

HUNTER THE VIGIL SECOND EDITION

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview

Storytelling

Chapter Eight: Storytelling offers advice for Storytellers to help build and manage a chronicle while fleshing out rules for Storyteller characters. Additional content includes advice for creating player-facing compacts and conspiracies.



Chapter Eight: Storytelling

“Gore isn’t required for a good story, but adversity is.”

— Celeste Ng, American Author

The Vigil forges heroes. The Vigil spawns nightmares. The Vigil is a duty, a burden, and cathartic for anyone who wants a little payback at those *things* that snatched their father, sister, kid, or lover from them. Above everything else, the Vigil is a promise that a hunter will keep battling the darkness no matter if the fight costs them their soul.

The Storyteller’s role in a **Hunter** chronicle is to facilitate the story and be the arbiter of the rules that support it. There will be times when the hunters are successful. Somebody will stake a vampire on their first try, thanks to a roll of the dice, and tell stories about their heroics. Then, other times, a monster will slip through their grasp and that escape will *hurt*. The cell might witness the moment when that same monster snuffs the light from a victim they couldn’t save. They might even watch a monster they killed walk again — a terrifying thought — and learn that some creatures just won’t die.

The Vigil is never easy, but for many hunters, it’s the only option. Either they fight, or they suffer. Sometimes, hunters do both.

Out for Blood

Hunter: The Vigil is a game about being the underdogs in a fight against the supernatural. Even characters who join conspiracies with ample resources and Endowments to aid them face supernatural threats who form communities and guard ancient secrets. Nothing makes monsters more willing to lash out and risk their privacy than an organization dedicated to wiping them off the planet or dissecting them for parts. Hunters seek answers in darkness for countless reasons and they don’t all start out looking for blood, but ultimately, protecting themselves and those they care about is dangerous, and they must fight for it.

That’s not to say every encounter hunters have with monsters is a matter of life or death. Not only does that make it hard to keep a chronicle afloat and explore the characters to their fullest potential, it also tends to flatten the mood and diffuse a story’s drama. The *characters* might live their lives on a hair trigger, but the *players* shouldn’t.

Each encounter with a monster should be unique and fraught with complications. Maybe the hunters want to kill the undead thing preying on their neighborhood, but they don’t know *how* yet, so every time they cross paths with it they must get creative. Maybe they have no choice but to team up with a witch to get to the undead thing — but nobody said they had to be nice about it. Monsters have an infinite variety of reasons to not want to just kill the cell outright; they can get more use out of living humans than dead ones, after all.

As the Storyteller, save violent confrontations for story climaxes and major dramatic moments. Make strategic use of the Beaten Down and surrender rules (p. XX). When the characters have every reason to want blood — and they will — make sure they have reasons to do other things on the way there. Tactics are a great way to encourage players to think outside the box of deadly violence and pace the story according to a satisfying arc.

Hunters and the Code

All hunters wrestle with their conscience eventually, because while the denizens of the supernatural may struggle to gain power and dominion in the mortal world, hunters must abandon part of their life to hold them back. Unfortunately, not every monster is a clear-cut villain that must be dealt with to save lives. Sometimes, what a hunter calls a “monster” is a human being who possesses supernatural powers but doesn’t pose a threat. Sorcerers, witches, and mediums — even other hunters — may study and use supernatural forces to varying degrees.

When hunters pledge to uphold the Vigil, they’re often not aware of the nuances they will deal with. Their promise, reflected in the Code, might start off simple. “I hunt monsters because they don’t belong.” That phrase frames every action they take to ensure the supernatural doesn’t step foot in the daylight, but it also creates conflict the longer they hunt. Their worldview shapes everything they do. Does the hunter trap a monster and kill it no matter what? Or hear a human-seeming horror’s side of the story and *then* decide what to do next?

The Code doesn’t have to be vague, either. When framing the Code through a faith-based context, for hunters pledged to the Long Night or Malleus Maleficarum, the statement might change to: “I hunt monsters because God wills it” or “I hunt monsters to protect God’s creation.” In this way, the Code is practiced through a religious lens, and when a hunter’s core beliefs of the Vigil are challenged, it’s usually because their faith is as well. Keep in mind that the Code doesn’t have to frame hunters as “good” and monsters as “evil,” but it may imply that’s the case.

Sometimes, the Code can be more practical to fit a hunter’s style. A member of the Cheiron Group might claim, “I hunt monsters to use their bodies against them.” A scientist belonging to Null Mysteries would say, “I hunt monsters to study, find, and test their weaknesses.” Hunters who attach themselves to an organization’s interpretation of the Code are treading water, however, because should they change groups, lose status, or have a revelation, more than their loyalty will be tested. Hunter organizations can shape a hunter’s view of the Code, but even within these groups differing views exist.

The Code shapes a hunter’s worldview and provide a framework for their actions and beliefs. This agreement may be spoken or unspoken as the player sees fit; they are not required to write down what their interpretation of the Code is and uphold the letter of the law. The space between why the character believes they hunt and what happens when they do is where you’ll find narrative potential. Ultimately, it is up to the player to decide how defined they want this aspect of the hunt to be.

As the Storyteller, you’ll poke and prod a hunter’s conscience to challenge them and see what they really think. These trying moments are represented by rules for breaking points (p. XX) and the Code (p. XX). When combined, the player characters will not only hunt monsters, they’ll deal with what it *means* to fight, too. When they agree, cellmates get along great. When they disagree, usually due to differing views of the Vigil — outlined by the Code — is to blame. In those moments, that’s where you’ll find great, narrative conflict.

Types of Conflict

Fear. Fury. The unknown. The forbidden and the impossible. Hunters interact with the denizens of the Chronicles of Darkness as outsiders peering in through a dusty window. The longer hunters linger on the fringes, the more desperate they become to fight anything that preys upon their communities. Should they stop to think about when the fighting will end, they might realize

that it's only a matter of time before they'll die holding the line, praying another hunter will take their place.

Hunters versus Society

Hunters don't always recognize their underdogs, but they do see themselves as outsiders. In the supernatural world, they're stumbling around in the dark, picking off monsters when they can. In the human world, they're trying to maintain a life without exposing everyone they know to the dangers of the Vigil and the knowledge that the supernatural is real.

Despite the threat monsters pose to human society, not everyone is ready to acknowledge they exist, and even the precious few who do have different ideas on how to deal with them — well beyond what the Code requires. Should the government, after finding out vampires exist, tell everyone they're real? Or, by exposing this truth, do political bodies increase the risk and likelihood monsters will wage war on humankind?

In most cases, society looks the other way by framing supernatural sightings and attacks using language they're familiar with. A werewolf didn't shred that schoolteacher; they died after a vicious animal attack. A ghost didn't haunt that old house on Elm Street; the floorboards creaked and a gas leak caused hallucinations. Oh, that tunnel no one wants to use at night? That's just a group of teenagers being superstitious.

In this way, a hunter's greatest challenge isn't the monster they've fought, it's dealing with the people they're trying like hell to save. Most people will pretend the supernatural isn't real, even when they suspect otherwise, because it allows them to sleep at night instead of worrying about those “things” that are crawling around in the sewers. Hunters, however, not only want to know what those “things” are, they also want to know if they're dangerous, and how to stop them. They must extract information from people who don't listen to their gut and convince themselves the shadows won't yield monsters — at least, not the supernatural kind.

Cells don't always interact with other hunters; sometimes they must call in a favor from a local detective or ask a clerk at the mayor's office to waive the need for a permit. These connections, reflected through the characters with whom a hunter is allied (see *Merits*, p. XX), don't always know the supernatural exists. Sometimes, they're happy to help because they've known that hunter for a while. Other times, they might suspect something is up, but know better than to ask too many questions.

When a hunter doesn't have these connections, the hunt is that much more difficult. Suddenly, when they have a dead body on their hands, they become suspects in a murder. Oh, that building that just burned down? Traffic cams recorded the hunters blowing it up. The allies and resources a hunter may access determine how easy (or how challenging) it is to uphold the Vigil. Smart players will discuss their *Merits* ahead of time for this reason.

Hunters versus Cults

Sometimes, hunters don't just fight monsters. Sometimes, a monster will slip through their grasp because the cell encounters their protectors: a cult of believers. Cults appear in two broad types. One type of cult serves one or several monsters (be it something that walks the Earth or something that lurks in some other realm), while another cult has crafted its own dogma.

The first type serves its monster in various ways. The adherents may bring it food. They may do its dirty work. They may simply worship it. The fiend gains something, whether blood (drained

as wound levels) or Willpower (granted as one point per 10 cultists worshipping the monster, gained once per week) depending upon which Dread Power the monster uses.

Cult leaders can gain up to five total dots of Dread Powers if the monster so chooses — note, however, that usually only one or two cultists gains this boon. It's typically only reserved for the leaders or those who truly please the beast. The cultist who uses Dread Powers in this way can do so because the monster gifted them with that ability. Once the monster dies, the cultist's power wanes at the Storyteller's discretion. In either case, the cultist is mortal and should be treated as such.

