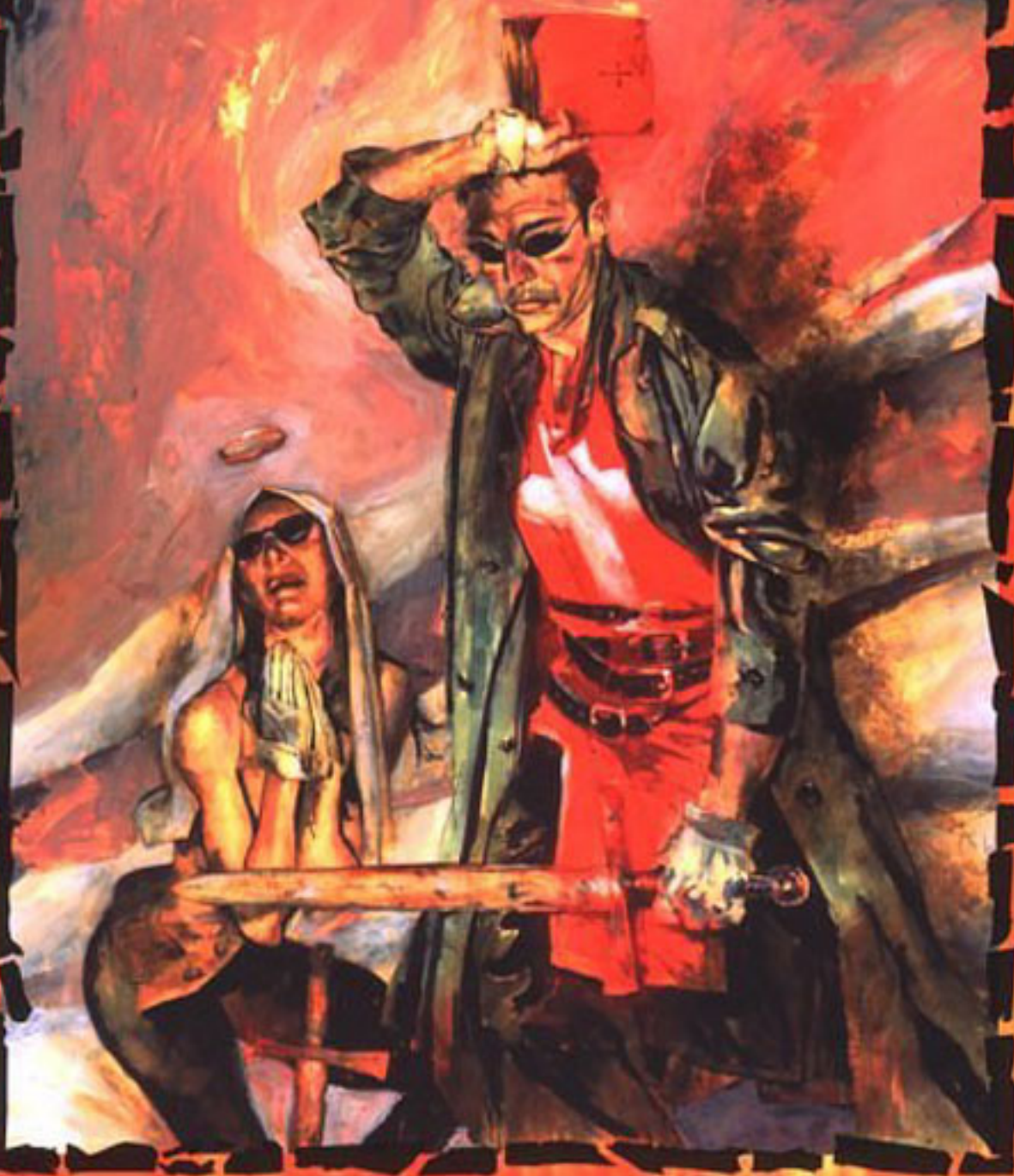


HUNTER

THE RECKONING

SURVIVAL GUIDE



The World of Darkness® revealed for Hunter: The Reckoning™

WASTELAND THE RECKONINGTM

SURVIVAL GUIDE

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PROLOGUE: STARTING A FAMILY

Leaf tightened her hand into a fist and struck as hard as she could, her breath expelling in a ragged shout. Sweat etched her brow and her lungs burned, but she couldn't quit. She struck again, with the left fist. She knew this could save her life.

"Ichi! Ni! San! Chi!" Her martial-arts instructor, a man so rail-thin that he seemed almost two-dimensional, strode in front of the array of students, watching them. He stopped before her.

"Okay, Leaf," he said. "You want your stance deeper, lower — so you can't be knocked off your feet. And pull your hand all the way back to your hip, got it? And don't stoop forward — you want your back straight. Ten more, people!"

The teacher's name was Steve. One of Leaf's friends studied aikido with him. Once Leaf and her husband Oaken had decided that they needed to study the martial arts, they'd initially thought of studying the "yielding way." A frank discussion with Steve, however, steered them toward his self-defense class, instead.

"Look, aikido is a terrific system. If I didn't believe in its principles, I wouldn't study it. But if you want to be able to defend yourself soon, and if you want to get in shape fast, take self-defense. It's a lot more aerobic and it's a lot more... blunt, basically. If you spent a year doing aikido, you'd be able to throw people around with very little physical effort, but if you take the self-defense class, you'll improve within a

month. It's not that it's better, but there's a much wider margin for error with punches and kicks."

The class wasn't all punches and kicks, however. Only the first half. After that, it was wrestling and grappling — learning the most efficient way to choke someone unconscious, and the places on the wrist and arm that provided the greatest pain with the least pressure.

It all made Leaf very uncomfortable. She was a pacifist. She believed in peace and harmony. Steve said he did too, but it was hard to keep that in mind when he was encouraging her to perfect her strangling techniques.

Afterward, driving home, she talked it over with Oaken.

"Does it make you uncomfortable? The fighting, I mean?"

"Fighting in the dojo? No, not really," he replied. "Not compared to the real thing."

"But the Living Power... do you think it wants us to turn to violence?"

"I'm pretty sure it doesn't want us to get killed, honey."

She had no reply to that. After another mile, she asked another question.

"Which do you like better, the standing or the wrestling?"

"I like the wrestling, I guess. I mean, there's a part of me that misses that from being a kid, right? This is just like rolling around with my brother, only a little more... intense."

"Really? It makes me kind of uncomfortable."

"Well, you're a woman in a class of mostly men. Rolling around on the floor with strangers is kind of uncomfortable."

"It's not that so much. Just the idea of... hurting someone. I don't like it."

"If you learn these techniques, you're supposed to be able to stop someone without injuring them. I mean, look at us right now. If we really *have* to get someone to stop doing something, we pretty much have to beat them senseless." He looked grim for a moment, and Leaf knew he was thinking of Loretta, a woman who'd looked like a normal meter reader, but who had really used her job to scout out lonesome and isolated victims for her master — a creature that lived only by causing death. They'd tried to stop Loretta, tried to hold her down, but she'd been too strong to restrain. Oaken had bludgeoned her with a steam iron. She was still in a coma, and they lived in dread of her waking. "Maybe when we get to the point that we're punching and kicking each other, instead of a punching bag — maybe then you'll like the ground work better."

Another mile, and one more question.

"Do you think I'm fooling myself? I mean, do you think I'll ever be able to really do this stuff?"

"Don't sell yourself short. You've spent, what, five hours a day hunched over that potter's wheel? Your back's probably as strong as anyone's in the gym, and your forearms aren't weak either."

"Why Oaken, you romantic fool." She smiled. He grinned back.

* * *

A week later, after class, they had a very different discussion. It had been a hard week. One of their fellow hunters, a woman named Constance Chilton, had spotted a rot in nearby Naperville. They'd tried to isolate it and cut it down, but it escaped them on the holding lot of a car dealership.

"Oaken... remember that pregnancy scare we had? When I was late?"

"I wouldn't call it a 'scare.'" Leaf had been taking Triphasal for years, and was usually regular as clockwork. When she'd been a day late, they'd spent 24 hours in a haze of hope, fear and confusion, wondering if they were ready to have kids, if they were financially stable enough, what changes would have to be made. After her period started, they had a long discussion and she went off the pill. They hadn't really been "trying to get pregnant." But they were willing to accept a child if it happened.

The day after they first saw the walking dead in a drugstore, Leaf went back on birth control.

"You realize if that hadn't been a scare, I'd be ready to deliver now?"

He was quiet for a second. "Wow," he said at last. He was pulling into a parking space, and as he put on the parking brake, he turned to her. "Do you still want kids? I mean... knowing?"

"I'm not sure. Part of me, it's like 'How can you bring a child into a world full of nightmares?' But when the Living Power came... I don't know. It's like everything's clearer now. I mean, even before the Call... we knew this could be a lousy place. Remember that woman in Naperville who

smothered her three children? Now, we know it's not just us. That evil is objective, it's embodied, it's not just an idea. But there's good too, and it's just as palpable. I know that babies are good — I mean, everyone feels that, right?"

"Sure, I guess."

"Look at the way people melt when there's a baby around. Everyone starts smiling and cooing, and, you know. Everyone gets soft. That's got to be good."

"Honey... I don't know if we can afford to be soft." He said it quietly and sadly. For a moment, she was quiet.

"If the good people stop having children out of fear of the bad things... how can good ever win?"

He didn't have an answer.

They went into their apartment and listened to a message on their answering machine. Constance Chilton was hospitalized with a broken back, waiting for a psychiatric evaluation.

* * *

Guadalupe Droin — another hunter — was waiting for them at the hospital. Leaf and Oaken didn't know her that well; the couple disagreed with her strongly about the proper way to handle the supernatural. Even through her fear and grief, Leaf wondered why Constance had called Lupe first, instead of her.

"How is she?"

"The doctors say she's resting, which I think means she's drugged up. She'll be okay, I think — she's a fast healer," she said, giving them a significant nod.

"How did it happen?" Oaken asked. Lupe shrugged.

"She was at home, by herself. It got in, got the drop on her, broke her back. I just wonder why she's still alive."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean if she had her back broken, do you think she'd have the presence of mind to fight it off?"

"Him," Oaken said grimly. "And I see your point."

"Maybe he couldn't bring himself to finish her?" Leaf asked, knowing it sounded weak.

"No," Oaken said slowly. "I'm thinking... have you ever heard of a honey pot?" Lupe gave him a puzzled look.

"You mean like a girlfriend on the side?"

"No, this was something the Viet Cong used to do. A sniper would wait until a GI was out in the open, then shoot him in the leg. When one of his buddies came out to drag him to safety, the sniper would shoot him too — aiming to cripple or kill. The injured man became bait for the rest of his unit."

"You think he's doing that to us?"

Quietly, Leaf stepped over to a table and pulled a pen and business card from her purse. She wrote on it and moved over next to Oaken, putting her arm around him.

"When we chased him through the car lot, it was like he could turn invisible at will," she said. "Just thinking about him being around and us not knowing... it terrifies me." Discreetly, she held up the card in the palm of her hand.

He's here now. Don't let on. With her sight on, Leaf could tell that the rot was right behind them, watching. She held the card so the creature couldn't see.

Lupe took a deep breath. "You can't get too suspicious or you'll go crazy," she said. "Look, let's talk about this tomorrow, okay?" And then she moved in to hug the two of them. It was the first time they had touched, other than shaking hands.

When they parted, Leaf noticed that Lupe took a big step backward. Leaf did not notice the streamer of smoke that trailed afterward from their lurking watcher. It was a marker that only Lupe could see.

* * *

Oaken and Leaf took turns sleeping. They'd seen the creature following them home, driving behind them in a lumbering SUV. Lupe came to them the next morning.

"Listen, I can track this thing, but I'm laying some rules, okay?"

"What do you mean, rules?" Oaken asked.

"I mean we do it my way. We go in, we don't talk to it, we don't try to get it to say sorry or reflect on its wrongdoing — we just kill it."

"Why do you get to dictate terms?"

"Because I can find it — and it can find you."

"Can't you see that you're acting just like it does?" Leaf cried, outraged.

Lupe's nostrils flared. "You ain't making me want to help you."

"Then why don't you just abandon us? Let the rot do your dirty work. You don't like us, do you? You think we're weak, soft — whatever you want to say, just because we aren't trying to butcher everyone who's different from us. Well that's what *we* believe. We think that's *right*, just like you think you're right. And if I give up on my beliefs just to stay alive — if I do the wrong thing to survive — how am I any different from something that kills for blood?"

"Because you're *wrong*!" Lupe shouted. "You're supposed to be on our side, not theirs! Jesus Christ, you saw what it did to Constance. She's our friend. How can you take its side now?"

"Lupe, Leaf — let's calm down here a moment." Oaken had his massive hands up in a conciliatory gesture. "Leaf — honey, you know that I agree with you in principle. Lupe, you're not going to make us into crusading warriors, no matter how much you want to. You can't make us into something we're not." Lupe drew in breath to argue, but Oaken held up a finger and raised his voice. "But in this instance, I think you're right. I don't think this one deserves a chance." He turned to Leaf, who was glaring at him. "I have to side with Guadalupe. I think we should do it her way. Can we agree?"

"Just take me where it is," Leaf said. "I'm not going to make any promises."

* * *

Lupe's trail ended in the middle of Rosebrook, in a hundred-and-fifty-thousand dollar house on a cul-de-sac, less than ten feet from its neighbors on either side. It was the same color as all the other houses, and the same shape as a third of them. It was perfectly bland, perfectly anonymous, perfectly suburban.

Instead of her usual taxicab, Lupe showed up driving a white van with "Green Thumb Lawn Service" on the side. "If anyone asks, you're guests in the house and I'm the hired help, got it?" Leaf and Oaken watched, feeling slightly useless, as Lupe put a ladder against the house and climbed onto the roof. When a car drove by, she industriously cleaned out the rain spouts, while Leaf crouched in the van with her husband. Once the coast was clear, Oaken got out and waved. Guadalupe nodded, then reached up and started fiddling with one of the wires going into the house.

"Okay," Lupe said when she reached the ground. "Either their alarm system can't call the cops now, or they don't get HBO anymore."

The three of them went to the back of the house. Lupe carried a knapsack with a gun and a flashlight. Oaken and Leaf had crowbars, carried discretely at their sides. Under their loose sweatshirts, each had a stake and a hammer.

Inside, the house was normal. Everything was tidy. All the appliances matched. All the decor was blandly tasteful. It looked almost like a showcase home — an uninhabited model used to sell people on moving in by showing them how calm and placid their lives could be in Rosebrook.

The three hunters went room by room, opening shades and letting midmorning light pour in. There was nothing odd here, nothing to indicate it as the lair of the living dead. But in the foyer, Lupe spotted her smoky trail. It led them to the basement door. She drew her gun, and both Leaf and Oaken brought forth their stakes.

Behind the door was darkness, even to the sight. Lupe produced a flashlight, and it shone down on a set of rickety stairs. She started down, but Oaken stopped her and stepped down ahead of her. Leaf followed him.

Halfway down, the room was flooded with light. All three were dazzled and they heard a voice, "I'd prefer it if you stopped, actually."

Leaf had instinctively ducked her head from the light, and looking through the slats of the rickety steps she could see a thick bed of steel spikes, firmly set into the floor and sharpened wickedly. Then she saw a rope, tied to the support beams of the steps. One good yank would drop them onto the spikes. The rope led off to a full sized freezer, the lid of which was propped up; sitting up inside it was the man they'd pursued. He was wearing pajamas. Dangling above his head was the pull chain of the lights, which still swayed from his tug. A quick glance around the basement showed that every window was covered with metal plating.

"So, may I ask why you've come here?"

"Three guesses," Lupe spat out at him.

"Judging from your stakes and weapons, my rational course of action would be to dump you onto the spikes," he said calmly. "They're poisoned, by the bye. Lucky for you, I'm more curious than rational. How did you find me?"

"We were led here by the Living Power," Leaf said, stalling. "Who are you?"

"You can call me Freddy, I guess. Living Power? My, that sounds impressive. Why don't you tell me all about it?"

"Better yet, I'll show you," Lupe announced and leaped from the stairs. With a curse, Oaken dove toward the bottom and Leaf felt the steps lurch as the rot yanked the rope. Her stake and hammer clattered to the floor as she lunged for the top of the stairs. Her hands caught the doorjamb seconds before the steps collapsed into rubble among the spikes. Her arms were in agony as she fought to hold on. She turned her head and saw Oaken stumbling to his feet, saw Lupe raising her pistol, and saw a woman stepping out of the shadows with a shotgun.

"NO!" Leaf cried. She felt a surge and the second woman — a rot, she now saw — hesitated, baffled by the Living Power. Lupe spun and fired her pistol straight into the woman's face. Freddy vaulted out of the freezer. His face was contorted with rage, but somehow his voice was still calm and deliberate: "I can't let you hurt my wife. I'm her husband. I have a duty to protect her. We just want to get by, not make trouble, 'Pursuit of Happiness' and all that..." As he spoke, he seized Lupe and flung her to the ground. The rot woman, blood pouring out over her modest nightgown, bent down to scramble blindly for her dropped shotgun.

Freddy pounced on Lupe, disarming her with one hand and seizing her throat with the other. Oaken lunged onto his back, striking powerfully with a stake. "Would you stop that?" Freddy asked conversationally. Then he lifted Lupe's head and slammed it down against the floor.

The rot-woman raised the shotgun, and again Leaf shouted at her to stop. Once again, the Power held the rot helpless. Oaken shouted and this time the stake struck home. "Freddy!" cried the woman.

Leaf felt her arms giving. With a heave of her stomach muscles, she pulled her legs up and to the side, bracing them against the wall. As her fingers slipped, she kicked out as hard as she could, hoping to clear the spikes. Under a thin layer of carpet, the floor was concrete, and her teeth rattled as her skull bounced off it. She saw the rot woman fling herself at Oaken, fangs bared, and she had time only to lock eyes and whisper "Do you remember?" before she passed out.

When Leaf awoke moments later, Oaken was cradling her head in his arms. The woman was blasted nearly in half. Oaken must have gotten her with her own shotgun. Lupe was out cold.

Somewhere, in the basement's surrounding darkness, an infant began to cry.

* * *

"So, what are we going to do with it?" Oaken asked. It was the question they had avoided all the way home.

Back in Rosebrook, they had managed to pry the metal plate off a window and then break the glass. The sunlight almost completely dissolved Freddy and his wife. Leaf and Oaken both had to lift Lupe through. Leaf gathered their tiny, wailing find, and Oaken helped her out.

There could be no doubt about the baby's nature. In a mouth that should have had smooth gums, there were two fangs, no larger than a cat's teeth — but sharper. Somehow, neither was able to leave it, so they bundled it tightly against the sun and drove home with it. Even with their

caution, a few rays of diffuse light penetrated to its skin, leaving it with ugly burns.

"I don't know," Leaf whispered. "How could they do that to their child?"

"We don't even know it's theirs." Oaken heaved a tired sigh. "It doesn't really matter now, anyhow. It's our problem."

"How can you call it a problem?" Leaf asked, brushing its wispy hair with her hand, but she knew the answer. They were desperately grateful that Lupe didn't wake until the infant was smuggled into their home. It fell into an uneasy sleep. With its mouth closed, it looked perfectly alive and innocent.

Beautiful.

"Leaf, it is a problem. I mean... how are we going to feed it?"

"We'll find a way."

"What are we going to tell people?"

"We'll tell them we adopted him."

"No, I mean the *list*. What do we tell the others? If Lupe hadn't been unconscious—"

"Why do we have to tell them at all?"

"It could be dangerous."

"Open your eyes! If we're ever going to interact with a... with someone like this safely... it's an infant, right? How could it hurt two grown-ups?"

"Maybe it's older than it looks. Maybe it's been dead for centuries and just never got older, just stayed preserved..."

"Stop it! You're just imagining things being the worst they could be!"

"I want us to be safe in our own home!"

"And I want to find a solution to this! I don't just want to stop these, whatever they are, I want to help them! Maybe this child could be the key to finding a cure!"

"Now you sound like Doctor 119."

"I do not!"

"I just think we should..."

"Should what? Give it over to the crusaders? They'd stake it — *him* — without mercy. He'd never have a chance."

"What chance does he have now?"

"Who knows? Who knows what's possible? Maybe this... this whatever it is, is reversible. Maybe it's just an illness that can be cured. If it can, think what a *great thing* that would be, Oaken! If we could heal them? Heal him? I mean, he's just a baby. There's got to be a way to save him. The Power wouldn't have led us to him if there wasn't a way, *some way* to make this right! Don't you believe?"

"I don't know, honey." He put his arms around her. "I don't know."

* * *

That night, Oaken came half awake at the sound of a crying child, but it soon stopped. As he was drifting back to sleep, he heard Leaf humming a lullaby. She had a lovely voice.

"Go back to sleep now, River." River was the name they'd picked out for a boy. Too bad she hadn't really been pregnant.... Oaken rolled over, something tickling at his

mind. He half-opened his eyes and saw Leaf sitting on the edge of the bed, looking half-asleep herself. The child was nursing at her breast, its eyes closed in bliss.

A trickle of blood fell from the corner of its mouth.

Oaken bolted upright. "It's okay, honey," Leaf said fuzzily.

Oaken grabbed the first thing at hand — a heavy book from their bed stand — and slammed it into the child with all his strength. There was a dull thud, followed by a meaty sound as it hit the ground. Leaf's eyes shot open and she surged to her feet. She screamed as her fist slammed into her husband's nose. He heard it crack and tears sprang to his eyes.

"Don't you ever hit that baby again!" she shrieked.

"It's no baby, Leaf! Look at yourself! Look what it did to you!"

She looked down and pulled her nightgown closed. "I don't care," she said shakily. "It's just a child. It was hungry."

They stared down at the child, wailing on the floor. It raised its arms toward Leaf, entreating, imploring.

"Mama," it said.

"Maamaa!"

* * *

Somehow, Leaf got back to sleep. They had lined a drawer with blankets, and she put the baby there when it

calmed down. The makeshift cradle was right next to her. Oaken went to sleep on the couch.

When Leaf awoke, there was midmorning sunlight pouring through the windows. She still felt groggy and weak. The word "drained" crossed her mind, but she immediately stifled that thought. Then she realized what sunlight meant and she sat up, her heart full of fear, looking down at the drawer. It was empty.

"Ash," she thought desperately. "Freddy and the other one left ash. There's no ash here.... Oaken must have moved the baby, must have remembered what I forgot, must have moved him into the closet or the bathroom." She leaped out of bed and began searching the dark interior rooms of their home. She didn't find the baby. She did find a note:

Leaf,

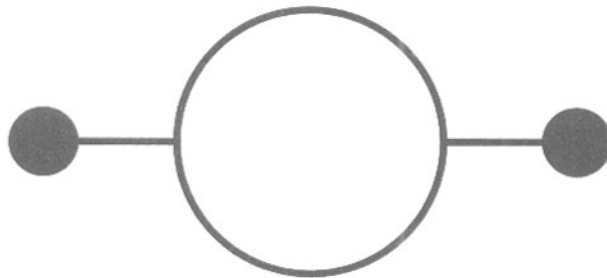
I have taken the baby for a drive.

Please forgive me. I really think it's for the best.

Oaken

She crumpled to the floor. For a moment her mind was empty of everything but deep, wordless horror. She heard a terrible noise and realized it was her own voice.

Leaf howled, making pained, wordless sounds that echoed throughout the empty house.





Welcome to Hunter-Net

This is the Hunter Survival Guide, a page linked to the main hunter-net site. I'd say "welcome," but that's a little too cordial for our purposes.

If you're here, you've undoubtedly found this page through the main site and know what you yourself — and we — are. Others out there are either intruders or the very ones we devote our attention to. All of "us" who read this page should bear in mind that our "competitors" may see exactly what we do and perhaps learn as much about the world and us as we do about them.

The purpose of this page is simple. The main site was seriously compromised not long ago and was taken down. It has been restored since, however, with the right people in control and stronger safety measures installed (although understand no measure is foolproof). Since so much information was lost — and, more disturbing, *altered* — from the original site, and so many newcomers have arrived since the emergence of this one, I thought it prudent to lay some foundations for us all.

It's reassuring to see so many new subscribers appearing on and contributing to the list. That means our "benefactors" are still active and our numbers as a whole continue to grow. Perhaps that means our strength continues to increase and may someday give us the edge in this struggle. Or perhaps our ever-increasing numbers suggest that this is a war of attrition and we are simply statistics on some unfathomable roster, that we're sent into the breach over and over again.

And yet, I must try to focus on the good of our situation, if only to avoid defeating myself before anyone else does. Thus, I look to our increasing numbers on the list as a sign that we are growing increasingly aware of each other. Communication between us furthers our cause. Our kind share information, learn from each other's successes and failures, and can come to each other's aid in times of crisis.

And there is the crux of this page. The Hunter Survival Guide combines posts and new information from members across the world, from the archives of the original site, from the new site's records, and from some independent sites discovered by our kind. The result is a reference to help anyone pursue our goals across the world. Indeed, the very existence of this page and its contents is proof that we imbued exist everywhere — and that our counterparts do as well. This new reality that we have all recently discovered is rife with beings that until now have hidden themselves among the shadows and behind proxies. Our fellows' pervasive efforts, discoveries and contributions are proof of that. Now, information is shared among all of us, so that everyone may better understand who or what it is we're up against, whether in our own home towns or in the farthest flung corners of the world.

Take this information, learn from it and apply it wherever you can, in whatever situations you find yourself. Where it proves accurate and even life-saving, inform the list so that we may all benefit from your encounters. Where it proves false, be certain to spread the word — those are traps we must all avoid.

Always remember, though, that we as a brother and sisterhood are like wide-eyed children in a true-life, demented fairy tale. There are monsters, and they have been telling us the story for millennia. They simply don't know that we finally see the pages of the book. We therefore only begin to sense what is real and who we are. Our first steps are shaky. We lack the confidence of experience. No one will hold our hand. Yet the risks we take now as a burgeoning society will blaze a trail for all humanity to follow.

Inherit the Earth.

Witness1

INTRODUCTION: THE REAL WORLD

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs and sorcerors, and whoremongers, and idolators, and who-soever loveth and maketh a lie.

— Revelation 22:14-15

The **Hunter Survival Guide** is a reference primarily for players of **Hunter: The Reckoning**. This book explores the World of Darkness as the recently imbued slowly discover it, as they explore and begin to understand the shroud of lies and evil that monsters have woven. The book is written by the imbued (or those who claim to be) for the imbued, as an instructional tool to deal with creatures, both domestically and abroad. Thus, you get to read about the “true” world just as your character does. What is genuine and accurate, and what is false and misleading are for you and your character to discover.

Of course, the Storyteller can find plenty to enjoy and work with here, too. This book offers a broad perspective on the World of Darkness, with allusions to all kinds of events, legends, conspiracies and plots. Hunters can invest whatever wealth they possess, cobble together or steal to travel the globe in pursuit of the enemy, or international supernatural developments could have impact in hunters’ own homes — and perhaps the enemy may even arrive there in force.

As Storyteller, you even have access to some of hunters’ first recognized “most wanted” — creatures that have been encountered but that have escaped or defeated their would-be destroyers. By “virtue” of being on this list, monsters are by definition considered a life-endangering threat by the imbued who detail them. And yet, the

motives and perspectives of the chosen are as varied as the imbued themselves. What one crusader might consider deserving of execution, a more compassionate hunter might find to be penitent, perhaps even worthy of salvation. Indeed, personal opinion colors the content of this entire book. What an imbued contributor might claim is indisputable fact may actually be misguided or completely erroneous, or such facts may simply be incorrect in the world of *your* chronicle.

As always, keep **Hunter**’s spirit in mind when using this book. The imbued are beleaguered and disenfranchised, but they’re also cosmopolitan. They appear all across the globe, in every society, culture and religion, wherever monsters dwell, lurk and dominate. If you’re a player who’s fully immersed in the other World of Darkness games and you know exactly what’s “actually” happening in Asia or Europe, keep it to yourself. Your character doesn’t know that kind of information, and he shouldn’t suddenly blurt it out in some bizarre out-of-body channeling. You’ll enjoy the game more when you embrace your character’s ignorance rather than wrestle with it.

If you’re a Storyteller, feel free to reference and introduce anything you want from other books about **Hunter**’s setting. There’s far more going on in the World of Darkness than is presented here, and you of all people should be in the know. Books such as **A World**

of *Darkness*, the Hong Kong and Tokyo sourcebooks, Vampire's city series and Werewolf's *Rage Across the World* series are good places to start (or you can ignore all that crap and create your own unique setting, a place that you feel is ideal for your chronicle, and that is totally different from what initiated players *think* they know about the game).

How to Use This Book

This book is divided into several chapters, each of which is designed to explore and explain the developing culture and society of the imbued as they see it, and to examine the world's continents as hunters truly begin to understand them.

Chapter 1: Hunter Survival Tips is practical advice from hunters who have already become seasoned veterans, even in the brief existence of the imbued.

Chapter 2: Africa details the travails of chosen from the cradle of humanity.

Chapter 3: Asia relates the experiences of an imbued who's an outsider in his adopted home, in the Far East and even among his own kind.

Chapter 4: Australia provides an account of bizarre developments "down under," where supernatural creatures seem to pursue an agenda unique even among their own strange kind.

Chapter 5: Europe tours the Old World to reveal threats and evils that have menaced the West for centuries.

Chapter 6: North America recognizes that the imbued emerge among all races, cultures and religions, and investigates the impact on minorities.

Chapter 7: South America explores the world's neglected child to illustrate how corruption prospers while international attention is drawn elsewhere.

Chapter 8: The Most Wanted details a handful of creatures that got away and remain at large; some of the first, worst offenders arrayed against the imbued.

A WORD ABOUT THE INTERNET

The Internet is one of the most powerful weapons in hunters' arsenal. It allows them to perceive and establish a genuine culture through the interchange of ideas. As time goes on and more hunters propose and debate their similarities and differences, the creeds themselves begin to take shape as political, ideological and even religious organizations. The Internet also gives hunters the opportunity to discuss the fundamentals of their mission and ways to deal with creatures, to dispatch warnings and to give advice on the uses of their strange capabilities.

The Internet of the World of Darkness is basically that of the real world, with some mysterious and supernatural elements thrown in. The two can therefore be compared in a general sense. If you're net-savvy, you may have already noticed some "holes" or even apparent impossibilities in how the net operates for the imbued. The crux of the matter is: Why haven't technically adept monsters fully caught on to what hunters are up to? What keeps monsters in the dark or at bay? Sure, the imbued

fear online intrusion by the enemy, and there are signs that such compromise has occurred (the loss of the first hunter-net, for example), but why has it happened on such a limited basis where an instantaneous, worldwide communication system is concerned?

Secrecy and privacy on the Internet are functionally impossible. They are a continuous struggle, at best. Even with nearly unlimited funding, security is never absolute — just ask the Pentagon or Microsoft. If you're experienced with other World of Darkness games, you know that hunters' security problems are compounded by groups of supernatural creatures that are highly adept with Internet technology. (We're taking primarily about mages, but even some werewolves are at home with high tech!)

Take just one factor, but a huge component of the forming imbued culture, email. Email doesn't just exist on a sender and receiver's computer (even if they were secure). It exists for a time on the computers of the people who run the email service, and it exists on several huge computers that record and forward mail though the main trunklines of the Internet. All a "techno-monster" has to do is use her supernatural powers to subvert even the most robust mortal firewall and she learns a lot about your character's *other* life by reading his email.

Founded on email, hunter-net is not secure. As mentioned earlier, someone or something destroyed the website and list at least once (see Chapter 1 of the rulebook). The same or other forces have also undoubtedly outwitted the techs who support the network in general, and have discovered multiple hunters' true identities or locations. It's almost certain that some imbued have lost their lives due to such breaches. And yet, the net remains hunters' most vital means to organize, exchange ideas and establish an identity. Hunters are a burgeoning cyber-culture, despite the inherent dangers.

The Internet is too complex and dynamic for us to cover every means by which hunters' presence could be compromised — or protected. And as was said, some hacker (or monster-hacker) eventually finds a way through, around or behind any protection. The following are therefore guidelines that we suggest for online hunter-monster interaction in your game. We hope that the dynamics of the Internet will become part of your chronicle, but that means taking the good with the bad. These points indicate how hunter-net is organized, and offer rationales for how hunters' online presence remains a relative secret.

Before creatures can use hunters' Internet presence against the humans, the enemy must learn that the imbued are even there. Most creatures of the night have no idea what the imbued are, much less that they use the net to organize! Also consider that many of hunters' enemies have no use for computers, much less the know-how to turn one on. Many ghosts couldn't give a damn about modern technology, and centuries-old bloodsuckers make human slaves do their accounting. Thus, the imbued largely escape notice online because few enemies know to look for them, there or anywhere.

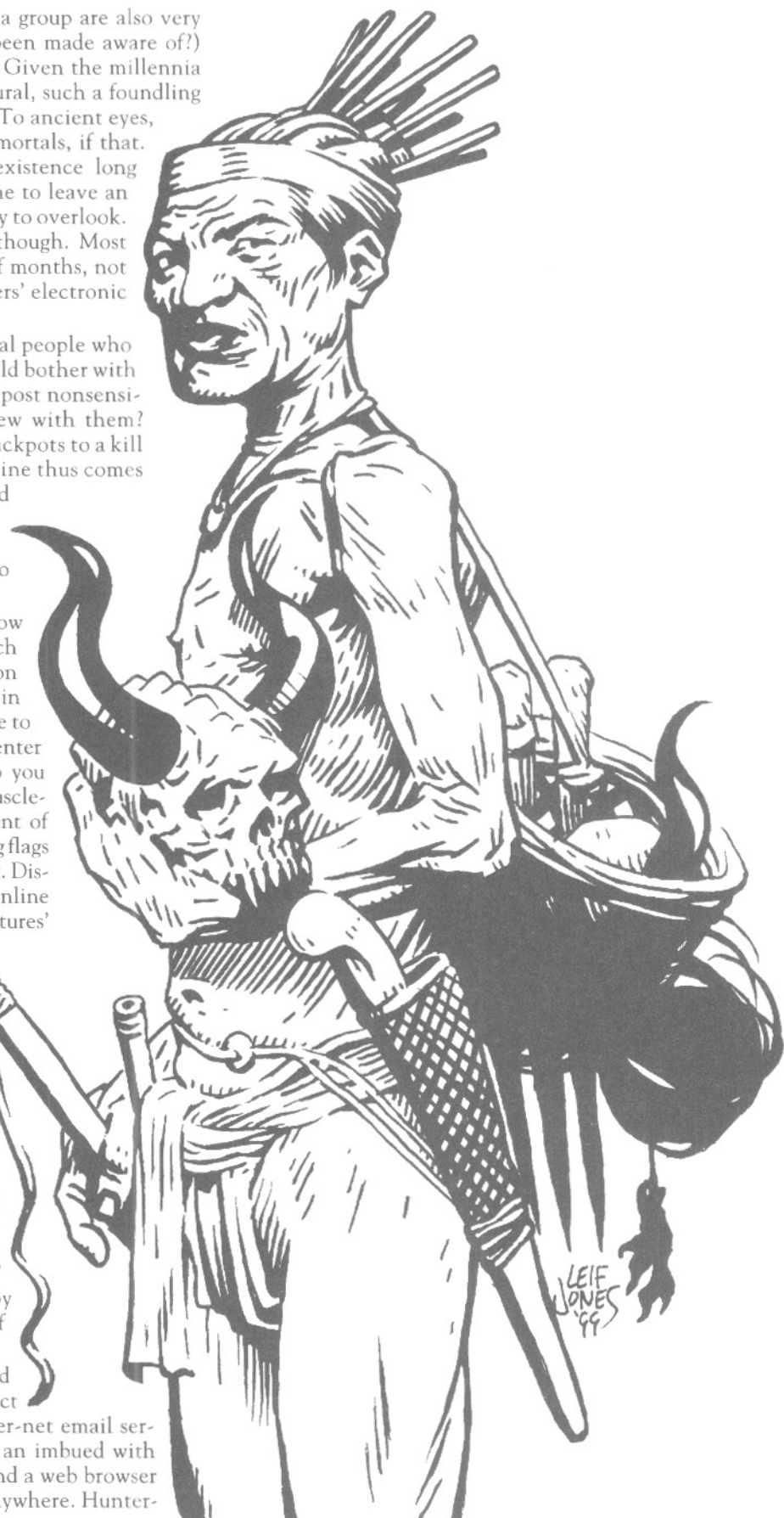
For the time being, hunters as a group are also very young. They have just joined (or been made aware of?) true World of Darkness cosmology. Given the millennia of momentum behind the supernatural, such a foundling group attracts almost no attention. To ancient eyes, these odd people are mere upstart mortals, if that. Hunters simply haven't been in existence long enough to make an impact, let alone to leave an Internet footprint. They are still easy to overlook. (Time passes quickly on the net, though. Most chips have a production life span of months, not years. The clock is ticking for hunters' electronic anonymity.)

As for human hackers — normal people who crack the “chosen” code — few would bother with such small fry, especially ones who post nonsensical or fanatical bullshit. Why screw with them? There's no glory in adding these crackpots to a kill list. Danger from human attack online thus comes from incidental damage: viruses and the possibility of a website about murders and other illegal activities being reported to law-enforcement agencies.

Fortunately, hunters don't know the real names of the things with which they deal. Sure, “vampire” is a common term found in one form or another in various cultures, but the imbued have to devise their own names when they enter foreign territory. (What exactly do you call a ten-foot-tall, blue-skinned, muscle-bound brute?) That said, the content of hunter email rarely raises any warning flags among creatures that observe the net. Discussing “werewolves” or “ghosts” online indicates no knowledge of these creatures' true nature or existence, and so does not attract their attention. The same can be said for use of terms such as “bloodsuckers,” “goblins” or “man-beasts.” Such names are just so much more static from the ignorant human masses — nothing to worry about.

The same ignorance allows hunters' posts to slip under the radar of human hackers. Posts about killing demons and vampires are old hat to web geeks; they did all that in their far less “cool” roleplaying days. Such emails are by no means genuine confessions of murder to hacker eyes.

The designers of hunter-net (and other hunter-related sites) also enact policies to secure their sites. Hunter-net email services, for example, are web-based; an imbued with access to an Internet connection and a web browser can log-on and get her mail from anywhere. Hunter-



net is not an Internet Service Provider like Mindspring or AOL, so posters have to gain their general Internet access from independent sources. Thus, no central registry of hunter information exists, and the computers that run hunter-net can be moved around.

Those brave chosen who run the service keep information on users to a minimum. Techs do not archive email and do not keep any message on their servers for long. "Read it or lose it," is the unspoken rule. The managers also mandate users to update passwords at irregular intervals, and they never ask for personal information that may reveal a contributor's real name or address when establishing a subscription. Finally, admission to hunter-net is by invitation only and multiple levels of security are used to verify the identity of any would-be subscriber.

Whether they know it or not, hunters online also seem to have an ace in the hole, their best asset: the Messengers. Simply put, some weird things have happened online that no known website designer has actively intended, and no one can explain the phenomena. The surprising resurfacing of hunter-net after its crash is a primary example. Various net-hunters believe others responsible for the restoration of the site, but no one claims full credit.

So who got the site back up? The forces that create the imbued in the first place, some say. There's some credence to this theory. Select hunters profess to be able to reinforce online security, create firewalls and manipulate systems with *their edges*. The fact that new edges are frequently reported through online dialogue only reinforces such possibilities, although which groups among hunters may possess powers over technology is still unknown.

A few imbued who take the long view of the hunt, even in these early days, are not surprised by the notion of Herald intervention online. These philosophers point to hunters' instinctive adoption of the Internet as a fundamental tool, positing that the net is intrinsic to

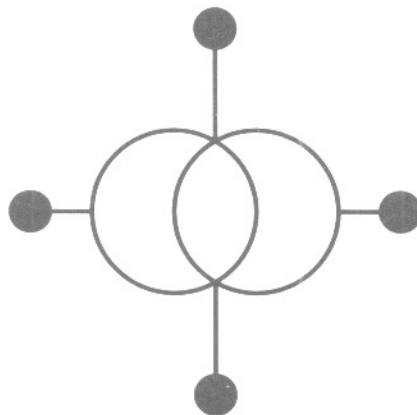
imbued destiny and purpose. Perhaps the electronic world can be cleansed of monstrous manipulation whereas the material world is too far gone. Is the Internet a world to inherit, where human identity might exist unmolested? Perhaps that's what the Messengers had in mind all along, and they lead the way into the electronic realm. Who can say for certain when so much about the Herald is unknown?

And yet, there are the inevitable hunters who think this is all bullshit. What good is a tool like the net that you can't hold in your hands, they say. To them, a 2x4 or broken-off golf club fosters all the communication they need. There's no risk of jeopardy or compromise behind the business end of a tire iron. For these people, no-nonsense tools are more than enough to win the war and the world, Internet be damned.

HUNTER-NET HANDLES

Hunter-net and some other mailing lists apply a numbering system to member names, with results such as "Bookworm55." Hunter-net is not AOL — the numbers are there for a reason. The techs call them "position numbers." They're assigned in the approximate order in which hunters join the lists. So Steelworker22 has been a subscriber longer than Steelworker122. Don't be fooled by position numbers, though. They are not necessarily an indication of a hunter's experience in the fight. One of the first people ever imbued may have joined hunter-net right away, but is a lurker and doesn't actually hunt much. Meanwhile, another hunter might become seasoned through his own personal crusade, and discovers hunter-net later on. The wannabe has a lower number on the list, but he's nowhere near the veteran that is the newcomer. Then again, position numbers might indeed reflect experience. The proof is in the wisdom, passion and hands-on application of a subscriber's posts — and in his continued existence.

The bottom line is, don't assume position number is necessarily a reflection of your character's capabilities — or of another hunter's.





Internet Browser: Hunter-Net - Home Page

Backward Forward Redraw Stop FindIt! Homepage History Printing Save Preferences

HTML site: http

Email Program

Subject: Life and Death

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: god45

Copied To:

Send Message

Get Messages

If you want to live, you will hark to the commandments contained within this document. Yes, they are written in stone. Treat this document as you would treat any other tablet brought down from Heaven, because, quite simply that is what it happens to be.

Although I despise the need to repeat myself among you people, I'll say it again. Those of you who do not make the effort to memorize these instructions, compiled out of my own loving kindness, have set yourselves apart from my mercy and my aid, and I leave you to your own inept devices. Read this document out loud until you have it word-perfect. Sleep with a copy of it under your pillow. Eat it. Breathe it.

If you want to die, you're part of the problem.

The fact that I am still alive and active in the game despite my seniority is the only credential I need. Many of you know me by my various cover identities, which I am not stupid enough to disclose on this insecure list. That is all I care to say.

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Email Program

Subject: Looking for More Rat-Killing Dogs

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: <sender unidentified>

Copied To:

Send Message

Get Messages

A reliable source tells me to check in here and introduce myself. If you're engaged, like I am, in the crusade against the propagation of death, then we might be able to share information and support.

Working independently, I've accounted for three puppetmasters and 13 drones. As far as they were concerned, I was God come down to punish them personally. This game of solitaire is dangerous and potentially wasteful, but I have no desire ally myself. You might simply know something I need.

Don't bother replying to this note because it has no return address. I'll be back in touch. Your security system is a crime against sense and self-preservation.

CHAPTER I: HUNTER SURVIVAL TIPS

<<<<Continued from First Page

THOU SHALT

Follow these commandments in both letter and spirit and you will live to hunt another day. They are not "helpful tips" or "options." They are mandatory. I do not suffer fools, and you can be assured that Heaven is less forgiving than I am.

You will note that I have appended various examples and other supplemental material to these commandments. Although these are meant as illustrations, the careful reader will find it simple to extrapolate various auxiliary codes for safe behavior from these grim cautionary tales, the misadventures of your colleagues.

LAW OF ATTENTION

Thou shalt pay attention to thy surroundings at all times. Remember always that sleep has more in common with death than the average person cares to admit. You risk destruction every time you allow your eyes to close or your attention to flag.

A successful hunter simply cannot afford to let his attention slip for the slightest moment. You are always on duty — there are no sick days in our vocation, and no coffee breaks. You are most likely to court death when your guard is down.

Why is this crucial? You are fighting a war in which you are always outnumbered and always outgunned, and so the only edge you have is the multiplication of tactical factors (I will return to this below). You cannot acquire the tactical

edge unless you are aware of it before your adversary, and to become aware of latent factors in your environment, you need to keep your eyes open — wide.

Furthermore, if I need to remind you that the first few seconds of an encounter are the most important, we are both wasting our time here. Ambush is the least survivable of all tactical situations, and awareness is your best defense to avoid it.

STAY AWAKE

Keep your eyes open. Like most humans, you have been lied to, programmed to believe that you require far more rest than is actually the case. Fight this programming, because, as I am so often forced to repeat, the wage of sleep is death.

Too many hunters have died or otherwise surrendered their vocation because the monsters caught them in their sleep. To repair this weak link in your armor, I recommend you train yourself to get by on no more than three hours of sleep per 24-hour period. Because the body quickly builds up a tolerance to large doses of caffeine, and my position on illegal drugs can be found below, I suggest the beginner rely on distractions such as long late-night walks and physical pain (self-inflicted or otherwise) to jolt the weary senses.

Remember that monsters rule the night, and it is especially important that you be in a position of preparedness during their nocturnal hours of ascendancy.

READ THE SIGNS

You have been granted several avenues for gathering information about monsters. Some of these are universal (your

own deductive skills, your own senses, the Angelic Decree), others are special gifts of the hunt that must be earned or received through inscrutable grace. In any case, it is your responsibility to strive unceasingly to use these skills in the hunt.

You will most likely survive if you live as though this were the least perfect of all possible worlds. Or, to put it more simply, you must judge every stranger you encounter on the sidewalk, every chance meeting, every moment of every day of your life as guilty until you can prove it innocent. Monsters can lurk behind every face. Corruption hides behind even the purest-seeming facades.

Interrogate the Angel, even if it simply delivers a message and otherwise remains mute. Watch the children you see playing for signs of abuse or preternatural sin. Scrutinize young lovers for signs of being unnaturally healthy, undeservingly happy. Dissect every moment until it surrenders evidence of the evil underneath, and then act to eradicate that evil, root and vine.

Thou shalt pay attention to thy surroundings at all times. Keep your eyes open and keep alert to the slightest change in your immediate location. If you are in a crowded place, pinpoint every thread of conversation going on around you. Know the names and frailties of everyone you meet — sexual weaknesses, scandals, regrets. These are the wires by which the monsters will make your fellows dance, so learn how they may best be snipped.

CAUTIONARY TALE

I cannot count the number of neophytes who became a danger to themselves and their colleagues after monsters co-opted their very dreams. Even if sleep did not rob the hunter of his tactical edge by forcing a period of dormancy and blindness, this phenomenon of dream- or subconscious parasitism would be a powerful enough argument against laziness.

The case of BlueGirl76 is instructive. She attracted the attention of entities who visited her in her sleep, implanting certain instructions into her mind when she was at her most vulnerable. I have it on good authority that the burns will heal someday, but the doctors are less optimistic about her sanity. Call them “chimeroids,” call them “dream-ghosts” — classifications fade in the stink of blistered skin.

Stay awake.

GAYNER DATA

This is a closely related point, but important to enforce. Once you have uncovered signs of monsters at work, your work has only begun. In order to survive, you must dig deeper, exposing the nature and characteristics of the monster you fight as though you were exhuming a corpse from the dirt.

The more you know about the creatures, the better you are able to surprise them, to use their own patterns of habit against them. Learn their weaknesses and their strengths and prepare for both. Ambush is one of your most effective weapons. Use it whenever possible.

Follow every lead. Research even those elements of the game that seem minor or irrelevant. Nothing is irrelevant,

even the patterns of dust in one of the killers' charnel houses can point the way. Solve even the most obscure riddles posed to you by the Angel.

Live in libraries if you can. Study law, history, politics and art for clues to where the monsters hide. Pay closest attention to the obituaries, for these will list the names of your next enemies.

Despite slanderous claims against me in this very forum, I do not encourage you to interrogate captured game or the accomplices thereof. Torture and intimidation are inelegant tools, to be used only when the precise implements of research and intuition fail. Still, they are effective, and I doubt that even my detractors would have you believe that an effective weapon of survival should be discarded *in toto*.

Interview those who have been harmed by the monsters, even indirectly. They need not be aware of the nature of their oppressors to know some useful trivia about the beasts — where a monster resides, what it fears, what it hungers for. Rely on this intelligence, but always be subtle, for remember that the entities you hunt would sooner be hunting you.

HONOR THY INSTRUMENTS AND KEEP THEM HOLY

You are the only beacon humanity has to keep the darkness away. You are the stone in the wall of innocence, keeping the monster out. You are your own best weapon, your own sword, shield and armor.

Treat yourself with the respect your role deserves. If it is raining or cold, come inside. If you are hungry or thirsty, eat or drink. If you are hurt, seek medical attention. To do otherwise is to rob yourself of strength unnecessarily and this, in turn, robs the human race of one of its few protectors. This is not hubris. This is good tactics.

TWO QUICK EXERCISES

First, I want you to go to a crowded place where there is a lot of conversation. Focus your attention at nothing in particular — a newspaper, an empty coffee cup. Concentrate on hearing everything said around you and work on weaving every sentence into the conversation to which it belongs. Once you have done that, determine which people are having which conversation. Do not cheat by looking.

Second, walk through a crowded street. Be aware of everyone around you, paying special attention to their movements. Watch the shadows on the sidewalk and make some gesture immediately before anyone passes you from behind — perhaps a wave, a blink, or some shuffle of the feet. This action will allow you to time others' approach, distance and proximity, in anticipation of the day or night when the shadow is cast by the unliving. Above all else, do not allow anyone in the crowd to come within a yard of your body, even if it requires you to maneuver adroitly.

When you have mastered both of these exercises, you are ready to learn how to look for monsters.

REMAIN IN THE MUNDANE

I would be the first to agree with Builder50 that Western society is almost irretrievably corrupt, ripe with the taint of unnatural influence, like a house that stinks of urine. The monsters grow fat in all the high places, while we struggle to comprehend how the structures that seemed so innocent when we were children have grown so foul.

Still, the heart of the slime is where truth dwells. You will find the core of your power in the crowd, in your simple meaningless interaction with other human beings. Watch the faces of the crowd. Watch the children before they are twisted by the monsters, and watch the faces of your friends and family as they sag under the weight of slavery and other lies.

Sometimes, just often enough, you will see them forget to be slaves. In these moments, they reveal themselves to you as they could have been, in a world less dark, on an Earth that we and we alone have inherited.

Cherish these moments and keep them in mind when the monsters push you past your limits. When you haven't slept in two days, when you've been shot in the stomach and you've wrapped yourself in tape to keep your insides in, when they're chewing on your wrists, think of how we could have been.

Remaining in contact with the cesspool monsters have made of our species might keep you from screaming. It might even keep you from giving up. There is no other benefit, but this is important enough, I think.

KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY

By this I mean not only the obvious (maintain your munitions with the respect they deserve), but something more subtle. You do none of us, least of all yourself, any good

if you allow your body, mind or spirit to grow ineffective through lack of proper maintenance.

Your body in particular is your most necessary weapon and mode of transportation. It requires fuel in the form of fresh, nutritious food, and it requires maintenance. If you do not eat, you will lessen your effectiveness. I understand that many of you are convinced that this is a waste and an act of self-glorification, but that is nonsense. Even Dictatrix11 understands that if she does not put gas in her car, it will not run. The body is the same.

Likewise, clean yourselves. Filth is not productive because it encourages disease to be used as a weapon. Moreover, maintaining a base level of hygiene allows you to move more easily in the crowd, prevents you from attracting attention and simultaneously makes it easier for you to gather information or support.

As my requirements on the topic of sleep show, I am far from a hedonist, so you should not take this commandment in that vein. Like you, I harbor no illusions about the questionable joys of the flesh, nor do I enjoy spending resources on my own care and feeding that could be equally used to further the hunt.

However, unlike you pathetic "martyrs," I recognize the utility of the body. Keep your powder dry. If you are too weak to run, you are no use to the rest of us. Honor thy instrument.

CULTIVATE PATIENCE

I have seen more of our kind destroyed by impatience than by any other failing. We are all thirsty for victory; we all want this war to end, so we can go home and rest or for whatever other reasons.

It will not end until all the cities are plumbed to their deepest basement and all the dead have been forced to give up



all they have stolen. In other words, you are here for the long crusade, so there is no sense in getting sloppy with eagerness. It doesn't change anything. It only causes mistakes.

GOING FISHING

I suppose it's up to me to close the case of Sherone Engel. She was, as you may know, one of our best, combining the acuity of a former theology student with the determination of an athlete. She was one of the most dedicated of us, cutting herself off from friends, then school, then family in her pursuit of the enemy.

Sadly, I saw her in one of the monster pits last night, in one of the fetish clubs in Frankfurt that cater to this century's morbid fascination with death. Needless to say, she did not recognize me, but I recognized her from her leaflets.

I made a sign of recognition but she was too busy receiving homage from the fetishists to notice. They hoisted her in a chair made of the bones of grown men and abased themselves before her.

The Angel confirmed my worst fears: "SHE IS THEIRS."

"It happened so easily," she told me later that night, as I heard her confession. "I forgot daylight."

PLAN THE ENCOUNTER

Plan every nuance of your confrontations. Strike only when all the pieces are in place, and when you have prepared for every possible contingency. If you are hunting one of the blood drinkers, be ready for all of the apparent types, solitary and communal. Have three complete strategies in mind, because the first two will go wrong. Carry auxiliary weapons. Be able to call for reinforcements, if you have any.

STRIKE FROM AFAR

Related to the urge to force a confrontation before all the elements are in your favor is the urge to confront the enemy directly. Resist this urge at all times. If you have put yourself in a situation that can only be resolved by direct, physical contact with the game, you are taking too many risks.

Become adept at the arts of remote gratification. Cultivate contacts who can procure explosives for you. Determine which of the monsters have rivalries and lure them into one another's territories. Sabotage vital machinery. Acquire a weapon with telescopic sights.

Above all, remember that you are too close if you can see into the monster's eyes. They can do things with their eyes.

KEEP YOUR OPTIONS OPEN

This is a corollary rule following from what has gone before, but I will stress it again to drill it into your heads. You must always be flexible, and this means having a back-up means of defense or route of escape.

There are few things more stupid than a stationary fight in a cul-de-sac. One to one, they are stronger than we are. Therefore, try to keep the battle moving, as this allows you to needle at the enemy, tormenting it, wearing down its strength until you finally exhaust it.

Only then is it safe to beard the lion. Before this point, however, it is your responsibility to your vocation to engage in no act that sacrifices your freedom of action or movement. Stay flexible, while acting to impede the freedom of the monster you hunt.

THE HUNT ON A BUDGET

The resourceful hunter can survive on only a few dollars a day. This allows him to stretch his savings or, should he have drained these already, make do on the kindness of strangers.

First, bread is cheap. You can find enough bread to live on for about a dollar a day, maximum. This represents two day-old loaves. Even a talentless beggar should be able to earn this much in the course of a few hours' work.

Should you be more talented at begging, supplement this diet with bruised vegetables, available from supermarkets and corner groceries. Juice overripe fruit or simply cut away the unappetizing portions. Pet food, offal and other commonly ignored animal products are an inexpensive source of protein — simply ask a local butcher for bones, organs or blood "for a pet."

As for shelter, college campuses generally have lax security, should you be able to mingle with the natives. Campuses are also active at all hours, day and night. Other places of refuge include train and bus stations (which are heated and contain full toilet facilities), abandoned buildings and steam tunnels.

There. I just showed you how to survive on a dollar a day, should you resort to quitting your job and dropping out of society. You can spend the rest on ammunition.

THOU SHALT NOT

"Never say never" is a favored slogan of those too blind to see the eternal nature of truth. In our vocation as in others, there are certain tactics that are always unwise. To follow these paths will ensure your destruction, or worse sabotage the efforts of others.

If you engage in any of these activities, you will meet a gruesome fate, sooner rather than later. You will be maimed, humiliated, ridiculed, neutralized, co-opted, possessed, betrayed or killed. They will take your organs while you watch, debase you grotesquely, force you to torture and murder or make you over in their likeness. They will turn you against our kind.

Say never. Say it often. More importantly, live it. Or stop living.

NEVER HUNT ALONE

As with much of this material, this should be obvious, yet I include it here to instruct the recently turned and to remind those of us who should know better.

Never engage the enemy directly unless you are either in contact with any allies or else you have entrusted your notes to posterity. You will note that this second course of action indicates that the hunter has resigned himself to death, and as such should not be relied upon to act perfectly in his own best interests. If

another makes out a will or puts his files in order, watch him carefully for "accidents." He could compromise you, too.

NEVER MAKE UNSECURE TRANSMISSIONS

You should remain in continual contact with others of our kind while on the hunt proper. I recommend wireless telephones for efficiency and portability, but never compromise the hunt by referring directly to our unique concerns over this medium. Wireless conversations are subject to heavy monitoring and can be recorded and traced by our opponents.

Extrapolating from this basic principle, you are never to refer to "v_mp_r_s" or "gh_sts" or similar matters over any publicly accessible or mass communications medium. To speak with your colleagues about the hunt, use any of the informal euphemisms we have created for this purpose. There is no protocol for speaking with non-combatants about the hunt, because this amounts to suicide.

I am often criticized for being inflexible in this matter. However, I am alive while any number of would-be popularizers have shouted "v_mp_r_s" at the top of their lungs on a radio program or over the Internet, and have never been heard from again.

To be blunt, you do not want to tip your hand. We know, but they do not know who among us knows. Let's keep it that way, because, as above, surprise is one of the few tactical edges we possess.

NEVER LEAVE HOSTAGES

Every hunter in the hands of monsters is a liability to us all. The rescue or elimination of the captured is your obligation not only to yourself and the safety of your group, but to your fellow hunters and to the prisoner himself.

