

HUNTER BOOK VISIONARY



A Character Book for Hunter: The Reckoning™

HUNTER BOOK VISIONARY

Prophets or Madmen

"Monsters might win battles, but *we* are going to win the war."

Visionaries: The thinkers, prophets and leaders of the imbued. Hunters struggle against the supernatural night after night, but to what end?

Visionaries look to the future, hoping to guide the imbued to a better world — maybe one that only they can see. What makes these hunters so certain of their calling? And can they make their vision a reality?

They Have Seen the Light

Hunter Book: Visionary is part of a **Hunter: The Reckoning** series dedicated to the creeds, the character types of the imbued. Learn Visionaries' philosophies, motives and ultimate goals in searching for answers to the questions on all hunters' lips: Who created us? Why were we chosen? Can the supernatural be beaten? Or will we all die trying?



**HUNTER
THE RECKONING**



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HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/rules.html>

Welcome to Hunter-Net

GUIDELINES FOR USING HUNTER-NET

Revised 11/06. Completely rewrote rules and introduced Unity site

Hunter-net is a website designed for the exchange of information about what we experience, for the want of a better term, as the imbued. It is an attempt to create an online haven where we can share information with others all over the world, and find acceptance and unity.

Access to hunter-net is a privilege, not a right. Any posters who abuse the rules set out below will be barred from the list. Don't think you can get around them by signing in under a different handle, either. I have safeguards in place to prevent that.

Remember, these rules are for your own protection and for the protection of other imbued. Following them is a matter of life and death. Literally. Hunter-net has been compromised before.

Witness1

ItE

RULES

These rules apply to hunter-net, vigil, firelight, judgmentday, triage, unity and ALL OTHER hunter-net-hosted websites and discussion groups. All webmasters of hunter-net sites and lists have agreed to implement these regulations. Any violation on any of these websites or lists will lead to the suspension of hunter-net accounts.

1. Post only minimal information about yourself and your location

Before pressing "send," think: Will this post make it easier for me to be tracked down? If the answer is "yes," don't send the post. Mentioning the city where you're based is acceptable if absolutely essential, but don't do it unless you have no other choice. By no means should you state your specific neighborhood. Keep reference to careers or hobbies to the bare minimum. Identify other imbued by hunter-net handles or substituted names only. Do not use real names.

2. Do not abuse or threaten other hunters

We're all in this together. Flaming other posters is counterproductive. Abuse of other members will be treated on a "three strikes and you're out" basis. Direct threats will be responded to with a single warning. A repeat offense means banishment from the lists.

3. Hunter-net is only a tool

There are too few of us as it is. If we choose to hide online and not deal with the monsters that the sight reveals, there will be even fewer of us. At this time, hunter-net and the other related sites are available to facilitate the hunt in the real world, not replace it. Don't be a habitual lurker.

4. Reading does not make you an expert

Reading an article about the best way to use a bomb, gun or "the question" against a rot does not make you an explosives expert or a diplomat. Much of the information posted to the lists is speculation. Be aware of your limits and those of other posters.

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HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/rules.html>

Welcome to Hunter-Net

SITE DIRECTORY

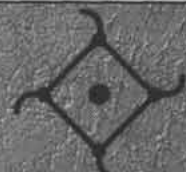
Hunter-net currently has three main sections:

Discussion forums can be found at the [main site](http://www.hunter-net.org) (<http://www.hunter-net.org>), along with archives of particularly useful discussions.

NEW

The new [Unity](http://www.hunter-net.org/unity.html) site (<http://www.hunter-net.org/unity.html>) is a selection of private correspondence, information resources and other useful data. I have compiled it to provide a practical resource for pursuing the hunt, and as a means of illustrating how we can work together. You can submit information to Unity. It will be posted only if I think it is useful and has merit. To be considered, it must either provide ideas that will help hunters work cooperatively, or it must provide data that will allow others to function more effectively together in the field.

Other websites that host discussions of various different approaches to the hunt are listed [here](http://www.hunter-net.org/approaches.html) (<http://www.hunter-net.org/approaches.html>).

HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/unity.html>

Hunter-Net: Unity



A CALL FOR UNITY

"WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER."

That might seem like an obvious thing to say, but recent events prove it isn't. Hunters have begun to turn on hunters, and when that happens, the only winners are the monsters. You've probably heard of recent personal clashes between our brethren: Crusader and Oracle, Solomon and a *number* of people, Alleyman and the missing-in-action Shaka.

But the danger doesn't end with such alarming conflict from within. Hunter-net is in danger of tearing itself apart. Firelight, vigil, vitalis, triage and the rest emphasize the differences between us, not our common causes. They also dilute the efficacy of the main list with splinter groups that hoard information rather than share it.

Although we are all entitled to our beliefs and the chance to express them, our increasing fractiousness — even violence against each other — terrifies me. By fighting amongst ourselves, we literally do the work of the monsters for them.

And yet, there's another threat from within that perhaps frightens me even more than our own dissension. It disturbs me so much because I've helped make it possible. I've been guilty of it: Denying the realities of the mission by hiding online.

Other imbued have protested that some of us spend too much time on hunter-net and not enough in the field. The result means arrogance and the dissemination of questionable information by "lurkers," because they know no better without direct experience. There is a danger to these people, and I embody it. I created hunter-net, the very tool that people are now abusing, and my complacency online recently cost another poster his life.

People, we have to stop squabbling over our differences of opinion and purpose and look at the bigger picture. We all have to play our parts in the world so the imbued as a whole can better understand and cope with the forces against us. That's why I created this list, Unity. It collects records and advice from hunter-net posters that will help us coordinate our activities and support each other worldwide. It complements hunter-net as a resource for complete lines of thought and accounts of efforts, rather than as a medium for flames and slander.

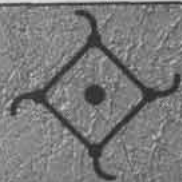
Unity looks to the future. I've corresponded off-list with some hunter-net posters and a few others who are more concerned with our long-term goals than the day-to-day work of the hunt. I have decided to make these discussions public in the hope of inspiring more of us to take a broad view. Each of these posters has a different perspective on our future, but they look for a way forward for all of us. I've also added a few relevant extracts from other hunters' emails, in hopes of demonstrating that differences of opinion can be constructive, not destructive.

Yes, I understand the inherent irony of what I'm doing here: creating a chat list with the intent to get people together and *off* the Internet. Understand that cooperation, understanding and *unity* are my goals. As with all things, steps must be taken to achieve goals. This site is just one step — a baby step. But as more of us see eye to eye, go abroad and take further steps, this list will become less and less useful. With luck, it may even become obsolete. The fact is we can't afford any more crippling differences or internal dissension. Every time I do a roll call, another of us fails to answer. Every time we make stupid mistakes because of inexperience or lack of forethought, another of us dies, as I now understand personally. Only together can we survive, and we must survive by standing on our own two feet.

Witness1

The sum of our parts is greater than the whole.

[Contents](#)

HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/unity/contents.html>

Hunter-Net: Unity



UNITY CONTENTS

Inherit the Earth

It's far too easy to get caught up in the day-to-day matters of surviving confrontations with creatures and thus lose sight of our long-term goals. Worse are the people who become mired in slander of fellow imbued rather than active hunting. Some of us have very specific plans for the future that we can all follow. Several of these visions are presented here.

Who Are We?

It remains a fact of our lives that we have no idea who really opened our eyes to the creatures around us. Still, many of us have theories and I have compiled those of three posters here.

Realizing Your Vision

Theories are no good if they can't be put into action. Our new life involves confronting the monsters out there. Here's some practical guidance on the hunt, toward achieving a big picture.

The Sum of Our Parts...

The growing divisiveness of posters online, among those who meet *in real life*, and indeed between these two groups are the reason for this site. Here we offer some examples of the problems we face as people, and ways of dealing with them.

(Aside: I cannot bear the casually abused "IRL" abbreviation any longer. The world means far more than can be represented by three dismissive letters.)

The Word

The symbol language that almost becomes second nature to us after the imbuing seems to have a special significance to those who try to plot our future. I don't know what this affinity may mean in regard to our purpose or origins, but the bond seems meaningful.

Here is a collection of some of the more compelling symbols that I have gathered.

Worldwide Updates

While the [Hunter Survival Guide](#) gives an overview of each continent and some imbued who live there, this Unity page will be a regularly updated report of the conditions hunters face in every country where posters live.

Hunter Journals

Records and advice from individual posters.

Danger List

Certain hunters have become possible or undeniable dangers to other imbued and people. Those we know of are listed here.

Document Archive

Scans of various documents found by myself or other hunters that raise some interesting questions.

Further Reading

Links to websites of interest

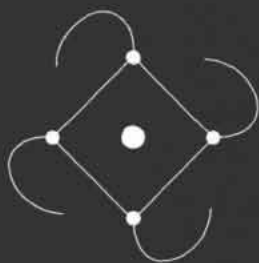
Hunter-Net: Unity

THE WORD

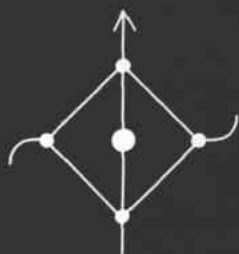
The hunter symbol language must be one of the greatest tools we have in banding together for the hunt. If ours is the "Information Age," imagine what we could be capable of with a secret language taught to us immediately and intuitively! Again and again we hear of imbued who meet simply because one of them displays a symbol.

Surely the key to our future lies here. With a few reports of some symbols such as Summoning being used to actually call to other hunters, it appears we only scratch the surface of the Word's potential. How many other symbols could prove more useful than we currently know?

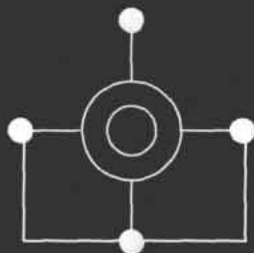
Tanguera352's description of how she created a symbol with an extended meaning ([archived here](#)) may be just the first stage in us using this language to its full potential.



Thinkers/Philosophers/Leaders/Prophets/Pathfinders. Many of the people I have quoted in the pages of this site claim to identify with this symbol to a greater or lesser extent.



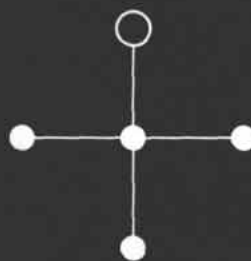
Sometimes used as a qualifier and sometimes on its own, this symbol is used in an area where a creature or phenomenon exists from which hunters can learn (presumably to the inscriber's frame of mind, anyway). Some philosophic imbued tell me they translate it as "think" or "open your mind."



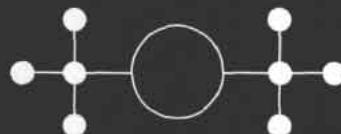
This symbol seems to represent gatherings of the imbued. Certain groups use it to define "turf" as if they were street gangs. Others reportedly combine it with another for "meeting place" or the "summoning" symbol, to guide the newly imbued or transient hunters to them. It appears that each group of hunters customizes this symbol slightly in a way I don't really understand. If true, it's another example of us taking the Word and making it our own. The symbol shown is the most common, with elements added thereafter.



Apparently a few among us are able to use this symbol to actually summon other hunters. And yet, when some use it they get no more response than they do from the one that means "meeting place."



This symbol seems to function as a qualifier to another symbol. It suggests "this way" or "there," with its placement in regard to another symbol, suggesting direction, almost like "up" being north on a map.



The symbol's meaning seems to vary depending on its context: It can represent everything from "all hunters" to "cooperation." I chose it as the symbol of this site for its seeming "unity" application.

HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/unity/journals/1/apocrypha3.html>

Hunter-Net: Unity

JOURNAL — WITNESS1

APOCRYPHA: THE EVIDENCE (CONTINUED)

A few days later, and under cover of darkness this time, I paid a second visit to the house on Richey Avenue. The police had removed nearly everything from the basement at that point, so I didn't expect to learn much more than I had the first time.

Nevertheless, I was able to recover certain documents left concealed at the house — many of them over a century old. I have scanned in these items and posted them [here](#), along with discussion of their possible implications.

The front of the house looked abandoned and had been covered in graffiti. Parts of the "protected" symbol were apparent in the mess, along with "hunter," and what I believe is the "alone" symbol. I wonder if Fyodor used these to put the girl at ease.

I concentrated on the spot and all its signs in hopes of knowing just what had happened there before. I wasn't disappointed. I could see a young woman walking down the street, looking apprehensive and glancing at a scrap of paper in her hand. She appeared to be searching for an address. Then I saw her register the symbols, a look of relief on her face. "This is the place," I heard her say. She opened the door and went into the house.

For me, such abuse of the signs and breach of trust — when the imbued have so little to trust in — disturbs me deeply. This girl put her faith in Fyodor. Bookworm55 did too. We're so grateful to find someone who's had the same experiences we have that perhaps we trust each other too quickly, too easily. What a terrible thing for Fyodor to prey upon.

Conclusion

I think the accumulated evidence shows us that much of what Fyodor claims to have done in *Apocrypha* is true. While there is no doubt that he has done some good for us — Bookworm55's restored legs being the most obvious example — his charitable acts are more than outweighed by the crimes he professes to have committed in the name of the hunt.

I have no choice but to place him on the [Danger List](#).



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HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/unity/journals/142/ghost2.html>

Hunter-Net: Unity

JOURNAL — STELLA142

COMMUNICATING WITH SPIRITS 2

The next time I communicated directly with a ghost was after the car accident. I had only been out of hospital for a few days.

One of the *others* was over, visiting me in my flat. I had been working on the laptop prior to his visit. It was still open on the table, surrounded by cuttings from the morning's papers.

J. and I were in mid-conversation when the machine beeped twice, to my surprise. I went over to it and found my word processor opening *by itself*. Fearing a virus, I tried to shut it down, but couldn't.

Then, a document opened and words started to appear on the screen.

At first I ignored it and kept trying to shut the machine off. That's when the words appeared: "stop it. i'm trying to talk to you." My Internet connection wasn't even up. It was another *thing*, and this time it has invaded my computer, my home!

My "friend" was all for smashing the machine in hopes of killing whatever was inside. I stopped him and after a moment typed, "What do you have to say?" That's when it started flowing. I took screen grabs to try to record it all. The discussion is related in these three:

After the ghost stopped "talking," the application quit and the file was deleted. I don't know if the "ghost" or the machine did it. I don't think it knew I was taking grabs.

The ghost's advice turned out to be relatively legitimate. I've added a separate entry describing how J. and I dealt with the thing stalking us [here](#).

Why did the ghost come to us? I still don't know. More importantly, why was a dead thing in my computer? How did it get in there? How did it operate the machine? Can all

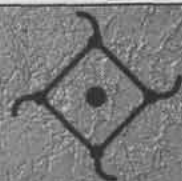
ghosts do it? This has real implications for the security of hunter-net. Is this how Carpenter169 breached security and started using the list? How can we even find out?

I've read that Witness1 thinks Carpenter169 was let onto hunter-net, perhaps by the Messengers. That seems lame — wishful thinking on his part. If ghosts have free and easy access to computers, is any use of the Internet on the mission a potential security breach?

Could we gather all reports of monsters manipulating computers? I know Dole7 has already done some work on this. That way we might know if hunter-net is doing us more harm than good.

Until we know more, I'm afraid to even approach my machine. Posting *this* could be the dumbest thing I've ever done. But what choice do I have, to go completely blind and alone?

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HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/unity/worldwide.html>

Hunter-Net: Unity



WORLDWIDE UPDATES

While hunter-net is a resource for all us, like so many Internet-based tools it is only useful to a particular group of people. Look at the members. Extrapolating somewhat from posts, we're dominated by North Americans and British, with only a few English-speaking posters from other parts of the world. I have also heard of some lists in foreign languages, but they too are limited.

Much of the world has yet to gain access to telecommunications, let alone the Internet. And then there are all the people who live in wired, English-speaking countries who simply aren't online. Given current ratios, it's likely that there are far more hunters who have no Internet access than there are subscribers to hunter-net. There could be thousands of imbued out there, alone. They can't reach us, we can't reach them, and neither group can learn from the other. To try to counter this problem, I have begun to compile domestic and foreign press reports of possible hunter and monster activity. Most of it is [here](#).

I also want to use this page to post discoveries, encounters and meetings with other hunters across the world. I need volunteers from every country to act as hunter-net's liaisons.

Please note that this is still an incomplete resource. I will add further entries as I obtain appropriate data.

COUNTRY

Finland
France
Germany
Hungary

GERMANY

Compiled by [forscherin263](#)

We have many Poltergeist in the cities of Germany. Many of the cities were badly damaged during the war, so perhaps they are the spirits of those who died then, I do not know.

Die Zombie are everywhere. We can kill some with stakes, but others seem not to be hurt by her. The problem with Gegänger gets worse each month that passes. We can think of no way to catch them without spending all ours days. We would welcome suggestions.

There is much of what is believed to be Werewolf activity

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HTML site: <http://www.hunter-net.org/unity/danger.html>

Hunter-Net: Unity

DANGER LIST

We face threats more deadly than the "simple" physical danger that each confrontation with the enemy poses. Division within our ranks grows. I'm going to give some examples, and suggest why it's a problem. It's up to all of us to find solutions.

Obsession is becoming a grave danger to us all. Stella142 and that person's group has reported being assaulted by another imbued. They found the following in their attacker's possession.

strangers talk to me more clearly now. At last I have the direction I need. What I have to do is clear.

30/1

I have found the cassenachs again and they have welcomed me back into their company. I find it sad, but they have left the path. I am no shepherd, but instead the wolf who prays on the lost, keeping the flock strong. Now, I hunt.

The assailant was a Scottish hunter on the trail of the same creature as was Stella's group. The man initially helped them, but they claim that when they tried to stop him from attacking normal people who got in his way, he turned on the group.

It seems that keeping a sense of perspective as to who we are is vital to staying sane. Perhaps we need to start watching each other for signs of instability, before it's too late.

Indeed, I've found that dissension can blow out of proportion very quickly. The following is an extract from an exchange between myself and Hannibal137, after Dole7 decided to exclude Hannibal from the vigil list.

>> Dole7 is the moderator of Vigil and he is well within his rights to exclude you from
>> his list. While I have made no attempt to do the same, I suggest that you moderate
>> your language on hunter-net in future. Also, stop insulting other posters. We are all
>Cut the holier-than-thou crap, Witness1. When was the last time you posted
>about an encounter with the enemy? I'm telling you, if I come across Oursine again,
>I'll give her a lot worse than a bump on the head.

Hannibal and Oursine's dispute is an example of the problems we face. They have a broadly similar outlook on the hunt, yet they obsess over the differences between their viewpoints. Their argument is unnecessary. Barring one incident, they are based far enough apart that they do not need to work together. If they spent more time working in their respective regions, even posting insights into their own experiences rather than flaming each other, they could be productive members of the list. Some perspective on the situation would make them worthwhile rather than obsessive contributors to our cause.



PROLOGUE: REVELATION

A hint of drizzle laced the evening air, threatening to become a downpour at any moment. The cold wind blustering off Lake Erie swirled the mist about in random billows. Kim shivered, turned up his coat collar and regretted not bringing heavier clothes or a hat. When he'd planned this trip, no one had suggested checking the weather. He looked up and down the road impatiently, but there was nothing more to see now than there had been every other time he'd looked — just the same litter, grime and pale streetlights. The parking lot behind him took up almost a quarter of the block and wasn't a welcome change from the cheap cafes, wholesale fabric stores, TV-repair shops and other low-rent businesses that he'd passed to get there. The neighborhood was quiet except for the highway passing over the end of the road. There was nowhere to hide here. It wasn't a comfortable place to be waiting on a cold, winter night — where anyone or *anything* could be out.

Back home, Kim would be sitting with a cup of coffee at his computers, catching up on the afternoon's traffic, checking the firewalls, logs and other secure systems, and generally making sure that hunter-net survived another day. He missed it dreadfully. Cleveland seemed alien, threatening. He wanted to be back at his machines, not in the field, in a depressed part of a town he didn't know, thousands of miles from home — in over his head. If it hadn't been so important to try to verify something, *anything*, that the damn Russian had written....

The sound of a car approaching brought Kim back to the moment, but it didn't alleviate his uneasy sense that this whole place was wrong. Kim looked up the street nervously and saw a new-looking blue car approach. The driver appeared to be alone. Kim tried to empty his mind and breathed deeply several times, summoning his focus until, like an old neon bulb, the sight flickered on. He waited as calmly as he could as the car pulled up. The driver rolled down his window. He seemed no different through the sight than he appeared through a normal gaze.

"Have you walked far?" the driver asked.

Kim smiled, relieved. "A thousand miles, as God is my witness. Uh, Walker37, right?"

"Yep. You must be Witness," Walker replied, grinning. "Welcome to Cleveland. It's a pleasure to meet you in the flesh after all this time." He leaned over and unlocked the passenger door.

Kim walked around the front of the car, his earlier hesitation now forgotten. Somehow, the impersonal relationship

established between the two men online faded now that they met face to face. In fact, Kim felt a little excited to put a person behind the messages he had received. The warmth inside the car rolled out to meet him. He sank into the passenger seat gratefully and pulled on his safety belt. "Nice car."

"Thanks," Walker said, pulling away from the curb. "I boosted it from a lot back in Detroit."

"Is that safe?" As Kim asked the question, he recognized the handle of a gun in the door compartment at Walker's leg.

"It'll be fine. It was a quiet lot, out of the way, and I wasn't seen. Anyway, no one will notice it on a Sunday, and we'll be two states away by the time we hit Pittsburgh. I'll ditch it in Toledo on the way home and do the final leg by train tomorrow morning. Good thing you don't need ID to buy a train ticket."

"You don't carry any ID?"

"And be identified if something happened? I'd rather take my chances with the few *good* cops than let them know who I am. At least with the cops I'd just be another drifter — or John Doe."

"What about your gun? Shouldn't it be hidden or something?"

"No way. They're everywhere. Anyone could be with them. Shit, it was hard just to meet you. I want something within reach all the time. But don't worry. We'll be fine."

Kim looked forward again, still unsettled. "I have to admit, some of this is new to me. I've seen things, but I've been handling it differently for some time. I'm not used to being out in the open like this."

"Then you're safe with me. See, I already showed you three things: guns, cars and, uh... no IDs. But come on, you're the guy who did all that computer stuff. You're like, famous. I'm sure you've been through all kinds of shit."

"Well, I used the archives to come up with a plan for getting out here. I flew in at lunchtime and booked a room at a cheap hotel. I bought a ticket for a show downtown later on, so I've got an alibi for being out if I need it. Then I spent the afternoon buying some computer parts from a guy I found on the web, to justify the trip. That's all pretty solid."

"Sounds good," Walker said. He turned the car smoothly up an on-ramp to the highway. "It's a couple of hours to Pittsburgh. You okay with that? I'd rather not stop."

"I'll be fine," said Kim.

"Good. It's not smart to stand still any longer than you have to in these parts. I don't know how things are out West, but 'round here the authorities are crawling with bruises — not just the cops,

but paramedics, the fire department, hospitals, even the damn phone company guys. I've kept an eye out. I see the bruises everywhere. They're always looking for a way to take us out quiet, without blowing their cover. There's even been a group of cops in Detroit sniffing around about me and my 'friends.' There's too many of the fucking puppets to deal with. If I wasn't tied down at home, I'd up and sell and try my luck somewhere down South."

"I've read a lot of theories about monsters in the system, but no one's ever described them being *that* bad."

"Shit, that's nothing. I hear they know all about us." Walker chewed at his lip. "They got this big computer that searches emails and it's meant to look for us."

"You mean Echelon, the email filter? Don't worry about that. Hunter-net runs encrypted, and on a secure router hop..." Kim noticed that Walker had a blank look. "Uh, we're safe from that. If they had that much info on us, we'd be dead already."

"Maybe they're just waiting so that they can be sure what we're up to before they take us out," Walker said glumly. "We're not all tech wizards like you. That's why I don't post to the list often. Too high-profile. I'm more comfortable with something real, like this. Anyway, catch me up with this place you need to check out."

"Have you read *Apocrypha* yet?"

"You mean like the Bible and end of the world and all that shit?"

"No, not really. It's a book that was written by one of us. It's hard to find, but I posted suggestions on the website."

"Yeah, well, I'll look into it the next time I get a free moment. I've been a bit busy staking and baking, you know?"

"Well, in one of the sections, the author Fyodor describes some sort of experiment he carried out in Pittsburgh, where he tied one of us — a woman — up in a basement, face to face with a rot. He claims to have left her there for a month until she went mad, to see what she learned or how it changed her."

"Are you fucking joking? What kind of sick asshole would do that?"

"I don't know. That's what I want to find out."

"So what happened next?"

"Uh, nothing, I guess. He claims that he killed the woman, the rot, and the bruise that was tending the two for him." Kim tried to sound matter of fact about it.

"Holy shit!"

"I know. I've been hoping since I read it that it's all a lie, but I have to know for sure. That's why I got in touch with you. I tracked down a reference in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* to a clandestine burial — a suspected murder victim — in a church cemetery. They found this body buried illegally one morning. It seemed to coincide with what Fyodor wrote about the dead hunter and what he did with her. There was nothing in the article about a dead puppet or any "torture chamber," but the details about the body were consistent, and the timing seemed about right. I tracked down the church's address. That's where we're going."

"Not that what this guy did was right or anything, but if this woman is dead, does it make any difference?" Walker looked unconvinced.

"Of course! Fyodor might have made the whole thing up based on the newspaper article. What he writes is pretty... extreme. If we can verify that *this* part is true, then the rest of the book might be true, and that could make a huge difference about who we are and why we were changed. It also makes a lot of difference about the author. If he's lying, we know he can't be trusted, but he's not necessarily dangerous. If he's telling the truth, he's out of control. Either way, I owe it to Bookworm."

"Book who?"

* * *

Observatory Hill was elegant, even on a wet, dreary night. Settlers made homes in the area for fifty years before the region was first incorporated as Allegheny City in 1840. When Pittsburgh swallowed it up in 1907, the area retained its character — old, dignified, even quaint. The hill itself was shrouded by the woods of Riverview Park, a dark patch in the city's lights. As the two men approached the Presbyterian church, its bell tower could be seen standing proud over the skeletal trees across the grounds of the park. The church was a white building in the colonial style, with a gravel walkway and a cemetery off to one side. The men pulled up and parked.

"I've got a bad feeling about this place," Walker said. "I never liked going to church."

The two sat still for a moment, almost as if each waited for the other to make the first move. Walker finally broke the silence. "Come one, no one's around." He moved quickly out of the car, pistol already in hand.

Kim flinched at his partner's brashness. "Do you have to toss that thing around? We don't even know who's here."

Walker holstered his gun irritably, "I knew this was a mistake. You can't always see 'em, you know. Ghosts and shit."

Suddenly, Kim found himself in moderator mode, as if he had just been flamed in the clumsiest way. "If there are ghosts here, do you really think a gun would stop them?"

Walker fell silent.

As they headed along the walkway past the church, they failed to notice that a closed-circuit security camera observed their passing.

The cemetery was as neat and tidy as the adjoining church, a peaceful, ordered place. Kim found himself relaxing. "There's no way something so horrific could happen here," he said, too softly for Walker to hear. He paused, then said aloud, "The news story had to be exaggerated."

"What are we looking for?" Walker asked, looking tense.

"A while ago, I started to be able to do something. I found that if I concentrate, I can see things that happened in the past," Kim said, almost embarrassed, as if he were trying to pass off science-fiction as something real. "I can only do it in certain places."

Walker just stared at Kim. Finally, he said, "Uh, okay. What do I do?"

"Keep your eyes open. I get pretty out of it when I try this."

Kim closed his eyes and started a breathing exercise. As he focused on his breath, he could feel something build slowly within him, as if his awareness were spreading out to everything around him. He began to see flashes of images in his mind's eye and concentrated on thoughts of Fyodor as Bookworm had described the man. Suddenly, Kim's eyes opened, but Walker was nowhere in sight.

Police tape fluttered in the wind on a bright afternoon, the russet of the leaves betraying the season. A small plot in one corner of the cemetery was dug up completely. Police stood all around, looking for clues, taking pictures, keeping people away. A suggestively human shape lay under a sheet to one side. Kim pushed harder, catching a glimpse of the freshly turned earth, then of the gaping hole. He paused there, watching, and gasped as the wide-eyed corpse of a young woman dropped limply into the hole. She had been strangled, by the marks on her neck. Then a tall, powerful man with cropped hair and a goatee stood over the makeshift grave, apparently muttering something. He turned to pick up something heavy and heaved another body into the grave — a man's remains. No mention of another body had appeared in the newspaper report Kim had read. The bodies interred, the large man shoveled earth into the hole. When the job was done



and the makeshift grave complete, he vaulted the cemetery fence. To Kim's surprise, the man crossed through some woods and entered the back door of a house only a hundred yards away.

When the vision winked out, Kim faltered and Walker steadied. "You okay?" Walker asked.

Kim nodded tentatively. "He was here. He buried her, along with someone else. The other man must have been the bruise he wrote about, but the newspaper never said anything about a second victim." Then Kim stopped, looked around and pointed. "He came from over there."

* * *

Their destination on Richey Avenue sat at the corner of the park. It should have been a reassuring place, a picturesque reminder of successful modern life, but too much age clustered around the house. Lost years crowded the present here like playground bullies. The house was a dusty old brownstone with twin chimneys towering at either end; it seemed like an intruder from last century. Even the short hedge in front seemed to mark the yard as a space apart from the rest of the world.

Walker seemed unaffected by the atmosphere. "Is this guy still here? Can we just go in?"

"He's gone, I think, from what he wrote," Kim said. "I wonder how long it's been abandoned. You'd think the police would have been all over it after finding a murder victim."

"Shit, I told you about the cops. The puppets probably kept 'em out or hushed everything up. Come on."

The garden at the back of the house was even more oppressive than the front. The city's glow barely offered enough light to see by. The lawn was thin, overgrown with weeds — even worse than what Kim had seen in his brief vision. The flowerbeds were neglected completely. A door situated down a short flight of concrete stairs drew their attention. It led to the basement, Kim knew immediately.

The door was locked. "We have to get in," Kim said.

Walker smirked slightly. "Step back," he cautioned as he pulled his gun. Kim started to protest but was too late. The blast seemed to echo for an eternity and the door hung loose on its hinges.

"Are you crazy?"

"Lighten up," Walker said. "This is like my skeleton key in Detroit. It'll be at least fifteen minutes before the cops and bruises get here. We'll be gone by then."

Kim was about to protest further, but he gave up when Walker handed him a flashlight and invited him to go in first.

The door opened into a large room with old mason-block walls — seemingly the entirety of the basement in one space. The stench of decay was immediately overwhelming, but it was dead quiet within.

"I'll try the lights," Walker said.

There was a faint click but no light. Nevertheless, the details their flashlights picked out started a steady clinching in Kim's gut. A thick, old oak table dominated the center of the room. On one wall, coarse chains hung from several wall anchors. A few feet away, a second table was propped facing the wall. More chains, these crusted brown with dried blood, hung from its sides.

"It's exactly as he described," Kim said, talking mostly to himself. He closed his eyes, forcing his breathing back into rhythm. His mind started to open. This time he was wrenched back, almost as if the room wanted to unleash its torment on someone.

A pale, twisted creature, seeming like Death itself, was chained naked against the wall. The chains, now taut, crisscrossed its body, with thick padlocks holding them together. They were as much for support as restraint, though — a stake was driven through the creature's chest. A suffering young

woman, bruised and bloody, faced the monster. She was chained naked to the table in the same way the creature was to the wall. Like the bloodsucker, she hung there staring at the thing that stared back at her. Neither blinked, and Kim was sickened to realize that their eyelids were held open with safety pins that pierced the delicate membranes. A young man looked on, smiling. Some kind of taint was visible in him as Kim watched.

Suddenly, the scene changed and the same young man was lying on the floor, the back of his head crushed. Fyodor appeared from the periphery of Kim's vision. The madman turned his back on the dangling bloodsucker, smiled at the young woman, and gently caressed her face. Then he reached up, wrapped his hands around her neck and calmly choked her to death. When he was sure she was dead, he turned to the rot, lifted a shovel, and dug the edge of the blade into its neck. The head eventually separated, and the body convulsed briefly. As Kim watched, horrified, the monstrous corpse withered and twisted, hemorrhaging its vitality. Within moments, it was mangled and leathery, the head little more than a parchment-wrapped skull. The stake fell to the floor.

When the vision faded, Kim came to slowly to discover that he was lying on the floor as well. Walker squatted beside him, looking concerned. "Can you hear me? Are you all right?"

"Yes," Kim said wearily as he got up. "I saw... It was terrible."

"It must have been. You dropped like a sack of shit. Scared the hell out of me. I thought for a minute that a ghost got you."

Kim shuddered, disturbed to wonder whether he might have been Walker's next candidate for a bullet. "I saw them, chained up, facing each other, a woman and a rot. They were being tortured. Another man was watching, the puppet who worked for Fyodor, I think. Then Fyodor killed them all. He didn't even look sorry, just curious. I've seen enough. Let's get out of here."

"Sounds good to me."

Walker turned toward the door and moved too quickly for Kim to keep up. Kim followed, still dazed — haunted, even — by what he'd seen. A ghost of sorts *had* gotten to him, he realized.

Suddenly, the doorway lit up brighter than day, dazzling Kim. An amplified voice boomed all around: "THIS IS THE POLICE. DROP YOUR WEAPON AND PUT YOUR HANDS UP." Kim heard Walker shout, "Fuck you, blood-sucker," as a hail of gunfire erupted. Above Kim, at the top of the stairs, Walker spun around as if hit by a sledgehammer and crashed down the flight of steps like a broken doll. He slammed into Kim, knocking him back to the basement floor.

Powerful lights shone down the basement stairs to reveal Kim where he lay. He tensed in mute terror, waiting for the bullets to rip into him. Instead, a voice called down, almost gently. "Sir, are you all right? Can you speak?"

"I... I can hear you."

"Don't move, sir." There was a clatter of footsteps and equipment as three police officers entered the basement, their guns drawn. They almost ignored Kim as one rolled Walker's dead body onto its back. A moment later, someone yelled, "Clear," and a paramedic rushed in. She put a box down and knelt beside Kim as more police followed. "Are you hurt?" she asked.

"No... no," Kim said, confused.

"I think we got here in time," the paramedic said to someone across the room. She turned back to Kim, shone a narrow light into his eyes and took his pulse. "He doesn't seem to be hurt. May be in shock though — low temperature and pulse, not much dilation. Take it easy just the same."

A police detective wearing a professionally concerned face knelt down beside the paramedic. "I'm Detective White," he said. "You're safe. Your kidnapper is dead. Do you understand?"

Kim nodded.

Ten minutes later, he was sitting inside an ambulance in front of the house, with a blanket around his shoulders and a cup of coffee in hand, desperately trying to come up with some sort of story. Belatedly, he remembered Walker's warning and forced himself to look at his "saviors" with the sight. One officer, talking on a radio, was clearly wrong. Detective White, who was crossing the yard toward Kim, seemed normal.

White sat down next to him. "Mr. Sun, if you're up to talking about it, could you tell me how you got here?"

Kim stammered something incoherent and froze, suddenly certain that he would never be believed. White, however, looked concerned rather than accusing. "Mr. Sun? Are you okay?" Kim tried to pull himself together.

"He was insane. I was trying to get a cab when he pulled over and pointed a gun in my face. He made me get into his car." For a moment, Kim remembered Walker's comforting smile as he pulled up when they met, and he felt his eyes blur with tears. "He bragged about stealing the car in Detroit. He... he drove us out here, to the church, forced me to walk through the cemetery and over here. He kept saying, 'I'll do you like I did the others.' Then you came."

White put a hand on Kim's shoulder sympathetically. "It's okay now, Mr. Sun. You're safe. Do you remember where you were when he picked you up?"

Kim nodded. "I was on Main Street... in Cleveland."

White looked astonished. "Cleveland?"

"We drove for hours. He wouldn't let me see where we were going."

White jotted a few lines in his notebook. "Someone monitoring security for the church saw you via closed-circuit camera being marched at gunpoint into the cemetery. Then three people reported hearing a shot at this address. I'm going to have to ask you to come down to the station, Mr. Sun."

Terror washed over Kim — of being arrested, of things being done to him by prisoners and worse. "W-why? I didn't do anything."

White smiled kindly. "It's not like that. We just need a full statement, any extra information or evidence to verify what you've told me, that sort of thing. It won't take long."

Kim nodded, relieved.

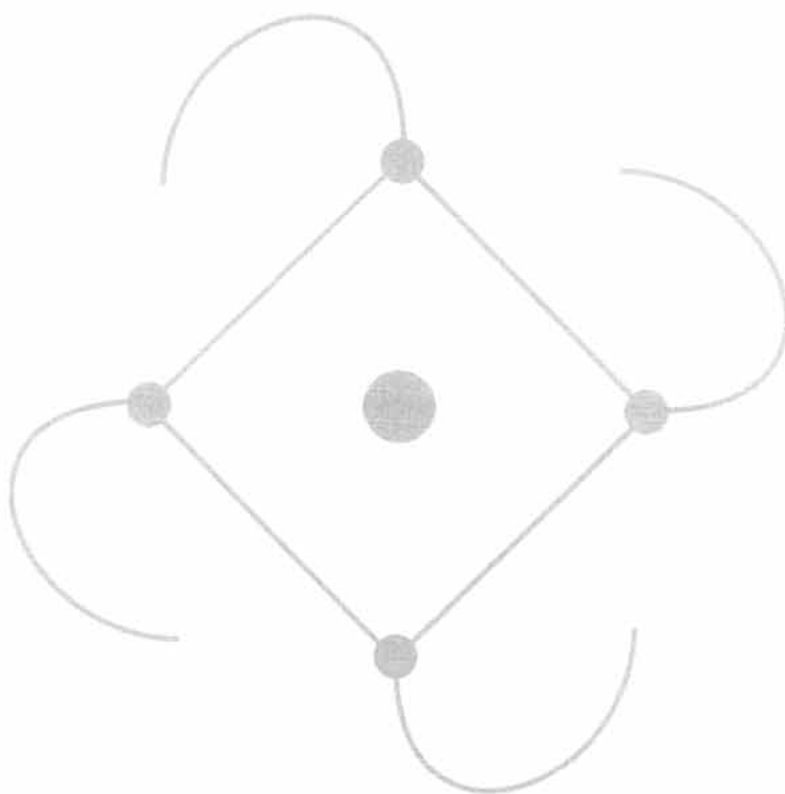
They got to the station late that night, and it was all over by dawn. Kim had his plane ticket, hotel key, computer receipt and theater ticket all in his possession to support his version of events. The police had no reason to doubt him. White even agreed to try to keep Kim's name out of the papers. Thanks to his statement, Walker was going down as a John Doe, shot resisting arrest and posthumously credited with Fyodor's crimes. Kim got the feeling that the police were relieved that Walker was dead — that some burden had been lifted from them. But a burden had descended upon Kim, because he had brought Walker out here on a personal mission, and now his ally was dead.

As Kim headed for the door, someone touched his shoulder. "Sir?" It was the *wrong* policeman, the one who'd been on the radio. Kim started.

"Sir, can we give you a lift somewhere?" The bruise's gaze bored into Kim, and the hunter's walls went up instinctively. Somehow, Kim knew what this *thing* was after. Kim had reported that Walker was going to kill him like he had the *others*. Someone in authority had obviously gone to a lot of trouble to dispose of the second body found at the church — that of Fyodor's agent, the blood puppet. Kim had subtly used that knowledge to his own advantage, and at Walker's expense. His statement had undone someone's coverup, and now he suspected whose.

"No," Kim answered at last. "I'll make my own way from here."

HUNTER BOOK VISIONARY



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Chad "Radio Richard" Brown (#14, Defense), for daring to step into the domed hockey arena, with tear-soggy dollar bills.
Brian "Defcon4!" Glass (#84, Goal), for skipping out on the entire state of Alaska to stand between the pipes.
Matt "Everything Old..." Milberger, for inheriting the same damn team he started.
Rich "...Is New Again" Thomas (#13, Defense), for getting drunk enough to agree to co-captain.
Mike "I Love You Guys" Tinney (#11, Goal), for losing his source of anger before every game.
Fred "Always a Bride's Maid" Yelk (#56, Defense), for going on the summer wedding circuit instead of playing damn hockey.



