoping that this makes everything I've done so far count for something. I'm hoping that someone believes me in the end if I go into that house and don't come out again. I'm hoping that, as someone who strikes me as one of the good guys, you take what I have to say and do either one of two things. One, you get you and your partner the hell away from there. You're only a couple of streets away from a nest of monsters, and I don't want the death of another, much less a child, potentially weighing on my soul. Two, you do what's right. Take the fight to them, and avenge the soul of an insignificant scribbler who tried to do his best for once by making a stand.

I'm hoping if I go in during the day, they'll be docile enough that I can take them on. I'd try and burn the place down if I could, but it's too close to the other houses, and I don't want other people's homes to be caught in the blaze. I couldn't live with myself if that happened. It's got to be done up close and personal. If they wake up, and if they are anything more than groggy, then it's going to be four against one.

Time to make my stand.

Here goes everything.







Introduction

In all the darkest pages of the malign supernatural there is no more terrible tradition than that of the Vampire, a pariah even among demons. Foul are his ravages; gruesome and seemingly barbaric are the ancient and approved methods by which folk must rid themselves of this hideous pest.

— Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*

In the world of **Vampire: The Masquerade**, even the predators have predators. The Kindred feed on kine, but occasionally, the kine bite back. **Hunters Hunted II** reveals these lonely martyrs, the mortals who hunt vampires. Their faces and methods are varied, as are their motives, but they all share a common pursuit in the destruction of the Kindred. With the possible exception of others of their own kind, Kindred fear the mortal hunter as no other foe. Indeed, the very secret of their existence, the Masquerade, exists to protect them from those mortals who would extinguish the Curse of Caine.

The origin of the Kindred is lost in the mists of prehistory, except for some few legends that survive. These legends tell that the first enemies of the Kindred were their own kind, with Caine's attempt to destroy his own progeny being their first baptism of fire. From then on, vampires have ever distrusted one another, and are eager to destroy others of their kind in order to further their own chances of survival. This is the Jihad, as vampires and a few dangerously knowledgeable hunters understand it.

Yet the Kindred continue to create their own progeny. Mortals are the clay of this creation — mortals as Kindred themselves once were. Kindred not only endanger the mortals' lives, but risk their souls as well, dragging the kine down with them into their Damned state, or so many mortals believe.

It was inevitable, living so parasitically upon mankind, that some would discover the Kindred in the midst of their depredations. Most often, the reaction is one of horror. Sometimes, the reaction is one of envy, with a mortal begging for the Embrace, seeking the golden apple of immortality without understanding that the apple is rotten. But there are also those who react with hate and righteous anger, who take up the misunderstood and harrowing path of the hunter. Whether their hunt is a success or failure, rewarding or fruitless, only they can determine.

There are many different types of hunters, and as many motives for the hunt. Some seek knowledge, risking their blood and their souls for it. Others seek control, attempting to use the Kindred as the Kindred in turn use mortals. But most often, it is destruction these hunters seek. To some of them, the Kindred are blasphemies, requiring the hunters to take up a holy war against the vampires. Others simply seethe with hate for the unnatural dead. To them, the Kindred are evils the world has no need to suffer.

In the pages of **Hunters Hunted II** you will find information on these different hunters and the motives for their dangerous duty. This book approaches the Kindred from a different perspective than V20. It conveys



the viewpoint of the vampires' victims, the mortals. But not just any mortals. **Hunters Hunted II** is about those who have turned their fear into hate and use it to fuel a relentless pursuit of their terrifying oppressors.

The Kindred are as complex and diverse as any group in mortal society, but their hunters do not see them that way. To hunters, the vampire is a mysterious, powerful, seductive, and monstrous creature. A hunter works from the limited information gained from actual experience of real Kindred, clouded by the myths and legends that have grown up about the vampire. What person can know of the secrets of the night brotherhood without being inducted into it?

All too often, the dogmas of the vampires' evil cause many hunters to experience a crisis of conscience. Not all Kindred are inherently evil; many are truly sensitive souls, cursed with the tragedy of a Biblical sin. These Kindred do not kill those from whom they drink, and they are often careful to ensure the safety of these mortals. A hunter who kills one of these Cainites is often wracked with remorse when he comes to realize he has destroyed one of the undead whose only crime was to fight desperately for her fading humanity.

Certainly, **Hunters Hunted II** includes information on playing hunters. This can be an interesting and different chronicle for a troupe used to telling tales about those cursed with Caine's blood. Does their hunt teach them to hate the Kindred more? Or do they learn pity and compassion for the fallen among men?

Theme and Mood

Hunters Hunted II has two themes at work. The first is the theme of personal horror upon which **Vampire** is built. This works very well for hunters on a very local and immediate level, because a **Vampire** story focused on hunters almost certainly has a very intimate feel and a very abrupt end. Hunters don't know about the worldwide conspiracy of the Damned. They know only that the weird old lady down the street has been doing something unspeakable to the neighborhood's children and that it has to come to an end. A hunter can "win," but it's a victory of sometimes willful ignorance. Even if the hunter kills the vampire, he can't help but ponder, perhaps at the back of his mind, if it could happen somewhere else....

The second theme is sacrifice, the idea that one person can make a difference, but only at great cost. Hunters often

become consumed by their knowledge that monsters are real, and that knowledge pushes them away from those they hold dear but who haven't been affected by the terrible secret. As if it's not bad enough for vampires to be alienated and monstrous; their very existence alienates those few who see beyond the Masquerade and damns them as well. The alternative is to let the darkness fall over the lives of those the hunters love.

The mood is one of desperate determination. Most hunters couldn't possibly know the scale at which the Kindred infest the world, but they know that something awful preys on their locality and that only they and their knowledge of the terrible truth stand in the way. Their knowledge is the proverbial double-edged sword – though they know the truth, it damns them to be forever on guard against the vampire threat, which sets them apart from other, oblivious mortals.

But no pity can change the nature of a vampire: At heart, the craving for blood is all-consuming. The hunt must go on.

What's in this Book?

Chapter One looks at what it means to be a hunter. Who becomes one, why, and upon whom can he depend?

Chapter Two describes the systems by which players can create hunter characters, including a few new Traits that may help them push back the ever-encroaching night.

Chapter Three offers tips and tactics on hunting the Damned, from group strategies to individual tactics, all of which might make the difference between bringing down a vampire and being his next victim.

Chapter Four discusses Numina, those supernatural and supernal advantages that hunters sometimes witness while hunting the undead (and sometimes cultivate themselves...).

Chapter Five explores the Storyteller's craft when she sets her sights on creating a hunters story or chronicle.

Finally, the **Appendix** presents a few hunters ready to make their way in the night, whether as players' characters or as personalities for the Storyteller to convey.





Chapter One: Alone in the Night

I didn't ask for this. I killed my best friend for you people.

— Rick Grimes, *The Walking Dead*

Good, you're awake.

No, no, no, don't struggle. Don't. You're going to hurt yourself. Yeah, you're tied to a chair. I don't blame you for panicking, but try to relax. I promise I won't hurt you or kill you.

This is just for both of our safeties. You don't have to believe me. I wouldn't. You'll just have to see when you're still alive at the end of this.

Okay?

You don't have to answer. Yeah, I gagged you, too. Sorry.

Honestly, that's just so you shut up long enough for me to say my piece. It's going to be a lot to take on board, and we don't have time for all the stock denials and "why-is-this-happening-to-me?" bullshit.

It'll all make sense when I'm done, I promise.

You don't have to believe me. You just have to hear me.

So, You're a Hunter Now

Welcome to the lonely, desperate struggle for the night.

Don't pretend you don't know what I'm talking about. We're past that now. That time is way gone. It was gone the

minute you saw that damn monster. Vampire. Whatever. Call them goddamn boogymen for all the difference it makes. They are what they are.

That makes you sick, doesn't it? That they exist at all?

Walking, talking monsters among us, getting away with murder.

Abandon all hope ye who enter here, right? But you haven't. That's just it. I see it in you. All you got left is hope. The small glimmer of hope that you can still make a goddamned difference in this fight.

You can take down one monster. Take back one block. Free one slave from the undead's power. Excise one cancer from this sick world. Make a stand. Draw a line in the sand, and let them know which side they fall on. Alone, if you have to. Which is good, because you *are* alone, from here on out.

You don't have to tell me I'm right. I see it all over your face, same as mine was.

The good news: You can do it. Kill the bad guy, take back the block, save the kid, whatever.

But it'll cost you.

Cost you what? Everything. Family, friends, credibility, a long look at the sun... your daughter. Your life. Everything.



Oh, no? You shaking your head now? You think you're going back? You're going to track down and murder a fucking vampire, and then what? Go into work the next day and be all, "Hey, Pam, how's Don? The impetigo clearing up?" Push your papers around and pretend that was the only vampire, ever, so everything's cool?

What's the matter? You don't know what you're gonna do, do you? You probably ain't settled on killing it for sure, huh? Hadn't said it out loud yet?

Bah! What do I know? Maybe you'll walk away. You wouldn't be the first. But I don't think so. You saw that thing and knew you had to do something. Anything.

Now you're a hunter. Like me.

Some call themselves investigators, or truth seekers, or illuminators of hidden mysteries. Met one group who called themselves the Torchbearers. Bunch of self-important bullshit. I don't get caught up in fancy titles. It doesn't matter what you call it. Even if you're "just curious." You're gonna follow that vampire around and take little notes. See if it sparkles or has a mother or whatever you're gonna do. You're still hunting. You're a hunter. Same difference, whether you plan to put a bullet in it or not. To me, at least.

Either way, I want to help. I've been lucky enough to become an old hunter. I ain't gonna be lucky forever. It already cost me more than I wanted to pay. All I've got left is knowing what I know, and it won't do me any good to take it with me.

So you just sit you a sit and let an old man learn you some things.

Well, you don't have much choice. I appreciate that.

Quit struggling. You'll hurt yourself.

No. No, we'll just leave the gag in for now.

Let's go back to the start.

Why Do This?

You do it because you have to.

Same as we all do.

They killed your family. They turned your son into one of them. They took those kids. They deal drugs or peddle flesh or worse from that old house. They control the government. They horned in on your turf. They're monsters. They used you, and you won't give them another chance to do the same to anyone else. They hurt people.

Whatever the reason, you do it because you have to.

You do it because no one else will.

Motive

What if I told you to dive into a shark tank and pick a fight with one? Just swim up and take a swing. You'd think I was touched in the head, right? Well... you probably think that anyway. Point is, you're not built for the water. You don't have the strength, speed, or agility a shark does. You don't have the natural weaponry. That fucker is built to kill in every direction, and you barely know how to swim.

You get where I'm going with this, right?

That's what you're doing right now. That's what I do. That's what two dozen or so other hunters I've met do. What would drive people like you or me to jump into that tank like we got any business?

Here's just a few reasons I've come across.

Revenge: The big one. I don't have hard numbers, but it's a safe bet most of us lost something we couldn't stand to lose. Family, friend, lover. Maybe murdered, maybe turned, maybe they're still alive and serving as a ghoul — a kind of slave. Whatever, the loss is the same. So's the need to avenge it on one or all of those bloodsuckers. Straight up, you took from me, I take from you. You hurt me, I hurt you. Eye for an eye, tooth for a fang.

Righteousness: The do-not-suffer-them-to-live set. Vampires are blasphemies, unclean, impure, or just plain not right. Whether it's religious or racist, the righteous just cannot stand that these creatures tread the same earth as you and me. And they won't hear otherwise. The very notion makes their skin crawl and their fists tighten. No price is too high to pay. If innocents get in the way, well, acceptable losses and all that. Who among us is truly innocent after all? Don't look at me like that. That's what they think. You probably don't want to talk politics or religion with them, but they hunt as well as anybody.

Duty: You got a responsibility. Maybe you took an oath at some point or simply need to see right done. Cops, soldiers, doctors, reporters — I even met a psychiatrist once — all see the hunt as an extension of what they swore to do. Duty is almost always in service to something bigger than you, even if it's just an ideal. You do it because you said you'd do it. You made a promise to someone somewhere. Doesn't need to be God, or some institution, or anyone at all. Could be you see the vampires picking on the weak and you see yourself as strong. Well, less weak, anyways.

Power: Some people simply cannot abide they ain't kingshit on shit hill. Vampires rule the night? We'll just see about that. The rich and powerful don't like other sharks in their pool. Maybe some mixed-martial-arts dude who needs to pit himself against the toughest motherfuckers. Or maybe some chick out

to prove there's nothing she can't do. Funny thing is, we lose the most of these guys to the other side. They eventually get noticed and are made an offer they can't refuse: more power. Not all of them, but a lot. Don't turn your back on this type, but they're good for drawing attention away from you.

Curiosity: You caught a peek behind the curtain, and you can't just go back. Some, their drive is purely academic. Others have a personal need for truth. If there's one vampire, then there must be more. How many? How do they make more? Are they biological or magical? Are they monsters or victims? How do they socialize? What's their sign? Will they date me? Blah blah blah. Sorry, I hate these guys. Mostly tourists and starfuckers, you ask me. A few are okay when they come back with something valuable. Eventually, most of them walk too far into the lion's den and never come out. Neither do any of their notes.

Thrills: This type just plain freak me out. Listen, if you make it out alive, your heart pumping, all that sweat and adrenaline going, hey, it's a rush. I get that part. Not enough of a thrill to be your only reason, though. You got your privileged and entitled used to getting whatever they want. You got the kinks who can only get off if they're so close to death they hear it call their name. One way or another, brushing up against the undead is a thrill to them. Takes all kinds, whatever makes your grapefruit squirt, and all that. But this type'll get you killed just so she can strum herself in Dracula's bathtub when she thinks he's not home.

Insanity: Then there's the rest. The crazies. I mean, shit, the hunt takes its toll. We're all a little crooked in the head, but some just come that way. Some got a death wish. Some got urges better taken out on the vamps than other folks. Some see angels and demons or extradimensional whatzits where you and I see... well, vampires, but you get the idea.

How do I know I'm not one of the crazies? By now I got enough corroborating witnesses, I'm not that worried about crazy anymore. Plus... well, I just know.

How do *you* know? You don't. Not yet.

Who Does This?

Answering why to do this is a good start. It's important. But it's not the whole package. It still takes the right kind of people to do it. Millions of people are victims of crime, but not everybody becomes Van Fucking Helsing. Vampire attacks are a nightly reality out there. How come they're not in the news? You can't just cover that up. I don't care how good it feels or how many memories they alter, there should be more of us. So why not?

How come no one is outraged?

Cause nobody wants to say it out loud. They want to go home, sleep it off, and forget. Nobody wants to believe it. Nobody wants to be a victim. No one but you and me and the rest of the thin black line. We can't let it go. We can't forget.

You'll have to figure out your own reasons for yourself. It's a matter of degrees. No two people react in quite the same way. Still, I got a few broad categories that most of us seem to fit into one way or another. I'll give you some examples. Some ideas of who else you might run into out there. Maybe it'll help you feel a little less alone. Maybe it'll give you some idea of who you wanna be. Or don't wanna be. That might be more important.

The Desperate

You're the only one who knows. You're all alone. You've seen too much. You know too much. They know who you are. They took your kid. They locked you in. Time is running out.

The desperate fight back out of fear. We all do this because we gotta, but they never gave you a choice. You were forced into it. They took what was yours or are coming for you because of what you seen or what you said. Maybe you don't even know why they're coming. They may not even have a reason. You're just in the wrong place at the wrong time. They backed you into a corner, maybe literally, and you got only one choice. End of the line.

Examples: Cornered mouse, neighborhood busybody, only survivor, whistleblower, paranoid

The Driven

You're willing to make any sacrifice to see your cause through. The price of failure is too high. The anti-government militiaman who knew there was more in the shadows than money. Or a mother refusing to lose her children to the vampire scumbag who holds them in thrall. Maybe you're a club rat who remembers the Kiss and you need to have that feeling again.

The driven fight because they can't not fight. Distinct from the desperate, the driven aren't waiting for the threat to come to them or racing against time. They take measured steps, stalk their prey, plan their attack, and burn the whole fucking house down.

Examples: Survivalist, conspiracy theorist, crusader, attention seeker

The Discredited

No one will listen to you anymore. Howling at the moon, they say. Jumps at his own shadow. This happens to most of us eventually, but I'm talking about those poor assholes stuck somewhere in the system. Hunters who had credibility to lose and did. A reporter who just wouldn't let it go, and now no one will hire her. A cop maybe, or a soldier who saw some shit and was told, "No, you didn't." An orderly at an asylum

that lets vampires feed from the least salvageable patients.

The discredited fight to win their lives back. For validation. Maybe one did the right thing and went up the chain of command only to find his boss already under the monster's spell. Or one never quite figured out how to lie low and keep her mouth shut. Whatever it was, they lost it all, and they want it back — or as much back of it as they can take.

Examples: Detective, military, academic, reporter, doctor, psychiatrist

The Disenfranchised

You don't exist. Not that anyone wants to admit, anyway. Vampires thrive in forgotten places where no one misses the missing. The project mother who knows it wasn't gangs that killed those boys. The bum who knows why nobody goes under the bridge anymore. The drug dealer who doesn't want anyone taking advantage of his hood but him. The college girl who volunteers at the soup kitchen and notices hunger isn't all that's wrong with these people. You don't have to be one of the forgotten to fight for them, but good luck getting anyone else to care.

The disenfranchised fight because no one else fights for them. The police don't come to that neighborhood. No one believes some ginne-d-up derelict. The city says they'll look into the kids getting sick in that orphanage but never do.

Examples: Homeless veteran, caseworker, squatter, hood rat, church volunteer

The Different

You aren't like other people. Not like the mopey kid in the corner with the black lipstick. Him, too, maybe, but I mean really different. A girl who knows when bad things are about to happen. A man who gets these headaches right before things catch fire. A kid who sees dead people. I see you making a face. It doesn't matter if you believe it or not. They believe it. What's more, many of them need to use their gifts, curses, delusions, whatever, to do something. Or admit they're as crazy as they sound.

The different fight because they have no other place in this world. Maybe if she does one more favor the voices will let her rest. He may as well use his power to hurt those that deserve it. A kid who wants to make a martyr of himself.

Examples: Haunted soul, clairvoyant, loner, autistic, vigilante

The Deranged

Vampires ain't exactly cornered the market on being monsters. Hell, some of their worst traits are their most human. So what happens when their monsters run across our monsters? A *caporegime* — like a mafia lieutenant — investigating who's hornin' in on the boss's territory only to find Count Orlok. A serial killer whose victim of choice

is creatures of the night. You ever seen that show about the serial killer who's a cop? Like that. A ghoul who got a taste for the blood, and now he hunts just to get a fix. Or some sick douchebag who ran out of flies to pull the wings off of and bums to set on fire who likes the way the vampires keep healing, giving him a fresh canvas each time.

The deranged fight cause they were already in the shadows and don't like the company... or the competition.

Examples: Serial killer, blood junky, lunatic, skinhead, cultist, sadist

Exceptions to Every Rule

I mean, that's us at a glance. Not all of us, obviously. You get some of the desperate who graduate to driven before they become the disenfranchised and eventually the deranged. Sometimes the different are actually the deranged, and vice versa. Mix and match 'em. I've seen all kinds, some that I don't even have a convenient D word for.

Shit, that was a joke.

You're probably not in the mood for jokes. Sorry about that.

All right, we covered why and who. Let's move on to how.

Going It Alone

All but a very lucky few of us come to the hunt alone. Vampires may be world-class assholes, but they know how to keep witnesses – and survivors – to a minimum. You gotta give them that.

The terrible moment when you watched that poor girl's body hit the pavement and the man that did it disappeared into the night. You've been alone with that ever since.

Who can you tell? What would you tell them?

Knowledge is a terrible burden to handle alone. It's just you and the darkness, seeing which one of you blinks first. You probably don't feel this way now, but waking up tied to a chair and being told your worst suspicions are right is a damn blessing compared to the nights you waste wondering just how crazy you are.

The life of the solitary hunter is desperate and paranoid. You make regular gut checks and question your sanity every night. Was that really a monster or just some kid twisted on kitchen-sink drugs? Am I just some delusional, schizo freak? What if I'm wrong? Ah, but you always come back to the same conclusion: What if I'm *right*?

You're the hunters' hunter now. The prey turned predator.

That makes it sound cool, right? Yeah, right up until you consider what the hell you're gonna do now. How does little old you go up against big bad them?

To use an old saw, very carefully.

Cat and Mouse

To the vampires, you and me are prey. Like I said earlier about diving into a shark tank.

Forgive me another imperfect metaphor for a second. Mice ain't designed to hunt cats, right? But back them in a corner and learn quick they still have claws and teeth. Yeah, yeah, who gives a shit? The cat's still gonna eat that mouse, right? That ain't the lesson. The lesson is that the cat never, ever expects reprisal.

Vampires are used to winning. They hunt people down and take their blood every night, rarely with more than a quickly healed scratch on their cheek or maybe a torn sleeve. The very idea that you would turn around and bury a hatchet into Lestat's neck is the last thing on his mind. Trust me, I've seen the faces they make. This mixture of terror and indignation, one part, "How dare ye?" and one part "What the shit, get it off me!" It's fucking great.

Now, I'm not suggesting you haul off and ambush some vamp in an alley with a Home Depot hatchet. Unfortunately, that ends up being a lot of hunters' first, best plan. You thought of it, didn't you? That's how crazy and stupid being alone with the truth makes you.

Unless they know who you are, know you know about them, or are otherwise coming for you, you got time. A lot more time than you feel like. Vampires have been around since forever, so you're not going to save the world tomorrow by running out with a whittled-down chair leg. Yeah, it's gonna hurt more people between now and when you eventually bring it down. Absolutely. You gotta figure out how long you can live with that on your conscience for yourself. Just remember, you're not doing anyone but the vampires a favor by running off and getting yourself killed.

When hunting alone, you have to be smart. You have to gather intelligence, keep out of sight. When you finally strike, strike hard, fast, and certainly. Vampires are strong and fast. They shrug off wounds that would kill a person, and they command a host of supernatural powers. They can disappear in plain sight, they can make you love them, they can make you forget your own name with a glance, and they can sculpt flesh and darkness like it's goddamned clay. All of that is true. If that ain't enough to have you shitting your pants, then you're stupid or one of the psychos. It's enough to make the hardest hunter desperate.

So what's the upshot? How do you get to be old and crazy like me? Well, most of what you see in movies is real enough. Vampires have very exploitable weaknesses. Fire, sunlight, and wood through the heart all work more or less as advertised.

Hunting on a Budget

Unless you're independently wealthy, you'll have to start out like most of us, splitting time between hunting and pretending to be a normal human being. You still have to pay your mortgage and keep the lights on, which probably means going to work as best you can. It's been awhile since I checked, but I don't think banks are handing out loans to build vampire-killing bunkers either. And even if they did, that'd just tip off one of the dead guys.

Good news, fire is cheap and easy to come by, though hard to contain and control. What's more, vampires are terrified of it. Not just in the way all sensible living things are, but some deep, instinctual, fight-or-flight, crazy-eyes-and-hissing type shit. If that sounds like a profoundly dangerous state to put a supernatural killer into, you're right. Despite all that, fire is still hands-down the most efficient way to kill some vampires. Burn their lairs down during the day, and you only have to hope no one can trace it back to you. Douse their staked bodies in gasoline, and for five dollars and a match, you just rid the night of another thing going bump in it.

Even a signal flare or Roman candle can save your life in a pinch. Easy to ignite and the sudden light and noise might trigger that panic I mentioned, or blind and deafen the ones with super senses if you're lucky. Enough to buy yourself a quick retreat, hopefully.

Sunlight is free, though vampires are pretty adept at avoiding the stuff. But more than just a weapon, the daylight is your shield. Just being able to walk around during the day is an advantage. They have to be tucked away in their coffins at sunrise. You don't. Confront them close to dawn and even if it all goes to shit, they have to get away.

You'll have to track them back to their den at night, but you can come back during the day. Some vamps will have someone or something watching over them. Usually ghouls, like I mentioned earlier. Blood addicted servants. They're strong but easier to deal with than their masters.

Wood through the heart works, too. Drops vamps like a stone. They're already dead, so don't go wiggling it, they just stop. Who knows why? Probably some mythology shit. Sounds great, right? Yeah, except it's near impossible to do. In the movies they seem to forget things like breastbones, ribs, and the thing trying to murder you at the time. I've been all over the country and met dozens like us, and I've only met two who survived the trying, and both of them said it was luck and never tried it again. Not alone, anyways.

Don't do crossbows or bows either. I know, I know, that guy from that zombie show. *It's a fucking TV show.* Maybe if you have a lifetime of practice. They're next to impossible to

conceal, and even if you don't get yourself arrested or shoot your dick off, you're still gonna get yourself killed in tight quarters. There're no points for *almost* hitting the heart, so if you miss by even a whisper, all you did was piss the vampire off.

Special Weapons and Tactics

Those are the big three. You might have put together most of that on your own. Unfortunately, the monsters know what their weaknesses are, too. Even if you get the drop on one of the bastards, they'll expect that stuff. You really want to put them on their heels? Learn their strengths and come at them specifically. Vampires have powers. I got some cheap and clever solutions for the most common ones. It's impractical to carry every countermeasure on every hunt, but a little intelligence about your target will narrow down the right tool for the right job.

Animal Control: Killing their animal servitors is a surefire solution. If you're a bleeding heart or don't want to waste the ammo, you can interrupt a vampire's control in other ways, but it's your ass on the line. Dog whistles or specialized sonic devices can drive all but the most devoted animal servant crazy. Bear mace or pepper spray will blind and choke the poor bastards. Traps, snares, nets, or pits require forethought and time, but can save your life.

Extra Sensory Perception: Many vampires rely on heightened senses. Overload those senses with bright lights, strong smells, loud noises, or all of the above. Some of their powers can only be countered with similar vampire hoodoo, I think. If you think you're being read, try and send false impressions. Reach a meditative calm, or let your conflicted emotions and thoughts run wild. Repeat a nursery rhyme or song in your head.

Speed: You can't be as fast as them, but you can set up an ambush. Tripwires. Pit traps. I once set up neck-high wires and led one of the suckers to decapitate himself in the chase. Throw obstacles down in their way to force their path. Even better if they're on fire. Wear layers, or a loose jacket you can twist out of if you're caught.

Mind Control: Most of their mindfuck powers seem to need eye contact, so don't meet their gaze. Not ever. You don't want to take your eyes off them either, but focus on their mouth, their hands, stay fixed on center mass. Wear dark glasses. Wear earbuds blasting music directly into your ears so you can't hear their commands.

Invisibility: Some can disappear in plain sight. Remember, they're still there, you just can't see them. Start swinging wildly at where they just were. Use dirt or sand to make a line they have to interrupt to get past you. Use a fire extinguisher, bucket of mud, laser pointer, or spray paint to reveal them.



Strength: All vampires are strong, but some are truly inhuman. Not much for it outside not letting them touch you in the first place. If you're good enough to catch them in a snare or otherwise get them off the ground, their strength won't matter without leverage. My only other recommendation is body armor. Kevlar, Spectra, Aramid, all that shit is commercially available and spreads force away from the point of impact. Might be the difference between broken ribs and bits of bone piercing your lungs and heart. Motorcycle or riot helmets sacrifice peripheral vision, but they might save you from one blow.

Old Reliable

Fire, sun, stakes, and clever tricks aren't your only weapons. You also have, well, weapons. Vampires shrug off injuries that would kill you or me. A point blank shotgun blast to the chest? They look like old hamburger one second, and the next they're factory fucking fresh. But I've discovered — through let's just call it trial and error — that's a trick they can only pull off so many times.

They don't just take blood because it tastes good. They *need* blood. Need it to animate their corpse bodies, and to heal, and apparently to fuel most of the really crazy shit they can do. It may take awhile, but a hunter can eventually blow more holes in a vampire than the monster can deal with.

With distance and surprise, a solo hunter can set up a marksman's position and deal with a vampire from relative safety. However, as with all such solutions, the police will be all over the scene, so you better have two exits and be careful not to leave anything behind.

If you're more desperate, ambush the son of a bitch in an alley with a shotgun and don't stop firing until the shell-box is empty. Take off the head, destroy their brain parts, and they don't get back up. I don't know how you plan to get out of there, but the vampire's dead.

Speaking of taking their heads off, use only blades and other edged weapons. Axes, hatchets, machetes, that kind of thing. Maybe the sharp end of a spade. You're not going to do any internal damage or knock them unconscious, so leave the clubs and hammers at home. Nobody ever beat a vampire by TKO.

Intangibles


Vampires aren't a secret only because people don't want to believe. They're not fairies or bigfoots or some shit. They do enough of the heavy lifting to let the collective unconscious do its best willful ignorance thing. They don't do it because it's polite. They do it because they're told to. They do it because they're afraid.



The Cops

Quick aside. We're talking about a lot of things that will get you arrested. Carrying weapons, trespassing, attacking monsters who otherwise look like people, etc. Lemme give you some scattershot advice before I forget.

- First things first, don't fight the police. Don't. Unless you're absolutely sure they're there to kill you, don't shoot at them, don't swing at them, don't even resist them. You'll just give them the excuse to shoot you. Cops don't have senses of humor about dead cops, not even dirty ones.
- Know your rights. Know what the local carry-and-conceal laws are. Follow them as best you can. Don't stockpile ammo and explosives at your legal address. If they suspect you of terrorism, they can detain you as long as they want. Get a storage unit under a fake name if you're building up an arsenal.
- Minimize your trail, but don't drop off the grid entirely. The more legitimate your standing, the bigger your legal footprint. You don't need to burn off your fingerprints with acid or any of that shit. Prints are harder to get than TV would have you believe. Drag your fingers on anything you touch to smear the prints. Wear gloves when you load your clips. Wipe down your weapons habitually.
- Don't smoke, or at least field-strip your cigarettes, otherwise you're leaving all kinds of DNA and shit to be found. Don't mess around with the hard drugs either. It's just something else to bust you for.
- Don't rant and rave about vampires and monsters. Rant and rave about your rights. The legal system is a fucked-up maze. Due process puts the burden on them to build the case. Even under strict orders from a superior, they need to charge you to hold you. Vampires can bend the rules but not break them entirely. They might hold influence over key personnel, but they can't walk into a police station like they own the place.
- Make sure someone knows where you are. Use a phone call to start off a barking chain. If people are asking about you, it makes you harder to disappear. If you don't have anyone on the outside, make noise inside. Holding cells are recorded. Not all the cops are controlled, and if one or more notices something funny about how you're being handled, it might be pressure enough to get you a bail hearing. A lot of hunters are cops or ex-cops, and maybe you get lucky.
- Last but not least, if you have any kind of evidence, keep it in a P.O. or safety deposit box. Bluff if you don't. Threaten its release when you're up against the wall.



I know, I know, I already did the cat don't fear reprisal thing. And they don't. Not from you. Not from me. They're not afraid of people in the singular. They do seem to be afraid of massive numbers of people though. Probably leftover from the good old days of torches and pitchforks.

Vampires want to stay hidden enough to keep getting away with murder every night of the week. Use that against them.

Never attack a vampire more than a block or so from a public place. Whatever distance you feel you can sprint in a pinch. Run out of an alley onto a busy street, and you've

essentially handcuffed your pursuer. The real ugly ones can't follow at all, at least not visibly. All their monstrous strength and speed need to be kept in check. Their mental commands are harder to hear. Eye contact is harder to maintain. If you're really desperate, shooting or otherwise wounding a vampire in full view of the public may keep them from healing or force him to feign injury enough for you to beat feet. And you better beat feet.

They need blood. You have blood. While risky, you can turn that simple relationship into power. Or at least a

means of bargaining. I want to make clear, I do not fucking recommend it. You deal with the devil, it will cost you your soul eventually. But it's only fair to tell you all the tools in your toolbox. It's up to you to not get killed using them.

Lastly, you can usually rely on a vampire's own hubris. Yeah, this is the cat metaphor thing again. Exploit their pride that they're untouchable, by you at least. Apparently, vampires spend most of their time in a constant paranoid dick-measuring contest with other vampires. They're constantly looking over their shoulders and checking out the shadows. Thing is, unless you're pressing your luck, they'll look right past you when they do. The older they are, the more oblivious to you or me they are until you make them see.

Unless they've made you, you can hide right in front of their faces. Just some other cow who wandered away from the herd. Now, once you've stirred up enough trouble, well, they start coming for you, and that's a different story.

That's when you better make some friends, and quick.

You Are Not Alone

Smart hunters, or at least hunters who want to survive more than one night, know they can't go it alone for long. The trick is finding someone you can trust, someone who will believe the crazy shit coming out of your mouth. Someone who saw it, too, or someone you meet with a similar perspective while on the hunt. Someone you watch catch his or her first glimpse of the same terrible world you've been living in. In my case, that'd be you.

You have to be careful, no doubt. Not only will even your best friends think you've lost your nut, but asking around may get you noticed. By *them*. Not to keep you up at night anymore than you're already gonna be, but they have eyes and ears all over the place. People in low places, people in high places. Even animals. Yeah, have fun eyeing up every dog, cat, and rat you run across from here on out.

Still, you can't do it alone for long, so something's gotta give. How do you connect with other hunters? Well, you could be like me and take the hunt on the road. Travel from town to town, find the local vamps, and see if anyone else is hiding in the shadows with you. But I already lost everything. I got nothing holding me back, so it's a little easier for me in that regard.

How to Find Others

Put up flyers for a support group that asks vague but leading questions. Tap other buddies on the force you know have seen... things. Reach out to other parents in the neighborhood who've also noticed the change in their

kids. Approach the girl who stumbles a little too much — a little too pale — from the bathroom and ask what she remembers. Scan the obits for mysterious deaths: Too young, too sudden, too weird. Scour the web for things that match the details of what you've seen that pulled back the veil for you. Or take your sister or brother-in-law or whoever you can trust aside and test their loyalty. One becomes two becomes the few who will listen — the few who believe you, because they know it, too.

Orders of Business

Once you have your group, lay down ground rules. Do it as soon as possible, while heads are as cool as they're gonna get, even if it's just two of you. This is essential. I say with full confidence, groups that do this last longer than those that don't. Period. Ask the following questions, and agree on the answers.

What's your function? Just what are you hoping to accomplish? Do you want your kids back? The community center? Your block? Your city? Are you hunting out of revenge? Are you gathering intelligence? Are you comforting the afflicted? What are your methods? You may not agree on all points, but make sure you have enough common ground to continue.

Better to find out if someone is out of step or doesn't have the stomach for it now.

Who's in charge? Pick a boss, someone who has final say. Two if you feel more comfortable. Or each member could have the final word in his specific area of expertise: a group leader, a field leader, someone in charge of provisions, safety, medical emergencies, keeping everyone calm, etc.

How are decisions made? Does the leader give orders? Do you all vote? Any checks or special privileges? Can the leader veto or break ties? Does the majority rule, or do you have to be unanimous? How many of you need to be present for a vote to carry? Does the same go for handling disputes?

What are the divisions of labor? Who presents orders of business? Who makes the plans? Who gets what weapons? What are each of your roles in the field? Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. Don't say you can shoot a gun if you can't. Don't bullshit about hammering a stake through a vampire's heart, because when it comes down to that horrible moment, there's no changing your mind.

Where to meet? When you're planning? In an emergency? If you split up? Optimally, have a different answer for each. Don't keep all your supplies in one spot. Establish secondary locations in case the first is compromised.

What is your alibi? What will you tell the cops? Or anyone asking too many questions? What if one or more of you gets arrested? Do you have a bail fund or a lawyer available? Or do you distance yourselves to avoid implications? More importantly....

What will you do when one of you is compromised? Do not put this one off. These calls don't get easier in the moment. Agree on a protocol, and stick to it. What to do if you're controlled, blood-addicted, or turned? Write it down like a will. Do you want a quick death? Do you want your body burned? Do you want your family or friends to know what happened? Will you attempt rehabilitation or redemption? Between you and me, I don't recommend rehabilitation or redemption. I've seen it go wrong too many times, and I've never seen it go right. But maybe you're the one....

Common Ground

Something needs to keep your group together beyond just knowing each other. Whether it's built on relationships, goals, or simple mutual benefit. It doesn't have to be nice: Greed, competition, and mutual hate start a lot of ventures.

Trust: The rarest motivation by far, but perhaps the most valuable. Family, close friends, and members of the same combat unit have this kind of thing, a bond the hunt won't easily break. Fueled by love or deep understanding, each willing to lay down his own life for the others. A father and his two children avenging the loss of the mother. Survivors of trauma. Victims at the hands of the same monster. Your goals are inseparable from each other's.

Cooperation: This is the less intimate version of the above and far more common. The bonds are less ironclad, more strained. You each benefit, but the relationships aren't inviolate. You're colleagues more than comrades. You may still be family or friends, but no one's laying down their lives for crazy Uncle Mike. Maybe you have kids or other bonds outside the group that are more important. You may have been strangers before the hunt brought you together. Trust may come, but until then, cooperation will have to do.

Ideological: Some groups are together for the outcome, other bonds are prerequisite, as with sharing an initial philosophy, usually fueled by religious, political, or other social bias. Some want to deliver absolution, others want converts, still others want to eradicate the enemies of the fold.

Local Interest: Your group may share an area of concern, a neighborhood, or a professional field. You're not so much looking to save the world as your corner of it. Take for example concerned neighbors, or a town watch cleaning its streets of monsters. Could just be a couple of cops

putting together the strange leads gathered on their beat or following up on cases that mysteriously closed.

Group Tactics

Establishing your mission and what your goals are comes first. Figuring out how you're going to achieve them comes next. The hunt isn't all killing; that's just the part I'm best at. Hunters can and should bring any combination of tactics to bear against their prey.

Observe and Report: Curiosity, intelligence gathering, spreading information, or building something lasting. Imagine it as a scientific think-tank, trying to answer real questions about the quarry. I met some kids who put together an underground zine for avoiding and surviving vampire attacks. I don't know how serious anyone took it, but they think they're saving lives. One group meets on the internet only through anonymous handles or whatever you call them, putting together a database of known information. It's like the Wikipedia of fighting the undead.

Militarized Cells: Some find comfort in structure, discipline, and a chain of command. Most commonly, these include ex- or current military, teams of specialists, or members of the same agency. It doesn't need to be in an official capacity, as with survivalists, militiamen, or game hunters turned soldiers. Some even form within criminal hierarchies such as the Mafia, street gangs, or drug cartels.

Networking: Some groups wield public opinion and social pressure like a weapon, using the vampires' need for secrecy against them directly. Politicians, lobbyists, or lawyers who want to root the parasites out of the system – other parasites, at least. Maybe your network negotiates treaties or cuts deals instead. Support or survivor groups may be more interested in the victims than the monsters. It's important work, so I hate to put it down, but I prefer more permanent solutions.

Hunting as a Pack

Even one extra set of eyes to watch your back opens up the ways we can hunt.

Lure vampires into trying to feed from you so your buddy can blindside him. Switch tails every couple blocks to avoid suspicion. Create a crossfire, or confuse your victim by hitting her from multiple angles. Split her attention so she can't focus with her powers. A stake through the heart becomes significantly more viable the more you split the beast's attention. This opens up other ways to kill, preserve, or interrogate your prey.

The more bodies the better, at least up to a point. When you have too many untrained hunters in a tight space with a vampire, the risk of friendly fire, tripping over

one another, or one of you being compromised increases. Three to six are ideal numbers for a hunting party. I've heard of bigger, and I've seen two-man crews that hum like a well-oiled machine. I'm talking averages, and three to six is what I'm comfortable with.

Most important, others provide some confirmation that you're not insane, someone to talk to about the shit you've seen. Peace of mind is priceless, and just not being quite so alone in the night is better than gold.

Of course, that presumes you and your collection of on-the-edge paranoids don't all turn on each other and implode instead.

Not Killing Each Other

Don't look so shocked. Tied with vampires for the leading cause of hunter deaths is other hunters. Be honest. You're thinking about killing me right now, in no small part because you're sure I'm going to kill you. That's pretty average for a hunting party even when one of us hasn't tied the other to a chair. It's also the reason I tied you to a chair. See how that works?

The longer you're together, the more the fear gets a hold of you, and doubly so if you started off solo and got used to only trusting yourself. As much as a group brings solace, it also brings liabilities. Partners open up your flanks. Are you all on the same page? Veronica's been acting weirder than usual lately. Jerry is a little soft. Would he sell you out? Michael hasn't been as dedicated since he met that girl. *Holy shit, she's one of them.* Maybe.

The merest suspicion becomes a fucking klaxon in the back of your head. You start to think in terms of who you're willing to lose, who you need to put down before they get you all killed. What's more? They're all thinking the same goddamn thing. And eventually, one or more of you is going to be right.

I came across one group that hadn't hunted a single actual vampire before they'd torn each other apart. The enemy won and didn't even know they were playing.

Not every group ends up shooting one another's faces off before the undead have a chance. Set up a kind of buddy or sponsor system. Meet regularly. Ask questions. Pry. And when one of you pushes back against it, remind them of the fucking price of being wrong.

Even if you have a solid group together, clicking on all cylinders and most of you surviving most of the time, you're still alone. Oh, you have a few others who understand, and like I said, that's better'n gold. But in the bigger sense, in the part of a greater society way, you're still fucked.



Alone in the Crowd

Even if you're the most successful hunter in the history of vampire killing, don't expect recognition. Despite all of your good works, no one's handing out any medals.

If you approach someone, you may think you're doing some great favor by removing the scales from the eyes of your fellow man. Don't be surprised if the resistance you meet is much further beneath the skin, from traumatized survivor to sober witness. Your most trusted confidant can see the exact same thing you did and come away in unassailable denial. Try not to judge him for his weakness, even as you realize you can never be honest with him again.

Worse is when you try to appeal to a superior or a trusted advisor. You know, "doing the right thing." The further you go up the chain, the more likely you are to run afoul of vampire influence. If they don't have their claws in the chief of police, they probably have the commissioner or the mayor. Answers to your pleas are not forthcoming, and now, they know your name, and you don't know theirs.

As you stockpile weapons or search for the wrong stuff on the Internet, you show up on watch lists. As you hang out in clubs, sipping drinks and keeping your eye out for predators, you might freak out the not-Draculas, pissing off the management. You finally track your prey back to her haven, take out her ghouls and burn the place to the ground? You could be hauled in for arson or murder the very next day.

You might think, *well, don't they know?* The government? The church? Somebody? Yeah. Well, partly yeah. Let's talk about that.

The Big Leagues

Larger, more organized groups of hunters are out there. While that might sound like the solution to all our problems, they are mostly up their own asses with clubhouse protocols and best avoided. Hey, if the opportunity presents itself, team up with one or two, and see for yourself. Just don't take them home. Read their literature, but don't sign up for the damn newsletter.

Arcanum: Imagine every English Lit professor you ever fell asleep to. Clone him 100 times, and you've got the gist of this bunch. They hunt just to *know*, and then keep it to themselves. They're just books with legs, and honestly, I'd rather hunt with the book. Hey, apparently their information is good, and I know a few academic-minded hunters who think the world of this collection of uselessness. Don't get me wrong, being smart has its place in the hunt, and I know a few short-lived billies who found that out the hard way, but you need to do the other hard work eventually, and that's where these pencil-necks fall short.

The Other Side

Arcanum: Children stumbling around in the dark. We could light a candle for them, but we wouldn't be doing them any favors. Not really. The Arcanum is not a shelter for lost souls stabbing blindly at the night. We recruit only those with the required skill set, and of a particular temperament.

Society of Leopold: Blessed are those who take up the battle for the night with nothing more than an urge and a torch. Some may prove themselves worthy agents of God, but most are tin soldiers. Wind them up and point them in directions we don't have the resources to get around to yet. If they take one or two monsters down with them, more's the better. We will say a prayer for their souls.

Project Twilight: Some rookies think we should be glad for the help, no matter how civilian. Say that after you're six months into an op just to have it compromised by some lunatic yokel with a knife duct-taped to a weed whacker. They see themselves as, I dunno, holy warriors or the thin dumb line between the light and the darkness. I see them as six wasted months and a shitload of paperwork.

Inquisition: Yeah, you heard me. Officially, they call themselves the Society of Leonard or some obscure bullshit. But they're the same bunch of Catholic holy rollers lost in time that burned witches 600 years ago. They hunt like hell, no pun intended, but they have no idea where the line is, and if you knew me better, you'd know that's saying something. I hear they got no problem bumping off the likes of us if we don't quite make their grade. If they come knocking, try to get them off your case as quickly as possible.

Project Twilight: You know those stories about how the government knows everything and they just ain't telling. Yeah, apparently that's not too far off. Not everybody is in on it. Not your mailman, or the TSA, and probably not the President either. They're government spooks with all the funding and ability to make you disappear that you might expect, whether you're a vampire or an unaffiliated vamp-basher who falls into the category of acceptable losses.

What We Know

I don't mess around too much with what the monsters call themselves or how they group together. Still, any intel is good intel, and so, I'll tell you the few things that I can make sense of. The big stuff anyway. Knowing that some of them call their country cousins "gangrels" isn't going to save your life. Knowing when you're dealing with the big vamp on campus might.

They play at society, with politics and infrastructure just like mortals. If they have politics, that means they have sides. While every vampire seems quick enough to turn on another, they see the value of safety in numbers. You'll find some loners, which is good because no one's going to miss them and fucking awful because it means they're strong enough to make it on their own.

The C Word

The one side imagines itself domesticated. I always forget the word for them. It's Spanish or Italian or something. I want to say camaroon, or catamaran, but that's not it. Starts with a C, whatever it is. Anyway, they got rules for everything, including being too obvious, apparently. Makes them feel less like the monsters they truly are, I guess. Chances are, if your city isn't well-known for being a shithole, they're the ones in charge. They answer to some ponce who calls him- or herself Prince. Yeah, Prince. One for every city, I think. If there's a King, I've never heard of him. They meet with a kind of council or senate, and they make sure everyone toes the line and stays out of sight.

Before you start thinking they don't sound so bad, remember what we're talking about here. Monsters. Vampires. Among their rules are how much of your blood they can drink, and how many dead people are acceptable in a neighborhood. Clear?

Otherwise, they seem content to let their members toddle around drinking blood and killing people and only get involved when something goes wrong. That includes you and me doing our job.

If they ever draw a bead on you, they're as likely to try and talk out your "differences" as they are to kill you. Why? Because they give less of a shit about a few dead vampires than they do about being dragged into the light screaming. It's up to you how good their deals are, but be careful dancing with them. Doubly so for one who smiles and calls you friend. On the other hand, if you really piss them off, like killing the Prince's favored son, they can drop the hammer on you sure as anything.

Take out who you can, cut a deal if you have to, and get the fuck out of Dodge. Worked for me... for a while, at least.

The Other Ones

If they got a name for themselves, I've never heard it. But when you've been at this as long as I have, you get to know when you're dealing with the other side. The first group's vamps bother to pretend they're cursed. You know, while they take over the government and build themselves posh hidey-holes downtown. These guys, though? They worship their condition like a fucking religion. I don't know what your opinion on religion is, so no offense up front, but that only makes these guys more whacko.

They're full of claims of how superior they are, but turn the lights on and they still run under the fridge like the rest. They still scream and beg when you set them on fire. Which isn't to say you can take them lightly. They may be full of shit, but unlike how the first group pretends not to be monsters like it's a full time job, these fuckers just *do not care*. The minute you bust them that you know what they really are, they will drop all pretense and go straight for your throat. And they're never alone.

Most of the ones I've run into aren't very old or powerful. High turnover rate, I guess. I've been at this long enough to know when I'm messing around with soldiers. They've got captains and generals somewhere. If they're the same kind of assholes evolved, you're lucky to not run into them.

I've heard they'll run into town, make a bunch of newbie vampires and set them loose to be someone else's problem. I've never seen it myself, so whoever covers that up must be doing an okay job. But that's who you're dealing with when it comes to these vampires.

Loose Ends

I wish the vampires all stood neatly in one of two lines and let us take them down nice and predictably. That ain't so. You got your forgotten ones left to squat in abandoned houses that even their own kind don't acknowledge. You got gangs of young punks who don't think any rules apply to them. You got cultists, wanderers, some kind of undead mafia, blood sorcerers, real monster-monsters, living corpses, and all sorts of "other." Just like the people most of them still claim to be, there's all kinds and exceptions to all of 'em.

Just when I got used to the idea that some bloodsuckers turn into wolves, I see one turn into a snake, or a bat just like in the movies. I stopped trying to figure shit out more than that. In the end, you just gotta be ready for anything. Which brings us to this next bit of unfortunate business.

All That Goes Bump Ain't Vampires

If I had the opportunity, I'd break this to you some other time, but I don't, so here goes. There's other things out in the night than just bloodsuckers. I want to be clear, I don't suggest hunting any of these. You may be crazy enough to hunt vampires, but you'd have to be really out of your mind to hunt any of this shit. I'm just giving you the head's up so you don't stand there slack-jawed when you should be running or shooting.

Werewolves: Yeah, they're real. Like I said, some vampires can turn into wolves too, which is its own mess. I lost a whole hunting party that tracked a vampire right into a werewolf neighborhood. They take their territory very seriously, apparently, but in my limited experience, they seem to stick to it. So I guess that's lucky. They hate vampires as much as we do, but I wouldn't go thinking of them as allies. Don't make them enemies if you can help it either. Like I said, they seem to stick to their own corner, and I'm content to let them. They're outside my expertise. I will tell you they don't give a shit what phase the moon is in, or whether it's day or night, like they do in the movies. They can do their thing whenever, apparently. I'll tell you what is true, though. All that shit about silver? Yeah, they hate the stuff. Maybe you should start carrying some old tableware just in case. Otherwise, stay out of the woods.

Wizards: I've met hunters who claim they do magic, get premonitions, or have psychic powers. I've seen it. I believe them enough. Why not? I'm already on board with vampires, right? Then I've heard — and only heard, thankfully — of certain more esoteric kinds of magic. Flipping a coin and making it land on its edge, reattaching a severed finger, and boiling a rat alive to talk to a god that lives on the edge of perception — all those sorts of things. I've seen more than most, and even I have a hard time believing it. Are they real? Are they friendly? I couldn't tell you, and I'd be real careful about trying to find out. Consider this: They're keeping themselves secret for some reason, right? I have a hard time believing it's a good reason is all.

Ghosts: Bad news, yeah, ghosts are real. Good news, they can't really do shit. At least not that I've ever had to deal with. I've heard of all the usual poltergeist "get out of the house" kind of stuff, but I've yet to have one lay any kind of hands on me. I met more than one person who can talk with them, and they seem okay at complaining about how they died or giving information. For a price. Weird prices too. Like crying or shouting or telling living relatives to check under the old oak tree kind of crap. I don't mess with them, and I don't think they mess with

me. Maybe that's enough. Don't turn down help, but be careful to get the price up front.

Demons: I don't know if I believe in Heaven or Hell or whatever. I'd be willing to keep it simple and call critters that claim to come from either demons on some level or another. However, I met some guys who said they ran across real demons wearing human skin. Whether they just ran into some ghosts who can actually possess people or some weird, religious vampires, I can't tell you. I can only reiterate two things: Be ready for anything, and if something smiles and calls you friend, stay the fuck away.

Zombies: Yeah, I don't believe in them either, but I've been hearing about them a little more than usual lately. Just a pop culture fad running away with everyone's imaginations, maybe? Maybe. But remember vampires are pretty popular, and it doesn't make them any less real. Maybe their popularity is the world's way of warning you about them.

Hunters: I don't know what else to call them. I saw this couple, a man and woman, staking out a likely vampire haunt. I didn't want to spook them, so I let them at it before I introduced myself. Their mark walks out of the place. The woman starts cutting on herself with a penknife, like her hands and arms. Then before I know it she wrestles the vamp to the ground barehanded. A slip of a thing, and she's holding her own. Then the man runs up with a tire iron that shines as bright as daylight and takes the thing's head off. Then they ran. I let them. I've seen all kinds of shit, and heard about even more, but that's a damn first. At least they killed the bad guys. Unless they're worse guys, I guess.

I Can't Even: Bear with me, I promise I'm not fucking with you. Apparently there's stuff out there that's not even *people*. They walk around *looking* like people, or they've replaced people, or something. Did you ever see Jacob's Ladder? Have you ever suffered from schizophrenia? Fuck it, let's move on.

Some End-of-the-World-Type Shit

Demons? Zombies? Humans calling on some kind of holy fire? I'm not the superstitious type, except when it suits me. But I've been at this a long time, and there's a change in the air recently. Even the vampires are acting nervous lately. All the crazy weather, and natural disasters, and... I don't know. They say every generation thinks it's the end of the world, and maybe that's just it. Maybe I got old, and paranoia turned my head sour with nonsense. I'm just saying, I think you've got harder nights ahead of you than I ever had. Even now that....

Well, seeing as it's almost dawn, I guess it's time to do this.

Last Words

We're almost to the part where I untie you. Almost.

First, I have one more bit of knowledge for you. A last word of warning and a request. *Two* requests.

You see, when you get good at this, *if* you get good at this, it means you've gotten good at the not-dying part. You get good enough at surviving and tracking and killing and knowing when to cut bait and when to go to ground, who to trust and who to stab in the back before they do the same to you.

You get good at all that. You get so good that your enemy comes out the other side of fear and comes to admire you. Gets to think you're worth more to him alive. Forever.

I got took a couple weeks ago. I'm one of them now. And while I took the bastard that did it right back, it doesn't undo the damage done. That's one thing the movies don't have right.

So now I'm going to untie you. And if you've learned anything at all, you're going to kill me. You're going to tie me to that same chair, and you're gonna take that machete right over there and you're gonna do your best to take my head off in one. I sharpened it as good as I could.

Then, if I can ask you one more thing, you'll take this envelope. There's an address and some info, everything you should need is in it. Find the girl – well, woman now. Find the woman in it, and give her everything that's in there. And tell her... just tell her I'm sorry.

Don't you fucking pity me! Don't you dare go soft on me either. You think, what? Maybe it doesn't have to end like this? Maybe I can do some good this way? Fuck you. I've already tasted blood once. Human blood. I held that girl down and took her life away in great big gulps. You watched me do it, remember?

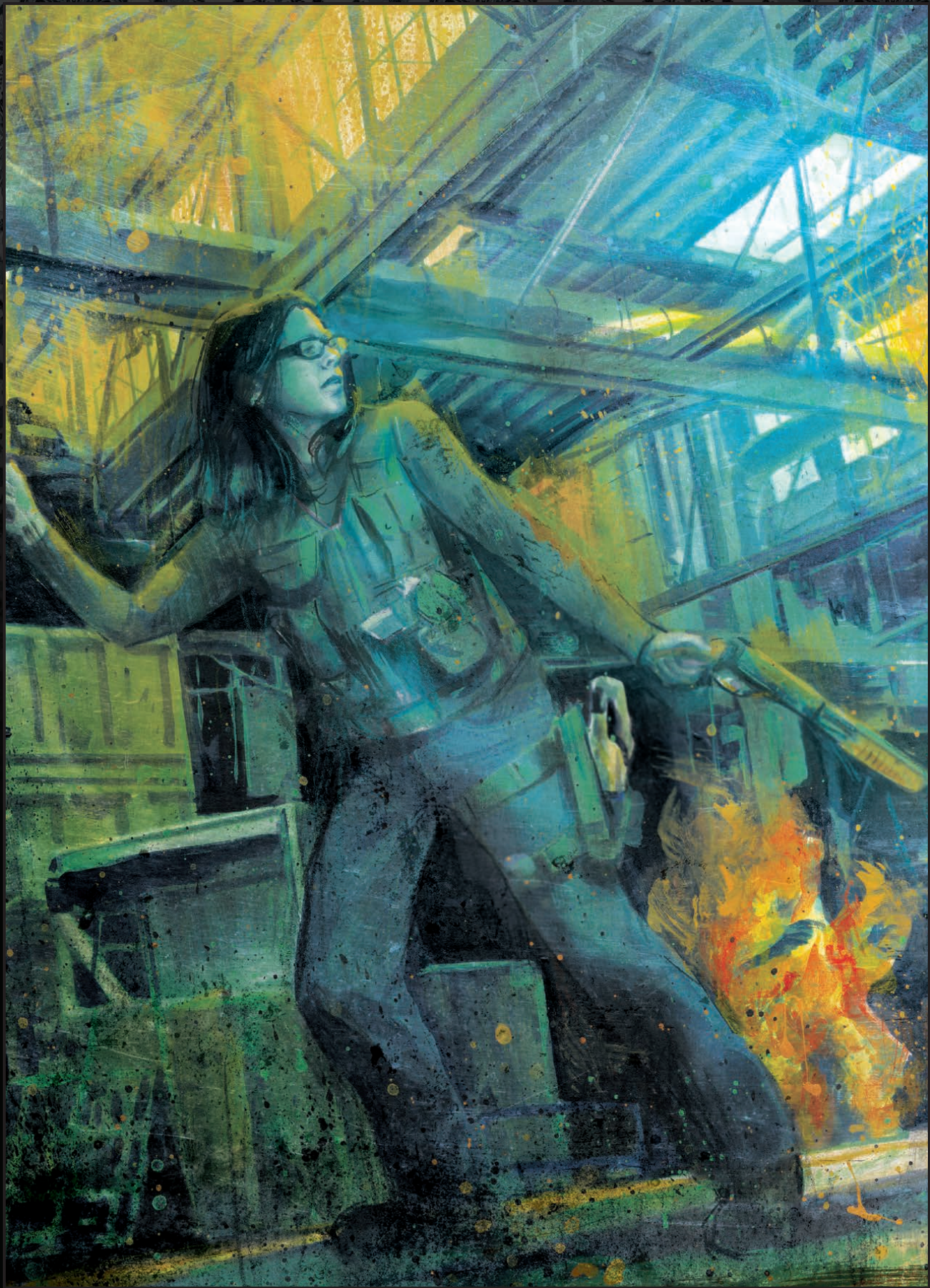
It won't be long before I have to again. Do you understand that? No, you don't. I'm starving. Like no hunger I've felt before. That hunger is a little monster inside of me rattling at his cage for me to tear your throat out. It's getting bigger and louder as we speak. I don't care if you want to do it or not. I can make you do it. I've got their powers now. I've got....

I've come too far to become this.

I'm only sorry I don't have the time to get you more ready. But what're you gonna do?

The hunt takes everything eventually.





Chapter Two: Character Creation and Traits

There is no greater impotence in all the world like knowing you are right and that the wave of the world is wrong, yet the wave crashes upon you.

— Norman Mailer, *Armies of the Night*

According to Greek mythology, the goddess Athena sprang forth whole and fully formed from Zeus's head. Building a dynamic character is not quite so easy. Creating a compelling hunter character may necessitate some back-and-forth with the Storyteller and the troupe, and it requires some consideration for both concept and chronicle.

A sculptor can look at a block of marble and visualize a potential masterpiece. All that remains to do is to chip away everything else. Think of your character sheet as a chisel used to shape the personality of a character and clear away everything else until you have that perfect image of the hunter you will play.

Your character should be more than mere Traits, awesome weapons, and the occasional supernatural power. Stories come from dramatic challenges that happen to characters with dreams, fears, and motivations beyond the next battle and blackly humorous quip. The odds are stacked against you. The villains control the world and maybe always will. Playing a hunter is akin to starring in a Shakespearean tragedy: You know you might die in the end, but it's how you make your exit that truly forms your legend.

This chapter describes how to create a hunter character, beginning with a general concept and then translating that concept into the Traits used in the game. Although the process is relatively simple, it is often worthwhile to

create characters with the Storyteller's collaboration so that she can answer questions and guide the creation process.

The Storyteller and a Chronicle Synopsis

Outlining a hunter chronicle can be a collaborative effort between the Storyteller and the players. Limiting the planned themes, motifs, and plots can focus the story and enhance enjoyment for everyone. Writing a synopsis to guide everyone provides signposts for the intended development of the future chronicle can encourage everyone to adhere to an agreed-upon set of parameters. A synopsis helps coordinate the players and the Storyteller to quickly establish a common context for the chronicle and remove any potential misunderstandings later.

Imagine that three players in a new chronicle have created science-themed hunters with a solid amount of skepticism about the supernatural. If the fourth player creates a mystic sorcerer without creating bridges to the other concepts, the chronicle may develop a disharmonious element that will disrupt the story and,

most importantly, the fun. This isn't always the case, of course – some chronicles may thrive on achieving a harmony in how hunters view their undead foes – but unless the Storyteller plans to explore those themes, they may disrupt the theme and mood.

Selecting a Theme for the Chronicle

A theme is a particular motif for the chronicle. The best way to determine your chronicle theme is to decide on the premise of the chronicle. It is recommended that you limit yourself to one primary motif for a particular chronicle, or you run the risk of the themes confusing the players. Here are but a few examples:

Science vs. the Occult

A group of scientists and students have discovered that vampires exist, and they must use their training to investigate their influence over the university, decide how to respond to them, and surmise if there is a possible cure for the state of vampirism.

A Crusade Against Vampires

In his dreams, an old priest hears the voice of an angel charging him to undertake a crusade against the undead. A group of the devout must then battle the Damned while tempering their war with the tenets of their faith.

Protecting the Hood

A group of everyman eccentrics from a neighborhood on the wrong side of the tracks has noticed that residents are disappearing and no one is asking why.

Black Ops: Best of the Best

A group of highly trained soldiers have gathered to hunt down and eliminate the threat of vampires.

Family Business

A family with ancient ties to the occult has an unusual motto: The family that slays together stays together, even beyond death.

