

HUNTER: THE VIGIL

TOOTH AND NAIL



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TOOTH AND NAIL

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WHEN THE CALLING COMES

"There's a saying I like. Goes something like this." Brother Devon said, walking through the congregation, snaking through row after row. It was a small, cramped group, numbering some thirty five members, on old, weathered metal folding chairs.

"Man's stranded on an island. A boat comes by and offers to take him away. He says thanks, but I prayed, and God's gonna come save me." The crowd trail him with its eyes, through every twist and turn. Brother Devon spoke with a slow, folksy, rhythmic drawl, almost hypnotic.

"Then a prop plane lands on the island. They offer him a seat when they leave. He says thanks, but I prayed, and God's gonna come save me." The people look amongst each other, nodding, listening along.

"Weeks pass. He runs out of food. He cries out to God. Asks why he's been forsaken. God parts the heavens, and says I sent ya a boat, and I sent ya a plane. What else do you want from me? And you know what happened next?"

The people looked around, waiting for someone to volunteer an answer. The look in their eyes said everyone in the room had heard this story before, a hundred times or more. Even the children knew how the tale ended, but none spoke up.

"He died. He died because God answered, but he didn't listen back. And that, brothers and sisters, is why we're here. It's our job to listen when God gives us a sign. He's given us a sign, family, and I don't think we're listening close enough."

Half the members gasped under their breath. All looked around, every set of eyes met every set of eyes in a matter of seconds. Brother Devon continued his slow march through the crowd. Dead center, he stopped. Every eye first fell on him, then on the couple sitting before him, both sweating, holding hands. "Brother Devon?" The young woman, blonde, blue doe-eyed looked up to him, terrified.

"Sister Miriam. Will you listen when God speaks? Or will you starve on that island?"

The couple looked to each other, then back to him. "What, um, what do you mean? What's God saying? I'm listening?" Her partner, a strapping young man, with the kind of tan you get from a lifetime of mowing lawns, sweated bullets, his hand shaking on hers.

Brother Devon looked to the man, then back to the woman. "What do you think, Sister Miriam? Listen closer. What is God saying?" The room whispered so much, there was a sort of white noise permeating the little concrete, windowless room.

She bit her lower lip, chin quivering. "I don't know... I..." She swallowed. "Is it sin? That we're together? I know we're not married, and..."

Brother Devon cut her off. "Nothin' of the sort. You know as well as I do that in the end times, God needs babies. Can't afford ideological purity when there's a war to fight."

She took a long breath out. "Is it? Is he?" She turned to the boyfriend. "Are you? No, Zeke. No, no, no." Zeke nodded.

"No!" She shouted, and stood. "No. No!" She wailed, and stomped a foot. "How could you?"

Zeke looked down to the floor. "I had to. I don't even know. I saw this old man. But he wasn't an old man. He was a devil. Neck like a snake. Fangs like swords. He was killing people, Miriam. What was I supposed to do?" He looked up to her, tears in his eyes, pleading.

Brother Devon drew a fifty-caliber handgun from a holster under his shirt. He checked the chamber for ammo, then held it to Miriam, grip facing out toward her. She clenched her jaw and took the gun, aiming it at her lover.

"Baby you know you can't interfere with the messengers. It makes you a devil. Next, you're gonna be the one killing people. Killing kids. We were supposed to have babies. How am I supposed to have babies with a monster?" Tears dragged lines of mascara down her cheeks.

"I'm not a monster, Miriam. I was doing what was right. If you saw that thing for what it was, you'd have done the same thing. PLEASE!" He started to stand. Brother Devon put a hand on his shoulder and forced him back down into the chair. Miriam's arm shook.

"Damn it, Zeke. Why couldn't you just leave well enough alone? Why'd you have to be so selfish. I loved you!" She thrust the gun forward, knocking his forehead. He winced.

"Loved me? You love me, Miriam. Please. You still love me."

She recoiled, sobbing, and looking up to the ceiling. "So what if I do? Of course I love you. But you know the rules! You know how this works. You get that call from the devil, you hang up!" She lowered the gun in her moment of weakness. A third of the congregation stood, each drawing their own pistols. They circled like heavily-armed buzzards.

"But it weren't the devil, Miriam." He shook his head. "Why do we trust these people? What I heard, that was God. He was asking me to help. To save the world. Just like Brother Devon said. If he speaks, we gotta listen. He was talkin' to me."

Miriam looked to Brother Devon. Devon shook his head. "You gotta make a choice, Sister Miriam. When the callin' comes, you gotta be ready for war."

She raised the gun again. She held it there, hand shaking.

"God don't leave a voicemail."

She looked to Devon, chest pounding, then back to Zeke. "Why'd you make me do this?"

Zeke remained silent, eyes on hers.

"Ring. Ring." Devon said. The congregation now formed a full circle around them, moving chairs to make a clearing.

"He can do better! He can repent!" She snapped to Devon, but with the gun still at Zeke's head.

"Ring. Ring." Devon repeated.

"Damn it!" She snapped, and dropped the gun. "I can't. We can't. When do we have to call ourselves the monsters, Brother Devon?" She bounded forward, kneeling and wrapping Zeke in an embrace. "We've got to give chances, or we won't make it to see the end."

Devon stepped back, receding into the crowd. "We're sorry. We can't come to the phone right now. Please leave a message..."

The deafening crack of a pistol pierced the room. Miriam held tight to Zeke, crying openly. Her white shirt revealed a gaping, red hole. Zeke pulled closer. His back revealed a similar but larger hole; it pierced through the both of them.

Then another crack.

Then another.

Then another.



You can kill a person. You can't kill an idea.

The enormous, shadowy devil with blood dripping from his fangs and claws like daggers, the one who follows you home, you know the one. You can kill him.

The instinct that tells you an enormous shadowy devil with blood dripping et cetera, the one that's usually wrong but still leaves you crying and awake at night, you know the one. You can't kill that.

Beasts walk the line between the two. Beasts are literal embodiments of those primal fears from deep down within your subconscious. They're ancient, mythical, primordial representations of some little shred of what makes you human. They're kind of like nightmares; nightmares from which you can never truly wake.

If Beasts truly are a manifestation of something truly human, should hunters even take up the Vigil against them? Few hunters even know of these monsters. Some avoid them because of this dilemma. Most hunters who hunt Beasts have more complex ideas about what Beasts are, and what they mean to humanity. Some believe Beasts are something of a thread that ties all monstrosities together, a sort of proto lineage of monsters that branched off into others. Some simply see them as their own island in an archipelago of monsters.

Heroes

When we say Heroes, we don't mean knights in shining armor saving the prince from the evil castle. Or at least, it's more complicated than that. Heroes are a phenomenon surrounding Beasts; they're people who find themselves imbued with power and purpose to destroy them. This might sound simple, but in the **Chronicles of Darkness**, things aren't so black and white.

To put it simply, Heroes don't care about collateral damage. Heroes believe the ends justify the means, and sometimes the means are downright disturbing. You can find more on Heroes in "The Enemy" on p. 11.

The Basics

Here are some basic concepts that encompass what Beasts are. Note that most of this information is not known to those on the Vigil. Individual Compacts and Conspiracies have their own priorities and interests and may have researched relevant information pertaining to those interests. Further still, this material is greatly simplified from the ideas presented in **Beast: The Primordial**. It's focused on the experiences hunters have, and the ways in which they can engage Beasts. So, for example, this won't go into great depth about the Primordial Dream, because only very few hunters can ever interact there.

What Is a Beast?

Beasts are a strange phenomenon in the **Chronicles of Darkness**. They embody ancient ideas, cultural tales, but they also appear human. A Beast who embodies a tale of dragons isn't a winged lizard the size of a truck; it's a bipedal person who can call upon some of the gravity of that cultural story and those with whom it resonates.

TOOTH AND NAIL

hunter: the vigil

"It is a great evil to look upon mankind with too clear vision. You seem to be living among wild Beasts, and you become a wild Beast yourself."

-William Beckford, *The Episodes of Vathek*

Beasts aren't strictly human. They were humans, but their souls have been replaced with the stuff of nightmares. Through a creation process, a Beast brings the person into the fold, explaining the truths of their nightmarish existence. If the person accepts this new fate, his very dreams, his nightmares devour his soul and replace it with pure primal terror.

Most Beasts believe they're teachers of sorts, who teach the hardest lessons through terror and tribulation. These "lessons" are sufficiently vague that one can't truly prove or disprove their veracity without the kind of rigorous, subjective debate that's rarely part and parcel of the hunt.

Bestial Family

Beasts consider themselves the kin of all monsters. As if all the supernatural denizens in the Chronicles of Darkness are one huge family, with Beasts at the center. This gives them a unique perspective and outlook; whereas many races, groups, and factions will fight or maintain tense pseudo-diplomatic relations, Beasts see all these groups as family largely worth the benefit of the doubt. This is, of course, the ideal, not always true in practice. Beasts struggle with werewolf packs, vampire coteries, and witch covens on occasion; but their default assumption is one of kinship and loyalty.

This also means that often Beasts surround themselves with other monsters. This adds many layers of complexity to the Vigil. You might run afoul of a Beast, and even know how to take him down, but do you also know how to handle the werewolf pack that stands guard at his lair's entrance?

This phenomenon also builds dimension in the Vigil. While most hunters would unapologetically refer to themselves as "human", Beasts don't care about those classifications. To Beasts, some hunters are kin, and there's nothing worse than being betrayed by one's own family. This isn't an issue for most hunters, but those in certain Conspiracies – namely the Lucifuge – have inherently complicated relationships with Beasts. Other groups have particularly constrained relations with Beasts because of the natures of their Vigils. For example, when Beasts learn of the Cheiron Group and their morbid Thaumatechnology, their typical response is to turn the hunt back on

the hunters, to slaughter them and their entire cells. In one egregious example in Tokyo, a small group of Beasts eradicated the members of the Cheiron Group to "reclaim" the bodies of their kin. The Ashwood Abbey has similarly disastrous conflicts with Beasts when Beasts learn of their methodology. Even the most jaded Beast can at least understand why hunters take up the Vigil. This sympathy affords at least reasonable approaches to most hunters. But those hunters who go above and beyond, those who hunt for pleasure or profit, they're given no quarter.

What constitutes "kin," however, isn't an exact science. Beasts tend to have relatively subjective ideas about who is and is not considered kin. Generally, if a character has access to supernatural abilities thanks to the circumstances of her birth, Beasts consider her kin.

Nightmares

Beasts have nightmares within them, so they control nightmares. They can embody the darkest parts of human imagination and can assail a victim with terror and malaise. While a Beast might not truly be a giant, fire-breathing lizard, his nightmarish Dread Powers could have the same or worse effects.

This leaves first- and second-tier hunters in a very uncomfortable situation. There's little they can do to protect themselves from these often-devastating effects. Effective hunters hit hard, heavy, and leave no room for error. Most fail. Even victories are often met with serious casualties. Even survivors walk away with lasting trauma. Some Conspiracies have developed rudimentary defenses against these attacks, and at very least are on better footing for handling the threats.

It's important to note that while these terrifying Dread Powers draw from primal fear and instinct, they're very real. A person who loses a hand to a Beast's nightmarish hellscape is just as crippled as a person who lost a hand in a tractor accident. Sometimes his hand might still be there, but something in the brain disallows movement. In most cases, this is an actual, physical change; some synapse or nerve snapped or twisted, and mundane science just cannot fix it. Some hunters have studied these phenomena but to mixed and lackluster success.

Appearances

Beasts look human – more or less. Many have temporary access to forms reminiscent of the nightmares replacing their souls. This isn't always necessary, however, and often is just a method of terrorizing victims. A Beast with a griffon's claws, for example, might simply scratch across her enemy's face with her well-manicured, polished, cherry-red nails. This would take her victim's face off just the same as "the real thing." She could make her arm look like it's covered in fur and claws, but it's completely unnecessary. When aware of hunters – and they often are thanks to Heroes – Beasts will take a subtler approach whenever possible to benefit from the element of surprise.

Good and Evil

Good and evil are already muddy terms to most hunters on the Vigil. Beasts create fear. In the strictest sense, they're terrorists. They often believe that what they're doing is not only essential, but helpful and good. But then again, don't most terrorists?

As with any other monster, every hunter, every Compact, every Conspiracy views them differently. Ask one-hundred hunters whether vampires are good or evil, and you'll get one-hundred-and-one answers. Beasts are no different. The disagreements tend to be on whether Beasts are genuinely worth addressing; that is if their threats are credible and lasting when held up to monsters who kill and maim. Frankly, Beasts terrify, and while that is traumatic, some hunters aren't particularly sympathetic since terror and emotional trauma are simply things they must deal with.

Monstrosity and Hunger

Hunger defines a Beast. All Beasts experience an overwhelming, existential hunger. Each interprets that hunger differently, but all must consume, consume, consume. Some consume fear. Some consume flesh. Some consume envy. This pursuit generally determines the response from those on the Vigil, and often a hunter's first run-in with a Beast determines her general outlook toward all of them. A hunter who uncovers a Beast who feasts on bones likely assumes others have similar diets. One who finds a Beast feasting on financially ruining the wealthy might see Beasts as a potential net good in the world. That is until another Beast proves her wrong.

About Heroes

Heroes are just as much a reality as Beasts. Heroes, in this context, are supernatural phenomena that exist alongside with Beasts in a strange, symbiotic relationship. Those hunters who run into Heroes see it as a sort of "chicken or the egg" argument. The two both appear to exist as a response to the other.

Heroes share some views with hunters but are often much more extremist in their methodology. In a way, Heroes are victims of a society that exalts vigilantism and deifies people it admires. Heroes, by virtue of being Heroes, can do no wrong. Heroes internalize this, and it reinforces their darkest traits. This is a world where people redefine torture to excuse their governments' behavior – clearly, their elected officials are not monsters who torture people. The truth is more complicated than that rationalization, but it's also far less comfortable. These politics of comfort are why Heroes can be dangerous when left unchecked. Heroes aren't inherently *wrong*; but when they stop thinking critically, they can do things that are wrong.

In **Hunter: The Vigil**, there aren't bad people; there are bad actions. This is core to the dichotomy of Beasts and Heroes.

Correctly monitored, Heroes can be effective tools or diversions. Some have even been known to work with a cell on a temporary basis, but this generally has terrible consequences because an argument of methodology at the wrong time can give a Beast a much-needed edge against her would-be killers.

