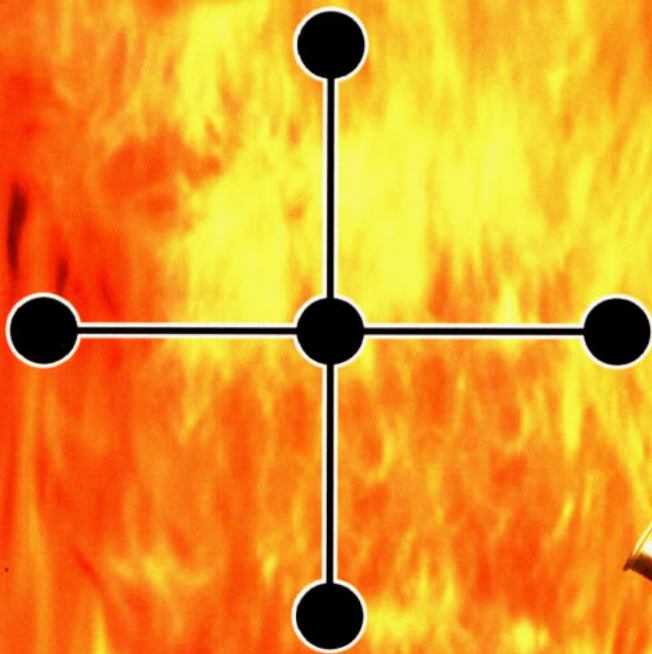


Mind's Eye Theatre™

LAW S

of the

RECKONING™



A CORE RULEBOOK FOR PLAYING THE IMBUED

HUNTER
THE RECKONING

Mind's Eye Theatre™ LAW S

of the

RECKONING

Ignorance Is Bliss

Most people go through life on a daily, endless round of chores and tasks — paying bills, going to school, working a job, raising a family. Many live their lives in ignorance of the danger that passes them on the street or lives in the mansion on the hill, walking through a bright blindness all their lives. Some, however, have their blindfolds ripped off, and the truth laid in front of them: monsters walk the world. Mundane concerns are swept away — there is no choice but to act.

The Duty That Cannot Be Ignored

Laws of the Reckoning contains all the material that players and Storytellers need for creating, playing and Storytelling those mortals who have become Imbued. From creating preludes, to the hunter classes, to Abilities and Attributes, to the powers of the Edges, and Storytelling, this book has it all. All that remains is the choice — take up the good fight, or stand on the sidelines. There is no returning to ignorance.

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Prelude: A Doll's House

Nothing in life should ever be so bad it ruins a Friday night.

Seth breathed a sigh of relief. Dinner had gone well, almost surprisingly so for a first date; they had shared mutual likes and dislikes about everything from television to classes they'd had in college, and so the subsequent invitation to head back to Melissa's house for coffee had been a natural one. Most importantly, the drive had been silent as far as the Voices were concerned. Seth didn't know how long his luck would hold, but as he poured their coffee and brought it back to the couch, he found himself whispering a small prayer that for once he'd be able to enjoy a normal evening.

"So, what shall we watch?" Melissa asked, gesturing to the small stack of rented videos on the table. "I haven't unpacked everything yet, but I've got a few romantic comedies, some Bruce Willis action flick, a couple of horror movies —"

"I'm always partial to Bruce Willis," Seth interrupted, a little more hurriedly than he should've. Before, he had enjoyed horror movies, even considered himself something of an aficionado, but not anymore. Melissa simply smiled and pushed the tape into the machine, settling back down on the couch a little bit closer to him than before. Before long all he was aware of was the flickering light of the screen and the little ways that the two of them kept moving closer together as the movie went on.

In fact, Seth had finally gotten his arm around her shoulders (she snuggled into the motion, always a good sign), when suddenly he realized that the sweet flower smell of her hair had soured into the hated, familiar scent of fresh earth and old, unquiet death. *No*, he screamed inside, fighting to keep from pushing her away as his thoughts accelerated toward panic, *not now. Not here. I don't want to see it. I don't want to know.* But the Voices didn't grant his wish, and he felt himself begin to shake.

Onscreen, Bruce Willis turned away from the bad guy he had just stylishly dispatched and looked Seth straight in the eye. "IT RISES TO FEED ON INNOCENCE," he intoned, a hollow, booming sound Seth had come to identify with the Voice. The image shook, fizzled and then ran like wet paint until it had reformed into that of a wooden door at the bottom of a series of

cement steps. As he watched, transfixed, a shadow moved behind the glass, beyond the door, and he saw himself walking slowly down the steps, his hand reaching out—

“Seth? Are you OK?” Melissa’s voice shook him out of his trance; her face in front of his, close, a look of worry in her eyes. Behind her, the television had returned to normal — of course, for her it had never changed at all. “You were shaking, I was worried—”

“I’m OK, I’m OK,” he said as reassuringly as he could manage, waving her concern away and hating himself for the lie. He covered it as best he could with another. “I was just startled by something — did you hear a noise just now? A big thud, then a clang?”

“I don’t think so —”

“Really? ‘Cause I’m pretty sure I heard something.” Seth made his face into a mask of polite but sincere concern, another hated deception he did all too well. “If you didn’t, I don’t know, but it sounded pretty big to me.” He waited a few seconds, watching her desire to believe him conflict with her own sensory perceptions. When he saw her wavering he added, “If you want, I can check it out, it wouldn’t be a big deal.”

“I guess so,” Melissa said, standing up. “Let me show you to the basement.” Seth felt his pulse began to quicken....

...

By the flickering light of the ancient bulb, Melissa’s basement appeared old and cracked, half full of the future, half full of the past, as antiques vied for space with the very new-looking washer and dryer. Dozens of moving crates were still stacked in various piles on the floor but there were also piles of odds and ends far too old and haphazardly scattered about to be hers.

“Do you see anything?” Melissa’s voice carried down from the top of the stairs, where she waited for him, coffee cup still in hand.

“No, not really,” Seth replied, and it was more of a truth than she could know. Back when the Voices had first spoken to him, he had found that if he concentrated very hard and listened to what they were telling him, he was able to see *things*. Monsters that walked like people, spirits that played with the living like puppets, demons that no one else seemed to notice, let alone try to fight against like the Voices were always telling him to do. Even using his special sight, her basement looked normal, except—

“Hang on a second, I think I might have found it.” Piled against one wall was a ragtag tumble of antique dolls, frilly dresses turned the color of blood with age and dirt, glass eyes cloudy with scratches, still staring up at him. To his special sight, tiny luminescent strands linked them all together like ghostly spiderwebs. Even stranger than that, though, was what was sitting in the corner across from them.

A lone baby doll sat in a tiny broken wooden chair, staring impassively at the ceiling, a serious, almost brooding expression on its chubby pink face. Unlike the others, its dress was clean and perfect, the pink of its flesh

unmarred by dust or age; to the sight, it almost looked alive, glowing with inner energy that made it seem as though it were almost breathing. Seth crouched down next to it, wanting to touch it but knowing better than to try, hypnotized by a feeling of loss and anger that radiated from the doll.

He never felt the attack coming. One moment, he was staring at the doll, wondering what to do next, then abruptly an icy hand slammed down on his shoulder, spreading a chill through his whole body. A rush of alien thoughts and feelings flooded through him: *kill the girl she deserves it (RAGE) invited you home on a first date you know what that means (LUST) she's corrupt like all the others (RAGE) a dirty, dirty baby doll (LUST) you know what she deserves (PRIDE) she's just a broken doll like all the others a broken doll like all the others a broken doll like all the others a broken doll*—

"No!" Seth shouted, not caring if Melissa heard him. The presence was strong, incredibly strong, its words loud and commanding in his head, but he squeezed his eyes shut and listened deep within until the Voices began to drown it out and his head was finally clear again. Opening his eyes, he saw just the barest outline of a man glaring angrily down at him with baleful white eyes, then the apparition vanished.

"Seth? Are you OK? What happened?" Melissa's voice was worried, almost panicked.

"I'm fine," he managed, struggling back to his feet. The glow from the dolls had faded to nothing, and even the one in the corner had lost its sinister gleam; in the back of his mind, however, he could still feel the thing's ominous presence nearby, waiting and watching, seething with hate and confusion over his escape. "I just tripped over some boxes and lost my balance." He faked a laugh. "It's a little spooky down here, that's all."

"Did you find whatever made that noise?" Her voice, now relieved.

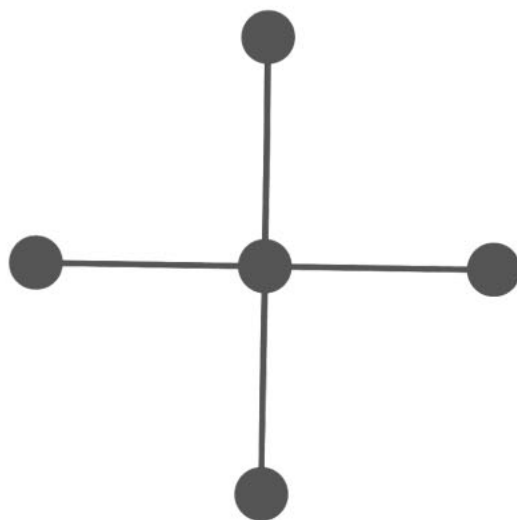
"Oh yeah," Seth said, glancing back at the corner, where the dolls continued their eerie vigil. For a split second he thought their eyes glowed white, then nothing. "I found it."

Mind's Eye Theatre™

L A W S

of the

RECKONING



by Peter Woodworth

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Chapter One:

Introduction and Setting

What is Storytelling?

We have been telling each other stories since the earliest days, when cavemen acted out the tales of their hunts around their fires. We painted cave walls, pressed reeds into soft clay tablets, inked papyrus and vellum, performed plays, illuminated manuscripts, printed books, filmed movies, scripted radio and television shows, and programmed computers. Now, one of the newest methods of storytelling is actually a return to the oldest form. Live-action roleplaying (LARP), which grew out of the table-top roleplaying games of the '70s, is just the kind of "participatory" tale-telling that we can still recognize among cultures around the globe. It is the same emphasis on character and story that you can find in the myths of our most ancient cultures, and that led to the creation of what we call "storyteller" games. The book you hold in your hands is an attempt to explore those universal tales of the Hero's Journey.

What Is Mind's Eye Theatre?

This game is probably different from any game you have played before. In many ways, this is really not a game at all. **Laws of the Reckoning** is more concerned with stories than winning, rules, game boards or dice. You will find that this game has more in common with childhood games of adventure than with card games or Monopoly-type board games. This book contains all the information necessary to catapult you into worlds of imagination. You create the action, and you choose your own paths. We have a name for this style of game. We call it **Mind's Eye Theatre**.

Playing **Mind's Eye Theatre** is like being in a movie. You and your friends portray the main characters, but the script follows your decisions. The director of this improvisational movie is called the Storyteller; he/she, along with assistants called Narrators, creates the stage and the minor characters with whom you interact during your adventure. Most scenes are played out in real-time, and always in character. You should only break character when there is a rules dispute or a change of scene which requires adjudication from the Storyteller or Narrators.

In **Mind's Eye Theatre**, there are no limits to the worlds you can explore. In the **Laws of the Reckoning**, you will discover the dark and frightening world of the imbued, ordinary people who have been chosen by mysterious entities known as the Messengers to combat supernatural creatures. Torn away from their old lives and thrust into a conflict they barely understand, they must confront some of the most terrifying creatures to stalk the night armed only with their courage, determination and perhaps a few equally mysterious powers of their own. It is a war waged in dark

alleys and high-rise penthouses, lonely wilderness and quiet suburbia, fought by hunters from all walks of life from the gutter to the board room. Their only unifying factor is that they have seen the Truth, they have heard the Call, and now they must hold to their Mission, no matter what it costs them. Because once the Heralds have touched your life, blissful ignorance is gone forever — there is no going back.

Characters

When you play **Laws of the Reckoning**, you take on the persona of a hunter, an ordinary person gifted (or cursed) with the ability to see supernatural creatures all around her and charged with the duty of battling them in a multitude of ways. Some take the fight to the creatures tooth and claw, while others reach out a helping hand to those they feel can be saved, and still others wonder about the meaning of it altogether. Anyone can be chosen by the Heralds — the only limit on your character concept (besides the rules) is your imagination. You create a character, then roleplay her over the course of a story and perhaps a chronicle (a series of connected stories). You decide what your character does and says. You decide what risks to accept or to decline.

During the game, you speak as your character. Unless you're talking to a Narrator or Storyteller, whatever you say is what your character says. Because most of what a **Mind's Eye Theatre** player perceives depends on the characters around him, players must be vivid and expressive. The characters direct the plot, but at the same time the events of the game guide and develop the characters, helping them to achieve the story's goals. To an extent, as a player in a storytelling game, you have a responsibility beyond simply portraying your character. You need to consider the story as a whole and your role in making sure that other players enjoy the game.

Creating a character for **Laws of the Reckoning** is easy and only takes a few moments. Only a few things are necessary to define a basic character, and once you've done that, you can play the game. There's another phase to creating a character, though, one that makes playing **Mind's Eye Theatre** all the more rewarding. Your character should be more than just a series of Traits and numbers. Rather, she should be a living, breathing personality with a past, motives, drives, likes, dislikes — everything you want to see from a character in a movie or a novel. So it's probably a good idea to take time to figure out *who* your character is as well as what she is *before* you start playing. While certain details and personality traits will come out while you're playing her, you'll want to have the basics in place before you start playing. It's just like an actor asking his director for his character's motivation.

Characters are the heart and soul of a story. Without them, all the patient efforts of the Storyteller would be for naught. Appreciate the Storyteller's efforts by following the rules and taking an active part in the game.

Narrators

In the **Laws of the Reckoning**, Narrators are the people who help the Storyteller present adventures. Narrators are the impartial judges who describe scenes and events that cannot be staged, adjudicate rules, and occasionally play the roles of antagonists. Generally, enlisting the aid of one Narrator for every 10 players makes for a good ratio. The best number of Narrators for your game usually depends on the gaming experience of the players; the more experienced your players, in all probability the fewer Narrators they'll need. Narrators usually play characters of their own as well as helping out in certain situations. That way they can be a part of the action instead of just trying to correct it from the outside.

Storyteller

Every game must have a Storyteller, who serves as the ultimate authority and final judge in any game of the **Laws of the Reckoning** you play. The Storyteller creates the basic elements of the plot, and makes sure that the story unfolds well — in addition to doing everything the Narrators do. Storytelling is a demanding job, but it is also a very rewarding one, for it is the Storyteller who creates the framework upon which the players build their experiences.

The Storyteller makes certain the story has content, interesting hooks and a narrative flow. This does not mean that a Storyteller should just sit back and dictate the plot — characters who don't have free will are no fun to play. Instead, a Storyteller creates the “framework” elements of the plot, then turns players loose in order see what happens.

During the game the Storyteller must be watchful and ready to create new elements to make sure that the story works out well. He is also responsible for safety, ensuring that all of the players have something to do, and that everyone is abiding by the rules. Although performing all of these tasks simultaneously can be exhausting, the sense of accomplishment gained from creating a successful story makes the whole process worthwhile.

In the end, the goal of **Laws of the Reckoning** is for everyone to have fun.

Props

Props can be anything that the Storyteller approves of that helps to define your character, including costumes, makeup and jewelry. Have fun and employ any props that you feel are necessary to enhance your character. However, if you have any doubts as to whether a prop (such as anything remotely resembling a weapon) will be allowed in-game, consult your Storyteller and abide by her decision.

Hunter: The Reckoning

The basic premise of **Laws of the Reckoning** is derived from the table-top roleplaying game **Hunter: The Reckoning**. It is not necessary to own or know **Hunter** in order to play **Laws of the Reckoning**, but the world of **Hunter** has many useful source materials which can be adapted easily for games based on **Laws of the Reckoning**.

The Rules of Safety

Behave yourself so that everyone can enjoy this game. **Laws of the Reckoning** is to be played in the home, at conventions or at other safe locations. At all times, you should remember that it is a game, only a game, and nothing but a game. If you feel yourself getting too wrapped up in what's going on, take a timeout and step back from gameplay for a moment. It's for your own good.

Elegantly Simple

This game was designed to be easy to learn and easier to play. **Laws of the Reckoning** is a storytelling game. The rules are aimed at resolving conflicts quickly so that players can stay with the story without ever stepping outside their characters in

order to figure out what happens. We have made every effort to create rules that maintain the integrity of the story and the background in which the story is set.

The Only Rules That Matter

Here are the rules of **Mind's Eye Theatre (MET)**, the only rules that absolutely must always be obeyed. These are common sense rules to keep everyone — other players, yourself, strangers in the area and the police — safe and happy with your game.

These rules are designed to limit the opportunities anyone has to destroy the fun of your game. They're not intended to interfere with gameplay or your enjoyment; they're here to make sure that you play sensibly and safely.

Although a superfluous reminder for the 99% of you who are well-adjusted and sensible enough to play by such common sense guidelines without prompting, it bears noting that these rules deserve particular attention in the world of heightened security and cautious scrutiny we live in these days. Even something as harmless as a group of friends playing an elaborate game of make-believe can theoretically be construed as something suspicious or even outright dangerous if other people don't know what's going on, and like it or not it's a reality that cannot be ignored.

Therefore, those new to this game are advised to read the following rules closely and take them to heart, while veterans of **Mind's Eye Theatre** are encouraged to study them again and remember why they are important.

#1 — It's Only a Game

This is by far the most important rule. If a character is killed, if a plot falls apart, if a rival wins the day — it's still only a game. Don't take things too seriously, as that will spoil not only your fun but also the fun of everyone around you.

Leave the game behind when it ends. Playing **Laws of the Reckoning** is a lot of fun; spending time talking about the game is great. However, calling the person who plays the team leader at 4:13 A.M. on Sunday to discuss an idea your character has about the nature of bloodsuckers is another matter entirely. Make sure to keep a little perspective.

#2 — No Touching

Never actually have physical contact with other players, no matter how careful you are or how innocent you believe the gesture to be. This goes for so-called "social touches" like hugs or back rubs as much, if not more than, "combat touches" like punches or kicks. Accidents happen, intentions get misinterpreted and someone will get hurt. Rely on the rules to cover physical logistics.

#3 — No Stunts

Never climb, jump, run, leap or swing from anything during a game. Keep the "action" in your action low-key. If you can imagine you're an auto mechanic with the power to wallop zombies with a flaming socket wrench, you can imagine that you're diving across a table as well. Avoid attracting the attention of people who aren't playing, and use your imagination to its fullest.

#4 — No Weapons

Fake or real weapons of any sort are absolutely forbidden. Even obviously silly toy weapons are not allowed. Such props give other people the wrong impression as to

what you are doing, and in the dark they could conceivably be mistaken for the real thing. Use item cards to represent weapons instead, no matter how cool you think it would be to stash a cap gun in your trenchcoat for the sake of “realism.” This country recently lost the last of what tolerance it ever had regarding people carrying fake guns, phony bombs or any other such toys, and those who flout this attitude do so at their own peril.

#5 – No Drugs or Drinking

This one is a real no-brainer. Drugs and alcohol do not create peak performance. They reduce your ability to think and react, meaning that, among other things, your roleplaying ability will be impaired. Players impaired by drugs or alcohol are a danger to other players, and to the game as a whole. There’s nothing wrong with playing a character who’s drunk or stoned, but actually bringing such stuff to a game is in bad taste at best and illegal at worst. Don’t do it.

#6 – Be Mindful of Others

Remember, not everyone you see, or who sees you, is playing the game. A game can be unnerving or even frightening to passers-by. Be considerate of nonplayers in your vicinity, and make sure that if you are in a public area, your gameplay actions or conversations are not going to alarm anyone. This is especially important following the tragic events of September 11th, even if you’ve always been careful about such matters in the past. Trying to explain that you didn’t really kill your friend, your hunter just chopped off his head “in-game”, to a policeman at 3 A.M. is often an exercise in futility. Likewise, hotel security isn’t going to ask if you were discussing building bombs for purely “in-character” reasons before they call the police — and chances are the officers who respond to the call won’t see the humor in it either.

This rule is especially important in **Laws of the Reckoning** games, where on an average night a normal-looking group of players may discuss in great detail things like monsters, cults, conspiracies, supernatural powers and other things that can unnerve ordinary people who don’t realize a game is being played. Throw in the fact that your players might also be overheard planning all manner of violent acts or describing gruesome things they’ve “seen” and you have the potential for real trouble. While you should enjoy this game and the fun and challenges it presents, never forget that no group plays in a vacuum: what you look like or more importantly what you act like while playing can have serious repercussions on others around you.

This rule also applies to particularly shocking or horrifying costuming. Overly revealing or otherwise inappropriate attire might get you bounced from a play area on a variety of minor charges (not to mention instantly give any onlookers the wrong impression about what you’re doing), while wandering about in tattered, blood-soaked rags is another great way to summon a number of those aforementioned disgruntled police officers for a tense late-night chat. Costuming is meant to enhance play, not bring it to a screeching halt due to attracting unwanted outside attention, so take care to attire your characters accordingly.

In short, if you plan on playing in a public or even semi-public area, do your best let the authorities as well as the owners of the establishment know who you are and what you’re doing whenever possible, and make sure that players remember to respect the nonplayers in the area and to summon a Storyteller immediately if any problems or questions arise with people who don’t know that a game is going on. Not only will doing so avoid potentially difficult and embarrassing confrontations about a supposed

"Satanic cult" wandering the neighborhood, but it also helps dispel myths about this hobby and improve relations between gaming groups and the communities that support them.

#7 — The Rules are Flexible

In addition to the standard set of basic rules, **Laws of the Reckoning** includes a number of optional rules; these are intended to facilitate more evocative gameplay, cut down on the need for differing "house rules" between games and otherwise help customize the complicated world of magic for individual troupes. However, as always, feel free to ignore or adjust any of the rules in this book if it will make your game better. We at White Wolf call this "The Golden Rule." If some rule included in this book (beyond the ones listed here, optional or otherwise) doesn't work for your troupe, change it. Just be consistent and fair. Nobody likes rules that change every week or "no-win" scenarios. If your troupe finds new ways to handle, say, the imbuing or the Messengers, that work better for you than the ones in this book, go for it. The idea is to have fun.

#8 — Have Fun

Not "Win." Not "Go out and kill everyone else." Just "Have fun." The object of **Laws of the Reckoning** is not to win. In fact, there are no rules for "winning." The goal is to tell great stories, not to achieve superiority over the other players. In **Laws of the Reckoning** it's not about how the game ends, it's about the journey and what happens along the way.

The World of Darkness

At face value, the World of Darkness is not terribly different from our own. People are born, grow up, work and die every day. Cities bustle with traffic as the wilderness teems with life. The same movies are showing in the theaters, the same magazines hit the coffee tables, and the same shows stare blankly outward from the television screen. Just beneath this veneer, however, lurk things dark and terrible, an atmosphere of fear, despair and violence that's far more pervasive than our own world. This isn't just our world with white facepaint and black clothing — this is our world through the darkest looking glass of the soul. Monsters aren't just things from dimly remembered childhoods and the occasional lurid B-movie, but all too real, waiting in the shadows for fresh prey.

Gothic-Punk is the term used to describe the attitude of the World of Darkness. The "Gothic" aspect is that of the sinister, looming shadow that permeates life. Buildings here aren't just offices and residences but sinister, gargoyle-encrusted edifices that tower indifferently above the frantic, short-lived masses. Many lose themselves in despair and callousness, deadened to the world by the pain of life, and any belief that offers some hope or promise of power attracts throngs of followers. Social divisions are nearly insurmountable — the rich live in fantastic decadence and indulge every manner of debauched whim, while the poor work themselves to death and scabble to find enough food to eat. All manner of enigmas dwell in this world, but they are lore of the most forbidding sort, the kinds of things best left alone for sanity's sake.

The other half of this distorted vision is "Punk" — what many citizens of the World of Darkness have adopted in order to give their lives meaning. Rebellion is

commonplace on different levels of society, but many people pit themselves against the system for so long that they lose track of what it was that inspired them to action in the first place. Crime is endemic and violent, and everyone learns to look the other way if they know what's good for them. Language is rougher, styles are more shocking, art descends to any depth to get its point across, and technology advances to provide it all without needing to leave the comfort of one's home.

This is the world that hunters call home.

Laws of the Reckoning vs. Laws of the Hunt

White Wolf now has two live-action games about humans who hunt supernatural creatures, and it's important to point out some distinctions between them in order to avoid confusion. **Laws of the Hunt** is about mortals who wage their war against the supernatural for personal reasons or on behalf of existing organizations such as the Inquisition or the FBI's Special Affairs Division. Some of them are ordinary humans, similar in some ways to the imbued in this book (at least before the Call); others are magicians, psychics, supernatural kin or similarly strange beings, possibly even ones that hunters might consider targets. By contrast, the imbued of **Laws of the Reckoning** are humans with absolutely no supernatural lineage or training of any kind, who have been chosen by the Heralds to fight supernatural creatures apparently according to some mysterious plan. They have powers as well, called edges, but remain ordinary folks in every other way, and do not register as supernatural beings no matter how powerful they become. Ultimately the dividing line is that the Heralds have chosen the imbued, for whatever reason that might be; all other groups, no matter how dedicated, do not have the sanction or support of these enigmatic entities in any way, nor will they ever acquire it.

That said, it is perhaps not inconceivable for groups from the two games to possibly meet or even work together, but do so with great care — the two books were designed to evoke different moods and atmospheres, and too much of one can very easily ruin the special elements of the other. A lot of **Reckoning's** fear and mystery is lost if the newly imbued character is immediately swept up by the local Inquisition and trained in a dozen killing arts and a wealth of vampire lore, for example. On other hand, the “normal” hunters from **Laws of the Hunt** may feel left out when imbued colleagues write in the hunter code or talk about the Heralds and use the second sight. This book is specifically designed, written and dedicated to portraying thoroughly ordinary people who are chosen by mysterious beings and abruptly dropped into a life-and-death struggle with monsters and forces from their worst nightmares. While the other book can certainly have elements of that as well, on a whole it wasn't designed for quite that much of a narrow thematic focus, and thus Storytellers are advised to consider great caution before combining the two in any way.

Those still interested in crossing the two games should consult the tabletop book **Hunter: First Contact**. Not only does it contain a wealth of material on the developing relations between the imbued and various established agencies, but it also covers extensively how to run games where the imbued and “regular” hunters cooperate, cross paths or even collide with each other.

Lexicon

Most of these terms have been coined in the clandestine e-mail lists used by hunters. It's human nature to want to find ways to describe things — perhaps the better to make them real to those talking or hearing about them. Hunters who work in isolation or have no Internet access are not likely to learn these, instead creating their own terms. Certainly other hunter groups in other parts of the world or even across the country have developed their own variations on these words.

Avenger: A hunter who often advocates the extermination of anything supernatural above all else.

bait: A hunter who provokes confrontation with monsters by using himself as a target.

burden, the: Mankind, especially those who would rather maintain the status quo (however terrible) than risk change for something better.

bystander: A person who witnesses the supernatural as per an imbuing, but does not act against it for whatever reason. These people may remember seeing monsters, but they never gain the edges of hunters.

creed: Rudimentary hunter groups with their own philosophies and methods of the hunt. The creeds are Avenger, Defender, Hermit, Innocent, Judge, Martyr, Redeemer, Visionary and Wayward

chosen, the: A term some hunters call themselves in reference to the imbuing and the Heralds.

Defender: A hunter who strives to protect certain people, places or things as much as he hunts monsters.

defenseless, the: Normal, unimbued humans who have no idea that monsters exist in the world. A more derogatory term is *the blind*.

edge: Any of the strange, mysterious powers granted to a hunter upon her imbuing.

gawker: A normal human who witnesses hunter or monster activity (especially supernatural powers or edges), but cannot comprehend them as anything unusual.

gone fishing: A term for hunters who leave the city in an attempt to find peace in the countryside.

Heralds: The name given to the mysterious forces which supposedly empower normal humans to see the supernatural and grant them strange powers. The Heralds are considered to be agents of a greater power, usually God.

Hermit: A hunter who works in isolation, apparently suffering great pain from the presence of monsters or other imbued.

hunt, the: Hunter life — the continual tracking, trailing, research, pursuit and eventual confronting of the supernatural. Also called *the mission*.

hunter-net — An e-mail mailing list that many hunters make use of. Many newly imbued arrive at it without consciously knowing how. For some, it may be the only contact they have with other imbued.

imbued, the: Hunters; those made to realize that monsters stalk the world. Such people receive powers at the time of this gestalt, possibly to use as weapons against the monsters.

Innocent: A hunter who takes an open-minded approach to the hunt, preferring to look for the good in the world.

Judge: A hunter with his own high standards for carrying out the hunt and achieving the greatest good.

lurker: A hunter who frequents the Internet and researches the supernatural but keeps a low profile while doing so and avoids direct involvement in the mission.

Martyr: A hunter who is willing to offer the greatest sacrifice to the mission — herself.

Messengers: What hunters call the forces believed responsible for the imbuing. Hunters of various cultures and backgrounds have different beliefs regarding the nature of the Messengers, but most believe them to be a force of good (or at least not outright evil).

monster: A general term for any of the inhuman supernatural creatures that prey on humanity. Subcategories include bloodsuckers, rots, skinchangers, ghosts, vampires, wereolves, zombies, witches, goblins, poltergeists, etc.

Most Dangerous Game (MDG): The hunt; also the monsters being hunted, as they are far more capable of fighting back with their own weapons.

puppet: A human pawn of the supernatural, willing or unwilling. Also called *traitor*.

pylon: A normal human who witnesses monster or hunter activity where edges or supernatural powers are used. Also used for humans present during an imbuing who do not recognize anything monstrous. Considered to be an insult.

Redeemer: A type of hunter who seeks out monsters with personal good rather than destroying them on sight.

second sight: Also called *the sight*, the ability to see monsters (or ones who can disguise or hide themselves in plain sight) by sheer will.

soulless, the: Humans who revere the supernatural or support it through “questionable behavior” (which is usually entirely up to the speaker’s ideas). Neopagans, New Agers, gang members, Goths and club-goers are usually considered soulless, although some hunters apply the term to each other.

touched: To be influenced or affected by the Messengers.

Visionary: A hunter who develops a philosophy regarding the hunt and has few preconceived ideas about the Messengers, monsters or the purpose of the hunt.

wacko: A hunter who pursues her mission to extremes, such as accepting human losses, making tremendous sacrifices, or claiming very strange motives.

Wayward: A hunter who is *wacko*, whose only mission is destruction of the supernatural and those who abet it, including other hunters he perceives to be “soft.”

Word, the: Hunters’ language of signs and icons that are used to communicate simple messages.

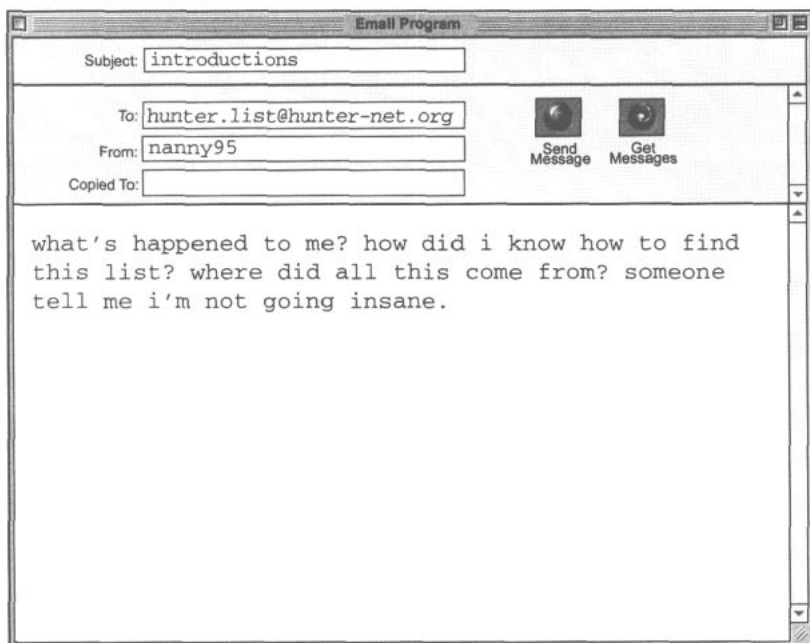
yokel: A hunter who believes in supernatural folklore and legends regarding monsters, but who has not tested their validity.

A Cry In the Dark

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: witness1

Re: introductions



Don't be afraid. The whole point of these lists is that you're not as alone as you probably feel you are right now. There *are* others who have gone through what you have — OK, maybe not exactly what you have, but close enough that they know what it's like and they know how to help. It's not easy getting used to what you've been handed, but if you don't it'll only get worse as time goes on, not better, so it's a good thing you had the courage and the sense to send us all a message. We're here for you, however we can help; to that end, I've compiled this file of topics and messages I think will help you sort out some of the questions you have. If you have more, just drop me or anyone else here a message, anytime; that's what we're here for.

After all, if we don't look out for each other, who will?

Life Before the Call

If you were anything like the rest of us, and I bet you were, life was an ordinary affair in every possible way in the days before you heard the Call. You had bills to pay, a regular job to go to and hobbies that kept you going when the first two seemed too much to bear. Maybe you were single and passed your time with a group of friends, still on the lookout for the one who'd fit everything into place, or perhaps you had a spouse and even kids that you cared for, trading some freedom for a kind of love that just doesn't happen any other way. Things were tense sometimes, and easy some others, and generally so busy you sometimes worried that your life will be over just about the time you started really understanding what it was all about. You might have had some

real disasters or tragedies that helped shape what you were, or maybe you were one of the lucky ones who managed to have fairly smooth sailing, but either way you'd probably figured you'd seen just about everything life was going to send your way, barring some miracle.

Of course, there are a few of us who noticed something was *wrong* with the world we were given. While I've yet to meet many of us that could say for certain that they encountered some kind of obvious supernatural phenomena before the Call, there were quite a few of us who believed in things beyond what we could see, hear and touch. Some were neopagans or New Ager types, open to a world they couldn't really describe and looking for solutions from sources outside the mainstream, while others were members of more traditional faiths who found comfort in the thought of guardian angels and the power of prayer. While *even* they did not claim to have all the answers, they thought that they were at least a little better acquainted with what might be out there than those who subscribed to strict notions of science and rationality.

As it turns out, neither side has much of an answer for what happens during the imbuings.

The Imbuings

I don't mean to bring up too many painful memories, but I don't think I'm too far off the mark when I say that nothing in your life before could possibly prepare you for the moment when the Heralds imbued you with the power to see the truth. I've taken to collecting different people's stories about their imbuings, and I can tell you now that they are perhaps as diverse as the subjects who told them to me. For some of us, it's a simple realization, with no fanfare or fireworks, that a person you're looking at is *wrong* in a way that can't be explained any other way but the supernatural. For others, it's like something out of a psychedelic drug trip or shamanistic vision, with strange images and bodiless voices welling up out of nowhere and assaulting their mind until it finally relents and acknowledges the truth it has been denying their entire life. No matter what, though, there's always the knowledge, no, the *certainly* that you're not just hallucinating or tripping or whatever else might explain away what you're seeing in front of you — we just *know* that what we're seeing is right, that our new impressions can be trusted just like any other part of our mind.

Another constant in the voice of the Heralds, which always comes as message of some kind, either heard as a voice in your head or written on something in sight: A "WALK" sign changes to "DEATH", a formerly innocuous billboard now reads "THE DEAD RISE AGAIN." Many imbued just get a simple statement — "IT DOES NOT LIVE" or "BEAST", for example — while others get cryptic but emphatic messages such as "IT FEEDS ON INNOCENCE" or "IT FEARS THE LIGHT OF TRUTH." Some of us even keep on hearing voices or seeing messages like this even after our imbuings, though they're in the minority. Most of the time you have just this direct communication from the Heralds that you're left with, but believe me when I say that's one message that will stick with you for the rest of your life.

With all of these new realizations, though, also comes an *imperative* — to act! No matter what the situation might be or how bold (or timid) you were before, you know that you must react in some way to what you're seeing. I've only heard of a few who didn't, who froze up when the Heralds called on them or even actively slunk away from what they saw, and from what others say that moment of hesitation haunts them forever afterward. Of course, as I've learned this command seems to mean different things in different situations. Some of us find themselves facing down raging monsters from a child's worst nightmares, fighting back with whatever they have at hand, while

others deal with more subtle threats or even find themselves approached by creatures seemingly seeking nothing more than a simple friendly exchange. Naturally, personality weighs in on how we deal with these situations too: I've met some of our kind who would probably try to talk down a raging monster rather than fight it, or more judgmental types who would cut off the hand of any creature that reached out to them for any reason. Whether or not the Messengers intended us to react in so many ways, or whether the light of their purpose was refracted in the prism of human behavior remains a question I don't think any of us are ready to try to answer yet.

The Heralds

So who or what are these Heralds I keep mentioning? Unfortunately, nobody really knows, though theories abound: they're aliens, trying to help us save our world from itself; they're powerful beings recruiting us to return wayward spirits to Hell or some other outer plane; they're an impulse from the universal unconscious or human overmind; they're time travelers from a past or future civilization, trying to prevent some great catastrophe from occurring. For the truly cynical, there's even the idea that they're another type of monster we just haven't met yet, using us as catspaws against their enemies in furtherance of some inscrutable scheme. If you like, after you read the rest of this thread you're welcome to look through some of our past posts on the subject. Or you can talk to some of the other imbued who claim to be in contact with the Heralds on a more regular basis; most swear that the Messengers return to them to impart information and warnings about impending conflicts, unanswered questions and other useful topics. Again, there's considerable debate over why some are chosen for this extra level of contact, when others receive only their original message and not one word more.

What everyone does seem to agree about is that they are unquestionably linked to our sudden ability to perceive monsters, as well as the strange powers we find ourselves equipped with not too long after. It's just too much of a coincidence that we would all be contacted by them otherwise. But as to why they choose us, no one can say for certain. Right now all we can do is *hope for the best about their ultimate motive*, and see if we can get a better picture of their goals and their identity as time goes on.

The Imbued

As unbelievable as it sounds at first, we now find ourselves in the position of being forced to acknowledge that we are all part of a group of people who have seen the truth of the world, that monsters are real and do indeed stalk human prey, and what's more that as a whole we feel compelled to do something about it as well. To paraphrase what the wise man said, like it or not we're through the looking glass now — it's not a question of whether we will act on this new perspective, but how. I only hope that we make the right choices, hard as they may be to see sometimes.

Diversity

So you're probably wondering, do we share any other common denominators: age, sex, race, creed, ethnic background? Well, while there's been no official census of our kind (and I wouldn't hold my breath for one any time soon), I think it's pretty safe to say that about the only thing that we all had in common before the imbuing was the fact of our ordinary lives. Other than that, I've heard from or seen signs of just about every type of individual imaginable, from all around the world. This gives me hope — it's not a question of race or nationality, but of what you're willing to do to carry on

the hunt. Some would say it's sad that it could only take a threat like monsters to unify so many different people, but at least that means it can be done.

Of course, with so many different types of people involved in the hunt, you're bound to run into differences of opinion and operation along the way. Reconciling all these perspectives is rapidly becoming the next hardest part to battling the monsters themselves, but it's an effort that must be made if we're going to become any kind of force for change in the world.

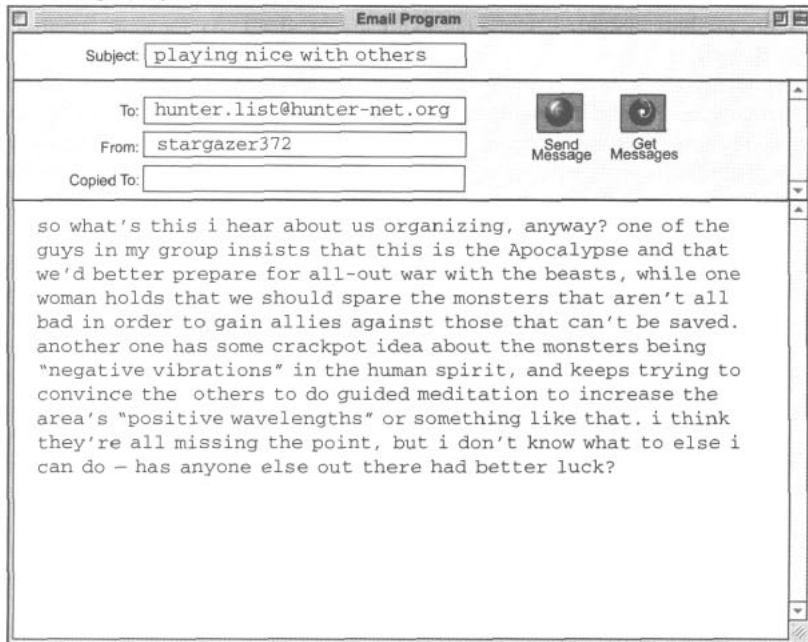
Well, enough of just my thoughts for now — since I just explained how different opinions weigh in, let me show you what some of the other members of this list have had to contribute on these subjects in the past. I hope you find their beliefs as interesting and helpful as I did originally.

Teamwork

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: soyboy134

Re: playing nice with others



I'm afraid there are no easy answers for you on that one, mate. I thought that my group had some rough edges when we started out, but next to yours it sounds like we're an all-star footie team. Hard luck, mate, hard luck. But all's not lost yet, at least not if you're willing to put up with some guff from them and sit down for a hard talk. Go into it the right way and I think you'll find that you can take some of those differences and wrestle strengths out of them instead. It's just a matter of arranging where everybody's strongest so that they complement each other instead of running at cross-purposes all the time.

For example, take that chap who's always going on about how much he wants to arm the world, blow up monsters with grenades and otherwise get all Rambo on you. Sure, he's bound to turn out a nutter if you just let him stew in the back, but if you give him a job he can put his hands on like protecting your mutual meeting place or taking

point when you head out into the field, you've suddenly got a very active and useful team member instead of somebody you're not sure you want behind you in a dark alley. Don't kid yourself — we're in a dangerous business no matter how you want to look at it, so it's just good sense to make sure you've got at least a couple of people who're good in a tight spot. Maybe you can even pick up some basic weapons and self-defense training off 'em, if they're the teaching type — once again, it may not be your thing, but it's not a bad thing to know even if you never plan on using it. I know I didn't, but I've found out differently since then.

Don't get me wrong, either, there's lots of room on this mission for others who aren't so keen on weaponry. That woman you said wants to talk to the monsters, maybe see if some of them are alright? So long as she doesn't have rocks in her head or an overly trusting streak, you've now got yourself a natural negotiator if you see a creature that doesn't look like it deserves immediate destruction. If that puts a bee in Mr. Rifle's bonnet, then tell him he can act as a bodyguard, backup sniper or what have you. They might even enjoy working together on plans for taking out those creatures she doesn't think are worth saving, while he might come around to how she picks truly deserving targets for him instead of just whatever happens along. As for your "positive-wavelength" channeler, well... Damned if I know if there's anything to the theory, but it sounds just about strange enough to be right to me. Even if you think he's just a crazy git, though, he can still be a right helpful one if you turn him loose on the local library or web browser looking for more information about the creatures and anything else that might tie into his particular theory — just be careful he doesn't start leaving out anything that seems to contradict what he expects, and he's bound to turn up all sorts of information for you to use.

Of course, I'm not saying you have to elect yourself king to get all of this done, and trust me the quickest way to be rid of your mates is to start tossing orders their way without asking nicely first. As much as you might want to do that sometimes, stargazer, don't — if nobody else comes along, you're stuck in a jam the first time the monsters show up in numbers that are more than you can handle (and chances are that's not many). Just sit everyone down and explain it to them as sensibly as possible, and if they're good folks they'll see what you're getting at and pull together. Don't worry about it — you'd be surprised how many of us still are, even given what we've been through. Deep down they know the score, and that usually wins out over even the most pigheaded ones out there.

Hunter Code

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: witness1

Re: archived message

In response to a wave of new posts regarding the origin and meaning of the hunter code, I'm reposting this archived message from scholar13 to cut down on the number of repetitive posts on the lists. Please, everyone, remember we do have archives — you can access them any time by clicking [here](#). Thank you.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: scholar13

Re: hunter code symbols

Like many others on these lists, early on in my new life I became familiar with a number of strange symbols that are routinely spotted around areas of imbued activity, and which hunters seem to be able to use to express a number of simple concepts and

ideas to their fellow imbued across all boundaries of language, education or even literacy. It appears to be no less than a universal written language of some kind, albeit a very simple one, yet at the same time there remains the curious problem that we imbued are the only ones who are able to decipher it, or generally even recognize it as anything other than ordinary graffiti. Normal people pay it no attention whatsoever, and if forced to comment on the symbols say nothing other than they find them vaguely disturbing or comforting, depending on the nature of the symbol itself.

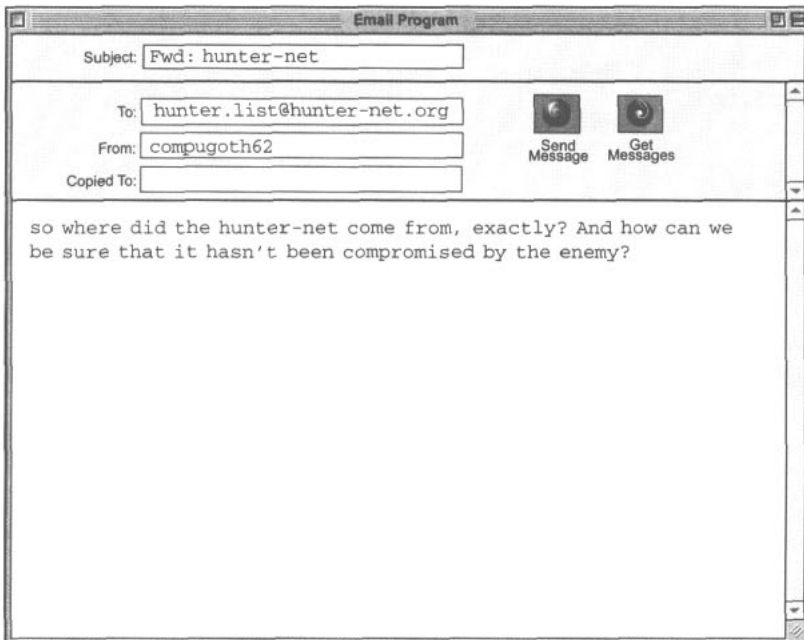
I have also heard tales — perhaps apocryphal, perhaps not — about even the most cunning or enlightened monsters being unable to unravel the slightest bit of meaning even from a symbol emblazoned on their house or car, while two imbued with no common language or experience can communicate in basic concepts using only these symbols. To date, to my knowledge it remains a weapon only we can command. None of us will argue with such a powerful tool, to be sure, but at the same time those of us who can't leave well enough alone can't help but wonder where it might have come from... and what will happen if our advantage one day loses its exclusivity.

Hunter-Net

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: cabbie22

Re: Fwd: hunter-net



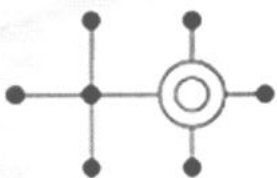
Witness, you want to field this one?

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

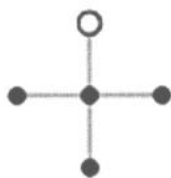
From: witness1

Re: Fwd: hunter-net

I first started these lists over three years ago, when I was imbued myself. I'm not an action type like some of the others out there are, and I felt there needed to be a resource for those of us — hoping desperately at the time that there were others like



gather



there



think



summon



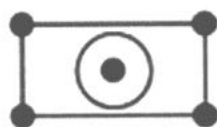
victor



believer



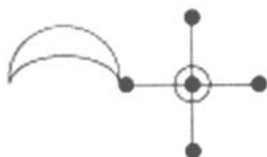
hunt



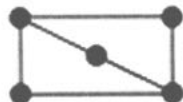
help



haunted



forgiven



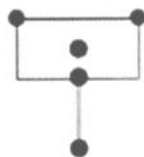
**they
watch**



talker



sight



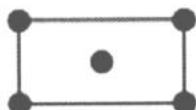
shark



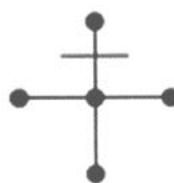
imbued



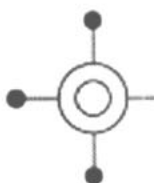
corruption



danger



heralds



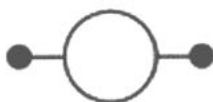
protected



haven



**second
sight**



alone



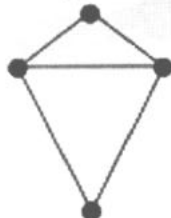
**blood
sucker**



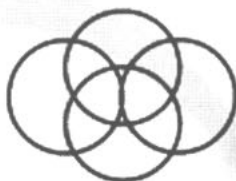
death



avenger



defender



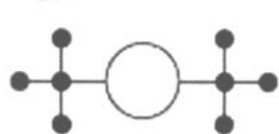
redeemer



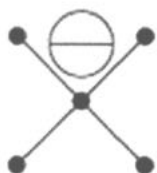
visionary



martyr



unity



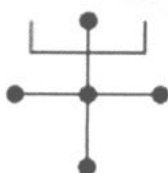
farewell



defense



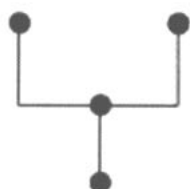
healers



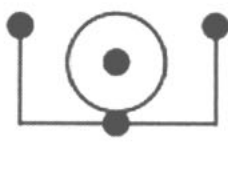
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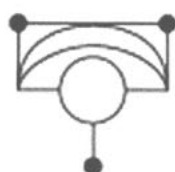
lost/
burned out



harmless



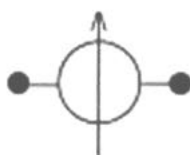
good
samaritan



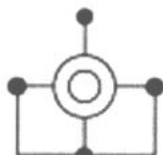
tormented



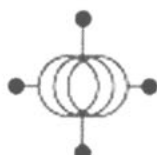
penitent



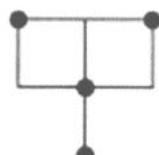
open heart/
open mind



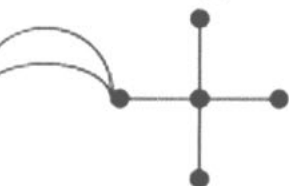
meet



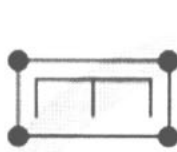
charge



victim



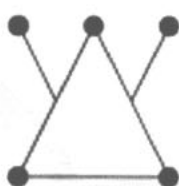
monsters



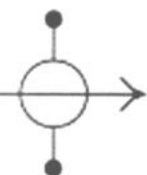
infested



protected



puppets



freedom



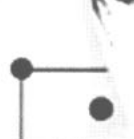
man beast



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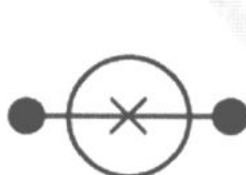
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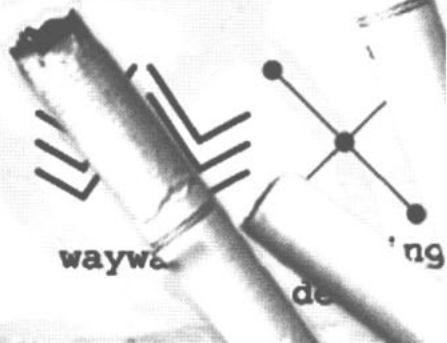
innocent



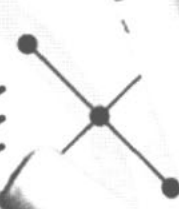
hermit



judge



wayward



deceiving

me — to keep in touch, share what we know and hopefully help keep the imbued from making the same mistakes over and over again. In that time, it's grown from one list with a handful of addresses to nearly a dozen major lists and countless offshoots and local branches. Some are still general information exchanges (like this one), while others are more geared for those with a similar philosophy or objective in mind. Most are open to anyone who wants to join, although a few of the more paranoid ones have started screening applicants; while I don't necessarily disagree with the idea, I don't think it does much to stop monsters or other undesirables anyway, so at best you've denied a few legitimately interested folks while still letting the bad guys in. But that's just my opinion.

And yes, since I can tell you probably did a little bit of a double-take when I mentioned it, there have been monsters on these lists before, though it wasn't perhaps as bad a thing as you might think. Despite rumors to the contrary, there is no evidence that the lists have ever been crashed or even significantly compromised by monsters; those few that have found their way on here (like Carpenter) seem to have done so almost because they were allowed to. Some say it's the Heralds protecting us online; others claim it's our natural anonymity combined with the sheer vastness of the Net. However, even if there's been no evidence of widespread infiltration or system sabotage in the past, that doesn't mean we shouldn't consider the possibility that these lists might be compromised at any time. While I'm far from paranoid, I do agree it makes a certain amount of sense to not throw the creatures out there any bones, either. Why do you suppose the disclaimer on the site entrance says to never reveal information that be used, however remotely, to track down your name and address, or the name and address of a fellow hunter? I pull such posts as fast as possible, and repeat offenders are banned as best the list managers know how, but I know of a few incidents where the information a hunter gave away was used to kill either him or his teammates. I myself had a close call once, just because I had slowly let slip a number of different clues over a period of *months*, and someone else was able to piece together enough of an idea about my location and identity to track me down. As a survivor of such an incident, let me simply say you're better off avoiding things like that.

So why continue with the lists, even if we know that those without our best interests in mind might well be reading every word we write? Because more often than not, they do real good for other imbued, from providing life-saving tips about how to do in certain kinds of rots to how to squeeze the most from your budget for hunting supplies without hurting your home life to just simple sympathy and support for those who feel they can't go on any longer. Just remember that none of this information is guaranteed, no matter who's posting it, not to mention taking the right precautions as you use the lists, and you should be OK.

Edges

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: sexton77

Re: Gifts from the Lord

It has come to my attention that there have been some on this list who question the origin or reliability of the various powers, or "edges" as I believe they've come to be called, that we receive upon being imbued by the Messengers. While my faith in my Savior and the sword he has given me has kept me from suffering some of the same doubts as others evidently have, I felt it only my duty to share what I have learned from conversations with other imbued about our various edges. Perhaps they will put some

of the uncertain more at ease with their new lives and their identities, that they may better serve the Lord because of it.

First of all, we must as a whole admit that we are now capable of things beyond the potential of our fellow humans, if we are to become comfortable enough to develop them to the fullest. Note that I say our fellow humans, for while we have certainly been blessed we are clearly still different from the godless monsters we know as our enemies — after all, we appear entirely normal to our very own second sight, which discerns even the slightest taint of the supernatural around us. What more proof could we desire? So to those who claim that we have merely been lowered to the level of our enemies, or that the Heralds are only loaning us the weapons of the monsters to use against them, I say to you: Behold the evidence of your own senses, and be silent!

Second, we must realize that the Lord has granted each of us different talents, assigning them as best suits our own souls and the role he has ordained for us in this crusade. Some wield the flaming swords of the archangels, while others have the healing touch of the saints, and still more are visited by the visions and passions of the prophets. And these are but the simple gifts given to those who bear the Cross — I have heard rumors of those who could unleash holy fire upon those abominations deserving judgment, or even blessed imbued that could purge a creature of all taint forever. I will not trouble you with the list I have been compiling of the various blessings the Lord has bestowed on our kind, though I will be happy to share it with any who ask; suffice it to say that though the enemy we face is mighty in its aspect, so too has the Lord armed His soldiers with the means to triumph over any obstacle.

Lastly, to those who are concerned about the permanency of our gifts, I say this: So long as the imbued who called upon was resolute in her determination, I have never once seen the Lord's blessing fail to materialize. Sadly, it was not always enough to turn aside the tide of darkness, but the edge itself never failed so long as the faith in it held fast. And as for the compassionate ones who think ahead to a time after the war is over and the evil is banished forever, and who worry about whether we will simply use our power to replace the monsters as the new tyrants, I praise them for their concern. But they need not worry, for when the war is over the Lord shall surely relieve us of our burden, and that includes such weapons as were meant to use against the wicked alone.

Monsters

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: witness1

Re: The enemy of my enemy

Guys, I received this from Advocate133 yesterday, and I think it contains some material that we'd all be better off taking a look at. It appears to be a scanned document, so I've passed it on in the same format. My apologies if the handwriting's a little hard to make out.

Someone in my group asked for the first time the other day what I thought about monsters: where they came from, what they want and so on. When I replied that the best we had was conjecture at this point, he looked shocked, as though the idea of going to war with an enemy we didn't understand either had never occurred to him or was an idea so far beyond reasonable that he didn't know what to make anyone who could support it. I quickly steered the conversation back to the specifics of the situation at

hand, but the more I thought about it, the more he seemed less the irrational one than I did.

After all, because they benefit it us it is very easy to take for granted a number of the conditions of our new lives — the sight, the edges, the hunter-code and so — even though we do not truly understand them, they work for now, and that's all we need to know; explanations can come later, so long as they keep working when we need them to. Mind, I'm not condemning anyone for this, because quite often the urgency we often operate under would make it fatal to wonder about the nature of the advantages we've been given rather than simply using them.

But then I realized that same logic applied to a lot of negative things about the hunt as well. When we first come through the imbuing, we are full of questions and fears about our new world, and I know that quite a few people on this list (myself included) like to think that we keep asking questions about everything we encounter. On closer inspection, however, I realized this was not so, that even those of us who keep open minds tend to start questioning only the specifics behind a situation, and ignore the underlying causes that truly deserve our attention. How else could the young man's innocent and sensible question have thrown me for a loop so badly, unless I had fallen into the same kind of trap I often chided others for getting caught up in?

Therefore, I am resolved to go forward and devote as much time as I can possibly spare to learning not only what monsters are and what they can do, but where they came from as well. Being forced to fight without proper time to gather intelligence is one thing, but actively planning a long-term course of action without taking the time to research and understand the enemy as completely as possible is simply folly. I only fear that there are too few groups with members like my young friend to remind them that the process of learning about the enemy is at least as important as battling them, if we are to do so with any semblance of a clear conscience.

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: sailor197

Re: eight ways from nasty

Just by way of making sure we're all on the same page, let me put forward a list of what everyone's to be talking about when they mention "the enemy". I've put them in a rough order of priority, based on how often we seem to end up fighting them (or they come after us). Let me know if I'm missing anyone important:

Rots — Also known as the walking dead. I've seen plenty in my career already, and putting that up against what everyone else has written I'd say that's our big theme. So far I've been able to pick out three varieties: hidden, walkers and shamblers. They go all the way down the scale from dead but nearly normal otherwise (hidden) to mindless killing machines (shamblers), although all of them have the same hideous strength and stamina. A few even develop some forms of mind tricks, though they're

— thankfully — the minority. All but the shamblers seem to have some purpose that pulls them out of the ground, though some don't stop even after they've accomplished what you think they're supposed to do, and have to be coaxed more forcefully to bed, as it were.

Ghosts — Get all the *Poltergeist* jokes out of your system now, and don't let me hear them either, because I don't laugh at that kind of stuff anymore. In practice, spirits to break down kind of the same way that rots do (I have a theory about that, but I'll save it for another time): the deceivers, the driven and the drones. Deceivers can't do quite the same things that hidden rots do — kind of hard to pretend you still have a day job when you don't have a body anymore — but they tend to live strange “lives” of their own, and get deeply upset whenever you do anything that upsets their careful routine. Driven are spirits that seem to have one particular purpose, like causing other people to get angry or protecting a place, sacrificing a bit of intelligence for a lot of determination in the process. Last are drones, who don't tend to notice anyone at all unless you land in their path, in which case they move you out as curtly as possible before resuming rattling their chains or whatever.

Vampires — From the suave *Interview* kind to hissing things little better than shamblers, it seems that bloodsuckers have a lot in common with rots, though mistaking one for the other can be a very fatal rookie mistake for one of us indeed. They seem a lot more organized, even infighting amongst themselves on occasion, and have perhaps the most pawns (a.k.a. blood puppets) in mundane society of any of our enemies. They also tend to have strict territories, so be careful of going more than once or twice into a neighborhood you think they control or you can be sure that the third time you're followed and the fourth time you're dead. Most don't seem much different than rots in terms of powers, although some of them can pull tricks from right out of the movies; unfortunately, if there's an easy way to tell one kind from the other, I don't know it.

Shapechangers — People who turn into animals and vice versa. Fortunately, they seem to be relatively rare (maybe a species on the verge of extinction), but when they do show up they tend to travel in large, angry groups. They're perhaps the most physically powerful opponents you'll ever meet — their human shapes are big and muscular, and their unnatural forms are, well, unnatural. Do not, repeat not, attempt to attack them without heavy weaponry and preferably a dozen backup team members as well. If you do kill one, remember that most of them have lots of big hairy friends with short tempers, and plan your next few months accordingly. One last word of caution: Shapechangers have a disturbing habit of appearing from thin air, slaughtering everyone in their path and then disappearing again; never assume that any kind of perimeter or stronghold is secure when they're involved.

Warlocks — On the surface, they seem to be the most like us; on many, you can barely detect anything wrong, but it's still there, no matter how slight. And when you see one cut loose, you know why: Although I've never personally seen one, I've heard that their spells can do just about anything you can imagine, from subtle stuff like reading minds or nudging a die roll to levitating cars and spitting flame at those who piss them off. Combined with their easy-to-miss looks, that's what makes them most dangerous to us. If you suspect you're hunting one, watch your step and try to hit them from complete surprise if possible, so they don't have time to work up some nasty spell for you.

Goblins — I put these things on the list even though no one has ever been able to even remotely explain to me what the hell they are. All I know is that without the

sight, they look normal (don't they all), but once you turn it on you see these nasty, twisted creatures superimposed on top of the human host, like creatures out of some nightmare of what the boogeyman must be like. They don't seem to respond to stuff that exorcises other spirits, though, and I've been told that they can do all sorts of nasty tricks on top of it, so as for me I'm going to stay the hell clear until someone can give me a better idea of what I'm hitting and where it'll hurt the most.

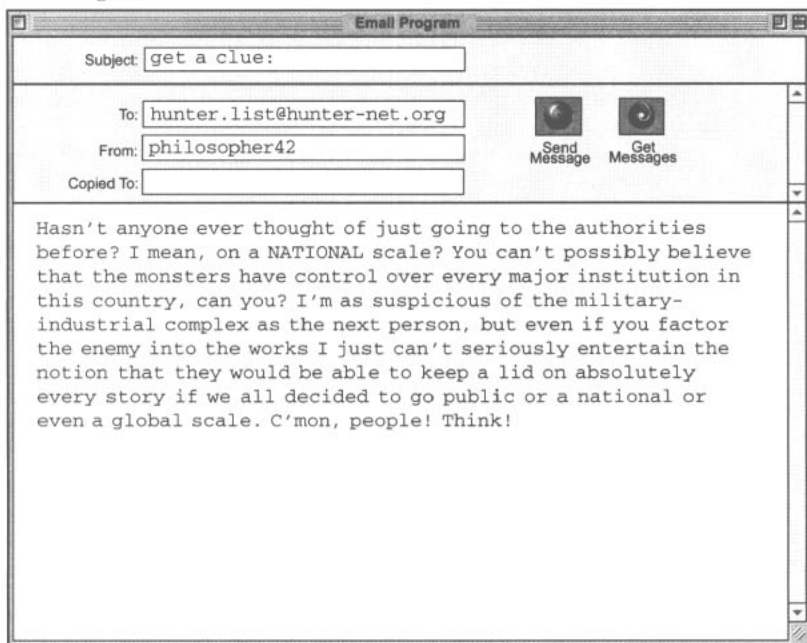
Other — All right, so it's not a real category, but there's lots of stuff out there I'm sure we don't know about yet, just waiting it's turn to take a whack at us. Since I'm not willing to fill this category with rumor, though, just what has been reasonably substantiated to my satisfaction, for now it's empty. How long it'll stay that way? Your guess is as good as mine.

The World

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: punker81

Re: get a clue



Philosopher, you've got some problems if you can't see the holes that run right through all the happy make-believe parts of your argument. Just because monsters might not be involved in every single aspect of mundane life doesn't mean those agencies are going to run up and give you a high-five for sticking your neck out like that. Creatures or no creatures, any society's business is preserving at least the status quo, or preferably the status quo ante, and any threat to that kind of mentality is going to be smacked down in short order by the most efficient means available.

Still don't believe me? Here's a quick civics lesson for you — just bear in mind that I'm talking about the possibility of what these institutions will do to you *without* any help from monsters at all, just for messing with them. Add some monsters to the

mix, ones who are really hell-bent on getting at you, and you have the stuff dystopian fantasies are made of.

Government

From the White House right on down the party that watches your house, government is a football for special interests of all kinds, none of whom have the slightest interest in letting you start some kind of civil war by going around telling people monsters are running around controlling their lives and snacking on the unwary. Rocking the boat is the greatest threat to a system that's based on red tape, procedure and patronage jobs, and if there's a better description of government than that, I haven't heard it. Point being, not only does government not want people like us going around telling other people like it is, it has *thousands* of ways to make your life a living hell if you try — if you thought taxes were high or utility service was lousy before, wait 'til you pick a fight with City Hall. Lost birth certificates? Deleted driver's licenses? Disconnected telephone service? Dead on paper, even though you're still alive and well? All that and more is just a few phone calls away for those in power, should you give them cause to lift the receiver. Death by a thousand paper cuts is still death, after all, and bureaucracy sure has enough ways to make you miserable without ever really taking any overt action at all.

Business

Grant an organization most of the powers of a government (or all of them, in the right Third World nations) with half the restrictions and a much more efficient operating system, and you have yourself a modern multinational corporation. While individual employees or even some management types may have a conscience, in the end if any large business is confronted by a choice between turning a larger profit or making the right ethical choice, you can kiss your sweet Kant goodbye. Unless you have a plan to make some huge money off the proving existence of monsters and hunting them down, business isn't interested, no matter how eloquent your proposal might be. Now, businesses don't usually have the power to make your miserable as directly as governments do, unless they're in a position to dictate a lot of local policy (such as a factory the entire town depends on), but they hate it just as much when people rock the boat or blow the whistle, and they'll hit you with all the trouble money can buy. Maybe your house just happens to be the perfect location for their next outlet store, or their lawyers show up with a summons for libel after you express your public dissatisfaction with them. And if you or anyone you know works for them at any level (not too hard with today's multinationals), man, they've already won, you just don't know it yet. It's easy to say that the cause is more important than a single job, but if that job belongs to your sister and it's her only means of supporting her kids, what are you really going to do?

Police

Repeat after me: *I am a criminal. I commit criminal acts. The police are not my friends.* Once that sinks in, you'll know why we stop having any real friends on the local police force the moment the imbuing hits. Even if you don't commit crimes, it's all too easy to make it look like you have, especially if the local constabulary is losing patience with your crazy theories or odd late night habits. Maybe those were bogus charges you got roused on, but that still means you're spending at least a night in jail before it gets sorted out, and the police can be very efficient at losing records and covering for each other if it means keeping a persistent nuisance or suspected felon behind bars. While good cops certainly do exist, they're not anything you can count on — in fact, for us it's generally better to get a crooked one, because then at least you have a chance of

bribing them when they catch you. Honest ones will just ride you in, and our chances of surviving to see trial are slightly worse than a child molester's once we have any kind of monsters on our trail. And remember that to the police, you're just one more crazy guy or desperate murderer — they might hear you ranting about monsters and cover-ups, but they're not really listening. So at best the police are still our enemies, just not particularly interested ones; however, should you become a problem for them in any way, you better believe they will make their presence known to you in all kinds of ways you'd rather avoid. After all, with how strangely we're all acting these days, will anybody stop them?

Underworld

So we're criminals — why not hang around with those who commit crimes as a full-time occupation? Maybe we can even use their extensive connections to pull some strings and put the word on the street about the existence of monsters.... Yeah, right. Who are you kidding? First of all, organized crime is often a lot like the police for your lower-income neighborhoods, except they don't have to even bother pretending to be impartial — if you make yourself a pest or otherwise threaten their interests in any way, they'll just work you over or disappear you outright, and no one else will say boo about it unless they want to be next. While crime's not quite the family affair it used to be, it's still not an open casting call either, and let's face it, most of us on this list have about as much chance to have what it takes to join the Mafia as we do to join the space program. (And if you *do* have what it takes, get the hell out of my city!) As for the rest of the day-to-day desperation of the semi-criminal underclass, well, hell, so much of it is due to what the monsters have done that it's practically impossible to tell where the human misery leaves off and the monster influence digs in. Put it on the first order of things to be cleaned up during the war, maybe, but as a way of invoking social change? Please.

Pop Culture

Ah, *vox populi* — and what a shrill voice it is these days, held by the windpipe as it is by a conglomeration of your aforementioned business and government interests. Even if you manage to go running to a television program that isn't owned by a conglomerate of some kind (good luck), or a newspaper that doesn't pass its work through one censor or another, it's simplicity itself for monsters to use *their* mouthpieces to write off the shocking revelation you imparted as a hoax, a publicity stunt or something similar. That's the problem with our jaded, video-game society these days — the one time a fellow imbued went on television and actually demonstrated his powers for the studio audience, they immediately assumed it was nothing other than "special effects" (an angle the rest of the media quickly picked up on). I've got nothing to answer that, either, because I can't think of a single overt demonstration of our powers that couldn't be chalked up to just "special effects" once you pass it through a video lens. It's a sick cycle; society demands proof of anything like what we have to say, then sets standards that make it impossible to prove by any means. Truth has at last become completely elastic, at least to the popular media — they can make it, or break it, or shape it as they see fit, simply by acting like they believe in one thing or cast aspersions on another.

Now are you so eager to run off to your local authority figures and tell them what's going on? No, if we're going to win this war, it's going to be because we do it on our own, not because some cavalry comes riding in to save us at the last minute.

Inherit the Earth

To: hunter.list@hunter-net.org

From: witness1

Re: What it all means

So that's a brief overview of where we stand at present, the world we have and perhaps a few glimpses of the world we hope to wake up to one morning. And deep down I think we all feel that will be the only time we can claim true victory in this war, when we've made the world safe for humanity to live out its own destiny free of supernatural interference (though as you've seen many people have different ideas about exactly how that will work). I certainly believe so. I've seen a lot of terrible things since my imbuing, but I've seen a lot of courage and compassion as well, on both sides, and I can only hope that means that we might just deserve the second chance I feel in my heart that we're getting.

"INHERIT THE EARTH," or so the Heralds told me that fateful night.

I can think of no better way to put it.

God protect,

Witness1



Chapter Two: The Creeds

“... and you’re sure that it was just the one entity?” Lucy, better known to some as “painter204,” favored Seth with a sympathetic but analytical gaze that he had become very familiar with over the past three months. Staying that objective was something he still had trouble with, but it seemed to come naturally to her, and more than once he had trusted his life to that same ability to come up with a good plan. Just like tonight.

“Only one, yeah, but believe me, one of this kind of creature is all it takes — the damn thing nearly invaded my mind, even though I was concentrating on my special sight.” Seth looked around at the others, saw the words sink in. “I only barely pushed it away.”

“Don’t let it bother you too much, Seth.” Tim spoke up first, quiet and reassuring as always. Like his voice, Tim’s appearance was pleasant but unassuming, favoring neat, casual clothes that enhanced a talent for blending into the background. A very mild disguise for a man who had once held off a charging shapechanger with nothing more than his own force of will. “You made it back to alert us, and that’s what counts.”

“I did some research on the property down at city hall,” Lucy said, pulling up a series of photocopied papers and a map of the region covered with colored smudges and lines. “It didn’t get interesting until I found some newspaper clippings from 1944. The original owners of the house were the Wilsons, a young married couple. They had been living there less than two years when one day an old friend dropped in for a visit, only to find a trail of blood leading down the basement. When the police investigated, they found Mr. Wilson sitting in the corner happily playing with his wife’s doll collection, absolutely covered in blood from head to toe. He kept muttering something over and over, which unfortunately the paper wouldn’t reprint, but the whole scene supposedly so unsettled one of the arresting officers that he quit the next day and left for parts unknown. They never found her body, but with an obviously deranged husband covered in blood it wasn’t a tough stretch for the jury, and he was convicted and sent to prison, where he remained until he was fatally stabbed by another inmate in 1956.”

The curly-haired young woman who so far had identified herself to the group only as “Feline303” shook her head. “Nice old-fashioned family values,” she muttered, and a few faint smiles broke out, but Lucy didn’t seem to notice.

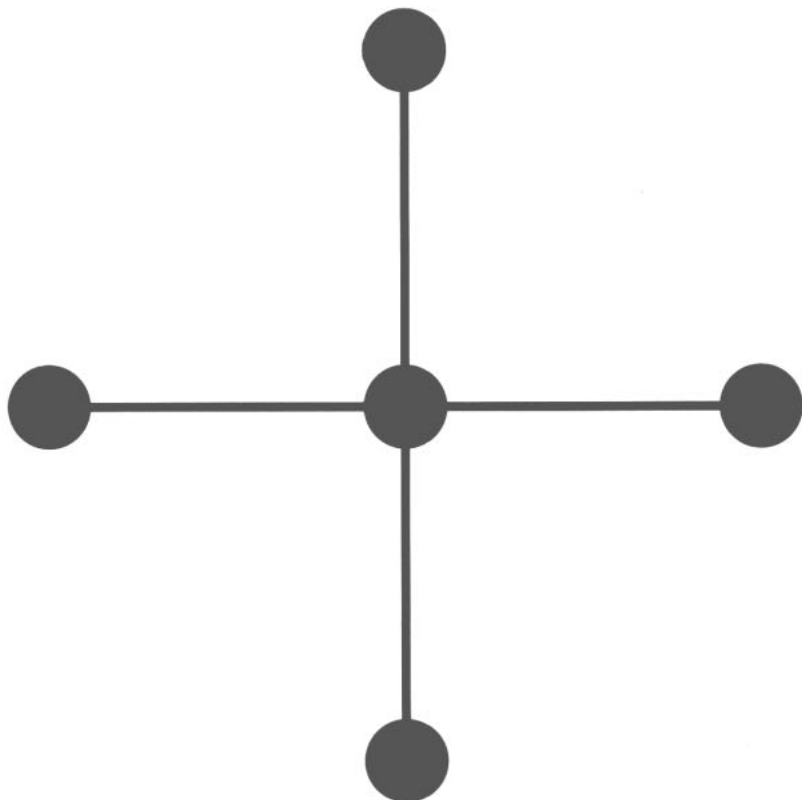
“Following his death, that house has changed hands 23 times, and every time a couple has inhabited it there has been some sort of trouble — numerous incidences of domestic violence, child abuse, incest, six full-blown disappearances and no less than nine highly suspicious deaths.” She gestured to the map. “The whole area around it has seen a sharp rise in incidents of violence upon women every time a couple moves in. The longest dormant period came when it was purchased by an elderly widow, Mrs.

Beckner, who held it without apparent incident for the past 10 years up until her death four months ago, when your friend Melissa decided to move into the target zone."

"Where is Melissa now?" Mae asked. Beside her, her older brother Scott nodded his agreement to the question, a thoughtful look on his face. Seth had never asked what shared horror the siblings had endured when the Voices first spoke to them, but he had never seen them far apart in all the time he'd known them.

"She went up to her parent's house tonight, packing up the last of her things. It's all the way up in Newton, so she she'll be there overnight. After that, it's touch and go as to when we might next be able to get into the house." Seth looked around, saw the same mix of fear and determination on their faces he was sure was on his. "So we have to do it tonight."

As always, their answer came as one: "Agreed."



A hunter's creed determines a great deal about how she acts and how she feels about the hunt, but it is important to recognize that the hunter chooses the creed, not the other way around. Creeds are not intended to be straightjackets for forcing all players of a particular creed to act the same way, but rather a starting point and common ground for individuals with similar goals and ideals.

Each creed description begins with the name of the creed, followed by what adherents of that philosophy are known as. (For example, Avengers are — surprise! — those who hold to the tenets of Vengeance.) A member of the creed in question offers a brief introduction into the lifestyles and outlook of that creed, followed by a series of sub-topics exploring different aspects of that creed and how it interacts with the world that has been revealed to it. A summary of each of these topics follows:

Weakness

Humans being the fallible creatures that they are, it stands to reason that members of the same creed might be likely to encounter the same problems and pitfalls as a result of their ideology. This can range from social difficulties or extremes of behavior that a creed's philosophy make it particularly likely for members to develop, to (in particularly serious instances) actual physical or mental problems that arise from the very nature of the creed's imbuing.

Apocrypha

Forged as they are in similar circumstances and driven by comparable ideals, many of the creeds hold similar beliefs about the nature of the hunt, the Heralds, the enemy and other aspects of their new existence. In addition, certain common personality traits or quirks that creed members often share are recorded here as well.

Gift

Though only the most inquisitive and dedicated hunters are beginning to fully realize it, within members of each creed lies the potential for a special great contribution to the cause beyond what the powers of Conviction and edges already offer: from enhanced weapons to insightful symbols to a mystical bond of shared strength and purpose, these additional gifts may well represent the next step of the mission. Powerful as they are, these gifts have the potential to add unbalancing elements to the game or potentially ruin the very *human* nature of the imbued, and as such may only be included at the Storyteller's discretion. While any of these gifts might occur to a character spontaneously, especially when a hunter has progressed far in her creed's Virtues, most of these gifts use techniques that a hunter must be told about by a fellow creed member who knows them, further limiting the number of imbued who have this knowledge available. Additionally, each gift carries certain prerequisites and/or mandatory Trait expenditures with it, which must be met before it will function. Lastly, even once mastered, a gift only functions for members of the creed who possess it, unless the gift description or the Storyteller specifically says otherwise — for example, no matter how many *Vision* Traits a character acquires, unless he is a member of the Visionary creed he will never be able to learn how to craft mission symbols as they do. These gifts are intended to be expressions of deep understanding of a creed's ultimate purpose, not chances for players to load their group up with free bonuses or "magic items," and should be treated accordingly.

Note: Many gifts require the expenditure of a large number of Conviction Traits to empower. If they cannot all be spent at once, a hunter may create a "pool" of Conviction Traits, which he may contribute to at any time; however, once a Conviction Trait has been set aside in this fashion, it cannot be used for anything else, nor can it be taken out again, and should the pool be abandoned all Conviction that

was stored in it is lost. Thus, pooling Conviction allows for the creation of special items and other unique feats, but carries a commensurate amount of risk and responsibility as well.

Imbuing

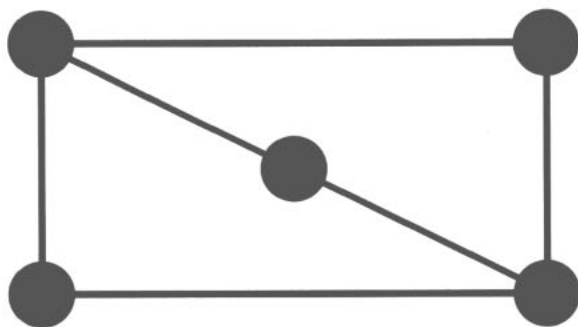
This section deals with some common themes and incidents that tend to be found in the imbuing of the members of a particular creed, as well as that creed's common reactions to the experience itself. Of course, the ways the Heralds reveal themselves are as numerous as hunters themselves, but astute imbued have begun to notice similarities, which in turn begs the question: does the imbuing determine what creed a hunter will follow, or is the hunter's natural inclination toward a creed something that would have found a way to express itself in any situation the Heralds had put before him?

Camps

Members of a creed pursue its ideals and objectives differently, and these camps recognize some of the attitudes and methods that are often adopted by different members of the same creed. Exactly how formal these distinctions are varies from creed to creed. In some, such as Innocence, there are few practical differences between members of different camps, while in creeds such as Vengeance the divisions tend to be much more overt. It should be noted that hunters will never actually ask "What camp are you?" For the time being at least, it remains a matter of personal opinion and effort and not a recognized distinction.

Starting Conviction

This number determines the hunter's permanent Conviction rating during character creation, as well as the number of temporary Conviction Traits that he "resets" to upon acquiring a new Virtue Trait. Thus, upon cashing in 10 temporary Conviction Traits to acquire a new Virtue Trait, an Avenger resets at four temporary Conviction Traits the next session, since that is what a starting Avenger receives.



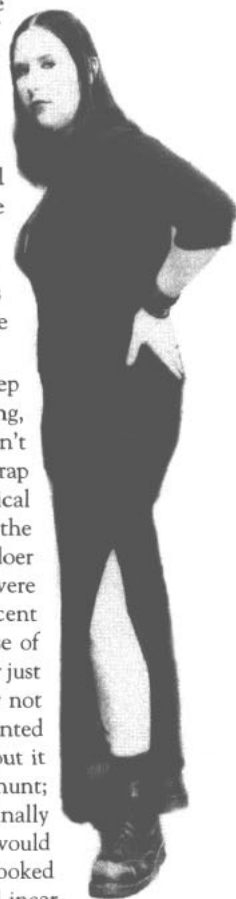
Vengeance

Avengers

Let me tell you something — there's a world of difference between fighting a war to win and fighting one not to lose. One has definite objectives and an ultimate victory condition; the other can only drag on as a holding action, plagued by indecision and bound to fail. That's where we differ from others of our kind — we're not willing to just fight to save a little something here, or wait for monsters to come take a shot at us. We know the only winning way to approach the hunt is to take the offensive and make the enemy pay for every inch they hold with blood. After all, what good is trying to fight defensively when the enemy conquered your territory thousands of years ago? No, if we're going to purge the world of the taint that's infecting it, the only way to do it is to plan for the destruction of the enemy, starting *now*.

Don't get me wrong — just because we believe in taking direct action doesn't mean all of our plans begin with "There they are! Get 'em!" and end with a hail of gunfire. While I won't say that we exactly shy away from violence — we are at *war*, never forget that — but flexing your trigger finger doesn't mean you should automatically disengage your brain, either. Running straight into the heart of the enemy with guns blazing might catch them off guard, but probably not, and even if it does the first time, sooner or later you're bound to run into something that'll just shrug off your bullets, and then what do you do? So we're not such strangers to planning as some of the others think, because while instinct might help you survive the battle, it's tactics that will carry the war. What we *are* unfamiliar with is inaction — we can't just sit back and wait for a break to come along. Like it or not, once we hear the Call, we're not happy unless we're working on the hunt, whether we're actually stalking the beasts or just buying the supplies for future operations. The sooner we do greater and greater damage to the enemy, the better.

Bloodthirsty? Some of us, sure. But I'll tell you this: deep down, even the most temperate of our kind (relatively speaking, of course) has always had a strong sense of justice. And I don't mean the touchy-feely, let's-not-hurt-a-criminal's-self-esteem crap that passes for justice these days; I mean *justice* in the Biblical fashion, where the wicked get exactly what they deserve and the harm done to a victim is repaid several times over to the evildoer who inflicted it. We were the kids who always pretended we were white knights or Wild West gunslingers, protecting the innocent and taking out the bad guys. Even as we got older, our sense of outrage at the sight of a criminal going free on a technicality or just evil going unpunished in general never diminished. We may not have had the tools or influence to set things right the way we wanted to, but none of us ever looked the other way and forgot about it either. That's why so many of us seem to take so naturally to the hunt; when the Messengers awaken us, it's like for the first time we finally get a chance to say "No more!" and stand up to those who would abuse others. Except that instead of the mere hoods or crooked politicians we raged against before, now we're up against evil incar-



nate. But if that's what it has to be, fine — it's us or them, and I don't think humanity is due to lay down and die just yet.

Call it single-mindedness if you like, but any soldier will tell you that in war there's only two sides — people alongside you, and people at the other end of the barrel. Maybe there are some creatures out there who aren't as bad as the others, but who can know for sure? I've heard the arguments from others before, and I'm not convinced. After all, if it's not a monster's fault that it became what it is, then it can't control its state either, and that means even the friendliest and most humane of them could go bad at any time. That's not a risk I'm willing to stake my own life on, let alone the life of someone on my team or especially an innocent person. And if they turned of their own free will, well, they should've thought a little harder before abandoning their humanity to prey on others. Monsters have been running up a karmic debt for thousands of years now, and it's time they got some payback. If we're the only ones willing to take it to them, then so be it. What was it the man once said? "Even a single spark can burn an ancient forest to the ground."

The Heralds handed us the match. Now it's up to us to strike it.

Weakness

If we have a real weakness — aside from whatever you want to call it that drives a person to actually *plan* battles with monsters in the night — it's our tendency to be a little extreme, especially in the eyes of our more tolerant colleagues. Even the best of us have trouble listening to other points of view about the enemy or our best course of action, and we can clash pretty badly when we try to discuss strategy with those who don't agree with our particular beliefs. Being a crusader doesn't leave a lot of room for differing points of view. That also means that a few of us have gotten almost as bad as the creatures in their efforts to rid the world of the enemy. You've heard the stories: the wacko who burned a building full of innocent people to get a nest of monsters, or the maniac who decided that minorities were part of the enemy as well. So hear this, in case you or someone you know ever starts thinking of broadening your crusade beyond the monsters the Heralds revealed: you commit acts like that, *you* are the enemy to the rest of us, and you know what that means. Humanity must be saved, and that means some drastic measures are necessary, but if we turn ourselves into monsters to do it, what the hell have we won?

Our need for action can get us in trouble because it makes even the level-headed among us too itchy to make something happen, when they really need to calm down or lie low for a while. So long as we channel it one way or another, we're fine, but leaving us alone with nothing to do is asking for trouble. Fortunately, most of the time it's the enemy that pays the price, but all you need is to lose one friend to such rash action to know that it only brings bad things in the end.

Apocrypha

As a rule, Avengers tend to have very traditional views of good and evil, and little trouble drawing a line between what needs preserving and what needs destroying. Some justify their new mission with religion or a similar higher cause, while others might simply believe that humanity needs to rid itself of these unnatural parasites, but in the end nearly all Avengers see their cause as straightforward and their goals as clearly definable. Self-confidence is another defining Trait of this creed: after all, not just anyone can be confronted with a hideous monster bent on destruction and have their first response be to kick it in a sensitive area until it stops moving! Lastly, all

Avengers recognize that war has only one outcome: survive or be destroyed. Other creeds might try to kid themselves about the outcome of the present conflict, but Avengers look at the world and see that either humanity can surrender and be ground into extinction even faster, or it can fight back and take control of its destiny for the first time in history.

Gift

Terrible Swift Sword

One of the main failings of the *Cleave* edge is that, while extremely powerful, it inevitably destroys the weapon in the process, sometimes even at the worst possible moment in battle. However, word has recently spread among a few of the Vengeful regarding the existence of special techniques that can render a melee weapon immune to the damage inherently caused by *Cleave*. The weapon can still be destroyed by other circumstances, but in the hands of its creator it will never be consumed by the wrath he invests in it. Of course, not just any weapon will do: all such weapons must be hand-crafted by their intended wielder, a process which takes days of concentrated effort and requires materials of the highest quality, as well as the invocation of special rites unique to the weapon's creator. For example, some Avengers may bathe their weapon in holy water, others might consecrate it to the four elements, and still others might burn incense and ask their ancestors to bless it to strike down the unholy. Even secular creed members still perform their own rituals for "consecrating" a weapon in this fashion, though they may not consciously realize that they are performing a ritual. If all these steps are taken, the result is a breathtaking weapon that never suffers any of the negative effects of *Cleave*, becoming a potent tool for Vengeance indeed!

System: An Avenger must have been personally instructed in the basics of this gift before he can attempt to make a *Cleave*-resistant weapon; merely being told how over the phone or hunter-net is insufficient to learn the process. Provided that condition can be met, he must also possess at least three levels of *Crafts: Metalworking* or two levels of *Crafts: Woodworking*, as appropriate for the type of weapon being created, as well as a proper workshop and materials to complete the process (which require a minimum of *Resources* x 2 to obtain). He may then begin the painstaking process of crafting the weapon, which requires a minimum investment of a number of *Crafts* levels equal to twice the weapon's Bonus Traits; in addition, an expenditure of 10 temporary Conviction Traits *per Bonus Trait* is required before the weapon can be considered truly finished.

As soon as the hunter has enough Traits in the pool equal to the amount required, he may perform the final consecration rites to invest it with his *Zeal* (and get the Storyteller to sign the item card). Assuming all the requirements have been met, the resulting weapon is considered a normal (if finely crafted) weapon of its type, except that when used to *Cleave* by its creator, it suffers no damage or deterioration. It may be destroyed by other means and is highly resistant to regular wear and tear, though if another hunter uses it for *Cleave* it begins suffering lost Bonus Traits normally and cannot be repaired.

Imbuing

All Avenger imbuing have one common denominator: violence, and usually lots of it. Someone almost always dies, whether an innocent, a monster or even the hunter himself. One common situation finds the new imbued facing a single creature committing atrocious deeds with no fear of reprisal, confident that no lowly mortal can harm it — until the Avenger steps in and does something about it. Regardless of the

circumstances, however, an Avenger's first response is to strike back at the creature responsible, out of rage, righteousness, fear or some combination of the three. Being at war with such a vast and mysterious enemy would paralyze most people with fright, but not so with an Avenger. Their first response is to lash out at the closest enemies they can lay their hands on, and do as much damage as possible. They don't know what they're up against and frankly don't care — all they know is that it's evil and must be destroyed *now*!

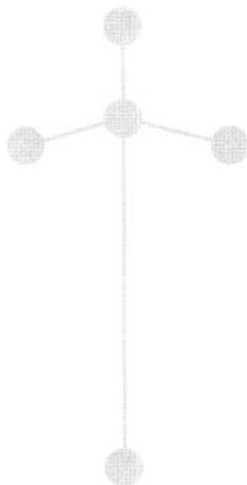
Camps

Hardcore — When other creeds think of Avengers, they tend to think of these types — fanatics who are consumed by the hunt, armed to the teeth and don't hesitate to charge in with guns blazing at the first sign of monster activity. In truth such Vengeful tend to be either very new to the hunt, full of anger and eager to strike a blow at the forces of evil, or have been in it too long and gotten burned out to the point where only tactics and targets matter anymore. Their narrow focus gives them great determination, but also makes them prone to obsessive and extreme behavior, although many have an eerie knack for attracting groups of like-minded associates to their bloody causes.

Moderate — These Avengers are less likely to quibble about the way others go about doing their part for the mission, so long as the end result is the same. They are also more likely to act out of a sense of personal outrage than turn their cause into a larger crusade, and are more willing to consult other Zealots for advice on what needs to be done. However, they still view other creeds with some suspicion until they prove themselves in the field.

Progressive — Although it might seem something of a misnomer for the Vengeful, these imbued can be considered the opposite of their hardcore fellows: while they also recognize a need for great change and direct action, these Avengers are the most likely to investigate all possible means of doing so, including consulting members of other creeds. This doesn't mean they aren't quite capable of down-and-dirty fighting when necessary, but as a rule they tend to rely more on their wits and investigative talents than brute force or charisma.

Starting Conviction: 4



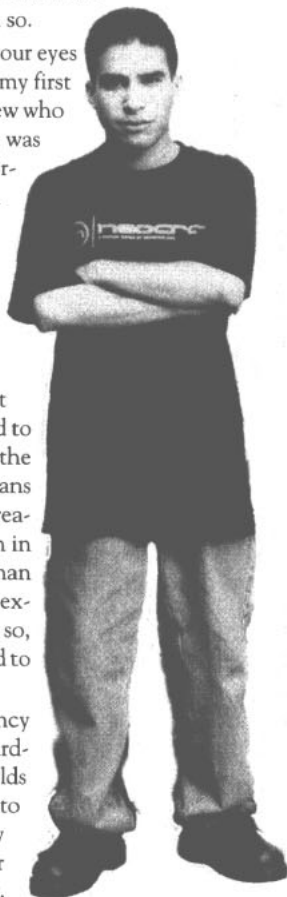
Defense

Defenders

There's a war going on, and we'll be damned if we think it's going to be won without some bloody fights. But let me ask you this before you run off to do battle: what good is winning the war if it you don't manage to preserve everything you're fighting for in the first place? A lot of the others drop out of their old lives and distance themselves from everything they held dear, afraid that their new existence will put all they value in jeopardy. To us, though, that's not acceptable. Sure, there are monsters who might try to use your family or friends against you, or strike at them in retaliation for what you've done — but do you really think using a fake name or moving a few states away is going to throw off a bloodsucker with the police in its pocket? For that matter, what about a ghost who can invade your dreams, or a witch with a crystal ball? You might as well accept it now: sooner or later, one of the enemy will track down people or places it knows you hold dear. And when that happens, how are you supposed to protect them if you've gone away? Will you still be able to hold your weapons or olive branches with their blood on your hands, hear the Call with their dying cries echoing in your ears? I didn't think so.

That's why we do what we do, and I can see in your eyes that you know exactly what I mean when I say that my first reaction to the Messengers was to think of those I knew who were still blind and needed my protection. For me it was my family; for others it's been friends, or a neighborhood, or an organization. There was even one woman I met who talked about fighting to protect an ideal, though I'd guess that's pretty rare. Regardless of exactly what our charge may be, we all feel the same desire deep down, a need to single out something we treasure above all else and keep it safe from the evil the monsters represent. It's not a matter of possessiveness or territoriality, though you can start developing those traits if you're not careful; it's a need to draw a line in the sand and say "No farther!" to the monsters who think they can simply play with humans anytime they like. And you'd better believe that creatures who try to cross that line will pay for every inch in blood. While we may be more reluctant to fight than those who dedicate themselves to vengeance, for example, it doesn't mean we're any less capable of doing so, and when our charge is in danger our ferocity is second to none.

Unfortunately, some of the others have a tendency to label our natural caution as hesitation or even cowardice, and point the finger at us for hiding in our strongholds while the world dies. Sadly, there's a grain of truth to such rumors: some of us have "gone ostrich," as they say on hunter-net, and no longer feel responsible for anything beyond their self-appointed area of interest,



even going so far as to run off others who come to them for aid. To these anecdotes and accusations we simply must respond that if we're going to win this war, someone has to watch over the home front and guard our flanks out in the field, not to mention know when to sound the retreat if the battle goes poorly. If we're to keep the trust of our comrades, it's essential that we make them understand that we assume these roles out of natural inclination and dedication, not because we're trying to hide from our new lives. Once they understand that, they'll start recognizing that the protection and support we offer isn't secondary to their objectives, it's the essence of what they've been fighting for all along.

Ultimately, we're the best of any imbued at remembering just what it is we're fighting for — and why we'd lay down our lives to protect it. Make no mistake, we are the last line of defense in a war that started us off deep in our own territory to begin with. After us, there's nothing, and all imbued would do well to remember that before rushing off and dying "to make a statement." Indeed, we are also the most likely of all the imbued to quit the field and fight another day, if for no other reason than dying puts the care of our charges into someone else's hands, and that's just not acceptable. We intend to win this war like everyone else, but first we're going to make sure we have something to come home to when it's over. Remember what that feeling was like? When you came home at night and fell into the arms of your parents, or your friends, or your spouse? When it all felt safe and happy, and you thought to yourself: *I'd do anything to make this last forever?* Or when you looked down at your newborn child and realized you'd do anything to keep her safe, give her the future she deserved?

If you don't, what have you been fighting for?

Weakness

The problem has already been raised regarding those of us who retreat into total isolation, survivalist-style, but it bears repeating since it can creep up on even to those who feel they're immune to such extreme responses. The basic problem is that no amount of preparation can ever really protect you from everything; for example, once you start fortifying your home, it's hard to stop. No matter how much you do you'll never feel it's enough to keep you safe from *them*. Another less obvious but still significant problem is those of us who decide to adopt their fellow imbued as their charges. While this is a good thing in the right doses, it can quickly turn ugly if a self-appointed protector suddenly decides to prevent her charge from entering dangerous situations at all, perhaps causing a disastrous hesitation or delay at a critical moment. Or even if they don't do anything wrong, feelings of regret can eat them up if their charge is injured, no matter how often you remind them we're at war and casualties happen.

Last, but not least, there are some who come to regard monsters — usually a specific one, or maybe a similar type of creature — as their charges, and will even step between us and the enemy if need be. This is most common if one of us suddenly discovers that someone they care about has become a monster, but it can happen to anyone who starts sympathizing too much with the creatures. Suffice it to say that confrontations are typically explosive and unpleasant for all concerned, and pray that you never have to make that kind of call in your career.

Apocrypha

Defenders are frequently highly traditional in their outlook, as their natural tendency to protect what they value often makes them wary of radical new ideas as well as more obvious changes to their environment. Like most Zealots, they tend to see things in rather black-and-white terms, but unlike the Vengeful they do not usually

draw a line between “good” and “evil,” but rather more of a distinction between “protected” and “predator.” Whether they choose to think that they’ve been picked by angels to save righteous folk from the devil, or have been chosen by fate to shield an important person or place from harm, their ideas about the Heralds stress the importance of preserving some measure of good no matter what the cost.

Of course, there are some Defenders who go the other way and reject traditional systems and ways of thinking; after all, they reason, such views come from a time when monsters ruled unchallenged, and might even have been instituted to help keep humans in line! Such imbued might have wild theories about the origins of the Messengers and their purpose, or they may be pure pragmatists who saw corruption and depravity everywhere *before* the imbuing. Regardless, they look for alternative solutions to hiding behind a faith or a belief to keep them going. Either way, both types of Defenders can ultimately agree on at least one thing: if the earth cannot be made a safe place for humanity to live, there’s no reason to fight at all, because the monsters have already won.

Gift

Guardian Angel

Defenders often wish they could leave behind something of themselves to watch over their charges when they are away, or that even after they die they might continue to protect those they hold dear to themselves. As they gain experience and perspective on the hunt, they frequently find themselves making small items to give to their loved ones (“Mommy made this necklace for you to let you know that she’ll always be with you, sweetheart”) or giving away items of special emotional significance to them (“Here, son, I want you to have this — your grandfather’s watch. I know you like it, and now that I’m traveling so much I want you to have it so you’ll always know when I’m coming home”). Maybe they erect a monument or plant a tree at a location they treasure, signifying their attachment to it. It seems a natural thing to do, a symbol of their affection and protection, and if questioned they would discern no deeper motive behind this occasional desire. Unbeknownst to them, however, sometimes their imbued dedication actually creates a special bond between such items and their owners, making them resistant to harm from supernatural sources.

System: A Defender must have a minimum of one Trait each in *Zeal*, *Mercy* and *Vision* to possess the requisite understanding to create or pass on these items, and he can never make more tokens than his *Zeal* rating. In the case of an item they create, he must expend a number of levels of the appropriate *Crafts* or *Expression* Ability equal to the level of protection he wants it to provide. With an item being passed along, it must have an increasingly high amount of emotional significance, starting perhaps with a small family heirloom at one Trait and working up to an incredibly personal and valued possession at five Traits, such as the final gift a character received from a beloved relative (Storyteller’s discretion, but it should be well thought out and sacrificed with significant emotion). In addition, the Defender must spend five temporary Conviction Traits for each level of protection he wishes the token to provide, up a maximum number of levels equal to his permanent *Zeal* rating. The total process of investment requires at minimum a number of hours equal to the Conviction Traits spent on the token, though the Storyteller may increase this time if she desires. Only normal people or locations can benefit from the protection of a token; imbued, supernatural creatures and even bystanders gain no benefit from these items at all, and a person may only gain the benefits of one of these tokens at a time.

Once created, tokens automatically absorb a number of levels of damage (bashing or lethal) from all supernatural attacks, equal to the level at which they were created, including all brawling attacks as well as claws and teeth or even magical blasts of fire or similar things. Thus,

a token with three levels of protection absorbs the first three levels of damage from every supernatural attack that hits its wearer. Damage or control from mental and emotional attacks is not prevented, nor are attacks by ordinary people or mundane means such as being shot with a pistol. There is no limit to the amount of damage that a token can withstand in this fashion, though it has no particular resistance to normal forms of damage or loss and thus can be easily destroyed if the wearer is incautious. In the case of an item protecting a location, the Storyteller may rule that it is simply immune to supernatural fire and other sources, though again it can still be destroyed by ordinary means. Hunters using the sight can tell something's special about the item, though not necessarily what, although edges like *Discern* or *Witness* might provide more of a clue.

Note: It should be stressed that while the player may know what's going on, the Defender herself has no conscious idea what she's creating when she fashions one of these tokens, and the Storyteller should ensure that the player does not look at the character as simply a "magic amulet" factory, or the drama and more importantly the *human* aspect of the hunter is greatly diminished.

Imbuing

Predictably enough, many Defenders report imbuing that involved some kind of siege by monsters, where not only did they have to protect the other people with them from the creatures but also had to keep those people from panicking or fighting among themselves. Other Defenders talk about facing off against a creature who wanted to harm someone the imbued cared about (or perhaps even more interestingly a total stranger), but who seemed reluctant to harm the Defender himself in any way, forcing him to decide between escaping safely and protecting the intended victim. Most terrifying of all, a tortured few describe being forced to decide whom to protect, knowing full well that the person they don't pick will suffer some terrible fate.

