

HUNTER

THE VIGIL

SECOND EDITION

Kickstarter Manuscript Preview

Mysterious Places

Chapter Six: Mysterious Places takes another look at the Hunter setting by introducing where monsters live, locations the supernatural has tainted, and which places are actually monsters themselves. It offers new rules to handle each type of location, along with several examples.



Chapter Six: Mysterious Places

“It was a house without kindness, never meant to be lived in, not a fit place for people or for love or for hope. Exorcism cannot alter the countenance of a house; Hill House would stay as it was until it was destroyed.”

— Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

The hunt takes a cell to strange and mysterious places that are more dangerous than they first appear. A vampire might hang out in a pub to find a victim, lure them into the back alley by the dumpsters, and then feed before disappearing into the night. The victim may never know who or what they encountered. Hunters hot on a bloodsucker’s trail want to know one, important thing: Where is the vampire going *next*?

In **Hunter**, the supernatural can be found in mundane and remote locations — and monsters are on the move. Often, hunters have their hands full and don’t formulate elaborate criteria when investigating a new, unknown place to determine how much the supernatural has tainted it and what type of location it is. A house may be haunted, sure, but beyond that? Hunters don’t typically categorize locations based on what they find there for a variety of reasons, because they concentrate on dealing with the monster who lives there. Toss in a healthy dose of urban legends, unreliable eyewitness accounts, and historical mysteries rooted to individual locations, and it’s easy to see why hunters don’t shuffle places into neat categories.

Though hunters don’t share a common vocabulary to classify mysterious places, **Hunter** does to accommodate attached rules. In game terms, mysterious places fall into one of three broad categories of sites: nests, tainted places, and sentient places.

Classifications

Nests are the homes and lairs of monsters. A nest is defined and shaped by the monster using it. Typically, a nest is a mundane, perhaps abandoned location with features that suit the monster’s needs. It is possible the nest itself is supernatural, either twisted by the monster or it already was prior to occupation. What makes it a nest, however, is that the creature rests, recuperates, feeds, hides, etc. in this *specific* location. In other words, a nest is where the monster feels safe — which means that, for hunters, it is very, very dangerous.

Tainted places are locations that are just...*wrong*. They are twisted, cursed, or corrupted in such a way that a mortal’s mere presence in that place is a hazard. What makes a tainted place dangerous are the strange effects it has on those who try to access or use it. A tainted place will force people to see shadows that don’t exist or say and do things they wouldn’t normally dream of. Tainted places may drive people mad, alter the flow of time, or even change their physical nature independent of a monster’s touch. Like an unnatural form of radiation, *something* permeates each tainted place to alter the environment through instinct. Entering one is always a risk.

Perhaps strangest of all are **sentient** places. Unlike nests or tainted places, sentient places are intelligent monsters that actively pursue agendas known only to themselves. A sentient place can think and reason. It feels. It *hates*. It may even communicate, move, or alter its dimensions to attack those within its reach. Hunters who encounter a sentient place often do not know what they are dealing with until it is too late.

Mysterious places attract people for a variety of reasons. Because they are static, these locations often have well-documented histories outlining who owned or occupied that space, who lived or died in it, and what it was used for. Anchored in a physical place but steeped in urban legends, these locations often attract hunters, police officers, detectives, and amateur investigators who are hoping to find more than a monster's lair.

Bygones and Strange Places

In the *Chronicles of Darkness*, some physical objects may radiate with a supernatural taint. This type of object, called a **Bygone**, is a rare and unusual find.

In **Hunter**, a Bygone may be found in a mysterious place, and is further defined as an object of a reasonable (and manageable) size that possesses strange abilities. An eerie crypt is not a Bygone, for example, but an urn found inside might be. Bygones fall into one of three types: temporary, semi-permanent, or true.

Temporary Bygones

A *temporary* Bygone is an object of manageable size that contains supernatural power but isn't irrevocably tainted by it. They are considered temporary Bygones because despite appearances they are still dangerous and should be handled with care. Temporary Bygones may be spelled or hexed to inflict a Condition when opened, tampered with, or broken.

Ghosts and spirits inhabiting objects act as their source of supernatural power. A ghost that possesses a porcelain doll technically creates a temporary Bygone; when the doll is destroyed, however, the ghost remains and must be dealt with. After the ghost is exorcised or moves on, the doll reverts to its (hopefully) less-frightening state. Other temporary Bygones include locket, amulets, poison rings, urns, etc.

Some temporary Bygones may eventually shift into semi-permanent Bygones with the passage of time depending on their power source. When one does so, anyone who comes near the item begins to experience strange side effects, and it's no longer safe to handle without training.

Temporary Bygones may be discovered in nests and tainted places. On rare occasions, a sentient place may create a temporary Bygone, as another monster might, to lure the unsuspecting to come near.

Semi-Permanent Bygones

A *semi-permanent* Bygone is an object that inflicts a variety of strange and unusual effects. Mechanically, these effects are represented by Tilts and Conditions that are activated by touch or by proximity to the object. Thematically, the object may whisper or sing to the owner, begging to be used. The source of this Bygone's power is variable and can be caused by witches, warlocks, or demons creating cursed objects that inflict two opposing effects. A Hand of Glory, for example, promises to grant the user who lights its grisly wick wondrous powers — but at what cost? An auctioneer might gain the Connections Condition, for example, but suffer the Shaken Condition at the same time, so they're too afraid to socialize and use the hand's "gift."

Semi-permanent Bygones are found in undiscovered or locations lost to time. Sometimes, other monsters live near a Bygone of this type because they are unwittingly drawn to its supernatural power. Often, however, this type of Bygone may be responsible for a variety of unusual

behaviors told through the guise of an urban legend. In this way, a mysterious place may not be *that* strange after all; a Bygone may be to blame.

True Bygones

Lastly, a *true* Bygone is a legendary object drenched in supernatural power. For **Hunter**'s purposes, storied relics that bestow Endowments to tier-three hunters may be considered true Bygones. This type of Bygone is usually one of a kind, shrouded in myth, and incredibly powerful — even warded. Often, true Bygones are priceless, ancient relics or mechanisms that have been lost to the ages. Those who know they exist may become obsessed with finding them to unlock their secrets, not knowing their mysterious source of divine or infernal power. Some true Bygones are terrifying relics that have been soaked with the blood of 1,000 martyrs, while others are rumored to be blessed by the gods. No one knows for sure.

Unlike other types, true Bygones require years, if not decades, of study to piece together how they work, how they can be safely stored, and how they're best used to mitigate any unwanted side effects. Their very existence is a lure, however, and true Bygones can be stolen and possibly destroyed with concerted effort. Most hunters would be reticent to set fire to a true Bygone because as far as mythic relics go, no one can be certain what would happen if such an attempt were made. Examples of rumored-but-unconfirmed Bygones include: Hades' Helm of Darkness, the Monkey King's staff, the Book of Thoth, and Dagda's staff.

True Bygones are a once-in-a-lifetime find and require considerable time and resources to discover. If semi-permanent Bygones are rare, true Bygones are even rarer. Often, these mythical relics defy the laws of physics because they each go against the natural order in their own way. As far as the Chronicles of Darkness are concerned, Bygones that bestow blessings are not of this world. True Bygones are also more than a legend; to find one is to fulfill a collector's wildest dreams.