Mortality

Beasts are not immortal. With a sufficient lair (see p. 27), they can live a very long time. They will meet old age eventually, however, assuming they don't meet death another way – and most do. While Beasts see other monsters as family, not all monsters see Beasts as family, and they most certainly aren't willing to see other monsters as mutual kin. Turf wars happen, and Beasts often end up in the middle of those battles. Heroes are not only dangerous but effective. A person willing to risk a house full of people by boarding it up and lighting it ablaze is not just frightening, but deadly. Beasts are hardy, but Heroes are willing. Also, Beasts often establish long-term rivalries that can end in blood.

Organization

Beasts tend toward loose, informal organization. Regions have immensely powerful leaders, but their leadership is mostly a thing of

matriarchy, patriarchy, or just plain respect with a less-formal hierarchy. They don't have the same multinational, ancient secret societies that have been seen in vampires and sorcerers.

These organizations can be a boon or bane, depending on the specifics. Attacking a beloved leader could result in an army of monsters coming down on a cell. This almost always ends fatally. However, strategically attacking a feared leader could result in assistance in the strangest places.

Further, the greatest Beast in a region influences all the others on a metaphysical level, which shows in the others' lairs. For example, if the greatest Beast in the area is a volcanic dragon, every other bestial lair might have fires abound or otherwise show great heat. Oddly, this isn't restricted to Beasts. If another monster is clearly superior, she might influence all those lairs. For example, if an ancient Transylvanian vampire is the apex predator in a city, all the Beasts' lairs may subtly change to look like the halls of a gothic castle. Rumor has it that in Tokyo, the apex predator is in fact not even a monster in the traditional sense, but a hunter on an elaborate and very effective Vigil.

Lairs

Another universal feature of Beasts is that every one possesses a lair. This lair has a metaphysical tie with the Beast's nightmarish soul, and it exists outside our recognized plane of existence. It is, however, accessible from at least one gateway in the real world.

These lairs borrow from legend, often taking the guise of elaborate mazes filled with traps and horrors unimaginable. Lairs are truly a labyrinth of the mind, made stone, metal, flesh, and... less savory building materials. Generally, a Beast's lair manifests in accordance with their true nature. A Beast modeled after the ancient leviathan, for example, might have a lair that manifests as a sunken ship. Beasts who establish broods with other Beasts can merge their lairs into enormous communal nests, with chambers that flow together in strange amalgamations.

To truly destroy a Beast, one must also destroy its lair. To call this a difficult task would be doing it a grave disservice. For most hunters, this is simply beyond their capabilities. Destroying a Beast's lair may be the focus of a chronicle, where the cell must uncover secrets and piece together mythical solutions. This is doubly complex because a Beast is at home in his lair, and benefits from immense power within.

The Nightmare

Beasts are fundamentally creatures of nightmare. The nightmare, in this case, is very much a literal place, a sort of collective subconscious. It connects humankind, turning every person, every mind, into an island of sorts. Beasts have the ability to draw that primal world into ours, and can directly inhabit that nightmare space to haunt and terrorize people.

We'll first touch on the realm itself, what it's like, and how it feels. Then, we'll talk about the ways Beasts manipulate that realm, how they reshape nightmares, and how they draw them into the real world; then we'll offer some Storyteller advice on how to present this in your game, with simplified rules. If you want more extensive rules for the nightmare realm, **Beast: The Primordial**

covers the topic thoroughly, as well as **Mage: The Awakening**. The rules here are quite a bit different, for ease and space reasons.

Nightmares and Dreamscapes

The nightmare realm is a strange conglomeration of fears we share. Picture it like so: The dream is an insurmountable, nigh-infinite darkness. It's darker than the darkest night with your eyes closed. The darkness radiates outward from a center so black it devours everything coming close. When a human is shaken to the core, fundamentally shaken with a fear that changes her, that fear becomes a chamber within the nightmare.

Chambers

That chamber embodies that fear, taking on a life that exemplifies it, hones it into a superlative version of itself. With time, it mutates. It adopts other fears and dreams in waves, taking on a life of its own.

As humanity grows, dreams, and fears, these chambers become cluttered and crowded, and the dark center of the nightmare pushes them outward. New fears overcome the old fears, and the old fears fester and rot into fetid, ancient tombs of horror. The nightmare grows exponentially and constantly.

These chambers are the closer to the physical world than the rest of the nightmare realm. Almost any successful attempt to breach the caul between the worlds will land an explorer in a chamber.

The Nature of Fear

Why does this happen? Different Compacts and Conspiracies have different ideas. The popular theory is that fear is simply a phenomenon that occurs within humanity, and this both reflects and perpetuates that phenomenon.

Some hunters claim that fear is essential for humanity, that it's a sort of "sixth sense" that's kept people alive in the face of potential extinction. In this sense, the fear is a safety mechanism; it tells you when to run. This isn't a wildly popular idea, however, since hunters by their very nature ignore and spite fear, standing strong when every instinct says to run.

Nightmare Souls

From deep within these chambers emerge terrifying souls, manifestations, and personifications of primal human fright. These amorphous fear spirits create Beasts, as they leech out into the world and devour human souls, replacing them. This allows them a foothold into the physical world, where they can enact their terrorism against the populace.

In their nightmare territory, these "horrors" are markedly powerful but largely exist as abstracts, as amalgamations of ideas. Many hunters, even ones versed in the nightmare world and Beasts, don't know these horrors even exist, let alone hunt them.

If you use these creatures in your stories, they should be represented as relatively powerful, fearsome spirits.

Atavism and Nightmare Dread Powers

Beasts possess two unique sorts of Dread Powers. While there's technically nothing stopping you from using them with

other monsters, they build the Beast's identity and reflect her relationship with the nightmare world.

In the nightmare, a Beast is her true self. She represents and embodies her horror. She may be massive, have terrifying natural weapons, or preternatural abilities. She also is one with her lair, as it's part of her very identity as a monster. Atavism Dread Powers let her take facets of her true identity and bring them into the physical world. In the nightmare realm, Atavism Dream Powers are always active unless the Beast chooses to sheath them.

Illogical Dream Logic

In the dream, fire doesn't burn unless it does, and water doesn't drown unless it does, falling off a cliff doesn't kill unless it does. Characters can assume the world works the way they expect, but there are always glaring exceptions. Dreams are fickle. Dreams are contradictory.

An easy way to handle this in play is to come up with three to five facts (depending on just how alien the current realm is) about the current dream realm. These are completely different from what a character would expect from real-world physics and logic. Jot these down on index cards, and put them face-down on your table. As characters take actions that would reveal these truths, flip them over. If they take a character by surprise, consider imposing a relevant Tilt to reflect the inconvenience. Look to your own dreams – disorientation is often the single biggest problem, regardless of the actual, specific context of the dream.

Rules for the Dream World

This material glosses over rules for playing within the nightmare worlds of Beasts. This is partly because of space, it's also partly because of complexity. **Hunter: The Vigil** games should only rarely take the hunt into that space. Even groups like the Merrick Institute only conduct certain activities there.

Characters in the nightmare realm use simplified Attributes: Power, Finesse, and Resistance. See **Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 127 for more on these. For Power, use the higher of the character's Intelligence or Presence. For Finesse, use the higher of Wits or Manipulation. For Resistance, use the higher of Resolve or Composure. Characters don't have access to Skills in the dream but can access Skill Specialties on relevant rolls.

Characters in the nightmare have "dream health" equal to Resistance + 5. This damage is "downgraded" one stage – aggravated damage becomes lethal, lethal becomes bashing, bashing is ignored – and applied to the character when he leaves the dream. If the character would otherwise fall unconscious in the dream, he gains the Soul Shocked Condition (see above). Dying in the dream leaves a character comatose, and only significant story actions can awaken him. Characters heal normally as they would in the real world.

Defense is the lower of Finesse or Power. Speed is Power + Finesse + Size (usually 5).

Most dice pools are made with a combination of Power, Finesse, and Resistance. Combat rolls are Power + Finesse. Damage types remain basically the same as their real-world counterparts.

SOUL SHOCKED (CONDITION)

Your character has been killed while on a sojourn outside her physical body, resulting in a shocked sense of self. Upon gaining this Condition, roll her current Willpower points (not dots) as a dice pool. Ignore 10-Again on this roll, and do not roll a chance die if she has no Willpower left. She keeps one Willpower point per success, immediately losing the remainder. While this Condition is in effect, your character does not regain Willpower from Virtue, Vice, or equivalent traits. She still regains Willpower from rest, surrender, and any other means of regaining Willpower.

Resolution: Regaining full Willpower.

Beat: n/a

A character's real-world Attributes have a bearing on her form in dreams. However, some characters might have greater abilities within the dream world; for example, Merrick Institute characters are often comatose and physically incapable, but are perfectly capable within the dream world. Characters with the Dream Avatar Merit (see p. 19) add to their Power, Finesse, or Resistance, not their normal Attributes.

Lairs

You can find more on Beast lairs on p. 27. But it's important to note that these spaces are almost inaccessible to anyone without supernatural abilities to open portals. Heroes have one such ability, as do some Conspiracies. With Storyteller discretion, characters can enter meditative dream states, often drug-induced, to fall deep into the nightmare. Right before falling asleep, a Resolve + Composure roll is required to dream lucidly. Within the nightmare, characters may pursue Beasts, including into their lairs. There are no hard rules for this practice - it should instead be the focus of complex and engaging story events unique to the Beast's own nightmarish existence.

Heroes

Every monster has a Hero ready to slay it. In specific terms related to Beasts, Heroes are those characters touched by the nightmare and driven to destroy it beyond all reason. They're self-important zealots, who believe the ends always justify the means.

From a practical standpoint, Heroes draw Beasts into their stories. They put the focus on Saint George, not on the dragon. They place weaknesses on the Beasts, to fulfill a strange, pseudo-narrative role. These imposed weaknesses are often called "anathema." The catch to this is, a Hero can only place anathema on Beasts who are well-fed and aren't currently on hungry rampages. This often means that Heroes must strike hardest against Beasts causing the least immediate harm. This isn't too challenging for the Hero - he's already rationalized everything he's doing.

Heroes are solo warriors. Or at very least, they perceive themselves as such. Part of the Hero condition requires the character internalize a fiction that they're somehow alone and unique in persecution, in their ability, and in willingness to take the fight to the monsters. To the reader of a **Hunter: The Vigil** book, this idea should be laughable. But to the Hero, it's the only possible logic. Even in the rare cases when Heroes work together, they struggle because only the lone Hero responsible for a kill reaps the rewards. Clearly, every single one believes himself worthy of the kill. They tend to get along fine when there's not a kill at hand nor an immediate threat to face. For this reason, the Internet has become something of a hotbed for Hero activity.

Not all Heroes violently pursue Beasts. Some take up other pursuits. However, these characters aren't the focus of this material, since the Heroes we're referencing here are those inexorably tied to Beasts.

You can find more specific rules for Heroes on p. 28. Note that these rules are different than those presented in **Beast: The Primordial**, and give disproportionate attention to rules that would facilitate engagement with hunters. They should have a significant array of tricks to use against Beasts, but we don't want to invest too much attention on what should ultimately be Storyteller character interactions.

HEROES AND HUNTERS

Heroes are not Heroes. At least, not in the traditional sense of the word. They have a very specific role in **Beast: The Primordial**. However, their role looks much different in **Hunter: The Vigil**. To a hunter, a Hero looks like a wayward, dangerous soul that makes the Vigil harder and more dangerous for everyone. To your average hunter, a Hero is a liability. To your average Hero, a hunter is a distraction and someone who might potentially rob him of his great cause. Indeed, some hunters on the trail of Beasts end up running afoul of Heroes. This rarely ends well.

Sometimes, Heroes are hunters. On some rare occasions, they will work within a cell of hunters to bring down their chosen prey. However, their hunt is one of single-minded, uncompromising conviction. That's the kind of conviction that tends to get hunters killed. It's also the kind of conviction that leads to explosive infighting.

In **Hunter: The Vigil**, Heroes are represented with Dread Powers. This is an explicit statement that what they do and what they are is not the same as what hunters do and what hunters are. Of course, some rare hunters find access to Dread Powers, so the lines can be somewhat muddy. But the two character types are incompatible except in the vaguest interpretation of their goals.

The Response

This section deals with some of the ways various Compacts and Conspiracies handle the hunt against Beasts. We deal with each from the perspective of a member, and one relatively in-the-know.

Aegis Kai Doru

Many great artifacts have long-since failed the test of time. These objects exist only within dreams, within the collective subconscious. Some never truly existed in the “real world” to begin with. Do you think Arthur’s sword is anything but allegory? Nonsense. At least, that is, in the physical world. We know that sword exists, and we know where it exists. It’s hidden away in the hoard of a nightmarish dragon. We don’t have it now. We will someday.

Nightmare is a labyrinth of the mind. It’s one we tread, but never lightly. It’s not our area of expertise, but it’s one we should never fear. It’s a place we could benefit from studying and working with others. It’s not a new frontier for us, but it’s always a new frontier. Dreams are fickle, unreliable. We can learn patterns, but we can never set expectations. We never know that turning left will send us leftward bound.

Ascending Ones

Our interest in these monsters is new but quickly growing. If you asked us about them a decade ago, we’d have shrugged. But now, it’s the topic on the tip of everyone’s tongue.

With some new concoctions, dreams have become a big thing for us. It’s fashionable to drone out and fall into that new world. Since travel works differently there, it’s a pretty good meeting spot. We’ve held a couple of festivals on that side.

Beasts are secondary to our interest in the dream space itself. We don’t actively commit to destroying them – but since we’re there anyway, we tend to see a lot of the bad apples. Those bad apples get worse very quickly; once they’re aware we’re in that realm, they tend to act defensively and excessively. This means that when we have the first reason, we escalate preemptively. It’s the only reasonable answer.

Ashwood Abbey

Let me start off by saying something provocative, to perpetuate the myth that “The Ashwood Abbey are the real monsters.” Let’s see. Where do we start?

Oh. Did you know that both fear and arousal are dictated by the same chemicals in the brain? Chemically-speaking, being afraid and being turned on are almost identical. So, what’s hotter than hunting nightmares made flesh?

Now that we’ve got that silly shit out of the way...

These Beasts are terrifying. They don’t like us. Generally, we don’t like them. A chapter in Northern California likes to hold parties in dream realms, and nightmare hunts are a big

deal for them. This is ridiculously dangerous, and not at all tenable in the long-term. The name of the game is safe and sane, but every chapter and every member has a choice of one of those things they play loose with. When you play loose with both, we start to consider folding your chapter. That chapter? They’re walking the line.

Thing is, these monsters are real niche. They’re interesting if you have very specific interests, but there’s typically something easier to find and just as worthwhile; unless you’re obsessed with the rare hunt. More power to you if you are, but generally we’re about the ends, not the means.

