

Hunter-Book™

Wayward



A Character Book for Hunter: The Reckoning®

WHO
ARE
THE
MASK
PEOPLE?
LEARN
THE
ANSWER
INSIDE . . .
AND
STAY
ALIVE!

MASK
PEOPLE
RULE
YOUR
LIFE!
AND
YOU
DON'T
KNOW
IT!

**Bella Vista fire:
Arson or not?**

A report on a fire that killed 12 people and injured dozens at the Bella Vista Arms on Sunday is stirring controversy. Investigators are not calling the incident arson yet, despite mention in the report of "multiple incendiary devices." The city's Arson Inspection Division, on Friday responded to questions about the report and about procedure and bias at AID. Also, funerals are to be held today for Tyrone and Tanara Anderson, five-year-old twins who died Tuesday of injuries sustained in the blaze.

Please see stories on C1 and C4

Controversy, confusion follow report on blaze

By LOUISA WALTERS

Arson investigators probing the fire at Bella Vista Arms issued a preliminary report on Friday that cited "several points of origin" for the blaze. The report also mentions "multiple incendiary devices" but does not label the incident "arson."

Karen Clay, a spokesperson for the Arson Inspection Division of the San Francisco Fire Department, said the guarded wording of the report was intentional.

"Our department is treating this fire very seriously," Clay said on Friday. "We want the public to understand that, and to understand that we value any assistance they can offer us in shedding light on this fire, on any fire. Nevertheless, we must proceed cautiously here and carefully examine all facts in the case before moving to the next step." That step would be an actual finding of arson.

Clay said, "We're investigating the scene at Bella Vista as if arson did occur there. We just don't want to rule out anything yet."

Such caution is understandable given the recent embarrassment AID suffered over a report of arson last June at a King Breweries warehouse in the SoMa district. City officials assailed that report after re-interviewing the two 12-year-old eyewitnesses it quoted. The youngsters amplified their statements during the later interview to explain that the "arsonists" they had seen brandishing "torches" on the warehouse loading dock had, in fact, been "a pack of wild dogs." Their insistence on this point led officials to void the findings of the report, list the

cause of the warehouse fire as unknown and demand the resignations of AID investigators Bart Kroeger and Antonio Cisneros.

Clay declined to discuss what effect the departure of Cisneros and Kroeger might have had on departmental morale. She repeated her statements about the seriousness of the current investigation. "The AID is devoting maximum energy to Bella Vista."

Some members of the Bayview community where Bella Vista Arms is located disagree. They accuse investigators of a half-hearted effort due to discrimination. Several neighborhood residents have been picketing outside fire department barriers that still cordon the building's remains.

Ida Washington, who lives not far from Bella Vista on Newcomb Avenue, said, "Twelve black people burned to death here. A lot more are in the hospital. If this happened someplace in Pacific Heights, they'd already have whoever did this under the jail."

Washington also questioned the personnel changes at AID that affected Kroeger and Cisneros: "Out of all the people working there, they ax the only black and the only Hispanic?"

Karen Clay said that neither race nor ethnicity played a part in personnel decisions at AID: "We abide by the same nondiscrimination policies that govern all city departments." She said that she understood the community's frustration, though. "Investigating a fire, especially a big one like this, is slow going," she said. "I just hope the neighborhood people continue to let us do our jobs so we can get them some answers."

Bashers assault 3 in Mission district

Three men were attacked on Thursday night around 3AM after leaving Club Eutopia in the Mission district. All three were hospitalized with broken bones; two were in serious condition at press time. Lewis Merrick, one of the victims, spoke to a reporter for The Compassion after being treated for fractures in his rib cage and collar bone. "I only saw one of the guys, right before he hit me with the butt of a rifle," Merrick said. He described his attacker as a white male, bearded with brown hair, late 20s to early 30s. After he fell to the ground, Merrick said he heard two different voices yelling: "One said, 'Get up faggot,' and then the other voice said, 'He ain't going no place.'" The SFPD said crime reports were filed in the matter and that patrols of the area would be increased.

Man, 35, is found shot dead at home

A man was found shot dead in his home after police responded to a call reporting the sound of gunfire at the residence late Monday night. Mr. Roland Van Owen, 35, of 227 Ironwood Lane, was declared dead at the scene. Police said he had been shot once in the head.

Investigators said they want to speak with Janice Van Owen, the wife of the deceased. A neighbor, Mr. Paul Scribinsky, 77, said that he told police he saw Mrs. Van Owen leave home "in such a hurry" that he was "a little worried about her." Mr. Scribinsky said that he was uncertain of the time of Mrs. Van Owen's departure. Police said that they received a phone call to report a gunshot inside the Van Owen home at 11:45 p.m. on Monday.

Police also said they are seeking a man Mr. Scribinsky described to them as a "houseguest of the Van Owens." Mr. Scribinsky said that a white male in his late 40s who had introduced himself simply as "Clancy," and as a friend of the couple, has been living at the Ironwood Lane address "for a couple of months."

— From staff reports

Widow of shooting victim jailed on contempt charge

By CHRISTOPHER AJERIAN

A judge ordered Janice Van Owen, 31, jailed for contempt of court after she refused to cooperate with San Francisco police who are investigating the shooting death of her husband.

Janice Van Owen was detained on Tuesday by police in San Jose after she ran a red light there. On Wednesday, she was transferred into the custody of local authorities who have sought her for

questioning since the August 30 slaying of Roland Van Owen, 33.

Detective Cliff Gold, who is investigating Roland Van Owen's death, said that Janice Van Owen's only communication with police thus far has been to assert her "political prisoner" status. Gold said that his department had gathered "ample evidence" showing the Van Owens' involvement in a variety of white supremacist organizations. "When the detective from San Jose brought her

here," Gold said, "the first thing she said was, 'I'm a citizen of the USWA. Y'all have no authority over me.'" Many white supremacist groups claim that the federal government of the United States holds power illegally, he added.

Asked how long he was prepared to incarcerate Janice Van Owen, Judge Sylvester Sorben said, "Until such time as she is willing to answer the questions the police need to ask her."



Fatal crash of stolen car is under investigation

By CHRISTOPHER AJERIAN
Staff Writer

Marin County Sheriff's Department personnel are investigating an unexplained car crash that occurred along Route 15 late on Monday, leaving one person dead and another hospitalized. Deputy Jake Lannigan said that the vehicle involved had been reported stolen earlier Monday afternoon by talk show host Ginger Sperry.

Trucker Michael Parmiter, 37, of Taos, N.M., reported the apparent accident after seeing a 1999 Dodge Viper overturned in a field about two miles northeast of downtown Mill Valley.

"I [saw] this car half-buried in the dirt and this great, big gouge in the ground where it left the road," Mr. Parmiter said. He believed the accident "had just happened. His wheels were still spinning."

Mr. Parmiter said he radioed for help, then went to check the wreckage for survivors.

"There was just the driver inside. The way his neck was bent, I didn't think he could be alive."

Nevertheless, Mr. Parmiter said, he turned to walk back to his truck for tools, at which time he

discovered a woman lying unconscious in a ditch at the roadside.

"I ran to her. I... figured she must have been thrown from the car, so I thought she'd be pretty banged up."

Deputy Lannigan identified the woman as Angela Cutler, 29, of San Francisco. Asked whether she had been a passenger in the car, he said that he could not discuss some details of the case at this time. Lannigan did confirm that driver, who was unidentified pending a medical examiner's report, was declared dead at the scene by paramedics.

He also confirmed a KJTV report that said a car belonging to station's on-air personality Ginger Sperry was stolen from the KJTV parking deck on Monday. Deputy Lannigan said that the vehicle identification number of the wrecked Viper matched that of the car reported stolen by Ms. Sperry.

Ms. Sperry declined to comment on the incident.

A spokesman at City General reported Ms. Cutler to be in stable condition after treatment for minor cuts and a bruise to the head. She was under observation for a possible concussion.



OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER

Alan Polk, M.D., Ph.D., Chief Medical Examiner
Stella Franks, M.D., Medical Examiner
Bailey James, M.D., Medical Examiner

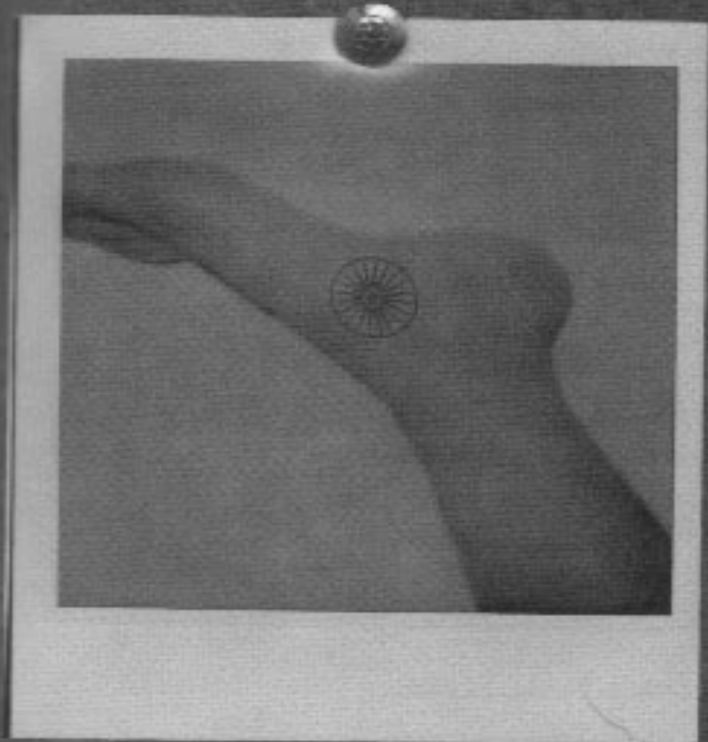
MEMORANDUM

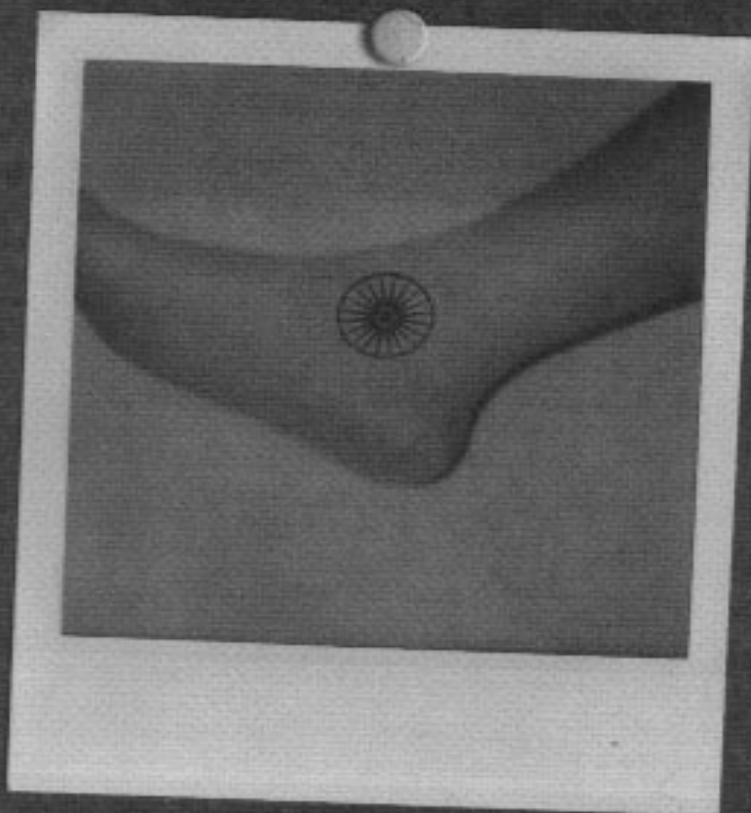
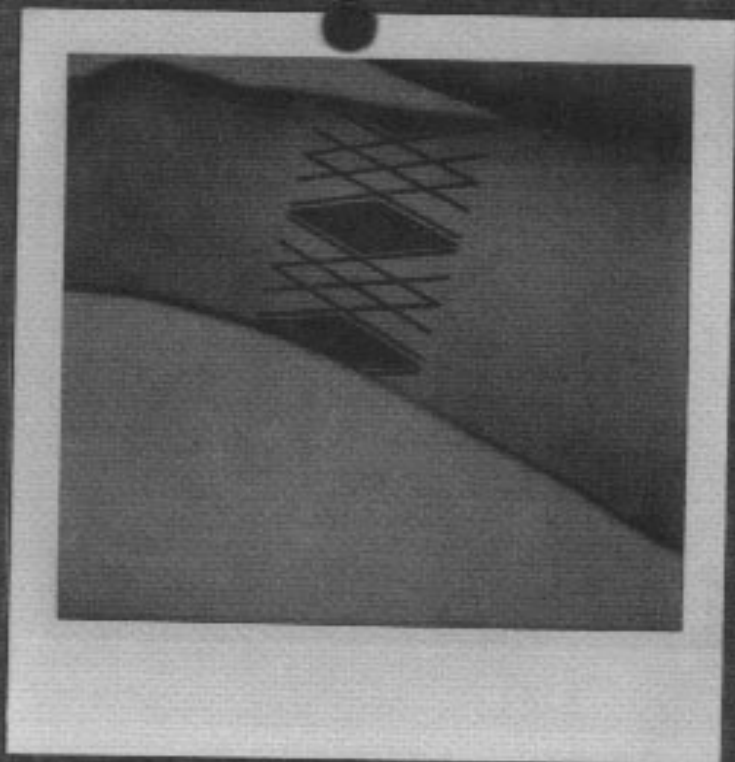
To: All staff
From: Alan Polk
Re: Mishandling of UID 564756

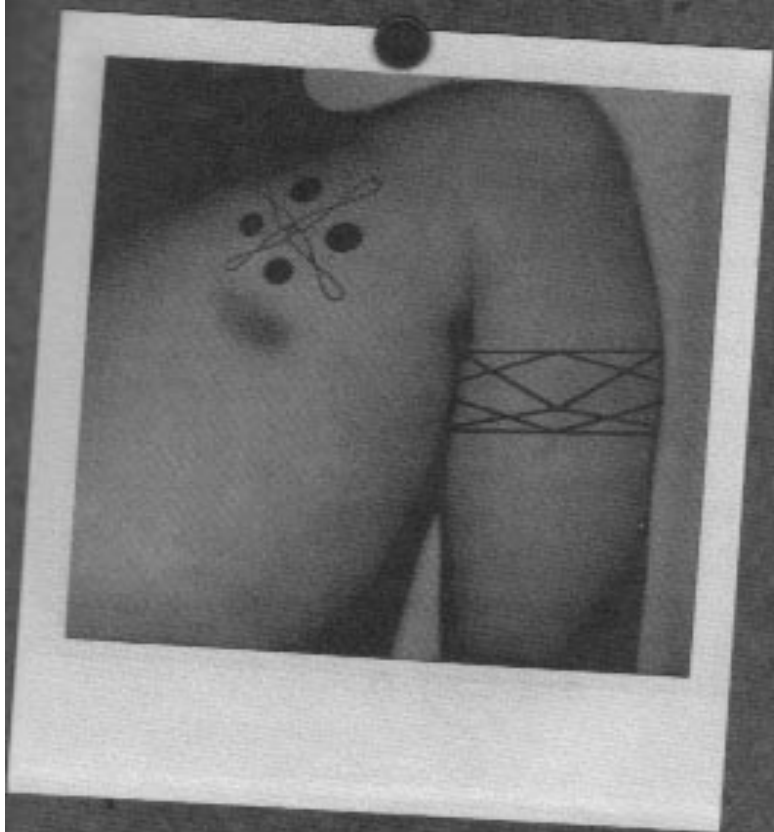
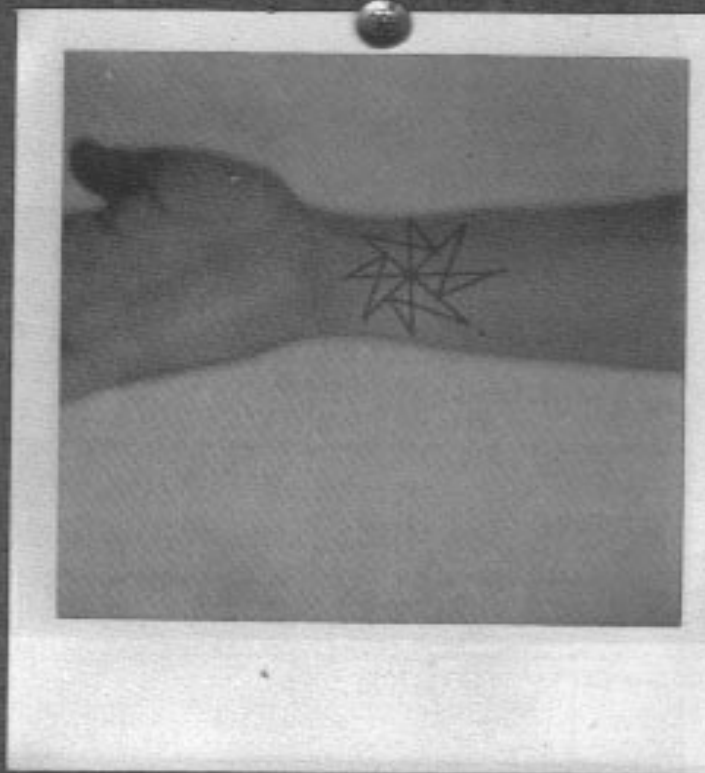
As we all know, any break in chain of evidence procedures makes us liable to a variety of legal sanctions; loss of an unautopsied decedent constitutes a total breakdown of the system. Effectively, it is taking the chain of evidence and tossing it into the Bay.

After our colleagues in San Francisco lost a decedent in the ongoing Anatomy School Killer investigation last July, I had hoped that personnel here felt cautioned and so shared my determination never to face the intense bureaucratic scrutiny endured by that office. Now, we find ourselves short one unidentified dead white male who may have been the principal in a celebrity car theft and subsequent attempt at vehicular homicide. We also may be in line for everything from lie detector tests to civil suits. Because none of us wish to be the subjects of some "60 Minutes" profile, some protocol changes are in order.

Effective immediately, staff members are not to discuss the particulars of this case (or any other involving unaccounted-for decedents) among themselves or with anyone outside of this department except myself, representatives of the California Bureau of Investigation, and their federal liaisons. Also, any materials in the possession of any employee that might pertain to this case or that might come into any employee's possession in the future are to be turned over to me posthaste. Failure by any employee to abide by these strictures is grounds for immediate termination and possible prosecution.







Subject: Re: Bullseye needed in NOLA area

To: shaka74

From: shophet125

Interested in your problem. Can you meet at Café Du Monde
Wednesday at 3PM?

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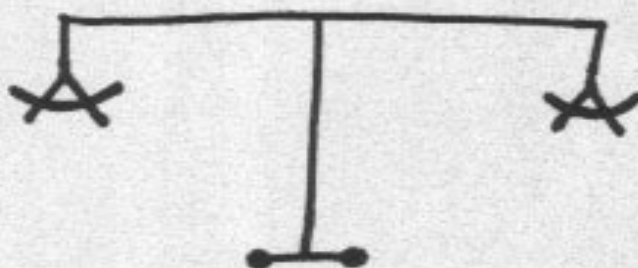
Can do. I'll be toting heavy-duty camera equipment. You?



P E L E U S

A O T R D B

G



Subject: Where I'm headed

From: shaka74

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I never told any of you exactly why I came to Haiti. It's time I did, since I might not get another chance.

Maybe you remember me saying that I came here to watch out for the interests of black people in our war. I didn't say then that the reason I feel it's necessary is the insane racism embraced by some of you. Not all of you, some of you. But believe me, that qualifier doesn't make me feel any better.

The rabid bigotry of imbued like Jager, Apartheid's poster boy, has been back-and-forth enough that just his name sums up what's ugly and wrong about the imbued. But his disappearance from hunter-net didn't mean that his attitudes went with him.

When I read in the Times-Pic that a 9th Ward housing unit had burned to the ground, I didn't think much about it. When arson was raised as a possibility, I still sort of ignored the story. When two more got torched the next week and cops were quoted about "gang symbols," along with a story from an eyewitness who claimed people were shot as they tried to exit one of the burning buildings (autopsies were still pending then), I took notice.

Damn if I didn't find a "protected" sign spray-painted onto a wall bordering the 9th Ward.

Some of you probably remember me making an open call for a bullseye in New Orleans. I was trying to lure this killer into the open. Didn't work, though.

What I did get was contact with some out-of-towners who were trailing a firebug/sniper named Peleus, a nasty piece of work who, according to them, was supposed to be dead. Some backtracking on their part had revealed him to be one more in a series of "corpse thefts" reported lately in their home base. The morgue had tried to cover up these disappearances because they "reflected poorly" on the medical examiner's office. Right. Whereas a botched cover-up was sure to win public confidence. Anyway, I was thinking *great, not just a rogue, but a dead rogue. One who knows our sign system, no less!*

The four of us, me and the three out-of-towners, set traps for Peleus. To cut to the heart of it, he kept sidestepping us — the man is wily. I'll give him that — until I finally had him in my sights, literally. He was busy with targets of his own, civilian targets, so I had no qualms about shooting him. I said, "I've got him" into my headset mic to alert the others — but I hesitated. I had to know. I used the sight — and saw that he looked normal. Alive. Not like a rot. Through the headset, I heard one of the others say, "Shoot, dammit! What are you waiting for?" As the implications hit me, I pulled back just for a second. When I looked again, Peleus was gone. My partners were so pissed that they abandoned me to chase Peleus on their own again. I wasn't



PROLOGUE: THE PRODIGAL

The old farmhouse rose from the dark fields to the right of the country road, its white clapboard walls gleaming like a sepulchre under the light of the moon. Joshua kept to the shadows along the tree-lined road, his fingertips brushing lightly against the rusty strand of an ancient barbed wire fence. Nothing stirred in the farmhouse's weed-choked yard. No lights shone from the curtained windows. Shivers raced up his spine, over the corded muscles in his arms and across his dark, scarred cheeks. The sensation was a sign from the Herald, one he'd felt many times before. Tonight would be the night. The monster would come.

Joshua slipped beneath the near-invisible wire and headed across the field, crouching low amid the tall, whispering grass as he circled to the rear of the house. The tails of his dark overcoat flapped like raven's wings as he moved, no longer weighed down by ammunition or cans of propane. He'd kept careful count of his weapons as he went from one errand to the next, measuring out destruction in careful doses. By mid-afternoon, he lost track of how many people he'd killed — and his arsenal was exhausted.

He had tossed the spent shotgun away in the ruins of the brokerage firm on 5th. The revolver was a cold lump at the base of his spine, its cylinder empty. All he had left was a two-foot piece of wood, held by loops he'd sown into the inside of his coat. Someone on hunter-net gave him the idea to take the back half of a pool cue and turn it on a lathe, tapering it to a deadly point. The hunter drew the weapon from his coat and turned its polished surface in his callused hands.

Behind the farmhouse, an old barn leaned drunkenly, its nails and timbers slowly giving way under the weight of years. Beth's old Volvo hadn't moved since morning. It still sat beside the hollowed-out corpse of an old tractor in the shadow of the barn. The screen door at the back of the farmhouse was slightly ajar. The big kitchen windows were curtained and dark. There was no attempt at pretense, only resolute silence, an acceptance of the inevitable. Joshua approved.

The hunter slipped from the shadows beneath the barn's overhang and crossed the overgrown rear yard, his hiking boots swishing through the weeds. The old steps to the back porch groaned as he took them two at a time and pushed the kitchen door open. He didn't know how much time remained. It had only been an hour since sunset. The beast would still be reeling, struggling to learn how badly he'd been hurt, how many faithful servants had been butchered while he slept. In another hour, perhaps a little more, what Joshua had done would be clear and

the monster would know where to find his revenge. Joshua had until then to be certain that Beth was prepared. The darkness beyond the kitchen door gave him reason to hope that she finally understood what was expected of her.

Joshua was already familiar with the old farmhouse, and he moved easily and silently through the moonlit rooms. An old grandfather clock measured the hour somewhere in the house, solemnly echoing in the still air. On impulse, he moved toward the sound, down the long, central hall and then right to the entrance of the parlor.

She was waiting for him in a threadbare, overstuffed chair set near a tall window. A thin shaft of silver moonlight slipped between the heavy curtains and spilled across her lap, showing the wrinkles where her slim hands had worried at the fabric of her skirt. Dark shadows hung in the hollows of her cheeks and beneath her eyes. Beth was composed, quiet. Her head turned ever so slightly as he stood in the doorway, yet her gaze seemed to pass right through him, staring at some distant, secret horizon. She was not the same person he'd left only hours before. Only time would tell what she had become.

"It's me," he said unnecessarily, the long stake dangling at his side. "I had a busy afternoon, but it's almost over. This is where you prove yourself." Joshua held up the improvised weapon. "I'll show you what to do."

That was when the creature moved. There was nothing to hear. Nothing to see. Just a gust of cold air, then Joshua felt his collarbone snap and he was hurled through the air to crash against the hearth's iron grate.

The voice that filled the room was like an echo in a dark cave, empty of human warmth or mercy. It was sound in the shape of human words. "No, let me show you."

Veritas292 proved harder to track down than many monsters Joshua had hunted. Of course, Veritas knew the dangers better than most and took care to conceal her tracks. Hunter-net helped. She could post her weekly journal entries to the mailing list with all the considerable safety that Witness1 and his skills could offer.

Over time, though, she made mistakes. Little ones, comments dropped here and there that were innocuous taken by themselves. But they eventually added up for a patient, attentive person. Joshua had been paying attention to Veritas for a very long time, from the first journal entry she ever made. Other hunters responded with virulent rants decrying her monster-

loving posts, but Joshua kept his peace, printing out each and every entry and underlining the telltales she let slip.

Veritas lived in or near a major city. She said as much, commenting on its cosmopolitan population and the hassle of her daily commute. She had a native's command of English, and she used American colloquialisms. She lived near a seacoast, having once described a moonlit walk by the sea with her monstrous confidant. And once, in an aside, she complained of 40-degree temperatures in December.

By that time, Joshua had narrowed her location down to fewer than five cities on the West Coast of the United States. Then in one entry, she wrote about a storm that drenched the city for three days, and all he had to do was hit the weather sites to determine her location. He caught a bus to the city the very next day, and after a 24-hour ride he started hitting the area's cybercafés.

It took three more days to find her. Her regular journal entries marked her as a creature of habit. She always posted in the early evening prior to her nightly communion. Finally, on a rainy Friday night he sat in the back of a small café near downtown and watched a young white woman duck inside from a downpour and take a table near the front window. She was in her early 20s, with a slim build and a broad, honest face that fell short of classic beauty but was attractive nonetheless. Nothing about her suggested who and what she really was; she wore no sign on herself or her possessions. Nor did she eye the crowd with nervous apprehension as most imbued learn to do. Without the clues he had gleaned from a dozen different journal entries, Joshua would never have guessed her to be one of the imbued. He could remember a time when such a thought would have filled him with dismay, but now he felt only vindication. She would prove him right. He knew it, like a sign from the Heralds themselves.

Joshua bought two cups of coffee from the bar while she set up her laptop. He threaded his way through the growing crowd and set a cup at her elbow. She paid little attention until he pulled up a chair and sat.

She glanced at the tall coffee cup and then at him, her expression bemused. A part of Joshua's mind marveled a little that she didn't seem the least bit intimidated by his sudden arrival. It was easy to think she was as naïve as her journal entries suggested, but the hunter reminded himself that she'd spent more than a year in the company of things far worse than he.

"I think you may have made a mistake," she said coolly. Her voice was quiet and confident, her green eyes sharp, but Joshua could sense a note of curiosity in her voice.

"No mistake," he said. "Large coffee, extra cream, two sugars. Your usual."

The laptop chimed musically, ready to operate. She closed the cover. "Do I know you?"

"No," he said, remembering to smile. How long had it been since he'd actually sat down and tried to have a conversation with someone? It felt like years. He thought for a moment, and clumsily extended his hand. "My name's Joshua. I've been reading your journal with great interest."

She took his hand without thinking, then her eyes widened as the words sunk in. Her hand jerked back as if stung. For the first time her eyes flicked nervously across the milling crowd. "How... how did you find me?"

The black man shrugged. "You gave yourself away, a little bit at a time. All it took was a little patience until the pieces fell into place."

The woman sat back, studying him with narrowed eyes. One long-fingered hand went unconsciously to her lips and she absently chewed the ragged end of a fingernail. "What do you want?"

Joshua's smile grew genuine. "To help you."

"I don't need any help," she said quickly. "My... friend and I have an understanding. I keep his identity a secret and he protects me from the... others here in the city. It's worked for months now, so I don't see any reason to worry." She leaned forward again, her voice quiet and insistent. "I've learned so much about them. The stuff I've written about is just the tip of the iceberg. He asks nothing in return. There's nothing I have that someone like him could want. He does it because he wants to prove that we can work together. We don't have to be enemies. If you were really paying attention to what I wrote, you would see that."

Joshua shook his head. "He's using you."

She shook her head in disgust. "Really? How? He never asks me anything. Never tells me to do anything, and I never tell him about what happens on hunter-net, even though sometimes I think I should. No, it's you guys who are blind," she said, staring hard. "All you see is someone different from yourself, a different kind of person that you don't understand, and all you can think is to kill it. I would think you'd understand how poisonous prejudice can be."

Joshua felt the anger start to rise and took a deep breath. "I can see why you would believe that," he said carefully. "Not everyone hears the call the same way. Not everyone sees the same things, or is given the same message. I understand that now. There was a time when I believed our purpose was obvious, and anyone who couldn't see it was... lost. But you could say I've had something of an epiphany," he said. "I've recently seen some things that disturbed me a great deal. We're still vulnerable. Once upon a time, I thought we were immune to corruption, purposely made, like antibodies, to destroy the cancer eating at the human race. But that's not true. We haven't been shaped into something better. We can still be corrupted. We can still become like them." The words were bitter on his tongue.

"Well, no shit," she blurted, her expression incredulous.

Joshua pressed on as though he hadn't heard her, the words welling up from a depth he'd never dreamed he possessed, gathering power like a summer flood. "There is no command from Heaven. We're not angels. We're no different than the clay of the earth, and though we have been raised up, it only makes our fall more terrible. We are no better than the rest of Babylon, and Apocalypse awaits us all. Heed the message and be afraid."

His legs were burning. Coffee was everywhere, the ceramic cup crushed in his hand. When had that happened?

She was staring at him. The crowd around them buzzed on, oblivious to everything but their own mundane thoughts. Joshua carefully set the mangled cup aside. "We're vulnerable," he said, as simply as he could. "We can become monsters. How? I've thought about it a lot, and your journals helped me find the answer. For more than a year now you've posted about how we're the link between monsters and humans, how we can create a link between the natural and the supernatural for the good of everyone. When I first read that, I was speechless. But, you know, it brought everything into focus."

She said nothing, staring at Joshua with wide, fearful eyes.

"Everything you've written is so carefully reasoned, and yet so ridiculous. It isn't your fault. Your source is a... thing. An undead creature that can fill your head with whatever propaganda suits it. And that's when it occurred to me. The Heralds give us the power to resist every trick the monsters have, but we can still be swayed by clever lies. Why?"

"Because they want us to think for ourselves?" Beth said coldly.

Joshua shook his head. "That's what I'm talking about. That's the monster talking, not you. Our creators could have made their wishes crystal clear, imprinting their commands into our brains as

...and they opened our eyes, but they didn't. Those of us who see things more clearly than the rest have to step up and lead the way." Joshua spread his hands. "Which brings me to you."

The woman shook her head, disbelieving. "I don't understand."

He smiled. "I know. You haven't had anyone to show you the way. That's going to change. You're like a prodigal child, but now I found you. With my help, you're going to fulfill your purpose."

"My purpose?"

"To kill every monster in this city. Starting with the bloodsucker you've befriended."

The woman's jaw dropped. "I never thought I'd say this about anyone, but you're deranged," she said, almost hysterically. She grabbed her bag and crammed the laptop and cords inside. "Stay away from me. Just... stay away."

Clutching her bag, Beth lurched to her feet and dashed out of the room. Joshua watched her go, only mildly disappointed. He hadn't expected it to be easy. That was the reason he'd chosen her in the first place. If he could show her the way, he could show anyone.

The hunter watched as she crossed the street and fumbled with her keys beside an old, battered Volvo. He pulled a small notepad from his coat and he wrote down the license plate number in neat, precise script.

The bloodsucker was on Joshua again in an instant, gliding effortlessly across the darkened parlor. The stake was still in Joshua's hand, but his left arm no longer worked. As he tried to strike the creature one-handed, it plucked the stick from his grasp and struck him a backhanded blow across the face.

"Such a waste," the monster hissed, cold breath sliding over dead lips. "You hadn't the courage to challenge me directly, so you went after my possessions instead. Some of them took years, decades to shape. All undone in a single afternoon. And for what? You thought to draw me out of the thicker like a deer and stick me with this?" Another blow, quicker and harder than the first, and Joshua felt ribs crack. He doubled over, curling into a fetal position. The creature tossed the stake aside, grabbed a fistful of Joshua's shirt and coat and lifted him like a doll.

The bloodsucker was handsome. He could have been an Italian prince, once upon a time. He wore a tailored suit that cost more than most people made in a year, and his bluish lips were pulled back to reveal cruel, curved fangs. Joshua felt the monster's words as icy exhalations against his cheek. "Did you think she wouldn't tell me? As if she owed you something because of a shared delusion? She told me about you the night you cornered her. She understood what manner of beast you were and begged me to get rid of you."

Beth slid silently from the chair, her wide eyes still fixed on Joshua. Her voice was quiet, ragged with sorrow and pain. "That's not what I said. I don't want anyone else hurt, Nicholas. You agreed. We had an understanding."

The bloodsucker snarled, his face inches from Joshua's own, eyes burning with anger. "You've taken more lives in a single day than I have in a decade, and yet you presume to pass judgment on me? You are *nothing*. An animal. I'm doing the world a favor by getting rid of you."

A hand closed about Joshua's throat like a vise. The monster began to squeeze, millimeter by millimeter, savoring the inexorable collapse of cartilage and the desperate drumming of the hunter's pulse.

The license plate number told Joshua a great deal. Her name was Beth Greenberg, and she lived in the country about half an



hour outside of town. With that and the information she'd so carefully recorded in her journal, it was a simple matter to steal a car and trace her. Around eight that evening, a car driven by an elderly gentleman arrived for Beth at her home and carried her to a walled estate in a well-patrolled suburb closer to town. The creature's home was like a fortress, watched over by cameras, dogs and human guards. Joshua continued past as the car disappeared beyond a wrought iron gate. All he could do then was backtrack.

According to her journal, Beth had first encountered the monster during her awakening, and evidently she had been under the creature's spell ever since. It was only later that she had discovered hunter-net, and she was so appalled at the murderous bent of many posters that she began to document her peaceful relationship with one of the beasts. Beth was an avowed pacifist, and she believed that the creatures of the world could coexist with people if the centuries of fear and prejudice could be erased. It was simple propaganda, Joshua realized, and it was effective. She had garnered a sizeable number of supporters, much to his disgust.

Joshua washed his hands in the kitchen sink and poured a fresh cup of coffee. Dawn was just starting to color the sky, and he fought the need to yawn. It was easy to be angry at Beth for what she'd done, to dismiss her unswerving loyalty to the creature as cowardice or stupidity, but now that he'd seen her face to face he knew how much she believed in the sanctity of her cause. She wasn't evil, she was merely... misguided. He would set her straight. Once she had all the facts, she couldn't help but understand.

The sun crested the hill to the east and bathed the room in ruddy light. He could remember a time when he would have simply tracked Beth down and put a bullet in her. Back then, if you weren't part of the solution, you were part of the problem. But he'd found a better way, a brighter path. For the first time in what seemed like years, he felt content.

Joshua walked down the hall and up the carpeted stairs. He pushed open the bedroom door and stood next to the bed. Beth rolled over at the sudden sound, opened her eyes and screamed.

"Are you ready to begin?" Joshua said.

"Get out of my house!" Beth cried, pulling the covers to her chin and drawing up her knees. She was paler than she'd been the night before. Dark circles stood out like bruises under her eyes. "I'll call the police! I swear to God—"

"I don't want to hurt you. I... apologize for scaring you, but you need to know some things."

She took a deep breath, composing herself, but her hand trembled as she raked it through her hair. "Say it and get the hell out."

Joshua sipped his coffee, collecting his thoughts. "Tonight is the night. I'm going to draw the bloodsucker out, and you're going to help me kill it."

For a moment Beth was dumbstruck. "No, no I won't. And you can't make me."

He sighed. "Actually, I can, but I don't want it to come to that. It's much more important that you make the decision for yourself."

For a moment it seemed as if she would scream again, but then she drew a deep breath and went on as calmly as she could, "I've been thinking about what you said at the café. I can see what you're saying, but when you think about it, what makes your vision of the world better than mine? What if I'm the one who's right and you're wrong? Think how terrible that would be."

"Put on some clothes. There's something I want to show you," Joshua said.

He waited outside the bedroom and then led her down to the basement. The body lay a few feet from the bottom of the

stairs, stretched out in the circle of the basement's single light. The elderly driver's clothes were in a rumpled pile just outside the light, next to a pile of bloodied instruments.

Joshua knelt beside the corpse, shaking his head. Beth screamed and screamed between bouts of sickness. He waited patiently while she got it all out of her system. He found it ironic that she could spend months with a living corpse, yet be so affected by a natural one.

"How old would you say he was? Fifty? Fifty-five? So look at what I had to do to him." He showed her the mangled hands, with the grotesquely broken fingers, then the soft part of the skull where he'd hit the driver with a pipe. "And that was just to get him behind your barn last night. By that point I knew beating him wasn't going to get me anywhere, so I pulled the battery out of your car and got some baling wire. Even then he resisted for almost two hours before he broke. Does that seem normal to you?"

Joshua went over to where Beth sat, her legs folded up and her arms wrapped tightly around them. She rocked back and forth, her shoulders hitching with silent sobs. She shrieked when he touched her, so he grabbed her arm and slapped her hard enough to get her attention. "Look at him. Look at him. This is what I'm talking about. What these creatures do to people isn't right. It defies God and nature. We have to stop them. Don't you see? Don't you?"

He had to shake her to make certain she was listening and heard what he said. She finally nodded. Joshua smiled, reaching out to stroke Beth's hair. "See. It's simple. Once you think about it, it all makes perfect sense." He stood and stretched, checking his watch. "I have to get some things." He nodded at the corpse. "He finally talked, but I couldn't get anything about his master's lair out of him. He did tell me about certain connections, though. Businesses that are important to your former friend. I'm going to take them away from him. When he wakes up tonight, he'll want revenge. When he realizes that his driver never returned after dropping you off, he'll know where to come."

The hunter took Beth's chin and raised her face to meet his. "Get some rest. You'll need it. And remember what I said. I don't want to make you do what's necessary, but I can if I have to. I can be very persuasive."

The monster's grip tightened. There was a roaring in Joshua's ears. His breath came in a thin whistle. "Beth!" he croaked. "Beth!"

"Stop it!" she screamed, her hands curling like claws against her face. "Stop it! You can't kill him! It's wrong!"

"Shut up, you cow," the monster snarled, "or I'll kill you, too."

Beth fell to her knees, weeping helplessly, and Joshua realized that she wasn't going to help him. As darkness closed in around him, he shut his eyes and made hers open to the vision he'd tried so hard to convey.

It felt like a wind rushing through him, a torrent of feeling pouring from him to her. Beth shrieked again, but this time it was a rising note of fury.

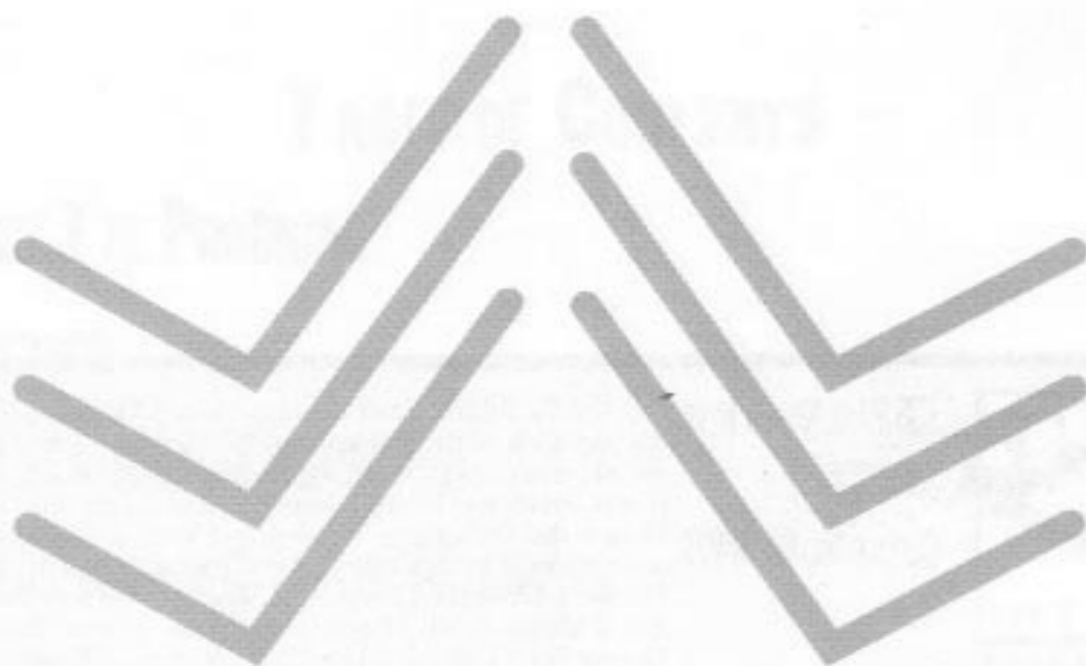
The vampire heard the cry and turned too late to see what had come over her. He took the stake full in the chest, driven between his ribs with all the force that the woman's small body could muster.

When Joshua regained consciousness, the creature's body was in pieces. Beth had found a cleaver in the kitchen and now sat on the bloodstained rug amid the gore, clutching the bloody blade to her chest. When his eyes met hers, he saw no fear. No doubt. She understood at last.

Joshua's voice was a rasp, like steel on stone. He said, "Welcome home."