Sodality of Licentia

At the top of Lomax Street lies a former church turned hot nightclub called Licentia. The club, which has been around since 2004, is so popular that any time other nightclubs or cocktail lounges move nearby they shut down within a month or two. Licentia attracts socialites, technophiles, venture capitalists, and social-media darlings who funnel money and resources to the venue. Some detectives have suspected the nightclub is a front but haven't been able to uncover what's being smuggled or dealt there.

Hunters know the truth: Licentia's patrons form a cult worshipping a demon named Licentia, the Daughter of Sitri and Calipha of Sin. Many years ago, the club's founders performed a ritual hoping to solve their academic problems — and it succeeded. Two of the original owners, Michael Palmer and Walter Sorvino, are dead and no one ever sees Cynthia Lomax who spends all her time in the basement. Rumor has it that Cynthia only emerges on Tuesday nights to DJ the club's members-only, ecstasy-filled parties. While hunters have been able to get inside the club, thus far they haven't been able to find Licentia or figure out why Lomax has been acting so strangely.

The second type of cult cobbles together a bizarre dogma that often only makes sense to them. Cults of this stripe may be religious, scientific, political, social, or academic — any field of study that can be used to justify their beliefs.

Cultists of this type are also mortal, but they do not manifest Dread Powers nearly as often. Some still develop strange powers as a provenance of their devotion to the cause. Any time one of these cultists performs an action in service to their cult, they may gain a new dot in a Dread Power, though they may never gain more than three total dots of Dread Powers.

Hunter Versus Hunter

Whether through conflicting interests, overlapping territories, misperceptions, or other extenuating circumstances, hunters can often be one another's worst enemies.

Hunters may face several types of conflicts when interacting with other hunters. They include:

- **Turf Wars:** Some hunter cells may protect a specific location and won't entertain any competition. This may especially be true for cells operating under orders.
- **Conflicting Motives:** Cells, compacts, and conspiracies may incur rivalries over time for a variety of reasons, including differing views of the Code, and can range from friendly to

antagonistic. Most often, however, hunters understand that a petty feud can and does interfere with the hunt, so they tend to set feelings aside unless one group is actively antagonizing them.

- **Hunting Methods:** Hunters might share similar views, but they won't always agree how to best deal with a monster. Whether they kill a zombie by decapitating or shooting them may not matter, but some hunters operate with conviction.
- **Coincidental Targets:** One cell might be tasked with exorcising a demon, while another cell might want to capture and study it. When two cells have the same target, their conflicting goals prevent them from finishing the job.
- **Desperate Measures:** Over time, the Vigil takes its toll on a cell — especially if its members have been hunting a specific monster who just keeps eluding them. The more desperate hunters get, the more likely they are to be at odds with another cell, and each other.

Individual hunters operate according to their conscience and beliefs. Sometimes, hunting with other hunters is easy. Members of a cell can all agree that a vampire needs to be staked — no matter what. Other times, hunters can't decide what to do next. Maybe a cell is outgunned and outmanned. Maybe a pair of hunters wants to head into a haunted house while the others think they should do more research first.

Hunters Versus Monsters

Conflict with the supernatural is the driving force in **Hunter**. The threats cells may face are dreadful abominations that defy what hunters once considered normal. Increased threat levels and sightings spell disaster for hunters who must face a terrible truth: Monsters won't stop emerging from the shadows.

A cell's encounter with a monster teaches them more about the denizens within the Chronicles of Darkness each time they hunt. They might learn that some monsters...

...have infiltrated human (or hunter) society.

...have human-seeming desires and beliefs.

...can reproduce.

...can influence human behavior.

...are tragic, more than horrific, figures.

...may be immortal.

...can't be stereotyped.

...are willing to exchange information.

...use mortals to cover up their existence.

...don't fit a neat definition of "evil."

... feel pain.

... use their powers to fight other monsters.

...could technically be considered mortal.

What a cell does (or doesn't) learn about a monster will differ based on its type and how that encounter is resolved. Each time a hunt begins, hunters find clues and test theories to successfully end a hunt. Over time, these pieces of information add up and hunters become more confident in their capabilities, but as every hunter knows — what a hunter doesn't know can kill them.

Compacts and conspiracies understand the value of information and do their best to either share data broadly or restrict its access to members only. As more monsters appear in greater numbers, however, all hunters must eventually decide what they value more: their pride or the hunt.

Horror and the Unknown

Everybody, whether they're hunters or not, knows about monsters. Omnipresent in stories, games, comics, and films, monsters fill pages' worth of media and are often defeated by a plucky hero or three. Only hunters understand that monsters are *real*. Some creatures, like demons, are easily defined while other monsters, like La Llorona, are passed off as urban legends and therefore are “nothing to worry about” when the lights are on.

Until a cell's members get a few hunts under their belt, they can't tell the difference between this version of the haunted hitchhiker legend or the eyewitness accounts of the ghost that's possessing college students. The space in between what the hunters think they know, what they don't, and what story you're trying to tell is where you'll find the means to leverage their worst fears.

For most monsters, a well-placed bullet or stab wound might end them, but the second-greatest weapon hunters can wield is knowledge. Almost everyone knows a zombie can be killed by aiming for their brain, but few hunters learn about the ritual of filling their mouth with salt and sewing it shut as they recite the prayer to silence the zombie's spirit forever. This knowledge often comes at a price and discovering where to find occult knowledge is just as important as practicing with weapons.

The X Card

The X card is a technique to help participants signal moments in a session that don't work for them. Designed by John Stavropolous. A card or sheet of paper with an “X” drawn on it is placed in the middle of the table. At any point, a player or the Storyteller may touch the X card to call a halt to any action that makes them uncomfortable or is causing harm. If they would like to explain themselves, they may, but none is needed. The Storyteller should continue gameplay after everyone is settled and ready to start again.

Fear and Trauma

The world isn't black and white. The shadows aren't always pitch black, and sometimes hunters see more shades of gray than they're comfortable with. Simple philosophies and scientific equations cannot accurately describe the reason why horrors are emerging in increasing numbers to prey upon mortals. Hunters may try to find one, but the more they pull back the veil the less they'll be able to stomach what they find.

Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition gives narrative tools that allow players to deeply experience the costs of the hunt. Unlike supernatural characters, hunters are mortal, first and foremost, and they must pierce the veil that separates them from the world of the supernatural. Tilts (beginning on p. XX) and Conditions (beginning on p. XX) are tools that serve a significant role in **Hunter**;

they temporarily, and sometimes permanently, affect a character's psyche, body, and environment as a result of their encounters. They are mechanical effects that should not be used to reflect a character's permanent disability. They are designed as a response to sudden acts of violence or harm caused by interacting with the supernatural.

Hunter Rules vs. Personal Safety

Rules shouldn't be used to punish players or make the hunt more difficult for its own sake. Rather, they exist to present a more realistic view of the hunt and tap into experiential horror. Sometimes, these experiences can be challenging for players and a little *too* gritty. Other times, their interpretation of the Code might cause an escalating argument that can't be solved through roleplay.

Supporting the narrative is important, but the comfort and safety of your players should come first. Should you desire to drag them deeper into the darkness, talk to your players about what you want to do. Strong sessions can emerge with a player's investment, still yield shocking surprises, and be enjoyable for everyone at the table.

Once a hunter suffers from a Condition or Tilt, they may seek ways to resolve it, so they can proceed with gameplay to finish a hunt. This may impact their next action or movement in a scene. Other times, the resolution isn't obvious, and the player doesn't know what to do next. When this happens, leverage Storyteller characters in the scene. Maybe their best friend calls them on the phone and talks them through possible solutions. Maybe a cop nearby sees they're in trouble and wants to help. In both cases, the story doesn't stop because the player didn't know how a rule affected their character.

Horrors and Invisible Threats

Sometimes, a monster's origin can be traced back to a story told around a campfire. The boogeyman lurks under your bed and swipes at your feet as you hop into the sheets. Sasquatch roams the great forests of North America. Trolls live under bridges. Ghosts haunt graveyards. These words immediately conjure images that are as recognizable as Santa Claus.

In the *Chronicles of Darkness*, these horrors are obvious: there are so many urban legends about that condemned house on the next street, no one buys the lot when it's up for sale. The monsters that creep and crawl and lash out are typical threats hunters will face; these are the obvious creatures who can, if encountered, cause serious harm.

The longer a hunter upholds the Vigil, the more they'll start to realize some monsters intentionally keep themselves hidden and do not want to risk being exposed. Creatures that defy description lurk in alleyways or in abandoned homes on the fringes of major cities, and hunters know them for the danger they pose. Horrors who operate behind the scenes take longer to expose, because they surround themselves with the naïve and unsuspecting and often have considerable resources at their disposal, too.

Of course, no hunter wants to admit the reason some monsters can hide in plain sight is because they are able to somehow pass as human beings. The most potent and deadly threats can not only shield their existence from hunters, they also know how to blend in. Worse: a hunter may even begin to glean words like "circle" or "prince" that make no sense at first, until they begin to

realize some monsters don't just hide in plain sight, they've formed complete societies that operate in the shadows.