That sounds reasonable, doesn’t it? Then why do a lot of Beasts hunt us down when they hear about us? Let me introduce you to Unspoken Rule of the Ashwood Abbey #4,623: Some bad eggs will always fuck it up for the rest of us. The difference between the Abbey and other Compacts is, we don’t try to pretend those bad eggs don’t represent us.

The Cheiron Group

The Beasts of legends serve an essential role in Cheiron Group operations: They print money.

You see, these Beasts want. They want like nothing else. And people want to want. Sometimes, they want to want something else. Sometimes, they want to want something they’ve lost the urge for. You can make them want again like they’ve never wanted before.

You know how much money goes into giving wealthy old white men boners? If you install the right Beast’s gland in the right place, you’ll give him the hard-on of a lifetime, a fuckstick so hard you could use to chop down a tree if that’s what you’re into (and some of them are; don’t judge). The implant alone nets a cool two million. Then there are the installation and inpatient charges. You give him a month of physical therapy to deal with his new bonkmaker and by the time he’s ready to ram, you’ve doubled that bill. Then you give him a couple of weeks to notice the implant rejection. He tells himself he can do without, that he’ll get better and that he doesn’t *really* need to nail Ivanka. But he’s lying to himself. Two more weeks pass, and he’s forcing a no-limit Black Centurion Card into your hand with his sweaty, sticky, little hands, and he begs you for the anti-rejection serum. You smile, you give it to him, and you smile even harder when you walk into your quarterly review. You use a little bit of that sweet, sweet bonus for some extra-strength disinfectant wipes.

That’s just one example of the lucrative advantages one can net when dealing with a Beast donor. But don’t limit yourself. If it can be desired, I guarantee you there’s a rich fool willing to pay for it.

The Lucifuge

To the Beasts of nightmare, we’re kin. This causes as many, if not more, problems than it solves. They think we’re family, so they project upon us all these weird responsibilities and expectations that they think we’ll instinctively know.



Let's just make this clear: We have no idea what in the hell they're talking about, and we have no evidence whatsoever that we're related to them.

Not to say this isn't difficult or sympathetic; they think we're family, but ultimately we end up hunting them. That must be rough. We see betrayal in their faces when we move in for the kill. They expect other hunters to kill them – every single time we do, it's an “Et tu, Brute?” moment. It sucks to be that guy, even if we have no control over this nonsense perception they have.

Also, we tend to take more nuanced approaches to many monsters. But Beasts feed on terror. Very few of them are worth saving. Vampires can feed from a pig farm if they want to avoid hurting people. Beasts cause trauma. They cause irreparable harm to the fabric of society, and damnation follows in their wake.

The Long Night

These Beasts are rare. They've always been. But when we find them, they must become our first priorities. As far as we can tell, these are the Beasts of Revelation.

I wish we could make this a more nuanced, complex stance. But there's no ambiguity here. The closest thing we get is when we

have to make deals to take the hunt to the monsters. We can't just walk into their lairs. But we can't compromise on the end goal. This is particularly important because sometimes the goal is to kill, but hunters compromise with groups like the Cheiron Group. We cannot allow scraps of their bodies to spread damnation. We read ahead to the end of the book. We know what happens.

Loyalists of Thule

Our interest in these monsters is largely academic. They cause damage, certainly, but it tends to be localized and relatively nonlethal when held up in comparison with other, more common manifestations of the darkness.

But they have one very, very important purpose for us: they attract others. They consider themselves family to other monsters, and frankly, other monsters seem to agree. If you examine these Beasts, you'll learn more about other monsters, and see them in strange nesting behaviors you almost never see elsewhere. We've studied pack behaviors in werewolves of course, but we've never seen them cohabitating with vampires and stranger things. At least, that is, before we began studying this Beast phenomenon.

From a psychological perspective, these environments are invaluable; we get to see various creatures and how they interact

to wildly different circumstances. Just to be a fly on a wall of one of these Beasts' lairs for a month would be more valuable than a century of book learning.

One of our number, a Doctor Hans Voorman, is trying to reach out to some of these Beasts as a sort of diplomatic research effort. He proposes a sort of live-in study, like Jane Goodall with monsters. He's not been treated kindly by most of his contacts, but he's not been killed. One has shown some interest, but she demands the researcher be a blooded member of the Lucifuge. This, of course, is an even bigger diplomatic nightmare. So far, not a single member has volunteered. But if he finds the right member, this could advance our studies at an alarming rate.

Malleus Maleficarum

We don't see these monsters as any sort of superlative evil. As far as our research concludes, they exist naturally, and take fewer human lives than crocodiles in any given year, and you don't see anyone lobbying to create a "Malleus Crocodilus" branch of our holy order.

In all truth, it appears most of the real risk in these monsters comes from humans poking the proverbial hornets' nest. Humans cannot leave well enough alone, and when they hear of legendary monsters, they seek to kill legendary monsters. Everyone wants to be Saint George. Most end up John Doe.

Network Zero

These things are the stuff viral stories are made of. They're like Francis Dolarhyde, but real. They also love scaring people. A little clever camera positioning and they're a goldmine of content.

So, there's the exciting part. Now, the shitty part.

Our videos of Francis Dolarhyde creates Will Grahams, except they don't have all that sweet, sweet FBI training. This tends to be a pretty big mess. They tend to die, accidentally kill people, or otherwise cause a massive clusterfuck. It's bad. So, we should be responsible with what we leak, and where.

This is always a problem, right? We show a vampire on YouTube, someone decides to go all Van Helsing. But it's different. These people aren't hunters. Not like us. They're... Different. It's like they're supernaturally emboldened to hunt. They just go fucking bonkers about it. You know the worst, most ridiculous and uncompromising hunter you've ever met? They're all *that* guy.

We haven't really been able to look at enough of these super hunter guys, but we've been wondering if they're somehow a different type of monster of their own. Do we capture them on video? Do we share it with the world? Are they in the right? Journalistic ethics class never covered Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*.

Null Mysteriis

While there is a supernormal quality to "Beasts," these are mostly a pitiable people. These are people who believe them-

selves to be some sort of collective thoughtforms, embodied legends based off ancestral, genetic memory. This is clearly false. Many claim to be ancient monsters, but monsters with no recorded legends before the nineteenth century. They embody Victorian revisionist histories, romanticized and edited thoroughly in post. These few are hardly ancient concepts; they're often orientalist, fetishized ideas wrapped loosely around classical foundations.

This does not mean they're not dangerous. But they're dangerous because of their delusion, not despite it. They've told themselves these very human stories, they've told themselves so many times, they can imagine nothing outside those paradigms. Everything's dragons and knights and wizards. Those stories always end in blood, so these people always come to blood.

They do have a connection to dreams. They appear very able to impress upon others' psyches, giving recurring, distressing nightmares. Document carefully.

Task Force: Valkyrie

When tasked, when ordered, we take them out. It's never easy. It's never good. We often lose troops. The work is absolutely necessary.

If you're given the order, do everything in your power to get reinforcements. Stay within the bounds of proper protocol, but act fast, and act thorough. Do not hold back. Do not think twice. If you fail to kill, you will lose your life or others'. When these things go loud, they go *really* loud.

Also, if you are told to attack them in their lair, don't. Toss in some grenades, and stay out. You will die on their home turf.

I think you get the gist here, right?

The Union

Monsters who fuck with dreams are utterly fucking insidious, and not okay.

We had an elementary teacher in our neighborhood years ago. He wasn't supernatural, but he was sure as hell a monster. He did unspeakable shit to over half the kids in the neighborhood. Some of us didn't make it to adulthood. Some left. A couple of us got together and ended him. That wasn't a happy ending. We went to juvenile detention centers. One of us was tried as an adult and went away for a life sentence. Those of us still alive and around meet sometimes. We talk about it. None of us got away well. We all have nightmares. We all have scars.

This is the problem with Beasts. They embody this. They prey on fear. They cause irreparable harm to communities. Even if they aren't eating people alive, they cause foundational decay. They drive people to suicide. They leave broken husks who will never recover.

And the worst part? I've heard they think they're doing us a favor, teaching us. You know who else thought he was doing us a favor and teaching us through abuse? That son of a bitch who abused us. He wasn't right, and neither are they. We'll put them down, just as quick as we put him down.

Yuri's Group

We deal with survivors. Sometimes, survivors become... something else. Other hunters call them "Heroes." We don't like that term. They grow obsessed. Extremist. It's an awful situation when it happens because there's very little we can do. But, we provide them the same — if more intense — support. Sometimes we help them see reason, and to heal. Sometimes. Not often.

Okay. So, that's bullshit. We know about Heroes. We deal with them more than we'd like to admit. We try to reserve the term for the worst cases, the irredeemable cases. Our dirty little secret is, sometimes we have to use them as weapons. Sometimes Beasts are just too much to handle, and we can't afford to lose a cell. So, we have a little trick. We've found that when Beasts flare up and go for broke, it sends up a supernatural beacon that calls a Hero. So, we goad Beasts into flipping out and attacking hardcore. That's saved our asses more times than we can count. In fact, we'd probably not be the organization we are tonight if it weren't for that trick.

Are we comfortable using survivors as weapons? No. But this is giving clean needles to junkies. Without our trick, Heroes would still attack. We're just speeding up the inevitable. And with us there, sometimes we can minimize damages. Sometimes, this means the Hero lives when she might otherwise not. Usually, we just run when the Hero comes knocking.

The Reckoning

We hunt the hunters. We hunt extremists. We hunt those outside of God's plan.

You see, God made the world. God made people. God gave people freedom of choice, freedom to sin, freedom to make mistakes. God empowered us to teach lessons, to correct mistakes, and to protect others' freedom of choice. God also created monsters. Monsters are God's teachers. Sometimes teachers screw up, but most of the time, they send the lessons humans are afraid to.

That is until Heroes come along. Heroes think they're doing good work. So do the guys who bomb abortion clinics. Killing a bunch of people doesn't solve anything. It just emboldens sinners and makes them right when they criticize you. It makes it harder for the people doing real good in the world.

That said, is it hypocritical of us to kill Heroes? I don't know, maybe. But I've met enough families we've saved, that if I'm going to Hell over that hypocrisy, I'm willing to make that sacrifice. But as far as I'm concerned, we're doing the good work. And it's not like you can negotiate with these guys. Have you ever met a Hero? They're zealots. They're fucking bugshit nuts. There's nothing you can say or do to convince them that they're doing bad stuff. In the early days, about ten years ago, we tried. We tried hard. We captured a few of them. Hate to admit it, but we even tortured some of them. That's how frustrating these guys are; they made us torture them because they were just that fucking obstinate.

Why do we call them Heroes? I don't even know. It's what Derek calls them. So it's what we call them.

How We Do It

Heroes are obsessive. That's our single biggest advantage against them. They'll ignore anything that isn't directly in the path of a Beast. I hate to say it, but our hunt isn't even that complicated. We're hunting things that can technically talk and reason. We're not hunting wild wolves. But really, this is closer to hunting wolves than people, and we have a lot of experience hunting wolves.

It's all about surrounding and isolating the target, to keep him from escalating. It's about taking meaningful, quick action to cripple and to execute. We don't fuck around. We bring guns to knife fights. Sometimes they can eat some bullets. But none of them can eat a ton of bullets.

Killing Monsters

The party line about monsters is, if it's convenient, if it's tactically sound, or if it's advantageous to take them out, we should consider it. We're supposed to play it safe. Monsters are dangerous, and taking undue risks just ends up with dead parishioners. That doesn't help anyone.

That's wise, but it's just not the truth in action. The truth is, we hunt when it matters. If some kraken shit is attacking people, we take it down. We're just mindful of the Hero that'll come after it. If a succubus kills a hellfire club full of rich perverts, that's on them. Who are we to get in the way of God's judgment? The thing is if you take a good, long look at the people monsters kill, most of them deserve it. I'm not saying we should be out killing people because someone cheated on his wife, but we shouldn't put ourselves in danger to save the filthy sonofabitch.

There are other monsters, other demons that don't attract Heroes, or at least, I don't think they do. Werewolves? Far as I can tell, they're just people who got a bad disease. If it's reasonable, we should do them a favor and make sure they aren't spreading that shit around. Demons are a whole different story. Sometimes we run into possessions. In those cases, we try exorcisms. But let's just put it out on the table: Exorcisms almost never work. So, we've got to man up and show these poor people some mercy. If they were good in life, they'll go to a good place.

Also, it's practical. Monsters do bad things, but they're also great practice. You can spend hours and hours at the gun range, but nothing compares to live targets. And you can shoot a vampire eight or nine times before it goes down. You can't do that with some guy robbing 7-Eleven. Not that I'm saying we should be doing vigilante justice against petty criminals, but I'm saying that hypothetical human targets just aren't good practice for the hunt.

Other churches exist. Other churches hunt monsters. They're wrong. But generally, their hearts are in the right places. Then again, so are those abortion clinic bombers', so take heart with a grain of salt. So long as they're not stopping our cause, we give them breadth. But the second they start protecting Heroes, that's when we show them the righteous fury of the Lord. The Malleus Maleficarum mostly leaves us alone; they're

more concerned with demons and vampires and witches. The Long Night stay out of our neck of the woods. I think they believe they're stopping the apocalypse, or hurrying it along or something. I don't know. I don't care. I don't think we'd get along. I'm not ready to test that guess.

The Merrick Institute

We hunt where nobody else can, or will.

We hunt nightmares. We hunt the truest monsters.

In This Dream

Most of our hunts occur in the dreamscapes. More often than not, that means having one or two members in the dreamscape, and the rest of the team supporting her.

The main member here is the dream warrior. She's not the only essential member, but she's the one that's doing the job we came for. (The dream warrior almost always uses the Dream Avatar Merit, see p. 19.)

One member of the team acts as a "teller," watching monitors and helping the dream warrior do her job. Our monitors on the outside are clearer, more logical than what the dream warrior sees. The monitors cut through the bullshit. Besides, they see from a wider perspective. The dream warrior only sees what's right in front of her. A teller can pan around, and tell her if a Beast is creeping up behind her. (Tellers often use Merits such as Small Unit Tactics and Inspiring to support the dream warrior.)

One member usually acts as "pusher," who runs scientific and mathematical tests in the dream world. The thing about the dream is, it doesn't work like the reality that we know. Have you ever watched the cartoon where the animal runs out over the cliff but doesn't fall until he looks down? That's like the nightmare. Pushers have tools that can move stuff around a little, and monitors that measure and gauge what they push. They can tell you what's hard, soft, hot, cold, sharp, sticky, heavy, illusionary, or whatever. Some groups call them "sandboxers." (This is represented by the Dreampushing Merit on p. 21).