Hunter-Book™

Wayward



By ED HALL, MIKE LEE, ADAM T'INVORTH AND CHUCK WENDIG

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Hunter-Book

Wayward

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE: THE PRODIGAL	10
INTRODUCTION	18
CHAPTER 1: CHAOS THEORY	22
CHAPTER 2: METHOD TO THE MADNESS	34
CHAPTER 3: FRIENDLY FIRE	46
CHAPTER 4: AFTERMATH	58
CHAPTER 5: WAR KNOWS NO BOUNDS	68
CHAPTER 6: THE DOGS OF WAR	94



INTRODUCTION

Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly...
— Job 4:18

REAP THE WHIRLWIND

Hunter Book: Wayward is a sourcebook to help you develop a better understanding of the Wayward creed and its emerging role in the world of **Hunter: The Reckoning**. Wayward is one of the two "lost" creeds, one of the mentalities regarding and philosophies toward the hunt that only now begins to emerge among the chosen. In truth, these apparent lunatics and homicidal maniacs have been around since the first hunters were imbued — and perhaps even before. They have simply been mistaken for manic, obsessive or murderous hunters of various perspectives — people who were mad before being imbued or people who have gone too far in the hunt since. Little did anyone know that these maniacs are actually of a like kind. Their bizarre behavior was imprinted upon them as much as it was determined by who they were before the Heralds touched them. Now, they have a sweeping outlook on the hunt that encompasses mass destruction as the best and only means of freeing the world from the supernatural, whether that means the end of all monsters — or the end of an enslaved humanity.

As a Wayward, you are a tortured, beleaguered person and a rarity even among the scarce chosen. Your imbuing is essentially similar to that of other hunters in that you are confronted by the existence of monsters and are made to see the truth of the world. You might even be awakened alongside other people who also respond to the spectacle. Whether you know it or not, however, your change is fundamentally different from those of other hunters. Whereas they see visions, hear disembodied voices or suffer other hallucinations thanks to Messenger intervention, they are largely left to their own devices afterward. You are not allowed that "freedom." Rather, it seems the Heralds awaken you and then never leave you completely, assaulting your mind with sights, images, odors and decrees that drive you to commit

atrocities against monsters, anyone who would aid them or anyone who stands in your path.

As if such horrific compulsions weren't enough, you and your kind are constantly shown the existence of monsters after your change. Your eyes are pried open and can never close — your ability to witness the corruption never ceases and can drive you deeper into madness.

This call to slaughter and unceasing awareness seem to combine to suggest a role for you against the monsters. It's almost as if you're meant to be the ideal warrior and military strategist — always recognizing the enemy and being prepared to fight it in any way, perhaps to harness that potential to lead others into battle. But instead, your frail human mind shatters under the pressure imposed upon you. It's as if you're meant to be a champion — to take the fight to the things — but you don't possess the fortitude, will or insight to restrain the sheer rage and violence that wells up within you. It explodes outward through you as if you're mayhem's tool, not its master.

Your embrace of carnage makes you a pariah among your fellow hunters. They don't understand that the death of helpless people is a small price to pay for the destruction of even one creature. They don't understand that there's a larger scope to the war, that any means justify the end of a liberated world. They call you a butcher, not a soldier. And yet, you can't always wage the war on your own. You're only one person before a vast, unnatural horde. At some point, you realize that you must reconcile your mission with the need for help — or at least that you must do so as long as potential allies are useful. After that, they can be abandoned... or disposed of. Perhaps this need to find allies even among weak-minded imbued is a lingering remnant of what the Messengers meant for you to accomplish. Or maybe you are the weak one for still needing to be a social animal rather than a dog of war.

Is it any wonder then, that you're a broken hunter? An imbued who senses an essential role to play as a warlord, but who is inherently disabled whenever he tries? Is it any wonder that other hunters consider you insane, psychotic or sociopathic? Is it any wonder that other imbued choose not to recognize you as being linked to (or anything like) themselves, not to work with you until they're desperate? If only you weren't so good at stalking and assaulting creatures, of empowering your would-be troops, you might go it alone without regrets. But your skills make your help invaluable even while other hunters curse your very existence, and you're forced to accept their value as cannon fodder with which to advance your campaign of destruction.

Perhaps you'll never find your intended place or know your intended role. It doesn't really matter. Your significance to the creators makes you an instrumental participant on the hunt, whether you want to be or not.

Hunter Book: Wayward helps you understand your creed and your character. It helps you determine who your Wayward is, before and after the imbuing. Also included here are the creed's unique powers and rules for roleplaying. For Waywards' official creed definition and explanation, see p. 20 of the **Hunter Players Guide**.

Just as you need to understand your own Wayward, however, you must also understand hunter society as it emerges; the two are inextricably intertwined, even though your character is probably considered an outcast and a maniac. As the newly imbued struggle to understand their new world, their origins and their purpose, they inevitably compare experiences, philosophies and fears with those of others on the streets or on the Internet. At first, the recently awakened latch onto anyone who understands them; the truth is just too terrifying to contend with alone. In time, though, 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.

During hunters' emergence, many varied imbued can seem to have common goals. As the chosen make contact, they try to understand their mutual condition, and work together. They quickly discover, however, that 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. Mutual experiences and mutual values turn out to be two very different things. Hunters can therefore be taken by surprise when a fellow "Innocent" proves actually to be a fanatical Avenger or a philosophical Visionary. 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 will finally arise. Judge will recognize Judge and Redeemer will recognize Redeemer, all through the creeds' codified values, intentions and goals on the mission.

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

BLACK DOG GAME FACTORY

This book is part of White Wolf's Black Dog Game Factory line of resources dedicated to adult readers and mature gamers. **Hunter Book: Wayward** belongs to this line not for the Wayward characters' propensity to shed blood, to curse or to cause mayhem. Nor is this a Black Dog book because of violent images or text presented herein. You can see all those things in any PG-rated movie. This book qualifies as Black Dog because of what it asks you to do. In playing a Wayward, you don't just watch the bloodletting and conscience-free violence, you initiate it through roleplaying at the gaming table. You commit it in a storytelling environment. And such wanton destruction isn't necessarily directed at an immoral villain who "deserves what he gets." "Psychos" earn such labels for a reason. They can and do kill, maim, torture and abuse anyone whom they believe warrants it in order to get at an indistinct enemy that Waywards sense as the target of their wrath. It means killing monsters, but also innocent children, the elderly, pregnant women, the defenseless or anyone else who happens to amount to "collateral damage" in the name of the cause. And Waywards often do it without a second thought — or at least they don't let their misgivings get in the way of what they believe must be done. They may even consider some regular people valid targets for extermination — whites, blacks, gays, straights, Muslims, Jews, police, prostitutes — whether those people are somehow connected to monsters or not.

You may have watched or partaken in hack-and-slash gaming before and thought nothing of it. But in this case, you play a mass murderer who kills because he believes it's the right thing to do, because he thinks God tells him to or because he has nothing but hatred for the world. That kind of roleplaying requires a mature gamer who knows when the game ends and who understands what constitutes going too far among his friends who actually share the table with him. If you can't grasp the idea of using roleplaying to look at what is human in a Timothy McVeigh or an Adolph Hitler — or, more to the point, to examine what there is in such destructive individuals that is human — and why restricting such impulses to the realms of roleplaying and the imagination is best for everyone, then close this book now and don't play a Wayward.

edges seem to be shared by the chosen of various perspectives and personalities doesn't help, either. Once creeds as institutions are finally acknowledged, the hunt may finally gain momentum it needs to overcome the supernatural entire. Or perhaps such cumbersome and fractious divisions will be the hunt's undoing, as imbued fall to infighting and politicking rather than upholding their higher purpose.

Waywards' fractured existence makes them both pariahs and heroes among the imbued. Their amazing capabilities allow them to lead the way against monsters and to rally the hunter collective. Yet, their intensity and willingness to sacrifice anyone for the cause makes them seem like a unique group of chosen unto themselves than like

extreme members of any creed — hunters who've given their souls over to the Heralds' whims and who have lost their own way in the process.

Even though they are misunderstood, Waywards experience many of the same fears and transitions that other hunters do in trying to grapple with what's happened to them and with what the world is really like. Waywards often find themselves when other hunters cannot tolerate their methods, but even the psychos are still terrified by what they see and know. They too need validation that they aren't utterly alone — even when they are — and lack of that confirmation can push many outcasts further over the edge.

And then another monster rears its ugly head and must be disposed of at any cost... even if it means working with the wayward imbued again. Waywards therefore become a part of the hunter fold, whether they want to or not and whether they truly belong or not. Perhaps they even emerge as a collection of imbued unto themselves.

Ultimately, the course of your chronicle and your storyteller's vision decides when all creeds become entirely recognizable in your game. In the meantime, your Wayward's fully developed identity helps define his own kind and the society of all imbued.

PERSPECTIVES

The opinions, theories, information and outlooks expressed in this book are presented primarily in three distinct "voices." This book also includes a wide variety of views on the creed from other imbued. The Wayward narrators typify the spectrum of personalities across the creed as a whole. Each of these characters presents his or her own take on the origins, tactics, relations and ultimate fate of the maniacs, and on hunters in general. Each, like all Waywards, 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 Waywards 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, ensuring that each Wayward's explanation of the hunt is as unique as the individual who gives it. Thus, the questions the imbued ask of themselves and their world — not any specific belief system — are what best illustrate their individual and collective identity. After reading this book, you should have a sense of the imperatives and impulses that inspire and motivate various Waywards. You should sense why these people seek to destroy anyone or anything whom they consider the enemy, and yet why they can't resist the command to be active and interactive members of the hunter order. We also hope that you're inspired to fully develop your character's identity and values, to make his reaction to monsters and the hunt as compelling as possible.

How to Use This Book

Hunter Book: Wayward 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 embodying the psychos among hunters — and possibly other creed members, too. This book can therefore help you better understand your character and elaborate upon her.

Chapter 1: Chaos Theory explores the nature of monsters, the Messengers and hunters from the Wayward perspective, and it seeks to explain why they're cursed beyond all other imbued.

Chapter 2: Method to the Madness covers killers' approach to their calling and how they cut swaths through the monsters.

Chapter 3: Friendly Fire describes Waywards' relations with other hunters and how such interaction is even possible.

Chapter 4: Aftermath presents maniacs' nightmarish aspirations for the world and their role in making it possible.

Chapter 5: War Knows No Bounds offers rules and edges that are special to Waywards and that might even be available to other hunters.

Chapter 6: The Dogs Of War details newly imbued killers who are ready for play. This chapter also profiles creed members who have acquired somewhat infamous reputations.

RESOURCES

Of course, movies and books are full of sociopaths with a dream, from whom you can take inspiration for your Wayward character. For the totally twisted, the Zeal + Vision of John Doe in *Se7en* definitely strikes home. Then, of course, there's Hannibal Lecter in *Hannibal* (more so there than elsewhere). The novel *Blackburn* by Bradley Denton portrays the believable evolution of a murderer. The eponymous Jimmy Blackburn is not so much a serial killer as he is a man gripped by a simple morality he creates when he's young, and he never deviates from it. Blackburn himself would make a perfect — and a very human — Wayward. *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis and *Exquisite Corpse* by Poppy Z. Brite both portray people with a distinct compulsion to kill but with a blueprint behind that drive.

You can find *The Boondock Saints* only for rental these days. It's a movie about two brothers who work in a meat-packing plant in Boston. After an awakening of sorts, they declare war on the Russian mob. Substitute monsters for the mobsters and ignore Willem Dafoe's entertaining but way over-the-top FBI agent and you've got a story that captures the essence of *Hunter* and the Wayward creed.

Finally, although it's a bit absurd, *Grosse Pointe Blank* depicts a man who represents death metaphorically in myriad ways. The clothes he wears ("You look like a mortician,"), his loner attitude — oh, yeah, and he's a hired killer. Plus there's that whole "moral flexibility" he's got going for him. Despite his ennui, he's still a trained (and fairly paranoid) assassin. He stabs one victim in the neck with a pen and then gets his unsuspecting best friend to help dispose of the body! When someone asks him what he does for a living, he answers, "I kill people." A Wayward attitude (albeit viewed in a funhouse mirror) if ever there were one.



CHAPTER I: CHAOS THEORY

Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.
— Job 5:21

Brain & Jaws

Monday, May 17th. Tape number 25-GHB-62. Inspecting extracted biopsy samples for pathologist.

Frozen sample 88-49C. Male. White. Age 42. Biopsy of epidermal tissue, taken from behind right ear. Possible epidermal malignancy.

Cutting tissue.

Staining with silver dye.

Mounting tissue on one-by-four slide.

Placing prepared slide in outgoing case.

Frozen sample 88-49D. Male. White. Age 65. Biopsy of upper aerodigestive tract, half-inch inside of salivary gland. Potential incident of pharyngeal cancer. Squamous.

Cutting tissue

Staining with silver dye.

Mounting tissue on one-by-four slide.

Placing prepared slide in outgoing case.

Frozen sample 88-50A. Female. Hispanic. Age 48. Pregnant. Biopsy of cervical tissue. Potential epithelial cell abnormalities. Scan for carcinoma of the cervix.

Cutting tissue.

Staining with silver dye.

Mounting tissue—

What?

Did somebody say something?

Jesus. I've been here too long.

MIND OPENED

Oh, God. It's happening again. I thought I was over this, but it's starting again. It wasn't like this last time,

though. I didn't imagine dead people last time — a least, not other than my father.

I was driving home when I saw it. A monster. A walking corpse.

I don't really understand how I know that's what it was. I mean, 12 hours ago that stuff happened in movies, not in my life. Now I'm sitting here, calm as you like, writing "walking corpse" in my diary. I'm mad again. I must be.

The problem is that it didn't feel like a hallucination. I can still close my eyes and see it now. I can see where part of the jaw and teeth were popping through the side of its head. I can see the midget on its clothing. I can feel the way the car jumped as I drove over it. It was still there when I drove back, and it still looked like a dead person. Really dead.

The thing is, I know there are more of them and I know they're real. I don't know how I know. I just know. It's something in my head, as if it's always been there. Worse than that, though, is the sense that they have to go. These beasties have no place in my country, and they need to go. I have no bloody idea what to do about it.

I've just read back what I've written and I can't believe that I'm thinking these things. I thought I'd put those problems behind me years ago. I haven't written in this diary in the better part of a decade, certainly not in the time I've been with Gregory. They told me I was cured, but what if I'm not? What about Greg and the girls? How are they going to cope with this? I've never told them anything about my real past.

I know I've done some stuff I shouldn't. Lying my way into the army reserves was probably the worst. I knew people like me really shouldn't be in the Territorial Army, but the weekends away always made me feel strong, confident, like I could protect people — and myself. Greg used to laugh at me for thinking that there were "bad guys" out there that I could stop. He said I was turning war into a game. I thought maybe I could stop people from being hurt like Dad hurt me.

No, better not to deal with that now. I'm having enough trouble keeping together without going back down that path. Concentrate on the present. Greg. The girls. The daily grind at the electronics factory.

Calm. Focus on the words and the writing, like you were taught. Keep your mind under control. Concentrate on what's real. The best I can hope for is that this was just a one-time thing. I saw something that shouldn't have been there and dealt with it. Maybe it's all over now.

For some reason, I doubt it.

Do I want it to have been a hallucination?

INSTINCT

My son and my wife are dead.

Everything's a blur. Like it didn't happen.

My god. I feel sick. They're both gone.

My wife's under the dining room table. Her neck was as pretty as the stem of a wine glass but now it's broken, it's just... snapped. My son's still sitting in his chair. Jesus! I don't know how long it's been. His throat is slit open. Maybe it's been a couple of hours. But that doesn't make any sense. The sun's just coming up. When did we eat dinner? I can't remember. I remember trying not to step in the blood. I didn't... I didn't want to track it everywhere.

This is a dream. It has to be. Maybe if I cut my own throat everything will be all right. Maybe we'll all wake up and be at dinner again. Maybe he won't mouth off again. Maybe he'll be good. Someone I'm proud to call my own. Or maybe it'll happen all over again and he'll still look filthy. Kendra will try to stop me and I'll have to do it all again.

I did it.

I killed my wife and son. And now I'm telling... who? Why am I talking into this stupid tape recorder like this is work? What am I doing here?

What the hell happened?

TRUTH REVEALED

It's happened again. I've seen another one - in the office. I was walking through reception on my way to lunch when I saw him. He had a slick suit, a briefcase, and he was wrong. I can't put it any better than that. He shouldn't have been. He had to go. And I felt like I had to do it. Oh, God, I'm mad. I must be. Why else am I thinking about killing a man? What do I do?

RECRIMINATIONS

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: "Mayhem"/"Peleus"

I've resisted participating on this list for a long time, mostly for lack of time. Also because there seemed little to gain. Most posts I read told me that I had little to offer that people here hadn't read already. Now, though, a situation I've tried taking care of demands everyone's attention.

One of our "fellows" has become a menace. He threatens not only everything we're fighting to protect and preserve but us directly. His methods and motivations make him as dangerous to other shophetim — or imbued, as many of you phrase it — as any monster could be. I'm talking about the poster who calls himself "Alleyman222." Some of you might have had the shit luck of meeting the man. In that case,



he introduced himself as "Peleus" or "Mayhem." If he must you, he may share a pamphlet that talks about MASK PEOPLE RULING YOUR LIFE."

If you're at that stage, what I have to say is not for you. Beware this man. He's a racist, a nazi and a killer.

Yes, that last label might apply to everybody reading this, but don't misunderstand me. I don't mean "killer of monsters." I mean "murderer of the defenseless." I mean "betrayer of allies." I mean somebody you don't dare turn your back on, whether on the street, in a fight or at a safe house.

There's more — lots more that I can tell you about this guy — but I don't want to wear out my welcome in my first post. If anyone else has seen the pamphlet I mentioned, I'd be really interested to know about it.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: wrath25

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

So what's your point?

Lots of bleeding hearts on this list would be better off dead. Their weakness and ineffectuality make them traitors to our cause, so it's not possible to "betray" them.

And as for "the defenseless," this is war, remember? Does collateral damage mean anything to you?

I think your problem is a lack of backbone, Shopet.

Subject: The Day of Reckoning approaches

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: count666372

+++

++0

+09

The last brigade of the 666 demons has been sundered. The end truly is near.

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

From: memphis68

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I had to pull my jaw out of my lap after I read your post, Wrath. You could take the prize for lurker of the year. Shine it up nice and pretty while you re-read last year's posts. Maybe you still think that hideout of yours makes you hot shit. The nerve of you, accusing somebody else of lacking backbone!

I remember what Brother Shaka had to say about Peleus. You might not give a shit if some cracker uses public housing for target practice, but I damn sure do. So be nice to the newbie.

Newbie, speak your piece. Consider yourself officially invited.

INVESTIGATIONS

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: tarjiman220

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

I have been asked by Warden what the meaning of the term "cracker" is. I replied that I thought it had to do with vaults, but he thinks this does not make sense in context. Memphis? Anyone?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

Sorry it took me so long to get back to this stuff, but there's this warlock I can't shake. This bastard seems to have made my personal misery his hobby.

I'm interested in this pamphlet I mentioned because it appears to talk about how Peleus became one of us. That part I'm still trying

to figure out. How is it that somebody this vile gets picked to serve the will of — is Heaven a good word? Is it because otherwise his life would've been a waste anyway so, hey, why not put him to work killing monsters? This sort of thinking will make you crazy! By that logic, why not turn the entire Third Reich into judges? Or all klansmen? Or all Republicans? It doesn't make sense.

Or it makes exactly as much sense as trying to make sense of God's will. I guess.

I don't have a scanner, so I'm going to retype what's on each page of this pamphlet — which looks to be incomplete. My copy does, that is. I'm not sure how much of it is missing.

What I have looks like this: on bright orange paper that's been folded not quite in half (which is one thing that made me realize part is missing), it says: MASK PEOPLE RULE YOUR LIFE! AND YOU DON'T KNOW IT! That's right of the fold. Left of the fold, it reads: WHO ARE THE MASK PEOPLE? LEARN THE ANSWER INSIDE... AND STAY ALIVE! My guess is that the first one was the front page, and the second was the back.

Most of you probably understand why I picked this thing up in the first place, right? I mean, it pretty well describes our situation, doesn't it? When I first saw it, I didn't realize that I had already met the author. I don't want to get ahead of myself, though. Here's what the inside pages say:

I am a patriot that has been engaged in our struggle with you-know-who for my whole life. Therefore, my identity must remain secret. As a warrior fighting for our peoples survival, there is another secret that I have to share with all you fighters for liberty. We have been fighting the wrong enemy!!! Forget about the ZOG. Forget about the mud people. Forget about The Children of Cain. Why? Because all of them are pawns for the Mask People. Scared yet? If your not you ought to be and if what you read here doesn't scare you your too blind to survive whats ahead. I was blind before I saw the Mask People. Now I see! One night after a patriots rally up in the Territories me and 3 buddies were walking to our trucks. Everybody else was long gone home or back to motels or wherevere. So there we were going along this dirt road with me bringing up the rear when the guy in front of me stops dead in his tracks. I almost walk straight into the son of a bitch. i'm about to say so and all of a sudden he's screaming something like "murderin peckawood I'm gone murder you back" Then he charges the guy in front of him, tackles him flat to the ground and just starts wailing on the guy. Now I don't know about you but never heard one true patriot call another one peckawood unless the guys were kidding around. This dude was not playing. he was serious as a heart attack and it looked like he was trying to kill the guy on the ground. I panic and clock the crazy guy across the head with my flashlight a little too hard looks like cause he's bleeding all of a sudden. But he doesn't miss a stroke, don't even turn around! He's still pounding the other guy who I'm scared might be dead already. I put my flashlight under the dude's chin so I can drag him off the guy on the bottom. I hear something go snap! and I think O shit that's it I killed him! But the guy is still fighting. I can see his neck is crooked. No question his neck is broke but he's the damn rabbit in that battery commercial and he just won't stop. Now I'm getting scared and just go nuts! Next thing I know I'm looking down at him looking up at me. And he's just laughing. No teeth. One eye swelled shut. Both arms broke in a couple of places. Just laughing. Only it's not the

(jumps here to next page)

guy laughing. It's something inside him laughing through his mouth like he had a tape recorder hid in there. I heard this

fella laugh earlier that night when they showed the lynching picnic pictures from the good old days and he didn't sound the way this voice sounds. This voice sounds like a nigger laughing. An ugly sounding too loud nigger laugh. And he says to me "well white man was that as much fun as beating black folks?" His lips don't move though. This dead voice is talking to me from this dead body that had been alive five minutes ago. And then the voice says "get used to it cause there's more of us than there is of you. That's how I found out about the mask people. And the scariest part is the dead voice wasn't lying Mask people are everywhere. They hide in mud people. They hide in White People. Even in White Children. They'll hide in you. And if they do then you stop being a patriot and start being one of Them. One of the enemy. If that happens it's all over. Here's why-get one of them inside you and you might as well be one of the mud people cause Mask People can make anybody do anything. Say anything. And then you might as well be dead. And guess what? I'm not wasting 2 seconds before I make that happen. So watch your back and listen up. If your friend starts sounding like somebody else it might be because he is. Cause the mask people are real and they can make you real dead.

(At the bottom of this page, in a bigger type face it says:) WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

There are a few things I want to comment on here, but I also want to get this stuff out there for others to see. Plus, I feel the need to check my doors and windows again.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org
From: wrath25
Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

Again, I have to wonder what the point of all this is? Is this the worst "evidence" you have? The man was in the heat of the moment. Are you trying to tell us you've never done things you regretted in the course of fighting these things? Cut him some slack, Shopet!

Don't you have more important things to do? I know I do.
Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"
From: memphis68
To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Tarjiman, crackers are as crackers do:
>I heard this fella laugh earlier that night when they showed the
>lynching picnic pictures from the good old days and he didn't sound
>the way this voice sounds. This voice sounds like a nigger laughing.
>An ugly sounding too loud nigger laugh.

This pretty well sums them up. In case you don't know, the "lynching picnic pictures" this asshole is talking about were really popular in the USA at one time. They were sold as _postcards_. Bunches of white folks would _bring their kids_ to see somebody get strung up or worse. Then they'd all smile for the camera with the corpse hanging next to them.

Whoever wrote this pamphlet doesn't know the meaning of the word ugly.

DECISIONS

July 17

I made a decision. I tossed and turned all through the night, kept seeing that thing, knowing that it shouldn't be, knowing that it has to be destroyed. I told Greg that I ate something that disagreed with me. He believed me in a

half-sleep way. About 3 in the morning, I finally woke up, my mind set. I knew that I had to get rid of him, and I spent the next few hours planning just how to do it.

It was almost laughably easy. I tapped into Sandy's schedule on the computer and found the name of the creature from his appointment two days ago. It was too easy to do a search of our contact database and pull up who he worked. Not only did Sandy have his work address, but his home one, too. Thank God for his buddy-buddy sd technique. Sandy probably plays golf with that thing.

The only question I have is what the hell I do now that I have this information. Now, Greg's watching the kids are doing their homework and I'm contemplating killing someone - and I don't seem to care.

What the hell's happening to me?

I know that my instructors on the weekends say you shouldn't think of the enemy as a person. You should think of him purely as a target to be killed and then move on. The situation is just insane, but I feel calm. Almost dead inside about it. I'm afraid I can actually go through with it.

July 18

It's OK. I'm over it. I deleted those addresses this afternoon. I'm not going to do it. I'm going back to a normal life. I'm okay. The moment has passed. I'm not going to need you again, sorry. Thank you for helping me through this.

INITIATION

God, I'm sorry. I'm trying to get a grip on it all. It's like it wasn't me. Please help me.

It's been a week. I can't go home. I haven't been back to the hospital. I haven't been to class. I've been squatting. Nasty, rat-ridden alleys. Filthy escapes. Wherever. I don't know if this is real. What's wrong with me? Everything's breaking apart.

I cleaned up the bodies before I even knew who was happening. I was on some sort of... autopilot. Like I was outside my own body, watching myself do things that I couldn't control. I wanted to stop. I didn't... I didn't want to burn the house down. All our memories. Photo albums. Our furniture. The bodies. Jesus. I just burned them. Why did I do it? Why didn't I just turn myself in?

I've been hearing... I don't know. Words. A phrase. Whispered over and over again. "CANCER IN THE SYSTEM." I heard it that night at the hospital. Then I heard it again when Jan started mouthing off to Kendra, just before her face... changed. Right before it looked like... I don't know. A red stain. I heard the words again when I cut him. Then Kendra tried to stop me. The bitch hit me with a plate - and I heard it again. Then my hands were around her throat.

Two nights ago, I saw... something I can't explain. A wall of TVs inside a pawn shop. The news was on every channel. I couldn't turn away. That's when I heard it again. "CANCER IN THE SYSTEM." They showed two cops shoving some black guy into a police car. One of the cops looked wrong, the way my son did. He... stuck out. I don't know how else to say it. Like maybe a shadow on an x-ray? Then this reporter interviewed some high school teacher about a shooting that happened in Doylestown. She looked wrong, too. Then there was a commercial with this guy selling toothpaste. He

his body. I hated him. I hated them all. I felt like they were cheating. They were liars.

And, it's the same everywhere I look now. They're everywhere. Homeless people. Businessmen. I'm surrounded by it and I don't know what it means. I don't know how it all relates. I hate them. I hate myself. I hate my family. I have to find out why I did that to them. It's raining now and I'm watching this... man? He just left a bar with some white girl. He doesn't look right. Like the others, a red blot. Blinking doesn't make it go away. I'm going to follow him. I'm going to find out what's going on.

FIRST STRIKE

I did it. I killed a man - something - in cold blood. I must be mad. What else could I be?

Gregory found me crying in the middle of the night. I must have started while I was asleep. What could I tell him? How can I say to my husband that I've turned into some sort of psychotic bitch?

I feel cold again. It feels like nothing matters, but last night I was scared and horrified. Those words don't even start to capture the depth of what I felt. My life has changed completely. I haven't felt this bad since Dad

Since Dad abused me. That makes sense, doesn't it? Maybe that's where all this is coming from. They say the abused often become abusers, but killers? Hallucinations? Voices in my head telling me to kill people? I remember enough from my counseling as a kid to know what that means. Schizophrenia. But if I'm suffering from that, I shouldn't know there's something wrong with me. I should be convinced that it's all perfectly normal.

So does that mean what happened yesterday afternoon was real? That there was some monster living in an expensive flat in the city, and I killed him? I pulled the address off the network again a few nights ago. Then I checked Sandy's diary on the computer, and worked out when the thing was due to visit next. I set off for work, as normal, and then ceded in sick from my mobile.

I found his flat easily. Nice, well furnished, expensive yuppie stuff. At least it was. Christ, I don't know if I should write this down, but it's the only way I can keep sane. I set fire to it. I burnt his flat down.

Be honest. I broke in there. Good security system, but I've been working in electronics long enough to know where to cut and where to connect. Then it was pretty easy to pry open a window and get inside. I waited for him in the bathroom. Everyone's got to go sometime, and I figured he'd be least expecting that. More fool me. I was in there for hours. Not a bloody sign of him heading towards the loo. And then I looked round the place. The toilet looked unused. It was dusty. You wouldn't think a dusty toilet could scare the shit out of you, would you? And then I remembered the dead thing that I'd run over on my way home.

I grabbed the golf club I'd nicked from Greg's bag and crept out of the bathroom. Luckily, the thing had the telly on. I managed to creep into the living room and attack him. He was strong - far stronger than I expected. He was bloody fast, too. I got a couple of bruises that I'll have to explain, but I put him down. I couldn't tell you quite how - I just kind of lost it. It was a bit like that place inside me I go when I'm on rifle ranges with the TA. I almost lose conscious thought and focus on banging each shot into the target.

The same thing happened here. One minute I'm nearly shitting myself as he gets up. The next he's down and out, and I've only



got the faintest memory of how it happened. Nothing but bruises and a broken three iron to show for it. The odd thing is, I could have sworn the club was hot when I was swinging it.

I headed into the kitchen. It was virtually empty. There was nothing in the fridge, not even any tins in the cupboard. What the hell was that thing? Either he didn't eat or he lived on take-out, but there wasn't much in the trash, either. I set all the ops taps on, switched a couple of lights on and set a small fire in the wastepaper bin in the hall.

I was out of sight of the building when I heard the explosion.

I should be feeling pain, guilt, fear or something other than what I am. But all I can seem to feel is pleased.

July 19

I've just read yesterday's entry again. Did I really write that? Did I do those things?

God help me, I'm mad, but what can I do? Turn myself in and face life in a psych ward? I can't do that. I can't lose my family. I could never face them again if that happened.

Thank the Lord no one else was killed in that explosion.

Maybe now that the guy is dead the obsession will go away. Maybe I can drag myself back to reality and forget it ever happened.

Necessity

After I followed that first one home I found a whole fucking... I don't know, underground of the things. They all seem to know each other. I see them, clustering together in dark corners in bars. On street corners. Filtering into cheap motel rooms. So I followed more of them. Watched them. Made connections.

I tried asking questions. None of them wanted to talk. Next thing I know, I'm breaking fingers. I could never have even considered doing that once. Now it seems like the right thing to do. I started getting names. Tried to find out what they're doing. Then I came across this one on South Street, pushing drugs on kids outside a record store. One of his gang, this pockmarked whore, told me some things about the guy, the... thing. She told me he loved dealing to kids. Said they were easy. He even worked the high school where James went.

I know my son was getting into some messed-up shit. He was dealing, I think, peddling some bad business. Crank, crack, I don't know. So I start talking to this guy. He's black. I'm black. He thinks we have some sort of connection. We talk in an alley. Sure enough, he knew James. He knew James real well. Got him started, he said.

And there it was. I had found the one who killed my son. It took a few weeks, but I found him.

I told him I was interested in buying something. I said I wanted to go somewhere private. He told me to meet him on the roof of this run-down apartment building off Christian Street. That's where we are now. I have him tied and gagged with electrical tape. I hit him a few times with a tire iron. He was strong, real strong. Maybe it's part of why he looked so wrong to me. He moved quicker than anybody I've ever seen. But then I got a piece of him.

We talked for a little while, didn't we?

Turns out this maggot has a whole other business. Blood. Seems he likes to drink kids' blood — and he

likes them to drink his. Pays them for it, don't you sick fuck? They get off on it or something. I don't know what that's about, and he won't tell me. Doesn't matter. It's wrong no matter how you cut it. I've never heard something so depraved in my life. He started screaming at me, something about him and others coming after me. Whatever. I taped up his mouth and poured gasoline all over him. Now he's soaked and shivering — from cold or fear, I don't know. Once upon a time, I would've called the cops. I'd have done this legally. But the cops think I'm dead or a murderer. I don't think they can see what I see. I know I couldn't see it before. I have to follow my instincts on this one.

Fire is the great consumer.

DECLARATIONS

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Peleus/Alleyman222 has been established already (and consequently banned) as a poster who threatened several members of the forum. This fact alone inclines me to leave him on the Danger List of imbued to be avoided. Posts by Shaka74 have further indicated that Peleus' methods harm people at best, and show signs of racial or ethnic animus on Peleus' part at worst. The latter was proved to me beyond any doubt by the racist and inflammatory language Alleyman used to verbally assault Cassie247 a few months ago.

Of course, by virtue of being banned, Alleyman222 cannot defend himself against any accusations made here. Likewise, Shaka74 remains MIA and cannot offer any amplification of his earlier posts. Neither of these situations troubles me much, however. Again, Peleus' own behavior here confirmed him to be exactly what others have portrayed him as: a bigot and a menace.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

>Again, Peleus' behavior here confirmed him to be exactly

>what others have portrayed him as: a bigot and a menace.

Exactly what I've been saying. Sorry, I was unaware of this "Danger List" of yours when I first posted. I'm going off on a limb here to ask, but since the information on that roster offers no physical descriptions of the individuals listed, how are we supposed to know in a face-to-face encounter that we're dealing with a dangerous person?

WAR JOURNAL

ENTRY ONE

I am logging a record of my major discoveries so that the memory losses I experience do not cost me or my significant information. So far, the blackouts have coincided with exercises against targets. Perhaps active hunting them provides some degree of immunity to the mental dampening, or however it is they go unseen. I will continue to monitor this in coming weeks.

Mission Objectives

The situation is simple. The country is occupied by hostile forces. The nature of the invasion itself is irrelevant. The hows and whys of their take-over will not allow resolution of this situation. The nature and capabilities of the targets need to be identified and effective strategies must be put in place.

dried up like raisins. They were fixtures on that porch, sitting there every night after dinner, reading to us. They wouldn't mix it up or lie like our teachers did in Sunday school. Words straight up from the King James. I always appreciated the honesty.

The Old Testament was always the most interesting, and it always spoke to me. God didn't fuck around. If he saw a city full of sinners, he put the town to the question, driving it deep into the Earth until all those against him were dead, gone or converted. He sent plagues into Egypt, never relenting, never letting anyone ask for forgiveness. God knew some would never see the light, even if they said they did. They had no hope of saving themselves, and God did them the greatest mercy He could by destroying them before they sunk any deeper. It was justice. Precise. Clean. Unyielding.

I don't know if I believe in God. I hear voices whispering to me. They talk about justice. About cancer. About words like metastasis, necrosis and tumors. Is this God, his angels or my own conscience telling me the truth that I'm still too naive to understand? Fuck if I know.

What I do know is that the Old Testament God I understand him. His actions are clear. His judgment is righteous. I see the position he was put in. It's hard to be above the moral limits of others. Justifiable, but difficult.

TAKEN ON FAITH

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Forgive me if I seem suspicious, Shopet, but it looks to me as if you're asking for some kind of "most wanted" list of our more unorthodox colleagues. Never mind the endless reasons why such a thing would be a bad idea (though the security of the list is worth mentioning). You probably don't remember the witch-hunt that went on here involving Oracle171. Without going into details or pointing fingers, a lot of that furor struck me as personally motivated. Do you hold some grudge against Peleus that we should know about?

>Forget about the ZOG. Forget about the mud people.

>Forget about The Children of Cain.

I get the white supremacist jargon here about the so-called "Zionist Occupational Government" and their ridiculous belief that nonwhites were formed in some apocryphal manner outside of biblical creation, but who exactly are "The Children of Cain" supposed to be? I could stomach only so much of this stuff before my imbuing, when I thought I was learning about "real" monsters (how little I knew...). I don't remember coming across the phrase in that context.

Finally, speaking of monsters, I vaguely recall something from Shaka74's post about Peleus that suggested this man might have died and "come back." Can you shed any light on that?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: wrath25

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

>ridiculous belief that nonwhites were formed in some

>apocryphal manner outside of biblical creation

Actually, the real nonsense is what scientists would have us believe about "everyone" being descended from Africans. That's no more true than the theory of evolution.

Painful as this is for me to have to point out to you Bookworm, there is nothing "apocryphal" about the separatist creation of the races. It's right there in Genesis 1:26.

Adam, >who was White<, does not appear until Genesis 2:7. Eve, who was born of Adam's body and >therefore White, does not appear until Genesis 2:22.

Obviously, the people God created in Genesis 1:26 are of race other than White. These are the people that God tells to "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28), which is why they outnumber Whites in the world overall and will soon in the U.S. Nevertheless they were created outside Eden, did not partake of fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and therefore fail to understand the difference between the two today. These weak-minded sinners are the favorite fodder of the demons we battle.

Even the Jews recognize this distinction in Creation.

Subject: Racist bullshit by the bucketload

From: memphis68

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Wrath, this stuff is extreme even for you. Did you believe this white-supremacist crap-mythology when we worked together? Think hard, because I don't think you did. Remember that we agreed to disagree on the subject of race, not that I felt the need to put a bullet in you on the spot.

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I just ignored the worst part of what I knew was there in you. Maybe your outlook was always this putrid.

Subject: The Third Sign appears

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: count666372

As predicted by the Prophet Fyodor in his book *Stories Are True*, the parching of the African continent is at hand. The proof is here.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

>Even the Jews recognize this distinction in Creation.

This Jew recognizes that you're full of shit.

You seem to be combining Kabbalistic lore and so-called Christian Identity "teachings" into some excuse for oppressing people of color. Don't drag me onto that bandwagon. If I didn't know better I'd say you've been attending Sunday school with Peleus.

Speaking of whom, Bookworm, yes, I have a grudge against Peleus and his kind. His kind kept the Nazi death camps running. His kind burned the homes of black families in the dead of night. Maybe you think I was using hyperbole when I called him a Nazi. I assure you, I was not.

I was brought into the ranks of judges alongside several of my former classmates during a reunion picnic at a seaside park. Peleus and another man helping him were also there, but they appeared to have already undergone the same change (or a similar one) that my friends and I experienced that day. That terrible day.

What started as a pleasant, sunny outing became literally dark and ominous in just a few minutes. It looked like a storm was rolling in from nowhere. And then the dybbuks were all over the park. They looked like drowned tourists. Most people seemed not to see anything different about them. Then it was chaos around. These things started dragging people into the swan pond. Others were just tearing at my friends, my old teachers, strange. I saw someone floundering in the water and ran to help. It was an old man in the pond, and I was wading in to give him a hand when this voice exploded in my ears. It said, "BEWARE OF NEEDFUL"

THINGS." I looked closely at the man and could see stuff burrowed into his skin where he had been under water. And I knew that he was already dead, some drowned person vomited back to drag others down. I pretended to offer him my hand, and when he got close enough I kicked him hard in the chest. He vanished into the pond and didn't resurface. As I turned, I saw one of my classmates, a black woman, fall near the edge of the pond. One of the things was nearly on top of her. I yelled "Stop!"—and was amazed to see it obey! The dead thing seemed to be straining against some barrier that I couldn't see. I went to help the woman and was shocked to see her trying to stanch blood from what had to be a gunshot wound (I had seen enough of them in the military to know) in her thigh.

I forgot about the monster.

As I looked up, the thing rushed forward again. The "barrier" needed attention from me, I figured out later. At the time, I froze. And then the top of the monster's head just flew apart.

This time I heard the shot and looked in the direction it had come from. Up a tree a fair distance away was the sniper who'd saved my life. I scooped up my classmate and ran toward the tree while the sniper laid down what looked like covering fire. He kept at least three of the dybbuks off us, anyway. I stayed near the foot of that tree for two reasons: It looked like the safest place in sight, and it would have been hard for the sniper to shoot at us there.

Why was I worried about that? I watched this guy shoot. He was no amateur. He was one of the best shots I had ever seen. When my classmate was hit, the thing chasing her was at least ten feet behind her. There was no way the guy in the tree could have been aiming anywhere except at her. He didn't just happen to hit her as he was aiming at the monster—which is what he told me after he came down and before the cops showed up. Then another guy with a Southern accent—this one toting a smoking shotgun—ran up and said, "Come on, May, we gotta go!" They ran toward one of the park exits.

It wasn't long before I started hearing stories about them from my classmates who also changed that afternoon. But that was how I met "Mayhem." Peleus. Satan in shitkicker boots.

REFLECTIONS

One thing sticks in my head—the wind. As I was diving that evening, it felt like there was a yoke blowing. I felt it against my skin. I felt it move my hair around. It was there. It wasn't a hallucination. It felt real. It made me feel good. It made me feel like I'd done the right thing. That killing was justified.

Then I realized that the car windows were up.

So maybe it wasn't real. Maybe it was just another sign of my fall back into insanity. I knew I should seek help, but I also knew that I don't have the strength to do it. Even questioning myself here is harder and harder.

AWARENESS

I found this thing on the Internet. There was a photocopied sign tacked to a telephone pole off of 611, in Jenkintown. There was some kind of... sign written in marker, and a web address. The sign looked like an arrowhead with crude lines. But it was more than that. Somehow I understood it to be about duty. A plan. Who put it up, I wondered. Was it from the same things that whisper in my ear, telling me about the cancer?

Turns out, I'm not alone.

I went to the public library and got onto the net. There it was. A



place full of people who seem to see the same things I do. They asked me for a name. I thought about it and called myself God. We have a lot in common, He and I.

The people on the site confirmed what I've suspected. These things aren't just here in Philly. They're everywhere. Global. Not everyone agrees on what they are, and everyone has an idea about what to do about them. But some of those folks seem to be on the same page. I like that. The notion of solidarity sounds good to me.

The others... their opinions vary and they squabble like a bunch of bitches, but there are more like me. It's good to know that I'm not alone. Together, we have purpose. If I'm not the only one, maybe this has happened with a plan in mind. But whose plan? Others — many others — claim to have been given the power to cleanse the world and cut out the taint. We can be a force. A clean sweep. I'm looking forward to this.

ENTRY TWO

Observations: Zombies are difficult targets to eliminate. Their bodies are capable of withstanding significant amounts of damage. Targets are also capable of being extremely fast, except in the cases of what seem the most primitive types. Suggested strategy: Inflict large amounts of damage as rapidly as possible, preferably at a range. Based on observations so far, these things seem to work largely alone. Terminal damage should therefore be inflicted as quickly as possible, negating their speed advantage.

Notes: Collateral damage is likely to be high. That's acceptable.

Recommendation: Acquisition of firearms — preferably heavy ordnance — is a priority.

STRATEGY

It's starting to make sense. I'm putting things together, one by one. The website gave me some clues. It's like one giant puzzle. Soon I'll have a clear picture of what I'm up against. I'll see how far below the skin the disease goes. I think it's pretty far.

I saw the news again today. Another school shooting. Six teachers killed. Thirteen students dead. Twenty-some-odd wounded. I didn't see any of them behind the scenes, but I know they're there. The world is buried in shit. It's getting in the wounds.