Thrill Killas: Life on the Edge

A motley collection of junkies, freaks, and sociopaths have discovered the greatest high of all: Kindred blood. And they're willing to murder to get it.



Determining Mood

The recurrent thematic elements you want to highlight in the story often determine the mood of a chronicle. The best way to decide on a mood is to define what sort of emotions you want to inspire in your players. What are the questions you want them to explore during the course of a chronicle? Here are a few examples that can help you determine the proper mood of your chronicle:

Sacrifice

Is it worth it to sacrifice your life for a cause? How much will you surrender to fight monsters? What are you willing to lose for your cause? Your life? Your job? Your relationship with your family? How much is the greater good worth to you?

Redemption

Hunting often requires a particular skillset that can come from an unsavory life. Some choose to be hunters to redeem themselves for the sins of the past. Can you find absolution while killing monsters? Does the good you do in the world absolve you of the evil? Can you ever truly erase the past?

Community

What does it really mean to be part of a community in the modern world? What do your neighbors really mean to you? Is it worth protecting a society that fears and mistrusts you? What does your duty truly require from you?

Revenge

You been wronged. How far are you willing to go to seek revenge? Who are you willing to hurt to achieve satisfaction? What would those you are avenging think of your retribution?

Faith

What do you do when different aspects of your faith conflict? Your faith might tell you that a vampire is an abomination and must be destroyed. But what if a vampire isn't hurting anyone? What if a vampire has been Embraced against her will? Is killing a vampire considered murder? Is it justified to break the law to protect people? Can a vampire's soul ever be redeemed?

Addiction

You were young, the night was beautiful, and all you wanted to do was have a good time. That's when the vampire drew you into the blood cult. You wasted years in a haze until you broke free, and you've sworn you'll never go back. You hunger for the rush every night. How long will you last? What if your former master finds you?

Creative Collaboration for Building a Chronicle

The Storyteller should familiarize herself with the **Hunters Hunted II** character creation process and then discuss with the players what options will be available for the chronicle.

An engaging chronicle doesn't simply happen immediately without effort. Storytellers must ensure the players understand the process while getting a feel for the new hunter characters they're creating. Character creation can provide Storytellers with some wonderful plot ideas and potential stories that they might not have considered on their own, or that they might have left open-ended to see which player expresses interest.

Players should examine or discuss the chronicle synopsis and avoid selecting Traits that would clash with the stated themes and mood. (See p. 34, below, for an example of a chronicle synopsis.) For example, a sorcerer character might be wildly inappropriate for a science-themed chronicle. The Storyteller, as always, has the last word on what is and is not appropriate to the chronicle.

Getting Started

The **Hunters Hunted II** character creation system is designed around five basic precepts, quite similar to those of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Keep these in mind while generating the persona you will assume in the World of Darkness.

- You may create a character of any age, from any culture in the world, and from any background, subject to the Storyteller's approval. However, all characters are assumed to begin the game as new hunters who have only recently sharpened their stakes and stepped into the World of Darkness.

- The character creation system is intended more as a persona development device than as a strict mechanical system. Who wants more rules at the expense of an interesting character or a good story? The character cannot exist as mere dots on a page — storytelling is always more important than numbers.

- You have a certain number of points to spend on Traits you would like your characters to have. You also receive freebie points at the end of character creation, which you may spend to round out your character, add personality, and further differentiate your character from those of other players.

Chronicle Synopsis Example

Life at a university is a study of life in transition. Freshmen begin their adult lives by moving to a strange campus the size of a small town. They learn to handle the rhythms of a new environment with a complex bureaucratic system that's unforgiving and views them as merely a series of numbers.

Each student must adhere to his own discipline, and if a student can't be bothered to attend class, it's the student's loss and not the school's problem. Temptations arise in a multitude of forms, including campus keggers at the frat houses, easily available drugs, and amiable graduates who haven't moved on to their own destinies but who want to introduce newcomers to a wild crowd.

Predators watch and wait for the weak. A university is the perfect spot for a nest of vampires to feed. The pale face of an anemic blood doll won't look out of place among the crowds of students pulling all-nighters. Dozens of students drop out of school never to be heard from again. Who would notice a few more that simply disappear into the night?

A chance encounter with a careless vampire introduced Dr. Philip Zukera to the terrors of the World of Darkness. He knew the world wouldn't believe him without proof. Dr. Zukera has gathered a small group of students, faculty,

and concerned citizens who have also run afoul of the corruption of the undead to study the phenomenon and patrol the university.

Theme: Science vs. the Occult

Mood: The inclusion and alienation inherent to a variety of overlapping communities

Character Concepts

Characters should be connected somehow to the university.

Dr. Zukera is interested in characters who have some sort of special skillset that would assist him investigating or hunting the supernatural. Such concepts may include students, school staff, or locals who dwell in the shadow of the lecture halls' imposing walls.

Characters who have been the victims of vampire attacks are likely to find themselves the subject or Dr. Zukera's recruitment efforts.

Limitations

Psychic Phenomena Numina (see p. 77) is available.

True Faith (see p. 83) might not be appropriate to the chronicle, but the Storyteller is willing to discuss it.

Sorcery and Hedge Magic are not available immediately.

- As in the core rules, a Trait rating of 1 is poor, while a rating of 5 is excellent. Traits rated above 5 (with a few exceptions, as with Humanity and Willpower) are superhuman, and a hunter is unlikely to ever wield one herself, though she may well find them leveled against her.

- A character with things to lose is almost always more interesting than a detached character who lives only for the kill. Create your character with ample points of reference to the world that reflect a life that has been lived and touched those around her. A lone gunman might make for an interesting hunter concept initially, but with no one to lament him if he goes missing, for whom is he trying to take back the night?

Character Creation Process

Step One: Character Concept

Choose hunter concept, motivation, Nature, and Demeanor

Step Two: Select Attributes

Prioritize the three categories: Physical, Social, Mental (6/4/3). Your character automatically starts with one dot in each Attribute. Note that your Storyteller might opt for the more potent spread of 7/5/3 to allow the hunters to be on a slightly more even footing with the vampires.

Rate Physical Traits: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina.

Rate Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, Appearance.

Rate Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, Wits.

Step Three: Select Abilities

Prioritize the three categories: Talents, Skills, Knowledges (13/9/5).

Choose Talents, Skills, and Knowledges.

No Ability higher than 3 at this stage.

Step Four: Select Advantages

Choose Backgrounds (5), and rate Virtues (7). Your character automatically has one dot in each Virtue.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Record Humanity (equal to Conscience + Self-Control) and Willpower (equal to Courage).

Spend freebie points (21). Optional: Choose Merits and Flaws (max. 7 points).

New Sample Concepts

- **Burnout** – escaped ghoul, reformed cultist, struggling vitae addict

- **Crusader** – former Inquisitor, militant priest, modern knight

- **Scientist** – behavioral psychologist, biologist, medical researcher, physicist

New Backgrounds

- **Armory** – A collection of weapons, ammunition, and armor that your hunter possesses.

- **Base of Operations** – A staging area for your hunters to rest, train, and plan attacks.

- **Guide** – A mystical spirit guide that inspires your hunter to fight the denizens of the night.

Numina

- **Astral Projection** – Free your soul from your body, and explore the realm of thought.

- **The Path of Curses** – Blight the fortunes of others with your mystical abilities.

- **Cyberkinesis** – Control computers and machines.

- **The Path of Divination** – Ascertain the unknown.

- **The Path of Healing** – Use your gifts to heal others.

- **Psychometry** – Read psychic impressions left on objects.

- **Pyrokinesis** – Ignite fires with your mind.

- **Telepathy** – Read the minds of others.

- **Telekinesis** – Move objects with your mind.

- **True Faith** – Belief in a higher power that provides miracles.

Freebie Points

Trait	Cost
Attribute	5 per dot
Ability	2 per dot
Numina	7 per dot
Background	1 per dot
Virtue	2 per dot
Humanity	2 per dot
Willpower	1 per dot

Step One: Character Concept

Concept is the seed that anchors your character to the chronicle and the foundation for the character's growth. It isn't required that your concept be complex or detailed. This concept stage also involves the selection of the character's motivation, Nature and Demeanor.

Concept

Concept is the creative starting point for designing a character. Who was the character before she became a hunter? The act of hunting monsters is a conscious choice between the safety of the mundane world and the shadows within the World of Darkness. What motivated the character to become a hunter? The character's motivation can transform this choice into an epic heroic story, a cold revenge tale, or even a tragedy.

Concept might not be a numerical Trait with a mechanical effect on the game, but it helps shape a personality for your character, and it provides an anchor for the hunter character to be built on a character sheet.

Some sample hunter concepts are presented in the Appendix. In addition, you can review a few example concepts in the V20 character creation chapter, on page 80. If you don't see a concept you like, make one up! Its sole purpose is to help you express your character idea concisely.

Example: Leah wants to create a concept per the Chronicle Synopsis Example on page 34. She isn't interested in playing a scientist, but she likes the idea of playing a disgruntled soldier. The Storyteller suggests that Leah change the concept to a discharged soldier who is now going to the university to figure out what she is going to do with the rest of her life, while trying to recover from her post-traumatic stress disorder. Leah names her character Midori and runs with the concept.

Motivation

The World of Darkness is a hostile and comfortless place to many mortals. People have learned to look the other way when something moves in the shadows. It takes uncommon strength of will to fight monsters alone in the night when neighbors shake their heads with disbelief and corrupt police may well be on the side of the vampires.

A hunter's motivation is the answer to that most basic question: Why? Why does your hunter risk her acceptance, her freedom, and her life?

Here are a couple of questions to answer to help you figure out your hunter's motivation and methodology:

How was your hunter introduced to the supernatural in the World of Darkness?

Why did she choose to fight rather than run?

Why does your hunter continue to fight after that first encounter?

What does your hunter think about vampires?

For more ideas on your character's motivation, review Chapter One: Alone in the Night.

Nature and Demeanor (Archetypes)

After developing a concept, you should choose your character's Nature and Demeanor. These behavioral Traits help players to understand their characters' personalities.

Demeanor is the mask a hunter presents to the world. How a hunter fights vampires is often reflected in his demeanor. Those who would take the fight directly to the undead tend toward aggressive, outgoing Demeanors to offset perceived weakness against the supernatural. Spiritual hunters gravitate toward insightful, emotive demeanors. Researchers may be clinical and detached, or driven by passions. Remember that the most interesting characters sometimes play against stereotypes.

Nature reflects a hunter's true self, his soul if you will. The Nature archetype of the hunter reflects his deep-rooted feelings about himself, others, and the world. The hunter's Nature is often reflected in his motivation to hunt vampires.

For a complete list of Archetypes from which to select Nature and Demeanor, see pp. 87-96 of V20.

Step Two: Select Attributes

Attributes reflect the measurement of natural acumen and raw capabilities of a hunter. All hunter characters start with one dot in each Attribute, reflecting the basic capabilities of the mortals from which they're drawn. A character's priorities determine how many dots you may allocate to that cluster of Attributes. For example, a tough, athletic character will likely have six dots allocated to his Physical category, while a clever, wise character will have six dots placed in her Mental category.

You start with an Attribute spread of six dots to allocate among your character's primary Attributes, four dots to allocate among secondary Attributes, and three dots to allocate

among tertiary Attributes. This Attribute spread presumes a gritty, high-lethality chronicle in which the hunters are likely outmatched by the vampires. This is suitable for a horror chronicle in which the story is about fighting overwhelming odds and how cheap life is in the World of Darkness.

A chronicle concentrating on expert, highly trained hunters may benefit from the more potent spread of seven dots among primary, five dots among secondary, and three dots among tertiary Attribute groups. While hardly legendary in power scope, this spread allows the hunters to start on a slightly more even footing with the vampires they hunt. It works well for chronicles in which starting characters might be experts in their given fields, or to provide niche distinction among character concepts.

The decision as to which scope of Attribute spreads to use belongs to the Storyteller.

For a complete list and description of Attributes, see Chapter Three of V20, pp. 96-100.

Step Three: Select Abilities

Like Attributes, Ability groups are also prioritized during character creation. You should select primary, secondary, and tertiary groups for your hunter's Abilities. The primary group receives thirteen dots for allocation, the secondary group receives nine dots, and the tertiary group receives five. Note that, unlike Attributes, characters do not begin the chronicle with automatic dots in any Ability. Further, no Ability may be purchased above three dots during this stage of character creation. You may raise Abilities with freebie points later.

For a complete list and description of the standard Abilities, see V20, pp. 100-110.

Step Four: Select Advantages

Every person in the world is unique as a result of her environment, experiences, and perspective. The Storyteller System represents some amount of this via Advantages.

Advantages are Traits that make your hunter a contender in the fight to protect the world from the vampires. Advantages are not prioritized; a set number of dots are allocated to each category. Although this number is fixed, additional Advantage dots may be purchased with freebie points.

Backgrounds

A starting character has five dots for Backgrounds, which may be distributed at your discretion. Background Traits should fit the character concept—a destitute street preacher isn't likely to have Resources, for example—though the Storyteller may disallow or encourage you to take certain Backgrounds for your character.

For a complete list and description of the standard Backgrounds, see pp. 110-119 of V20. Of these, several are inappropriate to mortal hunters: Black Hand Membership, Domain, Generation, Herd, and Rituals. In most cases, it's simply not appropriate for a hunter to have these Kindred Traits, but at the Storyteller's discretion, something truly strange might apply to a decidedly unique character (such as Black Hand Membership...).

New Background: Armory

A hunter with Firearms can perform simple tasks with weapons, such as cleaning a gun, but without a stocked armory, it's difficult to keep weapons in fire-ready condition. Your hunter has managed to amass a functional armory along with the ability to maintain all of the weapons within it. Each level of the Armory Background yields access to more potent weapons along with the resources to properly maintain and clean them, and proper ammunition.

The scope of this Background varies a bit by region, as weapons-control laws that exist in various locations around the world differ. What an American can buy in a department store, for example, might be the sole domain of the military in Romania, and players who wish to invest dots in Armory should consult with their Storytellers to determine the specifics of how it will work in the chronicle's locality. The Storyteller may require you to invest a few points in another Background (such as certain types of Influence or legal or military allies) to prevent the Armory's confiscation by the authorities. An Armory can vanish in a fraction of the time it took to amass it, particularly if its curator is prone to rants about blood-sucking monsters and corruption that goes all the way to the top.

For more details on specific weapons, including game mechanics, see V20, pp. 280-281.

Players may opt to pool Background points for a shared Armory. See pp. 118-119 of V20 for more information on pooled Backgrounds.

- You have an excellent starter armory that includes many legal weapons commonly available on the street. This level also provides access to a quantity of extra weapons, as relevant to the regional culture.



- You have access to enough legal weaponry to outfit a street gang of 10 men.
- You could start your own small militia. In addition, you can outfit five individuals with weaponry that exists in a legal gray area for the region, which most civilians would have a difficult time obtaining.
- You have an armory appropriate to a SWAT team in a major city, including some military-grade hardware. You have enough gear to outfit a 10-man team with such advanced weaponry, which is a cut above that provided by the lesser levels of this Background. Be careful where you use it, because without other appropriate Backgrounds, you may find yourself under official scrutiny for possessing weaponry that exists outside the realm of the strictly legal.
- Your armory is the envy of paramilitary forces around the world. You have the tools to clean and repair almost any personal weapon manufactured in the world. You have access to a significant quantity of weapons that are illegal in most countries, and enough of them to field your own platoon. If this armory were discovered by authorities, your hunter would be in serious danger of going to jail for a long time — assuming

there's no armed standoff that threatens him more immediately.

New Background: Base of Operations

A base of operations is a secure location controlled and owned by your hunter. This place is a headquarters in which your hunter can rest, train, and plan his next attacks. A hunter's base could be as simple as an unfurnished apartment, as grand as a senator's mansion, or as complex as a military base.

Players who elect to purchase this Background must divide their points among three different categories, described below. Also, the purchase of this Background may be pooled as per the Background pooling systems on pages 118-119 of V20.

Luxury

Luxury is a measure of the quality of appointments inside the base. The level of Luxury ranges from spare to opulent, corresponding closely to a Resources Background of equal value (see pp. 115-116 of V20).

- You bought your furniture at a thrift store or other low-cost vendor.
- Your base has been decorated and outfitted modestly. You have the basics expected of modern First World lifestyles (where appropriate).

- Your base is one of relative comfort, with a host of amenities.
- Your base offers a luxurious respite from the horrible reality of killing vampires, and it is unique in both design and appearance.
- Your base exhibits a degree of ostentation that only the extremely wealthy or celebrities usually enjoy.

Size

Size represents the volume of the base of operations and the amount of space that it comprises. While the following breakdown gives suggested sizes and room counts, players are encouraged to be creative if they so wish – imagine an open temple layout of no true “rooms,” or a converted service hallway that’s long and narrow but has multiple access points to various locations inside the city center.

- A small apartment or underground chamber: 1 to 2 rooms.
- A large apartment or small family home; 3 to 4 rooms.
- A warehouse, church, or large home; 5 to 8 rooms, or a large enclosure.
- A mansion or network of tunnels; 9-15 rooms or chambers.
- A sprawling estate or vast network of subway tunnels; 20+ rooms.

Security

Security represents how tough it is to break into the base. Each dot of Security adds one to the difficulty of any roll made to penetrate the base or adds one to the number of successes required to gain access. (Players and Storytellers should agree on this function before the story begins.)

- You have locks on the doors to the base, but not much else.
- The doors have deadbolts, and the windows have strong bars, or you may have a dog that barks to warn you when someone comes too close to the base. Your HQ is relatively secure from ordinary threats.
- The base is secure but not impenetrable, relying on a modern set of locks, physical protection such as bars over the windows, electronic security measures such as alarm systems, and standard electronic monitoring such as security cameras.
- Your base is protected by all of the security features for the previous level and then some. On par with restricted governmental buildings or even prisons, your base of operations has reinforced

walls, sectionalized access throttles, and perhaps even several panic rooms or hidden chambers. You have invested a considerable amount of time and effort to keep people out of your base.

- Your base is protected by all of the security features offered by the previous levels. Additionally, it is protected by one or more unique features, such as a remote location, a geographical boundary like a waterfall or mountain pass, and/or possible occult protections, like being visible only by moonlight. (Players and Storytellers should come to an agreement on the nature of such daunting and one-of-a-kind protections.)

New Background: Guide

Due to fate, destiny, or whim, a mysterious spiritual entity has chosen to aid your hunter in her quest to stalk vampires. Such guides rarely appear in the open, instead preferring to push their agenda via dreams, signs, and portents. One might appear as a ghost in a mirror. Another might reveal itself in an ages-old portrait of a long-dead family member, who offers advice or shudder-inducing environmental effects, such as a room forever shrouded in conscious shadow.

Generally, such entities are very interested in the welfare (or at least foibles) of mortals but possess hidden motives to encourage certain types of behavior in their companions. Crafty, knowledgeable in magical concerns, and possessed of inhuman senses, these beings have much to offer their patrons. They aren’t necessarily ghosts or spirits, but may well be among the less classifiable anomalies of the World of Darkness.

Nothing is free, of course, and this relationship is likely a two-way street. Guides may expect special treatment, including food, shelter, companionship, and/or even mysterious supernatural necessities. Perhaps even blood....

If you seek to invest in the Guide Background, you should cooperate with the Storyteller to create an interesting, unique personality that has good reason to share your character’s fate and influence her behavior.

- Weak Guide: An entity with limited occult knowledge that can only affect the world with great difficulty. It is not always reliably available and may occasionally provide incorrect information.
- Minor Guide: This entity knows a good deal about the occult and vampires, but it finds affecting the material world difficult and thus will only do it when it suits its goals. Your guide will help you, but is fairly limited in what it can do, especially in regards to being able to manipulate physical objects.
- Apt Guide: A guide of this strength may well be a recognized entity in the spirit world. She will aid you

with knowledge and training, and when appropriate, she may fight on your behalf, potentially wielding minor Numina for you (see Chapter Four).

- Strong Guide: Your guide is quite powerful, potentially a significant personage in the realms of spirits or the dead. This entity has major experience with the occult, and it is aware of the ins and outs of the vampire world. It is willing to assist you with major Numina once per story (see Chapter Four).
- Puissant Guide: This entity can walk between the spirit and material worlds with two major Numina powers. It may assist you if it feels appropriate, but it may well demand favors or obeisance in return.

Virtues

In the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, “He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster.” (It’s not too distant a thought from the Kindred’s own “A Beast I am lest a Beast I become....”) **Hunters Hunted II** is all about the struggle of fighting against monsters without becoming one. How long can a hunter delve into the darkness without being tainted? How long can she resist the wickedness and corruption of the World of Darkness?

Virtues are important to a hunter as they represent the character’s moral backbone and determine how readily he withstands certain perils of the World of Darkness. A hunter character has three Virtues, which define how well the character resists fear of the unknown and how keenly he feels remorse. Conscience governs a character’s sense of right and wrong, while Self-Control determines how readily he

maintains his composure. Courage measures the character’s ability to withstand fear, terror, and daunting opposition.

Each character starts out with one dot in each Virtue, and you may then distribute seven additional dots among the Virtues as you see fit. These Virtues play instrumental roles in determining a character’s starting Humanity and Willpower levels, so be careful how you spend the points.

Conscience

Conscience is a Trait that allows characters to evaluate their conduct with relation to what is right and wrong. Your character’s moral judgment with Conscience stems from her attitude and outlook. Conscience is what prevents a hunter from going too far when confronted with a situation in which the ends might justify the means.

One of the interesting challenges of being a vampire hunter is resolving issues of Conscience with what needs to be done to survive in the World of Darkness. Is it acceptable to kill a vampire? Is it considered murder? What about their ghouls? What if you need to break the law to protect innocent people from monsters? Is theft OK if it helps you fight monsters? Can you end the suffering of a vampire’s victim left to die? Is it the right thing to do?

Conscience factors into the difficulty of many rolls to avoid your character committing a transgression against her Humanity. Additionally, Conscience determines whether or not a character loses Humanity by committing acts that do not uphold her moral code. A character with a high Conscience rating feels remorse for transgressions, while a character with a lower Conscience may be more callous or ethically lax. (For more information on transgressions and Humanity, see V20, pp. 309-311.)

- Uncaring
- Normal
- Ethical
- Righteous
- Remorseful

Self-Control

Self-Control is a measure of your hunter’s mental discipline and control. Hunters learn to control their instincts in order to stand against the foulness of the undead. As well, the World of Darkness is punctuated with temptations subtle and gross, many of which aren’t even supernatural. Hunters with a high Self-Control are able to deny their darker urges more readily than characters with low Self-Control.

Alternate Virtues

In some cases, a Storyteller might permit you to take Conviction instead of Conscience for your character to simulate a fanatic dedicated to a rigid system of belief or faith. To a character with Conviction, the end certainly does justify the means, and that end is the end of the Damned. This is dramatically different from Humanity, and that difference should be reflected in roleplaying and how normal mortals interact with the hunter, as it represents an undeniable departure from the mortal perspective. For more information, see V20, p. 314.

- Unstable
- Normal
- Temperate
- Hardened
- Total self-mastery

Courage

Courage is the measure of your hunter's ability to stand strong in the face of fear or adversity. It requires Courage to oppose vampires and even more Courage to actively hunt them. Courage is bravery, mettle, and stoicism combined, which allows a hunter to face these horrible monsters without succumbing to the horror of the situation. A character with high Courage meets her fears head-on, whereas a character of lesser Courage may flee.

- Timid
- Normal
- Bold
- Resolute
- Heroic

Step Five: Last Touches

Spark of Life

Dots on a character sheet only represent your character's capacities; the onus is on you to breathe a bit of life into your character's Traits. If she exists only in mechanical terms, your character's not much more detailed than a featureless piece on a game board. Take a good long look at your Traits and their values. Why are they there? What do they say about your character? How will they come across in the story? What parts of the character don't you know yet? Like a novelist building a literary figure, decide on the physical, psychological, and background details that make your character one of a kind.

As a player, you may now spend 21 freebie points to purchase additional dots in Traits. These points may be spent however you choose, but remember that the Storyteller is the final arbiter of what he chooses to allow in the chronicle.

Each dot has a variable freebie-point cost based on which type of Trait it is. Consult the chart on page 35 for freebie-point costs of Traits.

Remember that Numina purchased with freebie points should come from compatible paths. Some paths may not be purchased together. For more information, see Chapter Four.

Optionally, the Storyteller may allow players to take up to seven points of Flaws to gain more freebie points, or use freebie points to purchase Merits. For more information on Merits and Flaws, see pages 479-495 of V20.

Humanity

Humanity is the measure of your hunter's spiritual evolution, the metric of your character's moral code that determines how she will react during difficult situations. This Trait is a reflection of your character's compassion toward and understanding of other creatures. Some people, such as murderers, rapists, and the cruel, have an extremely low Humanity rating and thus have a difficult time connecting with their community and society. A few have spent time caring and sacrificing for others and thus have a high Humanity score. Most people fall somewhere in the middle of the curve and simply live their lives without any great introspection or challenge to their sense of self.

Hunters often walk a fine line between ethical behavior and survival. Want to stake that vampire during the day? You might have to break into a building. You might have to lie, steal, or hurt someone to find your prey. And local law enforcement isn't likely to believe stories about blood-sucking creatures of the night, which could lead to uncomfortable situations in which you might be forced to deceive or even injure the police for the greater good.

Hunting vampires requires certain moral sacrifices. Vampires might be monsters, but most of them look human to some degree or another. How do you fight the potent servants of the undead? Ghouls are ordinary people forced into slavery via blood addiction. They won't pull their punches while protecting their masters. Do you kill ghouls? Are you freeing them from eternal servitude, or are you merely contributing to a growing body count of hapless victims?

War is not easy upon the soul. Soldiers often report feeling disconnected to society after returning home from conflict. Imagine a constant nightly battle against vampires that becomes an endless war in which the casualty is the human soul. As your hunter loses Humanity, she might care less about collateral damage and even blame the victims for suffering vampire attacks. Hunters with a low Humanity find it difficult to relate to ordinary people and thus have trouble making it through common social situations, perhaps drawing unwanted attention to themselves and their activities. As her empathy dwindles, a hunter destroys her relationships and ties to the community until she is as alone as the vampire she hunts.

Hunters who wish to regain or retain their Humanity must strengthen those ties to other mortals. It can be as simple as taking an interest in the neighbors, reconnecting with family, or forming romantic relationships. Religious characters might

take solace in their faith or seek spiritual guidance. Such ties are a perfect hook for future story lines as the vampire menace spreads, threatening the people and places dearest to the hunter.

Your character's starting Humanity rating equals the sum of her Conscience + Self-Control Traits, yielding a score between 5 and 10. Players may also increase their Humanity with freebie points.

Willpower

Baudelaire wrote that the greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist. Vampires similarly convinced the world that they never existed and thus faded into legend. Still, among mortals, an unconscious memory of the fear that the Kindred once commanded still passes from parent to child. Every culture in the world has a vampire myth, and children around the world frighten each other with stories of blood-sucking fiends that come out at night to prey on the living.

Hunters must confront this primal, ancient, crippling fear to fight the undead. The World of Darkness teems with monsters, unsavory criminals, and nightmares, and it requires remarkable will to confront such beasts when every instinct screams to run. Willpower measures your hunter's ability to confront such horrors, overcome fear, and battle against overwhelming odds.

Vampires possess a number of strange, horrifying powers that may enslave the will of mortals, but that those of great resolution can withstand. Hunters with a strong Willpower rating have the best chance at killing their prey and surviving. Rare hunters are even gifted with supernatural gifts of their own, and such characters usually have a high Willpower rating to distinguish them.

Like Humanity, the Willpower Trait is measured on a 1-10 scale. At character creation, your character's Willpower is equal to his Courage Virtue (though you may increase this value with freebie points).

For a complete list of the ways that Willpower may be used, see "Spending Willpower" on page 266 of V20.

Merits and Flaws

Merits and Flaws can add a distinct dimension to your character. Merits are special advantages unique to the character, while Flaws are liabilities or disadvantages that create challenges to the character's activities.

For a core list and description of Merits and Flaws, see the Appendix of V20, beginning on p. 479.

The following new Merits and Flaws are particularly suited to hunter characters and stories. As always, Merits and Flaws are subject to Storyteller approval.

Mental Merits and Flaws

Detached (4-pt. Merit)

Your hunter has the rare ability to view his psychic abilities as separate from his physical existence and can maintain this distance even under adverse conditions. Wound penalties don't affect the use of Psychic Numina until your character reaches Incapacitated. If he's Incapacitated, then you may spend a Willpower point to use a Psychic Numina power at half the normal dice pool (rounded down). This action may be performed only once per scene, after which the character falls unconscious, so choose last-ditch efforts carefully. Note: This Merit may be used in conjunction only with Psychic Numina.

Black and White (1-pt. Flaw)

The world is really a collection of shades of gray, but your character doesn't see it that way. To her, everything is clear as black and white. She thinks in terms of people being either for or against her, hot or cold, good or evil, easy or impossible, stupid or genius. This closed mindset can cost your character dearly in missed opportunities, misunderstandings, and under- or overestimation of others. In social situations where your character's judgmental perspective comes to bear, the difficulties of associated rolls increase by one.

Combat Novice (2-pt. Flaw)

Your character might talk a good game, but he's never been around real violence, and when it happens, he's not likely to respond well. When confronted with gunfire; obvious, brutal combat (blood drawn, stab wounds, bones breaking); or any kind of supernatural violence, roll Willpower (difficulty 7). If this roll fails, the character either freezes in place (if his Courage is higher than his Self-Control) or flees the area (if his Self-Control is higher than his Courage).

You must make this roll for every scene in which he witnesses a violent occurrence, but if you accumulate five successes, no further rolls need be made for that night of game time. An especially gory show of violence can reset the character's total, however, at the Storyteller's discretion.

Addicted to Vampire Blood (3-pt. Flaw)

Your character constantly needs the rush that only vampire blood can provide her. She feels empty and listless otherwise. This habit is a very dangerous one and can only be overcome via complete abstention (and likely no small amount of therapy). Anytime your character has access to Kindred vitae and wishes to resist the urge to drink, the Storyteller may require a Self-Control roll. If your character has not tasted vampire blood in over a



week, you suffer a progressive +1 difficulty to these rolls until she quenches her thirst.

Physical Flaw

Hemophiliac (3-pt. Flaw)

Your character suffers from hemophilia. If she is cut, she will not stop bleeding without medical help. If your hunter suffers lethal or aggravated damage, she suffers an additional level of bashing damage every five minutes until her wound has been dressed to stop the bleeding. Any vampire who bites her may “dress” such wounds and end the ongoing bashing damage by licking the injury after he bites her.

Asset Merits

Occult Library (2- or 4-pt. Merit)

Your character owns an estimable collection of works on arcane lore. If he has access to his library, you can lower the difficulty of Intelligence-, Occult-, or research-related rolls by 1 when he’s attempting to solve an occult mystery or

generally learn more about the occult. Having this library doesn’t automatically mean the hunter’s an occult expert, it just means he has convenient access to **SOME** knowledge. If you have purchased the four-point version of this Merit, your character also has an Occult Laboratory stocked with strange and rare ingredients he might need for his Numina rituals.

Science Laboratory (2-pt. Merit)

Your character has access to a fully stocked laboratory with functional scientific apparatuses and research equipment. When she has access to her laboratory, your character can perform experiments, run tests, and collect data, and you may lower your difficulty by 2 for relevant Investigation or Science rolls, or lower the difficulty by 1 for other appropriate rolls (as determined by the Storyteller) while she uses the equipment.

Supernatural Merits and Flaws

Pale Aura (2-pt. Merit)

Any color your character’s aura takes has a pale cast to it, as though he was a vampire. Unless her player gains five



Sleeping with the Enemy: Becoming a Ghoul

Vampires have almost all of the advantages in a fight: speed, strength, endurance, and unholy supernatural powers. The challenge of opposing such beasts can feel overwhelming. How can a mere mortal expect to fight and prevail against such creatures?


Some hunters wonder if they shouldn't take advantage of a supernatural resource. Feeding from the predators that prey on innocent people may even seem like poetic justice. Drinking vitae to become a ghoul can seem like the ultimate equalizer for a desperate hunter. Vampire blood can refresh a weary body, rapidly heal broken bones, and grant supernal strength or grace. Imagine that rush as the blood practically vibrates through your skin. Is this what eternity tastes like?

Indeed, some hunters are freed ghouls who never want to be slaves again. Each time they hunt a vampire, the temptation to revisit that forbidden puissance eats at their souls. How long until a former slave accepts the chains once more?

Hunters who regularly seek out vitae run the risk of becoming addicted. Without a regular source of vitae, such hunters become antsy and desperate for their next fix. Such a dangerous obsession can endanger an addicted hunter and her allies. (For more information, see the *Addicted to Vampire Blood* Flaw on p. 42.)

Ghoul hunters walk a dangerous line between regular mortals and vampires, as they struggle to deal with new cravings and controlling the Beast. Hunters with a regular source of vitae will discover new uncomfortable feelings toward their regnants. Killing the source of vitae may lead to troubled nights and lost Humanity as artificial guilt slowly cripples a hunter – or it may be an emancipation from a curse borne for decades or even centuries.

For more information on ghouls, see pages 496-506 of V20.



or more successes on an Aura Perception roll, any vampire discerns your hunter's aura as one belonging to the Kindred.

Clear-Sighted (3-pt. Merit)

Your character is not easily fooled by illusions. When faced with a supernatural illusion, such as those created by *Obfuscate*, *Chimerstry*, and the like, you may make a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty equal to the opposing power's level +3) for your character to see through the effect.

Poisonous Blood (5-pt. Merit)

Due to mysterious circumstances, your character's blood is poisonous to vampires. Should a vampire drink from him, every blood point imbibed causes one health level of bashing damage to her. Vampires naturally resent mortals known to possess this blessing and may well seek their destruction. Storytellers are encouraged to have an explanation for this aberration in their chronicles, though the player (and likely character) may not be immediately privy to such knowledge. Some examples include holy protection from a higher power, a rare ritual of protection, or even a genetic abnormality.

Sanctuary (5-pt. Merit)

Your character has a safe house that is a true sanctuary. Supernatural creatures require a successful Willpower check (difficulty 9) in order to enter her home without an invitation. It might be due some strange mystical occurrence, luck, a forgotten ritual, or perhaps your character's house stands on consecrated ground. This Merit must be assigned to a single building in which the character has a permanent residence. Good examples of a sanctuary might be a house, a small apartment building, or a church.

Psychic Feedback (1-, 2-, or 6-pt. Flaw)

Your character is gifted with potent Psychic Numina, but the use of these powers tires her. Your character sometimes even experiences minor cerebral hemorrhages from the strain of using her power.

With the one-point Flaw, your hunter experiences headaches or dizziness from each use of power. During stressful or taxing situations, the Storyteller may require a Stamina + Awareness roll (difficulty 7). If this rolls fails, the character experiences a brief state of pain or disorientation. All actions performed during her next turn have their difficulties increased by 2.

With the two-point Flaw, your character experiences minor pain from the use of her power. After she activates a power, you must roll Intelligence + Awareness (difficulty 6) against the number of successes obtained while rolling to activate the power. If you gain fewer successes on the Intelligence + Awareness roll than on the power's activation

roll, the difference is treated as levels of bashing damage.

With the six-point Flaw, your character suffers the same effect as per the two-point flaw, but the damage is lethal, though the Intelligence + Awareness roll is still allowed.

Unsettling Effect (1- or 3-pt. Flaw)

Numina powers are often unnoticeable. However, something about your character's Numina causes others to recognize that there's something weird going on. With the one-point flaw, she has a single intangible power (such as Telepathy or Psychometry) that generates a noticeable, perceptible effect. Perhaps subjects can feel the character paging through their minds, or maybe everyone around the psychic feels a swell of eerie emotions when she touches a resonant object. With the three-point flaw, *all* of your character's intangible powers (including ones that she learns later) have some sort of unsettling effect, likely united by a shared "signature" or style of effect.

Psi Focus (3- or 5-pt. Flaw)

Your character finds it impossible to use his Psychic Numina without the aid of a focus; he requires some aid or trigger to properly direct his powers. For three points, the character must gesture or speak a phrase or incantation for the power to work. For five points, the power requires a physical focus to function (such as crystals, a hypnotist's pocket watch, or a "lucky coin").

Health

The Health Trait measures a character's physical condition, from perfect health to death.

Humans are fragile. Vampires call them mortal for a reason. Hunters may well have to fight through the misery of every bite and cut with only their will to survive keeping them alive.

Wounds can take days, weeks, or months to heal. A broken arm can put a hunter out of a fight for its duration. A random knife can damage the liver or require major surgery. A single bullet can kill a hunter outright.

Storytellers should always invoke the consequences of the sacrifices hunter characters make. Vampires are deathless monsters kept alive via blood stolen from mortals. Any damage they receive can be healed quickly by spending that blood. This makes for a significant and thematic contrast

between vampires and the presumptuous mortals who would hunt them. While the ostensible prey can shrug off all but the most catastrophic of wounds, the merely mortal hunters may well find themselves grounded by a punch that would evoke nothing more than laughter from the Damned. It's the reason why so many hunters go after the undead in groups.

Hunting the Kindred is truly walking the tightrope without a net. Players should roleplay through their characters' injuries and recoveries. A resolute hunter who can't fight may well find a way to contribute to the group's ongoing vampire-slaying activities from the sidelines, such as by doing research, looking up blueprints, or making phone calls to important allies and contacts.

For more information about Health, see pages 121-122 of V20.

Experience

Vampires are eternal, but static. They resist change. It is their nature.

One advantage a mortal hunter has is the ability to adapt and overcome. During the course of a chronicle, characters learn from their mistakes and grow (assuming they survive). A great deal of what characters learn is beyond the scope of any game system to reflect. The more mundane aspects of growing older and wiser are reflected in the players' characters' increased confidence and perspicacity. Learning to lock your car when you leave it in a public parking place is simply common sense, not really a skill that can be purchased. Likewise, learning to look over your shoulder after dark and separating truth from myth when it comes to the undead are better realized in actions than in dice pools.

Hunters who survive their deadly encounters improve by earning and spending experience points, a system of rewards used to reflect these more quantitative changes. Experience points reflect the acquisition and improvement of Traits that a hunter hones as time passes.

At the end of each story, the Storyteller awards experience points to each surviving character. Between stories, players may spend their characters' experience points to purchase or increase Traits.

For more information on Experience Points, see pages 122-124 of V20.



Chapter Three: Tools and Tactics

No plan survives first contact with the enemy.

—Helmuth Karl Bernhard Graf von Moltke

It is possible for a group of new hunters to catch lightning in a bottle. They discover a vampire, some depraved beast from the shadows feeding on human blood, and they take it down. They rush in, beat it with whatever they have to hand, and set it on fire, and then look at each other over the flickers of the flames and the scent of burning flesh, and they realize, *more of these things are out there*.

If they decide to act on that knowledge, they had better come up with a plan, because rushing in swinging weapons works only once, if at all.

This chapter discusses the process of the hunt, both in terms of the initial investigation and the violent endgame. It also talks about what kinds of tools are available and ideal for hunting vampires (and addresses the fact that “ideal” is by no means synonymous with “available”).

Tactics

A group of hunters that acts without a plan, or that refuses to assume any kind of hierarchy, is doomed. Experienced groups of hunters are dangerous, and Kindred fear them. Not only do seasoned vampire hunters

have a good sense of what vampires can (and can't) do, but they tend to have strategies under their belts that work. Most important of all, though, knowledgeable hunters know how to adapt, which is not something at which most Kindred excel.

The trick, of course, is surviving long enough to become an experienced hunter. Mortals are fragile. A single bite, broken bone, or gunshot wound can be enough to kill or cripple them, and a hunter's margin for error is very slim indeed. As such, before hunters pick up a stake or a gun, they need to know what to do with their tools and have the will to see their plans through. Neither of these is a trivial matter.

Knowledge is Power

A hunter's “first contact” with the supernatural can take a number of forms, and these possibilities are discussed elsewhere in this book (see pp. 15-19). Many hunters make the mistake of assuming that the creature they first encounter is indicative of vampires in general. If a mortal sees a Brujah flip a car and race down the block in the blink of an eye, she probably assumes that all vampires are capable of this kind of physical prowess. If she spots a Nosferatu appear from the shadows and slaughter a



To Whom It May Concern

Awesome! You broke the cipher! I know that you don't have all day to decode this stuff, so let's get right to it. You are not crazy. Vampires are really real. If you're reading this, either you're a really dedicated fan of my books, or you're obsessively sticking to sunny places and popping uppers like they're breath mints trying to avoid sleeping at night. I just want to tell you — you're not crazy. The bastards are real, they actually do kill people, and they're dug in to our culture deeper than anyone wants to admit.

But here's the good news — they burn just fine. Keep reading, and I'll tell you all about how to kill them.

Oh, and just in case you're really one of them: Fuck you. Take a walk outside at noon, why don't you. Keep reading, if you want, but you're not gonna learn anything you don't already know.

— James Warder



homeless man, then she's more likely to assume that vampires are, like this monster, hideous and unable to hide their condition. Both assumptions are mistaken, and each is likely to prove fatal.

Vampire hunters have many different avenues of approach available to them if they try to learn more about the undead, but collecting solid, factual information is difficult. This isn't because popular culture is wrong about vampires. The Kindred resemble the vampires of myth, legend, and cinema in many ways — they burn in sunlight, they exhibit enhanced strength and speed, they feed on blood, and they can shrug off bullets and many other forms of physical attack. The danger comes in assuming that any given observation applies to all vampires, because with a few exceptions, popular culture tends to treat vampires as a homogenous group. Likewise, assuming that all literary or cultural vampire traits apply to *any* vampires is potentially fatal. Only a few works of literature group vampires by family or "Clan," and even fewer posit that different Clans might have different capabilities.

Generally speaking, hunters are likely to learn about vampires (and, to a lesser extent, other supernatural creatures) through three methods: popular culture, occult

research, and direct experience. All of these are valuable, and all have their pitfalls.

Popular Culture

Tales of the supernatural have been popular since people starting telling stories. It's tempting, as a Storyteller, to say that only works of literature over a certain age have any real validity as far as supernatural information in the World of Darkness goes, but why? Why is *Dracula* any more of a source for an aspiring hunter than the works of Christopher Moore or Anne Rice? As any **Vampire** player knows, the game draws influence from dozens of sources, and in the world of the game, those sources might well still exist. If they have the same information, and that information is objectively true as far as the Kindred are concerned, why pretend that a hunter isn't going to know or find it?


It's tempting to think that stories about vampires are a niche interest, but realistically, that's not the case. Anyone who pays the slightest bit of attention knows that a vampire is a pale, human-looking creature that drinks



Story Hook: I Know the Truth

Authors and screenwriters often spread information about the Kindred, trying to work in as much detail and factual information as possible. Of course, before any movie hits the big screen or the next Sebastian Behrndtz novel hits the shelves, it has to go through producers, editors, and publicists — some of whom may be in the employ or thrall of the undead. The public has an appetite for stories about vampires, and has for centuries, and so, the Kindred have no problem with these works of fiction being available. In fact, recent years have seen a push toward portraying vampires as sympathetic, harmless, and even a little pitiful.

This works on the same principle as a serial killer feigning injury to win a potential victim's trust, of course. Suppose the characters find an early draft of a popular novel, one that shows the true nature of the vampiric lead as a bloodthirsty, cruel, manipulative monster, and the original vision of the protagonist as a lone girl desperate to stop this thing from enslaving her?



blood. A few nights at the movies reveals vulnerability to sunlight (in one form or another) and probably enhanced physical prowess. Reading a book might highlight the unnatural charisma or powers of mental suggestion that some vampires exhibit, or the ability to change into bats or wolves, which used to be nearly ubiquitous in popular portrayals of the undead.

If you're playing or running a hunters chronicle, don't shy away from this. Let the players bring to bear what they have seen in movies or books about vampires, especially if it leads to mistakes or misconceptions. Discovering the truth the hard way makes for interesting roleplaying, and it's much easier than trying to dance around the fact that these sources exist and are a prevalent part of the culture.

Occult Research

The difference between popular culture and occult research is a little thin sometimes, but for game purposes, "occult research" is written by people who have had direct contact with the supernatural and aren't sugarcoating it. These works, therefore, tend to be handwritten and never published, existing in the hands of occultists or private collectors—or the Kindred themselves, some of whom keep such things as trophies from victims. Such materials might also include video or audio recordings made during the last few moments of a would-be researcher's life and then stashed away on a computer hard drive, in some forgotten corner of the Internet, or on some outdated media format.

Occult research is more reliable and usually more direct than popular culture in doling out useful information, and it doesn't carry the same risks as going out and experiencing the supernatural in person (see below). It does, however, carry the risk of reporter bias. As anyone spending time in an online forum knows, it's easy to present oneself as an expert on any topic one wishes. Con men have been doing it for centuries — just sound confident and competent, and use words the audience doesn't understand. Occult materials might look genuine and contain a few true (but not helpful) pieces of information, and leave out or misrepresent others. Any given artifact might have been written by a vampire or the pawn of a vampire, and left out for would-be hunters to find. It is human nature to assume that, if a source contains one nugget of true, useful information, the whole work (or works from the same author or organization) is likewise useful and trustworthy. Including a grain of truth in a bushel of lies might wind up getting a neonate burnt to ash, of course, but that's a risk that elders are generally willing to take. (An occasional rumor traded in Elysium, in fact, is that this practice became fashionable following the publication of *Carmilla* in 1872, and that





Be Scientific, But Not Too

Don't try and figure out why vampires work the way they do, and be really careful if other people say they've got it figured. Tell you what I mean.

I heard about a couple of guys in Boston that figured it was a disease. Like, vampirism is a virus passed through bites. They had lots of data to support that conclusion, and they wrote it all up and put it out there — most of the copies I know about have been scrubbed from the Net, but you can find it if you look (there's a URL in this book, actually, but it's a harder cipher. Sorry). Anyway, they explained their theory in this paper, and they use all kinds of scientific language.

Other folks have found it and tried to use it, but the problem is that unless you've got a background in virology or medicine, a lot of it is hard to follow. Also, some of the drugs they talk about are controlled substances, either because they're useful as street drugs or because they're really toxic. I've heard of people accidentally killing themselves because they were just blindly following instructions for making "vampire bug bombs."

Oh, and I have no idea whether those "bug bombs" actually work.

— Nadia Lukkari



every vampire film ever produced had at least one Kindred involved in its production. Can such a thing be true?)

Even if the information is genuine and the author earnest, the reader runs the risk of misinterpreting it due to difficulties with language or period. A diary recounting the capture and destruction of a vampire using "a stake of tempered yew," for instance, imparts the right information if the reader happens to know that "yew" is a type of tree. Yes, this information is easy to verify, but that requires that the reader do that legwork, and it's sadly common for people to run with their own assumptions. Doing so can get people killed if their assumptions turn out to be false.

Occult research is also harder to find than pop culture representations. Doing so involves combing used

bookstores, estate sales, rare book rooms of universities, and other such places, in addition to chasing down leads about crazy folks who took off looking for vampires. The search might take hunters to insane asylums, survivalist compounds, or remote monasteries. People who learn about the supernatural, after all, might decide that they can't hope to truly fight it and simply choose to remove themselves from the world. This might make for tense — and therefore fulfilling — in-character discussions when the hunters track down people with real experiences to share.

Direct Experience

The best way to obtain true, reliable information about supernatural creatures is to interact with them. This is also the best way to wind up in a shallow grave somewhere or, worse, enslaved to one of said creatures. Experienced groups of hunters are dangerous because of their firsthand knowledge, but that knowledge comes at a cost — almost all longtime hunters have lost friends, family, and colleagues, sometimes while they were watching but powerless to help.

Aside from the direct danger of taking on vampires, any lessons learned in such endeavors run the risk mentioned at the start of this section: overgeneralization. Vampires differ, but a hunter who watches a Toreador streak away from a confrontation faster than the eye can follow after staggering from the wounds left by a shotgun blast will be totally unprepared for the Gangrel who ignores the gunshot and sprouts claws. By seeing their opponents as "vampire" rather than each vampire on her own merits, hunters court death. Yet, it is human nature to make these kinds of assumptions — and it's probably one of the reasons the Masquerade still stands.

The Learning Curve

The military, the police, and various other organizations (some less legal than others) instruct their members on how to fight and hunt other people. Most folks, though, don't have any formalized instruction on this sort of thing. Yes, they can study martial arts in a dojo or learn to shoot at a range, but the hard part is doing it "in anger." In crisis situations, combatants act on muscle memory. This is why policemen are taught to shoot for center mass, rather than taking head shots — that kind of precision is difficult with adrenaline coursing through one's body.

And that, of course, is one of the major disadvantages that hunters have against vampires. Vampires are dead. They don't *have* adrenal surges, which means they are free to improvise during a fight. Of course, vampires as a rule aren't terribly creative, but they at least can analyze a situation on its own merits rather than panicking.

Wrong Assumptions in Play - They're a Good Thing

If you're running a hunters chronicle, odds are the players know something about **Vampire**. Maybe they haven't read the book, or maybe you've made some changes to how Kindred work, but in any event, the players are going in a whole lot better informed than their characters. That means that if they make mistaken assumptions when investigating or fighting vampires, those assumptions are either going to be deliberate mistakes or correct assumptions that depend on information that the Storyteller has changed.

Taking the latter notion into consideration, suppose the Storyteller decides that vampires can infect victims by feeding on them, rather the solely by the Embrace. If the Storyteller works up a system for this and implements it, but doesn't tell the players, this means it's possible for a character to become a vampire in a way that the players know is not in keeping with the rules as written.

On the other hand, suppose it's the players who make that assumption, and when one of their allies

sustains a vampire bite, they drive themselves crazy trying to prevent the infection from taking hold.

Either of these situations can make for a good story. Arguably, though, the players deliberately making these mistakes is the better scenario, because it allows the players to get exactly what they want out of the story. The players aren't likely to feel manipulated or betrayed if they deliberately take actions based on information they know to be faulty because that's the information their characters have. It's possible that they might feel frustrated if the Storyteller goes shifting the game rules around just to surprise them, because the message that can send is that the Storyteller doesn't trust them enough to play the game as written. If a hunter's player runs with an assumption that is false but perfectly in character, and it winds up complicating the story and making everything more interesting, you should give that player an extra experience point or two. Mistakes are often more interesting than victories, and they almost always take the story to more interesting places.

If a group of hunters is to learn from an encounter with the supernatural, it means that they have time to regroup, discuss the experience, and figure out what really happened. Doing this effectively is a skill set, though, and one that most people don't have any reason to develop. Hunters fall victim to several different problems when learning from their direct experiences, such as the following.

- **Recall Bias:** Recall bias happens when a person's memory of events influences the way they answer a question or approach a situation. An example would be the belief that a certain set of dice rolls high or low numbers when rolled by a certain person or under a given set of circumstances. It's far more probable that the person rolling the dice is simply remembering situations where the dice rolled a particularly impressive set of numbers and using that memory as a basis for their expectation.

Hunters, then, might decide that vampires "all like blondes" because they've seen a vampire attempt to seduce and feed from a blonde woman more than once.

- **Confirmation Bias:** People tend to remember things or interpret events in a way that confirms their own beliefs. For instance, if a hunter believes that vampires are the spawn of Satan and therefore can be repelled by crosses, she may well ignore several instances in which the undead ignored her attempts to repel them but recall, in detail, the one time that it seemed to work. As Storyteller, you can use this in play by finding out what the characters know or think they know about the supernatural before they ever encounter it. If you hear a player exclaim, "I knew it!" you're probably seeing confirmation bias in action.

- **Causation/Correlation:** As anyone who has taken a basic science class knows (or should know), correlation is not causation. That is, just because two events happened in succession does not mean that one caused the other. Vampire attacks increase in severity in summer, and sales of ice cream also increase. Does that mean that vampires are more attracted to people with sugar in their bloodstreams? (More likely, it means that, during the summer, more people

are outside at night but the nights are shorter, meaning vampires have more victims to choose from but less time to hunt.) This fallacy is especially dangerous when applied to methods of harming or repelling vampires.

Consider a hunter who, after doing some research and learning that gold is a metal associated with the sun in some cultures, fashions a bullet from gold and shoots a vampire with it. The bullet ruptures the vampire's innards, and the creature spews blood from his stomach — inconvenient to the vampire, but hardly fatal. But to the hunter, it seems that gold bullets really do have additional and impressive effects on vampires!

Successful hunters know or learn to consider not just *if* a tactic works, but *why* it works. Some of this principle goes back the fact that not all vampires are the same — they have different powers and different weaknesses.

Vampires Don't Exist

Unless a hunter was raised by a survivalist cult that trains its members from childhood in the finer points of tracking down and slaying the undead (which is a story hook in the making), he probably has to come to terms with the very notion that *vampires exist* before any other progress can occur. The problem is that the Kindred work very hard at making sure no one believes in vampires, and that the few people who do are viewed as lunatics.

For any strange experience that a hunter can come up with, Kindred society can (using a complicated shell game that involves police, university personnel, and the media) produce a perfectly logical explanation. People who were ranting about vampires infesting our clubs last night don't just vanish tonight — as expedient as that would be, it just lends credence. Instead, Kindred just let them rant. So long as they don't know anything specific (names of vampire Clans, identities of specific Kindred), they just become another source of noise in an already deafening society. Just for fun, get online, and run a search on “vampires in nightclubs.” The search brings up vampire-themed nightclubs, questions about whether such places are safe, and a discussion about the movie/TV cliché that vampires all own nightclubs. Once in a while, a page comes up warning people about “real” vampires, but only a dedicated hunter (someone who wants to believe — and remember, confirmation bias) is going to find and read those pages. Someone who wants to believe that what he saw last night was all a big misunderstanding can easily find support for that, too.

This conviction is the best weapon that Kindred have against hunters. *Everything* in mortal society tells them that vampires aren't real. Some Kindred balk at vampires

in media because they feel it can expose them, but more intelligent bloodsuckers know that anyone dedicated to hunting Kindred isn't going to do it because they read *Dracula* or went to see the movie adaptation of this year's hot paranormal romance. They do it because it's personal to them — and if that's the case, it's because a vampire fucked up somewhere along the line.

Investigation and Interpretation

From the players' perspective, combat and hunting are generally more interesting than data collection and analysis.

Cutting the investigation portion of the hunt short is a bad idea, though. Hunters should be aware that they can't know too much about a potential target. Every piece of information is a potential weapon against their adversary.

How, then, *should* hunters proceed? A successful cell of hunters needs to take the following principles to heart:

- Know what you know. If a group of hunters has had encounters with vampires and have seen these undead monstrosities change into bats, they know that vampires are at least occasionally capable of this kind of shapechanging. When they go into battle in the future, then, they might decide it's in their best interest to have one member hang back with a mesh net, just in case their target shapeshifts into a bat and tries to escape. It also means that, even when the hunters aren't on the offensive, they need to be wary of bats, because any flying mammal might conceivably be a vampire in disguise. (No wonder that hunters often exhibit signs of paranoia as well as problems such as alcohol abuse and insomnia).

Part and parcel to knowing what you know is knowing what you *don't* know. The hunters identify a vampire and see her vanish down a blind alley. Afterward, they are unable to find her. Did the vampire disappear? Did she take bat form and fly away? Leap to the top of the building and run? Shapeshift into a horde of rats? The hunters are just guessing without further data, and even if the vampire just slipped by them during a lapse in concentration, that should give them pause about hunting her without further data.

- If you've seen one vampire, you've seen one vampire. Vampires have different capabilities, approaches, knowledge bases, and social standing (both in mortal and undead circles). To assume that because one vampire is an emaciated horror dwelling in the sewers that all vampires are incapable of holding high station is a potentially fatal mistake. Each vampire must be judged on her own merits.

- One eye on the door. A group of hunters that follows a monster too far into its own domain is not likely to see daylight again. Likewise, if a vampire can set the hunters



to arguing about letting him “live” if he promises never to kill for food (which happens more often than one would think, especially with new hunters) until reinforcements or the police arrive, the hunt is over, and humanity has lost. Hunter characters must be aware of their escape routes and the methods by which more enemies could arrive. If someone yells the signal to abort and run, the hunters must know where to go. The first thing to note when casing a new location is where to run when the plan fails.

- To be known is to be dead. Hunters must make some effort to conceal their identities. Whether that means wearing masks, removing or obscuring the license plates on their cars, using nicknames, or just making sure that no one can identify them after the hunt, this is an issue of crucial importance, especially if the hunters still maintain normal lives. An individual vampire might not be hooked into the city government, but if a vampire passes along the name of a vampire hunter to one of the Kindred in charge, that hunter is likely to be homeless, unemployed, and wanted on some unpleasant felony charges within a week. Vampires can easily set someone up for robbery, assault, murder, or fraud, and all they need is a name and a description. A little more effort, and the police will find personal items belonging to the hunter at the crime scene, and if the right wheels get greased at the city

prosecutor level, the hunter isn’t likely to get bail. A clever vampire can even act as his own “corpse” for a time, if it helps to frame a hunter. At that point, the hunter is probably out of commission, unless he wants to go on the lam.

The Information Age gives hunters unparalleled ability to find people and learn about them, but unfortunately, those tools are available to the monsters as well. Yes, older vampires aren’t comfortable with technology, but any Kindred Embraced within the last decade is probably at least able to run some searches on the people troubling the undead, and that’s the first step toward killing them.

- Information now is better than crisis later. It can be tempting, both for hunters and players of hunters, to attack as soon as a target is positively identified. From the hunters’ perspective, every night the vampire is out there is another night that monster might kill someone.

The Plan

Once the characters have gathered enough information and made some assumptions about what it all means (correct or not), they need to come up with a plan. The plan isn’t a vision statement. It’s not the overall declaration of “we’re going to hunt down and kill vampires.” The



Digital Footprints

Stay the hell off the Net. Do research there, if you must (it's frankly too good of a resource not to use), but do not send communications unless you've got some really good encryption going on. Anything can be traced, including the kinds of things you run through search engines.

Also, remember that everyone and his mother has a tiny, portable camcorder in his pocket, and the second he sees something even the least bit hinky, he'll whip that camera out and presto, you're a viral video. And contrary to what you might think, vampires love that. First, it gets your face out there and lets them dig up who you are (or, rather, they let the fuckers online with nothing better to do handle that) and go after your friends and family. But the more useful thing is — if you're online hacking someone's head off and burning the body, the people who see the video will assume you're psycho or it's a stunt. And either way, you can be diminished, torn down, and ignored. And that's what the vampires want.

It's not impossible to avoid leaving a digital footprint. You probably have some information out there, but unless you're keeping an online log of the vampires you've killed, it shouldn't be too damning by itself. But just for kicks, run your name through a search engine. See what comes up. See how many clicks it takes to find your address.

Or go to a watchdog site, and look at how many sex offenders live in your area. A lot of those sites, you can just submit names and addresses. I knew of a woman in Texas who lost a leg and an arm to a vampire, and she acted as a kind of information dispenser — she used that kind of site to pinpoint bloodsuckers for folks with more ability to take care of business. She's gone now — her site was compromised — but the idea's not a bad one.

— Jonas Hansson



plan is a specific undertaking, often, though by no means always, to destroy one particular target.


Every group of hunters comes up with its own methods for devising the plan. They might gather around a table in a dark, sticky pub somewhere and move saltshakers and beer glasses around to indicate positioning, or they might run computer simulations and design 3D maps of their target's home based on blueprints they've obtained from city hall. The characters might refer to their plan as a "mission," if any of them have military experience, or they might just pray that they're wrong and hope to get through "tomorrow night" alive. The method for devising the plan and the characters' attitudes toward it are matters for the players to express through their characters. The plan, however, should consider the six points below.



What's the Point Here?

Why devote space to helping the players come up with a plan? Simply put, because it's unlikely that the players have had to imagine a tactical scenario in which they hunt down and drive a stake through a vampire's heart. Doing this and doing it from the perspective of their characters is not an easy task, and it can be useful to see an order of events and a method for devising the plan. If the players still miss or fail to consider something important, that's fine, and it can certainly affect them during the story — but then again, maybe it's worth giving someone an Intelligence + Leadership roll (difficulty 6, unless the scenario is extremely complex or the character is rushed for time) and pointing out what his character is missing.

This might appear to make it all too easy for the players, but that's a fallacy, because it assumes that the characters' plan will work. Too many things can go wrong in the moment (more on this later in the chapter) for a great plan to be a foolproof plan. If the characters walk in with a plan that should work, and they run up against obstacles that they could not have foreseen, then they have to work in the moment to resolve these problems. That rewards both planning and improvisation, and that's much more rewarding to the players than letting them fly blind and just beat everything with sticks.



Each of the sections below gives the group the chance to earn “Plan Dice.” This is an abstract representation of the time and energy that the hunters put into formulating their plan. Plan Dice can be used during the execution of the plan to help compensate for unknown factors or unexpected turns of events. As such, it is perfectly possible to go in blind and hope for the best, but that does mean that the characters have no plan (or Plan Dice) to fall back on.

Info

Not all of the information from the investigation is going to be relevant to the plan. The hunters need to decide what information they can use. If they’ve learned their target’s hunting habits and preferences, maybe they can use someone as bait. If they know the vampire has a townhouse staffed by ghoulish guards (whether or not they know from “ghoul”), they might be able to find a window of time when the guards aren’t there but the undead master is. Schedules, a behavioral profile, habits, and any supernatural information might become useful.