One cell mate acts as a "puller," which is to say he stands by with the switch or plug, ready to pull the dream warrior out before the monster kills her. This is a thankless job, because every dream warrior thinks, "I could have taken one more hit. I could have stopped it!" This always ends in an argument. We all know it's an essential job, just one you can never get right. Pullers also act like medics. We can't do a whole lot for a dream warrior, but we can offer a little respite and pick-me-up in the field. (This is represented by the Dream Medic Merit on p. 19).

We have a system. It's good. But, that's just not enough. We need talent, luck, skill, and willpower. We're engaging Beasts on their home turf. We can't just kick down a lair door, march in, and shoot the fucker. We do recon missions. We scout. We cripple defenses in advance. We interfere in the Beast's feasts so he's hungry when we move in for the kill. We harry, stick, move, and flee. We try to do lasting damage when possible, then duck out before the repercussions.

No offense to other monster hunters, but our job is the hardest out there. Also, we're kids. The whole deck is stacked

against us. But we manage. Far as I'm considered, that makes us bonafide badassess.

Beasts in the Flesh

Sometimes, we must hunt in the physical world. This is not ideal. For one, we can't all get involved. Some of us are physically incapable. And if any of us are physically incapable, that means someone needs to be with them to keep them safe and alive. That means even fewer of us get to be involved. Also, we're not built for fighting. Most of us lived up to a decade in a ten by ten cell, with no real exercise or training. We have a few members who were into martial arts beforehand, or who have studied since leaving the institute. But they're few and far between. Since we live on the road, it's not like we can take classes.

When we hunt in the flesh, we fight smart. We fight with traps, with diversions, with decoys. We use the environment. We use crowds to our advantage. Did you know, most vampires will do anything to get out of a fight in public?

Beasts aren't quite so timid. They'll rip your head off if you confront them in public. They give zero fucks. With Beasts, you should understand where they're strong (their lairs), and where they're vulnerable (the entrances to their lairs). You also should understand what can kill them (Heroes). If you've got that, you can put together a plan. In fact, using entrances and Heroes can make for a great supplement to an attack in the dreamscape. Sometimes, when confronted in the nightmare realm, a Beast will flee because they figure you can't be in two places at once. That's because they're miserable shits who cannot fathom rolling hard with a real crew. They have their monster buddies, but their little dragon hoards are like fortresses of solitude. They're the guy who wants to be friends with everyone but is kinda friends with nobody because of it.

One advantage we have in this field is that we're always on the road. So, if we fuck up, we bail. Or, if we take out one monster, and realize he's got friends, we bail. We scrub our identities, change our names, and pick a new time zone. Detectives say the only perfect crime is one that's random. We try to make our work look random wherever possible. We're not doing this to send messages or build a reputation. We're doing this because it needs to be done.

Take It on the Run, Baby

Sorry. My mom used to play that song when I was a little kid. It's one of the only things I remember about her. We have to work on the road. To say this is complicated is like saying that space is big. Most of us are teenagers. Legally, we're dead. We didn't have anyone to teach us to drive. We can't step foot on a plane. Eight to twelve teens carrying backpacks full of classified electronics stick out like a sore thumb on a bus. You can't Uber a cell of hunters – and yes, we've tried. You can't get a hotel without a credit card (unless you're willing to risk infection, and we have too many comatose members to take that risk), and those are hard to fake. We can't work legal jobs. It's a logistical nightmare, but it's essential.

How do we do it? It's complicated. There's no one answer.

First off, we put our faith in strangers. For example, we use a lot of parcel services and even the postal system to ship

ROAD TRIPS

As a Storyteller, road trip plots can be great tools. The Merrick Institute has unique challenges, addressed in this section. It's important to use problems on the road as plot hooks to move the story, but not to demoralize the players and stop the story dead in its tracks. The idea would be, present a challenge, and unless the players' solution is utterly ridiculous, make it work. Playing a Merrick Institute member is already complicated enough, without making flat tires and credit card machines insurmountable obstacles.

non-essential equipment. If you hit up Craigslist and say you're traveling, you can usually find someone who will receive a package for you. Our healthier groups bounce from hostel to hostel. One cell even moonlights as a touring band, and uses fans for "crash space." "The Dreamweavers"; you should look them up. We also shack up with other groups. It's usually not hard to find sympathetic Union members or even Loyalists of Thule willing to put you up for a little juicy lore.

Second off, we counterfeit. Most of us are at least competent with computers, but some of us are fucking phenomenal. One of our best can dig up dead people's identities and clone them, so we can get ID and credit cards and shit. But don't call her a hacker, she doesn't like that. She prefers "cyber-information-spe-

cialist." This isn't completely reliable. We all have to be ready to make a diversion and duck out the second a card gets declined.

Third off, we make huge accommodations for our less-ambulatory members. The most common trick for this is, we put up postings for freelance drivers. We keep it simple. "Runner wanted." We hire them for a few days, from city A to city B. We secure an RV or even just a freight truck outfitted with extra straps. Then we pay them to fly home afterward. If anyone asks, we tell them our mate has a disorder where he can't fly. They never ask. One cell bought an old, decommissioned ambulance. They travel the country with it. This was super brilliant on their part; cops never pull you over if you're driving an ambulance.



UP AND COMING COMPACT: TOMB RAIDERS

One collection of hunter cells is in the process of becoming a full-fledged Compact. These Reclaimers, or Tomb Raiders as some jokingly call them, specialize in robbing Beast lairs. They believe Beasts pull the bricks and mortar of their lairs from the collective human subconscious, and they aim to steal them back. Their philosophy states that as these fundamental human strands collectively weaken the species when not in human hands. Now, this doesn't mean they attempt to return these strands to their original owners; they believe it's their right to steward these lost threads.

While they don't have inherent membership advantages, they do have a single secret, an important secret: They've found a way to find and open gateways to these lairs. This doesn't mean they're naturally able to traverse these lairs; an underwater palace is still under water. But this first step confounds many hunters, and Reclaimers don't have that concern.

They're not quite a true Compact yet; their network just doesn't have the resources and support necessary to afford rank-and-file members any measurable advantages. This is changing every night, though. With every lair raided, they get closer and closer.

The Institute Remnants

We also hunt our former captors. If our group is going to survive, grow, and thrive, it'll be by taking back the tools of our captivity, and by guaranteeing our captors can never overcome us again.

The problem is with our captors, they're organized (or disorganized) in such a way that most people will never even hear about them, let alone stumble upon them. Even employees don't know what their labs are doing. This is all per design. It's built like a nice freight boat; the bottom is all full of little cells that can break apart without the whole thing capsizing.

We've got methods, though. If you know the little signs, you can at least narrow down the search. There's a certain kind of worker who is very qualified, often over-educated, and completely unsatisfied because they lack any real acknowledgment of what they're doing. They know they're doing important work, they know they're doing things that are changing the world, but they don't know *what* they're changing. There's a depression that comes along with that. Every one of these people is like their own little Oppenheimer.

We find these people through their dreams, through their insecurities, and through their instabilities. We find them, we connect with them through dreams or online, and we challenge them. We show them possibility and potential. We peel back the curtain just enough that they want to come and tell us everything. Usually, we're wrong. Usually, it's just some wage slave dying one day at a time. But sometimes, we find the right track, and the desperate wage slave points us to a benign industrial park in a nondescript suburb. These kinds of places are like gold mines. Except instead of finding gold, you find motherfuckers who torture kids.

The offices themselves are as hard to take down as they are to find. This isn't exactly Area 51 shit, but it's really, *really* close. Fortunately, their security hurts because they stay so secretive. They have security patrols in plainclothes patrolling their areas, and they have heavy security inside the labs; but they don't have

fully armored perimeter checks or anything like that. The labs are comparably small, and the security inside is always armed to the teeth. They usually have advanced weaponry, like some stuff you might expect on a Task Force: Valkyrie agent or something. Also, the average one of us is in her early 20s and doesn't have extensive combat training. Going in guns blazing just isn't an option. We usually whittle them down by attacking security in their dreams. That way, they come to work tired and lethargic. That gives us an upper hand. But if we play too rough in the dreamscapes, they'll get on to us, and send kids after us that way. Of course, the kids don't know what they're doing, so it ends up looking like some Ender's Game nonsense to them.

Sometimes, we bring other groups with us. That's not too hard. You can usually just tell them what they're doing to kids in there, or tell them there's a monster inside. It's technically not a lie.

These labs are like treasure troves for important tech. If we're careful, we can usually salvage at least half of the equipment inside for our own use. But most importantly, we never, ever keep the labs where we find them. We bring a truck and get the fuck out. When one of these places goes silent, within 48 hours, they burn to the ground, sink into the earth, or otherwise stop existing. We're not sure how this happens, but it happens every time. We lost a few early cells to this.

Other Targets

We also hunt other things. In the dreamscapes, we hunt other ephemera, little fears. Some fairies infect dreams, so do some sorcerers. We don't deal with them as much, but when we stumble upon them, they're fair game.

In the real world, we hunt what we need to hunt. Our awareness guarantees we can never truly shut our eyes when we're awake, so we see all the awful. We see the possessions, the murders, the cannibalism. And while we're not always ideal for those fights, we do it because sometimes nobody else will. Besides, the Beasts of nightmare consider "real world" monsters to be family. If that's not enough of a reason to fight them, I can't imagine what is.

New Endowments, Merits, Tactics

This is fun fuel for existing groups. Tactics, Endowments, and Merits. Maybe some equipment. This will largely focus on the ability to engage with dreams and nightmares. It'll also feature a couple of minor Hero powers.

New Merits

The following Merits are available to any hunters unless otherwise noted.

Dream Avatar (●)

Effect: Your character's representation within the world of dreams is more capable than her real-world self. When you purchase this Merit, choose two simplified Attribute dots (Power, Finesse, or Resistance). When your character manifests in the dream world, she gains those dots, including any derived traits.

Note that traits lost in the dream world that are derived from dots gained from Dream Avatar are purely conceptual, and are not lost in the real world. For example, if your character normally has Stamina ●●, but has Resistance ●●●● in the dream world, she has two health boxes that are marked first in a fight but do not translate to real world damage when she leaves.

Dream Avatar can increase an Attribute to one dot higher than the normal limit (almost always five dots).

At Storyteller discretion, you may also take this Merit to represent Merit dots that can only be used in the dream world. Instead of an Attribute, you can take four Merits. So, you could take eight Merits with this Merit. A good example of this would be Fighting Style Merits, which your character cannot access in the real world, but she knows within the dream. This is common in the Merrick Institute, where characters train for battles in the nightmare. If you use this option, you cannot use these Merits to buy more Dream Avatar Merits to essentially have an infinite source of dots.

You may take this Merit as many times as you'd like.

Dream Medic (● to ●●●●●)

Prerequisite: Intelligence ●●●, Medicine ●●

Effect: Your character can heal and support a person currently in a dream using basic chemicals. To use Dream Medic, your character must have access to the dreaming person's body and must have access to the necessary chemicals. A chem kit is Availability ●●●●, but can be scavenged from a pharmacy or drug store. In a pinch, she can scrounge one from convenience store pharmaceuticals, but all rolls to administer the medicine are made at -2, and all failures are treated as dramatic failures.

With a kit, your character can administer chems to the dreamer. Roll Intelligence + Medicine + Dream Medic. Suc-

cesses can be spent on the following, which only affect the character in the dream world.

- Heal 1 lethal damage, or 2 bashing damage.
- Give +2 dice to a single dice pool.
- Give +5 to the next Initiative roll.
- Give +10 to Speed for a turn.

Successes must be spent in the same scene. The dreamer can spend no more successes in a turn than your character has dots in Dream Medic.

This can be done as many times as you'd like. However, each additional roll made in the same day suffers a cumulative -2 penalty, with no upward limit. Failures cause 1 lethal damage to the character's real-world body. Dramatic failures cause 5 damage, and the character falls comatose until all the damage is healed.

Easy Out, Easy In (●●●●)

Effect: Your character can control her attachment to the nightmare world when delving in. At any time, spend a point of Willpower to leave the nightmare reflexively. In the same scene, she can delve back in instantly. Spend another point of Willpower to reflexively jump back in, at the same place or anywhere within about three meters. Many hunters use this as a method of ambush, effectively "teleporting" behind an assailant at an opportune time. This does not remove the normal expenditure limit of one Willpower point per turn.

Ephemeral Fetish (●●)

Effect: Your character possesses an item that no longer exists in the real world. The object was something very important to a person, something that provided comfort, that provided solace, a "security blanket" if you will. When lost forever or destroyed, this object became something that exists only within dreams, and now always manifests with your character for whatever reason. Perhaps it was given to her, perhaps it was important to her, or perhaps it's a strong reminder of someone she's protecting or has lost.

This object has immense potency within the dream. It's effectively immutable and indestructible. Whatever normal form it would take, add 5 Durability to it, and unless completely destroyed in a turn, it completely fixes itself every turn. If destroyed, it will reappear within a week's time.

The object grants +3 to all practical uses (in Illogical Dream Logic, see p. 10), including use as a weapon. If used as a weapon, ignore normal penalties for improvised weaponry. For example, a literal security blanket may give +3 to rolls to capture a monster as a net, or rolls to use it to glide safely from a high place. It would also give +3 dice when rolled up and used as a whip.

Groups like the Merrick Institute cherish these items. Many members have Ephemeral Fetishes from their friends who died in the institute's experiments. Some Ephemeral Fetishes have gone beyond simple fetishes, and are prized by the Aegis Kai Doru (see Dream Relic, p. 21).

Dreamscape (New Endowment)

Initiates of the Merrick Institute gain access to the Dreamscape Endowment. It allows them to do battle and reshape environments within the nightmare world of Beasts, as well as the dream realm that changelings traverse. It does not, however, allow access to these places. Characters must find their own access, often through the Procedure Tactic (see p. 24).

Dreamscape has three separate Merits associated with it. Each is purchased as its own 1 to 5 Merit. Additionally, hunters can adopt Merits which modify these basic abilities. Each of these Merits has listed prerequisite levels of other Dreamscape Merits.

These Merits work within any lucid dream, as well as within the Beasts' nightmare realm. This includes dreams brought upon by mages and changelings.

Dream Shaping (1 to 5)

Effect: Your character can manipulate the stuff of dreams. With a simple touch, she can mold the ephemera within dream realms as if it were clay. Each successive dot increases upon the manipulation possible. Activating Dream Shaping requires a point of Willpower for the first, second, and third dot abilities. Activation makes them available for the entire scene. The fourth and fifth dots require a Willpower point each time they're used.