I thought about going back to work. Trying to pull some story over on the cops. Telling them the fire killed my family and I wandered the streets, unable to remember. But I do remember. I can't lie. I can't just pretend. Plus, I have a more important job now. I'm not a "histologic technician" — some bullshit male nurse. I'm the wrong color to be a real doctor, anyhow. I'll let the white man go to college and be a surgeon.

But I think I learned some very important things before. Like tumors. What's a tumor? What does it do? What does it want? It starts with a surge of abnormal tissue growth. It occurs without prediction, without reason. It tends to exhibit a terrible capacity for growth, and this growth is often exemplified in cancer. Cancerous tumors,

malignant and damaging, spread fast. They corrupt nearby cells, creating their own blood vessels to feed themselves. That's the metastasis of the cancer. By the time a patient has spotted a tumor it's usually too late. Cancer is typically in its worst stages at that point, and it'll likely end in the death of the host. Tumors are ultimately selfish, existing for themselves, spreading and swallowing up whatever gets in their way. We don't understand why they behave that way.

Maybe the monsters are like that, too. Like my son. Like the pusher who ruined him. Like Kendra, who was so close to the disease she was marked by it. No, she didn't look like... like the boy did. I didn't get the same feeling. But that doesn't mean she wasn't fucked. I think it was too late for her. It must have been.

I suspect that once they were like us. Human. Now I think they just... wear our skin. Something, somewhere, corrupted them. God. The Devil. I don't know, but something did. And now they're different, grotesque reflections of us. Malignant. Just like cancer. And they grow, behind the scenes, away from what we normally see. Their numbers swell. They create conduits for food and swallow our blood. By the time we've noticed them it's too late. We're food for the cancer and then we die.

After seeing what I have, after reading message after message on the Internet... the cancer truly is in the system. It's pervasive. Everywhere I look, there they are. I can't go to a fucking McDonald's without seeing something like there with me. Cancer. I'm starting to see it.

A good doctor with the right tools can save a body by removing tumors. Some good cells are sacrificed for the good of the whole. In the end, some semblance of life and living can be regained. That pusher was just a small part, a molecule. He turned my son against me. My son turned my wife against me. Both had to be severed from the body to save the good tissue.

I'm not a doctor. I won't flatter myself. But I am the tool, I think. I only hope it isn't too late to save the body.

DISCOVERED

August 25

Sandy came to me today and asked why I accessed the Fredricks file just before he was reported dead. I told him off the top of my head that I was checking on the teams processing the man's order, and I wanted to get in contact with him about some details. Sandy didn't look convinced. I may have a problem on my hands.

SAFE

August 29

Sandy Campbell is dead. He was assaulted and robbed as he walked to his car this morning. He never recovered consciousness and died in hospital three hours later. The evening paper said that the police suspected the crime was drug related.

It wasn't me who killed him.

I burst into tears when they told me in the office. I cried and cried and cried. A few other people were just as badly affected, so no one really thought anything of it.

They let me take the rest of the day off. I rang Gregory, told him what had happened and reassured him that I was okay. He wanted to come home and be with me, but I assured him that I would be alright. I pulled the "big, strong, muscular soldier" line on him and he eventually dropped it.

For a little while I thought I was going to turn myself in. I sat staring at the phone after I spoke to Greg, but every time I reached for it, the image of all those creatures in the city kept coming back to me. Somewhere in my head, I could almost hear a voice saying "THEY MUST DIE." Eventually, I got up, went into the dining room, poured myself a whisky and sat down to write.

I know two things:

These creatures must be destroyed. Every one of them.

I don't want people like Sandy to suffer for it again.

CERTAINTY WITHIN THE UNKNOWN

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/"Peleus"

>who exactly are "The Children of Cain" supposed to be?

Sorry, I meant to reply to this question in my last post. I got distracted by bad memories. "The Children of Cain" is what white supremacists call Jews. When they're not calling them worse things.

As far as Peleus' "death and resurrection," I no longer know what to make of it. Shaka and I argued about that very thing. What I ultimately decided was that what the guy looks like to our way of seeing makes no difference. His soul is still dead to human suffering. The bastard is pure evil.

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/"Peleus"

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

That's quite a story, Shophet.

I'm guessing it must be hard to think that you owe your life to somebody who would take it under different circumstances, just on "principle." How do you account for him not shooting you and the woman while you were both in range? That part doesn't quite add up.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: pilot56

Subject: ALERT

Heads up, people! The federal wires are buzzing over this cop killing in New Orleans. Looks to me like the guy they want to question is one of us, so consider yourselves warned. CNN seems to be covering the incident exhaustively.

Subject: Re: ALERT

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I'm posting a version of the story Pilot refers to. If the suspect in question is who I think he is, I have real trouble believing he could do a thing like this.

>>New Orleans cop is

victim of lynch-killing

Mayor requests investigation

by federal agencies

New Orleans — Authorities said Officer Samuel Culp, a 20-year veteran of the New Orleans Police Department and an African-American, was found Monday shot dead and left hanging from a tree in a remote area along the Mississippi River. Mayor Hank Hallahan said the Justice Department plans to investigate the crime as "an act of racial terrorism."

At a Washington press conference, Attorney General James Crshaw said that FBI investigators dispatched to the crime scene already have leads in Culp's death.

Marie Filmore, an FBI special agent who is heading the case in Louisiana, said that her investigators want to question Steven Williams Pfc., 31, formerly stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. U.S. Army records show Williams, a native of Amarillo, as having been absent without leave for several months. Filmore declined to name Williams as a suspect at this time, but she emphasized that the FBI is "extremely eager" to interview him.

In New Orleans, flags are being flown at half-staff in honor of Culp, who would have been 40 on Friday. Colleagues of the slain officer expressed shock and horror at the news of his death.

Capt. Louis Abend, who runs the Third Precinct and was Culp's supervisor, said, "Sam Culp was one of the anchors of this force. Heaven help whoever's responsible for this despicable act."

Abend also noted that as a precaution members of Culp's family, including his wife and children, have been placed in protective custody.

ENTRY THREE

Observations I can't believe that no one else can see what I can. It's as if my eyes have been opened for the first time. To me, it's clear why I've been changed. The world needs fighters and I've been trained, yet I don't suffer the restrictions that members of the regular army do. I've been given weapons, ones appropriate for the task at hand. Kill a man with a gun. Attack a creature that is beyond understanding with an incomprehensible power. None of this really makes sense, but as long as I keep following orders and do what I'm told, maybe I'll stay sane. The only thing that does seem clear in the absence of explicit orders is that I have an enemy to fight, and I must do so. When I keep targets in my sights, the world makes sense. When I lose track of them, my world falls apart. The voices never let that happen for long.

Subject: Introduction

From: god45

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I'm pleased to see others who have come across the things I have. Monsters. Corruptors. Beasts. They look like us. Some sound like us. They adopt the flesh of our children, our parents, our co-workers. They steal our souls. They eat our bodies. But together, we can destroy them. As one immovable wall, we shall force them to their knees. They will be removed. Extricated. They are a disease and we must not abide such sickness or disorder. We will burn them out. Scald them and send them screaming into the sunlight. There is no sympathy for the devil. If they wear our children's faces, they shall die. If they try to slip under our skin, they shall die. If they rape our women and castrate our men, they shall die. We won't stand by and be passive as they fuck us. Not anymore. Never again.

I look forward to standing with you against them. I will lead us to a better place. A world more pure. Together we'll clean our wounds.

God45

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: builder50

Subject: Re: Introduction

Wow. This guy's a big ol' psycho.



CHAPTER 2:

METHOD TO THE MADNESS

As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

— Proverbs 10:25

WINNING BATTLES

It's easy to find them. I just open my eyes and there they are, all over the god-damn place. Like cockroaches.

I found another one today. I didn't expect to. It was before noon, the day was overcast and I went for a coffee in this dive that looked like an old Airstream. I've been finding coffee to be good if taken in small doses. One cup helps the synapses fire just a little bit quicker. Might be the difference between living and dying. These things can be calculated in fractions of seconds. No more than two cups, though. I don't need to be anxious or jittery.

I went into the place, sat down and I saw her. Thin white girl, yuppie clothes. The kind of kid you might see at a mall, giggling with her empty-headed friends. Her hair was stringy, though, like she hadn't washed in a few days. And then I saw it — the shadow. It passed over her face, a shadow. Inside of her skull, as if tucked under the skin, was another face. Like a puddle of oil with eyes.

The girl ate like a pig. Three plates already lay around her table, all smeared with the remains of pancake syrup and pie filling. She was working on a fourth. Shoveling. It looked like hash browns and ketchup into her

mouth, with her hands. Grabbing fistfuls and cramming them into her mouth. I don't even think she chewed. She made these satisfied little noises... grunts.

There are things out there... their appetites seem to drive them. It's different for each one, as far as I can tell. Some need blood. Others, like this one, are stuck with animal hungers. It disgusted me. I felt nauseated at the sight of it.

I sat down, ordered my coffee, and watched her for about fifteen minutes. She finished her hash browns and ordered a plate of creamed chipped beef. I guess she was going down the menu. I called over to her.

Her head jerked up. She said, "Mind your own business, buddy," and I could hear something like another voice behind her own in the last few words. A man's voice. Deep, thick. Maybe a Southern accent. I wasn't sure.

I told her that I wanted to talk to her. Told her that she looked hungry, that I could take her somewhere she could eat all day. Her eyes went wide, but the thing behind her face narrowed its own to slits. As it stared suspiciously, a piece of potato hung from her chin. It said that it had enough food. That it wanted something

else, something more. Then it asked me what I could offer it.

Anything you want, I said.

She sprung up out of the booth and wiped the food from her face and sat down across from me. She grabbed my hands and a wave of sickness lurched into my stomach. I didn't want to catch anything. I hoped the voices were protecting me. She grinned, her teeth smeared with ketchup.

"You got girls?" she asked. I don't know why, but I nodded. The girl giggled, and I heard the man's voice again. She started pulling me out of the booth.

The thing took the bait. I threw down a fifty on the table, money I'd taken from a creature a few nights before, and hoped that would shut everyone up. We left, and I led the thing toward an alley. We turned the corner and entered a filthy length of broken asphalt tucked between a pawnshop and a take-out Indian place.

"Where are the girls?" it asked. "Are there girls down here?"

I stepped behind a dumpster that stank of rotten curry. I quickly knelt down and waved the thing over. It looked confused, but it knelt down next to me and started freaking out. It told me that it wanted girls, that it may not have a cook but it could still taste. In the middle of the ranting, I put a finger to my lips. The thing tilted its head at me like a confused animal. I told it I had a secret.

Then I pulled out the gun I'd bought earlier and put a bullet between the thing's eyes. The shot rang out loud, the dumpster echoing as her head blew apart.

"Sweet Jesus," I heard from a few feet away. There was a pair of eyes and a salt-and-pepper beard sticking out from a pile of rags and rubbish. Some old homeless man. I explained quickly how sorry I was, how he shouldn't have seen that and how he might be tainted. Then I jammed the gun against his face and pulled the trigger again. There was a pop and a spray of red.

He was so perfectly placed. I wonder if the voices sent him or if I'm just learning to use my surroundings to my advantage. Probably the latter. Either way, I wiped the gun and put it in his hand.

Then I ran, adrenaline coursing through me. I did well.

I regret taking those lives. One girl, taken by something. Some possessor. But how could I save her? I had no other tools than what my mind told me to do. No procedure I know of would remove the stink from her soul. My options were limited. And the homeless man? Poor bastard, the alley was probably the only home he knew. Somewhere along the line I expect he got too close to the monsters and wound up on the street. I had to kill him. Disease spreads fast. I can't have that. I'm here to dam the river, not usher it along. I'm not willing to compromise.

That thing in the girl was my seventh kill. The man, my eighth.

No. That's not entirely true. She was ninth and he was my tenth. It's wrong to neglect my family like that. I'll never forget their sacrifice, or what they taught me.

REPUDIATIONS

Subject: [no subject]

From: soldier91

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I did not kill Samuel Culp. But I am responsible for his death. If any of you had seen the same things I saw, you'd be exactly where I am — on the run. That's nothing new for me. What I can't stand is having my brothers and sisters at arm's length. I believe that I could do what the news is all but saying I did.

This goes back to my friendship with Shaka74. Because he was my friend and because he was a black man, I can tell you from my heart that I would not have done this thing. Not like this, anyhow. I could never dishonor his memory that way.

Before I knew him, Shaka realized that cops — some cops — in his hometown were corrupt things. Block puppets. Slaves to fangs. He didn't understand it all at first, but it was obvious soon enough. He took pictures of them, because that's what he did before. I didn't know about the pictures until a couple months back. I found them while I was looking for ammo in Shaka's storage locker. So there'd be no doubt, he had drawn our sign for a puppet over each bad cop's image. The man was a wizard with a telephoto lens, believe me.

I brought all the photos with me, even though I figure most of these guys would have been taken out long before now. Shaka's been gone for a while.

Turned out every last one was still on the street, manning a desk at some precinct or other.

I started trailing a few of them, not because I had any reason to doubt Shaka's judgment (or the taint I could see hidden in each one I saw), but because I wanted to see proof of these guys' complicity with the enemy without any "enhancement." I still have nightmares about what I saw.

I followed two beat cops named Devereaux and Jones to the same landfill west of town on two different occasions. Both times, they drove into a huge shed where I couldn't follow without being seen. Nothing in these guys' job descriptions made it look like they monitored garbage or commercial trucking or anything else that made sense of them going there. Plus, they went to the place toward the end of their shift, in the dead of night around 0400. I decided to do a stakeout, so I managed to be waiting for them the next time they visited the place. I was ready. I had a good view of the interior from a fire-escape window that had been painted over. I had come prepared and cut a hole in the glass. Inside, down at ground level, there were bays where garbage trucks dumped their loads for sorting and stuff. Jones and Devereaux were near one of those. One of them opened the trunk of their cruiser and pulled out a body.

The dead guy probably looked a lot younger and more innocent than he had in life just by being dead, but he seemed like a kid to me. Like somebody's teenager who ought to be at home asleep instead of being dragged out of the trunk of a car like dirty laundry.

CONFESSIONS

And then they did it. They dropped the boy's body on the ground, on this filthy concrete slab. They just stared at him for a second, then one of the cops spit on his face. I heard one of them laugh. Then one started kicking the corpse. I think it was Devereaux. At first his partner just stood there. Then they were both going at it. I don't know how long I watched. They picked up the body after a while, one at each end, and started playing what looked like tug of war. They were spinning around on the floor of this shed, slipping in garbage, with this dead kid stretched between them — when the boy's head came off. Devereaux, for sure now, fell on his ass with a head clutched in his lap.

Now he's not laughing. He looks pissed. He stands up and lets the head roll into a pile of garbage. Out comes his nightstick and he pounds the boy's head to a pulp.

Since the aliens chose me for their gifts, I've seen a lot. Monsters — the kind I used to laugh at in cheesy movies. Real ones that made my blood run cold. I've seen them. Hell, I've felt them do some awful shit that made me want to puke. But somehow, none of it got to me like watching those two cops tear up that kid's body. I thought about it. How was this worse than some thing crawling inside a dead husband's corpse and going home to "comfort" the grieving widow?

For me it was. For me, the uniforms made it a lot worse.

Yeah, it's true, I went AWOL after all this started, so you'd think if anybody ought to know better about this stuff it should be me. Cops talk about "blue" almost like it's a shade of skin. As if the color of somebody's skin was important when it came to trusting them. Truth is, the uniform comes off. I had to abandon mine. These fuckers should've shed theirs before they chose the way they did. At least they had

a choice! And what did they choose? To give up their sworn duty to serve a higher one, the way I had to? No. They kept the uniforms, which made the uniforms a lie and all of them liars. They kept the uniforms and basically said fuck duty. Which means the law is not their boss. Justice is not their cause. They serve evil, pure and simple.

When I realized that, I looked at this box filled with pictures — not of crooked cops, not of cops who bend the law for the sake of justice, but of evil cops. I decided they all deserved to die.

I hit the road and started looking for hard-core hunters who I thought could kill a monster and not blink. Handed out five photos from the couple dozen I had. Two of the cops whose photos left my hands — Geralt Devereaux and Arnold Jones — pretty much vanished. The other one, the black one, died a very public death, as you already know.

Won't say here or anywhere who it was I gave the pictures of Jones and Devereaux to. I swore that I wouldn't. Besides, their disappearances might be exactly that. For all I know, they're off playing Kick the Corpse in L.A. Or Guam. Or maybe the monsters they work for decided they were getting sloppy and let somebody play soccer with their heads. Who knows?

As for the death of Officer Culp, I also had an agreement there. Clearly, the other party never had any intention of abiding by our deal, so I feel no remorse in breaking it myself. He told me to call him "Clarence," but that obviously wasn't his name. [CENSORED] If I had known what kind of diseased lump of shit was hiding behind those eyes, I'd have put a bullet between them and kept walking. That son of a bitch. I still don't know when he got hold of my lighter, but I'm certain he did so he could frame me. It doesn't matter now. All that matters is, the



man who did this is [CENSORED] That's how I knew he was for real. Whatever his name really is. He's the man who killed that policeman.

I couldn't. Not that way.

"Clarence," if you're reading this, don't expect so much as the courtesy of a "Goodbye asshole" from me. I see you, I kill you.

As for the rest of you, believe what you want. Those who know me, know. I won't be back this way again, so via con Dios to anybody who ever had my back.

We might have enemies all around us, but we still have to be able to look at ourselves in the mirror.

Subject: Soldier's post

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I removed some physical descriptions from Soldier's message. I'm taking no other action against him at this time, given his circumstances. I have warned him, though, against further such indiscretions, which you all know are not allowed here.

GETTING YOUR BEARINGS

God forgive me, but this is all starting to make some sort of sense. My eyes have been opened to the corruption in the world around me. I can go several days at a time without seeing anything, and then I'll see two or three things that are wrong in a day. It's hard to figure out exactly what's off about most of them just by looking at them. The dead ones are an obvious exception. Every one of the others that I've made any effort to investigate has turned out to be involved in something nasty. One even appeared to be, and I can't believe I'm writing this, what I guess you could call a vampire. It only came out at night. It drank blood. But that's nonsense, isn't it? Something from kids' books and old horror films. Maybe I'm just projecting monstrous qualities onto ordinary people to justify what I'm doing.

It doesn't feel like that, though. It feels like I've woken into a nightmare, if that makes sense. I've woken up, and things are worse rather than better. Monsters, the kinds I told the kids didn't exist when they woke up afraid at night, actually walk the streets. However, there doesn't seem to be much doubt in my mind that these things are real - and there should be. It's as if something is constantly in the back of my head, reminding me that they're real, they're dangerous and that they have to be dealt with.

They're not like the stories, though. They don't attack isolated towns or live in castles on mountains - or the ones I've seen haven't. They're here, in Scotland, living amongst us, hiding from us. However they manage to hide, I seem to have broken through it. Maybe it was something to do with these voices I keep hearing. Maybe they're shielding me from the deception somehow. I find that hard to accept, though. The monsters I can see, touch and smell. I find it harder to trust in voices in my head, especially when they sound a lot like my mum.

I suppose they're just my mind trying to come to terms with what I've seen. Some gut instinct in me hates the things the second I see them, a bit like my feelings for the bloody arrogant English. It's deeper, though. Every time I see one, every fiber of my body cries out for me to destroy it, to wipe it from the face of the earth. It takes every ounce of will I have to control the urge.

I have to control it, though. The craving is okay. The desire to act on it is not. I can hear my instructors, the TA now, lecturing me on how an ill-considered assault is worse than no assault at all. Any sort of effective strategy is going to involve planning and surprise attack. Some of these things are significantly stronger and faster than me. Just throwing myself at them is going to get me killed. I've had more success with surprises, like the way I took out those perverts in Glasgow.

GETTING EQUIPPED

I'm working with a combination of traps and explosives of various sorts. I'm glad we did that occupation territory course a year back. It's amazing how easily you can manufacture explosive devices. I'm not talking about the big, showy explosives that the IRA uses to make a point. I'm talking about small, anti-personnel explosives. Most houses can be turned into death traps. You only have to sabotage the light switch near the door so it sparks and then leave the gas on in the kitchen, and you can create an explosion that looks largely accidental. A small explosive device on a timer or remote switch under a door can be really effective, too. All you need is a big enough charge to rupture the tank and ignite the fuel. The explosion and the crash that follows is pretty much guaranteed to kill any occupants, although one or two tough ones have survived the blast.

The main problem with these methods is that it's hard not to kill or injure people in the area. The police and the papers take a lot more interest in an explosion that kills dozens of people, rather than one that kills one or two. Some of the smaller hits I've managed to pull off have actually gone unreported, which strikes me as pretty odd. Still, I should bless my luck and not question it too much.

If I can manage to get hold of some guns (which won't be easy), ranged attacks might be the best way. They minimize but not eliminate collateral damage. Based on how tough some of them are I'm going to need heavy artillery - something that has serious stopping power and that does major tissue damage. Actually, maybe something like a shotgun would be better than standard military weaponry. The spread of shot can do serious harm if fired from a significant distance. There's enough grouse shooting lodges up in the Highlands that I should be able to buy or steal a shotgun.

The ideal thing to do would be to make other people aware of the things and to get them involved. The other problem is that I have no idea how to do that. I've seen people standing next to what looked like a corpse and act as if it was like anybody else on the street. Can I really be the only person that can see these things? At the moment, I don't seem to have any choice but to believe it and work from there.

That makes me very, very scared. How can I, or a woman, take these things on? There are dozens of them that I've seen in the last few weeks, although there are a good number less now. How can I take them on alone? I don't have a choice. They have to go.

There's no way I can start telling people what I've seen. With my history, they'll assume I'm having another incident and drug me to the eyeballs. I'm not ready to go through all that again. Maybe they'd be right to do it. I'm not sure, though. I've had my problems in the past but I've never hallucinated and I'm sure that's not what

worrying here. If there's one thing that my childhood taught me: if you question your sanity, chances are you're pretty sane. It's only when you stop worrying about it that you're in real trouble.

Maybe it's my past that's allowing me to see these things. I've looked at the world through a different mental state before. Maybe that's allowed me to break out of the madness that affects everyone else. For the time being, I'm going to have to work on the assumption that I'm some deep behind enemy lines and concentrate on individual acts rather than major assaults. Perhaps my single greatest piece of luck so far has been the lack of anything that links me to the targets, barring one of the first I took down. I'm not sure what I'd do if I discovered that someone close was one of them.

RESISTANCE

I've all but stopped sleeping. I get a few hours a night. Thing is, I feel fine. I'm awake. Alert. I have plenty of energy. I can't remember when I've felt this alive. People don't need to sleep eight hours. Just another piece of misinformation that's propagated by the creatures. I've seen the things on television, in magazines. I don't trust mass communication. It's all manipulated. It must be.

So I sleep less. I've noticed a lot of these things seem to do their business at night, which means they have an advantage if we're asleep. Asleep both physically and metaphorically. Our eyes are closed in so many ways. But I'm waking up. I'm starting to see the little things they do to misdirect us, to lead us astray. We don't need to sleep that much. We also don't need to eat what they tell us. There's too much food in those bullshit nutrition pyramids. Too much fat. Too many carbohydrates. Stuff to keep our energy low while our asses are glued to fucking chairs. Country of fat people is what we are. But that's what they want. A single human being can live on a third of everything we're expected to — a third of sleep, a third of food, a third of our income. They keep us asleep, they keep us fat and they keep us slaving away during the day at meaningless jobs while they sit in their goddamn glass towers. Telling us lies. Keeping us sedated.

How much of what we "need" is a lie told to us? I'd say most of it. Everything from the vitamins to the cars we're told to drive. Prozac keeps us slow. Cell phones let us scream our secrets into the air so they can hear them. I know people can listen in on phone conversations, so why can't the things? It makes sense. Even the Internet and that precious hunter-net has been created to betray us, if I have it pegged right. It's all mass communication. A web of lies.

But that's not all. They hem us in with every moral fence they can build. The Church tells us to stay in our places, to remain walled up behind bricks of morality. The government keeps us under its thumb, making sure we don't get too

uppity, too fucking aware for their good. They certainly wouldn't want us to stop paying them taxes, would they? TV makes us feel better about ourselves, so we turn our eyes away from the atrocities that go on around us. Monsters are thick in all these places. I've seen priests who were wrong. Politicians who felt filthy. Nobody in power can be trusted.

Even if the monsters aren't pulling all the strings, we can't afford to be slow. To be held down. We don't have time for ethical boundaries or forced virtue. To eat food that makes us sick, to take pills that keep us feeble.

We have to be better. We hear messages and have gifts that other people will never have. We can't afford to stay asleep. Assume nothing. Expect everything to be false. Scrutinize the tiniest command that society makes. They want us to go to their Major League Baseball games and eat their hormone-riddled hot dogs and enjoy their mindless entertainment? We're supposed to flick on the TV and drool on ourselves until we fall asleep? No. We won't. By ignoring their demands, we can sneak in under the radar. They'll never see us coming.

ESTABLISHING BASE CAMP

TRANSCRIPT FOUR

Observations: Acquisition of a safe house complete. I have found an abandoned bathhouse in the Cairngorms that I've made sufficiently dry and secure to store weapons and equipment. It will function for limited periods as a hiding place in case I'm ever identified. The area is remote, generally only visited by hill walkers. I'll be discreet and if anyone stumbles across me, they can be disposed of easily. There are several treacherous ravines in the area where an unwary hiker could fall to their death.

My memory lapses are beginning to become a serious problem. I suspect some sort of hostile influence is at work. It's possible that the process that protects me from the influence of the targets is in some way faulty. However, bar the time loss involved, it does not seem to be impeding my effectiveness. Seeking aid would be, I suspect, inadvisable. Intense scrutiny of my mental health at the moment would be counter-productive, as civilians are unlikely to understand my current state of mind. The effect of the targets on the human mind seems to actually suppress any evidence of the targets' existence. Possible allies who I have approached have dismissed my stories out of hand.

DISPOSAL DUTY

Spray painted symbols in the cities I have visited have proved useful in locating and assessing targets. I now have three confirmed kills as a result of such "tagging." The use of the "tags" certainly seems to indicate that there are others like me who are aware of the occupation force and are seeking to liberate us. I am wary of making contact due to the risk to my own security. Still, I've opened a dialogue with

a few of them, using the symbols to convey my message. I am considering meeting with some as and when my need for assistance warrants it.

So far, direct assault and ambush using knives and short-range firearms has proven effective. I appear to be able to enhance the damage of close combat weapons through concentrating my anger. This in itself seems to create an element of surprise that I can exploit. Rapid, point blank fire can also have a useful incapacitating effect, allowing use of hand to hand on a prone target.

From my brief analysis of the remains of some targets, they seem to be little more than what they appear: mobile corpses. Assuming that these creatures are dead in the conventional sense, their lack of functioning organs would explain the lack of results from chest shots. The only shots that seem to cause significant damage at range are to the head, which are difficult to pull off in all but perfect conditions. Targets have shown an ability to recover rapidly from any form of weapons fire, suggesting that one or two sniper-style shots would not be an effective termination method. However, this assumes using standard ammunition. Grenades or dum-dum bullets may prove more effective if I can obtain them.

Recommendations: Obtain an array of ammunition and test on the enemy from range. Try to establish a second safe house in the city.

Immediate goals: I found a leaflet this morning, calling for a meeting of those who wish to "throw off London's color." While at first glance it appeared to be little more than radical Scottish Nationalist propaganda, it mentioned a "rising" of "ancestors" on Bannockburn Field, near Stirling. I'll attend in the guise of an SNP supporter to ascertain if there are any targets involved.

COVERING TRACKS

I've been messy. Impetuous. I have to focus on pragmatism, on rational methods. That possessor I killed. I did it during the day, I left bodies. Being caught wouldn't be productive. I can't attract attention. So, I've begun my search for new information. I'm learning things I never expected to need. And I'm learning them quicker, more efficiently, than I've learned anything in my life. It's all making me better, stronger. Smarter than I ever imagined.

Nitroglycerin, for instance. Simple to make. Some weedkiller, a few car batteries, glycerin soap. Chlorine gas is just bleach and ammonia. I've learned how to make my own hollow-point bullets. Explosives out of light bulbs and mailboxes. Napalm from Styrofoam and unleaded gas. I feel like a sponge, like my brain is lining all this information up and following it like one big fucking recipe. I'm getting information in the mail on how to make my own plastique. After that, a guy says he has plans for a small tactical atomic explosive. It seems drastic, but I'm beginning to understand the need for severity.

I've also found a better way to dispose the bodies. Corpses are inevitable. Most monster, but sometimes a civilian gets in there caught in a blast or taken out by a bullet. I don't like to leave them behind, so I bring them home. They're hard to dispose of, and weight them down in rivers or septic tanks involves many variables. Hiding a body means a body can be found. I can't have that, especially if the death appears unnatural. The bodies need to be destroyed, which is where the acid comes in.

Hydrofluoric acid. Bats through fuckin' anything. It attacks the calcium in bones after dissolving flesh. It's quick and leaves little more than a sludge behind. That and any jewelry, fillings, pacemakers or whatever. I have to be careful not to get any on myself, though. Remember to get some calcium glucomate to stop the burns just in case. Caution and preparation are the key.

EXCURSIONS

Subject: Re: The Third Sign appears

From: dazidat155

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

>As predicted by the Prophet Fyodor in his book *Stories Are True*,

Interesting. This interpretation of the title seems much closer to the way I read it, as opposed to the unwieldy English transliteration, "Apocrypha." Except that I would have rendered it as "All truth is fiction."

Very interesting indeed.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: cassie247

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

God's Gift to the White Race - in /his/ twisted little mind, that is - was here at my coffeehouse a while back. I thought he was okay at first. It was obvious that he was one of us. On a napkin, he drew a sign that meant something like "I share in the struggle" and left it in front of him on his table for me to see. I asked him to come back after closing. When we got to talk, he came on like a Theorist at first, but eventually something about what he was saying bothered me. I wanted to rally a bunch of us - people who had been changed that is - and asked if he could use the coffeehouse as a gathering place. I asked him how he was planning to pull it off, a rally since he was the first of us I had seen in the place in a few weeks. He said not to worry, that he knew a trick to bring in droves of us. That got me curious, so I agreed. When he made a mistake that was.

A few nights later, I closed early and he showed up with a can of spray paint. He made a huge sign on the back wall and I realized that others would be drawn to the shop by the sign itself. I could feel the pull of it even when I had my back turned. I was actually getting a little excited about the whole thing. People started showing up. A few were nervous at first, but had to be calmed down. At one point, I remember "Clarion" - that's how he was introducing himself that night - stood by the front window talking under his breath. He said something like, "Use your eyes people. Come on, we won't bite." And outside, like they had heard him, three people got out of a car parked up the street and came toward the shop! The

and guy from the car told "Clarion" that they had been worried about it being a trap, but they all decided at the same time to "check him out" when he stood by the window, so they had seen he was okay.

The evening went on like this, and everything was fine - a little creepy but still fine - until one of my old professors showed up. She's a black woman from the Caribbean, and she's always been one of my favorites, but she's not awakened. She thought we were open for business and was coming inside when "Clarion" says to her, "Hang on, Aunt Jemima. Where you think you're going?" I was so ashamed I just stood there for a second with my mouth hanging open! I told shithead, "You can't talk to her that way! This woman is a friend of mine!" He muttered something that I didn't hear, and then - as if he owned the place - said, "You know she doesn't 'belong' here, so take care of it."

I tried to grab him as he walked toward the back, but he sidestepped me. At the same time, I knew he was right. I couldn't let her stay. I was imagining what she must think! Nothing came to mind that might defuse what that asshole had just said. She asked me what was going on. All I could think to do was apologize and tell her I'd explain it all tomorrow. She said, "Don't bother, I think I understand," and left.

I saw two local guys that I had worked well with in the past, so I collared them and asked if they would help me get this insane redneck out of the coffeehouse before something (really) awful happened. That's when Clarion climbed onto a table and started preaching like some recruiter for the Hitler Youth! I don't remember a lot of details of what he said, but I do remember him talking about "the mask people" - and then - this is hard to write.

Then, I remember how he started to make sense.

He talked a while longer, then the crowd, nearly a dozen of us, headed out the door. We went in cars to some rail yard and found a couple of others - dead ones, I think - hiding on a freight train. I kept thinking /no eyes how do they with no eyes/. They tried to get away, and that made me even angrier. We dragged them out and cut them apart on the ground. Then we burned the bodies. It all felt so right.

The next day I was too ashamed to get out of bed. I wondered what people would think about the coffeehouse being closed, but I didn't wonder too long. After lunchtime, I went to campus to speak to my professor friend, but she wasn't in. When I went past the coffeehouse to check on it, "Clarion" walked up. He said we had all done great work the night before. He handed me a bundle of pamphlets and said I should put them out at the coffeehouse. I just threw the pamphlets at him, hard enough to break the bundle open. He looked really surprised at first, but then he smiled. I hadn't seen him smile before. It was really frightening. I'm not exaggerating. Maybe it was his eyes, but he had the cruelest smile I've ever seen. He didn't say a word after that. He just turned and walked away. I haven't seen him since. I wish I could say I hadn't heard from him, but there was that post from Alleyman222 where he called me some pretty terrible things. It was obvious from what he wrote that he was Clarion, and I remembered one post where Alleyman actually signed as "Peleus."

I was so mad that last time I saw him. I gathered up his pamphlets so they wouldn't be scattered near the coffee-

house and burned them all. At least, I thought I had till I read Shophet's posts. Then I realized I had been seeing one folded inside-out at the coffeehouse, so it didn't look like all the others. I have it in my hand right now. Somebody let me know what to do with it. I really don't want it.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

> I have it in my hand right now.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Subject: Re: ALERT

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

There's news out of New Orleans.

>>FBI: Officer's death may be part of broader conspiracy

New Orleans — An FBI investigation into the death of NOPD Officer Samuel Culp may be broadening its scope to look into the disappearances of two other members of the same force. Bureau agents in Louisiana said that Officers Gerald Devereaux and Arnold Jones, partners at the 10th Precinct, may have been missing for as long as three weeks.

According to 10th Precinct Capt. Roderick Messner, the officers had been disciplined on several occasions during the last five years for extended absences, among other infractions. Messner said his office is trying to determine whether any of those absences by the two officers had ever been simultaneous or had reached such a length as this current one.

New Orleans Mayor Hank Hallahan, in a written statement, expressed dismay at what he called police laxness "in the midst of the dire events confronting the city." The statement goes on to demand "full departmental accounting for this lapse in responsibility for its personnel and for the chain of police command."

FBI Special Agent Marie Filmore, who is in charge of the Culp investigation, said that this revelation casts new light on his killing earlier this week. "If Officer Culp's death is part of a pattern of activity directed against the police of this city, this investigation will have to go back to square one." Culp, an African-American member of the NOPD for 20 years, was found shot and hanged Monday along the Mississippi River in what local officials have dubbed "an act of racial terrorism."

LEAVING YOUR MARK

OCTOBER 3

I drew a symbol here the last time I wrote down my feelings. I think that's a good thing. The symbol, to me, means something like "war leader" or "strategist." I hope there's a chance, if I fall to the things, that someone else like me will find this and learn from my experiences. It's a faint hope, but there must be a chance. I don't know where I learned about the symbol, but once I'd drawn it, I simply realized that there were a lot more of them. I suppose that maybe there's some outside force protecting me. Where else would these symbols come from? Once or twice, they've appeared on a wall while my back was turned. The second I looked around, there it was, warning me of danger or encouraging me to action. Something is watching over me. I just hope it's not one of the monsters.

Maybe it's a sign of insanity and I'm just fooling myself that this is real. God, I hope that's not true. I've gone too far to be able to learn that the people I've killed were harmless. I have to keep believing this is real. I won't be able to live with myself if it isn't.

I've started carrying a can of spray paint. Somehow I've woken up to these symbols and now I can't seem to stop drawing them. I can use combinations of them to mark out the direction of an enemy, its relative strength and a warning. I can't help feeling that these symbols mean that there are others like me. There must be. What use would they be if they were just for me? Sure I can use them to mark targets for later, but I could pretty much do that as well with a notebook. So, I'm hoping that someone will spot them and contact me. I've used my daughter's old badge-making kit to make a small sign for my coat. I've seen the same symbol that I've drawn in here. It seems to sum me up.

I've also sprayed the front of our house with the symbol. Greg's been moaning about hoodlums and vandals ever since, but if I know him at all, it'll be months before he gets around to cleaning it off. The big problem is how long I can hide what I do from him and the kids. I'm "working" later and later, often not coming in till the wee hours. At least I'm not coming in bruised and battered like I was at first. There was only so long I could have put that down to bad squash games, an accident at the gym or bruises from TA weekends.

The other question is how long I want to stay with them. I love them, but this has to take priority. Until I can find others to work for me, I'm alone. I'm not sure I can afford the liberties that my family brings me. Hell, I don't want them to know what I'm becoming. I staid - and not just stuff I can't afford. The simplest way to get hold of things you don't want traced back to you - explosives, poisons, parts to make bombs - is theft. Breaking the law isn't exactly ideal, but the circumstances warrant it.

At some point, I'm afraid I'm going to have to make a clean break - from home and the job. I ought to make preparations, but it's so easy to get distracted by one of the things. The urge to deal with it is just too strong to deny, even if I can divert the compulsion into a planned attack rather than just lashing out.

Still, I can't give up Greg and the kids just yet. I fought so long and hard to have a normal life to have it taken away from me again.

LOSING THE WAR

Attacking the monsters one-on-one is becoming less and less productive. Not to mention dangerous. They never stop. By the time you've destroyed one, a dozen more are made somewhere else. It's too personal. They see your face. If you don't kill them, I don't doubt that they can scan your face and transmit it to others. Plus, I'm afraid they can read our minds - so don't leave witnesses behind. I think their powers are way beyond the scope of what we can imagine, so don't assume anything. That brings me to my next point. If you're caught in the act, you're connected with a body. It looks like murder - the worst possible

crime to the rest of the world. Put down something that looks inhuman now and chances are there'll be a normal-looking body left behind later. The police don't approve.

The destruction of our oppressors has to be wholesale. Genocide. It's useless to put one foot on the ground when you can wipe out a legion of motherfuckers. Kill a flock with a single poisoned stone.

I know. I've done it.

There was a chancellor on the board of directors at my old hospital. I won't name him here. He was white, with a lot of white friends and a bank's worth of white money. He had a lot of influence. His fat fingers were in the pockets of a thousand dirty causes. He was a thing. I can't say what. He fed on blood at the hospital. He ate diseased cultures from petri dishes like they were tins of fucking caviar. He was able to be out during the day. I don't know what kind of thing he was, but as time passes I'm beginning to think it's useless to differentiate between them. Why bother? They're corrupt. They're wrong. Black marks on our world. Whatever they are - spirit, demon, beast - they're our captors. They have to die.

So this fat bastard suddenly found himself dead. One minute he was in the recovery ward, dipping his tongue in some teenage girl's stab wound, the next he was in his car, ready to head home for the evening. Thick and happy. I was in the back seat with a syringe filled with nothing. I plunged it into his neck. Instant stroke. How sad.

The lesson I learned came quickly. As always I looked for the obituary, since it was something of a curiosity to see how they'd describe the death (if I let them find the body). This time something else caught my attention. The funeral announcement. A big production with charity flowers and the attendance of other white men with their nasty, white blood money.

Bad men, I figured, know other bad men. Sometimes worse men.

This fat fuck was going to draw a big crowd. I knew of some of his acquaintances. They were monsters just like him. And there had to be more. All rich. Obese with influence. It would be impolite for them to not show at the funeral which was, incidentally, at night. A night funeral announced three days in advance. Interesting. Plenty of time to prepare.

I was there, three days later. A few minutes before eight o'clock, I watched suited men and somber women filter through the main doors of the church. A tall, spired, Catholic thing. My mix-ticked off numbers. By final count, one hundred and fifty attendees entered, and that doesn't include the ones who went in early.

I saw at least twenty corrupters.

Fifteen minutes later, the explosives planted under seven of the pews went up. Stained glass rained outward. The next day's paper said

everyone died. Were there women and children in there? Yes. I regret their loss. I even cried about it last night. But their loss was not my responsibility. They were lost to us the moment they bought the lies that were sold to them. They became enemies, even if they didn't realize it, the second they were duped into standing in the darkness. It saddens me, but necessity is the queen of us all, and now twenty or more of the monsters have been wiped from the earth. I feel like I may have saved a limb, even if it needed to be cut off.

RELATIONS

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: cassie247

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

I'm wishing now that I had looked over this pamphlet sooner. I think it explains some things. Here's what's on it.

It's printed in black ink on white paper and folded in three. Shophet is right: When it's folded correctly, the front page is the one that says, "MASK PEOPLE RULE YOUR LIFE." The back page asks if you know "who the mask people are." If you open it, the middle flap is between the two pages that tell how shithead got to be awakened. (Shophet, you mentioned past military service; you also described shithead as being a great sniper. I believe a lot of what the Heralds look for in recruits is ability, with emphasis on diversity of skills to make a better-rounded army. What do you think?) Before you open the middle flap, what you see is: **YOU HAVE A DUTY AS A PATROTIC EUROPEAN AMERICAN TO HELP SAVE THIS NATION FROM IT'S UNSEEN FOES. DON'T SHIRK!**

On the other side of the flap is a list.

1. The time for waiting is over! War time is here! Leaders who urge patience are cowards. Replace them!
2. Gather whatever weapons you can whenever you can. The Mask People can have their puppets put gun control law in place **AT ANY TIME!**
3. Never pass up the chance to kill two birds with one stone. Mask People can be found feeding off mud people or replacing them with copies of themselves. If possible, destroy them all at once.
4. Mud people make good bait for mask people. Ghettos make good bonfires. Don't waste resources.
5. Do not be afraid to use trickery and sacrifice on our foes who wear white-face! Liberal traitors to the White Race work just fine as cannon fodder, suicide bombers or distractions.
6. Once the mud people are wiped out, we can use the queers and the children of Cain against whatever mask people still survive. After the Final Battle, we can establish camps to convert any liberal traitors over to the right way of thinking. Then Paradise will reign for a thousand years.

GOD BLESS THE U.W.S. of A.!

That's all of it in all its ugly, Fascist glory. Shophet is correct to label this guy a Nazi. I'm guessing that the last line means "the United White States of America."

It terrifies me to think of shithead as being anything like us.

Subject: [no subject]

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: count666372



SMALL-UNIT TACTICS

ENTRY FOUR

Transcription of recorded field notes:

Preliminary surveillance shows no signs of target activity at Bannockburn Field, although there is something odd about one of the monuments that bears further investigation. The field itself is unremarkable, with only a tourist center and a set of statues marking the battle fought here by Robert the Bruce and his men. The site saw a lot of death. Ends.