Camps

Aggressive — These Defenders live by the motto "the best defense is a nightmarishly powerful offense," and as such are often mistaken for Avengers or Martyrs as they take the fight to the enemy on the creatures' own turf. They are quite willing to die to protect their charges, though not without first making their deaths extremely costly to the enemy. Many have places or items as their charges and fortify strongholds accordingly, stocking them with weapons and equipment. Chances are that before the imbuing, these Defenders saw the heavy toll that cruelty takes on those who are unwilling to stand up and protect themselves, and their current methodology bears out this unwillingness to lie down and die.

Temperate — Many Defenders in this camp try to continue with their old lives, lashing out fiercely at anything that threatens their precious routine. Others, having lost their own way of life, become guardian angels and shield others from the reality of monsters so they can live their lives normally. More thoughtful than the aggressive types, these Defenders typically plan ambushes and otherwise fight only when they can do so on their own terms. These imbued don't seek out trouble, but they don't give any ground to it either.

Tolerant — Some call these hunters cowards, but in truth they are simply extremely reluctant to engage in a conflict where they haven't had time to study all possible courses of action first. While they are guardians like the rest of their brethren, they are the most flexible about consulting members of other creeds, and many have doubts about the motives of the Heralds who would lead them into such a conflict as this without giving them much information first.

Starting Conviction: 3

Judgment

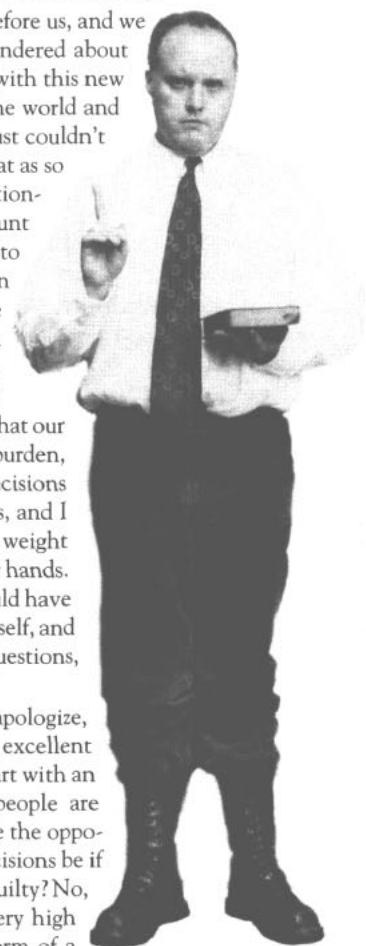
Judges

Before the Heralds turned our lives upside-down, we still had questions about the lives we were leading, whether we voiced them as philosophy professors in some ivory tower, police officers interacting with the everyday world or even just regular folks shuffling through a job that didn't demand too much of us. We questioned if what we did made a difference, if there really was a higher authority or if it even mattered to wonder about such things when so much evil and suffering existed. In our darker moments, we even wondered about the harder things, like whether it was better to do away with some to improve the lives of others, if some sins could ever be forgiven, or if we could ever find a definition of "evil" that all cultures agreed on. In our innocence, we even questioned if we would have the courage and conviction to make the right decisions if need arose.

Let it never be said the Heralds are without a sense of irony.

Suddenly there it was, a whole new world before us, and we could see the same questions we had always wondered about take on new dimensions as we struggled to cope with this new threat. We saw the evil and the corruption in the world and instinctively recognized that it was wrong, but just couldn't bring ourselves to leave our assessment of it at that as so many of our fellows did. We had to keep on questioning everything, from the smallest details of the hunt (does garlic work? can they cross running water?) to the grandest notions of why we had been chosen and what we were meant to do. Before long, we noticed the others had started looking to us when it came time to figure out what we were up against, or when it was time to decide whether some monster deserved to live or die, and we realized what our entire lives had been building up to. It is a burden, certainly, to be the ones who must make the decisions that others cannot or will not decide themselves, and I can see in your eyes that you know all too well the weight of knowing that some other being's fate is in your hands. But I can also see that you, like the rest of us, would have it no other way — you must seek the answers yourself, and if that means enduring the process of asking the questions, so be it.

Excuse me. If I sound a bit presumptuous, I apologize, but I think you'll find it's true that most of us are excellent judges of character, if only because many of us start with an inherent distrust of it. Not that we believe people are inherently doomed to evil and wickedness. Quite the opposite, in fact. After all, how difficult would our decisions be if we knew everyone we judged was automatically guilty? No, I think you'll find that most of us believe in very high standards for humanity, whether it takes the form of a



religious code, a personal philosophy or even just a simple belief that humans were meant for something greater than this. Why do you think we tend to look so harshly on monsters and others who would deny humanity this potential? It is very difficult to condemn if you do not have a position to condemn them from (or to), and even those of us who fancy themselves more “enlightened” than a strict system of rules and punishments still find themselves forced to pass judgment on a creature so foul that their first instinct is to banish it to the darkest Hell they can imagine, “individual concerns” notwithstanding. Conversely, those who pride themselves on their unyielding standards of conduct will one day find themselves forced to convict a person they know to be undeserving of the judgment their “law” prescribes for an offense, at which time they will face much the same crisis of conscience that their liberal colleague did before.

So what’s to be done about this dilemma, the gulf we all know lies between the natural tendency to pass judgment and the recognition of human fallibility? Suffice it to say simply that no one path will lead you through your challenges without running into some difficult decisions to make, so you just walk with determination and remember always that right or wrong, a decision must be made. Sure, sooner or later we all hate the things we must do for the greater good — lying to our loved ones to spare them the deadly truth, stealing supplies to keep up the hunt or killing an innocent person to stop the creature controlling him from doing even more damage. And no matter what, one day we’ll be judged for our decisions, whether by our peers, our society or our creator. But I for one know that I will be able to stand and say that everything I did, every decision I made, was driven by a desire to make this world a better place, to rid the world of evil that would deny us our true potential.

Will you be able to say the same?

Weakness

You cannot ask as many questions as we do and not suffer at least occasionally from indecision, though you should be careful not to let it paralyze you if you wish to keep the confidence of your peers (not to mention yourself). Let your responsibility slide too many times, and you invite all kinds of bickering and conflicting purposes into your group, and that does no one any good. No one appointed you emperor for life, but no one said you had to sit by and let everything fall into chaos, either.

On the other hand, be careful that you don’t let your role go to your head either — it’s all too easy to start thinking like you’re some kind of minor deity and start dealing out judgment as you see fit. If you ever find yourself thinking of others in purely objective terms, with no thought for their personal needs and ideas, chances are you’ve started thinking that making some decisions makes you capable of knowing what is “best” for everyone. When that happens, take some time and reacquaint yourself with those around you, so you can remember exactly why you’re doing your job as opposed to what it entitles you to.

Oh, and remember that no matter how corrupt the law might be, replacing it with an inflexible code of your own isn’t any better. We’re not trying to devise a penal code for the supernatural, we’re trying to sort out what we’re up against and what needs to be done about it. Do yourself a favor and don’t lay down any “absolutes,” no matter how tempting it might be.

Apocrypha

There are plenty of imbued who ask questions — indeed, Judges are suspicious of ones who don’t. The difference between Judges and other imbued is that they not only question, but have the drive to make decisions and act on them as well. Their

judgments may not be perfect, and they certainly feel the sting when they are not, but some action must be taken or all will be lost. Other than that rather constant factor, most Judges are split evenly on a variety of issues, depending on whether their view of their duty is a positive or negative one. Those who find comfort in their calling often claim to have found a new bond with their loved ones and even a fresh devotion to their deity, while those who see their role as more of a curse speak of how the terrible decisions they must make distance them from those they once held dear and destroy past notions they had of a benevolent force behind all of creations. In regards to their outlook on the hunt, they recognize more gray areas than their fellow Zealots, but still tend to make decisions based on old-fashioned notions of justice and fairness. After all, sometimes even the best option still involves suffering for innocents, and if that's the kind of decision you have to make on a regular basis, it quickly hardens your sense of mercy to those who commit evil acts of their own volition.

Gift

The Verdict

One thing that haunts many Judges is that their assessment of a monster can become meaningless if the creature passes outside the reach of those who the Judge can convince of its guilt or worthiness; hunters in a distant city might well destroy a rot that posed no harm to anyone, for example, or be fooled by the virtuous disguise of a being the Judge knows firsthand to be evil incarnate. Perhaps the Heralds heard these wishes, as some experienced creed members have begun to discover that they have a capacity to modify or create a special marker bearing a symbol of deep personal importance to them, which they can then use to brand a particular creature they have extensive firsthand knowledge of with an aura that tells other hunters whether it "deserves mercy" or "deserves destruction." Fellow imbued simply look at the beast and feel the Judge's verdict instinctively register in their minds, thus giving the Judge some hope that his sentence will be carried out (or a worthy creature spared), no matter how far it might travel. No matter how much they may desire, however, a Judge can never place a verdict on a normal person or other imbued.

System: A Judge must possess at least three Traits in *Zeal* and one Trait each in *Mercy* and *Vision* before he can begin making a marker, though once these levels are achieved it is up to the Storyteller to determine when the urge strikes. For example, Judges who routinely destroy or spare every creature they find have less of a need than those who take pains to arrive at a verdict in each instance. A marker must be something that can be held in one hand and that bears a symbol with deep personal significance to the hunter (not something from the hunter code). If it is being crafted or modified, it requires an expenditure of a number of levels of *Crafts* equal to the Judge's *Zeal* rating; other items may be used only if they possess sufficient emotional value to the Judge. In addition to these requirements, the Judge must spend 10 Conviction Traits on the marker to invest it with his *Zeal* before it's considered finished. Only the original Judge who crafted the marker can use it, even if another Judge with the ability to deliver a verdict wields it.

Once it is finished, a Judge may deliver a verdict on any creature he has extensive firsthand knowledge of and feels passionate about sentencing; creatures that do not meet these requirements cannot have a verdict placed on them. The Judge must touch the creature with its marker (using a Physical Challenge if the creature resists) and spend a Conviction Trait; no damage need be done, but it must be a solid contact for the marker to take effect. It can even be used on incorporeal targets, provided the Judge can touch the space they occupy, and possessing spirits retain the mark even if they leave their host. If successful, the verdict is applied

and cannot be removed unless replaced by a Judge with higher *Zeal* or the original Judge touches the creature and wills his verdict altered or removed. Only one verdict may apply to a creature at a time. Affected creatures must thereafter wear prominent description tags bearing the hunter's symbol or the Judgment sign for the hunter code (whichever is easier) and reading either "deserves mercy" or "deserves punishment." Not even the death of the Judge removes a verdict, and the Judge can instinctively tell if a creature bearing his verdict has been treated in an undeserving fashion regardless of the distance between the two (though not where it is or who did it). It should be noted that other hunters do not need to act upon the Judge's verdict, though it is an unusual enough feeling to give most pause before acting otherwise.

Imbuing

Judges tend to have rather unorthodox imbuing, especially compared to their fellow Zealots—they often find themselves in the presence of multiple creatures, forcing them to determine which ones pose the greatest threat and then deal with them accordingly. Sometimes these monsters aren't even interested in the mortals around them, but are fighting with each other (though nothing says ordinary folks might not be hurt in the crossfire), and the Judge must try to make some sense of the conflict as well as the nature of monsters themselves. Those Judges who face a solitary creature don't have it any easier than their fellows: such imbuing usually find the character faced with a person who has been possessed or controlled by a malicious entity and compelled to perform terrible acts, forcing the Judge to decide whether or not the poor host can be saved somehow or if he must die to prevent the creature from doing worse damage. And it just gets tougher from there....

Camps

Conservative—As their name implies, imbued of this camp tend to hold very traditional views on judgment and punishment, and tend to push for harsh action against those who they deem deserving. They are also the Judges least likely to grant mercy to a possessed host or other dupe, and tend to subscribe to the belief that while it is extremely unfortunate to pronounce such a sentence, the value of stopping the evil such individuals perform outweighs the rights of innocents who are used by the enemy in such a fashion. Ironically, most of these Judges find themselves at odds with mundane authorities due to the harsh—some might say draconian—punishments they inflict on the monsters they encounter.

Moderate—A Judge of this persuasion has a specific code of ethics and values he uses as a basis to judge others, although unlike his conservative counterpart he freely admits that it is *his* system of morality, not a universal one. At the same time, ethics and law must have constant rules of some kind, or they cease being codes of conduct and become nothing more than opinion. These Judges also believe that doing evil is a choice that all are capable of refusing, human or monster, and so have little sympathy for excuses or justifications when passing sentence. Those who take responsibility for their actions earn his respect, and he seeks to teach others morality by example.

Liberal—These Judges are almost all moral relativists, and base their judgment on the needs of the situation, instead of trying to apply the same system of rules and values over and over again. They are believers in the greater good, but convinced that it can only be achieved by observing what needs to be done on a case-by-case basis, and so tend to assume support positions rather than move to the head of the group. The personal nature of their rulings also means that they suffer terribly when they're proved wrong, since they have no one but themselves to blame, and so they tend to weigh their options very carefully before recommending a course of action.

Starting Conviction: 3

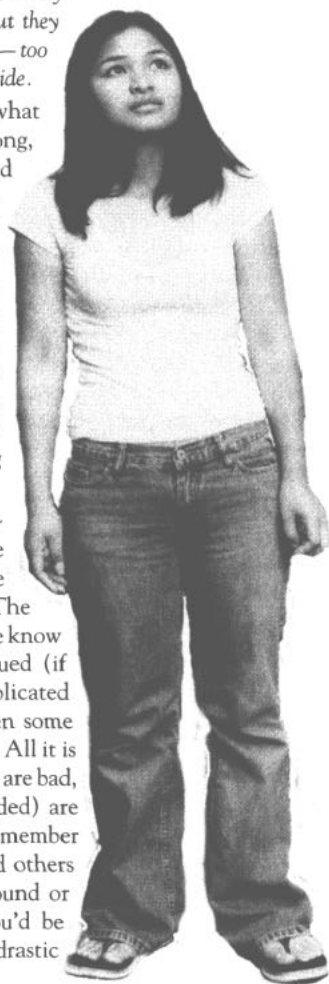
Innocence

Innocents

Hapless victims. Collateral damage. Friendly fire. "We had to burn the village in order to save it." No matter how well-intentioned the generals might be, how righteous the cause may seem, it's a sad fact that every war inevitably winds up killing people who had nothing to do with the action going on. What's more, as the conflict grinds on, it's hard not to give in to the temptation of sinking to the level of the other side, especially when the enemy is a horde of terrifying monsters that act without regard for human life at every turn. And sure enough, before long you've heard it beginning, but this time it's on your side of the fence. *They're all monsters, they all have to die*, and so it's OK to cut a few corners, ignore a few cries for mercy, set fire to a few "havens" rather than try talking to the things inside them. *Stolen? These things control the system — how else are we supposed to get this stuff? Torture? No, I wouldn't call that torture, just, you know, being physically persuasive. Those bodyguards? Well, sure, they looked human to the sight, but they served that monster, and so they had to be taken out too — too bad for them, but that's the price for picking the wrong side.*

Then all of a sudden comes the realization that what everyone claims to have been fighting for all along, namely humanity and the greater good, has slipped through their fingers in their haste to find ways to destroy that which they have come to hate. Or at least that's what you're afraid will happen, if your fellow imbued don't take the time to stop and think about what they're doing, or more importantly what they've become due to the choices they've made. And let's not even get started on the subject of the monster that was nothing but friendly to you and was killed by some bullheaded "hero" who turned around and berated you for your "cowardice" in not killing your acquaintance....

How am I doing so far? Fortunately for all concerned, you and I are not alone, and what's more we have no intention of letting the others off easy on the tough questions, at least not while we're around. The others may look at us like we've lost our minds, but we know that we're perhaps the most sane of all the imbued (if sometimes a little naïve). It's not a matter of complicated moral codes or belief in ancient prophecies or even some special gift we inherit from the touch of the Heralds. All it is is an unwillingness to simply *assume* that all monsters are bad, or for that matter that all humans (hunters included) are good. Simple enough, right? I mean, after all, you remember what you used to think about someone who judged others based solely on their skin color or ethnic background or religion? Chances are it wasn't very nice, yet you'd be surprised how quick a lot of imbued are to apply drastic



labels to creatures just because they aren't "normal," or they assume that any and all actions are justified so long as they harm the enemy. What's worse, some of them realize full well what they're doing to themselves, but see it as the price they must pay to keep the rest of us safe. I don't recall hearing anyone ask for that kind of protection, do you? Sure, we've been singled out, but if we start thinking that makes us innately superior to our fellow humans we're heading right down Monster Street (I'm sure a few of them started with the best intentions too). It simply cannot be stressed enough — if we want to inherit the earth, we'd better make sure we don't set ourselves up as the next set of tyrants when the monsters are gone, and that means never letting our ethics slide no matter how tempting it might be.

Of course, as accepting as we are, we're not stupid either — there are some mindless or utterly wicked creatures that need to be destroyed, although that's the always-absolute-last option as far as I'm concerned. Put our backs to the wall or our friends in danger, and the response will probably surprise even the more jaded hunters out there. The difference with us is that we never, *ever* take a life — human or otherwise — and try to pretend that we haven't just put an end to someone's hopes forever, kept one child from calling for his mother or kissing his beloved ever again. I don't even care if what something we put down was a slaving monster without a trace of intelligence left; it once was a child with dreams for the future, however far from that beginning it might have strayed. Not only that, but we make damn sure that those with us remember this too, and hold fast to what they might otherwise be tempted to trade for a pair of bullets and a puddle of someone else's blood.

You know perhaps better than anyone else in your group about the high cost that can come from the most insignificant actions, or the great rewards that can be gained from the smallest courtesies, if you're willing to try. Everybody needs someone to listen to them once in a while; why should we assume that monsters are different? Maybe they can't help what they've become or what it makes them do sometimes, but how different is that from some of the people we see on the streets every day? How many of the other side do you think got to be the way they are because other people stopped seeing them as individuals with feelings and hopes, and started seeing them as nothing more than "monsters" instead? Basic sociology tells you that if you put a label on someone long enough, no matter how much they might hate it to begin with, they'll eventually start to identify with it — what if that's the case with monsters too? Likewise, the minute we stop holding our own side to the same standards we want all of humanity to uphold is the minute we start sliding toward accepting what we claim to hate most in our enemies. It's a lonely path sometimes, but at least we can claim to walk it with a clear conscience.

Hey, don't look so glum — so long as there's even a few of us out there, things are bound to get better eventually. Trust me.

Weakness

Oddly enough, for perhaps the most liberated of all our kind, we tend to have a problem with guilt second only to the truly self-destructive ones among us. Reasons vary, but generally it stems from the fact that no matter how nice and open-minded we are, sooner or later something comes along that forces us to go back on what we normally believe in, whether it's helping to destroy a particularly nasty creature or even turn in one of our own gone rogue. Maybe you told a fellow hunter to stay his hand, and it turned out the monster went nuts and someone else wound up getting hurt. Just try to remember that nobody's perfect, and that for all we learn about

ourselves and about the creatures, we've still got a long way to go before true understanding is possible.

Sometimes the source of our woes is external — we take more than our fair share of abuse from our fellow imbued for the questions we pose, and a few of them have even used one of us as bait to draw creatures out in the open. Sometimes you'll feel that you've seen too much suffering, done too many things to ever feel safe or sleep well again, and until you lift that weight you'll be no good to yourself, let alone anyone else. Hunters like that tend to vanish an awful lot, and not all of them reappear later on. Or you might go the other way and mask your worries by pretending to be just like all the others in your group, try out a hard attitude and see how it feels to not ask too many questions when you're out stalking some thing. Trust me, though, that's not going to do you any good either, because you're still the same person deep down, and the guilt from doing all the things you know aren't right won't go away just because you decided to do a *Rambo* impression.

My advice in both instances is to just seek out someone you feel you can talk to and chat for a while, or just cry if you have to. Nobody's made of stone, least of all someone who tries to assume the best about everyone, and whoever says you don't need to cry every once in a while is lying, pure and simple.

Apocrypha

As befits their name, Innocents generally have a fairly uncomplicated approach to the hunt; they don't ask *what* (that's Judges) or *what if* (that's Visionaries), but simply *why*? Why does anything happen? Why do people worry about it so much? Why can't monsters and humans coexist peacefully? They also don't tend to have very specific ideas about the Messengers, chalking them up to guardian angels, invisible friends, spiritual guides and so on. After all, isn't it enough that they seem to want monsters and humans to reach an understanding? Does there have to be more to it than that?

Gift

Charms For the Defenseless

One thing Innocents quickly learn is that their edges allow them a certain degree of protection from some of the worst the supernatural has to offer; however, along with this realization comes the knowledge that many of the people they care about are still vulnerable. Many Innocents therefore gift those they care about with small good luck charms and similar items, not realizing that in the process some of them are actually conferring a degree of extra protection to those they care about. Needless to say, an Innocent must have a deep personal bond with the recipient of one of these charms, although unfortunately even if she has such a relationship with a monster or fellow imbued she cannot give them a charm that passes on these benefits (though she can give one to a bystander). Those Innocents who have become aware of the possibility of these items see them as a special sign of hope that they're on the right path, but for the most part they remain an unconscious blessing passed on by the simple act of their caring about the wearer.

Note: A person cannot benefit from both an Innocent's charm and a Defender's token at the same time; they are powered by very different energies from individuals with very different perspectives on the hunt.

System: An Innocent must have a minimum of three Traits in *Mercy* to possess the requisite understanding of the plight of the defenseless to create these charms, and she can never have more charms in play at one time than her *Mercy* rating. Creating an item requires the expenditure of the same number of levels of the appropriate *Crafts* Ability as the number of points she wishes the charm to possess, up to a maximum

number of Traits equal to twice her Mercy rating. This process takes at least one day per level of *Crafts* being spent, and may take much longer for especially powerful charms as the creator takes time to rest (and regain spent *Crafts* levels). Once created, a character cannot add more Traits to an item later even if her Mercy score increases, unless she takes the item and completely remakes it, including re-spending Conviction and *Crafts* levels. Finally, the charm requires the investment of 10 Conviction Traits before it can truly be finished. A charm only ever works for the person it was created for, and it has no special resistance to damage or loss, so a wearer must take care or risk losing its benefits to incautious chance.

Once it is done, the Innocent may select a number of different benefits for the charm. Each benefit has a cost in Traits, although a charm may possess more than one of these benefits if the Innocent spends enough Traits. What follows is a list of common benefits (players may design others with Storyteller approval):

Call — A charm with this benefit automatically alerts the Innocent if the wearer is ever targeted by supernatural powers (not edges), is scared or harmed by the supernatural, or if the charm is destroyed. The Innocent receives a rough idea about the nature of the threat and the wearer's location, but that is all. For each Trait spent on this power, the call has a range of 10 paces, and a Narrator should be employed to seek out the Innocent as soon as the benefit is activated. Alternately, if the wearer is an NPC or otherwise not usually directly involved in play, the Storyteller may allow each Trait to represent a 10-mile radius for the call, to preserve game balance.

Hint — Each Trait spent on this benefit effectively gives the wearer one level of the *Awareness* Ability solely for the purposes of detecting the presence of dangerous supernatural creatures or powers. These Ability levels can be spent like any others, in which case they are lost until the next session. The wearer does not necessarily realize exactly what is wrong with the person or item in question, but he receives a distinctly bad feeling about them and will avoid them or leave the area if possible. This benefit is useless if the wearer already has three or more levels of the *Awareness* Ability normally, although the Innocent may invest the charm with more than five levels of *Awareness* if she desires.

Calm — A charm with this benefit allows its wearer to stay calm in the face of supernatural fear or other horrifying sights. She remains aware of the danger such threats pose, but she is calm and able to act normally for one round per Trait spent on this benefit, and she quickly forgets what she saw afterward (though she may well suffer mental or emotional problems if she witnessed something truly horrifying).

Hide — This benefit allows the Innocent to impart a limited, unconscious form of the *Hide* edge to the wearer of the charm when he is threatened by supernatural creatures. For every *three* Traits spent on this benefit, the wearer may gain the benefit of that edge once per day. If this invisibility is contested, use the Innocent's Mental Traits plus her Mercy rating at the time the item was created to determine how many Traits the wearer has to resist. An Innocent must possess the *Hide* edge herself to create a charm with this benefit.

Imbuing

Very few Innocent imbuing involve violence, or if they do, it's violence that isn't actually what it appears to be for anyone who stops to look closely, such as a raging beast that is actually a skinchanger defending her cubs or a monster roughing someone up that turns out to be the creature protecting its neighbors from an extortion racket. Indeed, creatures that at first seem monstrous and frightening but actually prove quite harmless are a staple of Innocent imbuing. Those few who face an actual nasty dead-

set on inflicting maximum harm usually manage to talk them out of it or otherwise peacefully misdirect them, and while it may not always work the first time, that doesn't mean an Innocent won't try it again later. They are, after all, nothing if not optimistic.

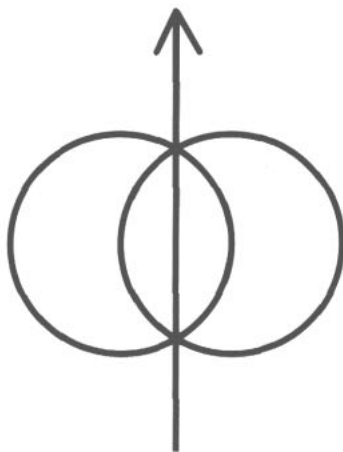
Camps

Idealists — Monsters aren't evil; in fact, those are just a couple of words people came up with to label things they didn't like. In actuality, the world is full of the potential for good, if only people would stand up and start living right. These imbued shine like beacons to those inclined to believe their message of hope and love; more pragmatic imbued tend to think they have rocks in their heads. While these Innocents are not usually stupid by any means, it does take a certain amount of naïveté or sheer dedication to hang onto such a lofty ideal for long when faced with the truth of the world.

Doubters — Many Innocents find themselves sliding toward this camp after some time in the field. While they still usually believe in the inherent goodness of most people and the power of hope to change the world, they also know some truly terrible things and creatures or fellow hunters that defy any attempt to be cast in a positive light, and that knowledge has shaken their ideals a little bit. Each little victory or defeat for their beliefs pushes them toward one camp or another, though some manage to stay in this doubting position for quite some time.

Jaded — Some would hesitate to call these imbued Innocents anymore, and truth be told it's pretty tough to see on the surface at this point. Most have given up on finding the good in monsters as a general rule, but they still tend to have a particular creature (or type of creatures) that they hope will prove them wrong. For the most part, though, while they may give lip service to the ideals, they don't really believe in them anymore. If monsters really are the victims of some kind of literal or metaphorical disease, as other Innocents often believe, then the jaded have come to the conclusion that the cancer is inoperable and it's generally better to kill host and disease at the same time.

Starting Conviction: 3



Redemption

Redeemers

Some of our fellow hunters argue that no monster should be saved, that they're all damned and we're just doing a bit of long-overdue housecleaning by wiping them from the face of the earth. Another group seems to want none of the monsters destroyed, but rather they want to talk to them and be friendly so we can all start plumbing the great Secrets of the Universe together. With all the shouting they do at each other, maybe it's not so surprising that none of them really seem to have given much thought to the fact that neither side is truly correct. That maybe there's some middle ground where we can save the creatures worth saving, and fight the ones who deserve no better. Fortunately we're here as living testament to this alternative, and while our results aren't perfect, there are at least a few creatures who've been brought back into the fold who would have been destroyed otherwise, and that says something. After all, what would you rather have, a dead monster that's no good to anyone, or a live one that's been turned to our side (or least moved out of our way)?

That's what I thought.

Some call us evangelists, and while I won't deny that we have perhaps more than our fair share of Christian clergy (including the fire-and-brimstone kind), it doesn't take a crucifix around your neck to believe in being kind to everyone and helping others to seek the light of salvation. Nor must you believe in an actual Hell to hope that there's some greater punishment waiting for those vicious beasts that leave a trail of bodies in their wake and openly defy the light of redemption, though I myself must confess I pray nightly that such fiends are delivered to greater justice than I have at my command. And while I like the ring that "evangelist" has, not all of us are out there to make converts to our cause, unless you count them as leading by example. If I had to pick a better term to describe us, I'd have to go with "healers," and I'll tell you why: like doctors, we examine the ill (literally or figuratively) to see how to best treat their condition. Those who can be saved, we work our hardest to bring back to health, or at least make it so that they can return to society again. Those who cannot be saved, or who refuse our treatment entirely, we can only help to put out of their misery as quickly and humanely as possible. Of course, it seldom works out so cleanly in practice, but you get the idea.

Indeed, it may be hard to reconcile such pretty words when you see one of us wade into a nest of depraved monsters with the rest of the team, guns blazing, then frantically stitch up a gravely wounded comrade and an innocent, injured creature at the same time. It may seem hypocritical that a group as obsessed with preserving and promoting life as ours can also commit so resolutely to battle, but you must remember that we do so because that is what our values demand from us. For ex-



ample, we love our pets and do everything we can for them, but if our dog becomes rabid, then it's also our duty to put it down, no matter how much we might care for it. Is it the dog's fault it contracted the disease? No, but that doesn't make it any less dangerous to others. Nor should we do any less to try to keep the disease from spreading, once we know it exists, if only to keep others from having to go through the same trauma that we did. So following that analogy, what if monsters are just the result of a disease that we're not aware of yet? You may scoff, but is that really so improbable a notion considering all the things we've seen? Even if you don't believe in an actual physical or spiritual contagion of some kind, it's still a very useful metaphor for understanding how we view the task before us, especially when it comes to aiding those who deserve it.

Don't be mistaken, though — when we speak of redemption, we're not talking solely in terms of the enemy. Not counting all the ordinary people in need of a second chance (or a final sentence), we see all too many of our own kind go bad from the pressures of the hunt. We offer them the same hope for redemption that we would offer anyone else, or perhaps more aptly the same consideration that we hope we would receive if others came to pass judgment on us. If you want to return to the contagion idea, who's to say that we're immune to whatever the monsters suffer from? None of us have turned yet, at least not that we know, but maybe that's because there just hasn't been time for one of us to be sufficiently exposed. What if you were transformed? Wouldn't you want your former friends and allies to make an effort to find out if there was still enough of your soul left to save? Even if you believe that we are shielded by some kind of divine grace from actually becoming monsters, consider this: how different do you think it is to try to salvage one who has given in to his darker nature, compared to offering salvation to a worthy creature? I don't see much of a difference either, and that's why we must remain ever vigilant on our rounds. A soul healed is a soul redeemed, regardless of whom it might belong to.

Weakness

Unfortunately, there are some among us who begin to feel that since they are the ones who have taken it upon themselves to offer salvation to those far from grace, they are therefore the supreme authority on whether a soul can be saved, regardless of possible evidence to the contrary. Others hew too close the opposite end of the spectrum, losing sight of their mission of healing and ignoring cries for mercy to bring judgment to those they find the least bit unworthy. Yet the worst of all are those who embrace both extremes, coming to see themselves as bloody messiahs who offer infinite mercy and wisdom with one hand and smite the ungodly (read: most people) with the other. Such would-be saviors pervert their calling to set themselves up as the ultimate arbiters of destiny for all they see, not noticing that their own ideas of redemption and punishment have gradually become empty, self-serving mockeries of what our mission is all about. All too often, they attract small cults of impressionable bystanders and even some normal people who find comfort in having their questions about sin and salvation answered by a ready authority in this world. We must tread carefully when trying to bring such lost causes back into the fold, or risk a confrontation that all too often ends in tragedy.

Another quieter but no less pervasive problem is that of simple greed; as the most likely of the imbued to develop healing gifts, many of us find ourselves tempted to start accepting money or recognition for our talents. You need not accept a vow of poverty when you follow the mission, at the same time beware of the slippery slope that follows after taking even the slightest donation for your gifts. After all, if you did so once, why

not again? Before you know it you've lost sight of the true calling in favor of becoming an infomercial celebrity or some millionaire's personal faith healer. Even if you refuse the material rewards, it's easy to burn out fast if your talents become too public, as you will quickly find yourself besieged by an endless stream of people with terrible afflictions and worthy causes, each expecting you to perform a miracle (and likely becoming quite agitated if you decline). While I'm not saying that you should let a person die if your gifts can make a difference, remember that you are still only one person and cannot be expected to heal the entire world alone, no matter what anyone else might say.

Apocrypha

Some Redeemers lean toward a more mystical or religious bent, and thus view their calling as a kind of final crusade to save the world from itself, whether it's freeing souls from the grip of Hell, releasing positive spirits from negative energy fields, banishing the hungry ghosts that are eating the world and so on. Other Redeemers of a more scientific bent look at their calling as treating a literal or figurative contagion, and discuss things like contamination, treatment and deprogramming their subjects. Regardless of their background, all Redeemers share a common view: creation is headed straight for some giant disaster, and the problems and creatures they're dealing with now are just the symptoms of this larger malaise. Whether or not they can prevent this catastrophe, or just try to spare as many people from the horror of it as possible, is a matter for individual Redeemers to decide, though as a rule their natural inclination to help makes them optimists, more often than not.

Gift

Holding Out Hope

Redeemers learn that all too often an otherwise virtuous creature is undone in its quest for redemption by its unnatural appetites, and wish they had some way to replace a monster's need for these energies. Some Redeemers are unwilling to leave such speculation in the realm of the abstract, however, and reasoning that since so many monsters seem to have an attachment to particular places or things from their previous lives, those same things might somehow be able to emotionally sustain them. While the search for these kinds of items is extremely demanding, and frequently carries a high level risk for the Redeemer and her companions, a successful result can net an item capable of sustaining a creature without it needing to prey on humans any longer — a powerful step in helping bring a monster back from the brink of damnation. Provided the Redeemer maintains his nurturing relationship with the creature afterward, helping her see the way back to the light seems to become easier as time goes on, as though the Heralds are rewarding these dedicated souls for undergoing their ordeal.

System: A Redeemer must have at least three Mercy Traits and one Vision Trait to be able to conduct a proper search and establish a bond between a creature and the item if it is found. Indeed, finding an item that will serve as a suitable source for a creature is a tricky process of exhausting research and investigation, which the Storyteller may rule requires a combination of intense roleplaying and a series of Mental Challenges with the appropriate Abilities to the Redeemer's methods. Even a friendly creature might not know of an item that can be used in this fashion, and downright hostile ones will require that much extra research to find something that they might find acceptable. Obviously, such searches are the stuff of multiple sessions or even an entire chronicle, and the Storyteller is under no obligation to drop the ancient wedding ring a bloodsucker once owned into your character's hand just because he feels he's earned the chance to create an alternative source for the beast.

Fortunately, a Redeemer can instinctively recognize on sight whether or not an item is suitable for this kind of bond, so once he has it in hand he can tell if he found the right object or not. Of course, convincing the creature to use the source of its own free will is another question entirely....

Once the Storyteller decides a proper source has been found, the Redeemer must spend five Conviction Traits preparing it as an alternative to the creature's normal sustenance; once those Traits are spent, if the creature accepts the source it may begin drawing energy from it in lieu of its regular feeding habits. It may draw energy of the appropriate type (Willpower, Blood, Rage, Pathos, Glamour, Quintessence, etc.) from the source every 24-hour period, up to a maximum number of energy Traits equal to the Redeemer's Mercy rating. Every time the creature uses the source, however, it feels a wash of guilt about past inhuman deeds coupled with a positive feeling about previous or ongoing efforts to retain its humanity, which it should roleplay accordingly. This surge of emotion is clearly the result of "feeding" from the source, but also clearly not an attack or invasive phenomena either, so most creatures will not necessarily immediately seek to protect themselves from it. A monster is considered have a Trait penalty equal to the Traits it received from the source on all efforts to directly or indirectly harm humans or hunters, even in a frenzy state, reflecting its intense guilt and aversion to doing so. (This penalty does not apply to self-defense or any attacks made against other monsters.) Willpower may be spent to overcome this penalty for a scene, but doing so requires a number of Willpower Traits equal to the penalty before it is lifted. Finally, the Redeemer is up a number of Traits equal to his Mercy rating on all friendly Social Challenges with the creature, reflecting his increased ability to communicate with it in a positive manner.

A creature may only benefit from one source at a time, and each source only functions for its original intended recipient. There is no limit to how many sources a Redeemer can create, but should he fail to maintain an active and positive relationship with a source's owner it will quickly fail; most Redeemers are wary of creating too many such items for fear of not having enough time to tend to all their recipients. Likewise, a creature that is actively hostile toward the Redeemer cannot benefit from a source, and it immediately stops functioning if the monster takes action against its benefactor, though it might begin working again if the Redeemer forgives the creature. A Redeemer can innately tell if a creature stops using a source, though he gains no further information about it. As a whole, Storytellers should take great care to make sure that these items are an important roleplaying tool for those who use them, and not just created as batteries for a character's favorite supernatural buddies.

Imbuing

Redeemer imbuing often resemble emergency room triage more than anything else: who's injured, who needs help and who's too far gone to be saved. Of course, it need not just be humans who require their healing presence. Quite a few Redeemers talk about seeing enough good in a creature's soul to spare its life, although conversely there are some whose experience was with monsters who were too far gone or in so much pain their only choice was to put them down as mercifully as possible. Some find themselves forced to talk down a monster from some terrible deed and steer it toward the true path, putting their faith in redemption between themselves and a terrible fate at the creature's hands. Regardless of the circumstance or what her instincts might lead her to do, the theme is the same: the Redeemer encounters a situation with the supernatural and her first response is *How can I help?*

Camps

Conservative — Redeemers of this persuasion are theoretically sympathetic to anyone who needs help, but in practice often focus their efforts solely on the humans and human victims they come across. There are simply too many people in need of aid for them to worry about monsters for now; in short, they subscribe to a “let’s clean our house first before we worry about the neighbors” ideal as opposed to more universal displays of benevolence. A few even confine their attentions entirely to their fellow imbued, on the theory that given the limited resources available, putting other imbued back on their feet does more for the world than saving folk who haven’t seen the truth. They are also the Redeemers most likely to actively track down monsters they see as beyond saving, since creatures aren’t high on their priority list to begin with.

Moderate — While these Redeemers share quite a few features with their conservative comrades — most notably their emphasis on giving other hunters priority for treatment — they differ sharply in that they cannot sit idly by while a monster they believe to be salvageable is destroyed. Although they still recognize that evil must be destroyed for the greater good, they will go to substantial lengths to contact and counsel such creatures. Strong team players, they tend to look on members of other creeds with respect, believing that all have their part to play, even if it’s not always agreeable or easily understood.

Liberal — These healers whole-heartedly embrace the idea of redemption, even going so far as to believe that any past crimes, no matter how hideous, should be forgiven if a monster truly seeks repentance. Many of these Redeemers see themselves as much as a general force for reconciliation as they are healers and confessors, and they oppose killing even the most depraved creatures if another option exists, however slight it might be. Needless to say, this willingness to put themselves between other hunters and their intended prey often earns them enemies with adherents of Zeal and other hard-liners, who openly call them traitors and shun their company whenever possible.

Starting Conviction: 3

Martyrdom

Martyrs

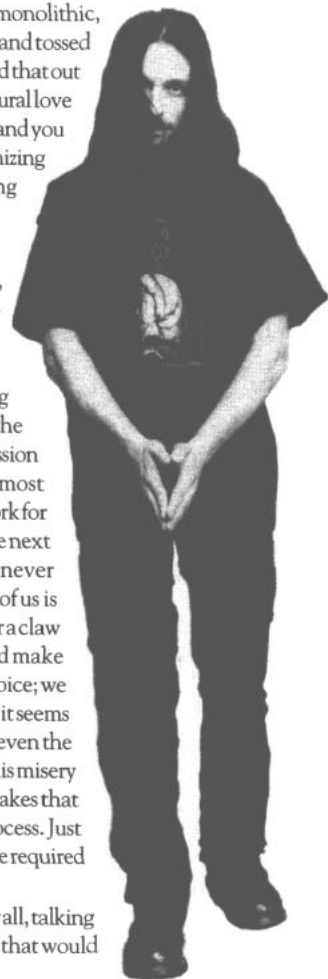
It's all over.

Perhaps you haven't noticed, but this world isn't in terribly good shape right now and, in the next 10 minutes, it's going to get that much worse in a thousand different ways. We've got crime and corruption running rampant through society, children are settling playground fights with pistols, war and terrorism are the international currency and our own planet is starting to poison us back for all the abuse we've heaped on it. Yes indeed, it was all looking pretty grim for humanity as a whole, until suddenly the Heralds opened your eyes and you beheld the truth — *it's even worse than you ever imagined out there!* Monsters lurk beyond the edge of human sight, stopping only as long as it takes to brutalize and victimize the humans around them before returning to their inhuman practices. They have their claws into everything, from the corner store to the Capitol building, and many of them are surrounded by legions of normal people who either crave their unholy powers or are too stupid to notice what they're really working for. Anyone who stands in the way of the creatures' monolithic, self-destructive juggernaut of a society gets broken down and tossed aside like so much garbage — hell, people like us usually found that out the hard way, even before we were imbued, just because of natural love of all kinds of hopeless causes. You can't run, you can't hide, and you can't fight back unless you want to look forward to a really agonizing death in your future. So why does anyone bother doing anything at all?

They never counted on people like you and me.

You see, unfortunately for those creatures out there, there's a whole lot of us who don't mind the pain one bit, who can't *wait* to lay down our lives if it means giving the others a shot at turning back the hands of the doomsday clock. And we're not just talking the talk, either — we'll give up anything and everything for the cause, from the shoes on our feet to the money in the bank to our very souls if it means moving the mission forward. Volunteering for the most dangerous raids, the most demanding labor, the most thankless jobs — all in a day's work for us, and you can bet we'll be back and begging for the same the next day. Some of the others may question our sanity, but they never question our dedication, and they never worry when one of us is guarding their backs, because they know we'll take a bullet or a claw for them without hesitation. Sure, it's true that all imbued make sacrifices, but the rest of them do it when there's no other choice; we give of ourselves and our supplies without thinking, because it seems like the right thing to do. Of course, there are limits — while even the best of us has thoughts about what it must be like to put all this misery to an end, I'll be the first to spit on the grave of anyone who takes that easy way out without achieving anything of value in the process. Just because you're willing to die for the cause doesn't mean you're required to.

If all this sounds a little extreme, well, it is — we are, after all, talking about people who almost look forward to fighting monsters that would



drive most people insane just by looking at them. In our defense, we don't know any other way than to give of ourselves until we can give no more, though the reasons this is so tend to be quite different from person to person. For some, that stems from a childhood of deprivation, where they were expected to accept sacrifices for the good of the whole family; for others, the suffering is penance for a sin, real or imagined; and for some, it's simple perfectionism, giving of yourself because deep down you don't trust anyone else to do it right. In the end, though, it all boils down to one thing: we not only need to live this way, we *thrive* on it too, as disturbing as that may sound. Like earning a scar, the suffering we endure on the hunt is proof that we've done something real, something that will have a lasting result even if we aren't there to see it. Whether it's an actual physical scar or just a story we never tire of telling, such marks are reminders of what the mission means to us, that keep our spirits up even if our world comes down around us. As long as we're still breathing, no matter what happens we can look back on what we lived through and say that we were there, that we survived and most of all that we didn't do it for nothing.

Yeah, I guess we do sound pretty dramatic when you put it that way, but you know what, if that's the only price I ever have to pay for what I do, I'll die a very happy man. In the meantime, let the others say what they will about how we must be crazy to volunteer for all the jobs and take all the risks that we can; we know why we're in the fight, and that's good enough. If your dying breath is a sigh of relief because you know you've ensured that someone or something you care about is safe, you've done all that anyone could ever ask. Let the others worry about saving souls or drawing up giant battle plans, we've got something else on our minds. Namely, how we can pursue redemption ourselves, even if it leads us take a bullet for someone else who has a larger role to play. Sure, we bleed for the cause, but as a wise man once observed, if you're bleeding at least it means you're still alive. We're lucky—we've been given a second chance to make something out of our lives, no matter what they might have been before.

We all get scars in our lives—let's make sure ours count for something.

Weakness

It doesn't take much thinking to figure out what can go wrong with a group as uniquely obsessive and melodramatic as we are. First and foremost is dealing with those who are confused about the distinction between suffering for a cause and suffering for its own sake (or worse, for the attention it gets them). Lesser cases of this syndrome are most politely referred to as "drama queens," for reasons that they are only too happy to explain to anyone who comes near them; more extreme cases wind up getting eulogized after making a pointless sacrifice that anyone with a brain would've seen wasn't worth dying over. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, let me state for the record: we are meant to deliver punishment when it becomes necessary, *not* simply suffer whatever punishment happens to be on hand. Sacrificing for a necessary part of the cause is fine, but doing it just because it makes you feel good or impresses others with how saintly you are is crap, plain and simple. Keep the mission in mind at all times, and remember that nobody ever gets a gold star for putting herself on the line for no good reason. If you still really feel like taking yourself out, at least have the guts to tell your team first so they can prepare for life without you. You may have suffered a lot, but they're the ones who'll suffer more after you're gone, so show them some respect and make your passing count.

Oh, and remember that while everyone admires our willingness to do anything for our comrades to get the job done, we aren't any good to others if we're falling to pieces ourselves. You know the type I'm talking about—they don't actually want to do themselves in just yet, but they'll do extreme things like sell all their possessions for ammo, give up regular meals to extend the team's rations and so on. Noble motives, sure, but before long they're actually more of a drain on the team than a boon, since they start depending on us to help them when they're broke or falling over with illness, and who the hell have they really helped then? Any time you see one of us doing so much for others that he's not really functioning himself, take him aside

and remind him that as much as it might be nice to think about giving up everything to help the team, he's even more valuable when he's ready to contribute 100% to the cause. If all you get is a blank look in return, then you'll know you have a problem case on your hands.

Apocrypha

Martyrs have more different theories about the state of the world than perhaps any other creed, save Visionaries, but they are fairly universal in that they all recognize that a great cataclysm is on its way, and hunters are the only ones with a chance to stop it. Exactly how it must be done or who will be saved in the end depends on which Martyr you're talking to, but most of them agree that the disaster will only be averted by hunters in general, and Martyrs in particular, making some kind of Ultimate Sacrifice on humanity's behalf. This is, of course, assuming that this cataclysm can be halted to begin with — Martyrs tend to be a pretty pessimistic group, after all.

A largely unspoken but powerful link also exists between how Martyrs view monsters in relation to themselves. They honestly sympathize with them, though most other creeds probably wouldn't believe it to see their fanatical actions in the field. But Martyrs are counted among the Merciful precisely because they recognize what little humanity remains in most creatures isn't too far away from what they themselves might become one day, and so they have empathy for the pain monsters endure because it is a burden they also share. Unlike other Merciful, however, Martyrs take these emotions and use it to fuel their devotion for the hunt instead of their desire to reach out to the other side, as their understanding of the depths a spirit can sink to gives them nothing but contempt for those who use it as an excuse to slaughter innocents and commit evil acts.

Gift

Take of Me and Live

As Martyrs learn more about the mission and the role that their sacrifice is meant to play, a small number of them realize that their deep desire to aid others regardless of cost to themselves can be used to actually blur the line between "self" and "other," establishing a bond that transcends distance to offer aid when another person needs it most. These Martyrs instinctively realize that by making a symbolic sacrifice and entering into a solemn oath or pact with a person or group, they can actually lend such recipients their strength when that oath is threatened, though naturally not without some cost to themselves. Whether Martyrs would have it any other way, however, is a matter of little debate — once they are aware of this potential within themselves, few Martyrs hesitate to make this kind of soul bond to another.

Note: Remember that all the rules of *Mind's Eye Theatre* are still in effect during such ceremonies; while they should be deep and wonderful roleplaying experiences, the normal rules about no touching and so on still apply.

System: A Martyr must have at least one *Vision* Trait before this kind of accord is truly possible, and she can never have communion with more people or hunters than she has *Mercy* Traits. Every Martyr has her own rite for enacting an oath, but it must involve some sacrifice or discomfort on the part of all participants: cutting palms and clasping hands, getting identical tattoos or body piercings, taking new names together, destroying treasured possessions, fasting or exposure to the elements, etc. Some also involve group prayers or chants, while others favor extended discussions about friendship or times spent together in the past, and still others simply sit in silent communion with their oathmates. At some point during the rite, the Martyr must also state the terms of the blessing that she wishes to share with the others: "My strength be with you whenever you fight the enemy," "If you're ever afraid, just think of me," or even just "I'll never let harm come to you as long as I draw breath." Provided the others agree to this compact, the rite is finished and the bond is established until the Martyr's death or either side later chooses

to dissolve the bond of their own free will. A Martyr may only have one type of bond with a particular individual at a time.

Any time thereafter that one of the members is in need, he may draw on the Martyr's strength, taking one of his Conviction Traits and either using it as a retest on a single challenge or replenishing a lost Willpower Trait, as he desires. Imbued may also choose to take one Conviction Trait and spend it as though it were their own for purposes of using edges, activating the sight and so on. Only one Trait may be taken per round, and all Conviction Traits taken in this fashion are immediately lost by the Martyr, although she is automatically aware of who needed them (though not where they are or why); if the Martyr is out of Conviction Traits, then the bond does not work, and the target knows only that the Martyr's strength has been sapped. This bond does not work in reverse — the Martyr cannot borrow their strength, only lend her own. The only stipulation on this exchange is that any Traits taken can *only* be used for actions directly related to the vow the Martyr made during the communion. For instance, a person the Martyr swore to protect may use the bond for defensive purposes any time he's in danger, while another the Martyr pledged to help destroy monsters could use it on combat tests. As a Narrator is required to act as go-between to get the required Traits from the Martyr when this bond is established, he is the final judge of whether or not the situation is appropriate to use the bond.

Imbuing

Martyr imbuing are usually as straightforward as they are brutal, with relentless monsters inflicting agony after agony on the newly imbued Martyr even as she rises time and again to meet it head on. Their ability to shrug aside pain for the sake of others is put to the test in the most excruciating and hideous ways imaginable, and quite a few of them never make it. Those that do often draw resolve from the memories of the triumphs (or failures) that they had during their imbuing, wearing their scars as badges of honor against the night.

Camps

Militant — Much like hardcore Avengers, with whom they frequently associate, these Martyrs take the war against the supernatural to bloody extremes; unlike their comrades, however, these imbued have little perspective on how much is too much as far as giving up is concerned. Many convert all their worldly possessions to hunting gear, flee their families or other close relations and give themselves exclusively to the hunt in ways even other imbued often see as extreme. Most don't last long, as their urgent need to do all they can for the cause puts them on the front line time after time until their luck runs out, but those who make it through their early days often find themselves either changing camps to a more moderate position... or abandoning sanity altogether.

Reluctant — Rather than serve from a sense of pressing need or general obligation, as their fellows do, these Martyrs often take on their job because they feel like no one else will (or they trust no one to do it right). They rarely have a big cause they believe in, a particular flag they rally round — they simply know what they're doing is *right*, and leave it at that. Their sacrifices come because they know no better way to get things done, and while they seldom call attention to their suffering or the extra tasks they take on, they can be quite short with those whom they perceive as unwilling to make the same kind of sacrifices as they have.

Idealist — These Martyrs subscribe to the notion that all imbued are martyrs by nature — why else would they have been chosen to bear the weight of the world? They therefore seek to downplay their own sacrifices as much as possible, leading other hunters by example and hoping that some of their ideas about giving up things for the greater good sinks in. They are likely to work in a team of otherwise dissimilar imbued, smoothing over differences and taking extra tasks to show their fellow imbued that it is not only possible to cooperate but necessary if the imbued are to get anything of lasting importance done.

Starting Conviction: 4

Vision

Visionaries

I know what you're worried about, so don't worry, I'm not here to judge you or the ideas you've been talking about on hunter-net. Actually, I find some of your suppositions quite brilliant, though I was wondering if you'd had a chance to read some of what witness1 has written on the subject of — what's that?

Oh! Right! I'm sorry, how rude of me. My mind tends to wander, and my mouth has no trouble keeping up, so you'll have to pardon the occasional digression. You asked me to come because you want to know more about how you got to be the way you are, after all, not to hear my latest musings on the state of the cosmos. So from this point on I'll try my best to answer your questions with a minimum of extraneous information. How does that sound? I thought that might be more to your liking. So... where do I start?

Perhaps it would be best to start things by going back to the original question you no doubt asked when you first saw the monsters: *What's going on?* And when I say that, I know that you know I'm not referring to the more direct form of that question that all of the imbued ask, the version that can be answered with simple facts. When people like us ask that question, we're not only wondering about the immediate state of affairs but the grander purpose behind it all, even if we don't realize it at the time. We're not content to learn the simple details like who we're fighting against — we're wondering why there's a battle going on to begin with, and we're not satisfied with pat answers from religion, science or conspiracy theories. As soon as we have a chance to process the shock of the imbuing, the questions really start going: Are we supposed to fight? Do our choices now condemn us in the eyes of the Heralds or other beings we can't perceive, or are we the champions of this unseen race? Are we imbued by accident, or are we really all hand-picked by some outside force? Is there some cosmic aspect to our war, or is it simply a Darwinian struggle to see which organisms are best adapted to continue? What about our enemies — where did they come from? Did they receive their powers from the Heralds as well; if not, how did they get them? What if they're the ones who bestowed our powers on us, only to find we've proven to be Oedipal children? What is the line between human and monster? And so on — you get the idea.



At this point you're probably saying to yourself, well, of course I have those kinds of questions, but so does every other imbued I know. Well, yes and no. Personally, I've known some I doubt would be able spell all the words I just used, let alone care what they meant, but even assuming we give everyone the benefit of the doubt and say that all hunters have wondered about such things at one time or another, we're the only ones who actually do our best to seek out the answers instead of just forgetting them and returning to the task at hand. As strange as it may sound, we alone remain committed enough to our search for the truth to keep from focusing too much on the day-to-day and forget the long-term. While we can never totally ignore the needs of the present, or lose the confidence of our fellows entirely, we must always keep a sense of perspective, looking for the big picture even as we move through the everyday.

That also means while we may seem impractical to our teams when it comes time to plan the latest raid, we're worth our weight in gold when the time comes (and it always does) that they need to know they must go on, or what it is that they're spilled so much blood fighting and dying to obtain. You don't think philosophy was invented by accident, do you? It may go a bit too far into the esoteric at times, but deep down, humanity always comes back to it, if only to listen for what they need to hear to keep going on that dark night of the soul. In this we resemble the more innocent among our ranks, but while their answers are specifically designed to settle the minds of their companions, the fact that our theories and investigations help calm our groups is just gravy — the truth is all that really matters. Sometimes the theories we propose or the answers we find are anything but calming, but we push on for the reasons behind our condition might be lost forever in the rush to battle by both sides. And there I go again with my own pet theories — sorry about that.

Anyhow, if you look at the creation of the imbued as the birth stage of a new society (and I see no reason why you couldn't), remember the urge to see us as learned scholars in the libraries or wise women in the backwoods. They were sources of great wisdom, sure, but also distant from the world at large because they had to be. This is something you and I can't afford, because while we might question the nature of the conflict and the players participating in it, we can't deny that a desire to act runs deep in all imbued. In this you'll find perhaps the greatest test for those who choose to seek answers above all else — taking our questions and theories and learning how to apply the answers we find to change the world for the better.

Sounds like a challenge? Well, here's hoping that one of us finally gets it right some time soon.

Weakness

Like most thinkers, we're not without our little fall-downs, though I must say I still find the most eccentric of us better company than some of the gun-toting lunatics who call themselves our allies. Worst of these is letting your pride get in the way of the quest for truth — usually this happens when some of us are lucky enough to find a few answers early on their career, and then they start assuming that their particular vision was the right path to follow. Not necessarily a bad thing, but sometimes early success means that these folks don't keep looking or testing their own assumptions, and they get tangled up in their own pride, refusing to consider any facts that don't fit their narrow view of the world. It's one thing to hold true to a single ideal, but another to deny the evidence that points in another direction, or assume that you have some special wisdom that others lack which lets you decide the difference. The best way to avoid this is to keep a good amount of emotional and objective distance from the

information you find, especially when dealing with a personal theory. Always keep perspective!

Another pitfall are those who decide that the hunt itself is wrong, and swear not to take part in it until they see evidence that says otherwise. While I admire their conviction and endorse their right to follow where their conscience leads them, the same is not always true for other imbued, who often see this as treason and react accordingly. Therefore, while I don't condemn the decision, I suggest that those who want to do so start by telling their colleagues well in advance, the better to defuse the situations that *will* happen when they actually decide to have no further role in the hunt.

Last but not least is the matter of hallucinogens and other illegal (or at least intoxicating) substances; I myself have never used such tools, but there are some who swear by them. If you decide to use this to explore our new condition, remember that the authorities are not usually very understanding that you just had to take a hit to understand more about the monsters around us, and a long trip to prison will put your research on a long hiatus. What's more, you're a liability to your teammates if your head's fuzzy in the middle of combat, so please have the sense to do this when you're not going to be seeing action.

Apocrypha

Some of the other creeds like to joke that if you ask 10 Visionaries about the origin of the imbued, you'll get at least 11 different answers. While this isn't to say that there aren't Visionaries who agree on different points or even pursue a particular ideal or theory together, as a rule their notions of why they have been chosen and what lies in store are more varied than any other creed. Many Visionaries change their big ideas and underlying suppositions on a fairly regular basis as they encounter new ideas and incorporate them into their worldview, though the perception of this by other imbued as fickleness isn't quite accurate either. Visionaries believe very passionately in what they hold as truth; it's just that unlike most people, they're willing to accept that they might have been wrong about what they believed in the past, and thus their constant state of intellectual flux. Beneath it all they do recognize one common thread: each imbued must discover his own purpose, as only when they truly know themselves will they truly be able to change the world for the better. If working toward that goal takes them down so many different paths, then so be it.

Gift

Symbols of the Cause

Although they were some of the first imbued to make widespread the mysterious symbols that have become known as the hunter code, many Visionaries were still frustrated by the fact that while this secret language could be an invaluable tool, it was still limited to conveying simple concepts of one or two words at most. Recently, however, other imbued have begun to notice strange symbols appearing more often, which seem to impart a whole outlook or philosophy on the hunt to those who look at them. They appear to be derived from the hunter code, but also remain unique unto themselves, as though a combination of that universal language with a personal ideal of some kind — which is precisely what they are intended to be. Those few Visionaries who have learned the gift of crafting these special “mission symbols” are just beginning to realize the potential they have, but their ability to rally other imbued and communicate a great deal of information quickly is already stirring up excitement in those who know of their existence.

System: A Visionary must have a minimum of three *Vision Traits* to create a quest symbol, as well as have heard of the process before (or spent enough time agonizing about how to communicate her message to others that the Storyteller rules it at last occurs to her naturally). Naturally, she must also have a clear mission or philosophy regarding the hunt that she passionately believes in as well; mere theories or notions of others are insufficient to carry the power of such a symbol. This mission should be written down in a sentence or two and approved by the Storyteller during the creation process, which requires 10 *Conviction Traits* to invest the symbol and takes a minimum of 10 weeks of in-game time as well (no more than one *Trait* per week). Assuming that such conditions are met, the Visionary has crafted her own symbol, which not only helps spread her message but also allows her a number of special advantages when placed it on a person or location. It should be noted that while any of her symbols can be understood by other imbued, only copies done by her own hand (even if only drawing on someone for a tattoo artist to trace) carry the benefits of insight outlined below. A Visionary may only have as many of these “active” symbols at one time as she has *Vision Traits*; while more copies can be made, they do not carry the benefits outlined below. Preferably, symbols should be placed a subject or surface permanently; symbols that come off a person or are removed or defaced on a surface cease conveying information back to the Visionary. They must be clearly visible as well, either prominently tattooed on a person or featured in a significant spot at a location, otherwise the symbol confers no special benefits.

If the quest symbol is placed on a person, the Visionary instinctively knows if he begins to have doubts about the mission, or if he has just performed some great feat in its name. Placed at a location, the Visionary receives a warm feeling when followers who support the cause are there, but feels a chill or some other ominous sign if they are arguing or otherwise unsure of the cause. A Narrator should relate such information to the Visionary as soon as possible, as distance between the two parties is no obstacle. Followers are not necessarily aware of the fact that these images convey information to the Visionary, but though those that are aware can temporarily block the transmission of information for a scene if they desire by spending a *Willpower Trait* and covering the symbol. In addition, a Visionary may revoke the benefits of any of her symbols at any time, such as if a follower deserts the cause or a location is destroyed, and any symbols are automatically deactivated if the Visionary ever abandons her big idea — if that is the case, those wearing the symbol or at a location that bears one feel a chill in their heart and a sense of disillusionment in the cause, though whether or not they continue to uphold it is up to them. Should she wish to create a new symbol for a different cause at a later date, she must perform the creation process anew.

Imbuing

Visionary imbuing tends to be quite unique, even for such a singular event as an imbuing, and very few of them have much in common besides the fact that they all required the Visionary to think on her feet and come up with a creative solution to the problem before her. For example, one Visionary might have tricked a foul creature into destroying itself, while another might have talked her way out of being annihilated just long enough to find an escape route. Very few Visionary imbuing involve head-on fighting, and even if they do, it tends to be left up to the Visionary to find some way to stop the rampaging beast without resorting to violence as well.

Camps

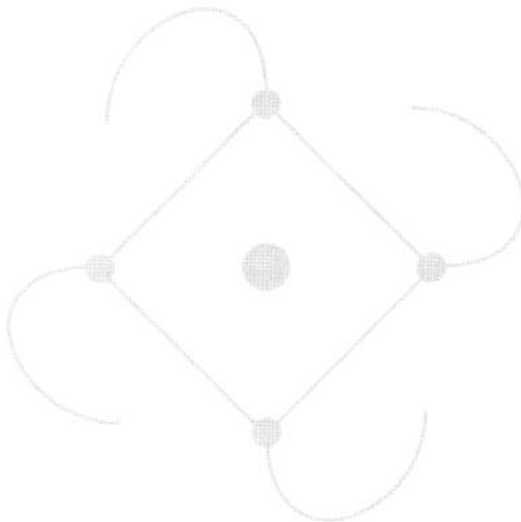
Single-Minded — As the name implies, this label describes Visionaries who have adopted one idea, or perhaps a tightly knit group of ideas, as their pet theory and now

pursue it to the exclusion of all else. On the positive side, this makes them very knowledgeable in their particular field; on the negative side, it closes them off to new ideas or even most criticism, as they tend to react poorly if their pet project is questioned in any way. They will gladly go on at length about their project's virtues to others around them, and when they feel it is "ready" they can be quite persuasive about acquiring followers to help them impose their will on the world. Obsessed as they are with fixing the smallest details of their masterpiece, they often develop problems keeping their eye on the larger picture, although time spent with fellow Visionaries can sometimes gently prod them back into line.

Pragmatic — The most grounded Visionaries, these thinkers haven't abandoned their search for truth by any means, but chances are in the past they've had at least one bad experience they blame on being too detached from the world, and as a result they've promised never to stray that far from the everyday again. They see the hunt as a constant struggle to bring their dreams to life, and work hard to spread their ideas in hopes of attracting others who can help them work bigger changes as a group. Dedicated to their ideals, but flexible enough to remember that new events and discoveries can change what they previously held to be true, these Visionaries are perhaps those best-suited to positions of leadership, as they plan well over the long term without completely forgetting about the needs of the present.

Open-Minded — Colleges would call these Visionaries "undecided"; while they may have a few ideas that they like, they have yet to develop a big idea of their own that they can really get behind, and so they're still drifting for now. Voracious gatherers of information, they tend to stay near the back of a larger group, analyzing data that is collected and otherwise taking a "support" role in the daily activity of their team. When and if they finally find an idea they like, they generally shift to one of the other two camps as they follow the course of their investigation. A few Visionaries fall back to this outlook later in their careers, having seen their ideas come crashing down and/or deciding that it is still too soon in the lifespan of the imbued for anyone to develop an kind of far-reaching theory about what their role might be.

Starting Conviction: 3



Deviance

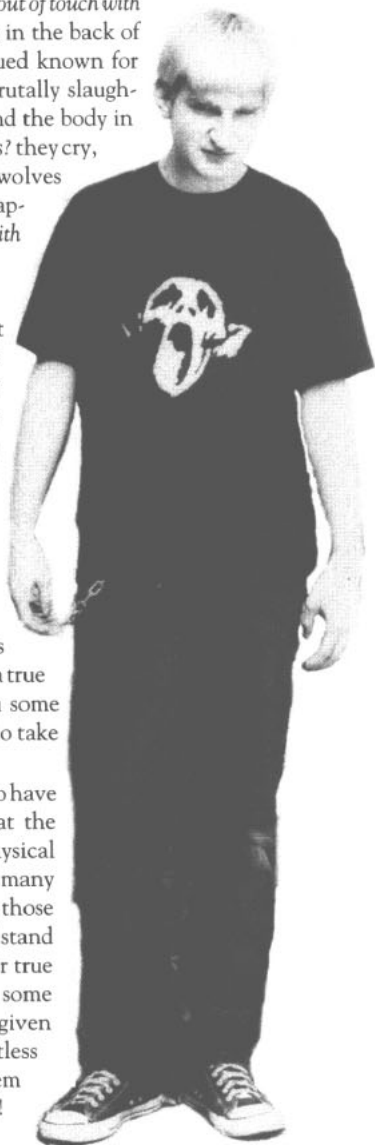
Waywards

It all began as rumors, and for the most part it's stayed that way, though the secret is starting to fray around the edges. First an imbued with strange tattoos shows up here, filling everyone with the righteous fury of the hunt before vanishing back into the night, leaving a bloody battle as their calling card. A *raid gone wrong*, the others say. *Sad, but it happens*. Then from the city just across the river comes a horror story about a crazed hunter who shot up an entire restaurant just to get at one monster, killing dozens of normal people in the process. *A maniac, totally out of touch with the mission*, they whisper, but the fear is there, forming in the back of their minds... along with recognition. A kindly imbued known for preaching tolerance and compassion to all is found brutally slaughtered, symbols from the hunter code scrawled all around the body in the victim's blood. *Who in God's name could have done this?* they cry, and in that moment they feel our presence at last, wolves among these weaklings who will not follow their appointed destiny. *What kind of animal are we dealing with here?*

Animals, indeed.

Many of the others have theories about the fact that we "imbued" are chosen ones of one variety or another; indeed, they spend a pathetic amount of time arguing about such things, time that would be better spent doing the work we're intended for. With us, however, there are no such foolish questions — we have been chosen to eradicate all forms of monsters from this earth and reclaim it for humanity once more. Who chose us is irrelevant; the mission is clear, the enemy made plain to our sight. Why else would we have been given the powers we have, if not to fight back? I can see from your eyes that this truth is obvious to you as well. That's good. You have all the makings of a true soldier for the Lord; all that's necessary is to get you some experience in the field, and you will be truly qualified to take your place in our ranks.

Unfortunately, however, there are still too few who have seen the truth as clearly as we have. The prison that the hellspawn have created for our world is not simply a physical one, but one of the mind as well, and the enemy has had many years to perfect it. Our fellow humans are taught to love those who oppress them, to forgive and step back instead of stand up for themselves, and sadly even the revelation of our true destiny doesn't always break the monsters' hold on some imbued. These weaklings receive their glorious, God-given powers and then turn around and waste them on pointless endeavors or even — in the ultimate sacrilege — use them to help the very monsters they were meant to destroy!



Such traitors seem to be in never-ending supply, but what is worse is how seductive their words can be to those who have not yet fallen to their level, sometimes even to those who think themselves soldiers of the Lord. Frightened of the responsibility they have been chosen for and long since brainwashed into believing they need reasons and explanations for everything, these lost imbued flock to such blasphemers and false prophets in sinful numbers, heedless that the path to Hell is ever that which seems easiest and most pleasing. Sadly, their minds are poisoned against our pleas for them to see the trap they have fallen into, to repent and take up the path we are destined to lead them down, and that means we must treat them the same way any other army treats traitors in its midst. It saddens us to do so, but if we are to sweep the corruption from the world, we cannot risk having some of our own kind turn on us to protect the very enemy that is eating their souls daily.

For example, I once knew a young woman who claimed to possess a devout faith in our Lord, and for the first few nights we fought side by side against the darkness, trusting in our faith to guide us as we destroyed a nest of bloodsuckers that had terrorized our small town. However, not long after we had moved to the city to search for more of the creatures, she fell in with group of others who also claimed to trust in the Lord, but whom I later discovered ran a small shelter that housed monsters they sought to “rehabilitate!” We began to drift apart in purpose, until one night when she berated me for destroying an apparently helpless old witch we had come across. She claimed that if we were truly pious, we would see that our beliefs required us to love and care for our enemies, to turn the other cheek. I responded that the Lord made no such requirements for beings that exude blasphemy by the very fact of their existence, and reminded her of the injunction not to suffer a witch to live. She said that the Savior forgave even those who placed Him on the cross, at which time I could take no more of her blasphemy in defense of monsters. I... I do not remember much of what occurred after that, but I have prayed every night that the coming days to see fewer of our kind led astray as she was. There are only too few of us to do the Lord’s work as it is, and stopping to teach such lessons in the end is still a distraction from our ultimate enemy.

And besides, we have business at the shelter tonight.

Weakness

If it hasn’t been made clear enough yet, Waywards are all deeply, *deeply* screwed up. While it’s not something that their fellow imbued have discovered yet (or possibly ever will), what happens is that during the process of their imbuing, new Waywards receive an horrifying onslaught of images of violence, hatred, carnage and warfare — the infinite hatred of the Messengers have for the enemy forcing its way into a fragile, finite human mind. (Yeah, that’s a big *ouch* right there.) Predictably enough, the hunter’s mind shatters in the process, and what remains has been forever shaped by the horror that she’s endured. As if that wasn’t enough already, the bloody images and violent urges that overwhelm her during her imbuing never completely go away, leaving the poor imbued to deal with a constant stream of gory images and half-realized brutality that threatens to boil over at any second. For an idea of what this is like, imagine the conditioning sequence from *A Clockwork Orange* played at full volume in your mind every waking moment for the rest of your life — except that accompanying these images is the message that violence is OK, that slaughter is acceptable and that the annihilation of anyone who gets in your way is not only right, it is no less than what your supreme being *expects* of you.

Yeah, it’s that serious.

Read it now and let it sink in forever after: *There are no good Waywards*. No matter who a Wayward might have been before her imbuing, she has become — and will always remain — a deeply psychotic individual who, like it or not, has absolutely no problem killing anyone or everyone she meets. Even hardcore Avengers and others who might agree with a few of their ideas still balk at the endless capacity for remorseless killing that these monsters possess. Only similarly deranged individuals can stand their company for any length of time, and even then such groups are naturally unstable and prone to self-destructiveness for other reasons (though those are learn to work together are frightening indeed). Waywards are certainly not heroes, or even misguided anti-heroes — they are shattered, dangerous maniacs who will stop at nothing to pursue their vision of a world swept clean of monsters and all who side with them. Any similarity to the goals or tactics of other, nobler imbued is purely coincidental on their part, or perhaps worse still a deliberate deception designed to smoke out the weak and impure hunters before destroying them.

This constant overpowering barrage of violent thoughts and images is represented in game terms by the fact that all Waywards receive a *mandatory*, permanent derangement related to violence and emotional dissociation such as *Compulsive-Aggressive Disorder*, *Megalomania*, *Sadism* or *Schizophrenia* (see “Derangements” on p. 93 for more details). They receive no Free Traits for this derangement, though they may take additional ones during character creation for full credit if they desire. This derangement is always considered active, and cannot be treated, bought off or temporarily suppressed in any way, even with edges or other supernatural powers. A Wayward cannot even spend a Willpower Trait to resist her derangement for a turn, unless the Storyteller permits it, nor would most of them want to anyway — their madness is all they know, making it unlikely that they’d try to fight it. Maybe once they were different, but now they have been shown the truth, and this is what it told them they must do.

Apocrypha

Despite rumors of a doomsday cult to the contrary, not all Waywards are Christian fundamentalists of one kind or another, though unfortunately a few of the ones that have begun to surface have been responsible for giving other imbued this impression. It is fair to say that 99% of Waywards have some belief in a higher power, if only because they believe it has turned its back on them. After all, bloody as it might be, very few people could come through the kind of intimate contact with the Heralds that Waywards experience without forming a belief in some form of divine authority, if they didn’t have one already. Naturally, while individual scenarios vary in the details, the message as a whole is very clear to this creed: Armageddon is here, and in the end only those who fight the hordes of darkness will be saved. Everything else is meaningless, an obstacle to be overcome or destroyed as needed.

That said, there are Waywards from all races and walks of life, from heartless thugs and terrorists whose pattern of violence only escalated with their imbuing to entirely harmless people who had this savage existence imposed on them seemingly at random. This diversity will prove to be perhaps the most terrifying trait of all about this fearsome creed, once they become known to their fellow imbued at large: that they can blend in with everyone else, their hate-filled minds like ticking bombs waiting to explode in a firestorm of violence and suffering. If the monsters represent the enemy without, then Waywards may well be the enemy within.

Gifts

Continual Sight

As part of their ceaseless exposure to the horrors of war (or perhaps because of it), all Waywards are considered to have their second sight permanently active, at no Conviction cost. However, this version of the sight provides none of the associated protection against mind- or body-control that activating their full Conviction defense does, so most Waywards quickly learn to “steel their will” against intrusion whenever they spot monsters to avoid suffering from their insidious powers. Interestingly enough, their form of the sight also somehow prevents them from ever acquiring *Discern*, *Witness*, *Illuminate* or any other edges that allow them to distinguish between different types of creatures — to their sight, all monsters are equally tainted and equally deserving of death.

Signs of the Righteous

To the Waywards, all of the hunt is a struggle to show monsters that a force more powerful than them has been chosen to wipe their evil from the earth. More cagey and experienced psychos know that a show of strength is often as important to winning a conflict as actual strength itself, so they cover themselves and their gear with the symbols of the hunter code and other signs of power, seeking to alert other imbued that a true hunter has arrived as well as confuse and terrify their prey. Other killers feel a call to return to simpler, more savage ways in their hunting, and instinctively take to wearing war paint or otherwise ritually adorning themselves for battle. Whatever a Wayward's motivation might be, before long many of them wind up sporting tattoos and other permanent markings; mixed in with the more familiar signs are some bizarre symbols that other hunters recognize as part of the code but which also seem to have a particular power to themselves as well. Those few imbued who have started to recognize the Wayward phenomena as its own distinct entity are growing increasingly nervous, as they recognize these new symbols might be not just markings of the killers, but emblems of power as well.

System: To date, no Waywards have ever developed a talent for empowering these symbolic tattoos any other way than spontaneously; while two psychos can exchange symbols when they meet, for the most part the Waywards simply *know* how to use them when the time is right. A Wayward may learn how to empower his first symbol upon acquiring four *Vision* Traits, and acquires another symbol for his repertoire with each additional *Vision* Trait afterward. Once selected, a symbol cannot be changed. A Wayward must have the mark drawn on his body to be effective (placement is not important); most choose to have these symbols tattooed on them in order to always have them at hand, though less permanent means work in a pinch. If a symbol is ever marred or destroyed, it immediately loses all effectiveness until it is reapplied. A Wayward cannot apply these symbol on anyone but himself, not even on other Waywards who understand the same sign; other imbued may understand what they mean, but receive no benefit for wearing them.

Activating a symbol requires three Conviction Traits, and lasts for up to a number of days equal to the Wayward's *Vision* rating. No more than one symbol may ever be active at a time, and while a Wayward can choose to deactivate one at any time, another one cannot be activated until the original time period for the first one has lapsed. Thus, if a Wayward with six *Vision* Traits deactivates a symbol after two days of use, he must still wait at least another four days before he can spend Conviction to activate another one, or even re-use the one he had active before. Benefits gained from a symbol can cause the Wayward to exceed normal limits, and any Traits gained from

them can be bid, lost or regained normally during the time the symbol is active. A list of possible symbols is included in the accompanying box; players are also permitted to devise their own unique symbols and benefits, subject to Storyteller approval. (For illustrations of what these symbols look like, see **Hunter Book: Wayward**, p. 93.)

Wayward Signs

Meaning

- Chief/Warlord/General
- Enraged/Unleashed/Furious
- Enduring/Stoic/Tenacious
- Vigilant/Alert/Wary
- Guided/Chosen/Destined
- Wily/Cunning/Resourceful
- Unbreakable/Unstoppable/Relentless
- Deadly/Piercing/Precise
- Resilient/Unflinching/Untouchable
- Devastating/Brutal/Awesome

Benefit

Free retest on all Leadership or Intimidation tests. Also recognized as the Wayward creed symbol in the conventional hunter code.

Free Brawny and Ferocious Traits.

Free Tenacious and Enduring Traits.

Free Vigilant and Alert Traits.

Extra level of the Destiny Background.

Free retest on all Streetwise, Survival or Subterfuge tests.

Two Extra Willpower Traits.

Free retest on all Brawl or Melee tests.

Extra Bruised Health Level.

Inflict an extra level of damage on all hits with one chosen form of attack (selected when the symbol is taken): Brawl, Melee, Athletics or Firearms. This symbol may be chosen more than once, provided a different mode of attack is selected and the design is modified each time.

Any retests given by symbols allow only for a single retest per challenge, with the second result taking effect.

Imbuing

Of all the creeds, Waywards have perhaps the most extreme imbuing of all, most commonly spectacular blood baths that make Avenger or Martyr rites of passage look like Sunday school picnics. Casualties run high, whether they are monsters, normal people or even other hunters being imbued at the same time, and the Wayward has just enough time to wonder what they have to do when all of a sudden they are shown the Truth. All monsters must die, as well as anyone who stands with them — and this is OK. It seems perfectly natural and right to the new Wayward, the same sort of everyday decision as a normal person might make about choosing what to wear to work or what they want for dinner. This is the primary difference between the creation of an Avenger or a Martyr as compared to the walking horror that is a Wayward — while Avengers lash out from a sense of outrage, and Martyrs sacrifice to achieve a goal, the Wayward is a child of *Vision*. Their capacity for violence comes from the fact that they have seen the plan the Heralds intend for the war (or at least believe they have), and like other adherents of *Vision*, they're now doing their best to impose their plan on the world at large.

Camps

Conservative — These fanatics embody the most extreme ideals of this already frightening creed, turning them into vicious hunters and killers who care absolutely nothing for those caught in their path and even take some joy in striking out at the enemy (whoever that might be at the moment). Chances are they were hate-filled individuals before the imbuing, and the Messengers merely put a face on what they had always “known” about the suffering and evil of the world. This also means that many of them have personal agendas that they tack onto their relentless hunt for monsters, often with hideous results that resemble miniature genocides fine-tuned to their specifications.

Moderate — Waywards of this disposition have grown to accept their mission with kind of weary resignation rather than the crazed glee or terrified reluctance of the others. After all, if death is the inevitable end to anything anyway, what’s wrong with bringing it to those who deserve it, especially if beings like the Heralds command it? (Of course, exactly who fits the description of “deserving it” is often quite different from moderate to moderate.) Most of the time, these imbued become so numb from the horrors of their task that killing is merely another chore for them, though they retain a certain cold logic and thus might work be able to with a group for a time if their goals seemed compatible. Likewise, some began their careers in groups, only to be cast out for their increasingly disturbing actions.

Liberal — Though it is a rarity in an already rarefied field, some Waywards are imbued who don’t come to identify with their mission like the rest of their fellows, who are horrified by what the Heralds are urging them to do. Many try desperately to hold on to their old lives and values, but they still cannot hold back the madness endemic to this creed for long, and as a result many develop split personalities or similar disorders in order to cope with the terrible violence they are compelled to perform. More than one of these Waywards has awakened in the middle of a room of bodies with no idea how they got there, which in turn takes its own toll on their psyches on top of their ordinary stresses. Ironically enough, these are often the most dangerous Waywards for their fellow imbued, as they switch from nice to nightmarish with little warning, and can switch from being quite friendly one moment to committing some terrible crime the next with no warning at all.

Starting Conviction: 4

Isolation

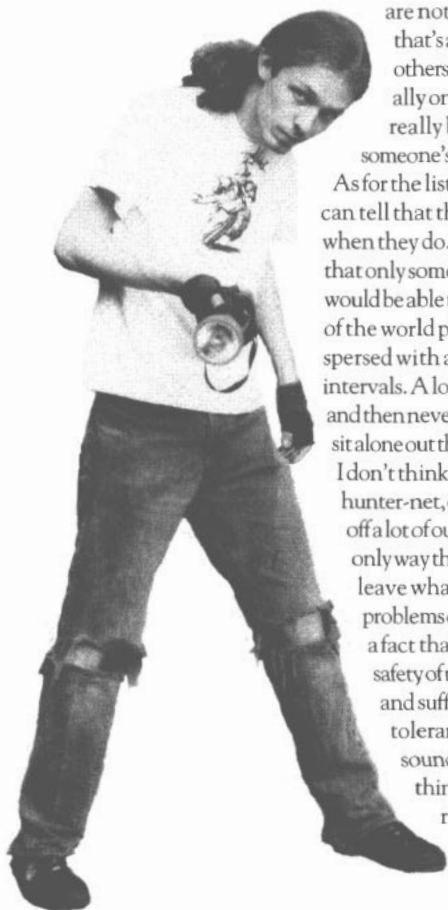
Hermits

You look surprised. Did I startle you? Or is it because normally the approach of someone bearing a symbol like this one here triggers such strong reactions you feel like you might lose your mind just to see if that would make it better? Ah, I see I have your full attention now. Well, I'll save the introductions for later — you'd probably recognize me from hunter-net anyway, so don't worry. I certainly know you — if our meeting just now wasn't enough of a clue already, your writing online has our fingerprints all over it. What do I mean by "our"? Good question, and precisely why I timed leaving my particular hiding place to coincide with one of those rare times I knew I could find you here. (Let it never be said that we recluses are nothing if not zealous about our scheduling!) I just had to seek you out because we are alike, you and I, painful as it might be. Because together we might have a chance at figuring out what makes us so different, what keeps us so isolated from the only other people who might be able to help us with what we're going through.

But most of all, because you're the only one I've ever actually met.

There are others out there, don't get me wrong. We are not singular in our new society, though whether that's a blessing or a curse remains to be seen. No, these others tend to keep the hunter-net, although occasionally one will work up the nerve to fax something, and really brave ones will actually drop off a package on someone's doorstep before running off into the night again.

As for the lists, most of them don't post a great deal, but you can tell that they're one of us by the kinds of things they say when they do. Usually their messages are full of information that only someone with a truly amazing amount of spare time would be able to dig up, but short on minor details that the rest of the world picks up on a daily basis, not to mention interspersed with a few rambling, esoteric thoughts at different intervals. A lot of times they'll also post what they have to say and then never respond, leaving their information or advice to sit alone out there like a wrapped present from an absent friend. I don't think it's because of all the cretins and flammers on the hunter-net, either, though I'm sure those ranting idiots scare off a lot of our kind as well. Rather, I think it's because it's the only way they know how to relate to others anymore, to just leave what they know out there to stand on its own, no problems of personality or interaction attached. I know for a fact that the only reason I'm here now, so far from the safety of my apartment, is that with long hours of patience and suffering I think I've finally managed to build up a tolerance for the static, and I was gambling from the sound of your posts that you'd managed to do something similar. Fortunately for both of our sakes, I was right. But what about all of those like us who never manage to do that? It gives me chills to imagine what a life entirely at the mercy of the



voices, the sounds, the frustrating ever-present babble of messages I just can't understand but I know I'm meant to do something with and I just want to....

I'm sorry. My concentration started to slip, and I can't let that happen yet, not when there's still so much we have to discuss. Most importantly, exactly what the Heralds had in mind for us when they gave us the power. Nobody else seems to know why it happened that we turned out this way, of course, and for that matter I don't really trust a lot of the answers others have come up with in regards to what our "real" purpose was supposed to be. What I do know is that we seem to experience a continual state equivalent to what other people describe as the kinds of things that they experienced only once, during their imbuing — the howling voices, the strange images, the bizarre ideas that creep into their minds. While it's true that there are a few others who report having a regular level of contact with the Heralds after their imbuing, none of them seem to endure anything near the level of the pain that our "static" brings us when we go near monsters or other imbued, so I'm ruling them out as being simply others like us who got a "milder" case. If that's true, then we must arrive at the conclusion that we have been singled out for something, a greater purpose aside from the fact of our simply have been imbued and being shown the truth of creation. Of course, in the absence of a clear answer from the Heralds on the subject (though I suppose we always can hope), all that does is raise more questions. Why do the Messengers keep us in such close contact, when they push all the others away? Are they trying to tell us something that we just can't comprehend, as I suspect is true? Or are we what some others have speculated, the flawed first draft of the imbued, and other hunters a more successful second effort at contacting the human mind? So many thoughts, like beams colliding in an infinite lilac prism of hopes, banshee truths of — No! I will not surrender now! I am a researcher! I will find the truth, I will....

Please, do not pull away like that. I am no mere lunatic, as you well know. The Heralds may have taken my greatest tool and turned it into a receiver for their alien thoughts, but I will not be robbed of reason by even their needs for this strange war! Listen, my time is growing short, so I will simply say what my research has indicated. Our condition is a pervasive psychological disorder stemming from sensitivity to the ambient psychic taint radiated by the monsters, coupled with the continued intrusion of telesensory activity from the enlightened alpha-consciousness that the Messenger-godhead represents. In essence, we are receiving images and impressions from both sides of this war, as the Messengers intended us to; the only mistake they made was in overestimating the amount of stress that the human consciousness could bear! Don't you see? We were meant to be communicators for all of the imbued, using our naturally receptive ESP fields to spy on the infected aura fields of the monsters even as we received meta-imperatives from the Herald consciousness collective to distribute to the rest of our kind. Knowing that, it's pure simplicity to see that our continued mental anguish is only a post-adapted psycho-biofeedback response to the overwhelming data streams that our active impulse-receivers have been processing, thus meaning that a cure for our condition would present itself if we could help rid the world of the polluted aura field created by the monsters and their naturally tainted spiritual architecture....

Why are you looking at me like that? I'm sorry if it's all coming out in a rush, but I just can't seem to hold back the voices any longer, and they're interfering with my theories again, messing and mingling and bending the way I intend them to come out so they seem so garbled, when through the agony I can see the truth of it all, it's so plain, all it takes is for us to realize the potential of the sublimated consciousness to understand — No! Don't go! Please, I just need one more moment — I just need — I just....

I just don't want to be alone with the voices. Not again. Not ever again.

Weakness

Static

There's a very good reason Hermits are so averse to dealing with others, especially monsters and other imbued—as a side effect of their unique connection to the Heralds, their minds are permanently flooded with an overpowering psychic “static” whenever they come within a certain distance of one of these beings. What is normally a constant quiet babble of alien voices and cryptic phrases, accompanied by bizarre images and other mysterious sensory phenomena, immediately increases in volume to become an utterly devastating psychic onslaught as soon as the Hermit comes near such individuals, and does not cease until they are out of that range. While occasionally useful as a cruel early warning system of sorts, this static is so debilitating that it is ultimately far more of a curse than a blessing, and players should bear this in mind at all times when portraying one of these tormented souls. While the special *Tolerance* Ability can offer a temporary respite from this debilitating condition (see below), it remains as incurable as it is mysterious, and Willpower expenditure has no effect on it in any way either.

While it is largely a roleplaying mechanic and therefore up to the player to portray, it is also recommended that Storytellers encourage players to use different props and techniques to simulate the anguish of the static, to help reinforce the debilitating effects it has on their lives. For example, creating pre-recorded CDs or tapes of voices and noises that a player can listen to when the static activates can be a useful roleplaying tool (not to mention show the difficulty they have relating to others), as can wearing strangely colored glasses or those with slightly disorienting effects such as 3-D glasses or refracting lenses. Provided that such things don't actually become more of hindrance to play than a help, or cause a player to become nauseated or disoriented out of game, they can be invaluable in helping a player understand the true depth of her character's condition, as well as giving Storytellers an easy way to determine when the static is or isn't in effect.

System: A Hermit suffering the effects of static is considered to have a one-Trait penalty on all Physical Challenges and a two-Trait penalty on all Social or Mental Challenges, due to the intense agony and disorientation the static causes. The range the static is triggered at depends on the Hermit's *Patron* Background rating. Characters with three levels of *Patron* suffer static any time they are within three paces of an imbued or supernatural creature; characters with four levels suffer it any time they are in the same room/immediate area of one of these beings; and characters with five levels of *Patron* suffer any time they are within the same building/large outdoor area of a supernatural creature. (These range increments can be adjusted for the sake of playability, if the Storyteller desires.) Only the *Tolerance* Ability can provide any relief from the penalties of the static—not even edges or supernatural powers have been successful in blocking it out, as it represents nothing less than the presence of the Heralds in the Hermit's mind.

In addition to the other penalties of the static, the permanent derangement brought on by their condition is also rendered active whenever the static is triggered, further complicating their attempts at meeting with others of their kind—however, this derangement can still be temporarily overcome with Willpower or other means, just as any other derangement might be.

Permanent Derangement

As a result of the extreme stress that comes with the constant murmuring of the Heralds in the Hermit's mind, all Hermits must select a derangement related to difficulty with social interaction such as *Hysteria*, *Manic-Depression* or *Paranoia*. This derangement can never be permanently cured, although unlike the permanent derangement that Waywards receive it can be temporarily relieved through Willpower expenditure, edges or other means. They receive

Unique Ability: *Tolerance*

This Ability allows a Hermit to temporarily withstand the effects of the static, allowing them to interact with hunters or monsters normally for a short period of time. Each level of *Tolerance* allows the Hermit to ignore the penalties of static for being near one hunter or supernatural creature for one hour, cumulatively. Thus, a Hermit with three levels of this Ability can go three hours in the presence of up to three beings that would normally trigger the static without suffering a penalty. Should time run out, or the number of people ever exceed the amount they can handle, the full penalties of the static immediately resume until the Hermit brings the situation back within his limits. This Ability's benefits reset every 24-hour period, although the Hermit can use his time all at once or in smaller increments as he desires. Bystanders count as half a person (round down, minimum one) for the purposes of this Ability, as do Visionaries for reasons no one has yet been able to determine.

It is possible to specialize in this Ability; each time a specialization is selected, choose one creed — members of that creed now count as half a person for the purposes of this Ability, as described above. It should be noted that while the game penalties of the static are temporarily removed with *Tolerance*, the constant barrage of the static doesn't go away, it just quiets a little — a dull roar as opposed to a pounding storm. While not nearly as bad as their normal burden, the struggle this Ability represents should still be roleplayed accordingly, or the Hermit begins to seem more like a lucid person occasionally plagued by moments of madness, rather than the other way around as they are meant to be.

no Free Traits for this derangement, though they may take additional ones during character creation for full credit if they desire.

Apocrypha

Many Hermits do not hold one solid belief about their origin or their purpose, as the nature of their condition makes it difficult to be certain of anything related to the Heralds or the mission for very long. Still, given that many of them have little else to do except contemplate their condition, some views and opinions have emerged, though they remain highly personal to those that hold them. A few have postulated that Hermits were originally intended to be one step above the rest of the imbued, giving orders based directly on their closeness to the Heralds; others contend that their state is one step below the others, who have obviously accommodated the presence of the Messengers in their lives (not to mention minds) much better than this broken creed. Religious Hermits consider the passion of the saints, or the relationship between insanity and the visions of mystics and prophets of times past, while more secular members instead theorize about innate human psychic potential or mass hysteria conditions. A paranoid few even fear that they are the only ones who hear the true voice of the Heralds, and that the rest of the imbued are being misled by this force of utter madness for its own inscrutable ends. Given the multiplicity of different views on their origins, however, many Hermits eventually resign themselves to trying to find some way to apply the information that assaults them daily, rather than think too hard about where it is coming from... at least for now.

Gift

Constant Contact

Though it may seem paltry compensation indeed for the static and madness that accompanies their contact with the Heralds, there is one benefit to it as well: All Hermits receive three levels of the *Patron* Background for free during character creation (levels four and five can be purchased as if they were levels one and two, respectively). In addition, these beginning levels can never be permanently lost during play; like it or not, they'll always be this close to the Heralds.

Message In A Bottle

Given the nature of the edges that they develop and the amount of contact they endure from the Heralds, more than one imbued has made the obvious leap that the Hermits were originally intended to be messengers and communicators for the imbued. Even in their fractured condition, however, Hermits still unconsciously find themselves drawn to composing treatises about what they have learned and disseminating them to their fellow imbued almost without thinking about it. While it can be difficult to sort out the information from the noise of some of these works, those imbued who try can often glean a surprising amount of insight from a Hermit's work. These missives seem to seek out those who need them most, even if the Hermit abandons them, leading a select few who are aware of the existence of such messages to suppose that the Heralds may intervene directly to ensure their arrival. Of course, it remains open to speculation whether this drive to collect and share what they know is a remnant of some original imperative the Hermits will supposed to fulfill, or simply a way for the Heralds to make up for the failings of this creed.

System: Every time a Hermit acquires a new *Vision* Trait beyond those she receives at character creation, she feels an unconscious but overpowering urge to record what she has learned so far and send it out into the hunter community. The exact medium for her message doesn't matter — letter, e-mail, journal, video, CD, etc. — so long as it contains her thoughts and opinions on her new existence as well as any information about hunters, monsters or other subjects even remotely relevant to the mission. Creating such a record requires a minimum of two days of effort, as well as the investment of a *Willpower* Trait — players are *highly* encouraged to actually produce these items if at all possible, though an item card or other purely descriptive representation might be acceptable with the Storyteller's permission. Once it is finished, the Hermit must cast the message out in some fashion and trust the Heralds to deliver it to those who need it — perhaps she considers her journal a waste of time and throws it in the trash, only for another hunter to stumble across it in the gutter days later, or she sends an e-mail with a blank recipient line that somehow manages to deliver itself to the right people. It is important to stress that the Hermit is usually not consciously aware that the Heralds will deliver the message, though a Hermit who has three *Vision* Traits and one Trait in both *Zeal* and *Mercy* has begun to gather enough general insight that she suspects the guiding hand behind the effort of creating such messages. Obviously, Hermits may create and distribute similar works at other times if they desire, but only those messages composed at the time they acquire a new *Vision* Trait have the benefit of being delivered by the Heralds.

Receiving such messages is usually just an informative roleplaying experience for those involved, although the Storyteller may rule that a message which the recipients find particularly helpful or inspiring gives them a *Willpower* or *Conviction* Trait as a reflection of their renewed commitment or insight into the hunt. Hermits might even receive one such message themselves, especially if they put out a particularly insightful or intriguing tract.

Imbuing

A Hermit imbuing is usually distinguished by the fact that rather than simply receiving a brief phrase or image regarding the supernatural, a vast torrent of such information begins pouring in their mind, not only alerting them to the situation at hand but also a dozen other things that may not be so direct at all. Thus they do not typically jump into the fray as most other imbued do, literally or figuratively, but stay to the side of the scene where they try their best to make sense of the warnings and insights they're receiving and pass them on to those who can act more directly. If they're alone, they typically try to find some way to alert others who might be able to intervene more directly, all the while watching and learning about the creatures they are suddenly aware of.

Camps

Conservative — These Hermits are usually the ones who were fondest of their previous lives, and thus the transformation they've undergone at the hands of the Heralds hasn't thrilled them one bit. They hate what they have been forced to see and the pain they've gone through, but feel that if they're going to be shackled with all of this maddening information, then by God they're at least going to use it to do some good! Needless to say, that makes these Hermits the ones most likely to try working with other imbued as often as they can manage it, since their grim determination to wrest some good from the confusion of their new existence allows them to endure great punishment for the sake of striking back at the creatures who started this nightmare in the first place.

Moderate — While conservatives are most likely to jump at a chance to strike at the evil that monsters represent, moderate Hermits are more likely to hold up both monsters and imbued to the same standards — often with disappointing results for both. They don't like what the creatures have done, but view the reactions of their more extreme colleagues with equal disdain, and frequently hold the opinion that both sides are little better than squabbling children with frightening powers. Many of these Hermits started out with a very cynical view of humanity to begin with, although a few have simply arrived at the conclusion that judging both sides equally is the only way to develop a clear and unbiased picture of the situation. In either case, this neutrality can also draw negative attention from hotheads on both sides, which moderates must be quite careful to avoid if they don't wish to wind up being used as an example for what happens to "traitors" on one side or another.

Liberal — Liberal Hermits question the motives of the Heralds directly, often viewing deliberately removing themselves from the imbued community (although not necessarily from the hunt itself) as a necessary measure to protect their free will from the alien control of the Messengers. Some were dedicated atheists who resent the divine imperative that the Heralds seem to represent, while others are natural malcontents who don't deal well with orders of any kind, but all of them agree that blindly following the directives of mysterious beings is an unacceptable course of action, especially given the murky motives and inscrutable entities they encounter on the hunt. Depending on their point of view and their experience with creatures in the past, they may decide to try to contact these so-called "monsters" on a regular basis to learn more about them, or they may continue the hunt "on their own terms," but regardless of what they choose to do they take great pains to ensure that it is what they wish to do, not an order from some controlling presence using them as its plaything.

Starting Conviction: 3



Chapter Three: Character Creation and Traits

A year ago, Seth never would have considered himself capable of breaking into a house; six months ago, he never would have imagined he would ever be any good at it. Now it was a skill that came only too naturally to him, and he cursed the Voices for making him develop it even as he thanked his own natural aptitude for picking it up so quickly. He parked his car on a crowded side street a block and a half away from the house, where Scott and Mae were already waiting for him, and the three of them watched silently as Tim's car pulled in down the street, and the young man known in another life as "chemist105" hurried as inconspicuously as possible toward them.

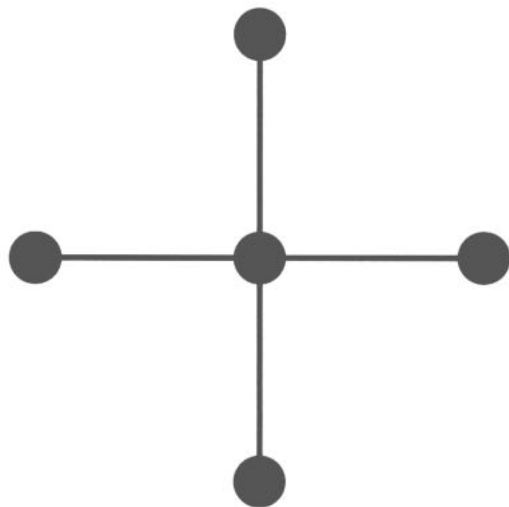
Their plan, finished over Lucy's coffee table only a few hours ago, was much the same as the others had been: Seth, Tim, Scott and Mae would go into the house and try to destroy the presence lurking within. Although initially included, Feline had begged off at the last minute; a family crisis had come up, and she needed to see her parents, so they had been forced to go ahead without her. In addition, Scott had objected to the violent focus of the plan, arguing that they should try talking to the creature first, but he had eventually agreed with Seth and the others that the evidence overwhelmingly suggested that this spirit was beyond redemption. It was the one subject the two siblings often disagreed on; Mae was usually quick to push for the expulsion and destruction of the creatures they encountered, while Scott generally pushed for less violent solutions. Seth never told the others, but deep down he felt as though it was his purpose to defend people like Melissa from what they could not see... most likely by dying in the process.

Meanwhile, Lucy would stay outside in her own car with a police scanner and a cell phone to warn them in case they were spotted and someone called the police. That had only happened once so far, two months ago when they were attempting to destroy a bloodsucker in his haven, and the narrowness of their escape had convinced them to never be so sloppy again. If everything went well this time, they would head into the house, destroy the spirit and head back out to their cars, taking care to stagger their departure so they didn't attract suspicion. If not, well... his last hospital stay had lasted three agonizing weeks, and he didn't think another excuse about a bad fall and a broken glass would cover up another set of broken bones and suspicious gashes.

At Seth's direction they walked down the street and went around behind the house, cutting through the dark yard until they were hidden among the trees behind Melissa's house. He heard Scott swear softly; she'd left the light over her back door on. By contrast, the windows were dark and quiet, like wide open staring eyes. "We'll be lit up like high noon," Scott muttered, and behind him he heard Mae and Tim shift uneasily. They were both carrying "weapons," Tim the shovel that he'd had since his first encounter with the monsters, Mae a heavy wrench that the Voices had taught her to coax into flame and would draw even more attention if they were spotted.