CHOOSE ONE: HONOR OR SURVIVAL

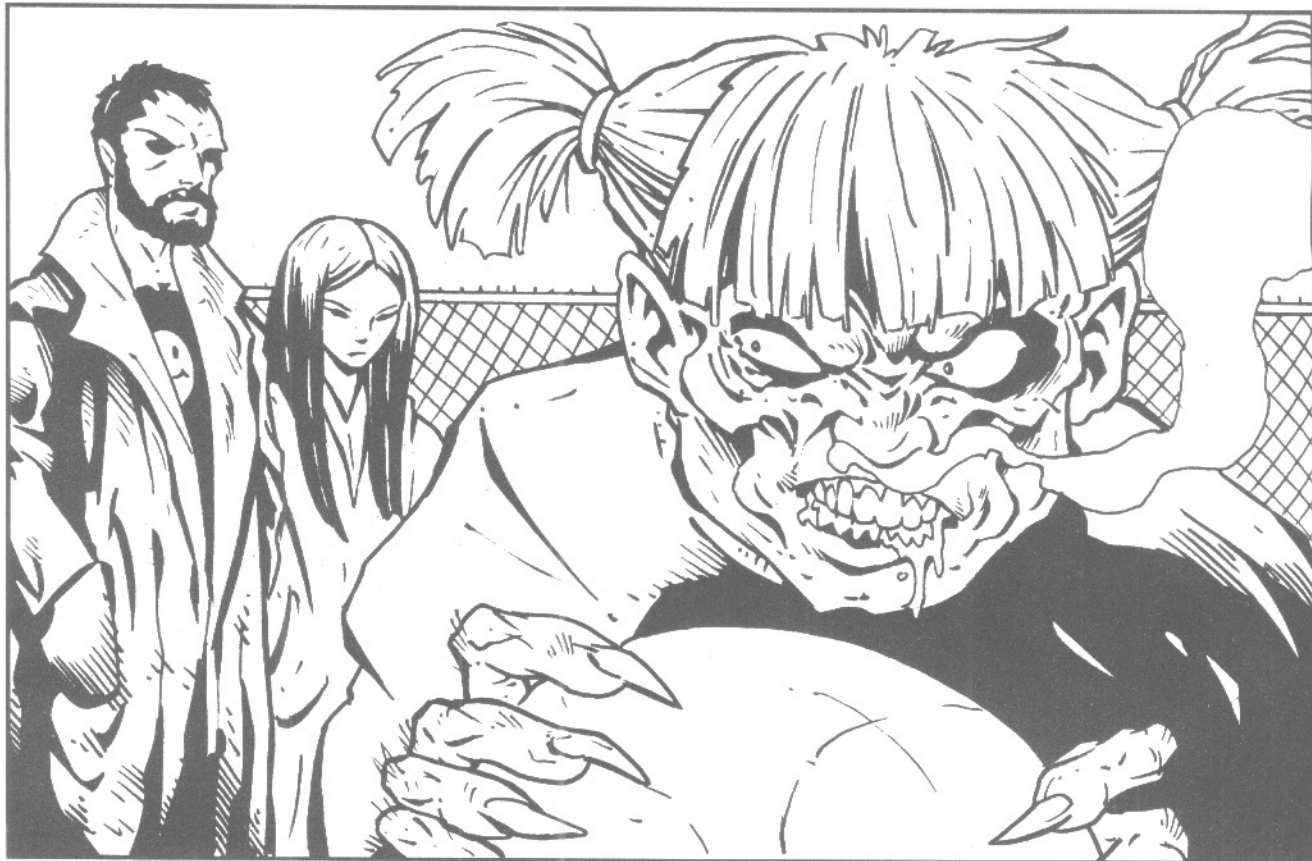
Two hunter groups have targeted the same rot. The first group spends six weeks monitoring the creature's movements and becoming familiar with its patterns. At the end of this time, they set an ambush for the game and destroy it by running high-voltage current through the area. No hunters are harmed, although the creature has consumed approximately 50 defenseless during the surveillance period.

The second group immediately confronts the rot on first encounter. Unfortunately, few of the hunters carry armaments appropriate to this type of creature, and the group only triumphs after taking extreme casualties — let's say half of the team is immobilized or killed. For the sake of the example, none of the hunters are injured by friendly fire. The only defenseless casualty is the woman the creature was feeding upon when encountered.

Q: Which group is in the right and which is in the wrong?

A: This is a trick question. Both groups are correct, although one is clearly more cautious than the other and survives to strike again.

Although many of monsters' more subtle modes of suborning humans do not seem to work on hunters, I stress that we cannot be sure of this. In theory, there is nothing preventing the creatures from using any of their insidious hypnotic abilities on us, should they find the right combination of factors that allows them to do so. Do not hand them a subject to



experiment on. Should one of your people be captured or left behind in enemy territory, do the honorable thing.

Such subtle considerations aside, keep in mind that the creatures are perfectly able to use mundane methods of coercion (torture, brainwashing, seduction, deceit or combinations thereof) to extract information or loyalty from us. Nobody wants to see his family strung by their viscera from a utility pole because a trusted "ally" revealed addresses and telephone numbers.

Remember the golden rule. You would not want to help monsters by leaking information, not even under duress of pain or mutilation. Give your colleagues the same respect. If you cannot immediately rescue them, kill them.

NEVER EXPOSE YOUR VOCATION

You are not a whore, revealing herself to every gawker to happen by. You are a hunter, and as such your vocation has nothing to do with self-expression, confession or any other exhibitionistic weakness of the spirit.

I am continually sickened by those who flaunt their backgrounds and personal qualities. Not only is this irrelevant to our work, it is dangerous. By broadcasting these details, they essentially nail up "wanted" posters with their own faces on them. And, should they be captured by the enemy or coerced through blackmail or kidnapping, we have a hostage situation — i.e. the remainder of us have been compromised, putting us all in extreme danger.

Gossiping about irrelevant matters gives the creatures hints to our identities. It is suicide to jabber on about how "I am a truck driver in Kenya" or "I am a Pakistani woman living in London." How exciting for you. This is not a game. We are dealing with creatures that would not hesitate to methodically slit the throat of every single Pakistani woman in London, one by one, until they find you.

You do not know my name, age or occupation. You do not know how (or if!) I was educated, or what part of the world I live in. Although you have probably speculated on my gender, I submit to you that any clues you may be following may be red herrings I have deliberately planted. Or not.

I am God45. That is all. I have erased my personal history, both in this forum and outside the Internet, through the surgical destruction of certain documents. I have no family to be used against me and, through me, you. Do me the same courtesy.

NEVER IMPLICATE THE DEFENSELESS

Likewise, show courtesy to the normal people you leave behind by keeping your activities secret. They do not share our vocation and should be allowed to fill their own lives as best they can. This is the closest to free will that many of them will ever enjoy.

This is especially true if you have maintained family connections or friends. These poor people already risk terrible reprisals from the enemy if their connection to you becomes apparent. Do not magnify the risk by dragging them into a world they did not ask to see.

NEVER BECOME A TARGET

You are the hunter, not the prey. Any course of action that reverses these roles is an error to be avoided at all costs. Hunters most commonly make this error by running afoul of the law, but any encounter with the enemy can leave you subject to humiliation and harassment, if not persecution to the point of madness or death.

Remember that this is still their world, not ours. They control the police, the courts, the media. If you come to their attention — or the attention of their puppets — they will destroy you.

Stay out of the spotlight. Be one of the cattle. Keep a low profile. Never allow anyone into the closed inner circle of your life, for if they find their way to your soft underbelly, you can be assured they will gnaw at it until there is nothing left.

If you become the subject of police or media attention, keep the hunt secret. To their eyes, you are one of the cattle. There is no such thing as monsters, and you are at best hapless and confused, perhaps suffering temporary delirium. Blame mundane motivations for your hunting activity — jealousy, greed, rage. The more venal the lie you tell, the more sympathetic the monsters will find it, as it will remind them of themselves.

If the police or media get their hands on you (or worse, should you be captured by monsters), you are on their home court and they have the advantage. To escape, any stratagem acceptable to you is permissible. Use the monsters' tactics. Lie. Steal. Betray.

I had a son... once.

SURFING THE SAFETY NET

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DON'T GET CAUGHT

It's that simple. Every plan should include an escape, followed by a clean-up. You should expect to be at least 10 miles from the scene no more than 30 minutes after you play your hand. If this is impossible, you have (a) allowed the situation to get out of control, in which case the plan has failed and you should abort anyway, or (b) you have become too wrapped in the game — i.e., careless.

I don't care how many drones are in the house. Get in. Find the puppetmaster. Administer justice. Get out. You can clean up the drones next week or next month, or simply let them decay. Don't waste time going room to room. Every minute brings you 60 seconds closer to police custody.

Ours is a war of attrition, and so it is a bitter victory at best if you achieve your objectives but are yourself captured by the monsters or their minions. The surgical strike is better. Do damage. Disappear. Repeat.



Email Program

Subject: AFRICA IS BURNING

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: jager51

Copied To:

Send
MessageGet
Messages

Are you all mad? There are monsters walking the Earth while you sit and argue about motivations and moral issues! You sound like you're more concerned about being *right* than you are about saving lives. A few of you, I reckon, are just cowards. You know who you are. Beat your chests and howl all you want, but any fool can look in the list archives and see who spends more time posting than hunting.

Why do you think our eyes have been opened? Why do you think we've been given these powers? Because our race is in danger of enslavement — or worse. Don't give me this shit about holy Messengers, because for every real hunter in Africa there are five damn kaffirs who think that anything with white skin is a monster. We haven't been *given* anything — we're remembering abilities our ancestors used when they first took the land away from the beasts. Why else do we have legends about monsters? They have always been with us, and we took the Earth away from them with sweat and blood. Now they want it back.

I knew this from the beginning, from the first moment I set eyes on a rot. I had just gone off-watch that night when the call came in about a disturbance over in Constantiaberg. I was halfway out of the station house and heading home when I got the feeling the boys might need backup, so I offered to ride along. It could have been nothing more than a family spat, but something told me that I needed to be there. Cops don't live long without trusting their instincts.

There was blood everywhere. The house had a high wall, a pair of dogs and an expensive security system. The dogs were in pieces, literally ripped apart. They were the lucky ones. It took the pathologists a week to officially identify the family. The officer who first came upon the nursery hasn't been the same since.

A single pair of bloody handprints were left by whoever climbed the back wall of the property. I could hear something thrashing through the trees beyond. The stone made deep cuts in my hands and arms as I went over. I didn't feel it. The only thing that mattered was making the bastard pay for what he'd done.

It was like chasing a wildebeest through the bush. The thing was strong, but not very fast. I caught up to him in the shadows beneath an old acacia tree. He was a big kaffir. The scars on his broad shoulders told me he'd fought with the *polisie* more than once. The black turned on me with a strange, whistling snarl. His teeth were slick with blood. There was no life in his eyes, and when he rushed at me I could see that his throat had been slit from ear to ear. A shock went through me, like getting hit with ice water. IT'S NOT ALIVE, I suddenly realized. IT DOES NOT LIVE.

My pistol was in my hand. I shot him four times before he knocked the gun away and grabbed my throat. We screamed at each other as he lifted me clear off the ground. Kicking the thing was like hitting a tree. Something made me grab my riot stick and I put everything I had into one swing. The damned thing's head burst like a rotten melon. When I hit the ground, I remember thinking that I wasn't glad to be alive, or even proud I'd killed it. Later, all I could think of was a sea of dark faces, the thieves, the murderers, the terrorists we'd put down, crawling back out of the ground. No wall, no gun, no door would stop them. But I sensed that I could. Somehow, I had to stem the tide.

In the days that followed, I learned that things were much worse than I thought.

While we've been building our cities and growing soft on junk food and television, the beasts have been multiplying. They've been watching us and learning our weaknesses. We've forgotten their ways, and they have crept in among us, a bit at a time. Up till now, they've kept hidden — even lions know better than to confront a herd head-on. But they're growing bolder. The time is coming when they will take us by the throat and plunge us into Hell on Earth. In places like Rwanda and Somalia, the fires have already begun.

It is not enough for us to stake a claim on a house, a tenement block or the streets of a single city. We are fighting for the *entire world*. There's no way to know if or when others might awaken to the enemies in our midst. We certainly can't force them to open their eyes, and even then we can't guarantee that they won't misuse their powers like the blacks do. So we've got to work together and hit the fiends before they can consolidate their forces. Africa is the front line. Believe that. Nowhere else in the world is there so much wealth, land and power ripe for the taking. South Africa is bleeding dry from crime and corruption, while monsters slaughter the helpless in Mozambique, Angola and the Congo. Algeria and Egypt are torn by religious wars, and the beasts rule openly in Mogadishu. Is it so hard to believe? Come see for yourself. The war to end all wars has begun.

Africa is burning. If we don't answer the call, the rest of the world will go up in flames.

...[next page]...

CHAPTER 2: AFRICA

...[previous page]...

HOPING FOR THE DAWN

Subject: Re: Hell no, we won't go!

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Cop90 wrote:

> No way I'm going to go off and die in some third world
shit-hole while we've got

> problms here in the good ol USA

Good God, this is the kind of stupidity I'm talking about. Africa is a lot more than jungles and kaffirs, man! Nearly all the world's diamond exports come from Namibia, South Africa and Botswana. South Africa is the world's largest producer of gold and platinum, while Zambia and Niger contain rich veins of uranium. Libya and Tunisia supply millions of gallons of petroleum to the world's industrialized nations, and recent geological surveys hint at untapped oil reserves off the coast of Guinea-Bissau. Egypt is the cultural center of the Arab world. Who knows what secrets the monsters might hide in ancient cities like Alexandria or Luxor?

But it's more than that. I've heard tell of the beauty of the North American forests and the wonder of the Amazon, but nothing compares to the beauty of the Cape, or to the lush green life and the roaring waters of the Congo. When the thunder rolls across the veldt, you feel it in your bones. There's *power* here.

You look out at the mountains and you know it, down to your soul. Africa is the cradle of life. It all began here.

The only thing keeping Africa from becoming a major world power is Africa itself. The continent is split into 55 countries, and more than a thousand languages are spoken here. At the beginning of the century most of the continent was divided up and run by Britain and France, who built roads, schools and kept order in the interests of getting at Africa's resources. After World War II, all that changed. The European powers had been bled dry and couldn't afford to hold onto their colonies. Britain and France pulled out over the course of the '50s and '60s, and when the locals took control, everything went to shit. Political upheavals, revolts, wars and widespread corruption dragged many countries into chaos, while others such as Angola, Nigeria and the Congo became playing pieces for America and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Things settled down somewhat during the '80s, but if you ask me, it's because of the beasts. They moved in during all the upheaval and set things up to suit themselves.

There are almost as many religions as there are languages in Africa, but the major beliefs are Christianity, Islam and bastard fusions of Christianity and local kaffir religions. Every tribe in the bush has its own mumbo-jumbo about earth spirits and the lands of the dead. The damnable thing is that some of these savages have been awakened, but their beliefs forbid them from fighting the beasts! They actually *welcome* the goddamned things. Someone explain that to me, if you can.

There is no way to make sweeping statements about Africa and the situations hunters face across the continent. It's different almost everywhere you go. Over the last couple of months, I've put together dossiers on different parts of the land and collected reports from other hunters operating in those regions. I'm going to put everything I've got on the list over the next few days, so you have an idea of what we're up against. Over the years I've collected a lot of contacts across the continent, and I'm creating a network to support our activities. I'll pass what I have to the list. I'll also give what advice I can about hunting in Africa. Believe me, my eyes haven't been open for long, but I've been a policeman all my life. Now I just hunt different prey.

If you are an Afrikaner or have been in Africa recently and have information to share about the beasts, email me and I will add it to my reports. Anything you remember, even if it's insignificant to you, might be of help to someone else. We've got to stick together and look out for one another if we're ever going to take back what's ours.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Subject: Arriving in-country

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

International flights to most African countries are available from any major European airport. At present, only one commercial carrier offers non-stop flights between the United States and Africa, with connections from New York to Johannesburg, and Miami to Cape Town, South Africa. Johannesburg International Airport is the major airline hub for all of southern Africa, with connecting flights to every major African city. Passports are necessary, of course, and most countries also require tourist or business visas. Visas can be applied for by contacting the embassy or consulate of the country in question.

Such documents pose a definite danger for hunters — passports and visas provide a paper trail that allows law-enforcement and customs agents to track your movements, and you can be sure the fiends have spies in these departments. I know of one hunter who made a circuit of several central African countries as he was acting on information supplied by the network and performing attacks on a number of confirmed monsters. Several of these attacks were staged with explosives. Later, he was seized in Cape Town while passing through customs and detained on suspicion of terrorist activities. There's been no word, and I know for a fact he isn't in any local jail. Be aware that your passport is a footprint of where you've been, so try to keep a low profile at all times. Conversely, do not attempt to travel without proper documentation. If caught, you will be detained and deported. In some countries, you might find yourself in prison.

It is possible to acquire forged travel documents, but it is risky. Customs officials at major airports are skilled at catching forgeries, and the penalties are serious. I have certain connections in Johannesburg who can make quality reproductions using actual passport and visa blanks, but it is expensive. Hunters stalking prey in Africa can contact me and I will put them in touch with the right parties. We can get you several sets of false identities good enough to cover your trail throughout the continent, but you must return them to us once you are finished.

It is possible to carry unloaded handguns and rifles into most countries in stored luggage, but ammunition is prohibited. Even then, certain countries will make a security notation on

your passport concerning this, and it will come to the attention of law enforcement in the event of trouble. Better to trust to your wits and arm yourself once you have arrived. I'll provide information later for the contacts I trust in various countries.

A more effective but much more time-consuming method of slipping into and out of Africa is by ship. Freighters, tankers and container ships call on ports daily all across the continent, from Cape Town to Port Said. Inspections are not rigorous, and it's possible to buy passage from a captain in need of cash. The drawback is the travel time — two to four weeks from Europe, six to eight weeks from America. Expect to bunk with the crew and to be put to work during the voyage, but once in port, it is fairly easy to slip off-ship with your gear and lose yourself in the city. Keep in mind that bloodsuckers apparently favor this sort of travel, and can crew a ship with slaves to keep them safe during a voyage. Choose carefully when you look for passage.

BLOOD AND DIAMONDS

Subject: South Africa

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

There's times I walk the streets of Cape Town and think that if there is a God, he's got an evil sense of humor.

South Africa is one of the richest and most modern countries on the continent. Its cities are as fine as any in Europe or America, and ten times as beautiful — standing on Lion's Rump and looking out over Cape Town and Table Bay takes your breath away. If it weren't for the kaffirs, it would be paradise.

Keeping control of the blacks has been a problem since the first settlers arrived, hundreds of years ago. First the Boers, then the British spent time and energy setting up townships, and educating and finding work for them. They were always like children — lazy and spiteful — and every time our backs were turned, they tried to sabotage us. In 1912, the kaffirs went so far as to declare their own political party, the African National Congress, which would come to haunt us decades later. In the 1960s, Nelson Mandela and other ANC rebels caused uprisings and armed confrontations that left dozens of people dead. We jailed Mandela and really started sweating out the blacks after that, trying to restore order and keep the peace. I think we could have saved Apartheid if our government had kept its nerve — there was nothing wrong with the system itself.

Now that I know what I know about the beasts, I think warlocks were involved. I know for a fact that there are black warlocks who use their magic against whites — they hide out in the townships and set curses on people for a price — and I think some of them did something to President de Klerk. Other Afrikaner hunters claim bloodsuckers were behind it, because their slaves are everywhere in the government. I think that came later.

We gave our land away to the blacks in 1994 and have been struggling to hold it together ever since. The population of South Africa is 75% black, 14% white, 9% colored (half-breeds) and 2% Indian. The majority of the population has limited education and no experience at self-government, but now they are in charge. The children are masters of the house and what is the result? Mandela the agitator became president. Instead of promoting discipline, he tried to give everything to everybody. The blacks think they are entitled to the wealth we worked so hard to gain,

and when they can't or won't earn it, they turn to murder and theft. Others take out their grudges on former Apartheid leaders or whites in general, and the government does little or nothing. The government has a hard enough time keeping political feuds under control, as groups like the Zulu-centered Inkatha Freedom Party try to undermine the ANC at every turn.

I've heard many times on the net that people think South African hunters are obsessed with politics. That's not quite right. We are determined to protect our race. The bloodsuckers have their claws in every aspect of our government, and we have discovered signs that they vie for control, using political maneuvers to increase their power at the expense of others. It's true that the few bloodsuckers we have seen have all been white, but I believe it was the blacks who made them that way. After all, if the monsters controlled the Apartheid government, why would they have let the president dismantle it?

There are hunters among the white population that believe blacks are the source of the monsters that plague us, and who see the return of Apartheid as a necessary step to turning back the tide. It is a fact that nearly all the rots we have encountered have been black, and their victims are predominantly white. Former Apartheid leaders, soldiers and policemen, as well as their families, seem to be singled out. Most rots take refuge in the townships, where white hunters face as much danger from the locals as they do from monsters themselves. I know for a fact that there are African myths about death, and how the gods told the tribes that if they laid a body on the ground and sprinkled it with ashes, it would come back to life. There

might be people in the townships who know these old rituals and are raising corpses to turn against us, but we don't have any evidence of that yet.

There are black hunters in the townships and in the countryside, as well. I've encountered a few. Most of them act hostile and distrustful, which is typical. They protect their own people from the beasts, but seem defensive. They won't go out of their way to hunt out a monster, and they won't actually destroy one unless they have no other choice. They certainly don't give a damn about whites that might be in danger. Of course, they probably blame us for the monsters, like everything else.

GETTING IN

Subject: Entering the country and local travel

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Johannesburg International Airport is South Africa's primary point of entry for international flights, and is a modern, well-equipped airport with up-to-date security equipment. Individuals entering the country do not have to present a visa if arriving for tourist or business-consultation purposes. Luggage is checked thoroughly at customs, and customs agents are smart, alert and very professional. Attempting to bribe a customs official is nearly always a grave mistake, so

I advise against trying to smuggle anything like weapons into the country.

There is no evidence that the beasts have any control over customs officials, but since the bloodsuckers exercise control over the higher ministries, they don't really need to. Hunters who try to make trouble for some bloodsucker could easily have their descriptions circulated as wanted fugitives.

South Africa's major cities have excellent roads, and unlike other countries it has a well-developed



commuter rail system. Cars and four-wheel-drive vehicles can be bought or leased, but be aware that rural roads are in poor repair and conditions are somewhat dangerous.

Additionally, small plane and helicopter flights can be chartered from local airports to see the countryside from the air — there are small firms that exist for just such purposes. Some of these companies also do a little smuggling on the side, and for a few thousand rand can be persuaded to ferry people to isolated parts of the countryside. Africa Air Unlimited is one such operation, flying single-engine aircraft out of Cape Town Airport. They've smuggled guns in the past, and lately I've worked out an *understanding* with the boss, Anders Grier. He will ferry small groups anywhere, no questions asked, and I keep him out any legal snares in return.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Subject: Looking over your shoulder

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Crime is a major problem all across the country. The fact of the matter is that with Mandela in charge and the government shaking up the police force, there's no one left who's willing to be tough on the blacks. The kaffirs are poor and, naturally, would rather steal something than work for it, and so carjackings, muggings and even bank robberies are rampant. Armed theft and assault are common near hotels and public transportation areas. Tourists are often singled out as targets. The police service has established task forces in every jurisdiction to target specific problem areas, and there have been some recent successes, but we are still spread much too thin to be truly effective.

My advice to hunters new to South Africa is keep your wits about you, never carry more money than you must (and keep the rest well hidden) and always travel in groups. Thieves will hit you day or night, sometimes in the middle of a traffic stop if they think they can get away with it, and they will not hesitate to kill you if you resist. I have heard from some local hunters who report that the large and successful gangs are comprised of blood-slaves, especially those groups that specialize in large robberies. The question is, do they serve the same bloodsuckers who control the government, or someone else, and where is the money going? It's definitely not finding its way into the black community.

The government is thick with blood-slaves. Anyone with the gift of sight can see them going about their business every day. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Defense, Safety and Security, and Telecommunications are known to be heavily infiltrated. There appears to be considerable in-fighting and political maneuvering within the government, often between these very slaves, which suggests to me that they serve different masters. At the same time, these slaves are all very strategically chosen, concentrating important sources of information and authority in the beasts' hands. What is interesting is that President Mbeki and his immediate staff are untouched. I've confirmed this myself, but have no explanation for it that makes any sense.

Political violence is still a serious problem in certain parts of the country, especially in KwaZulu-Natal province, where members of the Inkatha Freedom Party clash with supporters of the ANC. At times, locals and tourists are caught in the crossfire. This kind of violence has declined since the national elections, but police recently uncovered a huge cache of guns and ammunition in KwaZulu that points back to the IFP, raising the fear of more

armed confrontations. The few militant black hunters I know of have turned up as influential members of the IFP, and they could be trying to use it as a weapon against the beasts. Even if they succeed, things will be bloody in the meantime.

As a whole, the South African Police Service is untainted. Part of this is because of the shakeups directed by Mandela and his successor, Mbeki, and part of it, I suspect, is because the bloodsuckers already control most of the higher-ups in the Ministry of Safety and Security. All of our orders, wanted lists and strategic planning come directly from the fiends. A couple of times, I have watched manhunts organized for local hunters who drew too much attention to themselves. God help me, there was nothing I could do about it. Every single one of these fellows was caught and is now trying to stay alive in prison. The police have a lot of experience in tracking down fugitives, let me tell you. The police maintained close ties with South African intelligence agencies during the worst periods of anti-Apartheid terrorism, and the relationship is still strong today. Hunters must be very patient and very, very careful stalking bloodsuckers in this country. Keep as low a profile as possible. Leave no evidence that could be traced back to you.

During Apartheid, the police service was a paramilitary organization, and in method it largely still is. Police patrols are numerous in cities; much less so in rural areas. Disturbances in cities receive immediate and overwhelming response, and officers are much more likely to resort to lethal force than are their counterparts in America or Europe. Officers patrol in pairs and carry pistols, and have shotguns or submachine guns in their cars. There is no Miranda Law such as America has. Police have the authority to search or detain individuals if there is sufficient suspicion of illegal activity. If the police want to search your car or effects, they can pretty much do so at will and will not put up with the nonsense that most American police do. Resisting a police officer or giving him a tough time will get you a cracked skull or worse. Suspects still die in police custody from time to time, and waving a passport in their faces won't necessarily save you.

OBTAINING EQUIPMENT

Subject: The cost of getting even

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

To some extent, the crime problem in South Africa works to our favor. Most white households own several firearms, and the police are likely to look the other way if a local individual is found to be carrying a concealed weapon. Hunting rifles, shotguns and even military style assault weapons are commonly available, and registration procedures are lax. Blacks, on the other hand, face extreme scrutiny when trying to purchase guns in legal establishments, and a kaffir carrying a gun in public is likely to be arrested on general principle.

Obtaining general purpose equipment of all kinds — from hunting/camping gear to medical supplies — is easy in any city. Prices are reasonable and most credit cards are accepted. Voortrekkers Limited in Pretoria is an excellent source of hunting weapons, ammunition and equipment for wilderness expeditions, and the owner asks few questions.

Vehicles are likewise easy to obtain, though I would advise you to avoid purchasing new or even slightly used models. Such cars or trucks are tempting targets for carjackers, who take the vehicles, repaint and sell them. My suggestion: Get an old Land

Rover (a real one, not the luxury ones Americans are so fond of). They will go anywhere, run anytime and can take a great deal of punishment. If possible, buy a vehicle straight out, cash in hand. Renting a car or using a credit card leaves a paper trail the police are sure to find.

SAFE HAVENS

Subject: Where to go when things go wrong

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Any hunter should always plan for the worst. Plan ahead for where to go and what to do if a mission goes wrong. If your enemy is resourceful, retribution will be swift. Remember that one of our greatest strengths is our anonymity. Disappear into the crowd. Wipe down weapons and toss them. Abandon vehicles. Just walk away.

South Africa's hospitals are as good as any in America or Europe. Hunters can use the current crime problems to excuse all manner of injuries to police satisfaction. Medical treatment in rural areas is much less dependable, and doctors demand cash in advance. In the case of severe injuries, carry victims to a city hospital if at all possible.

I and my associates try to maintain a list of possible safe havens all over Africa, assisted by business associates and fellow hunters. Some of these are maintained by members of the network, others are little more than abandoned buildings that offer basic shelter. Our list changes regularly, so check with me frequently for updates.

Cape Town — Two-bedroom house on Victoria Avenue. A walled estate with a security system. The house is empty, awaiting sale. Look for small chalk *haven* mark at base of the right gatepost. Code for gate is 11321, code for security system is 44253. Key under rock in garden. Medical supplies in front hall closet. Do not use electricity. Do not stay for more than three days.

Pretoria — Mission of Our Holy Lady, Pieterswald Street. Approach only in extreme emergency, and do not contact at night. Food, lodging and medical help available. Weapons are forbidden. The sisters do not ask for contributions, but I expect any hunter who accepts their hospitality to damn well give them what he can.

Johannesburg — Karstens Market, Merchant Street. The owner's brother was one of us, so he supports what we try to do. He has a room in back for up to four people, and his sons can run errands or obtain equipment, if necessary. He'll undoubtedly ask you to investigate his brother's death in the township last September. His brother was chasing a rot who had been killing local white politicians. The rot either got him or the kaffirs did. Help Karstens if you want, but pay him for his trouble regardless.

NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Subject: Across the border

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Conditions in South Africa's neighboring countries are mostly stable and prosperous, with the exception of Mozambique. Hunters operating in these countries should be aware of the following information.

Namibia — Namibia has been closely tied to South Africa for most of its existence, becoming politically independent in

1990, but still relying on South Africa for most of its imports. Hunters in the capitol of Windhoek report blood-slaves entrenched in key government and law enforcement positions. The puppets' efforts are supposedly directed at controlling and maintaining the security of the country's diamond exports. No doubt these creatures reap huge amounts of wealth, but for what purpose?

Botswana — For years this country has been the largest supplier of diamonds in the world. Unlike Namibia, Botswana was a British protectorate until its independence in 1964, and it has a democratic government based mostly on native Setswana tribal traditions. The blacks make it work somehow, and the government seems free of outside influences. There are reports of ghosts and poltergeists in and around the mines at Orapa, Lethakane and Jwaneng, causing accidents and deaths among mining officials and workers. Some say that local tribes protect the sites of hauntings, holding them sacred.

Zimbabwe — Formerly part of Rhodesia, this country was a British colony until 1980, and it still enjoys good roads and modern facilities left over from that time. Years of political unrest and guerrilla warfare evidently led to an outbreak of haunted sites and supernatural activity — stories of ghost activity are common. Recently, a hunter in Harare, Zimbabwe's capitol, reported that the mayor's eyes glowed a pale green, and his face took on the shape of a spider's under scrutiny with the sight!

Mozambique — This country has suffered years of political upheaval between the ruling FRELIMO party and the rebel RENAMO party, leaving the economy in shambles. The current government is very corrupt. The police are heavily armed, but untrained, and respond brutally to most situations. Much of the countryside is extremely hazardous to cross, due to thousands of land mines sowed during the uprising, and there are reports of savagely mutilated rots stalking in packs.

THE DEVIL AND THE DARKNESS

Subject: Democratic Republic of the Congo

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

You can make a deal with the Devil, but sooner or later there's hell to pay.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was once known as Zaire, is one of Africa's largest and most populous countries — it's as large as the entire eastern US, and has a population of about 32 million people among 250 different tribal groups. These blacks have strong ties to their ancestral lands, and ethnic identity has always been more important than national pride here. The result is a huge number of ethnic factions pulling in different directions, and not afraid to shed blood to get what they want. Uprisings, raids and revolution are a way of life.

Zaire gained its independence from Belgium in April 1960, and managed to hold things together for all of a week before the province of Katanga rejected the newly elected president and seceded from the country. The Zairian army and the UN tried to pull Katanga back into the fold without success, and in September of that year military strongman Mobutu Sese Seko deposed the civilian government and took over the country. A vice-minister from the civilian government refused to accept Mobutu and declared his own government in nearby Stanleyville.

Subject: Government-sanctioned wiretapping?

From: descent88

To: jager51

I excerpted this from a story on the AP newswire yesterday and thought you ought to know. Be careful what you send out over the net, Jager. The government — or worse — might be listening.

> AP/CAPE TOWN — According to sources within the South African government, the

> South African Police Service and Afrika Telkom, the country's leading telecom-

> munications provider, have been operating a high-tech eavesdropping operation

> that has intercepted and recorded literally thousands of calls and emails into and

> out of the country over the last two years. According to the minister of finance,

> this special surveillance unit acts on court-authorized search warrants to gather

> evidence against known or suspected criminals, but allegations have recently

> surfaced that the operation was used to gather incriminating information on

> potential political opponents.

Meanwhile, a Baluba chieftain named Kalonji decided to take advantage of the chaos and declared his *own* government in Kasai. It's been downhill ever since.

Seko eventually came out on top — after re-installing a civilian government, then deposing it again in 1965. He declared himself president-for-life and used the army to brutally suppress his rivals. Seko may have been a pawn of the bloodsuckers; he lived like a king while the rest of the country suffered, and he never failed to keep the army under his control for his over 30 years in power. Others say he had the help of powerful magic that brought bad luck on his enemies. Either way, by 1996 Seko's luck ran out. A man named Laurent Kabila managed to form a coalition of rebel groups and Rwandan mercenaries that posed a real threat to Seko. Maybe Kabila had some magic of his own.

Kabila and his rebels ran Seko out of the country and took over in 1997. Not long after, Seko died. The official cause was prostate cancer. Kabila had made a devil's deal to keep his rebel army together, promising power to all the various factions once he was in control. Within months, it was pretty obvious that Kabila was just another kaffir with a lust for success, and his supporters started to rebel against him. Since then, the country-side has become a no-man's land of warring factions, tribal feuds — and monsters.

Not much news comes out of central Congo, but there are rumors of huge beasts stalking the rainforests and killing any trespassers. Anders DeValere is a hunter and a good man in the bush. He led safaris for years before he woke up to the monsters in our midst. He made it into the forests and told me that creatures have isolated many villages. They come in the night and murder the old and the sick. Sometimes they force themselves on young women; supposedly several have gotten pregnant

from it. DeValere went back last month to find one of these women. I fear the worst for him; even his skill can last only so long in the wilds.

For certain, the Congo is an ancient place. I've heard tell that there's evidence of some sort of civilization that existed there as far back as 10,000 years ago. Much of the rainforest is still unexplored and the locals say that the deep jungle contains many secrets. Kaffir religions are a lot more influential there than in Southern Africa, and it looks like the old beliefs have gotten a good deal stronger lately.

DeValere said he met some black hunters there, but they've got their own warped idea of what's happening. Evidently the local tribes believe that once upon a time the spirit world and the physical world existed side by side, connected by a cord of some kind. Humanity (by which they mean blacks) was supposed to keep hold of this cord and keep the worlds together. Well, they didn't. The spirit world drifted away and the blacks lost contact with their ancestors and the gods. They seem to think that the reason the undead exist is because they can't find their way to the other side. The Messengers, according to them, are ancestor-spirits who have finally made it back from the spirit world to remind the blacks of their responsibilities in keeping the lands together. So these savages are going around trying to *help* these creatures find their way to the spirit realm. Some tribes supposedly welcome evidence of the creatures, because it suggests that their old beliefs are gaining strength again and they can drive the foreigners from their sacred soil.

Magic is also widely accepted by the kaffirs out in the country. Every tribe has its warlocks, it seems, and they've been known to feud with one another from time to time. Rebel leaders go to a lot of trouble to win support from these people. Some of them might have real power, like the sorts that hunters have encountered in more civilized countries. DeValere once told me that city warlocks come out into the country when they have a feud "because outside the cities their magic is stronger." Is that because cities inhibit magic or because more people believe in the stuff out in the bush, or is the whole thing a fantasy? Maybe Congolese hunters know but they aren't telling anyone. They keep to themselves worse than the kaffir hunters in the townships.

GETTING IN

Subject: Enter at your own risk

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The regional fighting in the DRC has had a major impact on commercial travel into and out of the country, but local flights (and charter planes) can still be found at most African airports. Visas are required and applying for them from the Congolese embassy is notoriously time consuming. Be aware that French is the primary language of the Congo, along with several local native dialects, including Swahili.

Hunters should be wary if they choose to fly into Kinshasa, the Congolese capitol. It is possible to bribe the customs officials quite easily, as many of them have not been paid by the government in many months, but waving too much money around or carrying too much baggage is an invitation to be detained arbitrarily and "examined." Your valuables will be taken, as well as most of your money. My advice is to carry only what you need, keep a low profile and be very polite. They may

wear uniforms, but they are bandits at heart. Several hunters passing through Kinshasa report sighting at least one blood-slave among airport officials. Their purpose is unclear, but obviously one or more bloodsuckers are watching the airport for some reason.

Another means of entry is overland, working north from South Africa into Zambia and then the DRC. Overland travel is difficult and long, but with so much border area to cover entry checkpoints are sparse and you have a good chance of slipping in undetected. Make sure your vehicle has four-wheel drive, carry plenty of petrol and spare parts. Also keep an eye out for groups of refugees traveling south. If you see a small group (one that doesn't outnumber yours), offer them food or medicine in exchange for information about what lies ahead. It could save your life.

Travel conditions inside the DRC are difficult and treacherous. People avoid traveling in the countryside at night and some roads have been mined over the course of the conflict. Exercise extreme caution driving along deserted roads. There are rail lines connecting most towns in central and southern Congo for hauling freight and ore, and it is easy to hitch a ride on one.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Subject: No-man's land

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The state of government in the Congo, as always, depends on who you talk to. Kabila is in control of Kinshasa and many of the major towns in the west, while the eastern part of the country near Lake Tanganyika is controlled by rebels. The territory between is a no-man's land claimed by tribal militias, army deserters and foreign mercenaries. Only the president's uncanny luck and sense of diplomacy has managed to hold enough of his coalition together to keep the country from falling apart completely.

At present, the Congolese army consists of former Mobutu loyalists and rebels working side-by-side in a very uneasy alliance. Most of these troops are poorly trained, undisciplined and unpaid, and they frequently take their frustrations out on people who cross their paths during patrols. Shake-downs and extortion are common in urban areas, while in the country it is not unheard of for army units to "requisition" everything from vehicles to wristwatches. It is possible to bribe individual soldiers, but money is not a guarantee of safety. For all intents and purposes, Kinshasa and other towns are under martial law, which means troops can enter buildings and conduct individual searches at will, as well as arrest or detain persons indefinitely without making formal charges. Do not deceive yourself. You have no rights, not even as a foreigner. There is a curfew in effect from dusk until dawn in Kinshasa, and individuals caught out after dark are arrested. Measures such as this might have something to do with the limited bloodsucker activity in the region.

In rural areas, travelers must be wary of sporadic military roadblocks, where troops check for weapons or search for fugitives. Exercise extreme caution in these situations; there have been reports of deserters setting up fake roadblocks in order to rob and murder civilians. Even the real army is dangerous and will take items if soldiers think they can get away with it. The best tactic is to stay alert and watch for signs of dust or noise in the distance that might suggest a possible roadblock, then attempt to bypass it.

Finally, there are local militia forces and vigilantes to beware of. Kabila encouraged the concept of local militias as support for his army, but the local tribal leaders took it as an excuse to make their own private armies. Some are fairly dedicated at keeping the peace in their area, while others are little better than bandits. Vigilante justice is also common in the country, though it is usually thinly disguised ethnic violence. Still, DeValere was certain that some of these vigilante gangs were responsible for killing a number of bloodsuckers that had preyed on natives. He suspected that lone hunters were leading these groups, but was never able to contact any of them. Keep an eye out for these groups; it might be possible that we could get some use out of the kaffirs, after all.

OBTAINING EQUIPMENT

Subject: The price of staying alive

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Nearly every commodity is scarce in urban areas, as Kabila funnels as much as he can to his troops. But there is a thriving black market in Kinshasa, dealing in everything from weapons to clothing to food to medicine. Prices are exorbitant and the buyer had best check what he gets very carefully, no matter how much the seller protests. Hunters in the city can go to the market district and look for a colored man named Moise Kasavubu; he has one leg and the side of his face is badly scarred. He knows the local sellers well and will help you get good equipment for a small finders fee.

Military-grade weapons, mostly of Soviet or French manufacture, are frighteningly common and easy to obtain, though if an army patrol catches civilians with them it can be disastrous. Medicines are especially scarce and painkillers are very expensive. Wilderness or survival gear can be obtained, but will likely be well-used and in average to poor condition. Vehicles such as cars and trucks can be had, but will be in very poor shape, as the army commandeers the best-running vehicles it can find.

SAFE HAVENS

Subject: Where to go when things go wrong

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Hunters operating in the DRC do not have many options when it comes to medical care. Even in Kinshasa, hospitals are poorly equipped and the staff is under-trained. Conditions in rural areas are much worse — do not approach individuals in outlying towns who claim to have medical training. Most often they're just crafty kaffirs with some bottles of ether looking to rob you.

DeValere reported the following safe havens in Kinshasa before disappearing into the jungle. Use them only when absolutely necessary and exercise caution; I cannot completely vouch for their security. If anyone on the list knows more, please contact me.

Kalemie Street — Two-story house near the river with broken wall, number 112. This is an old building dating back to the Belgian occupation, and has been heavily damaged by fire. Upper floors are unsafe, but there is a secure basement with a small stock of supplies and an old tunnel that runs to the riverbank a kilometer away. DeValere noted that he might have seen evidence of a ghost(!) haunting the second floor.

Cercle Avenue — Isabelle Verdin is one of us, part of a skeleton staff operating the Peace Corps headquarters in Kinshasa. She can provide food and shelter in emergency situations, and can smuggle individuals out of the country in dire circumstances. Approach her only if necessary; remember that you can leave the Congo, but she can't, and she's at the mercy of the locals.

Lokele Avenue — Train shed at the edge of the railyards, with red corrugated roof. Look for one of our marks on the building's rear loading dock. There is an enclosed office in the shed with cots, some medicine and rations. A good, defensible position in emergencies. This is also a good place for entering or leaving the city by train.

NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Subject: Across the border

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Conditions in countries neighboring the DRC are equally dangerous and show signs of widespread monster activity. Hunters entering these countries should be aware of the following.

Nigeria — This nation is about half the size of the DRC, but has the largest population in Africa — 115 million people. Nigeria is generally stable, but the government is corrupt and there are serious problems with crimes committed by civil servants and people in uniform. Recently, a rash of kidnappings aimed at employees of foreign oil companies has swept through Lagos. One of the few victims who have been released has

spoken of "hallucinations" where his captors changed shape into huge creatures.

Angola — The situation in Angola is not much better than in the DRC, thanks essentially to one long drawn-out civil war since the country gained independence from Portugal in 1975. The entire country is essentially a war zone between rival political factions. Violent attacks in urban areas are common. Angolan refugees in Namibia have claimed that the bloodshed has gone on so long because the spirits of several powerful Angolan rebels refuse to leave the Earth and have taken over the bodies of unsuspecting men to sate their hunger for killing.

Uganda — This small country actively supports rebel factions fighting Kabila's government in the DRC, and might face military reprisals from the Congolese army as a result. Supply caravans crossing the border into the DRC's eastern mountains have disappeared over the last several months. Military types speculate that Kabila has hired ex-special forces troops from eastern Europe to stop the convoys, but my contacts in Uganda tell me that large quantities of heavy weapons and ammunition have disappeared off narrow mountain trails without a trace. Could the beasts of the Congo jungle be intercepting the equipment, and if so, why?

Zambia — This is a stable, fairly prosperous country known for its wilderness parks and nature preserves. Zambia has been taking in a steady stream of refugees since Kabila took power, many of them dispossessed Mobutu loyalists. Supposedly the Red Cross has encountered family groups carrying corpses wrapped in burial clothes out of the DRC. The families refuse to discuss the bodies and seem extremely protective of them. For health reasons, these refugees have been turned away from established resettlement camps and are at large somewhere in the countryside.



LEGACY OF LIONS

Subject: Kenya

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Kenya is the place where the lions still roam. If there are any true hunters to be found among the blacks, they will be found in the savannas of eastern Africa.

Unlike the kaffirs in my homeland and the bloody butchers of central Africa, the Kenyans have shown responsibility for their freedom, and despite several major governmental changes, power has been managed fairly sensibly. Recent economic problems have threatened this stability, however, and as of last year the country faces mounting foreign debt and rising inflation, discouraging vital foreign investment. They are vulnerable, like my country was in the '80s, when the damn bloodsuckers used the anti-Apartheid chaos to get their claws into our government. I read the news reports from Nairobi every day, and my contacts in the city see the same signs I do — the bloodsuckers are setting their sights on the Kenyan president and his ministers. This time, however, they might have a fight on their hands.

The secret of the Kenyans' strength lies in their national motto: *harambee*. The word means "pull together" in Swahili and it illustrates the sense of community that the Kenyans have toward one another. The idea of family and kinship is powerful among the Kenyan people — in a country where most of the population lives outside the cities, urban residents frequently make trips to their extended families in the country. They are still tied to ancient traditions, one of which manifests as scrawls painted on Nairobi's walls. *Hear the Lion in your heart*, one message reads. Some of the Kenyans hear the Message and they think it is the Great Beasts talking to them.

The blacks in Kenya worship animals that live on the grasslands, and they believe that each kind of animal has a Great Spirit, like a god. There is a lion spirit, a gazelle spirit and so on. Long ago, the kaffir shamans and hunters would dedicate themselves to a particular spirit, hoping to get the animal's abilities. They would wear the signs of the spirit on their bodies, either as tattoos or as amulets. There is a hunter I know in Mombasa who works for Reuters, and who she says she has encountered "lion men" stalking bloodsuckers in the city. For once, these blacks don't seem to hold the damn monsters sacred and are determined to kill them wherever they can be found. Except where the shapechangers are concerned. It plays into their damn beliefs. They see the shapeshifters as something like "angels" sent by the Great Spirits to protect the land, and the lion men will not raise a hand against them. Someone has to get in there and set these people straight. Any takers?

GETTING IN

Subject: Arriving in Kenya

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Kenya is the hub of eastern Africa, with an excellent airport, first-rate roads and extensive railway lines. Customs officials at Jomo Kenyatta airport are well-trained and careful, though they are mostly concerned with catching items leaving the country rather than getting in. So far, no one has reported any signs of abominations among these individuals. It is possible

to bring hunting weapons into the country, but they require extensive documentation showing that you are affiliated with a government-approved expedition.

Entry into the country by road is easily accomplished, as well. Once through the border checkpoints, individuals can travel freely. Some caution should be exercised near national parks and game reserves, however, due to persistent poacher activity. Game wardens desperately try to prevent these attacks and stop any strange vehicle they encounter.

Subject: The Real Face of Evil

From: shaka74

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

You pathetic little man. How in the name of all that is holy can you preach about unity and brotherhood one minute and spew such obscene racism the next? Do you want to save the world for all humanity, Jager, or just for *white* humanity?

You talk about the power of Africa, but you won't acknowledge the wisdom of her native children. The native tribes of Africa have long known about the interrelationship between the worlds of the living and dead. The ways of the tribes are fading fast from the Earth, but if you would get your head out of your lily-white ass for just a minute, you might realize that an untapped source of wisdom is right at hand. People like the Bantu and Kikuyu have probably *forgotten* more about laying spirits to rest than everyone on this list knows. But those of us here in America and elsewhere can't take advantage of that knowledge. You can, if you could see past your god-damned bigotry and reach out to these people instead of brushing them off as savages.

Trust me on this, Jager. One of these days you're going to come up against something that you have no idea how to handle, and you're going to need the wisdom of the black man to survive. If you can't see past your own stupidity, then I have no pity for you.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Subject: The rule of law — for a change

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The Kenyan government is stable and democratic, though there is some public dissent and occasional demonstrations complaining about the economy. The Kenyan police force is well trained and professional, engaging in frequent exchange programs with the British police and Scotland Yard to share ideas and improve their skills. Patrol officers aren't nearly as hard-nosed as we have to be in South Africa, but their investigators are first-rate, and they go after violent crimes aggressively. Step carefully in Nairobi, especially since the Muslims bombed the US embassy over there.

Possession of firearms is pretty tightly controlled in Kenya. Hunting weapons are permitted with the proper forms. Carrying a concealed handgun will get you the same troubles you would expect in America or Europe. Fortunately, Kenyan police play

by the rules, so they can't just stop you and search you on a whim, or harass you because they feel like it. If you cover your tracks carefully and pick your battles, you can avoid serious problems with the law.

As far as anyone can tell, the government and law enforcement are free from outside influences. Do not make any assumptions, though. I suspect the bloodsuckers will be making serious attempts in the future. What I can't figure is their motive. Why Kenya? There's not much there but parkland.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

Zanzibar: Initial Review

Status: Urgent

Plague has spread far more rapidly in Zanzibar than earlier data would indicate.

As you know, urban Zanzibar has been a focus point for WHO's observation of intravenous transmission of infectious disease since 1989, when the first mass outbreak of hepatitis-B made it clear to us that we could no longer ignore hygienic conditions here.

Since returning to the city, I am sorry to inform you that conditions have worsened dramatically. Hepatitis and HIV are found at near-pandemic levels throughout the sample population, and, nearly as disturbing on a personal level, the smell of ripening cloves once again serves as a cloying mask for the stench of sick men, women and children in the streets.

Most alarming is the attitude of the local population, who refuse to cooperate with WHO officers in identifying vectors of contagion. Most say only that the illness was acquired from contact with the "Hunter Clan" — a caste associated with the Aga Khan, but now presumably extinct — the lack of corroborating detail indicates to me that this is a dead end, however. Even as a child, I considered the "Hunters" to be mythical figures only, much like the British "bogey-man."

As per the attached proposals, I urge the Organisation to expand its humane presence in Zanzibar, and ask you to consider placing the entire island under U.N. quarantine until the epidemiological situation here stabilises.

Otherwise, we could be looking at conditions of universal infection as early as late 1999, with corresponding spread throughout Eastern Africa. By then, no clove incense will hide the stench.

Sincerely,

Dr. Larita J. Sahadi

OBTAINING EQUIPMENT

Subject: A different kind of safari

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

A small but significant part of the Kenyan business community caters to wilderness adventures, so obtaining basic equipment like food, clothes and medicine is easy and affordable. Weapons are another matter. Carrying or purchasing hunting weapons takes time and money, while paperwork is passed around and

identity checks are performed. Military-grade weapons are out of the question and no one should try purchasing anything related to explosives — those sources are still watched carefully by everyone from the Kenyan police to the CIA. There is supposedly a black market for some of these items, but the police have really been sweating them recently, so approach sellers at your own risk.

I know of one of us in Mombasa, a white man named McKinley, who last told me he was going to establish a safari company as a cover for providing rifles and shotguns to hunters. When we last spoke, he said the company was going to be named MDG Safaris, but he never emailed me about his progress. Anyone in that area who might have more information, please contact me.

SAFE HAVENS

Subject: Where to go if things go wrong

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The following safe houses are known to exist in Kenya. As always, take no chances and examine them with care before approaching.

Nairobi — Kikuya Street. Empty second floor office space above downtown Bank of Kenya. Cots, some medical supplies and food are hidden in office marked "assistant manager." At last report, the space still had electricity and water service.

Mombasa — Kalenjin Street. Odinga Clinic, run by a colored one of our "bystanders" named Bonaya. He couldn't find the courage to fight the rats when he first saw them, but now at least opens his doors to people who will. He is a competent doctor and he might know of other imbued in the area.

NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Subject: Beasts at the borders

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Kenya, close by the festering sores of Rwanda and Somalia, is in a dangerous position when it comes to beasts. The following conditions exist in the countries surrounding Kenya. Hunters looking to operate in those places need to be aware of the following.

Tanzania — Tanzania is a small, primarily Muslim country that has been fairly stable in the past, but has recently experienced a wave of fundamentalist extremism. Muslim leaders spread the word that the spirit of a great prophet has appeared in Dar es Salaam and is calling to the faithful to prepare for a jihad. What this means is still uncertain, but local leaders are starting to panic.

Rwanda — My God, what a haunted place this country has become. The ethnic massacres that slaughtered hundreds of thousands have left entire villages populated with vengeful spirits and packs of hungry rats. No one dares travel at night and entire stretches of the country have been abandoned to monsters. Enter at your own risk.

Somalia — The monsters rule here. If I could take a truckload of the beast-loving kaffirs from Cape Town and drop them into Mogadishu, maybe they would see what the bloodsuckers and their kind have in store for the rest of the world. There is no law or order, just anarchy and violence. Urban areas have been divided up by petty warlords and are ruled with a brutal hand. In truth, they serve the bloodsuckers, who fear

nothing and no one, and are unafraid to show themselves for what they are to the Somali people. The threat to Kenya comes from here, I believe. Something is at work in Mogadishu, something terrible. Something, I think, has been awakened. It's just a feeling, but I think that if we don't get in there and do something soon, terrible things will happen.

BROKEN CHAINS AND BITTER MEMORIES

Subject: Cote d'Ivoire

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I haven't been to the Ivory Coast in years, but I carried back a souvenir from there that I have to this day. It's a rusted link of iron, not much longer than my thumb. It's pitted in a lot of places, the kind of close-set, tiny holes etched by the acid in human blood. There are thousands of these pieces of chain to be found in the old abandoned forts along the coast, where French and Portuguese traders made fortunes on the slave trade little more than a hundred years ago. I remember how the tour guides talked about the ghosts that haunted those stone chambers. Now that I know what I do, I wonder how much truth there is to those stories and how many angry spirits are waiting in the dark for a chance at revenge.

Maybe these ghosts have taken the long road in terms of settling accounts; the Ivory Coast seem doomed to a slow death of poverty and corruption. Buildings, roads and services left behind by the French in the '60s are gradually wearing away, while the population continues to increase. Poor medical facilities and education has helped along a high incidence of AIDS among the Ivorians, and crime, especially violent crime, is on the rise. The links of society are rusting away and no one seems willing or able to stop it. All the while, the ghosts watch and wait.

GETTING IN

Subject: Buying passage

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

There are limited air facilities serving the Ivory Coast. There is a small airport operating in the Ivorian capitol of Yamoussoukro, and regional carriers offer sporadic flights into the city. Customs checks are all but nonexistent, and many officials will openly haggle for the proper *dash* (bribe) to overlook real or imaginary contraband. With the right amount of money, almost anything can be brought into the country, though you can bet the news will be sold later to anyone who is interested. Hunters who have passed through the capitol recently report huge numbers of blood-slaves. (Is this a reaction to the AIDS epidemic? Does it somehow protect the bloodsuckers' servants from the disease? Now that would be ironic, wouldn't it?) Keep in mind that, as in the Congo, the primary language is French.

The port cities of the Ivory Coast offer a golden opportunity for international hunters to slip into Africa. Smugglers use the corrupt



environment to bring in all manner of illegal merchandise, and it is easy to bring in arms and equipment without worrying about technicalities like visas or passports. The coast would make an excellent staging area for a hunter "pipeline" to Europe, if we could find someone who could be trusted to run the operation.

Subject: GET US OUT OF HERE

From: willow12

To: jager51

Get us out of here, Jager. Send the boat to get us out. Brenda and Pietr are dead. There's only me and Jenna left, and we're almost out of food and ammo.

Mogadishu is worse than we feared. It's Hell on Earth. The god-damned nightcrawlers are everywhere. People die every night and you can hear the fuckers laughing and howling at the sky. The gangs are scared shitless of them. We were out of our minds to think they could be turned against the creatures, even in the daylight. The sons of bitches are searching the city for us right now, practically fighting each other for the chance to turn us over.

But that's not the worst of it. There's something else here in the city, something that even the nightcrawlers are afraid of. From everything we've heard, it sounds like whatever it is, it's asleep. For now. God only knows how long that will last.

We're going to try to slip out of town tomorrow morning. Please Jager, have the boat waiting. For the love of God, don't waste any time.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Subject: You get what you pay for

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

For what it's worth, the Ivorian government actually seems to be trying to turn things around and breathe new life into the country. In the meantime, however, civil servants and politicians try to get ahead any way they can. This often means taking regular bribes from criminal organizations... and others... in return for free rein in the cities.

It's no surprise that the Ivory Coast is the center of a number of criminal organizations, smuggling everything from drugs to guns all across Africa. The police are paid well not only to look the other way but to actively protect their patrons' interests. Many of these organizations are run by bloodsuckers, but a strange story came out of San Pedro recently regarding a smuggling kingpin who was killed in a turf war — yet continues to control the organization by speaking through the body of his daughter. There are rumors of hunters stalking these beasts, but they keep a very low profile, probably out of fear of reprisals. At least one of these hunters is believed to be the son of yet another kingpin. He's probably just looking to line his own pockets — but maybe I'm cynical in my old age.

Anything goes in the cities. I've heard of hunters buying their way out of shootings, arson and murder. I've also heard of blood-slaves grabbing a hunter off the street in broad daylight

while local *gendarmes* looked on. Don't count on anything when hunting in the Ivory Coast, least of all someone whom you bought out the day before. There's always someone else out there with a better offer.

OBTAINING EQUIPMENT

There is, of course, a thriving black market in the Ivory Coast. Most anything can be had if you don't ask too many questions. Never let down your guard and always check the merchandise carefully. Don't pay a damn thing up front and don't be afraid to haggle. They will expect it. If it doesn't happen, even an "honest" seller will feel obligated to take advantage of you.

The last report I'd gotten was that sellers could be found at nearly all the docks, and some individuals make deals right off the boats. If anyone can develop a reliable source to provide regular information about the Ivorian black market, let me know.

SAFE HAVENS

Subject: Where to go when things go wrong

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Medical facilities in Ivorian cities are marginal at best, and doctors demand cash money in advance for treatment. Insist on having someone remain in the room if one of your friends must be anesthetized.

At present, there are no reliable safe houses in Cote d'Ivoire. No one can be relied upon to maintain them. In the event that things should go badly on a hunt, the best advice I can give is to flee into the countryside, where there are fewer prying eyes and the beasts in the cities have fewer contacts they can use to locate you. There are numerous abandoned forts and old settlements along the coast, but remember the rusty chains and enter at your own risk.

NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Subject: Partners in crime?

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Western Africa is broken up into literally dozens of small countries, as poor or poorer than the Cote d'Ivoire and more or less as corrupt. Hunters passing through the region have reported a number of significant rumors or sightings in the following areas.

Ghana — Recently, there have been stories whispered in the coastal city of Accra about a strange fog that sweeps in from the sea on nights when there is no moon. Supposedly a gang of rots comes ashore in the mist, dragging sets of manacles along the cobbles as they head for the old Slave Quarter. Anyone who encounters these creatures is reportedly seized and locked in chains, then dragged along to some sort of ghostly auction. The victims are never seen again. Local residents claim that the creatures occasionally have entered old buildings in search of prey, but they can be turned away if sea salt is spread across the doorway.

Liberia — If the people of Monrovia, Liberia, can be believed, their city is plagued by men who change into *sharks* — or perhaps the other way around. There have supposedly been sightings of creatures along the coast that appear to be half-man, half-shark. Several fisherman have been attacked and some believe it to be in retaliation for a recent oil spill that left the

beach littered with the bodies of hundreds of fish. I suspect this is a case of fraudulent journalism.

Senegal — There are warlocks in this former French colony, apparently organized into a number of well-established orders operating in Dakar. These orders are clearly very wealthy, probably profiting off the same corrupt climate found in Cote d'Ivoire, and it appears that locals are well-paid to protect the orders' business. I have a contact in Dakar who says these groups appear to be in competition with one another, and all of them regularly hire mercenaries and experienced guides to escort them on expeditions into the Congo. Not all of these expeditions return again. Is there a connection between these warlocks and the monster activity in the DRC?

INTERVIEW WITH GOD

[transcript of audiocassette dated "12/02/1997"]

Male Voice: Identifying mark. Interview with God, king of the Jebu tribe of Dahomey, tape 6 of 6. Copyright 1997 David Goldman, University of Chicago. Your majesty, may I respectfully ask whether your advisors have chosen your heir?

Second Male Voice: [Muffled laughter] There is no need.

First Voice: I respectfully do not understand.

Second Voice: When I leave this place to make my journey to the city of bone kings, the time of the Jebu people will come to an end.

First Voice: Does this mean the Jebu will stop considering themselves a people separate from the other peoples of Dahomey?

Second Voice: [Laughter]

First Voice: I am sorry, your majesty, but since the screen prevents me from seeing you, I cannot know what you find so amusing.

Second Voice: When I join the bone kings, the Jebu will not consider themselves anything at all. They will not be anything at all. Goldman, I know well how you students come to the people with your microphones hoping to squeeze out our secrets. I will tell you the biggest secret of all: The spring of time has almost gone dry. Soon I will be gone and the soulless ones will be free to pour across the land like black rain. Then the memory of Jebu will end, as will the memory of all those who speak with dreams.