Further investigation of the monument reveals what appears to be semi-visible human figures in and around the site. They are clearly targets, but they seem unaware of my ability to see them. Unsure of how to neutralize intangible targets. Further observation needed. Ends.

A small group of people has gathered as we approach midnight. There are maybe three dozen here, none of them visibly targets. However, one guy in the crowd has one of the tags sewn onto his rucksack. It's meaning isn't clear to me, but it seems to represent "observer" or "watcher" in some way. I intend to approach him. Ends.

There are four others like me present. The watcher, who calls himself Malcolm, says he's just here to find out what's going on. The others seem to defer to him most of the time, but one called Ralph seems uneasy with just watching. None of them seems to understand how wrong the targets are. Ends.

Five targets approaching. Apparently they are mostly the walking corpses I have seen before. One seems normal but feels wrong. Ends.

RALLYING THE TROOPS

Post-Battle Analysis: I must get as much of this down on paper as I can in case I forget again. When the targets appeared, I gestured to Malcolm. He asked where, so I showed him. At that moment, I heard a couple of the others suck in their breath, just as I felt a brief sense of disorientation. Malcolm looked at me with slight puzzlement. "Did you do that?" he asked. Apparently, the others need to concentrate to see the targets, unlike me. It seems I was able to make them see the targets just by being present.

We moved closer together, with the others slipping in behind me quickly and quietly. I was impressed. They had little to no combat experience, yet functioned with remarkable efficiency. Malcolm strolled away from the group and approached the targets. They appeared to not notice him once he stopped moving.

The lead target, the one that didn't look dead, started speaking to the crowd. At first he was spouting the normal anti-English stuff that we hear a lot of from the nationalists. I listened. I'd have agreed with him if I didn't know he was a target. The longer he went on, the harder it became to just stand there and not do anything about him.

Then one of the others yelled behind me. I turned to see translucent things from the

monument leaping out and into members of the crowd. Within moments, those people became wrong. I drew my gun, but paused when I heard Malcolm speak. "What do you really want?" he asked the lead target. Just for a moment, the hidden thing looked as if it was going to answer. Then it waved its hand vaguely at Malcolm. "Get rid of it," the thing said, and the wrong people came forward.

I didn't have a choice. I cut loose, calling for the others to support me. The crowd was screaming. The others just stood around looking confused. That made me angry. I yelled at them again and again as I fired. I felt a wave of warmth rush through me. The others finally got their wits about them and started attacking. Even Malcolm flung himself at one of the nearest off people.

I tried to stop as many of the poisoned people from getting away as I could. The crowd was in the way and some of the things tried to hide in the chaos. I'm pretty sure I got them all, with some incidental damage.

Three of us died. That's approximately a two-to-one kill rate. Not bad.

SETTING EXAMPLES

Been thinking about the Bible again.

Part of me thinks the whole thing is mythological bullshit. A big, glorified fairy tale written by white men in foreign countries that was meant to keep the peasants in line. To encircle us with moral rules. To make sure we don't stray from their way of doing things.

But there's something to it. Something that makes sense in there. Things I can relate to. There are monsters in that book. Demons. Possessors. Rome is corrupt. Egypt is corrupt. Human creatures oppress the righteous. That all sounds pretty fucking familiar.

And the book has some good lessons, too. Stuff I can use. Words that make sense in this disorderly place. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death. Plain and simple. You sin, you go against the grain of the natural order. If you go against the natural order, you die. You aren't warned. You don't get to put in community service to wipe the slate clean. Apologies won't help. The only thing that puts things right again is straight-up fucking death.

Mark tells us that if our foot offends us we cut it off. It's better to have one good foot than to have to limp into Hell. If your limb is gangrenous or cancerous or just plain poison we remove it. It's not an act of cruelty. There's nothing mean or malicious about it. There's no emotional investment. You divest yourself of all that, and you do what needs to be done. It's so simple, why can't anyone see the logic? I'm willing. Even if I have to do it alone.

Most don't — or won't — do what I do. Few of us deal with our corrupters as anything more than a violent game of cops and robbers. It's playground shit, really. Especially the ones who want to save everybody. You can't "save" cancer. You can change it. Its motivations are simple. Malignant

can't be rehabilitated. Cancer needs to be burned out. Or cut out. Or irradiated into nonexistence. Destruction is the only way.

Few comprehend this. All the others seem to have an agenda of their own, and their actions disappoint me.

But there are a few star pupils in the class.

Someone is out there, doing some very serious work. Getting dirty. Crawling through the trenches, unafraid of the consequence. So many of our kind are worried about consequences. What will the police say? What if I get hurt? Will my mortal soul be damned? Wastes of fucking skin and breath.

If your arm is riddled with tumors — I mean tumors with the fucking things — what do you do? Cutting it off stops the disease from getting to your lungs or your brain, isn't that the only choice? Do you whine, pining away for your

precious arm, something that's already eaten by poison? What's the point? Stop complaining. Cut it off and move on. We all need to adopt this attitude. I worry that too many of us aren't prepared to do what's necessary. They won't cut out the badness when it needs to be done most. Petulant children. Afraid of commitment.

But as I said, there's someone out there who isn't like that.

I don't know who he is, but he burned down a housing project. Lit the fire on one side and opened fire from across the street as everyone struggled to get out. Sniping. I don't know how many of them he killed, but rumor has it that there was a high number in there. I know how much they hate fire. It was a windy night, too, from what I'm told. Good for him. Wind fans the flames.

* I don't know who he is. He's messy. Hasty, for sure. But God approves.



CHAPTER 3:

FRIENDLY FIRE

Thou shalt not kill.
— Exodus 20:13

HARD KNOCKS

The world needs a tutorial.

Today's lesson: necessity.

I'll explain, because whoever might be listening to this won't have visual aids. I'm standing here taping in a pool of blood. It's everywhere. We're in a dingy studio apartment overlooking an elementary school in the city. The room smells of sweat. There's a man hanging from a steam pipe at the ceiling, his arms tied above him with piano wire. He's dead. His throat has been cut. If I had to count the number of stab wounds in his chest, neck and thighs, I'd guess thirty-five. Maybe forty.

There's another man here with me. He's still alive. He's lying huddled on the floor. He's crying. That's a good thing. Tears help to purge. They remove taint, cowardice, hesitation — it's kind of a baptism. It's not easy to overcome the hurdles, but this man has done it. He'll understand soon.

The dead man was poison. A self-made serpent in human skin. He was very much alive. Not dead, like some, but still a corrupter of the worst kind. I don't know what got to him, what gave him his powers.

He was a dealer. Selling hallucinogens at the school. Trying to make children's minds malleable, like a gold nugget hammered thin. Easier to manipulate that way. We can't have that. Cancer shouldn't eat the young.

So I took him and brought him here. He was difficult. He had strange abilities. Time didn't feel right with him, like it was shifting all around me. I felt sluggish, sick, confused. I tore open my eyes and moved past that. I cut his hamstrings and ended his lame struggle.

The man on the floor is one of us. His name is Daley. Richard Daley. Some rehabilitative counselor at one of the inner-city drug clinics. I've watched him work. He's a talker. He likes to sit down with the monsters, have a cup of tea. Share backrubs. Whatever. Seems to want to work out everyone's fucking problems. No matter the cost, no matter what came before. You can't "fix" a blood-drinking serial rapist, just like you can't plug a bullet hole with a cotton swab, or end all of the world's problems by kneeling next to your bed and saying a little prayer. Some things are impossible to undo.

Mr. Daley didn't seem to get it.

He talks to possessors, gets them to exit their hosts. I'll admit that he had his successes. Last week, he talked one out of a young girl. Some shimmering black thing with hollow eyes. He convinced it to get out. But residue was left behind. Somehow, the phantom corrupter left an imprint on her psyche. That night, she smothered her baby brother. He was eleven months old.

The thing went on to possess again. I killed it.

With all that in mind, I opted to teach Mr. Daley a lesson. Isn't that right, Richard?

Divisions

Subject: An outsider's view

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Lest anyone worry, let me explain that by "outsider" I mean an imbued who lacks a computer and who has never had access to the list until now. He and I met not long ago, and as we talked recently I realized that he shares a past with Shophet, about whom he has opinions of his own. In the interests of balance, here is what he has to say.

From Mister R.

As long as we're making it our business to notice the blood on each other's hands, I want to get something off my chest about "Shophet."

Actually, make that several things.

I was there that "awful day," too. I wasn't one of your classmates, but I got to see enough of them that I began to feel just like one of the family. Funny, I thought you felt that way about me, too. You stuck your neck out — more than once — to save my ass.

So why did you send me and the woman I love on a suicide mission?

If you ask me, I think the whole thing with Peleus has left you a few bricks shy of a load. Hell, don't ask. You need to hear this. You've been playing judge, jury and one-man firing squad too long. You have real people around you. You don't get to decide matters of life and death for them.

Remember Peleus' little buddy? Don't get me wrong, the guy was bad news. We know he helped torch at least one high rise full of people. Full of families. And we'll never know how many gay guys had their heads cracked open by that bastard. But did you have to leave his wife holding the bag after you killed him? And don't try to bullshit me because I know you pulled the trigger. "He's co-hosted his last molotov cocktail party." Those were your exact words.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

Obviously, R., you're very angry. I'm just confused. Grateful to know that you're alive (both of you?), but confused. For months now, I figured the two of you died in that explosion in East St. Louis at the bus station! Please believe me when I say that I sent you guys there to collect our gear for the road — and nothing else. I still don't even know for sure what happened that day! Maybe you could clue me in?

EXAMPLES

Every lesson requires examples of the right and wrong choices. Illustration provides enlightenment. Here are some examples of... others I've seen. Others I've come across. Some I worked with, briefly. Failures, in the end, but notable for the lessons they teach.

A parable-reading old man, physically and mentally able, is left to rot in an old folk's home by an uncaring family. Surrounded by the pain and decay of so many liver-spotted castoffs, he makes it his mission to deliver communion to those who can't make it to church. He's a self-made eucharistic minister. One night, he wakes to find a message on the wall, written in fly-specked shit. The message reads "ALL SHARE PAIN." The words disappear. Unable to sleep, he stumbles out to the TV room and past room 43. Inside, a nurse closes

the eyes of an old woman, and the man can see — for the first time — what's really happening. The nurse is different. Some might call her wrong. He believes he knows what she's doing. Bringing mercy to the sick, the diseased. The old woman is dead. The nurse and the man share a moment, later a cup of coffee, and that's that.

The nurse was a monster. The newspapers called her a serial killer, an "angel of mercy" murderer. She entered and exited hospitals, clinics and nursing homes, putting several to death. It's not mercy. It's murder. After meeting with the old man, she visited the children's cancer ward at Queens Medical Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. She put seven children to "sleep." Children who could have recovered.

The old man was weak. Ruled by emotions. His feelings confused him, allowed him to misread the message that the voices gave to him. Because of that, because of his cowardice and misplaced morals, children died. The manipulator is still out there.

A housewife comes home one night after playing cards with the girls on the block to discover that her three children — all daughters — are dead. They have been exsanguinated and posed together in a pornographic display at the kitchen table. None of the children is older than twelve. The perpetrator, some broken-minded leech, is still in the house. The woman's awareness explodes, and she destroys the thing by beating it to a pulp with a halogen lamp. It catches fire. She's chosen, the voices chattering in her ears. She makes it her personal crusade to go after these nightmares.

Her devotion is admirable. Her desire to excise the monsters, snipping them away like flowers, is worthy. Three months later she's killed. She goes alone into an old house out in Bucks County, finds a nest of possessors and is made to chew open her own wrists.

A fire in your belly is sure to burn you from the inside out. Like the old man, emotion pushed her to an irrational level. That's helps nobody.

Last one: A tenement is overflowing with the festering waste of corrupted things. Broken, sick beasts crowd the place, feeding off the impoverished, the angry and the infirm. It's in the black part of town. The ghetto. The place probably hasn't seen a white face in months, the last one likely being a cop or fireman.

One man sees this, notes the coincidence between the monsters, the economic state and the color of people's skin, and draws some conclusions. He starts a fire. A big fire. Those who don't burn try to get out. He waits across the street with a rifle. The death toll is immense. Impressive.

He's so close to doing things right. Things you or the other weak-kneed wouldn't do. This man isn't willing to throw away his gifts. He uses them to the teeth, understanding that the nature of a righteous angel isn't one of clemency or benevolence, but of fire and judgment. Pain.

Still, he's irresponsible. He leaves a trail. He's one of the good guys, but his emotions weigh



him down, force him into a dangerous and very public course. He's unable to see the forest for the trees, and I'm afraid that his lack of caution will get a good man caught, killed or worse. I'm going after him, I think. I believe he can learn from me.

If there's one thing you should take away from this, Richard, it's that there's always room for improvement.

CLARIFICATION

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: Mister R.

What happened that day? The place turned into a war zone. One minute it's a bus station, the next it's full of dead things and one huge, pissed-off wolf-man. Then fire. Then the building blows up.

We were a block away by then. We went back to the motel, but you had already checked out and the car was gone. There was no telling where you were, and we got worried about sticking around. People saw us haul ass out of the station before it blew!

Since you asked, we're both fine. But don't change the subject. I asked a stack of questions that you didn't answer. You're good at that, but I know your tricks.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shopet125

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

Before we play 20 questions, I want to let you know that while you two were skipping town, I was in the waiting room at Jiffy Lube. Remember, the car needed an oil change? I saw the news about the explosion on TV. Twenty minutes

later, I was crossing, and then you told me, knowing what had happened to my brother. You didn't tell me all that stuff so I'd go give the guy a medal. You told me because you were afraid your girlfriend's gal-pal was falling in with a bad crowd. Which is exactly what they were, all three of them. As you recall, the thanks our friend got for associating with them was Peleus trying to turn her into roadkill. By all rights, he should have died when he tried to take her out. But he survived the crash.

>But did you have to leave his wife holding the bag after you killed him?

I did no such thing. Yes, I went to his home with the intention of killing him. I could have killed the wife, too, and possibly should have. She knew what her other half was doing in his spare time — the bashing, I mean, not the hunting part. I think it turned her on. But here's the thing: I sent her away. And you must not be keeping up with the newspaper the way you used to, because the prosecutor's office dropped all charges against her recently. Because of evidence that I sent to them.

>So why did you send me and the woman I love on a suicide mission?

What I've written here ought to make it clear that the whole East St. Louis episode was one cluster fuck after another. Our mistake was in not having a fallback position outside of town. It wasn't as if we could call each other's folks and ask, "Where is he these days?" Besides, don't you think "suicide mission" is a little dramatic? Anything that you're around to describe in hindsight as a "suicide mission" obviously wasn't. It should've just been a quick trip to pick up some gear. I'm sorry it turned into something else, and I'm sorry it split us up.

Mostly, though, I'm just glad you're both alive.

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

>>I asked a stack of questions that you didn't answer. You're good at that [snip]

I don't think you do it on purpose, Shophet, but I had noticed the same thing. Fryodor had that same kind of single mindedness sometimes. Anyway, I'm still wondering if you can explain why Peleus shot your classmate when she was alone but not the two of you together. Inquiring minds still want to know.

JOINING THE COMMON CAUSE

NOVEMBER 6

Things have been looking a little better in recent weeks. I was on my way to the flat I've rented in the city center when I suddenly felt a pull, for lack of a better explanation. It felt a lot like the messages I get, except it was subtly different. I couldn't describe how it was different. I just knew that it was. Suspicious, I followed. After about five minutes, I found myself in an alley near one of the stations.

Up on the wall was one of the signs, but not one I've used before - it meant something like "summoning" or "gather," and standing next to it was a middle-aged, skinny guy with a mustache. I challenged him - I was pretty wary of him to be honest, but he didn't look wrong in any way. He eventually explained that he could call to other people like him and we using this sign.

Anyway, it seems that he travels around trying to get people like us in contact with one another. I was resistant. It just sounded too good to be true. After a while, I worked out that it was - something bad had happened to Paul - that's his name - a few months ago, and he was doing his best to fight his way out of it. I sympathize. I've met a few people through the TFI who suffered shell shock after the Gulf. It's pretty tough, even on a trained soldier. I hate to think of the consequences of this war on some soft, southern middle manager.

In the next few days, he managed to hook me up with a bunch of other people who had had their eyes opened, too. They were in a sorry state. They'd been at this a little less time than me, but had suffered some serious setbacks. One of their number was killed a while back, and another quit and left the city in despair not long afterwards. Both Paul and I agree that the group lacks any form of clear direction.

At this point they're almost desperate for someone to take them in. Since I quit my job and left Greg, I've got more time on my hands. For some reason, they seem keen to keep their family ties, so I work with them in their spare time. I find this deeply frustrating, but Paul has managed to calm me down when I get too worked up about it. He does have a point that family give the less committed something to fight for. I've cried myself to sleep more than once since I ran out on Greg and the kids. I'm beginning to wonder if I made a mistake.

We're using my flat as a home base. I've got a big map of the city on the wall, with pins locating hidden activity that we've identified. Paul's put together a broad categorization of the hidden ones, produced by someone he knows through the internet. Not all of it jibes with the observations I've made, but it's useful in helping us spot patterns of activity across the city. It's pretty basic military strategy, but Paul's excited by the idea. He seems to think that if other

groups can do similar things in other cities around the country, we can start to develop a broad picture of hidden activity and maybe get some idea of what they're doing on a large scale.

As far as I'm concerned, it draws us to plan useful strikes against the enemy wherever it'll do the most good. There's certainly a concentration of activity in the Gorbals. I'm tempted to see if I can set up a few "gas explosions" in the area, if the others don't go for my sweep-and-strike plan. I figure that if we can clear out that one section of town, we can make our lives a lot easier.

UNSTOPPABLE

You know, Dick - may I call you Dick? Too many of our kind won't listen. I've tried to talk to them on their little email list, their bigoted clubhouse. I'm fed up with their knee-jerk reactions, like I'm some sort of freak for suggesting the right thing to do. I'm trying to make them better. Stronger. They have so many weaknesses. Their reliance on the lies we're all spoon-fed is one of them. I can't seem to break them of it.

In the end, I'm met with nothing but anger and resistance. I want to ignore the lot of them and suggest that the few smart ones leave with me. They're going to have to pay attention soon or I'll turn away from them all.

Am I just clinging to hope here? It's clear they enjoy their ignorance. They may be blissfully unaware, and that's fine. They'll continue to be unaware until a bullet sprays their guts on an alley wall or some bloody-mouthed thing mind-rapes them as they go to their car. I won't cry for them. I don't cry for the dead and stupid.

Let me give you another imperative. We are... what? Revolutionaries? Angels? Gods? Someone sits up on high and gives us a new pair of eyes and gifts to lift us up. We're practically divine. The world is laced with tumors and we're the medicine. We're the bone saw. We're the therapy. Why squander our talents? Why waste our medicine?

Sometimes, though, the medicine doesn't work, does it? The saw simply won't cut. Sometimes it even makes things worse, spreading disease instead of culling it. That's unacceptable.

Our kind can be like that. They stand in the way of treatment, holding up the cure with indecision. Or bad decisions. We're here to do a job, a long-reaching and mumbly difficult job. When our own kind impedes this design, I feel sick. But I understand it. I'm not a Bible-thumper. In fact, I place little merit in any organized religion that exists to soften our brains and trap us inside some ludicrous moral hole, but there's some truth in there. Like the angels. The angels were supposedly perfect beings, like we were. Granted a divine mission, filled with heavenly providence. But some of them fell. Some turned against their maker and against each other. They created Hell. We can't have Hell, Mr. Daley. We just don't have time.

What I'm saying is this: If one of our own steps in the way of progress, he has to be considered just as infected as the creatures. These people must be put down like dogs. Give them

a chance to learn from their error, but if that doesn't succeed, death is the only option.

Some people are simply irredeemable.

You're different, though. I hope I've broken you of your old ways. I understand why you're crying. You were blind and now you have sight. That would cause the strongest man to cry.

I suppose, for the record, we should go over what we did here today, you and I. So if anyone ever finds these tapes, they'll understand. They'll see how you came to be what you are today. A much improved being. They'll come to love you, as I am coming to love you.

Today, I brought Mr. Daley here and tied him to a chair. I placed him ten feet from this hanging manipulator, the dealer, the filthy mind-raper. I let them talk, however briefly, and I listened as the two tried to understand each other. They actually believed they could fucking communicate, like they were on the same page or something. Then I taped the corrupter's mouth shut and showed Dick some pictures. One of a high-school boy who took some of the shit the dealer peddled and went to dance in traffic. An SUV hit him. Popped his head like a berry. The snapshot showed all the gory details. Then another picture. A girl in a locker room, dazed and confused, being led away by police. She was hopped up and wandered into the boy's locker room. The baseball team raped her. Not just with their dicks. With the end of a jump rope. With both ends of an aluminum bat.

Richard didn't like looking at the pictures. He had already communicated with the monster, already tried to understand it, tried to believe they could understand each other. Could you, Dick? Understand a rapist? You knew you couldn't.

I put a knife in your lap and left. I came back two hours later.

I was hoping to find that you'd wriggled your way free. I didn't tie the knots too tightly. I was hoping to see that you'd done what needed to be. But you hadn't. The creature still hung there, alive. You looked... beaten. You needed something. Something I could give you. So I did.

When I looked at you, you felt it, didn't you? You saw a small part of the plan. You saw the long road we walk. But more importantly, you saw what was at the end of the road, didn't you? You saw death. You knew — just like I knew so long ago — that death was the only way to make this world a better, pure place.

It felt right to watch you pull yourself out of the chair. To grab the knife. You attacked the cancer with dedicated hands, and you got messy, but the dedication makes all the difference.

And now here we are. Something that was less than human is dead. Its contaminated body will never corrupt again. And something that is now more than human is curled up on the floor, sobbing under the weight of the truth. After watching you, Richard, I'd be proud to work with you, to bring the scourge of sickness that coats humanity to its

swift and rightful end. You have been taught a valuable lesson. Barely a single one of our kind will ever know what you do now. They fuck around while the monsters go unchecked.

Now you know what I contend with, Dick. Trials and tribulations.

I have an appointment with that sniper I told you about. His trail is obvious. Littered with bodies and fire. I wish it weren't so clear, but at least I have a way to track him down. I would bring you along. You've come far. But it's just not your place. Just like I came to you, improved you and taught you. I have to do it again. Someone else needs to be taught. His eyes are already open, but his technique needs focus.

I enjoyed our time together. I know you want to thank me, but the look in your eyes is reward enough. Well, that's not entirely true. There's something else that would make me happy. Show the others what I've shown you. Tell them the plan. Teach them death. Soon you'll stop crying, and then you'll be unstoppable.

ZEALOUS WAYS

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: wrath25

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

What I think Shophet is good at is twisting details around to make people he's jealous of look bad.

>The wife was probably banging every militia monkey and klansman

>on the West Coast — Peleus for sure — and the husband knew it but turned a blind eye.

What difference would this make if it turned out to be true? Why do the bedroom arrangements of our brothers at arms matter? Unless you think you're missing out on something there. Did you fall in love with the man who saved your life? Hey, not my business, just something to think about. Some answers I don't want to know.

What I'm a lot more interested in is Soldier. He sure is putting himself in knots over a job well done. I mean, killing the enemy is what we do, right? And we can't have worse enemies than the ones who hide behind cop badges, right? How long do we fight this war on our own in secret? When is it time to bring the people in on this? When Shophet says it's ok? Assuming he can get his head screwed on right long enough to think straight (sorry, didn't mean anything by that, I know how you fellas feel about the word "straight").

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

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bitch even told me Peleus (she called him "May," just like her husband did) wrote that sick little pamphlet. And thanks to Cassie, we've pretty much confirmed that link independent of anything I know. In other words, Wrath: Shut the fuck up.

Bookworm, I think you're unable to make yourself think the way Peleus does. Please don't take that as a criticism. It disturbs me that I *can*, believe me, but it's the only way I'll ever catch the son of a bitch. I think he shot that woman so the zombie could catch her and he could have a better shot at it. He didn't *have* to do it that way. He *did* because he didn't see her as human. All he saw was the color of her skin. All that saved me from a bullet in the brain that day was the color of mine. And if we had been living in the world he wants, I would've had "Jew" stamped on my forehead. In which case, Peleus probably would have shot me *first*.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: tarjiman220

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

[Warden has asked that I post the following translation of what he termed an important message to various lists.]

Hunters in the United States are beginning to recognize the problem of Fascists among them. The ongoing troubles there with racism create advantages and disadvantages in combating organized hatred. Throughout Europe, we also have these disaffected thugs who gravitate toward anticivilized attitudes and behaviors. Here, they are less the problem than are the cryptofascists, those who attain public office and hide their loyalties with suit and tie. There, however, one violent man can have tremendous, terrible impact. Consider McVeigh and his actions. Whether his ultimate fate will serve to deter or inspire similar crimes remains to be seen. Unless, that is, he was the model for our own "Mr. Mayhem."

As I have stated before, it is indeed pointless to speculate upon why such individuals receive our gifts. My own immediate circle of "fellows" comprises two prison guards, a rapist, a murderer, an arsonist and myself. Apart from our mutual perception of the creatures and our seeming duties regarding them, proximity appears to be our strongest connection. To ask, "Why?" is a waste of breath. Whatever changed us seems to show no inclination to offer much beyond hints and riddles.

A far more important inquiry we all must make is how far are we willing to cooperate with such individuals in the course of fulfilling our mission. For me, the courts have dictated when, where and how long I interact with my prisoners. Furthermore, they allow me to do this in territory that I control. In my prison, I am the law. If I must sometimes break the letter of the law to maintain peace, my superiors understand. Granted, the degree and ends to which I must violate the law nowadays is beyond their understanding. So be it. To me, this situation is nevertheless preferable to the work of the detective and the policeman. They must go where criminals are, where lawbreakers live and work. A good detective must think as his quarry does. Yet to be a good man, the policeman cannot behave always as criminals do. Such decorum is far easier to prescribe than to obey.

Inside my prison, the criminals are the ones without their freedom. In the world, criminals — yes, and monsters and those "allies" of ours whom we trust and fight alongside at our peril — are not so easily recognized. Ask yourself which you consider to be the most dangerous threat. A vampire who feeds from humans yet never takes their lives? A blood slave whose job is to hide the crimes of a vampire who regularly takes human life, sometimes without feeding at all? Or the hunter who would destroy all of

these beings at once with a bomb powerful enough to level a part of town? My example is unfair, but it is not hypothetical. I had to make the choice. I chose to "defuse" both the bomb and its maker. Was my solution the "best" one? I cannot know. I know that the bomber's choice was not the best one that he could have made. Also, I understood that he could not be dissuaded from his choice, because "God told him to do it," thus forcing me to intervene. All I can do, all any of us can do, is weigh right and wrong as we proceed in this [I do know this word] and hope we choose well.

I fear what may be going on among hunters in the United States right now. It may be that Mr. Mayhem is alone in his activities, which is still frightening because he appears to be both skilled and determined. Yet more frightening is the idea that his goals are spreading among us, becoming our goals, that our methods grow ever more to resemble his.

If Soldier is truthful in his admissions, he has been used with awful intent. Whatever he embarked upon became something else because of its secretive and, yes, unlawful nature. It became something worse. I can only wonder whether it was Soldier's readings of my own messages on methodology that inspired him and led to this sad state of events. Such is the way of any war, but especially a clandestine one. The targets change as the defenseless move into the line of fire, or the "enemy" proves to be not at all what we perceived when we pulled the trigger.

All these variables are enough to immobilize us, something we cannot [purchase?]. Yet my feeling is that our collusion with the forces of hatred, with hunters whose view of humanity may be less evolved than the outlook of some creatures, is a greater menace to our cause than any other.

Choose well your targets. Choose better your methods. Choose best your allies.

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

From: memphis68

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

All of which adds up to ... what, Warden? Let's be careful out there? You make being a hunter on this side of the Atlantic sound like one big rally of the NRA and the KKK. Doesn't the general level of disagreement on this list give you any reason to think we _might not be that unified_?

The last thing I ever want to be is one of this century's Nazis. But it's not something that keeps me awake at night. There are plenty of other things in my life that do that for me.

NOVEMBER 7

Paul's a big user of hunter-net, an online site for people like us. He's suggested that I sign up, but I'm not keen on the idea. It seems like an unacceptable security risk to me. I've been in the hi-tech industry for the last 15 years, and I know how easily computer networks can be breached. Paul claims that some spooky stuff has happened around the site, as if it has a guardian angel or something. It sounds too much like wishful thinking to me. For the time being, I'm happy to let him feed information to us, but I've warned him that if he posts anything about us, I'll ram that bloody laptop down his throat.

MERCIFUL MEANS

Subject: An outsider's apology

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: Mister R.

Okay Shopet, so "suicide mission" was over the top. I didn't really believe that was what went down in East St. Louis, but I had

to be sure. Plus, I had forgotten all about the oil change thing. I heard stories about you the same way you heard stuff about Peleus, you know. A few people back home swore to me they would never work with you again. You have a rep with some hunters we know as playing fast and loose with the facts until after the fact. Me, though, I'd trust you with my life anytime.

Friends again?

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

>killing the enemy is what we do, right?

Speak for yourself, Wrath. Once again, I feel like my own words are back to haunt me. I don't think a day goes by without something reminding me that once it seemed like the rightest thing in the world to compile a list of "our monster enemies." The world is more complicated than that, which is a lesson it took me longer to learn.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: driver300

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

Memphis, your tune sounds a little different to me these days. I recall when you thought using duds as suicide bombers was a perfectly acceptable tactic.

Sadly, I can see both sides of this argument. Soldier was right to be outraged by depraved monsters whose actions (and true natures) are protected by badges and uniforms. At the same time, does he have any idea what this dead kid might have done? What if he killed an entire family? What if he killed the family of one of those cops? Some of us say we're here to protect the blind, the defenseless. Is it such a stretch to think that some monsters might feel the same way about their own families? And I know that not every slave to vampires is beyond hope. I know this because one gave his life to save mine.

We only perpetuate the violence we're mired in now when our response to it is more violence. There has to be another way.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: An outsider's apology

>Friends again?

Even after I had given you guys up for dead, I still thought of you as friends. I never stopped thinking of you that way.

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

From: memphis68

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

How could I be so stupid all this time? Driver, you're right. I've decided to give up the fight, hang a bell around my neck and start grazing in the nearest pasture. I'm sure the bloodsuckers that took _your_ family from you are in the market for a shepherd. Why don't you give them a call?

DIFFERENCES

ENTRY SIX

Observations: In the weeks since the confrontation on Barnackburn, I've come to realize that I am especially lucky. For some reason, the others do not seem to have been completely awakened to the targets that surround us. Where I can see them all the time, they actually have to concentrate on them to spot if they're one of the hidden or not. They also seem to lack the clear imperative to wipe out the targets that I have. It's almost as if their

minds have refused the full gift I have been offered and they've trapped themselves in a half-blind state because they're just too afraid to see clearly.

It seems obvious to me that I am meant to be a leader to people like this. I can see the enemy at all times, and I seem to possess the ability to make my squad aware of immediate threats, and to turn them into a highly effective fighting force. The biggest problem I face is that the partial eye opening they have means they don't fully understand the situation. While it varies by degrees, some of them just don't have the same focus on destroying the targets that I do. Perhaps their inability to see the extent to which the targets have infiltrated society means they cannot see or appreciate the depth of the corruption around them. This is something I am going to have to overcome if we are to work together effectively.

In the wake of the deaths of Malcolm and the others, they have turned to me for leadership; a position I seemed best suited for. I'm going to call the squad Rod, Jane and Freddie. I don't want this journal to compromise their real identities, should I be caught.

AVENGERS

Observations: Rod's heart is in the right place. He can see the targets for the corrupting, invasive influence they are. However, his attitude doesn't sit right with me somehow. I think it's because he's just too short term in the way he views things - this target must be eliminated because it did this, another one must go because it did the other. It's a very personal view of the mission. He's so focused on making each monster pay for its crimes that he can't look to the bigger picture. Still, as long as I keep doing that for him, he is one of the most effective members of the group. Just as I can make handheld weapons deadly, he can do the same with thrown ones. On more than one occasion, working together, he's softened up a target for me, and I've put it down up close and personal. In essence, he's a good soldier, but one that lacks the strategic viewpoint to be an effective team leader.

DEFENDERS

NOVEMBER 10

I argue with one of Rod's people quite a lot. He was their nominal leader until we showed up, and he'd nearly given up, as far as I can see. Rather than taking on the hidden, he wants to wait for them. Wait for them? What sort of an idiotic plan is that? His perspective is so limited that he can only grasp the idea of keeping his neighborhood safe. That's just foolish. There's just too many of them to achieve anything that way. I can see the wisdom of having a secure base to retreat to, though. One of the first things we did after meeting up with this lot was arrange a sweep of the

three blocks surrounding the lot. We've done that twice a week since and cleaned out two hidden. We haven't caught sight nor sound of any others since. I can put this guy to work keeping base camp secure, but I don't know how much use he's going to be in the long run.

INNOCENTS

Observations: The late Malcolm seemed to me to be something of a failure. Whatever it is that opened our eyes screwed it completely with him. Not only was he partially aware, like the others, he failed to comprehend exactly how dangerous the targets are. Frankly, I'm fairly sure that we're better off without him.

However, his ability to hide in plain sight would be a great tactical advantage if it was available to someone with the right attitude. I must try to get the squad to teach each other about their particular aptitudes in case any one of them is lost.

JUDGES

Observations: Jane is trying to be too cerebral about the hunt. She clings to notions of "right" and "wrong" rather than "them" and "us." This is war. I impress that on them again and again. They were corrupting people up there on the battle site, turning them into things like them. A few casualties are worth it to prevent the spread of their influence. The rightness of what we did was irrelevant. This is about survival and nothing more.

MARTYRS

Observations: Freddie is a good guy to have under me. In the last few encounters we've had with targets he's shown a willingness to go to extremes to destroy them. That's what we need in the struggle: total commitment. We seem to be outnumbered by opponents who appear to have at least a loose grasp on the country's principal power structures. Jane claims she has seen targets moving in and out of the Scottish Parliament, which shows just how powerful they are. Freddie seems to get it: a good soldier must be prepared to die for the sake of his people. As long as he doesn't throw his life away needlessly, he's a great example for the others.

DEMISSION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: wrath25

Subject: Re: An outsider's view

You people are all pussies. Weak, incompetent, malingerers pussies.

Not a single one of you has the brains or the balls to win this war.

I used to be the way you'll all be till you die, probably as a meal for something I'll have to come for later.

Now I see the way. I'm ready to prove myself as a True Warrior for the cause.

Why can't any of you understand the sacrifices that victory demands?

Soon enough, we'll move like a fire that sweeps across the whole world.

Subject: Wrath's post

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

To: witness1

From: shopnet125

Subject: [no subject]

Witness, please let Sarin and Michelle know that I meant every word I posted to the list. And thank you for bringing my friends back into my life.

Something here sounds worse than the usual sort of bad. I'm worried.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

>What if he killed an entire family? What if he killed the family of one of those two cops?

Driver, I think you're ignoring a key part of Soldier's story: Those cops started out spitting on this kid's corpse. Then they played a fucking game with it! Then, after the "toy" stopped being fun to play with, one of them got pissed. I don't believe someone in the throes of vengeful grief behaves that way. It seems trite in the context of what we normally discuss here, but this strikes me as a really inhuman set of responses.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: tarjiman220

Subject: Re: "Mayhem"/ "Peleus"

[I have translated the following response of Warden's for consideration on various lists.]

Memphis68 wrote:

>Doesn't the general level of disagreement on this list give you any reason

>to think we _might not be that unified_?

The lack of unity and overall discord among American imbued is what I fear to be fertile soil for Fascists. They thrive in such environments and cast against each other those who should — and would — otherwise be arrayed against Fascists themselves. Meanwhile, they busy themselves with attacks against the weak and the outcast.

>The last thing I ever want to be is one of this century's Nazis. But

>it's not something that keeps me awake at night.

It ought. Vigilance of our fellows is only half the fight. We must gird [guard!] ourselves against the tendencies to which individuals caught by wartime succumb.

SIMILARITIES

REDEEMERS

Alan's going to be a problem. I'm not sure that it's a problem I'm prepared to tolerate, either. He and I face in totally different directions, but stand in the same place. We agree that the hidden must be dealt with, all of them, forever. So far, so good. But he has this crazy idea that they can be brought back into humanity. Made moral again. He's one of those wishy-washy Christians who sees everything in the light of "turning the other cheek" and reaching out to the needy.

If he doesn't wise up soon, I might have to find some way of dealing with him permanently.

VISIONARIES

Paul is a good man. I've learnt more from him in the last few weeks than I have in months of doing this. He's constantly listening to what we say, taking those ideas and then bouncing them back at us in a new and unexpected form. I gather he used to run a group of us — "hunters" as he calls us — down south. Apparently things went bad. I'm not surprised. While Paul is a great analyst and administrator, he hasn't got the skills you need to face down the enemy in the field. He acknowledges that now,

and is quite happy to let me lead the group when we actually have to take one of these things down.

I'm almost in agreement with him over the idea that we can be as dangerous to other hunters as the enemy can. However, he sees what he calls "extremists" — people obsessed with killing monsters — as the danger. I disagree. The people who can't see what a real threat the hidden ones pose are far more of a danger. This is warfare, pure and simple. In any war, you don't stop to talk to the other side unless you're gathering intelligence. You kill them and keep killing them until they're all dead or they surrender, at which point you destroy their ability to be a threat again.

Paul's starting to come around to my way of thinking. I've been giving the others some training in basic combat and firearms skills. A few of them resist the idea, but most of them can see my point. I'll make an effective unit out of them yet.

BYSTANDERS

Observations: I had thought that we "hunters" fall into two broad categories: those, like me, who have their eyes open fully, and those who are left half blind. There appears to be a third kind. Jane has occasional assistance from another woman who was present when everything changed. It appears, for whatever reason, that this person is aware of the existence of the targets, but has not been given any ability to deal with or even see them again.

I find this idea rather terrible. To be aware of the long struggle without being able to be a willing participant? I would find that absolute torture.

It is our duty to find these people a role in the hunt, assuming there are more. Clearly their place is not in the front lines. That would be a hopeless waste of resources except in the most extreme of circumstances. However, as civilian backup they could function admirably. Jane's friend has been instrumental in establishing our Stirling safe house on one of the more rundown streets. There's a string of shops, many of which have closed down since a local shopping center opened. We've broken into one and established a cache and meeting place there.

VISIONS OF OBLIVION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

Subject: [no subject]

cassie247 is dead. her coffee shop blew up about 2 hours ago. i had just left the place. she had asked me to take some white supremacist flier, but i forgot the thing. just as i got to my car, i heard her call my name. she was standing in the doorway of her shop and holding up an envelope. i put my car keys back in my pocket and then there was a flash behind her. next thing i knew i was on my back staring into sky. car alarms were going off all around and some other people on the street were trying to get up too. the shop was on fire. glass everywhere. i found cassie in the middle of the street. i saw her and thought oh god she's ok but when i got right up to her i could see half of her was burnt up. i thought i could save her with the healing touch thing i've seen other chosen do it. why didn't it work?

Subject: Cassie247

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

First and foremost people, we cannot jump to conclusions here. Recent discussions on the forum make a strong circumstantial case for this attack being Peleus' work. I don't think we should assume that to be the case, however. I'd like to do a limited roll call of list members who are currently in the Seattle area and available to lend a hand on this. Please email me directly, rather than the list.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: pilot56

Subject: Re: Cassie247

Hold your horses, Witness. Traveler, if you're still in Seattle, un-ass the area pronto. Assuming you're in any shape to run for it, I mean. The place is about to be swarmed by ATF agents and every other three-letter D.C. cop you can think of. Seattle is not, I repeat, not a good place for imbued in general right now.

One reason I sent that anonymous open warning last year to hunters who'd had recent face-time with Peleus was this disappearing act he did from a medical examiner's slab out west. Shaka's source on that was correct. The guy was declared dead at one point. He just didn't stay that way. Uncle Sam took an interest because of the breadth and frequency of similar events nationwide and abroad. One of the things the government has been doing is "sweeping up" after these little "vanishings" to avoid mass panic. Just like they did after New Dijon turned into a literal ghost town. Lower and middle echelon feds think they're up against a black-market ring that's stealing bodies for illicit genetic research. I don't want to go into a lot of detail here. Really, the less you guys know about this crap, the better.

What you do need to know is this: ever since Peleus did a song and dance at the former Friendship Coffeehouse (Cassie's place), it had been under government surveillance. I learned as much tonight, after the place went up in flames, or I'd have warned you guys sooner. Traveler, if you're reading this, be aware that they wed your photo to their artists' renderings of the long-sought "African-American Man in Pajamas at New Dijon." And they ran your license plates. Sorry my friend, but you have been made.

Finally, Peleus was not the culprit in this fire-bombing. Not directly. He hasn't been in Washington State since he and Cassie had their sidewalk chat outside the coffeehouse. He certainly had a hand in it — preliminary spectrometry says 97.5% match with his other arson sites — but he didn't deliver it. He got himself a helper.

Do yourselves a favor: clear out of the Pacific Northwest for a spell. If you can. Traveler, good luck and Godspeed.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: WHAT THE FUCK?

Pilot wrote:

> the less you guys know about this crap, the better
Better for who? Not Cassie for damn sure.

The United States government knows about Peleus. It has known about him since he stopped being a corpse. The feds have pictures of this prick. They know what he's been doing and haven't done *shit* to stop him!

Do I have this right? And if so, since you know where Peleus isn't, tell us where he is so I can park a bullet in him.

Subject: Re: Cassie247

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Pilot, can you tell us how many imbued might have been compromised at Cassie's? Obviously, anybody who got caught

up in that mess Cassie described ought to be worried, but what else does the government have?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: pilot56

Subject: Re: Cassie247

>anybody who got caught up in that mess Cassie described ought to be worried

Actually, I'm not sure that's true. I think the concentration has been on Peleus: who he is, who he was, how he might have gotten the way he is, why he doesn't register the same way that other "morgue escapees" do on the machines they have. Plus, from what I can tell, Cassie put a bit of a lid on things after the rail yard episode. It seems to have taken something out of her that she never got back.

I think the lack of interest in imbued other than Peleus has the same roots as the puzzle he represents to the analysts here. We don't register on the scanners my colleagues use. Thank God, or they'd have nailed my ass ages ago. I think Cassie and the others just look to the feds like normal citizens that Peleus "conscripted." I don't get any sense from the records that they're wise to any element of mind control or whatever actually happened there. Otherwise, they'd be a lot more scared by the guy than just curious about him.

Personally, I'm with Shophet. Peleus needs killing.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: driver300

Subject: Re: Cassie247

>Peleus needs killing.

I'm reluctant to condemn someone I don't even know. Still, nothing I've read here gives me the sense that he might change. Pilot, why haven't you guys just grabbed him for study up close and personal?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: Cassie247

Pilot wrote:

>Peleus: who he is, who he was, how he might have gotten the way he is

You know his real name? Witness, what do we have to do here, vote? I vote for an imbued APB on Joe Mayhem or whoever the fuck he is. Who else has to die before we move on this?

