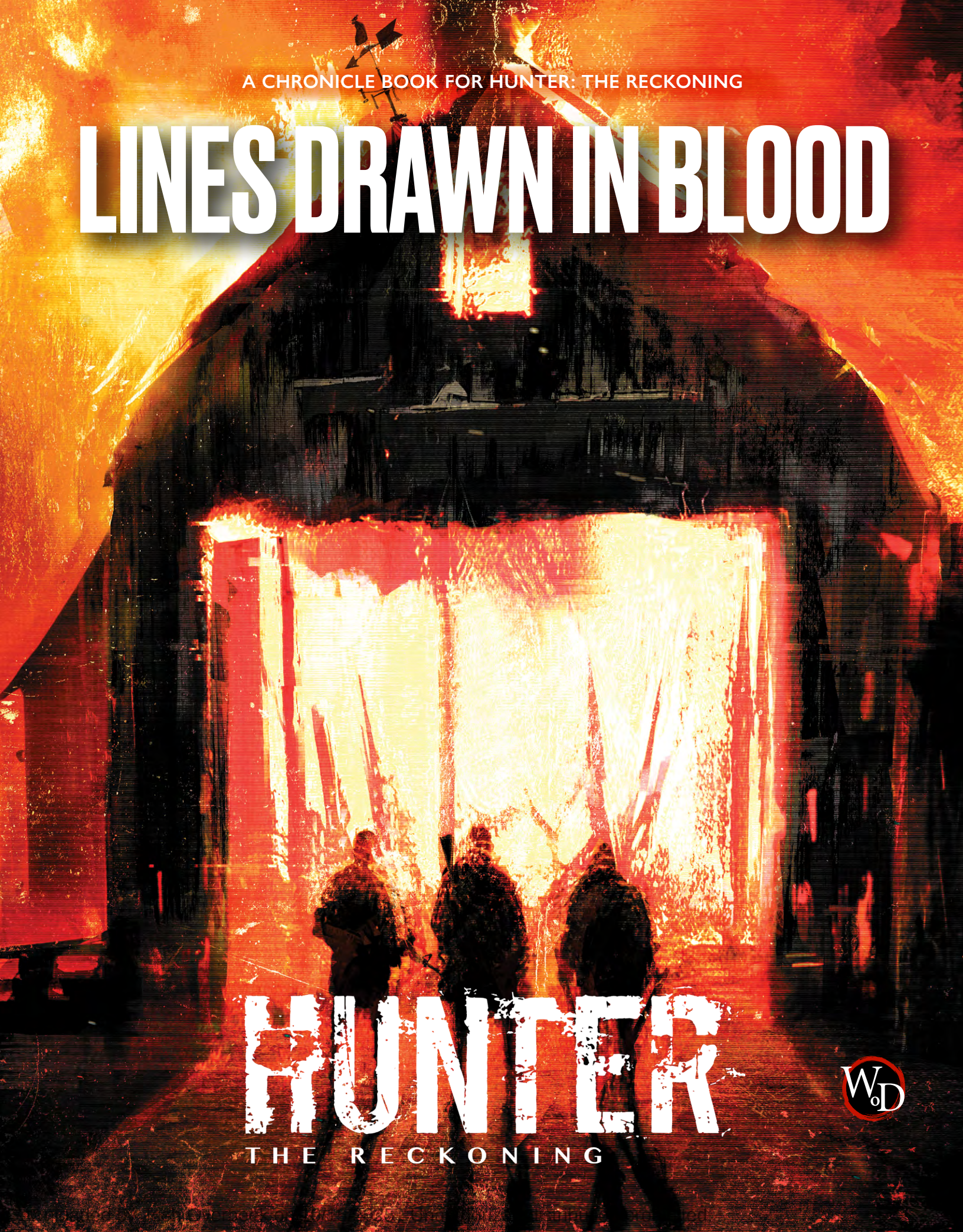

A CHRONICLE BOOK FOR HUNTER: THE RECKONING
LINES DRAWN IN BLOOD
HUNTER
THE RECKONING
WoD

HUNTER

THE RECKONING

What lines are you willing to cross when you push back against the evil that walks among us? *Lines Drawn in Blood* presents a series of four stories that can be played individually or linked together to tell an entire chronicle.

Pressure Test: Ghostly incursions are far more than the weight of individual sorrow.

Outsiders: The residents of a small town break an ancient pact and pay the price.

Blur the Lines: Occult symbols at a murder scene drag Hunters into a race against time.

Alone in the Dark: Far from city lights, a nest of monsters pull the strings of a lonely northern town.

Lines Drawn in Blood is a story supplement for **Hunter: The Reckoning,** A Storytelling Game of Desperate Measures.



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HUNTER

THE RECKONING

Lines Drawn in Blood

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HUNTER
THE RECKONING

Lines Drawn in Blood

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 5
Thin Red Lines 5
How to Use This Book 6
Genre 7
Motifs 7

CHAPTER ONE: PRESSURE TEST 9
The Hunt 12
Genre 12
The Quarry 13
Complicating Factors 13
Story Structure 13
Red Flags 14

PART ONE:ARE YOU COMING OUT TO PLAY? 15
Living Spaces 15
Locations in Town 15
Nighthawks 16
Ghosts of Summer 17
Next Steps 29

PART TWO: STRANGERS IN TOWN 30
Investigating the Ghosts 30
The Men in Black 31
Alice 32
New Conflicts 32
Shady Maple 32
Mrs. Henderson's Savings 33
The Construction Site 34
Warning 35
Arrested 36
Unit 13 36
The Secret Area 38
Next Steps 38

PART THREE: SUMMERTIME 39
Weather Report 39
Energy Rise 39
The Summerfolk 40
Entering the Storm 40
Riders on the Storm 41
The Device 42
The Eye of the Storm 42
Destroying the Memory 43
Remembering Summer 44
Loose Ends 44
On the Road Again 45
Allies & Antagonists 46

CHAPTER TWO: OUTSIDERS 49
The Hunt 52
Genre 52
The Quarry 52
Complicating Factors 53
Story Structure 53
Red Flags 54
Danger 54

PART ONE: SMALL TOWN, USA 55
The Job Description 55
Under the Juniper Tree 56
Home is Where the Hunt Is 58
Chewing the Fat 59
Next Steps 60

PART TWO: DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN ARE? 61
When You Say Nothing at All 61
Taking it to the Streets 61
The Stop-And-Rob 63
Teenage Wasteland 64
In Sickness and In Health (Outlet) 68
Welcome to the Neighborhood 68
No Rest for the Wicked 70
Between the Rows 72
Babes in the Wood 72
In the Pines 74
Hit the Books 76
Employee Reviews 78
Next Steps 79

PART THREE: THE UNQUIET GRAVE 80
Where the Wild Roses Grow 80
Ghosts of the Ozarks 82
Loose Ends 83
On the Road Again 85
Allies & Antagonists 85
The Fae 87
Neto Solutions 91
Aurum Industries 92
Mister Gannet 93

CHAPTER THREE: BLUR THE LINES 95
The Hunt 98
Genre 98
The Quarry 99
Story Structure 99
Complicating Factors 100
Red Flags 102

PART ONE: A DISTURBING PATTERN 103
Tense Entrance 103
The Scene of the Crime 104
The Survivor 107
The Cops 108
The Fanboy 110
Next Steps 110

PART TWO: PILGRIM'S PROGRESS 111
Harder than it Looks 111
The Broadcasts 111
Prep School 112
The Shelter 114
Bailey & Sons 115
Sacred Word 116
Davis Medical Center 118
Interference: Joanna Torres 120
Interference: Aaron Lambert 121
Interference: Steven Anderson 121
Interference: Sophie Wilson 122
Murders and Confrontations 122
Next Steps 125

PART THREE: THE LONG DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL 126
Setting Traps 126
Catch and Kill 126
Catch and Release 127
Catch and Drive 127
Loose Ends 127
On the Road Again 128
Allies & Antagonists 128
The Victims 131

CHAPTER FOUR: ALONE IN THE DARK 135
The Hunt 138
Genre 139
The Quarry 139
Story Structure 139
Complicating Factors 140
Red Flags 141

PART ONE: NORTHERN LIGHTS, DARK CITY 142
Home Away from Home: The Copper Indian 142
Second Shift 142
The House Where Nobody Lives 145
Saints Preserve Us 146
Cold Case Calling 147
A Nice Friendly Chat 148
Hard Sell 150

PART TWO: THE LAMB LIES DOWN IN YELLOWKNIFE 151
Gather In His Name 151
Coffee Date with the Vampire 153
Heart to Heart 155
On The Trail of The Dead 156

PART THREE: RED AND WHITE ALL OVER 158
Nowhere To Run 158
The Carpenter's Nest 159
Nana Werther's Nest 160
The Vicar's Nest 163
Blood Makes Noise 164
Loose Ends 165
On the Road Again 166
Allies & Antagonists 166
Map: Schneider's Apartment 173
Map: Construction Site 174
Map: Unit 13 175
Map: Mister Gannet's Prison 176

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INTRODUCTION

Thin Red Lines

"Hell is empty and all the devils are here."

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

The ghosts of a forgotten town rise up, determined to leave a lasting mark. Fae creatures wreak spiteful revenge on humans who broke an age-old pact. A teenage serial killer delivers justice the only way she can; at the point of a knife. And a vampire clique carves out a home far from the politics and cruelty of their kind. Lines Drawn in Blood is a book of stories for Hunter: The Reckoning. It's also a book about people, and monsters, pushed to their limits. These stories explore how much someone can take before they lash out at a cruel, unfair world.

Make no mistake: all these monsters need putting down. If they're not dealt with, innocent human beings will suffer and die. It's the Hunters' job to protect these people. But the best villains are a mirror, and that's absolutely the case with the antagonists in the four stories that make up Lines Drawn in Blood. Like the Hunters themselves, they're seeking justice or safety. They just happen to reach for it in ways that bring them into conflict with a Hunter cell.

The many threats in this book need to be eliminated but that doesn't always mean slaughtered. Three of the stories give the Hunters other options. Most of them take the form of delivering justice: commemorating a tragedy, renegotiating a pact, or redirecting a serial killer's murderous instincts onto real monsters. In each case there's a high price, killing's often the easier option and that's a theme the Hunters have to wrestle with. Every one of them has to decide where they're going to draw their personal lines.

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How to Use This Book

Lines Drawn in Blood is designed as a chronicle for a group to play chapter by chapter, maybe interspersed with other, more personal stories involving individual Hunters' Touchstones and Drives. Each chapter also works as a standalone story to incorporate into ongoing chronicles. They're set in and around the American Midwest: two in Nebraska, one in Missouri, and one somewhat further afield, in Canada. We promise it's worth the trip. That's by design. While Hunters are usually closely linked to a single community, thoroughly embedded in its story, spreading these stories over a bigger geographical area means it's easier for a Storyteller to find at least one that fits their setting.

A group can play through these stories in any order but there's a natural sequence. **Under Pressure** sets up a home base for the Hunters and works as a first hunt, then **Outsiders** shows the cell how other teams of Hunters operate (spoiler: it's not pretty). **Blur the Lines** features a human antagonist, so it works best when the Hunters have learned just enough about the supernatural to see it everywhere they look. **Alone in the Dark** is brutal and the Hunters need their wits about them and their skills on point to survive it. Running it first would be cruel. The **On the Road Again** section at the end of each story offers suggestions to link it to any of the others.

Although the stories all officially take place in North America, they're easy to transplant. Struggling rural communities like Rawlins, Missouri (**Outsiders**) exist everywhere. So do big cities and their suburbs, like Omaha and Unity (**Blur the Lines**, **Pressure Test**). There may not be too many towns exactly like Yellowknife (**Alone in the Dark**), but every country has isolated beauty spots where evil can thrive out of sight of human and supernatural authorities. Tear these stories up by the roots if you need to and replant them in a setting that suits you. Change names and faces. The plots are plenty strong enough to thrive.

The four stories follow the same structure. They start out with a summary of The Hunt that provides an at-a-glance overview of what the story involves. Any background information the Storyteller needs is here. Use it to help improvise if the Hunters take the story in an unexpected direction. It also includes content warnings. The summary is followed by a description of The Quarry: what and who they are, what they want, and how they go about achieving their goals. Complicating Factors walk the Storyteller through all the things that stop the story being a simple "find monster, kill monster" scenario, and offer ways to change up the story to suit a group. Red Flags are events that alert the Hunters to what's happening—in other words, story hooks.

All four stories assume the Hunters have already had their first brush with the supernatural and awakened their Drives. **Pressure Test** is designed as a cell's first hunt and gives some guidance for turning a bunch of newly created characters into a functioning Hunter cell, but the bonds will always be tighter if players create their characters together and consciously build connections between them.

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If you want to test out one of these stories as a one-shot you can grab a set of ready-made characters from the Renegade Games Studio website. They cover each of the five Hunter Creeds, and they'll give players a solid idea of what a Hunter character should look like. The ready-made characters know one another and are already a working cell. That means they also work as an example of how to hard-code friendships, rivalries, and tensions into a cell of Hunters while making sure they still work as a team.

Genre

Each story in **Lines Drawn in Blood** has similar themes, though they tackle them in different ways. The overarching themes are justice, the limits of tolerance, and choosing where to draw the line. The mood of each story varies.

Pressure Test is a traditional ghost story: a time long past echoes into the present in ways that disrupt and threaten the Hunters' contemporary world. The Hunters' understanding of mortality, and their home, shifts like sand.

Outsiders is folk horror. Beautiful, decaying environments are as important as the silence and secrets of a small rural town where capricious Fae keep an ancient evil sealed in the depths of the woods.

Blur the Lines looks a lot like a police procedural. It presents a single-minded killer with mysterious motives and hangs all the responsibility for solving and stopping a murder spree on the characters. As the murders continue the Hunters fight the clock and the grim, obstructive cast of supporting characters as they attempt to bring this very human evil to justice.

Finally, **Alone in the Dark** is action horror. The environment itself is dangerous, but nowhere near as deadly as the quasi-religious cult of vampires the Hunters are stalking—and who are stalking them in return.

There's a secondary theme in **Lines Drawn in Blood**, and it reoccurs in every story: nobody in power gives a damn. Law enforcement agencies, corporations, and the major orgs don't care who they hurt as long as they get what they want; whether that's a cover up or a higher kill count. The Hunters will feel like they're the only thing standing between life and death for innocent people. Because they are.

Motifs

Some of the motifs in **Lines Drawn in Blood** cut across genres and apply to several of the stories included. If you intersperse these stories with others of your own devising, adding one or more of these motifs can help make them feel thematically consistent and part of the same overarching narrative. These motifs can also help you decide the outcome of an unexpected situation in a way that will feel appropriate to the rest of the story.

1. Nobody's innocent
2. Alliances are temporary, enmity is forever
3. Violence is the easy answer, not the only one

Mature Content Warning

Hunter: The Reckoning deals with mature themes. If a cell's quarries didn't do heinous, unspeakable things there'd be no need for Hunters at all. Players can expect to encounter violence, gore, injustice, and suffering as part of a day's, or night's, work. Some of the humans they meet as antagonists, or at best highly-problematic-temporary-allies, will be just as unpleasant as the monsters: selfish, cruel, fanatical, and in some cases bigoted. These elements are important to the narrative, but that's not an excuse to inflict them on unwilling players.

All of these stories come with content warnings up front. However thorough and detailed a list of content warnings is, there is always a possibility it won't flag something one of your players is vulnerable to. Be aware of the content of stories before you run them, discuss potentially traumatic or triggering content with players, and most of all be respectful. If a story element doesn't work for your group, change it.

Hunter: The Reckoning includes **Advice for Considerate Play** on pp. 274–276. Follow it.

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CHAPTER ONE:
PRESSURE TEST

"Time does not bring relief; you all have lied
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!
But last year's bitter loving must remain
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide"
- Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sonnet 02: Time Does Not Bring Relief; You All Have Lied

We begin with a ghost story. Something is buried under the quiet suburban town of Unity, Nebraska. The ghost of the town that stood here before—swallowed up in the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression—is old, hungry, and angry it's been forgotten. Trouble starts with strange sightings around the town, leading the Hunters to ghosts who initially seem lost and confused but turn angry when their confusing needs aren't met.

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CONTENT WARNINGS

The ghosts in this story are from the 1930s. Some of them are horrible people; others have major problems. One is casually sexist, one is extremely racist, and one is a morphine addict. Discuss this content with your group up front. If they're uncomfortable or reluctant, cut it or rework it to suit. Ignore Mrs. Iris Henderson's gender role expectations, remove Sergeant Lawrence entirely, and make Tollence destitute but not addicted. Do not hesitate, do not second guess yourself: this is a game, and nobody should ever be hurt by playing.

The Hunt

This story is set in the American Midwest, specifically Nebraska, but it suits any place where old towns have died out and been replaced with new ones. The city in question is pretty small. Not so small everyone knows everyone else's business or that you can't get lost in it, but not especially glamorous or exciting. It's the sort of place people come to for a slower pace of life, maybe to raise their kids, but still have all the modern advantages of a city: jobs, entertainment, and even bigger cities close by. It's a maze of identical suburban houses with lawns kept neat by the annoying diligence of a few homeowner associations. While Unity's proud of its neat middle class areas it's also big enough to have an underside of crime, drug use, and homelessness that most people try to ignore.

The Hunters might be locals alert to changes to their dull, safe little city or they might be passing through and come across the supernatural problems of the town in the process. Ghosts appear to many people in Unity, including the Hunters, to ask for help with unfinished business. As they investigate further the Hunters learn all these ghosts seem to originate from the 1930s, the Dust Bowl era. While the ghosts start out harmless, before long they become dangerous and aggressive. The ghosts are clearly angry about something and are becoming powerful enough to hurt people.

On the surface the locations and manifestations of the hauntings appear random, but when the Hunters follow up the names and clues each ghost reveals about their lives, they discover a pattern. The ghosts' histories are mundane, though often tragic, and they all come from a town called Summer and were all alive in the 1930s. A little research on the era reveals it was part of the dust bowl: the era in the 1930s where overfarming led to the failure of crops across the state, driving many farmers and their families into poverty and destitution. These ghosts are echoes of those who lost their lives in the town of Summer but there are signs of a driving intelligence or power behind their manifestations.

To complicate matters, a team from Aurum Industries, a corporate monster hunting org, arrives in Unity in the middle of the hunt. In their guise as "men in black" a lot of official looking agents arrive in town, asking around about strange occurrences. They politely warn the Hunters to back off. They get gradually less polite if the Hunters refuse to drop their investigation. This particular team is testing experimental technology. They've determined the area has a high level of "paranormal emissions" which need to be purged. They're looking for the center of the "disturbance" where they plan to detonate a device that will destroy the source of the "radiation." It might even work: there's a lot of R&D money behind the tool. But it's untested, and it might also make the situation worse, or cause a lot of collateral damage to Unity residents simply trying to live their lives. The Hunters clearly need to either stop them or solve the problem first.

The cell still needs to find a way to make contact with the spirit of Summer and find a way to lay it to rest. They know it's angry and hungry but not what will appease it. As the Hunters try to find answers a dust storm whips up. Summer's endgame has come into play, and it plans to wipe Unity off the map; just as it disappeared a hundred years ago. The Hunters need to battle both the dust and the corporate agents to find the center of the storm and face the ghost of Summer.

Genre

Although the ghosts of Summer aren't strictly ghosts, this is very much a ghost story. It's about people, places, and a tragedy that needs to be laid to rest. The key element is understanding: what are the ghosts, why are they appearing, and what are their motives? The first two parts are a chance for the Hunters to get to know the people and locations of Unity and get a feel for the town; which is the most important character in the story.

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Story Structure

Pressure Test consists of three parts.

PART ONE: ARE YOU COMING OUT TO PLAY?
The cell has their first interactions with Summer's apparitions and learns that something unnatural afflicts the entire town.

➤

PART TWO: STRANGERS IN TOWN
The cell tangle with a corporate hunter org investigating the same phenomena, and the apparitions become increasingly aggressive and dangerous.

➤

PART THREE: SUMMERTIME
The apparitions' activity peaks with an attempt to erase the town that forgot them. The cell must either destroy the ghosts or placate them.

In classic ghost story fashion, the action amps up in part three as the ghosts grow in power and seek their revenge.

The Quarry

The cell's quarry for this hunt is the ghost of an entire town.

You won't remember the place, nobody does, but out in Nebraska, on the old frontier, there used to be a small town called Summer. It was never the sort of place you could call thriving, but the folk there did ok for the most part. It was everything you'd expect of a frontier town of its time. It wasn't much to speak of except a church, a bank, and a general store. Even then the only building with any real foundations was the church. Mostly it was just a central place for local farmers to meet up, share stories and trade among themselves or with the occasional out of towner.

Life was never easy for the people of Summer, but when the Dust Bowl hit in the 1930s, it got a lot harder. One by one the farms failed, and with no buyer in their right mind interested in a dried out stretch of land, it was hard to move on. Effectively trapped in Summer, those forced to stay had no one to turn to as everyone around them shared their dire straits. People died, slowly and quietly, on empty farms, in broken buildings. The houses collapsed into sun-bleached coffins waiting for the sands to silently bury them until there was nothing left. People forgot about Summer because there was no one left to remember it.

Eventually folk came back to the land where Summer once stood. Modern suburbs quietly grew out from the great cities until a new city covered the dust of the old town. That's when some remnant of Summer woke up, something hungry and angry. It was one thing to be forgotten, but to be covered over and erased was too much.

In this story the Hunters face the ghost of a town, a spirit angry that new communities thrive where it is forgotten and that still remembers the terrible hunger that led to the deaths of so many of its people. What the town really wants is to be remembered. A stone or a plaque that states it was once here would be enough. It doesn't know what it wants, and it lashes out at the city atop its bones. Murder and torment are the only way it sees to create a legacy. If the Hunters can't find the connections between Unity's hauntings and ghostly killings, the ghost of Summer will turn the whole city into a monument to horror that no one will ever forget.

Complicating Factors

While the hauntings appear to be sudden, the town of Summer has been gathering the power of its rage and emptiness for an awfully long time. When it grows strong enough, it brings a cruel, lethal dust storm down on the town built on top of it. There's a time limit on the cell's investigation and the spirit is in no mood to delay or be lenient when it's already waited so very long to make its mark.

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But that's not all. This swift buildup of power has caught the attention of Aurum Industries; a corporation with a newly developed interest in ghost hunting. After sending in a couple of scouts to determine if the ghostly phenomena are worth committing resources to, they arrive en masse with a variety of technology and personnel. Several "men in black" begin following the same leads as the Hunters. They might potentially be helpful, but sadly the corporation is in no mood to share data with amateurs and do their best to sideline the Hunters. To the Hunters, these newcomers seem to be federal agents from a special task force. They stonewall efforts to find out any more information about their role or authority.

While many people would just leave it to the professionals, the Hunters have their own Drives to get involved. If they were the type of people to look away from problems, they never would have struck back against the darkness in the first place. Besides, the corporation is going about things the wrong way. When you want to try out a great big shiny hammer, every problem looks like a nail, and the corporation's tech is all hammers. Their brute force containment approach will only enrage the ghost of Summer, which could lead to the destruction of the whole town. Including, if the Hunters are local, their friends and families.

Red Flags

This story is designed to work with either an established cell of Hunters or as a way to bring a new cell together. **Pressure Test** assumes this is their first, or at least an early, hunt as a cell and they're still finding their feet; figuring out strengths and weaknesses, and so on. If you haven't figured it out before starting play, take some time to discuss how the group got together. Play out some prelude scenes to develop that meeting or allow them to come together during this opening scenario.

- Tabloids, social media, and a range of ghost-obsessed websites circulate stories about the Unity hauntings. Local and regional newspapers and TV run skeptical segments, occasionally diving into group psychology to look for reasons for this apparent ghost epidemic. Some media are even offering cash for stories of personal encounters, verifiable images, or video. While it is certainly not mainstream news, and weird sightings do occur all over the place, there is a higher-than-average concentration in Unity. It's enough for an itinerant Hunter to consider it worth the trip.
- If the Hunters are local, someone in their family and friend group has encountered a ghost or knows someone who has. Most are cynical, but some are worried. Each of the ghosts has a preferred target; substitute a Touchstone to make the story more personal to the cell.
- The Storyteller might also use this story to bring the cell together. In fact, the group can contain a mixture of seasoned and inexperienced Hunters. New Hunters should be residents in the town where things begin. This gives them a home turf advantage and their local knowledge will balance the greater understanding of the supernatural the more experienced Hunters have.
- Encountering the ghosts draws the Hunters together. Either they're present for the same hauntings, or they run into each other as they follow the same leads. If the Hunters don't get along initially, the threat of Aurum Industries' experimental solution gives them a common enemy. The Hunters need to deal with the org quickly and decisively. Working together facilitates that.

In this opening section the Hunters come together when they discover signs ghosts are walking among the people of the town they live in. Initially the ghosts seem harmless but soon they become violent and dangerous as their needs are not met. Unfortunately, they don't express what their needs are so the danger escalates until people start dying or disappearing.

RED HERRINGS FOR EXPERTS

If the players are already familiar with the World of Darkness, they may reach some erroneous conclusions. Based purely on the name they may think Summer is some sort of faerie problem and the "Men in Black" are supernatural entities in their own right. It's up to you whether you correct them or just let them learn that it's not safe for their Hunters to assume anything which, let's face it, is a survival skill.

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Part One:
Are You Coming Out to Play?

Living Spaces

Once they know a little of the town, the players describe where their Hunter lives, any nearby landmarks, and whether their home is part of a particular community. Most residents will be in one of the almost identical subdivisions. Most of which are distinguished by degrees of affluence rather than architecture. Out of town Hunters should detail where they are staying and how good a place they can afford, unless they are staying with a friend.

Locations in Town

This story takes place in Unity, a decently sized Nebraska city. It has a downtown district with shopping and entertainment malls, big box stores, and chain restaurants so folks don't need to travel out of town to get to a familiar store. It's small enough for people to be interested in what happens across the whole city, not just their immediate neighborhood. But it's too big for everyone to know each other's business. It's got its shady areas near the office parks and light industrial zones where there is crime and homelessness that most people try to ignore. The suburbs stretch on for miles until they give way to an ocean of farms.

There are hundreds, even thousands, of towns just like Unity across the USA and most of the world.

Pressure Test works in any similar real-world town, or a convenient fictional one the Storyteller's already developed. In either case the players are unlikely to know the area so it's useful to provide a few landmarks to help build a picture of the place. The Hunters will visit some of these locations to investigate clues and can use others as meeting places and set dressing.

Bella's Diner (see "Nighthawks") is an old-style American diner that's been a part of the town as long as anyone can remember. It's open 24 hours and as it's on the edge of the town does a good trade serving truckers and anyone else passing through.

Ellis High School is in the center of the town and pretty much every kid in Unity goes there. It has its bullies and bad elements, but it's generally a pretty decent place. It's clean and well maintained and students here get decent grades. The best occasionally get scholarships to Ivy League colleges. Behind the high school a large series of playing fields backs onto some of the city's more affordable neighborhoods.

Carlisle Park is a large green space near the High School where many people come to eat lunch on warm days. There are plenty of benches and a fair few shady trees but it's just a big, flat, open area of grass.

St Mary's Library is located on the other side of Carlisle Park from the High School. It used to be a church and was converted into a library when the new church building was built. While not a vast library it is well stocked, especially with local history. It lacks a lot of scientific and educational books but has a lending deal with the High School library for those sorts of books.

St Margaret's Catholic Church is the largest church in the area and is a modern building in the center of town near St. Mary's Library, formerly St. Mary's Church. This is the town's main place of worship. A Baptist and a Presbyterian church can be found further out of town in opposite directions.

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The Grand Hotel is also in the center of town. It's expensive but not especially luxurious. Given the town doesn't see many tourists and only a few business travelers the hotel's restaurant sees more guests than its rooms.

The Beaumont Motel is on the edge of town near Bella's Diner. Put simply, it's a dive. It's cheap and basic but also clean and secure. The owners don't warn guests about the high (for Unity) chance of being assaulted or robbed in the area, and they turn a blind eye to anything shady happening in the rooms as long as the bills are paid and there is no damage to motel property.

The Ceilidh is the most popular and central of the many pubs and bars throughout the town. It maintains a proud Irish theme despite the fact not a single Irish person has ever entered the place. Many people just call it 'The Cale'.

Nighthawks

Start the first session of the story with a short opening scene to introduce the town. All the Hunters (whether they know each other or not) are in Bella's Diner, on the outskirts of town. It's late at night but not so late the place is empty. Ask each player what brought their Hunter there tonight. If they cannot come up with a reason themselves, have them pick one from the list below:

- It was the first warm place they saw on their way into town.
- They had an argument with a spouse, child or roommate and needed to get out of the house for a while.
- They really like the coffee here.
- They have a crush on one of the staff.
- They just needed somewhere quiet to think.
- They're coming back to their hometown and fancied a nostalgic reminder of the town they once knew.

The only staff in the diner are Zeke the cook and Alice the waitress. Alice is running the place as Zeke never leaves the kitchen if he can avoid it. Alice is amiable and chatty, mostly out of boredom, but she

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does like to hear people's stories. She makes small talk with the Hunters, which might also get them talking to each other. Alice has heard about some of the hauntings happening in town. As they're the most interesting thing that's happened in Unity for years, she brings up the subject of Mary (p. 18) and tells the Hunters all she knows with barely any need for questions. That's not much: there's a creepy little girl who bothers local kids and traumatizes any who play with her. The kids think she's a ghost, their parents think she's a disturbed and dangerous child.

As the Hunters notice each other, give each player a chance to describe their Hunter's appearance and general demeanor. Each Hunter can leave when they see fit whether or not they have spoken a word. The point of the scene is to establish the diner as a place that feels safe, where they can all visit, meet, and possibly make plans if they don't have a safehouse of their own. It's also a subtle way to introduce Alice, who's important to the story's development. She quickly becomes a contact for one of the Aurum agents who'll be arriving soon. She encourages the Hunters to share their theories with her and encourages them to come back to the diner with more of those "interesting, strange stories." She may well offer some free coffee so she can hear more, but she is clever enough not to become suspicious with questions.

Ghosts of Summer

The scenes introducing each ghost work in any order as long as the introduction scene for any particular ghost comes before its conflict scene. So, the Storyteller might introduce all the ghosts first, or develop some a little earlier depending on where the Hunters focus. Encountering each ghost potentially offers clues for the Hunters to follow up in Part Two.

These hauntings aren't actually ghosts in the truest sense. They are manifestations of what the town of Summer remembers about its long dead inhabitants. So, while they have the forms of actual, historical townsfolk, they're only echoes: their souls or spirits have moved on. Their pain and hunger soaked into the land and created the ghost of Summer. In turn, Summer uses that power to create these manifestations.

Summer's ghosts are solid enough to touch but can't be wounded or killed. Bullets and weapons meet resistance but pass through and do no damage. With a little more investment from Summer, they can perform physical tasks like dragging people to their death or firing weapons they might be carrying. Each encounter should leave the Hunters wondering whether they just met a ghost, a real person from the past, or something else. If Danger rises to 4 or higher, the ghosts are always solid enough to pose a physical threat; Summer doesn't have to consciously make it so.

If the Hunters don't take the bait and investigate the ghosts, the ghosts keep coming to them, and the rest of the town. The ghosts aren't subtle, either. They make house calls, including breaking in, leaning over the Hunter's bed, and screaming at them until they pay attention. These ghosts' entire motive is to not be forgotten or ignored.

The Hunters aren't the only people seeing ghosts. Most people in Unity ignore them as they do minor street crime or homeless people. The more someone pays attention to a ghost, the more persistent they are. Each ghost described here has chosen a target with whom they feel a connection or affinity. Those people can't ignore them, and notes are provided in each introductory scene for when and how those targets might turn to the Hunters for help.

If the Hunters are locals, use their Touchstones to further show the ghosts' activities affecting innocent people: a young family member's followed around by the Sergeant, assumed to be a delinquent; Mrs. Henderson insists they're trying to rob her; etc. If not, people in Bella's Diner or the hotel swap stories of weird encounters with distressed people in "old timey" clothing who fade away into thin air; it seems everyone's seen a ghost or knows someone who has.

Children are more likely than adults to interact with the ghosts, as they haven't yet learned the skill of denying the existence of uncomfortable things.

Each ghost has a history that gives it an affinity to specific creeds or Drives. The Storyteller should use this connection to make interacting with the ghosts more personal: they're relatable and easy to sympathize with. That may lead to each Hunter taking the lead with a particular ghost, which is a great way for players to start thinking about and performing aspects of

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their character. Just make sure if the characters keep splitting up to investigate different leads, you cut between them often, so nobody gets bored.

GHOSTS AND THEIR AFFINITIES

Mrs. Iris Henderson	Entrepreneur, Greed
Father Caleb	Faithful, Oath, Pride
Mary	Inquisitive, Curiosity
Sergeant Dale Lawrence	Martial, Vengeance, Envy
Tollence	Underground, Atonement

Each ghost has a specified target, and both an introduction and a conflict scene. You can replace the target with any Hunter. The ghosts' introductory scenes don't need dice rolls. The Storyteller might call for Wits + Insight tests (Difficulty 3) to notice the emotional state of the ghosts and some of the oddities about them but this is a great opportunity to use automatic wins if dice pools allow. Each scene should leave the Hunters with the feeling something isn't quite normal about the encounter, but not precisely what. The conflict scenes are more overtly weird and should scare or unnerve the Hunters, clearly showing them something dark and supernatural is going on.

How the Hunters interact with ghosts affects both Danger and Desperation. The more frustrated and angry the ghosts become, the more they scare (and even hurt) the people of Unity, increasing Desperation. Calming and empathizing with the ghosts gives them the recognition Summer craves; the ghosts are less overtly harmful, and Desperation reduces. The one thing Summer won't stand is to be dismissed: destroying a ghost, although it's a temporary solution, enrages Summer and increases Danger (only do this the first time the Hunters destroy each ghost, or things quickly get out of hand).

Mrs. Henderson – Introduction

Entrepreneur, Greed
Content Warning: Mild sexism

Target: Aileen Murdoch, a single mother living next door to Mrs. Henderson's home. The old lady's been alternately asking for her help around the house and accusing her of stealing. That's annoying, but what makes it weird is that sometimes the house isn't even there.

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Discovering the Ghost: Aileen tells other parents about the situation at the school gates; investigating Mary can lead the Hunters to Aileen and her problem.

Mrs. Henderson is first encountered in a quiet suburban street. She's an old white lady, around seventy years old, in a tatty, faded blue dress that looks vintage. Characters with an interest in fashion or history recognize it as 1930s in style. Mrs. Henderson tries to get the attention of passersby, of which there are few, and appears flustered and upset. If the Hunters approach her, she's very glad to have caught someone's attention and asks them if they can help her. If they agree, or at least seem as if they might, she invites them into her home for a cup of tea.

Her home is the exceptionally average house behind her. The yard's dry and dusty, nothing like the immaculate lawns to either side. The interior's basic, with only a few pieces of furniture, so some Hunters may have to sit on the floor or stand when she offers them all a seat. The kitchen is next to the living room and Mrs. Henderson will go there to make tea. She is somewhat old school and expects any female Hunters are either related or married to men present, and her lips thin with disapproval when she finds that's not the case. She noticeably bristles at anyone who doesn't meet her expectations of their gender: gentlemen should assist ladies with anything physical, ladies ought not to use coarse language, and so on. This includes characters whose gender doesn't neatly conform to her idea of a "masculine" or "feminine" presentation. Note that this scene can be uncomfortable for some players. Check in with your group and play down or alter this aspect of Mrs. Henderson's character if need be.

If any Hunters leave the sitting room, they find all the other rooms in the house are completely bare and the kitchen cupboards are empty. All Mrs. Henderson has is a few token bits of furniture and the facilities to make tea. She answers any comments about this by saying she doesn't have much but she gets by.

She clearly enjoys the Hunters' company and a Wits + Insight test (Difficulty 2) reveals she seems lonely. Eventually she gets round to asking them for the help she needs. She tells them she's worried about her savings. She buried them in a metal box near the church but is worried someone will find them and steal them. *"You can't trust people these days, especially now times are hard. But you all look like decent folk."* She asks them to find the box and check on it, either burying it somewhere more secure or bringing it back to her. She insists she cannot go as she's not welcome there anymore, and her knees couldn't make the walk.

There's only one church near the house but it's surrounded by concrete (sidewalks, roads, parking lot etc.) so if there was anything buried there the Hunters couldn't get to it. In fact, Mrs. Henderson is referring to the ruins of Summer's church (see "The Construction site"). If the Hunters return to her house, they find it empty, with a For Sale sign in the yard. The realtor, Lisa Johannson, is happy to show the Hunters around if they like (although it's also easy to break in with a Dexterity + Streetwise test. While it's certainly the same house there's no furniture or tea making items and various property websites say it's been on the market for six months.

Father Caleb – Introduction

Faithful, Pride

Target: Sayeed, a homeless Syrian refugee Father Caleb's taken a particular interest in. The priest's offers of help are contingent on Sayeed "coming to Jesus" (he's Muslim) and his persistence makes Sayeed suspicious. He avoids Father Caleb as much as possible.

Discovering the Ghost: Alice regularly helps Sayeed out with a hot meal and allows him to sit in Bella's Diner when it's quiet. If the Hunters talk about hauntings in the diner, Sayeed tells them his story. Father Caleb is a middle-aged Black man who calls out to the Hunters on the street in a busy part of the town. He wears a plain shirt and trousers with a priestly collar. He has an earnest look that suggests he's the sort of preacher who rolls up his sleeves and helps people rather than just offering scripture. He asks the Hunters if they have served Jesus today. If they ask what that means he tells them it is to do as Jesus would and help the poor; after all, there are a lot of folks in need nowadays. He asks if they would share their bounty with those less fortunate. At this point the Hunters

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realize they're each carrying a small bag of bread rolls with a modest cheese filling. The rolls seem perfectly normal, and the Hunters can eat them (though it won't fill them up). If anyone does eat one of the rolls, the Storyteller might want to note they've done so to make the players a little paranoid.

If they refuse to help, Father Caleb gives them a look of utter disappointment and turns back into the crowd. In moments he is gone, and the bags of bread the Hunters carry fade before their eyes. If they agree to help, Father Caleb leads them to a nearby alley where several homeless people live in rough shelters. He indicates the Hunters should pass out the bread rolls, which are gratefully received by those they give them to. While the Hunters can continue to interact with Father Caleb, no one else can see him. With several Hunters present this should become apparent gradually and subtly. Keep in mind that the recipients of the Hunters' charity don't want to cross them: it could get dangerous.

A number of unhoused people live in the alley in very poor conditions. If the Hunters take time to talk to them and learn something about them, they can make some useful friends and allies here. In any interaction a Hunter can make a Charisma + Streetwise test (Difficulty 2) which, if they win, earns a modicum of trust from the person they're talking to. These allies can help the Hunters in Part Two when the Special Affairs Division enters the scene.

Most of the people in this small community want to find a way out of their situation but either aren't sure how to or are highly distrustful of any government assistance. It's difficult for the Hunters to change the lives of the people here, but how hard they try is up to them. The community includes:

Sarah — A runaway teenager who escaped an abusive home. Male characters suffer a penalty trying to earn her trust.

Bob — An educated middle-aged man who lost everything when his business went bankrupt.

Margaret — A lady in her late sixties who has been on the streets for a while and suffers from mild dementia.

John — A veteran who lost an arm in Afghanistan and whose disability benefits didn't cover his rent.

Marcus — A teenager who's had problems with drugs and has difficulty staying away from them when the realities of his situation get on top of him.



When the Hunters have given out all their bread Father Caleb thanks them and tells them they have served their community in the spirit of Jesus. He blesses them and tells them the Lord may have cause to call upon their kindness once more. Then, as he walks away from them down the street he fades away.

Mary – Introduction

Inquisitive, Curiosity

Target: Dayo Johnson, a young Black boy. Dayo's parents work long hours, so he's left to entertain himself after school. Every time he's alone, he sees this creepy white girl watching him; he no longer wants to be alone.

Discovering the Ghost: Mary's one of the best-known ghosts in Unity; she's a threat to the local children. Kids find her scary and unnerving, and "Lonely Mary" is becoming an urban legend. Their parents want to know who Mary is and find her family so they can "do something about her." Asking about ghosts anywhere in Unity leads the Hunters to Mary,

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who's known to hang around local playgrounds and parks. Dayo might approach one of the Hunters in town and ask them to walk him to the library or his home, so Mary leaves him alone.

Mary is a small white girl of around eight years old. She has long, unkempt black hair and wears a simple and slightly grubby pinafore dress. She turns up at local parks and playgrounds, asking other children to play with her. Most kids find her scary in a way they can't articulate and simply refuse or stay away from her. If they ignore her, she eventually goes away. A few kids have tried to play with her, but they only do so once. Something about going to play with Mary is deeply traumatizing and those who do are too frightened to talk about the experience afterward. Even thinking about it sends them into panicked hysterics.

The parents of the traumatized children are naturally upset about the situation, especially as their kids are the ones who have been trying to help Mary. They believe Mary is simply a very nasty girl who plays some sort of disturbing child's trick on any other child naïve enough to fall for her "little girl lost act. They have been discussing "the Mary problem" at the school gates, parks, and coffee mornings and if any of the Hunters are part of that social circle they have undoubtedly heard of Mary.

Mary herself is easy to find. Hanging out in any place children play eventually leads to an encounter with her (though, depending on the Hunters' aesthetics and behavior it may generate a brush with the local cops first). Mary steps out of an alley or from behind a tree and gently approaches any group of children, her head hung shyly and her movements nervous and tentative. She asks if anyone will play with her, and these days rarely gets a favorable response as the other children shy away from her. Any child who considers going with her is pulled back protectively by the other kids.

All Mary wants is a playmate; if the Hunters offer to play with her Mary will happily agree. She lifts her head and offers a warm smile, tagging one of the Hunters and running away (but not so far that whoever is tagged can't chase her). The Hunters can play out a game of tag with Mary, with a Dexterity + Athletics test (Difficulty 1) to see who does the best. With an Intelligence + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 3) they notice that as they play, they're being drawn further away from the populated part of the park or street.

Once the game is done, Mary's breathless and happy, thanking the Hunters for a lovely game. She then asks if the Hunters would get her mother and older sister to play with her as they never do, and she thinks they need some fun. Apparently neither of them wants to play and that is why Mary has to find other playmates.

If the Hunters refuse, Mary is deeply upset as she thought the Hunters were her friends. Crying, she runs away, leaving no trace for the Hunters to follow. If the Hunters agree (either initially or changing their mind when they see she is upset) she leads them to her mother and sister, who are sitting on the ground together, slumped against a wall. Even from a distance they're clearly long dead. Their dresses are like Mary's but rotten with age, their skin is drawn and mummified from being baked in the sun. As the Hunters take this in, Mary gleefully tells the huddled corpses that they "have to play now as she has some new friends" and to "stop sleeping and wake up to play."

At this both corpses begin to move, turning their heads towards the Hunters, revealing inky black holes where their eyes should be. Both open their mouths impossibly wide, releasing a void that threatens to overwhelm the Hunters. Each Hunter must make a Stamina + Resolve test (Difficulty 5) to remain conscious as a wave of nausea and aching hunger passes over them. When they recover their senses, Mary and the bodies are gone. Those who stay conscious see Mary and her family fade away, but as they do so Mary whispers *"I know they're dead, and the dead can't play, but we'll all be dead soon anyway."*

Sergeant Lawrence – Introduction

Martial, Vengeance, Envy

Content Warning:
Overt racism, especially anti-Blackness. If anyone in your group is uncomfortable with this, rework this scene. Sergeant Lawrence can just as easily target young "delinquents" as the town's non-white population.

Target: Daunte Tyler, a street performer. His confrontations with Lawrence happen regularly and in public: the Hunters inevitably see one play out.

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Discovering the Ghost: Local law enforcement aren't happy with this "vigilante" roaming the streets. Cops ask around after the vintage truck Lawrence uses, including asking the Hunters if they've seen the truck or met the driver, who's known to target minorities all over Unity.

A middle-aged white man approaches the Hunters. He's wearing an old suit with a star-shaped sheriff's badge on the lapel. He doesn't look professional enough to be in law enforcement; in fact, the badge is the only thing that distinguishes him from some sort of local farmer. He introduces himself as Sergeant Dale Lawrence and says he needs some decent, respectable folks to help him patrol the town. He tells the Hunters, "This used to be a decent place, but when folks don't have much money, a bad element tends to take hold."

If the Hunters refuse, Sergeant Lawrence becomes angry. He admonishes them all for not taking pride in where they live and says they're part of the problem. He gives them a stern talking to for their lack of community spirit and tells them they're "the reason this whole town has gone to shit." With Sergeant Lawrence talking about "this town" and "this place" the Hunters might think to ask him where he's talking about, or they might mention Unity when they speak. In that case they learn Lawrence is talking about Summer.

If the Hunters agree to help (before or after he tells them off), Lawrence gestures towards his old truck, a classic (anyone with an interest in history or cars recognizes it as a 1930s vehicle) Ford pickup and tells them to hop aboard. There is only room for one Hunter in the front with Sergeant Lawrence (two if they really squeeze). The rest have to go in the back. Lawrence tells them the job is simple, he's just going to drive around and if they see any trouble, he'll stop, and they can fix it. It should only take an hour or two of the Hunters' time. He expects any Hunters who aren't white to ride in the back.

Lawrence is pleasant for the most part and genuinely concerned about the town, but he is horrifically racist and the 'trouble' he points out are gatherings of any group that isn't predominantly white. Each time Lawrence sees a 'trouble spot' he stops the truck and asks the Hunters what they think they should do about it. They can convince him it's not a problem with a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3).

If the Hunters refuse to help him out Lawrence becomes aggressive and difficult. He picks up his shotgun from the truck and goes to sort things out if the Hunters fail to convince him there isn't any problem. Being faced with such overt and unapologetic bigotry is extremely unpleasant but if the Hunters can tolerate Lawrence, they have an opportunity to ask him about the town, which he consistently refers to as Summer. Lawrence also talks about the local farms having trouble as crops are not doing well and how he fears most of the people in town will be forced to move if things don't get better.

Alternatively, if they don't take any of Lawrence's crap, the Hunters find out that while the ghosts are tangible and solid, they can't hurt them.

After a couple of hours and dealing with three trouble spots Lawrence drops them off where he found them. Then he and his truck fade to nothing as he drives away.

Tollence – Introduction

Underground, Atonement

Content Warning:
Drug misuse and overdose

Target: Leanne Olafsson, a social worker. She's been sober for thirteen weeks, but the craving for opiates never goes away.

Discovering the Ghost: Leanne does a lot of work with kids at risk and Unity's vulnerable homeless population. She can become involved in Father Caleb's actions or Mary's.

This ghost doesn't so much encounter the Hunters as haunt them until they take notice. The Hunters keep running into the same young man. He passes them in the street or reaches out from an alley or a shop doorway asking for change. He speaks to other people too, but they ignore him. It's impossible to tell whether they don't see him, or just pretend not to. Whenever someone acknowledges Tollence

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he holds out a hand and asks if they have "anything" because he "needs to take the edge off, if you know what I mean." Tollence is a young white man, but a weathered one, pale and drawn. He wears faded trousers and a ragged shirt in a 1930s style and often has a plain, coarse gray blanket wrapped around his shoulders.

If the Hunters ignore Tollence he keeps appearing, often at the beginning or end of other scenes. The more they ignore him the more insistent he gets. He reaches out to them or grabs at them as they pass, calling out to them or begging them to help. Each time they see him he's in worse shape, although it takes a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 2) to notice this. He gradually gets thinner, paler, and more drawn until he is almost skeletal. If the Hunters ignore him four times, the fifth time they see him he manifests as a corpse, curled under his blanket in the mouth of an alley. No one but the Hunters will ever be able to see Tollence, so trying to get him help, or even directing someone to his body, makes the Hunters look weird, at the very least.

Tollence wants morphine. He's chronically addicted and it's clearly killing him. He begs the Hunters to help him out. If any of the Hunters has encountered addiction in their background Tollence's words are hauntingly familiar. However, they feel about Tollence or his addiction, they have only two options, find him morphine or not.

Getting hold of morphine isn't difficult. A Charisma + Streetwise test (Difficulty 3) puts the Hunters in touch with Craig Bayer, a hospital porter who deals opiates to the many people in Unity hooked on painkillers. Plus, the local hospital is well stocked and while they don't just hand morphine out it isn't an illegal drug. A hospital contact might be able to get hold of a small amount, the characters might steal it from stores, or even from a patent on a morphine drip. All they need is one dose.

If the Hunters refuse to find morphine for Tollence he begs and berates them but eventually calms down if he can't change their minds. "You are right I suppose," he says and huddles back in his blanket. If the Hunters do give him morphine, he's thankful and uses it right then and there, his eyes quickly closing in euphoria. In both cases the last thing he does is tell the Hunters "It



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wouldn't have made any difference anyway," at which point he passes out and dies in front of them. After a moment his body fades away.

Mrs. Henderson – Conflict

Late at night, wherever they are, one of the Hunters is woken to someone screaming in their face. Her scream is so surprising and frightening that unless the Hunter can succeed in a Composure + Awareness test (Difficulty 2) they take 1 point of Aggravated Willpower damage. Old, kindly Mrs. Henderson is screaming at them like a banshee, raging that the Hunter has failed her, or is a thief and a liar. Ideally this should be directed at whichever Hunter had the best connection to her during her introduction, failing that at anyone with a criminal background. Alternatively picking randomly is fine as the Hunter in question hasn't done anything wrong.

Mrs. Henderson's screams are unspeakably loud, increasing the Difficulty for any action the Hunter tries to take by 1. Mrs. Henderson never pauses. She doesn't even need to draw breath. However, only the Hunter she is targeting can hear or see her. Normal weapons inflict no damage, but supernatural weapons and attacks will do damage as normal. She has 8 Health levels and fades away if all of them are crossed out. Attacks against Mrs. Henderson are made at Difficulty 2. Attacks on Mrs. Henderson make her even angrier. Each time she's struck, whether it harms her or not, she lets out a scream of such rage the Hunter suffers 1 point of Superficial Willpower damage for each attack anyone makes on Mrs. Henderson.

With a Manipulation + Insight test (Difficulty 3), the Hunter calms Mrs. Henderson enough for her to clearly (though still angrily) explain her grievance. Otherwise, the best the Hunter can hope for is to surmise the problem from her accusations of theft and betrayal. Mrs. Henderson believes her savings have been stolen and that the Hunter failed to protect them, or worse, took them. She insists the Hunter returns what they have stolen. The problem is the Hunters don't have it. Explanations, pleas, or excuses make no impact and eventually Mrs. Henderson insists they all go to look for her stolen life savings.

If the Hunter refuses, she lets out another piercing scream that inflicts another point of Aggravated Willpower damage from a scream. If they say they don't know where to go she tells them she'll show them, saying as she's "wise to all their little tricks." Refusal to comply leads to Mrs. Henderson taking hold of the Hunter physically and dragging them outside or to a vehicle, although as she only has a pool of 5 dice for this purpose (resisted by the Hunter's Strength + Resolve), she may not succeed. Repeat the screaming and dragging until Mrs. Henderson gets the Hunter outside or they hurt her or drive her away.

Only the Hunter Mrs. Henderson has targeted can hear or see her, which makes it difficult for other Hunters to assist: the minimum Difficulty to interact with her is 4, for Hunters who can't see or hear her. Mrs. Henderson is aware of the other Hunters' presence but doesn't manifest to them. If her target's Willpower is reduced to zero, they pass out, coming round at sunrise or after a Wits + Medicine test, with 1 point of Willpower restored. Mrs. Henderson will be back the next night.

If the Hunters go with Mrs. Henderson, she guides them to an unexceptional suburban street a lot like the one her own house stands on. They draw up outside a very average house with some kids' toys on the front lawn and a truck in the driveway with a logo for Dillon's Building Services on the side. Mrs. Henderson explains (loudly and angrily) that her savings are inside the house and the Hunters need to get them back. She doesn't have any explanation for why she believes that she just knows. She can "feel it in her bones."

The Hunters can break in, which is what Mrs. Henderson recommends, or wake up the homeowners. They can promise Mrs. Henderson they'll come back in the morning, but it takes a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 4). In the latter case, if they don't return her savings to her empty home or give them to her when she appears the next night, she repeats the process of bullying the hunters into visiting the "thieves."

The homeowners are Mike Dillon and his wife Sharon. They're in their late twenties and have a one-year-old daughter. Mike works as a freelance contractor for local building projects. He doesn't know it, but he does actually have Mrs. Henderson's savings. They're in a rusty old tin he's placed in a cupboard in the living room.

The kitchen window is open, and the Hunters can easily sneak inside. They find the tin, but a Dexterity

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+ Stealth test (Difficulty 3) determines whether they wake up the Dillons. If they do, Mike, six and a half feet of ex-football playing muscle, comes downstairs with a baseball bat in one hand and his phone in the other, already placing a 911 call. At that point nothing stops him calling the cops, but nothing stops the Hunters leaving before they arrive.

If they ring the doorbell, Mike comes downstairs to answer it, but doesn't take the door off the chain. Only an exceptional Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 5) convinces him to let strangers into the house where his wife and child are sleeping, in the early hours of the morning, and any attempt to intimidate him just makes him slam the door and call the cops. He's got footage of the Hunters on his doorbell camera, so this won't go well for them. However, if they call during daylight and give Mike any plausible story ("my grandma used to live here..." etc.) he's happy to let them take a look around, and Hunters can search the living room while one of the cell distracts him. The savings tin is an old tea tin dating from the 1930s. Inside it is a few old coins, ten dollars in weathered single dollar bills, and a yellowed photograph of a young Mrs. Henderson standing outside a frontier style house, with her arm around the waist of a handsome, square-jawed man about the same age. If the Hunters return the tin to Mrs. Henderson she thanks them and fades away, leaving the tin and its contents in their possession.

Mike found the tin while working on a new development on the edge of town. It seemed sad to leave it under the foundations, so he brought it home. If the Hunters are polite and friendly with him, he's happy to tell them where, which leads the cell to the ruins of the old church in Summer. If the Hunters didn't make a good first impression, finding out more from Mike is the subject of "Mrs. Henderson's Savings" in Part Two.

Father Caleb – Conflict

The second time the Hunters run into Father Caleb he is not so friendly. He tells the Hunters they have failed him, God and the less fortunate of the city and insists they come with him to see the fruits of their failure. He leads them through the streets until they come across a homeless person sleeping in a shop doorway. It's one of the people the Hunters met in Father Caleb's introduction (whoever they took most interest in). Despite it being a mild night Father Caleb insists people such as this will be dead of exposure before the night is out.

As if to underline his point, Father Caleb walks up to the sleeping person in question and offers them a blessing prayer. He takes hold of their hand and makes the sign of the cross over them. Then he breathes out an icy wind, chilling his victim until they freeze to death in a matter of moments. Father Caleb sorrowfully declares that "at least it is finally over for this poor unfortunate" and that he was glad he could offer some solace at the end." He turns any accusations of fault or blame back on the Hunters: they should have done more, and it's a mercy Father Caleb was even here to support them in their final moments.