What is “useful” is somewhat subjective. Without a plan in place, it’s hard to say what intelligence would be most relevant. However, if the players are stuck, the Storyteller can allow them to roll their characters’ Intelligence + Investigation (difficulty based on the quality of the information and how clear-cut the situation is). If the roll succeeds, the Storyteller may suggest which facts or pieces of intelligence would be most useful to the characters in forming their plan.

The players should keep a list of each fact or piece of information they are going to use in creating the plan. This list can and probably will evolve during the creation of the plan. For every point of used information on the list, add a Plan Die to the pool.

Step by Step

The second step in the plan is to decide what happens in what order. The plan is roughly divided into discrete sections, and the characters figure out how each section is to be accomplished.

The first question that needs to be considered in this stage is “what determines success?” Is the goal to destroy a vampire? If so, the hunt should be said to be successful if the vampire is turned to ash. How about if the goal is simply to verify that a particular target is a vampire? This might be better handled as investigation, but it could require more work if the target is particularly cagey. The goal might be to rescue a comrade or family member held in thrall or as a prisoner of a vampire. In this case, the goal is to get the captive to safety, and killing the vampire might be incidental.

One method for determining the steps of the plan is to work backward from the goal. If the goal is to destroy a vampire, the hunters might decide they’ll accomplish that by setting the bloodsucker on fire. That requires getting close enough to throw gasoline on him. How will they close in? They decide to corner him in the parking garage where he parks his car while hunting in nightclubs. Further steps in this plan, then, involve making sure that they aren’t observed, getting into and out of the garage without being seen (an escape route, that is), and having someone in the club keep tabs on the target.

For every step in the plan, add one Plan Die to the pool.

Assign Jobs

No one should be superfluous. Every member of the group needs a specific job. A good way to approach the plan, in fact, is to look at the group and figure out how to maximize each person’s effectiveness. In game terms, of course, this means using the Abilities in which the characters have high ratings. (Some players feel the urge to avoid playing to their characters’ strengths, and use words like “munchkin” or “twink.” Ignore these urges. It is not wrong to want your characters to be awesome and to succeed at their endeavors.)

Based on the information about the location in which the plan is to be enacted and how the plan should play out, every member of the group should have a specific way to contribute. Some examples:

Guns Are for Idiots

Seriously, don’t even bother. Shotguns have enough stopping power to slow down a vampire, but they’re loud and hard to conceal. Most pistols won’t really bother a leech, but if said leech mind controls you into whipping out a pistol the minute you hear the word “police,” you’re on the news at 11 as a suicide-by-cop.

Likewise, police and soldiers get hours of training not just in using guns, but using them under pressure. Pulling out a piece and firing blindly is going to get someone killed, but it’s just as likely to be the guy next to you as a vampire. Leave the guns at home.

- **Combat Abilities:** Characters with high Melee and Brawl ratings, obviously, should strike the killing blows. Characters proficient in Firearms should hang back and watch for reinforcements, or act as snipers. On no account should everyone in the group be armed and ready to whip out guns and shoot. That way lies death by friendly fire.

- **Investigation/Alertness:** These Abilities are useful for casing a room or taking in details. If the plan involves breaking into an area that the characters cannot see ahead of time, these Abilities are critical.

- **Technology/Larceny/Computer:** Any of these Abilities can be useful for getting past various types of security. The trick is knowing in advance what Ability will be necessary (and getting a sense of how hard it will be — i.e., the difficulty). A character with Larceny can pick a lock, much like a character with the Computer Knowledge can hack a computer security system. But when trying to break into a vampire's haven, "can do it" and "can do it before being noticed" are two very different things. When determining what someone's job is using one of these Abilities, factor in how long it's going to take and how long the character has before it's time to abort.

- **Streetwise:** The vampires may think they control the police, but the truth is that, if the hunters know the actual cops who are on duty on the night of the plan, they can bribe or persuade them to stay away.

- **Athletics:** Jumping or climbing fences, crawling through air ducts, climbing walls, even forcing windows — it's good to have someone on the team who's in good shape.

- **Occult:** If the plan involves exorcism, putting the dead to rest, or any other kind of arcane ritual to destroy or banish, it's the character with the Occult rating who should perform it.

- **Science:** Chemical weapons often work fairly well on vampires and their minions, but they should only be handled by a licensed, or at least knowledgeable, professional. It's possible to make various toxic chemicals from household materials, but doing it wrong can cause explosions or poison spills. It's perfectly acceptable to fudge the details a bit (is there really such a thing as "knockout gas?" Anesthesia isn't generally so simple). This is a game, after all. But even a character with a high rating in Science shouldn't be able to mix up a nerve gas without the proper chemical agents, and obtaining those agents might be more trouble than it's worth.

The exact systems governing a given hunter's job within the plan vary, of course, but the idea is to let everyone have a specific task. When that task is completed, the hunter should either get out of the way or act as support in some other way (hold flashlights, suppressing fire, readying a getaway vehicle, etc.).



For every specified task that a character has, add one Plan Die to the pool.

Poke Holes

The best thing that a group of hunters can do before enacting a plan is figure out how to thwart it. If they imagine themselves in their enemy's position and come up with ways to react to (and stop) the plan, they can figure out how to avoid those pitfalls before they even get to them. The characters should take into account what they know about the target's capabilities and resources and try to determine how the target is likely to use them.

It's always best to assume a worst-case scenario, here. If something goes wrong, what would the result be? How likely is it to go wrong? Is the reward worth the risk? One example is the question of carrying guns on the mission. They are useful, of course, but carrying firearms is illegal in many places and results in official attention almost everywhere. Committing a crime with a firearm generally nets a more severe response than the same crime without a gun, so the characters need to consider whether going in armed is worth this potential trouble.

As the characters figure out ways their adversary could turn the tables on them, they should confront the dangers of the plan and the risks that they face. They need to know the eventualities going in, and this step is a good way to consider the unpleasant possibilities. It raises questions such as "If the vampire captures one of us, are all of us compromised?" and "If the vampire has still-living servants or employees, are we going to use lethal force?"

Determining Plan Dice from this step is a little trickier, and the Storyteller should be in control of it. For every change made to the plan as a result of this discussion, or for every decision that the characters make about the plan, add one die to the pool.

Tool Up

The Tools section of this chapter discusses the kind of gear that hunters are likely to find useful and available. In this stage of the plan, the characters should think about what they'll need to make their plan happen and whether or not they can reasonably obtain it. Gasoline is easy enough to get, and it's not traceable. Guns and ammunition are legally available in many parts of the US, and in some cities, background checks are minimal or ignored. Gun laws vary greatly in other countries. Some countries forbid firearms entirely (but often make exceptions for wild animal hunters), while others have laws regarding ownership and use of firearms but seldom enforce them. Availability is also potentially an issue. Even if a character has the resources to afford a firearm and the

You're a Terrorist

Quiz: What's the difference between a vampire hunter and a serial killer or a terrorist? Answer: Motive. That's pretty much it.

I heard about six people in Florida who decided they were going to do things right. Three of them were Army buddies back from Afghanistan, and so, they had some training that a lot of us don't. They got some gear together that was pretty impressive given their budgets, they identified their target, and they planned out how they were going to roll up on the bloodsucker, put him in a van, and blow the van up.

Everything went off without a hitch except the "blow the van up" part. The explosives didn't work right, and the vampire called 911. These guys were arrested as terrorists with their target standing right in front of them. You didn't hear about this because it was all hushed up; remember, three of them were US Army, and all of them were white, so they're not the kind of "terrorists" whose capture gets a lot of press. They're all in prison, off the books, probably forever.

If you are caught in the middle of a vampire hunt, you will be treated as a terrorist or a crazed stalker and killer. That's more or less what we are, and as security gets tighter and more restrictive everywhere, we have to face the fact that what's bad for the bad guys is bad for us.

connections to make it happen, he can't be certain that he'll get something in perfect working order, especially if he has to skirt the local laws to obtain it. And the more reliable a gun is, the more likely it is to have a paper trail and an easy way of tracing it back to the buyer.

Characters can also build devices if they have the time and the expertise. Just having the materials doesn't mean that characters are proficient in their use, though. If a character enters a fight with a weapon he's never used before, even if he's generally skilled in combat, he takes a risk.

If the characters take time to practice with their gear, add one Plan Die to the pool for every character who does so (this requires at least a half a day of training).

Affairs in Order

Hunting monsters is not a profession for those who want to live long and uninteresting lives. Before the players' characters enact their plan, they should confront and consider the notion that they won't be coming home again. What exactly a hunter does with that knowledge is up to him, but he should do *something*. Some possibilities:

- Write a will: A good idea anyway for people in high-risk profession, a will indicates a character's wishes for the disposition of his assets. In the case of a hunter, these assets may include information or evidence that could implicate current targets (though some hunters work to shield their loved ones from the awful truth).

- Spend time with loved ones: Every hunt could be the last one. While career hunters usually wind up without family or close friends, people who haven't quite given up on their old lives might spend the days before the mission with the ones they cherish most. This is dangerous, of course, because the bloodsucker might very well retrace the hunters' steps if the plan fails. Hunters aren't the only ones with some skill in investigation, after all. After a local vampire suffers an attack (or a vampire's contact is destroyed or comes up missing), Kindred pay attention to obituaries and missing person reports, and they note people who behaved like suicides—giving away their prized possessions, changing their wills, sending families to live with relatives, formulating escape routes (plane tickets, passports, etc.), and the like. In fact, an interesting take on a Hunters Hunted chronicle might be for the players to play the family and friends of a hunter who, unbeknownst to them, died (or was Embraced!) in a hunt gone wrong.

- Blow the whole thing open: Occasionally, a video shows up on the Internet, often following reports of gunshots in the night or a fire that claimed several lives. The video is of a lone and often disheveled person, recorded with a webcam or a phone. This person claims that monsters are real, that he is going to go and fight them, and that he might not be alive to report on it tomorrow. The person generally asks people to look into the incident, to avenge his death, to learn the truth, and to avoid the dark alleys where vampires dwell. These videos often earn comments such as "Fake" and "you can totally hear this guy's buddies laughing" and "he ripped it off from that one movie." Even so, hunters keep trying to leave behind the proof that will wake up the rest of humanity, be it in the form of a book, a video, a letter, or even a work of art.

If a player describes a scene of her character preparing for the possibility of death, add a Plan Die to the pool. If the scene resonates with the character's Nature, the player can either refill the character's Willpower pool or add a second Plan Die.

Determine Plan Dice

By this point, the players should have a fairly impressive pile of Plan Dice. Sadly, they don't get to carry them all into battle. Divide the number of Plan Dice by the number of players portraying hunters. This is the Plan Dice pool, and it can be used during the plan as described in the next section.

The Plan in Action

Once the hunters have a plan, it's time to enact it. This stage, of course, is when things can (and should) go horribly awry. Most of the game systems necessary for the hunt itself can be found in V20 (combat, stealth, injury, etc.). This section discusses how the players and the Storyteller can make the hunt tenser and more interesting. More on the subject can be found in Chapter Five.

Maintaining Tension

The way to keep tension high in a horror game is through uncertainty. Three ways to make the players uncertain about their situation (and therefore the results of the plan) are:

- Hide the Health boxes: Have the Storyteller keep track of the characters' health levels. As characters suffer damage, the Storyteller describes the wounds, based on the number of health levels inflicted and the source of the injury. If the Storyteller is really ambitious, she can tailor the description to the character's experience in combat. For example, a combat veteran has a much better sense of how serious a blow to the head is or what a gunshot wound to the shoulder might mean for functionality. Someone who has never been in so much as a fistfight before, though, might well freeze up or run screaming from real violence.

- Hide the characters: Instead of getting out a map and moving miniatures around, draw a very rough sketch on a piece of scrap paper, indicate what the characters see in terms of obvious things (furniture, brightly colored objects, lights, and things to which the eyes are drawn), and describe any other features as the characters would notice them. If someone wants to determine whether or not the room contains a fire extinguisher, have the player roll Perception + Alertness (maybe even splitting a dice pool to do so) for his character to look around the room. Apply whatever penalties are appropriate to represent darkness, dust, loud music, smoke, and other sensory stimuli that would impede a character's ability to function.

If the Storyteller really wants to make things unpleasant (and emphasize the necessity to plan and practice combat), she can describe characters in general terms — "the man

in the red jacket, the woman with the black hair.” The players, then, can’t be sure the characters are shooting or stabbing their intended targets until the attack is resolved, unless they want to take the time to verify (which should, at the very least, add to the difficulty of the attack).

- **The fog of war:** The term “fog of war” refers to the ambiguity of combat or military operations. It is especially noticeable in tactical scenarios (that is, when people are actually fighting), as in the heat of the combat, it’s very difficult to say with any accuracy whether the gunfire the characters are hearing is coming from allies or whether the bullets are having any real effect on the vampires. Communication during combat is difficult, and it runs the risk of giving away positions and plans to the enemy.

To simulate this effect, the Storyteller should disallow table-talk. Characters can talk to one another, but anything that takes longer than three seconds or so to say eats the character’s turn (or, at the very least, raises the difficulty of the attempted action). Likewise, characters can’t stop and explain what they meant, meaning that a character can very easily misinterpret an order given in the heat of battle. Don’t give players time to consider their words or plan out their instructions either. If the players have taken the time to decide on a series of code words and cues as part of the plan, this is the reward for doing so.

Do note, though, that the reason for all of this secrecy is not for the Storyteller to “win” or have an advantage over the players. The reason for it is to simulate the uncertainty and fear that the characters are feeling. The Storyteller shouldn’t be using the lack of tangible details to pull the rug out from under the characters, but rather to make the whole experience more immersive and interesting for the players. This balance is a delicate one, and it requires the Storyteller to let the players have the victories that they earn. If the players come up with a tactic that makes everyone say “oh, that’s awesome,” even with the lack of “top-down” perspective, the Storyteller should consider letting that tactic work, or at least not deliberately stepping on it.

Changes to the Plan

The plan isn’t likely to go off without a hitch (not if the Storyteller wants to make things interesting). Some sort of problem, be it from a random occurrence or a detail the characters missed, is going to make things difficult. The true test of a group’s ability, then, is how well it adapts. Below are some possible ways for the plan to go off the rails and some strategies for how the group might salvage it.

- **Outmanned:** The characters were prepared to fight a vampire. That is, one, single, solitary bloodsucker.

They didn’t expect the monster’s co-conspirators to be over visiting. Or maybe the vampire has slaving, blood-addicted guard dogs or a cadre of Dominated homeless junkies guarding his lair. Either way, the characters missed this little detail, and now they have to fight.

The smartest thing to do might be to abort, but if the characters can find a way to modify an existing step of the plan so that it applies to the extra opponents *instead* of the target (not in addition to), the players can double the reward for the Plan Dice they put into that step. An example would be: The characters were planning on luring the vampire out into the garden and then dropping a bunch of rocks taken from said garden from the nearby roof (hard to get rocks up there, but uses the vampire’s own terrain against him and doesn’t require carrying a lot of gear into the area). Instead, the characters decide to use this strategy on the abnormally large mastiff with blood on its lips. If they put three Plan Dice into this action, they actually get six dice, but then they can’t use this part of the plan on the vampire himself.

- **Outgunned:** Popular fiction, with a few exceptions, doesn’t paint vampires as especially conversant with firearms, but the fact is that guns have been around for centuries, and there’s no reason an undead monster can’t also be a crack shot. The characters break in and discover that not only is the bloodsucker awake, he’s packing a submachine gun.

If the characters are badly outgunned, they should probably run. Superior weaponry is fast and deadly, and if the characters aren’t prepared for a firefight with an opponent who can soak up their bullets, walk right up, and shoot them in the head, they should bug out. That said, though, if they have equipment that can reasonably counter their target’s use of weaponry (body armor, for instance), then the players can bolster that equipment’s effectiveness with Plan Dice. If using body armor to add to soak, for instance, the player can add Plan Dice to the soak roll.

- **Unknown Ability:** Despite how closely the Kindred may resemble the vampires of one story or another, they differ in important ways, and they don’t all have the same weaknesses. A group of hunters might successfully destroy a vampire by distracting her with a beautiful bauble long enough to set her on fire, only to discover that the next bloodsucker they target is in no way moved by objets d’art. Vampires display weaknesses, powers, and proclivities that break patterns and have no antecedent in literature or in occult research. What are the hunters to do then?

Fortunately, their research can save them. If the hunters run afoul of a monster who displays a power or supernatural Trait that their research does *not* represent, the players

can add Plan Dice to any applicable resistance rolls or use them to increase the difficulty of powers used on them. For instance, the Dementation 1 power *Passion* uses the target's Humanity as the difficulty rating. A hunter's Humanity rating might be only 6, but if the hunter's plan makes no mention of vampires who can drive their victims mad, the hunter can use four Plan Dice to increase the difficulty to 10. Of course, using Plan Dice this way can deplete them quickly, but sometimes, the alternative is worse.

Two restrictions on this use of Plan Dice exist: First, the characters cannot use Plan Dice in this way unless they included *some* supernatural intel in their plan (that is, some of the Plan Dice had to come from planning to counteract a supernatural influence). Second, players cannot raise the difficulties of direct, physical attacks by using Plan Dice.

- **Loose Cannon:** It takes a lot of trust to follow someone into a vampire's lair with the intent to kill the creature. That trust, unfortunately, isn't always rewarded. Sometimes, a hunter gathers a group with the intent of duping them, leading them into battle but then following his own agenda, using his erstwhile fellows as bait for the undead. Sometimes, a hunter gets into the middle of the mission and loses his nerve — or loses control of his anger. And sometimes, it doesn't matter how many times the group goes over the plan. In the heat of the moment, someone forgets or refuses to do his job.

This, of course, is the advantage to making sure everyone has a distinct job to do. If one character doesn't do it, the team at least knows which part of the plan isn't going to work (or has to work in another way) and can react to it. In game terms, if one character does not undertake his appointed task, the other characters can apply Plan Dice to any attempt to make sure that part of the plan still occurs or can be circumvented. This rule only applies if the action that the character did not perform was a specifically assigned action (that is, the players received Plan Dice for assigning it).

- **Failure:** Everyone makes mistakes. Even if the characters do their jobs, it's entirely possible that the dice don't cooperate. If a player botches a roll on an action that was critical to the plan, that roll runs the risk of wrecking the whole mission. A character tasked with bypassing an alarm system might set it off. A character who was supposed to incapacitate a guard might start a protracted fight, alerting others. Minor setbacks are to be expected, but this one is a potential catastrophe.

The character has an option, though, if he's truly committed to the hunt. If the character spent some time preparing for the worst, he is, appropriately enough, able to handle it when the worst happens. If the player added Plan Dice to the pool through putting the character's

affairs in order, the player can use Plan Dice to add to any roll meant to mitigate or correct the damage done by the botch. Note that this only applies in the event of a *botch* (see p. 250 of *V20*), not just a failure.

Fighting as a Group

Vampire sires teach their children to beware of mortals in groups. It is the primary reason for the *Masquerade*: One mortal isn't a threat. Five mortals are, and 20 mortals can overwhelm even an elder vampire. This fact is one that hunters can and should exploit.

Fighting in a group requires that the group train together, practice the maneuvers they intend to use, and cement those maneuvers into muscle memory. It's no good going into combat if the hunters are just going to take turns hitting the vampire. That might work, but it gives the vampire too much potential advantage. Better to use superior numbers to put the vampire down.

Below are four tactics that a group of hunters can use against a vampire (or, theoretically, another monster, though results may vary). In order to use any of these tactics, the hunters must train together for at least eight hours—a rule of thumb is that it requires 1,000 repetitions of an action to put it into muscle memory. If a group attempts to use one of these tactics without the proper training, increase all difficulties related to the tactic by 3.

When using a tactic, all of the hunters' players roll initiative, and the group acts on the highest result. If any member has not had the proper training, though, the tactic happens on the *lowest* result (since the hunters have to wait for everyone to be ready).

- **Same Damn Spot:** Even a vampire's undead flesh has limits. With this tactic, the hunters target the same area on the vampire's body with weapons—blades, blunt objects, whatever they wish to use. Striking the same spot as the previous hunter imposes a +1 difficulty, but every successful hit beyond the first increases the difficulty of the vampire's soak roll by 1.

Example: Three hunters take on a *Ventrue* vampire. The first hunter hits the vampire with a fireman's ax. The second hunter attempts to strike the same spot, and adds 1 to the difficulty. If this attack succeeds, the vampire's soak roll incurs a +1 to the difficulty. The third hunter attempts to strike the same spot, also with a +1 difficulty, but if this attack succeeds, the vampire's soak roll difficulty is increased by 2, and so on.

Of course, close quarters and cramped conditions may limit the number of hunters who can cluster around a *Kindred* and lay into him. The Storyteller will determine when and if the environment becomes restrictive in this manner.

• **Light 'em Up:** Rules for fire and what it does to vampires can be found on page 297 of *V20*. Using a fire in a fight, though, is a risky endeavor. Fire does, after all, tend to spread out of control, and a burning vampire in a blind panic is dangerous to everything in the immediate area. This tactic allows a bit more control to the immolation. One hunter makes the roll to set the vampire ablaze. (The safest way to do this is to throw a Molotov cocktail or something similar. More information can be found under Tools later in this chapter.) Meanwhile, the others, armed with long weapons, push and strike the vampire to keep her contained. Pitchforks are the weapon of choice, here, but spears, clubs, and even baseball bats will do in a pinch (though anything shorter than a foot is ineffective).

If the burning vampire enters Röttschreck, she instinctively moves away from the blows, which means that the characters can “herd” the vampire. If the vampire doesn’t immediately enter Röttschreck upon being set alight, each successful hit from the weapons, whether the vampire soaks the damage or not, requires a new roll to avoid the Red Fear.

• **Staking:** This is the classic vampire-destroying method, in which the hunters hold the vampire down and one of them drives a wooden stake into his heart. The hard part is keeping the vampire still enough that the stake can be placed accurately.

Staking a vampire is covered on page 280 of *V20*, but in brief: The attack is made at difficulty 9, and it must inflict at least three levels of damage after soak in order for the stake to pierce the heart. That assumes, however, that the vampire is active and mobile. With this tactic, all but one of the hunters rush and tackle the vampire (Strength + Athletics, difficulty 7, in an opposed roll against the vampire’s Strength + Athletics + Potence, also difficulty 7). If the combined total of the rolls made for the hunters equals or exceeds the one made for the vampire, the vampire is knocked prone.

The hunter with the stake can’t attack that turn, however, because the other hunters need a few seconds to pin the vampire down. This requires a Strength + Brawl roll for each hunter (difficulty of the vampire’s Strength + Potence, maximum 10). If any of these rolls succeed, the hunter with the stake (and, hopefully, the hammer) can attempt to pound it home on her next action. This requires a roll of Dexterity + Melee, difficulty 7 + 1 for every hunter who failed the roll. The hunter still needs to inflict three levels of damage with the stake to pierce the heart, but using a hammer inflicts an automatic level of damage with each strike. This means that a vampire can always be staked in three turns, if the hunters can keep him immobile long enough.

The Classics

You know how in *Dracula* they stab the Count with a Bowie knife and he kind of crumbles away to dust? That doesn’t actually happen. I’ve never heard of a vampire crumbling away at all, and certainly never when stabbed. But I’ve also met people who swear up and down that Stoker knew that vampires were real and his book was meant to be a primer on killing them. So what does that tell you?

• **Beast Baiting:** This is an extremely dangerous tactic, and it requires that one hunter have a visible, bleeding wound (self-inflicted or incurred in battle, either works). The hunter moves close enough to the vampire that she can smell his blood and then darts away. The vampire, acting on instinct, lunges for the bleeding hunter, whereupon the hunter’s comrades attack, taking advantage of the vampire’s distraction.

This tactic works only if the vampire is hungry, which means the hunters have to trust their luck or tail the vampire for some time before enacting the tactic (injuring the vampire and forcing her to expend blood points to heal would also work, but the hunters probably don’t know that). The wounded hunter moves close enough to the vampire that the vampire can see and smell the wound, and then ducks backward. Roll Self-Control or Instinct for the vampire. If this roll fails, the vampire is unable to control herself and attacks the wounded hunter as her next action.

The wounded hunter dodges the attack (hopefully), and the rest of the hunters strike, taking advantage of the vampire’s bloodlust. In game terms, players reduce their difficulties by 2 when the attacking hunters attempt to hit the vampire, regardless of what type of attack they’re making. In addition, hunters’ players may donate successes from their attack rolls to help the wounded hunter dodge. This state lasts for the current turn only, but the wounded hunter can attempt the tactic again. The difficulty on the vampire’s Self-Control/Instinct roll, however, decreases by 1 on successive attempts (unless she spends more vitae, in which case her hunger betrays her).

Example: Four hunters are fighting a Gangrel vampire, and the bloodsucker has already managed to slice one of the hunters open with her claws. However, the vampire is also spending blood



to maintain her edge in the fight, so the sight of the bloodied hunter is maddening. Seeing this, the hunter maneuvers in close and then jumps back. The Gangrel attacks with her claws, scoring four successes. The wounded hunter dodges, but only manages one success. The other hunters, though, attack the Gangrel (at 2 difficulty), and one of them scores five successes! He donates three of those successes to the wounded hunter's dodge roll, bringing the total up to four successes and allowing the hunter to avoid further injury.

Things You Don't Plan For

Beyond the possibility of something related to the plan going haywire, the possibility is always there that something unforeseen will happen to harm — or even help — the plan. A police cruiser pulls up next to the characters' vehicle at a stoplight, and the cop notices a stack of wooden stakes, a big mallet, and a container of gasoline in the back — not illegal, but probably worth a look. The vampire's cab driver takes a wrong turn on the way home, and the hunters have time to set up a perfect ambush. Lightning strikes the bloodsucker's house and sets it ablaze. It's a child's truism that anything

can happen, but weird coincidences can befall anyone, for no reason (that's what makes them coincidences).

Except that, in **Vampire**, nothing happens by coincidence. Even something coincidental in the story was a planned, deliberate event originating with the Storyteller or the players. So anything like the events described above, while plausible in real life, is going to feel forced in the game. As such, players can use these random benefits or setbacks to explain especially good or poor dice rolls, if they'd like, but the Storyteller should carefully consider whether having a "random" disaster befall the characters is going to help the story or make the players roll their eyes.

Another option, though, is for the players to get something extra for accepting a little chaos into their lives. During the planning phase, the players can add up to five extra Plan Dice to the usable total (that is, after the first total has been divided by the number of players). The Storyteller then rolls those dice (difficulty 8) before handing them over to the players. At some point during the mission, something random — not put in motion by the target or the characters

Successes Results

Botch	The characters' vehicle is rear-ended on the way to the vampire's haven (or wherever the characters are going). While the damage isn't severe, it throws off the timetable of the hunt, at the least, and if someone calls the police, it means that the characters' movements are on official record.
Failure	One of the characters (determine randomly) suffers food poisoning. Apply a +3 difficulty to all of their actions during the mission.
1	One of the characters resembles the vampire's long-dead loved one (mother, son, lover; choose whatever is appropriate). While it doesn't make the vampire any less willing to kill the hunters, it makes him hesitate. The first initiative roll made for the vampire against that character suffers a +3 difficulty.
2	One of the vampire's ghoul guards spills coffee on the floor. Later, when the characters are running away, someone opposed to them slips on it, giving them an extra turn to escape.
3	A thunderstorm blows up just as the characters approach their target. Apply -2 to all Stealth difficulties for the remainder of the night.
4	The target's Internet service suffers a short, shutting down not only his online access, but his alarm system for one hour.
5	The target was unable to find a victim tonight and starts with three fewer vitae than he otherwise would.

— happens to the hunters. Whether it helps them or hurts them depends on how many successes the Storyteller rolls on these dice. For maximum effect, the Storyteller should keep the results of this roll secret, so that when the event occurs the players don't immediately know if it will help or harm them. Some examples are listed in the table above.

Tools

V20 has a list of weapons on pages 280-281. It's not exhaustive, but it doesn't need to be. A weapon is, in game terms, a few extra dice and perhaps a special effect, and so, long lists of different models of guns don't add anything other than a bit of brand-name flash.

Indeed, equipping a group of hunters is more challenging than simply deciding on what caliber of bullet to use. Equipment should play a vital role in the mission, and the players should know what their characters are carrying. It might become relevant when a hunter becomes separated from the rest of the group and has to fend for herself, or when she's arrested and searched and has to explain what the police find.

Low Tech

It might occasionally happen that a billionaire discovers the existence of vampires and wishes to hunt them down,

but more often, it's everyday people who witness the undead and the horrors they commit. Normal, working people—cab drivers, bartenders, EMTs, firefighters, news vendors—don't

Legal but Suspicious

Remember before when I mentioned that there isn't all that much difference between a vampire hunter and a serial killer? Some of the worst offenders carried "rape kits" — things such as duct tape, handcuffs, knives, plastic restraints, rope, and so on.

Now, none of those things are illegal, and all of them can be helpful against vampires. But if you get caught and searched (and yes, it's illegal for the cops to search you for no reason, but believe me, if they want a reason, they'll find one), you're carrying a "rape kit." And any cop worth his salt knows what to look for.

I'm not saying you shouldn't carry useful stuff. I'm saying don't get caught with it.



have access to high-tech weapons or gear. They have what they can scrounge, make, or buy with their limited means. With a little ingenuity, though, that can be enough.

Below are some examples of the sorts of gear that hunters without access to great wealth can afford or make, and (where necessary) what sort of game effect they might have. Do note that, although much of this equipment is legal and easily available, certain authorities notice when someone purchases, say, a large quantity of propane out of the blue. Gearing up for a vampire hunt is often a lot like gearing up for a terrorist attack, and the FBI is not above goading people they think might be terrorists into taking part in an attack, then swooping in at the last moment to arrest everyone. It's not out of the realm of possibility that they might try something like this with vampire hunters (especially if, as some hunters believe, the bloodsuckers have already compromised certain institutions of mortal authority).

Improvised Weapons

A moderate amount of money and a trip to a home-improvement store can set a group of hunters up with most of the weapons that it'll need. Guns, remember, are of limited use against the undead anyway, and

have the further disadvantages of being loud and attracting attention (depending on where one lives). A sledgehammer, though, works just fine for knocking vampires' fangs in, is inexpensive, and is easily available.

It isn't hard to make such a weapon, though. A hammer is just a heavy lump of metal attached to a stick. A hunter can achieve the same effect with any weighty metal object, a blowtorch, a baseball bat, and a little time. It won't be as well balanced as a hammer, true, but it will still serve the necessary function.

Boards or wooden bats with nails driven through them can also inflict some damage to vampires, since they not only pierce, but tear out chunks of flesh. Targeting the face is trickier (+2 to the difficulty of the attack), but it can result in the vampire losing his fangs (no bite attack possible until the vampire heals the damage) or eyes (blind until the vampire heals the damage).

Sometimes, though, "improvised" means "what I find lying around" rather than "object that I bought to be a weapon, regardless of its intended purpose." Any hunter might find herself caught out without her gear. Look around the room you're in, though, and consider which objects might be best used as weapons. The best weapons are *heavy* (no point in hitting a vampire with a plastic hanger), *hard* (a coffee mug makes for a good distraction if thrown or swung hard enough), or *tapered* (small surface area means more pressure per square inch — it's why a pin punctures more easily than a flashlight case). In any given room, a character can usually find something good for at least a one-die weapon bonus. A successful Wits + Melee roll (difficulty 6) made by her player lets a character do just that, but if the player has an idea for what the character might reasonably find, you can forego the roll.

Vehicles

Vampires are tough and difficult to kill, but hitting one with a car is a good way to slow one down (the vampire, if not the car). Cars are, of course, legal to buy and own, and not terribly difficult to come by. Ramming someone with a car inflicts damage based on the size of the car and the speed at which the car was traveling. Start with a base of 10 dice, add one die for every 10 miles per hour the car is traveling at the time of impact, and then add between one and ten *more* dice based on how big the vehicle is (a compact car might add one die, while a truck might add ten, at the Storyteller's discretion). All damage inflicted is lethal, even to vampires, though they can attempt to soak.

Characters with the right Abilities (Crafts, Drive, Technology) can even modify cars to help in the hunt. Some possible useful modifications include:

- **Armor:** Plating added to the sides of the car prevents a vampire or his minions from shooting the people in it. See Armor on page 280 of **V20** for more information.

- **Extra speed:** Cheap auto-parts store customizations, nitrous-oxide injection systems that boost the car's speed temporarily, and even stripping out seats and other parts to lighten the car can make it faster — useful for escaping when the plan goes awry.

- **Guns:** A machine gun mounted on the roof is conspicuous, but it wouldn't be impossible to rig shotgun shells to fire at someone standing behind or in front of the car. Likewise, mini-flamethrowers, mounted on the underside of a car and rigged to spit fire upward, are legal as carjacker deterrents in some countries.

- **Storage space:** Hidden compartments in a car can help characters to pass a cursory search. A big enough trunk can also let hunters transport an immobilized vampire away from the scene of a crime.

Explosives and Chemical Weapons

Chemical weapons and explosives strike fear into the heart of sane people, especially since they are much easier to come by than most people think. It's possible to create explosives and incendiary agents in a shed with very little specialized equipment. What's even stranger is that some very dangerous agents are legal. For example, Tannerite is a binary explosive compound used in construction and disaster control. It's legal to purchase its components in the US (though it might require permits) because Tannerite is stable and easy to transport. It requires a great deal of pressure or high heat to detonate, but coating a surface with it and then shooting it is enough to trigger the explosion. The more of it is used, the bigger the explosion, but assume that enough Tannerite to, say, blow up a small car would inflict 15 health levels of lethal damage to anyone within 10 feet.

Poisons are often of limited use against Kindred, but toxic chemicals (while usually more closely regulated than industrial explosives) can still be useful against minions, guard dogs, ghouls, and still-living monsters. Deadly chemicals inflict lethal damage (again, not to vampires) based on how toxic they are. Truly deadly chemicals can inflict 10 or more health levels of lethal damage, which is obviously more than enough to kill a person. Other options exist, though. Putrescine and cadaverine are naturally occurring chemicals produced when living tissue breaks down and rots. These chemicals are partly responsible for the smell associated with rotting tissue, and both can be synthesized (Intelligence + Science, difficulty 8, or 7 with a good lab). The scent of these

chemicals can cause nausea and vomiting (a successful Stamina + Self-Control needs to be made for a mortal to resist vomiting after smelling a concentrated dose — a vampire doesn't vomit, but recoils, suffering a +2 difficulty to her next action).

Homemade Firearms

Run a search on a popular video sharing website for "homemade crossbow." The Internet is full of instructions for making such devices out of materials that are lying around the house or easily purchased. Homemade guns are legal, though they don't tend to be accurate to any real distance. In general, homemade distance weapons inflict one die of damage less than a professionally manufactured version would, but they have the advantage of being untraceable and custom-designed for the person using them (-1 difficulty to use).

Staking a vampire with a crossbow bolt is much the same as doing it by hand — difficulty 9 to hit the heart and three levels of damage after soak to pierce the heart.

Fire

Fire is a time-honored way to destroy vampires, and one of the most effective. Of course, the biggest problem with using incendiaries is that the fire doesn't know when to quit and spreads to everything in the immediate area. Sometimes, though, hunters feel it's worth the risk.

The easiest way to set a vampire on fire is to douse her in gasoline or some other flammable liquid and then toss a torch, lighter, or flare at her. The damage that fire inflicts is covered on page 297 of **V20**. If a vampire is entirely engulfed in flames (as would happen when hit by a Molotov cocktail or doused in burning gasoline), she suffers three points of aggravated damage per turn. Vampires with Fortitude can use that Discipline to soak fire damage. Fire from gasoline sets the difficulty at 7, while damage from thermite (a chemical composite made from aluminum and iron oxide, which when ignited reaches approximately 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit) would be difficulty 10. Thermite is legal and simple to make, though it does require a bit more than a lighter to ignite it (magnesium, so a handheld sparkler will do it). It burns hot enough to melt right through almost anything it's touching, though, including vampires.

Restraints

Not all vampires have superhuman strength, and even those who have the Potence Discipline aren't necessarily strong enough to break out of good restraints. Handcuffs are commercially available, but good quality nylon rope is cheaper. BDSM clubs offer classes in rope work and knot

Wait, What Are Those Ropes Made Of?

Astute readers will note that the chart on page 261 of V20 lists breaking down a steel door as requiring Strength 5, but here we're saying that snapping some restraints might require as much as 7?

Well, yes. Breaking down a door doesn't really require breaking the door itself, just the hinges. The hinges are a weak point. It's still hard, especially a metal door, but the fact is that doors are meant to open and that gives the character an edge.

If the character is properly restrained, though, he can't get the leverage he needs to pull the restraints apart. It's the lack of leverage and the inability to exert one's full strength, not the material, that makes restraints effective.

tying, and have the advantage of being used to people who use nicknames and don't wish for their proclivities to be publicized. On the other hand, this also makes them tempting hunting grounds for vampires.

Breaking out of restraints requires Strength 4 to 7 (see Lifting/Breaking, p. 260 of V20). The better the quality of the restraints, the more Strength it requires. Tying up or otherwise restraining a character requires a successful Dexterity + Crafts roll, difficulty 5 if the target is insensate or incapacitated. Increase the difficulty to restrain the individual to as much as 10 for a fully awake and struggling character. The more successes the character doing the tying achieves, the harder the restraints are to break.

Traps

Much of this chapter assumes that the hunters are invading a vampire's lair, but that isn't necessarily the case. They might lure the vampire to them, somewhere they have the home-field advantage. If they can manage that, they can set traps for the unfortunate bloodsucker.

Traps take many different forms, but they all work on the same principle. The victim has a chance to avoid the trap, and if he doesn't, he suffers damage (which may or may not be soakable).

Avoiding a trap is usually a matter of noticing it before triggering it. This requires a successful Perception + Alertness roll. The difficulty of this roll is set by the person placing the trap. Placing a trap requires a Dexterity + Survival roll (difficulty 6). Every success on this roll adds one to the base difficulty of spotting the trap. This difficulty starts at 5. Therefore, if the player achieves four successes on the roll for the trapper to place the trap, the difficulty to spot that trap is 9.

If the victim fails to notice the trap, he triggers it and suffers the effects. Some examples of basic traps follow:

- **Falling Object:** When the trap is triggered, something falls on the character from a damaging or immobilizing angle. A caustic chemical, a heavy object, or a light coating of tannerite (see above) are all possibilities. **Damage:** Varies by the falling object, from two to twelve (!) dice.

- **Triggered Weapon:** Triggering the trap means that a gun fires, an explosive detonates, or a blade (perhaps powered by a gas canister) springs out. This trap can be as simple as a shotgun rigged to a doorknob or as complicated as a series of explosives hooked up to a computer that detonates if the wrong password is entered. **Damage:** As appropriate for the weapon (most often the base damage for the weapon, in the case of a melee weapon, unless the Strength of the "attacker" is significant, as with the gas canister).

- **Pit:** The floor or ground gives way, and the victim falls into a hole. These traps can be used to capture or hold a victim, but digging a hole deep enough that an average person, much less a vampire, can't just climb out probably requires a backhoe or a lot of work. **Damage:** Potentially none, though if the pit is lined with spikes, then damage could be as high as seven dice. Even with less damage, though, the spikes immobilize the vampire until she can free herself (Strength + Athletics, difficulty 5 + 1 for every spike impaling the vampire).

High Tech

Of course, if the characters *do* have access to large sums of money, then the kinds of gear they can obtain broadens considerably. Weapons, surveillance gear, vehicles — all of it might be useful for the war on the undead.

Two major problems with high-tech gear present themselves, though. One is, obviously, that when large sums of money change hands, people notice. Many weapons require permits or registration if purchased legally, and that means that even if the characters can afford a .50-caliber machine gun and mount it on a vehicle, when the police discover its use (and it's very difficult to clean up after such an incident), they won't have to look very hard to find the people in the area who own it.

The other problem is that, regardless of whether a piece of equipment was actually designed to be used in the field rather than as a toy for a rich dilettante, it probably wasn't designed to be used on vampires. Bullets don't inflict as much damage to vampires as they do to the living. Thermal goggles aren't effective at showing vampires because the undead don't generate body heat. And so on. The players might come up with some interesting piece of technology, and the characters might have the resources to buy it, but that doesn't mean it's going to work the way the characters want it to work. Which is why hunters, even wealthy ones, have to be clever.

Weapons

As mentioned, the difference between one weapon and another, in game terms, is usually just "more dice." The weapons that become available with more funds, though, often come with scopes, laser sights, increased range, and specialized ammunition. These things can improve on an attack in various ways. Scopes and sights can lower the difficulty to hit a target. Range makes it easier to ambush or snipe. Specialized ammunition can cause lethal or even aggravated damage to vampires.

Personnel

Why do one's own dirty work? Military connections, criminal contacts, or just an obscene amount of money can put a character in touch with any number of rough, well-trained people. True, they might not believe that their target is a vampire... but suppose their employer can provide proof? Or suppose he's paying well enough that the hired thugs don't mind a bit of eccentricity? If you're already will to kill for money, putting a stake through someone's heart might not be too big a stretch.

Personnel don't have to be human, either. Dogs are used to sniff out drugs, explosives, and corpses. Nothing says that a corpse-sniffing dog couldn't be trained to find vampires instead. Dogs have the disadvantage of being vulnerable to the Animalism Discipline, but the ability to identify a vampire might be worth the risk.

Surveillance

For a comparatively small sum of money, hunters can buy cameras small enough to conceal in necklaces or rings. These can be connected to computers so that the camera feed comes right to the hunters. Attach this sort of camera to a vampire's jacket, and the vampire winds up giving the hunters a guided tour of his haven.

Thermal vision filters, used in conjunction with other visual apparatus, can be used to identify a vampire. If

someone shows up on a normal camera feed, but not on the thermal, then he has no body heat and is very likely undead... if not something else.

Microphones, wiretaps, and other such spy gear is commercially available, and they allow hunters to listen in on vampires' conversations. This, in turn, lets the hunters plan their missions with more precision. It also places the Masquerade in great jeopardy, and paranoid Kindred (that is, the most dangerous kind) prefer to discuss any sensitive topic in the safety of Elysium. Breaking into Elysium and being a fly on the wall would be a gold mine of information for hunters, and as technology has become inexpensive and miniaturized, hiding a webcam in such a place is quick and easy. Of course, it still requires getting access to such a place and knowing when the vampires are likely to be present, and that the camera has a good enough sound system to be useful.

Out of Your Depth

One last thing: Vampires have a society named after the First Vampire, Carmilla. It's complex, it's old, and we (meaning, those of us with a pulse) have no freaking clue how it works. The bad news is that vampires will close ranks when they know that living folks are hunting them down. I don't know much, but I've heard enough to know that, apparently, they (their society as a whole) has had problems with in-the-know people before, and that letting the truth out is a huge no-no. So if word gets out that you're gunning for bloodsuckers, you face a "me, my brother, and my cousin against the stranger" kind of situation.

The good news is: Vampires hate each other. They're predators, and they compete for food (that'd be us), and so, they have this deep-seated instinct to kill each other off. Yes, they'll work together to kill if they know about us, but if they don't know about us, if you can ID one or two and watch them, you'll see that they'll fuck each other over for... whatever they use as currency. Haven't figured that one out yet.

But do not, for any reason, no matter what a vampire promises you,





Chapter Four: Numina

And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places.

— Roald Dahl, *The Minpins*

Vampires are dangerous predators who own almost every edge in a fight against a hunter, or even a group of hunters, in some cases. The Kindred possess terrifying physical superiority and unfathomable powers. The powers of the undead include the ability to rend the mind, sway the heart with a glance, and twist a hunter's very perceptions of the world.

In the face of such terror, the mortals who defend the night sometimes invoke an ancient Latin proverb, *numen lumen*, which translates to "God is the light." This has become a sacred mantra, a call to arms, for those who fight against the vampires. As a result, Numina has become the catch-all term for the mystical and psychic powers that seemingly ordinary people have learned or naturally developed to be that light in the world.

The origins of these powers may never be wholly known, but that hasn't impeded the evolution of a number of different theories, each of which has been pieced together from speculative evidence garnered among hunter communities.

The Light of God theory proposes that Numina abilities are a sacred gift from the divine (though which exact incarnation of the divine differs according to the world's faiths) to battle the darkness. Vampires are a plague upon the world, and the divine has tasked the

wielders of Numina to lead humanity out of the darkness and into salvation.

A few hunters are convinced that those with Numina abilities bear the blood of angels and refer to them as Nephilim. Some believe that these chosen few carry out the literal word of God.

A number of scientists and researchers have proposed the Numen Theorem, which suggests that humanity is naturally evolving psychic abilities as a biological defense against vampires. This suggests that vampires are simply a previously unknown predator in an ecosystem that forces mankind to adapt to new circumstances.

Some individuals believe that vampirism is an advanced, complicated biological state and that the real battle should be to study Numina in order to discover a cure. Many supporters of the Numen Theorem often completely discount faith or occult interpretations of Numina as superstitions perpetrated by the vampires to prevent a full scientific study devoted to ridding the world of their presence through inoculation.

Whatever the truth, some chosen few in the World of Darkness are able to call upon powers greater than those of most mortals in their defense, and those secrets comprise this chapter. But what does that make their practitioners?

Numina and the Hunter

The last few years, if hunters can believe their own apocrypha, have seen a sharp increase in the discovery of people with elementary psychic abilities. Canny hunters suspect that a small number of “ordinary people” may be manifesting the supernatural acumen required to wield Numina.

Hunters tend to be strong-willed folk willing to risk life and limb to kill vampires. It is hardly surprising that opinion is sharply and vocally divided about Numina. Some hunters were quick to take advantage of such new weapons to give them any sort of edge. Life is dangerous enough in the shadows. Why refuse the aid of anyone or anything that can help you survive another night?

Other hunters are quite vocal about their distrust of those who claim to control such supernatural powers. Ghouls enslave themselves to vampires for their strength and longevity. How are those who can perform Numina any better? Have you seen what sort of things they have to do to make their magic work? Who knows what sort of deals these strangers have made with monsters to acquire such powers?

Categorization, Classification, and Taxonomy of Numina

The few knowledgeable scholars on the subject of Numina have formulated a simple taxonomy to classify and categorize the diverse and unexplainable mystical and psychic Numina abilities. Numina seems to function in one of three classes, and each has a specialized moniker.

Hedge Magic (practiced by Hedge Magicians) is a traditional type of magic like that often described in folklore. It is formulaic, and it is invoked by those who command the talent through the performance of specific rituals.

Psychic Phenomena (practiced by Psychics) are evolved psychic powers developed through training and possibly mutations of the human mind.

True Faith (practiced by the Faithful) encompasses a host of abilities gained through a special connection with the divine.

Each class of Numina can be further broken down into Numina Paths. A Numina Path represents a focused area of ability centered around a specific theme, such as Pyrokinesis and fire.

Like many Traits, Numina Paths are scored with a rating of 1 to 5. Each rank purchased indicates a new

level of mastery for the character. For example, a score of 1 would indicate a novice ranking, while a score of 5 would represent a mastery of that Path. As a character increases her score in a Numina Path, she gains access to the powers listed next to the appropriate number of dots and, of course, retains access to the lesser abilities.

Acquiring Numina

The method of acquiring a Numina Path is wholly dependent upon the Numina type to which it belongs and the agreed upon story conditions the player and Storyteller define together.

- Hedge Magic – family stories, occult library, mentor
- Psychic Phenomena – high Willpower, mental training, natural gift
- True Faith – acts of goodwill, devotion to faith, high Humanity

Not everyone who fits the characteristics described above manifests Numina, which are still rare, despite what those who believe their appearance to be increasing may think. Some individuals seem to have evolved these powers naturally, or perhaps with divine assistance. Others have mastered the powers of Numina in secret through years of training and study.

Purchasing Numina

Players can purchase Numina with freebie points during character creation. They may later boost these abilities with experience points or, with Storyteller approval, diversify their talents with new Numina Paths/ratings.

Rarely does a mortal possess more than a single type of Numina. The limitations of the mortal condition seem to make it impossible to learn all three types of Numina. Numina powers are costly to learn, and some of them operate under very different and perhaps even opposing paradigms. Learning too much puts a strain on a character's understanding of the world as a whole, and may damage the foundation of her sanity or physical well-being.

For example, gifted Psychic Midori Jones might possess Pyrokinesis and Psychometry (both Psychic Phenomena). Leah, her player, is interested in expanding her character's powers, but the Storyteller decides that her options are limited by her character's story and circumstances. True Faith requires a long and difficult epiphany. It isn't something to be bought with experience points on a simple whim. However, Leah and her Storyteller decide that Midori might be able to learn a bit of Hedge Magic along the way to add to her abilities in the context of the story.

Hedge Magic

Entertainers have long thrilled audiences by sharing terrifying tales of gods and monsters. Parents still send their children to sleep nightly with thrilling tales of clever kids overcoming great obstacles.

Psychologists dismiss such fairy tales as a psychological mechanism for the release of hidden anxiety about the dangers of the world through a shared release of pathos. Monsters are merely antagonists in a story that represent an uncomfortable element of reality.

A precious few know the truth. They have heard the stories and know them for what they really are: lessons on how to fight monsters. G.K. Chesterton once wrote that fairy tales are more than true, not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten.

Hedge Magic is a loose collection of Numina Paths cobbled together from snippets of superstitions, old wives' tales, and folklore. Practitioners of Hedge Magic believe in the lessons of these legends as fait accompli. A shared hearth lore across comparatively unenlightened human experience comprises the powers of these Numina Paths: They may have been called witchcraft, medicine, or juju in the myriad

societies from which they're drawn. Some practitioners employ this type of Numina to curse their enemies, to look into the future, to heal with a touch, or other such "folk" practices.

Hedge Magicians tend to be do-it-yourself individualists without a lot of obvious resources. Some are self-taught through personal research and experiments, studying old notes passed down from long dead ancestors. Others are the latest talent in a respected family tradition and belong to a community that supports their calling.

The symbology of Hedge Magic is often inelegant, and the execution is messy, but somehow, it works for the individuals who master it. Occultists are sometimes frustrated by Hedge Magic because they can't quite figure out how it all comes together. The methodology is too flawed to manifest much power, but the collective expertise of generation after generation in these superstitions appears to have lent metaphysical validity to the practices of Hedge Magic.

Several Numen Theorem theorists believe that Hedge Magic is merely a psychological crutch used to explain an unknown latent psychic ability. For these skeptics (if they can be called such), it's simply easier to explain such superstitions as "magic" than to accept the personal responsibility of controlling so much power.



Acquiring and Mastering Hedge Magic

Learning Hedge Magic is not a simple process. Hedge Magicians must accept superstitions and old wives' tales as fact to give power to their Numina Paths. This requires a certain mental perspective that clashes with modern sensibilities. If you know that, with the proper gestures, you can curse an enemy, then you must also accept that the number 13 is unlucky, spilled salt must always be tossed over the shoulder, and a black cat should never be allowed to cross your path.

Characters who disregard the truth of that hearth lore find that Hedge Magic becomes more and more difficult. Storytellers are encouraged to monitor this attitude closely, raising the difficulties of cynical individuals who practice these Old Ways by 1 or more, where relevant.

Hunters who would be Hedge Magicians must either learn from a mentor with the proper knowledge or spend a quantity of time piecing together bits of lore from books and legends. Many Hedge Magicians come from old families that believe strongly in their cultural identities and the wisdom of the hearth. Some families have proud legacies of opposing monsters and have specialized "fairy tales" of their own to remember the deeds of ancestors.

Hedge Magic and the Hunter Outlook

Hunters may view Hedge Magicians as well-meaning rustics who have a weird way with the world. Hedge Magic Numina Paths tend to be quite subtle, lacking overt manifestations, and the effects can often be explained away as coincidences or freak occurrences by determined nonbelievers.

Hedge Magicians can be quite obsessive with their superstitions and may have strange habits. Some Hedge Magic Numina Paths require unusual components that might include animal sacrifice, common items used in uncommon ways, and foul-smelling ingredients. Imagine a "Gypsy fortune-teller" who partakes of a shot of vodka with a drop of her subject's blood in it or who brandishes a "bewitched dog's paw" that points in the direction of danger. Such trappings can prove unsettling to those who subscribe to a more "modern" view of the world.

Those who understand the power of these Hedge Magicians may well look askance at them. What sort of deals have these poor bastards made with the Devil to master such creepy gifts? What secrets might they hide from hunters?

The Path of Curses

The curse is one of the most ancient and potent forms of Hedge Magic. It can take many forms, from the "evil eye" of the Mediterranean and the Middle East to the "jinx" of hoodoo to the "hex" of Eastern European folklore. Curses have been known to cause grave misfortune in a variety of forms: accidents, illnesses, and even death.

At the core of any curse is maleficent intent directed toward an enemy. The Hedge Magician focuses her will, her directed hatred, toward her target and releases that intent in the form of harmful energy. The curse quickly afflicts its victim's life and slowly fades as the hateful energy dissipates.

The basic mechanic for cursing is simple. The Hedge Magician determines what level of curse she wants to inflict (within her ability), and then she spends one turn per level of severity gathering and honing her mystic hatred. Once the Hedge Magician is prepared, she discharges the curse in a cathartic fashion directly toward the target (who must be visible to her). Examples of a proper discharge include a scream, a dance, rending a puppet that represents her victim, or offensive gestures.

The Hedge Magician's player makes a Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty 7) activation roll to determine if the curse is successful and the duration of the curse, as listed under Effects.

Each level of the Path of Curses allows for a greater range of misfortune to occur. Mechanically, a curse takes the form of penalties to difficulties and, eventually, dice pools. The Storyteller should apply the effects of a curse carefully to ensure that this Numina Path does not overwhelm the entire chronicle.

When mucking about with the threads of fate, however, a Hedge Magician runs the risk of entangling herself. Botching a curse will bring the effects back upon her three-fold, in which case, the curse intended for her enemy applies immediately to the Hedge Magician.

A Hedge Magician may attempt to banish any curse, even one of her own, but it isn't easy. Her player must spend a Willpower point and roll Wits + Subterfuge (difficulty 9). Each level of success reduces the level of the curse inflicted by a single rating. If the roll botches, the Hedge Magician suffers from the very curse she attempted to banish for the remainder of the original duration of the curse, with no further chance at breaking it.

The Path of Curses eventually takes a toll upon the human soul. Practitioners rarely live happy lives, as the hate and anger required to fuel this Path tends to twist their insides. Mechanically, this often translates into a low Humanity score

for characters who practice this Path. Storytellers are encouraged to require Humanity rolls for Hedge Magicians who have a high Humanity or who invoke curses more than once per month.

System

Roll: Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty 7)

Modifiers: N/A

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: Varies (see below)

Path of Curses Levels

- The victim suffers brief inconveniences, such as dropping an object, saying something foolish, or having a motorcycle run over her foot. Mechanically, this is represented by the Storyteller adding a +1 difficulty to dice pools appropriate to the specified situation for the duration of the curse. For example, the injured foot might increase Athletics difficulties by 1, while saying something foolish might cause Etiquette difficulties to increase thus.

- The victim suffers from a string of errors and bad luck that result in lasting injury or embarrassment, such as stepping on a nail, breaking an heirloom, or catching a minor disease. Mechanically, this is represented by the Storyteller increasing the difficulty of rolls appropriate to the curse by 2 for the duration of the curse.

- The victim suffers severe accidents and misfortune. Typical effects might be broken bones, loss of income, or grievous illness. Mechanically, this is represented by the Storyteller increasing the difficulty of rolls appropriate to the curse by 3 for the duration of the curse.

- The victim suffers from major catastrophes and chronic illnesses. Mechanically, this is represented by the Storyteller increasing the difficulty of rolls appropriate to the curse by 3 for the duration of the curse. In addition, the victim subtracts one from associated dice pools during appropriate moments in the story.

- Curses inflicted at this level are nigh upon Biblical in scope. Nothing goes right for the victim for the duration of the curse. Her life is an exercise in misery, and may well be accompanied by plagues of locusts, being stricken barren, or causing despair in those she meets. Mechanically, this is represented by the Storyteller increasing the difficulty of rolls appropriate to the curse by 4 for the duration of the curse. In addition, the victim subtracts two from associated dice pools during appropriate moments in the story. Invoking a curse of this magnitude requires a Humanity roll for those Hedge Magicians of Humanity 4 or greater.

Curse Duration

The duration of a specific curse is determined by the number of successes achieved during the activation roll.

One success	The next action
Two successes	One scene
Three successes	One day
Four successes	One week
Five successes	One month
Six+ successes	Up to one year, decided upon the activation of the curse

The Path of Divination

Many civilizations of the world believed that certain men and women communed with the divine and brought forth wisdom and warnings of the future. Divination as a word was inspired by the Latin word *divinare*, meaning “to be inspired by a god.” Countless examples span the length and breadth of human history, from the prophets of the God of Abrahamic faiths to the crones and wise women of pagan ways to the shamans and medicine men of the New World and beyond.

Hedge Magicians who practice this Numina Path have a unique method of communing with whatever metaphysical force they revere to glean insights into the future. Such methods are not always easy or quick, but they can be effective if the Hedge Magician interprets the signs correctly.

The Hedge Magician concentrates upon a single vexing decision or subject, and then she uses an external focus (see below) to read the patterns of chance and happenstance in the world around her. By looking at the web of destiny, she can peer upon its strands to see what may happen – or even what will *probably* happen, if the Magician is adept enough with her divination. The player makes an activation roll of Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) to determine what the character discerns.

Each success gained on the activation roll increases the level of clarity of the answer provided. A single success will result in a vague impression or muddle of possibilities, while five successes indicate with some clarity which option will yield the best result. A botch, however, will result in faulty information that may lead to danger or worse.

A Hedge Magician employing Divination may attempt to read another individual’s future, but she must do so in the presence of that individual. Difficulties on rolls to perform this sort of Divination increase by 1.




Forecasting the Future

Divining the future may be described as considering a panoply of outcomes without a certain map of what will be. Divination can yield concrete and specific details, but some element of the unknown always exists.

Storytellers, take care. The Path of Divination has the potential to reveal more information to the players before the appropriate time comes for optimal dramatic significance. Storytellers should attempt to reveal just enough information to whet the players' appetites and offer guidance about possible scenarios that could lead to a better outcome.

Offer choices, not concrete answers, and allow the players to make one. Storytellers are advised to focus on critical decision points that players can directly affect. It is important for players to have agency in the game and the ability to affect the outcome of a scenario, even if the odds are stacked against them. Revealing that an earthquake will kill thousands might be exciting, but unless the players can change the outcome, they may lose interest in the scenario. By comparison, if the hunters have the opportunity to save a number of victims by freeing them from a vampire, then the players suddenly have a cause for which they can fight.

The Path of Divination can highlight dramatic tension in the chronicle by providing indicators of the escalation. A few suggestive images that represent potential crisis points can evoke anticipation and keep players on the edge of their seats. Teasing the answer is almost always better than providing a clear mandate.



Tools of Divination

The tools used to focus Divination are many, but they all work equally well and according to the same principles, opening a conduit of sorts for the Magician to peer through and see the essence of destiny itself. A Magician might use cards, carved fetishes, coins, tea leaves at the bottom of a cup, or the entrails of a recently slain

animal. She might peer into a crystal ball, a mirror, or a pool of water. She might pray with a saint, walk in the woods, or simply watch for omens. Whichever option the player chooses for the character says something about the cultural origin of her Divination ability, as well.

System

Roll: Perception + Occult (difficulty 7)

Modifiers: +1 difficulty to perform for Divination for others

Cost: Varies

Duration: A single revelation

Path of Divination Levels

- The Hedge Magician interprets signs or warnings about the state of her immediate circumstances, lowering the difficulty of her initiative rolls by 1. (For more information on initiative order and modifications, see pp. 271-272 of V20.) Each success achieved on the activation roll extends this ability by an hour.

- The Hedge Magician eliminates possible negative outcomes by comparing them beforehand. A Hedge Magician may ask the Storyteller, who represents the guiding metaphysical entity, for information to help determine the best choice for a simple decision. The player asks a question such as "Should I join this stranger for a trip downtown?" The Storyteller then provides some amount of information in response that will help the player decide.

The Storyteller should consider a number of factors when answering such a question. What is the intent of the Hedge Magician asking the question? Is she asking which decision is safest? Is she looking for the quickest route to her goal? Which decision will have the greatest impact upon the current state of the chronicle? See "Forecasting the Future" above for more information on handling such matters.

Fate is not always kind to those who attempt to divine it. It might be that it is the character's destiny to follow a stranger downtown where she will be attacked by a gang of ghouls, but that may be the path to determining the location of the vampire who commands them.

- The Hedge Magician may sense patterns of chance allowing her to glean short-term information that follows specific decisions. A successful divination reveals information about the question as with the previous level, but it also provides insight into the next set of decisions required for other available options. This degree of divination yields hints about the future, but it also reveals one or more of the choices and consequences the character would face.

To return to the example question, “Should I join this stranger for a trip downtown?” the player learns vital information via this power. The player would know that, if the Hedge Magician travels with the stranger, she faces physical danger (remember, she will be attacked). If she overcomes the danger, a new path awaits her. And if she refuses to join the stranger, that same danger will visit itself upon another. In this situation, the player has many options and some amount of information on each, but the information is imperfect. The player relies more on impressions than hard-and-fast truths — which is the nature of divination.