Subject: Peleus

From: memphis68

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I vote for death.

Subject: Re: Peleus

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I'm pasting the physical description of "Clarence," the hunter who I believe framed Soldier. Shophet independently matched this information in an exchange we just had off list. "Clarence," "Clarion," and, according to Shophet, "Clancy" are all aliases that Peleus uses, in addition to "Mayhem."

Soldier wrote:

>Tall, rangy, good ol' boy wearing a bandanna with the Confederate flag low over his eyes. High cheekbones, rough, tanned face. He'd been outdoors a lot. Blue, blue eyes. Aquamarine, even.

>All that matters is, the man who did this is tattooed up the ying-yang with some weird kind of signs that I can't quite explain.

Pilot, what do you have to add to this?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: Peleus

Witness wrote:

>man who did this is tattooed up the ying-yang with some weird kind of

>signs [snip] what do you have to add to this?

It looked at one point like the only reunion I was going to have with my "savior" would be at the medical examiner's office that Pilot mentioned. That would have been fine with me, but I'm thinking now that Peleus had already walked out of the morgue when I got there. I'm never going to believe this guy is dead until I see his rotting carcass.

The clerk at the morgue was really nervous when I asked about the body of a John Doe from a car crash, so I "sniffed" him for lies. He reeked. He made me track down a case number, which cost more time, but in the end it was worth it. Turns out this clerk had been collecting Polaroids of tattoos on corpses for years! Peleus exited before they could autopsy him or even make official photographs (I tried to get the pictures shot at the scene of his "fatal" car crash, but they were sealed). This clerk, though, had made pictures of the Nazi fuck's tats on the sly. After I threatened to expose his little hobby, he was happy to share the photos with me. Witness, with your permission I'll try to include them in an email as attachments. Even if I have to buy a scanner.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: driver300

Subject: Re: Peleus

So that's it? Now he's just a marked man? What, am I expected to shoot it out with him if I see him in line at McDonald's? Witness, I'm not sure this is the way.

Subject: Re: Peleus

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Driver's right, Witness. If your motive here is to prevent further loss of life, posting what amounts to a death warrant for Peleus is a strange way to do it.

Every description of him here makes Peleus seem reasonably intelligent. Can we at least try to reason with him?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: Peleus

Bookworm wrote:

>Can we at least try to reason with him?

Thank you Neville Chamberlain. Mr. Hitler, you have the floor.

Appeasing Nazis does not work.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: driver300

Subject: Re: Peleus

Nobody said anything about appeasement, Shophet! What you guys are doing is just as bad as what you accuse

Peleus of: betraying and killing allies! His crimes don't justify yours. Not that anything I say has any weight here. Obviously, Witness has already made his executive decision.

ENTRY SEVEN

Observation: I have had longer and more extended periods of memory loss in the last six weeks than ever before. I'm told that the squad has barely seen or heard from me in that time. I am now extremely concerned, but I can't see any way of dealing with the situation right now. However, it is clearly beginning to hamper my operating efficiency and I can't tolerate that going on much longer. The squad needs me to direct them. I can't afford to let them down.

The squad has been contacted by another hunter in the last few weeks. He's due to meet us tonight and I've been invited. They say he seems to be able to use our tags in a way we haven't seen before - he actually used it to call Jane and Freddy to him. I'm keen to learn more about this as soon as possible. This could be another tactical advantage.

Subject: My Decree

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: god45

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Any of that sound familiar?

Whoever is willing to pay attention — our world is mired in shit. We're the only ones who can pull it back out. The things that exist outside of us, their answer to us is death. We're cattle to them. Skinbags. Masks to wear. They use us and destroy us.

Their intention is our eventual destruction. So must our intention be unto them.

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Pay attention.

Subject: Re: My Decree

From: bookworm55

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

How about what Jesus tells us? Christ rejects "eye for an eye" judgment in the New Testament. He urges us to love our enemy. He went among the sinners, the money-lenders, the prostitutes. He saved them. Isn't it possible that we've been given the potential to recognize the sinners and offer them an alternative?

Subject: Assholes

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: god45

Go back to reading the Old Testament. Salvation is a bedtime story so you shallow cunts can feel better about your inability to change the world. You're all so fucking afraid to do anything, to take action against our oppressors that you're letting them trample all over you.

Do what you want. But if I come across you and I find you unwilling to do what needs to be done, my lesson will be swift and unyielding.



CHAPTER 4:

AFTERMATH

*And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother;
and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that
thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.*

— Genesis 27:40

BROTHERS IN ARMS

"CANCER IN THE SYSTEM."

Those words. I get them at least once a day. A whisper right before I kill, or letters formed in drying blood. In the glare off a knife. In the code printed on a red wire. Or hovering in a cloud of cold breath.

It's getting worse. All of it, I mean. The world, the people in it, us. There's a critical mass. It's all coming to a head. There is more of our kind, but the monsters still outnumber us. Hordes of the fucking things overwhelming us. Things are happening. The weather's unpredictable. Dry summers. Warm winters. The seasons are blurring together. Storms, earthquakes, floods. The television, lying constantly, wants us to believe it's all Mother Nature, that this is part of some sort of cosmic cycle of El Niños, El Niñas and solar flares. But it's not. It's them. The corrupters. The sick fucks who're pulling the strings on our world. Or maybe the natural world is rebelling against them. I don't know. I just know it's getting worse and that sooner or later we're going to see a major meltdown.

Biggest problem is, I'm going up against it alone. The weight of the world is square on my shoulders, and no one else is offering to help. Atlas. I'm like Atlas. Propping up the world as

cancer eats it from the inside out. Soon I'll be left holding a shell.

I want help, but every time I get involved with our kind I find myself surrounded by amateurs. People who aren't willing to act. Hunters who wouldn't know sacrifice if it bit them on the ass. Unprofessional. Emotional. Their personal agendas crash together like waves. Nothing gets done. Half the time I have to hurt them or force their hand. Or kill them. It's the only way I can get anything done. When it all comes down, when the world is crawling with things that see us as nothing more than food or slaves, we'll all regret what we weren't able to do. Our inability. Our unwillingness. It'll be Hell, and we'll all be punished. We'll look to each other and wonder why we were afraid to take it all the way.

I haven't killed anything in just under a month. Twenty-seven days. I worry that I've contributed to the spread of the malignancy. If I was at the hospital and an oncologist let cancer go a month without treatment, the patient would be dead. Especially if it were one of the more aggressive cancers like mesothelioma. We'd have nothing left but a cadaver. I worry that by hesitating, I've already wasted too much time and lost the chance. In this operating room, hesitation is as good as murder.

I've been searching, instead. Hunting for help. The candidates are slim. Richard Daley hung himself with a garden hose. While I'm disappointed that he won't be fighting with me, I'm honored that he chose to bow out of a calling that he clearly couldn't answer. He did the right thing. There are a few others on the list that I'd like to find, but they still have their problems. Crusader's hotheaded. Cop and Shaka - both dead or missing. There's someone called "Thurston" I'm having trouble tracking down.

So, it comes down to the sniper. He's dangerous. From the trail I've been following, it's painfully obvious that his motives are skewed, that he's driven by his own agenda. That I don't like. But he's good. Eager. I can straighten him out.

That's what I've been doing for the last month. Tracking him. Turning over every rock that even smells of him. He's way too public - hanging a cop, a black cop, in New Orleans? Didn't he think the world would notice? Besides the leads the police and feds have, I found one that may take me to him.

His mother. It's just too bad she's dead.

THE T'WAIN SHALL MEET

I've been crying. When I started this diary again, I thought it was because I was going mad. Since then, I've stopped questioning my sanity and just accepted the madness I was seeing as real. What I didn't realize was that the damage has already been done. It should have been obvious to me by the way I rationalized away the memory blanks, just as I did when I was a kid - after my father raped me. Whatever's happened to me, to all of us, has turned me into more than one person again. I wish Greg were here. I don't know why I ever walked out on him. That all seems so stupid now.

I was obsessed. Obsessed with destroying the things. To stop them hurting people like I was hurt. I didn't want anyone to feel that pain. I didn't realize it until now, but that's what was driving me forwards. Wiping out the bastards before too many people suffered. The problem is, there's another part of me that goes further than that - that has stopped thinking about motives and goals and just wants to wipe out every one of them. And she doesn't care who gets in the way. At least, that's what I've been told. I

can't see any reason why Paul would lie about the "other" me. I've come full circle. I'm not schizophrenic. I'm suffering Multiple Personality Disorder, just like I did as a kid. Just like I did last time I kept a diary like this.

When I got back to the flat earlier, Paul was waiting for me. He looked exhausted. "I wondered when you'd show up," he said calmly. "Where have you been?"

I got defensive: "What business is it of yours?"

He backed away slightly. "Look, calm down, Kirsty. This is really important. Where were you earlier this evening, around 6 pm?"

"I was patrolling."

"Are you sure? Where were you exactly?"

I wracked my brain, but however hard I tried, I couldn't remember. That worried me. I knew, deep down, that there had been a lot of times like that in the last few months, and I knew - or thought I knew - what it meant. Paul's next words confirmed it.

"Look, Kirsty, I know you're going to find this hard to believe, but I think you have a problem. I visited another group in Stirling. They wanted me to meet the woman who had got some of them killed and who had threatened the rest of them into obeying her. I said I'd do what I could to help. I have some experience with those who've gone too far."

"I've got a debt of my own on that score that I'll never be able to repay. Anyway, we waited for her. When she arrived... it was you."

I didn't really hear what he said next. I felt the room spin. I collapsed on the sofa. I think I started crying. By the time I pulled myself together, Paul was sitting next to me, looking wary but concerned. Two of the others were in the room, too. One of them was trying to conceal one of the guns I nicked from the TA.

I must have been babbling, because Paul asked

"Kirsty, what do you mean,

"It's happened again?"

I told him. About the abuse, about the MPD I developed to try and deal with it. I told him about the psychotherapy that eventually made me more or less whole again. He told me all about what happened at the safe house in Stirling. About his shock when I walked in. About how I didn't recognize him, and started getting angry and making threats, especially when he started claiming that he knew me. Apparently the other me called him a "sassenach bastard" and threatened to kill him if he didn't leave. That's why he brought the others to see me.

I thought I had everything under control. Things seemed to be going so well. And now this? I need time to think, but the others have so many questions. I'm not sure I can answer them yet. I'm not sure I'm ready to face up to what I - or my other self - has done. I know that it's wrong, very wrong, by any normal standards. But part of me can't help but be glad when I hear about what happened in Stirling. It's as if she was doing everything I've wanted to, everything I've had to fight to stop myself from doing.

DEALS WITH THE DEVIL

Saul committed himself to seeking the ghost of Samuel to find out why things were so terrible

Subject: Roll call follow-up

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Since the last roll call message, I've heard from all active members except the following:

Wrath25

God45

Pilot56

Count666372

As usual, any information anyone can share about the wellbeing of these individuals would be appreciated.

in the world. Why was the Philistine army so fierce? Why was God no longer speaking to the world? How thick were the wages of man's sin? And so he went to the damnable witch of Endor. She conjured the spirit of Samuel. And Saul was cursed to be exiled from God.

I'm afraid that I, too, may be cursed. Did I make a mistake by consulting with the spirit of Peleus' mother? I can't say for sure. I have never enjoyed negotiating with the things, however necessary it may have been. Even temporary contact scares the shit out of me. We're not supposed to be talking. We should have nothing to say to one another aside from threats, profanities and violence. But today I found her. Today I talked with her.

She haunts the scenes of his killings. I don't know why. I saw her the first time outside the burned shell of that project. I went for her, but her hair and dress whipped like she was in some kind of storm and then she was gone.

The next time I saw her was at the tree where he hung the cop. She was just staring up, her filthy dress in tatters around her. Her mouth opened and closed, but no sound came out.

At first, it didn't look like we were going to get anywhere and I was just going to have to put her back in the ground without any rewards. She was gibbering, howling, clawing at her self. A hot wind kicked up. Her pupils were locusts crawling around inside the whites of her eyes. She didn't seem capable of speaking, just a rant of lunatic jabbering.

Then I saw it. There were answers in her eyes — past the vermin.

Her eyes told me who she was. Whose mother she was. They told me some other secrets about him, too. Things he might not want to know. I have a fistful of his bullshit propaganda in my sack. I know what he thinks of himself and the world. He's wrong. It's almost funny how badly he's betrayed his own beginnings.

So, our "conversation" was very productive. I don't enjoy being in such close proximity to malignancy, but I recognize the need. One has to understand the disease to cure it. There are clues contained within all things.

But, still. Suffer not a witch to live. So I sent her screaming back to Hell.

PLAYING A PART

Where do I go from here? I've spent a lot of time thinking about that. The others have been with me more or less constantly for the last week. I don't know if they're looking after me or keeping watch over me. They're still taking my advice on tactics and the best ways to deal with the hidden ones, but they don't seem to trust me anymore. Perhaps that shouldn't surprise me, but I am sad. Paul's gone back south. He promised to return as soon as his work would allow. Apparently his position is getting pretty tenuous there and he can't afford to push it any further. It's a pity that he's gone. Things seem easier while he's around, and the others accept me more readily when

Subject: Idle Hands

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: god45

You primates do what you do best — chatter among yourselves, picking motherfucking fleas off each others' backs. Meanwhile, I'm going out there. I'm going to find this sniper and I'm going to kill him. I know who he is. I know where he is. It's only a matter of time. So all of you can stop bickering like girls on the playground — the situation is in a pair of most capable hands.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: shophet125

Subject: Re: Idle Hands

Does anyone have anything to say to that? I don't.

he vouches for me. Now that he's gone the tension is getting more and more noticeable.

I have a problem. There's no way of denying it. I'm clinically insane. The right, sensible thing to do would be to turn myself over to the authorities and seek treatment. They put me back together before. The problem is that I don't want to. Not because I don't want to get better. It's because the hidden ones are still out there and they need to be dealt with. The more I think about it, the more plain it all seems. The hidden ones abuse people. They take advantage of us for their own ends. Why else would they hide like they do? If they weren't a threat to us, why have they hidden themselves from us? I know they have to go and that we have to get rid of them.

The other Kirsty is still me. She's just the part of me that does the things I shy away from. I'm a family woman. Well, I was a family woman. I worked in product development. I'm not a killer. Not really. But I've got it in me. Maybe it was born when I watched my father do those things to me, and I knew that I wanted to kill him. Maybe it was born afterwards, as I struggled to come to terms with what happened and the terrible effect his abuse had on my mother. Maybe it's just one of my personalities from childhood that I never really got hold of.

However she was born, she was the one that loved those weekends playing soldier with the Territorial Army. She felt — I felt — that with a gun in my hand and training, I could deal with anything. Maybe she was right. She seems to go a step further than I'm prepared to go. The problem as I see it is that the others can't help but see the hidden ones in human terms. They assume that they think like us and do things for similar reasons as we do. That just isn't the case.

If we continue to regard the things as "strange people," we're doomed to lose the fight. We can't apply human standards or human morality to them. Most people live in this bubble of self-protection, assuming that other people are much like them. Sure, others might make mistakes. They might even commit crimes, but they're still human, right?

Wrong. Even other people are capable of being something we wouldn't recognize as human. I can still remember the way my father looked as he pulled his dick out and made me choke on it. I was seven. The look of pleasure on his face

had nothing to do with humanity. Morality doesn't allow for the things he did, and no punishment comes close to making him pay for what he did to me.

Yet, he was still a human being. These things I fight and kill aren't. They may walk around in human bodies, but you only have to look at them with open eyes and you can see that they're something else. How can we understand what they do and what they're capable of? I've read about the horror and disbelief of the first allied soldiers who entered the German concentration camps. They saw what had been done to people there. The terrible things. The rape, slaughter and torture of untold numbers of people by other people - who started with the same basic standards of morality that are comprehensible to us.

The more I think about the hidden ones, the more I wonder what they're capable of. I've seen them kill. I've seen them eat from humans as if it was their right. That's what I find so offensive. That they move among us unseen, that they do what they want assuming no one can challenge them. They behave like our masters and treat us like pets. They treat people like my father treated me.

It has to stop. My eyes have been opened fully to the abuse. Maybe my childhood prepared me to see it more clearly than the others can. Maybe that's why I can see everything while they have to search to find any of it. It doesn't matter in the end. The hidden ones have to be flushed out, brought into the light and destroyed. Their single most powerful ability is to stop people from seeing them. If that could be overcome, there'd be no more need for a few of us to struggle alone. Everyone could rise up against them, with us in the lead. But at this point, I have no idea how to achieve any of that.

So we have to find a way. Until we do, we have to fight. We can't afford to obey human rules, either. These things don't play fair, so we can't. A boxer who refuses to hit below the belt when his opponent does will lose. The idea that there are rules in war is a lie told to make civilians feel better. Introduce people to a concept gently and they'll grow accustomed to it over time. I know that some of us have done things on the hunt that we wouldn't have dreamed of doing before. War inherently inures you to its own excesses. The longer I wait, the more people come around to my way of thinking. I've got this lot thinking like soldiers already, and I've only been with them for a few months. Even Paul, a bloody sales manager from Croydon, is beginning to see the sense in my way of working.

This is just a step further. That's the only way I can make sense of what's happened to me. What we're fighting is so utterly unlike us that my mind copes not by denial, like with the others, but by sheltering me from the worst of it in a different identity. That sounds like my shrink talking, but she was right last time, so I guess the same holds true now. Maybe it's for the best this time round. The other Kirsty can do what needs to be done when it needs to be done, while I can work with those whose eyes have yet to open fully, to show them my way. I wonder if it was me who killed Sandy to protect my secret, all those months ago. In a way, I almost hope so. His death makes sense that way. It has a purpose. Dying at the hands of a monster is a waste. Dying to prevent the monsters from realizing what's going on is a noble death - the death of a martyr.

We'll remember them as the heroes they were, when the struggle is over. They may not know why they die, but their descendants will honor them. I can't afford to stay trapped in this flat forever, for the sake of those who have already died. I have to get back out there and do what I do best. I just need to watch for the chance. This has been going on too long. They're getting sloppy. It won't be long now. Then I'll be free again.

UNLEASHING THE PLAGUE

I still don't necessarily believe in God. Obviously, I'm willing to accept the possibility of some pretty fucked-up things. We're in a world plagued by demons and devils, which in some sense seems to imply the existence of a god. But why does God allow such evil? Are the monsters the creation of a Devil? Are we the angels of some blind, idiot god who simply lost control of his toy?

Last night, in my hotel room, I took the Bible out of the nightstand and thumbed through to the Book of Revelation. That's what "apocalypse" means. "Revelation." The unveiling of something. We're in that time. That's what I'm looking forward to. And it's us who'll be revealed. Our eyes have been opened and the world has been revealed to us. The creatures aren't aware of us yet. Not as a whole. But they will be. My kind and I - those who aren't weak-kneed women - are going to make enough of a mess that we're going to have to be noticed. I don't think that's such a bad thing.

In the book, there's Jezebel, the harlot who brought debauchery to the world, who cheated God and destroyed kings. She tried to lead the people away from good and into an immortality of ever-repeating sin. In the end, she got what she deserved. God didn't waste any time. She had her chance. He put her to death. Put those who fucked her to death. Put her children and probably her god-damned pets to death.

We're in a fatal world. We are the harbingers of it.

Again, I think in most ways, the Bible is too full of itself. In some ways it over-reaches its authority. Other times it isn't willing to commit enough. Especially in the New Testament, which is effectively the coward's version of the original. Whatever the case, there's a metaphor in there. Good connections to be made. Bits to help me learn.

I think I know what we are. I'm pretty sure I know what we're here to do. I've been doing it on a small scale, but not to the degree that it needs to be done. God brings judgment to the people. He brings plagues. He brings floods. His hand rains baptismal fire to clean the shit out of the gutters. That's what we are. We're the plagues, the floods, the locusts. The hand of death.

But we're not doing enough. I can't be a plague all by myself. It's true that my skills, my abilities, are peaking. As an individual, I've almost reached the pinnacle of my achievement. I can feel it. But there's more to it. A

flood isn't made of a few drops of water — it's a motherfucking deluge, a billion drops combined into one, drowning the sinful and crushing them against the rocks.

I need more of us. For a long time now, I've believed that the others haven't been doing enough and that they never would. They're feeble, untrained and blind to what's necessary. I dismissed them. Put them out of my head and led myself to think that I was the whole hand of God. But I'm not. As much as I hate to admit it, I need them.

Helping others see the light has been difficult. I've had to put more than one unbeliever into an early grave. A terrible shame, but necessary. Those who don't support me stand against me. But people like Richard Daley prove that there are options. And now Peleus. We can do this. We can build an army. Daley snapped under the weight, but I think there are others with stronger resolve. Others who can be shown the truth. Somehow, someday, I'll teach them. Once they're truly aware of the right way... well, the Eleven Plagues will be a head cold compared to what we'll accomplish.

FURTHERING THE MISSION

ENTRY EIGHT

I have escaped. In the absence of that English bastard, the others seemed to lose their grip on me. I don't think I hurt any of them seriously. At

this point they have not proved themselves enough of a danger to warrant elimination. Situation to remain under advisement.

It appears that even others like myself cannot be trusted. My captors — obviously associated with that English worker — seem to be in league with the occupational forces. Clearly, those of us who are not amongst the first rank can be turned by the enemy. Their partial defense against the enemy's disguise perhaps lays them open to manipulation whilst they are not protected. My safe house has not been compromised so far. I've been out for several weeks, however, so I've got no way of knowing what they've discovered. I'm taking what I can carry and heading out. I might spend a few weeks in Aberdeen before returning to take the traitors out.

There's no room for half measures. Either you're fully committed to the death of the enemy or you aid the other side.

The enemy is not human. They don't deserve respect, they don't deserve mercy and they don't deserve our compassion. They haven't signed the Geneva Convention. For fuck's sake, they use the bodies of our loved ones to come back and attack us. I don't for a second believe that these walking corpses are our own dead returned. Why would they be so hostile to us? They're some invasion force that we have to deal with at all costs.

Based on my recent experiences, I can broadly classify all people into one of three categories:



Fighters: People like me and the Stirling group who can see or who can be made to see what needs to be done. We are the untouchables - people who must be protected at all costs, because we alone can see the occupation force that hides amongst us.

Traitors: Those who have had their eyes opened, but who refuse to accept what must be done. I classify the Sassenach and his group in this category. By talking to and aiding the enemy, they become collaborators and are our first targets. They risk compromising the operation.

The Masses: Humanity as a whole presents me with a problem. While taking back this country and then the world is being done for their sake, they're the source of sustenance and support for our targets. Some targets seem to actively feed from humans. Others use their fellow people as servants in ways I haven't comprehended yet. The only resolution to this situation is to focus on that fact that we are rescuing humanity as a whole, rather than individuals. If we have to sacrifice many for the benefit of all, so be it. When Wallace rebelled against the English, he knew that ordinary people would suffer for his actions. He could see that it was a necessary sacrifice in the cause of liberating Scotland. How can I do any less?

BAPTISM BY FIRE

Disappointment is inevitable as we wade through the shit to try to find enlightenment. I accept disappointment as a fact of life. I will not accept failure. Did I fail today? I don't believe so.

I'm back in Louisiana. New Orleans, looking even worse than the last time I was here. A shit hole of a town. A chancre. I've stepped in so much puke and filth I'm amazed I haven't drowned in it. Drug dealers, porn-pushers, frat-boy date rapists, underage girls on wrought iron balconies fucking each other with rubber dicks. Some are things, some aren't. And it's not even Mardi Gras. New Orleans is proof, I think, that God does not exist. If he did, even he couldn't abide such a house of sin.

I stood in the middle of Bourbon Street. The masses flocked around me, grabbing at each other like the mentally retarded. And then I heard some people talking. Three of them. Standing only a few feet to my left. They'd just come out of some strip joint. They were talking about "the hunt." They didn't look wrong. Were they like me? I was going to find out.

They were young. The oldest was probably twenty-five. Two guys, one girl. The girl was obviously a stripper or whore of some sort. Probably the oldest of the bunch. The others were just boys. Looked alike, but I don't think they were brothers or anything. They were standing together, trying to keep quiet, but how the hell do you keep quiet in the middle of New Orleans? You don't. I approached.

They wheeled on me like I might be some beast ready to gut them right there. Then they rolled their eyes at one another, like I was just a poor, homeless nigger looking for a quick fix and a five-spot. I smiled and opened my coat. Inside were two pistols, one revolver, six pipe bombs, a small handheld propane torch and a sheathed Bowie knife. Then I closed my coat. The rest of the ignorant throng didn't notice. They were too busy pawing at one another. But these three knew what I was showing them.

They asked me if I was like them. I nodded. They seemed soared of me. Afraid maybe that I would pull off my face and swallow them whole. But I didn't. I just asked if they wanted to be the part of something big. If they wanted to take care of business. They didn't say anything, but I knew they were interested. I told them to get ready, as we were surrounded, walled in on all sides by corruption. Then I cranked their sight and pushed them, like I did Daley.

They weren't the well-oiled machine I was hoping for. They didn't act in tandem. They didn't attack with any sort of professionalism. Instead, they just sort of... dove in, their faces all fucked-up and twisted. They didn't grab any weapons from me. They just went in with bare hands and started tearing. Hands and teeth. Kicking and biting. I'll give them credit. They actually got a few before they were put down. Other than that, it was chaos. Not the chaos I was looking for, though. A lot of screaming. Sorority girls banging into one another like idiots. Everyone pushing. People vomiting. A few of the things fought back. Others ran. I shot at a few who tried to run. They took a few to the back and kept going. I got them later.

When I turned back around, everyone was fleeing the scene. The shots were the last straw, I guess. The flock of the ignorant fled, and the three I sent to battle were in the street. Each one bloody and dead. One's face looked like a piece of raw meat.

So what happened? Was it a success, a failure or both? Where do I go from here?

BATTLE PLAN

At this point, our greatest problem is a lack of detailed knowledge. While I have led some effective strikes, I have no idea if I'm striking at generals or foot soldiers. Without detailed intelligence on the movements, power structure and plans of the enemy, our strikes are not nearly as effective as they should be. The key problem is finding a way of using our skills to obtain information without revealing too much about ourselves to the enemy.

The ideal strategy would be to develop two independent teams with little or no knowledge of each other. One group could approach the enemy to ascertain its broad organization, plans and hierarchy, while winning its trust. The talkers would be ideal for this and would be expendable, whether they'd know it or not. The second group would train in secret,



carrying out occasional missions against weak and isolated targets to hone its skills. Once the "collaborators" had passed enough information down, I could order the second group to take down the first and use the information gathered to plan a series of strikes that would fragment and weaken the enemy's power base.

At this point, subtlety may not be an issue. Many of the targets are extremely strong and resilient. The key factor is taking them down fast and with as little danger to the fighters as possible.

Once we have successfully carried out this model across Scotland, we can send key members of our squads into other regions to repeat it. If there's one thing I picked up from that Sassenach bastard, it's that this problem is not confined to Scotland. It's at least UK-wide and possibly spread further. Liberation can only be achieved through a systematic guerilla-style war.

Maybe I was too hasty in hiding out. If I can find some way to re-join the Sassenach's group, perhaps for an extended period of time, I stand a chance of learning a good deal about the enemy. He's apparently in contact with some other groups nationwide. He may actually have compromised the Stirling group, but with time I'm sure I can bring them back to my way of thinking. Otherwise, cooperation with the Sassenach may allow me the opportunity to make contact with other soldiers with a similar outlook.

The question is how to achieve it all.

LEGION

I haven't been choosing the right soldiers to fight by my side. In concocting an honest-to-God plague, you don't want to cobble it together with itty-bitty bullshit germs. You want heavy hitters. Bubonic. Ebola. HIV. The kind of plagues that'll clear a nation from border to border. The kind whose only result is death, has always been death and will continue to be death.

Those three in New Orleans. They weren't death. They were germs. Effective in the short term, but we need people to commit for the long haul. I need a pestilence to bring the beasts to their knees. To do that, I need the proper ingredients.

And so I found him. The prodigal problem child. Alleyman. Peleus.

The sniper was a little resistant to my ideas. That's understandable. I was actually pleased that he didn't take to them so quickly. Enlightenment shouldn't come immediately. It took me a long time to discover the truth. We can't all be Paul on the road to Damascus.

He had the methods down. He's messy and he leaves too much of himself behind, but he's efficient. His numbers are great. And I appreciate his attitude toward others of our kind. He won't tolerate their whiny, backstabbing bullshit. Their options are threefold—they can

help, they can get out of the way or they can try to find their way out of a body bag. He doesn't know the words for it yet, but somewhere in there he knows that if you're not curing the cancer, you are the cancer. There's no in-between.

He tried to cover his eyes from me and plug his ears to the things I had to say. I won't give him too much credit. He's still stuck in his backward mentality, relying too strongly on impressions he had from before, when he was asleep. He called me "nigger," he called me "coon." Why? Because of the color of my skin? Skin is just a suit. A costume. The monsters wear them, but we're fortunate to wear them, too. It's just a fucking bag that holds in your guts and blood. He thinks it means something. It doesn't.

He attacked me, of course. I would've attacked me, too, but I was ready for him. A syringe filled with a home-cooked cocktail. I jabbed it in his leg. The stuff acts quick. I made sure of it.

And so we were able to have a rational talk. I think I surprised him when I asked where Wrath was. Of course, he didn't tell me. But his reaction confirmed what I suspected since I read a message from Wrath about us sweeping the world like fire, a line I remembered from Homer. Just like I remembered the name "Peleus" from Homer. Somewhere between The Turner Diaries and The Arsonist's Bible, I guess he made time for The Iliad and it shaped his thinking about what he believes we are. We're not classical heroes, though. We're something else.

He's in the other room, now. We're in a hotel in Slidell, about fifteen miles outside of New Orleans. He's asleep. The morphine should be keeping the pain down. He didn't want to lose the hand, but once I explained the concept of necessity to him, I think he got it. The lesson made some sense. You could see it in his eyes. Fact is, everyone has to think he's dead. And it makes perfect sense that I killed him. Some black militant taking down the white supremacist — who turns out to be half Cherokee Indian. He didn't know that and didn't like the revelation much. Thanks, Mom.

I see now that it's a good thing I never bothered to track Wrath down after we tried to work together months ago. I thought about surprising him at that hidey-hole of his after the little coward left me alone in the middle of a fight. The new and improved Wrath I saw in his emails didn't make sense until I thought of what I tried to do with Richard Daley. Once I saw the Peleus connection, everything came together. And now I have a worthy ally.

He's recovering, but slowly. With the fire I set at Wrath's place, someone should find the teeth we left behind. And the hand. He'll be dead to the world. He's already dead in the legal sense. Now maybe those lunatics on the list will believe it, too. Dead to them, he'll be reborn

and together we'll start an army. We'll be a plague. The second deluge. We'll be the Fifth Horseman.

GETTING BY

DECEMBER 15

I'm moving. I never thought I'd find myself doing this, but I'm heading south to England with Paul. He's trying to establish a new group of hunters down there and I think the best for me is to be a part of it. I seem to have less "incidents" when Paul's around. I think working my plans through with him eases the need to destroy the things that turn me into the "other" me. If I'm going to stay useful, I'm going to have to try to control it.

I think the others are relieved to see me go. I don't blame them. Apparently I've threatened the Stirling crowd, and badly beaten two of the Glasgow lot in my escape a few weeks ago. They really haven't got a lot of reason to trust me. I think the only reason the Stirling lot hasn't reported me to the police is that they're still scared of me. I hate myself for saying it, but part of me sort of likes the idea. The really tough officers in the TA, the ones who were really effective, terrified me — and not just because I'm a woman. Some of the men dropped their guts every time one of those guys barked an order. Respect and fear are two sides of the same coin. If the troops don't respect you, they won't obey your orders without question when it really matters.

Certainly, the more time I spend with others, the more evident it becomes that they're badly in need of leadership. Too many of them pull in different directions without any coordination to make best use of their talents. Each of us seems to be given a different set of tools — that's the only way I can really think of these bizarre things we can do. It's as if we have different roles in the war. Society has grown too liberal. It teaches us that we can be whatever we want. That's nonsense. We all have our skills and aptitudes and we should do what we're best suited to, not what we happen to fancy.

It's a struggle making the others see that. Still, the hidden ones make it easier for me. If we don't use the tools we've been given, the enemy can escape or hurt us without much effort, and people quickly slip into their assigned roles once their lives are at stake. They're slowly growing more militant in their thinking. Paul gets uncomfortable with it sometimes. I think it reminds him of his past mistakes, but reminding him of my training usually eases some of his fears. He'd be hard pressed to deny the results we've achieved in the last few months.

The war is just beginning. When the time for the big battles comes, maybe I'll have them ready. That day is

Subject: [no subject]

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: count666372

107

106

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104

a ways off yet. In the meantime, we've got rats to kill. Thanks diary, but I don't think I'll need you anymore. Now that I've accepted what I am and what I have to do, things seem easier. I haven't had an incident since that last escape from the flat in Glasgow. I now know what I want and how to achieve it.

DELIVERANCE

It's late. It's raining. I'm tired. It's been a long night. The biopsy is complete, I think. I've been bleeding the patient, cutting out the tumors. But every time I turn my back, I feel like the fucking thing spreads. The cancer moves in right behind me, just as I finish burning it out. It's a constant process. I don't think it'll ever end. I think I'm going to die this way. Pushing back the sickness, kicking the infection into the god-damned ground.

But I'm not done. I may be tired, but I won't quit. Not yet. I'm not going to sleep... now that I've got help.

We're making a choice that we make over and over again every day. Every minute of every day. To kill or not. Society thinks it's wrong, but society doesn't know it's being bent over the sink and fucked up the ass. Killing may seem wrong, but it's just another form of aggressive therapy. We do what we have to. No

therapy is painless. It requires work and sacrifice on the part of the individual who works for improvement. You don't get better by sitting on your ass and hoping and praying and jerking off. You have to be forceful. Demanding. Most of all, devoted.

We're going to change the face of the world one of these days. I can't lie to myself — I know the place that we'll end up with isn't going to be the same place we started with. We're cutting out too much. So much live tissue is being chopped out that this place won't be recognizable. But at least it'll be around. At least it'll finally be ours.

So the choice is clear. Do we want a body, its back riddled with bedsores, its gut bulging with tumors? Or do we want to fucking survive a limb short? I know what I want. And I know what I'll do to get it. The cancer is in the system. I'm not the only one who sees that now. In time, we'll persevere. God rewards the victorious.

PLAN IN MOTION

Observations: Plan now successfully implemented. Have integrated with the Sassanach's group and they seem to have accepted me. Let's see what I can pry out of them about the enemy before they're useless to me.



CHAPTER 5:

WAR KNOWS NO BOUNDS

I will give you over to bloodshed and it will pursue you. Since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you.

— Ezekiel 35:6

BRINGERS OF DEATH

Questions abound for the chosen. It's exhausting and haunting to be a hunter, an existence rife with confusion over purpose, origin and future. *Who am I? Why me? What have I become?* No clear answers are forthcoming. Newly awakened to the monstrous truths of the world, the imbued are left to wander like children in the dark, groping desperately for boundaries, stumbling into danger, seeking any guiding light.

Many find meaning and guidance in their methodology, the way they "take up the hunt." Angry and aggressive people tend to adopt the mission with passion and fervor, whereas the compassionate and forgiving can answer the call with a gracious view on the reality into which they're thrust. Those with natural insight or curiosity might consider the hunt with a mind for broad answers or skewed logic. And around them all are obscure messages and momentary flashes of unreal insight, a seeming truth that's just out of reach.

Occasionally, however, some chosen emerge with a sense of purpose and foresight unknown by most others. These extremely rare few seem driven beyond capacity, without question, without hesitation. Some are immediately, innately and inherently steeped so deeply in an undertaking that no other course is possible. These few are subjected to an imperative of such extreme relentlessness and unforgiving that they seem almost alien to other hunters — human in body but inhuman in morality and spirit. These reactionary chosen can cut a swath through whomever or whatever they perceive as an enemy or threat. Individuals

who stand in the way meet with violence so calculated that it could be performed only by a machine — or a monster. *Who* are these people? *What* are these people? Are they Avengers so far gone that they've lost any shred of compassion? Are they Martyrs who have given up their last ounce of human identity? Or are they Visionaries with heads so warped that they are incapable of restraint?

Or worse — are these hunters something different? Something new, something no one has ever seen before or even been able to conceive in their worst nightmares of destruction and carnage?

They are Waywards and they are certainly not "new." The few Wayward hunters who exist seem to have been around since the beginning, awakening among the first echelons of the chosen — and they continue to appear today. They are extremely rare, they are brutal and they are like no other hunters. They are most content when bringing death to monsters and those near the enemy. Casualties are not merely acceptable — they're welcome. Waywards are prepared to burn down a retirement home to get at one blood slave janitor in the boiler room. While other chosen argue and squabble over plans of attack or ways of addressing creatures, these hunters wade in, bent on annihilating whatever is within reach.

When most imbued encounter these obsessed hunters, they get the hell out of the way, calling Waywards psychopaths, sociopaths or serial killers. Fortunately, only a handful of imbued have ever encountered these killers — and probably wouldn't know it if they did. There's no obvious sign about these tormented chosen that marks them as outright murder-

ers. A few chosen, however, get close to these Waywards and witness their work firsthand — and may be changed forever after. Once the carnage begins, other hunters may discover that the benefits of being with one of these killers outweighs even the depredations that are committed before their eyes. Just by being in proximity to a Wayward, “lesser” hunters discover that their eyes are opened for them, their gifts come more easily — and a lust for blood can indeed come to seem the best response to monsters’ threat. Some have almost found a killer’s company a subtle addiction. Others lose themselves in the bloodbath, go mad or simply end up dead.

Why did the Heralds create these madmen? Was there some secret purpose? The making of Waywards appears still to occur. They still emerge from time to time, launching into a frenzy at their imbuing. But why? If they’re so destructive, why do they still arise? Some theorize that such deviants represent an error committed once that has since spiraled out of control — perhaps even out of God’s control. Like a Frankenstein’s monster, maybe they were built for one purpose, could not fulfill it and now thrash about in a rage as they search for another calling. Then there are those hunters who genuinely fear even to divulge the notion that the psychopaths may have been put in place to mark the way for all imbued — to be leaders in a war that lacks direction. Or maybe, just maybe, Waywards aren’t broken at all. Maybe they’re just the way the Heralds want them. Maybe it’s all the other hunters who are broken. No one knows what hunters’ creators intended — or intend. They only suspect that the touch of divine hands can yield some very tragic results.

WAYWARDS IN PLAY

Waywards are members of a “lost” creed, intended for a leadership, counsel and militant role but somehow... broken in the process. This chapter gives you all the rules and rollplaying tips to help you portray a member of this errant group. It should give you a foundation on which to create someone who was once a (relatively) normal person and who is suddenly and drastically ushered toward a remorseless and grisly destiny.

Maniacs are unlike any other hunters. As members of a terrifying breed, they embody their Vision primary Virtue with a grim resolve encountered in no other. The combination of their insight and violence suggests a purpose as warlords or military strategists spiraled out of control. Now all that seems to remain of any such ideal is an imperative to destroy and a keen sense for ways to inflict the greatest harm.

It’s unlikely that any imbued crosses paths with one of these hell-bent chosen, but it occasionally occurs — perhaps once in a hunter’s brief lifetime. If you play a psycho, which should probably be the only one of her kind in your chronicle, this chapter helps you define her abhorrent path. This chapter offers rollplaying tips, edges, Backgrounds, Traits and other possibilities that allow you wear the skin of a Wayward.

The warmongers are violent, hateful and utterly obsessed with destruction. They may be integral to overcoming the darkness — the chosen warriors of some god gone horribly astray — or they may be a fire-blackened, inscrutable piece in an otherwise jumbled puzzle. You decide.

THOSE GONE ASTRAY

Waywards are different. Really different. They might look like other hunters (though some don’t — see — “Signs of

the Righteous,” p. 91), but they’re a whole other division of soldier. As such, they’re subject to some unique character-creation rules. These qualifiers, “benefits” and exceptions are some of the things that make a Wayward an outcast among the imbued. Not least of these qualities is Waywards’ starting Conviction of 4 — the highest among the Vision creeds.

DERANGEMENT

It doesn’t matter who your Wayward was before he was pulled headlong into the madness. He might have been a shop teacher or a militant terrorist — his previous identity does not and cannot prepare him for the imbuing, especially not the particular kind that confronts him. The knobs that control aggression, hate, anger — every one of them is cranked past sane limits. The volume of violence that shrieks in his ears is all-encompassing.

And so a potential Wayward has a choice. His mind snaps and he’s left a gibbering idiot, or he somehow runs the gauntlet of change and perseveres to emerge remade into an entirely new person. But the only way a candidate can endure is through outright insanity. Madness is a convenient back door for a Wayward. It makes him capable of contending with barbaric cravings and impulses, allowing him to endure the horrid trauma of the imbuing. The transformation is harrowing and the brain copes the only way it can — by breaking and mending, never perfect, but still allowing some form of distorted and warped cognition.

Each Wayward begins the game with one *mandatory* derangement, brought upon him by sudden and irresistible desires for slaughter and ruin. This disorder is invariably among the most extreme, traumatizing diseases that the human mind may suffer. Some of the more disturbing imbalances that afflict Waywards include Schizophrenia (Hunter, p. 204), Megalomania (p. 205), Sadism (Hunter Book: Martyr, p. 74), Compulsive-Aggressive Disorder (Hunter Book: Avenger, p. 69), or one of a whole slew of possible personality disorders (two of which are detailed later in this chapter).

One of the most unfortunate facts of this punishment is that a Wayward is hopelessly married to her derangement. The mind copes in the most bewildering of ways and allows the hunter to do what she senses must be done. And the mind doesn’t stop trying to cope. It opens the door to making atrocities possible and tolerable. Waywards’ madness is unrelenting and untreatable. Your character is incapable of alleviating her illness. It’s her companion for the remainder of her brutish days.

There is small comfort, however. Whereas most chosen begin to manifest derangements at Virtue ratings of 7, your Wayward doesn’t acquire additional ailments until attaining a rating of 9 in any Virtue. Perhaps your murderer’s initial affliction helps protect against — or simply dwarfs — further mental fractures. Or maybe he is so hardened to calamity early on that almost nothing can faze him afterward. Either way, Waywards don’t gain further derangements until earning a 9th and 10th point in any Virtue (although, by the time your character gains a Virtue rating of 10 and commensurate proximity to the Messengers, derangements are probably the least of his worries, even for a Wayward).