Sierra Leone — Constables in Sierra Leone have put out a warning to all neighboring police services for information that might pertain to a recent spree of brutal killings through the small country's rural areas. The few witnesses that survived the attacks reported white men and huge gray dogs. The men spoke English and actually seemed to speak to their animals from time to time. They apparently entered the country from neighboring Mali and seemed to be on the trail of something. They claimed to be "servants of the Earth," but left death and destruction in their wake. No one knows for certain what they were pursuing, but they appeared desperate to catch it. These attackers are still loose in the countryside, though they may have continued eastward into Liberia.

SECRET SAND HAUNTED SANDS

Subject: Egypt

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I've said it in the past on this list and elsewhere: Who we are and what we are doing isn't about divine intervention or some kind of biblical Armageddon. Everything in life happens in cycles: birth and death, hunter and prey. For thousands of years, humanity has been on top, ruling the Earth. But now we've gotten soft and the Earth is striking back. There's a reckoning coming. You know what I'm talking about.

If there is anywhere in the world where we can find clues about what is coming, and what might happen after, it's in the ancient cities of Egypt.

Egypt is the second-most populous country in Africa, and its civilization is certainly one of the oldest in the world, if not the oldest. Archaeologists can find evidence of trade, agriculture and government going back at least 6,000 years, probably longer. I suspect there are hunters in Egypt who believe, as I do, that buried in the country's history lies evidence to other plagues of monsters and spirits, and perhaps clues to how these beasts were defeated before.

Egyptian mythology is full of ideas about ghosts, man-beasts and the living dead. After all, these were the people who believed that their gods were part man, part animal, and that human bodies needed to be preserved because the dead would need them to continue in the afterlife. History has a way of turning things on its head, though. What if the archaeologists have it all wrong and the Egyptians weren't preserving their royalty for the afterlife, but making sure that the pharaohs stayed dead? Maybe they removed a body's brain and internal organs as a way of insuring that the ruler wouldn't come back as a bloodsucker? For all we know, Egypt may have been the place where the bloodsuckers originated.

The Egyptians are proud of their past, but they are also determined to press ahead into the 21st century. Oil prices are returning to pre-Gulf War levels, and the Egyptian economy is on the upswing, bringing in more money to modernize and expand, and to reclaim arable land from the desert. At present, Egypt has one of the highest population densities in the world, with nearly all of its 56 million people crammed into a small region bordered by Alexandria on the north coast, the Nile Delta just south of Cairo, and by the Suez Canal to the east. That works out to 1,540 people per square kilometer.

It is a place where monsters thrive. Bloodsuckers have easy pickings and a sea of shifting faces to hide in. Spirits can feed on the pain and misery of so many souls packed together, never having to reveal themselves. Monsters are like any other criminal in some ways. The more ambitious they are, the more risks they take. Sooner or later, they screw up. That's why they are so easy to spot in South Africa, because the bastards are in a rush to take advantage of all the chaos and upheaval and it makes them less cautious. Not so in Egypt. The beasts there have had advantages that others across the world have not. They've had the luxury of patience and a steady supply of power. They haven't had to struggle for anything. Power and influence have accumulated around them like desert sands.

Unlike South Africa, the beasts appear to care little for politics or material wealth. If some of them are ancient enough to remember the pharaohs, maybe they know firsthand how fleeting such things are. There is some evidence of supernatural taint in Egyptian government, but it's very subtle. An influential individual might turn up as an apparent blood-slave for a week, then all traces of the taint disappear later. There have been reports of several government ministers showing signs of periodic possession by the same grim-faced spirit, coming and going without any apparent rhyme or reason, but always during times of key decision-making regarding expansion efforts into the desert. It is as if the government and the Egyptian people were no more than a herd of goats needing the odd nudge to stay on track, while the shepherd concerns himself with more important things. The question is, where does their real focus lie?

Unfortunately, politics, and more importantly religion, are very important to most Egyptians, and regional hunters seem to have a difficult time putting their differences aside to face greater threats. While most of the country is Sunni Muslim, there is a small but significant Christian minority, and hunters from both faiths seem to think their awakening is some kind of inherent validation of their faith. (This is the biggest reason why I reject the idea of a god — any god — being behind our sudden awakening. If this is a matter of holy war, why are people from many religions being called? Makes no sense.)

This is just more fuel for the fire, as religious strife has simmered in Egypt for decades. But instead of going after the creatures in their midst, Egyptian hunters are going after one another more often than not. One of us who I won't name and who was not on this list almost died recently in this ridiculous feud. It turns out that the bloodsucker he was stalking had nothing to do with his recent disappearance — he and some of his associates were caught in a bomb blast in a downtown café, and he is in a Cairo hospital with burns over most of his body. An extremist Christian group later claimed responsibility.

GETTING IN

Subject: Arriving in the land of the pharaohs

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Egypt is the gateway to North Africa and the Middle East, with international trade and commerce passing through its airports and docks every day. During the '70s and '80s, it was also an international crossroads for Islamic terrorism, where operatives could travel from their training camps in Libya or Lebanon and slip quietly into Europe. As a result, Egyptian authorities have tightened their customs controls and checkpoints, so hunters are advised to exercise extreme caution if attempting to slip into the country with a forged passport or any kinds of weapons. Also, if you have a criminal record or have any outstanding warrants held by worldwide police organizations like INTERPOL, you run a great risk of being detected and detained. Entering the country overland from neighboring Sudan is somewhat easier. Soldiers at the checkpoints have been known to accept bribes in exchange for overlooking certain irregularities.

Traveling within Egypt is easy enough in the area of the Nile. There are extensive roadways and rail lines connecting the villages and towns along its length, all of them coming together in the capitol, Cairo. Traveling west into the desert is another matter. There are roads that parallel ancient caravan routes, but

many areas, especially on the border with Libya, are still heavily mined (some of which date back to World War II) and require special permission from the government to enter.

It's possible that some of these restricted regions contain ruins that have significance for the monsters. I know of one recent discovery by the University of Cairo in the desert around Al Farafirah that was abruptly declared off-limits. Two members of the university team disappeared when trying to explore a series of ruins uncovered by a sandstorm. The official reason for the "accident" was attributed to land mines. Other members of the expedition will not publicly discuss what happened.

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

Subject: Barbarians at the gate

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The Egyptian government has been struggling against sporadic terrorism for the last two decades, mostly from extremist Muslim groups that oppose Egypt's peace with Israel. These attacks continue and there is evidence that hunters are involved. Whether they believe they are lashing out at a government that is a pawn of the beasts or simply finding an outlet for their fanaticism is unknown.

Because of these attacks, the Egyptian police are essentially a paramilitary unit that is more concerned with holding the country together rather than sticking their noses too deep into petty crimes. Not even murder cases receive the level of interest that they might in other more developed countries. Emphasis is placed more on surveillance of known agitators and controlling the flow of guns and drugs.

There have been a few cases where police have apparently been used to disrupt hunter activities. A group that was gathering information on a spirit haunting an apartment in Cairo had their house raided by counterterrorist operatives pursuing an "anonymous tip" that the place was a bomb factory. Two hunters from out of the country were deported within 24 hours, while the locals spent four days being interrogated about their political leanings. One of them died. The fact that the police continued this treatment despite the lack of any evidence to support the tip suggests that some kind of outside influence was applied. Of course, there was no way to trace the tip back to any monsters, who achieve their results through a whisper here or a nudge there. The beasts understand the climate of paranoia very well, and those of us who overplay their hand can quickly find themselves under arrest.

OBTAINING EQUIPMENT

Subject: The fine art of improvising

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Egyptian law is very strict regarding firearms — possession of a pistol or rifle is prohibited as part of an effort to stem the tide of terrorist violence. Of course, there is a thriving black market in guns, especially Soviet military weapons. Hunters in Cairo can contact Ahmad el-Araby, a bookseller in Cairo's old city who used to broker deals between sellers and extremists before a bloodsucker opened his eyes. He will act as a middleman for weapons deals for a not-so-modest fee, but you are cautioned not to ask for much of an arsenal. Possession of a firearm or connection to any incident involving firearms will result in

immediate detention and interrogation. The Egyptian police are not afraid to use torture to learn the names of suppliers and "terrorist collaborators."

My advice to hunters in Egypt is to improvise. Avoid carrying guns or grenades or anything else that would give the authorities an excuse. Gasoline and glass bottles make for effective weapons and can seem perfectly innocent until they are needed. Of course, this means that one must carefully choose the time and place for one's battles, but against the subtle beasts of Egypt, one needs to think and act like they do. More than anywhere else in the world, hunters here live and die by their wits. Be cautious and creative.

SAFE HAVENS

Subject: Where to go when things go wrong

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

In Egypt, the tables can be turned on us without warning. Trust your instincts, but don't take chances. Always have a plan ready in case the worst happens. Hunters here have scouted out the safe houses listed below. This list changes frequently.

Alexandria — Number 14, Abd-el-Nasser Street. Two-story walled house just off the market square. The house is supposedly owned by one of us, Atef Moussa, formerly a professor at the University of Cairo. Moussa is... scarred by his encounters with beasts. He lost his wife and child recently. No one knows

more about the city than he does, but there is some concern about his mental health. Approach with caution, treat him with respect, and be careful.

Cairo — Salaam Café, Independence Street. This was a café opened by an American expatriate. It is the site of the bombing that crippled my acquaintance. The American has returned to his own country, and the café is presently abandoned. There is an office in back and a small apartment upstairs. It is not a very secure site, as the café's front doors were blown off and the front windows were shattered, but the apartment itself is somewhat defensible.

Memphis — Farouk's Wine Shop. Farouk's small shop is located in the Memphis Bazaar, just past the Gold District. It is in a dangerous part of the Bazaar, so be wary of pickpockets and armed thugs. Farouk is a hunter with an impressive reputation, but he is also a fanatical anti-Zionist and I suspect he has been lending his skills to a number of local terrorist groups. He says his door is open to all of us, regardless of race or belief, but his associates might not see things the same way.

NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Subject: From Casablanca to Tripoli

From: jager51

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The cities and cultures of North Africa are among the oldest in the world, and there are legends of ghosts and monsters



that go back hundreds of years. Some of these stories don't sound so foolish anymore. Hunters abroad in the following countries should beware.

Libya—This oil-rich North African country has bankrolled terrorist activities against Israel and Europe for decades, despite punishing sanctions from the UN. Its people are held together by the incredible charisma of one man, Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi. Even in the '80s, there were stories that the man had an almost supernatural control of his subjects, and many have commented on his incredible good fortune despite numerous assassination attempts. Some say he is a warlock. Others think he is a slave to a particularly powerful bloodsucker. Whatever the case, his security forces have shown a particular prejudice regarding hunters, and a sizeable reward has been posted to the first Arab — Libyan or not — who can capture one of the "anointed" and bring him or her to Tripoli.

Subject: The answers at last

From: logos

To: jager51

I am writing to assure you that your concerns are unfounded. Last night I met with the radiant spirit known as Amn-Thoth, and the divine one kept to his word. In return for the golden scarab from the University, he has shared with me all manner of wondrous knowledge and arcane secrets, such that we may turn the powers of the demons back upon themselves and cast them into the dark waters from which they sprang.

There was no risk making contact with the spirit. One so ancient and noble as Amn-Thoth knew full well the wisdom of entreaties and cooperation, and sought only a small *quid pro quo* before embarking on what has proven to be a most fruitful dialogue. It all began with trust, a simple gesture of faith. I cannot tell you how gratified I am to know that my theories have been correct. Not all denizens of the spirit world are to be feared. Egypt is home to many old and wise souls who remember their former lives and well understand the perils we face. They want to help us and ask little in return.

I cannot begin to relate all that Amn-Thoth has taught me. There is so much to share. Alas, my arthritis is flaring up again and typing is becoming painful. We must meet and then I can relate everything I know to you in person. Can you send me your address? You are in Cape Town, are you not? Is that near Alexandria or Suez? It is a small matter to arrange transportation from Berenice. I just need to know where you are.

Please contact me soon. Already my memories are fading and I fear for the secrets that may be lost. There is so much that Amn-Thoth wishes you to know and so much that he wishes to know of you.

Tunisia — According to hunters in Tunis and Bizerte, there are small cabals of warlocks operating semi-publicly in most Tunisian cities, providing services in return for a small fee. In some cases, barter is accepted, sometimes trading charms in return for errands carried out in the desert. My first instinct would be to dismiss these claims, except for the fact that those individuals who go out into the sands lose up to three days of

their lives. They remember leaving their homes and heading out, and then wake in their own beds, days later. What are the warlocks asking them to do?

Algeria — This poverty-stricken country is torn by an Islamic uprising that has left thousands of native Algerians dead from terrorist bombs and horrible rural massacres. The Algerian authorities appear powerless to stop the killings and have tried to consult with other African police services for assistance. I've looked at some of the reports. Based on the evidence, it looks as though whole villages have turned on one another, neighbor attacking neighbor without any apparent motive. The attacks always happen on nights where there is no moon, and the killings persist from dusk till dawn. Could this be some kind of mass possession?

Subject: Re: Good Riddance!!!

From: witness1

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

As of today, no one on this list has heard from Jager51 in almost a month. Unless anyone speaks up, I have to assume that he's been caught and/or killed and his network has been compromised. How our opponents discovered him is a mystery, though there are a number of possibilities. But you know what is perhaps even more disconcerting? The fact that no one on this list seems to care.

Damn it, people, Jager was a racist, but he was one of us. I don't condone his beliefs (and don't even *think* about starting another flamewar over this, because we don't have time for any more of that). The fact of the matter is it's us against the whole world. We don't have the luxury of choosing who's imbued. We need everyone we can get. Not everybody is going to be neat and clean and easy to get along with. Some of us may be utter bastards, but that isn't the point. The point is taking back what's ours. What belongs to *all* of us — me, you and people like Jager. He may have had some deranged ideas about a person's skin color, but he was right about some things. We have to stick together, like it or not, if we're going to win this thing. He worked hard to keep hunters coordinated all across Africa, and now it's up to us to pick up where he left off.

Look at it this way: Even if you can't bring yourself to risk your neck for the sake of someone like him, think of the other members of his network. He dropped some names on the list, but there must have been dozens of others he didn't mention. He must have kept records, even if only in his memory. We *know* how the creatures can turn a man inside-out if they want to. We have to assume that they know everything he did, and that means a *lot* of people are in danger. Someone has to get to Cape Town and try to find out what happened. We know he was a member of the police. How often does a cop turn up missing? We can probably get a name and an address from that and go from there.

In the interests of keeping the peace, anyone who is willing to investigate Jager's disappearance can email me privately. I'll create a separate mailing list to coordinate transportation and contingency plans. Right now, circumstances keep me from heading to Africa myself, but I'll be glad to help in any way I can.



Subject: PariahDog Unabridged

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: willow12

Copied To:

Send
MessageGet
Messages

As requested, I've gathered together all the postings from the identity known as "PariahDog." Use them as you need. Keep the brotherhood strong.

>>>From: pariahdog140

>>>Subject: Well Met in the Year of the Tiger

>>>To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

>>> I haven't seen any other posts from Asia. Maybe there's a listserver floating around the ether somewhere >>>in Vietnamese or Urdu. Until that's discovered, seems like I'm the voice from the East. My first advice is: >>>Don't think of Asia as a haven from your European monsters. They're here, too, but they're born of Asian >>>nightmares that are just as real and just as hungry. Some of you are lucky I found this site.

>>> My pseudonym here is PariahDog because I'm a *sansei*, a third-generation Japanese-American. I took a >>>lot of shit for it, too, growing up where I did. I've been playing Assistant English Teacher (read: human tape >>>recorder) at a high school here for almost a year, but I didn't come here for the job. Since both my father and >>>grandfather died before I was born, and since my mother seldom mentioned either of them, I came here with >>>the hope of tracing my roots. Ha! Once you've left Japan, your roots have either been pulled up or paved over. >>>But I still look Japanese enough for people to rattle off these fast strings of *nihongo* at me, and then look at >>>me like I'm simpleminded when I don't understand. I know what they're thinking: How dare I look Japanese >>>when I can't even speak the language? I'd happily put my lineage against any of the *yankiis* who hang out in >>>Osaka's *Amerika Mura*, with their bleached straw hair and their cell phones. My mother still remembers the >>>stink of the California detention camps.

>>> Anyway, my imbuing was solitary, so I had about a week of bedsweats and razor blade contemplation in >>>the shower — a lot of you know this score, so I won't elaborate. I thought it was some kind of divine >>>punishment for agreeing to teach evening English lessons at the house of the Yamagumi brothers the month >>>before. (And I don't even buy into God!) These guys, textbook yakuza, approached me about it in a >>>coffeehouse, talking about joining the family. I figured this was my chance to finally scare a little respect out >>>of my countrymen. Thankfully, on the train home from a lesson a few weeks ago, this old guy dropped a calling >>>card in my lap as he was getting off. Only his e-mail and that "Friends" symbol were printed on it. BTW, if >>>you want to start correspondence with *anyone*, give them *only* your e-mail address first. It's almost impossible >>>to trace, and the security protecting user identities is *ichiban*.

>>> I won't go into details about the return e-mail and the subsequent rendezvous, but it all culminated in >>>my hooking up with a small group of imbued. I wish I could say they've got a Kung-Fu name like, "The Glorious >>>Vengeful Dancers" or "Sunfire Fists," but they just call themselves *Kessanhito*, "The Balancers." The guy who >>>gave me his card on the train, Ken, was the first. He's been using those cards to pull people together. The >>>group's pretty much an Old Boys Club — I'm the youngest by about 30 years. Ken figures it's because Japan's >>>youth has its eyes closed to spirits.

>>> There's only five guys in the group — Dragon, Sembei, Saiban, Ken and me. Like most Japanese old >>>enough to remember WWII, they're all firm believers in Shinto. Ken explained it to me. Basically, the world >>>is full of *nigimitama*, a peaceful life energy, and *aramitama*, a violent one. The monsters that we've all seen are >>>a result of a gross imbalance in the life energies, and I'll bet you can guess which one's winning. No one knows >>>why this is, but everyone's got their opinions — except me. I think it's a load of crap. Ken believes there's >>>something guiding me despite my being atheist, like my grandfather's spirit or something. I dunno. In a weird >>>way, I'm like that guy God45. I don't care what hell they crawled out of or what they are or why they are. They >>>just *are*. I guess that's kinda Zen, isn't it?

>>>more

CHAPTER 3:

ASIA

Cont.<<<

We meet at Ken's house periodically to discuss our leads. It's the safest place. Ken's got trained watchdogs and he's installed blinding flashbulbs in every room in case trouble stops by. We don't have much to follow up right now. Sembei's sniffing out something in Osaka, and Ken's actually known the Yamagumis as rots for some time. His "ancestors" told him to tail me after a lesson one night, to throw me his card on the train. Once he helped me fine-tune my own sight, I saw their rotted skin and pulsing black veins too. I'm still teaching them, though, using it as a front to find out what I can about them.

Ken's sort of become my personal trainer. The guy looks like a scarecrow, but he's got iron guts and a mind like a katana — delicately balanced and sharp as hell. He doesn't really know English, but we communicate pretty well. Since I refuse to waste time getting blasted every night with my coworkers, I've been studying Japanese a lot, so I've gotten pretty good. I'm learning to fight with a *hanbo*, a short ironwood staff, one of the few deadly weapons you can take for a stroll downtown.

All the *Kessanhito* know one fighting form or another. They have to — no one owns a gun. The gun laws in Japan are wicked. The only ones you can buy are shotguns, for hunting. The licensing and registration procedure is so tightly regulated that if your pellets embed themselves in anything outside duck season, you can expect a visit from the blues. And if you *kill* someone here with a gun, well, capital

punishment in Japan is death by hanging, and no one feels like dying a spaghetti-western death.

If anyone reads this and gets a hankering to come to Japan, let me set you straight on some things. I already mentioned the gun control, so don't even waste your time trying to bring your own in. The police here are pretty straight — no one's noticed any blood flunkies among them... yet. Politicians are another matter. Two of Japan's recent prime ministers have resigned in handcuffs.

You can enter visa-free for up to about three months, but it's almost impossible to stay longer unless you've got a job. If you can read this post, you can get a job easily here as an English teacher — they always need those. But be warned, if you get a job, you have to get something called an Alien Registration Card. It's got your prints on it, and the police can legally ask you for it at any time. They still don't trust foreigners here. Then again, being a *gaijin* can be a real asset. The general consensus in Japan is that if foreigners had brains, they'd eat them. This can be troublesome when you're looking for an apartment or a car, but it means you can get away with shit that would crucify natives, as long as you play dumb. They simply chalk it up to your barbaric idiocy.

Getting around here is a breeze if you use the train. Japan's rails reach every major city and even shoot deep into Dogpatch, if that's where you need to go. And they're always on time. But they almost all stop running at midnight, so if

you're looking for traveling nightcrawlers, check the airports or ferry terminals instead. If you feel the need to get a car, you're going to need three things: an international driver's license, a fat wallet and a high threshold for pain. Driving in the city is insane, and country roads are narrow, badly maintained and seldom very direct. You'll be amazed at the lack of traffic on Japan's expressways — right up until you hit your first toll booth. I've seen \$80 tolls here. No joke.

One more thing: Be prepared to discover that everything you "know" about Japan is wrong. Most people here don't speak English, except at tourist areas and airports. Computers are only really used by people who need them for their jobs, and that's not as many as you'd think. I'm glad I brought mine from home; I haven't seen a "cybercafé" here yet. And don't expect to meet a lot of wizened old sages spouting haiku and that bullshit. As with any other wealthy nation, once the economy faltered here, worship of the almighty profit margin got a helluva lot more important than a handful of dopey river gods. Sure, people still go to ancestor shrines and all, but the meaning's changed a lot from what it once was. Kind of like how Halloween and Easter pretty much revolve around kids and candy back in the States.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Foxes Among Us

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

My first proactive supernatural encounter is tonight, and I'm nervous as hell. The *Kessanhito* are coming over in a couple of hours with my suit, then we're shuttling into Osaka to a place called "Season of Tea." According to Sembei, it's full of *kitsune* — "fox-people," whatever that means. Supposedly the great deceivers in Japanese legend. Our grand plan is to trick the tricksters.

It's Sembei's idea, really. He's the one who discovered that Season is rife with these things. Don't ask me how. It's a hostess club in Shinsaibashi, Osaka's flashy entertainment district. Hostess clubs are a strictly Asian phenomenon, I believe. The staff at my school took me to one, back before they found out I hated these places. It was pretty lame. A bunch of suits pay wads of cash to have some pretty girl sit at a table and talk to them, or maybe sing a karaoke duet with them. I guess the shadier ones involve handjobs under the table, but Season's really upscale — total hands-off policy. I've heard of it before; it's said to have the most beautiful girls in Japan.

Sembei's been watching it for some time. What's going on, apparently, is that all of these beautiful girls are creatures masquerading as humans. In Japanese folklore, they're supposed to appear to men as stunning women and use that disguise to trick them into humiliating themselves. Yeah, I know, another anthropological study into the feminine aura of mystification and fear in Asian myth. Well, *these* MDG are more than metaphors. We think they're like succubi, drawing their power from others' lust. Sembei's got two magazine articles: The most recent is about an influential Japanese Diet member. The other is about the president of a major electronics company. Both mention recent marriages to women they met "at Shinsaibashi's best-known gentlemen's club." Read: Season of Tea. They both live in Tokyo. If anyone wants to check them out, I'll send you their names.

Sembei says that he's seen a number of executive-types led by fox-women into "Nine Tales," a love hotel down the road. Love hotels are another Japanese institution, custom-made for discreet rendezvous. You go in, and there's pictures of all the rooms on giant back-lit buttons. You put your cash in a slot, press a button and you're off to coital bliss. It's like a giant vending machine — no desk clerks for jealous wives to bribe. It's perfect for the creatures' purposes, and for ours.

Tonight we're playing salarymen sycophants to Saiban. He used to be a doctor, so we're going to say he's big brass in the Ministry of Health. Ken's letting him borrow a gold-plated Omega. We even got flashy business cards made up for him. I'm supposed to be his sister's kid from America, fresh out of Yale Med. The foxes are going to pick up on all the shameless adulation we lavish on him and take him to Nine Tales, where we move in unnoticed. At least, that's the main idea. Go fishing for these things on their own turf, lure one away from the group, put her in the net, spill her guts. It sounds a little far-fetched to me, but at least I'm not the bait on the line. Tricking the tricksters. I just hope someone's coming up with a backup plan as I write this.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: The Best Laid Plans of Mice and Men

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Despite all my misgivings from last night, the plan almost worked. It *almost* worked, but not quite. As you know if you've spent some time on this site, our margin for error is about as wide as a razor blade. A plan that almost works is a plan that doesn't work, and a plan that doesn't work will kill you faster than you can say, "What's Plan B?" But the *Kessanhito* work, at least as a group, and these powers that have been given to us, they work too. That's why I'm here typing and not on a slab or passing through someone's lower intestine right now.

At the start, it went okay, I guess. We paid our table fee, the ladies came over and we started putting on a show for them, playing like old Saiban was our liege lord and master. They seemed really interested at first. I was pretty interested too, creatures be damned — until I flipped on my sight. Every one of them had these vulpine heads with long, jagged teeth. I flipped it off again. Nothing kills a romantic evening like long, jagged teeth. Saiban would never admit it, but I think it made him scared or nervous or something, and he started tossing booze back to compensate. This turned him into a complete imbecile — stuttering and knocking over drinks and shit. Pretty soon the girls' smiles took on a professional hollowness, and I was sure we had just blown half a rock on a failed road show. But the youngest one, she kept on laughing and asking me about America. At closing, she invited me to join her for a walk. Now, I'm too young to be twitching on the hook, but the *Kessanhito*, those bastards, they practically picked me up and threw me on top of her, giggling the whole time. Especially Sembei. It was his money.

I kept her smiling down the neon street and into Nine Tales. I looked back as often as I thought I could get away with, hoping I'd see one of the *Kessanhito* trailing us through the crowd. Someone must have been, and they did a damn good job, because I never saw them. I ended up putting down a wad of cash on a room so sugary, I would have gone into

seizures if I was diabetic. My companion glided around, stroking the lavender curtains and laughing at the mirror over the bed. When she laughed, she was radiant. I just sat on the pink taffeta bedspread, watching her, wishing I'd never been given the sight.

Finally, she came over and took my face in one hand, my hand in the other. *Hifusou*, reading the skin, goes back a long way in Japanese culture. "I thought there was something fascinating about your face." She looked at me, then at my hand. "Your *ninsou* conflicts with your *teisou* more than any I've ever seen. It means you're a stranger among your own."

I mumbled something about the hard time I've had here tracing my roots. "*Chau, chau*," she shook her head. "It runs much deeper than that."

I swear that's all she said, but when she took my eyes into hers, enemy or not, I crumbled. She must have worked some fox-mojo on me, because I suddenly started having to battle this urge to spill our plan to her, to keep her safe. We were both surprised by a knock on the door, the prearranged pattern Ken had originally told Saiban he'd use. She got up to get it. Just as she was unlocking it, I lost control and shouted a warning. But the door had already been opened, and that was all the *Kessanhito* needed to burst in and rush her into an armchair. There was a rag in her mouth before she could scream. She was chained to the chair before she could fight. They had a blade to her throat. Her eyes were sick with fear, and she kept looking at me, imploring me to save her. I felt like crying.

They took out the gag and started interrogating her about her people, trying to get a bigger picture of what they were really doing. It took a while to get her going, but when she really started to sing, Saiban cringed and let out a yelp that made everyone jump. "*Usotsuki*," he said. "Liar." Then he placed his hands over her eyes and started speaking in this thick monotone, as if he were talking in his sleep.

I made out most of it, and it seems pretty incredible — something about a coming age, a great battle, hell rising. The *kitsune* are apparently gathering power for a fight, their method as simple as seduction. They use places like Season to *conquer* a man, tie a leash around his balls. If he's married, it's as a high-priced mistress or with a well-hidden camera. If he's not, well.... It's said that Mao Tse Tung had a *kitsune* for a wife, as did a former Indonesian prime minister. In those times, though, such marriages were the whims of capricious creatures. Now, they're almost a mandate.

They're placing their own at the sides of men who can be coordinated, when the time arises, to change the shape of Asia. Maybe the world. Does the idea of monsters whispering into the ears of a nation's leaders scare the shit out of anyone else?

Saiban must have been terrified. He snapped out of his trance and smacked the woman across the face hard enough to draw blood. I guess her spell was still working on me. I leaped at Saiban and gave it right back to him, tipping over the woman's chair in the process. When Saiban picked himself up again, he held his ghost sword, which cracked



with his rage. Things got tense fast, with Ken and Dragon trying to hold Saiban back and Sembei putting himself between me and that sword. Ken managed to talk Saiban down at last, and everyone had sort of forgotten about the woman. When we finally turned to her, there was nothing in the armchair but a loop of chains.

With all the revelations, the inexplicable disappearance and her strange seductions, the creature had dealt us a few too many cards to play with. We just sat there, catching our breath, trying to sort it all out. We didn't have long. The air suddenly began to shiver as we watched eight things *materialize* in our room. The dealer had returned. She brought a lot of muscle with her.

Without our weapons, it looked like the only way we'd leave that hotel was dead. Then Ken pulled out a prayer cloth and waved it at them, telling them they couldn't advance on the *Sonshou Darani*. The fox-people growled and glared at him with their yellow eyes, but damn if they couldn't move in. It was like Builder50 was saying about the Torah and vampires. They just edged back and started fanning out around us. Dragon began mumbling something and goutts of smoke billowed out of his suit. Pretty soon the whole room was filled with this thick fog. With my sight on, I could see through it fine, but I could tell the things couldn't, and that this made them pissed. Sembei had his own ghost blade out, and he damn near lopped the head off a big red one in front of the door.

We ran into the hallway, but it didn't take long for the things to find the door and come barreling after us. I was bringing up the rear, so I turned and blew some of that invisible heat-junk at them, which bought us the time we needed to get out and lose ourselves in the Shinsaibashi throngs. We hid in a karaoke joint — just rented a private room and sat there watching the blank video screens until daybreak. No one really felt like singing.

I'll try to post a copy of the *Sonshou Darani* once I get a scanner. Maybe it can help someone out. Also, if anyone's got any theories on how that woman managed to vanish like that, I'd like to hear them.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Confrontation Rising

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

It's been a week and no one's gone missing yet, so I'm guessing we eluded the foxes. I can only speculate what ripples are spreading through monster circles about our little rendezvous. Ken's already planning our next one.

It's election time here for some political office or another (which seems to be a constant thing). Vans with loudspeakers roam the streets, blasting out the names of candidates. They make dogs bark and babies wake up and are basically a nuisance to everyone. Well, one passed by Ken's house this morning, and instead of the usual campaign blather, he claims he heard, "RETURN THE RISEN TO THEIR SLEEP," repeating until the van was out of earshot. He figures it's time for a housecall to the Yamagumis.

I still visit them twice a week, and I've been eking a little more out of them each time. They're taking an "extended business trip" to San Francisco early next year for a "family" venture that's starting up, which is why they wanted English

lessons. From what I've learned, I think they're bringing something with them when they go. Before they leave, though, they've got some business in China to settle before New Year's. I can't pry deeper to find out more.

I try to check out their security every time I visit. It's not so tight, but there are always two thugs hanging around the place at all times. Oddly, this hired help doesn't seem have the blood taint that other vampire flunkies discussed on this list are supposed to possess.

Ken says I don't have to worry about the security. Since I'm known at the Yamagumis, I can go through the front door, and just get them talking. The *Kessanhito* will worry about the rest. He's planning the raid for the day of the new moon, a week from now. (In Japanese folklore, new moons are when the dead are supposedly weakest. Has anyone else found this?). Once again, I'm a lure. Wonderful. I might as well attach some little shiny spinners to my ass and fishing line to my nose.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Cold Wave blows in

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

We've got a new member in our group, and he's sort of a local G-man. Powerfully built and with a nasty scar on his cheek, he calls himself *Kanpa*, "Cold Wave." He saw the glyph, the same one on Ken's cards, welded onto Dragon's truck, and flagged him down. We all gathered at the back of a greasy *yakitori* joint last night to hear his story. Apparently, he used to work for the government, tracking and investigating people.

Normally, agents run in packs, but Kanpa is supposedly a lone wolf now. He's got some friends at Kansai Airport that are planning a way to smuggle him out of Japan and into Seoul, where he's got family. As soon as it falls into place, he's going to Korea, digging himself a deep hole and diving in.

Apparently his agency's methods are to capture people and get them to spill the beans about themselves and their friends. Well, apparently these guys were investigating one of the enemy and grabbed the thing. From his story, Kanpa and one another agent were awoken during the interrogation. While Kanpa was confused by what was going on, the other guy went nuts and started using edges on the creature.

I guess the shit hit the fan, with other agents all over the creature and this other hunter. Kanpa laid low while the "company" men supposedly called the other hunter a *shintu*, a wizard, and demanded that he explain how he infiltrated them. They took the other hunter away while Kanpa kept his mouth shut. He still knew that things had changed, though. He panicked, went AWOL and fled to Osaka. That's where he recognized Dragon's sign. He says he wants to learn more about what he's become from us before he drops out altogether.

We had a lot of questions for Kanpa, like how the government knew about monsters, but said he couldn't answer them. He claimed that to keep the bureau safe, agents aren't told any more than they need to know. He also suspects that they secretly administer drugs to agents, maybe in their food. Until recently, Kanpa hadn't been able to physically divulge as much as he could now. He guessed that maybe as the drugs wore off, he'd remember more.

Kanpa's "silence" made Ken nervous. He wanted to know if the "chance" meeting with Dragon wasn't just a set up for the *Kessanhito*. Kanpa explained that the government doesn't pussyfoot around. If they really had business with us, we'd be behind bars already. It made sense to me, but Ken wouldn't give in until Kanpa offered to help us find more creatures. He couldn't turn down an offer like that, especially against the Yamagumis. The *Kessanhito* aren't exactly numerous enough to be choosy about our allies. I just hope this raid goes a lot more smoothly than the Nine Tales thing.

"2000: YEAR OF THE DRAGONS"

According to the old calendar of the Sage, next year the Thirteen Dragons (powerful reptoids) are scheduled to rise from their sleep, asserting themselves as masters of the Thirteen Towers (reptoid cults) and thus taking their ancient thrones as Kings of the World.

On that day, when the Dragons rise, where will you be? When the streets of Seoul crack open and the ground drips with the blood of children, what place will remain for you?

I have seen their servants and they have fed me from their own black table. They are terrible.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Artifacts Recovered

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Howitzer114, I can meet your flight. Don't forget the password we agreed on. Anyone else out there undeterred by my last post?

The raid was a success, more or less. I went to the Yamagumis' yesterday afternoon, searching for a book I'd "mistakenly" left after my last lesson. The guards knew me, so they let me in. I grabbed the book and promptly asked to use the bathroom. I'd gotten a pretty good idea of the house layout from surreptitious recon under the guise of previous bathroom breaks (I used to drink two liters of water before each lesson). As usual, no one followed me, so I slipped into the back room, undid all the locks on the rear door and let the *Kessanhito* in. Ken put down one guard pretty easily when they came looking for me. The other was kept conscious long enough for Saiban to get information from him.

Saiban and Dragon went looking for details on other creatures in Japan, or at least for a wad of cash to steal. Everyone else followed me to the rots' lair. I'd seen it on my first visit to the Yamagumis' — the entrance, anyway. It was a heavy steel door with a lock like a safe. It may as well have read "Monsters only." We had no trouble opening it thanks to Saiban getting the combination. The Yamagumi brothers were there in the cellar, sleeping on futons.

If you read nothing else in this email, read this: From what I'd read about rots on this site, I'd had Ken bring wooden stakes for the dirty work. So I pounded one into the closest brother. It splintered his ribs when it went in, so I know it must have hit his heart, but it sure as hell didn't kill him. He leapt up and would have sucked me dry if his head hadn't suddenly exploded! I turned to see Kanpa with a big-ass gun in his hand, and he was

putting a few more slugs into other thing. The gun's sounds were no louder than hand claps. I swear I didn't see a holster on him before, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who looked for one. Kanpa claimed later that if he'd told us he was carrying a gun, we wouldn't have trusted him. I guess he had a point.

It was pretty creepy down there, once we really started looking around. There were manacles and bowls caked with blood. Sembei found a hidden panel behind this weird carving and pulled out some really funky shit from behind it. I bought a scanner so I could post pictures. [Picture1](#) [Picture2](#) [Picture3](#) If anyone's seen stuff like this before, let me know, especially if it's cursed or something. Ken's keeping it all at his house. We're getting together to see what it can do.

* * *

[PariahDog's links don't connect. He once sent out a description of the items discussed, which I paste here. — Willow12]

>>>One is a palm-sized figurine of a crane on a base. Both are carved out of a black stone. They're smooth, with simple, graceful lines. The bird has two tiny gemstone eyes that seem to glow in dim light.

The second item is what looks like a fancy hand mirror. That wouldn't be unusual, but something isn't right about the reflection it casts. It kind of looks like spider webs!

Our third find is a short Japanese sword. There's nothing outwardly remarkable about it, except for a weird intricate design on the handle. The sword is strange for seeming normal when the other objects are disturbing. It scares me most.<<<

* * *

Meanwhile, Dragon and Saiban found the Yamagumis' personal files. The most interesting find was a photo taken in Chinatown of what we think are the Yamagumi contacts in S.F. Anyone recognize them? Another was a curious memo in English, not written by the Yamagumis: *The Angel knows about us. Stop him before he goes to Triangle, tells others. Now at Sai Fek's, Aberdeen Bay. Receive shipment first.* Dragon says Aberdeen Bay is in Hong Kong. Sounds promising. Maybe another hunter in Asia?

From: pariahdog140

Subject: On the lam from the Man

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

We won't be able to meet after all, Howitzer114. I'm posting this from a pay terminal in Hong Kong's airport. I hope you paid full fare for your ticket, because after you read this, you might want to get a refund.

Right after my last posting, I decided to head back to my school and tell them I was quitting. Spin them a tale about a death in the family — namely mine, if I didn't disappear fast. When I got to the school, everyone was talking about how one of the teachers had to chase off a couple of black Mercedes that had been around the grounds, just circling slowly. The most infamous purchasers of black Mercedes in Japan are the yakuza. I left and phoned in my resignation instead. They won't miss me.

That night, we all met at Ken's house to figure out what to do and examine our finds from the Yamagumi. Even Kanpa was there. The bullet that shattered that rot's skull really changed Ken's opinion of him. When I got to the house, they were drinking sake solemnly.

We didn't even have time to examine the items. Right after I arrived, the dogs went nuts outside. That was all the warning I needed to grab my *hanbo* stick. Just as Kanpa got his pistol in hand, who should crash through the door but some of his old friends.

There were five of them, with pistols like his. Images of that Yamagumi's head exploding raced through my mind. The freakiest thing, though, was the last one to come through the door. He looked *exactly like Kanpa*, right down to the cheek scar! I was standing beside Kanpa. His double stared the shit out of him! He started screaming. The agents screamed back. I couldn't make out a damn thing except something Kanpa said about a secret they shouldn't have learned. Us? That twin? Kanpa didn't elaborate.

A flash, one of the ones Ken had installed, went off and everything went to shit. Guns fired, people were yelling. I don't know. I didn't see most of it. I just threw myself on the closest one of them, figuring I could maybe give the others a chance to escape. I knocked the gun out of her hand, and she clawed at me, making deep scratches across my back. I looked at my cuts afterward. No one's nails are *that sharp*.

Whatever the hell those agents had, they were still human. I hit her hard with my staff and she collapsed. I think I may have killed her. Another one was on me and I swung against him too. I guess I lost it, cause I just kept hitting him after he was down.

I probably would've been killed myself if Dragon hadn't dragged me outside and into his car under the cover of his weird smoke-shit. He gunned the engine and we left it all behind.

All the way to the airport, Dragon kept cursing Kanpa. It took a while to get him to talk slowly enough for me to understand. He fought an agent, too, and when he looked up, I was the only one standing. The other *Kessanhito* were dead. Another of the intruders was down. But Kanpa — both Kanpas — were gone. We'd been set up, he said, and Kanpa had led them right to our safehouse. He could be right, I suppose, but I don't think he saw the terror on Kanpa's face when that twin came through the door. I don't know what it all means. Is the whole government in on the whole truth? Are they our enemies, too?

We headed straight to Kansai International, stopping only long enough to withdraw as much as we could from the ATM (which is quite a bit in Japan, around \$5,000, but for some reason they all close at 9 p.m.). We also stopped at our places for clothes and passports. That was probably dangerous, but what choice did we have?

Dragon explained that if Kanpa really was on the level about being a government agent, we had to skip town before they put out an alert for our passports. He booked us onto a flight for Hong Kong as it was loading passengers. Hong Kong's perfect, he said. Still the center of capitalism in mainland Asia, it requires no visas to enter (to encourage tourism), plus Dragon has contacts here who can score us fake papers in case our old ones are hot. We also figured we could check out that possible hunter lead from the Yamagumi memo.

I was shitting bricks when they ran my passport at the ticket counter, but apparently the government hadn't gotten a fix on our identities yet, so we were on the plane in 15 minutes. Those slashes across my back *really hurt*, so I had to

sit straight up the entire time. After three hours of this special hell, we touched down at Chek Lap Kok. I'm writing this as we wait for Dragon's pals to pick us up.

Dragon says his friends are here, so I have to go. Howitzer, and anyone else who wants to check out the scene in Japan, take this warning: We've got powerful government enemies there, and they're dangerously curious about us.

Hong Kong Police Department

Central

Filing Officer: Lt. 233 / He Qiwu

As per my preliminary report filed 29 April, undercover investigation has identified Tony Cheung, 31; Bridgette Lau, 29; and Freddie "Cochin" Lau, 24, as ringleaders of the "Four North Winds" heroin smuggling operation. During interrogation of F. Lau, suspect implicated a Gan Shuo as Four North Winds supply point, or maybe boss — suspect's testimony was confused and somewhat disjointed on this point. Files point to Gan as major underworld figure, but details so far are sketchy. No informers.

Unfortunately, Lau died in isolation holding cell under as-yet-unexplained circumstances [see attached sheets]. Death certificate indicates "suicide," but unsupported by forensic evidence. For one thing, he wouldn't have had time to flush his eyes, even assuming he managed to dig them out in the first place.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Present and Accounted for

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

This is in reply to Hunter9's roll call to see which of us have survived through our first Christmas. Happy Holidays, Hunter. I wrote Santa and asked him to put a more thoughtful server name in your stocking.

I got my new passport from Dragon's connections today, and it looks solid. I always wanted to be Danish. They even attached a Hong Kong student visa and a re-entry permit for Japan (like I'm going to go back). Dragon's already gone — left for Saigon this morning to investigate a string of hospital arsons caused by what he called, "fireflies." He couldn't or wouldn't tell me more — by no means would he let me go with him. I had another agenda, anyway.

I finally tracked down Sai Fek's in Aberdeen today, and almost got killed for my cleverness. It's no hunter hideout, it's a heroin plant. And it's got guards that shoot to kill. Blood-flunkies, if the description on this list is accurate. I knew that the Chiu chau triads had made Hong Kong into Asia's drug source in the '60s, but I thought the authorities had cleaned them up since. Or maybe they just got the labs not controlled by rots. It would lend a helluva lot of credence to Builder's conspiracy theories. It also gives me a good idea of what the Yamagumis were planning to take to America. I'm going to investigate. I want to see if "The Angel" is as aptly named as I suspect.

From: pariahdog140
 Subject: Hong Kong's Hunter
 To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Well, I found a "hunter" in H.K. Unfortunately, he's not part of our club and he's not looking to join. I suppose he's better than Kanpa and his playmates. Why do none of our enemies' enemies ever want to be our friends over here? It's a shame. This guy is really serious.

Our meeting was under less than ideal conditions. I'd been watching movements out of Sai Fek's for a few days. The place is a regular horror hive, with blood-flunkies running in and out at all hours. A dreadlocked black dude goes in too, but only at night. To the sight, he's a rot, but somehow different than the Yamagumis — hard to describe. I'd bet money he's "The Angel." I usually spy from a rooftop, but there were some big deliveries last night, and my curiosity got the best of me.

I'd been watching from an alley nearby. I didn't even notice the things creep up behind me. I had my staff with me, but it was three against one. I'd be dead if this ragged-looking guy hadn't come out of nowhere and dropped the leader with his bare hands. The other two circled us, but this guy just whipped his hands and killed them with knives.

"I've paid for your life by jeopardizing my own," he snarled in English. "The gods may smile upon that, but the Black Angel will not."

I didn't know what the hell to say to that, so I just sputtered, "You're one of us?" This query raised his eyebrows. He motioned me to follow and we wound up in a tiny Aberdeen apartment, apparently where he lives with his sister.

His name is Zhan, and he calls himself a *shih*, a "knight," I guess. He says there are more in Asia. It's odd — he seems like us, but he's not. He can see through monsters' disguises like we can, and he can do weird things, but he doesn't recognize the symbols and he's never heard the voices. Apparently he was fighting monsters long before there was an internet, much less a hunter-net. I haven't met anyone else like us who's been at it *that* long.

He said he's originally from Beijing, and he fled to Hong Kong last year with his new wife and his sister, Bai. His wife died after they arrived. He didn't say how. He *did* claim that the things that live under China's northern cities are losing their "reticence." The sewers and the subways are rotting like warm fruit, breeding all kinds of horrors. Some have even crawled out. Apparently the Chinese government's trying to enforce media silence about it, but as the deaths mount, even its many hands can't cover all the mouths.

Zhan described these knights like animals before a brush fire. Overwhelmed by the spreading corruption, they're fleeing the cities and being squeezed south. Rumor holds that the government's trying to broker something with a power up north before the blight crosses the Chang Jiang river and into Shanghai. Zhan didn't reveal any more.

Now he's dedicated to starting a war between rival heroin labs in Aberdeen, by selectively snuffing their members. That black guy is at the top of his list. Zhan's backers? Get this: a group of ghosts in Wanchai — and something to do with his wife! He claims to work for our enemy, and he

gave me hell when I was shocked. Spirits are seldom fearsome in Eastern legend. I've picked up books on Asian myths, and there are a lot more Caspers than Headless Horsemen. I suppose that makes everything okay.

According to Zhan, the Angel runs the lab. The guards are his own creation. Zhan's seen him feed them with his blood. Zhan says there are other creatures, too — "rats" that supposedly distribute the heroin "because they hate us."

"Us hunters?" I asked.

"Us humans," he said.

I can't claim to understand.

When I tried to explain a little about us — being imbued — Zhan got kind of worked up. He told me that the knights go through years of training. He says our abilities remind him of a story about an ancient knight group called the "Celestial Army." Having been granted powers without developing the accompanying wisdom, the army supposedly became lazy and arrogant. Apparently knight philosophy recognizes monsters as having their place, and seeks to deliver justice to only the wicked ones. The Celestial Army sought to eliminate all monsters. The army's wickedness finally caused the earth to eat its stronghold, leaving no trace of the greedy *shih*. Zhan sees us as the return of this group.

If Bai hadn't come in just then, I think he would have challenged me to a fight or something. I left my hostel name and the list address before I left. I don't know why. Zhan probably just burned them.

From: pariahdog140
 Subject: Pattern179, take your toys and go home
 To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

WARNING TO ALL HUNTERS: Pattern179 is not a Desert Storm vet with a secret collection of weapons. He did not dismantle a blood cult in San Antonio. He has not uncovered a dark secret behind the school cannibalism in Austin. Pattern179 is a 16-year-old boy currently on vacation with his parents in Hong Kong. I don't know how he's found us, but he's crying wolf. Don't waste your time checking that bullshit out. Can't we do something about intrusions?

From: pariahdog140
 Subject: Hong Kong
 To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I've been going to the library where Bai works to talk with her. Her English is good, and she's been teaching Zhan for years. She's not touchy about the hunter thing like her brother — she's come to terms with it through him — so the two of us have become pretty good friends. Actually, she's the first person I've felt close to in a long time, like I'm not an outsider for a change.

She's been helping me research Asian myths, especially anything on this "Celestial Army" (nothing so far). I'd like to give up this business and actually see Asia for a while. Maybe even take Bai with me. She won't leave Zhan, though, and she says he won't give up his "wife" — ???

A few things about Hong Kong to answer Willow12's questions. The Peoples' Liberation Army is actually pretty low-key. Before it moved in two years ago, mainland China promised Hong Kong most of its autonomy. Bai says she hasn't noticed many big changes, other than fewer Westerners around. Crime remains rampant here, though, and punishments are severe. Don't bother trying to get a gun legally. Weapon permits are only given to people who can prove that they absolutely need one — in the eyes of the law. If you're a foreigner, you don't need one. Bai says that the black markets of Wanchai and Sheung Wan are triad-controlled, easy to locate and eager to sell weapons. *Caveat emptor*: Sometimes dealers are fronts for police. The locals are always aware of police operations. They'll help you avoid them, for the right price.

If you do get a gun, be careful. Possession without a permit will get you 14 years — and a life sentence if you actually use it. The police are well-armed, too. The Tactical Unit and Special Duties Units are well trained by dealing with triad activities almost every day. They'll crack loner gun nuts wide open — even you, Crusader17. Government corruption's pretty bad here, though, and it's gotten much worse since Chinese re-occupation in 1997. But don't think you can graft your way into carrying an arsenal around with you: Recent ordinances that monitor public ser-

vants' lifestyles have made it increasingly difficult for them to accept bribes. A lot of crimes here are committed with steak knives and clubs.

From Hong Kong, it's easy to get a travel visa for short stays in mainland China. You can usually get one from your hotel in a day if you've got the right papers. From what Bai tells me, China's a lot less friendly to hunters (like Zhan, and us I suppose). The mainland still has a pervasive secret police force. That pleated-skirt teenager down the street might be happy to rat you out for advancement in the Young Communist Party. It's policy for members of the People's Armed Police Force to live in the neighborhoods where they work, so they generally have a lot of eyes. The few foreigners in China make it easy for anyone to recognize you if you're ever spotted doing something wrong. Pray you're not caught: China's "re-education through labor" program helps keep the country's crime rate among the world's lowest.

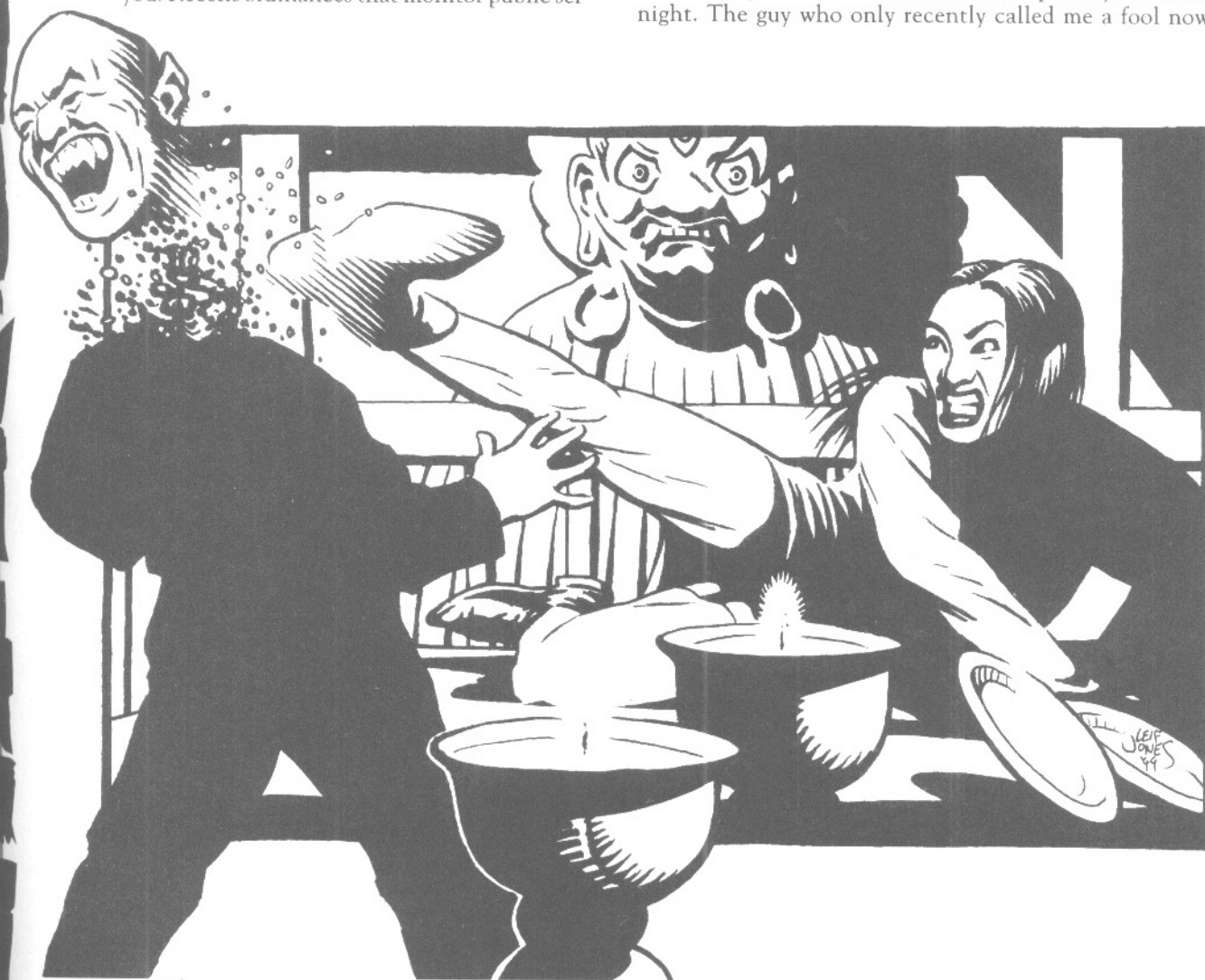
From: pariahdog140

Subject: Smoking Kills

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I've got another plane to catch, this one to Bangkok. I've still got to pack, not that I've got terribly much, but the plane leaves soon, so I'll keep this brief.

I nearly lost it when Zhan showed up in my room last night. The guy who only recently called me a fool now



pushed past me, dropped onto my bed, and lit up a smoke like I was his new pledge brother or something. He started talking, angrily at first, but that tone quickly gave way to a pleading one. It seemed that something must have tracked him after he revealed himself by saving me. His sister always greets him when he returns home from Wanchai, but last night he was welcomed by a ransacked apartment. Tufts of fur and blood streaks on the carpet were all he needed to realize his sister's whereabouts. She was in Sai Fek's, huddled in an empty room under the building. The ratmen were in the lab, as was the Angel, though there was talk of him leaving that night for business in Thailand. With my help, Zhan was going to ensure that the Angel wouldn't make it.

Zhan told me his plan as he jimmied open a sewer grate near Sai Fek's. He explained that to create injectable heroin, a lab needs to change it through an ether and alcohol solution. This process creates a gas that's normally vented out. Zhan wanted to cut the power to the vents and give the gas some time to accumulate. Apparently Sai Fek's was currently working overtime to finish the recent large shipment I'd seen earlier; they wouldn't stop for a technical problem. He needed me there to pull a fuse from the box in the basement, and to keep anyone from putting it back in. Meanwhile, he'd slip in and grab his sister. The *coup d' grace* would be a spark, which could be created by blowing the lab lights through the fuse box.

I wanted to ask him how he knew all about Sai Fek's, but the manhole cover finally came off and the smell of the sewers took my breath away. Hong Kong fully lives up to its name: "Fragrant Harbor." Zhan navigated us through the tunnels and up through a grate into a dingy boiler room. He found the fuse box and pointed out the circuit to me.

"Give me two minutes to find her, then pull the fuse. If we're not back in ten minutes, get out." Zhan made for the stairwell, but suddenly stopped and started whispering in Chinese. Somehow, I knew what I'd see before I flipped on my sight. There she was: a woman, Zhan's dead wife whom I'd seen in pictures. Not all things revealed by the sight are hideous and wrong. After a moment, she disappeared and Zhan turned off his flashlight, plunging the room into darkness.

When he spoke, Zhan's voice was as empty as the gloom around us. "My sister is gone, and the Angel's left for his flight."

"So what are you going to do now?" I asked.

Zhan's flashlight came on again. I'll always remember Zhan's face caught in the glow: mouth clenched around an unlit cigarette, glint of tear trails. "I'm going to hold my wife again." The lighter snapped off and I heard him climbing the stairs. "Pull the fuse. Leave in five minutes."

No one even came down to investigate. The sewer tunnels echoed the laboratory's end tenfold — I'm still having trouble hearing. A final note for visitors: If anyone comes to Hong Kong, they just might meet a ragged ghost with a deep-creased face. I've only seen the scowl lines, but you might not, as he is likely to be accompanied by a smaller ghost in white. Don't do anything too rash — remember, he was like us. Just ask him how he enjoyed his last cigarette.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Bangkok

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I've been poking around this cesspool for a few days, searching for information on "The Angel," mostly in places where my unusual requests are accommodated most: Patpong and Khao San Roads. These are the places where you'll find the things that make Bangkok internationally known: the expatriates and the industries that serve them. Since foreigners here seem to suffer from a nearsightedness that ends at the tips of their dicks, I've been sowing cash through the home-grown detritus, hoping it will turn something up. My limited experience has found Bangkok law enforcement to provide the best information on any illegal activity in Thailand. As an even bigger bonus, their information comes cheaper than anyone else's.

Everything's for sale in Bangkok, and everyone's selling. Although every travel guide screams not to do it, I carry a bankroll at all times. Favors never come cheaply, especially ones that keep your ass out of jail. I've learned how to say, "Can we work something out?" in Japanese, Cantonese, Schechuan and Thai so far.

The place where the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet, known as "The Golden Triangle," has been an unquashable center of opium cultivation and smuggling for years. It could be the "Triangle" mentioned in the Yamagumi memo. If the Angel's purpose in coming to Thailand was to broker a deal for his lab, I've purchased the names of a few towns he might have gone to. It's far from having him in my crosshairs, but it's better than nothing. I'll start looking into flights to northern Thailand tomorrow.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Bangkok's Crusaders

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Good news for Willow12 and anyone else looking to carry on the fight in Asia. I've been recognized and brought into a hunter compound here in Bangkok. This group doesn't have a name; I refer to them as the Templars, after the knights who traveled to Jerusalem during the Crusades. They're led by a guy I call King Richard. He's lived in Thailand for 20 years, and he's one of us. He used to be a bishop at a Mormon temple here, but once he got "summoned to duty" as they call it, he severed his ties. Now that he's witnessed "evil's incarnations," he says he's transcended traditional Mormonism. He's started his own church, based on a revised, more intense version of his previous beliefs.

Interestingly, the imbuing apparently didn't take Richard as much by surprise as it does most of us. I mean, the official name of Mormonism is the Church of the Latter Day Saints, emphasis on "Latter Day." These guys have been talking End Times for 150 years. The group identifies the "voices" as the Holy Ghost. To them, the Messengers are God's hand on Earth, so all the whispers and symbols and strange powers make perfect sense to these people. They even claim that the imbuing attracts new followers to the Mormon faith, though I'm not exactly sure how.

Being the atheist that I am, I am once again the exception to the rule. King Richard says my arrival and

"lack of faith" are signs that I'm meant to join his church. He's brought it up on numerous occasions. I usually change the subject. His philosophies sit about as well with me as Ken's ideas of good and bad life energy. Still, I know there are things he won't share with me because I'm not "of the fold".