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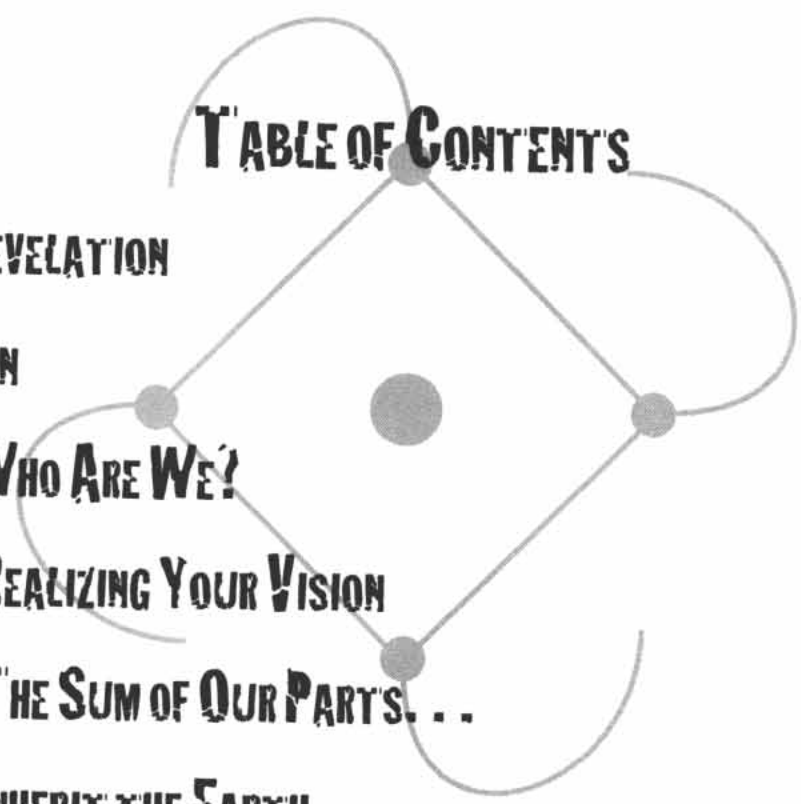
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HUNTER BOOK VISIONARY

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INTRODUCTION

And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

— Genesis 42:12

INHERIT THE EARTH

Hunter Book: Visionary is a sourcebook to help you develop a better understanding of the Visionary creed and its emerging role in the world of **Hunter: The Reckoning**. As a Visionary, you look beyond the simple execution of the hunt and fix your mind on the future. Let others decide the fate of an *individual* creature; you look to the big picture. If the imbuing is to mean anything, you need to show the way to a better world, one that others can achieve day by day.

Everything you have learned since your imbuing has helped you imagine how the world should be: free of monsters, hopeful, liberated, peaceful — a better place than any living person has ever known. Perhaps you even dream of a future world where humanity controls the monsters, or where man and monster work together in harmony. For now, though, you understand that the world is a darker and more dangerous place than you could ever have imagined *before*. Perhaps it's worse than you know even now. That must all change, you realize, but how do you liberate humanity as a whole? How do you bring light to the darkness for everyone? What can you do to save the world? These are the questions you ask yourself constantly, and that you constantly strive to answer.

But what makes you tick? What compels you to seek answers where none seem to exist? What drives you to

solve riddles that you don't even understand? Is it wisdom, insanity or simple arrogance that makes you think you can find the solutions where others fail? This book helps you decide, to determine who your Visionary is, before and after the imbuing. The creed's new powers and rules don't hurt, either.

But just as you need to better understand your own Visionary, you must understand hunter society as it emerges; the two are inextricably intertwined. As each of the newly imbued struggles to understand her new world, origins and purpose, she inevitably compares her experiences, philosophies and fears to those of others on the streets or on the Internet. At first, the recently awakened latch onto anyone who understands them; this new world is just too terrifying to contend with alone. In time, however, as more and more imbued dare meet and make overtures to find each other, individuals with similar attitudes and theories are attracted to one another and develop like-minded circles. These nascent social groups are the bases for what ultimately become the hunter creeds.

Yet, during hunters' emergence, many varied imbued can seem to have common goals. As the chosen make contact, try to understand their mutual condition and strive to work together, *similar* goals and *comparable* experiences can hide fundamentally different philosophies, whether about hunter purpose, the nature of the Messengers or the necessary fate of monsters. All hunters agree that the

supernatural's hold on humanity must be broken, but not everyone agrees on how to accomplish such a feat. Mutual experiences and mutual values turn out to be two very different things. Hunters can therefore be taken by surprise when a fellow "Visionary" really proves to be an inspired Avenger or a philosophical Innocent. Sometimes, the chosen aren't even sure of their own ideals until they immerse themselves completely in the hunt.

It's only after the imbued become fully devoted to or even obsessed with the hunt that their approaches to it become purposeful and refined. Some become determined to save monsters' souls. Others want to see such creatures utterly destroyed. When this distillation is complete, the creeds as social classifications finally arise. Visionary recognizes Visionary and Redeemer recognizes Redeemer, all through the creeds' codified values, intentions and goals in the hunt.

When will hunters achieve such social structure? It could take months or years as the imbued struggle to understand themselves and then each other. The fact that so many edges seem to be shared by the chosen of various perspectives and personalities doesn't help, either. When creeds as institutions are finally acknowledged, however, the hunt may finally gain the momentum it needs to overcome the supernatural, once and for all. Or perhaps such cumbersome and fractious divisions will be the hunt's undoing, as imbued fall to infighting and politics rather than upholding their higher purpose.

Ultimately, the course of your chronicle and your Storyteller's vision decide when the creeds become publicly recognized in your game. In the meantime, your Visionary's fully developed identity helps define his own society and that of all imbued.

PERSPECTIVES

The opinions, theories, information and outlooks expressed in this book are presented primarily in three distinct "voices." These Visionary narrators typify the spectrum of personalities across the creed as a whole. Each of these people presents his or her own take on the origins, tactics, relations and ultimate fate of thinkers, and on hunters in general. Each, like all Visionaries, has his own concept of the way the world should be once the imbued have broken monsters' stranglehold on humanity.

The creed and its members' views evolve constantly as Visionaries try to define themselves and their aspirations for the future in a world they no longer understand. With no other frame of reference, the chosen often resort to the ideas, values and philosophies they possessed before their transformation. No two Visionaries have the same thoughts about their origins, for example. Thus, the questions the imbued ask of themselves and their world — not any specific belief system — best illustrate their individual and collective identity. After reading this book, you should have a sense of the drives and ambitions that inspire and motivate various pathfinders. You should sense why these people always feel the need to look to the future and a better world, and what influences their relations with other imbued. We also hope that you're inspired to fully develop your character's identity and values, to make his dream for the hunt and its ultimate purpose just as compelling.

How to Use This Book

Hunter Book: Visionary broadens the World of Darkness as creed members perceive it and offers insights into the imbued psyche. It also offers new rules and powers for use by the philosophers among hunters, and possibly by other creed members. This book can therefore help you better understand your character and elaborate upon her.

Chapter 1: Who Are We? explores from the Visionary perspective the nature of monsters, the Messengers and hunters, and seeks to explain why the imbued receive their gift or curse.

Chapter 2: Realizing Your Vision covers thinkers' approach to their calling and how they turn their personal vision into practical reality when faced with the day-to-day demands of dealing with the supernatural.

Chapter 3: The Sum of Our Parts... describes Visionaries' relations with like-minded fellows and other creed members.

Chapter 4: Inherit the Earth presents philosophers' attempts to define their purpose and destiny: the fulfillment of their dreams for the future.

Chapter 5: New Rules offers more rules, edges and equipment for use by Visionaries and perhaps by hunters of other creeds.

Chapter 6: Prevailing Winds details newly imbued thinkers who are ready for play. This chapter also profiles creed members who have acquired reputations through word of mouth or the Internet.

LEXICON

Each Visionary tends to develop very personal terms for monsters, other hunters and the mission, using terms that tie into her personal beliefs about the hunt. As Visionaries start to meet other hunters and one another, however, comparing their formative goals and pitting their various theories, they start to evolve a way of categorizing other imbued and their ideals. They see that hunters who would destroy monsters can clash with those who would integrate beasts into society, for example. And adherents of each ideology can be antithetical to those who merely seek to escape from monsters' influence. The following are formative terms used to label other people, ideas and experiences gathered while in the field.

adversaries, the: A common Visionary term for monsters

big idea: Colloquial term for a Visionary's theory of the hunt

challenge, the: A common Visionary term for the hunt

crackhead: Slang for a Visionary who seeks answers to questions about the hunt through use of mind-altering substances.

homebody: Insulting term for a Visionary who rarely faces monsters in the field personally, choosing instead to devote time to refining a concept of the hunt and directing other hunters to that end.

in the field: Another term for the hunt, often used by Visionaries who like to test their theories in practice.

lurker: A Visionary who spends all her time pontificating online instead of getting into the field and pursuing the hunt actively. Also: skulker.

micro-manager: A derogatory term for Visionaries who tend to neglect pursuing their personal dream in favor of leading a band of hunters on a day-to-day basis.

prophet: A Visionary who tries to make her ideals into a religion. Generally, these hunters are mistrusted by other Visionaries.

revelation: A term some Visionaries use for the moment of the imbuing.

tunnel visionary: A Visionary who has become so focused on his personal goal for the mission that anything else seems trivial.

visionary: A term used increasingly to describe the more thoughtful among the imbued. Many other descriptors are used, however: honchos, navel-gazers, pathfinders, philosophers, the undecided, thinkers and wayfarers.

SOURCE MATERIALS

Movies, TV shows, comics and books are full of characters who look to the future and try to bring about their concept of a better world. Even if these sources don't contain monsters or overt combat, the struggle to realize a dream is there. Most of the following resources contain excellent characters after whom you could model your Visionary.

Fight Club: Brad Pitt's character illustrates that not every vision is a pleasant one.

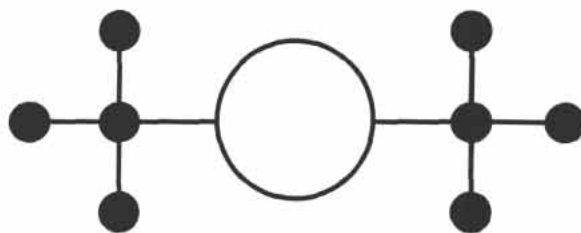
Gandhi: One man's struggle to bring an end to oppression peaceably. A great Visionary role model, a history lesson and a noble biopic. Rent it now.

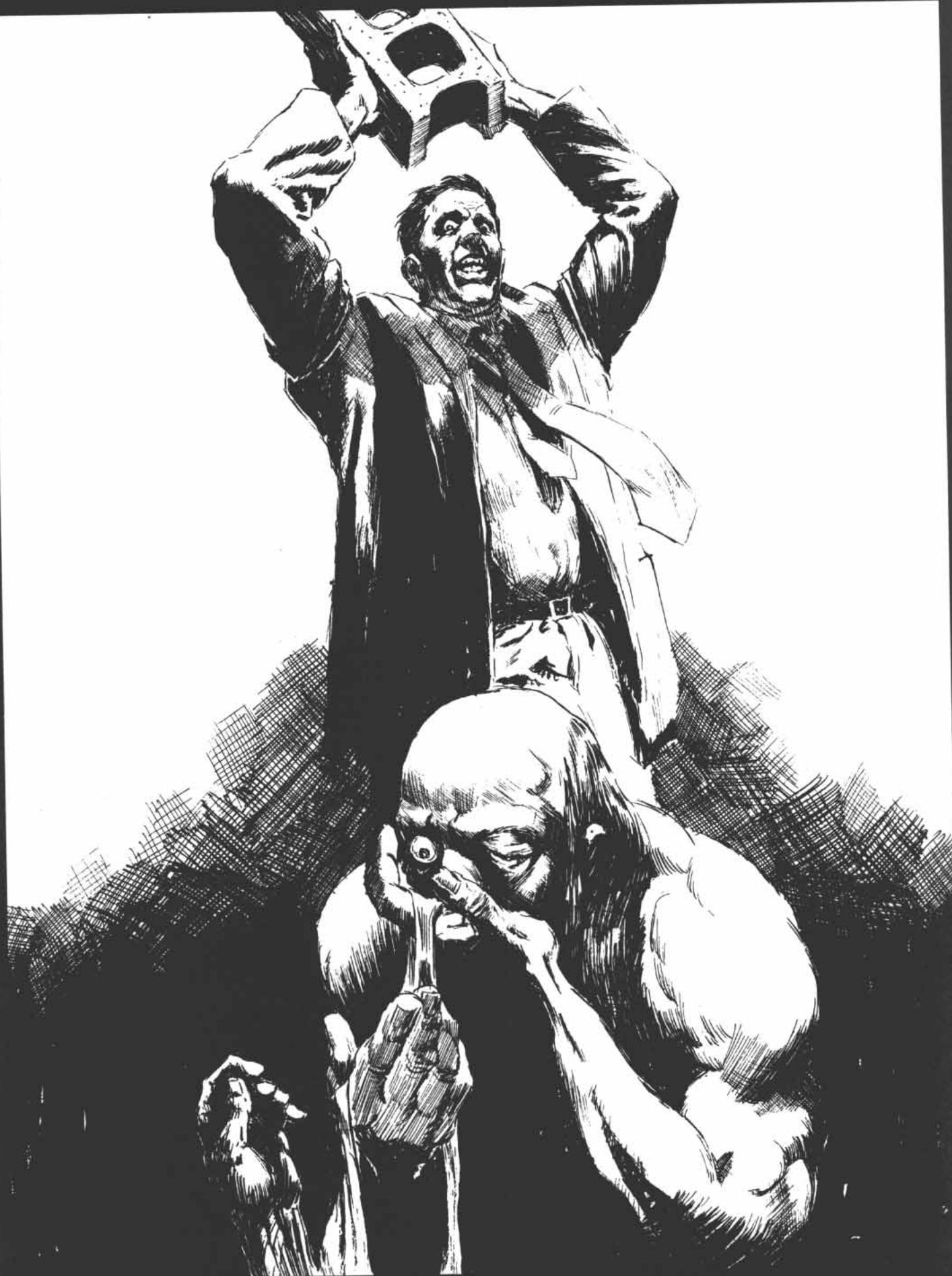
Le Morte D'Arthur: This, or any other decent retelling of the Arthurian legend, is the classic Visionary tale: A man with aspirations for a better world — symbolized by the ideals of Camelot — strives to achieve his goals. The tragic end of the cycle is much in keeping with the World of Darkness.

The Matrix: Replace machines with monsters, and replace Neo's extrication from the Matrix with an imbuing, and you have a **Hunter** movie. The Visionary? Morpheus, of course.

Vampire\$: The book by John Steakley, not John Carpenter's very loose (and deeply inferior) film adaptation. Not only is this book virtually required **Hunter** reading, dealing with the consequences of monsters preying upon ordinary people, it features two Visionaries — Amanda and Felix — with very different outlooks on the challenge.

The Uncanny X-Men (and umpteen other X-titles): Forget the mutant angst and years of convoluted plotlines. At its heart, this comic tells the tale of Charles Xavier's mission to achieve understanding between human and mutant.





CHAPTER 1: WHO ARE WE?

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

— 1 Corinthians 13:2

Subject: New Website

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

As many of you know, I make a point of collecting interesting and thought-provoking posts to this list. I've also been in contact with a number of you in one-on-one discussions. Given the rifts that seem to be growing between us, such as the attack on Dictatrix11, the ongoing feud between Crusader17 and Potter116, and the questions surrounding Oracle171, it's imperative for us all to share some common perspective. Even if we disagree on details, we can at least respect each other as human beings and as people selected by the Messengers. For those of you who are interested, I've created a new set of pages off the main site that feature some of the best material I have received. It can be found at <http://www.hunter-net.org/unity.html>.

WELCOME TO UNITY

From witness1

Over the past few months, I have been collating information and ideas on all aspects of our existence, from the nature of the struggle that we face to speculation about our beginnings. It should be obvious to everyone that the imbued need to work together if we're going to stand a chance of making this world a better place. It *should* be obvious, but unfortunately it doesn't seem to be, as a lot of our time and energy is spent bickering — or even committing acts of violence against each other! As disastrous events taught me recently, we need to cooperate and

be practical. In order to help us all find some common ground and focus, despite our apparent differences, I have collected a variety of the most insightful and interesting material available to me. To make it accessible to everyone, I have sorted it into approximate topics, such as this one, "Who Are We?" It is my sincere hope that this information will help us all work together in tolerance, respect and understanding. Then we can accomplish the larger goals that must be achieved.

On this page, I have collected ideas about how our situation may have come about — where our abilities might come from, what the enemy could be, what the Heralds might want. We understand so little of ourselves and the true world that much of this material is, by necessity, speculation. Even so, you may find that the questions you are left asking will inspire you to seek answers, or to ask yet other questions.

WHO ARE THE MESSENGERS?

From cassie247

Witness, I've been thinking. I get to do that a lot. My parents' coffeehouse is quiet between college terms. So, I can think a lot about what's happened to me — to us all. I'm a rational person. I like to follow a chain of thought carefully, step by step. I've been doing plenty of that recently, and I believe I've arrived at some conclusions that startle me. Before you can start to make any reasonable deductions, though, you have to get solid information to base them on. I've concentrated over the last few months on questioning as many of us as I can find about our common experiences, opinions and abilities. I think I'm starting off on as solid a foundation as possible.

The most important question in the history of the world is "Why?" Without people looking at the things around them and asking questions about cause and effect, we would still be living in caves and getting dragged around by our hair. It's the question that children ask most — Why is the sky blue? Why are eggs shaped like that? All too often the answer is, "It just is." That's no answer, of course. It just means that the parent doesn't know the answer. Well, "It just is" isn't good enough for us, either.

Asking the right question is the first step toward getting the answer we need. The most important question we can ask is "Why have we been changed?" In order to come to grips with our situation, we need to look at what we've become and what we need to do. We need to know our limits and definitions, like the border of a jigsaw puzzle. Once the corners and sides are in place — we know our own framework — we can start filling in the big picture.

As the beings responsible for opening our eyes, the Heralds or whatever you want to call them may be the best place to start. There's a lot that we don't know about them. (Do we even know anything?) But I wonder if we /need/ to know anything at all. Their origins are extremely unclear, but maybe irrelevant. It doesn't matter if they're aliens, spirits, angels, manifestations of the human unconscious, time travelers, gods, or any other crap that we desperately impose on them to make them comprehensible. Knowing their origins would be useful, sure, but only so far as it resolves a far more vital issue: What do they want with us? Too many idiots on the list waste time fretting over where the Heralds come from, arguing back and forth over their pet theories. If someone points a gun at you, you don't stop to wonder if he's from Renton, Portland, Vancouver or Olympia.

So what /do/ the Heralds want? Maybe we can understand their intentions by looking closely at their apparent actions. If we can be so bold, they seem to do certain things, or make them possible anyway.

* Torment us by making us see and resist creatures that aren't human or even alive

* Bring us face to face with things when we're changed

* Instill in us a sense of wrongness regarding the supernatural

* Provide us with special powers

* Force the meaning of certain signs on us

* Apparently select individuals from all over the world, in all social, mental and physical groups

* If rumor is to be believed, return to certain hunters again and again to provide warnings or hints — or to torment them

* Choose people with (or force people into) certain differing types of goals

Beyond the actions that can be considered proactive, or that at least seem like active efforts, there are also certain things that they do not seem to do.

* Like, tell us specifically what they want

* Explain about our background or their origins

* Make us all the same or even compatible with each other

* Provide financial support

* Get it right all the time (consider the duds, those of us who have died, and people like God45)

* Warn us if we're in danger

* Give us an understanding of the true nature of society

* Explain the nature or weaknesses of the enemy

* Make us powerful enough to face creatures with impunity

* Give us multiple awakenings if the first one isn't sufficient

* Explain the meaning of life

* Awaken everyone in the world

If you look at these lists, it might seem like the Heralds are doing only half a job. They awaken us to a different perspective, give us some tools with which to deal with the others, and teach us how to communicate with each other beyond speaking. They do not appear to give us the strength to take on many of our opponents, give us any information, co-ordinate the work they've recruited us for, or spend any effort trying to keep us alive. They certainly left me to fumble around. That's a very poor way to run an army, if indeed that's what we are.

If the Heralds are doing half a job, is there a reason for it? It seems to me that there are only a limited number of possibilities for doing so. They're capricious, incompetent or weak, or a combination thereof. I'll consider each of these possibilities in turn.

If they're capricious, they don't really care what happens to us once we've had our revelation. That might mean they're not particularly concerned about the results of tinkering with us, and are perhaps more interested in the act of empowerment. That would explain why they don't tell us anything in detail, and why they don't appear to worry about our well-being. However, it doesn't explain why they don't just enlighten everyone. We read online about hunters all over the world and they're all as baffled as we are. Why would anyone go out of their way to travel thousands of miles to affect individual people if there wasn't a method to the madness?

If the Heralds are incompetent, maybe they don't have the skills necessary to achieve their aims. In this case, we might experience a wildly fluctuating level of "service" from the Powers That Be — some people might be imbued "correctly," with full understanding, support, power and information, while others would be completely broken, unable to function. We /do/ see broken awakenings. Again, I point to the duds, the ones who see but don't change, and to maniacs like God45. But then most of us seem to report a fairly consistent experience — we witness something that isn't right or should not be, and we respond in ways we never dreamed possible. Would such a "success rate" (assuming we are successes) be likely if the Heralds were incompetent? I suspect that their mistakes would vary more, on a case-by-case basis.

If the Heralds are weak, then they lack the power, energy or talent to make us truly effective. They might be doing the best job they can with limited resources, hoping for the best given the circumstances. That could explain why the knowledge we receive is almost instinctive rather than overt and consistent, and why some of us can perform some miracles while others can't. It could also explain why so few of us, compared to the rest of humanity, are awakened, and why we're so far-flung. It might be the most efficient way of utilizing the scant resources at their disposal, or of overcoming an inherent flaw.

Personally, I kind of like the idea of a creator who's as flawed as I am.

What do you think?

CHOICES AND OPTIONS

From sixofswords29

Who are the Messengers? Dear boy, does it matter? Consider this: We have months' worth of discussion on the list as to their identity. While I love a good conversation as much as the next man, have we come any closer to the truth? Even if we did, would we know?

Perhaps one can dwell overmuch on the past. I don't know the meaning of life, either, or why the world was created. It doesn't stop me from living, though. That said, if you'll indulge my urge to speculate, we do have some information about the Messengers from which we can draw some useful conclusions.

First, look at those whom some of us call "bystanders." They would seem, given the available evidence, to be hunters whose imbuing didn't "take" for whatever reason. As we have no clue as to the mechanism of the imbuing, it seems futile to speculate as to the nature of that reason (although it is more than a little intriguing).

However, the existence of these people does seem to indicate that the Messengers aren't perfect. Perhaps they aren't omniscient or omnipotent, after all. Perhaps they make no guarantees that everyone who hears the call will answer. An interesting notion, isn't it?

Now, let's look at the people who seem chosen for the imbuing. What common traits can we find among them? Well, the simple answer seems to be that there is that is no common trait. From everything I've read, we seem to cover the geographical, age, race and socio-economic spectrum rather nicely. Admittedly, there seems to be a bias toward the lower end of the socio-economic scale, but that's probably because there are more people at that end than among, say, the millionaires.

There doesn't seem to be much in the way of common skills among us, either. My expertise is in management and sales, not in hurting monsters. While we have a few people with appropriate skills - Soldier91, Hannibal137 and the late Cop90 spring to mind - most of us claim to have more mundane talents.

That's not to say these "every day" abilities are useless for our new purposes. The computer skills you and Dole7 have are rapidly becoming invaluable to hunters all over the world. I really don't know what I'd do without hunter-net and some of the other lists. The amount of information I've learned here and relayed back to my team is staggering. Even Doctor119's studies are useful, despite the fact that he comes across as a cold, arrogant SOB.

So, if we don't have skills or backgrounds in common, this brings up two main possibilities: The Messengers choose us at random or they aim for a broad base of abilities. My personal inclination is to believe in the second option.

If you have a job to do, you assemble a team. If the task is very specific, goal-orientated and defined in purpose, then you choose a particular sort of person. For example, if you are selling a new brand of washing powder, you get a ruthless team of sales people to place it in the major retailers, and maybe hire an ad agency that is really just another form of sales person.

If you're initiating a project from the beginning, you need a range of skills: research & development, market research, sales, marketing, manufacturing consultants, and so on. The reason for this? If you don't, the project will fail because not all of the bases are covered.

So, as far as I can determine thus far, the Messengers have some sort of big project in mind for us. And it's not just destroying monsters. Otherwise, we'd all be frothing psychos and we'd all be on the Firelight list.

It's a project that involves a whole different range of approaches. The question is why haven't the Messengers told us what it is?

Perhaps they're trying to, but lack the means to do so. We've heard a little on hunter-list about the visions people like Forscherin263 get. Then there's that "Apocalypse" book by Pyodor that's circulating. Now, while I wouldn't trust Pyodor as far as I could throw him, whatever Bookworm says, he and some others seem to be getting messages from the, well, Messengers that we aren't. Either that or they're raving loons. Now, for the sake of argument, I'm going to take Bookworm and Violin's word and assume he's getting visions. But until I meet this Russian or someone as out there in person, I'm taking nothing for granted.

Based on Pyodor's claims, the Messengers seem to communicate their information to him visually, through dreams or

THE HERALDS' CHOICE

From witness1

As SoS keeps referring to Stella142 directly and indirectly in his discussions, I thought it only fair to give him (Stella) a say here, too.

Stella142 is the nominal leader of a group of hunters in the same city as SoS29, and the two men have developed something of a friendly rivalry, I suppose, stemming from their different approaches to the challenge.

I'll let them explain further. Here's Stella's response to some of SoS' points about our creators.

From stella142

That's typical SoS. He'll chide people for ignoring inconvenient facts, and then do it himself.

Let's talk about these so-called "failed hunters." I know two personally, a young lady (let's call her Penny) and a bloke (Clive). Both were there when my eyes were first opened. I was with Penny at the time. To be honest, I was enjoying a pint of Stella, my namesake, and trying my best to chat her up when I saw a thing, what turned out to be a dead man, invade the pub. She saw it the same time I did. We both should have changed, as far as I can tell.

I believe the difference is in how we reacted. Penny just sat there. Me? Well, I watched for a while. Once I had determined that neither Serena's attempts to talk to it nor Jason's attempts to protect the innocent girl it was harassing were getting anywhere, I hit the bastard. Hard. From behind. I'm no fighter, but when I'm forced to do it, I'll do it right.

(These might be my friend's real names. They might not be. Hey there, lurking monsters, how many levels of double bluff do you want to play?)

Now, Jason had been drinking with a mate before it happened. That's right, Clive. Jason acted straight away, leaping to the victim's aid. Clive? He sat there drooling into his pint, as I recall.

Of course, he and Penny could do something nobody else in the pub could: see the dead man for what it really was. The rest of them ignored it until the fight broke out, at which point they went for the door.

So what does this tell us? Well, it might mean that some of us are picked as having potential to become hunters, but not all of us make it. Some of those who have the potential don't live up to it. Which means, as SoS says, the process or its enactors are flawed. But it might also mean that whatever is doing it can see into us and get a sense of who we are in advance.

I don't know about you, but I find both possibilities terrifying. Not only could our patrons be fallible, which is pretty scary in its own right, but they might sense something about our true selves while we can't see them at all.

On the other hand, it could mean that the Heralds have something else in store for Penny and Clive. Perhaps they actually function as recorders of information in regard to the supernatural. Maybe every time we encounter a creature in public view, a few more learn about the truth, and it starts to spread from there.

Bugged if I know.

So what are they, then, these voices in our heads? That's exactly what I think they are: voices in our heads. Maybe they're our rational side speaking to our spiritual side or vice versa....

Then again, they might just be aliens.

hallucinations, I suppose, rather than simply by telling him things. Forscherin's experiences seem to be somewhat similar from what's she's said, if a lot less extreme.

Who knows? Perhaps direct contact with our patrons would drive us mad. Maybe what most of us have experienced is the only way they can talk to us. Which leads us to the conclusion that the Messengers work in a way that is not comprehensible to us. If it was, they would surely have said something by now. A team is useless without direction, after all.

Of course, there is another option. Perhaps we're going through the equivalent of a trial period. Maybe when the evaluation's up, we'll be told the truth. What happens, though, if we fail or we don't like the truth that's revealed?

HOLY WARRIORS OR LONELY PILGRIMS?

From forscherin263

So, you want to hear my theories on the ones you call the Messengers, Witness1? To me, a simple question it is you ask. This is one of the few things I take for granted about what has happened.

Although my first choice is always science, this time I must use faith. I have few facts about those who chose us, certainly not enough to build a good theory, so I must use my beliefs. The Messengers are servants of the Lord. This I believe. The Bible speaks of the angels and their work among men and I am truly blessed to have been touched by them and given the means to perform my own small miracles.

My friend Stefan is cheeky. He says to me: "I read my Bible in school, and the angel spoke to Mary directly. If it is really the angels who choose us, why do they not talk directly to us and tell us what to do?"

I laugh and explain that I am not Mary and would not presume to have the same attention as the mother of Jesus. I believe the angels give us as much help and information as they can. They send me visions, not of the future, I think. No, these seem to me to be messages, parceled up in a way my brain can deal with. It takes time, but I think I understand most of them in the end.

What have I learnt from the angels? I believe that they have chosen us to do the work of the Lord. Just as He has given me intelligence that I may work in my lab and fight against the viruses that make people ill, so has he given me the sight and the power to learn about and combat the creatures that infect our society like a virus. Just as he invests us with natural gifts to meet natural challenges, so I hope and pray he invests us with special gifts to meet our challenges.

I feel that the way the angels touched me proves this theory (all theories must be tested if they are to be proven true). It was in a lab that I first faced the unnatural. My first instinct, once the danger had passed, was to study what was presented to me.

You do us a great good, Witness 1, by providing us a place for us to exchange theories of the nature of our foe. We have many people all over the world doing our fieldwork, often at the risk of their lives. It is nice, is it not, to have the chance to discuss our theories with others?

Have you perhaps thought of creating a separate list solely for those of us whose focus on the future, not the present? Perhaps then we can share our theories without the distraction of the execution of our research?

From witness1

While I have considered Forscherin's suggestion carefully, I now feel that to create further division amongst us would be an error. All imbued should contribute to a discussion of the future if we're going to inherit the Earth, as I was told. It's just

as important for us to consider the day-to-day realities of the hunt, though. More on that later.

THE IMBUING

From sixofwords29

It strikes me that the Messengers seem to give the more thoughtful among us the opportunity not to so much deal with a problem, but to consider its implications. Stella142, for example, was imbued during an encounter between a dealer and the girl who was its fiancée in life. The girl was, I believe, the secretary of one of his group. A co-incidence or the Messengers choosing people who had a personal investment in the situation and who were thus most likely to act? Food for thought, again.

Stella142 himself, however, would take issue with my statement that some of us might be meant to be thinkers. He suggests, and we have debated this point long into the night, that the relevance of his encounter was simply that several people were changed at once. Stella, definitely an idea man, took the lead in the immediate aftermath of the confrontation, getting the others out of the pub before the police arrived.

In other words, he was given the opportunity to lead. Even though he's very intelligent, his self-determined role is to give direction to his fellows rather than to ponder everything ad nauseam. From what I've seen of his group, no one ever appointed him leader, it just happened that way, and he doesn't seem to question his role much. He considers himself a "do-er," although I would still classify him as a thinker based on his natural leadership role.

As you know, Witness, I assembled my team some time after I was imbued. My management training at work, perhaps? My wife always says I treat life like a business exercise. I know she's teasing, bless her, but I know there's a grain of truth there.

My point is that some of us seem to have been meant to think our situations through, and perhaps even those of other chosen. For example, my first contact with the Messengers helped me understand that what I was facing was a worldwide problem, not just the localized one that so many hunters seem to perceive.

Of course, it took me a little while to come to this conclusion. It was very easy to dismiss the encounter with a rot in New York as another fault of American society. The dead walking the streets seems very hard to take seriously in the peaceful suburbs of my hometown. A zombie strolling down Broadway seems a little more acceptable, if that's possible, if only because we get enough bad American films on the telly over here that such things just seem more likely.

Then, when I saw one of those awful man-beast things near Ipswich, I knew there was a problem to be dealt with here. The Messengers had given me perspective and an ally in the form of the late, lamented Seer6, to do something about it.

(Thank you, by the way, for taking my suggestion months ago and not reassigning the numbers of those of us who have fallen. It is a small memorial, but a worthy one.)

It is this very capacity to get a little perspective on our situation that marks the thinkers among us from the fighters or talkers, I think - to see a bigger picture where others see a personal one, or one close to home.

From forscherin263

Let us look at what we might know about how the angels choose to bless us.

1. They seem to bless us when there is a monster present.

While this may seem obvious, because we all agree that this happens, perhaps we do not see its significance. Why do they choose moments of crisis? Had I not acted within seconds



when I saw that first monster, I would not be typing this e-mail to you Witness1, nor doing anything else. Or perhaps I would be a dead that walks, too, and you would be trying to decide how to stop me. I hope you would succeed, for nothing frightens me so much as becoming one of those that we fight.

Would it not be more sensible to bless us in the quiet times, so that we could practice our skills and make plans for our meetings with the servants of the Devil?

Since they allow us no warning, they must have some reason for throwing us into the fire. This may be to test us. Only the worthy are blessed and we are tested in the moment we are blessed. Perhaps the word "blessing" or "imbuing" is not a good one. Perhaps we should refer to it as the "testing." But what can one little lab operator do to change what others say? Everything I can. :-)

2. The angels choose lots of different tests.

The test is not a simple one. It is not just that the angels say "here is a monster" and see what we do. They choose to show us monsters in different situations. Sometimes they give us direction: "PROTECT THEM", "THE EVIL ONES WALK" and "STOP THEM," or so I have read. At others, they do not.

I remember reading of Bookworm55 hugging the dead *fräulein*. It was such a sweet story. I could not imagine Bookworm55 killing a monster the way my Matze does. It is good that the angels chose to give Bookworm a dead that walks to hug, and Matze a dead that walks that had to be killed.

Bookworm likes to help people, so he was given a test of helping. Matze, he likes to use anger and be aggressive, so he was given a test of anger.

The angels seem to know who we are and guide us to situations that suit who we are.

3. The angels choose to test us when it matters.

I do not count many blessed here or in the real life that have been tested when it did not matter. Always, a life was in danger or someone had to be saved. If we walked away, harm would be done.

This does not seem wise, but I believe the angels are good and caring and wise. So there must be a reason why they try to test us like that. It must be that the situation is urgent.

I have read that Fyodor wrote of a final battle and the signs of its coming. This sounds much to me like the tales of the Bible. So, perhaps the angels choose to bless us when it is urgent, for there is not time to be lost.

My theory is that we are blessed because we are needed desperately. We are blessed in ways that suit who we are and we are tested to be sure that we are worthy. This all seems to me to fit the available data.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

From sixofwords29

Thanks for forwarding me that piece from our German friend, Witness. It occurs to me that her points about being tested are well made, even if I don't agree with her assumptions.

One could actually look at the imbuing as a sort of interview. In an interview, one is set questions and occasional tasks to do, and you are judged on the results. If they are acceptable, you get the job. If they are unacceptable, you do not.

What if, at the imbuing, you are set a task? If you succeed, you get the Messengers' gifts and join the "team." If not, you don't. Or you die, I suppose. I wonder how many would-be hunters have died in those first few moments? It's a chilling thought. It's one of the reasons I cannot see the Messengers as being purely beneficent.

I'm not so sure that I agree with Forscherin's point that the challenges set us are devised to be appropriate to the person being tested. To use her examples, if that thug of hers had faced the dead girl Bookworm55 faced, he would have presumably dealt with it by destroying it. Equally, perhaps, Bookworm would have found some way to communicate with the rot that "Matze" destroyed.

I suspect it's more a matter of us being assigned jobs based on the way we react in our interview. This seems to reinforce my earlier point about the Messengers assembling a team with a variety of different skills.

If you look at the abilities they give us, I think this theory becomes plausible. To be honest, I'm surprised more hasn't been made of this on hunter-net. The gifts I've been given, on the whole, allow me to either be a more effective leader or better student of our enemies. Bookworm, who joined me over here for a time, seems to possess abilities that allow him to get close to monsters without being hurt, so he can communicate with them. Brave boy, if a little naïve at times.

Of course, this is just the starting point. Some of us work in groups, and others apparently assemble when more people are imbued. (Who else might you turn to when your world is turned upside-down?) I think we have to determine exactly what we, as teams, should be doing. Maybe this is the second part of our interview. Our first was the moment we were changed. Our second is to determine a direction for ourselves as we come together. If we hit upon the right direction, and we manage to organize ourselves into demonstrably efficient teams, perhaps we will continue to advance.

I can only hope that the Messengers will choose to reveal their purpose at some point. I'm rather afraid they will just set us another test. Did we have predecessors who performed so badly that they had to be trained exhaustively? Has every generation of "heroes" gone through this much? That may be why there are so few real heroes in history. Very few of us can make the grade.

I'd like to develop these ideas a little further. Do you think we can set up a chat session shortly?

From forscherin263

I have talked of tests of killing, and some of us do that well, whether we do it to protect people or to hurt the monsters. I have also talked of tests of caring. What about people like you and me and Cassie, Witness1? How do you test a mind rather than the emotions?

It is not, as Sixofswords suggests, a test of leadership. That is only an element of it. To me, it is more that we are presented with a puzzle to solve than a crisis to resolve. We take more away from our imbuing than the satisfaction of averting disaster and the knowledge that monsters are real. We take away the first clue that will help us build a theory of what it all means. Hidden within that encounter, I believe, is a piece of data that we could use as a key to unlock the secrets that the angels have showed us. That is how important the event is, and why it affects us so. Is that not a common point for us all?

I was left with the question of finding a link between rats and monsters. Stella142 says he had to find the link between the dead that walks and its victim. Both of us had to deal with the aftermath of our encounter, and only then did we adopt a role like leadership.

Matze would laugh if I said I lead the boys. I do not lead them. I talk to my friend Andreas, who is very sweet and who always wants to protect me, and he listens. He then goes to Matze, who listens to Andreas. I do not lead the boys, though. That is Matze's job, as he so often says.

No, I do not lead. Instead, I examine what the boys have done and I look for the clues, those pieces of data that will

allow us to build a picture of what the hidden world truly is. I have the access to the data from the three of us, and other hunters whom I have met, like the lovely Lotus19.

When we all start to share our data and the findings we have made, then we might take steps toward understanding what we must do to meet the challenge the angels have set us.

A CERTAIN QUALITY

From sixofswords29

The imbuing does not really seem to change us. It changes our perceptions, our lives and our view of the world, but it does not make us different people, as far as I can tell. We retain the same basic characteristics that we did before. Our personalities remain constant, once we have recovered from the shock of knowing.

The sort of person that thinks rather than just acting, and who looks to the long term rather than to immediate needs after the imbuing is exactly the same type of person who did that before the imbuing.

You can't pin it down to anything as simple as a job, profession or education. Really, Witness, I expected better questions from you.

From forscherin263

I think many of us who take up the challenge of planning and understanding God's mission for us were those who lacked direction before the blessing. I was one of those. I had my degree and my job, but neither were exciting anymore. I just went from day to day without real purpose.

Then my eyes were opened by the angels and all that changed. Now, I understand the world. Now I have the purpose my life lacked. It was as if I was an empty vessel waiting to be filled.

The first thing I did was sit back and think "what does this mean?" I have never stopped asking that question. I will never stop asking it until I understand it all. When I understand it all, then I will help make a better world.

That is the second thing we must have: the skill to make our vision into the reality. I have my science. Sixofswords29 has his leadership. Witness1, you have the internet. There are many more. That is how we were chosen.

BEING IMBUED

From cassie247

Assuming some of the limits that the Heralds seem to work under, we can guess at what they might want by looking at what happens to us — the revelation. We know, from personal experience and the range of people on hunter-net, that the Heralds have had an effect all over the world, that they seem to reveal the truth to us, and that they might be the ones who give us tools with which to deal with our adversaries. If they take any direct action for or against the others, I haven't heard about it or seen any creature be taken care of mysteriously. I don't hear any stories that would suggest they actively wipe our adversaries out, or forcibly change their hearts. Otherwise, why would we be needed?

And yet, there is possible evidence of direct Herald intervention in monster activity: during the invasion of hunter-net by those two mysterious posters, Carpenter and Ichmail. Both seemed to find their way onto the list, past your impressive defenses, Witness (one of them even claimed to be repeatedly /forced/ onto the list). Then they seemed to vanish at approximately the same time. Witness, you yourself talked of your security being opened and closed. The whole event seems anomalous to me. I would expect to see those kinds of mysterious events repeated often, everywhere, if the Heralds took an active stance against the creatures. I posit that, by the

WHEN THE WIND BLOWS

From witness1

This was taken from hunter.list recently, during another of our regular discussions on the nature of the imbuing. It suggests that there may be another aspect to the revelation that we have yet to consider. I, too, felt a wind when I was imbued. While I can't subscribe to Tanguera's theory, I would dearly love to know why it happened, if it was anything at all.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: tanguera352

Subject: Re: Why?

Why do you not talk of the wind?

When I was chosen, I felt the wind rise and blow. I was inside a building and the night was calm, so this could not have been natural. The wind wrapped itself around me like the most passionate embrace, and I felt my breath disappear. I stumbled, but when I stood again, I knew I was different.

There is now much proof of my difference. My dream has caught the imagination of so many in the short time since I decided that things must be done. My words have spread to many of your countries already and I know that some of you have heeded them. More of you will, I know.

I do not mean to anger you but I think you do not talk of the wind because you are not as special as I.

I am glad you are not as special, because I cannot do everything. I need those like you to help me. I was blown by the wind because I am destined to lead. These others, who felt not the wind, will be the generals in my secret army as we destroy those who would take our control from us. The others, the killers and the protectors and the helpers and the spies, they will be the soldiers in our plan.

So that is why there is a wind: so that the soldiers may know their true leaders.

absence of such events, the Heralds devote the great majority of their time and energy to messing with us.