PREVAILING SIGHT

When the Heralds set out to create hunters who wind up as Waywards, they presumably believe the mortal mind can (and needs to) deal with seeing the true world revealed at all

costs, at all times. What good would chosen warlords and generals be if they couldn't identify their foe? With their "eyes" constantly open, the agents of the divine could be battle-ready and able to spot monsters' corruption at any given moment. The result is that Waywards' second sight is always active. Every rot, leech, shambler, flicker or other supernatural being — menace or not — in a Wayward's field of vision can be seen without effort. As usual with the sight, no actual identification ability is conferred — someone looks wrong or seems off, but not necessarily in any specific way. Your Wayward doesn't necessarily know what he sees, but he sure as hell knows it's not normal.

As a result, you need never spend Conviction to turn on your character's second sight. It's perpetually active. Note, however, that this benefit does not confer the other bonuses that come with Conviction expenditure. No protection from mind-, emotion- or body-control powers or effects is granted to your character. If you haven't spent a point of Conviction for protection and a leech performs some sort of mind manipulation on your character, the character is subject to the power. You have to spend Conviction to activate the defense mechanisms that normally coincide with second sight, even though your character can "see" at all times.

If they survive long enough, Waywards generally realize that as soon as they spot a monster, it's prudent to bring their "will" to bear as a defense. (You can always choose when to activate your character's self-protection effects, or the Storyteller can allow you and your character to "react with Conviction" when monsters are near or when use of their capabilities is somehow sensed — see—Hunter, p. 133.)

The irony, of course, is that bearing uninterrupted witness to the horrors of the world only furthers Waywards' madness and perpetuates their condition. They can never escape the sickening knowledge that the world is corrupt and dying. Creatures and their poisonous touch are sensed everywhere. Constant second sight is therefore a double-edged sword — it's Waywards' greatest weapon but also an open wound in the soul that can never heal.

As a corollary to Waywards' persistent sight, they can never possess observation edges such as Discern, Witness or Illuminate that allow for the identification of creatures' natures, qualities or traits. Killers are allowed to spot a creature when it's present, but they are denied the faculties to distinguish one kind of being from another. Monsters are all simply wrong, off or tainted, without distinctive shadings. And in a sense, such ignorance makes Waywards' role easier to stomach. There's a certain bliss that comes with the ignorance of not knowing which enemy is better or worse than another. They must all be destroyed, whether well-meaning spirit or rampaging shapechanger. That's all that matters.

AMONG CHIEFS

Waywards are ruled by their ailments and by their obsession with monsters' destruction. Their madness rules them from day one, pushing them to ever more gruesome acts of carnage and wanton slaughter. They might not have been intended to act as killing machines, but that's how their message has been received.

There is slight relief to their plight, however, in the presence of Visionaries. Whether this respite suggests a once-intended relationship of respect between Waywards and Visionaries or is a glimmer of a knight-and-lord model in an existence otherwise gone horribly awry is unknown. The



cause of killers' calming may not be important any longer. The bottom line is that maniacs' ailments are alleviated somewhat in proximity to a Visionary. Whereas your character might normally act on even the most sadistic whim when left to his own devices, you may spend a Willpower point to "turn off" his prevailing derangement (the one acquired at character creation) for a single scene as long as a Visionary is still within sight or earshot — even over a phone or on a television. The Visionary and his player need do nothing to initiate, encourage or maintain this calming effect.

A clarity can overcome your character in these moments. His murderous instinct eases briefly and he may think rationally for the duration, almost the way he did before the imbuings. He can coordinate activities and speak coherently even if he was enraged moments before. In fact, your character may recognize the atrocities he has committed of late and be overwhelmed by the guilt, anguish or remorse that would normally result for any sane person. This emotional suffering is largely a roleplaying opportunity, without any impact on game mechanics. The downside to the effect is that after the eye of the storm passes and the attending Visionary is gone, the maelstrom resumes — often worse than it was before, because your character can torment himself for having shown weakness or regret.

THE IMBUING

A Wayward's imbuings is serious. That's not to say that other hunters go through some frivolous, bullshit rite of passage, but a Wayward's "birth" is life- and mind-shattering, right from the very start. Many or all of the qualities and values held dear from previous existence fall away because they come to be seen as suddenly futile, empty or extravagant. The path to a new course of action and direction is clear, and it can lead through a field of bodies.

Destruction runs rampant at a Wayward's imbuings. Casualties can be high — among any beasts present, but also among any unfortunate passersby and even among any hunters awakened simultaneously. Usually, no one is safe. Whatever monster is present is something of a representational target — an object distilling every negative emotion that a Wayward has ever carried or suddenly been invested with, to degrees never before known. Fear, hate, anger — it all turns white-hot and is turned on the creature (or creatures) at hand.

Wham! The plan imprints itself on the Wayward's mind, forever lighting her twisted path. The answer becomes clear. Annihilation is the solution to every question, problem and puzzle she's ever faced. And it makes sense. The Wayward's psyche provides all the necessary buffers to accept such a radical agenda. Maybe she was a doctor who now simply understands that she must purge this "monstrous plague" from the world. Maybe she always resented men and now an actual bloodsucking man crouches before her to represent every intolerable male quality. However the Wayward mandate manifests, some sort of unfathomable equation races through the newly imbued person's mind, erasing old thought and morality patterns, heightening others or imposing entirely new ones. And all the patterns point to death.

In the moment that the Wayward embraces death like a partner, nobody is safe. People in a maniac's path or who try to interfere with the his newfound objective... well, they're probably "with the monsters" and could get mighty dead, mighty quick. The notion of "innocent people" may very well be alien to a Wayward. Nobody's truly innocent, right? After

all, everybody hurts other people in some way, at some time. Monsters' corruption must have touched everyone. So why not just kill them all?

The Wayward imbuings isn't always quite that extreme, but it can be. And regardless of severity, the imbuings forever resonates in a Wayward's mind. He may not know it does so — some maniacs are so disconnected that they don't even remember their imbuings. But it's there. In the back of the head, waiting to provide paper, pencil and inspiration with which to plan a lethal crusade.

Of course, an imbuings scene may involve the awakening of one or many hunters. A Wayward being birthed into the madness can be pretty dangerous for any other burgeoning imbued present. An Innocent may open her eyes to the supernatural for the first time only to have a Wayward push her into traffic because she's "not helping."

There are ways, however, to make the situation work for the troupe and your chronicle, to create an organic whole out of the experience — even with a Wayward in the mess. It's useful from the outset to encourage players' awareness that, although some disagreements may arise between them and their characters during play, the troupe and the hunters need to work together. The imbuings is a fantastic place to highlight this necessity, especially with an up-and-coming Wayward on the scene. Consider that a psycho manifests edges as does any other hunter, but particularly Impart, which allows him to activate other hunters' second sight. The Wayward does so to make the others aware of the threat present and to aid him against it, but he also does the favor of alerting them to trouble, even if he isn't fully aware of the effect he inspires. Maybe other characters on the scene simply sense that the "maniac" among them is somehow integral to knowing what's really going on around them.

It's also a good idea to indicate how hunters in an imbuings scene complement each other in order to emphasize that a potential Wayward can need allies, and they can need him. A Defender may work to heal a Wayward who throws himself at this walking nightmare they face. A Visionary may be able to focus a Wayward somewhat when she would otherwise tear up the entire place. A Redeemer might even be believed to "bless the dead" in the aftermath of the imbuings to help the fallen move on to their final reward rather than return and further the world's suffering.

The point being, no one is safe at a Wayward's imbuings. It's therefore important to make sure that everyone has a part to play so that characters and players recognize the importance of all participants. After all, even a rampaging Wayward may appreciate the person who swings a tire iron at one of the things, or he may spare the person who can miraculously hold beasts in place to be massacred where they stand.

IDENTIFYING A WAYWARD

The emergence of Waywards among the chosen is a pretty rare event. Whether the Heralds' induction of individuals into the creed has intentionally been reduced to a trickle or the creation of such imbued could not be stopped once it was begun, Waywards among players (or the Storyteller's characters) ought to be extremely uncommon. They simply don't spring up at every turn. The Messengers don't crowd the earth with these broken warlords. Don't expect more than one or two to appear among your characters and your chronicle's supporting cast. That said, you and your Storyteller should know when they can slip in through the cracks.

WAYWARD OR AVENGER?

Upon first glance, it might be hard to distinguish a Wayward from an extreme Avenger. Both tend to use violence as an essential means toward an end. Both appear to rely on physical conflict to resolve problems. There are, however, some key differences between the two.

Avengers are adherents of Zeal. As Zealots, Avengers tend to seize the moment, fueling their actions with the coals of passion, the embers of wrath. They are driven by their emotions, their desire to stop being victimized and to get revenge on those whom (they believe) have wronged them or others.

Waywards don't operate that way. They're followers of Vision and as such aren't necessarily motivated by an emotional, vengeful energy. They're ushered along by dark designs, building majestic architecture in their heads to justify their urge to destroy. They don't just jump out and hack at something because they're offended. They plan the pain they inflict. They teach it to others, hoping to spread it like a virus. They have aspirations, like Visionaries, but theirs are nightmares of destruction with a purpose — apocalyptic waking dreams.

If you want a real-world example of the difference between Avengers and Waywards, consider a police detective and the Reverend Jim Jones. The first is the kind of person whose motivations might stem from a range of emotions. Maybe she had an abusive parent, but instead of becoming an abuser herself she seeks to avenge other children who suffered worse than she did. Maybe she never confronted her own upbringing, her mixed feelings about the abusive parent, so she thinks the only way to earn love is through force — which she wisely directs at worse abusers than herself, at criminals.

Maybe she's that rare individual, the Good Cop, who seeks vengeance utterly in accordance with the law (i.e., justice) because her loving, non-abusive parents taught her it was the right way to live. Any of these people could be imbued as Avengers.

Now consider the Reverend Jim Jones, who inflicted a deviant lifestyle on a cult of followers in which every action was met with a combination of reward and violence. "Jonestown" was part of a long-standing, dark design — one that ultimately ended in the poisoning deaths of almost everyone at that South American compound. Jones didn't make all this possible on a whim. His plan was a *Grand Guignol* of suffering and grief — all in the name of religious enlightenment. Ultimately, though, Jones' ends came to be The End — his and his followers'. And that end was sweeping and horrible in scale and enormity. It was wayward.

Remember that even a negative quality such as hatred may offer guidance and far-reaching perspective. It can inspire a person to plot harm against a certain group on a vast scale, not just against isolated individuals. The Wayward "dream" is heavily steeped in such intense, encompassing abhorrence. Avengers' activities seem petty by comparison.

It's probably not best for your Storyteller to assign the Wayward creed arbitrarily. The burden of playing such a fractured character should not be forced on any player. The decision to have a Wayward in your game — and who exactly portrays one — should be settled by the Storyteller and the best potential player. As the introduction to this book states, it takes a mature mind and player to roleplay a psychopath — and to still make the game enjoyable for everyone else involved.

Fortunately, there is a back door out of being saddled with a Wayward character, even if the person behaves in ways appropriate to the creed during the imbuing. There are definitely differences between Avengers and Waywards, but the behaviors and attitudes that separate them could also be rationalized to allow a potential Wayward to manifest as one of the Vengeful, instead. Maybe your character's wrath for monsters was in fact the product of a perceived wrong from the past as opposed to being anger for its own sake. Your character therefore doesn't develop any Wayward edges or manifest any initial derangement, after all. Or maybe a character who throws himself at monsters during the imbuing doesn't actually do so to slaughter them all, but to spare other people harm by the things (and so a Martyr is born instead of a Wayward).

Waywards are a distinct lot, clearly apart from the rest of the hunter creeds, with their own bent and defining lines. What follows are some conditions or qualities about a person that could lead him to become a Wayward. They suggest who your character might be before the imbuing and what he could become afterward.

Aggression: Those who become Waywards are not typically the type to "take things lightly." They don't step back from a situation to gain perspective, and they certainly aren't willing to play devil's advocate to talk things through. They take care of a situation as soon as possible. They get in other people's faces, they start fights and they rage against those they don't agree with or whom they just don't understand. Their answer may not always be violence — it may be yelling, acting up, driving fast or some other stress-venting act. But more often than not, they bully their way through a situation, and that can definitely result in punches thrown — or worse, shots fired.

This sort of behavior can definitely be exemplified in the imbuing. The Wayward does not try to see "all sides" of the situation when confronted with the inhuman. He may even force a monster's hand before it gets to commit any offense. The creature may not even intend to commit an offense, but must now defend itself. People who are naturally aggressive and who behave so at the imbuing probably don't back down from any being encountered and instead attack relentlessly, thus ushering themselves into a broken existence thereafter.

Hatred: Some people harbor a deep, unfounded loathing for some institution, philosophy or group. No mere "dislike," what drives some potential Waywards is downright abhorrence, tempered with a strong streak of revulsion, and could stem from just about any source. Hatred often derives from bigoted beliefs: prejudice based on race or ethnicity, strong sexist stands, bias that targets others due to their gender preferences. Or it can be more focused, such as hatred of people in higher economic brackets or "those God-damn Democrat bastards." The target of a person's vitriol can be very broad or very specific, depending on the individual in question.

Hatred can certainly determine a potential Wayward's course at the imbuing. The essence of your character's enmity seems to manifest in a monster as one of "them," whoever that might be. It doesn't even matter whether the creature looks or behaves like the target of your character's loathing. He sees it that way according to his own skewed reasoning.

The imbuing can also lead a prospective Wayward down new, misguided paths of hatred, giving rise to fresh targets for ceaseless aggression. Your character may have hated "fags" or "niggers" before, but now he perhaps suspects that inhuman creatures are responsible for all people whom he perceives as tainted, thus making room to despise "kikes" and "beaners," too. The bottom line here is blame. A Wayward is often able to project his anger onto the creature before him, even if he must fit a square peg into a round hole. Like hatred itself, a Wayward's "reasoning" need not be logical.

Repression: The world is filled with people who repress things that happen to them. Sometimes, memories are tucked away just below the conscious level. Other times, they exist so deep that echoes of events can be found only in the subconscious. Either way, these memories can bubble to the surface at the most inappropriate times and cause radical behavior changes — whether destructive or self-destructive.

Waywards are people who once (or who still) repress something. Something bad. Never anything as simple as "My sweetie broke up with me." The repression is usually of a horrific, haunting experience: child molestation, rape, witnessing tragedy, loss of a loved one. Or maybe a person was the perpetrator of such deeds and has buried their memory to deal with the guilt. The act may even have been committed for the "right" reasons, such as following orders to commit outright atrocities during the Gulf War. Any extreme event is the stuff of repression, and the Wayward mind is often founded on the poisoned ground of such buried memories.

Exposure to monsters or the truth of the world during the imbuing can cause repressed memories to rear their ugly heads. Maybe your character is awash in them and lashes out in anger, frustration or fear. The monster — and anyone else nearby — is just a convenient target. Or maybe the revelation brings forth buried thoughts permanently — and your character can't push them back down again. Dealing with such feelings in the short term is typically expressed as rage. And in the case of Waywards, the "short term" can continue for weeks, months or years.

Victimization: Sometimes, the role of Wayward can be imposed on someone who doesn't necessarily warrant it. She might be a fairly well-adjusted person. She might have a simple, perhaps even sheltered life. She might not hate, resent or envy anyone or hide anything about her past from herself. And yet, she can draw the Heralds' attention when a killer is needed or the phenomenon that perpetuates Waywards strikes again.

This sort of victim is made insane by the very fact of the change inflicted upon her. Her lack of previous maladjustment makes the transition into a murderer even harder to bear than it is for other maniacs. The change seems so unfair. What justifies this kind of punishment? Maybe nothing at all. Maybe it's just fate, and the victim is in the wrong place at the wrong time. Maybe some unknowable force decides that the subject needs a wake-up call from her delicate, even-keeled existence. Regardless of the reasons, a once-content and well-meaning person is turned into a monster that's barely discernible from the things she now seeks to destroy.

This imbuing is perhaps the most unusual among all hunters', if that's possible to say. At least the personalities, beliefs or identities of other hunters tend to flow into the roles they assume in the hunt. The calling leads them down a path that they already walk. In the case of the "Wayward victim," the change is radical and jarring, a violation of nature and spirit. This kind of imbuing, above all others that Waywards can undergo, may indicate that the creed was never quite perfected or turned out differently than the Messengers intended.

PRELUDE EVENTS

The way an imbuing plays out isn't set in stone. A thousand-and-one variables arise when a hunter's awareness blooms. And yet, there are some common experiences and occurrences that flesh out the moment, sending the chosen in certain directions. Nascent Waywards' experiences are no different, and many (though they certainly don't know it) endure some similar experiences that make their imbuing

WHY BE A WAYWARD?

Portraying a Wayward should not be taken lightly. This isn't just a character who's inclined to fight or who has a hot temper. This is a wanton mass murderer, even if his targets are primarily inhuman beings. You have to know why you want to play a psychopath, sociopath or stone-cold killer. If you think it would be a hoot to incur limitless violence on your troupe and the supporting cast, maybe a Wayward isn't for you. If you've recently been fired or dumped, or you're confused about your sexuality and you want to take it out on someone else, maybe a Wayward isn't for you.

If you're looking for a mature, albeit disturbing experience, however — probably one unlike any other you've had in a roleplaying game — then proceed. Talk to your Storyteller about it. Don't assume a Wayward will automatically fit any Hunter game. A Wayward will tear apart a chronicle based on understanding monsters. The Storyteller has to create room on deck for your loose cannon. He needs to make allowances in a story for a hunter who might attack anything or anyone without warning or even apparent provocation. (Believe it or not, some Storytellers even like being forced to stay on their narrative toes this way.)

It's been said before but bears repeating: Waywards are extremely rare. There's no army of them in the desert waiting to storm corrupt cities. Hunters are *unlucky* to meet even one of these people during their "careers." The psychos exist in minute numbers on the fringes of hunter society and are often mistaken for imbued who have gone too far for the cause and lost themselves in the process. There's no widespread, recognized, specific group of wackos among the imbued.

Also, make sure you're ready to play a Wayward. Not to say that playing any member of any creed doesn't come with its own roleplaying baggage, but there's a difference here. As a Wayward, you're playing a purposefully violent character in a time when society has witnessed unimaginable atrocities — school shootings, office killings, serial murders, botched FBI raids and worse. A Wayward fits snugly into this unfortunate microcosm, and when you slip your feet into those shoes... well, the roleplaying results can be very disturbing for you and your fellow gamers.

special. The following are developments or forms of behavior that can inspire a Wayward to emerge or that indicate when one has come to be. The Storyteller can either set up events with a Wayward imbuing in mind, or a player who seeks such a character can roleplay appropriately to invite her induction into the creed.

Violent Fugue: Your Wayward almost literally wakes up — often at the scene of a gruesome murder — with no memory of what's happened. Surely something terrible occurred, but poised on the brink of madness, your character has suffered a blackout. She may remember nothing more than witnessing something unacceptable and the flash of insight that the Messengers delivered. It could be that repressed memories of the past arose and were too much to bear, or hatred for the thing and what it represented was more than your character's mind could deal with. Afterward, it's just a void — till she finds herself cognizant, surrounded by bodies and covered in blood. Maybe the murder weapon is still in hand.

Death of Innocents: Your character is dragged into the "real world" and is confronted by a horrible creature — and the normal people it influences and with whom it surrounds itself. Whether these people (mere mortals) are in league with the beast or are just passersby doesn't matter. Your character concludes that they might have been corrupted by it simply by being in its proximity or accepts that the only way to take this thing out (and boy, does he ever want to take this thing out) involves incidental loss. Maybe he's fine with either situation. Maybe he regrets what must be done. Either way, it has to and does happen. A scene of unimaginable violence ensues and the monster is slain. But so are a lot of other people.

Hate Crime: That which your character hates is suddenly presented before him — but now it's worse than ever. Monstrous. Wrong. Evil. This imbuing can occur among individuals who already harbor a great deal of loathing. Whether your character is a misogynist, racist or homophobe, the object of his hatred is revealed not only as what he already despises, but also as a monster. The thing serves only to confirm your character's beliefs. Now he knows why he hates those "wetbacks" or "crackers" or "whores." Now he has evidence, and it's time to make them hurt.

Messages: Waywards don't always receive input from the Messengers quite the way that other hunters do. As a creed that was seemingly mishandled by the Heralds — perhaps as one of the first created and therefore botched — these imbued were not and still aren't forged by the same fire that hardens other imbued. For them, the floodgates open, their minds are encouraged or forced to absorb imperatives to destroy, and then they're unleashed upon the world.

There are multiple ways in which the creators' transmissions come through at the imbuing, and likely thereafter. There may be an incessant chattering in your character's head, a barrage of sibilant whispers telling him to KILL, DESTROY, BURN, or to perform any other act of brutality. He may receive a singular message — one transmission that repeats over and over like a broken record, smeared across bulletin boards and television screens and crumbling sidewalks. Everywhere he looks is another harsh "call to duty" that desensitizes him to the horror of what he's told to do. It's possible that messages are indecipherable, just an unwavering drone of maddening white noise. Or violent sensory experiences may overwhelm a potential Wayward — an inexplicable flash of



one's mother being raped, the sweat-cologne smell of a fondling step-father — causing him to lash out.

No matter what, contact from the Heralds hits hard during the imbuing. It's mind- and soul-numbing, and excruciatingly painful. A person may not even want to act on the impulses that overcome him, even as he performs those very deeds.

PLAYING A WAYWARD

A Wayward is forced to contend with a horde of conflicting emotions and impulses that wage war in his soul. Once a "normal" person (a relative term if there ever was one), your character now struggles with burning anger, and negotiates with (or tries to shed) the ghosts of his former life to somehow coincide with his new, horrid programming. No matter who your character was, his new mindset invades his old identity. Both sides are compelled to fight the monsters outside themselves — and all the ones inside, too. The battle never ends.

Waywards can also fight other hunters. It's an unfortunate fact, but their "righteous" aggression and embrace of violence do not make them good bedfellows with... well, just about anybody. Even the most stalwart Avenger can flinch when a Wayward gets down to business. Some Waywards are so far gone that they think nothing of dispensing with anyone who intrudes upon their mission or who espouses different opinions or techniques about the hunt. Messing with one of these mad dogs can put a hunter on the autopsy table.

So the challenge is a big one. How do you make your Wayward playable? What lets you get into your character's head and examine his warped identity and perspective, while still depicting a person who doesn't destroy everything your Storyteller and the other players try to do? It's isn't easy. Entering a game with a full-blown psychopath does not necessarily make a good time for all. A compromise must be reached to allow an enjoyable, shared story be told even as you try to abide by your character's nature.

Your Wayward may be a maniac by definition, but she needs to get along with other hunters in some fashion. Designing an antagonistic hunter with severed heads in her fridge probably alienates, rather than welcomes, other hunters. Unless you play a solo game, your character has to be capable of dealing with people in a manner other than disemboweling them, while still maintaining likely characteristics of her creed. Maybe your character isn't too far gone just yet (she has a low Vision score). She can let some monsters and other people off the hook in the short term if there's promise of a bigger kill later. Or perhaps because your Wayward is birthed of Vision, she has enough foresight to realize that it's wise to keep some other hunters on her side, even if it's just to use them as cannon fodder one day or to help see her through to the devastation of her wildest dreams.

No matter how you cut it, Waywards are fucked up. Whether your hunter was once Mother Teresa or Charles Manson, there's no denying that the imbuing takes the brain and body down some awful roads. Waywards are violent killers, written that way by the Messengers who "enlighten" them. Here are some ways to make your Wayward accessible to both you as a player and to your troupe.

Choose Derangements Wisely: All Waywards awaken with a derangement, and their personalities are forever altered from day one. Their derangement can lead them to grisly acts of irrationality, which are obviously hard to fit into

a game. If a hunter circle is about to sneak into the basement-lair of some leech, the last thing they want is an ally who snaps and has a twitching, frantic episode. Try to choose a derangement that doesn't jeopardize your character or interfere in every activity that he or his partners perform. Manic-depression may constantly discourage a Wayward from pursuing his dream of an apocalyptic future for monsters, but it doesn't necessarily put his colleagues at risk all the time. A phobia such as one of open spaces may inspire a maniac to wild outbursts, but he might also be talked down by allies and even shepherded through such episodes to come to their aid. Waywards can be afflicted by crippling disorders, but they can also be capable of lucid thought and behavior when it suits their distorted ends. Sometimes sociopaths can even be sociable when it means achieving an overriding goal in their unrepentant destruction of monsters.

Rationality Is Possible: Not every Wayward goes off like a rocket every time she sees a monster or encounters a hunter who "plays with" with the enemy. In fact, many Waywards are thoroughly capable of composing themselves when it benefits their mission. They can recognize the need to maintain relationships with (or outright manipulation of) other hunters. If a Wayward's hell-bent crusade is to put all the living dead back where they belong, she might realize that she can't do it alone. Thus, she might sway, cajole or outright force other hunters to follow her plan. Also, unmitigated or uncalculated violence may prove her undoing. If she marches into the camera-monitored convenience store with a fire ax, the police are going to identify her and seek her. You don't have to play some unhinged battle machine. Remember always that Waywards are bent more toward Vision than Zeal. Their appetite for destruction can be whetted slowly, calmly and methodically. Zeal is of the moment. Vision is a blueprint that captures an ideal and may be altered as necessary. If your character realizes that her actions alienate (or kill) hunters who can be useful (even if only as cannon fodder), she can ease her activities for a while. All it means is delaying the inevitable.

They Might Be Leaders: If hunters truly identify the Heralds as divine agents, they might conclude that Waywards surely were meant for business beyond simple murder. The flaw that made them what they are must have been in humanity rather than in God Himself, yes? Whether the psychos were really supposed to be generals, military advisors, sergeants or shock troops, they still have some versatility even in their damaged state. Their edges suggest an ability to get the most out of other hunters. Their perspective on the end of the hunt rather than the moment indicates a mind for strategy and tactics. Why not run with these qualities when forging your character? Create a Wayward who may be a natural leader at heart, someone who, no matter how screwed up, wants to usher (or drag) compatriots into battle. This gives him a connection to other characters (and you to other players) as a useful partner.

Consider that a Wayward's seemingly monstrous behavior can be counterbalanced by his usefulness. He probably has gifts that allow him to sense danger, open the "eyes" of other hunters or even kick everybody into the fury that helps them survive impossible odds. Other hunters may vacillate about staying with your character — one minute he's a total maniac, and the next he makes sure the job gets done — but going without him completely may put the imbued in greater danger than when they work with him.

They Were Normal Once... Right?: It could be said that when the Heralds make someone a Wayward, they simply encourage that person to apply his existing personality to the hunt. Individuals filled with hate or who are already a hair away from immersing themselves in violence may be awakened and given supernatural "justification" to make their previously curbed impulses a reality. It's possible, however, that a more normal person (by "normal" we mean someone who's not already insane or violent or both) is the target of the Wayward imbuing. A psycho may be chosen this way because there's something in him — some skill, some spark — that lends itself to the calling. Maybe everything has just been taken away from him. Maybe he's one of those "quiet neighbors" who simply needs a push to become a serial killer, whether he knows it or not. Maybe he has access to weapons or has a family history of mental illness or is chosen for his natural leadership abilities. Maybe there's no decipherable reason at all.

This type of Wayward — though still dysfunctional — can be the most playable. He's able to look back on an old life and try to hold onto it as much as possible. He may not be able to live it any longer, but he can try to uphold its best values such as loyalty and friendship — even while torturing leeches and their accomplices to death. A onetime printing-press operator is likely to be more stable (and therefore playable) than a cannibalistic drifter. If you create a hunter who was well adjusted once upon a time, other hunters and players have an easier time relating to him — at least until those moments when he really does go off the deep end. "Less of a psycho" still means "psycho" in some way or another. Your character still isn't sane or safe to be around, just saner and safer than some Waywards.

Resisting the Urge: One plausible (and perhaps the most satisfying) way to play a Wayward is to create a character who doesn't want what the Wayward lifestyle (and the Messengers) have to offer. Maybe now that he's been changed, he regrets his closed-mindedness or aggression of the past and wishes he could return to a better life — if only these damned things would stop interfering. Or maybe he opened himself to his imbued fate in a moment of weakness and wants to atone for his actions — if only the monsters could stop proving themselves an even greater evil than himself. Regardless of why, your character tries to resist the maniacal compulsions that come over him. He tries to seek a different resolution whenever violence seems like the best answer (which is almost all the time). When the voices or urges flare up and tell him to hurl a molotov cocktail into a classroom, he tries to say "no." At least, until it's "clear" that the monster involved has tainted most of the children, and the others don't have long to go. If he can't resist some commands to kill, your character is nothing but a murder machine and not really workable in roleplaying games about normal people in grossly abnormal situations.

The whole "withstanding dark impulses" theme can be accomplished through basic roleplaying or through a system that resolves Wayward behavior.

The roleplaying approach ought to present challenges. Your Wayward is predisposed to mayhem. He's literally programmed that way. He has to struggle desperately to see the light, not unlike an alcoholic or drug addict trying to get clean. Your character constantly has to struggle with the one monster he can't see — his inner demon. And even then, he is never "fixed." It's not as if five game sessions of tamping

down destructive impulses suddenly locks those urges away. Each moment, each confrontation is a powder keg waiting to go off, a potential explosion of unrestrained violence. Every acceptable choice seems to be the "wayward" way to do things. The key is to work out how to restrain such instincts, and then maintain that restraint. Talk with your Storyteller. Work out some key to help your character lock up his hatred. Perhaps he exercises some means of expressing his hostility such as frequent visits to a firing range. Or maybe he punishes himself every time "the need" arises — burning himself with a cigarette lighter or cutting himself (maybe in the form of strange markings — see "Signs of the Righteous," p. 91). Maybe he simply takes drugs — recreational or medical, it doesn't matter. Maybe he finds that heroin sedates the beast within. Maybe some doctor slaps a weighty dose of lithium on his daily existence. But even then, situations or monsters or dictates from the Heralds might overcome any mortal effort to stave off a bloodbath.

A system used to measure your character's restraint (preferably in combination with roleplaying) should be moderated by you and the Storyteller. Willpower is crucial. That Trait is your character's best defense against the internal call for atrocity. Spending points can allow him to shut out his impulses for a limited time. How often this needs to be done is at the Storyteller's discretion. Maybe a point spent upon waking up allows your Wayward to be somewhat "restrained" during the day, but certain circumstances (moments of heated conflict, face-to-face confrontations with monsters or even encounters with more moderate hunters) may call for the expenditure of another point — perhaps more than one. The Storyteller determines how well Willpower shores up your character's restraint. A Wayward can't throw a switch and shut off the madness. But he may be able to work it out... for a while.

CHARACTER CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Waywards are metaphorically "lost," creations that have simply gone awry. They aren't Merciful, helping creatures turn aside their bestial nature. They aren't Zealots, acting out of aggression, instinct and the moment. They have Vision — twisted and bent by some ugly stuff indeed — and thus are people whose minds stretch out and encompass sweeping plans. They may appear to the untrained eye as nothing more than deranged, but they're much more. What follows are some new Traits and rules to help more clearly define this intimidating group, hopefully making your creation both comprehensible and engrossing.

NEW ARCHETYPES

The following are new Natures and/ or Demeanors to help distinguish and enhance your Wayward character.

ENGINE

People fitting this Archetype tend to be unyielding and practically unstoppable. They are thoroughly determined beings — beyond stubborn, beyond immovable. Implacable would be a grand understatement. Engines are often so driven in their purpose that they seem more like machines than human beings. Car accidents, bullets in the chest, arrest warrants... nothing prevents their terrible progress. In many

A LONG, DARK ROAD

Although ultra-violent, Waywards are still students of Vision. Their existence is dedicated to the big picture of the hunt — where it can go, how the world can be saved, what can be accomplished — but always in terms to ruin, conflagration and calamity. Destruction is their first and last tool. But how does your character see it all? Playing a Wayward means having an overarching goal or aspiration. To play one fully, you might decide what your character's "big plan" is. How does he channel or justify his aggression? Is your character a conspiracy theorist, pinning up flowcharts of pyramidal corruption while aiming to bring suffering to the oppressors at the top of the system? Maybe your Wayward thinks that bloodsuckers are the world's real puppet masters, so killing them (their retainers, their former families, their pets...) is the way to salvation. Your character might hold beliefs so extreme as to see all people a monster touches as diseased and likely to become monsters themselves. Of course, how long it is until he realizes that he himself touches monsters is another question....

A Wayward's bent for bloodshed has definite *direction*. He believes it has meaning. Each unspeakable act performed falls into place like a piece in a puzzle. He can have faith in his brutality and that faith creates a horrifying network of justification. Anything is acceptable as long as it's a means to your character's violent ends, so determine his goals. Figure out not only what he does, but why he does it. After all, if a Wayward fulfills a grandiose plan, others are more likely to follow him (assuming they can actually stomach his aspirations).

cases, the only thing that can divert a hell-bent Engine from a goal is flat-out death.

— Regain Willpower when your character is able to bulldoze through or persevere beyond a seemingly insurmountable situation.

MONSTER

Some people are already broken in life, and shatter further upon the Messengers "enlightenment." Others twist and break upon any freakish awakening that is forced upon them. Either way, these people are terrors, rife with cruelty and a desire for suffering. And this cruelty is limited in no notable shape or fashion — they impress it upon the youngest of children or the frailest of adults. They exercise no discrimination. It's nothing for a Monster to spend hours immersed in a session of interminable torture. Enjoyment of such an act is one of her key provisions. She may not even appear to be cruel to the untrained eye — until she's in a room alone with the guy who has been laundering money for that flock of bloodsuckers downtown...

— Regain Willpower when your character's visiting extended pain and suffering upon someone significantly furthers her plan for cleansing the world.

CAMPS

What are the creeds? Are they supernatural in origin, imposed upon unwitting humans by the Messengers, or are they hard-line moral guidelines that arise from the moment monsters are revealed? The chosen don't know — and, in fact, they are almost entirely unaware of the creeds in general. They begin to spot vague trends and ephemeral

associations in their collective nature and behavior, but beyond that the imbued simply know that they have different attitudes, personalities and goals, all of which come to bear on the hunt. The creeds are therefore just a way for you as a player to identify how your character might answer the call.

But there is division among the members of each creed, much as there are rifts between members of similar political parties or religious affiliations. Individuals are unique. Each one's thoughts, opinions and actions are wholly his or her own. One Avenger may take to the hunt with a hotheaded, strong-arm sensibility whereas another may be slow, methodical and rational. These tendencies within creeds are called camps, and not even they are hard and fast in defining where a character's persona lies. They simply offer guidelines for how you might like to roleplay your character. Waywards may belong to the following camps or they may sit squarely outside them, being altogether unique.

CONSERVATIVE

Conservative Waywards are typified by the most psychotic of the creed — indeed, of human beings. They take up their unwholesome "mission" with a verve and tenacity that borders on tyranny. Before the imbuing, they were probably insane or — at the very least — harbored deep hatred. Once the Messengers shove them stumbling into the truth, they are quick to adapt their madness and hatred to the crisis at hand, resulting in a sick — and sickening — personal manifesto.

Conservatives tend not to resist their charge. The revelation of a society crawling with demons fits right into their skewed worldview. It just puts a different face on what they already "knew." Conservatives therefore take to the hunt like ducks to water, responding to all situations with assault. Their message is one of death, and they're glad both to receive and deliver it.

These hunters don't play well with others. Their social circles tend to consist of individuals who can help kill things and others who should be put down because they're part of the problem rather than the solution.

Favored Attributes: Over time, these hunters become more and more steeped in their own violence. They rely upon Physical Attributes (Strength and Dexterity, in particular) to aid them in their single-minded goals.

Favored Abilities: Conservative Waywards tend to possess Abilities that make them better killers. Firearms and Demolitions are two, but Brawl and Melee are much more visceral and to the point.

Favored Backgrounds: Allies and Contacts are rarely on the list for these hunters — but Arsenal is something that's probably high up in their priorities. They may also have had a degree of Exposure prior to the imbuing, giving them further fire with which to fight.

Other Favored Paths: Zeal-based edges, specifically those offered by Vengeance, are the most common developed by these hunters, beyond those of the Deviance path (that of Waywards themselves).

MODERATE

Waywards who accept their mission but who don't relish it tend to be moderate members of the creed. These people, subjected to ceaseless second sight and immersed in an apparently cancerous world, tend to become desensitized to the violence inherent in their calling. If the world is broken and pain is everywhere, then how wrong can abject violence be? Committing murder seems to these Waywards like performing a favor. It's not a joy and it's not a chore — it's a necessity.

These Waywards can be capable of logic and rationality, though. To them, death isn't the only answer — it's the inevitable one. They're able to work with others to achieve a goal (provided the ultimate goal is *theirs*, of course). They're even willing to let monsters live if it will set up a bigger, more important kill later. It all still boils down to causing death for moderate Waywards, but they're prepared to be pragmatic to get there.

These chosen, often emotionless and devoid of compassion, are often involved with other hunters, at least in the beginning. As they become increasingly desensitized, other chosen may rebuke their "purpose" and leave them to hunt alone.

Favored Attributes: These Waywards recognize the importance of both social and mental faculties in achieving their goals. Their potential for rationality may make Perception, Manipulation and Intelligence their key Attributes.

Favored Abilities: Investigation may be crucial for a Wayward of the moderate bent so she can gather enough information to focus her mission. Moderates may use Intimidation (or Torture) to get answers, or Alertness to remain aware of their surroundings.

Favored Backgrounds: These Waywards are likely to have Allies or Contacts, as moderates are capable of understanding the need for such connections. Resources are helpful in keeping their violent designs feasible.

Other Favored Paths: A moderate is most likely to employ edges from the Defender and Judgment paths to achieve his goals — the protection and control that come with both give the Wayward a variety of tools from which to choose.

LIBERAL

Sometimes, albeit rarely, a Wayward is created who wasn't totally gone before the imbuing, wasn't injured to the suffering of a shattered world, and wasn't a hateful killer. Or, if he was, sometimes that person doesn't want to be a Wayward, doesn't want to accept his nauseating, brutal urges. These Waywards are usually the least strident in the hunt (if that can be said at all for members of this creed), in that they can seek to retain their values and personalities from before, even as they commit atrocities now. The result can be radical personality shifts, distinct and separate identities, fugue states or severe schizophrenia. The liberal's "normal" personality typically lingers somewhere, blissfully ignorant while the body behaves as a genocidal maniac. Occasionally, the two personas bleed together, whether in dreams or mental flashes — or in the next day's headlines.

Sometimes, the liberal isn't quite so alienated from her violent self and is fully aware of what she does. Her actions can coincide with severe resistance or major self-loathing as she tries to find moderation, tries to curb and curtail her brutal inclinations. Unfortunately, as hard as she tries to oppose her horrific desires, she eventually becomes an arbiter of atrocity.

Favored Attributes: Desperate to restrain herself, a liberal may need Manipulation or Charisma to help convince others that she's "just fine."

Favored Abilities: Subterfuge and Empathy provide the liberal means to appear normal and useful to other hunters. And yet, her dark side may favor Demolitions or Firearms, or it may subconsciously drive her counterpart to gain higher degrees of Athletics, Awareness or even Intuition to make her a better soldier.

Favored Backgrounds: Exposure may have created a fissure in a person's psyche that preceded becoming a liberal

Wayward, and being imbued drives a wedge between such personae. Or a liberal may have Patron, which keeps her in constant contact with the Messengers and drives a part of her identity into hiding.

Other Favored Paths: If any group of Waywards can tread the Mercy path, it's probably liberals. Martyrdom edges most closely reflect a liberal's inner conflict and potential self-hatred.

TRAITS

The following new Abilities are likely to belong to Wayward characters but aren't necessarily exclusive to them. Members of other creeds may possess these Traits. The Storyteller should approve such "poaching" before your chronicle begins, though, to ensure that all players' characters are unique.

SKILLS

TORTURE

The leech shivered, its eyes darting around the half-circle of candles that surrounded it. The monster struggled in its bonds, and hissed. Mike chuckled dryly.

"You don't like fire, do you? Good. We're going to start by removing those pretty, pointy teeth. If you tell me where all your buddies hole up during the day, I won't have to cut off your eyelids. If you still don't tell me... I'm going to get out the car battery." A low wail of fear rose in the leech's throat. Mike nodded. It was good to be efficient.

Torture has a long and inglorious history. Throughout history, information has been gleaned from victims by the likes of the Romans, the Inquisition, Nazi Germany and probably our own government. Often involving physical pain — though possibly mental and emotional, as well — torture has been a grisly staple of just about every civilization. And it hasn't always been used to gain information. Sometimes, it has been performed simply for perverted pleasure.

Individuals who have this Skill know the weaknesses of the body and mind, and how to inflict excruciating harm without killing a subject. The Ability includes the capacity to inflict suffering, but also the know-how to prepare for it and to use different tools for various effects — to inspire fear, to intimidate, to puncture, to slice, to crush. This Ability isn't just about interrogation. It doesn't even have to be used to get answers. It's about causing and prolonging pain — something hunters can be very, very good at.

Whether the torturer focuses on the body or the mind to get results, roll Manipulation + Torture. A dice pool equal to Stamina + 3 or Willpower (whichever is higher) is rolled for the victim. Difficulty is 6 for both. Torture may also be treated as a combination of resisted and extended actions. In-game time between rolls may vary, depending on the nature of the abuse. The Storyteller determines how much time passes.

The victim suffers one health level, bashing or lethal, for every roll you make during serious physical torture (whether the torturer is successful in gaining information or not), or she loses one Willpower per roll of mental torture. Combining mental and physical torture has devastating effects on a victim. A botched roll for the character inflicting the abuse can destroy her mind, cripple her for life or even kill her.

For every success a torturer gains in excess of his subject's roll, he drags out a piece of information. If the interrogator's extra successes exceed the victim's permanent Willpower at any point, the subject folds completely and divulges everything she

knows. Your Storyteller determines the relevancy and extent of information — if any — gleaned through such techniques, as a victim often gives a skewed account based on her own perceptions and on what she thinks her torturer wants to hear.

Hunters who torture supernatural subjects must remember that their victims are not necessarily human or even alive. Conventional forms of harm may not faze such creatures, whereas seemingly innocuous treatment could terrify them. Research or Occult might be required to learn about a monster's weaknesses — or it might not have any at all.

- Novice: You know how to break a finger.
- Practiced: You know *where* to break the finger to make it count.
- Competent: You are well versed in the arts of pain.
- Expert: The human body is a flowchart of suffering to you.
- Master: With a sliver of paper and a drop of lemon juice, you could get someone to admit to just about anything.

Possessed by: Abusive Hunters, Terrorists, Mercenaries, Monsters, Interrogators

Specialties: Torture Devices, Interrogation, Bashing Damage, Lethal Damage

POISON

Martin screwed the cap back onto the shaker, put his hand over the top and shook the jar a few times. He was pleased to see that the powdered plant derivative had blended almost perfectly with the salt — just as the text file said it would. Moments later, Martin's companion — the one with the "we-can-save-them-all" attitude — returned from the restroom and eyed the cheeseburger in front of him.

"Oh good, the food's here. Could you pass the salt?"
Martin was happy to oblige.