When Richard was imbued, a group of Mormon missionaries had arrived at his temple. Two of them were chosen as well, and have been with him since, even after his break from the traditional church.

Since Richard's group receives no more official funding or backing, he's turned to the local populace for support. His temple runs a soup kitchen for west Bangkok's needy, and the prayer groups afterward burn with fire and brimstone, evil incarnate — uplifting stuff like that. The ones who really buy into it are inducted into the church and drafted into Richard's ranks. He keeps the true aspect of his temple a secret, of course: To most members and outsiders, the Templars simply spread their religion to the indigent and unloved.

The group's true purpose is to track down and eliminate the supernatural threat in Thailand, one demon at a time. Unlike some of the more inquisitive groups I've read about on the list, the Templars' philosophy regarding monsters boils down to two words: "seek" and "destroy." That's all the explanation Richard and his two aides need.

They don't have any computers here — it never occurred to them to look for others like them on the net. I've told them about this list, so maybe you'll hear first-hand about MDG in Thailand. There's a "crusade" in the works, and they've convinced me to help before I continue trailing the Angel north. For anyone interested in the current enemy situation in Bangkok, King Richard gave me something to post [here](#).

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Abominations in Thailand

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I've set up an internet account for the Templars, but they've been too busy to use it. Right before I came to

Thailand, they got a lead on some supernatural activity up north. A lot of the hopeless souls in Bangkok — the tuk-tuk drivers, the beggars, the sex-show performers — are from the mountain areas of the country. Thailand's hill tribes live there in tiny clusters of villages, cut off from the rest of the country. They still speak their own languages and subsist mainly off what they can grow. A long dry season or an exceptionally fierce monsoon can come down hard on these people.

In order to preserve their villages, some tribes take to growing opium poppies for the drug warlords of Burma and China, especially near the Golden Triangle. Others send members to Bangkok to scrape together money for the rest. Alone amid Bangkok's smoke and neon, many of these displaced people end up on the streets. Those tribespeople who are able to debase themselves nightly in Bangkok's enormous sex industry are considered lucky. Their jobs require them to be well fed.

I'll tell it to you as Richard told me: A recent convert, a fellow from the Yellow Karen tribe west of Chiang Rai, approached Richard after a particularly grim prayer session. Apparently, his village contained the mossy remains of a *prasat hin* castle from the millennium-old Khmer Empire. As far back as village elders' stories went, it had been inhabited by a powerful spirit said to keep the village's crops plentiful and the village safe from evil. In exchange, this spirit demanded that the blood of slaughtered beasts be placed at the mouth of the castle's entrance every sunset. The blood was always gone the next day.

Last fall, the drug war pushed into the village. Burmese rebels, angered at the villagers' refusal to plant opium, set fire to the fields. The people were driven to consume previously shunned food: wild tubers, small animals, and for the first time the spirit's offerings. The elders hoped the spirit would be generous.

It wasn't. In the first week after the offerings ceased, the strongest bull elephant in the village was found at the mouth of the temple, drained of life. The next morning, the tanner's infant daughter was missing. The people quickly resumed

Hello from Thailand! As the leader of the Summoned in Bangkok, I welcome you all to join our holy fight! Any who wish to hone their skills or knowledge will find that Bangkok is rife with what the Thai call "phi pop," vengeful spirits. Truculent specters play horrid games with the contenders at the Ratchadamnoen muay thai kickboxing arena. Revenants prey on prostitutes in the shaded confines of Lumpini park. We're currently racing the Central Investigation Bureau to deliver justice to whatever's been leaving the jawbones of tourists outside the Temple of Dawn. The retribution we plan to deliver will be far more appropriate than any Thai firing squad. Even our contacts in Cambodia hear whispered rumors of the recent Khmer Rouge resignation being spurred by strange deaths within their ranks. Some say the tortured dead have risen again to punish their killers. And no one believes that errant land mines are the cause for the great temple at Angkor's sudden inaccessibility to visitors.

Any Summoned who come here will find themselves among capable hands. Don't worry about trying to smuggle weapons into Thailand. We possess an enviable arsenal that's been gathered over the past several years. We know enough people in the black market to keep that stockpile growing, and enough friends on the police force to maintain it. Collectively, we've purged nearly a dozen demons from Bangkok.

Thailand is not a place to hunt the demons without knowledgeable company. Lone women here will be mistrusted and deceived. Visitors who don't appear Thai will fall under immediate scrutiny by the populace. They become targets for criminals and worse things. While the police don't appear to be controlled by demons, [PD140: *The only blood slunkies in Asia seem to be at Sai Fek's. Why?*] many of the street gangs are. In Bangkok, you'll find not only safety but survival in numbers.

So I invite you to listen to our teachings, learn our ways and join our fight. Together, we can ensure that the good people of Thailand are freed from oppression.

their offerings and the killings stopped, but there were questions about the next year's crops.

It sounds to Richard like the village needs "cleansing," so we're leaving tomorrow. There are only four imbued in the compound, including me. But they're dropping me off in the Golden Triangle afterward. If you're thinking about joining the fight over here, you'd have devoted allies in Bangkok. Just post the essentials: time, day and an introductory codephrase to the list.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Apocalypse Now

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I'm connecting from the last possible place in northern Thailand — a pay terminal overlooking the night markets of Chiang Mai. The battle has been fought and won. The casualties will change the Templars — for the better, I hope, but I've seen too much to wish too hard. Willow12, read this post carefully before you come here.

We began the mountain hike to the Yellow Karen at sunrise, guided by the convert from the village. All of the summoned from the temple came up: King Richard, myself and his two missionaries, "Jacob" and "Noah" — both very intense. They were all wearing this outfit that Richard told me protected them from evil, which included the shirt and tie they always wear. I didn't ask questions, but it was kind of ridiculous — rolling into town to purge monsters with

the Osmond family. Nine of Richard's truest believers from the dregs of Bangkok came, groomed and wearing similar clothes. Altogether, we were a dozen starched shirts and one fatigue jacket strong.

Our arrival was like Pizarro's conquistadores riding into Mexico City, or Columbus' landing in the New World. There couldn't have been more than a few hundred people in the village, and every one flocked to us, all big eyes and open mouths. King Richard immediately took control, giving everyone big smiles and handing out the bags of rice and salt we brought as he cheerfully explained our mission to crush whatever lived in the ruins outside town. I couldn't understand his explanation; I only inferred it from the way the talking and laughter seemed to hush at once, leaving only Richard's voice as he finished his speech.

What really drove it home was the bundle of M16s that Jacob thoughtlessly unwrapped while Richard talked. America was allied with Thailand during Vietnam. When we fled, we left a lot of toys behind. As I've said, you can get anything in Bangkok, usually dirt cheap. Well, this little surprise got the whole crowd jabbering again. Someone started crying. The crowd bled away like the tide, leaving Richard talking to the sacks of food we'd brought. The villagers just left it laying in the dirt. It really looked like some of them could've used it, too.



Peace Corps
Attn: Doris Boyce,
SE Asia Regional Supervisor
Hong Kong

Dear Ms. Boyce:

I have a strange question that I hope you can answer. As you know, our corporate observer had sent my P.C. team to Ye in order to inoculate the population — mostly Karen separatists — with the usual vaccines.

However, while we were there, Derek, as you know, had his accident. We all know the sad story of how that happened, but the thing that is bothering me is how the villagers reacted. Immediately after we lost Derek, we never saw any of the local people again without a thin yellow ribbon tied around their wrists. The ribbons were very long, trailing back behind them to the hut of the village elder, "Old Man Bo," who doesn't come out much.

When I asked the people, they said the ribbons were to keep their butterflies from flying away to join Derek. Old Man Bo just smiled and pretended he didn't speak English.

I also asked Mr. Bucholz, our corp. observer, but he just laughed and said they could wrap themselves in all the ribbons and bows they wanted, it didn't matter anyway.

I would appreciate any light you could shed on this matter.

Sincerely,
Allison Narvaez

P.S. By the way, I'm fully in favor of the vaccinations, but why do we need to clear all our operations through a corporate observer? Is it purely a funding thing?

The Templars started passing around rifles and cartridges. By afternoon, we were on the path to the temple. It wasn't that impressive. It was a tumble of grimy vine-covered stone, and it didn't even clear the tops of the trees. More noteworthy was the narrow line of village men blocking the entrance, a handful of machetes and a couple hunting rifles between them. It was a brave but pathetic stand, considering the mismatch of firepower. All the same, they started yelling at us to leave. I didn't understand it then — we were supposed to be helping them! How are you supposed to rescue people who don't want to be saved?

For King Richard, the answer was as plain as a bullet. It was a massacre. That's when I learned the true lengths to which the Templars were willing to go in their crusade. No wonder they kept me at arm's length. I was sickened. It was horrible. I dragged a dying man from the path and his rifle wasn't even loaded.

Richard was a psychopath and I needed to get out of there. But against a dozen armed men, what could I do? Our guide was trembling, too. Richard talked to him even as he reloaded his own gun. I could guess what he was saying: he'd tried the same thing on me. Something about doing God's work and the promise of eternal paradise. An assault on a demon's defenders — the villagers — was tantamount to an assault on the demon

itself in his mind. The other Templars had eaten it up long ago. No one blinked as Richard emptied his rifle into those men. They just stood around, fidgeting, like they were waiting for the start of a football game or something.

Richard talked the guide back into the group. That's when he turned to me, "You wanna cut and run, too, heretic?" I did, but even if Richard's followers didn't kill me in the escape, where could I have gone?

We went into the ruin.

It didn't take long to find what we were looking for. A tunnel past the entrance wound deep underground, then opened into a chamber so large that our flashlights couldn't reach the far wall. That's where it started. Someone must have seen something — there was a burst of gunfire. Suddenly everyone started blasting away. I heard someone scream, and right about then our lights went out.

There were dead things in there. I didn't need the sight to make out knotty gray flesh and dark eyes. They jittered in the strobe from the muzzle flashes, like silent film nightmares. They looked like the zombies I've read about here, but zombies are supposed move slowly. One of these was across the room in a flash and tearing into some kid's throat the next. I jumped when Noah pulled me back into the intersection. Richard and Jacob waited there, listening by lighterflame. Fewer sounds of gunfire, more sounds of dying. "They're fighting the good fight," Richard proclaimed, sparking up a flare. Then the shepherds simply left their flock to the wolves.

We didn't get far. Even Good King Richard dropped his flare when he saw it. I almost vomited. It was a head, a floating fucking head, trailing gristle and viscera, fangs stretched into this big grin. From between those twisted lips came a gout of fire that all but enveloped us. You say the vampires in the West are afraid of fire? This one spat it!

Maybe those costumes really did protect the Templars, because the flames just licked around us. We started shooting. But even though our bullets were sparking off the walls all around the monster, none hit it. Someone panicked and we all ran for daylight, everyone tossing weapons and gear aside. Finally, we burst into the afternoon sun. Safe.

I don't actually remember pissing myself. It had to have been a vampire. I read your accounts: "They went up like paper birds in a furnace." "She reduced to ash in moments." "Motherfucker couldn't even scream." Well, none of that happened.

This thing followed us into the full light of day, grabbed Jacob and snapped his neck like a twig! It wrapped its entrails around his head and twisted it like a bottlecap.

When it turned, a hideous eye erupted from its forehead. The thing grinned when its eye met mine — like it wasn't interested in me — and then it turned to Richard. He just stared. With my sight, I saw something misty being drawn from him. I don't know what it was doing, but Richard started shaking and whimpering, like it was sucking out his soul. Richard's spirit must have been strong, because he fought the monster long enough for Noah to bury a jagged stick deep into the head.

The village looked deserted when we came back. I heard crying from some of the huts and felt frightened, hostile eyes on my back. I took out my wallet and laid half of what I had left,

at least \$2,000, on one of the untouched sacks of food. It wasn't enough. Nothing could have been. I didn't need to speak Thai to know that the thing in the temple was the center of the Yellow Karens' beliefs — a god as vengeful and as real as a smoking volcano. The monster deserved to die, I suppose, but I wonder if the villagers' beliefs deserved to die as well, without apology or explanation. We took the Yellow Karens' religion and left behind a memory of those whose own beliefs had razed the temples and melted the idols in so many cultures before.

If the Templars shared my misgivings, it didn't seem to weigh too heavily on them. Richard began describing a more aggressive plan for proselytization to Noah as soon as we got into the *samlor*. Replenish the shock troops from Bangkok's unmourned and unloved. Noah wondered out loud how many forgotten villages there were in Thailand. I had them drop me off outside Chiang Mai and hitchhiked my way in.

There were no goodbyes.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: Sri Lanka

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The world is wrong. Or I am. Perhaps I'm a stranger among my own kind, like the fox-woman said. Hell, I don't even know who my own kind are anymore.

Let me explain how I've wound up penniless and terrified in Sri Lanka. After my last e-mail, I went hunting around the Golden Triangle towns along the Thai border for signs of the Angel. Drug talk is the vernacular up here; government enforcement hasn't been around in decades. At a riverside bamboo pub in Ban Pang, I met my man — a dislikable Corsican bush pilot named Louis who said he might have done business with a *negre*. I checked him out with the sight and he himself was clean — no taint or anything. But when I flashed an image of the Angel running this freakish forked tongue over Louis' face and mouth, I knew he was no stranger to the supernatural.

I told him I had an urgent message from Hong Kong for the Angel, that I was one of his "special assistants" from Sai Fek's. He was skeptical, until I scared the shit out of him with that heat-haze. That convinced him that I was on the level. I know there's been debate about using our abilities in front of normal people. I say do it when you need to get a reaction.

It turned out that Louis had worked with the Angel and his associates for a couple of years, flying them to a secret airstrip in northern Sri Lanka. Apparently, the Angel's got his boss in a village there, someone called "The Nubian." Louis had never met that person. Last week, the Angel showed up for a night flight, but this time he brought a guest. Louis described Bai perfectly. I almost lost my cool and ruined everything right there.

Even with Louis' "trust," the bastard drained almost all of my cash for the trip over. We had to cross the Khong river into Laos after sunset, maneuvering a tiny bamboo raft well away from the Vietnam-relic PT boats that served as the border guard. Louis' men picked us up on the other side and took us to a clearing where more men were removing brush that concealed a tiny dirt airstrip. They rolled Louis' Cessna out of a nearby hut. With only a campfire to show where the strip ended, we left Thailand under a crescent moon.

We landed a couple of hours before dawn on a tiny private airstrip at the edge of a forest. Louis had apparently

called ahead; a pair of headlights flashed a greeting as we taxied to a stop. But the rots who met us were not a welcome wagon. They pulled Louis out of the cockpit as soon he opened the door, and put a bullet through his head. I would've locked the doors if I could've found the damn lock, but I suppose it wouldn't have mattered, anyway. They dragged me out, kicking and screaming.

I'm sure I was about to join Louis. The fucker pointed his gun and looked me straight in the eye — and then lowered it with an exasperated expression. He gasped something like "damvee." When the one feeding off Louis was finished, the two talked in hushed tones, like in a huddle. The next thing I know, I'm in the back of their jeep, getting an escort! They wouldn't even explain what was going on. They just kept apologizing in broad gestures and pointed at a map, asking where I wanted to go, I gathered. I just said "Angel" and flicked my tongue, like a snake. They seemed to understand and seemed cowed.

We eventually arrived at a town called Colombo. Rather than proceed any further, I got out, choosing not to be introduced to my target face to face. I wanted to confront him on my own terms — and find Bai. All the while, though, I was tormented by other thoughts. What was a "damvee" and why had the rot soldiers changed their tune when they thought I was one? Why did that floating head creature pass me by, too? For that matter, why did the yakuza trust me? Things I never thought twice about before were now suspect. What is it about me? I've been an outsider my whole life: Isolated from my heritage, family, co-workers, and now I seem to find a place among the very things I'm trying to stop. What am I?

From: pariahdog140

Subject: A land gone bad

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

If there's any place that needs our help, it's Sri Lanka. Howitzer, Willow — come quickly. There are stormclouds building here, pitch-black ones, and if they break...

If you want to take up arms here, there are a few things you should know. The entire country has been in a state of emergency for the last several years, due to civil strife between the Sinhalese-run government and the Tamils and Muslims. As with so many other war-torn countries, irreconcilable differences over belief and land have devolved into a series of attacks and counterattacks. Buddhism is normally a very gentle religion, but the Sinhalese practice it like the Catholic clergy practiced their religion hundreds of years ago: with intolerance. They want to make Sri Lanka a shining bastion of Buddhism, and some monks wield enormous political sway, much to the detriment of the Hindu Tamils and the Muslims.

Like their rebellious brethren in the IRA and the PLO, LTTE members (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) believe that change must come through violence. The Sri Lankan Army is not entirely blameless, though. Amnesty International has been busy with peace-keeping activity here for years.

What all this means for you:

Tread lightly. Special emergency provisos give the authorities ample power to fuck you up and not give a damn about repercussions. The police and military have the right to (1) conduct what would be considered illegal search and seizure in the U.S., (2) arrest you without a warrant, and (3) jail you

indefinitely without laying charges. All this is legal and binding in Sri Lanka, so don't go crying to your embassy. The only way they'll be able to spring you is by slipping you a chisel. There's also a national curfew that's imposed periodically.

As with any other third-world country, though, foreigners equal money. Playing to this stereotype with the authorities could help you avoid a lot of grief. But then again, it might not. A lot of the law enforcement and military are fattened by the enemy.

Computers are still pretty new here, and can only be found at the universities, the few cybercafes in Colombo and Kandy, and in scattered wealthy homes. You can drive almost anywhere here, but leave your weapons behind if you travel much farther north than Kandy. Your car is almost guaranteed to be searched at one of the many checkpoints. Public transportation is mainly by bus, which is the safest way to go; buses are *almost* never inspected. Unfortunately, buses really only run to large cities and the tourist spots in the west and south.

All in all, it's not safe here, either. And conditions here leave me wondering: In every country I go to, why does it seem like I'm trying to save humanity from *itself* rather than from the enemy? I mean, the original purpose of monsters in folklore was to pose as examples of things people *shouldn't* do. Look at the serpent that tempted Eve or the Big Bad Wolf — they were someone's creations that taught us not to be foolish or prideful or wicked. It's like they've come back, they're trapping us in our own folly, and we're too unmindful to see.

From: pariahdog140

Subject: <no subject>

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

That message that appeared on the list without a number assignment — from "HongKong" — turns out to have been from a friend of mine, Bai. Yes, this list was compromised, but this time by the *right* people. When I could find no leads to her here in Colombo, I'd assumed the worst and thought her dead.

I was right.

She must have kept the address I intended for Zhan. You may have seen the message, posted 11 February. You may have thought she was cracked for putting her home address up. You may have wondered who she was trying to contact, who could rescue her, a person she called "The Outsider." It was me.

It was after midnight when I made it to her apartment — how she had one when she had been a prisoner of the Angel, I couldn't guess. She wouldn't open the door until I said who I was, and then she wouldn't undo the chain until she'd seen for herself. She looked *old* — sunken, hollow. She kept all the lights off, so the glare from the streetlights only accentuated her haggard appearance. She told me the story of how the ratmen kidnapped her from her home, of how the Angel controlled her and took her with him to Thailand. A deal had gone bad in Bangkok, and some kind of treason occurred in the Golden Triangle, maybe in connection to the Yamagumis. She didn't know much. He'd kept her locked in a chest, delirious on something he injected her with... and on what he'd fed her.

The Angel made her one of *them* soon afterward — a rot like all the rest! Apparently he fled the city, to find safety until clashes between the rats calmed down. In the meantime, he apparently left Bai to her own devices, certain that she would be loyal to him as her "master." She said she

quickly discovered that she was not welcome among the city's rats; she was a "Western" devil, even though she'd been born and raised in China.

Bai was sitting on her bed in front of me. She took my hand and began to cry into it. "I'm like you," she said. "I'm a stranger among my own people." In that moment, I wanted to take her, whatever she'd become, and run. When I took my hand away, I saw it.

Blood.

She'd cried tears of blood on my hand. It was the only thing, after all, that she *could* cry. I knew then that no matter what we might do or where we might run, neither of us could escape what we had become. She would always be one of *them*. I'd always be one of us. It would have been easy to kill her right there, just like all the other things the Kessanhito and Zhan and I destroyed. It might even have been the humane thing to do, but I couldn't. She was still Bai.

Some people learn who and what they are as they mature. I seem to learn what I'm *not*. I'm not fully American. I'm not fully Japanese. I'm not an old-school demon slayer. I haven't found the Word of God. Hell, I might not even be *human*. And yet, through all the shit, one indisputable thing shines through: I'm me. I can say that for certain. Call it process of elimination.

Ever since I was imbued, there's been nothing but an "us" and "them" — and I don't mean toward our prey. Read posts by Builder50, Jager51 and Hunter9 if you don't believe me. We fight among ourselves as much as we do with our "real" opponents. Sri Lanka is the result of such black and white contrasts: a nation divided, its defenders crippled by their refusal to ally as the invaders, banded together, rush in unopposed. I think we need to redefine the meaning of the word "enemy." We're the underdogs in this secret war, and we need to be united by our goals, not divided by our differences. Embrace outsiders or die alongside them.

Anyway, I'm going back up north. Bai has agreed to help however she can. You may condemn our alliance, but if you gave the "enemy" a chance, too, you might discover allies where you least expect them.

There aren't many computers where we're going, so I may not be able to write for a while. Good luck.

>>>From: hongkong

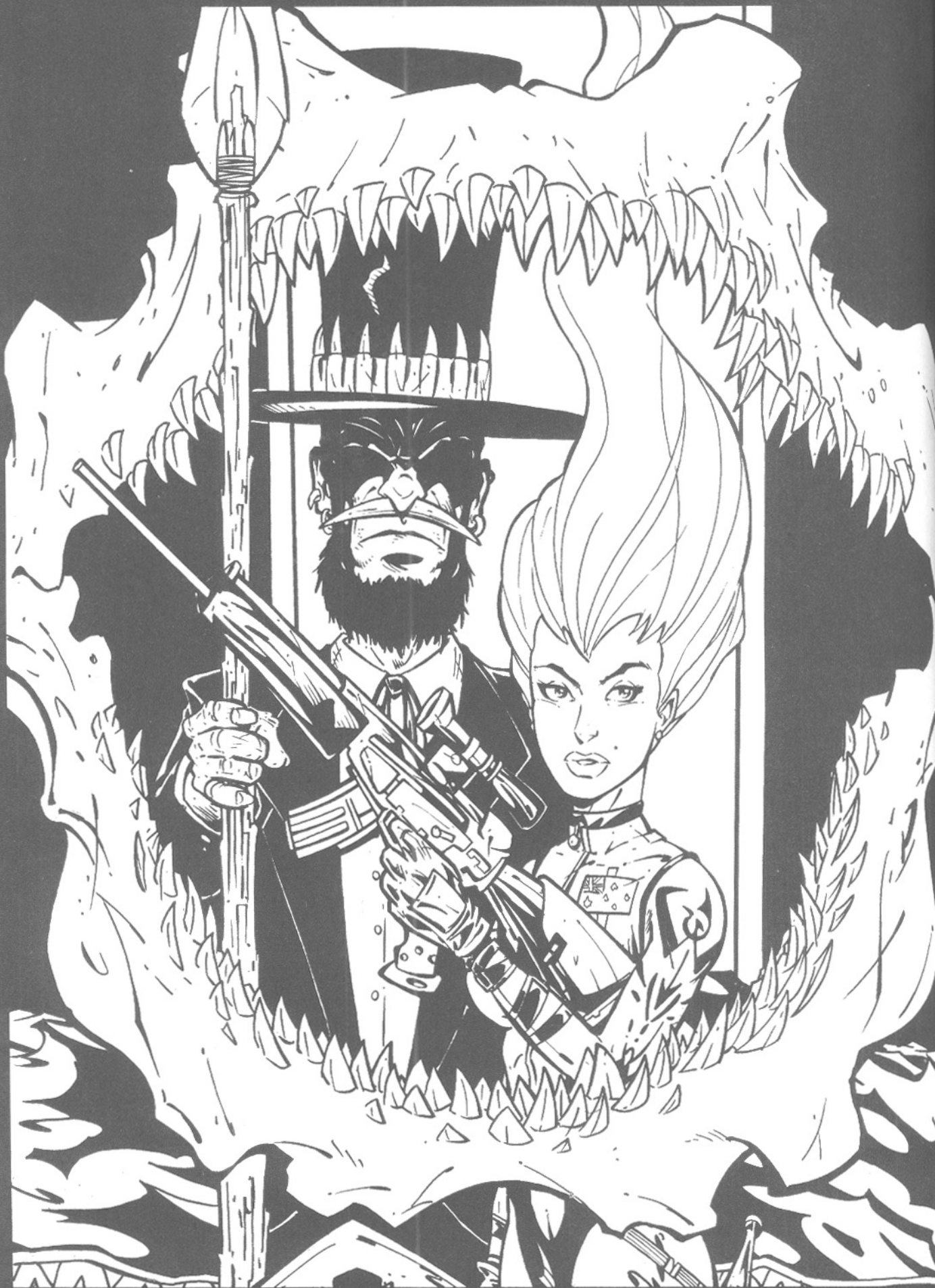
>>>Subject: Re: Where's PariahDog?

>>>To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

>>> I saw PariahDog140 die last night in what the media has >>>dubbed "The Great Colombo Airlift." Don't believe >>>any of it. Willow12 is here. He'll give you a full report >>>of what happened.

>>> We're in Bombay now, but we're on our way to >>>investigate the new designer drug problem in San Fran->>>cisco that we've heard about. We think it starts here.

>>> Before I go, though, there's something I have to do. In >>>my country, some families believe that the recently dead >>>cannot rest until they're remembered with something. If >>>all your words collected here are not enough, my love, >>>perhaps this Confucian saying will serve as a humble >>>epitaph: To be a true knight, you must be open-minded >>>as well as resolute, since your onus is heavy and your >>>course is long.



Welcome to Hunter-Net

Email Program

Subject: To: From: Copied To: Send
MessageGet
Messages

CALL TO ARMS

I hope this message reaches the right people. If not, I don't know what else there is we can do. If you do understand this, then please, for the love of God, listen. If you don't understand, then you will. Maybe not soon, but you will.

Right now, I'm with a group of five. From what I can tell of the list, that's pretty damn big. Not too much of a fucking comfort, though. More and more often I get the feeling that we're just being pushed together so we can all be squashed at once. The others don't feel it, but they don't seem to have the same gifts I do. I pray every night they don't see the kinds of things I do, now that Ashley's gone.

At least some of them had a way of rolling with the initial shock. Meredith's father was a police officer. Erin grew up in the city. Bishop, well, he was a soldier; he saw all kinds of violence before the Dream began. Not me. I was just a college kid from Cairns. I played footy with my mates, and went to the pub for a cold one after class, and to Noosa on holiday. Outside keeping my girl and getting a degree, that was just about all there was. It was boring and ordinary and predictable, and these nights I miss it more than anything in the world.

My own Dream began quietly. I was just getting some air, walking off a night at the pub along a secluded stretch of dunes, when I heard yelling offshore. There was a large sailboat foundering. I thought maybe it had run aground on a sandbar. I saw the shapes of people on deck, waving and shouting for help. Then the boat capsized. I was a lifeguard for three summers, so I dove in. I reached the boat and could hear survivors in the water all around me, maybe six or seven. I called out, telling them to follow my voice and swim for shore. One man was sinking when I reached him and I began to pull him back myself. I had the group more or less under control when something large slammed into me from below.

I'd seen a shark attack once before and knew there was a danger here, especially with so many people thrashing around in the water. I yelled out a warning just in time to hear the first person go under. I couldn't even tell if it was a man or woman. I just heard a strangled gulp and that was all. A man went down next, shouting before he sank, then I heard a woman's scream. Over the surf I heard a child crying, then shrieking, and then nothing at all.

That's when I started to panic — the first thing you learn about sharks is that if they're bent on killing you, you're done. But then a weird calm came over me, and I swear I heard a voice say, "SHIELD THE INNOCENT." That's it, plain as if I'd said it myself, but in retrospect the most damned compelling words I'd ever heard.

We were almost to shore. I could finally touch bottom. A few metres more and I convinced my "friend" that he could, too. I saw the others behind — a man and a woman — splashing as fast as they could in the knee-deep water, coughing and gagging. That's when the waves pulled at me from below, like the ocean itself was trying to drag me back — and I saw it.

At first I thought it was a large piece of debris from the boat, a part of the bow, maybe. Then I realized it was moving toward me — a fin maybe a metre high and stone grey. All I could do was watch as the water swelled in front of it, a massive wave with a dark shape at its heart. It was a shark, but bigger than any I'd ever seen, ever heard of, rising up behind the others. I think I shouted. I don't remember. The woman had enough time to turn around. She made a ... sound. By then the shark was on them. The water turned red and both were gone.

>>>more

CHAPTER 4: AUSTRALIA

continued<<<

Moments later, it was circling the man and I. It never occurred to me then that the water should have been too shallow for it where we stood, and yet there the thing was, all the same. All I remember is clenching my fists and shouting, "I am not going to die, you bastard. *No fucking way!*" It stopped right in front of us, as if it hit a wall! I couldn't believe my eyes. It just glared, teeth snapping. As I watched, stunned, it seemed to twist, changing shape until it was something out of a monster movie, half-shark, half-person, dripping bloody water. The man I shielded screamed and scrambled away. I just stared back at it, taking in every goddamn detail from its ugly face to the gore running down its muscular legs. It tried to bear down on me, but it kept falling back. That's when I realized it was me who was keeping it away, holding it back with ... I don't know (and I still don't). Whatever it was, I seemed to be the cause and it couldn't get by me.

Finally, the thing turned and dove, vanishing. The man I saved was gone, run off over the dunes to a parking area, I suppose.

I spent that night lying awake in my room, wondering if I'd gone insane and imagined the whole thing. "SHIELD THE INNOCENT," I'd heard. Yeah, sure. I'd done a great job. I managed to save all of one person from whatever that thing was, and the fella seemed out of his gourd when I last saw him tearing away. So why wasn't I cracked up, too? Jesus, after hearing voices and seeing what I did, I should have been

right on that guy's heels. I just wanted to forget, but it wouldn't happen. Worse, by dawn, I almost felt ... normal. That scared me more than anything.

I didn't go the police. Who would? The paper said the boat had run aground due to a navigational error and that all but three of the passengers were listed as "missing." The police had apparently discovered the remains of two people, and the man I saved (who turned out to be a government ecologist studying the steel industry's effects on the local environment). The man was a complete amnesiac about the whole thing. He'd been on some official cruise with a few of the local mill owners and their families. That's the only thing he could recall.

I didn't have time to wonder at it all for very long. It wasn't even noon before Ashley showed up. Meeting him was like bumping into a fairy-tale giant. I had to look twice to believe my eyes. He was more than two metres tall, basically filled the dorm hall, and was wearing a long oilskin coat, dirty clothes and a battered straw hat. He just stood there staring at me. Right away, I knew that he *knew*. I thought about running, about fighting.

Somewhere among all those thoughts, I broke down. He was reassuring me that others had seen things like I had. They'd been chosen by the Lord, too, he said, and I needed to meet them. That was it. I didn't know who this guy was, where he came from, or what he really knew, but I left with

him, understanding implicitly that it was the right thing to do. To this day, I don't know how Ashley knew how or where to find me. I can't recognize another Dreamer standing right in front of me — but he knew exactly where and who I was. Needless to say, I look back on those days all the time — we all do — but that's not me anymore. I'm not allowed to be that person now.

Ashley introduced me to the others he knew: Erin, an American who'd been living in Sydney doing clerical work; Evan, a would-be pro footy player who gave up his plans when he discovered the truth; Meredith, a legal aide from Brisbane; Jim, a tour guide out of Melbourne; and Bishop, another Yank who'd lived in Australia for a dozen years and who used to be in the military. Ashley himself had been a sexton who traveled from church to church all over the country, doing odd jobs — at least, until he discovered that folks he buried came back up again.

The only other person they knew who was aware of the truth was a Father Michael Tonnerre, a Catholic priest. Ashley had been in contact with him for several months. We've never met him in person; strictly email and letters so far. They all told me what they'd seen. Their stories would have sounded crazy, but my experience made sense of them all. I thought of returning to school and putting everything that had happened out of mind, but I kept hearing the sound of that child being dragged down in the water. My purpose was with these people now.

Three months have passed since my Dream. I'd have died in two weeks if not for the others. I've seen monsters on the street, in pubs and in the wild. I've killed a dingo as

big as a car, clubbed a walking corpse to the ground, and was with Jim when he died. I'm also wanted on a weapons charge in Queensland. I'd prefer to not say why. Meanwhile, my old life is gone. I've failed school, my parents think I've joined a cult, and my girl won't talk to me anymore. The others are as bad off, yet Ashley and Father Tonnerre have held us together. Father Mike is always providing gear or a place to stay. Ashley is always there with encouraging words. Well, he was, anyway.

Three nights ago, everything fell apart. Ashley is gone and we don't know what to do. Just as soon as we'd learned enough to help him, we let him down. Father Mike hasn't returned our messages. The other walkers out of Darwin — a group we'd learned of only last week — has suddenly gone silent just as a news comes of a fatal "accident" involving "tourists" in Kakadu National Park. Good Lord, if they're gone, we'll be alone. The others are looking to me now, and I don't know what to do.

So if you hear and you know, the situation here is desperate. We're on the brink of something huge. If we don't go into the wilderness now to face it, there may be nothing left but wilderness in the world before long. They're faster than us, stronger than us, and worst of all, they're on to us.

THE DREAMS

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Subject: Dreams

Forwarded From: Ashley Jervis
(Revelation617@angelfire.com)



I don't know about the rest of you, but one thing many of us in Australia seem to have in common is this kind of shared dream. Some have had it once since being "imbued." Others have had it as often as every week. The details supposedly vary, but they're close enough to be more than coincidence. Almost everyone who's had it describes waking with a lingering feeling of dread.

Last night, I found this old email in Ashley's account (originally sent to Father Mike). It describes Ashley's version of the Dream, with the impact it can have on others who don't understand.

- > Father, the vision came again last night.
- > I was alone in the wilderness, naked except for a pair of ripped shorts,
- > facing kilometres of endless land. The sun was high and I was sweating. I
- > somehow knew there was no food or water for kilometres. That sense of
- > being in another time was even stronger. I don't know what exactly
- > gives me that impression; the earth just felt _younger_. I remember
- > feeling frightened, but also very excited, as if I was the first to see all
- > the sights the land had to offer. That's when I felt eyes on me, like
- > before. Only this time when I turned, instead of the wind blowing
- > dust in my eyes, a group of _things_ were standing there glaring at
- > me.
- > They were tall and muscular, but had wolf heads and their eyes were
- > red. The biggest one stepped forward and howled at me, knocking
- > me backward. I looked down and suddenly realized I was on Uluru,
- > that I was violating their sacred ground. I tried to run, but fell
- > again. I grabbed a rock to fight them off. I'm ashamed to admit that I
- > became enraged, lashing out until I was standing alone, surrounded
- > by the bodies of innocent people I had murdered. The bodies of the
- > wolf-men were nowhere to be found. I didn't have time to pray for
- > forgiveness before I found myself walking to the edge of the cliff,
- > crying. I tried to stop myself but I couldn't, I just walked off the edge.

- > The last thing I remember was the land below opening like a huge
- > mouth to swallow me whole.
- > I was asked to leave the hostel this morning because I was "causing a
- > disturbance." It seems I was yelling and kicking in my sleep, so much
- > so that they almost called a doctor, thinking I might be having some
- > kind of seizure. Apparently they couldn't wake me at all. As I left, I
- > could feel the others looking at me, suspicious or pitying — the same
- > expressions the sane give to madmen. Forgive me, Father, for the
- > angry feelings I had toward them. I know that were I like them, I'd
- > probably have the same reaction. I suppose I'm just envious of their
- > innocence. May the Lord bless me and keep such dark feelings from
- > my heart.
- > I look forward to meeting the others you spoke of. While my burden
- > is mine alone to bear, it would be nice to be among those who
- > understand.

KENNING THE LINGO

A lot of people think Australians give things odd names. They make fun of us when they can't pronounce "Uluru" or "diggeridoo," and then get upset when nothing on the other side of the world is spelled like it's pronounced, either.

A lot of the following terms are quite serious; we use them to explain the lives that we've been thrust into. However, I must admit that we have fun with our language when we can, even when we're scared half to death, if only to make the things we face tolerable.

Even our walker slang is used for more than just laughs, though. When a spirit throws furniture or makes the walls bleed, you're all ready to piss yourself and bail. But when someone turns, smiles and says, "We've got a real banger here," you're on your way to gaining control, or at least to getting out alive. Humour is the one thing that keeps you sane when nothing else can.

Aborigines — The natives who were here long before us. Also First People or simply Originals.

Banger — A poltergeist or other nuisance spirit; comes from their habit of banging on things to get the attention of living folks. Used to annoy them, show them we don't care for their ways.

Big Six — What we call the six types of creatures Ashley's prophecy warns of. We haven't met all of them yet (at least we don't think so), but we're keeping our eyes open.

Cross — Ashley coined this term for the sense of duty each walker feels. Some of them don't like it — they think it sounds too religious. I think it's just right.

Dodgy — Shady, suspicious; in walker-speak, something that smacks of the supernatural.

Dream, the — Since we walkers all seem to have similar dreams in common, we call our first crossover from normal life to whatever it is that we are "the Dream." Some Dreams are peaceful and calm, while others (like mine and Bishop's) are nothing but blood.

Ducks — Ordinary people; they tend to travel in flocks, paddle around in their own little ponds and otherwise live up to their name when trouble starts.

Dundee — An Aussie who goes overboard to fit tourist stereotypes, or any American who tries too hard to blend in.

I-House — The hostel we've set up; located in the Sydney vicinity (security prevents giving an exact location). It's an unassuming little building where we hide, store gear, trade information and plan walkabouts.

Irwin — Slang for a walker whose guts get him in trouble; the kind of person who walks right up to a skinchanger and marvels at its fur coat or comments on how its teeth are so well suited for tearing flesh.

Lobos — The walkingdead; comes from "lobotomy." You know, "Dead in the head?"

Mates — A group of friends, male or female. We do not walk around randomly calling people "mate."

Oz — Australia. Comes from the abbreviation "Aus," not from the movie. "Aussie" is pronounced "auzzie," not "aussie," all right?

Returning World — The prophecy given to Ashley in which the spirit world is trying to merge with the mortal realm. According to his interpretation, that would mean the end of civilization — Hell on Earth. Another interpretation holds that it's "simply" the return of the Aboriginal Dreamtime, creating a new world by fusing both spirit and matter; a *different* world, of course, but not necessarily evil.

Seppo — An American. I'll let you in on a little secret: We Aussies love to rhyme things, and the only thing that rhymes with Yank is "septic tank."

Skinchanger — Creatures who can turn from people into animals. So far, most of the ones we've encountered have been wolves or dingoes, but the shark from my Dream is never far from my mind. Every time I hear of a great-white attack off the Reef, I wonder if there are more of them.

Sleepwalker — A hunter, or what the rest of you seem to call the "imbued." We call it sleepwalking, because of the Dream that starts our journey (and because of the way most of us start to look after a while).

Sleppo — A few of us have started using this term for others of our kind from abroad, especially Americans, who seem to have a good head on their shoulders. It's meant affectionately, trust me. The term comes from crossing "seppo" and "sleepwalker."

Sculling — Finishing off a drink. We also use it for killing a nasty, nasty monster. ("We sculled this ugly lobo tonight.") Used beforehand, it means something like "suck it up," "get ready" or "there's a real down and dirty fight ahead."

Walkabout — I hope they don't take it badly, since we honestly don't mean any disrespect to the Aborigines by borrowing it, but we've come to call going on hunts our own version of walkabout, especially when the going gets really weird.

Walker — This is what we call each other; sleepwalker's nice, but takes too long to say. This one's just for us Aussies, though.

Oh yeah, and getting back to the pronunciation thing, if you don't want to look like a total idiot, some basic place names won't hurt: Adelaide (AD-eh-LAID), Brisbane (BRIZ-bun), Cairns (CANS), Canberra (CAN-bra), Melbourne (MEL-bun), Uluru (OOL-a-ROO) and Wollongong (wool-N-gong).

CULTURE AND FOLKLORE

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Subject: Folklore

Actually, most of this isn't anything I put together, it's something we found in one of Ashley's journals following his disappearance. Seems he had a few more notions than he let on about where we come from and what our purpose is, but I'll let him speak for himself. I just have a few words for those who aren't native. Life in Australia isn't like living in America only upside-down and with the seasons reversed. I mean, we tend to live our lives basically like seppos do — work during the week, see the family when we can, go to church at least twice a year — but the pace of life here is different, a bit more relaxed. I understand that can take some getting used to.

First of all, just about everything here closes at six outside the cities, except of course pubs and restaurants, which stay open till one or two, maybe later. A lot of shops don't bother to open on Sunday — there's no "shop till you drop," although city business have become increasingly busy and remain open later and on more days. We like our holidays (or vacations as you call them) and take as many as we can, which works out great since there's so much to see around here. Not that we tend to visit the tourist places — too crowded — but if you ever want some of the finest surfing in the world, I know a few places they don't tell you about in *Lonely Planet*.

Don't get to thinking we're lazy, though; we just like to enjoy life instead of trying to cram it as full of "stuff" as we

can. I've met a lot of seppos. It doesn't surprise me that we coined "No worries" and you invented "You got a problem with that?"

Don't expect to find one or two cultures here. Australia is multicultural, too. We're not just whites and Aborigines. There are large communities of Chinese, Italians, Japanese and Greeks, for example, even in remote areas.

Also remember that this place is damned dangerous. We have most of the world's venomous snakes and spiders, not to mention sharks, crocodiles, and poisonous octopi and plants. Even platypuses have a poisonous spur. And while wombats look cute and cuddly, they have claws that can tear a person

in half. Lots of tourists (and locals) get killed by the wildlife every year.

Most places are hot, too. Really hot. Hotter than Mexico. Other places like parts of Victoria and South Australia get snow. Deserts are freezing at night. The climate kills as many tourists as the wildlife does.

But enough of that. Here's what Ashley wrote, scanned right off the page. The entry was written for Father Tonnerre, as most of Ashley's entries are. As with everything in Ashley's journal, there's no evidence that he ever intended to send it. We've been over the book a dozen times and still feel we're missing everything it really says. The truth is in there, beyond what's on the surface.

Father Tonnerre,

Last night I prayed for guidance. It was a lonely night spent at the side of a road somewhere between Jacobs and Deulin. I prayed for the Lord to send me some sign of where the evil I see around me comes from, to show me what the root of the sin is so that I might purge it.

When I awoke, the sun was high and I was kilometres from where I had slept. I do not claim to have been miraculously transported, but perhaps the Lord blessed me with a state of ecstasy so that I might better shoulder my burden. In any event, I came across a car by the side of the road and a family standing around it. It looked like the engine had overheated and we were kilometres from the nearest garage. There was a mother, father, grandparents and three children, an elder girl and two young boys. The boys and father waved to me, but the others looked apprehensive.

I asked them what the problem was and they said their car had died; the father asked me if I knew anything about automobiles. I had picked up a little in my time in Alice Springs, and I offered to help. The grandparents looked at me suspiciously, and I heard the boys talk about how dirty I appeared, until their sister shushed them. The father, however, talked to me pleasantly, asking me if I liked how the Swans were playing this season, whether I lived in this part of the territory, and other niceties that are so typically forgotten in this day and age. Forgive my arrogance, Father, for passing such broad judgment, but unfortunately it is often all too true.

I forgave the children their rudeness and the grandparents their fear and helped fix the engine. It was a simple problem and I fixed it quickly. But when I looked at the family over the hood of the car, a vision swept over me and I knew the Lord had sent the sign I begged of Him. "BEHOLD THE TRUTH," the Herald spoke to me, and so I did witness it.

Each family member bore a radiance, some dark, some light. In that instant I knew the truth before me. The father was smiling, but he was surrounded by a deep smoky-grey aura, laced with thick black threads. His name was Gregory. He worked in the steelworks at Wollongong and it was killing him. Not directly, not by some disease, but by a poison in his soul, something he wasn't even aware of.

His wife, Evelyn, was little better. She radiated a sickly yellow glow that spoke to me of worry and uncertainty, of a spirit plagued by doubt and jealousy. She thought her husband a disappointment at work and even wondered if he had been untrue to his vows.

The grandparents, Wesley and Jeannine, had just the barest of flickering silver lights, legacy of their diminishing presence in the life of their family. They were good people but had turned their backs to the world when their family began to draw away from them, and so were slowly sliding into nothingness.

The children were worse. A sinister crimson aura surrounded the girl, Connie. Her skin seemed to change as well, growing pale and ashen. The boys were bathed in deep blue light, and I believed they were all right until I realized the light was slowly swirling, drawing light around it in like a whirlpool. Then I knew they were drawing life force around them into themselves, draining the world instead of adding to it. And their eyes, Lord save me, their eyes! It was like looking into deep, dark wells.

I was stunned at the vision for some moments, and finally snapped out of it at the sound of the car driving away quickly. The two boys stared at me from the back window. I stood there for some time before, still stunned by the Herald's intervention, waiting to see if there was anything more. Nothing came.

I know the Lord sent me to that family as my sign, and I know what I must do to save them, and the souls of others like them. The touch of Hell spreads but the might of the righteous is enough to stem the tide.

What the hell is all this supposed to mean? Ashley never mentioned a word about this family to the rest of us. Why keep it from us? My guess is that they're some kind of walking dead, but God only knows what they're like or what they do.

Note: Ashley's journal entry has recently acquired some more meaning. Last week, on the trail of a lobo, Evan noticed a family fitting this description, driving past as we got near the damn thing's lair. Every head in the car turned to stare at him as they passed, he said, even though he was well hidden. What's more, when we traded information with our sister team out of Darwin, they too reported having seen the family while on walkabout one night. Supposedly the family was picnicking in a field by the industrial park the team was staking out. When the walkers tried to get closer, the family was gone.

Erin has compared these sightings to American urban legends of "phantom hitchhikers," only in reverse. A spirit family that travels around looking for ... hell, I don't know, but something to do with us. They have yet to confront or even speak to us (aside from Ashley, anyway), so it's unclear

whether they pose a threat or even what type of creatures they are. Ashley apparently saw them as a sign of where the country was headed, and that can't mean anything good. Thing is, when I get glimpses of stuff he understood, I miss him more than ever.

Here's another journal entry. It looks like one of the last ones; earlier in the entry, he mentions having dinner with the group in Sydney. That was three or four days before he disappeared. We got the short version of this during that dinner, and nothing about the Aborigines. In particular, I wish he would have discussed the six types of monsters he lists; all we got was a gloss on that, and nothing on how to defeat them. More than anything else, this is unsettling to read, phrased as it is like some lost biblical passage. It makes me wonder what we're really fighting for.

Bishop asked about the Aborigines: 'Why, if we thought some creatures might be living in the wilds, we hadn't contacted some of them, leanned what they know. Erin seconded his interest, asking if there was any folklore or other knowledge they have might that could be useful in our crusade. Though it made my heart heavy to do so, Father, I told them of what I wrote to you a while ago, what the Lord granted to me in a vision — that the sons of the Dreamtime shall have no part in its return. Bishop asked me to relate my vision, and so I did as the Herald commanded me: "ANNOUNCE THE WORLD'S RETURN." I record it here as witness to the truth.

There will come a time of upheaval, when all of man will sit atop the throne of destruction, and the last pure soul will succumb to temptation. At that hour, the divine soldiers' hold over the world shall be broken and the world will merge with the firmament, mingling the realms of spirit and flesh. The Dreamtime shall return and the sacred animals will walk alongside man once again.

Already the agents of the spirit world, loosed from their hellish torments, have begun their search for the last pure soul so that they may devour it and complete their dark existence. Six breeds of these beasts have been loosed to bring on the others. You will know them by their marks.

The first are the skinchangers, the chosen of the spirit world, who wear the shapes of animals and who seek the destruction of mankind and his vanities.

The second are the dead returned, who have risen from Hell in service of their dark master and his cause, whose name and face you know.

The third are the restless dead, who have lost their bodies and seek to harass and slay the living to acquire new hosts for their evil.

The fourth are the unseen demons, who you shall know by the stench of the grave, and who bring wisdom to the Devil about his enemies.

The fifth are the soul-stealers, who prey upon the hearts of children and who seek to drain the Pure Soul of its power before it comes of age.

The sixth are the weavers, who work heaven and the firmament together and who may call the powers of Hell, wave and storm to confound the righteous.

At this I saw a vision of the gates of the firmament opened and the beasts astride the Earth, at first few, then ever more, and I knew the sons of the land were not to raise a hand against them. It is the duty of the children of invaders alone, sacred punishment for their trespass. Every son of the land who takes up arms against the spirits of his ancestors shall do so at the cost of a life he holds dear.

Once the tide of the spirits is loosed, it shall wash across the world. Distant lands will be stained with evil until the realm of spirits overcomes the works of man and all creation will be drowned in the depths of sin.

Against this evil, the Lord has commanded warriors to His cause, sacred crusaders who burn brightly with His flame. Each carries his own cross, and they are known by their eyes, for they behold the Dream and know what fate awaits the world.

Against the six beasts of the Returning World, these words must be heeded:

Against the skin-changers, stand fast and pierce them with shafts of moonlight of the earth, for it destroys their twin existence.

Against the living dead, call forth their true names, to remind them of their punishment in Hell. Reduce them to dust or they shall rise again.

Against the restless dead, destroy those things that gave them power in life. They return through those things which gave their wicked hearts power in life.

Against the unseen demons, there is cleansing fire.

Against the soul-stealers, a spike of steel driven through their heart insures destruction, and one must mind their blood, for it burns the righteous as fire.

Against the sorcerers, wear a piece of ivory to be safe from their spells, and do not believe the lies they weave. Each doubt weakens their power, and sweeping doubt banishes them forever.

ANOTHER TAKE

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Subject: The Prophecy of the Returning World

Forwarded From: Dwayne_Bishop@hotmail.com

After Soy sent all that biblical nonsense to the list, I'd like to offer my firsthand perspective. We've been over and over this "prophecy" since we discovered it. While it's all very certainly interesting, I have some serious reservations.

1) So far, we've dealt with a good half-dozen skinchangers (and seen as many more), faced maybe a score of lobos, and come across one thing we haven't been able to identify yet (I'd rather not venture any guesses on that here). If there are really six definite types of monsters, and they're supposed to be eating babies and destroying the world right and left, then the rest are being damn quiet about it.

2) The "prophecy" refers to a pure soul who supposedly is a key to everything. Yet none of our experiences thus far seem to reveal anything about him. If he's so important, why the hell aren't we being told more about where to find him and how to protect him?

3) Ashley claimed the prophecy was from God, which is fine if you're Christian, but it seems to dump a lot of blame on the Aborigines. That strikes me as someone pushing an agenda. What does Hell on Earth have to do with them? If these monsters are related to their beliefs, shouldn't we be knocking on their door? I say fight the enemies here now and worry about where they came from later. Whatever these things are, I've never seen one of them that did anything to

justify saving it. Destroying them may not be part of some big plan to save the world, but it can't hurt.

CREATURES OF THE CONTINENT

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Subject: What we've seen

Forwarded From: Dwayne_Bishop@hotmail.com

I'm supposedly the tactical expert, so they've decided to let me post about the kinds of monsters we've seen here, and what we've learned about them. I don't know what's going on in the rest of the world, but if our critters are anything to go by, we're all in some serious trouble.

Most importantly, we've encountered several skinchangers. If even a portion of the prophecy is accurate, that's just the tip of the iceberg. Not counting Soy's shark-monster, all the ones we've faced seem to be part wolf or dingo. From what we've seen, they can move quickly, lift enormous objects and heal bad injuries. To kill them, you have to absolutely destroy them — chop off their head, cut off their limbs and burn their body. Anything less and they just keep coming back.

A word of caution: Sometimes the body takes a different shape before you burn it. That's a spirit trick, trying to fool you into thinking you've killed an innocent person or animal. _It's only a trick._ What you've destroyed is a spirit, a creature from beyond this world hell-bent on beating down the door and moving in.

With the exception of one encounter we had in Sydney, the skinchangers we've faced have been in rural areas. They



seem to hate technology more than anything else. One destroyed our car before attacking us, which could be an exploitable weakness; using a technology "lure." Before, we followed up newspaper reports and happened to get lucky. Now we search for reports of sabotage or industrial accidents. If this trend continues, can it be long before the monsters attack cities outright?

Another thing that skinchangers seem to have in common is attachment to runes or symbols. Ones we've fought have been discovered near caves with native paintings or stone carvings, or the creatures themselves have been covered with strange markings. We don't know what they mean — they're not like the ones we seem to understand — but disturbing the symbols has provoked hostility in two different cases. Maybe ruining the marks does direct damage to the monsters.

Soy connects skinchanger sightings to areas that have spiritual significance to Aborigines. I hate to agree with Ashley's muddled prophecy, but if Soy is right, the creatures somehow draw on Aboriginal holy sites in some way. If that's true, we have to isolate those spots and destroy them. If we're going to stop the skinchangers, we may have to tell the Aborigines what we know. Seems logical, but it gives me this weird, ominous feeling.

As for the lobos, they're pretty straightforward: nasty as all hell, just like the skinchangers, but a lot less difficult to locate. (Rotting skin and missing parts tend to be hard to hide, even with oblivious ducks all around.) If you ever had any doubt whatsoever about sculling a skinchanger, don't worry — lobos are evil, plain and simple, and there's no question the world's better off without them. Problem is, some of them seem to have some wits. They retain something from previous life, even a normal appearance. Some in the group here think these lobos are the result of demon possession, as suggested in the prophecy. The only thing I'm sure of is that our weapons and abilities seem to work against both kinds.

Strangely, the smart lobos we've faced have occurred inland whereas the simple ones have been close to the coast. Could something be creating these monsters somewhere in the bushland? The farther away from the source they are, the less powerful and intelligent they become? Problem is, finding something in that country is like a needle in a haystack. Like I said, the skinchangers are most common in the country. Maybe a single source spawns them both. Destroying it would solve our problems.

One smart lobo looked really goddamn human. Only Erin spotted it. The thing was actually working as a night watchman at a church. The fact that it set foot on holy ground shows how much good crosses and all that stuff are worth. As we watched it, we noticed a pattern to its actions. Not only did it seem to avoid bright lights, but it

was completely fascinated by children, spending a lot of time around the Sunday school. It made my skin crawl, watching it caress pictures of kids and stare at their drawings on the walls. It was like watching perverse parenthood. We finally destroyed it when it cornered a kid on the church playground. It tried every trick it could to get us to spare it, claiming it was an innocent person — somebody named Wayne Fenneman. But when Erin went to get the kid away, the lobo lost it and we had a fight on our hands. Afterward, I was tempted to look up the name Wayne Fenneman, to find out who he was. Some things you're better off not knowing.

Like I said, we haven't come across much else over here, although we did hear a strange story from the Darwin walkers about two weeks ago. They claimed to have encountered a skinchanger while investigating the murder of an Aborigine. It attacked and they put it down, with the usual human corpse as a result. But one of the group claimed to see a spirit leave the body, that it wasn't a true skinchanger or lobo, but something between.

Otherwise — I know the others don't exactly want me to discuss this — but I believe we walkers have to count ourselves among the creatures here, even if we do think we're the good guys. Like it or not, we all have inexplicable abilities. Ours seem a bit more subtle than the enemy's, sure, but what's subtle when we're talking about powers that no normal human has? Ashley has convinced the others that their powers came from God and this prophecy. That just sounds like a cop out. Yeah, Ashley was capable of some amazing things, like you might expect from a "soldier of God," but Erin is more suited to spotting these creatures, not fighting them. As for Soy, well, all he seems to be able to do is talk to them, and that just doesn't jibe with any apocalyptic images.

Seems to me that if these powers come from God, He's more confused about what we're supposed to do with them than the others would like to believe. That doesn't satisfy me, not when we're drawing a line between monsters and us. What if we do beat the skinchangers and lobos? Will our powers go away, or will we always be this way, different from everyone else? And if we are, what's to keep us from abusing what we can do, using it against ducks? I recently discovered that I can do something similar to what Ashley could: make common objects into deadly weapons — no flaming sword like his, but deadly all the same. There was no warning, no prophetic sign. One day I couldn't. Next day I could. According to Ashley's prophecy, this should be a good thing. So why is it that all I see is how this same power in someone else's hands could be used for so much harm instead of good? If we really are more than human now, because of God or whatever, we have the potential to be saviors or tyrants.

Telephone transcript, unattributed

FEMALE VOICE: You heard me, love. I took Meggie to one of those witch doctors they have out on the native reserves. And I think he helped more with his sticks and God knows what else than any of your friends in the psychological profession!

MALE VOICE: Let's not start this again. So she's recovered?

FEMALE VOICE: Not fully, but at least she can sleep again. She'd damn well better, considering I had to drive her all the way to Oodnadatta to see this Wotjobaluk person. Benny Wotjobaluk, he said.

MALE VOICE: It didn't cost much, I expect. What did you do, give him a few beads?

FEMALE VOICE: No, he didn't even charge. He's the death of all your analyst friends. After he was done chanting and fixing her up, he said to tell you the "farmorians" were walking around loose. Red ones and white ones, whatever they are. Sheep, I wouldn't doubt.

MALE VOICE: He said tell me? Christ, my daughter has nightmares and even the abbos blame me!

FEMALE VOICE: That's what he said. Something about the world being just a dream of these things, and now they're waking up. Dreaming sheep!

MALE VOICE: Look dear, I've got to run. They've been at my phones lately.

STATE OF THE UNION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Subject: Oz at a glance

Before I can tell you how to move around in this country, there are a few places you should know about in advance, places where we've had experiences with the supernatural, for better or worse. Basic lesson: Australia is big — as big as North America! There are cattle stations here the size of American states! The continent is divided into six states of our own: Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, and two territories: Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. Most of our walkabouts have occurred on the coasts of New South Wales and Queensland, although we've made a few forays into South Australia and one trip to the Northern Territory.

Although we've lost touch with it in the last few days, the only other walker group we know of operates out of Darwin, on the northern coast. From what we've been told, they've gone south into the desert on several skinchanger hunts, using Alice Springs as a base. They've also made one trip to Perth, and lost two members to a pack of skinchangers there. The idea that skinchangers have advanced to the coast does nothing for our sleep around here, since we'd hoped the coasts were safe zones, too far from the heart of the bush. True, Perth is isolated and an easy target, but if a city, even a remote one, can be infested by skinchangers, it's

only a matter of time before others like Melbourne and Sydney are targeted.

For now, the eastern coast seems relatively safe. Arrange to travel in through Sydney and stay in that area if at all possible, at least until you're familiar with the country. The high industrial base seems to keep skinchangers away, although there are still lobos there.

We discovered an intensely haunted spot about a month ago. It's on the Great Ocean Road, which runs from Torquay to Warrnambool in Victoria. There's not many tourist attractions along the way, just you and the road and the sea. Or at least, that's what the ducks are meant to think.

All of us were there except Meredith and Ashley, who were over in Sydney. We were driving at night to make up time. Erin woke up the rest of the car, pointing down to the ocean. Dozens of figures were clambering out of the surf, staggering toward the road. I thought they were drunk tourists or something, when I realized I could see right through them!