"There's no way around it," he said, shaking his head. "We'll just have to do it fast." The others nodded, and together they moved to the door, Tim and Mae falling slightly behind in a protective posture. Seth knelt down by the door, plying his homemade lockpick as fast as he could; fortunately, the lock was as old as the house, and she hadn't had time to install a more modern security system. With a last *click*, the door eased open at his touch. "We're in."

A cold breeze blew back out at them, and Scott almost hesitantly clicked on his flashlight. The circle of light it cast looked lonely and small in the darkness, as though afraid to be the first thing to set foot in the house. The group waited for what felt like a full minute, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, dreading everything, before finding their courage and filing quietly inside, shutting the door behind them.



Without characters, there can be no game. Each player takes on the role of a character, a persona within the context of the game. To guarantee that all players use the same potentials and capabilities for their characters, the rules of *Mind's Eye Theatre* provide a single simple set of guidelines for character creation.

Quick Character Creation Process

- **Step One: Inspiration — Who are you?**
 - Choose a concept.
 - Choose a creed.
 - Choose a Nature and a Demeanor.
- **Step Two: Attributes — What are your basic capabilities?**
 - Prioritize Attributes (six primary, four secondary and three tertiary).
 - Choose Traits.
- **Step Three: Advantages — What do you know?**
 - Choose five Abilities.
 - Choose five Backgrounds.
- **Step Four: Last Touches — Fill in the details.**
 - Assign three Virtue Traits.
 - Record starting Willpower Traits (2).
 - Record starting Conviction (based on creed).
 - Choose edges (based on Virtues).
 - Choose Negative Traits and Flaws (if any).
 - Choose a Derangement (Storyteller permission only).
 - Spend five (or more) Free Traits and choose Merits (if any).
- **Step Five: Spark of Life — Narrative descriptions**

Step One: Inspiration

Arguably the most important step in character creation is the formation of the basic concept. Every hunter was once a regular person, with hopes, fears, dreams and ambitions all her own — such ideals and values don't just vanish overnight, even with the realization that monsters are real. (Indeed, if anything most of them probably seem more vital to her now than ever before.) After the imbuing, a character brings her particular outlook to her new life; even if you decide that her new role has forced her to cast aside all she once was and start over, it's still only a startling change of heart if you understand what she was like to begin with. All of these strengths and weaknesses shape the character's Traits, capabilities and limitations.

The first step in creating a character is to come up with a basic idea of the person. This initial concept can usually be summed up in a single word — scholar, drifter, dilettante, laborer. Don't worry about details now; think more in terms of broad brushstrokes. Create the regular person she once was, before you start worrying about the hunter who sees the monsters lurking in the shadows of the world. Once you know where they came from, you'll have a better idea of where they're going (and what they'll do along the way).

Creed

Creeds are not formal organizations in any way, but rather a label used to get an idea of how the hunter views the supernatural, the Heralds and her own role in the war she's been drafted into. Thus, they are a philosophy at heart more than anything else, but also the motivations and ideals that guide a hunter's hand as she moves into action, whether it's to reach out to the creatures of the night or destroy them altogether. Creeds receive much more attention in their own chapter, which begins on p. 34, but a brief summary of their views and values can be found here:

Creeds

- **Defense** — Winning the war means nothing if everything you're fighting for is lost along the way. *Defenders* seek to protect what they can from the ravages of the war, if only to convince themselves the struggle is all worthwhile.

Virtue: *Zeal*. **Starting Conviction:** 3

- **Innocence** — Don't be too quick to deal out death and judgment, and don't take anything for granted, especially with such an unknown group as monsters. *Innocents* know that in the chaos of the hunt there has to be someone checking to make sure that everyone is still human and still doing the right thing.

Virtue: *Mercy*. **Starting Conviction:** 3

- **Judgment** — War consists of one difficult decision after another; *Judges* volunteer for this grim duty, deciding which creatures are worth sparing and even going so far as to question the actions and motives of their fellow imbued when necessary.

Virtue: *Zeal*. **Starting Conviction:** 3

- **Martyrdom** — Some must suffer that others might remain untouched by the corruption of the monsters. All hunters make sacrifices, but *Martyrs* do it without question or hesitation, and gladly leap in harm's way to save another; their suffering validates the actions they take.

Virtue: *Mercy*. **Starting Conviction:** 4

- **Redemption** — Within even the most debased creatures exists the possibility of salvation. *Redeemers* help any creatures who truly seek aid for their fallen state, but don't hesitate to destroy those monsters that revel in their evil nature.

Virtue: *Mercy*. **Starting Conviction:** 3

- **Vengeance** — Only one option exists to secure the freedom of humanity: total destruction of the enemy. *Avengers* don't always begin their efforts with violence, but are more than willing to finish them that way if they must.

Virtue: *Zeal*. **Starting Conviction:** 4

- **Visionary** — Skeptical of easy answers and interested in the deeper questions about their new existence, *Visionaries* are also the most likely of the imbued to plan for the long-term as opposed to simple day-to-day survival.

Virtue: *Vision*. **Starting Conviction:** 3

The Lost Creeds

Though they are only starting to gain recognition as more than just a scattered number of disturbed imbued, evidence is surfacing that there are two whole creeds whose imbuing invariably drives them mad in a similar fashion. Perhaps these so-called “lost creeds” were meant to play specific roles in hunter society, but their true purpose has been obscured by the madness the Heralds inflicted on them. Given their warped natures, the mere presence of one of these imbued can change whole games, and so these creeds are *not* available to players without explicit Storyteller permission.

Likewise, their particular quirks are established at their imbuing and cannot be changed thereafter, so a member of one of these creeds cannot change creeds later on, nor can a follower of another creed change to one of these creeds. Like it or not, the accident of their imbuing has marked them as different forever.

- **Deviance** — Shattered by an overwhelming barrage of images of violence and bloodshed from the Heralds, all *Waywards* are sociopathic loners and relentless stalkers, a danger to creature, hunter and normal human alike.

Virtue: *Vision*. **Starting Conviction:** 4

- **Isolation** — For some poor souls the barrage of visions and voices from the Heralds never quiets; these *Hermits* shun the company of their fellow imbued, tormented by otherworldly information they can't understand.

Virtue: *Vision*. **Starting Conviction:** 3

Nature and Demeanor

To define a character's personality, choose a particular archetype. Each archetype lists an underlying motivation, a reason for a character to behave in specific ways. The archetypes described here are by no means the final list of personalities; Storytellers can suggest and approve any further numbers of archetypes.

A character's Nature is her innermost persona, the true basis of her motives. Though many people bury their desires behind facades, the drives of the Nature often shine through. Since the character's Nature is a result of her upbringing and life experiences, Nature rarely changes. It takes extraordinary events to cause someone to change Natures.

By contrast, the Demeanor is the public face, the one a character shows to everyone else. Even if radically at odds with the character's Nature, the Demeanor provides a convenient mask against intrusion. Demeanors are subject to change at whim; some characters may change Demeanors like some people change socks, while others may choose a single face to present to the world. On occasion, Nature and Demeanor may be the same, but given the paranoia that many hunters feel after their imbuing, few are comfortable being that open with those around them.

Archetypes

Analyst, Architect, Autocrat, Bon Vivant, Bravo, Caregiver, Celebrant, Child, Conformist, Conniver, Crusader, Curmudgeon, Director, Dreamer, Eccentric, Engine, Evangelist, Explorer, Fanatic, Gallant, Gambler, Nonpartisan, Paragon, Penitent, Perfectionist, Provider, Rebel, Rogue, Soldier, Stoic, Survivor, Teacher, Traditionalist, Trickster

Step Two: Attributes

Natural capabilities use Attributes for descriptions. Every character has certain innate qualities. Attributes describe these qualities, marking a character's particular areas of intrinsic talent.

Choosing Attributes

Each character has areas of modest skill and other areas of excellence. You determine your character's natural talents, selecting whether your character is to be physically adroit, mentally agile or socially adept. The character's concept should guide these choices, so an actor is probably socially versatile while a thuggish criminal probably has more physical development than mental.

- **Physical Attributes** measure your character's general health, stamina, agility and power. A character with modest Physical Attributes is probably not very athletic, while a character with high Physical Attributes is exceptionally strong, dexterous or tough.

- **Social Attributes** determine the force of a character's personality and ability to interact well with others. If your character has few Social Traits, she may be awkward, uninspired or just plain-looking. A socially potent character is attractive, compelling or smooth.

- **Mental Attributes** help in problem-solving, learning, deduction and general alertness. With limited Mental Attributes, a character is not particularly well-educated, quick-thinking or perceptive. A strongly Mental character is conversely intuitive, logical or attentive.

Choose the priority of your character's attributes. Each character is stronger in some areas than in others, at least at first. Obviously, concept and creed shape these attributes to some degree, but only a broad outline is needed in this step.

Choosing Traits

Once you've decided upon your character's inherent strengths, you should describe exactly the sorts of exceptional characteristics possessed. In your primary area of attribute development, choose six Traits; in your secondary, choose four; in your tertiary area, select three Traits. Traits are adjectives describing the character, just like the descriptions in a novel or play. Thus, a highly Social character might be more *Witty*

Attributes

- **Physical Traits:** *Agile, Brawny, Brutal, Dexterous, Enduring, Ferocious, Graceful, Lithe, Nimble, Quick, Resilient, Robust, Rugged, Stalwart, Steady, Tenacious, Tireless, Tough, Vigorous, Wiry*
- **Social Traits:** *Alluring, Beguiling, Charismatic, Charming, Commanding, Dignified, Diplomatic, Elegant, Eloquent, Empathetic, Expressive, Friendly, Genial, Gorgeous, Ingratiating, Intimidating, Magnetic, Persuasive, Seductive, Witty*
- **Mental Traits:** *Astute, Attentive, Clever, Creative, Cunning, Dedicated, Determined, Discerning, Disciplined, Insightful, Intuitive, Knowledgeable, Observant, Patient, Rational, Reflective, Resourceful, Shrewd, Vigilant, Wily, Wise*

than *Intimidating*, or a strong *Mental* character could be *Rational* and *Wise* but not exceptionally *Clever* or *Alert*.

A complete list of Traits starts on p. 99. Pick Traits that describe your character as if you wanted to write down the particular qualities of the individual. You can pick a particular Trait multiple times, if you like, to denote spectacular depth in an area.

Step Three: Advantages

These Traits record the special capabilities and resources of your character, from concrete things like cold hard cash and technical skill to more nebulous talents and holdings.

Choosing Abilities

Select five Abilities that represent your character's education and training. Whether learned in mortal days or honed during the imbuing, Abilities set your character apart by letting her attempt tasks that less skilled compatriots cannot understand or complete. You can choose an Ability multiple times, if desired, to show greater expertise, though you cannot have more than five levels of any one Ability. A complete list of Abilities starts on p. 108. Note that some Abilities, especially Expert Abilities, may be restricted by your Storyteller.

Choosing Backgrounds

You may take five Background Traits for your hunter. Each Background represents a tie to a particular agency, organization or resource, whether mortal or imbued. You can have up to five Traits in any single Background, though your Storyteller may prohibit certain Backgrounds based upon your concept, and most Storytellers will heavily scrutinize any Background above three Traits.

Background descriptions start on p. 121.

Step Four: Last Touches

The final character Traits come together once concept, creed, Backgrounds and Abilities are chosen. Since these Traits derive from the previous choices, mostly they are a matter of recording a certain number of Traits. Your last touches include Willpower Traits, Virtue Traits and Conviction Traits.

Willpower Traits

When all other avenues are exhausted, your Willpower measures your innate drive for self-preservation, your sense of mental fortitude and your ability to resist temptation and defeat. You can use Willpower Traits for a variety of tasks, like redoubling your efforts in a task or resisting supernatural coercion.

Abilities

Academics, Alertness, Awareness, Animal Ken, Athletics, Brawl, Computer, Crafts, Demolitions, Disguise, Dodge, Drive, Empathy, Endurance, Etiquette, Expression, Finance, Firearms, Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability, Intimidation, Intuition, Investigation, Law, Leadership, Linguistics, Medicine, Melee, Occult, Performance, Poison, Politics, Science, Security, Stealth, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Survival, Tactics, Torture, Traps

Backgrounds

- **Allies** — Mortal confederates and aides.
- **Arsenal** — Weapons and supplies for the hunt.
- **Berserk** — A fierce and destructive fighting rage.
- **Bystanders** — Associates who know the truth of the world.
- **Contacts** — Sources of reliable information.
- **Destiny** — A great (or terrible) fate awaits you.
- **Everyman** — Blending in with the mass of humanity.
- **Exposure** — Previous encounters with the supernatural.
- **Fame** — Outstanding reputation in regular society.
- **Fraternity** — Backing from a mysterious imbued patron.
- **Grace Under Pressure** — Steady reflexes in the face of danger.
- **Influence** — Sway over the institutions of mundane society in any number of areas: *Bureaucracy, Church, Espionage, Finance, Health, High Society, Industry, Legal, Media, Military, Occult, Police, Politics, Street, Transportation, Underworld or University.*
- **Iron Willed** — A capacity to ignore injuries for a limited time.
- **Mentor** — An older or more experienced imbued teacher.
- **Patron** — Regular visions and visitations from the Messengers.
- **Pawn** — A supernatural creature aids you... for its own reasons.
- **Resources** — Material wealth and ready access to cash.
- **Roots** — Deep ties with the local community.
- **Soulmate** — A true love who provides great emotional strength.
- **Steel Nerves** — Resistance to insanity and mundane horrors.

Each hunter begins with two Willpower Traits — a slight advantage over most ordinary people, but nowhere near some of the dread creatures of the night they battle against. You may choose to have a card for each Trait of Willpower you possess, and turn over the card to a Narrator or Storyteller when you expend Willpower.

Virtue Traits

All hunters follow the mission in their own way, but as a general rule, three distinct approaches to the hunt can be recognized

There are three Virtues a character can follow — *Mercy, Vision* and *Zeal* — and during character creation, a character receives three Traits to assign to his Virtues. The only requirement is that a character must always have an equal or greater number of Traits in her creed's primary Virtue than the others; aside from that, how she spends her Traits is up to the player.

Think carefully about how you assign your Virtue Traits, since not only do they tend to increase slowly during play, but more importantly they reflect your character's outlook on the hunt and how it evolves as the chronicle goes on.

Virtues

- **Mercy** — If monsters were once human, then that means there have to be some that can be saved from their awful fate. However, if only some can be saved, that also means that others are too far gone to be spared; these monsters must be destroyed to protect innocents on both sides.
- **Vision**—Life is a complicated and inscrutable thing, even before the imbuing; is it really wise to assume that one has all the answers when it comes to this strange new world? We must examine all of our assumptions and all of the evidence about our new lives that we can — only then can we plan for the long-term.
- **Zeal** — Sometimes you simply have to believe in a cause for its own sake, draw definite lines you will not cross and not accept half-measures or half-truths any longer. Some call this extreme, but you know that one must be willing to take a stand against things (or *things*) you know to be wrong if justice is to survive.

Edges

As a result of their imbuing, hunters soon find that they can develop mysterious powers, called edges. While some researchers among the imbued labor to find out what the exact source of these powers might be, most are simply glad to have them, even if they don't understand them. While hunters recognize no such distinctions, for game purposes edges are organized by paths, which in turn correspond to each of the creeds. Descriptions of each path and the various edges can be found in the edge chapter, which begins on p. 190.

Edges are “purchased” during character creation or after play begins with Virtue Traits; each edge costs an amount of Virtue Traits equal to its level, as outlined in the accompanying chart. Buying edges in this fashion does not actually lower a character's Virtues, but Virtue Traits that have been used to purchase an edge cannot be used to buy another edge as well — the hunter must raise the appropriate Virtue again if the player wishes to purchase an additional edge from that Virtue.

Edge Costs

Edge Level	Virtue Trait Cost	Virtue Traits Required	Level of Power
Touched	One	One	Basic
Gifted	Two	Three	Basic
Devoted	Three	Six	Intermediate
Inspired	Four	Ten	Intermediate
Exalted	Five	Special	Advanced

Edge Paths

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| • Defense Path | Powers of protection and offense, derived from the <i>Zeal</i> Virtue. |
| • Deviance Path | Powers of madness and slaughter, derived from the <i>Vision</i> Virtue. Available to members of the <i>Wayward</i> creed only. |
| • Innocence Path | Powers of inquiry and evasion, derived from the <i>Mercy</i> Virtue. |
| • Isolation Path | Powers of observation and communication, derived from the <i>Vision</i> Virtue. Available to members of the <i>Hermit</i> creed only. |
| • Judgment Path | Powers of perception and balance, derived from the <i>Zeal</i> Virtue. |
| • Martyrdom Path | Powers of sacrifice and retribution, derived from the <i>Mercy</i> Virtue. |
| • Redemption Path | Powers of healing and condemnation, derived from the <i>Mercy</i> Virtue. |
| • Vengeance Path | Powers of wrath and potency, derived from the <i>Zeal</i> Virtue. |
| • Visionary Path | Powers of insight and direction, derived from the <i>Vision</i> Virtue. |

Example: Andy is an Innocent, and during character creation he decides to assign all three of his Virtue Traits to Mercy. When the time comes to select edges, he immediately selects Hide, a Touched edge of the Innocence Path that he feels works well with his concept. That leaves him with two Mercy Traits left to spend on edges. If he likes, he can buy a Gifted edge of the Innocence Path (since he has met the requirement of having at least one Touched edge from that path — this would cost his remaining two Mercy Traits, but give him a fairly powerful edge to start with. Alternately, he could use his two remaining Traits to buy two more Touched edges from any of the paths derived from Mercy, provided that he doesn't take more edges in another path than he has in Innocence (since that is his creed's primary path). He could save one or both of the Traits to buy edges later, which is exactly what Andy does — not seeing any other edges that immediately jump out at him, he decides to hold on to both of his remaining Mercy Traits and see how things develop later on in the chronicle. Thus Andy begins play with three Mercy Traits and one Touched edge, with two Virtue Traits still free to be used later.

Negative Traits

Some characters have particular weaknesses or shortcomings. Others just never developed in some fashion, or suffered injuries that set back otherwise strong attributes. Such hindrances are represented with Negative Traits. Though Negative Traits are not required, they can represent a deficiency or injury in your character.

Since few people actually want to play a character with handicaps and problems, Negative Traits grant bonuses in other areas of character creation. Each Negative Trait taken is good for one Free Trait later. You may take up to five Negative Traits,

Negative Traits

- **Negative Physical Traits:** *Clumsy, Cowardly, Decrepit, Delicate, Docile, Flabby, Lame, Lethargic, Puny, Sickly*
- **Negative Social Traits:** *Callous, Condescending, Dull, Eerie, Haggard, Naïve, Obnoxious, Repugnant, Scarred, Shy, Tactless*
- **Negative Mental Traits:** *Forgetful, Gullible, Ignorant, Impatient, Oblivious, Predictable, Shortsighted, Squeamish, Submissive, Violent, Warped, Witless*

though you should not take more than three Negative Traits in any one attribute category without Storyteller permission.

Unlike other Attributes, you should only take Negative Traits from the list here. Although there are certainly other adjectives that would appropriately describe a character's drawbacks, nobody can be expected to guess a Trait that isn't covered in the rules.

Remember to take Negative Traits that you can roleplay accurately and well. As a rule of thumb, for each level you have of a particular Negative Trait, that deficiency should come up in some noticeable way once per session. This need not be melodrama or a game-stopping display, but perhaps a notable comment or some minor action in front of several other characters that makes your shortcomings in that respect fairly plain (at least to those who know what to look for). Likewise, the Storyteller may force you to "buy off" Negative Traits that you consistently ignore, as you're so obviously working to overcome them.

A complete listing of Negative Traits, and how they affect play, begins on p. 101.

Derangements

In addition to Negative Traits, you can choose derangements for your character. A derangement represents some sort of mental instability or neurotic behavior. Taking a derangement counts as two Negative Traits and thus grants you two Free Traits, but you can only take one derangement at character creation. Be warned, derangements cause unpredictable and uncontrollable behavior at times, and a Storyteller is justified in asking you to "buy off" any derangement that you do not roleplay accurately.

Remember that playing a derangement is an exercise in advanced roleplaying. Insanity is neither humorous nor light. You should always consult your Storyteller before deciding to take a derangement.

Derangements

Antisocial Disorder, Charmed Life Complex, Compulsive-Aggressive Disorder, Demophobia, Dissociation, Fugue, Hypochondria, Hysteria, Insomnia, Manic-Depression, Megalomania, Multiple Personalities, Obsession/Compulsion, Paranoia, Phobia, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Puppeteerism, Regression, Sadism, Schizophrenia

Choosing Flaws

Representing specific deficiencies or drawbacks aside from inherent weaknesses common to many people, Flaws showcase particular problems. As with Negative Traits, Flaws grant additional Traits to the user. Each Flaw is rated in terms of its value, ranging from one to seven Traits. The higher the value, the more debilitating the Flaw. A character may total up to seven Traits of Flaws and receive compensation for them; a player may take more Traits of Flaws than that, with Storyteller permission, but receives no Free Traits for them.

Flaws begin on p. 163, with the listings for Merits and Flaws.

Free Traits

Because no two imbued are alike, each character gets an allotment of Free Traits to spend on any area of development desired. If you want your character to be socially adept but also intelligent, for instance, you can use Free Traits to improve your Attributes so that you have a high number of Traits in both categories. You could decide to use Free Traits for extra Backgrounds if your character has strong connections to his community, or for Merits to reflect special advantages that she has.

Each character gets five Free Traits in this stage. Additional Free Traits are earned from Negative Traits, Flaws or Derangements taken earlier. One Negative Trait grants a single Free Trait; a Derangement is worth two Bonus Traits and Flaws have variable values listed individually.

- One Free Trait can be spent to take an additional Attribute Trait, up to a maximum of eight Attribute Traits in one category.
- One Free Trait allows for an additional Ability Trait.
- A single Free Trait allows you to declare a specialization in one Ability Trait. Remember that each Ability can only have one specialization, unless the Storyteller decides otherwise.
- One Free Trait converts to an additional Background Trait, though subject to normal Storyteller approval.
- One Free Trait buys an additional Conviction Trait, up to a maximum total of eight Conviction Traits for a starting character. This is a one time only purchase, and does not affect the character's starting Conviction for determining what he "resets" after buying Virtue Traits or between games.
- Three Free Traits allow for an extra Willpower Trait.
- Merits have a variable Free Trait cost, dependent upon the individual Merit.
- Virtues and edges *cannot* be purchased with Free Traits. Period.

Choosing Merits

The antithesis of Flaws, Merits represent special bonuses and capabilities beyond the norm. Each Merit is rated in terms of its Trait value. To take a Merit, you must expend Free Traits equal to the Merit's value. You can take no more than seven Traits of Merits, unless you receive special permission from the Storyteller to do so.

Merits start on p. 150, with the Merits and Flaws section.

Step Five: Spark of Life

Your character is more than a summation of Traits and adjectives. At this stage, take the concepts that you've emphasized and develop a story for your character. Look

for explanations to why the character learned certain things, failed in others and developed as she did. Think about the sort of person you're playing and the motives of the individual.

Longtime **Mind's Eye Theatre** players will doubtless note that this section is substantially more involved than usual. This is done quite deliberately, as paradoxically we've found that creating the kind of ordinary people that **Laws of the Reckoning** is about requires a bit more attention to background detail than what it takes to make a supernatural bad-ass of one kind or another.

- **Life Before the Call** — Think about the ordinary person your character was before the Heralds changed her forever. Where and when were you born? How were you raised? What was the neighborhood like? Did you fight for attention in a large family, or were you an only child who couldn't escape the spotlight? What were your childhood dreams? Who were your friends, and how did you meet them? Do you still see them, or have you grown apart? What sort of education did you have, if any? Did you feel that you had a "calling" before the imbuing, or were you drifting in search of a purpose? Were there any particularly spectacular successes, failures, romances or business ventures in your life?
- **The Imbuing** — In some games, the imbuing will take place during play, but if it doesn't it is up to you to determine what happened during your imbuing. (Remember to run it by your Storyteller before finalizing it, since she may have additional required themes or plot hooks to insert into it as well.) As it is the single most influential event in the character's new life, it's best to sit down and spend as much time as possible figuring out the details of this mysterious and often frightening time. How the Messengers first revealed themselves to a character and what her first interaction with monsters was like not only helps determine her creed, but also has an immeasurable impact on how she comes to view the hunt, the "enemy" and even her fellow imbued as well. Where were you when the Heralds announced themselves? How did they make themselves known? Did you fight the monsters you saw? Talk to them? Watch and wait from a distance? Were other people imbued as well? Did some of them fail? Was anyone hurt? Did anyone die? Were the authorities involved, and if so, did you come to their attention? Did it leave you feeling inspired, confused or (it happens) reluctant about your new life?
- **The Mission** — Life didn't end at the imbuing, much as a character might sometimes wish it had. How has your character adapted to the hunt? Do you feel empowered, your eyes open to the truth for the first time? Or do you feel more cursed than blessed, drafted into a war you wanted no part of from the beginning? Was it the change you've been hoping for all his life, or has it threatened to ruin the wonderful career you've worked so hard to build? Of course, there's also the enemy as well: What are your feelings about monsters? Their origins? Their motivations? And what about the Heralds? Does you consider them blessed saviors of humanity, cruel tormentors, disinterested researchers or something else entirely?
- **Inherit the Earth** — Of course, a hunter doesn't just deal with mysterious creatures and abstract Heralds on her own; most imbued quickly find others of their kind, and fitting into this whole new society presents its own benefits, problems and questions. Take a moment to figure out the extent of how much your character interacts with other imbued and deals with hunter society in general. Do you log onto hunter-net often? Are you looking to run with a group, or do you prefer to keep to yourself most of the time? If you are part of a group already, how did you meet and why have you stayed together? What are your feelings about the other creeds and their adherents?

Your own creed members? Have you made any special allies, on the hunter-net or in person? Have you made any enemies? If you have trouble figuring out why your hunter would show up in the game, much less play nicely with the other characters you find there, ask a Narrator or Storyteller to help with a couple of possible motives.

- **Ethics and Ideals** — While a character's choice of creed weighs heavily on some of these answers, there can be a surprising variety in the responses even within the same creed. After all, even a frothing Avenger might have sworn never to kill women or children (monstrous or not), and an otherwise harmless Innocent might react with surprising ruthlessness if a monster messes with one of her close friends. Whether they are explicitly stated or just intuitively recognized, everyone has some code of ethics they live by, however noble or self-serving it might be. What are your moral boundaries? What acts are justified by your beliefs? What acts aren't? What would you never do (or at least do you hope you never have to do)? Do you have a rigid code of beliefs, or are you more flexible, judging things on a case-by-case basis? Are there some commonly accepted moral beliefs or ethical systems that you object to? That you wish more people supported? Have you ever crossed your own lines in the past? When? Why?
- **Appearance** — Some hunters manage to keep up an appearance of normalcy, while others abandon all pretense of their former lives in favor of what is needed for the hunt. Live-action offers a unique chance to convey a character concept on a level that's hard to come by in other formats, so take advantage of it! Just by thinking a bit about their character and how best to present their unique traits to others, a player can use costuming and mannerisms to portray a believable character on every level from his vocal tone and his body posture right down to his favorite shirt or lucky socks. How he stands, walks, holds a drink or dresses will be one of the things that other characters will remember him by.
- **Equipment** — Your character's *Backgrounds of Resources* and *Influence* may grant access to certain pieces of special gear. Whether you have a leather jacket, a handgun or a wad of cash, you should talk to your Storyteller to make sure that your character's gear is accounted for. You can have a card for each special item that you carry, representing the object in question (especially for weapons, armor and other conspicuous devices that you shouldn't be lugging around in real life).
- **Quirks** — Everybody has distinctive behaviors. Anything from a habit of saying "For the love of Mike!" to cackling instead of laughing to pulling your lip when you're concentrating — such a mannerism serves to show off your character's uniqueness. A quirk might even be used to distinguish you when in disguise — or its absence might warn your comrades if a monster has taken control of your mind somehow.

Archetypes

Each archetype describes an essential form of personality. Though a character is more than a simple set of drives, an archetype provides a basic springboard from which the character's motives and behaviors can develop. An archetypal Nature shows the underlying elements making up a personality, while archetypal Demeanor is the face the character shows to the world around him.

In game play, a character's Nature archetype serves to provide a framework for setting concrete goals and codes of behavior. However, if someone discovers your character's Nature, it can be used against you to force a Social Challenge if the opponent tries to convince you to do something in line with your Nature.

Example: Jimmy has Penitent as his Nature, since he has never forgiven himself for his part in the accident that killed his girlfriend. Faced with a weeping rot that swears it's merely trying to right a past wrong, Jimmy wants to destroy the creature anyway, but his teammate Chris thinks it should be spared instead. As they have been close friends for a while, Chris has learned what Jimmy's Nature is, and realizes now how it might be used to help him relate to another being seeking atonement. When their debate starts to break down, Chris calls for a Social Challenge on the grounds of Jimmy's Penitent Nature, forcing Jimmy to bid two Traits if he wants to contest the challenge. Jimmy relents instead and wearily agrees that maybe even a monster deserves a second chance sometimes.

Once per session, a character may also use his Nature to call for one retest on a related challenge, as he calls upon the very core of his personality to give him strength to succeed. However, this is best done sparingly indeed, as he must use his Nature as his bid — "I'm too much of a *Bravo* to back down from you!" thus giving his enemy a valuable piece of information that might be used against him in the future. Unless otherwise noted or given Storyteller approval, this retest cannot be used on edge-related tests.

- **Analyst** — Anything can be understood with the right information, and you tackle the unknown with reason and curiosity.
- **Architect** — You hope to leave a lasting legacy, to build something for the future.
- **Autocrat** — You want to take charge, since nobody else can do the job right.
- **Bon Vivant** — Only a good time can assuage your otherwise empty existence.
- **Bravo** — Other people only get in your way of doing things, and you do not hesitate to bully them into line.
- **Caregiver** — You protect and comfort others.
- **Celebrant** — You find joy springs from your overriding passion.
- **Child** — You need others to nurture and help you.
- **Conformist** — You take the lead and the cues from someone else, letting others handle the responsibility.
- **Conniver** — There's no point to doing it yourself when you can get someone else to put in the effort.
- **Crusader** — You have a clear vision of the world as a better place, and try to affect this change through action and example.
- **Curmudgeon** — Nothing's perfect, everything sucks and you're going to make sure that everybody knows it.
- **Director** — You feel an overriding need to impose order around yourself.
- **Dreamer** — You live in a world of art and ideals, and aspire to share your creative visions with others.
- **Eccentric** — Considered bizarre by others, you know that predictability is the true enemy, and strive to live by your own rules and in your own style.
- **Engine** — Once you have your sights set on something, nothing distracts you, nothing stops you, nothing gets under your skin until you achieve your goal.
- **Evangelist** — Not only do you live for your cause, but you take great joy in showing others the beauty of it as well.
- **Explorer** — You search for the new and unknown, and are forever looking for a new and better way of doing things.
- **Fanatic** — One cause, one truth, one purpose — you serve and proselytize with absolute conviction.

- **Gallant** — Everything you do is geared toward flamboyance and excess, since you need the attentions of those around you.
- **Monster** — You delight in wicked and sadistic acts of all kinds, and think nothing of using and abusing others on the slightest whim.
- **Nonpartisan** — You take what you are given for what it is in itself, without outside prejudices clouding the issue.
- **Paragon** — You live by strong moral and ethical principles, and deal with others in an honest and straightforward manner.
- **Penitent** — You have sinned, and cannot rest until you atone for it.
- **Perfectionist** — You do everything with wholehearted zeal aimed at immaculate completion; there's no excuse for flawed efforts.
- **Provider** — You work hard to give a good life to your family (real or adopted), and ask only that you receive some recognition in return.
- **Rebel** — Whether from habit or drive, you lash out at the system and try to break it down.
- **Rogue** — First and foremost, you look out for number one.
- **Solider** — Armed with competence and determination, you face challenges head on and do your best to see your companions through as well.
- **Stoic** — You take life in stride, and seldom let your emotions show.
- **Survivor** — Nothing stops you, for your drive to pull through is indomitable.
- **Teacher** — Everyone can learn from your example and experiences; you were born to instruct others.
- **Traditionalist** — The old ways are the best ways, so you preserve and protect them even in light of your new existence.
- **Trickster** — Existence is fundamentally absurd, so you fill it with humor and irreverence to avoid looking too deeply at the pain.

Attributes (Bidding Traits)

The Traits that describe your character's innate capabilities are called Attributes. These Attributes are used in the game to perform actions and overcome obstacles. While certain situations may also require Abilities, such matters are a function of training. Even with the appropriate training, you must call upon your own strengths to finish the tasks set before you.

When you enter a situation with a questionable outcome, you bid a Trait appropriate to the challenge. If you are trying to knock someone over, for instance, you might bid the Physical Trait *Brawny* as you use your strength. The nature of the challenge determines the Trait used — Physical, Social or Mental.

You should try to bid a Trait appropriate to the nature of each given challenge. That is, using your strength may call upon the *Brawny* Trait but not the *Dexterous* Trait. If you and your opponent agree, you can use other Traits, but in general, choose Traits fitting to the challenge.

Remember, when you bid a Trait for a challenge, you risk that particular Trait. If you fail the challenge, you may temporarily lose the use of the Trait, as you exhaust your resources and lose your confidence. Some situations may require the use of an additional Trait or more — any time that you are considered "bids down," you must risk additional Traits. Conversely, if you are listed as "Traits up" or "Traits down," you modify your current number of Traits when comparing for overbids or ties.

For the purposes of determining what kinds of Traits are appropriate to specific challenges, the Trait listings include a run-down of what sorts of Traits fit into what specialized categories. For example, the Physical Trait *Resilient* is appropriate for resisting physical torture, because it is a Stamina-related Trait. Of course, you can ignore these categories if you wish, in favor of speeding up the game. Remember, unique situations may allow Traits to be used in unusual ways.

New players may find it easier to bid a generic Trait from the appropriate pool instead of picking a specific one. This allows them time to get the hang of the system. When they're more comfortable with bidding, then start having them choose specific Traits.

Trait Maximums

As hunters soon become painfully aware in their encounters with the supernatural, there are definite limits to human potential — while certain edges, Merits or other Traits may temporarily raise a hunter over these ratings, in no instance may they permanently acquire more Traits in one category than their listed limit. Thus, a 23-year-old hunter may not have more than 12 Traits in any one Attribute category, while a 16-year-old character is limited to nine Traits in any of the categories. These maximums apply equally to hunters, bystanders and regular people; after all, as edges and the sight have repeatedly borne out, the imbued are still essentially no different from ordinary folks.

It should be noted that the Trait maximums are grouped not out of ageism, but from the philosophy that the very young have not yet developed their full potential, and while older people may have a wealth of experience behind them (usually represented with high Abilities, Backgrounds and Willpower ratings), they often do not have the same immediate faculties of younger individuals. Naturally, Storytellers are free to adjust these maximums as they see fit — for example, if they want a game centered around older or younger characters than normal — but remember that these limits have been created for the sake of game balance and realism as well, so take according care before modifying them.

Trait Maximums	
Character Age	Trait Maximum
Young (13-19):	9
Peak (20-65):	12
Old (65+):	6

Physical Traits

Strength-related:	<i>Brawny, Ferocious, Stalwart, Tough, Wiry</i>
Dexterity-related:	<i>Dexterous, Graceful, Lithe, Nimble, Quick</i>
Stamina-related:	<i>Enduring, Resilient, Robust, Rugged, Tireless</i>
Miscellaneous Physical:	<i>Agile, Brutal, Energetic, Steady, Tenacious, Vigorous</i>
Agile:	You have a well-honed and flexible body. You can bend, twist, run and jump with ease. Uses: Acrobatics. Athletics. Competitive events. Dodging.
Brawny:	Bulky, muscular strength.

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	Uses: Punching, kicking or grappling in combat when your goal is to inflict damage. Power lifting. All feats of strength.
Brutal:	You are capable of taking nearly any action in order to survive. Uses: Fighting an obviously superior enemy. Settling a score.
Dexterous:	General adroitness and skill involving the use of one's hands. Uses: Weapon-oriented combat (<i>Melee</i> or <i>Firearms</i>). Pickpocketing. Punching.
Enduring:	A persistent sturdiness against physical opposition. Uses: When your survival is at stake, this is a good Trait to risk as a second, or successive, bid.
Energetic:	A powerful force of spirit. A strong internal drive propels you and, in physical situations, you can draw on a deep reservoir of enthusiasm and zeal. Uses: Combat.
Ferocious:	Possession of brutal intensity and extreme physical determination. Uses: Any time that you intend to do serious harm.
Graceful:	Control and balance in the motion and use of the entire body. Uses: Combat defense. Whenever you might lose your balance.
Lithe:	Characterized by flexibility and suppleness. Uses: Acrobatics, gymnastics, dodging and dancing.
Nimble:	Light and skillful; able to make agile movements. Uses: Dodging, jumping, rolling, acrobatics. Hand-to-hand combat.
Quick:	Speedy, with fast reaction time. Uses: Defending against a surprise attack. Running, dodging, attacking.
Resilient:	Characterized by strength of health; able to recover quickly from bodily harm. Uses: Resisting adverse environments. Defending against damage in an attack.
Robust:	Resistant to physical harm and damage. Uses: Defending against damage in an attack. Endurance-related actions that could take place over a period of time.
Rugged:	Hardy, rough and brutally healthy. Able to shrug off wounds and pain to continue struggling. Uses: When resisting damage, any challenge that you enter while injured.
Stalwart:	Physically strong and uncompromising against opposition. Uses: Resisting damage, or when standing your ground against overwhelming odds or a superior foe.

Steady:	More than simply physically dependable: controlled, unfaltering and balanced. You have firm mastery over your efforts. Uses: Weapon attacks. Fighting in exotic locations.
Tenacious:	Physically determined through force of will. Uses: Second or subsequent Physical Challenge.
Tireless:	You have a runner's stamina — you are less taxed by physical efforts than ordinary people. Uses: Any endurance related challenge, second or subsequent Physical Challenge with the same foe or foes.
Tough:	A harsh, aggressive attitude and a reluctance to ever submit. Uses: Whenever you're wounded or winded.
Vigorous:	A combination of energy, power, intensity and resistance to harm. Uses: Combat and athletic challenges when you're on the defensive.
Wiry:	Tight, streamlined, muscular strength. Uses: Punching, kicking or grappling on combat. Acrobatic movements. Endurance lifting.

Negative Physical Traits

Clumsy:	Lacking physical coordination, balance and grace. You are prone to stumbling and dropping objects.
Cowardly:	In threatening situations, saving your own neck is all that is important. You might even flee when you have the upper hand, just out of habit. This is a Physical Trait because it most often applies to physical danger.
Decrepit:	You move and act as if you are old and infirm. You recover from damage slowly, are unable to apply full muscular strength and tire easily.
Delicate:	Frail and weak in structure; you are easily damaged by physical harm.
Docile:	The opposite of the <i>Ferocious</i> and <i>Tenacious</i> Traits; you lack physical persistence and tend to submit rather than fight long battles.
Flabby:	Your muscles are underdeveloped. You cannot apply your strength well against resistance.
Lame:	You are disabled in one or more limbs. The handicap can be as obvious as a missing leg or as subtle as a dysfunctional arm.
Lethargic:	Slow and drowsy. You suffer from a serious lack of energy or motivation.
Puny:	You are weak and inferior in strength. This could mean diminutive size.
Sickly:	Weak and feeble. Your body responds to physical stress as if it were in the throes of a debilitating illness.

Social Traits

Charisma-related:	<i>Charismatic, Charming, Dignified, Eloquent, Expressive, Genial</i>
Manipulation-related:	<i>Beguiling, Commanding, Ingratiating, Persuasive</i>
Appearance-related:	<i>Alluring, Elegant, Gorgeous, Magnetic, Seductive</i>
Miscellaneous Social:	<i>Diplomatic, Empathetic, Intimidating, Friendly, Witty</i>
Alluring:	An attractive and appealing presence that inspires desire in others. Uses: Seduction. Convincing others.
Beguiling:	The skill of deception and illusion. You can twist the perceptions of others and lead them to believe what suits you. Uses: Tricking others. Lying under duress.
Charismatic:	The talent of inspiration and motivation, the sign of a strong leader. Uses: In situations involving leadership or the achievement of leadership.
Charming:	Your speech and actions make you appear attractive and appealing to others. Uses: Convincing. Persuading.
Commanding:	Impressive delivery of orders and suggestions. This implies skill in the control and direction of others. Uses: When you are seen as a leader.
Dignified:	Something about your posture and body carriage appears honorable and aesthetically pleasing. You carry yourself well. Uses: Defending against Social Challenges.
Diplomatic:	Tactful, careful and thoughtful in speech and deed. Few are displeased with what you say or do. Uses: Very important in intrigue. <i>Leadership</i> situations.
Elegant:	Refined tastefulness. Even though you don't need money to be elegant, you exude an air of wealth and high society. Uses: High society parties. Defending against Social Challenges.
Eloquent:	The ability to speak in an interesting and convincing manner. Uses: Convincing others. Swaying emotions. Public speaking.
Empathetic:	Able to identify and understand the emotions and moods of people with whom you come in contact. Uses: Gauging the feelings of others. Offering sympathy.
Expressive:	Able to articulate your thoughts in interesting, meaningful ways. Uses: Producing art of any kind. Acting. Performing. Any social situation in which you want someone to understand your meaning.

Friendly:	Able to fit in with everyone you meet. Even after a short conversation, most find it difficult to dislike you. Uses: Convincing others.
Genial:	Cordial, kindly, warm and pleasant. You are pleasing to be around. Uses: Mingling at parties. Generally used in a second or later Social Challenge with someone.
Gorgeous:	Beautiful or handsome. You were born with a face and body that is good-looking to most people you meet. Uses: Modeling, posing.
Ingratiating:	Able to gain the favor of people who know you. Uses: Dealing with high-powered people in a social situation. Defending against Social Challenges.
Intimidating:	A frightening or awesome presence that causes others to feel timid. This Trait is particularly useful when attempting to cow opponents. Uses: Inspiring common fear. Ordering others.
Magnetic:	People feel drawn to you; those around you are interested in your speech and actions. Uses: Seduction. First impressions.
Persuasive:	Able to propose believable, convincing and correct arguments and requests. Very useful when someone else is undecided on an issue. Uses: Persuading or convincing others.
Seductive:	Able to entice and tempt. You can use your good looks and your body to get what you want from others. Uses: Subterfuge, seduction.
Witty:	Cleverly humorous. Jokes and jests come easily to you, and you are perceived as a funny person when you want to be. Uses: At parties. Entertaining someone. Goadng or insulting someone.

Negative Social Traits

Callous:	You are unfeeling, uncaring and insensitive to the suffering of others — or at least it seems that way when others meet you.
Condescending:	You just can't help it; your contempt for others is impossible to hide, even for a short period of time.
Dull:	Those with whom you speak usually find you boring and uninteresting. Conversing with you is a chore. You do not present yourself well to others.
Eerie:	Real or imagined, something about your presence unnerves normal people and other hunters alike, and they don't spend time with you.
Haggard:	You've had too many late nights, missed meals and close calls since the hunt began, and it shows — you appear very seedy, unkempt and worn-out.

Naïve:	You lack the air of worldliness, sophistication or maturity that most carry.
Obnoxious:	You are annoying or unappealing in speech, action or appearance.
Repugnant:	Whether due to a congenital malformity or simply an extremely slovenly lifestyle, your appearance disgusts even most well-meaning people.
Scarred:	You bear prominent physical scars or other noticeable permanent injuries of some kind that are both memorable and disturbing to others.
Shy:	You are timid, bashful, reserved and socially hesitant, whether due to some previous trauma or just a natural inability to approach others.
Tactless:	You are unable to do or say things that others find appropriate to the social situation.
Untrustworthy:	You are rumored or perceived to be unreliable, whether or not you really are, and have a hard time getting others to open up to you.

Mental Traits

Perception-related:	<i>Attentive, Discerning, Insightful, Observant, Vigilant</i>
Intelligence-related:	<i>Cunning, Disciplined, Knowledgeable, Rational, Reflective</i>
Wits-related:	<i>Astute, Clever, Intuitive, Shrewd, Wily</i>
Miscellaneous Mental:	<i>Creative, Dedicated, Determined, Patient, Wise</i>
Astute:	Mentally prepared for danger and able to react quickly when it occurs. Uses: Preventing surprise attacks.
Attentive:	You pay attention to everyday occurrences around you. When something extraordinary happens, you are usually ready for it. Uses: Preventing surprise attacks.
Clever:	Quick-witted resourcefulness. You think well on your feet. Uses: Using a Mental Challenge against another.
Creative:	Your ideas are original and imaginative. This implies an ability to produce unusual solutions to your difficulties. You can create artistic pieces. A requirement for any true artist. Uses: Creating anything.
Cunning:	Crafty and sly, possessing a great deal of ingenuity. Uses: Tricking others.
Dedicated:	You give yourself over totally to your beliefs. When one of your causes is at stake, you stop at nothing to succeed. Uses: Useful in any Mental Challenge when your beliefs are at stake.
Determined:	When it comes to mental endeavors, you are fully committed. Nothing can divert your intentions to succeed once you have made up your mind.

Discerning:	Uses: Facedowns. Useful in a normal Mental Challenge. Discriminating, able to pick out details, subtleties and idiosyncrasies. You have clarity of vision.
Disciplined:	Uses: Investigation and tracking. Your mind is structured and controlled. This rigidity gives you an edge in battles of will.
Insightful:	Uses: Facedowns. Useful in a Mental Challenge. The power of looking at a situation and gaining an understanding of it.
Intuitive:	Uses: <i>Investigation</i> (but not defense against it). Knowledge and understanding somehow come to you without conscious reasoning, as if by instinct.
Knowledgeable:	Uses: Spontaneous deduction. You know copious and detailed information about a wide variety of topics. This represents "book-learning."
Observant:	Uses: Remembering information your character might know. Depth of vision, the power to look at something and notice the important aspects of it.
Patient:	Uses: Picking up on subtleties that others might overlook. Tolerant, persevering and steadfast. You can wait out extended delays with composure.
Rational:	Uses: Facedowns or other mental battles after another Trait has been bid. You believe in logic, reason, sanity and sobriety. Your ability to reduce concepts to a mathematical level helps you analyze the world.
Reflective:	Uses: Defending against emotion-oriented mental attacks. Defending against an aura reading. Not used as an initial bid. Meditative self-recollection and deep thought. The Trait of the serious thinker, <i>Reflective</i> enables you to consider all aspects of a conundrum.
Resourceful:	Uses: Meditation. Remembering information. Defending against most Mental Challenges. You work well with what you have on hand, whether in terms of projects and raw materials or people and problem-solving.
Shrewd:	Uses: Creating something, especially with limited means. Improvising on a test where you don't have what you normally need. Astute and artful, able to keep your wits about you and accomplish mental feats with efficiency and finesse.
Vigilant:	Uses: Defending against mental attacks. Alertly watchful. You have the disposition of a guard dog; your attention misses little.

Wily:

Uses: Defending against investigation. More appropriate for mental defense than for attack.

Sly and full of guile. Because you are wily, you can trick and deceive easily.

Uses: Tricking others. Lying under duress. Confusing mental situations.

Wise:

An overall understanding of the workings of the world.

Uses: Giving advice. Dispensing snippets of Zen.

Negative Mental Traits

Forgetful:

You have trouble remembering even important things.

Gullible:

Easily deceived, duped or fooled.

Ignorant:

Uneducated or misinformed, never seeming to know anything.

Impatient:

Restless, anxious and generally intolerant of delays. You want everything to go your way — immediately.

Oblivious:

Unaware and unmindful. You'd be lucky if you noticed an airplane flying through your living room.

Predictable:

Because you lack originality or intelligence, even strangers can easily figure out what you intend to do next.

Shortsighted:

Lacking foresight. You rarely look beyond the superficial; details of perception are usually lost on you.

Squeamish:

You have a weak stomach for the nastier parts of life. When faced with disturbing sights or unpleasant truths, you tend to lose your cool (or your lunch) and do anything you can to get away from the source of your discomfort.

Submissive:

No backbone; you relent and surrender at any cost rather than stand up for yourself.

Violent:

An extreme lack of self-control. You fly into rages at the slightest provocation, and a destructive fit of anger is never too far from the surface. This is a Mental Trait because it represents mental instability.

Warped:

Your experiences on the hunt have changed how you think so drastically that you have trouble relating to normal people and situations anymore. This is a Mental Trait because it relates to problem-solving.

Witless:

Lacking the ability to process information quickly. Foolish and slow to act when threatened.

Abilities

The particular bits of knowledge learned over the years, the tricks of the trade and the hard-won secrets of crafts are all Abilities. A character's Ability Traits represent special training or talent, and as such often allow performance of tasks that would be otherwise impossible. Even with more mundane situations, Abilities allow for a much-improved chance of success.

When a character performs a risky or uncertain action, Abilities aid the outcome. If you try a task and fail, you can temporarily expend one of your

appropriate Abilities, immediately gaining a retest. You lose the Ability used and the initial Trait(s) bid for the task (if any) because you lost the initial test, but you can still overcome the challenge. Abilities used like this are recovered at the next game session.

A character with multiple levels in a given Ability is certainly more experienced and proficient than an individual with just one. Most characters will fall into one to three levels of Ability; greater amounts are very rare, and anything beyond five levels is certainly superhuman (beware those elder monsters). The total level of Ability in a given field roughly corresponds to the character's professional capabilities, as illustrated in the accompanying chart.

Number of Traits	Level of Accomplishment
One Trait	Competent: Able to earn a living
Two Traits	Professional: Licensed, capable of supervision
Three Traits	Journeyman: Bachelor's degree or instructor
Four Traits	Expert: Master's degree or researcher
Five Traits	Master: Doctorate degree or true innovator

Some tasks are simply too difficult, or require too much skill to be attempted by a character without the requisite Abilities. The Storyteller may occasionally require the possession or use of an Ability Trait to perform a specific task. In this case, characters without the Ability, or who have already used all of their levels of the Ability, cannot attempt the task at all.

When an Ability is used against a set scenario or object (such as using *Security* to pick a lock), the feat usually has a difficulty assigned by the Storyteller. In such a Static Challenge, you may be required to risk a Trait for a trivial task, or even be asked to bid two or more Traits for a difficult, risky or frustrating undertaking.

Some Abilities can be used against an opponent instead of facilitating a regular task. In this case, the Ability is expended to gain a retest in a challenge with the opponent. See the rules for challenges and retests on p. 237 for complete details.

Focusing Abilities

A few Abilities specifically require a concentrated area of study. One cannot simply study all *Crafts* at once, after all. These Abilities are specifically noted in the descriptions. When you take such an Ability, you must choose an area of study, a specific topic that you have concentrated on. Each area is considered a separate Ability, so *Science: Biology* counts completely separately from *Science: Metallurgy*, for instance.

Ability Specializations

Within a given area of expertise, some practitioners further hone their knowledge to a razor's edge. By choosing a specialization in an Ability, you hone your skills with a particular facet of that talent.

Ability Specializations are a wholly optional rule. Remember to ask your Storyteller before taking a specialization.

Taking a specialization requires that you spend one Experience Trait or Free Trait on an Ability that you already have. Then, you can declare a particular specialization.

Whenever you perform a task with that specialization — even if you do not expend the Ability — you gain a one-Trait bonus on resolution of challenges, as long as you have at least one level of the Ability left. You may only have one specialization in any given Ability; you cannot take *Firearms: Pistols* and *Firearms: Rifles* together, for instance. You also can never gain more than one Bonus Trait at a time from specializations, even if more than one would be appropriate to a given challenge. That is, even if you have *Medicine: Physiology* and *Science: Biology Research*, you only get a one-Trait bonus on a test of biochemistry, despite your multiple specializations.

A specialization is a fairly narrow area of research or practice. You cannot, for instance, take a *Firearms* specialization in “guns,” nor could you have an *Occult* specialization of “writing.” An appropriate specialization refers to one small class of items or to one type of practice within the Ability, such as *Firearms: Antique Pistols* or *Occult: Superstitions*.

You may take a specialization in an Ability with an area of study. In such a case, you concentrate your research in one particular facet of that sub-Ability, or in one application of it. Thus, you could have *Craft: Woodworking* with a specialization in *Hidden Panels*, or *Science: Botany* with a specialization in *Exotic Flora*.

Note that the Bonus Trait from a specialization does not have an adjective and is not bid or used like other Traits. You simply are “one Trait up” on challenges within the specialization.

Example: *As an ex-military Avenger, Bishop is familiar with most types of guns, but he has especially extensive training with sniper rifles. He has the Ability: Firearms x 3 with the specialization: Sniper Rifles. When Bishop engages a foe in a firefight, he normally uses his six Mental Traits. With a sniper rifle, however, he has seven Mental Traits because of his intense training. Of course, if he gets tired out or wounded (loses several challenges), he may not have as many Traits, but as long as he has at least one level of his Firearms Ability left, he gets to add the one Bonus Trait to his remaining Mental Trait total.*

Academics

You possess a level of education and general knowledge beyond rudimentary schooling. With *Academics*, you can express artistic criticism, debate the classics, consider philosophy and indulge in studies of culture. This broad Ability covers all sorts of humanities in learning.

Academics allows you to recognize historical, art and cultural references. You can use *Academics* when working in such fields, when developing a critique or researching. Calling upon *Academics* Ability may require a Mental or Social Challenge to determine your exact level of competence.

You may further direct your studies by choosing a specific field, such as *Art Criticism*, *Classical Studies*, *History*, *Journalism*, *Theology* or anything else that could be studied with higher education.

Alertness

You're never caught unaware. You pay attention to your surroundings, and even if you aren't particularly perceptive, you've learned to pick up on subtle cues. The information of your senses is immediately processed for danger signs and unusual signals.

When you are Surprised, you may expend a Trait of *Alertness* to negate the Surprise. You may then respond normally, and can even activate reflexive edges or Conviction defense normally that turn.

"Your Mom Can Use a Flamethrower? Cool!"

Silly as that quote might sound, it's exactly the picture of a character that can develop if players get too carried away stocking up on "useful" Abilities like *Firearms* or *Security* and forget that the hunters they're creating were regular people until very recently. Chances are these new hunters had fairly ordinary jobs and hobbies before their imbuing, with Abilities to match, and even those who go through particularly bloody rites of passage don't automatically forget everything they once knew in favor of familiarizing themselves with specialized lockpicking skills and the expert use of every weapon made since the 12th century. Likewise, unless they are active military personnel or otherwise practice combat forms regularly, they're unlikely to have more than a Trait or two in any of the so-called "killing skills" — even if the *player* knows it would be helpful to have such Abilities, it doesn't mean they should bend their concept out of shape to fit in 60 hours a week at the rifle range and black belts in six martial arts.

In short, generally it's best to try to aim for balance between portraying what a character knew before the imbuing and what they have learned since. While he does not have to be completely helpless in combat (it's amazing how fast you learn when your life is on the line), it's generally best to start with an absolute minimum level of such skills and focus instead on how he uses what he already knows to further their hunting efforts. After all, anyone can fight zombies with nine years of ninja training and the ability to shoot a hole in a falling dime from a half mile away in perfect darkness, but it takes real courage to be willing to fight anyway when you've got little else except your determination to see you through.

Animal Ken

An imbued needn't rely only his fellow humans to help him on the hunt; with a bit of training many animals can be useful allies as well, from guard dogs to trained horses and beyond. What's more, a hunter with this talent can sometimes tell a natural animal from a supernatural spy or shapechanger just by observing its behavior, so in tune is he with the animals he studies.

With *Animal Ken*, you can train an animal to perform particular behaviors (stay, fetch, attack), calm an enraged animal or attempt to deduce an animal's state of being (injured, angry, frightened, etc.) with a Mental Challenge. If you work with an animal over a long period of time (generally a month or so), you may be able to teach it a simple trick, up to a limit of one trick for each Mental Trait the animal has.

Athletics

Whether due to a background in sports or just personal talent, you are skilled in all manner of athletic endeavors. You can throw a ball, sprint, climb, jump and swim.

Your *Athletics* Ability is used for retests on most forms of raw physical activity: acrobatics, swimming, jumping, throwing, climbing and running. You may choose to focus on something you do especially well.

Optional Rule: "Active Abilities"

This optional rule is designed to smooth out play and minimize the number of Static Challenges, as well as add an element of drama and risk to situations that are normally handled through some rather dry tests. Specifically, this rule covers different ways of handling two types of Abilities: detection skills such as *Awareness*, *Security* or *Traps*; and resisted skill pairs such as *Stealth/Alertness*.

Detection Skills: Instead of making a Static Challenge any time the player wishes to detect something through one of these Abilities, he must instead announce his intention to risk that particular Ability as he enters the area where he believes something related to it might be. If there is indeed something there for him to detect, he retains his level of that Ability and is alerted to the presence of the person or thing in the area — including allowing him to stop short of setting off a device or dangerous circumstance on the basis of such information. If there isn't anything there to warrant the Ability risk, however, that level of the Ability is considered spent for the rest of the session, thus discouraging hunters from risking Abilities at every turn lest they lose all of their levels on red herrings. For example, a hunter who believes a door might conceal some kind of booby trap could announce "Risking *Traps*" and open the door — if there is a trap there, he keeps his level of *Traps* and is considered to have noticed the trap before setting it off. If the door isn't trapped, however, the hunter loses the *Traps* level that he risked, the penalty for a bad guess.

Note that this does not replace the need for all Static Challenges — a character who detects a trap must still make a test to disarm it, while using *Awareness* to detect an unseen spirit before entering a room might still require a regular test to determine exactly where it is or how powerful its aura seems. Likewise, this rule does not apply to more in-depth skills such as *Academics* or *Enigmas*, only ones that might provide some kind of early warning. Ultimately, what Abilities can be risked in this fashion are up to the Storyteller, but she is encouraged to stress drama and mystery over simple Trait-maxing.

Resisted Skill Pairs: With these skills, the character initiating the action she wishes to get away with must announce the expenditure of an Ability Trait as she performs it; this Ability is considered spent, but unless another character also spends a level of an Ability that counteracts this use, he cannot react to it in any way. If an observer does have such a skill, it becomes a regular test of the appropriate type to see who prevails. For example, a character who wishes to peek around a corner without being caught may announce "Stealth!" as he pokes his head around the corner; if a guard spots him doing so, he may call out "Alertness!" and the two perform a regular test to see who prevails. Otherwise, those who see him should ignore it, as in-game they did not have the skill to catch such a stealthy character. Likewise, a character might spend a level of *Streetwise* to swipe an item from a table without being noticed, while onlookers could resist with *Alertness* or *Investigation*. This optional rule tends to burn through Abilities very quickly, but also offers a bit more realistic way of incorporating these Abilities in play without endless resisted challenges.

Obviously, the Storyteller is the final arbiter of which Abilities may be used as resisted skill pairs, and to avoid any misunderstandings she should make it clear which Abilities can and cannot be employed in this fashion

before play begins. Likewise, Narrators should take care that these Abilities are not abused in unrealistic ways if this optional rule is used — for example, it's one thing to cross a shadowy room unseen by calling out a few levels of *Stealth* to move from one area of cover to another, but players who try to employ *Stealth* to walk openly down the middle of lighted corridors should quickly be brought back in line. Additionally, it bears noting that this optional rule *never* applies to combat situations — such intense scenes are best left to regular game mechanics. However, when properly applied it can give players a bit more of an intimate way to look at their Abilities and how they work rather than simply throwing a few rock-paper-scissors tests.

Awareness

Although any hunter can summon the second sight to see the supernatural for what it really is, some have a knack for detecting the unnatural without the aid of Conviction... sometimes without paying it any particular attention at all. It should be noted that other imbued are *not* detected with this Ability, unless they are actively employing an edge, and even then it's the edge that's detected, not the fact that the person is a hunter.

A hunter may make a Mental Challenge to attempt to detect the presence of a supernatural person, place or object — success means that she gets a telltale impression of the unnatural from the target, and might even be able to make a guess as to the type of creature or magic involved if she has encountered one before. Narrators should remember that while this Ability can sometimes replace some of the need to activate second sight, especially for experienced hunters, it provides none of the associated protections that activating Conviction defense does. In addition, *Awareness* must be used against targets individually, while second sight is automatically effective along the hunter's line of sight. However, when used in combination they can be quite effective in alerting a hunter to hidden dangers or helping her conserve Conviction until it is truly needed.

Brawl

Back-alleys, martial arts schools and rough bars are your stomping ground. You might have military training, or maybe you just grew up with a passel of rough-and-tumble siblings. Whatever the case, you know how to dish out damage with your body in very effective ways.

Use the *Brawl* Ability for retests in combat when you are using your natural weapons (fists, feet, etc.). This Ability is also the province of the martial arts, although you must specify which art when taking this Ability.

Computer

One thing astute imbued pick up on as they hunt is that many monsters have difficulty adapting to modern inventions. As a result, an understanding of cutting-edge technology makes for dangerous knowledge in the hands of a clever hunter. With Computer Ability, you understand how to use, program and access computers of all sorts.

Use Computer with a Mental Challenge (difficulty determined by the Storyteller) to break into systems, alter data, write programs or figure out unfamiliar operations.

Crafts

You can build and repair things. Depending on your area of expertise, you know how to manufacture items and make handy tools or decorations. You must choose a focus for *Crafts*, specifying your form of creation: *Carpentry*, *Clockworks*, *Blacksmithing*,

Leatherworking and the like are all possibilities. You can fashion works of art, studying *Painting*, *Drawing* or similar physical media. *Crafts* also covers more technical skills done with labor, such as *Mechanics* and *Electronics*.

Making or repairing an item with *Crafts* usually involves a Physical Challenge of your dexterity, with difficulty set by the Storyteller based upon the type of job.

Demolitions

This Ability covers the knowledge to identify, build, place and disarm explosive devices of all kinds, from industrial dynamite charges to sophisticated military ordinance. A hunter may make a Mental Challenge to attempt to disarm any such devices she encounters, including booby-traps with explosive components. The difficulty of this test is based on the complexity of the device and the hunter's familiarity with the type of explosive in question.

She may also attempt to build and place such devices herself, provided she has sufficient time to work and access to the proper materials. All such attempts require a Mental Challenge as well, where the difficulty depends on type of device being created and/or the result the hunter is hoping to achieve with the explosion when she places it. Bear in mind that mere possession of bomb-making material or literature is a punishable crime in many countries, and even fairly ordinary explosives may be difficult or impossible for a regular citizen to obtain through legal channels. Of course, a hunter can always turn to less reputable sources for what she needs, but such shady dealings have risks of their own. (High levels of *Arsenal* and/or relevant *Influences* such as *Underworld* or *Industry* are all recommended for hunters who plan on making a habit of working with explosives.)

Disguise

While many monsters guard against illusions and other mystical disguises, no few are still fooled by the old-fashioned art of clever makeup and a change of clothes, if only because they so seldom expect to be duped that way. Clever hunters can exploit this mentality to their advantage, using a mundane disguise to perform reconnaissance, escape unwanted attention, become prey to bait a trap or even infiltrate the ranks of the enemy.

Creating a disguise requires a Mental Challenge, where the difficulty depends on how much of a change the hunter is trying to make. Appearing as a generic "someone else" is a difficulty of three Traits, appearing as a general type of individual (soldier, repair man, gang member, etc.) is a difficulty of five, and taking on the appearance of a specific person is a difficulty of seven. Appearing as someone of the opposite gender adds two to the difficulty of a test, and the Narrator should feel free to raise or lower the difficulty to accommodate other factors as well. Ideally, the player should also adopt the proper makeup, costuming and props to indicate the use of this Ability, but those features are not strictly necessary — all a player is required to do is wear a description tag marked "Disguise" that describes their altered appearance to other players, which must be displayed prominently for other players to notice. Other characters may make a Mental Challenge against the hunter to try to pierce the disguise, provided they have a valid in-game reason to be suspicious about the hunter's identity.

Bear in mind that even though a hunter's physical disguise may be flawless, she may still give herself away through inappropriate speech or behavior, especially when attempting to impersonate specific people or members of tightly knit groups. Thus, most hunters skilled in the craft of *Disguise* are equally skilled in Abilities such as *Subterfuge* and/or *Performance (Acting)* to help maintain their cover, not to mention

taking time to do a bit of research beforehand. Likewise, even a completely convincing performance might still be disbelieved for reasons outside of the character's control — no matter how well she looks or acts the part, if the bloodsucker's bodyguards know for a fact that his lady love left last night for a two-month vacation, the hunter's disguise isn't going to work!

Dodge

When trouble rears its ugly head, you know how to get out of the way. Unhesitating reactions let you evade blows and shots, thereby avoiding injury. You can *Dodge* against any attack that you're aware of: diving for cover as someone fires a gun or twisting away from a sword, for instance. *Dodge* may be used as a retest when defending against an attack that you can see or sense coming.

Drive

Though most people can drive in the modern age, you can drive well. You're equally at home with a stick shift or an automatic, rush hour is of no concern, and you can get the most performance out of a car. In dangerous situations, you can evade traffic and even use your vehicle as a weapon. Bear in mind that just because you can drive a station wagon doesn't mean you can drive a semi with equal ease. A Mental Challenge may be required to allow you to figure out where everything is in an unfamiliar vehicle.

Drive tests most often involve a Physical Challenge of your reflexes.

Empathy

You are sensitive to the moods and emotions of people around you. When you listen to someone, you understand her feelings. You can identify with others and tell when people are lying or holding back while they are talking to you.

With a Social Challenge and the expenditure of an *Empathy* Ability, you can determine if the last thing that someone said was a lie (although *Subterfuge* can defend against this). Alternately, you can attempt to determine the subject's current Demeanor.

Endurance

Whether due to conscious training or simply an adaptation to the rigors of the hunt, imbued with this *Ability* has developed an impressive resistance to the effects of going without food, water or sleep for long periods of time. With one level of *Endurance*, a hunter can go 24 hours straight without such amenities before needing to test for deprivation penalties; each additional level of *Endurance* beyond the first adds another 12 hours to this time. Until this time is up he functions normally and suffer no penalties related to a lack of sleep or sustenance. In addition, each level of this *Ability* adds 15 seconds to how long a hunter can hold his breath, when applicable.

This *Ability* has no effect on poisons, disease or wound penalties stemming from actual injuries of any kind, only "damage" done by lack of sleep or nutrition. Once a hunter's *Endurance* level has been passed, he begins suffering penalties normally and loses his *Endurance* rating until he has time to replenish his reserves; one level of *Endurance* is regained for each full day of proper rest and nutrition he receives.

Etiquette

When one learns that monsters are real and stalk human prey daily, it may seem that knowing which spoon to use isn't terribly important anymore, but a surprising amount of everyday interaction still depends on social graces, and you have them down pat. You do know the proper way to greet someone, when to rise and how to make

introductions. You can hold a toast with the best of them and keep your cool in any social scenario, from high tea to a gang rally.

The *Etiquette* Ability can be used with Social Tests to impress or blend in at parties. If you make a social *faux pas*, you may immediately expend an *Etiquette* Ability to negate the gaffe — your character knew better than to make the mistake.

Expression

Words and feelings flow freely from you. When the muse strikes, you put pen to paper (or fingers to instrument) and pour out a torrent of emotion and stirring imagery. You can convey message and meaning in your art, from symphonies to poetry, and whatever you write is both clear and moving.

When writing or composing, you can sink true *Expression* into the work to make it stand out or be especially persuasive — the exact effects are up to the Storyteller, but in general a work with *Expression* in it is more noticeable than one without it.

Finance

The world of money and business awaits your whim. You understand interest, CDs, stock market transactions, currency exchanges and GNPs. A little *Finance* lets you make quite a bit of money. You can also use your *Finance* to balance books or run a business of your own.

Hey, Where's My <Insert Supernatural Critter> Lore?

You may notice that this chapter doesn't include any of the various "Lore" Abilities found in other *Mind's Eye Theatre* books, such as *Kindred Lore* or *Garou Lore* and so on. There's a very simple reason for this: it's not what **Laws of the Reckoning** is about. While the imbued inevitably learn about the various types of monsters that exist in the World of Darkness, such knowledge is best left to what the characters actually manage to acquire from spending long hours stalking hideous monsters to learn their weak points or frantically digging through crumbling old tomes in a creature's haunted library — in other words, through the kind of events that game sessions are made of. Reducing the vast, mysterious world that the imbued have entered to a process of spending two or three Experience Traits to pick up all the practical information you need to know about a group of creatures is anticlimactic at best, and downright ruinous to the game's atmosphere and tone at worst.

Therefore, while of course you are free to do what you like on the subject of *Lore* Abilities, it is *highly* recommended that if they are included at all they should only be available to characters who have months or even years of in-game experience trying to learn more hard facts about the enemies they face. (See the *Mind's Eye Theatre Journal* #3 article "Hunting Lores" for an excellent write-up of what different levels of *Lore* teach a character.) They should *not* just go to someone who says, "My character used to watch horror films, play roleplaying games and go to Goth clubs a lot, so I should have *Vampire Lore* x 2." In the meantime, the more nebulous and uncertain (and therefore suspenseful) Abilities such as *Occult* and *Awareness* or Backgrounds like *Exposure* or *Patron* tend to suit **Laws of the Reckoning** much better.

Typically, you can run a business, follow a money trail, perform an audit or clean up an accounting mess with a Mental Challenge (difficulty dependent upon the task, as determined by the Storyteller). Alternately, you can expend a level of *Finance* Ability to raise \$250 in cash between games. Not every use of *Finance* is so benign — money laundering operations have to come from somewhere.

Firearms

A little time at the gun range goes a long way. You know how to hold, fire and clean a gun. You can unjam one, too, and you can tell different models apart. You know how to stand to get the best aim, how to handle recoil and how to take care of problems in the field.

If you possess *Firearms* Ability, you may use your Mental Traits for gun combat instead of using Physical Traits, at no cost. You can expend *Firearms* for a retest in ranged fire combat.

Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability

In a certain area of expertise not covered by another Ability, you have achieved some level of skill. You may have a small grasp of a trade due to some work on the side, or perhaps you've specifically studied a topic.

Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability is a catch-all category for highly unusual areas of study that aren't covered by other Abilities already. This Ability is intended as a way to allow players to have skills that have been overlooked or which simply do not fit the mold of what is presented here, but *not* to design silly little specialized uber-skills like *Vampire Slaying* or the like. Any Ability of this type must be specifically approved by the Storyteller, and its capabilities defined by the Storyteller.

Intimidation

Intimidation represents any of a broad variety of techniques for terrifying people into compliance. This could be anything from physical size, to a particularly frightening grin, to knowing which emotional buttons to push.

You can use *Intimidation* when trying to scare someone with a Social Challenge.

Intuition

A hunter with this Ability is intimately familiar with this natural "sixth sense" of humanity and trusts it as much, if not more, than what her normal senses or formal learning might be telling her otherwise. In game terms, this Ability has two uses: first, the imbued may spend a level of this Ability instead of a Willpower Trait if she wishes to perform a test with an Ability she doesn't have, as she goes by pure instinct to attempt what would normally be outside her grasp. Second, she may spend a level of *Intuition* and make a Mental Challenge against six Traits when she's confronted by a dead end, a choice to make or stumped by an enigma. Success means that she may ask the Narrator for a small hint to help her guess what she should do. (See the *Vision* edge *Foresee* for an idea of when and how such guesses can come into play.)

This Ability is not equal to the power of even that basic edge, however, and Narrators should remember to treat it accordingly. It doesn't simply beam ideas or information into a hunter's mind fully formed, nor is it a danger sense or true navigation tool. It's a subtle nudge, a vague impression, a fleeting feeling leading in the right direction; in other words, enough for a Narrator to possibly help out a player who's been stumped while trying to figure out a problem, but not a free pass out of danger or a shortcut for players to avoid real research with other Abilities.

Investigation

You know how to pick up clues and put together disparate pieces of information. By habit and training, you can set a jumbled mass of data in order, discovering

identities, motives and patterns in an otherwise chaotic scene. You can use *Investigation* with a Mental Challenge when trying to puzzle out meaning of a random scene.

Law

Nobody is above the law, except those who know how to use it to their own advantage. You're one of the latter. Perhaps you uphold the law, or maybe you twist it to your own ends. Your knowledge of *Law* allows you to understand legal processes, courts and lawyers, and to use them effectively.

Use the *Law* Ability in court situations or with Social Challenges involving legal matters. Because the legal body is so vast, your Storyteller may require you to select a particular area of study (*Criminal, Civil, Tax, etc.*).

Leadership

When you speak, people listen. A good speaking voice and self-confidence lend a powerful presence to a leader. The *Leadership* Ability represents your ability to motivate people and to get them to follow your guidance. Even among those who do not know or respect you, you can command attention.

You can use *Leadership* with a Social Challenge to try to get a minor favor or task from a character.

Linguistics

You've studied a language — or languages — other than your native tongue. Whether you're an older hunter whose childhood language is no longer spoken, you frequent the global community, or it is necessary for other studies, you can speak, write and read other languages.

You must choose one language for each level of *Linguistics* you possess. Thus, you could have *Linguistics: Mandarin* and *Linguistics: German*. Alternately, you can focus on the underlying study of *Linguistics* itself, granting some understanding of the principles behind the structure of language. Languages need not be spoken; American Sign Language or Egyptian hieroglyphics would also be considered fields for study. Those who wish to converse in another language (but cannot actually do so) should hold up one hand with the first finger and thumb making an L-shape to indicate to other players the characters are not speaking English. Those who wish to listen in must also possess the language.

Note: You do not need not take this Ability to understand the symbols of the hunter code, although it might be helpful if you are inclined to try to understand exactly what they are or why hunters seem to instinctively understand them when no one else can.

Medicine

You know how the human body functions. You can speed the recovery and healing of an injured person, or use your knowledge to inflict injury.

You can use the *Medicine* Ability to speed a person's healing by one category: a *Wounded* person would heal as if *Bruised*, for instance. *Medicine* may be used for other sorts of research and lab work with a Mental Challenge. As *Medicine* is such a vast field, your Storyteller may require you to specify what you know (*Pharmaceuticals, Internal Medicine, General Practice*).

Melee

If you've got something in your hands, you're a deadly fighter. Be it a sword, a stick, a set of nunchuku, you can use it to damaging effect. Expend *Melee* for retests in hand-to-hand combat when you are using a close combat weapon like a knife or a chair. Certain weapons function best when used by a wielder with *Melee*.

Occult

The hidden world teems with mysterious secrets. By unlocking universal keys and studying the basics of spirituality, you can learn the shadowy paths of the cosmos. Your *Occult Ability* serves as a general knowledge of the supernatural, alerting you to the existence of many varied sorts of inhuman creatures and paranormal powers and events.

Occult grants some basic (and sometimes erroneous) knowledge of the various denizens of the supernatural world; for more detailed information, study *Expert Ability: Lore* in your particular subject of interest, but be prepared to pay a high cost for it (both in experience and Experience).

Performance

You are a true virtuoso. Whatever your chosen medium, you have a gift for artistic endeavors. Whether playing an instrument, singing, dancing or acting, your skills allow you to entertain and even earn money.

Your *Performance Ability* can be used to earn a modest income, just like other artistic trade skills. You must choose a specific art form when you take *Performance*, such as playing an instrument, singing, acting or dramatic readings. Note that *Performance* is generally anything done before an audience, while *Expression* most often focuses on literary works, and *Crafts* concentrates on the creation of physical objects (such as paintings or sculptures).

Poisons

Anyone can toss a few chemicals into food or drink in an effort to cause harm, but a hunter with this *Ability* has delved deeper into learning the delicate and dangerous art of concocting more professional (not to mention less traceable) poisons, as well as how to deliver them in ways a target will not expect or detect. Given enough time and resources, he might even be able to mix poisons designed to cause a specific reaction in their target, such as disabling a particular organ or sense, or incapacitating a foe rather than killing him. Naturally, such knowledge confers an equal aptitude for recognizing toxins and mixing antidotes as well.

Generally speaking, brewing either a poison or an antidote requires a *Mental Challenge* of some kind, not to mention the necessary time and materials to mix. A person who suspects she is being targeted by poison must make a *Mental Challenge* to notice anything out of the ordinary, although some creatures with supernatural senses may be able to detect it long before it has a chance of harming them (Storyteller's discretion). This *Ability* is also required if a hunter wishes to safely poison a melee weapon or other instrument without the threat of accidentally dosing herself in the process.

Politics

The world of influence-trading and favors is extensive among humans. Through observation, intrigue and a bit of spin-doctoring, you've learned how to handle appearances, what a speech really means, and where the deal-making is going on. In short, it's *Politics* as usual.

The *Politics Ability* is useful primarily in dealings with society or *Influence*. You may be able to manipulate the outcome of local political actions, with the proper *Influence* and some well-placed *Social Challenges*; *Politics Ability* insures that matters proceed in the direction that you desire. *Politics* is also used to discern hidden motives and broker deals, and as such is almost a requirement of would-be power brokers. The hierarchies of power are often visible: who is in charge of a group, or how much faith a team has in their leader, for example.

A knowledge of *Politics* includes, by extension, an understanding of the bureaucratic levels of power. You know how to cut through red tape, or how to obstruct others with it. By determining who's important in a given strata, you can usually avoid wasting time and simply go straight to the person who has the power to do what you want.

Science

The modern Information Age sees the explosion of all manner of studies. Categorizing and breaking down the world into many different forms, the methods of logic and reason give humanity the means to understand the universe, or at least small pieces of it. Education in *Science* covers techniques of inquiry, modern studies and a broad range of underpinning work in a diverse range of fields.

Science Ability requires an area of particular study: *Biology*, *Chemistry*, *Physics*, *Metallurgy*, *Electrical Engineering*, *Mathematics*, *Geology* and *Botany* are all possibilities, though such a list is far from comprehensive. Combining a *Science* with different fields may give a wide variety of results. For example, *Science: Metallurgy* with *Academics* may give results regarding historical research and theory, while the same *Science* with *Occult* may center on ancient alchemy. Actually constructing objects or devices theorized with *Science* may require use of the *Crafts* Ability.

Using a particular branch of *Science* usually requires a Mental Challenge of some sort to determine the success of research or the viability of theoretical work.

Security

Whichever side of the law you've worked on has granted you experience in *Security* techniques. You know about police operations and guard work, how they make their schedules and how they undertake their business—and how to disrupt such operations. Locks, traps, security systems and alarms are all within your purview. With a little time, you can put together *Security* measures for a location; you can also defeat such measures.

Use the *Security* Ability with Mental Traits to set up a secure area or network, or to formulate a plan for breaching such a network. *Security* Ability is also used to disarm traps, alarms and other devices, and to defeat locks. At the discretion of a Narrator, you may be required to use a Physical Trait related to Dexterity when attempting to bypass a physical lock or alarm.

Stealth

By blending into cover, blurring your lines and moving carefully and quietly, you can evade notice or sneak past people. You know how best to take advantage of surrounding cover and how to use light and shadow. Opportunities for unnoticed movement are not lost on you, as you understand the uses of timing and diversion.

With an appropriate Physical Challenge, you can sometimes sneak past the notice of guards and searchers (who contest your Ability with their Mental Traits and *Investigation* or *Alertness* Ability).

Streetwise

Word on the street is known to you. Even if you don't have any particular friends or contacts in the area, you know about the different communities and gangs that hang out in town. You recognize tagging and other territorial markers, and know some of the signs, colors and clothes that denote street people, homeless, gangbangers, hoodlums, criminals and social workers.

Streetwise Ability, with your Mental Traits, lets you recognize the influence of various gangs or street communities. You also know about criminal organizations and activities, and could perform a little larceny yourself. An appropriate Social Challenge can help smooth dealings with a hostile gang (though you may need *Etiquette* to make a really good impression).

Subterfuge

There are many ways to talk about subjects, and equally many ways to uncover the truth of the matter. Even in idle conversation, people use little white lies, slip hints about their true motives, try to guide the course of discussion and give away their secrets indirectly. The art of *Subterfuge* is the art of reading these tricks and using them effortlessly.

When someone confronts you with one of your own lies, you can use the *Subterfuge* Ability in your own defense (if someone uses the *Empathy* Ability, for instance). By guiding a conversation, you can also unearth someone's Negative Traits; if you manage to steer conversation to a particular topic in play, you can expend a *Subterfuge* Ability and make a Social Challenge to determine one of the subject's Negative Traits related to the topic.

Survival

Many monsters keep lairs far from civilization, and only a fool would dare to travel through difficult terrain in search of such terrible creatures without understanding at least basic wilderness lore. Survival Ability represents knowledge of terrain, how to find shelter, where to find water, techniques in hunting, and experience with edible and poisonous plants and fungi. Survival could also be used to help keep untrained companions alive. Generally speaking, characters with Survival can provide for as many additional unskilled people as they have levels in this Ability without undue strain. More than that number requires increasingly difficult tests.

Surviving and avoiding danger in the wilderness usually relies on a Physical Challenge. You can substitute your Mental Traits if you so desire.

Tactics

Tactics allows hunters to use good planning and teamwork to help level the playing field a bit against the monsters they're after. To use this Ability, the hunters must actually draw up and discuss a detailed plan of action, assigning responsibilities to different team members and ensuring that everyone involved knows at least their role and their objective. Team members who aren't present during the planning, who don't pay attention to the discussion, who disagree strongly or who otherwise choose not to participate in the plan cannot receive the benefit of this Ability (be honest). It should be noted that *Tactics* is not limited to just combat situations — rescue missions, infiltration efforts, shadowing a target and other such activities can all receive the benefits of *Tactics*, with the Storyteller's approval. At the same time, a Narrator should ensure that it the hunters truly have a plan, not just an intuitive command for everybody "to do what works for them" or a variation on the ever-popular "Get 'em!"

Once a plan has been finalized, the hunter with the highest *Tactics* rating in the group makes a Mental Challenge against a difficulty of the number of people involved in the plan plus three. (Each additional hunter in the plan who has *Tactics* adds one Trait to the testing character's total for the purposes of resolving ties.) Success means that the group receives a "pool" of retests equal to twice the testing character's *Tactics* rating, plus an additional retest for each member who spends either a *Tactics* level or Willpower Trait at the end of the planning session. Each character can only add one retest to the pool in this fashion. These retests are then distributed to the team members by the testing character, whether that means distributing them evenly among the group to keep the whole team an edge, or perhaps concentrating them on a few members with harder tasks (or to make up for some members with less ability).

Once assigned, retests gained in this fashion can be used on any challenge made during the execution on the plan, provided the hunter is acting strictly according to the orders she was given. Only one *Tactics* retest may be used on any particular challenge, and it cannot be used in combination with other Ability retests on the same challenge. Hunting teams may make multiple plans with this Ability at once, but a character can only receive the benefits of one *Tactics* session each scene, regardless of how many plans she might execute during that time. Thus, a team cannot make redundant or overlapping plans in order to gain a large number of

Think, Children, Think!

Though it should go without saying, an interrogator should always respect both the rules of *Mind's Eye Theatre* as well as the limits of her target and any onlookers when employing *Torture*, which means not being any more graphic about her work than everyone present is comfortable with. While it might seem a bit silly to some, it's still a lot better to simply say "My character tortures you" now and again for 10 minutes if it means everyone will be comfortable with what's going on, instead of accidentally going into too much grisly detail and making your target feel nauseous or unnerved out of game and thus ruining the scene for everyone. Likewise, players and Storytellers alike should take care that their actions do not disturb people outside of the game — few things will draw police attention faster than reports of what sounds like a girl being raped or a guy being murdered, and those are just a few of the reports that the neighbors might call in if players are heard screaming for mercy.

retests. Additionally, a hunter who deliberately goes against her orders, no matter what the reason, immediately loses all benefits of this Ability for the rest of the scene.

Torture

Like it or not, those who know how to apply the correct pressures — physically or psychologically — and have no qualms about doing so can extract just about anything they want from a subject, given enough time to wear them down. A torturer must select what method she will use to get information, either physical punishment or psychological tactics. Depending on what method she chooses, she must make either a Physical or Mental Challenge against the target's Willpower, as she sees fit. Each *Torture* session generally requires at least 10 minutes to perform, and should be roleplayed as well as possible within the rules of *Mind's Eye Theatre*. (This system can be considered to supersede the one given on pp. 33-34 of *Laws of the Hunt*.)

At the end of this time, and once the appropriate test is made — if successful, the subject loses a temporary Willpower Trait and offers up a piece or two of information (he may suffer some other bashing or even lethal damage as well, depending on the methods used by the torturer). Once all of his Willpower Traits are gone, the subject breaks and answers whatever questions the torturer requires as honestly and completely as possible. This process differentiates this Ability from mere manhandling or threats issued without this Ability — if a subject can be broken this way, the torturer can be assured that the information they're getting is true so far as the subject is aware.

Traps

A synthesis of several other Abilities for a very specific purpose, *Traps* allows a hunter to set up — or disarm — a variety of different devices designed to capture, delay or even kill those who activate them. What's more, he knows where these traps can be placed to the best effect in a location he wishes to defend, allowing him to not only create a fortified space of his own but also to know where to look for them upon entering the lair of a monster or similar dangerous location. A hunter with this Ability can choose to use his Mental Traits in any test to disarm or avoid a trap, even if it would normally be a Physical Challenge to do so. Supernatural traps may or may not be detected or affected by this Ability, as determined by the Narrator and the nature of the trap in question.

A hunter may also ask the Narrator for a Mental Challenge to try to discern if he can see any signs of traps in the area, but only one test can be made for any given area or item, and the

Narrator should keep the result hidden so the character does not know if there are actually any traps around... or if he just failed to find them.

Backgrounds

Your character's Backgrounds help to flesh out ties with mortal agencies, roles in hunter society and beneficial resources available. Each Background is used differently. In general, having multiple Traits in a given Background allows for better or more common use of that benefit. Some Backgrounds directly affect your character's creation and development; others are called into play later during the game.

Allies

A few friends, either kept from easier days or made after the imbuing, help you out in your endeavors. You can make a few calls and cut a few deals to get assistance in a wide range of activities. Your Storyteller will probably require you to define how you keep your *Allies* and their relations to you.

Each *Ally* Trait possessed represents one person whom you can call upon for aid. Unlike *Influence*, your *Allies* have special talents that make them better than the average person on the street. Though an *Ally* cannot be aware of your hunting life, he or she can be quite useful if properly directed.

In general, your *Allies* do not show up directly in play. Instead, you can use an *Ally* for certain services in between play sessions, by notifying your Storyteller:

- An *Ally* can be directed to follow up on research or activities that you have started. If you previously undertook a specific task, like tailing someone, researching a project or building a device, your *Ally* can continue the work. The *Ally* does so with one Ability Trait's worth of expertise. As long as the *Ally* works on the project, your *Ally* Trait for the individual is tied up.
- If you need a particularly competent *Ally*, you can expend multiple Traits to gain access to a mortal with multiple levels of an Ability or Influence. Each *Ally* Trait that you spend after the first gives an extra level of expertise to your *Ally*. The *Ally* may use this expertise on your behalf, though rarely with your own skill, and only helps as long as you tie up your *Ally* Background Traits in this manner.

Be wary of calling upon your *Allies* too often. An *Ally* may call on you for mutual aid or refuse to help if pressed into dangerous or illegal activities.

Arsenal

Slaying dread monsters of the night with a nothing more than a few torches and pitchforks is strictly a film cliché these days — while many hunters are initially stuck battling monsters with whatever is at hand, smart ones know that if they're going to continue fighting much longer, they're going to need more serious hardware. That's where this Background comes in, representing not just weapons and ammunition (though a hunter with this Trait has a lot of those too) but all the other gear that a serious hunter needs to stalk and bring down monsters as well: camping supplies, night vision gear, body armor, field rations, communications equipment, heavy duty tools, combat medical supplies and so on. At the highest levels of *Arsenal*, a hunter's toy chest can include powerful explosives, black market high-tech gear or even surplus military vehicles. It also represents the know-how for obtaining this sort of equipment and a few connections that the hunter can go to get them (though broader contacts with such sources require other Backgrounds).

Naturally, it is up to the player and the Storyteller to work together to detail what kinds of goods the hunter has readily available, and what he can come up with if he does a little digging. The accompanying chart provides a rough reference for how much equipment and what kind the hunter has access to. Players need not have an exact laundry list of items, but both player

Arsenal Rating

Type of Hardware Available

One Trait

A modest collection of rifles, shotguns and handguns, with some minor military surplus as well (rations, walkie-talkies, first-aid kits, etc.).

Translation: Maybe you're from a long line of sport hunters, or your grandpa was in the army, and your family kept his things.

Two Traits

Substantial trove of firearms, possibly including some old military rifles or a few really nice modern pieces, and a good collection of more useful items such as police scanners, fatigues and the like.

Translation: Your dad was in the army, and liked it a lot.

Three Traits

A serious collection of implements of war, including exotic melee weapons and even a few semiautomatic assault rifles. There's enough gear to equip a full-size hunting group for some field work, including a few sets of body armor and some high-tech communications.

Translation: You were in the army, and brought your work home as often as possible (so to speak).

Four Traits

An exhaustive cache of weaponry of all shapes and sizes, including a number of fully-automatic weapons, sniper rifles or other specialized and valuable items. At this stage, some truly impressive and exotic gear (police lock guns, eavesdropping devices, etc.) has found its way into your collection as well.

Translation: You were in a special forces outfit, and liked it so much you decided to get the materials to start your own.

Five Traits

A truly frightening amount of firepower, including a number of automatic assault weapons and a veritable armory of regular pistols, rifles and shotguns. You have a small but impressive supply of old heavy weapons as well — vintage but serviceable grenades and even a few mortars.

Likewise, your equipment extends well into such hard-to-find goods as top-of-the-line body armor, navigation gear, sophisticated electronics and other highly useful (if restricted) items, perhaps even a surplus military vehicle.

Translation: You *are* the army.

and Storyteller should always have at least a general idea of what the character does and does not have, so there is no disagreement later on about whether a few assault rifles could be found in the character's cache or not.

As this Background is potentially a source of great abuse in the hands of power-hungry players, here are a few clarifications on what this Background does and does not cover. First of all, let it be made clear that you do *not* need to have this Background to have a gun, or even several guns, nor is this Background automatically granted if a hunter walks into an army surplus store with a credit card and a smile (though permanent levels of *Resources* can be converted into *Arsenal* on a one-for-one basis if a character is truly serious about stockpiling). Rather, it represents a regular practice of collecting weapons and gear that a hunter devotes considerable time and effort to maintain, as well as a general familiarity with the type of arms and equipment that make up such stockpiles.

Furthermore, the costs of maintaining this collection on a basic level are assumed to be included in this Background, separate from any *Resources* a hunter might have, though hunters with high ratings in this Background and no other income may find their levels diminishing if they constantly run through their inventory. Likewise, losing a large amount of stock to a police raid or extreme usage such as a prolonged siege may temporarily or even permanently lower this Background if a hunter isn't careful.

On the other hand, the Storyteller is within his rights to require other characters who begin acquiring a large amount of weapons from other means to spend Experience Traits or trade in levels of other Backgrounds to acquire this Background (and thus maintain their new

Breakin' the Law! Breakin' the Law!

Not to make players feel too restricted when it comes to using a Background they've paid for fair and square, but it's important that all parties concerned don't forget questions of legality and police attention when *Arsenal* comes into play — it's neat to have such powerful weapons and useful tools, but having a pile of them generally leaves a trail that mortal agencies or clever monsters can use to trace a trigger-happy hunter with frightening ease. Of course, if he bought his firepower illegally, there's little or no paper trail, but that also means some harsh penalties and likely jail time if he's caught. Likewise, quite a few useful non-weapon items like spy cameras or recording devices are restricted or outright illegal in many states, and even when they are legal to own they can quickly attract the wrong kind of attention to a hunter who isn't careful. ("No, sir, I insist — I would really *love* to hear why you felt the need to prowl around in the bushes with night vision goggles and a laser microphone.")

And so far all that's been addressed is *owning* this kind of gear, not using it. Storytellers should remember that no police department treats reports of shotgun or automatic weapon fire lightly, and being told that the persons responsible looked like they were dressed for World War IX doesn't help their sense of humor either. Firefights in public areas will attract large and dedicated police manhunts, as will reports of heavily armed "gang members" or "militia guys," and using heavy weaponry or explosives of any kind is a surefire way to attract some very unpleasant federal attention on top of everything else. While having everyone arrested on the first night of the game might not be the best way to keep the chronicle going, Storytellers should ensure that the police remain a threat with teeth if they do not wish this Background to be abused.

For their part, players should understand that while it offers them some definite advantages, and smart hunters can use it for some time without attracting too much notice, merely having this Background does not allow them to use their various giant weapons without consequence. **Reckoning** is about regular people facing the supernatural as best they can, after all, and regular people realize the risks that come with such behavior — they just also know this is the time to take such risks.

collection), so that those who actually purchased this Background don't feel cheated. Ultimately how this Background is gained, lost or used in play depends on what the Storyteller feels is best for the chronicle, and while the players can offer their input, the Storyteller's word is final.

Berserk

Even the most mild and tolerant of the imbued can't help but feel anger toward the monsters for the suffering they cause and the corrupted world they've made, but the feelings this Background represents go beyond righteous fury all the way to raw, primal rage. Any time she encounters a situation that might ignite her fury, she must make a Willpower Challenge against five Traits or lash out in some violent fashion. This rage isn't totally blind — she need not strike an ally who accidentally crosses her boundaries, for example — but if she can't hit the target of her anger, the scenery will certainly feel the force of her wrath instead. For better or worse, the turn after her particular trigger is set off she surges with blind fury, adding her levels of this Background to all Physical tests involving brute force, including brawling and melee attacks or other Strength-based actions such as knocking down doors or snapping handcuffs. In addition, she adds one level of the appropriate type of damage to all such attacks during this time. (Yes, *Berserk* can and often does work in concert with *Cleave*. Ouch.) However, at the end of the turn she immediately suffers a level of bashing damage from the force that she throws herself at the object of her rage — armor may be used to soak this damage, when appropriate.

This Background can only be used once per scene, and lasts for only one turn regardless of whether or not the offending stimulus is destroyed during that turn, though chances are the hunter is still quite enraged even after the *Berserk* fit passes. Additionally, it should be noted that aside from self-preservation or extreme dramatic circumstances, this rage can *only* be ignited by specific triggers outlined to the Storyteller when this Background is purchased. A hunter may have up to as many triggers as they have levels in this Background. Triggers can be just about anything the player and the Storyteller agree on, but should make sense with the character's history and should focus on situations ("being taunted," "seeing children abused," "having team members injured") as opposed to objects or people ("bloodsuckers," "guns," etc.)

Bystanders

Contrary to what many of the imbued might believe, there is in fact a bridge between those who have answered the Heralds' call and the normal humans whose eyes are still blind to the creatures around them. Some people heard the Call, but failed to act on it as the imbued did, and in so doing fell into a state somewhere between a true hunter and an ordinary person. These so-called "bystanders" are not fully imbued, and cannot develop edges or use Conviction, but their eyes have been opened to the truth, and that fact allows them to offer a kind of support to the imbued that few are capable of: belief. *Bystanders* remember what's really out there, and are generally willing to help the hunter however they can, if only out of a sense of guilt over not having done the right thing when they had a chance before. Indeed, sometimes the greatest aid they can offer to one of the imbued is simply the relief of being able to talk about the world as it really is, without having to lie or leave things unsaid.

Each level of this Background translates to one such *Bystander* the hunter is friendly with, and the player should work with the Storyteller to detail the identity of each of these individuals and their relationship with the hunter, though it is up to the Storyteller to determine their exact Traits. It should be remembered that *Bystanders* tend to be far less effective against the supernatural in head-on battles, and so will

typically do so only if things are truly dire. After all, while certainly sympathetic to the hunter and her cause, a *Bystander* failed the original test for a reason, and many of them have no desire to directly face the horror monsters represent ever again. As a rule of thumb, a hunter can expect about the same level of aid from a bystander as she could from one of her own family.

It should also be noted that *Bystanders* are generally drawn from the same material as hunters themselves: blue-collar or middle class people, who might be able to offer a few skills or some modest resources from time to time, but who are generally most valuable for their advice and emotional support. Players who wish to have *Bystanders* that are more powerful or connected must clear it with the Storyteller and purchase additional Backgrounds such as *Mentor* or *Allies* to represent such extra additional status.

Putting a Face On Backgrounds

All too often, it is easy to forget that Backgrounds like *Allies*, *Bystanders*, *Contacts* and *Mentor* are supposed to represent living, breathing individuals, not just Traits for a character to use at will. This is especially true in live-action, where a Storyteller or Narrator must often portray many such roles during the night, and thus some of the individuality of these people can often be lost in the shuffle. To help combat this dissociative thinking and keep the human aspect of the game strong, Storytellers may wish to reward players who take the time to create or select illustrations or photographs to represent these individuals. Not only does this give the player a face she can identify when using her Backgrounds, as opposed to just some lifeless Traits on a character sheet, it also gives a clever Storyteller an easy way of indicating when they're playing a particular character by allowing them to affix the picture of the person to their costume.

Indeed, Storytellers may wish to offer a few Experience Traits or other incentives for players who put faces on other people in their characters' backstories or current lives in this manner, as it tends to encourage a deeper level of roleplaying than simply jotting these Traits down and forgetting about them.

For more information on bystanders, their abilities, their viewpoints and their interaction with the imbued, see Chapter Seven.

Contacts

With the right *Contacts* in all walks of life, you can get a line on all sorts of useful information. Although having an "ear to the wall" doesn't necessarily provide you with good help or loyal servants, it does mean that you know whom to ask when looking for the movers and shakers behind the scenes.

In game terms, your rating in *Contacts* allows you to discern rumors and information. When you call upon your *Contacts*, you make a few phone calls, check with likely snitches and grease a few palms. In return, you get rumors and information as if possessed of a certain amount of Influence. This lets you find out exactly what's going on in the city within a particular area. You can get information of a level equal to however many *Contacts* you use; if you use *Contacts* x 3 on *Industry*, for instance, you get information as if digging up dirt with *Industry* x 3 Influence. The advantage of

Contacts is that they can be switched from place to place each game, getting information in different areas on demand.

Using *Contacts* for especially dangerous or secret information may require you to spend some money or perform a few favors, at the discretion of a Storyteller. On occasion, accidents can cause *Contacts* in one area to dry up, such as a strike that affects your *Industry Contacts*, or a particularly unlucky astronomical conjunction sends your *Occult Contacts* running for the hills. Your *Contacts* generally will not function as aides or fellow hunters; that is the purview of the *Allies* and *Bystanders* Backgrounds.

Example: *Although his career has definitely taken a turn for the worse since a zombie scarred his face early on the hunt, Jeffrey still retains a number of his old connections from his acting days, for a total of Contacts x 4. When his group begins looking into a rot that's been stalking some of the city's socialites, Jeffrey makes a few calls to some wealthy friends and allocates two Traits of Contacts for High Society Influence, to allow him to gather information about possible parties the thing might try to crash, and another Trait on Media Influence to dig through society page archives and see if he can find anything there. He holds the last Trait of Contacts in reserve, just in case something else comes up that he needs information on in a hurry.*

Destiny

Even among such a select (or cursed) group as the imbued, a hunter with *Destiny* stands out as someone special, maybe as an individual whose fate could change the entire world. *Destiny* is not a quantifiable thing, but it's somehow palpable to other people around the hunter just the same, and those with good *Awareness* ratings or certain higher-level *Vision* edges can sense an aura of inexplicable power around the hunter, especially when it seems that he's following the path that he's meant to take. Whether he is aware of his true importance or not, an imbued with *Destiny* attracts attention and respect from other hunters wherever he goes. Of course, this notoriety isn't always helpful — imbued with a strong *Destiny* might just as easily be subject to extra scrutiny or even criticism from those who feel that they're wasting their "gift," and feelings of jealousy or fear can grow in those who find themselves constantly in the hunter's shadow. What's more, a hunter cannot simply expect to sit back and be handed all manner of glory and riches — the greatest heroes go through equally daunting challenges, after all, and it should also be noted that it is not unheard of for a hunter with a powerful *Destiny* to die before his time, though even then his death is never unimportant.

In game terms, for each level of this Background he possesses, a hunter with *Destiny* may get one retest on any challenge, including tests with edges. Only one retest may be made on any single challenge, and once used in this fashion that level of *Destiny* is gone for the rest of the story.

The Storyteller should decide what the hunter's *Destiny* is and work it into his plans for the chronicle, and he need not necessarily tell the player what the character's *Destiny* might be. Bear in mind that a *Destiny* need not be a glorious one or have a particularly happy ending — dying heroically or even becoming a villain of some kind are popular alternatives, though by no means the only ones — though if the Storyteller wishes to design such a dark *Destiny*, it is best to talk about it with the player first to make sure he is comfortable with such a tragic fate for his character. In addition, should the events of the hunter's *Destiny* actually come to pass before the end of the chronicle, the player may re-assign the levels of this Background as he likes, preferably in keeping with the outcome of his moment of truth.