•••• The Hedge Magician is able to divine specific events in the future. These events are still not definite, but they are much more likely than the nebulous possibilities above. If the target of the divination changes her current behavior, these events become less likely. The details are still vague: “You will meet a man with whom you will share your heart,” rather than “You will meet a forceful man wearing green who shall become your lover.”

••••• The Hedge Magician gains the ability to sense clear and concrete details about the future and the ability to predict specific events with dependable certainty. She can now describe the man wearing green from the previous example in exact detail. In addition, she may know his name and intimate details about his life and future.

This level of the Path of Divination requires the expenditure of a Willpower point and then requires a successful activation roll of Perception + Occult (difficulty 8). The Storyteller may lower the difficulty by 1 to 3 if the caster has intimate knowledge of the subject, a prized possession of the target, or something personal of the target’s, such as a lock of hair or some blood.

The Hedge Magician may also communicate a subtle sense of the overall feel of her divination to that person by spending an additional point of Willpower. This might take the form of a sense of foreboding, if things are dangerous, or a sense of peacefulness, if things are going well. The recipient of this sensation will not recognize it as any sort of communication, but rather experience it as something internal like a “gut feeling,” as it were.

The Path of Healing

Healing the sick hasn’t always been the bailiwick of formally educated doctors armed with a battery of surgical implements and medical databases. Ancient cultures sent their sick and wounded to a spirit medium who communed with the divine and used that knowledge to soothe pain and heal illnesses. The role of the healer might change — be it priest, wise woman, or witch — but the

function remained the same. Healers used a combination of physical remedies and spiritualism to heal those in their care and to keep the community in good health.

The modern Path of Healing is a fusion of magic and ancient curative techniques. Hedge Magicians who have mastered this Numina Path can break a fever in moments or heal traumatic wounds to the body through spiritual means. The Medicine Knowledge is required for this Path to be effective, along with cultural elements, such as meditation, prayer, singing, massage, or other techniques.

Healing can exhaust a Magician during the process, and such healers often suffer for their incredible sensitivity and compassion. Should the player botch the healing roll, the character catches the ailment or withstands sympathetic damage from wounds.

With Storyteller permission, a player may take the Path of Healing as a Psychic Numina Path instead of Hedge Magic.

For more information about healing and health levels, see pages 282-286 of V20.

System

Roll: Manipulation + Medicine (difficulty 7)

Modifiers: +1 difficulty to perform for healing oneself, +1 difficulty if the subject is unwilling, +2 difficulty to perform healing in a stressful environment (such as combat, while being interrogated, while trapped in a burning building, etc.)

Cost: Varies

Duration: Varies by effect (see below)

Path of Healing Levels

• Practitioners of the Path of Healing may examine patients with but a touch to instantly diagnose ailments, learn the nature of injuries, or discover genetic defects. Each success achieved on the activation roll provides additional relevant medical information.

•• A Hedge Magician with this level has a rudimentary control of her patient’s body and can stimulate the healing process. She can instantly cure sprains, severe headaches, flu, or minor infections without difficulty.

With the expenditure of a Willpower point and a successful roll by her player, the Hedge Magician can touch a patient to mitigate the pain of wounds or cure communicable diseases. Such illnesses include the common cold, flu, or even STDs. This level of the Path does not cure serious maladies such as cancer or heart problems, however.



Each success achieved on the activation roll negates any dice-pool penalty arising from wounds from which the subject suffers for 10 minutes. For more information on the effects of damage and dice penalties, see pages 282-286 of V20.

- The Hedge Magician is able to heal broken bones and alleviate chronic but non-life threatening illnesses (such as arthritis, kidney stones, or asthma) with a single touch. Bashing and lethal damage wounds heal twice as fast as they normally would with the healer's ministrations, and without infection. The Hedge Magician can also induce a healing trance state to prevent bleed-outs or other medical trauma from killing a patient before proper surgery can be performed.

Using this power requires a successful roll and the expenditure of a Willpower point.

- The Hedge Magician can stop and heal almost any injury with a single touch.

With the expenditure of a Willpower point and a successful roll by her player, the Hedge Magician can instantly heal a single level of bashing or lethal damage on a patient. Each additional success gained from the activation roll heals one additional level of

bashing or lethal damage. Healing lethal damage in this manner comes at a price, however. For each level of lethal damage healed, the Hedge Magician suffers from a dizzying migraine for an hour that causes all dice-pool rolls made for the Magician during that time to incur +1 to their difficulties. The player may spend an additional Willpower to ignore this effect for a scene, however.

- The human body holds no mysteries to a Hedge Magician who has mastered this level of the Path of Healing. She can cure chronic and acute illnesses (such as cancer, AIDS, or strokes), remove genetic defects, or cleanse chemical addictions.

Such treatment is difficult for the Hedge Magician and requires that the patient be under constant care for some time. The exact length of the treatment and other requirements should be determined by the Storyteller, but they should generally be one quarter the standard recovery times for such cases as indicated on pages 285-286 of V20.

Such sympathy comes at a cost to the body, and the Hedge Magician may suffer a +1 to +2 difficulty increase to all non-Healing related dice pools during

the period of convalescence, as determined by the Storyteller. This need not be applicable for all uses of this power, only those that involve healing of the most debilitating of diseases or the most crippling of dependencies.

In addition, the Hedge Magician can overcome the effects of supernatural trauma upon the body. With the expenditure of a Willpower point and a successful Manipulation + Medicine roll (difficulty 8) by her player, a practitioner can instantly heal aggravated damage on a subject. Each success gained on the activation roll heals one level of aggravated damage.

The cost for healing such damage similarly comes at a price, however. For every level of aggravated damage healed, the Hedge Magician suffers a level of painful sympathetic bashing damage. The sympathetic damage cannot be healed via applications of this Path (whether by the Hedge Magician suffering the sympathetic damage or another healer).

Psychic Numina

Psychics are people with the ability to perceive forces hidden from mundane senses through extrasensory perception, who may then use their minds to manipulate these supernatural elements. Some people are just born with unusual gifts or raw talent that leads to the discovery of these paranormal abilities, such as telepathy, telekinesis, and clairvoyance. Psychic Numina Paths thus involve the mind perceiving and altering the material world.

Reported instances of true Psychic Phenomena were once quite rare, but the last few years have been marked by a remarkable spike in psychic activity. Many of these new Psychics seem completely unaware that they possess unusual abilities.

Popular culture is flooded with ghost-hunting reality shows and blog accounts that explore urban legends and investigate reported poltergeists. Some of these are actual hauntings by ghosts, but a sizeable number of these incidents are actually caused by the residents of the homes creating the “poltergeists” with their undiscovered psychic powers. Of course, no small number of them are false, or purveyed by charlatans, as well....

The origin of psychic abilities has yet to be properly scientifically explored. Currently, little concrete information exists regarding how or why these powers develop. A number of scientists and researchers who have discovered Psychic Numina have proposed the

Numen Theorem, which suggests that humanity is naturally evolving psychic abilities as a biological defense against predatory supernatural creatures. Psychics are merely the first step in this new evolution of the human species.

Acquiring and Mastering Psychic Numina

Psychics are born with or develop a special gift that allows them access to areas of the brain that perform Psychic Numina. Many hunters possess a latent low-level awareness that helped them realize that there were monsters in the world. A number of parapsychologists who support the Numen Theorem believe that all humans possess the potential to access Psychic Numina with the proper training, and that hunters mark the sea change at which mankind moves from realizing it’s not alone in the night to being able to do something about it.

Psychics learn to focus their will and train themselves via often-grueling mental regimens to use Psychic Numina Paths. Practitioners of Psychic Numina often rely upon the Awareness Ability, along with regular exercise and good diet, to keep their minds healthy. Psychics who fail to maintain proper balance in their lives may suffer from exhaustion or, indeed, may develop mental aberrations. Storytellers may find it thematic to bestow new Flaws upon Psychic characters who exceed the limits of their endurance.

Hunters who would be Psychics must acquire either a mentor with the proper knowledge or spend an extended period attempting to develop their mental abilities under controlled conditions. Some parapsychologists now train fledgling Psychics in an attempt to learn more about the new phenomenon. The occasional “latent Psychic” emerges untrained from the shadowed corners of the World of Darkness, but without learning proper control techniques, he may well be considered one of the monsters....

Psychic Numina and the Hunter Outlook

Hunters tend to be more paranoid than other mortals, and hanging around someone who might read your mind isn’t a comforting situation. How can you keep secrets from freaks who can simply touch something and thereby learn everything about it? What happens if they lose control and start a fire? If vampires and Psychics are real, who’s to say that it won’t play out like *Scanners*?

These fears often lead hunters to develop their own proactive defenses against Psychics in order to protect themselves. Or a hunter may take an alternate path and try to develop Psychic Numina herself in order to gain an understanding of the unknown. Of course, that still involves a level of trust that many hunters are unwilling to grant practitioners of the paranormal.

Astral Projection

Countless people have reported out-of-body experiences during near-death situations. Spiritual pilgrims worldwide have reported strange ascents to a higher plane during mediation in which they claim to have physically seen their body from the outside. A number of parapsychologists have theorized that this phenomenon is a latent experience with Astral Projection.

Astral Projection is the ability to separate the consciousness from the physical body and then explore the realm of pure thought—the astral plane. This strange plane of existence is believed to overlay the material world and is thought by some Psychics to be populated by angels, ghosts, living memories, or other immaterial beings. The nature of the denizens of the astral plane is as yet unknown, but it is clear that some of them are malicious and unkind.

The astral traveler must mediate for a turn, after which she leaves her physical body in a sleeping state as her spirit travels freely through the astral plane. Astral travelers move very quickly, traveling at the speed of thought. The disembodied traveler is connected to her body by an ephemeral silver cord. Other astral creatures can touch this cord, and if the cord is severed, the traveler's consciousness becomes trapped in the astral plane.

For more information about the astral plane, see pages 138-139 of **V20**. The Astral Projection Numina Path is a bit different from the Psychic Projection Auspex power, but the destination is the same.

Astral Interaction

Entities may talk, touch, and even engage in combat upon the astral plane. Since they have no physical bodies, characters using Astral Projection or otherwise dwelling therein substitute their Physical Traits for Mental and Social Traits. (Wits replaces Dexterity, Manipulation supplants Strength, and Intelligence substitutes for Stamina.) Due to his lack of a physical body, the only way to harm an astral traveler is to cut his silver cord, which is represented by the astral traveler's Willpower score in Health Levels. For more information on psychic combat, see page 138 of **V20**.

System

Roll: Varies

Modifiers: N/A

Cost: Varies

Duration: Based on successes

Astral Projection Levels

- The Psychic has a rudimentary awareness of the astral plane, though she cannot yet travel to it. She can shift her senses toward the astral realm, where she can see astral travelers and communicate with them. She must first concentrate for a turn to allow her mind to adjust to the competing images, after which the Psychic sees the astral realm overlaid upon the normal physical world.

- With the expenditure of a Willpower point and a successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) by her player, the Psychic can leave her body for brief periods of time and travel to the astral realm. Each success on the activation roll allows one minute of astral travel. If the Psychic wishes to push herself, her player may spend a Willpower point to extend the character's time by an additional minute. When this time has elapsed, the Psychic snaps back to her physical body, unless something strange and dire has happened.

- With the expenditure of a Willpower point by her player, the Psychic can manifest her astral form in the material world. In this manner, a Psychic can manifest on the other side of the world from where her physical body resides, using the great speed of astral travel to visit faraway locales in the form of thought. An astral traveler appears as a blurry and translucent ghost version of her usual physical appearance. A manifest astral traveler cannot touch or affect the material world, but she can be seen by non-Psychics and may speak in soft whispers.

- At this level of prowess, the Psychic may travel deep into the astral plane for lengthy periods of time. With the expenditure of a Willpower point and a successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) by her player, the Psychic can visit the astral realm for one hour per success. If the Psychic wishes to push herself, her player may spend a Willpower point to extend the character's time by an additional hour.

- With the expenditure of a Willpower point and a successful Manipulation + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) by her player, a Psychic can mask her presence in the astral plane (including her silver cord)

from other astral travelers. Suspicious rival Psychics and native astral entities might sense the presence of something strange, at the Storyteller's discretion, but they won't be able to identify the source of the irritation unless their players achieve more successes on a Perception + Awareness roll than the activation roll made for the hidden astral traveler.

Cyberkinesis

Computers were once the sequestered tools of wealthy corporations and the academic elite, but advances in technology gradually made them affordable to the rest of the world. Tonight, innumerable residents of the World of Darkness have mobile devices in their pockets that are more powerful than the early computers that took mankind to the moon. Indeed, there are now more laptops, cell phones, and personal electronic devices than there are people in the world, and their invisible signals blanket the air, saturating the night with numinous data.

Cyberkinesis is the ability to read, understand, and control these electronic devices without a direct interface. Scattered reports of this relatively new Numina Path first appeared in the late 80s; as the public consciousness came to accept computers, more and more Psychics developed

this talent. Vampires fear these cyberkinetics, who wield power over the technology the undead use, and who are able to read their emails from a distance and track them via the GPS on their smart phones.

For more information on computers, see pages 263-264 of V20.

System

Roll: Manipulation + Technology (difficulty 7)

Modifiers: N/A

Cost: Varies

Duration: Generally instantaneous

Cyberkinesis Levels

- This level of Cyberkinesis allows the cyberkinetic to project his perceptions into an electronic device, enabling an understanding of its purpose, the principles of its functioning, and its means of operation. The cyberkinetic must touch the device, and his player must succeed at the activation roll. The number of successes on that roll indicates how well the cyberkinetic understands the device, from a general grasp (one success) to a holistic understanding of it, its processor architecture, its power supplies, and its data structures (five successes).



•• The cyberkinetic has an innate understanding of the weaknesses of electronic devices. Just by touching a device, he can force its power supply to surge, causing interruption or even destroying the device. It only requires his player to spend a Willpower point and succeed on the activation roll. This power cannot be used to directly damage a person (though the destruction of a car's fuel injection control chip can potentially later cause a serious car crash, for example). The number of successes achieved on the activation roll determines the degree of damage done to the device. A single success results in a brownout but leaves the device unharmed. Three successes shut the device down, requiring a manual or remote restart. Five successes indicate a total shutdown and a burnt-out power supply that must be replaced before powering on again is possible. Note that many complex computer systems, such as large-scale networks and remote clouds, can't be shut down entirely by the failure of a single device.

••• The cyberkinetic can telepathically read, encrypt, and decrypt electronic communication with amazing speed and accuracy. With a successful activation roll made by his player, the Psychic may access, encrypt, or decrypt (but not change) any data saved on a device merely by touching it. If the cyberkinetic encrypts the data, the number of successes achieved on the activation roll is applied as a penalty to the difficulty of anyone else attempting to read said data.

For more information on computer use and information storage, see page 264 of V20.

•••• The cyberkinetic can mentally access any devices within his line of sight. This is not a form of telekinesis in which the Psychic is wielding the controls. Rather, the cyberkinetic accesses the device by using a psychic version of radio waves similar to WiFi to infiltrate the device and control it from within. When connected to a device via this power, the cyberkinetic can employ any of the other levels of Cyberkinesis without having to make physical contact.

••••• Through his player spending a Willpower point and succeeding at the activation roll, the cyberkinetic can operate any computer or computer-assisted device he touches or has accessed via sight (as above). The cyberkinetic can activate any function of the device: running apps, browsing files, sending data to networks, opening a mechanical lock, etc. Note that any advanced or secure functions will have to be resolved via other methods, whether in the form of other applications of Cyberkinesis or just simply knowing the password.

Each success on the activation roll allows for 10 minutes of control over the targeted device. Devices that are taken out of eyesight range or physical contact, as appropriate, simply disconnect from the cyberkinetic. If the device is destroyed while being controlled, the cyberkinetic suffers five levels of bashing damage as synaptic shock.

Psychometry

Some parapsychologists theorize that emotions are expressed by the human brain as a form of energy that can be absorbed by objects or places. Psychometry is the ability to read this emotional residue, called psychic resonance, and then interpret it and extrapolate information about the events and people connected to the object. Strong emotions linger, and they can be read by those with the special perception to feel and understand the psychic imprint. Places or objects exposed to these strong emotional signatures hold flashes of information that a psychometrist can read by touch.

The Psychic must touch the object, and then her player must make a Perception + Empathy roll (difficulty 7) for the character to read its psychic resonance. Successes achieved on the activation roll determine the level of details received as per the effects chart, below. On a botch, the Psychic may become lost in a dreamlike reverie or may be harrowed by a flood of hostile emotions.

An object with a particularly strong resonance may make it easier to find information about its owner, and the Storyteller may elect to lower the difficulty of roll to do so. Although a toothbrush may have DNA from its owner, for example, it is unlikely to be significant since it is thrown out every three months. A locket with a family photo, on the other hand, is likely to be much more important to its owner. The information discovered will depend on how the owner feels about the object and what it might mean to him. A wedding ring might reveal the location of the owner or flash to instances of the owner violating his wedding vows.

System

Roll: Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7)

Modifiers: Per the significance of the item or the severity of the psychic resonance, as described above

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: Generally N/A, but higher levels yield ten minutes or one hour per success for an active connection

Psychometry Levels

• The Psychic may read the psychic resonance of an object or place to learn about the identity of the owner of the object or the most significant visitor to the place.

- The Psychic may learn about everything that occurred near the object or place within the last 24 hours.

- The Psychic can discover and understand the complete history of the object or place. She can witness key events that occurred in the vicinity of the object or place.

- The Psychic can attune herself to an object, allowing her to align her vision to the location of the owner of the object. She can then watch the owner of the object anywhere in the world for 10 minutes per success on the activation roll (as influenced by the effects below).

- The Psychic may follow the psychic resonance to the owner of an object. She then learns the direction and distance of the owner of the object, anywhere in the physical or astral world (informed by the clarity of the effects, as indicated below). This connection lasts for an hour per success on the activation roll.

Effects

The number of successes achieved on the Psychometry activation roll determines the clarity of the information the Psychic receives.

One success The Psychic feels vague impressions and perceives cloudy imagery, but these lack concrete details.

Two successes The details are blurry, as though viewing them via a poorly scrambled television signal. A Psychic might see a man with dark hair, but not his specific eye color or other details.

Three successes The Psychic perceives the information as if from a distant vantage. Most of the details are difficult to discern, but others stand out in sharp clarity.

Four successes The Psychic receives a detailed view of the people, places, and events associated with the vision. She may speed up or slow down events. If she concentrates, she can pause things as though watching a movie and study the scenario.

Five successes The Psychic has complete and utter control over her visions. She can stop, start, review, and observe from any angle.

Pyrokinesis

Pyrokinesis is the ability to conjure fire via a glance. The pyrokinetic must see his target and then concentrate to

conjure flame at that location. The number of successes on the activation roll determines the accuracy of where the Psychic places the flame. If the target is a sentient creature, she may attempt to dodge the blast with an opposed Dexterity + Athletics roll against the number of successes on the activation roll.

Fire conjured by the Path of Pyrokinesis must be released for it to have any effect. Thus, the pyrokinetic might summon forth a palm of flame, but so long as he holds it, he suffers no damage, and the fire casts no light other than being itself visible. Once the flame has been released, however, it burns normally, and the Psychic has no control over it. A pyrokinetic is not immune to his own flame once it is released; he burns as easily as anyone else. Botches with Pyrokinesis tend to be singularly spectacular, as the Psychic self immolates or sends flame shooting wildly about.

The Storyteller may increase the difficulty of the activation roll given any circumstances affecting the target of the flame. Setting fire to a wet log, for example, would indicate an increase of +1 to the difficulty, while igniting asbestos or water would increase the difficulty by 3.

Psychics with Pyrokinesis often live with the constant fear that their control will slip and fire will consume everything around them. Indeed, some pyrokinetics have woken to discover that they have set fire to their homes during particularly violent nightmares.

System

Roll: Manipulation + Awareness

Modifiers: By target, as above

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: Once ignited, pyrokinetic fire becomes normal fire, and it behaves as described on page 297 of V20

Pyrokinesis Levels

- Candle (difficulty 3 to soak, one health level of aggravated damage per turn)

- Palm of Flame (difficulty 4 to soak, one health level of aggravated damage per turn)

- Campfire (difficulty 5 to soak, two health levels of aggravated damage per turn)

- Bonfire (difficulty 7 to soak, two health levels of Aggravated damage per turn)

- Inferno (difficulty 9 to soak, three health levels of Aggravated damage per turn)



Telekinesis

Telekinesis is the ability to move things without touch, solely through the power of the mind. Objects under the Psychic's telekinetic control may be manipulated as though she were personally holding them: They may be lifted, spun, juggled, and even thrown. Some Psychics, ignorant of their special abilities, unknowingly unleash their telekinetic power, evoking the poltergeist phenomena of many of hauntings.

A Psychic must be able to see her target and then concentrate to manipulate the object. Each success on the activation roll allows for one turn of telekinetic manipulation of an object. Five or more successes on the activation roll means that the Psychic can control the object for the duration of the scene.

The Psychic may attempt to maintain control after her period of control ceases. Doing so requires a new activation roll without the expenditure of an additional Willpower point. Failure means that the Psychic must make a completely new attempt the following turn. A botch means that the Psychic loses control and exhausts herself for the scene, her player being unable to spend Willpower for the character for its remainder.

If this power is being used to manipulate a sentient being, the player of the target may attempt for his character to resist through an opposed Willpower roll each turn the control is exercised. If the Psychic has mastered the fourth level of this Path, she can completely immobilize the target should the opposed Willpower roll succeed.

If the Psychic attempts to wrest an object from someone's grasp, this requires a contested roll pitting the telekinetic's psychic strength versus the target's Strength Attribute.

Thrown objects may be dodged by an opposed Dexterity + Athletics versus the successes generated from the initial activation roll. Damage done from thrown objects is bashing or lethal (depending on the object thrown and Storyteller discretion), and it can be modulated by the Psychic up to her level of mastery of Telekinesis. For example, a Psychic with three levels of Telekinesis wishes to throw a rock at her enemy. The Storyteller decides that a rock does bashing damage. The player may decide to do up to three levels of bashing damage to the Psychic's enemy should she succeed on the roll, assuming the target is unable to dodge.

System

Roll: Wits + Awareness

Modifiers: N/A

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: Based on successes and any contest from an unwilling target

Telekinesis Levels

- One pound/one-half kilogram
- 20 pounds/10 kilograms
- 200 pounds/100 kilograms
- 500 pounds/250 kilograms
- 1,000 pounds/500 kilograms

Effects

One success	one turn
Two successes	two turns
Three successes	three turns
Four successes	four turns
Five successes	five turns

True Faith

Faith is a sacred trust in the divine usually manifested in the form of a religion. Millions of people enrich their lives through this sacred trust, but only a blessed few have been personally touched by the divine. True Faith is a combination of this trust and a divine favor that brings about a profound conviction that can protect an individual against the depredations of the evil, the corrupt, and the profane — such as the Kindred.

The blessings of True Faith are very rare. Devoted worshippers of every faith exist, but only a scant few have this robust holy connection. Official religious investments are not required to possess True Faith; characters with True Faith are not required to be priests, rabbi, or clerics to be chosen. Indeed, many men of the cloth themselves aren't so favored as to be able to command True Faith.

Characters with True Faith have the ability to perform miracles. Some believe that the presence of these special people is a sign that, whatever higher powers exist, they have not forsaken the world.

The Light of God theory proposes that those with True Faith are ordinary mortals who have been chosen by the divine to protect the world. A few theorists believe that they are Nephilim, mortal descendants of angels or other higher beings.

Acquiring True Faith

True Faith is a gift of the divine. Characters with True Faith are chosen to bear that gift for a specific purpose. It is recommended that players interested in True Faith Numina have a discussion with the Storyteller about the background and potential story for their characters. A player should select a religion or creed that fits with the character's background and story.

The manifestation of True Faith often requires that the Faithful individual suffer through a crisis, a "dark night of the soul" in which the universe seems to test her belief and resolve. Many of the Faithful have spent long periods of contemplation considering the many facets of their faith as it applies to the world, considering how best to follow the tenets of their faith. Should one of the Faithful fail to follow the mandates of her faith (as determined by the Storyteller), her player must make a Conscience roll at a difficulty of 9 to resist the wavering of the character's True Faith and the concurrent loss of a level in the Numina. A character who flagrantly disregards the core beliefs of her faith finds that her connection to the divine becomes more and more distant.

Regaining faith is much harder once an individual has lost it. This can be an intense storytelling experience for a hunter, as the character experiences a true crisis of faith and must work diligently and piously to return to the good graces of the divine. Whether gaining, losing, or regaining True Faith, such a story element should be treated as a strong dramatic turning point in a character's development.

In addition, Storytellers are encouraged to handle True Faith with care. On the one hand, the close relationship of True Faith with real-world religions requires respectful treatment of the faiths in representation. At the same time, the reduction of the ways of higher powers to an abstract system of dice rolls and "powers" can undermine the gravity of what the Numina represents.

No character may begin a chronicle with more than one level of the True Faith Numina.

Increasing True Faith

True Faith is increased by acts of devotion toward the character's revered higher power or cause. Additional points are awarded only at the Storyteller's discretion, based on appropriate behavior and deeds. The Storyteller should closely consider the Faithful's actions during the course of the story and inform the player when he believes that it is appropriate that next level be purchased.

Systems for True Faith

Unlike the other Numina Paths, True Faith only has a single Path.

True Faith grants the believers special benefits:

- Each level of True Faith grants an extra point of Willpower.
- Each point of True Faith acts as a die of divine protection to resist the effects of Numina, vampire Disciplines, or other supernatural powers. When a character would be affected by a Kindred Discipline or other power, her player may spend a point of Willpower and roll the character's True Faith rating as a dice pool against a difficulty of 7. Successes earned on this roll subtract successes from the activation roll of the power in question. This protection affects only powers that would directly affect the character, and only if a dice roll is required to determine their degree of success. It offers no protection against passive or indirect uses of powers such as Aura Perception or Fortitude.

The True Faith Numina, like any other, has a rating of 1 to 5. Exactly what protection is afforded to the individual depends on this rating, as described below. At their discretion, Storytellers may wish to amend or alter these benefits to reflect the intervention of

higher powers as it illustrates the themes of their own chronicles.

True Faith Levels

- Any character with True Faith may attempt to repel vampires, ghosts, and other supernatural creatures by brandishing a holy symbol or uttering prayers. The player of the Faithful spends a Willpower point and rolls her character's True Faith rating against a difficulty equal to the creature's permanent Willpower.

The successes garnered indicate the number of turns that the creature must flee from the character while she invokes the protection of prayer or the holy symbol. If the activation roll yields no successes, a supernatural creature need not step back, but may not advance. A botch indicates that it may advance unhindered. If the religious symbol is placed against a vampire's body, each success causes a level of aggravated damage, burning into the creature's flesh.

- The Faithful may sense the presence of a vampire. She need not consciously try to detect the vampire's presence, but she must be in peaceful, quiet surroundings, perhaps alone in thought, praying, reading a religious book, meditating, etc. The Faithful will not sense the vampire if she is preoccupied (e.g., arguing) or in a crowded, noisy place (jostled by a mob, in the midst of a party, etc.). This



ability doesn't light up the vampire like a beacon; the Storyteller reveals the presence of the vampire only when the Faithful's attention would indicate such. Note that the character doesn't know exactly what she senses through her faith. All she knows is that something sinister is nearby.

••• The Faithful is immune to Chimerstry, Dementation, Dominate, Obfuscate, and other supernatural effects that confound the mind.

•••• The Faithful may not be turned into a ghoul. She is unaffected by Presence and other supernatural effects that manipulate emotions.

••••• The mere presence of the Faithful may fill a vampire or other supernatural creature with self-loathing, disgust, terror, or even physical pain. The player of any vampire who hears the Faithful pray or preach, or who is touched by the Faithful, must make a successful Röttschreck roll (difficulty 9) to resist having the Kindred flee immediately and for the duration of the scene. A vampire who is unable to flee is reduced to a gibbering wreck, flailing on the floor, screaming, sobbing, or begging for mercy.

Miracles of True Faith

A miracle is an instance of direct divine intervention. The Faithful often pray to the divine as a form of worship

and meditation. On rare and inspiring occasions, the divine answers a prayer in the form of a miracle. Such miracles should be rare, never more than one in a story, and always dramatic.

The Storyteller should examine the motivation of the character invoking the miracle. The divine likely doesn't care if the Faithful wants to drive a luxury car, win the lottery, or even survive an encounter with a random vampire. Every religion has martyrs, and death is sometimes in the divine plan. Prayers that are selfless and seek to help or inspire others have the best chance of being answered. No hard-and-fast system for invoking miracles exists – it's simply a dramatic reminder that Faithful individuals bear a divine duty and can occasionally serve as conduits for their greater power's will in the world.

Miracles are impossible to define mechanically, as they should be specifically tailored to the situation. Some examples include:

- Helping a barren woman be able to bear a child
- Curing a terrible and painful disease, such as cancer
- Helping someone trapped under a collapsed building
- Finding yourself at the side of a friend in desperate need





Chapter Five: Storytelling

*But first, on earth as vampire sent,
Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent:
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race;
There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
At midnight drain the stream of life;
Yet loathe the banquet which perforce
Must feed thy livid living corse:
— Lord Byron, "The Giaour"*

As old as vampire stories are the stories of the lives vampires affect. These may be cautionary tales about the mortals they enslave, terrorize, or kill, or they may be heroic stories about the people who stand up to protect them. In the end, the brave vampire hunters or the gathered mob turn back the beast.

Vampires are the villains of these stories. It's a relatively modern idea that the vampire is someone with whom it's worth empathizing, let alone that one should be the protagonist, or someone you'd want to play in a storytelling game.

Even the prototypical vampire novel, *Dracula*, is really the story of Jonathan Harker, Mina Murray, and a small band of hunters. Guided by Abraham Van Helsing, they kill the titular monster's brides, run him down, and drive a stake through his heart.

Dracula isn't the best example of the themes and moods within these pages, but it reveals how deep vampire hunting's roots are within the genre. You can find vampire hunters throughout pop culture, such as Robert E. Howard's Solomon Kane series, Stephen King's *Salem's Lot*, John Steakley's *Vampire\$*, and countless others. Take away the vampires, and

you have even more examples of desperate people facing off against the supernatural, such as the excellent films *Frailty* and *Dog Soldiers*. Any number of zombie, ghost, or slasher films also highlight the victims' (read: hunters') bid for survival.

It's time for you and your troupe to recapture the true nature of vampire stories, that of unnatural horrors inflicting themselves on the innocent and the few stalwart souls who arm themselves against the night to end the depredations of the undead. Your players' characters may still pursue vampires with pity and compassion, seeking to understand their condition or release them from it. Or the hunters can lace up their shit kickers, jack another round in the chamber, and go stomp the pretty little bloodsuckers into much-deserved Final Death.

Let's get to it. Let's hunt the hunters.

Getting Started

First things first, figure out the kind of story you want to tell in broad strokes. Is it a long, slow-burning investigation into the rot at the heart of a wealthy family? Or is it a one-session, one-night, survive-until-dawn kind



of story? Will you tell a straightforward point-A-to-point-B story over a handful of sessions? Or will you create a living, breathing epic and set your players loose upon it to explore and uncover its nuances however they wish?

If you don't have such a clear vision and just want to get into a new kind of story at your table, ask your players what they want up front. What do they expect from a game with comparatively fragile mortals front and center? What do they think of when they hear the phrase "vampire hunters"? Do they want to focus on revenge, retribution, survival, mystery?

The cardinal rule is that telling and playing storytelling games is a cooperative effort. You as Storyteller provide the wheres, whens, and with-whos, but your players are the ones really driving the story. Let them in on the process early and often. If you prepare an investigation story with lots of twists and turns and stirring betrayals and all your players create ass-kicking loners, you're going to be at odds. Rest assured, you can still tell a deep, unraveling mystery while catering to the tastes of your troupe.

Themes

Many of the best stories cleave to a specific, central theme, infusing it into every word. Sticking to a theme isn't strictly necessary, but it can help even the smallest scene resonate by giving you something to fall back on narratively. You may already have a theme in mind going into your story, in which case, more power to you. However, authors often don't discover the theme of a novel until well into the second or third draft. As a Storyteller, you don't have a second draft, but may find common threads among your players' characters, antagonists, and plots, or all of the above, as you go.

Keep your eye open for those threads as you play through your first couple of sessions. Two characters are parents (one single, one still married), another has a mother she must care for, and the last is an orphan? Consider a theme of family, dependents, or caregiving, and see how it fits as you progress. Even by its absence in the case of the orphan, the theme works to highlight what the character is missing, seeks, or is glad to be free of.

Hunters Hunted II has two major themes it seeks to reinforce: Personal Horror and Victory at a Cost. These and a few other examples are discussed below.

Personal Horror: Personal horror is the heart of all World of Darkness games, and this one is no different. At its heart is the fear of losing what's important or the regret at what has already been lost. It can be a theme all to itself, or it may be used to enhance others.

Using personal horror, a character doing something as simple as sharing dinner with his family heightens his

fear of losing them. Stress the distance between he and his spouse that widens the more he lies about what he's up to at night. Have a daughter or son announce some new activity or friendship that the character didn't know about because of his increasing absences. What if that new friend hangs out at a club the hunter knows vampires frequent? Or perhaps the new activity is volunteering at a soup kitchen that has a reputation for disappearances? Paranoia, anxiety, and that fear of loss informs the scene and, by extension, the character.

Personal doesn't necessarily mean it has to affect a character directly. Investigating a child's death will move any parent to consider what they have on the line at home. A vampire driven to vengeance at the loss of her child may find that same parent reflecting on what he has in common with the monsters he hunts. When the players hatch a plan, let the scene linger on what they just agreed to do. Highlight that they're perched in a garbage-strewn alley waiting to ambush a monster instead of home watching TV or participating in some other mundane activity. Leave time for the hunters to reflect on what they've done after a particularly gruesome night of hunting.

Victory at a Cost: For every step the hunters take, they're pushed back or walk further away from the life they knew and the things they cared about. The classic example is a Pyrrhic victory, which is winning a battle at such a high cost that the victors may not be able to survive another such "success." Slasher films often winnow a group of friends down one by one until the final confrontation leaves only one or two standing. You don't need to be that dramatic unless that's the kind of story you want to tell. In that case, be up front with your players that their hunters may not survive. Better to keep the costs personal to the characters but not so devastating that you can't all play again next week.

A hunter may lose a loved one, a close friend, or an ally in retribution for his actions. If a player isn't keen on playing through the grief and misery of someone close to him dying, keep the loss to abduction, hospitalization, blood bonding, blood addiction, or the Embrace. Vampires have other ways of making mortals suffer without permanently robbing them of someone in whom they (or their players) are invested. With regard to the Masquerade, murder may draw too much attention to the vampire anyway. Kindred can manipulate a hunter's finances so he's suddenly flat broke. They may be able to put pressure on other institutions to condemn his house, repossess his car, or cost him his job. Or they can use their own underworld contacts to burn his place to the ground to send a message. They can plunder his identity, ruin his reputation, and even have him arrested. A masterful vampire might even be able to convince the world at large that it's the hunter who is, in fact, the bloodthirsty undead creature.

Vampires as Metaphor

The obvious conflict of any hunter game is hunter versus vampire. However, on its own, that's not much of a theme. Instead, focus on a particular aspect of vampirism and bring that to the surface.

Predator: Vampires literally stalk and feed from mortals. They prey on mortals' emotions, trust, wealth, and free will. They are wolves among lambs, every night taking to the streets, bars, and clubs prowling for fresh meat. They are cats, preened and proper and playing with their food. Present your vampires as cocky pricks, used to getting their way, and taunting the hunters to the last. Vampires as predators will draw heavily from physical and social cues.

Parasite: Vampires gnaw at the rotting carcass of society, communities, local government, financial institutions, and religious bodies. They siphon funds to themselves or personal pet projects, potentially interfering with neighborhood renewal projects, police pensions, or poor boxes helping the people they're intended to. Vampires don't need to be on the high teat in order for this theme to work. Nosferatu, Caitiff, and down-and-out Brujah are equally as likely to prowl the queues of soup kitchens and the foyers of halfway houses for easy meals. Vampires as parasites will favor the mental and social aspects of vampires.

Addict: Vampires don't drink blood because it tastes good; they *need* it lest their hunger own them wholly. The Beast drives them to acts of depravity, to scratch that itch, or it will scratch it for them. Focusing on the addict aspect of vampire may have them come off as far more sympathetic than other categories. The Kindred may not want to hurt people, but they have no other choice. You can play to the personal horror that any of the hunters would be the same in their shoes. If any of the characters are alcoholics, junkies, or ex-junkies, draw a direct comparison. By extension, ghouls are also addicts, and ones your hunters have a better chance to save. Through tremendous effort and time, a blood addict can be weaned from her master's influence. No such path to salvation exists for a vampire (unless, perhaps, revered Golconda is more than just a myth). Vampires as addicts should play up the social and mental capacities of the vampires.

Manipulator: Vampires are social masters, playing off the better natures, fears, and insecurities of mortals. When you focus on vampires as manipulators, you will want to highlight their most social aspects: their bewitching charisma, dominating presence, and sense of confidence. Manipulation isn't all about owning a room—a vampire will say anything to escape a righteous vengeance seeker. When cornered by hunters, one may spin a tale of how cursed she is, how she doesn't want to hurt anyone but for this damnable hunger. The hunters pity her condition, weakening their

resolve, making them hesitate as she continues to prey on mortals anon. Manipulation as a theme doesn't dictate an entirely social game, mind you. Hunters may find they have been pushed toward certain targets or acts of violence or depravity as part of the schemes of an elder, for instance.

Monster: Vampires acquire a callous view of their nightly horrors over time. Murdering a human in the grips of their unnatural hunger is just a bad night to one of the undead. Vampires as monsters may focus on the physical, mental, or social side of vampires, depending on preference. While many vampires can hide in plain sight, some are monsters even in appearance: feral Gangrel, alien Tzimisce, and of course Nosferatu and Samedi cannot hide what they are.

What's Different

Fundamentally, constructing a story about the hunters is different than building one in which the vampires are the protagonists and have center stage. At their heart, both games emphasize a desperation and struggle for their focal characters to survive, but the flavor of each is significantly different. To start, a hunter story comes packed with heaving breaths and thumping heartbeats. Emphasize these disparities if you want to play up the distinctions between the hunters and the prey.

Perspective: The first major difference is one of perspective: how much presumed knowledge the characters are meant to start with. Even the lowliest neonate vampire is a little player on the big stage. Hunters, on the other hand, are outside the theater entirely. They hear snatches of music, watch people in macabre costumes come and go, and are left to wonder what goes on inside the theater. Hunters don't know from Clan, Sect, generations, or Disciplines — at least not initially. They just know something's wrong with that scary-looking dude over there and can't quite put their finger on what.

Play up the characters' ignorance. Don't have your antagonists use the usual handles of Clan or Sect. Instead, have vampires use obscure terms for themselves or make up new ones for common affiliations (for example, the Ivory Tower, the Chosen, the Blood, the Templars, or the Invictus). If your players are experienced with **Vampire**, play off their natural assumptions—a tough biker vampire in leather seems an obvious Brujah, but she could be from any Clan at all. Then, at other times (assuming the troupe meets multiple Kindred), play to those Clan archetypes. Once a player takes a few wrong turns with his presumptions, he'll stop worrying about who's what and worry more about his character surviving another night. If they're willing, encourage your players to forget what they know, deliberately misreading information and drawing wrong conclusions from their characters' limited

frame of reference. Maybe believing vampires are broken up into "Sabbats," the players send their characters looking for information on pagan holidays for guidance in the hunt.

Nightly and Daily Struggle: The night-to-night routines of the undead are wildly different than a hunter's. A vampire's schedule of nightly intrigue and hunting for survival is replaced with researching, planning, and plotting the next ambush. Surviving the Machiavellian maneuvering of blood politics instead becomes staying one step ahead of the mortal authorities while dogging the steps of the prey. The very fact that the hunters can go out — and are likely required to — during the day leads to major differences in theme, mood, and setting.

Such differences can take the form of the intrusive light of the sun on a hunter's sleep-deprived eyes, or the welcome relief of dawn's first light. It's still sunlight, but the character's relationship with it is significantly different. Use that light as a beacon of hope, a brief respite, or an unwanted interruption in a hunter's mission. The dawn may mean that time is running out to track a vampire, or the opposite, if she is dogging the hunter's steps instead.

Similarly, while mortals can keep themselves awake, the night is when the human body wants to rest. The night is a vampire's natural environment, and the hunters are interlopers in strange times. Stress the darkness that their eyes can't pierce or the exhaustion that sets in after midnight. Call for a Stamina roll to avoid a -1 penalty to subsequent rolls after an extended stakeout. Drinking coffee, popping pills, or spending a Willpower point could push that penalty off for another hour or more. In the case of pills, this may mean even more penalties when the drugs wear off: victory at a cost.

Power: Vampires use blood to heal grievous wounds in seconds and to fuel their many supernatural gifts. The weakest neonate can easily achieve the maximum human potential in Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina, if only for a short time. Mortals have none of these advantages. Even those possessed of True Faith, psychic sensitivity, or a knack for magic are amateurs fumbling in the dark compared to the undead. Power is something vampires take for granted and with which hunters struggle to keep up.

In order to overcome this power gap, players need to be more resourceful. Improvised weapons, elaborate traps, and using the modern world against anachronistic vampires are the orders of the day. How can the hunters stop a vampire from healing so quickly? How can they keep an Obfuscated vampire from escaping? How can they avoid obeying a vampire's commands? Put these challenges to your players, and watch as they have their characters come up with creative answers to the call.

What's the Same

Vampires were once mortal, and a central struggle to **Vampire: The Masquerade** is holding on to some amount of that Humanity. They may play the inhuman monster and play it well—Sabbat fiends, Camarilla manipulators, cultists of bizarre bloodlines, and scions of renegade Clans—but buried deep inside each one of them is a once-beating human heart. That connection, no matter how tenuous, draws parallels between playing the monster and playing the poor bastard tasked with hunting it. Highlight these similarities if you want to play up the sympathy between hunter and vampire.

Horror: Vampires become callous and inured to what they must do to survive. They cannot be swayed by emotional pleas or sympathetic twinges if they are to harvest the blood they need. So, too, your hunters are going to find themselves doing awful, bloody things to survive and succeed in the hunt. A housewife bringing a kitchen knife down again and again into the face of a monster has to ask herself what she's become as much as any vampire.

The horror of the hunt should be evident with only a little effort on your end. For the most part hunters are otherwise normal people doing extraordinary, violent deeds. They confront monsters to which the rest of the world turns a blind eye and usher them to a bloody end. Take extra care with your descriptions to heighten the grim realities of the hunt: the choking smells, the taste of bile and their own blood, the sound of bones cracking. Don't make your vampires out to be people with fangs, but rather brutal masochists concealed behind human faces (or not-so-human faces, if you favor Clans such as Nosferatu or Tzimisce).

Desperation: From freshly Embraced neonate to politically unstable ancilla, vampires scratch out a paranoid existence. Every night, they rise, motivated by their hungers, and beset by enemies without and within. They keep one eye over their shoulder for rivals while resisting the Beast rattling its cage in their breast. Hunters might not have a supernatural urge driving them to acts of depravity, but instead, they swim upstream against their own society in order to rid it of predators that no one else sees. No one thanks them, and rarely does anyone even believe them. The specifics change, but the desperation is the same. The pressure is on to keep going with their lives and reputation intact, to not give in to hopelessness.

Desperation is at the very heart of a hunters chronicle, and it won't take much to bring it the fore. Put the hunters up against the ticking clock, whether it's to rescue a victim from being sacrificed at a set hour, to save a ghoul in the making from her third irreversible drink of her master's blood, or simply to survive until dawn. The vampires the hunters face should be powerful, often seeming unstoppable—but the

hunters must find a way to overcome the undead. These are vile creatures that will go on to hurt, kill, and prey on innocents unless they are put down with extreme prejudice.

Survival: The desire to make it through another night is something hunters and vampires obviously have in common. Hunters hope to see another dawn, and vampires don't, but the drive to persevere despite daunting psychological and physical obstacles is all too similar. Hunters seek to survive insurmountable odds fighting foes who have them beat on every metric. Ask all but the most entrenched Prince or Primogen, and they would describe their lot as exactly that. Vampires may lay claim to a few more supernatural advantages, but they navigate unforgiving societies and, in their weakest moments, would admit to fearing for their unives nightly.

Hunters are in over their heads, up against unforgiving odds. Survival might be more about getting away than striking down the undead. A story's vampires should be relentless pursuers. If the hunters do turn and fight, describe the pain and seriousness of their wounds, as well as the exhaustion they must overcome. The one advantage hunters have over vampires is each other. It's about watching out for one another to make sure they all come home. Helping the weakest member climb over a brick wall, staving off blood loss from a gushing wound, pushing the one member who's lost his will into getting back on his feet all speak to survival.

Mood

If theme is the meat, then mood is the broth.

Hunters Hunted II has two primary moods it's trying to reinforce in these pages. The first is desperate determination, being up against improbable odds and finding the will to move forward. The second is the price of knowledge, of knowing that vampires are real and how that revelation weighs on the mortal mind. The two work in tandem, the dark truth of vampires driving the hunters to do what they do every night, but they can be applied separately. These aren't the only moods available to you, however, and below are a few more to consider as you build your chronicle.

Suspense: The hunt always seems to have some new, dark surprise to spring on those dedicated to it. Every encounter with a vampire is a puzzle box where one wrong move could mean death. What lies within a vampire's haven? How many ghouls? What other sort of supernatural traps will hunters have to survive to find its master? What preternatural abilities does the master vampire possess? Suspense can easily yield to paranoia. Every alley may hold yet another monster with a bloody grimace, every shadow may conceal some unseen watcher; indeed, everyone a hunter talks to may be in service to one of *them*.

Terror: The characters may have found the courage to hunt vampires, but that doesn't make them any less scary. The undead are creatures cursed by God. They look and act like people, but they will tear your neck open to slake their thirst. Every encounter with vampires should be presented like swimming with sharks, circling ever closer. At any moment, a Kindred can reach out and kill one of the hunters before the rest can even find their weapons. Draw out the minutes before the hunters raid a haven. Let the players explore swallowing their fear, girding themselves to do what's necessary.

Repulsion: The hunt is gore and guts, and it is bloodless faces frozen in the rictus of death. Vampires host salons with flayed bodies hanging from the ceiling, dripping blood into coupes like a champagne pyramid. You can turn up the squick factor, emphasizing gore and viscera, describing every wound in queasy detail. Tzimisce, Samedi, and Nosferatu seem obvious choices to reinforce this mood. Or you can focus more on mental revulsion: a Ventrue whose feeding restriction is children, the mindless obeisance of a conditioned slave, or gaunt blood dolls preening and begging to be fed upon.

Revelation: Every night reveals some new information or perspective, bringing the hunters one step closer to their goal. The hunt is a constant journey of dark discovery leading the hunters further down the spiral. After each

successful hunt, the characters glean some new insight into the enemy's capabilities or plans. Several Clans and Sects trade in information and secrets, which an enterprising—or doomed—pack of hunters can discover for themselves.

Loss: Whether it's willingly sacrificed or taken by force, the hunt takes everything eventually. A hunter stands to lose his friends, family, job, property, trust, sanity, and life to the pursuit of monsters. Perhaps loss is what led him to the hunt in the first place, such as a loved one lost to death or undeath. Vampires reinforce this mood, having themselves foregone former lives, loves, and passions. A vampire cedes her control to the Beast within, losing herself in the depths of her hunger. Ghouls similarly lose their will and identity in service of their masters.

Hope: Hunters persevere for the promise of a better day. There must be an end to all this violence and madness. A hunter just needs to overcome one more trial, make it through one more night, or kill one more leech. She can make a difference, ridding the neighborhood of vampires running the streets, burning down the abandoned hospital where they sleep, or excising the cancer growing, throbbing atop Capitol Hill. Each dawn represents a few hours of relative safety. Each night may be the last she has to do this. Every vampire killed brings her one step closer to the promise of peace. Like a recovering alcoholic, she faces her fate one day at a time.



Prelude: Opening Shots

Finding the body. Getting the phone call. Witnessing the attack. Running into the stranger in the office after hours. Paralyzed by an unseen force as the monster with the devil's face stalks past you in the hall. The scales fall from the characters' eyes either all at once or one at a time.

How do you introduce the **World of Darkness** to the hunters? Is it an ice-down-the-spine encounter with the unnatural, or the quick, violent crack of vertebrae and a tide of arterial blood? Is it a high E played on a violin, or shrieking guitars and relentless drums?

A good hunter prelude should be compelling enough to follow up on while still leaving room for mystery and exploration. Present the horror of being confronted with the unknown, the sickening feeling in the stomach as the hunter-to-be watches a creature straight out of folklore straighten its jacket and stalk off into the night.

Imagine any of a vampire's Disciplines as witnessed from the outside: the mind's reeling betrayal from *Obfuscate* or *Dominate*, or the loss of emotional control from *Presence*; the reality terrorism of *Chimerstry*, *Dementation*, or *Obtenebration*; the body horror of *Protean* or *Vicissitude*; the sheer physical impossibility of *Potence*, *Celerity*, and *Fortitude*. Any of a vampire's powers viscerally confronts people with the seemingly impossible, and most folks are willing to pretend it just didn't happen. The hunter, however, *knows* it happened. Now what?

Questions and Answers

A hunter's prelude can be just as personal as any vampire's, or it may be shared among your players' characters in their first session. You and your players may even prefer not to play through the Prelude. You can take their mission for assumed, with them already established as hunters, and start your chronicle with the next case. It's still important to make sure that you and they are on the same page, however. Asking a few quick but leading questions should help cement both your vision and those of the players as well.

These questions may be answered individually, if you're planning on bringing the characters together from separate origins, or asked of all your players at the same time, if you intend them to be together as a group from the start.

Who are you?

A quick overview of name, basic concept, and personality, as well as who you were before. You may still be that person now, trying to hold on to those sign posts of normalcy, or you may have long ago abandoned anything resembling a "normal" life. Players may find it useful to refer to their Concepts, established during character creation.

Freaks Like Me: Coming Together

Now comes the difficult question of how the characters come together and why. In a **Vampire** story, the characters are likely to know of each other by dint of being one of a few vampires in the area. In a hunter story, the characters are only human, whether exceptional or not. That alone can make it more difficult to forge those initial connections. The easiest fix is having the characters all involved in the same opening hook or inciting event. They are brought together by that shared experience.

Maybe the characters have some kind of connection beforehand such as being family or friends. The characters don't all have to be related to one another to make this method work. During character creation, have the players create only one degree of separation from each other.

Example: Sarah's troupe convenes for character creation and agrees that each character will know two others. At the end of the session it's agreed: Kelly and Bill work together. Bill's daughter goes to the school where Suzanne teaches. Suzanne knows Keith from church. Finally, Keith plays poker with Kelly.

Alternately, you can take the onus on yourself, letting everyone create whatever characters they want, then finding the common themes or constructing a plot that includes everybody.

Example: David is playing a cop, and Mary is playing a mother. You establish at the start of the first session that Mary's daughter has been missing for a week, but the police seem ineffective or lackadaisical in their investigation. David overhears Mary's pleas denied by the Sergeant and offers to take up her case on the side. The final player, Matt, is playing a bouncer at the club where Mary's character's daughter was last seen and is the first person with whom they speak about the disappearance.

What do you do for a living, or what *did* you do?

Does it apply to the hunt? Does it help, giving you access to specialized equipment or information? Does it hinder, demanding a lot of time or rely on you maintaining a certain image or level of credibility?

How long have you been a hunter?

Is this your first foray, or are you an old salt? Is it a family business you've taken for granted since adolescence? Do you have a special power or sensitivity that keyed you in to the unnatural existence of the Damned?

What is your goal in the hunt?

Collecting information? Pursuit of knowledge? To pull back the curtain and reveal the conspiracy? Desire for fame? Revenge? To take back your street, block, or neighborhood? To save your sister's soul? Kill all abominations?

Do you know the other characters? How?

High school? Church group? Work together? Served in the same unit? Frequent the same bar or club? Friend of a friend? Woke up in the same jail?

Why do you hunt vampires instead of hiding from them?

Is it a sense of duty? Or righteous indignation? Have they harmed or do they hold sway over someone close to you? Is the price of doing nothing too much to bear? Now that you know they exist, do you need to know more?

Story Structure

As you sit down with your players, you do so with the promise of a story. That story may be an adventure, a mystery, a futile struggle, a desperate last stand, or a combination of all of the above in turn. Regardless of the individual pieces, every story should include an opening hook, intermediary scenes, confrontations, climax, and aftermath. In an ongoing chronicle, you may go through the story process a dozen or more times, denoting each as chapters.

Opening Hook

The opening hook is that first scene, the inciting incident, the initial glimpse of the World of Darkness that forges the characters into hunters. It should be compelling and set the tone for the rest of your story. Here, you want to evince horror, the need to take action, and the overwhelming belief that more must be done. You can do this by introducing vampires in general or a specific antagonist whom your hunters will pursue for the rest of the story (or she them...). If you're looking to tell

an elaborate mystery that slowly reveals the supernatural, vampires may not feature directly in your hook, but their presence should be felt in the evidence you present. Consider, for instance, the bloody aftermath of a Sabbat Ritus, an exsanguinated corpse found in Lana Leigh's strip club, or a mysterious disappearance that affects the characters and drives them to action.

Sample Hooks: Attacked in an alley. Uncovering an ancient tomb. Witnessing a Sabbat shovel party. Threat to the community. Mysterious stranger moves in. Family or friend disappears (or series of abductions).

Intermediary Scene

An intermediary scene is any one that takes place in between a story's inciting incident and that particular arc's confrontation or climax. It may serve as a direct stepping stone to the next chapter, such as investigating the creepy family on the hill. Or it may be a scene in which your players roleplay their way through their characters' personal lives, such as a harried single mother explaining to her ex-husband why she needs him to keep the kids for another weekend and that, yes, she understands this is two weekends in a row. It may be a scene in which the hunters discuss and plan and argue among each other, or stake out the vampire's haven, or any other facet of the hunt that needs time at the table dedicated to it. (See Chapter Three for supporting systems that can turn these scenes of tension and characterization into tactical benefits for the hunters.)

You'll need to know the challenges the hunters will face, relevant dice pools and difficulties, and any Storyteller characters required to complete the task at hand. Maybe you don't need any of that if it's a scene in which the hunters debate among themselves what to do next, for instance. But you should still be prepared for someone to pick up their dice or call an ally or contact if it comes to that.

Sample Intermediary Scenes: Autopsy (Intelligence + Medicine). Researching an arcane symbol (Intelligence + Occult [or Investigation at a higher difficulty]). Deprogramming a ghoul (Manipulation + Empathy). Safely navigating gang territory (Wits + Streetwise). Stakeout (Stamina + Stealth followed by Perception + Alertness). Exploring a tomb (Dexterity + Alertness).

Confrontation

A confrontation refers to any scene where the characters come face to face with the story's antagonist(s). It may be one of several such scenes, or it may mark the point of no return in your story. The nature of confrontation in a story often means combat, but it doesn't have to.



Going into the projects to claim your daughter from the Brujah gang using her as a blood doll may involve a lot of shouting, posturing, and threats of violence, but in the interest of protecting the Masquerade, it may never come to blows (and they know she'll be back anyway). As often as not, the confrontation is setting the terms between predator and prey. It's the Prince's Sheriff showing up to tell the hunters to leave things alone before more people get hurt. It's gaining an audience with the Lasombra Bishop in which the hunters reveal they have the flash drive and what they expect in return for "keeping it safe." It doesn't necessarily need to be face to face, for that matter. A threatening phone call can still set the terms between your hunters and their target (or vice versa).

Sample Confrontations: Negotiating a cease-fire (Charisma + Leadership). Blackmail (Manipulation + Finance). Mutual threats (contested Strength + Intimidation). Cat-and-mouse chase (Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina + Athletics). And, of course, combat.

Climax

The climax is the culmination of your story, the breaking point. Everything is downhill from here. You want as much drama and danger as you can squeeze into the scene. Your climax is most likely a confrontation, but

it can take many forms. It's the final stand between the hunters and the antagonist. It's locking the doors on the old asylum and burning the place down. It's a hunter rescuing his wife and escaping with his skin intact. It's resolving the haunting spirit that wouldn't let the hunters rest until his murderer was brought to justice (and maybe suddenly doesn't want to go as quietly as promised). It's stealing the artifact, and outrunning the oily tendrils of darkness meant to protect it, before they pull the whole cathedral into the Abyss. It's feeling the fangs at your wrist and then kicking down the vampire's throat in a desperate act of defiance.

A well-constructed climax should pay off everything that's come before, minding every theme and steeped heavily in your mood of choice. It may be a good idea to ask your players what they want most out of the climax a session or two beforehand. You may not be able to fulfill everyone's wishes, but it will give you some insight into what's important to the players and where to put your focus, or *not* put your focus. If you had a whole plan involving a shadowy Storyteller character returning and none of the players mention him, maybe his return won't be quite as triumphant as you planned. On the other hand, no one will see it coming, and that may be even better.

Naturally, the climax should be catered to the specifics of your story.

Aftermath

The simplest aftermath is bare accounting, wherein you discuss what has happened over the course of the story with the players and hand out experience. While efficient, it may not be the best way to bring a sense of closure to the players and to the story, especially for a story in which the hunt cost the characters so much and they overcame all odds. Whenever possible, let the players have their say in the future of their characters. Let them discuss what they've done and where they all go from there. Ask a few leading questions to get them started. Do any of the characters continue the hunt? How do they go about putting their lives back together? Do they stick together, having forged an unbreakable bond? Or would seeing each other be too strong a reminder of the horrors they faced? This is especially important when it's the end of a chapter in a continuing chronicle, as it will inform future chapters. However, it can be just as important in wrapping up a one-shot or a linear narrative — which may reveal potential as an ongoing chronicle during the epilogue.

The end of the story is also a good time to let your players in on secrets or what lay down the paths they didn't explore. Just what was the vampire's master plan? What would have happened if the Tremere completed the ritual? Who left the message pointing them toward the abandoned church? Was Yoloanda the Malkavian telling the truth?

Game Structure

The next thing to consider is what kind of game you want to play. Are you running a linear story, a one-shot, an open-ended game in which you design the next session based on how the previous session left off, or a sandbox chronicle in which you design the setting and your players explore and uncover as is their wont?

Linear Narrative

Linear narratives are the simplest stories to create because they are the most straightforward. You just need to ensure that scene A reliably points to scene B, which points to scene C, and so on. Linear doesn't necessarily mean that only one *outcome* leads from scene to scene, or that the players should have to discover the one true "option." After your opening hook (say, a body found in an alley with a strange symbol painted in blood), a research-focused group of hunters might hit the Internet or the library to follow up on the symbol, a group with law-enforcement experience may investigate the scene forensically, a social-interest group may interview potential witnesses, while a more urgent or physical hunter cell might try tracking the killer from the crime scene. All are valid paths, and all of them should be able to point to the next step.

The last text from the hunters' missing friend says he was meeting someone named Ava at Club Lost, so the hunters go to Club Lost and ask around for Ava. They discover that Ava and a person matching the description of their friend left together a few nights ago, talking about the nearby park. The hunters find their friend pale and dead of exposure just off a path there. They also discover a torn business card for a local gallery. They go to the gallery, which also serves as Ava's haven, they confront her, a fight ensues, and with the hunters' superior numbers and Ava's limited Disciplines, you expect them to win.

The bane of a linear narrative is player creativity. Maybe you didn't count on a player to declare that his hacker character is going to look Club Lost up on the Internet, to roll six successes on an Intelligence + Computer roll, and to uncover that Ava is co-owner of the club and conjure up her gallery. The hunters aren't supposed to go to her haven until scene D! You don't want to discourage your player from being clever, and you don't want to negate his successes. Now what? You can hope another player makes a convincing bid that they should follow up on your clue first, but hope isn't telling this story for you. You can have Ava not be at the gallery, and lead them back to Club Lost, but then you're going to lead them right back to the gallery in two scenes. When all else fails, fall back on the strongest tool in a Storyteller's toolbox and improvise. Have it so Ava took the friend to her haven instead of the park. Or put Club Lost or the park on the way to the gallery if you want to preserve those scenes and revelations.

Linear narratives probably work best with neonates or ancillae of high generation as antagonists. Their presence and threat is most likely local to where the hunters are operating. You can certainly lead the characters in a fairly straight line around the globe in pursuit of an elder, but the more puissant the Kindred, the more you're inviting variance from your path.

The upside of a linear narrative is that it progresses predictably for a Storyteller, likely with clear goals and conclusion. The hunters aren't necessarily worried about the greater threat of vampires so much as killing that one monster or pack, or surviving until dawn, or saving a ghoul from her undead master. The downside is that, in being straightforward, it may feel "on rails" and as if your players had little effect on the outcome, especially if you had to course correct along the way.

One-Shot

A one-shot is a linear narrative meant to be played in a single session. The tale can (and should) have multiple paths, but they are necessarily limited and quickly lead to the scenes that follow.