Of course, hunters who *do* manage to track a true Bygone down are in over their heads. Raw, supernatural power is not to be trifled with, and *most* hunters know better than to fidget and experiment with the unknown.

The Response

Mysterious places can be area-specific or draw cells, compacts, and conspiracies from a broader region. Everyone knows the Varela family's house is haunted, for example, and can tell you in exquisite (if not strictly accurate) detail about the death of a young couple on a specific stretch of road.

Tier One: Backyard Hunts

Local mysterious places do more than provide a novel or unusual encounter for any cell; they can make up a part of the setting's character or reflect the themes of a chronicle. For example, the Theatre Royal provides local history while spinning lies. Many of these locations grow out of local communities or are hidden in remote places with little connection to — or influence on — the outside world. Strange places in villages, towns, and cities are not unknown to residents. Someone knows about them. Someone *must*. Either they live nearby, brokered a deal to sell the land, or always shiver when they walk by.

Tier-one hunters might not always track a monster back to its nest. A cell of hunters who stumble into a tainted or sentient place may be capable of tackling it, but they can just as easily be

overpowered due to their small numbers. When that's the case, the cell must find the allies and resources required to make their move. Often, cells suffer from a lack of knowledge and resources that forces them to do more research, interview more witnesses, and take extra precautions.

Mysterious places can be challenging for cells depending upon their size, location, history, and occupants. The older the place, the more time is required to know what the cell is dealing with. They can also teach cells a lot about the paranormal, because they sit between the world of mortals and the supernatural. Though they are not imbued with darker powers, nests can yield proof that a witness wasn't telling tall tales. They can also, however, act as lures to ensnare victims and trap hunters who've put their faith in the wrong informant. Tainted places may force tier-one hunters to confront their worst fear: The fight against the supernatural never ends. Then, if they confront a sentient location, they might decide to collaborate with multiple cells and form a compact — transitioning the characters from tier one to tier two.

Often, confronting or cleansing a mysterious place in a local area means tier-one hunters must face the darkness that gave rise to them. Unfortunately, that taint isn't always caused by the supernatural, and hunters who peer into it may not like who or what they find.

Tier Two: Amassing Resources

For compacts, mysterious places may require all hands on deck to investigate, explore, study, control, and neutralize them. Even when small or confined, some locations cast long shadows and compacts may have dealt with that place before. Other times, the targeted area has an important purpose that has nothing to do with the supernatural. Entire counties can depend on the output of a copper mine for economic survival; when that mine is revealed to be a nest, hunters who clear it out save more than people's lives. Towns and villages built near ancient wellsprings might depend on the fresh water a stream provides; the stream is protected by a sentient shrine. Now the hunters have a choice: clear out the shrine and potentially affect the water or leave it alone? Mysterious places such as these are likely to attract a compact's attention for a variety of reasons. The bigger the rumor, the more likely it is a compact will order its members to scope out the mysterious place. After a while, more cells might show up — or even competing compacts.

Compacts won't tell hunters they can't investigate a mysterious place or acquire a Bygone. Their attitudes will affect how easy it is for hunters to find resources or pull favors, however. Their positions are rumored to be as follows:

- **The Long Night:** Religious leaders have their finger on the pulse of the faithful, and are often called in to say a prayer, cleanse a cursed house, or even perform an exorcism. While their methods don't always work, the Long Night will reach out to other compacts as needed to deal with a mysterious place on behalf of its congregations.
- **Loyalists of Thule:** The Loyalists struggle to figure out how important mysterious places are to the hunt. While their primary focus is disabling (or disarming, as some members put it) Bygones when they appear, they're not sure if spending considerable time and resources dealing with a mysterious place is worth the effort. That said, the Loyalists aren't above helping when needed, but they likely won't investigate an area by themselves without seeing a benefit for their time.
- **Network Zero:** Compact members were some of the first to realize the increase in monster activity had certain side effects on various locations. Rumor has it that additional factions within the compact are forming to investigate haunted houses and monster lairs to prove the

supernatural is real. However, for every area that's been filmed there are dozens of false reports — often about the same locale. • **Null Mysteriis:** Members of Null Mysteriis are excited by the prospect of expanding their research opportunities and knowledge of the supernatural. Several hunters are thrilled that they can study where a monster feeds or sleeps, while others are eager to test the properties of inorganic materials that are clearly imbued with the supernatural. Of all the compacts, however, Null Mysteriis comes across as more authoritarian when dealing with Bygones and mysterious places, because they want to control the field to produce great results.

• **S.W.O.R.N.:** Every major metropolitan area is filled with forgotten or derelict buildings, and S.W.O.R.N. is aware of which places to avoid. They know their city well and will gladly share intel — especially if other hunters are willing to investigate. Unless someone is in danger, however, compact members tend to agree with The Union and leave dangerous areas alone.

• **The Union:** Members of The Union are hyper-vigilant, and their frequent patrols to keep the neighborhood safe act as a deterrent to outsiders — including monsters who need to find cover for the night. When their hunters find a mysterious place, it's usually one that's just out of reach or several miles away. Thus, when a cell does investigate, it often stumbles because they don't have the experience other compacts do. While some compacts — like the Loyalists of Thule — closely guard knowledge, others — like Network Zero — gladly share their findings. Banding together to investigate or fight in a mysterious place could even lead to the formation of a new compact. Larger and more powerful threats introduce the possibility of additional allies or enemies as well as conflicting motives. Hunters may gladly enjoy the added resources their compacts provide to cleanse a mysterious place or mount a fact-finding expedition. Of course, to do so a cell must first figure out what they're investigating and, when it comes to hunting, no two compacts hunt precisely the same way.

Unless a compact has a history investigating Bygones, tier-two hunters are marginally aware that they exist. The reasons for this are simple: Hunters capture, study, and eliminate monsters because they represent an *active* threat and a higher priority. John Dee's grimoire by itself isn't as compelling as a scary clown stalking and killing tourists at a county fair.

Compacts filled with hunters can go bankrupt, and their resources are not unlimited. Members are aware of supernatural threats but weigh the benefits and risks of investigating each one. Though most compacts have their own goals and motivations, they tend to agree that keeping a community safe is more important than hunting down a rumored Bygone unless it's actively threatening or causing harm.

Tier Three: Global Effort

Conspiracies understand that civilizations are built upon common and scarce resources. Control certain assets or information and entire nations can be manipulated with a well-timed phone call. Mysterious places scattered across the world are a draw for many conspiracies, because they have what hunters seek: a better understanding of the supernatural world. Though no hunt is ever guaranteed to produce information or rare and unusual Bygones, like the Dropa stones, such sites draw the attention of global conspiracies seeking an edge in their fight against the supernatural.

Because mysterious places and Bygones hold supernatural secrets, the conspiracies tend to react to the “bigger fish” as opposed to the haunted shack down the street.

• **Ascending Ones:** The Ascending Ones are less interested in mysterious places than they are in experimenting with Bygones. Unlike other conspiracies, hunters want to explore their uses by

either coating them with potions, using them to contain their magical elixirs, or crushing them into fine powders that can be used as ingredients. Ascending Ones haven't shared their intent with other hunters outside the conspiracy, and there's no telling what other hunters will do when they learn how far this conspiracy is willing to go.