If that's true, it could mean they're trying to achieve their purposes through changed people alone. I've discussed what effects the change seems to have in common. Not /all/ factors are the same for all people, though. Some people receive a verbal message, like I did, while others claim that some written words are changed, or they have an extraordinary sensory experience, like a smell or a hallucination. Aside from our special sight and understanding, we don't all receive the same capabilities as each other, either. And some of us claim to be contacted by the Heralds repeatedly, while for others the first time appears to be the last.

I think you can look at the moment of awakening as an increase in energy levels, like an empowerment. Yes, we all seem to see the others at that moment, and yes we all seem to be contacted by the Heralds, but those are transient elements of the change, not lasting ones, and therefore, I propose, symptoms of the change rather than the purpose of it. If they were the purpose, why don't they last longer? Assuming that the enduring functions common to us all are the critical ones, the ones that most closely reflect the purpose of the Heralds, we should look most at the only two changes that we all seem to gain: the sight and the Word. I have not spoken to any awakened who has not received both of these things.

The sight allows us to recognize the truth about the creatures that claim our world. It allows us to identify our adversaries. If my experiences are common, our special vision does not apply all the time, though. We need to concentrate on it. That indicates to me that we're not supposed to concern ourselves with /all/ the others that are out there, just the ones that we encounter at times or places of our choosing. The implication is that we need to approach them tactically, or only worry about them during conflict. I don't think the sight is designed to save our sanity — the truth is so horrible that it wouldn't make any real difference. In fact, we'd probably be better off seeing all the time, to settle that gnawing uncertainty and paranoia that afflicts us when we don't. It could be because use of the sight harms us in some way, saps our strength or something. But if that were the case, frequent users might report some sort of trouble. I've never heard anything like that, but then maybe it's too soon.

The code allows us to communicate. I've formed some surprisingly complex messages with a bunch of symbols that I just seem to /know/. We also seem to understand what other writers say — as if we place meaning beyond the forms, like hieroglyphics. But even this special communication is limited. There's only so much that can be said, and we can't read each other's minds or sense each other's presence (that I know of). Would those kinds of abilities be infinitely more useful to us?

So, at the core of our purpose are two possible basics: We can choose to see and we can choose to communicate. To me, those are the characteristics of a person who blends into the background and life of the society she infiltrates, and waits for the correct moment to become active, like the Hashishim my history professor talked about. It's like we're supposed to blend into the crowd, yet be able to gather information and pass it on secretly. Remember that, and I'll get back to it shortly.

Some seemingly inconsistent effects of the awakening — continued contact (if it really happens) and our various gifts — might also tell us something about our state. In truth, although I list both of these here, I don't think that any ongoing contact from the Heralds is particularly significant, and might just be delusional. There seems to be no pattern to it, and while it may provide some sort of advantage — several posters have talked about being warned of traps or unpleasant situations — it also seems to cause a lot of confusion. Are such people (I call them "speakers") any safer than the rest of us? Assuming they're sane and telling the truth, a rational explanation might be that speakers are somehow easier to communicate with, that they have some kind of close tie to the Heralds. Presumably, our benefactors would aspire to give us all this level of attention, but cannot for one reason or another.

As for our powers, I wonder if there's a pattern to them, after all. It's difficult to be sure, but I've emailed a lot of different people, asked questions and taken notes. You see a lot of different attitudes toward the revelation, but I think we can break them down into four approximate groups: Kill the Others, Be Caring, Evaluate the Others and Consider Theories. I refer to the groups as Killers, The Caring, Evaluators and Theorists. Obviously, each division has some overlap, and each one includes a wide range of attitudes — it's hard to classify various and divergent people too stringently. However, there appears to be a correlation between groups of attitudes and the capacity for particular powers.

Many Killers, for example, report picking up pipes or boards and swinging them to devastating effect — much worse than anything they expected or could do before. Some caring report being able to heal the injured (although

some Killers, I note, claim to heal wounds, too). Evaluators tend to profess clarity of sight or insight, which makes sense for the category in which I place them. Theorists, which I consider myself, posit visions of possible events or even past ones. In all of these cases, the powers described seem to support or reinforce the roles or personalities or efforts of the people in these groups. It's as if individuals have roles to play, and they're given the particular tools they need to do it. I wonder, then, if our gifts are a product of our identities or if the Heralds match us to skill sets and intensify our attitudes at the same time?

It's quite possible that the Heralds brainwash us with a particular set of opinions when they awaken us. However, I'm pretty damn sure that my passions derive from who I was before. Now I just focus them on new subjects.

I was awakened in the shop. I was taking an order from a nervous young woman. I didn't think much of it at the time. Suddenly, I heard over the stereo — and much louder than it had been playing a moment before — "FOR WHAT DOES IT TRULY HUNGER?" Then I could see that the woman's companion was dead. He had to be; he was all covered with wounds and sores. I dropped the coffeepot, but tried to hide my disgust. I guess it worked, because he didn't seem to notice me — and none of the other customers noticed him!

I used the broken pot as a diversion to collect myself. After a minute or two I served them, still trying to figure out something to do. The guy was big and sort of looked angry. I'm only 5'2". The girl looked desperate to escape but scared to try. I couldn't just abandon her. My mind raced through possible actions and their results, like I was adding up a bill or something. When the girl came up to pay, I told her I /knew/, that I would call her back before they left, and she could make a break for it through the

kitchen. She seemed shocked at first, but caught on fast. She left her purse at the till as I suggested. I waited until they were just through the door, then called out to her to get her purse. The guy looked a little confused and irritated, but didn't stop her, or at least didn't react fast enough to. She ran through the kitchen and out the back door. I gave her a few seconds, then went outside and complained to the guy that the girl had run through the place. He was pissed. I thought for a second that he would crash back into the shop, but he stormed off, instead.

The point is that I tackled the problem as I've always done, by thinking it through, despite being scared out of my mind. Some people have accused me of being weak, said that I should have killed the guy. But how? He'd have killed /me/. I've always been more analytical than physical — I majored in History and Political Science. I wasn't on a sports scholarship or anything. Almost everyone I've spoken to says the same thing, that their past seems to lead up to the change and they respond to it based on who they've always been.

All this talk of similar capabilities and personalities guiding action leads me to believe that the Heralds fit us into groups closest to our personal natures. Some people are just going to react in particular ways, and maybe we're given capabilities based on that. That's shocking enough, but then you realize that if they do fit us into groups, then they're probably groups that /they have chosen/. In other words — and I know this will piss off a lot of Killers — each of us and therefore each of our groups is important. If they weren't, why would the Heralds make any of us (get used to that; they /make/ us)?

So, considering different groups may give us a clue as to what our creators are trying to achieve. We have Killers, the Caring, Evaluators and Theorists. What organizational



model does that fit? A trading or research group — a company, organization or financial market — has no need for killers. Guards perhaps, but not active attackers. We also don't really have any negotiators, so the Heralds don't seem to want to deal or sell. Many religions use Killers and the Caring, but they don't need Evaluators. If we were a cult, our aim would be to convert everyone. We also lack the charismatic/brainwashing abilities to make people or the others believe in us. So the Heralds don't seem to want to convert, either. To be of any use as a new social model, we'd need bureaucrats, archivists and workers, none of which we appear to have, so it doesn't seem like we're supposed to found a new Eden, at least not on our own.

The only major organizational model left to my mind is an army. A look at history books shows that armies do indeed use all four groups. The only roles we do not provide in terms of a military body are, to the best of my knowledge, the support roles of Scouts, Artillery, Engineering and Cavalry — people skilled at intrusion, long-distance offense, construction and maintenance, and rapid deployment. However, not all military structures require these roles.

In "Hunter Apocrypha," the author asserts that we are the last line of defense in the battle at the end of the world. If that were the case, I would expect to see us all have powers geared toward defense and protection. Some of us do, but nowhere near enough of us for that to be our only role. Think back to my earlier deductions about our common abilities — blending in and passing information. The roles we're missing are only vital to an army that fights battles out in the open. Neither blending in nor covertly passing information is particularly critical in a straight-up fight.

I think we are an army, but we are neither a shock force nor a last-ditch defense. We're guerrillas. We're outnumbered and outgunned, working for the weak side, fighting powerful and merciless invaders on our home ground. A hopeless task — except that in Vietnam, for example, the guerillas won. From reports of monsters' predation and manipulation of people, they don't fit in among us, but inflict themselves upon us. They don't belong among us, but use force and trickery to keep us down. That might mean they don't really know what being human is, and don't know that /we/ hide in the crowd. They can't pick us out, but we can identify them.

All this rationalization leads me to believe that we have a purpose, that we were created to do something specific: to overthrow the monsters from within. To adopt guerrilla tactics, plan and coordinate efforts, work in cells, and use our strengths and our ability to hide in plain sight to get the upper hand. Each of us has a role to play. The Heralds, wherever they come from and whatever they are, have recruited an underground resistance force to take control of the world back from the others.

A QUESTION OF PURPOSE

From witness1

I think the next section is of particular importance. SoS29 really hits the nail on the head with his observations. Too many of us ignore hard facts that don't suit our own worldviews.

From sixofswords29

It is difficult, but certainly not impossible (as Stella142 has proved more than once), to deny that the Messengers see our purpose as wide ranging, as I have already suggested.

Admittedly, it is difficult to read much into each individual contact with the Messengers. Their meanings often seem extremely cryptic, and always impermanent, leaving their only record to the fallible human memory. The fact that most of us are scared or almost witless at the time doesn't help, either.

Still, I have the impression that in situations where multiple hunters are present, they can receive different messages. How many people have reported being in the same place, but seeing or hearing or even smelling something different from the others there? If this is true, it implies that our patrons are consciously aware of the different types of people we are, maybe of the styles of hunting that we might employ. It also implies that they watch over us in some way, choosing who to direct in a particular fashion. That can be reassuring, in its way. While I don't want to sound like Crusader17 or Forscherin263, the Messengers almost sound like guardian angels.

On the other hand, some of the imbued claim to have very little contact at all with the Messengers, when they're changed or thereafter. Their imbuing involves a sign changing before their eyes, a creature appears — and that is all! They're left to their own devices from that point forward. Is that a mark of confidence in these hunters? I hope so, for I admit I do not hear from the Messengers, much as I wish I did.

Whatever they have in mind, I hope we manage to figure it out before long.

THE MISSION

From forscherin263

What do the angels intend for us? On this, I think, the Bible is a clear guide. In the Book of Genesis, chapter one, verse 26, it says: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'"

It never says that we do not rule over the creatures of the night or the bloodsuckers does it? God does not say "let them rule over everyone except for the dead that walk." He says "all the creatures that move along the ground" and when I look at a dead man who walks, I see him moving along the ground.

You must excuse my joke, Witness1. Andreas always says I do not treat our mission with respect, but I do not think he realizes yet how important it is to me.

So, I think God has seen that the monsters no longer respect their place and they try to usurp us of leadership over all that is created. We are the angels' choice for the ones to teach them their rightful position once more.

We must not get carried away thinking that we are new holy warriors, though. We are not new crusaders. They took their orders from kings and Popes, all of whom can be corrupt. We do not. We have been blessed by the angels themselves, and then left to our own choices. They have not, as far as I can see, appointed a leader from among us. This frees us from the pettiness of politics, so we can work together to fight the Devils. This, I think, is good.

Each of us must make our choice as to how we use our gifts. I think if we look at who we are we will find our way. I am a scientist, so I research. SoS29 is a manager, so he tells people what to do. Cassie247 is a thinker and a student, so she studies and thinks. I want to go to her coffee shop one day and talk with her. Maybe I could make her see that all ideas could be right, and not just her own.

The angels do not seem to bless the powerful or the rich very much. Perhaps they know that the poor are less likely to abuse our powers. I do not like seeing imbued like Tanguera352 and Flame61 gaining followers. While Tanguera seems nice, I worry that power can do bad things to a person. You do not need to look long at Germany to see the danger that causes and the damage that could be done.

Flame61 I distrust. She sets herself up as a religious leader, claiming a direct link to the Lord. I do not believe she has one any more than me or you.

THE VISIONARY ROLE

From cassie247

Believing that we are guerrillas does leave certain questions unanswered. Why are specific individuals awakened? What does it mean that there are no specific groups beyond the four that I list? What are our adversaries? What, in other words, is our sense of self?

These questions strike to the very heart of our identity. Answering them is one of the most important tasks for those of us who are theorists. As people, we all need something to focus on and believe in: a god, the world, even a career. Successful armies need causes to believe in, grand visions that justify personal sacrifices. We work far more effectively when we can hold onto accepted truths behind our causes. Without reasons, we lack focus and inspiration.

Because of the seemingly haphazard way that we are awoken, many of us have to find a sense of meaning in our own individual callings. That's good in one way, but it's also dangerous, because it promotes narrow-mindedness. In the absence of a greater sense of purpose around which all hunters can rally, a Killer becomes fixated on destruction, the Caring focus on helping, and Evaluators make only moment-by-moment decisions, none with clear sense of greater purpose. Without that sense, these people come to believe that their roles are the only worthwhile ones. That's when rivalries and dissension — the likes of which are all too obvious on hunter-net — emerge.

Sun Tzu teaches that any military operation needs to be united. There needs to be a clear chain of command, a strategy, and the different branches of the force need to respect one another. Since the Killers, Caring and Evaluators are preoccupied, I think we Theorists should encourage such respect, open-mindedness and unity. It's our role to analyze our larger purpose and explain it to the other groups, so that they have something greater to believe in than just their particular roles. Something that allows them to rally, despite their differences. Leading is not about giving orders or knowing what's best. It's about providing a focus to get behind so that specialists — who know what they're doing — can do so without distraction. It's impossible to over-stress that point. As Theorists, we are the glue that holds the awakened together. As long as the imbued remain divided, we fail at our appointed task.

In that spirit, I have considered the first question I discussed: 'Why us?' I think there's only one answer that fits the erratic distribution and timing of our awakenings. When a situation arises in which humans can be exposed to monsters without guaranteeing human deaths, the Heralds attempt to empower those people. We are the only ones mentally capable of coping with the truth and doing something about it. The rest can't handle it, whether ever or in that moment, and their minds shut out the Heralds and the truth. If I'm right, the next time you ask "Why me?" remind yourself that you might be stronger than everyone else. It helps — not much, but some.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From witness1

So, are we something new? That seems to be just one of the questions that haunts so many of us. Have people been changed like this before? Been confronted with revelations about a world they never imagined? Seen monsters? If so, what can we learn from them, and why don't we seem to know about them at all?

From sixofswords29

Don't be stupid, Witness1. Of course we're not new. I know that seems like a big assumption to make, but really. The adage "There is nothing new under the sun" is an adage for a reason. There have always been heroes who stood firm against the forces of darkness. Virtually every culture has legends of demon-slayers, monster hunters or bands of heroes who oppose injustice. How can something so universal be coincidence?

Look at the mythology of my homeland: King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, Robin Hood and his Merry Men. Bands of heroes facing injustice. Sounds like ourselves, does it not? Of course, there is precious little in the surviving legends to indicate that there were monsters involved in their conflicts, but why not?

One thing the collected wisdom of hunter-net makes very clear is that normal people cannot see our adversaries. They scream, they run and they hide. Their minds seem to deny what they experience. So, if at some future point we gain the numbers and enough evidence to go public, it's still likely to be a real struggle to get people to believe in monsters.

How much worse must it have been for our predecessors? Without the technology and mass-communication devices available to us, it would have been nigh impossible to convince anyone that there were real monsters, or at least the kind that truly existed. It might be impossible anyway. Look at how little impact that idiot Yank, the friend of Doctor119, had when he tried to go public on TV.

Little wonder, then, that the enemies of the old heroes were coined as "corrupt kings" or "witches" — basically, evil people. Those were ideas that the common folk could digest, even back then. Are we in any different situation today when we see tainted authority figures? We can't cry "werewolf," but we can cry corruption and seek to bring the things down by socially acceptable standards. We might even become heroes for it.

It appears to me that legends come in cycles: heroes rise, drive the monsters away for a while, and then fade out. The monsters rebuild their strength and influence to a certain point, one where they become a serious threat to the world again, and then a new breed of hero arises. These cycles take a really long time, though. It's, what, the better part of a thousand years since Robin Hood's day? Arthur was nearly a thousand years before that... Long enough for us to forget monsters, but not heroes. That's probably what they want, of course. "Forget we're here. No need for heroes. They're just legends," say the monsters. And we believe them.

Then they get sloppy, or maybe the Messengers notice them again and new heroes are born. We're just the latest in that cycle. Perhaps the greatest of us will be remembered in legend, like Arthur or Robin Hood. That's if we win, of course.

Even that boon Hyodor agrees with me on this one, which may or may not be good. He makes this point several times in his ranting, referring to previous periods when predecessors took up the fight against the monsters. I only wish they had left us more advice.

Or perhaps they did. Given the general climate of disbelief in the supernatural, maybe our predecessors found more cunning ways to leave us clues. How much did Bram Stoker really know when he wrote "Dracula"? The monster he describes there seems a lot like the monsters some of us have faced.

Before now, I wouldn't have been seen dead in the horror or fantasy fiction sections of my local bookshop. I might have to start looking, should I ever find the time. I'm in the office as I write this, as I can get away more easily with doing hunter-net stuff here than at home. My wife is growing less tolerant of the time I spend online. Maybe I'll take her out for dinner tonight. It's been a while.

A NEW BEGINNING

From forscherin263

I believe that we blessed are new to the world, and that the Lord has a purpose for us. The available evidence seems to show that we are no older, as a group, than a few months.

So why has the Lord chosen now to act? Are our enemies new to the world, too? Some new ploy of the Devil to lure our souls to damnation? Or has their evil simply become too much? Consider this: When the sins of the world became too much, the Lord sent the Great Flood to cleanse the earth. When the sins of its people needed redemption, he sent his only son to atone for our sins.

When the Fallen One's servants grow too strong, God chooses his own servants, us, to fight them. While a demon will lie in the service of the Adversary, the angels lead Carpenter160 to our online conference for a purpose. Within his lies there might be some truth. It makes me uncomfortable to use data from such an unreliable source, but we have so little pure information to work on. Every little bit must be analyzed as much as we can.

If the return of the dead from purgatory, or perhaps Hell itself, is a new phenomenon, then it is no wonder that the Lord has acted. Maybe these demons, the "hidden" as Bookworm55 terms them, have led the damned souls from Hell back to our world. The angels have chosen us to fight against the forces of the Fallen One.

THE ADVERSARIES

From sixofswords29

I sometime despair when I read the discussions on your list, Witness. Why do people find the supernatural so hard to accept?

The supernatural exists. That is a simple fact of our existence. It's only in the last few hundred years that we've really stopped believing in it. When peasants in their hovels huddled together for warmth in the night, they knew that monsters were at the door.

I doubt that they were any better prepared to cope with them than humanity as a whole is today. I'm sure they cowered or ran, just like we would, had the Messengers not granted us our strength against them.

However, the Messengers apparently felt no need to explain away the forces of darkness as anything but the supernatural. Our science and technology has insulated us from the darkness so much that we have forgotten that it's there, and now we can't deal with the truth.

And it's there. It always has been. It's no co-incidence that every form of mythology has its monsters to fight. It is a tragedy that our faith in science is so complete that we have recast the stories of monsters as nothing more than fables to scare our kids.

Perhaps Johnny-come-lately religions, like that watered-down pap Protestant Christianity and any of that nonsensical New Age, deny monsters. But the world's old religions have to know the truth. Monsters are real.

It actually disturbs me that people are so quick to accept new religions that some crackpot (or crack head) thought up in an idle moment, and so slow to accept the truths of the past. Why do we dismiss the knowledge of previous generations so easily?

It is my fervent hope that hidden within these stories are clues to beating the monsters back. Our predecessors seem to have succeeded - people are still here. They must have left clues. They must have. Would they really be so heedless of the future, so obsessed with themselves that they wouldn't think of their successors?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: cassie247

Subject: Re: Experiment

I've been following this thread with a sense of total disbelief. The idea that the Heralds conduct an elaborate experiment on the world has absolutely no evidence or logical support to back it up. What about a control group, experimental variance, or built-in systems? Why give us the tools that we have, not more or others? It's patently ridiculous. This is the sort of ludicrous crap that weakens us as a whole, and it should be stopped immediately. Professor Geo, I particularly blame you for lending credence to this discussion. You ought to know better.

It's just not good enough, people. Get it together.

ORIGINS OF THE SPECIES

From forscherin263

It saddens me that so few people believe anymore. I think I have talked more of my belief in God and Jesus in the last few months in my e-mails to you Witness1, than I have done in years. Other than the few who attend my church, I know few peoples who still follow the word of God. Too many of them are fanatics like Crusader17 or Joan296.

I think this is our problem. Too many people have lost their faith, and with every soul that strays, the powers of the evil ones grow stronger. We are so clever that we tell ourselves that good and evil are merely creations of the clever human brain, but this is not true. Good and Evil exist without us, and we can choose to serve Good or we end up serving Evil by doing nothing.

This is why I worry about Violin99 and the others who seem to want to hide from us and from the challenge. It is a shame, I think, because when Violin99 does post, he brings such wonderful data to us. I want more people like Violin99.

I am glad, but worried, by what Violin99 has done with the writings of the mad Fyodor. It cost many marks to have a copy sent to me, and it was hard to read at first. I tried many times and I think I understand it all. What he writes seems to make sense to me. We serve good. Evil tries to tempt us from the path. That is not new. The Bible has always taught us that. Perhaps it matters more to the blessed, though, for if we fall, our capabilities could allow us to do terrible harm.

I fear that Fyodor has fallen and that his writings were as the last words of Lucifer as he fell from Heaven.

THE UNDEAD

From sixofswords29

I keep seeing it: "If you really want to know the origins of monsters, delve into the records of the past: church histories, the tarot and the symbolism it contains, the oral tradition of the Druids. Mythology. Early horror fiction. It must be there somewhere."

I'm not a religious man, but I accept that religion provides a useful crutch for some people - for those who don't go to excess, at least. But religion does provide us with some interesting insights. The Catholic Church still performs hundreds of exorcisms each year, you know. They could just be pandering to people's fears and misunderstanding of mental illness, but I think we know why they're really doing it. There are ghosts out there possessing people, and no amount of medication or counseling is going to drive them out.

So, a quick test. Why are there ghosts? Well, the simplest explanation is that when people die, they don't want to let go. Isn't

that simple enough? Do we really have to behave like spotty teenagers, believing in aliens, or people from Dimension X, looking for ridiculous answers? Those of you who think they come from outer space are living proof that telly rots the brain.

As far as I can see, ghosts are the souls of people who should have gone on to whatever's next. Frankly, I don't know what's next. As I said, I'm not a religious man, so I'm not going to play that... guessing game.

But, really, there isn't much disagreement among ghost stories as to what these things are. Let's go the simple route and assume the stories are correct. We've seen nothing to prove otherwise.

Why are there vampires? I don't know. I may never know. They seem to have been around a long time. Now, perhaps understanding their origins would help us defeat them, but I doubt it. Knowing that every person I meet is the result of a sperm meeting an egg really doesn't help me persuade them to buy my particular brand of soap powder does it? So why would knowing how a vampire is born help me put a stake through its heart?

We have to stop obsessing over the past and start looking at the present and future. Vampires are real. They drink blood. There's a useful fact. You want to catch a vampire? What's the best bait? That's more useful to know than their history.

My personal guess is that the supernatural is just part of the world. In fact, "supernatural" may even be the wrong term. It's as much part of nature as what we term the "natural." I wish I could give you evidence of this, but I can't. If you can prove me wrong, please do.

If we want to investigate the source of vampires, perhaps we should go to the reputed source of the problem: Eastern Europe, the Carpathian Mountains and Transylvania, that "land beyond the forest." I note that we have few, if any, posters from Eastern Europe. That may be because the Internet has yet to make much of an impact there. Or it might be that the area is so rife with bloodsuckers that anyone imbued there has had a very brief "career."

Of course, even if the opposition is part of nature doesn't mean that we should accept it. Do we accept packs of wolves hunting us? No. Do we accept rats breeding in our basements? No. So why the hell should we accept rots staggering our streets?

Do you know what I really find offensive? The rots themselves. Dead people crawling out of the grave and tormenting the ones they claim to have loved. Some bloody love! If I die on the hunt, and there's every chance I will (a fact I accepted when I heard about poor old Seer6), my wife will mourn, recover and go on with her life. That's the way it should be. What sort of a husband would I be if I got back into my rotting body and went back to have a chat with her? A rotten one, pun intended. That's not love, that's obsession.

While I applaud Shaka74's attempts to go to the gombie homeland (much as I recommend here in regard to vampires, I suppose), and as much as I hope that his efforts didn't cost him his life, I cannot help but think his efforts were ill-conceived.

A significant portion of the rots we face do not act like the mindless gombies of movies. Many of them appear to have personalities and intelligence, or at least the semblance of them. Some of them actually appear to be the people they were in life. Like I said: selfish bastards.

In fact, they're so selfish it leads me to wonder if these things are really the dead come back to life. Some of them, the ones in better condition anyway, seem to have memories of the people they once were. Others, the ones in seriously decayed form, don't, or don't as far as we can ascertain.

That's got me thinking. Perhaps what's animating these corpses isn't ghosts at all. Perhaps it's a sort of demon that is able to plunder memories from the corpse it takes. The better condition the corpse, the more memories it's able to acquire and the better charade it can maintain.

If the demon gets a body that's close to falling apart, the brain is that much more decayed, so it can't plunder memories. Maybe that's why they come across as mindless. Actually, it wouldn't surprise me to find the reason they "shamble" is that a decayed body is much harder for the demon to handle.

This all begs the question, why do they bother? I can't answer that, I'm afraid. Funny, isn't it? Every time I come up with another answer, a few more questions spring to mind. Still, keeps us all busy, eh?

I'd better wind this up, Witness. My wife went to bed over an hour ago. If I don't go there will be hell to pay.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

From forscherin263

The answer as to where the monsters come from is simple to me. I will try to make this as understandable as possible, as I know many of you are not scientists. I also apologize for the poor quality of my English.

What we face are the servants of the Devil. Just as God made the animals and all the creatures of the earth, the Devil made monsters to mock Creation and spite the Lord.

One can easily understand the existence of the variety of adversaries in terms of ecology. In the natural world, there are various ecological niches into which species fits, from mankind to the earthworm. Each being finds a niche in which it can exist: a habitat in which to live, a food source on which to survive. If it can exploit these successfully and does it better than any other species trying to occupy the same niche, it thrives. If not, it dies and is replaced.

It is a basic principle that any niche, even if it is briefly empty, will be occupied by a being that evolves to fill it. If you accept the existence of evil, as I did even before I was blessed, then you might accept that these niches exist in the evil world as much as they do in our natural one.

Simply, the variety of beings we face has risen to fill empty niches.

The vampir, for example, preys on us as we prey on beings further down the food chain. This is how we know they are servants of the Devil, for did not God put us at the top of His order? Perhaps it is not truly as supernatural as the poltergeist is, for it feeds on the natural and the physical.

Could it be that the vampir is nothing more than a human that has given himself to the Devil? They look like us, yet they are corrupt. Perhaps the devil's mark is that corruption.

Some beings which are particularly successful create a niche that is too broad for them to occupy alone. They then break into various sub-species. I believe this explains the varieties of walking dead that we face. The basic species has split and adapted to different niches alongside each other. With further study and examination, we may be able to deduce much about them by defining how each differs from the other.

The same applies, too, to ghosts. Poltergeists and possessors seem to indicate some form of sub-division within the underworld. Understanding these differences may be the key to dealing with them.

What worries me is that these dead that walk appear to try to occupy our niche. I do not know what they have to consume to survive, but many of them live like us, wearing clothes, living in houses, working at jobs. The list archives

are full of tales of us discovering these "hidden" among us, even preying on us.

It is a blessing for all of humanity, then, that the Lord has chosen now to create us to oppose the creatures. A demon is better equipped to occupy our evolutionary niche than the average human is, I imagine. We, with the Lord's blessing, may be able to stop that from happening.

But then, I am left with the question, if we were created to answer the increase of demons in the world, what happened to them before to make their numbers low, and what happened since to birth so many new ones?

MAGIC AND THOSE WHO WIELD IT

I do not need science to explain those who use magic for their own petty purposes. This is very simple to explain. Let me turn again to my Bible.

2 Chronicles chapter 33, verse 6: "He sacrificed his sons in the Valley of Benn Hinnon, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger."

The link between the sorcerer and evil is clear? Perhaps this should be obvious to us. It is a simple question to ask, but many forget to do so, thinking only that wizards look like people and act like people, so are not monsters.

The simple question is this: How do those who use magic come by their power? Is it gifted to them, like the angels give us ours? In a way it is like us, only it is not the angels who give them power, in my opinion. I think they have dealt with demons, instead.

Some in the service of the Devil may yet be welcomed back into the service of God, but for the wielder of magic, it is too late. To obtain their power, they have already sold their soul and it is the Devil's for eternity.

The Lord councils against us making these trades in Deuteronomy chapter 19, verse 8. He makes it a condition of entry to the Holy Land that no one use magic. "Let no

one be found among you who sacrifices his son and daughter in the fire, who practices magic or sorcery, interprets omens, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults with the dead."

I am sorry for them but there is only one choice when dealing with wizards. Exodus chapter 22, verse 16: "Do not suffer a sorceress to live."

Many have criticized Fyodor for killing a hexe when she made herself known to him. While Fyodor claims to have done many bad things, that was not one of them.

From sixofswords29

Wizards, witches, sorcerers. What are we to think of them? They look human, but look wrong to our sight, or so I'm told. Yes, I'm speculating based on things I've read on hunter-net rather than through my own experience - again.

Perhaps they are merely people who have found a way to tap into the supernatural world and manipulate it to their own ends. The supernatural equivalent of scientists, perhaps?

Of all the enemies we face, I am most inclined to be lenient with these people. If we look at the legends of the past once again, we see these people split into two groups:

"Wicked Witches": The archetypal evil spell-casters, from Morgan Le Fay to the witch in Snow White. They are always power-crazed and obsessed with their own importance. They strike down those who oppose them or who are better than them in some way. I am reminded of Dr. Faustus, who sold his soul to a demon for power.

"Helpful Mentors": Merlin is the obvious example. These are the figures who tutor the young hero, but who remain in the background. They seek the betterment of the world, not personal power, and seek magical knowledge for that end.

So, which of these best describes the wizards we face? Based on what I have read on the lists, both and neither. They do seem to vary on a case-by-case basis. Perhaps we should judge each on its own merits, as we would any other human being, if that's what they still are.

If I'm right with the scientist comparison, then they could be very useful to us. They may know about the supernatural, information passed down from master to apprentice (I'm aware that there are a whole load of assumptions buried in that one sentence). Certainly Bookworm55's experiences with Purple seem to bear that out. I seem to recall something on the Vigil list in a similar vein. I think it was Instructor who talked about a sorcerer saving his life.

The danger, I imagine, is that it's very difficult to tell if you have a helpful mentor or a wicked witch on your hands. Watch them. Don't trust them. But hope that there might be some good in them. Without that, things seem very bleak indeed.

I can't help wondering why people don't believe in magic any more. History tells us they used to. Then everyone decided magic was a con, suitable only for stage shows. Yet, we know there are real magicians. So why did people stop believing in them? Maybe the wizards went away. The monsters were hiding, so there wasn't any use for them anymore. Now the monsters are back, the heroes are back and so too are the would-be advisors.

MAN-BEASTS

From forscherin263

There are werewolves. We have legends in Germany that tell of them being hunted here only a few centuries ago. Some people on hunter-net have said that we can talk to these man-beasts, that we have common cause. I say you are fools. Every "werewolf" we have met has been a raging

QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

From stella142

witness1 wrote:

>What are hunters?

Hunters are people. The gifts that we have are just an expression of our true selves. There's nothing special about us, we just care more or hate more or feel more.

Or we are the chosen instruments of divine justice, raised above other people to guide and protect them.

One of the two, anyway, I think.

>Where did monsters come from?

They are people, too, just gone horribly wrong. Our minds show them at their worst, because we've "woken up." To normal people, they appear as we do... just ordinary, everyday folks.

Either that or they came slaving from the pits of hell to consume our immortal souls.

>What's the role of a more thoughtful hunter, like yourself?

To ask these questions. Not the questions that you're asking, but the ones you force me to ask myself as I write this. To search for an apparent truth and to disprove it or to believe it. The search is what matters.

beast that tried to kill us. Other hunters I know here say the same thing. They show no mercy in the way they treat us. We must do the same.

Where do they come from? This is what I started to say at the beginning of my e-mail. There are more than just wolf-men. Other beasts are reported, too, as at <http://www.hunter-net.org/huntersurvivalguide>.

Now, I am a scientist and I know that science does not allow an animal and a man to be the same being and to change in size. Where does all the mass go when they do so? There is no answer to that question, so I must turn to the supernatural for an explanation.

This is not easy for me, but I was able to examine the body of a man-rat not long after I was blessed, and I could not find anything unusual about it. Once it had died and become a rat once more, it seemed to be a normal animal, although large. I see a lot of dead rats in my work. I am sure it was just the same.

But I did find something. It carried a terrible virus that could have caused much illness should it have escaped. This is interesting. Maybe it was never really a rat-man. Perhaps the angels' gift just made me see it that way to show me it was dangerous. When Matze killed it, it stopped being so dangerous, because it could no longer bite anyone, and so I saw it as it really was once more.

We may misunderstand what the Messengers really show us. Maybe fangs and rotting flesh are just signs of danger, not of supernatural monsters. This is something to ponder, for if it is true it changes everything.

If this is not the case, where else can I turn for advice? The Bible does not give guidance on such creatures as it does with wizards.

I know the man-beasts must be the work of the Devil in some way. What cause would he have for combining man and beast into one body? I cannot believe that he does it to elevate the animal to our state. What harm would that cause an animal? Perhaps he does it to lower man to the level of an animal.

Could the man-beasts be servants of the Devil who have failed him? As a punishment, he has made them one with the animals, to make them lower than other men. Once he has done this, he leaves them on earth to do his work. No wonder they are all so angry.

I do not know if this is true. I do not know how to test it. But these are the only theories I have.

From sixofswords29

Perhaps I can help Forscherin. I'm going to turn to legend again, if I may. There's lots of talk in European mythology of witches who consort with animals, and who can shift their shape into animals.

What if those witches were to, well... breed with animals? Who knows what the result could be? Have those witches fathered (or should that be mothered?) an entire race of animal/man crossbreeds?

I have encountered man-beasts. Some months after I saw one in Ipswich, I took a week off work to try and find it again. The rest of my team joined me. I told the wife I was at a work conference, so she didn't wonder why I wasn't taking her on my holiday.

We spent days scouring the Suffolk countryside for the slightest trace of them, with no success. On the Wednesday, over lunch in a village pub, we decided to split up to cover more ground. That night I found myself a room in a pub in a small village not



far off the A12. I was at the bar when I concentrated my sight, on the off chance. The barman was wrong. Not very wrong, but off nonetheless. There was something almost feral about him, though I still can't put a finger on how. After I'd finished my meal, I pretended to head up to my room.

Instead, I hid outside in the car park and waited. The last of the customers were kicked out not long after 11.30. Shortly after, the barman said his goodbyes and headed off on foot. He was whistling cheerfully, so I was able to follow him without too much effort. Within 10 minutes, we were deep into the countryside. He leaped over a fence and headed off through a field toward some woods.

I decided not to follow directly, but skirted around and approached the woods from another direction. About 20 minutes later, I found myself feeling very lost. As a precaution, I steeled myself for trouble. Just as well. Shortly after I did, a series of howls broke the silence. I was barely able to keep from running for my life.

Even though I was convinced I was about to die, I edged toward the sound. I could see a bonfire ahead, through the trees. A whole gang of man-beasts cavorted around the fire, howling and singing. The man I had followed sat at the edge of the clearing, laughing and singing, too. One of the monsters broke from the crowd, shrank down into the form of an attractive woman, kissed him - and I mean really kissed him - before starting to undress him.

I had seen enough. Despite the fact that I'm sure my heart was beating loud enough for any fool to hear, I crept out of the woods and ran back to my car.

What did I decide to do? Nothing. We weren't strong enough or trained enough to deal with a group like that. One day, I'll tell the others and we will go back to deal with those things. But how many of the villagers will be tainted in the meantime?

They breed with people. My god, what does giving birth to a monster like that do to you? What is making love with one like? I shudder to think.

THE NATURE OF MONSTERS

From cassie247

Finally, the /nature/ of the others. I'm afraid I don't know how they're created or where they come from any more than I know where the Heralds come from. What I /do/ know is that they are predatory and violent, and they consider people inferior. That can easily be deduced from the way they lord over us, like an occupying army. Many of them are actively malevolent, and even those that aren't are disinterested at best, if general reports from the list are anything to go by. They are also here, on our turf, using us in whatever way they consider convenient - look at the way they've infiltrated politics, crime and television. Whether that, like Vietnam again, is a result of a larger struggle between two giant powers, or whether they are here because they have nowhere else to go, the result is the same. They are our enemies. They stand in direct opposition to all the things we stand for.

Altruism is extremely worthy, and every convert that the Caring can make among monsters is a victory in the broader struggle, but at the moment the others swamp society and push us toward destruction. Just look at all our violence, tension, bigotry and envy. No one has time for anyone else anymore. That's not our natural tendency - we're a social species, like other primates. Monsters' influence can be seen throughout government, finance and entertainment. They're in places of power. They're obviously the ones to blame, and they're trying to force us into the abyss, probably because that would make them even more comfortable. We have to overthrow them. You don't recruit an army to reconcile. You do it to win.



CHAPTER 2: REALIZING YOUR VISION

He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.

— Job 20:8

From witness1

It's important to understand what's going on around us and to look ahead to know where we're going. It makes a huge difference in how we cope with our burden. But staying alive long enough to develop that understanding is vital to achieving any overriding goal. We've been forced into a real struggle, not a theoretical exercise, and we need to keep that in mind. On this page, I've collected a number of suggestions and ideas for operating in the field. Pay attention to the real world. It's our greatest strength as we try to realize our dreams against the unknown. I lost sight of that and a friend died. Don't make the same mistake.

THE BIG PICTURE

From cassie247

The first two or three weeks after the imbuing are the hardest. If you've made it this far, I'm sure you understand. I was pretty scared after I helped that girl. I hadn't assimilated it, made any sense of it. I closed the shop and went out into the city, just walking. At first, I think I was just trying to get away from what I'd seen. I wasn't really aware of anything around me. After a while, I started to get paranoid. What if that dead guy was following me? He might want revenge. I was pretty irrational. I started looking around a lot, staring at people.

That's when I started to see them — here a person with something inside, there some revolting walking corpse. I ran through the market and wound up in a church. I don't know why I went in, but in my state it

seemed like a haven. I spent the afternoon there, sitting in one of the pews, just trying to make sense of it all. Eventually, I started to come to grips with myself. I told myself the change was in my perception, not in the world. Everything still seemed to be going on as usual. Other people were reacting normally to the various /things/ walking among them, plain as day. No one was panicking in the streets. The cops weren't trying to keep mobs under control. Somehow, that was reassuring, but it meant something was different about /me/.

The real key to our new life is that we all need something to believe in, something to help us make sense of what's going on. If you can point to something bigger than yourself and credit it with (or blame it for) the state of the world, you can transfer the pain, horror and misery away from yourself. You see it in the war vets who stay sane. That sort of externalization makes things a lot easier to cope with. The world is nasty enough as it is, to be honest. People used to resort to religion and now they turn to or blame TV for escape. "Apocrypha" is on the money about that. But TV won't meet our needs. It's just a thing. This is real. We're real.

That need for belief is something I try to use to the advantage of the imbued. Other Theorists could do the same. I'm good at putting complex pieces together into comprehensible pictures. Most of us have our own ideas of what's really going on and what everyone is supposed to do. We're not all right — by a long shot, and I'll get into that more, later. But in order to fulfill my — our — designated roles as Theorists and to strengthen the imbued as a whole, I believe we need to be out there explaining our thoughts to others, persuading them to

share in our visions. Our duty is to look to the big picture and point people in the direction of an ultimate goal, something bigger than any single person, but not bigger than us all. It would be something we could work toward and find purpose in, replacing TV and maybe even replacing religion.

In essence, pointing to a goal and encouraging people to believe in it isn't that different from what preachers and evangelists do. Religions would die if they didn't set followers minds on something else — something that can't quite be quantified yet that can't quite be dismissed, either. That said, I'll let you in on the secrets of the guru trade. (There's a lot to be learned by hanging out with the overeducated in a college town. That, and college kids are highly susceptible to suggestion, despite how smart they think they are.) There are three keys to successfully persuading someone to believe in a mystical ideal. You need to appear wise, target the receptive and back up your claims with evidence.

Wisdom is shockingly easy to imitate one-on-one. I've been doing it for years. First of all, listen to your target. Let them talk to you. Encourage them. Be sympathetic. Let them pour out their hopes and fears. Get them to open up. You do this by smiling, nodding, saying the occasional "uh-huh," and most of all keeping your mouth shut.

Then, once they realize they've said more than they feel comfortable with, they'll clam up, but they're vulnerable. Tell them some things they want to hear. How good they are, how insightful, sensitive or right they are. Make some comments that pander to their stereotypes, whether they're jocks or artists or environmentalists. Tell them an anecdote that reinforces their beliefs. They'll believe they were right to open up to you, and they'll start trusting you.