What a hunter knows about humanoid monsters is impacted by the chronicle's tier. In general, tier-one hunters are often left wondering what the hell they just learned, tier-two hunters may eventually piece together that some monsters organize, and tier-three stories often deal with the political upheavals and conspiracies as part of the hunt. This knowledge, however, doesn't always hold true and a horror can have a strange immunity to fire or be slain with an iron dagger.

Still, fighting a smart cryptid is dangerous for hunters, but encountering an intelligent humanoid carries more risks than potential rewards. Cells who rush into an encounter risk exposure of the Vigil and getting arrested. To witnesses, the bloodsucker they've cornered *is* human. This makes the hunt extremely difficult because to the rest of the world, that vampire is an ordinary human being — and the hunters are trying to murder them. Knowing the town mayor is possessed is one thing but being able to prove it beyond a doubt is entirely another. Throwing salt at a news anchor can be considered a misdemeanor—and the law doesn't end there. Kidnapping, identity theft, car theft, selling drugs, breaking and entering, and attempted murder are a few ways monsters can use the law against their pursuers. The confines of living in a just and lawful society often shield the monsters more than they help hunters.

Recurring Nightmares

Sometimes, a cell can't exorcise a ghost or stake a vampire. Sometimes, hunters do everything right, and they still lose. Eventually, they *learn*. Some monsters defy human understanding. They dissolve into a poisonous mist or a flock of ravens. Sometimes, their body does die — but their spirit is reborn a few days later.

Recurring nightmares in **Hunter** deepen the mysteries of the supernatural, increase the threat level, and remind hunters that no matter how much they win, they're still mortal. These nightmares never walk alone; they actively plot and scheme to fulfill their own agendas of which hunters may not always be aware. In game terms, these agendas are described through the antagonist's Aspiration (p. XX).

Cells who encounter a recurring antagonist shouldn't lose heart, however. Hunters may not be able to stop an immortal, but they can put an end to a cult's schemes or save the victims on whom they're feeding. If hunters realize they can't take down a demon, they must shift their focus to figure out what they *can* do.

Mister White (Greater Demon)

Quote: *"You call yourself an instrument of justice. Can a murder be justified?"*

Background: In the space between dreaming and meditation, Mister White imagines he has been sent home. His home isn't the one his body occupies now. No, Mister White belongs in a quiet corner of hell where he can't hear a sinner's screams. Reveling in his vision, Mister White almost forgets his mind is trapped in the body of a man who's seen death. When he snaps back to reality, he remembers his other name: Detective Max Robinson, homicide. He recalls a party where his peers celebrated his retirement. Can demons ever retire? No, not really. Not when there's a murder to solve. Not when there's a murderer to punish.

Mister White can't remember what he was like before he became Max Robinson. His memories aren't like his dreams. In his mind's eye, he pictures a basement. There's a rat that squeaks past

him and a cobweb glistening in the window. He almost forgets the dark blood that's congealed on the floor, the limp hand with broken fingernails, the long hair tangled up with brain matter. He remembers the cold knot at the pit of his stomach, the clenched fists, the hair standing on the back of his neck. Then, he spots something out of order that everyone else missed. One of the bricks in the wall doesn't look right. Hmm...he pushes it, the door swings open, and the killer's just sitting there. Waiting. For him.

Who's "him"? Mister White or Max Robinson? Whatever the truth, Mister White is a demon now, one who punishes murderers. Those killers, they're gumming up the works. The machine won't work the way it's supposed to, and that can't happen. Mister White stands up, sighs, then leans on his cane. Reality isn't supposed to be messy. There's a natural order to it, a clockwork mechanism, and it's his job to maintain the system. His wrath? It sets things right.

Appearance: Mister White is an elderly gentleman. The lines in his thin face betray the years he's lived, and his black eyes are filled with personality. White is tall, lean, and requires a cane to walk. Sometimes, he'll wear a trench coat. Sometimes, he'll wear an old suit. True to his name, several details of his appearance are ghostly white: his teeth, the whites of his eyes, the jasmine boutonniere pinned to his chest.

Storytelling Hints: Mister White is careful not to reveal his name to just anyone. He splits his time between enjoying life as a charming, older gentleman and a hard-nosed homicide detective. If he stumbles across any hint of a murder, his back straightens and his demeanor sharpens. When he's on the case, he calls himself "Max" and let the detective's expertise take over.

A convincing and capable impersonator, Mister White might approach hunters when they're stuck. He will ally himself with their interests under the right circumstances, provided they bring the murderer to justice. If hunters respond to the enemy by killing them (or others), Mister White will make a citizen's arrest and drop them off at the authorities. If they don't, Mister White will urge them to take violent retribution, and then do the same thing.

True Name: Anamalech

Aspiration: Find murderers and turn them in for justice.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Investigation (Crime scene) 3, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Cane) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1

Merits: Contacts 4 (Police, Forensics, Morgue, Journalists), Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 2, Face in the Crowd, Untouchable

Potency: 9

Willpower: 9

Integrity: 0

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Health: 8

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Range	Dice Pool	Special
Cane	1(B)	n/a	7 –1	Improvised

Dread Powers: Black Gate ••, Dread Attack (Balefire) •, Know Soul ••, Looming Presence •, Predator's Sense (Murderer), Madness and Terror ••, Reborn ••••

Special

Forensic Reminder: By spending a Willpower point, Mister White can cause forensic evidence to return from obvation or to appear more readily. His breath restores fingerprints on glass. Bloodstains blossom again in his shadow, and skid marks reappear at accident sites. Animals expose the corpse of a monster returned to its human form. Once restored, such evidence is indelible. Efforts to wipe away blood simply result in it appearing again: a re-buried body turns up in a dumpster next to police headquarters.

Burning Obsession: When Mister White is on a murderer's trail, he suffers from the Obsessed Condition (Find Murderer) until their identity and location is revealed.

A Losing Fight

No matter how hard a hunter fights, eventually they will lose touch with their lovers, families, and friends. Sometimes, strained relationships are perfectly understandable. It is difficult for hunters to maintain friendships outside of hunter society due to the demands of the hunt. It might be hard to get excited when your favorite sports team comes into town when you have to focus on deciphering a cryptic message. It's hard to attend PTA meetings or meet with probation officers when your fellow hunters need your help to stop the Mothman from swooping down on unsuspecting hikers in the mountains.

Losing touch with friends and family is a heavy burden for hunters. It is also dangerous. The ties a hunter has to their life keep them grounded, remind them for whom they're fighting, and ensure they remember the hunt isn't the only thing worth caring about. These relationships are represented by Touchstones (p. XX), and indicate who the hunter was before they pledged to uphold the Vigil.

Hunters sometimes forget how important these characters are, because they're so busy fighting monsters or trying to cover their tracks. Eventually, these relationships fray and the hunter remembers what they have to lose.

The Vigil incurs a lot of loss, because sooner or later hunters realize they're not "just" fighting monsters. They're also fighting to retain a sense of self — especially since the horrors just keep coming.

Crafting The Hunt

Hunter: The Vigil is roleplaying game that presents a toolkit of ideas and rules you can use to facilitate multiple styles of gameplay. Before planning a chronicle, it's important to recognize that each player might want something different. Some players might only be interested in fighting, while others will want to focus on investigations and interactions with Storyteller characters. To find that careful balance, ask the players up front what they want before deciding on a tier and style.

What types of characters do you like to play? Instead of asking a player what kind of game they enjoy, talk to them about their character. Ask them leading questions like: "What do you think your character looks like?" "What do you feel they're good at?" "What do they need to improve upon?" These types of queries help players visualize who they want to play and get to know their character. Their answers will also guide your decisions along the way. If the entire troupe isn't interested in learning more about the occult, for example, then that element may be subdued in your chronicle — at least at first. If, however, your players say they want to infiltrate supernatural communities, their characters must be better equipped to face them, and you'll likely run a tier-three chronicle.

What kind of stories or scenes should I avoid? While **Hunter** touches upon real-world phobias, fears, and body horror, the story isn't as important as the player's comfort level. Some players might want to explore darker themes, while others may not at all. Typically, players are much more willing to play a horror game if they have help and reassurances their character won't be unduly punished. Violence, even in **Hunter**, is part of the story and represents both conflict and cost. Before the chronicle begins, find out what types of violence make your players uncomfortable. This can open more discussions about what types of scenes the player would love to explore, too.

What long-term goals does your character have? While every character has an Aspiration, they may want to accomplish a longer-term goal. Some players might want to give the character a rich backstory and their goal is "to avenge my father's killer" or "rise in rank to control the Loyalists of Thule." They may form loftier goals such as "learn how to read this occult tome" or "explore the Pyramids of Giza." These goals help shape characters and give the players something to look forward to outside of the hunt. These goals can also be pursued during downtime between sessions, too.

Are your players hoping to hunt, capture, and kill week after week? Or, do they want a deeper story that allows them to explore the mysteries of the world through their unique, and often outmatched, perspectives? Finding out this information ahead of time will give you more options to plan your chronicle.