- **Cheiron Group:** The Cheiron Group is tight-lipped and hasn't revealed its stance on mysterious places or Bygones — not even to their own members. Naturally, this has spawned several rumors and conspiracy theories. Some recruits are being forced to experiment with acquired Bygones to test their effects. The leaders of the conspiracy are draining the Cheiron Group's war chest to purchase mysterious places under the name "Lambent Development Corporation." What members are figuring out is that the Cheiron Group seems to be tightening its belt, even outright refusing equipment requests, while simultaneously increasing its recruitment efforts.

- **Council of Bones:** The Council of Bones has an unusual stance on mysterious places and Bygones, because it's only concerned with relics and locations connected to the spirit world. Some members believe they need to protect what they find, while others agree each instance should be treated as its own case. In general, hunters aren't opposed to investigating or sharing information provided the Council's interests to guard the living are protected. Secretly, some hunters fear the Council could lose sight of the Vigil by focusing too much on places lost to time and artifacts better left untouched.

- **The Lucifuge:** Members of the Lucifuge are concerned that demons and spirits of vengeance are gathering in abandoned places and are using them as a base of operations. While hunters aren't panicking, they will investigate leads that reek of the supernatural. The Lucifuge are often the first to show up at a scene marked by satanic symbols or evidence of a rite. Sometimes, this results in a case of mistaken identity, which is partly why hunters have begun working with local authorities to ensure they're viewed as allies rather than antagonists.

- **Malleus Maleficarum:** In its storied history, the Malleus Maleficarum has investigated sites plagued by vampiric, demonic, and ghostly activity. For centuries, with the backing of the Vatican, hunters — and some conspiracy theorists — believe they've acquired several Bygones and a stockpile of cursed relics. While there may be some truth to the rumors, conspiracy members have been told to check in before proceeding. Additionally, leaders are considering the formation of a new order within their ranks to specialize in cleansing cursed objects and places.

The promise of undiscovered supernatural power when combined with the hunt brings an equal measure of excitement and danger, and hunters wishing to neutralize dangerous sites have their work cut out for them. Entire chronicles may be built around the acquisition, exploration, and defense of such mysterious places; subsequent chronicles could be built on unlocking a Bygone's power or freeing a trapped creature. Some, like Haw Par Villa, may even act as a Black Gate (p. XX) frozen in a moment of time, allowing the wielder to travel wherever they wish.

Though conspiracies tend to have more resources at their disposal, their members deal with more politics and approvals than tier-one or -two hunters. Information — the *right* intel — is at a premium, because the story of what happened shifts depending upon who's telling it. Rival factions within a conspiracy might sabotage each other to get their hands on the Pettakere cave's latest, untouched map; competing cells or conspiracies might easily do the same. The more hunters involved in the search, the greater the chance a hunt may go terribly, horribly wrong — especially when investigating a sentient place.

Unlike monsters, mysterious places don't usually up and relocate on a moment's notice, and their place in the world does not go unnoticed. After all, if one conspiracy shuts down a tourist attraction, like the Khewra Salt Mines in Pakistan or St. Patrick's cemetery in New Orleans, other interested parties are sure to take notice. As much as conspiracies want to control the supernatural to various degrees, their members uphold the Code to remind themselves of their humanity.

Nests, tainted places, and sentient places may attract tier-three hunters, but the real challenge is figuring out how dealing with these locations fits into their agendas and how they affect other mortals who have no idea conspiracies exist. Should the Cheiron Group reveal all its secrets to accept an archaeologist's help? Will the Council of Bones stretch its view of the Code to work with a warlock who has more information? Just how far will the Aegis Kai Doru go to get their hands on a new Bygone?

No mysterious place surrenders its secrets easily, and conspiracy members need to tread carefully when dealing with the unknown. Setting their concerns about the supernatural aside, conspiracy members must balance the physical requirements of the hunt against the resulting politics and ethical considerations of such an undertaking.

Nests

Even monsters need a place they can call home. A pack of dog-sized creatures covered in rusting metal plates hides within an old junkyard. The old lady's house, abandoned since she died, is a nest of catlike beasts she unwittingly cared for. Some nests might be more accurately called a "haunt" or a "resting place" for the ghosts within.

Whatever you call it, whatever form it takes, a nest is a monster's lair or refuge. Nests are suited to the creatures living in them, and hostile to any hunters who dare enter. Going into a nest is extremely dangerous, because the monster has the upper hand. Unfortunately, hunters often need to follow their prey back to its lair to save a victim, capture or kill the monster, and make their city a bit safer — at least for a night.

Using Nests

Nests are often the setting for confrontations with a monster. This might be the set piece for the climax of a story or a set up to highlight how the hunters aren't fully prepared. In either case, dealing with a monster on its home ground should always be presented as a dramatic and dangerous scene.

A nest can also be used a setting for tense investigation scenes. Entering the lair of a flesh-eating beast to find more information is common, but risky. In this case, the nest itself is a source of clues, but also represents a terrible gamble — will the information hunters gain be valuable enough to make it worth their while? What happens when they find out another monster also lives there?

Savvy hunters should pay attention to the nest's environment. What kind of lair a monster chooses can tell you a great deal about it. A nest will often provide hints about a monster's weakness; a condemned factory with blacked-out windows probably indicates the creature is sensitive to light. Additionally, the nest might provide hints as to its abilities or Dread Powers. Hunters can enter a nest of a creature they assumed was unintelligent and find a collection of museum artifacts, instead.

The specific nest a monster chooses can also tell hunters something about its background. Its proximity to a hospital, police station, house, or other building says a lot about its habits. The activities it conducts inside can also deepen the mystery. Why does a slasher always drag its victims to the Oncology Ward in an abandoned hospital before carving them up? Why would a vampire sleep beneath a popular jazz club and never feed or interact with the musicians?

By fleshing out a monster's home, hunters have more information when deciding what to do next.

Destroying a Nest

The easiest way to neutralize a nest is to destroy a monster. Unlike other types of mysterious places, nests are typically not threats by themselves. Once the monster is destroyed, the nest itself is no longer a problem in most cases.

However, abandoned nests can still harm those who wander in. A cave on the verge of collapse or a dump site full of toxic chemicals are both extremely hazardous. Some intelligent humanoid monsters might set traps to catch or deter unwanted visitors, too. And, if the nest remains intact following its destruction, it could attract *other* monsters who need a home or are trying to find out what happened to the previous occupant. For cells and compacts, focused on immediate, local problems, cleaning up nests is a strong motivator to ensure their communities remain safe.

Hunters who physically destroy a nest deprive a monster of its lair (or drive a group of creatures out into the open) and can confront it in a new area. Fire, explosives, or other types of demolition equipment are obvious choices for hunters, but outright destruction of public and private properties can create headaches. Abandoned places are usually owned by *someone*, and authorities will want to know who blew up the old cistern without a permit.

Driving a monster out of its nest may cause other complications, as well. If the hunters aren't thorough, destroying a haunted house may cause the scattered ghosts to latch on to a new location — or the hunters themselves. A collapsed cave might cause the monsters within to attack more frequently, as they desperately search for a new home. Or perhaps there are more monsters in the nest than the hunters initially expected, and now they are pouring out of a burning building, howling for blood.

Systems

A nest is notable because it favors its monstrous occupants and hinders unwelcome visitors. Mechanically, the hindrances are represented by Conditions and Tilts. Some monsters may set traps (p. XX) as well, reserving their Dread Powers for the real fight.