Each ability uses an Intelligence + Manipulation (or Power + Finesse) + Dream Shaping dice pool. If used against sentient creatures, they're contested with Resolve + Stamina (or Resistance x 2). Characters affected by Dream Shaping can remove the effects by spending Willpower. Each Willpower point spent takes an instant action, and removes the effects of a single success.

When using Dream Shaping, the effects apply at a rate of one success per turn. So, if you roll four successes, the transformation takes four turns. This can be slowed to encompass an extended action, for example, to reshape something into a piece of art.

Note that in dreams, characters can be manipulated into shapes and forms that might not work logically in the physical world. A character whose body is changed to stone doesn't die because of the change; she's just less able to move until the effects are repaired. Also, material properties are generally not as extreme as they could be in the real world. In dreams, you may be able to pick up a terrifyingly radioactive material. While Dream Shaping doesn't disallow ludicrous and strange creations, the Storyteller is encouraged to make them plausible within illogical dream logic (see p. 10).

1 Enhance: With this ability, your character can embolden and build upon already-existing materials. Each success on the activation can increase an object's Size by one, add one to the amount of damage caused by an item, or add one to the object's Structure. Two

successes can add one to the item's Durability. An item can only be subject to this ability once per scene.

2 Deaden: This ability reverses the effects of Enhance. Each success on the activation can decrease an object's Size by one, subtract one from the amount of damage caused, or remove one point of Structure. Two successes can remove a level of Durability. Objects cannot be reduced to 0 Size with this ability. An item can only be subject to this ability once per scene.

3 Reshape: This ability allows your character to mold objects. She can reshape, shift, bend, and twist objects like they were malleable clay. She cannot change a liquid into a gas or solid, but she can adjust their basic density and hardness. She could make steel a softer metal, or she could make wood hard as a rock; this is functionally identical to five successes on Enhance or Deaden. She can manipulate 1 Size worth of an object per success. If reshaping a character, each success can add or remove a dot of an Attribute.

4 Create: This ability works like Reshape but allows your character to create the initial material to manipulate. The successes determine the initial Size of the object. Creating an object takes a point of Willpower.

5 Destroy: Using Destroy takes a point of Willpower per use. This ability removes the limitation of Deaden, and cannot be used on an object subject to Deaden in the same scene. If an object would be reduced to Size 0, it is destroyed entirely. When used against a sentient being, the victim's successes on the contested roll reduce your rolled successes.

Dream Shield (1 to 5)

Effect: Your character's mind is steeled against the terrible things that exist within dreams. Each dot of this Merit adds 1/1 armor for protecting her against threats in the dreamscape. Additionally, anytime she spends Willpower to add -2 to a resistance or +3 to a contested dice pool against Dread Powers in the nightmare, also add her dots to the effect. For example, with three dots, she'd give -5 to Resisted rolls, or add +6 to her Contested rolls when spending Willpower.

Dream Sword (1 to 5)

Effect: Your character's mind is a weapon in the dream world. Spend a point of Willpower to activate Dream Sword. She has two options; she can create a Size 1-3 physical weapon or she can project an attack at anything within eyeshot with a Finesse + Power roll. If she uses the former, the weapon persists for the scene, and she cannot be disarmed. If she uses the latter, the weapon works only once and costs additional Willpower for each additional attack. The weapon has a damage rating equal to your character's dots in Dream Sword and can take any physical appearance she wishes. Many members of the Merrick Institute train with martial arts, simply turning their hands and feet into weapons within the dream.

Absorb and Fortify (☹☹ or ☹☹☹)

Prerequisite: Dream Shaping 3, Dream Shield 1 (Dream Sword 1 for ☹☹☹)

Effect: Your character can not only reshape dreams and defend herself, she can simultaneously do both by absorbing the dreamstuff into herself. When using Dream Shaping to remove Durability or Structure from an object, add her successes as temporary Health boxes. When she takes damage, it's first applied to these Health boxes, which are removed and cannot be replenished. She cannot "stack" these Health boxes; additional uses of Absorb and Fortify only add additional Health if her successes exceed her current temporary Health, and then she only gains up to her successes.

With three dots, you may also use Absorb and Fortify when using a Dream Sword attack. Successes cause one fewer damage than normal, but also add temporary Health as above.

Colossus (☹)

Prerequisite: Dream Shaping ☹☹☹

Effect: Normally, your character can only create relatively human-sized objects, or make large objects somewhat larger with Dream Shaping. With this modification, your character can create massive structures in seconds. When using Dream Shaping to create or grow non-sentient objects, each success adds 3 Size instead of 1.

Dreampushing (☹)

Prerequisite: Dream Shaping ☹

Effect: Your character can enact minor influence on the dream world, from without. She cannot make physical attacks but has fine manipulation. Essentially, if it could be done with hands, but not with arms, she can handle it. These hypothetical, invisible "hands" move up to half her Speed per turn (but must stay within arms' reach of each other), and act with her Power and Finesse. The "hands" are essentially invincible, but relay sensory information to your character. For example, she knows if she touches something hot, even if it cannot burn her.

Note: This allows the character access to her Dream Shaping abilities. She cannot use Dream Sword but can access Dream Shield with the Shielding Mind Merit to help the dream warrior, if she so desires.

Regenerative Mind (☹☹)

Prerequisite: Any Dreamscape Merit at ☹ or greater

Effect: When your character spends Willpower on Dreamscape abilities, she regains one of those spent Willpower every ten minutes. By taking a point of bashing damage reflexively, you can speed this up and immediately replenish one Willpower point. Note that this only works on Willpower spent on Dreamscape abilities.

Shielding Mind (☹)

Prerequisite: Dream Shield ☹☹

Effect: Your character can use Dream Shield on another character by spending a point of Willpower. That character gains access to your character's Dream Shield. He must spend his own Willpower for the Contested and Resisted effects.

Warp (☹☹)

Prerequisite: Dream Shaping ☹☹☹

Effect: With this modification to Dream Shaping, your character's Dream Shaping effects occur instantly, regardless of the successes rolled. In fact, her Dream Shaping may be used reflexively when used against inanimate objects.

Wrack (☹☹)

Prerequisite: Dream Sword ☹☹☹

Effect: When your character successfully strikes with a Dream Sword attack, you can choose to remove damage from the weapon to drain an Attribute from the victim for the scene. By removing three damage from the weapon, you can reduce an Attribute by one dot. By removing five damage from the weapon (requiring five dots in Dream Sword), you can reduce an Attribute by two dots, or two Attributes by one dot. Choose these Attributes before rolling the Dream Sword attack.

New Endowments

These Endowments are available to their relevant Conspiracies.

Elixir: Drop of Dreams (☹☹)

This milky, oily elixir has a pearlescent sheen and must be kept away from light once brewed. It's tough to swallow, like barium milk with a subtle citrus flavor. Once imbibed, the drinker falls into a deep sleep. Her subconscious drifts off into the world of primordial nightmares.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The drinker falls unconscious as normal for one hour, but does not visit the primordial dream realm. Additionally, the nearest Beast feels the dreamer's presence and can enter her dreams as if he fulfilled his hunger before her (see p. 26).

Failure: The drinker falls unconscious as normal for one hour, but does not visit the primordial dream.

Success: The drinker falls unconscious for one hour. Nothing short of lethal damage will wake her. During this time, she finds herself in the primordial dream. She doesn't gain any special ability to access bestial lairs, but may be able to enter if she finds them. Once the hour is up, she may extend the voyage for a half an hour for a point of Willpower. She may continue to do this as long as she has more Willpower to spend.

Exceptional Success: The drinker falls asleep for as long as she'd like, and may remain in the primordial dream indefinitely. Her body imposes some limitations, however, as she requires life support and feeding tubes or similar treatment to remain nourished for an extended period.

Relic: Dream Relic (☹☹)

This isn't a normal Relic; it's an enhancement or modification to an existing Relic. This represents a Relic that's been physically destroyed or otherwise lost forever, so now it only exists within the scope of dreams. This Merit means your char-

acter is somehow bound to the destroyed Relic, so it appears with her whenever she manifests in a dream.

When using the Relic within dreams, you can choose to take lethal damage instead of using Willpower to activate the Relic. Additionally, all activation rolls gain +2 dice. As well, the Relic gains all the benefits of an Ephemeral Fetish (see p. 19).

Relic: Perseus' Mirrored Shield (●●●)

The story goes, Athena gave this shield to Perseus so he could look into it and see Medusa's reflection, protecting him from her petrifying gaze. He used this to behead the Beast. Now, the shield has a similar use; it protects the wielder from bestial Dread Powers.

Activating the shield requires the hunter polish the back of the shield, and invest a point of Willpower. If successful, the shield's inside becomes a perfect mirror.

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The hunter believes the shield works, but it does not. In fact, the first Dread Power used upon her achieves an exceptional success so long as at least one success is rolled.

Failure: The shield refuses to work. The polish just is not clear enough to show an enemy.

Success: The shield becomes a perfect mirror. If the hunter is currently viewing a monster in the mirror, she becomes immune to targeted Dread Powers. This does not affect Dread Powers that simply enhance the monster, like Dread Strength. As a rule, it affects Dread Powers using a Resisted or Contested roll against the hunter.

Attacking or otherwise acting against a character by viewing them through a mirror is difficult. All relevant actions suffer a -2 penalty, as the hunter effectively must act backward. However, the mirror does offer excellent visuals, effectively eliminating penalties for any low-light short of full darkness.

Exceptional Success: The mirror's imagery pierces supernatural illusions. Monsters seen through the shield appear in their true forms.

Relic: Saint George's Sword (●●●●●)

This ancient broadsword was used by a soldier in Libya over one thousand years ago. The story says that fifteen thousand people converted to Christianity as recompense for the soldier's work in slaying a great, poisonous dragon.

Now, the sword has been kept as a legendary monster-slaying tool. Activating the weapon's blessing requires the user concentrate on the would-be target. She might look at the target, she might concentrate on its name, or she might simply listen to villagers describe the monster in question (assuming the description is relatively accurate). The legend says the warrior must sign the cross as part of the activation, but this is not required.

As a weapon, the sword is old, of questionable craftsmanship, and not particularly sharp. It serves as a weapon that causes 1 lethal damage, but all dice pools to strike with it suffer -1. Any dramatic failures when attacking with the sword are identical to dramatic failures when activating the blessing (see below).

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only does the blessing not take hold, but the weapon shatters on first impact. At some point within the next month, the weapon appears somewhere else in the world, always in a small market, but never in the same region.

Failure: The blessing does not take hold.

Success: The blessing takes hold. The first time the target is struck with the weapon, he bleeds profusely. This causes one lethal damage per turn. This bleeding will not stop by normal means. The only way to stop the bleeding is to kill the sword's user. The target knows this fact intuitively.

Exceptional Success: Not only does the blessing work as with a normal success, but the weapon becomes shimmering, sharper, and stronger. It becomes a 3 lethal damage weapon for one day or until broken and gains Armor Piercing 2.

Note: This blessing only works against monsters. If the wielder attempts to use the blessing against a human, the blessing reverses and causes bleeding against her instead.

New Tactics

Unless otherwise noted, these Tactics are not restricted to just Beasts or Heroes in execution. Some of these Tactics mention a monster's Vice. When used on a Beast, this refers to the monster's specific hunger, not his Vice.

Damsel in Distress

Prerequisites: (all participants) Composure 2, Stealth 1, Wits 2 (primary actor) Composure 3, Subterfuge 2

Requires: 3

Primary Dice Pool: Composure + Subterfuge

Secondary Dice Pools: Dexterity + Stealth

Description: This classic tactic exploits a monster in a moment of weakness. The primary actor must know and play to the monster's Vice (or hunger in a Beast). Essentially, he offers himself up as a victim, or occasionally someone to be "saved." In that moment, the monster drops her defenses. The primary actor lines up to strike at the monster's weakest available point, putting himself in harm's way. Simultaneously, the other actors jump out of hiding to startle and distract the monster, so the primary actor can strike hard and get to safety.

This Tactic often requires one or more rolls before the actual Tactic roll, as the monster might see through the ruse in a more extended pursuit. For example, if a hunter tries drawing a



vampire out of a nightclub to get her to feed on him, he might need to make a Manipulation + Persuasion roll to initiate the liaison. By default, the core Tactic roll is made at -6, as monsters instinctively do not trust their prey. Every roll made to initiate and strengthen the liaison beforehand removes -6 from the penalty. This will not take the dice pool above its basic amount.

If this Tactic fails, it puts the primary actor in a terrible place. He loses his Defense and the monster gets a free turn, as he's considered ambushed by the monster who sees through the ruse at the last moment. After this turn, all characters act as normal. If successful, add the primary actor's successes to his dice pool to an attack dice pool, and he may use the Killing Blow rules (see *Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 93) against the monster on the first turn.

Organizations: This Tactic is not only common among the Ashwood Abbey; it's often considered a game of sorts. Union members also know well how to tip the scales against local predators. Some Reckoning cells use this Tactic to draw out Beasts and even capture them, in hopes a Hero will show up.

Going to Groups

Prerequisites: (all participants) Composure 3, Empathy 1 (primary actor, special) Resolve 3

Requires: 3, special

Primary Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure

Secondary Dice Pools: Manipulation + Empathy

Description: This Tactic is a rare exception to the usual rule, where a cell works together to handle a problem caused by a monster, because in this case, the primary actor is a monster. The cell acts as a support group. The monster talks about his struggle, his hunger, his terrible needs. The group offers support, advice, shoulders to cry on, substitute meals, and whatever else they need to for the monster to overcome his struggle.

This works on vampires, Beasts, and other monsters who have primal, controlling hungers that drive them to monstrosity. This does not remove the psychological desire, nor does it remove the basic expenditure of that sustenance. It does, however, make the monster able to cope with it a little better, and ensures that he will remain at least alive through the experience, if weak.

While under the effects of the Tactic, the monster will not lose her final Willpower point to the source of her hunger. A vampire will not need that final bit of blood to awaken, a Beast will not lose that last Willpower due to her specific hunger. Additionally, reduce any hunger-related penalties the monster might suffer to self-control by 2. For example, if a starving vampire would suffer -5 to rolls to maintain herself in the face of blood, she instead suffers -3. During the following week, successes rolled

on the Tactic can be “expended” for a single die added to any roll to resist temptation. However, once she’s at a single point of Willpower, all her Physical Attributes lose a dot, including derived traits. She can only regain Willpower through her Virtue. During this time, the monster cannot commit murder, or otherwise indulge in brutality in the name of her hunger, or else the effects end immediately. This also includes indulging in her Vice in a way that would grant Willpower.