Creating Storyteller Characters

Storyteller characters surround the characters and help weave your narrative's threads together. In a chronicle, treat your supporting cast members as dynamic characters who act independently of the player characters. By doing so, the hunters' relationship with other characters doesn't remain static.

Hunters, whether they're allies, rivals, rogues, or fallen, should be built using the character creation rules on p. XX. Mortal characters can be created using **Hunter** character creation rules with the following guidelines and modifications:

- All Storyteller characters, whether they're antagonists or not, need a character concept. Aspirations are optional.
- Storyteller characters can have a Virtue and Vice, but it's not required. These rules are recommended for recurring antagonists. Storyteller characters do not get Touchstones.
- Attribute categories and Skills are prioritized as normal. Storyteller characters may also have three Skill Specialties.
- Hunter characters can have Status and use Endowments. They can't use Tactics or teamwork without the involvement of the player characters, however. Storyteller characters who are hunters should have access to rules that fit the fiction. Fallen, disgraced, or rogue hunters should not have Endowments, for example, if you can't justify why they still have them.
- Storyteller characters spend Merit dots as normal, but they do not receive Professional Training or Status for free.
- A Storyteller character may start with variable advantages as best fits the narrative. For example, they can be Size 4, 5, or 6; have a lower (or higher) Integrity or Willpower rating; etc.

The rules for monster creation are found on p. XX, and cover characters who are supernatural. For **Hunter**'s purposes, all *potential* members of the Lucifuge who possess demon blood are treated as mortal unless they are clearly monstrous. Likewise, any fallen or rogue hunters with supernatural body modifications (e.g. they once belonged to the Cheiron Group) are also regarded as such.

The rules for mysterious places, which expand the setting and provide locations in which monsters can live, are found on p. XX.

Plotting Chronicles by Tier

Each tier requires different Storytelling techniques to balance the player characters' role in Hunter society against the needs of the hunt. Now, more than ever, hunters are faced with threats in that put them — and everyone they know — in harm's way. While every chronicle focuses on an individual cell of hunters, some aspects are unique to each tier.

Tier One: Eyes Wide Open

Tier-one hunters are usually new to the Vigil or come from a long line of hunters in their family or neighborhood. Most often, they tend to be more focused on the demands of everyday society than the world of supernatural. Tier-one hunters are the nurses who work at night clinics so they can help their cell stalk an undead creature who steals organs. They are the janitors who pilfer dusty books from the campus library to ensure a local warlock doesn't find what they're looking for. They are the hunters who prefer to fight alone, and are too jaded to ask other cells for help.

Often, tier-one hunters suffer from stereotyping, which shapes how other characters treat them. They're "weak," because they don't have back up. They're "anti-social," because they're not immersed in hunter society. They can't be challenged, because they're not strong enough to hunt.

When plotting a tier-one chronicle, keep the following in mind:

- *An individual cell doesn't have to hunt alone.* Hunter societies can form in a tier-one chronicle, and cells may team up with other hunters or compete with rivals. These societies might form around a bar hunters frequent, a shooting range, or even at the back of a bookstore.

- *Tier-one hunters have more to lose.* Tier-two and -three hunters have more resources and connections at their disposal, and hunters can switch their allegiances if necessary. Tier-one hunters don't have that option. If they tarnish their relationship with their cell, most hunters don't have any place else to go. Worse: Should they also lose their ties to their daily lives, they might not find a couch on which to crash.
- *Cells can and should have a route they patrol.* Hunters who defend their home turf know those streets better than any digital assistant will. No matter where they live — inner-city neighborhood or sleepy suburb — tier-one hunters care about what happens in their backyard. To facilitate this, suggest the players form a route they monitor from night to night. They might swap routes with another cell or edge a little further out, too.
- *Hunters are not restricted by their location.* While tier-one chronicles tend to be set in a hunter's backyard, cells are not *required* to stick close to home. A hunter is a hunter no matter where they sleep at night, and their confined hunting grounds tend to keep the scope of a story smaller than a tier-two or tier-three chronicle. That said, if a cell only wants to scout out their immediate area, they'll need a variety of monsters and mysterious places to explore. Otherwise, another night on the town becomes routine.
- *Cells do have backup if they know where to look.* By leveraging the cell's connections, hunters may be helped by local police officers, detectives, doctors, security guards, etc. Yes, the cell might have to get creative when they explain why they need the architectural plans for a sewage system or explosives that will level a building, but they can still ask.
- *Hunters who don't know anything about the supernatural, can learn.* From lesser-known museums to eyewitness accounts, a cell can glean information they need to keep hunting. Rumors and gossip can also yield invaluable clues about a monster's whereabouts or the secrets they've been hiding.
- *The rule of law still applies to hunters.* A hunter who accidentally smashes a store window during a fight is still subject to arrest or questioning. A cell who's speeding to get away from a monster can't always explain they're running from a slasher. A dead body, even if it's a supernatural one, is hard to explain to the authorities. Mortal laws still exist, reminding hunters that the rest of the world doesn't know or care about the Vigil.
- *Hunters are capable.* In **Hunter: The Vigil Second Edition**, hunters are given powerful capabilities to accommodate greater threat levels. Hunters are accomplished in their chosen field and have less restrictions to practice teamwork and Tactics. These rules support player characters who can and should be confident in their abilities.
- *Hunters can get creative.* Sometimes, the players will surprise you. No matter how many times you drop hints that the monster is using Know Soul to find out more about them, the hunters might accuse other Storyteller characters of being spies, instead. Though you might feel pressured to steer the hunters back on course, let them choose how they deal with the problem at hand.

Tier-one chronicles are also a great way to introduce new players to **Hunter** without pressuring them to learn more about the Chronicles of Darkness. Hunter does have lore, but often that knowledge is regulated to one of two things: the history of a hunter's organization or the monsters themselves. Both are sketchy at best, because what hunters know about the

supernatural and the history of the hunt changes depending upon who's archiving what. Many hunters, after all, intentionally spread disinformation when they can to throw others off the scent.

By starting with players who are in the dark, you can slowly introduce other narrative elements over the course of a chronicle. This cuts down on character interactions that focus on explanations of **Hunter** politics and deeper mysteries.

Going it Alone

Sometimes, a player may want their character to go off on their own. Maybe they need a breather from a heated argument or maybe they're hoping to follow up on a new lead. When a character leaves the cell, what happens next depends upon several factors. Sometimes, the player may split from the group because they're bored and are hoping for more action. While the *hunter* may claim they found a new clue, the *player* may have abandoned the cell because they're spending too much time figuring out what to do next. Differing views of the Vigil may also cause players to take a time out or do something rash — especially if they're hoping to be the hero that night.

A player whose character breaks away from the cell has the potential to be disruptive or antagonistic. When they do, it's important to figure out what the character wants. During the session, a Storyteller character might call them or run into them on the street to find out what's up. In this way, you can use the narrative to weave their departure into the story without resorting to a monster's surprise attack. If this technique doesn't work, try finding a natural way to take a break. Maybe you've reached the end of the scene or maybe the character's departure has signaled a shift in the story. Then, take the opportunity to pull the player aside and find out what their plans are and how you can help.

Using Downtime for Research

Downtime, or the time between sessions, can be leveraged to manage the finer, more painstaking details of a hunt. Instead of spending an entire session surfing the internet for clues, for example, the characters can search through a few email exchanges. This can yield a lot of interesting developments, because you'll have more time to respond to their questions and drop hints or names the group can check out when it's back together.

Research is a necessary evil in a lot of **Hunter** games, because most cells won't know the difference between one werewolf and another. They might *think* they know, but hunters often win through sheer perseverance and a whole lot of luck. The more knowledge they glean, the more informed decisions they'll make, and the better you'll be able to cue off their actions. Therefore, some sessions can open by ascertaining what the hunters *want* to do, instead of what background info they must learn before taking that next step.

Tier Two: Clubs, Gangs, and Rivalries

Compacts allow hunters to feel like they belong to something greater and more important than themselves. Sure, compacts can supply more guns and intel than another cell might, but they also sharpen a hunter's purpose by giving them a place in hunter society. That oh-so-important sense of teamwork motivates a hunter to keep fighting even though they're bruised and bloody, because they're not just fighting for their friends, family, and cellmates — they've got an entire compact of hunters they don't want to disappoint, too.

Working together to face enormous threats is not a new concept. Though some hunters go rogue because they're convinced their way is better, many find solace and friendship in their chosen compact. Knowing someone has their back is essential in the heat of battle and knowing everyone is fighting for the same goal gives them hope.