Finally, as the clincher — and this is where you really appear wise — tell them some truths that they don't want to admit, but that they know deep down. Pick something that's a core part of their world and tell them something about it that they don't want to hear, like they can't maintain relationships because they demand too much, that they can't commit to any goal because they're afraid of failure, or, in our case, that they feel lost in this new world because they were lost in life before and never acknowledged it. Be sympathetic, but don't shrink from rubbing it in. They'll be bowled over by your insight and perception.

If you want them to do what you want after all that — ideally follow you — tell them you can show them how to overcome their problems. That's the point where you explain your personal theories. Put them over as fact and tie them into the target's needs and insecurities as much as possible so as to hammer the message home. That's where the second factor comes in: the target's vulnerability. There's no point in trying to convert someone who already believes in something else. It rarely works. Your impression of wisdom will be flawed to them, because your answers won't be their answers. Instead, select people who are confused, hurt, depressed or otherwise directionless, as many imbued are. They'll be really eager for anyone to make sense of the world, and be grateful to you for showing the way.

The third factor, evidence, is far more nebulous. It depends on your theories. I base my perceptions on rational deduction, so I can go through things step by step as evidence. If A leads to B and B leads to C, then they all must lead to D. It's pretty convincing. You may need to point to events in the real world, common experiences at the imbuing, the shock of receiving gifts, visions of creatures — anything that backs you up. Make a good case and the target's yours.

And before you say anything about manipulation or abuse Witness, remember that our purpose as Theorists

is to give the awakened something to rally around — to help them to stay strong. Beliefs give them power. We're not abusing anyone. We're helping save their lives.

Which brings me to other Theorists. Many of us have ideas that can all work well together. I focus on the structure of our purpose, and how we should operate as guerrillas. Witness, you believe we should all work together through the Internet. Those two positions are complementary. In fact, many of our collective ideas as Theorists /do/ fit together. We have /pieces/ of the big picture.

Some, however, do not, and their ideas clearly and obviously fail to fit in with the larger tapestry. Irrational, ill-fitting theories can still serve a role as a focus for a small group to follow, but they should not be allowed to spread. They weaken our cohesion — no problem really for a cell or two, but a big problem if they become widespread. Those Theorists that we identify as divisive should be primary targets for conversion to a more complementary position. This is critical. I suggest bringing together agreeable theorists in a semi-formal association, with a collective plan, and then try to bring dissenters around. If they won't play ball, they should be isolated as much as possible from the bigger ideal. As their predictions and hopes fail to come true, they'll lose their followers anyway, so there will be little long-term danger.

THE FIRST FEW DAYS

From *forscherin263*

I felt so much in those first few weeks that it is difficult to explain. I shall try. I felt fear, that the monsters were real. I could not leave my home for some days. I was so afraid as to what I might meet. I telephoned my lab and told them I was ill. Then, I started to feel just a little bit of excitement as I considered if perhaps a new world had opened up before me. I felt pleased that I had helped deal with the rat-thing that could have harmed others (if it was real at all...).

Soon, I could not sleep. I kept thinking of that one word, "BEWARE." I was told so very much and so very little in that moment. Then the dreams came when I was awake. I do not think I would have got through it if Matze, Andreas and Stefan had not been there that first time. They already knew. They had already met, and helped me understand.

After a while, when I was not with them or at work, all I could do was think about what I had learned and before long I wished to know more, much more. My old friends did not see me anymore. I had no time for them.

Sometimes I would just sit at my window of my apartment, watching and hoping to see something. I never saw another rat-thing, but there were so many dead that walked. I must have seen two or three in one week. Then I saw a woman who had something inside her. I could not tell what it was, but it seemed like there were two people inside the same body. It was very disturbing. For a while, I thought perhaps all this had happened to me, that something that had come inside me and made me see these things.

That woman made me wonder who I had become, or at least who might have joined me. So I looked in the mirror and studied myself in the same way I saw that first time. But I could see nothing different. I saw nothing special about Matze, either, so I took solace that I was not host to another.

I began to think that the demons were here on earth and that God had a purpose for me. I have not come up with a better theory yet. At the time I was scared, though, so I did nothing. Matze grew impatient after a short time and said the only way I was to come to my senses would be by joining them out there. The three of them came to where I live, took me out

and showed me that the evil can be defeated. Once I realized that my studies could help them, I stopped being scared.

From sixofswords29

Denial. That's what I went through. I tried to pretend that none of this was happening to me and that the monsters were only in America. Apparently, the Messengers weren't having any of that.

Once I knew that the things were everywhere, I knew I needed to find others like me. I knew there were some others, because I had met Seer6 and his people in New York.

MEETING OTHERS

This is the first and most important piece of advice I offer to anyone with whom you share this, Witness: If you're new to all this, find others like yourself. They exist. They are the only ones who can keep you sane. Your head is full of questions and ideas and revelations and nobody else, no one who hasn't seen, will believe you.

More to the point, you don't have the right to tell the people who haven't seen. Remember how your world was shattered when you found out the truth? What right have you got to inflict that on someone else? I have never tried to tell my wife about my other life. It would be selfish of me, so I'm not going to. End of story.

This begs the question, though, of how to find others? Thankfully, the Messengers have provided us with a tool to do just that: the Word. The symbols that we all seem to know and understand. If you haven't seen them yet, you will. It will scare the hell out of you the first time. It still scares me that I know and can understand these things.

You can do one of two things: You can put a symbol on a wall somewhere and hope someone finds it, or you can be more creative. I was more creative. I put what I call a "summoning"

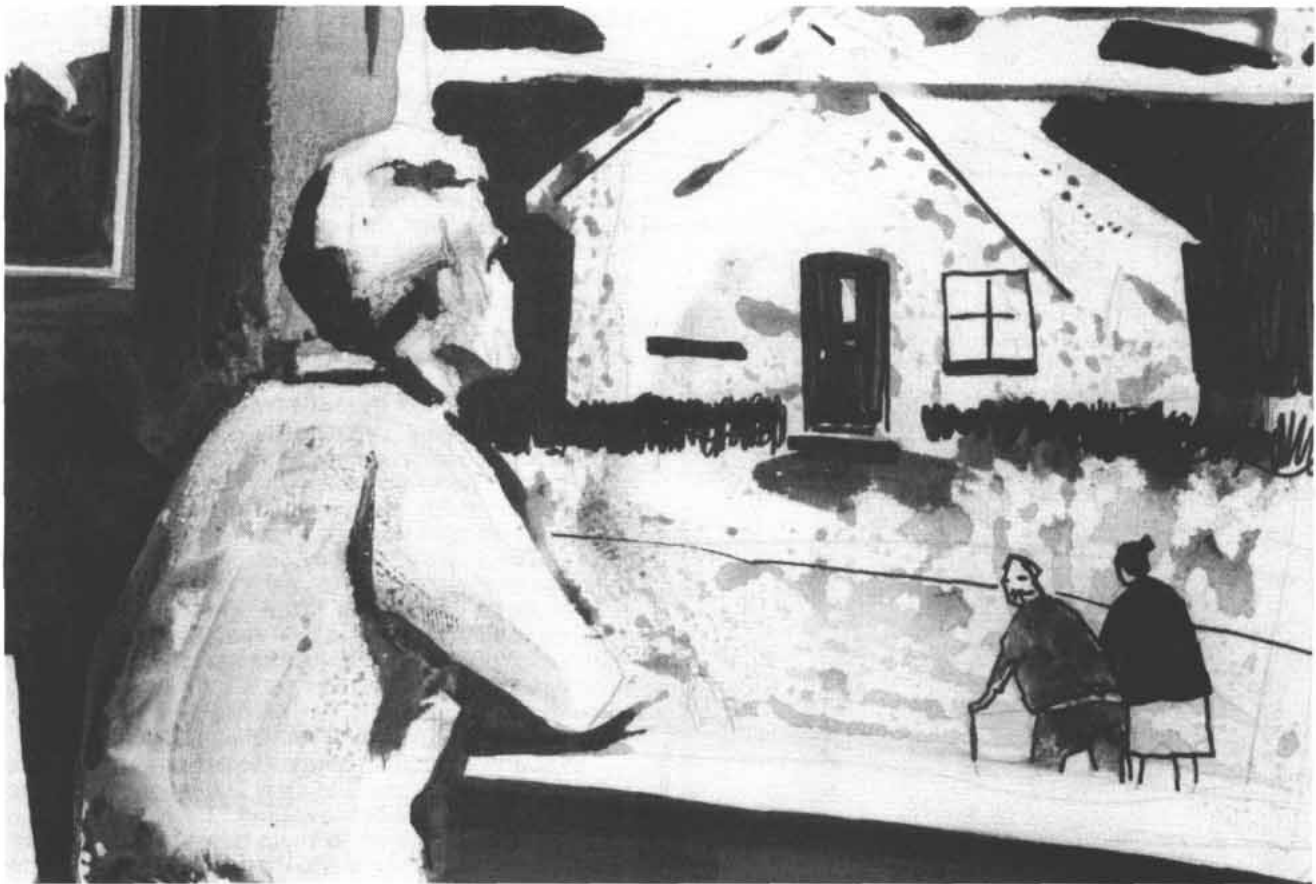
symbol in a small ad in the local paper. Somehow, it lets us know about each other. Within two weeks, I had the nucleus of a group as three others joined me.

I've since discovered that there may be a more direct way to bring other imbued to you. It's actually possible to use the summoning sign to "call" hunters actively. It's difficult to explain, but it's like instinctively seeing a light in the dark and knowing where it leads. I know it sounds mad. But what doesn't about our new existence?

As far as I can tell, and I've spent a lot of time on hunter-net, we haven't yet had any reported instances of the adversaries deciphering the Word. One or two monsters became aware of its existence, I believe, but they couldn't understand it. As long as things stay that way, and pray to God they do, it remains an extremely useful way of reaching out.

Another way of finding others is through hunter-net. The list's restrictions preclude us from revealing personal information, but seemingly innocuous references from other posters can occasionally suggest that they're nearby. It's pretty easy for me to spot a fellow Brit, for example. The difference in language and spelling is usually a give-away (although where Dole7 picked up the vile American habit of using "pissed" to mean angry, I don't know. "Pissed" means drunk to us, so every time you colonials use it in your posts, you give us Brits an unintentional laugh).

Another cunning trick is to find some way of carrying a symbol on you. Marked on a bag, as a badge, or even on a shirt. Anything to increase your chances of meeting another of us just a little. It will make a world of difference for you, beyond even the relief that comes from expressing your fears, concerns and ideas on hunter-net. There's only so much comfort we can take in cold technology.





GETTING THINGS DONE

From cassie247

As figureheads and symbols of the resistance against our adversaries, we need to remain visible. We also need to remain alive and well. Our primary purpose lies in providing answers and faith — mental support.

I've got some tips on practical leadership. Maybe there are some Theorists out there who manage to combine insight and inspiration with leading from the front, gun in hand, but I'm not convinced. If I could fight, I'd have been a Killer, and I think that holds true for most of us. I know that I'm quicker to analyze a situation than to just jump in. Some other people I've met who I'd call Theorists seem inclined to indecision. We think, we don't so much act. In other words, we owe it to the rest of the awakened to keep ourselves alive by keeping our heads down and, when action is called for, keeping our big mouths shut. We have a solemn responsibility to keep out of harm's way as much as possible. If we're dead, we can't help provide direction for anyone.

There is a problem with that, though. Many of the more action-focused awakened seem to resent caution almost as much as they resent leadership. So getting others to do what needs to be done without being a tyrant or a coward is extremely important. In a regular military operation, there would be a clear chain of command, but we don't have that luxury. Instead, Theorists need to work with other imbued, to persuade them to do the right thing. What business gurus euphemistically (and sarcastically) call Talent Management, and what Machiavelli talked about in "The Prince."

There are different ways of working with different groups of awakened. The Killers are direct and many of them are extremely angry about monsters. That's a useful tool we can use to influence them. If you want Killers to go after a specific creature, talk them into a frenzy. Tell a couple of stories about the evil acts that the thing has performed. Give some graphic detail about the horrible wounds suffered by victims, the grief of the bereaved, and the trauma of survivors.

Then, once they're really offended by it, set it up as a soft target. If your Killers are cautious, point out a weakness or vulnerability that won't necessarily last too long, or reveal a habit they can use to prepare an ambush. If they're hot-headed, tell them that although you know where the lair is, you could never let them go after it — it would be too dangerous. You can make them think it's their own idea by asking the right questions such as, "Do you think it might have something that it's 'attached' to in its neighborhood?" or whatever fits the situation. By the time you've finished, you'll have them pulling at the leash.

With the Caring, you need to take the opposite approach. Paint a creature as a victim or a person in need of help. Describe how it's trapped by its situation. Tell the Caring about an oppressive creature hampering the one you want helped. Make them as sympathetic as possible. Once you've prepared the way, you can proceed to soften the objective according to the caution levels of the people you're persuading. Statements like, "I wish we could do something to help, but I can't think of anything" work well. You can also try just being honest, explaining what needs to be done and why it's critical, and asking them to help. (I wouldn't try that tack with most Killers. They'd start fighting no matter what you wanted.)

Evaluators are best spurred to action with creative indecision or ignorance. The ones I've identified love to lecture or show off their knowledge. "Here's what I know that you don't." Explain to them how you can't understand a particular being or situation. Ask what they know

about it, or if they can help unravel the mystery. Flatter their vanity. Make them think you feel inferior to their mighty intellects and they're quite easy to maneuver.

As for us, well, we just love to be believed, don't we? Keep telling a Theorist how correct and insightful he is, how he makes everything clear, and he'll be only too happy to help you with every little problem you have. They'll go find you the information you need in order to guarantee your respect and admiration. I'm no different — a real sucker for a sycophant.

One final word about information management. Avoid lying to people, because many of them can pick it up easily. I learned that early on in college. If, however, you try to persuade someone to do something in the face of sense or reason or even conflicting information, do your best to hide the facts that get in the way. Make sure your lapse in information is plausible, or else the person won't trust you again. Ignorance can be a very useful tool, too. Always at least hint at possible dangers, though; it's totally unfair to send someone into a situation blind. We need to respect each other more than that if we're going to have a chance of winning back the world. If you / absolutely / need to sacrifice someone, and the loss is justified in terms of your overall plan, be prepared for the guilt to follow. We're still human, after all.

TEAM-BUILDING EXERCISES

From sixofwords29

Once you've found others, how do you go about making a team out of them? It's far easier said than done. The imbued react to the evidence that monsters exist in all sorts of ways. Some want to kill them. Some want to heal them. How the bloody hell do you get them to work together?

You have to get them thinking outside the box. Let me explain. It's very easy for them to get focused on their own individual way of doing things. I want to kill monsters. Ergo, I kill all the monsters. There must be good in the vampires, let's bring them back onto the side of the good guys. These two attitudes appear incompatible.

They're not. It's all a question of making people see the big picture. That, if anything, is what we thinkers are here to do. If you can make them understand that their individual aims are best served through cooperation, you've taken the first step. If you can get them to accept that their own agendas are the right way to deal with only some of the other side, then you've taken the second step.

What too many of us do, I suspect, is fail to take that second step. You have to give them the chance to act according to their own inclinations, but to also show them where other ways work under the right circumstances. No one likes to be told they're wrong all the time.

Thankfully, getting people to see the light isn't as difficult as it sounds. The memories that demons gain from possessed bodies could affect them in different ways. The strength of particular memories may be so great that it could twist the way a demon thinks. They seem to become obsessed with something their hosts left unfinished in life, or in avenging a memory that is so painful it overwhelms even the possessor.

Sometimes, but not often enough, they controlling demons seem to gain some of the moral standards of the person they once were." As a result, many of the walking dead can be negotiated with and even talked out of their plans. So, you send a talker to deal with them, and he's glad to pursue the agenda he thinks is right on the hunt.

Of course, if you have a group of shamblers tearing up a street, send out the fighters and protectors to destroy them and minimize the damage. That's what they think is right, and that's what they do best. This is where our theorizing and coordination skills come

in so useful. Working like this, we can stop allies apparently antagonistic agendas from clashing, and still work as a group.

One of my particular successes has been working on a "need to know" basis. If S___ has been working with a monster that we feel can be turned, even if for a little while, I don't tell E___ about it. There are two reasons for this, the public and the private, if you like. The public reason is that if, heaven forbid, any of us should be captured by the other side, we can spill less damaging information about the group and what it knows. That's one of the reasons I've avoided telling my team about hunter-net. It minimizes the chances of this vital resource being compromised - yet again.

The private reason about leaving some allies in the dark is that E___ would do his nut if he found out we'd got that close to a monster and didn't let him at it. Since E___ doesn't muck things up, S___ and I learn about the other side and I can share our discoveries with people here. (Actually, on second thought, Vitalis might be the best place for that sort of information.)

Anyway, by using these techniques, which are little more than basic effective-management skills, you can fuse a group of fairly disparate individuals, who have nothing in common but their imbuing, into a useful team.

Your job is therefore to take this team and use their skills to deal with the challenges the Messengers have set us. I've got my own ideas of what to do next, and I'll outline them later. You must decide your course. Let's see which of us is right.

From forscherin263

Matze was the one who they all listened to. He had seen one of the dead that walked kill someone and he thought they should all die, so no one would ever be hurt again.

"How can it be bad to kill what is already dead?" he asked, and nobody could think of an answer. I could see that this worried Stefan, so I talked to him. He thought there might be some good left in the creatures, that the dead were still the same people they were when they lived and that we should talk to them.

I do not agree with him, for I think that what he believes is what the Devil wishes us to think, but I found myself with a plan. I could make Stefan happy and make Matze happy. It would make me most happy of all.

I talked to Andreas of how we needed spies. Any war needed spies to tell us what the bad people were doing. Perhaps Stefan could be our spy. I knew that Matze would not listen to me, but he might listen to Andreas.

He did listen, and soon when we found a dead that walks that was doing nothing bad that we could see, we sent Stefan to talk to it. It was not easy. The dead wanted to be left alone to live its life. We thought that funny and bad at the same time.

Stefan met and talked with the dead that walks, which he called Otto. After some weeks, he asked us to come with him. Matze was excited. I think he thought that we would get to make Otto dead again, and we did I suppose.

Otto and Stefan took us to a churchyard. It was overgrown with weeds and had not been cared for in many years, I think. Stefan asked us to help him tidy it up. It was hard work. Otto just sat and watched, growing quieter as the day drew on. At last, just before she became dark, we were done. Stefan put his hand on Otto's shoulder and Otto crumbled to dust.

I could see that Matze was both happy that it was gone but sad that he did not get to strike it. He is such a boy at heart.

Stefan thinks we made Otto's soul happy, so he left. I do not think so. I think the demon in Otto could not stand the goodness in our hearts as we cleaned the holy place, and was forced back to hell.

I have not told them yet what my big plan is. I do not know how they will react. I do not think Stefan will like it, but I think Andreas and Matze will both see its good points. Andreas will see it as a way to protect people and he will be happy. Matze will see that it makes his enemy weaker, and he will be happy.

What should I do about Stefan? I do not need to tell him just yet, I think. I do not know enough facts about our adversaries to create my virus, but I pray to the Lord that he will send enough monsters to me that I may study them.

Maybe by then I will think of a way to explain to Stefan that this is the work of the Lord that we do.

NOT LETTING GO

From sixofwords29

Once you've got your team together, you have to find a way of reconciling hunting with your normal life. I don't pretend that this is easy. It takes organization. It takes sacrifice. But it can be done.

I'll illustrate by explaining how I did it. Perhaps you can apply some of these lessons to your own lives.

SOCIAL CONCERNS

There's two halves to most of our lives: social and business. Let's deal with the social first. First of all, you're going to have to let some things go. Sorry, but that's the way it is. I loved playing golf. I really did. Every Saturday, I'd be down by the clubhouse with the boys from the office. I can't remember the last time I was on a golf course.

Frankly, most of our social lives are so much extraneous clutter that can be dispensed with when something more important comes along. The mission is more important. That's all there is to it.

Do try and keep your family and really close friends happy, though. We all need the chance to step away from the hunt. I don't claim to always be successful at this. I think my wife gets a little upset at times, particularly at the amount of time I spend on the Internet in the evenings. I don't have much choice. My hunter-net research is absolutely vital to the continued success of my team. She'll appreciate it one day, I'm sure of that.

PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS

Then, there's the business side of life. I suppose I'm lucky in a way. I've been selling for 20 years and I've been managing other salesmen for half that time. Frankly, I can do the job with my eyes shut. My boss is a lazy bastard who doesn't really keep tabs on me as long as my team continues to hit targets. And we do.

The knack is to both protect and take advantage of your job. I provided the company with a good business justification for me to be on the road more. They bought it and provided me with a mobile phone and a laptop.

These allow me to both remain in continuous contact with my business and hunting teams and to keep my wife in the dark as to what I'm actually up to. I never bother to give her hotel numbers anymore. She just calls the mobile.

I can exploit my nationwide sales role to scout the country for monsters. Once I've found and assessed a threat, I dispatch the appropriate members of the team to deal with it. Of course, we have to leave some threats alone (those man-beasts in Suffolk I told you about earlier, for example). I've got them all logged, though, so we'll get round to them eventually.

It's really that simple. In fact, as my team becomes more self-sufficient, I'm considering contacting hunters in other cities in the UK. Perhaps I can get some sort of network going. Now that would be a step toward a truly big plan.



PERSONAL PREPARATIONS

From witness1

The majority of posters from whom I have gathered emails and assembled this page have focused on the external — going into the field, working with others — a course that I endorse heartily. By contrast, Stella142 focuses on the internal, on thinking over action, on acting through inaction, almost as a rule. I cannot decide if this is useful or a distraction, or whether his morbidity is helpful or destructive. I know that when I focused too much on my way of dealing with the hunt, it cost me dearly.

From stella142

>How do you think we should go about preparing and executing the hunt, in

>practical terms?

Of course, I cannot hope to answer your question. Who are these "we"? I certainly know no "we," only I. Why ask me? What makes you think that I might know any better than you? All I know is how I go about preparing for the hunt and how I attempt to execute it. And, being honest, that is of no use to you whatsoever, as I am not you or "we."

What I can say is that to my mind the preparation is more important than the execution. It is the only part over which I can exert any control. And even then I am at the mercy of the voices, or the newspapers or the television.

Has it actually occurred to you that the voices and the television news have a lot in common? They both give you the information you need to keep you on the desired path, but without actually telling you anything. The information comes so thick and fast that there is no time to assimilate it, you just react, and then suffer the consequences afterward. There is no time to actually think for yourself.

To answer your question, yes, I definitely think we should prepare for the hunt on an individual basis. Getting my affairs in order was a primary preparation for me. A nice plot of land in a quiet cemetery, hallowed ground and all that. But I'm lucky; I've had that arranged for a while. Other than that, there's no preparation that I can do. I don't know what monster I'll be facing from one moment to the next. How do you prepare for the unknown? You don't, which is why it's unknown.

Execution? Good choice of words. My "experience" shows that improvisation works best.

From forscherin263

How can anyone live a normal life when they have been chosen for the mission by God? It does not make sense to me. I visit my mother when I can, but the boys are my family now. There is so much to learn and get done that I must not be distracted by other things.

I do need my job for I need food to eat and clothes to wear and equipment to use to study the fallen ones. Sometimes, when I should be working I am studying samples I have taken from the evil ones we have killed. I think they are noticing my work is not so fast as it used to be. I must be careful or I will lose this job.

That may be good. I could then get a job with better facilities I could use. Maybe I should look now and not wait to leave this job.

Everything I do not need for food and clothes and somewhere to live is for the hunt now, and this is as it should be. In Matthew chapter 16, verse 24, it says: "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'"

I too want to save humanity, so I must take up my cross and deny myself. I have so much research to do, so much to learn and understand that the time for those things that are trivial has passed. Maybe one day my work will be done and I can relax and enjoy myself once more, but for now my reward is my calling.

IMPRACTICAL GOALS

People like us, Witness1, have chosen a very hard job for ourselves. Not only do we have to play the game to make other people listen to our ideas, but our research is so hard. Sometimes I wish for assistants like I am a lab assistant at work. I need someone to look after the boys when they go to fight and I need someone to help me do my studies. Perhaps I will find others, like the boys found me.

Until that day, we must deal with the problems that come with research. We can learn more about our adversaries through three methods: consulting existing research, observation and experimentation.

The amount to be gained from the first of these is limited. As most persons are unaware of the fallen ones, there has been little or no research on them. I will not take mythology as coded evidence as Sixofswords29 occasionally seems willing to do. The only viable research source is hunter-net and I'm sad to say the methodology of many of our posters is very questionable. The only rigorous one here seems to be Doctor119. Descent88's conclusions are also useful, if a little shallow at times.

Perhaps if Stefan does well with his talking to the fallen ones, they may be able to provide some data themselves. The Lord is merciful, and perhaps some of the enemy can be brought back into his light. If they were to help me, surely it would improve their standing in His eyes. Perhaps He will even forgive them and free their souls from Hell, when their physical body is gone.

Observation is useful and forms the majority of my research to date. I do not let my boys go out without me, as I do not want to miss the opportunity of learning something new about our adversaries. I am so scared and so excited every time we go out. I cannot help but feel that we have very little chance to study the creatures in their habitat. I am attempting to talk Stefan into allowing me more time with him and the monsters he talks to. He seems to have the ability to do this that I do not. I could rely on his findings but they are so vague and emotional sometimes.

The last method is to experiment. Eventually, I intend to experiment in the field, but that is a distant aim, not a short one. I have to make do with samples I take from those we destroy. I did this for some months and learned much. I have not sent my results to hunter-net, but I have discussed them with Doctor119 and Descent88 and we have reached some useful conclusions.

Now I am extending my studies to whole bodies. We cannot store these in my apartment. It is lucky that Andreas has a basement in which to place them. It is not exactly sterile, but I have to accept what the Lord has provided. The biggest problem is getting the bodies to Andreas' car without us being noticed. He is also rather hesitant about them rising again, but has agreed thus far to my requests for assistance.

We killed a man-beast once, a different one from that I saw first. We were very lucky I think, and poor Matze came close to death. Andreas has been given a great gift, the gift of healing.

and he was able to do enough to keep Matze alive. When the doctors came, Andreas told them Matze had been hurt by a dog, and they believed him.

I was able to hide the body of the wolf, which is what the dead thing turned into, just like the rat-man turned into a rat. We stored it in Andreas' car. It is very frustrating, for all my experiments show it to be a normal wolf. There is not the disease of the rat, so where is the danger it concealed? Or is there no relationship between the two? If that is the case, I must take my research in a new direction.

This getting of experiment subjects is a challenge and it has nearly gone wrong several times. I hope that the angels are watching over us and that our luck holds.

If I was to be honest, I would like to have some captured monsters to study. This will teach me much more about what we face than examining what is left once Matze and Andreas have finished with them. While what Stefan tells me is useful and interesting, it is no substitute for practical experimentation.

This will not be easy. While it is one thing to kill a rat and study it, it is very different to experiment on something that can talk to you and answer intelligent questions. I am not sure how I will react when that time comes.

I have talked about this with Matze and Andreas. They took much persuading. In the end, I had to tell them that it would help me make better weapons for them to use against the fallen ones. It is only a little lie, or not one at all if you look in a certain way.

We do not have the monies to buy somewhere suitable, so the boys are looking for an abandoned building that could be made to suit our purpose. This will take time and planning, but I know this will not be a large problem to solve.

ACCEPTABLE TACTICS

From cassie247

There are some things that you just can't afford to do. If you don't handle them with caution, the world is going to turn around and bite you on the ass. There's plenty of threats out there, and not just the monsters. A lot of what we do as awakened is firmly classified as illegal, insane or antisocial, and you need to keep out of the way of the police, secret services and neighborhood watches. It's important to keep the truth about the world hidden from the people who haven't been changed. No matter how much they love you, they're not going to understand. They won't believe. How could they? Would you have before? You'll be ignored or laughed at if you're lucky. If you're unlucky, guys in white coats will appear and offer you a ride "for your own good." Remember that if your big plan involves showing everyone the truth of monsters.

It seems like there's something hard-wired into the human mind that stops us from perceiving monsters as they really are, and that also makes us ignore the truth. I remember that blindness well from before. Shortly after my change, I set up a meeting with an ex and tried to point out a rot to him from across a bar. He thought I was joking, and then told me I was nuts. Finally, he got all edgy and paranoid until he just left. People who haven't been awakened would have no protection from the others, anyway. We wouldn't either if not for the change.

All that said, if you pursue a plan that doesn't look illegal to the casual observer, you don't need to worry too much about hiding things from the rest of the world. It's kind of like that criminal philosophy: "Look like you're supposed to be doing it and no one will bother you." But then, sometimes you have to do things in public that are obviously wrong or crazy, like using your gifts. People tend not to take that too well, almost going hysterical and

refusing to see, or blocking it all out. In these cases, you can sometimes get away with it if you get out fast, before the police show up to figure out what the disturbance is. But remember that you're making a scene, and if something is found broken or stolen or dead, and someone can remember your face, you're in trouble. It's therefore best to pursue your plans discreetly whenever possible. You're more likely to succeed that way.

Now, there are ways of accomplishing your goals without acting personally or playing your hand. Sometimes you can persuade officials or other people to make life difficult for specific monsters. The cops may be under monsters' control, but they can't know it consciously any more than the cops can consciously understand us. You can use that weakness to our advantage. If a monster has a public identity, report it to the IRS for tax evasion, to a newspaper as a pedophile, or to a vigilante group as a rapist. Get other people to do the same, using different examples or evidence if you want to get the best results. I've found that when a creature is being hassled, it can become sloppy and make mistakes that you can capitalize on.

In fact, it's worth doing the same thing to the shitty people of the world, too. If you know of a criminal who's particularly unpleasant — a murderer or child abuser — consider treating him as just another target. If we're going to make a better world, we should deal with the parasitic human scum, too.

Getting back to the others, some of them seem to have patterns and haunts that might be susceptible to disruption. Protestors outside a "reputable" business can make it hard to come and go to feed on people. Fire has a knack for disrupting a creature's plans. If you have some money, you can order all sorts of things for delivery to a creature — bomb-making equipment, toxic bacteriological cultures, illegal pornography, prostitutes, workmen to renovate a building, exotic weaponry, or anything else that might attract attention and distract your target. If monsters are prepared to feed off our society, they should be made to suffer its vulnerabilities.

Others who don't participate in society are more difficult to distract. The best way is often to get the authorities or commercial forces to do something to an area that a creature considers its turf. Pay to have an area developed if you can afford it. Pave over a particular cellar.

Then comes cash. It seems that monsters need it as much as people do. I'm sure they buy their influence and pawns to some degree. Why use voodoo on a businessman if you can just buy his assistance or complacency? Money is invaluable for our calling, too. If your dream calls for large amounts of poison, you need to get it somehow. Sometimes stealing and deception don't work or don't cut it. As a Theorist, I am perhaps fortunate that a lot of what I do is strategic, which can be fit into a work week more easily than a Killer's need to track down and annihilate the enemy. That doesn't mean following my calling is easy, though, or that ends always meet. Many of the enemy have lots of cash. I don't see anything wrong with taking their money and using it against them. If you're working with people who plan to go in and kill a rot, you might as well take what you can to make the scene look like a bungled burglary rather than an assassination. At least that way the police are thrown off to some degree.

If any of these suggestions offend you, remember that we're fighting a guerrilla war. That means we have to adopt terrorist tactics. They work far better for weak, disconnected forces such as ours than a frontal assault does. Very often, that means doing things we never would have considered before. Do you think religious

terrorists look forward to taking hostages or killing people? Sometimes those are the only means at their disposal to make their statement and provoke change. I don't see where we're any different.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

From sixofswords29

Do you have the faintest clue how much easier it is for you in the USA, Witness? I'm constantly reading about guns this, guns that on hunter-net. Well, that doesn't work for us here. Guns were always pretty hard to get hold of in the UK. Since the massacres at Dunblane and Hungerford, they've been next to impossible to find.

Guess what? The bad guys seem to find them much easier than we do. As if we needed another disadvantage.

It's pretty much assumed that if you have a gun, you're a criminal. I know E___ stole a gun and he's gotten away with it so far, but it's not something I encourage. There are legitimate ways of getting them, but the authorities (which are monster controlled...) make it so easy to trace you, it's almost not worth thinking about.

On the whole, I think we should stand on the right side of the law. Let's not sink to the level of the monsters. On the other hand, we are akin to a police force for controlling the supernatural. We should allow ourselves the same leeway that the police do: limited rights to break and enter, to take suspects into custody and to carry out surveillance.

I don't consider killing monsters murder, most of the time. It's almost always self-defense - or species defense, at the very least. In the long term, we need to make monsters live by our rules and standards. We start down that path by destroying the irreconcilable ones now. Those who cooperate and who are capable of adapting to human ways might stay. Since other folks just can't understand the existence of monsters, it will be up to us to decide which creatures are tolerable. Of course, that means we need to understand creatures better, too. How else can our laws be just?

HIDDEN CRIMES

From forscherin263

Breaking the law is pretty foolish, unless you cannot avoid it. We have enough problems with monsters without making the police interested in us too.

We do end up breaking the law. We cannot avoid it all the time. But we must minimize the amount we do it, and make it as difficult as possible for the police to find us.

We can see the monsters. Other people cannot. They will not understand why we do what we do, so we will have no defense in court. So, if we are to continue God's work, we must do it within the laws of the country as far as we can.

This is not always possible. Matze has his gun and he likes it. I chide him for it sometimes, but he does not laugh, although I think he does while I am not looking. Even Andreas has a gun. We should not have them and we hide them. I have not asked how they got them. I do not want to know every fact.

I do not know what I will do when I need something for my study and I do not have the money to buy it. I will not steal to do God's work. That does not seem right to me. Perhaps not having the money is a sign from God that it is not needed. I do not always need my machines. God has given me the gift which allow me to look at the enemy and know things about them. Andreas believes we get new gifts as we learn more about how we should hunt. I pray that God will give me more gifts that make machines unnecessary, to be free of their need.

Perhaps one day I will be able to make a drug that helps people see the monsters just as we can. I do not want to do this yet. If people see the monsters now, they will try to kill them. The monsters are too dangerous and many people will die.

I cannot make the people see the monsters until I can make the monsters weak. It must come that way.

PERSONAL COSTS

From sixofswords29

We've looked at the law. Now let's look at the consequences that meeting the challenge has on our own lives. No, I'm not talking about injury or madness. Those are risks that we accept when we follow the mission. If you can't do that, stop reading this, give up hunting and walk away.

I'm talking about how much money you're willing to spend, how much you're willing to give up and how much you're prepared to put yourself at risk.

The answers have to be up to each of us individually. I have my limits. I have a mortgage to pay, a wife to support. I am not going to let the mission get in the way of that under any circumstance. Neither will I put myself at risk needlessly. I stress the word needlessly here, as there is no way of avoiding risk completely in this business, much as I wish it were otherwise.

Of course, others have their own limits. E___, one of my team, has given up virtually everything. He doesn't have a family or responsibilities. So, it's less of a problem for him. But if he chooses to marry, if he survives that long, none of us will blame him if he takes more of a back seat.

The more people we get involved, the less each individual has to give up. That's why it's so vital that we start forging contacts and cooperating with each other. If I had to do this alone, I would have had to give up everything long ago. But I don't. I have my team and they allow me the freedom to keep my mundane life. And it's my mundane life and my respect for it that separates me from the monsters.

FUNDING THE FIGHT

It's crossed my mind to find a way of funding hunters through charitable donations. Achieving this would take a lot of effort and imagination.

Obviously, we can't set up a charity for the elimination of supernatural predators. First of all, we'd have to establish some sort of cover. Something not terribly far from the truth, and which has an appeal to the general public. To borrow from Forscherin263, perhaps something that masquerades as a medical-research organization. She would, I feel, appreciate the labs we could offer her.

If we could get this up and running, it would allow select hunters to devote their working hours to the hunt. I know there would be people prepared to do it. I mentioned E___, earlier. This would allow us to work a lot more efficiently.

The charity's offices would have the potential to act as safehouses and meeting places for the imbued. We could even incorporate the Word into its logo, to draw imbued to our plans.

There remain practical considerations to be addressed. In this country, certainly, charity's accounts are scrutinized closely for irregularity. We would have to find some way of covering up some of the less explicable expenses that dealing with the other side would require.

We would also need people to run the organization. Ideally, they or a significant proportion of them would have to be aware

DOES CRIME PAY?

From witness1

Stella142 has had a very different experience with the law than has SoS29, Cassie247 or Forscherin263. I include his comments for comparison.

From stella142

This post of SoS' was written before it happened, wasn't it? I'm sure some of SoS' team would have had a thing or two to say about his "management style" then, and I'm bloody certain they do now. I almost feel sorry for the arrogant bastard.

It was very easy for him to be self-righteous about not committing crime. Let me tell you something. In my whole life before I was imbued, I got maybe a speeding ticket. Since then, I've committed crimes that range from breaking and entering to kidnapping to torture to murder.

The others keep telling me the murder was justified, that it was in self-defense, that the guy was the slave of a bloodsucker and there was nothing else I could have done.

I know they're right, but that doesn't make it sit any easier. Maybe the hunt forces us into these acts. Maybe I'm just a natural criminal. Or murderer.

Now, what was your question again?

>What should our attitude be to the law?

Whose law? The law of the British Isles? God's Law? The Law of the Jungle? "To your own self be true"? You cannot legislate morality.

Why do you ask of a unified attitude for us all? Certainly I have seen little unity amongst us, and little to recommend unity as a worthy ideal. We have the strength of diversity on our side, why undo that by attempting to collect individuals under some banner of the moral right? That road leads to unions and destruction. Any British child of '80s can tell you they're the same thing.

of its true purpose. Stella142 has managed to get "bystanders" involved in helping his group. Perhaps others could be found and recruited to run this charity?

I saw some talk on hunter-net of some "Rose Foundation," a person or group that makes donations to needy hunters. It seems to be doing what I propose already, if it really is what it seems. If only the people behind it would come forward, we could learn from their successes and failures.

COMPETING VISIONS

From forscherin263

I know, from when I read on hunter-net, that I am not the only one with a plan. Is this a problem? Of course not. I would be very arrogant to think that my plan was the only one and the best. There is only one person who knows the only plan and the best plan, and that is God.

What I hold is a little piece of that plan. When I do my piece, all the other plans will be easier. That is my role, do you see? When every one of us finds a way to make our plans happen we will create a new world.

This is exciting, is it not? I love to hear about new plans. I like to hear about Sixofswords29 trying to be the police of monsters. It make me feel safe and I like that. I do not think you are right, Witness1, that cyberspace is where we

can escape from the monsters for good, but I think your idea is a good place to help make our visions work. A safe place to plan, like hunter-net is a safe place to have a conference and exchange ideas. You see? We can all make our plans one greater plan.

My problem is those who think their plan is the only one. We have to be very careful about these people. We need their plans to make the greater ones, so we cannot simply get rid of them. Some will try and stop other people's plans, so we must be vigilant to make sure that does not happen.

I do not like to have to watch other blessed, but we must help each other. It is also for the good of the ones who have too much pride. If they believe that their goal is the only one, they could believe that it must happen at all costs. That is a crack in our armor, which the Devil can use to weaken us.

RIVALS

From sixofswords29

I think you already know a local hunter called Stella142. He leads another bunch of imbued. They're close enough that we can meet once in a while.

He and I don't quite see eye to eye, but I think that's a good thing. His answer to the challenge is a little more aggressive than mine. Actually, it's much more aggressive. I think his attitude has been hardened by the fact that he's nearly been killed twice. Once by a ghost and once by a Scottish hunter who'd apparently gone mad. (To me, there's a similar danger to E___'s approach to the hunt. Forgetting what was important before makes it easy to lose contact with society's values in general. Sometimes his actions have been a little to extreme for me. He's just a bit too willing to kill or hurt in pursuit of what we do. Luckily, E___ has us to keep his feet on the ground.)

I must admit, testing my vision and plans against Stella's helps keep me focused. He's good at spotting weaknesses in my strategies, and I'm sure I've helped rein him in when he's become fixated. Our groups have cooperated surprisingly well on the few occasions we've needed the backup. They're a lot less disciplined than my group, but they're very dedicated.

Our meetings are a friendly, low-key version of what I see on hunter-net. Those of us who know what we want from this mess seem to be starting some sort of Darwinian battle for our theories' survival. Offering ideas, countering them and coming up with new, better ones as a result. Damn fine idea it is, too. The monsters have a big head start on us. It's only with the best-defined goals that we can sort them out, once and for all.

I'm pretty sure my dream will be one of those that becomes part of the final plan, but we'll see. If mine fails, then I suppose it deserved to.

Stella is quite young. He's only in his twenties, I think. His inexperience with life in general blinds him occasionally. For example, one evening, we were talking when he suddenly went quiet.

"Can I tell you something?" he said. I nodded. "Your lot aren't very happy at the moment," he said. "One of them is stirring up trouble, saying you're a coward and that you've lost your nerve. Something to do with what happened to you in Suffolk?"

I said nothing as he continued. "I know how easy it is to get disturbed and dispirited by what we see. It happened to me after I was hospitalized. If there's something you need to talk about..."