Everyman

By definition, hunters are all normal folks before the Heralds come along, but an imbued with this Trait was so thoroughly ordinary that, well, she's nearly invisible as far as the authorities are concerned. No matter what she's been up to since the hunt began, she's maintained an excellent semblance of a normal life, so much so that ordinary people don't give her a second thought as she goes about her day. This also holds true as far as most institutions are concerned — her credit rating is good, her arrest record is clean, there aren't any bizarre charges on her credit cards and so on — making her very hard to track down through bureaucratic channels. And while this needle-in-haystack effect can occasionally be a hassle for the hunter as well, more often than not it's a welcome protection when immersed in a world where bloodsuckers and other monsters frequently hold sway in local institutions.

Each level of this Background adds one Trait to the difficulty of all attempts to track down the hunter through record searches, witness interviews or any other means besides directly tailing or tracking the imbued herself. Furthermore, any time someone tries to use any Influence against her, even just to gather information, the effort takes twice as long and/or requires extra levels of Influence be spent, at the Storyteller's discretion. Alternately, in terms of information gathering the Storyteller may rule that expenditures of fewer Influence Traits than the hunter's rating in this Background simply fail to generate any result at all. This Background does not represent any kind of supernatural quality, just a natural anonymity on the hunter's part, and provides no protection whatsoever from supernatural scrying or any kind of face-to-face confrontation a monster might wish to initiate. It simply ensures that if monsters wish to use the faceless powers of authority against the hunter, they're going to have to track down an equally faceless target first.

Example: *A bloodsucker wishes to call in some favors to launch a police raid on the apartment of Tim Sullivan, a humble Defender with Everyman x5. First it wants to find out more about him, though, and so it turns to its contacts in the local Bureaucracy for this normally elementary step; however, the search winds up taking far longer than it had anticipated, becoming a matter of days instead of mere hours. (After all, do you have any idea how many men named "Tim Sullivan" there are in an average metropolitan area?) Even with the right information, the monster then finds to its displeasure that it will have to call in a few more Police favors than it expected: Tim's record is so spotless that it's going to take a serious effort to cover up the shady causes behind the raid. (In game terms, the Storyteller rules that it will take two additional levels of Police Influence to call in the raid, due to Tim's high Everyman rating.) What would be a routine disruption to inflict on most mortals has become an exhausting chore, giving Tim at least a little more time to act or perhaps even scaring the creature away entirely from such an unexpected drain on its resources. Of course, it can still confront him directly if it chooses, but working through middlemen is going to be considerably tougher indeed.*

Note that while this Background offers some rather potent advantages, it also requires a amount of ongoing discretion on the character's part — the Storyteller may reduce or even revoke this Background if the hunter is repeatedly spotted in bizarre or dangerous situations by those who believe in her "normality." Being spotted out at odd hours once or twice isn't likely to cause a decrease in this Trait, but doing it on a regular basis without a good cover story is, and major infractions like being seen prowling around with a weapon or getting arrested for a serious crime might cause it to vanish overnight. Likewise, the Storyteller may forbid this Background to characters whose histories or personalities would naturally disqualify them from owning this Trait.

Hunters who are openly regarded as eccentric or dangerous, or who have long criminal records or histories of mental illness, are simply too distrusted by the community to receive this benefit. A hunter with *Everyman* cannot have the *Fame* Background, and the Storyteller may rule that especially high levels of other Abilities or Backgrounds prohibit it as well, depending on the setting of the chronicle itself.

Exposure

Not all hunters first encountered monsters at the moment of their imbuing; some Chosen came across the supernatural before the Heralds spoke to them, and while at the time they repressed or rationalized the experience away, now they're able to look back and make some sense of what they couldn't quite handle before. Indeed, their memories often come in handy when it comes to identifying and battling creatures in the present, as they recall details of their past encounters and compare it to what's now in front of them. This may not seem like much, but even such a relatively meager source of information can be a blessing when compared to other imbued who cross into their new life with no real knowledge of the enemy at all. On the other hand, cautious hunters also bear in mind that they weren't capable of piercing illusions or seeing the big picture back then either, and so act carefully lest they work from a false perception of their enemy.

In game terms, any time the hunter encounters a creature similar to one she believes she saw before her imbuing, she may spend a Mental Trait and ask the Narrator for a Mental Challenge against six Traits (spend *Exposure* for retests). If successful, the Narrator may give her a hint or two about the nature of the monster, its habits or its vulnerabilities as the character suddenly remembers such details from her past encounters and applies them to the present. All *Exposure* spent in this fashion is lost for the rest of the session.

Note that this Background works based on what the imbued *believes* she has encountered before, which isn't always necessarily what she *actually* met, and even if it is might still have provided misleading clues about others of its kind — if she happened to face a bloodsucker who was repulsed by garlic, for example, she's almost certainly in for a rude surprise if she tries to use it on another one. Naturally, the information gained from this Background cannot include things the hunter couldn't possibly have learned from his past experiences — she cannot suddenly remember that silver burns the skin of shapechangers if all she did before was run from them, though she might remember a useful tip about how she escaped. The player should work with the Storyteller to determine exactly where and how her character came in contact with the supernatural before, not only to determine what the hunter believes she encountered before (and the extent of what information she might be able to glean from it), but also because such experiences might well provide excellent material for future plot hooks or even the return of creatures from a hunter's past.

Fame

Though rare, some hunters are imbued from among the ranks of the wealthy or talented elite. Though such notoriety often fades quickly as a hunter's paranoia (or enemies list) grows, until it is gone your *Fame* can help to influence society in a few helpful ways.

Fame allows you to exercise your connections over a longer distance than usual. Sure, if you've got the right Influence, you can push things around on an interstate or even national scale, but with *Fame*, you can just make a few calls and get your *Contacts*,

<i>Fame Traits</i>	Fame Ranges
	<i>Maximum Range for Backgrounds</i>
1	Local scene
2	City
3	State
4	Adjoining states
5	Entire country

Influence or *Resources* exerted over a greater range without any impediment. Your total *Fame* determines your maximum range for unimpeded use of your *Contacts*, Influence and *Resources*.

When you make an effort to exert your Backgrounds over a long range, you lean on your popularity and image, thus expending your *Fame Traits* until the next game session. Usually, *Fame* is used in the downtime between sessions to facilitate long-range plans.

In a less mechanical fashion, your *Fame* also dictates how recognizable you are to people, for one reason or another. You could be a movie star, or a notorious criminal. Either way, the Storyteller will certainly make the effects of your *Fame* apparent, and folks may take notice of you at bothersome times. You should wear a tag indicating your level of *Fame* so that others know of your distinction.

Fame does have its limitations. It makes little sense for you to have this Background if you're another guy on the street, or if you've faked your own death or otherwise done something to remove yourself from the public eye. Also, *Fame* does not always indicate a widespread knowledge of you; you may only be known to a sub-set of a particular group, such as a lesser-known performer, or a recognized expert in a field who's unknown to those outside a given circle.

Fraternity

Somewhat similar to *Mentor* but not quite as specific or direct, this Background represents a secretive or mysterious fellow hunter (or group of hunters) who has taken an interest in the character's well-being and actively supports her hunting efforts. Most of the time this assistance comes in the form of information, such as anonymous e-mails offering advice or a timely warning scrawled in hunter code, although occasionally more tangible gifts such as weapons or money might be sent as well, depending on the means and motives of the *Fraternity*.

Exactly how much a hunter knows about her backers and whether or not she is able to contact them directly is between the player and the Storyteller to decide, but in general this Background is intended to be as nebulous as it is helpful, if not more so. Even a benefactor whom the hunter comes to know personally cannot be counted on as reliably as an *Ally* or *Contact*, though developing such a combination of Traits is certainly possible so long as the essential mystery behind this Background remains intact. Likewise, it is up to the Storyteller to determine the identities, abilities and motives of the imbued backing a character, and he is encouraged to be as complex or arcane as he likes when doing so. (After all, if these mysterious benefactors didn't have some reason to hide their faces or motives from the character, they would've approached her more openly.) Indeed, it might even turn out that *Fraternity* support has been a devious ploy on the part of a character's enemies, in which case these Background Traits must be re-assigned. The Storyteller may also require the player to

shift these Traits to levels of appropriate Backgrounds if the hunter ever learns the true identities and motives behind her *Fraternity* rating.

While most assistance from a hunter's *Fraternity* comes in the form of information, at the Storyteller's discretion it may also come into play on a one-for-one basis as temporary levels of *Allies*, *Contacts*, *Influence* or *Resources*, representing connections or assets an imbued's *Fraternity* has made available to her. Any Traits bestowed are up to the Storyteller to decide; while a player may make suggestions, particularly if her hunter has some way of reaching her benefactors, the Storyteller's word is final. While tied up in this fashion, *Fraternity* Traits cannot be used for anything else, and must be returned when the benefactors require (i.e., when the Storyteller asks). More exotic Backgrounds such as *Arsenal* may also be bestowed in this fashion, but are correspondingly rare, and some Backgrounds are not available at all (use common sense on what a benefactor could and could not provide).

Grace Under Pressure

Most often possessed by soldiers, paramedics, SWAT officers and others who have been trained to respond efficiently to dangerous situations over a long period of time, this Background allows a hunter to keep her cool and act quickly in high-pressure situations. Any time that an order of initiative is being determined for a turn, the hunter may add a number of Traits equal to her rating in this Background to her actual Trait rating for the purposes of determining who acts first, provided she isn't totally Surprised. (If a level of the *Alertness* Ability is spent to negate a Surprise, this Background functions normally.) This includes using edges, when applicable, but only applies when the hunter is performing actions in a turn of "combat time," whether or not an actual fight is occurring.

Thus, if a hunter with five Physical Traits and four levels of this Background enters a fight, she is considered to have nine Physical Traits for the purposes of deciding who acts first in a turn, as her calm nerves allow her to react faster than another person with the same number of Physical Traits might. It would also apply if she was attempting a Mental Challenge to administer first aid to a fallen comrade during a firefight, as she does not need to actually be fighting, merely immersed in an immediately hazardous situation.

It is best to ask the Storyteller before taking this Background, as some games do not use an initiative system to determine the order of actions in a turn, rendering this Background useless.

Influence

Society builds upon institutions. In doing so, people form gatherings of expertise that can be manipulated by those who know the right calls to make and strings to pull. If you have Influence, you can sway the direction of some areas of society, generating results you desire in a given field. It is a rare and valuable thing for a hunter to hold onto for very long after the Call, as the imbued tend to distance themselves from their old lives over time. Your Influence can be used to strike indirectly at monsters while protecting your own assets, and to gain information or special resources unavailable to those without such privileges.

Influence comes from many different areas. You must allocate Traits separately to each Influence; thus, if you have *Legal* x 4, you could still have *Police* x 3 independently but you would have to spend the Traits for each.

You cannot manage more Influence than the sum of your permanent Physical, Social, Mental and *Ally* Traits combined. This counts against all of your total Influence — your combined levels cannot exceed this total. After all, there are only so many things you can do in a day, though with some help a great deal is possible.

When you exercise Influence, you expend temporary Influence Traits. The tables for various Influence areas detail what you can do with a specific number of Traits. Performing an action requires a number of Traits equal to the level of the action; you must use three Traits to

perform an action listed at the third level of an Influence chart, for instance. Thus, with high levels of Influence, you can perform many small actions, or a few significant ones.

Certain levels of Influence gift you with items, money or aides. Unlike the *Resources* Background, money and equipment garnered with Influence does not automatically come each month; if you want a steady income from Influence, you must continually direct your Influence in that direction, and this does not come with any associated trappings of wealth (you'd have to buy a house and car separately, for instance). Aides garnered with Influence generally help only for one specific task, and usually only have the equivalent of one level of Ability in their area of skill—for more competent and readily available help, take *Allies*.

Most cities have only a set amount of Influence in various areas. For instance, Atlanta has a great deal of *Transportation* Influence, because it is a hub of travel, while Hollywood would have a lot of *High Society* and *Media*.

Storytellers should map out the total amount of each type of Influence to be had in the area. Once all of the Influence of a given type is used up, the only way to get more is to use Influence to grow that area of society (making new projects, sponsoring investment and so on), to destroy someone else's Influence and thus free up those resources, or to acquire an adversary's Influence in an area. Also, each area may have different reflections of the Influences listed here. A city with a thriving independent film community is going to have a different picture of *Media* or *High Society* than a city where the arts are being literally starved out due to budget cuts.

Each area of Influence has its own description. Be warned that certain ancient monsters or hideously wealthy and connected individuals may possess levels of Influence far beyond the features listed here, and wise hunters know that no matter how powerful they may be, there's always a bigger fish out there somewhere.

Bureaucracy

You can manage various government agencies and bureaus. By dealing with social programs and public servants, you can spin red tape, bypass rules and regulations or twist bureaucratic regimentation to your advantage. *Bureaucracy* is useful in operating or shutting down businesses, faking or acquiring permits and identification papers, and manipulating public utilities and facilities. Government clerks at the city and county level, utility workers, road crews, surveyors and other civil servants are potential contacts or allies.

Cost	Effect
1	Trace utility bills
2	Fake a birth certificate or driver's license
	Disconnect a single small residence's utilities
	Close a small road or park
	Get public aid (\$250)
3	Fake a death certificate, passport or green card
	Close a public school for a single day
	Shut down a minor business on a violation
4	Initiate a phone tap
	Fake land deeds
	Initiate a department-wide investigation
5	Start, stop or alter a city-wide program or policy
	Shut down a big business on a violation
	Rezone areas
	Obliterate records of a person on a city or county level

Church

Though the modern church has arguably less control over temporal society than it did in the Middle Ages, its policies still exert considerable influence over the direction of politics and communities. Knowing the appropriate churchmen allows insight into many mainstream religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Shinto or Buddhism (fringe or alternative groups, such as Scientology, are considered *Occult*). When you exercise *Church Influence*, you can change religious policy, affect the assignment of clergy and access a variety of lore and resources. Contacts and allies affected by *Church Influence* would include ministers, priests, bishops, Church-sponsored witch-hunters, holy orders and various attendees and assistants.

Cost

Effect

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Identify most secular members of a given faith in the local area
Pass as a member of the clergy
Peruse general church records (baptism, marriage, burial, etc.) |
| 2 | Identify higher church members
Track regular church members
Suspend lay members |
| 3 | Open or close a single church
Find the average church-associated hunter
Dip into the collection plate (\$250)
Access private information and archives of a church |
| 4 | Discredit or suspend high-level church members
Manipulate regional branches of the church |
| 5 | Organize major protests
Access ancient church lore and knowledge |

Finance

Manipulating markets, stock reports and investments is a hobby of many imbued, especially those who use their knowledge to keep hidden wealth. Though your actual available money is a function of your *Resources*, you can use *Finance Influence* to start or smother businesses, crush or support banking institutions and alter credit records. Clearly, such power over money is not to be trifled with — fortunes are made and destroyed with this sort of pull. CEOs, bankers, stockbrokers, bank tellers, yes men, financiers and loan agents are found among such work.

Cost

Effect

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Learn about major transactions and financial events
Raise capital (\$1,000)
Learn about general economic trends
Learn real motivations for many financial actions of others |
| 2 | Trace an unsecured small account
Raise capital to purchase a small business (single, small store) |
| 3 | Purchase a large business (a few small branches or a single large store or service) |

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4 | Manipulate local banking (delay deposits, some credit rating alterations)
Ruin a small business |
| 5 | Control an aspect of city-wide banking (shut off ATMs, arrange a bank "holiday")
Ruin a large business
Purchase a major company |

Health

Sooner or later most imbued will require serious medical attention of some kind, but those with an eye to the future cultivate an interest in local health resources before visiting the emergency room. Not only can such connections help get suspicious injuries (gunshots, large bites, etc.) treated with a minimum of difficulty, but they can also help track down signs of supernatural activity such as fake death certificates, a string of related deaths that have been swept under the rug and so on. All of these sorts of research and development fall under the purview of *Health Influence*. Coroners, doctors, lab workers, therapists, pharmacists and specialists are just a few of the folks found in this field.

Cost	Effect
1	Access a person's health records Fake vaccination records and the like Use public functions of health centers at your leisure
2	Access some medical research records Have minor lab work done Get a copy of a coroner's report Instigate minor quarantines
3	Corrupt results of tests or inspections Alter medical records
4	Acquire a body Completely rewrite medical records Abuse grants for personal use (\$250) Have minor medical research performed on a subject Institute large-scale quarantines Shut down businesses for "health code violations"
5	Have special research projects performed Have people institutionalized or released

High Society

The glitterati at the top of society move in circles of wealth and elegance. Access to famous actors, celebrities and the idle rich grants a certain sway over fashion trends, not to mention helps in scoring hard-to-find tickets or other backstage passes to the world of the famous. Combined with *Fame*, a modicum of *High Society Influence* turns a hunter into a debonair darling of the most exclusive social circles. Among these circles, one finds dilettantes, artists of almost any stripe, old money families, models, rock stars, sports figures and jetsetters.

Cost	Effect
1	Learn what is trendy Obtain hard-to-get tickets for shows

- | | |
|---|---|
| | Learn about concerts, shows or plays well before they are made public knowledge |
| 2 | Track most celebrities and luminaries |
| | Be a local voice in the entertainment field |
| | "Borrow" idle cash from rich friends (\$1000) |
| 3 | Crush promising careers |
| | Hobnob well above your station |
| 4 | Minor celebrity status |
| 5 | Get a brief appearance on a talk show that's not about to be canceled |
| | Ruin a new club, gallery, festival or other posh gathering |

Industry

The grinding wheels of labor fuel the economies and markets of the world. Machines, factories and blue-collar workers line up in endless drudgery, churning out the staples of everyday living, and many imbued were themselves employed before the Messengers changed everything. Control over *Industry* Influence sways the formation of unions, the movements of work projects, locations for factories and the product of manufacturing concerns. Union workers, foremen, engineers, construction workers, manual laborers and all manner of blue-collar workers are among these ranks.

- | Cost | Effect |
|------|---|
| 1 | Learn about industrial projects and movements |
| 2 | Have minor projects performed |
| | Dip into union funds or embezzle petty cash (\$500) |
| | Arrange small accidents or sabotage |
| 3 | Organize minor strikes |
| | Appropriate machinery for a short time |
| 4 | Close down a small plant |
| | Revitalize a small plant |
| 5 | Manipulate large local industry |

Legal

Since many of the operations that imbued undertake are at least marginally illegal, a good amount of sway over judges and lawyers is indispensable. Those hunters who know the ins and outs of the law are priceless to their confederates, often foregoing more dangerous duty to devote their time to bailing other imbued out of trouble or at least ensuring that they receive trials free of supernatural influence. Of course, a little *Legal* Influence is also excellent for harassing an enemy's assets, too — for example, a subpoena for a daytime court appearance can make a bloodsucker's existence difficult with just a phone call or two. Such Influence ranges from law schools and firms, to lawyers, judges, DAs, clerks and public defenders.

- | Cost | Effect |
|------|--|
| 1 | Get free representation for minor cases |
| 2 | Avoid bail for some charges |
| | Have minor charges dropped |
| 3 | Manipulate legal procedures (minor wills and contracts, court dates) |
| | Access public or court funds (\$250) |

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 | Get representation in most court cases
Issue subpoenas
Tie up court cases
Have most legal charges dropped
Cancel or arrange parole |
| 5 | Close down all but the most serious investigations
Have deportation proceedings held against someone |

Media

While all attempts at bringing the hunter cause directly to mass public attention have met with failure so far, the ability of influence different media groups can still be invaluable to a clever imbued. Putting specific emphasis on certain events can place an enemy in an uncomfortable spotlight, for example, or discredit a rival with a well-timed smear campaign. With *Media*, you can crush or alter news stories, control the operations of news stations and reporters and sway public opinion, with deejays, editors of all varieties, reporters, cameramen, photographers and broadcasters at your disposal. At Storyteller discretion, *Media* may also allow access to the more technical areas of television, radio or movies.

Cost	Effect
1	Learn about breaking stories early Submit small articles (within reason)
2	Suppress (but not stop) small articles or reports Get hold of investigative reporting information
3	Initiate news investigations and reports Get project funding and waste it (\$250) Ground stories and projects
5	Broadcast fake stories (local only) Kill small local articles or reports completely

Occult

The hidden world of the supernatural teems with secrets, conspiracies and unusual factions. Obviously, a hunter is aware that there are strange things out there by the fact of his imbuing and other things he has experienced firsthand, but hard knowledge of such things is a function of Abilities. By contrast, using *Occult Influence* you can dig up information to improve your knowledge, get inside the occult community and even possibly track down some less careful and/or more arrogant monsters. Even copies of the elusive hunter *Apocrypha* are available to those with the right connections. Cult leaders, alternative religious groups, charlatans, occultists, New Agers and a few more dangerous fringe elements can be found here.

Cost	Effect
1	Contact and make use of common occult groups and their practices Know some of the more visible occult figures
2	Know and contact some of the more obscure occult figures
3	Milk impressionable wannabes for bucks (\$250) Access occult tomes and writings

- | | |
|---|--|
| 4 | Learn the general whereabouts of a particularly incautious creature (one that has surrounded itself with a cult, opened a suspicious business, etc.) |
| 5 | Get a copy of the <i>Apocrypha</i>
Track down a lead on a fairly well-hidden creature |

Police

"To protect and serve" is the motto of the police, but many imbued quickly realize that exactly who is being protected and served may not always be who they'd like it to be. On the other hand, hunters with *Police Influence* can be very handy to when it comes to harassing otherwise secure creatures, or getting the authorities to respond just a little more slowly than normal to those reports of suspicious activity around a monster's haven.... Police of all ranks, detectives, clerical staff, dispatchers, prison guards, special divisions (such as SWAT or homicide) and local highway patrol make up these ranks.

Cost	Effect
1	Learn police procedures Hear police information and rumors Avoid traffic tickets
2	Have license plates checked Avoid minor violations (first conviction) Get "inside information"
3	Get copies of an investigation report Have police hassle, detain or harass someone Find bureau secrets
4	Access confiscated weapons or contraband Have some serious charges dropped Start an investigation Get money, either from the evidence room or as an appropriation (\$1,000)
5	Institute major investigations Arrange setups Instigate bureau investigations Have officers fired

Political

Although many imbued come to distrust government after seeing the supernatural at work within it, the power to manipulate political structures offers a host of possibilities to those daring enough to work within the system this way, not to mention offering a chance to strike at some monsters in their own backyard.... Altering party platforms, controlling local elections, changing appointed offices and calling in favors is all in the purview of *Political Influence*. Well-timed blackmail, bribery, spin doctoring or any sundry tricks are stock-in-trade on both sides of this fence. Some of the likely contacts and allies include pollsters, lobbyists, activists, party members, spin doctors and politicians from rural zoning committees to the mayors of major cities or Congressional representatives.

Cost	Effect
1	Minor lobbying

- | | |
|---|---|
| | Identify real platforms of politicians and parties |
| | Be in the know |
| 2 | Meet small-time politicians |
| | Garner inside information on processes, laws and the like |
| | Use a slush fund or fund-raiser (\$1000) |
| 3 | Sway or alter political projects (local parks, renovations, small construction) |
| 4 | Enact minor legislation |
| | Dash careers of minor politicians |
| 5 | Get your candidate in a minor office |
| | Enact encompassing legislature |

Street

Ignored and often spat on by their "betters," those in the dark alleys and slums have created their own culture to deal with life and any outsiders who might come calling. When calling on *Street Influence*, you use your connections on the underside of the city to find the homeless, gang members of all sorts, street buskers, petty criminals, prostitutes, residents of the slums and barrios, and fringe elements of so-called "deviant" cultures.

Cost

Effect

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Have a ear open for the word on the street |
| | Identify most gangs and know their turfs and habits |
| 2 | Live mostly without fear on the underside of society |
| | Keep a contact or two in most aspects of street life |
| | Access small-time contraband |
| 3 | Get insight into other areas of Influence |
| | Arrange some services from street people or gangs |
| | Get pistols or uncommon melee weapons |
| 4 | Mobilize groups of homeless |
| | Panhandle or hold a "collection" (\$250) |
| | Get hold of a shotgun, rifle or SMG |
| | Have a word in almost all aspects of gang operations |
| 5 | Control a single medium-sized gang |
| | Arrange impressive protests by street people |

Transportation

Even most monsters still need to get around by mundane means, and a hunter with this Influence can use this weak spot to cause all kinds of trouble and delays for their target. (If a creature has a particular vulnerability, such as debility to sunlight or inability to cross running water, the possibilities just get better and better.) What's more, getting access to special supplies and services can also take a measure of *Transportation*. All these things can be controlled with a bit of sway over truckers, harbors, railroads, airports, taxis, border guards, pilots and untold hundreds, as well as more mundane aspects like shipping and travel arrangements.

Cost

Effect

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Know what goes where, when and why |
| | Travel locally quickly and freely |

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Track an unwary target if he uses public transportation
Arrange passage safe (or at least concealed) from mundane threats (robbery, terrorism, etc.) |
| 3 | Seriously hamper an individual's ability to travel
Arrange passage that's <i>relatively</i> safe (or at least concealed) from supernatural threats, but only those that you are aware of and can prepare for in some way |
| 4 | Temporarily shut down one form of transportation (bus lines, ships, planes, trains, etc.)
Route money your way (\$500) |
| 5 | Reroute major modes of travel
Smuggle with impunity |

Underworld

Not all imbued were upstanding citizens before the Heralds called to them, and even those who were sometimes find themselves forced to deal with shady characters in order to survive. Whatever the case may be, it's a sad truth that the world of crime offers lucrative possibilities to strong-willed or subtle leaders. Guns, money, drugs and vice — such delicious pastimes can be had by anyone talented or simply vicious enough to take them. *Underworld* Influence lets you call upon favors for all manner of illegal dealings, and its ranks are filled by the Mafia, La Cosa Nostra, drug dealers, bookies, Yakuza, Tong gangs, hitmen, fences and criminal gangs.

Cost	Effect
1	Locate minor contraband (knives, small-time drugs, petty gambling, scalped tickets)
2	Obtain pistols, hard drugs, stolen cars Hire muscle to rough someone up Fence stolen loot Prove that crime pays (and score \$1,000)
3	Obtain a rifle, shotgun or SMG Arrange a minor "hit" Meet someone in "the Family"
4	Make white-collar crime connections
5	Arrange gangland assassinations Hire a demolition man or firebug Supply local drug needs

University

Institutions of learning and research are the purview of the *University* Influence. Access to the halls of learning can help you with any number of resources, from obscure folklore to research assistance to many impressionable young minds. School boards, students from kindergarten through college, graduate students, professors, teachers, deans, Greek orders, and a variety of staff fill the ivy-covered halls.

Cost	Effect
1	Know layout and policy of local schools Have access to low-level university resources Get records up to the high school level

- 2 Know a contact or two with useful knowledge or Abilities
 - Have minor access to facilities
 - Fake high school records
 - Obtain college records
- 3 Call in faculty favors
 - Cancel a class
 - Fix grades
 - Discredit a student
- 4 Organize student protests and rallies
 - Discredit faculty members
- 5 Falsify an undergraduate degree

Iron Willed

Many hunters continue on after suffering terrible losses, but an imbued with this Background can quite literally struggle on even when gravely wounded, though not without a monumental effort of will. The damage remains, and if serious enough can even kill the hunter if he's not treated in time, but as long as he can maintain his concentration he feels no ill effects from his wounds.

For each level of this Background, the hunter may ignore wound penalties for one level of injury, cumulatively — thus, an imbued with five levels of this Background ignores wound penalties for the first five levels of damage he receives. Each turn that he wishes to ignore wound penalties in this fashion, however, he must either spend a Mental Trait or make a Willpower Challenge against a difficulty of five. As soon as he fails a test or fails to spend a Mental Trait in this manner, the benefits of this Background end immediately and cannot be reactivated for the rest of the scene. If the hunter has five levels of this Background, he may stave off Incapacitation automatically by spending two Mental Traits every turn — he cannot run or fight, but can still speak, move at a walking pace and perhaps use some edges or less physically demanding Abilities.

Patron

The Heralds typically contact a hunter directly only once, to imbue them with the power to face the creatures of the night; after that the hunter is on essentially her own, for better or worse, and hears nothing more from the Messengers. Imbued with this Background, on the other hand, are still contacted by the Heralds with some frequency, receiving all manner of mysterious omens, cryptic messages, bizarre visions and dire warnings seemingly out of the blue. However, unless they are painfully direct (and the Messengers seldom are), it is up to the hunter to make sense of all images and impressions received this way, though if she is stumped and desperately needs to decipher them she may make a Mental Challenge of the *Enigmas* Ability to ask the Narrator for a hint.

In either case, a hunter has one turn or minute of warning before a vision strikes, as she can sense the imminent onslaught of information — for the following turn or minute, she is either frozen in place or sent into a seizure-style fit and can take no action, even to defend herself, as the images from the Heralds sweep over her. She may act normally on the following turn, though she is considered down a number of Traits equal to her *Patron* rating that turn, due to residual distraction and discomfort.

Naturally, clever Storytellers will be quick to take advantage of this mysterious link to the Heralds to introduce all sorts of foreshadowing, clues to puzzles currently

facing the hunters and other information to the chronicle. The imbued's rating in this Background determines how often she is contacted by the Messengers, and to some extent how direct or intelligible their communication is — those with higher levels have a somewhat easier time understanding the flood of information they're hit with, but suffer equally frequent fits and convulsions as the Heralds speak to them. Roughly speaking, a hunter will be contacted once per story for each *Patron* Trait she possesses, but need fear being contacted in the middle of the action (i.e., during a session) only once or twice per story at most. At five levels of this Background, however, she receives information once every week of downtime, and can expect to contact (and its accompanying seizure) every other session of play or so.

Pawn

Here's the good news: a hunter with this Background has attracted the notice of a supernatural creature, who regularly gives him supplies and some inside information to help him destroy other monsters in the area. It might even intervene directly to save him from danger if he's been especially good at his job, though it's best not to count on that too much. Here's the bad news: whether the hunter guesses it or not, he's being used as a hatchet man against the creature's enemies as part of some monstrous power play, which means that as soon as his usefulness ends or he shows signs of going against it in any way, the beast will use all its power to try to take him down.

The more levels of this Background a hunter has, the more powerful his patron is in terms of abilities and resources, but the less he knows about it and what its long term motivations might be. One or two Traits indicates a creature that is probably more clever than it is powerful, and whom the hunter knows at least a bit about in return; three or four Traits, on the other hand, typically denotes a creature (or group of creatures) who have managed to screen their identities from the hunter quite well, but who can supply him with fairly considerable resources when required. At a full five Traits, the hunter will probably never be able to trace back exactly who is supporting him, and will be up against a mighty adversary if he ever goes rogue, but the impressive assets it provides him with will likely keep him from asking too many questions... at least for a while.

In game terms, this Background works much like *Fraternity*, and can be converted into temporary levels of other Backgrounds to represent the aid that the monster is offering, and the Storyteller should feel free to disseminate information about the creature's enemies as well. Just bear in mind that this Background springs entirely from self-interest on the creature's part, so while both sides may play along for a while (particularly if the monster manages to dupe the hunter into thinking he's doing the right thing), it's only telling him what he needs to hear, not necessarily the whole truth as it stands.

Resources

You have access to liquid capital and spending money. You also have some solid resources that you can use when times are tight. Unlike the use of *Finance*, these *Resources* are always readily available and come to you automatically due to your investments, jobs and holdings.

Your number of *Resources* Traits determines the amount of money and capital that you can secure. By expending temporary *Resources* Traits (which return at the next game session), you can draw upon your regular income, as shown in the accompanying table. If you expend permanent *Resources*, you can divest yourself of holdings, allowing access to ten times the amount shown on the table. However, the

limits of what you can buy are always adjudicated by the Storyteller. Truly powerful uses of *Resources* are best left to downtimes and moderation between game sessions.

Resource Allocation

No Traits:	Poverty; income \$200. Get roommates, bus pass.
One Trait:	Small savings and holdings; income \$500. Have apartment, cheap means of transportation.
Two Traits:	Modest savings and holdings; income \$1,000. Have condo and motorcycle or modest car.
Three Traits:	Significant savings and holdings; income \$3,000. Own house, car.
Four Traits:	Large savings and holdings. Income \$10,000. Own large house or some small properties, two vehicles, some luxuries and unusual items.
Five Traits:	Rich. Income \$30,000. Own estate and grounds, multiple small properties, several vehicles, arts and treasures, luxury items.

Roots

While many imbued find themselves distanced from the community by the nature of their contact with the Messengers, no few remain as deeply tied to the lives of their neighbors as they were before, if not more so. A hunter with this Background has just such a connection — she is well-liked and well-trusted by those in her community, and they naturally come to her with their problems and concerns. In return for her help, they gladly look out for her and what they perceive to be her best interests, and will do what they can to help her if she requires it of them. They cannot be exposed to the details of her new life without endangering them, nor will they actively take part in illegal activity or offer highly specialized information, but they will do their best to help out so long as those limits aren't pushed, and without asking too many questions either — for example, they might hide her from a police sweep, look after her when she's ill or let her know if a suspicious person was seen hanging around her apartment.

It should be noted that this Trait represents a broad bond with a community, as opposed to the more powerful and specialized benefits offered by *Allies* or *Contacts*, though it would be possible to create a character with truly intimate ties by combining the three. In game terms, all uses of *Influences* within her particular community take half the normal time, and she can expect food, shelter, friendly advice and some basic medical help if she's ever in dire need. What's more, she adds her rating in this Background to all Social and Mental Challenges related to interacting with her neighbors, noticing something wrong in the neighborhood and otherwise keeping an eye on her community, reflecting her intimate familiarity with her neighborhood. The size of the community she's

ties to depends on the number of levels of this Background she has, as shown by the chart below.

Background Rating	Community Size
1	Small group: immediate family or group of friends.
2	Specific community: a school, apartment building, etc.
3	Small neighborhood: a few square blocks.
4	Large community: several dozen blocks, or a small social or ethnic group citywide.
5	Broad community: entire section of city or a large ethnic or social group.

Of course, such a relationship has to be maintained, and as with the *Everyman* Background a hunter who is noticed performing too many suspicious, criminal or just disturbing activities may well lose this Background. Likewise, if the hunter starts refusing to help her neighbors without a good reason, or abuses their trust when they come to her for assistance, she may quickly find her neighbors giving up on her, or even aiding those who come looking for her (though more out of petty spite than true ill will).

Soulmate

True love is a rare thing, especially in a world crawling with monsters, but a hunter with this Background has somehow managed to find it, and the thought of her love gives her strength to continue despite terrible odds, especially if her love's life is at stake. Aside from the rich roleplaying opportunities this relationship offers — and the Storyteller should ensure that such roleplaying interludes are attended to properly if the player wishes to keep this Background — there are several in-game benefits as well. Once per session she may add her *Soulmate* rating to her regular Traits on one test of any kind, provided it directly involves reaching her *Soulmate* or protecting him from harm. Additionally, the imbued may spend a level of this Background to immediately regain one Willpower Trait, but only if her true love is in direct, immediate danger and the hunter is actively going to rescue him.

For all the benefits this Background offers, it has some substantial drawbacks as well — love is always a state of vulnerability for a person as well as one of support, and that is especially true for a hunter who routinely makes enemies of various foul night creatures. The hunter will do the best she can to protect him at all times, and if her beloved is actively in danger, she *must* go to help him immediately. Period. End of discussion. What's more, should she ever fail to protect him from a serious threat she believes she could have prevented (note that it is whether the *character* believes she could've helped, not whether the player knew she had a chance or not), she falls into a state of severe depression and self-loathing for a period of time determined by the Storyteller of weeks/sessions, putting her down a number of Traits equal to her *Soulmate* rating on all tests not related to her *Soulmate*.

If her loved one is actually killed, such losses and lack of self-confidence might become permanent at the Storyteller's discretion, and she may also gain a derangement related to the incident as well. If the Storyteller is feeling charitable, she may be allowed to re-assign the Traits from this Background elsewhere (*Berserk* is a good choice), but only after some wrenching roleplaying and an appropriately extended

time of mourning. It should also be noted that unless a player purchases the appropriate Backgrounds, a *Soulmate* is not a bystander and can't deal with the supernatural, which may have nasty repercussions for the relationship if the hunter attempts to show her love the truth of reality. In no instance should a *Soulmate* be another imbued, nor can it be another player character. Doing so has a nasty tendency to spoil both character's relationships as the players worry about the out-of-game numbers behind their interaction, and also ties the Storyteller's hands somewhat in regards to the question of how vulnerable this true love is to outside forces.

Steel Nerves

Not all threats to the sanity of a hunter come from monsters and their insidious mystical powers. Indeed, while an active Conviction defense may protect the imbued from supernatural horrors, all too often hunters are exposed to "mundane" horrors — grisly murder scenes, threats to family and innocents, horrific torture and so on — that can inflict serious psychic harm on a hunter as quickly as any supernatural power. An imbued with this Background, however, has somehow developed a resistance to such horrifying scenes — he might be a police officer or paramedic who sees a lot of grisly sights, or perhaps he's a journalist who has covered scenes of genocide in the past. Maybe he draws exceptional strength from religion, or holds onto thoughts of his family to keep him going when even other imbued might pause or lose control.

Regardless of the source of his strength, whenever the hunter is threatened with gaining a derangement from a non-supernatural source of mental shock, he may immediately make a number of Willpower tests equal to his rating in this Background, against a difficulty of five Traits. If he wins even one of these tests, the derangement is staved off indefinitely, though this doesn't mean he's not affected at all, just that he's able to keep his wits about him regardless of the psychic anguish he's enduring. In addition, if the Storyteller has described how the hunter automatically reacts to a non-supernatural horror (running in fear, freezing in panic, vomiting, etc.), the hunter may spend a level of this Background to ignore those directions and act as he desires, instead of spending the Willpower Trait such self-control normally requires. Levels spent in this fashion are lost for the rest of the night, though there is no limit to how many may be spent this way each session.

Willpower

Willpower Traits measure the strength of your character's resolve and sense of self. By exerting your Willpower, you can withstand otherwise untenable conditions, renew your commitment to a course of action or empower certain difficult edges.

Willpower Traits are not described with adjectives. You simply have permanent Willpower — your normal limit of Willpower Traits — and temporary Willpower, your expendable Traits. All hunters and bystanders begin play with two Willpower Traits, and more can be purchased with Free Traits (during creation) or Experience Traits (once play begins). When you expend temporary Willpower Traits or raise your permanent Willpower, you regain temporary Traits at a rate of one per game session, though your Storyteller may vary this to suit the pace of her game or to simplify bookkeeping.

Imbued, bystanders and normal people all share the same maximum numbers of Willpower Traits — as with Attribute Traits, they are grouped by age, reflecting the ability of the human will to persevere and grow stronger over time. Once again, these maximums may be adjusted if the Storyteller desires, though in no case should a character ever be allowed to have more than ten permanent Willpower Traits.

Willpower	Maximums
Age	<i>Willpower Maximum</i>
Young (13-19)	6
Peak (20-65)	8
Old (65+)	9

Expending a Willpower Trait allows for one of any number of effects. Generally, Willpower Traits allow you to keep self-determination and to empower extremely difficult or complex actions. Using Willpower is almost always a reflexive action, and does not count as your turn.

- A Willpower Trait can be spent to refresh all of your lost Traits in one Attribute category — Physical, Social or Mental. You may do this once per category per game session. This does not apply to Ability Traits.
- Expenditure of a Willpower Trait allows you to gain a retest when defending against a Mental or Social Challenge. Note that certain edges or supernatural powers may override this stipulation, as detailed in their description.
- Spending one Willpower Trait enables you to enter a challenge for which you lack an appropriate Ability. Thus, you can make a test even if you would normally require a specific Ability that you don't have or have used up.
- You can expend a Willpower Trait to ignore all wound penalties, up to and including Incapacitated, for the duration of one full turn.
- Spending a Willpower Trait lets you temporarily suppress a derangement. If you spend enough Willpower Traits on suppressing a derangement, you may eventually overcome it. See "Derangements" on pp. 259-264.
- Certain edges or other imbued powers require the expenditure of Willpower.

Conviction

Conviction represents your hunter's inner strength and drive for the hunt, and relates specifically to the use of edges and other talents unique to the imbued. It is separate from Willpower because it is imparted during the imbuing and represents the faith that a character has in her cause and her ability to continue with the mission, no matter what approach she might take to it. A character with a high amount of Conviction is full of energy and resolve for the hunt, while a character with little or no Conviction is exhausted and possibly dispirited as well, quite vulnerable to the touch of the monsters.

Conviction Traits are not described with adjectives. You simply have Conviction Traits, which are most commonly spent to activate the sight, Conviction defense or to power edges. Your starting Conviction rating is determined by your creed; this is also the number of Conviction Traits you "default" to after gaining a permanent Virtue Trait, as described below. You may also purchase additional Conviction Traits during character creation if you desire, to a maximum of eight. In no case can you have more than 10 temporary Conviction Traits at a time, however, and should you gain an amount that would take you over that limit, the excess is lost.

Expending a Conviction Trait allows for one of any number of effects. Generally, Conviction Traits allow you to keep self-determination and to empower extremely

difficult or complex actions. Using Conviction is almost always a reflexive action, and does not count as your turn.

- **The Sight:** Also known as a hunter's "Conviction defense," spending a single Conviction Trait makes your character automatically and completely *immune* to the following powers and conditions for the remainder of the scene: illusions, artificial hallucinations, mental or emotional control and manipulation, possession, invisibility or comparable powers, and any kind of supernatural fear or memory-damaging effect such as usually accompanies the presence of a ghost or shapechanger. No test is involved — such effects simply fail in relation to the hunter, although in the case of powers that affect an area or group other characters without such protection may still be effected normally. If a hunter is challenged with one of these powers, a hunter may simply declare "Conviction active" in lieu of performing a test, though canny hunters who realize a creature is trying to manipulate them might still play along.

At the Storyteller's discretion, *truly* ancient or fearsome creatures may be able to try to overcome a hunter's Conviction defense with their powers, but such instances should be extremely rare and reserved for moments of high drama, as the absolute nature of Conviction defense is part of the blessing bestowed by the Heralds and essential for letting hunter players feel they have some chance to stand their ground against monsters.

In addition to these immunities, hunters with the sight active can automatically recognize any supernatural creatures they see as being either *not human* or *not living*, though without edges or other knowledge they do not necessarily know what a kind of monster it is — they just know that it isn't right. This includes the ability to see any ghosts or other incorporeal creatures in the vicinity, and spirits possessing a body are automatically revealed as if they were superimposed on top of the person they're inhabiting. It should also be noted that while the sight does detect humans who have been granted a measure of supernatural power, such as an apprentice witch or a blood puppet, it *never* detects other imbued or bystanders as anything out of the ordinary. Hunters must rely on other means to recognize each other.

In mixed games with other supernatural characters, it is recommended that hunters can use an out-of-game sign to indicate that their second sight is active by making a "C" around their right eye with their thumb and index finger when they enter a room or when they first approach or are approached by another character who might be a monster. This sign is a simple and easy way of determining when a hunter's Conviction defense is active in order to avoid arguments later. ("I used my powers on you before you had your defense up!" "No, I had it on when I entered the room!" "Did not!" "Did too!")

- **Activating Edges:** Some edges require the expenditure of one or more temporary Conviction Traits to activate, as noted in their description. Using Conviction in this manner does *not* count as a character's one opportunity to risk Conviction in a scene (see below).

- **Risking Conviction:** Once per scene, a hunter may choose to risk Conviction Traits on a single *edge-related* test, reflecting his willingness to invest his faith in the hunt in his new abilities. To do so, the player must announce that he is gambling Conviction on the test and state the number of Traits he is risking, which can be up as many as a number equal to the temporary Conviction Traits he currently has. He is considered up a number of Traits equal to the Conviction he risked on that one test for the purposes of resolving ties or initiating overbids, potentially making him far more likely to succeed at his task. If he succeeds and accomplishes something by doing

Optional Rule: Reacting With Conviction

Conviction provides a wonderful defense against manipulation by supernatural forces, but it can quickly drain a character's precious reserves to constantly spend it every time a new scene begins just to make sure a dramatic moment isn't ruined by every hunter running screaming from the room. It therefore an option for the Storyteller to rule that characters are allowed to activate their Conviction defense as a reaction to the sudden presence of the supernatural rather than simply activating it at the beginning of the scene. Doing so can cut down on the amount of Conviction players spend, but at the same time adds an extra element of risk and suspense as well.

System: Any time a hunter would be exposed to a supernatural force in some way that might cause a Conviction defense response, the hunter must make a Mental Challenge with the appropriate Ability required to detect that particular threat — *Intuition* for educated guesses ("I read this is the most haunted place in this house, so be ready"), *Alertness* for physical signs of the supernatural ("Did you guys just feel a cold chill go by you?") or *Awareness* for all other phenomena or just a general supernatural "danger sense" ("I think something just tried to touch my mind"). The difficulty is determined by the strength of the phenomena as well as the care taken by the supernatural creature to keep its efforts from being noticed. Success indicates the hunter has enough of an advance warning for the player to spend a Conviction Trait to notice a creature or block a power before it takes full effect; alternately, the player may simply spend a level of the requisite ability for the hunter to automatically detect the threat in time, though doing so can quickly exhaust a character's Ability reserves. This system generally works best in hunters-only games where Narrator characters are portraying the monsters, as it can quickly add a cumbersome level of challenges to mixed games, though ultimately it is up to the Storyteller to decide whether to use Conviction proactively (as normal), reactively or some combination of the two.

so, then he keeps all the Conviction Traits he risked and gains an additional temporary Conviction as his character's faith in his abilities is increased. If he is successful but nothing significant is accomplished, such as using *Illuminate* to try to find monsters when none are actually present, then he keeps his Conviction risked but does not gain an additional Trait. The Narrator is the final judge of what tests can have Conviction risked on them, as well as whether or not a success netted enough of a result to earn an additional Trait.

If the player fails on a test that he has risked Conviction on, however, he must immediately make two Simple Tests. If he wins or ties either of these tests, the risk is simply considered a failure and the hunter loses only the Conviction Traits he risked. If he loses both of these Simple Tests, however, the risk is considered to have botched disastrously — not only does he lose *all* of his temporary Conviction Traits, but he must also roleplay the utter loss and vulnerability of losing his one sure defense against the darkness that surrounds him. Especially devastating botches may earn the hunter a temporary derangement or other handicap, if the Storyteller feels one is warranted.

- **Gaining Ground:** At the Storyteller's discretion, one or two temporary Conviction Traits may be gained for a truly extraordinary success related to the hunt:

achieving some great victory, realizing a long-term goal, learning a deep insight related to a character's creed or philosophy, resolving a powerful between her old life and her new one, and so on. These bonuses should be rare, however, and reserved as a reward for intense drama and excellent roleplaying of the character's concept and creed, not just bounties for the hunter with the largest stack of monster skulls.

- **Losing Touch:** On the other hand, the Storyteller may also rule that particularly devastating failures related to the mission cost a character a Trait or two of temporary Conviction as well: losing a loved one to a monster attack, failing some important task in line with one's creed, finding out a deep-seated belief was a lie or some other devastating turn of events. Such Trait losses should be fairly few and far between, however; hunters lose things and make sacrifices all the time in the name of the hunt, and so only truly disheartening failures can usually earn this loss.

- **Maxing Out:** Any time a character has 10 temporary Conviction Traits, the player may choose to cash them in for a permanent Virtue Trait of his choice. When this occurs, the character's Conviction returns to the normal starting level for his creed and he must begin the long trek back to 10 Conviction Traits before he can gain another Virtue Trait, thus deepening his understanding of the hunt and allowing him access to more edges as well. At the Storyteller's option, the Virtue Trait you purchase in this manner may have to be related to the circumstances where you earned the Conviction Traits you cashed in; for example, it might not make much sense to buy a Vision Trait if you earned your Conviction in a bloody battle against a marauding shapechanger pack.

A character is not required to cash in his Conviction when he reaches 10 Traits; he might need all the help he can get in some upcoming battle, for example. However, while he remains at 10 Conviction Traits, any additional Traits that would take him over this limit are lost, and of course there's always the risk of losing most or all of these Traits on a failed or botched risk.

Virtue Traits

If a creed defines what philosophy a hunter follows, then Virtues are the essence of what those ideals are made of. While hunters are individuals and do what they do from their own motivations, for game purposes the three main approaches to the hunt have been categorized as Virtues. Each creed has a Virtue that it holds as primary to its philosophy, and the rating a hunter has in a Virtue determines how committed he is to that ideal and how well he understands it in the context of the hunt.

Each Virtue assumes a different philosophy about the hunt. An outline of each Virtue's primary tenets follows, as well the common uses of and applications of Virtue Traits in play:

Mercy — You understand that most monsters were once people too, and that many of them suffer terribly in their current state; while that does not excuse them from crimes they might commit, you strive to remember and possibly rekindle the spark of humanity that resides in even the foulest creatures. You know that the imbued only make more enemies for themselves when they make extreme assumptions; the only lasting victories in life come when both sides are willing to meet to discuss their differences and come to some kind of compromise. Of course, should a monster be beyond redemption, there's no choice but to put it down for good.

Vision — You focus less on day-to-day problems, instead spending your time planning for the long term and — more importantly — searching for the answers to

the larger questions surrounding your new life: *Where do monsters come from? Who are the Heralds? Why are some Chosen and others left blind? What will happen if all the monsters are destroyed? What is all this suffering for?* Only when such questions have answers will an ultimate solution be possible.

Zeal — All the rationalizations in the world don't do a damn bit of good for a victim who has suffered at the hands of monsters. You don't care why creatures do what they do, you just do your best to keep them from hurting others, no matter what it takes. Failing that, you make sure they pay for their crimes, and if that means taking pre-emptive action to ensure a monster doesn't hurt more people, well....

- **The Creed:** Although on the surface it may appear to a chicken and egg argument, in game terms a character's creed determines which Virtue is considered to be his primary one for the purposes of edges and Virtue advancement. Avengers, Defenders and Judges all use *Zeal* as their primary Virtue; Innocents, Martyrs and Redeemers have *Mercy*; and Visionaries, Waywards and Hermits require adherence to *Vision*. A character can have ratings in the other Virtues outside of her primary one, but a character's primary Virtue must always be greater than or equal to her rating in either of the other two Virtues. A Defender cannot have more Traits in *Mercy* or *Vision* than he does in *Zeal*, for example, although he can have an equal amount of *Zeal* as he does in the other two.

- **Multiple Virtues:** It is possible to have Traits in multiple Virtues, provided the hunter respects the rule about keeping his primary Virtue equal to or greater than any others. Splitting up a hunter's attention (and Virtue Traits) in this fashion slows his access to powerful edges or other creed features, but offers the added advantage of a wider perspective than the one of someone who just has a rating in their creed's Virtue. For example, an Avenger may start off with just a narrow focus on attacking the enemy (beginning with only *Zeal* Traits), but eventually realize that a larger scheme is needed if the war is to be won (reflected by the acquisition of a *Vision* Trait later on). Aside from the fact that a character may also acquire edges from these other Virtues that more narrow-minded colleagues might not develop, it is an excellent way of tracking a character's progression as the hunt goes on.

- **Gaining Edges:** Virtues are used to purchase edges, a process described in more detail described in the edge chapter. In a nutshell, however, the more powerful the edge, the more Virtue Traits it costs for a hunter to acquire, as illustrated by the accompanying chart. A hunter may never have an edge higher than the highest level edge he has in his creed's primary path, and he must have at least one edge of each level before he can purchase an edge of the next level — he cannot “skip” a level to learn a more powerful edge. Thus, a player who wishes to purchase a Devoted edge must have at least one Touched edge and Gifted edge from that same path before he can purchase the Devoted edge he desires. That also means that he must have a minimum rating of six Virtue Traits in that particular Virtue — one Virtue Trait for a Touched edge, two Virtue Traits for a Gifted edge and three Virtue Traits for a Devoted edge. Of course, he may purchase additional edges of a single level if he desires — purchasing both Touched edges of a particular path, for example — so long as he still respects the fact that he must never exceed the number of edges he has in his creed's primary path.

- **Edgeworks:** Whenever an edge calls for a test of some kind, a hunter may add his rating in the appropriate Virtue rating to his bid for the purposes of resolving ties and initiating overbids. This reflects the fact that while hunters are human, when they call upon their edges to battle the supernatural, their own drive for the hunt fuels their efforts as well, possibly even raising them to levels that are beyond normal human

limits for the purposes of the edge. Thus, if a Mercy edge calls for a Social Challenge, the hunter adds his Mercy rating to his Social Traits for the purposes of determining ties and overbids.

- **Gaining Virtues:** Virtues cannot be increased with Experience Traits; only “cashing in” 10 temporary Conviction Traits can increase a character’s Virtue rating, making for slow and arduous going indeed. (See the “Conviction” section for details on this process.) This also means that a character cannot develop any new edges until he raises his Virtues to a sufficient level, unless he decides to use previously “unspent” Virtue Traits to develop additional edges. Perhaps he decides to stay focused on his creed’s primary Virtue alone, sacrificing some versatility for the increased power and sense of purpose focusing on one path offers. Or he may choose to have Traits in two or even all three of the Virtues, reflected a broader, more well-balanced approach to the hunt that makes up in adaptability what it lacks in raw power.

- **Consequences of High Virtue:** Of course, there are some who are willing to pursue their primary Virtue to such a high degree that it begins to eat away at their sanity, even as it offers them commensurately powerful edges and other benefits. Old friends and causes are cast aside — only the hunter’s mission matters, and even close loved ones may be rejected as the character descends into the depths of her drive for the hunt. When a hunter reaches seven Virtue Traits, he acquires a permanent derangement related to his mission or his obsession with completing it; each additional Virtue Trait beyond seven adds another derangement to this list as well. Stemming as they do from the close relationship between a character and the Heralds, these derangements cannot be permanently cured, though they can be temporarily subdued with Willpower Traits or appropriated edges and other powers.

Although it remains the Storyteller’s discretion if or when the option should be used, she is well within her rights to declare that a character at seven Virtue Traits or beyond is so alien and obsessed as to be removed from regular play, either reverting to a Narrator character position or perhaps an occasional mentor (or enemy) role later on in the chronicle. This is not meant to punish a player for building up a character’s Virtues, but rather as an indication of just how consumed a character with such Virtues becomes, not to mention a way of safeguarding against characters being so powerful that they run roughshod over the game and other players.

Derangements

Mental instability and insanity plague many hunters, who are gripped by their guilt, fear, frustration and inability to deal with world that has suddenly opened up before their eyes. Some others suffer devastating setbacks that cause temporary or even lasting damage to their mental health, and may require months or even years of therapy to overcome before the hunter can be “normal” once more. It’s even rumored that hunters who are far along the path of their primary Virtue begin developing an increasing amount of derangements from their proximity to the Heralds, though they are still few imbued so powerful and widely known enough to make this theory a truly accepted one. derangements represent specific mental problems that sometimes crop up in situations of stress.

Derangements are advanced roleplaying, and should only be taken with the consultation of the Storyteller. Fuller descriptions of them can be found on pp. 259-264.

Negative Traits

As listed previously under Attributes, you can take Negative Traits to specify particular weaknesses inherent to your character. The listings of Negative Traits are included with the other Traits on pp. 101-106.

When someone successfully guesses your Negative Trait in a challenge, you are forced to risk an additional Trait to continue with the challenge. Thus, if you enter a Mental Challenge but your opponent successfully guesses one of your Negative Mental Traits, you must bid and risk an additional Trait to continue with the challenge. If you do not have any more Traits to risk, you automatically lose the challenge.

Merits and Flaws

As optional Traits to flesh out your character, Merits and Flaws allow you to specify particular advantages or disadvantages that are not covered by Attributes, Abilities or Backgrounds. All Merits and Flaws are organized into specific categories, according to their type. To purchase a Merit, you must spend Free Traits equal to the cost of the Merit; taking a Flaw, conversely, hinders you with a handicap of some sort but offers additional Free Traits. You can take up to seven Traits each of Merits and Flaws. You may only purchase Merits beyond that point with Storyteller permission; on the other hand, you may take as many Flaws as you like (so long as you do not create a caricature rather than a character), but only receive compensation for the first seven Traits of Flaws that you take.

Normally, you must purchase Merits and Flaws during character creation. However, with an appropriate story, you may be able to buy a new Merit with experience equal to double its value or overcome a Flaw (again, with experience equal to double its value).

Longtime devotees of *Mind's Eye Theatre* will notice that there is no section for Supernatural Merits and Flaws. This is no oversight, so don't go reaching for that **Laws of the Hunt** to make your kinain/Kinfolk/ghouled hedge wizard uber-hunter just yet — if it wasn't obvious before now, understand that neither hunters nor bystanders can ever have any supernatural powers, qualities or heritage of any kind. Period. No, most of these Traits offer instead relatively small benefits or drawbacks in a particular situation, because those are the kind of quirks that ordinary people have, and players should view them accordingly.

Social Merits

Approachable (1 Trait)

People from all walks of life find it easy to talk to you, and getting even traumatized or suspicious folks to open up to you doesn't take much effort. You are two Traits up on all such Social Challenges involving normal people or other hunters, and one Trait up on appropriate tests when dealing with monsters that still fancy themselves at least somewhat human.

Early Adopter (1 Trait)

You take pains to keep up with the latest technology, and while it may strain your finances from time to time, it does give you advantage when trying to figure out the

Trait-Stacking For Fun and Profit

Some players will naturally look at this extensive list and see right past the sea of roleplaying opportunities before them, focusing instead on the fact that it's often possible to load up on related Merits and develop a character who gets an absurd amount of bonus Traits or difficulty breaks in some fairly common and/or potentially unbalancing circumstance. ("I have *Acute Sense: Vision, Ability Aptitude: Firearms, Good Night Vision, Lucky* and *Daredevil* — that basically means I'm up 10 Traits on all shots I take at night and have at least one free retest for each one, right?") For sake of retaining some semblance of fairness, then, assume that bonus Traits or difficulty reductions from multiple Merits do *not* stack unless noted in their description, or if the Storyteller specifically allows such combinations to occur. As a rule, only the largest benefit applies, and in the case of a tie the hunter may decide which benefit he receives. This should restrain the urge some players have to build invincible super-hunters, while still permitting players to take related Merits if they desire.

Naturally, this limitation does *not* apply to the penalties earned from having multiple Flaws that come into play simultaneously; the poor bastard must just suffer through his abominable luck somehow, and pray that his weaknesses don't line up like that ever again.

latest technology (that consumers might be familiar with, anyway). You are two Traits up on all tests to figure out how to operate unfamiliar devices.

Funny (1 Trait)

Good comedic timing is rare, but you have it in spades; not only does this get you more than your share of party invitations, but your knack for getting a laugh also means that you know what type of humor to use in a given situation. You're invaluable at keeping up morale, and are two Traits up on any Social Challenge to bolster morale or lighten someone's mood in a helpful fashion.

Good Listener (1 Trait)

Most people just wait for their turn to speak, but you genuinely *listen* to what other people are saying, and this willingness to entertain their thoughts without interjecting your own opinion means that people tend to tell you more than they expect to. In any apparently friendly situation that involves someone else talking to you more than you talk back, you are two Traits up on any Social Challenge to get information from them as your receptiveness encourages them to say more than they might otherwise would about a subject.

Good Taste (1 Trait)

While your knowledge of pop culture probably leaves something to be desired, you have a knack for giving the right presents, quoting the right wits and otherwise impressing other people with how cultured and refined you are. You are two Traits up on any Social Challenge to impress or make contacts with like-minded individuals, due to their natural acceptance of your excellent taste.

Gossip (1 Trait)

Petty rumors and juicy secrets may be the ruin of polite society, but you just can't help yourself — when presented with a chance to learn such tidbits, you can't pass it up. Fortunately, this also means that other gossips recognize a kindred spirit in you,

which means that you seldom have trouble finding people to dish the dirt with. Lower the difficulty of all non-violent, non-Intimidation Social Challenge related to learning gossip or other small secrets by two. (Remember, this is gossip, not state secrets, although you can frequently make a surprisingly accurate tapestry of a target's life if you tie together enough such loose ends.)

Lovestruck (1 Trait)

Ah, *l'amour*! You're in love, and the world suddenly seems a much better place, allowing you to wake up more refreshed than normal each morning. Unlike the *Soulmate* Background, this love may be fleeting if you don't work to maintain the relationship (causing you to lose the Merit). However, until such a thing occurs, you regain two Willpower Traits from natural rest anytime other hunters would regain one (between games, every good night's sleep, etc.).

Media Junkie (1 Trait)

From TV talk shows to radio call-ins to online chat groups, you're an avid consumer of pop culture, and if anyone's up on the latest movies or music it'll be you. While this can suck up your downtime to an almost unhealthy degree, you are two Traits up on all tests related to researching anything related to pop culture, or on all Social Challenges involving fellow devotees of these mediums.

Natural Leader (1 Trait)

Natural magnetism and leadership capabilities spring from your actions and words. Others want to follow you, and you easily take charge. You gain two Bonus Traits on tests of leadership, whether using that Ability or otherwise. You must have at least six Social Traits to take this Merit.

Natural Politician (1 Trait)

Machiavelli was pretty bright, but a few more years in the game and you just might be able to give the old boy a few tips yourself. You understand how power flows in organizations, and whether or not you have actual *Politics* Ability or Influence, the arts of deal-making and power-brokering come naturally to you. You are two Traits up on all Social Challenges in situations where politics is a factor, whether it's an international summit or a meeting of the neighborhood watch. You must have at least six Social Traits to take this Merit.

Punctual (1 Trait)

Punctuality is nearly a lost art in these hectic times, but not for you. If the boss wants you in a meeting at 9, you're waiting patiently outside his office at 8:59. This may not seem like that much of a boon, but being on time (and scheduling your activities accordingly) is so second nature to you that barring some disaster or deliberate outside interference, you are assumed to make all meetings and other appointments that you have on a given day, in addition to your hunting activities. Needless to say, this can be a wonderful aid in maintaining a double life without losing your job, or even just making sure that you make it home from zombie-slaying in time to cook dinner for the kids. (Narrators should use common sense if a hunter begins trying to abuse this Merit and devotes too much time to the hunt to possibly make it to all of their regular obligations as well.)

Smooth (1 Trait)

Regardless of your actual upbringing or etiquette skills, you have such a natural grace and carefree charm that other people tend to forgive your little foibles, even if they do not actually like you. Provided you're not completely crass or bent on

antagonizing others, you are two Traits up on all Social Challenges to get on someone's good side in a social situation such as a party or a nightclub.

Way With Words (1 Trait)

You have a natural flair for choosing the right words to express exactly what you mean, whether communicating your emotions to another person or crafting a work of art. You are two Traits up on all *Expression-* or *Performance-*related Challenges primarily involving words and wordplay.

Best Friend (2 Traits)

Many people go their whole lives without a true best friend, but you've been blessed with one — through all the highs and lows of life, you may have fought but you've always stuck by each other, and even after the imbuings the two of you are still inseparable. She may not know the details of your new life, but she'll still do anything she can to help you, and won't ask too many uncomfortable questions either. In essence, you have a totally loyal and supportive *Ally*, but one who also demands more in return, since she will naturally expect you to do all that you can for her if she needs it as well. Still, when no one else will help you a *Best Friend* will still go that extra mile to save your sorry butt, if only to kick it around a bit for being so foolish in the first place.

Enchanting Voice (2 Traits)

Your voice is naturally resonant and commanding. All non-edge uses of your voice grant you two bonus Traits; you can seduce, intimidate and cajole with just a few well-chosen words.

Fashion Sense (2 Traits)

Dressing well doesn't just mean keeping up with the latest trends and designers, it's also an innate knack for knowing when to dress up (or down) and how to do so smartly, especially on a limited budget. You are one Trait up on all Social tests where your appearance makes any kind of difference, provided of course you have time to choose your outfit before you go out.

Flirt (2 Traits)

Not everyone is necessarily very attracted to you on sight, but when you decide to make someone the object of your affection, most people find it hard to resist. You simply have a talent for understanding the subtle give-and-take of flirting and teasing; you're two Traits up on any Social Challenges involving such activity with members of the opposite sex (or the same sex who find you attractive).

Good Judge of Character (2 Traits)

Given just a few moments of conversation or observation, you can make a fairly accurate appraisal of what someone is like, and such guesses are right more often than not. You're two Traits up on all Mental Challenges involving assessing a person or human-seeming monster, and one Trait up on any Social Challenges where you're going on a limited amount of prior contact with a person.

Great Liar (2 Traits)

Whether from countless exercises or simply a good innate understanding of what to say and what people want to hear, you're a fabulous liar. Even the most involved untruths have a ring of creditability when you speak them, and you have little trouble convincing others to take your word as truth when you want them to. You are two Traits up on all attempts to lie or deceive another person. You must have at least six Social Traits to purchase this Merit.

Laid-Back Friends (2 Traits)

You've got a number of good buddies, not quite as close as ones from the *Best Friend* Merit or as powerful as an *Ally*, but still loyal to the bitter end and generally willing to help out as best they can with few questions asked. (Combining this Trait with the *Ally* Background gives you the best of both worlds.) Perhaps most important of all, while your friends have noticed you've changed a bit lately, they're not going to poke their noses into your business too much, and are fine with going a while without hanging out, so long as you're still friends when you do see them.

Nurturing Partner (2 Traits)

You have one or more children of your own, but fortunately your economic situation is such that your partner can afford to stay home with the children alone full time, which eases some of the burden when it comes to balancing your job and the responsibilities of the hunt against your family. Best of all, you have maintained a healthy loving relationship with your family, and neither your children nor your partner resent it if they must go without seeing you for a day or two. (Though this can change if you start missing too many days without explanation or begin taking your partner's role for granted too often.) This Merit need not represent a character's actual spouse — parents, grandparents or other people who might help take care of a character's children are all acceptable as well. A character can combine this Merit with the *Children* Flaw, as the latter represents her own feelings of guilt when she feels she lets her children down, regardless of whether they feel betrayed or not.

People Person (2 Traits)

Human nature may have some pretty low points, and you don't kid yourself about them, but even that doesn't keep you from being endlessly fascinated by (not to mention sympathetic to) your fellow human beings. This good nature and general open-minded acceptance of others makes it easy to get to know all kinds of people, and you are two Traits up on all Social Challenges to break the ice and make a good impression on others. You must have at least six Social Traits to purchase this Merit.

Pillar of the Community (2 Traits)

Maybe some people in town have been acting kind of funny lately, but you're just about the last person anyone would dare voice such suspicions about — you're a well-known and well-respected member of your community, and as such you command a certain amount of popular respect with your neighbors. They won't serve you blindly, but if you try to warn them about impending danger or give an explanation for a bizarre occurrence, they're likely to believe you. They might even come to your aid if you require it, although this is hardly a certainty unless you have other Traits tied up in the local community. Indeed, unlike the *Roots* Background, this Merit confers no true power over the community, although combining the two is certainly appropriate. (On the other hand, this Merit also doesn't carry quite the same responsibility as that Background does.)

Seasoned Traveler (2 or 4 Trait Merit)

Whether from extensive book learning, a lot of time spent elsewhere or a combination of the two, you are well-versed at finding your way around in distant places, from cross-country trips to foreign nations. For two Traits, this applies to anywhere you travel within your home country; for four Traits, the world is yours to explore. Whenever you're trying to find food, shelter, transportation or other basic goods and services in another location, lower the difficulty of any appropriate tests by

two Traits. Note that this confers no automatic benefits in regard to any language barriers that might exist, although a hunter with this Merit might be able to more easily locate a translator in places where she doesn't speak the language.

Socially Aware (2 Traits)

Other people are generally blind to the delicate interplay between themselves, but not you. Reading the dynamics of a group or situation is second nature to you, and you can quickly puzzle out the true feelings people have for each other by studying their vocal tones, word choices, body language and so on. You are two Traits up on all Mental Challenges involving interaction between individuals.

Trivia Champ (2 Traits)

While most would consider your specialty a storehouse of apparently worthless tidbits of information, nevertheless the sheer volume of facts at your command means that you can often remember some relevant (if obscure) fact about the situation at hand. At the Storyteller's discretion, once or twice per story your character may just happen to know a bit of information that the hunters need to complete a task before them. This Merit confers no special knowledge of the enemy or the occult, besides what might be known in pop culture (and which therefore might well be dangerously wrong to act upon).

Upright Citizen (2 Traits)

Before the imbuing you were a model citizen, with nary so much as a hint of scandal about you, and even now that same squeaky-clean image makes it quite difficult for other people to believe anything bad about you. You receive a free retest on all Social Challenges involved with maintaining your good name, although the Storyteller may well restrict some of your Ability or Background choices (or at least force them underground) to make sure you actually would fit the image that this Merit describes. This Merit is particularly appropriate to combine with the *Everyman* Background, though it is not necessary to do so.

Vibrant Neighborhood (2 Traits)

Every city has at least one neighborhood where "anything goes" and people are always coming and going on various legal (and not so legal) errands, regardless of the hour. You happen to live in just such a locale, and thus are able to get away with many activities that would be viewed as strange in other parts of town, as the locals consider them to be just more of the daily routine.

Corporate Savvy (3 Traits)

Business is war, so they say, and if that's true then you've got a few tours of duty under your belt already. You understand the corporate dynamic very well, from how to motivate people to how resources flow in a company to the best way to climb the ladder, and have little trouble managing businesses efficiently and profitably when you put your mind to it. Anytime you try manipulating a corporation or a corporate employee in a business-related matter, you are two Traits up on the related tests. You must have at least six Social Traits and one level of the *Finance* Ability to purchase this Merit.

Media Savvy (3 Traits)

A natural-born spin doctor, you instinctively understand exactly the right things to say to journalists to present your subject the way you want, allowing you to create, suppress or redirect stories with relative ease. Given enough time to prepare or with a friendly enough contact in the press, you can even set up situations so that the press

will read them the way you desire. You are two Traits up on all Social Challenges made with journalists or news organizations of any kind.

Supportive Family (3 Traits)

Your family has always been there for you, and even though you may have changed since your imbuings, they support you and do their best to look out for you whenever they can, no questions asked. They don't know exactly why you've made some of the decisions you have recently, and they can't necessarily pull some of the strings that *Allies* or other "official" sources can, but they can offer much-needed comfort when the hunt gets too rough, not to mention dispense some family wisdom as well. Hopefully one day you'll tell them what's going on, but until then they're content to help you out and leave it at that. You are family, after all.

Lucky (4 Traits)

While not even close to a supernatural effect, lucky breaks just naturally seem to head your way, whether it's as personal as bumping into the lady of your dreams as you're reading her favorite book or as simple finding \$20 when you were just about out of gas. Once per session, you may decrease the difficulty of any test by two Traits (minimum one Trait difficulty), or put yourself up two Traits against an opponent — if you succeed, it is because some small lucky break occurs that swings things your way. Alternately, in a non-test situation the Storyteller may describe some minor but fortunate circumstance that helps your character, though again this Merit can be called on no more than once per session.

You may not possess this Merit and the Innocence edge of *Fool's Luck*; if you acquire that edge during play, you must spend these four Traits on other Merits or Traits developed during the chronicle.

Physical Merits

Acute Sense (1 Trait)

You have a particularly sharp sense (specify which one). In all tests with that sense, you are two Traits up on challenge resolution. Note that this never applies to combat, unless the Narrator specifically says otherwise. You may have multiple *Acute Senses*, but you may only take this Merit once for each sense.

Ambidextrous (1 Trait)

You have a high degree of coordination, and you can use both of your hands equally well. Normally, you suffer a two-Trait penalty for performing tasks with your "off" hand. With this Merit, you have no penalty for using either hand. Of course, if you use both hands, you still suffer the coordination penalty for both (see "Two Weapon Combat" on p.257).

Good Right/Left Hook (1 Trait)

Whether due to esoteric martial arts training or just a lot of time spent pounding on people, your unarmed attacks are particularly vicious. Upon making a successful *Brawl* test to injure a target, you may immediately make a Simple Test — on a win, you inflict an additional level of damage. (This can be combined with edges, when appropriate.)

Hollow Leg (1 Trait)

You can put away an impressive amount of alcohol for someone your size, and suffer little or no consequences for doing so unless you really attempt to poison yourself with the stuff. All penalties for alcohol consumption are halved, and you suffer no

further side effects after drinking. (Bear in mind that the normal *Mind's Eye Theatre* rules about drinking still apply.)

Light Sleeper (1 Trait)

While you still require the normal eight hours of sleep to be considered fully rested, you awaken at the slightest signs of a disturbance, whether due to ghostly whispers or merely those pesky neighbor kids cutting across your lawn again. You suffer no penalty upon awakening and can act normally (as opposed to those without this Merit, who are considered *Surprised* the turn after being roused). This does not replace the *Endurance* Ability or the *Vigilance* edge, though they can certainly be combined for maximum watchfulness.

Natural Runner (1 Trait)

You love to run, and have done so gleefully since you were a child. Accustomed to the rigors of running under all conditions, you subtract one Trait from all movement penalties in a combat turn. Additionally, when doing nothing but running (including dodging) in a turn, you can channel your energy to put on a superb burst of speed — by spending a Physical Trait, you may move an additional step that turn. Only one Physical Trait can be spent in this fashion per turn.

Perfect Balance (1 Trait)

You almost never slip, stumble, fall or even get dizzy. Your sense of balance is so well-developed that even on a narrow ledge or wire you can walk with ease. You are two Traits up on resolution of challenges where your balance is a deciding factor.

Robust Health (1 Trait)

You shrug off most illnesses with ease, and even serious afflictions or mild poisoning doesn't slow you down much. Any time you must make a test to resist the effects of poison or illness, you are two Traits up. You must have at least five Physical Traits to purchase this Merit.

Sea Legs (1 Trait)

Accustomed to life on ocean vessels of all kinds, you are immune to seasickness even in the roughest weather, and ignore all movement or action penalties due to rough seas or unexpected ship movements.

Bundle of Energy (2 Traits)

A naturally vibrant and energetic person, you need only five to six hours of sleep per night to count as fully rested, and thus can work long hours without much difficulty. Needless to say, requiring less rest can be a real boon in maintaining a double life or stalking monsters for extended periods of time. You cannot purchase this Merit if you have the *Endurance* Ability or *Vigilance* edge, and if you develop either of these Traits later this Merit must be cashed in for two Free Traits.

Cat Napper (2 Traits)

Although you might still require the standard eight hours of sleep per night to remain rested, you need not get them all at once — so long as the numbers of hours you sleep in one 24-hour period totals what you normally require to be rested, you're fine. Additionally, you have little trouble falling asleep just about anywhere if you want to, though once asleep you're just as difficult to rouse as anyone else unless you purchase additional Traits that dictate otherwise.

Forgettable (2 Traits)

When you were growing up, you thought your name was actually *Hey You*. It's not that you're necessarily unattractive, it's just that your face is, well, easily forgotten by those you meet. While this means that you have to work twice as hard as most people

to be remembered, it can be a real blessing when you would prefer to remain anonymous. All difficulties involving recalling your appearance are increased by two Traits. This Merit is distinct from the *Everyman* Background in that it only applies to your physical appearance; you may have a paper trail a mile long, but luckily for you it's unlikely you'll ever be picked out of a lineup or off a wanted poster. (Of course, you can combine this Merit with that Background for a truly anonymous character, if you like.) You cannot have more than one Social Traits related to positive or negative physical appearance (*Gorgeous*, *Repugnant*, etc.), nor can you have more than two Social Traits related to personal charisma; if your totals ever rise above this level, this Merit must be cashed in for two Free Traits.

Good Night Vision (2 Traits)

From an early age you've had little trouble getting around at night, although chances are you never knew just how handy this knack would be later on in life. You have excellent night vision, and suffer no penalties at all for low-light conditions, and your natural self-assuredness allows to cut the normal penalty for operating in total darkness in half (though this does not apply if you have been physically blinded somehow). Additionally, you are two Traits up on all Mental Challenges involving perception at night.

Sexy (2 Traits)

Maybe your town's ground water contained chemicals which sent your pheromones into overdrive, or perhaps you're just blessed with a fabulous body, but no matter what the case might be you're pretty damn irresistible when you set your sights on a target. You are up two Traits on all non-confrontational Social Challenges with the opposite sex or members of your own sex who find you attractive, and should you choose to focus the full power of your charms at a target, you are considered three Traits up on all relevant Social Challenges. However, this magnetism can irritate others of your own sexual persuasion — you are considered one Trait down on Social Challenges with such individuals in any situation where you might be perceived as a rival.

Daredevil (3 Traits)

Not only do you take outrageous risks, you survive them. Whenever you take a risky (some would say foolhardy) course of action — one with a difficulty of at least eight Traits or a potentially harmful outcome — you get one Bonus Trait on the attempt. This only applies to combats if you are outnumbered or sorely outclassed (Narrator's discretion).

Huge Size (3 Traits)

Nearly seven feet tall and hundreds of pounds in weight, you tower over most adversaries (and allies). You have one extra Bruised health level. You should represent your incredible mass appropriately — wearing bulky clothing and carrying large props is a start, though an additional description tag of some kind is probably a good idea as well.

Mental Merits

Common Sense (1 Trait)

You still have a lot of gut insight and everyday practicality. Whenever you're about to do something that goes against common sense, the Storyteller or Narrator can make suggestions or warning about the action. Unlike the *Intuition* Ability, this does

not help you make good guesses, nor does it offer any special insight into a situation. It just helps you avoid doing something really dumb. Needless to say, this Merit is excellent for new players who are not familiar with the intricacies of the game.

Concentration (1 Trait)

You can shut out distractions and annoyances that would hinder others. Whenever penalty Traits are assigned for some outside phenomenon (harsh lighting, rain, loud noise, etc.), you suffer none of the penalty.

Fast Reader (1 Trait)

It takes longer to wash the ink off your hands than to actually read the paper, and you read *War & Peace* in the time it takes most people to commute to work and back. OK, those may be slight exaggerations, but you still read amazingly quickly, and retain what you have read as well. It takes you half the time to perform any actions that primarily involve reading, making you a valuable researcher and investigator.

Good Map Reader (1 Trait)

Given a map of some kind and the barest of directions, you can find your way to just about anywhere you need to be with a minimum of detour or delay. You have an innate sense of direction, and when traveling to a familiar location or when given time to prepare a route to an unfamiliar one, you can shave travel time between locations by a third, reflecting your knack for taking just the right path for maximum efficiency.

Good Recognition (1 Trait)

Other people might forget a face or a place, but not you — your ability to recall the names of people you meet only briefly is fantastic, and you can remember your way around places easily even if you've only been there once before. This isn't total recall — that's the *Eidetic Memory* Merit, above — but rather just a gift for remembering names and locations, even if you've only seen a face for a fleeting moment on television or heard a name in passing. The difficulty to recall a name or face you've seen before is decreased by two Traits, as is the difficulty to navigate in a location you've visited in the past.

Healthy Skepticism (1 Trait)

It's hard to pull one over on you, since you naturally tend to view all matters as pending until proven and all people with caution until they earn your trust. This isn't paranoia, however — you just usually need proof of some kind before you'll buy into something, even if you sometimes get burned because of it. On the other hand, you are two Traits up on all tests to detect a lie.

Natural Aptitude (1 Trait)

Pick a single Ability — you need not actually possess it now, though you will most likely purchase it later — that you have a special knack for. You are two Traits up on all non-combat uses of this Ability, and it takes half the normal time to train in this Ability as well. You may take this Merit more than once, but each *Natural Aptitude* must be assigned to a different Ability.

Religious Devotion (1-3 Traits)

Although many imbued find their faith sorely tested in the face of the evils loose in the world, yours has endured and offers you additional resolve when the odds are stacked against you. Each Trait spent on this Merit translates into an extra Willpower Trait that you can call upon once per story, if you have time to pray for guidance for a turn/minute before attempting the task. You may only call on this Merit once per session, unless the Storyteller specifically says otherwise, and naturally it can only be used when performing deeds in keeping with your character's faith — attempting to use it for selfish or impulsive acts not only fails to grant the

extra Willpower, but revokes this Merit entirely until you have properly atoned. Likewise, this Merit is only available to characters who are appropriately devoted to their faith; while players need not be melodramatic about it in any way, they must act according to the tenets of their character's faith and otherwise roleplay their abiding faith as best they can.

Time Sense (1 Trait)

You can accurately estimate time to the nearest minute or two without the use of a watch or clock. This is obviously very useful in knowing exactly how long you've been standing watch, tailing a subject, or even how much time you have before sunrise... or sundown.

Code of Honor (2 Trait)

A specific code of behavior and ethics guides your actions. It might be related to your creed, or it might not. After all, there's no law that says an Avenger can't have a code of honor that requires him to spare women and children, even monstrous ones. This is a very personal code, shaped by your own experiences, and you should work with your Storyteller to build and appropriate code (which should include some hindrances and prohibited activity in addition to positive beliefs and passions). You gain one free retest whenever facing a test of any kind that might cause you to violate your code, be it supernatural persuasion, torture or some other form of duress, and you count as having an additional Willpower Trait for the purposes of resolving ties in such instances as well.

Determined (2 Traits)

While this isn't always necessarily a good thing, you're extremely stubborn when it comes to sticking to your beliefs about something, and you resist mundane and supernatural attempts to persuade you otherwise with bulldog tenacity. You are two Traits up on all tests to resist being persuaded to do something, including supernatural powers if your Conviction defense isn't active. You must have at least three Willpower Traits to purchase this Merit.

Eidetic Memory (2 Trait)

Your memory is nearly perfect, and you recall almost everything you experience with incredible clarity. A single turn of attention is sufficient to commit a page, picture or short conversation to memory. If you are involved in combat or otherwise distracted, you must make a Static Mental Challenge, difficulty of six Traits, to successfully memorize the contents of your subject of scrutiny. You should keep a "cheat sheet" of your memories to aid you and the Storyteller in "recollection."

Internet Savvy (2 Traits)

A fair number of people have at least a rudimentary knowledge of computers and their ability to locate information online, but you go beyond such ordinary knowledge with your natural skills—you navigate online resources instinctively, and need to spend only the absolute minimum amount of time finding what you're looking for when hunting for data. You are two Traits up on all tests involving online investigation, including accessing hunter-net and other resources unique to the imbued. You must have at least six Mental Traits or two levels of the Computer Ability to purchase this Merit.

Natural Linguist (2 Traits)

You have a remarkable grasp with any additional languages that you speak or write (as per your *Linguistics* Ability). You gain three Bonus Traits on all challenges related to languages other than your native one, though you are assumed to use that one nearly flawlessly as well. Obviously, to be useful some levels of the *Linguistics* Ability will be required, though they are not actually required to take this Merit —

without them, you have the potential to be a great linguist but haven't actually applied yourself enough yet.

Unflappable (3 Traits)

It's not that you're without emotions, it's just that you don't let them affect you as much as other people do. You are two Traits up on all Willpower tests related to staying calm or not overreacting to mundane circumstances — in effect, anything within the bounds of your pre-imbuing experience is probably fair game. This therefore differs from the *Steel Nerves* Background in that it doesn't cover anything related to the supernatural or even the truly horrific, just the kind of things you had to deal with before your imbuing.

Direction Sense (4 Traits)

A natural compass, you rarely get lost, and seem to have an innate sense of which way is north or where you are (and how far you traveled to get there). You can estimate distance and location fairly well, and are two Traits up on all relevant tests to figuring out where you are or how you got there.

Optimistic (4 Traits)

Not even the revelation that monsters exist has been able to shake your fundamentally positive view of the universe — as far as you're concerned, even the present trials and horrors are only the price for something better just around the corner. You're not necessarily naïve, you just naturally believe that things will turn out OK. Every time a regular hunter would regain a Willpower Trait, you regain two instead, provided you maintain and portray your optimistic outlook.

Aptitude Merits

Prodigy/Aging Gracefully (2 Traits)

You have exceptional potential for a young person, or you have managed to keep yourself in peak condition despite the ravages of age. Select one Attribute category: Physical, Social or Mental. You are considered to have a Trait maximum equal to someone at their peak, thus allowing you to have more Traits in that category than a normal person of your age could. This Merit may be selected more than once, provided a different category is chosen each time.

Legal Merits

Specialist Drivers License (1 Trait)

You are licensed for and experienced with driving vehicles beyond the average person's experience: tractor trailers, farm vehicles or even military transports. You are up one Trait on all *Drive* tests with such vehicles, although you must have at least one level of *Drive* before purchasing this Merit. Of course, actually owning such vehicles is the province of other Traits, but should you come across them you know what to do.

Dual Nationality (2 Traits)

A rare boon indeed, you were born to parents of different countries and thus have a dual nationality. This makes it much easier for you to enter and exit the countries you are a citizen of than foreigners, making them ideal places to visit if you've attracted too much unwanted attention (human or otherwise).

Firearms License (2 Traits)

The benefits of this Merit depend on the area the game is set in: in places such as the United Kingdom, where possession of a firearm is illegal, it allows you to carry a normal gun. In countries where you have a right to bear arms, it means that you are licensed to carry unusual or powerful firearms, or perhaps even a concealed firearm of some kind. (In other words, you do *not* need this Merit to have a gun license in countries that already have a right to bear arms.)

Economic Merits

Alimony Recipient (1-3 Traits)

The bad news is, your marriage failed (either before or after the imbuings); the good news is, alimony means you have an outside source of income, which can be invaluable as the demands of the hunt mount higher and higher. The number of Traits spent on this Merit indicates the number of levels of *Resources* you can have (purchased separately) that you don't have to work for, and this Merit also indicates that your ex is prompt with his payments. Naturally, it is also a good indicator of how well-off your ex is, although it generally also means that you have children or other dependents you must look after as well.

Bargain Hound (1 Trait)

You have a nose for good deals, and given enough time to shop around you can come up with some amazingly good deals on all sorts of goods. You are two Traits up on all tests involving shopping, and with time and a successful Mental Challenge you can sometimes reduce the cost of an item by a third or even cut it in half as you shop for the best deal (Storyteller's discretion on what items you can receive such discounts). Needless to say, you're a godsend for a group with low *Resources*, even if it does take time to find what you need.

Independent Income (1-5 Traits)

Whether due to an inheritance of some kind or just long hours of hard work, each Trait of this Merit indicates one level of the *Resources* Background (purchased separately) that you don't have to work for, leaving you free to devote most of your time to other things. You should work with the Storyteller to detail exactly where this money comes from; while it is assumed to be a fairly stable and secure source of income, it might well become a target of the character's enemies over the course of a chronicle, or he might lower it through splurges and incautious spending.

Good Credit Rating (2 Traits)

You've had a steady income for a long time, you pay off your debts before they're due and otherwise have maintained a spotless credit record, which in turn means that you have access to a large amount of credit at the present. (What you do with it is, of course, up to you.) Your *Resources* rating is effectively one level higher if you choose to exercise your credit, although you must take care to pay off such debts if you wish to keep this Merit. You must have at least three levels of *Resources* to purchase this Background.

Wealthy Partner (2 Traits)

Your partner pulls in enough money to support the two of you at the level of *Resources* you have (purchased separately), and what's more your beloved is happy with the arrangement — you can work part time or not at all, as you desire, allowing you to devote considerable time and energy to the hunt.

Flexible Job (3 Traits)

Maybe your job requires you to travel a lot, or spend a lot of unsupervised time out in the field. Maybe you're even your own boss, with no one else to report to. However you're set up, you can effectively earn your *Resources* rating through a job that doesn't significantly restrict your hunting activities.

Paid Mortgage (3 Traits)

You own your house, free and clear, and need not fear any more mortgage payments or the threat of repossession. No matter how poorly the hunt goes, you'll at least have a roof over your head.

Social Flaws**Bad Liar (1 Trait)**

It's said that children develop the capacity for deception as early as two years old, but your talent for fabrication hasn't progressed much since that tender age. You might have obvious behavioral telltales when you try to lie, such as stammering or blushing, or maybe you just tend to invent situations that are just too fantastic for anyone to give them credence. Regardless, you should roleplay this difficulty whenever possible, and you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges involving deception in a social situation.

Bully (1 Trait)

You like to throw your weight around, and don't see anything wrong with getting your way through social pressure or physical force when you feel like it. In addition to these charming traits, you don't tend to deal well when compelled to follow a more forceful personality, and tend to be a troublemaker when you're not in charge. You're one Trait down on all Social Challenges when you're not the figure in charge, due to your irritation.

Children (1 Trait)

You have children who depend on you for the necessities of life, not to mention love and support. Fortunately for them, you treasure your role as a provider and take pride in being there for your kids; unfortunately, the demands of the hunt can quickly place a strain on your relationship with them, and no matter how they feel about it, the guilt of neglecting your responsibilities takes a terrible toll on you. This Flaw requires a lot of downtime attention to be significant enough to count, and should only be chosen if you and the Storyteller are willing to mind it often enough for it to have a real presence in the character's life. (A good idea to start with is to have the player draw up a weekly schedule of his character's obligations as well as the kids' activities, which not only gives him an idea of the ways they might overlap, but also a framework for the kinds of actions he can perform in downtime without threatening his responsibilities.) If you go more than three days without seeing your kids, either due to the hunt or other obligations, you cannot regain Willpower until you have a chance to be with them again for a like amount of time. At the Storyteller's discretion, this penalty may also apply for a time if you miss a particularly important event — championship game, class play, graduation, etc. — especially if you promised to attend or it would naturally be expected for a parent to be there.

Chronic Pessimist (1 Trait)

Determined to make Eeyore look like Shirley Temple, you learned long ago that everything sucks, and what's more, you're happy to share this knowledge with others. Nothing ever looks like it'll turn out right, and even if it does you're sure it's only because that success is a prelude to an even greater failure down the road. Even for one

of the imbued you're pretty down on the world, and that's saying something for someone who knows that horrifying monsters kill people and poison the planet every day. Naturally, take delight in roleplaying this doomsaying at every opportunity, but remember that such fun does have a price: you're down two Traits on all Social Challenges involving motivating people (such as *Leadership* challenges) or cheering them up in any way (such as *Empathy* tests) — it's just not... *you*.

Chronically Late (1 Trait)

Delays, delays, delays — something *always* seems to come up whenever you're trying to get somewhere on time. This is as much a reflection of natural procrastination or inattentiveness on your part as it is external factors. Anytime you have an appointment to make, formal or informal, you must make a successful Willpower test against three Traits to be there on time — failure means you're at least 10 minutes late. This can include entering the game later than other characters, if the time of your arrival is important. Alternately, the Narrator may choose to increase your effective travel times by as much as a third, to represent your inability to start a trip on time.

Chronically Shy (1 Trait)

People? Eep! Above and beyond the Negative Trait of the same name (though you likely possess that as well), you're incredibly wary of strange people, and even worse with crowds. You're one Trait down on all Social Challenges with people you don't know, and two Traits down on all Social Challenges that address a crowd of any kind. And yes, these penalties are cumulative for crowds that are composed of more strangers than familiar faces.

Clannish Family (1 Trait)

Sure, your family loves and supports you, it's just that, well, they don't like outsiders much. It's not that they're necessarily mean, it's just that they prefer to keep matters (and favors) within the family. This might not even have been much of a problem before, but since the imbuing they've noticed that you've been hanging around a lot with people they don't know, or worse still, bringing these strangers home before the family felt comfortable with them. If your family constitutes or accounts for your *Allies*, *Contacts*, *Resources* or *Roots*, they flat-out refuse to do anything that requires them to directly or indirectly aid others outside the family, and will do their best to make outsiders feel uncomfortable whenever they interact with them.

Collaborator (1 Trait)

Whether it was a devil's deal to remove a larger threat to both sides, or just an innocent exchange of information, sometime in the recent past you've worked with one or more monsters to achieve your goals. Or maybe you haven't, but word-of-mouth in the hunter community says you have, and for one reason or another it's been impossible to prove otherwise so far. Either way, this reputation can put a serious strain on your relations with more conservative imbued, and the Storyteller should take care to inform other player characters of your supposed collaboration, so that they might roleplay their reaction accordingly.

Crude (1 Trait)

You may be a trusted friend in private and valued ally on the hunt, but when it comes to situations that require a certain amount of manners or refinement, even your best friends try to pretend they don't know you. You seem to break all the rules of etiquette, deliberately or otherwise, and thus are two Traits down on all Social Challenges in situations where tact or social grace are required. This Flaw can be taken in addition to Negative Traits such as *Tactless* or *Obnoxious*, because it reflects a

general ignorance of social mores as opposed to a more specific difficulty with particular behaviors.

Cultural Snob (1 Trait)

Yes, yes, we've all heard how much you appreciate fine art, classical music, the best wines and the sublime ambiance of a good French restaurant — the problem is, we've *also* heard how much abuse you heap on those who demonstrate the least bit of knowledge or enjoyment of pop culture. In short, it's obvious to everyone that you're a cultural snob of the worst sort, and you should do your best to roleplay this grating distaste for all things "popular" as well as possible. What's more, when it comes to dealing with people who aren't equally snobby about such things (read: just about everyone), you're two Traits down on all Social Challenges.

Defensive (1 Trait)

Whether from a lingering amount of immaturity or an endless drive for perfection (in your mind, at least), you have trouble taking responsibility for your actions. Any time anything goes wrong, you always find a way to blame someone or something else, and become downright hostile to anyone who tries to point out this tendency as well. You are one Trait down on all tests that would involve accepting responsibility for one of your failures, and one Trait down on all Social Challenges with someone who tries to point out this lovely habit of yours.

Eccentric Appearance (1 Trait)

Perhaps you run with a particular clique — Goth, punk, raver, etc. — or maybe you've just got a truly unique sense of style, but either way your appearance immediately makes you stand out in a crowd (at least among more ordinary folks). Aside from occasionally drawing negative attention from others who disapprove of your clique or style, you're also easily remembered by other people. Any attempts to track you down through witnesses are two Traits up, and you cannot take the *Everyman* Background or the *Forgettable* Merit. Obviously, this Flaw also requires that you wear suitable costuming and makeup to mark your unique appearance, and repeated failure to do so will force you to buy off this Flaw.

Gambling Addict (1 Trait)

You can't help it — whenever there's a possible wager on the table, you just have to take it. This is bad news because while you probably have extensive experience with gambling, you're addicted to it as well, which means that you tend to lose a lot more than you win because you can't pull yourself away from the table when you're ahead. Aside from the obvious impact this might have on your *Resources*, you must also make a Willpower test against four Traits to pass up a chance to gamble. Once you've started, you must spend a Willpower Trait or make another test to stop gambling for any reason less than a direct threat, regardless of whether you're winning ("I'm ahead now, so why stop?") or losing ("I have to at least break even!").

Ghoulish Sense of Humor (1 Trait)

You have an highly active sense of humor, but not exactly a healthy one — in fact, you tend to find amusing what other people consider disturbing or outright disgusting, and thus have a bad tendency to crack inappropriate jokes at the worst possible times. Any time you're faced with a gory scene or otherwise uncomfortable moment (such as someone consoling a crying victim), you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges due to your habit of belittling the situation or those involved in it. Needless to say, you should roleplay this behavior as well as possible, so long as you remember to keep all the jokes in character.

Icy Demeanor (1 Trait)

Whatever that intangible quality is that makes people open up to others, you just don't have it. No matter what you're like on the inside, you habitually project a cool and hostile demeanor to those around you, and most don't bother trying to get to know you any better than that. You are two Traits down on all Social tests with someone during the first scene that you meet them, due to your innate difficulty with presenting a likable face to others. This is distinct from the *Callous* Negative Trait in that it represents an ineptness at presenting yourself well rather than actual emotional isolation, though the two may be combined in to create a truly heartless and distant S.O.B.

Impractical Dresser (1 Trait)

Nothing says your sense of style isn't that great, but your sense of timing could definitely use an improvement, at least in regards to what you should — and shouldn't — wear when on the hunt. Whether due to job constraints, wardrobe limits or simple force of habit, you always seem to be caught wearing high heels when you need to chase someone, or tight-fitting clothes that restrict your movements as you try to climb a chainlink fence. Even some painful past experiences haven't broken you of the habit. You are assumed to begin each session somehow attired inappropriately for the needs of the hunt, and thus are considered one Trait down on all athletic- or combat-related Physical Challenges unless you specifically acquire extra clothes in-game and take time out to change during the session. This Flaw should be simulated as safely as possible with appropriate costuming, but should you ignore or readily circumvent this Flaw too often you may be required to buy it off, as it is obvious that you have finally learned how to dress to kill (so to speak).

Insensitive (1 Trait)

Relating to people in an emotional context is an awkward and uncomfortable experience for you, and your typical method of avoiding such unpleasantness (being very blunt about everything) doesn't usually do much to smooth things over either. Most of the time you wind up apologizing without knowing exactly what you did to offend someone, since you have a difficult time figuring out how other people are feeling. You are one Trait down on all Social Challenges with someone in the grip of a strong emotion of any kind, and two Traits down on all uses of the *Empathy* Ability (these penalties are cumulative).

Intolerant Neighbors (1 Trait)

Your neighbors are every hunter's nightmare: they like their neighborhood nice and peaceful and quiet, and don't hesitate to call the authorities at the first sign of suspicious activity or even a loud party. This is generally up to the Storyteller to bring into play, but a hunter with this Flaw had best tread carefully in regards to some of her wilder activities lest the police or other agencies pay her an unwelcome visit. You cannot possess this Flaw and the *Vibrant Neighborhood* Merit or the *Roots* Background unless you have a truly strange living situation (and Storyteller approval).

Misinformed (1 Trait)

Some time ago you latched onto a theory or idea that's far from mainstream and/ or flies in the face of accepted science, and for better or worse you've incorporated it into your worldview, so much so that you tend to interpret events through the lens of this belief. You need not be pushy about it, but you do truly believe in it, and will stand steadfastly by it if it is ever called into question. Whenever you make an Ability test that involves your skewed worldview (such as *Science* or *Awareness*), the difficulty is increased by two as you try to fit the events or information you're seeing into your own perspective instead of vice versa. Note: You cannot take simply "the existence of

monsters" as your skewed belief, though you might be able to persuade your Storyteller to allow it if your character passionately (read: blindly) believes that all monsters are actually space aliens from the planet Zorg or some similarly outlandish belief.

Mistaken Identity (1 Trait)

They say everyone has a twin out there somewhere; problem is, yours is up to no good, and everyone knows it. You bear a striking resemblance to a notorious figure of some kind, whether a prominent criminal, infamous celebrity or even a feared monster or radical imbued. You must wear a description tag indicating this unfortunate resemblance. It doesn't usually take much effort for others to figure out that you're not your "evil twin," but some hotheads or glory hounds might not stop to make the distinction before confronting you, and even then your presence is easily remembered by those who recognize you.

Needy Friends (1 Trait)

Perhaps you're just too soft-hearted to ever say no, or perhaps you have (or are perceived to have) time and money to burn, but regardless, you're the one your friends and other non-imbued acquaintances always seem to come to when they need help. From posting bail to giving a ride to holding someone's hand, their need for you never seems to end, and while you still consider them real friends as opposed to moochers, that only makes it less likely you're going to break free any time soon. In game, the Storyteller may reflect this from time to time by temporarily lowering your *Resources*, asking for additional favors from an *Ally* or *Contact*, limiting your downtime activity between sessions or otherwise indicating how your friends need you as the chronicle progresses.

No Internet Access (1 Trait)

Whether or not you're familiar with computers or not, you have no ability to access email or the Internet of your own, and must rely on friends or local libraries to access this invaluable resources. Of course, this also makes it difficult for you to keep up with hunter-net, assuming you are even aware of it in the first place. The Storyteller may adjust the amount of time it takes to use certain Backgrounds or Abilities to reflect the difficulty it takes to get in touch with you

No Phone (1 Trait)

You do not have a regular phone number others can use to reach you, nor do you carry a pager or other electronic messenger. This can make it exceedingly difficult to track you down on short notice, and you must rely on other means such as e-mail or face-to-face meetings to keep in touch with your fellow hunters or plan for upcoming activities. The Storyteller may adjust the amount of time it takes to use certain Backgrounds or Abilities to reflect the difficulty it takes to get in touch with you.

Nonconfrontational (1 Trait)

Bringing up subjects you know others would prefer to avoid is acutely uncomfortable for you, and you often find yourself giving in and accepting compromises you regret later on down the road. It's not that you're weak, it's just that you hate being thought of as causing unhappiness to those you care about, so much so that you will go to great lengths to avoid it if at all possible. Any time you find yourself the bearer of bad news or in need of telling a friend or love one some unpleasant things, you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges for the rest of the scene as a result of your hesitation and unhappiness.