The bane of a one-shot can be bad rolls. If proceeding requires a hunter to find a crucial clue and no one succeeds




Keep Calm and Carry On

Keep your feet under you, and do your best to avoid leading players (and their characters) by the nose. Feeling free to explore the story is one of the joys of playing a storytelling game. With too firm a hand on the rudder, you take away a player's investment in her choices, and the story becomes a pre-ordained diorama. Sometimes, that's hard to avoid, like if one player takes up everyone's time on a personal tangent, or if the players misinterpreted a clue and are all trying to leave town. Usually, a gentle nudge or calling for a quick roll can get everything back on course. If you really need the characters to chase the vampire, and they don't, have him drop a clue, and a Wits + Alertness roll might get you back on track – or at least signal to the players that something in the scene is still undiscovered. If that doesn't work, consider that the vampire tracks them down instead, demanding to know what they saw. Or if you don't want to reveal your primary antagonist just yet, maybe an agent of his, such as a crooked detective, follows up for his undead master.

A story can get away from even the most practiced Storyteller. An all-too-easily acquired three health levels of damage will take a hunter over a week to heal. If you gave the characters a timetable of three nights before something terrible happens and everyone's laid up in traction for a month, well, so much for that story. Or is it? Try not to see setbacks as, well, setbacks. Look at them as opportunities to expand the story in new directions. Maybe the characters interrupted the plan enough to push back the timeline, or perhaps an outside influence can provide unexpected – and supernatural – aid to put the hunters back on the streets.

It's important for everyone to have fun, so pay attention to your players. See what they pick up on or straighten up for. If your scripted scene introductions lose them, do something drastic like announce the chatter of gunfire or the wet thud of a fresh corpse. What you lost in preparation (and pride), you'll regain in engaged players. If your linear narrative isn't yielding the expected results, open it up, and let the players play. By giving them a little room, they'll show you the story they want to tell. Distill your idea down to the really important details and events, and be prepared to alter where and when they're supposed to happen. With a little patience and attention, you can reinsert those essential elements in a way that tells the story you wanted while keeping everyone happy.



on a Perception + Investigation roll (or even calls for one), you're stuck. Worse, if someone botches, do you send them down the wrong path and inevitably delay your confrontation? How much time can you really spend on failure? You may need to put your finger on the scale and have the clue show up anyway, or add a key witness who can point a confused group of hunters in the right direction, or even have the killer circle back and confront her pursuers. It may be narratively clumsy, but if you absolutely have to keep the game moving forward, "time dilation" can be forgiven.

One-shots work best with low-level threats that can be dealt with reliably in the time you have allotted. Focus on a high-generation vampire who poses enough risk to be satisfying

to overcome, but not necessarily one who will take up a lot of time regenerating and soaking with an abundance of Fortitude. The vampire's Final Death (or the disruption of his machinations) won't invite a lot of repercussions unless you have time left over to explore them. The story doesn't have to be simple minded, but it should be simple.

The upside of one-shots are that they don't require a heavy time investment. They're good for casual groups, for introducing people to the World of Darkness, or if you're just looking to sample the flavor of a hunter story. The downside may be that it feels unrewarding without any significant attachment to the outcome. A bittersweet bonus of a lack of attachment is players may be more willing

to see their characters die for the cause, driving home the consequences of the hunt. Of course, if your troupe wishes to continue, you could always treat the story as an extended prelude and launch an unexpected chronicle from there.

Open-Ended Story

An open-ended story doesn't dictate a single path, but rather lets the players pursue their characters' goals however they see fit. The players have great flexibility and a more direct effect on the outcomes than in a linear narrative. Players are always going to be the ones driving the story forward, but this style of story takes them from a closed track to the open road, so to speak. That doesn't mean you don't have tent-pole scenes or a conclusion in mind; they're just more fluid. Think of an open-ended story more as a season of a television show than as a movie or novel. Multiple episodes and plot developments ebb and flow, adding up to the larger story arc of a season. As with any story, you want to start with a strong opening hook that compels your players to get involved. The major difference between an open-ended story and the linear model described above is that you're not trying to compel the players to a particular action or reaction as a result of that hook. The characters can all go home and think about what they saw or did that night without worrying about interrupting "the plan." In fact, "the plan" becomes one of their own making.

One obstacle inherent to open-ended stories can come in one or two players dominating game time with side excursions. Some characters may necessarily be the focus of a few sessions, but make sure everyone enjoys their share. If one player spends a lot of table time roleplaying through the drama of keeping his day job, and it's not adding anything significant to the hunt, that may be okay for a little bit, but make sure your other players have a chance to participate meaningfully. If the scene stealing continues to the point of distraction, you can talk to the player about needing to move the plot forward, or bring the hunt and other hunters to his job (a shadowy new partner in the firm, a Ventrue buy-out, or the character's boss revealed as a vampire's pawn). Some players may not feel as comfortable taking initiative. You can bring the story to them, catering a subplot or scene for their characters.

With open-ended stories, you're more free to explore the gamut of vampire cultures, plots, and power than with the straightforward approaches described above. You can have an escalating series of antagonists ranging from neonates to conspiring elders. You can focus on one central nemesis with wide-ranging influence and power, controlling elaborate conspiracies, or a cast of antagonists who weave in and out of the narrative. The

characters can wage war on entire Sects, whittling away at their power structure and ultimately confronting the Prince, Archbishop, or Baron of a city.

The pros of open-ended games come through granting agency to the players to fully explore their characters, and expanding your own freedom to add new ideas and characters as you go. The con of an open-ended story can be straying from your original plot concept. This is mostly a negative for you as Storyteller, as your players probably won't be as aware of the variation, but it can throw off your themes or your intended climax. You may be tempted to guide the story with a heavier hand, but the better course is almost certainly to go with the players and change your plans instead. No matter how brilliant your intended climax, the one that emerges naturally with your players' input will be more satisfying. You can always rescue ideas from discarded scenes and incorporate them into all new ones.

Sandbox

A sandbox chronicle is an open-ended story writ large. You supply the setting, cast, theme, and mood — but not a defined plot — and the players strike out to explore what they will. Your job is to design your city (borough, town, or county) brimming with cool story hooks, interesting characters, elaborate conspiracies, and forgotten treasures. While you still need to provide a starting point, your players are free to uncover threads and unravel them as far as they'd like. You'll have favorite ideas the players never see, and you'll throw away ideas they thoroughly investigate, driving you to elaborate on them. For instance, you may have an extensive backstory written for an Inconnu Monitor who, due to his nature, never tips his hand enough to be discovered, and you may have a token Tal'mahe'Ra presence you're suddenly forced to justify including. You can always rationalize the Inconnu's intervention later, but the latter issue may challenge your storytelling skills. The best advice for sandbox-building is not to include anything in the setting you're not eager to explore.

Some stories may lie in wait for the players, while others advance unbeknownst to them. The struggle for control between Primogen and Prince may resolve with the players none the wiser, for instance. Sabbat incursions on the other end of town can happen while the hunters deal with the Anarch revolt closer to their neighborhood. But be careful not to move forward world-changing events without the players having a fair chance to intervene. Optimally, the players should feel as if their characters are having a real impact on the setting, one filled with victories, setbacks, and repercussions.

Be careful when defining the scale of events transpiring in a sandbox chronicle. The players should emphatically not

feel as if they're waiting for you to update them on the next awesome thing happening in a private game you're playing by yourself. Your players may respond with incredulity if the Setites black out the sun and hasten the end of the world without their characters having the first clue (or if they missed it). On the other hand, having the characters wake up to a shroud of eternal night without warning can drive home the horror and scope of the World of (now literal) Darkness.

The bane of a sandbox chronicle can be in telling a cogent narrative. Everything your players do may be its own vignette, making it difficult to navigate to a satisfying or thematic climax. In many ways, that's a feature and not a bug, but it can be problematic to cleave to a particular theme or keep a mood from week to week. Don't try to force it. Theme and mood have ways of cropping up where you least expect them. So long as the players are having fun, you're doing it right.

By their construction, sandbox chronicles can involve as wide a range of vampire factions, ages, and complex politics as you feel comfortable including. You don't need to shoehorn in every Sect, Clan, or published story hook. You can create a small town with an Anarch problem and have it be just as rewarding as saving a London from open war. Focusing on small, personal stories are just as valid as sprawling, continent-spanning conspiracies.

The benefit of a sandbox chronicle is the wide array of stories, themes, and moods you can play with the same characters session to session. At the very heart of this style of game are variety and exploration. You and the players should never be bored. The problem that can arise in a sandbox chronicle is overloading the setting. On the one hand, you can weigh yourself down by including more than you can manage. The players may spend more of their time arguing over what to do next or pulling each other in so many directions. The first problem is easy enough to solve. Narrow your focus on what the players are involved in, and lose the furthest-out plots and characters. Maybe choose one or two favorite pieces to save and don't worry about the rest unless they come up naturally later. The latter problem may not be a problem at all if it's creating good drama between characters. If it drives the troupe to distraction, however, it may need sorting out. Doing so can be as simple as making a quick survey of everyone's priorities, or maybe you can marry some plotlines together to help remove the source of the disagreement.

Flowcharting or mindmapping tools can greatly facilitate sandbox chronicles. In most cases, you'll want little more than a few sentences or character highlights as your points of interest. Fill in the blanks as you need them, when they arise in play. You don't need everything exhaustively

detailed beforehand. In fact, you'll do as much exploration as the players do, but it won't be visible as such to them.

Genre

Conveniently, pop fiction already has an in-built handle for combining your theme, mood, and story elements: genre. Focusing on a genre can narrow down the tools you'll use to tell your story, without relying too heavily on specifics. A story of a few sessions length may easily stick to just one genre, but for longer chronicles, you'll be able to mix and match in interesting ways.

Action

Sparks fly from sharpening knives. An increasingly tense *click* announces each round pushed into the magazine. Finally, the distinct *ch-chack* of a shotgun kicks off a night of bullets, blood, barking out orders, and eventually — hopefully — triumph. Whether running toward the danger or from it, action deals with story obstacles of intense physical and mental rigor.

Bravado and Bullets: The hunters don't care if he's a 100-year-old Toreador named Carl Dane. He's a monster who filled Patty's veins with a bunch of poison, and now she's gone. Someone's got to pay. The players are a posse of concerned citizens with homemade weapons and a couple gallons of gas. They may not all be coming home, but they sure as hell are going to blacken the eye of the forces of darkness on their way out.

Focus on physical confrontations and challenges. A lot of fighting, shooting, and calling for Athletics rolls will feature. The antagonists are probably near or slightly above the characters in terms of power. If you want to rack up a big body count, you can fill out the vampires' ranks with ghouls and neonates, or pit the hunters armed with improvised weapons against a handful of vampires empowered with Disciplines. Ratchet up the tension by keeping track of every bullet. Have the players act out their character's every wound penalty. Or kick back, pop open a beer, and grant your characters the unlimited ammo of a cheap action movie, and reward ridiculous feats of derring-do with bonus dice.

Draw inspiration from any number of movies where shouting and shooting are the main draws. The *Blade* movies (*Blade II* in particular), *Vampire Hunter D*, and *From Dusk Till Dawn* all fit well into this genre. Either of the *Left 4 Dead* video games present good atmosphere and team dynamics even if the antagonists aren't vampires.


Adventure: Distinct from action proper, an adventure story has more exploration and investigation elements. To think of adventure as a hybrid of action and mystery wouldn't be wrong-minded. However, the research in



Bravado and Bullets Story Seeds

Rescue: The characters have heard about the disappearances over the last few months and poking around got them nowhere but noticed. Now the bloodsuckers made it personal by coming for one hunter's daughter (or spouse, friend, member of the hunter team – a Storyteller character or absentee member of the troupe, for instance – or just one more victim than the hunters can stand). The team gears up. They're going to cut, shoot, and burn their way through this city until someone reveals whose ass needs kicking and where he's hiding before time runs out.

Revenge: Take the above scenario, and add a tragic twist. Time already ran out. They've already Embraced the daughter or sacrificed her to their cloud of sentient darkness. The primary difference between the two scenarios is now the hunters don't have to be careful, at least not until they discover other victims.



these kinds of stories is usually brief, sexy, and thrilling, such as having one's hacking of a vampire's computer suddenly interrupted with fisticuffs or being forced to jump from a train after stumbling upon a sleeping car full of ghouléd brides. The focus of an adventure story is still physical, but less exclusively combat. Your players should have plenty of opportunities to use Drive, Athletics, Stealth, and Larceny, for instance.

The adventure genre often uses travel to lend the story some range. It doesn't need to be to exotic locales. It may stay among the haunted cottages and abandoned windmills of a sleepy little county in Pennsylvania. Or it might take you from the neonate drug dealer on the corner to the haven of the Tremere Vangaline Price, rumored to be buried near the Vatican. If that's the case, you may want to tip your players off that Etiquette, Streetwise, and the Language Merit won't be wasted.

Draw inspiration from the Indiana Jones series or its many wayward children such as *National Treasure* or *The Da Vinci Code*. Most of Michael Crichton's brand of science fiction, such as *Congo* and *Jurassic Park*, has more adventure cues than hard science. In video games, the *Tomb Raider*, *Far Cry*, and *Uncharted* series have all the hallmarks of the genre.

Survival: This book is primarily about the titular hunters. The very word suggests initiative: actively searching, tracking, and killing. However, a little further beneath that surface, this book is about mortals versus vampires. Many hunter stories start with the characters in the tried and true roles of victims – prey.

Shut the hunters in, and set an Anarch initiation upon them (or Sabbat war party, or a starving Nosferatu), then see who makes it to morning. The survival subgenre is particularly good for short stories played in a session or two, or when used to introduce the characters to longer chronicles.


Focus on the physical again, but this time, the players' characters should be clearly outmatched – either outnumbered or pitted against a single, seemingly unstoppable foe. No matter how big, strong, and capable the characters are, the challengers will always be more powerful. No matter how fast they run, the bad guys are always right there with them. The gap will always be just a little too far to jump. Of course, no-win situations are only so much fun, so it should only *seem* unwinnable. Optimally, you're pushing the players to be cleverer, to make greater use of their surroundings, to overcome greater odds. No system is



Adventure Story Seeds

Global Puzzle: Workers uncover a strange symbol in the old sewers beneath New York. Less than a week later, the same symbol turns up in Prague. Connecting the dots unravels a worldwide effort to awaken an ancient vampire. Can the players' characters interrupt this complex ritual before the creature awakes, sating its terrible hunger on the modern world? Maybe it's not a global puzzle, but a local one. You can just as easily restrain this story seed to a county, city, or borough.

The Ruins: The players' characters uncover a lost city that could be the next Machu Picchu. They poke around the remains of the long dead culture, but one by one, madness overtakes them. The locals hired as guides turn on them. The denizens of these ruins are not so long dead as presumed. The characters have awakened horrors better left asleep, and none may live long enough to regret it.






Survival Story Seeds

Locked Room: A handful of strangers wake up in an old warehouse. Hulking shadows of abandoned equipment cage them in. A shouting voice gives instructions, but not to them. The voice is addressing recruits for a gang of some sort to track the characters down and kill (or Embrace) them by dawn. Among the five of them, the characters have only a baseball bat and a .38 pistol with which to defend themselves. Forced to navigate a makeshift labyrinth, against a small group of neonates out to make a name for themselves, the characters must escape, or become unwilling vessels or even vampires.

Cat and Mouse: The characters witness a Sabbath shovel party. Not that they know that. They just know some kind of monster gang made a bloody mess of the corner of Seventh and Heywood. Unfortunately, the fledgling hunters were seen, too. Now they're on the run, trying to use their knowledge of the streets to make it until dawn with monsters running them down.



in place for, say, dropping an elevator on a frenzied vampire, but it can only be awesome watching the players pool their resources and have their characters frantically hack away at the cable. Making a bomb out of a fire extinguisher, smashing a stolen school bus into an elder, or trapping the predator on a rooftop near dawn are the kinds of resourcefulness you want to drive the hunters to. Survival can evoke the frantic ducking and screaming of a shootout or the triumph of the characters over the longest odds.

Draw inspiration from any number of slasher or chase films, from *Halloween* to *The Warriors* to *Attack the Block*. *The Most Dangerous Game* and *The Tempest* are classic examples of cat and mouse on different scales. For psychological horror, consider the original *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Watch the bar scene in *Near Dark*, and imagine the patrons' situation. Can your players change the outcome?

Investigation

For long-form chronicles in which you're able to take your time, consider the investigation conceit. If your

troupe enjoys social interaction and politics in its **Vampire** stories, they should find the same reward in the cerebral tension of an investigation chronicle. You can certainly tell short-form mysteries as well. Regardless, the subgenres under this category will make greater use of Mental and Social Attributes than action typically does.


Mystery: Something terrible sets the hunters on their way down the path of investigation and discovery. The classic whodunnit, or for a hunter chronicle, whatdunnit. They may know vampires were to blame right away, or they may take the long way



Mystery Story Seeds

Watching the Watchmen: Just as new evidence came to light, all investigation into the city council was put on hold "until further notice." Now the characters have to go it alone, without any kind of official authorization. They uncover a deepening conspiracy set up to protect someone, or something, as they go. It's not the councilmen and -women themselves – they were much too easy to incriminate. The questions become, what's at the center of the web, and how will the characters react when it moves?

Something's Wrong with Josh: Josh was an average teenager. He got good enough grades to stay out of serious trouble but found just enough trouble to not be a square – until recently. Now he's out late, sleeping through classes, and churlish when asked about the change. Josh can be a son, a lover, a friend, or not even a teenager at all, but a spouse of 10 years. Josh might be one of several victims, all having the same problem around the same time. As concerned parents, friends, or siblings, the hunters need to get to the bottom of this mystery. Reading through diaries, asking teachers, and following kids to a new nightspot "Lilith's Cave," where Josh (and possibly others) are falling into the thrall of a charming Toreador who can just as easily turn his coveted attention on the hunters.



around to slowly uncovering the very existence of the supernatural. Even once the hunters discover vampires are involved, that only muddies the waters. Now they have to negotiate the complex politics of the night.

A mystery game focuses on intellectual and social challenges. Your players' characters will have to navigate lies, false leads, cover-ups, and double crosses. They might uncover and follow up on clues, or perhaps they find themselves conning their way into private areas and digging through misinformation to uncover the real story. The pace of research-based mysteries is certainly slower than a more straightforward find-clue, follow-clue kind of story, but can also ramp up tension. You can confound the players' expectations, or establish a race against time as the players make extended rolls or have their characters pursue chains of misdirection. Spikes of physical danger may erupt in the third act, but the antagonist may well be off-screen, just out of reach — or share scenes with the characters without their knowing.

Any number of genre entries unfold like mysteries. *The Lost Boys* unfolds as a kind of social mystery. Sam knows something is wrong with Michael, but what and who is ultimately responsible plays out through the story (though it ends on an action beat). Old episodes of *Kolchak*, *the Night Stalker* (or more recently, *The Dresden Files* novels) can provide some ideas. Draw inspiration

from such non-supernatural fare, such as *Winter's Bone* and the Millennium series trilogy.

Thriller: A thriller takes the pacing of mystery and adds more elements of horror. The threat should loom twice as often as it's actually present (at least as far as the characters know). Draw out the circumstances and tragedies arising once a new presence enters the neighborhood, scene, or school. Have the characters discover some nefarious clue or witness a feeding — some sort of bizarre murder? — that convinces them the killer is after them. The foe in a thriller is the better of the characters in almost every way. He is faster, stronger, cleverer, always one step ahead, especially when the characters finally think *they're* ahead.

Call for Mental, Social, and Physical challenges in turn. Outmatch the characters until the very end: No matter how hard they hit him, their pursuer gets right back up. No matter how fast and far they run, the vampire is right behind them. No matter how well they hide, the enemy is drawn closer and closer as the hunters hold their breath and try to will themselves silent. Think of the preternatural villains in any slasher movie from *Friday the 13th* to *Halloween*, or the unrelenting pursuit of the raptors in *Jurassic Park*.

Draw inspiration from any movie featuring Hannibal Lecter for reference on interviewing one monster to help bring down another. Most of Hitchcock's films are the



Thriller Story Seeds

Serial Murder: The police (or reporters, or the hunters themselves) discover multiple corpses throughout the city, drained completely of blood. Other than the cause of death, little else links the victims or locations. The hunters involve themselves, narrowing down locations for the next strike and trying to head off the mysterious murderer before he strikes again. Or perhaps he discovers they're on his trail and places them next on his list. Is he a vampire at all, or is that line of reasoning a red herring? The local Camarilla Kindred are as concerned as the hunters are. Might they be allies?

McGivens Boys: Seventy years ago, the fire that ravaged the McGivens School for Wayward Boys claimed the lives of more than a dozen students. So why have boys been seen in the area wearing the old McGivens colors? Why is someone savagely murdering alumni and staff? The hunters track the tragedy through history and back to its source of one twisted headmaster and a previous generation of hunters who thought they'd already dealt with the problem. For added creepiness, make the McGivens Boys Blood Brothers (see V20, pp. 396-397).

very template for thrillers; just add vampires. *Fright Night* (more the original, but also the remake) is a classic vampire thriller. Many ghost stories, such as *The Changeling*, can provide tips and tricks for building suspense and effective use of the unseen. The graphic novel *Locke and Key* is one of the best modern thrillers going.

Beyond the Physical

When you tell your players they'll be portraying vampire hunters, their first instinct may be to dump a bunch of points into Physical Traits and hope they survive. Not all vampire hunting needs to be done with guns, machetes, and fire, however. Here are a few ideas for how socially and mentally oriented characters can be an asset.

Social: Leaning on a ghoul informant (Intimidation). Convincing the enemy you're worth more alive

(Manipulation). Cajoling your foe into admitting some tie to his Humanity, such as a lover or favored trinket (Empathy). "My friends already have the place surrounded, Dracula" (Subterfuge). Impressing a Toreador with the beauty of your words or music (Expression, Performance). Talking your way into restricted areas with legal babble (Law).

Mental: Researching information in the library or on the Internet (Academics, Computer). Examining a body for clues (Investigation, Medicine). Revealing some creative accounting in the ledger (Finance). Paying the proper deference to or observing a rare custom from the vampire's native land (Etiquette, Streetwise). Jury-rigging a weapon or a way out of a locked room (Crafts, Technology).

Even in stories that focus on assembling clues and solving occulted mysteries, Physical challenges will arise naturally and often. Still, you can go several sessions relying only on the middle and right portions of the character sheet with all the same tension and drama of a firefight.

Pacing

If your story is all bravado and bullets, then your downtime should be sparse and focus on counting coup and dwindling ammo. If your story focuses on trying to hold onto Humanity as the characters delve deeper into the hunt, then feel free to let your players play and let the talking scenes linger. Not that a bravado-and-bullets story can't have talking scenes, but they should focus on what the hunt costs and might be interrupted at any moment as another body turns up at the theater.

In a slowly unraveling mystery, take the time to describe how empty the library feels, the smell of the books, the eye-straining hours poring over microfiche. Portray the skipped heartbeat as an unfamiliar sound echoes through the stacks. Describe the triumphant relief turned to gooseflesh as the hunters turn up a picture of the man they encountered last night in a newspaper dated 100 years ago.

You may be tempted to skip through the days entirely. In a story in which the hunters have already dedicated themselves to the hunt, or as you close in on the climax, that may be appropriate. When you have the chance, and if your players have the taste for it, spend time at the characters' day jobs. Play through how empty their routines feel now that they know the terrible things they know. Or if a boss is a known associate of a vampire, draw out a scene just being in the same room — or trapped in a meeting — with the ghoul.

The Plot Thickens

Sometimes, a story is like an arrow — it travels straight to the target and stops with a satisfying *thunk*. The characters

are out at a club, witness a vampire attack, find a clue, track him down, and put an end to his eternal damnation. High fives all around. Those can be great stories and fun for a few quick sessions to blow off some steam.

As you consider running larger or open-ended chronicles, however, nothing should prove that easy. (Or if it is, it should have a hidden hook, trap, or Pyrrhic element). As the protagonists, it's natural to presume the characters' eventual success. The plot however, demands complications. If overcoming one conflict is good, overcoming several is great.

As you conceive a short story arc or an upcoming session, your story sketch probably looks something like: goal, the plan, climax, resolution. What is the characters' goal? Stealing an artifact from the rival of a vampire who has promised them information. How do they plan to get to it? Casing and breaking into the private collection. What big obstacle lies in their way? Fight or sneak past ghoulish servants. Finally, what is the outcome? Success means taking the artifact and eventually earning the promised information. Failure means... well, that all depends on how they fail.

Nothing is wrong with the above course. It serves its purpose just fine, if neatly.

Now, let's add a few tension-building breaks: goal, the plan, setback, plan B, another setback, climax, resolution. Presumably everything goes along the same until right after the planning phase. Now introduce the first setback. If the plan relies on the security guard at the parking deck taking a smoke break every night at the same time, maybe he got fired, or it's his night off. Now what? The players scramble to come up with new solutions, making rolls they didn't count on. With more on the line, players may sit up straighter in their chairs or pore over their character sheets for creative solutions. Once they've negotiated this and subsequent snags, they're back on track.

They approach the artifact as planned (or perhaps the plan has had slight alterations) when the plot twists again. The password has changed (maybe heightened security because the guard was fired), or the artifact on display is a forgery. Again, creativity should abound. Finally, what is the resolution? Success may be the same as above, but the players' potential failures have multiplied. Maybe they steal the counterfeit copy of the artifact, or are captured, and now they'll be ransomed back to the vampire's rival. A simple smash-and-grab has been transformed into a twisting, turning fiasco that's a story of its own.

Don't take earned rewards away from the players per se, nor foist failure upon them. If they came by their information as a result of a clever action or a successful

roll, don't wave your hand and change the outcome. Rather, keep your eyes open for holes in their plan, or watch for places to insert your unforeseen developments. Truly, sometimes a plan *should* come together. However, hunters have the odds stacked against them, and your story can and should reflect that. Worried characters means worried players. The intent isn't to frustrate the players, but rather, engage them in new ways. There's a reason you're the Storyteller and not the Adversary.

Optimally, any given story session will resolve any cliffhangers or lingering questions from the last session, introduce a new conflict or set of challenges, proceed through the legwork and resolutions, and end on a new cliffhanger or "oh, shit" moment. "Oh, shit" moments have the most impact when they aren't planned, but rather, occur in a moment of inspired brilliance at the table. Never be afraid to call your session short at such a moment and take the extra time to really let it stew. But don't waste the momentum if everyone's picking up their dice and salivating. Another "oh, shit" moment will come.

Bending the Rules

The hunt is a struggle against monsters generally more powerful than the characters. Playing strictly by the rules may skew the odds too much in the vampires' favor, or vice versa. If you were up all night designing an antagonist to challenge your players on every level, and he's dead before the first round of initiative is over, it robs your confrontation (or climax) of its weight. In this section are a handful of simple twists to the rules that put your thumb on the scale.

All that said, each of these must be wielded sparingly. You don't want to set yourself up as the bad guy. You want the players cursing your name with a smile on their lips. Overcoming challenges in a game provides a sense of relief and accomplishment, so the harder it is to succeed, the more satisfying the results. At least in theory, if the pendulum swings too far to the vampires' side, ease off, or balance the scale with a few events that turn the players' way. If players are frustrated, ease it back.

Turn Up the Heat

Below are a handful of tricks you can employ to put the characters off their strengths, or to widen the power gap between hunter and vampire. They can be used to add another layer of horrific realism or to raise the tension of facing down creatures of the night.

Powerless: The first time the hunters encounter a vampire, don't allow the players rolls for their characters to resist her powers. This works best during the prelude or opening hook while you're setting the tone. You can



use this technique to establish the raw power of vampires in general or, better still, your primary antagonist. Have the vampire kill one of their contact's agents or a friend with few to no rolls to intervene. Then have her stroll casually away while the characters are held fast by Presence.

We play games as often as not to feel empowered, so don't use this technique in times of life or death (at least not the hunters'), and don't rob any player of something he invested points in without due cause or rationale either. But set the tone early, and the next time your unstoppable foe shows up, watch the players tense up.

Real Time: In the grip of a crisis, panic and fear threaten to override sense at every turn. Players can linger too long on all possible actions, outcomes, pros, and cons. So, in a combat situation or other action-oriented scene, point to the first player in initiative order, and ask him what his character does. If he doesn't answer quickly enough, tell him "too late," and skip to the next player. If a player can't decide on an action in three to six seconds

(the average time a turn is meant to take) do the same to her. Much like using the powerless technique above, do this early in a low- to medium-danger situation, and see if the players aren't a little more decisive by the time the master vampire shows up. Remember, you want to heighten tension, not badger a player for not being as quick-witted as her character is supposed to be. Do not rely overly on this technique unless your players enjoy the stress.

Fish Out of Water: Your players all created everyday folks low in Physical Traits? Make those characters have to escape from a burning building or jump from one rooftop to the next. Have characters with a lot of Physical Traits and Firearms Ability? Put them in a social situation in which they have to talk their way out of something. Have the cops pull them over with an informant in the trunk while all of them are armed. Looking down at two dice when the player is used to rolling six to eight should get the nervous laughter going at your table. This technique

isn't intended to be a punishment. It is a challenge and a way to create tension, to make players afraid they have to genuinely worry about how their characters are going to get out of this situation.

Every Tool is a Weapon: Vampires are so much more than a physical threat to be defeated. They are capable of taking away anything a hunter holds dear. Every part of a player's character sheet can be a target. Every Background is also a liability. Resources can be tied up by a manipulative Ventrué's accountants. Allies can be kidnapped or killed. Contacts can be leveraged to keep their mouths shut. Even Attributes and Abilities can be turned against a character with a little wit and a dare. For example, someone playing a character with high Physical Traits may put a lot of faith in his dice and can be goaded into a fight he can't finish. A character with a love of history (and an Ability to match) may not be able to resist a glimpse at an elder's collection — if her player doesn't bite and roleplay this on her own, you could call for a Willpower roll for the character to resist.

One optional technique you may wish to establish at character creation is that you may impose a related Flaw on any character who takes four or five dots in an Ability (as well as the usual specialty). These Flaws should be minor and focused on roleplaying more than dice penalties. This reflects the sheer amount of dedication and time the character has put into that field, and how that focus informs how they interact with the world. A character with high Social Traits may be overconfident because he's used to getting his way. One with a high Science score may seek to explain vampires as natural phenomena (having her grossly underestimate their danger).

Remember, you don't want to punish a character for having a high Trait. Rather, you want to test that Trait precisely because the player has demonstrated an interest in using it.

The Toll

The hunt wears on hunters mentally as well, but that can be hindered if your players don't play to that aspect. Below are a handful of techniques that can keep your players questioning.

Paranoia: Have the players make regular Perception checks, and nod grimly, regardless of the results. When players hear the details of your scene, they are often trained to grant everything you tell them importance. As you describe scenes, put in an extra detail about how deep the shadows are, or note an empty catwalk overhead. When they inevitably search, tell them they find nothing. At any time during a scene, tell them their characters feel like they're being watched or that something just feels

off. Have a vampire drop a vague reference to one of the characters' place of employment or family. Does he know where the characters live, or was it merely a coincidence?

Hidden Rolls: Players' rolls give them a reasonable picture of how well their characters are doing. If a player rolls high with a Wits + Alertness pool, and you tell him he sees nothing, he can safely assume nothing was there to see. If you perform those rolls behind a screen it, you occlude the real results. Now he has no idea if nothing was there or if the dice failed him. Social rolls, such as attempts to manipulate or cajole the truth out of a witness, will leave the player unsure if the answer his character obtained was the truth or not. Mental rolls will still provide him answers, but are they the right ones? Making every roll this way can make things cumbersome and confusing on your end. During combat, for instance, keeping track of all the results and who they apply to will require a lot of accounting for you. Not to mention rolling is often seen as the player's privilege, and you don't want to rob them of the physical action too often. Use this technique in key moments where knowing if they succeeded directly informs their next action (such as the examples above).

Tricks of the Light: Disturbing dreams and portentous visions can amplify the horror and mood of your story. Not even sleep offers respite from the hunt when every time a hunter shuts his eyes he finds himself in a twisted dreamscape filled with haunting memories. Use dream sequences to confront him with his sins and secrets, amplified by visual metaphors. A dream may start as an idyllic scene of simpler times with his family, when the sun suddenly turns black, and his loved ones turn on him, fangs bared and eyes weeping tears of blood. Not all dreams have to be nightmares based on the hunter's fears and failures. They can be used to instill hope, showing him the better world that will be built from his success, and reinvigorate his dedication to the mission.

Maybe such visions aren't reserved for when a hunter tries to rest, either. Waking nightmares and hallucinations can help you simulate sleep deprivation, post-traumatic stress disorder, or the lingering effects of vampiric powers. As you describe a scene, choose a player whose character is particularly exhausted or running low on Willpower, and add a horrific and impossible detail only he can see. One of the bartenders has a demonic face, a naked bloody woman pulls at her hair in a corner booth, or the vampire the hunters killed two weeks ago stares motionlessly at him from the dance floor. Have the player make a separate Wits + Alertness roll to avoid the arms reaching out to grab his character, only to reveal nothing there. Pull the player aside or pass him a note, and the rest will have to wonder

why his character is suddenly acting so weird. Maybe the player can spend a Willpower point to make the character's visions stop for a time (dangerous if he's already low), or succeed on a Wits + Awareness roll to discern reality from hallucination for the scene, or simply get his character some sleep to make them cease. You don't want your stories to devolve into an endless barrage of things that aren't there, but used sparingly, hallucinations can amplify the horror of an already tense scene. Use this technique a few times, and you can set up a more horrific revelation down the line when the hunter successfully clears his mind only to have one of the phantasms remain (as with a ghost or other supernatural effect).

In the Crosshairs

The World of Darkness hosts an array of vampires to hunt, each with her own strengths, weaknesses, and specialized flavor. Individually, most are a match for your hunters. However, as often as not, they aren't alone. They are part of a society, broken into Sects and political parties, complete with their own considerations.

The specifics of Kindred society won't always need to find a place in a hunter story, but when they do, they can serve to heighten the themes and moods central to the chronicle.

Crosshairs: Camarilla

The Camarilla is a ubiquitous presence in the World of Darkness, shored up by the strongest support network socially. Second only to Anarchs, Camarilla Kindred work closely with mortals, influencing civic institutions, maintaining the Masquerade with zealous fervor, and gripping tightly to their Humanity. Despite their ivory towers and Elysiums, Camarilla vampires are still monsters, apex predators who view mortals as pests to be controlled or destroyed. Kindred of the Camarilla make excellent antagonists in stories about corruption, control, order, and tradition.

Hunters can run afoul of the Camarilla vampires at any tier of society, from bottom-feeding Nosferatu to high-rise Ventrue; from hood-rat Brujah to socialite Toreador. They are the paranoid neonate out to make a name for himself, and the desperate ancilla holding fast to what power she has. They are the polite elder who will invite mortals into her parlor, only to lock the door and bare her fangs when it becomes clear they are of only one use to her. While each Camarilla vampire is an individual, they are all beholden to the Prince and the Traditions. If the hunters murder a vampire who is only the tip of a conspiracy's iceberg, some Kindred agent will investigate her Final Death.

The likelihood of coming in contact with the Camarilla's local halls of power is greater than, say, doing so with the Sabbat. Perhaps one Primogen seeks to use the hunters as a tool to undermine the Prince's support. Or maybe the group awakens the sleeping dragon, bringing the Sheriff and more upon themselves. The Camarilla might first try to negotiate with your hunters, interested in quietly keeping the peace (and the Masquerade intact) rather than starting a war. They are political and cosmopolitan antagonists, and they work as well in social stories and mysteries as they do in straight-up action tales.

Crosshairs: Sabbat

You won't find a lot of hand-wringing soliloquizing about the horrors of the vampiric condition in the Sabbat. They brook no wrist-to-forehead lamenting of the dawns they've lost or the lovers kept from them by the cruel hand of fate. Fuck that! Being a vampire is about swinging the biggest dick in town! If you want to confront the hunters with unapologetic monsters, the Sabbat are your vampires. They bring with them elements of religion, endless war, paranoia, and brutality, but also dark twists on themes of duty, family, cooperation, and honor.

The biggest difference between the Camarilla and the Sabbat from a hunter's perspective is that Sabbat vampires rarely travel alone. Coterie may be encouraged in the Camarilla, but packs are all but requisite in the Sabbat. And they make excellent opposite numbers to a group of hunters. Sabbat packs as seen through the eyes of mortals are forces of nature. They sow chaos, feed and kill recklessly, and push one another to new depths of depravity. In times of war, they Embrace recklessly, setting their scared and starving fledglings on an unsuspecting populace. This presents a ready hook for multiple hunters: losing loved ones to the war party's brutal recruitment or bloody aftermath, or survivors and witnesses to the same.

Use the Sabbat when you want to turn up the volume on monstrosity and break the knob the fuck off. They are not beasts lest they become beasts. They are simply beasts, raging to be let loose. From flesh-sculpted Tzimisce witches to Lasombra summoning tentacles of night and from Toreador *antitribu* serial killers making spectacles of their victims to pack priests espousing the liberty of murder, the Sabbat raises the bar on sheer terror. Their many dark rites and twisted festivals require mortal blood, and lots of it. Saving a small town or neighborhood from being harvested is a harrowing task for any group of hunters.

You can still tell many of the same stories as with the Camarilla, only there will be no negotiating. Compromising with a group of hunters is a sign of

weakness, and one a Ductus or Bishop won't have a chance to explain if discovered by her fellows in the Sword of Caine. Sabbat vampires aren't incapable of being polite or charming to get their way, but the distance between convincing a hunter to move on and just ripping his throat out is slight. The Sabbat holds mortals in contempt for bothering to stand up to them, and its members aren't as mindful of the Masquerade in the heat of the moment.

Crosshairs: Anarchs

Anarchs don't buy into religious trappings or bullshit platitudes about the vampiric condition – not that the distinction matters much to their victims. Anarchs call to mind street-corner braggadocio, leather jackets, motorcycles, chains wielded as weapons, and pants hanging off the ass. A fair number of younger members fit the bill, and the movement attracts more young Kindred than they Embrace. These vampires work best with themes of youth, lawlessness, rebellion, or explorations of gang culture. What such neonates lack in age and respect, they make up for in hair-trigger tempers and raw physical power. Like a hydra, where one Anarch falls, two more can spring up to replace him. Hunters probably won't find any shortage of Anarchs to bump heads with in run-down urban neighborhoods. Due to their lack of broad political power, such Anarchs work best in small, localized skirmishes. You can use them in take-back-the-block situations, culminating in a confrontation with the charismatic and persuasive gang leader.

Beyond the stereotypes, the Anarch Movement considers itself educated and enlightened. Its members are not uncultured. They simply defy the standard definition of culture. Every age has its revolutionaries, and rebellion comes in many forms. You may well see 200-year-old Mexican rebels, Haight-Ashbury dropouts, and Ventrue Elders who grew disillusioned with the politics of abusive privilege and found a place far from their sires among the Anarchs. The gentleman monster isn't restricted to the ranks of the Camarilla. The Anarch political structure can behave the same way as would the Camarilla, but with less adherence to the Masquerade and Traditions (and none of the religious celebration of the Beast common to the Sabbat). Anarchs may even be willing to work with mortals, making overtures of equality and mutual cooperation. This is a lie, of course, even if it's one they're inclined to believe. They are the wolves, mortals are the sheep, and wolves have little tolerance for sheep who defy them.

Crosshairs: Tal'Mahe'Ra

The True Black Hand is an elusive entity even among the Kindred. The True Hand works best with themes of secrets, conspiracy, prophecy, archaeology, and the

end times. Some Black Hand vampires see themselves as serving the Antediluvians and hope to be spared the Ancients' wrath for their loyalty. To this end, they have a keen interest in undermining and weakening the hold of the other Sects. A group of hunters, ignorant to the internecine politics of the undead, may make an excellent pawn. Agents of the True Hand may gladly supply such mortals with money, weapons, and a list of targets. In return, they will expect intelligence and any occult artifacts recovered from the havens of their targets. The leadership of the Tal'mahe'Ra is largely composed of elders of unclear lineage and trusts it will be able to discard the hunters when they have exhausted their use. The Sabbat is the Hand's most direct enemy, and it takes special care to infiltrate that organization's ranks. Here (and to a lesser degree, for all Sects) is where hunters can encounter younger members of the True Hand, often pawns themselves. They may present themselves as contacts, while the hunters perform the Sect's dirty work. Or they may make a counteroffer to turn on an elder to help them move up within the organization. The Tal'mahe'Ra prides itself in its members not squabbling among themselves like the rabble of other Sects, but such betrayals come naturally to vampires. Besides, an agent of the True Hand has plausible deniability: How is he responsible for the actions of a few rogue mortals?

Crosshairs: Inconnu

The Inconnu is a clandestine sect of elders and Methuselahs who exist outside of the Jyhad. They largely keep to themselves, reportedly dedicated to quietly pursuing Golconda. The Inconnu reinforce themes of mystery, redemption, secrets, and history. Such aloof figures make difficult targets for hunters, as they largely avoid the affairs of mortals and the pull of the Jyhad alike. However, if your hunters seek to redeem a vampire from his evil ways, the Inconnu may seem to be the greatest repository of knowledge regarding salvation – Golconda. The Inconnu are probably the closest you can get to including repentant vampires in a chronicle, or so they would have the hunters believe. That they prefer to keep to themselves silently watching and striving to transcend vampirism doesn't keep them from being ancient monsters who have consumed their fill of mortal vitae. If the hunters are battling another elder, an Inconnu vampire may be just the powerful ally they need, though he may be reluctant to reenter the Jyhad on behalf of a few mortals unless he believes it serves his personal redemption. Lastly, consider the tales of the noble Inconnu vampire quietly meditating in pursuit of elevating his condition is so much bullshit propaganda. What better way to obscure his true purpose? What his

actual agenda may be is up to you. Maybe he tires of his hopeless quest chasing castles in the sky, or perhaps he serves some darker master. Perhaps the destruction of the elder the hunters pursue removes the last barrier between him and elusive salvation.

Crosshairs: Independents

Even further out on the fringes of Kindred society are the outcast and esoteric independent Clans: Assamites, Followers of Set, Giovanni, and Ravnos. They may not be as cosmopolitan as the Kindred belonging to the greater Sects, but aside from the Ravnos, they have closely knit Clan communities and identities, which they exhibit by relying on each other, often furthering a unified Clan goal instead of that of a Sect or an individual.

Assamites: The Assamites' reputation as assassins comes from their most public face, their warrior caste, who travel the world, taking on contracts to be paid in vampire blood, which they tithe back to Alamut. They can be of any race, creed, or color; they can be charmers, seducers, alien, or amiable. Especially throughout the Middle East and North Africa, Assamites can play the same antagonistic role any Tremere, Ventruue, or Toreador would. Some may be under deep cover, acting as members of those or other Clans for decades.

An Assamite makes for a daunting physical threat to challenge even the hardest hunter cadre. She is a

lightning-fast, invisible killer willing to work for any party willing to pay. Ostensibly, this means your hunters may even be able to hire her if they have some way of procuring the blood — from a prior target perhaps, or a staked hostage. More likely, as your hunters make more of a name than a nuisance of themselves, someone hires an Assamite to take care of them: a hunter loosed upon the hunters for doing their job too well.

You can slow-play the introduction of the assassin. A hunter sees a figure in an alley, but by the time he alerts the others, she's gone. Staking out the haven of their latest target prompts another sighting on a nearby rooftop but, again, gone before the hunters can follow up. String together several such encounters over several nights (or weeks, or months) before she makes her move. As the hunters finally mobilize to storm the haven, wait for a player to give a spoken command, and inform the others they don't hear anything, even as their characters stand side by side.

Or screw all that foreshadowing and have her come on like a lightning strike full of Celerity and blood magic.

Follower of Set: The Followers of Set don't necessarily consider themselves vampires, and certainly not "Kindred," anyway. They claim instead to be direct descendants of the god Set. As outsiders to much of undead society, they may try to set themselves up as allies



for your hunters, offering up the location of far greater evils than themselves. Meanwhile they'll sell the hunters' location to the local Kindred and double their profits.

A Setite might bend the ear of a hunter, offering leads, weapons, and money. At what point does the rest of the group wonder where the information is coming from? He may offer the same deal to all of them. Mortally wounded after a hunt went bust? He can help with that, too. Don't worry about the price. You can work that out later.

The Setites want the whole world to be in debt to them. This is why they often trade in vices. Get someone hooked, and they have to come back, increasingly desperate each time. The same can be said about religion, and they offer that too. The Followers of Set are as much cult as Clan, and they are more than willing to bring Set's truth into empty and aimless lives. The cult sees itself as the guardian of doomful and esoteric knowledge. With temples spread the world over, Setites hoard sanguinary rituals and arcane devices with the hope of rescuing their god from the Underworld — or to summon the dark serpent Apep to devour the sun, whichever comes first. Any Setite will gladly point hunters in the direction of such items, spells, and other cultural curiosities. And he will let them take all the risk and gladly claim the spoils for his own when (and if) they return.

Giovanni: The Giovanni are more than Clan, they're family — a fucked-up family with a seemingly endless amount of cousins and a deep fascination with death, but a family nonetheless. Obscenely rich and organized, they act as a sort of supernatural mafia. They run numbers, protection rackets (only instead of protecting a business from "accidents" they also protect against sudden hauntings), smuggling, extortion, drugs, and other tried and true profitable criminal ventures. All of these are crimes that target and exploit mortals as often as not, making for an easy hook into any hunters chronicle.

The Giovanni support a broad network of mortals and ghouls, perhaps greater by ratio than any Clan or even Sect. They have a veritable army capable of operating during the day, so hunters tangled up in Giovanni interests won't benefit from the usual reprieve of dawn. Giovanni lawyers can tie a hunter up legally. Giovanni bankers can put a lien on her house. Giovanni *goombata* can express what a shame it would be for something to happen to her loved ones. Hell, a Giovanni teacher can start substituting at her son's school after that terrible accident killed the last one. All while the sun is shining.

Giovanni express themes of corruption, power, bullying, family, honor, sex, and death among others. They are among the most versatile Clans and can be used in almost any kind of story. Only the Camarilla's

curtailing the Clan's reach keeps them from being the ideal antagonist for any situation. However, that same thing is what pushes them into places you may not associate with other vampires. They fit just as easily into suburban settings as urban ones, they can be owners of the creepy old house on the hill or the union-controlling undead Mafiosi. They can be crypt-raiding necrophiles or the polo-shirted new guy on the squash court. Where they are strong, they are ubiquitous (appropriately, where they are weak they may be nonexistent).

Other than the very real immediate threats they pose, Giovanni can also communicate, summon, and command the dead. Use them to mastermind a haunted house scenario, grant them a particularly creepy clairvoyance, or have them hold souls hostage. Anyone can threaten to kill someone. Only the Giovanni can promise that'll only be the start of her troubles.

Ravnos: Ravnos possess reputations throughout the Kindred world as thieves and gypsies, a nuisance to be chased away or killed outright. They have few sympathetic parties outside their own Clan and are capable of wearing out their welcome before they've even arrived. Ravnos largely avoid other vampires, focusing their attention on mortals instead. They might draw the fury of your hunters well before a Prince or Archbishop even knows they're there. The good news is they're usually alone. The bad news is that's not always true — and that they're excellent survivors.

Ravnos speak to themes of vice, addiction, isolation, illusion, and lies. Every vampire is something of a conman, if only to feed or uphold some variation of the Masquerade. The Ravnos, however, make an unlife out of taking everyone with whom they interact for all they're worth. They range from the low-level thief, who may take a hunter's wallet (and a pint or two of blood from his neck), to the high-level charlatan, who will steal the house out from under him and sell it to five other buyers, letting them scratch out ownership as the Ravnos counts her profits on the way out of town. Theft and cons may not seem like much of a hook in a horror game, but lost homes or savings ruins lives, and makes already desperate people more desperate. It is personal horror in a very intimate sense.

Lastly, the Ravnos are masters of illusion, able to distort reality itself with their Discipline of Chimerstry. At greater degrees of Discipline mastery, Ravnos blur the line between reality and illusion, whether through something as simple as creating a convincing suitcase of money out of thin air, or as brutal as demonic monsters that crush real bones and draw real blood. Or perhaps one might conjure up a hunter's dead wife, stirring up old wounds and attacking his very will to continue.

Crosshairs: Ghouls

Vitae-fueled servants and mercenaries, ghouls are poised somewhere between the worlds of vampires and hunters. They are functionally immortal, with certain key fragilities. Their master, whomever is providing them with vitae, believes they're worth preserving, but not necessarily Embracing. They may be a vampire's weakest link, or as powerful as an ancilla after hundreds of years of artificially extended life. Ghouls can be so many mooks with guns between the hunters and the boss vampire in a bravado-and-bullets story, or one may be the secret power behind a vampire's empire, having run her affairs for the last century and a half.

Ghouls probably won't be your primary antagonists, but freeing one or more from a vampire's control can put them front and center in your story. As they're not quite (or yet) vampires, they can potentially still be redeemed. Addiction, salvation, loss of identity, and the price of power are all themes ghouls can help explore.

Ghouls possess power beyond that of normal mortals, a power that might tempt many hunters. If a hunter could but drink the blood of the enemy, he would become stronger. He'd become strong enough to hunt even fiercer prey, with more potent blood. A hunter falling victim to such temptation soon finds he's spiraling down a craven path of addiction and power, taking greater risks and becoming more dangerous to those around him. In his desperation for blood, he may become compromised, as a vampire offers her blood willingly for inside information on other hunters.

Crosshairs: Elders

A single hunter may be able to go toe-to-toe with a thin blood. A band of hunters may be a match for a coterie of neonates or a young Sabbat pack. As a unit, they may even be able to overwhelm an ancilla. When it comes to elders, however, no handful of hunters can hope to stand up to their sheer physical power.

Five hundred years is the rough watermark of the elder vampire. By that age, one is powerful enough to take on five to ten *vampires* herself. A handful of hunters aren't going to make her lose a day's sleep. Elders are not invincible, however. They are often flush with hubris and slow to adapt. Hunters can take advantage of the modern world in ways most elders can't even fathom. An elder is an antagonist around whom to base an entire chronicle, and the hunters will need a better plan than direct assault to best her. Despite the elder's disconnection from nightly affairs, hunters aren't necessarily beneath her notice. Such a vampire has been at the Jihad far too long to

ignore the value of any foe... or tool. She may even be behind everything that has happened to the hunters since the very beginning. Perhaps the hunters have spoiled her plans with their interference, or maybe they played their part perfectly, without knowing it.

An elder probably isn't the best antagonist for an action game, though such a confrontation could certainly be epic. The hunters storm her haven with modern ordinance, flamethrowers, and petrol bombs, but having potentially accumulated significant levels of Fortitude throughout her centuries, she may still prove too formidable for them. Elder antagonists are better served by long, drawn-out efforts of discovery, peeling back layer after layer, creeping ever closer, attacking her holdings, weakening her influence. An elder is slow to move and fears nothing but other elders. She sits patiently still, manipulating events around her like a spider in a web. She needs eyes and ears, and she likely has lesser minions to do her dirtiest work. The hunters can put out those eyes, deafen those ears, and slay those minions to draw her out from the safety of her haven. Or they may be her unwitting minions....

When the hunters do eventually confront their elder enemy, it should be after they've built up their arsenal, and perhaps struck dangerous deals with other vampires (or other creatures of the World of Darkness). They can be aided by magic relics and rituals, or lead a rival to her lair. Or they may simply storm the elder's haven during the day, burning the place down as they go, and shattering the foundations with explosives, burying her under rubble. It may not kill her, but hopefully, it will take her a long, long time to free herself.

Beyond even an elder's reckoning of power and control are Methusalehs. They are creatures so ancient and potent they don't need to be awake to influence events around them. All of the above applies to Methusalehs as well. You've just raised the bar another notch or three.

Crosshairs: The World of Darkness

While not the focus of this book, we'd be remiss if we didn't mention the other denizens and monsters of the World of Darkness. If you play with the one-world perspective — that the creatures all of the World of Darkness's game lines compete for resources and barely tolerate one another — then you or your players may feel incomplete for their exclusion. Or maybe you want to throw some new and particularly harrowing monster at your hunters while they assume that vampires are the core threat. Other supernatural creatures can serve as a red herring or strange new allies. Try not to treat these creatures as awesome new toys; rather, use them

to enhance or contrast your themes, raise the stakes, or illustrate how in over their heads the hunters are. Whatever your reasons for introducing them into a hunters chronicle, below are a few brief words on the other denizens of the World of Darkness.

Werewolves (see V20, pp. 378-380): Good news: Lupines harbor a religious-level animosity toward vampires. Vampires are blights upon the world; they corrupt and do evil as a matter of course. With the rare exception, werewolves will kill vampires all but on sight. Bad news: They don't care overmuch for mortals either.

Even if they did get along, mortals can't keep up with werewolves. Even the best hunter is as fragile as a child compared to them. Their battle form causes all but the most steel-willed hunter to flee in panic and forget the whole thing ever happened, or to rationalize what he saw as a wild animal or deranged killer. You can lessen the effect of this "Delirium" if you wish, or increase it to drive home the horror. Perhaps one or more hunters are kin to the Lupines, easing the effects of the Delirium and giving the groups a rationale behind working together. Even still, such kinfolk are supporters to the Lupines, useful for breeding and perhaps little else, which may play well with a theme of classism (the hunters caught between aristocratic vampires and tribal werewolves, and outside the consideration of both).



If you want a fragile alliance between the hunters and Lupines, play up the tension. Lupines are hulking murder machines who may fail to distinguish between friend and foe in the middle of a melee. Treat them as loaded weapons that may go off at any second. Whatever peace or cooperation the hunters can arrange with the werewolves may dissolve the moment their mutual enemy is ash.

Werewolves may also enhance a theme of territory. The hunters may be in the middle of ridding their neighborhood of vampires only to have the Lupines encroach, seizing the opportunity to expand their own range. Hunters may need to negotiate to cross werewolf-claimed regions or follow through on an investigation that leads them deep into the same. Or perhaps something threatens both hunter and werewolf holdings: a Kindred sorcerer or infernalist loosing a corrupt spirit into the world or a wealthy vampire manipulating city zoning to turn the area into a high rise.

As allies, Lupines are dangerous; as enemies, they are deadly. Werewolves may serve as a distraction, shouldering the blame for a series of savage murders along their border (or vice versa). A Gangrel or Ravnos may lead unsuspecting hunters close to a werewolf holy site, trusting she can make her escape while the hunters bear the brunt of her trespass. Only fire, silver, or some very convincing words may save them then, at least long enough to get the hell out of there.

Magi (see V20, pp. 380-382): Willworkers and hunters might make for more natural allies than anyone else found in this section, except that magi seem to insist on remaining hidden from humanity. Reality agrees, punishing them for overt expressions of their magic. If some or all of your players availed their characters of the powers found in the Numina chapter, magi may challenge their preconceptions of power or the occult – or give them enough common ground to seek out an alliance to trade information and favors.

Magi hold no love for vampires but are often content to leave them to their business. Still, enough vampires dabble in sorcery to create some potential for one to run afoul of the other. Baali, Tremere, Tzimisce, Setites, Assamite sorcerers, and several members of the Sabbat and Tal'mahe'Ra can all be used to put hunters on the same side as a coven of willworkers, or at odds, if they have a vested interest in any of the above succeeding in their occult pursuits.

Magi often represent themes of power, hubris, and corruption. Someone who looks like a mortal hunter, bleeds like a mortal hunter, and breathes like a mortal hunter, but who left behind mere mortal concerns years



ago represents an enigma — are the willworkers still “mortal”? One may start off as an ally, but that partnership can sour quickly as the hunters witness what he’s capable of, and how alien his perspective may become.

Chronicles involving the recovery of arcane artifacts or the discovery of ancient sites could have the hunters racing magi to get there first. Or the hunters’ search may put them on the radar of the techomantic willworkers who believe such items and places should remain lost.

Ghosts (see V20 pp. 384-386): Ghosts challenge assumptions about the existence of souls and the afterlife in a way vampires don’t. Encountering one may run counter to a hunter’s religious beliefs, rob him of hope for eternal reward, or just give him the heebie-jeebies. He may be hard enough to stare down a charging werewolf, yet still be pants-shittingly terrified of the restless dead.

Ghosts represent the unknown, terror, past sins coming due, and obviously, death. A wraith may serve as the best witness to his own murder or to some scene from the past relevant to the hunters’ current situation. When including ghosts in a story, place emphasis on the unsettling nature

of such encounters, their weird tautologies, their raw emotions. They persist beyond the mortal compact with death, materializing and disappearing without seeming to notice the difference. Describe the tingle up the hunters’ spines as a ghost drifts through their bodies while trying to gain their attention.

The restless dead may haunt a place the hunters have to navigate, or they may be bound there by some application of the Necromancy Discipline. They can serve as spies for the Giovanni or for a hunter with the Medium Merit (see V20, p. 493). Perhaps they’re the victims of a vampire and sense that the hunters share an enemy with them. Maybe instead they’re haunting the hunters, as with the restless soul of a ghoul or an innocent victim caught in a crossfire.

Hunters can’t usually fight a ghost directly. If they are to be rid of the spirit, they will first have to break some strange tie that the ghost has to the temporal world. In some cases, the hunters may need to resolve such ties, such as passing on final words, finding the money meant for the ghost’s son, or otherwise helping the spirit let go of whatever keeps her from moving on.

Demons (see V20, pp. 386-387): Whether actual fallen angels born in the time before Creation or malignant spirits from some hoary other realm, demons walk the earth. By and large, they wear human skin and may be indiscernible from normal people without high Awareness or specific Numina. One thing seems common among these creatures: they want to make a deal. With some blood and a handshake, they promise power beyond a hunter's wildest dreams. Money, supplies, the ability to get out of the wheelchair the vampires sentenced him to, or access to supernatural powers, such as the ability to summon flame? They can offer it all. But at what cost? Demons are the price of victory and desperate determination personified.

For a Storyteller, demons can act as something of a *deus ex machina*, able to offer the characters a way out of particularly hopeless situations. If all the hunters are hospitalized due to an especially nasty combat that didn't go their way, or have reached a dead end through no fault of their own, a demon can offer a way out that keeps the story on track, as well as likely serving any theme that vampires do. The players may well refuse (and probably should), but it gives an enterprising Storyteller a tool to use that may feel less like cheating than just handing the hunters the key to victory. To the characters, a demon offers capabilities they may not otherwise be able to achieve. It puts the question to them plain and simple: What are they willing to lose in order to strike back against the undead? Maybe the hunters believe that they can worry about their redemption once they overcome the vampires or that they may turn their newfound power against the very demon who provided it. Dr. Faustus thought the same.

Zombies: Historically, zombies were the purview of Necromancy, which animates the lifeless bodies of the departed so they might perform physical duties for their masters. Giovanni, Samedi, and members of the True Black Hand in particular make use of these sad, shambling servants. They can be simple, mindless minions deployed as cannon fodder, or you can use them as the true threat, having risen for whatever reason you choose to impart. Their very presence suggests themes of death, horror, or slavery.

In modern nights, however, some hunters have reported encounters with the wandering dead independent of vampires. They seldom communicate their intentions, instead acting inexorably until returned to their ultimate reward. They attack if approached but otherwise trudge along in a slow, straight march to somewhere. Where? Theories are mostly religious or apocalyptic, but even pragmatic answers point to ghosts fleeing the Underworld in a hurry, animating whatever is handy. They may indicate the first sign of a greater threat, or the end of

the world. Due to their apocalyptic association, you can use zombies as a red herring, the side effect of potent magics, or a distraction to busy the hunters while some unknown necromancer pursues a greater goal.

The Others: Concurrent with reports of zombies are those of other hunters — that's the only description that makes sense. They're ostensibly mortals but display powers beyond any known to even the most jaded hunters. What's more, they seem to be following the guidance of something unseen. Are they just madmen bearing advanced forms of Numina? Or are they something altogether different? These other hunters can be used in stories focused on escalation, the cost of victory, or again, the end times. Introduce them in conjunction with demons to show the power they can offer, but also the dark reflection of what power can make. Or have them show up to confront the hunters after they've taken the demon up on his bargain. They serve as distorted reflections of the hunters' mission. Their presence may reaffirm the path the hunters are on or reveal the twisted destination of their current actions. These others may even take the hunt to dangerous extremes, proving more of an immediate threat than the vampires.

Crosshairs: Mortal Law

The characters will almost inevitably end up on the wrong side of the law at some point. It might be for legitimate offenses, such as carrying unlicensed firearms, arson, trespassing, or breaking and entering, or maybe these cops are vampire cronies coming to deliver a message.

The police can make for another obstacle or adversarial presence in your game. Perhaps the characters left behind some evidence in a previous scene. Start an extended Intelligence + Investigation roll for the police (or specific detectives if you want to add a face to their efforts). Each roll counts as a day or a week, depending on the pace you want to set. If you want a harrowing race against time, make it days. If you want the players to focus on the hunt but not neglect the presence of mortal authority, using weeks is less punishing while still building to an inevitable confrontation. The difficulty should be appropriate to how obvious a trail the characters left (no traceable evidence is a 10, a gun registered in one of their names, a 5). If the investigators accrue more evidence, lower the difficulty or add dice to represent more men on the case. Each success brings them closer to your hunters' doorsteps. At five successes, your detectives may call one of the characters "just to ask some questions" about the night of the crime. At 10 successes, they show up and introduce themselves. At 25, they order a search warrant. And so on.

If your players' characters do run afoul of the law, shooting their way out is rarely the wisest option, but players may



To Gehenna or Not To Gehenna


Demons? Zombies? High-powered hunters with abilities they claim come from angelic sources? The World of Darkness may exhibit the signs of one or several armageddons. Or not. That's up to you, as the Storyteller.