In fact, the frozen rough sleeper isn't quite dead, but they soon will be if the Hunters do nothing. They die of exposure in three hours if they get no help, and as they're unconscious they cannot help themselves. They need to be taken somewhere warm, given something warm to eat or drink, and allowed to rest indoors overnight.

Father Caleb admonishes the Hunters to follow him and see more of their failures. He repeats the same process (with or without the Hunters present), leaving eight rough sleepers dead by morning unless the Hunters stop him. They can sway him with theological or sociological arguments (e.g., "helping them just makes them dependent!" The arguments don't have to be kind or correct, just persuasive), with a Manipulation + Academics test, or divert Father Caleb onto another activity (e.g. preparing his church for the morning service) with a Manipulation + Subterfuge test. Both tests' Difficulty is equal to the current Danger.

Alternatively, the Hunters can physically fight Father Caleb until he discorporates. Inform the Hunters that he seems more solid, more present somehow, than he did the first time they met him: they can smell the faint aroma of his cologne, his footsteps are audible, and he casts a shadow. That's because he's manifesting a power (his freezing touch), and if the Hunters down make the connection for themselves, tell them after the fight's over.

Father Caleb has 8 Health levels and a combat dice pool of 6. His hands are ice cold. As a weapon

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they add 1 to the damage pool. The first time he wounds someone in a scene, all damage inflicted is Aggravated. Father Caleb inflicts Superficial damage afterwards. If the Hunters win the combat Father Caleb discorporates, with a parting declaration, maybe a warning, that "God's work will be done!"

Mary – Conflict

Content warning:
Danger and possible harm to children.

If the Hunters felt sorry for Mary in their previous encounter, that's about to change. By Summer's will, all the ghosts are escalating their interactions with the living people of the town in the hope of doing something so horrifying it becomes memorable. Mary therefore changes her tack to target the children who have avoided her. Instead of just scaring them she attempts to lure some of them to a place she can trap them and leave them to die. The Storyteller should be exceptionally careful how they play out this encounter. They should take extra care with this scene and be aware of how the players are responding to it. Check in regularly, and if you so much as suspect someone is uncomfortable, the children are found safe.

The Hunters initially discover something is wrong when they hear about a spate of missing children recently. It's all over the newspapers, social media, and TV news and a hot topic of conversation for anyone with kids. Three have gone missing in as many days.

The missing children all disappeared from one of the local parks, making it the obvious place to start looking. The park is a small recreation area with a few swings and benches and two trees in the midst of a rundown part of the town. It's only a block or two from a closed down, condemned office park, so it's not especially salubrious. The disappearances have caught the attention of the local media and a small crew from Channel 12 Local News have set themselves up here. Angela Marks is the lead reporter, supported by cameraman Lenny Trabe and sound recordist Sarah McNally. For Angela, getting this story would seriously boost the small channel's prestige and relevancy. She cares about finding the children, but she wants a great story too, and is determined to dig up any interesting details that make the story stand out. Her crew are bored and don't want to be stuck out here waiting for something to happen any longer than they have to. Needless to say, the park is empty as no parent is letting their kids anywhere near it. Angela tries to interview the Hunters simply for something to do. She's persistent and sympathetic and asks open questions that might lead the Hunters to tell her more than they intend if they are not careful. And of course, a group of sketchy looking adults can easily become a target for people looking for someone to blame for the mysterious disappearances of several kids.

Once they enter the park the Hunters quickly come across Mary. She manifests nearby and warns the Hunters "You can't have them. They belong to me." Mary appears because the Hunters are quite close to finding her victims. The Hunter with the largest Wits + Awareness pool hears high-pitched crying coming from a nearby abandoned office building. While the Hunters follow the sound Mary tries to distract them, following them and becoming increasingly furious until she begins throwing rocks and trash at the Hunters to hinder them. It's not effective, just a sign they're on the right track.

The children are Lacey McCauley, aged seven; Arya Weber, aged four; and Dayo Johnson, aged eight. Mary's holding them in a basement room of a nearby vacant building.

Mary plans to starve them to death, but after three days they're only severely hungry. They've survived on rainwater dripping through cracks in the ceiling. Their sobs echo along the steel corridors, making them harder to track. Searching for them requires an Intelligence + Investigation test (Difficulty 4), and if the Hunters fail the children have passed out by the time the cell finds them.

When the Hunters locate the room the children are in, they need to open a rusted old steel door. While it isn't locked it's far too stiff for any of the children to open. When the Hunters try to open it, Mary appears and starts telling them how they are too weak and pathetic to open the door and save anyone. She will focus on the Hunter's innermost fears and shortcomings to drive them into despair. Each player should detail what Mary might say to their Hunter to destroy their confidence. To overcome

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Mary's scathing words the Hunter opening the door must make a Composure + Resolve test (Difficulty equal to Danger). If they fail, they suffer 1 point of Aggravated Willpower damage and the door remains closed. Anyone who fails needs to take a moment to get themselves together so cannot make two tests in succession (although the Storyteller might allow it for an increase in Difficulty). If all the Hunters fail and lose all their Willpower, they collapse in despondency. It takes hours before they can try again, in which time one of the children has injured themselves trying and failing to climb out through a hole in the ceiling and needs to be hospitalized.

If one of the Hunters can overcome Mary's abuse, they can find the strength to open the door and free the children. The children's condition depends on the current Danger: if it's 2 or lower, they're hungry and thirsty but unharmed. If Danger's 3 or 4 Mary scared the kids enough that they tried to escape: they're injured and need hospital treatment. At Danger 5, Dayo's critically injured. He's still in hospital at the end of the story, and his fate's uncertain. The Channel 12 news crew reach the scene just as the Hunters lead the children from the building. The cell has exactly one chance to turn the situation to their advantage by making a Charisma + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 1 + Danger) for how they came to find the kids. If they fail, it takes three days for the media and local community to start theorizing the Hunters abducted the children and returned them when they feared discovery.

Sergeant Lawrence – Conflict

The next time the Hunters encounter Sergeant Lawrence, his intentions are clearly murderous. He pulls up in his truck at one of their homes and tells them it's time to get serious if they are to save the town. He's angry and armed with a shotgun and based on what the Hunters saw in their last interaction with him it would be a terrible idea to let him loose in the town on his own

Lawrence is happy to drive to any of the other Hunter's homes to collect more support and clearly has violence in mind. The back of his truck has several shotguns, pistols and baseball bats he offers to the Hunters if they are unarmed. Until they arrive outside a reasonably quiet suburban home Lawrence only tells the Hunters he's found "some of the rot in the town"



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and is going to deal with it. He rather chillingly adds that "no one is going to forget this."

The house looks ordinary on the outside. However, Lawrence will insist his investigations have led him to believe this is the center of the town's drug culture. The more innocent it looks, the more he insists otherwise. He plans to kick in the door and deliver some "frontier justice" with his shotgun. He insists the occupants are all hardened criminals, and no doubt well-armed.

In fact, the house is nothing more than a shared student house. Eight twenty-somethings live here, sharing the rent. They do smoke more weed than average, but they're hardly drug dealers. They're also completely unarmed. This isn't justice but an atrocity.

If the Hunters assist Lawrence, they're murderers but after their previous encounter they shouldn't take him at face value. Lawrence lets them scout out the place (where they can find out more of the real situation) believing tactical intelligence will be helpful. Then he'll expect to dive in.

To stop Lawrence the Hunters will have to either 'kill' him or take his shotgun off him. In any conflict Lawrence has a combat dice pool of 7, and health levels equal to 3 times Danger. His shotgun doesn't need reloading. Thankfully he can be harmed by non-supernatural means. When the ghosts can cause physical harm, they're also vulnerable to physical damage.

Most of the students in the house run and scream if any violence kicks off indoors. Two of them, Kaitlyn and Allen, try to subdue Lawrence with combat dice pools of 4 and 6 Health levels.

Tollence – Conflict

Tollence appears to one of the Hunters when they are alone, focusing on the one with either the weakest will or an obvious need or dependencies (e.g., smoking or a high caffeine consumption). He tells them he needs them, and he is hungry. Then, unless they beat him on an opposed Resolve + Composure test (Tollence has a dice pool of 2 + Danger) he steps into their body. As soon as he does the Hunter feels their most important need or dependency rise to irresistible levels. The obvious need to enhance is one for drugs or alcohol but it might just as easily be a need to be loved or respected, or to visit a certain person. Let the player decide what the Hunter's greatest need is and how it manifests.

The Hunter finds nothing sates their craving. Once they have exhausted all the options where they are (like all the food in the fridge if they want food) they set out to find more of what they need. Their only priority is getting more of the thing they need. Every hour they don't get another, bigger hit of the thing they want they take a point of Aggravated Willpower damage. The Hunter will steal, beg, or take what they need by any means possible, and while they may want to stop, they will be unable to until the end of the night, or until Tollence leaves them.

The Hunter can resist this new urge for an hour by spending a point of Willpower. All that matters is getting what they need, regardless of responsibility, sense, or morality.

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The Storyteller should allow this scene to run as long as it needs for the Hunters to experience a desperate and insatiable hunger and what it drives them to. Knocking out the affected Hunter pushes Tollence out, as does another Hunter helping the victim reassert control of themselves (by winning a contest of Charisma + Leadership versus the possessed Hunter's Manipulation + Subterfuge). This scene should shine a light on the Hunter's weaknesses, but perhaps also show them they can overcome them.

Next Steps

This section can bleed a little into the next depending on what the Hunters choose to do. If they wander the town ghost hunting, they come across the spirits in any order. The Storyteller can keep throwing hauntings at them until they have a chance to investigate. It's likely they'll want to look into the history of the area to understand what these ghosts want as soon as they come across one.

As the Hunters start to look into the meaning of the ghosts, they notice there are new faces in town. The corporate team has arrived.

In this part the Hunters investigate the ghosts they've encountered. A group of strangers arrives, clearly trying to do the same thing. These new arrivals are employees of Aurum Industries, and they are not happy about a group of 'amateurs' getting involved in one of their operations – regardless of who was there first.

Although they're listed in separate sections the players' actions mean you'll probably run scenes from Parts One and Two simultaneously. They're Hunters, they'll be hunting, looking into local history and the clues they've picked up from the ghosts. Wait until they've gathered a few clues and begun to understand the haunting before you introduce the corporate hunters: especially if this is the Hunters' first op, build up their problems slowly.



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Part Two:
Strangers in Town

Investigating the Ghosts

The encounters with Summer's ghosts provide a few clues for the Hunters to investigate: their names, their 1930s aesthetics, and a key location: Mrs. Henderson's church. The most obvious place to start is the local library, which will not only reveal something of the town of Summer but lead the Hunters to one of its former residents.

The library's a thoroughly modern building, a place the middle-class residents of Unity can be proud of. It has an excellent set of archives and a helpful reference librarian, Frankie Wyatt. Frankie's thirty, overqualified for this job, and genuinely excited to have someone ask for their help.

Ask the Hunters what they're looking for on a visit to the library and provide information as appropriate from the list. Each clue the Hunters can obtain here needs a set number of successes on an Intelligence + Academics test to discover. The Hunters have time and qualified assistance, so they pick up most leads even with no successes.

Each clue also comes with information on how the Hunters can learn more about it.

Where are the ghosts from? *Zero successes.* The ghosts' clothes are all quite old and in a consistent style. Looking up a costume book at the local library makes it easy to match the clothes to the early 1930s. This gives them a time frame to research.

What is special about the 1930s? *Zero successes.* Every document, website or book the Hunters consult talks about the 1930s Dust Bowl and its impact on the region. Severe drought hit many plains states and modern, intense farming processes didn't take the arid climate into account. Farmsteads failed, leading to starvation, death, and migration. Whole towns collapsed and were abandoned, and some places were lost to the huge dust storms that plagued the region.

How old is Unity? *Zero successes.* Unity was founded in 1957.

What was the old town? *Zero successes.* There is very little detail about the old town of Summer in the local records. Some mention that many frontier towns were gradually deserted during the dustbowl and that given most were made of wood the houses were either cannibalized or rotted away or just fell apart. If the Hunters ask Frankie, the librarian, about the town's specific history they won't know. But they do suggest that if they are looking into the 1930s that might just be in the living memory of some of the town's oldest residents. They suggest the Hunters talk to the residents at the Shady Maple Care Home right here in town.

Who are the ghosts? *Two successes or four successes.* Sadly, few of the ghosts are noteworthy enough to feature in history books. Only two get any mention, and even then, they're obscure. With two successes, Hunters researching local history find a picture of Father Caleb standing outside the old church of Summer. The picture is only labeled as 'Frontier Church, 1932.'. They also find a posed photograph of Sergeant Lawrence. He is dressed up for a portrait photo, cradling his beloved shotgun. The photograph is labeled 'Sergeant Dale Lawrence, Summer 1936'.

With four successes, if the Hunters have visited the building site where Mike Dillon found Mrs. Henderson's savings, they recognize the surrounding landscape in the background of Father Caleb's picture.

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The Men in Black

Early in this section Aurum International's field team arrives in town, their task force led by Thomas Vogel. They don't arrive in convoy with sirens blaring and start cordoning off the high street but they're conspicuous all the same. The Hunters notice a trio of identical black sedans parked on the main street, and Bella's Diner is full of people in black suits drinking coffee. It's almost like a quiet alien invasion.

If the Hunters don't interact with them, eventually a pair of Aurum operatives engage with them. In this initial phase of their investigation the field team go out in pairs to interview as many local people as they can. They want to know if they have seen anything strange or unusual in the last few days. They listen intently and note down replies, even if the interviewee is clearly misleading them or trying to wind them up (later on the agents will buy a beer for the agent who's told about the most Bigfoot or alien sightings).

The Aurum employees are professional to the point of being humorless and strongly advise locals against pursuing any investigations themselves, and after rumors about Mary, and missing children, the Hunters aren't the only people suspecting something weird's afoot. The operatives' warning is calm, authoritative, and carefully worded: "I would advise you against any course that would lead to a more formal relationship with the authorities." If the Hunters ask the operatives for their credentials, they show their Aurum Industries ID. They act like they have official authority, but they categorically do not. All they say of their reason to be here is that they are part of a special task force taking part in an ongoing investigation the details of which are not a matter of public interest.

The purpose of this scene is to show the Hunters the corporate agents are numerous, well equipped, and professional. They're open to, even interested in, claims about paranormal activity. They're good at de-escalating situations and they avoid getting aggressive or argumentative, but if the Hunters really push their

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buttons, they'll find an excuse to get the cell in trouble with local law enforcement.

After they've met the Hunters once, the Aurum team start getting in the way of their investigation. They show up just as the Hunters are leaving a scene or leave as they arrive. They leave locals unsettled and guarded and make the Hunters' work harder. There always seem to be more agents, and they have forgettable names like Clark, Smith, and Jones.

Alice

Alice, the waitress from the diner, quickly strikes up a friendship with Aurum employee Lance Jones. He immediately puts her to work gathering info on anyone else in town taking an interest in the hauntings. Alice does her best to talk to the Hunters and get to know them. She's sympathetic to their point of view. If the Hunters don't visit the diner often, she turns up wherever they do frequent. This might be the Ceilidh bar or the hotel restaurant, or somewhere else they go to relax. If they're not local the Hunters need to eat and sleep somewhere and if they are, they have jobs and social lives. Either way Alice wants to keep tabs on them. She has enough friends around town to get a few shifts to 'help out' pretty much anywhere. If the Hunters find her presence a little contrived that's fine: it is, and they should be suspicious of her.

While Alice shows interest, she's clever enough not to overplay her hand. Even so, if her interest leads the Hunters to keep an eye on her, they'll see her meeting agent Jones at the diner and other places around town.

Alice can be a powerful ally as Jones takes her reports seriously. Plus, she's good at getting information out of people, and that includes Aurum Industries agents. While she doesn't have the leverage to sway Vogel from his plan, if the Hunters convince her Vogel needs to be stopped, she will have learned some of the operational protocols of the agents and can be a great asset.

New Conflicts

While the Hunters investigate, keep up the pressure from the ghosts. Even if they're discorporated repeatedly, they come back the next night or a few days later. Use them to feed the Hunters information if they're not putting pieces together from their investigation: have Father Caleb take them to "his church" or Mrs. Henderson speculate that maybe it was her no-good sister who put the Hunters up to stealing from her, so she could leave town like everyone else is doing.

The Storyteller might even create a few new ghostly encounters of their own. They should be based on characters from the town around the 1930s and follow the theme of hunger, despair, and a need to be remembered. If the Hunters are locals, some might even be distant relatives, meaning they can get similar information from elderly family members or collections of heirlooms as from the residents of Shady Maple.

Shady Maple

The Shady Maple Retirement Village is a modest but comfortable retirement community and care home out towards the edge of Unity. It's a gated community for assisted living as well as a care home. About two hundred residents live in apartments with medical support on call if required, and a hundred more are under full time care in the main building. The whole complex is designed for accessibility and convenience so has ramps, elevators, handrails and stairlifts everywhere.

The residents are a varied bunch but most are eighty or older. Most are trying to enjoy a quiet and slow-paced retirement, while about a third behave like delinquent teenagers having one last hurrah (just slightly slower). Anyone old enough to remember the 1930s is in their nineties, so is in the care home part of the community. Gaining access is easy: the staff like to see the residents get visitors. The challenge is getting to the right person. A lot of the residents are eager to reminisce about their youth, and their stories are interesting (sometimes shocking) but not useful. A Charisma + Etiquette test (Difficulty 3) gets the Hunters to Mary Gilligan quickly; if they fail, they spend the whole day at Shady Maple before finally getting to speak to Mary in the evening. It's not a huge impediment, but it keeps the Hunters from following any other leads that day.

If the Hunters look or act dangerous, the staff hover around throughout their visit and if the Hunters start explicitly asking about ghosts the staff ask them

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to leave because they're upsetting the residents (they are not, the staff are just highly protective).

In due course the Hunters meet Mary Gilligan, a lady of ninety-six. She's frail and uses a wheelchair but still has a sharp mind. She tells the Hunters she used to live right here where Unity is now, in a town called Summer, as a little girl until her mother and sister died. The family farm failed in the Dust Bowl, and they were simply too proud to ask for help. She was rescued from starvation by another family who were leaving town and happened to look in on Mary's mother to say goodbye at the right time. They adopted Many and moved away to make a life for themselves in another town. But when Mary got older and married, she came back to what was now Unity in the 1950s to start a family. Summer was long gone but she didn't mind that: there was nothing there she wanted to remember.

If the Hunters would like to see them, she even has some old photos they can look at. Most of the photos date from after the war and show a younger Mary at her wedding, on holiday and with her own children (her husband died a few years ago and her children have moved away but still visit). However, among her very oldest photos is one of her as a little girl, just after her adopted family arrived in a new city. She is clearly the Mary they met as a ghost, but she's very much alive. If 'Mary' isn't a ghost, what is she? Older Mary herself remembers very little of that time, except for the despair she felt when she lost her mother and sister. She remembers very little of the town of Summer as she was very young. But there was a church in the center, a general store and a sheriff's station nearby and the rest was mostly small farmsteads spread out across the area.

During this scene the Storyteller should explore the theme of being forgotten. Many of the residents here no longer see their families, often just because they are too far away. But some have been dumped here and never see anyone anymore. Many of the residents have accepted their fate: they're lonely but see it as inevitable. Some are angry and resentful, and all of them, on some level, fear being forgotten "as if [they] never existed at all."



Mrs. Henderson's Savings

If the Hunters have reclaimed Mrs. Henderson's savings box, they might be wondering how a local contractor got hold of it. Depending how their encounter to reclaim the old tea tin went, the Hunters could approach Mike Dillon or his wife Sharon to learn more. Mike spends most of the day working on the construction site on the edge of town. It is a large build, expanding the suburbs with around fifty new houses. Sharon works part time in a homewares boutique in town but is most often at home looking after their one-year-old daughter (Daisy).

How any of the Dillon family respond to the Hunters depends how they approach them and what happened beforehand. If they recognize the Hunters from an attempted burglary, they will be both frightened (and in Mike's case furious) and will call the police. Otherwise, it's hard to broach the subject of the old tea tin when no one really knows Mike found it.

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The Hunters can come at this laterally, possibly asking if anything of local interest has been found on the site as they are history students looking for signs of the old town of Summer.

If they win Mike's trust, he tells them he found the tin while digging some foundations for one of the next sections. He didn't think much of it, but it seemed sad to just leave it there, and if he still has it will happily sell it to the Hunters for $20. Given the age of the bills it's worthless anyway. He won't show the Hunters exactly where he found it without a hefty chunk of cash (at least $200) or a Charisma + Persuasion test (Difficulty 4): it's private property, and a working building site, so he's not strictly allowed to let passersby on site. He does tell the Hunters it was close to the ruined foundations of some old building. There isn't much left, just the brick foundation of a wooden building that is now long gone. But a couple of academics have come down from the city to check it out for historical significance. The building company and foreman are fuming about having to stop work in that area, and it means Mike can't take them *right* to the spot he found the tea tin even if they get on-site.

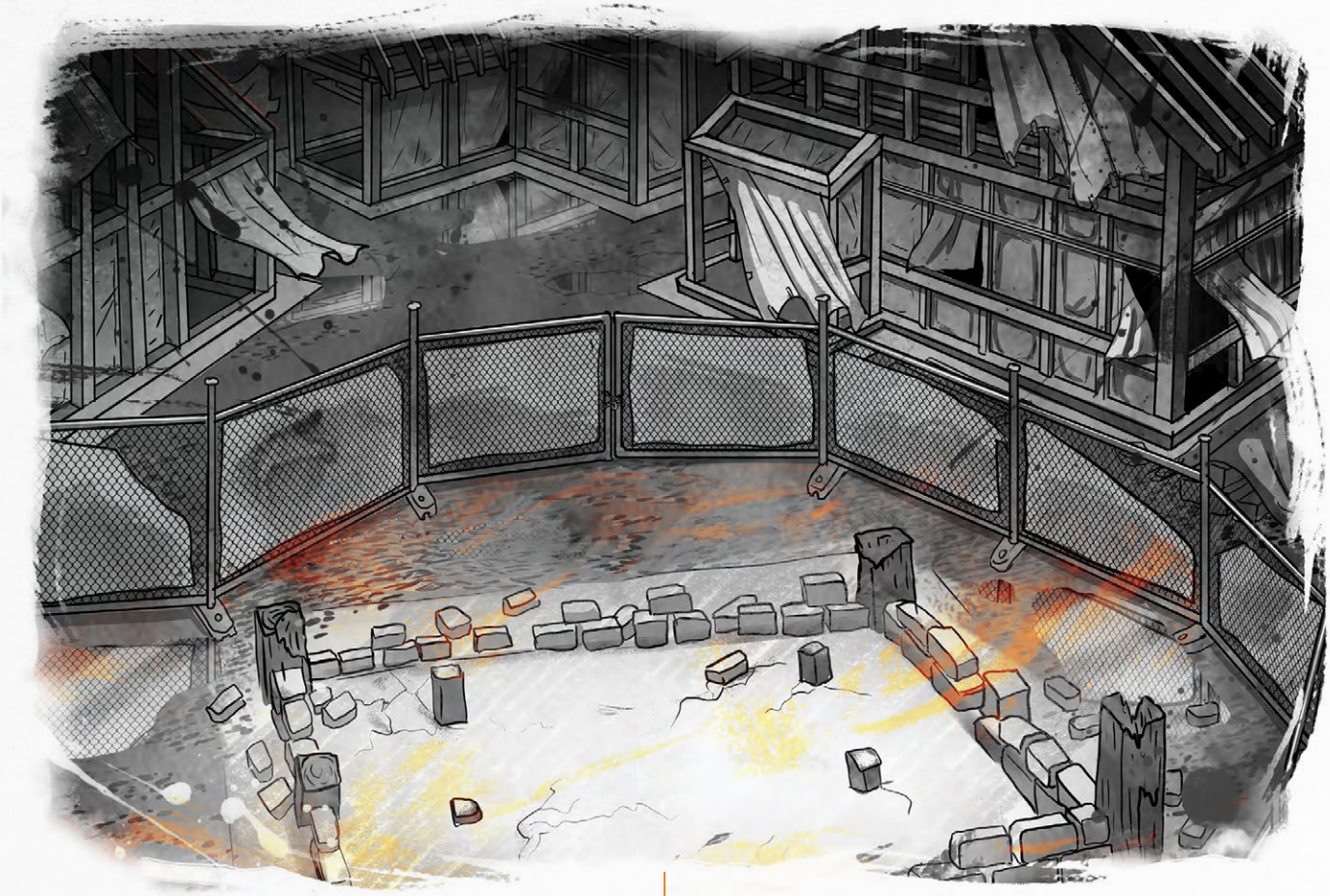
The Construction Site

Once they know about where Mike found the old tin with Mrs. Henderson's savings the Hunters can investigate the place, he found it. The site is very busy during the day but almost deserted at night. While a certain area has been cordoned off, work on the rest of the site is carrying on as normal. At the moment each of the new houses is little more than a wooden skeleton with thin transparent plastic nailed over windows and doors, flapping in the wind where it has come loose.

The cordoned off area is a rectangle about twenty feet wide and thirty feet long. It's little more than a foundation for a building; a perimeter of old bricks filled in with cheap concrete. While a few hardy wooden posts remain wedged in the concrete and brickwork, whatever this building was is long gone. Even from a distance the Hunters can make an Intelligence + Academics test (Difficulty 3) to note that there is so little to this site any investigation by the academics Mike mentioned shouldn't take more than a day.

If the Hunters want to take a close look at the area, they need to get past some Aurum Industries employees. During the day, the "academics from the city", who are clearly Aurum employees, are on-site. They make no effort to hide it, given they are still in the same black suits as the other agents. But they will behave a little more politely. Their names are Frank Morris and his partner Dr. Danielle Sanders, and they do have a good knowledge of history and archeology if quizzed. However, persistent questions get the Hunters escorted off site and they call for backup from their own agency and the police if the Hunters are troublemakers.

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The agents are investigating the site, but not with any equipment the Hunters recognize. They have a variety of gear with which they are taking readings. A good look at any of the devices allows the Hunters to make a Wits + Technology or Science test (Difficulty 4) to notice that among the cameras and laser scanners most of the equipment is designed to measure a variety of electromagnetic energy levels. Should the Hunters get hold of the agents' notes (difficult, as they're on tablets the agents carry in tough, rubber cases on their person) they find a recent report, unfiled, stating this area of the town and this site in particular has none of the spectral energy they're testing for, despite the high levels across the rest of Unity. The Hunters might charm this information out of the agents if they can convince them they might be able to help explain it, but it takes a Manipulation + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 5).

If the Hunters investigate the site at night Agents Morris and Sanderson aren't there but four standard Aurum Industries field operatives on guard (see p. 47).

If the Hunters get to the site itself to take a close look, they can make a Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 3). If successful they notice a few symbols carved on the bricks, probably when they were laid, common Christian symbols like crosses and fish. This and the remains of where walls might have been positioned make it clear the building was once a church of some form. If they have seen the pictures in the local library of Father Caleb outside the church, what's left of this building matches it.

Warning

Sooner or later Aurum International realizes the Hunters are more involved than the average local. It happens sooner if the Hunters are aggressive or violent with the Aurum agents, longer if their paths just keep crossing (for example at the church, the library, and Shady Maple). However discreet the Hunters are, someone somewhere points them out as a group who have been asking questions, or people odd enough to

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be persons of interest in whatever the federal agents are investigating.

Aurum's opening move is a standard cease and desist. A couple of polite but stern employees visit each of them and remind them Aurum has everything in hand. By this point they've got a private contract with the city council and pushing back against them gets the cell labeled obstructive and suspicious, and they'll run into problems with local law enforcement.

If the friendly approach doesn't work the agents tell them in no uncertain terms the whole affair is under their jurisdiction and if the Hunters don't desist, they will "assume the consequences of extreme indiscretion." Basically, they will be placed under arrest and will end up serving jail time if their case ever gets to a court.

If the Hunters have made allies among the people of the town, they can help against Aurum Industries. This is especially true of any contacts amongst the homeless community. The operatives have treated them with disrespect and dismissal and, unlike most of the locals, the unhoused folks of Unity aren't scared of them: they've got very little to lose. The Hunters can enlist the aid of any allies to keep an eye on agent movements, stand lookout, or act as distractions if they want to sneak anywhere unnoticed.

Arrested

Unless the Hunters go against every instinct of Hunter and player and do as the authorities tell them, the Aurum Industries team eventually abducts them. How they arrive depends on the Hunters' previous actions. If they have a history of violence, then the field team arrive mob handed with five agents for each Hunter. They drag the Hunters into a secure van and drive them to their main base of operations. Otherwise, there's only one agent for each Hunter and they ask the cell to capitulate before putting them in handcuffs. Either way, they end up in a secure van on the way to the base. The van's windowless but a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 6) tells the Hunters they're still somewhere in Unity.

Even if the Hunters have been good as gold in their investigations Aurum still comes for them. Vogel's heard of them, knows they're a potential problem, and wants to give them a scare to remind them who's in charge. Ultimately, as a corporate org, Aurum Industries has no judicial powers. Hunters who escape are in the clear, and Vogel releases the other in a few hours (see "Unit 13").

Hunters who make a Wits + Streetwise test can follow the agents' journey, learning they return to an industrial park near the center of Unity.

Unit 13

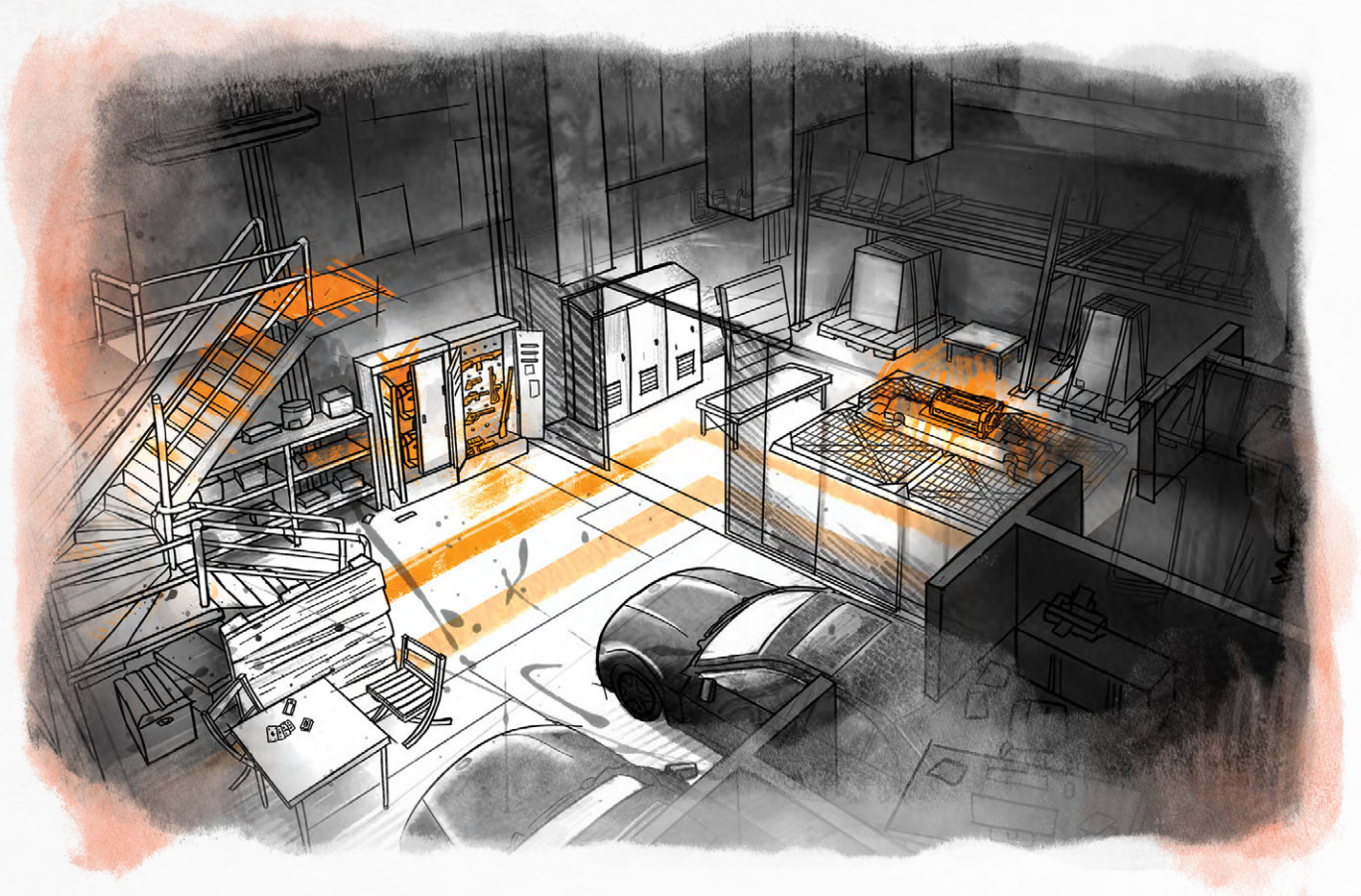
Vogel's team has set up their headquarters just outside the city center. It's Unit 13 of an industrial estate. The property includes a ground floor warehouse and an upper floor office space. The Hunters might get a forced invitation by way of being arrested. But they might also attempt to sneak inside if they follow some of the agents to find out more about them.

The industrial estate consists of several identical buildings. Most of them are occupied, but the ones to either side of Unit 13 are empty. The agents' presence is obvious, with several black sedans and a couple of black vans parked outside the unit and agents on guard around the building at all times. Most of the agents are sleeping at

EXTRAJUDICIAL INTERVENTION

Aurum Industries acts like they have real, judicial power. They bully locals and in this scene, they abduct the Hunters. Any Hunter will wonder how they get away with this. And the answer is money. Their contract with the city has Unity officials and media terrified to cross them. Individuals who do so face intimidation and threats, and Aurum knows it can make any official complaints or criminal charges disappear or get tangled up in court until their highly effective lawyers flatten the complainant.

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the Grand Hotel so there are fewer agents at night.

The ground floor is one open space with large wide doors for access, but the agents have set up a divider to close off half of the area. The Hunters aren't taken into the closed off area (see "The Secret Area", p. 38) but they catch a glimpse of people wearing lab coats going in and out of the area. In the half they can access (or are taken through in handcuffs) there are several more parked vehicles and a rest area for the agents. This includes a small rack of assault rifles and other small arms. A set of metal stairs provide access to the upper level.

The upper level is open plan with a series of six small offices along one wall. Most of the floor is empty except for the office where Team Leader Thomas Vogel has set up his operations center. If the Hunters are arrested, they're brought to the upper area and handcuffed to support pillars in the open area. It's very hard to speak without being overheard: it takes a Manipulation + Stealth test (Difficulty 4). The cell's left there for several hours to make them uncomfortable, uneasy, and more likely to respond to interrogation. Then either Vogel speaks to them as a group (if he has reason to think they'll be compliant) or has them moved into separate offices so he can interview them one by one.

Vogel wants to hear everything the Hunters know about what is going on, and if they're working for anyone. His assumption is that they're under the control of some supernatural force and looking to exploit the hauntings somehow. The interrogation matches his Manipulation + Intimidation against the Hunter's Resolve + Insight. If the Hunter gets fewer successes, they give away some piece of information they don't want to. Let the player choose what, with the margin of the test determining how serious their slip is.

This scene emphasizes that the corporation isn't interested in investigation as much as neutralizing a perceived threat. It also underlines they're not interested in any help the Hunters can offer; they consider civilian Hunters hindrances, or more likely supernatural assets. The agents are trained and well-resourced and will clearly just take bigger swings at the supernatural problem in Unity until someone brings it down. If the Hunters were tempted to work with them or share information, this encounter should make it clear

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Aurum is only interested in a one-sided relationship.

Unless the Hunters are especially belligerent Vogel lets them go after the interrogation. But he can keep them chained up as long as he likes, regardless of how much they shout about their freedom or civil rights. He can even apply some pretty scary anti-terrorist laws to have them locked up without trial if they really push it and he'll make no secret of that fact. From here on out it should be clear the corporation cannot be an ally.

However, the Hunters might not have given up on Alice. She might reveal her allegiance if she thinks the Hunters are on to something, especially if her bosses are ignoring them. She is a loyal asset, but she does feel Vogel is too heavy handed. She might work against her bosses if the Hunters can show her some compelling evidence.

The Secret Area

The hidden part of the warehouse base is where the team is constructing an explosive device. There is no way Aurum will show the Hunters this area so if they want to see behind the partition, they have to sneak in. During the day it's very busy, with scientists coming in and out and agents all over the place. But after dark most people go home, and while the area is guarded there are no scientists on site and few agents inside the building. Attempts to get inside use Dexterity +Larceny, (Difficulty 3 to get close, Difficulty 4 to get inside where they can see the area, and Difficulty 6 to get close to the device).

The area itself is bare, with a few computers and control systems wired into the device. The device itself is a sphere about a meter in diameter, hanging in a support cradle. It looks like a satellite of some form but is actually an explosive device. Hunters can investigate the device itself to find out what it is with an Intelligence + Science test (Difficulty 5) or try to access the computers for more data using Wits + Technology test (Difficulty 4).

On a successful test the Hunters determine the device is designed to emit a very powerful pulse of radiation-fueled electromagnetism and some other sorts of weird energy. It's cutting-edge stuff and uses a power source the Hunters won't have seen before. If they have any way of measuring emissions from supernatural entities, this is similar. When detonated it will also cause a large conventional explosion, enough to bring down a building. It might do something worse. If the Hunters present have at least three dots between them in Science and one in Occult, they realize there's a chance this could do serious, lasting damage to the area on a spiritual level. Most of the computers linked to the device are being used to make some very precise calibrations, based on readings taken in central Unity. For all its precision, the device is basically a supernatural bomb and what its detonation might do is anyone's guess.

Next Steps

By the end of this part the Hunters should have learned the ghosts aren't what they appear, and that there's a connection to the lost town of Summer. However, what the ghosts really want should still be unclear. If the Hunters piece together the themes in the hauntings, they might realize that the power behind the hauntings wants to be remembered, and it will go to any extreme to get what it wants. If they don't know that yet, they'll have another chance to learn it in Part Three.

The Hunters have encountered Aurum Industries and discovered they are not their allies. Ideally, they will have also discovered the device the corporate team is working on and that activating it is highly dangerous. They may or may not have discovered Alice is one of their agents, but they may have convinced her to help them.

The Hunters' reputation in town depends on their actions. If they rescued the children from Mary, they might be heroes. Too many violent encounters with Aurum Industries might make them outsiders. Ultimately, Aurum Industries presents itself as a reasonable, legitimate group of professionals, so conflict with them marks the Hunters are malcontents and possibly criminals. If the Hunters keep insisting the team has a special bomb to blow up ghosts, nobody believes them, and most people assume they're out of their minds.

Part Three begins with the town of Summer conjuring a huge dust storm. If the Hunters are lost or at a dead end, this is a good way to push the story along as many plots unravel as the danger increases.

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Part Three: Summertime

The Hunters have run out of time. Summer is tired of small gestures and has decided to reveal the true extent of its power by doing something no one will ever forget. A dust storm forms outside town and escalates exceptionally quickly. Weather channels are quick to warn townsfolk that the storm is on the way, and this is quickly followed by the authorities telling people to remain indoors. People barricade themselves inside to wait out the storm.

Thomas Vogel sees this as an opportunity rather than a time to pause. Recognizing the center of the storm as the center of the power his team has detected, he sets out to challenge the ghost of Summer. The Hunters must stop him before his actions tear apart reality, but they have to fight the storm as well as the agents to stop their plan. Then they face the spirit of Summer and appease or destroy it.

Weather Report

Whatever the Hunters are doing, they're interrupted by a weather warning. It's on the television news, radio, and internet as a public service warning for the area, as well as being sent by text message to locals' phones. The warning claims an unusual change in local weather patterns means a large dust storm is on the way towards Unity. It should hit in around an hour or so. Residents are not advised to leave but to stay inside, in a basement if possible, and make sure all their doors and windows are locked and sealed. With the winds rising, cars trying to leave might easily be blown off the road (and traffic gridlock from everyone leaving at once could leave people in the path of the storm). Anyone with a storm shelter is advised to use it, but residents are advised there is no need to panic. A certain amount of property damage is expected, but if everyone stays indoors the storm poses no threat to life.

Local Hunters know, and others can find out with a quick question or an internet search, dust storms are common here but this one is out of season, much bigger than usual, and whipping up fast. Winds up to eighty miles per hour are common; this storm could be worse. Townsfolk prepare to shut their doors and wait it out. Anyone with nowhere to go is welcomed into the diner, the library, or the Grand Hotel. If the Hunters are currently heroes to the town there will be plenty of places they can go. If they've made enemies, they're short of options, but there are empty buildings, like the house where the Hunters first met Mrs. Henderson or the office building where Mary imprisoned the kidnapped children, all around Unity.

Some Hunters may see this as an opportunity to explore places they shouldn't while people are busy. They have an hour, after all.

Energy Rise

If the Hunters are near Aurum Industries' base at Unit 13, they see the agents spring into action at the announcement of the storm. For purposes of exploring the base, visiting now is like approaching at night given everyone is very busy. However, the Hunters won't be able to get close to the device without a disguise and a Manipulation + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 4).

With a Wits + Science test (Difficulty 3) the Hunters notice the energy signatures the scientists have been tracking are now registering off the charts. The general chatter seems to be that the oncoming dust storm is a significant factor in this. However, there is a lot of disagreement about whether it's a cause or a symptom, and some of the scientists dispute

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whether it's connected at all. But the gist of their conversations is that it is time to deploy the device. They just need to plot where the center of the storm will be when it's at its full strength.

The Summerfolk

An hour after the announcement, the leading edge of the dust storm hits the town. The wind picks up into blasts strong enough to knock a person off their feet and the air is filled with stinging particles of sand and dust. All actions suffer a 2 point rise in Difficulty as it's hard to see and breathe outside. Protective gear (such as goggles and face masks) makes it easier and reduces the penalty to +1 Difficulty.

Several thin and ragged figures walk within the storm. They're dressed in tattered 1930s clothing and are a mixture of genders and backgrounds, but all move slowly and with an air of purpose. They look hungry. The storm doesn't affect them.

They make their way towards the Hunters, wherever they are. There are more than enough to surround each Hunter even if they're all in different places. Through the wind and dust, they see hands clawing at their windows and shapes surrounding the buildings. Those who listen can hear the same chant coming from each one "Summer is here. You will all remember." Everyone in Unity is safely indoors, but anyone in the same space as the Hunters sees the people of Summer.

These apparitions are physical manifestations, and they attack anyone who comes near them. Which means they're also solid enough to be hurt by normal weapons. Unfortunately, they try to break into the Hunters' homes or hiding places. They're not strong but they're numerous, a whole town's worth of people intent on getting to the Hunters. Summer's chosen to come for the Hunters first as it knows them (having interacted via the ghosts) and knows they're capable and dangerous (especially if they found the children Mary kidnapped) but it plans to kill everyone in the town eventually. Then the world will remember them.

The apparitions will get to the Hunters. They can fight but they're outnumbered and while their opponents are easily 'killed', they get up again in moments. The sensible thing for the Hunters to do is leave, and at least meet up, but that means braving the storm.

SUMMERFOLK

General Difficulty: 3/1
Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 3, Mental 3
Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7
Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 7
Notes/ Other Traits: Regenerate (2 Health)

Entering the Storm

Forced out of their homes by the apparitions, the Hunters stumble out into the dust storm. If they're not already together they need to meet up. The internet's out but the Hunters still have cell service. Call for a Stamina + Survival test (Difficulty 2 + Danger) if they travel on foot, or Composure + Drive (Difficulty 2 + Danger) in a vehicle: the wind stings and the dust impedes visibility. Even if the Hunters fail the tests, they meet up. If the majority of the Hunters fail their test, increase Danger by 1.

The apparitions follow the Hunters but don't impede them while they're on the move. Once the cell is together, they point to the Hunters and say in unison "You have been chosen as witnesses. The strongest shall remember the destruction this day will bring. Only those who reach the last place will be granted sanctuary. The weak shall be mourned."

Then the apparitions launch themselves at the Hunters intending to tear them apart. "Only the strong" means those who survive fighting these spirits. The Hunters' best option is once again to make a run for it as the apparitions cannot be truly killed.

The Hunters should figure out they need to get to the old ruins of the church of Summer, the 'last place' that survived of the town, but if they don't offer them a deal: another point of Danger in return for the revelation that "sanctuary" refers to Summer's church, on the outskirts of town.

Call for one Wits + Survival test (Difficulty equal to Danger) to navigate the dust storm and find the church. The higher the margin, the quicker they reach the church; the lower the margin, the more often they encounter obstacles like fallen phone poles or trees, are assaulted by apparitions, or stumble into the vignettes described in "Riders on the Storm." If the navigation test fails they reach the church anyway, but

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wreck whatever vehicle they're using (or take levels of Superficial damage equal to Danger, if they're on foot). Rather than the usual three round duration, run one round of combat each time the apparitions attack: these are quick skirmishes, hit and runs.

Riders on the Storm

Content Warning:
Animal injury (non-fatal)

As the Hunters make their way through the storm, they discover they are not alone. They may engage in any of the following encounters depending on how many 'distractions' the Storyteller wants to put in their way.

- A family failed to heed the advice of the weather experts and tried to leave town. They're now trapped in their car, which skidded off the road and got stuck. The family are a husband (Phil) and wife (Donna) and two young children (Mike and John) who are both frightened, crying and screaming. The Hunters can help get the car back on the road with a certain amount of effort (Strength + Technology test (Difficulty 3)). If they don't the family are easily overrun by apparitions drawn to the children's crying.
- A little girl (Elsie) got lost in the storm and took shelter in a dumpster for protection. Her father (Marcus) ran out to find her in a panic, without taking the precautions he ought to. The Hunters might encounter either first, and try to reunite them. Both need some medical help as they are suffering from the dust and grit of the storm without any protective clothing.
- A power line has been hit by debris caught up in the storm. The damage caused it to spark and spit electricity which is dangerous enough. But the main pole took quite a beating and if not supported it might fall. This will do more damage to nearby buildings and cut the power in that section of town.
- The Hunters come across an injured dog lying under some cover (such as a dumpster) clearly in pain. The dog has been hit by something and



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badly hurt its leg. It does have a tag on its collar with its name (Clover) with its home address on the other side. However, the dog is quite large and in pain, so it needs a Charisma + Animal Ken test (Difficulty 3) to get close enough to it without getting bitten. Once they earn the dog's trust the Hunters can try and get it through the storm to its home where the owners will be very pleased to see it.

- A group of three men (Combat dice pool: 6, Health 6) have broken into a local store to steal what they can. The owner's on the premises and in a tussle with the looters. Firearms are involved. If the Hunters don't intervene, the store owner and one of the looters are both seriously injured. Alternatively, the store owner might arrive just after the looters are gone (responding to the security alarm) and mistake the Hunters for looters.

The Device

The rise in supernatural activity launches Vogel's team into action. They load their device onto a large truck and set out to detonate it at the church. The truck is driven by two agents and is followed by a sedan (with Thomas Vogel and three other agents in it) and a black van (with four agents and four scientists inside).

As visibility is very low and the vehicles are traveling slowly, Hunters who see and follow the convoy have an opportunity to climb aboard the truck to look at the device. This takes Strength + Athletics tests (Difficulty 2 + Danger) to get aboard and Dexterity + Stealth tests (Difficulty 4 + Danger) to avoid being spotted.

This scene could be a big showdown with the field team, with fights on the trailer, attempts to take out cars by ramming them off the road and even a gunfight in the midst of the storm between vehicles. The field operatives do all they can to protect the device and use deadly force to get rid of the Hunters.

The Hunters might try to stop the convoy so they can talk. The storm isn't conducive to a conversation and the apparitions are never far away Vogel is deaf to any pleas to hold off or not use the device. To him the storm is a clear and present danger that needs to be stopped so lives can be saved. He does not have time to chat about some half-baked theory the Hunters may have come up with. He doesn't regard them as capable or intelligent and there's no changing his mind. He has a spectral bomb his team of scientific experts assure him is the best chance to dissipate this dangerous supernatural energy.

Finally, if the Hunters haven't figured out they should get to the church ruins; they can follow the convoy to see what they are up to. If they capture an agent, they will tell them (if they win a Manipulation + Persuasion or Intimidation test (Difficulty 3) that they were going to the church ruins, which they've determined to be the center of the supernatural energy.

The Eye of the Storm

Apparitions surround the footprint of the old Summer church. However, once the Hunters step into the rectangular foundation of the church, the apparitions don't follow. The wind inside that area falls to nothing and the noise of the storm fades away. All around the area, swirling winds full of dust and grit smash against an invisible wall surrounding the church.

Anyone inside the confines of the church foundation is safe from anything Summer can throw at them. No apparition or ghost will enter it and there is no wind or dust, so no penalty to action Difficulty

Once the Hunters take stock of their surroundings Summer speaks to them. A hundred faces form in the clouds of dust, shifting and changing into a hundred more. In one great chorus they address the Hunters.

"You are the strong, you will remember us. We are Summer. We will not be forgotten. Bear witness as we destroy this place as we were consumed by the dust. Spread the word of Summer and we will not have to bring this devastation again."

The spirit of Summer answers questions as best it can.

- **Who are you?** "We are the memory of a forgotten place. We are the hunger and pain of a people lost."
- **What do you want?** "A lasting memorial. Something that will remain. But our cries have gone unanswered. Now we must do something so dreadful none will ever forget."
- **Why do you need us?** "We need someone strong

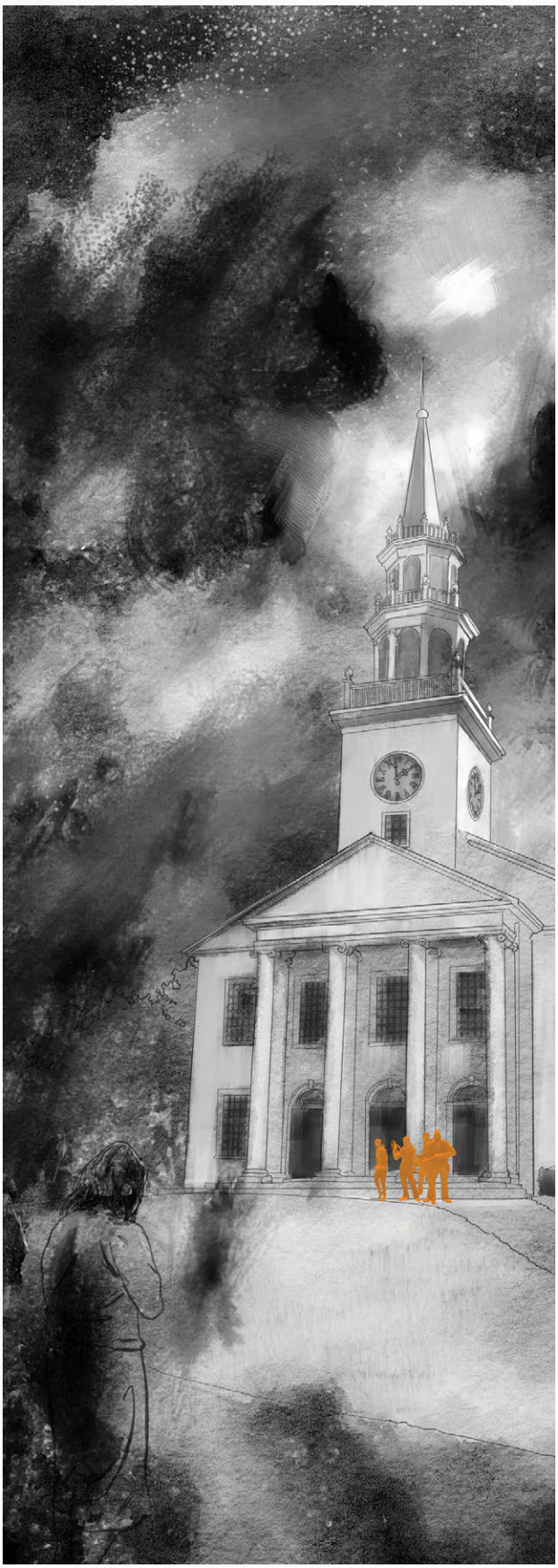
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who can carry the word of what we have done so the dead can be mourned, and the memory preserved."

- **We'll remember you. You don't have to do this.** "That is not enough. You are only few, and few will listen to you. We need something that lasts. Horror lasts. Pain lasts."
- **We'll fight you.** "You cannot fight a memory. Stand against us and you will be buried in dust and forgotten."

All Summer wants is for the Hunters to bear witness as it levels and destroys the town and everyone in it. As the Hunters shouldn't be happy to just stand by and do nothing, they will be wondering what they can do. In general, they have two options: destroy all memory of Summer or find a better way for the place to be remembered (see "Destroying the Memory" and "Remembering Summer").

If the Hunters haven't stopped Vogel's plan, the Aurum Industries team arrives shortly after the Hunters to set up their device in the church foundation. They will detonate it if the Hunters don't stop them. The pulse blows the dust storm apart, but also gives several people in the town nose bleeds and then brain hemorrhages. Vogel considers these deaths acceptable collateral damage and a minor concern in the big picture. While the spirit of Summer is disrupted, the device tears open a hole to one of the many other layers of reality, leaving a wound that takes a long time to scar. Sooner or later, something very bad will use it to find a way into the world.



Destroying the Memory

The Hunters can destroy all memories of Summer. This is the best option for more action-oriented groups. Essentially, as they destroy what little remains of Summer's church, its manifestation weakens and fades.

The Hunters need picks and shovels or even the large digger that is still nearby on the construction site. Destroying what is left of the church, especially anything unique about it (like the carvings on the bricks) visibly hurts the spirit of Summer. As they start tearing things apart, they see the wind die down a little.

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Unfortunately, as soon as they break the perimeter wall of the church, they destroy its protection, and it ceases to act as a sanctuary. The storm dies down as Summer shifts its power into creating more apparitions. They attack the Hunters and do their best to destroy the tools and machinery they're using to destroy the church. There are as many apparitions as needed to make the Hunters fight hard. Fallen apparitions get up, unharmed, within moments. But as the Hunters destroy more of the church foundations, more apparitions crumble to dust. As Summer becomes weaker, it is unable to maintain so many apparitions.

Play out three rounds of this action, then describe the rest. The Hunters defend one another and break up the church foundations. The apparitions crumble and the wind fades away. At this point the five original ghosts appear. They tell the hunters that not everything has been forgotten; they may not last long, but they'll leave a cruel legacy, on behalf of Summer.

To make those ghosts fade away, the Hunters have to destroy all evidence of the town. That means the photographs and books in the library as well as Mary's photo album. It may also be necessary to kill Mary, as the last remaining resident. But outright murder might (quite reasonably) be a step too far for your group. The Storyteller is free to face the Hunters with that as a moral quandary though. What might stay their hand is seeing the ghost of Mary (who might arrive to try and stop them) fade away, with a look of abject hatred in her eyes.

Remembering Summer

A less confrontational option is to give Summer what it wants: to be remembered. This means finding a way to commemorate the town with something permanent. Unfortunately, they have to do this in the middle of a huge dust storm as Summer isn't going to stop its plans just because the Hunters have an idea.