Poor Online Demeanor (1 Trait)

Sure, you've discovered hunter-net or a similar online community of the imbued, but now they almost wish you hadn't — whether you intend it to be or not, your online persona is exceedingly grating and obnoxious to others, and they will aid you only grudgingly because of it. Add two to the difficulty of all attempts to gather information or ask for aid from the online hunter community; what's more, you are one Trait down on all face-to-face Social Challenges with other hunters who recognize you from your online postings.

Shadowy Past (1 Trait)

Maybe the imbuing really is intended as a second chance. You certainly hope so, because it would give you a chance to atone for a life you weren't too proud of before. What was so bad about this life depends on what you and the Storyteller agree on — for example, you might have been a career criminal or abusive parent — but it's bad enough that if it came out other hunters might well abandon you. Even if it does and they don't, you're two Traits down on all Social Challenges with other hunters who know of your shady past until you prove yourself to them somehow. It is assumed as part of this Flaw that you're not still engaged in the activities of your former life, and that you now consider it something to be ashamed of if not actually something you're actively trying to atone for.

Socially Oblivious (1 Trait)

A bull in the social china shop, you tend to draw a lot of unhappy outbursts or icy stares in group situations because you miss the small social cues that other people naturally pick up on regarding taboo topics or delicate personal issues. This is distinct from the *Tactless* Negative Trait because it reflects a broader range of inappropriate behaviors aside from simply verbal ones, from overstaying your welcome at parties to making a pass at person who's obviously taken (probably with her significant other standing right next to her, in fact).

Speech Impediment (1 Trait)

You stutter, stammer or otherwise suffer from some form of speech impediment that makes it difficult to communicate, especially when you're in the grip of powerful emotion. You are two Traits down on all Social Challenges involving speech, and should roleplay your impediment accordingly, though not to the point of offensiveness or parody.

Stubborn (1 Trait)

There are pit bulls, there's *rigor mortis*, and then there's you — all three unwilling to let anything go once they've got a hold of it. All of your beliefs enjoy your full, unwavering support, and anyone who attempts to challenge them finds herself the recipient of as much grief as you can muster. Any time someone questions one of your beliefs, you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges with that character for the rest of the scene as you naturally close yourself off to her (not to mention the embarrassment if she's actually *right*).

Superstitious (1 Trait)

Whether a cautious trait you acquired since learning that monsters existed, or a habit you've had all your life, you adhere rigidly to a number of superstitions, to the point where you frequently attribute the success or failure of your plans to how well you adhered to "the rules." You need not risk your life or the lives of others on these foibles, however. Not only should this tendency be reflected on a constant level in your roleplaying, but you are such a stickler for your superstitions that you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges with anyone who disapproves of them due to your

conflict of belief. (As a rule of thumb, if you could imagine the person in question reacting incredulously or unfavorably to you performing one of your regular superstitutions, this Flaw applies.)

Trusting (1 Trait)

You can't help it — you just naturally take people at face value, whether due to an optimistic view of people or just a limited amount of contact with people whose motivations aren't as noble as yours. Not only do you take them at their word, but you also do such incautious things as accept rides home from recent acquaintances or walk through bad areas at night, simply because you truly don't believe something bad will happen. You are two Traits down on all attempts to detect a lie or judge the character of someone you've met for the first time that session.

Abusive Partner (2 Traits)

Monsters don't just roam abroad — you live with a perfectly human beast at home, who abuses you physically whenever you're home. Any time you spend the night at home, you must make a Simple Test — success means that you take no damage, while a tie means that you come into play next time with a level of bashing damage from the abuse. Aside from obvious social and psychological problems, this Flaw can also significantly impair a character's healing times, and the Storyteller should make sure the character feels its weight appropriately.

Compulsive Liar (2 Traits)

Whether or not you're good at it, you tend to inject your own special blend of the truth into what you say, ranging from little white lies to untruths that might potentially hurt others (especially when it comes to fellow hunters). At this point you might even believe the lies you invent, since you tell them so often. Regardless, you should roleplay this constant level of fabrication as best you can; additionally, in order to tell the complete truth for a scene, you must spend a Willpower Trait or win a Willpower Challenge against four Traits. This is also the case when you must tell a truth that openly exposes a previous lie.

Conspicuous Consumer (2 Traits)

Saving money is difficult when there are so many cool things out there to buy, and you tend to tax your finances buying brand names and a host of products you don't really need. Add two Traits to the difficulty of all tests related to using your *Resources*, and cut the amount of monthly allowance it usually affords you by a third to reflect the amount of money you spend.

Dogged by Fringe Media (2 Traits)

The truth is out there, but the sad fact is that lots of people went over the edge right along with it, and for one reason or another you've got one such "colorful" individual following you around. Worse still, this person is an amateur journalist for an paranormal Web site or 'zine of some kind, and thus while you needn't worry about his work landing you on the front page of the local paper anytime soon, he can still draw lots of unwanted attention toward you, especially if monsters happen to monitor the local fringe media. What's more, he has the most annoying habit of showing up just in time to witness something bizarre or difficult to explain, which naturally only fuels his curiosity further. You should work with the Storyteller to come up with some details about him and how the two of you met, although it will be up to the Storyteller to determine his true abilities and motivation.

Foreigner (2 Traits)

While you might very well be fluent in the language and generally familiar with the customs, you are still not native to the area where you currently live (and hunt). You tend to be ignorant of small cultural details, and might have additional legal restrictions on you as well. Whenever you attempt *Streetwise* or *Etiquette* tests, you are two Traits down dealing with this strange foreign culture, and should adopt a distinctive accent or other mannerism that clearly marks you as a foreigner (without resorting to cultural stereotype).

Honest to a Fault (2 Traits)

Telling lies or even just bending the truth is contrary to your nature, so much so that you will not do it unless it's necessary to save human lives. Naturally, this lack of practice tends to make you a pretty poor deceiver when you do attempt to twist the truth, and you are two Traits down on any Social Challenge involving deception.

Infamy (2 Traits)

You're well known in the area that you live, but for all the wrong reasons. You might be a well-known criminal associate, or perhaps you were involved in a prominent local scandal that has never quite lifted from your reputation. While you won't necessarily be attacked on the street, people do tend to look down on you or treat you with some hostility, and so you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges with those who know about your past. The Storyteller may also require you to wear a tag denoting your infamous status, to ensure that you get the kind of reactions that you deserve.

Lustful (2 Traits)

There are plenty of words for people like you, but regardless of how you want to look at it, even you admit that you seldom put up much of a fight when it comes to resisting the sensual charms of the gender you fancy. All attempts to seduce you are two Traits up, and in general you make very poor decisions when it comes to people that you find physically attractive, which should be roleplayed accordingly within the rules of *Mind's Eye Theatre*.

Monstrous Connections (2 Traits)

Most hunters spend nights out monster hunting, but you needn't look far to find at least one of the creatures — you have to deal with one in your daily life, whether it's your boss, a key family figure or another regular fixture of your existence. The creature doesn't necessarily know what you are (yet), but it's in a prime position to cause trouble for you should it choose to do so. This Flaw assumes that the monster is in some position where you cannot easily avoid it, if not actually in a role that your hunter would have a great deal of trouble justifying taking action against (such as a parent or child).

Nosy Neighbors (2 Traits)

If something happens to one person in your neighborhood, chances are the entire community knows about it by dinnertime; your neighbors just don't take no for an answer, tend to drop in at bad times and worst of all ask difficult questions when they do stop in. Anyone attempting a *Stealth* test in your neighborhood (friend or foe) is down two Traits due to the high alertness of the neighbors, and likewise any attempt to question them about strange events is two Traits up; while this may occasionally be useful in frightening off creatures afraid of exposure, more often than not it is a negative factor since the neighbors are just as likely to turn you in for such infractions as they are mysterious strangers.

Poor Judge of Character (2 Traits)

No matter how hard you try, you always seem to fall in with the wrong crowd. Aside from (or perhaps including?) your fellow imbued, your “friends” tend to be moochers, petty criminals and other undesirables, and suffice it to say that your romantic history is probably long, tragic and highly repetitive. You are two Traits down on all *Awareness*-, *Empathy*- or *Intuition*-related Challenges in social situations, due to your difficulty in judging people correctly, and at the Storyteller’s discretion you may face occasional difficulties with Backgrounds such as *Allies* or *Contacts* if they involve your questionable associates.

Stalked (2 Traits)

Life as a hunter is terrifying enough without the additional threat of an obsessed “normal” individual trailing your every move, but you have just one such sick person who continues to bother you despite repeated warnings to back off (legal and otherwise). This stalker need not be violent, but he is definitely beyond all reason regarding his obsession with you, and his action could possibly escalate into violence later on. Every time you got out on the hunt, or even just out on the town, you must make a Mental Challenge against five Traits — failure means that your stalker has managed to get your trail and may well put in an appearance later on that night. And before you ask, leading this nutcase into a trap or territory full of monsters never seems to work out the way you’d hope, at least until you buy off this Flaw.... Until then, however, you’re stuck with him.

Technophobe (2 Traits)

You hate modern technology, especially computers, and you’re pretty damn sure it hates you right back. While you’re at home with tried-and-true things like cars and telephones, making any sense of cell phones, pagers, laptops or other newfangled gizmos is quite beyond you. You must make a Mental Challenge against five Traits to perform even simple tasks on a computer, ATM machine or other technological device you’re not comfortable with (which is most of them), and the Storyteller will probably restrict some of the Abilities you can take at character creation to reflect this deficiency as well.

Moneygrubbing (3 Traits)

Money makes the world go round, and you intend to ride the merry-go-round for all it’s worth. Everything is secondary to the pursuit of wealth, and you’re capable of performing some extreme things so long as there’s enough money in it for you. Any time you’re offered a bribe, even by a monster or other loathsome figure, you must either spend a Willpower Trait or make a Willpower test against six Traits to avoid accepting the bribe. This difficulty increases by one if you’re pretty sure the task required won’t hurt anyone (that you know of). In addition, you must make a similar test to avoid searching the bodies or dwellings of fallen opponents for valuables... or looting fallen allies for the same.

Wavering Faith (3 Traits)

There was a time when you thought your faith could get you through just about anything, but that was *before*... The horrors you’ve experienced since your imbuing have shaken your faith to the core, and you have trouble mustering courage of conviction when everything you once believed is so obviously wrong. After all, how *could* a loving deity allow monsters to roam free causing suffering and anguish? And it only takes one encounter with a ghost or a rot to see that the afterlife is obviously not how you always thought it was. Aside from the wonderful roleplaying opportuni-

ties this Flaw offers, all difficulties on Willpower tests of any kind are increased by one, due to your shattered sense of confidence.

Criminal Entanglements (4 Traits)

Crime pays, as you learned when you went to some shady sources for a loan a while back; however, now you either can't or won't pay back what you owe, and that's starting to... *irritate* your unlikely business partners. They're not sending hit men after you — not yet — but they will definitely make themselves known before long, and what's more they will have no problem escalating the level of their coercion in an effort to get their money back or make an example of you. Work with the Storyteller to determine exactly how much you owe and whom you owe it to, as suits your character concept. Quite likely, buying off this Flaw will involve a serious impact on your *Resources* or *Influences*, though any manner of resolution is up to the Storyteller to adjudicate.

Unlucky (4 Traits)

If someone wrote a song about your life, it'd be a classic country tune — after all, sometimes it seems like losing your house, your car, your wife and your beloved dog would simply be all in a day's work for you. No matter how you look at it, your life has been plagued by bad coincidences and twists of fate as unlucky as they are unlikely. Once per session, the Narrator may add two Traits to the difficulty of one test, and if you fail it is because of some utterly random, totally unfortunate factor suddenly cropping up. Additionally, you seem to be the target of a minor but neverending stream of karmic jokes, which the Storyteller will likely evoke descriptively as the chronicle progresses. You cannot possess the *Lucky Merit* or the *Fool's Luck* edge, and if you develop either of them, the Traits from this Flaw must be re-assigned to other Flaws.

Pacifist (5 Traits)

Some admire the courage of your conviction in the face of evil, while others rage at you for being a damned lunatic with a death wish, but regardless of the favor of others your philosophy remains clear: you will not use violence of any kind, nor will you carry a weapon or purchase one for another. Given a chance, you do everything in your power to convince others to adopt a course of nonviolence as well, though you need not necessarily risk your life to do so. Confronted with particularly serious outrages such as a loved one being harmed in front of you, you must make a Willpower test against five Traits to avoid resorting to violence in response. Should you ever commit an act of violence for any reason, you cease regaining Willpower naturally until you either come to terms with your transgression somehow, typically a period of excellent roleplaying, or change your life philosophies altogether (i.e., buy off this Flaw).

Physical Flaws

Allergies (1 Trait)

A common substance that's harmless to most people — dog fur, pollen etc., — presents a particular problem for you, causing sneezing, watery eyes and other irritating symptoms. You are at a one-Trait penalty on all actions when exposed to this substance, and the symptoms take another scene to go away, even after you've left its presence.

Arthritic (1 Trait)

You suffer chronic pain in your joints, especially your hands, which makes it difficult to perform actions that require delicacy or fine motor control. Any time you must attempt such a feat — typing, sewing, working with small parts — you are one Trait down due to added difficulty presented by your condition.

Color Blind (1-2 Traits)

Colors tend to blend together into an indistinguishable blur to your eyes, making it hard to give accurate descriptions or identify items by sight. You are one Trait down on all Perception-related Mental Challenges involving distinguishing or identifying objects. For two Traits, this Flaw indicates a complete inability to perceive any color at all, though color density is still visible as degrees of shading. While this monochromatic condition makes you a natural *noir* film director, it also puts you at a one-Trait penalty on the sort of tests described above, as you lack even the proper frame of reference to describe colors at all.

Distinguishing Characteristic (1-2 Traits)

You have a permanent physical mark that's easy to remember — a prominent tattoo, scars or a birthmark. Not only does this make it easy to identify you, but all attempts to track you down based on witness interviews are up a number of Traits equal to the value of this Flaw. This Flaw is worth one Trait if your characteristic is easily covered by clothing, two Traits if it is not, and should be represented by appropriate makeup or description cards.

Heavy Sleeper (1 Trait)

On the plus side, when you want to sleep in, all the lawnmowers in the world won't disturb a lazy Saturday morning in progress. On the negative side, however, chances are that a horde of rots beating down your door won't stir you, either. Only striking or shaking you forcefully has any chance of waking you up, and even then you must win or tie a Simple Test to act the same turn as you awaken — on a loss, you cannot act at all that turn and count as Surprised on the one after that, reflecting how long it takes to shake the sleep from your eyes.

Lazy (1 Trait)

Why put off until tomorrow what can safely wait until next week? You despise physical labor of any kind, and even faced with a rather pressing need you would rather debate what needs to be done for hours than actually get up off your posterior to get it going. Any time you are faced with doing work not directly relating to the hunt or to keeping your job (if you have one), you must make a Willpower test against four Traits — failure means that you cannot be bothered to perform such routine tasks until some time later.

Low Alcohol Tolerance (1 Trait)

If someone opens a beer in the next room, you head starts getting fuzzy, and in general you tend to feel the effects of alcohol long before others would. You suffer twice the normal penalties related for intoxication, as well as suffer a one-Trait penalty on all actions the next day due to the nasty hangovers you're prone to getting.

Motion Sickness (1 Trait)

Try as you might, you've never developed a stomach for things like sea voyages or carnival rides, and even a long trip by car soon becomes an adventure in nausea for you. Any time you spend more than 15 minutes on a boat or plane, or more than 30 minutes in a car, you are at a one-Trait penalty on all actions for the rest of the trip as well as a full half-hour afterward, due to the sickness such journeys cause.

No Sense of Smell/Taste (1 Trait)

Your sense of smell or taste is completely gone, whether due to a genetic defect or some sort of freak accident. You are at a one-Trait penalty on all Perception-related tests involving your deficient sense, but on the other hand you suffer half the normal penalty (round down) when it comes to dealing with unpleasant odors or tastes, as appropriate.

Nonswimmer (1 Trait)

Maybe you were raised somewhere in the Midwest, or perhaps you watched too many shark movies as a child, but either way you never learned how to swim and have no natural aptitude for it now. If thrust into an aquatic situation the best you can manage is a pitiful doggie paddle. You are two Traits down on all *Athletics* tests involving swimming, and might even panic if dropped into water.

Poor Eyesight (1 or 3 Traits)

Your natural eyesight is extremely poor, and you have a two-Trait penalty on all tests involving vision (including ranged combat tests). Obviously, you cannot have this Flaw and any Merits related to acute vision. This Flaw is worth one Trait if this difficulty can be corrected with eyeglasses or contact lenses, or three Traits if it cannot.

Poor Hearing (1 or 3 Traits)

You have substantial difficulty hearing, and suffer a two-Trait penalty on all tests of hearing. Obviously, you cannot have this Flaw and any Merits related to acute hearing. This Flaw is worth one Trait if this difficulty can be corrected with a hearing aid, or three Traits if it cannot.

Sickly (1 Trait)

It seems you're always coming down with some sickness or another, and no matter how often you get them, your immune system doesn't seem to be getting any better at fighting them off. Indeed, you are two Traits down on all tests to resist diseases and other infections, and should roleplay your constant low-level sickness when possible. This is distinct from the *Sickly* Negative Trait in that it reflects a weakened immune system, as opposed to simply a frail body, though they can be combined if the player desires.

Vice (1-3 Traits)

Somewhere along the line you got trapped in an addiction, and like it or not you still haven't kicked the habit. The value of this Flaw depends on how common (and legal) the substance is, and to a lesser extent how addicted the character is to it. One Trait would indicate an addiction to a legal and easily obtainable substance, such as cigarettes or a \$10-a-day coffee fixation. Two Traits indicates a legal or mildly illegal substance that impairs the hunter's ability to carry on the hunt, such as marijuana or ecstasy. Three Traits indicates an addiction to a highly illegal and/or extremely dangerous drug such as heroin or crack. You are considered to always be under the effect of this substance (Storyteller discretion, but should be far more negative than positive overall), and should you be denied it you may begin losing Willpower or suffering Trait penalties temporarily as you go through withdrawal.

Youthful Appearance (1 Trait)

No matter how old you might be, you appear to be underage for many adult activities, and can count on being carded, looked down and otherwise harassed by those who believe you're nothing more than a minor. You are one Trait down on all attempts to persuade others that you are in fact of legal age, as well as on all Social Challenges with those inclined to distrust young people (concert security guards, cynical police officers, etc.). If you do not already have an appearance that simulates up this Flaw, a description tag is recommended to alert other players to your apparent youth.

Disfigured (2 Traits)

A hideous disfigurement mars your face, and your revolting countenance is hard to forget (try though others might). You cannot take any Appearance-related Social

Traits, and you suffer a two-Trait penalty on all Social Challenges except intimidation when your face is visible. Makeup or a mask of some kind is recommended to ensure this Flaw has maximum effect, though a description tag will also do in a pinch.

Insomniac (2 Traits)

Sleep is a precious commodity for the imbued, but you have trouble getting even a few hours of sleep, and your daytime performance frequently suffers because of it. A Willpower test against a difficulty of five Traits is required before each session begins — if it fails, you are assumed to have gotten inadequate sleep the night before. Aside from the hours of frustrated tossing and turning or mindless infomercial watching this entails, you also suffer a one-Trait penalty on all *Alertness*-, *Awareness*- and *Intuition*-related tests due to your dull senses and groggy thinking. This Flaw cannot be selected if you have either the *Endurance* Ability or the *Vigilance* edge, and if you acquire those Traits later, the Traits from this Flaw must be reassigned to another as soon as possible.

Low Pain Tolerance (2 Traits)

While you're not necessarily any weaker than others, you have a much lower tolerance for pain than other people your size, and tend to cave in when confronted by the slightest period of discomfort. You suffer an additional one-Trait penalty whenever you are reduced below your last Bruised level, and have a similar penalty on all attempts to resist physical torture or intimidation as well.

Old Injury (2 Traits)

At one point in the past you sustained a serious injury, and it continues to pain you to this day — you are at a one-Trait penalty on all *Athletics* tests due to discomfort, and should roleplay dealing with this old war wound accordingly.

Poor Night Vision (2 Traits)

Maybe your parents forbade you to go out at night, or perhaps you lacked the right vitamins in your diet, but regardless of the cause you have a terrible time getting around in low-light conditions. You are down two Traits on all tests made in dim light (such as those attempted by mere starlight or a simple flashlight beam), and suffer an additional one-Trait penalty on all combat conditions while fighting in low- or no-light conditions. Needless to say, this can be a devastating handicap when trying to adapt to your new life. The *Discern* edge eliminates this Flaw while active, although other vision-related edges such as *Witness* or *Illuminate* offer no such relief.

Short (2 Traits)

You have trouble seeing over things, interacting with tall people and escaping notice due to your proportions. You can only take two steps in an action instead of three, due to your small size. You also have trouble reaching countertops and manipulating objects designed for normal people (like cars). You should wear a tag to note your condition if you are not actually that short.

Crippled Limb (3 Traits)

More severe than simply suffering from a twitchy limb like the *Lame* Negative Physical Trait, you have extensive damage to one of your arms or legs. If one of your arms is injured, you suffer a two-Trait penalty on any actions that normally require two hands (firing a rifle, climbing a wall, etc.). You should also adopt a posture or prop that indicates your limb's useless nature. If one of your legs is crippled, you can only take one step per action, you cannot run at all and you should probably take the Negative Trait *Lame* as well. Additionally, you should roleplay this impairment with a cane or a set of leg braces.

Deformity (3 Traits)

A physical deformity of some sort not only mars your appearance, but makes physical activity difficult for you. You have one penalty Trait on challenge resolution for Physical Challenges, and two for Social Challenges. You should work with the Storyteller to define the nature of your *Deformity* (hunchback, club foot, etc.).

Elderly (3 Traits)

Most people are closer to the prime of their life when the imbuings strike, but you're the exception to that rule — while this means you can often offer advice on a wide range of topics, it has put a few limitations on your physical performance. While you might be just as strong or fast as your younger counterparts, you don't have the stamina you once did; after any period of exertion (combat certainly included), you must make a Physical Challenge against seven Traits. Failure means that you must stop and catch your breath for at least 10 minutes, and suffer a one-Trait penalty to all actions until you do so. Likewise, your wound penalties are increased by one. This Flaw should be indicated by appropriate makeup or description cards.

Shaky Hands (3 Traits)

When you're under pressure, your hands have a bad tendency to shake uncontrollably, making it difficult to perform actions that require any kind of manual dexterity (such as reloading a revolver or picking a lock). You may be as brave as the next hunter, but all the same you still suffer from this dangerous quirk, and are at a one-Trait penalty on all tests involving fine coordination. You must make a Physical Challenge against a difficulty of five Traits (retest with *Firearms*) to reload a revolver or shotgun during combat; failure means your turn is wasted and you must attempt to reload again another round.

Missing Eye (3 Traits)

Whether by injury or defect, you are missing an eye or one of your eyes does not function. You are two Traits down on tests of depth perception, including ranged combat. Depending on the nature of your eye damage, you may choose to wear an eyepatch, or you may simply have one blind eye. Oddly enough, the *Discern* edge allows you to see as though you still possessed both of your eyes.

Child (4 Traits)

A true rarity among hunters, you were imbued as a child, between five and 10 years of age. This causes some decided problems: you cannot have more than six Physical Traits normally and you suffer a two-Trait penalty on tests of authority with adults. Obviously, given enough time you will eventually grow out of this Flaw, so to speak, but until then you're in for a multitude of headaches at least as bad as the protections and freedoms it provides. You must additionally take the Flaw *Short* (though you do get Free Traits for it), and a description tag of some kind is required to alert players to your tender age.

Chronic Illness (4 Traits)

Whether acquired since the hunt began or a holdover from your life before, you suffer under a debilitating illness of some kind, from chronic fatigue syndrome to cancer, and as a result you tend to tire and injure more easily than most. You are two Traits down on all *Athletics* tests, as well as any tests involving absorbing punishment of any kind. You cannot have more than five Physical Traits if you wish to take this Merit, and may even lose them slowly as the chronicle — and your illness — progresses.

Deaf (4 Traits)

You are completely deaf, and must use sign language or some other form of communication. On the plus side, this renders you immune to certain supernatural powers that rely on hearing to function, but you also suffer a three-Trait penalty on tests of perception and alertness. In addition, you are automatically Surprised by anyone who approaches you from outside your line of sight. Needless to say, you cannot possess any Merits or other Traits related to good hearing.

Mute (4 Traits)

You cannot speak at all. You should use sign language or write down your communications. You can explain your actions to a Storyteller or Narrator, but that is the limit of your speaking. Without *Linguistics*, you may not even be able to sign. You also cannot use any edges which rely on the spoken word to function, such as *Bluster* or *Insinuate*, unless your Storyteller allows you to come up with an equally compelling alternative for your condition. This can be a difficult Flaw to roleplay, so choose carefully.

Blind (6 Traits)

The world of sight is lost to you. You cannot see at all, so you automatically lose all ties where sight would be a factor (tests of manual dexterity, for instance). What's more, you automatically fail any challenge that rely solely on sight, and the hunter code is obviously of no use to you at all. The *Discern* edge allows you to see again normally, if only for a time; at the Storyteller's discretion, you may still be able to use your Conviction perceptions or even vision-related edges like *Witness* or *Illuminate* by developing your other senses to a higher degree instead. If you have this Flaw, you should wear a special tag or glasses to indicate its nature.

Mental Flaws**Medicated (1-5 Traits)**

You require some form of medication to stay healthy; exactly how often you require it (not to mention how difficult it is to acquire) determines the value of this Flaw. One Trait indicates a medication that matters for long term health but which has little impact on everyday life, such as cholesterol medication; three Traits indicates something more serious, such as heart or liver pills; five Traits means that your character requires daily doses of medication to keep her alive, such as insulin for a diabetic. Missing a day's worth of medicine inflicts a level of bashing or lethal damage, depending on the seriousness of the condition. This damage cannot be healed until the character gets back on his medication, at which time it heals at a rate of one level every 12 hours.

Nightmares (1 Trait)

Hideous nightmares about monsters stalk through your mind whenever you slumber. At a Narrator's discretion, you may suffer nightmares so bad that you are unable to sleep restfully, causing you to be two Traits down on the first test you make against monsters that day. A crafty Storyteller is usually quick to take advantage of this Flaw to introduce all sorts of mood and foreshadowing as well. You may possess this Flaw and the *Vigilance* edge or *Endurance* Ability — you may need less sleep, but it's still as bad as a full night's rest when you finally close your eyes.

No Sense of Direction (1 Trait)

Maps, compasses, heck, even GPS technology and a personal guide — none of it does you any good, you still get lost all the time anyway. You have trouble keeping

your bearings in all but the most familiar surroundings, and are two Traits down on any tests to navigate or otherwise try to feel out your way to a location. This doesn't include trailing a target, though it might make for an interesting trip home, especially if he went through some bad parts of town....

Poor Sense of Time (1 Trait)

It's very difficult for you to estimate the passage of time without a clock on hand, and as a result you tend to over or underestimate how much time has passed by five minutes or more, which can be a critical mistake when you're attempting to go along with a tightly planned operation. This Flaw largely relies on the player to roleplay correctly, though the Narrator may impose a one-Trait penalty on all tests involving estimating the passage of time correctly, including demolitions work or arriving at the right time to rescue a fellow hunter.

Short Temper (1 Trait)

Setbacks of any kind irritate you a great deal, and truth be told, you tend to overreact when faced with the slightest difficulty enacting your plans. If you fail to win at least one test in an extended series (such as picking a lock or even fighting a monster), or come up short on a particularly important single challenge (Narrator's discretion), you are at a one-Trait penalty on all other tests for the rest of the scene due to your ill temper and rising frustration.

Terrible With Names (1 Trait)

You have the devil's own time putting name to a face or a place, and should roleplay this inability to remember these details accordingly. Should it ever become essential to remember such information, you must make a Mental Challenge against five Traits to recall what you're looking for; failure means that you simply can't draw it out. (You meet so many people in a day, after all.)

Absent-Minded (2 Traits)

Whether due to advanced age or just a natural trait, you tend to forget details that other people take for granted. Once per session, when you try to use an item that you would normally bring with you, the Narrator may require you to make a Willpower test against five Traits. If you fail, you forgot to bring the item in question, and you must go searching for it before it'll turn up again (it always does by the end of scene, if you look).

Attention-Deficit Disorder (2 Traits)

No one posts you to guard duty unless they have no choice, and chances are you're first one to drift off during planning sessions — you can't help it, but it's just about impossible for you to sit still and pay attention for any length of time. If you are ever required to perform an action that requires more than ten minutes of constant supervision, such as standing guard outside a stronghold or watching for signs of activity in a monster lair, you must make a Willpower test against six Traits. Failure means that you become distracted somehow; you need not abandon your post outright, but you have a two-Trait penalty for the rest of that scene to all Perception-related tests due to your inattentiveness.

Dyslexic (2 Traits)

While not necessarily stupid or uneducated by any means, you have a tremendous difficulty reading the printed word, such that even the simplest documents often take you a great deal of time to work through. You are two Traits down on all tests to decipher maps or read documents of any kind, and such activities take half again as

long as they would for another character to reflect the additional difficulty you have working through such sources.

Eating Disorder (2 Traits)

Whether a victim of cultural expectations or simply possessed of an unhealthy desire to stay trim, you have developed an eating disorder that is wrecking your body's natural balance. You are two Traits down on all Stamina-related Physical Challenges, reflecting the weakness and malnutrition you've forced upon yourself.

Language Barrier (2-3 Traits)

You cannot speak the language or dialect of the area you operate in, which means that you must rely on clumsy guidebooks or translators in order to get your point across. For two Traits, you can read the language but have trouble using it in conversation (you're at a two-Trait penalty on all related Social Challenges); for three Traits, you can neither speak it nor read it. Needless to say, you cannot learn the local language any further until you buy off this Flaw.

Overconfident (2 Traits)

Maybe you're a talented individual who's just a bit too sure of himself, or perhaps you're just a show-off with an thoroughly unfounded opinion of his own merit, but either way you tend to underestimate your opposition at the same time that you overestimate your own capabilities. This can be a dangerous Flaw indeed when the hunt is involved, and once per session the Narrator may secretly add three Traits to the difficulty of one test to reflect how your inflated opinion of yourself has led you to draw the wrong conclusion about your situation. You also tend to jump in where others would hold back for at least a moment or two, which can lead to a short hunting career indeed.

Faint of Heart (3 Traits)

You have a weak stomach for scenes of gore and carnage; even cheesy horror films can make you queasy, and when confronted by an actual scene of such depravity you must make a Willpower test against a difficulty of five Traits to avoid losing your lunch. Failure means that you're overcome with nausea for the next 10 minutes, and while you still may attempt other actions than retching if the need is great, all such tests suffer a one-Trait penalty while the sickness lasts.

Incompetent (3 Traits)

You are absolutely terrible at one Ability, but unfortunately it seems like you're the only one who doesn't notice it. Perhaps you fancy yourself a master thespian when all your audience wants to do is crawl under their seats, or maybe you assume that a lifetime of playing violent roleplaying games has somehow made you a skilled martial artist. Choose one Ability when this Flaw is chosen — you believe that you have a proficiency of three levels or more in this Ability, but you cannot take actually any levels of this Ability during character creation, nor can you learn it during play until this Flaw is bought off. (It will take you some time to learn to walk the walk as well as talk the talk.) The plus side of this arrangement is that you do not need to spend a Willpower Trait to attempt challenges with this Ability, even though you do not have any levels of it, since you are so completely convinced you're an expert in the field. However, your overconfidence paired with your utter lack of any real knowledge also means that you lose all ties involving this Ability, and with particularly important failures the Storyteller may require you to win or tie a Simple Test to avoid failing in some truly spectacular way. Naturally, until this Flaw is bought off you are quick to

deflect any failures or perceived lack of expertise on your part, and will come up with no end of excuses or rationalizations to maintain your self-deception.

Low Self-Esteem (3 Traits)

No matter your actual talents or strengths, you have trouble realizing your real worth, and tend to be down on yourself as a matter of habit. Others may try to cheer you up temporarily, but that can make it even worse if you realize what they're doing, and you don't even gain much satisfaction from applying yourself according to your true nature. Any time you would gain Willpower from a great success or acting in accordance with your Nature, you must make a Willpower test against five Traits — failure means that you do not earn the bonus after all, as a reflection of how much you downplay yourself or your role in events. This penalty does not apply to Willpower you regain naturally by resting.

Slow Learner (3 Trait)

Regardless of how intelligent you might actually be, you have trouble getting your mind around new concepts as quickly as others, and can drive even patient instructors to distraction as you plod along. It costs an extra Experience Trait to learn a new Ability, and if you spend Experience to raise an Ability it does not actually increase until the session after next, reflecting how long it takes you to put what you've learned into practice.

Weak-Willed (3 Trait Flaw)

"A hero? Who, me?" When others would rise to the occasion and summon the grit to carry on, more often than not you have trouble getting as far as the gritty part to begin with. Whether due to guilt over some past failure or just a difficulty in seeing yourself as worthy to take big chances, you have trouble rising to meet the kinds of challenges the imbued are faced with daily. Add two Traits the difficulty of all Willpower tests, and you cannot possess a Willpower rating higher than six so long as you still have this Flaw.

Amnesia (4 Traits)

Prior to your imbuing, the past is a blank slate. You know nothing of your history, your family, your friends or foes. Your Storyteller makes up your character's history, including the reasons for your Amnesia. The Storyteller may even keep your character record partially hidden, only revealing your Abilities, edges, Backgrounds, Conviction, Merits and Flaws when you try to use them (or when they come back to haunt you). In general, the only things obvious to you are the things you can see in the mirror.

Depression (4 Traits)

All hunters are threatened by feelings of depression at one time or another, but you've fallen into the trap to such a degree that at this point you think your feelings are perfectly natural (if not entirely deserved), and so you refuse to get help of any kind for your condition. This Flaw should not be confused with the derangement of *Manic-Depression*; the latter represents clinical insanity of one kind or another, while the former is "merely" a behavioral condition. (A character cannot possess both Traits; if one is acquired, the points for the other must be reassigned to other Flaws.) In any event, you do not regain Willpower naturally, but can only regain it by performing deeds in keeping with your nature or successfully completing great personal goals.

Illiterate (4 Traits)

You cannot read or write your native language, and while you can recognize some common symbols such as traffic signs or warning labels, you are a great disadvantage when it comes to doing research of any kind, and will have trouble getting a decent

job as well. You automatically fail all tests involving reading or writing. This Flaw does not affect your ability to understand the hunter code.

Aptitude Flaws

Immature/Old Before Your Time (2 or 4 Traits)

You might be at the prime of your life as far as most people reckon, but for some reason you're far short of your true potential, either due to lingering immaturity or conditions similar to the onset of old age. For two Traits, you're considered to be young for the purposes of determining Attribute and Willpower maximums, regardless of your actual age, and must grow up some and buy off this Flaw before you can exceed those limits. For four Traits, you're considered old for the purposes of determining Attribute maximums, though not for Willpower maximums, and with time against you it's unlikely anything short of a serious miracle will ever correct the problem (i.e., buy off this Flaw).

Only characters in the peak age group may take this Flaw, and the Storyteller may forbid it outright if she doesn't feel it will make a substantial difference for a character.

Legal Flaws

Political Extremist (1 Trait)

You are a known member of a suspicious or feared organization such as the Klu Klux Klan. This naturally causes non-members to hold unpleasant views about you, and you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges with people who dislike the organization you belong to. In addition, you can expect curt treatment at best from local law enforcement, and while you might have no criminal record yourself, the local authorities will have an open file on you, regardless. You might even be targeted by undercover surveillance at different times if your organization begins attracting attention to itself, and the Storyteller may decide to restrict certain Backgrounds based on what people would trust you with.

Revoked Driver's License (1 Trait)

Whether you lost it due to a poor record, or never bothered to get it in the first place, you do not have a driver's license of any kind, and if caught driving the police will immediately arrest you and impound your car. Needless to say, this can be a serious impediment to your hunting plans, not to mention a substantial limit on your mobility in general.

Sunday Driver (1 Trait)

As much as they might love your company, your friends never want you to drive — maybe you're fussy about obeying the speed limit and every other possible traffic regulation you come across, or perhaps you're the exact opposite, and pay dangerously little attention to things like lane dividers or oncoming traffic. Either way, you're down two Traits on all *Drive* tests involving high speed chases or other complicated maneuvers.

Criminal Record (2 Traits)

Rightly or wrongly, you have been convicted of several misdemeanors or perhaps a minor felony, and questions of rehabilitation aside this places certain legal restrictions on you as well. You cannot buy firearms legally, you can be brought in for questioning with the slightest of evidence, and depending on your particular crime and the place you live you might have to report yourself to the local police, newspapers or both. Needless to say, this can earn a lot of ill will from those who find out about your

past, and you can expect to get nothing but grief from most police officers. You are two Traits down on all Social Challenges with law enforcement officials who know of your criminal past.

Probation (2 Traits)

At least it got you out of larger trouble, but making a deal for probation does have its bad side as well — you must report to your case officer on a regular basis, and submit to random searches of your residence or person when the court deems it necessary. Not only that, but you must demonstrate a commitment to becoming a model citizen as well: hold down a job, keep up with debt, not being seen any place suspicious, etc. Needless to say, this can make a lot of hunting activities quite difficult to get away with, but as the price for getting caught is most likely being tossed in jail, it's a balancing act you're going to have to become quite good at if you wish to go far.

Illegal Immigrant (3 Traits)

Simple enough — wherever you live now, you don't belong there, at least not as far as the law is concerned. If you're ever arrested, there's a serious risk of being deported to your country of origin, and you cannot hold down a job unless it pays you under the table. The Storyteller will most likely want to restrict your Backgrounds to reflect the difficulties you have being a non-citizen as well.

Wanted by Law Enforcement (3 Traits)

Well, now you've done it (or maybe not, but it sure looks like you did) — you're the prime suspect in a felony crime, and the police are actively searching for you. That means living a fugitive's life from night to night, as your assets are frozen, your regular hangouts watched closely and your known associates might be called on to provide your whereabouts. It is assumed in this Flaw that for one reason or another you cannot simply walk into the police station and clear up the matter, even if you happen to be innocent. Indeed, this Flaw cannot be bought off at all unless you either undergo the long and difficult process of clearing your name, or you somehow deflect official attention in a big way (flee the country, fake your own death).

Economic Flaws

Audit (1 Trait)

Like it or not, you've become the subject of an audit by your government tax authority, and they watch your finances carefully for strange expenses or illegal maneuvering. Buying exotic or illegal equipment is extremely difficult, and the agency may bring you in from time to time to explain where your money comes from or how it is spent. Add two Traits to the difficulty of all *Resources*-related tests, as well as any transactions for illegal goods that total over \$500.

Demanding Career (2 Traits)

Whether you used to be a workaholic and now find yourself trapped by your old habits, or you simply practice a profession that can call on you at just about any time (such as a paramedic or firefighter), your job has a habit of interfering with your hunting activities. You must have some way for the office to contact you on your person at all times, and too many late arrivals or missed shifts will wind up with you being terminated. What's more, whether you quit or get fired, your *Resources* drop at least one level should you leave the job for good.

Primary Breadwinner (2 Traits)

Your family counts on you to bring home the income it requires make ends meet, and you simply must have a regular job of some kind to do that, the needs of the hunt

be damned. At least two levels of your *Resources* rating must be dedicated to supporting your family, and should that Background fall below that level your family will begin to suffer for it. If that ever becomes the case, increase the difficulty of all Willpower tests by one due to the shame and guilt you feel over letting your family down in such a fashion.

Uninsured (2 Traits)

You carry no insurance of any kind, either due to a lack of sufficient funds or a personal decision. Should you require medical attention or be involved in an accident, all the resulting costs must be paid out of your own pocket. Such tremendous drain is likely to reduce your *Resources* rating by at least one or two levels, perhaps even permanently in the case of serious or long-term expenses.

Alimony Payments (3 Traits)

Money you make goes right back out to your ex-spouse and your children (if any), and failure to keep up regular payments will result in having your assets frozen and your possessions seized by the authorities. You may never have more than three levels of *Resources*, no matter what your actual income might be, due to the economic hardship involved in meeting the payment schedule.

Homeless (4 Traits)

Just as it sounds, you have no permanent place to dwell, which means it's a life on the streets or spent hopping from shelter to shelter for you. You cannot take the *Resources* Background at all, and cannot heal lethal damage naturally while living under these conditions. In addition, you must carry all of your equipment with you somehow, and if you do not you must hide it and make a Simple Test with the Storyteller — on a loss, your stash has been found and at least one item has been stolen.

Sample Character Creation

Pete decides to enter a local game of **Laws of the Reckoning**, and after checking with Alyson, the Storyteller, he decides he wishes to play one of the imbued. Pete puts on an inspirational CD while the two of them take a copy of the rulebook and sit down to create a character.

Step One: Concept

The process begins by looking for a concept, a basic idea or theme Pete can build his character around. By way of guidance, Alyson tells him that the game is going to be centered around a local college, and to design characters that would fit into that environment. Thinking for a bit, Pete begins to get an impression of a young punk rocker, but rather than play him as simply another cookie-cutter rebel he decides that his real motivation revolves around guilt over the death of his girlfriend Christine, who died in a car accident while he was behind the wheel. He blames himself for it and has been a little overzealous in looking out for his friends since then. Before he moves on to choosing a creed, Pete asks Alyson if he will begin the game as a hunter, or if she wants to run the imbuing later on as part of the prelude. She tells him that they will do the imbuing during the prelude, but that right now he can still select the hunter characteristics that he's most likely to wind up with. (They can always be changed later if needed.) He spends a while looking over creeds, and while it's a tough call, he ultimately decides to go with Martyr over Defender, as his sense of guilt and subsequent lack of respect for his own life make him more likely to choose self-sacrifice even when it's not truly necessary. He chooses Celebrant (Music) for his Demeanor — he often loses himself in his music while he's around his friends — and Penitent for his Nature,

a natural choice considering his tragic past. Looking for a name, he considers a few possibilities, then at last decides his character goes by his nickname of Jimmy most of the time.

Step Two: Attributes

Pete now has to prioritize Jimmy's Attribute categories, to determine his basic strengths and weaknesses. He takes Social as Jimmy's primary Trait category, Physical as his secondary, and Mental as his tertiary. Pete explains that Jimmy was quite a talented performer before the accident, and still isn't bad at all even now (Social); he's still a young man, and between time spent skating and in the pit at local shows he's in decent shape (Physical); but he started hanging out a little too early and never quite picked up all the education he should have (Mental).

Now Pete must choose individual Traits for each category, beginning with six Social Traits. He picks *Expressive*, *Witty*, *Charismatic*, *Eloquent*, *Gorgeous*, and *Friendly*. Jimmy has a compelling stage presence, and can deliver a performance as precise as it is passionate. Next is Physical, with four Traits, and Pete chooses the following: *Athletic*, *Wiry*, *Energetic*, and *Tough*. Jimmy's got a bit of natural athletic talent, as well as a lot of energy and staying power when it comes to physical activity. Finally comes Mental, with only three Traits to choose. Pete picks *Creative*, *Intuitive* and *Alert* — Jimmy hasn't picked up as much in class as he should have, but he's got an good artistic temperament, as well as a little skill at watching his back.

Step Three: Advantages

Pete now must choose Jimmy's five Abilities. First he reflects on Jimmy's musical talent, once the focal point of his life and still an important part of it even now. To reflect his natural talent, he takes *Expression* and *Performance* x2, designating singing and playing guitar as his chosen *Performance* styles. A level of *Streetwise* is next, since like any good punk Jimmy's spent quite a bit of time hanging out in questionable places and playing shows in run-down halls on the wrong side of town. Last comes a level of *Brawl*, which Pete figures Jimmy probably learned in the pit and outside a few clubs. There are others he'd like to take, but he'll have to come back with more points later on or earn them with Experience Traits during play.

Next comes Backgrounds, where Pete has another five levels to play with. One level each goes into *Contacts* and *Allies*, reflecting the friends Jimmy has all over town and a professor who's been trying to help him get out of his depression and put his life back together. Another level goes into *Exposure*, and when Alyson asks him how he earned it, Pete explains that Jimmy and his late girlfriend Christine used to run around at night with a group of friends looking for spooky places to sneak into. It was mostly harmless fun, but one night they heard some strange noises and saw a couple of bizarre things that Jimmy now believes might have indicated a real haunting after all. A level goes into *Resources* — Jimmy lives with his mom, but she doesn't do much to support him, so he has a part-time job and an old station wagon of his own. His last level goes into *Fame*, which Pete justifies as Jimmy's band's popularity on the local scene, and Alyson approves these Background choices as appropriate to the character.

Step Four: Finishing Touches

Pete now records Jimmy's starting Conviction, Willpower, Virtues and edges. (While Jimmy has not yet undergone his imbuing, these are the Traits he will take when he does, so Pete records them for the sake of convenience later.) As a Martyr,

Jimmy begins with four Conviction Traits, which Pete marks down on his sheet, and all hunters begin with two Willpower Traits, so those are recorded as well. Now for Virtues, where he has three Traits to spend — the Martyr Virtue is Mercy, so that one must be equal or higher than the others. Pete assigns two Traits to Mercy and one to Zeal; Jimmy understands very well the pain that drives monsters to act the way that they do, but he also tends to make clear decisions and favor actions against the supernatural. For his edges, he selects both of the Gifted Martyr edges, *Demand* and *Project*, and finished with the Gifted Defender edge of *Ward*. Pete feels the Martyr edges reflect Jimmy's strong personality and his heedlessness of his own safety, but that he also still has strong feelings about protecting his friends which makes the Defender edge a natural choice as well. Alyson agrees and they move on to spending Free Traits.

First Pete has the option to choose Flaws and Negative Traits for his character, to help flesh Jimmy out a bit more and earn some extra positive Traits in addition to the five Free Traits all hunters get. None of the Negative Physical or Social Traits appeal to him, but *Impatient* stands out as a good choice — Jimmy is restless and doesn't see much point in waiting for anything, especially since Christine died. Moving on to Flaws, he selects *Eccentric Appearance* (green spiky hair and clothing covered in pins and patches is easy to pick out of a crowd) and *Nightmares* (the car crash), both worth one Trait each. That gives him a total of eight Free Traits to spend to improve Jimmy's other Traits. The first two go to *Tenacious* Physical Trait and the *Observant* Mental Trait, boosting up some of the qualities Pete started outlining before. Another three Free Traits go into Abilities, purchasing a level each of *Athletics*, *Stealth* and *Intuition*, representing some of his youthful pastimes and his ability to follow his instincts a good amount of the time. With his last three Free Traits, he purchases the *Good Right Hook* Merit for one Trait and the *Best Friend* Merit for two. He explains to Alyson that the first came around in part because Jimmy hates guns and refuses to fight with weapons of any kind; the second is his friend Beth, who has been his best friend since first grade and who saved him from total self-destruction when Christine died. Beth won't be aware of exactly what Jimmy goes through during the imbuing (that would require the *Bystander* Background), but she'll be there for him just the same. Liking the character development that she's seeing, Alyson approves the Trait expenditures and Jimmy's character creation is officially finished.

Step Five: Spark of Life

All the game mechanics, Traits, edges and skills are now laid out. Pete has developed a much better conception of Jimmy than when he first started, but these are still some things not covered, things that can't be captured by rules and character sheets; specifically, the details that make Jimmy live and breathe to the other players. Pete has to think about ways to convey his character's personality to the other players, to create a host of little identifying quirks that come with roleplaying him. There are countless subtleties that can be added to make a character seem more real, and which make for an entertaining and memorable personality for everyone in a game to interact with. Finding the right balance of such elements can be a great challenge, but also one of the most rewarding roleplaying experiences around, and Pete looks forward to bringing Jimmy to life in the dark nights of the Reckoning....

Chapter Four: Edges

While most hunters cling tenaciously to their humanity in the time following their imbuing, desperate to believe that there is still something that fundamentally separates them from monsters, there's no denying that they also begin displaying special powers as well. These powers are called edges, for the advantage they give hunters in their battles against creatures of the night, and are perhaps the source of greatest speculation on hunter-net aside from the enemy and the Heralds themselves. Some hunters rejoice in their newfound powers, considering them gifts of God, the mark of the next step in evolution or even just some neat tricks to have at their disposal. Others dislike and distrust what they feel edges represent, whether they think it's a mark from God that proves they are like the monsters, or that they represent an freakish mutation of the species, or even because they're afraid that imbued will begin abusing them just like the monsters abuse their own powers. Still, even those who do not trust them or where they came from do not deny their effectiveness.

Indeed, no matter what the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the existence of edges might be, ultimately the hunter realizes that he has them and what's more, that he knows how to use them. Of course, it is also a fact that this realization is always accompanied by the sudden knowledge that monsters exist, and that these powers will in some way help him deal with his new world... draw what conclusions from it that you will.

Initial Edges

Most of the time, you will select edges during character creation just the same as you select your creed, Attributes, Abilities and so on. Provided you can rationalize the edges you take with the personality of the character and the circumstances of his imbuing — a straightforward, no-nonsense Avenger whose imbuing is a bloody street battle is unlikely to develop a quiet and unobtrusive edge like *Hide*, for example — this option leaves you free to take the edges you feel best represent your character. Simply spend your initial three Virtue Traits on the edges you want, and that's that. You don't need to take only edges from your own creed; you may purchase any edges that you have the Virtue Traits for. Just remember, however, that you can never have more edges in another path than you have in the one corresponding to your creed's primary Virtue. Thus, a Martyr must always have an equal or greater number of Martyrdom edges as he has in any other edge path.

Edge Costs

Edge Level	Virtue Trait Cost	Virtue Traits Required	Level of Power
Touched	One	One	Basic
Gifted	Two	Three	Basic
Devoted	Three	Six	Intermediate
Inspired	Four	Ten	Intermediate
Exalted	Five	Special*	Advanced

*Only imbued with 10 Virtue Traits who accept at least three permanent derangements and other sacrifices for their creed have a chance at developing these edges. Indeed, the nature of the changes required are so severe that typically only Narrator characters will possess these edges, since a player character would be so consumed by his mission as to make him effectively unplayable.

Gaining New Edges

Of course, character creation isn't the only time that players will deal with purchasing edges. Every time a player cashes in 10 Conviction Traits, she gains a Virtue Trait which can then be used to purchase edges (or saved, if the player wants to buy an expensive edge). The Virtue Trait cost of an edge is listed in the table. All hunters may learn edges of any path that they have Virtue Traits in, at no additional cost, provided once again that they do not acquire more edges from a path that is not their creed's primary path.

A hunter must have at least one edge of each rank before he may buy an edge of the next level in a path — thus, in order to purchase a Gifted edge, the hunter must have at least one Touched edge from that same path. A character could not simply spend two Virtue Traits to acquire a Gifted edge of a path he doesn't have; first he must have at least one edge of the Touched level from that path.

Edge Levels

Edges are divided into five levels of potency, reflecting how far along that particular path a hunter has traveled: Touched, Gifted, Devoted, Inspired and Exalted. Likewise, they have a corresponding cost in Virtue Traits to acquire — a Touched edge costs one Virtue Trait, a Gifted edge costs two, etc. For the purposes of power comparison, Touched and Gifted edges are considered Basic powers; Devoted and Inspired edges are Intermediate powers; and Exalted edges are Advanced powers.

Triggers

Hunters aren't comic book characters, they're real people — that is to say, even once they discover they have special powers, they don't automatically trust them entirely, nor do they necessarily know where they came from or how to activate them once again. Therefore many imbued put their trust in a common prop, phrase or action to help them make sure the edge activates once again — what's known as a trigger. After all, if the first time you ever warded off a monster you did so by holding out your favorite necklace, would you really not have that necklace with you the next time that you were going to try that effect, just in case it somehow turned out to be part of how the power was created? Even if you knew deep down that you didn't really need it (as the majority of hunters eventually realize), its presence is still reassuring, not to

mention how it offers a reflexive way to respond to danger rather than casting about trying to remember how to activate the edge.

Triggers are therefore solely a roleplaying mechanism, but one players are highly encouraged to use when activating their edges — whether it's praying loudly, clutching a favorite piece of jewelry or even an action like crossing yourself or spinning in a circle, doing so adds to the game environment as well as keeps edges from seeming like automatic comic-book superpowers. A character is encouraged to have one or two triggers for each edge, although she may certainly use the same trigger for different edges if she desires.

For example, a Defender might shout loudly and/or hold his arms out to activate *Ward*, cross himself with his weapon to activate *Cleave* and whisper the names of his wife and children to use *Foresee*. Not only do such triggers add an interesting and unique roleplaying quirks to his edges, but they also help the player remember that his hunter is still a person and not some superhero slinging magical powers around at will.

Edge Names

Along the same lines, it should be noted that the names given for different levels of edges are simply what's commonly used on the hunter-net; imbued may give their edges personal names as suits their personality and/or how they discovered they possessed the edge in question. One Avenger may refer to *Cleave* as "the hand of God," for example, or a Martyr calls *Demand* "the bum's rush." So long as the player is clear what his edge is and what it does, he is encouraged to be as creative as he likes with the names of the edges his character has.

Edge Appearances

While other imbued with their Conviction active and supernatural creatures can normally see the effects of active edges for what they really are, normal people in the area either miss the effect entirely or rationalize it away as something they can understand. A Martyr's use of *Ravage* becomes a tear gas attack; a Redeemer's employing *Respire* is just performing first aid on a wound that must not have been as bad as it looked, etc. The Storyteller is the exact arbiter on how normal people react and how much they remember, though as a general rule the less Willpower they have and the less interest they have in what's going on, the less they remember about it later.

Note that this does not mean the imbued can run around using their powers whenever they feel like without fear of reprisal — decapitation is still decapitation, no matter how witnesses might rationalize that the imbued did it with a flaming sword. That means while ordinary folk might scatter for safety, the authorities will arrive at any location that the imbued are seen to be fighting with others, especially if they use particularly vicious or unsubtle powers. Even if *Cleave* doesn't leave much evidence behind, being seen acting like a madman and attacking an enemy with some kind of invisible weapon won't help if the police find a hunter standing over the body.

Likewise, one never knows when agents of the supernatural world may be watching, either — being observed performing "strange acts" and muttering about monsters in public is a quick way to get a visit from some very unwelcome entities, especially if they've been having trouble with some pesky humans who seem to know a bit too much.... Therefore, wise hunters keep their edges as secret as possible, using them in public only when they have no choice or they wish to try to expose a monster for what it is as well.

Several edges make use of physical contact — an Innocent giving a comforting hug, an Avenger using his fists, and so on. Obviously, under Mind's Eye Theatre rules, actual physical contact is forbidden, so either a description is necessary (for a willing target) or a Physical Challenge (to make contact with an unwilling target). Unless otherwise specified, physical contact edges do not require skin-to-skin contact.

Mercy

Whereas *Zeal* urges followers to choose sides based on clear-cut, universal distinctions, adherents of *Mercy* tend to take an interest in individuals and specific circumstances. While most do not argue that codes of behavior are important, the Merciful also realize that sometimes in life situations develop in ways that would test the integrity and judgment of even the wisest and most caring of individuals — which means that people who fall short of these ideals may very easily make mistakes or break rules they otherwise wouldn't. Followers of *Mercy* thus tend to seek out explanations for why a person or creature acted as he did before they make assumptions about him, and will do their best to make sure others bear such considerations in mind as well. These imbued often find that quite a few monsters exist who could possibly live in harmony with humanity, given the right chance, and they will fight the best they can to keep other hunters from interfering with creatures in the process of "reforming."

Of course, this tolerance should never be mistaken for allowing truly wicked or degenerate monsters free rein to prey on others — if anything, most Merciful fight harder than their companions in such battles, because they feel they have considered all factors and therefore can proceed with a clear conscience. Even then, however, they can't help feeling a twinge of regret for snuffing out any possibility of redeeming a creature, or perhaps even because they feel (rightly or wrongly) that but for the grace of God, they might themselves have gone.

If a character's first reaction to her imbuing is to protect innocent lives, put herself in harm's way or ask a monster why it's doing what it's doing, then there's a chance that character may be a follower of *Mercy*.

Innocence

Across all other factors such as age, gender or occupation, one factor unites all members of this gentle and inquisitive creed: an ability to look on the supernatural with no prejudices or preconceived notions whatsoever. This often can put them in dangerous situations as they ask questions or approach creatures other hunters won't go near (or at least won't go near without a large weapon of some kind), but it can also elicit a surprisingly disarming reaction even from some ancient creatures, who have forgotten and may even be nostalgic for what it was like to be addressed like just another ordinary person.

Innocents' edges reflect this naïve quality about them: they are well-suited to escaping from harm's way, lifting morale, learning more about creatures without interfering with them and otherwise gaining a fresh perspective on the situation.

Touched

Hide

There are perks to not standing out from the crowd, sometimes: a hunter with this edge can quite literally go unnoticed by nearby supernatural creatures, provided she doesn't go out of her way to attract attention. She doesn't actually become invisible

— rather, she simply seems unworthy of notice, even if they're face to face. (The standard posture for invisibility in *Mind's Eye Theatre* — crossing the arms over the chest — should be used to represent this power's use, though take care to note that it is not necessarily effective against all other characters.) Actions such as walking casually, speaking softly or slowly opening a door do not break this power; however running, touching a creature, yelling or acting aggressively in any way toward a monster will end the edge immediately for all monsters in the area. Should the character fall unconscious or become Incapacitated, the edge also fails. This power costs nothing to activate when not in the presence of monsters; should monsters begin actively searching for the character (not just pass through a room or give her location a once-over), or should the hunter seek to “disappear” in their presence, she must defeat such creatures in a Mental Challenge to stay *Hidden*. Her *Mercy Traits* are added to her bid in this test. Note: This power doesn't function against fellow hunters or normal mortals, who can perceive the hunter just fine.

Fool's Luck

Other imbued often joke about how Innocents seem to have special protection from on high; regardless of the ultimate truth behind such remarks, hunters with this edge certainly do seem to be visited by veritable miracles just when things look their darkest. Once per session, if the Innocent's life or capability to carry on the hunt is in direct, immediate danger, she may spend two Mental Traits to call upon *Fool's Luck*. She then receives a “lucky break,” the exact nature of which is left up to the Narrator, but which should offer at least a moment's respite from the danger threatening her. For example: A pair of police officers might finally respond to a “shots fired” call, forcing a gun-toting bloodsucker to flee the scene rather than finish her off; a locked door might suddenly open, giving her more running room; or she might even turn a corner and run into her fellow hunters just when she needs them. The only absolute rules are that it cannot permanently end a threat for her; it cannot aid anyone else but her; and it cannot provide a direct combat bonus of any kind (no fair having a piano fall on those pursuing goblins). Obviously, even with such restrictions, exactly how these narrative jumps are handled remains strictly under the Narrator's control, and this power may be disallowed if players try to abuse it. In addition, Storytellers of larger venues where Narrators are not as accessible can opt to simply say that this edge allows the Innocent a Fair Escape (if possible) or a free combat turn to do anything *except* fight (if escape is impossible).

Gifted

Illuminate

With this edge, a hunter can make it easier for her fellow hunters to spot any monsters in the area, effectively duplicating and replacing the need for them to spend Conviction to activate the second sight. It also reveals all creatures for what they truly are, even those that are normally difficult to discern such as warlocks or shapechangers in human form. To simulate this effect, the player must loudly announce “*Illuminate!*” — all players of supernatural creatures who hear this call must respond by raising one hand and keeping it up for five seconds. This is an out-of-game exchange, which is used to simulate the following in-game effects: to *all* hunters in the area, any supernatural creatures now stand out as though surrounded by brightly colored lights. However, all the creatures in the area can likewise clearly perceive the hunter using *Illuminate* as the source of what is revealing them, and furthermore the hunter cannot use *Hide* or other concealment powers while *Illuminate* is active. Note also that *Illuminate* doesn't

provide any resistance to mind or body control, as spending Conviction does. *Illuminate* takes a turn to activate and lasts for up to 10 minutes, during which time the hunter can call out "*Illuminate!*" as often as she desires; each Conviction Trait spent adds another 10 minutes to this duration. She may also terminate the power at will, and when it ends she must loudly announce "*Illuminate over!*" to signal to creatures and fellow hunters alike that the power has ended.

Ease

Monsters aren't the only dangers in the world of the imbued; all too often the stresses of the hunt begin to wear a fellow hunter's concentration, or even their sanity. Innocents with this edge can attempt to "talk down" those imbued afflicted with derangements, and help quiet their demons, if only for a time. To use this edge, the hunter can do nothing but speak reassuringly to the subject for at least three turns/five minutes; at the end of this time, the Innocent makes a Social Challenge against the afflicted character, who resists with a number of Traits equal to her primary Virtue, plus one additional Trait for each point of a Virtue they have at five or higher. (Thus, a Martyr with eight *Mercy* and six *Zeal* would have 10 Traits for the purposes of resisting this edge — eight from his primary Virtue, plus an additional two for having a *Zeal* of six.) The target cannot relent to the use of this edge, as it is the power of the derangements he has that is resisting. However, the Innocent may risk Conviction on this test, though her target cannot — it is the purpose of the Innocents to help, after all. If successful, the Innocent may suppress one of the target's derangements for two hours, plus one additional derangement per Social Trait he's willing to spend. At the Storyteller's discretion, continuous use of this edge over a long period of time may even help a target permanently shake off a derangement. This edge may only be used on a target once per session, and has no effect on anyone except fellow imbued.

Devoted

Radiate

With this power, the hunter begins to glow with unearthly white radiance, impeding all attempts by monsters to attack the radiating character. A point of Conviction must be spent to activate this edge, and it lasts for a number of turns equal to the hunter's *Mercy* rating. He must also announce to all near him how he is radiating light, as it is clearly visible to anyone in the area. During this time, all attacks by supernatural creatures — spells, claws, guns or any other means — are made at a two-Trait penalty, and the hunter may add his *Mercy* rating to his Trait total for the purposes of resolving all ties on defensive tests. This penalty is incurred even if a monster does not rely on sight; the hunter's aura seems to confuse and disorient it, regardless. No monster's mystical powers or senses can be used to negate the radiance, although hunter senses (even edge-assisted ones) are unaffected. The hunter may also include others in his protective field, provided that he spends a Physical Trait for each additional person and that such individuals do not stray farther than two paces from the hunter at any time. *Radiate* fails immediately if the hunter is Incapacitated or otherwise rendered unconscious.

Inspire

By reaching out to other people, the Innocent can offer them a measure of her own Conviction, bolstering fellow imbued and even relieving normal humans of some of the worst stresses of the supernatural. All that needs to be done with fellow imbued is touch them; for as long as the Innocent remains in contact with them, she may spend her own Conviction to bolster their efforts. She may activate their second sight and

self-control (if they are unable to do so themselves), she may spend her Conviction so they can use their own edges, and she can even risk her own Conviction on a test that they make. This last is handled exactly as if the subject had risked his own Conviction, except that if it succeeds he receives the additional extra Trait of Conviction — the Innocent simply retains what she risked. Note that if the Innocent has already risked her own Conviction on a test in the current scene, she cannot do so for another that same scene; likewise, if she risks her own Conviction on another's behalf with this edge, she cannot risk Conviction on one of her own tests later that scene.

In the case of bystanders and normal humans, the Innocent can only grant them protection from supernatural fear, mind or emotion control and possession — she cannot grant them second sight or the ability to use edges. Attempts to use such powers against them simply have no effect, just the same as for hunters using Conviction defense, and they understand emotionally that the hunter is responsible for sparing them from the trauma before them. Imbued or otherwise, an Innocent can support as many others as she is in contact with and/or have joined hands with her, up to a maximum of her Mercy rating. She must spend Conviction for each individually, however. Any effects generated by this edge end immediately if the hunter is Incapacitated.

Inspired

Confront

To use this edge, the hunter must spend a Conviction Trait and perform the seemingly suicidal act of looking a creature straight in the eye and make no move whatsoever to avoid its attacks. By trusting in the righteousness of her cause and the inherent spark of goodness buried in even the most depraved creatures to keep her safe from harm, she effectively makes it emotionally impossible for the creature to hurt her, such that the mere notion of attacking the hunter becomes a horrifying thought. To attack or otherwise directly act against the hunter, a monster must first spend a number of Willpower Traits equal to half the hunter's Mercy rating (round up) to even initiate the attack challenge. Failure to do so means the creature is overcome with guilt and can only stare back shamefully at the hunter. Even if it spends the requisite Willpower, the monster must still succeed at the attack challenge; despite the fact that the hunter is unresisting, the creature's own reluctance may sabotage its efforts. Note that *each* action requires a Willpower expenditure, including any extra attacks granted by supernatural speed. This edge functions against only one monster at a time, unless the hunter can somehow capture more creatures eye-to-eye at the same time, but lasts for as long as the hunter maintains eye contact (blinking is permitted).

Bond

Innocents are often considered the mother hens of their fellow imbued, and this edge is one reason why. It allows the hunter to establish a connection to a bystander or fellow imbued (but not a monster or normal person), which then allows him to "check in" on his charge from time to time, even if they are separated by great distances. The Innocent must know the recipient for at least a month before establishing a bond, and this power cannot be used on an unwilling target, or it automatically fails. If those conditions are met, however, the Innocent may touch the target and spend a variable number of Social Traits, depending on the duration he wishes the bond to last — one Trait for one session, two Traits for one week, three Traits for two weeks, four Traits for a month, or five Traits for one story (Storyteller's discretion). Any Traits spent in this fashion cannot be regained with Willpower that

same session; they may only recover naturally in between sessions. During the time the bond is active, the Innocent may take a full turn of concentration and spend a point of Conviction to activate the bond, thus gaining a sense of the target's general location ("at home," "at work," etc.). He may also attempt to win or tie two Simple Tests at this point, which if successful enables him to further learn the target's general emotional state (angry, happy, fearful, etc.) and general physical condition (well, wounded, unconscious, etc.). To gather this information, he may use a cell phone or walkie-talkie, ask a Narrator to find the target, or even ask other players out-of-game the appropriate questions to learn what he needs to know. At the Narrator's discretion, the Innocent also immediately has a strong feeling of dread any time his target suffers lethal damage or is in any way Incapacitated, without needing to spend Conviction. A hunter can have no more targets bonded to him than his Mercy total, though he can choose to sever a bond at any time. This bond offers no direct benefits to the target, though she may feel a small boost of confidence when the Innocent checks in on her.

Exalted

Blaze

With this awesome power, a hunter can transform the light from one source into a blinding, damaging radiance for any supernatural creatures struck by its rays, including incorporeal creatures and even monsters that aren't normally harmed by light of any kind. To activate this power, a hunter must spend two Conviction Traits and one Physical Trait, and there must be a suitable light source in view (though it does not need to be in the hunter's possession). The amount of damage done depends on the strength and size of the light source transformed by this edge. Relatively minor light sources such as torches, lighters, flares or small flashlights inflict one level of lethal damage; larger lights, such as headlights, bonfires or heavy-duty flashlights inflict two levels of lethal damage; truly impressive sources such as searchlights or the sun itself inflict three levels of lethal damage. This edge does not function with moonlight. Monsters may use *Fortitude* and similar powers against this damage. The maximum potential range of this power is a number of paces equal to the hunter's Mercy rating, though in the case of directional lights such as flashlights the Narrator may rule that only two or three targets may be struck at a time, regardless of the power's potential radius. *Blaze* is instantaneous, lasting but a brief (if shining) moment; if the hunter wishes to inflict more damage, she must activate this power again.

Backlash

Sometimes other imbued go too far in pursuit of their various causes, and even the most saintly of Innocents knows that this means on occasion they must show such "allies" the danger of abusing their powers in the name of any cause. To activate this power, the imbued must touch her target (using a Physical Challenge if the target resists) and then spend two Conviction Traits. If the Innocent successfully touches her target, a contest of wills begins and the target cannot attempt to physically break free until this edge is resolved. The Innocent then makes a test of her Mercy against the target's Willpower. If the target wins, the edge fails and cannot be used against that same target for the rest of the scene; if a tie results, the struggle lasts until the next turn. If the Innocent wins, she reflects the target's own rage against back at himself — any time in the next month that the target tries to commit an act of violence, whether coldly premeditated or impulsively destructive, he first suffers a number of bashing damage levels equal to his Zeal rating. This does not apply to fighting in true self-defense, although actively provoking another character into attacking first just to

claim “self-defense” will trigger this edge. An Innocent may apply this edge to a number of targets equal to her Mercy rating at one time (though each must be challenged separately), and its effects persist even if she is Incapacitated or killed during this time, though she may also end it prematurely if she desires. This power does not work on bystanders, normal people or monsters.

Martyrdom

Avengers may be able to comfort themselves with the knowledge that monsters are inherently different from humans in ways that make it OK to fight them, but Martyrs have no such luck. Try though they might, members of this creed just can't escape the knowledge that monsters were once human, or at least are enough of an approximation that they feel the same pains and emotions that humans do. Paradoxically enough, this understanding is what fuels the Martyrs' drive to battle the supernatural — they find it utterly intolerable that monsters can be so much like humanity in so many essential ways, and yet for all their powers and influence still choose to use what they have for selfish, wicked purposes. In the case of truly inhuman creatures, Martyrs despise the fact that monsters feel they can exploit humans as food and resources in spite of the obvious harm it does to them, both individually and as a species.

Martyrdom's edges thus focus primarily on tapping into this shared well of emotions and sensations, particularly pain, to strike back at the creatures and make them feel what their prey must feel like for once in their existence.

Touched

Demand

Tapping into deep bodily reserves, the character can greatly boost his strength — for a price. As soon as this edge is used, the character suffers a level of bashing damage, which cannot be prevented in any way (though it does heal normally). For the rest of the round, however, he enjoys the following benefits: he adds a number of Traits equal to his Mercy rating to his total for resolving ties on all tests involving strength (including combat), and he deals an additional level of damage of the appropriate type in brawling or melee combat. If used outside of combat, this strength lasts for exactly one minute. Conviction points can be risked when this edge is used, but it *cannot* be combined with other attack- or physical-action-based edges in the same turn.

Project

Hunters often wear their hearts on their sleeves, but none to quite the same effect as those Martyrs with this edge, who seem to radiate such intensity that even the dread creatures of the night part ranks rather than face them. This edge is activated by spending a Conviction Trait and making an appropriately intimidating display; afterward, any supernatural creatures who desire to attack or otherwise directly interact with the hunter (either physically or with supernatural powers) must first win a Willpower Challenge against the hunter's Social Traits. Both sides may spend Willpower to retest the outcome. Note that this edge's protection does not extend to anyone else the Martyr is with, nor does it prevent creatures from defending themselves or performing more indirect actions such as following the hunter. This edge can only be activated once per scene, and if the hunter is Incapacitated or one creature successfully interferes with him in front of others, the effect is broken for all monsters present. Finally, humans and other hunters are not directly affected by this edge, although the hunter's obvious intensity puts them two Traits down on all Social

Challenge against the Martyr while this edge is active, unless they also share his particular cause.

Gifted

Witness

This edge supplements the usual powers of the second sight, allowing the character to determine the exact nature of any creature they see, even one that is not normally easily identified by the sight (warlocks, shapechangers in human form, etc.). The monster's most horrific aspect is written across its face for the hunter to see, allowing the player to (out-of-game) ask anyone she comes across "What type of supernatural creature are you?" Other characters must answer honestly, though in return they are both permitted and encouraged to answer in terms of an image or impression of some kind ("My eyes are deep with centuries, and you see blood flowing down my chin and razor-sharp fangs in my mouth"), rather than simply putting it in dry clinical terms ("I'm a really old vampire"). Activating this edge takes a turn of concentration, and its effects last for 10 minutes plus an additional 10 minutes per point of Conviction the hunter wishes to spend. Note that while this power can effectively replace the second sight in some respects, it does not provide the protection against illusions or mental and emotional control that the "regular" sight does, though of course a hunter may activate them both if he desires.

Revelation

Martyrs understand the pain of hard decisions better than most of the Chosen, and some say this edge came about in an effort to help ease the burden they bear when it comes to deciding which monsters do or don't deserve destruction. By making eye contact, the Martyr can effectively see a picture of a creature's soul at the instant the power is used; for each Mental Trait the hunter wishes to spend, he may ask one of the following questions, which must be answered honestly: "What is your current emotional state? What are your immediate intentions (talking, fighting, running, etc.)? What are your objectives in the current situation? Can you offer an additional insight or detail into one of the answers provided before (a name, an address, a face)?" Note that these questions can only concern what is in the monster's mind at that specific moment, so information about its long-term objectives is usually not available (unless such plans happen to be directly related to matters at hand), which in turn means some answers might seem quite baffling in the here-and-now context that the hunter receives them. In addition, this glimpse is not one-way: the monster may use this momentary bond to spend an equal number of Mental Traits to ask the hunter similar questions if it chooses. This power can only be used on a creature once per scene, and is of no use at all against other hunters or ordinary humans.

Though not generally an idea that occurs even to neophyte hunters, it is possible to read monsters in the grips of extreme emotional or mental disturbance, with correspondingly high risk. Immediately after spending their Mental Traits, the hunter must make a Willpower Challenge against six Traits; failure means instinct takes over and the hunter mimics the creature's emotional or mental state, whether attacking all those around him, fleeing the area in terror or exhibiting some other reaction. This state lasts until he can win another Willpower Challenge or spends a Willpower Trait to reassert his self-control.

Devoted

Ravage

Though its origins are still ill-understood, the Chosen know very well the terrible results this edge has when used, especially against all things unnatural. When activated, this edge creates a thick, roiling heat-haze that stuns ordinary humans and inflicts grievous wounds on supernatural creatures. To use this edge, the character must suffer a level of bashing damage (armor does not help), spend a variable number of Social Traits (never more than their permanent Mercy rating) and make a Social Challenge to hit her target. A successful attack has several different outcomes, depending on the nature of the target. Ordinary humans and hunters without their second sight active are simply overcome with horror for a number of turns equal to the Social Traits spent; they may flee or defend against incoming attacks, but cannot actively attack the hunter or anyone else. Hunters with their Conviction defense active are unaffected. Supernatural creatures suffer a number of lethal damage levels equal to the number of Social Traits spent, even if they are intangible or currently possessing the body of another (the host body suffers no damage from this power in this instance).

Inflict

With this simple but potent edge, the Martyr can attempt to turn an assailant from the path of bloodshed and violence... or at least ensure that an offender goes down with him. The hunter must spend a Conviction Trait and spend a turn activating this power, typically by bracing for the worst or warning an attacker of the harm that will come to it if it resorts to violence. Once active, any damage inflicted on the Martyr by brawling or melee attacks of any kind is immediately inflicted on the attacker as well. Both sides apply any armor or other defenses they have against such harm separately — for example, if the hunter is hit with an attack that would inflict three levels of lethal damage, but is wearing body armor that will absorb two levels of that attack, his attacker must still deal with the full three levels of damage on its own. This edge lasts for the duration of the current combat and has absolutely no effect on ranged attacks any kind, including mental attacks or spells hurled by distant warlocks.

Inspired

Donate

At great risk to himself, the hunter can loan his own capabilities to others for a time, enhancing their chances to further the quest at the cost of his own. By spending two Conviction Traits and touching the person he wishes to bestow his qualities upon, the hunter may then loan any number of his Physical, Mental or Social Traits to the recipient. Only one Attribute category can be shared at a time, however — you cannot give a subject both Mental and Physical Traits — and the hunter cannot share Abilities, Backgrounds, Willpower or any other kinds of Traits except Attributes. This donation lasts for up to one scene/hour and cannot be ended by the recipient, though the donor may end it at will. If this loan reduces the hunter to zero Traits in one category, he immediately falls unconscious until the duration lapses. If the donor is killed, the recipient immediately loses all benefits; likewise, if the recipient is killed, the donor permanently loses all of the loaned Traits. Loaned Traits can be risked, spent and lost just the same as the recipient's regular ones, and the recipient should keep careful track of how many he loses during the edge's duration, so he can tell the donor which ones are returned at the power's end. Only one donation may be made at a time, and while his Traits are loaned out, the donor cannot spend Willpower to refresh his Traits in that category, though he may do so when the edge is terminated if he wishes.

In addition, if the donor gives Mental Traits, the two characters also enjoy limited telepathic contact; if the donor gives Social Traits, the two cannot communicate telepathically, though they can get a vague sense of the other's emotional state. Such connections are best simulated with cell phones or walkie-talkies of some kind; while Narrators can also be used to pass such messages, the Storyteller is well within her rights to negate this aspect of this edge if it proves too troublesome or draining on the Narrators.

Ordeal

A power to potentially allow the ultimate sacrifice, this edge allows the Martyr to absorb the injuries of another, even if it kills him — by touching the afflicted character and spending two Conviction Traits, the hunter may immediately transfer all of the target's damage levels to himself. This is an all-or-nothing deal — the Martyr cannot chose to take only one or two levels of damage, he must take it all. For each bashing level he absorbs in this fashion, though, he is allowed a Physical Challenge against seven Traits; if he succeeds, that level of damage is negated by the power of the hunter's selfless sacrifice. Willpower cannot be spent to retest these challenges, and he has no such defense against levels of lethal damage. This absorbed damage takes effect immediately, and can easily Incapacitate or even kill the hunter outright, though his death does not negate the transfer — the subject is still healed, the Martyr simply isn't around to celebrate her recovery afterward.

A Martyr may also attempt to take on the mental and emotional wounds of others. This is handled in the same fashion, except that the hunter receives a Mental Challenge against seven Traits for each trauma or derangement he attempts to absorb. If successful, he sublimates the condition into his unconscious and doesn't suffer from it, though it is not erased entirely, and might even be activated under later circumstances at the Storyteller's discretion. If he fails, he immediately suffers the full effects of the derangement or trauma normally, though the subject is still healed.

Note: This edge *cannot* be used on the bodies or minds of monsters, only humans and other imbued.

Exalted

Payback

By focusing his righteous judgment on a target, the hunter can strip a supernatural foe of one of its treasured powers or even dare to impose a human limitation on it once more. To activate this edge, the hunter must spend five Conviction Traits and make a test of his Social Traits plus his Mercy Traits against a difficulty of the creature's Physical Traits. If successful, he may then name one *specific* supernatural power that he wishes to revoke — “I don't want it to be able to disappear/move quickly/read minds/etc.” — and so long as the creature remains in his presence, it is utterly incapable of using the named power in any way. The character may also use this edge to force a supernatural creature to endure a particular human limitation once more — a ghost may be made physical and frail, a shapeshifter may find itself confined to human form, and so on — though he cannot chose to both impose such a limitation *and* remove a supernatural power at the same time. This edge lasts until the hunter is knocked out, killed or willingly removes it; it is also lifted if the target manages to flee the area, at which time another use of *Payback* is required to cut it down to size once more. Needless to say, it is generally a good idea to have a Storyteller on hand to determine exactly what use of this edge covers, how it affects game play and so on — not only will this keep the scene running smoothly, but it will likely avoid some confusion and hurt feelings as well.

Expiate

With a great and terrible sacrifice, the Martyr may “purge” a supernatural creature of the taint that keeps it separated from its humanity: shapeshifters and warlocks become normal people, while zombies and bloodsuckers are granted their final rest at last. This edge reportedly has no effect on goblins or ghosts, though it is ultimately the Storyteller’s discretion to decide what happens in such cases, and unless he’s heard of this particular immunity a hunter with this edge might still try anyway. Naturally, such a victory over the forces of corruption does not come easily, and the Martyr himself is in great peril of being tainted himself regardless of this power’s success or failure. A Martyr must have 10 Conviction Traits available to use this power (which also means no Conviction can be risked on this edge), and he must make a Physical Challenge to touch his intended target and hang on for three consecutive turns. During this time, neither side can take any other action as a contest of wills occurs — each turn the two must make a Willpower Challenge against a difficulty of five Traits. Willpower cannot be spent to automatically succeed on these tests, though it can be spent to gain a retest. At the end of three turns, whoever has the most successful tests wins, with a tie going to the defender. If the creature wins, it may again act normally, and the hunter loses a Conviction Trait. If the Martyr wins, his Conviction falls to the normal starting total for his creed and the creature is apparently purged of all supernatural essence, as described above. While some elder and powerful creatures may be immune to this power, at the Storyteller’s discretion, it is recommended that such cases be rare in the extreme due to the high drama and commensurately high cost of this edge to employ.

Indeed, many speculate that this victory is possible because the Martyr absorbs at least some of the tainted energy himself, which (if it does not instantly kill him) will still manifest as crippling pain, debilitating illness or even insanity. Every time this edge is used successfully, the Storyteller must make a Simple Test to determine what happens to the Martyr (redo all ties until a victor is determined); if he wins, the hunter permanently loses a Physical Trait, which cannot be bought back, and gains either a *Decrepit* Negative Trait or a derangement, as the Storyteller sees fit. Negative Traits and derangements incurred by this edge can never be cured, though they can be temporarily relieved with the appropriate treatment or edges. On a loss, however, the hunter dies from the energy coursing through him, living just long enough to say a final good-bye or have some other small dramatic moment before expiring.

Redemption

Unwilling to condemn all supernatural creatures outright, Redeemers work as hard as they can to locate those worth saving even as they join their comrades in battling the ones who have given themselves over to darkness. It is a difficult and dangerous tightrope to walk, especially given the uncertainties and misinformation that surround all aspects of interaction with monsters, but Redeemers hold to what simple truths and feelings they do have, feeling that if they save even one worthy soul in their careers, it is one less creature for the world to worry about.

No small part of a Redeemer’s success can also be attributed to the edges granted by this path, which can help immensely at defusing conflict, healing injuries (or bruised egos) and plumbing the depths of a creature’s soul to search for the goodness within.

Touched

Bluster

This edge turns a shouted syllable (“No!” “Stop!” and “Don’t!” are all popular) into a shield against all manner of harm, allowing the hunter to turn aside everything from a bullet to a claw to a magical bolt of lightning, provided he can clearly see the attack he wishes to prevent. It doesn’t matter whether the attacker is a monster, a fellow imbued or even just a normal person, but the attack must come from an action undertaken by an individual, malicious or otherwise. For example, this edge can stop a bullet that was accidentally fired by a child playing with a gun, but has no effect on a natural disaster such as an avalanche or even a naturally occurring bolt of lightning. It also does nothing to prevent attacks that don’t inflict damage (such as mind control) or on attacks that aren’t direct (such as stabbing a voodoo doll). In effect, this edge allows the hunter to substitute his Mental Traits for any defensive tests he has to make, regardless of what she would normally defend with. He adds his *Mercy* rating to his Mental Traits for the purposes of resolving ties involving this edge. This edge can naturally be activated as a reflexive defense — indeed, that’s how most imbued discover it in the first place — and can even be used to block attacks against others, provided the hunter can see both the attacker and the intended target. (Using this edge for another counts as the hunter’s action for the turn.)

Outreach

Most monsters give little thought to humans, but even the most outgoing and humane creatures can have profoundly negative reactions when they recognize that an imbued sees the monster for what it really is, or happens to use edges in front of it. This edge allows a Redeemer to allay these natural suspicions to a degree, making himself seem harmless and pleasant to speak with even after he reveals that he can see a creature’s true nature. So long as he approaches the creature unarmed and visibly unthreateningly, he can potentially strike up a conversation with just about any intelligent monster. A Social Challenge is required to use this edge, and it can only be used on one creature at a time, but the hunter need not actually see the monster to use the edge (as with an invisible ghost or the like), only be somewhere that the monster can see or hear him. If successful, the creature is undisturbed by any demonstration of edges or revelation of information that hunter might have about the monster itself, however personal, making it much easier to have a discussion with the beast about its true nature without it flying off the handle at “being discovered.” Note that while the creature may feel no particular inclination to harm the Redeemer, there’s nothing stopping it from doing so, and psychotic or bestial creatures aren’t deterred in the slightest from attacking if they desire. Likewise, this edge is not a form of mind control, and so cannot alter a creature’s goals — changes like that are the Redeemer’s job. This edge just makes it easier to start such conversations. Naturally, drawing a weapon, making a hostile gesture or even touching a subject without its permission cancels this edge instantly, and for better or worse a creature may only be targeted by this edge once per scene.

Gifted

Insinuate

With this edge, the hunter can ask a single monster a question — the actual question doesn’t matter, nor does it matter if the creature responds (though it must understand that a question has been asked). What matters is that the hunter is treating the monster as a person, not merely a *thing*. This act, fueled by the hunter’s spirit, allows him to confront the creature with at least a momentary vision of the humanity it has lost. A Social Challenge is required to activate this edge, though the hunter adds his

Mercy Traits to his rating for the purposes of resolving ties. If successful, the creature is confronted by a single vision related to its humanity (or lack thereof) — spirits vividly recall what life was like, shapechangers may have visions from the lives of those they have killed, and so on, as appropriate to the creature in question. Even less “monstrous” beings such as warlocks might get glimpses of possible futures where they have become twisted by their power, or remember a time in the past when they abused it. Outside of combat, the effect of this vision and the sobering, often highly sorrowful emotions that accompany it last for the rest of the scene, and should be roleplayed accordingly — while it may not instantly send a depraved bloodsucker scrambling for redemption, its power does give even the sickest creatures pause. In a combat situation, this edge forces the creature to spend the following turn frozen in place, lost in its conflicting emotions, though it may defend itself normally if necessary. This edge may not be used more than once per scene on a targeted creature, unless the Storyteller specifically permits it (usually as the result of excellent roleplaying on the part of both hunter and creature).

Insight

An essential part of establishing a rapport with any creature is understanding what drives it to act the way it does, or what pieces of its former life it misses most — with this edge, the Redeemer can potentially gain a wealth of information about the state of a monster’s humanity, hopefully giving him some material to work with in trying to save its soul. At least a full hour must be spent observing the creature for signs of its past humanity, at which time the Redeemer may make a number of Mental Challenges equal to her Mercy rating against a difficulty of six Traits — for each successful test, the Redeemer gains one “layer” of insight into a particular facet of a creature’s lost humanity and its attitude about such a decline. These layers are cumulative — for example, a Redeemer who wins one challenge might see simply that a bloodsucker longs for a loving touch. Another successful challenge might reveal that it misses touch because it was a very vibrant person while alive, while yet another success might reveal that it especially misses the feeling of security it had in the arms of its former wife, etc. Needless to say, it is best to employ a Narrator to perform the actual information gathering from a creature, so she can ensure that the proper amount of information is passed to the Redeemer. This edge has no effect on normal people or fellow imbued, and at the Narrator’s discretion particularly ancient or depraved monsters might appear totally blank or even outright horrifying to this edge. A Redeemer can use this edge multiple times on a monster, but only once per session, and the Narrator may eventually rule that he has learned all he can from this edge after several uses — there isn’t much that hides from this edge.

Devoted

Respire

A hunter with this edge can heal all manner of terrible wounds, though not without considerable cost to his energy and Conviction. All that’s required to heal is that the character breathe into the target’s mouth, *a la* mouth-to-mouth resuscitation (please remember the no touching rule still applies), and make a number of Physical Challenges equal to his Mercy rating (against a difficulty of six Traits). For each test he wins or ties, he may heal one health level of damage, but he must choose to either spend one Conviction Trait or take a one-Trait penalty on all his challenges for the remainder of the scene for each health level he heals. These costs can be mixed and matched as the healer desires — a character who heals four levels of damage can choose

to spend three Conviction and take a one-Trait penalty, spend two Conviction and take a two-Trait penalty, etc. The hunter cannot use this edge on himself, though it can be used on normal people and even monsters, if he desires.

A hunter may also choose to drain energy from a monstrous opponent — to do so, he must win a Physical Challenge (adding his *Mercy* rating) against a nearby creature. If he succeeds, he immediately gains one Conviction Trait (up to the limit of his starting Conviction, as determined by creed), and the monster suffers one level of lethal damage. This use of the edge can only target one creature at a time, and does not function against humans. The hunter is also immediately visible as the source of the energy drain.

Punish

As much as some might dislike it, all Redeemers recognize that there are some monsters that can't be saved, or ones that need to do penance for their sins. With this edge, the Redeemer can force a creature to endure a taste of the suffering and fear it causes whenever it tries to victimize another. To activate this edge, the Redeemer must touch the creature or the space a spirit occupies and make a Mental Challenge. If successful, this edge lasts for a number of hours equal to the hunter's *Mercy* Traits, during which time the monster suffers waves of remorse and agony any time it wishes to harm or feed from a normal person (*not* hunters or supernatural beings). To perform any such actions, the creature must first make a Willpower Challenge against a difficulty equal to the Redeemer's Mental Traits at the time the edge was activated. If the monster fails, it is overcome with sorrow and nausea at the thought of what it was about to do, and loses its action for the turn (though it may still defend itself normally). It may make repeated attempts to perform a prohibited action, but each additional failed attempt puts it at a one-Trait penalty on all actions for the rest of the scene as it is wracked with pain and guilt. A Redeemer may have a number of monsters under the effect of the edge equal to his *Mercy* rating at any one time, and its effects persist even if the Redeemer is killed before the duration runs out. No more than one attempt to use this edge on a particular creature can be made per scene, though the Redeemer may end its effects at any time if he desires.

Inspired

Becalm

With an exertion of will, the hunter creates an area of nonviolence and emotional stability around himself. Within this eye of the storm, attacks or even just sudden movements of any kind suddenly seem much harder to perform, and darker emotions such as fear and anger are subdued to manageable levels. Subjects affected by the field do not lose their individuality or will to survive — they just gain a sense of perspective, as the urgency of the events at hand drains away. To activate this edge, the hunter need only spend a Conviction Trait. The effect covers an area about the size of an average room or a number of paces equal to the hunter's *Mercy* rating (whichever is larger), and automatically lasts for a number of minutes equal to his *Mercy* rating. While it is active, anyone who wants to make any kind of violent act (including pulling a trigger) or sudden movement must first defeat the hunter in a test of their Physical Traits versus the hunter's Social Traits plus his *Mercy* rating. A test must be made for each such action, even if the attacker has already defeated the hunter on a previous attempt. Actions such as speaking or moving slowly are not affected, unless they would somehow have a violent or explosive result (such as with a supernatural power of some kind). Ranged attacks that initiate from outside the

affected area against targets within it are not affected by this edge, however. This edge also subdues all feelings of anger or fear, including supernaturally induced instances of these emotions, and supernatural creatures are automatically snapped out of all frenzy states unless they defeat the hunter in a test of their Willpower against his Social Traits (again, Mercy Traits are added for resolving ties). It should be noted that this edge affects everyone in the area, including the hunter himself as well as normal people and other imbued, but fails automatically if the hunter is Incapacitated.

Abjure

By spending an action and a Conviction Trait, the Redeemer can appear as the embodiment of all lost humanity to any creatures in the area, becoming a shining beacon of hope for those creatures seeking their own salvation... or a veritable punishment from on high to wicked and depraved monsters. All creatures that have wicked intentions toward humanity in general and/or wish to take hostile action against the Redeemer in particular are driven from his presence unless they can defeat him in a test of their Willpower against his Social Traits. Willpower can be spent to retest such challenges, but only once — if the creature fails that retest, it must flee from the Redeemer's sight and stay out of it for the rest of the scene/hour (whichever comes first). This edge cannot be used to corner a monster, however, and any attempt to do so ends it immediately. Even if a creature successfully resists, the effect is not broken for others who failed to overcome it, and the Redeemer may act normally against those who resist this edge. It does fail if the hunter is Incapacitated, however, or if he shuts it off intentionally, and it can only be activated once per scene, regardless. To indicate this power's use, the Redeemer should inform others around him of his unearthly glow and adopt the appropriate posture: both arms held out at his sides, palms facing up (essentially, a modification of the *Majesty* gesture from *Laws of the Night*). Monsters who retain their humanity and/or seek salvation are not repelled, however, and instead the Redeemer is considered two Traits up on all friendly Social Challenges with them as they perceive him to be the embodiment of that which they wish to attain. This edge has absolutely no effect on normal humans or other imbued.

Exalted

Suspend

One of the first things many hunters learn is that this world is but one plane of existence — and that all manner of strange and frequently terrifying things lurk on the other side of our reality. What's worse, it seems that many of the creatures have ways of traveling to and from these places, and use them to strike without warning or flee to where even the most dedicated hunter cannot find them. In retaliation, this spectacular edge shuts out all contact with other worlds, at least for a time, forcing monsters to deal with life on this plane alone (or barring nefarious entities from entering this realm). It also prevents all supernatural forms of scrying. All that is required is that the hunter spend two Conviction Traits and win a Mental Challenge against eight Traits — if successful, for the rest of the scene the material world is effectively sealed off as far as the hunter can physically see, severing all ties to other planes of existence and disrupting any powers or items that rely on such energy to function. (Those fluent in the other systems of the World of Darkness may substitute a difficulty of 10 minus the local Gauntlet rating, at the Storyteller's discretion.) Only conventional means may be used to escape the hunter's presence. Likewise, creatures cannot enter the material world from other realms in the hunter's vicinity — they must enter in an area beyond his influence and travel to him if they wish to confront him,

and cannot so much as peek into the material world where he is standing. This edge persists even if the character is rendered unconscious, though he may end it earlier if he chooses.

Shame

As experienced Redeemers know, part of understanding any monster comes from recognizing the division it has created within its soul — the good and noble side it retains (however small) and the part that has succumbed to darkness. A Redeemer with this edge can exploit this dichotomy to fill wicked monsters with near-suicidal self-loathing, while simultaneously inspiring more humane creatures to remain on the path of righteousness. Two Conviction Traits are required to activate this edge, and the Redeemer must spend a turn expressing concern or scorn for the creatures present. He may then make a Social Challenge against all creatures in earshot, both benevolent and malign. If successful, all benevolent creatures are two Traits up on all tests for the duration of the edge, as the Redeemer's words fill them with confidence. By contrast, inhumane creatures spend their next action inflicting damage on themselves by the most powerful and direct means possible, even if it's utterly self-destructive. A vampire might leap into a bonfire, for example, or a shapechanger might grab a silver dagger and plunge it into its own heart. Armor still applies, of course, and the creature may attempt to use supernatural powers to deflect or mend this damage as well, effectively making it a race against itself to see which side will win. What's more, the effect continues for as many turns as the Redeemer continues speaking, up to a maximum number of turns equal to the hunter's Mercy rating. To break free, a monster must make a Willpower Challenge against the Redeemer's Mercy Traits; only one such attempt may be made at the beginning of each turn (before additional damage is done). A creature can only be targeted by this edge once per scene, and rest assured if it survives it will stop at nothing to destroy the being who forced it to harm itself in such a fashion. At the Storyteller's discretion, *truly* ancient or degenerate creatures might suffer a reduced effect or even be immune to this edge, as they are too distanced from their previous humanity to care one way or another about salvation.

Normal humans and fellow imbued are completely immune to this power, and if it is used against supernatural player characters, it is *strongly* recommended that they not necessarily be forced to harm themselves as other creatures do — perhaps they are merely wracked with indecision and shame for a turn, or suffer only a small level of harm as opposed to being forced to commit almost certainly self-destructive acts. This may seem to give an unfair advantage to supernatural player characters in regards to this edge, but weighed against the feelings of powerlessness and out-of-game ill will that would almost certainly result from having an entire group of players be forced to kill off their own characters, it is highly recommended that the Storyteller find a middle ground on this power's effects for the sake of the game as a whole.

Vision

Imbued who hear the arguments of both sides, from the unilateral “us-against-them” mindset of the Zealots to the “everyone-has-some-good-in-them” response of the Merciful, and decide that the answer must lie in another course entirely are the most common adherents of *Vision*. Such hunters refuse to take anything for granted, from the most “obvious” truths recognized by the majority of their fellow imbued to the least little bit of circumstantial evidence in a particular case, and seek out their own solutions to problems and questions they face. Freedom to act of their own will is especially important to them, and they strongly resist all efforts to curb their freedoms

— whether such attempts come from supernatural manipulation or mundane authorities or even other imbued — and can be surprisingly fierce in such situations compared to their usual detached demeanors. Otherwise, however, most students of *Vision* pride themselves on not flying off the handle, not “just following orders” and not letting their emotions cloud their judgment when it comes the hunt.

This doesn't mean they are dispassionate people — far from it. When it comes to theory and speculation, most become extremely animated, and are especially passionate when it comes to promoting and defending their own particular views on the supernatural. Should a monster come looking to hurt them or those they care about, they're as stout as any other imbued, especially since most of them put stock in planning ahead (including creating traps and strongholds). They simply try not to let the assumptions of others get in the way of asking the right questions, no matter what the situation.

It is interesting to note that imbued of this *Virtue* are considerably less common than their Merciful or Zealous counterparts. Those few hunters who have made this observation typically suppose it's because of the highly unorthodox way that followers of *Vision* respond to the imbuing compared to their fellow hunters, but the truth contains more than that. In truth, *Vision* has two other creeds attached to it, the so-called “lost creeds” known as Waywards and Hermits; at present these damaged imbued are too rare to identify as the groups they are, but it remains to be seen what will happen when the fact of their existence becomes common knowledge, not to mention what such a discovery will do to those adherents of *Vision* who are not like their unstable comrades. (The edge paths for these lost creeds are included at the end of this chapter, as they are restricted to members of those creeds alone.)

If your character doesn't react in an obvious way to her imbuing — doesn't attack, doesn't intervene, doesn't run, but still does *something* — chances are you may have a natural disciple of *Vision* on your hands.

Visionary

While other imbued worry about day-to-day details following their awakening, Visionaries typically respond with a deep curiosity about this neoteric level of existence they were unaware of before. While not blind to its many dangers, they are willing to risk a great deal to learn all that they can about the Heralds, monsters, edges, the nature of the imbuing and other aspects of their new lives. After all, if such a seemingly timeless and obvious piece of conventional wisdom as “Monsters aren't real” can be proven false, just imagine what else is out there waiting to be discovered!

As might be expected, Visionary edges nearly all center around enhancing their talent for gathering information, though some Visionaries develop a surprising number of powers centered around bolstering the morale of their fellow imbued, especially those who agree with a particular Visionary's ideas about the hunt.

Touched

Foresee

Though the exact source of its power remains mysterious, a hunter with this edge often finds that she receives brief visions of events yet to come. These images can help her choose the best path when many possible choices loom before her, or even offer a second chance at what would ordinarily been a failed effort. At the beginning of each session, the player may make a number of challenges equal to her *Vision* rating with the Storyteller; for each test she wins or ties, she may receive one free retest on any

challenge that session (the result of this retest must stand). No more than one retest from this edge can be used on a single challenge or situation, and all unused retests are lost at the end of the session — they cannot be “saved up.” Alternately, the hunter may spend one of these retests to get a second chance when faced with multiple choices to make in a situation, provided such choices involve only the hunter herself (at least in an immediate sense) and are fairly simple and direct. For example, if the hunter is trying to disarm a bomb and has to pick one of three wires to cut, she could spend a retest to “undo” the action and choose a different wire if her first pick turns out to be wrong. Likewise, if confronted with a situation where she must answer a riddle, she may use a retest to get one additional guess. However, she could not open a door, look around inside and then use a retest to “take back” entering the room if a monster jumped out at her, nor can she use these retests for another character in any way. If in doubt, consult a Storyteller as to what can or cannot be taken back, and remember that Storytellers are fully within their rights to waive this feature of the edge if it is being abused.

Focus

Keeping focused on the larger plan behind the hunt is an exhausting process, but a Visionary with this edge has a unique gift for keeping her allies on target even in the face of great hardship. When an ally's Conviction Traits fall below the starting total for his creed, the Visionary may attempt to inspire him with a conversation about their collective place in the grand scheme of things and his need to keep up his fervor for the hunt. This requires at least a minute of uninterrupted conversation, preferably more, during which time the outside world seems to fade away and neither the Visionary nor her target can do anything else. At the end of this time, the Visionary may make a Social Challenge against the target (the target cannot relent). Success means that his Conviction Traits return to the starting level for his creed. Attempting to use this edge in combat, in an especially noisy place, or on a target who is an opponent of the Visionary's big plan puts the Visionary down two Traits on the test, cumulatively. Conversely, she is two Traits up to help another imbued who is a dedicated supporter of her grand idea. Focus may only be used on a target once per session, and the Visionary cannot use this edge on herself. This edge is a time for examining a hunter's role in the world and a renewing of his commitment to the hunt, and so should always be a memorable roleplaying experience; Visionaries who routinely eschew deep conversation and attempt to use this edge merely as a Conviction “filling station” for their fellow imbued may find this edge fails them until the Heralds see they are more passionately upholding their duties.

