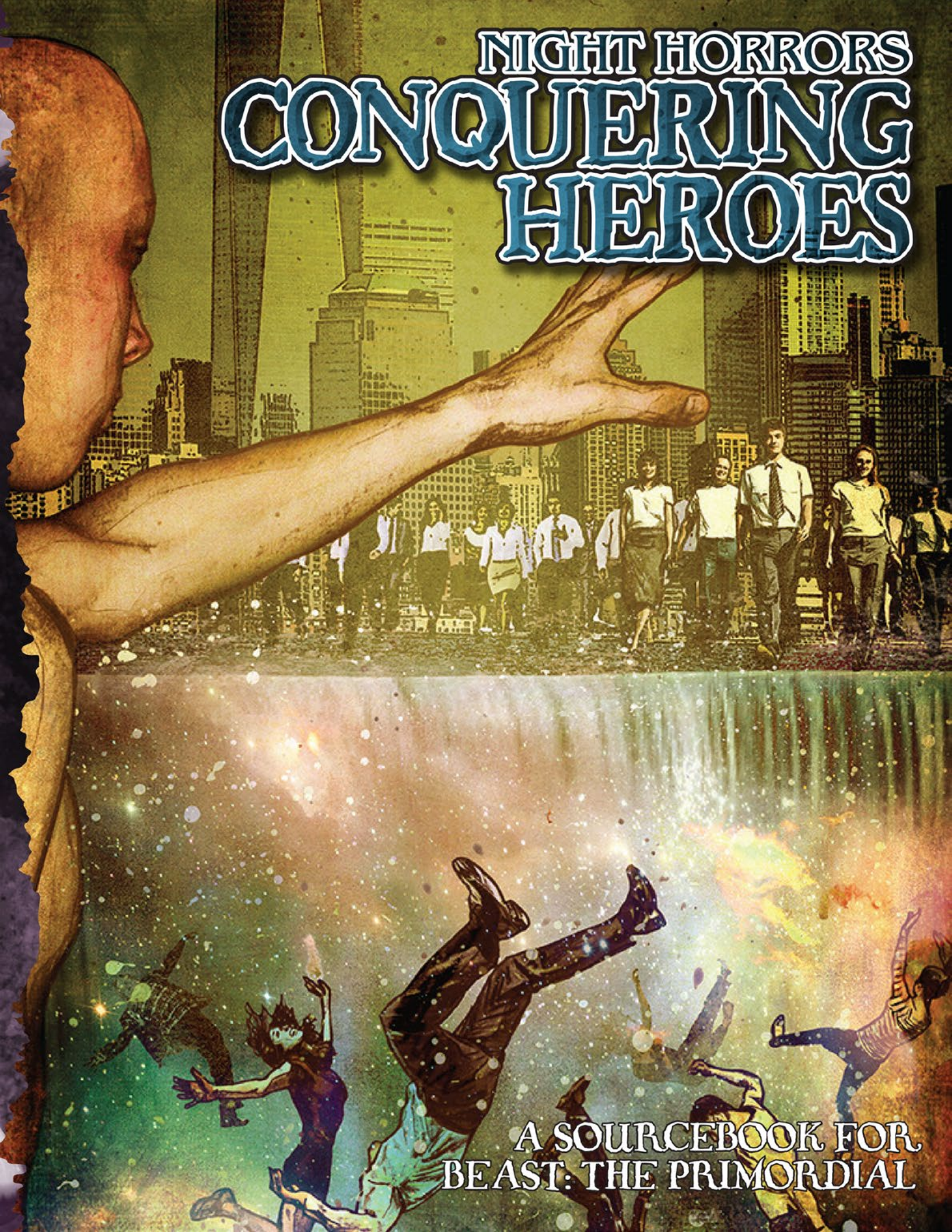


NIGHT HORRORS CONQUERING HEROES



A SOURCEBOOK FOR
BEAST: THE PRIMORDIAL

The background of the poster is a dark, purple-tinted illustration. At the top, a row of sharp, white teeth is visible. Below them, a large, dark, muscular arm reaches out from the left side of the frame. In the background, a city skyline with various skyscrapers is visible. In the foreground, a group of people, including men and women in business attire, are standing and looking towards the right. At the bottom, there are more sharp, white teeth, suggesting a giant monster's mouth. The title 'NIGHT HORRORS CONQUERING HEROES' is written in a large, stylized, outlined font in the upper right quadrant.

NIGHT HORRORS CONQUERING HEROES

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DINO

By Matthew McFarland

"What's this?"

"Doggie."

"Good." Pause, scribble. "Do you have a dog at your house?" Vince bit his tongue as soon as he said it. He'd read the file; he should have known better.

"He died." The boy's voice was impassive, but Vince could see the tension in his face.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said. He made eye contact, enough to let the boy know that he was sincere, but not enough to make him uncomfortable. "It's very sad when that happens, I know." He paused for a moment, making sure the boy wasn't going to continue, and then turned the page of the test.

"Bird."

"Well, it's where the bird lives. Do you know what it's called? The bird lives in a..."

"Cage."

Pause, scribble. The affricate sound at the end of the word was distorted, but Vince had heard the boy say "just" and "chips" earlier, out in the playroom, so he wasn't concerned. Probably wasn't a word the boy had used a lot.

"Are we almost done?"

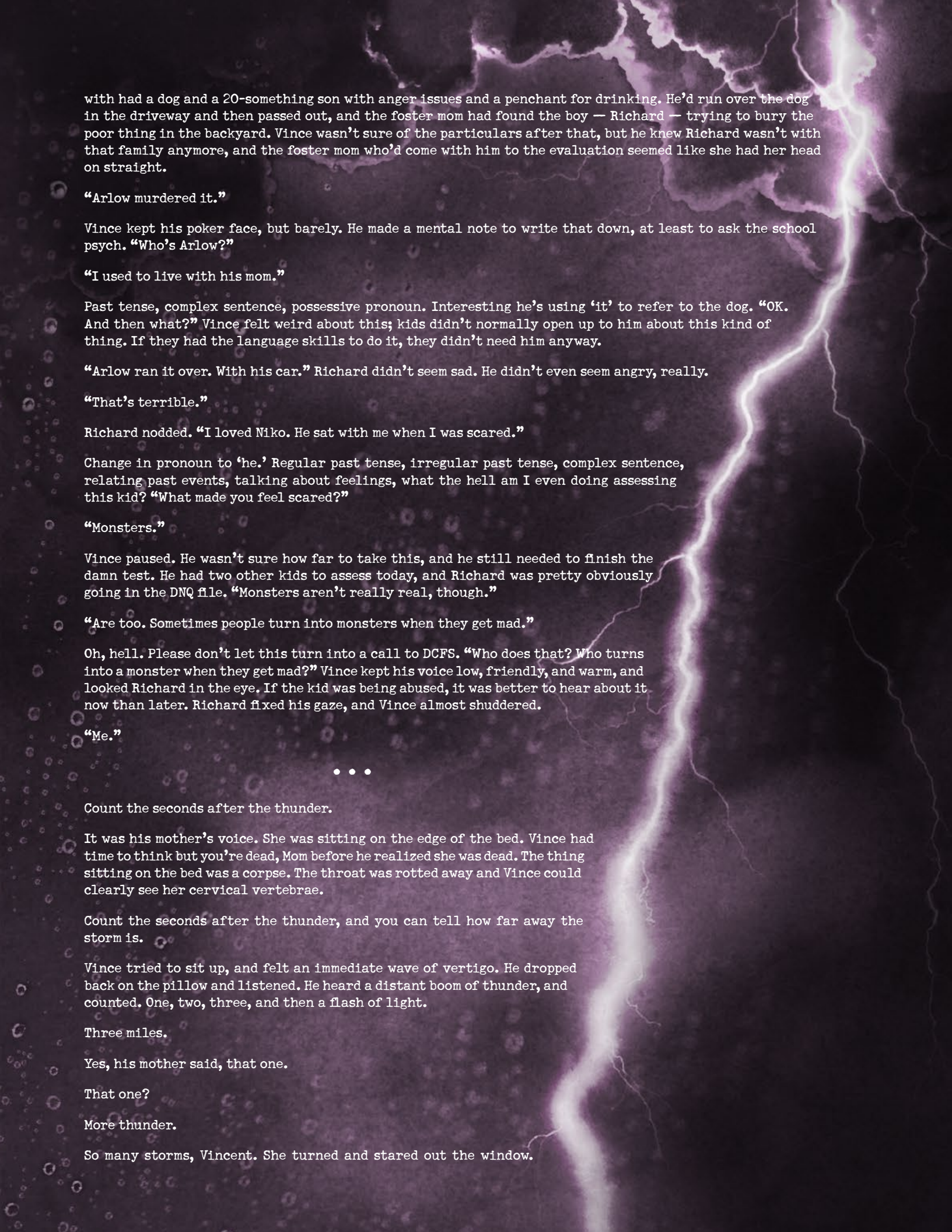
No, we're just getting started, thought Vince. "Well, there's a few more pictures, but you're doing a really great job." One thing Vince did miss about older kids was that they were familiar with the concept of "breaks." With the preschoolers, the best you could do was let them bounce a ball around the testing room or stand up and stretch, but if you let them go back into the playroom, you'd need a team of horses to get them back at the table. The school district had decided that Vince was better suited to assessing the younger kids, though, and he didn't really disagree. In a lot of ways this was easier. He could forget the kids as soon as their evaluations were complete. He turned the page again.

"Gate."

At least this kid has some vocabulary, thought Vince. That'll make it go faster.

"Want to hear what happened to my dog?"

Vince put down his pen. "Sure." He already knew, of course; it had been in the referral report. This kid had been bounced around in foster care for the past 18 months, and one of the families he'd lived



with had a dog and a 20-something son with anger issues and a penchant for drinking. He'd run over the dog in the driveway and then passed out, and the foster mom had found the boy — Richard — trying to bury the poor thing in the backyard. Vince wasn't sure of the particulars after that, but he knew Richard wasn't with that family anymore, and the foster mom who'd come with him to the evaluation seemed like she had her head on straight.

"Arlow murdered it."

Vince kept his poker face, but barely. He made a mental note to write that down, at least to ask the school psych. "Who's Arlow?"

"I used to live with his mom."

Past tense, complex sentence, possessive pronoun. Interesting he's using 'it' to refer to the dog. "OK. And then what?" Vince felt weird about this; kids didn't normally open up to him about this kind of thing. If they had the language skills to do it, they didn't need him anyway.

"Arlow ran it over. With his car." Richard didn't seem sad. He didn't even seem angry, really.

"That's terrible."

Richard nodded. "I loved Niko. He sat with me when I was scared."

Change in pronoun to 'he.' Regular past tense, irregular past tense, complex sentence, relating past events, talking about feelings, what the hell am I even doing assessing this kid? "What made you feel scared?"

"Monsters."

Vince paused. He wasn't sure how far to take this, and he still needed to finish the damn test. He had two other kids to assess today, and Richard was pretty obviously going in the DNQ file. "Monsters aren't really real, though."

"Are too. Sometimes people turn into monsters when they get mad."

Oh, hell. Please don't let this turn into a call to DCFS. "Who does that? Who turns into a monster when they get mad?" Vince kept his voice low, friendly, and warm, and looked Richard in the eye. If the kid was being abused, it was better to hear about it now than later. Richard fixed his gaze, and Vince almost shuddered.

"Me."

• • •

Count the seconds after the thunder.

It was his mother's voice. She was sitting on the edge of the bed. Vince had time to think but you're dead, Mom before he realized she was dead. The thing sitting on the bed was a corpse. The throat was rotted away and Vince could clearly see her cervical vertebrae.

Count the seconds after the thunder, and you can tell how far away the storm is.

Vince tried to sit up, and felt an immediate wave of vertigo. He dropped back on the pillow and listened. He heard a distant boom of thunder, and counted. One, two, three, and then a flash of light.

Three miles.

Yes, his mother said, that one.

That one?

More thunder.

So many storms, Vincent. She turned and stared out the window.

The shadows from the tree outside played on the wall, forming monstrous shapes, just like they always had. Vince felt his breath catch in his chest. The monsters are here.

No, said his mother. But they're near. Count. Count the seconds, find the storms.

Vince counted when he heard the thunder, and realized the thunderclaps were coming from many different directions. Some were loud, some so faint he could barely hear them, but they were there. When the lightning flashed, the shadow monsters moved.

I'm scared, Mom.

The corpse turned back toward him. Her lips — the tattered remains of her lips, completely unsuited for clear speech — moved, but he couldn't hear her anymore.

What?

She leaned down next to him, and he felt those horrid, ragged lips moving by his ear. You have nothing to be afraid of. They aren't really real.

Vince woke, flailing. At the end of the bed, Bacon jumped up and started barking, panicked. Vince sat up, and the dog stomped up to the pillows and licked his face.

"It's OK, buddy." Vince stroked Bacon's fur and tried to get his heart rate down. "It's fine. Just a dream."

• • •

Richard's mother reports... Vince punched the backspace key. Richard's foster mother reports...

Not much, actually, thought Vince. He stared at the screen, trying to decide how to proceed. It shouldn't be this hard. It was an easy case, from his perspective. The school psych would have some harder decisions to make with regards to eligibility, but that wasn't his problem. Richard, was, as he'd suspected, a "does not qualify." And yet, he couldn't get the boy out of his mind.

He stood up from his desk and walked down the hall to the psych office. The room smelled like a used cough drop. One of the psychs had brought in a vaporizer, and it was spewing eucalyptus-scented fog into the room. Vince suppressed a gag and walked over to Grace's cube.

"Hey." He leaned on the cube wall and looked down at her. Grace was staring at her laptop. "What do you think about Richard?"

"He's not gonna qualify for you, is he?" Grace didn't look up from the screen.

"No, his speech is fine." Vince drummed his fingers on the wall. "I just wondered what you were going to do with him."

Grace saved her work and turned her chair around to face him. "Well, I don't know. Ann says he'll qualify for OT."

"Really?"

"Yeah, apparently his fine motor skills are really delayed. I didn't notice."

Vince shrugged. Ann was too eager to qualify kids, in his opinion, but occupational therapy wasn't his field, anyway. "What about you? Did you do a cognitive test?"

"Yeah, came out in the low 80s. I think it's mostly lack of exposure, moving all around like that." Vince nodded. "The social-emotional stuff was really what I was more worried about, based on the reports from the daycare, but he was fine here."

"What's he like at daycare?"

"I don't know. He goes to that Children's Warehouse place over on 82nd. I hate that place. It's always overcrowded and they never turn the TV off."

Vince grimaced. "Ugh. You gonna go out and observe?"

She glanced back at the papers on her desk. "I don't have time. I have four reports to get done before Friday and two of them are pretty involved. I was going to see if Deb could do it."

Well, that'd be useless, Vince thought. Deb was pretty burned out and she was retiring at the end of the year. Her reports were cursory at best, and if she knew that Grace was on the fence about the kid, she'd gloss over any problems to make him a DNQ across the board. "I could go."

Grace cocked an eyebrow. "You don't normally—"

"Yeah, I know." Vince looked around the room. "And it's not going to be a habit. But I'm caught up on reports, I have time. And this kid..." He shrugged.

"He got under your skin."

"Yeah." Vince shuddered, and Grace nodded. Apparently she'd seen it, too.

• • •

Children's Warehouse was as shoddy as the name implied. A cluster of four boys, all preschool aged, were sitting on the floor staring at the TV. Vince couldn't identify the show, but he wasn't up on kids' programming anymore. He walked over to the only adult he saw, a harried woman in her 40s trying to wrangle a diaper onto a two-year-old.

"Excuse me, hi." He gave his warmest smile and showed his ID badge. "I'm Vince Milliner. I'm an SLP with—"

"Hang on." She pulled up the child's pants and buttoned them, and set him on the floor. The kid scampered off toward the TV. "Okay, what now? You a speech therapist? You here for Dmonte?"

Vince shook his head. "No, I'm just here to observe Richard Fries."

"He ain't here no more."

"What? What happened?"

She gave him an exasperated look. Somewhere in room he couldn't see, a child started crying. She rolled her eyes, but didn't move to investigate. "Shirley — she owns the place — she kicked him out after he cut Lee's leg up."

Vince swallowed a feeling of creeping horror. "He cut someone's leg? A kid or an adult?"

"Kid." The woman leaned in. "We never even found no knife."

"Did Richard say why?"

She shook her head. "They was always fighting. Lee liked to make fun of Richard and push him and all. And then I come in yesterday and Lee's leg is bleeding and Richard just standing there with this look on his face."

Vince could only nod. He knew the look she was talking about.

• • •

"Seriously? Not even under ED?" Vince was looming, he realized. He took a step back from Grace's chair and she relaxed a bit.

"We can't. He's only four, he's never been in a real preschool, and his behavior problems haven't been addressed because no one ever did a behavior plan." Grace looked annoyed. She was here late. The other psychs were gone, the therapists were gone, the administrators long gone. Vince seldom stayed late, but today he had taken a late lunch and then gotten stuck in a meeting. He didn't want to come in tomorrow to a pile of work, so he stayed to finish his reports. He had no idea what Grace was still doing here.

"I think he's just going to wind up in an ED room later."

"Yeah, maybe, but that's not on us."

"Fuck," whispered Vince under his breath. Grace glanced at him. Vince had almost trained himself out of cursing at work. "You know he cut a kid at that daycare?"

"No, he didn't." Grace wasn't even looking at him anymore.

"What?"

"He didn't cut that kid. I talked to the kid's mother; we assessed her other son last year and she'd called to refer the little one, Lee. She took him to the doctor and the doctor said the cut was from an animal."

Vince's eyes widened and, somewhere in the distance, he heard thunder. "An animal? How would he even know that?"

Grace swiveled her chair to face him. "He's a doctor, Vince. I guess he looked at the cut and figured it out. Anyway, the mom thinks that Lee must have been messing with a stray cat or something — they're all over the place by that daycare — and then only saw it when he was with Richard. Maybe Richard touched his leg or something." She stretched her arms. "Okay, now, I really want to finish this up so I can go home. Okay?"

Vince nodded. "Meeting for Richard is tomorrow, right?"

"Yeah," Grace said, carefully. "But you don't have to come. He's a DNQ for you, right?"

"Right."

• • •

The meeting was a farce.

Ann had backed off, agreeing to DNQ Richard from occupational therapy. That left nothing, no ground for Vince to stand on to argue for qualifying him. He tried, but the district rep (who had never worked in a classroom a day in her life, as far as Vince knew) kept coming back to the numbers. High language skills. Low-average cognitive. Low-average fine motor. Elevated behavioral reports, but all just reports, and no history of interventions. No disability that would pose an adverse effect on education.

Vince disagreed and wrote on the form why he disagreed, and then went to lunch. He ordered a beer with his sandwich and drank it too fast, then drove back to the clinic feeling flushed and angry. He tossed four mints in his mouth before he went inside, stalked back to his desk, put his earbuds in, and turned on his music.

Thunder. He started, and looked up. No sunlight streaming in the window. He checked the clock on his computer. He was more than an hour past his quitting time. His reports were done, printed, and stacked neatly by his computer. Where does the time go?

He stood up, stretched, and picked up the stack of papers. He could wait until tomorrow to deliver them to the psychs, of course, but why not just do it now and get it out of the way? He didn't want to see any of them, anyway, and they'd all be gone for the day by now. If he waited, he knew they would chide him about disagreeing — or, worse, they wouldn't, and would just natter about it behind his back.

He walked down the hall to the psych's office and sorted the reports out by case manager. Donna, Jim, Mia, Beth...Grace. Fuck.

He stood by Grace's desk, staring at the report, staring at the photos pinned to the cube wall, staring at her fucking chair, willing it all to catch fire. Fuck her, he thought. She can't see it. She doesn't see it. This kid is going to hurt someone for real, and she can't hear the thunder.

"Vince?"

He turned. Grace was standing there; he was blocking the entrance to her cube.

"Yeah. Just dropping off some reports."

"Okay, thank you." Polite. Neutral. Just like a goddamn psych.

Don't say another word, thought Vince. Not another fucking word. Just get out, get your coat, go home, walk the dog.

He stood aside, and Grace brushed by him to get into her cube. He turned to leave. Walked two steps. He was five feet from the door when she said it.

"I think you should have skipped the meeting." She was sitting down, now, looking at her screen. Not even really talking to him.

"Yeah?" Vince glanced down to his left. He was standing by Beth's cube. She had a geode paperweight sitting on her desk. He thought he remembered her saying her son had given it to her for her birthday.

"Yeah. It was kind of embarrassing, actually." Typing. Not looking. Not communicating. Not paying attention. "He doesn't qualify. You know he doesn't."

Vince picked up the geode. It had to weigh a solid three pounds. He turned. "Well, I think he does. I think we'll be sorry for not keeping an eye on him."

"Well, Vince, we can't just qualify kids for services to keep an eye on them. If he gets to school and he can't succeed, then we'll—"

Vince brought the geode down on her head. He heard a distinct crack. She gasped, a wet, broken sound, but she couldn't scream. He raised the geode again and brought it down. It glanced off exposed bone and drew a ragged stripe of flesh from her cheek, snapping the frame of her glasses. She fell out of her chair and tried to push herself up.

Vince crouched down next to her. "He qualifies," he hissed. "I said he fucking does. He's going to hurt people." He raised the geode again and brought it down on the base of her skull, near the brainstem, near the medulla oblongata. Something shifted under the rock as it landed, and Grace collapsed, eyes open, barely breathing, staring at nothing.

Vince stayed there, squatting next to her, until the raspy breathing stopped. He waited for someone to come running. No one did. The only people in the building were custodians, and they'd done their sweep of these offices already.

He grabbed a garbage can and pulled the empty bag out, wrapped up the geode, and carried it back to his cube. His right hand was bruised and had a fleck of blood on it, but he was otherwise clean. He put the geode in his coat pocket, and walked out into the cold.

Thunder rumbled in the distance, and Vince counted the seconds. It was close. The storm was close. He tightened his grip around the stone.

So many storms, his mother had said. How many others would qualify for his services?

That's why we do this work, he thought, starting up his car. Because someone has to. Because no one takes care of these kids.

He pulled out of the lot and turned right, following the thunder.

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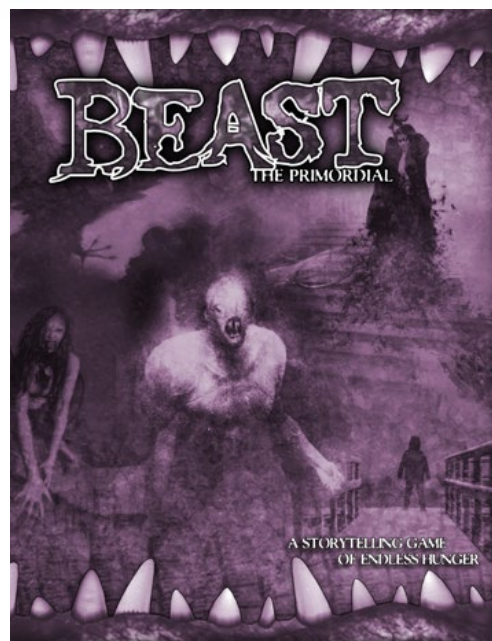
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Thanks to Matthew McFarland who took a chance on me so many years ago. It is fitting that my very first published writing shows up in a Night Horrors book, and my very first development project is a Night Horrors book; both projects under the control of Matt, and both opportunities facilitated by him. Also, thanks to my husband, Weston Harper, for always keeping me on the right track and being my muse when I need it.



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NIGHT HORRORS CONQUERING HEROES

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INTRODUCTION



What makes a Hero in any time and age? Is it the impetus to take up sword and shield to defend those less capable? Is it the desire to right perceived wrongs, to drive back the terrors of the night? Some would say yes to both, yet the truth of the matter is more complex and often much dirtier than that. The desire to be known as a Hero is every bit as intoxicating as doing good, often leading someone to see things in blacks and whites, while the rest of the world exists in shades of gray. Everyone is the protagonist in their own story; everyone believes they are the hero, the savior, and the person doing the right thing, regardless of how far from the truth they really fall. Those Heroes who take it upon themselves to hunt Beasts are all of these things, and worse.

How then, does a Beast come to conquer such creatures? The fairytale version tells us of the creature lurking in its cave, terrorizing people until a hero comes to save the day. But these are not fairytales, and this is no way for a Beast to really live her life. Why should she wait until some Hero comes by to stalk and hunt her as though she is prey? Sometimes she does take the initiative, hunting Heroes before they can hunt her, but she must be careful of the Horror inside. She must balance the terrible hunger she feels with the need to survive. Because if she isn't careful, she may find herself becoming a true terror, a Beast without reason or purpose, killing and living only to satiate her hunger.

THEMES AND MOOD

Two themes pervade this book; the first is that sometimes good people do terrible things because they think they are right, and the other is that sometimes terrible people use the expectations of others to get away with their terrible deeds. Heroes throw their followers at problems, caring only for the final outcome, destroying a Beast, and not for the many innocent lives they endanger. Beasts give in to their Hungers, giving up any pretense of providing a lesson in favor of embracing their Legends and Myths. Insatiable are selfish creatures driven wholly by the Hunger inside them, caring nothing for the havoc they wreak as they feed for prolonged periods in an area.

TO CONQUER

The concept behind this book is not to display Heroes who boldly go forth and conquer Beasts. While some of the Heroes examined here believe that this is their mission, most do so for selfish reasons. Instead, those who take on these monsters are the heroes and the creatures found within these pages are the ones who need conquering. Heroes and Insatiable alike prey upon supernatural creatures, seeking them out to kill them to satisfy either a bloodlust or a hunger they cannot satisfy through any other means. Heroes looking for their next power fix tend to lose any vestige of the heroic demeanor in which they protect innocent victims, and instead throw followers and sycophants into the clutches of the Beasts they hunt.

All the adversity I've had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me... You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you.

- Walt Disney



CONNECTED THROUGH THE PRIMORDIAL DREAM

Another, subtler, theme is the effect the Primordial Dream has on the lives of those it touches. Everything presented in this book has a connection to the Primordial Dream. Heroes dream deeper than humans, touching the surface of the Primordial Dream, but not delving into its full depths where the Horrors and Insatiable roam. This touch on their souls leaves a lasting impression, and how they react to that defines what kind of Hero they are. Their lack of true knowledge of the Primordial Dream drives them to incomplete conclusions and gives them just enough power to be dangerous.

Beasts, on the other hand, are born from the Horrors of the Primordial Dream. They see the fears and terrors of mankind that have shaped their Families, and they seek to make meaning of their own existences. Yet, there are those who give in to their hungers, merge with their Horrors, or retreat completely into the Primordial Dream, unable to balance their Life with the Legend and their Hunger. While these Beasts are not inherently monsters, not any more than any Beast is a monster, they pose different problems to the areas they call their homes.

Finally, Insatiable are also born of the Primordial Dream, but their existence predates that of Horrors. The Insatiable live in a deeper, more primal place within the Primordial Dream, allowing them to move about nearly unseen by both Heroes and Beasts alike, but also preventing them from really connecting to humanity the way Horrors can. They instead must hijack people with a connection to the Primordial Dream, but not those who are fully realized as either Heroes or Beasts. The process is spontaneous, as the Insatiable is constantly looking for a way to feed its Hunger, and jumps on any opportunity that presents itself.

CHRONICLES OF DARKNESS

While this book is geared towards **Beast: The Primordial**, the creatures found in this book have ties to and hooks into many different supernatural communities. While Heroes are not the same as hunters, they cross quite a few lines, and even team up on some occasions, though a Hero rarely follows anything resembling a Vigil and will betray her newfound friends in an instant if it brings her closer to the Beast she hunts. The Beasts found in this book are territorial and likely to attract all kinds of attention, and not just from Heroes. Insatiable are a problem for anyone they come across. Just because they like to feed their Hungers on Beasts does not mean they won't pick other, easier prey. These creatures have no illusions of kinship to the other supernatural creatures in the world, and are just as likely to make a meal of one as a human or Beast. Any of these antagonists could show up in any Chronicles of Darkness game and make the supernatural denizens of the world unhappy for a variety of reasons.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This book is separated into three chapters, each detailing people and creatures who have lost their grasp on humanity, making

them monstrous and in need of conquering. Each chapter focuses on one of three antagonist types: Heroes, Beasts, and Insatiable.

CHAPTER ONE: HEROES

We take a look at how Heroes come about and how they react to the Primordial Dream in different ways. We cover how they hunt and kill their prey, as well as give an insight into how Heroes are the star of their own show.

The YouTube star, **Candy Rasmussen** uses her channel followers to leak information on Beasts, direct other Heroes to their lairs, and sometimes drag innocent victims through the mud in her pursuit to gain more viewers.

Daniel Greene, the child of a pair of hunters with a Vigil, was indoctrinated into the world of the supernatural at an early age, and takes up the sword against Beasts as a way to continue his family's legacy.

A sociopath turned paramilitary, **Dwight Whittaker** enjoys using poisons and explosives to fight Beasts. He cares more about his reputation than he does about his own life.

A Proximus turned Hero, **Emily Esser** has no soul of her own, and attempts to stay afloat by consuming the Horrors of the Beasts she kills, taking them as her own soul for a short time.

Grace Teller hunts Beasts with the lens of the world watching, convincing everyone that it's all special effects and television magic, as she broadcasts her every move via a camera crew who follow her on her hunts.

Jada Cole is a young Hero who believes her true calling is that of a superhero, like the ones she grew up reading about in comic books. She hasn't yet killed a Beast, but instead is exercising her new mission on the vampire population of her city.

A physician and sleep therapist, **Dr. Jameson Stone** is fascinated with the Primordial Dream, going so far as to capture Beasts and other supernatural creatures to perform experiments on in hopes of furthering his research on the nature of dreams.

A single mother, **Marlena Sarcosa** believes she must protect her neighborhood and children from the horrors of the night, no matter what form they take.

A Hero who only takes up the mantle when disturbed, **Martin Whist** just wants to swim in the ocean in peace without the horrors that disturb his dreams, and the creatures that pain his acute hearing.

Michael Bellinger is a serial murderer who has found that he gets the most thrill and pleasure from hunting and killing Beasts, though he'll kill others in their place if he can't find a Beast in time to slake his desires.

Tereza Markusa was picked up by the Cheiron Group early in her career as a Hero, and now has to balance her own desires to hunt Beasts with her corporate duty of hunting other supernatural creatures, all while hiding her own preternatural abilities.

CHAPTER TWO: BEASTS

The Beasts found in this chapter are those who have lost their way, or in many cases those who have found their Inheritances and are now so powerful that their very presence

can cause problems for other Beasts and supernatural creatures sharing their cities.

The Corporate Ravisher is a Beast Incarnate who is the most powerful Beast in Zurich. He feasts upon the ruin of other businesses, making it his missions to destroy the lives of not only those employees with whom he comes into contact, but of their friends and families.

The Beast Rampant, **Cru**, no longer holds any vestiges of humanity after his human tried to hold him back and starve him out for far too long. Now, he lives only to hunt and kill his prey.

The Empyrean Swimmer is a Beast Unfettered who has gained power over the Primordial Dream, allowing it to traverse planes of existence gathering information on all types of supernatural creatures, and losing its connection to other Beasts as it does.

A powerful Makara Incarnate, **The Silver Bay Serpent** rules his small cove with a terrible ferocity and territoriality that keeps foreign Beasts from getting near, and destroys any who attempt to lay claim to the ocean.

Unfettered and untroubled by the constraints of man, **The Sky Crawler** seeks out secrets, absorbing and learning all she can. Eventually, she finds those with terrible secrets and punishes them for their transgressions without mercy.

A Namtaru with little to no compunctions, the **Slimy Lobbyist** has leveraged his monetary inheritance toward bribing, blackmailing, and swindling politicians, forcing them to act out against their beliefs and ruining their lives in the process. He indulges his Hunger with abandon, and is exerting pressure on other supernatural communities in his city in an attempt to extend his feeding even deeper.

A Beast who once acted out in an effort to gain attention, **Tears on the Sand** is now a Beast Rampant who lost herself to her Horror at the unwitting urging from her changeling friend. She is holed up in a youth camp for troubled teens and feeds on those who cannot follow the rules.

CHAPTER THREE: INSATIABLE

The Insatiable are creatures from a time before man, a time before the dreams and fears of man filled the Primordial Dream. In this time, the terrors of the world were not fears born of legends, but instead were the very landscape of the earth. These terrors live on, even though they are no longer prevalent thoughts in the minds of dreamers. Some of the

Children believe they are some kind of progenitor species, created and then discarded by the Dark Mother, but they themselves believe they come from an entirely different entity called the Primogenitor. These creatures capture and take over those with any connection to the Primordial Dream before they come to realization as either Beasts or Heroes. They have an insatiable hunger they constantly try to fulfill by devouring human and Beast prey alike. This chapter details mechanics and powers specific to Insatiable, including rules for taking over a Beast's Lair, or the Beast herself.

The Authority stands over the crime organizations in his town, using them to keep a stranglehold on any and all criminal activity in the city. He devours any who steps out of line whole, and consumes the power from those he subjugates.

A wandering sign of terrible things to come, **The Blind Man** comes and goes throughout the ages, bringing with him ruin and destruction without rhyme or reason. He is a stickler for the rules he himself creates, and consumes any who step out of his arbitrary lines. He believes he does this to bring about the resurrection of the Primogenitor, though no one can be sure if this is a portent, or pure madness.

Cold and alone, the **Lovesick Girl** entices people into her Den to hold and squeeze until she consumes all their warmth, and then their very flesh. She hunts without thought for others, mindlessly seeking love or some kind of connection to feed her burning hunger for affection.

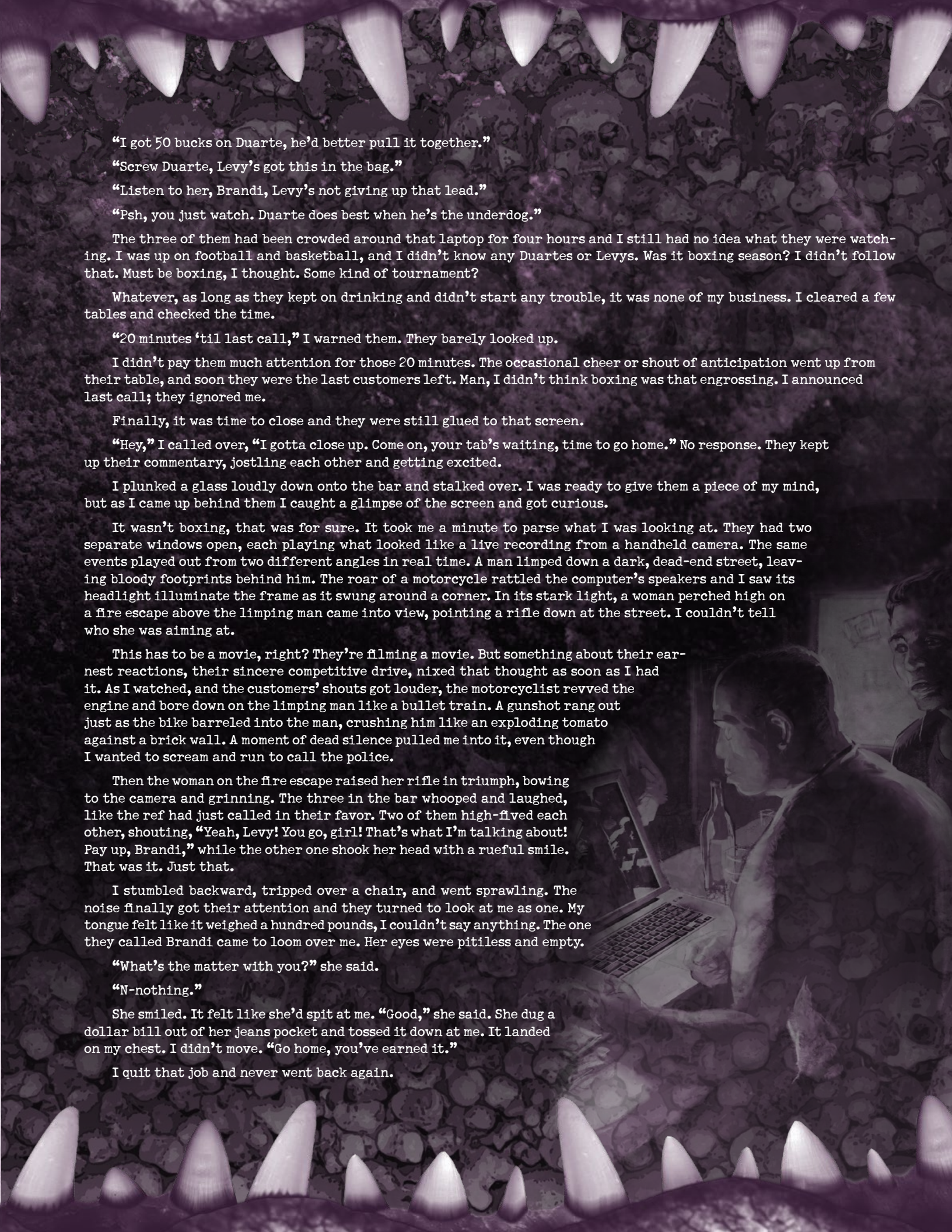
Null Synper feeds solely from the fear and ruin she instigates on the internet through hate groups and active trolling. She starves herself of a true meal of flesh and bone, afraid of leaving her safe hovel, and finding it far too easy to prey on those who would take their own lives for her.

A hunter locked the **Unrelenting Clown** in a reliquary for nearly 50 years. If his predations and feedings seemed horrific before, his imprisonment and near starvation has left him a twisted and damaged creature who sates his unrelenting hunger in any way possible. Fear, pain, ruin, and power are all delicacies to the thing that has taken on the persona of a demented clown as his true form.

A survivor of World War II bombings, the **Blitz Boy** still appears as a child after becoming Insatiable. He now steals children and their families, to crush and smother them, eventually feasting upon their bones. He uses his innocent looks and the goodwill of others to worm his way into the hearts of his prey.







"I got 50 bucks on Duarte, he'd better pull it together."

"Screw Duarte, Levy's got this in the bag."

"Listen to her, Brandi, Levy's not giving up that lead."

"Psh, you just watch. Duarte does best when he's the underdog."

The three of them had been crowded around that laptop for four hours and I still had no idea what they were watching. I was up on football and basketball, and I didn't know any Duartes or Levys. Was it boxing season? I didn't follow that. Must be boxing, I thought. Some kind of tournament?

Whatever, as long as they kept on drinking and didn't start any trouble, it was none of my business. I cleared a few tables and checked the time.

"20 minutes 'til last call," I warned them. They barely looked up.

I didn't pay them much attention for those 20 minutes. The occasional cheer or shout of anticipation went up from their table, and soon they were the last customers left. Man, I didn't think boxing was that engrossing. I announced last call; they ignored me.

Finally, it was time to close and they were still glued to that screen.

"Hey," I called over, "I gotta close up. Come on, your tab's waiting, time to go home." No response. They kept up their commentary, jostling each other and getting excited.

I plunked a glass loudly down onto the bar and stalked over. I was ready to give them a piece of my mind, but as I came up behind them I caught a glimpse of the screen and got curious.

It wasn't boxing, that was for sure. It took me a minute to parse what I was looking at. They had two separate windows open, each playing what looked like a live recording from a handheld camera. The same events played out from two different angles in real time. A man limped down a dark, dead-end street, leaving bloody footprints behind him. The roar of a motorcycle rattled the computer's speakers and I saw its headlight illuminate the frame as it swung around a corner. In its stark light, a woman perched high on a fire escape above the limping man came into view, pointing a rifle down at the street. I couldn't tell who she was aiming at.

This has to be a movie, right? They're filming a movie. But something about their earnest reactions, their sincere competitive drive, nixed that thought as soon as I had it. As I watched, and the customers' shouts got louder, the motorcyclist revved the engine and bore down on the limping man like a bullet train. A gunshot rang out just as the bike barreled into the man, crushing him like an exploding tomato against a brick wall. A moment of dead silence pulled me into it, even though I wanted to scream and run to call the police.

Then the woman on the fire escape raised her rifle in triumph, bowing to the camera and grinning. The three in the bar whooped and laughed, like the ref had just called in their favor. Two of them high-fived each other, shouting, "Yeah, Levy! You go, girl! That's what I'm talking about! Pay up, Brandi," while the other one shook her head with a rueful smile. That was it. Just that.

I stumbled backward, tripped over a chair, and went sprawling. The noise finally got their attention and they turned to look at me as one. My tongue felt like it weighed a hundred pounds, I couldn't say anything. The one they called Brandi came to loom over me. Her eyes were pitiless and empty.

"What's the matter with you?" she said.

"N-nothing."

She smiled. It felt like she'd spit at me. "Good," she said. She dug a dollar bill out of her jeans pocket and tossed it down at me. It landed on my chest. I didn't move. "Go home, you've earned it."

I quit that job and never went back again.

CHAPTER ONE HEROES

It's a narrative that dates back to humanity's earliest stories. When the deep darkness outside our familiar walls births a monster to menace the innocent populace, a hero rises to protect them, passing through trials to slay the beast and win her heart's desire. These stories propagate like wildfire because everyone wants to imagine herself as that hero: the one who would take up arms, stand up to terror, and prove her bravery in the face of a foe all can agree is unwanted. No shades of gray taint the choice to kill the dragon that razes the countryside and demands unearned tribute.

Good and evil are clear and obvious sides in a war that requires not an army, but a single sword shining with righteous virtue, to prevail. Strength, cunning, wisdom, skill, divine gifts: the hero wields these tools in her quest to become humanity's savior, proving herself a superlative example of her kind and earning the respect and love of all.

Modern Heroes would never admit to thinking of themselves this way. Asked why they take up arms to hunt the Beast, they reply that if they don't, who will? That their power is a burden that demands action. That they alone have the clarity to see what must be done, and justice dictates they do it. That they feel something wrong and can't escape the urge to right it. The trouble is, what they call "wrong" is something they barely understand and can't really define. It's "wrong" because it's different,

because it goes against the familiar status quo. A Hero's instincts tell him that the ripples upending his dreamscape when he sleeps are not supposed to be there. When he tries to explain it to his friends and family, they advise him to take a vacation from stress or see a therapist, and ignore what seems to him an obvious threat. He can't see beneath the surface of the dream, so his imagination fills in the rest; what do millennia of human history tell us lurks in the unknown to disturb the peaceful slumber of the unwary? Monsters, of course.

Just like in the movies, no one tells the fledgling Hero what she's supposed to do with this knowledge she didn't ask for. For some, it's terrifying. For others, it's vindicating. Either way, it's *special*. She's adrift on a raft in a sea of ignorance, with no lighthouse to guide her and no companions to share her experience. She has no way of knowing that she's a superfluous leftover from a time when humanity's relationship with nightmares was radically different, or that now she's just standing in the way of the ones with a *real* purpose. To her, destiny beckons. She alone must be the one to solve what she perceives as a problem on an existential level. She's seeing these disturbances for a reason, and if she can prove it, then others will *have* to believe her — and more, to thank her for doing what they can't. To recognize her as their Hero.

THE MANY FACES OF HEROISM

Not everyone reacts the same way to this shallow awareness of the Primordial Dream. Some don't become Heroes at all, instead finding other ways to indulge their primal instincts or learning to tune them out. A rare few even take it upon themselves to help the Beasts they track down, heeding the message that humanity can only progress by accepting its fears and turning them to productive change. Generally,

**Because there is good
and there is evil,
and evil must be punished.
Even in the face of
Armageddon I shall not
compromise in this.
But, there are so many
deserving of retribution...
and there is so little time.**

**—Alan Moore,
*Watchmen***

though, human nature reacts poorly to the unknown and the different, with irrational fear and a desire to show dominance. From these primitive instincts arise base needs that drive those who slay Beasts. Like the Children themselves, Heroes feed primal hungers, but they do it in reaction to their mortal enemies rather than for any true purpose. Heroes rise for as many reasons as their diverse personal histories suggest, but patterns do emerge.

Perhaps the most basic cause of Heroism is the need to lash out at what's unfamiliar and threatening. To this kind of Hero, the Beasts aren't threatening because of anything they've done — their mere existence is a menace to the Hero's sense of self or worldview. She fears what she doesn't understand, and she takes her aggressive nature and buried anger out on the thing that's socially acceptable to harm. She suppresses her violent urges, vicious hatred, or stark paranoia in her everyday life, so as to fit in and get by — the law says it's not okay to hurt your coworkers or the guy that cuts you off on the highway. But a monster? Those are fair game for unleashing whatever dark impulses beat inside her resentful heart. She fights because it's cathartic. She kills because she *can*.

Others start out *trying* to ignore their Heroic instincts, taking up arms only after the incessant disruptions in their dreams drive them to utter distraction. The reluctant Hero acts out of a simple need to make the noise *stop*, or because someone convinces him that his nightmares are signs of a fate he must accept — a mission from God, perhaps, or inevitable events that will take place with or without his agreement. The longer he's been at the job, the more likely he's resigned himself permanently to it. He fights because he believes he must, to save himself from madness or at the behest of a higher power. He kills because losing control of his life numbs him to the consequences of his actions, and leans on Heroic destiny as a scapegoat to take away all responsibility.

To some people, simply *playing* hero is not enough. This Hero needs attention and love, fame and applause, and she will do anything to get it. She's the white knight who jumps in to rescue people who don't need rescuing, the one who runs for student council president but delegates all the work. It's easiest for this kind of Hero to pretend she's doing it for the poor, defenseless victims, but she's indiscriminate and thoughtless about her killing, proving it's all for the accolades in the end. She recruits followers less for the help and more so that someone sees her in action — if she can't tell the media all about her exploits, she can at least have awe-inspired flunkies witness her greatness. She fights for the thanks and praise. She kills because that's what Heroes *do*.

For the Hero who feels inadequate or scorned in his everyday life, slaying Beasts fulfills a need for the validation of a self-image no one else sees. It gives him the chance to justify his existence. He needs to prove that he's the cleverest or the most skilled, that he knows something others don't, that he's a good person despite the haters, that he's been misunderstood all this time, or just that he's in the right. He's deluded himself into thinking he's the underdog in a war he created, desperate to be the "good guy" in a fight against the Beasts' "evil." He

can't stand to accept the primacy of something that's nothing like him — it would debunk a lifetime of assumptions and shatter his ego, and he can't let that happen. He fights to grasp at legitimacy and set himself up as the "us" versus someone's "them." He kills because to hold back would be to admit that he was ever wrong.

Some Heroes are dissatisfied with the perfectly-mundane lives they lead, and turn to hunting Beasts out of a need for *more*. More power, more thrills, more anything. Once this Hero gets a taste of the fantastical world beyond her own, she can't get enough. The intoxicating Gifts she receives after slaying a Beast drive her to do it again and again. She wants to be unstoppable, to have superpowers, to live on the edge, to be a goddess. She sees the strange, dark lives the Children lead and envies them. She steals from them to give to herself. She explores the Primordial Dream to eat of its flesh and drink of its blood, and spends as little time participating in human life as possible. She fights to become someone else. She kills to reap the rewards.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY

Unfortunately for the Hero of our story, the Children don't conveniently line up for the chopping block. A Hero often spends more of his time looking for Beasts and planning his approach than actually killing them, especially since it usually takes multiple tries against any one Beast before he succeeds. Not all Heroes go out of their way to find villains to vanquish, of course; some stumble from disturbance to disturbance, living an unrelated life in between calls to arms and letting the Primordial Dream do the hard work for them. For many, though, that's not enough.