The Hunters can initially do something simple, get hold of a large rock (boulder size) and carve, or even just write, something like 'This stone commemorates the town of Summer, lost in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s'. This might be done in the church or back in the center of town. But they will need tools and the endurance to do all this in a dust storm. The building site at least has the tools.

Once they have a decent sized stone it will take a Strength +Stamina test (Difficulty 5) to get it into a truck to get it where they want it. Carving it is an extended Strength + Insight test (Difficulty 4). The hunters can make as many attempts as they like, but each failure costs something in the town. It might be a building being torn down in the wind or a family home being crushed. The longer it takes, the more hits the town takes. Wherever they are the Hunters will hear crashes and screams, to underline time is of the essence.

While a monument carved in stone is the most obvious choice for a lasting memorial, consider other options. If one of the Hunters is a musician, or a filmmaker (or a YouTuber), memorializing Summer that way works too. Summer doesn't have a great understanding of technology but telling the spirit the Hunters just broadcast information about it to thousands of people, and millions more will find it over time, satisfies it.

When Summer realizes the Hunters are serious the winds will die down and the apparitions fade away. The dust settles on whatever is left of the town and people come out of their hiding places to start clearing up and helping each other.

Should the Hunters' monument ever be removed or destroyed, Summer will rise again to make sure it is remembered. This time it won't be satisfied with anything but complete devastation.

Loose Ends

When everything is over, how the Hunters have behaved might have them hailed as heroes, wanted by the law, or in danger of being placed in a mental health facility. No one will believe the dust storm was anything other than a freak occurrence and folks write off any apparitions they saw as homeless people, transients, immigrants, biker gangs or any other group that society regularly scapegoats.

Aurum Industries is livid if the Hunters interfered with their plans, but they can't argue with results. If the town is safe and the supernatural threat contained, they pack up and leave. But there's no handshake or

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gesture of respect for the Hunters. Vogel considers them dangerous amateurs who got lucky and flags their identities to several other agencies. Next time the Hunters come up against the authorities, there are database entries marking them as dangerous and possibly criminal.

Unity is safe and the Hunters can be assured their actions saved lives in the long run. The spiritual threat has been neutralized so they should feel free to move on or go back to their normal life. They've now established themselves as a cell.

If the Aurum Industries device was detonated, there's no way of telling what it might do. Even if it's left abandoned in Unity, nobody knows what dangers it might pose... or who might find it in future.

On the Road Again

If this story is part of the **Lines Drawn in Blood** chronicle, it could connect to other stories in these ways:

- Sienna Fisher, of Neto International, attempts to convince Thomas Vogel to loan her a couple of scientists for help with a problem down in Rawlins, Missouri. He makes a half-joking suggestion that she contact the "lucky amateurs" he met in Unity; and she does, leading the cell to **Outsiders**.
- **Blur the Lines** takes place in Omaha, which you can choose to place Unity nearby. If the cell's established in Unity, Omaha's almost part of their regular beat.
- If **Pressure Test** was the cell's first hunt, the nest of vampires up in Yellowknife makes a really bad second outing: they're tough and organized. On the other hand, it's character building. Yellowknife's a big tourist town, and it's easiest to get one Hunter there on a family holiday or quiet retreat, then summon the rest to meet them for **Alone in the Dark**.



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Allies & Antagonists

This appendix covers the important and recurring Storyteller characters encountered during **Pressure Test**.

Summer

The main antagonist of this story is the ghost of a long-forgotten town. This doesn't mean sentient buildings, but the collective dying scream of a community suffering from starvation and despair. It's an emotion given form, a gestalt spirit of a population too tired and weakened to do anything but weep for what they lost. This all means that while Summer has a spirit and a sense of self, it's single minded and not good at compromising. It wants justice and recognition, and nothing less will do.

Summer works through intermediaries in the form of the ghosts and apparitions.

APPARITIONS

Summer manifests the ghosts of the townsfolk most of whom are long dead. Summer invests each of these spirits with the power they need to do the job it wants them to do. Each ghost is manifested to do a particular thing and so their properties are different at each encounter. For instance, if the ghost isn't needed to do anything physical, Summer will not waste energy making it corporeal. Consequently, the properties of each ghost are detailed in each encounter. These differences should serve to confuse the Hunters on the nature of what they are actually capable of.

If the ghosts are physical enough to deal damage, they can be hurt with normal weapons. Otherwise, only supernatural harm hurts them.

Alice Nolan

Alice is a waitress at Bella's Diner and being reasonably new she often gets stuck with the night shift. Alice makes friends easily and when Aurum Industries rolls into town, they enlist her as a contact. There are many people like Alice across the world, civilian resources orgs can tap when the need arises. The orgs themselves can't be everywhere, so they rely on their networks to target resources effectively.

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Alice befriends the Hunters as she does everyone, but her interest in them depends on what they decide to trust her with or ask her about. Alice is a waitress with a keen mind and a handgun (and a shotgun in her apartment). Alone and outnumbered, she doesn't present a great physical threat but she can and will call in her friends from Aurum Industries if she feels threatened.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 7, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 7, Firearms 6, Performance 6, Stealth 7, Subterfuge 7

Thomas Vogel

Vogel's a career middle manager, and an amateur paranormal investigator. Aurum Industries has given him the opportunity to combine his passion with his career path: he now runs a research and development team for the corporate org. Unity is his first step into field operations, but he feels he's got a good handle on things. He is the very image of a 'man in black', tall, muscular, and humorless. He cares about making the world a safe place and is ready to do what it takes to make sure his mission succeeds.

For all his tough guy appearance, the moment he fully comprehends that he's facing a supernatural force his nerve cracks. Given his resources that makes him dangerous: he'll use maximum force to terminate whatever threat he encounters, rather than the carefully calculated response Aurum Industries would prefer. His fear drives him to destroy what he doesn't understand and trust that his plan and resources will work as expected, all so he can sleep at night. Vogel is ready to burn the town to the ground to stop the paranormal threat and trusts that the weapons he has will be more than adequate, whatever some upstart amateurs might say.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 8, Social 4, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 8, Firearms 10, Intimidation 8, Melee 6, Stealth 8

Notes/ Other Traits: Arsenal (with Team Requisitions)

Other Folk

A variety of townsfolk and agents will also be useful during the story. For these minor characters the character and antagonist profiles in **Hunter: The Reckoning** will be more than sufficient:

Unity Citizen

The town is full of parents, teachers, shopkeepers, passersby, and busybodies. Few have any particular skills, and most will run if things become violent. Each has an 'Occupation' skill, which covers any specialist knowledge or expertise they have related to their career, like teaching for a teacher or building for a builder etc.

General Difficulty: 3/1

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 4, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Occupation 6

Aurum Industries Field Operative

These agents are a diverse mix of races, ages, and genders. Several have disabilities. All dress in plain black business suits. They are gruff and uncooperative.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 8, Firearms 8, Melee (Urban CQB) 8, Stealth 8 ■

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CHAPTER TWO:
OUTSIDERS

"The Queen of Fairies she came by,
Took me with her to dwell,
Even where she has a pleasant land
For those that in it dwell,
But at the end of seven years,
They pay their tithe to hell.
And I, so fair of flesh and blood,
I fear 'twill be myself."
– The Ballad of Tam Lin

Neto Solutions, a tech company with an interest in monster hunting, has purchased the wilderness surrounding Rawlins, Missouri and begun construction on a solar farm that will bring jobs and technology to the rural town, but at the cost of a broken pact with a Fae Court and the risk of waking a sleeping terror in the forest.

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CONTENT WARNINGS

Outsiders features the abduction of young adults (though no harm comes to them). There's a strong body horror element, with the Quarry transforming its victims into glass. By dialing down descriptions of the transformation and/or making it an instant process you can significantly reduce its impact.

The Hunt

Rawlins is a rusty collection of dilapidated barns and graying tractors in the heart of the Ozark mountains, humid and hollow and at least two hours from the nearest city. A ramshackle, red streak of farmland that is bleeding its population into the metropolitan areas, Rawlins holds only 9,000 people huddled behind its paper-thin walls and creaking doors.

Once a thriving sanctuary city for freemen and abolitionists in the mid-1800s, urban development and industry have pulled most of Rawlins' town members away to greener pastures. After the recent death of local landlord, Lucas Schaffer, Neto Solutions purchased the forest and farm in an attempt to drive local fae creatures from hiding. They've sent in a team of interns to determine the fae's location.

This initiative has not only angered the fae, causing the capricious Queen Amaryllis to abandon her protection of Rawlins, but it has awakened a collection of hungry spirits the Ozark Union keeps trapped in the forest. The fae have spirited away the team of Neto Incorporated interns and withdrawn their protection for the inhabitants of Rawlins and the corporation's workers, leaving the population vulnerable to an ancient terror.

After the massacre of a night logging crew, Neto Solutions has become aware of the nightmarish Mister Gannet, as the fae call the monster they've ceased to keep under control. The corporation hoped one threat would take out the other. That hope fell through when Queen Amaryllis refused to become involved and chose to antagonize Rawlins' population instead. Now Neto wants Hunters to enter the battlefield and annihilate Mister Gannet, as well as flush out the fae for Neto Solutions's own purposes.

The players' Hunters must find the missing interns, make contact with the fae, and decide whether they can be trusted as temporary allies in the hunt for the monster devouring Rawlins, and whether they should be turned over to Neto Solutions after.

Genre

This is an atmospheric folk horror case with a rural midwestern aesthetic, and it explores tensions of tradition versus expansion and nature versus industry. The Hunters should be encouraged to set aside their preconceived notions of friend and foe as the humans refuse to help them and the fae may be their best chance at destroying the monster lurking in the forest's bones. In addition, there are rules for community building to gain the trust of Rawlins' citizens, as well as industrial espionage as the Hunters are asked to play two corporate orgs, Neto Solutions and Aurum Industries, against each other to determine the shape of Rawlins' future.

Outsiders features the frequent use of hoodoo to protect the citizens of Rawlins from both the Fair Folk and the corrupted spirits that make up Mister Gannet. Hoodoo is a rural American folk magic with African American and African Diaspora roots and is still widely practiced in the South and Midwest. Hoodoo, conjure, rootwork, and other folk magic, especially with African and Indigenous foundations, has a history of being grossly villainized or exotified in fiction. While **Outsiders** is also a work of fiction, Storytellers must be prepared to accept the responsibility of presenting the practices in this case with respect, and to wield Rawlins' hoodoo tradition in the spirit it is intended: to protect the community from outside forces, just like in the real world.

The Quarry

This case introduces both a primary and secondary quarry. Neto Solutions has lost a number of logging crews to the hunger of Mister Gannet, aided by the passivity of the Ozark Union.

Mister Gannet is the name of a collection of hungry spirits trapped in the forest surrounding

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Story Structure

Outsiders consists of three chapters.

PART ONE: SMALL TOWN USA
The cell arrives in Rawlins, meet some potential contacts, and see the first signs sinister forces at work.

➤

PART TWO: DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN ARE?
Tthe Hunters explore the town. They learn its history with the fae and the promise the humans have broken.

➤

PART THREE: THE UNQUIET GRAVE
The Hunters deal with Mister Gannet and weigh up the risks posed by the fae... and Neto Solutions.

Rawlins by the Ozark Union. These spirits are primordial in origin, the echoes of the natural world that has been culled in the wake of humanity's swords and torches. These animistic spirits are predators and consume all who cross their paths, leaving naught but bleached bones twisted into tree branches and the scent of spring; even monsters have their place in Mother Nature's schemes.

Mister Gannet itself has developed a sadistic streak after centuries of imprisonment by the Ozark Union. Where once it was a wasting disease, it now devours its victims with a spiteful glee, taking special pleasure in sapping the strength from the physically powerful. When observed, it appears as a tall gaunt figure, wispy and cold as mist, covered in grinning mouths. Having been created from the spirits of its own victims, Mister Gannet grows with every meal. At the time of this case, it towers over humans and fae alike, standing fourteen feet tall.

The fae around Rawlins have the same origins as its human population: West African and western European. The human population know of them: they abide by a pact to keep the forests intact and preserve nature, and in return the fae keep Mister Gannet under lock and key. The humans have broken their side of the bargain by letting Neto Solutions harm the forest, so Queen Amaryllis no longer upholds hers. Mister Gannet's free to feast, and the queen's forbidden the fae to interfere.

Complicating Factors

Neto Solutions may have hired the Hunters and provided them with a liaison in Sienna Fisher, but they won't do anything to openly jeopardize their standing in the Rawlins community or bring attention to their true agenda. All investigation is up to the Hunters: Sienna is a former Hunter, but her loyalty is to Neto Solutions first.

Neto Solutions is not the only corporate org interested in expanding their influence in Rawlins. Other corporations have identified strong paranormal emissions around Rawlins (as a result of the fae presence) and want to either disperse or control them. Aurum Industries, (see **Pressure Test**), has begun negotiations to purchase the defunct Ozark Valley Mall. Their agents are already attempting to infiltrate the town and could pose some difficulty for Hunters there.

Mister Gannet grows larger by the day, devouring Neto Solutions employees, and Rawlins citizens. Besides the locals' distrust of outsiders, there is another complication: with the exception of the town historian Sawyer Holman, and her descendants, the population of Rawlins is not permitted to speak of supernatural occurrences. This is a result of the powerful fae magic included in their pact with the Ozark Union, even after its supposed dissolution by Queen Amaryllis.

Queen Amaryllis, however, is unaware of the fondness one of her knights, Chicory, has developed

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for widower Aubrey Randall, and how this tests Chicory's loyalties. The Hunters encounter Chicory, and if the cell hunts and kills them Queen Amaryllis declares war on all mortals within the Ozark Union territory and sends the rest of her knights to deliver justice against the cell and Neto Solutions.

Red Flags

Neto Solutions is a technology developer and manufacturer that supplies many Hunter cells throughout the southern and midwestern USA with weapons and accessories, as well as funding hunts that align with their corporate interests. Unless they're desperate for money, a corporate job offer won't appeal to a lot of Hunters. Make the offer, but if the cell refuses to take Neto's money, use some of the hooks listed below.

- Lucas Schaffer was the last member of a family of landholders who owned the majority of farmland and wilderness in Rawlins. He had no direct descendants and the county took control of his holdings upon his shocking death in a hunting accident. There could be any number of local authorities wishing to follow up on the strange coincidence, and a Hunter's contacts may take special interest in Neto Solutions's hasty acquisition of Lucas Schaffer's property.
- Sawyer Holman's eldest daughter, Kaila, has told her mother she will be attending college in the fall; however, she has actually accepted a privileged internship with Neto Solutions. She didn't know how much, or what type, of fieldwork it would involve, or how expendable Neto considered her.
- Hunters are often a close-knit community and there's no better base of operations than a rural town in the heart of the mountains. Retired Hunters, like Sienna Fisher, might recognize the signs of a far hungrier evil than the Ozark Union and serve as personal contacts for the Hunter cell, whether as family members, former lovers, rivals, or friends.
- Prior to the imprisonment of Mister Gannet, Rawlins was a sanctuary for freedmen, indigenous families, and abolitionists in Missouri during the mid-1800s. There are numerous legends from that period that mention mass disappearances similar to the legend of Roanoke. Ambitious Hunters may want to investigate those legends, as they point to an ancient evil in the Ozark wilderness.

Danger

Mister Gannet and Queen Amaryllis become increasingly curious about the Hunters as they spend time within the town limits of Rawlins. As the Hunters increase their standing in the town, raise the suspicion of fae creatures, and investigate Mister Gannet's victims, the amalgamation of spirits grows hungrier, and Queen Amaryllis grows more impatient. There are many ways the narrative might frame the increasing Danger:

- There are more fae in Rawlins, and they abduct people from within the city limits as well as in the forest.
- Members of Queen Amaryllis's court are more likely to fight rather than flee, if confronted.
- Mister Gannet takes victims more often, possibly including a named Storyteller Character the Hunters like or rely on.
- At Danger 5, Mister Gannet or Queen Amaryllis manage to infiltrate Neto Solutions' lobby or the Rawlins Farm, rendering it inaccessible as a safe haven.

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Part One: Small Town, USA

Neto Solutions's liaison, Sienna Fisher, meets the Hunters at the company's regional office in Rawlins. She explains Neto is tracking the movements of a particularly dangerous Fae Court in Rawlins that is potentially responsible for the disappearance of a group of Neto Solutions interns, as well as the mysterious deaths of several contractors. However, she also informs the group that she believes there is something else killing the population; something that intrigues her superiors.

The Job Description

While the street it's on promises cramped interiors and too-little space, wedged in between the remains of a defunct dentist's office and a grocery store, the lobby of the regional Neto Solutions office is decidedly out of place in Rawlins, Missouri. It's all shimmering glass, polished steel, and alabaster backsplash. The receptionist, a pretty woman with a high ponytail and a smile full of white teeth, stands at the ready to hand out visitor passes and cold tea in glasses that are cloudy with condensation. To the left of the desk, behind a second glass door, is an open waiting area with plush, pastel furniture.

Sienna Fisher arrives right on time, fist curled around a mug of coffee with a ring of brown stained into the ceramic from constant reheating. She's tall and broad, with deep brown skin and hair buzzed into a neat fade. When she addresses the Hunters, Sienna is all business, and her answers betray no emotion unless she is specifically asked about Kaila Holman, one of the missing interns. Sienna's free with information, after all, the Hunters are working for her. But some intel is on a need-to-know basis and the Hunters only learn it with a Manipulation + Persuasion test. The Hunters obtain all the information listed up to and including their number of successes.

What Sienna Fisher Knows

The Forest Fae (0 successes): Neto Solutions has determined there are strange creatures in the area, they're proving impossible to categorize and just as hard to track down. Their location continues to elude the corporation. Neto have landed on "fae" as a descriptor mostly by luck. The local population has been no help until recently when a citizen, Kaila Holman, entered their internship program. She gave the team some necessary intel, including the name of Queen Amaryllis and the existence of a centuries-old pact with the queen and her servants, though she didn't know the terms beyond protection from a monstrous spirit in the forest in exchange for keeping the wilderness intact.

The Missing Interns (0 successes): Kaila Holman was the only local willing to discuss the supernatural and she was chosen to lead a team of interns into the forest to find some sign of the Fae Court, as Kaila claimed she could approach the fae peacefully.

The Dead Contractors (1 success): When the interns disappeared, Neto Solutions decided to smoke out the fae by disturbing the creature in the forest. They did this by starting major construction work in its territory. It took only three days for them to see results: a project manager named James Kirkland was the first body they found, face contorted in pain and horror as his bones split and sprouted into heavy-hanging limbs and his blood sprayed across the earth like blossoms in spring. Six other employees have been found like this, frozen in their death throes, branches shooting from beneath their skin and forming a canopy of gore that smelled like fruit and flowers. Sienna was ordered to bring in professionals and this team of Hunters came recommended (if pressed on

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how/by who, Sienna tells the Hunters flatly "there's a grapevine." and won't say more than that).

James Kirkland (2 successes): James Kirkland is, or was, one of Neto International's project managers. He was overseeing operations here in Rawlins but passed away suddenly. A further Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3) convinces her to hand over the files she collected from James Kirkland's office. Studying the files reveals the surveyor's analyses have mapped and identified a crossroad of multiple paranormal energy signature in the forest south of Rawlins.

What Sienna Fisher Does Not Know

The Fae Court: Sienna doesn't know about Chicory's connection to Aubrey Randall. While she's aware of Sawyer Holman's position as the town librarian and historian, Sienna doesn't know the pact purposely excludes the Holman family from the clause that prevents the rest of the townsfolk from speaking about the supernatural. Sienna also doesn't know Queen Amaryllis has broken her treaty with the populace of Rawlins since Kaila's disappearance.

The Dead Contractors: Sienna's deduced the contractors were killed by whatever creature Neto Solutions disturbed in the forest but doesn't know Mister Gannet is a collection of ghosts eager to devour living creatures and rebuild the forest with their corpses.

The Missing Interns: Sienna knows that the interns went missing while attempting to discover the location of the Ozark Union but doesn't know Chicory spirited them away into another dimension; a twilight sanctuary where they could eat, drink, and be merry and safe from both Neto Solutions and Mister Gannet.

Sienna Fisher suggests the Hunters get some rest before investigating further as it would be dangerous to hunt while exhausted from travel. She directs Hunters who choose to rest to Aubrey Randall's farmhouse, as Neto Solutions has arranged for him to rent his spare rooms to the Hunters. In this case, Storytellers should continue to "Home is Where the Hunt Is." Hunters who insist on investigating immediately are directed to Sawyer Holman's library, which is currently closed due to Kaila Holman's disappearance. They'll have better luck the next day if they want to "Hit the Books." Sienna also recommends they check the site where James Kirkland was killed "Under the Juniper Tree." Reminding the cell that a Hunt's a dangerous business, Sienna half-jokingly advises them to make some friends at the local clinic at "In Sickness and In Health."

Under the Juniper Tree

James Kirkland's temporary office is on the edge of the forest, as he served as the manager for the contractors hired to clear forest for construction. The office is a clean, brand-new double-wide resting on a cinder block foundation and the door needs a key from Sienna Fisher or a Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 2) to unlock.

Once inside the Hunters are greeted by a stark, empty building without any furniture, as it has already been cleaned out by Neto Solutions personnel. Even the carpet has been pulled away from the plywood flooring and the bathroom and kitchen are devoid of plumbing or electrical wiring. The entirety of the office is stripped bare, but a Hunter who succeeds on a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 2) notices the corner of a manila envelope tucked into a corner ceiling tile. Inside is a cellphone with a pre-programmed number to a liaison for Aurum Industries, as well as a crisp, new business card that reads 'Amy Barry, Acquisitions Specialist'. Also inside the envelope is a bundle of cash totaling $25,000 in large bills, as well as a printed list of ritual items that Hunters who make an Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 2) recognize as the elements of an exorcism and protection spell, in the local folk magic tradition of hoodoo.

The items are as follows:

- Charcoal, freshly pressed
- Resin, formed into tablets
- Juniper Berry
- Bay
- Yarrow

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- St John's Wort
- Hawthorne
- A raffia braid to bind the bundle

Used properly, they should be bound together with the raffia and used as incense: the smoke is supposed to keep away hostile creatures.

If the Hunters don't have the requisite Occult skill themselves, they can learn this information by speaking with Aubrey Randall, Sawyer Holman, or Sienna Fisher, or through the use of relevant Edges. To use this incense, Hunters should bind the herbs and coat them in the melted resin, then light atop a bed of charcoal. Doing this will protect them and anyone with them from both the Ozark Union and Mister Gannet until the smell clears in one hour. Note that the incense is not, in itself, magic; it's more of a rule the local creatures abide by.

Leaving the office through the back door brings a stark change in scenery. The forest behind the office gapes open, ready to swallow any who enter, and the felled trees litter the earth like broken teeth. Venturing deeper into the forest brings the sound of glass shattering, and the Hunters realize that as they walk, they are stepping upon shards of brittle, blue grass, and glittering wildflowers. An Intelligence + Survival test (Difficulty 2) reveals an adult man crawled through the underbrush exactly where the grass and flowers grow, forming a path deeper into the darkened woods. The path of shattered stems leads to a small clearing that glows with a ghostly blue light and, at its center, a shimmering blue tree that looks to be made out of blown glass. The branches are stretched high overhead and there clearing smells of wildflowers and fresh cut grass. It doesn't look as good as it smells: vitrified vegetation and human body parts radiate from the tree's roots in a clumsy spiral.

The tree is all that remains of James Kirkland. His face, etched in the glass trunk of this tree as its limbs twist in terror and supplication, is a perfect portrait of his last few moments, eyes wide with horror and mouth falling open in a frozen scream. Beyond the clearing, the forest is far too quiet.

The rest of the construction site is a maze of equipment and forgotten blueprints. The six vitrified Neto Solutions employees from the logging crew's night



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HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

Even if they came to Rawlins at the request of a corporate org, the Hunters will likely depart from the org's agenda quickly. That's to be expected: orgs and Hunters have different motives and employ different tactics. But corporations like Neto don't like being brushed off. If the Hunters don't check in within twelve hours of speaking to Sienna Fisher, a blank envelope awaits them the next time they are at the Randall Farm with instructions to touch base immediately. This is an object lesson in the stress and hassle of getting into bed with a corporate org, even on a short-term basis.

shift are scattered through the construction site, in various states of terror and distress, each set of remains heavy with globes of glass fruit. One has been felled with a saw and the shattered shards of its trunk are dotted with globules of bright red blood, cold to the touch and shimmering like rubies in the dirt. When the wind blows, the glass trees echo with long-suffering moans.

Any Hunters who win a Composure + Occult test have enough presence of mind to connect this image to a hoodoo tradition call a bottle tree: glass bottles are hung from boughs to provide protection against evil spirits. This is an inversion of a bottle tree, like a spirit's openly mocking it.

This is the first time the Hunters come face to face with the results of Mister Gannet's hunger. Storytellers are encouraged to make it memorable by invoking different sensory descriptions, such as the smell of spring blossoms or the smooth, glassy surface of the tree's trunk. On the other hand, if any players are uncomfortable with this element of body horror, avoiding sensory descriptions will likely make the scene easier for them to deal with.

Storytellers can decide whether Mister Gannet is nearby, watching the Hunters. If so, its coming should be heralded by the buzz of cicadas that cannot be seen. Hunters who investigate the sounds don't find Mister Gannet but can trace its direction with a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 5).

After discovering James Kirkland's body, the Hunters may wish to investigate the forest further. Mister Gannet is nowhere to be found, but if they're eager for a fight, the Hunters may encounter two round, chittering rodents, each knee-height with heads collapsed around spirals of sharp teeth, (see p. 88-89), who ask whether the Hunters are friend or foe in voices like a tinny music box. They're content to watch the Hunters through eyes set deep in their toothsome maws, but if a Hunter touches one they both attack with vicious bites. These corrupted animals fight only until one of them is hurt: messing with mortals is entertaining but they're not willing to die here. If the Hunters give chase, they burrow into the roots of a nearby tree and vanish.

Home is Where the Hunt Is

The Randall farm is nestled along the tree line at the base of the Ozarks, with graying stalks of corn blending seamlessly with the wild undergrowth and tangled trees of the wilderness. Several rows lie on the ground, snapped at the base by a meticulously guided tractor in preparation for an upcoming corn maze. In the haze of heat and insects, they look like more victims to the forest surrounding the farm.

The farmhouse was once a grand affair, but those days are long since behind it. The white paint on the wooden stairs flakes and chips away at the slightest touch and the floorboards groan audibly with the effort of supporting even the lightest occupant. The kitchen is in disarray, a collection of rusty tools and "soaking" pots line the counter and a single table, with a dangerous lean, struggles to uphold a full Dutch oven of something sticky and sour.

Aubrey Randall is a Black man of few words, tall and broad as a barn door and twice as sturdy, with brown hair flecked with gray and a full beard. He is polite to the Hunters and answers any questions about Rawlins that he can unless he risks exposing the Ozark Union or his relationship with Chicory. Particularly perceptive Hunters who make a Wits + Occult test (Difficulty 2) notice webs of red yarn attached to bells in the trees surrounding his property and a swirl of red inside the cast iron pot. If the Hunters mention it Aubrey's defensive but describes it as "hoodoo. You folks wouldn't know it." With a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 2), the Hunters can get him

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to talk a little more on the subject, though he skirts around any details. Hoodoo's an African American magical tradition, a way of interacting with local spirits and supernatural beings. That's about all Aubrey can say without running up against the Pact.

The magic of the Pact (though broken) prevents Aubrey from explaining the yarn and bells are a gift for his lover. He remains downstairs as long as the Hunters do but leaves for the barn once he believes that they are asleep.

The rooms for rent are upstairs, furnished with dense, goose down quilts and pillows. The closets are sparse but an Intelligence + Investigation test (Difficulty 2) reveals a shoebox of photographs of a happily smiling Aubrey and his late wife, Rebecca. A Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3) gets more information about Rebecca from Aubrey. The Hunters learn she loved roses and the nearby forest, specifically a sunlit glen by a waterfall. Hunters who keep the sprig of hawthorn and find that glen can rescue the interns without Chicory's assistance. Otherwise, they have to rescue the interns from the demesne by negotiating with Chicory in "Babes in the Wood."

The Hunters are safe from Mister Gannet and the Ozark Union as long as they're on Randall's property and Chicory is alive. If Mister Gannet is provoked to attack Aubrey Randall or invade his property, Chicory immediately comes to their lover's aid. If Chicory dies, the Randall farm is the first casualty in Queen Amaryllis' war with the mortals of Rawlins, Neto Solutions, and Mister Gannet.

Chewing the Fat

Aubrey is polite but withdrawn and he avoids answering any personal questions about his missing wife, Rebecca, or his experiences on the farm, especially if they come too close to revealing his relationship with Chicory. If the hunters ask about the missing interns, he claims he knows they are safe, but can't elaborate on how he knows.

Aubrey doesn't encourage the Hunters to investigate the house, preferring to keep them in the sitting room, which was Rebecca's favorite. The furniture is stiff, over padded, and slick with the plastic that covers them. Portraits of the extended Randall family line the tobacco-yellowed walls, with a wedding portrait of Rebecca and Aubrey in the center above a fireplace decorated with sprigs of hawthorn and holly. Beside the cold fireplace is a guitar whose neck is shrouded by a thick film of dust.

Aubrey's busy on the farm all day (genuinely, it's long, arduous work) but whips up a simple, tasty evening meal for himself and the Hunters when he's done. Over dinner is the best time to talk with Aubrey, at least for a little while. He claims to turn in after thirty minutes of questioning from the Hunters, as he has to be up early to tend to the farm. An Intelligence + Insight test reveals he's anxious and uncomfortable: there's something else going on here (i.e., Aubrey's concerned about the Hunters finding out about Chicory). If pressed Aubrey says it's been a long

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time since he had guests in the house, and he's more comfortable on his own.

Hunters who make a Dexterity + Stealth test (Difficulty 3) can explore the house quietly. The rooms are devoid of personal belongings beyond furniture, but one room is full of sealed cardboard boxes, all labeled with Rebecca's name. Inside one of the boxes, the Hunters find a bouquet of wild roses as fresh as the day they were picked. They don't wilt, ever. Hunters who keep an everlasting wild rose reduce the Difficulty of Charisma and Manipulation tests against Chicory and Aubrey by 1.

On the first night the Hunters stay, Chicory doesn't visit. By the second night, Chicory and Aubrey are eager to see each other, and Aubrey slips out to see his lover in "Between the Rows." He does the same thing every subsequent night.

Next Steps

The Hunters may use the Randall farm as a base of operations to rest and recuperate. Like the lobby of Neto Solutions, the Randall farm serves as a waypoint for their investigations and is safer than most other places in and around Rawlins. If the Hunters don't trust Aubrey Randall's hospitality and decide to stay awake (or just stay up all night conducting research, or are usually insomniac, etc.) fall asleep unless they make a Willpower test (Difficulty 3): everyone on the farm except Aubrey falls under a magical sleep when Chicory visits nightly. If any Hunters stay awake for Chicory's visit Storytellers can advance directly to "Between the Rows." When the Hunters wake, they can investigate the scene of James Kirkland's death in "Under the Juniper Tree" or move onward to "Chapter Two."

By the time the Hunters complete Chapter One they should have:

- Spoken to Sienna Fisher and learned Neto Solutions wishes to make contact with the Ozark Union.
- Examined James Kirkland's body and determined that he was vitrified.
- Noticed Aubrey's house is very welcoming for the fae.



OUTSIDERS

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Part Two: Do You Know Where Your Children Are?

The Hunters face a wall of insular townsfolk who are not just unwilling to work with outsiders but unable due to the magic of the Ozark Union.

When You Say Nothing at All

Outsiders is a folk horror story and building on and analyzing the relationship between people is as important as interacting with the supernatural. What the citizens of Rawlins don't say is just as important as what they do. Storytellers should be aware that Hunters can become easily frustrated when being shut out by the people of Rawlins. Provide them opportunities to shed their Outsider social status in the eyes of Rawlins' population.

Possible ways to show the citizens of Rawlins that the Hunters prioritize the town, and its problems include (but are not limited to):

- Speaking with prominent members such as Sawyer Holman, Deputy Joan Munroe, or Andrew Miller and gaining their endorsement
- Helping local nurse practitioner Debbie Higgins examine and cure patients afflicted with the Fae Scouts' sleeping poison
- Participating in the search party for Kaila Holman
- Defending the citizens from attacks by Mister Gannet or the Ozark Union
- Rescuing or recovering victims of Fae Scout poison

Hunters who don't engage with the town or attempt to lighten its burdens will find the population maintain their silence and offer no help or insight, while Hunters who prioritize Rawlins and its people find that sentiment returned when they need support.

Taking it to the Streets

Rawlins is a collection of empty suburbs and decaying apartment complexes, a dying town with more history than future. Covering fewer than eight square miles, a Hunter can make their way from one edge of town to the other within a couple of hours. Idle teenagers wander in small packs along the tired trails through their neighbors' yards, neglected lawns stretching up to brush their hips as they scale chain link fences separating moldering duplexes and vacant trailers. None of them are in the mood to chat with Hunters who approach them, but they point out which houses are empty and rattle off addresses of important locations, such as the Holman library and the Stop-And-Rob. These teenagers are bored but not malevolent and won't attack or try to rip off the Hunters, preferring to scatter to the wind if things get too intense.

Like many small towns, Rawlins boasts a town square that houses the majority of its commercial real estate. Peppered in among the empty storefronts are Ed's Barber Shop, a small grocery, and Sawyer Holman's library. The majority of Rawlins' population is over fifty years old and many of them spend their time socializing at the town square or along the cracked sidewalks lining their neighborhoods. Most retreat inside or actively ignore

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the Hunters if approached. Grandmothers shoo the Hunters away from their doorsteps, business owners pointedly ask the Hunters to leave if they enter to ask questions rather than make purchases.

Hunters quickly see a pattern developing in Rawlins: many of the occupied houses' lawns feature trees strung with brightly colored bottles, buildings have mirrors hung at the entrances, and iron nails and horseshoes mark entrances, exits, and windows. An observant Hunter who makes a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 3) notices bowls of milk, honey, or other food items placed on back doorsteps and under low hanging trees draped with red ribbons and silver bells. Upon closer inspection, Hunters can identify swirls of bright red blood in the offerings with an Intelligence + Medicine test, (Difficulty 3).

While it is clear that the denizens of Rawlins are aware of the supernatural, none of them are permitted by the pact with the Ozark Union to speak of it. They are physically incapable of forming the words to identify or describe the Fae themselves. Clever or charismatic Hunters who succeed at a Charisma + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3) can learn the following information from the average citizen of Rawlins:

- Most citizens don't trust Neto Solutions, especially not with Kaila Holman now missing. Kaila is an independent young woman and active in the community. She is a star pupil at the county high school and beloved by the town. Everyone hoped that she would take over the library when her mother retired, but Kaila's mind seems set on the big city.
- No other young people from Rawlins were part of the team of interns. If their families are concerned or miss them, they have not come to Rawlins to search for them.
- Grant, Ed the barber's husband, saw Aubrey Randall out in his fields at midnight a few weeks ago. While he cannot directly say that he suspects a Fae has glamoured Aubrey, he can hint at it and a clever Hunter can pick up that information with a Wits + Insight test (Difficulty 4).
- Aubrey Randall has still not held a funeral for his missing wife, Rebecca, who was declared dead months ago. Citizens who gossip about Aubrey seem more judgmental than sympathetic when they mention Aubrey's grief over losing his wife. Even though they cannot be sure if Rebecca was glamoured by the Fae, a clever Hunter can infer that they suspect it with an Intelligence + Insight test (Difficulty 4).
- Lucas Schaffer's death is a mysterious tragedy. Though young, he was a seasoned hunter who never entered the forest alone at night. None of the residents of Rawlins agree on how or why he died in the forest, but they all agree on one thing: his death was no accident.
- The real estate agent in charge of selling the Schaffer estate to Neto Solutions was Andrew Miller, a city councilman who has been promising to bring jobs and industry to Rawlins for years. It seems he's finally managed it just before kicking off his gubernatorial campaign.
- Debbie Higgins, the nurse practitioner at the local clinic, has noticed an increase in citizens disappearing for hours in the forest and returning exhausted and dehydrated with no memory of the lost time.

The Stop-And-Rob

The Stop-And-Rob is an affectionate nickname for the only gas station on the western edge of town. Teenagers litter its parking lot, slurping sugary sodas from the beds of rusted pickup trucks and backseats of their parents' sedans. The latest country crooner, an arduous, off-key ballad of love lost, and revenge taken, thrums from beneath the dashboard of a station wagon while Aisha Holman, Sawyer Holman's youngest daughter, drums her fingers idly on the hood. At the sight of the Hunters, she excuses herself from her friends and heads back to the library.

The teenagers at the Stop-And-Rob are a much more mischievous group than the ones at the shopping center or in the suburbs. They tease and catcall the Hunters during conversations and a Wits + Larceny test (Difficulty 2) alerts the Hunters that one of the teens is attempting to pick the Hunters' pockets. Regardless of whether they're caught, the teens direct the Hunters inside the gas station to Stacey Awiakta-Munroe at the counter and speed away.

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Stacey Awiakta-Munroe is a woman in her late teens with black hair cropped short and ears full of silver rings and studs. She rolls her eyes when Hunters enter and pops gum behind a magazine. The daughter of Deputy Joan Munroe, she's used to people giving her a hard time and has crafted an unbothered demeanor to keep from being harassed by vandals and petty thieves looking for even the smallest jolt of excitement they can find in a small town.

Hunters who question Stacey discover that she is a bright young woman with a strong loyalty to her mother. She strongly believes that Joan will uncover the mystery behind Lucas Shaffer's death and Kaila Holman's disappearance. Unlike other Rawlins' residents, Stacey also believes that Neto Solutions can only improve Rawlins by bringing in jobs and strengthening the community. She is a strong supporter of her boss Andrew Miller, who got her friend Kaila an internship at Neto Solutions before she and the other interns disappeared. Hunters who mention Stacey's faith in her mother to Deputy Joan Munroe reduce the Difficulty of Charisma and Manipulation tests by one.

Any Hunters who eat at the Stop-And-Rob's deli must make a Stamina + Resolve test (Difficulty 2) or reduce their Physical dice pools by 1 for the next scene from the effects of food poisoning.

Teenage Wasteland

The Ozark Valley Mall, an abandoned shopping center on the north side of town, is a particularly popular hangout for young delinquents. Inside are forgotten decorations boasting Rawlins' annual ham festival and corn mazes, complete with rows of previous Pork Pageant Princesses from decades long past. The air is stale with the stink of old carpet and peeling wallpaper and years of damp stains have soaked into every surface like a clumsily painted map. In the center of an abandoned hunting store stands a foam mountain with a rotting taxidermied ram at its summit, nearly impossible to discern; a monument to days long past when this shopping center fed and clothed every citizen of Rawlins from cradle to grave. Now the storefront feeds only ghosts.

The Arcade

The individual bulbs on the fading sign above the arcade's door have all been smashed by wandering packs of bored teens, but the words SHOOTING STAR GALLERIA are still legible. Dozens of dormant arcade cabinets and dusty skee-ball galleries await inside, worn out from decades of love by Rawlins' youths. The air is thick with dust and the shadows between the cluttered rows of abandoned machines are deep.

Idling in the corner are a group of adolescents, crowded around a defunct basketball machine that's missing its hoop. One of them, a tall boy with brown hair, tosses a ball mindlessly into the hoop. The action is rote, etched in his muscle memory. Nearby, a pair of girls peer through cloudy magnifying glasses at a length of wood and iron in another boy's hand: a strange-looking arrow. At their feet, a basset hound groans and curls her head under one paw for a nap.

Hunters who approach the group of children find that none of them scatter or avoid them, instead pointedly asking questions as though they are the interrogators. The youngest girl introduces herself as Darlene and her friends as The Hush Club. They've formed a club for investigating the mysteries that the adults in Rawlins refuse to explain and they have found their first clues. Darlene named the club after the exasperated "HUSH" adults use to answer her questions.

While the other members of The Hush Club are less enthusiastic about supernatural mysteries, Darlene marvels at any chance to learn more from the Hunters. She is at an age where she realizes strange things are happening in her town, but no one can explain or describe the culprits, including her. Her vocabulary has been limited by outside forces but, because of her age, no one in Rawlins has bothered to explain why.

Members of The Hush Club are listed below:

- Darlene, a precocious ten-year-old who is fascinated with detective novels and uncovering the secrets of Rawlins that her parents will not share. She is short for her age and has a baby face full of freckles that makes adults underestimate her. She is tenacious and a know-it-all, but cares deeply for her friends.

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- Patrick, the eldest member of The Hush Club. He is Darlene's babysitter and has promised her parents to look after her while they are out of town. Twelve years old and athletic, he wears a basketball jersey nearly everywhere, regardless of the occasion. He is very protective of Darlene, despite loudly complaining that he is only being paid ten dollars a day to watch her.
- Demetrius, Shantelle's twin brother and Darlene's best friend. He grew up next door to Darlene and has known her since they were both in diapers. Though a year older than her, the two are very close. He wants to be a barber when he grows up, like his father, Ed, and he has cut intricate designs into his clipper-faded hair.
- Shantelle, Demetrius' twin sister who has a crush on Patrick. Shantelle is an over-achiever who works hard for her community and dreams of becoming mayor of Rawlins one day. She always dresses her best and in her signature color, a bold purple.
- Olive, Shantelle and Demetrius's pet basset hound and faithful companion. She is very tired.

If the Hunters have not already participated in a search party **In the Pines** or discovered the interns in **Babes in the Wood**, Darlene, and The Hush Club plan to join other Rawlins' citizens that have formed a search party to look for Kaila Holman.

Hunters have the opportunity to dissuade Darlene and her friends from investigating further. Neither Mister Gannet nor the Ozark Union are of the mind to spare them because they are children. After all, what is age to the ageless? A win on a Charisma + Persuasion, Intimidation, or Leadership test (Difficulty 3), convinces Patrick to take Darlene home and watch cartoons instead of climbing through abandoned buildings or joining the search party.

The Toy Store

Starlight Junction was the first store to close at the Ozark Valley Mall, but its bones remain in a display of 1990s glory with neon color blocking on the walls and glow-in-the-dark carpet. Scattered throughout the empty store are decades old comic book displays that could not be sold or dismantled, boasting brave heroines and beefy superheroes, ray gun-wielding starship captains and spider queens from far below the earth's crust. The torn pages boasting their adventures have faded after years of teen trampling and rain from the partially collapsed ceiling.

Along the far wall are a collection of local baseball cards on display, each one signed by the child who brought them. Near the end, Kaila Holman's looping signature is punctuated with a smiley face inside a flower on a photograph that depicts her grandfather, Douglas Holman, in his Rawlins high school baseball uniform.

A Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 3), reveals the presence of a pair of fae spying on the newest arrivals to Rawlins for Amaryllis from between a collection of abandoned stuffed animals. One of the pair is long and lanky with a wide mouth like a Venus flytrap, and twists into impossible contortions to hide behind whatever cover's available. The other is small and sharp-featured, its skin a mottled, mossy surface on which small wildflowers bloom and burst. They're both carrying handmade, wooden bows and arrows.

Outsiders are rare, and the most recent arrivals have all caused trouble; the fae are paying close attention to newcomers. If the Hunters approach them, they flee. A particularly charismatic Hunter who makes a Charisma + Persuasion test (Difficulty 5) convinces the fae to stay long enough for a few moments of conversation (though they won't let the Hunters get close) learns this is the first time the Ozark Union has seen these glass trees. Hundreds of years ago, the trees were natural saplings, so this must be a corruption of the spirits' abilities.

The Dollar Store

The Dime A Dozen dollar store is open, but nothing seems worth buying. A cursory glance at the sign posted by the registers reveals the store is due to close within a couple of weeks, but the lights are completely out, and no one stands at the counter. Even so, the door is unlocked, and the Hunters are able to enter. A pleasant electronic chime echoes through the room.

Examining the aisles reveals that most of the candy and sodas have been taken, and there's a light beyond the end cap full of romance novels and off brand children's dolls. Hunters who walk through the door to the employee break room find Aisha Holman and two other teen girls smoking cigarettes and eating the store snacks.

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Aisha is wearing a Dime A Dozen vest and nametag.

Unlike the other times Hunters can encounter Aisha, she is obligated to stay and talk. Her friends, Kirsten and Whitney, both excuse themselves at the earliest reprieve, but Aisha has to remain in the store if she wants to be paid for her time.

Hunters who win at a Charisma + Etiquette test (Difficulty 3) learn the following from Aisha. Hunters who participated in the search party for her sister Kaila "In the Pines" make the test at Difficulty 2.

- As the youngest Holman child, Aisha has always felt overlooked. Her mother never invested the time or energy in her that she did her older siblings, since they were more likely to take over as the town historian.
- Aisha has read her great grandmother's journals and noticed that there are significant events missing from the Holman chronicles, most coinciding with legends of mass disappearances in the area. It makes her wonder if there are secrets even from the Holman family.
- Aisha cares dearly for her sister, Kaila. She and her older brother Tyrell have been searching the woods every night for the last few weeks for her, trying to peer through fair folk magic using whatever means they can, just in case. If the Hunters haven't already participated in a search party "In the Pines" or discovered the interns in "Babes in the Wood", Aisha plans to join her brother Tyrell and other Rawlins' citizens who have formed a search party to look for Kaila.
- Aisha noticed some strangers in black suits entering through the loading dock while on a smoke break a few days ago (Aurum Industries employees, though Aisha doesn't know this). With the recent deaths and disappearances in town, seeing so many strangers enter the mall has made her suspicious, which is why she is now taking her smoke breaks inside the break room. "Please don't tell my mom, she'll totally freak out."
- Andrew Miller says he's doing a lot for the town, but Aisha doesn't trust him. It can't be a coincidence that he recommended Kaila for the internship and then she mysteriously vanished. A couple of days ago, he told her he would be closing the Dime A Dozen and getting the mall ready for sale, so she could expect this to be her last week. Have some gummy bears; it's on the house.

The Fashion Outlet

My Sister's Closet once boasted the latest fashions of the rural elite: starched Sunday dresses in floral patterns with leg-of-mutton sleeves, suede sport coats, and an unholy range of denim... everything. Those days are long gone, leaving the store a wasteland of scattered shelves and empty clothes racks. Splinters of bright blue have eased their way through the vinyl floor from adjacent stores as the glass trees push their roots through the shopping center's crumbling foundation.

The walls of the clothing store boast the shaky graffiti of teenagers without much practice in vandalism and every mirror in the changing room is empty. One booth in the men's changing room hides the corpse of a woman in a torn suit and broken heels, who is punctured with dozens of arrows. Examining her body on a winning Intelligence + Investigation test reveals she hid in the changing rooms after being injured, before finally succumbing to her wounds. The state of her body suggests that she has been dead for a couple of days. Searching through her pockets yields an Aurum Industries business card with the name SHERRILYN WALKER.

Hunters who alert Deputy Joan Munroe to the danger in the outlet mall find their experiences with Rawlins' townsfolk improve considerably, reducing the Difficulty of Charisma and Manipulation tests with them by 1.

On their way out of My Sister's Closet, the Hunters encounter a pair of Aurum Industries recruiters in smart black suits and briefcases. The recruiters offer the Hunters $10,000 to walk away from their investigation in Rawlins, as well as a business card to stay in touch. Hunters who refuse or try to negotiate a higher pay are asked to turn on Neto Solutions and sell the company out. If they still refuse, the recruiters attack the Hunters with telescopic batons and pistols. If the Hunters show the recruiters Sherrilyn Walker's business card, claim to have already been recruited,

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and make a Manipulation + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 3), the recruiters believe them.

The Hunting Store

The eyes of a decaying ram on the peak of the foam mountain seems to follow the Hunters' every step as they search the Catfish & Cabin sporting goods store. With no exterior windows, the store is utterly dark. The open space is broken up with large taxidermied beasts and if the Hunters use flashlights their beams bounce off a mob of glassy eyes and matted fur. Dust motes drift from the ceiling and sink with trapped moisture and black mold as light catches on the twisted muzzle of a snarling grizzly with one paw raised high above its head, claws bared, as though in warning.

Hunters who make a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 2) spot the veins of glassy vegetation in the gloom of Catfish & Cabin. The trail of sparkling blue leads to a grove of three glass trees gathered in the aisles of a vacant pharmacy. Examining the trees with an Intelligence + Medicine test (Difficulty 2), reveals they're all uniformed Neto Solutions contractors except one in a suit and tie, whose monogrammed briefcase is nearby, ripped to shreds. Scattered between the shimmering roots are copies of Neto Solutions documents watermarked CONFIDENTIAL: printed analyses of paranormal energy signatures around Rawlins.

Interpreting the analyses requires an Intelligence + Science test (Difficulty 4) reveals the surveyor's analyses have mapped and identified a crossroad of multiple paranormal currents in the forest south of Rawlins. This is the reason Neto Solutions and Aurum Industries have taken such a strong interest in Rawlins, and it is also the reason the magic of the Ozark Union's pact, Chicory's demesne, and the corruption of Mister Gannet are so powerful.

A Strength + Larceny test (Difficulty 3) opens a locker in the employee lounge that holds two rifles and a case of ammunition. These guns are decades old but a skilled Hunter who spends a day cleaning and performing some long-needed maintenance on them will have them working like new.



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In Sickness and In Health (Outlet)

Hunters eager to investigate the stories of missing Rawlins' citizens can ask townsfolk for more information. They are guided toward the clinic on the eastern side of Rawlins by multiple townsfolk, including Demetrius and Shantelle, whose father, Ed was recently admitted after wandering in the forest for over two days. Like many hospitals built to service entire midwestern counties in the early twentieth century, this clinic was once a marvel of modern medical technology and a medical university. However, it has long since fallen into disrepair: multiple wings have been closed in recent years and a skeleton crew of one doctor, three nurse practitioners, and a single receptionist are all that is left of North Star Medical Center.

Nurse Practitioner Debbie Higgins greets the Hunters at the entrance to the clinic, exhausted from a long overnight shift. One of the other nurses has been admitted after being attacked in her yard by a hidden creature and falling into a deep sleep.

Debbie is a short, round woman who wears her thinning blonde hair in a long braid. She wears faded gray scrubs and flat shoes that squeak across the dingy tile of the dimly lit hallway as she leads Hunters through the only remaining wing of the clinic. Her fellow nurse, Rachelle Perkins, sleeps at the end of a row of beds next to a window overlooking the Randalls' cornfield.

The Hunters can make an Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 5) to recognize the injuries and symptoms match folklore about a poison used by fair folk to induce a deep sleep in their victims before abducting them. Upon succeeding on the test, the Hunters find they can wake Rachelle and the three other sleeping citizens in the room with a dose of arrowroot powder to counteract the poison. Debbie is grateful for any help that the Hunters can provide and gives them the following information:

- These attacks began after the interns went missing, roughly three days before the Hunters arrived in Rawlins. Hunters who have spoken with Sawyer Holman can trace the timeline: the attacks started after the deforestation began and the Ozark Union broke their pact with Rawlins.
- The longest a patient stayed unconscious was six hours, however two older patients died after being attacked as a result of cardiac arrest.
- None of the patients who woke after being admitted could describe their attackers, so Hunters can infer that their attackers were supernatural. Hunters that have already faced Queen Amaryllis' Fae Scouts recognize the civilians' attackers as part of the Ozark Unions foot soldiers.

Hunters who wake the sleeping patients, or who succeed at a Composure + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3) present themselves as calm, competent professionals and so gain Debbie's trust. Although it's highly illegal she offers help in the form of bandages, antibiotics, and painkillers. Hunters who fail to earn her trust have the option of stealing supplies from North Star Medical Center if they succeed on a Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 3).

Welcome to the Neighborhood

Andrew Miller's real estate office is the largest house on Elm Street, boasting two floors and twelve hundred square feet with new white vinyl siding and a large bay window. The lawn is immaculate and a flag with the words DO MORE WITH MILLER emblazoned in red, white, and blue is tacked in the window for all passersby to see. Miller's office is devoid of any trappings of hoodoo or gifts to the fae: the Hunters find no red ribbons, bells, mirrors, or food offerings on his property.

The receptionist is Tyrell Holman, a trans man in his early twenties and the eldest son of Sawyer Holman. He is plump and good-natured, with long locs in dark red and warm yellow, decorated with rings and beads. He makes conversation while the Hunters wait for Andrew Miller to see them and it's apparent that he, like all of the Holman family, is not restricted

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in discussing the supernatural. In fact, if Chicory is with the Hunters when they visit Andrew Miller's office, Tyrell sees through Chicory's glamor and recognizes them immediately.

While not as knowledgeable as his mother, Tyrell is considerably more free with information since life in Rawlins tends to be rather dull; until recently, that is. No skill test is required for the following information:

- Andrew Miller made a commission of tens of millions of dollars when he sold the Schaffer estate to Neto Solutions. Aurum Industries also bid on the property, but Miller's mind seemed made up as soon as the lid on Schaffer's coffin closed.
- Kaila has been missing for weeks but the glass trees only started sprouting three days ago when Neto Solutions began tearing down the forest on the southern end of Rawlins.
- If the Hunters haven't already participated in a search party "In the Pines" or discovered the interns in "Babes in the Wood", Tyrell plans to join his sister Aisha and other Rawlins' citizens in a search party to look for Kaila.

Charismatic Hunters who gossip about Aubrey intrigue Tyrell, who rarely has anyone to talk to about these matters. A Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 2) gets Tyrell to open up and share everything that he knows about Aubrey, Rebecca, and a fae named Chicory.

According to Tyrell, Chicory is a trusted Knight of Queen Amaryllis and a favorite of her court. Tyrell long suspected that Rebecca, a friend of his mother's, would meet Chicory in the forest regularly, as there was a glen there that she loved that grew wild roses. He suspects Aubrey has now become Chicory's favorite after Rebecca's mysterious disappearance two years ago. Perhaps her two lovers found solace with one another in her absence, or maybe Chicory simply moved on to the next convenient human plaything.

Queen Amaryllis has forbidden her Knights to take mortal lovers and Tyrell speculates that Chicory could make a valuable ally if that information is used against them.

This may be the first time anyone in Rawlins has spoken openly about the Fae. Tyrell treats it like it's a completely normal part of life, and if the Hunters



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express shock or surprise, he's equally surprised they haven't figured it all out yet. If asked, Tyrell explains the Holman family are the town historians: they're granted a little more freedom to speak of these things than other people.

An Intelligence + Occult test (Difficulty 4) tells the Hunters Tyrell is especially sensitive to magic and may be able to resist Fae spells or glamor to an extent.

When Andrew Miller's ready to see them, the Hunters are escorted into his office, which is a lavish display of his wealth and power. The white walls are lined with photographs and newspaper reports about his achievements and celebrity contacts, as well as a built-in bookcase filled with leather-bound books about economics and political science. The natural wood on the floor has been recently waxed to a shine. Any Hunters who make a mess, mark the wax, or put things out of order increase the Difficulty of Charisma tests against Andrew by 1.

Andrew Miller is a man in his sixties with silver hair cut in a businessman's taper and a gray shirt buttoned to the top with the sleeves rolled and pressed at the elbow. He loosens his tie as the Hunters enter his office and prepares himself for questions. Like the rest of Rawlins' population, he cannot speak plainly on the supernatural happenings in Rawlins. Unlike the rest of the town, however, he is a deft conversationalist and employs both salesman's panache and outright deception while communicating with the Hunters.