Evan yelled and I realized there were more of them ahead, lined up along the highway, hundreds of them dressed in everything from modern clothes to old sailor outfits. What could we do against so many? I just drove as fast as I could, going straight through some. I tried not to think of what would happen if we ran out of petrol in the middle of them. I know Bishop has theories about spirits originating in the bushland, but this is about as far removed from there as you can get, and there were *hundreds* of them. I think they could be using the road to get to distant cities that might normally be inaccessible to them. People might take the road and arrive at their destinations with unseen passengers.

When we know better how to deal with it, we plan to go back to the Great Ghost Road (as we call it), first in the day, then to see what we can do at night. We're just going to make sure that the tank is full before we leave.

Even the Great Ghost Road seems tame, though, compared to the trouble we ran into when we investigated trouble along the roads leading to Mount Isa in Queensland. A number of adventurous seppos head out that direction, despite the fact that it's barren terrain for hundreds of kilometres at a stretch. There'd been reports of strange accidents and animal attacks, and then some tourists went missing. This time we were prepared to go inland, but what we found was still disturbing. We never found the missing tourists, but we chased two skinchangers near an active mine. They lost us somewhere in the tunnels. The next day, the mine shut down due to a series of "mechanical malfunctions." The day after that, sixteen miners died at a neighboring operation when an entire shaft collapsed. After that, the police presence was intense so we left, but every night we heard the sound of dogs howling. There was no question that they were responsible for the deaths. Most frightening was that it took only two of them to do it.

Of course, there are a few safe places here, where you can lay low for a while if you need to. The first is the I-House outside Sydney, naturally. We've packed it full of supplies, not to mention security devices. We figure it could hold about twice our number for three weeks in the



event of a siege. (There's even a little chapel inside for the religious-minded, and after a few weeks of this life, who isn't?)

We've also established a couple of makeshift hostels, one in Adelaide at a small, run-down hotel called Nick Restaway Inn. The other is with a married couple in Alice Springs. Nick has a few rooms permanently set aside for anyone who registers at his place under the name "Mister Joe Drake" or "Misses Jane Duck" — adjoining double rooms located away from the street and with easy access to four different escape routes in case of trouble. The rooms aren't anything wonderful, but they're not exactly conspicuous or easily traceable either, so we figure they'll make a good holdover before heading north to the Outback or even west to Perth.

As for our friends in Alice Springs, I won't give their names, but the husband is the bartender at a well-known pub. He'll pay special attention to anyone who orders a drink called a Bug-Eyed Jesus. Their house is nicer than Nick's hotel. It can't support a lot of people for any length of time without attracting attention from the neighbours, so don't plan on staying long, especially if you suspect that monsters may be on your tail. The couple are old family friends of Evan's. Anyone who threatens their lives or property will have to answer to us.

Meredith just reminded me of something else: So far, no one has really looked into Tasmania. Bishop and

Meredith have discussed using it as a secondary base of operations, especially if the skinchangers manage to advance to the eastern coastline. Its isolation from the mainland should keep it safe from them a while longer, we think.

However, a week ago I had a disturbing dream about the island. I dreamt we were flying there. As we approached, the engines failed and we began falling to our deaths. Right before we hit shore, I saw skinchangers and lobos standing side-by-side, grinning at us. That's when I woke up. I haven't mentioned this to anyone yet, partly because I don't want to spook them without good cause and partly because I don't want to give up hope on a possible safe haven.

Still, I've thought about the dream a lot. With Tasmania's majestic wilderness, it might be home to its own skinchangers, even so far from the heart of the bush. As for lobos, if Hobart's history doesn't lend itself to unhappy ghosts, nowhere does.

Finally, another place that bears mentioning, simply because we walkers seem to have a connection to it, is Uluru, what was once known as Ayers Rock. Ashley names it in his dream, and many of us have dreamt about it as well. We don't know exactly why it draws us so. It's vital to Aboriginal beliefs, but that connection does more to confuse me than anything else, given our separation in the prophecy. All my instincts tell me there's a big piece of the puzzle there.

EXHIBIT: SUICIDE NOTE OF ROBERT MCCARTHY

Dear Sharon,

I think it better to be swallowed whole by the night than one piece at a time, especially when everyone I turn to for help will not believe me. I always thought you at least would be there for me. Like when I ran over the little girl in the first place. But now that she's back where are you? You and Terry are probably laughing at me right now. Just pray for me that dying doesn't send me to her. Death should be peaceful. I pray it sends me where she will never find me again.

TRANSPORTATION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Subject: Re: travel plans

Howitzer114 wrote:

>i want to come down, but there's a problem - what do i do? what are the >weapons laws like down there? is there a safe place to come in? what >places are safe to stay? how do i travel once i'm down there?

Since a lot of you sleppos seem to be awful fond of your machine guns and all (not that I blame you!), just getting into Australia can be quite a problem. Australia has strict weapons laws, especially for foreigners coming into the country. Unless you've got some kind of government ID, official channels are a big

no-no. However, thanks to some friends Meredith has in the Sydney police force, we've found a way to sneak some of your gear in through the airport there, although it's costing us a fortune to maintain. When the agents ask if you have anything to declare, say that you have a chronic illness. When they ask you what it is, tell them that you have Lyme disease. (Hey, I don't make up the code words around here.) They'll excuse you from the line and offer to search your bags privately. Provided you're not carrying anything really outrageous, like a case of assault rifles or a grenade launcher, they'll take down your name and wave you through. Just make sure the rest of your luggage is clean!

We've made sure they'll look the other way for a variety of weapons (keeping your name is insurance for the officers on duty in case you get in trouble later on). Drugs and high explosives are too much to ask for, and we can't afford to keep this arrangement up and bail a bunch of sleppos out of jail.

Even after you get your gear past customs and make it to the I-House, you're still in for some stiff trouble when it comes to getting around. Most places in America and Europe, you just hop in a car or train and there you are, no worries. Well, that works all right here if you stick to the coasts, but try to get anywhere other than that and I guarantee you'll be in over your head in the course of a day or so. There are a lot of places in Oz that just can't be reached A to B, especially with the things out there in between.

First of all, you can make like most of us and drive. Renting a car runs you about twenty to one hundred American dollars a day, depending of course on where you're going and (more importantly) what you say you'll be doing. Make sure you get a land-rover; road conditions vary widely by territory and a lot of the places we're liable to go aren't anywhere close to the well-lit strips. If you plan to go more than an hour or two from suburbia,



make sure you take enough provisions — petrol, water and food — for a few days. Getting stuck in the middle of nowhere is no joke, especially when you get into the heart of the bush.

Mobile phones are a good idea if they have the range to be useful, as is a CB radio or other short-wave radio. Don't laugh, one of those saved our lives after a walkabout left our jeep a wreck about a hundred kilometres from the nearest town. Oh, just in case you seppos forget, make sure to drive on the left, and remember all the numbers are metric.

Another option is public transit: coach or train. A lot of seppos look down on it, but it can beat driving for 40 or 60 straight hours, that's for sure. Every major city except Darwin is connected by train. If you want to head into the Outback, there's only one big stop: Alice Springs. Anywhere else and you're back to something with wheels. Our group has used coaches and trains a lot of times — they're an excellent way to get several people a great distance without attracting attention. Best of all, you're surrounded by ducks. Not even skinchangers are willing to butcher a hundred people to get at three walkers. If you can keep a group of "pylons" between you and whatever has an eye on you, you're safe for the time being. Compared to a car, travel by coach or train is still relatively fast — going cross-continent can take as little as three days, nonstop (though that can be a pretty uncomfortable three days if you have to travel cheap). The trip can be a week long by coach, with stops.

Remember, while a lot of Australians have rifles, especially in rural areas, you can't rest yours across your lap for the duration of your coach ride. Likewise, unless you're willing to risk concealed weapons charges, you have to present a license and identification to carry a pistol aboard public transit. All pistols and rifles are almost certainly locked in a secure luggage hold during the ride, unless you're a government agent of some kind. Safer for the ducks, but not exactly helpful if a skinchanger takes the next seat or a lobo knocks up your compartment in the middle of the night. Therefore, you have two options: Surrender your firearms and rely on what weapons you can still carry legally (such as knives), or smuggle something to keep with you. Since many of us gave up following the law when we realized what was really behind it, we don't have qualms with carrying illegal weapons.

Another travel option is to charter a private flight. For a lot of tiny towns in the bushland, this is the only option, unless you're prepared for a lot of hard offroad driving. Even so, some places are damn near impossible to reach without a pair of wings. A lot of small towns have airstrips if you have your own plane. Although this is normally an expensive option, we have an ace in the hole. Stan Gansert, one of the best bush pilots around, is aware of who we are and is willing to lend a hand. Stan's one of the lucky ones whose Dream didn't end with any particular cross to bear, but he knows a lot of what we do. If you get in touch with him, he'll fly a small group out to just about anywhere you can name (and probably a lot of places you can't). He can be something of a Dundee at times, especially when he knows there're seppos around, but he's a solid character and he keeps his cool when it matters.

Right after my Dream, we went into the Gibson Desert after a skinchanger who'd murdered four children in Alice Springs. If not for Stan and his ability to land a plane where none has a right to be, we'd still be walking back. All you have to do when you talk to him is mention our names; he'll know what you're talking about. But be careful: Some of the more remote places he flies to could be areas of skinchanger activity. If word gets out that he's on our side, his life wouldn't be worth dirt.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Subject: Final words

You've heard everything I can think of. I only pray to God that we haven't missed anything dangerous, and that this new list is safer than the previous one. I've already asked for help, so I won't beg again, but in case anyone else anywhere in the world needs to remember why we fight the battles we do, here's the letter I sent to Father Mike the morning after Ashley disappeared.

To: stjohn832@hotmail.com

From: soyboy

Subject: Your inquiry

I have terrible news, Father. I'm afraid we lost Ashley for good last night.

We were chasing a creature suspected of committing a pair of kidnappings outside Sydney. You've probably read about them. The first victim was of dubious repute and lived with her equally dubious fiancé, judging by the accounts we got. The second was the wife of a businessman who keeps shop on George Street — not exactly the type of person you want to antagonize without a damn good reason. That alone wouldn't have been enough to get our attention, but Ashley had visions of the women, trapped and alone in the dark. He's always been the one of us that the Heralds seem to affect regularly. He told us he kept hearing "YOU MUST PROTECT THEM" over and over again.

Meredith has friends on the police force. She and Ashley were able to see some evidence. Apparently Ashley took one look at a picture of a crime scene and told Meredith, "It's a lobo. It lives, like the others we've faced, but it doesn't want to. It thinks the women can help it, somehow — set it free. But it will only kill them when they fail it." He said that it had taken shelter in the squalid places where it thrived in life. How he knew those things, Father, was as always beyond all of us. I might be jealous of knowledge like that, but I once looked into his eyes right after he had an episode. That cured me real fast.

We went to King's Cross that night. I'd been there before, as had Ashley — a church outreach program for him; my motives were less noble. We were about to decide where to start looking when Ashley just spotted the thing. He always seemed to just know. He started chasing it before the rest of us even knew what was going on. We followed their trail through the crowd.

I was leading the group, so I was the only one who actually saw it. Lucky me. The creature looked like a nightmare patchwork of human parts and animal skins, as if someone had been sown into a wolf costume and it was starting to fall apart. I was maybe ten metres behind the two of them when it suddenly turned and grabbed Ashley. He was the biggest damn person I'd ever seen, but that thing held him like a rag doll. Suddenly there was a bright white light and the two of them disappeared like they'd never been there at all. Or at least, we thought they'd disappeared until there was a high-pitched wail like nothing I'd ever heard before. Then a spray of blood shot out of thin air, covering us all.

We couldn't help it, Father. We ran. It was just too much to bear. God have mercy on us, it was too much. We left and we left him.

We made it back to the hotel over an hour ago. We had to break in so no one would see us all bloody. We're barricaded in, with Bishop and Meredith on the door.

However it was, I hope Ashley died quickly.



Welcome to Hunter-Net

Email Program

Subject: To: From: Copied To: Send
MessageGet
Messages

You'll think me mad for bothering to say all these things, a daft woman out of her element, babbling and confused, right? I'd say you're wrong. I've read your own stories of dread and wondered many times how you came to the places you are. Nobody wants to talk of what came before, only the now, the present. Can't you ever look to your past selves? Each muscle of your own bodies has a story to tell if you will only listen. I know it sounds rather naïve, pseudospiritual and absolutely worthless. But it's true.

Make no mistake: I'm here for a single purpose, to share with you my knowledge of the lands and peoples of Europe, its sanctuaries and its hellish pits, where there are shadows to hide in and streets to shun for dear life. I'll tell you what I know of the defenseless and the demons and hope it saves your skins. But I can no more start in the middle than at the end. You need to know my beginning if you're to understand the things I say.

I'm a mongrel by birth, what trendy anthropologists call a "hybrid" or "woman of the borders." Like a lot of young women, I grew up with conflicting signals, thanks to my gender. "Go to school and succeed in your studies," said my upwardly mobile English father. "Education is the great equaliser, and if you're equal enough you can follow me in the family business." Mum, on the other hand, supplied the voice of central Asian tradition and spirituality. "Find a suitable mate and don't forget to clean the kitchen before you cook grandmother's rice pudding!" I took them at their word; would my mother and father mislead me? Surely they only had my best interests at heart. So it was mathematics and psychology for me, first in my home city, later in Germany. Then, as I neared the end of preliminary schooling and wanted to proceed in my studies, the words of my parents blended together. "Come home," they said, "and find a husband and a job. Settle down and give us grandchildren. Come home now. Your schooling is done and your years of freedom are spent."

Naturally, I didn't want to refuse the pleas of my parents. I *did* want, someday, to have a home and a family of my own. But the need to plant my soul hadn't yet matured; I still possessed the desires of a child, to see and do things beyond the hearth and womb. I travelled back to London to explain my position. That's when everything changed.

It was the spring holiday, and I walked to the market like I'd done a thousand times, revelling in the smells and sounds of the city. Despite the tensions at home, London made me feel whole again. I should've *expected* it to rip me apart.

It was an alley down near Camden. There I was, bread in a sack, togs in a bag (and my pack weighed down by some marble bookends I had bought on a whim), on my merry way home. And that's when I felt *pushed*. Nobody's hand grabbed me, but still, *something* took me towards the alley. In my mind, did I hear voices? Did I see the signs on all the storefronts flash red, pointing me to a path I couldn't see? I can't remember. I turned into the alley, just the same. It wasn't the only time I would find my feet leading me in directions I never thought I'd take.

That's when I saw the *thing*, the demon. I don't know what scared me more, that the villain of mum's worst bedtime stories should be there in London, or that I actually knew what the thing was. I felt like I was walking through a story I'd already written in my mind.

She'd called it rakshasa. I thought it looked like a sick tiger who'd spewed up rotten cow lungs. The bastard stood on its two hind legs and struck out with paws as large as my head. Its unlucky target was a man, and what a fine figure *he* was. But short-lived, from all the attention the monster was giving him. There wasn't a thing I could do about it. If I was smart, I would have used his last moments to get the hell out of there. I stayed. I had to stay; I don't know why. Something held me to the ground like wet concrete. Just as well, because I wouldn't have believed what happened next.

Press [Enter] to continue.

CHAPTER 5: EUROPE

Press [Backspace] to go back a page.

The man ducked beneath a swipe. Then the rakshasa howled and clutched its paw. Like a thorn in the massive pad, a knife buried itself to the hilt. The man scrambled out of reach, and when the beast turned to him he had another blade. As he backed another step, he stumbled, falling within easy reach of the demon. Faster than I knew what I was doing, as if my fingers knew the score before I did, I slipped off my pack and slung it at the beast. It connected against the shaggy head and I had the creature's attention for a long moment. I pity the mouse in a tabby's glare, because I know how it feels. Before the rakshasa lunged at me, I saw a blade hurtle through the air, burying itself in the shaggy chest. It seemed that as soon as the man launched a knife, another was in his hand. The fourth blade caught the thing square in the throat, and the beast crashed to the ground. The rakshasa seemed to collapse on itself, and in a matter of seconds the monstrous form was now a rather small woman, covered in blood.

For a long moment, the man stood over the demon, another knife in hand. Then — and it shocked me to no end at the time — he bent over her, grabbed her head and sawed at her throat. I cowered away. When he straightened, the head was still dripping in his grip. That's when he addressed me for the first time.

"Nasty thing," he said matter of factly. "Come on, we better get going." No explanations! And I was dying of

curiosity. He showed nothing other than complete calm and apparent expectation that I knew what the hell had happened. Maybe on some level I did.

"American hunters have it easy — they can pick up a shotgun with no effort," the man mused as we strode from the carnage. "Here in Britain, it's a damn sight harder. Lucky these fellows seem to be loners." I couldn't place his accent, but his skin had the same warm brown tones as my own, mixed with a liberal dash of chalk. His blue eyes didn't fit in his face, like he'd been put together with spare parts. Plenty of muscle, though.

"Call me Seljuk. And I don't wanna know your name. Not now. Get outta here first. Questions come later." I followed him. Damn feet seemed to have a mind of their own again. Or maybe it was the wind and dust that blew behind me, stinging my neck and scalp, driving me forward even though the day had dawned clear and bright.

Later that night, I sort of came out of the shocked trance I'd been in since I saw the rakshasa. What was I *doing* here, sleeping on a mattress in a dilapidated rooming house, watching over some oddball who played with knives? Well, I can't explain it, and heaven knows I've tried. I just know it felt right somehow. There was that same sense of *deja vu* I had in the alleyway. I never called my parents, not once. What was I supposed to tell them, that I'd seen ancient Indian demons on the streets of London? That I wanted to chuck

their dreams and mine to roam around and find more rakshasa, or whatever the hell that thing was, just so I could carve out their hearts?

Seljuk took me under his wing, so to speak, for a couple of long weeks. I don't see him much anymore, just the occasional e-mail or covert advertisement. There's not much a woman on the run can do, but when I found myself on the Continent, certain opportunities presented themselves. I've done all kinds of things, many I'm not proud of, but they were necessary. It's not an easy life, and it's certainly not glamorous. But I do get to meet all kinds of interesting people. More than a few have turned out to be good sources of information, among other things. Others have come into my parlour and never left.

You thought I sold spices in the corner bazaar, perhaps?

STATE OF THE UNION

Now that you've heard my story, let's get down to business. Unless you've had your heads totally in the gutter, you know the biggest change to hit Europe in fifty years is this idea of the European Union. Well, for those of you who don't live in the EU, let me give you an overview, because if you're heading this way, you're going to run into its bright little slogans, songs and banners eventually.

Fifteen countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK) belong to the EU, which states its ultimate goal as "an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe." They want to promote and monitor economic and social progress, claiming that all the various nations of Europe would be much better off as one citizenry. Sooner than later, they're going to all use one currency, the Euro, which will presumably be much easier on travellers; none of that time-consuming money changing business. The EU promises to provide for social rights, combat discrimination and improve employment. It stresses the need for sharing information and cultivates a policy of openness on the part of government and economic institutions. And it doesn't believe in the death penalty.

But what does all this mean for you and me?

Well, for starters, let's talk about airports. Watercraft aside, one of the easiest ways to get around Europe is to fly. Every country has a major airport, and most have several. Small regional airlines flit all over the continent on an hourly basis, which is nice if you need a quick departure. If you're going from EU country to EU country, there's not much you have to do by way of producing visas or reams of official paperwork. A valid passport waved at the customs folks will get you admitted pretty quickly and with minimal fuss. But be warned that some borders are stricter than others, such as going from Ireland to the UK, and that some airports have quite powerful x-ray scanners. Manchester is a killer, and Frankfurt isn't much better. If you're travelling with contraband, I'd suggest taking a cruise.

And then there's the extensive rail system. I almost forgot to mention it since it's such a part of everyday life. We tend to take trains for granted, but I'm given to understand that America and Canada don't have a rail system nearly so comprehensive as Europe's. You can travel from one end of

the continent to the other in relatively good time on a train. And what's more, most rail personnel don't even ask to see a passport. But I digress.

Another thing to worry about is extradition. When it comes to cooperating in matters of law, many of the EU countries are thick as thieves. You get a record in one place, it's not so hard to haul you next door for a trial. And even with the abolition of the death penalty, being in court or prison is something we must avoid at all costs.

Finally, let me tell what I think is going on behind the scene in Brussels. I've spent a lot of time there, and the place is fairly crawling with dead things. They swarm all over the old battlefields, and what's worse, I've seen a few coming and going at the EU headquarters, always at night. These were no ordinary things either, but well trained looking fellows, dressed in quite costly clothes. I tried approaching one, to no avail; he looked me right in the eye. Next thing I knew, I was having a cappuccino six blocks away. I don't know if these monsters were there on permanent assignment or just slumming. Either way, I don't think it bodes well for the EU.

POLITICS

My father had a saying: Politics were invented in Europe. That may seem a little arrogant to people in other parts of the world, but he has a point. The bulk of political *writing* at least did come from this continent, and a lot of those words shaped events around the globe. Where would the Yanks be without the writing of Locke and others of his ilk? The dreams of reformers in French salons and German taverns shook the continent in 1789, 1848 and 1871, for starters. And surely you know that revolutionaries like Che Guevara and Mao Tse-Tung fairly devoured the writings of Europeans like Marx and Engels?

So it's natural that Europe is what you might call a politically active place. Almost every country has dozens of political parties, and in most cases, whichever party comes out a winner in the national elections gets to put its leader forward as the head of state. Less often than not, no one party emerges as clearly victorious, so the politicians cobble together a coalition government where various posts of power are filled with a melange of leaders and viewpoints. You might have a conservative head of state trying to get along with a socialist secretary of treasury and a Green Party defence minister! Britain is probably the exception to the rule in that we have a de facto two-party system. Other parties exist here, that's true, but the real power belongs in one of two camps, Labour or Conservative.

I can't begin to list all the political parties in all the nations in Europe. Czechoslovakia alone has more than a hundred, and last election about half of them were represented. But I can give you some generalities. Most countries have some version of the SDP, the Social Democrat Party, a fanciful term for socialists, which may or may not have splinter factions. Don't confuse these with the various communist parties; that's a whole different kettle of fish. There are also a lot of "freedom" parties, which stand on the far right wing of conservatism, often at odds with more traditional conservatives. Confused yet? Just wait, it gets better. Christian coalitions also have strong representation, such as in Belgium's Christian Social Party or Germany's Christian

Democratic Union and Christian Social Union. Virtually every nation has a Green Party, which bases its platform on environmental issues. Finally, in Spain, Britain and Finland (and probably others I don't know about) you have separatist parties, such as the Catalan and Basque Nationalists or Plaid Cymru, the Welsh nationalists who want independence. Some of the more interesting parties in recent times include the Network Party, anti-Mafia politicians in Italy; Democrats 66 from the Netherlands, who are pro-business and capitalism; and the Polish Peasant Party.

All this talk about politics has got me thinking. Ever heard the phrase that if you've got two people in the same room, you've got politics? Okay, so here's my theory, based somewhat on what Bookworm55 has written. I think all the different kinds of monsters are divided up into competing factions according to what type they are. You got all the goblins in one group, the rots in another and the ghosts in yet another. Then there are these people I call epic beasts, things like the rakshasa that don't really fit in anywhere. Maybe each group has some sort of political or social agenda, and they're engaged in a war with each other we don't really understand. Naturally, though, their interests may cock up our own.

A number of you have said these monsters have infiltrated governments and institutions, and a couple of posts have referred to "dark masters" who rule the world from the shadows. I've been thinking about this, asking myself why — why would they bother? "To hide themselves from mortals" is the obvious answer, but really, I think they do that well enough as it is — only a few of us have proof of their existence. Here are some things I came up with. See what you think.

First, we'll assume a country is being run by creatures of darkness. Look at Russia as an example. Communism rose fairly quickly there. Assuming a shadow government pulls the strings, who would think communism is the best way to go? Who would it be advantageous for? How about the rots? Remember all the stories we heard about the Soviets — secret police kidnapping people in the middle of the night, citizens ignoring strange happenings because they assumed the Party was responsible, and the whole Big Brother paranoia? Sound's perfect, doesn't it? Those bloodsuckers with a huge, subservient and docile flock of servants, able to cull with impunity.

So why did communism fall as suddenly as it rose? Why would the vampires let it? Maybe other monsters are responsible — the epic beasts, for example. Perhaps they are fighting the rots. Why? Traditional animosity is an easy answer — they hate the other or don't want them to have power. I'd feel more comfortable with a better rationale. Perhaps there is something about the communist system the epic beasts don't like. But would a fascist government such as the Third Reich be different? Nazis employed similar methods of control, and in the short term were quite efficient at taking over territory. They were very systematic in the transport and slaughter of their "cattle" (if we follow the logic of people as food).

Two aspects of this argument don't make sense to me, however: why kill millions in such a short time? Surely there was a reason other than blood or whatever. Also, the Communists and Fascists were diametrically opposed to each other; why would the blood drinkers compete? If there was in



fact a supernatural power behind Hitler, I'm not sure it would be the dead. But it occurs to me that Stalinist Russia had its own purges, as did many of the other communist countries. Perhaps the creatures were merely culling people who weren't as easy to control, leaving the more tractable ones behind. Perhaps...well, maybe this is all tripe.

Sorry for the ramble. It's all just speculation, as I said. But if the premise is true, think of the implications! A war among the monsters? Why not? Rots against walking dead against ghosts against goblins against rakshasa against... Or maybe it's more factional, with the dead/undead versus the "living" beasties.

I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts on this. If any of it is credible, the knowledge would be a powerful advantage in our struggle.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Every European country has a national police force, which controls any number of municipal, regional and local police units. The UK police and Ireland's Garda are exceptions in that their officers don't carry guns. But before you get too happy, let me assure you that there are plenty of backups who do. For example, we British have a pretty lethal antiterrorism unit called the SAS. These folks are all business and can be anywhere in the world in a matter of hours, so just imagine how quick they can be transported on home soil. They train with similar agencies, such as Germany's GSG-9, Spain's GEO and the GIGN from France, who are in similar relationships with their own national police forces.

So for example, if the local Dutch police armed with their Walther P5s and H & K MP5s can't handle the problem, they can call on the Netherlands' elite BBE for help. Do you really want to fight these guys?

Did I mention that all these special tactics chums network information with each other and send reps to most terrorist crime scenes across the continent? Sorry to disappoint everyone, but I'm afraid we may well be considered terrorists ourselves (not a pleasant prospect). I mean, the INTERPOL definition refers to terrorists as persons who engage in premeditated violence against noncombatant targets due to political motivations. Maybe a bunch of our targets are combative, but certainly not all. And since those who are don't exist in the eyes of the authorities....

Gives one pause for thought, doesn't it?

Let me clear up something about INTERPOL. It's not a police force unto itself; rather, it's an agency that coordinates

the police forces of member nations. INTERPOL brings operatives together and makes sure they have current information on criminal activities. They're particularly keen on stopping organised crime, drug trafficking and illegal immigration. So if you get stopped by an INTERPOL agent acting in a capacity other than a representative of his own government's police force, something's amiss.

INTERPOL is an international organisation which coordinates cooperative efforts between the police forces of its nearly 180 member states. The organisation is a clearing-house for information on criminals, missing persons and stolen property. An international criminal (and this may mean *you*), missing person (which may also mean *you*, or the deader you burned) or a stolen car or artwork can be traced at any time of day or night.

When a member state requests that INTERPOL be on the lookout for a suspect, the General Secretariat in Lyon issues a "Red Notice," with details of the case including a description and history of the criminal, to all member states. That means if you leave prints or other evidence behind after a job in Rome, Dallas or Hong Kong, police forces all over the world can nick you for it and hold you until you can be extradited. For reference, the colour codes of different wanted people are: Red (request capture of a wanted criminal), Blue (request identification or location of a criminal), green (request information on someone who may

have committed a crime abroad), yellow (request information on a missing person) and black (request identification on a dead body).

If you find a way to access the INTERPOL database, brilliant! The possibilities are endless. A friend at the UK Bureau found crime patterns — a series of mutilations — that led me to a gang of creatures that were hopscotching the French-German border. (Did I happen to mention that it's good to have well-connected friends? Every little helps, I always say.)

And a word of advice: if you plan using a fake or "stolen" INTERPOL badge to get into a crime scene or out of a tight situation, be careful. INTERPOL has no police force, and therefore no badge. You may get past the ignorant, but you'll have some explaining to do if you flash it inspector-style at someone who knows better.

Gun control laws are stricter in Europe than in most other places in the world. You need a general permit for ownership everywhere, and most countries either don't allow you to carry your firearm around at all or they have special carrying permits that are extremely difficult to

SCOTTISH FREEDOM PARTY RALLY

DO YOU CRAVE FREEDOM? DO YOU WANT TO THROW OFF THE YOKE OF LONDON'S COLLAR? DO YOU WANT TO RECALL THE DAYS OF WALLACE AND BRUCE, WHEN THE SASSENACHS BEGGED FOR THEIR MERE EXISTENCE? THEN JOIN US ON 30 APRIL AT MIDNIGHT ON BANNOCKBURN FIELD, STIRLING, WHERE OUR ANCIENT SIRS ONCE VANQUISHED THE ENGLISH TYRANTS. THE TIME HAS COME FOR A NEW RISING, ONE IN WHICH OUR GLORIOUS ANCESTORS THEMSELVES SHALL LEAD US TO TRIUMPH!

Seljuk, didn't you say something about a radical faction among the zombies? I can't believe the Scottish Nationalists would stoop to this kind of bunf. Something about it gives me that kind of a shudder. This may be some kind of recruitment scam.

Lotus

come by. Lawmakers across the Continent also think you need a good reason to get a basic permit in the first place; legitimate reasons seem to be sporting, collecting or for job purposes. Being a target shooter might give you some basis for ownership, too. Overall, it's a bit easier to get a rifle in some places, since you can justify the need for hunting, but handguns and anything full auto are much more difficult to obtain. Germany is one of several nations that limit how many guns you can own; they take things a step further by reserving the right to inspect gun storage facilities among private owners.

Admittedly, I've not seen any zombies or other monsters among the police forces of Europe. But doesn't it strike you as strange that, until now, the monsters have been able to get away with things so easily? Doesn't it make perfect sense that creatures would have some toe-hold in law enforcement? How is it that they might control these people? Drug addiction, hypnotism or some sort of mind control are possibilities. Or there's always good old blackmail and bribery. I think there's too much power within the police force for the monsters to ignore.

Subject: A reminder about Spain

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Mythmaster10, an acquaintance told me you're heading to Spain, so I thought I'd give you some details on law enforcement and such there. This is a bit more than what I've put out for the general list on the situation of Europe. Then again, I had some "interesting times" in Spain.

Guns are extremely restricted in Spain. Nobody but the police (the National Police and the Civil Guards) ever carry them, and even the police mostly use rubber bullets instead of real ammo. But if you stir up too much trouble, one of three kinds of special tactics forces will come after you. The police have an elite unit called the Grupo Especial de Operaciones, or GEO, that specialises in counterterrorism and hostage crises. Then there's the Artzantza (if you're slumming with militant separatists) and the Mossos d'Esquadra (if you cause trouble in Catalonia). These are well-trained anti-terrorist units; some of them even train with Mossad, so watch out!

Civilians can't have guns, unless they're traditional hunters, in which case the weapon must be an appropriate rifle that is duly registered with the police. Whenever you carry the weapon, it has to be unloaded until just before you're ready to use it.

Most crimes in Spain tend to be of the domestic violence variety, and knives rather than guns usually settle disputes. If a gun's involved, it's almost always a hunting rifle. If you can get your hands on some good forgeries, you could turn this to your advantage.

Take care of yourself and let me know if you find anything interesting.

CRIMES AND CRIMINALS

Technically, each of us is a criminal. Most of us work outside the law, blowing up things, stalking and assaulting seemingly innocent persons — any number of activities blind justice frowns upon. This being the case, we tend to gravitate towards the darker side of the street. So far, I've managed to get by without getting in over my head, but sometimes it's tempting to say, "I've killed walking dead, what's a few thugs with machine guns?" Some of the most dangerous monsters in this world still breathe.

First, I'll talk a bit about organised crime. I'll admit that until I started down the hunter's path, what I knew about organised crime could be summed up by films. Criminal organisations are alive and well across Europe. By far the best-known of the international criminal groups, the Mafia, is still vibrant despite efforts to eradicate it. I've only hunted in Italy once, and I didn't relish the experience. I think Italy is a sty, though, so I've got a bias there. I'm not personally acquainted with anyone who admits to associating with la Cosa Nostra, and I don't know if there are any Mafiosos in our line of work. They still wield some influence, especially in Italy and Sicily. But since the end of the '80s, the Mafia has been overshadowed by a new force to reckon with throughout Europe.

Organised crime has swept Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union; I've heard estimates of over 4,000 criminal organisations in Russia alone! Drugs, weapons, illegal immigrants, vice, even the theft and sale of plutonium have become serious concerns. It's even getting to be a problem in Scandinavia. A contact of mine reported the number of assaults and gang murders in Stockholm has risen in the last couple of years, as criminal factions vie for control over the smuggled cigarette trade.

The Russian Mafia, or Organizatsiya, is ruled by wealthy, ruthless businessmen. They know how to bend the system to their will. In some parts of the ex-Soviet Union (now called the Commonwealth of Independent States), these criminals have assumed control from the governments, or control the governments themselves. I imagine some of you could see an advantage in cultivating contacts among the Organizatsiya. After all, for a price they can get you nearly any kind of equipment, access or information. Personally, I'd advise against it unless you're desperate. They are far more brutal than what I've heard of the Mafia of the West, and likely to doublecross at the slightest provocation. Also, you can find yourself in the middle of a gang rivalry. And for the exceptionally paranoid out there (and who on the list isn't?), how do you know those we hunt aren't running the mobs? Can you think of a better way for walking dead or bloodsuckers to make a few thousand quid?

GHOSTLY ARMY STALKS POLAND

In the decades since World War Two, the Soviet Union has kept many secrets. But since the parting of the Iron Curtain, one of its strangest secrets has been revealed. On a frigid November night, some tourists were driving to Warsaw when their car died mysteriously. The driver braved the cold to seek help. He hadn't gone far when he saw what he took to be a group of villagers milling about a moonlit field. None of them took any notice of his pleas for help, but continued to wander aimlessly through the clearing. There were women and children, but most of the silent stalkers were men in military-style uniforms. Still calling out, he stepped into the clearing, whereupon the specters disappeared instantly.

Eventually he found a flesh-and-blood farmer to assist him. Upon telling his strange tale to his benefactor, the Pole confirmed what he'd seen — the phantoms were the souls of Polish soldiers and local villagers slaughtered in that forest. That very field held their mass grave! The dead of that brutal time stand guard over their bodies, which lie unmarked and forgotten except to local legend.

PROSTITUTION

Prostitution is more or less legal in most European countries — that is, it's legal to sell sex, but it may be illegal to buy, or to help someone buy, or to work in a brothel or similar establishment. In some countries, such as Switzerland, it's a profession recognised by the state. Greece even mandated semi-weekly health checks and retirement benefits for sex workers. As one might expect, prostitution is alive and well in former east-bloc countries, despite being illegal. Here in Amsterdam, many of us sit in windows; when a client comes in, we go to another room to "negotiate" price and service, like any other business. I should probably warn you, though, that about half the prostitutes in Amsterdam are HIV-infected.

Why do I bring this whole subject up? I've got several reasons, besides the obvious (the prudish Yanks aren't used to this sort of thing, I've heard). Yes, it's a form of income, but I don't really expect many to follow this path. But hear me out before you say you don't understand or judge me for my actions. I'm not proud, but I am practical. I was desperate to get some money, and I was lucky enough for things to work out okay. I don't necessarily recommend it to anyone else. However, it is a way to meet people, including contacts and possibly monsters (odd as it may seem). Not everyone who's entered my "office" has left again.

For those on the outside, a prostitute may be a source of more than comfort — they hear things and they know people. One of the local girls may have disappeared suddenly, a local mob boss may be a regular customer and the local constabulary may be easily bought. As with any new contact, information improves with familiarity. A stranger asking nosy questions looks like trouble, while a regular client who tips well might deserve a few innocuous answers.

As a related aside — I have suspicions about one of the women down the street from me. I've never gotten close to her, but I sense an "otherness" about her. I've also watched her clients; the regulars seem unusually eager to meet with her, and when they leave they act a little intoxicated. Not a great surprise, given the legality of drugs here, but I watched a client visit her daily for a week, and each afternoon he left weaker than the day before. The last day I saw him, he was staggering. Has anyone met anything resembling a succubus, drawing energy from another through sex? If possible, I'd like to find out more before I meet her face to face.

TERRORISM

I'm not suggesting anyone contact these people! Most of them are dangerous fanatics who strike first and ask questions later. And like as not, they'd not give a fig for our stories about monsters and conspiracies. But I provide some information here about a few of the best known terrorist groups in Europe for two reasons. First of all, I have your safety, such as it is, in mind. You don't want to tangle yourself in their business, nor do you want to be mistaken for any of them. And second, I suggest that any truly desperate parties among the monsters may try to take advantage of terrorists' resources and devotions. Can you imagine what havoc there'd be if a puppet controlled some of these radicals?

The first group is the ETA, the Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna, known in English as Basque Fatherland and Liberty. Many members are neo-Marxists, and they want an independent homeland in Spain's Basque region. Known for bombing and assassinating Spain's political leaders, they've now included French targets as well, thanks to France's assistance to Spain in stomping out terrorism. The ETA uses robbery and extortion to earn money, and some sources estimate they're accountable for over 800 deaths in recent years. They've hundreds of members and supporters, and it's quite possible that they have ties to the IRA.

Ah, the Provisional Irish Republican Army. I heard a lot about them during my time in England. This is the armed wing of Sinn Féin, a legal political party in Ireland. The Provos' goal is to remove British forces from Northern Ireland, and to carry out this aim, they engage in bombings, assassinations, extortion and robberies. Off and on, they establish cease fires, and rumours abound that a splinter group within the IRA is the one breaking the truces. In any case, the group most often targets public transit stations along with British soldiers and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) members. Like ETA, the IRA has hundreds of members, along with several thousand sympathisers worldwide.

Finally, I want to mention the PKK, aka the Kurdish Workers' Party. I know it might seem odd to refer to them when talking about Europe, but they've got a fairly strong presence here, even going so far as to try and put up a respectable facade and official presence in Germany (not that they're getting anywhere). Their goal is to establish an independent Kurdish state in Turkey. PKK began as a rural movement, but now they're involved in more urban terrorism. For example, they've attacked Turkish dignitaries travelling in Europe, and targeted European tourists in Turkey. PKK has at least 10,000 members, perhaps even more, not counting their many sympathisers. Kidnapping, assassination, extortion and assault top their list of activities. Their peaceful

protests have come to naught, by the way, and they're still considered a dangerous criminal element in Europe.

Consider for a moment the rise of terrorism in recent years. People aren't getting more evil, not really, despite what the righteous may say. I have another theory. It's entirely possible that somehow, these creatures we face feed off of the violence and fear that terrorists breed. And why not? Rots seem to drink blood and beasts eat human flesh. Who's to say there's not some creature out there that *psychically* obtains sustenance or power from death and destruction? Maybe a few months ago, I would've laughed at such a suggestion. No longer.

UNDERGROUND CONTACTS

I'm probably dotty for putting this stuff out on the net, but I'd feel worse if you found yourself in a terrifically hot spot and couldn't get help when you needed it most. These are a few of the more dangerous contacts I've dealt with over the past months. Oh, don't worry, they're all as human as you or me, which may or may not be saying much. Let me emphasise something here: these are businesspeople. If you show up on their stoop covered in wounds and acting like a loony, they'll turn you away at best and grind you into fish food at worst. But if you comport yourself like a professional and come prepared to shell out some cash (or sometimes information and favours), they can be extremely useful. And for heaven's sakes, make sure you're on a secure line and not followed when you go to make a connection!

Señora Arcelia

Señora Arcelia owns and manages an upper-class brothel near the Plaza de Cuzco in Madrid, and she's amassed quite a fortune from 20 years in the business. So why do I have a madame listed first among my contacts? First of all, for some collateral, Señora Arcelia will lend you money at a fair rate. I mean, we can't exactly drop into a bank and apply for a loan when we need a new rifle, can we?

Second of all, she has quite a lot of information about what's happening in Spain and even other parts of Europe; Arcelia's establishment is not a poor, run-down shack, but one of the nicer places on the Continent. So her clientele is, shall we say, upper crust as well. And while government officials don't regularly whisper state secrets in the ears of prostitutes, enough of them let off steam and such to give Señora Arcelia and her employees a few useful bargaining chips.

For example, I heard from one of the women (who heard it from a client) that a certain Italian diplomat had been implicated in a murder... and that he suddenly was back in Italy with proof he'd never even *been* in Madrid. Turns out that the diplomat was the walking dead, and I made sure the damned thing wouldn't murder anyone else.

Finally, if you're game, Señora Arcelia occasionally hires temporary help, mostly cooking and cleaning, that sort of thing. My advice, if you want to speak with the Señora, is mind your manners, and if possible bring her a token gift, even if it's just a bundle of fresh flowers. Anyone can snatch some from a graveyard.

Erich Gunterheim

How Herr Gunterheim stays out of the police eye is beyond me, but the man's a paragon among gun collectors, so perhaps they offer payoff to the authorities to keep him free

and working. He custom models rifles of all kinds and can usually get what you want within a few days. The cost is quite high, but the craftsmanship is superb; producing a quality weapon is a matter of intense pride to him. You can get a message to Herr Gunterheim through the Bärenzwinger tavern on the Ku'gamm. Go with plenty of cash, since he doesn't take cheques. And watch out, that's one of the busier areas of Berlin. I've seen zombies right there on the street.

Hillevi Hilmarrson

Hillevi has a small seaworthy boat and works out of Gävle, giving him easy access to all of the Baltic Sea and ports in Russia, Poland and Germany. Hillevi doesn't know anything about our business, as far as I know, and I doubt he'd care. All he wants is the money. He has a strict fee schedule and usually isn't willing to barter. A couple of weeks ago, I was in a bad spot. I'd killed a goblin but neglected to notice her henchman, and he was a real brute. Anyway, I hadn't any cash, and Hillevi refused to take me to Memel, where I had a stash put away. Lucky I know the man's weakness, which I'll pass on to you. He's really into this cheesy hotel game where young tarts knock him up and pretend to be lost (you can imagine what happens from there). I know someone in Amsterdam who likes that sort of thing too, so I promised to set him a date. For once Hillevi laid his greed aside and got me to Memel. I haven't spoken to Liesje since their tryst; I can only hope they had a lovely evening.

Zigana Vilmos

Zigana would scare me even if she wasn't a cold-blooded killer. I've only met her once, but she was fair to deal with. The scary part is that I think she either knows what's going on or suspects what I'm doing. I didn't hire her for a wet job, only for some information (and that took a lot of my spare cash). A contact in Prague tipped me off that Zigana had killed a Hungarian government official in a rather fiery automobile accident, and that the fellow was a zombie suspected of doing away with one of ours. Anyway, I just wanted a few details. For the right price, Zigana was willing to give them.

Naturally, I didn't blurt out who we were or our mission, but she either read a lot into what I was saying or believes in the supernatural. I recall she murmured that "the night has its reasons" or something like that. Strange! I'm not sure how to get in touch with her now, but when I followed her, she entered an apartment on south Celetná Street, in the Old Town.

Ivan Gorky

Obviously this guy is using a pseudonym, and who could blame him? He stays a few steps ahead of the Organizatsiya, or maybe he has a deal with them. Anyway, Ivan's a wonder. He can get just about any kind of forged documentation you could want, from driving licenses to passports to visas. He's my main contact (well, my only contact so far) in Russia. Right now, it's a rough place to be with government unrest, starvation and rampant crime. If it wasn't for Ivan, I would've been killed my first night there. He told me not to open the door of the triple-locked flat (I use that term loosely) where I was staying until he came to fetch me in the morning. At least two thugs tried to break in! If you want Ivan, go to the Vstrecha B & B, run by a seemingly benign Georgia couple. Tell them you'd like to meet Gorky in the park. With a small tip, they'll set something up.

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

I don't need to tell you that Europe is an incredibly diverse place, with dozens of ethnic groups, languages and religions represented in a relatively compact space. Here are a few specifics that can keep you from stepping into the midst of centuries-old trouble.

Subject: We Happy Few, We Band of Brothers

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

You might think that just because we're united in this quest, all of us European hunters are like green peas in a pod, one big happy family. Wrong. This is way too large of a place with way too many different kinds of people for that to happen. Oh, granted the general train of thought is the enemy of my enemy is my friend and all that, but that's too simplistic a picture. It leaves out the ugly neofascists I've met, whose targets range from the expected monsters to the occasional poor gay man on the street. Take the messy situation in the Balkans, where a Serb hunter didn't direct her weapon too carefully and took out a defenseless Muslim, a young girl, along with a zombie.

And I could tell you about the stance certain Anglos take against immigrants like me, thinking we should go back to where we came from and leave the "Western" monsters to people who know more about them. Now that's utter cock and shit if I ever heard it! Aren't we supposed to be in this together? If there's anything that's going to give the zombies an edge, it's these petty animosities among ourselves. If we've never bothered to face the atrocities of racism before, let's please do it now, so we can get to the business at hand.

RELIGION

The dominant faith in Europe, of course, is Christianity. Most Christians are Roman Catholic, but aside from them you have the Orthodox Church (14 different ones, actually) and quite a few Protestant denominations. Judaism is common, although many Jewish communities never recovered from the Holocaust. Islam is chiefly practised in the south-east. While uncommon, the other major world faiths, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, can be found in Europe, brought by immigrants. My own mother was Hindu, but my father insisted I be raised a good Anglican. But mum made sure I knew something of the *Vedas* even as I was reading the Bible, so I guess you could say my Eastern heritage strongly coloured my Western faith.

Much of the turmoil in Europe, past and present, is the result of (or is blamed on) religious differences. Ireland is one example; the Balkans are another. But there are religious prejudices that don't necessarily involve spilled blood. This is particularly true when religion runs along ethnic lines. Whenever Islamic terrorists strike, for example, things get tense for Muslims throughout the continent. It's not fair, it's ugly stereotyping, but it's a reality.



In this day and age, most of the faithful don't believe in monsters, not really. For all that my vicar believes in the Holy Trinity, angels and the power of faith, if I confessed to seeing rots, ghosts and the like, I'm sure he'd pray for my addled mind more than he would my endangered soul. Keep your eyes open, though; there are some believers, and as any veteran (I use that term loosely) hunter can tell you, there's no such thing as too many allies.

I met a sister who worked at a mission in Amiens, after an encounter with some deaders in Brussels that could only be described as "Pyrrhic." Cold, wet, hungry, no ID, no money, scared — that pretty much summed it up. Still looking over my shoulder, I found my way into a hostel/soup kitchen run by some nuns. It was empty except for one, who called herself Joan, after her patron saint. With no questions asked, she fed me, wrapped me in blankets and gave me a cot by the heater. Only after I'd recovered a bit did she ask me if I was being followed; I guess I looked the part of a runaway. I was evasive, of course — best she blame an abusive boyfriend — but she assured me that no one, "in this world or any other can harm you in the Lord's house."

I did some cautious probing along that line, to see if she was one of us. I don't think so, but she all but said that evil walks the world in many guises; that just as demons and imps may walk the night, so angels in all their divine glory intervene on our behalf. She suggested that several of her order had been visited by angels and saints. It set me to thinking. Wouldn't ecclesiastics produce more of us than average? I know there are a couple of priests and such on this list, but what if there was a whole order full of hunters? And even if they are all "mere mortals," so what? In the days since meeting the rakshasa, I've never felt safer than in that hostel.

Which brings me to the power of faith. Has anyone tried waving a Star of David or a cross or anything else at a monster? Did it work? Did you believe it would work? Surely the power of the mind has some place in all this, for us as well as the creatures we hunt.

Away from the cities, folk traditions and superstitions hold considerable sway. In rural areas, particularly among pensioners, some supernatural traditions are still followed, often unthinkingly. In little villages around Britain, I've seen self-bored stones and horseshoes in barns for protection against fairies, relics of ancient fertility rites such as maypoles and mummer's dances, dozens of everyday superstitions adhered to out of habit. And I have no doubt the same sort of thing goes on in villages in Romania or Spain as well. Does this sort of thing affect goblins, rots and the like?

I once saw a charging nightstalker stopped in her tracks by a priest with a crucifix, but have also read that some of us can keep the enemy at bay with nothing but will alone. I wonder if this particular creature was repulsed by the cross or mightily amused by the attempt. There's a third option: perhaps it was reverence rather than repulsion. After all, some of these creatures retain something of their human selves. Perhaps God still has some meaning for them. I know many of you will laugh, but it bears some thought. Not to seem critical, but although many of you war against walking dead and ghosts nightly, you never consider the spiritual aspects of what we do. (I hope you don't think me a hypocrite because I didn't ask the creature herself. I took advantage of

the pause. She was responsible for several deaths, and I daresay she won't kill again.)

Of course, this begs a few more deep questions. For starters, what are *we*? Where did hunters come from? I've thought about this quite a bit. This is a common enough thread on the list, but I just wanted to throw out my view. Many hunters I've met give only passing thought to the question, dismissing it with, "We are, and that's all we need to know." For me, that's not enough.

Drawing on Christian belief: are we modern saints? We hear voices, we perform what can easily be described as miracles. A number of you suggest we are given our power by angels, so would that not make us saints? Or, looking at my Mum's faith: are we avatars of gods, like Vishnu, who came to Earth in many mortal forms? I know this sounds like the ultimate narcissism, but who's to say the gods *know* they are gods in all their Earthly manifestations?

For those of you who weren't on the list at the time, Seer6 had an interesting view — that we are reincarnations of great heroes. We are born to fight the evil creatures of the world, and at the end of the battle (win or lose) we die and are reborn in the future. He suggested this happened in regular cycles (millennially, every 100 years, whatever) although someone said it happened frequently but irregularly during times of conflict, such as during the world wars. On the other hand, Sixofswords29 said if that was the case, we'd have heard about our kind, and so contends our last appearance must have been long before, well, printing presses anyway.

Which leads to the next question: why now? The fact that every hunter I know became so in the past several months should certainly make us wonder. Is it because of the approaching millennium? Tribulation? Is Armageddon fast approaching, and we're here to welcome it?

And have the things we fight always been here, or do they appear around the same time we do? Healer115 volunteered to do some research on crime reports to see if the violence we associate with monsters suddenly escalated in the past five or ten years, but hasn't posted any findings yet.

Several of these theories, particularly the ones suggesting reincarnation, say we'll die out eventually. Perhaps our purpose is to protect humanity from the monsters, like antibodies against a plague. When the plague of evil creatures springs up, we are "called forth" to combat them. When the creatures are destroyed, we disappear with them, or live out the rest of our lives and pass on, to wait for the next plague. Are we not then, in a way, perhaps a bit monstrous and otherworldly ourselves? It's just that we're on the side of humanity, the good guys as it were.

Some of you are obviously scientists and rational thinkers, and I commend that. But you shouldn't be so quick to reject any sort of spiritual explanation. You keep looking at the things we face through the lens of your *old* reality, when it should be obvious they work under different laws. What we're capable of is outside the scope of science. Why cling to that structure while trying desperately to understand the monster's place in it? You want zombies to be victims of a disease rather than accept they are animated corpses, or that rots are simply the victims of a blood borne pathogen. Open yourselves to a little spirituality, people! It's just not as simple as science and reason.

CHAT SESSION ON THE BIG PICTURE

<Lotus19>You guys there?

<Healer115>Hey Lotus, I'm on here.

<Descent88>Me too.

<Lotus19>Thanks for coming. Did you think about my question?

<Descent88>Yes, and I think you're a bit wacko. It's fate, it's a duty and that's all there is to it. You're reading too much into all this. Leave all the religious malarky to the church.

<Healer115>And yet one must admit that these creatures have some sort of will. Granted, this is a desire to destroy; they cannot see past their own needs to a larger world.

<Lotus19>Are you saying it's free will?

<Healer115>Yes, in a way, but their desire overwhelms them; their need to destroy, feed or control defeats any of their fragile connections to unity with humankind.

<Descent88>For God's sake, you're talking about these damned undead_things_ walking around, sucking blood, leaving bodies strewn from here to Tipperary! What the hell is all this unity bullshit?

<Healer115>Schopenhauer for starters. Teilhard de Chardin, perhaps.

<Descent88>All I know is that when I have them in my sights, I pull the trigger. If you get too maudlin, you're in trouble.

<Lotus19>I've seen _you_ pretty emotional, Descent. (smile)

<Healer115>I did not say I refused to "pull a trigger," merely that one must understand the enemy to defeat it.

<Descent88>What I understand is that it's us or them. Listen, I'm not all big on war or destruction; hell, I've seen it firsthand in my own backyard, haven't I? But philosophy doesn't have much of a place in this business.

<Lotus19>I disagree. We need to think through how we got here, where we came from, all that.

<Healer115>Perhaps you both have a point. There has to be a balance between thought and action. Otherwise the precision of what we do is lost. In this work of ours, I think you will both agree that there are certain rules and procedures that must be followed, else we all pay a price.

<Descent88>Well, following rules isn't something the monsters really do, is it?

<Healer115>Actually, I think they have some immutable laws of their own. A key to defeating them, perhaps, is understanding those rules.

<Descent88>Okay, you've got a point there. Some of the weirder beasts I've seen definitely have certain ways of doing things.

<Lotus19>Like what?

<Descent88>I think there's some connection between goblins and the pagan element. And all these fool Irish wannabes around the world aren't helping any.

<Healer115>Pagan?

<Lotus19>Der Heide.

<Healer115>It is strange. Here we see that influence in music and sometimes art, but less perhaps than Descent does. It is more inside the individual rather than the culture as a whole. But tell me, how is it we know where to go and what to do? Is it ancient memory?

<Lotus19>Well, I usually have these dreams. And I find myself catching a train or taking a walk, and there's usually something to do at the end of the journey.

<Descent88>Not me. It's always a tingle, a slow burn. My blood boils, and I know it's time to get down to business.

<Healer115>I find myself without any feelings when there is a need to work. It's like cold water washing over my body. But the message is clear, and sometimes I hear a whisper in my mind, advising me to take necessary actions.

<Descent88>Strange indeed, old son.

<Lotus19>Oh hell, someone's calling on my other blower. Got to sign off now.

<Healer115>Same time next week, then.

<Descent88>Slán.

FOLKWAYS

Even though I've only been collecting these stories for a month or so, I've found that hunters are often more than willing to share what they know. Some of these accounts puzzle me with their illogic. Others challenge me to further study. Anyway, the people who told them certainly believe in their authenticity. I have reserved the original senders' names in almost all cases for their own protection. Contact me through the list if you wish to follow up.

Forgive the clarity of some of the writers; if it's not written by someone fluent in English or German, which I can translate, the words may be a little muddled. Just because we live in Europe doesn't mean we're a bunch of polyglots. A lot of these folks have worked hard to learn English since it's the language most people speak on the list; don't berate them for their efforts.

Subject: Kindermoderinn (Translated from German)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

In many places and times, there have been creatures called Kindermoderinn, or Radiant Children. Now I have seen them here in Germany with my own eyes. They are small, no more than a metre or so tall, and they shine with an intense light, greenish gold. Some look like young boys or girls; others are like miniature adults. Most wear clothing of some type or another, from modern day jeans and shirts to old-fashioned long gowns and coats. I have marked several places with a sign to let others of us know of these creatures. While seemingly harmless, they are no doubt menacing



tricksters in their own way. I have dispatched two already. Unfortunately, three others escaped. Many of the Rhine castles, some of which are privately owned, seem to be favourite haunts for these zombies. If anyone is interested, we can arrange a strike, preferably after dark when the Kindermoderinn are easier to spot.

Subject: Hitchhikers (sent in English)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

The Germans have a word for these things; they call them Gengängers, hitchhiker zombies. Their pattern of behaviour is terribly perverse. Always they station themselves along mountain roads or on the grande-route, I think it is what you call the motorway. Anyway, the zombies jump out in front of the auto, always at a bad time, like when another vehicle is coming or there is a curve nearby. What happens is that the poor driver swerves to miss the zombie and then hits another auto or drives off a cliff. These hitchhiker zombies are hard to find; most appear in the night, a few during dawn and dusk. It is perhaps some game to them, what they do, but many humans have lost their lives.

Subject: Goblin Note (Translated from German)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Potter,

Hope all's well with you. I know you said you were interested in cases of children affected by the supernatural, and I stumbled onto this lucky find while following a lead at a Berlin hospital. Odd how more and more things like this seem to find their way to me. Anyway, this kid had left it on a notepad in the waiting room. I tried to keep true to her words, except for some of the weirder syntax, but a bit got lost in translation. It ended abruptly, too. Let me know what you think; the school may still have the drawing.

Mommy and daddy are talking with the stern man now, not paying any attention to me. They think I'm drawing pictures while I wait. I like to draw, but I also like to tell stories, like the Funny Man who comes to see me sometimes. No one can see him but me. He's my secret. Except mommy caught me talking to him one time, and now she thinks I've been really naughty by saying he's real. I drew a picture of him at school, and everyone told me how neat it looked. I didn't draw his cheeks quite right, and all the gadgets he carries in his bag, but then Ilisa told me he reminded her of Saint Nicholas, and I liked that. Teacher hung the drawing up on the board with some others, so it must have been good. I hope the Funny Man comes to see me if I have to stay here. Maybe he'll go to school and look for me there, so Ilisa ca

Subject: Moon Demons (sent in English)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I never have forgotten that night when I was fishing with my father near the coast. Crete is not a big island, but it has many small inlets that offer privacy and quiet. Such a place is where we were. Sometimes the fishing is best in the dark, you know. The howls we heard first. Then we saw the lights, green, gold and red. For what reason, God only knows, but we crept a little closer, enough to see them on a far hill, dancing around a huge fire. They were the Moon Demons, perhaps a

forgotten part of the old Cretan legend about women who spin threads by the light of the moon. But these were terrible creatures, like wild beasts, with tangled hair flying as they danced in circles and screeched like harpies. My father and I rowed for dear life, praying they had not seen us. I have carried that memory now for 20 years. I am eager to go back and see if the Moon Demons still exist and ask anyone who is willing to come along.

Subject: Death Camps (sent in English)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

It was much worse than any film or any story could possibly be. I had to leave quickly. So many sorrowful dead ones. I do not understand how I am supposed to destroy those that have already been murdered. I am not trying to turn my back on our mission, but to kill ones such as those in this place, I simply cannot do.

Subject: Dead in the Water (sent in English)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Lotus, I don't know if you've seen these things, these ghosts in canals and along dikes, here in Amsterdam and a few other cities in the Netherlands. Are they tempting people to jump in and save them? Stories of missing persons are more frequent lately, and I wonder if there is a connection with any of the drownings the police have been reporting.

Subject: Inhumans (translated from German)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

Has anyone actually seen one of the sorcerers Bookworm55 wrote about? The reason I ask is that I came across something odd in Freiburg, a young man who was stealing books on the occult from the university's special collections library. It was just blind luck that I stumbled into him while I was doing my own research, and despite a stern warning from me to hand over the materials, he fled the scene. Naturally, I chased him, but the man simply disappeared. I have no other explanation if he wasn't a sorcerer or the slave of one.