THE HUNT

Many Heroes subscribe to the creed that the better they know their enemy, the easier it is to emerge victorious. They spend hours tracking down mystics and mythology experts, delving into occult libraries, and studying historical accounts to uncover patterns in the Beastly *modus operandi*. Any lore they can find on other supernatural creatures helps, too, since they quickly learn that the Children have a propensity for spreading the love to other breeds of monster. The brave among them find ways to step into the Primordial Dream as often as they can, learning the secret pathways of the hive and memorizing their twisting routes, dowsing for a Horror rocking the boat in the distance. Tales make the rounds of Heroes who keep themselves sedated and have followers transport them from one place to another, actively seeking upheavals in their dreams' serene surface.

Others take a more practical approach to their research, looking to human news media and rumor mills to pinpoint scenarios that seem to carry the Children's fingerprints. Stories of intense nightmares, assaults with odd motives or methods, and unusual behavior that could signify sudden phobias attract these Heroes, who prefer to investigate in person and gain the

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE BEASTS

From the Children's perspective, one Hero is bad enough. Two or more teaming up presents a new level of horror. Imagine watching violent fanatics rile each other up to compete over who can commit murder first and congratulate each other over it afterward. Beasts are good at making friends in the supernatural world for protection, but nobody wants to live like a contestant on a sadistic game show where the whole audience drools in anticipation of spilling her blood.

Fortunately, the observant Beast comes to recognize that such a partnership is tenuous and can't last. With careful manipulation, she can use the Heroes' own tactics against them, playing up their unhealthy need for competition to turn them against their fellows and expose all the little ways in which they sabotage each other. Even Heroes who organize around competition and agree to friendly rivalry have trouble keeping their egos out of the way; a clever Beast can deliberately make waves to kick the race into high gear and fabricate foul play or dishonorable conduct on one side or the other to exacerbate the rising tensions between Heroes. It's a risky gamble, but it often has more appeal than waiting for the mutually-inspired frenzy to come to her doorstep. The major advantage Beasts have over Heroes when it comes to teamwork is that the Beasts understand how it's *really* supposed to work.

trust of the community affected by a Beast's predations. Often this approach leads to false alarms in which some other kind of monster is the culprit, but that's usually a good sign, as far as the Hero is concerned — where vampires and fae lurk, a Beast is rarely far behind. She tasks her followers with gathering information and acting as eyes and ears, reporting back with any suspicious talk they hear and even bringing witnesses in for questioning.

Not every Hero is a lone wolf, at least at this stage of the quest. Some forge wary alliances with others of their kind, expanding their territory and increasing the likelihood of picking up hints of a Beast's presence. The teamwork never lasts long, though. Even among pairs or small groups of Heroes who manage to work out a system for distributing the kills, their individualistic and self-serving natures eventually prove too volatile to sustain the partnership. That's why some Heroes bypass the messy cooperation part and instead simply use their Heroic brethren to lead them to the lion's den, following their movements in secret and slipping in to steal the kill at the last minute. Others embrace the competition, holding contests to drive each other to find the Beast first — and sneak information from each other whenever they get the chance.

THE KILL

Finding the monster is only the first leg of the journey. The hard part comes next: How does a Hero defeat a foe so much more powerful than himself? In the stories, it often comes down to grit, faith, willpower, courage, or heart. In real life, the Hero finds such nebulous sentiments to be woefully inadequate. For a while, at least, he's the underdog in his personal narrative — he needs to fight like one. Even a longtime Beast killer with a number of Gifts in his repertoire must be careful going up against the monstrous resources of his foe; it's not just the personal power of the Children that makes them dangerous, although that's certainly significant. They also carry with them nightmarish realms that bleed into reality, befriend other creatures just as terrible as they are, and have the ability

to transcend hiding among humanity to become truly legendary horrors. Grit helps, but only so much.

Sometimes the answer is just more firepower. Throw enough followers, bullets, and fire at a monster and it's bound to go down sooner or later. Heroes with the right kinds of resources can bring overwhelming force to bear — military-grade equipment, whole police units, tanks, grenades, the works. Some lead the charge from the front, heading up small armies and firing assault rifles. Others lead from behind, using their forces as fodder to take the brunt of the enemy's attack until all that's left is for the Hero to swoop in and finish the job. Even if a Hero has no access to such lavish gear, the philosophy remains the same: Bring enough people with enough weapons and the enemy falls eventually.

For many Heroes, though, the all-in method is impractical, if not impossible. It's more common to take the guerrilla approach, planning ambushes and using hit-and-run tactics to harry the foe before moving in for the kill. Those with the ability to follow a Beast back to his Lair have a distinct advantage, especially if they can combine it with Anathema or powerful allies. Being able to track a Beast wherever he goes helps, too, since the Hero can time her attacks to be as inconvenient for him as possible, safe in the knowledge that no matter what happens, she won't lose track of him.

Of course, the most devastating weapon in any Hero's arsenal is the ability to inflict (or "discover") Anathema. Heroes believe that all Beasts have inherent weaknesses, and only the supremely confident or reckless go up against one of the Children without giving any thought to the matter. Heroes learn delaying tactics to give them enough time to figure out how any given Beast can be defeated, and stage attacks solely for the purpose of levying an Anathema. They can escape to let it do their dirty work before returning for the final showdown. Those who can inflict Anathema from a distance or subtly in a crowded room milk the advantage for all it's worth, and send followers spying on the Beast afterward to monitor the effectiveness of the weakness before choosing the right time to strike.

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE HUNTERS

On the surface, Heroes and hunters make natural allies, but a Hero's appreciation for her hunter comrades is rarely reciprocated for long. Conspiracies and compacts with less sympathetic approaches to the Vigil might back a Hero for a time to reap the ancillary benefits, and might not even care that her uncanny powers come from a dark source, but many are just as suspicious of the Hero's ability to track down Beasts as they are of the Beasts themselves, and organizations like the Long Night certainly don't attribute the Hero's obvious connection with the Children to some God-given blessing. Even a group like Ashwood Abbey comes to recognize that a Hero is just a different kind of beast with an opposing mythology defining her existence, and she's likely to land in the "monster" category before long.

Heroes profess to understand the Vigil, but what pushes them to hunt is far more selfish and deluded than the average hunter's "humanity for humans" creed or the loss-fueled vengeance that drives him. Hunters who adhere to strict codes or struggle with the morality of their lifestyles often refuse to work with a Hero once they see to what lengths she will go for a kill. Her propensity for dragging innocent people into her fight as followers doesn't endear her to them, either. Inevitably, her insistence on taking the kill for herself and talking about her rightful destiny are deal breakers to the team-oriented cell that's just trying to keep the streets safe.

A Hero's singlemindedness about Beasts in particular doesn't make sense from the Vigil's perspective, and even when the Hero agrees to help hunt other monsters in exchange for aid in her own pursuits, she rarely cares enough to uphold her end of the bargain. She doesn't truly understand what drives the hunter to see a vampire, a possessed victim, and a Beast as equal threats, and ultimately any alliance she makes is just an excuse to use the hunters as a means to an end, until they become hindrances to her own self-aggrandizement. In the end, a hunter hunts for humanity's sake, while a Hero hunts for her own.

Beast-slayers call themselves Heroes, but that doesn't by any means imply that they're above blatant manipulation and trickery. Particularly patient or cruel Heroes go out of their way to learn what the Children value so they can take it away or threaten it. A Hero might take hostages, blackmail the Beast or someone to whom she's close, persuade someone the Beast trusts to betray her, keep her under surveillance or hire a private eye to learn all her secrets, or even run a long con to earn the Beast's trust himself before stabbing her in the back in a vulnerable moment. Some Heroes use potent poisons, drugs, or supernatural relics and sicknesses to weaken a Beast until she can't mount an effective defense.

Finally, despite the Children feeling familial about their fellow otherworldly creatures, nothing guarantees that such

creatures return the sentiment. A Hero who probes the supernatural underworld of an area inevitably unearths potential allies in her quest, albeit temporary ones. Plenty of the night's denizens have reasons to oppose Beasts who might be co-opting their prey, upsetting the usual balance of power, or poking their noses into things they shouldn't. Heroes are often much more willing to strike deals with monsters than hunters are, since their real concerns have nothing much to do with principle or revenge. They also make deals with the hunters themselves, as they possess shared goals and have the ability to lead a hunter cell straight to a monster's den. Hunters actually make better allies than other Heroes do, since a Hero has no need to view them as competition except insofar as he must be sure to strike the final blow.

CANDY RASMUSSEN

VOICE OF THE VICTIM

The people want to hear your every single scream. I need you to scream for everyone you ever hurt. Do you think you could do that for me?

BACKGROUND

As a quiet student of media and politics, Candy Rasmussen never stood out or made a fuss. Candy wasn't an exemplary student, but she was committed to her degree as a keen scholar of modern propaganda and the online medium for news communication. Rasmussen rarely found time to socialize with others, but her charisma and skill in persuasion shone when she was in front of a camera. Candy was gifted in wordplay and evoking emotional responses from the viewer; her lecturers told her repeatedly that when following the correct script she would change minds and make an impact.

Rasmussen never had an interest in using someone else's words. With just a camera, the walls of her dorm room as background, and her opinions, she began to deliver improvised opinion pieces aimed at the student body. Candy was disappointed to find her viewership rarely rose higher than single digits.

One of those viewers was a similar devotee of media. Candy found bunches of flowers waiting for her after three days of broadcasting, and a new camera after two weeks. A note was attached, inviting her to the university's media library. Curious, naïve, and flattered by the attention, Candy encountered her fan at the appointed time, meeting a shy, nervous, damp impression of a sophomore. The boy introduced himself as Jess. As Candy thanked him for his praise, he gushed about the validity of her points of view, and offered to host her vlog on his moderately popular debate society website. In exchange, he asked for minor input into the content of the vlogs. Rasmussen weighed the creepiness of the offer against the opportunity for increased publicity and accepted within minutes.

To their mutual surprise, Candy and Jess formed the perfect team. The two increased her popularity to the point that everyone at the university knew her face and words. Rasmussen worried for a time that Jess had romantic designs, but his interest in her — and specifically, her voice — was purely platonic. The pair became friends and confidantes; Jess suggested an occasional byline while obtaining more ad sponsors and increasing the website's viewership, and Candy ascended the ranks of the student union, becoming a major voice for their rights.

As Rasmussen's star rose, nightmare-driven insomnia denied her rest. Terrible dreams of suffocating under mucus, sewage, and filthy water would jolt her awake, where she inevitably found her skin covered in grime and her bed despoiled.

The nighttime horrors started severely affecting her study and work. During one night of terror, Candy sleepwalked across campus to the media library, unknowingly drawn to the source of her nightmares.

Entering the room in which she first met her friend Jess, she beheld something terrible. Hunched over, hulking, and dripping in viscous fluid — a slippery approximation of Jess writhed in the midst of reels and filming equipment. Rasmussen broke from her daze to see the true form of her yearlong companion. Jess just looked over his shoulder and formed a jagged smile, beckoning Candy to join him, before moving to hook up a video camera. Turning his back on Candy proved to be a fatal error. Horrified and betrayed by the friend who infected her dreams, she grabbed Jess' lighter from his dropped rucksack, and put it to a shelf of old celluloid, locking the door on the Beast trapped within. She stayed long enough to hear his screams as the highly-flammable nitrates ignited around the trapped Collector.

A Hero was born.

The university treated Jess' death as a tragic accident. Candy Rasmussen felt abandoned by her deceased companion, but with the nightmares banished, she pursued her media goals in earnest. Without Jess' support, however, her channel plateaued. She had the personality to win subscriptions and monetary support, but was unable to find reach beyond her campus. Candy attempted to tackle hard subjects such as poverty, sexual health, religious freedoms, and political corruption, but the world failed to care about her or her opinions. Slaying Jess was a pyrrhic achievement, at best. As she reached her second year at university, she prepared to quit the life of a social media personality.

Candy's attitude changed when the nightmares returned.

The terrors she experienced in her dreams were not identical to the ones from before, but held similarities. She dreamt of the giant face of a man, descending on her from the sky. He snapped at her with teeth like boulders and overwhelmed her with his bulk in every nightmare. She recognized the face as that of a local bank manager, controversially released from prison, whom she had mentioned in a vlog the week before. With her scant remaining pull, Candy arranged for him to come along to the university as a sit-down guest for a 15-minute segment. She wanted to be sure he was like Jess: a monster responsible for the torment of innocents.

The Anakim laughed at her questions about ethics, openly mocking her when she enquired whether he learned anything as a result of his incarceration. He called her a naive, wet liberal. After the interview Rasmussen, with tears in her eyes, addressed the camera in a heartfelt, apparently unrehearsed speech:

“The sad truth is we’ve made this world a gray, uncaring place where everyone does the bare minimum to get by. The people want to believe in ideals, but harsh reality tells them hope and faith are mistakes. To hell with the needs of innocent victims crushed beneath the wheels of grinding prosperity. The man who sat beside me is a crook — a beast. Nobody will address this because he has the most expensive lawyers in the country. But let me tell you now, live: the people need to hear the strong voice of someone bold enough to tell the greedy magnates, bent politicians, and violent criminals they’re wrong. Their victims won’t take this any longer. The beast beside me, and everyone like him, need to be shown we won’t take their shit any longer.”

The incendiary words went viral within hours. Rasmussen’s face and speech became a meme across social networks and a subject of discussion around water coolers. She received a lawsuit from the banker within a week, and went on to publicize this on her show. Her viewership went up, and the banker received regular harassment and threats of harm. When asked to comment on the danger posed to her former guest, Candy remarked, “Let him be threatened. The rest of us have to live that way our entire lives due to predators like him.”

When he appeared on her show, she knew he was a Beast. Candy also knew she was unable to do anything against him personally, but by utilizing her persuasive skills, she successfully shifted public opinion against him. Another Hero happened to watch her broadcast, and recognized the signs. Candy wasn’t responsible for the explosion that consumed the Beast’s Lair, but she lit the fuse.

The man responsible for the Beast’s death — a Hero calling himself the Web Weaver — began writing fan mail to Candy. Encoded in his letters of praise were identities and locations of other Beasts he tracked, but was unable to engage. Recognizing the advice of a kindred spirit, Candy began to lace her vlogs with this information. One night Candy presented a special report on urban decay, unobtrusively highlighting the locations of

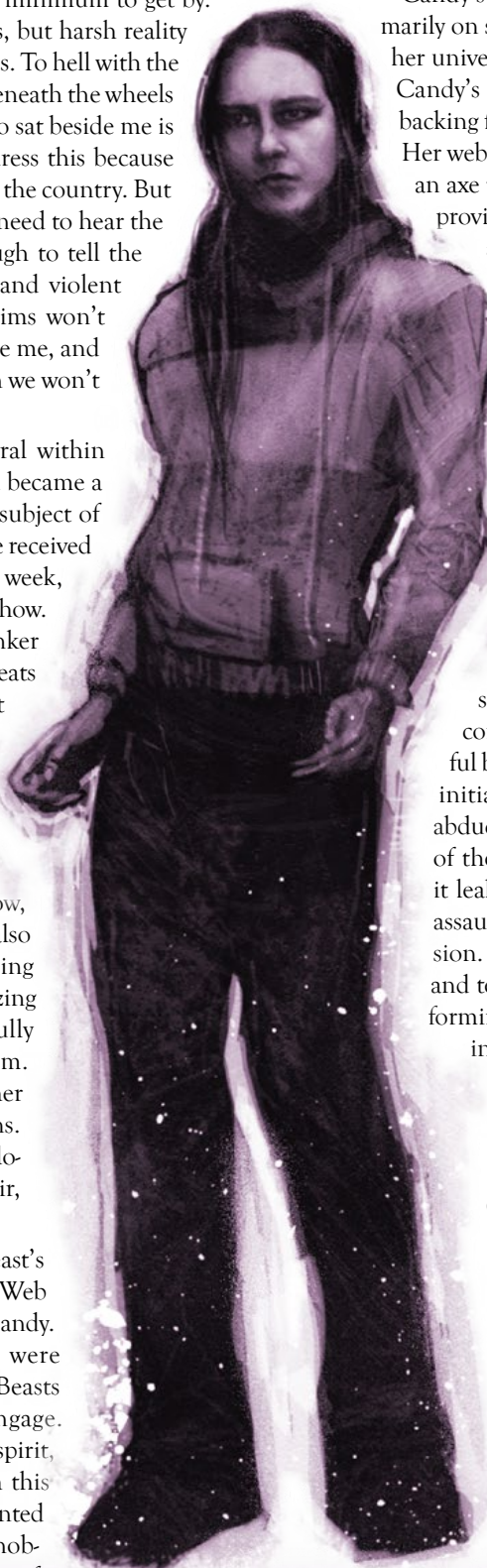
several Lairs. Another time she performed an exposé on gang culture, highlighting one group actually consisting of a brood of Beasts. Every week there would be at least one segment dedicated to someone or somewhere connected to Beasts.

GROWING LOUDER

Candy’s vlog — Voice of the Victim — focused primarily on sufferers and perpetrators in an area local to her university. As more Heroes tuned in to her show, Candy’s fame grew. She began to receive financial backing from wealthy supporters of similar mindsets. Her website became intensely popular for those with an axe to grind against any perceived wrongdoer. It provided support to authentic victims of abuse and hardship, and Candy was always swift to respond to pleas for aid or sympathy. It also provided a source of intelligence for Heroes to use against Beasts. Voice of the Victim became the preferred network for Heroes in the know, who used Rasmussen, her forums, and her fan community to pass on information about targets and safe houses, and to proclaim victories over infamous Beasts.

Beasts noticed Voice of the Victim’s actions as their addresses, places of work, and families were featured on the publicly-visible website. The furor surrounding the site made Candy’s visible aims a particular concern to Beasts lairing on campuses. A youthful brood attempted legal action against the Hero initially, but, finding no traction, plotted her abduction. Foolishly, the brood broadcasted plans of the attack across social media, where word of it leaked to Candy. Rasmussen anticipated their assault and recorded every step of their aggression. The Hero’s loyal fans on campus — students and teachers both — intercepted the Beasts. After forming a human wall around the vlogger’s building, they fanatically and violently defended Rasmussen. Candy uploaded footage of the brood’s unsuccessful raid that evening, along with her voiceover mocking the “vengeful beasts.” Police intervened to ask Candy whether she wished to press charges or required protection. The Hero declined both. She knew other Heroes would soon eliminate the Beasts, whose faces were online for everyone to see.

Following the attempt on her life, Rasmussen strengthened her fan base into a bona fide cult of personality. Understanding the best defense against Beasts would be a loyal following of admirers and devotees standing in their way, she made herself well known across multiple online and television channels as



“that girl who stands up for innocents.” With support from the university faculty, Candy appeared across multiple news networks in interviews where she stated her lack of fear, and invited the downtrodden youth to attend seminars hosted by her on campus, as well as counseling chats online — both of which were broadcasted live and uncut. The subsequent media coverage of her untrained, but astute, massage of victims’ emotions became a hit. Those in need of a caring ear for their problems or a shoulder to cry on found a young, deeply dedicated source of empathy in Candy and her website. All the while, Beasts raged as they found the Hero’s once-paltry defenses strengthened by adoring supplicants and do-gooders. Heroes toasted Candy as she continued to release information regarding their enemies as lead stories in a broadcast or in the subtext of a vlog, sometimes overtly, other times encoded. The messages always got through, and Candy Rasmussen’s following increased further.

Rasmussen is one of the best-known Heroes in the world due to her media presence and ever-present disciples. Some Beasts even wonder whether she’s an innocent being played by Heroes. They are as fooled by her guiltless appearance and good works with the truly downtrodden as her supporters. Few Beasts want to cleave through innocent puppets in order to reach her. They just watch, frustrated, as she plants targets on the backs of those who can’t assail her without their own identities and lives being exposed for the world — and Heroes — to see.

DESCRIPTION

Rasmussen never found out if Jess intended to infect her with his nightmares, or if they were a byproduct of their closeness. She never discovered whether Jess meant for her to stumble into his Lair, or if she was destined to enter and slay the Beast. The overriding emotion Candy felt with the discovery of her nightmares’ source was humiliation, and it’s one she’s never been able to shake. Despite that, she struggles to reconcile his slaying as anything other than murder. She knows Jess was her closest friend...until she killed him.

This feeling of guilt colors everything Candy does through her vlog and public works. She serves the causes of other Heroes diligently and without question, and truly believes the majority of their targets are deserving of painful deaths. She then directs the money she gains from Heroes towards increasing her public image, and assisting genuinely innocent victims of persecution and hate. She sees the shy and reluctant Jess in many of the youths who come to her channel for assistance. By interviewing them, highlighting their plight, and raising awareness of abuse and neglect, she believes she can be a force for good in the world, while mitigating her guilt, if only briefly.

Candy’s reasoning is one of misguided altruism. She believes Beasts taint what they touch and harm what they love. She blindly ascribes most of the world’s ills to the activities of Beasts, ignoring the possibility of human corruption when a Beast could bear the blame. For all her attempts at charity and compassion, her methods and the results always come back to hurting Beasts for reasons largely in her head.

Not all subscribers use Candy’s web presence to assist in the persecution of Beasts. Some intentionally direct her to target

STORY HOOKS

- One of the Beasts in the protagonists’ brood receives an invitation to participate in a Voice of the Victim interview. Logic dictates making an appearance on the show would be foolish, yet such an opportunity may lead to the brood getting close enough to Rasmussen to stop her activities. Perhaps she can be convinced that her agenda is one of blind aggression and talked into giving up her role as a Hero. Then again, if the brood prefers a more violent approach, stopping her in a more lethal fashion is an option. No doubt, she’ll be recording everything taking place around her, no matter what.
- As is the way with all families, Beasts don’t necessarily get along. When Candy Rasmussen broadcasts a special on a group of “unsavory individuals who prey on the innocent,” the characters realize she’s talking about a rival brood in the same city. They’re forced to decide whether or not to warn them. If Heroes take out their longtime enemies, it frees up territory and removes a big thorn from their collective side. Then again, perhaps blood is thicker than petty rivalry.
- As one of the Beasts enters a church, a therapist’s office, or another place of quiet refuge, they spy a heavily-disguised Candy Rasmussen exiting. Supposedly, Rasmussen goes nowhere alone, yet in this instance she’s unaccompanied by any of her hangers on. This is a golden opportunity to stalk the Hero, engage her while she’s undefended, or simply find out more about her. What darkness does she contain that drives her to a place of counseling and contemplation, and is it possible to reach her with words instead of resorting to claws and Horrors?

innocents of no supernatural stripe, knowing how credulous her cult of personality has become. Believable stories of villainy persuade her to assign outraged mobs or subtle killers against any credible target. Candy refuses to pry deeply into the stories submitted, unprepared to acknowledge that people may dupe her. She has to believe she’s doing good deeds, and that she’s not a monster acting as a broker for even worse monsters.

Rasmussen sees nobody as a friend. She identifies allies within the ranks of Heroes. She sees followers to maneuver and manipulate among those who avidly watch and fund her. The innocents who use Voice of the Victim as a place for communicating their genuine ills are among the few Candy respects, though pity contaminates this feeling. She invests much of the money contributed to her website in support groups for the “victims,” as well as increasing her own exposure, allowing her to reach more troubled individuals. To all appearances, Candy is a young philanthropist with a big heart. Whether through accident or by design, every one of Candy’s investments in Voice of the Victim has paid off dividends, with profits returning

to her own pocket and the funding of Heroes' activities. The website isn't a charity, and Candy's never advertised it as such.

She's encountered several Beasts face to face in interviews and during exposés, holding her own as an indignant and outraged member of the public. She lambasts her targets without pause, before setting her entourage on them then, or later. She fears getting close enough to a Beast to realize they may have a decent side, so she doesn't allow such creatures to get a word in edgewise. Candy attempts to target Beasts her viewership will judge unsympathetically. When she does profile an innocent-seeming brood, childlike Beast, or unobtrusive Lair, she has the skill to twist a tale and make a mostly harmless person into a ravenous public enemy.

Candy has accompanied bands of Heroes on hunts for Beast families. She never actively participates in an assault, instead voyeuristically recording the Heroes' sadistic attacks. She experiences a thrill from watching Beasts being put down, though nausea occasionally overwhelms her while watching the footage. Her goading dialogue, recorded over the visuals, excites and sickens her in equal measure. She stores these videos on a well-hidden external hard drive, and only loads them up when she's not brought the life of a Beast to an end in recent months. She's beginning to realize she has an addiction to slaying Beasts, even if the only part she plays is as information network to the real killers. She doesn't know how to break this feeling, and doesn't understand the Primordial Dream, but such discoveries aren't pressing. Candy derives enough pleasure from her popularity, success, and how she helps innocents while throwing Beasts under the bus, that she's content — at this time — to plow on.

Candy has not left her university and, despite the amount of money she earns through online exposure, rarely dresses up. She prefers casual, relaxed clothing, favoring yoga pants and a hoodie to go along with the sports bag she keeps slung over her shoulder. Even in front of a camera, she wears little makeup. Candy has a natural beauty and a look of innocence in her almond eyes and warm smile, the freckles across her nose and cheeks enhancing the appearance of naïve youth. She knows these features play a large part in her popularity, and doesn't feel ashamed of using them to enrich her profile.

RUMORS

"For a Hero, she sure puts a lot of barriers between her and us. There's so many people following and obeying her, I doubt she'll ever hunt us personally."

Rasmussen has little appetite for engaging Beasts directly, and has killed only one Beast herself. While she understands the power conveyed by a Beast's slaying, and a significant part of her desires more of this power, Candy's approach is ultimately pragmatic. She feels safer and in control of the situation when she can manipulate others.

Candy will sacrifice any number of followers to bring a Beast down, as she knows the cause is worthwhile. She harbors minimal desire to engage a Beast one on one, therefore frustrating many who would love to end her activities. Rasmussen knows her limits, and hides behind monitors and minions for as long as she is able.

"Rasmussen hates vampires about as much as she hates us. She was a slave to one of them once, but slipped free of her mistress' mental control and burnt the vampire to death. Seems she learned a thing or two while in her service, given how she can influence a crowd."

A gift Candy's always possessed is a stellar skill of persuasion to a degree Beasts call unnatural. Some Beasts believe it's in her blood, conveyed by a vampire master. To Candy's knowledge, she's never imbibed a vampire's vitae, or come under the influence of such a creature. Her connections to the undead are few. Vampires of the Carthian Movement have been monitoring the Voice of the Victim as a means to pass on information in a similar fashion to Heroes who use it.

Neither vampires nor Heroes know the others are interested in Candy's vlogs. Rasmussen does know, having been approached by a young Daeva with an offer of Embrace, but is stringing the vampires along until she can determine whether they act as a hindrance or a help to Beasts. Just as with her other followers, she's prepared to milk the Carthians for their uses, before disposing of them.

"If she wasn't so eaten up with regret for killing her precious Jess, she might amount to something. Until then, she's about as useful as her channel is at assisting victims, as she calls them."

Some Heroes believe Rasmussen is a pathetic example to set for aspiring Heroes: a weak link due to her visibility. She knows much about Hero activity across the world and, while she cannot identify her peers by name, she can easily pinpoint anticipated locations, or lead Heroes into traps set by Beasts. Such a danger is too much to tolerate.

Legend: Champion

Life: Philanthropist

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Investigation 1, Occult (Beasts, Vampires) 3, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression (Melodrama) 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Rabble-Rousing) 5, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Heroes) 3, Contacts (Social Media), Fame 3, Inspiring, Resources 4, Status (Media) 2

Gifts: Kinslayer

Health: 7

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Armor: —

Notes: Candy keeps a camera in her sports bag at all times.

DANIEL GREENE

THE SILVERSMITH

I know your weaknesses. I've cut off your escape routes. Can we get this over with? I've got a ton of orders to ship out, and the post office closes at five.

BACKGROUND

There was never a time in Danny's life when he believed the world was safe. His parents were fanatical hunters who were constantly on the road, sniffing after rumors that might turn up evidence of monsters. Not even his impending arrival could slow them down; his mother went into labor while hunting a vampire, and gave birth to him in a barn in a rural Nebraska town so small it wasn't even a dot on the map. He was barely hours old when his father anointed him in the family tradition, a smear of monster blood across the forehead to dedicate him into the family business.

Danny grew up in a series of temporary homes, left in the care of family friends and semi-retired hunters while his parents continued their crusade. At an age when most kids were learning their alphabet and playing with friends, Danny absorbed monster lore and learned how to create simple protection talismans out of wire and string. Christmas, when celebrated, netted him books on obscure arcana, handcrafted hunting gear, and a small arsenal of weapons.

Due to the transient nature of his parents' lifestyle, Danny's formal education was sporadic when he began to accompany them on their routine hunts. Though his mother taught him how to read, write, and perform basic mathematics, often in cheap motel rooms sprawled across a bed or over the daily special at a diner, he learned almost nothing of geography, history, or science except where it benefitted him as an apprentice hunter.

The most stability in his life came at the age of 10, when his parents left him with his aunt Marissa in order to hunt a dangerous vampire, and never returned. Instead of turning him over to child protective services, Marissa decided to raise Danny as her own. Though she had once been a hunter, Marissa was determined to provide Danny with the things his parents had found frivolous or unnecessary. For the first time in his life, Danny found himself with all the trappings of a normal childhood: his own bedroom, toys, books, and enrollment in school.

Ironically, life soon proved to be much harder for Danny in a stable home than it had been on the road with his parents. The holes in his education handicapped him from the first day of school, keeping him constantly lagging behind his classmates, and the resulting bullying, coupled with his instinctual distrust of strangers, made him a friendless outcast for most of his years

in school. Despite Marissa's constant encouragement, Danny grew disillusioned and frustrated, and the day he turned 16, he dropped out of school entirely. Marissa attempted to convince him to go back, but Danny had already given up. Not even his aunt's ultimatum of "go back or get out of my house" worked. Instead of returning to finish his education, Danny packed up and hit the road.

DEATH WISH

He drifted for months, working odd jobs for cash in towns he passed through. Though his hunter lore had been more or less left dormant for six years, he found it easy to slide into the lifestyle his parents had led, and soon made a name for himself amongst other independent hunters as the crazy kid with the death wish.

Danny was well on his way to a violent, bloody end, but that changed the day he met Ben.

It happened like a Hollywood romance: During a busy lunch rush at a diner, Danny found himself sharing his booth space with a stranger who seemed to be allergic to silence, a cute twentysomething who introduced himself as Ben. Whether it was sheer loneliness, attraction, or the novelty of a social situation with someone who wasn't shouting at him or calling him names, Danny soon found himself lingering over coffee and pie, listening to Ben talk about everything from music to politics to current events. Even though Danny didn't have much to offer, he was happy to listen, and Ben was happy to talk.

Lunch turned into dinner, dinner turned into a movie, the movie turned into spending the night, and almost before he knew it, he was in a relationship. For a time, Ben gave Danny everything he desperately craved: attention, affection, and respect. In a frighteningly short period, Ben became the whole of Danny's world, even though he sometimes felt a thrill of fear at the look in Ben's eyes, like he wasn't a partner, but a plaything to be devoured.

When the nightmares started, Danny didn't think anything of it. He'd always had recurring dreams of loneliness and isolation, was used to being chased by bullies and monsters through his sleep, and a few night terrors were par for the course when one hunted monsters.

He didn't notice until months had passed that the nightmares always coincided with Ben's mood swings into anger and condescension, always following that fearsome expression

on his face. Danny tried to convince himself he was imagining things, and was even successful for a little while, but eventually, he couldn't ignore it anymore.

It ended like a Hollywood horror film: the next time Ben raised his eyes across the dinner table with that alien hunger in them, Danny saw a huge thing with sharp teeth and burning eyes, slaving for his flesh, his soul, and his mind. Danny didn't think, he just reacted to the threat. He lunged for the carving knife lying between them and vaulted over the table, taking Ben to the floor. The scuffle was vicious and bloody, and Danny would never remember exactly what happened, but the next thing he remembered was sitting on the floor next to Ben's body, covered with Ben's blood, holding the knife that had carved out his lover's throat.

Under the cover of darkness, Danny snuck Ben's body into the trunk of his car and took it to a nearby swamp where he weighted it and sunk it into the mire. He returned to their home long enough to pack his belongings and then Danny holed up in a cheap motel for nearly a week, trying to process what he had seen and what he had done. When he emerged, he was no longer a mere mortal hunter; he was now a Hero.

NEVER AGAIN

Danny soon found evidence of another monster's predations, and discovered a Beast too powerful for him. Luckily, another Hero happened to be hunting the same Beast, and arrived in time to save Danny from certain death. The Hero, a woman named Cecily Souza, angrily ripped Danny up one side and down the other for interfering in her pursuit of the now-dead Beast. When she realized Danny had only recently awoken as a Hero, she decided to take him under her wing and teach him a few things, if only so he wouldn't end up killing himself on the hunt.

Though he didn't stay with Cecily long, it was long enough to understand that the world was much more complex than even hunters comprehended. It was also long enough for Danny to take a long, hard look at the consequences of giving into his recklessness and impulsiveness, and to realize that changes were in order if he was going to save the world from

the predations of horrific Beasts.

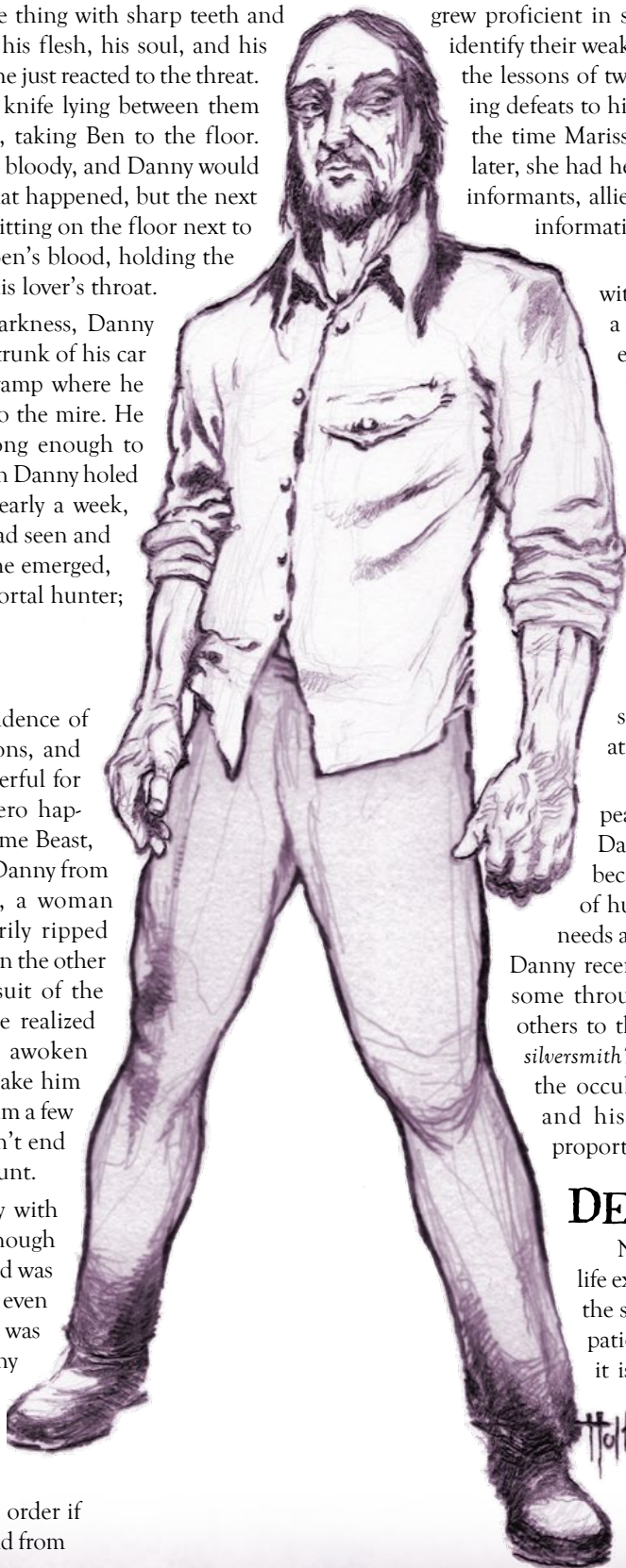
He returned to his aunt Marissa's house to secure her assistance in his new purpose, counting on her decades of experience with her former vigil to help formulate his long-term strategies and plans of attack. With her counsel to help him, Danny grew proficient in stalking his quarry, learned how to identify their weaknesses and vulnerable areas, adding the lessons of two successful kills and two humiliating defeats to his repertoire within the first year. By the time Marissa died of breast cancer a few years later, she had helped Danny construct a network of informants, allies, and peers with an eye to sharing information and assistance.

When a serious injury from a fight with a Makara sidelined him for nearly a year, Danny found himself at wit's end, driven to hunt by a lifetime of instinct and purpose, but without the ability. Reaching out to his contacts, he found another Hero willing to teach him metal working, and secured several materials-suppliers from hunters who owed him favors. Most of his year of recovery was spent at a homemade forge, hammering metal into talismans and weapons. Within several months of long, daily practice, his skill was great enough that he began attracting customers.

Satisfied customers bring repeat business and new clientele, and Danny's budding smith business soon became a trusted entity in the worlds of hunters and Heroes. If another Hero needs an expert blade, they contact Danny. Danny recently began to sell his wares online, some through hunter- or Hero-only avenues, others to the general population. His handle, *silversmith78*, is considered an authority on the occult, folklore, and talismanic magic, and his customer satisfaction rating is proportionately high.

DESCRIPTION

Now in his mid-30s, Danny has the life experience of a man twice his age, and the scars to prove it. The headstrong impatience of youth is far behind him, and it is rare that he rushes into anything anymore, whether it's a conversation with a potential one-night stand or the Lair of a Beast he has been stalking for months. He is suspicious and cautious by nature, preferring to view new situations



and people from as many angles as possible, forming his opinion over time instead of relying on snap judgements.

While Danny often disseminates the information he gathers to hunters and the occasional fellow Hero, he remains a formidable foe in his own right. Unless given a compelling reason to act immediately, Danny takes his time to stalk his target in order to understand and predict his opponent and maximize his chances of success. He has little patience for theatrics, isn't given to monologues or impassioned speeches in combat, and strikes in what he calculates to be the most efficient way to take down a Beast fast and hard. His preferred weapon is a sword he forged himself, but he has on occasion used firearms or explosives to take out particularly troublesome or well-protected Beasts.

Though he is not unsympathetic to the victims of Beasts, Danny often treats them as tools in his arsenal, and isn't averse to using them as bait to draw out his current target. He respects mortal hunters who choose to take up the vigil, and assists them as he can, but rarely goes out of his way to provide aid for someone he doesn't know well. His relationships with his neighbors are ambivalent; most of the unenlightened who know him consider him a kooky hermit at best, and a dangerous lunatic who is most likely sacrificing small animals and debauching virgins for demonic forces at worst.

Despite his outsider nature, Danny has little problem blending into the populations of any town or city. He prefers blue jeans and work shirts for their utility in the workshop, in combat, and in everyday life, and rarely changes his style of dress unless given no other option. His hair is always a little too long, brown and shaggy, and his erratic shaving habits have him varying between a scruffy week-old beard and a rough five o'clock shadow. Years of metalworking and Beast-slaying left him with calluses and burn scars on his hands, and well-defined upper body muscles. He drinks too much and sleeps too little, and his eyes are bloodshot and shadowed from a combination of sleep debt and hangover.

RUMORS

"Danny Greene? Man, what a freak. I knew him in school, and he was just as weird then as he is now. He had that budding serial killer look, y'know? Now he's got all these strange people coming and going at all hours of the day and night. I swear he's started a Satanic cult or something up there. Which makes sense, I guess. If I'd pegged anyone for a cult leader, it'd be him."

While keeping his base of operations in a small town means Danny can readily identify outsiders and potential threats, it also works the other way. His neighbors easily pick out the hunters and occasional other Heroes who visit his home for information, help, or specialized tools and weapons. Life in small towns can be boring, and many of the townsfolk are unrepentant gossips, taking pleasure in spinning tall tales about what's really going on at the old Greene property. The most popular explanation is that he is the leader of a doomsday cult, but stories of running drugs, engaging in human trafficking, or flat-out Satanic worship also occasionally make the rounds in town.

STORY HOOKS

- The Silversmith is sighted in an area the brood frequents, but it's difficult to discern if he's there for a member of the brood, or another Begotten who resides nearby. A canny Begotten may be able to capitalize on his presence to rid herself of a rival, or perhaps call upon other Begotten in the area to attack the Silversmith in force, removing him as a threat permanently.
- A cell of hunters friendly with the Silversmith is wounded after losing a fight with a pack of werewolves, and is spotted fleeing to his house in order to recuperate and rearm. An opportunity for alliance rises when the werewolves give chase to the cell; the Silversmith's home is well-defended, but those defenses may crumble under a joint attack by both Begotten and shapeshifters.
- Hunter activity has taken an uptick. Normally, Beasts don't pay too much mind to mortal idiots who try to take them head-on, but times are not normal. Recently, two prominent members of the Begotten community have turned up dead, sliced to pieces by sharp blades. Also recently, a survivor of an attack reported that the hunters are carrying weapons that allow some of the innate abilities of Heroes to transfer to the hunters carrying them. While the single longsword recovered from a scene has no maker's mark, the hunters call themselves the Silver Smiths, which is evidence enough for some to consider retaliating against the Silversmith before he can arm more hunters with his Hero-making weapons.

"The Silversmith knows how to keep us out of dreams. Look, let me show you. He has this Etsy store where he sells this shit. See that? 'This handcrafted, personalized dreamcatcher is designed according to ancient dreamlore to offer security and protection against the horrors that stalk your sleep.' There's nothing else it could mean, worded like that."

While it is true that Danny makes and sells trinkets via his online stores, none of them have any innate talismanic power beyond the placebo effect. The descriptions in the listings of several of his "protective" handcrafts, however, are carefully optimized to attract the victims of Begotten seeking relief from their nightmares. Every purchase is investigated, using the information provided in the shipping address as a starting point. Though it is not a foolproof method, it has resulted in the discovery of a handful of true victims, enough for Danny to continue using it.

"I swear, I got the email yesterday. Greene's flipped his shit. He's working with the goddamn monsters now. Beckett out in Amarillo said he was down there last week and Greene sat in a café, talking to one of those Giants. Greene gets up, leaves town. Three hours later, the safe house is hit. Local cell of hunters completely wiped out, man. And it's on Greene's hands."

While it is true that Danny occasionally allows a Beast to pass unmolested if they are not presenting a threat to humans in the area, it's patently false that he would ever betray Heroes or hunters to them. In some cases, this is simply a case of mistaken identity. In others, it's a vicious rumor spread by rival Heroes or even Beasts, seeking to discredit him and turn his own allies against him.

"There are three kinds of Heroes, kid. You got your fanatics, that track you to the ends of the earth and face you in your hoary den and other melodramatic bullshit. Then you got the idealists, the ones who go on grand quests and slay the dragon and rescue the princess. Then there are the pragmatists. Silversmith? He's one of the latter. And, he gives zero fucks if you're a Begotten, human, or other kind of boogeyman. If you're a monster, he ends you. But sometimes it works out. I've used him as a cleaning service from time to time, making sure a pack of wolves or fangs end up somewhere he can find 'em. Enemy of my enemy, and all that."

Danny sees few differences between other denizens of the world and the Beasts he hunts. Though he will prioritize a Beast, if prioritizing is necessary, he considers anything that preys on the weak and innocent to be fair game. It is the fundamental principle of his life, instilled in him from birth by his extensive hunter lifestyle, and it drives a significant portion of his Legend. Smart Beasts capitalize on the Silversmith's incursion into their territory by manipulating their enemies to cross his path while they lay low in their Lairs.

Legend: Watcher

Life: Efficient

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Crafts 3, Investigation (Lairs) 3, Occult (Monsters) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Stealth (Stalking) 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Presence 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2

Merits: Contacts (Bloggers), Contacts (Hunters), Library (Occult) 3, Professional Training (Smith) 2, Resources 2, Safe Place 2

Gifts: Loremaster, Chosen Blade

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 12

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Armor: 2/0

Notes: Danny's Chosen Blade is a longsword. Damage: 4L, Initiative Modifier: -3, Size: 3

Danny uses Intelligence + Occult for Loremaster, using research into arcane monsters to find Beast weaknesses.

The Professional Training Merit is found on p. 48 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

DWIGHT WHITTAKER

THE WEB WEAVER

You might think different, but you've been trapped ever since you blundered into my web. I caught you a year ago and we've been playing ever since. Time for the game to end.

BACKGROUND

Those who know the Web Weaver know the legend of a man who's part arachnid, constructing traps designed to ensnare prey until he finds the time or inclination to feed on them. While the real Hero is quite human, it's a tale Dwight Whittaker propagates. He adores feeling a monster's fear. Each Beast slain must be more impressive than the last. Accounts tell of the Web Weaver's desire to become a nightmare to Beasts. His in-depth knowledge of booby traps, poisons, and explosives leads to once trusted shadows, safe places, and even

Lairs becoming sources of uncertainty and trepidation for all but the most headstrong of his prey.

Beasts assume Whittaker has an extensive military background; his forte in stalking and snaring is attributed to a history performing black-ops in hostile territory. The man who became Dwight Whittaker would have loved rigging elaborate traps and orchestrating assassinations in legal service to his country, the United States, but the failure of a psychological exam abruptly terminated his role as an explosive ordinance disposal specialist. He exhibited an unhealthy admiration for

al-Qaeda and the Islamic State's nuanced approach to bomb design and placement. The review board classified him as "suitable only for tactical planning, and never to be utilized as an active disposal specialist."

Dwight bitterly disavowed himself of his nation and went AWOL, abandoning his new desk job and electing to travel off the beaten track through Mexico all the way to Brazil, in search of a new focus. His former commanding officer's jeep exploded three weeks after Whittaker disappeared, and terrorists received the blame for her death. It was, in fact, the first occasion the young Hero-in-waiting put his morbid fascination with traps to work — an elaborate bomb attached to the vehicle's electronics was triggered to detonate only after receiving a sufficient charge.

In monthly letters to his parents, Whittaker alluded to secret work he pursued for the government. In truth, once he left America he adopted the name Dwight Whittaker and for years roamed Brazil, working security for logging enterprises and university research teams operating in and around the Amazon rainforest. Dwight studied alongside the scientists he accompanied, becoming familiar with and delighting in the flora and fauna of the Amazon. He developed a particular attraction to the toxins of the native bugs dwelling in the rainforest, and excelled in untrained study of toxicology. As the years passed, his affection extended to one of the scientists, a São Paulo professor named Sam dos Santos Cruz. The Namtaru upon whose Lair the research team unknowingly camped cut any thoughts of romance short.

Whenever the research team stopped to work, it was Whittaker's job to clear the forest floor and ensure nothing would intrude on the research camp. He would sweep the location for signs of indigenous peoples and dangerous creatures. The one threat he was unprepared to face was one able to attack the dreams of its prey.

On a nauseatingly hot night, the science crew camped next to the river. Only Whittaker remained awake. He stared into the flowing water and thought deeply of the professor. Simultaneous cries from the team broke his reverie as they stumbled from tents scratching at their skin and

screaming into the darkness. He darted to the scene and found the group in the grip of what he assumed was a hallucination induced by contaminated food or water. He could do nothing to shake the dreamers from their nightmares. As scientists began to flee in separate directions into the rainforest, he spied the roiling, pulsing figure of horror in the tree canopy — a Gorgon possessing a body made from hundreds of insects and bearing the head of a wide-mawed millipede. The Beast stared at Dwight, and Dwight — not suffering the same mental phantasms as his charges — stared back. The Namtaru slowly retreated into the darkness, and it was then that Dwight realized he couldn't find Sam. He delved into the rainforest and recovered every one of the research team he could find, each of them bewildered by the events of the night. Not a one of them knew what became of Sam. Whittaker spent days searching for him, even after the scientists moved on, but never found him.