Hunters can try to outwit him with a Manipulation + Insight test (Difficulty 3). Rather than making a test for each talking point, roll once at the beginning of the conversation. Success here gets Andrew Miller to speak, or at least strongly imply, the whole truth. He provides information up to the number of successes on the test, as listed in the bullet points.

Uncovering Andrew Miller's Lies

- **Neto Solutions came to him after hearing of Lucas Shaffer's tragic death in a hunting accident (1 success):** In truth, Andrew Miller had been working behind the scenes for months to secure Neto Solutions as a buyer for the Shaffer estate. He and Lucas were boyhood friends and companions, and he knew that Lucas' dream was to sell the estate to a local and move away from Rawlins to California. The plan had always been for Andrew to purchase the estate from Shaffer, but Lucas' early demise hastened the process, necessitating Andrew's stepping in when the county needed an agent to sell the land instead of purchasing and then reselling outright.
- **Lucas Shaffer's demise was an unfortunate accident (2 successes):** Savvy Hunters discern that Andrew did not murder Lucas outright, but he still benefitted greatly from negotiating the sale of Shaffer's estate on behalf of the county. While they may have been close, it's clear Andrew valued profit over his friendship with Lucas, who he genuinely believes was murdered for his land. Though Andrew is unsure of the culprit.
- **Andrew sold the estate to Neto Solutions because they were the only buyers interested in the land (3 successes):** Andrew was approached by another corporation called Aurum Industries for purchase of the land, but Sawyer Holman and Aubrey Randall actually put together a committee to purchase the estate on behalf of the city of Rawlins. While Andrew can't outright say that this initiative by Aubrey and Sawyer was to protect the pact with the Ozark Union, this can be easily inferred by a clever Hunter who knows about the pact. While Miller grew up in Rawlins with the tales of the Ozark Union pact, he doesn't take it seriously.

After this line of questioning, Andrew Miller insists he's a busy man and must be left to his work on his upcoming campaign. He makes himself unavailable for future interviews but stealthy Hunters who did not manage to see through his intentional obfuscation can return after dark to go through his files with a winning Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 3). They also learn he's currently drafting plans to sell the Ozark Valley Mall to Aurum Industries.

No Rest for the Wicked

As the Hunters progress in their investigation, Danger increases and Mister Gannet's vitrified victims appear more often, sprouting from the shadows and at the

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end of cul-de-sacs, with townsfolk hurrying to cover or hide them. Mention the impact of Mister Gannet in the locations the hunters visit: it is a looming threat, and the Hunters should never feel they've totally escaped it. The Rawlins townsfolk and Neto Solutions alike are not eager to increase the presence of outside law enforcement in the town and urge the Hunters to wrap up the investigation before even more outsiders, like the FBI, show up in town to add to their problems.

After the Hunters have investigated three of the scenes, increase Danger by 1. At that point, regardless of scene order or time of day, Mister Gannet makes its first appearance. Invoke sensory descriptions and make the encounter as memorable as possible. Mister Gannet targets three unnamed townsfolk in a busy area such as a park, church, or general store.

Each victim, in unison, screams. Their voices take on the high-pitched drone of cicadas as they weep and plead for assistance. They're unable to verbalize the supernatural way in which they are being targeted. It becomes clear to Hunters who make a Wits + Occult test that these victims are being targeted by something supernatural and magical (Mister Gannet, if they've encountered him) and any Hunters who have created protection incense can use it to rescue the afflicted townsfolk.

Otherwise, the victims' bodies begin to glow with a hot, blue ghostly flame and their limbs stretch far beyond their torsos, beyond what should be possible for humans, and twist into branches bearing glittering glass fruit and the scent of flowers. Their screams echo through the streets and remain frozen in the trunks of the trees for all to see... but for none of the witnesses to speak of.

Mister Gannet manifests in the center of the street, driving bystanders into fleeing panic: a wispy, gaunt figure fourteen feet tall and stooped, claws dragging the pavement like low hanging fruit. Inside the smoke of its form, thousands of mouths filled with glistening teeth giggle and grin, and it feasts greedily upon the fruit borne from the glass trees it has created. Hunters may feel compelled to attack Mister Gannet here and should take care to avoid the panicking townsfolk that Mister Gannet will attack if it is not stopped. Even if they defeat it, without cleansing the forest of "Ghosts of the Ozarks", Mister Gannet manifests again and continues its hunt when the sun sets.



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Between the Rows

On their second night at the Randall farm, Aubrey Randall makes his way into the barn, where he keeps an altar of fresh flowers and honey offerings for Chicory.

Long after the sun sets as the hours creep toward midnight, Hunters who are still awake hear the sound of the Randall barn door opening and see a lantern flash through a crack in the wooden slats. They can slink through the weeds lining the edge of the barn with a Dexterity + Stealth test (Difficulty 2). The barn groans in the humidity but the rest of the farm lining the forest's edge is eerily silent.

Aubrey takes a deep breath as he lights a set of candles and gently kisses a photograph, then takes his lantern deeper into the rows of corn behind the barn. Hunters who have found the photographs of Rebecca in the guest room recognize her. The photograph depicts her in a sheer white dress, asleep in a patch of wild roses beside a creek.

This is a nightly ritual for Aubrey. The Hunters can follow him further into the swaying rows of corn. As they walk between the rows, the night air becomes warm and much heavier, as though something were attempting to smother them with sleep. They must make a Composure + Resolve test (Difficulty 5) to stay awake. Hunters who fail fall asleep where they stand awaken at dawn or when someone shakes them awake.

At the center of the cornfield is a massive, flat circle. Inside the circle an altar stands, decorated in wildflowers and silver bells. Here, Aubrey pauses to look around and ensure that he is not being followed. Hunters need a Dexterity + Stealth test (opposed by Aubrey Randall, with 4 dice or Difficulty 2) to remain hidden. Once he's certain he isn't being followed, Aubrey scoops another bowl of honey, pricks his fingers, and drips a few droplets of his blood across the lip of the bowl. The altar appears to *shiver* once he sets the bowl down, illuminated in the ghostly light of his anemic oil lantern. Will o' wisps enter from the edges of the cornfield, the bright points of light swarming into the open center of the field and greedily drinking up the offering.

If Aubrey realizes he's being watched, he walks around the cornfield then returns home. The Hunters can investigate the altar, summoning the wisps themselves with a Charisma + Occult test (Difficulty 3). Aubrey returns the next night, and the Hunters can follow him again. The second time he pretends not to know he's being followed and goes through the ritual, summons the wisps, and follows them to Chicory. He can't wait another night to see his love.

Once the wisps have had their fill, they gather in a line and lead Aubrey out of the cornfield and deeper into the forest. They've already succeeded on a Stealth test, so the wisps don't notice their presence. If they failed their Stealth test and Aubrey noticed the Hunters following him, he flees to the glen and Chicory is prepared to do battle to defend their lover when the Hunters arrive.

The forests are silent and still, as though frozen in time for Aubrey's rendezvous with his lover. Birds are frozen in flight and the occasional rabbit or doe stands as still as a photograph along the edge of the trail into the woods. After a mile of walking, they spot a stream of sunlight slicing through the darkened trees ahead of them. This is the entrance to Chicory's demesne. Only carrying a sprig of hawthorn from Rebecca's room or following the wisps can lead a Hunter to Chicory's demesne and Aubrey steps inside with graceful ease, walking through the sun and disappearing as one would past a curtain.

The Hunters can follow Aubrey into Chicory's domain but finding it requires either a sprig of hawthorn (like the one found amongst Rebecca's possessions in "Home is Where the Hunt is") or a Wits + Survival test (Difficulty 4) to follow Aubrey's path quickly enough to slip inside after him. If the Hunters fail this test, the next day as they're leaving the farm they notice hawthorn bushes with broken branches, like someone's been snapping off sprigs for some reason.

When the Hunters are ready to enter Chicory's otherworldly home, increase Danger by 1 and proceed to "Babes in the Wood."

Babes in the Wood

Chicory's domain is an open summer glade with a babbling brook edged with wild roses. Stepping inside this secret place makes the Hunters feel as though the pressures have been lifted from their bodies and cotton

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has been pulled from their ears: every color is bright and vivid, and every sound is a heartbreaking melody. The world is a haze of watercolor mixed in hues never rendered by the mortal eye, a saturated, jewel-toned feast of the senses.

The sound of laughter greets Hunters who venture farther into Chicory's home. Seated beneath a heavy willow with branches braided in rich ribbons and hung with silver bells are the five missing Neto Solutions interns, including Kaila Holman, a willowy teenager with long, curly hair tied into a puff atop her head and decorated with blue wildflowers. These interns are waiting on Aubrey, who lounges beneath the willow tree, his head nestled in the lap of Chicory, the Fae Knight.

Chicory is resplendent in their silver armor and long white hair. Their skin is golden, with eyes ringed in dark swirls and lips that form a natural pout above a sharply pointed chin. In the human world, they appear as an androgynous human with tan skin and long black hair and even in this domain, the shimmer of a glamour conceals a head shaped like a horse's skull and fiery eyes atop an emaciated form.

If the Hunters didn't alarm Aubrey or the wisps, Chicory greets them politely and offers hospitality. Any Hunter who chooses to partake in the wine or fruit offered to them by the interns must win at a Composure + Resolve test (Difficulty 3) or find themselves compelled to act as Chicory's servant until the end of the scene, though they retain enough free will to ask questions and participate in conversation while they wait on Chicory, Aubrey, and their guests..

Chicory is obligated by their Fae nature to tell the truth, with some sly obfuscation, and Hunters who make a Resolve + Insight test (Difficulty 2) learn the following from Chicory and their lover, Aubrey:

- Queen Amaryllis would have killed the interns if she discovered Kaila was leading them to the Court, so Chicory hid them in their demesne as a favor to Aubrey. Now the pact is broken, Chicory keeps them in the demesne so they're safe from Mister Gannet.
- Mortal lovers are forbidden for Fae Knights. Rebecca, like Sawyer Holman's father, was killed by Queen Amaryllis when she discovered her romantic relationship with Chicory. In their shared grief, Chicory and Aubrey grew closer and fell in love.
- Mister Gannet appeared three days prior to the Hunters arriving in Rawlins. Chicory has been bringing Aubrey to the demesne nightly to ensure his safety. They fear Mister Gannet will soon grow strong enough to attack during the day and

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HE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Coaxing Chicory to join the Hunters' investigation introduces a delicate balance. Their relationship with Aubrey prompts them to defy their Queen and Court in small doses. However, they're still a Fae and a dangerous one at that. Any attempt to harm the Queen or turn Chicory over to Neto Solutions is met with decisive violence, but Chicory also insists that Fae who encounter the party be eradicated to prevent them from informing the Queen of Chicory's deception. Killing fae under Chicory's advice reduces Danger by 1, as Queen Amaryllis has no way to spy on the hunters through dead fae.

Chicory does everything possible to ensure the Hunters' success in destroying Mister Gannet. This doesn't mean that Chicory or the Ozark Union are to be trusted; it would be foolish of the Hunters to see them as anything other than a means to an end, as Chicory will immediately turn on the Hunters, Rawlins, and even Aubrey if their Queen wills it.

if "No Rest for the Wicked" already happened the Hunters can confirm this. As soon as Chicory learns this, they resolve to keep Aubrey in the demesne where he will be safe for the time being.

Hunters have the option to persuade Chicory to join their cause against Mister Gannet and can lean on the murder of Rebecca Randall, the growing threat of Mister Gannet, or the threat of revealing Aubrey and the interns to Queen Amaryllis. A Manipulation + Leadership test (Difficulty 4) convinces Chicory to join forces against Mister Gannet, however they insist that Queen Amaryllis and the Court not be harmed. Chicory also insists on holding the Neto Solutions interns as hostages to ensure the Hunters' loyalty until Mister Gannet's defeat. The Hunters must make a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 5) to free the interns, whether by threatening to spill Chicory's secret love affair to Queen Amaryllis or as a show of good faith.

Hunters might also choose to battle Chicory, as destroying them would immediately dissolve the demesne and free the interns. Killing Chicory, a favorite Knight of Queen Amaryllis, prompts her to declare war upon the population of Rawlins and Neto Solutions the following day with the Randall farm as the first casualty. In addition, Hunters will be beset by squads of four Fae Knights daily until they locate the Court and kill Queen Amaryllis herself.

In the Pines

If they have not discovered the interns in "Babes in the Wood" or triggered Mister's Gannet's wrath in "No Rest for the Wicked", the Hunters may choose to join Tyrell, Aisha, and three other civilians in a search party to comb the forest for Kaila Holman. If the Hunters have not dissuaded Darlene and The Hush Club from investigating supernatural mysteries, then Darlene and her friends are also present. The search party is led by the deputy, Joan Munroe, a tall Cherokee woman with a welcoming, warm demeanor. Participating in the search is a good way to earn the locals' respect and the population warms to Hunters who prioritize their problems. Reduce the Difficulty of Charisma and Manipulation tests towards locals by 1 for Hunters who participate, for the rest of the story.

The forest is heavy with humidity and a light drizzle falls as the party begins their search. Night creatures sing beneath a canopy of trees that block out the sky and the only illumination is the search party's flashlights and whatever lighting the Hunters have brought with them. The terrain is a tangle of brambles and brush, and Hunters must make a Stamina + Survival test (Difficulty 2) to keep up with the locals who know the area.

Deputy Joan Munroe is not averse to making small talk, but she keeps a vigilant eye on the trees and carries a double-barreled shotgun along with her flashlight and sidearm. Coaxing her to open up about the difficulty in her investigations of Lucas Shaffer's death and Kaila Holman's disappearances requires a win on a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3). Hunters who mention Stacey's faith in her mother to Deputy Joan Munroe reduce the Difficulty of all Charisma and Manipulation tests against her by 1.

Chatting with Joan reveals additional clues about Aubrey Randall, Andrew Miller, Kaila Holman, and Neto Solutions, including:

- Zero: Lucas Shaffer's corpse has been transferred to the county coroner about fifty miles away. Joan is hoping for more information soon.

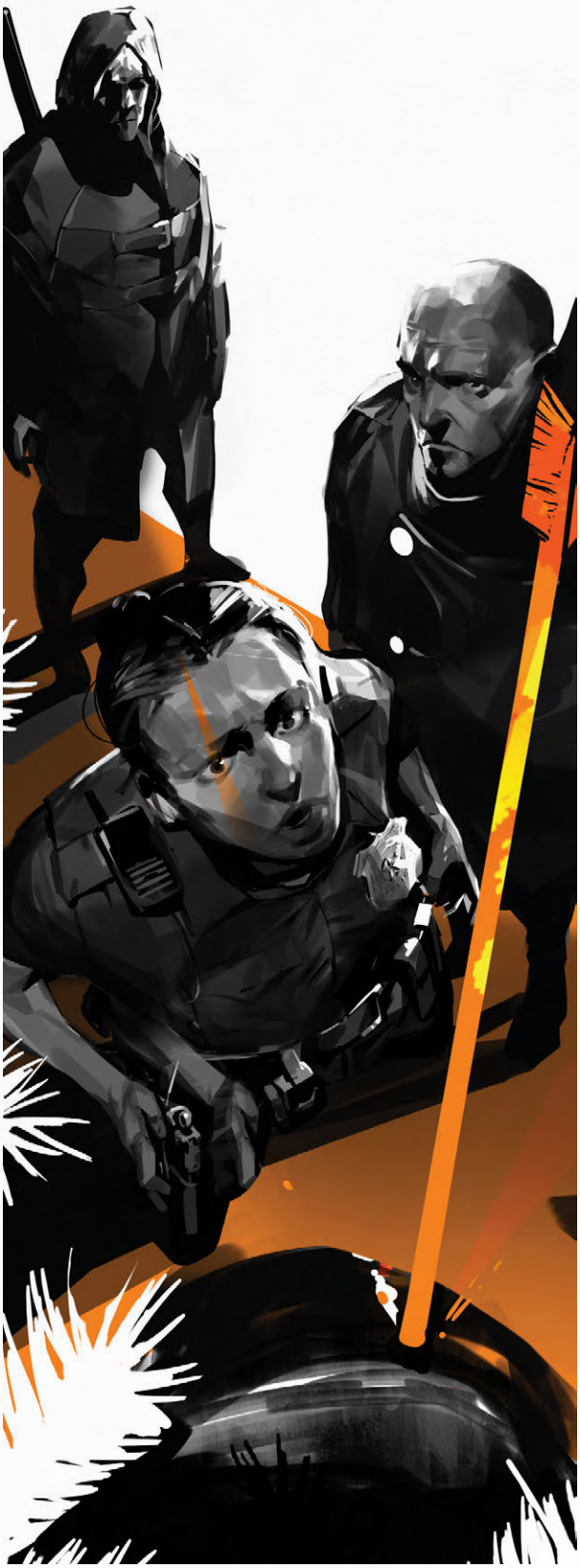
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- Zero: It's common knowledge that Kaila Holman has been eager to leave Rawlins. Andrew Miller wrote a letter of recommendation for her application with Neto Solutions, another action the rest of Rawlins deeply resented him for.
- One: Lucas Shaffer had plans to move to California and it was common knowledge he was going to sell his estate to Andrew Miller for the city's use. Andrew is under suspicion by the local police department following Lucas Shaffer's disappearance and has been cautioned to not leave town.
- Two: Aubrey Randall's wife disappeared over two years ago, and Joan never found her body. She has since tried to visit Aubrey, especially since he seems to have recovered from his grief rather dramatically over the last few months. Perhaps he's met someone.
- Two: A representative from Aurum Industries named Amy Barry has been cold-calling homeowners on the north side of town to ask if they would consider selling their property. Several families have taken the deals offered, which average a couple hundred thousand dollars, at least three times the properties' value.

Tyrell Holman is the first to notice when things go wrong, calling a warning to the rest of the search party.

The whistle of an arrow on the wind cuts the conversation short when the search party is ambushed by three fae creatures with red teeth hiding in the trees above, whooping in low, reverberating laughter. They flee if attacked, but their priority is to scare the humans out of the forest and away from Queen Amaryllis' territory. Rawlins' citizens flee at the sight of danger, with Deputy Joan Munroe providing cover with her shotgun.

After defeating or fleeing from the fae, the search party dissolves, its members too terrified to continue combing the forest at night. If she survives the encounter, Joan Munroe thanks the Hunters for their assistance and offers to supply them with iron weapons just in case they run into any more Fae in their investigations.



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Hit the Books

Rawlins Library is located inside a two-story brick home in the center of the dusty town square. Where once there were lively store fronts and sidewalks filled with antiques shoppers, only empty windows filthy with dust and sun-faded FOR LEASE signs remain.

The yard is surrounded by an iron wrought fence, reddened with age, and its gate swings open on precarious, shrieking hinges. There's one bare, leafless tree in the yard, its branches hung with blue glass bottles. Any of the Holmans can explain the bottle tree's a hoodoo practice: it offers protection from evil spirits, trapping them in the bottles before they can get inside the home. If Mister Gannet's already struck in public (in "No Rest for the Wicked") Tyrell and Sawyer can go further: they've made the connection between the bottle tree and Mister Gannet's victims. Mister Gannet's attacks are a mocking perversion of the bottles' protection. Instead of being trapped in glass, this evil spirit imprisons his victims in it. An Intelligence + Insight test (Difficulty 3) suggests the monster's been shaped by a long history of imprisonment itself.

If Chicory is with the Hunters, they must wait outside the yard: even in their human disguise they cannot stand even the stink of iron. Up the hand-laid stone path, peppered with weeds and skittering grasshoppers, and the stoop, there is a black door lined with iron nails and fitted with an iron handle. The cool air inside the building is a welcome reprieve from the oppressive humidity.

An irritated teenager with hair pulled into tight braids leads the Hunters into the parlor. This is Aisha Holman, Kaila Holman's younger sister. If asked about her elder sister, Aisha's dark skin pales and she begins to sweat and change the subject out of discomfort. If pressed further, she lashes out in anger: Aisha doesn't believe that her sister is alive, and that fear is very painful for her. The Hunters can infer this with an Intelligence + Insight test (Difficulty 2).

Sawyer Holman enters the room when Aisha leaves, wheeling a tank of oxygen behind her. If Aisha is upset when she enters, Sawyer is very guarded in her language and demeanor, insisting that the Hunters not make any trouble for the family while they are in town. Sawyer is a middle-aged Black woman with her hair arranged in a clean braided bob that reaches her chin. She carries herself with authority and almost always has a book in her hand, as arranging them is a nervous habit.

If the Hunters have investigated James Kirkland's death "Under the Juniper Tree", they can ask Sawyer about the nature of the curse under which he died. If they have spoken with Andrew Miller in "Welcome to the Neighborhood", Sawyer is more likely to open up with the Hunters about Kaila's internship, of which she did not approve.

As with other characters in the investigation,

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Sawyer reveals information based on the number of successes the Hunters obtain on a Charisma + Persuasion test.

What Sawyer Holman Knows

Neto Solutions (0 successes): Neto Solutions was brought in by Andrew Miller, a real estate agent and city councilman who sold the Schaffer land to Neto Solutions on behalf of the county. Sawyer doesn't trust the corporation at all, and even less so now that her daughter is missing as a result of joining their internship program.

The Fae Court (0 successes): Sawyer is very nervous about sharing any information on the Ozark Union. Unlike Aubrey Randall, she does not respect, love, or revere them. She wholeheartedly fears them after they cut down her father for trying to spread the word of the Ozark Union pact to the world in her childhood. She tells the Hunters the tale of Rawlin's founding.

The freemen, indigenous, and abolitionists came to the area to escape a war across the Mississippi. When they entered the forest surrounding what would become Rawlins, they were terrified to discover they were trespassing on the homes of beings they called haints: supernatural beings whose existence was tied to the forest. These spirits claimed to be primordial beings, the souls of nature and the changing seasons, and their only interest was in breathing new life into the decay brought on by autumn and buried in winter.

The settlers did not realize that they were also followed by creatures from their own homelands. Creatures that claimed to love and protect the settlers of Rawlins, led by the childlike Queen Amaryllis.

Convinced by Queen Amaryllis that the haints would turn on and devour Rawlins, the town made a pact with the Ozark Union: they would burn down the forests housing the haints and help drive them into a grove bound with Queen Amaryllis' powerful magic. During the battle, dozens of Rawlins citizens were lost to both the spirits that devoured them for fuel and the fae that ensnared them into their front lines. After a year, Rawlins was won, and the spirits were sealed into the grove. The human population would be their jailers and worship the forest and its fae. In return, Queen Amaryllis swore that Rawlins would be safe from humanity's wars and the hunger of the spirit world... so long as they always revered the Ozark Union. To seal the deal, Queen Amaryllis took away the power of Rawlins' people to speak about the pact, with only the Holman family to carry the legend and ensure Rawlins' responsibility carried on through the generations.

A PRODUCT OF SYNERGY

While the Hunters don't need to return to the Neto Solutions office to check in with Sienna, she will be able to provide supplies and a canister to preserve Mister Gannet's remains for Chapter Three, should the Hunters require it. However, returning to the office (or to the Randall farm) takes time and Mister Gannet moves swiftly once it realizes the Hunters are a threat. If Hunters return to Neto Solutions to debrief and restock after collecting all of their Chapter Two clues, Storytellers should remove a Rawlins citizen from the population for every two hours the Hunters spend preparing. This number should include a named character, chosen at random, if the time spent in the safe spaces exceeds three hours, and two random named characters if they exceed five, which also increases Danger by 1. Aubrey Randall is never at risk. Remember: every person devoured adds to Mister Gannet's size and power, so the Hunters shouldn't waste any time!

The Dead Contractors (1 success): This is emotional news for Sawyer since Kaila's disappearance has kept her too busy to observe Neto Solutions's actions as closely as she would like. She knows the construction began weeks ahead of schedule and suspected it was related to the interns' disappearance. Their deaths are nearly identical to the ones described in the Holman memoirs, so she assumes the pact has been broken.

The Missing Interns (2 successes): Sawyer is tight-lipped on the internship program. If the Hunters have been "Between the Rows", she is curt but cordial when speaking about Chicory, who she does not

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trust, and describes the Fae knight with backhanded compliments. A Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 2) gets Sawyer to open up a little more and she reveals Kaila wants to be a journalist, like her grandfather. She worries that Kaila will make the same mistakes and fall victim to the Ozark Union. Or worse, the spirits of the forest now the pact is broken.

Mister Gannet: This subject requires some additional research in Sawyer's library. An Intelligence + Academics test (Difficulty 4); on a failure the Hunters have to spend all day in the library to get the information) reveals a theory written by a great-grandmother of the Holman line, who posited the spirits would feed upon one another if they were not provided enough decay to continue their duty. An exorcism may be necessary to weaken them so they may be neutralized, as the spirits may be too far gone to be rehabilitated and taught their natural ways. As long as they feed the forest, Mister Gannet will continue to increase in size and in strength until it devours the Ozark Union and Rawlins whole.

What Sawyer Holman Does Not Know

Chicory and Aubrey: Like Queen Amaryllis, Sawyer is not aware of Chicory's fascination with Aubrey Randall. However, her son Tyrell who works as an assistant at Andrew Miller's real estate office, has his suspicions as Aubrey was once a good friend who suddenly broke off all contact. If the Hunters haven't already encountered Chicory, have Tyrell present in this scene to give additional hints on Aubrey's suspected relationship with one of the Fae.

Corporate Orgs: Sawyer is not aware of Sienna's status as a former Hunter (indeed, she doesn't know capital-H-Hunters exist), nor is she aware of James Kirkland's buyout by Aurum Industries. If either of these facts are introduced, she becomes very distraught and needs to sit and rest at the thought that Kaila could be in genuine danger. The Hunters need to succeed at a Composure + Leadership test (Difficulty 3) to coax Sawyer into continuing the conversation. Otherwise, they can visit again later when she feels better.

The Missing Interns: Sawyer doesn't know the interns are alive and trapped inside Chicory's home. If the Hunters reveal this fact, Sawyer grows increasingly worried for Kaila: she doesn't trust any member of the Ozark Union to send a Holman back to Rawlins unharmed.

Mister Gannet: Sawyer doesn't know offhand how to banish Mister Gannet; a name given to the entity by the same great-grandmother who theorized its existence. If the Hunters give her the ingredients for the protection incense (from "Under the Juniper Tree"), or even indicate its existence, she can identify the ritual necessary to seal Mister Gannet in her great-grandmother's notes, but it takes her a full day of study (halved, with the Hunters' help).

Speaking with the Hunters is emotionally exhausting for Sawyer, especially if she's discussing Kaila's disappearance. Discussing two separate threads of inquiry, alongside Kaila's disappearance, is all that she can manage in one encounter, though Hunters are free to return at a later date for more information.

After the Hunters have discovered the missing interns' whereabouts in "Babes in the Wood", they're likely to return to Sawyer Holman and let her know what happened to Kaila. If this is after their initial meeting Sawyer reveals that she has discovered the banishing ritual. If the Hunters reveal Kaila's whereabouts the first time they meet Sawyer, she works ceaselessly to discover the banishing ritual over the next day, so she has something to offer the Hunters in return for getting her daughter back.

Employee Reviews

The corporate orgs in Rawlins are waiting for an update. The Hunters' relationship with Neto Solutions and Aurum Industries depends mostly on how often they check in with their sponsors, but of course their actions also shape whether the relationship's positive or negative.

POSITIVE

- Hunters check in daily and prioritize the corporation's demands.

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- Hunters provide photographic evidence of their investigations.
- Hunters regularly defeat or subdue threats from the Ozark Union or Mister Gannet.

Hunters with positive sentiment from their corporate sponsors gain monetary rewards for their loyalty: $2,500 dollars is immediately wired to their personal accounts to cover expenses, counting as an additional dot of resources for the rest of the story. They also receive a canister in which to preserve Mister Gannet's remains: the spirits' essences are much more profitable intact than exorcized. The canister has a digital lock, operated with the command *terminus*. It's marginally more sophisticated than a voice activated home assistant, but not much. A Manipulation + Leadership test (Difficulty 5) convinces Sienna to join the hunt if Chicory is dead or refused to ally with the Hunters. If the interns are already free from Chicory's home, Neto Solutions picks them up for debriefing and quarantine at a different location. Kaila's the exception: she goes back to her family and no force in Rawlins can get Sawyer to let her go.

NEGATIVE

- Hunters only check in when prompted and have little evidence or progress to pass on.
- Hunters' actions or attitudes generate negative sentiment toward the corporation among the population of Rawlins.
- Hunters regularly flee or surrender to threats from the Ozark Union or Mister Gannet.
- Hunters are suspected of corporate espionage or breaking their contract.

Hunters with negative sentiment from their corporate sponsors risk severing their contracts and, while corporate groups tend to be competitive, may find themselves blacklisted from future opportunities. If the corporation suspects the Hunters are engaging in corporate espionage by feeding information to a rival corporate org, the Hunters' contracts are voided without pay and they are added to a hit list.

Storytellers should feel free to introduce contracted threats targeting the Hunters in future investigations.

Next Steps

Scenes in this chapter can be completed in any order, multiple times, and over as many days as necessary to gather clues. Mister Gannet typically eats between one and four civilians per day and its height and the atmosphere in Rawlins should reflect this if the Hunters decide to take their time.

Hunters have completed Chapter Two when they have:

- Spoken to Sawyer Holman and learned the nature of the Ozark Union Pact and the original history of Mister Gannet, as well as the ritual necessary to seal it away and cleanse its home.
- Witnessed Mister Gannet attacking civilians and the nature of its hunger firsthand and either defeated or fled from it.
- Defeated or fled from Queen Amaryllis' Fae Scouts at least once.
- Seen Chicory rendezvoused with Aubrey Randell and either negotiated for the safety of the missing interns trapped inside the other dimension or defeated Chicory and destroyed their home.
- Either checked in or been contacted by their corporate sponsors.
- Discovered Aurum Industries' interest in expanding to Rawlins.
- Learned the location of the Ozark Union's court, whether from Kaila, Sawyer, or Chicory. ■

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Part Three: The Unquiet Grave

After gathering as much information as possible, the Hunters enter the forest in search of Mister Gannet's prison. Once Mister Gannet is defeated a final time and the area is cleansed, Rawlins will be free of the corrupted spirits.

Where the Wild Roses Grow

This scene can either come before or after the battle with Mister Gannet.

If Chicory is defeated and Kaila rescued, or if Chicory joins the Hunters as an ally and is coerced with a win on a Manipulation + Persuasion or Intimidation test (Difficulty 5), the fae tells the Hunters the location of the Court in the depths of the forest to the south of Rawlins. If Sienna Fisher is with the Hunters, Charisma and Manipulation tests against Queen Amaryllis increase by +1 Difficulty.

The Ozark Union's court is at the base of a wide waterfall, halfway up the mountain to the south of Rawlins. The stream seems to part like a yawning gate, beckoning Hunters to enter, and the cave's maw gives way to another jewel-toned garden where a collection of creatures sit at the end of a long table. Occasionally when the Hunters blink, they see, instead of the garden, a cold, damp cave. Then in the space of another blink, the fae's glamour reasserts itself and the garden returns.

Shimmering in an iridescent sunlight, the fae cackle and titter, with birds' beaks and clacking insects' legs. One attendee flops a meaty arm against the table, chattering in a high-pitched kettle's whistle to a much taller figure hunched over the table on cricket's legs, stuffing its mouth full of a carpet of verdant greenery and some wet, wriggling larvae.

If Danger has exceeded 3, the Hunters hear whispering in the hum of summer insects, secrets of their childhoods and conversations that they have seemingly had in private. If Danger has exceeded 4, a Rawlins resident they've become close to is also sitting at the table, seemingly entranced by the enchantment the fae have them under, a hostage to negotiations with Queen Amaryllis.

They have been expecting the Hunters and the small girl with an elaborately braided chignon who is seated at the head of the table taps a silver spoon against the golden rim of a crystal goblet to seize everyone's attention.

"Please, enter," she commands in a voice like a wooden flute. "I don't wish for you to complain about our hospitality here."

This is Queen Amaryllis, who appears no older than ten years old. Like Chicory, her skin shimmers with a golden sheen and her hair is as white as the moon, but her childlike face bears six eyes and a crown of shimmering glass sits atop her head. Butterflies dance around her head as she sips a sweet-smelling wine from a tall glass, battering each other with their wings and falling dead upon her shoulders, only to rise and do battle once more. She gestures to a collection of seats at her side; places of honor that bear some slick dampness from the waterfall and cave housing her glamoured dining hall.

Hunters need to be especially quick-witted in Queen Amaryllis' company. While she cares little for most of her lowly fae, Chicory is a favorite of hers and she does everything in her power to ruin or even end the lives of anyone who has threatened them. Her dress, a diaphanous sheathe of delicate pastel petals, whispers against the silk tablecloth as she turns her attention to her guests. If Chicory is present, she flashes them a brilliant smile but does not otherwise acknowledge them.

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Hunters who make a Manipulation + Insight test manage to learn some or all of this information through conversation with Queen Amaryllis, either through what she says or what she implies, based on the number of successes:

- **Mister Gannet (0 successes):** Queen Amaryllis sealed Mister Gannet away in its prison two hundred years ago after coaxing the townsfolk into burning down its sanctuary, when her power was still in its infancy. Now she is much stronger and feels confident that she could kill Mister Gannet but wishes first for it to teach Neto Solutions and Rawlins the price for breaking a pact. It was she who released Mister Gannet, not Neto Solutions, once she saw the Rawlins no longer felt obligated to worship the Ozark Union, which is why the humans are still under the restriction to speak of the supernatural. She has done this in the past when she has grown bored with the citizens of Rawlins and she could be persuaded to not do it again...for a future favor.
- **Chicory's Lovers (0 successes):** Queen Amaryllis does not approve of the fae taking mortal lovers. Chicory has done so in the past, resulting in the death of Rebecca Randall, but was given a chance to redeem themself. If the Hunters reveal to Queen Amaryllis that Chicory has taken Aubrey Randall as a lover, Queen Amaryllis calmly claims that she will need to think on this betrayal. After the Hunters leave, Queen Amaryllis commands her subjects to raze the Randall farm and execute Chicory.
- **Mister Gannet's Prison (0 successes):** Mister Gannet was sealed at the top of the mountain, high above the Ozark Union, a place of power that amplifies Queen Amaryllis' enchantment. Destroying its prison would be quite entertaining for Queen Amaryllis.
- **War With the Fae (0 successes):** Queen Amaryllis and her fae are formidable foes and Hunters should know the risks if they plan to do battle. Despite her bravado, Amaryllis is visibly nervous about the threat a corporate org could pose.
- **The Broken Pact (1 success):** Queen Amaryllis sees nothing wrong with the fair folk tormenting



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or killing humans in Rawlins if it is under her orders. After all, the pact she negotiated with the Holmans two hundred years ago does not carry stipulations for boredom.

- **Chicory's Demesne (2 successes):** Queen Amaryllis is not aware of Chicory's private demesne or that Chicory did not kill the Neto Solutions interns as instructed. Revealing this puts the interns, Chicory, and Aubrey Randall in immediate danger: Queen Amaryllis won't give Chicory a third chance.
- **Aurum Industries (3 successes):** Queen Amaryllis is not aware of Aurum Industries' attempts to move into Rawlins. This is valuable information for her and a Hunter who obtains the requisite 3 successes can use this, along with information about Neto Solutions's plans, to open negotiations for a new pact with Rawlins that would benefit both parties more equitably. Choosing to negotiate a pact with Sienna Fisher present breaks the Hunters' contract with Neto Solutions and while she does assist the Hunters in defeating and sealing or banishing Mister Gannet, she also adds them to Neto Solutions's blacklist.

Queen Amaryllis and her Fae Knights allow Chicory to help the Hunters fight Mister Gannet, but she provides no additional help unless a Hunter makes a Charisma + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3) to convince her to cast a charm of protection on them (granting 4 Armor until the end of their battle against Mister Gannet; it takes the form of a living cloak of bluebottles and beetles crawling over the Hunter's skin). In return, Queen Amaryllis asks for protection from Neto Solutions and a future favor, which Storytellers should feel free to incorporate in other cases.

Ghosts of the Ozarks

The air is electric as the Hunters ascend the mountain toward Mister Gannet's former prison. There's no glamour here, no blend of fae magic and the real world. This place is suffused with magic, and its nature's visible to even mortal eyes. The trees bow and bend beneath the cry of thousands of unseen insects, branches caked with shimmering shards of icy blue glass. The grass crunches underfoot and shadows lengthen, disappearing into the inky blackness of the forest surrounding the mountain's summit. After hours of hiking, a clearing comes into view, a vitrified overlook of sizzling black rock and glass orchards that gives the Hunters a view of the entire town below. In the center runes and sigils that have been blasted into the rock's surface and a cairn stands, glowing like an ember.

Approaching the cairn wakes Mister Gannet, taller and much stronger from gorging itself on the innocents of Rawlins. It attacks immediately and fights until the Hunters are devoured, or it is destroyed, using the environment to its advantage as it towers over most of the trees: there's nowhere to hide, and everything in the clearing is a weapon. Chicory takes the front line in battle with Mister Gannet, brandishing a silver sword and summoning magic to protect themself without regard for the hunters' safety. Sienna Fisher acts as support with her handgun and does what she can to protect the Hunters from environmental hazards such as falling trees and tossed boulders.

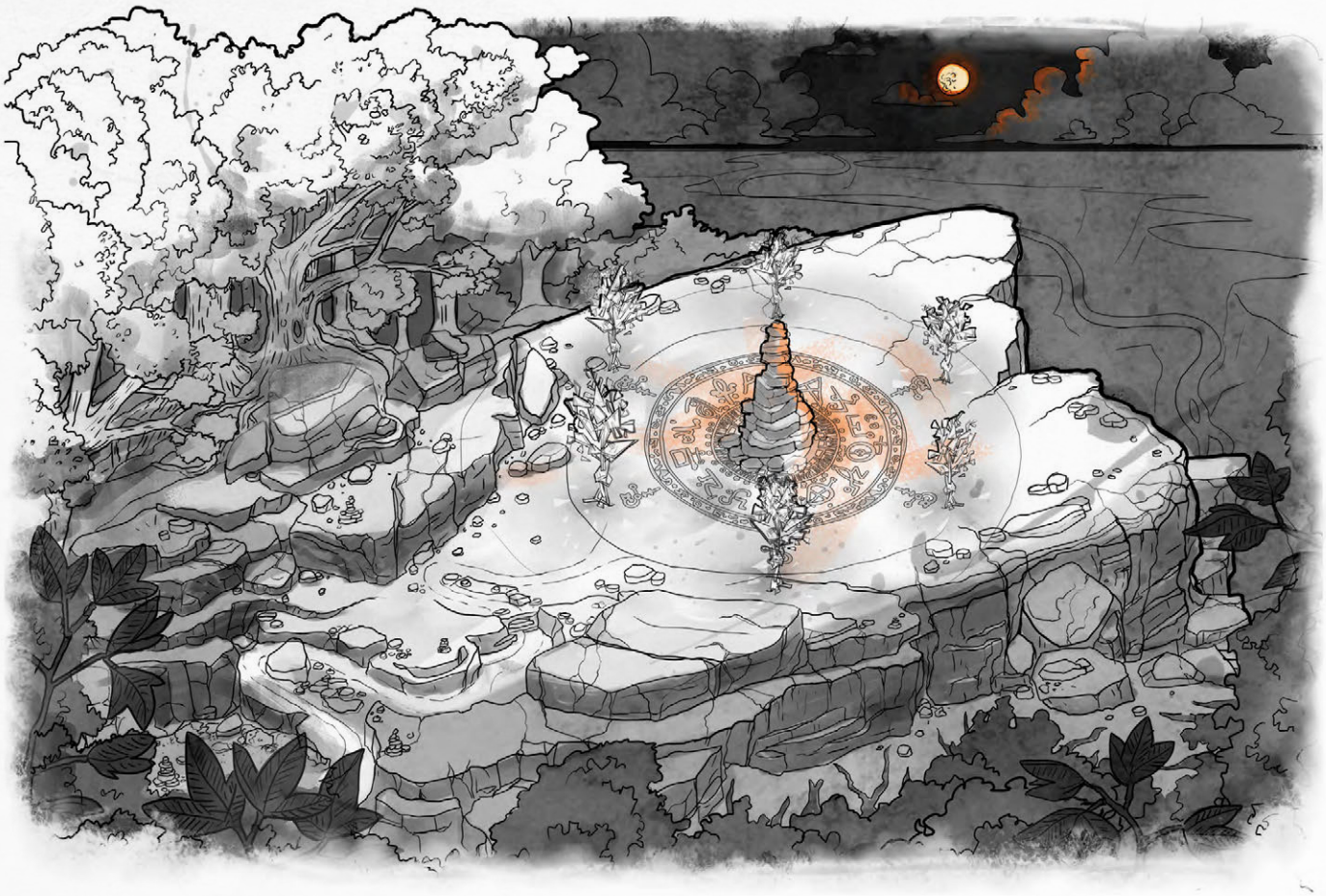
Mister Gannet can activate its curse (see its Traits in the Appendix) on any Hunter who fails a Stamina + Resolve test (Difficulty 2) and the afflicted will succumb if not given access to the protection incense within a couple of minutes.

Banishment

The Holman family ritual destroys Mister Gannet for good, but also terminates the fertility enjoyed by Rawlins' farms and forests, siphoning the life from the vegetation to overpower and disintegrate the spirits that comprise Mister Gannet.

The Hunters must follow the ritual instructions laid out by the Holman family's memoirs: creating a circle of salt and graveyard dirt and invoking the spirits corrupted by Mister Gannet to come forth. From there, the exorcism herbs are burned, and the ashes are spread across the cairn, which crackles and crumbles into harmless rubble as a Hunter makes a Charisma + Occult test (Difficulty 2) and commands the earth to release the spirits into a new purpose. The mountain splits and forests and fields

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incinerate instantly with the power of this ritual and Mister Gannet is banished from Rawlins. It will take hundreds of years for nature to recover from this mass banishment of spirits.

All that remains of Mister Gannet is a fist sized chunk of blue glass at the heart of the cairn.

Delivery

Neto Solutions would appreciate it if the Hunters sealed Mister Gannet's remains inside a canister for their further study. This is Sienna Fisher's preferred resolution and Hunters who choose to seal Mister Gannet away for Neto Solutions's further study receive a bonus: on one future occasion, they can call on Neto Solutions' assistance as if they had an Asset (Arsenal, Fleet, Library, or Ordnance) of their choice (with no perks).

Sealing Mister Gannet requires a canister large enough to hold the heart of the cairn, the lump of glass at the center of the rock prison. Sienna Fisher may have provided just such a container. Getting to the heart of the cairn requires a Strength + Athletics test (Difficulty 3).

Loose Ends

If the Hunters don't rid Rawlins of Mister Gannet it will devour the entire town until finally doing battle with Queen Amaryllis and the Ozark Union. Queen Amaryllis is still young, for one of the fae, and can't overcome him. When Mister Gannet overpowers her, the Ozark Union flees the area and leaves Neto Solutions and Aurum Industries to handle Mister Gannet.

If the Hunters do defeat Mister Gannet, Chicory frees the trapped interns and Sienna pays out the Hunters' contract, if applicable. Here is a list of possible resolutions to this investigation, depending on how the Hunters choose to wrap up their time in Rawlins:

THE HUNTERS BETRAY QUEEN AMARYLLIS TO NETO SOLUTIONS

- Neto Solutions pays the Hunters, then cuts ties with them. They demolish the forest in favor of building a massive solar farm that brings jobs and industry to Rawlins.

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- Survivors of the Ozark Union move to a bustling city in Nebraska where they agree to lay low and observe humanity until they can rebuild their Court (perhaps Omaha, giving the Hunters another challenge to face while they pursue their quarry in **Blur the Lines**).
- The Holman family moves from Rawlins to a larger city so that Sawyer's children can pursue their dreams.
- Queen Amaryllis is imprisoned by Neto Solutions and transferred to a Research & Development facility on the East Coast.
- Aubrey Randall declares bankruptcy on his farm, and he moves out west to be with family.

THE HUNTERS BETRAY NETO SOLUTIONS TO QUEEN AMARYLLIS

- Queen Amaryllis grants the Hunters a boon: they can call on her—a message whispered to a beetle or bird or breathed into an empty bottle will reach her—for assistance on one future occasion. The assistance gives a single Hunter an Endowment (from **Hunter: The Reckoning**, pp. 97-98), which lasts for one day from the time it's granted. The Hunters must use the boon within a year and a day, or it expires (and Amaryllis will be most offended... and vindictive).
- Queen Amaryllis and her Ozark Union destroy the construction and Neto Solutions Rawlins branch, killing all employees that they encounter.
- Sienna survives the Court and escapes, adding the Hunters to the Neto Solutions hit list, which Storytellers should feel free to incorporate in future cases.
- The Ozark Union are flighty and dangerous, as is their nature and within a couple of years they have once again broken their pact and declared war on Rawlins.

THE HUNTERS SELL NETO SOLUTIONS OUT TO A RIVAL CORPORATION

- This results in a powerful merger where Neto Solutions is acquired by Aurum Industries,

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forming a formidable new corporation, Aurum–Neto Global. Their first order of business is to add the Hunters to their hit list, which Storytellers should feel free to incorporate in future cases.

THE SMOKING GUN

The murderer of Lucas Shaffer is left open for the Storyteller to interpret, as the answer has no bearing on the Hunters' investigation. Lucas Shaffer's body is at the county coroner's office fifty miles away. If the Hunters investigate, they find evidence appropriate to the selected interpretation. Possible truths behind this mystery are:

- Queen Amaryllis allowed her fae to kill Shaffer while he hunted in the forest, as she'd grown bored of waiting for the humans of Rawlins to instigate a war and decided to begin her own.
- Aurum Industries discovered that Andrew Miller had entered negotiations to sell the Shaffer estate to Neto Solutions and assassinated Shaffer in the hope the county would sell to them instead while the inheritor was under suspicion of murder. They did not anticipate the strength of Neto Solutions's business dealings or their iron-clad contracts.
- Neto Solutions murdered Lucas Shaffer after he altered his will to bequeath his estate to Sawyer Holman.
- Lucas Shaffer was killed by a transient vampire pack on their way north to experience the freedom and luxury of Yellowknife (see **Alone in the Dark**).
- Lucas Shaffer died of a heart attack while alone on a hunting trip in the forest.

On the Road Again

If this story is part of the **Lines Drawn in Blood** chronicle, it could connect to other stories in these ways:

- Sawyer Holman and her family move to Unity, Nebraska, a bland suburb of a larger city, and soon call in the Hunters for help once more, kicking off the events of **Pressure Test**.
- Neto Solutions may choose to call in the cell when Neto employee Toby Schneider and his entire family are found dead. If so, the cell arrives on the scene of **Blur the Lines** a day after the Schneiders' murder. They can still sneak into the crime scene and investigate.
- While interacting with either of the corporate orgs in this story, the cell intercepts strange reports coming from the Canadian city, for **Alone in the Dark**. This might take the form of an overheard phone call, a discarded printout, or a glimpse at an email they shouldn't see.

Allies & Antagonists

The following section focuses on important and recurring characters that Hunters encounter or learn about while investigating the deaths and disappearances in Rawlins.

Citizens of Rawlins

Sawyer Holman is the town librarian, notary, and genealogist. She is a late middle-aged woman with three children who has been part of a long line of historians for Rawlins since the town's founding. Because her family passes along the legacy, the Librarian is the only Rawlins citizen who is permitted to speak of the pact with the fae. It was her great-great-grandfather who negotiated the pact with the Fae Queen, Amaryllis and her great-grandmother who predicted that the Ozark Union would one day turn on Rawlins and once again unleash the corrupted nature spirit she called Mister Gannet, something her journals claimed they had done before

General Difficulty: 3/1

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 5 Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 8, Academics 8

Notes/Other Traits: Library

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Kaila Holman is Sawyer Holman's eldest daughter and the town sweetheart. She is kind, quick-witted, and a sports star who dreams of leaving her small hometown to become a journalist like her grandfather. The pressure of carrying on the family business inspires her to ask Andrew Miller to recommend her as an intern for Neto Solutions. During her first assignment, leading a team of fellow interns to the location of the Ozark Union's court, she and five of her coworkers disappeared, abducted by Chicory per Aubrey Randall's request.

General Difficulty: 2/1

Aisha Holman is Sawyer Holman's younger daughter and a fifteen-year-old rebel. She regularly hangs out with the other town delinquents at the Stop-And-Rob. When she isn't tagging abandoned houses or searching for her missing sister, Aisha works part-time at the Dime A Dozen store in the Ozark Valley Mall. Unlike her elder siblings, Aisha is not encouraged to learn about the supernatural, the secrets of Rawlins, or the Holman family legacy. This was a choice Sawyer made to give her as normal a life as possible. However, Aisha has misinterpreted Sawyer's attempts to distance her from the danger lurking in Rawlins as disinterest and she acts out as a result.

General Difficulty: 2/1

Tyrell Holman is Sawyer Holman's eldest child, a gregarious trans man in his mid-twenties who works as a receptionist for City Councilman Andrew Miller. He is far more friendly than the average Rawlins citizen and has no problem gossiping about the latest news; including the supernatural happenings in Rawlins. He leads a search party for his sister and is a valuable resource for Hunters who are looking to make a lasting impact in the community. He also displays a talent for noticing concealment magic and spells used by the fair folk, seeing through Chicory's human glamor and spotting Fae Scouts in the forest with ease.

General Difficulty: 2/1

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 7

Notes/ Other Traits: Sense the Unnatural (Fair Folk specialization)

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Lucas Schaffer was the last member of a family of landholders who own the majority of farmland and wilderness surrounding Rawlins. With Lucas' recent demise in a 'hunting accident', leaving no descendants, the county took hold of the Schaffer estate and sold it to Neto Solutions under the promise of job growth and bringing industry to a rural area.

Aubrey Randall is a corn farmer and widower whose wife was a lover of Chicory's, murdered by Queen Amaryllis. He has begun meeting with Chicory nightly and has become quite smitten with them. Aubrey will do anything to protect Chicory and asks Chicory to protect the interns sent to hunt down the Ozark Union. He is frustrated that Chicory will not bend in their loyalty to Amaryllis and protect Rawlins from the hungry ghost devouring its citizens but would never dream of leaving them.

City Councilman Andrew Miller is the real estate agent responsible for brokering the sale of the Shaffer estate for Neto Solutions, pocketing a several million-dollar commission in the process. A capitalist in every sense, he shared a lifelong friendship with Lucas Shaffer, only to immediately profit off of his murder when the opportunity arose. Andrew is a person of interest in Deputy Joan Munroe's investigation of Shaffer's death, but that won't stop his upcoming gubernatorial campaign.

Deputy Joan Munroe is the overworked officer in charge of investigating both Shaffer's death and Kaila Holman's disappearance. After sending Lucas Shaffer's body to the county coroner, Joan was amazed to discover that the county court permitted her person of interest, Andrew Miller, to complete the sale of Shaffer's estate to Neto Solutions and pocket a several million-dollar commission. More than enough to fund his upcoming gubernatorial campaign. Weeks later, Kaila Holman and five other interns disappeared while on an assignment for Neto Solutions, and days after that glass trees began sprouting out of human beings in the middle of the night, boiling their blood and vaporizing their organs on the spot. In a matter of months, Rawlins has become a much more dangerous town than Deputy Joan Munroe bargained for.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 8, Firearms 8,

The Fae

Queen Amaryllis is the matriarch of the Ozark Union. Threatened by the haints in the forest surrounding Rawlins, she convinced the townsfolk of mid-1860s Rawlins to burn down the forest where the haints dwelt and drive the spirits into a prison of her design. In exchange, she swore to keep Rawlins safe from human threats and her cruel fae servants. Upon the arrival of Neto Solutions, Amaryllis revoked that peace to punish the people of Rawlins. Capricious and conniving, Queen Amaryllis is known to murder townsfolk who do not obey her whim, and she holds a tyrannical rule over Rawlins that will certainly continue should the Hunters allow her and the Ozark Union to survive. She appears as a young girl with golden skin in an iridescent flower petal gown with a tall blue glass crown, and six eyes beholding her surroundings. Neto Solutions wishes to capture her and use her magical prowess in their Research and Development to create renewable energy.

General Difficulty: 5/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 6, Mental 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools:

Notes/ Other Traits: In addition to the abilities for vampires listed on page 169 in the **Hunter: The Reckoning** core book, Queen Amaryllis also has the following:

- **Prescience (Mental pool):** The creature can extract information from unprotected minds, by reading the strands of fate, or even seemingly out of thin air, detecting ambushes, lies, and even thoughts from the unwary. Anyone who tries to deceive the creature must succeed at a Composure + Wits test vs the Prescience pool. If the creature

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scores a high enough margin, it can pluck information out of the victim (such as brief flashes of the cell's safe house), and four or more successes allows it to read surface thoughts.

Chicory is a fae knight of the Ozark Union. They are a valued protector, patient, and persevering. Their loyalty to Amaryllis and the Ozark Union is boundless, but they have recently become quite taken with a resident of Rawlins named **Aubrey Randall** after the murder of their former lover, Aubrey's wife Rebecca. Their ability to charm and enthrall morals is equal to 2 + Danger.

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 7, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools:

Notes/ Other Traits:

- **Charm (Social pool):** The creature enthralls its victim, evoking something akin to infatuation and adoration in its victims. Anyone failing to resist the power with their Composure + Resolve is enthralled for the rest of the scene. Enthralled victims automatically fail social tests against the creature and must spend a Willpower point each time they want to act against it. This power usually affects anyone in sight of the creature when used, though for "lesser" versions, the monster may need to choose a single affected victim, at the Storyteller's discretion
- **Otherworld (Mental pool):** Once a day, Chicory can open a door into their own home, in a realm humans should neither see nor enter. Chicory can, if they so choose, keep a human guest, or prisoner, comfortable here. Enclosed in a realm where time passes according to Chicory's whim; usually a few days in Chicory's home is the equivalent of a year or more outside.

The Fae are Queen Amaryllis' foot soldiers. Considerably weaker than Chicory, they are an expendable force used as border guards and spies. Their natural camouflage resembles shadows filtering through the underbrush until they attack an

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unsuspecting foe. Many of them are gleeful hunters and enjoy the thrill of the chase when stalking innocent mortals, a habit that Queen Amaryllis has encouraged. They are strange to behold, some with dolls' eyes and human heads attached to a centipede's body for a neck, others with limbs coiled into spirals and wings that glitter like dew on the dawn. All are dangerous and deceptive and will lure humans into the forest as prey for their wild hunts, if given the chance.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 7, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools:

Neto Solutions

Neto Solutions is an energy corporation that specializes in solar power. They have been a corporate Hunter cell sponsor for nearly a hundred years, using research into monsters' supernatural capabilities to further their research for renewable energy. The concentration of paranormal energy signatures in the woods around Rawlins has drawn their attention. Under the guise of bringing solar farms, jobs, and industry to the region, Neto Solutions recruited Kaila Holman to locate the Court of the Ozark Union.

Neto Solutions pioneered internships for young people who wish to become corporate sponsored jobbers and they recruit as young as sixteen years old. Their ten-year goal is to amass a small army of highly trained hunters (lower case h: no matter how much they try, they can't force someone to find the Drive to hunt) to flush out supernatural threats and acquire enough power to provide free energy to the world. It's a shame they need to commit so many assassinations to make that happen in the meantime.