The relationship between the monster and its nest, or the structure of the nest itself, can make navigating or exploring difficult. A living doll chooses a lair in an apartment building full of narrow hallways and cluttered with old furniture, where it can move freely, but the hunters can't easily defend themselves from its knife. The doll's nest would have both the Detritus and Tight Tilts. A featureless slasher in a gas mask swinging a pickaxe takes up residence in chemical factory, where the fumes inflict a Poisoned or Sick Tilt on anyone else who enters. The slasher stalks the weakened invaders and picks off the hunters one by one.

The Tilts inflicted by a nest are almost universally Environmental and apply to any unapproved visitors attempting to navigate the nest. Unless otherwise noted, leaving the monster's nest will

remove the Tilt or Condition. Abandoning the nest to remove these effects will not grant Beats, however. Additionally, a monster may have Dread Powers that further shape the environment.

Mechanically, destroying a nest requires an extended action that may be opposed by a monster or Storyteller characters. The difficulty of starting a fire or determining *just* the right amount of explosives to level a nest is at the Storyteller's discretion.

Arthur Kill Ship Graveyard

Quote: *"Sure, we know about that ship's graveyard, but nobody's fool enough to actually clean it up. Why? Pick a reason: too expensive, too dangerous, too many nasty migraines."*

Location: New Jersey, New York. U.S.A.

Description: Records indicate the official name of the Arthur Kill Ship Graveyard is the Donjon Iron and Metal Scrap Processing Facility. It is an array of rusting hulks and broken-down engines that sits on the Staten Island sound, staring across the water at New Jersey. Around 100 ships have found their final resting place here, mired in mud and muck. Most have been stripped of their useful parts, and their skeletal hulks decompose at differing rates.

Decaying ships from as early as 1901 can be spotted in the graveyard. These range from a NYC Fire Department boat, to a random assortment of tugboats and merchant vessels, to a World War II submarine chaser. Many of the corroded ships are not worth salvaging and are hazardous because they contain toxic substances; they've been left to rot at the sound's marshy edges, staining the water red with rust.

Gaining access to the site is difficult and dangerous. Hunters must trudge through mud and seven-foot-tall reeds or try to navigate unstable paths made of broken boards.

All of this makes the graveyard a perfect hiding place for monsters to hide and find shelter in.

Storyteller Notes: Over the decades since the salvage yard was established, monsters have taken up residence within on at least four separate occasions. The combination of access to potential victims, the difficulty of getting into the place, and the vast array of hiding places within the ship graveyard have proven irresistible. At least two of the monsters are rumored to have been amphibious; some hunters believe the creatures swim out and attack people far away from their lair. Tracking these creatures back to the ship graveyard was as much a case of luck as good hunting.

To introduce this location into a chronicle, think about how much time the cell may spend there. Maybe the cell has tracked a dangerous monster to its hiding place in the Arthur Kill Ship Graveyard. Maybe there's a wrinkle: another hunter cell has tracked a completely different monster there. How are these two creatures coexisting within the same nest? And can both cells work together to flush them out?

Suggested Tilts: Detritus (Environmental), Filthy (Environmental), Tight (Environmental)

Theatre Royal

Quote: *We were just about to leave, when we heard someone shout, "Goddamn you for a blackguard, rascal!" Turned out to be Charles Macklin!*

Location: Drury Lane, London, England

Description: Several different buildings claiming the title of Theatre Royal have loomed over Drury Lane throughout London's long and storied history. The first and third iteration burned to the ground, and the fourth still stands.

Each theater has claimed its fair share of lives and plays host to the ghosts of its predecessors. The most famous spirit is known only as the Man in Gray, a ghost with a penchant for 18th-century attire, complete with tri-corner hat. Many believe the spirit is connected to a body discovered in 1848, sealed up in one of the theater's walls with a dagger between its ribs.

The Theatre Royal's ghosts are not the only challenge hunters face. London is a busy metropolis and its police, citizens, and tourists frequently stroll past. To top things off, the titillation of the theater combined with a good old-fashioned ghost hunt may be just the thing to attract the interest of local hunter cells, debunkers of the supernatural, or even stranger denizens of the night.

Storyteller Notes: The Theatre Royal is an iconic part of London and is a wonderful example of a haunted nest. The theater is the source of many superstitions that grant ambience and mystery to a chronicle featuring its renowned stage. The ghost light, for example, is a single light left on to placate ghosts. Supernaturally touched plays, such as *Macbeth*, Goethe's *Faust*, and *The King in Yellow*, might even be performed during an investigation. The ghosts — and actors — will resist efforts to cleanse or exorcise the site.

The Theatre Royal isn't the type of nest hunters can burn down on a whim; they must deal with the spirits if they want to cleanse the site. Its fame, however, may attract other monsters. Maybe an enterprising director scheduled performances of a newly discovered play with occult overtones. Since rehearsals started, there's been an uptick of paranormal activity in and around the theater. Eventually, the hunters may learn the play is riling up the ghosts haunting the old theater. But is the director doing it deliberately? And, if not, who is?

Suggested Tilts: Faltering, Reeling

Ophiology Lab

Quote: *Why didn't anybody tell me we're investigating snakes?*

Location: Ota, Gunman Prefecture, Japan

Description: Hidden almost in plain sight among the newer facilities of the popular tourist attraction, the Japan Snake Center, is a collection of rotting, wooden shacks. Filled to bursting with decaying specimens, preserved ophiological treasures, unknown piles of research, and other paraphernalia, the neglected lab space is unnaturally permeated by the stench of decomposition.

The Ophiology Lab is no longer routinely used, and while it has every appearance of being securely locked up, it's hard to tell for certain. With so many specimens in such disarray, the lab is rumored to attract several types of snake yōkai: Nomori, Uwabami, and Nure-onna to name a few.

Whether the Ophiology Lab is protected by its rumored inhabitants or not, some hunters are skittish and may not investigate it because the area taps into their fears and phobias. Cells that want to visit this nest must research it thoroughly before paying it a visit by investigating former reports and interviewing spooked witnesses.

Storyteller Notes: The Ophiology Lab's placement is so close to the Japan Snake Center, it works best as an introductory, unexplored mysterious place that may or may not be a nest. The appearance of snake yōkai could turn out to be a rumor, falsified report, or frantic statement from a tourist scared of snakes. It could, however, also be a place where thieves scope out the Japan Snake Lab to steal from tourists, or simply a set of extra storage units that a scientist hasn't gotten around to cleaning up.

If one of the snake yōkai has moved in, the cell will need to figure out how to gain access to the site. Maybe they befriend a scientist who witnessed something strange, or maybe they ask the facility's administrator if they can help clean up the site.

Suggested Tilts: Detritus (Environmental), Filthy (Environmental)

Tainted Places

A sturdy oak tree where victims were once hanged until dead is eternally cursed. An isolated military base where experiments in psychic warfare were conducted has a lingering aura of pain and fear. The forest where a group of invaders slaughtered the families hiding from the ravages of war and famine twists the perceptions of anyone who draws near. That cistern in the basement of a centuries-old farmhouse is believed to be a doorway to hell. Whatever the reason, these places are dangerous. They are tainted.

Tainted sites are the places that have weird and terrible stories about them, places that people avoid without entirely knowing why. This is for good reason. In areas around a tainted site, nature often acts...*odd*. Plants grow in unusual ways; animals skitter strangely. Rain falls sideways. These oddities extend to people who spend too much time in a given site. As the taint of the place begins to take hold, their perceptions are altered, followed by their innermost thoughts and behavior. Eventually, they may become a danger to themselves and those around them.