Gifted

Pinpoint

This edge reveals a single weakness of a creature that the hunter is looking at, provided she defeats the creature in a Mental Challenge (Vision Traits are added to her total for the purposes of resolving ties). If successful, she receives a brief flash of a specific vulnerability the monster possesses: fire, running water, cold iron, a dependence on a particular place or object, etc. In the case of the beast having a lair or being tied to an object, the hunter may attempt to win an additional test — if successful, she receives a vague impression of where it is located. Because of the sensitive nature of the information revealed with this edge, it is generally best to have a Narrator perform the test with the creature, so that he can judge an appropriate vulnerability to relate to the hunter. Note that while they are always useful (eventually), some weaknesses

are not always as straightforward as the hunter might hope, especially in the case of particularly powerful or well-shielded creatures; after all, it's the not the Heralds' fault if the hunter doesn't know what "time" or "control" has to do with fighting the beast. This edge can only be used on a particular creature once per scene, never repeats the same information twice and has absolutely no effect on mortals or other hunters.

Summon

All imbued recognize the symbol for "summoning," which is routinely used to mark gathering places for fellow hunters; however, when a Visionary uses this edge, that symbol becomes a positive homing beacon for the Chosen, leading them to the spot of her choosing. A turn is required to inscribe the symbol (it must be at least two feet square and on some durable surface such as a wall or vehicle), and the player must make a Mental Challenge (*Vision* counts) against a difficulty of eight Traits. If successful, all hunters within the character's *Vision* rating in miles hear the call for as many hours as the Visionary has *Vision* Traits — other hunters do not have to come, but answering the call feels natural and right to them, and those who follow it find themselves instinctively led by the quickest route to the place where the symbol was inscribed. It's as if an inexplicable wind is leading them in the right direction, even indoors, and they may observe phenomena such as papers or loose debris being blown along the path they should follow. A Narrator should be employed to inform all imbued in the area of the nature of the call, and needless to say the Storyteller may take advantage of its use to introduce other Narrator character imbued as they arrive. A Visionary has no idea if her call has been heard by any other hunters, nor if it has been heeded, so relying on it to send a rescue party every time the Visionary gets in trouble is a risky proposition at best, especially if she constantly sends up such "flares" looking for help. The Visionary may end the call at any time, and need not remain in the location where it was inscribed (though most do); likewise, it is ended automatically if she is Incapacitated, or the mark itself is destroyed or significantly defaced. This edge can only be used once per session.

Devoted

Delve

A hunter with this edge can put herself into a light trance, whereupon she begins receiving images of past events that happened in her current location. Five minutes of meditation — usually a good time to send for the Storyteller — and a Mental Challenge against a difficulty of six Traits are required to enter the trance. (This meditation time can be cut to one minute with the expenditure of a Willpower Trait.) If successful, the hunter may see up to five minutes of history per *Vision* Trait she possesses. There is no limit to how far back the hunter can look, although events of over a year ago increase the difficulty by two Traits and events of over five years ago increase the difficulty by two Traits more. These visions are also silent, unless the hunter spends two Conviction Traits or increases the difficulty by two Traits, at which time she can also listen to the past. (Only hunters with Visionary as their primary path can use this edge to "hear" the past in this manner.) It should be noted that the hunter need not simply pick a time and hope she sees something; she can also command visions according to time ("What happened here two days ago?"), by connection to a person or object ("Show me what happened when the child was kidnapped") or in connection to an event ("I want to see the battle as it occurred"). Naturally, the Storyteller should be on hand to handle the visions generated by this edge, and ultimately it is the Storyteller's discretion as to what it does or does not reveal, as

especially emotional or traumatic events may cloud or distort images that the hunter receives. This edge can only be used once per scene.

Rally

By making a speech to her team and explaining the importance of what they are about to do in the greater scheme of things, the Visionary is able to lend her fellow imbued some of her own passion for the cause. At least five minutes or three combat turns must be spent giving this speech, uninterrupted, and the subject(s) must be within earshot and paying attention (or exhorted to do so) if he wishes to gain any benefit. At the end of this time, the Visionary gains a number of extra Conviction Traits equal to her Vision rating, which can then be distributed to her comrades as she sees fit — usually an equal split, though she does not need to do so. The Visionary herself cannot gain any of these Traits, nor can they be given to any fellow imbued who are opponents of the Visionary's big idea (be honest). These bonus Traits are otherwise treated in all respects as a subject's regular Conviction Traits for the purposes of using edges, activating Conviction defense and so on, except that they cannot be "cashed in" to gain an additional Virtue Trait, and they cannot take a subject over 10 Conviction Traits at any time — all excess Traits are lost. Conviction may be risked on this edge, as a one-for-one addition to the Traits the Visionary is able to distribute to her team — this risk is considered a success if the team achieves what they set out to accomplish. If the bonus Conviction Traits are not used by the end of the current scene (or the next scene, if the speech is given before the team moves out), they vanish as the power of the Visionary's words begins to fade. All Conviction Traits gained from this edge remain for the full duration, even if the Visionary is Incapacitated or killed later on. Likewise, she cannot remove bonus Conviction Traits from a subject once they are assigned.

Inspired

Restore

This amazing edge gives the imbued truly miraculous powers of regeneration, enabling her to bring herself or others back from the brink of death, speed the recovery from grievous wounds and even regrow missing limbs and organs. All that is required is that the hunter spend three Conviction Traits and make a Physical Challenge (Vision Traits count for resolving ties) against a difficulty of four Traits plus one for each lethal level of damage the subject has suffered. If successful, all levels of damage are immediately converted to bashing damage, making for a much faster recovery time. If some or all of those damage levels represented missing limbs or organs, they are instantly regrown, though they remain sensitive and weak until the healing process has run its course (i.e., the character gets them back, but must still wait until the damage has healed before he is fully functional again). Additionally, subjects treated with this edge are immediately cured of any mundane illnesses related to their injuries and need not fear infection as they recover, though supernatural infections are a different story. At the Storyteller's discretion, this edge may also cure long-term illnesses such as cancer, though he should feel free to adjust the healing times and/or Conviction costs for such tremendous feats of healing as he sees fit. This edge cannot revive the dead — a subject must still be living, however tenuously, for this edge to be of any use. It may only be used once per scene.

Unify

All Visionaries are disturbed by the signs of unrest they see developing between the various other creeds, and this edge is a direct result of their research into trying to set this right. By pacing the area she wishes to affect for at least half an hour, pondering the ramifications of her actions and the actions of fellow imbued she knows, trying to figure out how they will act (or how she wants them to act), the Visionary may then scribe a symbol for “unity” somewhere in the area. While in the vicinity of this symbol (generally an area of an average room or small clearing), other imbued enjoy significant benefits and use their edges more easily than normal, though these blessings are immediately lost if one hunter ever deliberately harms another or the symbol is somehow destroyed. This edge requires a Conviction Trait and a Mental Challenge against a difficulty of six Traits, in addition to the time requirements detailed earlier. If successful, while in the radius of effect, all hunters are considered to have their Conviction defense activate for free — that is, the sight and its protection against mind- and body-control is automatically active, at no cost to them. Leaving the area renders them vulnerable, though they can re-enter it at any time to receive the benefit again. Furthermore, imbued are considered one Trait up on all tests to activate or use their edges while near the symbol. This edge lasts for one scene, even if the Visionary is killed. If she survives she can “re-activate” the symbol later on with another test and Conviction expenditure if she desires. While it is active, hunters perceive the area to be the center of a vortex of whirling winds, though monsters and normal humans see nothing about the winds, if they perceive them at all.

Exalted

Augur

Imbued with this edge can turn their senses to the future, receiving visions of things to come. This edge requires three Conviction Traits, five minutes of meditation and a Mental Challenge to activate, and as with *Delve* the visions generated by this edge can be based on a time frame, a person, an object or a specific event, though they become increasingly indistinct the farther in the future the hunter goes. If the test is successful, the hunter receives a vision of the future she requested for up to a number of minutes equal to her *Vision* rating, although unlike the *Delve* edge, these visions cannot generate sound. As with all precognitive efforts, the Storyteller must be contacted to describe the vision to the hunter, and the player should understand that while the Storyteller will do his best to give visions based on his knowledge of upcoming events in the chronicle, all glimpses of the future are still only *possible* futures. As hunters well know, humans and monsters alike are remarkably unpredictable beings, and the determination of even one individual to make a difference can change the world in unexpected ways. Note that unless a vision is specifically impossible, such as a hunter asking to see the next time his friend stops by his house when unbeknownst to him that friend has already been killed by monsters, a vision is always received when this edge is used, whether the hunter wins the test or not — those with this power quickly learn to beware the harm that false visions can do to them. The Storyteller is thereby encouraged to make the test in secret, so that the hunter is unsure of whether the vision they are seeing is a legitimate one or not. (If Conviction Traits need to be awarded for a successful test, they can be awarded later on the sly, so that the hunter isn't immediately sure of whether he succeeded or not.) This edge may only be used once per scene, if that often, and attempting to use it more frequently merely provokes splitting headaches.

Determine

As with *Foresee*, a Visionary with this edge has learned to glimpse the future, but while that edge deals with a broader range of experiences, this power allows the Visionary to focus on one specific creature and subtly influence the outcome of the actions it takes. It's not that hunter gets to decide everything the monster does — it's more like she gets a glimpse into several different possible results from the creature's actions, and chooses the one she wants to occur. This may not always be something the hunter is happy with, but in general it is definitely better than just sitting back and watching the creature from the sidelines. Two Conviction Traits are required to use this edge, and a Visionary must be able to see the creature she wishes to influence and defeat it in a Social Challenge — if successful, she may immediately make a number of Simple Tests equal to her Vision rating. Each test she wins or ties equals one opportunity to control the creature's destiny. Conviction risked on this edge simply equates to an extra opportunity per Conviction Trait risked. Influencing a monster's fate is handled in the following fashion: any time she likes, the Visionary can spend one of her opportunities to force the monster to re-do any test it has just performed, including all overbids and Ability retests if possible. Once it is finished, the Visionary may then decide which test's results she wishes to keep, the original or the do-over, but she must pick one of them — if the monster successfully hits her friend on both different attempts, there's nothing more the Visionary can do but pick one of them to have stand. Once she has decided, the result she picks becomes reality and the other is treated as having never occurred because, indeed, it didn't. No more than one retest can be forced on any single test with this power. Only one creature can be affected per session, and this edge can only be used on simple actions that are decided by a single challenge — more complicated or extended actions are beyond her grasp to influence as a whole, though she may try to influence individual actions that are part of such processes. The Visionary is not clearly identifiable as the source of a creature's ill fortune, and cannot use this edge on normal humans or fellow imbued.

Zeal

Let students of the other Virtues worry about the hidden motives of their new lives or whether or not a monster came from a broken home; followers of *Zeal* know that in the end everything still boils down to one thing: Are you capable of doing whatever it takes to defend your ideals? Hunters who follow this Virtue tend to have direct and decisive responses to the supernatural ("destroy it" is the most common, though not the only one), and they don't recognize gray areas between what they consider right and wrong, especially in the field. Despite what other imbued may believe, Zealots are not necessarily stupid or narrow-minded. They are simply decisive, and for every headstrong warrior who charges in with guns blazing there are several behind the scenes carefully planning their ultimate strike against the enemy.

If your character's first response to the supernatural is to take direct action of some kind, without stopping to wonder about the *who* or *why* of the situation, it's likely that you have a Zealot on your hands.

Defense

Defenders walk a fine path between the Zealous ideal of direct, decisive action against the enemy and wanting to guard the people and places they hold dear. Most eventually compromise by becoming master planners and tacticians, channeling their need for action into their efforts to fortify and protect what they consider theirs to defend. In battle they are as fearless and uncompromising as their Vengeful brethren,

but also know the value of a strategic retreat, and will not lay down their lives for efforts they're unsure of, especially if doing so means their charges will go unprotected.

Defender edges reflect this balance between security and offensive potential, as well as offer a means for Defenders to stay on their feet and alert during their long lonely watches every night.

Touched

Ward

A hunter with this edge can hold monsters at bay, as though generating some kind of impassable shield. This barrier can be activated once per scene as a reflexive action, at which time any monsters who wish to come closer than the hunter's *Zeal* Traits in paces must first defeat him in a Willpower Challenge (his *Zeal* Traits are added for the purposes of resolving ties). In the case of multiple monsters, the highest Willpower in the group is used, plus one Trait is added per monster. Likewise, any monsters who are within this edge's radius when it is activated must defeat the hunter in a similar test or do nothing but stagger backward until they have passed the edge of the barrier, at which time they can act normally once more. Each creature can attempt to break the shield once; after that, each subsequent attempt costs a Willpower Trait. This edge has no effect on normal humans or other imbued, and so hunters often use it to shelter such individuals inside its radius. The imbued need not concentrate to maintain the barrier — he can fight or perform other actions normally. However, it does not protect against ranged attacks from outside the radius of effect, and if the user is Incapacitated the shield falls automatically. In addition, while the hunter can adjust the size of the barrier at will, if he ever deliberately attempts to use it to corner a creature, the shield automatically fails — it is intended as a defensive measure, not a means of pinning down opponents.

Alarm

A Defender with this invaluable edge can create a warded area, allowing him to detect when any supernatural creatures cross the boundary he establishes. He must walk the perimeter he wishes to affect and make a Mental Challenge (*Zeal* counts toward resolving ties) against a difficulty of eight Traits; generally speaking, the area warded can be no larger than an average suburban house and yard, though the Storyteller is free to adjust this size for the sake of game balance. (As a rule of thumb, warding the entire playing area is a big pain in the neck for Narrators and players alike, especially in larger games, so it's recommended that this be disallowed unless dramatic reasons exist to do so.) This ward lasts for three hours, though this can be extended an additional three hours for each Conviction Trait the hunter wishes to spend.

Once established, the character is automatically alerted whenever supernatural creatures or their puppets cross the perimeter; in smaller or more tightly controlled games, a Narrator can usually be assigned to keep the hunter updated with such comings and goings. In larger games, it recommended that this power be limited to use on doorways or other obvious entrances only. The hunter can then post brightly colored out-of-game signs informing players of supernatural characters that they must announce themselves loudly out of game, knock in a particular fashion or otherwise make it as obvious as possible when they cross the perimeter. When activated, the hunter receives an impression of the general direction of the intrusion, as well as a rough estimate of how many creatures crossed (one, two, several, many). A Defender must remain within the perimeter the entire time, or it immediately fails, and he may only establish one warded area at a time; however, it persists even if he is Incapacitated.

Note that this edge does not detect any monsters already in the perimeter when it is established, nor does it detect where creatures go once inside the warded area.

Gifted

Rejuvenate

Imbued with this edge heal damage with amazing speed, and more miraculously, they can lend their healing talents to others with proper time and care. All bashing damage automatically heals at a rate of one level every 10 minutes, while lethal damage heals according to the following chart. This healing is automatic, and costs no Conviction to activate (nor can Conviction be risked to heal faster). To heal another, the hunter must place his hands on the subject and spend Conviction to heal the subject's most severe wound (her "lowest" lost level) — one Conviction Trait for a bashing level, two Conviction Traits for a lethal level. That health level is then healed according the normal amount of time it would take a hunter with this edge to heal it — 10 minutes for a bashing level, for example, or an hour for a Bruised level of lethal damage. This edge can be used multiple times on a single target to speed her healing, but the hunter must wait for each health level to mend *before* applying this edge again — in other words, he must be at the patient's side fairly constantly. This edge cannot bring the dead back to life, though it will automatically stabilize a Mortally Wounded character (indeed, many hunters with this edge have survived because their foes assumed their wounds would finish them off). It has no effect on poisons that do not inflict health levels of damage, such as alcohol. Likewise, it does not regrow lost limbs or cure long-term illnesses such as cancer.

Lethal Damage Recovery Times

Level Being Healed	Time Required*
Bruised	One hour
Wounded	One day
Incapacitated	One week
Mortally Wounded	One month

*Remember that like normal healing, these times are still cumulative — that is, a character who has been Mortally Wounded takes a total of one month, one week, three days and three hours to be fully recovered, since he must heal each level of damage individually as he progresses back to normal.

Lock

With this edge, a Defender can seal an object — a door, a car, a window, a book or even a computer hard-drive — against supernatural passage, intrusion or observation. A touch and a Mental Challenge (adding Zeal Traits) against a difficulty of nine Traits is required to activate this power; if successful, the hunter may seal an object for one day, plus an extra day per Mental Trait spent. In addition, a card signifying this edge's use and describing its effects should be attached to the item in question. Any would-be supernatural intruder must first win an appropriate test (e.g., Physical to force a door, Mental to see through a window or unlock a computer) against the Defender's total Mental Traits plus Zeal Traits at the time the lock was created. Failure means the monster simply cannot enter or access the object in question — an open doorway seems to have an invisible wall in the way, a window appears completely

black, a computer shows nothing but a blue screen, etc. Normal humans and other imbued are unaffected by this power, though puppets and possessed individuals are blocked by it normally. Even destroying the object will not allow a creature access. Only one object at a time may be sealed with this edge; furthermore, while the Defender can end this edge with a moment's thought, the seal persists even if the hunter is Incapacitated before the duration runs out.

Devoted

Brand

When this edge is activated, the hunter's hands become surrounded by a nimbus of energy, allowing them to mark a supernatural creature with a palm-sized version of one of the symbols of the hunter code ("Monster" and "Corruption" are favorites, though by no means the only ones). This is no mere tattoo, however — the brand smolders through any regular clothing that covers it in seconds, and while sturdier coverings such as armor aren't burned through, they may quickly become so hot the wearer must remove them or suffer damage. This symbol is visible to anyone, even normal humans or hunters whose second sight isn't active, and persists even if the creature becomes insubstantial, invisible or somehow changes shape.

To activate this power, the hunter must first touch the target (using a Physical Challenge if the target resists), and then make a number of tests equal to his *Zeal* rating. This touch cannot also be used to inflict damage — a punch or choke is inadequate to leave the mark. The number of *Zeal* tests he wins or ties determines the duration of the mark: one or two successful tests leaves a mark that lasts for one day; three to four leave a mark for a week; five to six create a mark for a month; seven or eight tests leave a mark for a year; and nine or more create a permanent mark. If no tests are won, the mark simply doesn't take, though the hunter may attempt to use the edge again if he desires. The target also suffers one level of lethal damage for every two successful tests used to deliver the mark, and cannot heal the last level of damage from this edge until the mark has faded. A mark may be removed prematurely, but only by the hunter who placed it. Due to the damage it causes, this edge is usually used to mark a past opponent as a warning to other imbued, or to alienate a creature from its peers, although in drastic circumstances it has also been used to mark a friendly creature so other hunters will leave it be. For the duration of the mark, the target player should draw the symbol prominently on his skin, attach a large description card or otherwise represent it as visibly as possible.

Guard

With this edge, the Defender can watch over a single subject from a distance, becoming instantly aware the moment any supernatural forces are directed at the subject of his supervision. To activate this edge, the hunter must touch the target and make a Mental Challenge (adding *Zeal* Traits) against a difficulty equal to the amount of time he wishes the edge to last: six Traits for an hour, eight Traits for a session, 10 Traits for a week, or 12 Traits for a month. If successful, the hunter instantly knows when the subject is targeted by any supernatural powers or likewise in any way directly threatened by supernatural creatures, as well as the subject's general distance and direction. Note that this edge does not discriminate between benevolent or malignant uses of supernatural powers — for example, a creature using supernatural healing to help the subject will set this edge off just the same as a monster using mind control or other supernatural attacks. Nor does the subject have to be the specific target of a supernatural threat — as soon as she wanders into a supernatural "danger zone," this

edge alerts the Defender. So if she decides to stop by the bank right as a group of shapechangers are planning to kill everyone inside, this edge warns the Defender. This edge does not activate if the subject is threatened by normal humans, even those working for a supernatural agent, though puppets and other humans with supernatural powers set this edge off. A Narrator is usually employed to alert the Defender when his charge is in danger, though out-of-game cell phone calls or other means are also acceptable.

Inspired

Champion

Bringing the enemy to you is always a daunting proposition, especially with the tall odds that most imbued face every night, but sometimes it's the only way to save someone the hunter values... or draw a monster into a trap. Only a monsters that has a continuous and direct line of sight to the imbued can be affected by this edge, and the hunter must spend a Conviction Trait and best it in a Social Challenge (Zeal Traits count) against its Mental Traits. If successful, the creature focuses on the hunter alone, disregarding all other possible targets and even its better judgment in doing so. For each extra Conviction Trait the hunter wishes to spend, he may attempt to affect an additional two monsters with this edge. However, even if one creature manages to resist this edge, it does not disrupt the effect this edge has on any of its companions. Note that this does not necessarily force a monster to attack the hunter, merely to focus all of their attention on him — if all the creature wishes to do is talk, then it will still do so, it will just ignore everyone else but the hunter while talking. If the creature does wish to do harm but finds it cannot attack the hunter, the effect ends as soon as it realizes attack is impossible. A hunter cannot stand out of reach of the creature, for example, or use edges like *Ward* or *Burden* to keep it at bay, nor can he run for cover or use concealment edges like *Hide* — he must stand his ground out in the open, for better or worse. This edge lasts until the hunter deactivates it (which can be done at any time), the hunter is Incapacitated, or until anyone else attacks the creature. A monster may also attempt another Mental Challenge against the same number of Traits the hunter had when this power was initially used to try to break free. Each attempt costs a Willpower Trait and counts as an action that turn, and only one such attempt may be made per turn.

Protect

Even the most dedicated hunters can succumb quickly to the terrible attacks of their supernatural foes, but not so a Defender with this edge. By spending a Conviction Trait, which can be done reflexively in response to an attack, the imbued immediately gains a number of special *Protect* Traits equal to his Zeal rating. These Traits are added to the Defender's Physical Traits on all tests to resist or endure supernatural attacks against the hunter's body (mind or emotional attacks are not affected). Thus, this power defends against a bloodsucker's claws and fangs, as those are supernatural attacks, but not against a punch from a normal human or even a bullet fired by that same bloodsucker, unless the bullet is somehow magical in nature. Furthermore, the Defender may spend these *Protect* Traits to gain the following benefits: for one *Protect* Trait, the hunter may gain a retest on any test to defend against a supernatural physical attack, or shrug off two levels of bashing damage delivered by a supernatural attack. For two *Protect* Traits, the hunter may turn aside a level of lethal damage from a supernatural attack, or force a monster to accept the results of one retest against such an attack (block any further retests). No more than one retest may be gained on any one test in this fashion, although there is no limit to how many Traits may be spent

at once to reduce damage delivered by supernatural means. *Protect* Traits spent for these benefits are gone for the rest of the scene and are no longer added to the Defender's Physical Traits for the purposes of defending against supernatural attack. This edge can only be activated once per scene, and any unused *Protect* Traits vanish at the end of the scene.

Exalted

Burn

When this mighty edge is activated, the hunter seems to glow with roiling energy, and any who touch (or are touched by) the imbued suffer searing burns and pains. Two Conviction Traits are required to activate this edge, and it lasts for a number of turns equal to half his *Zeal* rating (round up). During that time, all damage he deals in unarmed combat becomes lethal damage, and anyone who attempts an unarmed strike or grapple against him must win a Simple Test or immediately suffer a level of lethal damage. Grappling opponents must make a test every round or continue suffering damage, as the hunter literally burns through their grasp. He may also choose to add an additional level of lethal damage to any unarmed attack during this time, although each such use reduces the overall duration of the power by one turn, and no more than two levels of damage can be added to any one attack in this manner. This edge does not damage inanimate objects such as clothes or weapons, but hurts any animate creature he comes in contact with, including normal humans or any disembodied spirits he passes through. It also does not discriminate against friend or foe while it is active — a fellow imbued who tries to tackle the hunter while this edge is active must test or suffer burn damage, for example, even if his reason for doing so was totally benign. The hunter may also deactivate this edge at any time, though not in reflex to being struck (such as in the example above).

Blast

With this fearsome power, the Defender essentially becomes a walking electrified fence, keeping enemies at bay with a ring of highly charged miniature lightning bolts. The imbued must spend two Conviction Traits to activate this edge, whereupon the barrier instantly expands outward a number of paces equal to his *Zeal* rating (this distance can be reduced if the hunter desires, but once set the barrier cannot be changed). Any supernatural creatures caught in the path of the field as it expands or that try to cross it once it is established immediately suffer four levels of lethal damage. Conventional armor does not protect against this damage, though monsters may use supernatural powers to reduce or deflect the damage if possible. Creatures inside the radius of the shield when it is created or who manage to enter it after it is up do not suffer further damage while inside its radius of effect. This edge has no effect on other imbued or normal humans (who perceive nothing out of the ordinary), and they may take shelter alongside the Defender inside the shield. This edge lasts for one turn, plus an additional turn per extra Conviction Trait the hunter spends when activating it. A Defender may only use this edge once per scene, and its effects end immediately if he is Incapacitated. No other actions are possible while the shield is maintained, including moving from the spot where the shield was created.

Judgment

Although the need for the Zealous to destroy the supernatural burns deep within them, sometimes it's not always obvious what the best course of action would be, or which creature is most deserving of punishment and which would simply be a potentially devastating waste of effort. Fortunately, that's where Judges come in, using

their powers of observation and deduction to direct the fury of their fellow imbued where it would be most useful and sparing those who are undeserving of such punishment from the attacks of their fellows. Many Judges were people of strong convictions who held themselves (or society, or both) to a high standard of conduct, but who also realized that brute force and intimidation were unsatisfactory means of establishing this standard for everyone else. Their current roles give new dimension to these ideals, forcing them to pick out which targets are corrupting society the most while at the same time offering a reprieve to those rare creatures that aren't as much a part of the problem as the rest of the monsters.

Helping Judges make these difficult decisions are a number of edges that grant extra insight into a creature or situation, as well as impose burdens of guilt and judgment on those monsters they find unworthy.

Touched

Discern

The benefits of this edge are two-fold: first, it allows the imbued to more accurately identify what type of supernatural creature she is facing; second, it grants the hunter perfect vision, regardless of blinding lights or total darkness (or even if she has lost her eyes entirely). By concentrating for a turn and making a Mental Challenge against a target, the hunter's heightened powers of observation give her one or two clues as to the being's true nature — she might notice the tips of a bloodsucker's fangs and the fact that it doesn't blink, for example, or that a shapechanger in human form still pants like an animal and growls slightly under its breath. These clues must be something the hunter can visually observe (however slight), but it should be noted that while these clues are never outright misleading, they do not always make it immediately obvious what a creature might be either, especially to inexperienced imbued. For example, it is rumored that there are bizarre spider-changers who are quite vampiric in appearance, and assuming that a creature is a rot just because it doesn't breathe is a potentially devastating mistake. This edge lasts for 10 minutes, plus an additional 10 minutes for each Conviction Trait the hunter wishes to spend, and while it may supplement or even replace the second sight in some cases, it provides no mind- or body-control protection as the sight does.

This edge can also be used to search for clues of recent supernatural involvement with a particular place or person — such uses require a Mental Challenge against seven Traits, and as usual how the hunter interprets the clues she's given is up to them. This edge is best employed with a Narrator, to ensure that fair and appropriate clues are given. Lastly, while this edge is active the hunter ignores all penalties for blindness/darkness, and can see everything as easily as if she was in a well-lighted room.

Vigilance

All hunters quickly learn to exist with less sleep than before, especially as the nightmares set in, but Judges with this edge are unique in that they become physically capable of getting by on much less sleep than a normal person when the situation calls for it. Furthermore, she becomes flawless at activating her Conviction defense even at times other hunters would be caught unaware, as her ability to sense impending supernatural manipulation is heightened to an incredible degree. For each Zeal Trait the Judge has, she requires one hour less of sleep per night to function normally (starting at a base of seven hours). She is also automatically roused to full readiness by even the slightest noises or disturbances, and can act at no penalty in such situations. In addition, the Judge is considered to automatically succeed on all instinctive

attempts to activate her Conviction defense, even while asleep, enabling her to raise her defenses against threats of mental or emotional control that would catch other imbued off guard. There is a price to pay for such perpetual alertness, however — for every 24-hour period the hunter requires the use of this edge to get by, she subtracts one Willpower Trait from her reserve. All Willpower lost this way is immediately returned the first night she gets a normal amount of sleep. This power cannot be shared with other imbued.

Gifted

Burden

Bringing the full weight of her scrutiny to bear on a supernatural creature, the imbued literally fixes it in place for as long as she keeps her gaze on it. A Willpower Challenge (*Zeal* Traits count) against a difficulty equal to the creature's Physical Traits is required to activate this edge; if she wins, she may keep the creature locked in place for a number of turns equal to her *Zeal* rating. She may attempt to use this edge on a number of monsters at once, provided she can keep her gaze on all of them — a single challenge is performed against the entire group, which resists with a number of Physical Traits equal to their strongest member's plus one for each creature beyond the first. Creatures affected by this power can still act normally — fight, speak, use their powers, etc. — but cannot move more than a foot from the spot. Likewise, the hunter can attack the creature or otherwise interact with it however she likes, but attacking anything else or likewise significantly diverting her attention ends the effect immediately. (Note: Eye-to-eye contact is not required for this power, so long as the hunter keeps her general gaze on the creature.) This power does not function on normal humans or other imbued, though it can be used to free a host from a possessing spirit by locking the spirit in place and then pulling the host body away. Beings with powers of supernatural movement — incredible speed, teleportation, etc. — can make one attempt per turn to try to break free with these powers, making a normal test of the appropriate type against the hunter's Physical Traits.

Anathema

With this edge, a Judge can make a particular person repugnant for all supernatural creatures to feed upon, or cause them to suffer greatly when attempting to replenish their energies in a specific place. By touching the person or visiting the place she desires to make off-limits, the Judge may then draw the symbol for judgment and make a number of Mental Challenges equal to her *Zeal* rating, against a difficulty of five Traits. For each test she wins, a supernatural creature suffers a level of bashing damage each turn that it attempts to feed on the person or at the place in question. The experience becomes nauseating and painful in the extreme, though the monster may still continue feeding if it likes — a bloodsucker might still drain a victim dry, but doing so will be one of the more unpleasant and punishing experiences of its unlife. This edge lasts for one day per *Zeal* Trait the Judge has, and the imbued may have a number of bans active equal to her *Zeal* rating (she need not be near any of them once the edge has been placed on them). It even persists if the Judge is Incapacitated, although she may also rescind it sooner if she likes. This edge has no effect on other imbued or normal humans, and cannot be used to protect a supernatural creature from others that would feed on it.

Devoted

Balance

With this simple yet devastating edge, the hunter cuts a creature off from a form of energy it requires (typically one stolen from humankind). To activate this edge, the imbued must look at the creature and curse it in some loud, dramatic fashion — anything from the more prosaic “With creation as my witness, the dreams of the living shall give you no more comfort!” to a simple “Starve, bastard!” The hunter must then defeat the monster in a test of her Mental Traits (*Zeal* Traits included) against the creature’s Physical Traits. If she wins, the creature cannot use any power or perform any function that requires supernatural energy of any kind, such as *Blood/Rage/Gnosis/Quintessence/Pathos/Glamour/etc.* Willpower use remains unaffected. This effect persists even if the hunter is killed or the monster flees her presence, lasting for the rest of the session/a number of hours equal to the hunter’s *Zeal* rating, whichever lasts longer.

Vow

Sometimes a compromise is the only way to end a conflict, much as other imbued might hate to admit it, and this edge allows the Judge to walk away from a conflict with honor by ensuring that a monster makes a substantial behavioral modification. The Judge must verbally negotiate a deal with the monster, in which it promises to forego a particular activity (“I’ll never kill another human being,” “I’ll leave town and never come back,” etc.). Creatures that are incapable of intelligent conversation, even if only temporarily due to frenzy or other disturbed mental states, are thus incapable of being affected by this edge. The hunter may even make a contract with intangible spirits, provided that there is some form of intelligible communication between the two parties. Once the promise is made, the Judge must spend a Conviction Trait and trace the symbol for judgment on the creature; if the promise is ever broken, the seal immediately bursts into flame, inflicting three levels of lethal damage to the target and instantly alerting the Judge no matter how far away she might be. Each contract lasts for one month per *Zeal* Trait the hunter has, and she may maintain a number of them up to her *Zeal* rating, though not more than one with any particular creature. This edge cannot compel a creature to actively perform an action, such as destroy itself or attack another supernatural creature, only proscribe a specific action and make it punishable. Likewise, the creature must agree wittingly, though the Judge is free to use as much coercion as she likes to elicit a vow — indeed, many creatures are only too glad to make such promises when their alternatives are certain death at the hands of the Judge and her comrades. A pact can also be ended by the Judge at any time, though the monster is unaware the ban is lifted unless it actually performs the forbidden action and goes unpunished.

Inspired

Pierce

Many hunters quickly become used to sorting truth from lies, but imbued with this edge become preternaturally adept at it — they are essentially human lie detectors, and even become able to receive brief visions of a subject’s past encounters with the supernatural. The former and more common use of this edge allows the hunter to spend a Conviction Trait — for the next scene, she may make a Simple Test to determine the veracity of anything she hears. If she wins or ties, she may ask the speaker if the last statement he spoke was the truth, as far as he is aware. Any lie detected causes the hunter to experience a short and typically unpleasant feeling — a sour smell, a bitter

taste, etc. Conviction Traits risked on this edge allows for a retest of any of these challenges on a one-for-one basis (no more than one retest per challenge). To use the latter aspect of this edge, the hunter must spend a Conviction Trait and engage the target in a Mental Challenge (including *Zeal*); the results depend on whether the target was a normal human or a supernatural creature. If a normal human is the target, the hunter receives a brief vision of his last contact with the supernatural (if any), even if those memories have been suppressed by the subject's conscious mind. If a monster is the target, the hunter receives a vision of the creature's past — either memories that regard a particular person, place or thing, or calling up a specific, short period of time (“What were you doing on Thursday night two weeks ago?”). In either case, only events up to two months in the past can be witnessed, plus an additional month for each Conviction Trait the hunter wishes to spend.

Confession

By tapping into a target's mind, the Judge can extract a truthful answer (as the target is aware of it) for one specific question. A Conviction Trait is required to activate this edge. Once it is spent, the Judge simply touches the target (using a Physical Challenge if he resists), asks a question in a language the target understands and makes a Mental Challenge against the target's Willpower. Incorporeal targets can be subjected to this edge, if they can understand the Judge and she can touch the space they're currently occupying. If the test is successful, the target must relate the truthful answer to the Judge out of game, who then automatically speaks it aloud in game. All answers can be no longer than one sentence; if the information the Judge desires can't be boiled down to something that clear-cut, then an answer simply doesn't come. What's more, if the Judge fails the test, she must immediately make a Simple Test — on a loss, the target may feed her false information instead, which she will naturally believe to be true. A Judge can use this edge on normal humans and other hunters, though imbued tend to regard such thought-sifting as a deep insult, and even normal folk don't take too kindly to other people suddenly blurting out potentially surprising or unpleasant truths. Regardless of success or failure, this edge cannot be used on a target more than once per scene, and the Storyteller may rule that certain particularly ancient or powerful monsters are immune to such superficial mind-reading.

Exalted

Expose

At this level, the hunter can reveal all supernatural creatures to the normal humans in the area, dropping all disguises (supernatural or otherwise) to lay bare their true natures. The imbued must spend two Conviction Traits and make a test of her *Zeal* rating against a difficulty of eight Traits. If successful, all normal humans automatically perceive any supernatural creatures in the hunter's line of sight for what they truly are. Each supernatural creature must briefly describe itself in terms of a horrifying vision of their wicked nature (whether they are truly wicked or not). A bloodsucker might appear as a hideous corpse with blood running from its fanged mouth, while a shapechanger could suddenly seem to be a monstrous man-beast or a wizard become surrounded by crackling unholy energies. Imbued do not appear any different to those under the effect of this edge. Note that while normal people can now perceive what stalks among them, they still have strong instincts telling them to avoid such dangerous creatures, and will tend to rationalize away what they saw as best they can once they leave the immediate area. Therefore this edge comes up somewhat wanting if the hunter wishes to use it to raise an instant army of torch-bearing peasants.

However, many monsters will still flee the scene rather than risk further damaging their mundane disguises, especially those who have a high profile in human society. Even normal humans who'd rather pretend they merely had a bit too much wine at dinner will never again be truly comfortable with a being they now know (subconsciously or otherwise) to be something unnatural, and clever hunters can use this distrust to potentially devastating effect if they time this edge correctly.

Note: While superficially similar to the imbuing that the hunter herself originally experienced, there is no evidence to date that this edge can be used to spark an imbuing in other humans. That remains the province of the Heralds alone.

Imprison

This edge is essentially an advanced version of *Burden*, allowing the Judge to restrain a creature for hours instead of simply moments. Two Conviction Traits are required to activate this edge, and the hunter must spend a full turn gazing at her target. At the beginning of the next turn, she may make a Physical Challenge (*Zeal* counts) against the target's Willpower, and success means that the creature is trapped in place for 10 minutes per Physical Trait the Judge possesses, rounded up. Unlike *Burden*, the Judge need not keep her eyes on her target the entire time, and indeed the edge continues to function even if she is *Incapacitated* or later leaves the area. If the monster is threatened or otherwise endangered, it may immediately make a Willpower Challenge against six Traits to break free of this edge's grip. Likewise, creatures with supernatural movement powers may make one attempt per minute to escape by making a test of the relevant Traits for their power against the hunter's Physical Traits at the time the edge was activated. Normal humans and fellow imbued are unaffected by this edge. The Storyteller may modify the duration of this edge or even disallow it entirely in mixed games or if it would ruin the enjoyment of the game for other players (having another player character sit in a chair for an hour and a half usually makes for a player who won't return).

Vengeance

If any creed truly takes *Zeal* to heart, it is the Avengers — they accept the ideals of their Virtue wholeheartedly, without reservation or hesitation in the slightest, and do their best to live up to them in every confrontation with the supernatural that they have (and they have a lot). Evil must be punished, and all wicked deeds met with swift, terrible retribution. Compromise is not an option when dealing with beings that exhale lies and deception with every breath they take. It doesn't matter what the price of dealing such punishment may be: It must be done, or evil will triumph once again.

Like the Virtue they embody, it's easy to write off Avengers as being nothing more than simple-minded and bloodthirsty, but the truth is more complex. Avengers don't necessarily take the fight to their enemy in obvious ways, though they're more than capable of defending themselves if need be; all this creed believes in is swift and decisive action. How Avengers execute that ideal is up to them to decide. This path gives them all the weapons they need to tackle the monsters loose in the night, as well as the means to make their punishment cut through even the most ancient creature's defenses.

Touched

Cleave

This edge allows a hunter to deal devastating blows to the enemy, regardless of whether she's using a standard melee weapon, a regular household item or even just

her bare hands. What's more, there are rumors of some hunters spontaneously manifesting gleaming energy weapons or even phantom limbs in order to use this edge.

Cleave can be activated or deactivated at any time as a reflexive action; while it is active, all damage the hunter deals with brawling or melee attacks is automatically considered lethal damage. If a weapon normally inflicts lethal damage (such as a sword or an ax), it inflicts an additional level of lethal damage for the duration of this edge. All targets take this enhanced damage, including normal humans and even incorporeal opponents. In addition, the hunter is considered two Traits up on all challenges to attack with this edge. However, this edge does have a price — while her body itself is in no danger, melee weapons the hunter uses cannot withstand the energies this edge sends coursing through them and quickly fall apart. A weapon may only be used as many times as it has Bonus Traits before it is in danger of falling apart; after that, the hunter must make a *Zeal* test against six Traits at the beginning of each turn. Failure means the weapon immediately falls to pieces, becoming completely useless. In addition, weapons pushed beyond their limits in this fashion automatically fall apart at the end of the current combat, and cannot be repaired without considerable time and effort (if at all). Thus, a sword with three bonus Traits can be used “safely” for three turns before the imbued is required to make a *Zeal* test each turn to see if it survives. This edge cannot be used with ranged or thrown weapons of any kind.

At the Storyteller's discretion, some hunters — typically ones with fairly far-out views of reality, even for one of the imbued — may spontaneously manifest weapons of pure energy, visible only to monsters and other imbued. Such weapons should be exceedingly rare and be given Traits as the Storyteller sees fit, and he is fully within his discretion to allow such “outlandish” uses of this edge if it would conflict with the tone of the game.

Impact

This edge is fundamentally identical to *Cleave*, except that it applies only to thrown weapons or items of some kind, and that each weapon empowered by this edge is lost or shattered after the very first use, regardless of how many Bonus Traits it might have. Otherwise, the same guidelines apply: all damage done by the thrown weapon is considered lethal, and items that already did lethal damage (knives, spears, etc.) inflict an additional level of damage. Bullets, arrows, bolts and other weapon-fired projectiles do not function with this edge, nor do grenades. The object must also be something that is capable of doing damage on its own, however minor; a wadded up ball of tissues can't be used with this edge, because it is not inherently damaging, but a cell phone or a beer bottle might. Some Avengers develop this edge later on in the hunt, as they expand their combat prowess, but as a rule this edge tends to manifest in hunters whose imbuing finds them kept at some distance from a monster, but who still wish to do it as much harm as possible.

Gifted

Trail

Not all monsters fight to the death — some are remarkably skilled at taking flight, making pursuit a necessity to put them down for good. This edge allows an imbued to touch a supernatural creature or thing and create a smoky streamer that trails behind it, making it easier to follow. These streamers cannot be dissipated by any known means, including being walked through by others as well as natural (or supernatural) weather conditions. Such trails are visible only to the hunter who created them, although at the Narrator's discretion other imbued with powers such as *Discern*,

Witness or *Illuminate* currently active may perceive them as well; likewise, the Narrator may allow monsters with especially keen senses a Mental Challenge to perceive the smoke, provided they have a reason to suspect they're being followed.

To activate this edge, the hunter must touch the target (using a Physical Challenge unless the subject specifically consents) and spend a Mental Trait. The trail lasts for a number of hours equal to her *Zeal* rating, unless a Conviction Trait is spent, in which case the duration moves to days. Multiple trails may be created, but all of a particular hunter's trails appear identical, making it risky to create too many at once. When attempting to follow a target that is leaving a trail, for each person she passes the hunter may ask out of game "Have you seen <the target>? Where did he/she/it go?" Those questioned must answer honestly. If the creature leaves this plane of existence, the trail ends at the spot where this occurred, and picks up again where it re-enters reality. Likewise, if a creature becomes invisible, the trail will lead to its general location (a room or small outdoor area). This edge has no effect on normal humans, mundane objects or other imbued.

Muse of Flame

As Avengers know all too well, there inevitably comes a time when monsters make the hunter into the hunted, and this edge helps warn them of imminent danger from such sources. The only drawback is that the hunter must have some source of flame to work with, from a match or cigarette lighter to a burning house or car. By staring into the flames, the Avenger may make a Mental Challenge (including *Zeal*) against a difficulty of seven Traits — success means all flames seem to bend in the direction of the nearest supernatural creature, and continue to do so for five minutes per *Zeal* Trait the imbued has. If the Avenger comes into the immediate presence of a monster during this time, the flames then bend toward the next closest creature for as long as the edge is active. Only the Avenger himself and any other imbued who also have this edge active see anything out of the ordinary. This power may only be activated once per scene, though at the Storyteller's discretion it may occasionally spontaneously activate to warn the Avenger of impending visits by supernatural creatures. Such uses should be reserved for moments of high drama ("Wait a minute, why is my lighter bending against the wind... oh, %\$#@."), and may even require the hunter to make a Mental Challenge to understand or notice the messages that such uncontrolled instances of the edge are sending him.

Note: Obviously, please use caution and common sense when employing this edge, especially if you intend to use open flame of any kind in your game. There's nothing wrong with make-believe fire in a make-believe game, after all, but if you still choose to use real fire, please make sure that all flames are under constant supervision while they are needed, and promptly extinguished when their use has passed. That said, thank you in advance for not being stupid.

Devoted

Smolder

An imbued with this edge can create a cloud of dense black smoke, shielding her from mundane and supernatural detection alike (but offering no hindrance to herself or other hunters with their second sight active). Sight, sound, smell, and all heat perception are completely baffled by this mysterious smoke. Activating this edge takes one full turn, and requires a Conviction Trait and a Social Challenge (*Zeal* counts) against a difficulty of nine Traits. If successful, enough smoke is created to fill a normal-size room; each additional Conviction Trait spent allows for another room-equivalent

amount of smoke to be created. Those within who are not immune to the smoke as described above are treated as blind on all related tests (see the combat chapter for details), and not even the *Blind-Fighting* Ability offers any relief. Those hunters immune to the smoke receive a free retest on all *Stealth* tests, ignore any *Loud Negative Traits* their weapons might have (sound is completely muffled), and receive one free retest on a single combat test of their choice as the smoke grants them an edge over their opponents. This cloud lasts for a number of turns equal the hunter's *Zeal Traits*, although she can end it earlier if she desires; it cannot be dissipated by any other known means, however. At the Narrator's discretion, ancient creatures and/or monsters with particularly powerful senses may be able to partially or entirely avoid the smoke's effects, but as even most spirits cannot pierce the smoke this edge creates, immunity of any kind should therefore be correspondingly rare.

Fuel

Truly dedicated Avengers eventually see little difference between their personalities and the deeds the Messengers require of them; while this can lead to extreme behavior as it advances, it also allows the hunter to find strength of purpose in even the worst circumstances. Her faith in her mission and the rage she feels against the creatures of the night allows her to endure conditions that might break other imbued and stoke her inner fires higher than ever. An Avenger must be facing an especially dire situation to use this power — surrounded by shapeshifters, running low on ammo as a horde of rots approaches, gravely wounded away from her friends, etc. The danger need not be so obvious and overt, however — for example, an Avenger who hunts down a newly turned bloodsucker, only to find herself facing her own child, might find herself in a situation to use this edge as well. Provided such conditions are met, the imbued may convert a *Willpower Trait* into a *Conviction Trait*, as her resolve to continue fighting transforms into active fuel for the hunt. This edge may only be used once per scene, though at the Storyteller's discretion the Avenger may convert up to three *Willpower Traits* to *Conviction* if the circumstances are truly dire and/or emotionally wrenching for the hunter to face (such as facing one's own child, as in the example above).

Inspired

Surge

This edge transforms a hunter into a blazing physical powerhouse, able to finally go toe-to-toe with many of the fiercest monsters and come out ahead... at least for a time. A *Conviction Trait* is required to activate this edge, at which time a feeling of incredible power surges through the hunter and she immediately receives a number of bonus *Physical Traits* equal to her *Zeal Traits*. These bonus *Traits* are risked and lost just like the imbued's regular *Physical Traits*, and last for the rest of the current scene. If the hunter spends a *Willpower Trait* to refresh her *Physical Traits* while this edge is active, all *Traits* gained from it are refreshed as well. Attempting to activate this edge more than once or twice a night can be quite risky, however — at the Narrator's discretion, the hunter may receive fewer bonus *Traits* with each attempt as the energy begins to run out, or perhaps even receive the full benefit but suffer an increasing amount of bashing damage as her body suffers from the strain of channeling so much power.

Firewalk

All Avengers find themselves developing an affinity with fire, if they didn't have one to begin with, and this edge proves that such sympathy isn't entirely coincidental.

Minor sources don't even leave a mark, and in general anything short of weapon-grade flame or industrial heat won't damage them in the slightest. Taking a turn of concentration and spending a Conviction Trait, the hunter then ignores the first level of fire damage she suffers from a given source every turn, including supernatural fires of all kinds. If she suffers more than one level of fire damage from a source in a turn — say, she's hit by a flamethrower that inflicts three levels of fire damage — she may make a Simple Test for each level beyond the first. If she wins or ties, that level of damage is ignored as well. This edge lasts until the end of the scene or until the hunter is Incapacitated. Note that this edge is not considered always "on," and that any fire damage the hunter suffers before activating this edge is unaffected. This edge also does not protect anything the hunter is carrying or wearing (including her clothes), so being doused in flame and carrying bullets or explosives still isn't a very good idea.

Exalted

Smite

There is nothing subtle about this edge, but when it comes to erasing the target of a hunter's ire, there is nothing quite as efficient as it either. All that's required is that the imbued gesture in the direction of the person or thing she would like to see turned to ash, spend a Conviction Trait and make a ranged attack Physical Challenge (adding *Zeal*) against her target. If successful, a brilliant bolt of something not quite lightning, not quite fire erupts from her hand and blasts the target, inflicting an impressive four levels of lethal damage and usually scaring the hell out of everyone in the area as well. Even those not targeted feel the power of this edge — when it is used, glass breaks, electronic equipment dies, and people develop nosebleeds and headaches from the sheer force of it. These secondary effects are largely descriptive and entirely at the Narrator's discretion, though the Narrator is encouraged to throw in at least a few such details so that everyone gets the idea that this is not a power to be taken lightly. This edge functions against normal and supernatural targets alike.

Harpoon

Avengers who last long enough in the field often start complaining about "the one that got away"; this edge seems specifically designed to answer such tales. With this edge, the Avenger creates a burning spear of energy (visible only to hunters or supernatural creatures) that can be thrown into supernatural beings, even incorporeal ones. Two Conviction Traits are required to create the harpoon, and a standard Physical Challenge (adding *Zeal* Traits and retested with *Athletics*) is required to successfully hit a target. On a miss, the harpoon dissipates and the hunter must spend more Conviction to create another one. On a hit, however, the harpoon inflicts two levels of lethal damage and fixes the creature in the spot it's currently occupying; it may still act normally in that spot, but it cannot move without disabling the hunter or ripping the harpoon out (a highly painful process). A monster may make one attempt to escape each turn, by initiating a Willpower Challenge against the hunter. Even if the monster succeeds, however, it immediately suffers an amount of lethal damage equal to its regular brawling damage as the harpoon is painfully torn free. Otherwise this edge lasts for a number of turns equal to the hunter's *Zeal* rating, or until the monster is destroyed or the hunter is reduced to Incapacitated. The range of the harpoon and the length of the bond created by this edge are both measured as far as the hunter's *Zeal* rating in paces — if the hunter moves beyond that range, the creature is automatically dragged with him until the bond is somehow broken. This dragging normally doesn't inflict any special damage, although a bloodsucker being pulled out

into daylight by this edge certainly has problems of its own, and the Storyteller may rule that bashing or even lethal damage is dealt if the hunter uses this edge to drag a monster behind a car or something similar.

The Lost Edges

The following edge paths are exclusive to the lost creeds, Waywards and Hermits. Other hunters can never develop edges from these paths, though it should be noted that the reverse isn't true — Waywards often favor *Zeal* edges as a means of enhancing their already formidable combat talents, while Hermits find *Mercy* edges or other *Vision* powers useful in contacting others or making sense of the information they receive.

Deviance

Though it is easily obscured in the sea of blood that washes over everything a Wayward touches, in between moments of rage and carnage one can see a glimmer of what the Waywards were meant to be, which in turn shows how far they have fallen from that intended state. Those few imbued who have been touched by this path and lived to tell of it describe the feelings it engenders as frightening, all-consuming rage, a fury that threatens to devour the hunter's very mind. Waywards themselves seem to revel in the feeling of power that this edge gives them and many employ it often as possible just to feel the "rush" that it gives them.

Like the imbued who use it, this path excels at spreading bloody murder and chaos, as well as surviving the battles they inevitably dive into.

Note: *Deviance*, in its natural state, breaks just about every rule of Mind's Eye Theatre conduct. *Never* actually physically grapple, strike or grab someone in the course of roleplaying this edge. *Never* actually attack someone, jump off furniture, throw things at people or do anything else that breaks the rules of conduct. Lastly, *never* take the destructive, bloodthirsty urges of this edge anywhere near out of play.

Touched

Impart

Sometimes other hunters need to a good wakeup call to get them to see where their priorities lie — and this edge allows the Wayward to do just that, by forcibly activating the second sight of other hunters to see the monsters around them. This edge requires a turn of concentration, after which time the Wayward may spend a variable number of Mental Traits — for each Mental Trait spent, he may activate the second sight of one other hunter he can see. This activation costs no Conviction for those who receive it, but also provides no protection against mind-, body- or emotion-control as the full sight does, only the ability to perceive monsters. Other hunters are not immediately aware of this drawback, however, unless the Wayward stops to inform them... or they find out the hard way. A targeted hunter may spend Conviction to receive the full benefits of the sight, however. This edge can only be used once per scene, and the sight it confers lasts until the end of the current scene.

Gifted

Forewarn

Immersed as they are in violence, Waywards become hyper-sensitive to impending threats of all kinds, from immediate ones (an enemy drawing a gun) to less direct

dangers (a rickety floor about to give way). This edge therefore has several facets — first and foremost, the Wayward can never be Surprised by an enemy. Period. Second, once per scene at the beginning of a combat the Wayward may spend a Conviction Trait to pre-empt an enemy's first action with one of his own, as his danger sense allows him to plunge into battle with amazing speed. Finally, when a less direct danger is approaching the Wayward, once per scene the Narrator may make a secret Mental Challenge (*Vision* counts toward resolving ties) against a difficulty of at least seven Traits, depending on the nature and severity of the incoming peril. Success means that the Wayward receives an ominous feeling of some kind, emanating from the general direction the threat will arrive (if that is possible to determine). Note that each Wayward perceives such warnings differently, and they are never specific as to the nature of the threat, leaving it up to the hunter to guess how to react to them. Indeed, this edge can even make matters worse from time to time — a Wayward who senses danger and ducks for cover in expectation of a firefight is in for a rude surprise if the warning was actually related to a bomb planted in the building!

Devoted

Enrage

As Waywards see it, there are precious few imbued who truly possess the strength of will to do the job they were meant to do, and even fewer who feel the same drive for the hunt that the Wayward does. That's where this edge comes in. When it's activated, other imbued in the area are immediately filled with a blind, killing fury toward "the enemy" (as defined by the Wayward, or by themselves if the Wayward does not give them any direction), meaning that even the most pacifistic souls will find themselves in the midst of a charnel house at this edge's end. The Wayward must spend one Social Trait per hunter he wishes to affect, and engage them all in a test of their individual Willpower Traits versus his *Vision* Traits. If a target fails, she is forced into a berserk state for a number of turns equal to the Wayward's *Vision* Traits, during which time she has only a limited control over her own actions, though she remembers everything normally when this state passes. Raging characters will use the most direct and powerful means at their disposal to attack "the enemy," and while they are not blind or blatantly suicidal, any sense of caution or moderation they might usually display is drowned in a sea of bloodlust, and they should roleplay this fury accordingly. Indeed, this state is so all-consuming that even if the hunters manage to defeat their foes before the time expires, they will continue to strike their downed enemies or vent their fury on the scenery until the edge is over. What's more, while enraged hunters will not normally target friends or innocent passers-by, absolutely *anyone* who gets in a berserk character's way will automatically be forced aside, violently if necessary, and repeated or especially forceful attempts to interfere may even prompt the raging hunter to regard those responsible as "the enemy" as well!

On the positive side, while in a berserk state the target is up a number of Traits equal to the Wayward's *Vision* Traits on all combat and pursuit tests (this is not cumulative with the effects of other edges, in which case whichever bonus is higher takes hold). On the negative side, once the edge's effects pass, those affected suffer one level of bashing damage for every three rounds they were berserk (round down) — this damage will never kill a hunter, though it might well render her unconscious or even comatose.

A target may spend a Willpower Trait to gain a retest to shake off this madness, but only one such attempt may be made per turn, and each hunter must break free separately. This edge may be used more than once per scene, but each use beyond the

first costs the Wayward a Willpower Trait, and a Wayward can never use this edge on himself. What's more, there must be something or someone the target imbued perceive as an "enemy" present for the Wayward to activate this edge (be honest). Note that this can be a mistaken perception — the Wayward might well whip hunters into a frenzy against a pack of shapechangers they thought were coming to kill them, even if the monsters actually only wanted to talk — but there must be at least a perceived threat; the Wayward cannot send the hunters into a killing frenzy in a kindergarten classroom, for example, or against each other alone (since this edge requires an external threat to rage against). The Narrator can be called upon to make the final decision if there's any doubt, but as a rule of thumb if the imbued harbor any significant fears, suspicions or past grudges against a particular target, whether they admit it in character or not, then the Wayward can inspire fury in them.

Inspired

Reap

Leaving a trail of destruction behind them as Waywards always do, some say it was only a matter of time before the killers eventually learned how to glean information straight from the bodies of the dead. Regardless of its origin, this macabre edge allows a Wayward to do just that — by staring into the eyes of a corpse and asking it questions, the Wayward may compel a corpse to answer his questions truthfully (at least as far as it was aware of the truth). This edge also functions against the "undead" such as vampires, ghosts or zombies, provided they still have eyes enough to gaze into. (Looking into the eyes of a host body allows a Wayward to question a possessing spirit.) Against a regular corpse, this edge requires that the corpse still have some semblance of eyes to look into, and the Wayward must spend a Conviction Trait and make a Mental Challenge against a Trait difficulty equal to three plus the number of questions he wishes to ask. If successful, the Wayward "hears" the correct answers in his mind, although it should be noted that all answers are relative to the body in question — if it doesn't know an answer, only silence will follow, and while it cannot be actively deceitful, if it honestly only knows an inaccurate answer, then it will pass such incorrect information on to the Wayward. With all forms of undead, this edge requires eye contact, a Conviction Trait and a Mental Challenge against the target — success means that the Wayward may verbally ask the subject a number of questions equal to his Vision rating minus the target's Willpower (minimum one question). The target may respond to these questions however it likes, and indeed will typically dismiss or rebuff them, but the correct answers form in the Wayward's mind regardless of what the creature states aloud. Language is not a barrier to this edge, even with normal corpses, but it may only be used successfully on a target once per scene — additional interrogation must be done at a later date.

Exalted

Spiral

Waywards are a frightening force on their own, but those that have mastered this edge are truly terrifying, able to call up a miniature tornado or hurricane that blasts everything in its path. Two Conviction Traits and a turn of concentration are required to activate this edge, as well as Physical Challenge against a difficulty of 10 Traits. If successful, the next turn a terrible storm immediately begins pounding an area of five paces around the Wayward — no more, no less. Excluding the Wayward himself, each turn everything inside that area capable of taking damage (including incorporeal spirits and inanimate objects) automatically suffers three levels of lethal damage, though armor

and other such protections apply normally. Furthermore, verbal communication is impossible while inside the storm's howling winds, and all movement rates are halved (including the Wayward's). Finally, all attacks made against the Wayward are at a three-Trait penalty due to interference from the storm, including ranged attacks made from outside its radius. A Wayward can do nothing else but move while maintaining the storm, and it ceases immediately if he is rendered unconscious or killed. Otherwise, the storm lasts until the end of the current combat or until the Wayward commands it to end, and can only be activated once per scene in any case. A Narrator may be required to adjudicate the scope of this power, and the Wayward should adopt an appropriate posture and/or sound effect to ensure that all around them are aware of its use.

Isolation

Hermits find it a bitter irony that their every waking moment (and quite often each night's rest as well) is haunted by a never-ending flow of information they can only barely comprehend, yet their particular edges are designed specifically to allow them access to even more sources of information unavailable to their fellow imbued. Whether this is a sign of where their problems may have originated or simply an attempt by the Heralds to make up for the damage they caused is debatable, but once they learn to sort the information they gain with these edges from the torrent of images and impressions flowing through their minds, many Hermits find them an invaluable alternative to actually leaving their places of safety.

Needless to say, gathering and transmitting information is the main focus of the Hermit's path, although at higher levels they seem capable of using their unique link to channel the very presence of the Heralds themselves at their target, often with spectacular results.

Touched

Reach

All Hermits have some talent for sending their senses away from their physical body, though whether this is some indication of the role they were supposed to play, recompense from the Heralds for causing their condition or simply the way the human mind adapts to the static is unknown. Regardless, a Hermit may spend a Mental Trait and a turn of concentration to send her senses to a distant location (maximum of 10 paces per Vision Trait). This "out of body" state lasts for a maximum of 10 minutes, during which time the Hermit can make standard perception-oriented tests on what she is perceiving. She may even activate her second sight and its associated protection, though this is not automatic — she must first win a Mental Challenge against six Traits or it cannot be activated. Likewise, if her Conviction is already active when she sends her senses, she must win a similar Mental Challenge or it goes inactive while she is out of her body. (Repeated attempts may be made to activate second sight.) A Hermit may move her senses around at a "fast sprint" within her range, and physical barriers are no impediment to this edge. However, static is triggered if the Hermit's senses come within approximate range of hunters or supernatural creatures, so most Hermits use this edge with great caution. Note that while all of her senses are sent, she may only use them for observation, not interaction — her sense of touch could tell her if a kettle is hot, for example, but not move the kettle in any way. In addition, she is completely oblivious to what's going on around her body, and is considered defenseless against all forms of attack. Should her body be reduced to Incapacitated, she is automatically returned to it and rendered unconscious; should it be killed, her projecting senses are extinguished as well.

Gifted

Send

In theory this edge is supposed to allow Hermits to communicate telepathically with other imbued; in practice, it often transmits many of the same confused messages that Hermits themselves receive. Nevertheless, it can be a valuable tool with sufficient concentration. A Hermit may attempt to communicate with one person at a time, and it must be with someone she can see or hear directly with her own unaided eyes or ears (no video cameras or telephones). Furthermore, it does not compel a subject to pay attention, and while he can definitely tell that the thoughts received are not his own, they are not distracting enough to incur any kind of Trait penalty. This edge requires a turn of concentration to activate and a Mental Challenge with the target (he cannot relent to this challenge) — if successful, the Hermit may pass along a brief message or momentary image to the target. Communication typically cannot be any more complicated than a sentence of five words or less, or a similarly simple picture. By spending a Conviction Trait, the Hermit may extend this message to a full 30-second monologue; however, the target cannot communicate back, only receive information. Messages sent using this edge cannot be intercepted or “listened to” by any means, though other Hermits with their second sight active perceive its use on targets they are directly observing. This power can only be used successfully on a target once per scene, and cannot be used on normal humans or monsters at all.

Devoted

Edict

A Hermit using this edge virtually hands down the Heralds' judgment from on high to a particular target, reminding him (for better or worse) just how small he is compared to the powers of the universe. Monsters, their servants, fallen hunters and especially evil or selfish humans are filled with feelings of shame, revulsion and self-loathing; those rare humans who live truly noble and selfless lives are filled with a sense of righteousness, as are imbued who are true to their ideals. To use this edge, the Hermit must direct her gaze at a single target and engage him in a Social Challenge — the results vary depending on the type of target affected and his overall moral state. Against monsters or those who serve them (wittingly or not), a successful use of this edge immediately costs the target a Willpower Trait as he suffers the Heralds' harsh judgment. With selfish or morally “neutral” individuals, they feel a deep sense of unease but suffer no other penalty. Other imbued either gain or lose a Conviction Trait, depending on how they have been adhering to their creed's principles of late. (Narrator's discretion regarding such judgments, but honesty is expected, and a good rule of thumb is how well a hunter has been regaining Conviction or Willpower lately.) No hunter can gain or lose more than one Conviction Trait per session with this edge, and Hermits and Waywards are completely immune to it. This edge has no effect on animals or creatures with totally subhuman intelligence.

Inspired

Transcend

A more powerful but also more dangerous form of *Reach*, this edge allows a Hermit to send her spirit out of her body, not just her senses. This “astral self” can travel nearly instantaneously to any point around the world (though a Storyteller must be contacted if the Hermit wishes to observe a scene outside the regular play area), and can even spend a Willpower Trait to interact with the physical world in a very minor way — not

enough to cause damage or even flick a light switch, but perhaps enough to move someone's hair or write in frost or condensation. Physical barriers or attacks do nothing against her, but caution is still advised, as static still applies and most incorporeal creatures — notably ghosts — are treated as solid to her, allowing them to attack her normally. (She uses Mental Traits in place of Physical Traits while in this spirit realm.) In addition, she can activate second sight or use perception-based edges such as *Discern* or *Witness* while projecting, though communication is limited to the minor physical interaction described above or perhaps a use of the *Send* edge. Conversely, most edges that affect spirits will work on her as well, and many imbued will likely think the Hermit nothing more than a ghost unless she can convince them otherwise. Other beings may get an uneasy sense of being watched if they have at least three levels of *Awareness* and win a Mental Challenge; monsters with supernatural perception may make a test as well, though even they do not truly “see” the Hermit, only get a definite sense that a presence is watching them.

Activating this edge requires a turn of concentration and a Conviction Trait, and the Hermit can remain “astral” for up to half an hour (this becomes a full hour with the expenditure of an additional Conviction Trait). As with *Reach*, her body is totally vulnerable to outside attack while she is away, and she suffers the same fate if she is wounded or killed while projecting. All damage suffered in the spirit realm is healed instantly on returning to her body, however. This edge may only be used once per session, and while it is active the Hermit should adopt an appropriate posture or description tag to indicate its use, not to mention a sign to show where her body is while she's away.

Exalted

Proclaim

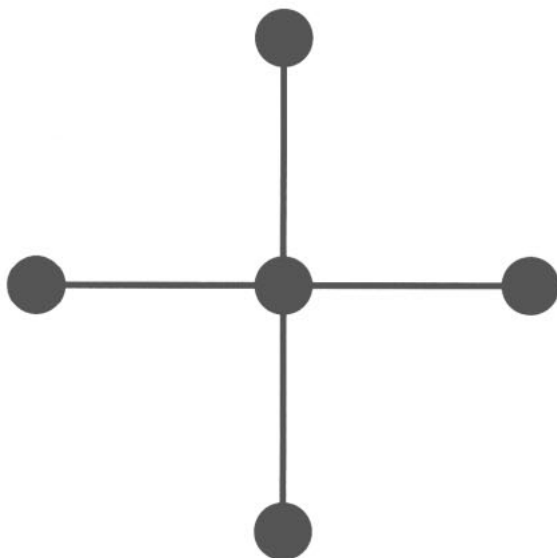
Those few non-Hermits who know of this edge or have seen it in action can't help but wonder what the Hermits might have been, if not for the frailty of the human mind. Essentially, it allows the Hermit to bring a target or group of targets directly to the Heralds' attention, sending monsters into fits of hysteria and flooding fellow hunters with a torrent of images and feelings not unlike their original imbuing.

Perhaps most miraculously of all, this edge allows a bystander to get a second chance at joining the ranks of the Chosen, though it has no effect on those who have never been touched by the Heralds before (i.e., it cannot be used to spontaneously imbue normal people).

Two Conviction Traits are required to activate this edge, which manifests as the Hermit speaking in tongues for at least a full turn; the exact effect this striking display has depends on the target in question. Fellow imbued are brought nearly as close to the Heralds as they were in their original imbuing, and are automatically treated as if they have the *Paron* Background fully active for the rest of the scene, regardless of whether they normally have it or not. There is no strict game mechanic for this time, but the Storyteller should make it as intense as possible and use it as a chance to give the imbued all manner of cryptic hints, symbols and visions, especially ones pertaining to upcoming dangers and other future trials of the hunt. Due to their constant connection to the Messengers, Waywards and Hermits cannot be targeted by this edge, for better or worse. If the target is a bystander, on the other hand, he receives a second chance at becoming a true hunter — provided he doesn't back away from the truth of the world a second time, his actions determine a creed and other hunter traits as per a regular hunter imbuing. (Edges and other powers are not necessarily instantaneously gained,

and the Storyteller will probably want to monitor the change over to ensure it is carried out correctly.) Only one second chance can ever be granted to a bystander with this edge, however, so a target who fails this additional test will forever remain a bystander thereafter.

Against monsters, the edge requires a full turn to use; at the end of this time, the Hermit engages the creature in a number of challenges equal to her *Vision* rating minus the monster's Willpower (minimum one challenges). Multiple creatures may be targeted at once, provided they can all hear the Hermit speak; each of them resolves his or her challenges and possible damage individually, however. If the creature wins as many or more challenges as the Hermit, it suffers no ill effect. If the Hermit wins one more challenge than the monster, the monster suffers a highly active derangement for the rest of the scene; if the Hermit wins two or three more, the derangement persists for the rest of the session; four gives the creature a permanent derangement or removes a permanent Willpower Trait; and five or more inflicts increasing amounts of mental damage, as determined by the Storyteller. If the Hermit fails *every* test, the backlash causes her to immediately acquire an active derangement herself for the rest of the scene. Derangements inflicted are typically phobias, paranoia or some kind of severe depression. This edge may only be used once per day, and overuse may result in the Hermit acquiring permanent derangements herself or even suffering physical harm from the strain of channeling so much of the Herald's energy in a short period of time.





Chapter Five: Rules, Systems and Drama

There are times when a player wants to have her character do something that can't be accomplished through simple roleplaying, such as attacking another person or deciphering an ancient text. When this happens, you need rules.

Rules are an imperative part of any game; they define what characters can and cannot do. Only when confrontation does occur are rules necessary to govern those situations. Still, never forget that the primary focus of this game is to tell a good story; the rules should always serve and enhance this purpose, not impair it.

Challenges

There comes a time when two or more players come into conflicts that cannot be resolved through roleplaying alone. The system detailed in this chapter allows for the resolution of conflicts simply and quickly. This sort of face-off is called a challenge, and it makes for a very simple system of conflict resolution. In most cases, a Narrator does not even need to be present when a challenge is played.

Roleplaying does not necessarily have to end when a challenge begins; in fact, roleplaying becomes more important than ever if players intend to enjoy a confrontation and avoid disputes. Experienced players can seamlessly integrate a challenge into their roleplaying so that outsiders don't even know that anything unusual is going on. At the players' option, special hand signals can be used to indicate when certain Traits and powers are being employed.

In order for this system to work, players need to work together. They have to educate each other on the rules and agree on what Traits can be used in a challenge. Compromise and cooperation are the bywords of the game. Arguments over whether or not a particular Trait bid is appropriate can ruin both the momentum and the mood of a game.

Using Traits

Before you can begin to learn how challenges work, you must first understand what defines a character's capabilities. A character is created by choosing a number of adjectives that describe and define that person as an individual. These adjectives are called Traits, and are fully described in Chapter Three. These Traits are used to declare challenges against other characters or against static forces represented by a Narrator.

Initial Bid

A challenge begins with a player "bidding" one of her Traits against her opponent. At the same time, she must declare what the conditions of the challenge are — firing a

gun, knocking someone down, etc. The defender must then decide how she will respond. She can either relent immediately or bid one of her own Traits in response.

When players bid Traits against one another, they may only use Traits that could sensibly be used in that situation. Essentially, this means a player can usually only use Traits from the same category as her opponent's Traits. Most challenges are categorized as Physical, Social or Mental, and all Traits used in a challenge must be from the same category. Experienced players may offer each other more creative leeway, but only by mutual agreement.

If the defender relents, she automatically loses the challenge. For example, if she were being attacked, she would suffer a wound. If she matches the challenger's bid, the two immediately go to a test (described below). Those Traits bid are put at risk, as the loser of the test not only loses the challenge, but also the Trait she bid for the rest of the evening.

Testing

Once both parties involved in a challenge have bid a Trait, they immediately go to a test. The test itself is not what you may think — the outcome is random, but no cards or dice are used. The two players face off against one another by playing Rock-Paper-Scissors. It may sound a little silly, but it works.

If you lose the test, you lose the Trait you bid for the duration of the session (usually the rest of the evening). Essentially, you have lost some confidence in your own capabilities and can't call upon them for a while. You can no longer use that Trait effectively, at least until you regain confidence in your Traits.

The test works like the moment in poker when the cards are turned over and the winner is declared. The test produces one of two possible outcomes — either one player is the victor, or the result is a tie.

In the case of a tie, the players must then reveal the number of Traits that they currently have available in the category used (Physical, Social or Mental). The player with the least number of Traits loses the test and therefore loses the challenge. Note that the number of Traits you've lost in previous challenges, or lost for any other reason, reduces the maximum number of Traits you can bid in ties. You may lie about the number of Traits you possess, but only by declaring fewer Traits than you actually have — you may never say that you have more Traits than you actually do. This allows you to keep the actual number of Traits you possess a secret, although doing so may be risky. The challenger is always the first to declare his number of Traits. If both players declare the same number of Traits, then the challenge is a draw, and both players lose the Traits they bid.

Example of Play: *Evan is facing off against a hideous creature that advances on him with wicked talons. Cornered, Evan takes a deep breath and charges the thing, hoping to catch it off guard and escape. He begins with a Trait for his initial bid ("I'm Lithe enough to slip past you, monster!"), and the creature responds with an attack ("A Ferocious claw attack is all that you're going to get, human!"). The two test — both shoot scissors, a tie. Now they have to declare their total number of Traits to resolve the tie. Evan knows he'll need all he's got, so he declares all six of his Traits. Unfortunately for him, the creature has 12 Physical Traits, and so Evan loses the challenge and suffers a wound. Now he's backed into a corner, and without some pretty quick thinking Evan is in going to find himself in some serious trouble.*

Rock-Paper-Scissors

What we mean by Rock-Paper-Scissors is the following: you and another person face off, and, on the count of three, show one of three hand gestures. “Rock” is a basic fist. “Paper” is just a flat hand. “Scissors” is represented by sticking out two fingers. You then compare the two gestures to determine the winner. Rock crushes Scissors. Scissors cuts Paper. Paper covers Rock. Identical signs indicate a tie. Certain advanced powers allow some characters to use gestures other than Rock, Paper and Scissors. Before players can use the gestures in a test, however, they must explain what they are and how they are used.

Adjudication

If you have question or argument about the rules or the conditions of a challenge, you need to find a Narrator to make a judgment. Try to remain in character while you look for a Narrator. Any interruption in the progress of the story should be avoided if at all possible, so work problems out with other players if you can. If you do not know the correct application of a certain rule, it's usually better to wing it rather than interrupt the flow of the game.

It should be noted that a challenger who fails on a Social or Mental Challenge must wait at least five real-time minutes (and not spend them arguing over the results of the previous challenge — you can't protest a ruling with a Narrator for 4:58 minutes, then drop your argument and say, “Oh, look, time's up,”) before repeating the failed challenge. This rule includes supernatural powers that use Mental or Social Challenges unless they specify otherwise — a monster cannot continue attempting one mental assault after another until he finally succeeds. This does *not* include trials that are failed but then redeemed through retests or overbids.

Complications

There are a number of ways in which a challenge can be made more complicated. The basic rules are enough to resolve most disputes, but the following rules add a few bells and whistles.

Negative Traits

Many characters have Negative Traits; these are Traits that can be used against a character by his opponent. During the initial bid of any challenge, after you have each bid one Trait, you can call out a Negative Trait that you believe your opponent possesses. If he does indeed possess the Negative Trait, your opponent is forced to bid an additional Trait, although you must still risk your one Trait as usual. If he does not possess that Negative Trait, *you* must risk an additional Trait. You may call out as many Negative Traits as you wish during the initial bid phase of a challenge, as long as you can pay the price if you're wrong.

If your opponent does not have additional Traits to bid, then your Trait is not at risk during the challenge. Additionally if you guess more than one Negative Trait that your opponent cannot match, you gain that many additional Traits in the case of a tie or an overbid (see p. 236). The same works in reverse, favoring your opponent if you do not have additional Traits remaining to match incorrect Negative Trait guesses. It is considered *very* cheap to list off Negative Traits just to see which ones a player possesses.

Example of Play: A bloodsucker is trying to seduce Rachel, an Innocent, into letting the location of her group's hideout slip. The creature begins with its initial bid ("I'm so Alluring you have no choice but to be receptive to my charms,") while Rachel, wary of such sudden affection, tries to turn his own tactic against him ("I'm too Gorgeous for you to put two words together, let alone make a move on me!"). Irritated, the monster then suggests that Rachel possesses the Negative Trait Naïve ("Are you kidding? A Naïve young thing like you should love the attention of a suave young man like me!") If Rachel did indeed possess that Negative Trait, she would have to bid an additional Trait to have continue the challenge. However, the young Innocent isn't quite vulnerable as she seems and does not possess the Naïve Trait, and now the bloodsucker — having underestimated his opposition — is the one who has to bid an extra Trait if he wishes to continue trying to get the information he wants.

It can be risky to bid Negative Traits, but if you're sure about what you're doing, you can raise the stakes for your opponent, possibly even to the point where she relents rather than risking additional Traits.

Overbidding

Overbidding is the system by which powerful characters may prevail in a challenge, even if they lose the initial test. Unfortunate as it may be, a centuries-old monster with 18 Physical Traits should be able to smite a newly imbued hunter who has only five (unless, of course, that hunter has some edges and starts using them quickly). This system is designed to make that possible.

Once a test has been made, the loser has the option of calling for an "overbid." In order to call an overbid, you must risk a new Trait; the original one has already been lost. At this point, the two players must reveal the number of applicable Traits they possess in the appropriate category, starting with the player who called for the overbid. If you have double the number of Traits as your opponent in that category, you may attempt another test. As with a tie, you may state a number of Traits less than the actual number you have and keep your true power secret. This can be dangerous unless you are confident in your estimation of your opponent's abilities.

Example of Play: Ashley is facing down a bloodthirsty skinchanger; he's succeeded at keeping it from getting past him so far, but he knows it's only a matter of time before the creature decides to be more forceful and lands a shot that takes him out of the fight. Desperate, he activates Cleave and swings his shovel at the beast ("May the Lord forgive my need for such a Brutal strike!"), while the creature attempts to turn the blow aside ("Fool! I am far too Tough for such a pathetic swing to harm me!"). They test and Ashley wins, but the monster is in no mood for games. Figuring it has far more Traits than even the burly Avenger, the creature bids additional Trait ("I'm Tenacious enough to keep on coming!") and calls for an overbid. Having won the first test, Ashley does not need to risk an additional Trait. The beast announces all 18 of its Physical Traits, and since Ashley has only six Physical Traits left the overbid proceeds. They test again, and this time the creature wins. Ashley loses the Brutal Trait he bid, and the monster still loses its initial Tough Trait, but it has won the final challenge and so it knocks aside Ashley's swing and laughs at him.

Static Challenges

Sometimes you may have to undergo a challenge against a Narrator rather than against another player. For example, a hacker may use a Static Mental Challenge with the Computer Ability to break into another computer system. In such circumstances, you bid a Trait that would be appropriate, then perform a test against the Narrator. Before the test is made, the Narrator decides on the difficulty of the task which you are

attempting — this is the number of Traits you are bidding against, which is used to compare in the event of a tie. The test proceeds exactly as it would if you were testing against another character. Of course, you may attempt to overbid in a Static Challenge, but beware, because the Narrator can overbid as well. The number of Traits attached to the challenge should represent the difficulty and danger inherent in the challenge.

Sometimes Narrators may leave notes on objects, such as books, doors or even magical items. These notes indicate the type of challenges that must be won for something to occur (such as deciphering a tome or picking a lock).

Simple Tests

Simple Tests are used to determine if you can do something successfully when there is no real opposition. Simple Tests are often used when using edges. Most Simple Tests do not require you to risk or bid Traits, though some may.

When a Simple Test is called, a test (Rock-Paper-Scissors) is performed against a Narrator. In most cases, the player succeeds on a win or a tie, although in some cases, it may be necessary for the player to win for him to receive any benefit from the challenge.

Retests

Certain Traits allow a character to retest. A retest allows a character to ignore the results of the first test and test again for a new result. Retests are most commonly gained through Abilities, but other Traits may also provide them; such Traits are noted in their descriptions. Generally, expending one level of an appropriate Ability allows for one retest.

Multiple retests are possible on a single challenge, but each retest must come from a different source. A character may retest a challenge once using a level of *Brawl* and then retest again through the Merit: *Luck*, but may not gain multiple retests with the *Brawl* Ability on the same challenge.

Retests may be canceled (“blocked”) by a character who is capable of matching the conditions of the retest. Thus, if a player uses *Firearms* to retest when firing a gun, the opponent may expend a level of *Dodge* to block the retest and force the attacker to accept the results of the original test.

Example of Play: *Destiny is out of her element — the Visionary researcher has been ambushed in her apartment by a mysterious creature searching for answers about an ancient text she’s been studying at the university. Terrified, she attempts to escape (“I’m Quick enough to bolt out the door!”) while the creature simply sneers and goes to grab her (“I am quite Wiry myself, my dear — you’re not getting away from me!”). They test and Destiny wins, but the creature is unwilling to let her escape so easily and spends a level of Brawl to call for a retest (“If it’s a Brawl you want, I’ll give it to you!”). They perform another test and this time the creature wins — while it has spent a level of Brawl, it has what it wants, and Destiny is in trouble indeed.*

Fortune smiles on the young Visionary, however, as her friend and fellow imbued Chris happens to show up just in time to see what’s going on. Pulling a gun on the beast, he announces he’s going to try to shoot it before it can get a good enough hold on Destiny to use her as a hostage (“I’m Alert enough to keep you from getting the upper hand!”), while the creature simply tries to avoid the attack (“I’m Quick enough in close quarters to avoid your hasty shot!”). They perform a test, and Chris wins. Frantic, the creature tries to use its Brawl skill once again (“I’m good enough in a Brawl to stay out of harm’s way!”) but Chris, a trained

marksman, immediately blocks the retest with Firearms (“I’m good enough with Firearms to make a shot like this, no problem.”), and no retest is performed. The creature takes a bullet to the chest and staggers back, giving Destiny enough time to reach her friend, and Chris enough time to take aim for another shot.

Relenting

At any time before the actual test is performed, a player may choose to acquiesce and admit defeat. Characters who relent automatically lose the challenge, but do not lose any Traits, even if they bid one before relenting. They also help the game flow along more smoothly than extended Rock-Paper-Scissors matches do.

Bonus Traits

Certain weapons and special powers grant a character bonus Traits during a challenge. You may add these extra Traits toward a character’s total when determining a tie involving that weapon or special Ability.

Order of Challenges

Since multiple challenges will inevitably occur simultaneously during any given fight, the Narrator needs some means of determining who acts first and who acts last. Each person involved in a given game turn checks the current number of Traits appropriate to the action they wish to attempt. A character punching someone would use Physical Traits to determine speed, while a character casting a spell would probably use Mental Traits. If an action does not require any sort of Trait challenge, it occurs last in the turn. As with overbidding, you may declare fewer Traits than you possess, if you wish. Characters with equal numbers of Traits are assumed to go “simultaneously,” though for resolution purposes the Narrator may simply choose one to act first.

Sometimes a character with a high number of Traits will attack a character with fewer Traits, who will decide to strike back. In this case, the character with fewer Traits resolves his action in the same test as the faster character, but in doing so, he loses the ability to take any aggressive action for the turn — he uses up his one action with the counterattack.

Example of Play: *Destiny and Chris are still facing down the creature in her apartment, when it decides to favor the better part of valor and flee through the back. Unfortunately for the monster, their teammate Greg has been creeping up behind it and announces that he’s tackle it to the ground. Greg has seven Physical Traits, while the creature has six Physical Traits, so Greg acts first. He makes his bid (“I’m Ferocious enough to tackle a zombie from behind!”) while the creature angrily decides to strike him in return (“Ferocious? I’ll show you what that really means!”). The two test, and Greg loses, suffering a wound in the process. However, the creature has just used up its action for the turn by attacking Greg, and so must wait until next turn before making an attempt. Meanwhile, Destiny declares that she’s fleeing outside to safety, while Chris waits for another clean shot at the monster.*

The Mob Scene

It’s a fact of life that sooner or later a large group of characters will decide to mix it up. Group challenges can seem intimidating even to experienced Narrators and Storytellers; these rules are meant to streamline the process and make such situations easier to resolve, rather than devolving into endless matches of Rock-Paper-Scissors.

First of all, find who is challenging whom. The easiest way is to count to three and have everyone point to the person they wish to target that turn. If no one is being challenged by more than one person, then challenges are carried out normally.

If one character is challenged by several targets, or tries to challenge multiple opponents at once, resolve it in the following manner. First deal with groups in the order of largest to smallest, just for ease of play. Each attacker must bid an appropriate Trait as normal for the challenge required; spatial logistics generally put a limit of up to five characters physically attacking another character at once.

Next, the defender character must have enough Traits to counter every opponent in the group; if he does not have enough Traits, he must relent to the rest of his opponents (although he may choose which ones he relents to). Resolve such relented challenges first — it is very possible the defender may fall before the rest of the group can act!

Finally, the defender and any remaining attackers engage in one simultaneous test. The defender then compares his sign to each of the attacker's signs, applying the appropriate results. Thus, if the defender throws Scissors and his attackers throw Rock, Scissors, Paper and Paper, the defender is considered to have lost to the first challenger, tied the second (resolved like any other tie) and beaten the last two. The defenders and attackers lose Traits bid in any given loss. If the defender in the previous example had bid one Trait against every attacker, he would have lost one Trait to the first attacker, and an additional Trait if he had lost the tie as well.

Once the tests have been made, they are resolved in the standard order of actions and initiative. It is possible for a defender to lose Traits to the first attackers and then lose a tie to an attacker later in the same mob challenge. That's OK — the first attackers "softened up" the defender. However, unless the defender has a special power which allows him to take multiple actions, he may only attempt to injure one of his attackers in return, and it must be one that lost a challenge. If none of the attackers lose, the defender simply suffers the results of their actions — like it or not, there's a definite downside to getting jumped by a large number of people!

When the defender in a mob challenge uses Abilities or other powers to gain retests, each attacker's challenge is treated as a separate test. Thus, a defender would need five *Melee* Abilities in order to retest against five attackers in a melee combat.

Time

Time in *Mind's Eye Theatre* works as it does in real life. It moves forward inexorably, relentlessly. For the most part, everything is played out in real time, and players are expected to stay in character unless they have a rules question.

It is assumed that a player is always "in character" during the course of a story. A player should never drop character when interacting with other players. Doing so ruins the atmosphere for everyone involved, and typically creates a "domino effect" as those other players drop out of game and drag others around them out of game as well. Challenges may be talked through, but a player is always considered to be active in the game. If a player needs to take a break, he should inform a Narrator. That player should not interact with any of the other players while out of character, and preferably stay in a designated out-of-game area.

The only other exception to the "in-character rule" is when a Narrator calls for a "timeout." This may be necessary to resolve a dispute or to change the scene if the story calls for it. When "Timeout!" is called, all players within hearing distance must

stop whatever they are doing until the Narrator calls out, "Resume." Timeouts should be kept to an absolute minimum, since they interrupt the flow of the story for everyone.

Chronicles, Stories, Sessions and Scenes

Mind's Eye Theatre time breaks down into five major allotments: chronicles, stories, sessions, scenes and turns. A chronicle is defined as a series of smaller stories that are all connected somehow, and may take months or even years to complete. Each complete plotline within the chronicle is called a story; for example, a **Reckoning** game's first story often revolves around the newly imbued discovering each other and perhaps banding together to defeat some common supernatural threat. A session is just that: one actual night of play, although Storytellers may define a session as one night of game time if the action was left *in media res* at the end of the previous game. (Since many characters regain spent Traits in between sessions, this can be an important distinction.) Finally, a scene is the amount of time it takes to resolve the action in one location; once the characters shift locations, the scene has ended. If a session will be taking place entirely at one location, or in a large venue such as a convention where it is difficult to keep track of all the players at once, a scene can then be defined as roughly one hour.

Turns

To keep everything straight when players start throwing challenges around or attempting complex actions, the time is right to start using turns. Turns are considered to last about four seconds, although this may vary from challenge to challenge at the Storyteller's discretion. In any given turn, a character may take one action. Some actions may take multiple turns to complete, such as hacking a sophisticated computer system. Other actions, like speaking a short sentence, do not use up a character's turn at all. Once everyone involved in a turn has taken an action, the turn ends and another turn begins.

In some instances a character may be interrupted before he can take his action, or be forced to respond to events developing around him. In such instances, a character may always defend himself, although doing so uses up his available action for the turn.

If a power affects a character for 15 seconds, it is assumed to be in effect for four turns when turn-based time is in effect. In normal roleplaying, such powers work for their allotted amount of time.

Downtime

Many aspects of a character's life are critical to her continued existence, yet do not make for dramatic roleplaying or are overly intricate to take time during sessions to perform. Storytellers are encouraged to use "downtime" between sessions to allow characters to maintain their holdings, learn edges, etc. Other actions and interactions may take place during this time, with Storyteller supervision. As long as players don't use abuse downtime privileges, the time in between sessions can be a rewarding roleplaying experience in itself.

Health

A character in **Laws of the Reckoning** has different Health Levels; these represent the amount of injury the character can endure. These levels are: Healthy (where a character starts), Bruised, Bruised, Bruised, Wounded,

Wounded, Incapacitated, Mortally Wounded and Dead. If a Healthy character loses two Health Levels from a combat challenge, she is on her second Bruised level. If she loses three more Health Levels from there, she is on her second Wounded level, and so on.

- **Healthy** — When a character is Healthy, he is virtually or completely uninjured. He suffers no penalty aside from possibly being cosmetically scuffed up a bit.

- **Bruised** — A Bruised character is more seriously roughed up, and his injuries have started to impair his viability a bit. He is considered one Trait down on all challenges.

- **Wounded** — When a character is Wounded, he is seriously injured in one or more locations. To reflect this, he must risk an additional Trait to attempt a challenge, and his opponent wins all ties, regardless of who has more Traits. If the injured character has a power which normally allows him to win all ties, ties are resolved through comparing Traits instead. Note: a character may always attempt to overbid, even when injured this seriously.

- **Incapacitated** — When a character is Incapacitated, he is completely out of play for at least 10 minutes. Once awake, the character is still effectively immobile, although he may whisper pained sentences. He may not enter into challenges until he has healed at least one Health Level. He is at the mercy of other characters, and may only heal gradually on his own. If he suffers more bashing damage, he is rendered unconscious for at least an hour, and may even enter a coma; if he suffers another level of lethal damage, he becomes Mortally Wounded (below).

- **Mortally Wounded** — A Mortally Wounded individual has little time left — he does not regain consciousness normally, and instead loses a Physical Trait every 10 minutes. As soon as the character runs out of Physical Traits, he dies. Only the assistance of someone with the right healing edges or the Medicine Ability can halt this loss, and the character will not even begin to heal unless treated by edges or full hospital facilities. Those who fail to improve or stabilize in time undergo a complete and permanent cessation of all metabolic activity, conventionally known as death.

- **Dead** — Imbued injured beyond Mortally Wounded by lethal damage or who are allowed to bleed to death in that condition are killed. In other words, hope it counted for something, better luck next time, make a new character.

Example of Play: *Jim is in trouble — separated from his companions, he's under attack by several shamblers and their rot master. The first shambler punches him with a rotting fist for one level of bashing damage, putting him at his first Bruised level. Another of the monsters rakes him with its wicked barbed claws, inflicting two levels of lethal damage, dropping him to his first Wounded level. Struggling as best he can, nonetheless Jim is swarmed just as badly the next turn, pummeled by two shamblers for one bashing level apiece and reduced to Incapacitated. He slumps to the ground unconscious for the next ten minutes — at this point another level of bashing damage will render him out for a full hour, while a single level of lethal damage will bring him to Mortally Wounded (and thus will face slowly bleeding to death unless help arrives). Should he take more than one additional level of lethal damage or an extreme amount of bashing damage, he will be Dead. If the cavalry doesn't arrive soon, chances are Jim won't last much longer at all, and even if he does he's got a long period of healing ahead of him to fix the damage from this savage attack.*

Optional Addition: Visible Injuries

Although *Mind's Eye Theatre* is designed to record damage as an abstract thing, and there's certainly nothing wrong with running it that way, it can add a great deal of realism to the game to introduce a way of visually identifying how injured a character is (not to mention make players realize just how much of a blessing quick healing edges really are). After all, in reality it would be quite easy to tell if a person has been badly mauled by zombies, and a visible injury system allows you to do that with a minimum of out-of-game statements and descriptions. Exactly how you choose to make such representations is up to you, but it is recommended that you make them easy to apply and remove in order to avoid accidentally ruining someone's costume or giving them a strange feature to explain at the office Monday morning.

For example, you could represent each wound level with a slash of red makeup or acrylic paint (dries quickly, comes off easily with water) on the hunter's cheek, forearm or other prominent location, thus allowing other characters to tell at a glance how badly injured your character has become. Another system could be taking small strips of red cloth and tying them to your wrists or looping them on your belt, one per wound level. Such a system may require some trial and error to incorporate into your game, but handled correctly it can help drive home the facts of injury and recovery a lot more than having characters always look the same out-of-game no matter how badly they're injured in-game.

Healing

Hunters are human and must heal wounds naturally; only a few have edges that can speed their healing time, which means they must take care or taken out of the action and rendered vulnerable for a long time. These healing times also assume that a character is resting and has access to reasonable medical resources; needless to say, this can be hard to come by if a hunter has no real base of operations to fall back to, or if he refuses to get medical treatment for a gunshot wound or suspiciously large claw marks. The Storyteller is free to modify healing times for characters receiving excellent care or no care at all.

Bashing/Lethal Damage

Some types of damage are more dangerous than others: a punch to the jaw is less likely to kill than a knife wound. Bashing damage is defined as any injury which is painful but fades relatively quickly: kicks, punches, tackles, etc. Lethal damage is intended to kill, and takes humans a long time to heal: bullets, swords, knives, etc. The Narrator is the final arbiter of what counts as bashing or lethal damage. Characters put below Incapacitated by bashing damage are not Mortally Wounded, but "merely" rendered unconscious for one scene/hour (although the Narrator may rule that they are put in a coma or killed if the beating is fierce enough). On the other hand, hunters reduced below Incapacitated are considered Mortally Wounded and begin bleeding to death — should they sustain any further damage of any kind, or be left untended for too long, they are simply killed.

Recovery Times

Injury Level	Bashing/Lethal
Bruised	One hour/day
Wounded	One day/week
Incapacitated	One week/month
Mortally Wounded*	Two months

*Unless full hospital facilities are used, these characters heal only by edges or the Storyteller's discretion, and most will gain a Negative Physical Trait of some kind from the experience (*Delicate*, *Decrepit*, *Lame*, etc.).

These times are cumulative, so a character at their second Wounded level from lethal damage takes two weeks and two days to completely recover: one week per Wounded level, plus a day each to heal the Bruised levels. Likewise, a character who takes the same amount of bashing damage would take two days, two hours to heal back to normal, reflecting the less serious nature of most bashing damage. Given such a long recovery time, is it any wonder many hunters will do their best to protect those with healing edges?

Fire

While it is a potent weapon against many forms of monsters, even the most battle-hardened hunters use fire with great caution, as it can easily be as dangerous to the one who wishes to wield it as it is to her intended target. In game terms, all wounds inflicted by normal or magical fires do lethal damage, and may leave disfiguring burns or other marks as well. A character who is on fire must win or tie a Simple Test and spend one action rolling on the floor or performing some other action to douse the flames.

Electrocution

While not exactly a common means of causing injury, sometimes a hunter can't help but wonder what would happen if the rot standing next to him on the subway platform "accidentally" fell off and hit that third rail... or maybe the rot he didn't spot is thinking the exact same thing. Damage from electricity results in burns both external and internal, and as result it's usually considered lethal damage except in the case of an extremely low-voltage charge or weapons like stun guns that are designed to restrain rather than kill. The actual amount inflicted with each turn of contact depends on the size of the charge — a wall socket would be one level, a stun gun would be two levels, and a power line or other powerful source would be three levels. Note that most of the time in the case of sources doing two or more levels of damage per round, a hunter will be unable to pull himself away from what is electrocuting him due to the muscle seizures caused by the electricity, and thus another character will probably have to knock him clear of the source before he dies.

Drowning/Suffocating

Unlike some of their enemies, who have transcended the need to breathe for good, hunters are still human and can go only so long without oxygen before they begin to suffocate. As a rule, a character can hold his breath for 10 seconds per Physical Trait he possesses; the *Endurance* Ability can add to this time as well. In combat situations, this is reduced to one turn per Physical Trait, so that a character with seven Physical

Optional Rule: Aggravated Damage

Some monsters have access to especially terrible attacks that inflict what's known as aggravated damage — foul and potent sorcery, the claws or teeth of especially powerful and fearsome monsters and injuries inflicted by supernatural weapons are all possible candidates for causing aggravated damage. Likewise, Storytellers may occasionally wish to stress that a particular creature is even more dangerous than most monsters, especially if the group has gotten a bit complacent due to healing edges such as *Rejuvenate* or *Respire*, and thus she may include aggravated damage as a way of ensuring the players never feel too secure squaring off against the night. In game terms, aggravated damage is treated the same as lethal damage, except that it requires twice as long to heal, and those injured beyond Bruised by such damage will usually acquire a Negative Trait from the experience as well (*Scared*, *Lame*, etc.), which can only be bought off when the damage has totally healed.

Aggravated damage is listed here as an optional rule because it is not normally a necessary element of **Reckoning** games — hunters face enough challenges without requiring them to spend six months in the hospital thanks to one lucky claw swipe — but it can offer some interesting extra material for Storytellers to work with, not to mention help provide game balance in longer-running chronicles. So long as it isn't overused (“Oh no, another flunky with an aggravated damage magic weapon, here we go again....”), it can do a great deal to stress how little hunters know about their enemy and just how dangerous the truly powerful creatures of the night can be.

Traits will begin suffering the effects of drowning/suffocation on the eighth round of combat (assuming he doesn't lose Traits during the combat). Once his time has expired, the hunter begins suffering an automatic level of lethal damage for every turn/10 seconds until he either gets a source of oxygen or he dies. However, unlike normal lethal damage, this damage fades away completely an hour after leaving the water or finding an air supply, as the characters either gradually dry out and cough up all the water in their lungs or regain their regular breathing capacity.

Poisons

Some hunters attempt to use various chemicals to impair or kill their enemies before the creatures can even take a swing at them, while other hunters wind up finding out the hard way that certain monsters carry a venomous claw or bite attack. In general it is the Storyteller's discretion as to what effects individuals poisons and chemicals have, from “merely” causing a subject to have a Trait penalty due to impairment all the way up to inflicting levels of bashing or even lethal damage until the poison is purged or an antidote is obtained. As a rule of thumb, if exposure to the substance in question would require the assistance of poison control or other expert attention to treat or cure, it probably does lethal damage; if not, it's probably only bashing damage.

Disease and Infection

One of the unseen dangers of the hunt is the possibility of developing all manner of infections, from being forced to belly-crawl in the filth under a rot's decrepit house,

being injured by a diseased walking corpse, or trying to treat serious injuries without proper medical supplies or facilities. Getting a gunshot wound treated nearly always involves police attention, for example, and even those hunters who can pull enough strings to ensure that their treatment doesn't attract too much attention seldom want to be laid up in a hospital for long, considering how easy it would be for those *things* to just walk right in.... Even just the wearying nature of the hunter lifestyle can take a toll on the body before long; when a hunter isn't getting enough sleep and running herself ragged when she's awake, sickness of one kind or another is bound to keep her company a good amount of the time.

The Storyteller may decide to have players make a Physical Challenge against a difficulty based on the strength of the illness and their current health to avoid contracting illnesses when they encounter the appropriate conditions. She may also rule that a character suffering from an infection will not heal any further unless he receives professional medical treatment, or even that his condition worsens if the infection is particularly bad. This is a particularly good way of underscoring how desperate the imbued can become if they begin living on the wrong side of the law, or suffer serious injuries away from the presence of proper medical attention.

Ultimately it is up to the Storyteller to decide how much of a threat she wants disease and infection to be. Ignoring them altogether can make the imbued seem superhuman or downplay the need for medical attention, but on the other hand paying too attention to germs and microbes will make the *players* afraid to get out of bed, not to mention limiting what their characters do. The best advice is generally to save it for groups that have limited resources or as an occasional nasty reminder of what else can happen when you fight rotting monsters from beyond the grave, but not make the players feel like they have to run and hide if their characters get so much as a scratch in the field.

Combat

Combat is the usual intent behind Physical Challenges. Essentially, combat involves two characters in physical conflict. The players agree what the outcome of the challenge will be, each player bids an appropriate Trait, and a test is performed to determine the victor. The following section allows for variations on those basic rules, such as situations using surprise or weapons.

The agreed outcome of a Physical Challenge is often the loser being injured. This is not the only possible result, though. The two parties can agree nearly to anything, whether it's tripping an opponent or throwing him out of a window. The results of a combat challenge may also be different for both participants; for example, if a Redeemer is trying to stop a frantic creature from escaping, he may wish only to subdue his target while it desires to get away.

Surprise

If a player does not respond within three seconds of the declaration of a Physical Challenge, the character is considered to have been surprised — he is not fully prepared for what's coming. Sometimes a player is busy with another activity or is playing a character who just isn't prepared for the attack. Any player who sneaks around whispering challenges to get the element of surprise is cheating, plain and simple.