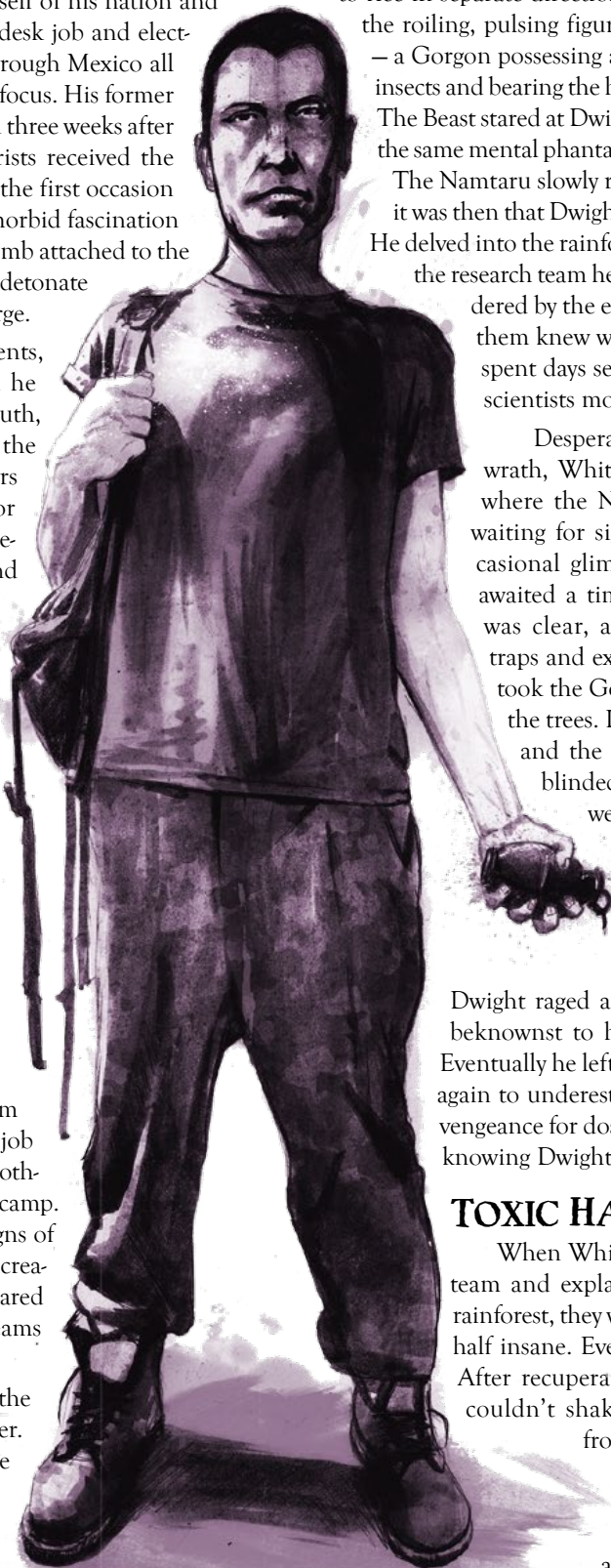
Desperate, hungry, and consumed by wrath, Whittaker traveled back to the site where the Namtaru struck, watching and waiting for signs of the Beast. Spotting occasional glimpses of its writhing form, he awaited a time when he was sure the area was clear, and placed improvised booby traps and explosives over the area while he took the Gorgon's previous hiding spot in the trees. In the night, the Beast returned and the fireworks that followed nearly blinded Whittaker; the traps he'd set went off in perfect order as his quarry stumbled from one to the other, before the maimed and burning creature literally folded its being into the tree on which Whittaker perched.

Dwight raged at the vanished Beast who, unbeknownst to him, had retreated to its Lair. Eventually he left the rainforest, but swore never again to underestimate his prey. He would seek vengeance for dos Santos Cruz, despite his never knowing Dwight's feelings.

TOXIC HATRED

When Whittaker rediscovered the science team and explained what he'd found in the rainforest, they wrote him off as dehydrated and half insane. Even he conceded the possibility. After recuperating for several weeks, he still couldn't shake the feelings and memories from his battle with the Gorgon.

The team confessed their work in the rainforest was done for the year but, out of gratitude, awarded him a Science Without Borders scholarship. He left Brazil partway through his stud-



ies, and continued to pursue his learning as he made his way across Australia and Central Africa, specializing in toxicology while keeping tabs on all reports of entities such as the one he met in the rainforest.

Whittaker stopped writing to his parents as his obsession with Beasts grew. Wherever he traveled, he found himself fanatically stalking those who struck him as potential predators. He never found one of them to be a creature like the one in the Amazon. It was during a stay in Côte d'Ivoire that his dreams were disturbed by the presence of a nearby Beast. This was a different creature from the Brazilian: young, apparently weak, and new to the nightmares it was inflicting. Whittaker awoke sharply, stalked the whereabouts of the Beast, and was surprised to find a creature looking entirely human.

Dwight only briefly weighed the possibility of the Beast being undeserving of punishment before remembering a Beast could make any loved one disappear. More importantly, he hated these creatures' ability to best him. Stalking the creature for a month, Whittaker discovered the humans the Beast was calling family, and decided to see whether the monster was capable of feeling loss. Dwight kidnapped a child from the Beast's family home, and stashed him several miles away. He then began to send cruel, mocking letters to the address from which he snatched the boy. He described how the child had been administered a poison that within a week would cause a painful death. He left clues to the child's location, taunting the Beast into acting without calm or control. Dwight reveled in his role as a nightmare, luring the Beast into his web.

The Beast eventually traced the boy's assumed location and arrived at a seafront boathouse. He didn't find the boy, but did find a cell phone, with Whittaker already speaking on the other end. Dwight explained how he released the boy earlier that day, but poisoned every other family member with a neuromuscular-blocking toxin via their water tank, which would swiftly lead to respiratory failure and suffocation for everyone the Beast loved. Expecting a negotiation, the Beast began to respond. His voice triggered the explosive in the cellphone, messily decapitating him. Dwight returned to the boathouse, and sprayed a web in silver paint on the headless body. He left Côte d'Ivoire without a second thought to the people he poisoned.

Since returning to the United States, the Web Weaver has only once joined a band of Heroes. He found sharing information with them uncomfortable, and living together repellant. He suspected such a large group would soon become a target of the Children. After narrowly avoiding death when an avenging brood of Beasts discovered the band, Whittaker tired of his fellows, and utilized the Heroes as bait. He successfully lured a mighty Ravager to the Heroes' communal mansion, and after it slaughtered the band — being sufficiently weakened in the process — Whittaker followed the Beast back to a dilapidated subway. Somehow, he was able to follow it into its Lair. Despite the horror he faced and nightmares he endured, Whittaker was equipped with enough explosive material to make the Ravager fear the ruin it once idolized. Dwight painted a silver web on the Ravager's remains, and sprayed another outside its Lair for other Beasts to see.


STORY HOOKS

- A prominent Eshmaki in the region disappears, leaving her lair abandoned and decaying. The only obvious clues to her whereabouts are the spray-painted silver web of the Web Weaver marked on the manhole cover beneath which she made her home, and a handwritten note coaxing other Beasts to attempt rescuing her. Although it's clearly a trap set by Dwight Whittaker, this particular Beast has acted as a mentor and friend to Children all across the city, and the longer he has her, the less likely her survival becomes.
- When six members of the Beasts' mortal families all come down with wasting illnesses, the first suspicion is that a nasty flu is going around. When some of them receive tox screens from their doctors and the results indicate a lethal dose of spider venom in their systems, it's apparent the Web Weaver is attempting to weaken the brood's network of loved ones. How Whittaker is administering the poison to all of them while avoiding the notice of the Beasts, and what he intends to gain from multiple murders is a source of fierce conjecture. If his aim is disharmony, it's working, as these Beasts desperately prioritize their human relatives over the needs of the brood.
- A 60 Minutes special focusing on AWOL soldiers features a harrowing interview with a pair of elderly parents who didn't even realize their son was missing. The old man appeals for anyone who recognizes his son Leon to get in touch with his family, the network, or the army. The photo shown to the viewers is of a much younger Dwight Whittaker. The Beasts — and even some Heroes — who encountered the Web Weaver and survived recognize the Hero and take advantage of this insight into his identity and weaknesses by using his family, or knowledge of his military service, against him. An investigation into Whittaker's past presents the possibility of exploiting his many concealed weaknesses. It also paints a huge target on snoopers' backs, as Whittaker reacts violently.

Whittaker now moves around the world, hunting the perfect target. He keeps expenses to a minimum, stealing when he must, and doing lab work at universities for the materials needed to make his poisons and bombs. He knows no Beast exists without a weakness. No monster is without family, foibles, or vices to exploit and turn into a weapon.

DESCRIPTION

Dwight returned home under his assumed name, and didn't feel the need to revert to his true identity. He keeps it in reserve, in case there comes a time when he makes enough enemies to warrant abandoning the pseudonym earning infamy across the world, not that his pride would easily allow him to



escape his reputation as a trapper and Hero, renowned and feared by Beasts and other Heroes alike. The name of Dwight Whittaker is synonymous with the silver web mark, and his epithet of the Web Weaver. Dwight has developed a fixation with making sure the legend of the Web Weaver outlasts him no matter what, so stories of his successes persist even after his retirement. He doesn't consider death a possible outcome, unless it's by his own hand. He has no intention of falling into the enemy's hands, and is rarely without an explosive device or poison pill.

Dwight has a habit of grading others by their value as bait or competition, and prefers to do this at a safe distance. He's developed a chart based on letters — A to E, with A being prime lure material and E nothing more than collateral — and numbers — 1 to 5, with 1 being unapproachably dangerous and 5 being pathetic. When he has to interact with people face to face, he's awkward, and tends to make the person opposite him uncomfortable. He fails to blink, licks his lips a lot, and smiles at inopportune moments. Heroes who meet Dwight classify him as a "cold fish," not realizing much of the ineptness he displays is affected. His truthful persona is cold, but he deliberately makes people fear him. It brings him pleasure to know those around him don't know how to react to his mannerisms.

When the Web Weaver is stalking a Beast, he pushes people aside, breaks into houses, and cuts throats if he believes it will bring him closer to his target. He believes such actions are justified. On the rare occasions when a Beast has approached him to talk, threaten, or beg, Whittaker can't help but be snide. He doesn't realize this to be his own weakness. His pride forces him to exalt in the ingenious nature of his traps and a Beast's predicament, and could one day lead to prey playing possum just long enough to turn the tables on the Hero.

Whittaker inwardly justifies everything he does as vengeance for Sam dos Santos Cruz, but in truth, he can barely recall the professor. The Web Weaver stalks and slays because he's always seen others as superfluous, and has long felt the compulsion to prove himself smarter and more capable than those around him. The story of his first encounter with a Beast in the Amazon has spread far, as at least one Beast he's pursued has used the name Sam dos Santos Cruz against him, throwing him off his game. The name pushes Whittaker's buttons, and he grows more trigger happy when it comes up. With bombs at his disposal, Dwight's not a Hero many Beasts want with an itchy finger.

Regularly dressed in camouflage gear appropriate to his environment and bearing a backpack containing his hunting equipment, Whittaker fits in well in warzones, rural areas, and small, isolated towns. He keeps carefully-wrapped vials of venom from various spiders, favoring the paralyzing effects of the Brazilian wandering spider, the spasmodic agony of the funnel-web, and the hemorrhaging caused by the brown recluse. If he ever settles for a long period, he introduces these spiders to an area by stealing them from zoos and universities. In the rare case that he fights hand to hand, he uses a knife smeared in venom. Rudimentary traps set up near Beasts' Lairs involve darts, stakes, or wires coated in toxin if he doesn't want the

neighborhood alerted to an attack. When Dwight cares less about collateral, he uses bombs of varying size, depending on requirement.

The Web Weaver's appearance outside his combat gear is that of a tall, angular man who stalks more comfortably than strolls. He's happier running from building to building, and jumping across roofs or between trees, than hiding in crowds attempting to resemble an average human being. On the occasions when Beasts get a look at Whittaker before he disappears out of sight, they describe his gangly limbs, pronounced widow's peak, and sallow skin. He is not traditionally attractive by any stretch, but his appearance is not a trait over which he gives much care. Dwight would rather others remember him for the silver web he sprays whenever he makes a kill, as it feeds the legend while enhancing his own anonymity.

RUMORS

"The Web Weaver has dens laden with traps all over the country. He stalks us and studies us, and sticks juicy bait down in them designed to lure us in. I heard he's figured out a way to impose his personality onto his dens, just as we do with our Lairs."

As much as Whittaker despises Beasts, he admires the way they construct complexes more dangerous than any natural environment. Through the vivid nightmares he experiences when in a Beast's proximity, Dwight realizes he possesses his own limited connection to the Primordial Dream, and wonders how far this connection could extend.

Whittaker is intent on discovering the method by which he can build a Lair. A Gift through which Whittaker and other Heroes could build their own Lairs would rock the existing methods of Beast hunting. He interrogates captured Beasts regarding how to construct a Lair, what sacrifices make them strong, and what makes a Lair a living nightmare for intruders. Unable or unwilling to explain how they subconsciously apply their natures to Lairs, he has executed all but one of his prisoners to date. His most recent prisoner has escaped and is still on the run from the Web Weaver, though rumors persist that he allowed the Beast to break free and act as a stalking horse.

"If you make this Hero when he's stalking you, he'll disappear and pursue a different Beast. Weaver's a coward; only attacks those who don't see him coming."

Engaging unprepared foes is the Web Weaver's specialty, which forms his reputation as an outstanding trapper. Whittaker excels at striking his prey when they're unaware or weakened. A rumor doing the rounds among Heroes and Beasts alike is that Dwight is a coward. Supposedly, if a Beast becomes aware of the Hero stalking or weaving a trap around her, he quietly and hurriedly abandons all attempts on that target and moves on to another one.

The rumor is entirely true, except for instances where Whittaker finds his pride baited. Shedding light on his activities just makes him retreat further into the shadows. When called out as weak or afraid, the Web Weaver takes unpredictable action. Any references to his life up to his first encounter with the Amazon Gorgon are liable to flush the Hero out into the

open, where he responds with explosive violence. While the Web Weaver would love to be the professional who can abandon all personal connection to his talents, he cannot get over the need to be an anonymous source of fear.

"Real handsome fella called 'round the other day looking for a man named 'Dwight Whittaker.' When he described him, I said it sounded like my son, Leon. Course, we ain't seen Leon since he went off on special ops. He left a card with a number of it. He's got one of those Hispanic names, Samuel dos Santa Maria, or somethin'."

Dwight may have forgotten what Sam dos Santos Cruz looks like, but Sam's not forgotten him, not after he nearly burned to death in the rainforest. Sam was the Namtaru in the Amazon, preying on the research team with which he worked. They were perfectly primed to satiate his cravings, when that freakish security guard Dwight Whittaker failed to react to his Horrors, and sabotaged the feeding. Sam follows Whittaker's activities, and is now hunting him down. His intention is to either join a brood or trade information relating to the Web Weaver, though he risks danger if forced to pursue him alone

Legend: Trapper

Life: Outsider

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Explosives) 5, Investigation 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science (Toxicology) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 4, Survival (Tracking) 4, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Alternate Identity 3, Contacts (University), Contacts (Zoologists), Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Multilingual (French, Portuguese), Killer Instinct 2, Patient, Professional Training (Scientist) 2, Safe Place 2, Status (Heroes) 2

Gifts: Champion's Endurance, Legendary Hunter, Open Gate

Health: 8

Willpower: 7

Integrity: 2

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Initiative: 8

Defense: 6

Armor: 1/3 (3/3 when fighting a Beast)

Notes: Dwight is rarely without a Kevlar vest, camouflage clothing appropriate to his environment, a handgun for which he owns a license, an army knife, several vials of varied poisons, and a small array of bombs concealed about his person.

The Professional Training Merit is found on p. 48 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

EMILY ESSER

SOUL-EATER

You think They are your friends, but I promise you it is a lie. They are only using you, and sooner or later they will expect you to turn against your own kind to further Their goals. You must renounce your allegiance to Them before it is too late.

BACKGROUND

Born to a family that served sorcerers for hundreds of years, Emily didn't exactly have a normal childhood. Her world was filled with magic and creatures with occult powers who clothed themselves in human flesh. However dangerous she knew these creatures could be, they never really frightened Emily. The wizard-scholars she looked up to often met with these magical beings, and even regarded some of them as friends. How could anyone think of them as monsters?

At the age of 10, Emily manifested her family's talent for seeing souls. The mages bestowed on her the title of Proximus and furthered her education. Over the next four years, Emily

learned how to swallow the souls of the recently deceased in order to keep them from passing on to the next world, as well as how to regurgitate the soul and bind it to someone whose soul had been lost. The sorcerers promoted her to the rank of Soul-Tender and placed her in the service of Anomandus — a mage with a reputation as a healer of afflictions of the soul. He arranged for Emily to operate as a nurse in the ICU of a local hospital, where she would collect the souls of the recently deceased and bring them to him. Anomandus would implant these into the victims of soul theft.

Every day Emily saw cringing wretches transformed into people capable of normal lives. The people whose souls she swallowed had no further need of them — no more than the dead

needed their healthy organs. Like donated organs, these transplanted souls saved lives. Emily never questioned the importance of her work for Anomandus. How could she possibly know that she was collecting far more souls than he needed for his patients? After all, she spent much of her time at the hospital.

It wasn't until she met Phillip Strange that Emily first began to worry. At first, she mistook him for a new patient — one taken in after a desperate altercation that left his face scarred and bruised. She could see his soul, though, even if it was a hideous thing that resembled a sandy pit filled with scorpions. Phillip told her he was Anomandus' distant cousin, although her master described the man as a friend. To Emily, though, he was always the Stranger, and his gaze made her uncomfortable.

Soon after that initial encounter with the Stranger, Anomandus' demand for souls increased, forcing Emily to spend longer hours at the hospital. She still could not satisfy her master's demand. He insisted that too many souls were escaping her. She couldn't be in two parts of the hospital at once, nor could she spend every minute of the day working. Anomandus demanded that she start swallowing the souls of the dying instead of waiting until their souls came free on their own. Emily tried to tell him that the souls of the living burned her throat, and she expressed her discomfort with the act on moral grounds, but her arguments did not move Anomandus. All the while, the Stranger stood in the room and watched Emily plead, a smile on his lips.

At first, Emily did as she was told in spite of her misgivings and even though the souls of the living tasted like blood and burned her chest and throat like unquenchable fire. A week passed and then two. After a month of coughing up blood, Emily finally decided she had had enough. She confronted Anomandus with an unwelcome truth — she wasn't harvesting more souls than she had been before. The souls of the living had torn her up inside, and she was spending hours in the bathroom every day — either squatting on a toilet in gut-wrenching agony or bent over it as she retched up bloody bile. The loss of blood had left her too weak to do the job that served as her cover story in the ICU, and very soon she would likely be a patient at the hospital instead of a nurse.

To her shock, Anomandus seemed unconcerned. That was when she finally understood. The Stranger had corrupted her master. It was a

monster that had turned him into a monster, and the only way he could regain his humanity was to kill the Stranger. Emily started to babble, then, warning Anomandus that if he did not destroy the Beast that had enslaved him, she would have to tell the other mages about his crimes, and they would surely destroy him.

The wizard only laughed at her threat. He and the Stranger had forged a partnership that made her services irrelevant. The Beast would spill blood freely, and Anomandus would collect the souls its hunger released and dispose of the evidence. Considering the Stranger's insatiable hunger, the mage would never want for a supply of souls again.

With that, the Stranger stepped into the room. As the scorpion pit of his soul swarmed toward her, Emily knew he would kill her and that there was nothing she could do to stop him. But she also saw his soul's hunger for hers as he grabbed her by the wrist and slid the knife across her cheek. In a moment of desperation verging on panic, Emily vomited up her own soul to keep the Stranger from feeding on it. The Stranger's knife wavered, and his eyes went wide.

Before he could react further, however, the Sentinel and her deputies arrived to arrest Anomandus as a possible Reaper — a thief of souls. The Stranger stood and fought when he should have fled, and the cabal of powerful mages killed him. They hauled away Anomandus, leaving Emily wandering her master's sanctum in search of her lost soul. It had already fled, but the Stranger's soul still lingered. Not without some trepidation, Emily swallowed it.

The Stranger's soul was unlike any she had eaten. It filled her with warmth and made her skin tingle, but it also opened up her eyes to another truth: Her master was not the only mage creatures like the Stranger had coaxed into acts of terrible hubris. At Anomandus' trial, Emily saw another mage who she could sense had befriended a monster. She warned him quietly but sincerely, and unlike her master, he and his cabal took Emily's warning seriously. They lured the Beast into a trap, and Emily stood witness as the wizards killed it. She consumed its soul and felt it join with that of the Stranger.

Several months passed during which Emily met no more Beasts. The glow of the souls she had eaten started to fade — as though they were not attached to her but were, rather, like slowly digesting meals that could not sustain her forever. Thinking the problem was with the monsters' souls, Emily returned to the hospital and bound the soul of a recently-deceased patient to herself, but she found that it melted away after a single week. Her confrontation



with the Stranger had somehow made her a soul-eater in truth, and only the souls of Beasts could keep her from becoming a Reaper like Anomandus had been.

Emily scoured the city for more signs of the Children. Her path led her to a shapechanger who had allied herself with a Beast. Emily convinced her to turn against the monster, and then she fed on the shadowy soul. Thus began the Hero's unending journey. After five years of hunting for Beasts among the supernatural creatures that people the world, Emily has become convinced that the Children are the ones who tempt them to use their occult powers to engage in selfish depravity. They are the voice of hubris, the unchecked rage, and the callous disregard for human suffering that turns otherwise sensible supernatural creatures into monsters like the Beasts. The prevalence of horrors in the world only proves how insidious and widespread the Children's influence has become.

DESCRIPTION

Emily Esser is a mousy woman in her early 20s — the kind of person one might expect to find spending every Saturday night alone in an apartment full of cats. Her eyes and shoulder-length hair are brown, and she wears thick-framed glasses and baggy clothes. All of it is calculated to avoid attracting attention. She still takes work as a nurse at local hospitals, so she is sometimes dressed in scrubs.

Emily is softspoken even among ordinary humans, but she becomes positively deferential when interacting with supernatural creatures. Although she realizes they aren't to blame for the evil acts the Children drive them to, she knows that they can be dangerous if they feel threatened. Once she has identified someone who has formed a bond with a Beast, Emily approaches her and offers a gentle warning about what this friend really is. She never presses the issue, nor does she offer any hard evidence of evil-doing. She merely slinks off as quietly as she appeared. If she was unable to use Family Rivalry (see below) during this initial encounter, she seeks out her target again a few days or weeks later to issue her warning again. Once she is able to place her Anathema on the target's Beast ally, Emily usually avoids contact with the target until his final confrontation — whether it is with his peers or the Beast. In the first case, she looks for someone else who the Children have touched and begins the process again. In the second case, she stays at the edges of the conflict until the Beast is defeated, at which point she arrives to claim its soul. If her proxy fails, Emily keeps her distance and attempts to slip away before her quarry notices her.

RUMORS

"I had him right there in my Lair — fleeing from me through waist-high water infested with leeches. He kept muttering to himself about how this must be a nightmare, but both of us knew he wasn't going to wake up until my jaws clamped down on his leg and dragged him down. I don't know what happened. One minute he was scrambling to escape, and the next he was just gone, leaving me alone with my Hunger. How is that even possible?"

Emily recently discovered that if she consumes the soul of a living victim, it renders him immune to the dream powers of

STORY HOOKS

- He was a useful friend to have — not too great in a toe-to-toe fight, but always able to figure out what was really going on and tied in tight enough with the local sorcerers that they never got in the players' characters' way. Now he has come to the brood begging them to hide him from every Mystagogue in the metro area. He wants to clear his name, but no matter what anyone says or does the Mysterium remains convinced that he's a Scelesti spy. It all started when that young Esser told him that his association with the Children would lead him to a precipitous fall into hubris — as if a mere Proximus could educate one of the Awakened on the subject of Wisdom! Yet it seems she has somehow turned all his peers against him.
- The Beast that Anomandus befriended was an old friend or mentor of one of the player's characters. The Reaper recently finished serving his sentence (or so he claims), and he wants help getting his revenge on the Proximus who murdered their mutual friend. Normally this would be an easy task for a mage, but Emily has some powerful friends who have been hiding her location from Anomandus. Since his fellow mages won't help, he has come to the brood for assistance. What he isn't telling the players' characters is that he has spent the last several years studying Emily's Gift, and he now understands that he can draw her out of hiding by convincing a Beast to place the Family Ties Condition on him. This plan will work eventually, but in the meantime, the brood has formed a bond with a Reaper who is not even remotely interested in overcoming his soul-stealing habits, which attracts enemies to their door that are even more dangerous than a lone Hero.
- The players' characters find themselves opposing an especially-depraved Beast who has thus far defied all attempts to topple him because of his friendship with a very powerful community of kin. They hear rumors of another Beast who was once connected to the same community before a soft-spoken Hero mounted a whisper campaign that so poisoned them against him that he had to flee for his life. The characters' enemy is engaged in all kinds of behavior that Emily would find particularly abhorrent, so perhaps they can find a way to unleash her against their enemy.

the Children. Doing so takes a heavy toll on her body, and she knows all too well what the wretched slide of the soulless looks like, so she does not do so lightly. However, she has used it to prevent a Beast from eating its fill of a human's nightmares on at least two occasions. Emily needs to touch her target to use this power, which could provide the Children with her whereabouts.

"We were damned near inseparable for 20 years! I can't even tell you how many secrets we learned, how many opportunities we had to betray

one another, or how many times we saved each other's lives, but it was probably north of a thousand. Then one day she comes to me with tears in her eyes and demands to know the truth about me. What truth? That the Children are in league with the Gentry, keeping her kind divided so that they are easy to recapture. The accusation wounded me. I thought she had learned to trust me, right? A month later, she shows up with some Summer Court heavies to put me down. What the fuck? I barely escaped with my life. I hear she's still hunting me, and maybe I should do something about that, but dammit, I still consider her my friend."

Emily's peculiar Gift is often cruel. Facing down a Hero armed with a sword that the Beast *knows* will kill him is bad enough, but being forced to fight or even kill his own kin can be too painful to endure. Either the Begotten's friend becomes an enemy, or her friend becomes the sworn enemy of everyone else like him. Emily rarely shows herself to her quarry until she is certain the Beast has been defeated, but she is always present during that final confrontation — usually posing as a frightened bystander or one more face in the angry mob. If they interview enough survivors, the Children might eventually cobble together a description of the Hero who is hunting them. Emily takes pains to avoid standing out, but she's not invisible.

"My aunt says that when she was in the hospital after her heart attack, she had to share a room with a homeless woman who obviously had a long history of being abused. If my aunt so much as closed her book too loudly, her roommate would break down in tears as often as not. Then this new nurse comes in — Emily. She's nice enough to my aunt, but she seems real interested in the woman on the other side of the curtain, says she can help. That night, my aunt had a vivid dream about Emily pulling a demon out of the homeless woman and wrestling it into submission as it bit and scratched her. The next day, Emily looks like she fell down a flight of stairs, which my aunt thought was really weird. Even weirder, a week later, this homeless woman who couldn't go three hours without sobbing uncontrollably walks out of the hospital a new person. Gives Emily a hug. Gives my aunt a hug. Talks about how she's going to go back to college and finish her degree. My aunt says it had to be some kind of miracle."

Emily works part-time as a nurse to pay her bills, to avoid attracting unwanted attention, and to supplement her hunger for souls between Beast kills. She keeps a lookout for victims of

soul theft, too, whom she restores when she can using the souls she harvests from the dead. This only happens a few times in a year, but the effect a new soul can have on someone who hasn't had one in a while tends to raise eyebrows. On those occasions that it attracts the attention of supernatural creatures, it also offers Emily a way to find new prey.

Legend: Agitator

Life: Healer

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 3, Occult (Souls) 3, Science (Biology) 1

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Larceny 1, Stealth (Lurking) 3, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Outsider) 3

Merits: Barfly, Contacts (Mages), Contacts (Nurses), Indomitable, Resources 1, Sympathetic

Gifts: Family Rivalry (below), Kinslayer, Soul-Eater (below)

Health: 7

Willpower: 8

Integrity: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Armor: —

NEW ANATHEMA: CHOSEN ONE

The Hero designates another character as the one destined to kill the Beast. This Anathema is identical to Weaponbound (**Beast: The Primordial** p. 211), but it instead affects all attacks made by this chosen one.

SOUL EATERS AND PROXIMI

This Gift is meant to emulate the Blessings and curse of a Proximus — a type of supporting character in *Mage: The Awakening*. For groups that have access to those rules, Emily belongs to a Thyrsus Dynasty called the Essers ("Eaters"). She has the following Blessings: Death — Soul Marks (•), Soul Jar (••), and Sever Soul (•••). Other common Blessings among these Proximi (Death, Life, Spirit) include: Death — Speak with Dead (•), Ectoplasm (••), Damage Ghost (•••); Life — Analyze Life (•), Cleanse the Body (•), Body Control (••), Purge Illness (••), Knit (•••); Spirit — Exorcist's Eye (•), Know Spirit (•), Cap the Well (••), Channel Essence (••), Erode Resonance (•••).

First emerging among the Germanic tribes during the reign of Constantine, most Essers currently serve the Silver Ladder, although some have chosen to operate as independent healers and exorcists. They invoke most of their Blessings by eating, drinking, or pantomiming the act of eating or drinking. Those Essers who specialize in Death Blessings are commonly called Soul-Eaters or Ghost-Eaters — even if they later master other Blessings. Plague-Eaters and Pain-Eaters focus on Life Blessings. Demon-Eaters and Essence-Eaters focus on Spirit Blessings.

NEW GIFTS

FAMILY RIVALRY

Although Beasts are kin with other supernatural creatures, many regard the Children as the black sheep and troublemakers of the family — the kind your grandmother warned you about and the ones you tell your baby brother to stay away from. By speaking warnings against his continued association with the Children, the Hero can force the listener to choose between his friendship with the Beast and his respect among his peers. This Gift allows the Hero to recognize when a non-Beast has the Family Ties Condition and only works on supernatural creatures with this Condition.

The Hero initiates the effects of this Gift by using social maneuvering in an effort to convince the target to shun or steer clear of the Beast who bestowed the Condition. Once the Hero successfully opens the final Door, the target gains the Peer Pressure Condition, which has the potential to worsen first into the Black Sheep Condition and finally into the Pariah Condition. If the target is connected to a Beast with the Sated Condition, the Hero may make the target the Anathema of the Beast by engaging him socially for a few minutes and spending a point of Willpower.

SOUL-EATER

Some Heroes have contact with the occult world even before their first encounter with the Children. A Hero with this Gift is a descendent of the Esser Family. This ancient bloodline grants some of its scions powers of healing and exorcism, of which Soul-Eating is but one manifestation. The Gift has several facets that the Hero can call upon but also carries a curse:

Soul Sight: The Hero can see souls, including the free-floating souls of the recently deceased, those bound by supernatural powers, and those within most living people. On a successful Wits + Occult (Souls) roll, she can also discern whether the subject is a supernatural being, whether she has had her soul tampered with, whether she is Possessed, or whether she has eaten or otherwise consumed another's soul.

Soul Eating: Ordinarily, the soul of the recently deceased does not linger before passing on, but the Hero can delay its passage by catching the soul in her hands as the person dies and eating it by spending a point of Willpower. The consumed soul does not pass out of the world until she later regurgitates it or until she digests it (see the drawback below). The Hero cannot store more than five souls at a time in this way. Although Children don't have souls, the hero can consume the Horror within a Beast in the same way — as long as another Hero did not slay the Begotten.

The Hero may attempt to eat the soul of a living victim that he can touch. This requires the expenditure of a point of Willpower and a successful Resolve + Composure roll resisted by the victim's Resolve. If successful, the Hero suffers a point of lethal damage that cannot be healed by supernatural means. The victim is immune to supernatural powers that influence or attack his dreams for as long as the Hero contains his soul, although he gains the Soulless Condition. The Hero cannot

devour the soul of a living supernatural creature, including the Horror of a Beast.

Soul Regurgitation: The hero can spend a point of Willpower to regurgitate one of the souls she has consumed as an instant action. The soul becomes free-floating and will depart the world within minutes unless supernatural powers prevent it from doing so.

The Hero may instead spend two Willpower to bind a regurgitated soul to a target who has the Soulless, Enervated, or Thrall Condition. If the target is unwilling, the Hero must succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll resisted by Resolve. If successful, the Hero suffers a point of lethal damage that cannot be healed by supernatural means, but the target immediately resolves all Conditions related to soul loss. The Hero cannot transplant Horrors into new targets.

Drawback — Dynasty Curse: If the Hero becomes detached from the soul she had when she acquired this Gift, she cannot accept a permanent soul and becomes dependent on a steady supply of souls to sustain her. Any replacement soul counts as a soul she has eaten, even if it is bound to the Hero using other supernatural powers. The Hero may choose to digest one of the souls she has eaten. This removes it from her reserves, but for the next week she is considered to have a soul — unless it is a Beast's Horror, in which case it instead lasts three months. If the Hero runs out of souls or chooses not to digest a soul she has eaten, she gains the Soulless Condition until she digests a new soul. This Condition worsens to Enervated and Thrall normally.

NEW CONDITIONS

PEER PRESSURE

(PERSISTENT)

The character's peers suspect he has been compromised and actively watch him for signs of disloyalty. His first impression level among his own kind drops by one (minimum of poor unless already hostile), and he suffers a -2 penalty to Social Maneuvers against them.

Resolution: The character resolves the Family Ties Condition or gains the Black Sheep Condition.

Beat: The character aids or accepts the aid of a Beast, which causes him to gain the Black Sheep Condition.

BLACK SHEEP

(PERSISTENT)

The character's peers openly distrust her and oppose her at every turn, although they usually do not resort to open violence. She suffers all the effects of the Peer Pressure Condition. In addition, any of her Social Merits related to her connection with her peers are treated as two dots lower (to a minimum of 0).

Resolution: Unlike Peer Pressure, merely breaking off contact with the Children is not enough to clear the character's name. The Beast must die or flee beyond the reach of the character's reasonable pursuit to resolve this Condition. This Condition is also resolved if the character gains the Pariah Condition.

Beat: The character goes more than a month without taking action to destroy the Beast, or she aids or accepts aid from the Beast. This causes the character to gain the Pariah Condition.

PARIAH

(PERSISTENT)

The character's peers regard him as an enemy (a hostile impression level) and will likely imprison, banish, or execute him

unless he successfully avoids contact with them. He loses access to all Social Merits related to his connection with them, although the Sanctity of Merits applies.

Resolution: The character participates in the act of killing the Beast.

Beat: The character suffers a plot complication due to being a fugitive from his own kind.

GRACE TELLER

REALITY TV STAR

Next up on *Grace Hunts in Hollywood*: the season concludes as our heroine invades the monster's lair and puts an end to it!

BACKGROUND

Fame, renown, and the eternal love of the masses have been Grace's dreams ever since childhood. Growing up in a small, Midwestern town, Grace (born Renata Powolski) yearned her whole life to be an actor.

Theater and performance was her only refuge in an otherwise-chaotic life. When Grace was four years old, her mother gave birth to a severely disabled baby boy. Young Grace couldn't understand why she'd suddenly lost the attention (and, seemingly, the love) of her parents, who were now wrapped up in a never-ending struggle with doctors, hospitals, and insurance companies. To cover the medical bills, which insurance wouldn't, Grace's mother had to get a job, and then another one. Her family rapidly descended from a comfortable middle-class lifestyle to struggling paycheck to paycheck.

Grace didn't handle the transition well — what four year old would? Though she eventually grew wise enough to understand the choices her parents made, some part of her has never forgotten how abandoned young Grace felt.

As Grace grew up, her mother, Marta, struggled to find a place for her daughter. Grace's brother still needed constant care, and Marta struggled with dividing her attention between her son, her daughter, and her work obligations. Luckily, their community had a strong theater program for adolescents, and Marta wasted no time in enrolling Grace when her daughter turned old enough.

Grace found the camaraderie of her fellow actors filled the social void she'd felt ever since childhood. After her first performance, Grace experienced the profound thrill of hearing applause. From that moment on, Grace's path was clear: She was going to be an actor.

The day after she graduated high school, Grace packed everything she owned into a secondhand Honda and set out

west, following her dreams of fame to Hollywood. Her first years were very lean, as Grace had to learn how to live on her own while also working hard to launch her acting career. She spent more than a few months eating ramen noodles so she could afford acting classes and head shots, while living in a sparsely-furnished studio apartment and taking odd jobs to make rent.

Grace didn't give up. Every night, she would dream of fame — of walking down red carpets, waving at photographers, signing autographs, seeing her face on magazine covers. Whenever she got discouraged, these dreams would sustain her, and Grace would promise to give herself another month before throwing in the towel and going back home.

The young actor found a few small successes early on — a commercial here, a kids' show there. She made connections with other struggling actors, those as hungry for fame as she. Banding together, they formed a creative collective and began making and publishing short films to the web. The collective managed to gather a small group of fans, but nothing they made got noticed by the networks. Grace knew they'd have to make something truly fantastic to earn network attention, and she and her friends spent many late nights brainstorming what that might be.

While the group worked on a concept for a comedy series, a young Ugallu in Grace's neighborhood began to spiral out of control. Danny had gone through his Devouring alone and hadn't been lucky enough to come across any other Beasts who could teach him how to survive. As a result, Danny would starve his Horror until he lost control then inevitably lash out against an innocent victim. The destruction he wrought during these episodes only reaffirmed Danny's commitment to not giving into his Horror, which started the whole vicious cycle over again.

As Danny struggled with controlling his Horror, his mistakes attracted the attention of Grace. As ignorant of occult

matters as Danny, Grace also couldn't explain what was happening. On some level, though, she understood that she and Danny shared a deep connection via the Primordial Dream. Grace interpreted this intuitive feeling as being her key to earning the fame and glory she'd always yearned for.

Grace began stalking Danny, covertly watching him and trying to figure what he was. While surveilling him, an idea came to her. Grace understood, on some level, that she and Danny were engaged in a mythic struggle of good against evil, and she wanted the world to know this story.

Grace put on a black sweater and some dark lipstick, turned on her web cam, and told a story about a monster she dubbed "Black Feathers." Black Feathers wasn't a scared and struggling 17 year old; he was a vicious predator who stalked his prey through their dreams, slowly sapping their will to live. Grace assumed the persona of a monster hunter, determined to discover Black Feathers' weaknesses and put an end to him. She turned her real world experiences into fodder for an engaging New Media experience: Episode two consisted of Grace, with a GoPro strapped to her chest, narrating her experience of stalking Black Feathers.

No one assumed Danny was a real person. Everyone who watched *Grace Hunts in Hollywood* assumed she and Danny were both actors. Something about her video — her delivery, her passion, and her determination — attracted even more followers. Grace's crew collected around her, a support network of camera operators and producers who helped build up the story. Grace had never felt so energized or passionate about her work.

Realization slowly dawned on Grace that the only way for the story to end was with Danny's death. She and Danny were connected in some profound way Grace didn't fully understand, but which drove her on regardless. Grace wasn't even sure *why* Danny had to die, only that he did. On the other hand, Grace was wary of killing on camera. Wouldn't that be tantamount to filming a murder? Danny was, despite everything else, a person. He had a birth certificate, a driver's license, and a job delivering flowers on the weekends. No judge would accept, "I really, really wanted to," as an excuse for killing him.

Grace wondered if she was going crazy. Her doubts were quickly assuaged, however, as the passion

with which she had infected her crew now came back to her. Her producer, still believing *Grace Hunts in Hollywood* was a fictional story, persuaded Grace to take the story to its logical, dramatic conclusion. Under his advice, Grace began mentally and physically preparing herself for their confrontation. She began self-defense classes and bought mace and combat knives, which she started carrying everywhere.

Danny eventually realized something was after him, but didn't know enough to protect himself, and matters came to a head one night while Grace stalked Danny. Danny was Starving, a Condition Grace somehow subconsciously understood. Now was her chance, and she took it, her GoPro recording the entire desperate fight.

Young Danny didn't know exactly what a Hero was, but his Horror understood the danger Grace posed. Instinctively, Danny attacked and, just as instinctively, Grace fought back. Neither of them had any real combat training, but they each knew this was a lethal struggle. The fight ended with Grace alive and Black Feathers dead. Covered in the dragon's blood, Grace reeled between horror at what she had done... and an exhilaration that put her earlier experiences on stage to utter shame.

Grace took the footage to her producer, and together they cut and recut it into the dramatic conclusion of *Grace Hunts in Hollywood*. Danny became a CGI'd shadow, his identity obscured by special effects which made him out to be the monster Grace felt sure he was.

The final episode was a hit, and went viral on social media. Grace made such a big splash that she attracted the attention of a new streaming service, one that signed not only an exclusive distribution contract for *Grace Hunts in Hollywood*, but also ordered 13 new episodes.

Grace was over the moon. Not only had she just come into her own as a Hero, she was winning all the fame and attention she had longed for since childhood. The order for 13 new episodes eventually included 13 more, and then 13 more, as Grace continued to hunt and put an end to Beasts unlucky enough to cross her path. The network markets the show as a fake reality show, an urban fantasy take on *The Office* and similar mockumentaries. So far, Grace has put out five seasons of



STORY HOOKS

- The characters have realized Grace's true nature as a Hero and what she's up to. Grace has found a new target, and decided to try something a little different for her new season. Instead of just telling a story, she's going to gamify her show. Grace hired a new transmedia consultant, so now her followers can receive text messages, emails, and otherwise interact with her story. Only the characters know that Grace is actively planning to murder a Beast as part of the thrilling climax. The problem is, they don't know precisely whom. They need to play her game in order to uncover the identity of her target, then get to the person and save them from Grace.
- The vampire Prince of Los Angeles approaches the characters, needing their help to solve the problem of Grace Teller. Her show, explains the Prince, is a grave breach of the Masquerade. Even though she doesn't hunt vampires, any indication that the supernatural is real is a threat to the Masquerade. Normally, the Prince would be content to order Grace's death and be done with it. However, Grace's fame also protects her from mysterious accidents or unexplained disappearances. The Prince doesn't really care how the characters take care of the problem, as long as they permanently silence her without putting any more stress on the Masquerade.
- The hunter has become the hunted, and Grace needs the help of the characters to stay out of jail. With half a dozen kills under her belt, it was bound to happen — a homicide detective with the Los Angeles Police Department has picked up that there's something not right going on in the city. The detective, Deirdre Long, isn't aware of what Grace is doing, or why. She doesn't even know it's Grace yet. Grace needs a team of discreet, effective people to distract Detective Long, claiming she's being stalked and framed by an overly dedicated fan. Of course, the characters may eventually realize that Grace is lying and turn on her themselves.

Grace Hunts in Hollywood. Which means she's killed five Beasts and pretended their deaths were fake to millions of viewers.

Without a doubt, Grace is convinced that those she's hunted and killed are little more than monsters. The supernatural powers she's experienced, the Lairs she's crashed, and the utterly surreal experiences she's had as a Hero all prove that. On the other hand — she hasn't just broken into Lairs, she's also broken into people's homes and seen the 1,001 small reminders that a Beast is also a person.

Grace can justify her actions as being part of the greater good, though the police and district attorney would feel differently about what she's been doing. For better or worse, the Beasts she killed have legal identities and are entitled to the protections of citizenship. In the eyes of

the law, Grace is a cold-blooded serial killer, murdering for fame and money.

Grace understands this, at least on a certain level. She doesn't want to go to jail for murder, but the rush she gets from the hunt, and the adulation from her fans that comes after, is too satisfying for her to stop. It'll only take one mistake, one savvy investigator, and Grace's life will fall apart.

DESCRIPTION

More than most Heroes, Grace is obsessed with maintaining her fame. She relies on her followers — most of whom are on her production crew — more than most Heroes do. Her fans are also critical in supporting Grace as both an actor and a Hero. Grace has begun to expand her franchise, turning new seasons of *Grace Hunts in Hollywood* into an alternate reality game as she invites her fans to get involved. Though her fans believe they are participating in media tie-ins, they are in fact helping Grace with her research and tracking.

When Grace first came to Los Angeles, she was a perky blonde woman who took care to stay trendy. However, as her TV persona as a monster hunter developed, so too has her wardrobe. Instead of going for a valley girl style, Grace has gone a bit darker, adopting a mall goth look - wearing heavy silver jewelry, black eyeliner, and blood red clothes, which flatter her athletic figure. She even recently dyed her hair a deep black with red and purple streaks.

Grace moves through the world with a sense of purpose and self-assuredness; her confidence usually increases after a successful hunt. Like any other actor, Grace works out regularly and has the body to prove it. While most actors focus on cardio and yoga, however, Grace has taken up the study of martial arts to prepare her for fighting the Begotten. She's also going to the gun range and is in the process of getting a concealed carry permit.

Due to her natural inclination as an actor, bolstered by years of theatrical training, Grace can't help but soak up all the attention in any room she walks into. Her inner Hero craves this attention and she'll do whatever she can to make sure all eyes are on her. She's not vulgar about it, though. Grace knows how to work a room, and how to make people feel good about being in her presence.

Grace never speaks of her family. If asked, she brushes the question off with a few platitudes and quickly changes the subject. She certainly loves her parents and brother, but she can't help feeling just a little guilty for leaving. She knows her parents still struggle with money and that they miss her. The situation is emotionally fraught, and Grace has opted out of dealing with it, which feeds into her guilt, especially around the holidays. Grace wants to see her family, but is secretly relieved when a convenient excuse presents itself to justify her staying in Los Angeles.

Grace understands that, in the digital age, she's always performing. A fan might come up to her in a coffee shop and ask to take a selfie with her, and she has to be on point or risk being criticized and derided online as just another stuck-up

celebrity. As a result, even when Grace is upset or angry, she never lets her mask slip. She forces herself to be happy, upbeat, and positive, no matter what.

At the end of the day, Grace has too many secrets and alter egos. She tells stories about things that really happened to her, but has to pretend they're only stories. As a result, Grace has a difficult time being authentic with anyone. She can relate to others primarily on the level of a celebrity to a fan, or a similar superficial relationship. This has begun to wear on her, and Grace yearns for just one other person with whom she can open up and be honest around.

Grace also struggles with her Integrity. Her multiple kills have left her feeling spiritually numb, but she still strives to think of herself as a good person. She reacts poorly to any suggestion that she's not working for the greater good — such an insinuation is possibly one of the few things which could provoke a strong emotional reaction from Grace and force her to reveal her true self.

RUMORS

"Now, listen, son. If you want to succeed as a Hero, you gotta get yourself some followers. Look at the lady out in Hollywood, the one with the fake reality show no one but us knows ain't fake. See the questions she asks her fans to answer for her? They think it's part of the show, audience participation and all that. She asks them to find some piece of information, some random bit of data, and now she's got a couple hundred folks doing her research."

When Grace is tracking down a Beast, she often crowdsources parts of the research to her fans. She frames these queries and requests as part of the ongoing story, and asks viewers to send her whatever pieces of supernatural trivia they come across. Most of what she receives is distorted, inaccurate, or just plain made up by a creative fan, but Grace has been doing this long enough that she knows how to tell good information from bad. Grace has never brought an actual mob with her on a hunt, she always hunts solo when the time comes.