James Kirkland was a project manager for Neto Solutions. He sold info about the Rawlins project to their competitor, Aurum Industries. In return James received cash, but also the recipe for a strong protection incense that was meant to keep him safe from both Mister Gannet and the Ozark Union



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that Hunters can use to shield themselves from supernatural dangers for a limited time.

Sienna Fisher is the Hunters' recruiter, as well as the foreman overseeing the construction of Neto Solutions's latest project. She is also a trained Hunter (in her case, upper case H), having undergone the Neto Solutions internship program, but is under strict orders to merely observe the reaction of the monster in the forest and its relationship to the Ozark Union fae court. She offers to pay handsomely if the Hunters determine the location of the Ozark Union's queen so that Neto Solutions can enter and exterminate them. Sienna can be persuaded to disobey her orders and accompany the Hunters if Chicory is not with them and if they agree to act in Neto Solutions's best interest. If she suspects the Hunters of double-crossing Neto Solutions, she adds them to the corporation's hit list to be eliminated at a future date. As a trained, upper management Neto Solutions hunter, she has the following stats:



General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Subterfuge (Plausible Deniability) 7

Edges: Arsenal (All Perks)

Aurum Industries

Aurum Industries is a recent entrant into the bloodbath of corporate Hunter orgs, but their coffers are deep, and their workforce is expendable. Their CEO is Jack Williams, a mid-twenties heir to a substantial lithium mining contract, who took an interest in the paranormal after his late father refused to leave the family business alone. Aurum have a particular interest in technology that identifies and suppresses ghostly activity (see **Pressure Test**).

Amy Barry is a recruiter who reached out to Neto Solutions employee James Kirkland. In addition to a cash sum, James Kirkland also received the recipe for a strong protection incense that was meant to keep him safe from both Mister Gannet and the Ozark Union. Unfortunately, he did not get the chance to use it.

Aurum Industries Recruiters are infiltrating Rawlins and Neto Solutions to solidify a foundation for the corporation's expansion into the town. Armed with leaked information from Neto Solutions' analysis of Rawlins, as well as their sidearms and envelopes of cash, the recruiters do everything in their power to buyout or eliminate their competition.

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General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 7, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools:

Mister Gannet

This ghostly plague is an amalgamation of natural spring spirits trapped within the trees surrounding Rawlins, their forest home having been burned down by the townsfolk of Rawlins under Queen Amaryllis' order. After Queen Amaryllis cruelly releases them to punish Rawlins for allowing Neto Solutions to begin deforestation, they form into one being that grows stronger as it devours helpless mortals by vitrifying them into glass trees, shaping them into the very bottle trees that the early residents of Rawlins once used to keep themselves safe from evil spirits. In a corruption of its true purpose, the plague of spirits wishes to cover the countryside in beautiful trees once more.

This collection of hungry spirits is **Mister Gannet**, a wispy man-shaped form covered in grinning mouths and no eyes. It bears a stooped back and its mouths glisten and gleam as it devours the glass fruit growing from its vitrified prey, ingesting their spiritual essence. The more spirits join it, the taller it becomes, towering over the population at fourteen feet tall in the beginning of the investigation and well over twenty feet tall at its defeat.

Mister Gannet's attacks are heralded by the scream of thousands of cicadas, as well as the air becoming unbearably hot and dry. Its curse of vitrification burns a living creature from the inside out, forcing their bones to expand and shoot from beneath their skin, tearing through organ, muscle, and sinew as easily as if humans were wet paper. The bone branches expand, rising up to the sky until the former human becomes a mature glass tree, boughs bending under the weight of shimmering fruit and wafting the scent of spring.

Hunters can choose to banish Mister Gannet completely, which results in the desertification of Rawlins and the wilderness that surrounds it, or they can choose to trap Mister Gannet and hand it over to Neto Solutions (or a rival corporation) for Weaponization.

When Mister Gannet uses the environment to its advantage, the damage inflicted is 2 + Danger.

General Difficulty: 5/4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 2, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics (Chases) 7, Melee (Blows) 8, Stealth (Ambushes) 6

Notes/ Other Traits:

- **Vitrify:** Mister Gannet fixates on a human being and plants the seed of its glass garden in their bodies. This curse sprouts from the still living victim unless they are treated with a specialized protection incense that immediately reverses the effects.
- **Terrify** (Strength pool): The creature can instill a primal fear in its victims and enemies and is able to make even the most grizzled hunter shake with fright. Anyone failing to resist the power with their Composure + Resolve is terrified for the rest of the scene. Terrified victims must spend a point of Willpower to master their fear, otherwise any actions taken in the creature's presence suffer a two-dice penalty. This power affects anyone who can see Mister Gannet when it uses this power. The Difficulty to resist Mister Gannet's Terrify is 3 + Danger. ■

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CHAPTER THREE:
BLUR THE LINES

"Say what you will about the sweet miracle of unquestioning faith, I consider a capacity for it terrifying and absolutely vile."

— Kurt Vonnegut, Mother Night

A series of occult-inspired murders set Omaha, Nebraska on edge. The cell pursues their perpetrator: Sophie Wilson, a devotee of an influential cult. Forces in the police, the media, and the cult itself push against them at every turn as the body count increases.

Soon, it's clear that Sophie's a human serial killer, and she's pursuing them as well. The Hunters must decide where the line between the Reckoning and vigilantism lies before the quarry decides for them.

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Tense Entrance

What Henry and the Neighbors Know

The Su



Prep School

The Shelter

Baile



Interference (Optional)

Catch &

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The Scene of the Crime

rvivor

The Cops

The Fanboy

The Braodcast

ey & Sons

The Sacred Word

Davis Medical Center

Murders & Confrontations

Setting Traps

Kill

Catch & Release

Catch & Drive

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CONTENT WARNINGS

This story deals with violent crime. There's a lot of blood and gore, and some of the violent cruelty inflicted on teenagers. If that's a hard line for your group, age Sophie, Scott, and the other high school students up to college age. If your group isn't comfortable with graphic gore, tone down the descriptions of fatal injuries.

The Hunt

It's the hunt every cell dreads, the one where the veil of the supernatural falls away and reveals something mundane but no less terrible. Whatever relief the cell feels once they realize their quarry is mortal dissipates in the face of the implications. Hunting night-haunts is dangerous, but it's easier to separate "us" from "them," and their secretive nature gives hunters of all types a cover to hide behind. When the target's human, even the worst kinds of human, at best it's organized stalking and at worst it's a murder conspiracy charge. The quarry, if the cell can even handle calling them that now, functions out in the open, calls for help freely, and no one's about to take "well, she's a monster, you know, in a metaphorical sense" as an excuse.

The World of Darkness is just like ours, only with a thin-threaded net separating mundane life and the supernatural world lurking below. Hunters are the few humans who've broken through, but the truth is most of the world is balanced on the net's ropes. This is a psychological horror story where the cell must deal with a situation resting precariously on the threads of the mundane but dragging the nets just low enough into the unnatural to get their attention.

Blur the Lines dives into a different kind of territory for Hunters. Here are three important things to keep in mind.

None of the characters or events in this story has a supernatural nature. The quarry is a member of a cult with power and influence over Omaha, and her murders are trying to invoke a supernatural effect, but the killer is an ordinary person, the cult's esoteric doctrine has no connection to any unearthly power, and the occult goal the killer aims for will never come to pass.

While the murders themselves have an occult aesthetic, the mundane qualities beneath them shouldn't feel like a cheap twist or a gotcha, but a very real danger of the Reckoning coming to pass. The World of Darkness is terrifying, even before the monsters come out to play.

The second part of this story introduces a time sensitive element. The longer it takes the cell to investigate and study their quarry, the higher the body count gets. A list of the quarry's victims is on p. 123, presented in the order they're killed if the cell isn't able to intervene. It's up to the Storyteller to determine when the quarry strikes again.

Here are a few options to determine when another murder occurs. Mix them up, using whatever feels appropriate in the moment.

- **In-Fiction Time:** Serial killers have a time period between murders, sometimes known as an "emotional cooldown period." Depending on the pace of your story, the quarry's murders could be as frequent as once every three days or as restrained as once every three weeks. As a rule of thumb, the space between killings should shorten as the quarry gets closer and closer to her last listed victim.
- **Mechanical Time:** When a Hunter Overreaches (**Hunter: The Reckoning**, p. 128), consider having the quarry start their pursuit of their next victim or take steps towards an already targeted victim instead of increasing Danger. The quarry isn't any closer to discovering them for now, but if the cell doesn't act soon, it might be at the expense of an innocent life.
- **Dramatic Time:** Never forget Chandler's Rule: when in doubt, have a man come through a door with a gun in his hand. In this case, it's more like, "have a woman come through someone else's door with a knife in hand," but the principle's the same. When the investigation's stalling or the cell can't decide on what to do with what they've learned, the quarry prepares to strike again.

Genre

In this story, the cell encounters a very familiar kind of dark force, one that lies in the human heart. As they

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Story Structure

Blur the Lines consists of three parts.

PART ONE: A DISTURBING PATTERN
The cell arrives at the Schneider apartment, the scene of a grisly murder. After some time to investigate the killing and develop some leads, the cell must dodge the incoming police and media.

➤

PART TWO: PILGRIM'S PROGRESS
The cell plays a cat and mouse game with the quarry, tracking her down and discovering her mundane nature while thwarting her killing spree. Along the way, a homicide detective, a TV news station intern, a cult leader, and the serial killer herself try to put an end to the hunt.

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PART THREE: LONG DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL
The cell moves in to catch the quarry. They must decide what to do with her, and then prepare for the fallout.

hunt their quarry, they'll find her unwavering faith and foc∑Ωus feels a lot like what drives a Hunter, just aimed towards humanity. Monsters are real, and one hopes the Reckoning makes the world a better place, but when the prey spouts out the same logic over the cooling corpse of a schoolteacher, it might give the cell some pause.

Sophie's not the only person with warped impulses and desires who the cell encounters in their pursuit. Whether it's a true crime devotee craving to be the star of the case, a homicide detective wanting to see how far the killer will go, or a preacher more focused on protecting his flock than saving lives, the cell must contend with some of the worst humanity has to offer.

This story is designed to help troupes tell an exciting, scary story about an out-of-context situation for Hunters, but beneath it all is a sense of mournfulness. The quarry has reasons why her victims must meet the end of her blade, but in truth she's tearing apart the lives of her victims' families just as her own life was torn apart by tragedy. Worse still, it's all in the pursuit of a goal that will never come to pass.

As the cell pursues the quarry, the damage she's left in the lives of those still alive should be clear. No matter how soon they stop the killings, if they even decide to continue the hunt at all once, they realize the stakes, many communities in Omaha lose people they'll never get back.

The Quarry

Sophie Wilson is a golden child. She's in striking distance of valedictorian at her prep school, and her dazzling track and field record ensures her a free ride to any institution of higher learning her heart desires. As the only child of the Wilson family, one of the founding families of a major Christian ministry in the Omaha area, she wants for nothing.

Sophie's life is in shambles. Her mother suffers from a rapid-onset terminal cancer, and the other leaders in her ministry are taking the opportunity to shove the Wilson family out of power. Her mother's dying, her father's falling into despair, and the people she trusted most are turning their backs on her in her family's darkest hour. She's known from childhood that she lives in an evil, corrupted world, but the forces of darkness have never been so strong. It'll take a miracle to make things right. So, she'll make one happen.

Guided by obscure passages in her ministry's sacred texts and after steeling herself with some target practice, Sophie's written a kill list of sacrificial offerings in hopes of restoring her mother's health and restoring the integrity of her faith.

Sophie is a human, but with a quick intellect and an even quicker set of reflexes. She has an inner fire

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that can match even the staunchest Hunter, and those that underestimate her might not live to regret it. More information and Traits are on page 122.

Like other quarries, Sophie Wilson gets closer to the cell as increasing Danger makes their presence known. As the only daughter of a wealthy family connected to a powerful cult in the city, she uses her pull to keep the cell away from her work. If that doesn't work, she takes matters into her own hands.

Sophie closing in on the cell could be added on to scenes in this story in a few ways, based on Danger.

Danger 1: Sophie spies on a Hunter from a distance; a Hunter notices an anonymous figure digging into their public records; Sophie calls in a harassment report on a Hunter.

Danger 2: Sophie sends a threatening message to a Hunter via an unwitting courier; Sophie anonymously delivers a copy of the New Word Bible (p. 101) to the cell's safe house; Sophie makes a vague allusion to the cell in a video message on social media.

Danger 3: Sophie tries to get a location important to the cell closed or repossessed; Sophie pays for someone to sneak into the cell's safe house to sabotage it; a Touchstone (not necessarily in Omaha) starts getting odd phone calls.

Danger 4: Sophie actively implicates a Hunter for her murders in a video recording; Sophie breaks into a Hunter's home to leave a final warning written in a victim's blood; Sophie sends candid photos of a Touchstone taken from outside their window (for this to work, the Touchstone does have to be in Omaha or nearby; if you started out with **Pressure Test** and the Hunters are based in Unity, that's just about close enough).

Danger 5: Sophie targets a Hunter; Sophie targets a Touchstone; Sophie targets the entire cell.

Complicating Factors

Sophie isn't the only problem. The bizarre nature of her crimes attracts the attention of three forces, each a danger to the hunt. The Hunters have to contend with

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media presence, interference from law enforcement (who are not in any hurry to catch the killer), and the killer's church, Sacred Word Ministries, who will do anything they can to ensure their reputation's not tarnished.

One murder is a tragedy. Two murders with the same method are an oddity. Three related murders are a social media sensation.

Now, more than ever, the media loves serial killers. An obvious perpetrator with an eye-catching calling card is bound to send both old and new media into a feeding frenzy. Any new killing finds a spot on the nightly news. Thousands pore over Sophie's new televised missives, looking for any clues that might out her or her motives. Forums and online communities form in hopes the internet can crowdsource a solution.

The media complicates the hunt through *misinformation*. As the cell pursues their quarry, they must learn to separate fact from speculation, something that can confound even the keenest Edge. There's also the risk that, by making themselves a part of the story, the media might expose the Hunters to the world, or at least to very interested supernatural parties following along. For example, any offended Fae from Rawlins (**Outsiders**) or surviving vampires from Yellowknife (**Alone in the Dark**), depending what stories have already been told. The face of the media is Aaron Lambert (p. 129).

Once the cell realizes Sophie is just a garden variety murderer, they might be tempted to let the police handle things. Whatever a Hunter's feelings on the police might be, this is their job, isn't it? They're monster hunters, not vigilantes, and surely that's not the same thing.

The answer's complicated. The official investigation is compromised in three ways. First, the usual serial killer profiles aren't going to help. Women serial killers are rare, and one only a few months out from graduating high school is almost unheard of. In the early days of the killings, the police are going to go through the tried-and-true serial killer profiles. It'll take a few murders for the police to catch on to Sophie. That is, if they don't just decide to pin it on the cell, who might already have a known record of being around when a citizen (i.e., a monster) ends up dead or missing.

Second, Sacred Word Ministries has a vested interest in keeping their secrets and finding the killer themselves. They have plenty of pull in the city and can use their sway with the city council or the police union to keep the homicide department from pursuing any lead that would bring them to the ministry.

Third, there's Joanna Torres (p. 130), the case's lead detective. Not only is she under the pressures of Sacred Word's indirect influence, but she's starting to understand Sophie's motivation. Perhaps, if her team can keep away from the killer long enough, there just might be a miracle.

Law enforcement, therefore, complicates the hunt through *misapplication*, specifically the misapplication of force. They'll slam down hard in the wrong directions, and if the cell isn't careful, they'll be the ones feeling the pressure.

In Omaha and a large portion of Douglas County, Nebraska, Sacred Word Ministries feels inescapable. Look up at a billboard and you'll see Reuben Marshall's smiling face. Open your mail and there's a postcard hyping an upcoming service. On TV, you just might catch the ministry's local TV show, *The Word Alive*, which until recently was hosted by Lenny Wilson and his wife Tanya.

On the surface, Sacred Word Ministries is a non-denominational Christian ministry with a doctrine consisting of a vague mishmash of Protestant theologies. Its services are held in small branches across the area, with a flagship church downtown. Three quarters of its 3000-member congregation never go any deeper into the church than that. For the remaining quarter, things get stranger.

Sacred Word Ministries formed in the late 1960s, created by three men with the belief that any human being could become a living god, and that prayer and worship were merely the exercise of human potential over the world. During fits of mystical reverie, they wrote the *New Word Bible*, a reprinting of the Christian Gospels interspersed with proclamations written in a constructed symbolic language, interpreting the texts as an instructional guide for exercising divine power. It also contains a set of mock sacrifices that are carried out in secret chambers in their flagship church. When the founders grew too old

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to carry on, they passed the faith down to their three respective sons: Lenny Wilson, Steven Anderson, and Reuben Marshall.

Over the decades, Sacred Word Ministries developed a multi-tiered system: an inner circle consisting of the three men and their families, a circle of Elders who worship using the *New Word Bible*, a circle of Ministers learning the *New Word* but preaching with the *English Standard Version* of the Bible, and laypeople worshiping under the Ministers. Who gets to rise through the ranks depends on three factors: their perceived holiness, their connection to secular power, and the amount of money they provide to the ministry. The congregation is asked to provide everything they can to the ministry, but for the Elders and Ministers, it's required.

Sacred Word Ministries is a quiet local success. It's developed an influence over the city that's hard to detect. Its members sit on the board of commerce, on local school boards, and in plenty of businesses and private organizations. It's dealt with congregants falling out, but who would believe the wilder stories? Any testimony that Sacred Word is anything more than a large church is kept to the underground.

They're not prepared for series of murders using their secret language and iconography. From Sophie's very first murder, the Elders and inner circle are worried one of their own threatens to expose their truth a flock that's unprepared for the revelations and wouldn't ever accept them if presented this way. They try their best to keep out interlopers and settle this internally. That includes the police and the cell.

Sacred Word Ministries complicates the hunt through *misdirection*. Their higher echelons will use whatever pull they can to keep eyes off their secrets. They'll suppress pictures of Sophie's scrawls in the local news, they'll be the first to support victim's families to make them unwilling to put the pieces together, and they'll hunt down the murderer with their own fervor. The SPC representing Sacred Word Ministries is Steven Anderson (p. 130).

Red Flags

Blur the Lines begins when the cell arrives at the scene of the Schneider family murder. Choose one of the hooks below to get the cell there, use one suggested in the "On the Road Again" section of another chapter of **Lines Drawn in Blood**, or create one that fits your cell and chronicle.

- A Hunter is connected to a member of the Schneider family, who texts the Hunter with concerns over someone at their apartment and goes silent.
- A Hunter gets word from another tenant of the building the Schneiders live in, via a Touchstone, about a "weird person" hanging around over the past couple of days. Security can't seem to find the person, so they invite the cell to check things out; the only people they could think of to call.
- The cell discovers the crime through police scanner chatter or a source close to law enforcement (Bruce Dierbeck from **Alone in the Dark** has friends in Omaha, for example). The chatter includes mentions of "strange words" written on the walls, and the cops are hesitant to arrive, mentioning some earlier cases see "Athena's Story" (p. 114) . The call can use this opportunity to arrive on the scene before they do.

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Part One: A Disturbing Pattern

The cell arrives at the Schneider apartment to the scene of a horrific murder. They have a little time before the police and media arrive to gather clues and create leads. Sophie's started a small fire to cover up her crimes. The Hunters have the chance to preserve the evidence and rescue a survivor. Depending on the cell's choices, they may encounter Joanna Torres or Aaron Lambert for the first time.

Tense Entrance

The scene begins with the cell arriving at the door of Unit 3A, an apartment on the third floor of the Gardenia Breeze Estates, an apartment building in the city. The mood is tense. Several neighbors are in the floor hallway, talking amongst themselves in hushed tones. The cell can see the front door to the unit is ajar, and a glimpse in the space between the door and the frame reveals blood splatters and a corpse inside. The cell hears music blaring inside, which sounds like Christian hymns.

Upon approaching the door, they're stopped by Henry Nielsen, an old white man in his bathrobe. He's taken charge of the situation. He tells the Hunters they don't want to go in there, and that they should wait for the police to arrive. Unless the cell is visibly armed to the teeth or is unnerving to the tenants in other ways, the gathered neighbors speak freely with them about what happened. They assume the cell members are fellow tenants and might ask whether they've heard any noise on their floor.

What Henry and the Neighbors Know

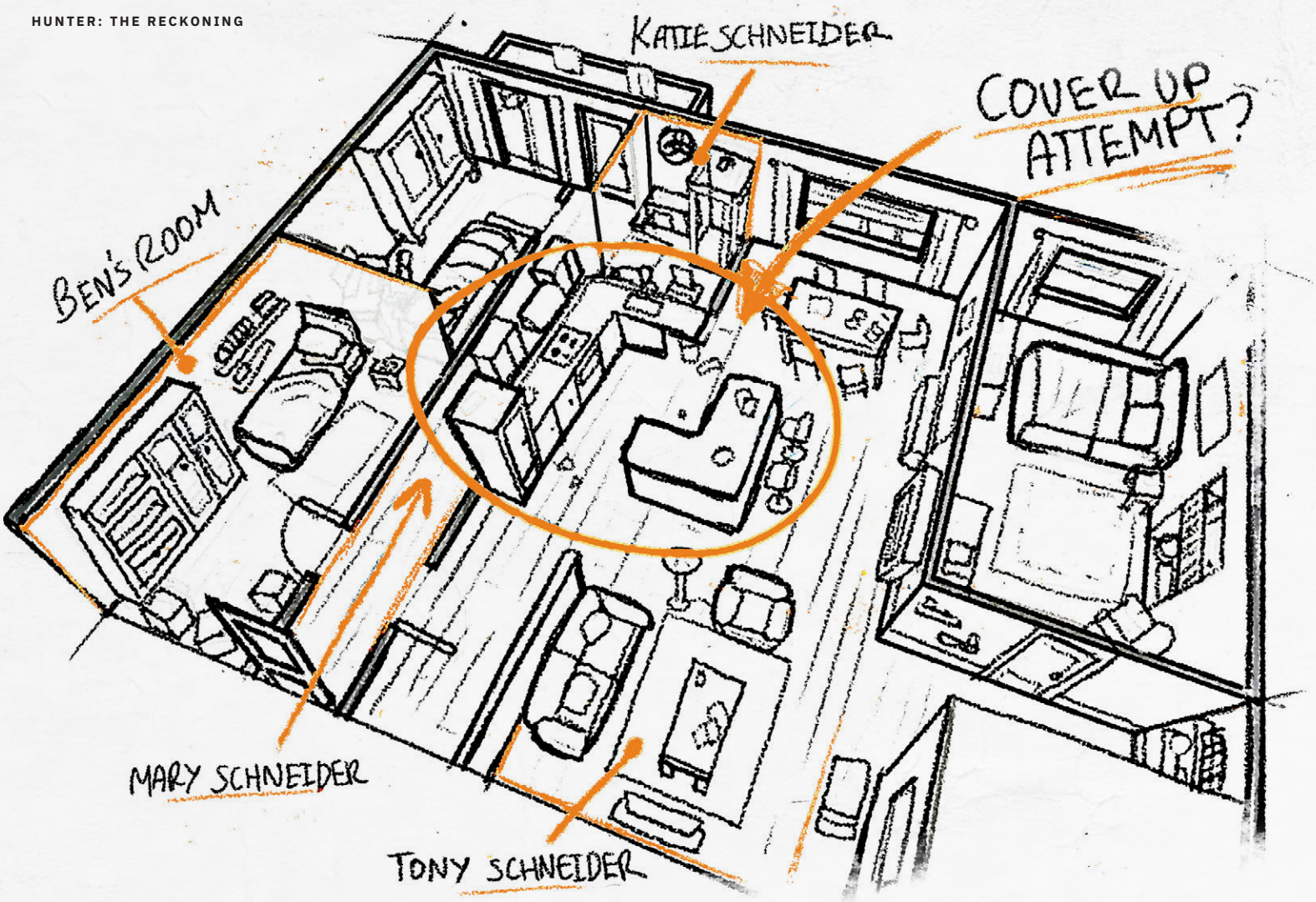
The neighbors' information is basic but helpful.

- This is the Schneiders' apartment.
- The Schneiders are Toby, his wife Mary, their son Scott, and their daughter Katie.
- Henry is their closest neighbor.
- Twenty minutes ago (by his best guess), Henry heard pounding next door, followed by screams.
- He found the door unlocked, saw Toby dead on the floor, and called the cops. It's taking forever for them to arrive.
- No one has seen anyone come out the front door since.
- Henry suggests that Scott was "into drugs," and wonders if that might have had anything to do with it.

Henry puts up some resistance if the cell tries to walk in, saying they shouldn't tamper with a crime scene. A Charisma + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3) or Manipulation + Intimidation test (Difficulty 2) will convince him to let them go. He's not willing to put up a fight, but he puts in a bad word about the cell to the police if intimidated or physically harmed. The other neighbors disperse if Henry leaves.

If the cell prefers to avoid Henry and the neighbors, the only other entrance is on the apartment's balcony on the third floor. Going around to the back reveals that the apartment's fire escape ladder is already extended. It's an easy climb but some of the rungs have bloody handprints and foot marks on them. If a Hunter is willing to take the risk of the fresh blood smears staining their hands, gloves (if they're wearing them) or shoes as they ascend the fire ladder, there's no test. A Hunter who wants to avoid the blood while ascending the ladder takes a Dexterity + Athletics test (Difficulty 2). The balcony door to 3A is already unlocked, and a set of bloody footprints leading out reveals what the cell might have already guessed: the killer escaped this way.

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The Scene of the Crime

No matter which entrance the cell uses, they bear witness to the carnage within. Signs of struggle are everywhere: errant stabs into upholstery, blood spatter on the walls and even the ceiling, broken dishes, overturned chairs, and broken tables and cabinets. It's clear the killer attacked the Schneiders as they were settling into dinner.

The bodies the cell discovers are fresh. Each of them has multiple lacerations and stab wounds, with multiple killing blows to the neck, chest, and belly. Their faces are all broken to some extent, some worse than others. Before she escaped, Sophie took the opportunity to stomp on each of the victims' faces.

There are three bodies, one living survivor, and several clues to find. All of these are presented here in five different "tracks." After the cell discovers Scott's body and investigates at least two other tracks, Katie awakens, and "The Survivor" begins (p. 101). Opening the bathroom starts "The Survivor" no matter how many tracks the cell has unlocked. There's still time for the Hunters to look for clues but

Toby's Body

This is the body the Hunters might have seen through the front door. If the cell entered the apartment through the fire escape, Henry, and the neighbors might catch a glimpse of them for the first time as they inspect Toby's body, and Henry won't be pleased to see them there. Assuring or intimidating him has a +1 Difficulty if he encounters the cell this way.

Toby Schneider's corpse is on the living space floor. The carpet around him is fully soaked in blood. Beneath and around him are a broken wooden table. His outstretched left arm reaches toward a baseball bat

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just a few feet from him, angled on one of the corners of the living space.

There's a deep bite mark on his right wrist. Examining the mark takes an Intelligence + Medicine test (Difficulty 3). A Win reveals that the teeth are human.

The living space has lots of trophies and souvenirs that identify the Schneiders. Among them are a trophy celebrating Mary as a Most Valuable Player for a community softball team, a picture from a middle school play Scott was in, and a medal Katie earned in a swimming competition.

Toby's smartphone is a few feet from his body. He never bothered setting a password or any security measures, so the cell can open it right up. It's barebones, he uses it for texting and emailing. The last thing he read was a series of work emails with his superiors at Neto International, where he works as an analyst. If this story is after **Outsiders**, he's being assigned to a project to determine what went wrong with the construction in Rawlins and their next steps. If before, or if this is a standalone story, it's a discussion about what to do about some geological analysis in Rawlins, Missouri that collected strange energy readings. Toby suggests changing the location based on and has yet to receive a reply.

If they haven't already discovered Scott's blood trail, an Intelligence + Investigation test (Difficulty 3) reveals it. It leads from the front door into the balcony hallway. A critical win reveals this blood trail is from a body moving from the living space into the back hallway.

The Christian hymn the smart TV is playing is the latest in an auto-generated playlist. Examining the playlist requires no test and reveals the playlist has been going for about forty-five minutes. Whoever put it on started the playlist with the hymn, "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky."

The Burning Kitchen

As the Hunters enter the apartment, they catch a faint smell of smoke coming from further ahead. If they don't investigate right away, the smoke gets thicker, and the smoke alarms start blaring. If they still don't investigate the kitchen, it erupts into a small fire.

When the Hunters get to the kitchen, they see a pan



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filled with canola oil put over the stove at high heat. The pan is neatly placed, a contrast from the spilled food packets and fallen pots nearby. Bloody handprints are visible on the pan handle and the stove dial.

If the pan's just smoking, a Hunter can just pull the pan off the heat. It's easy to avoid Sophie's bloody smear on the handle. Like climbing the ladder in "Tense Entrance", shutting off the heat requires either an understanding that their skin or gloves will get bloodstained when they do, or a Dexterity + Composure test (Difficulty 2) to carefully shut it off.

The knives in the kitchen are all in their correct places on a magnetic, wall-mounted knife strip, and none of them were used in the attack (they're all clean). Inside the utensil drawer is a long, thin metal rod that can unlock any doors in the apartment. This could be useful for "The Survivor."

Mary's Body

If the Hunters enter from the balcony, this is the first body they see. Mary lays face down on the floor, both arms reaching towards the balcony door. The pool of blood around her hasn't completely sunk into the carpet yet. Fragments of her teeth are scattered around her body.

She's grasping two things in her hands with a death grip. Examining them requires a Dexterity + Investigation test (Difficulty 3). A win reveals that her left hand is holding a shred of rough gray fabric, and her right hand is clinging onto a clump of long, blonde hair.

Looking around the area reveals the end of a blood trail leading into one of the bedrooms on the side of the hallway. If the Hunters haven't already found Scott's blood trail, they have a chance to discover it here.

On the other side of the hallway, a set of bloody handprints marks the bathroom door. A Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 2) reveals them as two different sets. A critical win confirms that one set belongs to Mary, and (at the end of the scene) that the other pair belongs to no corpse or person currently in the apartment.

The bathroom door is locked. If Katie isn't already awake or waking up, turning the knob will awaken her and start "The Survivor."

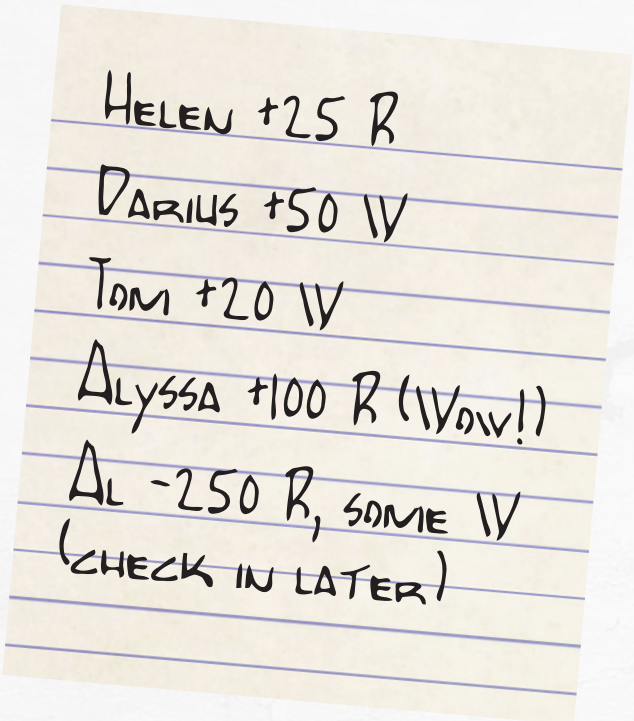
Scott's Room

The knob on Scott's bedroom door is covered in blood, but the door is open. A gentle push opens it and reveals its contents.

The walls of Scott Schneider's room are a soft gray. Elaborate symbols are drawn on the walls in blood. The blood clearly comes from Scott's corpse, lying face up on his bed. A Wits + Occult test (Difficulty 2) picks up the obvious Christian symbolism on some portions (a cross here, a fish there, a crude rendition of a dove), and while the entire piece is not in a recognizable occult language like Enochian, it does have some principles in common. An Intelligence + Academics test (Difficulty 4) tells the Hunters it's a conlang (a constructed language). A critical win tells them it's not a particularly sophisticated or consistent one, made more for show than for use.

A successful use of the Global Access Edge reveals that while the symbols are in no known language, this is not the first time they've cropped up in Omaha. The Edge's information source reveals two previous murders among the city's homeless population several

FROM SCOTT'S LEDGER



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weeks ago where similar scrawls were found near the murder scene.

Scott's room contains a dresser and a desk. The desk has a planner for Carter Preparatory School and an open notebook with the day's English class notes. The dresser contains clothes and some cash inside the sock drawer. One of the bottom drawers is pulled out far enough to almost fall out of the dresser. Unless the apartment is burning down, the Hunters have time to thoroughly investigate the desk and dresser and learn their secrets without dice rolls.

A false bottom on the desk hides another Carter Preparatory School planner containing a list of names. Attached to each name is a plus or minus symbol with a cash amount. These lines also have a "W," an "R," or both at the end. A few names repeat: "Helen," "Beatrice," "Ted," and "Al." Al's name always has a minus next to it.

Wedged in an empty space between the two particle board backs of the dresser are a few grams of marijuana, some bottles of Ritalin, and a switchblade. From the traces of blood in the particle board, the Hunters can infer Scott was trying to reach in for the knife before getting pulled away towards the bed.

Scott's Body

Scott's corpse is the most badly mutilated of the lot. The killer smeared the body's demolished face in its own blood.

A cell phone peeks out from the pocket of Scott's jeans. Slipping it out is no problem, but it's locked with a passcode. Unlocking it on the scene requires an Intelligence + Technology test (Difficulty 4). If the Hunters take it with them, and dedicate a few hours to the task, a Hunter with at least one dot in Technology can unlock it without a test.

Scott's phone is full of music and games. He gets a lot of messages from a lot of contacts. Some of whom are texting him right this second, asking where he is. If the Hunters have Scott's ledger from the desk, the names in his contacts match his written records. Going through his texts and emails reveals the following:

- If the Hunters haven't already guessed by finding his ledger or his stash, Scott Schneider's a drug dealer. His clientele are fellow school students. His conversations with them are quick and to the point.
- Among his regular clients are Beatrice Zhao (head of the debate team), Ted Jacobs (a sophomore who's terrified of not passing his Algebra II class, and apparently can only vent about this to his dealer), and Helen Dashiell (co-captain of the track-and-field team).
- He's in regular contact with Al Bailey (p. 132), who hires him for odd jobs at his repair firm, Bailey & Sons. He speaks with him in the same tone as he does with those who supply him drugs.
- If the story hook involved Scott texting a Hunter, Scott's text to them is the last he ever made. If not, his last text was to Al.

The Survivor

As the cell continues their investigation, any Hunter near the back hallway bathroom hears a loud thud from behind the door. Either the noise of the Hunters' movements or the sound of someone trying the locked door woke Katie up. She made her way to the bathroom door from the bathtub she was lying in, tried to unlock the door, and then passed out.

At this moment, the Hunters hear sirens coming from outside the building. Anyone close to the balcony window can see the cops finally arriving on the scene. If the Hunters don't cause a distraction, the cops enter the apartment after five wins of any kind, or a single total failure, whichever comes first.

The bathroom door is locked from the inside. There's no keyhole, but there is a small hole near the doorknob. Unlocking the cell requires either the use of the metal rod found in the utensil drawer in the kitchen, or a Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 4). The door's thin enough to break open with a Strength + Athletics or Strength + Melee (if using an improvised instrument or melee weapon) test (Difficulty 3).

When the Hunters get the door open, they see Katie lying on the floor, fully clothed. She's a thirteen-year-old white girl with long, sandy brown hair. She's less wounded than her other family members, and her face is mostly intact, but she's suffered a serious stab wound to the abdomen, piercing her intestines.

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Stabilizing Katie takes an Intelligence + Medicine test (Difficulty 3). A win keeps her alive long enough for help to arrive, and a critical win gives her enough strength to get up and walk out of the apartment. Offer a win at a cost for any successes lower than 4, and have the player choose one of the following options: the character spends so much time stabilizing Katie that they're caught by the cops, Katie can only reveal pieces of information equal to the missing successes before needing to rest or fail. On a failure, Katie awakens long enough to reveal one piece of critical information, and then dies.

If the cell never tries to open the bathroom door, or if every attempt fails, Katie dies. Joanna Torres (p. 130) or Aaron Lambert (p. 129) can provide the same information Katie would have given.

If the Hunters talk to Katie after she's stabilized, she can tell the cell what she witnessed. She's distraught and wracked with survivor's guilt but does her best to hold it together for the people who saved her life. The Hunters learn:

- She and her family were attacked by a woman with a long gray hoodie and a knife. (Katie will reveal this information with her dying breath if the cell fails to stabilize her.)
- The woman attacked as they were settling down to eat dinner.
- The woman came through the front door. She knocked.
- Scott answered the door, told the family that the woman, "might be someone I know from school." The woman began stabbing him before he could finish his statement.
- Toby (Katie calls him "Dad") ran to defend his son, and the woman took him down after a struggle.
- The woman left Scott and Toby bleeding on the floor and came for Katie. After a scuffle, the woman stabbed Katie in the abdomen.
- Mary (Katie calls her "Mom") attacked the woman, and the fight moved into the back hallway.
- Katie used the opportunity to hobble into the bathroom and lock the door. She regrets not being able to help anyone.
- While bleeding in the bathtub, she heard her brother screaming for help as the woman dragged him into his room. The last thing she heard before she passed out were what she believes might have been his final words: "What do you want from me?"

If the cops haven't already entered the apartment, they do once Katie finishes her testimony.

Whenever the cops arrive, the cell can hide from them in the apartment and with a Dexterity + Stealth test (Difficulty 4), escape the apartment through the balcony and the fire escape ladder, or choose to meet the cops. If they fail the test or don't try to escape, the cops catch them.

Any Hunter who gets caught or chooses to meet the cops moves on to "The Cops." Anyone who escapes the building or successfully hides from the cops triggers "The Fanboy" on their way back from the scene of the crime.

The Cops

The first police on the scene are a few beat cops clearing a path for the detectives' arrival. When they see the Hunters, they assume the worst. A Composure + Leadership, Manipulation + Persuasion, or Charisma + Intimidation test (Difficulty 5) deescalates the situation. If Katie's still alive, she deescalates the situation by telling the cops the truth. If the beat cops aren't talked down, they'll do everything they can to keep the Hunters on the scene until the homicide squad arrives. That includes placing them under arrest, putting them in handcuffs, and threatening them at gunpoint. They're reluctant to shoot but if they fear the Hunters are about to turn violent, they will. Once Detective Joanna Torres and her team arrives, the uniformed cops back down.

Unwilling to leave the building while her underlings search the premises, Joanna asks the beat cops to separate the Hunters so she can talk to them one-by-one. She uses the landlord's office on the first floor as a makeshift interrogation room.

Joanna's interrogation starts with the standard stuff: questions about where the Hunters were before they entered the apartment, why they're in the apartment, and whether they knew the Schneiders. Then without mentioning the previous murders amongst the city's homeless population she demands to know the Hunters'

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alibis for those dates (weeknights, a couple of weeks ago). Then she describes the crimes in explicit detail in hopes it will unnerve the Hunters, down to the symbols written in blood. The important thing for the Storyteller to accomplish here is to get across that the monster responsible for these crimes has killed before, so likely will again.

As Joanna analyzes the Hunters, they can analyze her in turn. An Intelligence + Insight test (Difficulty 4) reveals that for all her bluster, she's just going through the motions. There's an air of disappointment in Joanna's manner and a critical sin makes the picture clearer: She's bored, and the only time a spark of passion comes into her eyes is when she describes the symbols and the ritualistic manner of the murders. The Hunter can choose to win at a cost, in which case Joanna knows they learned something true about her.

Once Joanna feels she's learned everything she can about the Hunters, she gathers them together and assures them they're not persons of interest at this time. She orders them to stay out of the case and quit playing vigilante. She then lets them leave.

If "The Fanboy" hasn't happened yet, it starts as the Hunters make their way back to their accommodation.

The Fanboy

As the Hunters leave the apartment building, they sense they're being watched. Aaron Lambert (p. 129) picked up on the crime thanks to a report over the police scanner. Before he could try sneaking onto the crime scene himself, he saw the Hunters go inside. Undeterred, he slipped into the apartment while the Hunters were either escaping or being interrogated. He got as far as getting a picture of either Toby or Mary's corpse before the cops chased him out (if the Hunters didn't examine both corpses, Aaron snapped the one they didn't see; otherwise, it's Toby).

A Wits + Awareness Test (Difficulty 4) gets the drop on Aaron. A critical win scares him, reducing the Difficulty of tests to interact with him by 1 for the scene. Otherwise, he emerges from hiding near the Hunters.

Oblivious to any outrage or fright he's caused, Aaron Lambert introduces himself to the Hunters. He plays up his connection to a local television channel without revealing he's just an intern. He offers a business card with his personal number and some streaming services where the Hunters can listen to his true crime podcast, *The Dark Alley*.

Once the niceties are out of the way, Aaron gets to business. He decides the Hunters are amateur sleuths like him and asks what they've learned. If he gets the impression they're friendly, he tells them about his misadventure and proudly shows them the photo he got.

Aaron brings up the first two murders, saying he knew there was a serial killer in the city before anyone else did. Speaking out loud, he makes a note to himself to check the Unchained Soul, a homeless outreach group, for any witnesses. He realizes what he did, smiles, and tells the cell he'll charge them for that one later.

Reading him takes an Intelligence + Insight Test (Difficulty 2). A Win reveals that he's telling the truth, but there's something off about his demeanor. A critical win clarifies he's talking about the murders and the scene of the crime like it's a blockbuster movie or a hot new video game. There's no empathy for the victims whatsoever.

Aaron hangs around for as long as the Hunters tolerate him. Once he gets the cue to leave, he encourages them to not be strangers, claiming "we're all in this together, right?" He lets them know he'll be in touch.

Next Steps

Before moving on to the next part of the story, make sure the players know:

- The Schneiders were murdered in their home, and Scott Schneider appeared to be the primary target.
- This is not the first murder of its kind, and it may happen again.
- The killer is using an esoteric language not related to any known occult practice.
- The killer uses pseudo-Christian trappings.

Part Two can start any time after the night ends in Part One. Depending how the cell operates, they could end up with a lot of information here, not all of it directly relevant to the story. Give your players some time to formulate plans for further enquiries before you kick off Part Two.

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Part Two: Pilgrim's Progress

A disturbing broadcast on local television announces the Wall Scrawl Killer's intent to kill again. The Hunters use their leads to close in on the quarry and have an opportunity to save one or more of her victims. Joanna Torres, Aaron Lambert, Steven Anderson, or even Sophie Wilson herself interfere in their plans.

This section takes place over a longer time than the previous one and certain scenes might play out differently depending on the scenes that came before them. Remember to keep the timeframes in mind as you run this chapter. "The Broadcasts" and "Murders and Confrontations" are bookmarks to Sophie's attacks and repeat for each new victim. "Prep School", "The Shelter", "Bailey & Sons", "Sacred Word", and "Davis Medical Center" are the meat of the investigation and bring the Hunters closer to Sophie. The remaining scenes are extra complications. Slot them in if things are going too well.

Harder than it Looks

There's a chance the characters will figure out Sophie's their quarry during this period, or figure out the quarry's human. If so they're likely to either catch her and turn her over to the police or give up on the Hunt.

The "Interference" scenes provide the Storyteller with ways to keep the Hunters from getting to the truth immediately. Joanna Torres's interference (see p. 120) can slow the Hunters down significantly: if they're busy running from the cops, they'll be slower to follow leads. But the problem isn't just finding Sophie, it's stopping her.

If they turn Sophie over to the police, the Sacred Word intervenes to get her released within twenty-four hours: the church won't risk the damage to their reputation that would come from a founder's kid being accused of murder. As soon as she's released, Sophie goes back to her mission. She gets better at hiding, moving around the city to sleep at friends' houses or staying overnight at the Davis Medical Center with her mother, making it more difficult for the Hunters to track her down.

If the cell decides to ignore the problem, the murders continue; it's obvious within a couple of days that if the Hunters don't solve the problem, no one will.

The Broadcasts

Sometime after the Schneiders' murders, a strange broadcast starts playing on a local television station. Depending on how fast you want to pace your story, the broadcast appears sometime between a day and two weeks before Sophie's next kill. The cell always gets at least one day between the broadcasts and a new murder.

The broadcast is always on WERT, a local TV station. It plays at 7:25am, during the last five minutes of reruns of *The Word Alive*, an otherwise ordinary bible study program. It starts with stock footage of a beach at sunset. Over a backing track of the hymn "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky," text appears on screen. The text always begins with "I am who you say I am." Then, a veiled threat appears against Sophie's next target, which ends with, "I have judged you, and my desires will cry out through your blood." It ends in the same way, "Beg Sacred Word Ministries to intervene for the sick and the dying. Beg Sacred Word Ministries to correct their error. Only then, I may cease crying my heart's desire through the blood of the Earth."

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Sophie's Threats

Isabelle Khan: In the luxurious academy, you claim to teach. Instead, you take pleasure in mocking those who cannot know. No transit will protect you from me.
Clue: This refers to a good school. Scott Schneider went to a fancy prep school.

Al Bailey (p. 132): You promised to restore a house of God, and instead you shattered its legs. From where you run your demonic business, I will shatter your face.
Clue: Scott Schneider did odd jobs for a contractor occasionally; it may not be the same person, but that would be a good place to start looking for a contractor who does church repairs.

Georgina Ortega (p. 132): Instead of aiding the sick, you mutilated the skin of a prophet in a house of healing. I will set things right in that house.
Clue: Katie Schneider said her brother thought the killer might be someone he went to school with. If so, she's got money; maybe look into the best private hospitals: Davis Medical Center, maybe.

Reuben Marshall (p. 133): You corrupted the one true faith. Your darkness will not take my people. In the holiest place in the world, they will watch you become my final verse.
Clue: This is a clear link to a religion, and a building. A church that inspires this much passion is probably pretty influential, locally.

The players can choose whether to unravel the riddles themselves or try an Intelligence + Investigation test for some clues (listed underneath each threat). With zero successes, they get the clue to Isabelle's riddle. Add one clue for each success they get. For 3 or more successes, or a critical win, they get all the clues, including Reuben Marshall's. Players who solve the riddles without help from the Skill test can choose to reduce Desperation by 1 if they so choose.

An Intelligence + Technology test (Difficulty 3) reveals the broadcast isn't a signal intrusion nor streamed from another source. A critical win makes it clear that not only are the videos coming from the TV station, but someone is manually swapping in tapes of the Wall Scrawl Killer's threats.

The cell might be able to decipher Sophie's next target with context clues they've picked up during their investigation, but they can also make an Intelligence + Insight Test (Difficulty 2) for a basic but true interpretation of the threat (e.g. the type of person the threat is aimed at, the general location the murder will take place), and a critical win gives a clearer picture based on the cell's experiences or gives the cell a good lead in the right direction (e.g. the specific name of someone they've met or a place they've been to, the hint to search media for incidents the threat could be referencing).

Each broadcast only airs once, but archives are easily found on social media. If the Hunters visit WERT, the staff admit to getting the tapes in the mail but swear their policy is to send them to the police, not broadcast them. Aaron Lambert, who works there, knows exactly what's going on. If the Hunters seemed friendly and interested in his work when they met in Part One, he seeks them out to proudly tell them he's airing the tapes (before sending them on to Detective Torres). If Aaron can get the cell alone, segue into one of the suggestions in "Interference: Aaron Lambert" (p. 121).

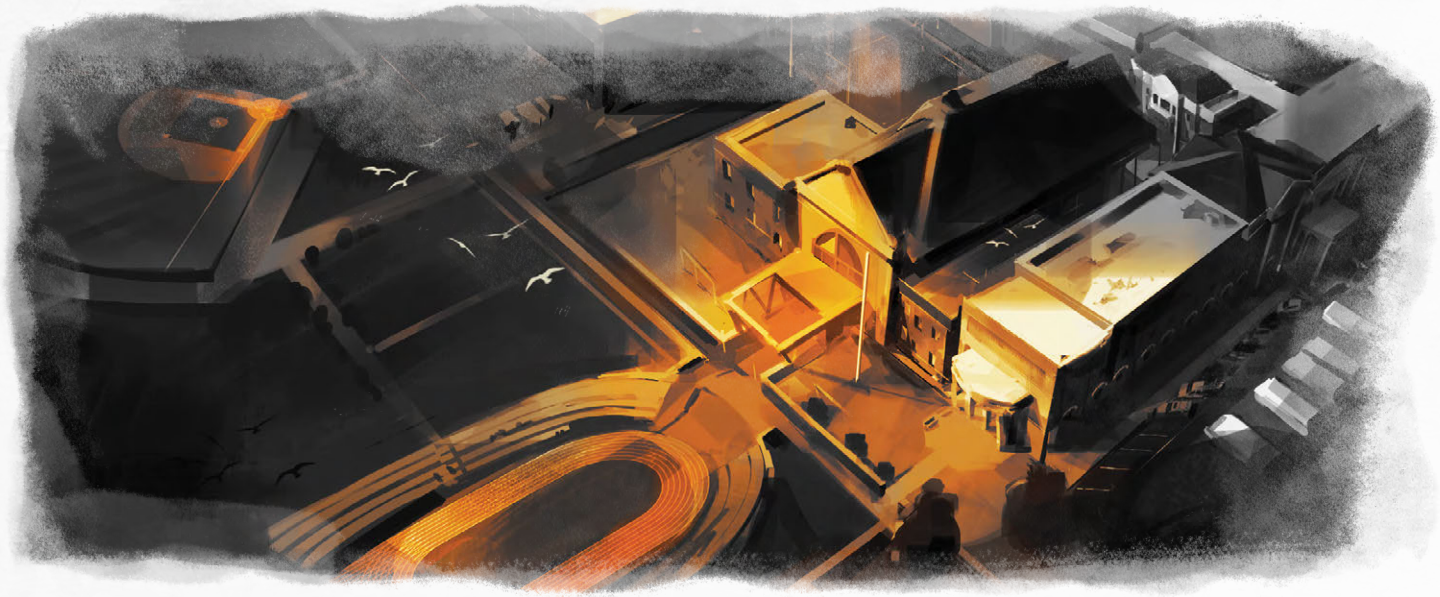
Prep School

If the cell found Scott's ledger, unlocked his phone, or listened to Katie's full testimony in Part One, checking out his school might be one of their first stops. Carter Preparatory School is a mid-sized private school just outside of downtown. It's a two-story school with a gymnasium, pool, baseball diamond, and dedicated area for track and field athletics. It's in very fine condition.

Getting In

Unless the cell has a connection with someone at Carter Prep, getting on campus and asking questions is difficult. The school has a high Student Resource Officer presence and most of its facilities are in the building. Most of the officers disperse after classes end but at least one officer remains on each floor and a car patrols the perimeter. The All-Access Pass perk

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of Global Access (**Hunter: The Reckoning,** p. 95) or an Intelligence + Technology test (Difficulty 4) can take care of any electronic locks, and a Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 3) takes care of other locks. If the Hunters get on campus in disguise, Charisma + Etiquette or Composure + Subterfuge tests maintain their cover, at Difficulties determined by the Storyteller (usually 2 or 3).

Asking About Scott

Asking around about Scott gets generic responses from students and faculty: they talk about how he was a quiet kid, how he kept running around with the wrong people, how he never lived up to his potential, how he could have been someone if he just applied himself. A Composure + Streetwise test (Difficulty 3) reveals that as a dealer, he was a stand-up person who never skimped on quality or quantity, though his supplier, a guy named "Al," didn't seem to like him very much. A critical win also reveals that over the past few months Scott became the main dealer for most of the upperclassmen, something Al got excited about.

Helen Dashiell, a senior on the track team, says she wishes she knew Scott better, since it seemed like nobody wanted to talk to him unless they wanted something from him. Helen is Sophie's teammate; through her, word gets back to Sophie that people were on campus asking about Scott.

Isabelle and Ted

If the cell comes to the school after the first broadcast, they encounter Sophie's next victim. On the first floor, the cell hears a teacher tearing into one of her students inside a nearby classroom. If the cell is on campus during classes, this is in front of the entire class, and she goes through his tests with a mocking tone, pausing for the class's laughter, which comes in slowly and uncomfortably. If the cell is on campus after classes, it's just the teacher and her student, and her tone is more vicious. The student calls her Mrs. Khan.

The student is Ted Jacobs, a Black boy with a short stature. If asked about Scott, Ted laments that now Scott's dead and his Ritalin supply is cut off, his grades are slipping again. Isabelle is cordial but brusque. She defends her actions as "doing her job," and won't hesitate to call an officer if the Hunters push too much. Or if the Hunters can't explain (with Manipulation + Subterfuge at Difficulty 2) what they're doing in her classroom.

Scene Connections

From here, the cell could investigate Al, which leads them towards "Bailey & Sons." If the cell is suspicious of Sophie, much of her life is visible either through regular search engines or the Global Access Edge,

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especially her membership in Sacred Word Ministries, which could lead the cell to "Sacred Word" or "Davis Medical Center."

If the cell's connected the dots and suspects Isabelle Khan is next, you could move on to her version of "Murders & Confrontations."

The Shelter

This scene occurs if the cell decides to follow up on Aaron's mention of the Unchained Soul shelter.

Getting In

The Unchained Soul is a small homeless shelter and kitchen downtown, run by Sacred Word Ministries. When the cell arrives, its staff apologize and explain they need to close off intake for the time being due to the police department sweeping a large encampment in the northern part of the city. Most of its residents made their way here. When the staff realizes the Hunters aren't looking for a bed, they're unwilling to let the cell start asking around without a win on a Charisma + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3). Allow for a win at a cost, with the staff keeping a very close eye on the Hunters. In this case, the Hunters will find big, muscular members of staff ready to kick them out if they upset any of the residents or volunteers.

Athena's Story

Most of the residents are willing to talk about anything and everything, but don't know a whole lot about the Wall Scrawl Murders aside from one of the killings happening at their old encampment and speculation that "poor Andrew" (Andrew Campbell p. 125) was one of the earlier murders. After one or two dead ends, Athena Williams, a gaunt Black woman, approaches the cell. She asks if they're going to find "Lissa's killer." Once she trusts the Hunters will get justice for her friend, she gives her testimony:

- Athena woke up in the middle of the night to relieve herself, when she caught sight of a "kid in a hoodie" walking up to Melissa Weber (p. 131).
- She thought nothing of it until she saw the quarry pull out a large chef's knife.
- The killer acted quickly; Melissa called out for help once before she went silent.
- She heard the killer hiss out insults and curses while she stabbed, stuff about "weakness" and "laziness taking root."
- She describes the quarry drawing "a bunch of symbols and other stuff" on the tent canvas.
- One of the dogs in the encampment caught the killer's scent, and then they were gone.
- Athena locked eyes with the killer as they fled. She says, "it was like the girl just saw right through me."