The end of the world can make a fantastic backdrop for a **Hunters Hunted** story. It involves all of the themes this book puts forward: desperation, holding onto humanity, victory at a cost, hope and hopelessness. How does the hunt change when the end appears nigh? How does it change the hunters themselves?

Show the vampires' own desperation in such dark times. After all, when and if the ancient blood gods of Kindred legend rise up, it's them they'll be after, not mortal hunters. The Sabbat may Embrace by the hundreds, attempting to raise an army to keep the Ancients at bay. The Camarilla may make frantic attempts to maintain control, clinging to structure and rules to impose whatever order is left to be found. Diablerie runs rampant as the young attempt to protect themselves and the elders devour their childer to defend their power. The Kindred's vanity turns to terror as their ancient progenitors turn on them as readily as the rest. In the middle are the hunters, the select few who know just enough to offer some guidance and protection to their fellow mortals.

It's certainly easier to justify the need for hunters with zombies shambling down the ravaged streets and vampires running rampant, unbound by their millennia-old Masquerade. Mere mortals hold the line against the forces of darkness, protecting as many as they can. Maybe the end acts as a dark vindication for the hunters who went so long without recognition or reward.

Strange times craft strange alliances. Hunters may find they share more in common with the monsters than they thought. The only hope for the world may be hunter and vampire working together, but can the practiced paranoia of either group allow such cooperation to last?



default to solving the conflict physically. The police may be controlled, corrupt, or on the take, but killing a cop is a very serious crime, and a crime the police take personally. So what should you do? You can move the story inside the legal system (up to and including imprisonment), emphasizing how the hunt isn't just a matter of cleaning the streets. All but the dirtiest of cops are on some level ostensibly on the hunters' side, even if they don't realize it. Going quietly does the hunters a greater service throughout the legal process and may plant the seed of sympathy with some on the force. You could use this as an opportunity to establish a contact or ally to help them out of their current straights. They can pool their money and hire a slick lawyer to attempt to get the case thrown out, but will he win the struggle against a district attorney in the pocket of the monsters? If you need your characters out on the

street and not holed up in holding cells, set bail for them while the investigation awaits trial. If the characters are unable to meet the amount, what a perfect opportunity for a mysterious benefactor to step in. Perhaps it's a hunter who's noticed their efforts, an existing hunter organization such as Project Twilight, or a vampire who offers to make this all go away — for a price.

You probably don't want to sidetrack your story with lengthy legal battles over concealment laws. The police may be particularly deaf, dumb, and blind in your story, made ineffective by vampiric influence. Or perhaps they are spread too thin, or bought off by the antagonist or a rival with an interest in the hunters' success. Whatever the case, conflicts with mortal authorities should have consequences, but don't let them detract from the struggle against the undead.



Chapter Six: Organizations and Resources

The section on Witch-Hunters in V20 (pp. 370-377) reference a number of organizations that hunt vampires. Here, we expand on those references, putting a spotlight on those that work together to deal with the Kindred scourge, as well as the specialized tools they use to do it.

The Society of Leopold

And the angel spoke unto me, in a strong voice, crying, "Many are the children of the Dragon, the Serpent, the great Satan, and they are among you now. I tell you, Servants of Christ, that the Parousia is near, that the Second Coming cometh soon. Stronger still grow the children of the Dragon, and they multiply, and they are a wound unto the earth. And we are the balm for this wound, we must cleanse it with fire, and purify it, and then the earth shall be ready for the Parousia, and we shall be judged worthy."

— Leopold of Murnau, *The Testament of Leopold*

Call them candles in the dark. Call them wounded angels. Call them sadistic zealots. But do not call them apathetic. Before science lit its night light to make men brave, these sheep dared to defy the predator lords. They are not antiquated crusaders cloistered in monasteries. Tonight, they wield blade and gun in seedy alleys painted

with monster blood and the flickering glow of a neon cross. They recruit and coordinate attacks over the Internet. They blast digital choir music through earbuds to drown out the poisonous words of the demons they exorcise. These are the stories of the modern Inquisition. There are no mortals the Children of Caine fear more.

Theme and Mood

The theme of the Inquisition is the modern crusader. All the world is their Holy Land. When an Inquisitor looks down the most mundane street, she cannot help but see the secret war. There is no going back. The stakes cannot be any higher. The Enemy is the Devil himself, and the souls of all humankind hang in the balance. In the direst moments, the Inquisitor knows this is not even the true war. When the world cracks and Hell breaks loose across the earth, then the real battle will begin. And the Inquisition will be ready.

The mood of the Inquisition is faith and doubt. A bladed pendulum swings between the two. Apocalyptic frenzy makes the blade shiver. What gets cut? What bleeds? Can a witch-hunter do the terrible things required and still maintain the faith? Ecstatic passion and drive, and the wonderful and terrible things they can enable us to do, are at the heart of the faithful hunter's tale.

Church Orders

A considerable number of religious orders reside within the Catholic Church and have played no small role in the history of the Society of Leopold. The most pertinent orders are explored below. Most require vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Members identify their affiliation by the use of initials at the end of their name. These initials are provided for each order discussed.

Benedictines

The Order of Saint Benedict (O.S.B.) is a grouping of priests, nuns, and laity who follow the Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia, written in A.D. 520. The rule favors the practical over the austere, calling for a combination of prayer, labor, study, and the recital of the Daily Office and the Divine Office. Though the majority of Benedictine work is on prayer and liturgy, many abbeys engage with the surrounding community. Benedictines are active in education, liturgical renewal, and reviving medieval church music.

Dominicans

More properly known as the Order of Friars Preachers (O.P.), this order was founded by St. Dominic in 1215 to preach the Gospels and combat vice and doctrinal or moral error. The Dominicans are made of three orders: the First Order, comprised of priests and brothers; the Second Order, of cloistered nuns; and the Third Order, which has two branches – sisters who live in communities and engage in social and mission work, and laypeople who emulate Dominican ideals outside a monastic community. The typical garb of community Dominicans is a white tunic and hood (or a veil for sisters), a black mantle, and a rosary. The Dominicans follow the Rule of St. Augustine, which enjoins community living, the asceticism of silence, and solemn choir service. Strict Dominicans abstain from eating meat.

Franciscans

St. Francis of Assisi founded three orders, all of which call themselves “Franciscan.” The First Order was founded in 1209, and currently includes three autonomous groups: the Order of Friars Minor (O.F.M.), the Order of Friars Minor Conventional, and the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin. The Second Order is comprised of cloistered nuns known as the Poor Clares (after their founder, Saint Clare). The Third Order was founded for laypeople who wish to exemplify Franciscan piety in secular life.

The Franciscans are the largest religious order in the Roman Catholic Church; each division is jurisdictionally distinct. The Franciscans have practiced evangelism, built hospitals, tended the ill and poor, and engaged in historical research and teaching. In their early history, the Franciscans, with their emphasis on the poverty of Christ and the Church, were accused more than once of heresy.

Jesuits

The Society of Jesus (S.J.), founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in 1540, grew rapidly across the world. Jesuit missionaries took Catholicism into Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while Jesuit scholars contributed to theology, linguistics, and philosophy. The goal of the Society of Jesus is twofold: its own salvation and the salvation of all humanity. The Jesuits are not limited to a particular apostolate (hospital, school, mission, etc.). Ignatius abandoned many conventional monastic practices which he felt conflicted with an active apostolate: communal singing of the divine office, compulsory fasts, and penances were among these practices. Contemporary Jesuits stress more social activism than Catholic orthodoxy.

There are four grades of Jesuits: scholastics, younger members training for the priesthood; lay brothers (temporal coadjutors), who tend to the needs of the community; priests (spiritual coadjutors) with simple vows; and professed fathers, priests of greater intellectual advancement, with solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Jesuit training is rigorous, including a novitiate (two years), philosophical study (three years), apostolate work (two to three years), theological study (four years, with ordination after the third), and the tertianship (one year): prayer, study, and pastoral work. Vows typically follow the tertianship, and for many, advanced academic work (e.g., a doctorate) then ensues. The process is designed to weed out unworthy individuals, build the requisite skills for ministry, and engage in a deeper union with God through Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises.


Divisions

Like the Roman Church, the Society of Leopold is made up of a number of smaller divisions. The members of the Inquisition share a common goal – to deliver humanity from supernatural evil – but their interests and modus operandi vary (and even clash). The four official sub-orders within the Society are the Condotierri, Gladius Dei, the Office of the Censor, and the Order of Saint Joan. The remaining groups are merely viewed as sects.



Cenacles and Cenacula

A Cenacle is a group of Inquisitors operating together. A Cenaculum (plural: Cenacula) is a retreat house and base of operations for Inquisitors. The word derives from the room in which Christ and His Disciples partook of the Last Supper. The original meaning of “dining room” is not lost upon older Kindred who relish the etymological irony, particularly when feasting upon an Inquisitor.



Subdivisions

The Condotierri

Founded in the 15th century, the Condotierri is a quasi-military order more concerned with the safety of the Society than the actual completion of missions. A Condotierre-General (selected by the Inquisitor-General) commands the militaristic hierarchy. Condotierri do not have the autonomy of other Inquisitors, but are assigned to protect the larger and older Cenacula. Smaller Cenacula, which don't always have the luxury of a permanent Condotierre, often request their presence for security or the completion of a particular mission.

Recently, Inquisitor-General Bauer initiated a more rigorous basic training regimen for the Condotierri Novitiate at the newly opened combat colleges in Nevada's Black Rock Desert and in the Spanish Pyrenees. Training includes security measures and warfare techniques both ancient and cutting edge. The Condotierri are as well-armed and technologically advanced as most national militaries, though lacking the larger ordnance.

Ranks within the Condotierri mirror those of the rest of the Society, but it retains its original, stricter hierarchy. When a Condotierre operates in conjunction with other Inquisitors, she generally cedes to the highest ranking Inquisitor, unless the Condotierre feels (and can justifiably prove) that the Society is put at unnecessary risk. Condotierri on duty in the Society's headquarters in Rome, the Monasterio di San Michele, typically wear dark blue paramilitary uniforms, although on holy days and at formal gatherings, they frequently wear an elaborate

Renaissance uniform similar to the clothing of the Swiss Guard. Condotierri on duty at other Cenacula dress as they feel most comfortable, typically in civilian garb.

In their earliest days, Condotierri worked in groups of three, called “lances.” A lance consisted of a mounted soldier, a squire, and a lancer. Although military tactics have changed, the Condotierri prefer to work in lances of three.

Gladius Dei

They are the corps d'élite, the “Sword of God,” the most distinguished order within the Society. Its membership is by invitation only, and is comparable to a knighthood. Its members are the ideal Inquisitors: loyal without fault, zealous, courageous, and capable. Members of Gladius Dei are hand selected by the Inquisitor-General herself and act under her direct authority. It is often an invitation to join the ranks of glorious martyrdom, for the Gladius Dei are called together for the most dangerous of missions.

Members of Gladius Dei may originally come from any sect or faction. In the past, new members were not required to end affiliations with their former groups, but Inquisitor-General Bauer has recently decreed that those in the Gladius Dei must dissolve all other factional ties. Loyalty is more systematically transferred to the Gladius Dei. This has caused some murmur of concern amongst the other factions, though not so loudly when the Censors are listening.

Gladius Dei's members are cocky, even arrogant, but with good reason — no auto-da-fé (a call for judgment, usually destruction, against a supernatural) called by Gladius Dei has ever failed. Their critics once referred to the order as “God's Little Army,” though more recently as “The Iron Maiden's Little Army.” More cynical critics wonder if Gladius Dei is nothing more than an ecclesiastical bully, picking fights that it knows it will win. Some auto-da-fé that would seem to be perfect for Gladius Dei went ignored.

Members of Gladius Dei often wear a ceremonial badge: a gold sword lapel pin, worn blade down so that it resembles a simple cross from a distance.

Office of the Censor

They who judge the judges. The Inquisition within the Inquisition.

Membership in the Office of the Censor is offered by the Inquisitor-General. Typically, however, nominations for Censor candidates come from the Office itself. This Office, administered by a Provincial, is considerably more organized than Gladius Dei.

Some within the Inquisition feared that the Censors were becoming too powerful, too independent, and that the Office was trying to enforce its own agenda. They were right. Ingrid Bauer was herself a Censor. After she arose to power as Inquisitor-General, it was the Censors who swept through the Society's ranks, taking away the entrenched spies of the Kindred and the loudest of Bauer's critics. When those screams finally died away, the accusations were much less public. There is no more ambiguity; the Office of the Censor now holds the most power within the Society.

When a Censor arrives to investigate an individual or a Cenaculum, those in question are considered in a state of certiorari: they are allowed to continue their standard practices and procedures, but a representative of the Office of the Censor must accompany them at all times. Furthermore, all records of the Cenaculum are open to investigation, its members open to interrogation. These days, random investigations happen with greater frequency.

Although the practice of Theurgy is not condemned by the Society, its use is still circumspect, so the Office of the Censor requires that all practitioners of Theurgy "register" with the Office "for future reference." This is not the polite suggestion it once was.

Censors are not permitted to remain in any other faction, but they typically maintain the ideology of any previous faction.

Order of Saint Joan

The Order of Saint Joan is not so much a "subdivision" of the Society as an autonomous Order that acts in concert with the Society of Leopold. The Order recognizes the authority of the Society and the Inquisitor-General, but maintains its own hierarchy. Members of the Order may work within standard Society Cenacula, but they rarely rise about the position of Councilor. None are ever promoted within the Society to the rank of Abbé or above. The Order maintains its own Cenacula, called Convents.

The Order of Saint Joan is led by the Abbess of Chartres, who defers to the Inquisitor-General in most matters of policy. The Order's Convents do not welcome men, including Inquisitors, anywhere beyond specified guest areas. No one outside the Order has ever visited the Convent of Chartres. The Abbess either speaks through her assistants from offices outside the Convent proper, or leaves the Convent to call upon people.

None of the Order's members who have worked within the Society's ranks ever show evidence of Theurgic study, but there are some rumors that the Convent of Chartres has a number

of powerful Theurgists in its midst. There are many rumors about the elusive Order, and none have yet to be proven.

Historically, the Office of the Censor has never trusted the Order of Saint Joan, which has repeatedly refused offers to fully merge with the Society. That strain has reached a breaking point with the rise of Inquisitor-General Bauer. The Office of the Censor submitted a list of members from the Order who were to report to Rome for questioning. The Order never complied, Convents have closed their doors, and all communication from Chartres has ceased.

The silence is chilled. The tension crackles. There are rumors that Inquisitor-General Bauer and the Abbess of Chartres have some sort of personal quarrel between them. Inquisitors the world over wearily wait to see what will happen next.

Sects

While some Inquisitors remain generalists, many find intellectual support and mutual ideology in a sect. Historically, the Society of Leopold has allowed, even encouraged, diversity within its ranks. That encouragement died with Monsignor Amelio Vittore. Now the sects clamor and maneuver for the favor of their new, frightening Inquisitor-General.

The Brethren of Albertus

Magic is evil, but one must learn it to best combat it, or so go the teachings of Albertus Magnus. The Albertines excel in the arts of Theurgy, and use it to great effect against the Supernatural. Although called "Brethren," they were among the first sects to freely admit women into their ranks.

The Albertines are not always trusted. Most Inquisitors still believe that "good magic" is simply an illusion that opens the door to black magic. Strangely, though, no Inquisitor-General has ever expressly outlawed Theurgy. Some cynics believe that the Albertines maintain some control over the Inquisitor-General. Although the Albertines cooperate with their fellow Inquisitors, rumors exist that the Brethren have their own private Cenaculum where they study their arts.

The Children of Lazarus

"Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who could triumph over death, and it is only by His power that we are able to do the same." For the Children of Lazarus, vampires are guilty of the greatest transgression by overcoming death itself.

The Children of Lazarus are a relatively new sect, forming in the late 18th century. However, their concerns



and ideology stretch directly back to Leopold of Murnau himself; much of his Testament deals with his observations and beliefs concerning the undead. Furthermore, Leopold was killed while fighting one such creature. The Children of Lazarus are now the largest sect within the Society, but somewhat extreme. They ignore other supernaturals and focus only on missions that cleave the vampire scourge.

Fathers of the Good Death

This small group, which admits only ordained priests, believes that vampires are unclean spirits from before the Flood, immortal creatures possessing corpses. Their presence is ultimately responsible for the spiritual decay of humanity. It is the duty of the Fathers of the Good Death to track down and destroy these spirits, restoring the balance of nature. They do not hunt with the hatred for vampires that the Children of Lazarus evince, but do so with an eerily amiable efficiency.

The Sanbenito

Depending with whom you speak, this group either does not exist or is a poison in the heart of the Inquisition. The Sanbenito are those Inquisitors who follow the beliefs of Raffaele Renzi, the Florentine Heretic, and instead of trying to destroy supernaturals, attempt to aid them. A

Sanbenito can operate within the Society for only so long; eventually, the conflict in interests must give. At one time or another, many Inquisitors have secretly pondered the issues raised by Renzi.

Sisterhood of Saint Claire

Saint Claire's sect is made up of those who take vows of extreme poverty in order to attract gifts of healing. They refuse all personal possessions and comfort, except for what the Society equips them with. Although many are trained in contemporary medical procedures as well as somewhat archaic surgery, they rely on prayer, devotion, and the laying on of hands.

Inquisitor-Generals come and go, and intrigue changes like the tide, but witch-hunters always need healing, and so the Sisterhood has never suffered from political enemies.

The Order of Saint Michael

This sect is the inheritor of the original Order's ideals. They do not seek the presence of the Infernal "in other things" (vampires, werewolves, etc.), but hunt the direct presence of the diabolic on earth. Some Michaelites study Theurgy (particularly Via Geniorum), but not to the extent of the Albertines. They do it with less intellectual curiosity and more pragmatism.




Theurgists: The Judas Witches

There are those who believed that the new Inquisitor-General, this Iron Maiden, would cleanse the Society of all Theurgists and mystics. Instead, she has made greater use of them as weapons. Perhaps this is to compensate for the recent and alarming erosion of True Faith in the Society's ranks. Perhaps this fits in with the "duality" that Bauer claims. When asked, she says that the Original Sin, the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, is the burden of humanity, but it is also part of our arsenal. "Undesirable trades are necessary, and just as we have the hooded executioner, so too do we have the magus."

Bauer may utilize magical study, but she has taken stricter control of it. All Theurgists must register with the Office of the Censor. Some receive official sanction to perform the occult arts, the Sanctuary of the Disciplina Arcani, from the Inquisitor-General herself. These "Judas Witches" represent the supernatural turned against itself. They cannot be questioned or punished for their study of the occult (though other Inquisitors can request this sanction revoked if misconduct is proven). There are rumors that Bauer has given the sanction not only to Theurgists, but to non-Christian practitioners of Numina (and even supernatural creatures) whom the Society employs or controls.

Technically, practicing Theurgy without this sanction is not outlawed, but these are tumultuous times, and it is hard to know where the line lies before one crosses it. An unsanctioned mystic walks a dangerous path.



The Sons of Tertullian

These Inquisitors are deeply concerned with ghosts and demonic spirits. The Sons are a throwback to the earlier days of the Inquisition; they believe that anyone

who speaks against the Word of God must be possessed, so they have a more strident concern for orthodoxy. They have come to resort to the occasional use of torture when dealing with individuals that they believe are possessed. The Sons tend to be skilled exorcists.

The Sect of Saint James is an even more radical subgroup of the Sons of Tertullian. Amazingly, considering the Sons' concern for orthodoxy, the Sect follows the words of a Gnostic treatise which advocates suicide as a means for entering Heaven. Rumor has it that many crossed over in 2012 and continue to shamble in some monastery basement, while the living sect members wait patiently for their rotting fellows to regain the power of speech and speak of what they have seen.

Backgrounds

In addition to the Backgrounds available to hunters generally, Inquisitors can also purchase the Mob, Reliquary, and Status Backgrounds.

Mob

The media and social networks of the information age offer a crafty Inquisitor new and innovative tools for organizing congregations into witch-hunting mobs. Zealotry surges through the new vectors of status updates. Fiery sermons sound from home to home via video chat. General Inquisitor Bauer personally instructs her subordinates in these techniques, and you have learned well. These folk are not as educated in the ways of the Enemy as you, and they do not command miracle-working faith or occult power. But they are angry. They are armed. And they are not going to take it anymore. You will find that a mob is much like weaponized fire: a destructive force that puts the fear of God in the hearts of monsters, but one that easily spreads out of control.

- You command a mob of two people.
- You command a mob of four people.
- You command a mob of seven people.
- You command a mob of fifteen people.
- You command a mob of twenty-five people.

Reliquary

You have been granted access to the reliquary of the Church. The vaults of the Vatican are ancient, dark, and deep, and many are the occulted secrets within – from holy relics to the terrible devices of witchery that the Church locks away to keep from blasphemous hands. This Background allows you to possess such a supernatural artifact and represents

both a privilege and a responsibility, as you are the keeper of the relic. The loss or destruction of the item consumes any Background points spent, and the Society may think twice before opening the reliquary to you in the future. The Storyteller has the final say on a relic's value and powers. Some example relics can be found on pp. 157-158.

Players may opt to pool Background points for a shared relic. See pp. 118-119 of V20 for more information on pooled Backgrounds.

- You possess a minor relic.
- You possess a useful relic.
- You possess a relic of significant power.
- You possess a relic of incredible power.
- You possess a relic mentioned in many legends.

Status

You are an Inquisitor of status in the Society of Leopold. Such distinction might come from a reputation of dedicated work, the slaying of a particularly powerful servant of the Devil, the performing of a holy miracle, the gathering of esoteric knowledge, or even simple longevity, a rarity in witch-hunters. As with any institution, having friends in high places helps as well. Regardless of status, a Society member is always called an Inquisitor. An Inquisitor without a Status rating begins as a novice.

When dealing with Inquisitors of lower Status, apply the difference in Status as a bonus to any Social dice pools.

- Tertiary
- Councilor
- Abbé
- Censor
- Provincial

Merits and Flaws

The following Merits and Flaws represent traits or situations that may occur with hunter characters serving the Society of Leopold. All Merits and Flaws are subject to Storyteller approval.

Mental

Isolated Upbringing (1pt. Flaw)

You were raised by the Society of Leopold, either born to an Inquisitor or adopted by the Society at an early age. The Inquisition is all you know. The sanctity of your holy

work is honed by a purity of skill, unclouded by distraction. Unfortunately, you have a limited understanding of the outside world. When in a non-Society setting, subtract one die from all Social dice pools. When field work takes you beyond the Inquisition's walls, how will you react to all the new people, stimuli, and fellow hunters who are not so cloistered?

Religious Hysteria (3pt. Flaw)

Angels and demons are everywhere! You see them. You note the signs of the Divine plan in every nuance of life. The entire world's an omen! The Holy Ghost whispers in your ear constantly. Why do others not understand? Even your brothers and sisters in the faith shake their heads as you breathlessly elucidate your latest holy vision. The difference between this Flaw and the Ecstatic Merit (see below) is that people do not take you seriously. Your visions occur a bit too often, are a bit too untenable. Subtract one die from all Social dice pools.

Social

Ecclesial Rank (1-3pt. Merit)

Though your status as an Inquisitor is a secret outside of the Society of Leopold, you are also an official member of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. This Merit determines your standing, each point widening the scope of your service and influence. The one-point version grants you the rank of priest, presiding over one parish (and its deacons and laity). The two-point version grants you the rank of Bishop, presiding over one diocese, consisting of many parishes (and their priests). The three-point version grants you the rank of Archbishop, presiding over several dioceses (and their bishops).

Sanctioned Witch (2pt. Merit)

You are known as a "Judas Witch," having received the Sanctuary of the Disciplina Arcani from the Inquisitor-General herself. You cannot be punished or detained for occult study or the use of Numina (though the sanction can be revoked for misconduct). A tattoo of the Seal of Solomon, on the palm of your left hand, marks your credentials. This does not mean everyone in the Society trusts your expertise, as many despise the magic arts.

Rebel (1-3pt. Flaw)

You have acquired some infamy in the Society of Leopold. At the one-point version of this Flaw, you might simply be scorned by your betters, who wait for you to slip up. At the two-point version, you are actively loathed and can expect little help. At the three-point version, there are Inquisitors who hate you as much as the supernaturals. You should work with the Storyteller to come up with the specific reason for this ill repute. Bear in mind, your reputation is relative

among the divisions within the Inquisition. Some sects may embrace you just to spite their rivals. For example, while you might earn the ire of the Society at large by studying the sorcerous arts too closely, you might find acceptance, and even encouragement, from the Brethren of Albertus.

Supernatural

Ecstatic (2pt. Merit)

You are prone to fits of religious ecstasy – stigmata, glossalia (speaking in tongues), visions, and trances. This is a Merit of dubious benefit. While some may distrust you as a religious hysteric, you find high regard among others of the faith as one “touched by God.” Add one die to any Social dice pools when interacting with the Society (and possibly others with similar spiritual beliefs).

Ecumenist (4pt. Merit)

The Holy Spirit “bloweth where it listeth.” You understand this. You see the fractal reflections of your God in other religions, and you remain humble in knowing how little of the divine you can know. Where others must brandish the holy symbols of their tradition

when using True Faith, you see the supernal spark at the core of beliefs beyond your own, and you are able to use their religious icons and holy ground when confronting the supernatural. Likewise, in your presence, a group of individuals from different religions may pool their True Faith for greater effect. Such a communal pool requires only one person with this Merit. You can be the bridge that connects all faiths as brothers and sisters in the long, dark night of the soul.

Fist of God (7pt. Merit)

Some call you “Witch-Hammer,” for your naked hands do grievous hurt to the children of the elder night. All your Brawling damage is considered aggravated against supernaturals. Work with the Storyteller to create a good reason for this rare effect, and how it developed. Only mortals with Humanity of seven or higher may purchase (or keep) this Merit.

Holy Aura (2pt. Merit)

No matter the color, your aura burns as a brilliant beacon of religious devotion. Even mortals who cannot see auras



are drawn to your presence. Subtract one from the difficulty of all social interaction rolls. Some supernaturals will find this a positive aspect; others, particularly the Kindred, may likely be hostile toward you. Many will believe you possess great power (regardless of the truth).

Paradise Lost (2pt. Flaw)

You once had the True Faith that could light the night. It is now extinguished. This is not the simple loss of an advantage, but a gaping wound of the soul. You know what it was like to be seen in the light of the divine, but now stumble outside the sight of God and drown in the corpse-cold murk of doubts, an ever-flowing river with no end in sight.

Whenever you are confronted with this loss (holding a holy symbol, asked to perform a miracle, entering a church, etc.), make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7) or lose one die on all actions for the scene, as sorrow seizes you. A botched Willpower roll consumes a Willpower point and opens you to despair. Indulging a vice (alcohol, drugs, pornography, etc.) can replenish Willpower points lost in this way.

This Flaw can be earned mid-chronicle with a loss of True Faith, or it can be taken at character creation as part of a tragic backstory, possibly initiating a redemption tale of faith regained.

Theurgy

Is all sorcery evil? Or is there a magic brought about with the assistance of good spirits? This debate echoes through the halls of the Society of Leopold, as it has for centuries. Some of the debaters have gone on to the fire and stake. It is said the practice of Theurgy came into the Society during the Renaissance, when Christian scholars rediscovered the ancient arts of alchemy and magic. However, its roots stretch further back into Jewish mysticism and the teachings of Esoteric Christianity – to heighten one’s spiritual nature, to speak to one’s Higher Self, one’s Inner God, in order to better fathom the wisdoms of God – to hear and to see and to speak the mysteries that the fleshy ear, jellied eye, and tongue of clay could not.

Yet many are the Inquisitors who take an ill view of Theurgy, proclaiming it is no different than Goety (magic that invokes evil spirits). To entertain the notion of “good” magic, they argue, is to begin down the slippery slope of temptation. These critics call Theurgists “Simonites,” after the magus whom Saint Peter defeated. The advocates of Theurgy maintain it is but another means of invoking Heaven.

Treat Theurgy as Hedge Magic, using the rules listed in pp. 71-72, but the superstitions and sacrifices powering this

Numina will follow the idioms of the Christian Church. Theurgists often invoke the name of the Archangel Raziel, “The Keeper of Secrets,” “The Angel of Mysteries,” who, it is written, stands close to the throne of God and put down all of the secrets of the universe into a book. It is rumored that fragments of this tome, the famous *Sefer Raziel HaMalach*, are locked away in the vaults of the Vatican.

An Inquisitor might refer to any Numina with Christian trappings as “Theurgy,” though the Society has its own names for the Paths. For example, the Path of Healing, the Path of Divination, and Pyrokinesis are known as *Via Medicamenti*, *Via Oraculi*, and *Via Ignis* respectively. When using Astral Projection, an Inquisitor might pray to Raziel and actually feel the angel pull away the shroud to the higher mysteries.

A Theurgist may purchase the following Numina Paths along with any others presented in this book (with Storyteller permission).

Via Geniorum

Via Geniorum is one of the Ways that is most distrusted by Theurgy’s critics; Theurgists who practice this Via deal with the realm of spirits and the demonic. They argue that all creatures are ultimately under the call of heaven, including spirits and demons. These Theurgists believe that there is an entire spectrum of Spirits who allied neither with Heaven nor Hell, yet can be commanded by the power of Heaven. This Way grants the practitioner power over non-human spiritual entities (demons, elementals, etc.).

Knowledge of a spirit’s true name grants one power over it. A true name is not the title that the spirit commonly goes by, but a more complex, primal invocation. The world warps and flutters when true names are spoken. They are jealously guarded secrets, requiring extended research rolls, Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 9), and a good occult library to decipher. Every success grants a “syllable” of the name. The simplest of spirits might have a single syllable true name, but more powerful demons will have many more (up to the discretion of the Storyteller). A Theurgist may try and trick a spirit into divulging its true name. True name syllables are often a form of currency amongst spirits and occultists, who tend to hoard them.

System

Roll: Varies (see below)

Modifiers: -2 difficulty if the Theurgist knows the spirit’s true name

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: Varies (see below)

Via Geniorum Levels

- **Ritual of Revelation:** The Theurgist does not peer into the spirit world so much as command nearby supernal beings to reveal themselves. On a successful Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 8), the Theurgist can see all spirits in the immediate area (including those possessing physical bodies).

- **Ritual of Protection:** On a successful Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7), the Theurgist may draw protective sigils into handheld objects or in a small circle around her. Extended ritual rolls can make larger circles or more completely protected locations, with 10 successes being enough to protect a small house. Spirits cannot harass or enter a person or location, thus protected, without succeeding in a Willpower roll (difficulty 9). Protection lasts for one month or until the sigil is disturbed (a carved sigil is much harder to disrupt than one drawn in chalk).

- **Ritual of Dismissal:** The Theurgist can send a spirit back to its native realm. This via requires a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 9). The number of success needed, in an extended ritual, vary widely based on the power of the spirit (and left to the Storyteller's judgment).

- **Ritual of Summoning:** The Theurgist can now summon spirit entities. This via requires a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 9). The number of success needed, in an extended ritual, vary widely based on the power of the spirit (and left to the Storyteller's judgment). A summoned spirit must remain in the Theurgist's presence for a scene or until it has answered three questions (it cannot be made to reveal its true name in this manner). Further interaction relies on Social rolls, sacrifices, or other powers. A botched roll summons an enraged spirit who likely attacks the unlucky Theurgist.

- **Ritual of Binding:** The Theurgist can now force a spirit into servitude. This via requires a Manipulation + Occult roll (Difficulty 9). The number of success needed, in an extended ritual, vary widely based on the power of the spirit (and left to the Storyteller's judgment). A bound spirit may be asked to do a specific action ("Attack that vampire!") or an ongoing action ("Watch over me.") lasting until the next sunrise or sunset.

Via Necromantiae

The Via Necromantiae is Theurgy designed to contact or banish the dead. This Via resembles in parts those of the Via Geniorum, but it is, nonetheless, distinct.

System

Roll: Varies (see below)

Modifiers: -1 difficulty if Theurgist has an object important to the ghost in life

Cost: 1 Willpower

Duration: Varies (see below)

Via Necromantiae Levels

- **Ritual of Wakening:** The Theurgist may command a recently deceased cadaver to awaken. On a successful Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 7), the corpse will sit up and answer the Theurgist's questions, to the best of its ability, for one minute per success. Every twenty-four hours the cadaver has been dead adds one to the difficulty. A cadaver more than three days dead cannot be wakened.

- **Ritual of Warding:** Theurgists may protect an area from ghostly intrusion. With a successful Wits + Occult roll (difficulty 7), the Theurgist may block ghosts from entering a room-sized area. Each success indicates one week of successful warding.

- **Ritual of Communication:** Theurgists may contact the dead by making a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 10). That difficulty drops, cumulatively, if any of the following criteria are met: Theurgist possesses an object important to the ghost in life (-1), a person important to the ghost is present (-1), the ritual is conducted in the ghost's former home (-1), the ritual is conducted in a place where the veil between the Underworld and the world of the living is thin (-2). Maintaining contact with the dead is difficult. Each success rolled allows the Theurgist one minute of communication. The time period can be doubled for another point of Willpower.

- **Ritual of Expulsion:** Theurgists may expel a haunting ghost. This requires a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty of the ghost's Willpower + 3, maximum of 9); this is a sustained roll, requiring a number of successes equal to twice the ghost's Willpower. Simply initiating the banishing costs 1 Willpower, but no more Willpower is required for the remainder of the struggle.

- **Ritual of Vivification:** The Theurgist can now urge a cadaver to rise. This via requires a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 8). Every success animates the corpse for one week, and that time can be doubled for another point of Willpower. Animated cadavers will not have much in the way of personality or intelligence, but can follow simple directions.

The U.S. Government

“You have no idea how far they’re penetrated this organization, or how powerful they are. At this point, I believe even the POTUS could be comprised. I pray to God that someone sees the same things I see.”

— General Arthur Clifford, ret.

Big Brother is watching you. And if you believe that, you can get a really great deal on the Brooklyn Bridge, too. Officially, the United States Government does not pander to terrorists, and it does not accept the existence of supernatural phenomena.

Unofficially? Well, that depends who you ask. Some sections of the National Security Agency use chaoscopic scanners to monitor the government and the people, looking for “negative bodies.” The FBI’s Special Affairs Department is a ghost of its former self, but those few dedicated agents who know the truth won’t let go. A handful of agents in other government departments — including the CIA, and the Department of Homeland Security — have discovered kernels of truth, but they’re very much on their own.

Theme and Mood

Government hunters represent a unique take on a **Hunters Hunted** game — the characters are the authorities. If it all goes to hell, they can call in the police or armed forces. But intelligence agencies have enemies both within and without, and any agents who reveal what they know about the supernatural risk being demoted or “retired” by factions of their own agency.

The theme of a government hunter story is protecting the status quo against chaos and anarchy. They have to look at things on a national scale, and often come into conflict with their own agencies about the truth of supernatural beings. Government hunters must balance who they are as people with the face they show the world.

The mood is one of paranoia. Supernatural elements have infiltrated every agency. When will they come for the hunters? The NSA is just now discovering the scale of “extra-dimensional” influence within the government. The SAD has too much to do and nowhere near the necessary resources. DHS actively works against its own hunters, and the only man who knows the truth in the CIA is a paranoid schizophrenic.

The National Security Agency

The National Security Agency is the information-gathering arm of the US intelligence community,

responsible for monitoring communications and breaking encrypted transmissions. For a long time, it had a hell of a lot of power and almost no accountability, thanks to its remit to “ensure national security by any means necessary.”

The first major shift came with the formation of the Department of Homeland Security, and a whole-cloth reform of the machinery of US intelligence. Suddenly more accountable than ever, and forced to share information with a suite of agencies that the NSA had spent years infiltrating, the agency had to re-evaluate its position. While the various internal factions all scrambled for power, someone discredited the head of the NSA, General Arthur Clifford, and ousted him from his position. While the two known vampires infiltrating the NSA, Bruce Higgins and Felicity Price, are the primary suspects, the truth is somewhat stranger. Maurice Edwards, a cat’s-paw of the human secret society known as the Star Chamber, arranged General Clifford’s fall. Nobody knows how the Star Chamber knew about the NSA’s level of supernatural knowledge, or why they wanted to gut the agency, but it worked.

General Clifford’s departure shook the NSA to its core. He knew a surprising amount about the supernatural, but his knowledge left with him — censors have redacted his sensitive files, in order to save the agency from the ramblings of a madman.

Truth from Chaos

Several years after General Clifford’s fall, the NSA acquired a number of chaoscopic scanners. Though none of the NSA agents know how these chaoscopes work, they know how to use the devices to identify “negative bodies.”

The upshot of this discovery is that the NSA has a number of static devices that can detect vampires and see ghosts. Roughly a two dozen people know about the chaoscopes, including the operators. The spymasters of the NSA don’t want more of their agents knowing why they’re training with armored moon suits, but a handful of spies in the field have pieced together some clues. The Agency has taken delivery of two mobile chaoscopes, but only a trained operator can requisition one for field operations.

The NSA has so far identified a number of vampires and pawns of vampires in government and among the intelligence community. The agency don’t know that what they’re seeing are vampires. General Shivers is sure that the “negative bodies” are people possessed by extra-dimensional entities, and has no knowledge of vampires or ghosts. Colonel Alec Riley has a number of contacts in the FBI, and had heard of the fabled “Special Affairs Department.” As an experiment, he leaked information about a minor functionary who appeared to be possessed



to a contact in the FBI. He read the official report a week after the target disappeared.

After that investigation, Colonel Riley has trained up five of the chaoscope operators to work in the field, trailing suspected negative bodies. They've tested one mobile chaoscope so far, using it to provide information to a field team. At General Shivers' request they haven't yet taken action, but keep known extra-dimensionals under observation.

In the Field

NSA agents on field operations come from two groups. The first know about the threat of extra-dimensional entities, and have spent time monitoring chaoscopes. These agents remain skeptical of the supernatural, but they have seen the hollow bodies in person and know that they exhibit some strange characteristics that warrant further investigation. Chaoscope operators answer only to Shivers, Riley, and Johnstone.

Other agents come from the NSA's ranks of intelligence operatives and spies. Field operatives from an espionage background don't know anything about the supernatural, and don't know about the chaoscopes. This lack of information can prove a handicap to curious agents who want as much background information as possible in order to discover the truth about their subjects. Most agents have so far been content to watch and wait, but some have

petitioned Colonel Johnstone to join any department of the NSA that results from their investigation.

Working for the NSA

A story focused on the NSA ramps up the paranoid mood of a government hunter game. Apart from the twenty-five people who know the truth about the chaoscopes, characters cannot trust anyone. Early on, most missions will involve intelligence gathering, but at some point that's going to change. When it does, will that just give the outsiders more information? The characters should plan at least four moves ahead, and always have plans A through M.

If you're using Merits and Flaws, Paranoid, Manchurian Candidate, and Backup Identity all help reinforce the mood of an NSA-based story.

General Shivers has instituted a training program for agents to handle extra-dimensional threats. Though these agents don't know why, they're prepared to operate in armored suits with mirrored visors and aural inhibitors to prevent manipulation by the negative bodies. These agents train in a small facility in New Mexico, where they remain cut off from the rest of the agency. When Shivers decides to act, these agents will be his vanguard.

The Trigger

Shivers, Riley, and Johnstone have so far remained free from interference because they control who knows what. Even so, they'll need to act soon. Colonel Riley has taken the extraordinary step of compromising a number of CIA agents and returning them to the United States. He's chosen agents who worked with Bob Schnoblin (see below), since their credulity would give him an extra level of deniability. So far, he has acquired seven burned spies, split between Los Angeles, Miami, and Portland.

Riley hasn't used his emergency assets for anything so far, but he's also not told General Shivers about them. He thinks that he's blurred any links between himself and his spies, but he's wrong: both Felicity Price and Maurice Edwards know about his plan, but neither wants to do anything until he actually uses them. After all, a group of trained spies could be useful, especially since both Price and Edwards can intercept messages once they leave Riley's desk.

Special Affairs Division

The Special Affairs Department of the FBI used to enjoy relative autonomy from the rest of the Bureau. Senior figures in the Bureau's hierarchy knew that it hunted monsters and turned a blind eye to requisitions for silver bullets or wooden stakes. The SAD was an open secret among the echelons of power.

A lot has changed in the last eighteen years.

History

SAD started life as a "shadow agency," a wholly independent unit that paid lip-service to being part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but had nothing to do with the FBI's field agents or chain of command, and included agents from several of the intelligence community's other agencies. With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and massive changes in the structure of US Intelligence agencies, the FBI fully absorbed SAD. While they remain the only government agency with an explicit remit to investigate the supernatural, SAD agents share cases and resources with FBI special agents.

As part of the shakeup, much of SAD's high-ranking agents found themselves out of a job. Cynthia Forrest spent three months in charge of the department, but vanished when scandal rocked the NSA (see above). Thomas Little, formerly the West Coast Director for SAD, was given the rank of Deputy Assistant Director of the FBI and put in charge of the re-organized SAD. He's the only member of the original SAD command structure still in place. Internally, he's now the SAD Director. Section Chief Jennifer Martinez is the SAD Assistant Director, and the role of Regional Director now falls on whichever experienced special agent is in a given area.

The Modern SAD

SAD is a shadow of its former self. Where previously it had regional offices with field teams stationed around the country, now it only has three field teams working full-time, each based in a separate facility around the country. The department supplements its poor manpower by recruiting FBI special agents for one-off jobs. These agents spend most of their time working "mundane" cases for the Bureau, and only come into contact with supernatural forces when SAD calls on them for specific cases.

The Special Affairs Department knows that vampires, werewolves, and stranger things stalk the World of Darkness, but they need to pick their fights carefully. Their remit is to investigate "bizarre occult-style crimes," but every week they see more reports – and SAD must investigate every one. In order to deflect suspicion, and to prevent the whole department looking like credulous idiots on the evening news, SAD agents work hard to cover up evidence of the supernatural. A raid on a werewolf's compound looks a lot better in the reports as a strike against a domestic terrorist group with trained attack animals. Even ammunition requisitions ask for "Code Five rounds" instead of silver bullets. That level of plausible deniability gives SAD the cover it needs to hunt monsters alongside normal FBI agents.

Facilities and Equipment

SAD originally had offices on the top floor of the J. Edgar Hoover building in Washington, D.C. After the shakeup, the FBI gave the offices to the Counterintelligence Division. Assistant Director Martinez rescued the more hard-to-find volumes from the research library and sequestered it away at the Department's Virginia facility. The SAD secure evidence vault hasn't moved, and nobody's opened it – it requires an active SAD agent's authority to unlock the door. If any agent working a case needs something out of the old evidence vault, she'd need to walk into the heart of the Bureau's Counterintelligence Division to find it.

Working for SAD

SAD stories should focus on the fragmented and overworked nature of the department. Full-time agents face ostracism from other FBI agents and too many cases for anyone to follow up, while those who keep an FBI post need to deal with supernatural phenomena without letting it destroy their mundane lives.

If you're using Merits and Flaws, Siege Mentality, Embedded Agent, and the 3-point version of Credulous all help to reinforce the themes of a SAD-focused story.

The department maintains an isolated mountain retreat in southwestern Virginia. This is where SAD trains agents new to hunting the supernatural, and stores evidence of paranormal creatures that would cause problems for the department were it to show up in FBI custody. It also maintains a small armory, including wooden stakes, silver bullets for SAD standard pistols, and a range of conventional weapons. Most SAD agents don't return to the Virginia retreat unless they have to; were the FBI to discover the facility, they'd shut it down and burn the last remnants of the Special Affairs Division out of the Bureau.

Investigations

Typically, an SAD investigation starts when the Department receives a tip-off, either from an old informant or passed to them from an overworked department. Usually, the agent who receives the case is the only full-time member of SAD in the area. She has pool of other FBI agents she can call on: some of whom were trained by the department but returned to a "normal" life in the FBI, while others are agents she's hoping to induct into SAD. The SAD agent doesn't always run the case — often, the agents she brings in to help outrank her. Instead, she acts as a coordinator and occult specialist.

Even though many SAD agents don't know much about the structure of the shadowy world, about tribes or clans or traditions, agents do know how to take down a werewolf or vampire. The team of agents takes the investigation as far as they can, but when they find a supernatural perpetrator, they can't risk bringing a vampire or werewolf into custody. Having

disposed of the perpetrator, the agent writes up two reports. One contains all the details of the case, and is held in the SAD archive in Virginia. The other, a sanitized copy containing no evidence of supernatural phenomena, goes into the FBI records.

The department's numbers are such that few agents have the luxury of working on a team with other full-time monster hunters. While these teams often get a bad reputation with the rest of the Bureau, they get the supernatural investigations that other SAD teams can't handle. The flip side of this is the sheer volume of cases that the FBI throws to all-SAD teams, including any case with a whiff of the occult about it. SAD teams face off against lunatics and twisted serial killers at least as often as they fight vampires or werewolves.

Other Agencies

Alongside the FBI and NSA, other government agencies have people or teams who deal with the supernatural.

Central Intelligence Agency

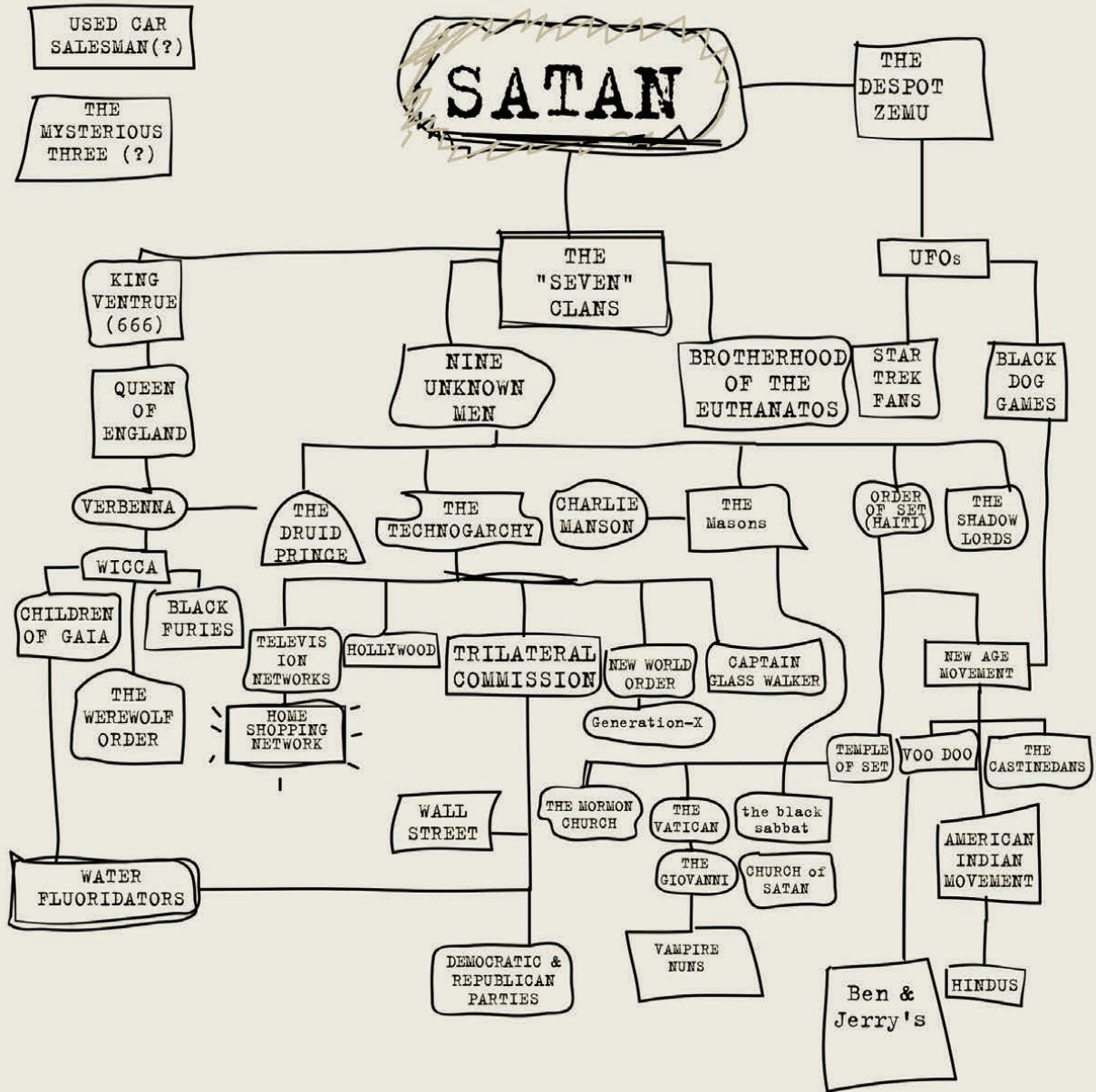
When it comes to supernatural creatures, the CIA is a pawn rather than a player. The Company doesn't believe in ghosts, ghouls, and vampires — much to its detriment. When a well-connected vampire needs information, or a politically active mage needs a covert strike team, then the CIA is their first port of call. If nothing else, the Company's ongoing ignorance of the supernatural makes them excellent fall guys and cat's-paws.

Only one person in the entire CIA knows anything much about the supernatural: a lone agent in lower management called Bob Schnoblin. Thought to be a crank when he joined the Company, these days nobody in the CIA thinks he's anything other than a nutcase. He still has an office in Langley, but is stuck on what other agents call "Red Stapler Jobs" — monitoring reports from field teams in the least interesting parts of the world.

Bob Schnoblin

Bob Schnoblin is the only CIA agent with any inkling of truth about the supernatural. New agents who encounter him think he's a paranoid crank, seeing conspiracies everywhere. Older agents push for psychiatric evaluations, worrying that Bob's paranoia and conspiracy theories may be symptoms of psychosis. But Bob always pulls through. He's an American hero, damn it, and he will not let these goddamn children tell him he's mad. Now in his late sixties, Bob bribed a senior manager to doctor his employment records. He doesn't have time for friends or contacts beyond those people who feed him information, and retirement would be a death sentence. He's convinced that he's right, that Satan is the source of supernatural power, and that if he can just uncover another connection, he'll have the whole truth.

BOB SCHNOBLIN'S PYRAMID OF SATANIC POWER™



Bob Schnoblin is the most informed person in the United States Government about the organization of supernatural forces. Unfortunately, that's not all he's informed about. His Pyramid of Satanic Power, drawing connections between the Seven Clans, King Ventrue, the Shadow Lords, and the Trilateral Commission (among others) has more truth in it than all the SAD archives.

Department of Homeland Security

The Department of Homeland Security has wide-reaching powers in the United States, all revolving around its mandate to protect against terrorist attacks and natural disasters. The Department's relatively new on the scene, and many agents fear that going up the management chain with their scraps of evidence of supernatural creatures would have them shipped off to watch the Mexican border for goat-suckers and hopping terrorists. Even so, some DHS agents have uncovered evidence of what they call "domestic terrorists of paranormal radicalization." Agents who uncover such information soon find themselves invited to mailing lists and social network groups hosted well away from the DHS network.

Vampires have thoroughly compromised the Department's upper levels, convincing managers to look the other way even on charges of drug smuggling and human trafficking. A few Kindred are able to send DHS field agents to investigate packs of werewolves — who look all too much like domestic terrorists to the Department.

Off the Grid

DHS agents who pursue "paranormal domestic terrorists" find that they can't talk openly with one another without management finding out and quashing their investigations. As a result, an anonymous agents set up the Watch List, an email group that DHS hunters can use to both discuss what they've encountered and to find ways to couch their investigation in bureaucracy-friendly terms.

Discussion on the Watch List is circumspect at the best of times. The list automatically sends out monthly reminders that users should never disclose personal information, and that the list itself is probably compromised — both by paranormal elements and DHS management.

Merits and Flaws

The following Merits and Flaws cover specific situations that may come up with hunter characters working for government agencies. All the following Merits and Flaws are subject to Storyteller approval.

Mental

Paranoid (2pt. Flaw)

Too many years in the intelligence business means that you know that it's only paranoia if they're not out to get you. You're suspicious of everything and everyone — you'd call for backup, but how can you be sure that they're not in on it too? You pick up on innocuous details, each one providing more evidence for the conspiracy against you. Add one to the difficulty of all social interaction rolls.

Siege Mentality (3pt. Flaw)

The agency is your family and your only friends. You don't trust civilians and amateurs to do what you see as your job, and politicians and lawmakers just get in your agency's way. You'd trust other intelligence agencies if they'd just once prove that they could find their collective asses with a mirror and a flashlight.

Your attitude has a number of cascading effects. First, you're brash and domineering with "civilians," whether that's an FBI agent talking with local police, or a CIA operative dealing with a private intelligence company. Subtract two dice from all Empathy and Investigation dice pools when dealing with amateurs in your field. Second, you're on edge around other members of the intelligence community, even though you're supposed to be on the same side. Add one to the difficulty of all social interaction rolls with them. Finally, if the law gets in the way of your duty, you won't think twice about breaking it. The Storyteller is encouraged to have your superiors rake you over the coals for your blatant disregard for procedure.

Manchurian Candidate (5pt. Flaw)

You're the worst kind of double agent: one who doesn't know he's compromised. Some power unknown to you gave you a task, and you can't help but carry it out. Your controller has programmed you to react to a specific signal — it could be a trigger word, a pattern of flashing lights, or a specific image. When you encounter your trigger, you'll do whatever your master asked of you. Afterwards, you'll remember up to the point where you encountered the signal — the rest is a blank. Common duties include spying on your own organization, destroying sensitive documents, assassinating a target named at the same time as the trigger, or stealing valuable equipment.

Work with the Storyteller to come up with a signal and a duty. Optionally, you can let the Storyteller work out the details of what you're up to. At some point she will describe your trigger, and you have no knowledge of what happens between that point and when you come around. The Storyteller may leave what happens when you're

triggered a mystery – or might have the other characters encounter you when you’re programmed. Work with her to portray your character in his brainwashed state. The brainwashing is strong enough that even supernatural powers may not sway your character from his task.

Social

Inter-Agency Liaison (2pt. Merit)

You work for two agencies at the same time. Either you’re a liaison officer between the two agencies—Homeland Security provides a handy cover for the CIA or NSA to poke their noses into the FBI and vice versa—or your current employers don’t know who you really work for. Either way, you can draw on the intelligence and resources of both agencies when you need to. You must purchase the Rank Background for each agency separately, and your Rank at your “home” agency must be equal to or greater than your Rank at your new agency.

Sanction (2pt. Merit)

Your agency has given you a limited sanction to deploy lethal force against specific named targets. They will hold you responsible for any additional deaths, and won’t hesitate to revoke your sanction if you’re too sloppy. This authority is extremely rare – the CIA authorizes some killings in foreign territories, and a shadowy group high up in the FBI uses it to eliminate potential domestic terrorists. As long as you do as they tell you, your agency provides weapons and equipment (within reason) and will cover your tracks once the job is done. Despite popular perception, this isn’t a “license to kill” – murdering people is still illegal even with the backing of an intelligence agency, and you could be prosecuted for murder if caught.

Embedded Agent (3pt. Merit)

You’re an accepted member of your intelligence agency, despite any weird side-project you work on. You might be an FBI agent with a sterling record who happens to moonlight for SAD, or an NSA intelligence analyst who just happens to spend a couple of weeks each quarter monitoring chaoscope reports. Because you spend more time around “normal” agents, they accept you as one of their own. Add a bonus die to any Empathy, Leadership, or Investigation rolls when dealing with other members of your agency. You’re also the last person anyone would think to name as a “monster hunter,” which keeps you under the radar of otherwise well-informed supernatural creatures.

Non-Standard Access (3pt. Merit)

Everyone working for one of the US Government’s alphabet soup of agencies has access to information not

available to the public, but you’re privy to secrets that are way above your paygrade. Maybe someone in the Pentagon owes you his life, or you just find files in an old dead-drop. Once per story, the Storyteller will ensure that you receive classified information useful to your current operation. The information is always useful and accurate, but not necessarily complete. Though it’s dangerous to explain how you came by your new knowledge, your informant is confidential and you haven’t yet suffered a leak.

Credulous (3 or 5pt. Flaw)

You believe in monsters and conspiracies, and your fellow agents know it. This credulous reputation makes you a liability – no matter how much of the truth you actually know. With the three-point version of this Flaw you’re still a field agent, but your fellow agents either ignore you or openly mock you. Subtract one die from all Empathy, Investigation, or Leadership rolls when dealing with members of the intelligence community. If a supernatural creature is looking for a scapegoat, your name is top of the list.

With the five-point version of this Flaw, you’re on your way out. You’ve got a make-work assignment – maybe a feasibility study for building a wall along the Canadian border, or listening for intelligence coming out of the New Zealand field office. You won’t get any backup, and if you continue to make trouble (by, say, investigating supernatural creatures), people high up in your agency’s food chain will arrange an accident to shut you up permanently.

Asset

Backup Identity (3pt. Merit)

Most agents build up one or two cover identities, replete with backgrounds and supporting documents. You’ve gone one further, and got a cover identity that your agency doesn’t know about. Your backup identity has a full set of documents, including a social security card and a passport, a bank account, and even owns a small apartment. Unlike most cover identities, nothing links you and your backup identity, meaning it can come in very handy when you need to work off the record, and as a get-out card when things get hairy.

This Merit just provides documentation and a guarantee that intelligence agencies don’t know about your alter ego. You still need the Alternate Identity Background if you want to play the part effectively.

Backgrounds

In addition to the Backgrounds available to hunters generally, government agents can also purchase the Rank and Requisition Backgrounds.

Rank

Government agencies enforce strict rank privilege—a private in the Army can't get a captain to listen to him, let alone give orders to his superior officers. This Background represents an agent's position in the chain of command. An agent with no dots of Rank is the lowest grade appropriate for the organization: a junior agent in the SAD or CIA, or a lieutenant 2nd class in the NSA. Though the character with the highest Rank will technically be in charge of other agents, extenuating circumstances in the field can screw up the chain of command.

When dealing with people in the same agency of lower Rank, apply the difference in Rank as a bonus to any Social dice pools. When dealing with people outside of the character's agency, treat her Rank as two dots lower.

- A special agent in SAD or a lieutenant 1st class in the NSA.
- A senior special agent in SAD or a captain in the NSA.
- A special agent in charge in SAD or a major in the NSA.
- A section chief in SAD or a colonel in the NSA.
- A regional director in SAD or a general in the NSA.

Requisition

You're a master of red tape, able to fill out the right forms to get your hands on some special equipment, from silver bullets to a chaoscope. You begin each story with a pool of points to spend on equipment equal to your dots in this Background. Once the equipment is used up or destroyed, that's it — and any surviving requisitioned equipment must be returned at the end of the story. You can save your Requisition points until you need a specific item or service, but cannot acquire a single item that costs more than (your Rank + 2). Some examples of equipment that can be requisitioned is on pp. 155-157.

Players may opt to pool Background points for a shared stock of equipment. See pp. 118-119 of V20 for more information on pooled Backgrounds.

- You possess a piece of equipment worth one Requisition point.
- You possess one item worth two Requisition points, or two items with one Requisition point.
- You possess one or more items worth a total of three Requisition points.
- You possess one or more items worth a total of four Requisition points.

- You possess one or more items worth a total of five Requisition points.

Psychic Numina

Some people manifest psychic phenomena, and for a while, the intelligence community funded research into psychic abilities, hoping that they might be useful in intelligence gathering. The last such project, the NSA's Project: WINTERGREEN, was shuttered in the whirlwind of changes following Arthur Clifford's departure. Individual agents working for the NSA, SAD, and other intelligence agencies sometimes display psychic phenomena — indeed, thanks to aggressive recruiting strategies, psychic powers are more common among agents than in the general population.

Agents can purchase the following Numina along with any others presented in this book (with Storyteller permission).

Animal Psi

Rather than telepathy or direct control, Animal Psi is the ability to communicate with animals, reading their emotional state and intent, and asking them to do things. The animal doesn't have to agree, but the psychic has a much better chance of getting an animal to follow her instructions than almost anyone else. At each level, the psychic can both better understand what an animal is thinking, and can issue short commands to the animal.

Talking to animals is a surprisingly useful talent for an intelligence agent. In cities, a talented psychic can send a pigeon or seagull to track a target, use rats to get into locked apartments, and talk to foxes and raccoons to discover what happened before the psychic arrived. Most psychics with this numen keep a number of tame, trained animals — from cats and dogs to rats and parrots — who are used to their abilities. This power only works when the user can clearly see and hear the animal she is communicating with.

Animal Hierarchies

Animal Psi works best on higher mammals — creatures believed to possess nearly human-level intelligence, such as chimpanzees and dolphins — and trained lower mammals, such as dogs, cats, rats, and horses.

To affect other animals the psychic must take a penalty to his Animal Psi dots per the table below — with Animal Psi ••, he can read the current emotions of a higher mammal, but only read the basic intent of a wild lower mammal.

Penalty	Animal Type
0	Higher mammals, trained lower mammals
-1	Wild lower mammals, trained birds (reduce penalty to 0 at Animal Psi •••)
-2	Wild birds, trained reptiles
-3	Wild reptiles
-4	Any other animal

System

Roll: Perception + Animal Ken (difficulty 7)

Modifiers: Per type of animal, as described above

Cost: None

Duration: Can communicate for one minute per success.