The world is filled with items, solutions and mixtures that cause sickness or death when ingested or introduced into a subject's body. Plants, chemicals, metals — or sometimes combinations thereof — can be used to harm or kill, and individuals familiar with these substances can identify and catalog them, then use them as deadly tools.

The art of poisoning involves two parts — the creation of toxins and their administering. Intelligence + Poison rolls (difficulty dependent upon the severity and rarity of the toxin) can be used to create substances. Sometimes, acquiring ingredients, venom or poisons themselves also means making rolls based on Social Attributes and an Abilities or Resources rating. A Poison rating of 3+ and a Resources rating of 3+ might indicate that a person maintains a lab and supply of ingredients with which to create toxins.

Administering a poison may require an Intelligence or Wits and Poison roll to determine how the substance is best used, with a potential Stealth roll to go about the act unnoticed.

The effects of this Skill are determined by the substance used. Remember that poisons don't always kill — they can also be used to deliver pain, sickness or unconsciousness. In general, a poison inflicts one to three levels of bashing or lethal damage per scene (or per turn in the case of particularly virulent substances). The toxin typically delivers damage over a series of scenes or turns before it becomes inert or the victim dies. Some poisons can be endured or counteracted with antidotes if such substances can be obtained. Characters with the Poison Skill know how to acquire and make antidotes just as they can poisons. Weak poisons might be resisted with Willpower rolls (difficulty 8), whether rolled only once or over the course of exposure to a substance.



Your character can disguise use of poison on a victim with a resisted roll of Wits + Poison versus an opponent's Intelligence + Medicine (both difficulty 6).

- Novice: Garden chemicals + juice = poison.
- Practiced: You can concoct very simple but effective poisons.
- Competent: You are an encyclopedia of possible toxins.
- Expert: You could poison and kill a bull moose in under 30 seconds.
- Master: Funnel spiders? Pit vipers? Box jellyfish? Their stuff is fruit punch compared to what you can whip up.

Possessed by: Assassins, Animal Handlers, Research Scientists
Specialties: Venom, Plants, Chemicals, Toxicology, Antidotes

THE HIGH COST OF COMMITMENT

Waywards demonstrate a terrifying obsession for the hunt and a capacity to perform any deed in pursuing it. They're vicious, and their actions are typically inspired by hatred or antagonism. It's as if inside every Wayward are two minds, each struggling for dominance. Somewhere in there is a normal, rational human being capable of all the things that come with everyday life — coupled with another being, almost a cross between a calculating machine and a petulant child. It is in walking this line, in trying to maintain a tenuous grip (or in letting go completely) that a Wayward is propelled headlong into the hunt.

SPENDING CONVICTION

Conviction is the representation of hunters' determination, drive and dedication on the mission. It measures a hunter's will to keep struggling, even if the imbued doesn't recognize it as an exhaustible commodity. Without Conviction, any of the chosen is essentially nothing more than a puppet awaiting use, a virtual bystander awake to the existence of the puppet-masters but without the strength to cut their strings. With Conviction points, Waywards feel invigorated, energized for their work, even if that duty defies their values and morals. Some conserve that energy to "keep their blood up" (you, as a player hoard Conviction points), whereas others try to accomplish goals when they can and fight the war a day at a time (you, as a player, spend Conviction when it's prudent and perhaps even have your character avoid confrontations with monsters when Conviction is low). Others push themselves to the limits at all times, almost seeking to flame out and take as many of the things with them as possible (you, as a player, spend Conviction as quickly as it's gained to inflict as much harm on creatures as possible).

Waywards can get off on the feel that Conviction inspires — a preternatural rush. Their occasional lack of emotion (or its overflow) drives them to use their gifts frequently, effectively spending Conviction with wanton disregard. They become almost addicted to their capabilities, drawing up edges, throwing up walls against corruption, and railing against monsters. Their often paranoid, sometimes borderline personalities tell them that there's every reason to prolong "the high," no hope in ever seeing any long-term success — so they dare the impossible as often as possible. These hunters can be quite dangerous, very much lost in the frenzy as their edges are used and their Virtue ratings increase quickly.

Some Waywards are more calculating. They still possess some degree of rationality (occasionally to a frightening ex-

tent), which tells them to apply their strength on sure bets, to spend of themselves wisely, to maintain their (warped) perspective. They are capable of extreme acts of balance, their brains so attuned that they truly become devices of the hunt. Their ability to accumulate Conviction means they are often supremely cold-blooded killers. Their longevity on the hunt can be astounding (their players hold onto 10 Conviction to use points when necessary rather than to invest in whatever Virtue point and possible new edge might manifest next).

Vision is often Waywards' Virtue of "choice." They tend to be prepared to push their awareness to the next level to better understand the shadowy schematics of the universe — and to better gauge the extremity required to destroy it all. Obviously, a greater capacity for Vision allows for more profound edges. Vision also opens Waywards to the powers of Visionary and Hermit brethren — fellow hunters who share foresight for the mission — augmenting maniacs' already frightening array of capabilities.

If other Virtues come into play, Zeal follows a close second after Vision. Zeal provides a Wayward with offensive abilities that can empower his crusade — which is obviously a must. Have no doubt: Waywards are definitely Zealous at times. Zeal backs up and makes real the dreams they conceive through Vision.

It is uncommon to find a Wayward with much of a notion of actual Mercy. Any degree of Mercy they gain is usually for temporary use only. It may stop them from destroying a creature or person just long enough to learn some crucial piece of information that will ultimately lead to more deaths at a later time. Mercy for a Wayward tends to translate into calculated restraint and little more.

In the end, one thing is for certain — with her second sight always active (and thus no need for her player to spend Conviction on it), a Wayward is capable of rising in Virtue with frightening speed. With their minds fractured by the hunt early on, they can become very hazardous (and unstable) beings.

REGAINING CONVICTION

A Wayward's player gains Conviction points just the way every other hunter's player does — by your risking them (and being successful) on edge rolls. Many Waywards are likely to gain Conviction quickly this way as their "at-any-cost" behavior often goes in tandem with testing their resolve. Conviction points can also be gained by acting in harmony with the general tenets of the creed, however, at the Storyteller's discretion. Players of Waywards ought to be rewarded this way when they act in accordance with such characters' inherent drive for violence, or more specifically when relentless aggression leads the characters (or others) to achieve goals that are important to the maniacs' twisted dream for the world. A Wayward's brutal behavior is driven by his Vision. His actions are not taken blindly or without purpose — quite the contrary, in fact. His behavior is part of a larger picture, and Conviction should be awarded only when the character's brutality applies to the greater scheme of his insanity. When his actions uphold his abusive value system (such as murdering the child of a manipulator because, "The little boy surely was in some way corrupt, too, and killing him now eliminates the spread of more evil later"), Conviction may be bestowed by the Storyteller. Wanton murder, unfocused and without direction, is not worthy of reward.

The following are some sample actions that may spur a Storyteller into bestowing Conviction to (or removing it from) a Wayward's player. Note that the following are not hard-and-fast rules, just suggestions. Also note that usually no more than one point of Conviction should be gained

through roleplaying per game session, regardless of how many of the following actions are performed.

- Gain a point of Conviction when violence proves to be the only answer to a situation — that is, when unchecked destruction provides resolution where all other avenues have expressly failed.
- Gain a point of Conviction when your character convinces another hunter that his own methods for destruction are the "one true plan."
- Gain a point of Conviction when your character gets hold of a piece of information that helps fulfill or validate his grand scheme of violence.
- (Optional) Lose a point of Conviction when your Wayward fails in (or is simply incapable of) harming a monster.
- (Optional) Lose a point of Conviction when your Wayward acts contrary to his own dark, bizarre crusade — or when he loses sight of it altogether.
- (Optional) Lose a point of Conviction when a situation is solved by means that are directly in opposition to your Wayward's personal crusade of terror and violence.

DERANGEMENTS

The human mind isn't constructed to handle the input that the Messengers transmit to a Wayward. Any coherent designs for making war and eliminating the supernatural have somehow gone awry in these imperfect human vessels, changing these imbued into sociopaths and maniacs. Whereas other chosen can eventually succumb to the mental rigors of the hunt and become unstable, Waywards are twisted from the very beginning. Add the fact that they can never close their eyes to the world's taint, the perils they must face, the acts they commit, plus any further garbled imperatives from above and the risk for very serious mental instability runs high in Waywards. They aren't host to distracting neuroses or annoying phobias — their brains become vessels for traumatizing insanity.

The illnesses that can affect Waywards most are commonly known as personality disorders. These ailments tend to be deeply rooted in the psyche. They radically modify a set of identity traits, pushing sufferers to antisocial or maladaptive extremes. The mind simply stops these people from interacting in a social or occupational manner and forces them outside the city limits, as it were. The Wayward identity, infused with monstrous impulses, can no longer operate in rational social and mental realms as is expected of a person. He is forced to become an outcast, an exile from everyday reality. Eventually, as his derangement worsens, the Wayward can find himself with disrupted (and occasionally ruined) emotional and perceptive faculties.

The following conditions appear elsewhere in *Hunter*, but are particularly appropriate to Waywards in specific ways. You can choose from among these conditions or others in *Hunter* books as your character's initial or perhaps high-Virtue derangements (gained at Virtue 9 or higher by Waywards).

ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

Individuals with Antisocial Personality Disorder no longer subscribe to social norms. They certainly don't believe in guilt. They recognize no lines dividing right and wrong. Their conscience is so submerged that they are desensitized to any normally unacceptable or inappropriate acts. They're practically automatons, emotionless and cruel. Nothing in

their heads tells them not to lie, steal, cheat or kill. Morality, to them, is a single shade of gray.

This derangement is a likely one among Waywards because it allows them to engage in acts of atrocity and murder without qualm or remorse. Any action these sociopaths perform is magically "excused" by their insanity, allowing any typically vilified deed to be performed free of guilt.

Waywards with this disorder suffer a +2 difficulty to Social rolls, as their cold and distant nature unsettles just about everyone they encounter. Also, they are incapable of succeeding on any roll that requires Empathy, as they have none — or are, at best, incapable of finding it.

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

There is no consistency to the opinions or actions of individuals who suffer this disorder — their motivations are driven by chaos. People with this illness fluctuate wildly between judgments, seeing the world in stark contrasts of black and white. The problem is, what's black one day may very well be white the next. Their self-image and perception of others are never constant and can lead to suicidal or homicidal behavior. They may love someone on Tuesday and try to bury an ax in that person on Wednesday. Victims of this ailment are unpredictable, making hunters with the condition a severely dangerous wildcard.

This ailment can manifest in Waywards who were more or less "normal" before the imbuings. The mind, once following a fairly basic code of norms, is suddenly submerged by a bunch of new, vicious impulses. The resultant moral confusion essentially throws the brain into a whirlwind of mental upheaval. From that stems a set of wildly changing moods and emotions. Such people are capable of horrible actions one day and behaving in a perfectly normal fashion the next.

Players of Waywards with this disorder face +1 difficulty to Willpower rolls, because their characters can't quite grasp the need to resist certain impulses. They also face +1 to +3 difficulty on all Social rolls, depending on how extreme their behavior is in a given situation (Storyteller's discretion).

EDGES

What are a hunter's powers? Where do they come from? Nobody knows. And what the chosen think they know is limited. They believe they hear voices, they suddenly see the world in a new light, and they're "blessed" with capabilities beyond anything they could have imagined — or feared — before.

The special capabilities conferred onto Waywards are much the same. The creed's path, called Deviance, is divergent from those of the other hunter groups, however, and made to suit the Wayward mindset. Also, it may be a hint at what the psychos were originally meant to accomplish and be. The questions remain, however: Do these powers come from on high, delivered by the Heralds as a means to make a ruthless killer? Or do Waywards simply fail to answer the call correctly and emerge with a mere glimmer of what their gifts could have been?

• IMPACT

This power may provide the first clue that Waywards were once meant for something else, something different than what they have become. Perhaps they were truly intended to be generals, marshaling troops into battle. Maybe they weren't always to be malfunctioning killers. Or maybe this power demonstrates nothing more than a Wayward's urge to bring others into the constant nightmare that haunts him.

Your character simply concentrates and is able to "open the eyes" of hunters near him, activating their second sight as if switching on a lamp. Those imbued affected by your Wayward's sudden "gift" have no intimation of how the phenomenon occurs, or who or what causes it — only that they suddenly become aware without their own volition, which can be startling in itself. Unfortunately, some hunters also presume that with second sight comes a hunter's standard resistance to monsters' influence powers, but it doesn't. Impart confers only the sight. If your character doesn't share this information, the people with whom he works may learn the truth the hard way — and perhaps to the detriment of your Wayward as well.

System: Roll Perception + Vision, difficulty 6. Each success activates the second sight of one other hunter. Three successes allow the sight of three hunters to be activated. The Wayward chooses which hunters do and do not receive this benefit, but all recipients must be within five times your character's Vision score, in yards (Vision 3 thus allows the power to take effect within 15 yards in any direction). Selected subjects don't spend any Conviction to see with second sight — unless they want the supernatural defense against mind-, body- and emotion-control that comes with "normal," self-activated second sight.

Using Impart costs one action and can be performed by a Wayward once per scene. Second sight conferred on anyone lasts for the remainder of the scene, even if recipients leave the effective radius surrounding your Wayward. A hunter also may activate his own second sight to get its full benefits during the same scene.

EMBRACING INSANITY

Waywards have a somewhat "special" relationship with their derangements. Whereas other hunters gain ailments that might cripple their ability to be rational people or to hunt effectively, Waywards may actually develop something of a symbiotic relationship with their illness by combining it with their old identity to create a new one. Sometimes, it's actually an advantage to suffer their conditions. Without such ailments, normal people would be devastated by the actions that Waywards are compelled to perform. A maniac's disorders can actually make it possible for him to commit to the mission with unerring depravity. Is that what the Messengers wanted? Or is it an unintended, disquieting side effect of the imbuing?

Either way, the Storyteller may wish to grant an optional bonus to a Wayward player who assimilates his character's derangement into his hunter's overriding goal on the hunt. Roleplaying derangements convincingly or using them as a tool instead of as a handicap may garner a rare point of temporary Willpower or even a point of Conviction. The Storyteller could even grant an extra die on a Perception roll as your character's insanity might allow him to perceive things that other sane people might miss or misunderstand. Consider that a paranoid schizophrenic may look for threats that other hunters dismiss. He may listen in on every conversation he overhears or could even somehow fix his eyelids open to make sure that no creatures escape his notice. Make such behavior a part of your character's identity and part of his hunt, and you have a convincing Wayward.

• • FOREWARN

As a Wayward is immersed progressively deeper into the hunt and into the corruption of the world, he becomes increasingly sensitive to the dangers and threats that surround him. His survival instinct flares up and his sense become like taut filaments. As he grows increasingly aware, these metaphorical wires become highly receptive to an

DEVIANCE AND OTHER CREEDS

The Vision granted to Waywards is a strange and exceptional blend of insight and violence — one that's largely exclusive to the creed. Killers are capable of crafting a massive tapestry of mayhem in which each scrap of information and each experience comes together as part of a grand, annihilating whole. Their edges are closely woven with their particular brand of behavior, and are not understood or easily acceptable by other chosen. But that doesn't mean characters of other creeds can't manifest Deviance edges.

The crucial question is why a hunter of another creed would be blessed or cursed with a power from the Deviance path. Few hunters even know that Waywards exist, and the ones who do are often afraid of these maniacs. Surely the powers of such a freak would be undesirable. Presumably, a hunter of another creed wouldn't have the mental or spiritual capacity to use a Deviance edge in accordance with its design. But if a hunter of another creed does gain one of these powers, maybe it's because he undertakes a violent crusade directed by an actual Wayward, and devotion to such destructiveness allows the capability to emerge. Or perhaps a hunter's derangements simply drag him down so far that he becomes "morally flexible" and discovers new and frightful possibilities.

However it happens, the Deviance path is maddening in scope and intensity. Other creeds simply have trouble dealing with the strain that comes with Wayward gifts. For a member of another creed ever to develop a Deviance edge, she must first have at least 4 Vision. Each edge gained from Deviance also comes at a terrible price — madness. Obtaining the first Deviance edge imposes a derangement on a non-Wayward hunter automatically — often one related to aggression or conflict. Hunters with Zeal or Mercy as their primary Virtues have it worse. Every Deviance edge these chosen gain — not just the first — invokes another derangement (some of which might include Sadism, Masochism, Megalomania, Compulsive-Aggressive Disorder or either of the disorders detailed in this book). On top of all that, derangements gained for acquiring Deviance edges cannot be cured.

Waywards have no problem gaining edges from other creeds, but they tend to favor Visionary- and Zeal-based ones. Those powers are most likely to make them efficient in their mission. If Mercy-based edges are gained, they usually enhance the Wayward's inherent violent tendencies and desires. Edges from the Martyr path such as Demand can be particularly useful, and a few Redeemer powers such as Bluster and Insinuate can be useful in tactical situations. Edges from the Innocence path tend to be rare due to their general incongruity with the Wayward mindset.

imminent danger, and they alert him just before a hazard emerges. Although the hunter does not gain any specifics about what is about to happen, he is alerted to *something* that could cause him harm.

This sense manifests differently for every Wayward. Some hear a low scream rising in intensity in the back of their minds. Others may hear a clamor of broken glass or the cacophony of children crying in their ears. Some receive visual or other sensory stimuli — a flash of light, the taste of bitter copper on the tongue. Regardless of the form of this awareness, these hunters become difficult to surprise. They become like spiders at the center of a web.

System: This edge basically confers a "danger sense" upon your character, giving her a brief and unique warning of impending jeopardy. It's always "on," ready to warn of trouble. In game mechanics, it's a reflexive power with a secret roll made by the Storyteller every time there is a possibility of imminent danger.

The Storyteller rolls Wits + Vision, difficulty 7. The edge activates in one of two ways, with separate benefits for each. The first is in non-combat situations — when a threat is posed to your character but it doesn't involve an imminent attack. Maybe the floor of an old house is rotted out and prone to collapse, or a bear trap is set around the next corner (neither of which represents a concerted attack against your character). Or a nearby bomb is about to explode. For each success gained by the Storyteller, your character detects the danger approximately one turn before it presents itself. So, the Storyteller rolls Forewarn when your character approaches trouble, early enough in advance that he can time your character's awareness in advance of actually encountering the danger.

In an impending combat scenario, the Storyteller rolls Wits + Vision, difficulty 7, in the turn before the attack will occur. If any ambush awaits your character, for example, the Storyteller rolls Forewarn in the turn before the attack is sprung. Any successes on this roll are added to your character's initiative in the next turn or are added to the dice pool of a reaction roll that you make in the next turn, such as to dodge, block or parry. You choose whether your character stands ready for action — you gain extra initiative dice — or he automatically prepares to defend himself — you make a dodge, block or parry roll. Thus, in a combat situation, if two successes are achieved on the Storyteller's roll, your initiative total is increased by two or you get two extra dice on any relevant reaction roll.

Danger sense does not indicate the kind of danger that's impending — simply that something bad is about to happen. Your character's reaction is yours to decide, but it's always possible that her choice could be useless in helping to protect her. If she detects a threat and goes prone before "something bad" happens, she may still be in the vicinity when a bomb goes off. Or she might try to parry an incoming attack such as a toppling wall, which can't be parried.

No Conviction may be risked on this edge, because the Storyteller controls its use. The Storyteller may decide if Forewarn is able to anticipate threats posed to others your character is with. You can't confer the effects of this edge to give others bonuses, but your character can still come to the defense of other hunters, drag them out of harm's way or even abandon them if she perceives some overwhelming value in doing so.

• • • ENRAGE

Almost everyone gets in the way of a Wayward's crusade. Few others seem willing to put the goods on the line, to get in and do what needs to be done! At least, that's how Waywards tend to see things.

This power may provide another clue that the Heralds meant Waywards to play a different role in the hunt than as mere killers. Enrage suggests that they were intended to inspire other imbued and lend a war chief's vigor for battle to their allies. Maybe if Waywards had normal, healthy psyches this edge might work as intended. But it doesn't.

A Wayward "shares his spirit," and this power instills a sort of berserk bloodlust in other hunters, forcing even pacifists to do gory battle with whatever raises their or the Wayward's ire. Hunters affected by this temporary curse are kicked into violent overdrive, their minds red with fury. Even hunters with the best of intentions may be lost to this power, "waking up" in a room full of bodies — those of monsters and people alike.

System: Roll Manipulation + Vision, difficulty 6. For each success achieved, your Wayward may affect one other hunter within her Vision score in yards. A 6 Vision allows selected hunters within six yards (18 feet) to be affected by a berserk rage.

This rage forces other hunters to act violently against "the enemy" (how that label is interpreted is left up to the players and the Storyteller). All players of affected characters may make a Willpower roll, difficulty 7, to resist the effect, and must exceed the total number of successes gained on your edge roll to do so. A subject doesn't have to remain within Vision in yards of your Wayward for the effect to persist. He lashes out at any distance from your character thereafter.

An affected hunter must attack the nearest perceived enemy with the most lethal weapon or power at his disposal over a number of turns equal to the total number of successes achieved in your edge roll. Each attacker also gains a number of bonus dice on all attack rolls equal to the successes gained in your roll. So, if you achieve five successes on your Enrage roll, all five affected hunters attack the enemy for five turns and gain five dice on all attack rolls in that time.

Once the turn is over, each affected hunter suffers a number of bashing levels (which are unsoakable) according to the number of successes you got on your edge roll:

1-2 successes = 1 level

3-4 successes = 2 levels

5 or more successes = 3 levels

The hunter using Enrage is not affected by his own power and does not take any of the damage associated with its use. The power cannot be used to infuriate regular humans, bystanders or monsters. All of those people or beings can be targets of attack, however, if anyone affected by Enrage could conceivably see those subjects as enemies. For use with this power, the term "enemy" typically refers to whomever or whatever your Wayward considers a foe. Even hunters who have befriended monsters can attack those creatures if your Wayward feels that doing so is appropriate.

• • • • REAP

The eyes are the windows to the soul, they say, and some Waywards believe this adage to be true — especially when the eyes in question belong to a dead being. Perhaps the soul still swims in the eyes of the dead. Or maybe some remnant of an identity lingers in a corpse. Who knows? What's

important is that a Wayward can look into the eyes of the dead and gain information from the departed.

"Dead" is a somewhat relative term where monsters are concerned, though. Some people drop dead permanently, it would seem. Others are dead *and still walk* — bloodsuckers, ghosts, shamblers. It's not so easy to pry secrets from these legions of the "undead." Still, if a Wayward can look into their eyes, this edge works and the bastards are compelled to answer.

It's by no means a perfect power, though. After all, the dead can't answer questions to which they don't know the answers. But at least this effect forces them to be truthful — even if their idea of the truth may not match up with honest-to-God fact.

System: Your character must spend one full action staring into the eyes of a dead subject. Spend one Conviction point and roll Perception + Vision, difficulty 8. Each success allows one question to be asked aloud, and each question will be answered "truthfully." All questions to be asked after this power takes effect must be posed within the same scene or the opportunity to ask them is lost until the edge is used again on the same subject.

Answers can be received from the dead only. This can mean either a dead body or a creature who is *de facto* physically dead (such as a vampire, zombie or ghost). Answers are truthful only relative to the body/creature being asked. If the subject doesn't know the answer (or if it knows only a wrong answer), your character receives either no response or an inaccurate response. If the subject is aware of the answer, however, the truth is forthcoming.

Answers are not spoken aloud, but seem to be whispered in your Wayward's mind instead. If your Wayward asks an undead creature (vampire, zombie, ghost), that creature need not answer aloud, either — and in fact may rebuff the

question however it likes. But the true answer still unfolds in your Wayward's mind. In the case of a particularly potent or ancient undead being, a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) may be allowed to resist this edge altogether for the scene.

Note that a corpse with no eyes (or head) remaining cannot be questioned, so corpses can decay and become useless to this edge. Animal bodies cannot be questioned. If a subject spoke a different language in life than your Wayward does, answers are still whispered in your character's mind in his own language. If a spirit possesses a host, looking into the host's eyes affects the spirit within. Looking into a spirit's incorporeal eyes still allows this edge to operate, assuming a spirit's form includes eyes.

This edge cannot be used successfully on the same body or undead being more than once per scene.

••••• SPIRAL

There are faint clues that the imbued — and more specifically, the creeds — are coupled somehow with certain elements. Zeal with fire. Mercy with light. And sometimes, Vision is associated with wind. Whether these affiliations are accurate or just an illusion is hard to say. Very few hunters are even aware of the possible associations, and those who are can be so far gone into the hunt that no one would really understand them anyway.

A Wayward with this edge is able to harness and command the power of the wind — and this is no small breeze. It's more like a miniature hurricane, a localized tornado whirling with violent gusts and invisible wind shears. The psycho focuses briefly and unleashes his wrath as a literal force of nature. Whether this effect is related to Waywards' capacity for farsightedness or it's a bizarre manifestation of their frightful aggression is open to debate. It doesn't much matter when one is caught in the vortex.



System: Spend two Conviction points and roll Strength + Vision, difficulty 8. A terrible windstorm is centered on your Wayward that has a three-yard diameter for each success rolled. (If four successes are gained, the whirlwind rages around your character across 12 yards or 36 feet in diameter — six yards or 18 feet in radius).

This whirlwind does lethal damage to all in its path, automatically inflicting damage for each turn of exposure equal to the number of successes gained on your edge roll (four successes means four levels of lethal damage). Anything is capable of sustaining damage — people, furniture, structures, monsters and even incorporeal and possessing spirits, as if the wind blasts in this world and the next. Damage from the winds can be soaked at the Storyteller's discretion (armor bonuses may be taken into consideration).

Also, any individual caught in the spiral must make a Stamina roll each turn, difficulty 8, to remain upright. All movement within the area of effect is reduced by one-half regardless of whether a victim stands or is knocked down.

Attacking a Wayward with this edge activated is a very tricky proposition. Every attack roll against your character is made at -1 die per success gained on your initial edge roll. If your roll achieved five successes, any attack rolls against your character are reduced by five dice.

Your character can perform no other actions other than move when surrounded by such a cyclone. The storm travels with him if he moves. He's in the "eye" of the hurricane, as it were — and doesn't take any damage from it. He, too, can travel no faster than one-half movement.

Winds persist for the remainder of the scene or can be stopped prematurely at your Wayward's command. They also cease if he's knocked unconscious or incapacitated. Your character cannot diminish the power's area of effect. It's always full size and affects all caught in its way, whether hunter, human or supernatural. This edge can be activated only once per scene.

THE FINE ART OF IMPROVISING

Even with the amazing gifts granted them by the Messengers, hunters' struggle with the supernatural is dangerously one-sided. A typical rot can shrug off blows that would cripple a normal person, while bloodsuckers and shapeshifters can possess strength and speed that no hunter can match. The imbued must counter the advantages of their prey by using wits and resourcefulness, and the best way to even the odds seems obvious: Get big guns. Presumably, there's no zombie, bloodsucker or werewolf so tough that a few hundred rounds of assault-rifle ammo can't handle it.

The problem is that most hunters aren't special forces troops or SWAT-team members. They're housewives, middle managers, construction foremen and students — people of ordinary origins with limited knowledge of firearms. Most wouldn't have any idea where to go to buy high-powered weaponry, much less the training to operate and maintain it. When faced with a threat, they would turn to the things they do know and often own already — the baseball bat under the bed, the ax gathering rust in the back of their pickup or the pitchfork resting beside the compost heap on their back.

Fortunately for the imbued, a typical household contains a veritable arsenal of potential weapons that a resourceful hunter can use against the supernatural. From claw hammers to driveway sealant, these items can be picked up cheaply and

legally from any supermarket or hardware store and are completely innocuous until put to use. Getting pulled over by the cops with a machine gun on the back seat will put you on your way to prison for five years, but a gallon jug of rust remover or a carton of bug bombs won't raise an eyebrow.

This section discusses a variety of household items that enterprising hunters might use against monsters, as well as basic rules for creating improvised weapons during play. Although by no means exhaustive, the following section is meant to inspire you to stretch your imagination and devise effective ways to deal with supernatural opponents without losing the gritty, down-to-earth feel of the game. Improvised weapons are particularly appropriate to Waywards as arguably the least "conscientious" of hunters. They're perhaps the ones most willing to cause extensive damage or to harm civilians with jerrybuilt explosives or traps engineered at home.

MELEE WEAPONS

Although a variety of swords, battle axes, maces and even more exotic weapons can be purchased through martial-arts stores or by mail, the fact of the matter is that many of these items are little more than junk, made from poor-quality materials that don't hold up to the rigors of actual combat. What's more, these items are illegal to carry in most cities, in some cases even when kept inside one's car or truck. As an alternative, hunters can resort to a wide assortment of farm or garden tools that do the job just as well, if not better than a knockoff "ninja sword."

Generally speaking, if a tool is heavy and durable enough to split logs, break rock or sever a thick tree limb, it has potential to be an effective weapon. Wood axes and hatchets are obvious choices, but machetes are also cheap and effective weapons in the hands of a sufficiently strong user, and can be replaced easily if lost or broken. Gardeners and landscapers are likely to own turning forks for handling compost. Unlike lighter hay forks, a turning fork has strong steel tines and a thick haft. Some specimens are no longer than three feet from handle to tip. Sledge hammers and pickaxes are slightly awkward to use but can deliver devastating blows, and both are made in both long- and short-handled versions. Pry-bars or chisel-pointed digging bars are pieces of solid steel that range anywhere from six inches to four feet in length, with more than enough weight to act as either stabbing or crushing weapons, as well as being useful for opening doors, windows or coffins.

Most fearsome of all "yard weapons" are gas- or battery-powered tools such as chainsaws or cutout saws (large, portable circular saws favored by rescue crews and construction workers). These tools can sever a limb with one broad stroke, but they are heavy and difficult to wield as well as being extremely loud. Battery-powered chainsaws or circular saws are far less noisy — though not silent by any means — and are just as capable of wreaking havoc on a human body as are their gas-powered counterparts. Modern 18-volt power cells are capable of driving reciprocating saws, circular saws, hammer drills and other tools with more than enough energy to cause considerable damage, and can run for hours of constant use.

And even if your character has access to only the most rudimentary tools, any number of items can be modified to serve as weapons. Mop handles can be sharpened to make spears (or three-foot-long stakes). Nails can be hammered into a wooden baseball bat to make a spiked club. Quick-drying cement set in

DON'T TRY THIS STUFF AT HOME

All of the items described here are capable of causing serious injury or death in the real world. Exercise proper caution when handling dangerous tools or products, and pay attention to any and all warning labels. In short, don't be a jackass. Save the mayhem for the game, where all you stand to lose when things go wrong is a few of your character's health levels.

the tip of a metal or PVC pipe makes a very effective bashing weapon, as can something as simple as a length of chain with a heavy padlock at one end. Best of all, virtually all of these objects (with the exception of power tools) can be further enhanced with Cleave, guaranteeing at least a minimum degree of lethal damage against any supernatural creature. Once used, they can be tossed in a river or otherwise disposed of and replaced with a quick trip to the store.

INCENDIARIES AND EXPLOSIVES

While every type of monster has its own specific characteristics and weaknesses, fire is almost universally effective at causing them harm. With the plethora of fuels, solvents and other chemical compounds on the market, even the most impoverished hunter has access to a wide assortment of incendiaries.

Naturally, the most common of these substances can be found in almost any car anywhere in the world: gasoline. A bottle full of gas that's plugged with a fuel-soaked rag is simple to make and easy to use, and can cover a sizeable area with fire if thrown properly. Cans of paint thinner, naphtha or any industrial solvent work just as well. Most of these chemicals come in thin-sided containers that explode rather than break, sending bits of razor-sharp metal up to 10 feet away. The drawback to these devices is that a single misstep or a buildup of vapors can cause a premature detonation, immolating the attacker and anyone nearby. Although effective, these primitive hand grenades pose significant risks no matter how carefully they're handled.

The difficulty of using gas or other fuels in makeshift bombs is that the liquids dissolve all but the strongest plastics, limiting the type of containers that can be used.

Certain liquid sealers or cleaning agents such as deck or driveway sealant are made to be applied by light metal pump sprayers, however, allowing users to cover a large area quickly and efficiently. A slow-moving or unsuspecting creature can be covered from head to toe in seconds and set alight with a match or flung cigarette. Conversely, some compounds such as roof sealant are less corrosive to plastics because of stabilizing agents that give them the consistency of tar. When hurled at a target, these sealants stick like glue and are difficult to remove — essentially acting as a poor man's napalm. Unlike napalm, these compounds come in five-gallon drums and can be found at almost any hardware store.

Another powerful incendiary device capable of causing great damage at the expense of safe distance is a propane or oxy-acetylene torch. Designed to cut or fuse metal, these gas torches can be purchased with small 16-ounce cylinders that are lightweight and easy to use, and most models carry an integral piezoelectric igniter, allowing the torch to be activated with the push of a single button. Normal valve setting produce a concentrated flame up to six inches in length. Although this range seems trivial when used against a marauding bloodsucker, the torch ignites clothes and causes severe burns with a single swipe. A 16-ounce fuel cylinder allows up to 15 minutes of continuous use, and a larger 20-pound version exists that can be carried comfortably in a backpack harness and operated for more than an hour. It's possible to modify a torch's nozzle to increase its effective range, essentially turning it into a crude flame-thrower, but such modifications can easily cause gas leaks or deadly explosions.

Perhaps one of the most powerful and commonly available incendiary devices can be found in many vehicle trunks and aboard most small boats: a magnesium safety flare. Burning at a temperature of more than 1400 degrees for as long as 30 seconds, these chemical flares ignite any combustibles on contact and can make a metal surface red-hot within moments.

Flares generally come in two types: roadway, which are 12-inch-long sticks that have an extended endurance (up to 10 minutes); and pistol, designed for high-altitude signaling. The pistol flare comes in a bright orange shell that's shorter but has the same bore as a 12-gauge shotgun shell and is designed to

MELEE WEAPONS

Weapon	Damage	Concealment	Notes
3.5 lb. Sledgehammer*	Str+2	J	
5 lb. Sledgehammer*	Str+3	T	
Pickaxe	Str+4	N	Can become embedded (1), Penetrates armor (5)
Turning fork	Str+2	T	Can impale victim (2)
Digging bar*	Str+3	N	Adds 1 die to Strength rolls (3)
Chainsaw	Str+5	N	Very loud (4)
Cordless saw	Str+3	T	
Cordless hammer drill	Str+1	J	Penetrates armor (5)

* A blunt weapon — all damage is bashing unless targeted at the victim's head.

(1) If the weapon inflicts more than 3 health levels of damage it embeds deeply in the target, requiring a Strength roll (difficulty 7) to pull it free.

(2) If the weapon inflicts more than 3 health levels of damage the tines impale the target, protruding through the body and possibly pinning the victim if next to a wall or door, requiring a Strength roll (difficulty 7) to pull free.

(3) The weapon adds 1 die to all Strength rolls that involve levering or breaking large objects (prying open a coffin, breaking down a door).

(4) When in use, a chainsaw adds +2 to the difficulty of all Perception rolls for the wielder and everyone within 10 feet.

(5) Damage from these weapons cannot be soaked by armor.

be fired from a specially built flare pistol or handheld launcher. In a pinch, these flares can be fired from a standard 12-gauge as well, although the short length of the shell has an increased chance of causing a jam in pump-action weapons. Shell flares have enough power to be used as ranged weapons, but are effective only at distances of 10 feet or less. If a flare penetrates a target such as a rot or a bloodsucker (say, if three or more health levels of damage are inflicted), it burns as long as it has fuel, causing horrific damage until removed. Chemical flares are purposely designed to operate in highly adverse conditions, capable of burning even when completely submerged. These incendiary devices can be found at most large auto-parts stores, are inexpensive and are designed for ease of use.

Although an incendiary is simply a solid or liquid that is ignited quickly and that burns readily, at its basic level an explosive is nothing more than a solid or liquid that can be made to combust while under pressure. The buildup of pressure magnifies chemical combustion and produces the effects associated with demolition charges or bombs. In the case of a hand grenade, the combustion shatters the bomb's metal casing and scatters the pieces in a deadly cloud of shrapnel. Hunters can create similar weapons, in some cases simply buying the items off the shelf and creating sources of heat or pressure powerful enough to cause them to explode.

The easiest type of combustible material to purchase is gunpowder, available in every cartridge of firearm ammunition in use, but also sold separately in metal cans for black-powder hunting enthusiasts and gunsmiths. With a suitable fuse, these cans of powder are ready-made bombs in and of themselves, available in five- or 10-pound containers and capable of causing considerable concussion and shrapnel damage. The drawback to purchasing large amounts of ammunition or loose powder is a trail of evidence that monsters with the right connections can trace back to suppliers. A less substantial but also less conspicuous source of black powder is common fireworks. Though far less powerful, fireworks can be cannibalized for their fuses and explosive matter and used to make fairly reliable grenade-like weapons at far less risk than attempting to buy hand grenades on the black market.

Since explosives derive as much of their power from compression as they do from combustion (perhaps more), virtually any gas placed under sufficient pressure can make an effective bomb. Aerosol cans of any kind, from hairspray to insecticide, are capable of causing significant damage if punctured or heated to the point that the expanding gas ruptures the metal container. The most potent examples of this type are CO₂ or oxygen canisters used by medical or health-care firms, or propane tanks sold for backyard grills. Ranging in size from 16-ounce cylinders to squat 20-pound drums to large 100-pound tanks, these canisters are capable of causing tremendous harm when ruptured. Although oxygen and CO₂ canisters are difficult to purchase, propane tanks are readily available at lawn and garden stores.

Sixteen-ounce cylinders are not much larger than a can of spray paint and can be employed as a powerful incendiary bomb capable of wrecking the inside of a car or severely injuring the occupants of a small room. Larger cylinders can cause extensive structural damage to buildings and can start fires up to 50 feet from the point of detonation. (For detailed rules on using explosives to destroy buildings and other structures, refer to Chapter 5 of *Hunter Book: Avenger*.) The disadvantages of using large tanks as demolition devices are their weight and overall bulkiness, as well as the challenge of rupturing a container without killing oneself in the process. Additionally, these

tanks are stamped with serial numbers that can be traced by authorities to their point of sale, assuming the part of the casing that bears the number survives the blast. Since gas grills have become so common, an enterprising hunter with a crescent wrench can cruise the suburbs for bomb materials.

See *Hunter*, p. 207, for complete rules on explosives.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

The majority of a hunter's foes might be walking corpses, but that doesn't necessarily make them invulnerable to acids, poison gas or industrial chemicals or lubricants. A blood-sucker can't see if his eyes have been destroyed. Nor can it shout a warning to its companions when its vocal chords have swollen shut. Not even shapeshifters, who can heal devastating injuries within moments, can shrug off chemical burns or poisonous vapors that cause their lungs to bleed with every breath. The average soccer mom or janitor can employ a plethora of household or light-industrial chemicals to harass, incapacitate or destroy the toughest creature.

One of the simplest and most common chemical weapons available is home or garden insecticide, available in jugs (to be used with a pump sprayer), or packaged in aerosol sprays. Although not immediately toxic to humans or animals, these chemicals attack the mucous membranes, causing pain and loss of vision, as well as severely aggravating the throat and lungs. These chemicals are most effective against living targets such as sorcerers and blood slaves, whose bodies react involuntarily upon exposure. Indoor foggers or "bug bombs" are also more effective, capable of filling an entire room with choking, blinding vapors within 30 seconds. These vapors are flammable and can produce a small blast in small, poorly ventilated areas. Insecticides are exceptionally effective as improvised tear-gas bombs.

A more lethal form of chemical agent can be found in the many cleaners, bleaches and degreasers available in stores. Many of these liquids are diluted hydrochloric or phosphoric acid and cause chemical burns when exposed to bare skin. Soft tissues such as the eyes, mouth or throat are even more vulnerable, suffering immediate damage. Unless irrigated with cold water, permanent vision loss occurs within seconds. Bloodsuckers and zombies are vulnerable, because tissues are physically destroyed. Also, because this damage is in the form of chemical burns, monsters cannot heal it as swiftly as more common forms of injury. Against living opponents, these chemicals present an additional threat in the form of highly poisonous gases that are released when a particular quantity of acid is mixed with bleach. Chlorine gas causes massive hemorrhaging in the throat and lungs, and is fatal after less than a minute of exposure.

Chemical weapons do not have to be directly harmful to be effective. Dousing a zombie with five gallons of motor oil can cause temporary blindness, impede movement and make grabbing or holding a victim nearly impossible. The same can be said for a gallon of contact cement; even the most frenzied shapechanger must pause when its eyelids stick shut and everything it brushes has to be peeled away.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Hunting and destroying creatures that can shrug off bullets or overturn cars takes cunning. In the absence of military-grade heavy weaponry, many hunters turn to their garages and tool sheds for weapons that help even the odds. This section covers rules for creating scratch-built weapons or modifying existing ones over the course of a *Hunter* chronicle. These rules are general and fairly abstract, in-

EXPLOSIVES AND INCENDIARIES

Device	Damage	Concealment	Notes
Paint thinner (can)	2	J	Firebomb (1)
Deck sealant	Variable	Variable	Firebomb (1), Can be sprayed (2)
Acetylene torch	6	J	Adjustable range (3)
Magnesium flare	3	J	Intense flame (4)
Black-powder bomb	Variable	Variable	1 die of damage per pound
16 oz. gas cylinder	4	J	Firebomb (1)
20 lb. gas cylinder	16	N	Firebomb (1)
100 lb. gas cylinder	32	N	Firebomb (1)

(1) When employed as a firebomb (poured into a bottle or can and thrown), these weapons explode and then burn. Full damage is inflicted at the epicenter and is reduced by one for each yard from ground zero. Damage is halved thereafter and inflicts burns for 3 turns after the explosion.

(2) When this weapon is sprayed or thrown at a target, the attacker must make a Dexterity + Demolitions/ Athletics roll, difficulty 6; it inflicts a number of levels of fire damage equal to the number of successes achieved, to a maximum of 4. That number is reduced by one each turn thereafter until extinguished.

(3) The damage listed is for a 6-inch flame. The torch can be modified to extend this range, but loses 1 die of damage per six inches of extension.

(4) These flares ignite combustible items on contact and heat metal to red-hot within 2 turns. They cannot be extinguished with water. The duration of a roadway flare is 10 turns. A signal flare burns for 3 turns.

tended for speed and ease of use instead of presenting pages and pages of formulae and ballistics data. As with the rest of the Storyteller system, the emphasis is on telling a story rather than punching numbers into a calculator.

As always, the Golden Rule applies: You are free to incorporate some, none or all of these systems into your chronicle, or to modify them however suits your needs.

THE BLUEPRINT STAGE

The first step in creating a homemade device is design. When your character has an idea to make a scratch-built weapon to fight the supernatural, you should develop a general idea of how the device is supposed to work. You can establish as much or as little detail as you want, but you should be able to answer the following questions.

