

HUNTER

THE VIGIL

SECOND EDITION

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Compact & Conspiracy Preview #5



SWORN & Malleus Malificarum

SWORN

Strong Warriors of All Red Nations

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

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

The roots of SWORN, or Strong Warriors of All Red Nations, grew from tragedy. Chicagoan Michelle TwoCrow, a member of WARN (Women of All Red Nations) and AIM (American Indian Movement), was desperate to find her son Eddie, who never came home from work one fateful night. At first, Michelle sought help from the police, but after hitting a dead end she turned to her local Native community for assistance. Unfortunately, they didn't help Michelle either, because they claimed Eddie had been spotted hanging around with a known drinker and drug user; some community members assumed Eddie was probably still out partying — even though Michelle knew that couldn't be true. To her, it seemed Native resistance groups were so focused on fighting oppression they had little time to wage war in the shadows.

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

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

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

The Enemy

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

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

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

Today's members benefit from Michelle TwoCrow's efforts to catalogue and cross reference strange phenomena and known monsters across Native urban environments, reservations, and folklore. With this information, hunters work to contain natural monsters, manage their numbers, and eradicate predators when they can. While SWORN is not opposed to helping or working with other hunters, members tend to avoid outsiders who try to roll in and "take charge" of their hunt.

Hunters

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

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

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

Factions

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

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

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

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

Status

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

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

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

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



Malleus Maleficarium

The Shadow Congregation

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

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

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

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

To date, no evidence of Pope Paul III’s true goals has been found. Some Church scholars believe he needed to officially recognize the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Others are convinced the pope was being manipulated by dark forces, and the formation of the *Malleus Maleficarum* allowed the Church’s enemies to infiltrate and expose witch-hunters to discredit the organization.

Unfortunately, few people alive today know the true founder of the *Malleus Maleficarum* was a man named Ambrogio Baudolino, a savvy political influencer who inspired the pope to formally recognize the Shadow Congregation for his purposes: to hunt vampires.

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

Now, in modern times, the *Malleus Maleficarum* is in danger of losing their war against vampires. Not only has the Church’s political influence waned over the years, previously colonized groups that were forced to welcome members of the Shadow Congregation are now

declining help and dealing with the supernatural in their own way. Recent talks among interfaith organizations have encouraged the Malleus Maleficarum to share its knowledge with other religious groups and participate in group hunts. Strangely, this has resulted in the addition of new members who are loosely connected to the Church, and the Shadow Congregation has been recruiting lay people in greater and greater numbers.

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

The Enemy

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

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

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

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

Hunters

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

You were a devout believer whose mother fell gravely ill. You attended to her every need but knew something wasn't right. When she died and came back, you were forced to hunt her down

to put her to rest. You were horrified and confessed what happened to your local priest. Not long afterward, the Malleus Maleficarum approached you and asked you for help.

You were in a gang, but you were still a good Catholic at heart. When you heard Father Gutierrez had gone missing, you went to look for him. Eventually, you found him trapped by a possessed parishioner and freed him. Then, Father Gutierrez taught you evil was real, and showed you how you can help keep the streets safe. Now you've got a new gang, and you do God's work.

Brotherhoods and Orders

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

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

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

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

Status

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

- You have been initiated into the Shadow Congregation and have been taught how to identify and hunt vampires. Add a free Skill Specialty to either the Occult, Investigation, or Streetwise Skills to reflect this knowledge.

- You've gained respect among faithful Catholics for your loyalty to the conspiracy, without saying who you are. Gain one extra dot in Status (Malleus Maleficarum).

- You have access to Rome's ample coffers. Forces within the Vatican have gifted you with additional resources. Take three dots in Resources to help you fight the forces of evil.

Benediction

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

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

Virtuous Rituals

Benediction comes in the form of rituals. The Lucifuge must spend time, effort, and possibly even small material sacrifices to draw upon the blessed. Malleus Maleficarum hunters learn their Endowments slightly differently than others. When the player purchases Benediction she gets a dot in the Benediction Endowment (each dot costing three Experiences) and learns a ritual. She can purchase additional rituals for 3 Experiences each. Her Benediction rating affects both her activation roll on rituals, and how powerful her rituals are. The highest her Benediction rating can ever be is 5.

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

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

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Benediction

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

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

Duration: One day (or variable)

Roll Results

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

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

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

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

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

Armor of St. Martin

Target success total: 7

The forces of darkness against which the Malleus Maleficarum hunters stand are numerous and dangerous, with claws, fangs, and terrifying powers that shred the faithful. The hunter prays to St. Martin, the patron saint of soldiers, to provide a shield against the darkness. The hunter gains an armor rating equal to her Benediction rating against both general and ballistic attacks, with full-body coverage. When the Armor of St. Martin is active, its presence is imperceptible to the natural senses. This armor does not stack with other forms of armor.

The Boon of Lazarus

Target success total: 8

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

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

Epipodian Safeguard

Target success total: 7

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

Fortitude of St. George

Target success total: 6

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

A Malevolent Force Within the Church?

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

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

Hands of St. Luke

Target success total: 8

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

Shepherd's Blessing

Target success total: 6

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

mental effects, it provokes a Clash of Wills, and the hunter adds his Benediction rating to his roll.

Vade Retro Satana

Target success total: 7

Contested by: Power + Resistance

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

Wrathful Sword of St. Michael the Archangel

Target success total: 7

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