Animal Psi Levels

- **Read Basic Intent/Communication:** The user can read an animal's basic intent, such as knowing whether it will attack or flee, and can both talk to the animal and understand what the animal "says" in return.

- **Read Current Emotions/Simple Command:** The psychic can read an animal's current emotional state, such as knowing whether an animal is attacking out of anger or hatred or hunger. The psychic may also give a simple command that the animal is compelled to follow, which can be no more than six words long.

- **Read Wants and Needs/Complex Command:** The psychic can read an animal's wants and needs without needing to ask, knowing that an animal wants him to follow or to stay away. The psychic can also give a complex command, usually in the form of two simple commands strung together ("Follow that man, and then come back to me.") The animal will continue to follow the commands for the duration of the power.

- **Anticipate Instincts/Borrow Memories:** The psychic can anticipate an animal's complex instincts, knowing how it will react in response to events that haven't yet occurred. He may also borrow the animal's memories, finding out what the animal has seen, heard, or smelled over the past six hours.

- **Mental Communion:** The psychic can send his senses along with the animal, nudging the animal to go where he wants it to, and perceiving with all of its

senses—a dog's sense of smell, or a hunting bird's eyesight. When using this power, the psychic is entirely unaware of his surroundings.

Anti-Psi

Some people's psychic potential only manifests itself as a cloud of mental static. Though this talent has no effect on most people, it prevents other psychics from using their talents. Psychics with this talent can damp it down by concentrating, but cannot turn it off completely. It doesn't have any effect on the mental Disciplines of the Kindred, or the spiritual Gifts of the Garou. A psychic with Anti-Psi cannot possess any other Psychic Numina.

Anti-Psi is a rare talent, for the only way to discover it is by being around other psychics. Project: WINTERGREEN discovered twelve people with this power before it was shut down. It inducted four of them into the NSA, and discovered that the SAD already employed two more.

System

Roll: None

Modifiers: N/A

Cost: None

Duration: Anti-psi is permanently active. Users can damp their power down to the one-dot level, but add +2 to the difficulty of all Mental actions due to their intense concentration.

Anti-Psi Levels

- The cloud extends out to a five-yard/five-meter radius around the user. Anyone in the cloud subtracts one die from all Psychic Phenomena dice pools.

- The cloud extends out to a ten-yard/ten-meter radius around the user. Anyone in the cloud subtracts two dice from all Psychic Phenomena dice pools.

- The cloud extends out to a fifteen-yard/fifteen-meter radius around the user. Anyone in the cloud subtracts four dice from all Psychic Phenomena dice pools.

- The cloud extends out to a twenty-yard/twenty-meter radius around the user. Anyone in the cloud subtracts six dice from all Psychic Phenomena dice pools.

- The cloud extends out to a twenty-five yard/twenty-five meter radius around the user. Anyone in the cloud subtracts eight dice from all Psychic Phenomena dice pools.



The Arcanum

“Our charge is knowledge of the otherworldly, but it cannot be only that. To turn a blind eye toward the various threats of humanity we know of is to be complicit in our own destruction.”

- Dr. Sandeep D’Souza, Chancellor of the New Delhi Chapter House

There are many mortal societies who seek knowledge of the supernatural, but none have the intellectual and academic resources of the Arcanum. Scholars in any field of esoterica are welcomed as members, for the society has found truth in the most unexpected places. Most Arcanists are academics, archeologists, librarians, mystics, and occultists – though there are a growing number who join because a brush with the supernatural sparked unending questions and a thirst for answers. This includes soldiers, spies, hackers, and even the odd bartender.

The Arcanum’s mandate, its “Syllabus,” is clear: the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, for the enlightenment and betterment of its members (and by extension, all of humanity). It accepts that there’s a world beyond what normal people see before them, and that through scholarship one can discover what is purely myth and what is truth hidden in the shadows.

It’s not a hidden society. The public knows of it as a prestigious, if odd, global academic society. It publishes a peer-reviewed journal on the esoteric called *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum*. The journal accepts submissions from the public, which the Arcanum uses to discover new candidates, and public knowledge of Arcanists sometimes provides a way into social situations that would otherwise block access to rare texts and secrets.

Hostile encounters with the supernatural have changed the Arcanum’s demeanor. Arcanists are cautious when it comes to research into beings like vampires and werewolves, lest they and their precious research be destroyed. These encounters have left mental (and physical) scars on some members, who see knowledge and the ideal of bettering humanity to be a call for action against humanity’s secret predators.

Theme and Mood

When it comes to the Arcanum, the theme is one of reckless exploration. The point of the society is the accumulation of knowledge, so its members continue to put themselves into places where they know less than they should. Just like children who explore the woods because the woods are there, and they yearn to know what's beyond the tree line. And because their mandate is knowledge, not war, Arcanists aren't (usually) armed and looking for a fight. They know they're tasty snacks for vampires and werewolves.

The mood is one of raging against the darkness. Sure, they're tasty snacks, but that will not stop them from fighting to keep the monsters at bay. Since they're outclassed, that means serving as spies, not soldiers. They also must rage against their own, as those in power would rather not see their society destroyed due to a bunch of dangerous, warmongering upstarts.

Architecture of the Arcanum

The Arcanum is part Victorian lodge, part collection of colleges. It spans across the globe, and its members currently number in the low thousands.

The Foundation House

The Foundation House is the cornerstone of the Arcanum. It's where the most important and sacred business takes place, and it houses the society's oldest and rarest books and other documents – the pride of its vast collection.

Its location, and even its existence, is a secret to those outside of the society. Neophytes are told that it's a bit outside of London. (After all, you need to know where to book a flight to if you have to go there.) Then they're blindfolded before they take the trip. Those who prove they can be trusted get to watch the scenic countryside drive to the Fens of Cambridgeshire, 100 miles north of London.

The Grand Chancellor, Madeleine Beuacourt, resides in the House, along with a number of Journeymen who tend to the House's vast collection, the Axis Mundi. The Executive Committee runs the high-level Arcanum business here. The third major use for the Foundation House is the stage for the Initiation Rite that prospective Neophytes take to be inducted into the society.

The Axis Mundi

One of the most impressive libraries on the occult and supernatural that any mortal organization has compiled,

the Axis Mundi is the soul of the Arcanum. Name a subject, no matter how fringe, and you will find at least a half dozen books on it in the stacks. Thanks to modern technology, the delicate works are preserved in climate-controlled rooms and the contents of many volumes have been digitized and made searchable – though not all, as this project will take many years to complete. A Chapter House's Librarian can place a call to the Foundation House if a book is needed, though the curators of the Axis Mundi prefer visitors to come on-site to review a book, when possible. (And they're worse than debt collectors about harassing those who don't return books when promised.)

Characters using the Axis Mundi get a benefit on any rolls regarding occult and supernatural research. Given a full day's access, they get +2 successes on the roll. If they don't spend that much time going over every possible lead, they can instead spend a number of hours equal to the difficulty of the research roll looking through the books to get +2 dice on the roll – maybe they get lucky and find what they need much sooner.

Because of the collection's importance to the Arcanum, the Grand Chancellor's encouraged those who live in the House to engage in physical and combat training. This is certainly no requirement, but over the last decade she has made clear that when a space opens up for, a candidate's ability to defend the Axis Mundi will be a factor in the consideration. Two of the Journeymen currently living there comes from special forces backgrounds – one from British Special Air Service, one from Czech 601st Special Forces Group – and they hold daily calisthenics and routine weapons training for others.

As part of this security, the Axis Mundi is not connected to any computer network. And the House does not send documents containing dangerous information over the Internet.

Chapter Houses

The Arcanum is spread out all over the globe. To manage this wide network, many cities and populous regions have a Chapter House. These Houses are headquarters (and sometimes living accommodations) for local Arcanists, and they function as a line to the Foundation House and the Grand Chancellor – both in terms of accountability and resources. Chapter Houses are expected to publish reports, and their members are expected to contribute both to the *Annual Proceedings of the Arcanum* (the society's publicly available academic journal) and to the Axis Mundi collection.

Each Chapter House has leeway to organize itself however it sees fit, so long as it continues to be a productive



The Arcanum's Initiation Rite


The Arcanum's new recruits are given the title of Neophyte once they accept the offer to join, but they aren't truly considered part of the society until Initiation. A group of them are gathered to the Foundation House to meet with the Grand Chancellor and take in the sheer weight of history and knowledge that is the Arcanum. When they arrive, they're told that the Initiation will take place the following day, led by the Mystagogue of the Initiation – not a held position; anyone high enough in the society may be asked to lead the ritual.

That evening, the initiates are invited to casually enjoy the fourth floor lounge. Only they and servant staff are there, and the Neophytes are given some time to talk among themselves. At this point, the Initiation has begun: the food and drink are laced with a powerful hallucinogen and a mild narcotic.

Surreal dreams flood their minds. One Neophyte spoke of a vast maze and an owl that screamed challenges as it assaulted his flesh. These dreams are perhaps the most pleasant portion of the ritual, for when they wake, they're each alone and naked in a wooden coffin. Initiates invariably scream and try to claw out as the drugs begin to wear off and the horror of dying inside a coffin comes fully to mind.

Only then are initiates allowed out, to find they're on a small isle. Once all are gathered, they're lead to the water. Arcanists in robes stand on the opposite end of the shore, waiting for the initiates to enter the water and be baptized.

The Mystagogue delivers the new Neophytes through the end of the ritual, and declares: "New Brothers and Sisters of the Arcanum, you have died and been reborn. Now cleanse yourselves and join us." Then are they welcomed into the fold.



member of the society. Its members have titles and roles like any other lodge or organization: Treasurer, Librarian, Secretary, Security Officer, and so on.

Common to all Houses, though, is the role of Chancellor: the House's administrator. The Chancellor's functions are to make the Grand Chancellor aware of all pertinent news and to act as the proxy for the Grand Chancellor.

Because of the size of the network, some Chapter Houses are designated as "primary" Houses in a vast area. The primary American Chapter House is in Georgetown, and all other American Houses report to the Georgetown Chancellor, who reports to the Grand Chancellor. The European Union moved their primary House in 2007 to Paris, after the London House was attacked by assailants presumed to be vampires (likely mistaking the London House for the Foundation House).

The politics in a region can make this complicated: the Islamabad House reports to the Dubai Chancellor, even though New Delhi is much closer. Likewise, the Taipei Chapter House sends reports directly to the Foundation House, despite the Shanghai Chancellor's protests.

Colonies, Lodges, and Colleges

Colonies are, in a sense, proto-Chapter Houses. When several Arcanists live and work in an area not near a Chapter House, they're still treated as an extension of whatever Chapter House is nearest (local politics notwithstanding).

If a Colony exists for long enough and its members can present a case to the Executive Committee, it may be promoted to a full Chapter House. The last time this happened was in 2004, when Macau lobbied to be a separate Chapter House rather than attached to Hong Kong. Sometimes these divisions are amicable, but they're just as often politically charged.

Lodges are groups of Arcanists, men and women who go out to conduct field research. A House assembles some Lodges for a particular endeavor, and others are long-standing groups who find comfort and success in continuing to work together. Lodges report to a Chapter House, though their travels may take them far from that assigned House. Other Houses are expected to provide hospitality to a traveling Lodge.

Lodges accomplish the Arcanum's chief goal of researching and collecting knowledge on the supernatural, so every Chapter House is involved. Smaller Houses can only afford to support one Lodge, and expect that Lodge to keep close to home. Larger ones support as many as five, and such lodges enjoy more freedom of resources and movement.

As Houses are the geographical divisions, **Colleges** are the academic and intellectual ones. Colleges, also sometimes called Schools, Programs, or Divisions, are collections of students and masters all across the globe who share a common academic or supernatural interest. Most Arcanists belong to a College (and sometimes to more than one), as only members in a College can apply for research grants and have access to various other privileges.

The old Colleges include the Colleges of Egyptology, Thaumaturgy, Lycanthropic Studies, Hermetic Studies, Linguistics, and Cryptozoology, just to name a few. Some new Colleges have joined the ranks in the last decade, notably the Colleges of Hematology, Paratechnology, and Arctic Studies. (Yes, the College of Hematology is a thinly veiled College on vampire research. The Executive Committee keeps a very close eye on them.)

A Most Dangerous Game

Everyone in the Arcanum, from Neophyte to Elder Brother, has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. But for some, there's an equal thirst for justice, heroism, and other romantic notions. And for a few, there's a dread, an inescapable fear of the creatures hidden in shadows and spoken of in dusty tomes. Fear, because those creatures are very real and more than a few know of the Arcanum's existence. And let's be honest: if you grew up in an academic environment with fighting for tenure being your biggest concern, a vampire ripping your neck open and draining the life from you is, to put it lightly, cause for concern.

That fear leads most of the Arcanum to adopt a "don't get involved" policy after the vampires destroyed the Boston Chapter House in 1910. To be fair, that the Arcanum still exists is a testament to the policy working.

Not everyone has the stomach to stay still while knowing of the horrors in the world. Individual lodges research into perilous affairs — reports of vampires, demons, werewolves, ghosts, and other supernatural beings. They gather intelligence by interviewing witnesses, scouting suspect locations, doing surveillance, and on very rare occasions "bagging and tagging" an entity in order to place a tracker and chart movement. Oh, and they still do the whole spelunking in libraries and reading book and book thing — no one's lost sight of how the Arcanum gets knowledge in the first place.

No one in the society thinks of themselves as soldiers on the front lines. (And those who do are killed by such creatures or silenced by an Elder Brother, so they're self-correcting problems.) No, these scholars are spies, sending this information to those who would act on it, and almost always in untraceable ways.

Likeminded Journeymen and Elder Brothers in positions to bring others into the fold look for qualities beyond the drive for knowledge. More and more, hackers are indoctrinated into the Arcanum to break into the systems of vampire-infiltrated companies, as well as to discretely send information to allies. Former spies and intelligence operatives make great candidates, though (as you might imagine) they're hard to find in the first place, let alone those who would be Arcanum candidates. Rarely, federal law enforcement is brought in, but it happens from time to time.

Others in the society are aware such people exist, but these scholar-spies do everything in their power to keep these dealings secret... even from one another. That means sometimes Lodges work at cross-purposes (or at least are inefficiently tracking the same supernatural issue). It means they're less potent, since no one's coordinating them. But it also means they can't give away the identity of others who fight for the cause.

That some Arcanists do this isn't news, but the scale's changed. Sandeep D'Souza, Chancellor of the New Delhi Chapter House, had quietly led a charge to change the society's overall attitude to clandestinely acting against the Kindred and other threats. As he's in line to assume the Grand Chancellorship, the Arcanum as a whole may radically change. Time will tell if that shift spells doom for the Arcanum.

What the Arcanum Knows

Members know there are many places of mystery where the occult steps out of the shadows. The pursuit to uncover these places is paramount, and many lodges continue to hunt for Mu, Camelot, Atlantis, the Hollow Earth, and so on. Others do not believe everything has been discovered in the places of mystery we are able to visit today: the Great Pyramids, the Bermuda Triangle, Mount Everest, even Antarctica. A few are obsessed with what lies beyond our atmosphere, and those who visit from there.

Legendary artifacts fire up the imagination of Arcanists just as much as places of mystery. Members trade notes on possible resting places for the Sangrail, Excalibur, Mjölnir, Tizona, Gáe Blug, Yata no Kagami, and the Book of Thoth — just to name a few.

Thaumalogists study the history and theory of magic. The archives have records of members encountering these rare phenomena. These records are labeled under "The Order of Hermes," after the compact known to exist in the Middle Ages. Strangely, the number of magical events members recorded in the last several months are more than in the last three decades. Whether that's because

Arcanists are getting closer to the truth behind magic in the world or because magic is “returning” is of hot debate.

Vampires definitely exist in the world, and they announced their displeasure at being spied on with the Boston Chapter House Fire in 1910. The mandate from the Grand Chancellor is to keep your distance, but also to not let fear destroy the pursuit of knowledge. In other words: learn what you can, but don’t fuck with them.

Werereatures, apparitions, and the fair folk are also know of, with lodges dedicates to uncovering more about them. The same mandate on not harassing those who can destroy the society applies here, though with less heavy-handedness than with vampires. One werewolf surprised the Arcanum in 2001; Neophyte Carol Dubois was part of a lodge traveling in Vietnam when they were ambushed. She transformed into a giant half-wolf creature, which the video running at the time captured. Dubois fled, and hasn’t been heard from since.

Demons are another topic of debate in the society. There are Arcanists who believe that there are lines humanity should not cross in the pursuit of knowledge, and the study of demons is one. Others believe to have such a line is to spit on the Syllabus.

Finally, there are other mortals who pursue knowledge of the supernatural. Arcanists consider them a great benefit as potential colleagues, or at least sources. Those who take an aggressive stance against vampires and other creatures that prey on humans make great unknowing allies. The Inquisition, members of Project Twilight, Crucible Genetics Amalgamated, and the Society of Leopold are among those the Arcanum feeds information to. Some Houses even have small, regional allies – the Las Vegas Chapter House noticed that the police are surprisingly adept at tackling the city’s supernatural threats.

Backgrounds

These Backgrounds reflect the Arcanum’s focus and reach: arcane and occult resources, whether they are physical, digital, or social in nature. Of course, having money doesn’t hurt either.

Artifact

Artifacts are items strong in supernatural potency. This Background allows you to begin play with such an artifact in your possession. Either it was a family heirloom, or a mentor in the Arcanum bequeathed it to you, or you found it early in your career and the Arcanum hasn’t yet requested it for “further study.”

The Storyteller should create something suitable for you based on the dots in this Background. Talk about what you want with the Storyteller. Truly legendary artifacts (such as Roland’s sword Durandal, or the chalice of Kai Khusrau) are objects of great quests and cannot be purchased with this Trait. Some examples of potential artifacts are presented on p. 123.

Players may opt to pool Background points for a shared artifact. See pp. 118-119 of V20 for more information on pooled Backgrounds.

- A minor artifact
- A useful artifact
- An artifact of significant power
- A much-sought artifact
- An artifact of incredible power

Library

Arcanists often devote their entire lives to research, and build up tremendous libraries over the course of their careers; those who live near Chapter Houses with long established and well-developed libraries do even better. Arcanists who have to research a particular fact in libraries have the difficulty number of research rolls reduced by this Background (note that this cannot be combined with access to the Axis Mundi).

Players may opt to pool Background points for a shared library. See pp. 118-119 of V20 for more information on pooled Backgrounds.

- Difficulty reduced by 1
- Difficulty reduced by 2
- Difficulty reduced by 3
- Difficulty reduced by 4
- Difficulty reduced by 5

Mentor

Your mentor – your Elder Brother or Sister – is the person who initiated you into the Arcanum. The higher rating, the more influence your mentor has among other Arcanists, and the better your initial reputation. A low rating could mean that your mentor is not well respected, but it could also mean you have a powerful mentor who isn’t often available.

Resources

The society may provide housing and a small allowance for its new members – typically no higher than a rating of one dot. Anything more must come from a member’s family, another job, or some other income source.

Merits and Flaws

The Merits and Flaws vary among Arcanists, from the armchair scholars sitting in comfortable chairs back in the Chapter Houses to the foolhardy spies and students diving head-first into the supernatural world.

Physical

Aging (3pt. Flaw)

You are not as spry as you used to be. Lower one Physical Attribute score (your choice) by one point. An Attribute cannot go below one with this Flaw. You may take this Flaw at 40 years old and once again per decade after.

Mental

Cultural Chameleon (2pt. Merit)

You're able to quickly pick up on social cues, local customs, phrases, modes of dress, and other little things particular about a place. If you're able to address those (can change your clothes, able to speak the language, etc.), anyone attempting to discern if you don't belong there suffer a two die penalty. Either way, you receive two extra dice for any action to find others who don't belong somewhere.

Isolated Upbringing

Similar to the Inquisition Flaw, p. 123.

Social

Research Grant (2pt. Merit)

You have a prestigious research grant from some university or research center. This frees you from the burden of needing a regular job. The grant provides a minimal stipend (from \$1500 to \$2000 a month in most cases), as well as credentials which grant access to exclusive libraries and research centers around the world.

Supernatural

Clear Sighted (5pt. Merit)

You can see through all levels of Kindred Obfuscate, Chimerstry, and other related Disciplines or supernatural power, with a Perception + Alertness roll against the opposing power's level + 3.

Eidetic Memory

The Arcanum views those with eidetic memory as a double-edged sword. On one hand, they're very useful not only for recounting off-site research but also with reconstructing any destroyed research that they've previously read. On the other hand, the problem with someone who is effectively a walking library is that anyone



can grab that person off the street and... forcefully check out the information he has in his mind.

Innocent (1pt. Merit)

You are always thought of in the most positive light, unless evidence exists to prove otherwise. If you do something wrong and the act is not easily attributed to you, it will most likely be blamed on someone else. This does not mean that you are “an innocent” – it just means everyone thinks you are.

Sabbat Survivor

An unsettling number of Arcanists have this merit, including Chancellor D’Souza.

The Path of Alchemy

Alchemy is a form of Hedge Magic whose main function (at least to the Arcanum) is to purify the soul. All other effects that alchemy is known for are merely stepping stones to that ultimate goal – after all, one must master transmutation to master purification. Enough Arcanists perform and strive to master this that they’ve formed the College of the Great Art.

Ultimately, the aim of Alchemy is to purify the soul to the point where one becomes immortal – not through any one formula, but from a lifetime of trials. Every time an alchemist perfects a formula, he takes a step closer down that road.

Alchemists that master the Path of Alchemy can create elixirs or powers that grant effects, and imbue metals with various strange properties.

As Alchemy is an arcane science, it takes material and time to execute a formula. A laboratory is necessary, though as an alchemist becomes more skilled, he needs fewer things to create minor transmutations. Each level of effect takes one to three days to craft, which includes gathering and preparing reagents, heating and cooling compounds, and tending to the experiment while it slowly works. A large, well-stocked laboratory (such as the one in the Foundation House) may cut this time down to no less than one day per level of effect.

Concoctions (elixirs and powders) are good for a single use and a single purpose. A character may only be under the effects of a single concoction within a twenty-four hour period, unless she also has the Occult Ability. In that case, she knows enough about her body’s interactions with pure and altered substances, and can be under the effects of a number of concoctions equal to her dots in Occult in a given twenty-four hour period. Similar effects (such as multiple healing potions) do not stack upon one another.

Metals can also be imbued with powers, as purification leaves room in the material for other effects to be placed within. Metals last longer than concoctions, but are generally less powerful.

The potency (or “shelf-life” as younger alchemists call it) is determined by the number of successes on the activation roll.

System

Roll: Intelligence + Occult (Difficulty 8)

Modifiers: +1 if using a well-stocked laboratory, +1 if the stars are right

Costs: Varies

Duration: Varies

Path of Alchemy Levels

- The Alchemist can create minor elixirs and powders, including simple poisons, tranquilizers, anesthetics, stimulants, and lesser healing concoctions. A healing elixir reduces the die pool penalty due to injuries by 1 (minimum 0), and halves the healing time for bashing and lethal damage currently taken.

The Arcanum’s spies have others uses for these creations: liquids that erase short-term memory, powders that counteract the intoxicating effects of alcohol, elixirs that aids in restful sleep with no memories of dreams, etc. (Many Templars offer their resources and services in exchange for a peaceful night’s rest.) As always, whether an alchemical effect can be attempted is up to the Storyteller.

One-dot effects cost no Willpower to create.

- The Alchemist better understands how reagents interplay, crafting stronger effects that harmonize with the body and mind. This includes powders that grant symbolic visions in dreams (possibly of the future or of some unknown aspect of what’s at hand), liquids that allow one to go an entire week with only one hour of sleep a night, and elixirs that can alter physical elements (such as skin, hair, or eye color) for a few hours.

A two-dot healing elixir works as the one-dot version, but also heals two bashing or lethal levels immediately. Along with this, the Alchemist can devise an elixir that can enhance a user’s natural abilities for a given situation. She chooses the Ability and Specialization when creating the effect, such as Empathy and Insight (for reading the emotions) or Subterfuge and Charm (for personal magnetism). The user gains that Specialty; if he already has that Specialty, he instead gets +2 dice when that Specialty comes into play (in addition to 10s counting as two successes). This lasts for a number of hours equal to the number of successes on the activation roll.

Two-dot effects cost no Willpower to create.

••• The Alchemist's abilities with concoctions are proficient enough to grant superhuman abilities. Different formulae can grant the drinker a specific Psychic Numina for the remainder of the scene. Such formulae are usually baroque or call for bizarre components; one alchemist uses the remains of a burnt Cuban cigar, ash and all, mixed with the filament of an old light bulb that died in Canada as the base for a Pyrokinesis elixir. The Alchemist can only create effects that are of fewer dots than her dots in Alchemy, and the drinker must pay any Willpower costs associated with the effect.

The Alchemist can also imbue metals with strange properties, removing impurities and bringing out elements of the platonic ideal. Among other uses, the alchemy can cause small weapons (daggers or a handful of bullets) to do aggravated damage against supernatural creatures. Metals can be imbued with some two-dot Alchemy effects as well.

Three-dot effects cost 1 Willpower to create.

At this rank, the Alchemist can create a normal one-dot concoction far easier, only needing a small travel kit (along with the appropriate materials). This lowers the time needed to gather materials to one day, at most two for effects that require rare ingredients. These effects cost no Willpower to create.

•••• The Alchemist has mastered all lesser forms of Alchemy. More powerful versions of lesser formulae can be created, as well as concoctions that temporarily increase an Ability or Attribute by one or two dots. Formulae that grant one dot last until the end of the scene; those that grant two dots (either in the same Ability or Attribute or to separate ones) last for one turn. Such formulae are esoteric, as the Alchemist delves into substances that represent platonic ideals and emotional purity as much as physical purity.

More than a few Arcanists have gone to fetch strange things for such formulae, such as urine from those who are nearly blackout drunk as a component for a powder that grants the user a dot of Manipulation for the rest of the scene.

Four-dot effects cost 1 Willpower to create. Two-dot effects can be extended to a full scene at a cost of 2 Willpower.

At this rank, the Alchemist can also create a normal two-dot concoction with a travel kit. This lowers the time needed to gather materials to one day, at most two for effects that require rare ingredients. (And for one-dot

effects, lowers the time needed to gather material to a day at most.) These effects cost no Willpower to create.

••••• Along with more dramatic versions of lower formulae, the master of Alchemy can create transcendent effects that grant vast abilities on par with the supernatural creatures Arcanists observe and catalog. Nearly all such formulae require some piece of a creature as a catalyst. These typically last for one turn per success, and cannot exceed the second level of the Discipline or other power in question. Elixirs of vampiric Disciplines require at least five blood points of vampiric vitae.

The Alchemist can create a regenerative powder which, when in the blood stream (usually by applying it to a messy wound) stitches the user together. He regenerates one level of damage every other turn until the end of the session.

Five-dot effects cost 1 Willpower to create, along with their egregious material components.

At this rank, the Alchemist can also create a normal three-dot concoction with a travel kit. Any three-dot metallic effects last longer, as though she rolled an additional success.

Duration of Concoctions

The duration of the potency of an elixir or powder depends on the level of successes earned during the activation roll. After this time, the concoction becomes inert, and (depending on what was used to create it) dangerous to drink. If the concoction is left out to open air for more half an hour or more, it becomes inert.

- One Day
- One Week
- One Month
- Three Months
- Six Months

Duration of Metals

The duration of the potency of an alchemical effect on a metal depends on the level of successes earned during the activation roll. Note that if the metal is severely altered or destroyed, the effect ends. Metals fade back to their impure states quicker than sealed concoctions.

- Two Hours
- One Day
- Three Days
- One Week
- Six Months

Criminals and Organized Crime

"Who are these neck-suckers, anyway? I'm telling you, Lenny, nobody drains the life out of people in this town but me. Torch 'em."

– Frankie the Toe

For decades, organized crime has been a scourge to civilized society, dipping their fingers into thievery rings, smuggling importers, gambling dens, and other illicit trade around the world. These organizations control everything from selling drugs to massive arms sales, from assassinations to influencing governments. These groups range from the massive gangs in Latin America, to Chinese and Japanese underground societies, to old-school Italian and Sicilian families. However inaccurately, many people refer to such diverse criminal organizations as "mafia."

Organized crime syndicates are massive, spanning multiple cities and even continents. Typically they are comprised of many small groups, and these smaller groups can number in the hundreds. Ties between these internal groups are complex, defined by locale, sphere of influence, and even non-business concerns such as marriage ties. Many members of such organizations are deeply religious, even if the organizations themselves are secular.

Some of these organizations have strict hierarchies, with powerful individuals controlling the direction of the group and making decisions for the whole. This sort of hierarchy gives the group strength, providing support, information, and internal cooperation. Other organizations are less coordinated, coming together in gangs beneath a single powerful or charismatic leader. Their loyalty to one another is the stronger for being more personally motivated, but such a group's influence is necessarily limited to areas where their leader can personally command the cell. Neither structure should be underestimated; these gangs and societies are extremely dangerous to outsiders.

When someone joins a criminal organization, they must adopt the rules, customs, and even enemies of that group. Many of these societies have engaged in bitter wars – not just against the authorities, but against one another; battles which have lasted for generations and left deep animosities. The underworld is filled with false allies and age-old grudges.

In the World of Darkness, the underworld has grown stronger and darker, encouraged in their criminal activities by vampiric influence. The world is ripe for criminal activity, and there is plenty of profit to be made in the loss and pain of others. Hunters come from this dark territory as well, fighting to protect their own from those who would prey upon them. To do so, these criminals must fight against supernatural horrors – and they must be victorious.

The Organizations

The Italians

Italian mafia families have many different appellations: La Cosa Nostra, the Mob, and the Syndicate, just to name a few. Over the centuries, poor Italian immigrants banded together in desperation for survival, creating tight-knit groups and exploring less-than-legal means of mutual protection and profit. During the American Prohibition era, these groups expanded exponentially, increasing their power and control throughout the cities of America and the old world. Even after Prohibition ended in 1933, the mafia families continued to grow their influence, getting a finger hold in government and law enforcement as well.

Through the 50s and 60s, mafia families continued to prosper. They used the Red Scare and the Cold War to gain even more control, increasing their influence over smuggling and gaining a virtual monopoly on gambling in the US. Through the 70s, after the institution of RICO, many of the Italian mafia families turned their attention to sex industries, the drug trade, and weapons smuggling.

Post-RICO Criminal Syndicates in the World of Darkness

A lot of criminal organizations in the United States were gutted in the face of the RICO Act (Racketeer-Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) in 1970, and in the 21st century, domestic large-scale criminal operations are difficult to maintain and control without being discovered. But in the World of Darkness, these kinds of secretive mafia are alive and well. Thriving and insular criminal organizations are the fodder for a lot of crime fiction, and that's the slant we present for **Hunters Hunted 2**.



They dabble in extortion, protection, bribery, and graft, as well as blackmail, prostitution, and their ubiquitous gambling interests. Today, old Italian families remain the kings of organized crime.

Motives and Method

For centuries, Italian mafia families have been infiltrated, used, and abused by the various factions of vampires – perhaps more so than any other single group in the underworld. Vampires have ghouled their brothers, used them as slaves or for fodder in meaningless vampire politics, and dominated their minds to the point of destruction. It's rumored that entire families are controlled (or even *related to*) entire groups of vampires. Revenge drives many of these hunters; revenge and the desire to protect *mi famiglia* from yet more abuse.

As to method, these hunters work in small, family-oriented groups of three or four, usually protecting the city in which they live, and training their sons and daughters to follow in their footsteps. Italian families are very tight-lipped with information, and in many cases, other members of the mafia may still be unaware of the

existence of vampires. They're protected by the family, and they don't need to know the details.

Most Mafioso hunters have a solid base of operations, a safe location from which to work. These may range from an anonymous warehouse hidden among thousands of others, to a luxury penthouse above the most prestigious casino in the area.


The Russians

The most well-known criminal society in northern Europe is the *Organizatsiya*, an organization founded by a group of ex-military agents that banded together to form a new criminal conglomerate. However, the structure of this group is tenuous at best, shaken to the foundation by the various changes and upheavals in that region of the world. The *Organizatsiya* is comprised of small cells comprised of independent agents, and led by a coalition of the most powerful leaders. These groups work together, and consolidate often enough that most other mafia organizations tend to lump them under the same umbrella. Russian mafia syndicates are known worldwide for having a significant number of ex-military and ex-KGB members



Vorovskoy Zakon

The traditional code of conduct within Russian organized crime is called “vory v zakone,” translating to “thieves-in-law.” Members of these organizations are bound to live according to this code. If it is broken, the only punishment for transgression is death.

- Forsake your relatives. Have no family, no wife, and no children.
 - Never work. Live only on your crime.
 - Help other thieves, morally and materially. Teach the trade to beginners.
 - Keep secret all information about accomplices, hideouts, etc.
 - In unavoidable situations, take the blame for someone else’s crime rather than turning a brother in to the law.
 - Disputes between members will be resolved by the vote of an informed convocation. Both sides will have the right to speak on their behalf. A member will participate in such convocations where necessary, and will accept and carry out punishments rendered by convocation. A member will not resist if found guilty.
 - Have a good command of the thieves’ jargon (known as *fehnyay*).
 - Be sure your informants are also members of the Bratva.
 - Do not gamble unless you can cover your losses. Do not overindulge in drugs or alcohol.
 - Do not fraternize with the authorities, even though public activities or community organizations.
 - Always keep your promises to other members of the Bratva.
- 

in their number, making them one of the most formidable black-ops forces in the world.

The lone wolves of the Russian federation are the *Bratva*, a word which means “brotherhood.” Whereas the *Organizatsiya* are a collective of various organized crime syndicates, a *Bratva* is an independent agent who works with the *Organizatsiya* on occasion, but is not a member of any cell. These individuals are often too unpredictable (or uncontrollable) to take orders, and prefer to be hired as bounty hunters or black ops freelancers for specific missions and tasks. These mercenaries will work for anyone, so long as the pay is acceptable and the job is interesting, but their strongest ties are to the Russian underworld.

Russian organized crime activity in the United States has been expanding for the past 20 years, growing especially in the areas of weapons smuggling and extortion. Unlike Italian crime organizations, the *Bratva* do not have an elaborate hierarchy, but instead form networks of contacts, cellular groups, and solo agents who move from one area to another, relying on their contacts and associates for support.

The Odessa Mafia is the dominant branch of the *Organizatsiya* in the United States, operating from New York to San Francisco, and led by a group of powerful individuals based in Brighton Beach. Unlike standard Russian criminals, this organization is highly structured and well organized. They operate in incredible secrecy, and use only the Russian language in their higher echelons.

Motives and Method

Members of the *Bratva* who hunt vampires often do it because a bounty has been placed on a Kindred’s head. These hunters are usually ex-military, well-trained and well-equipped, with some of the latest military grade weapons and technology and a personal “guidebook” of their experiences, discoveries, and strategies. These men and women are extremely dangerous, and many of them take a psychopathic joy in killing. The thrill of hunting a mortal has long since faded, and their skills are far above such a task. Hunting vampires is the only challenge left, and they so do with vigor — sometimes obsessively.

Although agents of the *Bratva* do not discuss it, some of these Russian hunters utilize the blood of vampires in order to increase their own skill and physical capacity. It is said that there is a laboratory in Romania staffed by ex-KGB scientists. This lab, called “Arca” by those in the know, maintain a morgue of captured vampires. Keeping them in torpor, the scientists sell injections of the blood as a stimulant to the wealthiest *Bratva* hunters.

Central American Cartels

Organized crime is on the rise in Central and Southern America, in some regions operating almost completely unrestrained by government agencies or law enforcement. Mexico, Columbia, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are among the most noted areas affected by these crime groups, who grow opium and sell drugs worldwide. Groups like Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), the Mexican Mafia (la M), and the Sureños hold tremendous power through Central America and the southern continent. Other, more organized Cartel bosses operate like small nations, ruling their local area with an iron fist but losing a great deal of pull at a distance.

Local instability leads to an even greater predominance by these groups. A thirty-six year Guatemalan civil war and widespread corruption through multiple governments have given crime syndicates significant footholds. Still, the gangs are constantly at war, making such influence unstable. The preferred crimes of these organizations range through kidnapping, extortion, and drug dealing to international aid-stealing and massive governmental corruption.

Central American gangs have a hierarchy, a specific code of language, and a code of conduct. They are usually organized in cells, or “cliques,” without any overall leader. Leaders of the cells are called *palabrerros*, loosely translated as “those who have the word.” Most cliques have a *primera palabra* and a *segunda palabra*, in reference to the clique’s first and second in command. Within the Cartels, things are a bit more organized; members known as “Falcons” (*Halcones*) are the eyes and ears of the group, while thugs known as *Sicarios* provide muscle to back up a Cartel leader’s commands.

Motives and Method

Many of the hunters of the Central American gangs have seen the carnage wrought by the Sabbat through Mexico and Southern America. Some have relatives, family members, or loved ones who have suffered terribly at the hands of these psychopathic vampires. But more often, a member of these gangs becomes a hunter out of a sense of pride or one-upsmanship, a desire to be the toughest and baddest member of the group, or to show the local vampires that mortals can fight back and win. These hunters are often young, reckless, and over-eager – but they are dangerous, nevertheless.

These gang-members have ties to weapons smugglers, allowing them to have excellent guns and other weaponry, but with a hint of randomness. They have access to whatever could be smuggled in that month, and that may range from high-powered submachine guns to rocket launchers.

The Tongs

The word “tong” means “hall” or “gathering place,” and the symbology is literal; these organizations are as much secret brotherhoods or private societies as they are criminal groups. Tong Halls are often publically known, and used for mundane purposes by local citizenry. However, beneath that pleasant exterior lies one of the most dangerous groups in organized crime.

The organizational structure of Chinese-based organized crime is quite complex, and in no way monolithic. There is no chain of command, nor coordination between the cities – but there are some figures respected unilaterally, no matter whether they are members of a specific group or not. Major tongs include the New York gangs Fuk Ching and the Ghost Shadows, as well as California’s Wo Hop To and the Wah Ching.

One of the most unusual things about the Tongs is their relationship with standard society. A criminal gang might be affiliated with a perfectly legitimate Asian-American cultural society, and might even be considered a positive and supportive part of the culture. These gangs often operate gambling rings, drug distribution, and weapons smuggling.

Motives and Method

Hunters from the Tong are not the stereotypical kung-fu expert. In modern times, they are often trained by private security firms, but turned from that employment to a more lucrative position in the Tong. Larger Tong groups often have enough money and resources to ensure that their protectors are well-equipped, and even those who are less profitable have the support of their communities. More than a few of them have Numina, followers of the old ways who use Chinese superstition and magic to best advantage against their foes. Numina is a fairly common power among the hunters of the Tong.

Retired Tong hunters, particularly those who have been permanently injured, disabled, or were former vampiric puppets, often become active resources for their Tong. Such experienced individuals become sages and guides for the next generation, and are hidden and protected by the rest of the members of the Tong. Because such hunters often have to deal with the strange Asian vampires in mainland China, this training can be absolutely critical to a hunter’s survival.

Yazuka

Known as *Yazuka* by their members and *Boryokudan* by the Japanese police, this criminal organization began as local, fragmented groups, but since World War II, the

Yazuka have consolidated, gained a hierarchy, and spread beyond Japan. The word itself comes from a Japanese card game called *oicho-kabu*, in which the worst possible hand was called a “ya-zu-ka.” Popular culture paints the Yazuka as tattooed street-thugs, riding Japanese motorcycles, eager for violence. Realistically, they are businessmen, who keep their tattoos covered by expensive suits. There are certainly younger, more gang-oriented members, but the Yazuka organization has expanded far beyond mere street thugs.

The various gangs that make up the Yazuka have different origins, but most claim descendancy from “Robin Hood”-like groups of *ronin*. Now, they specialize in gambling, protection rackets, and white-collar crime such as hacking, stock market scams, and business extortion.

Motives and Method

Hunters among the Yazuka are often called “*kabuki-mono*,” or “crazy ones,” an appellation that originates with ancient gangs of Yazuka who carried long swords, intimidated entire villages, and used unconventional and baffling strategies and innovations to confuse their enemies.

Yazuka hunters are trained assassins, skilled in stealth, silent operation, and single-target eliminations. They work in pairs, with a mentor (*oyabun*) and a student (*kobun*), and the two agents give one another absolute loyalty (and in the *kobun*'s case, unquestioning obedience). Some are agents of counterintelligence, using technology and hacking to track a vampire's activity and plague them from afar. The best of these agents never have to get within a hundred miles of their target in order to trap them in an area that will soon be ignited with sunlight, or to bring them to the attention of local law enforcement – and ensure that the police have all the information (and every advantage) necessary to destroy the Yazuka's target.

The Underworld

Most criminal agencies have thugs; individuals whose specialty is causing damage, or even killing, in the name of their organization. It is a fallacy to think that such experienced organizations can be easily infiltrated or manipulated, even by a vampire. More than one young Kindred has attempted to take over as the *Capo* of an area, only to discover themselves faced with a group of knowledgeable, capable hunters who plan to free their fellows from supernatural influence.

It's no exaggeration to say that criminal organizations are sinister, bloody, and ruthless. In many ways, their willingness to break the law, cause harm, and torture their enemies is the equal of any vampire. These criminals aren't

afraid to get their hands dirty, and they are well aware that they have no one to rely upon except themselves. A member of an organized crime family can't exactly call the police to help them when someone murders one of their made men, lest the authorities discover the organization's many other crimes while they're tracking down what happened to Timmy. Therefore, battles between Kindred and hunters from crime organizations usually occur beneath the radar of the authorities.

Mafia Cells

In organized groups, the most superlative of these individuals are taken in by their leaders, given information and training, and used to devastate vampires who encroach on the organization's turf. These men and women are trained to recognize a vampire when they see one, as well as the signs of vampiric influence. They can often discover that someone in the organization has been ghouled, and sometimes even when a power has been used to influence a member of the organization.

These thugs do not usually operate alone. Instead, they work in small cells of two to five individuals, trained and educated to work together, with access to their group's information resources and records – even through oral tale-telling – of other such situations. Many of these cells specialize in fighting Giovanni opponents, researching fetters and destroying them in order to rob the necromancers of their most powerful weapons. Such made men are known among the Sicilian mafia as “Absolvers,” those who fight to keep human souls free of vampiric influence both before and after death.

Among the Tong and the Yazuka, individuals chosen for this duty are respected and revered much like kamikaze pilots or suicide bombers. It is expected that anyone who fights vampires will likely die on one of their missions, and thus, these members are given a great deal of respect. As with most organized groups, the hunters among the Italian mafia, the Tong and the Yazuka benefit from the fact that their organization is hierarchical. Information, weapons, backup and support from their non-hunter allies give them a definite edge.

Gang Hitters

In other organizations, members are more independent, operating either in small gangs or as individuals. These hunters don't have the backup of the larger, more hierarchical organizations, but they can respond more quickly, and they are usually better trained and have more direct experience handling supernatural threats.

Russian Bratva agents often have specialized military training, and potentially even specific combat knowledge

of vampires (reflected with Specialties). These are among the most dangerous hunters among organized crime, and may even have old contacts or allies that can provide military-grade equipment.

Among the gangs of Central America, vampires had made significant footholds before hunters began to arise and fight back. However, constant abuse by the Sabbat throughout Mexico quickly taught these hardy people about the creatures they were fighting, and the gangs from Central America know more about vampires than any other group among the hunters of organized crime. After a kill, these individual hitters are more easily hidden among casual society, and can quickly lose any trail they might have picked up while on-task of killing a vampire.

Fighting For Control

For generations, vampires have been a powerful force, manipulating and dominating the movements of underworld organizations. During the Renaissance, when such organizations were spread out and communication was difficult, Kindred had a massive amount of control. It was easy for the Giovanni to hide themselves among the goombahs, using the discipline of Dominate to cover their tracks. It was just as simple for Brujah or Setites to “befriend” the Central American gang cells with Presence and leave behind very little trace. Yet as technology has advanced, allowing both the spread of information and the retention of knowledge, vampiric control has begun to slip. Small slips of the Masquerade shared and compiled over time has allowed these groups to see more of the big picture, and to understand their enemies and the powers that vampires wield – and recently, the underworld has begun fighting back.

Notably, they’ve done so with assistance. Carefully-chosen midlevel thugs, from Mafia *capos* to Bratva mercenaries, from Cartel bosses to Tong spiritualists, have been demonstrating a higher-than-normal amount of information about vampires. They have used this information to plumb weaknesses, devise strategies, and attack power structures within the Kindred world with devastating effectiveness, breaking down vampiric dominance within the underworld.

Detroit

The city of Detroit is a ravaged and abandoned landscape, with once-magnificent buildings falling apart under the weight of urban decay. It was here, in 2005, that a reckless Kindred attempted to gain control of the local Columbian drug posse – and instead ended up captured and tortured by them into revealing the secrets of the Kindred world.

The leader of that cartel, Miguel “Santos” de Sanza, spread word through his allies and the local Columbian gangs, and they decided to take action. Santos led the fight against Kindred influence in Detroit, killing several members of the Giovanni Clan and destroying a Setite temple. Afterwards, Detroit’s underworld was forever changed.

The violence spread through Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston, as information about these vampiric parasites was made available to various gangs and cartels. Santos de Sanza’s cartel, a group known as the *Sapa Inca*, rapidly grew in power and control throughout the United States. Today, Sapa Inca’s influence (and reputation) has spread through the darkest parts of the underworld and organized crime. They can be found in most major American cities, and parts of Mexico.

The Camarilla’s Justicars have declared Detroit a “danger zone,” and strongly encourage Kindred not settle in the area. The withdrawal of Kindred resources and influence has led to the further degradation and impoverishment of the city, but to those mortals “in the know,” this is preferable to slavery at Kindred hands.

The Caitiff Conspiracy

Only the highest echelons of these mortal hunters realize that they aren’t winning their battles entirely on their own. They have assistance; a group of Caitiff calling themselves “Kerberos” has allied with Santos, giving him information about the vampiric condition, access to Kindred society, and the location of targets known to be exercising influence over various underworld groups. Sometimes they pass along this knowledge in the guise of paid informants, but on other occasions they fool the superstitious and uneducated by pretending to be “angels” trying to redeem gangsters’ immortal souls. Certainly, in dealing with la Cosa Nostra, the Catholic culture of the Latin American gangs, and a variety of superstitions common in the criminal element, this ploy has shown merit. The “Dark Word,” as it is called, is spreading.

Very few members of the underworld know that de Sanza’s organization is working with Kerberos, and only a handful of those know that Kerberos is comprised of vampires. If that information became public, it might cause the members of Sapa Inca to riot, questioning whether Santos had merely exchanged one devil for another. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Kerberos has no control over Sapa Inca, nor Santos, and simply passes useful information to him through various and constantly-changing means.

The coterie known as Kerberos consists of only five vampires; four of whom are young, ostracized Caitiff

still deeply invested in the mortal world. Embraced in the last six years, they have living family and friends, and make every attempt to lead “normal” lives despite their new state. They reject the vampiric ideal that one should give up such things after the Embrace. Three of these vampires are too thin-blooded to create childer of their own, and do not know the identity of their Sire, giving them every reason to maintain ties with the mortal world. The fourth can Embrace, but does so only when told to by their leader.

The fifth of this group is their leader, a Kindred named Zek. Her real name is Nevesa Zekistraya, and she is a Tzimisce claiming to be Caitiff. To be specific, she descends not from the modern metamorphs of the Sabbat, but from the Old Clan, those who did not acquire Vicissitude (see V20, p. 439). She can trace her lineage back to Lambach Ruthven, though she is only a little over fifty years Embraced. Nevesa is a powerful creature, despite her high Generation (9th), and unknown to the others in Kerberos, she is their Sire. She deliberately botched their Embraces to ensuring that they would become Caitiff, and Dominated the details of the Embrace out of their minds so they would not recognize her. Thereafter, she gathered them up, played on personality traits she already knew they had, and began Kerberos.

In her mortal life, Zek was deeply entrenched in the underworld of the USSR; she was a member of the Russian KGB for nearly 10 years before her Embrace, and operated undercover among the various cells of the Organizatsiya. After her embrace, Zek fixated on the underworld and the various ways that Kindred society controlled it. She convinced her Sire that if she was allowed to take action, she could loosen those controls and potentially even cause them to backlash. At worst, nothing will come of her efforts; at best, the Sabbat, the Giovanni, and many others will be destroyed by their own pawns while the Old Clan never has to leave their Slavic fastnesses.

Using Animalism, Auspex, and Dominate, Zek ensures that no mortal has ever seen her true form. She possesses bodies and manifests her spirit from the astral plane, while her slumbering vampiric body remains safe. In this way, she makes sure that any contact she’s had with Santos is completely anonymous and ever-changing. She educates her Caitiff brood in similar tactics, making them incredibly hard to track down or identify. The others have additional skills in electrical engineering, espionage, and theology (to play on the various organizations’ religious leanings). One of them has even mastered the Thaumaturgical power of Technomancy, making the Kerberos coterie extremely versatile.

The War

The majority of the underworld war is currently being played out in the United States. The cities of Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston (Detroit being summarily controlled by Sapa Inca) have seen a notable upswing in violence among gangs and organized crime syndicates. However, within the last two years, riots and other outbursts have begun in Italy as the Mafia families strike against their long-time oppressors, the Giovanni. Such attacks are nothing to be ignored; many of them have taken out small strongholds, burning entire libraries of necromantic works and slaughtering a handful of Giovanni neonates, ancillae, and ghouls.

Haiti, too, has begun to see a rise in underworld violence as powerful vodouisants hear the “Dark Word” and realize that there are vampires in their midst. This has caused a significant upheaval for the Setites; ghouls are turning on their masters, and Setite control over the Caribbean is beginning to fail for the first time in decades. Superstitions once carefully created and developed by the Clan are now being turned against them, and more than one Setite coven has been sacrificed to the very gods they once impersonated.

Throughout the United States, the Justicars of the Camarilla struggle to get agents into the affected areas in order to quell the rapid spread of information, but they have had little success. The agents of Sapa Inca and their allies seem prepared for this, and have taken steps to ensure that Archons have difficulty finding a foothold of influence. Because they are tasked to keep the Masquerade, these vampiric agents find themselves placed in extraordinarily difficult positions; break the First Tradition, or lose track of their prey in the underworld.

Even the Regent of the Sabbat has noted the danger these mortals pose, though he is politically constrained against acting as if he has any concern about their behavior. Instead, he sends nomadic packs into the area as “tests” of their combat-readiness. These packs have somewhat more success than the Archons of the Camarilla. Still, once or twice the Sapa Inca and their Kerberos allies have managed to arrange these two more powerful factions battling one another – while the mortals sit back, laugh, and mop up the remnants.

For the moment, Zek’s conspiracy appears to be devastatingly effective. It’s only a matter of time, however, until the elaborate vampire-hunting apparatus she’s constructed realizes that Kindred are at the center of their information network, and they turn on her and her brood. But for now, she’s still managing to work the long con.

Merits

Mental

Sense Influence (3pt. Merit)

Through training and working with other experienced hunters, you have the ability to buy the Awareness Skill. Further, you can get a sense that someone is controlled by some supernatural influence or ghostly presence with a Perception + Awareness roll, difficulty 8.

Social

Thugs (1pt. Merit)

When you purchase the Allies merit, you are acquiring hard-core members of the underworld rather than ordinary members of lawful society. Your Allies may be gang members, mafiosos, or members of your organized crime syndicate. Unlike normal Allies, these individuals are willing to pick fights with other mortals, murder innocents, intimidate locals, temporarily lock down an area of the city, or even commit crimes on your behalf.

Legacy (2pt. Merit)

Your character comes from a lineage of hunters; either a family responsibility has been passed down, or your character is considered a “successor” to a particularly famous or successful hunter of the past. When you purchase the Contacts background, you may double the number of specific contacts you receive for each dot. Alternatively, you can purchase the Artifact or Reliquary Background to reflect a powerful heirloom.

Supernatural

Dead Zone (2pt. Merit)

Your exposure to death on a regular basis makes it difficult for ghosts to notice that you exist. You are considered to have one dot of Obfuscate (which works in the lands of the dead as well) against wraiths, spectres, and other such beings.

Minor Factions

The Young Bloods

The motorcycle club known as the Young Bloods started out as a gang of thieves and brutes in Los Angeles. Ghouled in 1992 by a reckless Brujah, the gang quickly overcame their erstwhile domitor and drank him dry. This incident gave them a taste for both the vitae and the destruction of vampires, and since then, they've been riding through

the southwestern American states, hunting down other vampires to serve the same fate.

For many years, the Young Bloods were extraordinarily successful, partly due to the instability in vampiric society in that area of the country. The Anarchs were fighting to keep their holdings, while the Sabbat and Camarilla were struggling to make inroads – and all three overlooked and underestimated a mortal gang. In time, the Young Bloods have been blood hunted in three cities, and their name was well known among Kindred of the area. That's when the gang's leader, Bob Zalkovsky (also known as Bobby Z or Big Z) came up with a plan.

Rather than hunt down vampires to get blood, they should take one prisoner and use it to ensure they always had a supply. Faced with the problem of the blood bond, Bob decided the best way to go about this was to have their vampire captive continually Embrace individuals. Everyone in the motorcycle club would drink from that sucker once, and then kill it. A month later, they'd have their stooge vampire Embrace another one, and they'd drink and kill that unfortunate soul, and so on, and so on. Nobody got blood bound, and the motorcycle club would have a constant source without a lot of effort.

It was Vera, Bob's girlfriend, who added the idea to hole up and establish permanent digs. She knew about a place a few miles west of Barstow, California – right near Calico Ghost Town – where the military had dug a bunker during the 60s and abandoned it in the 80s. The Young Bloods moved in, and now the motorcycle club calls the Bunker home, going off for weeks but returning regularly for a hit of their supply. It seemed like a perfect solution.

The poor sucker in the basement, of course, would disagree.

Their vampire captive's name is Eugene Bargen, but in the Los Angeles club scene, he preferred the name Romulus. A goth kid, overeager and naive, he was pretty enough to attract the interest of a Toreador sire – but not artistic enough to keep her attention. Eventually, Eugene started taking risks in order to make her notice. In 2003, the Young Bloods caught him in a net, dragged him behind a motorcycle for six miles, and then staked him. They unstaked him once they got back to the Bunker, and locked him in a military-grade brig underground. Eugene's been there for almost ten years, slowly going crazy. Occasionally he manages to muster enough force of personality to drive the Young Bloods off, but their thugs are tougher and have better control of their ghouled Disciplines – and they have plenty of manpower.

Meanwhile, the vampires of the southwest are faced



with an increasingly powerful – and ever-growing – army of ghouled, unbound hunters riding the streets of Los Angeles.

Ikhwan al-Safa

In the Middle East, the foremost group of hunters is the Muslim religious society known as Ikhwan al-Safa, or the Brotherhood of Purity. They safeguard traditional Islamic strongholds, including Baghdad, Tehran, and Mecca. Ikhwan al-Safa is one of the oldest hunter brotherhoods, and they have compiled libraries filled with generations of research regarding vampires and other supernatural creatures. The society's primary haven and core headquarters is within the sacred city of Mecca, where the city's dense aura of faith shelters them from their enemies.

It is known that a small family of like-minded tribesmen was the first true Islamic hunters. Striking out against monsters in the night, these brave individuals made little headway, but became known as the *sayyadin*. Driven by a consuming need for vengeance, these early hunters

were as likely to commit suicide on a vampire's fangs as they were to successfully root out the monsters. Yet they continued, and their struggle was noticed by a powerful Sultan named Mehmet.

From there, the society's history moves to the Sipahis; elite horsemen and soldiers of the Ottoman Empire. The original Sipahis were almost exclusively Islamic, as demanded by Sultan Mehmet II in his treatise entitled *Kanun Nameh-e-Sipahi* ("Law Book of the Sipahis"). Their rivals were the Janissaries, a group of primarily Christian soldiers (typically peasants and slaves), whose ranks contained Vlad Tepes and his half-brother Radu during their time as political hostages of the Ottomans. After he discovered what became of Vlad Tepes, Sultan Mehmet sheltered and took in the *sayyadin* tribesmen, promising them all they would need to find vengeance against their enemy. He further chose the strongest and most skilled of the Sipahi and caused the two groups to swear a powerful oath to one another. The tribesmen shared all they knew of vampires; the Sipahi shared all they knew of combat. Together, they became the Ikhwan al-Safa.

The scholarly elite among the order date their origins back even further, to a group of philosophical mystics in Basra, Iraq during the 10th century; a society known as the Brethren of Sincerity. Their esoteric teachings and philosophy have been preserved in a treatise known as the *Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'*, a giant compendium of 52 epistles. Mehmet II, they say, took most of his knowledge about vampires and the supernatural from these epistles. He removed that information from the epistles for the sake of the common man, and used it as a basis to write the *Kanun Nameh-e-Safa*, or "Law Book of the Pure." It is this text, updated over the ages, which educates and instructs the soldiers of the Ikhwan al-Safa. It may be the foremost compilation of anti-vampiric combat and strategy in the world.

The Djinn

It is known that the Ikhwan al-Safa have claimed to command the jinn. In truth, the Ikhwan al-Safa are allied with a faction of Persian mages known as the Taftâni, who use ancient rites to bind true Djinn – incredibly powerful spirits – in order to force them to serve mortal man. This practice is extremely dangerous, and there is a high death rate among those who seek to learn this magic.

The Taftâni believe that all other mages have tied themselves to *Druj*, a concept meaning "the Great Lie." Taftâni insist that that only through spreading Truth can the world be made free. The Taftâni among the Ikhwan al-Safa use their magic to combat evil, seeing the vampiric state as just another part of *Druj*; a spiritual lie replicating the soul that once inhabited the vampiric body. They believe that to right the world, these creatures must be destroyed.

Recent Developments

As the Middle East undergoes significant political upheaval, the hunters in that region have been pushed to the brink on many occasions. In 2007, this situation exploded into a brief but bloody three-sided war, and many hunters abandoned their higher calling in order to engage in sectarian battles. The groups gathered to sign a treaty signed at the beginning of 2008, and that has prevented the situation from worsening, but deep grudges remain, and the wounds are still fresh. Indeed, the Ikhwan al-Safa have reported that some violent young sayyadin have left their group, and plan to continue fighting against the Knights of St. George and the Judges wherever they find agents of those groups in the Middle East.

Akritai

The Akritai are descended from a Byzantine military organization originally meant to protect the borders from the Muslims and other infidels. The term is derived from the Greek word *akron/akra*, meaning border; border guards were employed in the late Roman and early Byzantine armies to take on the most dangerous of duties: guarding civilization from the barbarians of the frontier. This group consists of Eastern Orthodox witch-hunters, stridently unaffiliated with the Catholic Church or the Inquisition. To their credit, they are on relatively peaceful terms with the other religious orders of vampire hunters (the Society of Leopold, the Ikhwan al-Safa, and the Judges), but that is primarily because they neither assist nor collude with any of them. The Akritai prefer to work alone.

The Akritai have no concrete hierarchy, instead framing themselves around dozens of regional groups found primarily throughout Eastern Europe. They do have chapters in the Americas, but those are relatively new and inexperienced, although they can call on their more established fellows in time of need.

The majority of the Akritai are combatants, driven and encouraged by their faith to fight against vampires, werewolves, and other supernatural beings who would prey upon innocents. They are devout followers of the Orthodox faith who feel they have been called to this purpose, and devote themselves to an anti-vampiric crusade above all else. They are predominantly ordained priests or nuns, and generally do not have families or personal ties of any sort. The Akritai reject earthly goods and connections in order to focus their lives solely on the destruction of vampires.

In 2011, the entire order was called to action in the city of Domazlice, within the Czech Republic, where an ancient elder named Tryphosa was stirring. Knowing that this vampire was a seer, the Akritai called upon their most sacred order of monks and invoked the blessings of God. In the end, the Akritai had taken significant damages, but the Methuselah was destroyed. Since then, the Order has been trying to recoup its losses, accepting even non-priests into its fold, but they maintain their insistence that members must eschew families and luxuries, and the lure of the modern world all too often overcomes the call of God.

The Akritai discovered two extremely unusual books within Tryphosa's haven. One was a copy of an ancient text called *The Book of Nod*. The second, seemingly written in the Seeress's own hand, was titled *The Apostate Auguries*, a book of mad prophecy that foretells a great shadow rising from the Abyss, a beast which will free itself from captivity and devour the son (sun? – the text is complex,



and researchers disagree). Both books are being studied in secret by members of the Akritai.

Knights of St. George

The Resolute Knights of St. George, as they are occasionally called, was established in Syria in the 11th century. They spread across the world, and by the 1400's, there were chapterhouses of this knighthood from Ireland to India. The Knights of St. George have always been a forward-looking order, inducting women in the 19th century, and opening their doors to non-Christians in the early 20th. There are alchemists, sorcerous numinist, and mortal researchers. A splinter group, the Society of St. George, is even believed to be able to wield powerful magic. All of them have sworn to hunt evil upon the world, and primarily focus their attention on vampires.

The Knights see themselves as the greatest protectors of mankind, and other hunters accuse them of a great deal of false pride and exaggeration about their accomplishments. Certainly, they are one of the largest organizations of hunters in the world, and they have chapterhouses in nearly every major nation. In India, they are known as the Varghese. In Canada, they are known as the Church of the Union. In Central America, they are commonly called the *Caballeros de Posadas*, or "Sheltering Knights."