I told him straight: There was nothing wrong. Not everybody could lead from the front like him, and he could do well to learn from me and my research methods.

"That's another thing," he said. "You're spending a lot of time online. I log on from time to time, but the sheer number of posts from you is ridiculous. When was the last time you were actually out in the field? When did you last face one of them?"

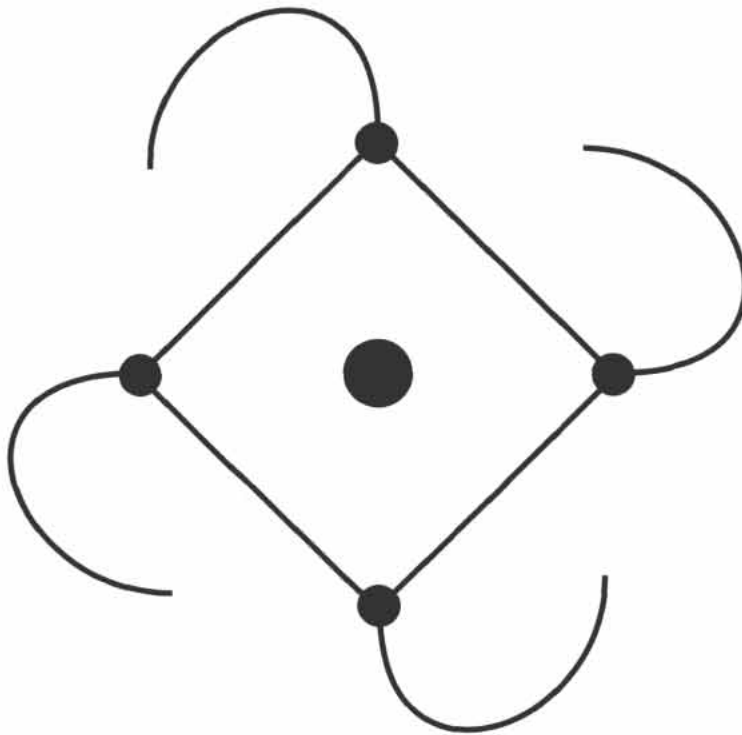
I will admit that I got quite cross at that point. "I'm doing my team more good by getting practical information for them off hunter-net than you are by charging half-cocked at every thing

you see. How many times have you nearly been killed now? What good would you be to the rest, then?

"And don't you dare call me a coward. I've been facing the monsters longer than you have, my boy."

He looked at me a second, downed his pint and stood up. "I didn't call you a coward. That came from you. What does that tell you, old man?" And with that, he left.

Cheeky bugger. I knew exactly what it was all about. E_____ was trying to usurp me again, and was using J_____ to do it. I've dealt with upstarts like him and E_____ in my job, and I'll deal with these two. I'll show Stella142 that my way is right.





CHAPTER 3:

THE SUM OF OUR PARTS.

Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions:
So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.
— Job 7:14

From witness1

As I've been saying on this site, we need to come together. The divisions between us are disastrous and we can't afford them any longer. We all need to explore ways of working together respectfully. On this page, I've collected a number of insights into our kind, and about what it truly means to cooperate. When you flame someone, there's a real person on the other end. It's easy to forget that, and if you find that you do, you should get away from your computer and spend some real face-to-face time with other chosen, in the field. Without mutual respect and tolerance, there's no way we can remain together as a group, and if we fail in that we fail in everything.

KNOW YOUR ALLIES

From sixofswords29

If you want to understand hunters, don't just subscribe to hunter list. Sign up to the subsites: vitalis list, triage list, firelight list, judgment day list (there's a trick to finding that one) and vigil list. Listening to everyone discuss their own approaches to our cause is an extremely useful way to understand how their minds work. I even throw in the odd post from time to time, just to see what response I get. It's often very enlightening.

My reason for subscribing to these lists? If you understand how other hunters' minds work, you can learn the best way to work with them. Compromise is an essential part of any team-management process. The best way to get something done is to get your team to want it done, too.

If that means changing your position somewhat to accommodate others, so be it. That sort of compromise isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of good organizational skills. Here's a breakdown of some of my observations of other imbued and their perspectives on the hunt. I'm

sure you'll be collecting similar observations from other people, Witness. The comparisons should make for some interesting reading.

From cassie247

I've already said quite a lot about practical leadership — how to get other awakened to do what you need. That's really just one aspect of working together, though. More often, you have to treat people as equals, at least for appearance's sake. You can still get them to do what you want. It just involves knowing who's who, and who's inclined to what kind of behavior. After that, you just ask people to be themselves to achieve your own larger goals.

AVENGERS

From forscherin263

There is evil and darkness in the world. It has to be fought. There are many way of fighting. I, for example, can be fighting in my lab to build a weapon that will hurt monsters. Some fallen ones need to be faced and fought by people with sticks and guns and other weapons, though. It is not always enough to search for a weapon against them all when individuals among them threaten us now. Those of us who fight each day are very brave, like my Matze. They choose to risk their life by confronting the dark ones and fighting for us all.

When my virus is done, Matze's job will be much easier. I must work as fast as I can. Matze will win a place in Heaven. I only fear that he will reach it too soon.

From sixofswords29

Save me from fanatics. I'm of two minds about the yobbers among us. I admit, they're bloody useful. Some monsters need to be taken down fast and hard and these guys do the job like no one else. In the long term, I can see us assembling teams of these guys, a sort of imbued SAS, to target and destroy monsters whenever it needs to be done. Pointed strategically at those monsters that need a quick, violent response, can you imagine how effective they would be?

Until then, however, we have a problem. Like E___, they're always champing at the bit. Criticizing anyone who doesn't see things their way. Calling us "weak" or "scared." Granted, you've got to be a fanatic yourself to fight a dead man who throws himself at you over and over. That doesn't necessarily make it any easier to deal with the firefighters, though.

From cassie247

The Killers are usually up for a fight. They tend to have a lot of repressed anger — and quite a bit of it isn't so repressed. The most proactive of them are obsessed, and sometimes you get the feeling that all they can even think about any more is taking the others down. You need to be careful what you say to these people. If you suggest any course of action other than immediate assault, they get in your face. The worst cases I've dealt with didn't have much to say to anyone who wasn't carrying a gun. But all that said, they're often decent people — just ones who have been pushed too far. Then others are psychopaths — God45 springs to mind again.

DEFENDERS

From forscherin263

Andreas is such a sweet boy. I tease him that he is a mother, looking after the rest of us as if we were his children. I tease him and make him cross, but he likes it, I know. I would not give up my Andreas for anything. The Lord has chosen us for such a dangerous life and he takes a little of that danger away. I thank Andreas for doing that.

We all have our role in God's task. Those of us who must take risks to learn all we can must have someone like Andreas at our side. Then we will live long enough to succeed in our appointed task.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: cassie247

Subject: Rabid dogs

When is someone going to put Alleyman222 — or "Peleus," or whatever he's calling himself now — out of my misery? The man is a complete sociopath, and frankly I almost start to wonder if he isn't one of the others. I'm not going to dignify his post with a direct response, but if anyone could see their way to planting a bomb under his car, I'd appreciate it.

From sixofswords29

These guys have their heads screwed on straight. The first aim in any marketing campaign is to protect your market share. Only then can you try to win new business. This protective instinct is perfectly natural, if you ask me. Secure our homes, our families and the things we hold dear, and that leaves us much more free to take the hunt to the enemy.

To follow the analogy I used about the firefighters, if we could recruit hunters to protect locations and key people and then infiltrate important political and social organizations, we would have a sound base for the rest of us to work from. Really, I find it hard to conceive of a plan that does not have these people at its core.

From cassie247

Not all the Killers are quite so obsessed. Some of them take a more rational approach to things, and are less concerned with just charging off and attacking anything in sight. They are often pretty reasonable about strategy, planning and prioritization, and tend not to fly off the handle if you give a good reason for holding back on a particular target. They're still Killers, though, and if you piss them off, you bring their anger down on yourself.



INNOCENTS

From forscherin263

To believe that our adversaries are in some way inherently good, and that we just need to reach out to them, is very dangerous, is it not? I feel a little shameful about this. My Stefan talks to the monsters and learns many things which he tells me. This is valuable data I would not give up.

Am I selling Stefan to the Devil by doing this? Should I be giving more thought to his soul than I am? If he is corrupted, because of his good heart, the blame will lie with me. I cannot decide if it is more important to gather the data or to keep Stefan safe from himself.

I am a coward, for I hide from that decision. I caution Stefan to be careful, but I let him gather more and more information for me. And each night I fear he will not come home from his talk with the monsters.

From sixofswords29

I count Bookworm55 as a friend, but however hard I try I cannot accept his attitude that there must be some good at the heart of every monster. Too many of the posters on Vitalis are wildly optimistic about our enemy.

I think it is revealing that many of them begin to take on the attitudes of those that they work with. This frame of mind seems to be a transitory phase. Bookworm himself will admit that his own naïveté is now laced with a healthy dose of pragmatism. That's no bad thing.

Just as the decision-makers make good field leaders, these folks are great information gatherers by nature of their ability to get close to the enemy, and so make great assistants to us in our search for the big picture.

Until such a point that the Messengers decide we have performed adequately to be shown the truth and the future, we must rely on these children to gather information for us. It's all a matter of their role in the team: They give us strategic planners the information we need to act.

When the Messengers do make their big revelation, what then? Well, once the true nature of the monsters is known, has it ever occurred to you what great assassins these chaps would make? Think about it.

From cassie247

The Caring are good people. That's probably a defining mental characteristic that comes into play when the Heralds select them. Sure, some of them are pretty whacked out, and some of them can be really bitchy from time to time, but deep down, underneath all the crap of life, they like other people and they like to help. Unfortunately, that seems to go hand in hand with foolishness for many of them. You need to be careful when you're working with someone like that, because they won't listen to your warnings, and they can be fiercely independent at the dumbest damn times.

JUDGES

From forscherin263:

I know I sometimes get taken away with my own ideas. I look too much at the future and not at the present. When I talk on hunter-net with Doctor119, he helps me stay focused and that is a good help to me always.

I think to have some people planning at today and other people planning at tomorrow is good for all of us.

I look for ways to make the monsters weak. If others look for ways to take my drugs and use them, this is less work for me. Thus where we plan and think, they execute our ideas.

From sixofswords29

Live or die. Good or bad. Kick butt or take names. I have to say, the more black and white about the hunt we get, the less useful we

become. Some people tend to take it to an extreme. I can certainly see a place for them, particularly "out there," making decisions and then deploying fighters or talkers as necessary, but in the end their focus on the short term doesn't make them effective leaders. That's our job.

So, if they can accept the role of deputy, let's use them. If they can't, well, they need edging out for the good of us all. Their simple-mindedness is not helpful.

From cassie247

The Evaluators are often nit-pickers, pedants and sophists. They've got this thing for gathering information, and they're good at it. They like to apply that information, come to informed decisions and then make sure that everyone else knows about it in as much detail as possible, even if it conflicts with what you're trying to accomplish. In fact, their efforts can sometimes screw up the little parts of your plans that you just take for granted.

These people are useful to us, though. You often won't have time to waste on the minutiae of the hunt, but these people thrive on it. Give them a week in a place and they'll be able to give you a good idea of the primary targets around. One word of advice, though: Don't challenge their evaluations, at least not to their faces.

MARTYRS

From forscherin263

I think every one of us blessed has this potential within them. Once the fallen ones go too far, or threaten something that means so much to us we would die rather than let it be harmed, then we become ready to die for the cause. The angels would not have chosen us unless we were all ready to die for what we believe in. I do not wish to do so, but if I must, I will.

From sixofswords29

I used to read posts from suicides-waiting-to-happen, but I eventually had no time for them. What a stupid waste, I thought. Then I met Stella142's man, Jeff. Did he turn me around. I suddenly saw that it's not that these people want to die or be hurt, it's that they're prepared to go that extra mile the rest of us aren't. The risks Jeff has taken has allowed Stella's group to do some pretty impressive things. You have to respect that.

While some of us make great spies, watching unseen from a distance, Jeff and people like him make superb infiltrators because of their willingness to risk their lives for the cause. Many of us will risk our lives, but few to the extent that these blokes will.

If it turns out that we really can't make the world aware of the monsters, these people become the second part of a two-pronged-defense plan. We get the protectors into important institutions, and we infiltrate the monsters with these guys.

What an information network we will have then, eh?

From cassie247

Strangely, not all the Killers seem to be skilled in fighting. I think there's a mentality among some that is actually pretty pathetic. They seem as good to get into action as the rest, but when they do, they don't seem to know what they're supposed to do. The ones I've worked with just get in the way — often at the wrong time. They stumble into the middle of a fight and get hurt pretty bad. It suggests to me that the Heralds pay more attention to our personal inclinations than they do to our capabilities. I guess that means there's something worthwhile about these would-be Killers, but I don't know what it is.

REDEEMERS

From forscherin263

Oh, if only I could see the world like some chosen seem to! To believe that the fallen ones could be brought back into God's grace would be so wonderful. I cannot. I know that some

of these souls belong to the Devil forever, and that to deal with them is to invite corruption. This makes me sad, but every soul that the caring ones claim to bring back to us is suspect. I do not know how we shall tell if what the fallen ones says is the truth, and this will always be the problem, will it not?

From sixofswords29

Turncoats. Spies. Double-agents. No, I'm not talking about those of us who think the enemy can be made to see the error of its ways. I'm talking about what these imbued could do for us. If they genuinely have the skills to turn some of the enemy and bring them to our side, we must exploit them. Each monster we turn, rather than destroy, is as good as two kills. It reduces the other side's numbers by one and adds one to ours.

From cassie247

Naivete aside, another common problem I encounter with the Caring is pig-headed stubbornness. They want to / help/, and just the awakened or even the living. Obviously, persuading some of the others to switch sides is part of the plan; maybe the Heralds thought up a carrot-and-stick whammy — go with the good guys and be nice or the lunatics will tear you apart. Anyway, you'll be lining up some monster for the kill when one of the Caring suddenly "feels the good in him." Then you have a long, protracted argument on your hands about the right thing to do. Still, despite their limitations, the Caring are useful to have around — considerate, sympathetic, especially when you're hurt.

VISIONARIES

From forscherin263

We thinkers have got to work together, or at least to communicate. I have told you before that I believe we all hold a small piece of a bigger plan. It is only by putting our little plans together into a big one that we will, as you say, "Inherit the Earth."

I am not so foolish as to think this will be easy. I look at the professors and doctors in my lab and at how they

INDIVIDUALITY IS ALL

From witness1

Not everyone is prepared to categorize other hunters as Cassie and SoS are, as the following message from Stella142 indicates.

From stella142

Why pigeon-hole people? We have our own individual roles, made by ourselves, into which we fit perfectly. I'm Stella142, I ask altogether too many questions and I am my own person. I am not an "inquiring hunter" or an "aggressive hunter." And neither are any of the other "imbued" that I have met. Even that term implies that we are no longer people but are some sort of higher being. We might actually be, but for my own sanity I like to imagine that we're still real people.

To separate us based on our beliefs or values denies the opportunity to recognize what we value in common, what unites us. Look at Forscherin. She's pretty relaxed for a Kraut. Maybe she's a "thinking" hunter, but she would become a "suicide" under the right conditions, by her own admission. Hell, she's even prepared to choose who lives and dies after her virus is unleashed.

Look at me. I ask so many bloody questions I don't have time to find answers. Yet, when we see a monster, who's the first in there trying to beat seven kinds of shit out of it? Me.

Don't try and pigeonhole us, Witness. And you lot, yeah, you reading this, don't pigeonhole yourselves either. Explore everything you are. Don't adopt some narrow-minded attitude.

Unless I'm talking bollocks and the Messengers have already picked our teams. Whatever.

jealously guard their secrets. I hear it said that politicians are the masters of back-stabbing and games, but they are not as skilled at the sneaky ways as research scientists.

I look at Stella142 and Sixofswords29, and I hear Sixofswords say that they are friendly rivals, but I ask myself if this is true. From what Stella142 posts to the list, which is not often, I think it is not as friendly as Sixofswords thinks. I think he tramples on the other people and this is not good. Or maybe it is his team who do not listen to him. This I do not know either.

There are those who think their path is the only way. This is bad. A little man once told Germany that one path was right and too many people listened. We cannot work together if you believe that you are right and I am wrong. We end up fighting and dying then. Or my idea gets crushed and broken by yours and my part of the big picture is lost. To claim that I am right when I could be wrong is no better.

That is why I say we are all right. If your vision does not work with mine, then we must both look at them and see where the mistakes lie.

From cassie247

Theorists tend to be slightly impractical, and I speak from personal experience. We tend to think in the long term — a vital resource if the awakened are to win — but we can overlook the here and now as a result. Aside from that, we're often pretty vain about our personal theories, and we love to have audiences or at least teams to lead. We can get pretty territorial, so if you have competing ideas, keep them to yourself, or at least downplay the differences — until you're ready.

WORKING TOGETHER

From cassie247

Can Theorists work together effectively? Yes, of course. We just have to accommodate each other. Although we all have our own ideas and hopeful goals, we're all perfectly capable of considering other elements of the struggle. When we work together, we often need to put our personal theories aside and concentrate on a common objective that's actually separate from the projects we would normally work on. For example, if you and I were to work together, Witness, we would probably do best to consider some area that neither of us normally concentrates on — such as where the Heralds come from. It's much easier to cooperate that way than to tread ground that one of us takes very personally.

I think it's time that we started recognizing our different skills and inclinations, and accepted that we have been empowered, one way or another, into different groups with predispositions toward certain skills and attitudes. Once we accept that, each individual awakened should be able to exhibit more tolerance toward other groups, because he or she will be more secure in terms of identity and purpose. Regional politics shows over and over that a strong national identity can work well to forging a new respect for other groups. It's when a country is unfocussed, divided and uncertain that rivalries and divisions are created.

From sixofswords29

All things considered in my lot on our mission, I'm lucky. Not only do I have a loyal, committed team, I have a colleague and rival to measure myself against.

The relationship I have with Stella142 tests my theories again and again. Making our competition work takes great care, though. Our rivalry must never extend to our teams, for example. I think our different styles of working have a big influence. Stella142 leads from the front. He doesn't mean to, but he gets caught up in the heat of the moment by nature, from what he and his people tell me. I'm more of a home-base planner. I'm M to his James Bond, I suppose.

I don't quite understand Forscherin263's way of working. She says she isn't the leader of her group, yet they seem to do what she says. That seems slightly dishonest and manipulative. As for Cassie242 and Tanguera352, well one is busy telling everyone what to do, but doesn't seem to be able to back it up with practical examples, and the other has become some form of dictator, as if she has tunnel vision. Perhaps Tanguera missed the fact that Argentina has become a democracy again. Sure, Stella and I give our teams ideas to buy into, but actual cults of personality are dangerous.

Anyway, back to Stella142 and me. The trap we must avoid is undermining each other's work. I've seen it happen to sales teams. If two teams are working in related areas, both with targets to hit, one will poach business from the other, because as it's an easier sell and it makes that team look better. Ultimately, this cannibalism narrows the organization's client base and introduces internal competition, which drives prices down. A rival company then moves in and destroys yours.

You're probably wondering what the hell this has to do with being imbued. If hunter groups start competing against each other over different viewpoints on how to deal with monsters, or even over something as petty as territory, exactly the same thing can happen. We weaken ourselves and the enemy can move in to make the kill. Obviously, we can't afford that. We are not each other's enemies.

I dread a time when we theorists and leaders are acknowledged as heroes. Might we then start seeing hunters set themselves up as dictators waging war on each other? I hope not. But then I look at Flame, Noah, Tanguera and the rest, and I wonder.

HUNTING ALONE

From sixofswords29

This is the ultimate error. We need other hunters to support us, to reassure us that we're not mad, and to work with. People are social creatures. Sometimes we just need someone - another hunter - around to talk to about what we do, without compromising ourselves to regular folks out of desperation.

Working alone is particularly dangerous for us thinkers. Look at what happened to Shaka74. He had an idea. He went to investigate it. Did he take backup? Where is he now? As far as we can tell, he's a corpse. There are too few of us about for us to throw our lives away, even if we're absolutely inspired by a dream and no one else can find their way to see it. In the end, if you're alone, you have no one to talk to and no one to test your ideas against - and frankly, to tell you that you're off base. We all make mistakes sometimes. It's good to be reminded of them.

From cassie247

The biggest mistake we can make, to my mind, is trying to go it alone. Why bother? We're supposed to be insightful and provide answers and guidance for others. It's in my nature, presumably /our/ nature. There's no way you can do that on your own. You need people around to pass information and leadership onto. Without them, you're lost before you get started. I know there are some of us who lock themselves away, but that road has got to be paved to insanity. Our job is to be out there rallying the troops, and, by definition, that means working with others.

There is a halfway, I suppose. Lurking on your computer all day and giving advice from afar. Forgive me if this sounds abrupt, Witness, but don't you think that's really just a way of trying to deny responsibility? No soldier, sailor or pilot was ever inspired by a commander who gave orders from miles away. Your website initially offers hope to people when they learn they're not insane or alone in the world, but when they come to grips with that, how much leadership do you really offer them online? We need to be out there, spreading the word.

RIGHT AND WRONG

From witness1

I think this e-mail from Tanguera352 to hunter.list makes its point without me explaining its context.

From tanguera352

You are talking the nonsense. There are only two types of hunters. There are those who will cooperate and there are those who will not.

If you cannot help me, you are my enemy. We must protect ourselves from the creatures that hunt us and there is no room for people who do not fight the war. I do not forgive my enemies. The rules of the war are simple:

Do not try to tell the world about us or the monsters. I will not forgive those who try. They will be my enemies.

Do everything you can to make sure that people can enjoy their pleasures without fear. Then you will be my friend.

Do not try to persuade me to do different, or persuade my followers to do different. That will make you my enemy.

Set aside your selfish ideas and follow me. That will make you my friend.

When the job is done, I will go back to being a waitress and you can go back to your lives. But now we fight a secret war and you are with me or my foe.

BYSTANDERS

From cassie247

Some people seem to be on the very edge of awakening. When the Heralds call for them, they have the strength to see the truth, but not to actually do anything about it. It seems like they reject the fate that the Heralds offer, and lapse back into their old selves — except now they've seen. They don't even seem to have any tools with which to fight, or the pride of knowing they were chosen. They're really sad. I've heard some try to deny everything and go back to their old lives. They're useless to us. Others want to help, and they can be dedicated allies if you let them contribute. Just don't take them into a fight unless you're prepared to lose them just like you would your family or friends.

From sixofswords29

You know there are monsters, but you can't do anything about it? What a horrific way to live! From what I've been told, that's exactly what the so-called "duds" go through. How much worse it must be if you know actual imbued hunters, too. Seeing them dealing with the hidden threat you know to exist, while you sit helpless on the sidelines...

These people are either our weakest link or our greatest asset. I think it's entirely in our hands to decide which. We have two choices: we can neglect them or we can use them for everyone's benefit.

If we leave them be, send them back to the normal world, what happens? They live in fear. They try to put what they've seen behind them. But they can't. In the end, it drives them mad or they seek out some other way to protect themselves from the supernatural. They become a danger to themselves. Worse, they seek out the supernatural to fight it. Then they become a danger to themselves, us and to the world. It's a no-win situation.

The other option, of course, is to offer them a place among us as our support team. There is more work to be done than every hunter put together can manage. The potential of the almost-imbued to run safe-houses, do research or manage cover organizations is immeasurable. We should call upon these people, for ours sake and for theirs.

A thought: Can these near-hunters read the Word? Has anyone tested this? If they can, the fact that the Messengers intend them to have a role seems clear.

EXTREMISTS

From witness1

It's becoming obvious that some hunters are prepared to give up more and go further than others. Some of them, like Fyodor and Tanguera352, have extreme views and approaches to the hunt. Others just seem detached from reality as we know it. Orcale171 springs to mind. At this point, there is no clear consensus among us how to deal with these people, assuming we should at all.

Stella142's contribution is one approach: "I met one once. He was a mad Scottish bastard and he nearly killed me. A month later, we killed him."

I think this is an issue we have to address, because it has the potential to break us. If some of us can go so far and become so lost in the hunt, how long will it before more do — our friends or allies, or even ourselves? If we don't decide how to deal with these situations and people now, will we even be of sound mind to do so later?

PROPHETS...

From forscherein263

I do not know what to make of the ones of us whose visions consume them. I see Orcale171 post on hunter-net and I do not know what she talks of. It is as if she sees things in a way we cannot.

I read Apocrypha and I hear in the words of Fyodor the insights and passions of saints or prophets. Yet, in his actions I see a madman and a murderer.

I hope that these special ones have moved closer to the Lord than the rest of us understand. He has granted them insight and they try to tell us what is to come.

If you read the Bible, you will often find that prophets are misunderstood and persecuted by those to whom they speak. Perhaps this is how they will appear to history, as great prophets who we did not have the understanding to appreciate when they still walked among us.

Crusader17 claims to be a religious man and to love God and the Bible. He seems to have forgotten its teaching in his dealings with Orcale171. I am very glad he did not kill her, for I was so sure that he would.

I am a scientist, and I must accept that these ones might have knowledge or awareness I need. So, I do not think we should hunt them, as you say we should with Fyodor. We know he killed one of us, but do we know who she was and how she lived? No, we do not. Perhaps she was as dangerous as the rot, and Fyodor found a way to kill her that also gave us new information.

I approve of the use of resources. Perhaps the prophets can teach us a new way of seeing that will allow us to truly understand our world.

...OR MADMEN!

From sixofswords29

Let's set a few things straight about Fyodor. From the accounts I've read - and was reported directly! - he virtually kidnapped Bookworm55, isolated him from his friends and family, toyed with him mentally, locked him up physically, and then lost control when Bookworm tried to leave him.

If you read Apocrypha, you find that he has captured and killed at least one other hunter as part of an experiment. I'm sorry, but Fyodor is not some great prophet, charting a path for imbued everywhere. He's a banking boon and a downright dangerous one at that.

There seems to be a real threat in becoming obsessed with the hunt. I think it's a product of becoming detached from the people we're



FYODOR SPEAKS

From witness1

I have received the following cryptic caution via Violin99, who claims this is a message that the author of Apocrypha wants me to pass on. I shall not reproduce Violin's rather offensive comments.

Those who have had no contact with Fyodor should consider themselves grateful. I know him to be a psychotic, callous, murdering son of a bitch, and he should be treated as extremely dangerous. I have managed to verify beyond question the truth of one of the more horrendous passages in his book. His actions there alone are grounds for hunting him down and exterminating him. For me, his *seeming* benevolence toward Bookworm is not sufficient grounds for a stay of execution.

Still, I will not be guilty of causing harm by omission, so I'm forwarding his comments. If he was telling the truth about Pittsburgh — and he was — he might have been accurate about other things, and I cannot in all conscience just delete this letter. I advise extreme caution when reading it. Interpret from it what you will.

From Fyodor

Friend Witness, I hope that you are safe and well in your electric halls.

Have you ever seen a rabid dog? Even at a distance, it is obvious that it is not normal. Such beasts are often stiff and erratic in their movements, even appearing robotic during advanced stages of the disease. They look unkempt and ill. The most legendary sign, that of the frothing muzzle, is pronounced and obvious. Other dogs hate and fear the ill one and do their best to avoid it. For such an animal, there is no salvation, just the prolonged agony of a painful, slow death. Execution is a mercy for all concerned. The disease is contagious, and it should be contained.

Please bear in mind also the myth of Medusa. She was said to be the most beautiful woman in all of Athens, perhaps even in all of Greece, and her hair was a wonder to behold, cascading down her neck in shining curls. Her loveliness was matched only by her vanity, and despite her appearance or perhaps because of it, her soul was twisted. Eventually, she made the mistake of comparing herself to Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, who, being a jealous goddess, cursed Medusa. Her beloved hair became a nest of snakes and her appearance was blighted. The result was a hideous monster so ugly that to look upon it was to be turned to stone. However, all Aphrodite had done was bring the beautiful woman's true nature to the surface.

actually doing this for. I confess that our calling is not easy. Things are very strained in my home, for example. My wife's obviously upset by my neglect of her, but I've got a good lead on a hicklen. I'm nearly ready to send the team in. Once that's dealt with, I'll sort out affairs.

The point is that I am aware of my normal life and I'm doing all this from as established a perspective as possible. I know I slip into management speak a lot, but that's my way of keeping my feet on the ground, of reminding myself of who and what I was before.

We have to deal with a mad, frightening, nightmare of a world, and I need to cling to my old reality with both hands to survive. I don't think that's so unusual. One of the few things that Stella142 and I agree on is that we cannot let the imbuing make us think we're more than we were before. That's what these extremists like Fyodor seem to think, and that's why they're so frightening.

Maybe they're no better than monsters themselves. It's up to us to watch these people. God knows the authorities can't hope to deal with them. They haven't the tools or the understanding.

It's up to us to police them. Perhaps we can talk them down and pull them back from the edge. Perhaps we should put them down like the murderous dogs that some are. We have to decide each case on its merits.

But we cannot - we must not - sit idly while these people commit atrocities.

From cassie247

I've come across a couple of burnouts over the last few months. They've seen too much, done too much — lost too much, I guess — and they really can't cope any more, so they seem to retreat into eccentricity and madness. One thing I do know is that they both had some pretty amazing abilities — ones that scared me, and I can do some bizarre things myself. It's as if losing hold on their normal minds gave them access to more opportunities. Is it possible that madness is the key to greater power? What an ironic twist. Maybe greater strength not easily accessed without letting go of understanding the world as we know it, or maybe the Messengers find us easier to guide when we're less stable. The old saying, "Those whom the Gods would destroy, they first make mad" is a cliché now, but perhaps it would be as true to say, "Those whom the Gods would choose...."

THE PRICE

From witness1

On this page, we have concentrated on relations with other imbued. We speak of these things in platitudes and theories, but in truth, working with others who have been touched means becoming involved in their lives. It means becoming part of the way they understand the world and themselves. Sometimes, you have to be there for the people who need you most. Sixofwords29 has graciously allowed me to forward the following message as a caution to all of us, as a reminder not to deal with one another at arm's reach alone.

From: sixofwords29

To: witness1, bookworm55, ticket312

Subject: Help me

Help me. I don't know what to do. I don't know what I should do. She left me. Three hours ago she left me. When I came in, her bags were packed and ready in the hall. She was sat in the living room waiting for me.

"I'm sorry, [CENSORED], I really am, but I can't go on like this. We don't have a marriage anymore. When you're not on that bloody computer of yours, you're away on some business trip.

"A lot of women might think you were having an affair, but I don't. You know what, you've got boring. Too boring to be having an affair. We used to have friends. We used to go out with them and each other all the time. Even some of your work mates were okay. But now? Nothing.

"I just can't live like this any more. No love. No affection. No excitement, nothing. I'm leaving before I become like you."

That's when I broke down and told her everything. About New York. About Suffolk, about the Messengers and Hunter-net and the monsters and everything. She just looked at me with pity and tears in her eyes.

"I'm so sorry, [CENSORED], but you're not the man I married. He would never have come up with such a pathetic lie."

And then she left.

Help me, please. I hurt so much. It's as if part of me has been ripped away. Who do I turn to? I don't want my kids to know. My friends are gone, and I can't seem weak to the team. What do I do? How do I get her back?

What did I do wrong? What did I do to deserve this?



CHAPTER 4: INHERIT THE EARTH

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

— Revelation 9:17

From witness1

On this page, I've collected a number of ideas about the overall purpose of our mission, and where it might take us. We need to achieve a kinder, safer world — to find a way to transcend the evil that suffocates us. It is vital, however, for us to remember that we can reach our goals only by going into the world and making changes ourselves. No one is going to do it for us. Although we need to know where we're going and how to get there, we also have to make sure that we do whatever it takes. I believe the answer lies within the electronic realm. Somehow, we can find a way to safeguard the human mind away from the violence and death of the outside world, and create a perfect reality for ourselves — an earth where we can control our surroundings, free from the evil that stalks us. That will come *after*, though. At the moment, we still have to go out and make it happen, and that means getting away from our computers. We can resort to electronics later, when things have been settled in our favor. The posters collected here all have different views on what we should do, but we share one thing in common: the will to realize our dreams.

THE CALM

Why did I create Unity? Two events triggered it. The first was my fault. My stupidity got a fellow hunter killed. The monsters will claim enough of us without us getting killed through stupidity or by spending too much time *lurking* and not enough *doing*.

The second event actually scares me even more. I hope desperately that the circumstances described below aren't a

sign of our future. Hunter turning on hunter is beyond imagining. We have to transcend our differences if we're going to make a difference in the world.

The following account was written by Sixofswords29, a few weeks after the events described.

THE COMING STORM

From sixofswords29

After my wife left me, I did the only thing I could. I threw myself into the hunt, hoping to forget the pain. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. It had been too long since I'd actively gone out with the team, and some of them resented me suddenly turning up and giving orders.

E___, in particular, gave me a hard time. He accused me of being a coward, of hiding on the Internet when I should have been out there with them. The team listened to me, but reluctantly. I could see that E___ intended to take charge, once and for all. I couldn't allow that. He couldn't see anything beyond killing. I knew that road would get them all killed.

I was busy trying to come up with a way to win my group's trust when Bookworm55 and his friend Ticket314 arrived from the United States, in response to the e-mail I sent the night my wife left, as it turns out. I tried so hard to pretend everything was okay, but they could tell I was lying.

During that time, Stella contacted me. His people needed help. They were about to go up against a bloodsucker. They had faced one once before and barely escaped with their lives. This time, they weren't taking any chances. They wanted backup and I volunteered my team.

It was a good plan. One of Stella142's group had made contact with a rot. (I won't name Stella's ally. I don't want to risk putting his family or friends in danger. It seems tragic to allow his sacrifice to go unrecorded, but I must consider those who still live.) Anyway, this man had won the creature's trust. It turns out the rot had an agenda in common with Stella's group. It wanted another bloodsucker destroyed. Something to do with this other one being responsible for its "death." (I don't pretend to understand how a rot could be "dead," yet clearly alive.)

To be honest, I didn't find out all the details. I just saw a chance to get back into the field and prove myself again. It all seemed simple enough. With the help of the turncoat rot, Stella's group worked out the target's schedule and proposed an ambush. They'd figured out

a way to douse it with petrol from those high-powered toy water pistols. Our job was to protect them while they lit the match.

I put the idea to my team and they were all for it. Even E_____ seemed satisfied with the plan. Bookworm was absolutely insistent that he come with us. To be honest, I was glad for the extra support.

It went off just as planned. The bloodsucker was caught utterly unawares, but it didn't seem scared at first. Not until it realized what it had been soaked with. By then there was an inferno.

The mistake we made was letting our undead informant come along for the ride. He didn't do anything untoward. One of us did. E_____ stepped up to him, pulled his gun and pointed at the rot. "Now it's his turn," he announced. I could see Bookworm55 already moving toward E_____ out of the corner of my eye, but the contact in Stella's group acted before anyone. He knocked the gun out of the way and stood in E_____s path, defiantly. I think it was the most foolish and brave thing I've ever seen.

"Get out of the way," E_____ demanded.

The man wouldn't move.

I don't think any of us expected what happened next.

CLOUDBURST

"Traitor," is all E_____ said. In that moment, I realized that I wished I'd asked more questions of this man who could speak to monsters. I wished that I'd paid him more attention. I wished that I could have acquired the same insights about the monsters that he could.

And then the moment was gone.

Our gentle friend was a quiet, unassuming man. He was balding, a little overweight. Wife and kids. Job in a library in the suburbs. Now he was dead. I_____ knelt next to him, trying in vain to save him, tears streaming down his face.

Stella just stood there. So many emotions crossed his face. Shock, anger, misery, all in a moment, like mine, that lasted forever. He half said something that it should have been him. I wanted to talk to him, to tell him it was my fault, not his.

Even E_____ seemed stunned by what he'd done. His arm was still stretched out, the pistol loose in his hand.

Maybe the only one among us with the sense to do anything was the rot E_____ meant to kill. He disappeared, his only friend among us dead and bleeding on the ground.

And me? I couldn't do anything. I was just frozen. I stood there for a moment, I think. Then it was like the ground gave way. I could hear someone vomiting. After I second, I realized it was me. Then I wasn't there any more. I was tucked up somewhere safe inside, where nobody could hurt me and I couldn't fail anyone. Like E_____. Like my wife. Like the dead man.

AFTERMATH

From witness1

Bookworm55 takes up the story.

From bookworm55

After Sixofswords collapsed, Ed dropped the gun and ran. Nearly everyone was too stunned by what had happened, except for Stella142. He ran after Ed. I just knew what Stella meant to do, and couldn't let him. Another killing would only make things worse. I threw myself at him and managed to drag him to the ground. By the time we were back on our feet, Ed was gone. Stella glared at me and for a moment I thought he was going to take his anger out on me. Then he seemed to calm down a little, and walked over to J. and the body.

Ed's on the run now, I guess. Stella and the others gave us enough time to get SoS and the burned rot's body out of there.

IGNORANCE IS BLISS

From witness1

Lack of understanding and communication is a terrible danger to us. Tanguera352 and her followers have become almost pariahs among us in the short time she has posted to hunter.list. It occurred to me that there may be an innocent reason for this. Could it be that her English is not good enough to properly express what she believes and intends for the mission? With the help of Tarjiman220, I asked Tanguera some questions in her native language. I think the answers will make some of you reconsider your opinions of her. Let her translated words speak for themselves.

From tanguera352

I have told you this before, Witness1. It is very simple. I do not ask much, I simply ask that those who have been chosen do not do what the monsters do and spoil the lives of the others who have not been chosen.

This is the task of those who have been chosen, you see. We must destroy the hidden ones without the world ever finding out they were there. I will never again be able to go to a milonga without thinking of the creature that preyed on the tangueras like me. I will not let them make me give up my dancing, for I love it too much, but it is now tainted. This is the curse of all the chosen. We have our lives tainted by the Voices, and because we do not want the others to suffer the same, we fight to keep them in ignorance.

We must use the methods of the hidden monsters to defeat them. Just as they are hidden in society, we must be hidden in society. Then, quietly, we can cut them out like the cancer they are, one by one. Wherever there is a place of power that one could hide, we must be. We must hide ourselves in the places of power like they do and we must cut down the leaders of the monsters first. Without the head, the body will not know what steps to take and it will be easier for us to destroy.

Still, we must be careful, for the world must not know what we do.

What will the world be like when they are gone? I do not know, but I look forward to knowing. We cannot tell how much of the misery and suffering of the world is their doing. We will only know this when we have taken them away. How beautiful this will be for those of us who were not chosen. They will not see the struggles with the creatures. They will never know the darkness that ate at their lives. They will just see the world become better.

We chosen will never be thanked for what we did. We will go back to our lives in this better world, feeling the warmth in our souls that we made it possible.

After that, one of them called the police anonymously, claiming to have witnessed a mugging and murder. I don't know if the police bought it, but they found that poor man's body. At least there would be some explanation, no matter how cruel, to offer his family.

THE FATE OF THE WORLD

From cassie247

In terms of a straight fight, the monsters outclass us. There are too many of them, and a lot of them have reportedly infiltrated deep into the power structures that run the world as we know it. They're in the police departments, judiciaries, state and national legislatures, television and media companies, criminal organizations, the church, entertainment. Everywhere. Going by some of the land deeds I've been shown up here, I believe some of them have been in place since we bought this bay from the chief. I can only imagine how long some of them must have been lurking in Europe before then. Given that they're so entrenched, it's safe to assume that they created or had a hand in society as we know it. As a result, we're oppressed, miserable and divided — just like we were before. Easy pickings.

So we can't use the tools of society to fight back. They're not ours to wield. We still need to kick the monsters out, though. Send them back to wherever it was they first came from — the stars, our minds, hell, wherever. It doesn't matter.

We can't take them on head to head, so we have to make things uncomfortable for them. Difficult. Expensive. Some of them show every sign of being highly intelligent, and that means they can analyze the costs involved in any given course of action. I don't just mean financial costs. Every action has certain consequences, it involves specific levels of acceptable and unacceptable sacrifices. We have to make the cost of staying in our world and feeding off us greater than the cost of leaving.

In other words, we've got to turn up the heat on the fuckers.

When things get uncomfortable enough, they'll leave us alone to live our own lives in peace. So, rather than devote resources we don't have to trying to find their hiding places, we should force them to find ours. After all, /they/ have the money, the research companies and the government grants. Forcing them into a guerrilla war will cost them dearly. Hopefully so much that they give up.

Now, if it all succeeds, society is going to be left in pretty bad shape. After all, /they/ created it, and to force them out we're going to need to knock down the institutions we're accustomed to. We're going to have to demolish government, the financial system, the media, in short, all the chains that bind us to the lifestyle fed to us. There's no way around it. I've seen it in my dreams.

Of course, the collapse of society as we know it will lead to some pretty medieval shit. Monsters can't be responsible for all the evils of the world. People are capable of some terrible acts themselves. That's when we'll need to come into our own. I can't believe we were created to save the world once when it would need to be saved twice. Our powers will give us the strength necessary to assume control, to establish order. By cooperating, we'll be able to influence all the petty groups that will probably arise to claim to control, and collect them into security forces. They'll help us maintain order until a new order is established.

