

There are moments in any hunter's life when she misses the important details and loses the bigger picture. There are moments in any hunter's life where the detail that she missed, no matter how small, will result in her failure or even her death.

For the lucky few hunters, there is the Man with the Gray Beard. He's been called a hundred names: Our Depththroat, the Mole, the Insider. Most often, though, he's just the Man with the Gray Beard.

Who is he and what does he do? Very few people know for sure. What's known about him is passed around like an urban legend among hunters on the vigil. It's said sometimes when a detail has been missed, when lives are on the line, the Man will show up in a black suit with a manila folder or a duffel bag with that missing piece inside.

He's saved a lot, so they say. Others say those missing pieces aren't always helpful; sometimes they lead the hunter in a direction she isn't ready for. Sometimes that manila folder leads to death. But why?

COLLECTION

OF

HORRORS

THE MAN WITH THE GRAY BEARD

A Storytelling Adventure System anthology for Hunter: The Vigil

WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING, INC.
2075 WEST PARK PLACE
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STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30087

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Special thanks to our voice actors for giving up a Saturday to help us out:
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Check out White Wolf online at <http://www.white-wolf.com>

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The Man with the Gray Beard

MENTAL ... PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ...

Overview

A run-in with the Man is an opportunity for you to pick up the pieces of a story that have been lost somewhere along the way. The Man is a well-connected hunter. He has been on the Vigil for so long that following the trail and understanding the prey is as natural to him as breathing. These days he hunts by proxy, following the careers of various small cells all over the world. When a cell he is following trips up in a big way and he had the means and time, he'll reach out, using his influence to sneak them a vital clue they may be missing.

In the scene, the Man will approach the cell somewhere public enough that they won't feel initially threatened by him. He'll walk up directly, set down whatever parcel his evidence is in and explain the kind of trouble they're in, what they've done wrong and maybe how to avoid it in the future. If all goes well, he'll indicate they have some powerful people (namely him) watching their activity. He'll warn that since the bigger game is aware of them, they can expect to have as many enemies as friends. When all is said and done, he'll leave them with the clue they're missing and more questions than answers.

Description

Everyone has heard the story; somewhere deep in the bowels of the government is a secret organization whose cloak and dagger operations are outside of the bounds of civilian (or even Task Force: VALKYRIE) understanding. Or maybe it's a philanthropic group that spends its resources helping other "private investigations." Every hunter has heard that this shadowy group has a face, and that face is the Man with the Gray Beard. He has his reasons, so they say, but those reasons are as obscure and impenetrable as the vague smile on his thin lips and the hardness in his eyes.

And now he's looking right at you. He's got a beat-up leather suitcase in his hand, knuckles almost white. He looks around while saying in a rough and strangely emphasized manner, "You're on the right trail, kids." He sets down the suitcase almost absently, like he's disavowing any knowledge of its existence or connection to him.

Storyteller Goals

You can take this scene down a couple of different roads to work it into a bigger story. In the most straightforward example, the Man might simply be dropping off evidence because he has some vested interest in seeing the cell succeed. He can just drop off the clue mysteriously and go, or he might drop the bag and give them cryptic advice that will make more sense in hindsight.

If instead his interest is largely in getting the cell to hunt down and destroy a target to fulfill his agenda, he might be less helpful and more chiding. He acts as if he's smarter and more experienced than the whole cell, and he'll have no problem pointing out to them how dumb they've been.

If you want to use the Man's clue as a red herring, play him as if he doesn't want the characters to get to their target and is sending them down the wrong path. This might be because the right path will kill them, or because they're simply in the way of his agenda.

The characters might go looking for the Man long after their initial encounter, and any attempt to research him should somehow result in them coming across an episode from a Network Zero podcast (see p. 4).

No matter what reasons you choose for the Man's actions, the fact remains that this scene is an opportunity to ramp up the paranoia and give the cell the feeling that they are in way over their heads. Half the fun of this scene should come from hinting at government conspiracies much bigger than even Task Force: VALKYRIE or Cheiron Group hunters might be aware.

Character Goals

For the characters, this scene might simply be a matter of collecting the clue the Man left for them and getting the heck out of there before things get weird.

Characters who have heard the rumors and legends about the Man might be interested in investigating more, trying to get him to open up, share experiences or maybe just explain who he is and what he's got to do with them. Some characters might wisely ask why they should trust him or his evidence and try to challenge his authority or pump him for information.

Some might try to follow him after they're done speaking to him, but that will likely be very difficult.

Getting The Man to Open Up

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion or Expression vs. The Man's Resolve + Composure. (dice pool 6)

Action: Contested

Hindrances: The cell has made a lot of mistakes and does sloppy work (-3), the cell has murdered a lot of sentient, intelligent targets (-2 or more)

Help: The speaker has made a name for himself as a hunter (status 3 or more) (+2), the cell has captured a number of their targets alive and passed them on to higher-ups in respective organizations (+3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Man with the Gray Beard is disgusted by their pleas for more information and won't give them any additional information then what he brought. In the future, if he has a suicide run that needs bodies, he may well set the cell up to take the fall.