Recent Developments

As noted, the fighting in the Middle East has driven many wedges between the various hunter groups in that area, and those grudges have influenced more than the local chapters of the Knights of St. George. During the upheavals, two of their chapterhouses were invaded and ransacked by members of the Ikhwan al-Safa. The other organization immediately issued a rebuke of those members, but the materials and research were never returned. The situation has put the knights at a high state of concern, regardless of the treaty signed in 2008, because the materials taken included information on a number of their most important libraries and undercover agents.

If the materials aren't returned, or worse, if they are used against the Knights of St. George, the consequences could be disastrous. A fight between two hunter groups could rapidly escalate into a war between the Ikhwan al-Safa and their djinn against the entirety of the knighthood and their allies.

The Judges

In the nation of Israel and all across the world, hunters of the Jewish faith have banded together to protect innocents from harm. This organization is known as The Judges, styling themselves after Biblical tradition of the *Shoftim*,

following Talmudic doctrine and the scripture of the Torah. In addition to these sacred writings, the Judges have inherited a great deal of collected wisdom contained in a secret Talmud; a compilation of teachings and arguments of earlier Judges. Unlike other hunter groups, the Judges have enough information to tell the difference between the different types of magic used by vampires. They use this knowledge to track down infernalist sorcerers, the so-called “Children of Lilith,” and demon-worshippers, whom they consider to be top-priority targets. Historical accounts speak of Judges working with other vampires in order to destroy one of these greater evils. Although such alliances never last beyond the destruction of the demonic target, the Judges have proven themselves true to their word, and keep their bargains.

Over the last ten years, much has changed. The Judges have gone from a small group with no centralized authority to a far more efficient and organized network of hunters, with a hierarchy centered in Tel Aviv. They have even received covert government sanction from Israel, and receive monetary aid and religious support both in the Middle East and from the Rabbinical Council of America. The organization has grown large enough to subdivide into specialties, including Kabbalists (who have fewer moral qualms about the study and application of Theurgy than do their Christian counterparts), information and intelligence-gathering agents, scouts and covert strike units, and heavily-armed soldiers.

Still, the Judges are an organization in transition, and not everyone is pleased with the new direction. Greater organization means more hierarchy, and that means taking orders –something independent and self-reliant hunters do not accept easily. It has been hard to convince some cells of Jewish hunters that it is in their best interest to be part of this new structure, and more than one group has gone rogue, rejecting all offers of alliance. One particularly renowned hunter in Dallas, a woman named Kess Aronowicz, not only rejected the offer but also claimed to have seen proof that the new hierarchy was a result of powerful Kindred seizing control of the organization. She has promised to locate these vampires and destroy them.

Currently, the Judges of Israel are engaged in an especially bitter war with a group of vampires known as the Bahari, who purport to be a cult of vampires and mortals that worship the demoness Lilith. This war is being fought primarily on two fronts. The smaller conflict is along the northern borders of Sabbat-controlled Mexico, where small cults of relatively young Bahari have been found. The bigger and much more dangerous one is in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey, where individual Lilith-

worshipping vampires – almost always female, as well as much older and more powerful than the individuals in the smaller cults – have recently been discovered. Thus far, there seems to be no connection between these two groups of Kindred other than a common adherence to the strictures of the Bahari religion.

Hunting Gear

One of the advantages of working for an organization of hunters is access to specialized tools for the hunt. Government agents can requisition higher-quality implements and bleeding-edge technology, while the Arcanum and the Inquisition use mystical artifacts and religious relics to fight vampires. These unique tools can often act to level the playing field against even some of the more powerful Kindred. Here is just a small sampling of the wide variety of tools that can be brought to bear in the hunt.

Requisitions

Each of these items has a Requisition cost; this is the amount that a character must spend from her Requisition Background to acquire the item. Storytellers may allow some hunters to use the Armory Background instead.

Ammo

Armor-Piercing Bullets (•• per box of 24): A box of armor-piercing rounds (ignores 1 level of Armor Rating). Military-grade ammo, an intelligence agent who uses armor-piercing ammo must be able to justify using it.

Silver Bullets (•• per box of 24): A box of silver bullets. Each box is issued for one weapon.

Armor

Kevlar Vest (•): Standard issue in armed hostage situations. Armor Rating 3.

Neck Guard (•): A flexible strip of flesh-colored Kevlar, reinforced with ceramic plates, giving Armor Rating 5 to neck attacks (such as from a vampire’s bite). The wearer’s Perception rolls are at -1 dice due to the difficulty in moving his head from side to side.

Riot Gear (•••): Full riot control gear, very obviously marked with the agency’s identifier to prevent friendly-fire. Armor Rating 5.

Forensics

Lab Access (•): You can get access to a forensics lab to run your own tests, including autopsies, ballistics tests,

blood, and DNA analysis. You can also use the equipment for non-standard tests.

Forensic Team (••): You can requisition a team of forensic scientists from a friendly intelligence agency to process a crime scene. The results will take several weeks to come back.

Urgent Forensic Team (••••): As a forensic team, but your job is top priority. Processing the scene takes six hours, and you will have results in one to two days.

Imaging

Chaoscope and chaoscope records can only be requisitioned by agents with Rank in the NSA.

Thermal-Imaging Goggles (•): Useful in low-light situations. Thermal-imaging goggles can also detect vampires by their lack of body heat.

Phased Motion Detector (••): This compact, handheld unit detects minute disturbances in the air and, through the collection of this and other data, works to sense movement within 50 feet/100 meters. Contacts are displayed as blips on the screen, with a beep that increases in volume as the contact gets closer. When used on a vampire under Obfuscate, this device aids the hunters by letting them make Seeing the Unseen rolls (V20, p. 142) as if they had one dot of Auspex.

Chaoscope Records (••): You can requisition records from one of the NSA teams monitoring a chaoscope in a major facility.

Portable Chaoscope (•••••): Access to one of two van-mounted chaoscopes; it takes twenty minutes to set up to start scanning and cannot be used on the move.

Raids

All raids require the cooperation of local law enforcement agencies, and will draw significant attention.

Apartment Raid (••): A squad of police armed with shotguns, submachine guns, and flash-bang grenades, able to seize an apartment or brownstone.

Block Raid (•••): Enough armed police to go through an entire apartment block or pacify a large-scale riot.

Compound Raid (•••••): Armed FBI agents supplemented with heavily-armed police or National Guard personnel, enough to end an armed stand-off with a breakaway sect.

Records

Access to specific records; requests usually come back within 24 hours.

Confidential Files (••): Agency mission files, and the like.

Secret Files (•••): Classified agency information, and similar documents.

Top Secret Files (••••): Reports of clandestine foreign operations, assassinations of American citizens, etc.

Military/Other Agency Files (•••••): Restricted information from the Pentagon, or from other agencies. Will require justification to the other agency.

Surveillance

Phone Tap (••): A junior agent, monitoring the activity on a single phone line or cellphone and reporting suspicious activity.

GPS Tracker (••): A device about the size of a box of matches, attaches to a vehicle to allow agents to trace it. Onboard battery is good for a week's monitoring.

Laser Microphone (•••): Bounces a laser beam off a nearby flat surface to listen in on distant conversations

Weaponry

For more details on specific weapons, see V20 pp. 280-281.

Heavy Pistol (0): All agents have a standard-issue sidearm and two magazines of ammunition.

Shotgun (•): A common weapon for dangerous operations

Taser (•): An electric stun-gun. Make a normal Firearms attack, on a success, the victim is knocked out for (10 - Stamina) minutes. Has no effect on vampires.

Fang Rippers (•): A set of specially-modified dental pliers to use on vampire fangs. Each fang forcibly removed from the vampire causes an aggravated wound, and vampires are under the effects of the Dulled Bite Flaw (V20, p. 481) until the wounds are healed.

Spike-thrower (••): A specially modified shotgun that fires a wooden stake, inspired by a Hungarian design used in the 1956 uprising. Damage 3, Range 15, Rate 1, Capacity 1, Concealment N.

Sub-Machine Gun (•••): A large sub-machine gun. Requisition may be denied if the agent cannot justify its use.

Heavy Weapon (•••••): A tripod-mounted heavy machine gun, anti-materiel rifle, or rocket launcher. Only for covert combat missions. Never for use in public areas. Agent must justify pressing need when requesting, and must account for every round spent in triplicate.

Drone Strike (•••••): An attack on the target by an unmanned aerial vehicle. Must include a case suitable for briefing the President, and full justification for not pursuing other means to capture or kill the target.

Relics and Artifacts

Relics and artifacts can be acquired using the Reliquary and Artifact Backgrounds (see pp. 122 and 140). Dots can be spent between items, so that three dots of Reliquary can be used to get a one-dot relic and a two-dot relic. These are just a small selection of possible relics and artifacts.

Eye of the Hour-Glass (•)

A pair of old 19th century glasses that allow the wearer to see Kindred using high levels of Celerity as normal. It doesn't grant the wearer any faster reflexes to counter the vampire, but it does allow him to be aware and unsurprised of the Celerity user's actions.

Mentat Stones (•)

A number of these unusual stones exist, each tuned to assist Psychic Numina in one of two different ways. The first kind of stone allows the user to better focus her abilities, lowering the difficulty of Psychic Numina rolls by 1. The other interferes with psychic activity, and acts as if the holder has one dot of Anti-Psi (see p. 135).

Ring of Chrysostom (•)

A silver band with a cross roughly engraved in it, this ring is believed to have been worn by St. John Chrysostom. Wearing this ring provides the wielder with the effects of True Faith • (see pp. 83-85), and acts as a holy symbol for Christian faiths.

Franciscan Aspergillum (••)

This aspergillum (a device used to sprinkle holy water) has a splinter of bone from Saint Francis worked into the handle. Using it to sprinkle holy water across a room creates an aura of tranquility, calming vampiric frenzy and other states of madness for one evening. Bearing this aspergillum provides a bonus dot to those with True Faith.

The Orb of Ulain (••)

A dull red crystal set into a tarnished silver necklace, the Orb allows the wearer to harness Psychic Numina, protecting her from any vampiric Disciplines involving the mind. The Numinist can add her highest Psychic Numina rating to the difficulty of all rolls against her using such Disciplines (maximum difficulty 9).

Shadow Cloak (••)

A black cloak that makes the wearer nearly invisible in darkness or shadow, granting +3 dice to all Stealth rolls.

However, cloaks are not a common sight in public, and often draw attention.

Byzantine Thurible (•••)

An ornate censer for incense, this thurible dates back to just after the fall of Constantinople. When used, the smoke from the thurible reduces the barrier between this world and the next, revealing the presence of wraiths. Until the smoke clears (typically about half an hour), the room increases its True Faith rating by 1. It can be used as a weapon of Faith, but it is very fragile – a botch will destroy it irrevocably.

The Griffin's Ring (•••)

A silver earring with intricate carvings of birds and owls along the edge. When worn, it will make a bird's cry in the ear of the hunter when she is in the presence of a Kindred (about 10 feet/3 meters).

The Martyr's Fire (•••)

A small, simple lantern forged from the ashes of the bones of martyrs. Those within the radius of light given off by the lantern (about 25 feet/8 meters) will vividly recall the suffering the martyrs and be inspired by them. As a result, they will not suffer dice penalties from wounds, although they can still be damaged as normal.

The Eunuch's Scapular (••••)

This scapular – a large length of cloth covering the front and back of the wearer – is believed to have been worn by a devout Cypriot saint who castrated himself in order to resist the temptations of the flesh. Wearing (or carrying) this scapular will render the bearer immune to all Presence powers, or similar Disciplines of emotional control. Being in extended contact with the scapular can render male bearers impotent for long periods of time.

The Garou's Claw (••••)

A dagger carved from the claw of a Lupine, this weapon causes aggravated damage to Kindred. Further, during the light of a full moon, the wielder of the dagger will automatically know the location of all Kindred that stand within 10 feet/3 meters of her. Of course, werewolves will constantly seek out the owner of the dagger to take it back, but that may be a small price to pay.

Silver Chalice (•••)

A few plain silver Chalices have appeared over the years. While not the Holy Grail that many believed them to be, they are still powerful objects. When drinking pure water from a Chalice on any holy ground, all damage or all kinds are immediately healed. Once used in this way, the healing properties do not work again until the next full moon.

The Crusader's Sword (•••••)

Over the centuries, a number of swords have become relics in service to those who hunt monsters. Holding the reversed hilt aloft counts as a holy symbol (for those that revere the cross of Christianity), and rolls for True Faith add one die against the supernatural. The sword also causes aggravated wounds to supernatural targets. Finally, while in contact with the sword, the wielder gains the Merit Iron Will if she doesn't already possess it (V20, p. 485). Mechanics for swords can be found in V20, p. 280 – these larger broadswords cause Strength +5 damage and have a conceal rating of N.

Dagger of Thorns (•••••)

Believed to be forged with a thorn from Christ's Crown of Thorns, this dagger was discovered in a Syrian church in the 6th century. This dagger gives the wielder a bonus dot of True Faith, even if they have no True Faith to begin with. It also does aggravated damage (dagger stats can be found in V20, p. 280). Finally, vampires stabbed with the weapon start to bleed from the eyes, ears, and mouth – each successful strike (even if it doesn't do damage) causes the target vampire to lose one blood point.

The Keys of Leopold (•••••)

Three splinters of bone, believed to belong to Leopold of Murnau, were worked into a set of heavy jailer's keys kept on a thick iron ring. When the holder touches the keys to a supernatural creature, he makes a Wits + Conscience roll (the difficulty is the target's permanent Willpower). Each success is one turn in which the target creature is completely immobile and drain 1 Willpower point. The keys must remain together to work.

Epilogue

My God. Look what they've done to you. Did they even bother asking questions tonight? I heard them in the hall, eager as boys with a pinchful of fly wings, so curious to see what will grow back. I sent them away. I still have some pull, mostly an artifact of a reputation acquired from performing a miracle in my youth. I may lose even that currency before the night is through. They'll call me Sanbenito or worse.

How many nights has it been? Three? I know you can see and hear. Can you feel that awful slat of wood in your ribs? The prefect listener. I think you're the only one I can talk to now. Like a friend or a confessor. Reconciliation.

"Reconcile" is, by far, my favorite word. Not for its connotation of forgiveness. It is more powerful than that, to make two conflicting ideas impossibly coexist – that is

magic – like the day a Jesuit priest taught me evolution and how that beautiful process might entwine with my spiritual beliefs, or the day I reconciled the presence of God in a world with evil, that the sculptor could love his work even if he did not explain his methods to the clay.

But I'm dillydallying. I have a drinking problem. So do you. But yours isn't alcohol, and it's not the point. This is the point. I'm going to release you. But first, I need to make one final confession.

They told me I was a gentle soul. As a boy, animals adored me. My mother likened me to St. Francis. All of those Sunday school questions – I don't know if dogs go to heaven, but I do know that a soul's purity can be measured in how one treats beasts.

They told me I was a sensitive soul. I wrote poetry, spent weeks locked away in my head, emulating the heroic epics. I wanted to be divinely inspired, the way Homer invoked the Muses or Dante called upon the Holy Ghost. That Jesuit priest told me art was the act of missing a place you have never been, a place beyond our clay.

Between the then and the now, I was ordained a priest, joined the Society of Leopold, entered the Dark Night of the Soul. Like Beowulf, "Time and again, foul things attacked me, lurking and stalking, but I lashed out, gave as good as I got with my sword. My flesh was not for feasting on." I saw horrors, true, but when I invoked the Holy Muse, it answered, and my words were star-fire, and no foul thing could approach me or bear to hear my ecstatic rhymes.

Then Monsignor Amelio Vittore, the head of our Society, died. Ingrid Bauer arose as Inquisitor-General. The Iron Maiden. She started the combat colleges and reinstated the official use of torture, which Vittore denounced. She brought the war on the Enemy that many of us needed. The Censors silenced any lingering opposition.

I was a gentle soul, but I have done things. I've done worse than what was inflicted on you. Now, when I invoke the Holy Muse, I feel nothing. I cry, "Marco!" into the dark. No one responds. I don't remember the last time I wrote anything.

Time has illumined Vittore's wisdom. He knew that torture gives worse scars to the inflictor. The Devil is patient. The Adversary knows that he does not have to win this earthly war, just make it horrible enough, just wait for our souls to putrefy, like free radicals gnawing meat. Doubts drone through our halls like flies gluttoned on shit.

I want my faith back! I will write poetry again. I will capture a fragment of a place I've never been. I will think impossible thoughts. I will reconcile.

You are my best friend now. The others only investigated your feeding patterns, but I looked deeper. I know how well you cared for your dog, that you fed him your blood so you could keep one good thing with you. I know what you wanted to do after college. I know the private joke of your email address. I know you've tried to call your parents since, but you hang up every time. I saw the bloody tears you left.

I have a gift for you. I'll just put it around your neck. It won't burn. It's no relic, just cloth and cord. Plain.

Humble. The words on it read: "Whosoever dies clothed in this Scapular shall not suffer eternal fire."

I will hate the sin, but love the sinner. I love you. I will love all of them, even Satan himself. It has to mean something; it has to hurt every time. They will be furious with me. They had more questions for you. Perhaps the Censors will come for me next.

Be not afraid. My sword arm is still strong, and I promise to look after your dog.



Appendix: Template Characters

This appendix details a selection of pre-generated hunters who can be dropped into any chronicle as Storyteller characters or portrayed as players' characters. Each one has been crafted in response to acts performed by careless Kindred that could potentially draw unwanted attention of the populace toward vampire activity in their city.

Whether it is an accident on the part of the undead (such as not disposing of a drained body thoroughly enough or an insufficient cleanup when one succumbs to frenzy in a public place) or the result of premeditated action (such as simply using mortals to get what one wants and discarding them without a thought of the consequences, or Embracing the wrong person who then escapes his sire's grasp), these hunters are all forged directly from the actions of Kindred. The seeds sown here may well grow and blossom in your chronicle, or go on to inspire the Storyteller to craft something in a similar vein to respond to the players' characters' deeds.

Remember, every action has consequence.

The Obsessed Detective

Background: You joined the police force to make a difference. Rather than sit and watch the crime rate rise in your community, you made a stand. You started on the streets as a beat cop, but your keen eye and sharp mind helped forge a path that delivered you to the rank of detective in just a few years.

A murder case ultimately brought your perception of the world crashing down. Body parts had washed up along a stretch of riverbank, and you were assigned to the case. It looked like an unprofessional disposal of a gangland hit. It took a week for forensics to find all the parts. The lab confirmed that someone had taken a saw to the victim. The cuts implied it was a rushed job. However, when the head turned up, the examination took another turn. Teeth marks.... Someone had bitten into the victim's neck and torn out his throat.

The case was officially closed as a gangland hit, albeit with gruesome overtones, but you didn't forget it. You kept a copy of the file locked in your desk drawer. Over time, other reports joined it – reports of bodies found with claw marks, teeth marks, and more recently, exsanguinations. At first, you could rationalize it all with mundane explanations, but of late, the rational side of you has fallen silent. There's too much evidence. You firmly believe that something is out there, preying on mankind in the dead of night.

Driven by your sworn duty “to protect and serve,” it is your mission to find and remove this threat before it claims more lives. You walk the streets late into the night, waiting for one of them to cross your path. You have yet to see a vampire face-to-face, but you've uncovered more and more evidence of those who don't cover their tracks.

The more you've seen, the more you've researched. You regularly scour tomes of occult lore, collections of myths and legends, and municipal police records, looking for anything and everything that could give you an edge. It's becoming an obsession, a burden that only you can carry because you're convinced your superiors wouldn't believe the truth. Even if they had a monster in front of them, given how they've ignored all the cases they have seen (and buried)

so far, they would simply refuse to believe it. Unless they're... no, that couldn't be true.

Your devotion is beginning to have a negative impact on your work. Burning the candle at both ends and reading news stories about monster sightings while you should be writing reports has brought you in front of the detective brass more than once. You simply won't let it go. You've caught a glimpse of the awful truth, and while it has ruined your previously stable life, it cannot be ignored. You're seeing monsters lurking in every shadow, and it's only a matter of time before something breaks. You just hope it's not your career, as it's the only thing of your former life you have left to hold on to.

You've gathered a collection of tools to fight whatever you find out there in the night: crucifix, Bible, holy water, garlic, bags of rice, compact mirrors, silver bullets, hammer and wooden stakes, the whole nine yards. Anything that you've found in books that says it works against vampires, you carry in a trusty sports bag to aid you for when the time comes. You're hoping that you've got what you need to get the job done. If you haven't, well, you'll leave behind a patrol car that'll have people thinking you were one of the tinfoil-hat brigade.

Image: Of average height and build, your appearance is deceptive in that you're quite strong and fast due to your training regimen. You tend toward smart but practical attire in your plain-clothes role, and are often found with the aforementioned sports bag containing the tools you hope will aid you when you finally confront a creature of the night. More often than not, you have dark rings around your eyes as the result of your late-night patrols. Slightly out-of-place hair and a wide-eyed look betray the image of a person who's trying to maintain a calm façade in spite of the stressful situation in which she finds herself.

Roleplaying Hints: Your lone crusade is putting a strain on your daytime detective work. With long nights and little sleep, you're on edge a lot of the time, and it's beginning to show. You're often tired when not dosed up on caffeine and energy drinks to you keep you going as you continue pushing yourself to the limit. It's an obsession that's consuming you, one night at a time, but you can't give up. The public depends on you, even though they'll never know what horror lurks so close to home.





Name:

Nature: Soldier

Age: 29

Player:

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Sex:

Chronicle:

Concept: Obsessed Detective

Residence:

Attributes

Physical

Social

Mental

Strength _____ ●●●○○
 Dexterity _____ ●●●○○
 Stamina _____ ●●●○○

Charisma _____ ●●○○○
 Manipulation _____ ●●○○○
 Appearance _____ ●●○○○

Perception _____ ●●●○○
 Intelligence _____ ●●○○○
 Wits _____ ●●●○○

Abilities

Talents

Skills

Knowledges

Alertness _____ ●●●○○
 Athletics _____ ○○○○○
 Awareness _____ ●●●○○
 Brawl _____ ○○○○○
 Empathy _____ ●●○○○
 Expression _____ ○○○○○
 Intimidation _____ ●●○○○
 Leadership _____ ●○○○○
 Streetwise _____ ●●○○○
 Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○
 Crafts _____ ○○○○○
 Drive _____ ●●○○○
 Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
 Firearms _____ ●●●○○
 Larceny _____ ○○○○○
 Melee _____ ○○○○○
 Performance _____ ○○○○○
 Stealth _____ ●●○○○
 Survival _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Academics _____ ●●○○○
 Computer _____ ●○○○○
 Finance _____ ○○○○○
 Investigation _____ ●●●○○
 Law _____ ●●○○○
 Medicine _____ ○○○○○
 Occult _____ ○○○○○
 Politics _____ ●○○○○
 Science _____ ○○○○○
 Technology _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Numina & Other Traits

Backgrounds

Merits & Flaws

_____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
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 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Allies (Police) _____ ●●○○○
 Contacts (Street) _____ ●●○○○
 Resources _____ ●●○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Humanity

●●●●●●○○○○○

Willpower

●●●●○○○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised _____ □
 Hurt _____ -1 □
 Injured _____ -1 □
 Wounded _____ -2 □
 Mauled _____ -2 □
 Crippled _____ -5 □
 Incapacitated _____ □

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○○

Virtues

Conscience _____ ●●●○○
 Self-Control _____ ●●●○○
 Courage _____ ●●●○○

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 • Abilities:11/7/4 • Backgrounds:5 • Virtues:7 • Freebie Points:15 (7/5/2/1)

The Paranoid Surveyor

Background: You were always a very rational and scientifically minded person, finding enjoyment in the order of mathematics and physics. Ultimately, you chose a career path where you could draw upon such knowledge. After studying architecture and engineering, you landed a job with the city's redevelopment office as a surveyor.

A few months ago, you joined a new team. City hall issued a redevelopment order on a district in the suburbs that had slowly been falling apart for years. With many of its buildings deserted, you and your team would survey the area ahead of demolition teams. In one building, you found a door you couldn't open, seemingly barricaded from within. Partly driven by curiosity, partly driven by the need to complete the survey, leaving no stone unturned, you searched for another way in. Breaking open the window and pulling back the curtains revealed the back of a wardrobe: another barricade. It took all your strength, but you pushed it aside, and the morning sun cut through the darkness, filling the room beyond.

You remember in vivid horror the pale figure on the bed. When the light touched it, it burst into flames. You'll remember the bestial, inhuman screams and the look of rage and terror in its awful eyes until the day you die. The sight still haunts your dreams, your own screams mingling with those of the wretched thing that still ring in your ears as you awaken in fear most nights.

Everyone knew the job was stressful, given the volume of work and the tight deadlines. They wrote your report off as stress and gave you a few days off work to relax. Given time alone to think, you tried to understand what had happened. All your research told you the same thing. You weren't one to believe in anything without proof before, and while it was outlandish, you knew you had come face-to-face with a monster.

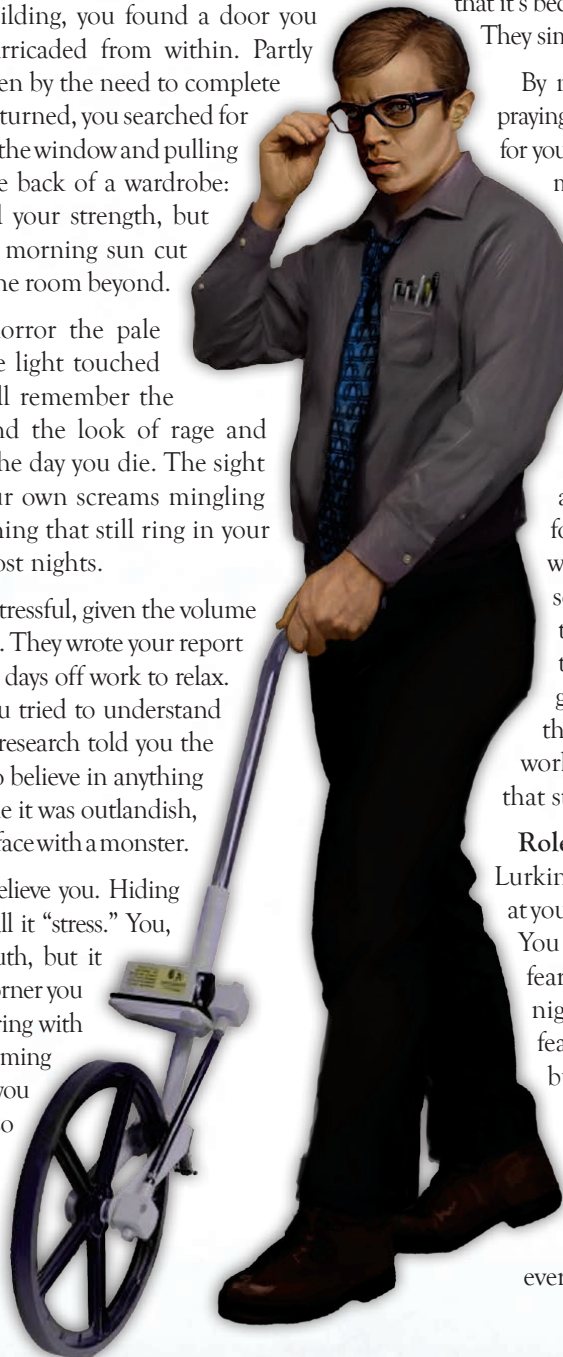
The world wasn't going to believe you. Hiding behind denial, people would call it "stress." You, too, tried to hide from the truth, but it played on your mind. In every corner you saw that pale figure lurking, glaring with those terrible, hungry eyes. Becoming increasingly afraid of the dark, you kept every inch of your home lit so that the fiends had nowhere to hide. Eventually, you sought help from a therapist. She suggested you confront your fears, and you took her advice literally.

No one else is going to take a stand for you. Now, you use your job to pry into the dark corners of the city during daylight to expose those secluded places to the light of the sun where horrors lurk. Your dedication to the job, going out into the field more than anyone else to identify places of infestation that are ripe for redevelopment, has earned you plenty of commendations. However, the fact that you have passed up two promotions so far to keep you in your current role, and thus rigidly focused to the redevelopment plan, is making your superiors think that you might be too heavily involved in the process. They are concerned that it's becoming detrimental to your mental health. They simply don't understand.

By night, you hide behind barricaded doors, praying that the creatures of darkness don't come for you in retribution. This self-imposed seclusion means you have drifted away from many friends, but it's a necessary price to pay to ensure their safety as well as yours. It's a lonely life, but it's the price of the horrible knowledge you came to possess.

Image: Being one to favor mental pursuits over physical exercise, you're slightly overweight, though not repulsively so, and you're slightly above average in height. You're usually found in a shirt and tie, given your work with the council, and you often have a selection of pens and pencils in your top pocket that, combined with your thick-rimmed glasses, give you a certain geekish quality. On the whole, you have the outward appearance of a normal office worker with little to betray the conviction that stirs within you.

Roleplaying Hints: They're everywhere. Lurking in the shadowed alleyways, looking up at you from the bottom of darkened stairwells. You can't go anywhere after dark without fearing they're just around the corner. Some nights, you're almost crippled by your own fear and paranoia. By day, you can relax, but only a little. You've got to work hard to clear them out, block by block. When you've cleared all the dark corners of the city, you can rest, and life can return to how it was. Unless more of them come from outside the city. They could be everywhere. It might never end.



The Destitute Crusader

Background: You know now that you should have paid more attention in school. If you'd spent less time skipping class, you might have made the grades to land a decent job. Working for minimal pay, for short lengths of time, you found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Ultimately, you had every door closed on you, and you were out on the streets.

You thought no one in the world cared, but you were wrong. The church on the corner ran a soup kitchen and a small shelter. You came to know the volunteers and, in time, even offered help. The work gave you self-respect. On Sundays, you attended church and listened to the promises of a better life after this for those who accepted the love of God. Against all the misery of life, the prospect of light at the end of the tunnel kept you going.

After an evening of begging for change and being ignored, you took a shortcut past a seedy bar on the way to the shelter. Hearing the screams inside, you couldn't help but look through the window. The thing inside was biting, cutting, and tearing its way through the people inside with fangs and claws. Leaving everyone dead in its wake, the thing came out of the door and passed within yards of you, trembling in the shadows, as it fled into the night.

You believe it was the grace of God that spared you that night. You prayed in thanks for your salvation and wept over the bodies of the slaughtered innocents. In the nights that followed, you experienced an epiphany. You were spared for a reason: This was to be a test to find if your soul was worthy to enter Heaven. You couldn't turn your back on this. It has become your crusade.

Some would say you move like a ghost through the streets. You see yourself as an avenging angel, however, protecting the innocent masses from the Devil's

creatures that prey upon them. With every one that falls, you prove your worth that little bit more.

You are enacting the will of God on Earth, becoming His right hand in the process of fulfilling this sacred task. Ignored by the masses as one of the homeless, you track the agents of darkness you find. Siphoning petrol from parked cars, looting trash for half-used aerosol cans and lighters, you gather

your tools to purify those you find with fire.

You've removed a handful so far, setting havens ablaze by day and cornering lone monsters in dark alleys at night.

Image: Most people see a hunched figure five-and-a-half feet tall, wearing a long, thick winter coat over a hoodie and sweatpants. Few see the face of a pretty 30-something woman with long, dark hair under the hood. You wash when you can, but you end up sleeping in parks and behind strip malls a lot of the time, which doesn't help. You carry your gear in your coat's many deep, bulging pockets.

Roleplaying Hints: *And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5).* You were spared to be the light of God that would cut through the darkness. You not only fight to save your own soul, but to save the lives of the innocents around you. They will never thank you. You will never ask them to. Your faith and the word of the Lord hold back the creatures of evil, allowing you to see another morning. In the end, you will be rewarded in Heaven. You won't stop. Your salvation depends on it.



The Ruined Alderman

Background: You worked hard to build a life for yourself and your family, though it took its toll on your relationships at times. Life in the upper echelons of city hall was demanding, but it kept you financially secure. It was a prominent role and gave you many privileges, but it also put you under a great deal of stress. This stress has caused you to berate employees and friends outside of work to the point where you had to take anger management classes to restore your sense of self-control. Not wanting it to risk your job, you were finally able to maintain a cool head to do well for your family. The job also meant you had access to information and resources that brought you to the attention of the Kindred.

You had just left city hall the night you learned the world's awful truth. You heard someone come up behind you as you were opening your car door... and then you were leaving city hall, again. You didn't think anything of it at the time. A long day at work, exhaustion playing tricks on you. The police came for you the next day. They took you to the station, asked you about a theft of sensitive information from the municipal files. Your pass had been logged accessing the archives, and the cameras had caught you going into the room. You denied it. You'd never do such a thing. However, as you saw the evidence, the veils of false, implanted memories fell apart in your mind and revealed what really happened that night.

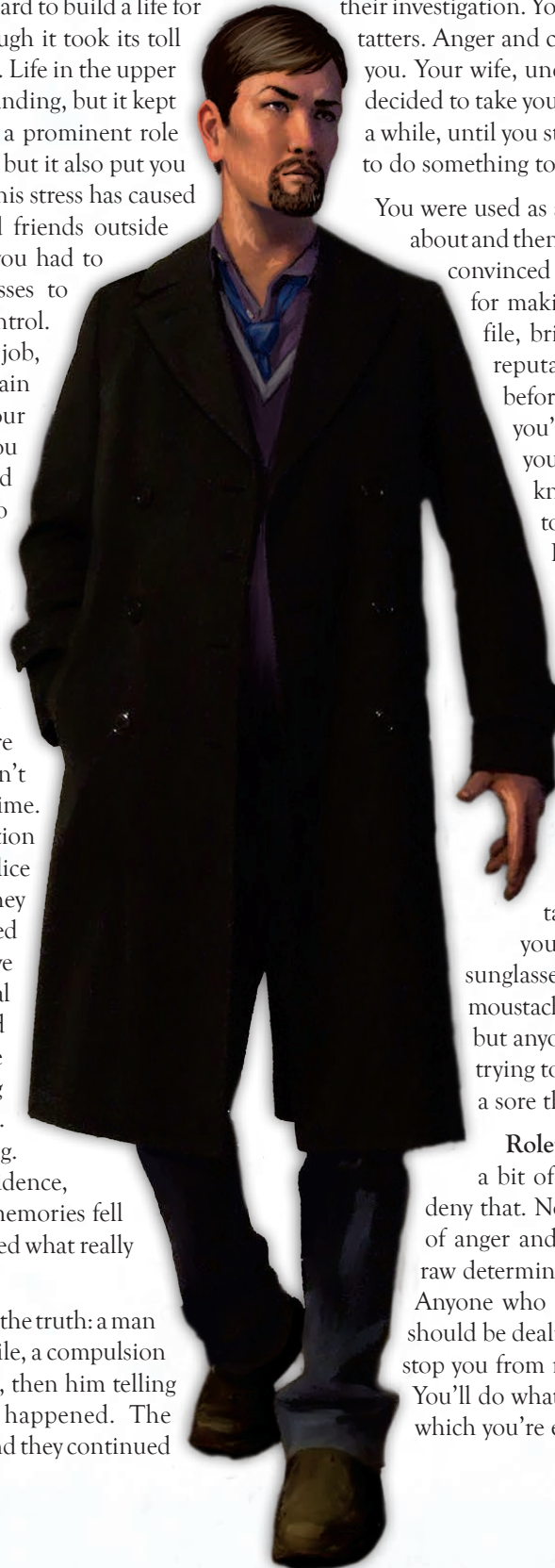
You remember fragments of the truth: a man in a suit telling you to get the file, a compulsion to obey him, his intense stare, then him telling you to forget that it ever happened. The authorities didn't believe it, and they continued

their investigation. You were suspended, your reputation in tatters. Anger and confusion increasingly overshadowed you. Your wife, uncomfortable with your growing rage, decided to take your son and stay at her sister's place for a while, until you straightened everything out. You have to do something to put your life back together again.

You were used as a pawn in a game you knew nothing about and then discarded. Consumed by rage, you're convinced if you can find the person responsible for making you do this, you can recover the file, bring him to justice, and salvage your reputation. You don't have much time before the police finally charge you, but you're slowly uncovering the trail leading you toward your manipulator. You don't know what this person is, with his ability to make you perform his demands. However, driven by an almost blinding rage and hatred, you don't care what he is. You want to make him pay, make his friends and colleagues pay, make everyone who was involved in the theft pay. You're not going to stop until you've brought him to justice before the eyes of the world.

Image: Normally a formal dresser, even when you're trying to blend in, you can't avoid wearing a suit. You've taken efforts to disguise yourself (dying your hair different colours, wearing sunglasses, changing hair styles, wearing a moustache, etc.). You're doing enough to get by, but anyone who knows the signs of someone trying to hide will find that you stick out like a sore thumb.

Roleplaying Hints: You've had more than a bit of a temper for some time, you don't deny that. Now, though, you're a walking engine of anger and hatred. You're hunting down with raw determination the man who ruined your life. Anyone who gets in your way is an obstacle and should be dealt with accordingly. No one's going to stop you from reclaiming your former life. No one. You'll do whatever it takes to make sure the life to which you're entitled is yours again.





Name:

Nature: Bravo

Age: 36

Player:

Demeanor: Penitent

Sex:

Chronicle:

Concept: Ruined Alderman

Residence:

Attributes

Physical

Social

Mental

Strength _____ ●●●○○
 Dexterity _____ ●●○○○
 Stamina _____ ●●○○○

Charisma _____ ●●○○○
 Manipulation _____ ●●○○○
 Appearance _____ ●○○○○

Perception _____ ●●●○○
 Intelligence _____ ●●●○○
 Wits _____ ●●●○○

Abilities

Talents

Skills

Knowledges

Alertness _____ ●○○○○
 Athletics _____ ○○○○○
 Awareness _____ ○○○○○
 Brawl _____ ○○○○○
 Empathy _____ ○○○○○
 Expression _____ ●●○○○
 Intimidation _____ ●●○○○
 Leadership _____ ●●○○○
 Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
 Subterfuge _____ ●●○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○
 Crafts _____ ○○○○○
 Drive _____ ●○○○○
 Etiquette _____ ●●○○○
 Firearms _____ ○○○○○
 Larceny _____ ○○○○○
 Melee _____ ●○○○○
 Performance _____ ●○○○○
 Stealth _____ ○○○○○
 Survival _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Academics _____ ●●○○○
 Computer _____ ●●○○○
 Finance _____ ●●○○○
 Investigation _____ ○○○○○
 Law _____ ●●○○○
 Medicine _____ ○○○○○
 Occult _____ ○○○○○
 Politics _____ ●●○○○
 Science _____ ○○○○○
 Technology _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Numina & Other Traits

Backgrounds

Merits & Flaws

_____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
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 _____ ○○○○○

Contacts (Municipal) ●●○○○
Fame ●○○○○
Influence (City Hall) ●●○○○
Resources ●●○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Humanity

●●●●●●○○○○○

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○○
 □□□□□□□□□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised
 Hurt -1
 Injured -1
 Wounded -2
 Mauled -2
 Crippled -5
 Incapacitated

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○○

Virtues

Conscience _____ ●●●○○
 Self-Control _____ ●○○○○
 Courage _____ ●●●●●

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 • Abilities:11/7/4 • Backgrounds:5 • Virtues:7 • Freebie Points:15 (7/5/2/1)

The Vengeful Wife

Background: You were recently promoted into an advertising executive's role in the city, having spent years working your way up the corporate ladder. You and your husband were excited about the prospect of a new life ahead of you. Fate had other plans for you. You returned from a business trip just before Christmas to find your husband missing. You reported it to the police, who helped run a poster campaign with advertisements placed in the papers, but nothing came of them.

Months passed, but you didn't lose hope. You refused to believe he'd left you. Something terrible must have happened to him. One night, you awoke to the sound of someone moving in the house. You turned on the light and came face-to-face with your husband — your now-lifeless husband. After the shock, he recounted the horror that befell him that night. The break-in, being dragged away and hit on the back of the head, being buried alive.... He explained, in the weeks that followed that night, that the monsters told him he was now part of "the Sword of Caine." He knew what he had become, but that didn't have to dictate how he *should* be. His love for you was too great to allow him to fall. When the first chance came, he escaped and returned home. Together, he hoped he could hold on. It didn't last.

Your husband refused to feed, trying to strangle the hunger roiling inside him as if it were an addiction that he could conquer. In the end, it drove him berserk. He couldn't take the chance of harming you when the monster inside took control, and thus confronted with the soul-

destroying realization that there was no way back, he decided that he would face the sun to ensure your safety. Devastated and heartbroken, you have vowed to find the creatures that were responsible for making your husband as they were. Vile monstrosities that prey on humanity: You will destroy them all to avenge his memory.

You've spent your wealth paying private investigators and funding back-room deals to hire muscle from organized criminals, all to move you closer to seeing your prey burn.

Recently, your actions have come to the attention of the local cult of vampires. They realized that you are ultimately directing your efforts against a rival vampire cult, so they have been feeding you with information from afar, pointing you at all the "Swords of Caine" in the city that they can. You don't realize who your unseen benefactors are yet. When you do, these Kindred will find they have placed themselves in the firing line as well.

Image: Average height and build, you are an attractive woman on the surface. The occasional dark glint in your eye betrays some of the viciousness that now lurks within you. You dress fashionably, often with expensive jewelry, including your platinum wedding ring.

Roleplaying Hints: You lost everything that mattered that morning when your husband burned himself to ashes. You've dedicated your fortune and existence to bringing about the end of those who ultimately caused his death. Like the spider at the heart of a growing web of contacts and paid minions, you are spreading your influence across the city to find them. You will show no mercy, no remorse. You will wipe out every last one of them— not only the one pack, but any more you find on the road to Hell.





Name:

Nature: Director

Age: 33

Player:

Demeanor: Survivor

Sex:

Chronicle:

Concept: Vengeful Wife

Residence:

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●●○○○
 Dexterity _____ ●●○○○
 Stamina _____ ●●○○○

Social

Charisma _____ ●●●○○
 Manipulation _____ ●●●○○
 Appearance _____ ●●●○○

Mental

Perception _____ ●●○○○
 Intelligence _____ ●●○○○
 Wits _____ ●●○○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ○○○○○
 Athletics _____ ●○○○○
 Awareness _____ ○○○○○
 Brawl _____ ○○○○○
 Empathy _____ ●●○○○
 Expression _____ ●●○○○
 Intimidation _____ ●●○○○
 Leadership _____ ●●●○○
 Streetwise _____ ●○○○○
 Subterfuge _____ ●●○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○
 Crafts _____ ○○○○○
 Drive _____ ●○○○○
 Etiquette _____ ●●○○○
 Firearms _____ ○○○○○
 Larceny _____ ○○○○○
 Melee _____ ○○○○○
 Performance _____ ●●○○○
 Stealth _____ ○○○○○
 Survival _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Knowledges

Academics _____ ●●○○○
 Computer _____ ●●○○○
 Finance _____ ●○○○○
 Investigation _____ ●●○○○
 Law _____ ○○○○○
 Medicine _____ ○○○○○
 Occult _____ ○○○○○
 Politics _____ ●●○○○
 Science _____ ○○○○○
 Technology _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Numina & Other Traits

_____ ○○○○○
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 _____ ○○○○○

Backgrounds

Contacts _____ ●●○○○
 Resources _____ ●●●○○
 Retainers _____ ●○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○
 _____ ○○○○○

Merits & Flaws

Humanity

●●●●●●●○○○

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○
 □□□□□□□□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised _____ □
 Hurt _____ -1 □
 Injured _____ -1 □
 Wounded _____ -2 □
 Mauled _____ -2 □
 Crippled _____ -5 □
 Incapacitated _____ □

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○○○

Virtues

Conscience _____ ●●○○○
 Self-Control _____ ●●●●●
 Courage _____ ●●●○○

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 • Abilities:11/7/4 • Backgrounds:5 • Virtues:7 • Freebie Points:15 (7/5/2/1)

The Genius Doctor

Background: People always said you were greedy, but they didn't know the life you've had. Your mother was diagnosed with cancer when you were young, and your childhood was pretty tough as a result. Not only did you have to watch what your mother was going through, but the rest of the family lived hand-to-mouth trying to cover the medical bills. As such, because you had so little at home, you took anything and everything that the world put in front of you, as you weren't going to get it any other way.

Your mother pulled through, and the ordeal led to you forging a career for yourself in medicine, to put an end to the suffering in others that you had seen firsthand. It was hard filling out all the paperwork and chasing down the grants you needed to get there, but now you're a rising star in the medical field. Based at the university hospital in the city, you've been working on cancer research for the last couple of years.

Despite your noble endeavors, your selfish nature remains, as you discovered following a recent problem at the hospital when blood had gone missing from the blood bank. Because you used blood samples in your research, you took an interest in the theft and took matters into your own hands before it could threaten your research. You staked out the area and caught a glimpse of someone going into the blood bank one night. Following the individual home, you returned the following morning with evidence in hand in an attempt to blackmail her. You were always hungry for more. This was too good an opportunity to pass up.

It was the decision to go back during the day that saved you. Tired and sluggish as the morning sun shone outside, you managed to run for your life back outside into the light where she couldn't follow. In that moment, with adrenaline pumping through your veins, you couldn't believe what you'd found. The terror of the moment yielded to wonder when you realized the potential of what lay before you. A being who could survive beyond death could have remarkable regenerative powers. If

you could harness that power, you might be able to find a cure for cancer. A Nobel Prize could be within your grasp.

Quickly gathering some improvised equipment, you returned while the sun was high in the sky, and after what seemed like an eternity trying to gather the courage to go back in again, you entered the creature's lair with cable ties and baseball bat in hand. Again, her sluggishness was her downfall. Beating her into submission, each frantic blow fueled by fear and opportunity, you finally had the thing on the ground, tied up, immobile. Transporting the restrained being to your secure laboratory, you examined her and then dissected her to expose her secrets. Ultimately left with a pile of ash on the operating table, you had not failed entirely. You had learned a great deal about the subject's physiology. However, you needed to know more.

Now, you scour the city for more "subjects." Following them back to their lairs, you break in during the day with the help of interns from the hospital whom you have paid to secure their silence. Restraining the subjects in body bags — they simply need to be transfixed with a wooden cotter! — you carry them back to the hospital in an ambulance. There, you continue your experiments to harness their power for the "good of mankind." When you've finished your great work, you will publish your findings to the world and bathe in your success at the expense of a shattered Masquerade.

Image: Even though you're in your late 30s, you look older than your years. You prefer formal presentation to casual, which grants you a certain impression of authority. In the lab, you can be found in a pristine lab coat with a pair of plastic safety glasses hung around your neck. Out of the lab, you often wear a smart pinstriped business suit, the better to navigate boardrooms when requesting grant money. Fairly well built, you are known for your personal fitness regimen and can often be seen jogging in the morning around the university campus.

Roleplaying Hints: You can't believe your luck. You were in the right place at the right time, and now you have the chance to make the greatest scientific discovery in the history of the world: a cure for cancer, and maybe even the ability to forestall death indefinitely. These things may well be monsters, but their bodies have so much to tell you. It's not like you're killing "people" anyway. The real people are the ones who are going to ensure you go down in history.





Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Capitalist
Demeanor: Scientist
Concept: Genius Doctor

Age: 38
Sex:
Residence:

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●●●●○
Dexterity _____ ●●●●○
Stamina _____ ●●●●○

Social

Charisma _____ ●●●●○
Manipulation _____ ●●●●○
Appearance _____ ●●●●○

Mental

Perception _____ ●●●●○
Intelligence _____ ●●●●○
Wits _____ ●●●●○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ○○○○○
Athletics _____ ●●○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○
Brawl _____ ○○○○○
Empathy _____ ○○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ●●○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ●●●●○
_____ ○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○
Crafts _____ ●●○○○
Drive _____ ○○○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ●●○○○
Larceny _____ ●○○○○
Melee _____ ●●○○○
Performance _____ ○○○○○
Stealth _____ ●●○○○
Survival _____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Knowledges

Academics _____ ●●●●○
Computer _____ ●●○○○
Finance _____ ○○○○○
Investigation _____ ●●○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ●●●●○
Occult _____ ○○○○○
Politics _____ ○○○○○
Science _____ ●●●●○
Technology _____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Advantages

Numina & Other Traits

_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○
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_____ ○○○○○

Backgrounds

Allies (Hospital Interns) ●●○○○
Allies ●○○○○
(Medical Research) ○○○○○
Resources ●●●●○
_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○

Merits & Flaws

Humanity

●●●●○○○○○○○

Willpower

●●●●●●●○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised
Hurt -1
Injured -1
Wounded -2
Mauled -2
Crippled -5
Incapacitated

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○○○○

Virtues

Conscience _____ ●●○○○
Self-Control _____ ●●●●○
Courage _____ ●●●●○

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 • Abilities:11/7/4 • Backgrounds:5 • Virtues:7 • Freebie Points:15 (7/5/2/1)

The Jaded Journalist

Background: Ever since your high school days, you wanted to be a reporter, hoping that one day you would break a stunning exposé that would make you famous. As such, you set out for a career in journalism with only a little talent but a lot of enthusiasm. You got your foot in the door with a job at a slick but poorly respected tabloid with a strong online presence, hoping to quickly rise in the industry. That was 10 years ago. Since then, you've been working on what is referred to as the Oddity Column – unusual stories that fill space on the back pages. You keep dreaming that one day you'll stumble across the story that will finally make you famous.

Over the years, some stories have shared a common motif. Bodies pulled from the river, completely drained of blood. Bars full of people torn apart as if by an animal. Lone individuals hunting “vampires” to kill them or capture them for experimentation.... However, it was just before Christmas when you finally saw all the proof you needed. You were heading home when you were attacked. You saw the fangs, the claws, and the inhuman look in the thing's eyes. You did what most would do if confronted by a pack of ravening monsters: You ran for your life.

You collected all the evidence you could find of what you saw that night—CCTV images, witness reports, police radio responses, anything you could get your hands on. You believed a Pulitzer Prize was assured when you submitted your exposé. However, the story was buried, the evidence destroyed, and you were ordered to drop the entire story. You knew it was a cover-up. At first, you couldn't understand it. Burying the story went against everything for which journalism stood. Then you saw the big picture. Only the vampires themselves could benefit from the truth being suppressed. You realized that they controlled the media, allowing them to remain hidden.

The only way to get the truth to the people was for you to go solo, so that's exactly what you did. You quit and went freelance. Publishing articles via smaller, fringe publications and at your own slowly growing blog, you're now spreading the word, albeit among a niche market audience. However, your name is out there, and more and more readers recognize you as a rising authority in the field of the supernatural. It's a position about which you're conflicted. On one hand, the fame, while slight, is exactly what you wanted. On the other hand,

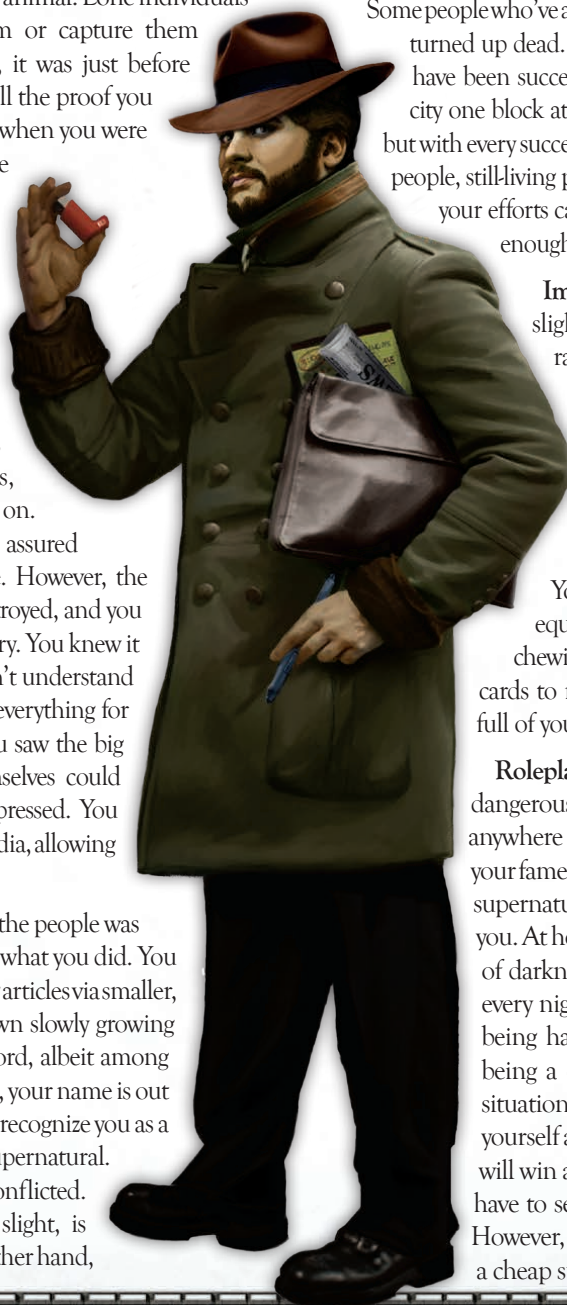
it could end up making you a martyr if the creatures of the night eventually want to silence you for coming too close to blowing the whole thing open.

You've been asthmatic since you were a child, and given that the only weapon you've ever wielded is a pen, you can't fight them directly. At night, you gather what intelligence you can as covertly as possible and compile dossiers on the monsters you find. When you've gathered enough information, you look for individuals to whom you can pass it on—normally out of the blue, through a variety of personal methods that sometimes border on blackmail—in the hope that they are spurred into action by what they read and take the fight to the creatures of the night.

Some people who've acted on the information you provided have turned up dead. Others have gone missing entirely. Some have been successful, burning down havens, clearing the city one block at a time. It's a heavy burden on your soul, but with every success, you know you are ensuring the safety of people, still living people, like yourself. You don't know long your efforts can remain hidden. You just hope it's long enough to get the job done.

Image: Slightly below average height and slightly overweight, you often dress in a raincoat and brown felt hat, with your inhaler close at hand. You look like you pose no physical threat to anyone in a fight, though you're relatively dexterous, evinced by your habit of rolling pens and pencils round your fingers as you jot lines down upon your ever-present notepad. Your pockets often bulge with miscellaneous equipment and paraphernalia, ranging from chewing gum to smartphones, and from business cards to notebooks and tablet computers already full of your scribbled observations.

Roleplaying Hints: You know you're hunting a dangerous prey, but the best journalists don't get anywhere without taking risks. You like to revel in your fame and your reputation as an “expert” on the supernatural with which your efforts have rewarded you. At heart though, you're terrified the creatures of darkness could come for you at any moment, every night, so you're manic, vacillating between being happy and overconfident one minute to being a desperate coward a heartbeat later if a situation turns sour for you. You like to think of yourself as a shrewd, calculating mastermind who will win against the darkness from afar and never have to see the front line of the conflict directly. However, in a real fight, you know you'd fold like a cheap suit, as you're craven in the face of pain.





Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Nature: Eye of the Storm
Demeanor: Idealist
Concept: Jaded Journalist

Age: 35
Sex:
Residence:

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●●○○○
Dexterity _____ ●●○○○
Stamina _____ ●○○○○

Social

Charisma _____ ●●○○○
Manipulation _____ ●●○○○
Appearance _____ ●●○○○

Mental

Perception _____ ●●●●●
Intelligence _____ ●●○○○
Wits _____ ●●○○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●○○○○
Athletics _____ ○○○○○
Awareness _____ ●○○○○
Brawl _____ ○○○○○
Empathy _____ ●●○○○
Expression _____ ●○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
Leadership _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ●●○○○
Subterfuge _____ ●●○○○
○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○
Crafts _____ ○○○○○
Drive _____ ●●○○○
Etiquette _____ ○○○○○
Firearms _____ ●●○○○
Larceny _____ ●●○○○
Melee _____ ○○○○○
Performance _____ ●●○○○
Stealth _____ ●●○○○
Survival _____ ●○○○○
○○○○○

Knowledges

Academics _____ ○○○○○
Computer _____ ○○○○○
Finance _____ ○○○○○
Investigation _____ ●●○○○
Law _____ ○○○○○
Medicine _____ ○○○○○
Occult _____ ●●○○○
Politics _____ ●○○○○
Science _____ ○○○○○
Technology _____ ○○○○○
○○○○○

Advantages

Numina & Other Traits

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Backgrounds

Contacts (Media) ●●○○○
Fame ●○○○○
Resources ●●○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
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Merits & Flaws

Humanity

●●●●●●●○○○

Willpower

●●●●●○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Health

Bruised
Hurt -1
Injured -1
Wounded -2
Mauled -2
Crippled -5
Incapacitated

Faith

○○○○○○○○○○○○

Virtues

Conscience _____ ●●●○○
Self-Control _____ ●●●○○
Courage _____ ●●●○○

Experience

Attributes: 6/4/3 • Abilities:11/7/4 • Backgrounds:5 • Virtues:7 • Freebie Points:15 (7/5/2/1)

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Dawkins
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Mikael Bakkely Petersen
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Sébastien Mary

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Ben Lyons
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Christopher Shaffer
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Cris Walker

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Shan W Simpson
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Sylvanwulf
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The Shotgun Bailout Chronicle
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Travis Hartland
Twice 66
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Vincent Price
Vladimir Draculesti
William Rodrigue
William Ruby
William Spotts
William T. Maenner III
Woody 'Detroit Hoyt' Dingwall

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Dr. Delaney
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David Bryan
David García-Brazales Santiago
David Rego
Davide Della Penna
DEN BITTRA MANNEN
Dirk Vanleeuw
Doombringer

dr cheinstein
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Usselmann
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Olivier Jobin
Onno MM Ebbers
Orphée Hagenstein-Muller
Panu Laukkanen
Père Samuel Lacoste
PERROT Claude-Arnaud
Petri Wessman
Professor Ignatus Rexamouth
Rabbit
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Ralf Lanwehr
Raoni "Orc" Rego Godinho
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Stephen Nurse
Sylvain "OgGy" TANGUY
Sylvio S Maia Conde
Tamsyn 'Destroyer of Worlds' Kennedy
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Torik, Roberto Salles, Malkav



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J. Wolfgang Dark
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Rafael Brasilio Grotti da Silva and Rodrigo Grotti da Silva

Arikail D'Marco
Ashton
Christian (Father Nightroad) Faulds
Christopher Gunning
Dan Niekerk

darksfallen
Gabriel Garcia Velasquez
Molly Griffiths
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Wonko

Agente Sebastian "Angelus" Sanzana
Reckmann
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Gail Cooke

LJ Nickerson

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Joshua Mellor
Michael Dillon
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Kai Schiefer

Kate "FITZE" Elizabeth
Sebastian N. Behrndtz

Jack A. Kaplon





Name:

Nature:

Age:

Player:

Demeanor:

Sex:

Chronicle:

Concept:

Residence:

Attributes

Physical

Social

Mental

Strength _____ 00000
 Dexterity _____ 00000
 Stamina _____ 00000

Charisma _____ 00000
 Manipulation _____ 00000
 Appearance _____ 00000

Perception _____ 00000
 Intelligence _____ 00000
 Wits _____ 00000

Abilities

Talents

Skills

Knowledges

Alertness _____ 00000
 Athletics _____ 00000
 Awareness _____ 00000
 Brawl _____ 00000
 Empathy _____ 00000
 Expression _____ 00000
 Intimidation _____ 00000
 Leadership _____ 00000
 Streetwise _____ 00000
 Subterfuge _____ 00000

Animal Ken _____ 00000
 Crafts _____ 00000
 Drive _____ 00000
 Etiquette _____ 00000
 Firearms _____ 00000
 Larceny _____ 00000
 Melee _____ 00000
 Performance _____ 00000
 Stealth _____ 00000
 Survival _____ 00000

Academics _____ 00000
 Computer _____ 00000
 Finance _____ 00000
 Investigation _____ 00000
 Law _____ 00000
 Medicine _____ 00000
 Occult _____ 00000
 Politics _____ 00000
 Science _____ 00000
 Technology _____ 00000

Advantages

Numina & Other Traits

Backgrounds

Merits & Flaws

_____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
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 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
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 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000
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 _____ 00000

_____ 00000
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 _____ 00000
 _____ 00000

Humanity

Health

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Bruised
 Hurt -1
 Injured -1
 Wounded -2
 Mauled -2
 Crippled -5
 Incapacitated

Willpower

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage

Virtues

Conscience _____ 00000
 Self-Control _____ 00000
 Courage _____ 00000

Experience

The Hunters Hunted II

Most mortals turn away from the darkness that preys upon them, going about their lives in despair of the Damned and the evils they visit upon the world. But a precious few wage a personal war to shine light on those shadows and diminish them, like solitary candles shining in the night. The path of the hunter is lonely and fraught with danger, at once beset by the monsters they hunt and looked upon with suspicion by their fellow mortals they thanklessly seek to protect.

Hunters Hunted 2 revisits one of the seminal titles of the Vampire: The Masquerade, in which the players take on the roles of those who seek to bring an end to the depredations of the undead. Included are details on those who choose to take up the good fight, expanding the options available to players and offering a host of new storytelling opportunities. No lone hunter or vigilant troupe should face the night without learning the ways of the hunter contained within this book.

Hunters Hunted 2 includes:

- Systems by which to play a vampire hunter — one who hunts the Kindred in the World of Darkness.
- Practical advice and teamwork-tactics game systems to bring to bear against the Damned.
- Updated systems for supernatural Numina powers that can grant hunters an edge against the undead.