Surprise simply means that the outcome of the first challenge in a fight can only harm the surprised defender, not the challenger. For instance, if a player did not respond in time to an attack, but still won the challenge, the challenger would not be injured. Furthermore, if the challenger loses the test, she may call for a second challenge by risking another Trait. After this second challenge, regular challenge rules resumes. Overbidding is permitted for both challenger and challenged in surprise situations.

Darkness

Night favors monsters and helps keep their foul deeds hidden from human eyes, but it also grants hunters some advantages when stalking their prey or avoiding attention from the authorities themselves. Unfortunately, one side is generally a bit better adapted than the other when it comes to dealing with darkness, although hunters with the right equipment and preparation can negate their natural disadvantage or even turn the tables on an overconfident foe. Obviously, while in-game an area may be dimly lighted or even pitch black, for the sake of playability and basic safety the play area must always be lighted well enough so that they players can see what is going on and move around safely. Therefore, it is recommended that either tags reading "Low Light" or "No Light" be posted at the entrances of affected areas, or that a Narrator may announce the conditions in the area when the characters enter the room so that they can roleplay their disability accordingly.

Conditions of low light, such as fighting on a dark night with no moon or in a basement lit only by a few small candles, put all characters two Traits down on all actions even remotely related to vision (including all combat tests). Naturally, this penalty may be ignored if all the participants are equally impaired, but if one character can see better than another it should definitely give them an advantage. A character with *Acute Sense (Vision)* or *Acute Sense (Hearing)* can cut this penalty in half, and a character with the Merit *Good Night Vision* suffers no penalties at all in these conditions.

Total darkness or blindness assumes that no light sources at all are visible, thus presenting a serious difficulty for all kinds of actions attempted. Characters without some way of seeing in such conditions (such as the *Discern* edge) are at a two-Trait penalty on all actions; again, this penalty can be ignored if all involved in the scene are equally impaired. *Acute Sense (Vision)* offers no help in such conditions, though the confidence of motion imparted by *Good Night Vision* reduces this penalty by half, as does *Acute Sense (Hearing)*. It should be noted that *Good Night Vision* does not help in any way if the character is actually blinded, however.

Movement in Combat

Three Step Rule

Anyone in or just entering combat is subject to the "three step rule." You may take three steps during any combat action and still attack. Moving one step is considered walking cautiously, two steps is moving directly (down one Trait in Physical Challenges), and three steps is running (also down a Trait in Physical Challenges).

Fair Escape

Fair Escape is a simple rule which allows players to escape from potentially dangerous situations without actually bounding over furniture or diving out of

windows. This rule also allows players to avoid combat without going through cumbersome challenges to see if they can “get away.”

When you use this rule, you can call “Fair Escape!” any time you see another player approaching with whom you do not wish to interact. Once you call “Fair Escape,” you may leave the area without being pursued. There are several guidelines which must be followed when using this rule, however:

- You may not use the Fair Escape rule if the person approaching is nearby (within conversational distance). In such cases, you must initiate a challenge in order to flee. Use common sense in places where there is a great deal of noise and conversational distance is reduced to a minimum (e.g., a crowded nightclub).
- Situations which involve an ambush (all exits blocked or the target is surrounded) or ranged weapons can sometimes negate the use of Fair Escape. Again, use common sense.
- A character using *Hide* or similar powers may employ a Fair Escape at any time before a challenge has been initiated, unless someone with some way to counter his invisibility challenges him.
- Monsters with supernatural speed may gain a Fair Escape by activating their speed before a challenge is initiated. In the case of two characters using supernatural speed, whoever uses the highest level of speed wins (all ties go to the runner).

These rules are meant to hasten play, not complicate it. Always try to employ common sense when using Fair Escape. (As a rule of thumb, if it takes several minutes to explain why a Fair Escape would be justified, it probably isn't.)

Weapons

For obvious reasons, no real weapons are ever allowed in *Mind's Eye Theatre* games. Even nonfunctional props are forbidden if they can be mistaken for weapons. This system does not use props of any kind, nor are players required (or allowed) to strike one another. Instead, characters should use weapon cards, which display the Traits and pertinent details of a particular weapon.

A weapon gives its wielder extra Traits for combat or other appropriate challenges. Sometimes this advantage is offset by a disadvantage in terms of a Negative Trait. Each weapon has one to six extra Traits; these may be used in any challenge in which the weapon is employed. These Traits *cannot* be used as an initial bid. Instead, they add to the user's total when she is comparing Traits. In addition, some weapons have special abilities that may be used, such as causing extra levels of damage or affecting more than one target.

Statistics for weapons are written on cards and carried along with your character card. Weapon cards specify the capacities of each weapon. Weapon cards allow other players to see that you actually possess a weapon — when you have a weapon card in your hand, you are considered to be holding the weapon.

Some weapons have Negative Traits; these can be used by the wielder's opponent in precisely the same way as regular Negative Traits. The weapon's Negative Traits can only be used against the wielder of that weapon. Negative Traits for a weapon must be appropriate to the situation. For instance, if you are firing a pistol and your opponent wants to use the gun's Negative Trait *Loud* against you, that Negative Trait could be ignored if you have a silencer on the gun.

Concealability

Each weapon has a concealability rating. If the weapon is not concealable, or if you do not have the proper amount of clothing or cover to conceal it, you must have that card on display at all times. You cannot, for example, pull a broadsword out of your pocket. Instead, you must carry that card in hand at all times or, optionally, you could pin the card to your shirt, indicating that the sword is slung over your shoulder.

Availability

Serious firearms and archaic melee weapons can take some time to locate. Firearms also require permits to obtain and may involve undergoing background checks or waiting periods in some areas. A character can turn to more "colorful" channels in order to procure equipment, but the black market often means shady dealings and vastly inflated prices. Weapons that have Influence values listed under Availability indicate the level of Arsenal or Influence required in order to procure the weapon through illicit channels. Finally, of course, there's cost: A character must have some level of the Finance Ability or money-raising Influence to procure exotic melee weapons and nearly all firearms.

Once a character has a weapon, that doesn't mean he can keep it forever. Too often characters run about firing shotguns and large automatic weapons without facing the massive police manhunts that such battles invariably provoke. Take care that characters with powerful weapons understand the equally powerful repercussions that come from their use; this not only preserves game balance, but enforces a sense of realism and keeps the game from turning into *Terminator*.

Special Weapon Capabilities

Some weapons have special abilities, allowing an attacker to inflict extra damage, ignore certain types of protection or strike multiple opponents. (Such powers are noted under the weapon descriptions.)

Armor-Piercing

Special rounds, generally Teflon-coated, are able to pierce armor with ease. Although they do not inflict extra damage, armor-piercing rounds ignore any defenses from armor. Such rounds are typically tricky to acquire, and legal inquiries often follow their use.

Destroy Shield

Although rare in this day and age, certain old-fashioned hunters and anachronistic monsters still use shields. A weapon capable of destroying a shield automatically penetrates it and renders it useless after a certain number of blows, no matter what the size or strength of the shield may be.

Fully Automatic

A firearm with this ability is capable of emptying dozens of rounds into a single target at close range. This attack automatically inflicts an extra health level of damage due to sheer volume of fire; however, after emptying the clip from fully automatic fire, the character must spend one action reloading the weapon before it may be fired again.

High-Caliber

Firearms of particularly high caliber can cause crippling wounds with only a few shots. When a high-caliber weapon hits a target, the attacker should immediately make a Simple Test. A win indicates the target suffers an additional health level of damage from the shot.

Incendiary

Burning weapons cause lethal wounds to just about anything. Some, like flame-throwers or molotov cocktails, burn the target with streams or explosions of fire, while others such as incendiary rounds ("hot loads") burn the target with superheated ammunition. See the damage section for the effects of fire.

Mass-Trauma

Certain weapons are so powerful they inflict massive damage on a target, literally tearing away portions of flesh. Such weapons score an extra health level of damage when used appropriately.

Speed

Fast weapons can be used to "pre-empt" an opponent's attack, allowing the attacker with the speedier weapon to strike and resolve his challenge first. A character must have the *Melee Ability* to use this special ability, and he must be attacking or otherwise actively using (parrying, disarming) the weapon in order to gain this benefit. Fast weapons only gain a pre-emptive strike against opponents in hand-to-hand or melee combat.

Since many attacks are handled simultaneously for ease of play (both players testing at once and the winner scoring a hit), this ability is not always very useful. However, if the Storyteller opts to allow each attacker to test individually (attacking striking defender, then defender counterstriking), this ability puts characters with fast weapons on the offensive.

Spray

The weapon can strike several targets at once, as noted under the weapon's specific parameters. The shooter makes one test against all the targets simultaneously. Each target who fails the test suffers the weapon's damage, while each target who succeeds avoids the weapon's damage. The shooter risks only the Traits required to test against the entire group, and loses only those Traits if any of the defenders wins the test.

Staking

Staking weapons paralyze vampires when a successful blow penetrates one's heart. The attacker must win or tie two successive Simple Tests in order to successfully stake the bloodsucker.

Bidding Weapon Traits

During a normal hand-to-hand fight, characters bid Physical Traits against their opponents' Physical Traits. However, if a character is using firearms, he may use Mental Traits instead. If his opponent is also using a firearm, she bids Mental Traits as well. If the opponent is not using a firearm and is merely trying to dodge, then the attacker uses Mental Traits to attack, while the defender uses her Physical Traits to dodge. This is one of the few regular instances in which Traits associated with different Attributes may be used against one another.

Weapon Examples

Melee Weapons

Knife/Dagger — These easily concealed weapons are very common, lightning fast in the hands of a skilled user, and they can also be used as ranged weapons if a character uses the *Athletics* Ability properly.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Short*

Concealability: Pocket

Damage: One health level

Availability: Any

Special Ability: *Speed*: In close combat against any weapon that has the Negative Traits *Clumsy*, *Heavy* or *Slow*, the knife-fighter gains the option to pre-empt the opponent's attacks and strike first in any turn, as long as he has the *Melee* Ability.

Wooden Stake — Though fairly humble in origin, these simple weapons have done in countless bloodsuckers and other monsters for centuries, and many imbued become quite familiar with them early on in their career.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Short*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: One lethal level

Availability: Any

Special Ability: *Staking*. A well-placed hit can stake a bloodsucker or other monster; see the "Special Weapon Capabilities" section (above).

Broken Bottle — A good example of a weapon made from scratch.

Bonus Traits: 1

Negative Traits: *Fragile*

Concealability: Vest (ouch!)

Damage: One lethal level

Availability: Any

Club/Ax — These common weapons cover anything from chair legs to hand axes to walking sticks to battle axes; one bludgeons while the other cuts, but the essential function is the same. While they have fallen out of favor as fashion accessories some time ago, some elderly or anachronistic hunters still carry **Canes** from time to time, even if only because they were the only weapons at hand when the imbuing struck.

Bonus Traits: Cane: 1, Club: 2, Ax: 3

Negative Traits: *Clumsy*; many canes have *Fragile* as well.

Concealability: Trenchcoat

Damage: Club/cane — One bashing level; Ax — Two lethal levels

Availability: Any.

Special Ability: Ax: *Destroy Shield*. Axes render shields useless after three blows.

Staff/Spear — Although they may seem a strange alternative when so much high-tech firepower is on the open market, smart hunters never discount the ability of these simple weapons to get the job done, not mention their availability compared to some other weapons. Staves are cheap, easy to make, tend to attract less attention than many other melee weapons do, and in the hands of a skilled user they are *extremely* dangerous. Spears are much the same as staves, but have a blade at one or both ends, and inflict an impressive amount of damage with slashing or piercing attacks.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: Staff: *Clumsy*, Spear: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*

Concealability: Nope.

Damage: Staff — Two bashing levels; Spear — Three lethal levels

Availability: Any martial arts store, although spears are usually a lot more expensive to purchase than staves, and also a lot harder to explain to any intruding authority figures.

Special Ability: *Spear: Staking.* A well-placed spear hit can function as a stake against a bloodsucker; see the Special Weapon Capabilities section (above).

Longsword — This category covers every blade of medium length, from Western broadswords to scimitars; while few hunters carry them as their primary weapons, they can be extremely effective close combat weapons regardless, and quite a few monsters born in earlier times still use them as matter of course.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: Longsword: *Heavy*

Concealability: Trenchcoat (barely)

Damage: Two lethal levels

Availability: Longswords typically must be special-ordered, although cheap and not especially durable versions are available at Renaissance festivals or military-supply stores.

Thrown Weapons

Molotov Cocktail — Simple to make, these so-called “weapons of convenience” can nevertheless be quite effective in battle, especially given how much certain monsters are afraid of fire.

Bonus Traits: 1

Negative Traits: *Clumsy*

Concealability: Jacket (unlit), none (lit).

Damage: One lethal level

Availability: A sock and a bottle of liquor away.

Special Ability: *Incendiary:* A target hit by a Molotov cocktail is considered to catch on fire, and automatically takes an additional level of lethal damage at the beginning of each turn until they spend an action and win or tie a Simple Test to extinguish themselves somehow.

Explosive Grenade — Though few hunters have access to this kind of explosive hardware, truly hardcore (or insane) imbued have been known to use them against nests of monsters or even just one monumentally powerful target. Rest assured, however, that the authorities will stop at *nothing* to capture individuals who sport this kind of weaponry, and it's next to impossible to explain why you have a crate of these things when the police pull you over.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud* x 2

Concealability: Pocket

Damage: Special (see below)

Availability: *Arsenal* x 4. Alternately, *Police* x 5 or *Underworld* x 5, and even then there'd better be a hefty bribe or extremely plausible cover story involved.

Special Ability: *Blast Radius:* A grenade inflicts three levels of lethal damage on the target of the challenge, as well as anyone touching the target at the time. Even if they win this test, they still suffer a level of lethal damage unless they specified that they were taking cover, dodging out of the way or otherwise avoiding the attack altogether (if you try to stand there and take it, it's going to sting a bit). Additionally,

anyone standing within a pace of the target must win a Simple Test or suffer two health levels of damage from the blast; success cuts this damage in half. Finally, those up to two paces from the target suffer one level of lethal damage unless they win or tie a Simple Test. These ranges are not cumulative — the original target does not have to make two additional Simple Tests, for example. However, anyone who takes damage from a grenade attack is knocked to the ground and must spend a turn getting to their feet, unless they possess extreme powers of strength or endurance.

On an unsuccessful test with a grenade attack, it is up to the Narrator to determine where the grenade goes off (or if it does at all), unless the target specifically said they were deflecting it in a particular manner. However, they are encouraged to make misses as dramatic as possible and stress the hazardous nature of using such powerful weaponry.

Archaic Ranged Weapons

Crossbow — These powerful weapons remain the one of the only armaments banned by an edict of the Catholic Church, who feared when they were first introduced that these weapons were so effective at killing that they would lead to the extinction of humanity. While those fears were a bit exaggerated, anyone who's ever seen what one of these massively powerful weapons can do to even heavily armored targets understands what made the church so nervous. Crossbows gain their power from a winch mechanism, allowing them to build up a great amount of power with relatively little effort. Note: Characters use the *Athletics* Ability for retests when using crossbows, and those without this Ability receive only half of the usual Bonus Traits (round down) due to the difficulty of using these weapons.

Bonus Traits: 5

Negative Traits: *Clumsy, Heavy*

Concealability: No way.

Damage: Three lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 2.

Special Ability: *Armor-Piercing*: Crossbows ignore all armor except reinforced vests. *Staking*: Bolts may be used to stake a vampire, if the archer wins two Simple Tests after a successful hit.

Longbow — These huge, powerful bows make mincemeat of many kinds of armor, and quite a few imbued who were game hunters before the Heralds touched them have adapted their skill with these weapons to hunt larger prey. Modern compound bows are smaller and use pulley systems to generate powerful pull; these bows do not have the Negative Trait *Clumsy*, but give the user only five Bonus Traits.

Note: Characters use the *Athletics* Ability for retests when using bows, and those without this Ability receive only half of the usual Bonus Traits due to the difficulty of using these weapons.

Bonus Traits: 6

Negative Traits: *Fragile, Clumsy, Heavy*

Concealability: No way.

Damage: Two lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 1.

Special Ability: *Armor-Piercing*: Longbows ignore chain or plate armor. *Staking*: Arrows may be used to stake a bloodsucker, if the archer wins or ties two Simple Tests after a successful hit. *Destroy Shield*: One shot from a longbow renders a shield useless.

Conventional Firearms

Pistol — This designation covers nearly any sort of small- and medium-caliber handgun commonly encountered, from zip guns and holdout pieces to 9mms and standard police-issue sidearms.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: Pocket

Damage: Two lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 1, if registered; *Arsenal* x 2, *Police* x 4, *Street* x 3 or *Underworld* x 2 otherwise.

Heavy Pistol — This designation covers the monsters of the handgun range, from the Desert Eagle to a .454 Cassull. These tremendous guns use high-caliber ammunition to punch large holes in their targets.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: Two lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 1, if registered; *Arsenal* x 2, *Police* x 4, *Street* x 4 or *Underworld* x 3 otherwise.

Special Ability: *High-Caliber*: Heavy Pistols allow a Simple Test on a successful hit. Success indicates the target takes an extra level of damage.

Rifle — Favored by many hunters and snipers.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: None.

Damage: Two lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 1, if registered; *Arsenal* x 2, *Police* x 4, *Street* x 4 or *Underworld* x 3 otherwise.

Special Ability: *High-Caliber*: Rifles may be loaded with high-caliber ammunition. Note that the character must specifically acquire such ammunition to gain this benefit — it is not included automatically when using a rifle.

Shotgun — This powerful weapon fires a spray of pellets, making targets easy to hit.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: None

Damage: Two lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 1, if registered; *Arsenal* x 2, *Police* x 4, *Street* x 4 or *Underworld* x 3 otherwise.

Special Ability: *Spray*: A shotgun may affect up to three targets if they are standing immediately next to each other and are further than 20 feet from the person firing the shotgun. This effect can be gained only if the shotgun is loaded with pellets, not slugs. *Mass-Trauma*: A shotgun can cause an extra health level of damage to a single target standing within five feet.

Submachine Gun — These weapons are very powerful, and they fire a large number of bullets very quickly, making them the favorite weapons of many gangs, where accuracy isn't as important as hitting a large number of targets simultaneously.

The law requires these guns be sold as non-automatic weapons, with only single-shot capability, but a gunsmith can convert them to fully automatic fire.

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: Two lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 3, if registered; *Arsenal* x 4, *Police* x 4, *Street* x 4 or *Underworld* x 3 otherwise.

Special Ability: *Spray*: A submachine gun may affect up to five targets if they're standing immediately next to each other and are further than 10 feet from the person firing the gun. *Fully Automatic*: A submachine gun inflicts an additional health level of damage if the entire clip is emptied into a target standing no more than five feet away.

Assault Rifle — The bigger and scarier relatives of submachine guns, these massively powerful firearms were designed for infantry soldiers in conventional warfare, and generate accordingly impressive results. They can take down targets in all but the heaviest conventional armor, employ powerful ammunition to inflict massive wounds and rake an area with a tremendous number of bullets. The law requires these guns be sold as non-automatic weapons, with only single-shot capability, but a gunsmith can convert them to fully automatic fire.

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: None

Damage: Three lethal levels

Availability: *Arsenal* x 3, if registered and semiautomatic. *Arsenal* x 4, *Police* x 5 or *Underworld* x 5 otherwise.

Special Ability: *Spray*: An assault rifle may affect up to five targets if they're standing immediately next to each other and are further than 10 feet from the person firing the gun. *Armor-Piercing*: Assault rifles ignore all armor except reinforced vests. *High-Caliber*: Assault rifles may be loaded with high-caliber ammunition, though it must be acquired separately — it is not automatically included with the cost of an assault rifle. *Fully Automatic*: An assault rifle inflicts an additional health level of damage if the entire clip is emptied into a target standing no more than five feet away.

Heavy Weaponry

Flamethrower — While something beyond the training (or madness) of most ordinary hunters, a few truly driven imbued have made use of these weapons to sweep out nests of creatures or just put the hurting on some unfortunate solitary creature. By their very nature, flamethrowers are tricky weapons to use at the very least; anyone attempting to use one of these weapons without at least three levels of the *Firearms* Ability must make a Simple Test every time it is fired. On a loss, they have accidentally lit themselves on fire and must take measures to extinguish themselves (quickly!) to avoid further harm, or worse having the gas tank explode.

Bonus Traits: 6

Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*, *Loud*

Concealability: Ummm... yeah.

Damage: Three lethal levels

Availability: Arsenal x 5, you wacko.

Special Ability: *Spray*: A flamethrower may affect up to five targets if they're standing immediately next to each other and are further than 10 feet from the person firing the weapon. *Incendiary*: Targets injured by a flamethrower are engulfed in flames, and continue suffering damage until they extinguish themselves somehow. *Mass-Trauma*: Those unfortunate enough to catch the full stream of one of these weapons is burned even more badly than normal; the flamethrower inflicts an extra health level of damage for a single target standing within five feet of the shooter.

Armor

Since it stops incoming damage, armor effectively grants a character extra health levels; these health levels are lost before the character himself suffers any damage in combat. Of course, armor does not soak all attacks—a bulletproof vest does little good for a character who is being possessed, for example, or whose mind is being torn apart by a monster's powers.

Different types of armor can absorb different amounts of punishment before losing their effectiveness; it should be noted that armor that has lost all its health levels is not necessarily completely destroyed, but more likely that it has been temporarily rendered useless instead. Of course, some attacks may destroy armor beyond repair. Fixing armor requires the proper tools and a Static Physical Challenge with the *Crafts* Ability.

Armor has two different Trait levels for game purposes. Health levels indicate how many levels of damage the armor can absorb before becoming useless and in need of repair. Negative Traits are the drawbacks a wearer gains for donning a particular type of armor.

Chain mail — This category covers most medium levels of metal armor, including scale and brigandine.

Health Levels: 2

Negative Traits: *Heavy*

Availability: Any. Chain mail generally must be custom made, and can cost upward of \$500 or more.

Plate mail — Extremely expensive and hard to come by, these ornate suits of interlocking metal plates provide excellent protection but sacrifice a great deal of mobility.

Health Levels: 3

Negative Traits: *Heavy*, *Clumsy*

Availability: Any. Plate mail generally must be custom-ordered, and can cost upward of \$3000 or more.

Bulletproof vest — This basic level of protection shields the wearer from some dangers, and doesn't attract the same kind of attention that more complicated forms of armor are bound to bring.

Health Levels: 2

Negative Traits: *Heavy*

Availability: Arsenal x 2, Police x 4 or Underworld x 3

Reinforced (riot) armor — The favored type of armor for military personnel and law enforcement officers expecting dangerous situations, these bodysuits provide excellent protection, even stopping many types of small-arms fire.

Health Levels: 3

Negative Traits: *Heavy*, *Clumsy*

Availability: *Arsenal* x 4, *Police* x 5 or *Underworld* x 4

Ranged Combat

Many weapons allow a character to stand at a distance from a target and engage him in combat. In such situations, the character must still go over to the target (after shouting "Bang!" or "Twang!") and engage in a challenge.

If a character has surprised her opponent, even if she loses the first test, she has the option of calling for a second test. Once the second challenge is called, play continues as normal with that new challenge. The target is considered to be surprised for the first attack, and if he has no ranged weapon with which to return fire, he is considered "surprised" for as long as the aggressor can attack him without facing resistance (that is, if he wins on a challenge, she doesn't take damage).

If the target is aware of the attack before it happens and has a ranged weapon of his own, he is not considered to be surprised for the first attack. He may shoot back right away, and challenges are resolved as stated below.

After the first shot is fired (and the first challenge is resolved), the target may attempt to return fire (assuming he is armed). The loser of a firefight challenge loses a health level.

Characters using the *Athletics* Ability to launch projectiles like knives or axes fall under the same rules for regular ranged combat, including cover. Questions of range should not be a problem, but if it becomes an issue use common sense, and don't forget to make allowances for things like monsters with exceptional strength.

Cover

Fighting with ranged weapons allows combatants to stand some distance apart; participants can therefore "dive for cover." When resolving each ranged combat challenge, each combatant can present one Trait of cover to add to his total number of Traits. These cover Traits may not be used for bidding, but they do add to a player's total if Traits are compared. This cover can take the form of whatever obstacles are around and within reach (*don't* actually dive for them). A Narrator might be required to describe what cover is around, unless the combatants can agree upon what cover is available.

If cover is extensive, it may be worth more than one Trait. The number of Traits available for cover is left for challengers to agree upon, or for a Narrator to decree. Hiding behind a boulder, for example, might be worth two Traits, while hiding behind a thin wood fence might only count as one. If one combatant goes completely under cover (he cannot be seen at all *and* is thoroughly protected), he is considered impossible to hit. The attacker must change his position to get a clear shot.

Melee and Brawling

Melee fighting can only occur when two parties are within weapon's reach of each other. Characters using melee weapons often have access to special abilities if they also possess the *Melee* Ability; for example, a trained character using a knife can take advantage of his weapon's speed when fighting a character wielding a heavy sword.

Brawling can only occur when two characters are within arm's length of each other. Characters engaged in brawling may use unarmed combat techniques on each other: trips, kicks, punches, wrestling holds, throws, etc. However, regardless of the

description, unless the character possesses an edge or other ability that specifically allows for extra damage, all brawling tests result one health level of bashing damage.

Specialized Fighting Styles

Buying a specialized fighting style under the *Melee* or *Brawl* Abilities allows you to describe how your character moves to allow retests and permits a certain flair for your attacks and defenses, but does not allow you to do extra damage or specific injuries.

Two-Gun Mojo

It's possible to use more than one weapon at a time in combat, though it's quite tricky. Just performing a task with the wrong hand is sufficient to penalize your chance of success; compounding matters by doing something else with the other hand doesn't help any.

For the purposes of simplicity, it's usually easiest to assume that the character has the same-handedness as the player, unless the Merit: *Ambidextrous* is taken. Furthermore, these rules do not apply to common uses of both hands, such as typing, playing a musical instrument or working a craft.

When performing tasks with the off hand, you suffer a two-Trait penalty. Thus, you must bid a total of three Traits to initiate the challenge, and you have a lower chance of success.

The Merit: *Ambidextrous* means that you suffer no penalty for an off-hand, since both of your hands are equally nimble. You still suffer coordination penalties for using both hands at once, however. Thus, if you're *Ambidextrous*, you can perform a task with either hand without penalty, but if you use both hands at once, you must bid two Traits for each hand.

When you specialize in a fighting style, you can choose *Two-Weapon Combat* or *Florentine* for your specialty. This negates one penalty Trait from your attacks with the specified form of combat. Thus, instead of bidding two Traits with your primary hand and three with your off hand, you would bid one and two Traits, respectively. Combined with the *Ambidextrous* Merit, you can use two weapons at no penalty whatsoever. Storytellers should take note of combat monsters in the making who try this combination — developing such a specialty should take *months* of training. Also, remember to use common sense about the weapons that can be employed in this manner — two pistols or even two longswords are within the realm of possibility (this is a game, after all), but two shotguns or two spears are out of the question.

Contests of Will

While it is certainly not a tactic that is recommended against all foes or in all situations, during their imbuing some hunters find themselves staring down a creature of the night, armed with nothing else than their determination. Even later on in the hunt, imbued can sometimes capitalize on the fear and confusion a creature feels when facing a mortal who seems to know what they are and still will not yield to them, actually forcing the monster to back down before a conflict comes to blows. Success in a contest of wills is determined in one of two ways. First, it is highly recommended that this action be roleplayed out rather than resort to the rules; in this case, if one of the players relents while roleplaying this action, his opponent is considered to be the winner. If a quick result is needed, or if neither of the players relents, a Social Challenge is used to determine the victor instead, with the loser breaking eye contact and losing the contest.

The Hunter Code

In game terms, the hunter code works very simply. Players may scrawl the words and a symbol or multiple symbols onto an index card or other temporary surface, taking care to write the meaning of the symbol on the back as well, and then affix them where they would like their character to leave a code symbol. How they write it in-game really doesn't matter—spray paint, crayon, small twigs, blood, etc.—although the medium should be noted on the card in case anyone wants to deface or destroy it later. Once they are placed, only hunter characters may read what is on the other side of the card—monsters and normal people will not notice a symbol at all unless it is in a particularly prominent location, and even then they will not realize its significance unless the Storyteller deems it appropriate for dramatic purposes. Even then, they *cannot* read what the symbol means—not even the most ancient and powerful creatures or their powers can crack the hunter code without help from one of the imbued, no matter how hard they try or even how often they see a particular symbol. Period. End of story. As a rule, then, non-imbued who read hunter code cards are cheating, plain and simple. (Writing “hunters only” on such cards in mixed games is a good idea to avoid accidental misunderstandings or overwhelming new player curiosity.) Illustrations of some of the more common symbols can be found on pg. 24-25; subject to Storyteller approval and scrutiny, players may eventually even make up their own as well. In no instance should a single symbol convey more than a simple concept of one or two words, however.

Contrary to popular opinion, hunters can choose to teach a symbol to a creature or normal person, but even the most generous imbued seldom do this for fear of giving up one of their few sancosact advantages. (And before you ask, the Heralds insure that torture and telepathic intrusion cannot pry the secret from hunters either—they must choose to teach the code of their own free will.) Only one symbol may be taught be month of game time per Willpower Trait a person or creature has, and it is an exhausting, draining process for both student and teacher alike. In addition, only firsthand students can learn this way, and cannot turn around pass their knowledge on to others, no matter how hard they try. Nor can unimbued characters attempt to decipher other symbols, even if they are similar to ones they understand; they must be taught to recognize and understand each symbol individually. Lastly, symbols drawn by non-imbued always seem instinctively “wrong” or “false” to hunters, which should be noted prominently on the description card. This is true even if a symbol is photocopied or otherwise perfectly recreated by one of the unimbued. Needless to say, few hunters trust a false symbol very much, though they are bound to be curious about how someone else learned one of their code symbols.

Remember to respect the rules of the game when applying hunter code symbols: do not actually spray paint your basement wall, tattoo anything on your forehead or otherwise put a real mark on anything unless you secure explicit Storyteller permission to do so and are willing to perform all necessary clean up work later as well. Index cards and the imagination are a lot cheaper than a new paint job on a car, after all, not to mention a lot less trouble than trying to explain to your landlord why exactly it's going to be necessary to repaint the side of your apartment building. In short, use common sense.

Derangements

The imbuing opens up the eyes of a normal person to a world too fantastic and terrifying to imagine — dead things that walk, beasts in human skin, witches with infernal powers and evil spirits that haunt the living with a vengeance. Not only that, but the touch of the Heralds compels the human to not only observe all of these horrifying things, but to take *action* against them as well, to willingly put themselves in harm's way of these monsters and try to make a difference. Many monsters have powers that can twist emotions or shatter minds if a hunter's Conviction defense isn't active, and even those that don't can leave trails of carnage behind them that would make seasoned coroners nauseous, let alone ordinary people caught up in this war.

What's more, supernatural dangers aside as the hunt goes on most imbued are exposed to all manner of mundane stresses and threats as well: divorce, financial ruin, death of friends or family members, unemployment, sickness and injury, isolation from loved ones and a whole host of other problems that can eventually bring a character to her knees. While most imbued somehow look deep within themselves and find ways to carry on despite the horrors they face, others cannot cope with the different stresses they're under, leading them to develop forms of insanity known as derangements. Insanity is perhaps the greatest threat to the imbued apart from the existence of the supernatural, as it can afflict any imbued from front line soldiers and healers to strategists and counselors, and the lingering threat of madness is a powerful tool for the Storyteller to remind players of the all-too-human nature of their characters even as they learn strange edges and battle supernatural creatures at every turn.

There are no set game mechanics for determining when a character is in danger of developing a derangement; that would defeat the purpose. Rather, the Storyteller may decide a derangement is in order after any experience that generates especially intense and unpleasant emotions, or which severely violates a character's beliefs or ethics, depending on the character's personality and how well she copes with the crisis itself. All derangements carry "triggers," circumstances which cause the effects of the derangement to become active; once activated, derangements remain in effect for the rest of the scene, and players must modify their characters' Traits, attitudes and behavior in accordance with the derangement description. A character may resist a derangement for one scene by expending a Willpower Trait. However, if the trigger is still present at the end of that time, the character must spend another Willpower Trait or the derangement becomes active again. In the case of particularly intense mental stress, Narrators may rule additional Willpower Traits or a Willpower test of some kind is required.

It is up to the Storyteller to determine what amount of time and Willpower is required to cure a derangement, and such cures are best left to thoughtful and involved roleplaying rather than simple Trait expenditure. A Wayward or Hermit can *never* cure the original derangement(s) brought on by their imbuing, though they can be treated for psychoses they develop later in their careers.

Derangements

Antisocial Disorder, Charmed Life Complex, Compulsive-Aggressive Disorder, Demophobia, Dissociation, Fugue, Hypochondria, Hysteria, Insomnia, Manic-Depression, Megalomania, Multiple Personalities, Obsession/Compulsion, Paranoia, Phobia, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Puppeteerism, Regression, Sadism, Schizophrenia

Note: There is nothing funny or arbitrary about the way a “crazy” person acts. The insane character is only reacting to the stimuli that he perceives to be real — to *him*, his behavior is perfectly normal. Players should never forget the **Mind’s Eye Theatre** rules of safety still apply when roleplaying derangements.

Antisocial Disorder

Imbued with this derangement have completely disowned conventional values and morals, and feel no guilt about any acts they perform, since nothing is wrong to them any longer. This derangement can be overt, as in the case of rampaging remorseless killers, or it can be more subtle, such as with ruthlessly amoral businessmen and politicians. Regardless of how it is expressed, when it is active the character is considered to be two Traits down on all Social Challenges, as well as have the Negative Traits *Callous* x 2 and *Condescending*.

Charmed Life Complex

Some hunters, usually either ones that have yet to be seriously harmed after a long time on the hunt or conversely those who have survived numerous dangerous encounters and/or recovered from grievous wounds, get it in their head that they have some kind of special “protector” who keeps them safe no matter what. Naturally, all imbued have been chosen by the Heralds, but characters with this disorder have an unhealthy level of belief in their own safety, often to the point that they stop taking precautions because they’re sure their “guardian angel” will see them through. The hunter is two Traits down on all tests in dangerous situations due to her inattentiveness, and may even eventually begin talking to her protector or otherwise elaborating on the fantasy in abnormal ways.

Compulsive-Aggressive Disorder

Characters with this derangement have become so saturated with violence and brutality that they are incapable of putting aggression in the proper context any longer, responding to all situations with brute force (or its nearest equivalent). While this derangement is active, they cannot use any other social Abilities except *Intimidation*, nor can they initiate any kind of Social Challenge except those related to bullying and intimidation. Their first option will also always be to use force against any perceived threats, regardless of whether that’s the best idea at the time. What’s more, should an attempt to intimidate a subject fail in a particularly spectacular or public fashion, they must immediately attack the one who made them look bad with whatever weapons they have on hand.

Demophobia

“A person is intelligent — *people* are stupid, panicky and dangerous.” That’s the motto of a character with this derangement, who suffers from a chronic fear and loathing of crowds and public places of any kind. Taken one or two at a time, people are fine, but put them in a group and before long you have a crushing

stampede or an angry lynch mob on your hands. Mix in some monsters who can look perfectly human, and you've got a real nightmare. Needless to say, this disorder can make it difficult to be part of an effective team as well. While this derangement is active, the hunter is at a two-Trait penalty on all Social Challenges, and must make a Willpower Challenge against four Traits to stay in any location with more than three or four people — failure means that the hunter must immediately withdraw to someplace less crowded for at least a scene.

Dissociation

Hunters with this disorder have lost track of the personal toll involved in the battles and dangers to life and limb that they see every day, and come to view all such situations with a calm detachment no matter how dangerous they might be, as though they were playing a video game or watching a movie instead of actually acting in a hazardous situation. While this derangement is active, they can take no defensive actions or use any defensive Abilities of any kind, and they will never refuse to do a task based on personal risk. On the other hand, their detachment reduces any Trait penalties by one for any wounds they receive in combat, though it does not negate the damage itself in any way, simply the way they react to it.

Fugue

Characters suffering this affliction react to stress by adopting a specific set of behaviors; in the process they suffer “blackouts” or periods of memory loss. Whenever confronted by extreme stress, the player must win a Willpower Challenge; failure means the character blacks out and the player must roleplay the character's trancelike state. Control of the character passes to a Narrator for a scene, who dictates the actions the character takes in order to remove the stress. At the end of the fugue, the character “regains consciousness” with no memory of his actions.

Hypochondria

A hunter with this condition suffers a debilitating reaction any time she is confronted with filth, sickness or contamination of any kind, which unfortunately is an all-too-common problem encountered on the hunt — a public bathroom is enough to turn her stomach, so imagine what a rotting corpse that's just hauled itself from the ground does to her. While in the presence of merely unclean conditions, the hunter is two Traits down on all Mental Challenges; if actively confronted by a monster such as a rotting corpse or gore-streaked bloodsucker, she is at a one-Trait penalty on all actions that involve being near or interacting with them in any way, and must spend at least half an hour cleaning herself after any such encounters.

Hysteria

Characters with this derangement are unable to properly control their emotions when subjected to stress or pressure, becoming vulnerable to sudden emotional shifts and fits of intense violence. The player must make a Willpower Challenge any time such stress is present, or the hunter immediately becomes either extremely violent and hateful or sullen and apathetic toward the source of the stress (as appropriate); in addition, whenever the hunter fails in a particularly stressful or prominent instance, he automatically flies into a violent rage and trashes his surroundings — he need not automatically attack others at

this time, though he will if they get in his way. (Narrators have final say on what classifies as such a dramatic failure.)

Insomnia

Many hunters have nightmares about what they've seen on the hunt, and others envy them for it — this person sleeps only with great difficulty, and what little rest he gets doesn't do much to refresh him. Before each session, the player must make a Willpower Challenge against seven Traits; if successful, last night the character had one of his rare nights of restful sleep, and can act without penalty. If not, however, he gains the Negative Traits *Lethargic* and *Oblivious* due to exhaustion, and the player should do his best to roleplay this discomfort as well. Additionally, the Narrator may require a similar test each time the hunter would recover a Willpower Trait for natural rest, with failure meaning he didn't get enough rest to do so after all.

Manic-Depression

This Derangement causes a character to suffer devastating mood swings. Whenever the character fails to achieve a personal goal, the player must win a Willpower Challenge (no Traits risked) or the character falls into a depressive state for a number of scenes determined by the Narrator. While depressed, the character's Willpower Traits are considered halved (round down, minimum one) for purposes of Trait comparison, and she may not use any edges related to physical power or exertion. After that, she enters a period of upbeat energy and excitement, pursuing her goals obsessively for a number of scenes equal to the time spent in depression. During this manic time she is one Trait down on all Mental Challenges, and receives a free *Impatient* Negative Trait.

Megalomania

These individuals have made power the focus of their existence, and such characters must always be the most potent individuals in their environment; where the power stems from is irrelevant, just so long as they are dominant. They believe that other people are divided into two classes: lesser beings and beings elevated beyond their worth. Rivals are considered "competition." Due to their supreme confidence, they are considered one Trait up on all Willpower tests while their derangement is active, but the players must also make a Willpower Challenge (against six Traits) for their characters to resist any opportunity to "get ahead" by any means necessary, including framing or blackmailing their rivals or even killing them if they feel they can get away with it, and must roleplay this ruthless self-centeredness as best they can as well.

Multiple Personalities

A character with this derangement suffered mental anguish so severe that his mind reacted by creating additional personas. Each personality is relevant to the trauma that caused it, and the player should work with the Storyteller to determine how many personalities are present, their Natures and what triggers a particular personality. When a personality is triggered, it assumes control until the conditions it was created to deal with have passed. Characters can manifest different Abilities and even edges for each personality (all such Traits must still be acquired normally — what a personality *believes* it can do can be different from what it is actually capable of), but any such arrangements must be worked out with the Storyteller.

Obsessive/Compulsive

Characters suffering from this derangement are driven to control their environment. Obsessive characters keep one aspect of their life constant — personal cleanliness or keeping things quiet, for example. Compulsive characters perform specific actions or sets of actions, such as constantly washing their hands or reciting a lengthy prayer before entering battle. Obsessive/compulsive characters are one Trait up to resist any attempt to coerce them from their set behaviors, but immediately fly into a blind rage if forcibly prevented from adhering to their derangement, attacking anyone who tries to keep them from fulfilling their need.

Paranoia

All hunters develop some measure of paranoia as a natural result of their new perceptions, but characters with this derangement go beyond healthy caution to irrational suspicion of anything and anyone they cannot explain. Paranoid beings believe that all their woes and suffering stem from an outside source. Many afflicted beings come up with intricate theories about just who is against them and why; those they suspect of being “one of *them*” are often subject to swift and brutal violence. Paranoid characters trust no one, not even those they have fought beside or owe their lives to, and they have a difficult time interacting with others. They are one Trait down on all Social Challenges while their derangement is active, and any sign of suspicious activity forces the players to make a Willpower test against five Traits or the characters immediately take some direct (though not necessarily violent) action against those who are obviously in league with “them.”

Phobia

A hunter with this derangement has an overpowering, irrational fear of some fairly ordinary item or circumstance, which severely hampers his ability to function normally as long as it is in his presence. The player should work with the Storyteller to determine an appropriate subject for this derangement. Whenever a character is exposed to the subject of his phobia, the player must immediately make a Willpower Challenge against six Traits or the hunter flees until he is safely out of its presence; even if he remains, he is nervous and at a one-Trait penalty on all actions due to the stress of being near the object of his fear.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Imbued with this affliction are forced to relive a certain set of memories or sensations whenever circumstances arise that are similar to the original incident that traumatized them, no matter how minor or tangential these new stimuli might be. For example, a hunter who lost her family to a house fire might suffer from this syndrome anytime she smells something burning or hear a child yelling, even if it's only scorched toast or part of a neighborhood game. When this happens, the player must make a Willpower Challenge against five Traits or the hunter is paralyzed by memories for three turns, during which time she can do nothing to defend herself. This time can be increased if the stimulus is extremely strong, such as the hunter awakening to find her current home on fire. Other characters may attempt to snap their ally out of this trance, allowing another Willpower Challenge, but only one such test may be made per episode.

Alternately, the hunter may simply begin speaking and performing actions related to the original trauma for a like amount of time, such as the hunter yelling for her dead husband; the effect is essentially identical, removing her from action for three turns while she performs these other actions instead. In no instance will she do anything that contradicts her memory of the original incident; for example, a hunter who was traumatized by being caught unarmed by a blood-sucker wouldn't be able to use a gun he has in his hand at the present, since he was unarmed in the original incident.

Puppeteerism

Hunters suffering from this affliction are so wrapped up in their personal cause or experiment that have started to view other people, including loved ones and fellow hunters, as nothing more than resources to be used and discarded in pursuit of their goals. They will use all manner of tricks and schemes to manipulate people into acting or thinking how they want them to, and become extremely upset when others deviate from the roles and plans the puppeteer has designed for them. When the derangement is active, he is considered one Trait up on all Social Challenges involving manipulation or deception, but he is also considered two Traits down on all other Social Challenges, and gains a free *Condescending Negative Trait* due to his contempt for others as anything except pawns in his schemes.

Regression

Characters suffering from this affliction avoid facing responsibilities or consequences by retreating to a younger state where less was required of them. During this state they may alternate between times of whimsy and temper tantrums, but they will always seek to put a more powerful individual between them and whatever is plaguing them. Victims are two Traits down on all Mental Challenges.

Sadism

Some hunters suffer so much at the hands of monsters that they start seeing it as only fair that they start doling out some pain in return; those who go too far down this line of thinking eventually develop this derangement, where they begin inflicting pain on the innocent and the guilty alike just because they can. Not even friends or loved ones are safe from such a character who seeks out and savages vulnerable spots as a matter of habit. When this derangement is active, the player must make a Willpower Challenge against six Traits to avoid the hunter torturing enemies at every opportunity. He also gains a *Tactless Negative Trait* due to the fact that he will say hurtful things just for the pleasure of causing pain.

Schizophrenia

Individuals with this derangement have had their psyche fractured by terrible, unresolvable inner conflicts. This is the type of disorder most people conceive of when they envision insanity; victims might imagine stuffed animals trying to stab them, or swear that their best friend just turned invisible and is spelling his name on the wall with purple blood. This disorder is anything but arbitrary, however — the player should work with the Storyteller to determine a general set of behaviors relevant to the original trauma. Imbued with this derangement are unpredictable and dangerous — in situations where their inner conflict flares up, the players must automatically retest any tests to maintain keep self-control, and are two Traits down on all Willpower tests.

General Hunter Information and Cross-Over FAQ

What follows are 10 of the most common questions regarding the imbued and their interaction with each other as well as the other creatures of the night. Bear in mind that this list is mostly for the sake of clarity, and not considered "in-game knowledge" for the imbued — while the player might know that her hunter can't be made into a bloodsucker, chances are her character isn't so sure, and even if she suspects it that doesn't mean she's about to test the theory!

1) *Are hunters human, or are they considered the same as ghouls, psychics, characters with Numina, and other "slightly more than human" types?*

Except for their Conviction and their edges, hunters are considered normal human beings in every way, including healing times, Trait and Willpower maximums, etc. While the hunters themselves often debate the question of their humanity, in game terms it's a matter of fact that they are otherwise identical to ordinary people.

2) *Can the imbued see supernatural creatures?*

Yes. By spending a Conviction Trait to activate the sight, a hunter can immediately perceive all beings with supernatural powers in her line of sight, including invisible creatures, incorporeal ghosts and possessing spirits. These creatures are perceived as somehow being "off" or "strange" to a hunter using the sight; unless they are obviously monstrous (such as a decapitated spirit) or the hunter has had experience with a particular monster in the past, exactly *what* they are might not be immediately apparent. More on the sight and how to use it can be found in other chapters. In addition, several edges such as *Discern*, *Witness* and *Illuminate* also reveal the presence of supernatural creatures; see the individual edge descriptions for exactly what they can and cannot do. Lastly, some hunters develop a talent for using the *Awareness* Ability to detect the presence of supernatural creatures. While impressions and auras received from this Ability are seldom as reliable or precise as the other two means, it can help spare them from constantly having to spend Conviction to activate their sight, thus allowing them to conserve that precious resource until it is truly needed.

3) *Can hunters recognize each other?*

Not automatically, no. Since they do not show up to the sight as anything out of the ordinary, even to each other, most hunters take to wearing hunter code symbols or arranging meetings over the hunter-net if they wish to identify each other. The exception to this rule is if a hunter sees another hunter using her edges — he automatically realizes that individual is another imbued, as opposed to some kind of monster, thus giving him a kind of natural immunity to some possible "friendly fire" scenarios. Note that bystanders have a natural talent for recognizing fellow bystanders and other imbued, but that's another story.

4) *Are hunters vulnerable to the Delirium/Fog/Mists/etc.?*

Hunters who do not have their Conviction defense active are vulnerable to the fear and memory loss engendered by the sight of some supernatural creatures; hence, most hunters quickly learn to make sure they get "psyched up" before entering a situation where they know such creatures might be present. Players whose characters are caught off-guard must roleplay their characters' fear and confusion as accurately as possible; such is the price of a lapse in vigilance. At the Storyteller's discretion, those imbued who do not have their Conviction active may attempt to activate it in reaction to a sudden supernatural threat; rules for this situation can be found in the section dealing with Conviction and the Sight.

5) *Can an imbued character be blood bound? possessed? enchanted?*

Imbued with their Conviction defense active are automatically immune to possession as well as all mind- and emotion-control powers, which includes such other supernatural control ties as enchantment and breaks the blood bond as well. However, while their Conviction is inactive they may certainly fall prey to these insidious tricks; if the control is subtle enough, they might only realize what happened to them the next time they activate their Conviction defense and the control is broken. (The specifics of what happens and how much a character remembers of it are subject to Storyteller discretion.) Indeed, imagine the horror of a hunter who uses the sight and suddenly realizes that several nights ago a vampire hypnotized him into performing all manner of illegal actions and then compelled him to forget about it afterward!

6) *What happens if a hunter is Embraced or mummified? Can they Awaken? Do they ever return as wraiths or risen?*

No, no, no and no. Although the vast majority of them are not aware of it (and even those don't care to test it), hunters *cannot* become supernatural creatures. Period. Attempts to Embrace or mummify them result in regular dead bodies, and their spirits never linger in this world as any form of restless dead. Likewise, the imbuing itself prevents them from being Awakened — they see a different kind of cosmic truth — and the Heralds safeguard their spirits from being transformed into werecreatures or changelings by any bizarre rites that make that possible (if such means even exist). This includes gaining any benefits from vampire blood, so ghoul imbued are not an option either.

7) *Can a ghoul/Kinfolk/kinain/medium/psychic/sorcerer/etc. be imbued?*

No! Only ordinary people are called by the Messengers — those with supernatural powers or any kind of significant supernatural lineage are never, *ever* chosen. Period. End of story. Not only would such characters seriously threaten game balance, but they also go against the theme of blue-collar characters and mundane people battling horrible monsters that so much of the game is based on, turning a game of fear and horror into an action-adventure *Buffy* rip-off. In summary, while such characters might very well side with the chosen during the course of a game, they will never be truly imbued.

8) Are hunters detected by *Aura Perception*, *Sense the Unnatural*, the *Awareness Ability*, etc.?

Short answer: No. Supernatural means can only detect hunters for what they are if they are actively using edges at the time — not simply the sight, but full-blown edges. Then and only then do powers that sense the supernatural detect hunters as anything out of the ordinary. At all other times, hunters come across as just ordinary humans, no matter how powerful the monster trying to perceive their true nature might be.

9) *What's so special about the hunter-net? Why don't the Glass Walkers or the Virtual Adepts or some other group just track it down and take it apart?*

Although intrusions by creatures have occurred in the past, by and large the hunter-net appears to be safe from wholesale infiltration by the monsters. It may crash or display strange files and posts from time to time, but as a rule any efforts to shut it down, trace its source or even identify those members who post on it (save from hints such posters may inadvertently drop in conversation) fail utterly. Although the imbued do not know it for sure, and given their paranoia level it's unlikely they ever will trust it completely, the hunter-net is indeed protected by the Heralds, which makes it safe from any attempts by monsters to crash it. Indeed, some of the more astute hunters are already wondering if those creatures that somehow managed to post on it were allowed to do so because it furthered the agenda of the Messengers....

10) *Can other characters read or copy the hunter code symbols?*

As a rule, only imbued and certain rare bystanders can truly write and understand the hunter code — to monsters and ordinary people, it appears to be nothing other than strange graffiti, and therefore is generally ignored. Should a symbol be brought directly and indisputably to their attention somehow, non-hunters can attempt to copy it normally, although without a hunter to *voluntarily* explain it to them they cannot understand what meaning it might have (making it impossible for them to catalogue or record the language for non-hunters). Many imbued consider their code absolutely safe; however, recent events have proven that it is possible — just extremely difficult and time-consuming — to teach normal people or even monsters symbols from the code. Likewise, even if they have a rough understanding of one symbol, they must go through the whole process over again in order to identify another.

Thus, a vampire that learns to recognize one symbol cannot automatically identify a different symbol or even that it is another example of the hunter code unless one of the imbued brings it to her attention and teaches her its meaning. In addition, hunters instinctively recognize any symbols that were not drawn by fellow imbued or knowledgeable bystanders as being “wrong” or “forged” somehow, and generally treat them with accordingly wariness. Even photocopies or similarly precise reproductions made by non-imbued still give hunters this false feeling, much to the frustration of would-be trap-setters. More on the hunter code, as well as examples of code symbols, can be found in other chapters.

Experience

As sentient beings, we collate the information that is presented to us in our daily lives and hopefully become better people for our experiences. During our life, we learn from the mistakes of yesterday and prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

Experience in **Laws of the Reckoning** is represented by giving each character one to three experience points at the end of each session. The number of points awarded is based on how well a character performed during the course of the story and how active a player was in the game. The Storyteller decides how many points each player receives upon completion of the session. All players receive one point — this is standard. Exceptional roleplayers, those who played an exceptionally memorable part, should receive two. Three points should be awarded to those characters who performed acts of incredible insight and courage, making the game truly memorable for everyone involved. On a normal night, each player will receive one experience point.

If you are a Storyteller, you should be consistent and fair in awarding experience. Do it in the open, and be prepared to explain the rationale for your decisions in accordance with the rules. If the players disagree, hear them out and make sure you know the whole story, then award experience to those who have earned it.

Be careful, as awarding too many experience points can make characters too powerful too quickly and tends to give players lax attitudes toward working for their goals. On the other hand, awarding too few disheartens the players and seriously damages their sense of achievement. In no instance should a player get more than four Experience Traits for a single session.

Awarding experience points, therefore, requires a delicate balance between satisfying players and maintaining the integrity of the game. If you follow the guidelines below, you probably won't get into too much trouble.

- **Automatic** — Each character receives one Experience point per game. This represents the acquisition of common, everyday knowledge. You survived another night, for better or worse — congratulations.
- **Roleplaying** — Narrators should encourage excellent roleplaying. The best way to do this is to reward it tangibly with Experience.
- **Leadership** — You should award one point to each of those few players who had starring parts in a story. Someone who got involved, and by her efforts propelled the plot, deserves a third point. It should be noted that if more than one of the players were integral to the progression of the story, each of the players who showed such leadership should be awarded a point.

Using Experience

Experience points may be spent to purchase new Abilities and Traits, improving a character and giving the player a sense of satisfaction as he watches his character grow more potent. The following chart lists the costs for improving Traits and Abilities.

New Attribute Trait — One Experience per Trait.

New Ability — One Experience per Ability Trait.

New Merit or Flaw/ Buy off Flaw — Double the cost of the Merit/Flaw, with Storyteller approval. This should not happen instantaneously; it should be worked into a character's ongoing storyline. The addition of a Merit or removal of a Flaw should not be treated lightly.

New Willpower — Three Experience per Trait.

Buy off Negative Trait — Two Experience per Trait.

New Background — Backgrounds are typically awarded as a result of gains made during the chronicle — rescuing the mayor's daughter earns you an *Ally*, looting a bloodsucker's house increases your *Resources* — but the Storyteller may require you to spend Experience to make such gains permanent. One Experience Trait per Background level is usually sufficient.

New Virtue/Edges — Virtues and edges cannot be purchased with Experience; edges can only be gained when new Virtue Traits are acquired, and Virtues can only be raised by cashing in 10 temporary Conviction Traits.



Chapter Six: Storytelling

Are You a Storyteller?

That's good, because this chapter is for you! This section details essential knowledge for all Storytellers, such as how to create a story from scratch, how to survive your first game, and how to manage an ongoing chronicle. You'll learn the basics of establishing mood, creating believable settings and laying down the law with troublesome players. Experienced Storytellers with a few chronicles under their belts will benefit as well from learning how to integrate new players into an existing game, breathe new life into a faltering story and manage the relationship between the game and the real world. Most importantly, this chapter gives you the straight skinny on Storytelling — who should try it, how it works, why it's hard and why it's the most rewarding challenge **Laws of the Reckoning** has to offer.

Taking Up the Mantle

Storytelling is the toughest gig in roleplaying. Paradoxically, it's also the most satisfying. Before you decide to plunge in with both feet, you should be aware of the magnitude of the challenge before you, and consider how you will address it. Many first-time Storytellers become quickly disenchanted because no one tells them how difficult the role can become. No one tells them how much of their free time being a Storyteller will eat up, how discouraging it can be to hear their players tell them they are bored with their plots, or how bothersome it can be to deal with problem players. But at the same time, no one ever tells them how unbelievably fulfilling the role can be. No one tells them about the creative thrill of taking a story idea that's floating in their heads and giving it life, watching it entertain, puzzle and challenge their friends, and hearing their players talk about it enthusiastically for weeks or years after it's over.

Realize now that while many players engage in playing in a game session once a week or once a month, Storytellers usually deal with some aspect of an ongoing chronicle nearly every day. You may well find the game pervading your life in ways you never imagined. Over-enthusiastic players will call you late at night to talk about the new wrinkle in their character development. Plot elements will pop into your imagination at the most inconvenient moments, demanding to be recorded before they are forgotten. Dinner gets cold while you try to input the latest downtime information into your new spreadsheet software.

Storyteller duties and responsibilities — real and imagined — will devour an incredible share of your free time if you permit them. Even if you excel at balancing your commitments and managing your time wisely, you will find yourself spending a greater period of time on creating and running the game than even some of your more

fanatical players. A part of every day will go into the game, even if you are only thinking about it idly while driving to work in the morning. The day of the game session itself will be taken up with preparing props, answering last-minute questions, approving character sheets and equipment cards, explaining to a player for the 19th time why he can't play his ex-Navy SEAL bad-ass Avenger combat god, and putting final touches on the plot elements you will introduce. The day after the game session you will be tired, but hopefully satisfied with the night's events.

Being a Storyteller can do some surprising things to your blood pressure. Sometimes nothing will go completely as you expected or planned. Key players won't show up, other players will invite their friends along and ask if it's okay for them to play "just for the night," your Narrators will take leave of their senses and make inexplicable rulings that threaten to bring your plot crashing down around your ears, your players will hare off on bizarre tangents and will ignore crucial clues, and you will feel suddenly and painfully ill.

The bad news is that as tiring as all this can sometimes seem, it comes with the territory. The good news is that it's all manageable, and the end product can be all the more worthwhile for it. You can learn to minimize the game's intrusion into your life, to become an expert at coping with the unexpected, to deal with your frustrations without taking them out on anyone, and to reap the very real rewards Storytelling offers. Remember: It's a genuine pleasure to run a game and witness firsthand your players' excitement and enjoyment of your creative efforts. Some players won't be at all aware of the sheer amount of effort you expend on being a good Storyteller, but many will, and they'll appreciate it. They might even thank you for it.

Building Stories

Storytelling is less like engineering and more like experimental chemistry. It isn't a matter of adhering to accepted procedures, choosing well-known materials and assembling them according to a precise mathematical equation. It's more like approaching each new project as an experiment that will combine familiar and unfamiliar ingredients to create a completely new compound. The results may differ wildly from your original plan, but this won't always be a bad thing — part of the joy of Storytelling is the fact that each new story is an adventure into uncharted territory, because you simply cannot predict where your efforts will take you. Regardless of the outcome, however, each project — each story — will teach you something you didn't know when you started, and will become another experience that will make you a good Storyteller.

Every Storyteller finds her own style when crafting stories. Some are comfortable making thumbnail sketches of a basic plot, rounding up some players and starting to play immediately; others prefer to brood over theme and scope, make extensive plot outlines and spend hours with their players on character creation alone. While it's generally true that you will be rewarded with a smoother game session if you plan and prepare adequately, there is no one "true" way to create and tell stories — you will find your own methods, and your own voice, when bringing your ideas to life.

Storytellers familiar with **Hunter: The Reckoning** who now wish to try a **Laws of the Reckoning** game will immediately notice a significant difference between the two types of narration: The materials at hand are markedly different. The story universe of **Hunter: The Reckoning** is the collective fabrication of the Storyteller and the players — the settings, scenes and events of each game session exist only within their collective imagination. But during a **Reckoning** game, the story becomes flesh,

as it were. The characters are present at a particular physical location, and their actions are, to a greater or lesser degree, actually performed as time passes normally. Perhaps more importantly, the Storyteller no longer has the luxury of clandestinely manipulating the entire story at a moment's notice. She can no longer describe each and every scene in minute detail, but must rely on a few well-chosen sentences and suggestive props to convey the appropriate sensory details to the players.

Fortunately, a good **Reckoning** game features one important characteristic that is less prevalent in standard game sessions: the players will take the key ingredients the Storyteller provides and create many of their own stories. Together, the Storyteller and players realize a roleplaying experience that is more intense than most traditional tabletop games.

Key Story Ingredients

Assemble your story ingredients like a master chef — or a mad scientist, if you prefer — paying careful attention to the type, form and shape of each before adding it to your creation. Careless selection of important story elements has led to the early death of more than one game, and you must learn to separate the truly good ideas from those that sound good on paper. It isn't always easy to tell one from the other, but exercising your own best judgment is often the means to learn to distinguish between them. Remember that in this endeavor, experimentation will often produce results that are more interesting than you might expect!

Theme

The theme is the organizing principle of your story. It is the unifying idea of your story, the one-or two-word description of what your story is all about on its most basic level. The theme is the question your story answers throughout its course, and it is the means by which you will convey its ideas and messages. It is absolutely essential that you select a theme, or more than one, if your story is to rise above the merely common and become truly interesting and entertaining.

Theme should pervade all aspects of your story — setting, mood, plot — but should nevertheless remain less than obvious. Themes are more effective as subtle suggestions rather than blatant statements. Hide the theme, cache it away within the tale to be discovered as the characters interact with the story itself. Don't worry about making the theme too subtle: It will make its presence felt soon enough through the story elements you introduce to the characters.

Here are some good themes for **Reckoning** stories, and some thematic questions they raise during play:

Love — How does love affect our actions, thoughts, and moods? What would we sacrifice for love? Can love be retrieved after it is lost? Does love endure?

Hate — How does hate manifest itself in our lives? How does the seed of hate take root, and to what acts does it drive us? Do we really become what we hate?

Betrayal — Why do we betray the people and things we love or that we are sworn to protect? What price does betrayal exact on our consciences and on our souls? How does it feel to be betrayed?

Revenge — Is revenge better hot or cold? How does revenge distort our perceptions and provoke our emotions?

Rebellion — What prompts us to rebel? How do we choose the targets of rebellion? Is rebellion always necessary to effect change? Can rebellion occur without violence and bloodshed?

The Importance of Theme and Mood

Think about the scariest movie you know, and how you would react to watching it all alone on a dark night, or perhaps still with one or two equally scared people to scream and whimper with you. Then try imagining how scary it would be if you watched it in the middle of a sunny afternoon while hanging out with a bunch of your friends and cracking jokes about it at every turn. The difference that you have just observed is one of atmosphere, and in a live-action game this atmosphere is primarily composed of two elements: theme and mood. It bears mentioning that more so than perhaps any other of its **Mind's Eye Theatre** brethren, **Laws of the Reckoning** relies a great deal on the presence of these two elements to keep some of the central aspects of its setting alive. Without these vital yet intangible ambient factors, it quickly becomes a rock 'em-sock 'em game of humans with nifty superpowers and pithy quips for every occasion, as opposed to a game about scared but determined people trying to do what they feel is right in a world they are only now beginning to see for what it has always truly been.

Therefore, please do not gloss over these two modest sections in favor of the nifty ones where we tell you not to play with knives or molest your neighbors (but please read those too) — take a look at them and try to think how you can use them to help tell the kind of story you want about these very human characters. Of course, you should not hammer the players with oppressive themes or mood-reinforcing plot twists at every turn — “Your mom’s dead? My mom’s dead too!” — but they should remain enough of a presence that the players feel them and react to them in their roleplaying. Theme and mood are sometimes difficult elements of storytelling to master, especially for those new to the trade, but with some time and practice you will find that the players do as much to maintain the atmosphere as you do, since it impacts on their outlook and everything they do.

Morality — Who or what determines mortality? Who are the keepers of morals and ethics? Are these things even necessary? Are there morals that transcend individuals, cities, nations, worlds?

Chaos — Why do things tend to fall apart? Doesn’t anything last? Is chaos sometimes necessary? How do we handle chaos?

Mood

Mood is the general tone of the story, the underlying emotions you want your players to feel as they interact with the tale. It’s one of the most difficult story elements to capture, and all the more rewarding for its elusive nature. Don’t tell your players what the mood you are trying to convey is, but let them feel it in every aspect of your tale.

Think of the mood as your story’s state of mind, and then ask yourself what emotions you want your story to reflect. Is the story pessimistic or hopeful? Apprehensive or confident? Angry or calm? Consider your theme and choose moods that seem to compliment it. The entire range of human emotion is available, and you need not restrict yourself to only one mood for the duration of your story. This is especially important to remember when crafting and running longer stories, because mood can be as fluid as the plot and pacing demands. You can either benefit from it, as players

caught up in a particularly well-done mood will naturally drag others along with them; or you can be stuck with it if you're not careful, as you try to motivate players for an action-oriented session when all you've done is hand them moody, brooding plot pieces to work with so far.

Good moods for **Reckoning** stories:

Paranoid — Also known as the “default setting” of **Reckoning**, this is a game where nothing is as it seems and no one can be trusted. Everyone is out to get something, often at the characters' expense, and even apparent friends can turn out to have unpleasant ulterior motives. Monsters can be everywhere, and characters must take great precautions to avoid being the next victim.

Desperate — Characters are reckless in their excitement or despair, willing to take greater risks in order to achieve some goal. No one should feel they can afford to sit back and relax as events demand drastic and extreme reactions. This mood is often very appropriate to hunter stories, where the characters find themselves working frantically to fight off some monstrous force that they have no time to really understand, only fight.

Brooding — Everything is dark and ominous, perhaps even somber. The unexpressed dread hangs cloyingly in the air, filling everyone with a feeling of waiting for something important but unknown to happen. This mood is tough to sustain for long but can be very dramatic, and works especially well as a prelude to a combat-intense session.

Mysterious — Characters are faced with a number of puzzles, mysteries, unexplained events and other phenomena that beg investigation at their every turn. Solving one puzzle just scratches the surface of the next, and characters must keep their wits about them as well as their weapons if they hope to get to the bottom of what's going on.

Festive — While an exceedingly rare mood to evoke in the average **Reckoning** game, even hardened hunters occasionally need to take some time off for the sake of their sanity, if nothing else. Reminding them that a lighter side of life still exists is an excellent way to give them hope for the future... or one more painful reminder of what they used to have. This is a good mood to invoke at the beginning of a new story, particularly when you plan to yank the rug out from under the characters' feet soon after, or as a way of rewarding the group after a long series of more somber and dangerous sessions.

Decadent — The world is decaying, falling to ruin, giving simultaneous rise to new vision and appalling debauchery. Characters must decide what path to tread as their familiar surroundings deteriorate around them — will a Redeemer turn his back on the mission and use his healing gifts as a rich man's personal physician for the sake of wealth and power? Or will he continue to struggle day-to-day hunting monsters for the sake of a world that doesn't seem to care?

Exciting — The action never stops as the characters contend with a never-ending cavalcade of threats, enemies and challenges. Never allow anyone to relax long enough to catch his breath. This is a difficult mood to sustain without being totally overwhelming, but can give your players the roleplaying equivalent of a roller coaster ride they will never forget.

Bitter — Everyone is angry about something and has their own ax to grind, and the imbued are certainly no exception. Characters are tense, irritable and frequently lash out at everyone and everything around them. Individuals can progress from close friends to avowed enemies swiftly, and events that seem innocuous at first often take on savage, angry tones.

Plot

If the theme and mood are the story's heart and soul, then the plot is its body. Plot is the progression of events that takes the story from its first game session to its last and every place in between. Your plot will initially be the result of the events you plan and introduce, but your players will also make a substantial contribution to the plot as they enact their characters' efforts to achieve their nightly and long-term goals.

Where do plots come from? Most good plots start as seeds of ideas planted in your imagination that germinate when you learn to tap your own creativity. Television, movies, magazines, novels and newspapers all provide potential plot ideas. The trick is learning to recognize the useful ideas and creating stories from them. It isn't easy at first, and sometimes it's harder than you'd like, but it's something you must teach yourself if you want to be a successful Storyteller.

Effective plotting means knowing your players, and in particular knowing what holds their interest. Players' attention spans vary tremendously. You will be able to amuse some players easily for months with little more than the story equivalent of a ball of string. Such players are the ideal recipients of long-term plot threads and subplots because they will dog them for long periods of time with remarkable determination. Other players, however, are more focused on immediate concerns and require a new ball of string every game session, and sometimes more than once in the same session, lest they grow bored very quickly. For these players, any plot that endures beyond one or two game sessions becomes a hopeless, confusing tangle of unwanted detail. You will want to offer plots and introduce plot threads that cater to both player types, a demanding but necessary task to provide something for everyone to enjoy.

Some plots, no matter how carefully planned, won't take you where you intended to go. The plot will become complicated surprisingly often, especially when characters' individual schemes clash. You will recognize when this happens by the confusion it generates. Don't panic. Confusion of this sort is both a help and a hindrance. Confusion lures and attracts those players who like to be involved in as many plots as possible. Other players react badly to confusion, and will cease to participate when a plot gets too complex for them to unravel. Just try to make sure that the story balances the interests of both types of people, and you should do all right.

Remember, plots need not be torturously complex to pique the interest of your players: Often the best plots are those that are simple frameworks to which you and your players can attach more complex ideas as the story proceeds. Consider these basic plot summaries and where they could lead your story:

Under New Management — A new monster has begun gathering power in the city, destroying any supernatural opposition but also causing more destruction and loss of innocent life than its predecessors did. From the looks of it, the imbued would have even less of a chance than normal at taking out this new threat alone, which leaves them with some unpleasant questions. Do they try to tackle the monster alone anyway, despite the odds? Do they wait and see if the creatures will destroy each other? Or do they do the unthinkable and approach some of the monsters with an offer to join forces against this mutual threat?

A Finer World — The city shakes with the arrival of a powerful Redeemer and his companions, who announce that they have a revolutionary plan to improve ordinary life in the city as well as rid it of evil supernatural taint. His ideas seem to have great merit and early results are positive, but his plan also involves working with a number of "good" creatures to help destroy their wicked brethren. It also means that the imbued will have to expose at least some of their new lives to the public, if not their

actual abilities. He assures them that the creatures can be trusted and that their own public face will be minimal, but can the hunters be so sure? Do they go along with the plan and hope for the best, or do they go against it and risk possibly wrecking a real chance at making a difference? Will their enemies use knowledge of their real identities against them? What are their powers for, if not to help other people who need it?

Born In Fire — Characters in this story are not imbued while facing just one or two creatures, but in response to a full-scale supernatural war raging behind the altered headlines and glossed-over misdeeds the public is aware of. Worse still, an incautious attack by one of the characters or another of the city's imbued has brought their existence to the attention of both sides, and each believes that the hunters are just one more of the enemy's pawns to eliminate. There's no room for mistakes in this scenario: the hunters must learn to cope with their new existence fast and organize themselves even faster if they have a hope of staying alive, let alone punishing the creatures behind this massive shadow war. Teamwork is at a premium, as are combat and reconnaissance skills, though more social or cerebral hunters may still have a role in convincing some of the enemy that they're not the real threat or in planning long-term strategy.

All Over the World — Every once in a while it's good to remind the characters that things are happening outside their little sphere of influence, either by bringing in some foreign monsters (perhaps with foreign hunters hot on their heels) or by starting a storyline that will lead the characters away from their usual stomping grounds. Whether it's as relatively close as the next town over or as removed as halfway around the world, how the hunters view their obligation (or lack thereof) to problems happening in distant locales or how territorial they become about problems that wind up on their doorstep all can provide excellent material for examining their role in the world they've inherited. If nothing else, outside villains or distant locations shake players up and force them to deal with brand new threats rather than the more familiar perils they've started learning about back home.

American Dreams — Not all stories are about earth-shaking monsters and deadly showdowns; some are much more complicated than that. In this story, a formerly seedy and crime-ridden neighborhood begins a sudden and mysterious turnaround, becoming a thriving area in matter of months. Investigation reveals that the neighborhood has come under the protection of a monster determined to restore its former neighborhood to the happy place it remembers from its youth. Life has definitely improved for the residents of this formerly hopeless location, but at a price — criminals and other bad elements who interfere with the creature's ideal of a pleasant neighborhood are mangled or even executed. Are the creature's tactics really much different than their own? Can the hunters remove the monster's presence without causing the area to slide back to ruin? Should it be removed at all?

Times Past — This story switches gears to explore the origins of the imbued. A strange but oddly compelling message from a cryptic source (an eccentric Visionary, a Hermit or even a monster) seems to indicate that the imbued have been around far longer than is commonly assumed. To support this claim, the source displays fragments of a purportedly ancient text engraved with symbols from the hunter code and asks for assistance in locating other relics, perhaps even speaking to a monster with expert knowledge (or personal experience) of history. Do the hunters abandon their regular duties to help in this admittedly wildly speculative endeavor? Or is it all some elaborate ruse on the part of the monsters?

Divided We Fall — It was bound to happen sooner or later — two or more groups of imbued are at each other's throats over some issue, and tensions are rising rapidly. Violence may even break out if the matter isn't settled soon, but tempers have been sparked and egos have been damaged, which means sorting out the truth of the matter or soothing both sides will be a difficult process. If the characters are involved, do they support their side without question, or are they trying to compromise? If the characters aren't directly involved, what are they doing to defuse the situation? Are they? Can hunters be much better than the creatures they hunt if they wind up squabbling like this?

Setting

The setting of your story is as much a character as the individuals who populate it. Before choosing your setting, consider your theme and mood. Are there settings that will enhance or detract from them? It's difficult to convey a brooding or somber mood when your setting is a circus or a car wash.

Setting your story in familiar territory is a good option. It's fun to pretend that your hometown might have some kind of supernatural presence hiding behind those same store fronts and identical houses. Trying to imagine what it would be like to hunt those supernatural forces can be even more interesting; how would you try to off a group of rots in the cemetery across from nosy old Mr. Allen's place without having him call the cops? A good place to start is by obtaining some accurate information about your city history, government and municipal services, and pass them through the Gothic-punk filter. Then choose some physical locations in the area that you want to replicate in the game. The advantage to setting your story in your own backyard is that you'll have minimal research to complete before you can begin playing; the disadvantage is that your players might know your city as well, or better than, you do.

Remember though, that your stories needn't always be restricted to familiar stomping grounds — there's only so many times you can fight zombies in back of the high school before it starts to feel ho-hum. Feel free to shake things up every once in a while — try another city, another side of town, even a distant foreign country. Libraries, bookstores and online sources will yield a wealth of information on nearly any municipality of any size, include population figures, government structures and handy maps. Just remember that you have to make the players feel as though they've really been transported to, say, an old hunting lodge in Germany as part of an exciting chase, rather than simply presenting them the same old location and props and giving all your Narrator characters bad German accents.

Pacing

The value of pacing becomes clear when you accept, as you must, the Storyteller's axiom that nothing will go exactly as planned. Characters will sometimes miss vital clues for no apparent good reason and then spend the remainder of the evening scratching their heads as the session drags on to an unnaturally late hour. Characters will also from time to time cooperate with one another in a frighteningly efficient manner, solving all the puzzles and conundrums that you thought would take them the entire night to understand in mere moments. More occasionally the players will feel completely overwhelmed by information and will be so uncertain of what to do next that they will cease taking an active role in the story altogether.

You can mitigate, if not avoid, these eventualities by giving due thought to your stories' pacing. Try to decide at what rate the story should progress before the game

session starts. Fast-paced games throw new situations at the characters throughout the night, forcing them to deal with each new challenge as it presents itself and leaving them little time to assess the big picture before the night is done. Slower-paced games lend themselves more to extended communications between characters, not to mention more subtle intrigues and plots. You may want to vary the tempo of a game, starting slowly and getting faster as the session progresses, or vice versa.

You can help yourself pace stories more successfully by learning to narrate spontaneously. That doesn't mean you shouldn't prepare adequately for game sessions, but rather that you should prepare yourself for the necessity of providing plot information on the fly. Characters will often ask questions for which you don't have a prepared answer, but which nevertheless deserve a response in order to keep the action flowing. Try to give answers that satisfy the characters' need for information but which will also advance with — or at least not contradict — your plot. An unexpected lull in the game's activity can be the perfect opportunity to introduce a new plot thread that you cleverly prepared for just such an occasion. Alternately, you can reintroduce a plotline that the characters thought resolved in order to keep the game session going without a break in the action.

Although off-the-cuff Storytelling is essential to any successful game, good pacing is roughly equal parts planning and improvisation. Start each night's game with at least an idea of the speed at which you want events to occur and where you think the story will go. Even if it doesn't get there because something unexpected happens, you'll be prepared to deal with it if you give adequate thought to pacing. Knowing the general direction in which the story is headed helps you recognize when the pace is becoming too fast or too slow, and gives you clues about how to adjust it in ways that best suit your players and plot. You must be sensitive to the ebb and flow of the story, watching carefully for periods of too much inactivity or hopeless chaos.

Forced to choose between these extremes — too fast or too slow — opt for too fast. Stories with a pace that is too slow lead to player boredom and frustration more frequently than the former. Prepare a couple of plot threads in advance that you can introduce in case the story starts to slow unexpectedly. These can be as simple as a character's spouse or children accidentally overhearing them discussing details of the hunt, or as complex as the arrival of a hunting group the players have never met before, wounded and seeking assistance against some previously unknown threat. If you're really in doubt about what to do in order to fix the pacing, ask your players what their characters want to do next. Listen carefully to their answers and try to tailor your responses appropriately. This tactic gives you room to breathe and think, and more importantly gives you a sense of why the action has fallen off.

Story Considerations

The story considerations will generally be easier for you to pin down than the key ingredients, mostly because their impact on the story is less immediate. If you do your homework and build your stories with due care, you'll find these story elements fall into place more easily.

Scale

The scale of your story is its relative size, the number of players who want to play. You can run stories for as few as two players or as many as 200, but stories for 20 to 30 players are the most common. The scale of many stories is often predetermined by the number of players involved when you begin, but it can and will change. Players bring

their friends, spouses and significant others into the game, and some players will drop out for various reasons. This doesn't mean that your story's scale is at the mercy of chance — you can influence it in either direction. Actively recruiting more players will increase the scale, and getting rid of some players will decrease it. Some Storytellers establish a player cap, which is the maximum number of players they will allow to participate in any given story, or do their game by invitation only, carefully selecting the players they want for any number of different reasons. The primary scale considerations should be the number of players you can comfortably handle, and the planned duration of your chronicle.

Scale can get out of hand if you are the only Storyteller and the number of players grows too rapidly or becomes too large. When you see this occurring, get some help. If you don't, your game and players will suffer as you try to handle all the Storyteller responsibilities by yourself. Ask for some volunteers from among your players and make them your Narrators (see below). A good rule of thumb is one Narrator for every 10 players, depending on your group dynamic. Some very large games have several Storytellers, each in charge of a different aspect of the game (main plot, subplots, Influences, antagonists, etc.). Remember that the larger your scale, the more broad and encompassing your plot should be in order to allow every player the potential to become involved.

Give some special thought to scale if you are running a plot that will require many months of continuous play to complete. Spend some time thinking about how scale changes will affect your long-range plots before you start them. Sudden or dramatic changes in scale can wreak havoc on long-term plots, requiring you to do some fancy Storytelling footwork to repair the damage and keep everything on track. Stories for extended chronicles must be more flexible in order to withstand the changes in scale that will inevitably occur as some players drop out and others arrive. How will your story be affected by the sudden departure of several players midway through the tale? Can your story cope if a particular creed or group sees unexpected growth over the course of the action, or if you gain players at a rate faster than anticipated? If the outcome of your plot hinges on only one character, think about what you will do if that character's player is suddenly obligated to leave the game, or if that character dies unexpectedly before the story's climax. Planning a few "escape routes" for your long-term plots will help you handle scale changes in stride.

Scope

Your story's scope describes the range of possibility for character action and impact — essentially, it's what is at stake in your story. Are you telling a low-key tale wherein the characters are concerned primarily with their own personal agendas? Or are you planning to give the characters the chance to save an entire city from some dire supernatural threat? Scale can modify your story's scope to a degree — it's easier to tell the story of an entire city of imbued if one has enough players to represent them — but in the end the stakes can be as big or small as you want.

Shorter stories often work better with correspondingly narrower scopes, but extended chronicles can handle wide variations in scope. The key for long-range stories is balance: Vary the scope of your games from story to story to give your players variety and a sense that their characters exist in an active setting. Saving the world story after story grows tiresome, as does fighting continuously between different teams over what is the best way to conduct the hunt, so change the value of story consequences and rewards periodically to keep things from stagnating. This is especially true if any of your

players are involved in such long-term plots as hunting an ancient creature, seeking the nature of the Heralds or even searching for their true love. The scope of the story is already established at a more personal level for these characters, and their stake in the overarching plot will increase or diminish as it affects their agenda.

Player Input

One of the simplest, but most often overlooked, things you can do to prepare for a new story is to ask your players what they want. Do not underestimate the value that soliciting player feedback can have on your story's success! All too often a Storyteller conceives what he believes is a fabulous new idea for a chronicle, busies himself with many hours of detailed preparations, and presents it to his players, only to find they are not interested in that particular type of story.

Key questions to ask your players before embarking on a new Storytelling effort:

- What kind of story would you like to play in — do you prefer political intrigue, mystery-solving, personal interaction or combat and mayhem?
- What sorts of plots would you like to see in the story?
- What power level should the story have — should all the players be of roughly equivalent power and experience, or should they be of varying power levels?
- What should take precedence — the story, the characters or the rules?

The Stages

Good stories have definitive stages — opening, climax and denouement. These are your story milestones, the markers which tell you where your players are in the story and what should happen to them next.

Opening

Lavish plenty of attention and detail on the opening of your story! Too many **Mind's Eye Theatre** stories start with all the characters sitting or standing around in a room, with no exploration of how they got there or why they are together. Particularly in the world of the imbued, such a gathering is unlikely to say the least, and can quickly ruin the sense of isolation and paranoia that haunt even experienced imbued by presenting them with a veritable legion of potential allies against the darkness. If you do want to put all the hunters in one place, *think it out. Hard*. Set the time, place and conditions of the opening scene by distributing common information that every character knows before the game begins. Are the characters all present because each received an anonymous e-mail on hunter-net? Are they gathered by the work of some more experienced Visionary, who wants to convert them to his cause? Are they there by mutual agreement to confer how their separate teams can tackle a larger threat? However sketchy, a briefing will allow your players to plunge directly into the story right away and begin roleplaying at once.

Climax

When the characters have discovered all they need to know to face final revelation, solve the key mystery or otherwise resolve the main plot, the story is at its climax. This is your story's high point, when the end toward which your players and their characters have been striving is in sight, and therefore the tension will be at its highest. If the opening was sufficiently intriguing and the players were enthusiastic, you need do little to help the story reach its climax. But if the players are confused or missed vital clues, you or your Narrators may find it necessary to take a more direct hand in guiding the action to its conclusion, perhaps by distributing more clues or

somehow reminding characters of information they should recall. If you find that you must interfere in order to begin the climax, try to do so in such a way that does not rob the players of the joy and satisfaction of accomplishment — being handed a victory never fails to feel forced and hollow to the players.

Denouement

The story winds down after its climax. The excitement and tension abates, and all the story pieces (most of them, at least) come together at last and form an identifiable, coherent whole. Try to manage the resolution so that your players feel they have accomplished something but are still interested in future stories. Just because the story is over doesn't necessarily mean the players learned all there was to learn about the main plot — sometimes just discovering another piece of the bigger puzzle gives the players sufficient motivation to continue.

You will find that your players will often want to gather immediately after the game session ends, to talk about the game and plan for future sessions. **Reckoning** players usually see only a few pieces of the story each time they play, and it's fun for them to learn more about the big picture. Players enjoy relating the night's events from their own points of view, and hearing the other players' version of events, too. You should keep one ear open at these wrap-up gatherings, both for news of exceptional roleplaying and potential plot complications.

Something for Everyone

The best stories are collaborative efforts between players and Storyteller; the Storyteller provides the players with an interesting backdrop and framework, and the players build on it. You must give your players ample materials with which to do their part, however, or they will rapidly grow bored with the story. Try to make your major plots broad enough in their appeal that they will interest nearly every player in the story, perhaps by giving them a vested interest in the outcome. Even if you are able to do this for most of your players, you may find that it's difficult to shoehorn some characters into a specific plot. When that happens, try to develop a minor plot or subplot for them instead.

Some of the tools you can use to ensure that all characters get something to do are character histories and subplots.

Blast from the Past

All characters in your story have pasts, which can prove an essential Storytelling aid. Encourage — no, insist that your players submit character histories to you along with copies of their character sheets. These can be narrative descriptions of a character's past experiences, a simple timeline or any other format that adequately defines a character's history. The character history is one of the most important tools in your Storyteller kit. All too often, a Storyteller who is fresh out of ideas for plots and subplots need look no further than these character backgrounds for the perfect story thread. Did a now upright hunting team leader at one time work for the Mafia? Have his former associates show up looking to collect on an old favor or debt, and watch how his teammates react to their new perception of their leader. Did another hunter destroy some powerful menace during his imbuings? Have its old allies show up to make trouble when the character least expects it. Character backgrounds will be lousy with ex-lovers, past misdeeds, hidden indiscretions, mortal enemies and personal quests, and all make great subplots and plot threads.

Main Plots

The central plot of your story is what brings your characters together and gives them a reason to interact. It should therefore be broad-based in its impact, affecting all characters in some way. While every character need not participate in the main plot, they should at the very least be aware of it and should consider its potential to change their environment and circumstances.

Take, for example, a plot that concerns the gradual rising of some great supernatural menace and the effect it has on the characters' locale. More combat-based teams might notice an increasing amount of activity as they find themselves battling more powerful and organized monsters as the creature's minions work to make room for their master. Other hunters more concerned with the mysteries of their new condition might receive a cryptic message from a Hermit or other bizarre source warning them of the threat, leading them to dig up old legends and any other information they can get their hands on to puzzle out what they're up against and how to deal with it. Teams more sympathetic to the monsters might be approached by a former minion having second thoughts, who offers to help the characters with what he knows, but only if they can help him find atonement for his past sins (no easy task). In this way a clever Storyteller can weave a story for each type of player and team, without leaning too far in any one group's direction over another, and making sure each team feels they have a valuable part to contribute to the whole.

Just be careful of what has been dubbed "Hardy Boys Syndrome," in which it always turns out that — surprise! — all of the plotlines the different hunting teams were involved with are actually intimately related, so that the outcome of every story arc has the players teaming up to face one big threat together. Do this too many times, and players will come to expect it to such a degree that it will rob any of the mystery or tension from your story, since they already know where you're heading with it. Rather, save it for when it's truly needed, and don't hesitate to do your best to keep the different teams in the dark about it when you actually do decide to go ahead with such an interlocking web of stories — the longer it takes them to realize the connections, the more exciting and original the outcome will seem.

Of course, occasionally a player or group of players will remain deliberately ignorant of the main plot's existence, refusing to acknowledge it even if it bites them on the rear. Such players deserve no special dispensation, and should suffer the consequences of their intentional aloofness; it's one thing to be so heavy-handed that you're basically leading the players around by the nose, but it's quite another for players to repeatedly refuse the well-intentioned plot hooks you take the trouble to prepare for them.

Subplots

Subplots are nearly as important to the success of your story as the main plot itself. They are minor events and activities, triumphs and tragedies, that fill the hunter's nightly existence. It isn't necessary to create a separate subplot for each player character; often the same subplot can involve several characters simultaneously, particularly if your players are enthusiastic about the game. Strongly motivated characters will create their own subplots regularly anyway, and will drag others into these situations without any prodding or help from you!

Some characters just won't be interested in the main plot. Their goals might be too far removed from the main story action, or their motivations might not allow them to be sidetracked by what everyone else is doing. This may seem like a problem, but it's actually an opportunity. Character goals and motivations can be the very essence

of great subplots, and can lead eventually to broader, more encompassing stories. You'll discover that subplots are also an effective means of dropping a new character into an existing story; just give the newcomer a connection with one or more of the existing characters, and let the sparks begin to fly. Remember: Conflict is your friend! It makes the best subplots and is relatively easy to establish.

When running long-term stories, be especially alert for subplots that take on lives of their own and threaten to become major plots, engulfing many characters and dominating entire game sessions. This won't necessarily derail your own story. Look on it as an opportunity. You might even be grateful to your players on occasion for this type of enterprising behavior, because it relieves you of some of the solitary burden of creating stories. For example, it's not uncommon for at least one character in an extended chronicle to start losing her grip and sliding into madness, potentially becoming a force of chaos and betrayal in the story (or an opportunity for some intense, soul-saving roleplaying). This might seem an inconvenience or a threat to your own plots, but actually it's a chance for some great character development and dramatic action. Work with the player to make her character's spiraling descent into madness a thrilling story. Your plots will still be there when the other characters finish dealing with this problem.

Character Relations

The game can't happen if the characters don't interact with one another. The quickest route to story failure is to create a situation in which the characters don't wish, or don't have adequate reason, to interact. This is not to say that the characters must cooperate and get along all the time: Conflict is a vital and necessary part of good stories! Nonetheless your story will fizzle if too many characters remain completely solitary, or hoard all the information they discover. Sometimes this occurs because players lack direction and are confused about what they want to do next. You can plan for this eventuality and establish good and clear reasons for characters to interact with one another.

Character backgrounds are the ideal place to begin planning for character interaction. Here's an easy one: Were two characters imbued at the same time? That's not only a natural reason for character interaction, but the makings of a subplot as well. Try fabricating rumor and gossip, or dropping hints about something suspicious happening in the vicinity that will pique character interest and coax them to interact. Even the most solitary hunter might be inclined to try a team effort if it looks like there's a monster beyond his ability to deal with in his neighborhood, after all. If despite your best efforts the characters still refuse to interact, you may have a genuine problem: Your players may be too fearful of losing to risk anything by engaging in character relations (see "Trouble," below). Alternately, some of them may stubbornly insist on being "realistic" (read: difficult) about their character interactions, ignoring characters they don't already know or actively going out of their way to give them grief, under the guise of roleplaying their suspicion of strangers correctly.

Creating the Setting

The story's setting will have an immediate, tangible impact on its tone and mood, and will influence the characters' actions from the very first game session. Your plot can be dramatically enhanced or encumbered by your choice of setting and how you detail it, so don't skimp on this element of the story.

Finding Game Locations

The ideal location for any story will have multiple rooms or areas where characters can meet privately, and a more central meeting area large enough to hold all the characters at once. It will also need to be relatively private, so that your players won't disturb anyone and will not be disturbed in turn. Examples of good story locations are parks, dorm lounges, apartment complex clubhouses, museums, restaurant meeting rooms, office board rooms, night clubs, conventions and shopping malls. The more public the location, however, the more care you must take not to disturb or offend non-players with your choice of costumes, props, language and behavior.

Obtain explicit permission before utilizing any type of private property, and maintain contact with local law enforcement authorities if your story will occur in view of the public eye. Use good judgment when dealing with any non-players who approach your game and are curious about what is going on; take the time to explain exactly what you are doing, but don't invite non-players to participate in the game at this point. Consider printing up some inexpensive business cards to offer passers-by who are genuinely curious and encourage them to contact you later, when you can speak with them at leisure.

Where Are We?

Take some time to think about what the setting must be like from your characters' point of view. What's its history? What are its secrets? Who are the major movers and shakers in the area, imbued, mundane or supernatural? Is it a threatening place where the characters will face danger every night, or is it a peaceful, placid locale in which the characters generally have the upper hand? Choose locations that complement your theme and mood whenever possible. If you want to invoke a brooding, somber mood as you weave a tale about the price of power, you shouldn't choose the front room of a pizza parlor, no matter how inexpensive or centrally located it might be. After choosing your location, supply your characters with a general map of the location, whether it's an entire city or a single building within a metropolis. This will give them a better idea of the physical location and help them visualize the setting as they play.

Disasters Waiting to Happen

A very useful Storytelling technique is to plant a few incendiary devices within the story backdrop before the story even begins. These story "land mines" go off only if characters meet predetermined criteria known only to you. For example, you decide when you create the story that the local mayor is actually a pawn of some supernatural creature, and keeps a watchful eye out for any reports of activity dealing with other monsters (or those that hunt them). If the characters try to take their concerns to anyone in authority or even use *Politics Influence* that passes through the mayor's office, the mayor will immediately do her best to track down everything she can on them and relate the information back to her master. The mayor is a "time bomb" planted in the story, but its clock does not start unless the characters do something to activate it.

Stage Business

In and Out of the Box

Devote time and attention to your setting and the stage on which it occurs. Your story's setting should not be a cardboard stage that exists only when your players tread

upon it. Make it a vibrant, active part of the story that lives and breathes even without the characters' conscious presence.

Think about what happens during any given 24-hour period in any community. People are born and die; they transact business; they obtain goods and services; they construct new buildings and tear old ones down; they commit crimes and infidelities; they end relationships and begin new ones; and they embark on hundreds of minor projects and enterprises that, when combined, make up their daily and nightly lives. What happens in your setting when the characters go back to their homes after a night out hunting? How might this be reflected in the world around them when they next meet? Your setting should reflect this ebb and flow of normal life, so that your characters will know and understand that they live in a place that is not static, but that is as active as they are, not to mention have a sense of the normal lives they once had (if only by observing them afar).

Ambiance

This is a game about hunters. Once ordinary people with normal lives, they now dwell in a world that's still remarkably like our own but with differences both large and small. This is the Gothic-punk environment, and establishing its look and feel in your game can be a challenge, but will aid your story immeasurably. Lighting, music and stage dressing will all help bring your story and scenes to life and make it all the more real for your players.

Lighting

Once they discover the truth of the existence of monsters, many imbued find themselves living nocturnal lives themselves, a world full of shadowed rooms, dark corners and unlit alleys. Accordingly, many sessions will take place at night in-game, regardless of the actual time out of game. If this is a necessity, there are a few ways to help simulate such shadowy places at a minimum of time and expense. Turn out some of the lights in your game locations, but don't make the room pitch black — doing so risks the safety of the participants. Candles are ideal for creating the proper ambiance, but most game sites won't permit real fire, with good reason. You can replicate firelight with electric holiday candles, or regular light bulbs masked by colored plastic screens (called gels). Strings of miniature lights can also replicate shadowy spaces, but give you enough light to play safely.

Avoid bright, direct lighting, as this brings the mundane world into sharp focus. Try replacing white lights with lower wattage, softer bulbs. You can even use multicolored lights to help create mood and atmosphere. A red light bathing one corner of a room helps convey an angry, tense mood, while blue light often indicates cooler, more subdued emotions. Strobe lights and black lights both work well to convey the energy and appearance of a nightclub, while phosphorescent glow sticks make great light sources for sewers (and the red ones give off a glow that's reminiscent of firelight). If you can't turn off some of the lights or replace them with dimmer bulbs, try draping a screen of dark cloth over them to cut down the direct light, being careful not to create a fire hazard.

Of course, sessions can take place during the day as well — it is a time when the imbued are safe from the direct actions of many monsters (though certainly not all), and thus can be ideal for all kinds of research, scouting or even daylight raids. Creating a daytime atmosphere is relatively easy — use bright yellow (not white) lights, throw open windows for some fresh air if possible, and otherwise try to illuminate as much

of the play area as possible — that way if you have to time shift to night later on in the session, it will be even more of an appreciable change in atmosphere because of it.

Music

Consider the emotional messages you want to send with each story session. Music can help you create these feelings, underscoring the sensations of fear, anger, love or joy that you're trying to bring into the game. Bring a variety of music to your games so that you can change it to reflect your story's changing moods, and tailor the music volume to the current story environment. Keep the volume at a background level when your players are trying to interact — don't force them to compete with the music. Try not to let the music overpower your settings. Your choice of music should suggest the mood, not dictate it. Movie soundtracks are ideal for many stories because they have few distracting lyrics and usually have multiple tracks that convey the changing moods and scenes of the film. Try classical music or light jazz to evoke a more sophisticated atmosphere, or techno and dance to establish a higher energy level. Gregorian chants and plainsong create a feeling of antiquity, while New Age music can evoke a mysterious and ethereal atmosphere.

Props

Consider props as one of your final touches. They are one of the last details needed to make your story believable, and they fall into two categories: stage props and personal props.

Stage Props

Stage props are those pieces of set dressing that decorate your game location to suggest the fictional locale where the story takes place. Whether set in a library or the sewers, you need some props to help bring the game to life. Good story props include furniture, works of art (especially art created by your players), costume jewelry, old clothes, legal documents, electronic bits and pieces from appliances that no longer function, scrolls, pieces of old Halloween costumes and unidentifiable oddments from your basement and attic. The limitations on props include resources, space, portability and storage.

You don't need to spend a fortune on props. You'll find many excellent pieces of set dressing in your own home, in discount or second-hand shops, and you can easily make others. They needn't be lavish — props shouldn't compete with your story for the players' attention. Props that *suggest* an object or setting are more than adequate in conveying the general idea of the actual object. Good players will treat these things as the genuine objects while in character, and will use their imaginations to fill in the blanks. For example, a brightly colored blanket, a low table and a few stuffed animals can quickly make a child's bedroom; it needs only your descriptive narration to provide the necessary imagery. If your game seems short on stage props, enlist the help of your players in finding some suitable pieces, or get together and build a few simple props together.

Make sure your stage props are appropriate to the space in which you will use them. A great-looking wooden chest will be lost if you stick it in the far corner of a school auditorium. Likewise stacks of cardboard boxes and packing crates might be great for an abandoned warehouse, but they're less useful if they leave no playing room for the characters to move around in. Smaller props might require some special lighting to make them noticeable among the other elements of your game, while larger props will tend to dominate scenes and even overpower them if they are too large.

Props small and large don't find their way to the game site by themselves. Before you invest in any huge or awkward stage props, consider how you will get them from their storage place to the game and back. Smaller props can present the same problem if you have many boxes of them or if some of them are fragile. Check with the owners of your game site about prop storage. You might be able to arrange to store your props at the site itself provided that you meet the site's safety and cleanliness requirements. If you can't store your props where you game, however, you're going to have to think about where to put them when the story ends for the night. Unless you have a huge storage area in your own living space, consider dividing up the props and entrusting some of them to players for transportation and safekeeping. The drawback to sharing prop storage is that a player may forget to bring a prop you need to the game; the benefit is that this will keep your home from looking like a yard sale.

Personal Props

More than costumes, personal props help identify particular characters or Narrator characters. Hats, canes, gloves, long coats, cell phones, scarves, old medals, laptops, briefcases, stethoscopes, palm pilots, lab coats and jewelry all help give characters a distinctive appearance. The number one rule about personal props is: They must be safe. Never allow a player or Narrator to carry anything that might injure another person, and never permit any real or prop weapons in the game. Doing so is an invitation to disaster, and is the hallmark of a foolish and immature Storyteller.

Economy is often a primary consideration in securing personal props. Many people just don't have the resources to spend on lavish costumes and brand new accessories they will use only for their games. Lead your players on a props scavenger hunt around your community, hitting discount stores, second-hand shops, yard sales and antique stores. The hunt for good personal props is continuous — most consignment and resale shops change their stock frequently, so make them a regular stop in your prop search.

Supernatural Powers

As odd as it may seem, an often-overlooked thing for Storytellers to try to evoke with stage properties and/or special effects are supernatural powers. Too often, the inclusion of supernatural powers becomes simply a matter of a Narrator stating things like "The monster moves with supernatural speed" or "Out of game, everyone hears a high-pitched wail outside." Especially in a game like **Laws of the Reckoning**, this is often a wasted chance to help underscore the mysterious and powerful nature of the supernatural world that the hunters find themselves up against, particularly when there are all manner of simple tricks that can be used to help simulate supernatural powers and give players a feeling that something truly paranormal is going on.

Obviously, lighting and sound can go a long way to helping simulate supernatural powers — projecting a bright light behind a creature creates a literal aura around it that suggests great power and otherworldliness, while having actual sound effects of things like thunderstorms or wailing voices does a lot more for game atmosphere than simply describing such effects and illusions to the players. Likewise, finding or creating representations of different powers can do a lot to enhance the player's roleplaying experience, such as taping a picture of the illusionary person to the wall instead of simply having an index card stating what the players see, and having a Narrator use a string of electric lights to simulate a magical barrier frees him from constantly answering questions about where the boundary of the barrier is and who or what is inside it. Even a few minutes of simple preparation and basic prop and stage techniques

can go a long way toward helping the players feel as though they're really up against something strange and unknown.

Indeed, if used correctly after a while players come to associate particular sights or sounds with the cues you have designed, making it easier and more atmospheric to introduce such powers rather than making constant out of game announcements. Just make sure that any effects or props you use to simulate supernatural powers do not inadvertently overshadow or trivialize the effect you are trying to achieve — it's generally better to describe the hellish imp on your shoulder than try to use a stuffed animal to represent it, for example — and that you do not overuse such effects to the point that players come to anticipate every supernatural power to be punctuated with a thunderclap or other stock effects.

Of course, you can always stick to the tried-and-true descriptive method if you like — this is a game based on the “mind's eye,” after all, and so leaving most or all of the effects for the players to imagine is perfectly fine. Don't forget to be as descriptive and atmospheric as possible when doing so, however — don't just blandly state “You see an illusion of a man” when you could say “You see what looks like an ordinary man standing in the middle of the room, but his form seems to waver like a television picture slightly out of focus, and when you look closely you realize you can see right through him.” After all, the imbued have been immersed in a whole new world — don't hesitate to keep things as mysterious as you want while making them as descriptive as possible.