When working with compacts, here are some things to keep in mind:

- *A cell can contain members of more than one compact.* A four-character chronicle containing only members of Null Mysteriis is much easier than a chronicle filled with Network Zero, The Union, the Long Night, and SWORN. However, just because it's harder to narrate a multi-compact story doesn't mean it can't be done. The main, and perhaps most important, thing to remember is that the player characters should have similar interpretations of the Code. Without that, the cell will eventually fall apart — more quickly than you might think — because some differences of opinion can't always be resolved without someone getting hurt.
- *Hunters don't automatically get access to everything their compact has to offer.* Just because a hunter suddenly has the backing of The Union doesn't mean the entire compact will converge on a rundown sanitarium when needed. Nor does it mean the compact's secrets will be revealed, either. Hunters who join a compact, regardless of status, must work for what they want by talking to other members, putting in requisitions, or even swapping favors.
- *The members of a compact are not homogenous.* Though it is easy to stereotype what a typical Loyalist of Thule might do or say, the reality is that compacts comprise several different kinds of people. Compact members may share similar beliefs or even interests, but each member is a unique character who acts of their own volition.
- *A hunter's compact status is not static.* The Status Merit (p. XX) shapes the player character's role in their compact. In the narrative, this status is something that should be maintained, nurtured, and acknowledged from time to time through character interactions. Hunters who ignore their role may lose status and cause tension between members.
- *Favors can be expensive.* Hunters, like anyone, can get into trouble they can't fix on their own. Their car breaks down and they need a tow — but all their credit cards are maxed out. They've learned a skinwalker may be at a fancy party with the nouveau riche, but don't have an invitation or a thing to wear. Compact members enjoy many benefits to their membership, but they don't *always* get a favor for free. Sometimes, a kindness must be repaid.
- *Each compact has its own culture.* Members of The Union might kick back with beers and brats, while the Long Night's hunters prefer to get together during a Friday-night fish fry. While compacts provide a great many benefits to a hunter, each organization also has its own quirks and nuances that makes it unique. This, too, is part of what it means to be a member of hunter society and deepens the player characters' connection to the Vigil.

At the core of any chronicle is the hunt. Tier-two stories tend to be broader in scope and cover a wider area, but not always. When compacts are involved, chronicles are enhanced by their involvement and presence, and hunters are required to check in. For this reason, you are encouraged to ask the player characters to devise a compact-related Aspiration both during character creation and after they've completed their first one.

Roles for Compacts

The compacts operate in a variety of ways. Some, like The Union, consider themselves to be regular people who keep in touch with their friends and kin across the globe. They fight monsters lurking in cornfields or on the streets of Chinatown in San Francisco. Others, like Null Mysteriis, confront the unknown through their scientific approach, to find answers where others have failed.

Though they may differ in their goals, culture, location, and method of operation, all compacts are willing to work with other hunters when it matters.

Here are some tips for unlocking a compact's potential in your chronicle:

- **Long Night:** Members of the Long Night must balance the needs of the Vigil against serving the faithful, and they are often caught wondering if they made the right choice. Hunters can experience crises of faith when they must choose between pursuing a demon and baptizing the newest member of their congregation or conducting a hunter's funeral. The Long Night's members feel they've got their finger on the pulse of monster activity, and they can predict — with some accuracy — when a storm is brewing in their neighborhoods. Partly, this is because many compact members are leaders in their own right and watch over their communities. Sometimes, however, this means members tend to be short-sighted, because they can't appear or be everywhere at once. Most hunters still breathe a sigh of relief when a member of the Long Night steps up, because their ability to inspire hope is greatly needed in these dark and dangerous times.

One of the best ways to broaden the scope of a Long Night chronicle is to expand their reach by connecting them to other communities. Until they start interacting with Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu religious leaders, they may not know what else is happening in their town or city. Then, when they find out which monster is in the area, they can put their knowledge of the hunt to good use. Other members may face a crisis of faith along the way when they realize that, despite all their efforts, the monsters just keep coming.

- **Loyalists of Thule:** A compact of scholars, the Loyalists of Thule tend to know more than they're letting on. They work well with other compacts because they have what they need: occult knowledge. While Null Mysteriis leans heavily on science, and the Long Night relies on its faith, the Loyalists of Thule are somewhere in between. Their pragmatism allows them to remain clear-headed when hunting the supernatural. The Loyalists excel in this, but often fail when trying to make sense of current events. In this way, they're split between two ideologies that shape their desire for atonement: Make sure the Nazi party never regains power, in any form that might take, and help other hunters deal with the supernatural.

A chronicle involving the Loyalists of Thule can involve modern politics as well as new discoveries of occult artifacts (see *Bygones*, p. XX), investigation of mysterious places, and trying to ascertain why so many monsters are appearing in greater numbers. Of all the compacts, the Loyalists of Thule are the most likely to piece together theories and unravel dusty rumors to find out what's really going on. This can put the compact's members in the spotlight or force them into an uncomfortable position as they try to convince other hunters their insights are correct.

- **Network Zero:** One of the biggest challenges members of Network Zero will face, regardless of how many monsters lurk nearby, is the volume of information they must sift through and process — or produce. In the age of too much information, hunters might have a

hard time collating and analyzing data without the help of a computer program. The rapid spread of information via the internet is, by far, the biggest threat to this compact's members. Fortunately, Network Zero can couch raw footage as "modern fantasy" or "science fiction" when asking outsiders for help. Members of this compact pair extremely well with members of Null Mysteriis who can help analyze data.

Researching or producing content for its own sake isn't enough to sustain a chronicle. The compact needs something to do, whether that's investigating a cryptid or tracking the movements of a monster. To get hunters off their tablets and computers, leverage Dread Powers and Environmental Tilts that impact electricity. You might also kick off a chronicle with a missing hunter who's gone off the grid. For a higher-stakes chronicle, rogue or fallen hunters in Network Zero could be trying to expose other hunters in the Vigil.

- **Null Mysteriis:** Though it may sound cliché, some scientists take exception to god-fearing or even blue-collar hunters while others will be more accepting. Members, however, aren't "just" scientists who sit in a lab all day. They practice their own faiths and have hobbies and interests. One of the biggest challenges when using this compact is its push for secrecy to control its research. While a Storyteller character may be reluctant to help, try not to make them needlessly antagonistic. Members of Null Mysteriis make great Storyteller characters when introducing cells to other hunters, too, because they enjoy discussing the finer aspects of the hunt with a curious mind.

When plotting a chronicle, make sure there are questions that can be explored through a scientific lens. Chronicles involving a mysterious place or a monster behaving oddly work well for Null Mysteriis members.

- **SWORN:** SWORN members are new to the fold, but they're not new to hunting monsters. As a compact formed around its members' cultural experiences, SWORN's hunters have a strong bond and set of beliefs that helps them fight the supernatural and keep each other safe. The compact's newness is its biggest strength; because they don't have decades of experience that others do, they also don't have as many preconceptions about other hunters, compacts, or monsters. Members reach out when they can and have been focusing on making friends with other cells, hunters, and compacts to build and maintain their community. They're also likely to join other hunters to help them fight.

Chronicles set in a major metropolitan area like Chicago offer a wealth of storytelling potential beyond the hunt. Maybe members of SWORN stumbled upon a group who's covering up for a mysterious donor keeping the city police afloat. Maybe they are welcoming a lot of new members over the course of a few weeks, and this triggers internal discussions to find out what's responsible for terrorizing their fresh batch of new hunters.

- **The Union:** Through and through, The Union's members are hard workers who hold factory jobs, drive trucks, and are loyal to their friends and families. Some hunters might look down on their members because they equate blue collar with less intelligent — though this isn't true. The Union exists as an "every hunter" compact, where anyone with an honest day job can join. While members try to keep the hunt simple, the proverbial devil is in the details. Hunters don't always know how to fight a monster, just that they should. Members can work well in mixed player-character groups for this reason.

Threatening friends and families is a good way to start a chronicle, but may not sustain it. Think about introducing monsters who live in plain sight or houses that keep hurting the new owners to broaden the scope of the story.

Creating a New Compact

Can't find a compact that fits your needs? As the Storyteller, you may create a compact your players can join.

Concept: When thinking about the compact you want to make, sketch out a few generic details. Then, think about whether it makes more sense to open a new location for an existing compact instead of creating a whole new one. For example, members of The Union are pro-labor, pro-family, and pro-safety from monsters. Based in the United States, they can be found anywhere those three things matter. These three tentpoles aren't unique to the U.S., however, so a similar compact could be based in Iceland, Sweden, Belgium, or Italy, where membership in labor unions is high. Though the relocated compact would culturally be unique from The Union in America, its core purpose and status remain the same. This technique also grants built-in allegiances among compacts and gives hunters an excuse to travel.

***Example:** You want to create a compact that takes a different approach to the hunt, so you form a hedonistic society based in Scotland called Ashwood Abbey, which hunts monsters for sport and pleasure.*

Choose a Foundation: If you have your heart set on a new compact, try to find its roots. The basis for a new compact could be to hunt a monster type, use a specific methodology to hunt, reveal a truth or fact, keep a community safe, or hunt because your faith or morals demand it. You may have already done this in the previous step and, if so, this is a good opportunity to codify that idea.

***Example:** Ashwood Abbey's members are thrill-seekers who put themselves in dangerous situations to hunt monsters.*

Write Its History: Every compact has a history that is known to its members. It doesn't have to be pages' worth of information, nor do all the facts have to be true. The history helps frame the compact and give it a place in hunter society.