Steven At the Shelter

In this scene, Steven Anderson (p. 130), one of the elders of the Sacred Word is putting in work at the shelter. If the cell Won at a Cost to talk to the shelter residents, he's been the one watching them the entire time. Otherwise, he becomes aware of them after Athena tells them her story.

If this is the first time the cell meets Steven, he introduces himself and his role in Sacred Word Ministries. He comforts a grieving Athena, who tells him the Hunters are going to get Melissa's killer. He questions why they're so interested in these murders, and tries to interrogate them in a calm, friendly manner. A win on a Wits + Insight or a Wits + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 5) lets the Hunters pick up what's really going on with the conversation. The Difficulty represents Steven using his special ability. It decreases to 3 if he's already had to use his ability this session. A critical win reveals Steven's interrogating them because he's terrified that they're making more progress on finding the killer than he is. Whatever happens, at the end of the conversation, he invites the cell to attend service at the Sacred Word Ministries church downtown.

If the cell met Steven Anderson in a previous scene, he's no less calm and friendly but instead of interrogation he tries to push the cell into leaving the shelter. He urges them to look out for their safety and abandon their search. Even if the Hunters leave

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as he asks, this is enough to make him interfere in the Hunters' investigation (see "Interference: Steven Anderson").

Scene Connections

If the cell is suspicious of Steven or takes up his invitation to a service, they can catch him again in the flagship church of the ministry in "Sacred Word."

Bailey & Sons

If the cell learned about Scott's connections to Al Bailey in Part One or got the details on the church's faulty wiring in "Sacred Word", they might head to Bailey & Sons for some questioning.

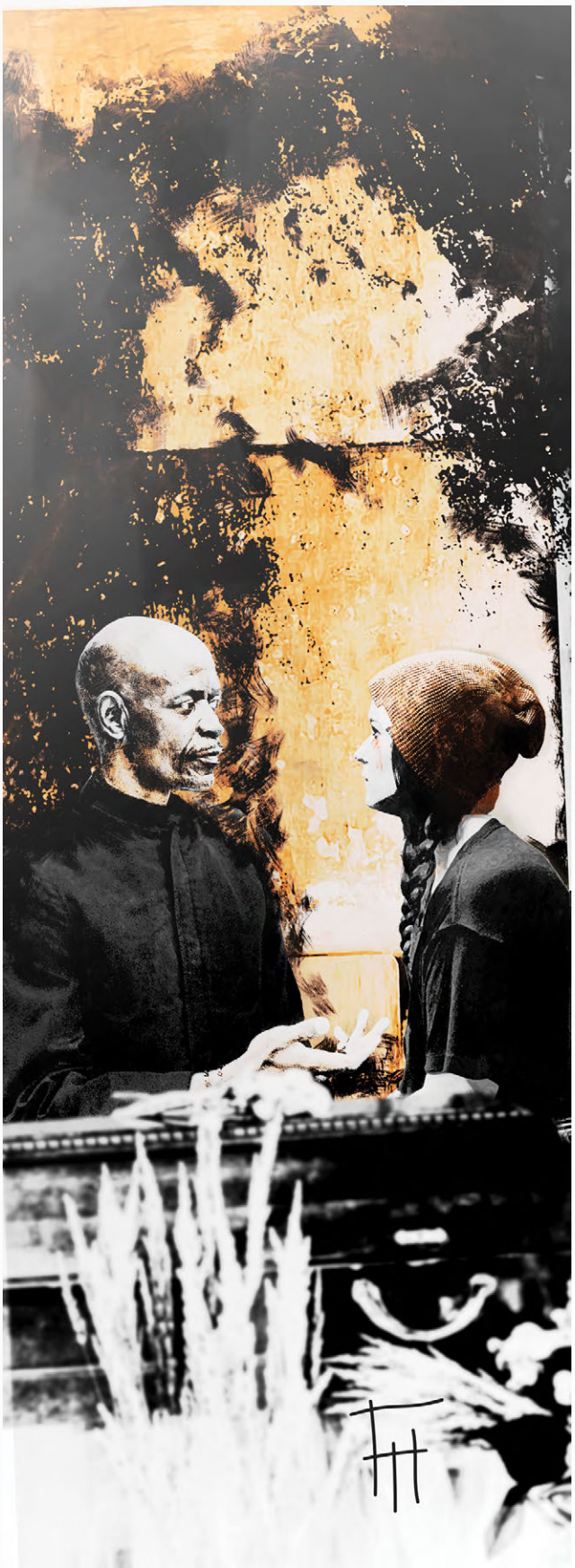
Getting In

Bailey & Sons Wires and Plumbing's headquarters is just outside city limits, in a complex with other repair shops and specialty stores. The place is a mess, full of workbenches covered with scattered parts and tools. Al's two employees are sitting at a table watching comedy skits on a tablet. Al is at his desk, playing online poker.

Drawing Out the Truth

None of them are happy to see the Hunters. Al is belligerent, asking them to put whatever's broken on the table, fill out a form, and his people will get to it. If they start asking questions, Al doesn't mince words. He asks if they're cops, and if they say no, he'll tell them to leave.

Getting him to answer any questions is a Social Conflict. He'll try to browbeat and cajole the cell into leaving, but if the cell uses any implication that they know Scott, or that they're seeking Scott's killer, that information functions as a +1 Superficial Willpower weapon against him. He gives up if he has more Willpower damage than his opponents after three rounds. He answers any questions the cell has. If he's Impaired, he even opens up about the seedier sides of his business.



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What Al Bailey Knows

- Scott was an employee of his but paid under the table. Al had him do "odd jobs." Sometimes those were around his school.
- He has no idea who killed Scott, but he believes someone would come for him eventually.
- If the cell asks about any recent jobs that proved difficult, or directly about the faulty wiring in the church, Sacred Word Ministries was looking for a cheap job. He took it because he needed the money, but "a cheap job means cheap work. Period."
- He's seen the pictures of what happened to Scott. The symbols remind him of iconography he saw on Sacred Word's banners and altars while he was working in their chapel.
- There was a room in that church no one was allowed into. He didn't mind it; it meant less work.
- He has "higher-ups" that are very unhappy about Scott's death, because Al's a person of interest.
- (If Impaired) Yes, he does have a "shipment business" on the side, and Scott was part of it.
- (If Impaired) He found Scott through his personal "shipments" and thought he could go places.
- (If Impaired) He encouraged Scott to expand his network, and fears that might have gotten him killed.
- (If Impaired) His "organization" didn't do anything to Scott. He wants to call the act monstrous, but after so long in his line of work, he can't say it's all that different, blood symbols aside.

An Unfortunate Gunfight

If the cell loses the Social Conflict or starts trying to intimidate Al, his handymen pull out their pistols and threaten the Hunters with them before Al can call them off. If the cell gets into a fight the handymen use the Criminal profile (**Hunter: The Reckoning**, p. 271). If the Hunters get the upper hand they try to flee. Word about this conflict reaches Al's "superiors" and also gets to Joanna, who could use it as reason to act ("Interference: Joanna Torres").

If the Hunters learned about the church from Al, they could investigate it in "Sacred Word." If they want to investigate Scott's "odd jobs" at school, they could head there in "Prep School."

If the Hunters have connected the dots and suspect Al Bailey is the next victim, you could move on to his version of "Murderers and Confrontations."

Sacred Word

Whether it's via Al Bailey, a hunch based on "The Broadcasts", an invitation from Steven Anderson, or just a general suspicion of an influential local group, many roads lead to Sacred Word Ministries.

The Service

A Sacred Word service is a lively hour and a half. The church is packed, and the service consists of three readings from scripture, sermons from some of the elders, and lengthy musical interludes. Dancing, call and response, and outbursts are encouraged. For this service, Steven Anderson and Reuben Marshall (p. 133) are the elders leading the service.

Their sermons are tonal opposites. Steven's is about the importance of embracing the future, even in the face of tragedy. Reuben's is about living in the moment and enjoying hard-won victories. It gets the congregation talking, which the cell can pick up with a Wits + Streetwise test (Difficulty 3).

A win leads to a discussion about the recent disappearance of Lenny Wilson from services. Rumor has it Lenny got caught taking money to pay for his ailing wife, and Elders Steven and Reuben had to take it upon themselves to kick out their long-time friend in Christ. A critical win brings more details: Lenny's wife is dying of cancer in Davis Medical Center.

At some point during the service, the electronics fail. Perhaps the lighting gives out or the speakers blare at the wrong time. Some members of the congregation tell the others what's going on: the church had a recent renovation that went very badly, and the church is still trying to fix the problem. Any research with Global Access reveals a settlement out of court between Bailey

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Wires & Plumbing and Sacred Word Ministries for the botched job.

If this is the first time the cell has ever encountered Steven and Reuben, they introduce themselves to the cell after the service. If Steven invited them, he's delighted they came and sees this as an opportunity to bring them into the fold, which could solve a lot of his problems. Whatever's happened before, Steven is quiet and reserved and Reuben is boisterous and prone to talking over his fellow elder. Reuben gives them the full pitch, and a win on an Intelligence + Academics Test (Difficulty 2) lets the cell pick up on some non-Christian ideas in the pitch. Reuben's double-talk implies senior members of the church themselves have divine influence.

Office Hours

If the cell goes to Sacred Word when there's no service in session, the church is empty save Steven, Reuben, other elders quietly working in the offices, and Grace Howarth, a pleasant, retired lady who cleans the church, answers the phones, and does various other bits of admin work for Sacred Word. When Grace introduces the Hunters to Steven and Reuben, she mentions Lenny Wilson's daughter called by earlier ("poor girl, she's awful upset") and Grace thinks the elders should really talk to her.

If this is the first time the Hunters have met either elder, they give the Hunters an amiable welcome, though Steven audibly wonders why a group of people would stop by when there's no service. Reuben ignores him.

Reuben gives the Hunters the pitch for the ministry if this is the first time they've met him, and they have a chance to pick up on his wilder ideas, which the other elders neither reject nor correct. In the middle of the pitch, the power in the office goes out. After some muttering and cursing, Reuben gives them a word of advice: never hire Bailey & Sons Wiring and Plumbing if you want a renovation job you won't be paying for later. Global Access can find the court settlement with his signature on it.

If the Hunters follow up on "Lenny Wilson's daughter," both Reuben and Steven are visibly uncomfortable. They explain, reluctantly, that Lenny Wilson was a co-founder of the church. When his wife was diagnosed with cancer, he embezzled church funds to cover her care. They understand and sympathize (with an Intelligence + Subterfuge test, Steven sympathizes a lot more than Reuben) but the church rules are clear: Lenny Wilson had to leave the church,

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and his whole family with him. The sins of one reflect on the others.

Nobody in the church is about to go giving out the Wilsons' address, but if one of them distracts Grace Howarth with a Manipulation + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 2), another can find the church's address in the church's files (hard copy, not digital) with an Intelligence + Investigation test.

The Symbols

No matter when the cell visits the Sacred Word Ministries church, they always have a chance to examine their surroundings. An Intelligence + Occult test confirms the unique iconography all over the church matches the symbols they saw on Scott Schneider's walls. A critical win makes it clear it's no basic copy: whoever's committing these murders is a dedicated Sacred Word member.

The Holy Text

The cell can take the church's Bible from the pews without incident. Reuben hands them a fresh copy if he catches them doing so. Understanding the book requires an Intelligence + Academics test (Difficulty 2). A win reveals that while it's mostly an ordinary Bible some parts diverge hugely from Christian doctrine. It seems off even to a non-Christian. Every book save for the four gospels is printed in poor quality, and the same strange symbols as the Hunters saw on the walls occupy the page margins.

With these clear examples in hand, a Hunter could use the Library Edge to determine the symbols aren't Christian in nature. They're not anything at all. They follow a basic grammatical pattern, but they're not a language anyone, supernatural or not, is known to use. The same goes for any item with printed symbols the cell might bring back, from any part of the church.

The Secret Chamber

While looking through the church itself, the Hunters have a chance to find the secret chamber of the elders. A Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 4) reveals the presence of a secret door behind the chapel podium. If the cell can get there without being seen, a Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 5) unlocks the door. Doing this in the middle of a service or when elders outside the chamber are actively watching adds +1 Difficulty.

The first time the cell enters the secret chamber it's filled with elders performing a mock sacrifice. One of the elders lays on a makeshift cross while the others stab at him with blunt wooden daggers. Hunters who've looked at any of the corpses Sophie left see similarities. A copy of the *New Word Bible* is nearby, which the cell could take and analyze like one of the Bibles in the main hall of the church. Anyone with at least one dot in Occult recognizes it for the bunk it is, with no test necessary.

If the cell stays hidden with a Stamina + Stealth test (Difficulty 5), they witness the entire ritual. Getting caught ends in Steven Anderson throwing out the Hunters (and most likely leading to "Interference: Steven Anderson"), or the embarrassed and angry elders getting into a Physical Conflict with the cell. Though it's only a scuffle and never escalates beyond pushing and shoving. If the Hunters pull weapons the elders back down immediately.

Scene Connections

If the cell wants to follow up on Elder Wilson's wife, anyone in the congregation can tell them Tanya Wilson is undergoing treatment at "Davis Medical Center." If the Hunters decide to investigate Steven Anderson, the congregation or other elders tell them he spends much of his time volunteering at the Unchained Soul and could head into "The Shelter." If they want to know more about the church's contractor, they can go to "Bailey & Sons."

If the cell figures out Reuben Marshall is Sophie's next victim, move into his version of "Murders and Confrontations."

Davis Medical Center

If the cell learns about Tanya Wilson or follows a hunch they made after watching "The Broadcasts", they might want to pay a visit to the hospital.

Davis Medical Center is a private hospital with cutting-edge technology. It's a compact facility in midtown.

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Getting In

Davis Medical Center has strict visiting hours, from 3pm to 8pm. Any time outside of that window has a robust guard presence and staff ready to escort out any leftover visitors. Only two visitors are allowed per room, with the rest of the group asked to wait outside. If the cell is here to talk to Tanya, she and the hospital staff are open to members of Sacred Word visiting, though that's slowed to a trickle in recent weeks.

Otherwise, a Dexterity + Stealth test (for sneaking in), Manipulation + Subterfuge (to talk or bribe their way into the building), or Charisma + Medicine test (to convince staff that the Hunter belongs there), each Difficulty 4, gets the Hunters into the building.

Tanya and Sophie

If the cell arrives during regular visitor hours, Sophie is with her mother. They pass the time playing simple board games like snakes and ladders.

If this is the first time the cell has ever met Sophie, she assumes they're members of Sacred Word, and thanks them for coming to see her mother, "in spite of unpleasant circumstances." Tanya urges her daughter not to worry and says her father's name will be cleared in time.

If the Hunters ask what they mean, Sophie realizes that the cell aren't church members and refuses to speak further. A Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3) can open her up. On a win, she tells her side of the story, how "certain actors" in her church framed her father for embezzlement. On a critical win, she loses her composure and says she knows Reuben Marshall did it. Tanya rebukes her daughter if she hears that.

Tanya can't answer many questions about the Wall Scrawl Killer if the cell asks her but can confirm that the symbols are in fact "a very special set of imagery" for the church. A Wits + Insight test (Difficulty 2) brings the Hunters' attention to Sophie trying very hard to maintain her composure as her mother talks.

If Sophie's met the cell before and believes they suspect her, she stays quiet and lets the cell talk to her mother. She's picking out which Hunter to kill. Her priority is anyone who upsets her mother, followed by anyone who seems too clever.

Tanya and Georgina

If the Hunters visit Tanya outside visiting hours, Georgina Ortega (p. 132) is there, checking her vitals. Tanya gently ribs Georgina as she does so, referring to herself as a "pincushion." Georgina is embarrassed about this. Tanya explains the joke and how Georgina couldn't find her vein. Georgina brings up how angry Tanya's daughter Sophie was. Tanya scoffs.

As in the other version of this scene, Tanya can't answer many questions about the murders, but can confirm that the symbols written on the crime scenes are used in her ministry. Georgina suspects the cell

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might not belong there but is willing to let them be if they're not threatening her or the patients.

Scene Connections

If the cell hasn't been to the church yet, they might attend "Sacred Word." If Sophie plans to kill a Hunter, they run into "Interference: Sophie Wilson."

If the cell figures out Georgina Ortega is Sophie's next victim, you may want to move into her version of "Murders and Confrontations."

Interference: Joanna Torres

Joanna tries to keep the cell off the case so she can follow the murders to their conclusion.

False Evidence

Joanna is not above manipulating or outright planting evidence at a murder scene that points to the Hunters. This isn't the first time she's caught this team in the wrong place at the wrong time, it's not difficult to convince the rest of her squad there's a pattern.

If any Hunter has a previous criminal record, she insists it's relevant to the investigation. Certain events, like starting a fight at Bailey & Sons give her the opportunity she needs to put the Hunters in jail, at least for a while.

Raids

If Joanna knows the Hunters are closing in on Sophie she resorts to desperate measures. Using her authority as lead investigator, she'll declare the Hunters active suspects and get a police team to bring them in for formal questioning. From here on out, the Hunters can't do anything without having to look for a plainclothes cop observing their movements.

At high levels of Danger, Torres sends out a formal warrant for their arrest. The Hunters could face a raid at their homes, or even a safehouse.

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Interference: Aaron Lambert

Aaron tries to stop the cell from identifying the killer before he does.

Exposure

Early in the investigation, Aaron gets in touch with the cell and offers his assistance. He makes big claims about what he can bring to the investigation. After "The Broadcasts" he admits he's the one who's been playing the Wall Scrawl Killer's broadcasts. He implies he has contact with the killer, which is partially true. He's sent letters back to the email sending the video files, and Sophie's given very terse responses. Despite this, he doesn't have a lot that the Hunters can't figure out for themselves.

The purpose of this collaboration offer is to gain access to everything the cell knows about the case, so he can post it on his blog and social media and reap the kudos. The Hunters find him at crime scenes taking candid photos of the bodies and whatever might drive the most online engagement. He refers to the Hunters by their names if he knows them, which could inadvertently alert Joanna, Steven, or Sophie to their presence, identities, and activities.

Blackmail

At high levels of Danger, Aaron feels the cell isn't giving him enough credit for what he's brought to the team. If the cell refuses to do anything with him, he's furious that they're making progress while he's stuck speculating.

He turns his investigative eye on them. He knows very little of the supernatural, but he's aware that the Hunters try to remain hidden (assuming they do). Once he's uncovered evidence of their past exploits that look shocking or offensive to people who don't know about the supernatural, he gives the Hunters an ultimatum: give him all the info they have on the Wall Scrawl Killer case and let him handle it, or he'll release the info, their identities, and all the personal information he can uncover to the web.

Interference: Steven Anderson

During the hunt, Steven uses the power of his community to stop the cell from investigating or bring the Hunters into the ministry to keep the situation internal.

Community Cutoff

Steven is a well-respected man around the city. He's chummy with many influential people including politicians. Not everyone in the city is a member of Sacred Word Ministries, but just enough are in the congregation to take him seriously. Once he's aware the cell's investigating the murders, Steven uses those connections to cut off access to people and information.

It starts in small ways. A Hunter might find their favorite store suddenly puts their picture on a "do not sell to this person" board. Neither the cashier nor the manager will explain why but will call the police if they don't leave. A casual contact won't speak to the Hunter because suddenly their job is under threat.

The closer the cell gets, the more strings Steven pulls. A "clerical error" loses all records of a Hunter's rent, mortgage, or hotel charges. The news implicates a Hunter in an embarrassing story, and the error's never corrected. Members of the ministry start watching the cell and reporting their findings back to Elder Steven. He'll do whatever he can to make his point: someone wants the Hunters to back off.

Conversion

At high levels of Danger or if the cell proves very useful, Steven changes tactics. Steven tries to find any psychological emptiness in a Hunter's life and use it as a way in. If he can, he capitalizes on the fallout from his previous campaign of harassment.

Any cutoff suddenly reverses. The store that once banned the Hunter now invites them back with discounts. Now there's a schedule of Sacred Word's services in their grocery bag.

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Steven attempts to personally reach out to the cell. Unlike Sophie's attempts to push the cell away as Danger rises, Steven tries harder to embed himself into the cell's lives.

Interference: Sophie Wilson

After Sophie learns the Hunters have visited her school and the church (and she will learn; she still has friends in church), or when Danger reaches 5, she considers the Hunters an active threat. All attempts to scare them off or get them to understand her point of view have failed. If they won't back down, they're obviously agents of darkness. She knows what to do with agents of darkness.

Pick a Hunter who upset Sophie's mom, seems most likely to figure out her identity, or who's had the most contact with Sophie. That Hunter is her target.

Sophie plans this kill just like any of the others on her list. She observes her target in secret, getting a sense of their daily routines. The Hunter can spot Sophie's presence with a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 3). Once she's figured out an opportunity she can exploit, she goes for it. Sophie can strike anywhere the character is alone and there are walls to smear their blood all over.

When Sophie strikes, she wants the target to know something very bad is going to happen to them. Her appearance is heralded by a Christian hymn like "I, the Lord of Sea and Sky," which she blasts on any media in the area. She tries her best to open with a surprise attack.

Sophie's less dangerous than most supernatural creatures, but she's no pushover. As a human, she's immune to Repel the Unnatural, and an Artifact with the Shield perk isn't going to protect the Hunter. However, she still takes damage like a person, and while she's fast and strong, few people are stronger or faster than a bullet. Most importantly, she's not willing to fight to the death. This is an attack of opportunity, not a stop on the kill list. If she must choose between risking death and taking out a Hunter or getting to live and kill someone like Reuben Marshall, she'll choose the latter.

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Murders and Confrontations

Sophie Wilson tries to go through her kill list without getting caught or killed herself. This is a repeatable scene with at least four different variations.

It's possible if the cell can't put the clues together for the latest victim, they'll be killed "offscreen." If this happens, give your players an opportunity to learn about the murder and get on the scene quickly. This can be done through any contacts, allies, or even Aaron himself, who'll most likely livestream from the scene of the crime.

Sophie's murders get sloppier as they go, so it should be easier to identify her as the Wall Scrawl Killer as the body count rises, assuming the Hunters didn't take the option of rolling to uncover the killer's plans in "The Broadcasts."

Isabelle Khan

Isabelle takes a similar route home to Sophie. Sophie knows she and her former math teacher head to the same bus station before going their separate ways, and that's where she'll kill the cruel teacher who's made so many students' lives hell.

The murder occurs on a school day, after class ends. Sophie keeps her distance from her prey, keeping to the back of the bus and keeping her hoodie and weapon in her backpack. A Wits + Insight test (Difficulty 2) signals that Sophie's tailing someone and a critical win makes it clear Isabelle is her target.

Tailing the bus by car takes a Wits + Driving test (Difficulty 3). It's not a high-speed chase but keeping up with a constantly stopping bus in regular traffic is tougher than the average driver realizes. If the cell learns the bus route, they could get to the station before the bus does.

After waiting a few minutes in the station, Sophie heads outside to a security camera blind spot to put on her hoodie. Isabelle gets up to use the restroom, and Sophie casually follows her in and kills her. She scrawls the next version of her prayer on the bathroom walls.

If the cell catches Sophie before she enters the bathroom, she'll forget about killing Isabelle and instead call for help from security. She'll use that to make her escape.

If the cell stops her in the bathroom, she turns on them, trying to hurt them enough to drive them off, which gives Isabelle time to escape. If Sophie's not incapacitated or captured after three rounds, she flees the bathroom and hops on any bus leaving the station.

If this happened off screen, the Hunters can obtain the bus station security footage with a Manipulation + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 3) and catch a slim, blonde girl pulling off a gray hoodie as she walks rapidly out of the bus station. If the Hunters don't get the footage, Aaron does and is willing to share it with them unless he's decided to interfere in their investigation.

Al Bailey

Sophie knows where Al works thanks to the addresses on the lawsuit papers between his business and Sacred Word Ministries. That's where she'll kill the useless contractor who ripped off her beloved church.

The murder happens after Bailey's Wires and Plumbing closes for the day. Sophie takes the bus to a nearby stop and tries the building's side doors. One door is unlocked thanks to a handyman taking out the trash earlier. She walks into Al's office to kill him there. She scrawls the next portion of her prayer on the office walls.

The cell can thwart the murder by getting to Bailey's before Sophie does. Al won't believe he's a target (he doesn't even know who Sophie Wilson is), but with enough evidence or a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3), he accepts the Hunters are serious. He tells his staff they've got mandatory overtime and asks the Hunters to help him keep watch. Have one Hunter conveniently near the unlocked door Sophie uses to give them an opportunity to chase and catch her. She'll flee and try to hide in a nearby store. If the cell loses her, she'll take a bus ride back home and continue down her list.

The cell could also inadvertently thwart the murder by starting a fight in "Bailey & Sons." Sophie then finds the repair shop closed and taped off with police tape, so she moves on with her kill list. She'll circle back to Al in due course, but the Hunters will probably catch her before that point.

If this happened offscreen, the cell can get access to the shop's security footage without a test if they're on site before the cops, or with a Dexterity + Larceny

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test (Difficulty 4) otherwise. It shows a few glimpses of Sophie's face. Any analysis of the footage shows no supernatural power in effect.

Georgina Ortega

If Sophie's gotten to this point, she has several successful murders under her bel, and she believes the answer to her prayers is in sight. The time for subtlety is over. She's going to kill Georgina, her mother's barely competent nurse, at Davis Medical Center. In preparation, she's used her pull with members of the Sacred Word to get access to a law enforcement license plate database to find Georgina's car. The Hunters can find the database and the request through the Global Access Edge.

Sophie takes the bus to the hospital. She doesn't visit her mother. Instead, she sneaks into the parking garage. She makes sure Georgina's car is in the garage and waits. When Georgina ends her shift and returns to her car, Sophie kills her. She scrawls the next portion of her prayer on the inside of her car.

If the Hunters have already met Georgina at the hospital and she trusts them, they can convince her to not come to work for a while. Sophie gets Georgina's address from her colleagues at the hospital, claiming she wants to send her flowers to thank Georgina for caring for her mom. Sophie decides to kill her in her house in the suburbs. The cell, with Georgina's help, could set up a trap there.

If they don't know Georgina or she doesn't trust them, she's suspicious and fearful when the Hunters reach out to her, especially if they meet her in the hospital. She's seen the broadcast and fears she's the next target. Unless the cell can win a Manipulation + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3), Georgina hurries to her car, where Sophie is waiting for her. The cell then has a chance to rescue Georgina and fight or capture Sophie.

If this happened offscreen, they can find Georgina expressed fears on social media that she was the killer's next target, after seeing the video broadcast on WERT. She didn't name names, but she's repeatedly posted that one of her patients has a "deeply creepy" daughter with "serious mental issues." If the Hunters can access police reports, they learn Georgina's attempts to get help from law enforcement were dismissed, with the decision stemming from Detective Joanna Torres.

Reuben Marshall

At this point, Sophie is convinced she's unstoppable. Her prayer will come true, and no one will deny that she's about to perform a Christ-like miracle. She just needs one more body, and she knows where to get it.



BLUR THE LINES

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Sophie strikes during a Sunday service. The elders never changed the locks after the Wilson family were cut out of the church, and all the keys are in her house. In the middle of the service, as Reuben gives his sermon, Sophie approaches from behind. She attacks him but doesn't kill him, hurting him just enough to make him fall. She opens the door to the elders' secret chamber and invites the entire congregation to bear witness. She drags Reuben to the makeshift cross in the center of the chamber and kills him. She invites the other elders to write with her, which they will not.

This murder is a moment of pure chaos. Sophie has no regard for video recording, photography, or even if she'll make it out alive. She has faith that her miracle will set everything right. Meanwhile, several members of the congregation call the police.

The quietest way to thwart this murder is to prevent Sophie from getting to the church in the first place. While Sophie normally uses the bus to get to her murders, this time she drives her mother's car. For this murder, she wants everyone to know it's her. The cell could pursue her in a car chase, in which the Fleet or even the Drone Jockey Edge could come in handy. They could also arrive before Sophie does, and fight or capture her outside the church, the rest of the congregation unaware.

If the Hunters are in the church when Sophie strikes, the scene erupts into chaos. Some of the congregation flee while others rush to protect Elder Marshall. Getting to Sophie through the crowd before she drags Reuben into the secret chamber requires a Stamina + Athletics test (Difficulty 4).

Engaging with Sophie in this stage is dangerous. Depending on Danger, she could have a large bonus to her dice pools at nearly any time. Members of the congregation, especially the elders, are willing to help the Hunters take her down with a Charisma + Leadership test (Difficulty 4), but they're not skilled fighters. Sophie didn't come here to start a massacre but has no problem committing one in the name of a miracle.

This should not happen offscreen, and the cell should have every opportunity to take part in this. But, if it does, it's major news. Steven is dead, Joanna's outwardly horrified but secretly pleased that a fascinating case ended in such an explosive way, and Aaron's furious; not because of the deaths, but because Sophie "got stupid" before he could solve the case. Sophie's on the run and the Hunters can track her down.

Other Possible Victims

If Sophie becomes aware that Joanna Torres, Aaron Lambert, or Steven Anderson is seeking her out, she might add them to the kill list.

Joanna Torres: Sophie sees Joanna on news reports. Sophie's broadcast statement about her is "You are a wall in the way of divine justice. There is no safe haven for you." She'll track Joanna down to her single-room apartment just outside city limits and kill her.

Aaron Lambert: Aaron's in limited contact with Sophie by means of her broadcast tapes, and he's promoting her crimes as a scandal, not as justice. Sophie's broadcast statement about him is, "You cast a shadow over my divine light. You have already been dispersed." She sneaks into the WERT station as he's putting on the broadcast and kills him as it starts.

Steven Anderson: Sophie targets Steven if she comes to believe that he was in cahoots with Reuben to oust her father. He gets no special broadcast; she comes for him when it's time to kill Reuben and goes for a double murder-sacrifice.

Next Steps

The division between Parts Two and Three isn't as hard as between Parts One and Two, but the cell should have the following information:

- Sophie Wilson is the Wall Scrawl Killer and the Hunters' quarry. She will continue to kill unless stopped.
- Sophie possesses no supernatural powers.
- Not only is Sophie connected to a powerful church, but other parties want her to keep killing or don't want the Hunters to find her.

If the cell succeeds in incapacitating or capturing Sophie at any time during Part Two, they move on to Part Three.

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Part Three: The Long Dark Night of the Soul

Caught in a hunt with a deadly but human quarry, the cell faces a hard choice: what to do with a monster that's just as human as they are.

Setting Traps

Whatever the cell's feelings on treating a person like a quarry may be, stopping Sophie might be their only option. There seems to be no end to her murders, the police are actively enjoying watching her crime spree, and by now the cell might have seen a direct attack.

The cell could capture Sophie in several ways.

Thwarting Murders

If the Hunters intervene in any of Sophie's attempted murders in Part Two, they have a chance to capture her. Sophie is captured if the Hunters win a Strength + Brawl (for grappling), Strength + Melee (for using ropes or other restraining tools) test (Difficulty 3) during a physical conflict. They can also capture her if her Health track is Impaired. She falls unconscious, and the cell can bring her into their custody.

Finding Weak Spots

If the cell knows places Sophie goes outside of her murders, such as school, the church, or even the hospital, they can set up an ambush. If confronted in a public setting, Sophie doesn't lose her cool, but does try to escape at the first opportunity. A win on a Manipulation + Intimidation test (Difficulty 5) convinces her to stay put. Otherwise, the Hunters might have to chase her down or fight her.

At Her Front Door

Sophie doesn't have a secret killer's hideout. Her father's been so depressed that if she makes sure he gets up to eat, she has free rein over the house, and he doesn't ask what she's up to. The Wilsons' expensive home in the suburbs isn't listed in public records, but Global Access can find it. The Hunters could even turn to the ministry for help. Even if he's been forcefully opposed to the cell during the story, Steven Anderson could give them Sophie's address if they can convince him she is the killer and they promise to bring her to him, not the police.

At her home, Sophie tries to stay calm when the Hunters come for her. She's armed with her knife. She tries to enlist her father's help in sending them away. If the cell provides any credible evidence that Sophie is the Wall Scrawl Killer, her father calls the police. In a panic, Sophie attacks her father with the knife, giving the Hunters an opportunity to capture her and get her out of the house.

Decision Time

Once Sophie's captured, she's at their mercy. The next three scenes are options the cell could use to end her killing spree: killing her, turning her in, or even introducing her to the hunt.

Catch and Kill

Killing Sophie is a decision that shouldn't be made lightly. The Hunters might (rightly) conclude the elders of the Sacred Word will do everything in their power to keep her out of court, let alone prison. She's never charged with the murders. Her death would be seen as a random, tragic end to a well-beloved member of her community, not justice. If Steven helped the Hunters capture her, killing her is betraying him, for

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whatever that's worth.

Then again, Sophie shows no remorse for her killings, and if people are willing to keep her out of prison, who's to say that she won't do this again? (Spoiler: she absolutely will do this again. And again, and again). Sometimes you have to follow the spirit of the Reckoning, not the letter. Depending on the Hunters' Drives and the Chronicle Tenets, this could easily push one or more of the cell into Despair.

Sophie's execution is a grim affair. She dies with no resistance, only a prayer.

Catch and Release

If the cell calls the police, they arrive quickly. Joanna's at the forefront, doing her best to hide her fury that the cell's not only done her job but also made sure she'll never know whether Sophie's miracle could happen. Sophie doesn't resist arrest. She's confident her divine spirit and her congregation will see her through. She's right.

If the cell brings her to Steven, he berates her, using the philosophy of her faith to humiliate her in front of the cell. Kowtowed, she accepts what's coming. The police arrive soon after. If the cell asks him whether he'll make sure she faces justice for her crimes, he won't answer. In fact, Sophie faces no consequences whatsoever: the Sacred Word doesn't want their names attached to a murder case and they have Sophie at liberty again in less than a day.

Catch and Drive

Hunters unwilling to kill a high school senior or hope a compromised justice system will do what's right might reach another solution. A Hunter doesn't need to worry about the blurred lines of the Reckoning and vigilantism if the would-be vigilante is brought into the Reckoning.

Convincing her to redirect her crusade against real creatures of darkness is an arduous task. Unless the Hunters have access to an Edge, object, or place that would make the existence of the supernatural undeniable it takes months of conversation and training to open her eyes to the hunt. Bringing a person like Sophie into the Hunt might also push a Hunter into Despair.

Sophie will never be great at telling the difference between a monster and a person she doesn't like, but once she's a Faithful Hunter there'll be fewer of both in the world.

Loose Ends

Whatever decision the cell makes, it brings the Wall Scrawl Murders to an end. Sophie is either dead, quietly awaiting an opportunity to kill again, or hunting brand new prey.

The Hunters Killed Sophie

If the Hunters killed Sophie:

- Furious that his ticket to fame is gone, Aaron posts a long screed online about how the cell "screwed him over." A supernatural creature (perhaps Queen Amaryllis, from **Outsiders**) gets in contact with him, with some ideas on how to take revenge.
- Joanna's botched investigation can't pin the murders on Sophie, but she can pin Sophie's murder on the Hunters. They must either go on the run or expose Joanna's malfeasance, and the Sacred Word makes it hard to do the latter. This is a great time to go to the northern wilderness of Canada to lie low, taking the Hunters into **Alone in the Dark**.
- Sophie's unquiet spirit returns from the dead, and the Wall Scrawl Killer becomes the Wall Scrawl Ghost. The Hunters have to kill her one more time.

The Hunters Gave Sophie to The Authorities

If the cell chooses to turn Sophie in to the police:

- Unwilling to deal with further embarrassment, Steven convinces the ministry's elders to reinstate the Wilsons. Using the last of his good will, he pulls strings to keep Sophie out of prison. Sophie's now a zealous enemy of the cell.
- Sophie's mother dies in the hospital. Sophie attends her funeral, then disappears

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- Sacred Word Ministries schisms, some of the congregation unable to accept the elders covering for a murderer amongst their flock. A sorcerer takes advantage of the chaos and recruits ex-members, turning a mundane cult into a supernatural one.

Sophie Takes Up the Hunt

If the cell opened Sophie's eyes to the supernatural, she could develop in several different directions:

- Sophie never acquires the Drive to become a full Hunter but signs on with an org like Re:Venge, MonsterX, or Neto International. She quickly rises through their ranks; or
- Sophie becomes aware of the myriad supernatural ways her mother could stay alive. She hunts monsters and harvests blood and organs from their bodies and feeds them to her mother in secret; or
- Sophie acquires the Drive, becomes a fully-fledged Hunter, and forms a cell of her own with members of Sacred Word Industries. Her cell's successes would make her invaluable to the Hunter community if not for her very loose definitions as what counts as a "monster."

On the Road Again

If this story is part of the **Lines Drawn in Blood** chronicle, it could connect to other stories in these ways:

- Joanna Torres or Aaron Lambert hear about the strange events nearby in Unity and pass that information discreetly to the cell, leading them into **Pressure Test**.
- Neto International, having noticed the cell's work in solving employee Toby Schneider's murder, offers them a contract in Rawlins, Missouri for **Outsiders**.
- Research into weird murders over the course of their investigation in Omaha alerts the Hunters to bizarre and bloody patterns in Yellowknife, for **Alone in the Dark**.

Allies & Antagonists

This section contains descriptions of major characters in this story. For any named characters in the story not mentioned here, assume a General Difficulty of 3/2 and 4 dice in all pools.

Sophie Wilson

Sophie Wilson knows she is blessed. She was born to Lenny and Tanya Wilson, loving and supportive parents who also stood at the head of a faith bringing light to a dark world. They awakened souls to the true divinity within their flocks, and they brought her in at a very early age. Some of the other elders were disturbed by this. Tradition made it clear that children should never stand within the inner circle, let alone among the elders, but her parents didn't care and neither did Sophie.

The *New Word Bible* was her everything, and she took all its proclamations literally. She poured herself into everything she set herself on achieving in academics, athletics, and religion. Everything that kept her from top grades or uncontested victory wasn't just a setback, it was an active attack from dark forces seeking to snuff out the living god she wanted to become. The darkness took so many forms: the unwashed masses who rejected their inner divinity, secular politicians and workers who thwarted her ministry's mission, even cruel teachers, and drug-peddling wastes of life.

Sometime ago, the dark forces gathered for their greatest attack yet. First, they came for her mother. Occasional breathlessness and coughing were identified as late-stage lung cancer, spreading rapidly to other organs. Then, they attacked her father. Someone accused him of stealing funds to pay for her mother's care. All her pleas and evidence to the contrary fell on deaf ears, and when Elder Reuben broke the news, she knew that he set up her father's expulsion.

With her mother dying in the hospital and her father bedridden with grief, Sophie turned to her *New Word Bible* once more, her only source of stability in an evil world. There, she found the passage that brought the clarity she sought: "Who are your enemies to you but offal for the sacrifice? The blood of God is

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within you, but within them is the blood of the Earth. Let your heart's desire cry out through the blood of the Earth."

She knew what had to be done. The mock sacrifices in the inner chamber were practice for the real thing, which would be the only way to burn the literal cancer out of her mother and the metaphysical cancer out of the ministry. She needed to undertake the greatest sacrifice; the most powerful prayer ever devised. They call her the Wall Scrawl Killer, but she knows who she really is a loyal daughter and a god approaching apotheosis.

Sophie Wilson is an 18-year-old white woman. Outside of work, she keeps her blonde hair in a ponytail and enjoys wearing blouses and long skirts. When she kills, she hides her features beneath a large gray hoodie, dark jeans, and sneakers. She kills with a large chef's knife (+1 Aggravated Health damage).

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 5, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Athletics (Chases) 8, Melee (Knives) 8, Stealth (Ambushes) 8

Notes: In public life, Sophie Wilson is the perfect image of Christian living: generous, kind, and forgiving to a fault. Those who get closer to her find a streak of condescension and disdain beneath her congeniality. In truth, Sophie finds fault in every person she meets, save for her mother and father. She collects grudges like some people collect stamps.

When hunting, she's merciless and unyielding. She pushes her athletic ability to the limit and won't let any witnesses survive if she can help it. Her preferred *modus operandi* is to stab a person to death then desecrate their face with her blade or just the bottom of her boot.

Sophie's so dedicated to her mission that she has a motivation not unlike that of a Hunter. Once per scene, she may add dice to her pool as if she were accessing Desperation dice with a Drive. At the beginning of the story, she has access to a +1 die bonus, which increases equal to Danger. This bonus applies to both physical and social conflicts.

Aaron Lambert

Aaron Lambert loves mysteries, especially real-life ones. Missing person cases, unsolved robberies, and financial fraud fill his heart with joy, but nothing gets his blood pumping more than serial killers. He keeps a well-maintained blog about them, where he also speculates on possible serial killer cases across the country. To get closer to stories as they happen, he took up journalism when he went to college and currently has an internship at WERT, a local TV station.

The Wall Scrawl murders are a dream come true. Finally, a real serial killer case just outside his front door! Sure, interns don't get to take part in investigations, but that's never stopped him before. In high school, sneaking into crime scenes was his specialty. It's almost nostalgic. He hopes he can help the online communities trying to solve the murders by providing some in-the-field footage.

What he'd really like to do is solve the crime himself. He knows all the stories, all the profiles, and every kind of murder pattern. He's exactly the kind of hero this true crime story needs.

Aaron Lambert is a white man in his mid-20s. When he's "on the job," he's never without a pair of rubber gloves, a digital camera, and his lucky gray flat cap

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Stealth 6, Etiquette 6, Subterfuge (Innocence) 7

Notes: Aaron sees the whole situation as one big game. He's aware people are suffering and that this is a dangerous situation, but the thrills outweigh any human factor. He's good at hiding that, but every so often his "nervous grimace" looks a bit too much like a grin.

Aaron has a gift for appearing in the worst place at the worst time. Once per session, unless it's a heavily guarded location or impossible to get to, Aaron can appear sight unseen wherever a Hunter is. Detecting him in the shadows is a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 4.

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Joanna Torres

Joanna Torres is tired. When she was a kid, she wanted to be a cop. She spent years reaching for the brass ring, and finally got it as the lead investigator on a homicide squad in the Omaha Police Department. All her dreams became ash in her mouth. The other departments are useless. Her own department's investigations take too long and grow too cold. Every month, she feels like she must tell another grieving family they'll get no closure.

Even her initial excitement over being put on the Wall Scrawl Murderers has fizzled out. She's discovered that Sacred Word Ministries is pushing back on the case, and it's sending the investigation into a tailspin. Her sergeant is looking into getting the FBI's support, so not only is the case compromised, but it also won't be hers in a few weeks.

While she waits for the case to collapse or change hands, she's undertaken a personal investigation into why Sacred Word would push back in the first place. Analyzing hours of their media is giving her some ideas. The scrawls match symbols that show up in some of the ministry's imagery. The emphasis on sacrifice is far heavier than other denominations. Could it be possible that the killer is a member, and trying to perform a holy sacrifice of their own? Could it *work*? The thought of it has her mind racing in new and exciting ways, something she hasn't felt since she first joined the force.

Perhaps there's a way to satisfy her curiosity and keep the feds at bay. It wouldn't be the first time a murder's pinned on the wrong person for a time. Why not pin it on someone who probably should be in jail anyway? That buys her time to see what the killer hopes to accomplish. Maybe, just maybe, Joanna will get to see a miracle.

Joanna Torres is a Mexican American woman in her late 40s. She has a stocky build. Her black, naturally curly hair is unkempt. Her brown eyes have heavy bags under them.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 5, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms 7, Intimidation (Interrogation) 6, Investigation 7

Notes: Joanna hides her exhaustion with a forceful and belligerent manner. Everyone who doesn't get with the program is an obstacle to knock down. Beneath it all is a sense of justice and faith that's bleeding out of her, day by day.

Joanna might be burnt out, but she can still strike fear into the heart of someone in the interrogation room. In a social conflict, her threats and insults have a +2 Superficial Willpower damage bonus when confronting a target alone.

Steven Anderson

He's not the man on the TV or the one whose clips go viral on social media but show his picture to nearly all of the congregation, and they'll recognize Elder Steve on sight. His flock know him as a kind and patient man. Those in the higher echelons of the ministry respect him for his wise interpretations of the *New Word Bible* and regularly seek his counsel.

In truth, he's not nearly the man of faith that everyone believes he is. He used to bet. Like Lenny and Reuben, his father brought him into the faith slowly so that when he entered the inner circle, he was a true believer. Things changed when his father passed on his share of the leadership to him. Maybe it was the realities of running the business portions of the ministry, or perhaps it was getting to read his father's notes on the creation of the *New World Bible* and finding it a bunch of psychedelic-induced ramblings. His faith in the idea of an inner divinity within himself and others isn't gone, he feels that his parents couldn't have passionately believed in something that didn't have a sliver of truth, but he sees himself as an agnostic in a pack of zealots.

What keeps him going is the sense of community he, Lenny, and Reuben have built, which he'll protect with all his strength. He likes being a leader, even if it means being the leader of liars, and he genuinely cares about the congregation. So, when an anonymous figure in the inner circle accused Lenny of stealing from the till, Steven was the one who expedited Wilson's expulsion from the ministry.

Steven's been worried about the Wall Scrawl

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murders since the very beginning. Andrew Campbell was a regular in the shelters Steve volunteers at and seeing a portion of the language his father helped create splattered on alley walls shocked him to his core. Not only is this an awful act of violence, it threatens to expose and destroy the community he's led for so long. He's taken on the tasks of suppressing all secular investigations and engaging in his own.

Steven Anderson is a light-skinned Black man in his early 50s. His brown eyes are sunken. He's clean cut and dresses modestly.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 6, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Performance (Preaching) 8, Occult 6, Politics 6

Notes: Steven Anderson speaks with a calm and soothing demeanor, which shifts once he realizes he's not in control of the conversation or the situation. When that happens, he leans on his authority and importance and if that doesn't work, he implies he'll use the force of his community to get what he wants.

Elder Steve is very good at hiding his true intentions. Once per scene, any attempt to read him for hidden motives is Difficulty 5.

The Victims

Sophie has a lengthy kill list. Three of the victims listed here are already dead when *Blur the Lines* begins, two before the story's events and one as the inciting incident. These victims have descriptions in case the Hunters research them, but do not have any dice pools. The remaining five are presented in the order Sophie targets them. If the Hunters figure out that Sophie is their quarry quickly, they get to save some of these lives. In this difficult story, that's one thing they can feel good about.

Aaron Lambert, Joanna Torres, and Steven Anderson are also viable targets, should Sophie determine them as threats.

Victim 1: Andrew Campbell

Andrew Campbell served in the Iraq War and the conflicts in its aftermath and came home to nothing. The recession took what little security he had left, and he's spent over a decade living in homeless settlements in and around Omaha.

Andrew became Sophie's first victim because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. When she was on the prowl, working up the courage to hurt someone, he was the one who asked for spare change for a bus ride. She said no and her tone made him angry. Against his better judgment, he yelled at her, and that gave her the permission she needed to strike. After a long scuffle that led the two into an alley, Sophie got the upper hand and stabbed Andrew to death. She wrote the first part of her prayer on the alley walls but was frightened by a passerby before completing it.

Andrew was a white man in his early 40s. He never went without a large winter jacket, one of the few possessions from his earlier years that he still had.

Victim 2: Melissa Weber

A car accident destroyed Melissa Weber's life, and Sophie Wilson ended it. Made homeless by sky-high medical bills, Melissa was sleeping in an encampment in Northern Omaha when Sophie arrived on the scene. Emboldened by Andrew's murder, she came to the encampment to finalize her "target practice."

Melissa's murder was quicker but no less violent. This time, Sophie finished the first portion of her prayer, written on the canvas of Melissa's tent. A resident's dog alerted the encampment, but by the time they got to the tent, Sophie was already gone.

Melissa was a white woman in her mid-30s. She had a distinctive limp in her right leg and notable scarring around her jaw and eyes.

Victim 3: Scott Schneider

Scott Schneider was a fellow student at Carter Preparatory School. Sophie hated him from the bottom of her heart, which was a surprise to him since he barely knew her.

His parents came from rough lives and used what they

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had to ensure that he and his little sister Katie wouldn't have to take the same paths they did for economic stability. They told Scott horror stories of what they went through just to have a nice mid-sized apartment in a nice part of the city but as much as he tried to follow in their footsteps he kept getting into trouble.

At first, he only used stimulants to help with demanding schoolwork. Then came the marijuana to help take the edge off after the stimulants. He used his extra cash to get a bigger supply, which he'd sell to a few close friends, then some not-as-close friends, and then a good portion of the Carter junior and senior class. The track-and-field team, sans Sophie, were regular customers.

It was good money, but once actual gangsters and mobsters wanted to start bringing him into their network, he got scared and started looking for a way out. Thanks to Sophie, he never got the chance.

Scott is an 18-year-old white man with curly red hair. He was tall but stood with a hunch and liked making himself look less conspicuous.

Victim 4: Isabelle Khan

Isabelle Khan is an Algebra teacher at Carter Preparatory School, where she's worked for over thirty years. She's known for two things: being the faculty sponsor of the yearbook club, and the mean streak she has while teaching. She singles out poorly performing students, publicly berating them when passing out graded exams and spending time during class to mock their homework assignments in the guise of "learning from mistakes." She's had multiple complaints and a few reprimands but keeps her job regardless.

Sophie was never on the receiving end of her mockery. In fact, she was one of her prized students. But she witnessed Ms. Khan mock so many people, and she could barely swallow the rage she felt in those moments. Now she can bring a little light to the world by murdering Ms. Khan, she can let loose that rage.

Isabelle is a Pakistani woman in her late-40s with dark brown eyes and long, black hair. She's rarely seen without her leather briefcase.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 2, Mental 4, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Etiquette 5, Intimidation 6, Academics 6

Victim 5: Al Bailey

Al Bailey is the head of Bailey & Sons Wires and Plumbing, the front for an organized crime ring. It presents itself as a repair service so small and dedicated to quality that even its owner is on call, a claim disputed by its multiple poor online reviews. Hiring them to help renovate Sacred Word Ministries' flagship church in hopes of saving money was a choice the congregation quickly regretted. Talk of a lawsuit dissipated after threats and intimidation from the criminals behind the business. It's an embarrassing ordeal the congregation would rather forget, but Sophie wants to settle the score.

Al is a very tall white man in his mid-40s with gray eyes. His scalp is clean shaven.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 3, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Craft 4, Subterfuge 5, Streetwise 5

Victim 6: Georgina Ortega

Georgina is a per-diem nurse who takes shifts at the hospital Tanya Wilson stays in. She was assigned to check in on Tanya while Sophie was visiting, and what was supposed to be an ordinary blood draw turned into a stressful, painful experience when Georgina had trouble finding a vein. When it was over, Georgina apologized profusely, and Tanya forgave her. Sophie never forgot. As far as she was concerned, that was no mere mistake, but the influence of dark powers mocking her mother's state.

Georgina's taken a few more shifts at the hospital since and is on a first-name basis with Tanya. She's never forgotten the look in Sophie's eyes when it happens, and hopes she never has to see that look ever again.

Georgina is a short Dominican woman in her early 30s. Her brown hair is in a bob, and her hands shake heavily when she's scared.

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Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Mental 3, Social 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Persuasion 4, Awareness 5, Medicine 6

Victim 7: Reuben Marshall

Reuben Marshall sees Sacred Word Ministries as his ticket to wealth and comfort.

Reuben never shared his father's faith but saw the opportunity that came with leadership of a big, generous church. He bided his time and eventually gained a seat in the ministry's inner circle. He has the mayor's ear, his name in the public's mouth, and a pool of free money to draw on at his leisure, but he's getting tired of having to put up pretenses. Sure, he's got a good thing going, but he's sure he'd have an even better deal if the ministries dumped the "inner god" thing and changed the ministry into a regular, Evangelist megachurch.

Tanya's illness gave him the opportunity to set his plans for the ministry in motion. All it took was an anonymous accusation of embezzlement directed at Lenny. Now he's gone, Reuben believes it won't take much more to get Steven to help him reformulate the ministry. He hadn't counted on Sophie figuring out his deceit when he broke the news to her and her father. No matter how many people Sophie kills, Reuben's last on her list, the greatest sacrifice of them all.

Reuben is a white man in his mid-50s with an aged but athletic physique. His hair is parted to the left, and it's obvious that he puts quite a bit of money into his wardrobe.

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 4, Social 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Leadership 6, Finance 6, Occult 5 ■



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CHAPTER FOUR:
ALONE IN THE DARK

"Ancient stars in their death throes spat out atoms like iron which this universe had never known. ... Now the iron of old nova coughing vivifies the redness of our blood."

- Howard Bloom

A nest of vampires moves into Yellowknife, Canada and slowly spreads its influence through a religious blood cult. The Hunters must succeed where the local resistance has failed.

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Home Awa

The House Where no One Lives

Seco

Saints Preserve Us

A Nice Friendly Chat

Hard Sell

Heart to Heart

Gather in His Name

Nowhere to Run

The Carpenter's Nest

Nana Werther's Nest

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CONTENT WARNINGS

There's a lot of blood in this story. There's also a lot of manipulation and addiction (to vampire blood). If gore is a problem, keep descriptions light on detail. It's difficult to remove the theme of addiction entirely, but it may be more comfortable to replace it with a supernatural compulsion. The story features a damaged parent-child relationship that went sour after the young adult came out as nonbinary to their parent. Players have an opportunity to repair this relationship during play, but if the subject's off limits have Andie and Bruce Dierbeck estranged for some other reason; maybe the two have political differences, or a death in the family (or divorce) pushed them apart.

The Hunt

Yellowknife is a city of roughly 20,000 people. It's the capital city of the Northwestern Territories. It's known for an excellent view of the aurora borealis nearly every night. It's a lonely place that juts out in an otherwise untamed frontier territory dominated by nature.

It's also slowly being taken over by a nest of vampires.

The vampires are turning mortals into blood thralls by replacing the wine at religious services with their blood. Those who drink from this cup soon abandon their lives and come to a cult called Blood of the Lamb. They are further broken down to become quiet servants to the will of these ageless creatures.

The good news is that the vampire infestation of the city is not yet complete. The cult is growing but there are still those in the city who want to fight back. Some need more help than others. And, if the Hunters are willing, monsters might be convinced to help fight other monsters.

The bad news is that the nest knows Hunters are in town. A local cell sprang up to fight the vampires and was betrayed by one of their own. The Hunters must pick up their investigation, discover the vampires and their weaknesses and eliminate them before it is too late.

This story is written in a floating scene format. Each scene provides clues that lead into other scenes until the Hunters and vampires face off once and for all.

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Story Structure

Alone in the Dark consists of three parts.

PART ONE: NORTHERN LIGHTS, DARK CITY
the cell investigates the murder of the last cell of Hunters to operate there and meets some minor threats to the city: a new vampire (and former Hunter), and a police chief under the thumb of monstrous forces.

➤

PART TWO: THE LAMB LIES DOWN IN YELLOWKNIFE
The cell plays a cat and the Hunters find out just how tight the vampires' hold is on the town and identify their prey. If they play their cards right, they can build up significant local support.

➤

PART THREE: RED AND WHITE ALL OVER
a snowstorm gives the cell cover while they hunt down the nest of vampires, or makes them sitting ducks while the monsters close in on them.

The final chapter introduces a wildcard element. An unexpected snowstorm sweeps through Yellowknife and locks the city down. It's an opportune moment for the Hunters to strike. If they do, they can take out each vampire individually. If they wait until after the snow, the vampires come to them and attack all at once.