The Tactic must be repeated weekly, or else the effects end – often disastrously – as the monster goes “off the wagon.” With Storyteller discretion, this Tactic may result in a monster eventually shedding her hunger completely, and coming to terms with herself. This generally means she finds other sources of sustenance or can sustain herself on a minimal amount.

Multiple monsters can enact this Tactic at the same time, during the same Group. In that case, the cell, the secondary actors, all make their rolls only once. Apply their results to each monster, where each monster acts as a primary actor for his own personal effects. However, any failing monsters cause all the monsters to fail, so smart hunters keep these support groups relatively small. Monsters can act as secondary actors for other monsters. These rolls are made at -2 dice. A monster can be both a secondary actor for other monsters and his own primary actor.

Organizations: This Tactic is a signature feature of Yuri’s Group. Almost every member learns it. Some Union cells have picked it up, but those members face increased scrutiny from their peers, due to the “unnecessary” risks involved.

Special: A monster must participate in this Tactic as the primary actor. This means the monster must learn it (and not as an affinity organization). This breaks normal limitations on monsters participating in Tactics. Any hunter with the Tactic knows enough to teach it to a monster.

I Need a Hero

Prerequisites: (all participants) Dexterity 2, Athletics 2 (primary actor) Presence 3, Persuasion 1

Requires: 3

Primary Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion

Secondary Dice Pools: Dexterity + Athletics

Description: Sometimes, a Beast is just too much for a cell, and it must resort to more drastic measures. Fortunately, knowledgeable hunters know that Beasts can sometimes create Heroes if they cut loose. Unfortunately, cutting loose usually proves fatal for hunters. However, with this Tactic, the cell knowingly goads the Beast to attack with overwhelming force. The cell plays it defensively, diverting, distracting, dodging, and otherwise staying relatively safe while the Beast escalates.

Successful rolls protect the actors from the Beast’s Dread Powers. During this time, the characters cannot attack; they simply devote themselves to fully avoiding devastation. Successes on a supporting actor’s dice pool subtract from the Beast’s Dread Powers against that actor thanks to the diversions, while still adding to the primary actor. If the primary actor succeeds, the Beast creates a Hero. The specifics are a bit vague, left to Storyteller discretion, but a potential Hero is recognized as:

☞ Relatively present

☞ Willing to make the choice to become a Hero

There’s nothing particularly supernatural about these phenomena; simply that the potential exists in any given place where a cell is likely to use the Tactic. Success means they are in the right place, at the right time, and the Beast is taking sufficiently terrifying actions.

Usually, the cell either continues to distract the Beast in pursuit, or flees if possible. The Hero takes a reasonable but short amount of time to arrive. If in a densely populated area, this might be a few turns. In rural areas, it might be as much as an hour. Regardless, the cell must do something in the meantime, and usually that means avoiding the Beast at all costs. The Storyteller should communicate a vague amount of time for them to fill. For example, “The Hero can’t make it during combat turns. But if you’re in a chase scene in the neighborhood, that should be plenty of time.” Once the Hero is on the scene, the two clash and it gives an easy escape for remaining cell members.

Organizations: Yuri’s Group specializes in this Tactic. Their intimate awareness of survivors and victims puts them in an ideal position to (grudgingly) turn the tables on victimizers. The Reckoning uses this Tactic, but for the reverse purpose; they use it to create and attract Heroes whom they can slay (they don’t acknowledge that it creates Heroes, simply that it draws them). Lucifuge receive training in this Tactic, as they better understand the fundamental relationship between monsters and Heroes than most hunters.

The Procedure

Prerequisites: (all participants) Crafts 1, Intelligence 2, Science 1, Medicine 1 (primary actor) Wits 3, Composure 2, Expression 2

Requires: 3

Primary Dice Pool: Wits + Composure

Secondary Dice Pools: Intelligence + Science

Description: With this series of medical procedures, the primary actor “goes under”, lapsing into unconsciousness and entering the primordial dream. The secondary participants use monitoring technology to see the nightmare world around her, and communications technology to interact with her, coaching her and supporting her efforts.

If successful, secondary actors become linked to the dreamer. With -2 penalties thanks to the relative disconnect between the two worlds, the secondary actors can participate in teamwork actions with the primary actor. Depending on the context, the dreamer can act as the anchor for these actions, or as a supporting character. For example, the dreamer would be considered the anchor if the others were helping her to access a Beast’s lair. On the other hand, if the team is attempting to build a map of the nightmare realm, she could be a supporting actor as she simply moves around the realm showing the others as they cartograph.

Additionally, any supporting actor can “pull the plug” on the primary actor as an instant action, pulling him out of the

dream. Usually, at least one member holds her action for this purpose, literally keeping her hand on the switch to snatch the dream warrior away from death at the last second.

Note that this Tactic requires at least moderate amounts of scrap technology to use. A full laboratory is ideal, but skilled users with an abandoned electronics repair shop or computer reseller can mock up the necessary supplies within an hour.

Organizations: This is the signature Tactic of the Dream Warriors. The Null Mysteriis and the Cheiron Group have adopted their own versions of it, thanks to their medical studies into the metaphysical nature of dreams.

Making a Monster

This section deals with how to build a Beast, and the inherent advantages they receive. Except where noted, Beasts work identically to other monsters in *Hunter: The Vigil* and *Chronicles of Darkness*.

Some of the Dread Powers in this section overlap somewhat with other existing Dread Powers. This is to emphasize the specific abilities and specialties of Beasts; when selecting other Dread Powers, endeavor to not overlap and invalidate Beast-specific abilities.

Aspirations/Hungers

Instead of Aspirations like normal characters, Beasts have two Hungers. They work very similarly but are almost always destructive or antisocial behaviors. Instead of affording Willpower, they give the Beast Satiety (see p. 25).

Bestial Advantages

All Beasts have the following basic advantages. These are not Dread Powers, per se, but natural extensions of the Beast's nature.

A Sense of Family

A Beast can instinctively sense family with just a glance. If she concentrates for a turn, she can sense a person's nature, as defined below.

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Roll Results

Failure: The Beast cannot discern the character's identity during this scene.

Success: The Beast knows if the character is human, or of supernatural nature. This will determine his supernatural tolerance trait and its dot rating, and any amount of "fuel" the character possesses (blood in a vampire, for example). This determines rough power levels, not what they are. If the subject is human, she knows his Virtue and Vice. She removes one Door from any Social Maneuvering efforts against him.

Exceptional Success: The Beast intuitively knows the above, but also identifies her subject's supernatural heritage. This may result in a Condition such as Leveraged, at Storyteller discretion.

Note: Supernatural subterfuge and hiding abilities may be able to defend against this sense. Roll this sense as a contested dice pool against the power in question. The Beast much achieve more successes than the monster to be successful.

In Passing

A Beast who has spent at least a full day with another supernatural creature can choose to "pass" for that type of creature. Spend a point of Willpower to pass until she next sleeps. While her basic appearance doesn't change, her physiology subtly shifts to fool investigators, and any supernatural sensory power will detect her as that type of creature. For example, a Beast passing for a vampire may have nearly deadened organs and no pulse, and her aura looks like a vampire's when viewed by a psychic. This kinship is more than skin deep; any ability which might detect her true nature only succeeds on an exceptional success, and even then, only as if it had only a single success.

Gatecrashing

Beasts are not creatures tied to this reality. In fact, they can open any gateway used by any other supernatural creature. For example, they can open breaches into the shadow world that werewolves often police, or doorways into the nightmarish hedge that changelings traverse. While they have no inherent ability to detect these gateways, they can always open them with an instant action and no roll. However, if they spend a point of Willpower, they can open the gate into their own primordial nightmare world, instead. For this reason, Beasts with other supernatural compatriots tend to be very slippery, and almost impossible to pursue at length.

When they open a gateway, they can choose to close it immediately behind them or to leave it open for the scene. This opening always ripples with latent subconscious energy, which sends a tingle down human spines or sends an unambiguous sensory wave through anyone psychically aware.

Lastly, a Beast who has fulfilled her hunger before a human target in the past week can enter his dreams and through those dreams access her primordial nightmare. This works similarly; it costs a point of Willpower.

Satiety (New Trait; 0 to 10)

Satiety is a trait in a constant state of influx for Beasts. Every day, a Beast loses a point of Satiety, to a minimum of 0. Beasts can use Satiety for a few purposes:

- They can regain two points of spent Willpower reflexively.
- They can spend any number of Satiety before making a Dread Power roll. If successful, add the successes to the total for determining exceptional success. This doesn't actually add to the total successes rolled; it simply helps achieve exceptional success.

- ☞ Increase a Physical Attribute by one dot for the scene, up to a maximum of 10.
- ☞ Satiety functions as Integrity whenever it matters. Beasts do not have Integrity.

Hunger: Any time a Beast is presented with a chance to indulge her Hunger, she must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll or indulge. However, this dice pool is limited by her current Satiety. She does not have to make this roll if she currently has 8-10 Satiety.

When a Beast falls to 3 or fewer Satiety, she gains +3 dice on all Dread Powers. Her monstrosity surfaces and lashes out harder than usual. This replaces the normal advantage from Willpower expenditure – the Beast cannot use Willpower for further advantages.

Recovering Satiety: Satiety can be recovered by fulfilling a Hunger. Most normal Hunger fulfilling actions give 1 Satiety. Significant actions give 3. Massive, epic actions that change the course of a story give 5.

Zero Satiety: At zero Satiety, a Beast becomes utterly ravenous. At this point, only a significant action will sate her (one that would usually give 3 or 5). And even then, it only affords her a single Satiety. She cannot resist indulgence at all. However, she becomes so very monstrous that she's something of a colossus. She gains two dots to each Physical Attribute, beyond her normal limits. She suffers no wound penalties.

Nightmares

Nightmares are Dread Powers drawn from the realm of pure terror. They're not inherent parts of the Beast's nature, like Atavisms, but instead, disciplines which inflict awful psychological terrorism upon the victim.

Any psychological Dread Power can be categorized as a Beast's Nightmare ability. In fact, we feature only a few new Nightmares because many existing Dread Powers work perfectly in this role. However, a single victim can only be subject to a single Nightmare ability at a time. If he suffers a new one, it supersedes the old one. Note that if giving a Beast a Dread Power that could be a Nightmare, it very well should be for this reason – never use categorization as a way to ignore this prohibition. If it can be a Nightmare, it should be a Nightmare.

Note that Nightmares can always be used as Hard Leverage in a Social Maneuver. Doing so automatically removes two Doors. If the Beast spends Satiety, it immediately removes three Doors.

Isolation (☞ to ☞☞☞☞)

This Nightmare makes a person feel utterly alone, even in a crowd. He's aware others exist, but only vaguely. People seem vague, blurred, distant even right in front of him. He only barely hears what they say, and he can't muster speech above a whisper because of his warped perceptions.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The monster bares her own soul. Anyone looking into her eyes sees and instinctively understands her supernatural hunger.

Failure: The monster sees nothing.

Success: The monster sees into the subject's soul. For each dot, she gains one of the following answers:

- ☞ The subject's Virtue and Vice
- ☞ One of the subject's Aspirations
- ☞ Any mental Conditions from which the subject suffers
- ☞ The subject's Integrity
- ☞ The thing the subject is most afraid of at the time
- ☞ The last nightmare from which the subject suffered

Exceptional Success: The subject bares his soul entirely. The monster knows all the relevant traits listed above; knowing intuitively when the subject lies or tells the truth for the rest of the scene.

Plague of Fear (☞ to ☞☞☞☞☞)

This Nightmare does not work independently; it modifies another Nightmare to make it infectious, so one victim spreads the fear to another, and to another.

Cost: 1 or more Willpower

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: None

Effect: Activate the other Nightmare normally. When activating it, spend any number of Willpower. Each point of Willpower adds additional potential victims equal to the dots in Plague of Fear.

If the Nightmare is successful, record the successes initially rolled. When the victim – currently under the effects of the Nightmare – interacts with another character, apply those successes minus one as a new activation against that character. They get to contest the roll normally.

So long as more potential victims remain, both the original vector and the new vector can continue to spread the Nightmare. However, each step away from the original vector applies a cumulative one fewer successes. This can potentially negate the effect's ability to spread further outward, regardless of Willpower spent.

For example, Helena activates a Nightmare for four successes against a victim. She has three dots of Plague of Fear and spends two Willpower. That means it could spread to an additional six targets. Her victim interacts with a character, who becomes subject to a three-success version of the Nightmare. The second victim interacts with a third, who is subject to a two-success version. That victim can infect a fourth with a single success. The fourth victim cannot infect other characters, while any of the other victims still can – until a total of seven characters are infected (one original victim, plus six for Plague of Fear).

Atavisms

Atavisms draw upon the Beast's true self, manifesting it in the real world. We've provided a few example Atavisms here. However, any Dread Power that could reflect the Beast's monstrosity and true self, can be an Atavism. If you use another Dread Power for an Atavism, express it in terrifying, epic, and majestic terms. Make it a little bigger-looking, a little more obvious when invoked.

Resonance

The one unique feature of Atavism Dread Powers is that when a Beast is in an area that well-represents the nature of her lair or its chambers, she can call upon her Atavisms more easily. Reduce Willpower costs by one point, to a minimum of zero. This also applies within the chambers themselves.

Marine Body (1 to 5)

This Atavism represents a monster whose body is entirely prepared for underwater action. She may be an undine, a leviathan, or another sea monster in her truest form.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: None

Effect: A Beast with this Atavism never needs to breathe air when underwater. Additionally, by activating the Atavism and bringing her true self into the world, she can move with alarming alacrity in the water. She moves at full Speed underwater. By spending a Willpower point, multiply her Speed by her dots in Marine Body, and add her dots to her Defense when acting fully submerged. While this advantage normally costs Willpower, most Beasts with this Atavism have a chamber underwater, effectively negating the cost.

Sphinx's Eye (1 to 5)

This Atavism dramatically changes the monster's eyes, often to gold or other similarly strange tone. Most monsters' eyes grow substantially. The Beast becomes able to see into a target's soul. For the Beast, this is invaluable. She sees phobias, hopes, dreams, goals, and other things she can exploit to feed her morbid hungers.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The monster bares her own soul. Any one looking into her eyes sees and instinctively understands her supernatural hunger.

Failure: The monster sees nothing.