"Yeah, we get that question a lot. The answer is, no, Grace Teller doesn't work with Network Zero. She never has. I don't think she even knows we exist. She shouldn't, not if we're doing our job right."

This rumor is merely the paranoid mutterings of a few Beasts who have figured out who Grace is and what she's up to. While the members of Network Zero in Los Angeles are vaguely aware of Grace and her channel (and have been monitoring her as a result), Grace herself is unaware of the existence of the hunter compact. For its part, Network Zero is trying to figure out if Grace is better or worse than the monsters she hunts — and it has yet to make up its mind. The actor is generally unaware of any of the larger supernatural communities in Los Angeles — though it's likely only a matter of time before they find each other.

"Casting call! Want to be part of the hottest new unreality show's upcoming season? Dreaming of fame and fortune as L.A.'s new monster hunter extraordinaire? Grace Hunts in Hollywood is ready for some fresh faces! We're looking for potential new talent to work with Grace as her new apprentice. Age: 20s-30s. Gender: Any. Ethnicity: Any. Must be

athletic; martial arts or surveillance training a plus. Send acting resume and recent headshots to the casting office. Per the request of Grace, you must also send in a thousand-word description of your most vivid dream and the impact it's had on your life. Union only."

Grace has gained enough experience that she's begun to realize the benefit of sharing the burden — even though some part of her is loath to share any of the limelight. She needs to be careful in choosing an apprentice, however, for the revelation that she stalks and kills monsters will not go over well with most people living in Los Angeles. Grace isn't the only incipient Hero in Southern California, nor even the only one who came here dreaming of a different kind of fame. Finding someone with the same drive for recognition won't be exceptionally difficult.

"That chick with the show? It's not pretend; it's real. Believe me, she killed my sister in her last 'season.' You couldn't tell it wasn't fake, though, not with all the special effects work they did. If you knew what you were looking at, though...damn, I watched my sister get murdered on TV. The worst part is, I heard she just got her show renewed for two new seasons. That means she's going to kill two more of us. Maybe me. Maybe you. Look, I know this guy. Kind of loopy, says he spent some time in this magical fairyland that messed with his head. Nuts or not, he's got my back and can do stuff I can't. And Trung says he knows this other lady who's some kind of vampire scientist. Yeah, yeah, I know. We need all the help we can get, though, and I'd rather hang with a vampire than see more of us die. Are you in or not?"

One cannot cut the destructive swath that Grace has through the Begotten communities without attracting some attention. The surviving friends and kin of Beasts Grace destroyed are onto her, trying to figure out a way they can stop her before she kills again. The only thing protecting Grace is her relative anonymity — though she's famous online, she's taken care to obscure all the details of her personal life to avoid trolls. Eventually, someone will figure out where she lives, and then Grace will be in some real trouble. The more Grace reveals occult secrets in her videos, the more interested other supernatural creatures are in silencing her.

Legend: Hunter

Life: Performer

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 4, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 1, Weaponry (Long Knives, Blunt Objects) 4

Social Skills: Expression (Storytelling) 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Barfly, Contacts (Fan Base), Contacts (Local News), Contacts (Occult), Defensive Combat (Weaponry), Fast Reflexes 1, Fast Talking 3, Fame (Reality TV Star) 1, Inspiring, Resources 3, Striking Looks 1

Gifts: Champion's Endurance, Legendary Hunter, Open Gate, Real World, Saint's Whisper

Health: 7
Willpower: 5
Integrity: 4
Size: 5
Speed: 11
Initiative: 6
Defense: 7
Armor: 1/0 (3/0 when fighting Beasts)

Notes: Grace generally doesn't wear her armor out and about in her daily life. She only dons her armor (an amalgamation of protective sporting equipment and motorcycle leathers) when she is actively pursuing a Beast and intending to start a fight. Most days, she's in her street clothes. She is always armed with at least mace and one combat knife. If she's expecting a bigger fight, she'll make sure to have more knives and possibly even her handgun on her.

JADA COLE

LIGHTSEEKER

I was born to end you. Thank you for helping me see that.

BACKGROUND

Some people are born into greatness, some people have greatness thrust upon them, and then there are the people that seize greatness by the ankle and refuse to let go until it just gives in. Jada Cole has always been the third type.

An only child, showered in praise and given just about anything her little heart desired, she grew up at the center of her own universe and was always happy to keep it that way. The spotlight was something she commanded whenever possible, as enthusiastically as possible, and while she was prone to dramatics (as most children are), she was still a well-behaved child, aware of the value of rules and willing to obey them and mind her manners. Easily the dominant personality in most groups, she was always willing to lead any kind of game or play, casting others in parts that centered around herself, the fearless hero.

The flavor would change depending on whatever movie or story she'd seen or heard most recently — rescuing a princess from a dragon one week, battling a robot uprising the next. Whatever the trappings of the scenario, the idea was always the same: beating down the bad guys, so good could win the day.

Even as she got older, Jada was inexorably drawn to stories of someone saving the day — the lone hero with the power to right all the wrongs of the world. Comic books became her favorite things, as well as any number of fantasy and science fiction tales, and she was always eager to share her own take on the stories with her friends.

As little girls tend to do, Jada and another girl in her class became best friends, growing nearly inseparable throughout grade school. The two might as well have been sisters, despite how different they were. No matter what, Connie was always willing to be the damsel to Jada's hero, and together they planned out dozens, if not hundreds, of daring rescues and escapes, acted out with other children or dolls and action figures.

As close as their friendship was, all good things must come to an end; by the time the two girls entered middle school, they were drifting apart. The stories were growing old to Connie, though they still captivated Jada, and soon the other girl began deriding her "best" friend for her childish interest. While Jada stuck with her martial arts and fantasy books, Connie moved on to gossip and boys, and a rift gradually grew between the girls that tore them apart, especially as Connie systematically turned the other children in their grade against the weird girl.

A small school district meant that no matter how far apart they drifted from their friendship, there was little avoiding each other around school. Jada, disheartened by her old friend's transformation, eventually found a new group of friends, but was sure of one thing: The Connie she had always known was no more, and an entirely separate person had taken her place. Something fundamental about her had changed, and there was no changing it back. Repulsed by her behavior, Jada found herself sickly fascinated by the transformation, from the princess who helped stage daring escapes to the evil villain that had featured in their old stories.

By the time they entered high school, Connie had cemented herself as one of the popular kids and ruled the most elite clique in the school. Jada, meanwhile, found a home in the comic book club, where others shared her enthusiasm for heroes and the idea that good would always triumph in the world, even if it struggled for a bit. More and more she found herself identifying with the fictional characters she spent hours reading about, kept up at night by a sense of wasted purpose and a destiny she wasn't fulfilling.

It was thanks to her ex-friend that things finally fell into place. As time went on, she noticed the way Connie could manipulate others, bullying and intimidating even the teachers with just a word or a look. Anyone who tried even for a moment to stand up to her was quickly shut down, and spent

the next few days looking tired and haunted, waving it off as a bad night's sleep if questioned about it.

For Jada, it all came to a head in the girl's restroom one day, where upon entering she encountered Connie and an unfortunate underclassman. The younger girl, already in tears, was shying away from the verbal onslaught condemning her. Jada slammed the door behind her when she realized what was going on.

In the silence that fell, she crossed the floor to the other girl, ramming her shoulder into her old friend on the way. She could feel Connie's gaze burning into her back as she wiped the other girl's face and helped her compose herself again, certain now that the person she had known for years was gone.

That night, as she anticipated based on the stories from others, she had trouble falling asleep. When she finally managed to drift off, the nightmare began. The world around her was too large; her own existence was tiny and meaningless, and there was nothing she could do to ever change that. It cycled through endless scenarios of being overpowered, dominated, shunted aside, and abandoned. Waking the next morning left her with one absolute certainty: Connie was no longer entirely human, and was instead something absolutely evil.

With this revelation came a calm sensation of absolute knowledge; now that she knew such evil creatures existed, the call she felt all her life, the kinship she felt with warriors of the light and champions of good, hadn't just been childish dreams or reckless ambition. Her destiny had been with her for her entire life, and she finally had a means to act on her true calling. All around her, she could feel the current of the world, and with it, the things that caused disturbances in the dark.

It took a bit of adjusting and a period of planning, but the next step was obvious from that first night. There was no way she could let her new-found awareness go to waste; like the characters she had always looked up to, she would use her powers for good and become a hero. Already, she had her arch-nemesis, her old friend Connie, who had led her to her destiny. Maybe one day she'd find a sidekick, but that could wait. What she was sure of was that there were all sorts of different threats, some worse than others, and far more than she ever could have imagined in her town.

The first steps were practical: redoubling her efforts in martial arts, learning the streets of

her town better, and paying more attention to police patrols and the news. She was looking for any odd cases, things that were unexplainable, written off as hallucinations, or cold cases dismissed on improbability. A scrapbook quickly gave way to a digital archive, and soon a public blog connecting her findings, often accompanied by entries explaining her theories or discoveries and marking her training progress. Once she had enough information amassed, a feel for the supernatural disturbances in her town, and confidence in the ins and outs of the buildings, it was time to start putting herself together. Function and practicality led her to sporting goods stores, where simple armors were available, frequently used by paintball or motocross enthusiasts. The ensemble was easy enough to put together, if not the most glamorous thing, and worked in the absence of comic book pseudoscience.

With the preparations out of the way, the investigation started in earnest. The strange fluttering sensations of *wrong* led her to quite a few individuals, some manifesting more strongly than others. She decided to go after the weakest first, and test her capabilities. They had their own distinct feeling, aside from Connie. Connie was deeper, something that stirred the very bottom of the world, while these things made waves closer to the top. What they were escaped her for a time, until the pieces finally fell into place. A few days into investigating one of the weakest threats on her radar, she realized her town was heavily populated by vampires. Those, at least, she could take out. After all, everyone knew how to kill a vampire, right?

About a week later, the first pictures started showing up on her blog, photos of people who always seemed slightly blurred, video clips that would burst into static when they panned over a certain someone. About a week later, the video was of another blurry figure, this time with a stake in its chest. The next morning there was a new video, panning over a pile of ash a few hours after sunrise, with the message "so it does work, they're real."

From there it was a simple process of climbing the ladder, working her way up to more and more dangerous opponents as she tested her skills. Connie never left her mind, her presence was always thrashing about in the edges of Jada's perception, and neither did the other Beast that was about town. The second signal was so strong and ubiquitous she almost hadn't noticed it before. The ripples it gave off weren't waves, but the tide itself, and she wasn't enough of a fool to dream she could take down such a quarry. Not yet, anyway.



For now, the young vampires would be the first to go. When they were all dead, she would move on to the next threat until all her foes were vanquished. It had to be her job and hers alone to let others know what was going on, and to protect them when they couldn't protect themselves, and she would do it with pride. Inspired by her first test, leaving the comatose vampire in the sun, and her desire to share her knowledge with the rest of the mortal world, she adopted the name Lightseeker to use as her Heroic identity.

DESCRIPTION

Jada is excitable and chats eagerly about her missions with anyone who seems curious. Enthusiastic to the point of being off-putting, she dominates conversation and bombards whomever she is speaking to with what she learned and what she has accomplished. She has no qualms about confiding that she is just working herself up to be able to take down the truly horrific things in this world. Every measure she has taken so far is just a stepping stone toward her ultimate goal of hunting down and slaying the most powerful evil creatures she can find. She has an extensive collection of DVDs, comics, and books about the supernatural, and obviously draws upon those protagonists when she presents herself. She enjoys the aesthetic of the reluctant, angst-ridden protagonist, but she is too excited about her newfound purpose in life to take on that role herself and has instead fashioned herself in the role of the eager savior of the world.

Jada is not so different from your average high school girl. She has a solid, athletic build, and enjoys many physical hobbies along with her more bookish pursuits. She has trained in Brazilian jiu-jitsu since she was young, and has recently taken up free running and parkour. She is independent and headstrong. As an only child, she is somewhat spoiled and enjoys being the center of attention, leading to her current antics since coming into her calling as a Hero. With her sense of purpose clarified through the lens of hundreds of superheroes and hometown heroines, she is eagerly attempting to make her own name and become the first real-world version of her childhood role models.

In her Lightseeker persona, she sticks to functional, comfortable clothing with practical uses. Leather jackets, paintball and BMX gear, and heavy boots are among her standard gear, and in the event that she uses a weapon (never against mortals, only against evil creatures), her arsenal includes stakes, salt, pepper spray, a collapsible steel baton, and, for dire circumstances, a Taser. Fully aware that her actions could easily be classified as vigilantism, she does her best to avoid interacting with anyone but her chosen targets. The blog she maintains is Lightseeker's connection to the world at large, but she strives to protect her identity. She rarely posts recordings or videos that feature her voice, and never shows her face without a mask or helmet.

While Jada is willing to help most people with whatever they need, she cannot be swayed on her opinion of supernatural creatures: They are all evil, and they must all die. Her worldview is almost comically black and white in that regard and, despite her love for comics, she has no need or love for witty banter

STORY HOOKS

- A blog has recently shown up and gone viral, documenting various monster killings, complete with photos of the vanquished creatures when available. Mortals cry fake or suspect a viral movie campaign, but the methods and details ring alarmingly true. The supernatural community as a whole is looking to find out what they can about this blog and how they can either shut it down or use it for their own purposes.
- The vampire population has grown uneasy and is looking for help in apprehending and destroying Jada for the damage she has done to their community and their secrecy. The vampires think she is aligned with a Hunter organization, but the characters' Brood recognizes her as a Hero. They must decide if they want to offer their assistance to the vampires in dealing with this threat, or let the vampires deal with her on their own.
- In order to save her own skin, a newly Devoured Beast has pointed out the more powerful Beasts around town and has agreed to act as a mole in exchange for safety from Jada. This Beast asks for your help in snooping around for information on other Broods in the region. She is also willing to team up to take out Jada, but is physically weak, meaning the hardest part of the task would fall to the Brood to undertake.

with her opponents. She considers any opinions and desires they have irrelevant and unworthy of consideration, as she sees them as inhuman. The quicker she can cut them down, the better, as the longer a fight lasts the more advantages her opponent will have. She has yet to go toe-to-toe with a Beast more powerful than one who has just been through their Devouring, and even then, both parties fled wounded. Only when faced with a threat she considers to be too great will she negotiate, if she can't avoid combat altogether until she is more confident in her abilities.

RUMORS

"She looks like she never sleeps anymore. Have you noticed that? I worry about what her home life is like, she's been coming into school with bruises lately...but she's happier than she's ever been. I asked her about it, and she said she'd taken up martial arts. It's so strange."

Jada finds it easy to throw herself wholeheartedly into her fate of being the Hero, but acknowledges that she needs to hone her skills before she can really tackle some of the bigger evils out there. She spends her nights and weekends listening to the local police scanner or hanging around the rougher parts of town, alert for signs of supernatural activity and working on her own fighting skills. Stopping muggings, breaking up drunken brawls, and rescuing victims from precarious situations are all tasks

she has taken on in order to prepare for her more impressive foes. While it may not give her the chance to exercise her own talents, it helps keep her in better physical shape.

"She's telling anyone who'll listen that monsters are real, and she's the only one that can stop them...I mean, she's always been obsessed with those TV shows and books with zombies and vampires and stuff, but...we're in high school, and now she's going on about how it's all real? Break in reality much?"

As part of her perceived duty to fight against creatures of darkness, Jada sees it as her mission to warn others about their existence. Most dismiss her claims as a phase or a strange form of teenage rebellion; broadcasting such knowledge and parading herself as the one savior of humanity shows not only her overconfidence, but her shortsightedness. To her enemies in the supernatural community, her flippant disregard for the secrecy they prefer paints an enormous target on her back. On the other hand, it does call other Heroes to her, and the blog she maintains documenting her work is a beacon for either side to follow.

"Tch. A vampire here or there, fine; they are the young, stupid ones anyway. That wasn't a problem. But she's been branching out lately, and getting better and better at tracking us down. She'll overestimate herself soon enough, I'm sure, and something will get the better of her. Full of bravado, that one, without enough skill to back it up."

Beasts in the area see Jada as a nuisance. She is a young, optimistic thing raised on stories of good triumphing over evil, without ever contemplating that her enemies are seeking to exist and serve their purpose just as she is trying so hard to do. Her success in destroying less powerful supernatural creatures is unsettling for those higher up the chain, but her publicizing

her antics makes her a difficult target to take out, as a sudden blackout of all activity and reports would earn suspicion and investigations. As most of her early victims have been vampires, they are most incensed about her breaking of the Masquerade and want her silenced.

Legend: Vigilante

Life: Bookworm

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computers (Social Media) 3, Investigation 2, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Parkour) 3, Brawl 4, Stealth 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Alternate Identity (Lightseeker) 1, Common Sense, Fleet of Foot 2, Parkour 4

Gifts: Kinslayer, Open Gate, Real World

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 6

Armor: —

Notes: If Jada anticipates combat or is out in her Lightseeker persona, her armor rating is 1/0

DR. JAMESON STONE

THE DREAM KILLER

Son, you just go on to sleep, don't pay me no mind. After I'm done, you'll never have another sleepless night, I guarantee.

BACKGROUND

The depths of the human mind have always fascinated Jameson Stone, whose single mother battled insomnia for years, and who originally became a doctor to banish suffering from the lives of people like his mother. As an adolescent he poked and prodded at the emotional states of his peers, convincing them to try strange potions and rituals that he'd read about in some obscure magazine or other and taking notes on their reactions. Later in life, he dabbled in psychology, neurology,

and even paranormal oneiromancy before settling on a career as a physician, with a specialization in sleep disorders. The inquisitive and philosophical Dr. Stone never shied away from trying experimental techniques and treatments, inventing new devices to track a sleeping patient's brain activity and prescribing meditation with medicines, herbal remedies, and mental exercises in every combination he could devise. His colleagues' concerns about the illogical and, at times, unethical bent to his methods fell on deaf ears.

One night, on call on the late shift and spending the wee hours dozing in his office, Dr. Stone fell into a disturbing dream filled with whimpers and moans that jarred him awake with the sudden certainty that not all was right in the sleep testing lab. He ran through silent corridors and shoved open the door. One of his patients, a sleepwalker spending the night for observation, brandished her own bed in both hands at a huddle of terrified people in the corner of the room. *She should never have been able to lift that bed*, he thought, staring openmouthed as she swung it like a baseball bat. Another patient flew across the room and slammed into the wall, flopping down onto the tiles like a deflated balloon. He remembered the whimpers in his dreams and knew without a doubt that this woman was not what she seemed. He realized that she was still unconscious, though she looked wide awake. A creature of evil, dreaming it was a person — but in sleep, it revealed its true nature. With the element of surprise on his side, he took up the nearest weapon to hand and crushed its skull.

After that, he embarked upon a detailed study of what happened that night, letting it occupy all of his free time. He spent years following his Heroic instincts, hunting down occult tomes of mythology and magic, and discovering everything he could about the Primordial Dream and its ghastly Children. Eventually, he came to the conclusion that *all* sleep disorders, mental illnesses, and nightmares issued from that realm of deep terror, and that the only way to free humanity from its somnolent grasp was to destroy it utterly — choosing to ignore all the obvious real science, psychological study, and human empathy that should have tempered his wild ambitions.

Of course, such a grandiose undertaking cannot be achieved without extensive study and exploration, so now Dr. Stone spends each night experimenting with nightmares and finding out all he can about the Primordial Dream — how it works, where it leads, what its boundaries are, and what emerges from its depths. He convinces his patients to agree to various cutting-edge treatments, all furthering the occult work he covers up under the veil of science, although he doesn't see a difference between the two at this point. He fills notebook after notebook with theories about how to end a dream prematurely without waking the sleeper or how to stop someone from dreaming entirely, and how the same principles extend to this nightmare dimension where monsters lurk, pretending to be human beings in daylight but showing their true colors when the world sleeps. He refuses to rest until he unlocks the secret to wiping the Primordial Dream from the minds of humanity, and imagines that in doing so

he will usher in a new age of mental health and prosperity, banishing fear forever.

DESCRIPTION

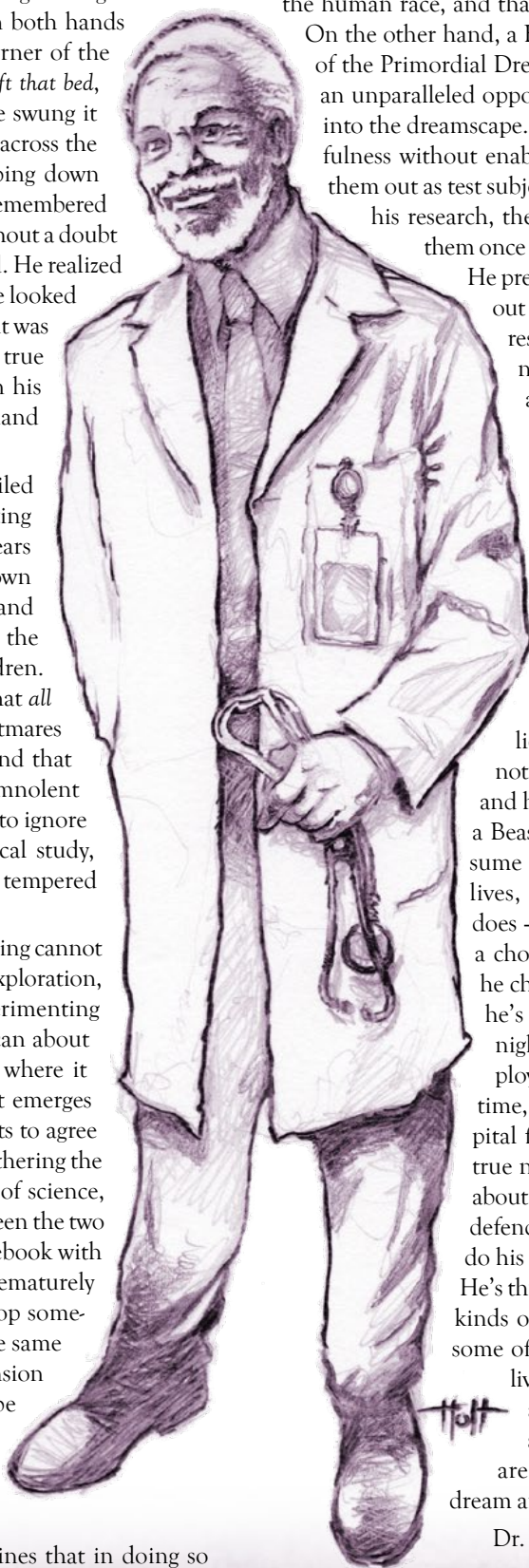
Dr. Stone believes that Beasts are a threat to the sanity of the human race, and that they corrode it just by existing.

On the other hand, a Beast is fundamentally a creature of the Primordial Dream, and that connection affords an unparalleled opportunity to glean valuable insight into the dreamscape. To maximize the Children's usefulness without enabling their fell schemes, he seeks them out as test subjects or supernatural assistants for his research, then finds ways to subdue and kill them once they've given all they have to offer.

He prefers to convince them to help him out when he can, promising to use his research for their benefit, but he's not above drugging, kidnapping, and restraining them if need be to get what he wants.

The good doctor is not much of a combatant in a direct fight, so he manipulates a situation until it suits his talents. He crafts medicines designed to put monsters to sleep, monitors his targets patiently to learn all he can before making his move, and lures them with lies and false offers. He's usually not so desperate as to use his hospital and his patients as collateral to ensure a Beast's cooperation — he doesn't assume Beasts care much about human lives, and for the most part he still does — but if circumstances ever force a choice between himself and others, he chooses himself with the logic that he's the only one who can stop the nightmare world's invasion. He employs several apprentices at any given time, trusted interns and young hospital fellows with whom he shares his true nature as a Hero and his theories about the Primordial Dream. They help defend him when danger appears and do his dirty work, whatever that entails. He's thus far had little contact with other kinds of monsters, but he knows about some of them through his research into living myths, and if the opportunity arose, he would be interested to see what they had to offer in the areas of sleep and consciousness, dream and fear, or thought and emotion.

Dr. Stone is a friendly, middle-aged



STORY HOOKS

- Traveling through the local hive, one of the characters' Horrors runs across a Chamber withered from some unknown corruption, a dead husk of a place where mad dream-spirits roam and Beast powers don't work properly. Further investigation of the phenomenon reveals the corruption spreading slowly through the hive like a disease. If it isn't stopped, it could seep into the characters' Lairs as well, and the outcome would be devastating. Will the Beast's Nightmares sputter out in the real world, too? Has the disease connected the Primordial Dream with some hidden depth of the Underworld somehow? Was it caused by the murder of a Horror gone wrong, or a vast shared nightmare of death among thousands of humans at once, or something else? Regardless of the source, the characters can trace it back to Dr. Stone's experiments.
- The Makara that Dr. Stone tamed for his own Heroic purposes turns out to be someone the characters know from the past, and once she becomes aware of their presence in the area, she guns for them singlemindedly with all the subtlety and cunning at her disposal. Perhaps they remind her of a shared history her warped mind can no longer abide, or perhaps Dr. Stone knows about the connection and wants the newcomers out of the way. Perhaps deep down, the Makara wants to be rescued, but doesn't know how to ask.
- One of Dr. Stone's experiments goes haywire, affecting the dreams of humans all over the area. Powerful, devastating nightmares constantly wrack the people's sleep, teaching nothing and feeding no one, making it impossible for life to continue as normal. Businesses and schools shut down one by one as the dreamers lose sleep and go mad, although the hospital itself seems unaffected in the chaos. Beasts who try to feed find that they receive no sustenance from minds already saturated and numbed with oneiric terror. Was the epidemic an accidental side effect, or did the doctor inflict it deliberately for some elaborate scheme? Can the characters use their primordial powers to save humanity from nightmares in a strange twist of fate?

black man with gray hair, glasses, and a ready smile. He dresses professionally, like any doctor, and can usually be found wearing his lab coat. He keeps a revolver hidden under his pillow at home for self-defense, in case the monsters follow him there through his dreams, but he's partial to bladed weapons for killing Beasts – the subtler the better. Working in a hospital on the night shift affords him some convenient ways to dispose of bodies and dress his experiments in acceptable trappings. It also gives him excuses to hide his work from his wife and adolescent daughter, neither of whom know anything of his

grand plans or secret life. They think of him as the thoughtful, intellectual man who comes home in the mornings and enjoys a sweet-smelling cigar while he asks about their plans for the day, and nothing more.

RUMORS

"I've heard some weird shit coming from the sleep test lab in the middle of the night. I don't know what they're doing in there, but I'll tell you what, I don't clean that room until the sun comes up. One of the patients told me she saw the doctor hook up a tube to a man's head and suck his brains right out. Said his brains were poisoned, and the doc, he drained out all the poison and then put the brains back in, good as new. God help me, I believe her."

The hospital night staff whisper about Dr. Stone behind closed doors, noticing the oddities in his behavior that others never see. They're afraid to ask questions or venture into the sleep test lab, so none of them have ever confirmed or denied any of the strange tales that circulate. In truth, Dr. Stone has never performed any sort of work on anyone's literal brains, surgical or occult, and the patient's story was a confused, half-asleep version of an explanation the doctor gave that she didn't understand. Still, characters following up on the story can find records of experiments that *metaphorically* fit the description, and piece together his true work from there.

"They say one of us lurks around the hive in these parts, a Makara, working for the Dream Killer. He brainwashed her, twisted up her dreams and made her a kinslayer, and now she goes around dragging us back to his lab so he can twist up our dreams, too. You'll know her by the tune she's always whistling."

The local Children speak of a traitor to their own kind, one who hunts like a Hero but still hungers like a Beast. Unfortunately for the local Children, they're right. Dr. Stone managed to not only recruit this Makara to his cause, but to warp her perceptions of her own family and the Primordial Dream into hatred. She uses her primal power to damage the hive and corrupt Lairs, to steal food from her brethren and make them desperate, and to bring the doctor whatever he needs for his experiments. She does kill other Beasts if the need arises, but her mandate is to capture them when possible.

"I'm applying for the internship program at the local hospital. The doctor there is famous for his work in sleep disorders and dream interpretation; he's a genius – and I heard his interns get all kinds of extra bennies. Free experimental drugs, confidential expeditions, and supposedly, he can get you into a secret government conference. Only the best of the best get accepted. Don't repeat this, but I heard some people come out of this program changed. Better. I don't know exactly how, but I'm going to find out."

It's not easy to lay hands on an application for Dr. Stone's elite internship program, but it does exist, and quiet rumors about it circulate on med school campuses all over the state. The selection criteria have little to do with GPA and MCAT scores, though. The required essays divulge an applicant's private ideas about the nature of dreams and terror, and from them Stone can glean inklings of how openminded a student is to the otherworldly. Those who join the program become his personal

apprentices and, while the tales of government involvement are mere bunk, the doctor does take them on field trips into the Primordial Dream and provides them with narcotics that help them see into the supernatural. If they prove worthy, he performs experiments that wake bizarre abilities in them, the better to support him in his quest. The Storyteller can represent these as supernatural Merits if she plans to use the apprentices in her chronicle.

Legend: Savior

Life: Caretaker

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 4, Crafts (Pharmaceuticals) 1, Investigation 1, Medicine (Sleep) 5, Occult 3, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 1, Weaponry (Small Blades) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Closed Book 3, Indomitable, Interdisciplinary Specialty (Sleep), Library (Medicine) 2, Resources 4, Status (Hospital) 3

Gifts: Dream Killer (below), Legendary Hunter, Loremaster, Open Gate, Shepherd's Gaze (below)

Health: 8

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Armor: —

Notes: Dr. Stone uses Intelligence + Medicine for Loremaster, attempting to apply his medical research into the source of dreams to bear against Beasts.

The Closed Book Merit appears on p. 50 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

DREAM KILLER

The Hero is a champion of the waking world, shining the bright light of stark reality onto anything that would muddle the mind. Beasts rely on that murky nightmare space below the collective consciousness to strike fear into their prey's hearts. With this Gift, the Hero exposes and denies the nightmare, assuring one and all that it was only a dream, after all.

This Gift reduces the time it takes to make each roll of an extended action to destroy a Lair Chamber by half. If the Hero accumulates enough successes to destroy a Chamber before he runs out of available rolls, he may add the number of rolls he had left as dice to the first roll of another extended action to

destroy an *adjacent* Chamber, as long as he can pass through a Burrow to the next Chamber before the first one collapses.

SHEPHERD'S GAZE

Like the shepherd watching over a helpless flock of sheep, the Hero keeps watch for any wolves that lurk inside an unsuspecting dreamer's mind.

Heroes with Shepherd's Gaze can try to tune in to the dreams of a sleeping person in the real world, seeing them play out in a vision and noticing any sign of interference from a Beast or her Horror immediately — whether it's a Nightmare that triggers when the sleeper wakes, the presence of the Horror in the dream, or some lingering influence.

A Beast must have targeted the sleeper with a Nightmare or her Horror must have come into contact with the sleeper's dreams at some point within the last month for this Gift to work. Otherwise, the Hero has no connection to follow into the dream and sees nothing. This Gift can reveal other kinds of supernatural dream manipulation once activated, such as from changeling oneiromancy or mages traveling the Astral, but the Hero still needs a Beast's meddling to first initiate the vision unless the source is directly connected to the Primordial Dream. Interference from non-Beast sources is fuzzier and harder to identify, and the Storyteller should limit the Hero's information accordingly.

Dice Pool: (Finesse Attribute) + Occult vs. Beast's Resolve

Action: Instant, but the vision lasts until the sleeper wakes or the Hero stops watching

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Hero loses himself in the dream, unable to extract himself or perceive anything in the real world with clarity. He takes a three-die penalty to all rolls for the rest of the scene, and if a Beast or her Horror is present in the dream and succeeds at a Wits + Composure roll, she can feel that someone is watching.

Failure: The Hero fails to connect to the dream.

Success: The Hero sees the sleeper's dream play out and spots signs of a Beast's recent influence as some kind of corruption or something that looks eerily out of place. He gleans the nature of the influence, such as which Nightmare was used or what happened when a Horror visited. He doesn't gain any specific information about the Beast herself, although he can see the Horror clearly if it's there at the time, but he gains a three-die bonus to future rolls to place Anathema on her or identify her.

Exceptional Success: The Hero may exert his own influence on the dream, either ending it immediately without waking the sleeper, or making his presence as watcher unequivocally known to any beings that don't belong there. If the dream ends while a foreign presence is inside it, that presence is shunted back out.

MARLENA SARCOSA

THE SENTINEL

I cannot and will not let that monster do as he pleases. I do this for my children, for your children, and so no one else will ever have to be his victim.

BACKGROUND

They call her many names in her neighborhood and in the district where her kids go to school. They call her bitch, welfare queen, and the girl who couldn't keep her legs shut. She knows they whisper these names quietly behind her back, but she does not care. She knows who she is, and what she has to do. She is a mom, and the only words that ever hurt her are the ones that come from her children. As for the rest of the world, she could not care if it does what she says or gets the fuck out of her way, as she believes only she can protect her kids from the terrors she's seen in the world.

Once, she trusted the system to help her. She was grateful for everything the system provided for her. Her family had a home, and her kids went to school thanks to the system. But, it failed her family when they needed it most, and it cost her Vera, her wife of three years. She lost her when one day Vera came home from a cleaning job talking about the strange woman whose house she cleaned that day. That night, Marlena dreamed of a vast marsh where her feet were stuck in the mud. She watched as Vera strolled through the wetlands, completely oblivious to the creature swimming next to her. She woke up screaming her wife's name when the creature went to devour her, and, a few minutes later, she received a phone call from the police saying that Vera's body was discovered in an empty parking lot not far from the house she had been cleaning.

When Marlena next saw the woman, she swore she saw the same beast from her dream standing before her, acting like a normal human, and smiling as if nothing had happened. Marlena turned to the system for justice, but found nothing. It was only when the Beast came for their children that Marlena found the strength inside of her to act. She paralyzed the creature with her words, and found the strength to tear the Beast apart with her fists. She hid from the world for two days, afraid that the police would come and take her children from her, but the police did not appear to know it was her. It was almost as if the system had suddenly turned a blind eye to what had happened.

Marlena realized that she had no choice but to be the one who watches the world around her. She once dreamed of being a happy homemaker, content to raise her kids and work her job at the overpriced kitchen appliance store at the mall. When Vera died, she realized a part of her did not die, but became stronger. She now faces the monsters of the world head

on, not because she wants to, but because she knows no one else will. This applies to all the children in the neighborhoods she watches over, as she does not want another mother to go through the loss of her kids.

Since then, Marlena has changed everything about herself to fit her new life. She works out every day after seeing the kids off to school, and she plays brain teasers and puzzles on her lunch break to keep her mind sharp. She has dedicated herself to fighting a war only she can see, which means she cannot afford any hesitation when she must fight the monsters again.

Her guiding lights in this life are her four children, Maria, Christopher, Catalina, and Tyreese. Christopher and Tyreese were Vera's, and they often remind her of Vera when she sees them smile. Of the four, Christopher is the one most prone to getting into trouble, and Marlena finds she worries about him the most. The others dutifully obey their mother, and she watches over all of them equally. Once a Beast tried to hold leverage over her by sending her children threats via their cell phones; soon the children stopped receiving the threatening messages, and Marlena's score of victories over the monsters of the world increased by one. The Namtaru who dared to do so was dredged from the local river one piece at a time.

She traveled with a Band once, and she still calls upon her fellow Heroes from time to time, but to her it was a giant waste of time. She met a man named Montana who promised her that her neighborhoods would never be the target of any more hauntings thanks to some help from his friends. In the six months she worked with him, they killed two Beasts and a monster who claimed to have escaped from something called the Fae, but for Marlena there was too much indecision. The Band spent as much time arguing among themselves and not focusing on the task at hand as they did pursuing and destroying the monsters around them. For Marlena, this inaction was the same as refusing to do their jobs.

Marlena is never comfortable around others, even around people she knows, because she has felt betrayal and it colors her views on everyone. She has seen her best friend destroyed by drugs, has seen children caught up in violence in her neighborhood, and her ex-wife's trusting nature led to her death. As such, she judges everyone for not what they are but what they could be, which is a survival tactic that has worked well for her so far.

The fact that some people cannot stand her abrasive or seemingly-demanding demeanor matters little to her. Her whole

life has been a litany of working against what others think of her, and now she finds that she needs to work twice as hard as both a Hero and a mother. Other people's opinions do not matter to her, as she knows what she needs to do to survive. People's opinions are worthless, and only their actions towards her are what matters.

Marlena's hobby has always been clothing, and since she has always placed her children first before everything else in her life, she has been able to use her creativity when creating her own wardrobe. An expert seamstress, she is able to mimic current fashion and always appears to be wearing the latest styles. She is often derided for her fashion sense, and some insult her by saying she spends more on herself than her kids, but she is just better skilled at adapting rags into riches than others. She always keeps an eye out for what others are wearing and thinks of ways to make similar clothing for a fraction of the cost.

This changes when she patrols her neighborhoods. She wears gray sweaters and blue jeans, and her running shoes are always comfortably worn so as not to give her any surprises when she has to run quickly. She does not wear any logos or have any defining characteristics to her clothing when she is in her role as a Hero, as it makes it harder to trace her back to her family. She has a small group of trusted informants in each of her neighborhoods with whom she trades food and clothing in exchange for keeping an eye out for bad influences that may creep in. Most of the time she receives information that is fairly useless, but she's learned to keep an ear open for any rumors that might suggest a more otherworldly threat is at hand.

When confronting a Beast in its Lair, which she finds is easier for her to slip into than some other Heroes, she is all about aggression. She only tries to reason with the Beast if she feels that it would help her children stay safe, but if she feels that is unlikely, she charges headlong at her opponent. She is not a newcomer to fighting, and reacts with the skill of a trained boxer. If she realizes early on that her attacks have no effect on the Beast, she takes off running. Her pride is consoled by the fact that proper planning and research will help her kill the Beast the next time they fight.

Over the past year, she has begun to spread out from her neighborhood and her children's schools and into other areas around the city. She knows that the truth behind why she has become an interested member of the PTA would

unsettle her fellow parents, so she plays the part of a firebrand speaking against misallocation of school funds and demanding better grades from the teachers of these schools. She believes in these things, but these are just covers for her to move against Beasts without them catching on to what she is doing. She keeps a detailed mental list of every strange visitor to her neighborhood each week and writes down in a hidden journal the names and descriptions of those she has confirmed as Beasts. To date she has claimed five Beasts, and as her legend grows she risks upsetting the Primordial Dream, but to her the Primordial Dream does not matter if it means saving her children from harm.

The truth is, she would love to stand down from her role as a Hero. She sees her children growing before her eyes, and misses her chances to be with them. She knows that soon they will be moving on with their lives, and as a mother she hurts every time they reach a milestone that she is not there to witness. Then she remembers she has seen literal monsters in their midst, and thinks of the bridge troll she discovered eating teenage runaways that nobody could see but her, and she finds the focus she needs for her fury.

DESCRIPTION

Marlena has two sides the world gets to see. First, there is the tense, tightly wound character who is constantly counting the minutes in the day and acts as if she is a police officer on duty. She is always careful and precise, and always looks behind her when she walks down the street. Very few things escape her eyes, which often look tired and drained from living such a life. On the other hand, there is the Marlena that appears in those rare moments when she permits herself to relax. In these moments the true exhaustion sweeps over her, but she is much happier. The pain and the tension of the day drift off of her as she enjoys video games with her kids or helps the kids with their homework. In many ways, the woman she is when she is around her kids is much like the woman who married Vera years ago.

In her late 30s, Marlena has a thin scar near her right ear lobe and her nose curves slightly from injuries she sustained as a teenager. She carries herself like a mother lion when around her kids, content to let them play and behave as children, but never once taking her eyes off them. She has an aristocratic air about her, and tends to not care what others may think of her in public.

When she realizes she is dealing with a Beast,



she immediately becomes alert. It is hard for Marlena to hide her contempt for dealing with Beasts, and although she knows that the element of surprise is important, she has trouble keeping her seething hatred at bay or the venomous look from her eyes. She knows that not everyone can see the world as she can, and will play it off as nothing in front of strangers, but she just as much wants Beasts to be aware of who she is and to fear her rather than play a naïve victim.

RUMORS

"You always hear about that mother lion shit, right? About how you should never fuck with a lioness' cubs or else she will tear your face to ribbons? Well, a buddy of mine learned the hard way. He tried to mess with this checkout girl at the grocery, thinking she would be the one to satisfy his Hunger. Well, that guy's not a friend anymore. He's not an anything, anymore."

Marlena is a ferocious combatant, having trained to push herself past limitations and to keep herself in the fight as long as possible. Once, when cornered by an Eshmaki who reacted to her trespassing in his Lair with rage, she was able to keep fighting even with five crushed ribs and her left eye had swollen shut. As for the Eshmaki, Marlena kept swinging until she felt the exhilarating feel of having destroyed a Beast.

"Honestly, I hated dealing with that woman. She was the kind of person who would make your life hell just to find out what was really in the Salisbury steak in the cafeteria each day. I used to say I hated her, but then one day she saved my life. I don't know how she knew I was seeing someone behind my wife's back, but right before the thing transformed into a skeleton and tried to suck my soul out that woman kicked in the door and kicked that thing's ass. Since then, if she asks me for anything, I give it to her. And I've never cheated on my wife again."

Marlena's habits of keeping notes on people can sometimes become paranoia, but so far she has not had to blackmail people to do what she says. She does not risk their lives either, instead acting on information only when she feels she must act on it. When she noticed that the strange mysterious woman who was showing up at school plays and making moves on the faculty did not resonate well with her, she started following the woman around to see who she was. While the woman turned out to not be a Beast, she was not human and in killing her, Marlena managed to save the principal of her kids' middle school. This worked to her advantage until he retired from teaching to focus on his marriage.

"We heard there was a witch at the local school. Said she could make a man freeze just by glaring at him and saying something in Spanish. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen her do it. Mr. Bradford came down to the school to try to meet and greet with the parents there, and this woman just cornered him outside of the school. She made Mr. Bradford and his giant gorilla of a bodyguard stand frozen in their tracks like they had been hit by a freeze ray or something. She's got the whole school wrapped around her finger cause of her sorcery."

Her reputation as a Hero, as well as her powers, allows her to stop a Beast in his tracks, and when it comes to protecting the

STORY HOOKS

- One of your Brood is finding his name slandered online, which is making it difficult for his human self as he quickly finds himself the target of an online smear campaign. Labeled as a threat to the community, the perpetrator behind this campaign, Marlena Sarcosa, is quickly bringing people over to her side by claiming that your Broodmate is "a ravenous monster in human clothing."
- Something is disturbing the Primordial Dream, and the ripples this disturbance is causing are echoing not just in your dreams, but in the dreams of a Hero. The Hero is an adamant foe of all Beasts, but the Primordial Dream hints that by working together you will be able to save the Family. But, whose family is it referring to?
- A Hero has gone on the warpath, rallying her Band to her side and setting herself against any Beast that crosses her path. The Hero's face is familiar, as she is the grieving mother from the news whose son has gone missing. Her rage is palpable, and she has destroyed a notorious Eshmaki whose Lair was destroyed as an example to all others. No one knows if returning her child to her will calm the Hero's fury, but the Hero will either lead to the Brood's destruction or her own.
- Lately, you have heard rumors of a creature moving into the nearby neighborhoods and taking control. No one is sure who he is, but the police refuse to touch him and he manifests strange, unexplainable abilities. Soon the people of these neighborhoods flock to him like a cult, and his power is growing daily. Rumor has it that he used to live on the east side of the city, but was driven out by a Hero there who kept him from entering her neighborhoods. Perhaps she has some clues as to who this person is and where his powers come from.
- Rumors have reached your Brood that a Hero on the east side of the city is finally getting what's coming to her, and on the news, you hear a story about a mother's kids kidnapped from their school. While she may have been responsible for a friend's death, you know that targeting her children will enrage Marlena, and this will be the last straw that drives her towards bringing unending pain and misery upon you and your Brood, unless you act on this.

innocent, she puts everything she has on the line. Mr. Bradford was a real estate developer who wanted to get the school to agree to raising tuition in order to pay for a new sports center on the premises, and his bodyguard, an Alakim who used his boss' connections to help him feed, became paralyzed in fear when Marlena threatened him at the door to the school. As for the school, Marlena's reputation for being a fierce fighter

has worked to her advantage more often than not. She does not possess any sorcery or power other than her Gifts, certainly nothing that affects ordinary people. Her real talent, when it comes to dealing with people in a position of authority, is knowing how to stick to her guns and that persistence can pay off.

"You ever notice those run down neighborhoods near 16th and Franklin? The ones that were by that mall that closed? Well, every time I think about going near there something just sets off my senses. It's like everybody near there knows who you are just by walking by. I can't even drive by that place without what looks like a few moms in hoodies whispering among themselves and calling the cops. They say there's some kind of neighborhood watch leader there that's got the whole place tuned up like a military base, so I stay clear of it as much as possible."

Marlena has managed to create a small following of people in her community that are eager to report anything they see to her. She's actually delivered on the promise to protect their kids from harm, and they have begun to see her kind of justice as the kind that should really matter in the world. Many times, the first phone calls about suspicious people lurking around neighborhoods and schools are to Marlena's cell phone, not the cops. While she works with the police, she knows they do not understand the real threat, or worse, are actively helping the Beasts evade justice.

Legend: Parent

Life: Guardian

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (6 vs. Beasts), Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 1, Investigation (Police Records, Internet Profiles) 4, Occult 2, Politics (PTA) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Street Brawling) 4, Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth (Surveillance) 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation (Aggressive Negotiation) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 3

Merits: Danger Sense, Defensive Combat (Brawl), Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot, Relentless Assault 2

Gifts: Kinslayer, Open Gate, Real World, Vanquisher's Strength

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 13

Initiative: 8

Defense: 7

Armor: 1/0

MARTIN WHIST

THE SILENCER

Please be quiet. I can't think with all this screaming.

BACKGROUND

Martin hates noise. He spends much of his time and money trying to escape it. He soundproofs his apartment, presses his techie friends to find ways to insulate his car against audible intrusion, and rarely speaks. He hates the Begotten, the Makara in particular, for taking away from him the one perfect place on Earth — the deep oceans.

Martin Whist grew up comfortable, if not wealthy, in the Pacific Northwest. He did well in school, and as he finished with high school, he started to think about what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. He'd always been a strong swimmer and spent his summers working the beaches as a lifeguard, and thought he might like to do something on the water. Maybe he'd join the Navy as his father had, or maybe he'd go north to Alaska and take work on a fishing boat for a while. His mother

suggested marine biology, while his girlfriend wanted him to keep the sea as a hobby — buy a boat and go out on the ocean on weekends. Martin wasn't sure; none of it sounded bad, but none of it made him want to drop everything, either.

He stood on the beach one evening, while the sun set over the water, and tried to figure it out. He was 17, and he needed to decide on a path for his life, or so his family and his teachers told him. He stood and watched the waves for a long time, waiting for an epiphany. It never came.

All that happened was a bunch of bikers rode by on the highway near the beach, pipes blaring loud enough to rattle the teeth in his skull. Martin turned and glared at them, but even after they were gone, the din remained. He didn't know then, and still doesn't know now, why it was that moment that changed the way he perceived the world, but from then

on, he heard *everything*. He heard the swish of his pant legs as he walked, the pop of his girlfriend's gum, the constant *tack tack tack* of his friends' fingers on their phones' keyboards. He heard zippers on jackets, the whiney edge to children's voices, and the sharp, dissonant brass of a teacher's disapproval. He heard brakes squealing, radios blaring, and the millions of shouts and barks and laughs of people. They never shut up. The noise never *stopped*.