***Example:** Shortly before it became an official compact, Ashwood Abbey was one of the notorious Hellfire Clubs found in Great Britain during the mid-1850s. Its leader, the Reverend Doctor Marcus Ogilvy, was a hedonist who sought pleasure in forbidden places — even by today's standards. One fateful night, Ogilvy and a handful of partiers wandered into the woods to have an orgy and stumbled upon a sacred artifact used by a pack of werewolves. Outraged by this slight, the werewolves attacked them and several members died horribly. Following this, Ogilvy, unable to find the werewolves again, began hunting monsters shortly afterward until his untimely death 10 years later.*

Now, Ashwood Abbey's members continue to hunt for the thrill of it, and often scare other hunters with their lurid and sadistic methods that push them right to the razor-sharp edge.

Note Factions: Following the history, each compact has three sub-groups, or factions, that make up the larger group. Factions are distinguished by their differences in ideology that add a nuanced perspective to the hunt. Each compact may also rename what their sub-groups are called.

Example: You decide that Ashwood Abbey calls its factions “cliques.” **Competitors** treat the Vigil as a sport, and other hunters — even within Ashwood Abbey — as competition. Members of the **Pursuit** are obsessed with learning and archiving dark, forbidden secrets. Some hunters record their experiences to analyze encounters. **Libertines** are taboo breakers. They push the limits of what’s considered “acceptable,” and frighten most other hunters.

Assign Status: Player characters can earn dots in Status within their compact, rated one through five. Three of these ratings are described per compact; they provide hunters with an in-game benefit. When assigning Status, think about how a hunter might gain or lose it, too.

Example: Status within Ashwood Abbey is gained when other members recognize the boundaries you’ve pushed.

- You’ve already done things you’d never tell anyone else about, but you still know how to party. You gain the Barfly Merit for free, if you didn’t have it already.

- You can use rooms in the local chapter’s clubhouse as a place to stay. This is equivalent to a two-dot Safehouse, with the dots assigned to Home Security, Arsenal, and Escape Hatch.

- You can call Ashwood Abbey and get the address lists of members across the world, who will supply arms, sex workers, and bait, and arrange hunting parties for you. You just need to ask. This is equivalent to four new dots of Contacts. These dots are assigned to Legal Aid, Vice, Arms Trafficking, and Ashwood Abbey Networking.

Following this step, consider how your new compact might be used in a chronicle. Ashwood Abbey members, for example, can be employed as rogue or fallen hunters who ignore the Code and their consciences.

Tier Three: More Theories Than Facts

Members of conspiracies know more about the supernatural than other hunters do, but even then, their knowledge might be outdated or downright false. When running a tier-three chronicle, consider the following:

- *Hunters usually don’t think in the long term.* A mortal’s short lifespan is nothing compared to an immortal creature’s. Unlike hunters, monsters understand how to plan in the long term, because they can hide for decades if needed by surrounding themselves with cultists or others of their kind. So, while conspiracies may have existed for centuries, their organization and goals may not be the same as they were 10, 50, or 100 years ago.

- *Conspiracies don’t know everything.* Many conspiracies’ members suspect the denizens of the supernatural have communities of their own and have adapted to modern society. Other than a few monsters’ names or identifiable types, however, most conspiracies fail to recognize that what they know is a drop in a deep and vast ocean of occult knowledge.

- *Conspiracies can be arrogant.* Some conspiracy members have the audacity to think they will win the fight against the supernatural, not knowing a monster has already infiltrated their cell and will pounce when they least expect it.

- *Hunters benefit from a conspiracy’s resources.* The conspiracies are global hunter organizations that wield their considerable resources and knowledge to achieve their goals. Whether they own meticulously curated libraries of forbidden lore or the latest computational-behavior algorithms, conspiracies have the power, knowledge, and willingness to go toe to toe

with the most powerful and brutal of terrors — or so they think. What's more, conspiracies often have contingency plans and alibis set up for their members when things go horribly wrong.

- *Conspiracies don't dictate belief.* A conspiracy's overarching view of the Code tends to be more flexible to justify how its members use their occult knowledge against the supernatural. Often, a conspiracy's agenda is more important to it than taking down an over-sized sewer rat, especially if it means putting one of its own at risk.

Tier-three chronicles that incorporate conspiracies tend to include the supernatural, but often involve politics and a fair number of rumors, enigmas, and mysteries that surround each organization and their members.

Roles for Conspiracies

While the conspiracies seem like they should be unstoppable forces who serve humankind, ultimately their agenda is more important than the occasional casualty in battle. Hunters who belong to these groups are bound by even tighter codes of conduct and political intrigues than others — but the others don't require constant check-ins.

When plotting a chronicle with a conspiracy, consider which faction the player characters belong to and how that puts them at odds with other hunters. Conspiracy factions are so different from one another that a group of Ascending Ones might argue more than a mixed group. Below are some ideas for using these conspiracies in your next **Hunter** game.

- **Ascending Ones:** The Ascending Ones are interesting to drop into a chronicle, because their members can be scientists engineering the perfect potion, alchemists mixing science and faith, or mystics embracing the magical aspects of their art. They can be holy warriors for their faith or criminals who trade drugs. This level of nuance grants their members agency in many social spheres; threads connecting characters often form the basis for a scam or front. What's more, the players may not necessarily be aware of what they've gotten themselves into. Conspiracies often have secrets for a reason, and what the player characters learn will affect what they do next.
- **Cheiron Group:** The Cheiron Group is secretive, manipulative, and can be brutal. Members are recruited and then forced to alter their bodies using the flesh and bones of supernatural creatures. Chronicles involving the Cheiron Group can be horrific or conspiratorial — even vicious. This conspiracy is also a good candidate for infiltration by characters who belong to a different group; after all, catching and experimenting upon monsters with the intent of grafting their skin is terrifying, but what happens when that “monster” is a psychic member of VASCU? Or a medium? Ultimately, the Cheiron Group can be used as antagonists or unwitting allies, but they aren't necessarily the heroes their members believe. This, too, can underline an all-Cheiron Group chronicle as the player characters discover their innermost secrets.
- **Council of Bones:** On paper, Council of Bones' members say they don't believe in necromancy, but that doesn't mean some hunters aren't exploring that forbidden rite. Certainly, the Council of Bones has a reputation for being creepy, since its members prefer dusty books to electronic files and don't let outsiders in unless it's necessary. This conspiracy can veer toward arrogance because it believes it's the authority on death. Hunters who can talk to the dead *do* solve problems, but they don't always know to whom they're speaking.

- **The Lucifuge:** Members of the Lucifuge are usually treated as outsiders in hunter society because of the possibility that demon blood runs through their veins, and this is something that should be avoided when possible. Despite their heritage, the Lucifuge's hunters are mortals who wield innate powers to serve humanity. In a chronicle, the Lucifuge is an excellent choice whenever demons are involved, but an unlikely one when attempting to redeem a rogue hunter organization.
- **Malleus Maleficarum:** As conspiracies go, Malleus Maleficarum is the most straightforward of the bunch. Its members want to put an end to the supernatural, and they justify their actions through their faith. Though the organization can and does specialize in vampires, its hunters are not restricted by monster type. Constant hunting, even when using Endowments, doesn't make for a good story. In a chronicle, leverage the conspiracy's history and that vampires survive far longer than any mortal does. When an old vampire starts pulling the characters' strings, they find themselves peering into history's darkest corners. Maybe, Malleus Maleficarum isn't as straightforward as it seems, after all.
- **Task Force: VALKYRIE:** TFF chronicles can be more political than supernatural because of their secret connection to the American government. As a conspiracy, it's centered on American interests, both domestic and overseas, and could serve as a model for similar conspiracies for other, foreign governments. Simply, TFF members recognize they don't have the jurisdiction to work with NATO or the United Nations, but desperately want other countries to be empowered to protect their own interests. What works against TFF is, of course, the lengths its members go to obscure their identities and actions. The conspiracy that shouldn't exist is one other hunters want to track down, however, and TFF hunters may have to choose between confronting a monster and risk exposure or forging alliances with other hunters.

The trade off to any limitations a conspiracy has is the immense payoff hunters gain. Tier-three hunters have more freedom of movement than tier-one or -two, because they're located worldwide and aren't restricted to a single area. Running a tier-three chronicle means the hunters do not have to focus solely on one threat at once, instead keeping tabs on numerous problems at the same time. Their contacts allow them to find out the knowledge needed to face these threats head on, which is an incredible boon to their fellow hunters.

For an example of a conspiracy thematically tied to a chronicle, check out VASCU on p. XX.

Creating a Conspiracy

If you'd like to create your own conspiracy, the guidelines follow.

Concept: The greatest challenge when creating a new conspiracy is to remember its size and influence will have weight in hunter society — but it is still mysterious enough that non-hunters don't know they exist. Start with a basic concept that frames what the conspiracy does. Do they experiment on monsters like the Cheiron Group or create potions like the Ascending Ones? Once you have a basic concept, think about how similar or dissimilar it is to existing conspiracies. Each tier-three organization has a lot of room to spread its influence, and their sub-groups can facilitate different methods or beliefs.