Tainted places are not aware, however. They don't have goals or feelings. They simply *are*. And their very existence is a powerful threat.

Cleansing Tainted Places

Hunters tell a wide variety of tales about how they have dealt with tainted places. In some cases, burning down the cursed house was a simple (if unsubtle) way of cleansing the site. In other cases, more elaborate rituals were required. No one has been able to discover a surefire way for dealing with the dangers of these places, as each tainted site is unique.

For many places, destroying the physical location is enough. If the curse or taint is tied to a specific building, tree, or landmark, then destroying that landmark will remove the threat of the tainted place. Fire, explosives, and demolition equipment attract attention, and anyone who owns a building is unlikely to be happy with someone burning it down. Worse: Some tainted places are immune to fire and may act strangely when attacked.

Some tainted places cannot be cleansed so easily. If the land *beneath* the building is cursed, then bulldozing the house is meaningless. In these cases, hunters will need to dig deeper into the history and cause of the tainted place, to find another means of cleansing the site.

Tainted Systems

Tainted places, though dangerous, are not monsters who think, feel, or plan. Tainted places simply react. The following rules apply.

- **Potency:** All tainted places have a measure of a curse (or taint). This is reflected by its Potency rating and the Dread Powers it possesses.
- **Dread Powers:** Dread Powers are often a sign of a malevolent presence at work. Unlike monsters, tainted places do not *choose* to use Dread Powers the same way they do, because they're not alive or sentient. Dread Powers are activated reflexively.
- **Types of Actions.** A tainted place can only take a reflexive action when a Dread Power is activated. They do not have Initiative, nor do they participate in combat. If necessary, defensive rolls comprise the tainted site's assigned Potency rating plus or minus modifiers. If an unusual roadside attraction has a Potency rating of 8, the tainted site's dice pool is eight dice. If, however, the tainted site is attempting to use the Agonize Dread Power, the victim's Stamina is subtracted from the roll as normal.
- **Durability.** The physical objects (doors, windows, traps, etc.) within a sentient place have a Durability rating; they are treated as form of equipment (p. XX) and is rated 1 to 5. In general, the higher the Durability rating, the more challenging it is to destroy.
- **Structure.** A sentient place may have several structures within a given location. When calculating Structure, add the object's Size to its Durability.
- **Variable Size:** Tainted places can vary in size but start at Size 10. Often, they are large or sturdy enough that destroying them may require explosives, construction equipment, or a long-term project that need permits and additional crewmembers. The amount of damage required to physically destroy a tainted place is at the Storyteller's discretion. If a tainted place is destroyed before it's been neutralized, its ruins will still present signs of the supernatural.
- **Other Threats:** Any location, whether it's a nest, tainted place, or sentient place, can be home to other threats. When assigning traps, monsters, Bygones, etc., specificity is required to help hunters clearly understand what they're dealing with.

Dread Power Adjustments

Dread Powers represent a tainted place's ability to inflict Tilts and Conditions or alter its environment in response to actions characters take.

The Dread Powers used by tainted places do not require Willpower, because they are activated reflexively. This means that Dread Powers requiring Willpower expenditure beyond initial activation won't work in a tainted place. Tainted places don't use Numen either, but ghosts who haunt a tainted place will.

Dread Powers are purchased according to their rank and are tied to their Potency rating.

Dread Power Triggers

Dread Powers become available to tainted places after initial purchase and are not powered by Willpower. Each Dread Power has a unique *trigger*.

The Dread Power trigger is a thematic device that causes the Dread Power to activate in a specific location within the area. They represent the years, decades — even centuries — of malevolent power that's seeped into wood, drywall, bricks, and stone. Dread Power triggers are

activated by characters and cannot be created by them (or by monsters); they are firmly connected to the tainted place. Once tripped, the trigger will not be reactivated.

Tainted places are not considered neutralized until hunters perform a successful ritual to cleanse the site. The ritual should be thematically appropriate to the tainted site and may be performed as teamwork or Tactics. Tripped Dread Power triggers will reactivate after a period of one week if the hunters don't neutralize the taint. They will, however, appear in the same place as before; savvy hunters will take note of where the effect occurred and avoid that location in the future.

INSERT TABLE

Potency	Number of Triggers	Dread Power Ranks
1	10-15	3
2	16-20	5
3	21-25	7
4	26-30	9
5	31-35	11
6	36-40	15
7	41-45	19
8	46-50	23
9	51-55	27
10	56+	31

END TABLE

Multiple triggers tied to a specific Dread Power may be found in a tainted place but may not be activated more than once per session. The trigger is considered “tripped” when the Dread Power has successfully affected a single character. Technically, a cell *could* temporarily neutralize a tainted site by activating all its triggers; doing so will not cleanse the taint.

The trigger for a Dread Power may require a specific interaction with an object, stairwell, hallway, or room; they may also necessitate a character's specific action. A tainted place triggers Maze whenever someone accidentally trips. A hospital that traps ghosts may force Agonize on a monster who dies inside. A cave may have several, hidden caverns that inflict Blackout on the hunters once they venture further in.

Storytellers are encouraged to place triggers in unusual places and think about using interesting Dread Powers to give the tainted place its own personality. Part of the mystery will be to figure out how to avoid getting hurt while exploring and neutralizing the site, saving trapped occupants, and dealing with monsters who've taken up residence.

Joelma Building

Quote: *“Thirteen deaths multiple times? That’s too many tragic losses to be a coincidence.”*

Location: São Paulo, Brazil

Description: Standing 25 stories tall, the Joelma Building is a towering skyscraper in the middle of São Paulo. It is also a historic site because of the tragedy that occurred three years after it was built. In 1974, an electric fire started on the 12th floor of the building, trapping people on the upper 13 floors. Soon, the entire building became a towering inferno, and claimed so many lives it forced the world to take notice and spurred fire-safety discussions and laws to prevent future disasters. By the time the fire died out, 179 people were dead and over 300 people injured.

Wherever there is tragedy, urban legends swirl in its wake. Paranormal researchers believe the land is now cursed, and the stories blend fact with fear. During the blaze, 13 people were trapped in one of its elevators and died. The victims were never identified, and no one came forward to claim the bodies. These unknown 13 souls haunt the Joelma Building site and never leave. Since the fire, there have been numerous reports of people seeing ghostly figures on the upper floors of the Joelma Building.

To this day, these hauntings continue. Workers see apparitions in the reconstructed building's offices and hallways and consider this to be a normal, everyday occurrence.

Storyteller Notes: Through careful research, the hunters can discover the truth of stories claiming the terrible Joelma fire was not the first tragedy to happen on the site. One story asserts that, at the founding of São Paulo, 12 cursed Jesuit priests and an altar boy committed suicide at or near the site. Another states that, before the Joelma building was built, a home on the same land was the site of a murder-suicide: A young chemist returned home and shot 11 people before killing himself. After emergency personnel arrived, one worker became ill and was forced to leave the scene. That worker died the next day, of an infection apparently contracted at the scene, bringing the death toll to 13.

In addition to being a tainted place that claimed the lives of 13 victims, the Joelma Building could *also* be a nest, haunted by the 13 souls who died during the fire. Cleansing an office building in the middle of a busy city is a daunting task for any hunter, especially since there's no telling if the site is actively attempting to claim 13 new victims or not.