Success: The monster sees into the subject's soul. For each dot, she gains one of the following answers:

- The subject's Virtue and Vice
- One of the subject's Aspirations

- Any mental Conditions from which the subject suffers
- The subject's Integrity
- The thing the subject is most afraid of at the time
- The last nightmare from which the subject suffered

Exceptional Success: The subject bares his soul entirely. The monster knows all the relevant traits listed above, and knows intuitively when the subject lies or tells the truth for the rest of the scene.

Titanic Charge (1 to 5)

With this Atavism, the monster becomes a colossus of sorts, sometimes stone, sometimes metal, sometimes simply massive. She charges forward, and nothing can stop her. This devastating embodiment of her monstrosity leaves destruction in her wake.

Cost: 5 Willpower

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Strength + Athletics + Titanic Charge

Note: While this is not contested, subtract the highest Defense of a character in the path of her charge. When she charges, nothing can stop her unless it physically prohibits her from moving forward despite her immense power.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The monster causes immense damage to the ground beneath her, effectively trapping herself until she can achieve five successes on an extended Strength + Stamina action.

Failure: The monster's charge is not supernaturally impressive.

Success: The monster charges forth, and moves twice her Speed in a straight line. Each character and object in the path suffer from an attack using the successes rolled, and the Beast benefits from a few specific effects:

- Ignore Durability and Armor equal to the Titanic Charge dots.
- Titanic Charge dots apply as a weapon modifier to the attack.
- During the turn, she gains 1/1 armor per dot of Titanic Charge. She may activate Titanic Charge reflexively before her turn for this benefit – the charge still only takes effect on her own turn.
- Every character struck suffers Knockdown.

Exceptional Success: As well as the above effects, victims also suffer the Shaken Condition from the assault.

Lairs

Lairs are natural extensions of bestial existence. The Horror which creates a Beast comes from the Lair, and is forever tied to its halls and chambers. Look to the section on the nightmare realm (see p. 9) for more on how lairs should be conceptualized.

Chambers

As the Beast grows in power, she finds other places, other stories, other terrors which resonate with her personal nightmare. She can incorporate these places into her lair, building them into distinct Chambers. In game terms, any time a Beast achieves an exceptional success on a Dread Power roll, or otherwise takes meaningful, terrifying actions, she can integrate the scenario, the fright into her lair. This turns the scenario into its own pocket realm, a chamber.

The Heart

The Heart of a lair is its first chamber. This is the original space from where the Horror comes. It's similar to other chambers, but much closer to the Beast's identity since it's not a place she's encountered, but a place core to her Horror.

Burrows

Burrows are the pathways, the halls, the caverns between chambers. Look at these pathways like the transition areas in a theme park – they embody both areas they connect; blending and mutating into one another. For example, if one chamber is a perpetually sinking ocean liner, and another is a volcano, the burrow between may be a ship's boiler room, heated with lava, filling the area with steam and fire.

Broods

Often, Beasts organize into broods, extended families. With time, their lairs meld together, crossing burrows and chambers into one enormous labyrinth. They shift and change, taking on aspects of each other. The greatest monster in the region influences every lair within, showing little bits of his own personal taint, his nightmare.

Lair is represented with the following trait. It's purchased and tracked like a Dread Power, but goes from one to ten dots. Beasts start with a single dot of Lair at creation.

Lair (● to ●●●●●●●●●●)

A Lair has a handful of effects, including determining chambers, the danger of the environment, and helping the monster resist supernatural abilities.

As the lair grows, it grows in chambers. Use the following chart to determine how many chambers a lair has.

| LAIR DOTS | CHAMBERS |
|-----------|----------|
| 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 5 |
| 6 | 5 |
| 7 | 6 |
| 8 | 6 |
| 9 | 7 |
| 10 | 7 |

Lair also functions as Potency (see *Mortal Remains*, p. 164). This determines Willpower expenditures available and trait maximums.

Lair Traits

A Beast has a handful of unique traits which only manifest within her lair. A lair is considered an Extreme Environment (see *Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 97). To determine its rating, have the Lair dots (round up) and subtract one. Additionally, for every dot in Lair, choose an environmental Tilt and assign it to a chamber. Characters within the chamber, not permitted by the Beast suffer from that Tilt. When creating these environments and Tilts, consider dream logic. Be fantastic. Be terrifying. Don't feel constrained by simple logic. An inferno that crackles out with black lightning might be a fitting environment, even if it's only a level 2 extreme environment. And the according Tilt could reflect visibility, shock, or any number of other effects. Effects not represented by these game rules simply do not happen – in that example, if the lightning isn't part of a game mechanic, it's simply a cosmetic effect.

Heroes

Heroes have the following Dread Powers. Every Hero gets Enduring Legend at one dot, Stalking at one dot, Open Gate, and Create Anathema at one dot for free. They can have other Dread Powers, but the Storyteller should be mindful not to choose other Dread Powers that might encroach into the realm of these existing Hero abilities. However, Heroes focus primarily on Beasts – their abilities are much less honed for other uses. Any Dread Power which requires activation has its Willpower cost reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 0) when used against a Beast and increased by 1 against non-Beasts.

Heroes are made as normal *Chronicles of Darkness* characters, but with the above Dread Powers at creation. Each time a Hero kills a Beast, he gains dots in Dread Powers equal to half the Beast's dots in the Lair trait, rounded up.

Amass Followers (● to ●●●●●●)

A Hero's legend draws those sympathetic and like-minded, sometimes overwhelming their better judgment and turning them into loyal – often disposable – followers.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression

Effect: The Hero converts a handful of nameless bystanders into sycophantic followers. This Dread Power must be used at the same time as another impressive action. For these purposes, an impressive action means an exceptional success or a showy use of a Dread Power. This power will not affect regular, named characters normally. A player's character won't be wrapped up in a Hero's legend with this power – he could choose to have his character fall in with the crowd, but cannot be forced. Volunteering to be subject to this Dread Power awards a character a Beat.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The crowd becomes agitated with the Hero, and impedes the Hero's hunt.

Failure: Nobody is sufficiently impressed.

Success: The Hero gains a number of temporary dots' worth of followers equal to her successes plus her Amass Followers dots. These dots are spread among the Allies, Staff, and Retainer Merits. Only one instance of this power can take effect at a time. Alternatively, followers may make attacks and other simple actions. Assume they have a dice pool of 3 for most basic actions, or 5 for actions important to the character. Often, Heroes exploit follower attacks to cause a Defense reduction in opponents.

Exceptional Success: The Hero amasses a large crowd of followers. In addition to the normal effects, the subjects and the Hero each gain a dot of Mystery Cult Initiation, with the Hero being the de-facto head of the newly-formed cult.

The supernatural effect lasts for the scene, but many followers will continue to follow a Hero with a strong personality.

Create Anathema (1 to 11)

This Dread Power allows the Hero to force an anathema – a ban or bane upon a Beast. It's one of the hallmarks of a Hero's hunt. Most Heroes call out the ban or bane when using this ability.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult + Create Anathema, contested (special, see below)

Effect: The Beast can contest this ability with Resolve, plus eleven minus her current Satiety. This defies the usual method for using Satiety to contest Dread Powers.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The bane or ban does not take. However, the Hero suffers from a similar bane or ban for one week instead.

Failure: The ban or bane does not take.

Success: The Hero can create a ban or bane on the target – per **Chronicles of Darkness**. Half the monster's Satiety, round up: that's the level of ban or bane allowed. It lasts one day per success rolled.

Exceptional Success: The bane or ban lasts a full lunar month.

Enduring Legend (1 to 11)

Heroes are exceedingly difficult to kill. The power of their legend keeps them pushing well after normal monster hunters would die.

Cost: None

Action: None

Dice Pool: None

Effect: The Hero gains one health box for every dot in this Dread Power. Additionally, each scene he can heal one bashing damage per turn, up to a total number equal to his dots in Enduring Legend. Each day when resting, he can heal one lethal damage per dot as well. With a single point of Willpower per point of damage, he can instead heal up to that many lethal damage reflexively.

Open Gate (1)

Heroes are uniquely capable of opening doorways directly into a Beast's lair. Up to a week after a Beast opened a gate into her lair's chambers, a Hero can open a doorway in that space which leads inside. Others can enter this door if the Hero leaves it open. Some hunters pursue Heroes simply to exploit this ability.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: None

Effect: No roll is required. If a Beast opened a gate to her lair within the past week, the Hero can open a portal. The Hero can close it behind himself, but they only rarely ever do since they have very little concern for the potential repercussions, and opening such a door is inherently harmful to a Beast. The door stays open for an hour. The Hero can spend an additional Willpower point to make the door permanent until the Beast manually destroys it, which means closing off one of her chambers for a full week.

Stalking (1 to 11)

Heroes pursue prey relentlessly, and intuitively know how to force their narrative forward.

Cost: None

Action: None

Dice Pool: None

Effect: In any roll to pursue prey of any sort, add the Hero's dots in this Dread Power. Additionally, he can sense the nearest Beast with a moment's concentration, up to a distance of about one mile per dot in Stalking. If this runs up against a supernatural concealment ability, the Hero contests the power's dice pool with Wits + Composure + Stalking.

Yuri's Group

On the surface, the Yuri Kochiyama Group (or “Yuri’s Group” as they call themselves) is a group of pacifists who run support groups and only grudgingly hunt monsters. At least, that’s a common perception. It’s inaccurate, and only addresses the group in an idealistic sense. They got their name from an anti-war activist, because at first, many of their support group attendees came home shocked from Iraq War. But they quickly found that they had other charges.

The group was born in the early 1990s as a handful of Los Angeles support group organizers began noticing patterns in survivors’ stories, suspicious discrepancies, and odd supernatural elements, which occurred time after time. Monsters. Specifically, a monster. This serpent king occurred in enough stories, acting the same way, that it simply couldn’t be a coincidence. It didn’t match up with any specific pop culture event. And the organizers curiously picked at the stories, trying to suss out not just commonalities, but if any truth was to be had.

And there was.

This serpent king existed; it was a man living in the sewers, stalking, and terrorizing people. The police laughed it off, even with pictures. A group of the organizers even followed him into the sewer, but each time, he’d vanish. Research stumbled upon research, and the group made headway when they finally saw him in his true form. They saw the monster, and in a moment of raw courage, they killed the Beast.

They’ve since organized and expanded into other regions, putting representatives in many support groups all over the US and a few other places. They look for signs of monsters, and they do what they can to stop them. Their group solidified, however, as they began capturing the monsters. They questioned the monsters and found that many of these Beasts believed they were teaching through pain, fear, and tribulation. While the group acknowledges that agenda, they wholeheartedly reject it. Yes, a person can find strength from pain. But the results of the pain are still very real. You may find strength in losing an arm in a war. That’s more than made up for when you no longer have a hand to use, or when you wake up in tears because of the trauma. People can learn without pain. No man, no Beast has the right to “teach” without a student’s consent.

Almost every member of Yuri’s Group fights with a cell of other hunters, providing expertise in identifying and supporting victims. Only rarely do cells exist only of Yuri’s Group members.



The Enemy

Primarily, Yuri's Group fights Beasts. This is far from exclusive, however. Any monster which creates enough survivors will attract their attention eventually. Blood-addicted vampire ghouls, shell-shocked werewolf victims, and former possession victims all draw attention. Unlike many other hunters, Yuri's Group very rarely deals with monsters that exclusively kill their victims. They will if confronted, but as they primarily hunt through support groups, no survivors mean no support group attendance.

The group views these monsters as victimizers of the worst caliber. They have massive power differentials with their victims, and often completely rob agency in their assaults. Some members will try to rehabilitate and reform monsters, but unfortunately, that's almost never practical. Immediate victims' needs must come first, and these kinds of monsters simply cannot be helped with the immediacy necessary.

Hunters

You were a social worker. Hell, you still are after a fashion. You hunt with your peers, you take down monsters, but your first and most important priority is the needs of victims. You allocate resources to establish safe houses, and you keep close tabs on your charges to make sure they're attending meetings. The hardest part of your job is dealing with the people that ask to join the Group, those that want to take up the Vigil. You've seen some shit, and you wouldn't wish that on anyone. You can't let them down easily. The best you can hope for is easing them in respectfully.

You're an active member of the neighborhood watch. You got into this when your sister was hospitalized for what turned out to be blood addiction to a vampiric master. You attend meetings and escort survivors home, all the while keeping your neighborhood watch group simultaneously aware of threats but ignorant of their supernatural nature.

You were a pastor, but your church just didn't have the answers for the problems your charges were facing. You held support meetings every Tuesday and Thursday, and every meeting got worse and worse. People came to you with stories scarier than the ones in the Old Testament, and these stories weren't allegory. Your superiors fed you platitudes about praying Satan away, but there was only so much praying you were willing to do while these people withered away into nothingness. You had to do something, so you chose to fight.

Support Groups

Rehabilitators do everything in their power to rehabilitate monsters. This is of course not always possible. But they stick by two major philosophies. First, monsters will set good examples for

one another if they prove successful in rehabilitation. Second, that monsters will request help if they see help there. Again, these are ideals. But at least one major support group exists in Los Angeles for monsters attempting to reject their natures.

Dark Angels are hunters and defenders first and foremost. They patrol, escorting survivors to look for repeat offenders. When they find these offenders, they make short work of them. These members specialize in urban warfare tactics and espionage, often setting themselves up as victims to attack monsters at their weakest points.

Doctors focus primarily on the actual act of rehabilitation, helping victims come to terms with what has happened to them, repairing any potential damage, and to move on with their lives. While they'll participate in the hunt, their greatest priority is to the victims themselves, diminishing damage and providing comfort wherever possible. When they do hunt, however, they're utterly ruthless. They carry with them the memories of countless tear-filled confessions, and people begging for death. Of anyone in Yuri's Group, they're the least capable of forgetting the hurt these monsters cause.

Status

Yuri's Group members can gain the following benefits:

- Basic membership offers connections. It gives Contacts and Allies in local support groups.
- Established members act as hubs for survivors. They have small groups of supporters who will fight to protect them. Divide three dots among Retainers and Staff Merits reflecting these characters.
- The most established members have an eye for the right time and place to prevent another victim. When on the hunt, they always arrive on the scene while survivors remain, and remain currently unhurt. If saved, these survivors become one-dot Retainers, Allies, Contacts, or Staff Merits.

Stereotypes

Cheiron Group: The worst. They could learn methods of solving greater problems with their research, but in the end, they only care about the bottom line.

The Long Night: They have a branch focused on redemption. That's a good start. If they could just get that not everything fits into their dogma. You can't "pray the gay away."