In the weeks that followed, Martin's grades began to slip. He couldn't concentrate. He told his parents what was happening, but they assumed it was hormones or "senioritis." His mother finally took him to an audiologist, and while the test revealed that Martin's hearing acuity was well above average, nothing seemed to be wrong.

The problem, though, was getting worse. It wasn't that everything seemed *loud*, exactly, just that Martin responded to sound differently. He couldn't sleep without ear-plugs and noise-canceling headphones. He couldn't drive with the radio on. He couldn't watch TV, and he could barely stand the high-pitched hum of a computer screen long enough to do his homework. In three months, he went from a solid B+ average in school to being in danger of failing. His parents finally took him to neurologist, but the tests were, again, inconclusive.

The day that spring break began, Martin drove his car out to the beach, and waded into the ocean. He dove deep, trying to escape the sounds, and for a few brief moments, he knew peace. The ocean wasn't silent, but sound traveled differently, and for whatever reason it was enough. He knew he couldn't stay, but he learned to dive, both with and without SCUBA tanks. If he had respite from the endless noise, then maybe, just maybe, life on the surface would be livable. Maybe he could learn to endure it.

Six months later, he saw the monster, and he realized the noise would never stop. He had no safe place, no quiet place, not as long as it was there. Martin was diving, looking at sea life and enjoying the silence, when he saw her. She was human, but at a depth far too great for a human to endure. At first,

he thought she was dead, a corpse sinking into the ocean. He swam toward her, thinking to drag the body back to the surface, and then he saw her move.

She turned and saw him, and swam away much faster than any normal person could have. He floated there, staring, horrified, and as he surfaced, he realized the deeps were no longer silent. He heard the rushing currents, the grind of boat propellers, and the wind over the waves. His silent place was gone. She — it — had taken it away.

It took two months for Martin to decide to kill her. It took three more months to find her. Martin wasn't sure how he did it. He went back to the ocean every weekend, searched the same area where he'd seen her, until finally he caught a glimpse. He took a picture of her, and then resurfaced, printed it, and tracked her down.

When he found her, she was sitting on the beach, by a bonfire, surrounded by friends. She could have been a classmate. Martin almost left, but then she tossed a stick into the fire, and it burned with crackling sounds loud enough to bring tears to his eyes.

Martin followed her to the parking lot and shot her in the back. He left her dying, and ran to the ocean. He swam out into the dark, dove deep, and dropped the gun into the depths. As he did, he realized that everything was *quiet* again.

It didn't last.

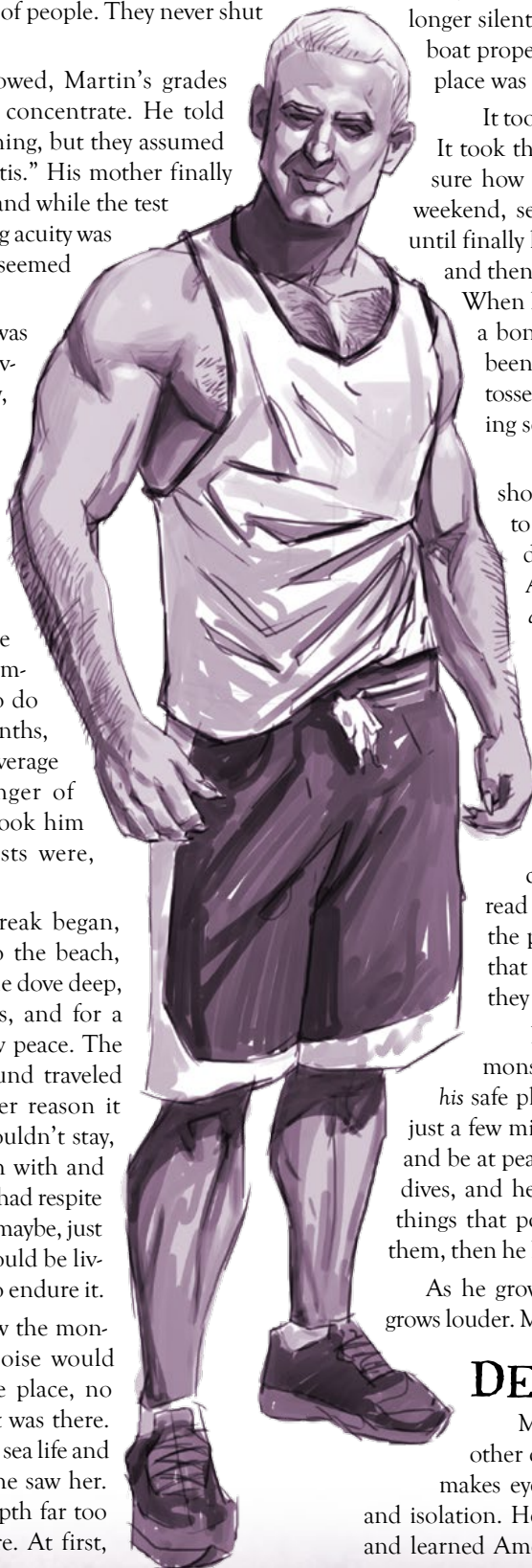
Martin did get his boat. His parents aren't sure where he got the money; they know he got a job after high school and they're disappointed he never enrolled in college, but they figure with tuition prices what they are, maybe he's making a smart choice, in the long run. After all, when they read his emails, he seems happy. He won't talk on the phone, but then he has that weird condition that makes sound so intense. He's doing all right, they think.

Martin is decidedly not doing all right. The monster he killed was one of many. The oceans are *his* safe place. He doesn't even need the whole ocean, just a few miles of coastline, just enough that he can dive and be at peace for a while...but he always hears them. He dives, and he hears the creatures, the obscene, inhuman things that pollute his waters. He marks them, he hunts them, then he kills them, and in so doing, he grows stronger.

As he grows stronger, though, the world around him grows louder. Martin sees this happening, but he cannot stop.

DESCRIPTION

Martin Whist doesn't speak unless he has no other choice. He wears earbuds at all times, seldom makes eye contact, and projects an air of annoyance and isolation. He shops online, to avoid human interaction, and learned American Sign Language to have some method



STORY HOOKS

Obviously, Martin Whist works best in a story set on a coast or out on the ocean. His followers are eerily silent, communicating in sign language or with other visual signals, and Martin himself is efficient, fast, and deadly. Here are few possible story hooks using the Silencer:

- A Makara approaches the brood looking for help. She caught Martin's attention and now she's afraid she's marked. She wants to get inland, far from the ocean, but Martin grabbed her laptop, which contains journal entries naming other Beasts, complete with photos. Can the brood help their unfortunate sister? Are *their* pictures in the journal?
- A representative of the local changeling Court approaches the characters (assuming an established relationship). He tells them that a motley of changelings died off the coast; pieces of their bodies started washing ashore this morning, including that of his brother. He wants to investigate, but the other Lost in the area are understandably terrified of whatever did this, and he himself can't bring himself to look too closely at what happened to his brother. Why did Martin kill these changelings? How can the brood learn the truth without coming to Martin's attention? If they tell their changeling friend about Martin, will they also join his inevitable quest for revenge?
- Martin manages to kill an Incarnate. This has a strange effect: It calls up a hurricane, but keeps the eye of the storm focused on Martin's boat. The eye of the hurricane is calm and silent, and although Martin is finally free of the noise of the world, he is terrified that he will never be able to leave his boat again. Can the characters get to the boat, perhaps using the Primordial Pathways? If they do, how else might this killing have changed Martin Whist?

of communication that doesn't cause him pain. His followers aren't always deaf, but they learn enough ASL to communicate. They're aware that Martin once snapped and strangled a guy who just wouldn't *shut up*.

Martin is an expert sailor and boater. He can hold his breath for nearly four minutes, and he is a superb marksman with conventional weapons and firearms designed to work underwater. He keeps himself at the peak of health. His body is strong and lean, and he cuts his blond hair short or shaves his head entirely. He tends to let his fingernails grow long, though; the sound of nail clippers is especially upsetting to him. Martin is white, in his late 20s, and sports a prominent tan from many long hours on the ocean. He dresses in soft clothing, and prefers drawstring pants to anything with a zipper (he hates the sound).

His speedboat, the Styx, sports a reinforced hull and several hidden compartments, stocked with guns and ammunition. When he goes out on hunts, he sometimes rigs the boat with

explosives. If he's going to die on the water, he wants to make sure he takes his target with him.

Martin doesn't want to kill, and doesn't especially enjoy it. His preferred method of killing is by using firearms; they allow him to inflict maximum damage at a distance, and he has no desire to fistfight a sea monster. Guns are loud, of course, but the noise is brief and intense, and he can prepare for it. He always uses proper ear protection when shooting. After a kill, be it a Beast or some other aquatic supernatural creature, Martin leaves his followers at a nearby beach or dock and goes out diving, retreating into the water for as long as possible before, inevitably, some other monster catches his attention.

Martin isn't much for introspection. He doesn't know what happened to him or why, and he's never tried to track down the cause of his condition or find a way to understand or cure it. He knows, on some level, that killing monsters is a temporary method, but he doesn't have any idea how to figure out the truth. He might be amenable to such research, if someone were willing to help him get started, preferably without speaking.

RUMORS

"You think you're safe just because you can swim? Bullshit. You're not safe. Ahab. Jonah. Perseus. Read the classics; you'll find all kinds of dudes who can't wait to set out to sea and conquer it. There's a reason for that. It's all the same Hero. I don't mean it's literally the Biblical Jonah, but he's the latest incarnation. He's on a whaling boat sometimes, other times it's just a little trawler and he's there with a big fuck-off shotgun. He remembers all these other hunts. He's not just a Hero, he's the guy who looks at the ocean and thinks, 'I can beat that.'"

"OK, laugh if you want, but that attitude is nuts, right? The ocean covers most of the world, so think about the arrogance it takes to think you know it, or that you can beat it. And yet here's this guy, this one guy over and over, who keeps taking on the Leviathan, the kraken, the sea serpent, the whale, and winning."

Makara are hard to kill in the water. They are practiced at using what is, to human beings, an alien environment to best advantage. A Hero that not only hunts seagoing Makara but manages to effectively kill them is an anomaly, and worthy of fear. That said, Martin Whist doesn't care about the ongoing struggle of man vs. environment, nor does he see himself as a part of a longstanding legacy of sea monster hunters. If he ever stopped to think about it, though, he might admit that he doesn't hunt ocean creatures for sport, fun, or even as a means to exert dominance over the sea. He feels a great deal of humility about the ocean (apart from the fact that he regards it as his exclusive domain). He simply wants to calm the seas, empty them of sound, and luxuriate in the silence. This is, arguably, a desire akin to taming the chaos of the seas, and therefore comparable to what the classic heroes of myth were trying to do in killing their aquatic quarry. Maybe Martin has a more illustrious history than he thinks.

"He's a smuggler. He runs guns, drugs, and diamonds. Comes out of Mexico, South Africa, Florida, Cuba, wherever, delivers the stuff to buyers in international waters. Killing monsters? I'm sure

he's tagged a couple of us, yeah, but I think it's incidental. Really, it's all about the money. Everything else is just him cultivating an image, or people misinterpreting what he's doing. You ever see him, just sink his damn boat and call it a day."

Martin Whist has taken on smuggling jobs, but he lets his followers set up the details and he just drives the boat. His lifestyle doesn't pay for itself, after all, and if he can take on some lucrative, if illegal, work to keep the boat afloat, that suits him fine. If he can find people willing to sell or trade him high ordinance or arm and armor the Styx, even better.

"I saw him once. I was eating conch fritters at a little stand by the ocean in Nassau, and he goes cruising by on his boat. I was talking to Marie – yeah, that's the one, the one that liked to magic herself a set of gills and swim around by the reef. He looks at us, and I mean, he had to be 50 yards away and his motor's going loud, but I swear to god, he heard us. I headed inland. I'd heard the stories. You see the Styx, you head for the hills. Marie, she hadn't heard the stories, or maybe they just didn't have the same gravity to mages, I don't know. All I know is she went swimming and I haven't seen her since."

Martin has a reputation among Beasts and other supernatural beings that frequent the oceans. They tell stories of his ship (the Styx is, in some versions, a Somali pirate ship, a refurbished battleship, or even a submarine), his deadly accuracy with a rifle, and his eerie ability to make the oceans go dead calm. They also say that if one lays eyes on Martin or his ship, the only thing to do is head for high ground, someplace far from the ocean. Martin has no such power over the sea, of course (though he is a terrifying shot). Likewise, he is perfectly happy to track a Beast inland if he feels he can. He simply prefers being close to the water so that when the hunt is concluded, he can get down into the silent deeps as soon as possible.

Legend: Hunter

Life: Arrogant

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Repair) 3, Investigation 2, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 4, Brawl 2, Drive (Boat) 4, Firearms (Rifle) 4, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise (Smuggling) 3

Merits: Anonymity 3, Contacts (Black Market), Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Firefight 3, Language (ASL), Marksmanship 3, Patient, Resources 2, Trained Observer 3

Gifts: Kinslayer, Real World, Warrior's Speed

Health: 10

Willpower: 9

Integrity: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 13 (23 vs. Beasts and supernatural creatures with Family Ties)

Initiative: 11

Defense: 8

Armor: —

Notes: The Styx is a modified motorboat (p. 98

Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook) with the following traits: Size 10, Dice Modifier -1, Durability 5, Structure 15, High Acceleration.

The Firefight and Marksmanship Merits appear on p. 61 and p. 63 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, respectively.

MICHAEL BELLINGER

STALKER OF BEASTS

It's not enough that I kill you. You have to say you're sorry for every ounce of pain you've ever inflicted and brother, you've inflicted a lot of pain.
Let's get started!

BACKGROUND

Michael Bellinger has a peculiar type of story for a Hero. All Heroes are intended to be part of the lesson mankind is supposed to learn from the tale, or at least they are to provide further explanation for the moral of the story. Michael Bellinger is bordering on the opposite of that, or perhaps he represents

a new kind of story, born of the 21st century. He is a murderer who is a Hero because of who he murders, and not for who he saves.

Born in Last Chance, Tennessee to hardworking parents at the local rubber factory, he benefitted heavily from his parents' labors. From an early age, they groomed him to have a better life than they did. They pushed him to excel in school, and he was

able to attend NYU on a scholarship. He was often the butt of jokes and pranks there, with his heavy Tennessean accent and lack of any fine clothes or electronics. His first semester he spent working at the campus bookstore and taking out loans, which unfortunately only went so far, to help him survive at college.

It was one night when he was working at the library that he noticed a strange man entering the humanities section. The man would spend many nights there reading books about Greek and Norse mythology, occasionally laughing so hard that it echoed throughout the library. Michael noticed that he could hear the man's stomach gurgling, and occasionally the stranger would excuse himself to walk the older part of the library where they kept the film and newspaper archives.

One day, as Michael was returning old research magazines to their holders in the archives, he heard the man laughing again, and this time a young woman was screaming in fear. Michael hurried up the metal steps of the archives and peered down the hallway. What he saw made little sense to him. A young woman had passed out at a cubicle, and above her stood the man, but he was no longer just a human being. It was as if the space of the library had stretched around him, and the man appeared like a giant of legend, with one great peering eye coming out from his forehead. In that moment, Michael saw wisps of light flow from the woman and into the giant, who seemed to hungrily devour them. The giant, not noticing that Michael had discovered him, seemed to shrink back to his normal size and left the library.

Michael called the campus police to help the young woman, but he did not tell her what had happened. She told him that she had dreamed that a large man had pursued her through a valley, and tore apart everything around her with his hands and pulled it into his mouth. This dream struck a chord with Michael, and he set out for his first hunt.

Michael set the trap well, giving a young mathematician a cup of coffee laced with a powerful sleeping pill. As the giant once more made his move to feed, Michael felt drawn to the giant, but he did not feel helpless. He felt completely in control of his actions, and with the help of his old hunting knife that his dad had given him, he was able to slit the Beast's throat from behind before the Beast knew he was there.

As the Beast's aura began to fade, he looked at Michael with frustration. "It should not be this easy," the Beast tried to get out while choking on his own blood. Before the Beast could manifest in his larger form again Michael ended the creature's life with another flick of his blade, killing the Beast, and felt the rush going through him from the exhilaration of killing his first monster.

Since then, Michael's devotion towards hunting Beasts has become his life's work. He does not feel the same attraction to others that he feels towards Beasts; in fact, he tried killing normal people, but found little satisfaction in the act. He tried to lay a trap for a creature described on one of the message boards he frequents, but he found that he could not manifest the same desire towards killing it as he had with the Anakim (he later discovered that he knew the name all along.) He had a very specialized fetish for killing, which frustrated him when he could not meet it, but when he could, he felt like he was invincible.

The problem with this is that he finds that if he drifts too far, that if he becomes too obsessed with hunting the Beasts, he is unable to pull himself back in. He lost his job at the library when he spent three weeks pursuing a Makara in Aruba, and he almost lost his scholarship when his academic advisor demanded to know what was so important about spending as many class credits as possible studying mythology and anthropology when he was there on a medical scholarship. Despite all of this, he graduated, and has a job as a psychologist in a private mental health clinic.

Michael's learning curve was severe, and he always pushed himself to do better. He had several close calls early on ending in near misses with the police who looked unkindly at murder. Of course, the alternative, telling the police that he needed stockpiles of ammunition and blades for fighting a dragon in its Lair would end his career and see him in jail. It was lonely for him at first, but he slowly overcame his problems and began to excel at what he does.

His primary method for dealing with Beasts is observation. He watches the Beast from a distance, and though he feels his call slowly become an obsession in his mind, he prefers to move at his own pace. He learns everything he can about the Beast, from her favorite foods to what kinds of victims she prefers. Michael hates surprises, and his meticulous planning always contains room for a wide number of wild cards that can come up as he hunts.

When he finally moves to strike at the Beasts, he moves swiftly and brutally, leaving no room for compassion or mercy in his work. He tries to trap the Beast, either in public or removed from her Lair. If forced to kill



STORY HOOKS

- Something is disturbing the Primordial Dream. Visions of hunger are slowly showing a predator who walks in the shape of a Hero. These visions show a methodical stalker appearing on the horizon, and following his prey from afar before striking to kill. Though you just regard it as a dream, when you describe the image of the stalker to your Brood you learn that one of them has seen this man recently, and wonders if he was following her...
- Someone destroyed a local Namtaru who was known for trying to keep her Hunger in check. Some Beasts even say that she had discovered a new way to satiate her Hunger before she disappeared. The only information on what happened to her is a mysterious note left behind in her Lair saying "You're welcome."
- A member of the Brood has been framed for murder, and the police are actively hunting him. Several other people in the city are also suffering from a similar frame job, one of them a Hero named Michael Bellinger. He offers a truce to the Brood and to share what he knows about the police chief responsible for the allegations, and wishes to meet on neutral grounds. The Brood knows Bellinger's reputation, but they need his help, if they think they can trust him.

his target inside her Lair, he always makes sure he knows how to escape if he must. Once an Anakim surprised him inside his Lair and used dragon's breath on him. He has a nasty scar on his shoulder from the incident that slightly impairs his movement, and he would rather avoid getting into a similar situation ever again.

He discovered that his preferred weapon is a kitchen cleaver. It is a simple kitchen implement bought at a retail outlet, but in his hands, it is lighter and strikes with the fury of a thunderbolt against Beasts. It is the only weapon he refuses to part with, as every other weapon he uses is generic cutlery purchased from secondhand stores and mass retail chains.

For Michael, savoring the kill comes after a successful hunt. He knows he cannot afford to stop after killing a Beast and observe his kill, and he knows he cannot afford to take any trophies. The only thing he dares leave behind with his victims are small generic calling cards that say "You're welcome" on them. The police have picked up on the calling card at several brutal murders across many different cities and have created a file on what they believe is a serial murderer. So far, his low number of kills has kept Michael low on the priority list for the FBI, but as he continues to kill more Beasts, he becomes a greater priority for them.

Michael has not gone unnoticed by Beasts, though the many Broods of the Dark Mother have not come to a consensus on how to deal with him. On one hand, he is serving a valuable

part in his story by being the Hero the Primordial Dream needs him to be. The Primordial Dream, in its unknowable wisdom, has bestowed its gifts upon him and made him an effective minion of destruction. What many Beasts find disturbing is the strange nature of this Hero. Many Beasts recall tales in the Primordial Dream that have brave heroes championing cities, or overcoming overwhelming odds to save their families. Michael is a brutal killer whose methods seem to suggest he is different from other stories. One Ugallu scholar suggested that Michael is the result of modern stories intruding upon the Primordial Dream, where he is a version of the Great Hunter whose story is as an obsessive killer. Surely, his methods are not that different from a hunter. He observes his prey, and stalks them carefully before striking and bringing them down.

When he is not stalking Beasts, he does his best to integrate himself into the city without becoming too familiar to the people there. He is a member of the country club and keeps a regular tee time at the Forever Green Golf Society. He dates, but never forms lasting relationships, and, by all accounts, he is a respected member of his field and of his neighborhood. This is as intentional as it is practical. He has cultivated numerous aliases that he has relied upon over the years, and by maintaining normal behaviors he is able to pursue Beasts into areas that he might not normally be allowed. If he were pursuing an Anakim who is a prominent local politician, then a respected member of the medical community would not seem out of place at a charity banquet.

DESCRIPTION

Michael is 5'11", and dresses to fit in wherever he is. He intentionally keeps his hair buzzed short and wears a hair piece so that he can change his identity when it suits him. Often, he will wear a bulky winter coat or zip up hoodie to help him hide his knives, and he meticulously grooms himself to try to keep down any body odor. When keeping a low profile, he smokes cigarillos and cheap cigarettes to keep a heavy tobacco stench around him, but when stalking Beasts he makes sure he is clean and his clothing does not contain the smell. His paranoia will not let him venture out into the world if he thinks his appearance will give him away. He wears flashy jewelry when he is out in public but does not keep anything on his person that could identify him.

His second most distinguishing feature that his coworkers will tell you about is his frequent nose bleeds. Michael suffers from a rare form of hypertension, and, at times, his nose bleeds for no reason at all. He relies upon this illness to excuse himself from others, using it as a means to get away from people he does not want to be around as well as providing a convenient excuse for allowing him to slip away.

RUMORS

"I had a run in with something that disturbed me to my core. I'm not saying that lightly, considering you've seen how I feed. I found this man waiting for me in my Lair, and he looked as calm as could be. Most Heroes look prepared for a fight, and some even have that same fucking smug look on their faces. This guy is just standing

there like he's upset that I'm late for an appointment. He very quietly picks up this cleaver, which very quickly didn't feel like any cleaver I've ever felt, and fights me like I'm...like I'm fucking boring him to do so! The worst part was the fact that I had to run for my life, as I couldn't stop this fucker. Feels creepy as shit, and I'm a fucking creepy guy!"

Michael is someone who imagines every scenario in his head, and has already planned how things will go. He plans for all contingencies, allowing him to seem unflappable in the face of sudden changes in the situation, or mistakes. Unfortunately for him, each confrontation never lives up to the majestic, scripted fight he has planned out in his head, leading him grow increasingly dissatisfied with his choice of prey as of late. A Beast that does not put up a worthy fight will leave him feeling impotent and will cause him to lose his lust for killing them.

"Dr. Bellinger has saved my life, and I don't mean that in a cheesy way. When I came to him, I had a stalker, and he was hurting my life. He was always following me around, and I swear I saw him in my dreams as this ravenous serpent that would poison everything I held dear. I know, that's anthropomorphizing my own fears on my stalker, but Dr. Bellinger didn't treat me like someone who needed a lecture. He listened to me, and, more importantly, he helped me. He told me he pulled some strings and he got the police to take care of that asshole permanently. I was so happy that I think I dreamed about Dr. Bellinger fighting the serpent, and though it was a really bloody dream, it felt good to watch him hack that thing to pieces. He's my hero."

Although he excels at and feels gratification from killing Beasts in brutal, sadistic ways, Michael is at his heart a humanitarian who cares deeply about his clients. Even those who do not have problems relating to Beasts always get his full and undivided attention when they come in to see him, and he helps them as much as he can; he's even willing to come in after hours to help in emergency situations (as long as they do not interfere with his hunt.) Michael is using his practice to gain information on Beasts, but if he can effect genuine good in the world while also fulfilling his need for violence then he will continue to do so.

"I had the weirdest run in with a human in Natick. I was separated from my pack and doing our weekly booze run when I noticed I was being followed by this man in plain clothes. I didn't know if he was being ridden by something or was serving those Pure bastards but I thought I'd turn the tables on him. I lured him into a nearby cemetery and prepared to pounce on him when I discovered that he had planned on me luring him there. He had hidden a high-caliber rifle in one of the trash cans and was blowing holes in my hide, all with this slow and steady precision like he wasn't surprised at the massive wrecking machine that was now standing before him. After a few minutes, he stops firing and just stares at me with his creepy brown eyes, and he frowns and starts to pack up his rifle. I

bellowed at him to finish the fight, and he just said, "I'm terribly sorry, but you are not what I am looking for." How about that? I get all ready to fucking kill this guy and he acts like we just had a first date! I was so fucking stunned that I stood around for 30 seconds with my mouth open like an idiot. By the time I tried to find him he had already got away!"

Although Michael has instinctive knowledge of Beasts and what he gains from being a Hero, his knowledge of the other monsters of this world is not perfect. For the longest time he assumed all monsters were Beasts, and that they simply came in various flavors. While he is willing to kill anything in an attempt to gain his next thrill, invariably killing someone who is not a Beast holds no value to him. He often kills these creatures so that they do not threaten mankind again, but he feels overwhelming frustration when the woman he has been pursuing turns out to be a simple, ordinary vampire and not a Namtaru like he was hoping for.

Legend: Destroyer

Life: Trusted Advisor

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 4 (6 vs. Beasts), Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Psychology) 3, Computer 2, Investigation (Shadowing) 3, Occult 2, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl (Take Downs) 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1, Weaponry (Kitchen Implements) 4

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression 1, Intimidation (Body Language) 3, Persuasion 1

Merits: Close Quarters Combat 3, Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Patient, Resources 3, Trained Observer

Gifts: Chosen Blade, Kinslayer, Legendary Hunter, Vanquisher's Strength, Warrior's Speed

Health: 8

Willpower: 6

Integrity: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 13 (25 vs. Beasts and supernatural creatures with Family Ties)

Initiative: 8

Defense: 6

Armor: 1/0

Notes: Michael's Chosen Blade is a meat cleaver. Damage: 2L, Initiative Modifier: -1, Size: 1

The Close Quarters Combat Merit is found on p. 63 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

TEREZA MARKUSA

DEAD EYES

Show me your insides, monster. If you have what I want, you die. If not, I turn you over to them. Trust me, death is better.

BACKGROUND

Tereza spent her adolescent and teenage years getting into fights, shoplifting, trying out as many drugs as possible, and painting nihilistic wall murals wherever it was forbidden. She attracted plenty of flunkies who tried to be just like her, but never quite understood that she wasn't any kind of rebel. She just couldn't find satisfaction. The world appeared dim and dismal to her, promising nothing but asking too much, gray and cold and filled with empty people. The human race seemed doomed to labor mindlessly until it evaporated with the oceans or blew itself to kingdom come. Nothing helped — narcotics, alcohol, danger, sex, violence: all disappointments. Was she destined to succumb to the crush of society, after all? Was there nothing to set her apart, nothing to inject *life* into existence?

When she hit her mid-twenties, her parents finally gave up on gentle nudging and kicked her out, forcing her to fend for herself. During her third visit to jail for theft and disturbing the peace, she dreamed she painted a vast canvas with bright colors. Splotches of black marred her painting and slowly spread, making the canvas buckle and warp. For the first time, she felt truly alive. She had to get rid of whatever was causing the splotches and wake up the world — she had a purpose, and the uncanny energy to fulfill it. When she murdered the Beast who acted as a warden at the correctional facility, the rush of power overwhelmed her, like taking a breath after years of drowning.

The courts transferred Tereza to a high-security prison and she despaired, craving another thrill and fearing a return to monotony. To her surprise, a lawyer and a corporate suit came to see her, asking questions about the creature: what it was, how she knew it was there, how she managed to kill it. Then they offered her a job doing it full time, complete with a clean slate. She took them up on it before she even learned the name Cheiron Group, and became an agent of the Field Projects Division in the blink of an eye. At first, she was elated. Not only did they give her free rein and the resources to hunt monsters to her heart's content — as long as she brought enough samples back — but the bioengineers promised to upgrade her body with the fruits of their research.

When she killed her first vampire, though, something was wrong. It wasn't the same. No rush of power, no paint dreams, no wakeup call. Then her supervisor told her she wouldn't undergo the upgrades just yet, because the scientists had found anomalies and needed to run more tests — and why hadn't she tracked down another monster in her dreams, by

the way? She went on a killing spree after that, murdering her way through creature after creature to find one that would feel like the first, and keeping her extracurricular activities a secret from her employers. She feared they would terminate her, one way or another, and couldn't risk losing her opportunity — or going back to jail.

It took months before another painting nightmare led to another Beast, and she hid that from the company, too, choosing to kill it and scratch her terrible itch rather than deliver it to the researchers to study. She's continued this pattern ever since, hunting monsters in quantities much larger than her quota off the record, hoping they won't find out that she's desperate for another hit of true purpose, or that she's executing things they would definitely want in the lab alive. Subtly, she tries to find answers to her questions. What makes those few different from the rest? Why does she have strange powers *without* the surgery? She'd like to improve her ability to track subjects, knowing it would make her more valuable to the company and less likely to be eliminated, but she can't trust any of her coworkers to help her figure it out. She's on her own.

DESCRIPTION

Tereza is a methodical, brutal agent of a corporation that gives her anything she needs: weapons, vehicles, money, and the

DEAD EYES AND THE CHERION GROUP

Characters can investigate her background and find dirt to use against her. The game she plays with her employers is delicate and comes crumbling down if someone tips them off that she's withholding valuable assets from them and using their resources for her own personal crusade. On the other hand, if she discovers the truth about her relationship with Beasts and ways to track them down more effectively, that leverage means nothing to Cheiron in the face of such an MVP. The company already wants to take her apart and see why she's so special; if they catch on that she's growing in power as she hunts, they'll want her right where she is for as long as possible.

results of advanced scientific research into the supernatural. She feels like a sellout, disgusted at becoming a corporate drone, but doesn't dare quit or do anything that would give them reason to fire her. Most of the time, she's aloof and disinterested, finding no joy in work or play. She mows down her prey with indiscriminate violence; if it's not human, she captures or eliminates it. Each kill brings a faint surge of anticipation that she squashes, not wanting to get her hopes up yet again, only to be disappointed.

Monsters that aren't Beasts exist only as targets or sources of information. Interrogations at Tereza's hands are terse and painful, and she only cares about answers that pertain to the Primordial Dream, Heroes, or Beasts (not that she knows those terms). If they have no answers, she turns them over to Cheiron and forgets them. When she does find a Beast, her whole demeanor changes. She becomes a ravenous hawk poised for the dive, eager almost to the point of zeal. She interrogates Beasts too, as they're the most likely to have what she needs, but it's hard for her to keep from taking the kill as soon as it's available.

Tereza is tall and slim, with pale white skin and dark hair cropped short. On the job, she dresses entirely in black, in a suit and tie with specialized Cheiron-built armor underneath, and she views her professional wardrobe as an ironic reflection of the splotches on her paintings. She rides a motorcycle with impressive bells and whistles, courtesy of the company. At home, she defies the gray veneer she perceives over the world, wearing bold colors and funky styles. She still seeks thrills and pleasures in mundane pastimes out of habit, though inevitably they're letdowns, paling in comparison to what she really craves.

She doesn't go off duty often, but when she manages to distract herself from her obsession, she's an artist and a trendsetter. She paints murals and street art, attends underground parties in clothes of her own design, and dances with strangers. She's in love with the subversive, but can't connect with anyone in more than a cursory fashion, drifting from club to protest to skate park, and influencing without ever being influenced.

RUMORS

"I'm told she dropped the werewolf like she was making breakfast, and when she went after his brood, she was like a rabid animal. They barely got out of there; she could run faster than her bike and she had a dozen soldiers with her. Watch your back. She's got it out for us, and she's not alone."

Rumors like this one circulate among the Beasts and other supernatural creatures in any area where Tereza is active. She doesn't usually tip her hand until she pins down one of the Children, but if he gets away, word spreads quickly that she's on the prowl and doesn't seem to be an ordinary hunter, even if she

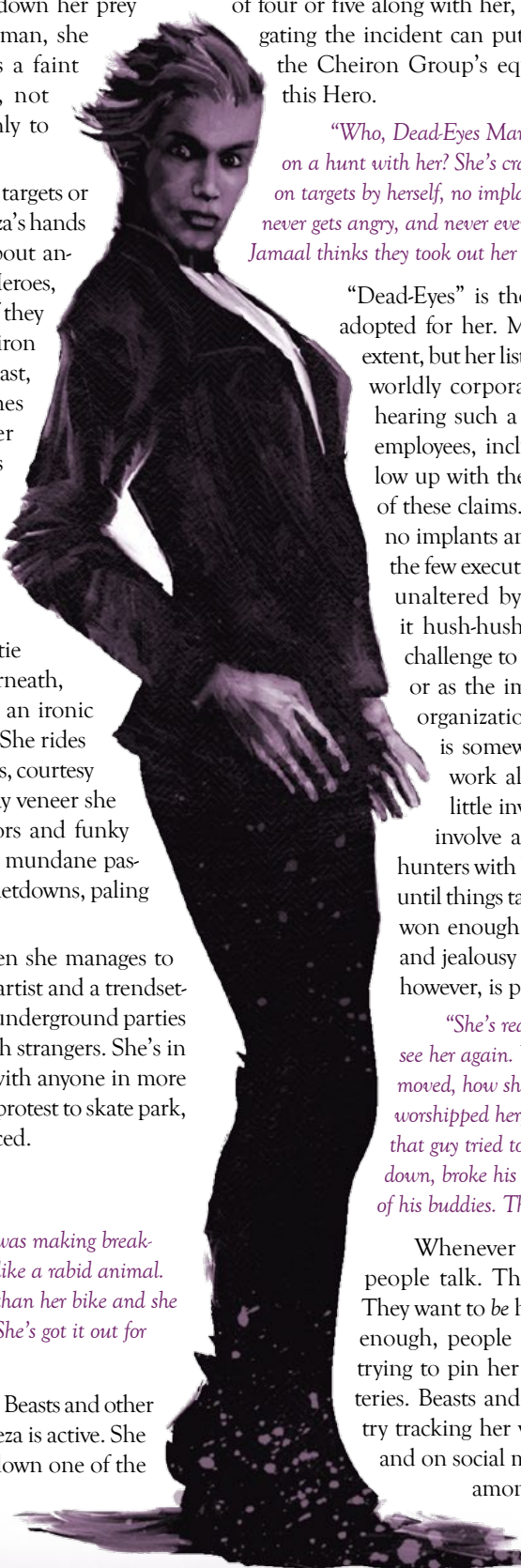
does have the kind of backup expected of them. This rumor is a bit of an exaggeration; she's much faster against Beasts and their kin than other foes, but she's still swifter on her motorcycle than on foot for pure movement, and the company usually sends cells of four or five along with her, not a dozen. Characters investigating the incident can put the pieces together to identify the Cheiron Group's equipment or tactics backing up this Hero.

"Who, Dead-Eyes Markusa? Man, have you ever been out on a hunt with her? She's crazy. I heard from Jamaal she takes on targets by herself, no implants, no nothing. She never smiles, never gets angry, and never even blinks. I bet she pisses ice water. Jamaal thinks they took out her soul when they recruited her."

"Dead-Eyes" is the nickname Tereza's coworkers adopted for her. Most hunters are jaded to some extent, but her listless indifference takes even these worldly corporate killers aback. Anyone overhearing such a conversation between Cheiron employees, including other hunters, could follow up with them or Jamaal to verify the truth of these claims. He can investigate why she has no implants and how she fights without them; the few executives and doctors who know she's unaltered by any Thaumatechnology keep it hush-hush. He can take the rumor as a challenge to get a rise out of the "ice queen," or as the impetus to learn more about the organization she belongs to. This rumor is somewhat true; Tereza does prefer to work alone when possible, and shows little investment in any job that doesn't involve a Beast. She often instructs the hunters with her to hang back while she fights until things take a turn for the worse, and she's won enough of those fights to generate awe and jealousy among her colleagues. The rest, however, is pure hearsay.

"She's really here? You're kidding! I have to see her again. You should have seen the way she moved, how she lit up the floor...the whole place worshipped her, but she never said a word until that guy tried to grab her ass. She wrestled him down, broke his arm, and beat the crap out of three of his buddies. This time, I'll find out her name."

Whenever Tereza goes out on the town, people talk. They notice her. They want her. They want to be her. If she stays in one place long enough, people report sightings to each other, trying to pin her down and unwrap all her mysteries. Beasts and other creatures or hunters can try tracking her via these rumor mills in person and on social media to find her while she's out among the regular folks. This rumor is 100% true.



Legend: Addict

Life: Visionary

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3 (5 vs. Beasts), Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Crafts 3, Investigation 2, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Drive 3, Firearms 2, Larceny 3, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Expression (Painting) 4, Intimidation (Interrogation) 3, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Anonymity 2, Barfly, Crack Driver 2, Fast Reflexes 1, Inspiring, Multilingual (Latvian, Russian), Resources 2, Status (Cheiron Group) 2, Street Fighting 5

Gifts: Kinslayer, Warrior's Speed 2

Health: 8

Willpower: 5

Integrity: 3

Size: 5

Speed: 10 (25 vs. Beasts and supernatural creatures with Family Ties)

Initiative: 7

Defense: 7 (9 vs. Beasts and supernatural creatures with Family Ties)

Armor: 2/3


Notes: Tereza has access to a variety of equipment, training, and resources specifically for dealing with the supernatural, thanks to the Cheiron Group's backing. She wants to hunt Beasts primarily, but to stay employed she must be a competent hunter of other creatures as well and must be able to take them in alive, so the Storyteller should feel free to supply her with anything that gives her an advantage on such missions.

The Crack Driver and Street Fighting Merits appear on p. 47 and p. 65 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, respectively.

STORY HOOKS

- The characters stumble upon evidence that someone working for the Cheiron Group has launched a secret investigation into Tereza's secrets. Further poking around reveals who she works for and, if the characters didn't already know, that she's a Hero with ties to the Primordial Dream. They have the opportunity to aid the investigator and potentially shut down an enemy, but in doing so they'd be helping an organization that dedicates itself to hunting monsters down and harvesting their powers. They can see that the investigation is on the wrong track, though, and left unchecked, Tereza forces a confrontation with the characters one way or another — even if no Beast lives among them.
- Tereza's hunters harry a local coterie of vampires to the point of desperation. The vampires find out somehow that the Hero in charge of the hunter cell is after Beasts and will do anything to get her hands on them. They decide to give her what she wants, luring the brood with promises of an alliance and then betraying it in an ambush designed to turn them over to Dead-Eyes Markusa in exchange for leaving the vampires alone.
- Tereza has found an ally in seeking answers: a mage from the local Consilium. Together, they delve into the Hero's dreams to solve the Mystery of her connection to the Children. With the help of magic, Tereza's close to working it out, but the mage's brute force interference has disturbed the local hive. Any Beasts in the area notice something's not right and can try to trace the disturbance back to the pair. Can they make a friend of the mage before Tereza becomes even more dangerous? Or will they end up inadvertently helping the investigation out by getting involved?





He moved through the crowded streets like a shark through a school of fish. Only vaguely aware of what they did, the people parted before him, hoping not to attract his attention. Hoping not to be prey.

One person did not waver. A woman in sunglasses and a black wool coat walked carefully behind him. She tried to stay hidden, but he'd danced this dance before. He kept his eye on her, tracking her shadow when it crossed his, watching her reflection in car windows.

She didn't walk like someone with knives hidden under her coat, nor would she risk a gun with so many innocents about. A garrotte, he decided. She was waiting for him to wander alone into a parking garage or elevator, and then she'd strangle him.

Part of him wanted to draw this out, a cat and mouse game in which they each played both roles, but this charade between them had gone on long enough. They were, he suspected, both ready to end it. Ever the obliging prey, he turned down a side street, then an alley.

She followed, edging closer as the crowds of people slowly thinned out, until no witnesses remained and she stood just outside arm's reach. He pulled an expensive phone out of his pocket, pretended to check his messages while he watched her in the screen's reflection. From under her coat, she drew...a stiletto?

He'd misjudged her. Not the worst mistake he could have made. She might be wary of guns, but he had no such compunctions. Dreaming of the headline, "Volunteer Firefighter Defeats Serial Killer," he drew his own gun and turned quickly around, ready to fire.

He growled in frustration. She'd vanished! Can things like her turn invisible? he wondered. He'd never heard of that talent before. He had half a moment to ponder the question, though, before he felt something sharp and painful pierce his throat from behind.

He tried to scream, but only blood gurgled out.

No. It can't end like this!

He fell to his knees, feeling another stab to his lungs, and then to his kidney. One good shove, and he fell to the asphalt.

She loomed over him, smiling. He'd seen that smile before; she smiled like that every time she tore into yet another helpless victim.

No. My destiny is to stop her! Not to die like this.

Raising a trembling hand, he tried to aim, but she knocked his gun away with a laugh.

As his life pooled on the dirty asphalt beneath him, he saw her transform. Her hair grew longer, twisting and forming into vipers which hissed and spat venom as scales spread across her mottled skin. The air crackled with energy as great brass-colored wings sprouted from her back.

He'd never seen her change quite like this. Never so much power.

Somehow, he realized with his last dying thought, he'd made it possible.



CHAPTER TWO BEASTS

The Begotten struggle frequently against Heroes: mortals imbued with the power and drive to hunt down Beasts. Less frequently, Beasts may come into conflict with their own kind (a situation no Beast wants unless it's the absolute final option). Beasts have no firmer nor more elaborate structure than those they can form using Family Ties; the Children of the Dark Mother are free of obligations incurred through clan, tribe, or court. While this grants them a greater degree of freedom than most other supernatural creatures enjoy, such freedom comes with a cost.

Some Beasts fall to their Horror and become the Beast Rampant, while others make a last-ditch attempt at survival and become Unfettered. Some Beasts plunge headlong into a union with their Horror and become the Beast Incarnate. Whichever path these Begotten take, the end result of claiming an Inheritance is often remarkably similar: an extremely powerful creature devoid of all moral or ethical sensibility. For the majority of Beasts, this is a condition to aspire to, the end result of being what they are.

Those Beasts who have not yet attained an Inheritance, then, frequently find themselves assuming responsibility for their kin who have. Given the deep respect Beasts maintain for those who have achieved an Inheritance, putting down an Incarnate or Rampant spinning out of control is done only as a last resort and only when all other options have been exhausted. Others, of course, may have a very different opinion. At such times, vampires, werewolves, changelings, mages, and even hunters may come together to bring down a particularly dangerous and overwhelming foe (not to mention Sin Eaters or Prometheans, who both have a vested interest in securing territories against external threats). Even if a Beast wishes to be the one to deliver the final mercy on her own, she may sometimes find herself out of her depth when dealing with an Unfettered, Rampant, or Incarnate. Then she calls upon her friends out of necessity.

The Beasts in this chapter are the worst of the worst; devoid of empathy or humanity, their Horrors run the show now. While these antagonists are most suitable for a Beast-centric chronicle, some of their excesses may be so extreme as to attract more attention. Most supernatural societies, after all, have a vested interest in removing agents of chaos from their midst.

**It was written I should
be loyal to the nightmare
of my choice..**

**—Joseph Conrad,
Heart of Darkness**

LUCA ROHNER

THE CORPORATE RAVISHER

The fact is, your firm simply has not been performing to the standards set at acquisition. Let your personnel know we begin liquidating assets tomorrow.

BACKGROUND

As the only son of wealthy Swiss bankers, “no” is not a word Luca Rohner grew up hearing. From infancy onwards, Luca was coddled and catered to. His parents, both too busy with their own careers to pay much attention to their son, preferred to pay others to do the work of raising him. Luca was raised by a small army of nannies, tutors, and assorted servants who were more interested in keeping the Rohners content than ensuring Luca grew up to be a functional, empathetic adult. When Luca’s caretakers tried to speak to his parents about some of his more antisocial tendencies, his mother and father preferred to make excuses for their son. He was too clever, too ambitious, too assertive — not a bully or narcissist.

Luca did struggle at times with the sense of social isolation that plagues most Beasts in their childhood. He alleviated his angst by virtue of the fact that most of the people he spent his time with were paid to pay attention to him. The semblance of companions was generally enough to satisfy Luca’s social desires — though they ensured the boy never learned how to relate to others as equals, only as servants, or later in his life, prey.

Cruelty, as a result, has always come naturally to Luca. His spirit shone like a beacon in the Primordial Dream, attracting a Horror so ancient it had earned a name. The Sorrowful Dancer thrived for centuries, gaining strength by crushing hope and stripping away the happiness of its victims. Luca drew the Dancer like a moth drawn to a flame.

Luca underwent his Devouring early in life, barely an adolescent when the Dancer came to him. For Luca, the choice wasn’t even a choice — of course, he wanted more power, the ability to terrify and control. He became an Eshmaki, one who fed on Ruin.

His first victims were the same tutors and servants he’d grown up thinking of as his companions. Luca realized his most satisfying meals came as the result of a long, protracted torment. He enjoyed gradually breaking down his victims, watching them slowly lose control of themselves and their lives as he toyed with them. Though he encountered some other Beasts who tried to convey the cultural importance of using his feeding to teach important lessons, such sentiments never sunk in for Luca. He could not have cared less about fear as a teaching tool; he was too busy reveling in the tears of his victims to pay any mind to their spiritual development.

In college, Luca finally realized his full potential. He attended Oxford almost as a formality, a necessary step to eventually taking over his parents’ lucrative investment firm. Free from the pretense of supervision, Luca (and the Sorrowful Dancer) pursued every sort of indulgence imaginable. His constant feeding, and the terror it brought others, did not go unnoticed, and Luca eventually attracted the attention of an equally powerful Hero.

Dennis Brand had already put an end to three Begotten by the time Luca crossed his path. From the moment they met, the two men realized their destinies were irrevocably intertwined. While Dennis employed his Gifts, Luca polished his own tactics.

For two years, as Luca completed his degree, he and Dennis played an intricate game of cat and mouse. Luca attacked Dennis’ family and livelihood, using his considerable connections in finance to distract Dennis from the hunt. Dennis stalked Luca, growing increasingly desperate to find a situation where Luca was vulnerable to attack. Luca was too clever, though, and Dennis never found an opportunity.

Their conflict came to a head one New Year’s Eve. Luca planned a lavish party, and quietly let Dennis sneak in without an invitation. The men confronted each other on the roof; Dennis thought he was ambushing Luca, while instead he walked headlong into Luca’s trap.

Dennis came prepared for physical combat. He didn’t expect Luca’s mind games, nor the traps Luca had carefully laid out beforehand. Luca kept baiting the Hero, wearing down Dennis’ confidence by luring him into these traps. Dennis got in a few lucky shots, but not enough to turn the battle in his favor. The Hero eventually realized Luca was merely toying with him, but by then it was too late for him. Despite the injuries Dennis inflicted, Luca quickly gained the advantage.