Systems: The Joelma Building is Size 100 and Potency 3. The Dread Power triggers are found in odd places that been built up or reconstructed since the fire took place. Suggested Dread Powers include Blackout, Agonize, Madness and Terror.

Haw Par Villa

Quote: *"Welcome to the horrific ride of your afterlife!"*

Location: Singapore

Description: Crowning a hill in Pasir Panjang, Haw Par Villa is a theme park dedicated to Confucian ideals and Chinese folklore, myths, and legends. Built in the 1930s by Aw Boon Haw for his brother, Boon Par, Haw Par Villa was a popular tourist attraction when it first opened. Over the years, however, interest in Tiger Balm Gardens waned despite its cultural prominence among Singaporeans, and the colorful attractions have continued to gently age or fall into disrepair. Despite this, Haw Par Villa holds a place in many a tourist's imagination and has spawned a peculiar urban legend: The site is thought to conceal a literal portal to hell.

Though many of its attractions are beautiful renderings, the Villa is most famous for its gruesome depictions of the 10 Courts of Hell. Abandoned, expanded, and renovated repeatedly

over the years, the villa has been a staging point for the Japanese army and a “moral excursion” for thousands of children.

Some believe the infernal gateway is only open at midnight or during certain astronomical events. Whether or not these urban legends are true, the rumors persist. Several sections of the park are closed off or no longer in use, and the location is often shut down for months at a time to ensure the public’s safety. When the park is operational, it is only open during the daytime, which further complicates matters.

Storyteller Notes: Aging theme parks, carnivals, traveling sideshows, and tourist attractions are interesting sites for hunters to explore even without the presence of the supernatural. These locations may seem perfectly innocuous during the day but take on horrific attributes at night when shadows fall ominously on cheerful statues. Haw Par Villa is a unique cultural site because it combines the mundane with the supernatural. The location isn’t tainted in its entirety; the supernatural is only active in the 10 Gates of Hell exhibit.

A gateway to hell represents a significant threat for hunters and acts as the reason a site is tainted while pointing to the source of its Dread Powers. Chronicles that include Haw Par Villa’s 10 Courts of Hell or similar exhibits may take a dramatic, if not demonic, turn. The goal is straightforward: Shut the gate and figure out how to keep it closed. The methodology, on the other hand, may not be. Demons, witches, warlocks, spirits, and other thematic monsters may prowl around the hellmouth, while others might try to escape. Hunters may have to prioritize or call for backup to deal with an increasing threat.

Systems: Haw Par Villa is not the tainted site — but the 10 Courts of Hell exhibit is. It is Size 50 and Potency 6. The Dread Power triggers are hard to find, because they’re located in, near, and around the exhibit in the underground tunnel. If hunters visit when the park is open, they’ll attract attention for being too hands on with the demonic statues and icons in the tunnel. Suggested Dread Powers are Black Gate, Damnation, Hex, and Maze.

Fairchild Oak

Quote: *“That tree...I think it wanted me...to hurt.”*

Location: Florida, U.S.A.

Background: The Fairchild Oak, which is also known as the Haunt Oak, is a centuries-old Florida landmark tainted by death. Many believe the tree attained supernatural qualities in 1880 when Norman Harwood killed himself beneath its outstretched limbs or following the immigration of Scottish plantation owner James Ormond II and the fight led by Seminole resistance leader Coacoochee — though its origin may precede the horrors of colonialism. Regardless of origin, the Fairchild Oak is neither benign nor malevolent. After witnessing centuries of grief and trauma that escalated during the Seminole War, the Fairchild Oak can no longer be sustained by water and sunlight alone. The oak tree thirsts for human blood and grief. It compels anyone nearby to sit beneath its boughs; when they do, it drives them to self-harm or suicide.

The massive, ancient tree stands at least 200 feet tall and 30 feet wide. The oak’s immense, spidery limbs twist in unsettling rows from the mass of its trunk like gnarled, grasping arms. The tree dwarfs the palms that grow around it and draws the viewer’s eye. Visitors to the state park

feel compelled to stop and admire the impressive tree. Those who are wise feel its quiet intent and do not linger on.

Storyteller Hints: The Fairchild Oak is a stationary force of nature stained by historical events that stretch back thousands of years. Unlike other threats, Storytellers are encouraged to build a session's plot or chronicle around the landmark's locale. A chronicle involving supernatural events in Floridian state parks is ripe with possibility, because the story can incorporate a larger mystery in addition to the Fairchild Oak's use as a tainted place. The threatening presence of the Fairchild Oak might also be a beacon for other, dangerous monsters: slashers, cryptids, and even weirder threats.

Hunters who approach the Fairchild Oak may not find anything wrong with it at first; the longer they linger, however, the more they'll experience intrusive thoughts of self-doubt and anxiety. This inner monologue grows in intensity, culminating in thoughts of despair and self-harm. The longer a hunter is exposed to the Fairchild Oak, the harder it is to escape its boughs.

Systems: The Fairchild Oak is Size 30 and Potency 3. The Dread Power triggers are found in the tree's branches and roots. Suggested Dread Powers are Agonize, Dread Attack, Eye Spy, and Soul Stealer.

Sentient Places

Strangest of all, sentient places are far more than accursed buildings or haunted forests. These places are aware. They think; they plan. In some cases, they move. They almost always hate.

The mountain overlooks the town, and locals swear it controls the weather on a whim. A sprawling haunted house lures new buyers and then murders them — trapping their corpses and ghosts inside. A shrine in a cave whispers secrets, turning visitors into its agents of destruction.

Every sentient place is a unique monster and should be treated accordingly. They plan, attack enemies, and repel intruders. They also have deep desires — and these goals usually spell trouble for anyone nearby. Hunters believe these places are motivated by a specific need that can only be fulfilled with time and careful planning. It has reasons for what it does, even if those reasons don't always make sense to anyone that isn't a ravenous ghost train or a malicious grove of trees.

Defeating a Sentient Place

For many sentient places, particularly smaller locations, hunters might try to destroy them outright. A house can be burned down, a glass tower smashed, a railway station blown up. Some sites are just too large for this to be practical. A sentient mountain, cave complex, or ghost town are not only extremely dangerous, but are too large to be reasonably destroyed without notice. Some compacts and conspiracies *might* be able to muster the means to wipe a place off the map. Doing this without further investigation or approvals is often too risky — even for them.

When dealing with a sentient place, there are so many factors for hunters to consider that often they can't neutralize one in the span of a single session. The only true way to neutralize a site, is to deal with its spirit. Identifying that spirit presents a challenge to most hunters, especially when other ghosts and monsters inhabit that physical location.

After the Sentient place is destroyed, a tainted place may eventually emerge from its ashes.

Nautilus: a Hunter's Urban Legend

Tier-two hunters are not immune to urban legends pertaining to compacts they've never encountered before. Nautilus is rumored to be an internet-based compact that organically formed online in chat rooms, private channels, and the comment sections of multiple websites. Its members are anonymous and immensely wealthy, operate on the Dark Web, and are known only by their cryptic handles. Nautilus, which takes its name from the submarine in Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, was formed for a specific purpose: to deal with mysterious places in its own, unique way.