Example: *You've decided you want to create a conspiracy that searches for magical relics.*

Choose a Hook: Unlike cells or compacts, conspiracies tend to be more flexible with the Code. The reasons for this are varied, but usually a conspiracy simply doesn't have the time to watch

over a hunter's daily activities or encounters with the supernatural. Their goals are big-picture and often world-shattering, should they be achieved.

Example: *You want to add a mystical nuance by forging the Aegis Kai Doru: an ancient conspiracy shrouded in myths and legends. Its members hunt for relics and use their knowledge against the supernatural, but don't dictate how or when that information must be used.*

Write Its History: Conspiracies have what the Cheiron Group calls "the company line." This is the information new recruits get before they start training, and often it's an account that can leak to other hunters without revealing the group's innermost workings. Note: the Aegis Kai Doru has a mystical, otherworldly feel, and this is reflected in its history.

Example: *Members of the Aegis Kai Doru, the Shield and Spear, believe it is their sworn duty to guard the magical treasures of countless lost worlds and use them against the supernatural.*

It is the oldest conspiracy known to humankind. The Guardians tell initiates that their ancestors can be traced back across the ages, before the great flood, to a mythical island. Some even call it Atlantis, or Lemuria, or Pan, or Mu. On the island, or so they say, the Guardians lived in a vast labyrinth that contained powerful magical relics.

Unfortunately, at some point the Guardians disagreed with the island's other inhabitants and a petty quarrel resulted in their forced ejection. The Guardians had planned to return, but by the time they set sail, the island had already sunk to the bottom of the ocean.

Soon, escaped islanders joined the Guardians, and blamed the loss of their paradise on shape-shifting invaders who'd broken an ancient taboo. The Guardians refused to be fooled, however, and held a grudge — that remains to this day — against the islanders who cast them out.

Now, while the Aegis Kai Doru's leaders continue to practice their ancient traditions at the heart of Greece, Guardians scour the Earth searching for magical relics in the hopes they'll restore their power one day.

Decide Recruitment: Unlike most compacts, conspiracies may want to keep their numbers small and ensure that they don't actively recruit hunters who don't "fit" their group. Most conspiracies have an arm that specializes in searching for initiates.

Example: *The Aegis Kai Doru is extremely selective about who it welcomes and makes sure that individual is thoroughly vetted before making an offer.*

Note Factions: Following the history, each compact has three sub-groups, or factions, that make up the larger group. Factions are distinguished by their differences in ideology that add a nuanced perspective to the hunt. Each compact may also rename what their sub-groups are called.

Example: *You decide the Aegis Kai Doru has three separate groups. There may be more, and as a global organization you have room to explore new possibilities if a situation calls for it.*

The Sword comprises militant and proactive hunters who use their physical prowess to fight monsters.

The Temple is made up of guards and locates the relics that give the Aegis Kai Doru its power.

The Scroll employs archivists and lorekeepers who test, record, and catalogue items of power.

Assign Status: Like compacts, conspiracies grant player characters dots in Status, rated one through five. Three of these ratings are described per conspiracy; they provide hunters with an in-game benefit they've earned as a reward for belonging to the compact. When assigning Status, think about how a hunter might gain or lose it, too.

***Example:** The Guardians of the Labyrinth gain Status through finding relics, discovering what relics do, and using them against their ancient enemies.*

- *You own at least one relic. When investigating a new, potential relic, you gain +2 to your Investigation roll.*

- *You've spent so long doing research that it's second nature to you. You get +1 on Academics-based dice pools pertaining to relics and archaeology.*

- *You've experienced the Second Initiation; your senses don't work the way they used to. You begin to be able to sense the old enemies of your sect. You gain the Gut Feeling Merit.*

Create Endowments: Endowments are blessings the conspiracy offers in exchange for loyalty and, occasionally, devotion. The rules for creating Endowments are found on p. XX. For the Aegis Kai Doru, their Endowments involve using a relic the hunter guards with their life.

Following this step, think about how your tier-three chronicle intersects with your new conspiracy. A hunter organization that specializes in the acquisition and study of magical relics adds a layer of intrigue to any hunt or exploration of a mysterious place.

Endowment Research and Development

Hunters are coming up with new ways to fight against their chosen enemies all the time. While the Endowments presented on pp. XX-XX might be fine for the basic hunter, eventually players will want new Endowments to use during a hunt. This section discusses the design philosophy behind Endowments to give guidelines on how to create them.

Keep in mind, these guidelines are suggestions to try to make balanced powers. There are some effects or factors that you might think about that aren't covered here. If that's the case, you can still use the following to best extrapolate.

Every Endowment contains the following pieces:

- An effect that is represented by a price (or cost of effects).
- A cost of activation, generally in Willpower or damage, which gives a discount.
- A backlash that gives a further discount.

This means that the most basic powers may cost nothing to activate and have no backlash. More serious powers may have high costs in terms of what the hunter must spend to activate, or in the subsequent backlash. Some limitations, such as the limitation on equipment from Advanced Armory, the Integrity limitation on Benediction, or the inherent backlash built into Castigation further modify the cost.

Every Endowment is designed by using a simple equation:

(Cost of Effects – Discounts)

Effects

Effects grant mechanical benefits and narrative license to accomplish great feats, represent special attacks or powers, or place restrictions or penalties on targets. The wider or more extreme the Effect, the higher the value associated with it.

Because all Endowments start with at least a baseline experience cost, there is a level of effect already baked into that cost. This is why there is a value of 0 for effects. Any Endowment can have at most two 0 value effects before those effects start to add +1 to the value.

START EFFECTS TABLE

Effects Table

Value*†	Mechanical Effect	Narrative Effect	Duration
0	Give a specific roll the 8-again quality	“You can smell fear.”	Immediate effect
1	Inflict a Condition or mild Tilt	“You can open any door.”	One scene
2	Provoke a Clash of Wills, inflict a severe Tilt Multiple scenes	“You can speak with ghosts.”	
3	Exceptional success at 3 successes rather than 5	“You can breathe anything.”	24 hours
4	Apply a Persistent Condition	“You can fly.”	One week
5	Give a specific roll the rote quality	“You can walk between worlds.”	Indefinite

* If the Endowment modifies a dice pool, the number of dice added or removed is equal to the value – 1.

† If the Endowment deals or heals damage, the damage modifier of the Endowment or the amount of Health restored is equal to the value – 1.

END TABLE

Costs

Endowments are often fueled with Willpower or damage to the user. A Willpower expenditure represents an act of will or focus necessary to trigger an Endowment, or the psychological or physiological cost of doing so. More extreme physiological effects are represented by using lethal damage as the cost; such Endowments are always fatiguing and often painful to use.

Endowments with variable results, or that directly affect a target require an activation roll.

Additionally, certain Endowments require circumstances such as having proper materials, maintaining equipment, or saying the right words. These minor actions are considered circumstances, and factor into the cost. For the purposes of example, we use specific requirements found within Endowments as our examples.

START COST TABLE

Cost Table

Value*	Action Equivalent	Willpower or damage**	Circumstances†
–1	Instant Action with an activation roll	1	- Common; saying a prayer, speaking a passphrase

–2	Contested or Resisted Action	2	Uncommon; e.g., access to a holy relic; hard to find ingredients; a consumable††
–3	Multiple Actions	3	-
–4	Extended Action (minutes)	4	-
–5	Extended Action (hours)	5	-

*For extended actions, base target number of successes is 5, increasing the target number changes the value by –1 per.

**Lethal damage. This may reduce to bashing damage in some cases where a narrative effect is between two number values. Increase to aggravated damage for an additional –1 value.

† Circumstances that generally benefit the player should read the value as positive rather than negative.

†† If an Endowment has an expendable component, such as ammunition, read the number of uses as a cost instead of a refund, and then subtract the –2 refund for being consumable.

END TABLE

Backlashes

Backlashes are the downsides to using Endowments. Backlashes are often something bad that happens to the hunter for using the supernatural. It might just be the aftereffects of a particularly vivid vision, or it could be the visible ramifications of the type of Endowment she was using. Most commonly, they impose a small penalty to certain actions but can also impose Conditions.

START BACKLASH TABLE

Backlash Table

Value* Example Backlash

- 1 Minor Drawback; lack of sleep, being hunted
- 2 Significant Drawback; imposes a Condition
- 3 Painful Drawback; imposes a Persistent Condition

* If the backlash penalizes a dice pool or imposes damage, give a –1 value on a one-for-one basis.

END BACKLASH TABLE

Creating New Endowments

The first step in creating a conspiracy's Endowments is to think about its concept; this informs how they'll be used and designed. Here's a summary of the Endowment concepts presented thus far:

- **Advanced Armory:** Following the implant of an RFID chip, Task Force: VALKYRIE members gain an impressive array of armaments, p. XX.
- **Benediction:** Blessed by the pope, the Malleus Maleficarum receive divine Benedictions, p. XX.