All that having been said, here are some additional suggestions for ways to stage/simulate “common” supernatural powers to make them especially memorable for your players:

Strength: Of course, lifting heavy items (actually foam replicas) or bashing through supposedly solid walls of painted paper or foam bricks are time-honored ways to signify supernatural strength, but those aren't the only ones. Consider adding a rule that for each level of supernatural strength a creature possesses, they knock anyone they strike in melee or brawling combat one step backward, perhaps even if they don't inflict damage.

Speed: Take full advantage of the rule of steps in combat when a creature with supernatural speed takes its action — thus, a creature with three attacks per round can take up to nine steps in a single turn, compared to a normal person's measly three. Use these extra steps to strike and then maneuver out of reach, put other characters in between the monster and its would-be attacker or otherwise keep the hunters off-balance. As an added bonus, you can have players close their eyes when the creature takes its actions (this is also a good trick for invisibility or teleportation), and only open them in order to resolve a test with the creature. That way, at the beginning of the next turn the players are forced to look around frantically to see where the super-fast creature moved and what it did to their friends during that blur of motion.

Endurance: Supernatural resilience is a relatively easy thing to project — never tell them if their characters' attacks had any effect, unless the result would have to be totally obvious such as losing a limb. (After all, sure they shot the walking corpse, but unless it falls over or the bullet visibly bounces off, do they really know what effect the shot had?) This is especially effective if the game is using the optional system regarding visible injuries — just don't have a supernaturally resilient creature ever show any signs of being injured until it keels over or gets away, and the players will quickly understand just what it's like to fight a monster that might be shrugging off even their most powerful attacks.

Flying: As with supernatural speed, take advantage of the increased mobility that flight offers to move around the battlefield and stay out of reach (or at least inconvenience) the best weapons the hunters have. You can even rule that if a creature flies high enough it goes out of sight, but then can subsequently make a surprise attack from above on one particular target as it dives at high speed. Such tactics will keep the hunters guessing where the flying creature will strike next as well as the highly frustrating nature of fighting a creature that can use a whole other dimension in battle.

Intelligence/Precognition: An often-overlooked threat is a creature with super-human intelligence or precognitive powers. Such creatures are generally one step ahead of just about everyone due to their superior planning skills; to simulate this in combat, you may give a monster one “planning card” per level of supernatural intelligence or foresight it possesses. At any time during combat, these cards can be turned into a *minor* item or plot twist in the creature’s favor. (Think in terms of what villains in spy films always have to seem handy when a hero threatens to thwart their plans — hidden pistols, escape routes, a squad of disposable goons, etc.) However, the Storyteller should always take care that planning cards are never used to create the following: unstoppable escapes, situations impossible for the players to overcome, or items that couldn’t or wouldn’t be present — pistols or knives are one thing, but think hard before having someone whip out a katana from inside her suit jacket. Rather, think of these cards as the creature’s intelligence or foresight leveling the playing field when things threaten to upset its plans. Likewise, so long as players understand that planning cards are a representation of the creature’s supernatural intelligence and not simply being used to “screw them over,” such cards can give players an excellent idea what it is like to battle an enemy who can predict every move or whose thoughts operate at a level far above their own.

The Heralds: Why limit stagecraft to supernatural powers? Pulling out the stops with regards to the Heralds — during the imbuing or otherwise — is another excellent way to reinforce the otherworldly edge to the lives of the imbued. Some good ideas for simulating these mysterious entities are: recording a CD of strange voices and phrases (and instructing non-imbued to ignore such sounds entirely); inserting written messages into papers or magazines (opening the sports section to see “IT DOES NOT LIVE” printed in bold letters right across the top of the page just as the zombie walks in is an experience not soon equaled); scrawling hunter code symbols on prominent props or set pieces (so long as you don’t do damage to them out of game); and, for the truly technologically inclined, inserting text or audible messages into video that’s watched during the game can all work wonders to kick off an imbuing or establish the mood later on during the game. Players with the *Patron* Background can be fertile ground for this kind of experimentation as the chronicle goes on, but even if you only intend to use such effects during the imbuing you should take it as an opportunity to go all-out with what the players will experience.

So You Want to Tell a Story . . .

You’ve got some players, a place to play, a plot and a collection of great CDs — you’re ready to play, right? Nope. Here’s a checklist of important things you’ll have to work out before the game even starts.

The Imbuing

As the moment that defines a hunter as something forever apart from the rest of humanity, the imbuing offers the possibility for some extremely powerful roleplaying

and truly unforgettable scenes. Yet at the same time the very mysterious nature of this event can seem intimidating to Storytellers, putting them at a loss for how to portray such a momentous event in a way that the players will relate to and at the same time contribute to the chronicle they wish to create. Therefore, the following section details some common ways to approach the imbuing to ensure that it will be the kind of life-changing event it deserves to be without running you absolutely ragged in the process. Even if the imbuing isn't handled during play, some of the concerns covered here are still useful in making sure the story of the imbuing carries the proper weight in a character's backstory.

As always, these suggestions should not be considered absolute gospel — if you find a better way to run the imbuing in your game, by all means go ahead. It is simply intended to be a guide to help Storytellers with designing a session that is often as tricky as it is rewarding.

Know Thyself (And Thy Players)

Although one would think it would go without saying, a lot of times players begin their first session knowing nothing more about their characters than their name, their in-game statistics, and perhaps a 30-second biographical sketch. While it's true that some things about a character are never quite solidified until play begins, much of the point of **Reckoning** is lost if you cross over into imbued life without a sense of what you're leaving behind; it's hard to empathize with a character you barely know. Likewise, as a Storyteller you stand to risk missing much of the flavor and intensity of a hunter imbuing if you simply dive into the first session with a nothing more than a timeline scribbled on a cocktail napkin that reads: "8:05, game begins; 8:25, brain-eating zombies arrive; 8:26, wackiness ensues."

This isn't to say that every hunter needs a 40-page character history complete with a list of childhood playmates, top 10 favorite ice cream flavors and high school grade point average, nor does it mean that you have to have plans for the first session rivaling the complexity of the Normandy invasion. It's simply that for the themes and atmosphere of the **Reckoning** to come into play, your players have to be able to really sympathize with their characters and the struggle they've been thrust into or a lot of the essence of the imbuing is lost. Likewise, as the Storyteller you have to have a clear idea of which aspects of the imbued and their mission you wish your games to focus on, since the imbuing will set the tone for how the players view the rest of the chronicle afterward.

In the case of the players, preparing them for the imbuing and the future beyond it often involves detailing the past. It's a good idea to require at least a thumbnail sketch of each character's life, friends and loved ones before play begins (if only because you intend to take one or more of those away during the imbuing). Nothing terribly elaborate, but enough to give them a feeling of being part of some community and not just an abstract collection of Traits brought into existence solely for the purpose of the game. If you're running an imbuing for multiple characters at once, make sure they know each other as well as their in-game relationship requires. (There are few things as awkward as two players portraying best friends whose characters seem to know absolutely nothing about each other.) This goes for the Narrator characters as well — killing off a character who is supposed to be the love interest of one of the player characters but whom he really knows nothing about has much less emotional impact than doing away with a character he feels he knows well. Even giving a Narrator character a first name paired with a quirk or habit — "This is Steve, the guy

two cubicles down who talks a lot and always sneaks out five minutes early on Friday" — is better than saying it's simply a nameless someone who works in the same building as one of the hunters. In short, humanize everyone as much as you can, even if you know they're going to be zombie bait six minutes in; the players certainly don't know that, and it helps reinforce that those bodies the zombies are eating weren't simply victims, they were people as well.

Preparation for the imbuing should involve a careful contemplation of some of the other elements covered in this chapter, most especially plot, theme and mood. Think about what type of imbuing you can create that will best work for the chronicle you have in mind and the characters the players have prepared, and construct the imbuing accordingly. As one of the most powerful moments in a hunter's life, the imbuing will naturally set the tone for how he approaches everything afterward, and so you want to ensure it's one that will work with what you have in mind as opposed to one you will have to fight to overcome. You are likely to be unpleasantly surprised, for example, if you expect and plan around the group being sociable with monsters if their imbuing consisted of a nightmarish battle with an array of bloodthirsty creatures. Rather, if you want to have a game where the hunters' new abilities and situation are as inscrutable as the Messengers themselves, include things that will make the players question everything about their new existence. For example, you could have the hunters receive contradictory (or at least *apparently* contradictory) messages from the Heralds, meet other hunters with radically different motivations or strange edges, be joined by bystanders who seem to be like them but then freeze up at a critical time, etc. If you want more of a straightforward action-adventure feel for your game, make the choices more clear-cut, add some dramatic physical challenges to overcome, and give the hunters direct means to take action against the creatures you present.

Of course, nothing says you can't throw the players a thematic curve during the imbuing, especially if you know they're expecting you to go one way in particular, but just bear in mind that the imbuing will resonate for a long time afterward and brainstorm accordingly. Once you feel you and your players have a good enough grasp on the characters and the world they thought they knew, it's time to pull back the veil and let them hear the truth of the Heralds.

Establish A Feeling of Normalcy

It's an old axiom that horror works best when it contrasts with the mundane. This is an important thing to remember as you actually set up and begin the imbuing session — it should contain enough ordinary life and everyday experiences that the players get a feeling of being ordinary people. Too often a Storyteller will spring monsters and visions on the players before they really have a sense of what their characters were like as ordinary folks, thus robbing the inevitable character transformation that accompanies the imbuing of a lot of its dramatic potential. Perhaps the best way to establish this feeling of normalcy is to have the session begin with the players engaged in some perfectly normal activity, and let it play out for at least half an hour to an hour before really throwing the imbuing into high gear. For example, if you're planning on having the imbuing occur while the players are taking part in a group therapy session, let them actually sit down and roleplay the therapy process for perhaps an hour or so. Once you feel it they have gotten solidly into character and have a feeling of the rhythm of their lives before the imbuing, then the inevitable arrival of the supernatural is that much more horrific and jarring to them.

One positive aspect to this approach to the imbuing is that it paradoxically creates tension through unspectacular events, as the players' own out-of-game anticipation of their imminent immersion in the supernatural means that each moment you delay giving it to them helps build up the excitement they feel. This is especially effective if you can call on a number of Narrator characters for the scene, which will keep the players guessing who the monsters might be out of game as well as allow you to show what happens to ordinary people when the monsters finally arrive. (You can even have some of these Narrator characters wind up as bystanders or even other hunters, to further throw them off guard.) This atmosphere also reinforces the sense that hunters are not created in a vacuum, and teaches them some truths about their new existence in a few seconds what might otherwise take hours to explain concerning the difference between them, the monsters and the people who have not heard the Truth.

The only thing to be careful of when establishing a feeling of normalcy is that you not let it go on too long — while the scene shouldn't feel rushed, letting it run too long will quickly spoil the tension that has built up as anticipation becomes exasperation. It's a fine line, but one that deserves close attention as you run the events immediately leading up to the imbuing. Wait for them to get comfortable with their character and the scene, maybe relax just a little, then shatter that illusion of comfort with the imbuing. Monsters don't play fair — who said you had to?

Moment of Truth

So now you've arrived at it: the moment of the imbuing itself. Remember that save for those hunters with the *Patron* Background, this is the only time they'll probably ever be in contact with the Heralds, so spare no effort to convey just how powerful and alien an experience it is. Overall session design aside, how you describe the actual moment of the imbuing will also color how the players view many things about their new existence, so think carefully about the effect that you wish to create. Sometimes even hunters who are imbued at the same time see very different things or receive very different messages from the Heralds, which gives you an immense amount of creative freedom as well as a natural way to tailor the experience to each character. Use it! First, think of how you want the presence of the Heralds to come to each character: is it a roar in her head that threatens to shatter her sanity, a feeling of bliss and words on encouragement from on high, or just simple (albeit undeniable) information? While you're at it, write down what you want the Messengers to say to each character in advance, the better to avoid having to fall back on more cliché-sounding things like "THE DEAD WALK" or "IT DOES NOT REST." For many hunters, those words are all they have to go on in regards to what they think the Heralds want from them, so choose them with care — just look how far witness1 has gone in his efforts to understand and interpret "INHERIT THE EARTH."

Next, try to appeal to all of their senses as the imbuing washes over the characters and the Sight lays plain the truth of the monster(s) before them — the smell of the rot's decaying skin hidden under its floral perfume, the sound of flesh tearing as the bloodsucker rips open its victim's throat to feed, the sickly bluish skin of the walking corpse, etc. Anything that helps ground the players in the moment and immerse them in their characters' new perceptions goes a long way toward making the imbuing feel like a true *revelation* rather than just some comic-bookish transformation. Don't be afraid to pause the session and relate to the players as much description as you require in order to convey the exact feelings and sensations you want the hunters to experience. In fact, a brief descriptive pause often serves well to simulate the flood of sensory information

that washes over the hunters during the imbuings, so take advantage of the technique to make sure you get across the message you want.

Lastly, don't hesitate to employ as much stagecraft as possible during the imbuings; even the littlest props and makeup touches often make up in creepiness what they lack in magnitude. For example, while time stops and the players close their eyes for your description of the imbuings, you can have a Narrator character apply a bit of quick makeup so that when the players open their eyes again, they really do suddenly see a pallid corpse instead of a friendly businessman. Such things typically require very little advance planning or investment on your part, yet have an immeasurable impact on the players during the game. (More ideas for portraying the Heralds can be found elsewhere in the chapter.) Just make sure you don't obscure the actual experience of the imbuings with the amount of special effects you use, and you should be all right.

Mounting Horror

Once the actual moment of the imbuings has occurred, don't relax the events of the session — like any other session, you should plan the imbuings so that as horrifying and jarring the initial experience is, it's only the start of a rising chain of events leading to a powerful climax. One common mistake many new **Reckoning** Storytellers make is pouring a huge amount of description and preparation into the moment of the imbuings, but then having the rest of the session be a fairly unremarkable chase or fight sequence that just happens to feature the newly revealed monsters as antagonists. Doing so can undermine a lot of the horror and mystery surrounding the imbuings very easily, since any questions the experience might have raised in the hunters about their new existence immediately seems fairly easily solved by the directness of the rest of the session. This isn't to say that a battle or chase plot can't be used for the imbuings. It's just that you should take a bit of time to think about how you want to use the imbuings and the events surrounding it to build to an even more dramatic climax, rather than having the moment of the imbuings be the biggest drama of the night and letting everything else slide after that.

One good way to maintain the initial sense of horror is to make sure that the monsters the hunters confront understand and play up their monstrous natures and inhuman motives as much as possible. Even if the plot is relatively straightforward, such as a frantic chase to stop some rampaging creature, its behavior should constantly reflect its inhuman mindset. In short, the players should never feel as though they are simply dealing with humans that happen to have fangs or fur; while they might forget it, or the monsters themselves take pains to hide it, it should always be apparent on some level that the creatures the imbued are dealing with *are not human*. Their goals might coincide on certain things, but even then the characters should realize or at least suspect that even “friendly” creatures could potentially perform acts that would make the characters vomit if it would get them what they want. For example, if the imbuings places the characters in the middle of a fight between a shapechanger and a bloodsucker, the characters might very well side with the shapechanger, and it might even seem to be right and noble to do. Yet in the middle of the battle, the hunters might watch in horror as the shapechanger kills a few obviously innocent bystanders who get in its way without batting an eye, or flies into a frenzy and messily devours a wounded enemy. In short, while their behavior should never be arbitrary (though it might seem so to the imperfect understanding of the hunters), the creatures should always behave in a way that reminds the hunters that they're dealing with *monsters* and not just regular folks with nifty powers and pale skin.

Another good technique to use in building a rising sense of horror and drama after the initial moment of the imbuing is to never let the hunters feel that they have a complete handle on their new powers and perceptions. Right about when one of them thinks that they understand what might be going on, another person in the group demonstrates an edge they hadn't had before, or the actions of another character call into question the judgment or opinion the hunters had formed. Maybe a witness asks the militant Avenger why she's attacking a creature's helpless, cowering minion, or for that matter a more pacifistic Redeemer or Visionary might find himself the target of a grieving bystander's anger for not striking down the monster responsible for killing their loved one. Perhaps another hunter or group of hunters arrives in time to save the characters' hides, only to demonstrate a completely different view on the Heralds and the nature of the mission than what the players were developing. Paired with the alien motives of the creatures around them, this feeling of mystery about the Heralds and the new reality they've revealed to the characters can keep the players from starting to feel comfortable and keep them working and guessing to figure out what you have put before them. Just remember that the players should feel that it is *possible* to understand what is going on, it's just *difficult*. Red herrings, conflicting motives, mysterious powers and sudden reversals are all wonderful tools to keep players guessing, but do not overuse them to the point where the players feel absolutely nothing can be counted on or only frustration will follow. Ideally, the players should be kept just enough off guard about their new state so that they don't immediately get super-hero syndrome and team up unquestioningly on all things, but at the same time they are not so conflicted that they become frozen with indecision or infighting at every turn.

Finally, now that you've designed things to keep characters debating what the true nature of the monsters and their new imbued state might be, go back to the mechanics of the plot itself and make sure it furthers the imbuing experience you want to create. Plan out the major events of the session to get the best use from your Narrator characters and to create the most horrific effects possible, and don't forget to have a few contingency plans in mind in case the players do something unexpected. Write up a timeline to cover pacing issues so you can make sure you haven't put too many combat scenes back-to-back, or written a big pause in the action right before the final scene that will rob it of its dramatic momentum. Brief your Narrator characters so that even if they're doing nothing more than playing a screaming mortal or low-level flunky, they know what their motivations are and can confidently answer at least a few basic questions that curious hunters might put to them about their past. Last but certainly not least, make sure the actual climax of the imbuing is a *challenge*, whether that means giving the characters a savage battle, perplexing enigma or even just a desperate roleplaying scene — win or lose, the players should feel as though they achieved some kind of solid resolution. Even if that resolution was simply their ability to survive in the face of this particular supernatural menace, it should be something significant enough to give them food for thought in future sessions and perhaps a few lingering plot threads they can explore later on down the line.

The Broken Mirror

Another element that many Storytellers forget but which offers a wealth of excellent roleplaying opportunities is portraying the inevitable return to "normal" society following the imbuing. Quite often the police or other authorities will arrive to investigate the events surrounding the imbuing, especially a violent or particularly public one, which means the characters will have to answer some questions and get

their first taste of the double life they've just been forced into. A hunter may get away clean from the scene of the imbuings and arrive home in the dead of night, only to find her worried husband or child is waiting up for her with questions she can't really answer. Even if the hunter lives alone, works nights and doesn't bump into anyone she knows in the immediate aftermath of the imbuings, take a moment to illustrate the just how her life has changed in the days following, especially in comparison to the blind people all around her. Maybe her boss says the same thing as one of the creatures by pure chance, causing her to freak out, only to find that he shows up clean to the sight and that her reaction has confused and frightened her co-workers. Perhaps she sees an ominous hunter symbol painted on a wall she's walked by a thousand times before, only to be bumped and jostled by the other pedestrians who stroll by ignoring the danger sign only yards away.

The ultimate purpose of such scenes is to show the players that life goes on around their characters, but that instead of being comfortable and ordinary it only reminds them of what they know (and what no one else seems to realize). These interludes need not be very long — in fact, they tend to become trite and overdone if they are — but when utilized well, they offer a natural way of coming down from the horror of the imbuings while still reinforcing the notion that there's no turning back now either. It is recommended, however, that you take pains to resist the temptation to suddenly have monsters and hunter symbols lurking absolutely everywhere in these scenes, unless you wish your game to have that kind of overwhelming motif to it. Sprinkling a few monstrous or alien touches into the normal life the characters once knew is fine, but having hunter symbols on every lamp post or having every cop they pass suddenly be tainted by evil quickly becomes a bit much for even the darkest settings. If you've done your job well, the players won't need such heavy-handed techniques to realize that this new moment of normalcy can only be a temporary reprieve before the monsters return and the hunt begins anew....

It should be noted that this sequence of scenes need not necessarily be the buildup to a physical confrontation of some kind; any kind of increasingly dramatic and challenging scenes will do just fine as the climax of an imbuings.

Unique Considerations

If you're a novice Storyteller, this section contains vital information about organizing a successful **Laws of the Reckoning** game. If you're an experienced **Mind's Eye Theatre** Storyteller, you still need to read this section, perhaps twice, because **Laws of the Reckoning** has some unique considerations that bear mentioning when it comes to setting up and running long-term chronicles. Certain typical conventions of live-action in general or **Mind's Eye Theatre** in particular don't apply much or at all to this game, while other dimensions are opened up that are difficult to explore in other venues.

Therefore, do yourself a favor and take a look at these topics before you go much farther, because if you don't you may quickly find yourself at the head of a very confused chronicle with no idea why it's turned out the way it did. On the other hand, once you know about these special factors, you can use them to build a game like your players have never seen before, creating a unique roleplaying experience they'll remember for years to come.

Style of Play

One way or another, many live-action game sessions involve a group of 20 to 30 members of the same group — or supernatural race, or political group, or what have you — all gathered in one location, where they proceed to play politics with each other, tell stories of their mythic past, fight among themselves for power and otherwise conduct the business of their shadow society. To borrow terms from other *Mind's Eye Theatre* games, it naturally makes sense for a city's Kindred population, or Garou sept, or changeling court to all hang out and talk shop or put the moves on each other — it's part of their culture, and has been since the dawn of time. There's enough inherent drama in one meeting of such beings to keep a chronicle going for quite some time, as they all have a clear sense of where they've come from and most likely a common purpose or two that they've inherited from their ancestors as well.

It doesn't work quite that way for the imbued.

Sure, you can put 20 or 30 of them in a room with each other, and sparks of some kind are bound to fly — when the local Avenger team butts heads with the neighborhood Redeemer group, their differences are sure to provide plenty of fuel for a number of good dramatic scenes down the line. A gathering can also provide the imbued with a much-needed sense of community in their largely isolated and paranoid lives, reminding them when things look bleak that they're not in this alone after all. It might also happen if a number of teams are aware of each other and decide it's time to share notes, discuss common threats and so on. Lastly, if one is willing to look years down the game's timeline, such gatherings will become increasingly important as the creeds begin to solidify into more formal organizations, distinctions between followers of different Virtues are recognized and the imbued really begin forming their own shadow society instead of the loose underground collective they have managed to build so far.

Trouble is, the imbued aren't even close to that point yet, and that makes large meetings of the imbued tricky propositions at best, especially if you intend to make them the central events of your chronicle. It's hard to develop a sense of the imbued being part of a tiny and secretive community if the only time they ever meet for a game session is when they're surrounded by 30 other hunters just like themselves, no matter how hard you might try to drill it into their heads that on all other nights "they're alone against the night." Hunters still tend to operate in small teams formed by chance and circumstance, and while imbued of the same city might keep in touch with each other through the hunter-net or other means, it's unlikely they'll meet in one place, where it would be only too easy for their various enemies to spy on them or even possibly try to take them all out at once. Some hunters even live in willful ignorance of their fellows as much as possible, afraid that if they are captured or mind-raped by the enemy they'll give up information that could get other imbued killed. Removing some of these elements without careful consideration of how they can be replaced or at least compensated for can quickly cause players to have a distorted and inconsistent outlook on their characters and the world they inhabit, which in turn leads to serious problems down the road.

What's more, in regards to matters of internal politics and power structures, while various imbued might have substantial ideological differences, at this stage of the hunt the hunters are too disorganized and frightened of the enemy to do much other than debate with each other. Only the fanatical or the insane are going to fight each other outright when there's so much to be done and so many enemies everywhere they look,

and those who resort to such tactics are usually shunned (or worse) by their fellows before long.

This natural cohesiveness can be a serious impediment to creating drama and excitement at large gatherings of imbued, because right now there is simply too much need for cooperation built into their very existence for them to believably maintain high-intensity conflicts for a long period of time. This means that gatherings of imbued, while rich in roleplaying experiences and information exchanges, can quickly run out of elements of drama or action that help keep the plot moving — bringing in outside enemies can sometimes work, but you can only have monsters or the authorities show up at these meetings so many times before it becomes cliché (not to mention having players wonder why they make themselves easy targets like that), and then you're right back where you started.

So faced with these problems, what's an eager young/grizzled old Storyteller to do? Fortunately, there are a few suggestions that can help you iron out some of these wrinkles and build a game that works with the elements of hunter life, rather than against it.

Solution One: Troupe-Style Play

Perhaps no other game is as well-suited to troupe-style play than **Laws of the Reckoning**. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the term, in a live-action context it refers to a style of play where players create several smaller groups of characters (such as hunting teams) and then alternate responsibility for portraying Narrator characters and otherwise running games for each other. For instance, say a group of 15 players decides to run a troupe-style game. For simplicity's sake, they break up into three troupes A, B and C, with five people each. When troupe A has a session, members of troupes B and C act as Narrator characters and work with Storytellers and Narrators to fill all the needed roles — villains, allies, bystanders and so on. Then when troupe B has a session, members of troupes A and C help run the show, and so on. Sometimes troupes may even rotate roles on the same night, if the scenes that each group needs to run are short. All three might be working on one story together, or they might have little or nothing to do with each other, as the Storyteller decides.

The advantages of this system are extensive, especially with hunter chronicles. First of all, the players get to retain a sense of being in small, isolated groups, while the larger-than-normal Narrator character base allows for the creation of very in-depth scenes with many personalities for characters to interact with — rather than simply describing a bar full of people, for example, the Storyteller may actually have enough members of other troupes to set one up! It also ensures that troupes cooperate well out of game since they all rely on each other to help bring their sessions to life — a troupe that routinely refuses to help out may well find itself short on Narrator characters when it wants to schedule a game, for example. (Offering an Experience Trait or other in-game benefit is a good way to keep Narrator character attendance up as well, as long as you ensure that such rewards aren't abused by players seeking only to quickly rise in power instead of helping the game as a whole.) Writing plotlines tailored to specific players and groups is easier as well — since they operate largely or entirely as separate entities, you can throw a combat-oriented plotline at the troupe that enjoys action without worrying about isolating the group that's more geared toward puzzle solving, even if you eventually intend to steer them all onto the same course. It's also an inherently flexible system, since it relies on being able to gather a much smaller

number of people, and thus can generally be scheduled fairly easily, sometimes even on weeknights.

Of course, there are problems inherent in this system as well, though nothing that can't be overcome with some effort and imagination. First and foremost is ensuring that all the troupes feel they are being dealt with fairly, which means making sure they all get to schedule sessions and that none of them feel that they're being passed over when it comes to pivotal plots and details. Second is a matter of time itself — while individual troupes take up less time, a larger group can generate a number of troupes to keep track of, especially if you try to do it on your own, so you may wish to appoint a Narrator or for each troupe to keep track of their plots, help schedule events and so on. Multiple Storytellers may even become a necessity in larger groups if you want to be able to make sure that every troupe gets a fair chance to play each month, requiring in turn that you meet with them and make sure that the various troupe storylines are progressing as you desire. Lastly, players may also be hesitant about others using knowledge they gained as Narrator characters against their own characters later, especially if they're rivals of some kind. Problems with that kind of metagaming can usually be handled by reserving truly important plot information to characters portrayed by Narrators and Storytellers only, and reminding players that using information gained while a Narrator character is simply cheating and will not be tolerated.

Overall, while there are quite a few concerns with true troupe-style play, most of these are logistical in nature, and thus solved with proper planning and coordination; on the other hand, the primary benefits gained are plot- and character-oriented ones, elements that can be extremely difficult to replace once they've been lost. Managing such an unconventional timetable or group structure thus requires a different approach than most live-action games, but the rewards can be commensurately greater as well.

Solution Two: Group Play (With a Twist)

No matter its various merits, troupe-style play simply may not appeal to some groups, whether for logistical or artistic reasons; therefore it will be necessary to design a **Laws of the Reckoning** game that reasonably and entertainingly supports a regular large gathering of imbued. Fortunately, while there are some very significant concerns that need to be addressed, as was outlined previously, there's no reason that you can't construct a game designed to such specifications — all you need is a compelling reason for the hunters to gather together on a regular basis, aside from the simple fact of their imbuing. What follows, therefore, are four different ideas about how a large group of hunters might form in a way that's conducive to the more typical large gathering session format, as well as providing ample material for possible subplots and inter-character relationships and conflicts aside from the threat of the monsters.

Pillars of the Community

In this scenario, the hunters comprise the leadership of a city neighborhood or perhaps an entire small town; while they need not all be elected officials or other authority figures of some kind (in fact it's usually more interesting if they're not), they are considered to be valuable members of the community and feel responsible for its welfare on a number of different levels. The fact of their imbuing has only made them more committed to their goals, and they meet regularly in order to discuss strategies for how to keep their community free from all kinds of threats, from monsters on down to garden-variety criminals. Perhaps they have formed some kind of grass-roots group,

but more likely they're just your proverbial "concerned citizens" — only these citizens know monsters are real, and are determined to keep them from ruining what they hold dear. Many games lose track of the toll it takes on ordinary people when there are supernatural beings running amok in a community; however, if the players are the ones who're going to be expected to help repair a damaged store front or are on a first-name basis with the people whose houses were destroyed in the fire they started trying to destroy a vicious rot, it changes their approach to the hunt altogether. This isn't to say that the hunters will be called on to get cats out of trees or should be afraid to do anything for fear of indirectly harming one of the people they're trying to protect, just that they will have to realize what harm the hunt can do to those around them. Of course, if the group does its job, the rewards of seeing their community grow and prosper can more than outweigh such concerns, as the players get a rare privilege in gaming: a chance to build a better community as a whole, not just torch the freak of the week to maintain the status quo.

This scenario can work well with players who are just beginning their live-action careers and might otherwise feel a bit overwhelmed by the setting of **Reckoning**, as it allows you to confront them with a number of more ordinary problems and concerns as well as supernatural threats, perhaps turning up the supernatural element as the players get more comfortable and their characters start learning more about their mission. It can also work well as a change of pace for more experienced players, forcing them to deal with the kind of little details and everyday issues that aren't usually part of other games. The difficulty of this scenario lies in making sure you communicate the scope you're looking for. Bog the players down in too many mundane details and they'll start wondering why they're playing a game about people with such dull lives, but give them such positions of civic responsibility without focusing too much on daily life and they'll soon feel like the Justice League of Cherry Hill, always out fighting one monster "villain" or another, and the point of the scenario will be lost.

Hunters, Inc.

Tongue-in-cheek title aside, the structure refers to games where the hunters are part of a formal or semi-formal organization that's aware of (and probably run by) the imbued, which demands that they work together and meet in larger groups on a regular basis for progress reports, mission assignments and so on. Being together isn't totally a matter of personal choice, it's a matter of obligation as well — whether they like each other or not, the hunters all joined for a reason, and thus overt common interest draws them to gather together regularly. Of course, the exact nature of this organization is up to the Storyteller and the players to decide, as fits the needs of the chronicle. Perhaps they're part of one of the larger nascent hunter organizations such as the mysterious Rose Foundation or the eccentric Conscience of Earth, working to expand the organization's scope and ability to help their fellow imbued, not to mention hunt monsters and make a few converts along the way. Maybe they've started a business or foundation of their own as a front for their activities — private investigative services, independent newspapers or generic "community outreach" programs are all good choices, though not the only ones — and use these new jobs to maintain a semblance of a normal life while they keep up the hunt. As long as they don't hang out a shingle like "Zombie Slayers R Us," they may even be able to use the authorities to their advantage if monsters try to interfere with their "legitimate business," though it's a delicate balance lest they attract too much official attention to their probably fairly questionable practices.

The advantage of this setup is it allows the players to feel they are working together toward very tangible goals, usually with a very clear mission as well, and also allows you to easily throw a number of curves, complications and creatures their way as part of the natural trials of their new "business venture." What's more, internal politics and subplots are sure to begin as players vie for different roles within the organization or try to take it in different directions, making for a good level of internal drama without having to worry too much about players actually pulling guns on each other or anything so drastic. The disadvantage is that it can make the experience of being imbued feel a little *too* ordinary if you're not careful: "9:05, meet with pen suppliers about shipment; 10:30, meet with board for lunch; one o'clock, slay hideous unliving menace to all that is sacred; 3:45, golf with Bill..." To guard against that, make sure that the players understand that even with an organization of their own, the characters are still not totally safe from the evil the monsters represent — just better organized against it. They may even become more vulnerable as they are more public, or if the creatures start striking at their business to get at them.

Just Following Orders

Going a bit in the opposite direction, the characters of this chronicle are all part of the same organization as well, but it's not one run by the imbued, and as such the hunters have to be much more careful to cover their hunting activities or risk disciplinary action or even dismissal from the organization. Obviously, for this structure to work it must be some organization that they cannot simply shrug off being dismissed from, or the chronicle will quickly come apart as the characters quit to be out from under its shadow. Maybe it's one they can't really leave on their own, like the military, and where being dismissed would cut them off from the other imbued who are still employed there. Perhaps it's an organization they feel is simply too important for them to quit, such as the local plant where everyone works or a position on the city council, lest monsters corrupt it (or worse) in their absence. Naturally, explaining how so many imbued all came to work in a particular business or branch of government can take some explaining to avoid feeling forced, though it's not impossible — maybe they were all imbued simultaneously while on the job, or perhaps they all arranged to be transferred to the same project or location as they slowly realized the truth about each other (perhaps even as a precursor to the "Hunters, Inc." scenario, above). They might even have been put together as a group with no idea why they were assembled at first... which makes for some interesting questions about who their employer is and what she knows when they realize that so many imbued have been put together in one place.

This arrangement preserves a bit more of the paranoid and frightening atmosphere of a regular **Reckoning** game, as the hunters must lead double lives to try to accomplish their goals and keep their exploits from becoming too public in the process. In this case their shared connection offers some measure of mutual assistance and direction, but also makes them vulnerable should the higher-ups in the organization decide to shuffle things around or even terminate one of the hunters. Imagine how helpless it feels to slay monsters at night but be unable to do anything to save your job at a meeting with your boss the next day. Throw a monster or two into the ranks of the company, aware of the hunters or otherwise, and you suddenly up the ante on the whole scenario considerably. The real issue of concern in this scenario is building an organization that the players will consider important enough for their characters, without making them feel forced to go along with a tenuous setup just for the sake of the game, and keeping the shadow of the organization and its requirements hanging over the players' heads without stifling them.

Outsiders Looking In

All of these other scenarios assume that the players are part of a group that's a fairly established part of public life, but that's not the only option by far. There are just as many interesting possibilities for groups comprised of less well-regarded or even outright notorious elements as well. What if the majority of the local imbued are members of a street gang? An organized crime family? How about homeless people, streetwalkers, corner dealers, runaways or other forgotten members of society? Life is hard enough on the streets of the World of Darkness without monsters preying on people no one else will miss—learning creatures of the night exist could very well inspire a large group to band together for safety's sake. (Of course, if two characters are new friends but still members of rival gangs or feuding families, things only get more interesting.) For example, running a game set around a mission or shelter in the run-down part of town can bring a lot of different character types together toward a common goal, and also gives them a convenient place to meet since many of them have nowhere else to go. Maybe the hunters aren't part of an outright criminal element, but one that's still considered suspicious by "proper" society such as a radical political party, advocacy group, religious sect or fringe performing troupe. How do their views change once they learn of the existence of monsters? Will they try to educate the public about this new threat openly, or will they work more subtly to call attention to the wolves loose in the flock? There are countless other possible outsider groups that might find it prudent to gather together for various reasons once the Heralds call to them; these are just a few suggestions. Some players might even play authority figures who learn the truth and become allied with their former social lessers, possibly at great cost to themselves and their lifestyles.

This scenario is perhaps the best for building a strong "us versus them" mentality in the group, since not only must the hunters fear monsters stalking their every move, but they must deal with the alternating abuse and apathy of mundane authority as well. (And let's not even touch on what happens when monsters pull the strings of such agencies.) With nowhere else to turn but each other, it's not too difficult to imagine such imbued gathering together in as large a group as they can manage. However, pre-imbuing rivalries may also be impossible to avoid, and criminal elements or fringe groups may not be as forgiving as individual members when it comes to suddenly hanging out with a member of a rival faction or refusing to take part in illegal activities any longer, all of which can make trouble for characters and bring up tensions within the group. The difficulty in this kind of scenario is primarily one of casting: making sure players aren't just playing broad criminal or lower-class stereotypes, or creating too much of a "Robin Hood" mentality surrounding the various seedy elements surrounding the characters. There can be a powerful urge to give all the criminals in such a game big hearts of gold and make all authority figures irredeemably evil. Don't. Sermonizing is one thing, but forgiving criminals all their crimes stops making them criminals (and robs you of the heart of this scenario). Even if a character can call on his fellow gang members to help take down a human-looking rot, that doesn't make them nice people—after all, they thought they were killing a regular person, probably without much cause.

Solution Three: Mixed Games

Of course, there's also the possibility of compromising and doing a little of both troupe-style play and a little of conventional group gaming, if you're feeling up to both. The easiest way to do this is to have the group broken up into several hunting teams (perhaps also dividing up in-game territory as well), and conduct individual troupe sessions for each group one month, then stage a large gathering of all the available imbued the next month. This way each hunting team still gets a strong amount of individual attention, allowing you to write storylines that will give them opportunities to show off their talents and satisfy their playing styles, not to mention bring up

incidents from their past without fear of focusing on a few characters or alienating the rest of the group by bringing up one player's subplot too often. Players can also be exposed to more of the ambiance that is so essential to creating the right **Reckoning** environment, as they are still playing at least half of the time as a small group of imbued alone against the night, but they also get to reap the benefits of a larger session with their fellow imbued as well. If one troupe session in between each group session seems like too little time to develop plots, simply extend the amount of time (and thus possible sessions) between large gatherings as needed.

Viewed in this context, large group gatherings become more important as well, a valuable chance to exchange stories and information with fellow imbued as well as perhaps put together a larger puzzle each group only had pieces of on its own. (Just beware the aforementioned "Hardy Boys Syndrome" and you should be OK.) Last but not least, setting up an epic-level storyline is just as easy with this format as one with humbler scope, since it's simply a matter of tailoring each troupe's goals individually instead of trying to steer the whole unruly mob of characters all at once every session. Just make sure you don't let one troupe feel neglected by your session spacing — doing their own troupe session and then having to wait two months for the big session is a sure way to kill player interest — and you can build all manner of intertwining stories with relatively little ease, especially once you get the hang of scheduling them.

For all the plot and character advantages, the main difficulty of this game structure is still a logistical one. Don't kid yourself — to run this kind of game you're going to need a few Narrators (maybe one for each troupe) and possibly another Storyteller or two as well, unless you're sure you have the time to run all the troupe sessions yourself. (Think carefully about this.) Keeping track of each individual plotline will also be essential if you wish to avoid getting them confused or forgetting where one particular troupe left off, doubly so if you want them to be interconnected, and you should be wary of burnout when trying to handle so many different stories at once. Fortunately, the nature of the troupe sessions makes it likely that the players will give you a good deal of help with story material since you can put so much emphasis on individual subplots and the like, using their character histories to spark ideas for new stories.

It should also be noted that for their part, this structure is quite easy on the players themselves, since they can get as involved as they like. Those who want to play more often can come help out with other troupe's sessions, while those with more demanding time requirements need only worry about one session a month or so, making it a more accommodating schedule than it might appear at first glance, especially once you show the players the benefits of helping out with troupe sessions in addition to attending larger gatherings.

Ultimately, the question of game structure is yours to decide. The means to tell any kind of story lie within all of them — we've simply pointed out some common ways they might go wrong, as well as some possible solutions to these problems. What you do with them is up to you, and we wish you and your troupe the best of luck no matter what your decision might be.

Book-keeping

You will want to keep a careful, exact record of certain things throughout the course of your story. You may be tempted to blow off the book-keeping, but don't. Part of the fun for players is watching their characters grow and change over time. They will want to know how many Experience Traits they have, how close they are to gaining

a new Ability, and whether their latest Influence actions have borne fruit yet. A good Storyteller should be able to answer these questions with a minimum of fuss, but you won't be able to if you don't keep accurate records. If the scale of your story is too large for you to keep all the records easily by yourself, it's time to get some organizational help (see "Narrators," below).

If you have regular access to a computer or word processor, take advantage of some of the terrific record-keeping and contact management software available today. You can maintain one spreadsheet page for each player, or combine them all into one sheet for easy comparisons. Resist the temptation to maintain this database in electronic format only — if your hard drive ever crashes, you'll be very happy you kept paper copies in your notebook!

Character Sheets

Maintain a hard copy of each player's character sheet, even if you're using a personal computer for most of your record-keeping and maintenance. Insist that every player turn in a copy of her character sheet to you before participating in a single game, even if it means that she sits out the first hour of the game to copy out a character sheet for you by hand. Keep this original copy in your files and make certain you update it as the story progresses. Develop the habit of reviewing all the character sheets regularly, perhaps a day or two before each game, to be certain that you didn't forget to add or note something. Track Experience awards and expenditures on the sheet, as well as new Traits, edges or any other changes. Keep these hard copies organized, and bring them to each game session. Establish a policy at your very first game that if there is ever any dispute about anything appearing on a player's character sheet, the Storyteller's copy takes precedence.

Experience

Take a look at the experience chart elsewhere in this book and decide before launching your story how you will award experience. Advise each player of her award as soon as possible following every game, and note the award on your copy of the player's character sheet. Be fair when awarding Experience: You want to satisfy your players without destroying game balance. Awarding too much Experience will lead to characters who reach their maximum potential too quickly; awarding too few will result in player frustration and dissatisfaction.

Every player should earn at least one Experience Trait automatically for participating in a game session. Award an extra Trait to those players who roleplayed exceptionally well (but be sure to set the bar higher in subsequent games to prevent players from resting on their roleplaying laurels). Beyond that, consider awarding an extra Experience Trait on the basis of character achievement to encourage your players to be more active during game sessions. Encourage players to list their character goals in their backgrounds, or to provide you with a goal list before a game begins. As hunter life is largely a team effort, if multiple characters contribute to achieving a group goal, give all the players involved in achieving the goal the extra Experience Trait.

Influence Traits

If you permit your players to utilize their Influence Traits during downtimes (see "Downtimes," below), you must keep very careful track of what each Trait is doing at all times. Otherwise, it is inevitable that two characters' Influence Traits will clash as they attempt to complete opposing tasks — you will need to know when this occurs to aid you in narrating the resulting fireworks. If you are the Storyteller for a large group — say, more than 15 players —

consider giving control of the Influence Trait portion of the story to a Narrator; otherwise you may find yourself swamped with requests for Influence Trait activities between games.

Story Events

Keep a log or journal of how the story is going. After each game, find some time to jot down a few notes about what happened. Reviewing these notes will help you prepare for the next game session and evaluate how the story is progressing. Don't hesitate to ask individual players what their characters saw, heard and did at each game; better yet, ask them to provide you with some kind of post-game statement or note detailing the game session from their characters' points of view.

Character Creation

Work as closely as possible with your players during character creation. The time you invest now in helping your players create interesting, vivid characters will repay you tenfold when the game is actually under way. Much has been written about the value of building strong motivations into player characters, and this is your chance to remind players of this necessity once again! Characters must have clear motivations, plans, hopes, dreams and goals, or they are little more than a dry collection of statistics on equally dry paper.

Some Storytellers like to meet with each player individually, but busy schedules and large troupes can sometimes make this impossible. Try holding a group brainstorming session to generate good, strong character concepts, talk about shared character histories, and get a general feel of the sorts of stories to which these characters are best suited. Be clear about what you will and will not allow in your story. If you intend to change any of the rules in this book — and it's perfectly natural and acceptable if you choose to do so — inform your players as they are thinking about their character concepts, so that they do not inadvertently create characters that will be unplayable in your story.

Some troupes, particularly large ones, may have the luxury of several Narrators who can help players make characters and forward the paperwork to the Storyteller. This method works well as a time-saver for exceptionally busy Storytellers. However, if you decide to allow Narrators to supervise character creation, be certain to provide them with any special rules or methods you wish observed.

Regardless of the character creation method you employ, take ample time to review the character sheets before the first game session starts. Look for mistakes and errors that will complicate play later, such as a character with too many Attribute Traits for her age. Acquaint yourself with the histories and backgrounds for each of your player characters. Make a genuine attempt to understand what makes each character tick, and if you don't understand, ask the player to help you grasp what he's trying to convey. If you don't understand why a character has a particular item in her background, ask the player to account for it before play begins.

Once the story commences, your concern should turn from character creation to character development. Encourage your players to keep records, diaries or journals written from their characters' point of view as a roleplaying exercise. Talk with players about their characters from time to time to get a sense of how they perceive the characters' actions within the context of the story, and how they think the characters are developing.

An Evening's Events

Before the Game

Abandon any hope of accomplishing anything not game-related in the hours before the session actually starts. You'll be too busy making final adjustments to the night's plots and subplots, reviewing character sheets, packing up props and answering last-minute player questions. No matter how hectic or busy these hours might be, however, don't forget to take a few moments to relax and prepare yourself mentally for the game. If possible, meet with your Narrators and make certain they know about any special expectations or goals you have for the evening.

Pre-Game Setup

Be one of the first people to arrive at the game site. Establish yourself in a convenient table, chair or corner and tell your players when you think you'll be ready to get the game underway. Check out the game site — is everything as it should be? Unpack and set up your props, enlisting help from your players if necessary. Set aside some time to check in with your players before the game starts — many of them will want to talk with you briefly and ask questions. Have your copies of character sheets handy. Check all props for safety, remembering that no real weapons of any kind are allowed in the game, ever.

Game On

Give your players a minute or two to collect themselves and get “into character.” Advise them that they should remain in character henceforth unless they have a question for the Storyteller or a Narrator. If the size of your game location permits, designate an area as the “reality room” where players can take a short break if needed, dropping out of character and remaining out for as long as they are in that area. Then, when all questions are answered and you are ready, inform the players how long you expect the game session will last, dim the lights, cue the music and announce the start of the game.

Alternately, assuming it won't badly damage your relations with the neighbors, have all the players exit (except those whose characters would already be at the site, such as a party host) and tell them to re-enter in character. Moving out of the location and then coming back in as your character is a subtly powerful tool for establishing both a sense of character and of location, not to mention allowing people to get their last few minutes of out-of-game conversation out of their systems away from the play area, so take advantage of it when you can.

During the Game

If you aren't actively portraying a Narrator character or answering a player's question, you might be a little uncertain what to do with yourself while the game is on. How you occupy yourself during a session depends more on your Storytelling style than anything else. Some Storytellers like to hole up in a corner with a notebook and watch the action, jotting down interesting occurrences and watching for problems. Others like to remain at their check-in area so that players can find them easily. Be prepared to answer questions, adjudicate challenges and resolve plot complications at any moment.

After the Game

It's a good idea to get your players together before they leave the game for some "decompression." Live-action roleplaying can be an energetic and intense experience. Give your players a little nudge back toward reality once the game is over. Encourage feedback from your players. What were their favorite and least favorite moments in the game? Did everyone enjoy themselves? If not, why not? Did anyone feel lost or confused? Are there any questions about the night's events (be careful not to give too much of the plot away when answering this one)? Make any necessary announcements at this point.

Police the game site and clean it up. If the location belongs to someone else, leave it in better condition than you found it. Pack up your props and make sure everyone else does the same. Be one of the last people to leave, and give the site a last once-over to ensure that nothing was left behind or is out of place.

Many playing groups enjoy going out for refreshments after a game session, and that's a great way to relax and unwind at the end of the night. Don't feel obligated to continue Storytelling once the game session concludes, however. A player might not be able to enjoy his onion rings until you tell him how many Experience Traits he earned tonight, but it's important to encourage players to have the proper perspective about the game.

Taking Care of Players

Some players will, for lack of a more polite word, obsess about your story and the game. They will spend the bulk of their free time thinking and talking about it, and will pester you incessantly with more questions about the plots, subplots, Narrator characters and clues. This extreme behavior can be both annoying and frustrating, but try to see the unspoken compliment these players are paying you. They are so entertained by your efforts that it's their pastime of choice, no small feat in a world in which people enjoy many thousands of entertainment venues.

Encourage all your players to pursue their goals actively. It is not sufficient for a player to decide that she wants her character to learn more about the Heralds — she must actively pursue this course of action during the course of the story. Encourage her to ask herself, before each game session begins, how her character can travel further down the path toward her goal tonight. The character who wishes to learn more about the Heralds, for example, should plan to meet and speak with as many different characters as possible during the evening, in order to get their opinion on or experience with these mysterious entities.

Remember, while dispensing these snippets of advice and fielding dozens of zealous questions, to respect your players. Without them, there is no story! This doesn't mean you should allow your players to run your life or run amok without consequences. Showing respect does mean that you should listen attentively when they ask questions, value their opinions, and strive to give them the best story you can. Meanwhile, keep an eye out for players whose characters come into conflict with one another during the course of the story. These players will sometimes tend to allow these inter-character conflicts to spill over into tension and hostility between themselves. If this happens, don't hesitate to remind the players that they must learn to distinguish between the events that occur in the story and their own, genuine emotions. Such conflicts can, if ignored, become serious problems and damage your story.

New Players

Coming into a new situation is always nerve-racking. Now imagine that you're going into a new place, meeting a group of strangers, and you aren't even yourself! That's what every new player is staring at when they make the giant step into roleplaying. These new players may eventually become your veterans, so it's important to give them some attention.

Occasionally, new players will forget what they should be doing, and may drop out of character at inappropriate times or break a conduct rule. Your best option is to remind them politely to stay in character or behave themselves, and it is a courtesy for others who are trying to play around them. Point them toward the reality room if they need a break or have questions.

If the new person has never roleplayed before, pitching him out into the game with only a smattering of rules and his character sheet is frankly a little cruel. Sometimes these folks come in with friends, spouses or significant others, so they aren't completely friendless or lost, but occasionally, the lone new person does come in, trying out something for the first time. Consider sending these folks in bearing plot clues for certain individuals, letters for characters or something that gives them a reason to get close to the other players. Some go-getters can plunge right into action without a moment's hesitation, but the shy and the inexperienced may need some extra help. Some imbued, especially Innocents and Visionaries, often feel it is their job to get to know those new to the cause and look out for the well-being of their fellow hunters — well, here's their chance!

There is a disturbing tendency by some older players to view new players as "fresh meat." There are few surer ways to drive off new players to your game than by letting the predators have their way. Keep an eye out for bullying, rules-lawyering or the like against new players, and step in if you see someone getting dog-piled. Most new players are often shy about approaching a Storyteller, fearing that their word won't be taken seriously because they are not part of the "in" crowd. If someone does come to you with a complaint, listen to the grievance and investigate it seriously; taking it lightly only reinforces the player's perception that his word is valueless.

In the end, your best bet with new players is to give them plenty of patience and be prepared to give them some extra help as they muddle through the first games. You will be rewarded with seeing someone develop confidence in her roleplaying and taking on an active role without needing encouragement, and that means another strong veteran player you can count on.

Narrators

You can't be everywhere during a game session. Sooner or later you will realize that something critical to the story occurred and you weren't even aware of it until a week later! Sometimes you will actually be the last person to know about a significant event that happened at a game. Likewise, you can't do everything yourself, especially if your story's scale is growing. Unless you have an exceptionally small group of players, you're going to need some Narrators.

Stories can have unlimited numbers of Narrators. A good rule of thumb is to enlist one Narrator for every 10 players, but you can adjust this to suit the circumstances of your game. A very intricate or volatile plot may require more Narrators than a game that is relatively straightforward or linear. The more Narrators you have, the more work you can delegate, and the more you can concentrate on Storytelling. Encourage players to go to Narrators with their questions first, especially those concerning rules

adjudication. There is no reason you must handle every challenge personally if you have Narrators who do so competently.

One of the most valuable and essential Narrator tasks is adjudicating rules questions. Therefore Narrators should be very familiar with all the necessary rules. You'll have to evaluate your Narrators and decide whether they should answer player questions related to the plot, or whether they are "simply" rules Narrators. If you want your Narrators to provide players with plot information, be sure to brief them thoroughly and establish the boundaries of what information they can impart and what should remain hidden. Give them clear expectations and good directions before each game starts.

Encourage your Narrators to ask for help if they are in over their heads, and don't hesitate to step in if a situation appears to be getting out of hand. Don't overrule a Narrator in public if you can avoid it, however, because doing so undermines her authority and causes embarrassment. Encouraging clear communication between your Narrators and yourself can help avoid situations like this.

Narrators can help new players create characters, handle experience point expenditures, and help keep track of the story's paperwork. Some particularly large games utilize separate Narrators to handle individual aspects of the story — one Narrator for all things relating to the Heralds, another for Influences, still another for the monsters, etc. Each Narrator is then responsible for managing that story element, and should do so with the goal of making less work for the Storyteller.

Downtimes — the Games-Between-Games

"Downtime" is the inclusive phrase to indicate not only the period between game sessions, but also any player character activities, actions and exchanges that occur during this time. If you weren't aware of this fact already, your players will make you aware of it approximately two minutes after the game concludes for the night. The end of the game session isn't necessarily the end of the action. Most **Reckoning** stories do not remain in limbo between game sessions — the characters still exist in the context of the story, even if they aren't all meeting in the same place at the same time. Naturally, your players will wish their characters to undertake a variety of activities between games.

The most inconvenient aspect of downtime or "off-line" gaming is that you cannot be present to personally adjudicate every activity. The best means of dealing with this difficulty is requiring your players to submit an account of all their characters' downtime activities to you. Make certain you require that the players give you such accounts well before the next game session, as the reports will both provide you with a great means of keeping abreast of all character activities and yield a surprising number of story, plot and subplot ideas.

Good downtime information includes:

- **Hunting Behavior** — In what part of the city do the characters normally search for monsters? How do they react when they first meet a creature: cautious approach, distant observation or head-on fighting? Downtime is a good way to sprinkle hints and glimpses of creatures that will show up later, without having to worry about players immediately wanting to run out and fight the bad guy.
- **Normal Lives** — Never, *ever* forget that hunters were once (and in many ways still are) ordinary people with all of the normal joys and woes that accompany such a classification. Most hunters still maintain at least some pretense of a normal life,

which in turn presents all sorts of possible plot pressures and complications for them. Did they miss an important meeting or family event? How is their family life? What's their job been like lately? Even those hunters who don't bother with normal lives anymore need to do *something* with their time off-camera; how do they survive with no normal income? What do they do with their time off? Do they even have time off anymore?

- **Influence Traits** — The player should outline exactly what she is trying to accomplish and how, note which Influence Traits are involved and what contingency plans she's made in case her attempts fail or backfire. Consider the impact of these activities on your story before replying!
- **Meetings** — Who does the character meet with, when and why? What is discussed?
- **Hunter-net** — Built into the setting of **Reckoning** is a wonderful tool for downtime communication: the hunter-net. Having players create their own in-character e-mail lists to represent the hunter-net is an excellent way of representing this invaluable resource, allowing characters to communicate about different plot elements and plan upcoming actions without requiring too much face-to-face activity or Storyteller intervention. Just make sure that you're on the list as well, and that people understand the difference between in-character and out-of-character e-mail, and you should do fine.
- **Edges/Abilities** — If the character is trying to learn a new edge or Ability, who is teaching him? Or is he simply practicing and hoping to learn on his own?

If you have access to a personal computer and have the skills, you may find it useful to create a Web page that offers your players a ready-made downtime form which they can complete and submit online.

Handling Player Questions

There will be times during which you must engage a player in a discussion that obliges her to drop out of character. It's unavoidable, but try to keep such interactions as brief as possible. Avoid protracted discussions or arguments about the rules; save them for after the game. If you must interpret a complex situation that threatens to seriously retard the pace of the game, make your ruling as quickly as possible and deal with any consequences later.

Often one of the most distracting questions comes from players who arrive to the game substantially after the designated starting time. These players may have excellent excuses or they may simply be inconsiderate, but regardless you must decide how to handle the intrusion. One method is to force these players to jump right into play immediately without benefit of conferring with a Storyteller — this penalizes their tardiness by giving them no opportunity to spend Experience Traits or clear new equipment cards before plunging into the action. Another method is to oblige these players to wait, not taking part in the game, until you have the time and opportunity to deal with their tardy arrival.

Troubleshooting

Player Boredom: "There's nothing to do in this game!"

You will hear this refrain at some point during your tenure as a Storyteller. If you choose your players wisely and prepare your stories adequately, you won't hear it too often. But when you do hear it, don't panic. Remember, the responsibility and burden of creating and maintaining interest in the story does not fall entirely on your shoulders,

Out and About

Downtime is also a good time to try a neat little trick — having a brief in-character meeting or scene in public or semi-public location, such as a park or a diner. Having imbued characters out among a whole bunch of ordinary people talking about ordinary things can bring home just what it must be like to live the life of the imbued in ways that are hard to manage otherwise. It can also help free up valuable weekend time by having necessary scenes done on a week night, since they seldom last long or require rules adjudication of any kind. Just be careful of a few things: First of all, never, *ever*, *ever* attempt action or combat scenes of any kind or any other events where things might get even remotely out of hand — the police *will* be called, and you will have some tense explaining to do at the very least. Stick to information exchanges, character reunions and other low-key scenes that do not require props and can be easily integrated into your environment. Second, *always* remember the rules about respecting non-players — leave offensive costuming at home, and do not make the people in the booth next to you uncomfortable by talking loudly about staking things and cutting off heads, or even just by using excessive profanity or other unpleasant character quirks. Not only is that common courtesy, but there are enough bad stereotypes about gamers as it is without you adding to the list by eagerly discussing your plans to burn down a bloodsucker's haven in a way that half the café can hear (and promptly take out of context).

Finally, and this is a big one to remember: keep it all in perspective. It's fun to get your friends together and have your hunting team go out for an in-character dinner every once in a while, but slipping into character whenever you go out at all or constantly trying to arrange such in-game "nights out" are strong signs that you might be losing your ability to tell where the game ends and real life begins. This is meant to be an exercise in catching a glimpse of what life as one of the imbued would be like, not a substitution for the life you're supposed to have yourself. Use common sense — remember, such meetings are a privilege granted by the Storyteller, not the players' right to demand whenever they want one. Treat them accordingly and you'll be fine.

however broad they may be. Your players have some responsibilities, too. When you hear these complaints of boredom, try to help the player identify the source of the problem:

- Is the player pursuing her goals actively?
- Is the player hoarding information she should be sharing?
- Is the player refusing to interact with other players during games?
- Did the player miss one or more vital clues?
- Did the player create an interesting character background?
- Is the pace of the game too slow for the player?
- Is the player achieving her character goals too easily?
- Is there something in particular the player dislikes or doesn't understand about the story?

Paradoxically, you might hear cries of boredom even when you go out of your way to provide the allegedly bored players with a clear course of activity! In such cases the

problem almost always lies with the players' perception of the story rather than in any deficiencies in your Storytelling. Nonetheless, some players will claim to be bored and will have a legitimate complaint. Prepare several plot threads you can introduce into the story quickly but that do not invalidate the plots and subplots already in progress.

The more players that participate in your story, the more likely it is that one or more of them will eventually claim to be bored. The player may be bored because she's not pursuing her character's goals actively or worse, doesn't have any character goals. If you think this is the case, remind the player that the easiest way for her to exclude herself from the story and grow bored is to remain inactive and silent during a game session. Characters who do not interact with other characters or who do not make an effort to participate in the action will be forgotten quickly by their peers. While some players may be shy and prefer to participate more passively, suggest that they locate at least one other character with whom to interact — otherwise, they probably won't enjoy the game and there's probably little you can do to alleviate their boredom.

Too Much Violence: "Not another mass combat!"

Conflict is endemic to the world of the imbued, and sometimes conflict will lead to violence. It's a part of the game, but it need not be the focus of each and every story. If you believe your story is plagued by unnecessary or ceaseless violence, talk with the players you believe are responsible. Do they truly believe they are roleplaying their characters' Natures and creeds appropriately, or are they using that as an excuse to kick the snot out of everything that moves? If every session devolves into a mob scene combat or extended series of Physical Challenges, you probably do have a problem.

Try moving the fictional location of the game to a place where the characters must think twice about going berserk, such as an art gallery, museum, shopping mall or other public forum. If the extreme or unwarranted violence continues to be a problem despite your best efforts, the players and their characters must pay the piper for their behavior. Perhaps the a powerful supernatural creature targets them to be silenced for drawing too much attention to the hidden world, or maybe a character faces justice from his fellow imbued for using his fists to solve every problem, leading to dire but well-deserved consequences.

If you believe the source of the excessive bloodletting is a particular player who seems to enjoy the game only if he's attacking or killing other characters, don't let this person ruin the game for everyone else. Deal with him calmly but firmly, informing him that if he can't rein in his behavior you must ask him to leave the game. If he can't handle this, get rid of him and don't look back.

Metagaming: "Hey, your character can't possibly know that!"

If your players seem confused about the differences between what occurs in character and out of character, advise them to adopt a means of determining when a conversation or other communication is occurring outside the context of the game. Suggest that the players remain in character at all times for the duration of the session, except when they enter the kitchen area — designating a "reality" room provides players with a means of respite from the sometimes-taxing necessity of remaining in character. It may also be a good idea to develop an "out of game" hand signal; while you certainly don't want to see it used a lot over the course of the night, it can be an invaluable tool for a player who needs to insure that everyone knows what they're saying is intended as an out-of-game utterance.

Argumentative Players: “You can’t do that to my character!”

Do not allow the players to argue with you, particularly when doing so will disrupt the flow of the game. Listen to a player’s grievance; if it can’t wait, then make your ruling and stick to it. Once you make your decision it’s final—otherwise you might as well stop making decisions right now. If you respect the input of players who disagree in an appropriate manner, and then make a fair ruling, other players will notice and will emulate this behavior.

Encourage your players to respect the story. If the source of the argument is the death of a player’s character, help the player deal with the situation maturely and rationally: Don’t allow him to manipulate you through guilt or a tantrum. If the player simply cannot cope with the reality that not all things will go his way in the story, don’t allow his social maladjustment to destroy the fun for everyone else. Politely but firmly ask him to leave and do not allow him to return.

Sometimes players will argue among themselves about the game or their characters. You have the final authority to resolve such disputes. Don’t let these situations grow into shouting matches or hysterics: Put a stop to them long before they reach that stage. If the arguing players can’t resolve their disagreement, resolve it for them as quickly and fairly as possible; if they can’t accept them, remove them from the game and try to help them work it out later. You’ve got a story to run, and you can’t let this kind of situation delay the game for everyone else.

Storyteller Burnout: “I can’t think of any more stories.”

This game should not take precedence over your life. If you ever find it becoming a burden or unpleasant chore, get some help or arrange to take a break from Storytelling until you feel like returning to the helm. Let someone else take over the story for a while, or try playing a new type of game to recharge your Storytelling batteries. The game should be fun for you as well as for the players. Storytelling should never feel like a completely thankless task, a burden you grudgingly accept because no one else will—if you feel like this, it’s vital to give yourself some well-deserved time off before taking up the mantle again.

Player Cheating: “Hey, you didn’t have that edge a few minutes ago!”

It’s an unpleasant fact of life that some players will cheat. A player might try to use Attribute Traits, edges or resources her character doesn’t have, or might try to fudge the number of experience points she has to spend. Take the alleged cheater aside and try to get to the bottom of the problem immediately—don’t let accusations of cheating fester, for they will only undermine your players’ confidence in you and enthusiasm for the game. If you actually catch a player cheating, you really have only two options: give the player another chance or remove her from the game.

Sometimes players “cheat” on a massive scale, “forgetting” to cross off Conviction and Willpower Traits they expend during a game. You can combat these problems by having your players carry cards or tokens denoting Conviction and/or Willpower Traits. When a character expends either Trait, the player must turn over the appropriate token(s) to you. When a player runs out of tokens, she runs out of those Traits. Tokens can be a very graphic reminder of how precious Conviction and Willpower Traits are to characters!

Failed Stories: “This game sucks.”

Keep an ear to the ground for the murmurs of discontent among your players. None of us are infallible, and you are no exception. Sure, some players seem to never stop complaining, and you’ll learn to screen unwarranted gripes. But don’t dismiss all complaints as idle whining because sometimes your players will have a genuine beef. Encourage them to bring real problems

to your attention, and be appreciative when they offer you constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement.

Sooner or later you'll tell a story that doesn't work right. Maybe the players weren't as interested in the main plot as you'd hoped they would be; maybe you miscalculated the characters' relative power levels and unbalanced the game. Don't let it discourage you from telling future stories! On the contrary, it's important that you learn from these less than successful attempts and apply the knowledge you gain to later endeavors. It's sometimes true that failure, as frustrating and disheartening as it may be, teaches us far more than our successes.

Favoritism: "You're only letting him play that character because he's your significant other!"

The best antidote to accusations of favoritism is not to practice it. Explain your decision-making process to your players and share your criteria with them. Strive to make your decisions about the game as impartial and objective as possible without injuring the story itself. It's particularly important to adjudicate rules situations fairly and not to favor people or characters you particularly like. If you place limitations on certain types of characters or powers in the game, rotate these elements so that players get a fair shot at them.

Unfortunately, no matter how careful you are to remain objective, accusations of favoritism will surface from time to time. Sometimes they are unjustified and mask other issues: A player's character died and he wants to blame someone for his loss; a player felt she was unfairly denied the opportunity to play a special role in the game; a player thinks the Storyteller's decisions are motivated by friendship rather than the desire to tell a good story. Deal with the accusation directly — take the accuser aside and discuss why she may feel she's the victim of favoritism. Don't overlook the possibility that she might actually be right. Sometimes it's possible to practice favoritism without consciously realizing we're doing so. If the accusation is deserved, amend your behavior accordingly.

Problem Players: "He's ruining the game again!"

Don't ever be afraid to lay down the law with problem players. The integrity of your story is your responsibility, and everyone has equal opportunity to enjoy the story. Most players will usually present no problems, but occasionally someone will cross the boundary of acceptable behavior. Often the transgression is accidental and requires only a reminder to keep players from getting out of hand. But you might encounter a player who actually enjoys getting out of control and wrecking the game through constant disruption. Maybe he likes the attention or the feeling of power it gives him, but whatever his motivation you must deal with him quickly, calmly and decisively. It's your story, and you're well within your rights to remove such offenders from your game permanently.

Crossover Madness: "Can I bring my werewolf/vampire/mage/changeling/psychic/unstoppable hybrid Character of Doom into the game?"

Short answer: No!

Although it is less common than in other *Mind's Eye Theatre* games, sooner or later someone is going to approach you about playing a supernatural character in your *Reckoning* chronicle. Chances are this person will have a fairly well thought-out concept, a number of reasonable explanations for how his character met the imbued and came to work with them and soon. Perhaps he wants to play an older supernatural creature who works with the imbued against a mutual enemy or out of a desire for redemption, or maybe he's the latest player to build on the ever-popular "mortal secretly spying on behalf of the vampires" idea. Maybe he's the sibling/spouse/best friend of one of the characters who has been turned into some sort of

supernatural creature, but still wants to hang out with his ally and “bring down the bad guys” together. Whatever the player’s concept or reasoning might be, it’s ultimately going to be up to you, the Storyteller, to decide whether or not you want to have friendly supernatural characters in your game in any capacity. As such, it’s perfectly within your discretion to allow it.

It’s also within your discretion to slap your game silly with a dead fish.

Let it be said now—including supernatural player characters (or even more than a highly paranoid handful of “friendly” Narrator-character monsters) will almost certainly cause an immeasurable loss to a **Reckoning** game. Even open and outgoing imbued are still not designed to be best buddies with monsters, nor are the creatures likely to be the least bit inclined to extend a hand to these strange and frightening humans who are suddenly on to their secrets. Thus, having monsters that simply hang out and help the hunters battle evil gives such creatures a feeling of familiarity and harmlessness that quickly devastates the ominous and mysterious nature of the supernatural that a great deal of the mood and atmosphere of **Reckoning** relies on. In addition, by offering a ready source of information about the supernatural, another of the game’s turning points is lost as the imbued can learn all they need to know about their enemies over beer and pretzels at the local bar, rather than learning it slowly and painfully as they normally must. It’s also a recipe for harsh feelings, since sooner or later a hotheaded imbued is going to take a shot at destroying the supposedly friendly local abomination against all that is good and right, and then you’re going to have at least one player who’s stuck off because another player just offed his favorite character. Having a Narrator character creature that the players meet on neutral terms from time to time is one thing (it allows you to control exactly what is said and done at such meetings), but actually letting a player run wild as one of the supposed enemy can do all kinds of harm that you might not even pick up on right away. In other words, no matter how many good reasons a player might have, resist the urge and gently but firmly tell them to play a concept in line with the rest of the game.

Likewise, incorporating hunters into a primarily supernatural game as player characters is a bad idea of titanic proportions. If they’re antagonistic, they’re going to have an ugly and short-lived career that spreads ill will in every direction as they spy on and then kill off fellow player characters. Even if the imbued are not overtly antagonistic, nearly every supernatural society has a deep-seated and strongly enforced taboo against revealing themselves to outsiders, and that certainly includes nosy humans who aren’t related by blood and can’t be made into loyal puppets like other folks. Monsters who consort with such types are likely to be punished severely by others of their kind, often with execution or exile, and thus they have been removed from the game just as surely as if they had been killed by more trigger-happy imbued. Lastly, should the Storyteller have a total brain failure and choose to allow “friendly” imbued into their supernatural game, a great deal of the essential mystery is still lost as outlined above, since the imbued can just hang out with the creatures and learn what they want to know that way, rather than fearing and hoping and struggling to learn of the enemy as they usually must.

We at White Wolf know that including such a strong prohibition will naturally only encourage certain players and Storytellers to create characters and scenarios designed for just the opposite, and as always if that’s what works for your particular game by all means go ahead. However, while such warnings aren’t ever written lightly, for **Reckoning** it applies more strongly than most other games—crossovers, especially hastily put-together ones, are almost certainly doomed to rob the game of elements that are essential to maintaining the spirit and atmosphere of the imbued. Do so at your own peril.

Chapter Seven: Watching From the Shadows

Bystanders

Called But Not Chosen

Not every imbuing is a success. Sometimes a person sees the truth but hesitates to act, overwhelmed by fear or indecision, and their chance to make a difference is lost. Others awaken but find themselves distanced from the action by unfortunate circumstance, while a tormented few simply can't handle the experience and do their best to avert their eyes and put what they saw behind them. Indeed, given the extreme circumstances and emotions that surround the imbuing, it's extraordinary that more people don't shirk their destiny, though whether this is due to the selectivity of the Heralds or a hidden strength of human nature is a matter of debate. Regardless of the exact circumstances involved, those who are offered a chance at the imbuing but hesitate too long or flee their destiny are known as bystanders, people who are not fully imbued but will never again be as blissfully ignorant as they were before, either.

At present most hunters aren't even aware of the existence of such "demi-imbued" individuals, since following their failed imbuing most bystanders take pains to avoid anything that even remotely smacks of the supernatural, and that especially includes other people who talk about monsters (let alone approach them). Those few bystanders who actively seek out or fall in with hunter society are often mistaken for nothing more than particularly reclusive or timid Visionaries or Hermits, although this is slowly changing. The most fortunate are the bystanders who find the hunter-net and/or understand the hunter code, thus allowing them to communicate with the imbued and retain their sanity without risking exposure to more of the *things* that stalk the night. Particularly dedicated bystanders establish themselves as informants, discussion partners and equipment suppliers for the imbued; very few will willingly take to the front lines, as it was just such direct contact with the supernatural which caused them to reject the imbuing. Perhaps the most valuable role they have in regards to the imbued is the fact that bystanders are people who can understand what hunters have seen and what they are going through — even if that person doesn't want to talk about it much, just knowing there are other people out there who know you're not insane can make all the difference.

For their part, what a hunter thinks of bystanders varies widely, though there are some trends based on what Virtue a hunter follows. Zealots tend to dismiss such individuals as weaklings and failures who didn't have what it takes to tackle a tough job, while the Merciful usually view them with a mixture of pity and compassion, and try to convince them to take up the cause in whatever way they can. Adherents of

Vision are the most likely to judge them individually, according to their own ideas about the Call and what the bystander has to offer. Conversely, bystanders often see Zealots as frightening and dangerous individuals, and while the Merciful are typically much more understanding of their situation, their somewhat patronizing attitude can wear just as thin in the long term. Most intellectual or conspiracy-minded bystanders get along well with *Vision* followers, though others find their theories alien and confusing. Some look on the imbued with jealousy or hatred, reminders of their own failure or possessed of gifts “that should have been mine,” while others regard them with respect or even reverence for shouldering a burden they themselves could not manage.

Ultimately, no matter whether they try to deny the truth or seek out the imbued in hopes of a second chance, all bystanders quickly learn that the touch of the Heralds has changed them in some indelible way, and try as they might they will never regain the blissful ignorance they enjoyed in the past. In this way they are perhaps even more tragic than the imbued, for they have been exposed to the same truth but lack the edges and other benefits the Chosen gain to deal with it. No few imbued bemoan the impact that the second sight has on their day-to-day lives, but on the other hand imagine the fear and paranoia that bystanders live with, having once had a glimpse of the evil that exists in the world — then losing all ability to perceive it directly! While some rare bystanders exhibit one or two talents of their imbued relatives, such as ability to read the hunter code or resistance to supernatural fear or mind control, the majority of them are ordinary people in every discernible way, with no special edges or defenses whatsoever.

In the end, the only thing that sets them apart is that they have witnessed the truth, and neither sleep nor madness can offer them permanent respite from this simple fact. Should they live to be 100 and never so much as glimpse another monster, they will still be haunted by the fact that they know such things exist and that once they were offered a chance to fight them.

When to Fail An Imbuing

Obviously, the question arises of how to determine if a person has failed her imbuing and thus become a bystander, especially if the imbuing is going to be part of play. After all, it's quite common for many hunters to have at least a moment of hesitation when they come face-to-face with the supernatural, and many hunters (especially those devoted to *Mercy* or *Vision*) wind up doing things like watching from a distance, talking to the creature or otherwise not “leaping into the fray.”

Along those lines, simply slapping the bystander label on players who happen to roleplay shocked silence for a moment during their preludes is just plain cruel, and there are few surer ways to alienate players than to tell them right off the bat that their characters washed out on the first big test of mettle in the game. On the other hand, the Storyteller may have to contend with a player whose character really seemed to totally freeze up or otherwise act like a bystander during his imbuing, but who then insists on becoming an Avenger because that was what he had in mind when he created the character. Running the imbuing as part of play is a wonderful chance to really immerse players in their roles, especially if they understand that their character's actions will determine their creed in the process; however, when the possibility of bystander characters comes up, it may seem like an extra headache to add to the process. Players may feel constrained by the need to look like they're doing something

to avoid being labeled a bystander, which in turn can potentially provoke a variety of out-of-character acts as players try to ensure they won't be judged as failures.

There are several ways around this dilemma. First, it's quite possible for the Storyteller to simply declare prior to running the imbuing that no one will become a bystander, and just chalk up those who seem to have weak or ineffectual reactions to the imbuing as especially distracted Innocents, Visionaries or even Hermits. (Hey, nobody said you had to go totally easy on them!) You are the Storyteller, after all. Alternately, you can inform players that there will be a possibility of becoming bystanders during their imbuing, depending on their behavior, and simply let the chips fall where they may — provided that players feel that they have a chance to discuss the issue with you, this can be a wonderful way to ensure some intense and thoughtful roleplaying during the imbuing.

Just make sure that the players feel as if they can discuss (though not dictate) the imbued/bystander outcome of their imbuing if they truly have an objection to where they wind up, and the process should go very well.

Incorporating Bystanders

Background considerations aside, given the substantial drawbacks that average bystanders have compared to their fully imbued companions, players may wonder why anyone would want to play one of these haunted souls at all, or Storytellers may have trouble figuring out how to include such characters in their games. There are a number of compelling reasons beyond the *Bystanders* Background to include bystanders in a *Reckoning* chronicle, however, and a few of them are as follows:

- **“There but for the grace of God...”**: The most obvious function of bystanders in any *Reckoning* game is to serve as a contrast to the hunters themselves. Whether they are cringing cowards or failed heroes struggling for redemption, bystanders serve as an excellent way to remind players of the unique nature of their mission as well as the high price it exacts from everyone the Heralds contact. Just remember that bystanders are supposed to be real people too, not just cardboard cutouts players can use to boost their ego.

- **Logistics**: More and more bystanders are assuming support roles in imbued society, performing ordinary tasks to leave their imbued comrades free to hunt, and so players may interact with Narrator character bystanders working in this capacity in the course of their hunting efforts.

- **Introduction**: Portraying bystanders can be an excellent “warm-up” for new players who want to learn about live-action and the world of *Reckoning*, but who don't feel up to handling imbued characters yet. As long as they understand and accept that they have a bit less power than fully imbued characters, it can be fun to play a character learning about hunter society in-game at the same time the player is learning about it out of game.

- **Challenge**: Conversely, some experienced players may enjoy the challenge of portraying relatively low-powered characters who botched their chances at being heroes but who still want to make a difference somehow. So why not let them?

- **Numbers**: If nothing else, hunters are supposed to be fairly rare, and so bystander characters allow players to take part in hunter society without packing a tiny suburb or city neighborhood full of an inordinate amount of the imbued.

Quick Character Creation Process

- **Step One: Inspiration — Who are you?**
 - Choose a concept.
 - Choose a Nature and a Demeanor.
- **Step Two: Attributes — What are your basic capabilities?**
 - Prioritize Attributes (six primary, four secondary and three tertiary).
 - Choose Traits.
- **Step Three: Advantages — What do you know?**
 - Choose five Abilities.
 - Choose five Backgrounds.
- **Step Four: Last Touches — Fill in the details.**
 - Record starting Willpower Traits (two).
 - Record starting Conviction (10).
 - Record additional benefits (Shared Ordeal and Hardened Spirit).
 - Choose Negative Traits (no more than five Traits, if any).
 - Choose Flaws (no more than seven Traits, if any).
 - Choose a Derangement (Storyteller permission only).
 - Spend 10 (or more) Free Traits and choose Merits (if any).
- **Step Five: Spark of Life — Narrative descriptions**

Benefits

Although they may feel their knowledge of the supernatural is far more of a curse than a blessing, bystanders still have a few special abilities that set them apart from the rest of unenlightened humanity. Additionally, their unique state between blissful ignorance and true imbuing also necessitates slightly different mechanics in regards to how they handle Conviction and confrontations with the supernatural, the details of which are handled below.

Shared Ordeal

Survivors of violence or natural disasters often seem to instinctually recognize others who carry the pain of similar ordeals, even after no more than a few minutes of unrelated conversation. Sometimes they can even identify a person after merely seeing her on television or reading an interview with that person. Although not all of them realize they have this ability or choose to act on it if they do, bystanders are naturally attuned to hunters and other bystanders in much the same way, recognizing others who have been touched by the Heralds through telltale emotional signs that slip through even in ordinary situations. Although personal contact is the best way to make such a determination, bystanders can attempt to identify hunters or other bystanders from television or radio spots, written work or even a photograph (especially one taken after the imbuing). Visionaries who are aware of this knack theorize that the imbued might very well have a similar ability to recognize each other, and perhaps those in remote areas do just that, but with the availability of the hunter code and the hunter-net the imbued haven't had to rely on this talent, and thus it goes unused and undeveloped.

System: Bystanders can recognize hunters and other bystanders with a successful Mental Challenge (retest with *Empathy*); optionally, the Narrator may simply rule

that recognition is automatic in particularly appropriate circumstances (deep conversation, therapy sessions, etc). The difficulty of this test varies: it is typically only two or three Traits following face-to-face conversation, but may be higher if the bystander is working from a picture or simply passing someone on the street.

Hardened Spirit

While the Heralds might not have chosen to bestow the full benefits of the imbuing on a bystander, the fact remains that she has still witnessed and survived direct contact with the supernatural (and most likely in very frightening circumstances). Channeled correctly, the memories of this experience and her own anger and determination can actually allow the bystander to generate her own limited version of Conviction defense, or what is known as hardened spirit. While it still does not confer many of the benefits that hunter Conviction does, and it is extremely draining for the bystander to use compared to the relative cost of Conviction defense, hardened spirit has allowed more than one bystander to surprise monsters and imbued alike who had written her off as a failure or "little more than mortal." Indeed, those few imbued who are aware of this bystander capability have suggested that it's a sign that the Heralds haven't totally abandoned these lost souls, but in fact are still trying to get them back in the fight by whatever means they can.

System: A bystander may spend a Willpower Trait to become immune to supernatural fear, mind or emotion control, and partial or complete possession for the remainder of the scene. Doing so should be handled exactly the same way as hunters activating their Conviction defense, as it is essentially a weaker version of the same instinct. Note that activating hardened spirit does not reveal monsters in any way (as the sight does), nor does it allow the bystander to see immaterial ghosts, recognize possessed individuals, or pierce illusions or magical concealment. In addition, it does not prevent the possible loss of Conviction due to witnessing horrific sights or taking part in terrible acts — it simply allows the bystander to stand her ground and shrug off supernatural attempts to bend her will. Lastly, hardened spirit has no effect on imbued edges that have such effects — they affect the bystander normally.

Conviction

Although they cannot access it as hunters do, their contact with the supernatural and the realization that it must be stopped has bestowed upon bystanders the quality of Conviction as well. Like or not, deep down they know that monsters exist and that it has come down to ordinary people like them making terrible sacrifices to stop these creatures from preying on humanity. However, for bystanders Conviction is used to represent how well the character is holding up in the face of horrors both supernatural and mundane — it is a passive Trait rather than an active one, measuring her sanity and will to continue the fight, reluctantly or otherwise. Particularly horrifying scenes or revelations will gradually wear down this reserve as the hunt goes on, and only by giving up part of her inner strength (i.e., Willpower) can a bystander hope to stave off madness in this fashion. Naturally, whether this slow deterioration is meant as a punishment for hesitation or a means of trying to encourage her to take action while she can is something only the Heralds know for sure.

System: All bystanders begin play with 10 Conviction Traits. Any time the Storyteller feels that the bystander has witnessed or performed something that threatens to eat away at his sanity, sense of humanity and/or his resolve to face the supernatural, she may call for the character to make an immediate Willpower Challenge against a difficulty based on the severity of the situation as well as the character's familiarity with it. Thus, a bystander might have to make a difficult test to

resist losing Conviction the first time he kills a monster, confronts a hideous walking corpse or stumbles on a grisly murder scene, but subsequent tests related to exposure to the same sort of things would likely get progressively easier as the character is better prepared to deal with what he is facing. Of course, lest the players become too complacent it is fully possible that the Storyteller can rule that familiarity offers no benefit in a particular circumstance, or even incurs an increase in difficulty — after all, it's highly unlikely anyone would ever become used to seeing a family member tortured, and the feelings of hopelessness and despair from being unable to stop such activity after repeated instances could well increase the difficulty of the related tests.

Should the player fail the Willpower Challenge, the character immediately loses a Conviction Trait, signifying his slow slide toward insanity. A player may spend a Willpower Trait for a retest, but doing so can quickly leave the character with few inner reserves in the face of danger. Additionally, a player may trade a permanent Willpower Trait for a Conviction Trait, essentially draining his natural reserves to bolster his drive for the hunt; this is the only way a bystander may acquire permanent Conviction Traits. If a character goes below three Conviction Traits, he receives a derangement for each Trait lost, much the same as a hunter acquires derangements when her Virtues reach high levels. Upon losing his last Conviction Trait, a character becomes a raving lunatic and is turned over to the control of the Storyteller.

Naturally, determining exactly what circumstances merit a test in this fashion falls squarely within the Storyteller's discretion and what she feels is right for her chronicle. The idea is to strike a balance between keeping the horrific and the supernatural as ever-present threats to a character's mental health and well-being, without constantly bogging down the players with challenges or rapidly whittling a character's Conviction down just because the player is unlucky at a few tosses of rock-paper-scissors. Likewise, if the game is a generally a fast-paced, combat-oriented chronicle, the Storyteller will probably require such tests only rarely; on the other hand, a chronicle centered around deep roleplaying and disturbing revelations will probably want to feature these tests quite often.

If I Had Humanity, I'd Feel Really Bad Right Now

Dedicated readers will recognize that the system for bystander Conviction presented here has been simplified from the one presented in the **Hunter Player's Guide** (p. 49-51). This change is not accidental; it was designed with ease of play and reference in mind, rather than adding another Virtue-based system to the game. However, if you would like to use Humanity and the Virtues of Reason, Courage and Self-Control that go along with the system as it was originally presented, feel free to do so. Complete **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules for Humanity and these accompanying Virtues (substitute Reason for Conscience) can be found on pp. 75-6 and 108-110 of **Laws of the Night**; these rules can easily be converted to run with the original bystander Conviction system. Alternately, ambitious conversion types can attempt to work out something with the streamlined Humanity system presented in **Laws of the Hunt**, pp. 138-139. Each version has possible advantages and disadvantages; ultimately it's up to the Storyteller to decide which system works best for her game and go with it.

Abilities and Backgrounds

Bystanders can generally pick the same Abilities and Backgrounds as the imbued, with a few exceptions. Bystanders normally cannot possess the *Awareness* Ability unless they have some means of accessing the sight; additionally, the Storyteller may rule that some Backgrounds such as *Patron*, *Fraternity* or others dealing specifically with the imbued are off-limits to bystanders, at her discretion.

Merits and Flaws

The following Merits and Flaws are intended to be taken by bystanders only, although the Storyteller may allow imbued characters to take slightly modified versions of the *Hunted*, *Nervous Condition*, *Broken Health* or *Nemesis* Flaws at her discretion. The other Traits are either redundant and/or pointless for the imbued, and should not be permitted barring truly exceptional circumstances.

Supernatural Affinity (1 Trait Merit)

Although the thought of monsters stalking the world fills you with horrible anxiety, at the same time you can't stop thinking about it, and instinctively find yourself searching for signs of the supernatural. In particular, you possess a unique ability to sense the presence of one type of supernatural creature, most likely the type you encountered during your failed imbuing. Whenever that variety of monster enters your immediate vicinity, you are immediately filled with feelings of dread, anger or even desire (depending on how your first encounter went) — while you may not realize what these feelings mean at first, over time you can learn what they signify and react accordingly. Note that this quality does not activate when a creature is using supernatural power to conceal itself (that is the *Penetrate Illusion* Merit, below), nor is it fine-tuned enough to allow you to track very effectively, or pick a creature out of a crowded room. However, spirits do trigger this quality even if they're not visible to regular sight, unless they have used extra supernatural powers to conceal themselves further.

The Word (1 Trait Merit)

You can recognize, understand and write the hunter code just as the imbued do. You may read cards with the hunter code on them that you find during play, as well as write such cards.

Penetrate Illusion (1-3 Trait Merit)

The revelation of the supernatural world and how it goes unnoticed by the majority of humanity has shaken you badly, and left you constantly checking and re-checking your perceptions for signs that they might have been supernaturally altered in some fashion. Fortunately, this has given you a limited ability to pierce supernatural powers of concealment and illusion; by making a Willpower Test (difficulty depending on the nature of the illusion and how suspicious your character is), you may penetrate one such power. Note that this may require you to spend a Willpower Trait to avoid losing control due to supernatural fear if you perceive a particularly hideous creature, and the Storyteller may rule that some illusions require a test to avoid losing a Conviction Trait — even seeing through them means that you have confronted something blatantly unnatural. Note that this does not allow you to perceive spirits that have not made themselves visible in the material world, nor does it allow you to perceive a spirit possessing a host body.

The number of Traits spent on this Merit determine the power of the illusions that you can penetrate. For one Trait, you may see through Basic-level illusions, for two Traits, you may see through Basic- and Intermediate-level illusions, and for three Traits you can penetrate illusions up to the Advanced level.

The Sight (1-3 Trait Merit)

Maybe the Heralds are trying to steer you in the right direction, or perhaps they've decided to punish you for failing, but either way you've been given ability of the sight like true imbued. How active the sight is depends on how much you spend on this Merit — for one Trait it is always on, which may quickly eat away at your Conviction and Willpower as you are constantly inundated with horrific visions. For two Traits it is generally under your control, but may sometimes spontaneously activate at the Storyteller's discretion (generally in the presence of the same sort of creatures that you faced during your failed imbuing). With three Traits, it is completely under your control. Regardless of whether you spent two or three Traits, however, both activating and deactivating the sight requires either a Willpower Challenge or the expenditure of a Willpower Trait. Note that this does not protect you against mind or emotion control, supernatural fear, or allow you to penetrate illusions in any way (though if you have the capability to do so you may activate such additional protection as well). Likewise, all that your sight tells you is that a supernatural being is *different* — it does not necessarily provide any clues as to what specific kind of monster it might be, just that it isn't right.

Cannot Become Monster (3 Trait Merit)

For one reason or another, the protection against supernatural turning and corruption that the Heralds provide the imbued has been extended to you as well — you cannot become a ghoul or be blood bound, nor can you acquire magic or psychic powers of any kind, and any attempts to make you into a vampire kill you instead. Additionally, you will never rise as a ghost or one of the walking dead. (At least the next life will offer you some peace.) This does not provide protection against mental control, fear or possession, though. Additionally, whether or not you're aware of your immaculate state is up to you and the Storyteller to determine — it's quite possible that you might only recognize the benefits of this Merit posthumously!

Resistant to Supernatural Fear (3 Trait Merit)

No matter what else might have happened, you survived an experience that would have reduced most people to hysterics without losing it — or maybe you did break down in the face of overwhelming terror, but have since built yourself back up stronger than before. In any case, you may attempt to resist supernatural fear with a successful Willpower Challenge against three Traits — if successful, you need not spend Willpower to resist supernatural fear for the rest of the scene. This ability is reflexive and does not count as an action. You may also spend a Willpower Trait normally if the test fails, in order to retain control in the face of terror. It should be noted that you might still lose Conviction Traits or be forced to spend Willpower Traits later on in the scene — being immunized to supernatural fear doesn't mean that horrific scenes can't still damage you, just that you have a better chance of resisting the urge to bolt right off the bat.

Resistant to Mind Control (3 Trait Merit)

Faced with the reality that monsters have the ability to steal into the very minds of their victims and take control of their thoughts and emotions, you have subsequently built up a powerful inner defense against having your will stolen in such a fashion. Any time you are targeted by such powers, you may immediately make a Willpower Test against three Traits — if successful, you are considered to be immune to such powers for the rest of the scene, just as if you'd spent a Willpower Trait for the hardened spirit. This ability is reflexive and does not count as an action. You may also spend a Willpower Trait normally if the test fails, as though activating the hardened spirit normally. Note that this does not confer any resistance to illusions or supernatural fear. Additionally, if a long-term subservience power is successfully used against you in one scene, it is up to the Storyteller to determine whether that connection is lessened or broken when you activate this ability or your regular hardened spirit later on — summoning your will to fight some menace might suddenly shock you into the realization that you've been under the influence of another creature's powers for some time!

Unshakable (3, 5 or 7 Trait Merit)

Although you are still in danger of gradually losing your Conviction and thus your sanity from exposure to monsters and horrifying events, for some reason you have an easier time handling such trauma than others. Perhaps you were a coroner or soldier who saw a lot of grisly things before your failed imbuings, or maybe you just have an especially tough constitution. Whatever the reason might be (and you should have a good one), you receive a benefit to Willpower Tests to resist Conviction loss in particular circumstances. The Trait value of this Merit determines how well-grounded you are: for three Traits, you are two Traits up on tests in one specific circumstance, such as facing a particular type of creature (probably the one witnessed at your failed imbuings) or viewing bloody crime scenes. At five Traits, you are two Traits up in regards to a general type of situation, such as facing undead of any kind or in regards to blood and carnage. At seven Traits, you receive this benefit on all Willpower Tests to resist Conviction loss, regardless of the source (though you'd better have a good explanation for how you failed your imbuings with such good nerves).

As this Merit can sometimes make it too easy to avoid losing Conviction, players should consult the Storyteller before taking this Merit, as she may adjust its cost or even prohibit it outright if it goes against the mood of the chronicle. Note: Despite some similarities, this Merit has nothing to do with the *Steel Nerves* Background, nor does that Background offer any kind of benefit in regards to resisting Conviction loss. However, it is very appropriate for a character with one Trait to have the other as well.

True Faith (7 Trait Merit)

True Faith is belief in a power, entity, consciousness — sometimes even a purpose — that is greater than oneself, and as such it is not limited to any particular religion. However, only the truly selfless, caring, compassionate and courageous have a chance at possessing *True Faith*, and the Storyteller is encouraged to be as strict as possible in seeing that those characters with this Merit live and breathe their faith every hour of every day. Simply going to church a lot or being convinced that God exists is not enough to earn *True Faith* (or it would be a lot more common). Indeed, most imbued will only come across *True Faith* if they encounter the righteous warriors of the Inquisition or somehow

come across those rare individuals who have heard a different kind of higher call and devoted themselves to it.

Unless the Storyteller specifically allows it, true imbued *cannot* possess *True Faith* at all — something about their connection to the Heralds seems to preclude such a beatific connection to the divine. (Rather, use the *Religious Devotion Merit* to represent imbued with abiding faith.) This decision is geared toward play balance if nothing else — imbued have a number of powers and advantages as it is without the extra power *True Faith* offers, and allowing them access to yet another powerful trait can easily tilt things far too heavily in their favor. On the other hand, bystanders may occasionally display *True Faith*, though it tends to be rare given the uncertainty and loss of confidence that often accompanies their experience with the imbuing. However, some bystanders find that their faith carries them through the difficult time surrounding their new life, and a blessed few develop such faith in response to their failure in an attempt at atonement.

The game uses for *True Faith* are covered exhaustively in **Laws of the Hunt**; however, a couple of basic rules for Faith are included here.

- By brandishing his holy symbol, the bearer gains the Social Trait *Intimidating* when repelling undead and warding off supernatural powers. If used to strike a supernatural creature, a holy symbol grants the extra Physical Traits *Burning* and *Searing*, and inflicts one level of aggravated damage.

- A character with *True Faith* may attempt to repel vampires or zombies by brandishing his holy symbol, invoking his belief (“In the name of _____, I command you to be gone,” etc.), and employing a Social Challenge. Success means the creature must flee the area immediately. Failure means the beast must still back off a few feet and cower before taking action, and the next turn the monster still may not initiate any attacks, although she may defend herself normally. A creature may only resist this use of Faith by attempting to overbid with Willpower; if she currently possesses at least twice as many Willpower Traits as the Faithful character, she remains unaffected. A character may attempt to repel multiple creatures with a group challenge.

- A character with *True Faith* may trade a Faith Trait for a Willpower Trait, in essence drawing on the power of her Faith to give her resolve to carry on. This can be done no more than once per session, and Faith Traits spent in this fashion require the usual period of atonement to restore.

Characters may only improve their Faith with truly inspiring and dedicated roleplaying, as determined by the Storyteller. On the other hand, it is much easier to lose Faith than gain it; any time a character fails a test in which *True Faith* was involved, he has a crisis of faith. During such a time, he is one Trait down on all Social Challenges for the remainder of the scene and unable to invoke his Faith again until that Faith Trait has been restored (Narrator's discretion). This Merit confers one Faith Trait; additional Faith Traits cannot be purchased with Experience, only be earned through roleplaying, and only the most saintly individuals will have more than four or five Faith Traits.

Haunted (1-3 Trait Flaw)

You might have turned your back on the Heralds, but they haven't forgotten you — horrific visions and whispered voices haunt you constantly, imparting the strange will of the Messengers and occasionally urging to take a particular course of action. Perhaps they intend to give you a second chance to make a difference, or maybe they're punishing you for trying to abandon the cause, but either way

they don't seem like they're going to leave you alone. The exact frequency of visitation depends on how many Traits the Flaw is worth; for one Trait you are contacted infrequently, perhaps only in the immediate vicinity of a monster, and receive only limited information such as the revelation of a monster's true nature and a plan of action. At three Traits, you are contacted on a daily basis, and must sometimes endure lengthy or extremely graphic visions regarding the creatures around you. Finally, for five Traits, the torment is nearly constant (and should be roleplayed accordingly); while useful information can certainly be gained this way, the sheer volume of communication often makes it difficult to interpret the signal-to-noise ratio.

In game terms, a hunter is considered down between one and three Traits on all tests while he is being contacted by the Heralds (which is seldom a convenient time), depending on the severity of the Flaw. At the Storyteller's discretion, this penalty and the associated contact may be temporarily reduced if the bystander acts in accordance with what the Heralds seem to want, though this may reduce the Flaw to a rather simplistic level if not handled correctly.

Hunted (1 or 4 Trait Flaw)

Here's the good news: you survived your contact with the Heralds. Here's the bad news: so did the creature you encountered, and it has decided that what you've seen or what you know means you must be killed. It cannot be reasoned with, bought off or otherwise pacified — it will not stop until you are dead, and even if it is killed it might have friends or allies who will carry on its quest to see you destroyed. Exactly how powerful the creature is and how dedicated it is to the hunt depends on the value of the Flaw. For one Trait, you are either pursued by a relatively weak monster that devotes nearly all of its time to planning your demise, or a moderately powerful creature that pursues you when it's convenient or you happen to cross its path. For four Traits, you either have a moderately powerful creature pursuing your undoing with every waking moment it can spare, or you are considered a troublesome loose end by a very powerful and influential creature. Obviously, this Flaw can only be taken with Storyteller approval, as the efforts of this monster can very well spill over into the rest of the chronicle as a whole.

Nervous Condition (2 Trait Flaw)

The trauma of your exposure to the supernatural has left you with deep mental scars, which manifest physically as chronic ailments that impair your everyday life and flare up even worse when you are under stress (and encountering the supernatural certainly counts as such). Your hands and feet tremble almost constantly, and you suffer a one-Trait penalty on all tasks involving fine motor control, balance, movement or combat. Additionally, if you are surprised (or Surprised) by a sudden turn of events, you suffer an additional one-Trait penalty on all relevant tests due to your inability to react well to such stimuli. Needless to say, this condition should also be roleplayed as well as possible without being offensive, and Storyteller should feel free impose additional penalties or dock a character a Willpower Trait for battling their symptoms if she fails to portray her condition appropriately.

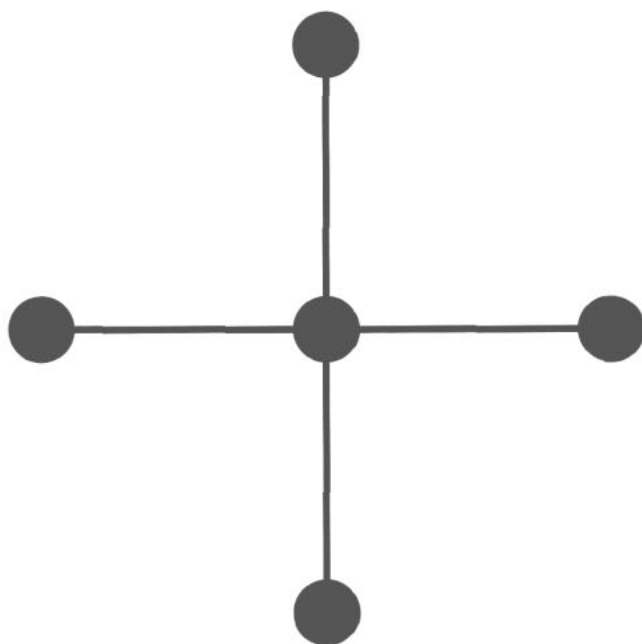
Broken Health (3 or 5 Trait Flaw)

Living with the knowledge of the supernatural and the terrible toll it exacts from humanity may not have broken your sanity (yet...), but it has certainly done terrible things to your body, robbing you of energy and vitality that might never return. At three Traits, you may not never possess more than five Physical Traits, not even with Experience Traits or hunter edges, and you are one Trait down on all tests related to

endurance or resisting damage. For five Traits, you suffer all of the above effects, but you also heal slower than others, at roughly one and a half times the normal rate, and you may never purchase or benefit from the *Rejuvenate* edge (though other healing edges function normally).

Nemesis (3 or 5 Trait Flaw)

Most of the time the imbuing occurs to one person alone, placing the weight of doing the right thing squarely on her shoulders, but in your case it happened to a group of people all at once, or perhaps you awakened to the truth in the midst of a firefight between monsters and full imbued. In either event, your hesitation somehow proved the deciding factor in allowing the monster to turn the tables on the hunters, and one or more of the surviving imbued has become obsessed with taking revenge on you for allowing this to happen. Actual guilt or innocence doesn't matter much — even if you did the best you could, the imbued after you considers your actions to have been pure cowardice and won't respond to negotiation or bribery of any kind. The number of Traits spent determine how powerful your stalker is and/or how much time he dedicates to taking revenge on you. At the Storyteller's option, it might be possible to placate the hunter somehow, but only if you're willing to meet his price... and chances are that such a cost would be high indeed.



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