Genre

Alone in the Dark is a survival horror. The vampires of Yellowknife are the most dangerous foes the cell will face in **Lines Drawn in Blood**, without question. The Hunters are alone a long way from help and surrounded by enemies.

The more they learn about what's happening in Yellowknife, the more worried they should be about making it out alive.

The Quarry

Vampires have moved into Yellowknife. More precisely, a small, abandoned church on the wintery outskirts of town. The central nest is located in an old church called Blood of The Lamb. Here the leader of the nest holds sway over the mortals he's ensnared with the power of his blood. The Vicar leads two other vampires residing in Yellowknife.

The Vicar, as he calls himself, dresses in a mishmash of religious raiment taken from various Christian faiths. His piercing eyes draw out the secrets of anyone he looks upon. Once someone drinks his blood, they gladly unburden their souls, and he uses those secrets to control their lives. The Vicar is a beautiful monster that's wrapped itself in the trappings of faith to justify its actions.

The Vicar reaches out to the community through Nana Werther. She attends religious services throughout the city to find people she can enthrall and control by making them consume either the Vicar's blood or her own or charity events where she can slip her blood into the potluck. In front of mortals, she's the perfect image of the churchgoing old woman: demure and smiling with just a hint of sassiness. It's all a predator's mask.

When trouble comes to Blood of the Lamb, the vampires have a blunt instrument to fix it called The Carpenter. This vampire has barely changed from the night he was turned. His tall, lean build hides surprising power in the same what that his chunky decades-old eyeglasses hide murderous eyes. His name comes from the weathered tool belt he wears, full of tools caked with the blood of his many, many victims. The Carpenter never bites anyone on the neck: he prefers to loudly lick and suck the blood off of the screwdriver he just stabbed someone with as if it were an ice cream cone melting on a hot summer day.

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DUDE, WHERE'S MY ARGOT?

If you're a fan of **Vampire: The Masquerade** you may be wondering why we're not defining our vampires by the terms of that game.

We deliberately chose to avoid recognizable terminology for a few reasons. One, we didn't want to have **Hunter: The Reckoning** Storytellers feel like they have to buy a different game. Two, Hunters aren't aware of those terms and even if they were, they would probably be applied incorrectly. Three, players who know the world of the Kindred might be able to surmise easier ways to put down these vampires without doing the legwork and skipping over many of the investigation scenes we've included here.

Individual Storytellers can season this case to taste based on their familiarity with **Vampire**. It's easier to add in material than remove. Part of the appeal of Hunter is seeing what the world of the monsters looks like from the perspective of mortals. But don't underestimate the joy of surprising overly knowledgeable players with some sort of monster trick that they weren't expecting.

Complicating Factors

Blood of the Lamb is not the only challenge to the Hunters in Yellowknife. Not only are there two other vampires in the city, but the local police are susceptible to the influence of The Vicar's blood cult.

Law enforcement in Yellowknife is handled by the world famous Royal Canadian Mounted Police, also known as The Mounties. G Division, which overlooks the organization's operations in the Northwest Territories, is headquartered in the city. The usual mayhem and violence caused by hard-hitting Hunters would be difficult enough to handle in a city so valuable to the Canadian government, but Blood of the Lamb has complicated it further. Andie Dierbeck is under the spell of The Vicar's blood thrall and a member of the cult. Their father, Bruce, is the Chief Inspector of Yellowknife. Until he can get Andie to safety, he'll cover up crimes committed by the cult and come down hard on any Hunters skulking around in his city.

Caleb Loudermilk was part of the local cell investigating Blood of the Lamb. Caleb got too close, too quickly, but was surprised when The Vicar offered him a chance to betray his fellow Hunters in exchange for being turned. Caleb accepted and led his cell into an ambush. Caleb is on his own adjusting to his new condition without much guidance. This is part of The Vicar's plan. If Caleb is hunted and destroyed by any remaining Hunters, The Vicar hopes they will assume the threat is over and leave Blood of the Lamb to quietly take control of Yellowknife.

What The Vicar doesn't realize is that there was already a vampire in Yellowknife when they moved in. A vampire blood sorcerer named LeChance had dwelled here for decades, enjoying the isolation and privacy and the ready supply of food in the form of tourists to the city. LeChance doesn't like his quiet existence stirred up by The Vicar's takeover of the city. LeChance might be willing to strike a deal with Hunters to help them take out Blood of the Lamb if they agree to leave him alone in exchange.

Besides the isolation, two other elements make Yellowknife an ideal place for vampires to build a nest. The emergency services network has malfunctioned for years. There are multiple examples of people calling 911 for help and being misrouted to the wrong need, such as a fire call being sent to the hospital, a police call sent to the fire department and so on. That's likely the fault of the lowest bidding service provider not caring enough to fix a system they built, but it could just as easily be LeChance's work or the symptom of another sinister conspiracy.

The other factor is Yellowknife's proximity to the Arctic Circle. This makes the evenings in winter months far longer than normal and also offers a period of midnight sun during the summer. Not only does that mess with the habits of a typical vampire but the city is known as one of the best places to see the Northern Lights on a regular basis: tourists come and go... or sometimes come and never leave. (Storytellers are encouraged to check out *30 Days of Night* by Steve Niles to see a major inspiration for this story. The comic series is preferable to the movie.)

The scientific explanation of the aurora comes down to disturbances in the planet's magnetosphere. They become ionized and display brilliant colors as they discharge this energy. What effects could this have on vampires? Only Sebastian LeChance may know

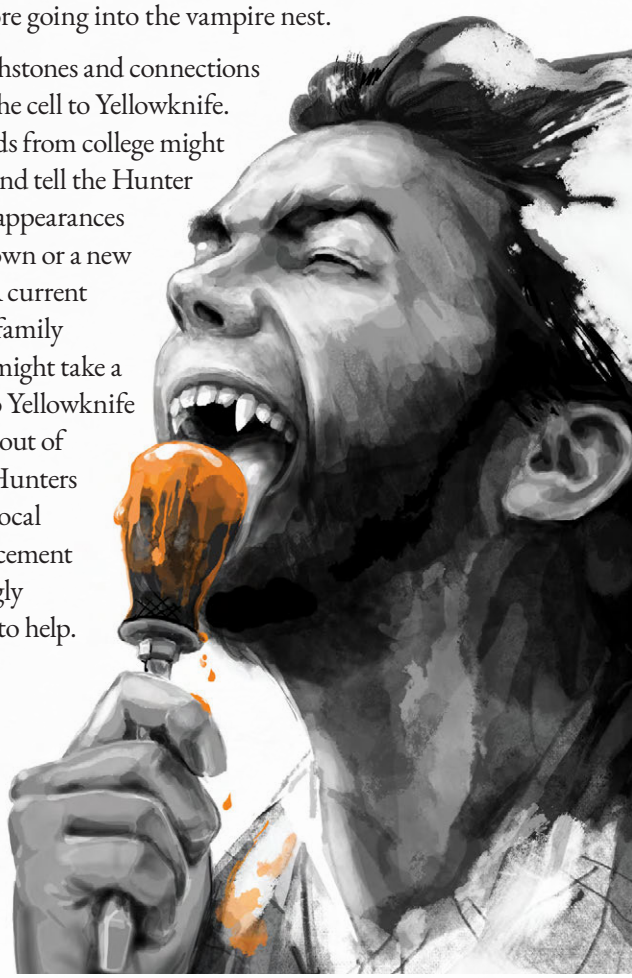
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and he's unlikely to share this secret with the Hunters. At the very least, on those nights when the lights are the brightest, the dull glow of a bestial vampire's eyes may match that strange flicker and make their appearance all the more unsettling.

Red Flags

Getting the cell to a remote location like Yellowknife might take some work. The Hunters might pick up on some threads from earlier hunts in this book or the Storyteller can offer one of the hooks bel¡ow to get them on the plane. Some of these are built as cold hooks to draw players in directly, while others work best when they are woven into earlier hunts to bring to fruition here.

- One Hunter survived the Blood of the Lamb ambush. Teri Thompson is the only local Hunter to know the truth of what the blood cult is up to. She's been damaged physically and mentally by the experience but she's willing to tell her story to a new cell in the hopes that they'll succeed where her cell failed. If any of the Hunters are known publicly as ghost hunters or experts on the supernatural, Teri reaches out to them. For more information on what happened, see "Second Shift."
- Numerous corporate and governmental orgs are interested in Yellowknife, but they can't head in with guns blazing. It might be a challenge to get clearance because of the city's importance to the government of Canada. It's doubly difficult for US authorities, who have no jurisdiction there. It might be a logistical pain to get a properly set up operations base to the remote city; this is why corporate orgs like Aurum Industries (see **Pressure Test** and **Outsiders**) aren't sending their own teams in. A representative appears to the Hunters with an offer to go to the city in exchange for a pressing need, be it money, equipment, the ever-popular expunged criminal records, or help with another ongoing case. If it's Thomas Vogel (see **Pressure Test**), he resents having to ask the cell for help with every bone in his body.
- The Vicar's nest is a fully functioning unit when it arrives in Yellowknife, which means it had to come from somewhere. The vampires might have left on their own accord or could have been pushed out by monsters in control of a city. In this case, one of the Hunters may have already clashed with The Vicar, Nana Werther or The Carpenter earlier in their history. If news reaches them of a strange crime that matches the style of a monster, they thought they killed, it's likely enough to get them to convince the rest of the cell to take a field trip and make sure the monster is dead once and for all. The Vicar's nest may have been responsible for the murder of Lucas Shaffer as they passed through Rawlins (see **Outsiders**), in which case he'll have similar injuries to the Carpenter's victims.
- Caleb Loudermilk also provides a personal connection to the case. He could have been a partner, a lover or a rival who reached out to the Hunters shortly before his betrayal of the local cell. This could be a habit shared by Caleb and the Hunter to make sure they are remembered before a hunt, or it could be a shocking expression of Caleb's fears before going into the vampire nest.
- Use Touchstones and connections to bring the cell to Yellowknife. Old friends from college might live here and tell the Hunter about disappearances around town or a new church. A current friend or family member might take a holiday to Yellowknife and drop out of contact; Hunters will find local law enforcement surprisingly reluctant to help.



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Part One: Northern Lights, Dark City

The Hunters make their way to the isolated city of Yellowknife, Canada. A religious cult calling itself Blood of the Lamb is slowly influencing the city. A local group of Hunters tried to stop them but were betrayed by one of their own. The Hunters must pick up the investigation where the dead cell left off.

Home Away from Home: The Copper Indian

Odds are the Hunters are holed up in a motel or other cheap lodging. Unless specified otherwise, they have rooms at the Copper Indian Motel. "Copper Indians" were the settler names for the local indigenous tribes now under the Dene First Nation banner. The original owners of the motel took the name literally, however, commissioning a statue of a Native chieftain made out of copper to stand in the lobby. Every staff member has a spooky story about "Chief Yellowknife" to tell the tourists that come through the motel. These stories are in no way accurate representations of Native beliefs or tales and tend to be disrespectful of them. Every story is a lie, told to get a laugh from the other workers when a tourist freaks out about noises in the building at 2am.

The two-story building is split by the main lobby. Checkout and guest services are on the second floor with the lobby, a split-level staircase and a restaurant on the main floor. The Copper Kettle restaurant is open early for breakfast but closes by 7pm, forcing Hunters who want to ruminate at all hours of the night to do so at bars like The Strange Range (see "Hard Sell") or Babe's diner (see "Coffee Date with the Vampire"). There is at least one person on staff in the lobby at all times.

There are twenty rooms in the motel, ten on each side of the main lobby, five to a floor. The rooms all exit out to a walkway open to the weather which makes the doors a little heavier than one might expect for this class of motel. The rooms are uniform. A queen-sized bed on the left is covered in a faded autumn leaf comforter. A flat screen TV and desk fill up the right-hand side, with an obvious cable connection. A narrow bathroom is crammed into the back with a shower and tub. Each room can sleep up to four people, though occupancy past two means either the bed or the floor is crowded.

This information really starts to matter if the Hunters end up on the back foot, with vampires tracking them down in their safehouse in Part Three.

Second Shift

The Petro-Canada truck stop on Old Airport Road isn't much more than a pair of prefab buildings that once shared a common wall. One building contains the counter where travelers can pay for gas along with picking up whatever snacks, drinks, or other seemingly random bits of junk. The other building offers services to the long-haul truckers that pass this way: showers and a dining area that can't decide if it wants to be a tiny food court or a large vending machine area.

Teri Thompson asks to meet the Hunters here. She's a small, exhausted looking Asian woman in a knit hat and a slimline puffy coat. She's asked the Hunters to meet her here because it's a public place. After this, she plans on packing up whatever she can, leaving Yellowknife and never looking back. Paraphrase these answers for the most likely questions they will ask (don't read them out verbatim, it stops the conversation with the Hunters flowing naturally).

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HOW DID YOU DISCOVER SOMETHING WAS WRONG?

It all started with a bake sale. I know that sounds ridiculous, but I was volunteering to raise funds for St. Teresa's Elderly Care Centre and something weird happened. I've been helping out there off and on for a few months. This... woman showed up at the bake sale. I had never seen her before, but all the staff welcomed her like she was St. Teresa herself. They called her Nana Werther and I thought that was a bit on the nose. Werther? You know, like the candy?

She was volunteering at the facility. Doing things like talking with the residents and families, helping the nurses, and even cleaning up a mess now and again. I asked around about her and everyone had nice things to say about her. The exact, same nice thing. 'Nana is very lovely and helpful. I'm glad she's here.' Half a dozen people said the same thing, word for word.

I had an old friend, Brian Kearney, who worked at our local paper, the Yellowknifer, that I asked to check out St. Teresa's. Kearney came back with some information about the facility. Deaths were up. It's not something you notice at a nursing home but the rise in deaths seemed to happen after Nana Werther showed up a few months ago. He also found out there was a private investigator, Lisa McCullogh, investigating a missing resident on behalf of her grandson, Caleb Loudermilk. Caleb said he went to visit her one night and doesn't remember seeing her. When he went back, they denied anyone by that name was ever there.

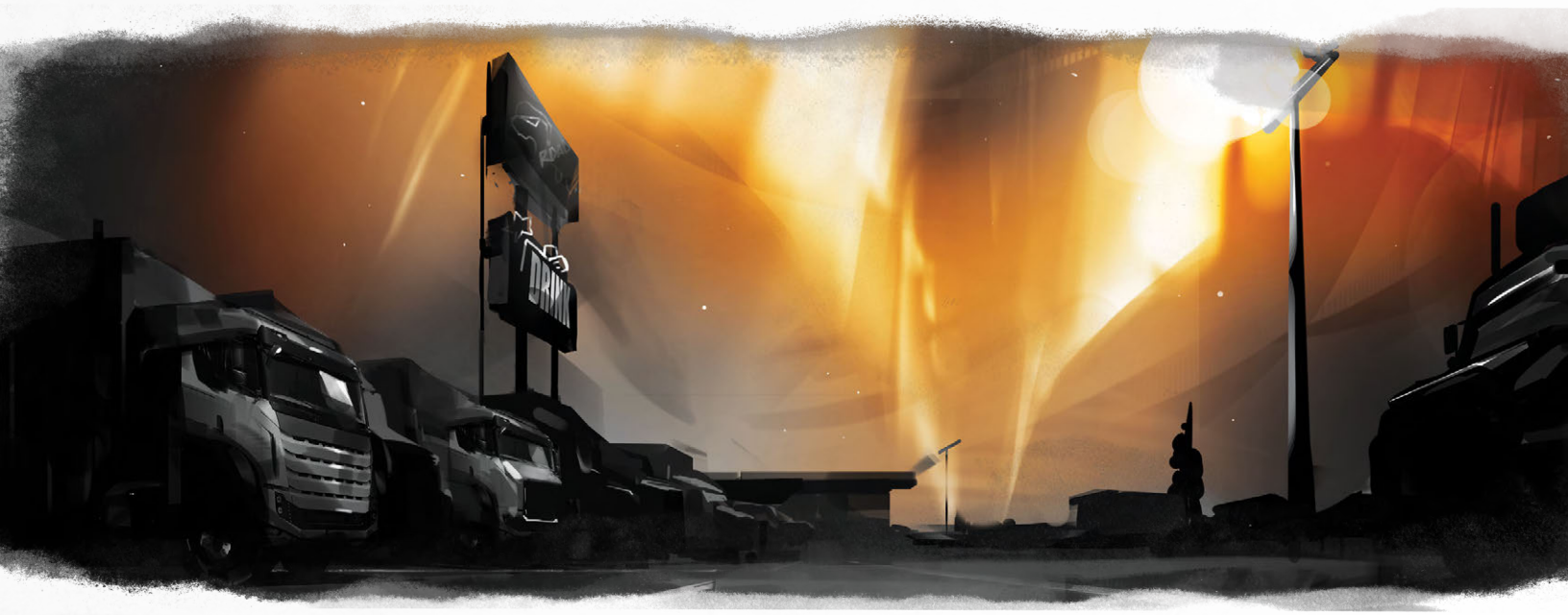
A COPPER HERRING

It doesn't take much for the Hunters to debunk the stories of Chief Yellowknife. A quick internet search shows there was no Chief Yellowknife, the Hunter can pick up the story as a lie with a Composure + Insight test (Difficulty 2) and mentioning the stories to any locals gets a chuckle and a "Staying at the Copper Indian, eh?" query. Here are three quick stories about Chief Yellowknife Storytellers can embellish to throw some interference into the Hunters' investigation.

- Anyone who doesn't bow to the chief in the morning will have a freezing night of sleep
- If you hear war drums in the distance at night, check the statue to see if it's moved. The drums mean Chief Yellowknife is on the prowl for the wicked.
- Leaving something of value at his feet guarantees his protection during your time in his city.

WHEN DID YOU REALIZE YOU WERE UP AGAINST SOMETHING WEIRD?

We were watching her... and I guess she was watching back. We thought she was the only one until I got a panicked call from Caleb in the middle of the night. Someone with glasses had their face pressed up against his window. He lived in a three-story walk-up.



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We gathered the crew at Babe's and started discussing action. We knew that if there were more of them and they knew where we were, the clock was ticking. Lisa followed her a few times back to a small house out in Range Lake and said she saw two- or three-people's shadows in the windows. Caleb thought we should move on the location during the day. Either we'd catch them off guard or they wouldn't be home and we could search the place.

WHERE IS THE REST OF YOUR CELL?

Getting this information out of Teri requires a little more pushing. A Manipulation + Subterfuge or Manipulation + Persuasion (Difficulty 3) convinces her to open up.

Fail: They're gone. They are all gone.

Success: They were waiting for us. The top floor was empty. There was broken furniture, scratches... and dried blood. We think they killed the family that lived there. We went downstairs. They blocked out the light from the basement windows. We had flashlights but one of them went out. Something grabbed me from beneath the stairs and I fell forward. I heard screams and then...the next thing I knew I was running back to the car. I wish I could have stayed. To fight. Or maybe die. I don't know.

Margin of success 1: "I saw Kearney die. One of them cut his throat with some kind of tool. A screwdriver maybe? He licked the damn thing clean, laughing."

Margin of success 2: "Nana killed McCullough. Jumped on her like a monkey, knocked her to the ground and just kept smashing until it was just red and wet all over."

Critical win: "Kearney and McCullogh are dead. I would have been dead too, but I made it up the stairs and out of the house. I could hear Caleb's screams, but I didn't see him die. Maybe he got out ok."

CAN WE TALK WITH THE FAMILIES OF THE OTHER HUNTERS?

"Please don't. They're all grieving. I don't think any of them knew about what we were doing. The last thing they need right now are some strange folks asking weird questions about where their dead loved ones were spending their nights."

WHAT KIND OF THINGS DO YOU THINK THEY ARE?

The information they get on this question depends on the outcome of a Composure + Persuasion or Manipulation + Intimidation test (Difficulty 3).

Fail: Loudermilk and I thought she was some kind of demon trying to defile the church connected to the rest home. Kearney thought she was a monster trying to turn everyone into a cannibal by feeding the poor human flesh. McCullogh suggested vampires but I think she just really wanted to do some Van Helsing stuff. We probably should have gotten a better picture of what it is before we charged in there.

Win: "I think they might be vampires...or some kind of demons. They had claws, and fangs and moved so fast. I remember one of them sucking the blood of his glasses after he cut Kearney's neck. It was savoring the taste."

Margin of Victory 1+/Critical Win: "I think they were vampires. One of them started licking the blood off their glasses after Kearny was dead. I made it out the front door into the sunlight and I could just feel the eyes of the one dressed like a priest on me as I ran to the car."

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN SINCE THE AMBUSH?

Hiding. I was waiting for the police to come... and they never did.

WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW?

I wanted to make sure someone followed up on this. I can't. I feel like I'm being watched, and I see their dead faces looking at me in every window. I've packed up as much as I can in my car and am headed out of town. I have to disappear. Every time I think about going back into that house I just start shaking and sobbing."

Teri plans to leave the Hunt to the cell but she also can be useful to point the cell back on track with a phone call or late appearance. She may want to leave this terrible tale behind but it's going to bother her like an itch underneath a cast. She might be willing to help out once the Hunters have located the vampire nests but sending her in alone to a nest is a bad idea. She's not strong enough to take out a vampire and the best-case scenario is that she dies in the attempt. The worst is that she becomes another vampire out for the cell's blood.

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Next Steps

Hunters who want to check out the scene of the crime head to "The House Where Nobody Lives." If they are curious about the lack of police response, it's time for them to have "A Nice Friendly Chat." Checking up on Nana Werther's presence at the Elderly Care Centre leads them to "Saints Preserve Us."

The House Where Nobody Lives

Range Lake is a suburb made up of a scattering of apartments, single family homes and townhouses. The address Teri gives the Hunters is a two-story home with the second floor extended over the garage. The sidewalk has not been cleared of snow. Getting inside quietly requires a Wits+ Larceny test (Difficulty 2 + Danger). On a failure, the cell still gets inside but a neighbor notices the break in. A police cruiser with two officers rolls around in about fifteen minutes to check out the disturbance. If the Hunters succeed but gain Danger (e.g., by Overreaching) while they're inside the house, the neighbor notices them rattling around inside and makes the call. If the Hunters get a critical win on the break-in or on any test during their time inside the house, the cops never arrive, and they can search the building at their leisure.

Asking around the neighbors doesn't get many answers. The family that lived there (live, as far as the neighbors know), the Foleys, mostly keep to themselves. The across the street neighbor, Dave, is willing to talk with the Hunters so long as they watch the hockey game and share a few beers with him. A Charisma + Persuasion test (Difficulty 4) does get a little something more from Dave. He remembers two unusual vehicles near the Foley house. The first was a red SUV a few days ago. The second was a police van a couple of days after that.

Based on Teri's story, the Hunters probably expect a scene of wreckage. Instead, someone has cleaned the house, or, at the very least, the first floor. There's a staged feel to everything, as if the house was going to be shown to potential buyers. A Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 4) lets a Hunter notice the faint hint of bleach and other cleaning products in the air, emanating from a faded bloodstain on the kitchen tile. The garage offers a strange clue. Someone went through the toolbox and took a screwdriver, awl, and pliers, leaving behind much older versions of the same tools. The ones left behind are rusted and dirty, and an Intelligence + Medicine or Investigation test (Difficulty 2) confirms some of the filth on the tools is dried blood.

By contrast, the second floor is chaos. Each of the three-bedroom doors are locked. Getting them open requires a Strength + Athletics or Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 3). These rooms show the mess



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and disorder of regular life. They also look to have not been lived in for a while. Rotting garbage in the rooms' trash cans stinks.

Something very strange is happening in the master bathroom. A toy rotary telephone, once that has a friendly face on the numbers, sits in the middle of the sink. A post-it is attached to the receiver with RING RING written on the paper. Anyone who picks up the receiver or touches the phone feels a shiver pass through them. A hooded figure appears in the mirror: an illusion sent by LeChance.

"I may be of assistance in finding what you seek," says the figure. "I will be at Babe's diner from dusk till dawn tomorrow night. Seek me there if you want my help."

The figure disappears from the mirror. Only the Hunter who touched the phone sees this vision.

The basement of the house is strangely empty. The boxes of old keepsakes and odd pieces of furniture are minimal and stacked in a slightly too orderly fashion. The Hunters notice the freshly scrubbed stain on the floor without a test. Mixed in are a few boxes full of medical supplies. Basic stuff like latex gloves, syringes, empty vials, gauze, and bandages. Shipping labels on the boxes identify them as having originally been delivered to St. Teresa's Elderly Care Center.

A small, folded hand-drawn poster is stuck in the medical boxes. If it is discovered with a Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 3), it reveals some basic information about a group called Blood of the Lamb. Underneath the illuminated manuscript logo is a short slogan: "Open your mind. Empty your heart. Free your soul. M-W-F-St" A hand drawn map shows a vague location on the edge of town. A stylized "AD" is tucked in the corner of the flier.

Next Steps

The Hunters are likely to have a brush with local law enforcement either being picked up by a patrol or heading down to the station on their own. Their first encounter with the RCMP is covered in "A Nice Friendly Chat." Hunters who want to take up the invitation of the hooded figure should check out "Coffee Date with the Vampire." Looking into the Elderly Care Center brings the Hunters to "Saints Preserve Us."

Saints Preserve Us

St. Teresa's Elderly Care Center was first built as a convent for the sisters of St. Teresa of Avila in 1905. The nuns always took care of the sick and the infirm throughout the years. When the facility transitioned out of the Catholic Church and into Canadian Medicare, few people noticed. St. Teresa's provides several different kinds of care for the older citizens of Yellowknife and the surrounding area. There's not much budget for different care facilities so everyone over a certain age gets lumped in here.

The exterior of the building reflects its religious origins with stained glass windows and gargoyles looming on the corners of the roof. The inside of the building is more of a modern hospital, though an occasional statue of St. Teresa or shrine to the Virgin Mary breaks up the fluorescent-lit monotony.

The nurses' station in the central hub is staffed 24 hours a day. Patients check in with the nurses here before being admitted. Near the desk is a hand drawn fundraiser chart in the style of a thermometer. The top of the chart proclaims the efforts are to REOPEN THE OLD WING and names different donors helping out the cause. If asked, any of the staff tell the Hunters the Old Wing fell into disrepair after the initial conversion from the convent to the medical facility forty years ago. Blood of the Lamb is one of the largest donors.

Asking around about Nana Werther gets the same response. "She's so lovely. Such a sweet, pleasant lady." Whoever the Hunters talk to fills in their own details of how helpful and wonderful she is, but they will all say that exact phrase in the exact same cadence as everyone else at least once during the interview.

Hunters looking to dig a little deeper, such as sneaking into the facility to look at some files with a Dexterity + Stealth test or trying to get more information out of a nurse or patient with Manipulation + Persuasion or Intimidation test (Difficulty 2). If only one Hunter investigates, impart one of these clues just for succeeding, and more equal to the margin of the test. If multiple Hunters investigate, split the clues between them.

- There's been an uptick in patient deaths over the past few months. Management is aware but doesn't seem concerned.

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- The police or medical examiner quietly pick up the bodies at night while the majority of the patients sleep.
- The Old Wing is haunted, and people who get too close to it see strange figures or hear voices (this is really Nana Werther looking for a meal).
- Attendance of on-site chapel services is dropping and has been for months.
- More and more employees are attending Blood of the Lamb meetings.

Next Steps

Hunters caught sniffing around areas they shouldn't will have "A Nice Friendly Chat" with the authorities. If Blood of the Lamb has caught their attention they may wish to "Gather in His Name." If they look into patient deaths the Hunters will find a "Cold Case Calling." If they venture into the Old Wing, they may stumble upon "Nana Werther's Lair" though she won't be around for a confrontation yet.

Cold Case Calling

Eventually, the Hunters probably end up at the morgue. They might be looking into the deaths of the local Hunters. They might be trying to confirm the rise in deaths at St. Teresa's Elderly Care Center. This might even be their first stop in the investigation since somebody had to die to get them to come to Yellowknife.

It's easy to find the Yellowknife Coroner's Office. It's on the first floor of the Justice Building marked by clear signage. The closer the Hunters get the more they feel the rumble of drums and hear the wailing

ALL THE DAMN VAMPIRES

Many cases draw out just what the monster is to enhance the sense of mystery. For many Hunters, and players as soon as blood is mentioned they'll be getting the stakes sharpened and the garlic strung into protective necklaces. The mystery here isn't so much about the monster, but how this nest of vampires functions. There are plenty of myths about vampire behavior. What will keep the Inquisitives and Faithful hopping is discovering which of these rules work against the vampires and which will just leave them laughing as they sink their fangs into the Hunters' arteries.

Storytellers who want to throw another complication into the case from the beginning can seed in some of the local legends of Chief Yellowknife to muddy the waters. See "A Copper Herring" for more details.



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of guitars. Listening to crunchy metal while working on an autopsy is one of the trademarks of the city's chief coroner, Ryan Paulson. His shaved head and multiple tattoos don't fit the stereotype, but he cleans up well when he has to go to court, making the RCMP willing to put up with his antisocial habits in the autopsy theater.

Ryan's not a detached academic or a nerdy introvert. He came into his position as coroner from a love of horror movies that's obvious from his office decor. Lurid movie posters glare down at visitors, and he keeps a classic slasher hockey mask hanging in the lab that he occasionally wears while he works. He's happy to talk shop with anyone that comes to see him.

Getting him to open up about specific cases, however, requires some pretense. Whether the Hunters portray themselves as some kind of police, the next of kin to one of the dead Hunters, journalists, or something else entirely, they should make a Charisma + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 2). Failing the test gets at least one bit of information but Ryan gets a bad feeling about the Hunters and quietly alerts the RCMP to come pick them up after their questioning. Each marginal success gets one more piece of information from the coroner.

- Kearney died from a puncture wound in the neck caused by a sharp tool. Not a knife, likely something like a screwdriver or pen.
- Kearney's driver's license says he needed glasses to drive but no eyeglasses were found on the scene.
- McCullough died from blunt force trauma after having her head smashed on the concrete multiple times.
- The Foleys are still missing and contacting their next of kin has turned up nothing
- Both Kearney and McCullough had lost a lot of blood considering their injuries.
- Caleb Loudermilk is not amongst the dead
- No car was found at the scene
- Include additional clues from "On the Trail of The Dead"
- Next Steps

Whether the Hunters go to the police, or the police come for them, "A Nice Friendly Chat" with the RCMP is on the cards. Caleb Loudermilk's missing car might lead them into the "Hard Sell" about the joys of being a vampire. "The House Where Nobody Lives" can also provide some additional clues.

A Nice Friendly Chat

Whether the Hunters get arrested or decide to come straight at the problem, they inevitably end up in the office of Inspector Bruce Dierbeck. Dierbeck is the detachment commander in charge of Yellowknife for the RCMP. He's been in the position for a few years with

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various accolades. Coming into his fifties behind a desk has softened his features and his frame, though he still knows how to use his bulk to intimidate when necessary.

The main source of decoration is a small area highlighting his young adult child, Andie. There are a few small sports trophies, a recent picture of an awkward looking teenager and a small, framed piece of abstract color artwork. Hidden in the corner of the painting is the same "AD" signature from the Blood of the Lamb flier. A Hunter can spot the signature with a Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 3) or without a test if the Hunter specifically says they are looking for the artist's signature.

Dierbeck listens to whatever story the Hunters tell. If they lie to him, he reassures them the truth will help him understand what's going on. If they talk about supernatural elements, he acknowledges he's heard similar stories. He reassures the Hunters that there are agencies that handle this sort of thing and requests for aid have been forwarded to those organizations. He requests the Hunters stay out of their way and let the professionals handle it. He also waves the Hunters off from any locations that Teri might have mentioned, such as the house in Range Lake.

The inspector is aware of Blood of the Lamb because he's been compromised by the cult. His child, Andie, joined Blood of the Lamb after they came out as nonbinary to Bruce, who was not supportive. Andie went to see The Vicar to talk about what happened during the argument with their father. Andie soon became a valuable member of the cult, called a Deacon. The Vicar visited the Chief Inspector not too long ago and made it clear that Andie is staying with Blood of the Lamb. Bruce is afraid if he, or the Hunters, make a move on the vampires, Andie will get caught in the crossfire. He's been quietly cleaning up after the vampires in the meantime until he can figure out a way to separate Andie from the cult.

The Hunters can uncover Dierbeck's lies a few different ways. Any Hunter with contacts in the orgs will quickly confirm the inspector has made no such calls. A Wits + Insight test (Difficulty 4) tips the Hunters off that Dierbeck is hiding something. A subtle inquiry around the Justice Building (Composure + Etiquette, Difficulty 3) or following Dierbeck home after work (Wits + Stealth, Difficulty 3) reveals Dierbeck lives alone since the argument with Andie.

If the Hunters continue to break the law or obviously pursue Blood of the Lamb, Inspector Dierbeck slowly escalates by bringing them back to his office for more "discussions." The first time he confiscates any weaponry or artifacts and tells the Hunters they can have them back when they decide to leave town. The second time he personally escorts them to the outskirts of Yellowknife and tells them he will arrest them on sight if they return. The third time the Hunters are officially arrested but they don't stay in jail for long. The blizzard detailed in "Nowhere to Run" hits, making the Justice building lose power and offering the Hunters a chance to escape.

THE PRODIGAL SON

Caleb's encounter with the Hunters is meant to inject a little burst of action in the otherwise quiet and investigative part of the case. Once the cell discovers the quarry are vampires, Martial Hunters might be ready to go in heavy with the stakes and the holy water. Caleb gives them an opportunity to see what works and what doesn't while also handing out a few clues the Hunters missed in other encounters.

Cells that crave a little more combat might meet Caleb under a different set of circumstances. He hits the Hunters with an ambush backed up by three or four human Blood of the Lamb cult members enhanced by vampire blood (general difficulty 4/2, all dice pools 5). If Caleb escapes from the events of "Hard Sell" he might return with these allies to get a little revenge. This ambush could replace "Hard Sell" entirely if the Hunters are having a hard time securing clues during their investigation.

If Caleb survives his earlier encounters with the cell, he decides not to confront them again and shacks up in one of the nests during the blizzard. It makes the most sense that he's hiding out with The Vicar but don't be afraid to bring him in if the Hunters are having too easy of a time with one of the other vampires.

Next Steps

The Hunters might decide to swing by the morgue on the first floor of the Justice Building if they haven't already for a "Cold Case Calling." There's "A House

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Where Nobody Lives" that might still have some clues. If the meeting takes the Hunters into the evening, they may stumble across Loudermilk experiencing the "Hard Sell" of vampire life.

Hard Sell

Caleb Loudermilk has been left to his own devices since being turned into a vampire. This is by design. The Vicar was originally planning to just kill Caleb after leading the local cell into an ambush, but Nana Werther convinced the vampire leader to honor his word. If their activities as Blood of the Lamb might draw Hunters who suspect a vampire, why not give them one? At best, the Hunters will leave after they've taken care of the problem. At worst, the nest will get a preview of what they are up against.

Caleb spends his evenings at The Gold Range Hotel. He's there if and when the Hunters arrive to check it out, and tonight he's determined to get lucky. The Strange Range, as it is known to locals, is a long-standing local venue that has a different feel every night. Caleb is on his own hunt. He tries unsuccessfully to use his regular charms on the ladies there. Eventually, he uses an unnatural ability to hypnotize a woman and gets her to follow him back to his car. Once there he overpowers the victim, feeds on her and then dumps her on the outskirts of town.

The Hunters have an opportunity to prevent Caleb from killing his victim. He's still driving the Ford Escape he used as a Hunter that was seen outside the house in Ridge Lake. A Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 2) lets the Hunters spot Caleb unsuccessfully attempting hypnosis on a woman in the bar. The Hunters have a few minutes after this to come up with a plan before he moves on to his next victim. This time he'll be successful.

When confronted, Caleb flees. He tries to get in his car and drive off if he can. If that's not possible he dashes up the stairs of the Gold Range Hotel to escape via the rooftops. If he's caught, he fights just long enough to flee again.

Caleb will do or say anything to stay alive. It's what got him turned in the first place. He'll try to convince the Hunters that a stake in the heart will kill a vampire even though they don't. Detecting this falsehood requires a Wits + Insight test (Difficulty 3). A critical win lets the Hunter know Caleb's lying to save his skin.

One thing that should become clear during this scene: Caleb does not regret his decision at all. As far as he's concerned, becoming a vampire has been an amazing experience that he talks up to the Hunters even as they rough him up or chase him down; the difficulty he has in feeding (e.g., his earlier failure to hypnotize a victim) suggests it may not be as delightful as he makes out. His undead existence may not persist for long, but his candle is going out on a very bright note.

Caleb knows about the following subjects:

- Vampire basics: sunlight burns, stakes paralyze, beheading kills, they need to drink blood regularly.
- The location of Blood of the Lamb on the outskirts of Yellowknife. He will helpfully draw a map or mark it on a GPS app if the Hunters promise to let him live.
- The number and names of the vampires in the nest: The Vicar, The Carpenter and Nana Werther.
- The status of Andie Dierbeck as a Deacon in Blood of the Lamb and their bad relationship with Inspector Dierbeck.

There is a strong possibility Caleb doesn't survive this encounter with the Hunters. That's fine. He's there to teach the Hunters what works and what doesn't about vampires and give them any clues they might have missed the first time around. If he survives, he'll come back and try for some revenge after a few more quiet scenes of investigation and dread. If he miraculously survives a second encounter, he goes into hiding during the blizzard in Part Three. He might appear again in Omaha or Unity if the Hunters haven't yet experienced **Pressure Test** or **Blur the Lines**.

Next Steps

The Hunters may decide to see Blood of the Lamb for themselves and "Gather in His Name." They may check in with local law enforcement for "A Friendly Little Chat." Or they may look for vampire nests "On the Trail of The Dead."

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Part Two:
The Lamb Lies Down in Yellowknife

Now that the cell knows vampires are behind Blood of the Lamb, they have to navigate the legends they know and the truths that can help them while not revealing their presence to the quarry.

Gather In His Name

The Hunters may wish to check out a Blood of the Lamb service. The nest has set these up in the evenings in a small, forgotten chapel several miles outside of Yellowknife. The paint on the walls has weathered over the years into a dingy gray. Fresh wood has been nailed across the windows on all sides of the building. The bell tower sags, looking like it's going to collapse at any moment. A few hundred yards away a pair of headstones mark a forgotten graveyard.

What started as a service where the three vampires outnumbered the worshipers has grown into around forty followers who come out to this chapel for a ritual of drinking vampire blood. There are also three members who assist with the ceremonies and run errands for the vampires during the day. The Vicar calls them his Deacons and they are completely under the sway of his control through the blood ritual. Andie Dierbeck is the most recent Deacon.

Finding the chapel is difficult as it's not on a major highway. Wide highways turn into thin two-lane blacktop which quickly becomes rough unplowed roads. The building can be found via GPS but the signal in the woods is very spotty and unhelpful. An Intelligence + Survival test (Difficulty 3) is required to find the building in a timely manner. If the Hunters fail, they still find the chapel, but they take enough time that they reach the building at dusk or dawn instead of their preferred time.

Tracking the members on a ceremony night is much easier. There is a field where all the members park their cars. They each light a candle and walk through the forest to the chapel as the sun goes down. It's easy to blend in with the worshippers, though not having a candle marks a Hunter as someone that's not been to Blood of the Lamb before. New members are pointed out to the Deacons, and they move to the front of the line during the blood drinking ritual. Hunters can avoid this callout either by following the crowd from a distance with a Dexterity + Stealth test (Difficulty 3) or convincing the cult members they forgot their candle with a Manipulation + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 4).

The Hunters might visit Blood of the Lamb's chapel during the day, on an evening where there's no ceremony, and on a night where the ceremony is performed. The vampires are only in attendance on ceremony nights.

There's only one Deacon on site during the day. This rotates week to week as it is mostly a maintenance position for the site. The Deacon makes sure the gas generator is filled, the space heaters are working, and the light bulbs aren't flickering. The Deacon in charge of the day shift this week is Michelle "Big Mitch" Muszynski, who recently retired after years as a long-haul trucker. She's gruff but affable and is happy to talk about what Blood of the Lamb gives her. She spent so much time on the road she never really noticed her family slipping away. Blood of the Lamb became that family for her.

On non-ritual nights, all the Deacons are on site. They are often called upon to run errands for the vampires ranging from mundane things like running to the bank to more heinous activities like disposing of bodies. They also counsel cult members who are dealing with issues like losing their previous religious faith or family putting up resistance to Blood of the Lamb. The pews are pushed to the side and there are sleeping bags scattered across the floor for the Deacons. If the

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Hunters saw Andie's picture in their father's office, they recognize the missing teen. Andie is a little scrawnier, looks like they could use a good night's sleep and has longer hair than the clean-cut person in the picture, but it's definitely the same person.

On ceremony nights, the Deacons get all the pews into place. They bring sacramental implements to The Vicar once the vampire has woken for the evening then return to the chapel to welcome the rest of the worshippers. Deacons wear a red sash or armband somewhere on their person. Once everyone is inside and seated, the Harmony begins.

One of the Deacons begins the Harmony by humming or making prolonged V or Z sounds. Soon, the other Deacons join in, harmonizing with their own sounds and the rest of the congregation comes in last. This buzzing happens throughout the ceremony. It breaks up the elements of the ritual.

The sound summons the vampires to the front of the chapel with The Vicar leading the procession, Nana Werther in the middle and The Carpenter bringing up the rear. Each bears a cup full of vampire blood. The Vicar's is inlaid with gold and jewels. The other cups are much simpler. Each vampire puts their cup on the altar, Werther and The Carpenter bow to the Vicar and then take their seats on either side of the altar. The Vicar bows to the cups of blood and then turns to the cult to begin the ceremony.

The first part of the ceremony follows the rhythms of a traditional Christian rite. The Vicar welcomes everyone to the ceremony then leads another round of harmony. There are readings from the bible. Nana Werther goes first, enthusiastically reading from an old copy she found in her nest at St. Teresa's Elderly Care Centre's Old Wing. The Carpenter reads a different selection from a beat-up green pocket bible. The Vicar then begins singing praises to The Lamb and sanctifying the blood in the cups by pouring and mixing them together.

The next part of the ceremony sees the Vicar offer his cup to the other vampires who each drink greedily. They then each stand at the edge of the outside aisle while the Deacons line up with the Vicar in the center. He gives them his blood, then puts his cup on the altar and kneels before the blood. After the Deacons drink, they act as ushers for the rest of the gathered

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worshippers, going aisle by aisle to make sure everyone participates in the ceremony. The lay people have two choices. They can Embrace Their Sacrifice and drink from one of the cups of Lamb's Blood. Or they can Expunge Their Sins and join The Vicar at the altar to confess. The Hunters don't have to do either but choosing not to participate will make interactions with human cult members much more difficult.

Hunters who Embrace Their Sacrifice feel a whirlwind of emotions overwhelm them. Joy, lust, anger, sadness, glee, and more wash over them. It's not uncommon for newer cult members to direct these intense feelings at the vampires. One of the duties of the Deacon is to help new cultists deal with the experience with a strong hand and a calming voice. Every time the Hunter drinks, they receive -1 dice to Composure tests for the rest of the scene. They may negate the penalty by spending a Willpower point. Only one sip is offered per service, but should the Hunter take more drinks than their Composure rating over any period of time, they become addicted to the blood. They can't regain Willpower unless they've had a sip that day.

The vampires make it very clear that further hits of blood are contingent on good behavior: loyalty to the church, including complete honesty, is expected, and required. If a vampire needs information or services from an addict, they deny them blood for a few days, wait for their will to weaken, then let them feast; combining low Willpower and Composure penalties with forceful interrogation or orders.

Hunters who Expunge their Sins approach the altar and kneel next to The Vicar. The Vicar asks if they wish to talk about anything or confess things they might be feeling ashamed about. The vampire uses Confessor's Gaze (see p. 167) if it must, though the faithful rarely hide anything from The Vicar once they've tasted his blood. The Vicar uses these secrets to gain control over non-cult members in the city. He passes them along to the Deacons to arrange blackmail or lets a secret slip to a congregant that might convince them to push away a family member concerned about the cult. Any secrets the Hunters let slip will come back to haunt them during the final hunt, if not before.

Anyone who doesn't participate in the ceremony is looked upon with suspicion. Hunters who refuse act with a -2 dice penalty to any Charisma or Manipulation tests interacting with any member of Blood of the Lamb until they confess to The Vicar or drink the vampire blood. Anyone trying to pretend to drink the blood during the ceremony must make a Manipulation + Performance test (Difficulty 3). Spilling or dropping the cup to avoid drinking subjects the Hunter to the Charisma and Manipulation penalty and leads to a Deacon following the Hunter after the ceremony to observe their true intentions.

Once the main part of the ceremony is complete, The Vicar thanks everyone for coming and invites them to return in two nights. He leads a processional out of the front doors to the chapel to another round of the harmony, where he, the other vampires and the Deacons remain until the attendees have left.

Next Steps

After seeing what they are up against, the cell might decide to have a "Coffee Date with the Vampire" to even the odds. They might follow one of the cult leaders back to their nest "When A Hunter Calls." They also might encourage Andie to have a "Heart to Heart" with their father.

Coffee Date with the Vampire

Babe's diner is named after the dyed, stuffed ox head looking down on the customers hunched down over their meals at the counter. Many years ago, someone dyed a real ox head blue and put it next to the wall clock. The color faded right along with everything else in the restaurant, becoming hard to distinguish from the fake wood paneling on the booths and the yellowing surfaces of the tables. Half a dozen booths stretch along the window side of the restaurant. One of them is occupied by the vampire the Hunters plan to meet.

LeChance awaits the Hunters in one of the booths. He sits quietly, staring forward, palms on the table with a chipped cup of coffee rapidly cooling in front of him. The combination of long hair, thick mustache, and thin strip of beard calls to mind an actor catching a quick

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bite before their *Hamlet* rehearsal, if that actor already did their hair and makeup at home. There's something else too, noticeable with a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 4). On a win, the Hunter notices LeChance is eerily still. No itching, no sniffing or any of the other involuntary behaviors that mark us as human.

The booth can accommodate up to three Hunters on one side. Once everyone has settled in and the waitress has taken orders, LeChance offers his terms. He carefully reaches into a satchel on his booth seat and removes a small, silk wrapped bundle. He deliberately lays out the content of the bundle in front of the Hunters. There are a number of glass laboratory slides equal to the number of Hunters at the restaurant and a small lancet device, similar to the ones used by diabetics to prick their fingers for blood sugar tests.

The blood sorcerer wants reassurances that the Hunters will leave him alone after he gives them the information they seek. He wants each Hunter to prick their finger and bleed a drop of blood on one of the slides. He will keep these slides in a safe place for his own personal use. LeChance won't threaten the Hunters or coerce them. They are free to walk away from these terms at any time. Hunters with any dots in Occult are familiar with the concept of sympathetic magic (i.e., that traces of blood, hair, etc., can be used to manipulate them). They have no way of telling how LeChance will use their blood, but the request should ring alarm bells.

LeChance exists as a resource to dispense truths about the monsters in Blood of the Lamb. He can confirm or deny what lore about vampires is useful and what's just stories. He knows how many of them there are, their general abilities and has a solid theory on what The Vicar is doing with his blood thralls. He's also aware that the more information he gives about the weaknesses of his kind, the more likely he'll pay the price for his cooperation with mortals. Either Hunters will come for him at some point or other vampires will silence him. He's not an open book and won't answer questions he thinks might come back to haunt him.

For Hunters who want to go all-in, LeChance is even willing to use his powers of blood sorcery to assist the hunt for Blood of the Lamb. Such assistance, however, requires what he calls an "additional fee." If this comes up in the negotiations, LeChance excuses himself to go to the bathroom. He takes the coffee cup with him. He returns a few minutes later (giving the Hunters a chance to discuss their plans outside of earshot) and places the cup back on the counter. The coffee has been replaced with blood. His blood. Anyone who drinks the blood will benefit from a spell LeChance cast on the cup in the bathroom.

Those who taste the vampire's blood gain a temporary Endowment. If a Hunter takes a sip, they gain their choice of Sense, Repel or Thwart the Unnatural (**Hunter: The Reckoning**, pp. 97-98) until the end of this story. If one Hunter drinks the entire cup of blood on their own, they gain the Endowment and a matching Perk. They may choose to make these Endowments permanent for half the usual experience points cost at the end of the story. Faithful Hunters don't benefit from drinking the sorcerer's blood.

Drinking LeChance's blood has the same effect as drinking the sacrament in the Blood of the Lamb's ceremony; drinking a whole cup means instant addiction. The only way out of addiction is cold turkey, lasting a number of weeks equal to 6 minus the Hunter's Composure. Addicted or not, the craving for more blood is intense: the Hunters have dreams about the taste and the rich, silky texture of it in their mouth.

Paranoid Hunters might wish to follow LeChance back to his lair. He's very careful about making sure that he's not followed, requiring a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 6). If they fail, LeChance uses his sorcery to cause any Hunter that gave him their blood a massive nosebleed. The bleeding continues until they let him out of their sight and causes a Superficial level of damage every X turns, with X equal to the Hunter's Stamina. If the test wins they follow LeChance to a motel room on the outskirts of town. There's a flash of light from inside as they arrive. When they get into the room, he's gone, though there's a strange sigil smeared in blood on the floor. LeChance doesn't return until The Vicar and the other vampires have been dealt with. Tracking down the blood sorcerer is a hunt for another time.

Next Steps

The Hunters should have a solid idea of what they're up against if they made a deal with LeChance. They now know how many vampires are in town, have a

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general idea of their weaknesses and where to look for the nests. If they are ready to throw down, you can slow the pace a little by sending them a weather alert for the blizzard coming in "Nowhere to Run." If there hasn't been any action in a bit, Caleb could strike as the Hunters leave the meeting, as described in "Hard Sell."

If LeChance has the Hunters' blood, he can find them whenever he needs to. If they drank his blood, addicted or not they crave more. The Hunters should enjoy their advantage now, because a good Storyteller should be delighted to use that bad decision to generate good stories after this one.

Heart to Heart

Whether out of a genuine need to help a parent and child reconnect after a vicious argument or recognizing the advantage of having local law enforcement working for them rather than against them, the Hunters might decide to seek out Andie Dierbeck and talk to them one on one. Unfortunately, most cults, especially ones with vampires at the center, make that difficult to accomplish.

As detailed in "Gather in His Name", Andie spends their nights at the Blood of the Lamb chapel outside of Yellowknife. They were recently made a Deacon and given additional responsibilities. Their main responsibility during the day is to beg, borrow or steal things the cult needs. Andie does this by digging through thrift shops, hitting up mutual aid societies and even spending time panhandling on street corners.

Andie is never let out alone, however. These "donation missions" as they are called are always done in packs. If one cultist is asking for scraps at a restaurant, another is a block or two away selling soda cans for the church. These small jobs are done under the eye of the Deacon, but they also are so the Deacon is being watched by the other members of the church. A number of Blood of the Lamb followers equal to Danger accompany Andie when the Hunters trigger this scene. The only time Andie's found alone is when they're on church day duty, but that's not until the week after next.

This scene might also include Hunters going to see Inspector Dierbeck to persuade him to seek out Andie to talk. While Dierbeck doesn't have blood cultists monitoring him, the Storyteller should keep in mind how the Hunters have acted when they come to chat. If they've kept their noses clean, Dierbeck might open up about his personal problems and how his child signing up with this strange church is affecting his choices as the head of law enforcement in Yellowknife. If they've

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already had a few "friendly chats" it's probably best if the Hunters talk to Andie first and let them persuade their father the Hunters are trustworthy.

Right now, Andie is at a crossroads in their relationship with their father. They are trying to solidify their identity. Bruce feels like he's failed as a parent because he didn't do it for them. He needs to understand it's something he can't do and has to allow Andie to figure it out on their own. Andie's confessions to The Vicar and blood drinking have intensified their emotions. Andie wants to feel loved and supported during this time, and they're taking that from the vampires, who are of course manipulating and exploiting Andie, instead of the real love of their father. The Hunters have to provide leverage to move the two back towards reconciliation either through a soft or a hard approach.

Hunters taking a soft approach will use a lot of social skills like Persuasion, Leadership, and Insight. These skills come into play in the hard approach though they will likely be preceded by a little action as the Hunters take out the other members of Blood of the Lamb or throw one (or both) of their targets in the back of a van. Play out the scene, let the Hunters make their points and then roll the dice at a pivotal point in the conversation. Give bonuses for good roleplaying and sharing connections to their own stories. A Hunter driven by Vengeance, for example, sharing a story about the son they lost to a werewolf is much more likely to melt a father's hardened, prideful heart.

The soft approach takes five tests at Difficulty 3 with three or more wins bringing the Dierbecks back together. The hard approach is more intense with fewer tests but a higher Difficulty. The hard approach is three tests at Difficulty 5, with best two out of three determining the outcome. A critical win automatically convinces the Dierbecks to put aside their differences.

A heartwarming reunion might be its own reward but Hunters who take the time to work with the Dierbecks also find Bruce willing to help with the hunt. Beyond just providing more clues, Dierbeck sends RCMP backup as the Hunters enter the vampires' lairs. More importantly, he can cover up any indiscretions the Hunters might commit in the process to keep their criminal records clean and off the radar of any orgs looking for leverage.

Next Steps

If the Hunters are ready to go, it's time for the blizzard to hit and give the vampires "Nowhere to Run." The Hunters might feel emboldened to check out "The Carpenter's Lair", "Nana Werther's Lair" or "The Vicar's Lair" with police backup.

On The Trail of The Dead

This scene contains clues to lead the Hunters to each of the vampire lairs throughout Yellowknife. After the clash with the local Hunters in the house on Range Lake, the vampires decided individual nests would make it harder for any other Hunters to wipe them out in a single night. The main action here is following the Deacons to each of the vampires' lairs but there are also clues included that can be folded into the other investigative scenes to serve as confirmation of these locations. These clues require a test to acquire. Unless noted in the specific entry, call for a test with an appropriate Attribute + Skill pool, and a Difficulty of 1 + Danger.

The Deacons carry out the errands needed to secure the vampires' nests and solidify their hold on Yellowknife. Most of this work is carried out during the day though some of it, like securing victims or criminal activity, happens on nights when there's no cult ceremony. Following a Deacon to a nest requires a Wits + Stealth test (Difficulty equal to Danger). A win means the Deacon is unaware they've been followed. A critical win confirms the specific vampire at the nest without having to investigate. Failing the test increases Danger by 1; failing during the day means the Deacon notices the tail and starts to dally on their errands on purpose. They finally arrive at the nest shortly after sundown when the vampire is active. Failing the test at night means the target Deacon summons the other two Deacons to help delay the Hunters while one gets word to their masters about the threat.

The Carpenter is holed up on a houseboat across the frozen lake. He leaves the boat open all hours of the day since anyone who might come inside will become that evening's meal. Because of his open door policy, he loses track of the key ring containing the engine and cabin keys and the Hunters might find it anywhere around town. The keys are attached to a puffy plastic keychain

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with a very faded sunset (and a bloody fingerprint) on one side and the boat's name, *Louise Marie*, on the other. A locksmith, a boat owner or a Hunter who makes an Intelligence + Larceny test (Difficulty 2) can identify the keys as houseboat keys. Nearly any native of Yellowknife knows about the houseboats gathered around Jolliffe Island and the boats gathered there.