Failure: The Man will be mildly put off and decides that they should be kept on the physical side of the Vigil and away from intrigue. He might give a hint or two to steer them away from intrigue or any more delicate work in their current investigation. even if it puts them in a more dangerous situation.

Success: The Man with the Gray Beard is reassured that his confidence in the cell was an asset worth investing it. He's willing to risk a little more and illuminates the wider picture, but only in as much as it pertains to the cell and only if it won't expose too much of his own operations.

Exceptional Success: The Man with the Gray Beard sees a spark of some greater potential in the speaker and his cell. He'll sit down and talk, sharing openly with them about the Vigil in general. While he won't say anything about what he does now, he might share an anecdote from early in his career.

Consequences

If the cell is approached by the Man, no matter the outcome of this scene, it is likely they will be affected by the Man's machinations in the future. If things went well (and if you choose to), the Man can end up like something of a creepy, clandestine guardian angel. He can give as much or little aid as you want just like any other mentor. You can even advise the purchase of the Mentor Merit (See the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 115) for one or all members of the cell.

If the cell embarrasses themselves or tries to bully the old man, they may quickly find themselves on the receiving end of unending investigations by Interpol, MI-5, Mossad or even the IRS. If things go really poorly and the cell manages to convince the Man that they are a threat to the Vigil as a whole, they have earned themselves the enmity of a very powerful figure. It'll only be a matter of time before he sets them up on a hunt they aren't equipped to handle.

It's possible that the characters might attempt to assault the Man, in which case he will quickly withdraw, with cover provided by heavily armed agents of some unclassified UN peace keeping force who are undercover in the crowd (use the stats for SWAT officers in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 206-207). Their entire job is to keep the Man alive. They're as dedicated to their job as the Man is to the hunt. If they follow a subtler form of aggression and attempt to follow him, they'll he gets in an unmarked black sedan. He drives to a random embassy and completely vanishes inside.

The Man with the Gray Beard, Mysterious Ally

Quotes: *"You're on the right track, kid, so stop talking to me and get out there; I have nothing else to tell you."*

"You can't trust her. She knows more then she's telling you, and what she's not telling you will cost you your lives."

"Regret what happened to your buddy, but he was careless, and you're in the big leagues. There are some major players involved now."

Virtue: Justice. He believes that there is a right and wrong to the hunt, and often, the method trumps even the hunt itself.

Vice: Sloth. As he's aged, he's realized it's just as easy to leave the leg work to younger (and less valuable) hunters. Why do the heavy lifting, when there is an endless supply of eager new recruits to do it for you?



Background: His name has been blacked out of every legal and civilian document it has ever appeared in, and anyone who knew it is either dead or willing to die rather than ever uttering it out loud. It's suggested that even he doesn't remember it. Officially, he's just John Smith.

His career started like any other field agent, graduating from training with high honors. He quickly made a name for himself, with his keen instincts and no-nonsense attitude. Before long he was requesting the tough cases, the ones no one expected to solve. Eventually, he strode confidently into cases that truly were supernatural. Before long, the young agent was pulled into a web of intrigue so tangled there was soon no way out.

Soon thereafter, he was a force to be reckoned with on his own, a one-man check and balance to larger hunter organization like Task Force: VALKYRIE and the Cheiron Group. After years of playing the game, he works for no one man. He calls his own shots and has no known affiliations.

Description: At first glance, the man is decidedly unassuming. Tall and thin, he's an older man, well into his sixties, but a lifetime of sensible eating and regular exercise has kept him looking younger. He keeps his hair short and neat, counter to the straggly gray whiskers on his chin. He wears a long brown duster that's thin and shiny at the elbows. He's got a long, efficient stride despite the slight limp in his right leg.

Storytelling Hints: The important thing to keep in mind with the Man is that he always has an agenda. Everything he does, every action he takes is with reason and usually part of a larger series of actions. Everything is one domino in line with a dozen other dominos, and he works very hard to make sure he's the only one who can see the pattern they'll fall in.

He might be trying to hunt by proxy, in which case his whole goal in this scene is to get the cell the information they need to catch their prey without giving them any more than they need to know.

He might see something in the cell, in which case his real goal here will be to improve them by encouraging and teaching them as much as he can in as short a period of time. He can't be sure he'll have contact with any of them again, so his methods of education tend to distill down to fortune-cookie like wisdom and hints of bigger problem. Hopefully if he hints enough, clever hunters will figure out what he was trying to explain.

Rarely, he may have taken a disliking to the cell for some reason, perhaps they messed up one of his plans or they just don't fit into his grand view of what a hunter should be. If this is the case then he's got one of two goals, confuse the characters so they head off in the wrong direction or to send them right into certain doom. This scenario could set up The Man as a future recurring antagonist.