The night ended with Dennis dead and Luca becoming a Beast Incarnate. Absolutely no one and nothing could stop him now. Luca graduated soon afterward, and returned home to Switzerland where he quickly built up his Myth. Now, the high finance and business communities fear Luca as a corporate raider; a ruthless CEO who destroys companies, ruins firms, and yet somehow always manages to turn a ridiculous profit at the end of each quarter.

Luca takes utter delight in ruining lives, and he uses his substantial power in the business and finance sectors to do so. Though few outside his rarefied circles have ever heard

of Luca Rohner, the people who have speak of him with fear and in hushed tones. They may not be consciously aware of what he's capable of, but they know a monster when they cross paths with one.

One of Luca's favorite tactics is to find well-performing, mid-size firms with solid bottom lines and thriving corporate cultures. He'll buy a firm out, then institute a long list of changes, ostensibly to maximize efficiency and profit. These changes, however, have nearly the opposite effect. Luca gleefully runs the firm into the ground, destroying profitability and morale alike while blaming the firm's managers for failing to live up to his expectations. The sordid business usually ends in late November, when he lets everyone go abruptly, just a few weeks before Christmas. As he enjoys the thrill of destroying families as well as careers, Luca prefers doing this to family-owned businesses. Nothing is quite as sweet to him as watching college funds and retirement accounts evaporate as the former owners try desperately to please Luca and fulfill their impossible obligations to him.

Interns are another favorite target of Luca's. Every year, he brings in a new crop of bright young financial wizards: MBAs eager for a chance to prove themselves and secure a spot at Luca's firm. The application process is grueling, and the winning interns walk in expecting to put in 14 hours a day, six days a week at minimum, for a full year. At the end of this year, the remaining interns are guaranteed a cushy job which secures their financial future. As a result, the interns are willing to put up with all manner of abuse for their chance at the brass ring.

Without fail, Luca chooses one or two "favorites," usually the best and brightest among the interns. Thrilled that Luca singled them out for individual mentorship, these interns invariably see all their dreams crumble, and eventually regret the day they heard of Luca Rohner.

Luca systematically isolates his chosen prey from their family, demanding longer hours and higher productivity. He does extensive background research on his targets, then engineers a myriad of personal crises — a work emergency at the same time grandma takes a turn for the worse in hospice, a mandatory trip during an anniversary or wedding, an eviction happening at the same time an important project is due, and similar impossible quandaries. While this continues, Luca slowly wears down his victim's sense of self-worth with carefully chosen barbs and backhanded compliments.

When the year is up, the targeted intern doesn't even become a permanent hire. More than a few interns have ended up in a care facility or even committed suicide once Luca has finished with them, which only feeds Luca more. He takes special delight in attending these funerals and comforting the surviving loved ones.

The challenge in taking on Luca is that everything he does is perfectly legal. He moves through the world without fear that anyone could ever stop him, because no one can. Luca's the sort of man who requires the coordination of several government agencies to take down. As the Beast Incarnate, he won't even attract the attention of Heroes.

DESCRIPTION

Luca's medium stature and unremarkable brown hair make him seem, at first glance, as someone who might be overlooked in a crowd. How he carries himself is what draws attention. His clothes go far past "designer label" and into the realm of custom-tailored. Even his blue jeans are hand sewn; Luca likes owning things no one else could possibly obtain. He wears little jewelry beyond watches and cufflinks, though he does enjoy wearing expensive cologne.

Luca has never once met a person he considers to be his superior, or even his equal. He is condescending and arrogant as a matter of course, and does not know how to be polite, even if he wanted to. Other people's problems don't bother him, and he doesn't understand why he should pretend to care. People tolerate Luca only because his money forces them to.

Luca has never had a serious girlfriend, only a rotating cast of women, aged 19 to 22, whom he cycles through constantly. He always has a beautiful woman on his arm at public events, a debutante or naïve heiress he's showered with money and presents, who soon vanishes and is replaced by another almost as quickly as she arrived. He feels no lack in his life for never having fallen in love. Sex and romance are just more power games, and he plays them with bored disinterest.

When it comes to other supernatural communities, Luca cares only to the extent that they are of benefit to him. He has dealt equitably with the Invictus from time to time, though he has little patience for "feral puppies" or "broken trauma-fairies," as he calls werewolves and changelings. He sees other Beasts as weak and therefore beneath his notice. Should he ever encounter another Beast Incarnate, however, he is immediately territorial and hostile.

Luca is undoubtedly the Apex of Zurich, and his Lair extends throughout



STORY HOOKS

- A close friend, ally, or family member (perhaps even a Retainer) of one of the characters has succeeded in becoming part of Luca's new crop of interns. Initially, this appears to be good news — the character will eventually benefit from the intern's success. However, the character's apparent good fortune quickly becomes anything but. The intern, chosen for special attention by Luca, begins to slowly unravel. Even the support of the intern's associates isn't enough to stave off the pressures of working for Luca. Depending on how close the intern is with the characters, Luca may even end up attacking their Merits in an attempt to disrupt the intern's life. The characters (and the intern) eventually realize Luca is more than just a horrible boss and must come up with a way to stop him and save their friend. As Luca is a Ravager, he won't simply relinquish his hold on the intern, he must destroy his prey in order to successfully feed.
- A member of the global business community wants to meet with the characters. Johann Strauberg is part of a small cabal of business and government leaders who, sick of the chaos Luca is wreaking across international markets, have decided to put an end to his corporate existence. However, Luca outmaneuvers them at every turn, able to retaliate in unexpected ways. Now the members of the cabal are under some kind of sustained attack — unable to sleep or function during the day. Johann, slowly realizing that Luca is somehow more than human, has put out clumsy feelers to members of the supernatural community. Johann isn't quite sure what Luca is, but can promise access to a wide array of Merits (including high-level Professional Training in certain fields) in exchange for the characters' assistance in dealing with Luca.
- As Apex of Zurich, it's only fitting that Luca receive an invitation to the Yule Ball, a lavish gala hosted every December 21st by the Invictus Prince of the city. The Prince has extended his invitation to anyone Luca cares to bring. Luca, knowing the importance of making a good impression, wants an entourage for the event. He hires the characters as his attendants for the evening. What Luca doesn't know is that another Kindred, the local Hierophant of the Circle of the Crone, understands what it means to be an Apex and is intent on displacing Luca and assuming that role for herself. Luca's arrival is the end result of a year of her machinations, and she's determined to assassinate him before the sun comes up. Now it falls to the characters to protect their charge against a coterie of vicious, determined vampires and their allies.

the city. Little of significance happens in the city of which he is not aware, both on a supernatural and a mundane level. His hold over the city is so strong that the residents have begun to absorb

Luca's toxic ideas, even if they may not realize it. Businesses are copying Luca's strategies and people are conducting their personal relationships the way he does. As a result, a shadow has fallen over the city that few are aware of, much less able to drive away.

RUMORS

"Sure, he's killed at least one or two people. That's part of becoming the Beast Incarnate; someone has to die. That's not what I'm talking about, though. The man's a serial killer, even if he doesn't hold the knife. The police are so far deep in his pocket though; they'll never do anything about him."

Luca is a Ravager, not a murderer. He's definitely responsible for the death of Dennis, along with a few victims he unintentionally killed shortly after his Devouring while learning how to hunt and feed properly. But those few lives are the only ones he's had a direct hand in taking. Indirectly however, Luca's been responsible for contributing to several suicides, nervous breakdowns, and slow slides into addiction and self-destruction. While he may be ethically culpable for these deaths, Luca himself bears no legal responsibility. But even if evidence of his early kills surfaced, the rumor is correct that Luca has so many friends in high places, he'd never see the inside of a jail cell, or even a courtroom.

"If you feel anything for Luca, feel pity. Don't fear him, and don't admire him. From the outside, yes, his life looks fantastic. He's ridiculously wealthy and has the respect of his whole industry. Take a closer look, though. He doesn't spend any significant time with anyone he's not paying. No family, no friends. That's a sad state of affairs for anyone, but if you know anything about what Luca really is, you know how his kind value friendship and family. And Luca doesn't have any of that. Must make for a pretty lonely life. Maybe that's why he's so cruel all the time."

As a Beast Incarnate, he still feels the Begotten's core impulse towards family and acceptance. He simply doesn't have the social skills necessary to form a lasting, valid friendship with anyone. Instead, Luca surrounds himself with underlings, advisers, and servants he's convinced himself are his friends and allies. These people eventually leave when Luca's cruelty is no longer worth the ridiculously high salary he pays. Then, Luca puts out another advertisement and hires another friend.

"I heard that there's a team of Heroes that have banded together to hunt down Luca. It's a bad business, he's likely to bring heat on all of us with that kind of firepower all looking for just one Beast."

While it is likely a Hero could be looking into Luca's activities, that isn't what's going on. The team is a consortium of regular mortals — businessmen, financiers, and government agents — who realize that, though Luca operates purely within the bounds of the law, his unethical businesses practices are having a deleterious effect on the corporate community as a whole. They are completely unprepared for Luca's nature as a supernatural creature of incredible power. While passing new laws and enforcing new policies might work for a mortal, Luca has so far been able to easily thwart their plans. It's only a matter of time before a member of the team eventually realizes what Luca is, and begins clumsy overtures to the supernatural community.

Myth: Heartless Corporate Leader

Family: Ugallu

Hunger: Ravager

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Corporate Law) 5, Computer 2, Investigation (Background Checks) 4, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Larceny 3

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation (Veiled Threats) 5, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2

Merits: Allies (Banking) 3, Allies (Legal) 5, Allies (Police) 3, Contacts (Business), Contacts (Journalists), Contacts (Government), Fame (Finance) 1, Fame (Corporate Ravager) 1, Resources 5, Status (Corporate World) 5

Atavisms: Eye of Heaven, Mimir's Wisdom, Relentless Hunter, Unbreakable

Nightmares: Behold, My True Form!, Everything You

Do Is Worthless, Fear Is Contagious, Run Away, They Are All Around You, You Are Alone, You Must Obey

Lair: 8 (Exposed, Maze, Mirages, Sealed Exits, Slick)

Health: 9

Willpower: 6

Satiety: 4

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Armor: 2/2

Beast Shapes: Flight, Legendary Size, Terrible Mien, Uncanny Speed

Notes: Luca abhors physical combat, even preferring weight training and cardio routines as his daily workouts over martial arts. He won't start anything, though he'll happily finish a fight someone else wants to pick. After which, he'll target their loved ones and see their businesses fail, their insurance policies get revoked, and their retirement funds vanish.

JAMES BERNARD

CRU

Everyone's afraid of something. Let me remind you what that's like.

BACKGROUND

Life had never been hard, exactly, but life was so stressful. James Bernard felt it ever since he was a child, the pressure to perform, to achieve. He was an only child with strict parents and a regimented schedule of school, tutoring, innumerable sports practices, and other extracurricular activities. Judged by grades, trophies, and medals, the standard of excellence came easily to him for many years. A smart boy, school was never a problem for James. He showed an early aptitude for the athleticism his father prized, took easily to rules and manners, and rarely spoke out against his parents. He was, by all appearances, a good boy.

If he fried some ants with a magnifying glass in the backyard when he was allowed some time to play, wasn't it just the nature of little boys? They all caught frogs and lizards, and poked and prodded them until they were bored or the poor animal escaped. The magnifying glass trick was a popular one, right along with pulling the wings off flies. Boys will be boys, as they say, and James heard it many times from his father, often accompanied with a hearty clap to his shoulder.

When high school began and the intensity rose to levels he had never experienced before, things started to unravel. A sudden drop in grades, a second-string placement on the school's football team; the boy with everything was floundering in his new environment, after being at the very top of things just the year before. The friends he had made found others to spend time with, the classes that had been so easy were replaced with more difficult subjects, and college was looming in the future. These four years, after all, would be how he would prepare, and he needed his perfect transcript.

He arrived home trembling the day his received his initial progress report, halfway through his freshman semester. There would be no saving grace when he got home. Nothing about how things had gone would be acceptable to his parents. He flirted briefly with the idea of running away before dismissing it, deciding it would only make things worse when he finally returned.

After hesitating only a brief moment outside on the porch, he entered, hanging his backpack near the door as always and shrugging out of his coat. The tension mounted as he waited

to hear his name thundering through the house. Yet, there was no roar from his father, and he cautiously stepped forward into the kitchen. His father sat there, looking over the dreaded piece of yellow paper, his face tight in a frown, but instead of expressing his disapproval, he just looked up and shrugged. James remained frozen, but his father offered no explosion, no anger, not even punishment; he instead requested James try harder, and not make plans with friends that weekend.

Confused by this reaction and assuming he was grounded, James retreated to his room, eyeing the tank on the top of his dresser. In it was a brilliantly green snake, curled up on a branch for now. After a moment of staring, he crossed to his closet, lifted the hatch on a smaller cage and took out two white mice. These he dropped into the snake's tank, and sat watching until it had eaten them both.

When the weekend came, James' father woke him Saturday morning, and offered little explanation beyond ordering him up and dressed. Before long, they were on the road, and his father finally explained. They were going hunting, a good way for someone who was stressed to blow off some steam. It was time, he said, that he taught James how to go about it.

By the end of the day, they returned with a deer in the trunk, and James watched his father gut, clean, and butcher it. He had known his father went hunting, but now he truly began to understand. Preparing, waiting, stalking; it all made so much sense. It felt right. For the first time in a while, he remembered enjoying himself.

They continued to hunt out the rest of the season together, and for James, things began to make sense again. New friends eased his anxiety, and adjusting to the workload took just a little more time. Every night, he dreamed of hunting, his new hobby that had turned things around. The scenes always started out simply, playing out just as his father taught him: climbing into a stand

before dawn, waiting for an oblivious animal to come by, and firing an arrow or a bullet to strike it down. Then his dreams changed to larger animals, ones that could fight back. He dreamt of stalking wolves and mountain lions, pouncing with nothing more than a knife, locked in struggles with them for tense, brief minutes, his strength against theirs, until the he slayed the beast and stood victorious.


It only began to trouble him when the animals started to win. Once a month, then once a week, then every night, he would feel his lifeblood draining from a critical wound, some predator roaring its victory above him and tearing him apart bit by bit. Waking up in a cold sweat, gasping back to life, he would sit trembling in the dark, unable to sleep any more that night. With this shift in his dreams, his life began to slide backward yet again, his temper growing with his inability to fix the mounting problems in his waking world. It wasn't terrible at first: some unnecessarily aggressive plays in football practice, a few pillows hurled at a wall (and the lamp once, but he knew his father's rage had broken worse), but it quickly progressed to fights at school. He would find one of his old friends and stalk them as he had been taught to do while hunting, until he could corner them and unleash his rage and frustration.

Everything felt so much better after that, and the dreams began to turn in his favor, but it never lasted very long, and he would have to find someone new to ease the tension.

Facing the threat of expulsion after too many incidents, he was sulking alone his room and staring at the snake slumbering in its cage. He turned again to feed it, down to his last few mice; after this, he would have a week or two to get more. Reaching in, he grabbed one, tossing it unceremoniously in with the boa. The other evaded him, running to the far corners of the cage as he tried to grab for it, and bit his fingers as he finally seized it, deep enough to draw blood.

The pain that lanced through his hand broke the control he had left.





Rather than fling it across the room, he popped the little mouse into his mouth whole and crunched down, feeling the bones crack beneath his teeth and the hot blood squirt over his tongue. Again, everything felt better after he finished chewing it up, and with the relief came a wave of exhaustion. He dreamed of hunting again that night, stalking along the undergrowth of a warm jungle, his keen senses pricked for anything out there with him. It wasn't long before a panther passed his way, and the chase was on.

He always loved the dreams, at least when they ended well. The body of a predator felt natural to him, his well-toned muscles coiled for action even when relaxed, jaws and paws bearing fangs and claws instead of teeth and nails. Hunting, even in his dreams, took patience, precision, and planning. The panther looked to also be on the hunt as he stalked behind it, moving soundlessly and effortlessly across the overgrown forest floor. After a moment or two, the air thrummed with a soft, heavy tone as it growled. He watched the big cat tense, its ears flattened back to its skull as it sniffed the air and searched for the source of the sound. He waited, watching it zero in, and let out a roar when their eyes locked. As it turned to leap away, he pounced, missing by inches, and raced after it as it tried to get away. The pursuit was always one of his favorite parts of the hunt, feeling the trees fly by as he pelted forward, his heart pounding a drum beat in his chest. With another vicious growl, he threw himself forward as the panther leaped to scale a tree, and was rewarded with a deep bite into its thigh. Dragging the cat down again, he dodged a swipe of its paw and returned it with one of his own, pressing his advantage as it went sprawling across the ground. Before giving it the opportunity to catch its footing again, he darted forward. This time his teeth sank into its throat, and with a triumphant growl, he tore it wide open, standing victorious over the bleeding creature. All was right in the world at that moment; he felt it somehow crystallize and become real. This was no dream; this was exactly what he was, and what he was always meant to be. The stalker in the dark, the ruthless predator. It was so much simpler than everything else.

RELUCTANT HUNTER

When waking did little to banish this sensation, he grew concerned. He knew something was different, he could feel the Horror that was part of him now, but as much as it had thrilled him the previous night, it made him sick and uneasy when he considered it now. It was all he could do to push it to the back of his mind and try to ignore the creature he refused to recognize as part of himself.

It worked for a little while, until the nightmares started and people in houses as far as blocks away would wake up screaming. Hunting helped, but barely. It was too impersonal for his Horror to shoot something from a faraway stand. Eventually, he compromised by wounding his prey from afar, following it as it fled, and finishing the animal off himself. That worked far better than ignorance and denial, and he thought he had found the perfect solution. Throughout the rest of high school and college, he subsisted on hunting down animals, keeping his Horror's hunger just barely at bay for fear of how it would lash out. It still happened on occasion, and he could see the way people reacted when it came forward, too powerful for him to

keep back, but the killing was still just animals, and never mind as the Lair his Horror occupied expanded, bit by bit. He was loath to visit it there, after his Devouring, only joining with it on rare occasions when he felt there was no other way to get out of a tough spot. As best as he could, he kept himself separate from the creature he didn't trust. The tightrope he had walked on all his life to attain perfection with nothing but absolute ease and confidence, and never any difficulty, was turning to razor wire beneath his increasingly clumsy feet.

He continued trying to lock the thing away, graduating college and following society's expectations. Soon came the entry-level office job and, not long after that, the wife. For years, it was easy to just press his nose to the grindstone, to find things that would distract him and keep him sane. It was easy, until the hunting stopped working.

The Horror lurking under his skin wanted more than scraps, more than rabbits, deer, and other easy game. It was tired of the formula; wait, shoot, follow, then kill. There was no satisfaction there. Still, he did his best to silence those urges, already facing pressure in his waking life. A possible promotion had ratcheted up his workload, his mother was concerned about the state of his father's mental health, and his wife was nattering incessantly and less subtly about starting a family. As if it could smell the weakness, his Horror began to pound on the bars of its cage, restlessly pacing its Lair. With everything pressing on from all sides, all James wanted was an escape.

It came one night after dinner, when his wife was doing dishes and she dropped some on the floor. The shattering sound resonated within him for a moment, and everything that was bothering him melted away. Footsteps silent as he paced into the kitchen, he watched for a moment as the woman that meant so little to him (now that he thought about it, anyway) swore quietly to herself and picked up the larger pieces of broken porcelain. He bent to pick one up himself, wickedly pointed, placed a gentle hand on her shoulder, and drove it into her neck. From deep within him, something growled its satisfaction and demanded more.

He recalled only that it was brutal, and he had drawn upon powers beyond anything he had attempted before. It felt much like that first triumphant dream had, so long ago. Something was awakening within him, filling up the empty space that had caused so much discomfort. The claws he couldn't see suddenly grew from his fingertips, the fangs that gnashed at her bloodied face sprouted from his aching gums, and dark, matted fur grew over his limbs and back. Finally, his Horror had what it always wanted, and never again would it have to go without. Beyond the walls of their pristine little community was a patch of woods that called to him, resonating with his Heart. When the Beast was finally satisfied with its kill, it took off for them, leaving everything it had known previously behind.

DESCRIPTION

When the man with everything going his way snaps in a quiet suburban area, it tends to catch the attention of at least the local news circuits. The story circulated immediately over the 24-hour news cycle, always coming to a dead end as far as

where the man himself ended up. Without a body ever found and no trace of him after the night of the conflict, the case quickly went cold and was largely forgotten outside of his immediate community. Locally, his story turned rapidly into one told at sleepovers and over campfires, always with an exaggerated ending involving a vengeful spirit, often disembodied (either his or one possessing him) let loose without a physical body to wreak havoc. In reality, James is no more, and in his place is Cru, the merger of man and Beast.

The best way to describe Cru is hungry. Following his transformation, his motives narrowed significantly and revolved solely around satisfying his Hunger. When threatened, he fights tooth and nail to escape and continue living another day. Hiding and licking his wounds is preferable to bleeding out from them. If there are other supernatural creatures around, Cru doesn't notice or care; only encroaching upon his hunting ground catches his attention, and it doesn't matter if the interloper is mortal, Begotten, or "other." Any that threaten his hunting ground soon become prey.

Cru's philosophy is simple: If he can't kill it, it can kill him; if he hasn't killed it yet, it might kill him. To this end, he is a brutal and relentless stalker, using all of the benefits of his Family to outsmart those who might want to find him. While he operates mostly on instinct, he does realize that getting caught means the end of him. The chase is of little importance to Cru, and he hunts opportunistically, preying on whomever or whatever happens to wander into what he claims as his territory.

The areas Cru has claimed as his own are very apparent and stand in stark contrast to the gated community he was once a part of. Manicured woods of suburbia give way to rotting forests, where footsteps and animal sounds echo in strange and dizzying ways, and sunlight rarely reaches past the dilapidated canopy even at high noon. Upon crossing the threshold into Cru's woods, the sense of being watched is ubiquitous, and the sensation gets stronger the more time is spent there. Sounds grow louder and closer until the inevitable roar from the nearby shadows and then, for the lucky ones, it's over before it begins.

For those that can catch a glimpse of the creature, Cru is a hulking black form in the dark, accented by flashing yellow eyes and glinting, wet teeth. On the occasion that someone can get a longer, closer look at him, he is a hunched, half-humanoid, half-lupine figure, covered in erratic patches of thick, matted, dark fur. His teeth are all unnaturally sharp, and his nails are wickedly curved claws. The hallmarks of his presence are an all-consuming sense of helplessness and the overwhelming desire to flee. Overcoming the compulsion is hardly better than obeying it.

RUMORS

"After that guy went psycho and murdered his wife, they say he ran away into the woods there and killed himself, too, and he haunts them now. That's why they don't grow anymore, and they don't feel right. He's out there, waiting for other victims."

James certainly did flee to the woods after the murder, and any recognizable countenance of the human man is gone. In his

STORY HOOKS

- Teenagers have made it a game to go into the woods at the edge of the community, and all come back reporting something horribly wrong that they can't put their fingers on. Recently, one of the intrepid teenagers has gone missing. Normally, Beasts wouldn't get involved, but she is the daughter of a local mage who believes she was taken by one of the Children. He has asked the characters to help him investigate the woods and find his daughter.
- There's been a sudden spike in the Hero population, and they all cite the same nightmare of something stalking them through dark woods. The Heroes don't know who to target, and members of the characters' brood are now in danger. The characters must either dispose of the Heroes, or find out what is awakening so many and put an end to it.
- The Apex has put out a bounty on the unhinged creature wreaking havoc and threatening to expose the supernatural world. One of the character's friends is an Eshmaki who has been targeted by those seeking to fulfill the bounty. She asks the characters to help her find the true Beast causing the problems and clear her good name.

place is the Rampant Beast James has become, and he doesn't exactly haunt his woods as much as dominate them. Cru, the shell of the man James once was, stalks his woods confidently, and is the source of the strange, persistent decay that possesses them. The "haunted" sense of the woods is completely accurate, however, anyone looking for a ghost is more likely to meet an untimely end rather than a specter.

"You can hear it howling every night. It hates the light, tries to stick to the shadows, but anyone that's seen it swears that werewolves are real. Can't be, though, might be a coyote or a regular wolf...at least, that's what people say before they see the claw marks on the second-story windows. Even then, some try to explain it away. As for me, the werewolf thing doesn't seem too far off, except that it only seems to come to town on the new moon."

On dark enough nights when the shadows are thick, Cru returns to the community he was a part of and hunts anyone outdoors late at night. He revels in the fear and enjoys making sure everyone knows the shadows are his, and those who try to catch a glimpse of the creature prowling outside are rewarded most often with terrible nightmares for their curiosity. If a night hunting this way offers no human prey as a reward, Cru turns on any unfortunate animal left outside for the night as a meager substitute, and hunts more viciously on subsequent nights until he is satisfied. The new moon is the easiest time to hunt this way, when the night is darkest. Bright light can deter him where it shines, but, as an Eshmaki, he is likely to simply summon darkness around him to bypass it.

"It's the damnedest thing; I'd been waking up from this terrible nightmare all week, and when I mentioned it to my husband, he said the same thing. The same dream, over and over. Even our daughter started having it, and she'd wake up screaming. She's 12, mind you – she hasn't been that scared of a dream in years. I talked to some other mothers about it...same story. At least one person in their family was experiencing it, if not all of them."

If Cru has not hunted to his satisfaction, the town around him begins to experience savage nightmares. More than once, especially if he happens to be prowling the streets at the same time, this has resulted in the awakening of a Hero. Thus far, no one has been successful in taking him down, but it is very possible some are biding their time until they are powerful enough to do so. Either way, the community has at least one budding Hero in it at most points in time. Cru doesn't much know or care about this particular consequence, but enjoys when it brings prey to his front door to hunt.

Legend: Brutal

Family: Eshmaki

Hunger: Prey

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Occult 1, Investigation (Tracking) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Grapple) 4, Survival 3, Stealth 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation (Stalking) 4, Subterfuge 2,

Merits: Direction Sense, Danger Sense, Danger Sense (Advanced), Relentless Assault 5

Atavisms: Cyclopean Strength, Eye of Heaven, From the Shadows, Limb From Limb, Relentless Hunter

Health: 9

Willpower: 5

Satiety: 2

Size: 5

Speed: 16

Initiative: 7

Defense: 7

Armor: —

Notes: Cru has the benefits of Increased Awareness twice (+2 to appropriate rolls), Body Warp (for a +2 bonus to Brawl) and Increased Attribute (Strength).

MARTIN O'SULLIVAN

THE EMPYREAN SWIMMER

I've forgotten more than you could even imagine, of countless realms between the stars and the beings which exist there.

BACKGROUND

Once upon a time, there was a young boy named Martin O'Sullivan, the son of a good Irish father and pious Irish mother. Martin, one of many children, was raised to work hard, say his prayers every night, and respect both his parents. His father raised sheep, his mother crocheted lace, and everyone assumed Martin would one day grow up to become a man like his father and marry a woman like his mother.

Fate had a different plan for Martin.

As a very young child, Martin had vivid dreams. While asleep in the large bed he shared with his siblings, he visited wondrous lands where he would learn fantastic and hidden lore, which he forgot almost immediately upon waking. He tried to share these beautiful dreams with his family, but they had no time for his flights of fancy. Martin's father, after all, was raising sensible sheep farmers – not idle dreamers. Martin quickly learned to keep his dreams to himself.

His dreams, though, kindled within him an intense curiosity. Martin wanted to know if these dreams were true dreams, if he visited real places in his sleep. His priest told him that these dreams were gifts from God and the angels, and so Martin felt sure that these places must exist somewhere, but had no idea how to find them.

Then came the day his father took him to market. Martin, finally old enough to help with the flock at age 12, accompanied his father and older brothers as they drove their sheep to Galway for sale and slaughter. Martin had never before seen the sea, and his first visit to Galway introduced him to yet another wonder: ships.

A living forest on the water of tall wooden masts and canvas canopies, Martin fell in love with these tall ships at first sight. At every opportunity, he slipped away from his sheep-tending duties to instead sneak into sailors' pubs and listen, wide-eyed, to their tales of travel and adventure. Martin knew that his fate lay not in becoming a sheep farmer, but a sailor.

His father, however, would not hear of it. Martin was of good shepherd stock, like his father and grandfather before him. Shepherding was honest, safe work. No son of his would become a sailor, not while he had anything to say on it.

Riding on the wagon away from Galway, Martin thought his heart might break as he saw the masts and sails slip away. He spent the next year pining for the sea, his dreams wrapped up in the adventures and distant lands of which he'd heard the sailors speak. Martin wished to be a good boy, as his parents wanted. He could not resist the call of the sea, no matter how hard he tried. Slowly, a terrible desire formed in his heart. At first, Martin rejected the idea, but his dreams grew more intense, and he eventually devised a plan.

As Martin waited for the year to pass, he spent time planning what he would do. After the year was out, he was now a young man of 13, and he again accompanied his father and brothers to the markets of Galway. For 13 days out of the fortnight he and his family spent in the city, Martin did as his father told him.

On the 14th day, before the sun rose, he walked out of the rooms where his family slept, and made his way to the wharf. There, he picked his favorite ship — a three-masted beauty with a painted hull and polished wooden mermaid on the prow. The captain had need of ready hands, though was reluctant to hire a poor shepherd from a landlocked village. The gleam in Martin's eye and the boy's obvious passion for the sea eventually swayed the captain.

Dawn came, the tide went out, and Martin was aboard his first ship as a cabin boy. The work was hard, the weather unforgiving, and the food barely edible, but Martin didn't mind. He was at sea. Never had he felt so at home,

so complete, until that evening, when he was finally allowed to sleep. The spiritual force that had been scratching at the doors of Martin's mind finally made itself known. The Swimmer, as it called itself, manifested as an amalgamation of every sea tale Martin had heard — and some he hadn't. Martin gleefully accepted the Swimmer's offer, and became a Makara.

Martin quickly turned the ship into his Lair. Feeding in such close quarters proved to be challenging, but Martin was a Collector who enjoyed stealing secrets from his crew mates.

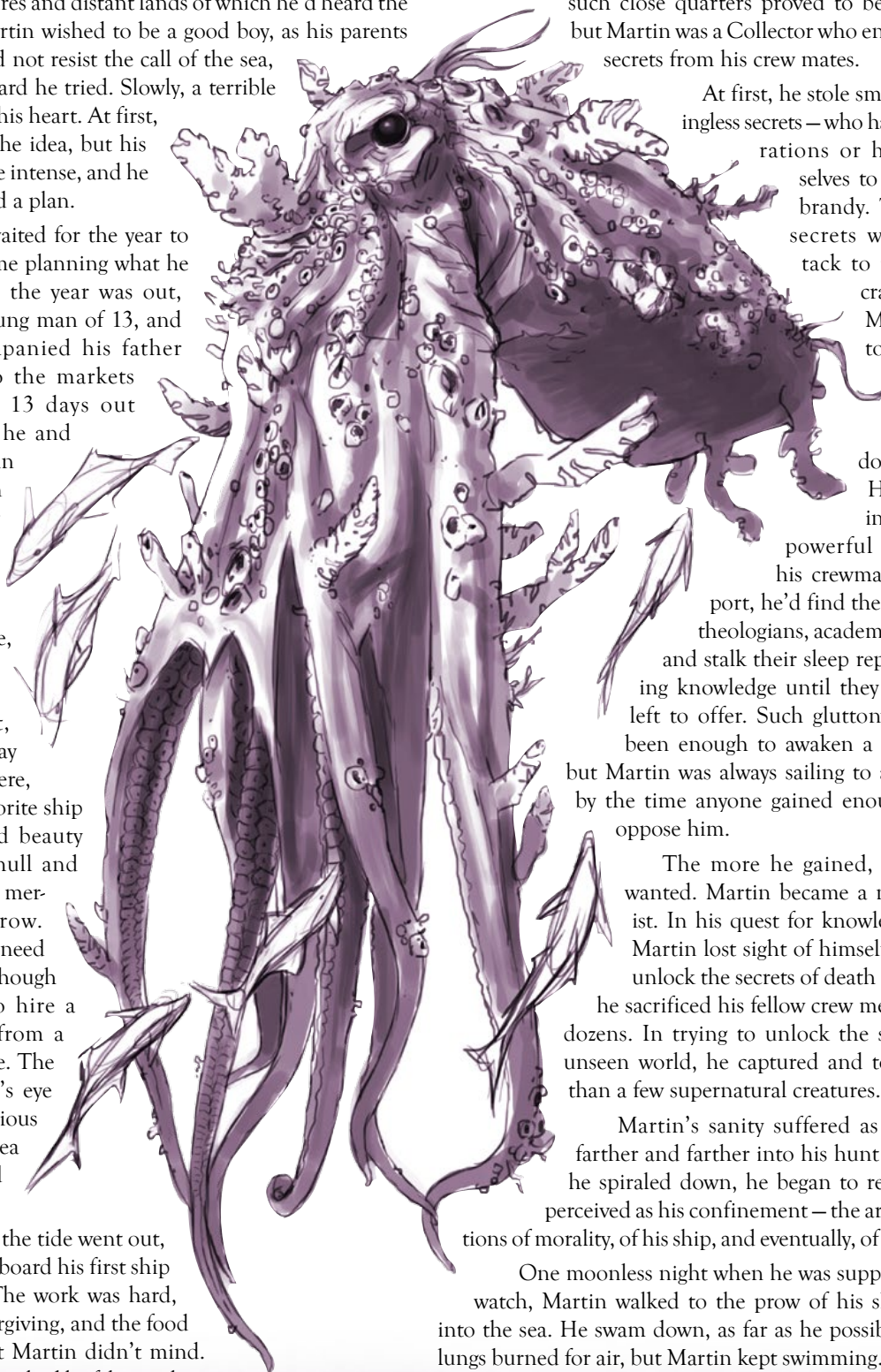
At first, he stole small and meaningless secrets — who had snuck extra rations or helped themselves to the captain's brandy. These simple secrets were as hard-tack to the feasts he craved, though. Martin wanted to understand the way the world worked, down to its core.

He began tearing larger, more powerful secrets from his crewmates. When at port, he'd find the most learned theologians, academics, or mystics and stalk their sleep repeatedly, stealing knowledge until they had nothing left to offer. Such gluttony might have been enough to awaken a nearby Hero, but Martin was always sailing to a new harbor by the time anyone gained enough power to oppose him.

The more he gained, the more he wanted. Martin became a master occultist. In his quest for knowledge, though, Martin lost sight of himself. In trying to unlock the secrets of death and madness, he sacrificed his fellow crew members by the dozens. In trying to unlock the secrets of the unseen world, he captured and tortured more than a few supernatural creatures.

Martin's sanity suffered as he traversed farther and farther into his hunt of secrets. As he spiraled down, he began to resent what he perceived as his confinement — the artificial restrictions of morality, of his ship, and eventually, of his own body.

One moonless night when he was supposed to be on watch, Martin walked to the prow of his ship and dove into the sea. He swam down, as far as he possibly could. His lungs burned for air, but Martin kept swimming. The pressure squeezed his body, but Martin kept swimming. Eventually,



either the pressure or the lack of air proved too much, and “Martin” died.

Free of his physical body, the entity formerly known as Martin was reborn as the Empyrean Swimmer.

DESCRIPTION

The Empyrean Swimmer has divested itself of all possible vestiges of its former humanity. Its previous life as Martin the boy from Galway is now less real than a dream.

The thing that the Empyrean Swimmer remembers most is the yearning - the desire for freedom, adventure, and knowledge. It now swims through the Primordial Dream, investigating lost and forgotten places. On a few occasions, it has even been able to reach the springs of Arcadia and the streams of Hisil. The desire to uncover hidden, occult knowledge has become the Empyrean Swimmer’s Ban.

As for a Bane - the Empyrean Swimmer cannot leave the water. Such things mean little in the Primordial Dream, but

do become meaningful whenever the Empyrean Swimmer touches another realm, including the material plane. Whenever the Empyrean Swimmer manifests, it always appears in a lake, stream, river, pond, or other natural body of water. It firmly resists any attempt to remove it from the water. The Empyrean Swimmer can move over land through water open to the air, such as canals and aqueducts, but not through pipes or plumbing.

In some circumstances, the Empyrean Swimmer may appear on a boat. However, the boat must be at sea (not on a river or docked) and the Empyrean Swimmer cannot go belowdecks; it must remain in the open air and with easy access to the water. Such manifestations are always brief, lasting minutes at best.

When manifesting, the Empyrean Swimmer appears completely inhuman. It has the general body of an octopus, but one covered in coral, barnacles, and wisps of seaweed. Small schools of tiny fish surround the Empyrean Swimmer, mystical attendants who constantly wink in and out of existence. Most alien and disturbing, however, are its eyes. Luminous and bright, one

STORY HOOKS

- A legendary Beast (perhaps even one of the Incarnate) threatens the characters and they must track down their enemy’s personal history if they are to have any insight as to his weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Predictably, however, the Beast has taken care to obscure all accurate information regarding such history. In the course of their efforts to track down this information, the characters discover the existence of the Empyrean Swimmer and realize this creature likely has the knowledge they seek. The spirit gives away nothing for free, though. If they wish to know how to defeat their enemy, the characters need to trade some secret the Empyrean Swimmer does not know. Unless the characters have already built up a store of occult secrets, or possess any particularly juicy personal secrets, odds are they’ll need to find something new. Since the only lore the Empyrean Swimmer reliably doesn’t possess is regarding Kindred, this means the player characters are going to have to visit the local vampire court in the pursuit of new secrets.
- Jinever Marques, despite being a mage, has never been overly concerned with unlocking the secrets of the universe or accumulating untold cosmic power. Jinever uses her powers to build the most wondrous and magical zoological garden in the known world. Her demesne is full of tremendous and rare creatures: bushes of ever-blooming roses watered by the Fountain of Youth, magically constructed unicorns gamboling in their enclosure, captured werewolves contained by electrified silver. Jinever recently learned of the Empyrean Swimmer, and is determined to add it to her next exhibit. For this reason, she hires the player characters — or, rather, attempts to. If the player characters are themselves Beasts, they’ll likely balk at Jinever’s offer and instead turn their efforts to protecting the Swimmer against Jinever’s machinations. After the characters turn her down, Jinever turns to a more amoral team of magical mercenaries, whom the player characters will have to oppose.
- At some point during its travels, the Empyrean Swimmer confronted its limitations. Though it is free to travel through worlds, it remains constrained by water and finds travel through the material world difficult. As a result, the Empyrean Swimmer has chosen to take one of the characters as a protégé — someone it can have perform various tasks on its behalf in exchange for tutelage and protection. The protégé must also be either a Makara or a Collector, though both would be ideal. The Empyrean Swimmer tasks its protégé with goals of increasing difficulty and dangerousness. However, in exchange, the Empyrean Swimmer will teach the character quite a few Nightmares, share fragments of occult lore, or reveal the location of much-coveted magical artifacts.
- A vortex of spiritual chaos draws the player characters in, as disruptions in the Primordial Dream spread chaotic nightmares. The Empyrean Swimmer chose to take one of its extremely rare trips into the material world just as a cabal of mages enacted a portal-closing ritual. As a result of the ritual, all nearby extra-dimensional gateways are now closed. The Empyrean Swimmer is now trapped in the material world. It has never encountered this problem before, and has begun to panic, lashing out at the parts of the world it can still touch. At night, it invades the dreams of nearby sleepers, carelessly stealing Essence in an attempt to return to the Primordial Dream. The characters must figure out what is going on, then help the Empyrean Swimmer return home.

cannot look into the eyes of the Empyrean Swimmer and detect anything kind, compassionate, or human — only an intelligent, yet overwhelming, hunger.

Communicating with the Empyrean Swimmer is a strange experience for anyone who tries. The creature is powerful enough and intelligent enough to have retained language. Somehow, it has also retained a voice and the capability to use it. Its experience as an unbound spirit of the Primordial Dream, however, has caused it to lose all understanding and empathy for the concerns of those still embodied. The only thing the Empyrean Swimmer understands is its ban, the hunger for knowledge. Such acquisitiveness is the only topic capable of holding its attention for any significant length of time. Regardless of the discussion, however, everyone who speaks with the Empyrean Swimmer comes away with the distinct feeling of having brushed up against a wholly alien and inhuman consciousness.

RUMORS

“What most people don’t know is that there are many planes of existence. Even among the people who do know about other realms, they generally only know about one or two. The Empyrean Swimmer has been to all of them, multiple times. You may encounter it in places you never thought even possible. It always comes home to the Primordial Dream, though.”

The Empyrean Swimmer has visited many planes beyond the material and the Primordial Dream. Its favorite is the Hedge, for that realm is beautiful and everchanging, though it also enjoys swimming through the Underworld and learning the secrets of the dead. However, the Empyrean Swimmer feels most at home in the Primordial Dream, and always returns to this realm after a visit elsewhere. Legends of the Empyrean Swimmer have spread within the Beast community and further into other supernatural avenues through its travels. Those that wish to find it may have to seek out rumors from other supernatural creatures and their experiences with the elusive spirit.

“If you want knowledge about things beyond your own front door, you need to seek out the Empyrean Swimmer. I hear tell it has been collecting a great amount of information about all the other supernatural creatures in the world, things they would never want you to know.”

The lives of changelings, mages, werewolves, and other supernatural beings often touch parallel worlds. As a result of visiting these planes, the Empyrean Swimmer has been able to learn a lot about these creatures. The one exception, however, is vampires. Kindred generally exist in no realm except the material — the one plane the Empyrean Swimmer visits the least often. On the rare occasions it does make the trip from the Primordial Dream into Twilight, few vampires have the ability to even perceive, much less interact with, the Empyrean Swimmer. It knows of the existence of vampires, and is aware of the differences between the vampire clans, but otherwise knows nothing about Kindred society. This is a gap in its knowledge which it would like to remedy. Any who seek out the Empyrean

Swimmer must be prepared to share information it does not already have in return for what they are looking for, which is often a difficult task.

“I hear the Empyrean Swimmer has a vast library filled with volumes upon volumes of lore and magical artifacts. They say it keeps these things in some kind of underwater lair; if you can find it, you are likely to find riches beyond your imagining.”

The Empyrean Swimmer is a spirit. It owns nothing, has no possessions, and claims no territory beyond the patch of water it currently occupies. Yet, what the Empyrean Swimmer knows and has witnessed would be enough to fill a library of the sort of which the rumors speak. While it may not specifically own any magical artifacts, it certainly knows where quite a few of them are located.

After obtaining a rare journal detailing the work a mage performed with spirits, the hunter organization Aegis Kai Doru learned of the Empyrean Swimmer. A cell of hunters working for this conspiracy, while looking further into the spirit’s existence, has realized that the Empyrean Swimmer knows the location of many magical artifacts. The cell would like to figure out a way to communicate with the Empyrean Swimmer, though it has no violent inclinations towards it, yet.

Legend: Acquisitive

Rank: 5

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 14, Resistance 11

Corpus: 16

Willpower: 10

Essence: 35

Size: 6

Speed: 24

Initiative: 25

Defense: 8

Influences: Fear ●●●, Water ●●

Numina: Awe, Bane Sense, Drain, Invade Dream, Nightmare Weaponry, Pathfinder

Manifestations: Fetter, Nightmare Apparition, Realm Gateway: The Hedge, Realm Gateway: The Shadow, Realm Gateway: Temenos, Realm Gateway: Underworld, Unfetter

Ban: Must collect secrets, especially occult secrets.

Bane: Cannot leave naturally-occurring bodies of water (or manufactured bodies of water open to the sky and air, such as canals or aqueducts). If the Empyrean Swimmer is tricked into entering a waterless area (such as by being lured into a canal which was then blocked and drained), it may be harmed by mundane attacks.

Notes: The Empyrean Swimmer is not a fighter, though it is magically powerful. If threatened, it simply swims away (possibly into another realm). Only if the Empyrean Swimmer is trapped or cornered will it fight back — and only to end the conflict quickly and decisively. Few other beings have the ease of movement that the Empyrean Swimmer enjoys, and it knows pursuit is difficult.



ADAM CUTLER

THE SILVER BAY SERPENT

Don't think about what's happening those thousands of feet below you.
You really don't want to know.

BACKGROUND

The waters just below the bluff were widely known to be treacherous, but they had always called out to him. Siren song wasn't the phrase; the waves that beat against the cliff felt safer than land ever had, and though swimming in them as a child always earned a swift call to come out and a lecture as he was ushered back into the house, he never listened for long. He couldn't. The little dwelling just down the hill from the lighthouse wasn't home; the rolling waves and cold, salted water were where he was always been most at peace.

As he grew older and watched the waves of summer people come and go from his sleepy cape town, the nightmares began. Beneath the placid waves lived giant, malevolent creatures, things that lurked in water far too shallow to house them, things that loathed the influx of bodies to their home. They brought poisons with them — the chemical lotions, the gas and oil from their motorboats, the waste from beachfront picnics — and cared little, if at all, for what they did to the water they invaded. When the waves frothed and foamed with motion and the tourists ran screaming, he waded in peacefully, almost in a trance. The world shrank around him as every step brought the water up higher — ankles, shins, knees, thighs, and chest. The undertow would grip him when he lost his footing, yanking him further into the vortex of white water and into the nest of the behemoth creatures so enraged by the intrusion upon their home. The trance always broke when one of them brushed his skin, slick eel scales or rough shark sandpaper, the phantom grab of seaweed or tentacles, or the unbreakable grip of an octopus' suction-cup arm. They thrashed more violently for a moment once they were aware of him, then, in terrifying unison, fell still.

The grip would return, usually the same creature that brushed him but occasionally another, and drag him below the surface, leaving his last breath of air a shriek above the water. Dragged into the murky depths with the bodies of the monsters pressing in, robbed of what little breath he'd managed to keep as they crushed from all sides, he felt his lungs burn in desperation as the rest of him turned colder and colder. Currents of icy water were the only things that marked his descent, the world around him black and cold, and his lungs crying for air as they continued down. By the time he was numb all over, a flare of bioluminescence would stab at his eyes, bright blue-white in the dark of the bottom of the world. As it faded, looming in

the lingering afterglow, he could see the teeth, and woke up just as the jaws flashed open to consume him.

His mother called the dreams common sense; he was learning that the ocean was a power to fear and the craggy bottom of their little bay was dangerous. As they persisted alongside the continued pull to the water, he knew they had to be something else. They returned with increasing frequency as time went on, more ferocious on days when he had been diving in search of answers to his nightmares. What he would do if he found the cove of such mammoth and violent creatures, he had no idea, and yet the desire to find and know was something he couldn't ignore.

Near the end of the summer season, when the beaches were finally beginning to empty again and the barest hints of autumn were nipping at the air, he woke well before dawn from the same haunting nightmare. He slipped quietly out of the house and mounted the hill where the lighthouse stood. The trance from the dream persisted, drawing him to dive the 60 or so feet down from the bluff, into a part of the bay largely unexplored due to rock formations blocking the way. It wasn't long until what called to him made itself known, a piece of wood lodged in the murk and muck of the sand, bearing faded letters that might have once said *Carey Marie*.

His prize — the length of his entire arm and no fewer than six inches tall — came free with ease as he pulled at it and carried it ashore. Returning to his home, he wrapped the piece in a towel and tucked it away in his closet with gentle reverence, then fell into the waiting arms of the dream that still hung about him. This time he witnessed it from a different perspective: yes, they were running, but he no longer had to approach. He was the serpent in the water, writhing and thrashing with his brethren, churning the water into white froth and foam. When he woke again, it wasn't the green eyes he knew that opened, but the slitted yellow eyes of the serpent, in the cold and fathomless dark of the very bottom of the world, under the comforting pressure of countless gallons of water. Just outside was the familiar lighthouse, or his version of it, creaking under its own weight and treacherous to uneducated feet, moored on an island hardly big enough to hold the structure. Home, he reflected, truly was where the heart was.