Copies of Blood of the Lamb fliers start showing up in public places. They are black and white instead of the original color that can be found in "The House Where Nobody Lives." They might pop up in the other scenes if the Hunters didn't find the original or if they are taking too long investigating other leads.

The Deacons have access to the Old Wing of St. Teresa's Elderly Care Center. They have a few passes and aren't very good at keeping track of which members have which key cards. The Hunters might notice one on the belt loop of a Deacon during the service at Blood of the Lamb. It might turn up as a clue in one of the other nests. They might follow one of the Deacons into the Old Wing and watch as they deliver something to Nana Werther. The Hunters could ask the staff members if their cards allow them to go into the Old Wing. They do, but nobody goes in there because it's dangerous and full of old things.

The Vicar has some impressive powers but even vampires have everyday concerns. It takes effort to keep his ceremonial costume clean. Hunters might notice the dirt from his nest in the woods spilling off the edge of his robe at the ceremony. They might track a Deacon to the dry cleaner or the laundromat. If the Hunters need a moment to talk to Andie Dierbeck, this could be a great opportunity for a "Heart to Heart." The Deacons don't know the Vicar's location (though the other vampires do), but considering they drop all his supplies and clothes off at the church, he must live nearby. Unless the blizzard's raging, the Hunters can follow his trail from the church to the cabin with a Wits + Survival test (Difficulty 2 + Danger), or they can get the information from one of the other vampires and work their way up the chain.

Once the Hunters are aware of the Carpenter's tool belt, he might leave a tool behind by accident or perhaps a warning. He takes a Phillips head screwdriver and stabs it somewhere the Hunter can see. There are fingerprints but they don't match anything in law enforcement records (or any other records). The dried blood on the screwdriver matches Kearney's blood type.

Next Steps

Once the Hunters have their hands on these clues, they are likely to follow them to the vampire nests. Now is a good time to drop a snowstorm warning on them with "Nowhere to Run." If they head out to a nest now, go to "The Carpenter's Nest," "Nana Werther's Nest," or "The Vicar's Nest" based on their choice. If the Hunters wait out the storm, the vampires attack them instead in "Blood Makes Noise."



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Part Three: Red and White All Over

An unexpected snowstorm gives the Hunters potential leverage against the vampires. If they make proper plans, brave the cold and act quickly, they can take out the nests without anyone noticing. If they fail, the vampires try to wipe out the cell while they're digging out. At this point, Danger is ever present; unless otherwise stated, use the Danger rating as the baseline Difficulty for tests.

Nowhere To Run

When the Hunters are ready to root out the vampire nests, it's time to drop a big twist on them. A blizzard hits Yellowknife and shuts the city down. It may look like bad luck at first, especially if the Hunters have experienced **Pressure Test**, but the opportunity should become clear as the Hunters discuss their next plan of action. With the city shut down, the vampires are vulnerable in their nests. Aid will be slow in coming. If the Hunters move quickly and cleverly, they can take out each vampire individually rather than face them all at once.

The storyteller has two options here: suspense versus surprise. Suspense means seeding the blizzard throughout the story. Have it come through on background news chatter during their investigations. Sprinkle in preparations for it in the small talk at the Blood of the Lamb service. Suspense lets the players react naturally to the idea and incorporate it into their plans earlier. Storytellers can use the Danger level as an indicator of when to drop a mention in play. When it goes up, remind the players that the snow is coming.

Surprise is an effective tool to shake up the story. This is a good option if the Hunters have been having an easy time of things. If they figured out it was vampires from the beginning, dropping a snowstorm on the cell can increase the tension for the final act. Use surprise sparingly. Too much surprise and players might feel like they are being punished for being observant and ahead of the game.

As soon as the Hunters know they are dealing with vampires, they will likely plan to attack the nests during the day. Attacking the nests with the sun out gives the Hunters a definite advantage in their battle. The vampires have to deal with not being set on fire in addition to whatever nasty plans the cell has. But each nest section has a discussion about how the vampire acts in the day and how they might act at night. Why?

The Hunters will undoubtedly want to take on the vampires during the day. During the day the vampires are more vulnerable from the sun and sluggish from their need for the daysleep. But vampire slaying causes a lot of ruckus and Hunters draw much more attention to themselves doing things like setting nests on fire when people are going to work. Daylight attacks draw teams of RCMP; if Bruce Dierbeck isn't on their side, the Hunters might find themselves in a jail cell, sitting ducks for the vampires' counterattack.

The Hunters might decide to investigate a lair at night immediately after discovering a clue that points that way (though that would be unwise). They might decide to follow up on clues while Blood of the Lamb is holding a service and know the vampires are otherwise occupied.

Most importantly, the days are short. Treat increases to Danger as wasted time; unfortunate hindrances (e.g., misplaced gear, vehicle breakdowns) and treacherous roads slow down the Hunters so much that they don't reach their next destination until just before sunset. Pushing forward might be bad but letting vampires live until the next sunrise will be worse (see "Blood Makes Noise").

The Hunters might even decide to attack the church during a Blood of the Lamb service. This approach

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hurts many more human cultists than vampires. Bruce Dierbeck won't cover for them if they put Andie in danger, whether or not the two have reconciled.

The other challenge facing the Hunters during the storm is hazardous travel. Getting between locations means careful driving and keeping skin from exposure to the extreme conditions. Hunters need to make a Stamina + Survival test (Difficulty equal to 1 + Danger) every time they travel between locations. Hunters who exceed the difficulty can donate extra successes to Hunters who fail. A critical win by any Hunter means they find a sheltered path and every Hunter is treated as having succeeded on the test. Any Hunters who fail the test take a level of Superficial damage to represent fatigue, numbness from the cold or even a spill that causes a minor but nagging injury.

Next Steps

If the Hunters take advantage of the blizzard, they get to choose in what order they take on Blood of the Lamb. Go to "The Carpenter's Lair", "Nana Werther's Lair" or "The Vicar's Lair" based on their choice. If the Hunters wait out the storm, or night falls, the vampires attack them instead in "Blood Makes Noise."

The Carpenter's Nest

Yellowknife is located along the northern shore of the lake known as Tu Nedhé to the indigenous population. There is an island in Yellowknife Bay that was once owned by the Imperial Oil Limited. That place, Jolliffe Island, is now home to a community of houseboats. The folks who live in these boats clash with city officials over the use of resources and whether or not they need to pay taxes like the rest of the citizens of Yellowknife.

The Carpenter lairs within one of these houseboats. He quietly dispatched the original owners of the *Louise Marie* even before the nest had moved out of the house in Range Lake. The Carpenter enjoys a solitary nest apart from the other vampires. The better to play with his food.

The deck of the ship is fairly nondescript. It's a mixture of faded paint and sunwashed bumper stickers full of catchphrases from twenty years ago. There's a smaller motorboat bobbing on the side of the vessel. A Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 2) reveals a trail of dried blood stains on the deck leading from the motorboat, across the deck and down the stairs to the main cabin. Down below, The Carpenter has made the space his own. It's become his workshop for body disposal. The bedroom is layered in plastic tarps. The mattress is set against the wall with a small shelf full of power tools in front of it. These tools share a similar style to the ones in The Carpenter's belt: they're caked in blood and viscera. There are three full size portable coolers stacked to the ceiling with holes drilled in the bottom of each.

An Intelligence + Science test (Difficulty 4) confirms the grim nature of this workshop. The Carpenter kills his victims, takes the bodies apart, stuffs the parts in the coolers and then takes the package out on the motorboat launch. He dumps it overboard and the body rests on the bottom of the lake. He mostly does this for his own victims, but he occasionally assists The Vicar or Nana Werther if they need it.

There is another cooler of the personal, flip top kind stashed in the corner of the room. It's hidden under some bloody rags and shredded clothing. The Hunters discover it with a Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 3). There are two dozen small tokens inside, claimed from each of one the victims The Carpenter brought back to the boat. It's a collection of jewelry and other personal items. The Carpenter has arranged them in a specific way, and he'll know if someone has touched them unless they're put back in exactly the same places. A Wits + Insight test (Difficulty 4) puts everything back correctly. If the Hunters got a critical win on the test to find the trophy cooler, they don't need a test to put it back properly.

The Carpenter doesn't leave the houseboat much. The Deacons bring supplies for his grisly work and leave them on the deck during the day and he collects upon waking in the evening. He only leaves to feed, attend Blood of the Lamb ceremonies, and dispose of remains. If possible, he tries to find victims on the way back from attending the service. He prefers to prey on homeless people or sex workers as their disappearance from the streets of Yellowknife is rarely noticed or investigated with any great fervor.

The Carpenter hasn't made special preparations for his daysleep. Usually, he passes out in the small

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bathroom below decks, having wedged a few towels in the small window. Sometimes he'll climb into the shower, other times he'll pass out on the toilet. If it's been a busy night, he might even pass out in the main cabin as far away from the door as possible.

On the one hand, the cabin is cramped, giving a -1 dice penalty to all physical action dice pools for every person in the cabin beyond the first, to a maximum penalty of -4 dice. On the other hand, the job of sunproofing the room is mediocre at best. With a Strength + Craft test (Difficulty 3) a Hunter can tear down the window covers and let the sunlight in. Any extra successes inflict Aggravated damage to the Carpenter equal to the margin as sunlight burns his skin. Once the windows are open, he takes a level of Aggravated damage at the beginning of each turn until he is destroyed, or he flees.

The Carpenter is a formidable opponent on his own but there's an additional danger to Hunters sniffing around the lair. The other houseboat owners are a mixture of free thinkers, conspiracy theorists, libertarians and other folks who don't like the idea of people getting up in their business. If they see Hunters prowling around the deck of the *Louise Marie* they don't call the Mounties. Instead, they pick up weapons and scare off the prowlers on their own. If the Hunters increase the Danger while they are on the houseboat, that would be a good time for a neighbor to come over and check. Neighbors have general difficulties of 3/1 and 5 in all dice pools. They carry handguns and shotguns and inflict margin +2 Aggravated damage on a successful attack.

A confrontation between the Hunters and a neighbor gives The Carpenter time to survey the situation. The vampire prefers hit and fade tactics. If he knows the Hunters are coming, he hides in the bathroom during the day, locks the door and leaps out at the worst time. If they come at night, he's under the tarp of the motorboat tied to the *Louise Marie.* While the Hunters are searching his nest, he'll try to isolate one on the deck or, if nobody is watching, make his way back across the frozen lake and find the vehicle the Hunters came in. He uses his toolbelt to disable the vehicle, by popping a tire or pulling the wires on the starter. While the Hunters try to fix this problem, The Carpenter strikes.

When reduced to zero health, the Carpenter collapses. He flails on the ground, kicking his legs and smashing anyone who gets too close as his body rapidly reverts to its true age, leaving a skeleton with papery traces of skin and his eyeglasses, cracked by the violent spasms that wracked his body in his final moments.

Next Steps

If the blizzard hasn't hit, now is a good time for there to be "Nowhere to Run." If the Hunters know where "Nana Werther's Nest" or "The Vicar's Nest" are located, they should clear those out. If all the vampires have been dealt with, it's time to tie up "Loose Ends." Otherwise, they need to go back "On the Trail of The Dead."

Nana Werther's Nest

Nana Werther nests in the Old Wing of St. Teresa's Elderly Care Center for many reasons. It's an easy source of blood that won't draw suspicion. Most of the staff would never suspect the kindly old woman who volunteers every week of being a literal monster. Or, for that matter, realize that she makes her home in the drafty, rundown, closed off section of the very same building.

The Old Wing was already in rough shape when the government took over the building. The sisters used the space mostly for storage and made the minimum repairs needed to keep out weather and animals. The new owners kept using the wing for the same purpose and moved as much religious iconography as they could here from the rest of the building. Though there are still statues of the Virgin Mary and giant crosses in the main building, the vast majority of these items, like church pews and sculptures of saints and angels were left in the Old Wing to rot for decades.

The vampire lairs in the old abbess's office at the center of the wing. She's decorated it in a creepily cozy way. She's the one vampire that rests in an actual coffin but she's filled it with several stuffed animals that surround her while she sleeps. Not only does this room have no windows to let in the sunlight but it also amuses Nana to daysleep in a place that once was blessed to be the heart of the convent. She's arranged

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the church refuse along with more mundane pieces such as filing cabinets and office chairs into a labyrinth. This was originally for her protection, but she's found another use for it recently. On nights when she misses the thrill of the hunt she'll wheel in a patient bed, wake them up, and chase them through the maze before bringing their body back to the main hospital.

Getting into the Old Wing is surprisingly easy. On the inside the doors are locked by magnetic keycard locks that can be defeated with an Intelligence + Larceny test (Difficulty 2). The Hunters can also lift a keycard from a staff member with a Dexterity + Larceny test (Difficulty 2). The exterior doors and windows are chained shut and boarded, but a combination of local teenagers and Nana's occupancy has chipped away at this security. The Deacons might also have a key card to use, see "On the Trail of The Dead."

Once inside, navigation is trickier. Finding the abbess's office requires a Resolve + Awareness test (Difficulty 5). The Hunters must provide their own light via flashlights or lanterns. If they don't, any tests in the Old Wing suffer a -2 dice pool penalty. Getting back out is easier, at Difficulty 3. Failure means the Hunters have alerted Nana to their presence if she's in the building.

Those who get suspicious of Nana's nature become easy targets for her powers of undead persuasion. For the most part, the people who stumble upon Nana's secret are made to forget. Nana makes a suggestion using her powers and the human mind accepts it. In those cases where a more direct solution is required, Nana Werther has created her Harridans to chase down any problems.

The Harridans are staff members that Nana controls through a combination of hypnotic suggestion and feeding them her blood. None of the Harridans are members of Blood of the Lamb. None of the Harridans know what they are. But when Nana gives the command word, which is *Harridan*, the Harridans change from regular people to something else. She will often hide it in a sentence, like "Oh, my dear Rebecca, you're being such a Harridan." Their faces slide into a feral grin. Their posture slouches and becomes more animal-like. They run at full speed at whatever target Nana chooses and destroy it with their fists, their feet, their teeth. When Nana



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gives the command again, the Harridan straightens up and goes about their day, unaware of what crimes they may have committed for Nana Werther. The vampire takes pains to maintain their ignorance. She's been known to give baths and launder the clothes of her Harridans after messy skirmishes and drop them off back in their offices before saying the command word to turn them back.

If Nana is aware of the Hunters in the Old Wing, she has the Harridans in the hallways ready to provide interference. If the battle gets desperate, she's not above yelling out the command word and snapping a Harridan back to their human personality, giving the Hunters a messy, terrified complication to deal with while she slinks back into the shadows. She uses her knowledge of the maze she's built to cut off the Hunters and force them to fight her in territory where their numbers mean little.

During the day, sunlight filters into the labyrinth but not the central chamber where Nana sleeps. She is unlikely to be lured out of the abbess's office. She could be driven out by fire or another threat but that creates a whole new set of complications for the Hunters. The Old Wing does have a sprinkler system, but it's not well maintained. Even a small fire has the potential to burn the whole ward to the ground even during a blizzard. The speed in which the fire spreads is reflected by the Danger level. Anyone with a Stamina rating lower than Danger takes a superficial level of damage every round from smoke inhalation. The fire won't spread to the newer wings of the building but damage to the Old Wing will sour any relationship the Hunters have with Chief Inspector Dierbeck.

At night, a single Harridan patrols the labyrinth looking for intruders. If they find someone, they quickly run to the office to fetch Nana if she's there but she's usually out in the halls of the hospital cementing her control or attending a Blood of the Lamb service. She does her best to stay near humans if the Hunters come for her during the blizzard at night.



ALONE IN THE DARK

Next Steps

If the blizzard hasn't hit, now is a good time for there to be "Nowhere to Run." If the Hunters know where "The Carpenter's Nest" or "The Vicar's Nest" are located, they should clear those out. If all the vampires have been dealt with, it's time to tie up "Loose Ends." Otherwise, they need to go back "On the Trail of The Dead."

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The Vicar's Nest

The Hunters might assume that The Vicar's nest is at Blood of the Lamb's chapel. They're almost correct. The Vicar enjoys a little work-life separation just like any mortal. The vampire works at the chapel but rests and feeds at a small cabin nearby, a little further into the woods.

There are two important locations near the chapel. The first is an old graveyard located a few hundred yards from the chapel. It's connected to the chapel by a snowy path churned up by people walking in between the two locations. The gravestones are scattered about like broken teeth. The majority of them have been ground down by hundreds of years of high winds and freezing temperatures. Many of the graves look to have been disturbed recently. There are shovels hastily buried in a nearby snow drift. A Wits + Investigation test (Difficulty 2) finds splashes of blood scattered around the graveyard. Hunters who dig up one of the graves find a grisly sight. Fresh bodies have been shoved into the old coffins. An Intelligence + Investigation test (Difficulty 4) gives a quick assessment that the bodies are from at most, a few months ago. Some are more recent, but an exact date is hard to place due to the cold that's kept them from decomposing at the normal rate.

The other place is further back in the nearby woods. A path in the snow leads into the stark forest. It doesn't take long for the Hunters to feel like even the smallest chunk of civilization represented by the chapel is out of reach. Out here at night, the stars are bright, and the aurora is intense. Just when the Hunters start to think maybe there's nothing out here, a small one-room log cabin appears on the horizon.

The simple log cabin looks like it's been there as long as the chapel, if not longer. It has no obvious hookups for water or electricity. A pair of small, cracked windows have been blocked by something. The door has been replaced with heavy plastic strips like the ones used in hospitals or walk-in freezers. The snow has been cleared away from the door revealing that the cabin has been built directly onto the ground with a dirt floor.



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Medical supply boxes full of latex gloves, gauze and bleach wipes are stacked against the windows to block the sunlight. An old dining room table takes up most of the main room in the cabin. There are a pair of massive doves patterned quilts covering something on the table. Laid across the table, under the quilts, restrained by medical restraints bolted to the table, is a teenage boy. A small milking stool stands near the table but there are no other chairs. The Vicar likes to take his time feeding, slowly draining the same human over the course of a few days. This poor soul is one of the members of Blood of the Lamb that would not be missed. Others like him are freshly buried in the old church graveyard.

But this one is alive. Tony gasps for air suddenly as the Hunters approach. He starts to panic and strain against the cuffs holding him to the table. The Hunters can keep him quiet with a Composure + Persuasion test (Difficulty 3). If he yells out, anyone in the chapel can hear his cries. A quick medical check with an Intelligence + Medicine test (Difficulty 3) states how much danger Tony is in. Between the loss of blood and the exposure to the cold, Tony will die if they don't get him to hospital immediately. They can stabilize him until the end of the scene with a Wits + Medicine test (Difficulty 4).

The dirt floor isn't just there for show. The Vicar sinks into the ground to sleep during the day, and the stench of old blood rises from his hiding place. He may arise if the Hunters take too long discussing what to do with the victim in the cabin. Or they could simply dig. They'll find the Vicar, but he will be ready to fight, grabbing the shovel closest to him and throwing the Hunter in possession of it across the room.

The Vicar won't attack the Hunters in the day unless he's directly provoked. The cabin has almost no protection against the sun. The Hunters can drag The Vicar out into the day through an opposed Strength + Brawl test. They need to win the contest three times: once to get the vampire out of the ground if he hasn't attacked already, once to get the vampire out of the building, and once to keep him outside and let the sun burn him up. A critical win on any of these tests gets the vampire out into the sun immediately where he bursts into glorious flames.

At night, he's more willing to defend his space, though he does his best to flee to the chapel so the Deacons can help in his defense. The Deacons will improvise weapons as best they can. The Vicar will flee into the night if the battle seems to be turning against him. As the Hunters chase him down, he alternates between damning their souls for interfering with God's work to praying for Him to absolve their act of violence. When the Hunters put him down, a strange look of serenity washes over his face as he meets final death.

Next Steps

If the blizzard hasn't hit, now is a good time for there to be "Nowhere to Run." If the Hunters know where "The Carpenter's Nest" or "Nana Werther's Nest" are located, they should clear those out. If all the vampires have been dealt with, it's time to tie up "Loose Ends." Otherwise, they need to go back "On the Trail of The Dead."

Blood Makes Noise

The ideal path through the climax of this case is the Hunters hitting each of the vampires' nests in serial fashion using the blizzard as cover. This reduces the vampires' reaction time and pits the entirety of the cell against a lone vampire every time. Veteran Storytellers know players rarely take the ideal path. The Hunters might decide to wait until after the blizzard. They might move on to a nest right away after discovering it. They might take heavy losses after clearing out one and decide to heal up before taking on the others. This section details what happens when the Hunters play defense instead of offense.

If the Hunters return to their accommodation (most likely the Copper Indian motel) to recover or reload, ask them how many rooms they've rented. Who is staying together? Who is alone? What defenses have they set up? This is an excellent opportunity for Martial or Entrepreneurial Hunters to set up some weapons or traps. Don't worry if any of it seems a little too retroactive to the continuity. The Hunters need all the help they can get.

If the vampires come to the Hunters, they intend to leave nobody alive.

Nana uses her influence to obtain information on the Hunters. One of the hotel staff is part of Blood of the Lamb. They give the vampires the spare keys for the Hunters' rooms. They inform the vampires of any obvious preparations the Hunters have made like traps or arms caches. Nana does her best to ruin these

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preparations, though she might be caught by the Hunters in the process with a Wits + Awareness test (Difficulty 4).

The Carpenter does his best to turn the attack into a siege. He attacks the room with the smallest number of Hunters. He comes in through the bathroom window of their room and does his best to ambush the weakest looking Hunter. He's hoping that concern over a nasty wound will cause confusion with the other Hunters to let him slaughter his way through the cell. He singles out any lone Hunter going between rooms if he can isolate them. If the Hunters try to use someone as bait, the bait needs to succeed at a Composure + Subterfuge test (Difficulty 4) to lure The Carpenter into the trap.

The Vicar comes in through the front door. He waits for the Hunters to make their way out of their rooms. If they don't, he'll knock on the door of whichever room has the most Hunters or whoever has presented themselves as the leader. His goal is to keep the Hunters talking while Nana Werther and The Carpenter enact their goals. If either of the other vampires has already been destroyed, The Vicar causes a public scene in the lobby of the hotel. He accuses the Hunters of being criminals trying to extort Blood of the Lamb for money and for the staff to call the Mounties to help. A social confrontation with Manipulation + Persuasion, Subterfuge, or Intimidation (Difficulty 4) can cause The Vicar to slip up and reveal his true nature.

How the RCMP handle any calls to the motel depends on if the Hunters helped the Dierbecks reconcile. If they did, Dierbeck arrives to help the Hunters put down The Vicar once and for all. If Andie is still a member of the Deacons, the police arrive and take the Hunters out of town, strongly advising them to never come back.

Next Steps

If the Hunters survive, it's time to deal with the aftermath in Loose Ends.

Loose Ends

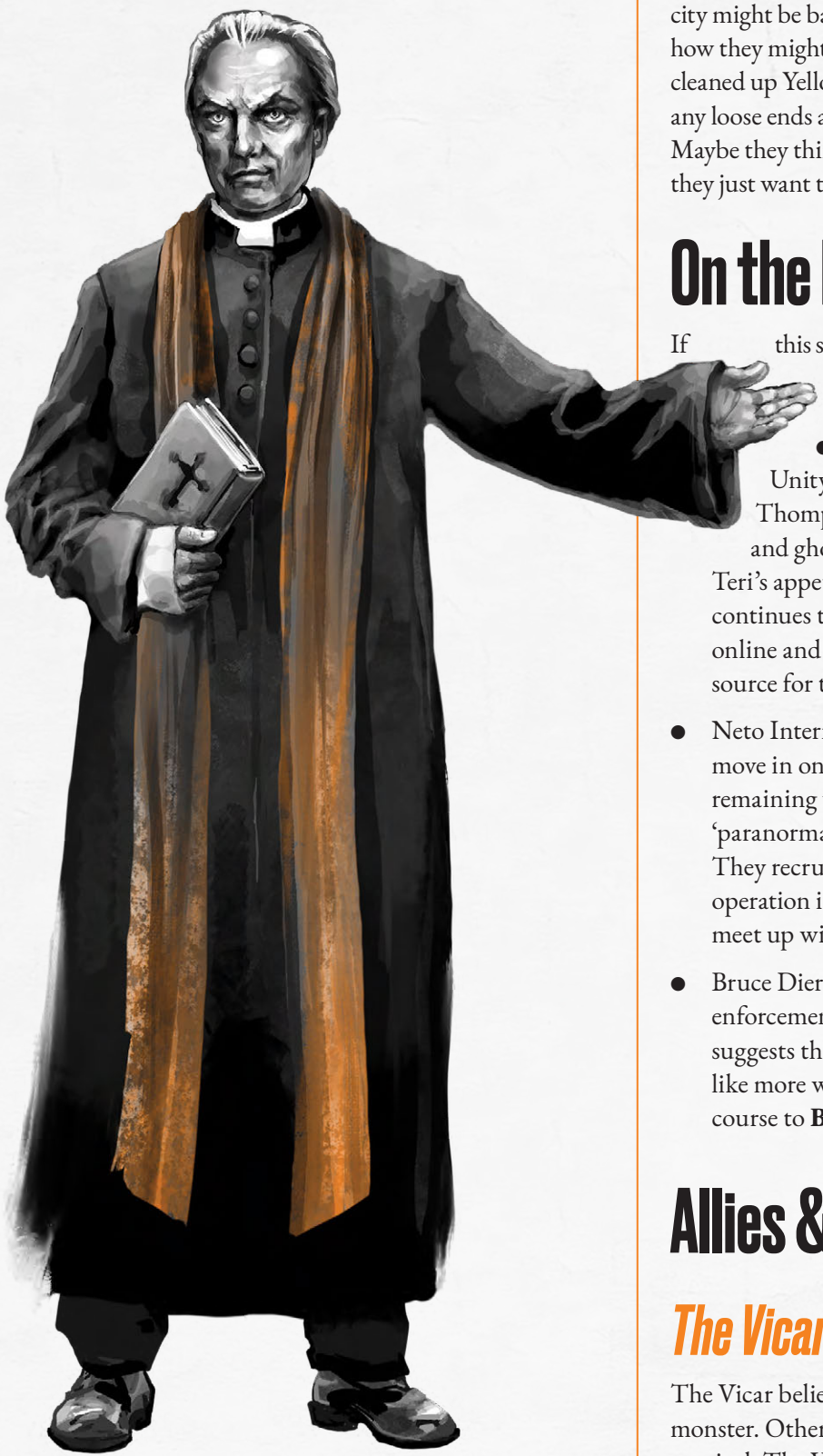
If the Hunters pull off the impressive goal of wiping out the entire nest, they deserve to savor the victory for a little bit. Word spreads: the people of Yellowknife talk, Bruce Dierbeck has to explain the situation to the RCMP, and Teri Thompson eventually checks in on her hometown (from a safe distance). The cell's deeds (if not their names) are posted on the well-hidden forums and Dark Web sites where Hunters gather online and the "Yellowknife Slayers" gain something of a reputation, which comes with the ability to call in assistance... and the responsibility of being asked for help by other Hunters. Even the orgs might reexamine their disdain for amateurs and consider working with the cell in a less condescending manner (or they might mark them as dangerous, especially if one of them has tasted LeChance's blood). But a reputation needs to be upheld, and the Hunters might find themselves targeted by young vampires looking to make their names by slaying the slayers.

If the Hunters don't completely wipe out the nest any surviving vampires fall off the grid for a while. Even if the Hunters pursue vampires from city to city, the trail soon grows cold. Other monsters become priority hunts. Matters in their personal lives become more pressing. When the Hunter's all but forgotten them, the vampire strikes. It lures a Touchstone into a new version of Blood of the Lamb, and they become a Deacon, or they attempt to frame the Hunter for some crime that takes them out of circulation for the rest of their lives. The Hunters let the vampires fester and now they have some hard, personal choices to make to cleanse the infection.

In vampire stories, death is not the end. A Hunter killed in this story could return later (as a Storyteller character) asking for help. Could it be a trap? How do the Hunters feel now that someone they loved and trusted is one of the monsters they kill? Make sure to discuss this story option with the player of the deceased Hunter first. They may want that character to rest in peace and any good Storyteller will honor their player's wishes.

If the Hunters don't slay a single vampire but escape with their lives, Yellowknife becomes a stronghold for the creatures of the night. Organized operators may need to come in guns blazing to clear out the monsters. When they do, word filters back to the Hunters of how bad things get. Perhaps they caught footage of Jolliffe Island on fire. Maybe they see the obituary of an ally like

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Teri Thompson or Ryan Paulson during an unrelated web search. Knowing they failed their friends in the city might be bad enough, but it soon becomes evident how they might truly pay for their failure. The org that cleaned up Yellowknife is coming for the cell to tie up any loose ends about how bad things were in the city. Maybe they think the hunters are vampire assets, maybe they just want to make sure word never gets out.

On the Road Again

If this story is part of the **Lines Drawn in Blood** chronicle, it could connect to other stories in these ways:

- If the cell hasn't yet visited Unity, Nebraska for **Pressure Test**, Teri Thompson tips them off to weird occurrences and ghost sightings she's read about online. Teri's appetite for the hunt is gone, but she continues to track hints of supernatural activity online and could become a useful information source for the cell.
- Neto International or Aurum Industries rapidly move in on Yellowknife, either to put down remaining vampires or to explore the potential of 'paranormal emissions' from the Aurora Borealis. They recruit the Hunters to help out their operation in Rawlins, Missouri, sending them to meet up with Sienna Fisher for **Outsiders**.
- Bruce Dierbeck has connections in law enforcement down in Omaha, Nebraska, and suggests the murder of an entire family looks like more weird, occult stuff, which sets them on course to **Blur the Lines**.

Allies & Antagonists

The Vicar

The Vicar believes himself to be God's perfect monster. Other vampires drink blood for mere survival. The Vicar terrorizes with a purpose. God made vampires to punish humanity for their sins.

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The Flood didn't work. Sacrificing his own son didn't work. Vampires are the next check down on a list of efforts to teach humans to serve the Lord. Be afraid of the darkness, and the things that live there, and God's children will embrace the light.

His current holy mission manifests in his church in Yellowknife, called Blood of the Lamb. His followers drink his holy blood and are rewarded with good health and gifts from God. In exchange, they bring him the things he needs. They bring him the power to control his surroundings. They bring him mortals to protect him and his kind from Hunters. They bring him fresh human blood so that he can transform it to a gift from the Lord. His influence grows in Yellowknife nightly. He's secure enough now to begin ministering directly to the public every few nights.

Whether or not the other vampires in the nest believe in his holy mission doesn't matter. They understand his abilities as a leader and organizer. If Blood of the Lamb takes root in the city, vampires of all kinds will come to the city and bend their knees to The Vicar. In a world full of tenacious Hunters and secret wars, The Vicar can ask any price in exchange for a few nights of easy hunting and untroubled daysleep.

The Vicar dresses in simple black clothes outside of his services. He has Caucasian features, a clean-shaven face and bright blue eyes. When he conducts his public ceremony, he wears a mishmash of items from various branches of Christianity. If asked, he can tell the story behind each item: who gave it to him, how they served him and the terrible tragedy of why they no longer do.

General Difficulty: 5/ 4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 8, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 9, Persuasion 9, Academics (Religion) 9

Notes/ Other Traits: In addition to the abilities for vampires on **Hunter: The Reckoning** p. 169 the Vicar has the following:

- **Confessor's Gaze:** The Vicar's ice blue eyes fix on a target and overwhelm them with feelings of guilt and regret. He makes the target think he knows their worst failure or darkest secret. The target must make a Composure + Insight test (Difficulty 5). If they fail, they take a -1 dice pool penalty for their actions for every point of margin until The Vicar turns his gaze elsewhere. On a critical win, the Hunter is immune to this ability for the rest of the night.

The Carpenter

Vampires are often portrayed as the most glamorous monsters the media has to offer. Many of the ones Hunters come across in their careers have an allure to them. The Carpenter is not one of these vampires. Whoever turned this man into a monster saw that his mortal form already barely restrained a beast. Becoming one of the undead merely sharpened its teeth.

The Carpenter stays by The Vicar's side when he's not coming after a target. He rarely speaks in public. The only time most people hear his voice is when he joins the Harmony during a Blood of the Lamb ceremony. His high, breathy tenor stands out from the rest of the cultists. It gives the sound an eerie beauty.

None of the vampires really know if The Carpenter is a believer in The Vicar's unholy mission or if he just enjoys being told what to kill. He gets anxious on nights when he doesn't feed, acting like a child seeking permission for some ice cream or other treat. He doesn't bite its victims, instead using one of the sharp tools on his weathered old tool belt to open a wound. The Carpenter uses the tool like a utensil, slurping up the blood and then jamming it back into the wound for more.

The Carpenter looks like he just clocked out of a twelve-hour day at the work site. He's tall, balding, and usually wears some combination of flannel shirts and old jeans. Two elements of his outfit are always the same. The first are his 80's style eyeglasses. They are thick and heavy and necessary for him to see properly. If they are ever lost or damaged, the Carpenter suffers -2 dice on all pools (or gives an opponent -1 to the Difficulty of tests against him). The second item is the tool belt he wears everywhere. It contains about half a dozen hand tools of various sizes and ages. He uses them as weapons when he fights.

General Difficulty: 5/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 8, Social 4, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 6

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Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee (Tools) 9, Stealth 8, Intimidation (Glare) 6

Notes/ Other Traits: In addition to the abilities for vampires listed on **Hunter: The Reckoning** p. 169, the Carpenter also has the following:

- **Shadow Mastery:** So long as there is a shadow nearby, The Carpenter can take refuge inside it, becoming invisible and invulnerable unless the shadow is removed (by shining a light on it, for example) at which point he appears as if from nowhere. He primarily uses this ability to ambush victims from the shadows. He can move from one shadow to another so long as he is able to crawl inside, though this takes a full turn.

Nana Werther

Predators thrive when they can hide amongst their prey. Nana Werther learned long ago that nothing brings down the guard of a potential victim like a helpless old lady. She may not be a statuesque porcelain goddess, but she's tasted plenty of blood by convincing a silly mortal she needs some help getting up some stairs.

This unassuming nature makes Nana the perfect vampire to start gathering influence for Blood of the Lamb. She appears at local church groups and other gatherings offering to help. She slips her blood into whatever refreshments are there, like the coffee at an AA meeting or the brownies at a bake sale. She then starts to use her powers of suggestion to get what the nest needs to thrive and survive. It's small things at first, like places to crash for the day or places to find clothing. Eventually, she settles into the nest and rarely moves a muscle as her friends bring her everything she needs.

Nana is a survivor. She existed for centuries before joining Blood of the Lamb. She enjoys working with The Vicar but if forced to choose between any of the other vampires and herself, she'll choose to survive another night. She has no problem with endangering mortals to cover her escape. She'll politely ask her blood thralls to fall on blades and jump in front of bullets for her and they will die for her without a second thought.

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Nana likes to wear big bulky sweaters and chunky jewelry. Her shoulder length silver hair never seems to waver. She puts up a front of harmlessness but can move in for the kill shockingly fast. She has very pretty brightly colored nails that lengthen into claws (+2 Aggravated damage on Brawl attacks) if she needs to subdue a meal.

General Difficulty: 4/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 7, Mental 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 7

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl (Claws) 6, Subterfuge 7, Performance (Little Old Lady) 8

Notes/ Other Traits: In addition to her claws (above) and the abilities for vampires listed on **Hunter: The Reckoning** p. 169, Nana Werther also has the following:

- **Just Lie Down, Dear:** Nana's calm demeanor never cracks. Her soothing voice can convince anyone to do anything because it just sounds so reasonable. Hunters may make a Resolve + Etiquette test (Difficulty 5) to decline Nana's invitation. The Hunter receives +4 dice to their pool if the request would cause themselves or anyone they care about direct harm. Nana prefers to issue commands that tell people to wait, lie down or even leave. Anyone that has tasted blood from any of Blood of the Lamb's vampires does not get a test to resist.
- **Drip Feed:** Nana's spent a considerable amount of her unlife developing techniques to preserve the potency and addictive nature of her blood even when it's adulterated in, say, coffee or cakes. The effect is seriously diluted; a few sips won't cause addiction, but a cup of coffee with Nana every evening for a month certainly makes people warm to her.

Caleb Loudermilk

Not too long ago, Caleb Loudermilk was just a teenager who loved his grandma. She had been left at St. Teresa's Elderly Care Center for years and as soon as he was old enough to drive, he started to visit her on a regular basis. It began as a way to get out of the house when things got too heated with his parents but soon, he started to enjoy her company. They talked for hours about everything.

Then, one night, she wasn't there. She hadn't died, officially. Her room was empty and nobody on the shift could tell him where she was. He was crying in his car when Teri approached him. She said she had noticed strange things going on at the center as well. They soon gathered up a couple more people and started snooping around. Caleb discovered the disappearances were due to vampires. He told the cell to start a plan but then something surprising happened: one of the vampires visited him. By the end of the night, The Vicar convinced Caleb to join his holy mission, betray his friends and become a vampire.

Caleb became a vampire shortly after his cell was destroyed. Since then, he's acting out as much as possible. His parents were his first victims and now he's doing whatever he wants with his parents' credit cards. He knows he can't do this forever, but The Vicar charged him to be a demon that showed the living what awaits them if they don't serve God. That means fast cars, good times and showing off his powers until someone puts him down for good.

General Difficulty: 4/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Social 5, Mental 3

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 7, Intimidation 6, Drive 8

Notes/ Other Traits: In addition to the abilities for vampires listed on **Hunter: The Reckoning** p. 169, Caleb also has the following:

- **Testing His Limits:** Caleb is still discovering the limits of his powers. He can spend health levels like Willpower to give himself +3 dice on a single test as he burns through the blood in his body.

Chief Inspector Bruce Dierbeck

Bruce has seen a lot of terrible things in his time with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police but the things that truly haunt him are the decisions he's made in his personal life. He spent too many nights and weekends

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on the job instead of enjoying his family. His wife divorced him after discovering he had an affair with a fellow officer. And, most recently, he drove his only child out of his house after a heated argument. Andie came to him in confidence about their gender, and Bruce reacted by yelling about how big of a mistake it was and how they were too young to make such a decision. As soon as Andie slammed the door shut and ran out of the house, Bruce knew how big of a mistake he made.

For weeks, his extra time on the streets was devoted to finding his child and apologizing for what he said. Yellowknife wasn't that big of a city, but Andie knew all the people on the streets that talked to the police and steered clear of them. Bruce was still looking when he was visited one evening by a strange man clad in black clothes. The man carried himself like a priest, but Bruce didn't notice any recognizable religious symbols.

The priest showed him pictures of Andie and said they were under his protection. To stay safe, the Chief Inspector would help out his church, Blood of the Lamb, with what the strange priest called service donations. What he meant was the police had to help cover up murders, break ins and other crimes committed by the group. Dierbeck scoffed, and then the priest invited him to their next ceremony. The Chief Inspector attended. Though he didn't partake in the blood he saw the hold that Blood of the Lamb had on his child. He agreed to do the cult's dirty work and is too afraid to push back in case they harm Andie.

General Difficulty: 4/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 6, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Firearms (Pistol) 8, Awareness 7, Investigation 8

Edges: Arsenal (Team Requisition, Special Features), Fleet

Notes/ Other Traits: As the head of the police in Yellowknife he can put down a call for officers to back him up. He can call up to six uniformed police to his location in a matter of minutes. These officers use the Police Detective profile (**Hunter: The Reckoning**, p. 271).

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Andie Dierbeck

Andie has never felt comfortable in their skin. They've gone through their childhood quietly not wanting to make things any more difficult for their father. Bruce was a good dad for many years, even if he made some bad decisions that drove their mother away. But now they're becoming an adult, Andie decided to take the steps they needed to claim their identity. It wasn't even that big of a change, they thought. Same name, two stupid little letters. But those letters meant a lot and after all the times their dad said they loved them and was proud of them, they didn't think it would be a big deal.

Instead, it was one of their biggest blowout fights. Andie's dad blamed everyone for putting weird ideas in Andie's head. Andie assured him that it was their decision, that Bruce had spent the past few years talking about being a responsible adult and that this was the first step on that path. Bruce called them childish and told them to not come back until they wanted to act like an adult. Andie spent a few nights on the streets of Yellowknife after that, avoiding police and finding a sympathetic ear in Blood of the Lamb.

The Vicar quietly listened as Andie sobbed through their complicated feelings. It all came out in between sips of the sacrament; their resentment of their mother for leaving, their anger at their father for the affair, their terror at not knowing who they were or what they should become. The Vicar calmed their fears and gave them the Deacon's hood saying they could leave whenever they felt ready to confront their father. Instead, Andie feels like they've found their new family by helping people find the same peace and release they did.

Andie Dierbeck is the newest Deacon. Their blood conditioning is not yet fully complete, but they will act in loyalty to the vampires unless they are convinced otherwise. Information that would challenge Andie's devotion includes evidence that the vampires kill their victims or that their father is in danger.

General Difficulty: 4/ 2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 7, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Persuasion 8, Athletics 6, Finance 7



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The Deacons

The Deacons represent the members of Blood of the Lamb who are under the heaviest sway of the Vicar. While other members of the congregation can be swayed to act in the cult's best interests, the Deacons follow orders from the vampires directly. Each Deacon wears a red hooded sweatshirt to note their rank within the organization. These hooded sweatshirts are not uniform but anyone that's part of Blood of the Lamb recognizes their authority. The Deacons know the leaders are vampires and tell themselves these creatures are acting in the name of the Lord.

Use the stats for **Ghouls** on pg. 272 of **Hunter: The Reckoning**.

Sebastian LeChance, Blood Sorcerer

All LeChance wanted was some peace and quiet. It takes a special type of vampire to learn Blood Sorcery along with the time and devotion required to practice it. He chose Yellowknife for its solitude. It seemed the petty vampire politics of other cities had passed it by. He also wondered how the aurora and the midnight sun might affect the vampiric condition. He thought he had all the time in the world.

Instead, Blood of the Lamb is drawing undue attention to the existence of vampires from too many people; police, Hunters, and other troublesome mortals. The very things that drew LeChance to the city are now working against him. There's no vampire authority to appeal to. There's no power structure to protect him from their mistakes. Even with the power of Blood Sorcery, three against one aren't good odds. But if they've already drawn the attention of Hunters once, perhaps the next ones can handle the problem for him.

LeChance always has his interests in mind first. Though he's made no formal claim, he feels Yellowknife is his city. The Hunters are the perfect tool for him to use against the nest. So long as they disappear from the city after they've done their dirty work.

General Difficulty: 4/ 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 6, Mental 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 9

Exceptional Dice Pools: Occult (Vampires) 8, Stealth 8, Academics (Linguistics) 8

Notes/ Other Traits: In addition to the abilities for vampires listed on **Hunter: The Reckoning** p. 169, LeChance also has the following:

- **Blood Sorcery:** LeChance has studied the powers of undead blood and mastered the use of it in sorcerous rituals. If he has a sample of a living being's blood he can track them, read their minds, and even cause harm to them depending on the amount of blood given. If he decides he needs protection, information, or assistance from someone whose sample he possesses, LeChance tracks them down and makes their lives unpleasant until they submit. He can do the same to vampires but prefers not to interfere with creatures as powerful as he is. Any ritual he uses leaves a trace amount of blood behind which anyone well versed in the occult can recognize as vampire blood sorcery.

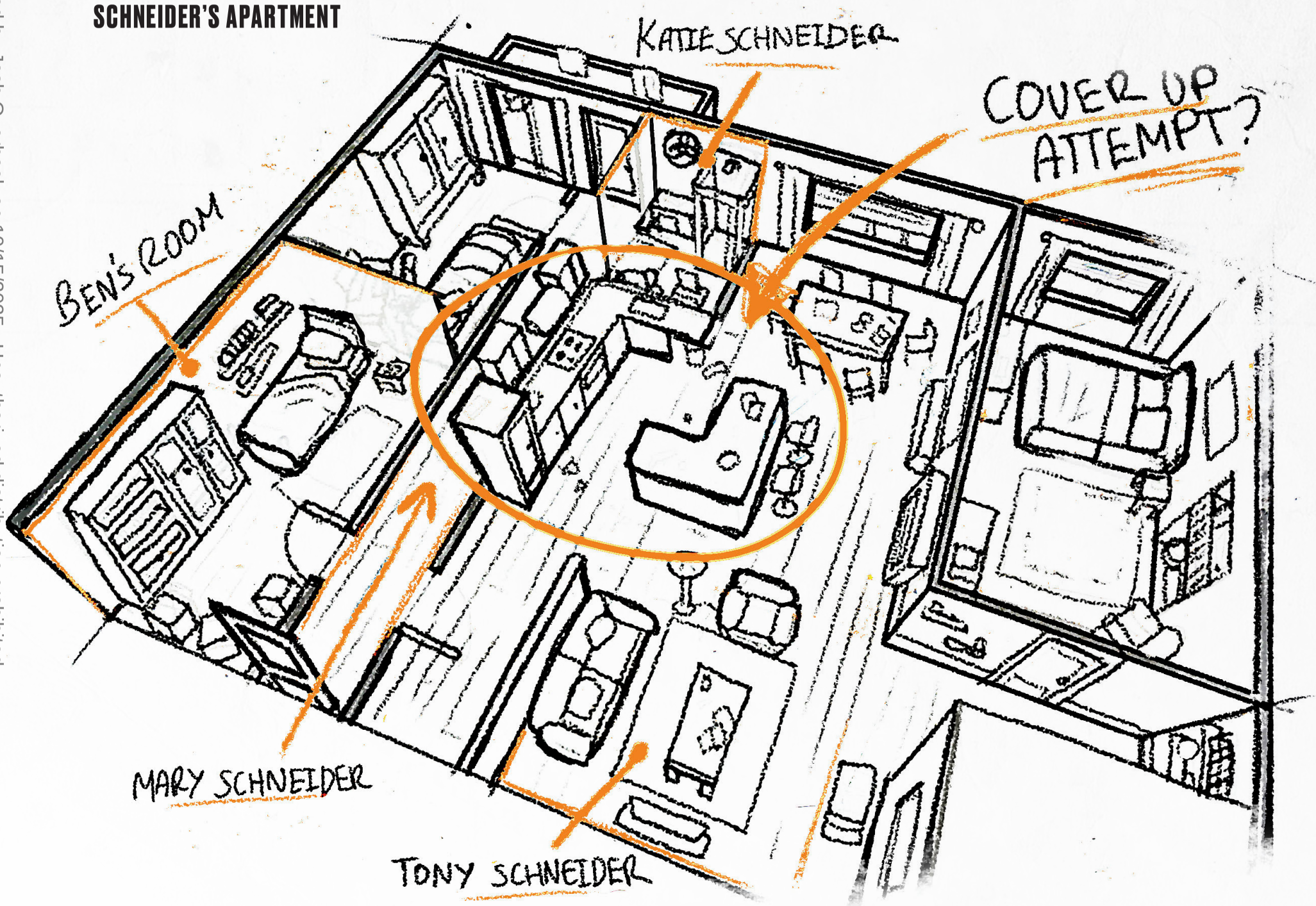
The Harridans

The Harridans seem like harmless workers at St. Teresa's Elderly Care Center. For the most part, they are. Nana Werther selected a few to give the gift of her own blood outside of the ceremonies of Blood of the Lamb. The blood has given them better strength, faster reaction, and a desire to protect their master. Nana's powers of persuasion buried the Harridan identity deep within these poor souls. When Nana commands them to attack they throw off all human traits and become hard hitting, fast running, mouth frothing beasts ready to kill for another drop of blood.

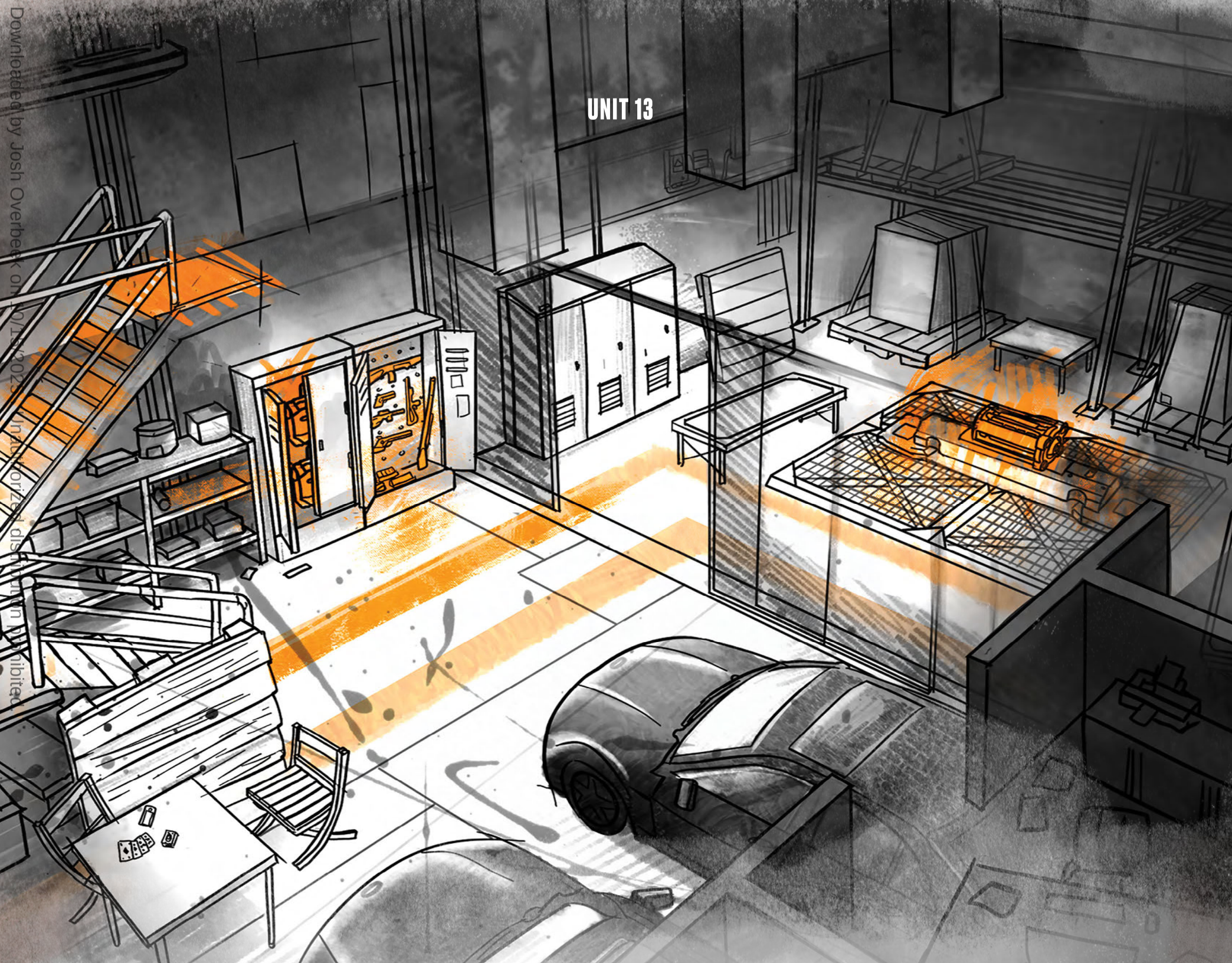
When the Harridans are active, use the stats for Ghouls on pg. 272 of the **Hunter: The Reckoning** core book. Otherwise, they are simply humans with general difficulties of 2/2 and 4 dice in all pools. ■

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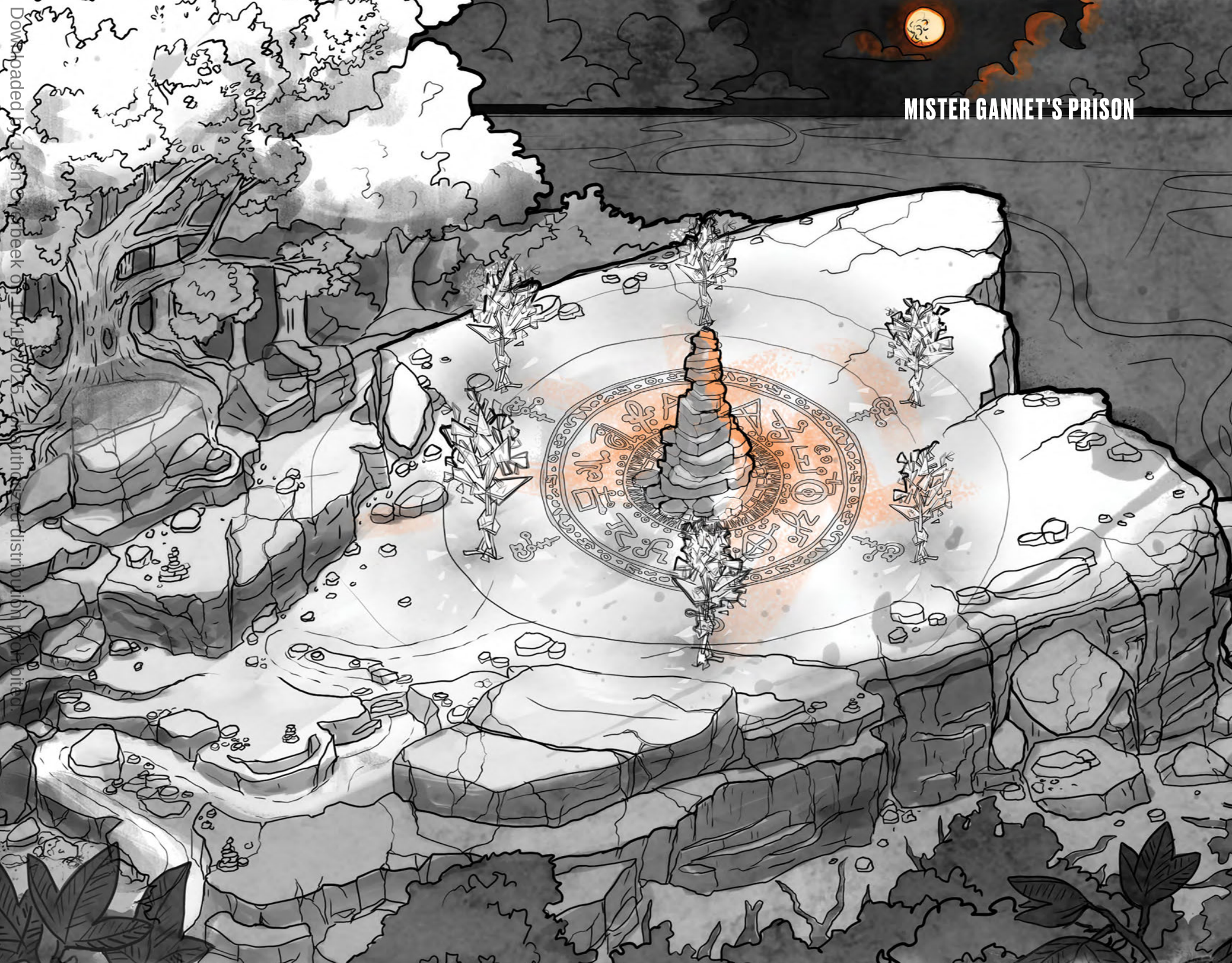
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