I have no doubt that bringing peace to people will involve battles, and I mean that literally. Normal folks will be confused and scared, and that breeds violence. We can prepare and stockpile now, though, because we know what's coming. That will give us a powerful base to



operate from. By uniting, we'll be able to assume command for as long as necessary. It might even be that whatever keeps monsters hidden from people's eyes now also disguises our gifts. Maybe without the monsters around, people will be able to recognize our abilities at work. That advantage will make us obvious as ideal candidates to take charge and reorganize society.

Since I've gone this far, I might as well tell you the rest of what I anticipate in our future. It's not politically correct to say, but democracy is an extremely bad form of government. All those people have different ideas and agendas. They pull against each other, and issues devolve into petty bickering. It just doesn't work. Democracy is also open to corruption — probably one of the reasons why the monsters devised it. Anarchy is worse. It's the total absence of order, so not even corruption is possible because everything is essentially corrupt.

Looking back at history, I believe the only truly effective form of government is a dictatorship. It offers several benefits. It's almost immune to external corruption. If one person rules absolutely, how can he be tempted with more? He already commands everything. What do you give the person who has everything? Second, a dictatorship allows for strong, unequivocal leadership and direction. There's no delay in response to disasters or crises, because there are no representatives to jockey for position. Third, it allows you to impose a firm structure on the population. Despite people's protests to the contrary, they don't really want freedom of choice. They like to be told what the right thing to do is, to make their lives as easy and as comfortable as possible. America's fetish with freedom is pathological — as mad as the Russian fascination with communal leadership. The benefits gained from an enlightened dictatorship far outweigh the loss of minor rights and privileges. The world will be too chaotic to permit such luxuries in the aftermath of the monsters' departure, anyway.

Choosing a dictator can't be easy, though. It cannot, by definition, be done by a vote. I foresee that once a region is under control, its most senior awakened will quickly emerge. This will be the person who leads the others, who coordinates with /other/ regions. The overall dictator will come from the ranks of these district governors. I suspect there will be a tournament of some sort, a series of challenges designed to identify the one who's most fit to rule. Skill at arms, speed of thought, foresight, fairness and technological understanding will all play a part in the selection process. Trials will need to be non-fatal, as each region will need its leader during the rebuilding to follow.

One among us will shine, empowered by the Heralds with the strength, clarity and kindness to rule. He or she will be obvious, a beacon of power to bring the world back from the brink. The tournament will not so much be a competition as an identification parade. This mighty leader will unite the regions, the awakened and the populace at large, and will be the key to realizing /human/ potential.

FIRST STEPS

From *forscherin263*

My first step toward accomplishing anything is to make myself as safe as I can. I have done this with my boys as I have already told you. My second step is to make my research as safe as I can. I have also told you of this.

I tell you now why I do this. I worry that by simply hunting the monsters we are doing evolution's work for her. We hear on hunter-net all the time how the big, strong and brave hunters have killed this creature or that, and how great they are. This, I think, is good. It keeps the people safe from the evil that walks, and this is a good thought.

Then, I look at the "Most Wanted" list you keep, Witness1. And I ask myself questions. I do not like the answers that may be true. Are the monsters we kill just the weak ones? Are they the slow or the stupid? The monsters that have eluded us certainly seem more powerful than those we destroy. Maybe at the moment we only make the monsters stronger by eliminating the weak ones. We could force survival of the fittest onto them and soon all that might be left to fight are the powerful ones.

This cannot be allowed to happen. This is why I research the weak monsters, so I can understand them all. I must understand them as science allows and use the gifts the angels have given me to understand the spiritual nature of the monsters. I need to understand both to understand how the monsters exist.

Once I have the understanding, and I hope there will be others out there who will read this and want to help, for that would make it much quicker, if not any easier. Then I will design the virus or other remedy that will make the monsters weak. This will take time to make and to work. Even then I do not think I can destroy the creatures of the Devil with such tools. I will only make them weak so others can deal with them.

This is because, as I say and will say again until more people start to hear, all our ideas are needed to as you say, Witness1, Inherit the Earth. The angels chose us all for a purpose and to think that my own purpose is more important than any other is blind. When all the purposes work together, then we will find a solution. I seek to make all monsters sick and weak. Perhaps then, others' plans for the future and the monsters will work better, because we all worked together. All with a little piece of the puzzle.

When we allow our purposes to clash, and I talk to you now Tanguera352, we lose part of that big picture. Once it is lost it will be very difficult to get it back again. The fighting of hunter with hunter that happened in London and in New York is a terrible thing. It shows that the evil can get inside all of us, if we are not very careful.

This is all a matter of the sin called pride. I am not proud. I think my plan is a good one but I am not proud so I think it is only part of a bigger plan. Tanguera352 is proud and she sees her plan as the only plan. It is only her pride that is the problem. Her plan is a good one, but it is only part of another.

When we make her see that she will look at her plan and look at others' plans and see how they could fit together with small changes.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

To get to my next step is more difficult to explain. First you must accept that the reason we are facing the monsters is that too many of us have fallen from the path. By giving in to evil, or not accepting the good that is God into our hearts, we have given the monsters room to grow.

We cannot defeat the monsters by fighting them. We can weaken them, for fighting represents fighting the evil within ourselves. This is the first of the things we learn. Then we talk to and understand the monsters, so we can understand the evil within ourselves. This is the second of the things we learn.

Last, we must stop fighting the monsters and start fighting the evil within ourselves. Now people will say "she is preaching" and "she is trying to make us all convert." Trust when I say I am not.

I know a little about the faith of the Muslims, and they say that Christians and Muslims and Jews are all "of the book," and that we worship the same God. This is an important idea. You see, Witness1, I believe the monsters are us. They are our own evil and corruption made manifest and it is only by overcoming the evil within us that we will defeat them.

LIMITS OF COMPROMISE

From witness1

I thought it only fair to give Tanguera352 the chance to respond to the allegations made here by Forscherin263. Once again, Tarjiman220 translates.

From tanguera352

I am judged most harshly by many on your list, Witness1. I thank you for the chance to explain myself. If you are ever in Buenos Aires, I will make you welcome.

I am not some monster who wishes to kill those who oppose me. I can work with any hunter who does not wish to break my greatest rule: We must not tell the people what is happening. Surely any plan can be carried out in secrecy?

I will do most things to stop other hunters trying to tell the world. They will be stupid people if they do. I have read here of the man who went on television and tried to tell the world. Did his effort make any difference? No, it did not. I'm sure Doctor119 can attest to that. If they are stupid enough to try that feat again, I and my followers will stop them by any means necessary, except killing or seriously harming them.

That is a line I will not cross, for that would make me as evil as the creature who wanted to drink my blood. If you ask me if I would sabotage the work of other hunters to protect my plan, I will be honest and say that I would, yes.

This does not seem an unusual thing for me to say. We have to watch each other's behavior, do we not? I read on hunter-net of the man in London who killed another hunter. This man is bad and must be stopped. I read of Dictatrix11, who killed the hunter stalking hunter-net writers. This is policing at work. So we of vision must watch each other.

I hope this will soothe the fears of those who think me a monster.

That rat in my lab was not a rat that changed into a man-beast. I can find no evidence of that. No, the shape I saw was a warning that a man in my lab was doing experiments he should not have and had given the rat a bad illness that could hurt others.

Through history, it is our own evil and stupidity that has birthed these monsters, just like the stupid doctor in my lab. We must fight the evil within ourselves, so we do not feed them or create any more like them.

Once the monsters have been weakened in the world, we will take the battle within us and fight it in our spirits. Just as we see division drive apart hunters who should stand alongside each other, we see divisions drive apart religions that should stand alongside each other.

Hunters and religions spend too much of their time looking at what makes them different from each other and not enough time looking at what is the same about each other. We hunters will have to overcome these differences among ourselves to meet the first part of the plan.

I am sorry, Witness1, but while I love your on-line meeting place, I think you have made a mistake for our future here. When you allowed Firelight and Vitalis and Vigil and the rest, you allowed us to not be one group any more, but lots of little groups who fight amongst ourselves and with each other.

This is bad. I know you thought you might shut down Hunter-net for a while after your friend died, and I am glad that you did not. I make a new suggestion instead. You close down all the other lists and make only two: today.list and

tomorrow.list. The today list is how we fight the monsters today. Matze will love this list and perhaps Stefan will too. If they share the same list eventually they will have to share their views. Then those of us who think to the longest will share our plans on the tomorrow list. Soon we will start to see how all our plans work together.

The same will happen with the religions of the world. The angels will have chosen people to be blessed from all of these. Each of them will bring to us a different understanding of the good that is God and the evil that is the Devil. Each will learn a different way to help the good grow and the evil wither.

We will bring all these ideas together and we chosen will then hunt the evil in us and truly come into God's grace. Then we shall go to those hunters who have not had faith. They will be brave and true for they have had to fight the war without the knowledge and weapons faith provides. We will show them the way to take their fight inside and they too will slay their evil and become one with God.

Then we shall take our faith to all people, who will accept it to their hearts or perish like the monsters. The monsters who truly repent and take our faith to their hearts will not be monsters anymore. God's grace will fall on them and they will be restored. The monsters who do not repent will be driven back by the light of our faith and will hide in the shadows. As more and more people take the faith to their heart, we will banish the darkness within and turn this into a world of light where the monsters cannot hide. Then they will shrivel and die as the last evil dies in us.

FAITH AND FEELING

And then, you say, we will have a world without monsters. No, I say, we will not. For I know from the Bible what will happen then. The Bible uses pictures and stories to tell how the world will end. I do not believe that there will come a woman and a dragon as chapter 12 of Revelation tells us. I do not believe that she will give birth to a child who will rule us all. I think that this is a story that hints at a greater truth than we could understand when God gave us that insight.

Some event will happen, I believe, and from it will rise a leader. Perhaps that event has happened and we are it, and one of us will one day step forward and be our leader. This may be true, for the same chapter speaks of the Devil and how he "has gone down to you," the people who live on the earth. We know that the Devil is here, for we fight his servants. Chapter 11 of Revelation has already told that the "time has come for judging the dead." We do this with great frequency, yes?

So, we can see that our future is already shown in the Bible if we can understand it. Now let us read on. There is much talk of battles and of beasts and of men who take upon themselves the mark of the beast. I do not know what they are, but I think those times are upon me. I shall take Revelation and make it my guide. As each passage becomes clear, then I shall know we are nearer the end. For now we are in the passages that talk of battle, but the book helps my faith that these times will one day pass.

I will talk to those who have faith from other religions and I will learn what they have been told. Like we all have small pieces of hunters' dream, they all have small pieces of faith for all people. Their holy books will also be guides. When all the books are brought together, then the path will be clear and we will know where to walk.

When we have found where we are the same and how these faiths all work together, we will tell the world and each person will understand how God is within him. There will be no need for religion, for there will be faith in everyone and they will know God and know themselves.

SUBMISSION AND SUCCESS

From hajirah252

I read Forscherin's words with pleasure. It is so rare both in life and on the hunter mailing list to find one of the Christian faith who understands that God and Allah are as but one.

While I am happy to see this, I hope she can see the errors that the Bible contains, that caused Allah to send the Prophet to us to bring us the Quran.

However, I cannot share her faith that all this is the work of Allah. My faith teaches that an individual's relationship with Allah is all-important and that no man can claim a special relationship with him. To claim that we are Allah's chosen seems to be blasphemy.

But then, it says in surah XIV of the Quran: "And warn mankind of a day when the doom will come upon them, and those who did wrong will say: Our Lord! Reprieve us for a little while.

"We will obey the call and will follow the messengers."

I think we are in the last days, prior to the Day of Judgment. I shall spend these final days protecting people from the creatures and doing my best to bring faith and hope back to them. When acceptance is reached, they will survive the inevitable day of judgment. For that is our purpose: not to stop the monsters but to prepare mankind for the end that they herald, as Allah has decreed.

For that is Islam — submission to Allah's will.

Once this is the case, there will not be monsters and there will not be hunters. There will just be people who know God. It is difficult to imagine how this world will be, but it will be wonderful.

While they are only part of the picture, I leave you with the words of the Bible again: "No longer will there be any curse, the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servant will serve him. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."

PRACTICAL STEPS

From cassie247

I said earlier that we have to kick the monsters out by making the world too costly for them. That's the way guerrillas and terrorists fight, and that's what we have to become. The difference between guerrilla and terrorist groups is usually one of perspective. If you support their cause, they're freedom fighters. If you oppose it, they're terrorists. There is also a second class of terrorist that tries to make political statements using violence — the Unabomber, for example — but that isn't fighting a war and that's not really important for our purposes.

There's a lot we can learn from the history of resistance. The most important is that effective groups are organized in a cell structure. From the French Resistance during WW II to Vietnam to modern gangs and the IRA, the most effective way of organizing is to split into many small groups that operate on an autonomous or semi-autonomous basis.

Security is the main advantage. If one of the groups is compromised, it's very difficult to trace back to the rest of the force, because no one knows each other. Flexibility is another benefit. If your group is largely independent,

ASSUME NOTHING

From witness1

One of the most frustrating and yet refreshing things about compiling correspondence is that so many of us are willing to challenge every basic assumption. We take nothing for granted, which is appropriate when we know so little. Look at how Stella142 challenges my .sig file:

From stella142

>Inherit the Earth!

Why? I don't want the earth. I just want to see my friends get what they want, to live their lives in peace, for me to know that my life is worthwhile.

Do you truly believe that you are meek, Witness? I make judgments daily. Who lives. Who dies. It sort of comes with the territory, with the responsibility that being "imbued" places upon us. We're not meek anymore. We don't get to inherit anything. We probably get to clear the way for the meek, get rid of the shit that's built up. Maybe once we've done our jobs, the meek will come along and do all the inheriting (and they'll probably kick our arses in the bargain).

I just hope that the Lord Almighty has kept a space in the hereafter for the "helpers of the meek." I hope my friend who that psychopath killed is there now. Assuming, of course, that we're on the Lord's side. But that's another topic entirely.

you don't need to wait for orders from higher up to react to a situation. Unpredictability is a major advantage, because various groups have different targets and strategies, so patterns don't emerge. Yet there's enough coherence in overall goal to make the collective campaign effective. Each group also remains small enough to be able to hide easily within society. The result is a whole that's greater than the individuals within.

At the same time, the backbone of the resistance is solid enough for truly important directives to be passed around. Ideally, overall loose control rests with a central council that makes broad decisions, sets priorities and provides ground rules that must be abided. Each of the members of the council is located in a different area and is responsible for setting up five or six cells. The council member chooses a leader for each. Cell leaders then do the same, recruiting and forming a similar number of cells and choosing a leader for each. The process continues until a third or fourth generation, depending on the size of the territory and the number of available agents.

Typically, a cell's leader has no contact information for the person who recruited him or her. The sponsor checks in by phone every so often to see if there are any problems, and to pass on directives. Details of cells recruited aren't passed back up the line, either; just rough numbers. That way each part of the structure is as safe as possible. To help protect any part from being severed, a central control number can be established where messages can be left if a sponsor or contact disappears. Leaving contact details there allows a group to be hooked up into some other chain.

The bare bones of a structure like this are actually already in place among us. Many of us seem to work in small groups — or claim to, anyway. What's lacking is a central strategic council and a chain of command down to the various cells. In addition, a lot of people seem to work

on their own or in pairs. That's just not going to prove effective in the long run. To maximize viability, each group should contain as broad a range of people as possible, offering as many different skills, resources, contact bases, inclinations and even gifts as possible. That way each cell is capable of a variety of functions and performing different operations, being self-sufficient.

However, because of the different inclinations that we work with — all of us have different ideas of what we should do and how we should do it, no matter how wrong some are — it is critical that each cell have a strong leader to which members defer. When the time comes for action, discussion stops. Disobedience or discussion puts lives at risk when immediate response is required. The group leader has to have authority, and that should be passed down from the central council to ensure that it's respected.

The first practical step that we have to take, then, is for our most perceptive and compatible people to come together to form a council. Such a body should be dominated by Theorists, because it will deal primarily with the fulfillment of long-term goals. But it should also include at least one each of the other groups, it should be international, and it should represent people both on and off the Internet. The council must devise a code of action (for both offense and defense) and a way of prioritizing targets so that we all pull in the same direction. Witness, I strongly suggest that you select the members of the first council, because you have contact with so many people.

Once the council is in place, members will need to assemble groups in their own areas. The recruitment techniques I described a couple of weeks ago may come in useful during this phase. Existing teams can form a strong nucleus for cells, with individuals introduced to bring numbers up as necessary. Group leaders should be people who can respect the overall structure, and have the dedication to persuade others to form their own cells.

Once this structure is established, I believe hunter-net will need to be abandoned. Inter-cell communication would prove counterproductive. Cell members must be focused on their teammates, not on establishing or maintaining relations elsewhere. The breadth of experience gathered from posters would still be useful though, so the list archives would have to be distilled down into a manual that contains as much information about the enemy as possible. Copies of this manual could be passed down the chain to all cell members.

New information, rather than be distributed by hunter-net, would have to be passed on as special informational bulletins. I can't stress enough how important it would be to keep the awakened relatively separate from each other. Our contact is currently our biggest weakness. We've become a committee surrounded by lone wolves, and it just isn't working. We move too slowly, we're too suspicious of each other, and we're too hostile and self-concerned. We have to stop talking so much, because it just reveals our weakness and differences.

As with any resistance movement, public support is critical, but we're in a difficult situation because we can't explain the truth to people. Instead, we need to form organizations that don't actually know what it is they support. Each group will need to devise a cover story that's appropriate to its location, and try to recruit the help of locals through that. Down South, for example, groups could masquerade as Christian anti-drug activists, racist hate groups, survivalist organizations — whatever /works/. I know that sounds manipulative, and it is, but we have no choice. We're fighting for the world, not for profit or ideals.

A strong support base in the local community can mean the difference between life and death. You can't

bring normal folks into the fight, but sympathizers can provide places to hide, shelter, food, medical support. Supporters can also perform seemingly mundane tasks, such as deliver messages or pass on information that they themselves don't fully understand.

Once we're established throughout society, we can start making things difficult for our enemies. Again, our efforts should be covert. I advise targeting the apparent leaders and potent figures. That could leave the rest disorganized and thus easier targets. Even then, don't take them on directly. Use terrorist tactics. If a thing is too cautious for you to plant a bomb in its car, dig up a section of road regularly traveled and plant a bomb there. Watch the spot. The next time he drives over it, blow him up. If you have any links to gangland, pass word that a target runs a rival operation. Post snipers in an area that you know a target frequents — snipers are almost impossible to predict or stop.

You don't have to work against a specific target, either. Try to identify the institutions that seem influenced by monsters and strike against them. Obviously, do everything you can to make sure there are no civilian casualties, but planting bombs to detonate late at night is a great way to damage and disrupt the creatures' structures. Jam or sabotage TV transmitters. Fake libelous stories for newspapers. Encourage civil disobedience against the police. Rob banks. Dig up major highways and rail lines. Release computer viruses. Do everything you can to fuck up the works, because it's /their/ system. Regular folks are just victims of it — like we used to be.

This sort of chaos has its own momentum. It starts slowly, but as the disruption spreads it becomes increasingly effective. A lot of little pushes quickly become a big one. There are only so many resources to go around to maintain the "order" that the monsters want. They'll be overtaxed. If the police in your town are busy containing a riot, who's going to stop you from blowing up a monster-infested business? And yes, as part of this you'll have to harden yourself to the fear caused in the population. Just remember, it's nothing compared to the truth that we keep from them.

These kinds of tactics and the exhausting of the enemy will eventually defeat them. It'll take a while and a lot of nerve, but we can do it. Over the last two or three weeks, I've started networking in earnest toward achieving the initial contact base our resistance will need.

From witness1

As an addendum to Cassie's comments, I feel it is important to quote the following excerpt from an e-mail sent by one of her seeming colleagues:

>Witness, I understand that Cassie247's been bragging to you about some grand

>plan she's put together against the monsters. Don't believe it. She doesn't know

>anyone beyond the handful of people that I do, and the only reason she knows any of us

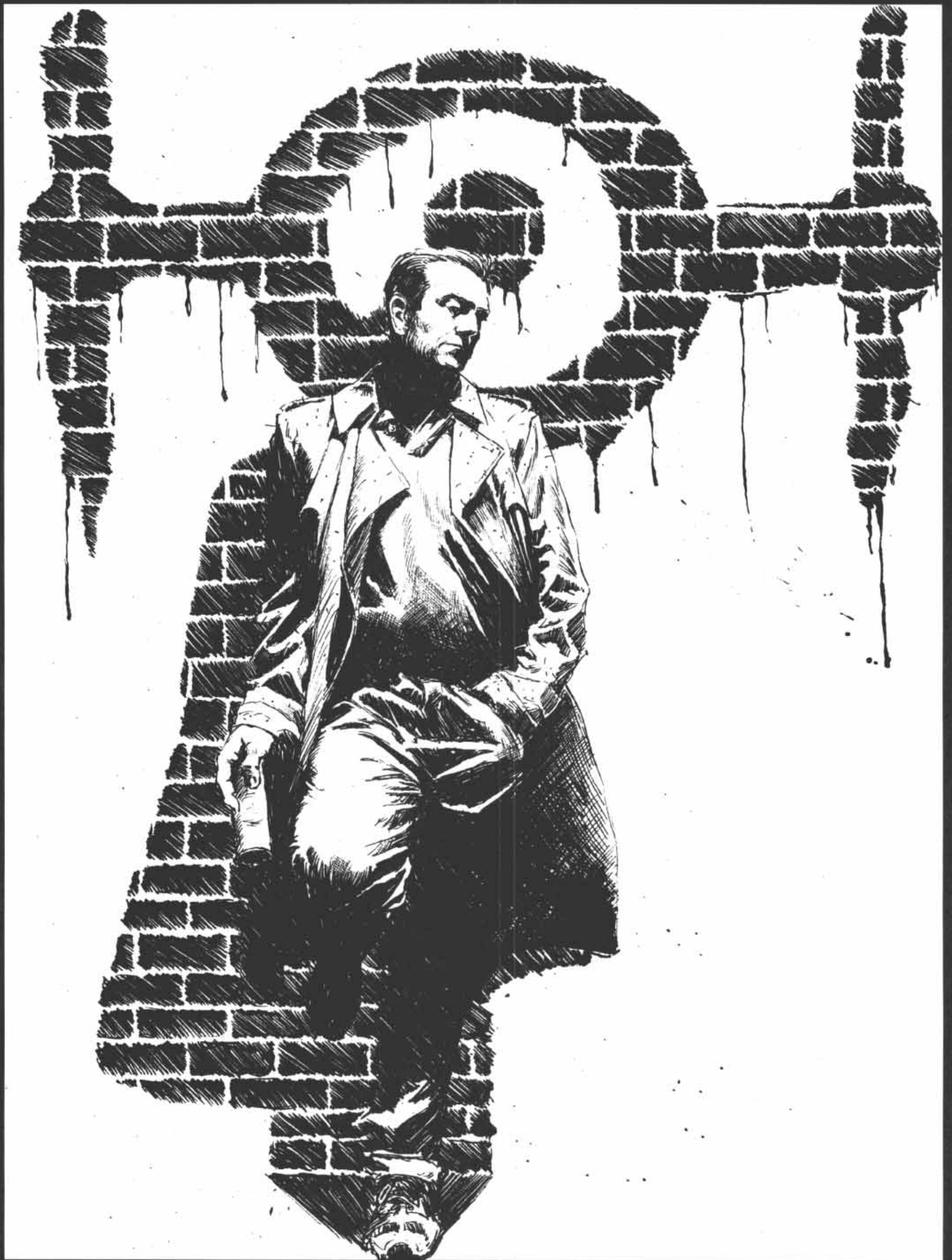
>is because I met and introduced her. Don't be fooled by Cassie's

>bravado. I don't even take her on the hunt. Everything she blathers about

>seems to be taken from books and ideas she's borrowed from others.

>I just wanted you to know, before anyone puts faith in what she has to say and gets

>killed. I intend to straighten her out myself.



CHAPTER 5: NEW RULES

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.
— Psalms 16:11

Playing a Visionary is unlike playing a member of any other creed. Instead of focusing on ways to approach the supernatural in the present, as almost all other imbued do, thinkers often look to future, seeking to guide their fellow hunters and each encounter they have toward individual ideals of a better world. The imbuing reveals a new reality to these people, as it does to all hunters. Pathfinders, however, immediately suspect or soon realize that focusing on small problems — killing this creature or sympathizing with that one — ultimately does not free humanity from monstrous oppression. Such efforts are like baby steps where these hunters seek to take strides. Visionaries thus tend to contemplate what the world could become if they and others only set themselves to the task of making it. Toward this end they ask themselves, their fellow imbued, and their unseen makers a seemingly endless array of questions: Where did monsters come from? Why were we chosen? What are we to do with these gifts? They do so in an effort to understand the true state of things, and to make reality better for everyone, perhaps even for monsters themselves.

This chapter is dedicated to the basic concepts of Visionary character creation and to the common and new Archetypes, edges and rules that apply to these hunters. It takes a certain kind of person to question the origins of monsters and the nature of seemingly divine forces, all while facing some ravening beast. And as these inquisitive hunters pursue their personal quests, they may share their insights, gifts and capabilities — and always their theories — with their fellow imbued.

DEFINING VISIONS

Although no two Visionaries or their theories on the big picture are identical, certain attitudes are typical of many creed

members. These philosophies can define who your character is and explain why he belongs to this group of thinkers and interpreters. Bear these attitudes and behaviors in mind when playing your character, to help define him and his peers.

- **Always look to the future.** This is the credo of most Visionaries. Attacking monsters savagely or coaxing out their innermost feelings on a case-by-case basis might have rewarding results in individual situations, but such approaches to the mission ultimately do little or nothing to relinquish monsters' control over humanity. Monsters are myriad and pervasive. Picking out single grains of sand doesn't change the beach. Thus, the "navel-gazers" understand that the hunt must be considered in the long view, with an idealized plan or goal in mind. Specific successes over or failures against the supernatural are immaterial if they don't contribute to or undermine a larger effort, whether it's to find humanity a new place to exist, to drive monsters from the world, or to reconcile humankind and beasts in a tolerable existence.

- **The present guides the future.** Despite Visionaries' reputation among some hunters as distracted or ineffectual, many pathfinders have various ideas or even strong opinions about how the hunt should be conducted on a day-to-day basis. They don't all pursue a big picture for the sheer intellectual challenge of it. They do so because they want their visions to come true, and destinations can't be reached unless the necessary steps are taken to get there. Visionaries therefore have strategies — to gather all hunters possible or to cleanse a city of monstrous control — to achieving their greater goals.

Admittedly, Visionaries' plans tend to consist of only guidelines, what they hope to achieve from encounters with the adversaries, rather than the nitty-gritty of how to kill a rot or make conversation with one. A Visionary who seeks scientific

answers to monsters' existence might ask allies to capture a creature for study. She might not offer detailed advice on how to do so, though. Such technical concerns are often left to other people who are assumed to have the skills necessary for success.

- **The past is only relevant for the insights it offers on the future.** There are few hunters who aren't desperate to know exactly who or what, if anything, has changed them. The Messengers' true nature and intent are a mystery to all imbued. Visionaries are perhaps most prone to theorizing about their origins, but typically they do not pursue such understanding for its own sake. Instead, they tend to seek clues to the Heralds' nature in an effort to arrive at better and more useful theories on what to do to change the world. The same applies to their attitudes on understanding monsters. Visionaries don't usually want to know where creatures come from in order to deal with one, or even a specific race of them. Visionaries look for clues to how monsters fit into the big picture and how that information can be used to change the picture itself.

- **Simple is not always best.** Visionaries are often the living denial of Occam's Razor — that the simplest solution is the most likely to be right. No Visionary can say with utter certainty that she knows what monsters are, why hunters are created, and what the imbued are meant to do. Visionaries all have theories, though, and they often test, throw out and experiment with new ones. Thus, while Occam's Razor may suggest that, say, monsters have always existed and have evolved alongside humanity, no theorist can accept that as the *only* correct answer because it seems simple. After all, what conclusive proof is there that monsters are even an old phenomenon?

Thus, while Visionaries can have pet theories about the truth, simplicity or complexity really has no bearing on what's possible to their minds. In fact, it's entirely possible that Occam's Razor was conjured up by monsters as a distraction from their true origins.

- **Every encounter with monsters is a chance to learn.** A theory isn't much use unless it can be tested. Visionaries are often keen to get "into the field" to put their theories into practice and thereby develop or discard aspects of them.

An outlook, plan or theory usually needs some foundation or inspiration in evidence, an experience or an encounter — no matter how thin that foundation is. Visionaries who devise concepts completely from thin air are either deluded or painfully aware of their concepts' fallibility.

Unlike, say, Judges who tend to gather intelligence for short-term decisions, Visionaries use information to help refine their hopes for the world or to find ways to bring their dreams to pass.

Only theorists who fear making errors, being proven wrong or getting killed avoid going into the field. Because Visionaries are still human, it comes as no surprise that many theorize in private, lurk online or only discuss their ideas, thus avoiding real-world confrontation and practical exploration. Of course, such insulation brings its own dangers.

- **A vision can always be refined.** Circumstances can force even the most respected Visionaries to change their attitudes and aspirations for the world, as has occurred with Witness1 and Sixofwords29. The hunt is a constant process of information gathering, experimenting, theorizing and refining ideas. Visionaries' attitudes develop and grow as a result of their experiences. Their big ideas are not cast in stone at the moment of the imbuing; they are living things, developing as their creators do.

- **With vision comes leadership.** Prophets who analyze a mysterious new world, seek answers to its puzzles, and express possible answers can be inspirational to those around them. When no hunter understands what's become of him or his life,

any possible answers are welcome. By virtue of taking the long view on the hunt and world, Visionaries can attract followers, whether they want to be leaders or not. For some theorists, adherents or simply other inquisitive imbued prove a tremendous help in making inroads to a perceived goal. But, of course, hunters seeking guidance can develop their own ideas of what's right for the hunt, which may conflict with what a Visionary himself seeks. Whether a pathfinder can achieve her own goals and help other hunters meet theirs depends on her ability to work with other imbued or to simply demand obedience from them.

CHARACTER CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Visionaries are something of a departure from other creed members when it comes to character creation. A Defender typically becomes such because her first response is to protect someone or something in the face of monstrosity. A Redeemer seeks to aid someone or make a creature reconsider the error of its way. These are attitudes about and reactions to events at the imbuing that help determine creed. Visionaries' response to monsters is a little different because it's not so much an attitude or an emotion as it is a thought process. When a potential theorist looks at a vampire, he doesn't necessarily see a being that can harm the people in its vicinity, or a thing that needs to be destroyed, he naturally thinks bigger, potentially perceiving a small part of a large problem that affects all of humanity. Would-be Visionaries therefore have a common tendency to see the whole rather than be absorbed with the details. As such, there are Traits that can represent their state of mind.

NEW ARCHETYPES

The following Traits can be added to your game as Natures and Demeanors.

ADVISOR

An Advisor knows deep down that her sense of the way to do things is correct and most people will understand it to be so, given time and the right guidance. She can't force them into seeing her way, however. Others have to seek it out for themselves when they're ready. When people become aware of the nightmares that lurk in the world and realize that their lives have been lies, it's only a matter of time before they seek direction. Once they ask, the Advisor is more than happy to guide them along the true path.

—Regain Willpower whenever someone seeks out and then follows your advice in way that furthers your dream of the future.

ANALYST

It doesn't matter how bizarre, horrifying or alien something is, the Analyst knows that it can be understood if the right information is collected and studied. To him, everything is data to be sorted, examined and used to understand what's really going on. Everything a rot does has some possible significance and thus must be catalogued and considered. Once enough data is collected, everything will become clear. The Analyst constantly runs the risk of looking for information when there is none, however, or of spending so much time analyzing that he never comes to any conclusions.

—Regain Willpower whenever careful study of a subject results in valuable new insights that reinforce or develop your hopes for the future.



PRELUDES

LIFE AMONG THE BLIND

It's possible for virtually any person, barring perhaps the most closed-minded or short-sighted, to become a Visionary. The trauma of the imbuing and the revelation of a hidden world can be enough to shock the most stodgy and conservative of people to try to understand what has happened, and to strive for a better future. And yet, many people who devote themselves to understanding the nature of monsters, the Messengers and fate in general tend to have been contemplative in their previous lives. The meaning of life may have been fascinating and elusive to a person before, but now so can the meaning of unlife.

The following states of mind are fertile breeding ground for Visionaries. Consider these as you create your character and seek to understand who she was in her normal existence and who she could become now that everything has changed.

Disillusionment: Sometimes, the most driven pathfinders are individuals who had previously lost all hope for the future. Any number of factors could have caused your character's disillusionment with life: the end of a relationship, losing a job, injury, boredom or a sense of personal failure. Many people find that the working world is not what they expected in their youth. The grind of nine-to-five routine can gradually impose compromises on a worker, stifling idealism and enthusiasm. With no particular vitality, these people can be veritable clean slates for the imbuing, when the source of their nihilism is given shape as creatures, and a true calling is heard.

Dreams: The harsh realities of the World of Darkness leave many people downtrodden. Oppression, poverty and denied opportunities can all keep a person down, forcing him to survive from day to day. People living under such conditions

can only hope for a better future, a better world. When the causes of such abuse appear incarnate, the chance for a better life becomes just as real. Suddenly, a better world appears to be within reach of whoever can make it, and that chance lies in the hearts and minds of people with a dream and the will to succeed.

Inquisitiveness: People who have always been interested in learning, exploring or experimenting can be drawn to the Visionary path. Their curiosity, determination to unveil the unknown or to simply learn is quickly applied to the hunt. After all, what could be more important than understanding this new, secret world? It's only a short leap for a research scientist to move from studying the natural to seeking to understand the unnatural. A journalist whose career has been devoted to investigating the truth and exposing it may treat the hidden world the same way.

Passion: People who are motivated or invigorated by a cause can sometimes transfer that passion to a new focus. They have the drive and initiative to pursue one agenda or dream, and when that proves false, hollow or mistaken, the same energy can be devoted to something more important or rewarding. A lowly but committed worker in a political party's election machine might redirect her commitment to saving humanity from supernatural predators. After all, party goals are meaningless when monsters pull the strings. Realizing that, she feels ready to do some real good.

EYES OPENED — THE IMBUING

The moment when the Heralds open your character's eyes is the defining experience of his life. The seeds of your Visionary's big idea are often planted in that first encounter. A student who discovers that a college administrator is corrupt might thereafter associate authority with corruption, and start formulating ideas to break monsters' control. A dedicatedly religious person might witness the walking dead and decide that organized

religion has failed mankind. Thereafter, he seeks to find and deliver the true meaning of faith once again.

To give your character the chance to develop into a genuine Visionary, the imbuing must offer enough motivation and information to inspire him to radical change, sweeping renovation or widespread salvation. If it doesn't, your character's revolutionary philosophical response is likely to seem false or forced. After all, why does breaking monsters' iron grip on authority worldwide seem more important than simply bashing the thing standing before your character?

To simulate a Visionary's train of thought at the imbuing, focus on your hunter's reactions to information about the supernatural, no matter how trivial such revelations might seem. If your character discovers that a person can suddenly become an animal, what does that possibility mean to him, beyond the horror of the event itself? To his mind, what are the consequences of man and beast being one? What do such seeming truths mean to life as he's known it, as all people know it? Step back a little from what your character is exposed to and think about the consequences of such a discovery. That is, after all, what a would-be Visionary does in his mind.

By working with your Storyteller, you can direct the imbuing to facilitate — or demand — creation of a Visionary by incorporating one of the following concepts into your character's prelude.

- **Complex problems and novel solutions.** A Visionary's imbuing rarely allows for a simple solution to a situation. Simply stopping a monster by killing it or talking to it isn't really the province of a long-term thinker, because these reactions basically address the problem at hand, not any larger one that's suggested (unless, of course, you rationalize killing or talking as a step toward a bigger response). Visionaries often think creatively to avert disaster altogether, or recognize a greater threat behind one that seems minor. The best way to cool off a situation in which a raving beast threatens to slaughter defenseless people might be to activate the building's sprinkler system. Confrontation with a gang of shambling zombies might be terrifying, but it's all the more so if the scene conjures up fears that Heaven or Hell might be full. In either case, a larger problem than what your character sees is apparent, and it's for him to find the solution... somehow.

- **Hints of a bigger picture.** Visionaries are often given a glimpse of a bigger picture in the course of their imbuing. The normal elements are there: a monster and a situation to resolve in some way. There is also some evidence to inspire your character to theories about how the situation is possible, however, and how it may have come to pass. If a character is drinking at a bar when a rot charges in, makes a beeline for a woman and her boyfriend, and roars something to the man about "stealing my fiancée," speculation about all these events could mean the creation of a Visionary. Sure, "How can the dead walk?" your character might wonder. But on a deeper level, "Is it possible for passions to transcend even death?" "Is it right to insist that the living remain beholden to the dead?" Or even, "How difficult is it to exhume yourself from the grave?" Rather than take events at face value and simply react, Visionaries tend to make these kinds of larger or more esoteric inquiries, and such trains of thought guide their lives thereafter.

- **Making a difference.** Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons to look to the big picture and become a Visionary is a sense that one person actually can change the world. If a potential philosopher becomes aware of a danger or problem before the imbuing — say, a doctor discovers a bizarre blood-borne virus affecting an inner city neighborhood — and then discovers the supernatural cause behind it and solves the problem, he has genuine evidence that it's possible to change

things for the better. If that feat was possible, what other heights can be reached? Maybe all he has to do is dream and try.

- **Taking charge.** Oftentimes, it seems that the Messengers assemble or awaken a group of people simultaneously in the face of the same threat. The result is typically a range of possible imbued, with varying gifts and capabilities as diverse as their identities and intentions in the situation. It's quite possible for these people to cross purposes or even clash in that moment of revelation, confounding rather than helping each other. With a mind for the big picture, Visionaries can immediately recognize the dangers of this chaos and thus seek to coordinate other new hunters instinctively, even though they understand no more of what's happening than the people they would organize. It's as if these thinkers' role is to guide the others and bring order from the confusion.

Then again, would-be pathfinders may be just more participants in the imbuing scene, and they might not come fully into their own until afterward. In the days and nights that follow, when the realization of what was seen and done sinks in, it takes an inspired leader to rise, put fear aside and try to come to terms with this new existence — and to help others do the same, for the good of all.

In either case, your character's leadership does not focus on immediate issues for long, or at all. She might start making long-term plans to learn whether others have been changed, too, and to organize them. She might propose exploring the depths and heights to which monsters lurk, to find out how far their influence reaches. Ultimately, your character might realize that any threat that is as insidious and pervasive as monsters must be dealt with on a large scale, and she might hope to show the way.

CAMPS AND COURSES

Visionaries' hopes for what they want the world to become are as varied and numerous as thinkers themselves. Sometimes, these outlooks are so at odds that these people can struggle to perceive what others' dreams — or even members of the creed itself — have in common. One Visionary's aspiration to instigate all-out war with the supernatural can seem antithetical to a contemplator who seeks to reverse whatever change might have created monsters.

Even though very few recognize it, most Visionaries fall into one of three broad groups within the creed, based on their evolving philosophies about the future.

SINGLE-MINDED

The most determined of Visionaries, the single-minded believe they have a definite plan for the future, and a clear way of bringing it about. They have a tendency toward idealism rather than pragmatism, because they believe every obstacle can be overcome eventually. Their big ideas usually involve a profound change in society, or a plan that involves every monster or hunter on the face of the Earth. Maybe they want to completely redirect organized religion, with hunters leading the way. Perhaps they seek to establish permanent forces of monster-hunters in each city, with sympathizers in the government and police to protect the imbued from the consequences of such action. The single-minded think big and believe that they can achieve big. It's the naysayers and uncommitted, these people often convince themselves, who deny them the chance to make their ideals into realities.

Views on the Calling: For a single-minded Visionary, the hunt is about imposing her vision on the world, and she tends to pursue that ideal with absolute dedication. She believes in her plan thoroughly and is willing to devote everything to achieving it. She is right, dammit, and everybody else had better follow her or face the consequences. Other hunters are there to be used as tools in building that

SEEING WITH NEW EYES

Hunter creeds aren't societies or movements that characters join. They're just loose classifications of people's various beliefs about and approaches to the hunt. Given that people are prone to change, it's conceivable that a perception-altering event could occur after the imbuing and open a hunter's mind to the vast scope of reality, even after she has pursued the narrower focus of a Mercy- or Zeal-based creed. Although such a revelation is very rare — hunters tend to become *more* obsessed with their causes rather than less — a major, traumatic event can bring about sweeping change. In fact, the Visionary creed is arguably the one turned to by most hunters seeking a new direction, as the pathfinders are among the most progressive of the imbued, seeking resolution and closure where other callings fail.

At the Storyteller's discretion, your character may abandon her current creed to become a Visionary if some kind of startling revelation occurs to her. Maybe your Redeemer seeks to convince a gang member that he has chosen the wrong path, and succeeds, only to witness the penitent criminal gunned down by rots. In that moment, it dawns on your hunter that if people are to be free to change, it must be as humanity as a whole, not just individual by individual.

Also remember that such creed transitions are usually only possible a short while after the imbuing, before your character becomes so focused on her assumed calling that she can no longer consider alternatives. Your Storyteller decides when it's too late to change courses.

better world. All who oppose the single-minded Visionary are likely to be viewed as just more nails to be hammered down.