HUNTER
THE VIGIL

Name: Man w/Gray Beard Virtue: Justice Profession: Detective
Concept: Mysterious Ally Vice: Sloth Compact:
Conspiracy:

Intelligence	●●●●●	Strength	●●●●●	Presence	●●●●●
Wits	●●●●●	Dexterity	●●●●●	Manipulation	●●●●●
Resolve	●●●●●	Stamina	●●●●●	Composure	●●●●●

SKILLS

☐ Academics ●●●●●

☐ Computer ●●●●●

☐ Investigation ●●●●●

☐ Medicine ●●●●●

☐ Occult ●●●●●

☐ Politics ●●●●●

☐ Science ●●●●●

☐ Brawl ●●●●●

☐ Drive ●●●●●

☐ Firearms ●●●●●

☐ Stealth ●●●●●

☐ Survival ●●●●●

☐ Empathy ●●●●●

☐ Expression ●●●●●

☐ Intimidation ●●●●●

☐ Persuasion ●●●●●

☐ Subterfuge ●●●●●

☐ 00000

☐ 00000

☐ 00000

SKILLS

☐ Academics ●●●●●

☐ Computer ●●●●●

☐ Investigation ●●●●●

☐ Medicine ●●●●●

☐ Occult ●●●●●

☐ Politics ●●●●●

☐ Science ●●●●●

☐ Brawl ●●●●●

☐ Drive ●●●●●

☐ Firearms ●●●●●

☐ Stealth ●●●●●

☐ Survival ●●●●●

☐ Empathy ●●●●●

☐ Expression ●●●●●

☐ Intimidation ●●●●●

☐ Persuasion ●●●●●

☐ Subterfuge ●●●●●

☐ 00000

☐ 00000

☐ 00000

MERITS

Allies (FBI) ●●●●●

Allies (Hunter Cells) ●●●●●

Contacts (Vigil, FBI, Conspiracy Theorists) ●●●●●

Professional Training ●●●●●

Resources ●●●●●

Status (International Diplomat) ●●●●●

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FLAWS

HEALTH

●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

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WILLPOWER

●●●●●●●●●●●●●●

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TACTICS

Morality 5

Size 5

Speed 9

Defense 2

Initiative Mod 5

Armor 1/2

NOTES

Specialties
Investigation - The Vigil, Occult - Isolated Phenomena, Politics - Navigating Red Tape, Firearms - Called Shots, Stealth - Plain Sight, Subterfuge - Hiding Details

Audio Prop

TOBY: This is the Toby Report, September 17th, 2007. I really deeply considered not posting this. But the fact is, it's a hell of piece of the mystery that surrounds the so-called Man with the Gray Beard. Jim will forgive me, I hope. I'm going to warn you, the content of this interview is both rough and frightening on a deep psychological level, so if you were just listening for some light cryptozoology or UFO sightings, this episode is not for you. Anyway, without further ado...

[Cut to interview]

TOBY: You're got it working on your end Jim?

JIM: No names, damnit.

TOBY: Right, right, sorry. So why don't you tell me again what it is you saw.

JIM: I'm not sure what I can tell you, it's all really vague. The first time we saw him was about three months ago. We'd been following some kind of weird sickness that was moving very selectively through Washington. We'd seen supernaturally influenced illness once before, so when we realized it was all low-level bureaucrats getting this kind of fucked-up cancer thing, we took a closer look.

Two doctors who treated the sick turned up dead almost immediately, but of alleged natural causes. I sure as hell didn't buy it, and neither did the doc. We got to one of the sick, and two days later, Doc got hit by an unmarked van. Anything he knew was ground to mush under a tire that backed up over him after it hit him. I can't...

TOBY: It's all right man. He was one of the best, but you've got to hold it together.

JIM: Hold it together; sure, I held it together all right. I held it together when Doc went down, and when Cheryl went missing. She had worked with Doc; I should have known they would go after her next. When Henry got sick, showing the same symptoms as the bureaucrats, I sincerely considered eating my gun.

As a matter of fact, that's when I saw him; I was sitting near the edge of the Arlington Memorial, feeling the weight of my nine-millimeter in my hand. That's when a black Buick pulled up and some tall fit old guy stepped out with his steely eyes and his gray scrubby beard.

TOBY: What did he say, Jim? What did he tell you?

JIM: He said "We got it, kid, we got it from here. You did good following this bug, but it's outside of your league." He said he was sorry about Doc, and that Cheryl was sitting in his car. He pointed over, and I saw her sitting in the passenger seat crying. He said she was in a lot of danger and that he had to get her out of town for a while.

He didn't say anything else, he handed me a syringe in a plastic bag with the name Henry written on it and just left. I haven't seen Cheryl since. Probably won't again. I don't know if the old guy ruined my life or if I did. It doesn't matter now.

[Sound of a gunshot.]

TOBY: This... This is the Toby Report, signing off.

To listen to the audio prop of
The Toby Report's interview with
Jim double click the poster.
Once you start the recording you will
not be able to stop it until it reaches
the end without closing the pdf.