- **Castigation:** The Lucifuge's hunters gain power through their infernal ancestry, and Castigation rites are powered by their blood. These rites cannot be unlearned even if they leave the conspiracy, p. XX.
- **Elixir:** The Ascending Ones use rare potions that must be alchemically manipulated in their bodies, and these create an array of dizzying effects, p. XX.
- **Perispiritism:** The Council of Bones employs a variety of techniques, powered by the mysterious Mark of the Scythe, as if they were natural mediums, p. XX.
- **Teleformatics:** VASCU agents undergo extensive processing with chemicals to unlock potent mental powers, p. XX.
- **Thaumatechnology:** The Cheiron Group members are augmented with the blood and flesh of monsters. Hunters acquire these Endowments by having surgery, and installation is permanent unless removed by a specialist, p. XX.

Each Endowment concept addresses the source of its power: potions, surgical grafts, a mysterious tattoo, infernal blood, divine blessing, a security clearance, and a chemical enhancer. This helps understand not only how the hunter is accessing the Endowment, but the kinds of Endowments hunters from each conspiracy would create. Also think about the way hunters get their Endowments through their Conspiracy. Is it an item they can walk away with, or a special magical tool they must spend hours researching and learning? How does the Endowment work? A potion must be imbibed or inhaled, but a ritual must only be spoken.

Before creating a new Endowment, think about the conspiracy to which it's tied. Are you creating an Endowment for an existing conspiracy? Or a new one like the Aegis Kai Doru?

Relic Concepts

The Aegis Kai Doru is an eclectic mix of hunters who devote their time to unlocking the secrets of strange, mystical artifacts and using them in their hunts against witches and shapeshifters. These Relics are called Bygones, p. XX. They believe that if the Relics fall into the wrong hands, they could cause great harm to innocent people. The threat of a supernatural creature or rogue hunter getting their hands on a Relic is omnipresent.

Right off the bat, there's a significant idea that needs to be incorporated into the Endowment concept — Relics can be stolen. If we look at the costs table, "access to a holy relic" is considered a -2 value. Since this will apply to every Relic Endowment, every Relic Endowment must have that cost associated with it. If a Relic is lost for more than a chapter, the Storyteller should allow the player to select another Relic Endowment to stand in for the missing one, provided it make sense in the story.

Something else to consider is whether these mystical artifacts are unique, or whether it's possible for two people to wield the same type of Relic. To avoid limiting Endowment creation, especially in instances where a Relic may be created or consumed, some Relics are truly unique, while others may be twins, triplets, or one of many. Perhaps the rituals needed to create them are even known to modern savants but exact such a heavy price they cannot be manufactured lightly. Even the least powerful Relic is still so mystically great it empowers its wielder to do the impossible.

Relic Endowments

Relic Endowments require membership in the Aegis Kai Doru. They also represent items to which the hunter has access and has learned how to safely use. It may have some trick of activation, or a word or incantation necessary for use that only the hunter knows. Relics may describe a class of objects with a similar or identical function, or a unique artifact with no true equal.

Combining these concepts, we're ready to use this to determine how Aegis Kai Doru hunters gain access to their Endowments. Maybe they have a reliquary full of Relics they must check out, much like Task Force: VALKYRIE, or they make them as they need them more like the Ascending Ones. Maybe each hunter has their own stash of Relics and some arcane force which allows them and only them to activate them.

Since the conspiracy deals in Relics, it makes sense to have a cache of these somewhere in which agents can get new ones. But since the Relics are rare and obscure, it also makes sense that they wouldn't be as easily exchanged as items from say TFFV's Advanced Armory. Instead, let's say that Aegis Kai Doru characters are gifted with Relics, and these Relics stay with them.

Based on this, we know that the Relics should not be single use, or consumable the way Advanced Armory is. Instead, a Relic's power should be something that either has unlimited use or recharges on its own. On that note, a Relic is a powerful, likely magical, artifact. This means they should have some kind of activation, maybe a chant or an action, that the hunter must perform to unleash its power.

With that in mind, build this into the basic Endowment structure. Each Relic is an item, it's something rare that you must get from the conspiracy to use. But because it's an item, the hunter could possibly lose it, or it could get stolen. Each Relic requires a certain activity, let's say a keyword or activation gesture to use, and if the user doesn't know the correct sequence or word, it won't work. Once again, there is a built in, general -1 value of needing an instant action to use into each Relic. So that means it has a -3 value to start. Below are two examples of Relics with differing power levels.

Aegis Talisman

The Aegis Talisman is unique and powerful, so it should have a lot of punch. First, assign its effects to figure out what the Talisman can do before it's negated with costs and backlashes. To start off, the Gorgon's Skin makes the user incredibly durable: Armor 3, for 2 points of value. Second, Gorgon's Solitude guards against magical attacks: a +3 to contested rolls for another 2 points of value. This effect lasts for a scene, which is another +1 value.

Right now, our Endowment value is 5. We have one more effect to add. Gorgon's Terror paralyzes the target with a relevant Condition or Tilt (+1) which incurs a cost of 1 Willpower (-1). These costs are baked into the Endowment, bringing us to a new total of 5. To drop the value back down to 0, we'll subtract 2 due to the talisman being a Relic and another 2 because it takes a contested action to activate, but it's still at a +1, so the armor activation should also cost a Willpower, bringing the Willpower cost value to -2. Now, the calculation is as follows:

$$(Effects: +2 + 2 + 1 + 1) - (Costs: 2 + 2 + 2) = 0$$

The resulting Endowment looks like this:

Legend describes the Aegis as a shield or as the skin of a goat, sometimes bearing the head of one of the Gorgons. This indestructible shield, wielded by the gods, struck terror in all who

beheld it, and thus made the user all-but invincible in battle. The Aegis Talisman, forged from silver, is roughly the size of an outspread hand and bears a relief of a gorgon's face. The talisman is not as powerful as its mythical cousin, but it guards against both physical and mystical assault and, with a focused and trained will, can even paralyze onlookers.

Cost: 1 or 2 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult vs. Resolve

Action: Instant

Duration: One scene

Upon activation, the talisman provides 3 armor, which applies to both general and ballistic attacks. This armor also provides a defense against supernatural attacks, giving her a +3 to rolls to contest an action or a -1 to her resistance Attribute when targeted by a Dread Power or supernatural effect.

Additionally, if the hunter spends an additional Willpower on activation, she can attempt to freeze a target in their tracks.

Roll Results

Success: The hunter inflicts the Stunned Tilt on a single target who can see the talisman.

Exceptional Success: The hunter inflicts the Immobilized Tilt instead.

Failure: The talisman fails to catch anyone's eye.

Dramatic Failure: The hunter blinds herself with her own talisman. She gains the Stunned Tilt.

Skeleton Key

This Endowment is called the Skeleton Key. It's a useful Relic and isn't one of a kind, but is the kind of object the Aegis Kai Doru might lend to its hunters.

The Skeleton Key's concept is simple enough: It opens doors. Before deciding its costs and backlashes, think about its potential effects. The Skeleton Key should be able to unlock any door. Keep in mind the Skeleton Key is a Relic that can be stolen, so we'll need to remember that -2. Our equation would be:

$$(Effects (+1) - (Costs 2)) = -1$$

Right now, this Endowment is a little underpowered and isn't compelling. Anyone with a lockpick can open a door. What if the door has a monster guarding it with a ward or some other Dread Power? In this case, our hunter should have to make a roll, which is covered under Clash of Wills. Add "provoking a Clash of Wills," which is a +2 Effect.

$$(Effects (+1, +2) - (Costs 2)) = +1$$

Now, we're at a +1, so it should cost a Willpower to use for a -1 value. That is balanced, but because there is already an expenditure of 3 Experiences to make this effect, apply some free effects to give it a little more oomph. Apply the 8-again quality to the hunter's Clash of Wills roll for free.

$$(Effects (+1, +2, +0) - (Cost 2+1)) = 0$$

The Skeleton Key Endowment is now ready for a hunter to use, and its new effects make sense in the context of the narrative. Though the hunter doesn't have to pay a point of Willpower or roll the dice every time they want to open a door, the Skeleton Key's usage reflects its common availability. Besides, opening doors is far more interesting than leaving them closed.

The resulting Endowment looks like this:

It's said that no lock, no matter how sturdy, can keep out death. Bar yourself behind doors and wards and mystical barriers all you like, but death has a key for all of them. The Skeleton Key Relic might not literally be death's enchanted key, but it does give hunters an uncanny ability to bypass obstacles in their path.

The Skeleton Key is a small, silver key in an archaic style, tarnished from long use. The teeth are grooved in such a way as to suggest human dentition, and the bow is an intricately detailed model of a human skull with tiny flecks of sapphire in the eye sockets. The key is always cold to the touch, even if carried in the hand or worn next to the skin for hours.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: None

Action: Instant

The Skeleton Key unlocks any locked door. If a monster used a Dread Power to seal the door, or made it difficult to pass through (such as Maze, p. XX), the key prompts a Clash of Wills, and the player gains the 8-again quality on the hunter's roll.

Now you're ready to develop your own. Start with what effect you want the Endowment to have, then think about how its rules might affect its usage. From there, you can write up new Endowments to model various powers. Remember that any new Endowment should get approval from your Storyteller before purchasing. Good luck and happy hunting!