Of course, it's usually most effective to be covert rather than overt about sweeping or revolutionary theories. Calling for the overthrow of the business world tends to drive potential supporters away rather than attract them, and might even draw the attention of the very monsters a focused Visionary hopes to subvert. Just standing up and shouting that all hunters should follow rarely works, either. Persuading others through words and deeds is far more compelling, and doing so allows a prophet to prove the value of her ideals.

Views on the Adversaries: The supernatural is regarded as a problem to be resolved, a threat to be eliminated. At least, that's the common focus of many single-minded plans. Individual monsters are subject to the same attitudes as are other hunters: Fit in or get out. Of course, even monsters that show no inclination to support or defy a dreamer's plan are still valid targets for destruction.

Possible Future: If the single-minded are successful in the process of imposing their vision on the world, they tend to grow increasingly focused. Because of this, they are the camp most likely to suffer the insanity that comes with high Virtue. If their plans falter, however, they may suffer a complete breakdown, perhaps considering other views, falling out of the hunt, killing themselves or even turning themselves over to the authorities or the other side for failing themselves and their cause. The single-minded are creatures of extremes. They are unlikely to make the compromises that mark the pragmatic.

Appropriate Archetypes: The single-minded tend to have similar Natures and Demeanors. They are often too focused on their plans and goals to pretend to be anything else. Common Archetypes include Architect, Autocrat, Celibrant, Fanatic and Perfectionist.

Common Traits: Single-minded Visionaries often have high Social Traits, particularly Charisma and Manipulation. Most develop Expression, Intimidation and Leadership as useful means of rallying people around them or obtaining aid. Politics and Bureaucracy are useful for manipulating the blind populace into serving their causes. Common Backgrounds include Influence, Destiny and Allies. Vision is focused on over other Virtues, although Zeal is useful for its access to edges such as Cleave that help these hunters drive home their point.

PRAGMATIC

Although these Visionaries perceive worlds that they would like to fulfill, they understand that chasing dreams takes time and that certain jobs need to be done immediately. While many of these hunters have passion for their personal causes, they're not blinded by it. They also realize that the future is unpredictable and that they need to be flexible enough to deal with the unexpected. They still hope that their ideals will win out in the end, though, and are sure that if enough people rally to them, they can all make something better of the world.

Views on the Calling: The hunt is a constant struggle to make a dream a reality. Every encounter with the supernatural is an opportunity to take another small step toward utopia. Sure, compromises have to be made, but if passion and commitment are upheld, they can win in the end. These Visionaries are the most likely to lead groups of other hunters, because goals are best accomplished through cooperation, and not all imbued seem to understand that cooperation is more important than killing or forgiving. Many pragmatic Visionaries enjoy testing the validity of their dreams on other hunters. Doing so gives them confidence, as the flaws of their aspirations are revealed, and strength, as allies come together to strive for meaning in a world otherwise stripped of it.

Views on the Adversaries: It's very difficult to make a sweeping statement about pragmatic Visionaries' concepts of the enemy. They tend to vary wildly, depending on each thinker's origins, beliefs and experiences. Some envision a future without any monsters at all. Others, a world where creatures are contained or imprisoned. And some even hope for integration of monsters into human society. Pragmatists rarely confront monsters that they're not certain they can defeat, coerce or manipulate, however. If they did, how would their dreams come true in their absence? Pragmatists prefer to watch, wait and learn first. In some cases, they settle for minimizing the damage a creature causes, rather than eliminating the problem entirely, in hopes of the best results in the long term.

Some of these moderate Visionaries avoid monsters for less justifiable reasons, though. Testing theories on their very subjects might challenge thinkers' ideas too severely. What would they do if proved wrong? The alternative of arguing aspirations with other hunters doesn't endanger personal beliefs quite as much, because hunters can't prove anything definitive about the supernatural. But of course, such sheltered intellectualism can make these philosophers ineffectual and perhaps as much a danger to themselves as others as they share untested ideas with fellow imbued.

Possible Future: The pragmatic often remain so throughout their "careers," unless some event or development forces them to reconsider their assumptions. A run of spectacular successes on a personal quest can make them single-minded. Too many compromises of their ideals can lead them to doubt the value of those hopes and of their own self-worth. From there, it's a short step to the open-minded camp. If a pragmatist's plan fails utterly, she may suffer a crisis of confidence, scram-

bling for any alternative that offers some kind identity and personal meaning, whether worthwhile or not.

Appropriate Archetypes: Pragmatists tend to be organizers and leaders, so they often have Demeanors such as Architect, Caregiver, Pedagogue or Advisor (see p. 70). Some have identical Natures, although many find that they have to be much more cunning to deal with disparate hunters, and thus have Natures such as Conniver, Director or Survivor.

Common Traits: As with the single-minded, Social Attributes tend to dominate, although it's a tossup whether Physical or Mental ones come in second. Most pragmatists develop skills associated with taking charge and directing others: Empathy, Leadership and Streetwise. Many take time to learn the basics of dealing with aggressive monsters, too: Dodge, Firearms and Stealth. Common Backgrounds include Allies, Arsenal, Contacts and Resources. Most acquire a few dots in both Mercy and Zeal, just so they keep a handle on the broad picture and better understand other hunters.

OPEN-MINDED

Some Visionaries have yet to really settle on a single big idea. They understand the importance of guiding the collective hunt to a destination, but they concentrate on gathering information, analyzing and coming up with possible theories before settling on a plan. They're the most willing to listen to what other Visionaries and hunters in general have to say. Some of these theorists believe that there's one true big picture and that all Visionaries' pursuits are just elements of that overriding, unnamable concept. Others think that it's just too soon in existence of the imbued to tell, and anyone who claims to have the answers is fooling himself — unfortunately, at the expense of anyone who would follow him.

Views on the Calling: The open-minded make good “home-base” or “fallback” members of a hunter group: doing research, analyzing data, planning strategies and suggesting approaches for dealing with the enemy. Their efforts help make other hunters more effective, and these thinkers are allowed to test their nascent theories through the activities of others. A few open-minded work essentially on their own, pursuing their studies of the supernatural and having only occasional contact with other hunters to get their findings “out there” for broader consideration.

Views on the Adversaries: The supernatural is largely considered an object for study and analysis. Some creatures are dangerous and some are not, but all are useful sources of information toward an understanding of the truth, as long as they are dealt with sensibly. The open-minded often oppose the outright destruction of monsters, unless the process of elimination provides more data or subjects for scrutiny. And yet, these thinkers often cooperate with creatures only so long as insights can be gained. After that, such beings could be expendable.

Possible Future: Once they arrive at determined ideas about the nature of the imbuing and the destiny of the chosen, many among the open-minded put their ideals into effect, gradually becoming pragmatists. A few get sudden inspiration and become utterly committed to their views, becoming single-minded. If and when notions or dreams fail to pan out, it's back to the drawing board.

Appropriate Archetypes: The open-minded can develop virtually any Demeanor. It's their Nature that really matters. Most are Dreamers, Perfectionists or Analysts (see p. 70).

Common Traits: Mental Attributes are almost always dominant among open-minded Visionaries. They tend to develop Abilities that suit gathering and study: Academics, Alertness, Awareness, Computer, Investigation, Research and Subterfuge.

FOLLOWING A VISION

The differences among the three groups of Visionaries are largely matters of commitment to a particular ideal or plan, and confidence in it.

You are fully welcome to play a Visionary who slowly develops his own hope for the future and world, and who finds the confidence to try to make it a reality, progressing through the open-minded, pragmatic and single-minded camps.

Bear in mind that each step along this course can cause conflict with hunter allies, though. As your Visionary develops from open-minded to single-minded, she is likely to become an increasingly dominant figure in the group, perhaps receiving support or maybe demanding it to accomplish her goals. If the other hunters don't accept her outlook or welcome her leadership, she might try to convert them to her cause or manipulate them to her own ends. Either option is likely to cause significant group strife, both in and out of game. If you're happy with that outcome and your Storyteller accepts it, go for it.

A completely different approach is to start playing a single-minded character whose theories are discredited and his confidence shattered in the course of the game. Then, you can play his search for new inspiration as the other members of the group reassess their former leader.

Common Backgrounds include Exposure and Mentor. Many open-minded Visionaries acquire some dots in Mercy and edges from the Merciful paths because these abilities facilitate observation of the enemy in its habitat. Fighting, capturing and killing monsters can provide subjects for study, but the open-minded tend to leave the actual acquisition to those more suited to it.

THE HIGH COST OF COMMITMENT

To develop the most realistic and plausible theories for the future, Visionaries have to go into the field and face the world's waking nightmares. Sometimes, ideals are proved solid and effective, and sometimes they fail utterly and must be reconsidered or discarded altogether. Such trial, error and success can lead to various Visionary outlooks on the hunt. The challenge of devising a plan to save the world can inspire a pathfinder to an unwavering philosophical quest (he focuses on the Vision Virtue). Repeated defeats, failures and blunders can frustrate a theorist's search for the truth and a plan, making him lash out in anger (he dabbles in Zeal). Or, insights into monsters can make a Visionary better understand creatures and even empathize with them (he is no stranger to Mercy). Not all plans for the future are based on intellectual pursuits alone — sometimes, passions such as anger or sympathy offer insights, too.

There is no hard-and-fast rule or obvious path to Visionary enlightenment. Each theorist's quest is a product of his identity and values, as reflected in his increasing Virtue scores, but also as reflected in his changing Conviction score. Successes in his efforts and aspirations motivate him to try even harder to understand the world, whereas failures break his spirit and make him question his direction. Rising and falling Conviction measures the waxing and waning of the Visionary spirit for the mission.

REGAINING CONVICTION

As with any Hunter character, you gain the majority of your Conviction by risking it on edge-related rolls. The Storyteller

can, however, award other points for roleplaying the pursuit of a significant personal goal or plan. Under circumstances appropriate to the Visionary creed in general, the Storyteller can grant you a single point. Don't expect this to happen more than once per game session; everyday acts aren't necessarily enough to boost your character's confidence in his dreams.

- Gain a point of Conviction if your Visionary persuades another hunter to act in a way that significantly furthers your character's big idea.

- Gain a point of Conviction if an encounter with a monster leads to revelatory information about the adversaries and your character's understanding of them, according to his vision for the world and the future.

- Gain a point of Conviction if your character comes up with an innovative and unusual solution to an encounter with a monster that reinforces his overall plan.

- Gain a point of Conviction if your character successfully directs a team of hunters against the opposition in a manner that supports his overriding goal on the hunt.

- (Optional) Lose a point of Conviction if your character's primary plan for the hunt is proved erroneous or otherwise falters.

- (Optional) Lose a point of Conviction if your character fails to take a crucial step toward realizing his dream for reality.

CASHING IN CONVICTION

Decisions, decisions. When your Visionary character acquires 10 Conviction, should you cash them in for a Virtue increase or hang onto them for confrontations with the unknown and the pursuit of understanding?

On one hand, hanging onto Conviction can seem sensible. It's pretty damn difficult to theorize about the nature of the hidden world when its every emergence makes you want to void your bowels and run for your life. On the other hand, boosting a Virtue can give you more dice in edge rolls and even grant your character a new edge.

So, which to choose? First of all, your *character* doesn't make a decision to cash in his Conviction and increase a Virtue. Those concepts mean nothing to him. They're merely mechanical means of recording his enthusiasm for and belief in the hunt.

A large Conviction pool doesn't mean your hunter is "powered up" with mystical energy. It means that at that moment he really believes in his hopes for the world and is confident that they can be achieved. A high Vision — or any high Virtue rating — indicates that your character has become more dedicated to his calling, and in the case of Vision has gained greater insights and understanding based on his triumphs.

So you can make the choice of which Virtue to increase when your character gathers 10 Conviction. This decision should be based on her recent experiences and personal epiphanies. If she just lashed out in anger against a creature when it refused to offer her information about the other side, she may deserve Zeal as opposed to Vision or Mercy points. Alternatively, Vision might be gained if she just reached a significant milestone in her quest for an idealized future.

Since theorists focus on Vision as their primary Virtue and constantly seek to further their understanding of themselves and the world, here are some guidelines by which you can decide whether your character's Vision rating increases in your chronicle.

- **Has your character substantially changed her big idea in a positive capacity?** If she has, she could be more committed than ever to the Vision Virtue, because past experiences have guided her to a more rewarding and inspirational dream for the future.

- **Has your character's role in the hunt changed sufficiently that a new Vision-path edge would be useful?** For example, has your character assumed more of a leadership role in an effort to realize the big picture? Would successively higher Vision edges make her a better leader?

- **Has your character's attitude toward monsters changed in keeping with a goal?** Has your character decided that wiping out every walker (or making peace with them) one by one isn't the way to end the war against the supernatural? If monsters become less important individually and more important as a force of supernature, your character might be due for a Vision increase.

Also bear in mind that your developing chronicle and its stories have a significant impact on whether it's time for your character to cash in or save Conviction, and on the Virtue point that you gain. If your character has been constantly on the run recently, never getting a chance to breathe, much less to ponder the mysteries of the universe, it probably isn't appropriate to cash in Conviction. Similarly, a recent story about self-sacrifice and mutual sympathy may preclude gaining Vision or Zeal. You and the Storyteller should discuss what Conviction and Virtue changes are appropriate for the course of the series and your character's part in it.

THE PRICE OF VISION

As hunters delve deeper and deeper into the unnatural world, the strain of coming to terms with the horrible truth exacts a heavy toll. Increasing focus on and dedication to the hunt leaves less and less room for being the person one was before, for relating to the world. Obsessions and fears rise up to consume a hunter's essential personality, making him ever more driven, erratic, incomprehensible or withdrawn.

Visionaries are often considered odd or distracted by other imbued at the best of times. Their focus on looking for answers to the hunt's larger questions means that they frequently spend time pondering and constructing elaborate theories, and they're rarely shy about sharing their thoughts with fellow hunters. Because of such characteristics, they run the risk of being considered eccentric or ineffectual, even while they're still perfectly sane and contributive.

Energetic Visionaries with a strong personal sense of the truth are in many ways the most vulnerable to stress and breakdown. Already idealistic or decided, they may react poorly to evidence that their cherished theories are incorrect and so suffer a crisis of faith. Faced with such a setback, some withdraw from the real world while they re-evaluate their very beliefs. Others prove unable to regain their old confidence and become depressed or withdrawn, maybe even suicidal — everything they put stock in has abandoned them. What can possibly be worth living for now?

Other Visionaries invest a lot of value in communicating ideas and guiding other imbued toward goals. Sometimes, goals change. The meaningful part is that people are coordinated to work toward some end, no matter what it is. These Visionaries find self-worth in being able to convince others that the theorists are guiding lights. Such pathfinders may become agitated, upset or hostile when their ideas, orders or pronouncements are challenged or mocked. They're also likely to react badly to competition for the role of leader. This kind of obsession can lead to mental disorders related to anger, hostility or stress.

Because Visionaries deal specifically with the unknown, often dwelling on the esoteric and intangible, they are perhaps the most prone to derangements of all imbued. Hunters who focus on killing or healing can at least take solace in the immediate rewards of their efforts — the remains of foes destroyed in battle or monsters brought back into the human fold.

By aiming for the horizon and seeking to fulfill goals that might take years to accomplish, Visionaries can fall victim to their own unrealistic standards. And yet, such lofty pursuits can insulate theorists from some of the rigors of the hunt. Mutilated bodies, harmed loved ones and the forfeit of past values can seem insignificant when the fate of the universe appears to hang in the balance. Situational experiences that may terrify or even inflict ailments on other hunters might therefore have no effect on Visionaries, depending on individuals' aloofness or fortitude.

Ultimately, it's up to the Storyteller to decide whether a setback, sight or event in the night-to-night hunt (as opposed to high Virtue) inflicts a derangement on your character. You could also impose one on your own character if you think it's appropriate to his identity. It's really a matter of what's most important to him, and whether an ideal must remain inviolate or can be sacrificed without consequence.

Overcoming mental conditions gained during the hunt involves reconciling traumatic events or setbacks into a framework that your Visionary can understand. She typically must make sense of what happened in terms of her ultimate theories and ideas. She may need to withdraw from the hunt for a period and dedicate herself to rationalizing events. This may involve a regular expenditure of Willpower, research of answers or alternative ideas, and professional counseling. It might not be possible to alleviate derangements imposed by high Virtue.

PUPPETEERISM

Some hunters become so obsessed with long-term planning and analysis that their ideas become the only thing that they truly value any longer. A puppeteer becomes emotionally fixated on an idea, a set of actions or on the investigative process itself to the point that other people — even family, friends and fellow hunters — are considered mere resources to be used and discarded. You or the Storyteller must choose an appropriate fixation for your character,

THE LURE OF MYSTERIES

Regardless of apparent sanity, any Visionary worth the name is undoubtedly intrigued when something truly amazing, inexplicable, unexpected or unprecedented occurs in her presence. At first, just about every scene made apparent by second sight qualifies and is terrifying, yet fascinating. A million questions race through the Visionary mind as such imbued wonder how this event is possible, why it occurred, who made it happen, whether it can happen again and what its ramifications are. Visionaries are nothing if not inquisitive.

Such curiosity is not in itself a sign of mental instability, even when it arises at the worst of times — say, when a creature's appearance seemingly from thin air triggers a hail of gunfire from other hunters, yet is eminently worthy of closer inspection by your theorist. Curiosity can become unhealthy, however, when Vision rises higher and higher, and more in-depth insights are gained about the supernatural. Experiences had early on might no longer be compelling, but the ones that are new can demand more and increasingly intense investigation, regardless of whatever else is going on in the vicinity. Thus, "extraneous" events in the real world that other hunters take for granted as vital can also elude a truly contemplative (high-Vision) theorist. Other imbued probably take your Visionary for mad and treat him appropriately. Whether that response is appropriate depends on how far you take your character's investigation of and obsession with the unknown — and most importantly, how it may bear on his view of the big picture.

whether it's testing the limits of being imbued, seeking the imbuing in past lives as recorded in hunters' collective unconscious (and brains) or exploring the human body for the source of edges.

A hunter with this syndrome can be extremely dangerous. He could be prepared to manipulate, compromise, harm or dissect any and all people or institutions to acquire the information or results that he values. He might force a normal person into a fight with monsters, publicly expose a hunter to see how monsters respond, or test the limits of hunter endurance through torture, all if the puppeteer feels there might be useful information to be gained from the exercise. The urge to manipulate someone into a specific dangerous or destructive situation can be suppressed for a scene by spending a point of Willpower.

Aside from your character's obvious lack of perspective and compassion, this derangement can make him vulnerable. He feels compelled to explore any lead or angle that might tell him more about his particular obsession. Thus, whereas his manipulation and deception skills might increase, his capacity to understand people or detect deceptions decreases. Social rolls are at +1 when attempting to further research, but suffer a -1 penalty when your character attempts to understand people's feelings or motivations, or to recognize when he's being misled.

TUNNEL VISION

A Visionary's broad plan to save the world is always something of a work in progress, as each pathfinder continuously seeks new information or insights to further refine the particulars of her calling. Sometimes, an extremely dedicated Visionary discovers that one nagging element of a grand scheme defies satisfactory resolution, and she becomes fixated on solving that particular problem to the exclusion of all else. It might be an obsession with learning how vampirism works, or understanding the relationship between the Heralds and hunters, or grasping the difference between hunters and bystanders. Whatever the case, the pathfinder expends vast amounts of time and energy pursuing leads or avenues of research related to the problem, or envisions plans that center more on resolving these issues than is rational or safe.

Visionaries with this derangement never pass up an opportunity that might offer information or insight into the question that plagues them. They focus on this pursuit to the exclusion of other potentially more rewarding inquiries, and skew plans of action for opportunities to learn more, despite obvious ramifications or risks. You may spend a Willpower point to bring your character "back on track" in any given scene, although at high levels of Virtue the Storyteller may decide that nothing can come between your theorist and her quest for answers.

VOLATILITY

Visionaries all pride themselves to a greater or lesser extent on being able to find answers to the questions that plague the imbued, and on directing their fellows to achieve the greatest long-term results from their efforts. Few pathfinders are ever thankful to be told that they're wrong. For some particularly dedicated individuals, being right and being an authority are the last pillars supporting their sense of self. Any uncertainty or disagreement threatens their very sense of worth, and the results can be explosive.

Anytime a hunter with this derangement is questioned, doubted or disobeyed, he flies into a rage. Such fits range from incoherent, wild-eyed screaming sessions to murderous assaults. These bouts are difficult to control and can be averted only through the expenditure of a Willpower point. Even then, your character can hide his outrage only with a successful Wits + Subterfuge roll, difficulty equal to his Virtue. He may well come to hate and fear people who repeatedly trigger his rage.

One small benefit to this condition is that your character's ego is still devoted to his ideas. He is completely convinced of the rightness of his opinions and orders, and he gains a +2 to any Social roll in which he defends a personal theory or tries to get others to contribute to it.

EDGES

Many Visionaries see edges as tools rather than powers, a selection of useful abilities to facilitate the hunt. Following that line of reasoning, it makes perfect sense that these hunters seem to develop edges that suit both their personal inclinations and the situations in which they find themselves. A Visionary who tends to hang back, observe and theorize develops a different tool kit than does the Visionary who leads from the front, fighting to establish his dream every bloody step of the way. In general, Visionaries develop edges that suit either analyzing the enemy and the world, or leading and encouraging other hunters.

The Vision edges detailed in the main **Hunter** rulebook are those most commonly reported among creed members. With the growth of the online hunter community and increased efforts by Visionaries to find other imbued in person, word of the variety of abilities the Messengers bestow is spreading. The following five edge have come to light as a result of this exchange.

As yet, only Visionaries have displayed these capabilities. At the Storyteller's discretion, hunters of other creeds may develop them. Your Storyteller should decide whether other-creed characters can have these powers on an individual basis, allowing an edge only if it is clearly appropriate to a hunter's concept. For example, a Defender who organizes fellow hunters to protect a neighborhood might manifest Summon.

• Focus

The hunt can take its toll. Repeated defeats, the death of fellow imbued and personal injury can quickly undermine a hunter's ability and will to face the supernatural. Sometimes, even one spectacular failure is enough to destroy a hunter's confidence altogether.

Some Visionaries perceive the damage that a broken spirit inflicts upon the imbued collectively. The chain is only as strong as its weakest link, they reason, and many hunters' will is weak indeed. Thus, these thinkers have sought a way to bolster the imbued spirit.

To the outside world, use of this edge seems like nothing more than a conversation between two people. From the perspective of the two hunters involved, it is as if the rest of the world fades into the background. The Visionary's words of encouragement, direction, inspiration and praise seem to rejuvenate the faltering subject, awakening a renewed passion for the cause.

System: If another hunter's Conviction drops below the starting rating for her creed, your character may use this edge to restore the subject's vigor. Roll Charisma + Vision, difficulty 6. Success indicates that your character is able to raise the crisis-stricken hunter's confidence. Her Conviction returns to starting level for her creed. Use of this edge takes one turn for both participants, during which no other actions are allowed.

Your character can use this edge on only one hunter at a time. The two must usually be within touching distance of each other, where voices can be heard conversationally, and they must usually be alone in a quiet area for this edge to work. If your character attempts to use this edge in a busy place or under combat conditions, the difficulty increases to 8 or 9, respectively. The difficulty also increases by one if the subject and your Visionary are at odds in any way, as opposed to speaking congenially. Difficulty is reduced by one if the subject is an active supporter of your Visionary's big idea.

If your character is interrupted in the middle of a pep talk, the effort fails automatically. It also fails if the subject absolutely refuses to listen to the Visionary, unless exceptional roleplaying changes the subject's mind (player and Storyteller's discretion).

This edge may not be used on the same hunter more than once per chapter (game session). Repeated crises of faith take more than edge-powered words of encouragement to overcome. You may risk Conviction on this edge; your character's own enthusiasm for the hunt is a powerful influence in convincing another that she's doing the right thing. A botch indicates that the other's doubts sap your character's own confidence. Focus cannot be used on one's self.

• • Summon

The Word is one of the most powerful tools that hunters have at their disposal: a language that each of the imbued intuitively understands, and which the enemy can't seem to understand or maybe even crack. Its seeming integration straight into the hunter subconscious is frightening, but what better means of communicating without playing one's hand? And yet, some Visionaries begin to realize that there is even more to the Word than intuitive signs and symbols.

The symbol for "summoning" (see p. 5) can be used as an indicator that a meeting is requested among all hunters who see and interpret the sign. If this edge is applied while inscribing the symbol, however, the image seems to acts as a beacon or homing signal to imbued who have not yet seen it. Simply scribbling the symbol on a piece of paper isn't enough. The symbol needs to be at least two-feet-square and marked on some durable surface—a wall, billboard or floor. It can also be inscribed on mobile objects such as cars and be used to lead other imbued to intended destinations.

The summons manifests as a sudden, inexplicable wind that blows (even indoors) in the intended direction at a receiver's locale, throwing up loose papers, leaves or similar material. Subjects feel a strong impulse to head in a particular direction. Following it simply feels *right* in the same indefinable way that the enemy feels *wrong*. The wind created seems unusual to normal people and monsters.

System: Your character must spend at least one turn inscribing the symbol. Roll Manipulation + Vision, difficulty 7. The effects of the beacon can be felt by all hunters within a radius of one mile per point of Vision that your character possesses. Affected imbued do not have to obey the summons; doing so is entirely voluntary. If they choose to follow, the summons leads them to the symbol by the most direct route possible, even if it's impassable by people (they must find their own way across obstacles or through buildings). If the beacon is located on a moving object and the distance it travels exceeds the edge's range to responding hunters, they lose contact.

The beacon effect lasts for one hour per success rolled. If the roll fails, your character merely creates the standard summoning symbol. If the roll botches, the symbol sends out confusing messages, leading hunters who heed its call on a wild-goose chase. Due to such potential hazards, the Storyteller may choose to make Summon rolls on your behalf, so that your character doesn't know whether other hunters are within range or are misled. If the Storyteller does make the roll, you may tell him how much Conviction you risk on the roll, if any.

If the summon symbol is defaced or the surface on which it's marked is destroyed, the beacon effect ceases immediately. The creator need not remain in its presence for the beacon to continue functioning, though he can deactivate it at will. The effect also



persists to its normal duration if the creator becomes Incapacitated. Summon can be used only once per chapter (game session).

●●● RALLY

Just as novice Visionaries can give dispirited hunters a confidence boost, one who has traveled further down the path of Vision can steel her followers for coming battles. Immediately before an encounter with the other side, a Visionary can speak to her team, explaining the relevance to the big picture of what they are about to do, and ideally transferring some of his own vigor to the others. As with the Focus edge, hunters listening to the speaker lose awareness of the world around them while the Visionary speaks.

System: The speech must last at least three turns. All participants must focus on the speech or be encouraged to do so, or they do not benefit from the edge. Subjects must be within earshot of your character, and they must be at least agreeable (not averse) to your character's dream of the future for this edge to work on them.

Roll Charisma + Vision, difficulty 8. The number of successes gained becomes a pool of Conviction points that you must allocate immediately among the attentive hunters present. Your character does not gain any of these points. The only way you can gain Conviction personally is by *risking* Conviction, as normal. Points should be allocated equally among all present, although they don't have to be.

If your character is interrupted during the course of his speech, the effect is ruined and the attempt to use this edge fails automatically.

If the Conviction gained through this edge is not used in the course of the current or subsequent scene, whichever applies, it is lost as the effects of the Visionary's exhorting words fade.

Conviction thus gained by a subject cannot be combined with his own to be cashed in for more Virtue points. These bonus points are considered a pool separate from a recipient's own

Conviction score, but are still available to the character for use in the scene. No subject's Conviction total can be raised higher than 10. Any excess points generated by this edge are wasted.

Once a speech is made and listeners are inspired to pursue your Visionary's agenda, they retain any Conviction gained for the scene, even if your character is rendered Incapacitated or dies therein. Once Conviction points are "bestowed" by your character, they cannot be revoked by him.

●●●● UNIFY

Visionaries dedicate themselves to formulating plans and achieving goals in the greater scheme of the hunt. This edge allows them to prepare a space for an encounter with the enemy and advance toward their ultimate goals by pooling the strengths and resources of fellow hunters.

The Visionary must spend an hour pacing the space he intends to prepare, contemplating objectives for the encounter and the ramifications of what may follow; planning exactly what she wants to do and how she expects other hunters involved to act. Then, she carefully inscribes the "unity" symbol on a prominent, permanent surface in the area. This can be anything from a wall to a lamp post to a floor.

The resulting symbol is insignificant to monsters' eyes — nothing more than simple graffiti. To all hunters within the area, however, it appears to be the center of a swirling wind. Normal people and monsters perceive nothing odd about this wind.

System: After the intended area is prepared, spend one Conviction and roll Wits + Vision, difficulty 6. The area effected extends from the unity symbol to a radius of one yard per success achieved.

Within this area, hunters who generally support your Visionary's ultimate goal (who are not genuinely averse to it) gain the benefit of second sight and protection from monsters'

mental attacks, as if Conviction had been spent but without actually having to spend the point. In addition, the difficulties of all edge-related rolls performed by any hunter within the circle are reduced by one. If affected imbued step outside the circle, all benefits are lost and Conviction must be spent as usual to activate second sight. Hunters can re-enter the circle to regain its benefits.

The effects of this edge persist for one scene. If any hunter within the circle *intentionally* performs a hostile action against another imbued, however, the effect terminates immediately for everyone. The circle is also broken if the unity symbol is ever marred or the object on which it is drawn is destroyed during the scene.

Unify does not diminish the Conviction costs of activating some hunters' edges. That is, powers that cost a point or two of Conviction to turn on still do.

Unify can be used on only one place at a time. The effect persists throughout the scene, even if your Visionary character is Incapacitated or dies. He can, however, deactivate the effect prematurely at will, if he chooses.

••••• DETERMINE

Whereas struggling Visionaries can sometimes get a glimpse of their own future and decide how to act accordingly, those who are truly dedicated to the path of Vision can actually preordain the actions of others. Although this edge does not allow a Visionary to take control of a monster, it allows her to gain insight into the possibilities of a monster's actions at any instant and choose the option that suits her best. Any supernatural creature can be affected (other people and hunters cannot be) but has no active knowledge that someone dabbles with its immediate fate. The worst luck simply seems to befall it — sometimes again and again.

System: This edge is similar to Foresee (*Hunter*, p. 155) but allows your character to influence the immediate future of a creature. The being must be within your character's direct line of sight.

Roll Manipulation + Vision, difficulty 7, and spend two Conviction points. For each success achieved, your character has one opportunity to control a creature's fate. You must announce that your character intends to apply one of these opportunities after the Storyteller has determined a monster's action in a turn, but before he has made the roll for it. Your character cannot try to interfere with a monster's action that has already been performed. Thus, your character must delay his action in the initiative to interfere with a slower creature's — see *Hunter*, p. 189. Or it might be possible, at the Storyteller's discretion, to call upon the effects of this edge in one turn and make it applicable to a monster's first action in the *subsequent* turn.

Each time your character meddles with a creature's future, the Storyteller makes one extra roll to determine the effects of the intended action. He narrates a glimpse that your character has of each result and you get to choose which applies. Even if neither option is ultimately desirable, you still must choose one (this edge allows your character to *influence* the future, not dictate it). Also, consider that your character's insight applies only to the immediate results of actions. You might decide that a monster's botch is the roll that applies, but the after-effects of that botch could cause unanticipated residual damage — say, a misdirected bullet goes on to pierce a gas tank and cause an enormous explosion.

The Determine edge influences only simple actions that are decided by single rolls, such as combat attacks. Your character cannot control the overall outcome of extended or resisted actions, although this edge might affect *component* rolls made during such efforts.

Each application of Determine may influence monsters' fate (may impose a total number of extra rolls) in that chapter only.

So if you get three successes on your Determine roll, your character may alter a creature's acts up to three separate times in the *same* game session. Once those extra rolls are used up, the edge cannot be activated again that chapter.

This edge can be used to affect the actions of the same subject over and over, but no more than one extra roll can be imposed on any single monster action.

Your Visionary cannot forewarn other characters of monsters' impending acts or the ramifications thereof.

Conviction points risked on a Determine roll simply increase the number of extra rolls you may impose on monsters for a chapter. Conviction does not affect the outcome of any monster's individual action to which an extra roll is dedicated.

SYMBOLS OF THE CAUSE

The practice began in Buenos Aires: Hunters bearing an unusual example of the Word, a single symbol that conveyed not just a one-word meaning, but a whole concept about the hunt. Any hunter who encountered such a symbol intuitively understood the cause that the creator espoused.

When questioned about it, an imbued bearing one such emblem proudly declared that it was "Mina's Sign" and that he was among her followers.

Mina Mederos, an Argentine imbued who recently joined hunter-net as Tanguera352, is the Visionary responsible for creating this symbol — indeed, for introducing this whole new interpretation of hunter code — which sums up her dream for the hunt, the future and the world. What most other hunters have yet to realize is that the symbols her followers carry do far more than just represent her beliefs.

NETWORK OF BELIEF

As more hunters rally to Mina's banner, she has discovered that the symbol she created to define her own aspirations actually allows her to keep watch over her supporters and their observation of her doctrine, seemingly wherever they operate in the world.

For some time after her imbuing, she often found herself scribbling symbols on her order pad during idle moments at her waitress job. Progressively, her scrawling became more complicated and involved — more extensively meaningful, somehow.

Finally, her tinkering developed into an obsession as she toiled for days over the right combinations of lines and arcs that somehow contained all the passion, hope and idealism that she herself did. Eventually, she arrived at a single symbiosis and just knew that it expressed her very soul — a veritable proclamation of what she believed should be done to set the world right, captured in a single, wordless diagram. She showed it to some of her fellow imbued, expecting ridicule. She was amazed by their reaction. After weeks and months of her futile preaching, arguing and rationalizing about her outlook, they finally understood the message she was trying to express all along, and adopted her cause for the future.

Some even marked the sign at their meeting place as an emblem of their movement. Over the weeks that followed, Mina experienced seeming hallucinations and flashes of her allies. She inexplicably sensed that one began to doubt the cause, and that another was flushed with success. Once, she even got a momentary glimpse of a hunter from Norway whom she had met and won over when she served him in a tourist bar. Unfortunately, the man appeared to be under attack by fierce beasts. Mina's subsequent efforts to contact him revealed that he had been found dead, the victim of a grisly murder.



After these bizarre experiences, Mina suspected she might be receiving images of events that happened near her symbols, that affected the way her plan was being carried out, for good or ill.

Recently, under pressure from other posters, Mina tried to explain the process she used to create her symbol, at least as far as words could convey. Other hunters who uphold causes, grand schemes and big pictures as the foremost goals of the hunt now seek to accomplish the same feat. As far as most imbued seem to be concerned, there's little point in one symbol that apparently expresses a statement when the existing code serves just fine for helping or harming monsters.

METHOD

Visionaries are the foremost proponents of creating symbols as the statements of their dreams. They believe they have discovered a tool that can allow them to spread their message, if only they can master the technique of symbol design. Adherents of Virtues other than Vision largely feel no compulsion to create such broadly meaningful symbols, because the existing Word serves their focused purposes. Because such a symbol contains meaning far beyond one word or concept, Visionaries clearly need to have evolved a clear understanding of their personal dream and mission before they can hope to define it with an icon. Many eager thinkers start to develop their symbols simultaneously with their evolving ideals, however, so that both are self-evident when the time comes.

A symbol remains meaningless to other hunters until a Visionary has a precise idea of the destiny he seeks for the world. The moment of revelation often comes when the prophet can distill his plan into a sentence or two that any hunter might comprehend and even put credence in. In the burst of elation that typically follows, the

Visionary creates the symbol that codifies those words into an understanding that transcends human language.

Once a symbol is created, other hunters or bystanders who truly espouse the principles it represents can learn it and reproduce it at will. The symbol then has the potential to spread as far and as fast as the imbued in general take up the Visionary's plan as their own. Unfortunately, all the mysterious effects that go with the symbol (see below) fail to be transferred with a reproduced or "forged" image. Only its inherent meaning spreads.

Generally, a symbol is used in two ways: to mark a hunter as an adherent of a particular movement or to mark a locale as a meeting place for people who support that mission.

All copies of the symbol drawn by the Visionary himself have the potential to offer insights back to the pathfinder. These perceptions are limited to ones directly relevant to the hunter's big idea and its spread or decline, however. He doesn't actually see what takes place in a meeting place marked with his symbol, but he intuitively knows if his followers flourish in one area or are threatened in another. If an individual wears or carries the symbol, the designer gets a sense of her level of commitment to his dream — perhaps an intuitive warning if she is likely to betray his ideals, or that she is in immediate danger. If imbued who espouse his doctrine fight among themselves in the presence of the symbol, the Visionary feels a chill and knows something is amiss with those supporters. Specifics are not available to him, though. Inexplicable winds blustering and dying, accompanied by flashes of adherents' faces are also reported as intuitive signs of progress or regression.

A symbol must be drawn visibly, for anyone to see (even if they can't understand it), to be effective. It can't just be traced with a finger or in "invisible ink," for example. Any symbol placed on a

person must be prominent and preferably permanent, like a tattoo. If it wears off, as felt pen markings would, that sign loses power and the Visionary loses contact with a follower or a meeting place. If a sign is defaced or the object on which it is drawn is destroyed, all the benefits of that particular symbol end. Symbols cannot be inscribed on or carried by normal people or monsters and still relay information back to the Visionary creator.

SYSTEM

To start designing a comprehensive, lasting symbol, your Visionary must be well on the way to forming a clear image of what he wants to happen to the world, humanity, monsters and the future. In game terms, he must possess at least 3 Vision. (Characters of other primary creeds who also have Vision ratings of 3 or more still cannot create quest symbols. Their true calling ultimately lies with other Virtues and purposes, unless the Storyteller rules otherwise.)

To create a mission statement and design the symbol that represents it, you must set aside 10 Conviction over a period of in-game months — no more than one point per week — that represents your character's investment of time and energy to refine his greatest aspirations into a simple image. Once a point of Conviction has been set aside, it cannot be used for any other purpose thereafter.

As part of this process, write a detailed explanation of your character's big idea and give it to your Storyteller. If your Storyteller agrees that you have roleplayed that goal by pursuing the dream for months, or that your character has been overwhelmed with a revelation about the hunt that has changed his whole understanding, roll Intelligence + Vision, difficulty 6. No Conviction or Willpower can be risked or spent on this roll. If it succeeds, your character has designed a symbol that intuitively communicates his desires to other imbued. If the roll fails, your character must spend another month reassessing his ideals (although no extra Conviction need be spent) and then another roll can be made.

If a design roll is botched, your character is unable to find any way to express his insights as part of the Word. He may then abandon the attempt or redefine his quest and start the process all over again. (though, if your character is completely baffled at creating a symbol where other hunters succeed, he may question his effectiveness as a philosopher and leader as a whole before taking a different tack at a dream). All Conviction set aside for the original quest and its icon is lost.

Once your character's mission statement and its image are codified, your character can personally copy his sign as many times as he has points of Vision. These symbols, when posted at followers' meeting places or carried on their person, can relate subjective information regarding the progress of your character's movement. Your Visionary can be any distance from his symbols and still be receptive to them. Any insights received are created and shared by the Storyteller, at her discretion. There are no hard-and-fast rules for how and when impressions or feelings are experienced, or even what's revealed. Supporters might gain more recruits and your characters' plan might thereby gain momentum. Energetic followers may be threatened or killed, and the movement could take a downturn. It's more a matter of story than mechanics, and whole chronicles might be based on a Visionary's effort to start a grassroots movement and then keep it on track to a better future, thanks to the iconic tools that make it all possible. In general, however, a symbol can gather and relay information about pertinent events that occur within a radius equal to one yard per point of Vision your character possesses.

Your character has an innate, limited sense of where all original, active symbols lie at all times. He simply needs to concentrate and can sense their bearing from his current position, wherever he is. He cannot estimate the distance to any symbol, though.

Your Visionary's sign can be imitated by other hunters or bystanders. These images still bear your character's mission statement to imbued or bystanders who see such "forged" icons, but no sense of events surrounding those duplicated signs are relayed. Similarly, your character can draw more images than he has Vision points. Excess symbols also lack the "information feed." If normal people or monsters forge your character's symbol, those images bear no meaning to hunters who look at them, and they convey no information. These "counterfeit" symbols seem false to imbued onlookers.

If your character wishes to create additional *fully effective* symbols, he has to wait until his Vision rating increases, or until another of his genuine symbols fades or is discarded, defaced or destroyed. Furthermore, if a person bearing your Visionary's symbol abandons the inherent big idea, the symbol she bears becomes meaningless, freeing your character to create another active symbol. Your character can also "revoke" an existing symbol at any time, making it powerless and meaningless, and allowing him to create another to use elsewhere. Revoking a symbol probably occurs as a last, desperate resort, say when one group of followers can pursue the mission without "supervision," whereas another group needs extensive oversight. A symbol can be revoked if supporters defy your Visionary's will or intent on his quest.

Whether other imbued understand that mission symbols grant their creator a "window to the world" depends on whether your prophet shares that information. It's a fairly extraordinary concept, so people — even hunters — aren't going to suspect that these images telegraph impressions. If sign bearers know, however, they may from time to time make a conscious effort to disguise information that might ordinarily be relayed. They may attempt to do so by covering the symbol or perhaps by sealing it up in a bag, effectively "jamming the signal." In game terms, a Willpower point must be spent to keep developments from being relayed for one scene without your character's knowledge. There are numerous reasons why a follower might "jam" your character's signal. Perhaps monsters have claimed her and intend to use her to attack the symbol's creator, or maybe she is using your character, just as he might be using her.