Hunters whisper that Nautilus specializes in buying and selling real estate; the compact's mission is to collect mysterious places until they have the means to neutralize them. When Network Zero visits a church and gets caught trespassing, they blame Nautilus. When The Union gets ready to throw down in an abandoned field and ends up interrogated by the cops, they also blame Nautilus.

For some hunters, Nautilus is too good to be true. A mysterious force that buys and sells property? Only to flip over a site after it's been cleansed? And what, if anything, does specializing in real estate have to do with the Code? The hunters who believe Nautilus exists would love to expose its members' identities and find out if the *other* rumors are true: that all their members have already pledged their loyalty to other compacts who have access to the information Nautilus requires.

Sentient Systems

Sentient places are caused by spirits wreaking havoc in the physical plane. Unlike haunted houses, sentient places are extremely rare. Most hunters encounter a sentient place once or twice in their lives — if they survive the experience.

Use the Ephemeral Entities rules found on p. XX to create an ancient spirit trapped in the physical world.

Transi De René De Chalon

Quote: *"There is nothing I wouldn't do to get my heart back."*

Location: Bar-le-Duc, France

Description: Standing on display at the Saint Etienne church in Bar-le-Duc, France is a funerary statue of René de Chalon, the fallen 25-year-old Prince of Orange. The figure was rendered in the 1540s by French sculptor Ligier Richier after the prince died from an injury suffered during the siege of St. Dizier. The statue, referred to as "The Skeleton," is a life-sized rotting corpse; strips of decaying skin flap over the deceased's ribs, and one hand is raised to heaven, empty. The grasping hand once held the prince's heart, which was removed, dried, and concealed in a reliquary placed in the statue's hand. The heart has since disappeared and may have been stolen during the French Revolution.

Thought to be an immortal corpse, the limestone statue is an eerily accurate depiction of a decomposing body three years after its death. Since the heart was lost or stolen, the Cadaver Tomb of René de Chalon has exhibited strange properties, and its grisly features have spawned rumors and urban legends, despite its sacrosanct location. Visitors sometimes report leaving the church with a terrible longing, a deep desire to find the statue's reliquary and return the heart to its rightful place.

Storyteller Notes: The site is a manageable size for a cell of hunters to deal with, but its placement inside a place of worship raises more issues than it solves. The statue is more likely to be active on the anniversary of the prince's birth and death, or those times of day and year when the veil between this world and the next grows thin: twilight, Samhain, etc. Cleansing the Transi isn't simple as smashing the stone and, even if the cell does so, it's possible the restless spirit of René de Chalon will appear to avenge the destruction of his tomb.

Power: 3

Finesse: 4

Resistance: 3

Rank: 1

Essence: 10

Corpus: 28

Willpower: 7

Initiative: 7

Defense: 4

Speed: 7

Size: 25

Ban: De Chalon flexes his fingers when someone inside the church says the word "heart."

Bane: The statue burns when sea salt touches it.

Influence (Statue): 1

Numina: Emotional Aura, Essence Thief, Hallucination

Bhangarh Fort

Quote: *"Was that rock there a minute ago? Why is that wall shaking?"*

Location: Rajasthan, India

Description: Bhangarh Fort is a 16th-century complex built in the Indian state of Rajasthan. The site is popularly believed to be the most haunted and mysterious location in the entire country, and the sprawling ruin is off limits to explorers, academics, and tourists to ensure their personal safety. To this day, the Archaeological Survey of India forbids anyone to enter Bhangarh Fort after sunset or spend the night. Bhangarh Fort presents other challenges, however, for while it is located outside major population centers, the complex is a protected cultural landmark and hasn't been outfitted with electrical wiring. After the sun falls, the ruins are plunged into darkness even when the moon is full.

Its construction and history have spawned many rumors and folktales attempting to understand the site's unusual and paranormal activities. One popular theory is that Bhangarh Fort suffers from a warlock's curse, a punishment incurred after a Bhangarh princess named Ratnavati rejected him. One story tells how the warlock, named N.K. Sinhai, tried to bewitch the virtuous princess by offering her a dangerous love potion. The princess refused to drink it, and when she dashed her cup against a nearby boulder, the seductive potion immediately set to work. The potion

was so powerful the land itself fell in love with the warlock, and the boulder began to roll, crushing him to death.

Many believe the warlock's death released the black magic stored in his body and triggered a terrible curse on Bhangarh Fort, one that can only be removed by Princess Ratnavati herself, reborn.

Storyteller Notes: Hunters wishing to explore Bhangarh Fort find themselves in a difficult situation. The Indian government would never allow the site to be razed, nor would they allow local or foreign hunters to investigate without proper approvals. The fort's place in history, pop culture, and Indian culture is significant and not to be ignored or downplayed in a chronicle. Some Indian hunters wonder if the sprawling complex contains hidden Bygones created by the warlock, while others think the site may not be haunted in the traditional sense.

Though Bhangarh Fort can be treated as a nest filled with trapped, mournful ghosts and spirits of vengeance, its walls *move* with a darker intent. The ruins long for all who come near — mortal and monster alike. The fort's size, when combined with its significant ability to defend itself, requires coordination on a massive scale. Worse, spirits trapped within Bhangarh Fort cannot be released by any means the hunters possess until the site is neutralized and the warlock's curse is lifted.

Power: 12

Finesse: 10

Resistance: 11

Rank: 4

Essence: 25

Corpus: 111

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 21

Defense: 10

Speed: 22

Size: 100

Ban: Bhangarh Fort's spirit will immediately return to the underworld if a descendant of Princess Ratnavati successfully performs an exorcism at the site.

Bane: Areas of Bhangarh Fort will fall dormant if the hunters can recreate the love potion the warlock presented to the Princess.

Influence (Bhangarh Fort): 4

Numina: Blast, Dement, Drain, Emotional Aura, Essence Thief, Hallucination, Telekinesis

Special: Zombies, spirits, and other monsters present at the site are treated as their own monsters and should be presented with their own rules.

Following the death of a mortal, newly created ghosts will remain haunting Bhangarh Fort until it's neutralized. These spirits can be treated as discrete monsters at the Storyteller's discretion.

Bhangarh Fort is an example of an ancient site that has multiple locations within its sprawling area. When introducing the site into a chronicle you may reduce the Rank, per the Ephemeral Entity rules, and treat each unique location as its own mysterious place.

Nan Madol

Quote: *“What we’re looking at here is proof our ancestors were geniuses. What monster wouldn’t want to take advantage of that?”*

Location: Pohnpei, Micronesia

Description: Rising from the waters off the eastern coast of Pohnpei is the megalithic city of Nan Madol, built over 2,000 years ago. The stones of the millennia-old city are so massive and well-placed, no modern historians have been able to figure out how Nan Madol was constructed. A historic and notable landmark used for religious purposes, Nan Madol is a testament to human ingenuity to some. Its architecture and unique features have spawned several myths, however, leading others to speculate that Nan Madol, which translates to “spaces between,” is a surviving relic of the lost continent of Lemuria.

Local legends point to a supernatural reason for the site’s construction. The twin warlocks Olisihpa and Olosohpa, who hailed from Lemuria, arrived near the site to build an altar for god worship. After failing time and time again, their efforts were eventually successful, and the twins’ altar was built near Temwen Island.

Formerly the royal seat of the Saudeleur Dynasty until the 1620s, there is no fresh water nor naturally growing food present within the city. Modern efforts to preserve the site have recently increased, and along with them renewed interest in the brothers and their altar.