What is the weapon made of? The materials used to construct a weapon have a direct bearing on its durability and capacity to deliver damage. A home-forged sword made of steel is going to hold up better than one carved from wood, though a wooden weapon might be more effective against certain monsters. The same applies to ranged weapons: Making a device that can fire a projectile at the same velocity that a rifle fires a bullet requires exceptionally strong construction to handle the pressure of the propellant. In game terms, the materials used determine the maximum amount of damage dice a weapon may inflict. Note: The maximum damage dice for any weapon cannot exceed double your character's Crafts rating (or be more than 1 if your character has no Crafts rating).

How does the weapon inflict damage? Is it a bashing weapon like a club, or a slashing weapon such as a knife? Does it fire wooden stakes or pressurized holy water? Or does it simply explode, showering its victims with silver-edged shrapnel? This information allows you to determine what kind of damage the weapon inflicts (bashing or lethal), as well as classifying whether it is a melee, ranged or explosive weapon. This classification is also important when determining a weapon's special characteristics.

If it's a ranged weapon, what is its propellant? How does the weapon deliver its ammunition to the target? Does it use air pressure like a gun that fires balls of paint, or a

compressed spring like a crossbow, or does it employ more powerful propellants such as gunpowder? The more powerful the propellant, the more intensive the construction process because increased pressure requires stronger materials and more precise machining. In game terms, the form of propellant directly affects the difficulty of your construction rolls.

Where does your character get the materials and tool to make the weapon? Does your character have access to the proper tools to make his weapon? If not, where does he get them? Does he have a brother-in-law with a tool shop in his garage, or can he stay late at work (and risk getting fired) to use its tools on his personal project? You don't have to map out an exhaustive work schedule and list of parts, but figuring out the basics of what to get and where to do the work offers some interesting roleplaying opportunities, and helps emphasize the desperate, individual struggle of the imbued. What does your character tell his brother-in-law so he can spend late-night hours in the shop? What are the neighbors likely to think about all the ominous sounds heard in the wee hours of the morning? Does your character's home start to look like a scrap yard, with discarded pieces of metal and plastic lying in pile outside the back door? You can use touches like these to play up the atmosphere of alienation and paranoia that the imbued suffer in their struggles against the supernatural.

THE CONSTRUCTION STAGE

Once the basic design for the weapon has been worked out and the Storyteller is satisfied with your character's efforts to gather materials and tools, you can proceed to the construction stage. (If you don't want to take up game time to roleplay preliminary steps, you can simply boil it all down to a couple of Intelligence + Crafts rolls.)

To build a weapon, make an extended Dexterity + Crafts roll with a difficulty determined by the materials used (see the construction chart). Difficulty is also increased by the number of damage dice you want the weapon to have, within its limits. So, a melee weapon made of wood that will have a Strength +1 damage rating poses a difficulty of 5. Any difficulty totals that exceed 10 are treated as 10. If difficulty is naturally far in excess of 10, such as with complex chemicals, that score could be

CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Chemical	Damage	Concealment	Notes
Pesticide	Variable	J	Eye irritant (1), Poisonous gas(2)
Industrial acid	Variable	J	Chemical burns (3)
Motor oil	None	J	Impairs Dexterity (4)
Silicone spray	None	J	Impairs Dexterity (4)

- (1) The chemical must be targeted at the victim's head to affect its eyes. If the attack hits, the victim must make a Stamina roll, difficulty 8, each turn until the chemical has been flushed out. The victim is unable to see for each turn in which a roll fails.
- (2) This gas causes 1 level of lethal damage per turn to living creatures in confined areas with little ventilation. This damage cannot be soaked.
- (3) These chemicals cause 1 level of lethal damage every five turns until removed. If the liquid is targeted at the victim's head, the victim is blinded. Unless flushed from the eyes within 3 turns, blindness is permanent.
- (4) The attacker must make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, difficulty 6, to hit the target with these chemicals. Any target that is hit loses 1 die from its Dexterity dice pools for each success achieved. Such immobility persists until the liquid is removed.

halved and two extended efforts might be called for to work on separate parts of the project, each at the halved difficulty.

The total number of successes required for the extended effort is decided by the Storyteller — perhaps six for something simple to 15 for something complex. Each roll represents one to five days of fairly uninterrupted work. Your character can put in the time any way he wants, either knocking out a solid week or picking up a day here and there between hunting and other activities, but a roll cannot be made until the required days' worth of labor are put in. If a roll fails, the time has been wasted. If the roll results in a botch, your character has not only failed to further his project but he has damaged it or exhausted his supply of raw materials and must get more. If your character is working with explosive or flammable materials, the consequences are potentially disastrous — a stray spark could lead to an explosion or fire if you really want to bring home the risks of dealing with hazardous substances.

If the effort is successful, your character manages to construct the weapon. But like all home-built designs, the device is crude, clumsy and prone to breaking. All scratch-built weapons begin with four negative characteristics that paint a picture of the items' idiosyncrasies and rough construction. Melee and ranged weapons have the characteristics

clumsy, unreliable, bulky and inefficient. Homemade explosives and incendiaries start out with unstable, unreliable, bulky and inefficient. These negative characteristics affect a weapon's performance in significant ways, but can be eliminated over time as your character tinkers with the design. He may choose which characteristics he intends to eliminate.

NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Improvised weapons have four of the following negative characteristics, whether they are melee/ ranged weapons or explosives/ incendiaries.

Clumsy: +2 difficulty on all attack rolls

Unstable: Botched Physical Attribute rolls while carrying explosives may cause them to detonate prematurely (Storyteller's prerogative)

Unreliable: Attack rolls botch on a 1 or 2

Bulky: Worsens concealment rating by one level. See Hunter, p. 198. Items whose components automatically render them "N" before being incorporated into improvised weapons, and that gain this characteristic — say a large ax turned into an even larger ax — are permanently bulky. The characteristic cannot be eliminated (see below).

Inefficient: +2 difficulty on all damage rolls

WEAPON CONSTRUCTION CHART

Melee and Ranged Weapons

Materials	Difficulty (Melee/ Ranged)	Max. Damage (Melee/ Ranged)
Wood	3/ 4	Str+2/ 2
Plastic	4/ 5	Str+1/ 1
Steel	5/ 6	Str+3/ 3
Stone	6/ —*	Str+4/ —*

* Manufactured stone missile weapons are sufficiently unlikely as to be impossible.

Explosives and Incendiaries

Materials	DifficultyMax.	Damage (per kg of explosive)
Flammable liquid	4	4
Black powder	4	5
Basic chemicals (magnesium, sodium)	6	4
Complex chemicals (plastic explosive)	7	10+

For explosives, the maximum damage dice shown are per kilogram. Up to 10 kg of explosive can be used per effort. Thus, 10 kg of black powder with a damage rating of 5 per kg yields 50 damage dice in a single explosion.



If you get extra successes on your extended Crafts roll to create a weapon, each success eliminates one of these characteristics. Later, as the Storyteller allows, your character may try to improve upon his creation. Each attempt is considered a simple action and the effort takes hours or days of game time to complete. Any number of successes on this roll eliminate a single selected negative characteristic.

EXAMPLE OF WEAPON CONSTRUCTION

Kirsty is faced with a dilemma: She has discovered a rundown tenement that's the lair of a pack of bloodsuckers who prey on a neighborhood. Her former hunter allies have abandoned her, and she has only a handgun left at her disposal. She can try to take the monsters on one by one but that will take time, and the things need to be destroyed now. She can go in after sunrise but isn't sure whether the things can defend themselves as long as they're out of direct sunlight. She needs some kind of weapon that will kill them quickly and in one fell swoop.

She has heard that bloodsuckers can be hurt by fire. She can't lay her hands on a flame-thrower — she was a mere military reservist in her previous life — but she might be able to improvise one. She cases and later breaks into an auto-mechanic shop and goes to work.

Kirsty's player proposes a design that uses compressed air to force gasoline through a long nozzle and into a chamber with an igniter, hopefully sending a stream of fire a distance of six or seven feet. The shop offers everything the Wayward needs.

Kirsty sneaks into the garage over a couple nights, careful to cover her tracks each time. The Storyteller calls on Kirsty's player to make a Dexterity (4) + Crafts (2) roll each night. The device is ruled to be an incendiary and works with a flammable liquid. The difficulty is 8 — base 4, plus another 4 because the player wants the flame-thrower to inflict the full 4 damage dice possible for a weapon of that type (which is also the maximum she can have due to Kirsty's 2 Crafts).

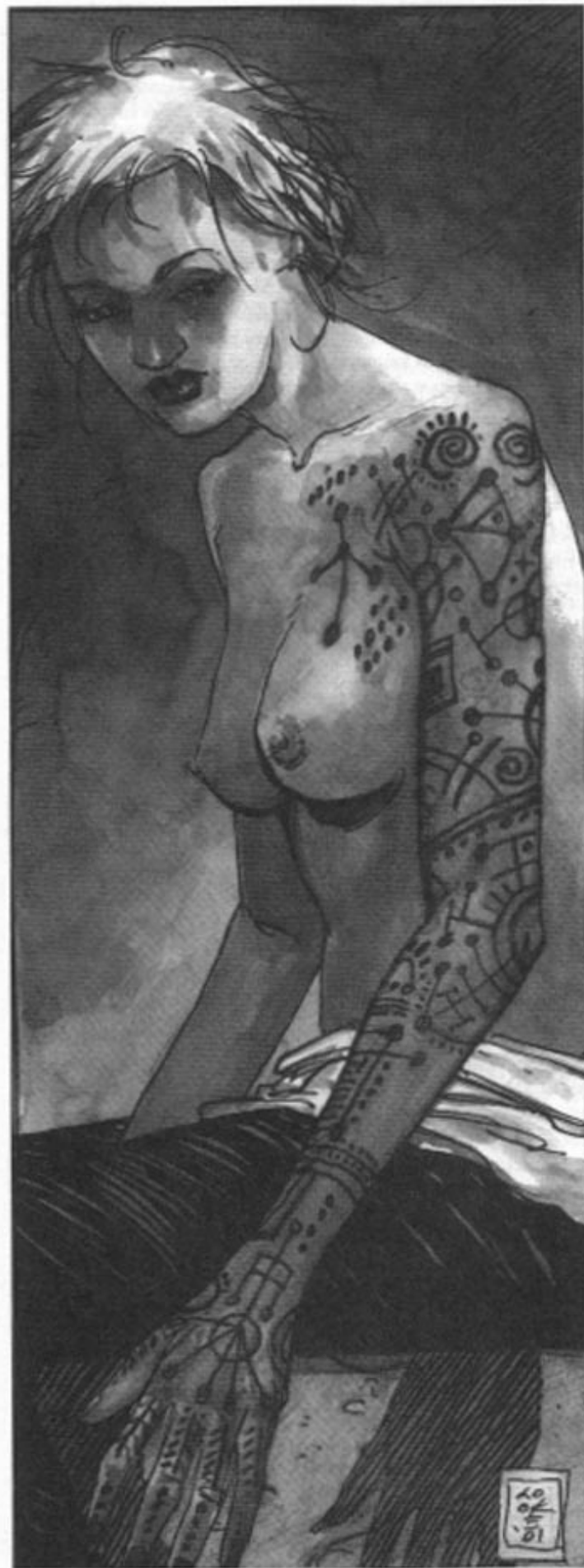
Given the availability of materials and tools at the shop, the Storyteller decides that only six successes must be achieved to create the weapon. Kirsty's player gets four successes the first night and three more the next, for a total of seven. The device is serviceable but has its problems. The wall of the container is unstable, so it could rupture if dropped or damaged. The whole contraption is bulky. And the nozzle is inefficient as it spews flame in a wide fan instead of in a narrow stream. Kirsty doesn't have time to address all these problems, but she does make sure that the igniter can be trusted. (That is, Kirsty's player dedicates her extra success to eliminating the unreliable characteristic.)

If Kirsty survives her descent into the bloodsuckers' nest, she could hang onto her improvised weapon and make improvements on it in the future. Eliminating each of its negative characteristics is a project unto itself, achieved by her player through a simple action and probably a Dexterity + Crafts roll, as decided by the Storyteller.

SIGNS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Mere existence as a Wayward demands unwavering focus and constant struggle. To suffer distractions or to stray from the mission is to die. To squander one's strength is to die. To not push oneself to the very limits of human capacity is to die. The maniacs' dream or obsession is so far-reaching, so vast and so alien that it necessitates calling upon every ounce of being they're able to muster — and more.

Some Waywards, particularly those lost in their destructive compulsions, have subconsciously discovered radical



methods to push themselves, to inspire themselves, to make themselves stronger. Over time, as their devotion and visualization of the hunt deepens, Waywards can "mark" themselves, drawing on, scarring or burning their flesh. The reasons are never clear and may be different for each person. Perhaps they subconsciously want to punish themselves, to deface their bodies out of shame for the acts they commit. Maybe they no longer feel like any of the people or other hunters who surround them, so they strive to visibly set themselves apart. Perhaps they just want to fuck up their looks so severely that they can scare even terrifying monsters. Or maybe such defacement is performed subconsciously, and a Wayward is shocked to realize that he has carved or burned himself while otherwise looking to the future or planning an attack. Whether it's a self-proclaimed rite of passage or an indication of masochism, Waywards can resort to marring or decorating their skin as an expression of their calling.

Many start "small" with a simple, impermanent design. They mark themselves with ink, ash or blood, scrawling a symbol that just "seems right," that lingers in the back of the brain or that has been "seen somewhere" and that haunts a killer's mind. (If word of this trend ever spreads to the theorists among the imbued, they might speculate that there's a connection between these symbols and the hunter code itself, both of which can bear an implicit meaning to some chosen.) Initial signs are often hidden beneath clothes, although it's not long before they're worn openly — and some Waywards can brandish images overtly from the very beginning, whether on arms, the neck or even the face.

Regardless of where or why Waywards wear these markings, these hunters definitely ascribe a sense of strength, energy, will or determination to the signs. The psychos simply feel greater resolve, whether markings impart power of their own or the Wayward's mind supplies the actual motivation. Given the rewards, it probably comes as little surprise that killers can resort to permanent marks: professional or homemade tattoos, scars or brands. Anything to make the signs a display of who a Wayward is and what he can do. Anything to grant power. Indeed, Waywards immersed immeasurably into the hunt become veritable "illustrated" men or women, their bodies landscapes of meaningful yet mysterious sigils and designs.

Who knows where the inspiration for such defacement originates, or where the seeming power within these symbols comes from? Is it a gift from the Messengers, a blessing to compensate for an otherwise broken creed? Is it a manifestation of Wayward instinct given form upon flesh? Or is it something more mythic, harking to a time when war chiefs painted themselves to stand apart from their followers and to frighten the enemy? No one knows. But that doesn't stop Waywards from bearing the signs.

BADGES OF COURAGE

A Wayward more or less subconsciously stumbles upon the symbols that bestow energy and power upon him. There's no plan or strategy to learning or finding the images. They simply come to mind, seem appropriate or linger at the back of the mind until expressed physically. Once a symbol is drawn, your Wayward just knows that the sign is important and he finds consolation, spirit or validation in it. Each symbol simply represents something important about himself that he can look to, and by which he can feel invigorated.

Almost all of these symbols are unlike any signs known in hunter code. Other hunters who look at a Waywards'

marks sense no meaning to them whatsoever — except for one, that which suggests — “chief,” “warrior” or “general.” Of all symbols borne by Waywards, that one is usually the first to be worn prominently.

When a Wayward achieves 4 Vision, he begins to sense the importance and meaning of certain images. A symbol comes to mind and is imagined in different places, seen momentarily on the character’s skin in a mirror or formed by the blood of a defeated monster. In many cases, the psycho feels compelled to adorn himself with the image in some fashion. Not to say that he must — your character may resist the craving, and some Waywards bear no signs at all — but resisting is usually an act of will, as opposed to the natural instinct to submit (there’s no system in place to resist self-marking at any time in a Wayward’s career; it’s a matter of roleplaying). For each Vision point that your character gains after 4, the image of another symbol comes to mind, becomes meaningful or seems elusively appealing. Thus, a character with 7 Vision has a “repertoire” of four images. A character who resists adopting symbols early on might opt to embrace them later in his “career” and may acquire one for each 4+ point of Vision that he has. You or your Storyteller may choose the signs that your character adopts, as best suits your chronicle.

If a symbol is drawn in a temporary fashion, such as with magic marker, the image fades but the implicit understanding of its meaning and the vigor it conveys is never forgotten. If your character wants to resort to its effects again, he can draw the image again and may eventually make the mark permanent. Location of such signs on the body is unimportant. They can be anywhere and placement on exposed parts often indicates a psycho who no longer gives a damn (or never did) about society’s concepts of decorum, or someone who wants to shock whomever or whatever he meets. At the Storyteller’s discretion, painful means of marking can inflict a level of bashing damage that can’t be soaked. These methods usually leave permanent scars.

Waywards can know or bear multiple marks simultaneously, but only one can be “active” — can be a source of determination or drive — at a time. Activating a sign means drawing it on the body or focusing on it as a personal motivation if it already exists. Your character might know that he’ll need brawn (i.e., Strength) in the coming days to tangle with a rot that’s stalking him. Or perhaps he looks for determination to stay alert to his pursuer (i.e., he brings forth more Perception).

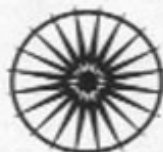
Activation of a sign costs three Conviction points. The effects of each symbol, listed below, last for Vision rating in days. Benefits received are lost if a sign is ever marred before duration expires normally. Maybe ink fades, your Wayward falls in a river or blood soaks his skin and covers his permanent tattoo. A marking’s effects can also be terminated prematurely if your character chooses. He simply allows himself to “come down” or ceases to focus so intently on the goal he previously sought. He cannot activate another symbol immediately, however. At least one day must pass before he can look to another sign for inspiration, no matter how the previous effect’s duration ended — intentionally or not; prematurely or after its full extent. Drawing or trying to activate a new sign too soon seems mildly tiring rather than invigorating, as if your character’s spirit isn’t into the intended new “program” just yet.

The following are just some signs that could be important to your character. More exist and you and the Storyteller may create some and define the benefits they bestow.

You or the Storyteller may choose one image for each point of Vision gained from 4 onward. Signs cannot be chosen for each Vision point and then replaced by new ones; a Wayward envisions or adopts only a few images in her career, depending on how high her Vision rises. Marks shouldn’t be chosen or assigned randomly. Although a general meaning is indicated for each symbol, above, you or the Storyteller should ascribe a personal meaning to each, explaining why your character finds it empowering. Maybe one reminds your character of the first creature he ever encountered, or is reminiscent of a memory, experience or past love. Thus, while different Waywards can bear the same symbols and gain the same benefits from them, they all ascribe the same signs with *different* meanings and *personal* significance.

Members of other creeds — and Waywards with less than 4 Vision — gain no effects from these symbols when they’re drawn on their bodies. Nor do they understand the significance of the signs that “qualified” psychos do. Perhaps these other hunters just aren’t psychotic enough to grasp “worthy” Waywards’ perspective on and appreciation for the hunt. On the very rare occasions when two Waywards meet, they can appreciate the meaning of any symbols inscribed on each other. Psychos can even adopt new symbols from peers when their Vision rises next, but each Wayward still invests each symbol with his own personal significance, not with the same meaning that another of the killers does.

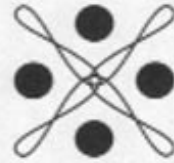
“Chief,” “warlord,” “general”; +1 to Leadership rolls; the Wayward creed symbol as perceived in conventional hunter code



“Enduring,” “stoic,” “tenacious”; +1 to Endurance rolls



“Vigilant,” “alert,” “wary”; +1 to Perception rolls



“Guided,” “chosen,” “destined”; +1 to Intelligence rolls



“Wily,” “cunning,” “resourceful”; +1 to Wits rolls



“Unbreakable,” “unstoppable,” “relentless”; +1 to Willpower rolls



“Deadly,” “piercing,” “precise”; +1 to Melee or Brawl attack rolls



“Resilient,” “unflinching,” “untouchable”; +1 to soak rolls



“Devastating,” “brutal,” “awesome”; +1 to all damage rolls





CHAPTER 6: THE DOGS OF WAR

*And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened
her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand*
— Genesis 4:11

The imbuing does more than grant Waywards new abilities: it imposes an imperative to kill that immediately overrides any previous moral code, and that forces these poor souls into psychopathy. The result is people who fight a losing battle to stay human, while the worst part of them acknowledges nothing more than a genocidal obligation to be fulfilled at any cost. Some fight their compulsions. Others revel in them. This chapter profiles some of these people for you to use as characters or to introduce in your chronicle. Feel free to customize or alter them in any way to fit the needs of your story.

GUN ADVOCATE

Just like bagging a ten-point buck — with fangs.

Prelude: While you weren't actually born with a gun in your hands, you came darn close. Your dad always wanted a son but seemed to accept you as long as you did some of the things a boy might do. So, when he took you hunting for the first time, you went along for his sake. Much to your surprise and his, you really enjoyed it.

You couldn't wait until you were old enough to go hunting alone. In the meantime, you tagged along with dad most weekends and learned to strip, clean and shoot a gun. You were pretty damn good at it, too.

Everyone had a gun where you grew up. It was just an accepted part of life. Your mom and dad drilled it home that you needed guns for protection from criminals and madmen, just like the cowboys needed them to protect themselves back in the Old West. As you grew older, they taught you it was your right to carry a gun, a right protected by law.

It was only once you were a grown-up and had moved to the city that you realized not everyone felt the same way. Some bleeding-heart liberals actually seemed to believe that guns caused trouble instead of preventing it. Even a few politicians agreed.

But your life was comfortable: work as a secretary, evenings in bars with gun-club buddies and weekends hunting or back home with dad. Then, one day as you walked home from work, you saw something — someone that was just as much an animal as the creatures you shot in the woods. Then and there, you knew why guns were so important.

You tracked the creature back to its home — or *lair*, as you thought of it. The first bullet put it down. It got up again. The second and third put it down, as well. It took longer to get up that time, and you switched to hollow-points to finish it off.

You found others like yourself in the city soon afterward, and now you're busy training and organizing them into hunting parties. Weekends away in the country are the perfect opportunity to teach this ill-matched collection of people some decent gun skills. Some of them initially disagreed with your attitudes and methods, but they either gave in or you ran them off. Okay, a few didn't run or give in, but they aren't problems any more, either.

Concept: You're a young, committed hunter who has spent most of her life killing animals with guns. Now, the reason for all that practice is clear. Long ago, you mentally classified all animals as game. Now you realize that you need to include some — or maybe all — people in there, too.

Roleplaying Hints: Monsters deserve nothing more than a quick, clean end. You're good with a gun and prefer to kill at range rather than up close and personal. Anyone who's with you is trained to the best of your ability. You even share your guns if that makes for a better kill. If anyone gets in your way, however, a bullet solves the problem quickly. You're adept at faking everything from a professional hit to an accidental shooting.

Equipment: Selection of shotguns and rifles of different sizes and uses, ammunition, outdoor survival gear, hunting permits for several different states, a small car and a battered old truck for weekends



Water Book Wayward

NAME:

NATURE: Fanatic

PRIMARY VIRTUE: vision

PLAYER:

DEMEANOR: Traditionalist

CREED: Wayward

CHRONICLE:

CONCEPT: Huntswoman

STARTING CONVICTION: 4

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Dexterity (Graceful) ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐
 Stamina ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

SOCIAL

Charisma ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Manipulation ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Appearance (Fresh Faced) ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐

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 (Sniping) ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐
 Melee ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Poison ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Security ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Stealth (Stalking) ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐
 Survival ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Technology ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

KNOWLEDGES

Academics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Bureaucracy ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Computer ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Finance ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Investigation ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Law ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Linguistics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Medicine ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Occult ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Politics ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Research ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Science ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

Allies ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Arsenal ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Fame ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Resources ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

EDGES

NAME	CREED	LEVEL	TRIGGER
Impart	Deviance	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	
Foresee	Visionary	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	
		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	
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		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	
		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	

VIRTUES

MERCY	VISION	ZEAL
Score	Score	Score
1 <input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
2 <input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
3 <input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
4 <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
5 <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
6 <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
7 <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
8 <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
9 <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
10 <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>

DERANGEMENTS

Paranoia ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

CONVICTION

☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

WILLPOWER

☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

EXPERIENCE

HEALTH

Bruised ☐
 Hurt -1 ☐
 Injured -1 ☐
 Wounded -2 ☐
 Mauled -2 ☐
 Crippled -5 ☐
 Incapacitated ☐

CORPORATE KILLER

Results are all that count. Methods mean nothing.

Prelude: Life has been a clear path for you. Your parents had enough money to send you to a good school, where you worked hard and played harder. You got good grades and a regular place on sports teams. With all that came popularity and more than your fair share of girls.

The Ivy League welcomed you with open arms and a good degree. The right contacts and a lot of networking landed you an entry-level position with a major corporate bank. You fast-tracked into management and showed a degree of ruthlessness and ambition that impressed your superiors.

Sure there were sacrifices. Sex replaced love. Colleagues substituted for friends — which didn't keep you from screwing them over when it suited you. And your parents heard from you only when you wanted to meet one of their business associates. Still, your folks were proud of you. They always said you were special and that you'd be a big success. You never paid much attention to the spiritual side of life; the material world was paying dividends. Still, you always had a feeling that someone was watching over you.

You got proof the day you realized the guy in the corner office was dead — and still above you on the corporate ladder. When you got away with burning him up and his apartment building with him, you suspected that you were even more special than you realized. Now, you've been promoted to the most important position of all: corporate killer.

You've spent a little time on that Internet site, but the people there disgust you. None of them can see the big picture. It's not enough to throw yourself at a monster in an alley. You need to make it weak and vulnerable first. You have to isolate it from its support structures and power base, just like you would another business... or businessperson.

Let the idiots on the street handle the things that attack drunks and bums. Hell, feed them information and let them get on with it if

need be. You're after the big game, the hidden ones that insinuate themselves into positions of power. If it takes bankrupting their companies and killing their aides to make them vulnerable, so be it. Besides, your company can swoop in to pick up the pieces afterward.

So you keep your day job. Your clout and the money you earn make your secret goals easier to achieve. You're aware, however, that the longer the fight goes on the harder it will be to explain your lateness and absences. The favors you can call upon aren't limitless, and you know you're going to have to find some support soon.

A few members of your staff became a little suspicious about some of your stranger transactions. You set them up as fall guys when the audit team came in, and now they're too busy trying to find enough money to pay their mortgages, let alone make trouble for you.

Concept: You're an overachiever who has been assigned a mission far more important than mere corporate domination. You devote all your considerable resources to cleansing the high-profile world of abominations.

Roleplaying Hints: You're polite, charming and impeccably dressed. Taste, drive and ruthlessness are your watchwords. These qualities are now all directed toward a single ambition, however: ridding the world of its monstrous puppet-masters. You try socially acceptable methods to render them powerless and vulnerable, but when push comes to shove you're quite prepared to dispose of them — and anyone associated with them — personally. And if you can gain from it in the business world, more power to you.

Equipment: Perfectly tailored suit; the latest tri-band cell phone and palm organizer, both programmed with the direct lines of key financial players; a small but powerful handgun, often kept in your Porsche Boxter



Incapacitated ☐

SCHOOLYARD BULLY

I'm not playing games anymore.

Prelude: At an early age, you realized that the world wasn't the happy place that TV made it out to be. Your parents moved to a new town, and you started at a new school. Your being the new kid made you a target, and you rapidly realized that you had a choice. You could either pick on other kids or they could pick on you. That decision was easy, and you set out to make yourself the most feared kid in school.

You were pretty smart about it, too. Some morons impressed the rest by talking back to the teachers. Sure, it won the other kids' approval, but it made life harder as the teachers punished them or told their parents. You intimidated and threatened the stronger but slower kids until you had a gang that would do whatever you wanted. You had the whole schoolyard in your back pocket, and the teachers were none the wiser.

Life was pretty easy from that point on. You kept the kids in line and kept yourself out of trouble. By the time you were in your mid teens, you had enough accumulated respect from your classmates that you really didn't have to try anymore.

Then everything changed. One evening, you saw that a guy hanging around the fence was wrong somehow — not human. You didn't hesitate. You took the knife you carried for intimidation and drove it into him. He barely noticed at first, so you did it again... and again. That's when you realized you were fighting for your life. You'd picked up some tricks around the playground, but you saw how paltry they were when you finally had to stab the thing in the eye.

Somehow, you just knew there were other things out there like that one, and they had to go. You set about it the only way you knew: You got other kids to do your dirty work. It didn't take much to get your gang — always pretty badly behaved — to throw homemade firebombs through the right windows. Even if they had no idea who or what the victim was, it was fun enough that they didn't care. Before long, you — and they — made the transition to full-fledged street gang. You even picked up recruits from a few other gangs who knew more than you did about things like guns and drugs.

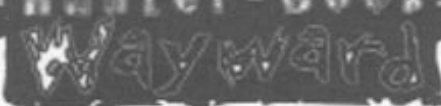
Now, the police are after this new street gang in town, but they haven't made the connection with you or your followers. It's only a matter of time, though, so you're making preparations to run away from home and direct your gang from hiding. You've made connections with a few of the local dealers — the human ones, anyway — that will keep you in cash for the time being. Time to go it alone.

Concept: You're a cocky school bully turned gang leader. You're as single-minded about dealing with the things on the streets as you once were about making a place for yourself at school. The fact that you're turning a bunch of kids into killers and criminals doesn't bother you in the least. As far as you can see, it's the right thing to do.

Roleplaying Hints: To adults, you're a quick-to-please kid. To other kids, you're hell in an acne-ridden body. Your sense of right and wrong has been severely warped by years of bullying, and irreparably twisted by the imbuing. "Right" and "wrong" are irrelevant; the world is split into what you can get away with and what you can't. You don't even see destroying these things as rewarding, just necessary.

Equipment: Switchblade, cheap mobile phone, beat-up bicycle, MP3 player, wardrobe of moderately priced street fashions, and a mob of burly teenagers keen to win your approval.





NAME: NATURE: Autocrat PRIMARY VIRTUE: vision
PLAYER: Demeanor: Bravo CREED: Wayward
CHRONICLE: CONCEPT: Willy Thug STARTING CONVICTION: 4

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL		SOCIAL		MENTAL	
Strength	● ● ● ○ ○	Charisma	● ● ● ○ ○	Perception	● ● ○ ○ ○
Dexterity	● ● ● ○ ○	Manipulation	● ● ● ○ ○	Intelligence	● ● ○ ○ ○
Stamina	● ● ● ○ ○	Appearance	● ● ○ ○ ○	Wits	● ● ● ○ ○

ABILITIES

TALENTS		SKILLS		KNOWLEDGES	
Alertness	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Animal Ken	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Academics	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Athletics	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Crafts	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Bureaucracy	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Awareness	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Demolitions	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Computer	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Brawl	● ● ● ○ ○	Drive	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Finance	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Dodge	● ● ● ○ ○	Etiquette	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Investigation	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Empathy	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Firearms	● ● ○ ○ ○	Law	● ● ○ ○ ○
Expression	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Melee	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Linguistics	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Intimidation	● ● ○ ○ ○	Performance	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Medicine	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Intuition	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Security	● ● ○ ○ ○	Occult	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Leadership	● ● ○ ○ ○	Stealth	● ● ○ ○ ○	Politics	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Streetwise	● ● ○ ○ ○	Survival	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Research	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Subterfuge	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Torture	● ● ○ ○ ○	Science	○ ○ ○ ○ ○

ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS		EDGES		VIRTUES				
		NAME	CREED	LEVEL	TRIGGER	MERCY Score Spent	VISION Score Spent	ZEAL Score Spent
Allies	● ● ● ○ ○	Impart Deviance	●	○ ○ ○ ○ ○		1 ○	● x	○
Arsenal	● ○ ○ ○ ○	Forewarn Deviance	● ●	○ ○ ○ ○ ○		2 ○	● x	○
Patron	● ● ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		3 ○	● x	○
	○ ○ ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		4 ○	○	○
	○ ○ ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		5 ○	○	○
	○ ○ ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		6 ○	○	○
	○ ○ ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		7 ○	○	○
	○ ○ ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		8 ○	○	○
	○ ○ ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		9 ○	○	○
	○ ○ ○ ○ ○			○ ○ ○ ○ ○		10 ○	○	○

DERANGEMENTS

Antisocial Personality Disorder

CONVICTION

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

WILLPOWER

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

EXPERIENCE

HEALTH

Bruised ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

PROMINENT WAYWARDS

The following are among the most "notorious" of Waywards. That is, in the minds of most hunters they're nothing more than maniacs and mass killers who have no sense of morality or subtlety in the hunt. And yet, some Visionaries and Zealots can see a method to their madness, and a few have even begun to wonder if these people aren't privy to greater truths than other imbued realize. Still, understanding these imbued means getting over the atrocities they have committed — and undoubtedly will continue to.

CLAYTON ALBERT MAYHEW JR., AKA ALLEYMAN222, AKA PELEUS, AKA UID 564756, AKA MAYHEM

Between his 1951 birth and his present-day infamy, the man born as Clayton Mayhew Jr. has had many aliases. The vagaries of his imbuing have left him with little beyond those false names except a cold, calculated purpose that has made him an outlaw among outlaws.

After 18-year-old Inez Eburn revealed her surprise pregnancy to her mother, a marriage of convenience and a lengthy honeymoon abroad quickly followed. Thirteen months later, Inez and Clayton Mayhew were driving home to introduce "their" new baby to his kin when a truck broadsided their Cadillac. Only the infant survived.

Of course, Inez's mother knew the orphaned child was no Mayhew at all. But what even she didn't know was that the child's true father was a full-blooded Cherokee, a migrant worker whom her daughter had met in the Eburn family's tobacco fields.

So it was that even as Clayton Jr. was brought up by his grandfather Jack Mayhew — a stalwart among the North Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan — each passing year made the boy look less like proper white supremacist material. ("Somethin' ain't right about that boy," was Jack's mantra.)

Nonetheless, Jack saw a chance to make over a son who had been a tremendous disappointment to him. He person-

ally instructed nine-year-old Clayton Jr. in the "art of lynching niggers," and made the boy a crack shot, despite the crudity of the caricatured blacks that filled the old man's firing range. Unfortunately, "pickaninnies" weren't the only targets of Jack's loathing. The constant threats, insults and assaults directed at his grandchild only worsened as the boy grew ever more to resemble (as Jack phrased it) "the flip side of a buffalo nickel."

As a young man, Clayton Jr. was brought into the Klan mostly because his grandfather was a prominent member. As one of the knights, the young man took part in mob violence with real gusto and no one could deny his skill with a rifle. When his hood was off, however, his "brethren" got nervous. After fights began to disrupt the ranks, it was Jack who asked the boy to leave "for the good of the cause."

Clayton Jr. drifted for some time before he decided that a military career was what he needed to prove himself. He couldn't pass the psych exams, though.

Ultimately, Clayton Jr. reached Southeast Asia as a freelance photographer — although not a very good one. His experiences there gave him another group of people to hate, however. Once he returned home, he was a walking pillar of malice. He tried to find himself a place among the hate groups infesting the northwestern United States. Little progress awaited him there, because his appearance raised even more disquiet among racists in this region where Native Americans were far more visible — and, in Clayton's circles, despised.

Unquestionably, his imbuing on a dark, wooded road in Washington State saved him from aimless ignominy, self-hatred and probable suicide. Whether anyone — Clayton Jr. included — is better off for that "salvation" is open to debate.

Prior to his encounter with God45, Clayton Jr. suffered from an odd derangement that mentally blocked him from using his own name. Thus, he routinely identified himself by one of a revolving series of aliases, many similar to his given names. What effect the revelation of his true parentage might have on his future behavior is uncertain.

JOSHUA MATTHEWS, AKA GOD45

It was a trial by fire for the hunter who calls himself God45.

He was a family man from Philadelphia with a son, a wife and a tenuous position as a histologic technician at Abington Hospital. By day, he prepared slides of biopsies, tumors and other potentially cancerous tissues for the resident pathologist. By night, he tried to manage his family, manage his money and manage the workload from his classes at Temple Medical College. Every day was a fierce juggling act as he tried to keep the elements of his world in balance, all the while becoming increasingly inured to the world of blood and cancer that he saw through the microscope.

It happened slowly. The message, a single phrase, was given to him in a fleeting moment at the hospital. It was a stuttering glimpse ahead to his imbuing, which would descend fully that night during the family dinner. The message was delivered again, the doors of perception opened wide and Joshua saw his son as he really was: a blotch, a stain, inhuman. Joshua's reaction was blind, irrational, murderous. He took a knife and cut the boy's throat. His wife attempted to stop





him, and even though she looked perfectly normal, Joshua reacted insanely and broke her neck. Surely the infection had already spread to her, he perceived implicitly; she spent more time with the boy than he did.

After that, he burned down his own home and fled.

Joshua's normal life disintegrated in a matter of minutes, and he was forced to adopt an entirely new one. That of a stalker. A killer. He grew to understand it slowly, and inevitably accepted his calling with a clinical obsession that was beyond psychotic. He adopted a metaphor from his past experience that explained the monsters and his role with regard to them: They were cancer. He had wanted to be a doctor once, to save lives and to excise cancer. But that could never be, for now a new calling beckoned to him, offered him the chance to heal on a grand scale, to be a physician of Biblical proportions. He has been at it ever since, a plague to monsters, a nightmarishly determined individual bringing death to those who seek to corrupt the world's body.

Joshua is deadly serious and utterly clinical in his judgments. Doubt doesn't seem to occur to him. When doing his "work," he is humorless, determined and implacable.

PROFILE

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity (Precise) 4, Stamina (Enduring) 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception (Wary) 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness (Urban Areas) 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Computer 2, Dodge 2, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Intimidation (Fear) 4, Investigation 3, Leadership 3, Medicine 3, Melee 2, Research 3, Science 2, Security 2, Stealth 2, Technology 2, Torture 3

Backgrounds: Arsenal 4, Contacts 2, Patron 1

Edges: (Deviance) Impart, Forewarn, Enrage, Reap; (Vengeance) Cleave, Trail

Vision: 10, **Zeal:** 3, **Conviction:** 8, **Willpower:** 6

Derangements: Antisocial Personality Disorder (Sociopathy), Megalomania, Paranoia

KIRSTY McCALLUM

The day Kirsty was old enough to leave home was the day she walked into the local police station and reported her father for child molestation. He was tried, convicted and locked away for the better part of 10 years. She spent half of that in therapy, having her identity rebuilt after it shattered into distinct personalities under years of abuse.

Eventually, she created a new life for herself. She went to college, where she discovered a remarkable aptitude for electronics. She eventually landed a job in an electronics firm in the so-called "Silicon Glen" of central Scotland. She settled in East Kilbride, met Gregory McCallum and married him. A few years later, they had their first baby girl.

Kirsty joined the Territorial Army with her employer's approval, slipping through the normal safeguards by lying about her maiden name, forging some documents and taking advantage of the lax checks performed by the reserves. Being in the TA gave her a feeling of empowerment that she had lacked earlier in life. Indeed, she made a happy and content life, confident that the horror of her childhood was behind her.

Then one night on her way home, she ran over a dead person. Twice. From that moment on, her life was consumed by a desire to cleanse Scotland of these invading things. Soon after her first kill, one of her co-workers became suspicious. The stress of the imbuing and the possibility of discovery fractured her personality once again. Her primary identity remained aware of what she had become, but was insulated from the worst of the Messengers' urgings. Her secondary personality took the full brunt of the imbuing and became an efficient, if ruthless, soldier in their service.

Kirsty soon found herself unable to reconcile the demands of the hunt, a family and a job. She abandoned her husband and daughter and set herself up in a squalid flat in Glasgow, financing her hunting through the occasional theft. The "primary" Kirsty was introduced to a group of hunters in Glasgow by Paul Moreton (Sixofwords29), a



Visionary who devoted his time to uniting the imbued. Meanwhile, her secondary personality had cowed a small group of hunters in nearby Stirling into following her, after she slaughtered some civilians and indirectly caused the death of half the group. When Moreton made contact with the Stirling group, he encountered Kirsty's secondary personality and later confronted her primary one.

Kirsty eventually moved south with Moreton, joining his new group of hunters in the southeast of England. His presence seems to ease her worst excesses and prevents her secondary personality from taking control. But the longer she hunts, the more akin the two Kirstys become.

Although occasional glimpses of the loving wife and mother who Kirsty once was occasionally show through, she is little more than a very proficient soldier these days. Only Moreton's steadying influence and a desire to not be utterly rejected by another group of imbued stop her from slipping completely into her alternate persona.

NYANGOMA

There are times when even the most compassionate and forgiving of hunters is endangered by the other side. Not all monsters appreciate attempts to bring them back into humanity. Despite their willingness to fight, aggressive hunters can also find themselves in the same position; they just get in over their heads and don't understand exactly what they face. Despite these dangers, few imbued really know much about combat or military tactics.

In recent months, a woman calling herself Nyangoma has contacted a few hunter groups in southern Europe and even on the fringes of Asia. She apparently offers aid and training. In return, members must follow her orders without question for the duration of whatever crisis they face. Hunters who refuse never hear from her again. Hunters who accept sometimes wish they had never heard from her.

Nyangoma, a soft-spoken woman whose accent hints at origins in the Congo, perhaps, puts hunters through a vicious and demanding training program over a period of a few weeks, teaching them basic firearms, explosive and



martial skills. She then leads the groups in efforts to smoke out and take down the creatures that have made the hunters their prey.

As soon as a threat is dealt with, Nyangoma moves on. No appeal convinces her to stay — not that many of her "clients" have ever felt like asking her to do so. Individuals who've discussed her on hunter-net and elsewhere talk (evidently with bad memories) of her utter commitment to destroying the group's foe, even if it costs the imbued or people around them their lives. Still, such chosen concede that none of them would be around to discuss Nyangoma had she not interceded.

Nyangoma is a striking woman in her mid-20s. Scars on her arms and legs hint at a violent past, but she never speaks of her own experiences. She remains focused on the job at hand and refuses to deal with other hunters on anything but a professional level.

Hunter-Book™ Wayward

The End Is Nigh

Monsters are everywhere, lurking in the shadows, masquerading as upstanding citizens, hiding in plain sight. They murder, abuse and oppress humanity. They have to be stopped, at any price. A new force emerges among hunters, a new creed never seen before — or has it been among them from the start? These chosen are bent on obliterating the supernatural — and anyone who gets in their way. Are these wanton killers the world's messiahs... or its destroyers?

Stand or Fall

Hunter Book: Wayward is part of a Hunter: The Reckoning series dedicated to the creeds, the character types of the imbued. Waywards are one of the two lost hunter creeds, a group of maniacs and psychopaths — even by monsters' standards. Learn what it takes to drive these hunters over the edge — or to make them the most prophetic among the chosen.



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