Life was easier after that, as Adam established a kind of symbiosis with the serpent in his soul. The Horror was never content far from water, but that was easy enough to appease,

and so too was its craving for the names of those who dared to challenge the open sea and declare themselves its master. College was the best of times, an excuse to study abroad and visit foreign shores, claim footholds in new places, and collect exotic names. He found Chambers he could have claimed as his own wherever he went, but he had little love for them; much more satisfying was making one that was unquestionably his own.

Earning a degree in marine biology ensured a life near the water, and almost certainly a healthy supply of names when he needed them. Yet, for all his travel, he was always drawn home, to his lighthouse and his little bay, needing to make them his. The Horror was not content to simply be, it wanted to be known, to take back the comfort from those who so foolishly thought the water was always safe and could never hurt them. To that end, he found himself occasionally trawling areas of the ocean known to be treacherous, and spent a particularly satisfying summer in the Bermuda Triangle. The tropics were never home, though; the waters were too warm, too clear, and he longed for his murky Atlantic. Little by little, he stretched his influence, his patience wearing thinner with the years, and his list of names growing longer and longer, individuals drowned far out at sea or whole vessels swallowed by the hungry tide. Sean. Michael. Paul. Gina. Rosey. The Fair Freedom. The unique and contradictory Shoreman's Home.

Stories about his hometown began to spread, the waters strangely deadly for such a quiet town, the weather so unpredictable. Clear skies darkened to black in an instant, the lazy tide suddenly turning ferocious. Kayakers who had pushed themselves too hard, swimmers who had overestimated their endurance, boaters certain they could navigate the treacherous cove, all swallowed by the water. It drove some away, yes, but drew others: bolder individuals who wanted to study the strange phenomena, or challenge it more directly. Either personality suited the serpent's needs equally well.

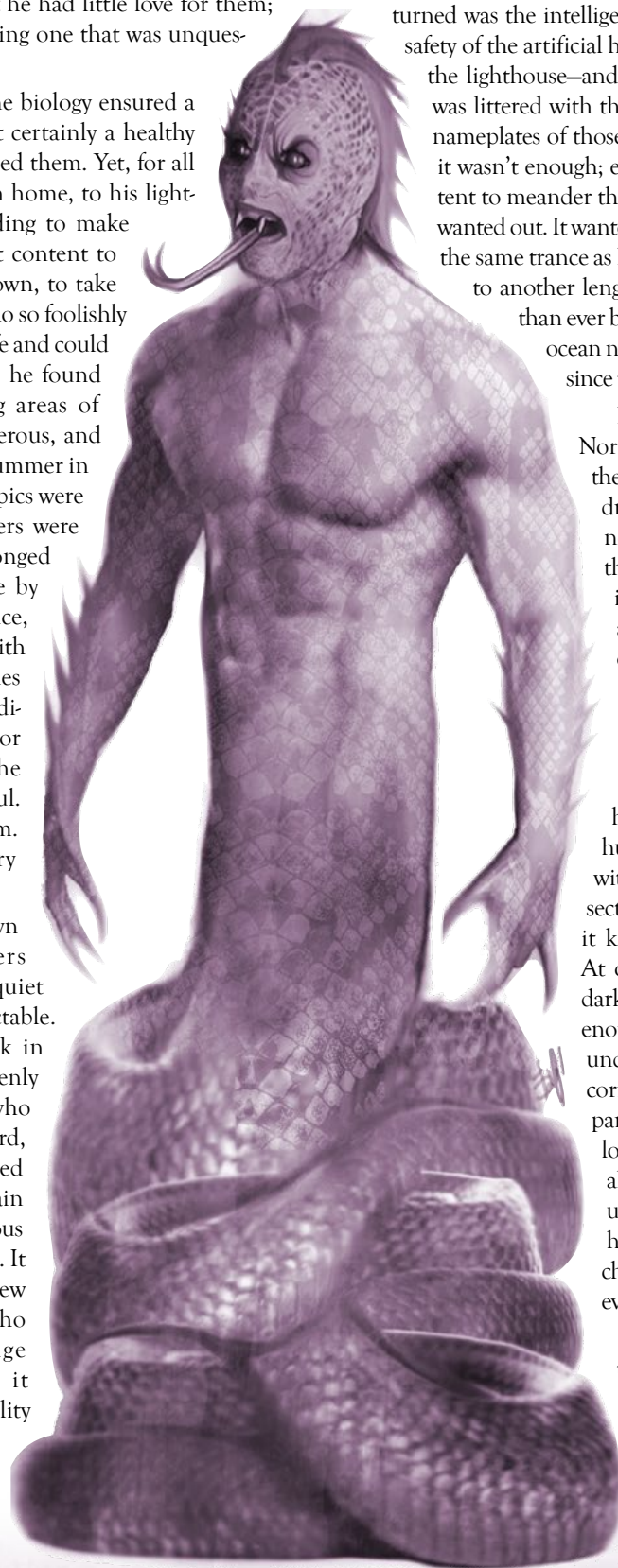
THE LEGEND GROWS

In the intervening decades, his parents passed and left everything to Adam. The serpent delighted in having control over the safety of those caught out in storms. The marina was safe; pulling the boats in for the night or when the weather turned was the intelligent thing to do. Those beyond the safety of the artificial harbor were fair game and, in time, the lighthouse—and his increasingly sprawling Lair — was littered with the IDs of individuals and the torn nameplates of those vessels the serpent claimed. Still, it wasn't enough; every year the Horror was less content to meander the same Chambers and Burrows. It wanted out. It wanted more. It drew him once again, in the same trance as he had been before his Devouring, to another length at sea, to another dive, deeper than ever before. The pressure and cold of the ocean no longer bothered him; they hadn't since the dawn the serpent awoke in him.

It led him now again to a site in the North Atlantic, where he plunged into the icy depths of the water, reliving the dream again but awake this time; not needing air to breathe, not needing the light to see, guided only by intuition and the current of the ocean around him. Any and all manner of aquatic life avoided him, moving hastily away as he continued down for hours (or was it days?) before finding the fabled shipwreck.

It sprawled across the ocean, half the ship here, the other half hundreds and hundreds of feet away with its own sea of debris between the sections. The serpent was delighted; it knew this place. It remembered. At once, as Adam's eyes probed the dark and finally came upon the one enormous piece it was looking for, he understood. Underneath the rust and corrosion, only three letters were even partially legible — A N I — but the location and the serpent's memories all fell into place. They had called it unsinkable, they had ventured into his territory, and he had taken their challenge. The Titanic had sunk, like everything else that challenged him.

He could feel the doorway there, as he explored the ancient wreck, and felt the overwhelming urge to make it his. It was something not simply requested but demanded by the Horror. He felt the serpent writhe with sick, eager joy as it joined the rest of



STORY HOOKS

- The tightly-knit local community has turned on the characters, the outsiders, and accused them of being responsible for the recent string of disappearances relating to the Silver Bay Lighthouse. The characters must investigate the problem and clear their names.
- A member of the brood came into the possession of an antique boat nameplate. The group traded it away to a mage in payment for services rendered earlier that year. It turns out that the nameplate was stolen from the serpent's hoard. He demands the characters repay their debt — either by returning the stolen property or paying in blood.
- During a trip, a storm causes the characters to make an unexpected landing in Silver Bay, forcing them to remain until it blows over. From the first night, the brood suffers nightmares induced by the serpent. They get the overwhelming sense that the Apex here does not like outsiders. They must meet with him and appease him before he kills them outright for trespassing in his territory.

his Lair. He followed it soon after to see what it looked like from the other side, and found himself exploring a very similar scene, this one in motion. Underneath the water, the shrieks and groans of tearing metal resonated for miles as detritus sank unendingly. Ecstatic, he wove in and out of the punctured hull, swam between the two halves of the perpetually doomed vessel, and reveled in the satisfaction of such a glorious victory.

Upon returning at long last to the long-deserted wreck in the waking world, he felt his next breath fill him more deeply than it ever had before, and a feeling of wholeness came upon him as he felt himself change. The tiny human body at the bottom of the ocean was no more, at least for now; at once he was the serpent, the enormous, sleekly muscled body his, in his true home. They were more one than ever, and that way they would remain. His quest was finished, and he had his answers.

He kept the serpent's form the entire way home, his little boat forgotten, unnecessary. While he knew the way his Horror had moved before, it was pure magic to stretch and flex and use these muscles, and feel them as his own! The storm clouds gathered as he swam, following behind him, darker and more ominous every mile until he breached the inlet that led to his cove. The winds had already drawn the tide into ferocious breakers. The clouds blotted out all sunlight, belching thunder and slinging lightning. The waters thrashed around his coiling body as they always had in the dream, and he reared up, meeting the revolving eye of the lighthouse before flinging his head back and unleashing a roar that rang through the town and the Chambers of its Lair, letting everyone know — mortal, Begotten, his more distant brethren—this was his power, his doing, his town, and his storm.

DESCRIPTION

The problem with humanity is just how petty and boring it is, and an Incarnate has little sympathy to spare.

In the event that Adam appears as a human, he is solitary and unobtrusive to behold, with the thin, specialized muscular build of a swimmer. Though he is quiet and reserved, he is always alert and carefully takes stock of everything around him. He carries himself with an aura of supreme confidence, needing no words to express his natural superiority. To some, this nature is offputting; the constantly-calculating look in his eye and dismissive nature of his demeanor are intimidating or infuriating. Yet, even those most incensed by such an attitude find that they falter after a few moments of his unyielding scrutiny.

The air around Adam is just a bit colder and carries the scent of the ocean. His long hair is slightly damp, and his skin looks stretched too tightly over his body, leaving bony ridges jutting out in sharp angles and muscles on display in stark relief. Combined with a near-permanent scowl, these give him a constant lean, hungry look. When stationary, his stillness is inhuman, but when provoked, his motions are sinuous and graceful, made more eerie in their speed and precision by the elongated quality of his limbs. More obviously between his toes than his fingers, his appendages are slightly webbed.

Thick, moss-green scales with a dark stripe pattern cover Adam's serpentine body. A spiny fin runs along the length of his body in the same manner as an eel, and his face and body are dotted with touches of bioluminescence. His eyes are enormous black holes that dominate most of his bony face, sitting just above the rows of sharp, needle-like teeth in his distensible jaw.

While he is not particularly against working with other Beasts, he is also not particularly for it. Having built his name and legend largely on his own over decades, begging for help is something he sees as unnecessary, and woe be unto the Beast if the task she requires aid on is something Adam thinks she can handle on her own. Undoubtedly the Apex of his region, he prefers those that inhabit it to fall in line and disturb him as little as possible, remaining a minacious, lurking figure rather than an obvious or friendly presence. To this end, the Chambers of his local hive have taken on his Decayed Lair Trait, pervaded by the stench of rust and salt while everything inside groans and creaks in an ominous way. One missed step or slip, and everything can come crashing down on a careless individual.

If there is something worthy of his attention, Adam never offers aid without a reward. The promise of new names for his hoard is a good motivation, provided he is hungry when found, and he is more likely to agree to help if the threat directly involves his beloved ocean. However, if a payment fails to come through, or is not satisfactory in his opinion, he will not hesitate to take whatever he wishes to make up the deficit.

RUMORS

"It happens at least once a summer. A perfectly calm, sunny day, not a cloud in the sky, and then out of nowhere, the worst storm you've ever seen. I'm talking hurricane levels. The sky just turns black, and you've got maybe five minutes. No one in the water after the

rain starts ever makes it to shore. Some people, ones with houses close to the water, say they can see something in the bay. Same story, year after year, different people every time. A huge serpent in the bay."

Everyone's had a temper tantrum, but most don't come with tsunamis and gale-force winds. Adam's lesson is a simple one: respect the water and what it can do. The first storm comes as a warning, and others follow if Adam deems them necessary. In the off season, once fall and winter hit, the storms mellow in scale but increase in frequency, and sightings of the serpent creature increase, as do instances of boats washing up ashore that appear to have been torn clean in two before sinking. Getting caught up accidentally in one of these storms is easy, as they can rage for days and affect the area for miles around.

"That lighthouse, on the hill there? The owners died years ago. Left it all to their son. They were townies, never traveled much. But, the boy just vanished one day. The lighthouse, though – it's never stopped working. It's funny...doesn't seem to spare many ships. Nights with a new moon, there's always something dashed on the shore in the morning. No one around here will go inside. They say someone tried a few years ago, talked a big game about how they could take on anything inside, ghosts aren't real, all that. Vanished, just like the boy."

If the locals don't like something, there's usually a reason. The lighthouse, well maintained and fully functioning, never shows any sign of people entering or leaving. Despite its apparent abandonment and the influx of bored teenagers every summer, it doesn't have a speck of graffiti or a single broken window. In some ways, that's what makes it eerie. After years of standing and serving as a Chamber in Adam's Lair, it has also developed its own aura that discomfits most mortal beings and signals to other supernatural beings that it is a place of not-inconsiderable power. On some occasions, the guiding light of the beacon becomes disorienting in the gloom. As for the disappearances, poke a sleeping bear and it'll only stay sleeping for so long. Occasionally, the door to the lighthouse will not just lead inside, but to the Chamber, where the would-be investigators invariably get more than they were looking for.

"The fog comes in sometimes, real thick. Too thick, some say. Can't see your own hand in front of your face, but you can hear. Something's moving. Something's hunting. If you hold still, keep to yourself, it won't bother you. When the fog comes in, some of them start screaming. I overheard someone talking about a dream they had once, walking and walking in a real thick fog, until the ground wasn't there anymore. Woke up when they started to fall, but not before knowing something was watching them. Maybe that's what makes 'em start to holler. When the dream starts coming true."

The best teachers know that different people learn different ways, and having more than one teaching technique is most effective. While at one point Adam's Hunger may have been confined to those straying in open water, since his ascension to Incarnate, his boundaries have widened. When Adam is hungry and the water is quiet, nightmares lash out at the people of the town, and those that react to the fog rolling in become targets for more personal, specialized lessons. On these occasions, Adam is more likely to hunt in his human form, inflicting savage nightmares upon those nearby as he collects what he considers to be his, prowling the fog for those fool enough to scream or run.

Myth: Storm-King Serpent

Family: Makara

Hunger: Hoard (Names)

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 6, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 7, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 6, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics (Nautical) 4, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 5, Larceny 2, Survival 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Tough Love) 3, Socialize 2

Merits: Demolisher 2, Killer Instinct 3, Killer Instinct (Advanced) 1, Patient, Safe Place 4, Spoor 3, Striking Looks 1

Atavisms: Cyclopean Strength, Heart of the Ocean, Looming Presence, Monster From the Deep, Needs Must, Storm-Lashed

Nightmares: Behold My True Form!, Fear Is Contagious, They Are All Around You, You Are Not Alone, You Deserve This

Lair: 10 (Decayed, Flooded, Fog, Heavy, Maze, Poor Light, Undergrowth)

Health: 9 (19)

Willpower: 6

Satiety: 4

Size: 5 (15 when in his Beast shape)

Speed: 17

Initiative: 11 (21 with Uncanny Speed)

Defense: 11

Armor: 10 (0 against Anathema)

Beast Shapes: Impenetrable Skin, Legendary Size, Piercing Sight, Splinter, Terrible Mein, Uncanny Speed



KIELE KANO

THE SKY CRAWLER

<The swift unspooling of silken threads, faint against the silence>

BACKGROUND

As a child, Kiele Kano had an insect collection that she loved to display under glass. She kept a pet tarantula in a tank and liked to watch it eat. Her teachers called her observant, but her classmates called her a snoop. She had a long and accurate memory, and was unfairly accused of cheating on exams more than once simply because she remembered her studies perfectly. Kiele wasn't popular, but she didn't much mind; the more people avoided her, the more opportunities she had to inspect them from afar.

By high school, she was no longer inspecting them alone, as her best friend Desiree joined her in all things. The two of them made up stories together about the people they watched, imagining they held precious secrets that could destroy lives or win them fame and fortune. One day, when a group of angry girls cornered Kiele in the locker room and demanded to know what private knowledge she'd stolen from them, she was bewildered until one let slip that Desiree had told them about Kiele's pastime spying on everyone, conveniently leaving herself out of the picture.

Kiele confronted Desiree later, who insisted it was just a joke. By the end of the conversation, she convinced Kiele to drop the matter entirely, and soon the two were thick as thieves once again. Years later, when Kiele's nightmares began and her work at college suffered, her now-roommate Desiree was the one in whom she confided. She was a highly inquisitive confidant, asking for every detail of the dreams again and again, and offering interpretations and suggestions for staving them off. Kiele tried them all, but nothing worked.

In her dreams, she stood at the front of a distended lecture hall naked and confused under a spotlight with all eyes upon her from all directions. A thousand faceless people stared and stared, consuming everything she was. Only their eyes were visible in their silent transgression. They weren't supposed to be looking, but they did look, and she was helpless to escape their attention. When she finally realized it was she who saw them as they truly were, and all they saw was an illusion she wore to cover her true nature, she ripped the eyes from their faces, clothing her body with them like a suit, and in that instant she was Devoured. She became the spider queen of 1,000 orbs, building lofty webs and seeing everything.

Kiele told Desiree about this, too, trusting her truest companion implicitly. She explained her need to find bad people to

punish for their dark secrets, just like they used to pretend, and took the encouragement she received to heart. She pursued her Hunger enthusiastically, believing she could teach wrongdoers to straighten out and improve their lives.

Desiree had her own secrets, though, and she wasn't sharing. The night Kiele transformed from human to Beast, her best friend was dreaming her own Primordial dreams, and felt the transformation like a slap to the face. Desiree spent several years trying to ignore her instincts, but every day, in her eyes, Kiele was more the Horror and less the person she had known for so long. Eventually, she bought a gun and hid it in anticipation of a time when she would need to take action. It all fell apart the night the two couldn't agree on who deserved Kiele's predations. The Beast was famished and couldn't wait any longer to feed, but Desiree had stood by long enough. As Kiele turned her back on the Hero to take to the streets, a gunshot sounded from far too close by. Reeling with shock and pain, she escaped to her Lair to recover, and never went back home again.

Kiele wanted to forgive the one she'd long considered a sister, but resentment burned cold inside her arachnid heart — not just for Desiree, but for herself. For all her 1,000 eyes, she'd been blind to the enemy plotting right there inside her web the whole time. She needed to punish Desiree for her transgression, but knew that as she was, she could never bring herself to face her own best friend wielding weapons against her. She had to transform again, to shed her human weaknesses. She had to set her Horror free. For the first time, she went on a senseless rampage, feeding indiscriminately on anyone she could get her fangs on. Once her Horror was sated, she retreated back to her Lair and then retreated from the world. The Sky Crawler was born, and its first act was to find Desiree and make her pay.

DESCRIPTION

The Sky Crawler gets its name from its propensity for building webs high in the shadows and watching, waiting, until the time is ripe to strike. To satisfy its ban, it flits from dream to dream searching for those who keep dark secrets from their friends and loved ones, and those who betray trusts. Once it zeroes in on a victim, it slips through the cracks in her dream into Twilight so that it can stalk her unseen to learn the depths of her crimes. Having gathered all the intelligence it needs to pass judgment, it appears to the victim in her vulnerable moments to terrify her, and then it fully materializes to trap and eat her as final punishment, if it finds her sins offensive enough.

The Horror isn't picky about who it hunts, and even feeds on Beasts who engage in deceit and treachery. It does seem to have a proclivity for Heroes, but never materializes near them and only ever feeds on them in dreams, to avoid its bane. While in Twilight, it intimidates small insect spirits into serving as its eyes and ears, traveling far and wide to gather news and rumors that they whisper to it like soothing songs.

Beasts who encounter or seek the Sky Crawler can try to tempt it into allying temporarily with them to harry and weaken a Hero. It refuses to work with anyone, Beast or otherwise, guilty of hiding important truths or betraying his companions, and takes offense at such an offer, attacking immediately. It occasionally assents to working with Beasts against other types of traitors, but it's much easier to convince it that a Hero is worthy of its time. Beasts who themselves run afoul of the Sky Crawler's ban and become its prey have the best chance of survival if they get their hands on a Hero's blood, but the attempt puts them in an unenviable spot between two powerful enemies.

The Sky Crawler appears as an enormous spider, ancient and terrible, with far too many eyes: 1,000 of them, in clusters all over its body. If any are destroyed, it regrows them as it licks its wounds until it has exactly 1,000 again. The eyes, slick with translucent slime and black as midnight, are each as big around as a person's fist and can rotate 360 degrees, giving the Horror a chilling ability to see in every direction at all times. Its fangs are razor sharp, dripping with bile that smells of gunpowder, reminding it always of the first betrayal that set it on its path. Its eight massive legs are covered in coarse black hair, and it can climb any surface, hanging upside down from horizontal ceilings as easily as strolling down a street. It can

even walk on liquid surfaces and skim the edges of gaseous substances like smoke, mist, or clouds, as long as it's in the Primordial Dream. It spins its webs with bloated spinnerets that seem much too large for its body, and while the webbing feels silken at first, those encased in it soon discover that the Sky Crawler spins webs of viscid human hair. When it feeds, it emits a keening screech that sounds like a human scream.

RUMORS

"Beware the great Sky Crawler, servant of Fate, bane of the wicked. It walks on the underside of the sky and combs the stars for tales of human treachery. If it doesn't like what it reads there, it descends from the heavens on threads of starfire to devour you whole. If you are one of the wicked, do not dare to dream, for in dreams its greatest power is revealed."

By ascribing the Horror's hunt to some larger power like destiny or a god, people convince themselves that its actions hold greater meaning, preserving their belief in a sensible, ordered universe. While the Sky Crawler can, and does, traverse the skies along the bottoms of clouds in the Primordial Dream, it certainly reads nothing in the stars and has no particular power to divine the future. It is simply a prodigious spy with access to Twilight and a view into human dreams that ceaselessly punishes because it must.

"She ascended beyond our kind to dwell wholly in the Primordial Dream as the Dark Mother once did, but keeps her many eyes on the world. She slips through to snare people and Beasts alike in her questing webs and takes them away, deep into the Dream, to rot in her Lair until they become shadows to do her bidding."

Beasts pass along stories of the Sky Crawler in hushed tones, an omniscient elder sibling that punishes its little brothers and sisters when they misbehave. It does sometimes capture



STORY HOOKS

- A brood shares the unsettling experience of seeing a mass of shining black eyes watching them from the shadows wherever they go. Wherever the eyes appear, they find a Hero not far behind — sometimes hunting them, sometimes unaware of their presence. After some investigation, the brood discovers that the Unfettered wants their help to punish the Hero and fulfill its Hunger without getting too close to it. If they agree, they can dispose of the Hero themselves or put him to sleep and let the Sky Crawler deal with him in dreams, but taking the latter route doesn't satisfy the Horror for long and it comes back for more soon after. If they refuse, the Sky Crawler views the refusal as a betrayal of their kinship and hunts them instead.
- A changeling approaches the characters with a strange tale. She says that in trying to pull a regular nightmare from a dreamer's mind, she accidentally pulled out the image of something else, something she sensed was infinitely larger and more terrifying than a mere dream actor. She doesn't want to run into it while dream-delving and she especially doesn't want it to notice her, so she seeks the Beasts' help investigating what it wants and how to best avoid or appease it.
- A Hero is on the brood's trail, but it's not like any kind of Hero they have dealt with before — it's a dead one. Desiree's ghost hounds them with strange abilities ghosts shouldn't have, like an uncanny knack for tracking them down. Doing their homework reveals to the brood that this ghost Hero isn't just here for kicks: She's trying to find closure for failing to kill Kiele when she had the chance. The characters can discover the pair's tragic story and put Desiree's spirit to rest, but doing so inevitably finds them crossing paths with the Sky Crawler.

prey instead of eating it, usually to drag people into nightmares and leave them there, unable to move, until they madden and die, or confess their greatest crimes. The rumor about turning people into shadows is a false explanation for how the Unfettered knows so much about everyone it comes across.

"A monster lives here. You'd never know it if it found you, though, not until it's too late. It appears to you as a dark-eyed man or woman. It seduces you into betraying everything and everyone you love, until you've given all of yourself to it. Then it drinks your blood, your pain, and everything else, and leaves your empty husk behind for your scorned family to find."

This rumor is the product of confused stories that come out of an area where the Sky Crawler and a vampire compete for food. People know they find victims drained of blood, and they know that something makes their friends and lovers turn against them for what seems like no reason. The latter problem stems from the

Horror using its Influence to intensify smaller betrayals that already stir in people's minds, though the Influence isn't powerful enough to create them from nothing. The rest is hearsay and speculation turned into whispered warnings over beers at the local bars.

"My Mastigos buddy told me a real doozy the other day. There he is, traversing the Temenos, minding his own business, when he runs across what he thinks is your run of the mill nightmare goetia. He figures he can handle it. Boy is he wrong! It traps him in its web and scares the shit out of him, 'til he spills all his secrets. Stuff he's never told anyone. He said he's never seen anything like that monstrosity, and he thinks it's still following him around even now. He thinks it's an acamoth and the Abyss is seeping into the Astral, but the way he said it...it sounded kind of familiar. Like I've had that dream before, you know? Maybe we all have."

The mage who originally told this story was either confused or he lied. The Sky Crawler has no way to enter the Temenos. The story itself, though, is true: The Mastigos somehow found his way from the Temenos to the Primordial Dream in his Astral travels and encountered the Unfettered on its home turf. His assumption that it was an Astral native cost him the victory, as his magic didn't function like he thought it would. The Horror didn't like what it learned from him there and stalks him still from Twilight.

Legend: Unforgiving

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 8, Resistance 5

Corpus: 15

Willpower: 10

Essence: 25

Size: 10

Speed: 25

Initiative: 13

Defense: 7

Influences: Fear ••, Betrayal •

Numina: Awe, Drain, Entrap (below), Invade Dream, Nightmare Weaponry (Fangs), Omen Trance

Manifestations: Image, Materialize, Nightmare Apparition, Twilight Form

Ban: The Sky Crawler must punish those with dark secrets. What constitutes a dark secret is often up to interpretation, but if the target believes he has committed an act he needs to keep secret, the Sky Crawler has a compulsion to punish him.

Bane: If the blood of a Hero touches the Sky Crawler, she loses access to any of her Numina or Manifestation effects.

Notes: The Sky Crawler's Entrap Numen uses sticky webbing made from human hair, thin but unyielding.

Numen: Entrap

The spirit uses ooze, webbing, tentacles bursting forth from the ground, a heavy weight, or even an arresting voice to stop its quarry in her tracks from a distance. This Numen costs 2 Essence to activate and is contested by the victim's Dexterity + Supernatural Tolerance. If the spirit succeeds, one opponent within a number of yards equal to the spirit's Finesse suffers the Immobilized Tilt with a -4 penalty; the Durability of the "item" holding her is equal to the spirit's Rank + 1 for every 2 additional Essence spent, and the spirit is free to take other actions while its prey is restrained.

ALVIN ZANE

SLIMY LOBBYIST

You'll spend tonight at a luxury hotel playing a game involving lines of white powder, a \$100 bill, and a woman young enough to be your daughter. Whether or not the police catch you in the act depends on whether you convince the committee to send this anti-drug bill to the Senate floor today.

BACKGROUND

Alvin Zane's great grandfather was a steel baron who made his fortune during the early 20th century. His grandfather sold his stake in Zane Steel and used the proceeds to create Zane Plastics, which swelled the family fortune even more. His parents began investing heavily in robotics and computer companies when those technologies were still largely unknown outside of science fiction. By the time Alvin was born in 1966, his parents' fortune exceeded a billion dollars.

Alvin's parents spent very little time managing their empire. His father often joked that they spent more time writing checks to their favorite charities than sitting in on board meetings. They were noted philanthropists who made large donations to the colleges, art institutes, and charities that served the people of Chicago. They also made significant donations to candidates for political office and were active in the local political scene, and young Alvin grew up watching these interactions with great interest.

Alvin's parents did everything they could to foster a close relationship with their son. His mother helped him with his homework. His father took him camping. They took him to church every Sunday and on trips all over the world every summer. They shared their love of music, art, and books. They worked to teach him self-control and humility even as they lavished him with praise and showered him with gifts.

In spite of all that, Alvin never really loved them the way he knew they deserved. He watched other children's faces light up when a father picked them up from school. He saw kids cry piteously when they thought a mother had left them behind. Many of his peers had parents who were too busy to come to every school play and band concert. A few even had abusive mothers or fathers who never failed to belittle them. Yet, all his classmates still loved their parents and yearned for their approval. Alvin simply didn't, and that knowledge pained him tremendously. He suffered the same sense of disconnection in all his relationships. People were just an arrangement of knobs and levers to him, and if you pulled this one you got that reaction.

In an art class during his senior year of high school, Alvin found himself staring at a picture of a weeping saint kneeling

at the bottom of a pit. A hideous creature with a lion's body, a human's face, and a scorpion's tail stood behind him. He read the caption, which explained that it was a depiction of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet who saw his nation's downfall ahead and failed to convince the stubborn kings and priests to do anything to stop it. No one really knew how medieval artists had come to associate him with the mantichore, since the monster was best known for eating people.

Alvin couldn't shake the mantichore from his mind. It began to haunt his dreams. Sometimes it pounced on him, pinning him to the earth and baring its fangs inches from his face. Other times he was the mantichore, stinging fallen prey with his tail before eating them. Many nights he whispered in the ears of those who coveted power and offered it to them in exchange for obedience. If they accepted this offer, he would drive them to increasingly terrible acts of depravity until their actions finally destroyed them. As with the traditional deal with the Devil, once the mantichore's victim sealed her bargain with it, she could not renege.

The night before his 18th birthday, Alvin had his most vivid dream yet. In it, the mantichore offered him a choice: his life as it already was or the life of a monster. Even knowing that he could not take back his decision, Alvin didn't hesitate before choosing the monster. A life spent stripping the power-hungry of their power wasn't exactly the sort of vocation his parents and school guidance counselor would have chosen for him, but he knew it suited him perfectly.

GAINING A FOOTHOLD

Alvin spent the next six years integrating himself into Chicago's political machinery while studying law at the University of Chicago. Through trial and error, he also learned how to feed his hunger for power. At first, he tried to make meals of his peers as they competed with him to canvass neighborhoods and register voters, but Alvin ultimately found these meals unsatisfying except when he was starving. Most of them were volunteers or low-paid workers, after all, so they didn't have a strong need to compete with Alvin. Those were lean years, and twice his Horror attracted the attention of Heroes he only narrowly eluded.

It wasn't until he started building a reputation as a cam-

paign manager that Alvin was able to feed regularly. Defeating his candidate's political rivals and leaving their careers and lives in tattered, scandal-plagued ruins kept the Horror from hunting prey on its own, but he longed for more. Then, when he was 35, both his parents died in a car accident, leaving Alvin the sole heir of the Zane fortune.

With nearly unlimited capital at his disposal, Alvin came into his own as a Beast. He contributed to political campaigns and manipulated circumstances to put his prey into office. Then he would threaten to withhold further contributions unless they used the powers of their offices the way he demanded of them. Some balked, but more than enough caved to provide Alvin with a steady food supply. Whenever he felt a little peckish, he would show up in a politician's office and make outrageous demands to remind her of her relative powerlessness. If the loss of a wealthy donor wasn't a strong enough threat, Alvin could trot out blackmail easily enough.

Over the last 20 years, Alvin has mastered his feeding technique. He runs at least six different PACs and Super PACs and boasts that half the elected officials in the state owe their allegiance to him. Alvin pays particular attention to ambitious politicians whose views are strongly opposed to his own, but who are careless about accepting campaign donations. Perhaps once an election cycle, he picks one of these rising stars as his special prey. He funnels huge campaign contributions into the politician's coffers and buys prime advertising spots in support of his victim's candidacy. If the candidate wins the election — and most of the time he does — Alvin approaches his prey in private and offers his congratulations. A few weeks later, the Beast starts making requests — support this bill, throw that case out of court, or press charges against that company.

At first, his requests are all things the victim was planning to do anyway. Then Alvin starts inviting the prey to fine restaurants and top tier golf courses, or he starts showing up at events his victim is hosting. Once in the presence of his prey, Alvin doesn't hesitate to

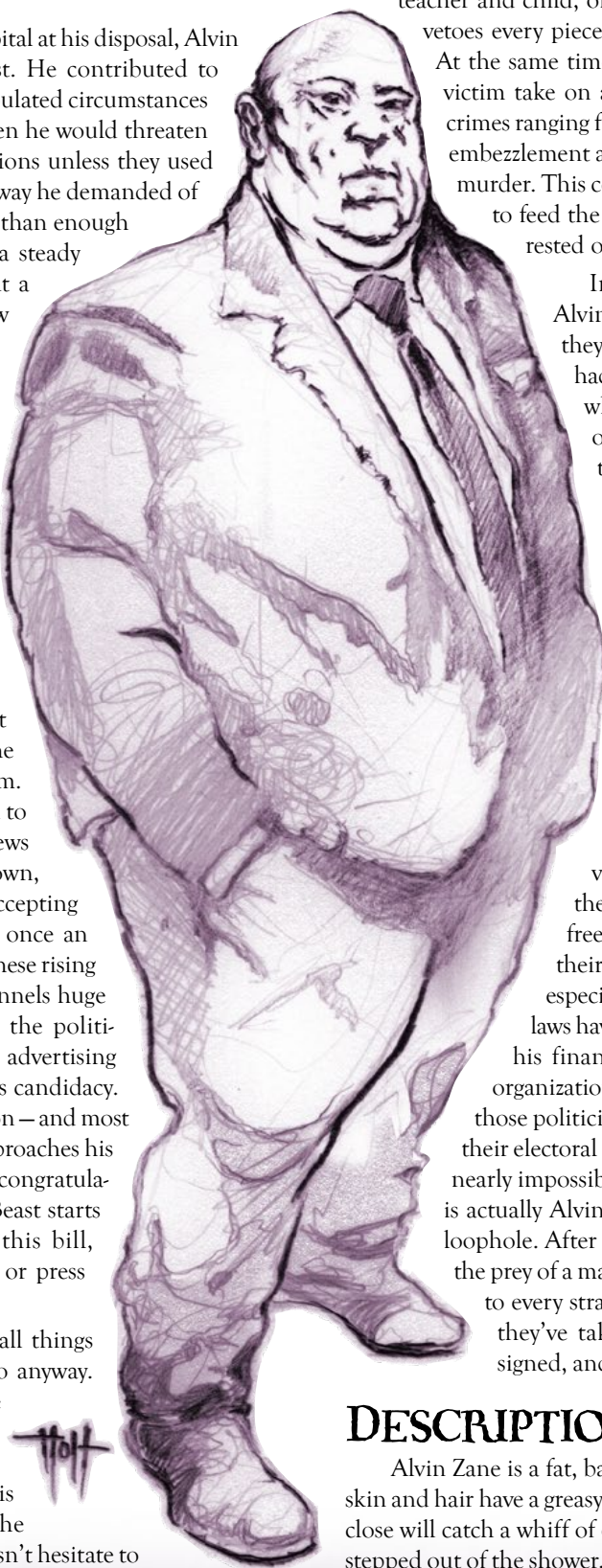
use Nightmares to ensure future meetings. As time goes on, the Beast's requests become more troubling. The prey must propose or pass legislation that is a veritable parody of his political views. A fierce proponent of gun rights proposes a budget that includes supplying schools with enough guns and body armor for every teacher and child, or a small government state governor vetoes every piece of legislation that crosses his desk. At the same time, Alvin's private meetings with the victim take on a darker cast, increasingly involving crimes ranging from petty theft and illegal drug use to embezzlement and sex crimes to armed robbery and murder. This continues to escalate — and continues to feed the Beast — until the victim is either arrested or resigns in disgrace.

In the last 20 years, only three of Alvin's victims have killed themselves as they realized how bleak their situation had become, and one of those killed his whole family before he turned the gun on himself. In the past, Alvin regarded these as something of a disappointment. Early in his career, whenever he felt a need to feed that he couldn't immediately satisfy, visiting his prey in jail — either with offers to help her get out of jail or with assurances that that she will never feel the sun on her face again when he has finished — could take the edge off his Hunger. Alvin hasn't needed to do that in years, though.

Alvin has been at this game for 20 years and has grown fat on his victims' fears, first of losing the power they coveted and then of losing their freedom, their loved ones, and possibly their lives. The last several years have been especially good to him. Changes to election laws have made it even easier for him to mask his financial connection to all the political organizations that exist to feed his Hunger. Even those politicians who suspect he would love to see their electoral aspirations burn around them find it nearly impossible to guess which anonymous donor is actually Alvin. He doesn't hesitate to exploit this loophole. After all, politicians who don't want to be the prey of a manticore shouldn't offer their services to every stranger who offers them money. Once they've taken Alvin's money, the contract is signed, and it's too late to haggle over its terms.

DESCRIPTION

Alvin Zane is a fat, balding white man in his late 50s. His skin and hair have a greasy sheen to them, and anyone standing close will catch a whiff of old sweat. This is true even if he just stepped out of the shower. His clothes are expensive but invari-



ably damaged. If he puts on a tailored new suit at seven in the morning, for example, every staple, nail, screw, or pen finds a way to tear, puncture, or stain it beyond recognition by noon.

He can seem a bit reclusive, and most people become well-acquainted with his money and his staff long before they meet the Beast in person. Alvin is convincing, but he tends to be bad at making arguments that appeal to emotion. If he can't win someone over with reason alone, he tends to default to one of two modes — generosity or intimidation. If he's pretty sure neither approach will work, he excuses himself at the earliest opportunity.

Despite his unshakable emotional detachment and his Hunger, Alvin remains fairly true to his upbringing. Like his parents, his politics are fairly liberal, and most of his victims are of a conservative bent — the better to discredit their political views in the eyes of the voting public. Moreover, while he freely admits that he's a monster, he still feels that he serves God by humbling those who succumb to pride and using their fates to warn others about the hazards of seeking temporal power. He continues to carry the banner of his parents' philanthropy, and although he is by no means gentle with his prey, the city would miss his charity work if ever Alvin suddenly vanished. The fact that he is an unmarried billionaire with no children of his own has only made him more eager to give away his money to the causes he supports.

Once his prey accepts his money, Alvin rarely gives up the hunt, but endeavors to make two exceptions: First, if the victim

returns the money within 10 days, Alvin considers the contract between them null and void. Most of the time, the Beast's prey has no idea who is supporting her campaign until it's too late, but it has been known to happen. Second, if the victim refuses to obey an order but manages to weather all the threats, blackmail, subpoenas, fake evidence of wrongdoing, and supernatural powers the Beast brings to bear against him, Alvin has the grace to consider himself bested and does not manipulate the politician further. This is probably impossible for anyone who does not have supernatural allies in her corner, but Alvin conceded defeat once last term. Come the next election cycle, though, you can expect he'll try again, and this time he'll be calling in a few favors of his own.

Local, State, or National Stage?

This writeup assumes Alvin Zane is a regional power, but his reach can be as short or long as the storyteller needs it to be. In a chronicle focused on the events of a single city, Zane might be a major power behind the throne within that city. If the scale of the story is much larger than that, he could hold an entire nation's politicians hostage (although a commensurate increase in power is probably appropriate in that case).

RUMORS

"Welcome to Zaneland, the best feeding ground this side of the Mississippi! Breathe deep. You can practically smell the fear and desperation of the people who live here. If there is an earthly paradise for

STORY HOOKS

- A gunman goes on a shooting spree in a public place where the characters happen to be at the time. Before they have time to react, the shooter fires on police who gun him down. The killer turns out to be State Representative Robert Butler, a legislator well known for his vocal opposition to gun control measures. Even before the public has time to absorb these events, however, Freedom From Fear PAC issues a strongly-worded demand that the state legislature take up a bill to weaken existing gun control laws — ostensibly in hopes of preventing such tragedies in the future. At the same time, Citizens for Public Safety insinuates that supernatural creatures in the area used mind-control powers to provoke Representative Butler's rampage in order to feed their twisted Hungers. The characters soon come under suspicion and must go to ground to avoid being used as supporting evidence for House Bill 2835. Complicating matters, one of the victims killed in the shooting had a powerful supernatural patron who wants revenge on the characters.
- One of Alvin Zane's representatives approaches the characters and requests their assistance. It seems that after years of playing politics from the shadows, Zane has decided to run for governor, and he wants the characters' help. Why the sudden interest in public office? Alvin claims that he hopes to redeem himself after decades of putting demagogues into positions of power by seizing the governor's mansion and using his political influence to repair the damage he has done. Considering his unsavory reputation among voters, however, he fears that the dirty campaign tactics he has deployed for the last 20 years might not be enough to defeat his opponent, and he hopes the characters will help tip the scales in his favor. They would not be working for free, of course. Zane already wields so much power that he can give the characters just about anything they might want — up to and including protection from the strictures of House Bill 2835.
- Rumor has it that Alvin Zane has his sights set on becoming Incarnate. In the process of expanding his Legend, he has managed to piss off just about every supernatural creature in the state. While no one really wants Alvin to achieve his goal, he has already become too entrenched to simply topple. However, money is the source of the lobbyist's power, and stripping him of his wealth is a sure means to disable and destroy him. A supernatural ally of the characters who is in on the secret invites them to join the conspiracy to part Zane from his money. This might involve con artistry, hacking bank accounts, blackmail, or any other means at their disposal. They can run these scams on their own or team up with other conspirators. Unbeknownst to the characters and their allies, the conspiracy is a tool in the hands of one of Alvin Zane's oldest rivals — one who hopes to fill the power vacuum left behind when the lobbyist's empire finally collapses.

those like us, this is it. The hunting is rich, and local law enforcement is so gormless and poorly funded that you can tear a man's throat out with your teeth and never see the inside of a police car, much less a jail cell. Just one warning: Steer clear of local politics until you know what you're doing. Yeah, the politicians are all narcissistic demagogues so corrupt that they practically leave a trail of slime behind them when they walk, but Boss Zane owns half of them. Trust me. You don't want to get on his bad side."

Alvin selects politicians he thinks he can control once they are in power. In most cases, this means ones he can bribe, blackmail, or coerce into doing whatever he says. Although using smear campaigns, push polls, mudslinging, racebaiting, and fearmongering to get his prey into office has ensured a steady supply of food, Alvin has become a victim of his own success. In order to satisfy his Hunger, he has spent decades putting despicable people into power. Worse, the success of his prey has inspired imitators who have made the heated rhetoric and extreme policies a fixture of the state's political backdrop.

Alvin's predations have made the lives of ordinary people in the region noticeably worse. Citing the state's increasingly unstable economy and troubling social climate, business interests and skilled workers have been fleeing for years. They have left behind an impoverished and hopeless electorate with a high violent crime rate. These social ills have attracted any number of supernatural predators, including other Beasts, vampires, and spirits that feed on suffering.

"My connection to Alvin Zane? I only met him once, back when I was running for a seat in the state House, to thank him for his PAC's generous contribution to my campaign. We talked policy for a bit, which was awkward because I disagree with the candidates he usually supports on pretty much every issue, but then he got this pensive look on his face. 'You seem like a nice guy,' he says to me. 'Why do you want to get into politics?' So, I told him about my immigrant father and my high school civics teacher and how I think our state needs to turn itself around. I mentioned how much my mother had admired Alvin's parents, and I guess it got pretty personal. Mr. Zane sat there quietly and let me talk. When I was done, he says to me, 'If you accept my campaign contribution, I expect you to pass legislation for me that will keep you up at night. I need to know you will do whatever it takes to earn my support.' That sounded shady to me, so I asked for clarification. He told me that my first test would be to skin my pet dog alive and then eat its heart raw. I was shocked, horrified. He says, 'If you aren't willing to play ball, Jeff, then give me back my money.' So, I called my campaign manager and did just that. I lost that race, but guess who threw his support behind my opponent? I don't think my rival ever had a dog, but his son died in a freak accident, right? No matter how crazy it sounds, I can't help but wonder whether that was just the price of accepting the support of Alvin Zane."

Alvin is a fierce proponent of teaching humanity that it is dangerous to accept gifts from strangers. He also believes that a Beast's lessons should instruct everyone who learns of her fate and not just the victim. If a politician rides dirty campaign money to victory and passes laws that actively harm his constituents, only to be forced to resign in disgrace in the wake of scandal, it tells humans that to accept money is to be enslaved by the one offering it. It is not enough to punish only the greedy and ambitious,

though, so Alvin occasionally supports earnest, virtuous, and seemingly incorruptible prey. As his victim becomes as dirty and contemptuous of the will of her constituents as every politician she railed against on the campaign trail, the voters follow the trail of money that leads to the same backers as all the other parasitical politicians in the state. The lesson is that money makes the beneficiary the puppet of her benefactor — and no matter how well-intentioned she might be, she dances when he plays her tune.

Although he won't admit it, the truth is that Alvin uses his Hunger to promote a mundane political agenda. He supports politicians whose positions he abhors because he knows what will happen to them when he feasts upon their powerlessness. High profile scandals and gross abuses of power don't just end the careers of Alvin's victims. They call into question the very policies those disgraced politicians supported, making all who claim to support similar positions look bad by extension. Sometimes Alvin deliberately scares off a potential victim because her fall from grace won't further his real agenda.

"As much as I admire what he has built, Alvin Zane has finally flipped his shit. His new PAC, Citizens for Public Safety, has not only convinced the governor that supernatural creatures exist but that they must be eradicated. If House Bill 2835 soars through Zane's well-oiled political machine the way it's expected to, our paradise will soon be a police state — ubiquitous surveillance, arrest warrants for anyone even suspected of possessing occult connections, and literal bounties on the head of anyone who fails to meekly show up in court on the appointed day. I hear his PAC is supplying intelligence to monster hunters like the Barrett Commission, the Union, and even fucking Taskforce V.A.L.K.Y.R.I.E. so they can exterminate us. It's also secured pledges of financial support from Deva Corporation, which apparently wants to set up some sort of regional headquarters somewhere in the state. This last decade has been really great, but I'm getting out now before Zane gives my address to the first Hero who sniffs around the capital."

Alvin Zane has set wheels into motion to expose, drive out, or destroy all the Children in his territory. Some Beasts argue that he simply can't stand the thought of having competition. After all, others of his kind have carved out feeding grounds by following his example, and clashes between PACs have grown more common. While there is some truth to that, mostly Zane hates that occult parasites have come to regard his constituents as easy pickings. He refuses to believe that his political empire has caused so much damage to the state he loves, and so rival Beasts and the other cousins of the Children make convenient scapegoats for his frustration. The path ahead will eventually spell doom for Zane, but he stands to cause a lot of damage before a rival Beast, the local wizards, a random Hero, or any of a thousand other enemies he has made over the last two decades finally manages to take him down. No one wants to speak the obvious question, though: "Who or what will fill the power vacuum Alvin Zane leaves behind?"

Legend: Seductive

Life: Altruistic

Family: Namtaru

Hunger: Tyrant

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 6, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Politics (Dirty) 5

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Larceny 1

Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation (Blackmail) 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Illicit Entertainment) 2, Subterfuge 5

Merits: Allies (Police) 2, Allies (Politicians) 3, Epic Potential (Manipulation), Fast-Talking 5, Resources 5, Spoor 3, Staff (Politicians) 1

Atavisms: Basilisk's Touch, Eye of Heaven, Looming

Presence, Unbreakable

Nightmares: Run Away, You Are Alone, You Are Better Than Them (Mage), You Can't Wake Up

Lair: 5

Health: 7

Willpower: 6

Satiety: 9

Size: 5 (10 with Looming Presence)

Speed: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 6

Armor: 3/2 (see also Unbreakable)

Notes: The Staff Merit is found on p. 56 of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

JANICE ESTERHAUS

TEARS ON THE SAND

<Sounds of growling and scrabbling, a half-grunt and half-warning bark from a dark building.>

BACKGROUND

Life was never kind to Janice Esterhaus, who would eventually become the Beast Rampant, Tears on the Sand.