Storyteller Notes: Nan Madol is an ancient city rife with history, and without the presence of the supernatural it is a wonder to behold and investigate. Many of the basalt outcroppings were used for funerary purposes and the altar was used to perform many rituals lost to time.

Physically, the way the stones are situated, the movement of the tides are likely to play an important part in exploring the city. Low tide may reveal entrances and chambers usually drowned and inaccessible, while high tide presents physical challenges to navigate the area safely.

Nan Madol is a rich, mysterious location that’s well-equipped to fuel a solid story arc. It may point to a Bygone, the altar built by the brothers, or evidence of fabled Lemuria. As a sentient site, the city may not have been built to harness the supernatural, but over time the spirit summoned and wielded here has remained in the stones. Now, Nan Madol resonates and vibrates with power, hungering for more. To what end? Thus far, no one knows.

Power: 7

Finesse: 9

Resistance: 9

Rank: 3

Essence: 15

Corpus: 109

Willpower: 10

Initiative: 18

Defense: 7

Speed: 16

Size: 100

Ban: The spirit must reveal a path to the altar during the Summer Equinox or it loses half its essence.

Bane: The stones react to blessed water by falling dormant.

Influence (Nan Madol): 3

Numina: Awe, Drain, Hallucination, Regenerate, Telekinesis

Other Mysterious Places

The world is vast and is filled with modern and ancient secrets. The older the site, the more mysterious it is, and the more likely it is to remind hunters of their mortality. The sites they explore may be older than recorded history or may have been constructed for bizarre and inexplicable reasons. Hunters may not know “why” they explore a nest, tainted or sentient site, other than the simplest of reasons. Wherever the supernatural is found, they must deal with the threats to hold back the lingering dark — even when those shadows or spirits creep from the most unlikely of places.

Blue Lake Grotto, Brazil

Gruta do Lago Azul, or the Blue Lake Grotto, is part of one of the largest flooded cavities on Earth. Its waters are hundreds of feet deep and fed by no known source. When a beam of sunlight shines on the lake via a hole at the surface, the waters turn the bluest of hues. Among the lake’s secrets is a vast trove of bones, culled from ages past. The skeletons of giant sloths, saber-toothed tigers, and other extinct creatures are piled beneath the waters. It prompts the question: what *else* might swim in the waters’ depths?

The grotto’s remote location makes it more straightforward to access than other well-trafficked and protected sites, provided cell brings the right equipment. Unprepared hunters may be hurt through non-supernatural means, like falling or drowning. If Dread Powers are used, either by the site itself or the supernatural horrors concealed within, the area could be deadly. The promise of long-forgotten secrets concealed within the grotto’s depths may draw more inquisitive hunters who seek to discover ways to increase their own power — for good or ill.

Recommended Use: Nest, tainted place

Aokigahara Forest, Japan

Covering the northwestern flank of Mount Fuji is the forest of Aokigahara. The trees grow thick and unnaturally dense in the forest, and scientists claim this is due to the rich, volcanic soil upon which it sits. Others believe the trees are sustained by a grislier source of nutrients: the hundreds, if not thousands, of people who have committed suicide here for centuries.

Aokigahara, or Suicide Forest, is an important icon in Japanese culture. It’s said in times of famine and strife, many suffering people came to die in the forest. Structurally, the area is difficult to explore; caves lead deep into the hardened lava beneath the trees. Between the

denseness of the foliage and the sound-swallowing volcanic rock, the forest can be unnaturally still and its eerie quiet is a silent tribute to its tragic victims. Despite the quiet, the forest is well-trod; many come to wander through the trees, either to honor and mourn the dead or to discover if it's truly haunted.

Recommended Use: Nest, sentient place

Mount Mulanje, Malawi

Mulanje is a monadnock, a lone mountain rising out of the surrounding plains in the East African country of Malawi. The highest peak is often shrouded in clouds and is nicknamed "Island in the Sky." Some believe Mulanje inspired the Lonely Mountain, Erebor, in *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien. A massive landmark, Mulanje is home to many local legends as well. Strange, diminutive creatures are believed to live on its higher plateaus, a mythical flying serpent has been spotted in the clouds around the peak, and countless mysterious disappearances have occurred on its slopes.

Mount Mulanje possesses several sub-peaks, valleys, and plateaus lush with life. A complex ecosystem of the mundane and supernatural, the area is a preserved and well-maintained landmark. Finding the source of strange activity is challenging due to mountain's sprawling size. Hunters might find more than one mysterious place in, around, and on Mount Mulanje, should they choose to hike this beautiful mountain.

Suggested Use: Nests

Canfranc Railway Station, Spain

The once-beautiful Canfranc Railway Station sits nestled in the Spanish Pyrenees near the village of Canfranc. Many of its buildings have been falling into elegant disrepair for some time. The entrance to a monumental tunnel pierces the mountain range, and once allowed trains to carry supplies and passengers through to France on the other side. The station, which first opened in 1928, was once called the "Titanic of the Mountains." Over the years, the train station has seen many uses, from a luxury railway connecting Spain and France to a key strategic holding of the Third Reich. Rumors of lost gold shipped by the Nazis persist throughout the years, and some hunters believe this gold carries a terrible curse.

Though the railyard carries a handful of trains to local destinations, the station is no longer in use and is overgrown with bushes, trees, and grass. After several years, and at great expense, the Canfranc site was recently renovated into a posh hotel that caters to the wealthy.

Suggested Use: Tainted place

House on the Rock, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

House on the Rock is a tourist attraction that prompts many urban legends and reports of supernatural activity due to its ever-expanding collections and exhibits. The house's construction took several years before the site, precariously built upon Deer Shelter Rock by the architect Alex Jordan, Jr., first opened to tourists in the 1960s. Since that time, House on the Rock has expanded significantly over the years to include warehouses filled with several collections of museum relics and icons.

Besides the house, each building contains a small museum's worth of items including the nautical exhibit "The Heritage of the Sea," an indoor carousel, vintage posters, a large collection

of room-sized automated music machines displayed in “The Music of Yesterday,” and thousands of other oddities. Some relics are rumored to be mere replicas while others may be priceless. With the multitude of artifacts contained within the site, local hunters believe a Bygone must be present. Reports of supernatural activity include feelings of being watched, judged, and followed.

Suggested Use: Tainted place

Karak Highway, Malaysia

A stretch of asphalt bridging the capital of Malaysia and one of its bordering states, the expressway looks like every other road that has ever been made. But there’ve been stories. Terrible ones. Over the years, the highway’s become associated with a multitude of tragedies and natural disasters such as freak landslides and car accidents, some fatal, some not. Unsurprisingly, this has given rise to numerous ghost stories and urban legends.

Most people in Malaysia have heard of the Karak Highway’s haunted nature. There are accounts involving beautiful women lingering at the side of the road calling to drivers, begging for safe passage; creatures in the jungle, waiting to strike; accident victims dialing radio stations, mournfully recounting the events of their own demise; and a boy with glass shards in his eyes, whimpering over and over, “Have you seen my mother?”

But one of the most repeated stories is that of a yellow Volkswagen. According to legend, when the night is deepest, drivers sometimes find themselves cruising behind the vehicle. It is always moving too slow, an unhappy nuisance but one easily overtaken. However, each time the driver moves past the Volkswagen, they inevitably find themselves behind the vehicle again.

Suggested Use: Nest, tainted place