In the event that your character changes his big idea significantly — because close friends die for his cause and he loses faith in it, for example, or a tremendous setback makes him reconsider everything he's assumed — all symbols created suddenly become meaningless and inert (in a practical sense, if you rewrote your character's changed "mission statement" and it was considerably different from his first, the Storyteller could rule that he has lost or changed faith). Only the most dedicated, focused and sometimes deluded of pathfinders have the Vision necessary to maintain a cause and symbol indefinitely.

If a new calling is developed, your character may start a new creation process — and a new movement — from scratch.

It's incumbent upon the Storyteller to keep tabs on a Visionary's statements and behavior in regard to the philosophy he supposedly endorses. If you or your character ever stray from the path too severely, perhaps by defying one of the tenets of your pathfinder's very mission statement, the Storyteller may render all of his symbols null and void. The punishment may be temporary, until some kind of atonement is made, or permanent.



CHAPTER 6: PREVAILING WINDS

Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

— Psalms 89:19

Certain types of people tend to personify the Visionary outlook and identity: creative, inquisitive, analytical, directive. The following characters are just such people. They're intended as models and starting points for your own character creation, or you can add color and detail to their profiles to make them your own.

ASPIRING CELEBRITY

The future's up for grabs. Somebody has to take hold of it.

Prelude: You've more or less gotten used to it over the years, but it still hurts. As soon as you say that you play baseball, people's eyes light up and they get really interested in you. Then you tell them it's for a farm team, not the big leagues, and you're "just a fielder." That's when their eyes glaze over. By the time you point out that you're still young and your career is on the upswing, they're already thinking about something else. It's that brief flicker that keeps you in the game, though — that little taste of how it's going to be when you make the bigs.

That's what really made Charlotte stand out. She was impressed when you started your spiel, and she didn't switch off when everyone else would have. The fact that she was hot didn't hurt, either. You'd been in the bar most of the night, taking it easy, talking to other regulars and unwinding. Charlotte came in late, dressed to kill, and all the guys turned to look. She invited herself into your group, dropped her name and started hitting on you. The others rolled their eyes and left you to it, as usual.

The two of you spent an hour talking about nothing much, and then you hit the dance floor. She moved well, and you looked good together. When they switched to a slow number, it felt totally natural to draw her in tight. That's when it happened. A wind blew up right inside the bar! Suddenly, Charlotte felt stone cold. You stopped dancing and stepped back to figure out what the hell was going on — and you saw that this "woman's" skin was marble-white and her mouth was full of jagged teeth! She looked up at you, smiled and whispered, "You wanna go outside?" Didn't anyone else see? What was going on?

You recall mumbling something. She took your hand and led you to the door. You felt sure that if you stepped outside with her, you were going to die. Desperate, you blurted, "Uh, I left my wallet at the bar," then you ran behind the bar, through the kitchen and out the back way.

Since that night, you think you're getting an idea of what the world is really like. But there's one thing about that night that haunts you more than anything else: You told Charlotte where you live.

Concept: It's a tough world and you have to be determined to get ahead in it. You've been fighting your way up through the minors for three years, but getting to the big time doesn't seem to matter anymore. There's a bigger game to win now.

Roleplaying Hints: You've always loved baseball, and you always thought you would be famous. You've worked hard to succeed, which has made you self-reliant and stubborn. You never doubt yourself for a second. Doubt is for losers. Doubt, you realize now, can get you killed.

Equipment: Casual clothes, sponsored trainers, team cap, rack of baseball bats



HUNTER-BOOK VISIONARY

NAME:

NATURE: Dreamer

PRIMARY VIRTUE: vision

PLAYER:

DEMEANOR: Gallant

CREED: visionary

CHRONICLE:

CONCEPT: Jock

STARTING CONVICTION: 3

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength (Rock Grip) ● ● ● ● ○
Dexterity (Lightning Reflexes) ● ● ● ● ○
Stamina ● ● ● ○ ○

SOCIAL

Charisma ● ● ● ○ ○
Manipulation ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Appearance (Fresh-faced) ● ● ● ● ○

MENTAL

Perception ● ● ○ ○ ○
Intelligence ● ● ○ ○ ○
Wits ● ● ○ ○ ○

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Athletics (Running) ● ● ● ● ●
Awareness ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Brawl ● ● ● ○ ○
Dodge ● ● ● ○ ○
Empathy ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Expression ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Intimidation ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Intuition ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Leadership ● ● ○ ○ ○
Streetwise ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Subterfuge ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

SKILLS

Animal Ken ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Crafts ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Demolitions ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Drive ● ● ○ ○ ○
Etiquette ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Firearms ● ● ● ○ ○
Melee ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Performance ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Security ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Stealth ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Survival ● ● ○ ○ ○
Technology ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

KNOWLEDGES

Academics ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Bureaucracy ● ● ○ ○ ○
Computer ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Finance ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Investigation ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Law ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Linguistics ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Medicine ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Occult ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Politics ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Research ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Science ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Fame ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Patron ● ● ○ ○ ○
Resources ● ● ○ ○ ○
○ ○ ○ ○ ○
○ ○ ○ ○ ○
○ ○ ○ ○ ○
○ ○ ○ ○ ○

EDGES

NAME	CREED	LEVEL	TRIGGER
Focus	Vision	● ○ ○ ○ ○	
Demand	Martyrdom	● ○ ○ ○ ○	
Cleave	Vengeance	● ○ ○ ○ ○	
		○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
		○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
		○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
		○ ○ ○ ○ ○	

VIRTUES

	MERCY	VISION	ZEAL
1	● x	● x	● x
2	○	○	○
3	○	○	○
4	○	○	○
5	○	○	○
6	○	○	○
7	○	○	○
8	○	○	○
9	○	○	○
10	○	○	○

DERANGEMENTS

CONVICTION

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

EXPERIENCE

HEALTH

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

CITY POLITICIAN

Listen, I know the people. I have the answers. All you need to do is what I say.

Prelude: It started out like any other Tuesday — a pain in the ass. The newspaper was full of damn-fool accusations about police personnel shortages, the sanitation committee was in session all afternoon, and that evening the mayor ducked out of a party to celebrate the opening of a new mall, leaving you to take his place. "It'll do you good to get some exposure," the old man said, flashing his trademark smile. Another mall, for Christ's sake!

So you spent a most of an hour reminding the editor of the paper that *perception* of police staffing was almost as important as actual numbers. In the committee meeting, you found yourself up against some slimy company man who insisted his people *had a right* to dump toxic chemicals. By the time that was over, security was waiting to take you to the mall.

After you arrived, you discovered that the wily old bastard had neglected to say he'd promised to give a speech. The mall reps weren't any more delighted to be stuck with a subordinate than you were about being there, so you shrugged, stood up, praised everyone nonspecifically and threw around some buzz words. It all went okay — one in the eye of the old man.

It was at the champagne reception afterward that things turned strange. A bunch of local shopkeepers had you cornered when a smart-looking guy butted in and asked to speak with you. You were glad to escape. The guy pulled you to one side of the room, which made security twitchy, and he started talking about the sanitation committee. He waved a piece of paper at you, but when you looked at it, you were ready to swear it read, "IT DECEIVES." When you realized you were staring at the paper, you returned your attention to the speaker and saw he wasn't the same. The same man was in front of you, but different eyes seemed to peer out from behind his own — dark, burning, hungry.

This was all *wrong*. You just knew it. But the thing inside didn't waver, and the guy just kept on talking. What the hell could you do? That's when you had the premonition: You saw the room where you stood being crisscrossed by lots of police. On the floor, at the spot between you and *him*, was a chalk outline — and what had to be a huge blood stain. Somehow, you knew it was him or you. You yelled "Gun!" and dropped to the floor. You were near a wall, with your bodyguards between you and the rest of the party. It seemed as if your men never even thought.

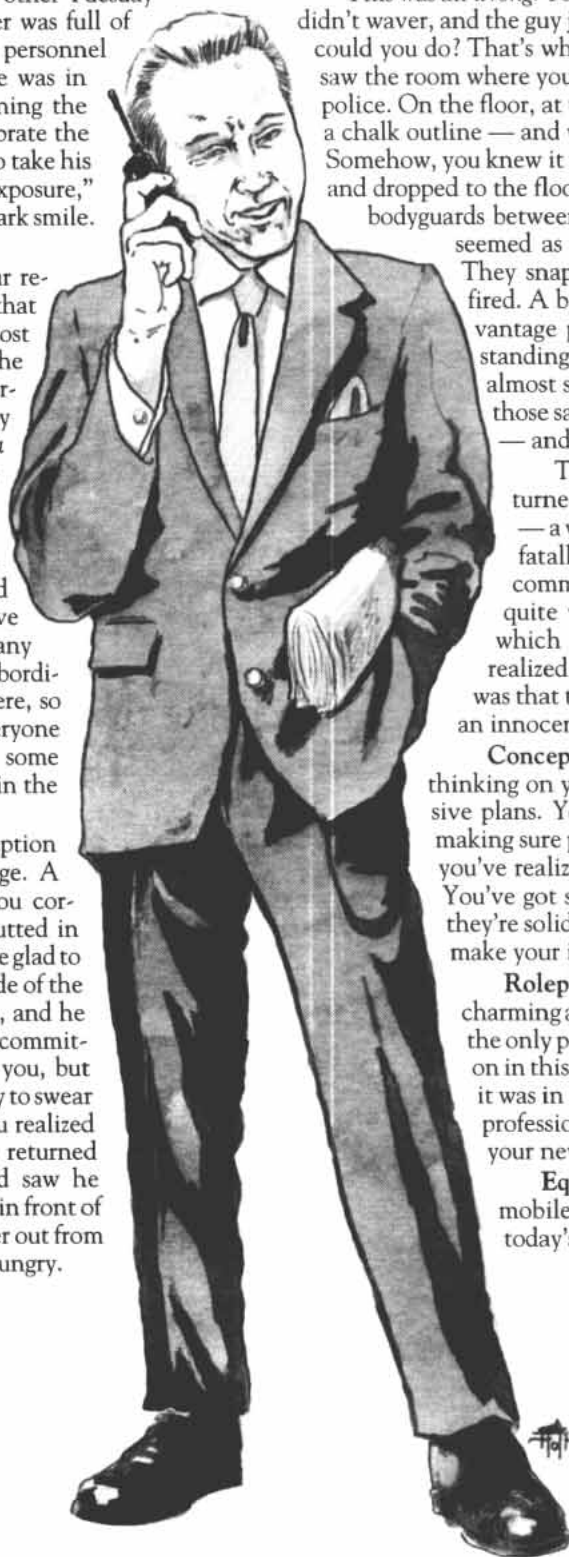
They snapped around, pistols in hand, and fired. A body fell next to you, but from your vantage point you could still see someone standing next to the wall — only he was almost see-through. When you looked up, those same hungry eyes glared down at you — and then the apparition vanished.

The man who had accosted you, it turned out, actually *was* carrying a pistol — a weapon used earlier that evening to fatally shoot a member of the sanitation commission. Ultimately, it turned out quite well. The press made you a hero, which pissed off the old man when he realized that you'd upstaged him. But what was that thing you saw? And had you caused an innocent man's death?

Concept: You're used to making decisions, thinking on your feet and coming up with decisive plans. You're also used to being right and making sure people know it. Since your change, you've realized that something big is going on. You've got some ideas, and like all your ideas, they're solid. Now, all you need is some help to make your ideas into reality.

Roleplaying Hints: You're confident, charming and smart. You're certain that you're the only person who truly knows what's going on in this new world. After all, that's the way it was in the old one. In the meantime, your professional duties demand a lot of time and your new concerns are intruding.

Equipment: Tastefully expensive suit, mobile phone, pager, personal organizer, today's newspaper



HUNTER-BOOK VISIONARY

NAME:

NATURE: Architect

PRIMARY VIRTUE: vision

PLAYER:

DEMEANOR: Advisor

CREED: visionary

CHRONICLE:

CONCEPT: Deputy Mayor

STARTING CONVICTION: 3

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Dexterity ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Stamina ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

SOCIAL

Charisma ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
(Silver-tongued)
Manipulation ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
Appearance ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

MENTAL

Perception ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Intelligence ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Wits ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Athletics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Awareness ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Brawl ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Dodge ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Empathy ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Expression ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
Intimidation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Intuition ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Leadership ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Streetwise ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Subterfuge ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

SKILLS

Animal Ken ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Crafts ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Demolitions ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Drive ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Etiquette ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Firearms ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Melee ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Performance ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Security ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Stealth ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Survival ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Technology ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

KNOWLEDGES

Academics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Bureaucracy ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Computer ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Finance ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Investigation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Law ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
Linguistics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Medicine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Occult ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Politics (City) ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐
Research ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Science ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Contacts ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐
Fame ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Influence ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐
Resources ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

EDGES

NAME	CREED	LEVEL	TRIGGER
Foresee	Vision	☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
Summon	Vision	☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
		☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
		☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
		☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	
		☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	

VIRTUES

	MERCY	VISION	ZEAL
1	☐	☒ ☒ ☐	☐
2	☐	☒ ☒ ☐	☐
3	☐	☒ ☒ ☐	☐
4	☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐
5	☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐
6	☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐
7	☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐
8	☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐
9	☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐
10	☐	☐ ☐ ☐	☐

DERANGEMENTS

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

CONVICTION

☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

WILLPOWER

☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐

EXPERIENCE

HEALTH

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

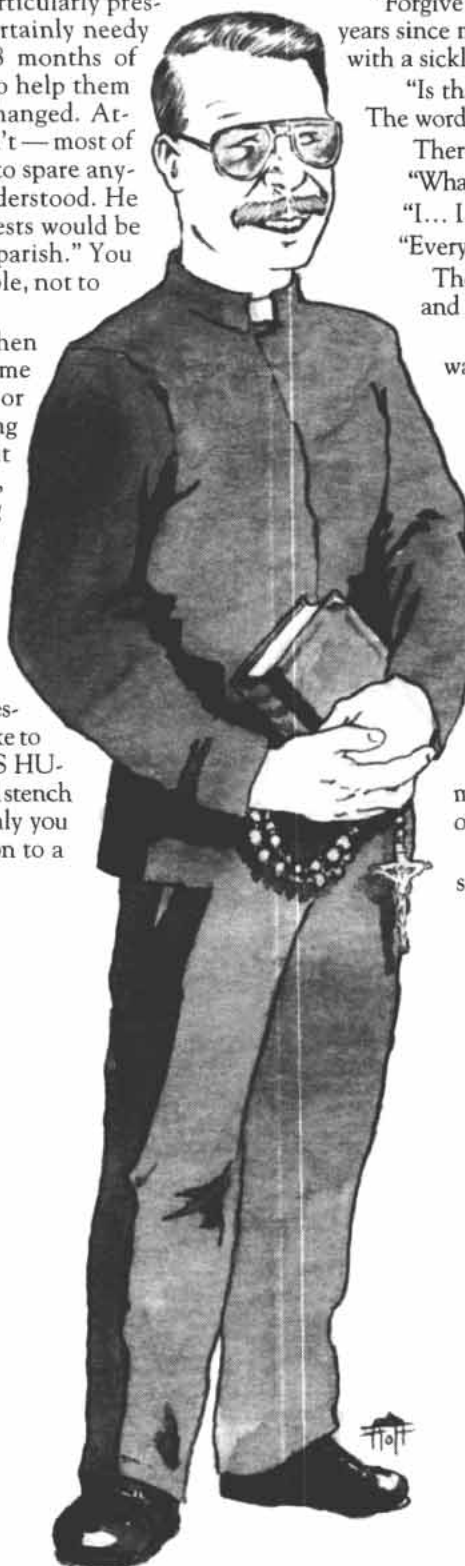
INNER-CITY PRIEST

God's plan is ineffable, and we all have a role to play.

Prelude: Your parish wasn't a particularly prestigious one, and its members were certainly needy enough when you arrived. After 18 months of work, you felt you'd done your best to help them despite how little seemed to have changed. Attendance was up, but donations weren't — most of your parishioners remained too poor to spare anything for the church. The Bishop understood. He assigned you here, after all. Some priests would be frustrated by being given a "problem parish." You joined the Church to be there for people, not to rise through the ranks.

You first noticed the stranger when you realized he'd been sitting in the same pew for over three hours, praying or doing a reasonable impression of it. Long stays had never been uncommon, but they were relatively rare mid-week, and he didn't look destitute. "Long stays" are often the sort of people who are in need but are too nervous to reach out. So you went over, apologized for intruding and offered confession. He accepted readily, seeming grateful for the chance.

As you were settling into the confessional, a miracle occurred. The Lord spoke to you in a thunderous voice: "IT FEIGNS HUMANITY." You recoiled from the charnel stench coming through the screen, and suddenly you knew: You were about to give confession to a dead man.



"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It's been 34 years since my last confession." The dead man spoke with a sickly gurgle at the back of his throat.

"Is that how long you've been dead, my son?" The words slipped out before you could stop them.

There was no response.

"What sins would you like to confess?" you asked.

"I... I don't understand," he said at last.

"Everyone needs help sometimes."

The door to the confessional slammed open, and you heard the man run from the church.

It didn't take you long to realize that he wasn't the only one of his kind.

Concept: You became a priest to help the needy and maybe make a difference in the world. Now, God has revealed that He has other plans for you. You know that if you do your part and God's other chosen do theirs, together you'll be able to defeat the Devil.

Roleplaying Hints: You're a kind person by nature, but that doesn't mean you're lenient toward evil. Working in a bleak, inner-city parish means you know poverty and decay. You live in the neighborhood, too. Besides, you've seen plenty of *human* monsters over the years. You helped many of them find the higher faith, too.

Equipment: Rosary; Bible; inexpensive, dark clothes

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

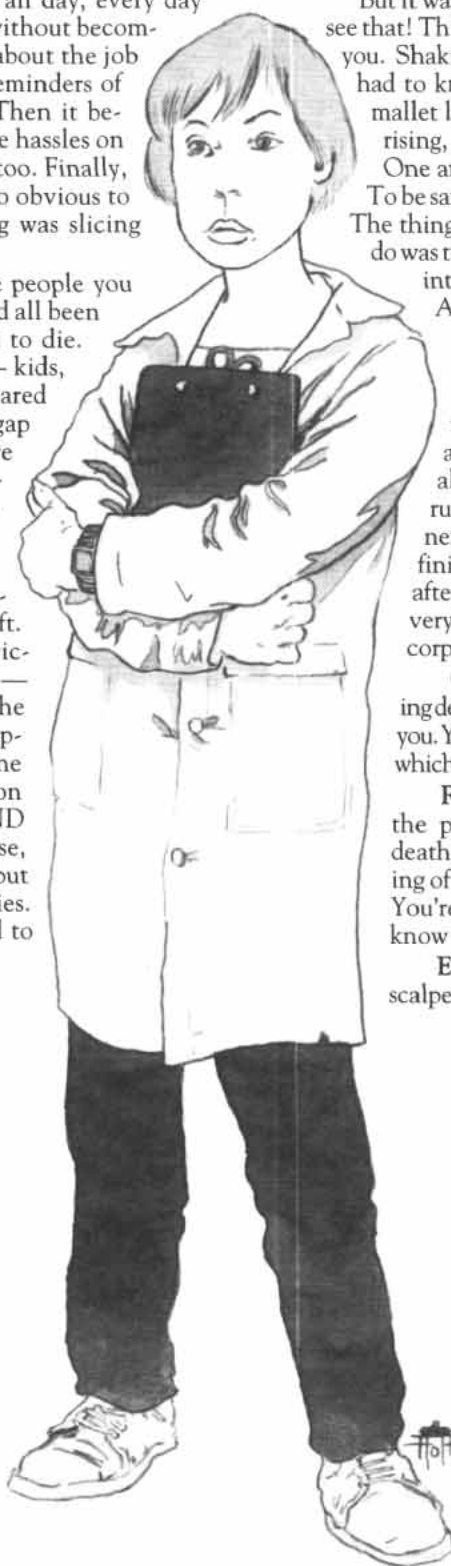
MORQUE ATTENDANT

Try using acid. If that doesn't work, use this bone saw.

Prelude: It was difficult to spend all day, every day staring closely at — and into — death without becoming blasé about it. At first, everything about the job was unsettling constant, unwelcome reminders of mortality. That lasted about a week. Then it became natural, a welcome peace from the hassles on the outside. That lasted about a week, too. Finally, it became part of the routine. Dull. Too obvious to notice. In the end, all you were doing was slicing meat and running tests.

It didn't help that the ages of the people you dissected ran the gamut. If only they had all been old people. Old people were supposed to die. But a lot of your subjects died young — kids, teens, young adults. Obviously, death spared no one, and there wasn't much of a gap between it and life. Before long, you were desensitized to it all. When you mentioned it to your boss, she just nodded.

So it was a shock when you suddenly learned that life and death were a lot more complicated than you imagined. You were working the late shift. Your first "client" was a hit-and-run victim. That meant some standard tests — blood analysis, injuries — to help the investigating detective. You were prepping when your tape recorder — the one used to tape your procedures — came on and you heard your own voice say, "AND THE DEAD SHALL WALK." Of course, you had never recorded such remarks, but that detail was the least of your worries. The cadaver's eyes opened and it tried to scream, but nothing came out.



But it was dead! You could see that! Anyone could see that! This shouldn't be. And yet, here it was before you. Shaking. "Screaming." Suddenly, you simply had to know how this could be possible. A bone mallet lay on a nearby tray. Just as the thing was rising, you smashed its legs just below the hips.

One arm was already useless from the accident. To be safe, you shattered the other at the shoulder. The thing was still trying to get up, but all it could do was twist and writhe. A couple of sheets pressed into service as ropes and it was immobilized. All the tools you needed were there.

Fifteen minutes later, you were even more perplexed. Erratic brainwave activity. Complete lack of any cardiac or respiratory activity, but it was still glaring at you, its eyes wide. This thing wasn't alive, but neither was it dead. You couldn't run any further risks with it, though. The next shift was starting soon. You decided to finish the thing off with a saw. It wasn't until afterward that you realized it was going to be very, very hard to explain the state of the corpse to your boss.

Concept: You know there's no way the walking dead are natural. Yet they exist, and that baffles you. You're determined to discover some answers... which will require more experimentation.

Roleplaying Hints: Like so many people in the postmortem industry, you're unfazed by death. Monsters don't fit into your understanding of the world, however, so they unnerve you. You're curious, analytical and methodical. You know there has to be an answer for all this.

Equipment: Casual clothes, lab coat, set of scalpels, pocket tape recorder

Bruised		☐
Hurt	-1	☐
Injured	-1	☐
Wounded	-2	☐
Mauled	-2	☐
Crippled	-5	☐
Incapacitated		☐

PROMINENT VISIONARIES

The following thinkers have survived the first harrowing months of the imbuing and have learned extensively from their experiences. Each now believes he or she has a clear understanding of the future, and some other hunters have even begun to rally to their causes. Some fellow Visionaries regard these theorists as hunters' most insightful thinkers, but many imbued of all creeds often give them a wide berth for fear that these "prophets" are insane or completely self-destructive.

EARL DEAMS, AKA SHAKA74

One unusually bone-chilling New Orleans night, Earl Deams was spraying de-icer into the lock of his pickup truck door when *other things* caught his attention. But neither the sourceless, booming voice nor the ambulatory corpses it alerted him to truly frightened him. After all, this was New Orleans. Earl actually found reassurance in his ability to end the creatures' rampage and chase them away with a makeshift flamethrower (the things you can do with aerosol products and cigarette lighters...). But talking with the police afterward — that unnerved him completely.

Run-ins with corrupt cops were nothing new for Earl. After all, this was New Orleans. Two of the officers who arrived to investigate the "disturbance," however, looked even worse than the zombies had, if only because these visibly tainted policemen seemed *marginally* alive. Earl began questioning his own sanity as the youngsters he'd saved presented their zombie-free version of events. When one of the normal cops asked what Earl had seen, he said, "Nothing like what they saw." One of the ominous-looking policemen became very interested, then, and Earl became terrified. He told a baldfaced lie involving perpetrators whose race, physical characteristics and clothing differed substantially from what the teenagers had recounted. The scary cop seemed satisfied, and he returned his attention to the crime scene. Earl's attention, meanwhile, had gained several new areas of focus....

For several months, Earl divided his time between making sense of the hidden truths he had discovered (or vice versa, perhaps) and identifying which members of the NOPD carried

this vile taint. The photographic artistry that provided his income and the years he'd spent in the military gave him the time and the tools he needed. Even before he found hunter-net or realized that other "imbued" existed, Earl amassed extensive photographic catalogs of "wrong" cops and their unspeakable masters. His early experiences on hunter-net left him uncertain of who (if anyone) might be "the good guys," though, so he surprised himself with the camaraderie he felt after meeting Steven Williams—better known as Soldier91. The two ex-army men saw eye to eye, worked well together and parted as friends.

The same could not be said of Earl's relationship with Erick Franco. Their failed effort (which Erick called "Earl's fuck-up") to kill an imbued extremist calling himself "Peleus" left hard feelings on both sides. Earl, none too happy with himself, embarked on a journey of atonement that eventually carried him to Haiti — and possibly his demise, as he remains missing in action to the members of hunter.list.

PROFILE

A staunchly Catholic upbringing left Earl's mind open to the possibilities of the dead rising and of the intervention of angels into human affairs. What he couldn't understand was how racist bastards such as Jager51 and Alleyman222 could be "holy warriors" alongside a genuinely good soul such as Soldier91. If he managed to survive his mission in Haiti, chances are he is a much-changed (and radically diminished) man. Regardless of Earl's fate, his photographic records remain in a suburban storage facility east of New Orleans. And even though he is ignorant of what is contained there, Steven Williams carries the extra key to the locker....

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 1, Computer 1, Crafts 3, Dodge 1, Drive 2, Expression 3, Firearms 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Melee 2, Occult 1, Security 2, Stealth (Scouting Missions) 4, Survival 3, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Fame 1, Resources (Army Pension) 3

Edges: (Vision) Foresee, Verbatim, Pinpoint, Delve; (Judgment) Discern; (Martyrdom) Demand, Witness

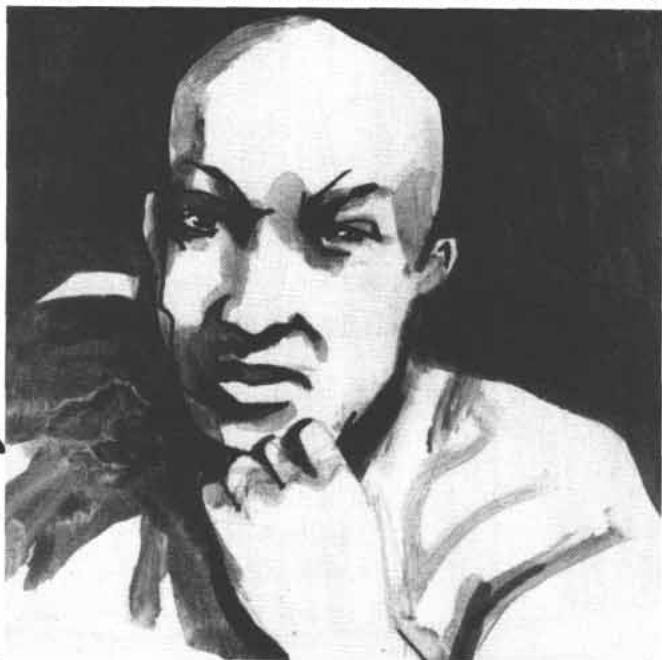
Mercy: 3, **Vision:** 7, **Zeal:** 2, **Conviction:** 3, **Willpower:** 4

Derangement: Paranoia

FYODOR

A tall, intense Russian with short-cropped graying hair, a dark goatee and a powerful build, Fyodor could be the Devil's personal therapist. The fact that he's one of the most enigmatic hunters around simply adds to his notoriety. His interests are eclectic, ranging from the world's future to the psychology of the imbued and everything in between, and he pursues his experiments and investigations ruthlessly. He travels constantly, moving among countries and continents as his research dictates. Familial connections to the former KGB help to fund and facilitate his journeys, and he often makes use of diplomatic papers to get through customs unchecked or to avoid entanglements with local law enforcement. He also has been known to call upon other less wholesome perks when he feels the need.

Encounters with Fyodor have been reported all over the world. Although he nominally lives in Kolpino, a city close to St. Petersburg, he has no residence there any longer and is as likely to be found in New York or Sydney as he is in Dubai or Zacatecoluca. Equally capable of shocking callousness and stunning benevolence, he makes many hunters extremely





nervous. Others practically revere him. He issues many of his communications to the imbued community via William Hannon, a withdrawn American loner known as Violin99, who idolizes the Russian. Hannon recently founded a tiny publishing company called Anchorite Press to print and distribute a collection of Fyodor's writings to the hunter community.

The book, entitled *Hunter Apocrypha* but called simply "Apocrypha" by many imbued, contains a lot of speculation about the origins and fate of the chosen and about the nature of monsters. Rumor has it that the truth about hunters and their foes is contained within, although it remains difficult to interpret if so. The book ends with a series of vivid prophecies that apparently are to precede the end of the world; some of these prophecies have supposedly come true already. Much of the remainder of the text is equally disturbing, including Fyodor's calm descriptions of torture, collusion and murder. His reputation would be a lot bleaker had he not restored Bookworm55's lost legs in a similarly calm and public manner.

Fyodor's power, insight and commitment are undoubtedly great, but he is a manipulative and dangerous person who has few scruples about playing with the lives of those around him. As *Apocrypha* is read and hotly debated by the imbued, Fyodor's name becomes increasingly well known and infamous. That he does not settle down in any one place may be a blessing for hunter society at large. Although his travels make Fyodor difficult to track down and confront, they also prevent him from easily amassing would-be disciples.

PAUL MORETON, AKA SIXOFWORDS29

Paul Moreton was heading for a life of studied mediocrity among the English middle class when his world turned upside-down. He had a decent job in sales management, a nice house in Croydon, a wife who worked part time, and grown-up offspring. Life was good and safe, but not very exciting. The closest to the "edge" he ever came was a flirtation with the commercial occult through mass-produced tarot cards and simplistic guides to the "hidden world" written by clueless journalists with an eye to a quick buck.

When a sales conference offered him the chance of a trip to the United States, he took it. Paul was walking along

Broadway in New York City, reveling in the bustle of the city, when it happened. A theater sign overhead momentarily seemed to read, "DEATH WALKS ABROAD." Just then he was jostled by a man wearing a hat and an overcoat.

Paul glanced at him, then recoiled in horror as he saw the dead flesh hanging from the man's face. The creature turned and ran. Paul, both horrified and fascinated, followed.

The thing quickly outpaced Paul, much to his frustration. He had so many questions to ask. As it turned out, his encounter was a godsend: A team of existing hunters had been trailing the rot for some time and had an ambush ready on a cross street. Paul's intrusion distracted the thing long enough for the waiting imbued to take it completely by surprise.

Once Paul had concrete proof of what he had seen, he threatened to call the police. The leader of the small group introduced himself and offered the Englishman an explanation over a drink. Paul listened warily, then declared that he wanted nothing more to do with any of this, partially from frustration that his questions about the "monster" remained unanswered. Still, he took the piece of paper that was pressed into his hand. It had only one thing written on it: "www.hunter-net.org."

Upon his return home, Paul tried to put all thought of what had happened from his mind. But only days later it happened again, this time on a sales trip. An alarming voice spoke through his car radio: "BEWARE THE BEAST." The creature he saw by the roadside was enough to convince him that something—either the world or himself—had changed.

That's when he subscribed to hunter.list. It wasn't long before his first contact, Seer6, was reported dead. Shaken, Paul started posting on his own and sought his own path in this strange, new world among these confused and frightened people. Then, inspiration struck. He scribbled a design on a piece of paper, scanned it into his computer and placed it, along with his phone number, as an ad in the local newspaper. Within a matter of weeks, three others had contacted him.

Under his direction, Paul's group began to achieve successes around Croydon and the home counties, quietly and efficiently disposing of rots, wisps and a few stranger things. Paul then learned of and contacted another seeming group of



hunters based in central London, led by Joshua Talbot, known online as Stella142. The two groups, and their leaders in particular, became friendly rivals of sorts.

It was only after an encounter with some monsters he recognized to be beyond his group's capacity to defeat that Paul realized the dangers of the life he had adopted — that his successes thus far had been luck, nothing more. Whether consciously or not, he spent more and more time on hunter-net and less on directing his allies. As a result, he failed to notice how reckless and obsessive his people became, and how relations with Talbot's group became strained. When his neglected wife left him, Paul's life, group and alliances fell apart.

In the short time that has passed since then, Paul has tried futilely to find a new goal to replace his failed one. At the heart of his desperation is the hope that he might prove to his wife that the supernatural is real and win her back by making his vision of the future come true.

PROFILE

Once overbearing and arrogant, Moreton is now almost too eager to please. He listens to any opinion and may even adopt it for a while, but then starts picking holes in it, challenges it and eventually discards it. He constantly seeks affirmation from other hunters.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation (Management Technique) 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Bureaucracy 2, Computer 3, Drive 2, Empathy 1, Etiquette 2, Expression (Sales Pitches) 4, Interrogation 3, Intuition 2, Leadership 3, Occult 1, Politics 2, Subterfuge 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 2, Patron 1, Resources 3

Edges: (Vision) Focus, Foresee, Summon, Delve; (Defense) Ward; (Judgment) Discern

Vision: 7, **Zeal:** 2, **Conviction:** 6, **Willpower:** 6

Derangement: Manic-Depression

JENNIE ORNE, AKA CASSIE 247

While Jennie was still an infant, her parents got caught up in the Hippie movement and relocated from Providence to San Francisco. They spent a few years living in cheap digs off stray jobs until financial hardship and the responsibilities of a young child drove them back to a more conventional lifestyle. The family wound up in Seattle, running a small coffee shop near Washington State University. Jennie spent much of her youth helping in the shop and chatting with regulars — usually students, occasional lecturers and old ex-beatniks, from whom she acquired a large part of her radical thought. Encouragement, aid and occasional informal tutoring from patrons helped her get good grades, and later helped her into WSU. She majored in history and political science, worked in the coffee shop, and did well, both academically and in the backstabbing world of the sororities.

After graduation, she stayed on at the coffee shop to help out her parents. Business was good, and the thought of moving into teaching or research was extremely unappealing. During the next few years, she took over and kept the shop focused on the university trade. Plenty of her friends and former professors made a point of dropping by regularly. Although the work itself wasn't demanding, talking to the clientele gave her plenty of opportunity to use her mind and maintain an analytical outlook.

After the Messengers revealed the truth to Jennie, she spent a long time weighing and discarding various theories about the state of the world. It wasn't until another hunter —



a stranger — came into the shop displaying the Word for “us” on a bag that Jennie suddenly knew that others were aware, too. One long and revelatory conversation later, she painted a sign that she was told meant “safe” on the shop door. She was determined to meet other “imbued” and to gather information.

News of the safe haven has spread as other hunters have spotted the shop's emblem. Jennie thrives on sharing news, opinions, information, thoughts and ideals with the hunters who seek shelter and consolation there. She even joins individuals and groups on occasional missions. She prefers observation to action and tries to avoid direct confrontation with creatures, although she has tried to destroy or rehabilitate a few of them. Despite her contacts and growing theories, Jenny doesn't have a regular working group.

Instead, she spends a great deal of time considering the Messengers' apparent actions as logically as possible. She has reached some conclusions that she believes are supported by what evidence she has gathered. She has thus set her focus on trying to persuade others of her theories — with limited success. Jennie devotes an increasing amount of time to using hunter-net for that purpose.

PROFILE

Although outwardly pleasant and willing to help, Jennie is a practiced manipulator and is comfortable feigning friendship to further her own ends. She feels it's her duty to spread the “truths” she has discovered to other imbued, and that's a more worthwhile goal to her than merely dealing with monsters. Privately, she believes the philosophers among the imbued to be considerably more important than the rest, many of whom her military history has taught her to consider expendable — sad but necessary sacrifices.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1, Charisma 3, Manipulation (Evocative) 5, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence (Creative) 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics (History) 3, Empathy 3, Expression (Oratory) 4, Intuition 2, Leadership (Persuasive) 4, Performance (Acting) 3, Research 2, Science (Chemistry) 3, Subterfuge 3, Technology 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Influence 1, Mentor 3, Resources 3

Edges: (Vision) Foresee, Pinpoint, Delve; (Judgment) Discern, Burden; (Innocence) Fools Luck

Vision: 7, **Zeal:** 3, **Mercy:** 1, **Conviction:** 6, **Willpower:** 8

Derangements: Puppeteering

KIM SUN, AKA WITNESS1

Perhaps the most well-known of the imbued, Sun has played an instrumental role in the salvation of confused and frightened fellow hunters, and in the formation of a burgeoning hunter society. Hunter-net is a vital lifeline to hundreds of chosen, a place to share ideas, gather information, discuss strategy and gain the reassurance of knowing that other people suffer the same ordeals. Hunter-net and its various sub-sites and lists provide a structure for hunters to relate and communicate, and these virtual tools have saved lives more times than anyone can know.

A first-generation American, Sun grew up with a blend of New World hope and Eastern mysticism. His parents married young and emigrated in the late 1950s, coming to the United States to work as tailors for a relative. Through hard work and dedication, they slowly established themselves sufficiently to start their own small business. Sun's mother was devoutly spiritual and taught her children a traditionalist blend of Buddhism and Taoism. His father, excited by the opportunities and rewards his new home offered, was extremely proud that his children were American and did his best to instill a sense of duty and gratitude in them.

Always quick to see technological and cultural innovation in a mystical light, Sun grew up fascinated by computers. An old Zen koan states that the world can be held within a rock, although the rock is within the world. To him, computers seemed to provide an answer to that and other equally ancient riddles. They gave control over energy, could transmute light and sound, and in many ways fulfilled much of the promise of meditation. Sun spent every available moment of his late teenage years playing with, programming, repairing and building computers, and he was active on the Internet years before it was fashionable. After college, he got a job in Santa Clara, specializing in communication technology and protocols. He scarcely noticed when his parents moved back to Taiwan in the early '90s.



Sun was imbued at a gas station on his way home from work one night. As he was paying the clerk, he heard the words, "INHERIT THE EARTH," and realized that the man paying at the pump was a rotting corpse. Sun walked outside and watched the thing get into its car. When it drove out of the station, Sun followed, not really knowing what to do. In fact, he was surprised to find himself speeding up behind the thing on a quiet stretch of road and then frantically sideswiping the car, sending it off the highway and into a tree. Sun pulled over and cautiously approached the wreck. The man inside was dead — but now he didn't move. Terrified by what he'd seen and done, Sun realized he had to cover up any sign of his involvement. He grabbed one of the old newspapers blowing on the wind around him, stuffed it into the car's gas tank and lit the free end.

After he'd calmed down, the enormity of Sun's experience sank in. He'd deliberately murdered an obviously intelligent creature just because it didn't look right, not only betraying everything his mother ever taught him, but also branding him as bigoted as any fool he'd known growing up. Guilt-stricken, he swore a solemn oath to learn as much as he could about these beings that secretly inhabited the world. Once he discovered the existence of other people who'd also been "imbued," he was determined to share whatever information he acquired, to make sure that all people like him were informed, not ignorant.

Sun has remained true to his vow. Despite occasional desires to lash out, he refuses to take aggressive action without first learning everything he can about a subject — sometimes doing so much research that he actually accomplishes nothing or misses his opportunity to act. His recent experience in Pittsburgh weighs on him as a reminder of the rift between theoretical discussion and practical action. Sun is realizing that the only way to "inherit the Earth" in the way he envisions may be to take a step back from the electronic realm and understand the real world better.

PROFILE

Sun believes that the best possible future for mankind is to retreat to the safety and protection of cyberspace, where the collective human unconscious has already begun to gather, courtesy of the Internet. There, people might escape monsters and the limitations of the physical world — by inheriting an electronic one. Hunter-net is a first step toward realizing this dream; his defenses for the site are prototypes for the defenses his new realm might need. He recognizes his goal as far-fetched, but no more so than possessing strange gifts or learning that the world is run by monsters. The Messengers' apparent willingness to augment his online efforts thus far give Sun reason to believe that he's on the right track.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma (Trustworthy) 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception (Insightful) 4, Intelligence (Book-smart) 4, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Computer (Internet) 5, Dodge 2, Drive 2, Expression (Letters) 5, Firearms 2, Intuition 3, Leadership (Friendliness) 4, Melee 1, Occult 1, Research (Internet) 4, Security 3, Subterfuge 2, Technology (Customizations) 4

Backgrounds: Contacts (Internet) 4, Destiny 5, Patron 3, Resources 3

Edges: (Vision) Foresee, Pinpoint, Delve; (Defense) Alarm, Rejuvenate

Vision: 8, **Zeal:** 3, **Conviction:** 4, **Willpower:** 9

Derangements: Manic-Depression, Tunnel Vision

WHERE THERE IS LIFE

MUMMY
The Resurrection



THERE IS HOPE.

MARCH, 2001



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