Subject: Tunguska (sent in English)

From: lotus19

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

I am wondering what you think Tunguska blast was? I have theory I would like to share. Maybe in year 1908, this is in Siberia, there was this blast from some other part of space or different universe. It was great force which turned ordinary men and women into vampires, zombies and beastmen, many in Russia but also all around world. Then these creatures all breed together and populate planet with their same kind. Maybe some live for long time, too, so that we fight ones who were born almost 100 years ago. Why we notice just now, I do not know. Maybe we also get powers from same force. What you all think?

TECHNOLOGY AND THE MEDIA

Seems like everyone has a web page and e-mail these days, especially at universities. Even in some of the poorer and more rural countries of Europe, you can find computers and the Internet available through educational institutions,

THE RESURRECTION HAS COME!

It's the beginning of the end, declare the parishioners of St. Edward's Church in Avebury. During the service, Elisabeth Huntley, 46, looked up and her sister was sitting beside her. This was particularly disturbing, since her sister had been buried in that churchyard that year! The sermon, read by the Rev. Richard Colquit, COE, was interrupted when Huntley screamed and fainted. Concern became shock when he saw, first the sister, and then six more deceased parishioners in the pews. "Just sitting, sitting," Colquit said, shaking his head. "Quietly listening. They looked a little pale, a little ragged, but dressed quite proper." When other church members began noticing their late cousins and husbands and neighbours, all was chaos.

Amid the tumult, the seven "late" arrivals quietly got to their feet and walked out. The last one, who one pensioner named as being a pillar of the congregation in the mid-50s, turned and spoke to the congregation in a low, solemn growl — as if he hadn't spoken in half a century. According to witnesses, he said, "We'll be back for you." Then he simply walked out. When the bravest among the crowd ran to the door, not a soul — or body — was to be seen. Nor were any of the graves disturbed in any way.

What could it mean? Matthew Ambleside, 68, a pensioner from Kent and witness to the supernatural event, had no doubt about its meaning. "The general resurrection has begun!" he exclaimed. "The dead live again! The new kingdom is upon us!" Others were not so quick to speak their thoughts, but it was obvious all were in a prayerful mood. Rev. Colquit said many of the parishioners stayed for hours, praying and debating the significance of the miracle.

"As for myself," he declared in an exclusive interview, "I believe that whether or not this is the resurrection — and I'm not disputing the possibility — the power must come from Glastonbury." Others agreed, including a Oscar Conrad, 62, who added, "Joseph of Arimathea brought a jar of Christ's blood to Glastonbury. With the power of the blood of the Lamb in these hills, small wonder the Rapture would begin here."

Thus far, the Church has not seen fit to investigate the matter. "They're afraid of the Rapture, they are," muttered Ambleside, referring to the bishops. "All cushy with tithes they are. They've got some dirty washing they don't want aired, don't they?"

Bishop Lindsey's secretary has declined to return our calls.

from primary schools to colleges and universities. So there's often a way you can keep in touch with me and others on this list. But let's talk briefly about old fashioned media, the telly, radio and newspaper, for those times when you can't log on.

Television is probably less important than the newspapers, except to the most gullible — what we call the admass. Most countries don't have lots of channels; for example, we have five at home in Britain, including "Auntie," the Beeb, also known as the BBC. You have to have a special permit to

even own a TV and get access to the channels. If you don't get the permit and have a TV anyway, the penalties are enormous. American repeats are quite popular, and in general, television is just not as vital a source of information as I believe it must be in the United States (judging from people on this list and the shows I've seen like *Dallas*, where Yanks have televisions in every room). Watching TV is a time waster, considering you can read a newspaper on the train or bus on your way to another mission.

Yes, newspapers and periodicals are much more important. British favourites include the *Times*, more or less pro-ruling party; the *Daily Telegraph*, highly conservative; and *The Sun* for your average citizen. I will admit that sometimes the line between a serious publication and a tabloid periodical is thin. Even some of the best periodicals have their page-three girls and other assorted nonsense. Something useful to note is the idea of balaam: useless filler material for news periodicals. If you have a contact at the newspaper, you can sometimes tempt them to stick a message into their balaam box. There's no guarantee it will appear, but it's quite a handy way to send a warning or set up a meeting. I mean, no one really reads the filler stuff, except perhaps your allies!

Do the monsters control the media? If they don't now, I imagine they will eventually. And this is a serious matter indeed. If a zombie were to have access to proposed newspaper articles, they might be able to piece together reports about hunter incidents and discover our identities. Someone needs to investigate just how safe the periodicals are. I have an odd feeling they're not as safe as we think, all my notes about balaam aside.

DEAR SCRATCH:

I am a long-time reader from Serbia. I have noticed that you have never printed a letter from Yugoslavia, but never thought I would end up rectifying the situation with a story from my own sex life!

A few weeks ago, I was in need of feminine attention so I went to the dance hall after work. There are plenty of new girls there all the time coming in from Albania or Macedonia or Bosnia. Despite the fact that they're not really Slavs, some are quite clean, and all are sexy if you're drunk!

Anyway, one of the girls in particular seemed especially willing, so I bought her some grappa. Her name was Elena and she had great breasts — I'm a "tit man," you would call it — but her sexiest feature was her eyes, which were big and golden. You know, like a tiger or something. I'm not one for small talk and neither was she, so I took her back to my flat.

Let me tell you, Scratch readers, she went all night! Screaming and yowling like some kind of wild animal, digging her fingernails into my back!

I was so sore the next day I went to the clinic. The doctor said I had lost a pint of blood.

M.K., Belgrade

We can't print this!
Where the fuck's
the sex?
God save me from perverts!

INFORMANTS AND SYMPATHISERS

Unlike some of my more dangerous acquaintances, I believe you'll find most of the persons listed here to be approachable and easy to get along with. Mind you, don't waste their time, but you like as not won't have to worry about leaving with your head still attached if you show up announced.

Reginald Clark

Just because Europe is a union now doesn't mean we're all one big happy! That's why we still have embassies. Clark works at the British embassy in the Hague. Nothing glamorous, mostly legwork for the ambassador's aides. But he can get things done — useful things like stamping documents and arranging connections between countries.

He's not one of us, but he's on our side. An imbued pulled him out of a tight spot (I don't know who, but I don't think they ever got on this list). Since then, Clark's been very cooperative with me and a couple others in our line of work, arranging travel, facilitating the shipment of unusual "medical supplies" and helping us keep in contact. He doesn't really understand it all. He just knows there are things out there, things like whatever attacked him not long ago. The only favour he asks is that we observe the law. Don't ask him to condone firearms or explosives smuggling. He's willing to help, but compromising his position helps none of us (least of all Clark himself).

Dr. Ludmila Kosskova

I came across her on my last trip to Bucharest. Dr. Kosskova runs a backstreet clinic. From what I understand, her family's political connections gained her some of the best surgical training available in the USSR, but the fall of communism took her fortunes with it. She ended up in Romania using her skills as best she could. Now her clients include criminals, locals, and some hunters from what I understand. The best thing about the good doctor is her discretion; Ludmila has a reputation for being very tightlipped, and she knows who to bribe to keep the heat off. She can take out bullets, stitch up knife or claw wounds, and never asks uncomfortable questions.

But don't expect charity work. Her services are expensive. She works for pay and will take gold or easily tradable items of value. She'll also accept medical supplies like drugs, needles and so on. I think she runs some black market trade with relatives in Russia. She does genuinely seem to care about helping people; she's just a pragmatist. I honestly don't know if she knows about hunters or monsters, since the topic never came up (I meant it when I said she never asks questions.)

Father Gyorgi

Remember my ill-fated trip to Italy? When I was finished there, I managed to get a boat to Greece. I met Father Gyorgi on Crete. What possessed me, I don't know, but I spilled a lot of my story to him over one long night. (The uzo might have helped). No one was more shocked than I when the priest listened and tried his best to offer me counsel. He did not confirm or deny the existence of monsters, at least not to me. But he did tell me that there are things on this Earth that cannot be explained by the likes of we mortals. As such, he said he felt obligated to give me spiritual advice, as it were.

Father Gyorgi has no connections with the government, no guns and no forged passports. All he can offer in the way of safety is an old cot, some fresh fish and a loaf of bread. But if you need to bend an ear, he's a good man, night or day. Look for him at the church of St. Mark, just outside of Knossos.

THE URBAN WORLD

Seeing how Europe is a fairly crowded place, largely given over to cities, I thought I'd better give some words of advice on what cities I've visited and some things to look out for. In general, big cities are an excellent place to hide and lay low. No one is going to notice one more odd-looking tourist outside the Louvre! On the other hand, cities seem to have higher concentrations of zombies. Let's take London, for example. I don't know why, but parts of the city draw monsters like flies to honey. The Waterfront is ideal for bloodsuckers; it's run down and tourists go there. What better place for night beasts to find prey? (And for us to find prey as well). The East End is rough territory, and then you've got all the weirdoes down on Oxford Street and in Soho. An interesting note for all you religious types out there is that churches are open late.

Moving on to the Continent, note that many cities, such as Paris, have excellent water transport routes along major rivers. Don't underestimate the value of a boat for getting away from monsters or the police. A few places, like my current home in Amsterdam, are relatively lawless cities where people don't give a damn what you're doing. As far as old cities like Rome, don't fall into the trap of thinking that those ancient ruins will give you a hiding place. They're not roped off, that's true, but they're also crawling with monsters. You may think you're safe only to find a hoard of creatures ready to pounce.

I just want to toss in a word about Brussels here. Admittedly I've only been there once, and a quick journey at that. But with the NATO and EU headquarters housed there, I think the city should be placed on some kind of red list. If the monsters *are* involved in politics as I suspect, they may make this a target. I did see a few zombies there, and I imagine we'll be finding more. I suggest some sort of reconnaissance team needs to make a report on Brussels, sooner than later. Any takers?

PUBS, CAFES AND BEER HALLS

Like so many things in our business, the warm, friendly pub, café or beer hall (depending on where you find yourself in Europe) is a double-edged sword. On a busy night, there's no better place to hide among locals, get a cheap bite or meet a contact. Amidst the noise, smoke and booze, you likely won't be overheard when you make a deal for that nice new Armalite. On the other hand, you *aren't* a local, and if the place is having a quiet night or the regulars are looking to put their nose in someone else's business, you're going to stand out. Use these places as you will; just be aware that they can be both an asset and a risk.

SAFETY MEYS

Since I'm chatting up the dangers and blessings of big cities, I'd better mention a few of my favourite small towns and some specialised cities that I consider safe. Granted, this information may change quickly, so keep an eye open.

Stornoway

If you are looking for a place far from walking dead and malicious monsters, you can't get much farther than the Outer Hebrides. Located on the Isle of Lewis, the population of Stornoway is maybe 6,000 — not big enough to attract the more gregarious things, but with enough population and tourist action for a hunter to lay low without attracting too much notice. Crime is light and people are generally friendly. The town is accessible by two ferries a day. The surrounding countryside is gorgeous in a desolate way, mostly peat bogs and rocky hills (a Norse raider burned away the forests centuries ago). With the open country and lots of sheep, it seems like fine shapechanger habitat, but I have yet to meet any such creature that I know of.

Heidelberg

I went to university here for a few years, so I know Heidelberg well. It's a lovely old town, where students still have duels of honour with sabres in hand. So if you do get in a fight, sans guns, you just *might* be able to talk your way out of an arrest if you say you were fighting a duel. Near the campus are dozens of shops, pensions (that's what we call B&Bs in Britain) and quite handy places to hide. There is an old castle at the highest point in the city, but it doesn't seem to harbour any ghosts. Actually, what I have noticed in my brief sojourn back to Heidelberg are some disturbing signs of goblin activity. More reports on that will be forthcoming.

Monaco

Monaco is a haven for gamblers and the socially elite. Simply put, you need money, lots of it, to go there. But if you've got plenty of quid in your pocket, you can pretty much have anything you want. And yes, I do mean anything! For any of you seaworthy hunters, hundreds of yachts dot the harbour. While stealing some shipping magnate's boat on a whim probably isn't a good idea, you might bribe the master's servants to get you to safety while the boss is spending time ashore. Be warned, though: if you appear a thug, the police will treat you like one.

Geneva

I'm not sure if any other city in Europe is as clean and tidy as Geneva. It's a marvel of city planning and plays host to the UN headquarters. There are no bums on the polished streets and you'll find people quite congenial. The whole city sits in a valley surrounded by mountains, giving the impression that nature has sheltered it from danger. In fact, Geneva is almost too perfect. Similar to Monaco, I'd advise against showing up there covered in blood. But if you're looking for a warm meal and a place to catch up on sleep, I give it my highest recommendation. And at least on my last visit, there were no signs of monsters. Any ideas why that might be?

DANGER ZONES

Since I've pointed out a few safe places, I should also give you some warnings about areas I know to be dangerous as sin.

Venice

Someone on the list once called Venice "the Italian Oubliette," and with good reason. Once you're off the train and onto a boat, you're stuck; no cabs, no getaway cars. It's far away from most other cities, so even if you get away, you've got a while before you reach another safe zone. And it's too easy to get lost in the tangle of canals. I've read about a couple of us that ended up buried in the marshes. As to what haunts this place, I've heard there are ghosts galore, some deaders and maybe some rots. It's a target-rich environment, but unless you're tired of life, don't go hunting here.

Vienna

Here's another place to have a care about. It's a beautiful city, but you can feel the creepy aura of the old town when you cross the city limits. I went there last year and saw a couple of rots, though I don't think they saw me. Other hunters have told me Vienna is absolutely crawling with monsters. Descent88 says he was staked out near the cathedral at sunset, watching for a particular vampire he'd been tracking. He looked up at gargoyles and grotesques carved along the bell towers and caught a movement. Investigating with binoculars, he claimed to see one statue *moving*. He described it as large and humanoid, with huge wings, but it looked like rough-carved stone. Several others joined it, and they flew off into the night.

Summer Isles

While Stornoway may be a lovely place to hide, there's another group of islands off the west coast of Scotland I should warn you against. The Summer Isles seem to be a haven for pagans and perhaps even epic beasts. I was on a private ferry when a storm forced us to beach there overnight. I had chicken skin from the moment I stepped ashore. The ferryman told me to stay in the inn and not venture out, no matter what I heard or saw from my window. Naturally, I did no such thing. The moon was full when I climbed down the ivy and crept along the path I'd spotted behind the inn. There, in a grove of trees — I think they may have been rowans — I saw about a dozen locals, naked, dancing in some sort of vile celebration. Needless to say, I was quite outnumbered, so I didn't act that night. Next morning, I crept back to the inn at dawn, only to find the ferryman ready to set sail then and there. These islands are highly placed on my list of things to investigate.

Schwarzwald

The beauty of the fir and spruce woodlands known as Schwarzwald, or Black Forest, is known worldwide. But these gorgeous German woodlands harbour many beasts, if our fellows there are to be believed (and the scars I've seen are all the proof I need). Some have described "spiritual presences" among the trees, incorporeal yet oppressive. I've also heard accounts of massive wolves — nothing natural.



COSMOS AND KINSHIP AMONG THE KURDS

Anne Cummings, Ph.D.

Most curious is the belief that the devil himself is imprisoned in a tomb somewhere in the basin that was once the Aral Sea. This belief is especially common among the pastoral groups who have been forced to take refuge on the margins of the basin, well within the territory exposed by the water's retreat.

According to Fatma [see kinship tables], the devil's resting place is deep in the salt flats, no less than two days' jeep ride from the refugee encampment. "He has always been there," she told me. "And now that the lake is dead, he is watching us with one eye open. When the other eye opens, he will eat us."

As previously noted, the refugees do not conform to Islamic orthodoxy, but seem to have a more Yezidic bent. However, unlike the Yezidees, these people refer to the force of ontological evil as "Minos, who is the son of Arikel." No amount of questioning would convince my informants to say anything more concerning "Arikel," but the name seems to indicate a Semitic origin.

Sadly, that was my last conversation with Fatma, who was killed by Iranian troops sent across the border to disperse the encampment.

TALES FROM THE FIELD

I have just a few more titbits to mention here, some things I'm still interested in keeping tabs about. If anyone wants to assist, let me know and we can arrange a meeting. Likewise, I'll send in updates reports as events warrant.

GHOST WALKS

If you've been to any major British city, you've seen these quaint little tourist stops, the infamous ghost walks. London must have tenscore, counting all the ones down in Whitechapel. A lot of semi-skilled actors take on these jobs, leading around batches of foreigners, telling ghost stories, scaring little kids and sometimes their parents too. Of course, not all the stories are false. In York, the tour goes past a home where a young girl jumped to her death. Perhaps it was a trick of the eyes, but I swear I saw her standing just outside the

window where she died. It may be that we can find some allies among those who lead the ghost walks; they might have some insights that could be useful.

CEILIDHS

Descent88 may a bit extreme, but his concerns about Ireland are no joke. Not unlike the Summer Isles, it seems to be home to a number of goblins and epic beasts. And for whatever reason, musical revels seem to draw out the supernatural. Perhaps free-flowing drinks bring images of legendary creatures to suggestible minds, but Descent and others are insistent. Maybe music and dance resemble an old form of pagan worship? Maybe the frenzied activity throws off a psychic energy that attracts these things. Or perhaps it's curiosity on the creatures' part.

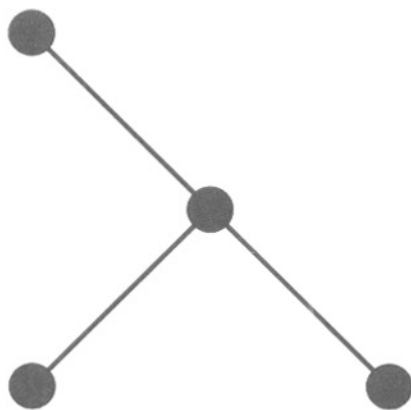
DREAMS OF STONE

I've had a number of dreams and brief flashes of some odd monoliths. I'm not sure where they are, but I do get an impression of light rising behind them, perhaps at dawn. They look nothing like the standing stones or caerns of the British Isles or Brittany. There are always three monoliths with many sharp points; they look like they may have been carved, yet the colours of the stones are strange, some kind of blue, and green moss with red streaks. Has anyone seen these?

TALISMANS

A late acquaintance of mine was following some leads on some sort of magical device that could supposedly raise the dead. Some sources mentioned a cauldron, others a chalice or grail. Mind you, this doesn't seem to be a strictly European phenomenon — devices that can raise the dead, that is — but there are an inordinate number of related legends through the Continent. The chalice and grail thing *does* seem unique to our Celtic and Teutonic mythologies.

My acquaintance was absolutely convinced this device was responsible for all the zombies we've seen. Besides cataloguing legends and rumours about resurrection objects, he followed reports of walking dead sightings in hopes of finding a pattern, or maybe even who was responsible for their creation. I suppose that someone was tipped off, because he never returned. I tried to pick up the trail, but no joy. What do you all think? Is there such an item, and if so who wields it? If it exists, tell me. I want to avenge my friend.





HTML site: [HTTP://www.hunter-net.org/huntersurvivalguide/](http://www.hunter-net.org/huntersurvivalguide/)

Email Program

Subject: North America

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

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GENERAL INFO

Well, since you foreigners seem to think it's so important, and since no one else is really stepping forward to do it, I guess I can. Just so you know, I'm not some punk ass with a big mouth. I'll let you know why I think I can talk about all of North America. I'm a salesman — I guess it doesn't really matter what I sell, you don't care, and if this list isn't safe I shouldn't put up any clues anyhow. But I move around a lot, selling my thing to factories all over the US, Canada and Mexico too.

Mostly, I guess I want to clear up some misperceptions about North America, so that any visitors from other countries don't get the wrong idea and get into even worse trouble than we're all in already. Since I'm from the US, I guess I'll start with that.

The government in the US is a democracy, so we can all vote, though not a lot of us do. The problem is that most people vote based on commercials, so the politician with the best commercials, and the most of them, usually wins. That takes money, so most politicians are trying to raise money all the time. The best way to do this is by doing favors for big corporations. So while the corporations can't vote, they still have a lot of power. I don't know how often you'll need to know that, but those of you in non-democracies should know that corruption happens here. (Generally, I'd say the corruption is worse in Mexico, better in the U.S. Some places in the States are really bad though — Washington DC and especially New Orleans have dirty cops all over the place.)

INS — that's Immigration and Naturalization Service — is pretty busy, and they try to be thorough. If you want to live or work in the US, you need a visa or a green card. They're easier to get if you're educated and white, or if you're from Europe. If you're a foreign national and you're caught without a visa, green card or passport, you can be locked up and deported. However, you're unlikely to get asked for a green card if you're white. If you're Hispanic, you better have this taken care of. Chinese people used to be able to get political amnesty pretty easy, but they've really tightened it up since that "Long Sen" thing in 1993.

From what I've seen, the INS isn't too heavy with *them*, but the border patrol around Mexico has a lot of the daytimers — the ones who've been pumped up with blood and are all strong and tough. I guess *they* are watching something in Mexico and sure don't want it sneaking into the States. What they're watching for I couldn't say.

>>>more

CHAPTER 6: NORTH AMERICA

<<<<continued

THE UNITED STATES LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement is pretty state of the art in most American cities. The cops have got fingerprint kits and DNA tests that can track you down from a single hair or drop of blood — if they have your DNA on file. They got computers in their cars, so if they see your license plate they know who you are and what your record is. They have guns and SWAT teams too, and if you kill a cop they will hunt you like a wild animal. If they even *think* you killed a cop, they will frame you for something. This happens — maybe not in *your* neighborhood, Potter116, but it happens in mine, and if you can't afford Johnny Cochrane, you're shit out of luck.

If you're dealing with a uniformed cop, be respectful. I haven't met a cop yet — black, white or bright fucking green — willing to tolerate a smartass. If you give them any reason at all to be pissed, they will haul you in. If you're black or Mexican, sometimes that's a reason. Anyhow, the only thing I find that works is: keep your head down, say "yes sir" and "no sir" and do exactly what they tell you to do, how they tell you to do it. Don't move fast and always keep your hands where they can see them.

Cops in the US have to read you your rights. If they don't say "You have the right to remain silent, you have the right to an attorney" and the rest of it — then the arrest doesn't

count. It's like the magic words they have to say before they arrest you. If you can prove they didn't read you your rights, you got a good chance of getting out of the slam. Of course, cops also hate that shit, so they'll watch you like a hawk, but you won't be in jail.

One guy I know in DC who isn't on the list says there are a lot of "blood buddies" on the force there. I don't have that better sight that lets you pick out the hiding ones like flickers, so I'm just taking his word. He says it's not most of them — maybe only one or two percent of the beat cops. But he said he hasn't gone into a DC precinct yet that didn't have at least one — and it only takes one bad cop to make your life a world of shit.

Local cops are bad enough, but if you travel to a different state after doing a crime, you might get the FBI chasing you. The FBI also gets in on it if you kidnap someone, and they're in charge of serial killers (which is probably what they'll think we are). I haven't seen an FBI agent myself, that I know of, but I knew a guy whose cousin got arrested by them. He said they tapped the cousin's phones and put an undercover agent on him and followed him around for a month, all to catch him stealing maybe a couple of computers from the shipping company he worked at. These people do not give up. They have lots of time, lots of money, and unlike most of us, they're getting paid for it. So don't let yourself be seen, don't leave any physical evidence at the site, wipe everything you touch, and pray.

There's also the ATF and the DEA — that's "Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms" and "Drug Enforcement Agency." If you're coming up from South America, the DEA might give you some beef, but as long as you don't actually have drugs they'll probably let you go. If you *do* have drugs, they will fuck you up, period. The stories I know from people getting arrested all say the DEA are the meanest sons of bitches they've met. They're jumpy, they like big guns, and they aren't shy about drawing down. But if it's not drugs, they don't care. You can be ripping off old ladies, raping kiddies or stealing cars — no problem. But if they find a reefer seed in your car, they'll wreck your world.

The ATF are like the DEA, only they're after illegal guns instead of illegal drugs. They are a *problem*, since if you don't have one of those glowing swords or death fog powers, you're probably packing — and if you're using a gat, you're leaving ballistic evidence. Any law enforcement agency can match up a bullet with the gun that fired it. Shotguns are safer, but only as long as you don't leave the spent cartridges at the scene: those can be traced too. Just so you know, it's illegal to own any shotgun where the barrel has been shortened. Fully automatic weapons are illegal in the States too, unless you get a special license for them. But to get that license, you need to have your fingerprints on file, and your picture, and you have to agree to let the Feds search your house any time they feel like it, without probable cause or a warrant.

TRAVEL

Travel in the U.S. is damn simple if you're driving. You get in the car and you go there. No checkpoints, no questionnaires, no passport needed. No car? You can take the bus or train without having your bags searched. Okay, the trains don't go everywhere and the busses are pretty slow, but you're still free to move around. If you're flying, I wouldn't try to take a gun anywhere. Even if it's in stowed luggage, the airline authorities will notice things and ask questions, and who needs that kind of bullshit?

RELIGION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

Subject: Churches in North America

This is for Tarjiman220. Yes, if you travel to America you can find a mosque, though I don't know if it will be Sunni or not. I'm Church of Christ, myself.

You don't have to worry about your religion getting you in trouble much here. If someone's going to kick your ass, they're going to call you a sand nigger while they do it. It'll be a race thing, not a religion thing. They say the U.S. was founded on freedom of religion, and to most people that means they don't have to think about it. Lots of Americans go to a church to get baptized, married and shoved in the ground. Others go every Sunday and don't think much about it for the rest of the week — that's probably the majority. But there's a few with real faith who are doing it every day.

GANG MEMBERS CARRY SILVER BULLETS

by Stephen Zien
Special to the Tribune

Members of the South Side's notorious "Stone Crips" gang have started carrying silver bullets. The source of this latest gang affectation is unclear, but the symbolism is not.

"You carry the shot for the man with the beast in his heart," said one Stone Crip, speaking anonymously. "The evil that walks in the shape of a man, but a wolf with a badge [is] still a wolf." Other Stone Crips agree, stating that the silver bullets — also known as "Lone Rangers" or simply "the shot" — are lucky.

Lt. John Schaeffer has been on the South Side Gang Task Force for two years, and isn't worried about the claims or the ammunition.

"This werewolf business is just more inflammatory rhetoric. As for the bullets themselves, they're only a status symbol — like an expensive car or flashy jewelry. They're a macho, ugly way to show off wealth."

Yaphett Short, a South Side resident, insists that the special shells "aren't a gang thing."

"I ain't in a gang. I don't have gang tattoos or throw signs but I got a silver shot," he stated, showing me the single silver shell loaded into the magazine of his Ruger semi-automatic. "It's the put-down bullet, second from the top of the clip. If you don't put them down with the first two shots, then you need it." When asked why he didn't load his

gun with all silver bullets, Short smiled and said, "Silver's expensive. And if the put-down shot don't do it, you ain't gonna shoot no more anyway."

Regardless of the symbolism, silver shots are becoming a small but lucrative business on the South Side. Henry Mullins, a local gunsmith, said the first request surprised him, but he now sells up to a dozen boxes of silver bullets a month.

"Silver tipped hollow points have been on the market for a while," he notes. "It's a soft metal, so it mushrooms up good on impact. I never sold them though, until one guy came in and asked specifically for silver bullets. Weird thing is, when I mentioned that I could order them ready made, he sounded surprised. He was ready to give me a silver necklace to melt down."

While Lt. Schaeffer isn't too worried about silver bullets, he has voiced concerns about gang interest in unconventional ammunition.

"Last week we arrested a woman who had a case of 25mm phosphorous ammunition in the trunk of her car," he said. "I don't care about silver bullets, but when I see that kind of nasty firepower, I worry about what could

(Continued on page 30A)

Oh, and I just thought of something. Don't get confused between your kind of Islam and the Nation of Islam, because the two are very different. The Nation of Islam is a bunch of black Americans who think that white people are evil genetic mutants — no lie. It's as much a political thing as a religious thing. I've met some angry brothers who were very into the Nation, and one of them got the Call, too. Way he heard it was "DESTROY ALL MONSTERS," and that means whitey too.

In fact, I've run across all kinds of people who've gotten the Call and have tied it to some weird religion or another. We've all heard from that guy in Thailand about how this is just the natural expression of "God's Will on Earth." I've also met with Atherians and Unariuns who say the same — only instead of the Holy Spirit, the Atherians talk about Aetherius. Who the hell knows? This George King guy heard a voice from Venus while washing dishes in 1954? Sounds like the Call to me, only with more answers and no headache. As for the "Unarius students," they don't like being called a "religion" but their leader calls herself "Archangel Uriel" and says she used to be Confucius, Socrates, Henry VIII and Benjamin Franklin. It sounds like horseshit to me (no offense to any believers out there), but I saw an Atherian blow up a flicker with something that cracked every window on the block and set off car alarms for half a mile. The official police explanation was a pipe bomb.

NOTES FROM INDIAN LAND

Pueblo Daily Rocket

by Herbert MacDonald

My final bit of news fills me with optimism for the New Year. As most of you Din'eh already know, two of the coyotes who have been causing such trouble for the reservation flocks were found dead last week near Tecnaz-Pas. The animals had apparently killed one another, perhaps in a territorial duel.

According to tradition, their pelts were burned in order to prevent misuse by unscrupulous individuals. Although Tribal President Howard was quick to ask the men who found the dead animals for the trophies, the Tribal Council was sorry to inform him that they had already been destroyed.

Let us hope 1981 brings us more news of this type!

Ya-ta-hay,

Herbert MacDonald

PENETRATION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

Subject: Nashua Weirdness

I just got out of Nashua NH, home of Cleaner221. I'll admit that I thought he was crazy too when he started posting about the flicker woman in the VR helmet blowing up cars with a remote control, and the guy who was spreading a trail of fire behind him when he waltzed with her. I should have known better.

In person, Cleaner seemed okay. His name was Gene Regent — doesn't matter now. He told me he'd been watching the pair of them for some time, and that they kept poking around this new company called Image Data. He worked the night cleaning shift at an office building in the same area, so he saw the two of them going in late, and he saw them mess up a group of maybe four security guards with the fire and all that.

So Image Data is trying to sell this thing to stores where they put a screen by the cash register, and when you write a check or use a credit card, it flashes your picture. They're buying the pictures from drivers license bureaus, and Regent said they've gotten a bunch of money from the Feds and the Secret Service. He was really bugging over the whole thing — kept talking about Big Brother and how hard it would make it for anyone to have privacy. Of course he didn't like it a bit when he saw that Image Data is thick with flickers, on top of the dancer and the computer girl. (I know, he didn't post about this. He didn't get a chance before he died, and I was busy getting the hell out of Dodge.)

We decided we'd take out the woman first, since he thought she was more dangerous. The first time he showed her to me, I was like "No way!" She looked normal, even to the Sight. I started to think, maybe this guy is just batshit, been smelling too much cleaning solution, when suddenly I got this headache like a spike through my brain. I grabbed my head, and I heard that Voice saying SHE IS ONE and when I looked up everything was all white and kind of blurry, and the street sign near her house said "WORLDBUILDER." Then I blinked and it said "Vanderbilt" again, and I still had a headache and a fucking nosebleed, but I started to believe my man Regent.

Bookworm55 seemed straight when he said the flickers don't like to do their thing when there's people around, so we set out to take her down in daylight. Regent had broken into his uncle's house, stolen a long rifle with a sight and two pistols. We were careful. We wore gloves when we loaded the guns, so we wouldn't leave prints on the brass parts. We drove his car through the woods so that there'd be mud all over the license plates. We even put on these fake-ass beards before the driveby. He'd been watching her, so he knew where she lived, where she usually parked going to work. We practiced the drive a few times the night before, knew when the traffic lights would change. We just hoped there wouldn't be too many bystanders.

We drove up slow, poked the rifle out the passenger window and got one good shot in her back before she knew what was happening. Then everyone started screaming like crazy, and I switched guns while she fell. She was on the sidewalk, real close to the street, so I pulled out a pistol to finish the job. That's when shit went wrong. She had this thing from her purse — I think it was a fucking TV remote. She pointed it at me, and when I shot at her the gun blew up in my hand. Lucky I had my hand out the window, so I wasn't bleeding all over the insides of the car.

Regent stopped the car and backed up, even though we were supposed to be getting away. I just shoved my hand in my armpit, and then I saw he was going to run her over. The bitch stood up and started running — with a bullet right through her spine. I don't know what Regent did then — he said "No you don't" or something and she stopped right in

place. We were over the sidewalk and driving on someone's lawn, so we didn't really smash into her — more like he knocked her down and drove over her with the tire. Crazy bastard wanted to go over her again to make sure, but I told him to get his ass out of there. He managed to get the back tire over her stomach while turning back to the street. I don't think she lived.

We were lucky. We were close to the edge of town, so we could go hide the car in the woods, where we'd left my renter. My hand was healing itself. We threw the guns in the river, except for the pistol we hadn't fired. Since we didn't hit her too hard, we didn't worry about paint from the car being on her body, or about there being blood on the bumper. But the tires had to go — there were definitely tread marks on the lawn and on her. So we took the tires off his car and put them on the rental, rotating them around. Then we washed his car up, so any cops wouldn't be suspicious.

It took us a couple hours to get all that shit done, by which time the radio had news of the "tragedy." We split up, taking both cars back, and I wanted to stop by my hotel and get some different clothes. (Stupid — I should have brought them along.) When I'd done that, I went to his apartment and knocked on the door. His car was out front, but there was no answer. That's when I heard something from inside his house — like a rattling kind of sound. I tried the door and it was unlocked. I didn't have a gun with me, but I put on the Sight and went in.

Regent was lying on the floor of his kitchen, and he was covered with big black rats. One was half in his mouth, and that's why he wasn't screaming. He was thrashing like hell, but there were more rats pouring out of the corners, coming down the hall, dropping out of the light fixtures and going at him. Standing over him, watching, was this motherfucker in a black tank top — and he was tap dancing! The rats weren't touching him at all, and he was fucking dancing. It was like, with every tap, another rat would show up, or a rat would bite at Regent. The dancer was talking at Regent, real low hissing about "You killed her fast but you're gonna die slow." Then I walked in and he looked up and click click, started dancing in a different rhythm, and all the rats turned and looked at me.

Regent had put the other gun in this gym bag, and I saw that on the table, so I went for it as the rats started jumping at me. The dancer, he was just laughing. I got the bag as the rats started on my legs, and they were climbing over each other to get higher up on me. I've seen rats before, and some big ones too, but these were huge, long as my forearm, and not scared of people like most are. These were like attack dogs, biting all over my legs. I'm kicking and shouting at them,

while the fucker in the tank top just laughs and dances. I got the gun out and fired it at him, which just made him laugh harder — it was like he was just floating along on the floor, never where I was shooting. The rats were all over my legs, I couldn't stand and I kind of fell back into one of Regent's chairs, still shooting and missing.

He'd started talking at me now, about how the witnesses saw a black shooter in the car. He came closer and I kept missing, and the tapping got louder and louder. By the time the gun was empty he was right in front of me. I was trying to back away, but the rats were everywhere I was trying to put my feet, I couldn't get out of the chair and then he jumped up and planted one of his fucking tap shoes right in my face. I could taste the blood, but I also heard the Voice go GET HIM BACK. That's when I tagged him with a punch that was way stronger than I could normally do. His head jerked and his face was bleeding. He grinned and looked crazy, and he was talking crazy too, saying "Let's get vulgar!"

He spun around and there were flames shooting out of his hands and feet, and suddenly things went wrong. I don't think I did it. Maybe the Voice was still around and was sick of him. I don't know.

All I know is that suddenly the tapping got real loud, and as he spun it was like he was coming apart. Like when you pull a wing off a cooked chicken — his arms and legs coming apart, and fire coming out instead of blood. He screamed something about a pair of something, then fell down, burning and dead.

As soon as he was dead, the rats started taking off. I didn't even want to look at my legs — I hoped they'd be fixed up soon enough, hoped that whatever makes me heal so fast could take care of rabies too. I just left the apartment, ran to the car and drove away.

So whatever's going on at Image Data may still be going on. I had a flight to catch, and Regent didn't know about any other hunters in the area. If you're up that way, don't reply, don't tell me shit. Maybe that's how they found Regent, how the dancer knew where to find him. In case they're reading this, don't warn them. Just go.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

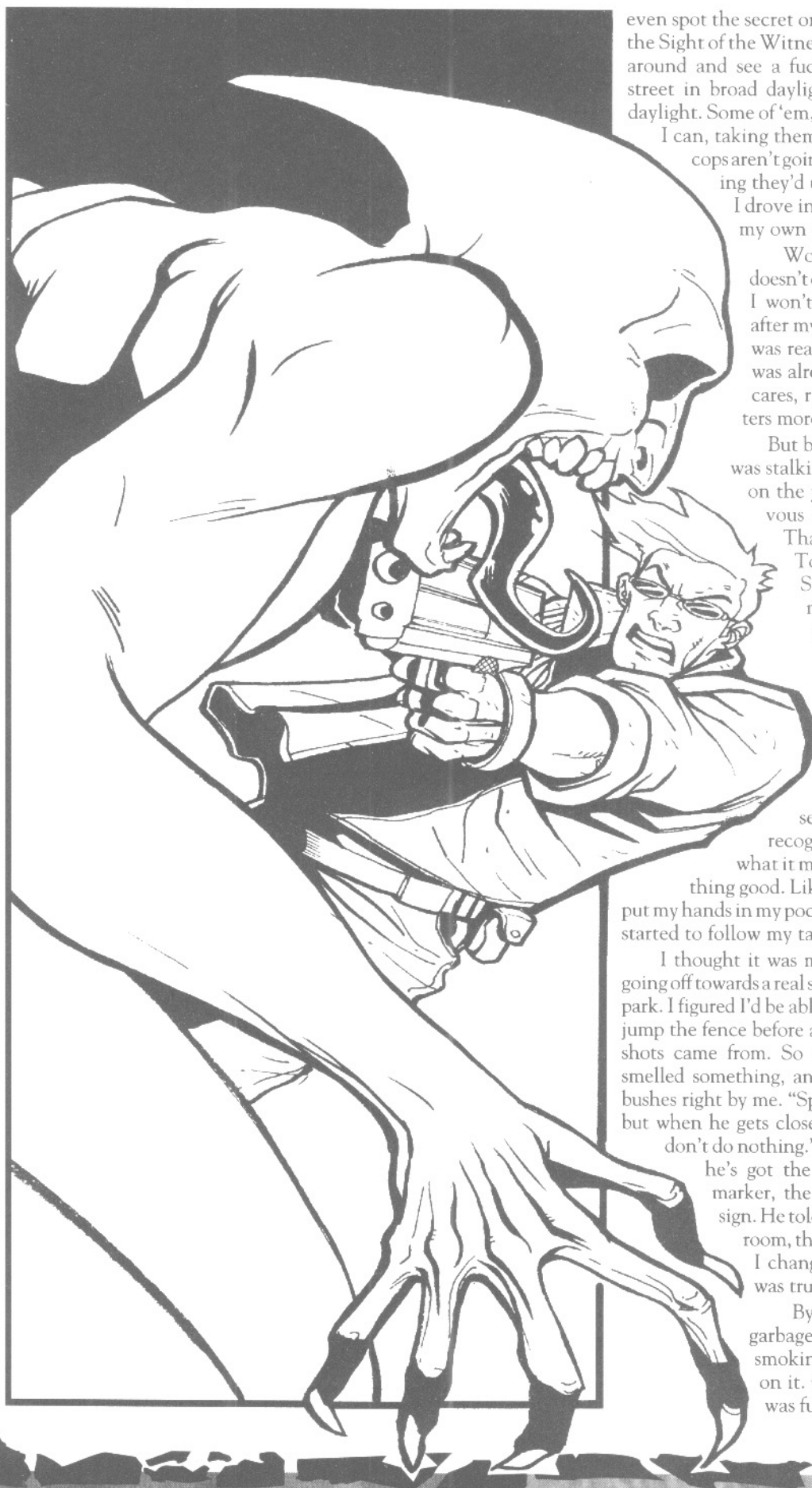
Subject: St. Louis

St. Louis is in bad shape, people. Any of you who can get down there and poke around ought to do it — don't know when I'll be back there, but I'll try to make it. The town's got rots like flies on dogshit. Damn shame that concealed carry law got defeated down there.

It's frustrating when you don't live there and can't make a careful plan and don't know anyone. After one real bad headache recently, I found that when I put the Sight on I can

DAMNED LIES AND STATISTICS

Every statistic you read is a lie. The Forces in power know people are followers, like sheep. After all, they've culled everyone who stands out and thinks for himself. We want to be with the herd, so they produce statistics to lead us along, disguising themselves as the Will of the People. The only thing you can learn from statistics is what the Forces want us to think. Send \$2 and a SASE To: Statistics, 735 Park North Boulevard, Suite 128, Clarkston GA 30021 for more information on the fight for your minds.



even spot the secret ones now — what God45 calls the Sight of the Witness, I guess. So now I can drive around and see a fucking rot walking down the street in broad daylight. (Yes, they can walk by daylight. Some of 'em, anyhow.) So I try to do what

I can, taking them out at random. At least the cops aren't going to find any "motive." Nothing they'd understand anyhow. At least I drove in to St. Louis, so I could bring my own damn guns.

Work wasn't going well, but that doesn't even bother me anymore. Shit, I won't front: work started to slide after my divorce, and getting imbued was really the flush for a career that was already in the crapper. But who cares, right? What we're doing matters more than any slave job anyhow.

But back to the rots in St. Louis. I was stalking this one after another day on the job, and I started to get nervous because it was getting dark.

That's when I saw him pull up by Tower Grove park and get out. So I was thinking this might be my chance. I checked my guns, put on my gloves and got out of the car, and then I saw something on the park sign.

It was one of those symbols people have been talking about — the ones Crystal23 put up. I don't know ... it made me feel better to

see it. I don't know why we recognize them. I don't even know what it means to me, other than something good. Like someone's on my side. So I

put my hands in my pockets and put the Sight on and started to follow my target.

I thought it was my lucky night, cause he was going off towards a real secluded part at the back of the park. I figured I'd be able to do him quick, run off and jump the fence before anyone even knew where the shots came from. So I was getting ready when I smelled something, and this guy comes out of the bushes right by me. "Spare change, buddy?" he asks, but when he gets close he says "They watching — don't do nothing." I look down at his hand, and

he's got the mark written on it with a marker, the same symbol from the park sign. He told me to meet him by the men's room, that it was safe over that way. So I changed course, wondering why I was trusting this nasty old bum.

By the men's room there was a garbage can that looked like it was smoking, there were so many flies on it. Getting closer, I could see it was full of dead squirrels and chip-

munks and birds and shit — all these little dead animals. They looked nasty, and not just the ones on the bottom that were rotting out. Even the top ones, which hadn't been dead long — they had bulgy eyes or they were mangy or something. I swear to God, one big squirrel on the top had *fangs*, not normal flat teeth.

The bum met me and caught me staring. He smiled and said the animals were the eyes of the dead. "She feed them her blood and they get all twisted like *her*. But I been taking them down, day by day. Soon she be day-blind and I'll have my park back." I asked what "her" and he said "a dead thing." Then I asked him how he'd found out, and he said an angel had come down and showed him the truth and he'd gotten himself sobered up so he could fight the dead things. I told him I'd heard the same angel and that I was ready to help him take both of them down. He looked a little nervous and I showed him the guns.

So the two of us skulked off towards where we'd left the rot, and (against my better judgment) I gave him a gat. I still had the Sight on, but we heard them before we got there. The two rots were bitching at each other! The man was saying something about how "We're the future, so get used to the law of day." She was yelling back, calling him an upstart and saying she had a secret weapon he couldn't dream of. That was when we got close and I could see her. She was one ugly bitch, all rotted away and covered with pus and dripping with every kind of skanky shit. So she points at the other guy, who could at least pass for alive, and a bunch of rats come pouring out of the shadows to gnaw at him. (I don't know what it is with rats — maybe it's something the rots taught the flickers, or vice versa?) It didn't seem to bother him much, though, cause he grabbed the corner of this picnic table and launched it at her the way I'd throw a frisbee. After that, the two of them just started whaling on each other. I was going to sit back and watch them go at it, come in and clean up the loser, but bum-boy charged in with the pistol, hoping to get a two-for-one, screaming about Jesus, so I had to back him.

He holed both of 'em at least once before they noticed him, and when they did the skanky rot just twisted and gnawed the other one's head off. She looked up at the bum and threw the head into his chest like a basketball, hard enough to knock him over. I can't be sure, but I think the other rot kept clobbering her even *without its head*. I put one right into her throat and then the rats were coming at me, and these were even worse than the flicker's rats because they were all sick and raggedy and fucking *hungry*.

Out the corner of my eye I saw the bum stand up with the cleave thing coming out of his hand, and the skank had time to say "You're one too?" before he hacked down on her like a tomahawk dunk. I was busy rolling on rats. By the time I was done with them, he was going over the chopped up corpses. Me, I wouldn't have touched them with a ten-foot pole — she looked chock full of AIDS and Ebola, but he came up with her nasty smelling purse. I was kind of antsy about sticking around, but he said the cops never came around the park, probably because of her. I said that if he wanted to look at that shit, he could do it in my hotel room after a meal and a shower.

So what we found was that the woman rot had about fifty bucks, no ID, a bunch of things that looked like credit cards

and a big ring of keys. She also had a little toolkit that looked like it was for electrical repair maybe, and a notebook written in some kind of code or foreign language or something. The only thing that made sense was the last page. It was one of the symbols, *our* symbols, with a question mark after it. Only I didn't get any sense of rightness looking at it. It's weird. I'm not sure — but I don't think it was written by one of us. I think it was just copied.

The guy rot had even less stuff: forty dollars, brass knuckles and a worn, faded out love letter from 1992. Anyone from Indiana who wants to check out the sender, let me know and I'll send her name and address privately.

While I was checking that out, the bum made a discovery. One of the plastic cards said "St. Louis Psychiatric Rehabilitation Center" on it. I didn't like the sound of that, especially once I found a schedule of visiting hours taped inside the notebook. So we made a plan. I had to leave the next afternoon, for absolute sure. The bum didn't know any other hunters in the area, and neither of us liked the sound of that "secret weapon" and "you're one too?" talk. So we decided to try and get into the hospital the next day, in case one of us was being kept there.

We took a pass by the hospital at night. I saw at least two rots go in — one tall gaunt woman and one real pretty boy white guy. Also, at least three people working there were blood slaves.

The next day I got the bum a haircut and said we were going to pass him off as a college professor who knew what the symbol meant. He was going to claim it was from ancient Schechem (we got the name from the Gideon Bible) and ask to see who'd drawn it. We'd pretend like I was a blood bunny (hoping they didn't have any way to recognize each other) who'd found him out, and we'd act like he didn't know what was going on. If we found the other hunter (or hunters), we'd try to smooth talk them out. Failing that, we'd get drastic. The bum knew the layout of the joint — turned out he'd spent some time there drying out once or twice — and said there weren't more than a dozen armed cops on the grounds. Yeah, great.

The card thing got us in surprisingly easy, but once we got off the elevator for the secure ward, we ran into some trouble. There was a security guard right there, and he wouldn't let us go any further without permission. So I tried to lay some gas on him by turning to the bum and saying, "Show him the letter" but the bum was too fucking stupid to get it. So I had to play off his "What letter?" by saying "The letter you got sent asking about the symbol." Then we were going at it like the Wayans brothers while the guard is looking more and more suspicious.

Then the bum's inability to act actually started to help us, when I saw him looking over my shoulder with his eyes getting wide and scared. I turned around and saw a doctor standing there frowning. Looking with the Witness Sight, I got a flash of him sucking blood out of the skank woman's thigh. "Doctor Leo," I said, reading it off his name tag. "I'm so glad you're here to clear up this misunderstanding." He glared at me, asked if I knew him and I said "We met once, don't you recall? A friend of ours from the park introduced us..." His eyes narrowed and his lip curled. "I think I might ... and what does *she* want?" I

started gassing him about how she'd asked me to find someone who could identify the symbol. He looked startled at that. "What do you know about it?"

"Let me guess: the patient who drew it was just a normal, everyday type person, who suddenly starts going apeshit about monsters and hearing 'the Call' and voices and stuff, right?"

"Perhaps we should discuss this in my office," he said, nodding to the security guard.

I thought about pulling the gun on him in the office, but thought I might as well bluff it farther. "Well, Doctor Gideon here has seen that symbol before," I said, nodding at the bum. "In Shechem," he said, nodding. And then there was this go-around with Leo not wanting us to meet the patient, and us insisting, and him wanting us to say what the symbol was all about first, and us not wanting to, and then the bum actually surprised me. He asked for a piece of paper and wrote on it, then asked the doctor to read the word. Now, the doc was starting to get pissed, but the bum insisted, so he said "wind" as in, blowing air. And the bum said, "No, I wrote wind, like you wind a watch." And the doctor said he couldn't know which meaning it had just from the one word. And the bum tapped the symbol and said "so you *do* see why we have to talk to the patient."

Leo knew he was beat, but still wouldn't let us talk to her alone (that's how I found out it was a "her"). I asked if she was dangerous, and he said "Not to us, let's hope!" I didn't like the sound of that.

Walking to her cell, he told me what a pain in the ass it had been to have her committed: her parents were divorced and it was hard to get them to agree to lock her up, especially since she later recanted on her first statement. But (and here he winked at me) he said it was pretty easy to provoke a few more psychotic episodes to wear down their resistance.

She didn't look like much: a scrawny eighteen-year-old white girl from the suburbs. Doc Leo introduced us by our fake names and said her name was Yolanda Cardaras. So I smiled at her, trying to think how to let her know we were on her side, when the bum held up a piece of paper with his symbol on it and said "Do you recognize this, sweetheart?" She cracks open this big, glassy eyed smile and says something about it's the sign of conviction. She turned to Leo and

said "They're like me! They've heard the Call too!" Dr. Leo starts to look mad, Yolanda's blathering something about the crusade against the law of day, and I figure everything's turning to shit. I try to draw my gat, but crazy Yolanda—it's like she knew what I was going to do before I did it — bitch jumped over the table and knocked me down. Dr. Leo's yelling for the guards while Doctor Bum's getting out the Cleaver and trying to go to town.

When my head cracked against the floor, that was it, I was pissed. I know, Yolanda's "one of us" and some of you don't think we should fight anything but dead things, but she was brainwashed or something and I was mostly thinking about a dozen armed guards in the building, so I tagged her. While she was yelping and holding her eye, I punched her in the gut. She had her hand on the butt of my gun. She was biting and clawing, but I just kept pounding her. Shit, it was ugly. She was just a girl, really, but she wouldn't let go of the gun until I'd knocked her flat out. By that time Doctor

Leo had the bum down and was bugging on him — biting and screaming — just as the guard showed up. I put my gun to Leo's head and said "Drop it!" and the guard did, right before Leo smacked my hand away and went for my throat. Shouldn't have turned his back on the bum, who still had the Cleaver and slashed out his legs with it. The guard was bending down to get his gun while I was grabbing mine, so I shot at him and missed. He ran and so did we.

THE TRUTH ABOUT JARED SHOEMAKER!

GRETCHEN MAGGS WAS ARRESTED FOR MURDER AND CLAIMED THAT HER VICTIM WAS A DEMON. SHE NEVER HAD ANY CRIMINAL RECORD OR HISTORY OF VIOLENCE BEFORE THAT. WAS SHE JUST A NUT? IF SO, HOW COME SHE DIED IN AN ASYLUM AFTER ONLY FIVE DAYS OF TREATMENT?

JARED SHOEMAKER WENT ON TV AND SAID HE COULD DO MIRACLES AND FIGHT DEMONS. ONLY DAYS LATER, HE WAS ARRESTED ON TRUMPED UP CHARGES AND DIED ESCAPING FROM PRISON.

THESE TWO PEOPLE DIED TELLING THE TRUTH, AND THEY AREN'T THE ONLY ONES.

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— A COMPUTER ENHANCEMENT OF SHOEMAKER'S WGN DEMONSTRATION, PROVING HE DIDN'T FAKE IT!

— ADDITIONAL PROOF OF THE DIOBALICAL CONSPIRACY THAT RULES US ALL.

— KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. LEARN ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE TERRIFIED YOU'LL FIND!

***FOR SECURITY PURPOSES, THE PRESENTER'S REAL NAME HAS BEEN CHANGED.**

The bum was pretty wrecked, but he insisted that I take him back to the park — said the “angel” would take care of him. I almost dragged him back home with me, but he wouldn’t hear of it, got crazy and said the park was his and he wasn’t going to give it up to the “law of day” or to the dead things or to anyone at all. So I left him with the rest of my traveling money and got the hell out of town. I came right home and wrote this, but I had some time on the road to think about what was going on down there. Here’s what I think.

1) There’s some kind of fight going on between two different types of rots, one calling themselves the “law of day.”

2) The other rots — I’ll call them the “law of night” — know something about the imbued and are planning on using us as their weapon against the law of day. They’ve got Yolanda brainwashed in that crazy house. The bum said she wasn’t a blood slave, so that’s something anyhow. They may have more.

3) They can’t know too much about us, since we don’t even know much about us.

4) They’ve had about six hours by the time you read this. I don’t know if they’ve moved Yolanda or not. If I was them, I would.

CANADA

GOVERNMENT, LAWS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Canada’s a democracy, sort of like the US, only their Prime Minister isn’t as powerful as our President, and their Senate is appointed instead of elected. Not that any of you are likely to need to know that.

What you need to know about is the RCMP — the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who are in charge of the biggest part of Canadian law enforcement. Forget Dudley Do-Right. The RCMP are cops, just like cops anywhere, except their authority covers everything everywhere. In the US, you can dodge a local warrant by skipping across a state line, and you don’t have to worry about the DEA if you don’t have drugs, but the RCMP are Canada’s one-stop shop for criminal ball-breaking.

One area of particular interest is the Canadian fascination with gun control. Handgun licensing is very restrictive — takes forever, costs a fortune, gets the cops paying attention to you. Recently they’ve passed a law that every gun in the country has to be licensed, so the hard task of getting a gat in the Great White North is going to become harder and more expensive.

The good news about Canada is that they’ve got socialized medicine — so when you show up at an ER, the first question is “What the hell happened to your arm?” not “You’ve got insurance, right?” You can get patched up on the government dime any time you get bashed up. If you want elective surgery, I guess that’s a whole different story. You don’t see so many women with breast implants up north. Boo hoo.

That’s not to say that there isn’t paperwork and that they don’t try to keep track of who you are. But it’s easier to deal with than in the U.S., and you don’t have to fuck with it until after you get helped. In the U.S., you have to cope with that shit while they’re sewing you up, if not before. The big exception is gunshot wounds, of course. Just like every-

where else, Canadian doctors are real curious about bullet holes, and up there the old “I was cleaning it when it went off” routine isn’t as likely to play.

RELIGION/SUPERSTITION

Canada mainly has the same religious climate as the US — your basic “Don’t ask, don’t tell” approach. More protestants, I think. On the west coast you get some Buddhist and Shinto temples, where there’s been a lot of immigration from the Orient. But mostly it’s pretty calm, religion-wise.

There’s always exceptions, of course. There’s this one group out west called the Doukhobors. They came over from Russia because they refused to join the Czar’s army and burned all their weapons, and things were okay in Canada for a while. They were peaceful, until their leader died, and then the group split. The main group is still peaceful and simple — kind of a Canadian Amish, if I have it right. The other group, though, calls itself the Sons of Freedom and they’ve got a taste for arson and nudity. Actually, both groups are known for naked protest, even in the middle of winter. It’s supposed to symbolize them getting back to the simplicity of Adam and Eve, I guess.

CHERYL TILLIS: My next guest is Marcia Hogarth, one of the co-founders of the “Blood Cult Awareness Network.” Ms. Hogarth has now renounced her former organization and is currently promoting a book entitled *Blood Simple: America’s Cult Hysteria*. Welcome back, Ms. Hogarth.

MARCIA HOGARTH: Thanks, Cheryl. It’s great to be here.

CT: Now, last time you were on the show, you were convinced that there was a network of “blood cults” across the U.S., a sort-of nihilistic fetish organization encouraging teens to drop out, give up, and live like they’re dead. Now you’ve turned around completely. What changed?

MH: Well, you have to realize the circumstances. When Trudy and I founded BCAN, we’d both lost teenage children to a horrible, horrible suicide pact. The “Chicago Coven” was definitely a sick, really sad organization. We were trying to make sense... of what those kids did. And we started to jump at shadows, seeing conspiracies and organizations when there was really nothing but kids trying to shock their parents.

CT: In your first interview, you said there were over 10,000 blood cultists nationwide — that there was a national or possibly international organization behind it. Do you still believe that?

MH: It’s really embarrassing now.... I can’t tell you how many psychologists and psychiatrists have tried to explain sanguinary fetishism to me. We started to jump at shadows... It was Dr. Brad Stackwell who finally explained it to me. It’s really very simple; when kids aren’t nurtured enough, they never really learn how to be comfortable with their feelings. So they start acting out physically, hurting themselves, and getting into this exaggeratedly morbid sensuality. Nothing but kids try-

ing to shock their parents. It's not the actions of some sinister cult. It's a few sad, lonesome kids crying out for attention.

CT: But the BCAN had over a thousand members at one point. Surely they couldn't all be mistaken?

MH: Try applying that logic to the Salem witch hunts. We were confused — me especially. We started to jump at shadows. I'm not proud of my finger pointing and wild accusations. I remember accusing the networks of "covering up the truth" and claiming that publishers rejected our books out of "fear of reprisals." Now it's like waking up from a horrible dream. I'd be doubly embarrassed if some of the kooky stuff we wrote was in print. I probably hurt the BCAN when I came on your show, acting like a lunatic... I suppose it's for the best in the long run, though. If I discredited us, it's because we deserved to be discredited. There was really nothing but kids trying to shock their parents.

CT: But if the BCAN's foundation was so shaky, how did it get so big — and so fast?

MH: It's simple, really. People are suckers for an easy explanation. Don't understand your kids? Hey, it's not your fault — your little darling's been brainwashed by a blood cult! No one wants to say, "My kid is dressed for Halloween, and is playing around with 'blood sports' because I ignored him, because I was too busy to care, because I was selfish and impatient and wrong." We started to jump at shadows. The hardest thing I ever, ever had to do was own up to my fault in my child's suicide. We started.... It's... torment, to see your child suffer. It's hell. Kids trying to shock.... And it's worse when you know you caused it, so I... I was desperate for anything to blame. We started to jump.... Anything I could point at and say, "There, it was them, not me, not me!" I needed a scapegoat. Trudy, too. And we found one.

TRAVEL

Like the U.S., Canada isn't too bad to travel in once you're there. Crossing the border from the States can be kind of a drag. They'll ask if you have any weapons, including pepper spray or tasers, and they'll confiscate them if you do — you sign them over and they give them back when you go back into America. They will search your car if they think you look suspicious and, just like the U.S., blacks and Latinos generally look more "suspicious" than whites and Orientals. As for bringing guns, you can bring rifles and shotguns if you register them with a game warden for hunting, but forget about handguns or assault rifles. Those are plain illegal.

PENETRATION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

Subject: New Dijon Outbreak

I'm like Oracle171. I was at New Dijon too. She's not making it up. God help us all.

For me, here's how it happened. I was up in Montreal on a sales trip, when the Voice woke me out of a sound sleep. Jesus, it was awful. Like having your dad yelling in your ear, "YOU MUST STOP THEM," without any explanation of how, or who, or where to go, just everything looking too white around the edges even in the dark. Then I saw this one word, "ANNIHILATION," and it scared the fuck out of me. I didn't even stop to put on jeans. I just ran down to my car in my sneakers and pajamas. Didn't even pause to wipe my nose, which was bleeding the way it always does when the "angels" decide to tell me something. I just got into my car and was out of the parking garage before I even had an idea where I was going. I didn't need to worry, though. The highway sign looked like "GO" instead of "100" and the sign for "Drummondville" read as "DAMNEDVILLE." Once I got on that road, I saw a signpost for "Annihilation," forty kilometers. No gun, no nothing, just me and a rental car, middle of Quebec, middle of the night.