Null Mysteriis: No, really the worst. They believe in "hard science," but eschew "soft sciences." Which is to say, they care about data, not people.

"She said that life is not what you alone make it.
That it's the touch of everyone and every experience you have.
We don't prevent scars; we stop people from being cut."

THE RECKONING

Most hunter stories begin with a tragedy. You know the tale. A monster rampages through her village, slaughtering everyone, toppling buildings, leaving fire and blood in his wake. The story of the Reckoning started similarly, but with one major difference. The destruction didn't come from the monster, but from the Hero.

Derek Campbell grew up in a compound with forty other people, self-declared "sovereign citizens" deep in the wooded hills of Oregon, two hours' drive away from anything you could call a town. They stockpiled military-grade weapons, preparing for a Day of Reckoning, a day that came hard, came tragically. It came when one of the hunting parties found a giant egg and brought it home to the compound.

One evening, a monster struck the compound. It was a giant winged-woman, like those old monster flicks with Claymation and Greek heroes. The people grabbed their guns, but just as soon dropped them when she howled out. Derek will never forget that howl, it imprinted something on his soul, something terrifying. But the monster didn't come to kill; it wanted the egg. It tore at the vault where the egg was hidden away.

Then, a man came. He came with a spear that looked to be made of light, and he charged into the compound. The guards fired on him, but he shrugged off their bullets like nothing. The man fought the monster viciously, but each time he missed the mark, his spear caught one of the compound buildings ablaze. By the time he finally eradicated the monster, twenty were dead. Derek, just eighteen, took his father's gun and fired the one bullet the "Hero" couldn't ignore. He struck the killer dead.

Derek took charge of the compound. With the arsenal and remaining members, he started what would become The Reckoning. They soon noticed other monsters; once you see the supernatural, you cannot unsee it. And every time, a "Hero" came in, escalated, and caused untold harm. He told his people that the Reckoning had come for the compound, and now, he'd turn it on "Heroes" like that one. To him and his, monsters were a fact of reality in the apocalypse. They existed to teach humanity the follies of mankind, to punish the debauch and to prove divinity to the non-believers. Heroes, he argued, turned these forces of nature into something wholly more dangerous. Kill the Heroes, and the monsters go about their business.

Within a few years, the Reckoning grew out of the compound. With this new outlook, they managed to recruit and ironically appear like less of a fringe movement.



The Enemy

The Reckoning comes for Heroes. Heroes follow Beasts, so The Reckoning studies Beasts, and looks out for every sign. Essentially, they hunt for Beasts but hunt Heroes. This isn't to say they won't kill Beasts; they absolutely will. But they perceive Beasts as a natural part of their god's judgment, and kill out of necessity, defense, or tactical reasons, instead of actively pursuing the kill.

This philosophy has put The Reckoning into bad relations with some other cells since they've killed at least a few other hunters in their zealous pursuit of Heroes. Ironically, The Reckoning believes that the means justify the ends, even if that means a few bystander deaths. Also, because of their proximity to Beasts, a handful of Reckoning hunters have become Heroes; a phenomenon that's surprisingly easy to conceal amongst the Compact. After all, to a Hero, collateral damage is just part of the job. The Reckoning Hero simply spins the equation, saying that the Beasts they kill are collateral damage in pursuit of Heroes, when in fact for these Heroes, other Heroes are just a necessary sacrifice in pursuit of greater monsters.

Hunters

You knew the way the world worked. Life is a struggle. Politicians are monsters, literally, and you could see it. When she smiled on camera, you knew what she really was. But you never hated her for it. After all, that was just her nature, and that was her place in God's plan. You did, however, hate the man who bombed her church, claiming she was the Antichrist. Now you've found a new church, one that empowers you to stop that kind of extremist from taking more innocent lives.

You're a good old boy, never meant no wrong. You grew up in the hills, and you couldn't keep out of trouble. It's not that you were a bad person, it's just that you couldn't say no to a fight. Your family died when you were out drinking one night; they were held up in a siege by a man claiming your mother was some kind of lizard person. You tried to stop him, but he knocked you out. When you woke, The Reckoning showed you how to put your urge to fight to a good cause.

You killed a man in cold blood. You saw him shaking down a convenience store, screaming about monsters, and you shot him dead. You were arrested and proudly awaited trial because you knew you were in the right. But a group called The Reckoning bailed you out and said they'd pay for your defense attorney. They said you did the right thing, and they could put you in a position to do it again.

Wings

Messengers are doing God's work. They're out in the streets, stopping Heroes from killing innocent people. They chase down monsters because they know what follows monsters, and they know that's worse. These are the front line for righteousness, well-equipped and uncompromising.

Seeders focus primarily on recruitment since the Compact needs members if it plans on thriving. They're remarkably good at this; they downplay the religious extremism and isolationism and focus on finding those whom Heroes have hurt – offering respite and revenge.

Castlers mostly focus on weathering the apocalypse. They take out Heroes when possible because that's the fundamental group purpose, but they devote their energy and resources to stockpiling weapons, building massive safehouses, and indoctrinating the next generation.

Status

Reckoning members receive the following advantages with Status.

☛ Fully-inducted initiates gain access to a Reckoning safe house. This acts as Safehouse ☛, but is always shared with other Reckoning members, offering a larger advantage. Additionally, membership offers Anonymity ☛.

☛☛☛ Leaders in the Compact have gained influence with certain fundamentalist religious politicians. This functions as Allies (Political) ☛☛☛. Generally, this comes in the form of pardons or demonstrations in defense of the extremist action. In one case, a candidate for United States President offered to pay for a Reckoning member's legal defense.

☛☛☛☛☛ Derek Campbell is the only member with this level of Status in the current church structure. It grants him Resources ☛☛☛☛☛, as the members each funnel their income – legitimately gained or not – into his bank account.

Stereotypes

Loyalists of Thule: Derek says one of his great uncles was one of their founders. They've got good intentions, but no amount of knowledge can put off God's plan.

Malleus Maleficarum: If they were doing God's work, their job would have been done centuries ago. As far as we're concerned, they're just misguided monsters peddling snake oil as "miracles."

Yuri's Group: I've heard they're trying to break monsters of their habits like they were meth junkies. You can't just take God's purpose from one of his messengers. Adam and Eve couldn't just make the serpent sing Kumbaya and hug it out.

**"A WISE WOMAN ONCE SAID,
THE DEFINITION OF HERO IS A PERSON WHO GETS OTHER PEOPLE KILLED.
YOU CAN LOOK HER UP LATER."**

MERRICK

INSTITUTE

In January 1987, Epsilon Protocol became Strunk Developments. In July 1987, Strunk Developments became Merrick Research. Just about every six months, this United States government shadow organization changes its name and burns all paper trails. They destroy all unnecessary research notes, move facilities, and salt and burn. Researchers only know the bare minimum they must, and undergo excessive and traumatic debriefings if and when they leave.

This organization, Merrick Research we'll call it even though there's no record of that name existing, exists to tap into the subconscious power of the human mind. Another international group had similar goals, developing a method called the Wintergreen Process. The Merrick practice, which has no formal name, is far more dangerous, far more damaging, but ultimately far more dramatic in its effects. Successful inductees become able to walk through a parallel world borne of human nightmares.

The inductees quickly found true monsters within this nightmare realm. The monsters devastated many of the inductees' minds, and left others dead in the real world. Merrick realized that, if harnessed, these nightmare Beasts could be unprecedented, unstoppable weapons in the hand of US military interests. These monsters could turn the tide of war, crippling enemy forces and possibly even heads of state, ensuring United States military supremacy for decades to come. Besides, if they didn't figure this out, someone more dangerous would first, right?

Merrick "inducts" children who meet certain very rare criteria in standardized tests filtered through the system. When these rare combinations of correct and incorrect results come up, Merrick's surrogates offer parents lucrative scholarship packages, and "enrollment in an elite school." On occasion, parents who refuse these advances disappear, their children ending up in Merrick laboratories anyway.

The children, usually right on the cusp of adolescence, undergo terrifying chemical, psychological, and physical trials made to force



specific and targeted growth inside their brains. These trials often kill the subjects and almost always leave them permanently damaged on a physical or psychological level. Most remain institutionalized for the entirety of their short lives. Some are inducted into military programs.

At least, that was the case until 2013. A group of prodigious Merrick teens developed codes to communicate despite their cells, organized, and overthrew their captors. This group laid waste to the scientists, the guards, and the bureaucrats responsible for their captivity. Only a couple of scientists were left alive, under promise to help the teens survive with their trauma and to help them harness their dream skills. They freed all the other teens but maintained a facility for those in persistent vegetative states thanks to Merrick.

The teens knew the Beasts of nightmare and what terrible things they do to humanity. They swore that despite losing their lives to this travesty, they'd make the most of their circumstances, take responsibility, and destroy these threats. Now, they've divided into loosely organized cells all over North America (and at least a couple have snuck abroad), and they scramble from place to place, building and scrapping the technology to support their cause, as they evade the intelligence community's inevitable approach. They sometimes find new institutions, satellite Merrick groups, and they work to liberate them as well. Now, the group has hundreds of teens and young adults, and a handful of older members, survivors from the first nights of the experiment. Survivors adopted the Merrick name as a way to reclaim their lives. They call themselves the Merrick Institute, despite not being an institute in any formal sense, as a sort of defiant mockery of their past captors.

The Enemy

Beasts are the Merrick dreamers' primary target. While they occasionally hunt others thanks to their general level of awareness, their skills are razor-honed to hunt within dreams. Every Merrick dreamer knows at least one peer dead or comatose thanks to these Beasts of legend. Many of the dreamers spent years in a Merrick institution before release, so to say that they've had time to build grudges against these monsters is putting it lightly. Most are obsessed, directing vast repressed anger at them, and will do anything to keep others from suffering the same fate.

Sometimes, dreamers run afoul of changelings and other strangeness within dreams. One dreamer found herself abducted by a terrifying, alien entity from beyond her dreams. She eventually escaped but was forever changed. Her flesh bore the

words of the stories she remembered to help her escape. She became even better at traveling within dreamscapes.

Hunters

Almost all Dream Warriors suffer some form of disability because of their time in the Merrick laboratories. This usually takes the form of a Persistent Condition. Often, these characters train to fight in nightmares to great success. This is represented with the Dream Avatar Merit (see p. 19).

You were on track for success in life. You had a handful of scholarships to major universities thanks to your mastery with technology. Your science fair project was a rudimentary AI. One day, your parents said you were being sent off to a prestigious institution you'd never heard of. You researched them but found nothing. You fought, but they fought harder. Just when you were investigating emancipation late one night, you fell asleep and woke in a lab. Long story short, now you're the tech wizard for your cell. You don't like to talk about what you had to do to get out of the institute. In fact, you don't like to talk to anyone but your AIs. Your cell gives you room to breathe because you're the best at what you do.

You're the most optimistic of your group. You grew up an orphan. You were used to neglect and mistreatment. As far as you're concerned, Merrick just gave you a unique skill that makes you special in a world that's against you. You act as the heart of your group, keeping their spirits up and their organization tight. More importantly, you know how to survive against all odds. You keep your brothers and sisters fed, clothed, and as comfortable as possible.

You're the truest dreamer in your cell. During the Merrick experiments, you lost consciousness and never regained it. Your cell keeps you alive and safe in the physical world, while you protect them in the nightmare world. You're an expert on the nightmare because you live it every day and every night. You couldn't escape it, so you mastered it. In fact, other cells come to you for your expertise, and even some other Compacts and Conspiracies have reached out for your knowledge.

Factions

Reformers believe that while the Merrick institute was objectively wrong, the group could benefit from a more structured organization. They plan to set up new laboratories to further the cause, most likely outside the United States. A few have proposed micro-nations for this plan. So far, the largest contingent of Reformers resides in Canada, where they plan to center a network of laboratories. The single largest Reformer lab is in

**"THIS IS ABOUT MORE THAN REALITY,
AND IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN DREAMS.
IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN FIGHTING DRAGONS.
IT'S ABOUT FIGHTING THE REASONS WE THINK THERE ARE DRAGONS.
ALSO, IT'S ABOUT FIGHTING DRAGONS."**

Australia though, where researchers are making revolutionary strides in cooperation with an aboriginal group.

Firebrands believe dream warriors cannot turn the Merrick Institute into anything more organized than splinter cells sharing information, tactics, and resources. Of course, the truth is that they're already past that point. But Firebrands believe in tearing down what little formal structure exists within the Conspiracy. They also favor heavily nomadic cell structure. One group has even bombed an established Reformer safe-house and laboratory (in their defense, they used a diversion to empty the place, first). They admit to the crime, saying that it's for the greater good. While the Conspiracy at large rejects the action, the lack of formal charter or structure prevents any real consequences for the action.

Fleshists openly reject the call to fight nightmares. While they don't eschew their gifts with dream navigation, they use these powers to fight more immediate threats. Most monsters exist in planes accessible from the nightmare world, so they can even use their gifts for relatively direct attacks. The Fleshists mostly use their talents for information gathering, though, where they learn the nature of monsters and how to best destroy them.

Status

Merrick Institute members have access to the following advantages with Status in their group.



Even the most loosely affiliated Merrick Institute members learn The Procedure. They gain the Tactic free of charge. If they already have it, this Status dot refunds the Experiences spent. Additionally, they gain access to the Dreamscape Endowment. This is more than most Conspiracies get from their first Status dot, but Merrick Institute members have numerous inherent disadvantages thanks to their history.



More connected members of the Institute benefit from those ties. They gain Allies (Merrick Institute) •, Contacts (Merrick Institute) •, and a Retainer • in the institute with this dot. This can add to existing Merits, or refund Experiences spent.



These members have been around for years, and have saved labs full of inductees. They gain the Easy Out, Easy In Merit (see p. 19) free of cost. If they already have it, refund the Experiences spent.

Stereotypes

Ascending Ones: They walk roads they don't understand. They are impassioned, but they believe their immense knowledge of other spheres translates to our realm. It doesn't.

Ashwood Abbey: They walk the dreamscapes for fun. They're privileged. They don't know the darkness like we do.

Task Force Valkyrie: They're unwitting tools of the machine that enslaved us. You're welcome to pity them until they're turned on us. Then, they become threats worse than the monsters.



The Stuff of Nightmares...

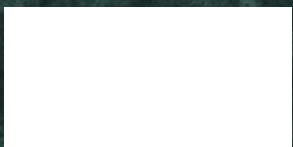
These monsters are the stuff of the primordial, collective subconscious. They're born of nightmare, and grown through legends of dragons, sphinxes, leviathans, and darker things still.

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HUNTER

THE VIGIL