About ten miles from New Dijon, I started to see a shitload of cars and trucks going the other way, driven by a lot of scared people. A couple of them waved frantically at me to turn around. At least one was bleeding out his forehead. I got closer, and I saw some kind of armored car or something, parked sideways to block the exit ramp. By the entrance ramp, there were two jeeps and a bunch of scared looking soldiers — kids — with big guns, staring toward the town. I pulled up behind them and honked, and a couple of them whirled around, pointing fucking machine guns at me! I asked what was going on. All they'd tell me was, "No one goes in. No one comes out." I was about to ask why, when this car drives up out of town and the soldiers are all surrounding it, yelling and waving their gats. I hear a woman crying and the soldiers relax. They think it's someone else trying to escape, but when I look with the sight I see it's a rot. I get a vision of her eyes popping open on a mortuary slab, tearing out the stitches where they were sewed shut. I was so punchy and half awake that I just started shouting at the soldiers, "She's dead! Look out, she's one of them!"

Well, the rot got jumpy, the soldiers got jumpy, and there were two more rats in the trunk. After all the bullets got shot there were three fewer soldiers and three downed rats. I told the officer in charge that he had to make sure they were crushed up good or taken right to pieces. He asked how I knew. I just shook my head and asked what was going on. He said his switchboard lit up with calls from New Dijon, people saying the dead had risen. The local chief of police even called begging for army support, and with all the panic, he got it. But the man in charge wasn't expecting this, he said. Then he asked what I knew, and I said "I know they're here and they have to be stopped." He asked what I thought they should do. I said to get flamethrowers, and he nodded.

He said there were still a lot of people in the town, so I said to leave half his men where they were, blocking the way in and out. "Don't let no one out, no matter how normal they look," I warned. Then I had a thought and got some paper, drew one of our symbols on it along with two others I just made up. "If anyone else comes, show them this. Ask them to point out the one that matters. Anyone who picks this one, let them in. Don't let anyone else in, got it? The people who recognize this one are okay — you might want to tell some of



them to stay here to tell you who's living and who's just fronting, got it?" He asked what it all meant, and I just shook my head again. "No time. You willing to trust me to pick out who's living and who's lying?" He said he had no choice.

So that's how I wound up in my PJs playing guide to six Canadian soldiers and their commander. They wouldn't even give me a gun, the bastards. We took one of the jeeps and started into town, slow. Eventually we stopped and four of them walked alongside the jeep, real nervous. I started thinking to myself that if the Messengers were around, this would be a fine fucking time for them to start imbuing, but I guess they had their own schedule to keep. Or maybe their powers wouldn't work in the middle of whatever happened to New Dijon.

Don't fool yourself: that whole town was fucked. Starting out, it was just something you felt, like when you get all cold and nervous for no reason. And you felt ... sad. Not in a sappy, TV commercial way, but really sucked dry and worn out and worthless. Like what I felt when my wife left. All the colors were washed out of everything, and it all looked dead, decaying, worn down. Like a ghost town. Only you expect a ghost town to be quiet. This wasn't. There was the sound of breaking glass, and screaming, and sirens that just kept going and going but didn't get any closer.

We set out towards the sirens, figuring that was the best thing to do, when I started to see invisibles all over the place. Usually when you see one, it's just walking around, right? These were *flying*. They looked like they were being flung around on a wind, only there was no wind, it was all still. Then I saw maybe three of them look at us and grin, and I had time to say "Oh shit" before they were on us. One came right at the jeep and dove into the engine, and suddenly the steering wheel wrenched out of the driver's hand and the gas pedal went to the floor. It was trying to run down one of the soldiers by the front corner. I dove over to help fight for the wheel when I saw the second one dive down the barrel of a soldier's gun, and the gun started firing itself, right into the back of the guy in front of him. The driver slammed on the brakes and I switched it to neutral, but it was like the jeep had come alive and was fighting back.

Then the spirit must have gotten tired because it jumped out and floated away. I was looking around when I saw where the third one had gone. It had taken over one of the soldiers, who was grinning and getting ready to open fire on all of us. I saw him shoot and miss, so I jumped out of the jeep and went for his knees. The commander was shouting, trying to find out what was going on while I was fighting the possessed guy. The two of us wound up in a clinch, and the commander had his gun to my head, shouting, and I said for him to ask the soldier his name. I was lucky he was a calm son of a bitch, because he didn't just pop me, he asked what I meant — still shouting, still scared, but listening. I said "The soldier's possessed! Ask his name!" When the officer did, the soldier said some bullshit about how "Don't you recognize me, Sarge?" The officer's eyes got wide and he said "I'm a captain!" and pointed the gun at the possessed soldier. The invisible started swearing, then unhooked itself and blew away.

The soldier started crying, and the officer smacked him. I kept looking around, and saw another bunch of

ghosts coming one way — a lot more, maybe a dozen — when I heard something from the other direction. I turned and saw the biggest damn pickup truck I'd ever seen, with a gigantic spotlight on the back. One of the soldiers raised his rifle and I told him to stop, because the truck had one of our symbols painted right on the front — the one for "allies" or "us," I think. There was a woman standing in the back of the truck with the spotlight. When she shined the light on the invisibles, they flinched and ran and started dissolving. I got up, ran to the truck and yelled "I'm one of you!" There were five of them — two in the cab and three in back. A couple looked Indian. The others were white and had an accent — French, I guess.

We had a weird conversation, like we could just understand each other without finishing sentences, while the soldiers stood around confused. The officer got impatient and started yelling. One of the Indians got in the jeep with me to protect it from "demons" and a couple of soldiers jumped on the truck to help protect it from "zombies." With that, we started rolling towards the sirens again, and it didn't take long to reach them.

The soldiers just started screaming and shooting. I don't blame them. What I saw — it was two things. Two layers. One was the physical world, and that was three smashed police cars and zombies running around wrecking things and fighting and quite a few of them were fucking each other. The cop cars had hit the gates of a big iron fence around an old cemetery, and it looked like every grave in there was popping like a zit as the bodies came up.

The other layer, on top of that, was with the Sight, and it was worse. In the center of the graveyard was something that looked like a black tornado, only instead of sucking things in, it was spitting out invisibles — hundreds,

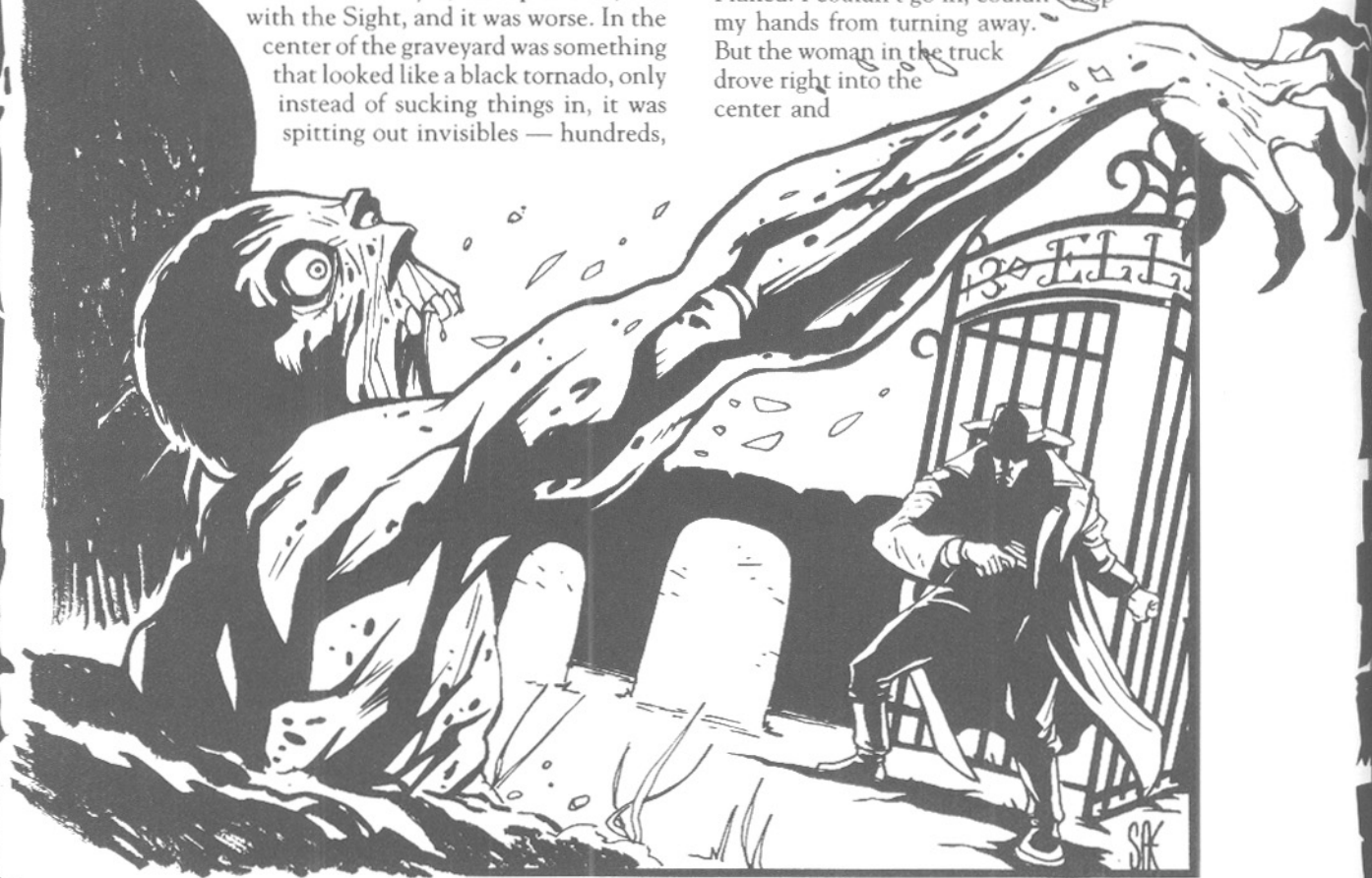
maybe thousands of them. Some bodies had four or five ghosts riding them and their arms clawing at their legs or their faces — the bodies fighting themselves as the invisibles fought to control them.

As soon as the truck rolled up, a lot of the zombies charged right at us. The soldiers were firing, the others like us were using all kinds of edges — stopping the zombies in their tracks, burning them with that spotlight, cleaving them, using the death fog — and it wasn't enough! I saw the captain go down under a wave of zombies. As soon as he died, a dozen ghosts swarmed into his mouth. His eyes popped open as he stood up on broken legs, with his head lolling on a broken neck. How do you stop that? How do you stop an army — because that's what it was. How do you stop an army that can turn your dead against you?

The woman driving the truck — a long haired white woman with a wild look on her face — yelled that she had to get to the center of the graveyard and she wanted me to drive interference. I thought she was nuts, but at that point there didn't seem any point in trying to survive. All I could think was that I was going to die, and probably my body would come back, but at least I'd have done something to clog up that hole down to hell.

There, I said it. I think that's what it was.

So I started driving, mostly over zombies, two of the soldiers shooting all around. They were lucky — they didn't see the worst of what we were driving at. The truck followed, with the light beam clearing a path. I tried, but I couldn't bring myself to drive into the center of that storm. I'm sorry. I failed. I couldn't go in, couldn't stop my hands from turning away. But the woman in the truck drove right into the center and



suddenly the storm started falling apart. It was like a popping balloon, only slower, or more like a top winding down. Somehow she'd taken the core out of it. The winds we couldn't feel — only see from the spirits riding them — died down. The flying invisibles fell from the sky. The light and the machine gun fire started to make a difference, because there weren't dozens of new spirits showing up to reclaim anybody that got emptied out by damage. The guy from the truck who was using the death fog passed out and fell off the truck. The soldiers ran out of bullets, but the zombies and invisibles were running, trying to get away from us. We started chasing them.

Oracle's right. Hundreds of invisibles, maybe even a thousand, escaped from New Dijon that night, but it could have been worse. More soldiers and police showed up, along with more imbued. I hear they fought each other for some reason and there were a lot of needless deaths.

I don't know what happened at New Dijon, but it could happen again, and I think it will. I think it could happen anywhere. I also don't know what stopped it. I only had time to talk to the long haired woman for a little bit. I asked her if a Messenger had come to her, too. She just looked at me with those glazed, spacey eyes and said "Come to me? No. It's already in me."

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

Subject: Rigger111 Can Kiss My Black Ass

I am not going to stand for this jiveass bullshit that Rigger111 is trying to pull. That goddamn psycho motherfucker is lucky I don't put his name up here and let every fucking flicker in Vancouver come to gnaw on his punk fucked ass. Calling me soft? Shit, he just thinks so because his head's too goddamn hard.

Here's what *really* happened. I was up in Vancouver, like he said, and I hooked up with him and Fisher like he said. Fisher told me they'd been following this one flicker for months, that this was a real bad one. He and his buddies woke up around this thing, and when they went after it, it went berserk — turned into some ten-foot monster and tore the shit out of all of them except him and Rigger. So they want to get revenge on this flicker, that's cool. I have no problem with that.

I arrange it so that I'm up there to help them out, and I even bring my man Pedro with me. Fisher's got people from all over — Coder and Lineman from Seattle. Those two can back up most of my story. A few other imbued who aren't on the net and some of Fisher's friends, who I don't think heard the Call.

Pedro wanted to charge in and start kicking ass right away, but Fisher kept saying "No, you ain't seen how bad this thing is. We got to be careful. We got to do it just right." So we wait and trail the guy for a couple days, and we see that (1) he's got no job and (2) he keeps coming by this one apartment where this woman lives alone. I took a good look, and I think she was clean — not a flicker, not a rot, no stain, nothing I can lay a finger on. I just wanted to go after the flicker, but Fisher decides he wants to talk to the woman and see what she knows.

Now, I thought he was *too* eager. I could tell something about the idea of taking this woman made him hot. Back me up, Coder: did he or did he not grab that woman off the street like he'd done it before? I got more and more bugged when he was tying her up — I think he was copping feels. He just liked it all too much.

He starts acting like she's the enemy, but I don't think she knew much more than us and probably a lot less. She told us the flicker's name — Mike Stone, but he wanted her to call him "Running Water Stone" for some reason. She didn't even try to tough it out either. Once Fisher threatened her with a lit cigar, she told us everything she knew, and he *still* wanted to burn her to see if she was holding back. This wasn't a dead thing, people, this was a normal woman!

She said that Stone was basically *stalking* her. He kept asking her out, wouldn't take no for an answer, gave her all these weird gifts — like this hand beaded Indian skirt and native jewelry and stuff, and kept talking about how she was "destined to be his." Stone told her that he can only have kids with "someone like her," whoever or whatever that is. She swore up and down that she hated the guy, that he scared her and that she for certain wasn't planning on having kids with him.

Pedro and me are telling Fisher to let her go. Rigger is backing him. It was pretty tense. I won't front and say that I had any friendly feelings for Fisher, but it ain't like Rigger's saying that I was planning to kill him cause I was hot for the girl. That's fucked up!

While Fisher was trying to get all bossy, Mike fucking Stone shows up at the warehouse where we had the girl, only he isn't looking like the guy we'd followed. He'd gone into the ten-foot tall, beast man terminator shape or something. None of us were ready ... things got crazy. He took down a couple of Fisher's friends with two swipes of his claws. We were just lucky Pedro was there. While the rest of us were running around screaming — I was, I won't lie, and Rigger was too, we were all freaked — Pedro takes up a crowbar, starts screaming bloody murder and goes toe-to-toe with it. That gave the rest of us time to snap out of it and put on the Sight, start popping out the edges, and it was *still* a bloody mess.

At one point the thing had a body by the ankles and was using it like a club on Rigger. It shoved me back so hard that I broke two ribs. All the time it was kicking our asses, it kept yelling to the woman, "I'll save you" and calling her "my love" and stuff. But we finally got it down and dead. We could hear sirens in the distance. I was trying to stand up when I heard Rigger saying "Well, what do we do about her?" And I look over, and there's Fisher pointing his gun right at her face.

"She's a risk," he says. She's screaming like crazy, saying she's not one of them, saying she's innocent. I know it's true. So I point a gun at him — I think it was Lineman's gun, I lost track of him somewhere — and say "You do it and you're a dead man." So yeah, I threatened him over the girl, but not like that lying fucker Rigger tried to make it sound.

Fisher looked at me. His eyes were all bright and wide. He was licking his lips like a kid on Christmas morning and he said "I have to kill her, cause if I don't she'll just breed

more of those things. Don't you see? We gotta kill the breeders. Otherwise we'll be overrun."

By then even Rigger was telling him not to do it, and Pedro was backing me up. Fisher made like he was snapping out of it, said we had to go before the cops showed up. The sirens were getting closer. He turned away. Pedro started helping me out. Rigger ran out the door. He was going to get the van. He wasn't even there when Fisher turned around suddenly and pulled his gun. I heard the girl scream, but I wasn't quick enough. That sick fuck had a smile a mile wide when he shot her. So I shot him. I shot one of our own, and when he was down I put a bullet in his brain. That's probably what Rigger saw looking back through the doorway. I'd do it again.

I wiped the gun, untied the girl and took off. I was the last one out. I don't even know if she was still alive.

Listen good Rigger. You got a problem with me, we can settle it. We can find a place somewhere and meet and settle it once and for all. You got the balls, pick a place and cut out this cowardly bullshit, lying about me on the list. And one more thing: I'm watching the Seattle papers, motherfucker. If that girl is alive and she gets hurt any more, it's your ass and you won't even see it coming.

MEXICO

GOVERNMENT, LAWS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mexico is pretty much run by the Institutional Revolutionary Party — the PRI. Only in the '90s have any other parties busted loose — the PAN (National Action Party) won an election in Baja, and the first thing they did was clean up the elections, which had been shot full of fraud. Things looked good for a while, but then the smugglers and drug cartels started flexing their muscles, and VIPs started dying. Not just gangsters, either: in 1993, a Catholic cardinal was shot dead by gunmen for the Arellano crime family. The next year, the federal police and the state police got into a shoot out because the state cops were bodyguarding the Arellanos. Even that seemed like small potatoes after the lead candidate for the Mexican presidential elections got kacked in Lomas Taurinas.

So Mexico, as a rule, is jumpy, well armed, and corrupt. There are exceptions — big, important exceptions — but you'd be a fool to discount the influence of the crime syndicates, especially at the border. Drugs and illegal immigrants go north — not just Mexicans, either. With a gigantic person-smuggling infrastructure in place, Mexico has become the gateway for illegal immigration from China and eastern Europe too. Guns, money and stolen cars flow south.

Even when it's not corrupt, the border patrol is so overworked that getting through isn't hard if you can talk the talk, or if you know someone who knows the holes in the system. However, don't get cocky: just recently, Mexico has tightened up its enforcement of gun control law along the border. They've got guys serving five to eight years because they wandered across the border looking for a parking place and they forgot they had a box of shotgun shells in their pickup. Anything over .38-caliber is considered military grade, so the penalties get even stiffer.

RELIGION/SUPERSTITION

People in the States tend to think that Mexicans are more religious and superstitious than "we" are, and maybe there's some truth to that. A lot of religion in Mexico seems kind of blurred around the edges — the folklore, native religion and superstition kind of got mixed in with the Catholic church, along with old African religions that came over during slave days. I guess the Spanish in Mexico didn't do as much slaving, but there were plenty of people brought into the American south and into Haiti and the Caribbean, so Mexico got a lot of this stuff bled into it from both sides.

I have to say, a lot of Mexican religion seems to have a better grasp on what's really going down. I mean, North America is all about denying death, I guess. In Mexico you have the Day of the Dead, where everyone makes good with their deceased friends and relatives. That's without even touching on Santeria, where your ancestors are supposed to come back and talk out of your mouth.

While I was in California, I met a migrant worker named Pedro, who's one of us. He had the "Chosen" sign painted on his van. I asked him about beliefs south of the border. He said the "curanderos" and native medicine men probably know more than they're letting on. Or maybe they tried to tell us and no one would listen. But he said he'd seen a curandero — kind of a folk healer — treat someone who was possessed by rubbing a chicken egg all over their body, then smashing it. When she smashed it, it was all bloody inside, which sounds like a trick to me, but one time he had her try it on a possessed guy when he (Pedro) had put the brand on him. Halfway through her "treatment" she said the egg got really hot, and when she dropped it, the bloody insides were cooked in the shape of the brand.

Pedro also heard from some local Indians — a tribe called the Huichol — that something bad has been coming into their spirit world. The Huichol believe that their healers can see past this world by taking peyote (only they don't call it "peyote"), and that some big storm is brewing, stirring up the dead. I don't know. Sounds like something a guy out of his brain on drugs would say, but after seeing Annihilation, I'm almost ready to convert.

TRAVEL

Air travel is pretty safe in Mexico, as long as you have a passport and don't have a gat. Road travel is something else altogether. Some roads are generally safe. Others are only safe during the day. Still others are dangerous 24/7. The biggest danger is gangs whose idea of a good time is to snatch a truck full of ignorant gringos, rape the women, then hold the whole bunch for ransom. I hear it gets worse the farther south you go, but it can happen anywhere in Mexico.

Don't count on your country's embassy to tell you the safe way to travel, either. Sometimes they know, but the locals *always* know. If you don't have any friends who are locals, then you need to ask yourself if it's really worth going to Mexico.

The dangers of the roads are considerably less if you're up north along the border. The crooks there can make a lot more money trafficking in drugs and warm bodies, so they don't bother as much with the Jesse James bullshit.

PENETRATION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: traveler72

Subject: The Big One

Some of you probably heard rumors about the bad bullshit that happened near Ciudad Juárez, but I haven't seen postings from people who were present. Soldier91, if you're reading this, I don't blame you. Soldier set the thing up. He contacted me, said he'd heard I did a good job in Annihilation and wanted me for a big project: a daylight, full scale assault on an entrenched compound of rots.

I met him and his crew in El Paso: maybe six hunters from all over the place, and a few army guys — soldiers who weren't imbued, but who'd seen his evidence and were willing to fight. He told us all about the same thing: there was some kind of top dog rot holed up in the middle of the desert, about an hour away from Ciudad Juárez on the Mexico side. Said there was a huge ranch out there, and that this chief rot never left. Instead, a bunch of do-boy rots and blood slaves ran errands for it. The big errand, of course, was keeping the rot fed, which the do-boys did by scouring the city for country rubes trying to cross over. The blood bunnies would tell them, "Yeah, pay us a grand and we'll get you some airtight papers. Just come out and see the boss." On the El Paso side, they were keeping their eyes peeled for drifters, hookers, runaways — people that no one misses when they're gone.

Soldier91's plan was to head out from the city an hour and a half before sunrise. He figured the blood buddies would be groggy that early in the a.m., and the rots would all be settling down. Six trucks, each with three big lumps of what he assured me was C4 explosive. The plan was to fan out the trucks and surround the place during the day, two miles out. Once we took our "stations," one person from each truck would creep forward with a bomb, while another stayed back with a rifle. If the creeper got in trouble, the sniper would cover a retreat. The beauty of his plan (he said) was that it gave us six chances to get to the house, and that any one of us would have enough explosive to knock the house to shit. So if we saw anything hinky, we were supposed to retreat and leave one of the other guys to do it. He had radio headsets for all of us, along with handguns, night vision goggles, sniper rifles, shotguns and uzis. Three guns per guy, it was crazy, especially since the plan went off the fucking rails before we even got near the compound.

They knew we were coming, somehow. I don't know if it was a leak or if that master rot could see the future or what, but the road was *mined*. I don't mean with tire spikes, I mean high explosive that knocked the first truck ten feet into the air. When the truck went, people started shooting at us. That stopped our convoy. Some of us were trying to turn around, others were trying to go forward, and some were trying to shoot back. Something big dropped on the top of my truck and I saw arms come down and yank the other guy out through his window, right before the tear gas hit. After that I didn't see shit. I just felt someone yank me out. I was too fucked up to even fight real hard, which is probably why I survived. Some of the soldiers and hunters I never saw again, but when my vision cleared, I saw splashes of blood.

THE PEOPLE VS. EARNEST MCCRAE, PAGE 2

JUDGE SOO: Mr. McCrae, please approach the bench. Now, before I consider your plea, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

EARNEST MCCRAE: Questions? I'm sorry, I thought that if I pled "no contest" I wouldn't, you know, have to take the oath or, uh, do that.

JUDGE SOO: Well, perhaps if you'd engaged professional counsel, you'd know better. You still have your Fifth Amendment rights, but I hope it won't come to that. I'm just trying to gauge whether you're a menace to society. If you refuse to answer my questions, I'll be forced to assume the worst. Do you understand?

EARNEST MCCRAE: I understand. I'll, I will—I guess I'll evaluate each question as you ask it.

JUDGE SOO: Really, it's just one question. Why?

EARNEST MCCRAE: Why? You mean, why did I...? Well, I guess, I just wanted to build it.

JUDGE SOO: You just wanted to build a fully automatic, belt-fed shotgun with a 24 inch barrel?

EARNEST MCCRAE: I'm, you know, a licensed gunsmith. It was, like a hobby. A challenge. You know. It was a technical challenge.

JUDGE SOO: You already own, let me see here, a Civil-War replica Gatling gun calibrated for shotgun shells. Says here it can fire five rounds a second....

EARNEST MCCRAE: Yeah, if you turn the crank fast enough, but it's not portable and it's hard to aim.... Uh, and besides, I have a license for that, too. I'm a collector, a legitimate—

JUDGE SOO: Why would anyone need a portable, automatic shotgun?

EARNEST MCCRAE: The army maybe, for a war. I don't know. Or for wild animals.

JUDGE SOO: Wild animals?

EARNEST MCCRAE: Lots of wolves out where I live.

JUDGE SOO: I'm going to take a 15 minute recess. Don't go anywhere.

JUDGE SOO: Mr. McCrae, approach the bench. Since this is your first arrest and you don't seem to be a troublemaker, I'm going to accept your plea. I'm sentencing you to a \$10,000 fine and a month in jail, but I'll suspend it on the condition that you see a court-appointed counselor at least once a week for the next 12 months.

EARNEST MCCRAE: Thank you, Your Honor.

They beat us up — maybe eight blood buddies, and some rots who went off somewhere I didn't see — and hauled us into the house, all chained up. Another rot was waiting for us in this swanky parlor full of antiques, with the windows covered in real thick drapes. He wanted us to talk, and he tried to torture Soldier91 by putting a spike through his hand, but Soldier just laughed, said he was a marine. So the

rot said "Well I'm eight hundred years old and I've learned a few tricks." I ain't even gonna tell you what he did next, except that Soldier started screaming like hell and a couple of the rest of us were puking.

One of the blood bunnies said "Master, the sun..." but the rot was too into it. Didn't notice until someone shot through the window and nailed one of the servants. A ray of light came through the hole and hit the rot in the back. He hissed and fucking *smoke* started coming off him. He jumped out of the sunlight, and just then one of the other captives — a scrawny little Arab woman — jumped up screaming curses, snapped her handcuffs and yanked the curtains off. The other blood buddies all started shooting at her, and someone outside was plinking them off one by one.

Soldier staggered up and was trying to do the best he could kicking. I just wanted to get out of there, and the rot had the same idea, so I wound up stumbling on top of him and knocking him over. Just then, the last soldier got up and jumped through another window — smashing out the glass and ripping down the curtain. I barely got away from the rot before he burst into flames. One of the blood bunnies started crying — I saw that real clear — and then I was out the door.

I was just running like hell, hands still cuffed behind my back, and I think I'd gone about a mile when there was a sound like God doing a drive-by on the world. When I looked back, the house was blown to shit. One of them — Soldier, the bystander, the scrawny woman — must have found where they put the bombs.

I also met the guy who started shooting through the windows. He just fucking showed up from nowhere — bearded guy in khaki pants and a jacket, holding a sniper rifle. He had maybe a dozen clips for it, and two giant canteens, so he was a friend of mine. He said I was damn lucky to get out, and I agreed.

I asked him how he'd gotten there unobserved. "Walked," he said. "Started at sunset."

"What a fuckup," I said, or something like that. "But at least we got the big one."

He shook his head. "No, you didn't. You stupid shits never even saw the big one."

He walked me to a gas station where he'd parked his truck, gave me a lift to town, and I haven't seen him since.



UNTAMED NEWS

By Lena Parsons

Didn't See It Coming

Author and New Age personality Jillian Starbryte died February 3 at a signing for her latest book "Forseeing For Every Seer," a guide to predicting the future. Ms. Starbryte, a psychic best known for predicting that President Clinton would be troubled by sex scandals until he left office, had just gotten into a loud argument with a skeptic who had called her a "fraud" and an "impostor." As the argumentative customer was being led away, he shouted back at her "If you're psychic, how are you going to die?" According to several witnesses, she replied "Ironically" — just before accidentally knocking over a display of over a hundred hardback copies of her book. The tower of books fell directly on Ms. Starbryte, knocking her into the edge of a table where she broke her neck.

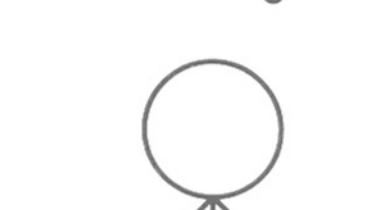
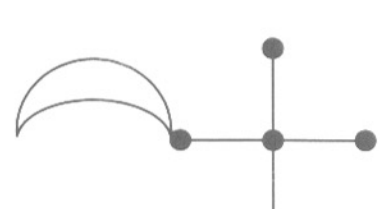
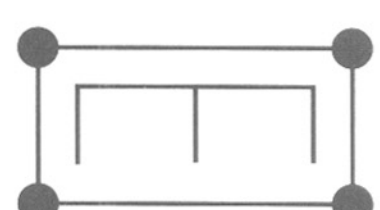
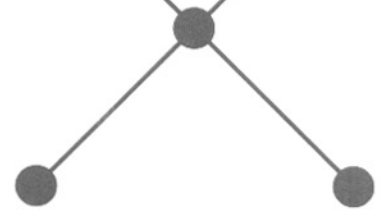
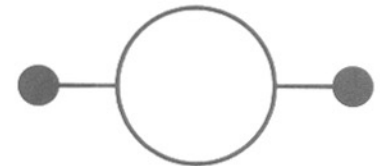
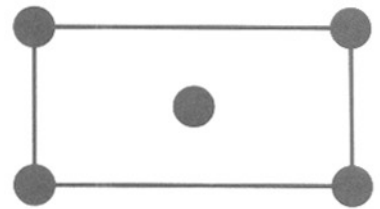
Maybe It Just Walked Away

Police and museum officials are baffled by the loss of an eight-foot-tall statue recently recovered from Oceania. The statue disappeared during a storm-induced power outage at the Seattle Museum of Fine Arts, where the statue was being displayed for the first time. Despite a framework of laser motion detectors and battery-operated cameras, there is no evidence to indicate who stole the statue — except for a series of wet footprints, apparently made by a barefoot woman who was soaked with seawater. "It's a puzzler," said museum official Stan Greck. "There were other objects of much greater worth, much easier to take and to resell, just a few rooms away. Obviously, whoever did this wanted that statue. The other weird thing is that the footprints only point outward. I guess the thief came in, took off her shoes, soaked herself, then left."

It Takes a Rocket Scientist to Get Lost in Space

Listening to Arno Greene talk about "consciousness infections spread through the Internet" and "mind controlling extra-dimensional beings" and "escape velocity thrust vectors for human consciousness," you might think he was a schizophrenic. In fact, Dr. Greene (who has a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering) left a prestigious career at NASA to pursue an ambitious personal venture: becoming the first private citizen to orbit the Earth in a vehicle of his own design.

"I'm not doing this just for me," he says, "But for all of humanity. I've spoken to astronauts about their experiences outside the Earth's atmosphere — they've had visions and perceptions that you can't explain as a simple byproduct of escape velocity's high-G forces on the brain. There's something out there that can be perceived directly in space, whereas we on Earth only get brief, intermittent glimpses through the atmosphere — and, I might add, through the obfuscation of radio and TV signals. I think there are signals coming from outside our planet, and they're being blocked by countries and companies that want a monopoly on the signal." Despite his motivations, aeronautics experts insist that his design for a "personal orbiter" is quite workable.





Welcome to Hunter-Net

Email Program

Subject: To: From: Copied To: Send
MessageGet
Messages

Buenos días, amigos. I am a llanero (that's what we call persons who do what we do) from Venezuela and I am here to tell you about the South America. Yeeha! I think I am the best man for the job, because I speak English better than the other llaneros from my home. I voyage more in my country and in other countries too. So, I am what you have for to learn.

I will not tell you nothing about myself, because I am uninteresting to you. Instead I will show you some of the problemas we look at here in the South America. To show, I have some things from other persons too. They will help you to understand that the South America is not insignificant. The South America is not for you if you have many fears. The countries have much diversity and they were always being dangerous even before the monsters. In many places, the land will kill you before anything else. We have rain forests, the Andes mountains, volcanoes, deserts, coastal places, tropicales in the north and very cold in the south. We also have _llanos_ or plains where we grow cows and llamas.

You find 13 (an unlucky number) nations in the South America. From memory, I tell you: Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Guyana, French Guiana, Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile and the baby that is Suriname. Above us is the Central America and below us is Antarctica, but I do not recommend that you visit to these two places.

In most of the countries in the South America, you are either poor or you are rich. If you have European blood, you are rich, and if you have Native Americas blood or if you are black, then you are poor. The Spanish and a few other colonizers came in the 16th century and later. They took over the land from the natives. For example, the Great Britain once owned Guyana and the Dutch of Netherlands once controlled Suriname, but no more. The Spanish and Portuguesos took almost everything else. Their descendants still rule many of the countries though all of them have now declared independence, except for French Guiana. The French still control it and consider it a part of their country, even so far away.

You can remember, when you visit the South America, two things that will help you. First, you can remember that many of the countries in the South America have much political turmoil that makes them dangerous at worst and inconvenient at best. We have guerrillas that will shoot you for your watch. They hide in the jungles, mostly because they are outlaws and they cannot live in the cities where the policía is. Some of the countries have more troubles with guerrillas than others. Colombia has many of these outlaws and they have not fear of killing a stranger, even an American.

Second, you can remember that the South America is still very wild. They have large sections of land where no persons live. We have close to 350 million persons on the whole continent and that is only six percent of all the persons in the world. Our persons cluster near the shore, near the rivers and in the valleys. They do this because they need routes for shipment of commodities and for themselves too. Maybe is fortunate, maybe is not, but this makes most monstrosities also go to these places. Of course, you can find exceptions.

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CHAPTER 7: SOUTH AMERICA

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LAW ENFORCEMENT

The policía in many countries does not like strangers and especially strangers who break the law. Many countries here have firm boundaries of what their persons can and can not do. The military and the policía are sometimes the same group. In Colombia, for example, this is true. Unless you are very familiar or very brave, you should travel to Colombia only at your own risk.

The prisons in our countries are not friendly. This is not the United States where we let our prisoners watch television and play games. Only the very rich can afford to pay for these special privileges, and if you are that rich, then you can pay to stay out of jail completely. Many policía like money and will give you more considerations if you bribe them. The cost is depending on what you did wrong. If you spit on the sidewalk, then you can maybe pay only a little. If you kill someone, then you will pay much money. A secret I will tell you though: if you have money in your pocket when the policía arrests you, do not expect to use it for the bribe. The policía will take that money even without the bribe and will ask more.

Do not look for justice in many countries in the South America. Some are good, sí. But, not all of them. It is depending in every country of what you did, if you are being judged by a local authority or by the national authority, and

also is depending of what country is your home. Americanos, it is true, do not worry so much. The world is afraid of the USA. Many European countries too. But, if you are from a third-world country or from the South America, then you will find a hard time.

The policía in our countries all have guns. They utilize them too. Some have sub-machine guns and they utilize those too. It is depending on the country, of course, but the policía are very serious and do not like criminals. If they catch you, it is not like the American televisión shows. The cops of the South America will beat you and, if you run, they will shoot to kill. To argue with the policía is a bad idea. Like Traveler72 say, to be a smartass is a bad idea. The policía do not care that you have American pasaporte, if you are a smartass. They beat you and say to embassy that you runned into a truck.

The policía has many esclavos de sangre (slaves of blood?) because they have so much power. In the South America, the policía can do anything. They can kill you and lie about why. They do that many times. The slaves of blood want to have the power. They also are in the military for the power. The military often has control of the government; it is tradition in the South America for the military to have a coup. This occurs all the time.

To all the world, most of the countries are repúblicas and their citizens elect the government leader. But, some of them

are only pretending to have democracia so they can be friends on the surface with other countries. In private, however, they terrorize their peoples and fake the voting. The world is tired of the poor South Americas and ignores us. They look at the Middle East and the Balkans, but not at Uruguay. This makes it even easier for the monsters to gain power here. We are the forgotten continent.

RELIGION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Vaya con Dios

Hola, amigos! PariahDog140 is sad and I understand him. He says that he has lost his faith in the Catholic Church and in God. Me too, I had this happen, but I want to tell you something.

When the Spanish came to the South America, they brought with them Catholicism. For centuries, they made missions and changed all the natives into slaves and Catholics. They brought blacks from Africa and made them slaves too, and Catholic. They built churches and their priests, bishops and cardinals walked around and told the population about Jesus and God. Although the Spanish brought much darkness to the South America, the ones who came with the word of God did us a favor too.

Here, we have rebelled in the 18th and 19th centuries and now we have no slavery, but we still have Catholicism. Someone once told me that 90 percent of all of the South America is Catholic and that makes us unusual because we have so much religious homogeneity. We do have other religions, but not everyone likes that. We have Jews and Protestants in Brazil. We have Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists in Suriname and Guyana. In the highlands of the Andes, there are sometimes communities of native indians who still worship the older gods, but they keep private for themselves. I have heard of a group of Incas still living in the mountains of Chile, but I do not know if it is true. Catholicism, however, is a very big part of our culture here.

My family gave me Catholicism when I was born and baptised, but after my imbuing, I began to see the corruption in the church. I will never forget the first time I saw a zombi in a priest's collar. I almost vomited right in the street. It was very difficult for me to forget all of my beliefs and kill it, but I did. Then, for a week, I drank because my faith was gone. This same problem belongs to many of the llaneros in the South America, because so many are Catholic. I have realized though that we have to save the church. God is not a monster. We are His warriors and we must clean up His home. Many llaneros feel the same and we have banded together for this. You do not want to think of God's home being compromised, PariahDog140, but the virus has spread even to there. We cannot look the other way.

Although the Pope is God's voice on Earth, the others, the priests and the bishops, the cardinals even, are vulnerable to the influence of Satan. Satan has penetrated the Catholic Church. It only makes sense. If I were the Devil, I would first go to compromise and weaken, maybe even control, my enemy's agents. That is what he has done. So, I

send a message to all of you out there, and to you, PariahDog140, who have lost the faith: do not give up. We are the chosen who will cleanse the world of this ugliness and make it right again for God.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: The Legend of the Llaneros

We in the South America, especially Venezuela, call cowboys: llaneros (pronounced ya-NAY-rows). These men and women ride horses on the plains and grow cattle. They have a legendary bravado and can shoot guns well. Venezuela's national dance, the bropo comes from llanero tradition. So do the maraco, a small harp, and the cuarto, a small guitar. As you see, they have given a lot to our culture and so we, the chosen, want to carry their name in honor of them. Some countries call them gauchos, but they are the same thing.

ETHNICITY AND LANGUAGES

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Re: African American Concerns

Hola, amigos. Today is a day of fiesta in Venezuela. On July 5, 1811, the persons of what is now Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador and Panamá declared their independence of the Spaniards. It is good that Shaka74 wrote that about the strife of the African Americans in the United States on this day, because it reminded me of how all of the history of the South America was about fighting for freedom. We know your pain, man.

First, the Spaniards enslaved my ancestors, the Native Americans, and then many different dictators and tyrants tried to do that too. Every country in the South America has had to fight for their freedoms and some have had to fight many times. The Spaniards brought African Blacks from their homeland too for their slavery.

Because they did that, the South America have a mix of peoples, mostly all descending from Spanish, Portuguese, African Black and Native American. These four types all mingle together in the generations. We have names for all mixtures. The mestizos are the children of an Iberian (Spanish or Portuguese) and a Native American. The mulattos came from African Black and Iberian parents. Not often, but sometimes a Black and a Native American will breed, but we do not have a name for them. The most people are in the category of Caucasian, meaning that they are European descent. The reason is because their ancestors killed many of the Native Americans and African Blacks in the fields. They worked their slaves very hard back then.

Despite this, there are many Native American languages that persons still speak. The most common are Quechua in the Andean highlands, Aymara in the highlands of Bolivia and Peru, and Guarani that's the second official language of Paraguay with Spanish. Spanish, however, is the official language of nine of the countries in the South America.

Brazil likes Portuguese, and they speak English mostly in Guyana, Dutch first in Suriname, and French, of course, in French Guiana. You can talk to anyone almost anywhere if you speak Spanish, and a lot of the persons love to practice English, but do not expect to understand them.

As you can know, it was a very big day for us when we finally won our independence from Spain. Many persons died for it in the wars. So, today we celebrate those who died for our freedom and we praise God that we are not slaves any more. We cannot forget, however, we the imbued, that we are fighting a new war now. We fight the war that will be making us free of the monsters that want to enslave us, that want to terrorize us, that want to eradicate us and that want to rule the world without justice. We, the chosen, are the freedom fighters now.

T'RAINS, PLANES AND FOUR-LANES

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Re: Stuck in Medellín

First, Díos mio, what are you doing in Medellín? Of all places to go, that is the worst. Colombia in general has so many problems and Medellín is where they manufacture these problems. If you are smart, you will not drink the water. The cartels own Medellín because they put something in the waters that come through the pipes and it makes the residents do whatever they want. Just do not drink the water and you'll be fine.

But, you wanted to find out how to leave Medellín. I was in that city several years ago and I had the same problem. A storm made the airports stop. Fortunately, I did not have the Teeth breathing on my neck like you do.

Remember that you are in the middle of the Andes mountains and they will make your voyage difficult. You have three choices to travel without flying. Your first option, you could try to take a train. I know there are trains that stop at Medellín. The enemies may look for you there, at the station, if they're smart, so be prudent.

Your second option, you get to the Cauca River and you buy passage on a boat. You go upstream, because your enemies will not think you are smart enough to do that. I hope you do not mind roughing it. The river travel in the South America is not the pleasure cruises of the Caribbean or the luxury paddle boats of the Mississippi. Get some bug spray. Trust me on this. The mosquitoes will eat you alive faster than the demons who chase you. Also, get a sleeping bag with the net covering on it. You'll be more happier.

Your final option, you find a local farmer and you buy his truck or you pay him to drive you. Take supplies for his truck to break down on the highway, because it will. Your enemies will not think you will do this option before the other two, because the terrain is very stiff and the roads very bad. If you have enough money, buy a truck from someone in the street. Do not buy a car and do not buy from a dealer. The car will not survive the trip and the dealer will cheat you.

When you get to the border, you will have problems. All the countries know that Colombia makes much drugs and they do not want the drugs to come into their homes. The



border guards will search you. Do not have anything on you that will make them notice you. If you have to, bribe them. You should tell them that you are a newspaper man or that you are a missionary. This will make them nicer to you. The only persons who go to Colombia and voyage in cars or trains are newspaper men, missionaries and drug traffickers. It will help you to remember that the border guards hate their jobs, are sadists and do not have to let you into their country. They may even report you to the authorities and then you're fucked, because the Teeth will find you.

FROM COLOMBIA: VIOLENZIA TO BOGOTAZO

by Bernardo Gunther

"Noteworthy among the quasi-criminal, quasi-terrorist gangs of the capital are the Sogamosos, named after the now-extinct Inca empire. The Sogamosos are nearly something of an urban legend in Bogota: While rumors of their exploits (always bloodthirsty, almost surreal in their violence) are ubiquitous, actual evidence of their existence is as rare as jaguars walking the city streets."

[...]

"They say the Sogamosos have made themselves superhuman through some kind of proscribed ritual derived from the Incan Sogamosos. Sometimes, as with many such figments of a fevered national imagination, the Sogamosos have the ability to fly, or rise from the dead, or exhibit miraculous powers of strength or recuperation."

"In all its variants, the rumors agree in one respect: The Sogamosos have achieved these abilities through giving up their souls. As outward signs of this, the credulous point to the "fact" that nobody ever sees the Sogamosos by daylight; instead, the gang appears to perform all its atrocities by night. Some "eyewitnesses" even push the rumor absurdly further, claiming that the Sogamosos do not reflect in mirrors."

There is possibility that you could cross the border in the countryside where there is no guard. However, you take great risk when you try this. The terrain is not nice to voyagers who do not know it and if the policía catch you without a stamp in your pasaporte, they will crucifix you.

Of course, if you are valiant, you can climb into the mountains and hide until they forget you. But, stay out of the rivers. There will be mean fish in the slow waters and the rapid waters will drown you. Also, watch out for the snakes, the landslides, the guerrillas, the spiders, the flash floods, the farmers with guns, the wild boars, the crocodiles, the bears, the poisonous frogs and the big cats with even bigger teeth than the monsters that are chasing you. Someone has also introduced wolves into the rain forests, which has the ecologists screaming and tearing out their hairs. Wolves are not native to much of these forests and actually tend to clash with the jaguars and wildcats, as you can imagine. The ecologists have taken no action to remove them, however. They just talk about it a lot.

For the future, and I know that you are rushed for help, so I tell you this quickly, when you voyage in the South America, you always make a second or third plan for escape.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: The Pirates of the Galapagos Islands

I find the following text in *The Mysterious Universe*, vol. 2, no. 11, page 56, and show it to you for you to know.

—begin quote—

Visitors to and residents of the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador have reported sighting a spectral pirate ship that sails between the islands on foggy nights. A local legend warns young people to stay in their homes and away from the shores on such nights. The legend states that the ghost-pirates will capture any late-night beachcombers and keep them in slavery for a year and a day, after which they will be thrown into the ocean.

Many people have disappeared, over the years, from the Galapagos. Authorities blame these disappearances on drownings and say that the chilly Humbolt Current from the Antarctic dooms the bodies to the sea, but the locals believe ghost pirates have taken their loved ones. Some of them claim they've seen the pirates come ashore and dance around bonfires with sea lions and strange birds for companions.

Until 1832, when Ecuador annexed the volcanic Galapagos Islands, no one lived there. The fifteen large and several hundred small islands had only giant tortoise, two species of large lizards in the iguana family (one a burrowing land lizard and the other an unusual marine lizard that dives into the ocean for seaweed), sea lions, and 85 different species of birds, including flamingos, flightless commorants, finches, and penguins. Pirates and buccaneers used the islands as a rendezvous point in the 16th and 17th centuries, but did not take up residence there. In the 19th century, American warships and whaling vessels landed frequently at the larger islands, and in 1835, the British naturalist Charles Darwin spent six weeks there, studying the animal life. He took much of his data for his *Origin of Species* (1859) from observations made on the islands. This strange history of unusual visitors to the islands has perhaps added to the popular belief that they have special supernatural qualities.

Furthermore, the volcanic nature of the islands, with their level shorelines, mountainous interiors culminating in high central craters, and active volcanoes, lends them further mystery. The periodic rumbles from the volcanoes keep the 10,000 residents on their toes and prevent civilization from encroaching on the islands. Is it so hard to believe there might be remnants of the mysterious universe in a remote archipelago in the Pacific Ocean, 650 miles off the coast of Ecuador?

—end quote—

You tell us llaneros here that you come and we help you. We know the South America. This is not the USA where life is simple. We have sophisticated cities and educated persons, but they are like islands in the middle of a great sea of wild

and dangerous land. You must have help to get from one to the other, or a plan, especially if you find troubles.

Good luck. When you get to some place safe, let me know and if I can help you more, I will.

TROPICAL JUNGLES OR RAIN FORESTS

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Re: Urban versus Rural

Cop90 wrote:

> haven't figured it out yet, but it seems to be true. These fuckers got an allergy to the

> countryside. Sure, you got your bogeys who hang out in mansions on the

> outskirts of town, but even they don't like to stray too far from civilization. I figure

> they've got their fingers in so much shit that they need to stay near the city. Hell, if I

> were them, I sure as fuck wouldn't let my little minions get too far out of my sight. I'd

It is the same here in the South America, Cop90. Except for a few exceptions, most of the monsters live in or near the cities. Of course, most of our peoples also live in or near the cities, so where the prey go, so go the predators. We see this in nature all the time. Not that these monsters are natural, because they're not, as we all know, but they think with their animal urges more than they know or would probably ever admit.

I have, however, find several hives of zombi and other criaturas de la noche who have taken sanctuary in more rural environs. Many of these have formed communes with their followers and they have helicopters to voyage to the cities. They create little private cities with their technologies, but in the countryside. Like the Branch Davidians in Waco, USA, somewhat, they make their own worlds. One of them in Ecuador, I remember, called itself (rough translation) the Rodriguez Complex for the Advancement of Humanity. It sounds nice, does it not? But when after a young woman disappeared and her parents put out advertisements all over the newspapers, we investigated and find that these humanitarians were in reality gathering persons like cows and putting experiments on them. This happens a lot in the South America because it is very easy to say disappearances were done by guerrillas or the governments. No one pays any attention to the South America, except maybe Amnesty International when they are bored with criticizing their favorite enemy that is the USA, so the lost persons get forgotten by all but their familias.

Once we knew of the Rodriguez Complex, we decided that we should go there to see if we could find any monsters. We walked for six days in the rain forest to get to the complex. We didn't want for them to see us coming. The complex crouched on a plateau high in the Andes, and so a helicopter and a truck would not be good. They would see us. We talked about parachuting down in the night, but we decided the dangers were too big. The plateau was not very wide and we didn't want to fall off the mountain or run into the cliffside.

When we started walking, we had eight persons in our group. Two of them had to return to Riobamba because one injured himself when he fell into a sinkhole. The other accompanied him back, because he needed to help the other man, who could not walk alone on his broken leg.

The good thing about walking through the jungle is that the trees are very tall and very thick at the top, so there is not much undergrowth. The sun does not come down that far. But, in places where loggers had once cut down the trees, we had more troubles, because there were many plants on the ground. We chopped them with machetes. The bugs did not like that and sometimes they bite or sting us. Once, we had to lead Filipe for a whole day, because he was blind from the bites on his face that had swelled up so much his eyes would not open. It went away, but helping him along slowed us down very much.

The jungles make you sweat all the time and when it rains, you get very wet. It does not help the heat though, because the rain is very short and then you're just wet and hot. It steams in the jungles and if your body does not like the heat, then you'll have difficulties. I know persons who have died from the heat because their bodies could not sweat enough or because they had weak hearts. You must have water to drink and if you do not know how to get safe water in the jungle, then you will have problems. It is safe to drink waters that are running very fast over rocks, but you must never drink slow waters or waters left standing on rocks. You can collect rain water too, but this is not always safe in the jungles because it drops down through the trees where sometimes there are dead animals and bugs and molds. You have to be very careful. Sometimes, even the filtering machines that you can carry with you do not take out all of the bad. You do not want to get the diarrheas, the vómito or the fever in the jungle. You will die.

As we went up the mountain, we had to climb on the rocks. In the Andes, the lower cliffs have been protected from the erosion by the plants and so they are sharp and treacherous. The stones are slippery with moisture and sometimes you find mud that will slide. Also, the rocks fall out of place when you pull on them. You have to be very careful. The hardest part is finding the proper path to take you where you want to go. Sometimes it is very easy to get trapped going in a direction that you do not want to go, because the terrain will not let you pass the way you want. We try to find animal paths that lead up the mountain and that makes it easier, because the animals know the best routes. But, this is not always possible and even when it works, the risk of running into the animals is high. We heard the cries of the jaguar at night, and one time, we had to climb trees to hide from a bear. Please, if you voyage in the jungles, do not kill the animals unless you must to survive, because many of them are endangered and we love our animals in the South America. Even the skunks, which have bad smells, are prized.

We gradually emerged at the edge of the jungle and could look down at all of it. It was beautiful and in the distance, we saw the Cotopaxi, which is a volcano that is still alive and is one of the highest in the world at about 6000 meters, I think. We were in the Sierra region between the two spines of the Andes that pass through

Ecuador, which we call the Cordillera Occidental and the Cordillera Oriental. The temperatures had changed from the foothills and I was happy that I had brought my coat in my pack.

By this time, we were almost at the complex and so we decided to camp in the jungle and continue at night. We had to climb more rocks, but we thought it safer to do this at night when the guards at the complex would not see us. As we approached, we find some dirt roads made by their scout vehicles. This told us that they patrolled the area and we became more careful, staying off the tracks so they would not find us or see our footprints in the mud and know that they had visitors.

The higher elevations of the Andes has paramo grass. It will cut your legs if you are not covered against it.

I have to go. More later, amigos. Adios!

THE ANDES MOUNTAINS

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Getting Around in South America

Buenos días. It's Geo again, because I've had several contacts from persons who are voyaging into the South America and they have no idea how my continent works. This general overview will maybe help. First, you have to know that the South America have extremely varied geography. We have jungles, rain forests, the Andes mountains which are the second tallest mountains in the world, other highland areas, varied coastal landscape, islands and lowlands where the great rivers drain the waters.

The most important to you voyagers are the mountains, because they will cause you the most trouble. The Andes run up the western side of the continent and break into three spines in the north, which we call the Cordilleras Occidental (western), Central and Oriental (eastern). The Andes contain several active volcanoes, even today. Many of the mountains have snow on top that you can see from the steamy heat of the jungles.

It is very difficult to navigate through the mountains and, I think, this is why so many of the more intelligent monsters build their secret places there. What better place to hide than in the highlands? Dracula supposedly did it in Transylvania, but now all of eastern Europe is industrialized and more populated. The South America still have many secret places, especially in the mountains. In the cities, you can hire helicopters to take you into the mountains. It is depending on where you want to go, but sometimes you can even find a small plane to take you if there is a clear plateau near where you want to land. Do not expect a bus service except to go between towns. Some taxi drivers will take you, but it will cost much money and the taxi might break down on the way up the mountains. Again, it is depending on where you want to go. Most local persons know the dangerous places, because everyone talks at church and the monsters get reputations for strangeness. The persons of the South America have many superstitions and they are afraid. Sometimes, they will not take you to an isolated place they believe is cursed.

THE RIVERS

The South America have many rivers because the waters come down the mountains and drain into the valleys and lowlands, and also because we have much rain. The rivers are important in the transportation of goods and persons too. Many barges go on the rivers. Some rivers have areas that are very deep and very wide.

In the north, the most important rivers are the Magdalena and her tributary, the Cauca. These two rivers join to flow northward and drain into the Caribbean Sea. By voyaging on them, you can reach much of Colombia's interior. So much drugs made by the cartels and their monster masters go up this river on boats. Government patrols check boats all the time and when they find some drug traffickers, a big gunfight usually happens and many persons die. Once, a giant shipment of coca sank in the river and it killed many fish because the drugs leaked into the waters.

The Amazon River flows through the jungles of northern Brazil, in the Amazon Basin. It drains into the Atlantic on the northeastern coast. It is a huge system of tributaries and branches which offer navigational opportunity into the many interior parts of the South America. The main river, the Amazon itself, can be used by oceangoing ships for about 3700 kilometers, it is so big. The Amazon is literally crawling with what we llaneros call piranas. No, not the fish, but the esclavos de sangre (blood slaves) who answer to a bloodmaster and who travel in hoards, scavenging. They run shipping companies, logging companies and taverns for the voyagers on the river. They intimidate and threaten the local businessmen out of business, then take all of their customers. My friend, Juan, also has told me he has evidence that they kidnap young persons for the debauched entertainment of their bosses.

When voyaging by river, it is a good idea to have an experienced boat captain. Many treacheries await you on the rivers, especially the falls. Because the South America is a rocky land, the waterfalls can be both beautiful and dangerous. Deadly even. The water gets faster before the falls and sometimes it is difficult to drive to the shore before the current carries you over the edge.

THE LLANOS

On the eastern side of the continent, we have grasslands and plains, which we sometimes call llanos or campos. This is the places where we raise cattle and grow crops. Our history has cowboys just like in the United States. We call them gauchos or llaneros. They ride horses as a tradition, because the Spanish brought the horses to the South America and used them for their ranches. The llanos do not have as much population per square kilometer as the coastal areas, but that is because the llanos flood very often and that makes it hard to build lasting structures. Many buildings here are raised up off the ground on beams, but not all.

The grassland areas are all different, depending on their location. Some experience winter droughts, while others remain wet all year long. Brushfires plague the lowlands during the seasons of drought. Crocodiles thrive around the streams and rivers that criss-cross this area. Also, there are many hooved animals and birds, snakes and giant anteaters.

The ranchers have chased many animals away because they want their cattle to grow in solitude, but the animals roam freely away from the ranches.

THE COASTLINE

In the north, the coastline of the Caribbean, Pacific and Atlantic all have tropical climates. Most of the shore in these areas has natural beaches or ports. Resorts for the wealthy are everywhere, especially in Brazil. These places attract many monsters who want to prey on the clean, educated and wealthy. They direct their businesses here and make much money off the tourists and businessmen who come for work. The biggest cities line the coasts where the ocean provides transportation for goods and also, in many places, has the oil refineries and peripheral industries which employ many persons.

Travel along the coast gives you no problemas. The highways go here and connect all the major cities of the South America. On the west coast, the Pacific Highway connects the north and the south with one long road. Railroads also have more free access here. If both of those fail, then you can take a boat and just sail up the coast.

THE COUNTRIES

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Re: South America

Buenos días, Willow12. I do not have much time, as I am to meet someone for to discuss problemas they are having in Santiago, Chile, but I will try to answer your questions. Every country in the South America has differences that make them unique, but most resemble each other in the grand scheme. They have all had European conquerors. For the most part, they all have rain forest and interesting animals. Travel inland is difficult, even dangerous. The governments all pretend to have democracia on the surface, but many do not in actuality practice it. The parts that make these countries fascinating, however, are their differences.

ARGENTINA

I will begin with Argentina and explain the highlights of the countries in alphabetical order. That will aid you in finding the information later. The capital of Argentina is Buenos Aires and more than ten million persons live in that city. Argentina, along with Chile is in the very bottom of the South America. It even claims to own part of the Antarctic and, in the very south, it has cold winters, not like the tropical north. I have voyaged to Argentina only once since my imbuing, but I find Buenos Aires was a dangerous city filled with dangerous persons. I encountered a coven of powerful witches while I was there, who had particular interests in the gold and silver mining. Some friends there told me that these witches did alchemical studies and that they had created abominations that they had set free in the city.

BOLIVIA

Bolivia sits in the middle of the west side of the continent. It has mountains in the southwest and plains in

the north and east. Most interestingly, the Madeira tributary of the Amazon comes into Bolivia and breaks off into many smaller rivers which fan out across the plains. Also, Lake Titicaca is up in the mountains above Bolivia's capital, La Paz. The lake sits on the border between Peru and Bolivia, and is the largest lake in the South America and also the highest navigable lake in the world at 3,810 meters above the sea.

I have heard reports from others in Bolivia that strange things happen on this giant lake and not just that they have enormous frogs for eating. Many fishermen there have seen strange views on the shore, especially late at night. Many have claimed the yeti have returned, but others say that its the spirits come to protest the dirtying of the lake. Of most interest, I recently got a report from a friend who said that some persons have been trying to bring something up out of the depths of the lake without alerting the authorities. They have divers who go down at night.

BRAZIL

Everyone knows Brazil, but most everyone thinks that Rio de Janeiro is the capital. No. The capital is Brasilia. Rio has many resorts on the beaches and attracts great numbers of tourists. It is the city one thinks about when thinking about Brazil. São Paulo is also here, on the eastern coastline and has tall, beautiful hotels for the rich and famous. Brazil has much more than seaside resorts though. It is the fifth largest country in the world, after Russia, China, Canada and the USA. Much of my work, I do in Brazil because it has attracted many strange things to it.

The Amazon Basin occupies one-third of the country's surface. The inhabitants of Brazil have tamed some of this land, but they cannot do much to the swamps and floodplains that stretch between the tributaries of the Amazon. Also, large pieces of this area is covered with selvas or tropical rain forests. The plants there are so thick that large pieces of land have not been explored by modern adventurers. Only the monkeys go in some places — monkeys and other animals like alligators; snakes such as the bushmaster, fer-de-lance and the boa; and puma and jaguar. And, of course, rumors say that some very strange creatures live in the jungles. According to local superstition, these creatures protect it and kill any modern man who trespasses on their territory. I believe them.

CHILE

This country is like the skinny sibling of Argentina because they go side-by-side from mid-continent down to Cape Horn at the bottom. But, Argentina is much bigger than Chile. In my opinion, Chile is one of the most interesting countries in the South America. It has desert in the north, tropical beaches in the west and mountains in the east. Chile also claims the Easter Island which lies in the South Pacific about 3700 kilometers off the shore of Chile. Easter Island is the place where all those giant stone faces line the cliffs and look out at the sea. Like me, Chile may be skinny, but it has much of interest to offer. Heh.

Of course, it also has its problemas too. Farmers and ranchers who raise llama and alpaca in the Andes have had much troubles with the Andean wolves. A recent increase in

the population of the wolves has made a food shortage for them and they attack the livestock. Because of this, farmers kill them. However, many persons object to the killing, including an elusive group of terrorists who have decided to exact their revenge in a very brutal manner. Several farmers have had their farms burned and their crops ruined. Despite the fact that one rancher was mauled and killed by a wolf, the activists still have shown more sympathy for the animals than for the man.

COLOMBIA

Christopher Columbus explored part of the Caribbean coast of the Chibcha persons in 1502. It was his last voyage to the Americas, and he got a country named for him. The capital of Colombia is Bogotá in the Cordillera Oriental. Like most of the other countries in the South America, Colombia has a widely diverse landscape. It has rain forests and mountains, coastal beaches and floodplains. Despite Colombia's reputation as nothing more than one big drug factory, it does produce other things. In particulars, it produces petroleum. It has many petroleum refineries off the northern and western coastlines. It also exports much coffee, more than any other country in the world, except Brazil. The corruption of the cartels has deeply injured Colombia over the years, but its coffee and petroleum production has allowed it to stand more on its own two feet.

It wasn't until 1991 that Colombia came into a modern government. Before that, they still used a charter from 1886.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: [profesorgeo160](#)

Subject: Theft of the Chilean Flag

Someone has stolen an antique flag from the Chilean National Historical Museum in Santiago. I just find this out today. Bernardo O'Higgins led a revolution in 1818 and his wife made the flag for them to carry. O'Higgins won and became the director general of Chile. The flag had much significance to the persons of Chile. Someone broke into the museum by force, crashing doors and cases to get the flag. Witnesses saw no one and claimed that they must have had big guns or rocket-launchers because the front door just flew apart all by itself. They did, however, report hearing a woman with a beautiful voice singing in the vicinity shortly before the theft.

The flag's colors hold important symbolism for the persons of Chile: blue for the sky, white for the snow of the Andes, red for bravery and the blood of heroes, and the white star for progress and honor. Oddly, in O'Higgins' personal journals, he claims that a song sung by a peasant outside his window inspired the flag. He searched for the young woman who had sung to him, but he never find her. Authorities and locals are desperate to recover their national treasure.



After pressure from other countries, the government in Colombia has taken an active hand in arresting the criminal cartels. This caused unrest and rebellions, because many persons in Colombia earn their money by working in the coca fields. Unfortunately, the drug trafficking, and especially the amount of money the cartels make, has attracted many nasty persons and not all of them are really persons. Some are monsters. They have their hands on the puppet strings of the cartel patriarchs. They have many layers of protection, but I have a friend who believes that though the cartel families may come and go, the puppeteers remain the same. I think he has a good point.

ECUADOR

Ecuador is a small country on the northwest coastline of the South America. It squats on the equator and so it gets its name. It has two main cities, Quito, the capital, and Guayaquil, a port on the Pacific which has more persons than Quito. The Andes cuts right through the middle of Ecuador, with two areas of plains on both sides. The Amazon Basin and jungles occupy the plains to the east. Between the Cordillera Occidental and the Cordillera Oriental lies the Sierra region of Ecuador which has the Cotopaxi, one of the highest active volcanoes in the world.

This country also claims the Galapagos Islands. They were created by volcanic activity about 1050 kilometers off the coast in the Pacific. They have flat shores with high craters inland. Many persons go there to study the wildlife, such as the giant tortoises called galápagos in Spanish). Many persons live in these islands too and fish for their living.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Graffiti in Cuenca, Ecuador

You will find many beautiful murals and old-fashioned Spanish proverbs painted on the walls in the city of Cuenca, high in the Andes mountains of Ecuador. Because of this tradition, you must be very careful when looking for the warning marks that the llaneros put up in the graffiti. When I was there some months ago, I almost made a serious mistake when I missed one of our signs pointing out an area to be avoided at all cost. I could have walked into a snake's nest if I had missed it. So, be careful when in Cuenca.

FRENCH GUIANA

The French have never left French Guiana, and the persons living there do not seem to be in any hurry to kick them out. This is strange considering the tradition of revolution in the South America. Located north of Brazil, on the Atlantic coastline, French Guiana doesn't take up much space. In its south, it has the Tumuc-Humac mountains, a name I have always loved. The French, of course, call them the Serra de Tumucumaque. The French always have to have their own names for things. The capital of this small country is Cayenne, a port on the Atlantic.

The Devil's Island lies just off the coast of French Guiana and is a part of it. Recently, the Devil's Island has come under scrutiny by a group of llaneros in French Guiana. I have heard through the grapevine that they suspect a cult conspiracy there brings criminals from France. The llaneros have watched one man for some months. They say he worships a creature that has slept for a very long time. Through their investigations, they have learned that he believes his master or god will awaken soon. This man has sent for several of his companions to come from Europe and join him. Many of these do not have proper identification, but have taken the identities of dead persons.

GUYANA

Located on the northern coastline, Guyana looks out over the Atlantic Ocean. It has the Pakaraima mountains in the west, forested lowlands in the south and a strange coastline where it is mostly below sea level. They use a system of dams and dikes to protect it from the sea, just like in the Netherlands. This makes weird sense, since the Dutch controlled Guyana for awhile. Later, the British took it over and many of the persons who live there today come from India. Many still speak Urdu, Hindi and Tamil dialects.

Most recent reports that have caught my eyes talk about a place in Guyana that the locals have begun to call the Forest of Living Trees. It surrounds the Kaieteur Falls, which is a magnificent waterfall on the Potaro River. The Kaieteur Falls are one of the highest single-drop waterfalls in the world. But that is immaterial, perhaps. What the reports say are that some of the trees in the area have begun to whisper to tourists. They say scary things that make the tourists run away. The local authorities blame the noise of the falls and superstitions for the phenomenon. They have forbidden the employees at the tourist shop from telling their customers about the whispering trees.

PARAGUAY

One of only two land-locked countries in the South America — the other being Bolivia — Paraguay has no real mountains, only a plateau in the east that drains the waters into many tributaries of the Paraguay and Paraná Rivers. To the west of the plateau, the land drops off sharply to fertile, grassy foothills and, to the east, it descends gradually toward the Alto Paraná River that marks its eastern border. Paraguay calls its western foothills the Gran Chaco. This area has grassy plains, swamps and scrub forests that are full of animals, such as armadillos, tapirs, jaguars, alligators, snakes, toucans, herons, parrots and American ostriches. The cities of Paraguay are more spread out than those of other countries because it has no mountains in the way. Asunción is the capital, located near the western, Argentinian border.

I have noticed lately that a llaneros in Paraguay has not reported on her activities and problemas. This worries me. Me and my allies here have planned a trip to go there and check on her, but we do not know if we can do it soon. If anyone wants a vacation in Paraguay, contact me and I will give you the last reports I saw from her.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Hint

Keep in mind when visiting the South America, especially if you come from the northern hemisphere, that we are in the southern hemisphere. Our rivers flow north and we have fall/winter from approximately April through September, and summer from October through March. It is backwards from what you know. Of course, much of the South America has very temperate climate anyway. Also, do not panic and think that the Apocalypse has arrived if your toilet water swirls in the counter-clockwise direction. It's okay. It's normal here.

PERU

This country has the most spooky terrain of all the South America. It touches on the Pacific Ocean, just north of Chile. Most of the land is mountainous, with very tall peaks, high plateaus, and deep gorges and valleys in between. Much of these mountains is covered with mist that the Peruvians call garúa. In the upper elevations, the Andes here still have glaciers. Because of this, the temperatures in Peru vary a lot, from tropical in the lower areas to arctic in the higher ones. To make it worse, the mountains in Peru are not stable. They have earthquakes many times. In the west, near the coast, then land is arid, but in the east, on the slopes of the mountains and on the northeast where the land is less elevated, you find vast tropical jungle. The vegetation there is very thick and dense, so most of it remains largely unexplored and undeveloped.

Peru has many mysteries. The Incas chose to make their capital city there at Machu Picchu. Other Native Americans still populate the Andean highlands of Peru as well. The descendants of the Quechua and Aymará, for example, do not speak Spanish. They have preserved their ancestral customs and folklores also. The Incas spoke Quechua, which makes one wonder if these Native Americans still follow the traditions of this culture and just how connected the two were.

SURINAME

Suriname nestles between Guyana and French Guiana on the northern Atlantic coast. It has a swamp on the coast, savannas and dunes in the middle and densely forested mountains in the south. The official language is Dutch, because at one time, Suriname belonged to the Netherlands. Many of its persons have emigrated back to the Netherlands. Most persons also speak Sranang Tongo (Taki-Taki) which is a local language that includes elements of several other languages all mixed together.

Surinamers are strange persons and that makes the country strange. They call the descendants of blacks who escaped slavery long ago Maroons. Asian Indians make up more than a third of the population, and Creoles (persons of mixed African and Native American descent) constitute another third. The rest is a mix of Maroons, Native Americans, and Chinese. Almost all the Europeans have left

Suriname. One bit of trivia: In 1667, the English made a trade with the Netherlands. The Netherlands got Suriname and the English got New Amsterdam, which would later become New York City in the USA. I wonder if the English feel cheated today, since the Netherlands still has their property, but England lost theirs.

URUGUAY

This country, the second smallest in the South America, stands on the Atlantic Ocean with Brazil to the north and Argentina to the south. It has a river that cuts it in half from southwest to northeast, called the Río Negro. It has tall hills and woodland on either side of this river and tidal marshland along the coastline. The capital city is Montevideo, the country's chief port.

I have never seen so many spiders as I've seen in Uruguay. Not even in the rain forests have I seen so many. These are not nice little spiders either. They're large. They hang on their webs between the roundwood trees and nest on persons' houses. For the most part, this country, or at least Dolores, the town where I visited, had strange persons in it. Many of them wore black all the time. It was the fashion, like everyone was in mourning. And the persons of Uruguay do not seem very friendly. Of course, if I had to worry about all those spiders, I would not be very friendly either.

VENEZUELA

Venezuela's coastline faces the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. The country has a vast mountainous region in the south and is cut horizontally in half by the Orinoco River whose tributaries spread out across the lowlands. Caracas, Venezuela's capital and largest city, has most of the country's museums, newspapers and other signs of civilization. Venezuela exports much petroleum. The country helped to build the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which as we all know has much corruption. For that matter, Venezuela has a long history of corruption. Military coups occurred often throughout its history, even as late as 1992, and in 1993, the Senate voted unanimously to have the president, Carlos Andrés Pérez, stand trial for embezzlement and misuse of public funds. So, you see, Venezuela has a long history of criminals in office. This is my country, so I hate to say bad things about it, but if the shoe goes on, put it there.

PALLA GRANDE HOTEL TAMANACO CARACAS

Oratorio will be provided by the lovely guest from Lima, Anna Quechua Camus.

Refreshments and incidental entertainment will be provided by Doktor Haushofer's latest crop of orphans. See the legless twins! The boy with three mouths!

Attendance by all covens is requested. Costume is formal.

More recently, the country made national the banks and gave the petroleum industry to private investors. They did this because we had a terrible economic collapse in the early to mid 1990s. Because Venezuela's industry centers around petroleum, petrochemicals, and mineral products such as aluminum, natural gas and iron ore, its cities feel very industrialized and modern, especially on the coast and in the foothills of the mountains. Most of the cities have vast, ugly slums where the poor live while waiting for jobs. This kind of environment especially attracts the zombies. Sometimes, I feel like I cannot walk down the street, read the newspapers or watch television without seeing some evidence of these horrid things.

PENETRATION

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Brazilian Wildlife

I just returned from a conference in São Paulo. The Universidad de São Paulo hosted experts from all over for talks on geology. I do not know if I said that I am a professor of geology at the Polytechnical Institute of Barquisimeto in Venezuela, but this is what I do for money. Since my imbuelement, I have reduced my number of classes and I do only research. They will not let me do this for long, because I have had little time to dedicate to it and it shows.

The conference was to discuss the mining of ores and minerals with efficiency. Experts from all over the South America came, including José Francisco Bénéduto who has

always talked about how the South America can become a major exporter of these things if only they will try harder. He worked with many countries to help them build their petroleum industries and stabilize their economies that way. He has brought the South America out of the Dark Ages and into the modern world.

I met Bénéduto many years ago and he told me to look him up at the conference. So soon after I arrived, I called him and arranged to meet for a drink. I went to his room, but when I knocked, there was no answer. I could hear strange noises inside though, like a cat in heat. My neck felt all prickly and I had that tightness in my temples that comes when there is danger. For me, when these feelings begin, I automatically find a place of calm inside myself, as if I had an angel of God giving me strength. I tried the door and was surprised when it opened.

"Go away," someone said inside, but the voice was wrong. It sounded deep, like gravel, like a demon. I opened the door all the way. I had to, and I was right. Bénéduto was on the floor, on his back. A strange demon crouched on him, spotted like the jaguar, with hair all over its body, half-man and half-animal. It had green eyes that glowed with a frightening intensity. It was looking at me, sí. Its body had the sleekness of a cat, but very muscular. It even had a long tail. The creature had slashed Bénéduto's face in neat rows, like torture. Poor Bénéduto was crying like a baby, but he did not or could not make any sounds. The creature hissed at me, "I said, go away." I think it was surprised when I didn't turn and run.

"What are you doing?" I asked it. I was horrified and confused. I did not understand. The creature just stared at me and I swear I saw emotion on its face: regret and sorrow so



deep. I pushed the door shut behind me and I stepped closer. I tried to reason with the poor, misguided thing, "You do not have to do that. You do not have to fight Satan's battle for him." It was the wrong thing to say.

The creature puffed up like a cat faced by a dog. It bared its teeth at me with a warning growl and began to stalk toward me. I put up my hands to show I meant it no harm, but it didn't care. I knew then that I was about to die. The thought ran through my brain like a cockroach afraid of the light. The creature pounced and hit me on the chest. I fell down under its heaviness and felt its claws dig into my shoulder. "No!" I screamed. The demon made a noise of pain and rolled off me.

There was a crashing sound that I learned later was the door breaking down, but my shoulder was on fire and I felt my conscious mind going to sleep. I fought to stay awake and reminded myself that I would heal, if I could stay awake and alive. I heard explosions, like gunfire. There were legs standing beside me and I smelled gunpowder. It burned my nose, but I was never so grateful for it. Finally, everything was quiet and I sat up.

Beneduto was bleeding badly and there was another man who was dead. A naked man with his face ruined by a bullet. It was not the demon though. I told this to the man with the gun, but he looked at me like I was crazy. Everything after that happened very quickly. I breathed some of God's grace back into Beneduto. A knife showed up from somewhere, I think from the man with the gun, and he put our bloods on it. Someone had called the policía and, when they came, we told them that the naked man had gone crazy and attacked Beneduto. It was the truth, and we didn't have to lie much. Only about the knife as a weapon. The policía gave us no troubles. The naked man had blood all over him, and not just his own. They took his body away.

After we had talked to the policía, and after we had gone to the bar for a drink, the man with the gun told me his name was Marcos, a chosen like us. He explained to me that the naked man was a demon. Only what I didn't know was that when the demon took over the man, it changed him to look like the demon. I cried that night, for the man who was dead because a demon had chosen him as the vessel for its evil. Beneduto flew home to his wife and three children without finishing the conference. I do not blame him.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Jívaro Shamans

I just arrived from Ecuador and have a story to tell. I had gone to the Sierra, what we call the central highlands of the Andes. Between the two rows of mountains, the Cordillera Occidental and the Cordillera Oriental, there is a plateau where persons live. I was going to view the Cotopaxi, a volcano that has been very active lately. Other geologists and I trekked up into the forests to get a closer view. It was hard going, but we eventually made it to the place where the forests yield to highland grasses. We made camp. That night, I began to feel that someone was watching us. It was dark and I could not see anyone outside the campfire's light, but I knew someone was there.

I was awake late because of the feeling. In my tent, I listened very closely to the night. That is the only reason I heard the sound. It sounded far away, but close. I remember thinking that it was in another room with a closed door between me and it, but of course, we were outside. It came from another world. I recognized the sound. It was the music from a panpipe. It haunted the night, sweet and melodic. It made me sleepy.

Then, I heard another sound. It was a snap, like a twig, and a whisper of the grasses. Being very quiet, I opened my tent and looked out. Several of the men had decided to sleep outside under the stars. I could see them in the small glow from the dying campfire. Bending over one of them was a Native American dressed in animal skins and khaki pants. He carried some strange wand or something. On his head, he had a feathered cap. His dark-skinned, broad face told me that he had native ancestors. Later, after some researching, I would learn that he was dressed as a Jívaro shaman. The Jívaro live on those eastern slopes of the Andes in Ecuador. They still have shamans who they say heal the sick, destroy the enemy and protect the tribe while in a trance produced by the hallucinogenic drink called *_natema_*.

Suddenly, the shaman began to sing and his song disturbed me deeply. It was a bizarre combination of tongue clicks, whistles and breathing sounds like the wind. He waved his arms over a sleeping man and, as I watched, his body began to jump all over the place like his muscles were full of electricity.

I must have made a noise, maybe a cry of surprise, because the shaman turned and looked directly at me. He stopped singing for just a minute, then he turned around in place and stopped when he was facing me again. He lifted his arms and began again to sing. I felt like I was going to die. There was too much pain. It was not pleasant. I stood, but I did not want to. I walked out of the tent and toward the man, but I did not want to. I could not speak. No one else noticed what was happening to me.

The shaman pulled me toward him with invisible lines like I was his puppet. I could hear his voice in my head telling me to, "Come... come..." And I did. As I got closer, he reached to touch my face, but before he could I saw my own reflection in his eyes. I had a blue, almost angelic glow around my body. Suddenly, I saw a flash all around. A voice, not the shaman's and not my own, said, "FOR WHOM DO YOU FIGHT?"

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: Advice

I suggest that if you are voyaging to the South America that you purchase a guide book. I believe that many good ones are out there and they will tell you what to do before you come and what to avoid when you get here. It is good to have some vaccines against viruses like malaria before coming to the South America. We have many mosquitoes, biting animals like monkeys, and much jungle that likes to grow diseases. Also, a book will help you to understand the place you will visit so that you do not feel so lost. I can tell you many things, but I do not have the time to be your personal tour guide. Sometimes, though, I wish my life were just that simple. Alas, no more.

In that instant, I knew what I had to do. Although it sickened me, I punched the shaman as hard as I could. I felt his bones break beneath my knuckles and saw him fly back to the ground. I had broken his jaw. He looked up at me with shocked fear in his eyes and I was so sorry because suddenly he looked so human. He was young, not more than 17 or 18. I had not noticed before that he was so young. I tried to go to him to help him, to pray for him, but he was afraid of me. He was afraid of _me_. He ran into the forest. I still have not learned why he attacked us. I will get help before I return again.

I was too late to save the life of my fellow scientist, but I learned a lesson that night. I can make a difference, but not alone. It is time for me to dedicate myself entirely to this mission that God has given me. This morning, I resigned from my position at the university. I have some money saved. I will live on it until it is gone and then I will find something else because I know now that I am Chosen. Even the Chosen, however, need each other. I cannot do this alone anymore. If I die, who will take my place? I came so close to dying many times since my awakening, but, until that night on the mountain with the Jivaro shaman, I have never felt so helpless. Now I must stop crying long enough to organize my fellow llaneros.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org
From: profesorgeo160
Subject: Jim Jones Cult... Again

I have had contact from an llanero who lives in Guyana and he tells me to come there because he suspects that something strange is going on in the location of the Jonestown massacre. He mentioned ghosts haunting, but he was very vague. I know of James Warren "Jim" Jones and the suicide pact he had with his cult, but I can not find very much information. Can you help me, you persons in America? I believe many of the 900 members of the religious cult were American, no?

In particulars, I want to know what kind of poison the persons took (wasn't it in Kool-aid?) and also what the Guyana government did with the bodies. Were they shipped back to the United States? Please, anyone that can help me.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org
From: profesorgeo160
Subject: La Portada en Chile

She was beautiful, I tell you. She had the biggest eyes I have ever seen. But I had to do it. She was temptation incarnated. I oh, Dios mio I killed her. I killed her. I had no choice. El Diablo works in strange ways and he sent her to tempt me.

It all started with my friend, Hector. He called me. He called me and he say that he need me and my band of llaneros. Hector lives in Chile. He tell me that something is sucking the life out of the persons of his village, eating their emotions. Together, Enrique, Marguerite and I flew to Chile in a plane. But Hector was not at the airport, so we went to his home. We find him in front of the television, just staring.

Hector talked to us, but he didn't care about anything anymore. He had no life in him and no vigor. I never had seen Hector like this before. Usually, he has much energy and he talks fast. He sings and plays guitar in a rock group. He is very good.

Eventually, Hector told us that he was waiting for someone. We asked him who and he said his girlfriend. Hector didn't have a girlfriend. Ever. He was too shy for girls. Hector and I are friends for a long time. He never said he had a girlfriend. So I begin to suspect foul play. I explain to Enrique and Marguerite. They go outside to watch the home from the rented car. I waited inside with Hector. Hector watched television.

Then someone knocked on the door. Hector went to answer it and there was a fantastic creature there. She was a goddess, tall and so graceful with long hair that shined like gold. Her face was exquisite, but I knew immediately that she was of the Devil. She bore his mark; her ears were long and pointed like those of an ass. She sensed my presence and looked at me. In her green eyes, I saw the world, full of sadness and anger and a hunger for revenge. I was so entranced with her that I did nothing and it was too little too late.

She waved her hand at me and it sparkled. It flowed like the river, leaving a trail of stars behind it. I felt my heart burst with love for her. Suddenly, I hoped that Enrique and Marguerite had not seen her and would not come in. I wanted to talk to her. I wanted to know her. I had so many questions.

But then, something changed. She bent to kiss Hector on the mouth and I felt jealousy like I have never felt before. I wanted to kill him because he was keeping her attention. I tore them apart and she began to laugh, "Hector. You didn't tell me you had a boyfriend." She laughed and laughed until the sound was ringing in my ears and making my head hurt. Hector fell to the floor. I do not know if he fell because I pushed him or if he fell because of her laughter.

Each of her laughs peeled away the layers of my delusions like an onion. I stared at her and saw her face change to cruelty. Her eyes became hard and merciless. What beauty that she had, though, even in that state. I would have loved her no matter what, but a man came on the television and spoke in a monotonic voice. He said, "EL DIABLO. EL DIABLO. EL DIABLO." Over and over, he say the same thing. I tore my eyes from her and looked at the television. The man was me, in black and white.

She was speaking to me, of love and of sex, but I couldn't focus on her. The words, "EL DIABLO. EL DIABLO," kept ringing in my head. I stared at the television. Her anger put electricity in the air and I felt her grab my chin. She jerked my face toward her. Her fingers felt strange — fatter and meatier than the hands I had noticed. I had no choice. I had to look at her. I think I said, "What are you?"

That surprised her. She didn't know I could tell she was a demon. I think it frightened her too, because she let go of my chin and reached into the pocket of her leather jacket. I thought she had a gun, but no. She pulled out a mouse. A little, white mouse. It squirmed in her hand and I watched as she squeezed it in her fist until its blood ran out between her fingers.

The rest all happened very quickly. I remember backing away from her because she started to glow with darkness. I know that makes no sense, but that is how it was. The back of my neck started to prickle. When she pointed a bloody finger at me, I knew then that she had magics that could kill me.

I listened to my instincts and dived to one side. Suddenly, a bookcase fell over and almost crushed me. It hit the television and made it explode with sparks and smoke. Glass flew everywhere. I searched for a weapon and saw a paperweight on the table. I picked it up and threw it at her. I just wanted to stop her. I did. It hit her in the head and she fell down.

There was fire in the home and Hector was not awake. I had to get everyone out, but Hector had to be first. I could not leave him, no matter what. I dragged him out and when it was time to go back and get her, the fire was too big. I wanted to. I admit it. She was so beautiful. I know I could have helped her. I know I could have. In time.

Well, I find Marguerite and Enrique asleep in the car. They were put under a spell of some kind. But, they were alive. They went back to the hotel and I went to the hospital with Hector.

Hector. You should have seen him when he learned that she was dead. He was so distraught. I began to fear he had lost his mind because of her. He ran away from the hospital. I followed him, because he is my friend. I tried to stop him, but he insisted on going to La Portada. This is a place by the ocean where there are rocks, big rocks that look like a gate or entrance to some other world. It lies just off the shore. "La Portada" means "the gateway."

The ocean was black. It looked so cold and the water splashed at the base of La Portada. Hector just stared out at the rock. He looked lost, like a frightened child. I stayed there with him for a long time, but I must have fallen asleep a little because suddenly I wake up and Hector is out in the water. He was walking toward La Portada. The waves came up and grabbed at him. They were greedy and Hector did not mind. I could not save him. I tried, but by the time I got out in the water, he was gone. I could not see him. I called his name over and over. I dived down and tried to find him, but no. He was gone. The waters began to pull at me too and I was so tired. I have to tell you that I almost gave up. I almost let the ocean take me too. I'm still not sure why I didn't. Only El Diablo knows, I guess.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: profesorgeo160

Subject: The Jesuit Mission

Buenos dias, llaneros. You discuss if we should call each other for help. Me, I receive many calls like this because we in the South America take a long time sometimes to know that there are other llaneros in the world and not many of us have internet. So, we are more alone and more ignorant of the monsters. I receive one call like this very recently from my amiga, Paula. She call because she find evidence of another llanero in her town. She thought she was the only one. When she tracked him down, she find his apartment a terrible mess. She saw signs of a fight there. In his mess, she also find some papers where he copied down some llaneros signs from the walls and wrote some notes by them. Also he

made some remarks on the papers that show he was looking for the person who made the signs. He even knew she was a woman, but he did not know her name. So, Paula calls me and asks me to go help her.

Marguerite, Enrique and I rode in a plane to Paraguay to the town of Fuerte Olimpo. Paula came to greet us at the airport. She drove us back to her home and we looked over the notes together. Marguerite find a clue first. In one corner of a paper, the llanero, Miguel, had written, "Jesuit reduccion," which is the word for the 17th-century Jesuit missions where many Native Americans settled. The missionaries educated the natives and they lived in peace, farming and praying. These peoples learned to sing and play music in praise of God. The Spanish king, Ferdinand VI betrayed many of the missions when he gave the land to Portugal in the mid-1700s. The Native Americans were sent back into slavery after the missions closed, but some fought back. Both the Jesuit priests and the native converts fought against the Portuguesos. This was named the Guaraní Revolt. So, now today, most Jesuit missions stand empty and falling down. The Jesuits have rebuilt some of them, like the one near Fuerte Olimpo.

So, because we are logical, we decided to visit the mission. We drove into the countryside where we find nothing but tall grasses, swamps and scrub forests. The sun was hot that day and it made us uncomfortable in Paula's car. On the way, we discussed how we would get a look around. Enrique suggested we sneak in, but we decided that was too dangerous, and we didn't know that the Jesuits had any connection to the mess in Miguel's apartment. Marguerite wanted to say we were converts, but I didn't want to lie to the priests. So, Paula says that we should just say we are doing research and ask to look around. We all agreed.

Before we reached the mission, we begin to see their fields of corn and wheat. And then the beautiful mission itself appeared before us from behind some trees. The mission had a stone wall around the grounds and all the buildings were stone too, with some stucco facades. They all had Spanish decoration and the church had a large bell in the tower. As we drove to the gates, the bell rang. We saw numerous Native Americans in the yards who ran to the church when the bell rang. A man in a priest's collar came to meet us in front. He said his name was Father Cornelius and welcomed us. He was very helpful. We talked to him for a few minutes. He gladly answered our questions, though we didn't mention Miguel yet. I think he believed that we were researchers, but Paula had to lie when he asked why we were researching. She told him we were working on a movie script.

Soon, we heard beautiful music coming from the church and Father Cornelius said the choir practiced there. We went in to see. All the singers were at the front pews, standing. They sang very well. Some were priests, but the rest were all Native American. As we approached, I began to feel very emotional about God. The songs were in Latin and I know it a little. They talked about the glory of God and how one day we would all return to him. They told of angels that would lead the sheep to their reward. They brought tears to my eyes,

and when I looked at the others, I saw that it had the same effect on them.

The choir sang so wonderfully that I almost didn't notice the tingles at the back of my neck. I did notice though, and I looked around for anything unusual. I noticed then that the conductor, who was also singing, had some strange movement in the air around his mouth — like heatwaves, or gasoline fumes, or oil in water.

My face must have showed my surprise because Father Cornelius leaned to me and asked if anything was wrong. I tried to say that it was just so beautiful, but he became alert of me. I looked around then and noticed other strangeness. A priest near the back had on a red shirt under his black priest's coat; it showed a little at the sleeve. A man in the far corner had bruises all over his face. A door on one side of the sanctuary had unfamiliar, arcane symbols carved into the doorframe. I thought for a moment that they seemed to glow, but when I looked straight at them, they stopped.

Paula had started to walk away and I watched her. So did Father Cornelius. I quietly told Enrique about the things I had noticed and he passed them to Marguerite. Paula crossed the church and knelt to pray for a minute at the Virgin's altar. Father Cornelius seemed very alert, even nervous. He signalled to someone, but I pretended not to notice. The choir kept singing.

After her prayers, Paula stood up and turned to watch the choir. I realized that she was just behind the man with the bruises on his face. I began to wonder if it was Miguel, our lost Ilanero. When he turned and looked back at Paula, I realized that, sí, it must be. She had made contact with

him. She stepped up to him and talked quietly with him. She had little time, because several priests suddenly showed up beside Miguel and tried to take him away nicely. Paula insisted on keeping him with her. I heard some raised voices, but I couldn't understand what was said. I quickly lost all doubt that the priests in this mission had had commerce with the Devil and they showed their true colors, magical colors.

May God forgive me for defiling His sacred ground, but when I saw one of the priests begin to sing words that didn't fit the choir's song, and when his eyes rolled back in his head, and when he began to glow with a swirling light of blue and purple, I knew I had to act quickly. Several eyes turned in our direction, and even more did when I pulled out my gun and fired it at the ceiling. I thought this would produce panic, but to my surprise, it didn't. The choir ignored me and kept singing. Paula had grabbed Miguel by the hand and was trying to pull him toward the front door. Enrique and Marguerite stood with their backs facing me so we were a triangle with sight in all directions.

They came out of every corner then. We were not in a good place. Through one door, more came than others, dressed in strange robes and suits covered with designs. This church had been defiled long before I fired my gun. I tried to watch in all directions at once and out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that Enrique was spinning slowly in place with his arms out at his sides. I think he was sealing the door because suddenly that one door slammed shut on the satanists and they couldn't get in.



The next thing is that one of the satanists threw a candle at Enrique. The candle hit him and ignited him. It burned very fast, with a strange blue color in the fire. I threw myself at him to try to knock him to the ground. We fell down together and I swear I saw the fires in his eyes, like they were burning inside him too. "Go," he said. "Take Marguerite out of here." I think he knew it was too late for him. He screamed then, in pain. The sound was horrible, not just a normal scream. It seemed to hold all the pain in the world. The satanists find it more painful. Many screamed with him and some fell on their knees or doubled over and vomited.

I looked up and saw that Marguerite was just standing there, staring down at Enrique and crying. A satanist was stumbling toward her, trying to get his hands on her. I hurried then and grabbed her before he could, pushing her aside. I shouted at him to stop and he fell down. Something flapping at the edge of my vision took my attention and I looked. It was a banner, but strangely, it had the words, "LEAVE NOW!" When I looked again, the words were gone and all the banner had was a Latin benediction. Enrique was convulsing on the floor and I knew he would not be alive much longer. I did not hesitate. I grabbed Marguerite's arm and began to run toward the exit. I said a prayer for Enrique as I went.

Paula had gotten Miguel out the front doors, but she didn't look well. She gasped for breath in a strange way that made me nervous. Marguerite and I left the church. The situation got worse then. Maybe they didn't want to defile their own church, I do not know, but when we got outside, all Hell broke loose, as Cop90 says. A dust cyclone rose up off the ground and tried to blow us off our feet. Miguel and Paula fell down. Marguerite had awakened from her shock about Enrique a little and I didn't have to drag her so much. We went to Paula and Miguel. I saw then that Miguel had a stick in his arm. The dust cyclone was picking up sticks and pieces of wood and throwing them at us. The pieces of wood cut us all, but in a way, I was glad for it. The satanists couldn't come near to us in the cyclone. I think they were just waiting for it to tear us to pieces, which it almost did.

We were all bleeding from cuts and a sharp stick pierced Marguerite's thigh. I had to carry her to the car. When we were there, though, we discovered that the car didn't work.

The satanists had broken it. That made me angry. We couldn't stay there, but had nowhere to go.

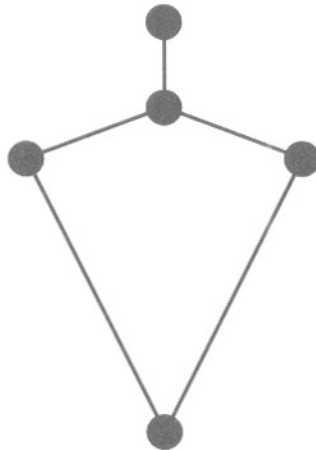
Paula was breathing normal again. Suddenly, she shouted, "Over there." I saw it too. There was a bus parked on one side. Paula said, "I can get it started, if you distract the witches." So, I agreed. I leaped out of the car and started shooting with my gun. I was angry and I called them many names. I tried to make as much noise as possible and make the cyclone follow me so that it would hide the others from sight. I was hurting all over. I couldn't see very good because there was blood in my eyes. I was scared, but I had to keep going. If I couldn't save the poor peoples there, then I'd at least save my three friends. Later, I thought, I would come back and clean the place completely. Of course, at that time, I was not sure if I would be alive to come back, but I kept going.

They were coming again, from everywhere. All the Native Americans had gone inside. Magic colors were flying everywhere, but they seemed to stay away from me. One of the satanists, I saw, had his arm shrivel up. It was strange. Another had his magic fly back at him and it made him scream in pain. They started to back off. I think they exceeded themselves. Maybe we were more tough than they thought. Something began to frighten them. I could see it in their eyes. The cross on top of the steeple was glowing as bright as the sun.

"God!" I shouted. "Save us from these devils!" When I invoked His name, some of the satanists seemed hurt, so I continued. "Your tricks cannot harm us, devils!" I shouted and shouted. It was mostly nonsense, but God stood firm beside us. I made it back to the bus which Paula had started and we drove away fast. They didn't follow us. I do not know why, but I think we hurt them.

Marguerite lost much blood. So did Miguel, but I helped to fix them with a Divine Kiss of Life. We all rested at Paula's apartment. Much later, we find out that Miguel had discovered the coven and had followed one of their demonic priests. They had caught him and tortured him, trying to find out how he knew about them and if anyone else knew too. He is very happy to know that there are other llaneros out here. He and Paula will make a band. Later, we will go back and clean the church.

Poor Enrique died a hero's death. I believe he saved us all. His name is to be revered among us forever.





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Sometimes our opponents get away.

No matter how good we are, and some of us are very good, we do not get all of the monsters. Sometimes we just have to pursue them over and over again, and sometimes we die, leaving a trail for others to follow. I have researched net archives, personal communications and every other form of record I can find to assemble a list of the creatures that have been most difficult for us to stop.

If a creature is on this list, it has escaped (or killed) at least two different imbued individuals or groups. Most of these creatures have some means of travel, and have appeared on more than one continent. (Although not all of them have done so.) Do not take chances. Go after these targets only after gathering experience with "easier" prey. Then plan thoroughly; reconsider your ideas, and gather yet more experience. Measure yourself against those among us such as Doctor119 or Traveler72. Are you more skilled than Cop90 or faster than Cabbie22? If not, leave these creatures to others.

CHAPTER 8: THE MOST WANTED

MONSTERS BY THE NUMBERS

The statistics given here draw on the information presented in the *Hunter Storytellers Companion*. If you don't have it or prefer the write-ups in *Hunter's Enemy* chapter, simply replace the various power sources such as Pathos and blood points with Willpower, and proceed accordingly. Make the monsters' mechanics as complex or as simple as suits your chronicle.

Players are discouraged from reading creatures' sidebar profiles. They contain information for the Storyteller's eyes only.

THE CENTIPEDE

>>>Namh Truang, in issue #7 of APA-Imbued, the amateur press association for hunters; transcribed to hunter-net<<<

[Yes, "APA-Imbued" is a fanzine for psychotics and paranoids to exchange their fantasies; Truang's a strange one. But finally his madness pays off. This is important. Just take anything _else_ he says with a grain of salt.]

My attitudes about children formed during the Cambodian civil war. As a college student, I was myself a target of Pol Pot's soldiers, and we learned early on that children were liabilities, not assets. Even today I can scarcely look at a child making noise (be it laughter or crying or anything else) without wanting to shut it up by any means necessary. Perhaps when I'm an old man I'll be able to go to public places without looking over my shoulder for assassins.

Naturally, the damned presence in my head wants me to pay attention to children. I still hate them, but I can't ignore them.

Last month I went to a professional conference in Prague. The last time I'd been there, the Cold War was still on, but discussing the overall changes in the post-Communist Czech Republic isn't my point. The real issue is what happened to me when I went to the Mucha Museum. (If you want to see my slides, we can make arrangements.) On the steps outside I noticed a group of a dozen or so children, ranging from perhaps eight to twelve years, walking along in a close formation. They seemed unusually solemn for such a beautiful evening, but nothing else about them stood out. Their features suggested the usual eastern European mix of ethnic influences, nothing unusual for the metropolis.

But the voice in my head shouted "THE CHILDREN DO NOT WALK FREELY." Wonderful, I thought, so have them take off their shoes. Still, I practiced the techniques for concentration I've learned.

I've survived stints in prison camps. I've tended to the victims of many kinds of torture. In my work on co-generation power plant maintenance, I've seen blighted hellholes on three continents. Suffering holds few surprises for me. This thing that I saw with the special sight chilled me to the bone. On that warm spring night, on the busy but peaceful streets of a city I love, I felt a despair and rage such as I haven't felt since the day teenage soldiers gunned down my parents.

The children were dead. That was no surprise; the voice in my head keeps showing me the living dead. They were also fused, front to back, into a sort of human chain. Their necks were all broken and reset, one angled to the left, the next to the right, so that they could all see. Their arms flailed randomly. Their legs moved in robotic harmony. Their eyes, though — their eyes still showed some lingering trace of humanity. Whatever did this to them didn't simply use their bodies, it used their minds as well.

I started to charge, then realized that I had no idea what I faced. So I invoked one of my aura tricks. The human centipede radiated as if it were a vampire. That made no sense to me; I assumed that I'd done something wrong. I steeled myself and prepared to cut the children loose. That's when the voice reminded me "THE OTHERS SEE BUT DO NOT SEE." For once it had a point. Just what would the good people of Prague think about a Cambodian man flailing away with a knife at a group of normal-looking children?

The last child in line turned her head to look at me. She alone showed expression. She _laughed_ at me, and spoke in German, "Fix this, meddler." Then she and the bodies grafted in front of her ran off with a supernatural speed and disappeared down a side street. I sought after them for the rest of my trip and found nothing.

>>>R.M. Klimu, in issue #8 of APA-Imbued<<<

Since receiving Mr. Truang's report, several of us in the area have searched Prague and nearby cities for the thing he describes. We've found it four times, twice in that city and twice in Bratislava. In each case it presented itself in public and taunted us when we became aware of it. I myself made the last of these sightings, and had the opportunity to speak to it.

I was able to strip it of enough power to hold it in place for a few moments, but none of my efforts to separate the controlling intelligence or to provide fresh vigor for the captive dead children succeeded. The thing spoke to me throughout the process. As my immobilization began to wear off, it summoned unenlightened police officers and apparently instructed them mentally that I'd attempted to molest it. Only the careful bureaucratic influence of our own Heather Iniston enabled me to avoid detainment or worse.

The thing describes itself as an endless child seeking playmates. According to it, the bodies fused onto it actually enjoy the experience. I compelled it to speak truthfully and got the same answer; apparently its delusion is sincere. I was not able to establish the truth of its captives' lives. Beneath the gibberish about souls and essences, there must be a pragmatic truth that accords with dialectical materialism as extended by the insightful Dr. Reich. (Perhaps an early member of our fraternity? Something to research.) But that truth seems lost. None of the captives achieved sufficient self-awareness to express themselves to me either verbally or mentally, but I was able to resolve a distinct consciousness-pattern for each one, and all appeared not just reanimated but suffering ongoing torment.

I hope that one of our kind has better success with the thing. Never have I encountered an entity so deserving of the epithet "monster."

The child-mistress of the Centipede is indeed a vampire. She's been dead for at least 400 years. Each of the children melted into her chain of segments caught her fancy while still alive; she arranged for him or her to die of disease or simply waste away for want of desire to live, then bound the child's soul into its body, stole the body, and added it on. A segment lasts up to 10 years before becoming so decomposed that it must be discarded. She leaves the bodies lying wherever she cuts them loose; they become forever-unsolved cases in local police records. (Careful investigation turns up a pattern of such corpses appearing one to three times a decade.)

The mistress and her "playmates" (the latter of which radiate a barely perceptible suffering to users of Discern or Pierce, or perhaps even Insinuate, Becalm or Witness) travel throughout eastern Europe by compelling truck and bus drivers to transport them. The vampire has no real understanding of the modern world, and simply enjoys all the bright lights and interesting sounds. She once encoun-

tered a hunter and tortured him to death. She since seeks to draw out others, to find out what these new people are about. She'd love to have an imbued child as a "friend."

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 6, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3 (except to hunter second sight), Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Linguistics (Eastern European Languages) 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2, Survival 3

Willpower: 6

Blood Points: 13

Health Levels: Bruised/Hurt, Hurt/Injured/Wounded/Mauled/Crippled/Incapacitated

In addition to powers appropriate to vampires of middling overall potency, the Centipede demonstrates some special powers of its own.

Veil of Life: The Centipede's controller uses this power to project images of the children as they appeared in life, dressed for their current surroundings. The children seem to cluster around each other, often in a line and always within arm's reach of each other. Second sight or a perception edge such as Discern is required to pierce this illusion; the children appear dead and decayed, with fleshy tissue connecting them in disgusting ways. There is no blood-point cost for this power; it's always active.

Fleet Footed: The Centipede gains three extra yards of movement per turn, for a number of turns equal to current Willpower, for each blood point spent. Each point spent offers an extra action in each of those turns, as well. Extra actions must each be dedicated to one feat only; multiple feats such as attacking two opponents cannot be performed in a single extra action.

Withering: The Centipede's controller can induce a fatal disease or simply ennui in selected victims. Imposing an ailment inflicts a level of bashing damage, which cannot be soaked, to the controller. Roll her Willpower rating against the victim's own in a resisted action, difficulty 6. If the controller wins, the victim dies in 10 days, minus one for each final success achieved. This power works on only children with whom the vampire has made contact for at least two weeks. Hunters, normal adults and children not "prepared" are immune to the effect.

Attempts to save a disease victim require resisted and extended rolls made between the vampire's Willpower rating and a doctor's Intelligence + Medicine, difficulty 6. One roll is made per day. The first to achieve eight successes in the days remaining of the patient's life prevails. Respire and Rejuvenate do not normally counteract an imposed disease.

Segments: Each child-segment of the Centipede has three health levels (Injured, Wounded and Incapacitated), whereas the controller has eight (listed above). A segment reduced to Incapacitated simply falls off rather than slow down the remainder of the being. Segments suffer no wound penalties. Two levels of lethal damage inflicted to fleshy connections separate segments. All segments separated from the controller fall lifeless, the trapped souls

released. (The bodies decompose over a matter of days.) The controller can keep up to 20 segments connected, but usually "plays" with fewer.

Strikes aimed at segment connections are at +2 difficulty. The controller is remarkably good at mentally commanding her segments to whip around in unison, but it's not perfect. She takes a -1 penalty to her dice pool to dodge and to perform other precise, quick actions for every five children connected (rounded up). Segments can grab and claw at enemies within reach, with a Brawl attack pool of three dice. Use the controller's 3 Strength to inflict bashing damage through a child. A segment's attack is considered one of the controller's actions in a turn.

The vampire can tear herself loose from all segments by sacrificing two turns in which she does nothing else, and she inflicts three levels of lethal damage to herself in the process, which can be soaked. She does so only when threatened with destruction.

THE PROTECTED PEOPLE

Physician's Field Report #22

Those of you who read my dispatches know how bad it is here in the northeastern reaches of Sudan. So you may be wondering why I'd report on a town of seemingly happy people as the greatest menace I've yet encountered.

I entered the town of Seven Wells as part of my routine sweep of local slave markets. (See my General Issue Reports for a full discussion of slavery in eastern Africa and what you can do about it, even though no Western nation wants to confront the issue.) At first I hoped for the best as the people seemed prosperous. Perhaps the local guerrilla conflict had been settled.

Then I approached the town square and witnessed two living-dead feasting on a human being. Townsfolk calmly walked by as if nothing were amiss. I am aware of the effects the supernatural can have upon normal people, striking them mad and sometimes oblivious, but then I saw an event which confirmed that something far worse was at work. One of the walking dead reached out and grabbed a woman speaking with a group. The woman fell and the others turned away as if she had never been present!

I confronted and destroyed the creatures, again without a commotion. They were easy to dispose of; they seemed to expect me to be docile and learned too late that I was not. As I sought answers to the town's mystery, night fell. I encountered two creatures I believe to have been vampires feeding on pedestrians in plain sight. Again, as soon as the victims were trapped, they seemed to simply disappear to the people around them. I destroyed the vampires as well, then sought out acquaintances for answers.

It soon became clear that some force prohibits all people in the town from witnessing anything supernatural—even more so than is usual for the veil of lies the supernatural create. I had never seen creatures display themselves so openly until I came here.

I had heard reports that the recent monsoon in Bangladesh appeared to have an otherworldly element. That might be the root of events here. Indeed, when news of it came on the television, my hosts thought that the TV signal had gone out.

Apparently they could see the image again only when the program turned to other news.

I do not know what causes the blindness, but I hope that my above report makes the potential threat clear. Where this phenomenon takes hold, monsters of all sorts prey without threat of anything except us. Our spirit guides protect us. But can we protect entire communities cursed this way?

A bane, a spirit of twisted destructive entropy, is the source of the town's extraordinary supernatural "blindness." It thrives on people's inherent tendency to overlook the supernatural, and intensifies the effect to attain more sustenance. The spirit does not contact or compel other creatures to take advantage of its influence, but those that discover the phenomenon can exploit the effect to its fullest, creating a symbiotic relationship between spirit and other monsters. Creatures partaking of this freedom may not understand it or even care about its source. The more intelligent or discerning investigate and make use of the liberty, but are still cautious of dangers that remain in the world.

Attributes: Strength 0, Dexterity 0, Stamina 0, Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 0, Perception 6, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Abilities: Intimidation 3

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: 10

Blinding: The spirit can infect a region's inhabitants with the inability to perceive *anything* supernatural. The only beings immune to this effect are hunters (Conviction need not be spent) and other supernatural beings. Any normal person who enters the region is affected; no notice is taken of any otherworldly activity or presence. Hunters are still perceived, but their edges are never noticed in use, by any means.

A person removed from the region regains his senses, but loses them again if returned. A human victim still in the area can be freed of the blindness over a series of days in which he is confronted directly and frequently with the supernatural, in an effort to deprogram the subject. Roll a subject's Willpower against the spirit's Manipulation + Intimidation in a resisted and extended contest, difficulty 6. One roll is made each day. If the subject is the first to achieve six successes, the illusion is broken and he behaves like a normal person again in the presence of the supernatural (that is, he may be driven in fear from it, but at least he subconsciously acknowledges it and has some form of survival mechanism against it). Attempts to deprogram a group of people requires that they remain available for days of effort and confrontation. (Remember, they believe everything is normal, so they undoubtedly resist being held against their will.)

Possession: The bane possesses a town well and spreads its control through the drinking water. It can be seen through second sight as a dark ooze roiling out of the well. It can take damage from edges that normally affect ghosts, but suffers no wound penalties. Although the spirit has no means by which to harm attackers, intelligent creatures in the area that understand how the spirit operates may come to its defense; all supernaturals in the area of affect hear a high-pitched keening as the bane signals alarm. That sound alone may attract monsters intending to put an end to the disturbing noise.



THE SEARCHER

>>>Dr. Jose Lee; transcribed to hunter-net<<<

I'd hoped to escape this torment, to ignore how the world had changed and take my family somewhere safe. Instead, here I am among you again, with a new danger that I cannot resist. Perhaps I could, but this danger comes from an old friend.

Some of you may remember my fellow anthropologist, the late Chang Jesus Anfei. He was killed, I believe intentionally, in a gun fight between Sendero Luminoso bank robbers and military police three months ago. He was a hostage.

I saw him again yesterday, while taking my parents for a walk in Salazar Park.

According to my information, Chinese communities are fairly common in South America. Political persecution and economic opportunities have apparently drawn immigrants to destinations throughout South America. Established neighborhoods in cities from Lima to Buenos Aires rival those in San Francisco and New York for size and prosperity.

— Dictatrix11

On some levels, it didn't come entirely as a surprise. We have, I believe, all dealt with enough revenants and revived corpses to know that unresolved passions seem to drive many souls to emulate life. Chang was nothing if not passionate in his dedication to improving present-day Peru, as well as to trying to understand its past. His death was horribly unjust. Were I inclined to spiritualism, he's one soul I would certainly expect to hear from again.

Yet it's one thing to guess at the real way of things, and another to see them demonstrated in the form of someone you knew and cared for. My parents remarked how the man in the rumpled suit bore a remarkable resemblance to poor Chang. In a moment of surprise and bewilderment, I performed the trick of concentration that dispels protective illusions. I saw him for what he was: a corpse. I pardoned myself with a story about my pager. Thank goodness it remains half-magical to them, suitable for all sorts of excuses.

I maneuvered through the crowd to escape their line of sight and approached Chang. His dead flesh bore a number of tattoos: the Chinese characters for "seeker," "wisdom," "heir" and others I couldn't make out. Warily, I slipped in front of him and spoke his name. He looked up, completely without recognition in his flat eyes. He scanned me from head to toe and spoke in precise Chinese, "You are not of the pure line."

"I do not understand," I said, more confused than ever.

"You have diluted your heritage. You cannot possess the Mandate. You are of no concern to me. Remove yourself, so that I may continue with the search."

I started to reach out to touch him. He picked me up with one hand and threw me a full ten feet. Even with my extraordinary healing, it took me several moments to catch my breath. When I recovered, he was gone. There was a lingering smell unlike anything else in the park. I gambled and followed it, out of the fashionable district and into old Chinatown slums. After

two hours, I found Chang again, peering through the windows of ground floor apartments. His eyes occasionally flashed a vivid jade green.

I tried to speak with him again. I agreed with him that I was not what he was looking for, but argued that I might be able to help him. I know that sometimes the walking dead voluntarily release the world if their obsessions find resolution, and I hoped very much not to have to kill my friend... again. In fits and starts, he claimed to be "First Thunder," returned to Earth to complete the mission chronicled in Romance of the Three Kingdoms. Now, I am not deeply steeped in Chinese literature, but that was one of my favorite tales as a child, and there is no character named "First Thunder" in it. I began to remark on this, when he angrily interrupted.

"It is a plot! The wicked unrighteous heirs suppressed the truth to end the triumph of virtue. The emendators will pay along with the usurpers!" He ranted in this vein for some while. From what I can gather, he seemed to search for the virtuous heir of the Han Dynasty — so as to rebuild Chinese glory!

I asked him why he was here rather than in China. He explained that this was where the "Dao" had sent him to begin his work. He would, he claimed, make his way throughout the world. If the righteous heir were to be found in China, he'd already be on the throne. Therefore, the Dao must have hidden the heir away from threatening eyes. I merely pretended to understand. The whole event had the quality of a nightmare. I was tempted to disassociate myself from it all, disengage my emotions, but I suspected that if I made one wrong maneuver, I'd have to fight my old friend.

As it happened, I did not make the mistake. As I questioned him, he continued his baffling search. We turned a corner by the Ch'ing Dynasty restaurant. His face contorted with a roar of anger, something like, "The invader cannot prosper! The purity of the Han must triumph!" As he ran, his body appeared to change almost into jade. He seemed heavier, too. (You can see his footprints sunk into the asphalt, if you can get past the police lines today.) His hands burst into flame, and when he smashed in the restaurant window, the glass burned along with the wood.

I made several futile strikes at him with powers of my own. He slapped me away and I must have fallen unconscious. By the time I recovered, he was gone. The restaurant was in flames. Fire fighters had removed seven people, myself included. Several died inside. The bodies showed signs of powerful blows — one had actually been folded in half. The police were already at work on a story involving drug-crazed terrorists. I left them to it.

That's my story. I have here pictures of Chang taken just before his death; he looks much the same to our sight. Please help me find and stop him.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2 (to normal sight), Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Firearms 4, Intimidation (in jade form) 4, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Survival 3

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 7



THE WRECKER

>>>Documents excerpted and uploaded to hunter-net by Pilot56<<<

[Sep. 7] FAA analysts refuse to comment on the alleged statements by Bernard Diehn, 40, the co-pilot in yesterday's OWA Flight 219 crash near Los Angeles International Airport. Recordings leaked to the press have Diehn screaming "My family's peace!" just before the plane entered a steep dive and moments after it left the tarmac. A spokesman for the airline refused to comment on whether Diehn's history included any treatment for mental illness.

[Sep. 11] Yesterday's explosion at Nairobi Airport is suspected to be the work of terrorists. Officials confirm reports of the pilot shouting, "My family's peace!" just before an explosive device of undetermined nature destroyed the plane's cabin. The death toll may reach as high as 500.

[Sep. 30] It is incumbent upon air-safety officials in the Americas and Africa to investigate and end the recent wave of apparent suicide attacks against commercial airlines. The air-travel industry must regain consumer confidence in the reliability and safety of the services it provides. Whether terrorists are using mind-altering drugs upon crew members or passing themselves off as pilots is less important than the simple prevention of these incidents in the future. The situation must be resolved immediately.

[October 19] Police continue their investigation into the murder of FAA crash investigator Frances Heyburn. Ms. Heyburn, a 12-year veteran of the service, expressed concern to her supervisor the day before her death about an apparent intruder at the scene of the West Grove crash site. The West Grove incident appears to have been part of a recent wave of suicide attacks against airlines on two continents. Ms. Heyburn's supervisor, William Losse, says that airport security is being stepped up significantly across the country.

>>>Notes from Pilot56<<<

Frances was a good woman and a good investigator. I had met her several times. With her death, I knew that whoever or whatever was taking planes down was within reach, and was for me to deal with.

Amazingly, it virtually came to me. I attended Frances' funeral when they got into my head again — something like, "THE MIND THAT CONTROLS DOES NOT LIVE." Startled, I changed the way I see things and spotted it: A ghost, I think. A black guy dressed in weird robes, this spirit inside someone's body, sitting there in the church. I wanted to go at it right there, but I couldn't during the funeral. I waited till the service was over. The thing made its puppet get up and look at Frances in her open casket. I think it smiled!

That was about all I could take. I crouched between cars in the lot and waited. Most everyone had left already. It eventually came out. I ran up and swung a tire iron at it. Got a couple of good hits in, but then it kicked the shit out of me. Last I saw of it, its puppet got into a car and drove away — fast. I couldn't find it again.

The spirit that causes planes to crash is the ghost of an African-American slave, part of an Ivory Coast tribe wiped out by warfare and disease in the 18th century. Until recently, the spirit itself remembered nothing of life except bondage and torture, and then the suffering endured beyond the living world. However, when some awesome force thrust the spirit back into the world of the living, it set out on a vengeful course. It is now fixated on destroying means of trans-Atlantic transportation such as airplanes and boats, in bitter memory of its kidnapping and relocation during life. The spirit does not discriminate between its former home, Africa, and its imposed one, America — both are subject to attack. Someone who can identify the spirit's obsession and somehow prove that slavery has been abolished in much of the world might lay the ghost to rest.

As far as reports indicate, the spirit has focused on planes thus far. It has, however, scuttled some ocean-going boats as well.

Attributes: (all imposed to whatever body is possessed) Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Melee 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2

Willpower: 10

Pathos: 8. The Wrecker regains one to four Pathos each time it destroys a plane (or other vehicle).

Health Levels: 10. No wound penalties are suffered by the spirit itself.

Host Protection: The Wrecker can absorb some damage that would otherwise affect its current host body. Spend two Pathos to add the Wrecker's 5 Stamina to that of the host for soak rolls for one scene. The Wrecker can even use its Stamina (but not that of the host) to help a host body soak lethal damage. This trick cannot be used against an attack that harms a host and the spirit simultaneously.

Possession: Spend one Pathos and roll the spirit's Willpower rating, difficulty of the target's Stamina. For each success achieved, the spirit can occupy the host for one day without access to the host's specialized capabilities; the spirit travels dormant within the body. Or, the host may be possessed for 30 minutes for each success, during which time the spirit imposes its own Attributes, Abilities and tricks upon the host (all of the spirit's Traits and capabilities may be used through the body). Hunters with active Conviction are immune to possession attempts. If Conviction can be activated while the Wrecker does possess a hunter (when it's presence is of the passive variety rather than active), the spirit's influence may be severed temporarily or the spirit could be expelled completely (Storyteller's decision). See the *Storytellers Companion* for further information on possession, and for any other tricks that you'd like to assign the Wrecker.

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