She was born the sixth of eight children to a deeply religious family on the East Coast of the United States. Janice's parents believed in discipline for discipline's sake, and Janice was punished harshly, even as a toddler, for what might be just a minor infraction in another family — such as crying, fidgeting, eating too little, eating too much, or refusing to immediately obey an order from her parents.

Though the pastor often preached the virtue of family togetherness from the pulpit of the church Janice's family attended, there was little warmth in the Esterhaus household. Janice's mother was preoccupied with her obligations to seven other children, and her father spent most of his time away from home, working to support his ever-growing family. As a result, young Janice had even more difficulty forming bonds than other young Begotten often do. Nothing in her life supported her social development, and Janice grew up feeling as though crippling loneliness was the normal way of things.

Janice's sense of isolation only increased as she grew from childhood into adolescence. Seemingly incapable of forming a sincere connection with her family members, Janice found she could only get attention by misbehaving and demanding punishment. Her mother would not speak to her except to criticize, and her father would not touch her except to punish. While

her siblings were friendly enough with each other, Janice could not interact with any of them without somehow provoking a fight. Which, in turn, would only bring more punishment down on her small head. Janice didn't necessarily want this kind of treatment; it was merely the only way she knew how to interact with her parents and siblings. Keeping to the rules just meant her family would ignore and neglect her.

A lonely child, her teenage years became a special kind of hell for Janice. Her parents insisted on homeschooling all of their children through elementary school, only allowing them to attend public school starting in the ninth grade. By the time Janice grew old enough to enter high school, not only did she possess sub-par academic skills, her social skills were virtually nonexistent. Her other siblings had helped each other through the transition from homeschooling to public education, but Janice had no one who looked out for her to that extent. One brother made sure she knew where her classes were, but made little effort beyond that.

All Janice had were the tactics she'd honed over her years of being a reluctant problem child. Though her teachers were initially willing to help the pitiful, isolated girl, Janice quickly burned through their goodwill by repeatedly acting out. Detention wasn't much of a deterrent — Janice found she liked having a few quiet hours to herself, and would sometimes deliberately break a rule or two in order to avoid going home. She would earn another punishment, but she knew how to handle that.

Discovering track and field improved life for Janice, but only

marginally. She'd always been naturally athletic, but her stunted social skills meant she wasn't well-suited for team sports. Track and field, however, emphasized individual achievement. Even when Janice participated in team events like relay races, she still had to rely only on herself. Janice took to the sport like a fish to water, excelling rapidly and grateful to have another excuse to keep her from going home.

Her teachers were thrilled that their ugly duckling had finally bloomed into a swan, one capable of running a seven-minute mile. However, Janice's parents were less than pleased with these developments. The track uniforms were immodest, athletic pursuits were unseemly for a young woman, and Janice's small collection of medals and trophies only encouraged the worldly sin of pride.

Janice only completed one year of track and field before her parents forced her to quit. The fight that preceded her quitting was epic, though Janice's coach tried to come to her defense. In response, Janice stopped acting out merely as a strategy to get attention. Instead, she now misbehaved as a way to get revenge on the parents who had taken away the only thing she ever really loved and felt she was good at doing.

Of course, her parents weren't pleased with Janice's growing sinfulness, and their punishments increased in severity and frequency. Janice often went without food or spent her nights sleeping in the cold garage instead of her warm bedroom — and those were her father's mildest punishments. Her only escape came at night. Janice dreamed of the day when the tables might turn, when she would be the one dealing out the punishment rather than suffering it. She dreamed of being bigger and stronger than everyone, of forcing them to love her and do what she said. Alternately thrilled and disturbed by her dreams, Janice couldn't quite let go of the fantasies of control and power. She started sleeping as much as possible to hang onto these alluring dreams, but that only earned her chastisement for laziness.

Janice sought a validation and sense of completeness in her dreams that the waking world denied her. Her Horror found her quickly, an ancient Tyrant known as Tears in the Dark who thrived on the bitter tears of the penitent. Janice welcomed her Devouring with open arms, ecstatic to finally feel like a whole person.

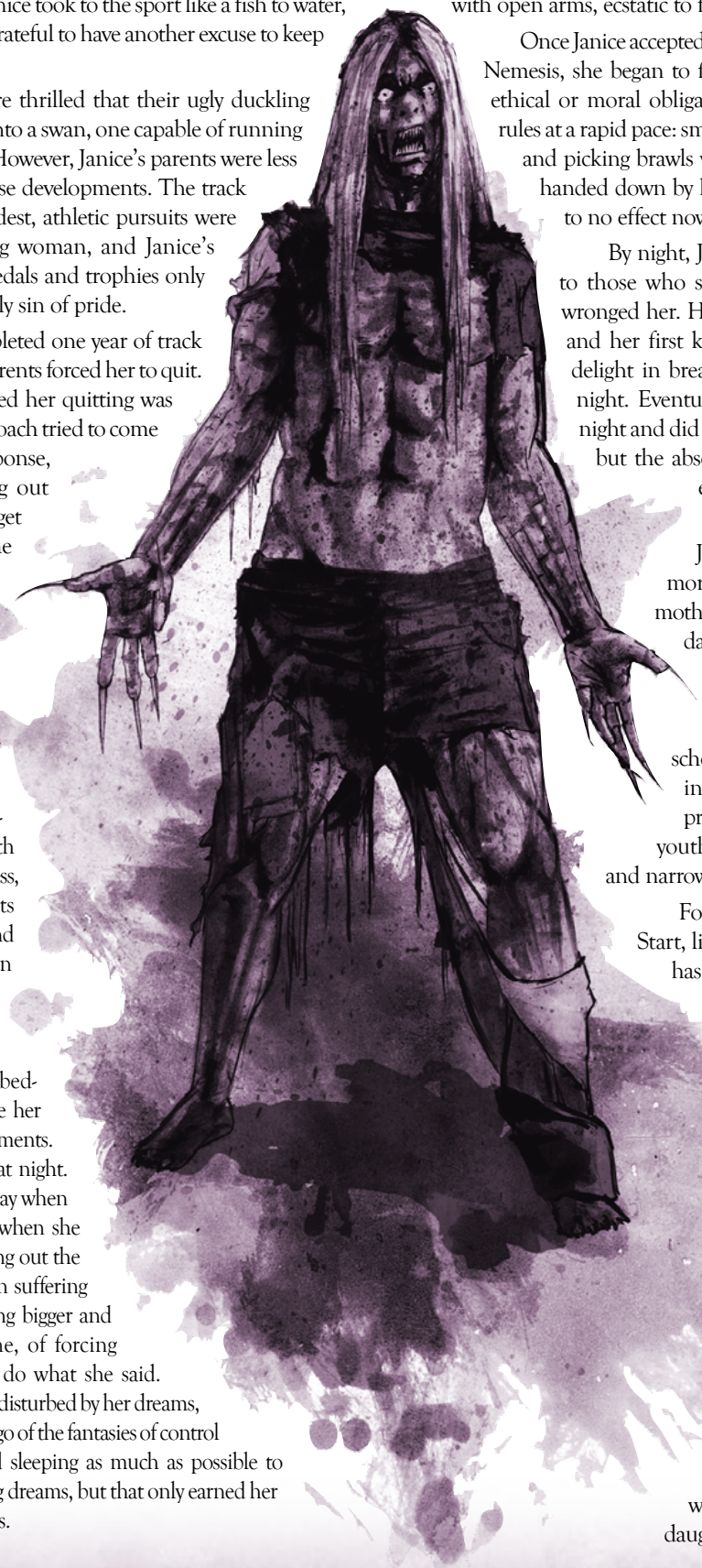
Once Janice accepted her spiritual heritage as an Anakim Nemesis, she began to feel herself free from any sense of ethical or moral obligations. She started breaking more rules at a rapid pace: smoking, drinking, shoplifting, lying, and picking brawls with her classmates. The penalties handed down by her parents and teachers had little to no effect now.

By night, Janice would deal out punishment to those who she believed had most grievously wronged her. Her father was both her first victim and her first kill. Janice's Horror took a special delight in breaking him down, night after slow night. Eventually, he simply went to sleep one night and did not wake up. Not only the murder, but the absolute lack of suspicion on Janice, empowered her further.

Free of her father's abuse, Janice still had to contend with the mortal world. Now a widow, Janice's mother gave up trying to control her wild daughter. Instead, she used part of her husband's life insurance to pay for Janice to attend A New Start for Troubled Teens. Half reform school and half summer camp located in the desert of New Mexico, the program promised to take wayward youths and put them on the straight and narrow.

For a teenager brought to A New Start, life is utter misery. Even boot camp has better conditions. The students, or clients — a euphemism the staff likes to use — have every minute of their day highly regulated. Privacy is nonexistent; even the showers are communal. Education is minimal, as the clients spend most of their day on hard manual labor: digging ditches, building fences, hauling rocks, or cleaning the camp buildings. Those who break any of the camp's myriad of small rules are denied sleep, meals, or even water (a dire prospect in New Mexico).

Had her mother known what would come next, she likely would have done her best to keep her daughter from ever hearing of A New



Start, much less sending her there in an attempt to reform her. Janice, initially resistant to the idea, found she loved the camp once she arrived. Three barracks full of angry, rebellious teens kept in line by an underpaid staff of barely-competent bullies were as a banquet to her. Tears in the Dark feasted again and again, finding ample petty tyrannies to punish.

Janice made her first and only real friend during this time in her life, another supernatural creature named Madeleine. Madeleine had been exploring an abandoned zoo when she stepped through the wrong doorway and ended up in Arcadia, becoming the thrall of particularly cold and vicious True Fae who used Madeleine as a human pet. Madeleine eventually escaped, but the experience permanently altered her. Though Madeleine spent nearly a year trapped in Arcadia, the outside world only missed her for a fortnight.

Understandably, Madeleine had difficulties adjusting to life back in the mundane world, which earned her a trip to A New Start. Initially, Madeleine hated the place, but meeting and befriendng Janice made the stay just a little more bearable for each girl. They relied on each other to survive in the hostile environment, and helped each other cope with being supernatural creatures in a world full of decidedly nonmagical people. Madeleine remains the only person to whom Janice was successfully able to form Family Ties with.

Unfortunately, while Janice was able to help Madeleine cope with being a changeling, the reverse was not true. Madeleine, not understanding the relationship a Beast has to her Horror, repeatedly gave Janice bad advice. She encouraged Janice to explore her more supernatural side and pursue personal power. When Janice followed this guidance, however, the Beast slowly lost her grip on reality. The only thing Janice knew was that she didn't want to leave. A plan came to her.

Miraculously, Janice began behaving at the camp — at least on the surface. Her apparent compliance was part of a long con that achieved completion when Janice earned employment as a junior counselor at A New Start. The facility managers enjoyed hiring graduates of their program, those who had been through the experience and had a better handle on how to control younger, newer students. Janice was a shoo-in for the position and quickly rose from junior to senior counselor, and finally to staff counselor. Madeleine stayed on as well, working hard to help and support her friend, and feeling increasingly hurt that Janice seemed to no longer care for her as she once had. Tears in the Dark was slowly gaining more and more control over Janice, and she had little time for Madeleine.

Janice earned promotions in rapid sequence and Tears in the Dark grew fat on punishment. Janice's Lair quickly expanded to cover the whole compound. Janice had never met another Beast, and no one warned her about the dangers of letting one's Horror have too much freedom. The more she fed her Horror, the harder she found it to resist satiating it further, and the more power her Horror gained over her.

Madeleine eventually realized that she'd recommended Janice follow a path which threatened her soul, and worked extremely hard to try and pull Janice back from the precipice. But, her efforts were in vain. Eventually, what remained of "Janice Esterhaus" was subsumed by Tears in the Dark, and Janice became a Beast Rampant. No longer known as Tears in the Dark, the newly-reborn entity goes by the identity of Tears on the Sand.

Tears on the Sand no longer draws a paycheck from A New Start, as they terminated Janice some time ago for presumed job abandonment. She nevertheless thinks of the camp as hers; the students and faculty alike treats for her to crack open and devour. She's out in the middle of nowhere, safe from any would-be Heroes. Her victims are troubled teens, their stories of abuse and deprivation easily dismissed as the stories crafted by young criminals trying to avoid punishment.

Every 18 weeks, a new crop of potential victims arrives at A New Start. Tears on the Sand likes to find the standouts — the smartest, the strongest, and the best-liked — and break them down. She is especially attracted to male petty tyrants and female mean girls, as those two archetypes brought her so much suffering as a human.

Madeleine remains, a staff counselor plagued by guilt over what she allowed to happen to her only friend. She understands Tears on the Sand's need to hunt and feed, and quietly arranges available victims, covering up any suspicious injuries or illnesses. Madeleine has a hard rule she has been able to make Tears on the Sand understand — no killing.

DESCRIPTION

Janice had a long, successful career at A New Start before succumbing to Tears in the Dark, and appears to be in her late 30s or early 40s, though that's the only human aspect of her remaining.

Now Tears on the Sand stands nearly seven feet tall, built like a cage fighter and covered with a thick, cracked skin that has more in common with an alligator than a person. Her long, formerly-brown hair is matted and coiled, turned the color of desert sand. Similarly, her nails have grown into sharp, jagged talons. Tears on the Sand vaguely remembers the use of clothes, and so wears little more than the tattered, soiled remains of shirts and trousers stolen from her prey. Tears on the Sand only bathes when it rains; as a result, the first hint her victims have of her approach is often the smell.

Tears on the Sand prefers to stay out of sight, sleeping in a storeroom that everyone knows not to go inside during the day. At night, after lights out, Tears on the Sand emerges to hunt. Her Inheritance has given her a preternatural sense of who has broken the rules during the day, and she can zero in on a target with little effort.

As for Madeleine — to mortal eyes, she appears to be a mousy, nervous, brown-haired woman, approximately the same age as Tears on the Sand. However, other changelings (or those who can see past the changeling's Mask) recognize her as a Venombite Kith of the Beast Seeming. As the nearest freehold is a two-hour drive away, and Madeleine refuses to take so much time away from her friend, she has not joined any Court, and is starved for companionship as a result.

Madeleine usually wears khaki trousers and button-down shirts, the general uniform for counselors employed by A New Start, with her brown hair pinned back and minimal cosmetics or jewelry. She avoids notice whenever possible, and attempts to quickly wrap up any conversation someone else initiates with her. The only people to whom Madeleine can truly open up are the students at A New Start; the changeling can certainly empathize with their situation as unwilling captives of forces beyond their control.

Though she works as a counselor, Madeleine's biggest priority is protecting her old friend. She lies, cheats, and steals to keep Tears on the Sand safe from prying eyes. Madeleine refuses to accept that her old friend has become a creature devoid of any human intelligence or warmth. She still holds out hope that one day, Tears on the Sand can go back to being just Janice again.

For her part, Tears on the Sand targets students and faculty alike, though she judges each group by a different standard. Students suffer strict punishment for breaking the rules, while she targets faculty for abusing their authority. If Tears on the Sand judges a faculty member's punishment of a student is unfair, she targets the faculty who delivered the reprimand and spares the student. By and large, Tears on the Sand prefers to punish faculty, but she'll take a student if one is easier to get to.

Tears on the Sand cannot function as a person, including the capacity to make friends or form social ties. Some part of her, deep down, recognizes Madeleine as a friend — she will not harm or attack Madeleine unless Madeleine makes the first move, which Madeleine, considering her deep affection for who Tears on the Sand used to be, will never do. However, no one else gets such a consideration — other people are either a threat, or they are food.

The few times a supernatural creature other than Madeleine crossed her path, Tears on the Sand reacted with a detached fascination. She orbits the creature, constantly watching but far too shy to risk an approach. Madeleine generally figures out what's going on before Tears on the Sand does. Such instances generally consist of teenagers having difficulties coping with their newly-discovered nature: most often, another changeling. When Madeleine recognizes these children, she takes time to direct them to the nearest freehold, saving them from another life in captivity as she now suffers through.

On several occasions, teenagers as lonely as mortal Janice once was, find something drawing them to the abandoned storeroom where Tears on the Sand keeps her nest. They reach out and find some way to look past Tears on the Sand's terrifying outer appearance and befriend the spirit trapped within. Often, these students are nascent Beasts themselves. Tears on the Sand accepts their overtures, their small offerings of food, books, and games. At some point, though, her new friend breaks a rule in order to do something nice for Tears on the Sand, and then she must punish them.

RUMORS

"That changeling at A New Start used to be lovers with that Beast she has holed up there. That's the only reason she's stuck around for as long as she has. It also explains why she's so defensive. She'll fight you if you try to get too close. You want to deal with Tears on the Sand, you gotta go through Madeline first."

This rumor circulates in whispers among those few supernatural creatures who are aware of what's going on at A New Start. Madeleine and Janice loved each other, but theirs was the devotion of lifelong friends with nothing romantic or sexual about their relationship. Madeleine remains largely out of guilt, and a regret that she could not save her friend, which has now become a determination to protect her. Madeleine's guilt over her supposed failure should be enough to keep Tears on the Sand well fed many times over. However, no matter how she feels, nor how many rules

she deliberately breaks, Tears on the Sand leaves Madeleine alone and will not feed from her.

"Tears on the Sand owns the whole place, top to bottom. Madeline might be the face of the operation, but it can't run properly without the Beast to control things. I don't know the legal stuff behind it, but I'm pretty sure they have someone else fronting the business side of things to make it look legit on the surface. I bet you could come in with lawyers and sweep the whole operation out from under their feet."

On paper, A New Start for Troubled Teens is its own company, owned by the husband-and-wife team John and Carol Finch. The Finches founded A New Start over 15 years ago, and own everything from the company trademark to the land and the buildings. Janice merely worked there for several years before merging with her Horror. Madeleine is only an employee. However, on a more metaphysical level, Tears on the Sand does own A New Start, for nothing of significance happens without her being aware of it.

"Nah, man. I'm serious. You're new, so I'll be nice. There's something that lives in that shed out there, and it'll get you at night. If you want to be safe, sneak some food out during lunch and leave it by the door. Yeah, no worries. We gotta look out for each other, right? But, for reals. The thing also don't like messy people. I know the showers suck and the laundry room ain't much better, but don't be a chump. Keep your clothes clean and take regular showers, the way the rules say, and you'll be okay. No, I swear to god I'm not fooling you. This is for real, man. The teachers don't know squat, but whatever is living out in that shed is real."

These, and a host of other rumors, have sprung up amongst the young clients of A New Start. The teens sent to this camp, far more perceptive than the adults tasked with their care, long ago figured out that something else was out there with them. They don't know the exact truth behind Tears on the Sand and her predations, but that hasn't stopped them from coming up with a long list of rules and superstitions which supposedly keep someone safe from her. Returning clients sometimes try to perpetuate these rumors by telling them to the newly-arriving students, but these maxims are just as likely to appear as bathroom graffiti or a note scribbled in the margin of a library book. The exact truth is that Tears on the Sand, as a Nemesis, targets only those who break rules, such as those who neglect the hygiene requirements by wearing dirty socks or skipping showers.

"There is no queen of the werewolves, don't be ridiculous. Even if there were, we would not bow to a creature such as the one that lives by the isolated camp for unhappy adolescent humans. That thing is pathetic and sad, utterly reliant on its fae minder. No, it doesn't control us any more than you do."

Rumors abound about a nearby werewolf pack that claims the desert surrounding A New Start as their traditional hunting grounds. They are aware of Tears on the Sand's existence as a feral monster who haunts the local camp for juvenile delinquents, and of Madeleine's role as Tears on the Sand's minder. At some point, they may have feared her, however, after encountering her as the Beast Rampant, they pity her. To them, she's become an object lesson in the necessity of supernatural creatures retaining at least some semblance of humanity. The pack monitors her, but chooses

not to intervene unless she attracts more attention. They do try to stymie these rumors as they hear them, even resorting to bloodshed to prove their dominance over the territory.

Legend: Punishing

Family: Anakim

Hunger: Nemesis

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Investigation 2, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Grappling) 5, Stealth (Covering Tracks) 4, Weaponry (Improvised Weapons) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 4

Merits: Allies (Students) 2, Danger Sense, Fist of

Nightmares, Indomitable, Iron Skin, Iron Will

Atavisms: Increased Awareness, Limb From Limb, Relentless Hunter, Titanic Blow

Health: 9

Willpower: 8

Satiety: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 13

Initiative: 7

Defense: 6

Armor: 2/2


Notes: Janice lost all facility for speech and higher thought when she became the Beast Rampant. Force is the only thing she understands now. Luring her into an ambush and fighting with strategy gives her attackers a definite edge.

Tears on the Sand has the benefit of Body Warp (for a +2 to Stealth)

STORY HOOKS

- Legends and rumors about Tears on the Sand have circulated among Beasts for years, but no one has been able to get close enough to the camp to verify them. An opportunity to do just this comes to the Brood when John Finch, the co-owner, dies suddenly and his widow Carol decides to sell the business. As part of the process, Carol needs her land surveyed and appraised. By taking the job, the characters gain access to Tears on the Sand. Tears on the Sand, however, can sense the Horrors entering her territory and isn't pleased at the incursion. She makes this displeasure known to Madeleine, and recruits her to help drive the characters away. The player characters must navigate an increasingly-hostile territory while attempting to both complete the job they've been hired to do and learn the truth about Tears on the Sand.
- Suitable for an introductory chronicle, the characters come together as clients, a group of unruly adolescent Beasts who have just gone through or are on the cusp of their Devouring. While Tears on the Sand is hostile to the incursions of adult Beasts, she makes allowances for the newly-arrived fledglings. After all, it's not their fault they're here. Almost instinctively, Tears on the Sand attracts new Horrors to the camp, hoping to help the nascent Beasts go through their Devouring while avoiding the worst abuses by camp staff. Once Madeleine realizes what's going on, she sees the young Beasts as her chance to make amends for what she sees as her mistakes with Janice.
- The characters — who may be clients, faculty, or a mix — face a unique threat when a particularly determined and pitiless pair of Heroes arrive at the compound posing as FBI agents. They're here for Tears on the Sand, whose constant, mindless predations have finally alerted the pair to her presence. Using forged warrants to gain control of the compound, the Heroes run roughshod over everyone in their determination to locate and kill Tears on the Sand. The FBI agents arrive with only Tears on the Sand in their sights, but may become aware of the other Beasts at A New Start as they search. Betraying Tears on the Sand to the Heroes before they learn of any other Beasts at the camp could save the rest; but are the characters willing to sell out one of the family? They must also contend with Madeleine's extreme protectiveness — she may not understand the exact relationship between Heroes and Beasts, but she knows they intend harm to her friend, and she won't stand for it.
- Madeleine contacts the Brood, asking for their help. Over the past several years, Madeleine has been carefully studying whatever fragments of Beast lore she can find. She's desperately trying to understand the nature of the Begotten in general, and what has happened to her friend in specific. After struggling through a particularly difficult occult text written in a Latin cipher, Madeleine thinks she has finally figured out how to turn Tears on the Sand back into her old friend Janice. She needs the help of the characters to perform the magic, however — or at least, she thinks she does. Once the characters arrive and take stock of the situation, they quickly realize that Tears on the Sand is a Beast Rampant, and in their eyes, there's nothing wrong with her. The only 'solution' to her condition is to kill Tears on the Sand if she is too much trouble. Such a solution is unacceptable to Madeleine, despite the fact that Tears on the Sand is acting out more and more violently in response to the presence of the strange Beasts. The characters must determine the best way to bring the situation to a close, even if that does mean eventually killing Tears on the Sand and/or Madeleine.





Abraham politely stepped out of the shoppers' way as they made their way down Washington Street. He nodded his head towards those who met his gaze and said "Happy Hanukah" and "Merry Christmas" to those he passed. Hanukah was always his favorite time of year, as it reminded him of pleasant memories from his childhood, and it always provided him with the misery of others to satiate his Hunger. The Eshmaki smiled to himself as he bid another stranger a welcome.

As he turned the corner, he felt a strange chill go down his spine and goose bumps rise on his limbs. He felt an intense panic fill him, a sensation he had almost forgotten since he embraced his Horror. This feeling was not just strange; it was as if someone was taking something from him. No, not quite like that; it was like someone had stolen a piece of him. No, not him, his Lair.

Abraham raced to his Lair, and was at first happy to see the mountain peaks and flowing rivers of lava that defined his home. But that tense chill from earlier still gripped him, and he raced through the Chambers of his home until he found a stranger sitting at a table. Not only was the stranger not someone he had seen before, but he did not seem out of place. In fact, the stranger seemed to be perfectly content inside of his Lair.

"I am Enlil," said the stranger. "I noticed you had a nice home. It's very pretty. Though it needs a little something on the walls, don't you think? Like the walls don't have a chance to breathe."

Abraham's own lips curled back in a sneer, as his mortal façade broke for a moment and his Horror manifested. The form of a fiery giant overlaid itself over Abraham's form, its anger as red hot as the burning manse that was once his Lair. His lips spat embers and smoke as he spoke to the stranger.

"Another Hero here to meet his end? Such a shame, to die so horribly."

The stranger cocked his head to the side and laughed, though it was not a human's laugh that escaped his throat. It was as if 1,000 mouths laughed at once, and Abraham saw a nightmarish creature staring back at him. It was then that Abraham saw the stranger's eyes had become mouths, and that before him he saw a creature that was floating heads bound together by veins of flesh. Its monstrous form sat upon a trio of tentacles, and everywhere a tentacle touched a dozen spine-filled mouths hungrily gnawed on the floor.

Abraham wanted to crush the interloper and break his bones to pieces, but he decided instead to drive the stranger from his Lair. As Abraham sought to draw upon his home, however, he found it was as alien to him as a stranger's house. The jagged peaks and burning lakes of lava began to cave in and fall into a tumultuous sea where creatures with strange shapes fought each other for the right to exist. The very walls of his cavern began to buck and heave, as they shifted from glazed stone to leathery tissue.

"What have you done?" Abraham's voice was a mere whisper, and he found himself too terrified to touch anything in his own Lair.

A pair of yawning mouths closed and opened as if to simulate the act of blinking, an act as unsettling as Abraham could imagine. The hideous laughter gave way to a ravenous growl from the creature's many throats as it began to advance on the Eshmaki.

"I've come home!"

CHAPTER THREE

INSATIABLE

The Lamashtu. The Obscene Ones. The Nightmares of Beasts. No matter their true name, the Beasts know them by one name in particular that best describes who and what they are: the Insatiable. They are not just creatures whose Hunger cannot be sated, but entities that forcefully intrude into the world and disrupt the ebb and flow of the Primordial Dream with their actions. They are creatures made of concepts alien to how humanity thinks. They are the nightmare that is the Hunger left unchecked and given horrific form, and they feed not just upon the dreams of man but on the fears of the Beasts themselves. They are monsters whose hunger cannot be reined in, and it is from this lust to fill the emptiness inside of them that they gain their powers.

No one knows what act inspires the Insatiable. Though they appear similar to Beasts, they do not go through the same birthing process. A Beast is born feeling that she is different from other people until the moment she is Devoured and her Horror defines her, but an Insatiable manifests suddenly and without prediction.

An Insatiable may go through life feeling completely at ease with himself and looking forward to a bright future, then one night the hunger in his stomach drives him mad, and he finds that devouring his favorite food only makes him hungrier. As he struggles to reconcile the strange environments he sees in his

mind, he eventually crosses a threshold and appears in the Moment that inspires his Insatiable. This alien concept then devours his spirit, replacing it with the Insatiable. He is his old self and something new, existing simultaneously and tumultuously. The newly-orphaned creature sees the world with new eyes for the first time, and the Hunger grows inside of him. The Hunger always grows. Soon, the Insatiable takes over his reasoning, and he feels compelled to do nothing else but find ways to feed — specifically, to find Beasts to prey on.

Some Beasts believe that the Insatiable are failed creations of the Dark Mother, and were an early attempt to harness the Hunger that dwelled within her. Others believe the Insatiable are byproducts of another age, and are failed proto-Beasts from before the time of human fears, something the Primordial Dream has abandoned now that Horrors fill its depths. This may explain why, when an Insatiable devours its prey, the fears and dreams of her victims do not flow back into the Primordial Dream. If they were flawed predators, the Primordial Dream would not permit their continued existence, but somehow the Insatiable have managed to survive.

The Insatiable find Beasts fascinating and see them both as prey and fellow predators. They consider themselves kin to the Beasts — though they do not feel familial ties to these distant cousins — and their Hunger fuels their powers as it does for Beasts. Each Moment regards each other as kin but at the same time as potential competitors, and it is this nature that has kept the Insatiable from working together over the centuries. They occasionally gather in small Broods of their own, though the Insatiable soon finds her Schism at odds with the others, and prefers to hunt alone. Desperation and threats from Beasts may cause the Insatiable to join together for temporary protection, though these kind of alliances never last long.

The Insatiable are particularly obsessed with the Lairs that Beasts build for themselves, as they are unable to construct their own, and see it as a birthright that the Dark Mother never bestowed upon them. They have developed a frightening ability to enter and corrupt a Lair, allowing them to manipulate it to their

Every time I go to sleep, I know I may never wake up. How could anyone expect to? You drop your tiny, helpless mind into a bottomless well, crossing your fingers and hoping that when you pull it out on its flimsy fishing wire it hasn't been gnawed to bones by the beasts below. Hoping you pull up anything at all.

—Isaac Marion,
Warm Bodies

own liking and take up residence. They are jealous of the Lair, though this stems more from a jealousy of the Beasts' relationship with the Dark Mother. To Beasts, it seems as though the Insatiable wish to emulate this connection, and even steal her affections. At first glance, the Insatiable appear similar to other spawn of the Dark Mother, though they do not represent any creatures she may have created. In truth, they too see her in visions while in the Primordial Dream, but they do not feel any fealty to her — though some do seek out her love.

The similarities between Insatiable and Beasts lend credence to the idea that they do come from the Dark Mother, though the Insatiable do not hold to this belief. They leave the Primordial Dream by entering a human, and they can access Nightmares and Atavisms as a Beast can. In addition, they can reveal their monstrous shapes to the world in the same manner as the Beasts, though their forms do not mirror any earthly horrors. The Insatiable represent terrors from a time before man: forces so ancient that men never dreamed or feared them.

Insatiable are horrors from a time of primordial struggle and hunger, and as such feel that to survive they must feed as often as possible. An Insatiable is not the subtle predator that the Beasts try to be and, worst of all, they do not release fears back into the Primordial Dream. When they devour their victims, they devour their fears completely, and starve the Primordial Dreams of the stories that sustain it. Born with a ravenous hunger that goes beyond the hunger pains that Beasts feel, the Insatiable are driven not just by satiating their appetites but the constant pursuit of them. They are gluttons starved of any ability to keep their own Hunger in check, and though they have not become mindless predators who seek to do nothing but feed, their Hunger is always on their mind. This hunger drives them to not only seek out humans for a meal, but also other Beasts and supernatural creatures.

The Insatiable see only the most powerful Beasts as rivals, and the rest as potential prey. They stalk them, take over their Lairs to serve as their new homes, and, at times, possess the Beasts themselves, driving them to commit horrid acts that draw attention to themselves and make them vulnerable to the world at large. They subvert the Hunger in Beasts and use that to leverage them to act out impulsively or worse, to take direct control of the Beast. This ability to strip away self-control is one of their most terrifying skills. This, coupled with their almost gleeful pursuit of Beasts, makes them formidable opponents.

DISTANT RELATIONS

The Insatiable consider themselves kindred to Beasts who are older than the five Families. They claim kinship as elder cousins, and believe they come from a consort of the Dark Mother. They do not truly know their parentage, and the Primordial Dream does not offer any answers to this question, though they have a theory. They claim that at the dawn of man there were many creatures like the Dark Mother who roamed the tumultuous waters that made up the Primordial Dream. Their progenitor was a primordial being of the world who fell in love with the Dark Mother and gave its own essence to her to help

WHAT IS THE PRIMOGENITOR?

The Primogenitor is nothing, and it is everything. No one is sure, and this is not a glib explanation of what it is the Insatiable claim sired them.

The Primogenitor is a creature that either does not want to be found in the Primordial Dream, or cannot be found because of something that happened to it. Some Beasts believe that the Dark Mother tore out its throat and left it to die in some earlier epoch of existence, while others believe that the Primogenitor left our world to wander others. Many Beasts do not believe the Primogenitor ever existed at all, and that the Dark Mother gave birth to the Insatiable in a time before and does not need them anymore.

If this is true, then the Insatiable are failed creatures, abandoned by their mother and seeking a way to survive in the world. It could also be that the Dark Mother banished them from her sight, stripping their Family name from all records and lore kept on the matter for a crime either long forgotten or purposefully purged from the Primordial Dream.


Either way, what the Primogenitor is or is not is up to the individual Storyteller to decide.

feed her own unrelenting hunger, and was every bit as worthy and powerful as her. This great Primogenitor is the Father of the Insatiable and their bloodline is theoretically older than that of Beasts, which lends the Insatiable some feeling of authority.

Beasts do not recognize this kinship. The Insatiable claim of a consort of the Dark Mother goes against what the Begotten know of their mother. They find the claim spitefully arrogant, and the Insatiable's attempt at superiority by claiming to be not children of the Dark Mother, but a contemporary, is meaningless to them. They know that the Insatiable possess strange powers and abilities that at times rival the Beasts', and know that they are deceptive and have randomly impulsive natures.

The Primogenitor is a mystery to the Beasts, and no matter how hard they try to get answers from the Dark Mother or the Primordial Dream, they only receive silence. Many believe it is nothing more than the ravings of mad creatures, but some wonder if perhaps the Primogenitor once existed. At times, the Primordial Dream shows images of great creatures and beasts of the land and sky, and just as the Beasts see images of the Dark Mother, the Insatiable claim to see images of the Primogenitor. The Insatiable are similar in some ways to Beasts, but, in others, they are completely alien. Beyond that, they damage the Primordial Dream when they feed, making them enemies of Beasts.

Whatever the case may be, the Insatiable possess Atavisms, abilities of their own, and an affinity for not only the Lairs of Beasts, but for manipulating the Beasts' appetites. The tie



between Insatiable and Beast is unmistakable, though no one knows for sure why or what it is. The fact that the Insatiable cannot draw upon the Primordial Dream directly also lends credence to the theory that they are not siblings to the Families. The Insatiable appear to be echoes from different times in the world's past, but are not aspects of stories told through the Dream. They appear more at the locations and the places where the stories were told, and though the places are as important as the Beasts and Heroes that make up these stories, they are not the same. Many Insatiable claim that the Dark Mother and Beasts forgot them or pushed them aside, yet they have a more ancient claim to the fears and nightmares of humanity. Some Insatiable are obsessed with inflicting suffering upon the Begotten, believing that cosmic circumstances have wronged them and not only do they have a right to exist on their own, but the right to dominance over Beast and man.

THE UNSATED HUNGER

Whether the Dark Mother intended for the Insatiable to be the ones that keep the Beasts in check or they were an accident of cosmic circumstance, the Insatiable pursue and prey upon Beasts as a superior predator would. They view the Beasts as a resource like any other. Beasts either feed their desires and their hungers, or are destroyed, and if the Insatiable inflicts pain and suffering on the world in the process, they do not care. They owe the world nothing, and the world deserves the pain generated from the Insatiable's Moment.

The Insatiable absorb points of Satiety from their victims in the same way a Beast feeds upon their prey, but the mortal never survives the process with an Insatiable. The Insatiable do not feed by devouring the dreams of human beings, though they do absorb these dreams and terrors as they feed. Instead, the Insatiable devours their victim brutally and carnally, often leaving behind gnawed bones and chunks of flesh scattered about. While this might not seem similar to how Beasts feed their Hunger, it has disastrous effects on the Primordial Dream, as the mortal's fears do not flow back into the Dream, but are instead devoured by the Insatiable.

It is impossible for the Insatiable to have her Hunger fully sated; even when her Satiety track is full, she is hungry. She can control her impulses when sated, but the creature driving her hunger does not go into slumber. She may always access her Insatiable nature, even in public, and can learn Nightmares from Beasts. She can use Atavisms, though if she steals an Atavism from a Beast, she loses all access to and benefits of it if she ever returns it.

THE MOMENTS

The Insatiable do not have Families of their own, as the legends that haunt the Primordial Dream do not define them. They are living concepts drawn from primordial times when the environment was more deadly than the things that lived in it.

As such, they represent different aspects and terrors drawn from moments in time.

Each Moment has their own view of the Primogenitor, and though they may claim to be beholden to a different one there are more similarities than differences between them. Each Primogenitor is a place out of history and an era that defined the birth of the Primordial Dream. They are not as specific as the Whitechapel district in Victorian London, but are instead the violent conditions that brought about change on the planet. They are the places where life struggled to exist rather than where life managed to live.

The Moments do not always manifest as primordial eras, and some are inspired by modern times. An Insatiable of the Molten Earth may project the feelings of violence and hatred for fellow human beings, while a Freezing Hell may cause the people in the area where he makes his home to become obsessed with hoarding their food and possessions in preparation for an upcoming calamity. An Insatiable of the Void causes her victims to believe that the world is coming to an end, so they must get rid of all their possessions and ignore laws because it will all end, and a Primordial Seas may turn an upper-class neighborhood into a bloodthirsty cult that serves her whims by delivering her food and culling the middle class in order to keep them in their place.

CLASHING FAULTS

The Clashing Faults are a world of towering mountains crumbling before the shaking earth. They are the caves that lure in those seeking shelter from the elements and then cave in on themselves, crushing those seeking a safe place to sleep under their stone grip. They are the lands that split apart into massive canyons and seas that drain in from the ocean, drowning all in their path. The Insatiable from this Moment lack compassion or empathy, and remember their founder as the one who cradled the Dark Mother as she slept and whose form held up the world.

The Clashing Faults feed by brutalizing their prey as they devour them, often pulling their victims beneath the ground to suffocate them, feeling their screams as they struggle for one final breath. Their Dens are caves and valleys where they can store their food deep beneath the ground, and they show little emotion as they feed. They consider what they do to be a constant of the universe, and hold no remorse for potential prey.

FREEZING HELL

The Freezing Hell are more than the stories of creatures that stalked the frozen plains when the planet was in the grip of an Ice Age. They are the animals that starved for warm blood and fresh food in an age when the world was barren and cold. They were born in a world where survival was brutal and short, and where man had to keep moving in order to seek places to live. No matter what form they take, they are constantly cold. Their hands are like ice, their blood like the coldest depths of the ocean, and food in their presence chills and freezes. They are patient, but as brutal as the winds of their birth.

Insatiable of the Freezing Hell are more patient than their siblings, as they are familiar with waiting long periods for prey

to fall into their inescapable traps. When they feed, they focus on eating the fat and drinking the blood of their victims as they constantly prepare for a neverending winter that may not come. They keep their Dens in cold, remote places or in walk-in freezers and ice boxes where they store their prey in ice until they need to feed. Their Horrible Form appears as snow drifts that flow like water but tear the flesh off their victims, or brutal vortexes of wind that instantly freeze their victims.

MOLTEN EARTH

The Molten Earth are from when the world was more than just covered in fire, but was the fire. They remember waterfalls of molten lead, and land so hot to the touch that nothing could exist. They smell of burning sulfur and ash, and they are the ones most driven to destruction. They hunger to see the world cast down and made new. They do not see this as destruction without purpose, however; they see the world on the cusp of great change, and as a wildfire brings new growth to a forest, they see themselves as encouraging new life to grow in the smoldering ashes of the old.

Insatiable of the Molten Earth are quick to anger and prone to destructive tendencies, seeing the world as subject to the changing embrace of fire. They prefer to cook their food as they devour it, inflicting horrifying amounts of pain on their victims as they burn them alive. Their Dens are often in burnt buildings and coal mines where they feel at home with burnable materials, and they store their food among pieces of wood and kindling to better cook it for them.

PRIMORDIAL SEAS

The Primordial Seas are Insatiable who are born of the frenzied birth of life. They are the leviathans and swirling maelstroms of the early seas, and are born from the hunger pains of life that struggles to survive its moment of creation. They are creatures driven to destruction by superior life forms, and take the forms of creatures that never existed but could have. The Primordial Seas believe their founder to be a great jellyfish that roamed these seas, snatching up life and devouring it. They are the fear of killing to live and sacrifice so others can live. They are an anxious lot, never truly resting, and always keeping an eye out for potential predators. This fear does not cow the Insatiable, but drives them to strike first — feeding as much as they can and showing their dominance.

Insatiable of the Primordial Seas feel the effects of their Hunger greater than their siblings, and often give in to violent instincts when feeding. Their Dens are like animal nests, made together from local materials and with food stored deep within them. Their Horrible Forms are often composed of the body parts of animals in strange fusions of flesh and bone to create terrifying predators.

VOID

The Void are strange, even among the other Insatiable. They do not represent the night's sky, but the unknown darkness that makes up the space between the stars. They are the

cold shadow that blankets the earth and gives cover to predators seeking to hunt in the dark. When the first fires cooled and the light of volcanos and meteor strikes did not light the sky, the world was held in a dark grip. More so than the bottomless depths of the ocean, the vast emptiness in space evokes a primal fear of the unknown. The idea that something could go on forever, in a way that man could never truly understand, is more terrifying than anything they could think up on their own. The Void represents the endless night and the unknowable distance, as yet unexplored. They are the methane oceans of Titan, the crushing grip of a black hole, and the fear of perilous creatures from beyond earth that may seek to destroy it.

The Insatiable of the Void are the most bizarre of all the Insatiable in that they do not conform to each other. They are not as simple as aliens from science fiction shows on TV. They are the living threats that come from space, from the gamma bursts that could liquefy the entire world's biosphere upon impact to the strange planets whose atmospheres function so differently from ours that they seem frightful and scary. Some find they must hunt down humans and devour their brains, while others feel they must kill their victims and assume their identities. Their Dens are equally as strange, as the Insatiable feel compelled to recreate alien landscapes and try to emulate the frighteningly beautiful places from across the universe, or they create beautiful yet terrifying homes of carved geodes, and representations of the planets that hide the remains of their victims.

UNKNOWABLE FEARS

Each Moment has a basic elemental nature to it, though all Moments mirror all elements at once. While the Clashing Faults appears more in tune with earth and rock than the Molten Earth, they also contain the threat of super volcanos exploding beneath the land and seas drying up as they erupt out of the ocean. It is the primordial fear of these Moments in time that bind them together. Man is too young to remember the horrors of these times, though the Insatiable spread their fear of these Moments to those they feed upon.

An Insatiable of the Void may feed upon a mortal they fill with fear of the world coming to an end in the wake of an oncoming asteroid, or that the atoms of their world are drifting away and everything will end in any second. An Insatiable of the Molten Earth may fill a pilot of a 747 with the belief that the ground below them has turned to molten rock and that to land the plane anywhere but the water will lead to their deaths. They drive irrational, terrifying fears into their victims, and feed upon those fears.

It is this presence of irrational fears that is the calling card of the Insatiable. The Insatiable's manner of feeding twists the environment around them. A neighborhood where an Ugallu has been feeding may suddenly give way to mob rule as they begin to burn their neighbor's homes to get rid of the impostors who live there. A college campus may see its students afraid of

stepping out of their dorms and drowning in the sea full of monsters that has replaced the campus quad.

This destructive presence of fear does not concern the Insatiable, but it does concern Beasts. The Beasts feel they exist because they take on the aspects of the Primordial Dream and have a part to play in a greater story that defines the world. A Beast is the monster in the cave that devours those who wander too close, or a warning to others of leaving their homes at night and becoming lost in woods where monsters roam. The Insatiable are a story without a moral, and a lesson without any real meaning. They exist to feed and care only to satiate the Hunger inside of them.

This damages the Primordial Dream as it pushes out the fears of man and replaces them with irrationality. A child who burns her hand on a stove learns to not touch the hot stove again; a man who fears that poison fills the air he breathes does not learn a lesson at all. By tainting their feeding grounds and promoting lessons that are impossible to learn, they slowly chip away at the Primordial Dream and make it more chaotic and indiscernible. Even Beasts who have a strong connection to the Primordial Dream find their Atavisms failing when they need them, or find themselves losing their connections to their Lairs.

THE DENS

When an Insatiable does not possess a Lair to call its own, they create homes in the real world where they store food and lie in wait for unfortunate victims to cross their paths. Dens are not constructs of dreams or primordial fears, but are real nests built out of the bones of their victims. These Dens have no mystical defenses to protect them, and appear clearly to those who discover them — which does not aid Beasts in keeping low profiles.

An Insatiable uses its Den as a public statement to the world of its might and glory, as well as a place for it to seek refuge after it has fed. Often, a Den is full of pictures and other materials of prey the Insatiable is stalking. Insatiable are clever at keeping their Dens concealed by hiding them in places few would expect to look. An Insatiable who has taken on the appearance of a forensic examiner may hide his Den in one of the old storage rooms in an abandoned police precinct, while an Insatiable who moves between train stations may keep her Den in an abandoned coal car.

Dens are disconcerting places to be, as the smell of rot in a Den makes even the strongest person want to leave. If anyone other than the Insatiable who created it enters her Den, he suffers from the Sick Tilt until he leaves the vicinity.

CREATING THE INSATIABLE

Insatiable are not simply Beasts that are hungrier than their counterparts. They are ravenous monsters that strike out at the world and tear apart society with their horrific powers and the maddening effects of the Schism. They are not intended as

player characters, as the Insatiable represent living, irrational concepts of reality that have no rhyme or reason to exist. Where a Beast constantly struggles with her Hunger, an Insatiable is his Hunger, and exists only to feed it. Storytellers can create new Insatiable for their chronicle using the following rules.

Creating an Insatiable is similar to creating a Beast (**Beast: The Primordial** pp.77-78), but they have their own template. Concepts may be as simple as the local butcher or a traveling salesman. All concepts should be compatible with the themes of the Insatiable. A traveling salesman who uses his profession to gain access to more victims to feed on is fine, where an Insatiable who uses his powers to fight crime would be silly.

Storytellers should pick Attributes, Skills, and Specialties for the Insatiable that make the most sense for the concept.

Choose the Moment that the Insatiable hails from, each Moment confers a special ability to the Insatiable.

- **Primordial Seas:** The Insatiable suffers a -2 penalty to Willpower and Social rolls but gains an additional dot of Strength and Wits.
- **Freezing Hell:** The Insatiable gains a dot of Stamina and two additional health boxes, but suffers a -2 penalty to her Initiative.
- **The Molten Earth:** The Insatiable can spend 1 point of Satiety to instill his touch with the burning heat of the earth, which causes his Unarmed attacks to deal Aggravated damage, but he suffers 1 point of Aggravated damage in the process.
- **Clashing Fault:** The Insatiable gains 2/1 Armor but has a -1 penalty to his Defense.
- **Void:** The Insatiable can spend Willpower to affect the area around her with the effects of the Impossible Vista Ensuriens for a number of minutes equal to her current Willpower. An Insatiable who normally has access to this Ensuriens gains a +2 bonus to her Satiety + Strength pool when using the power.

Choose Esuriens for the Insatiable depending on how powerful the creature is. A low-level Insatiable should start with two Esuriens, a moderately-powered Insatiable would have four Esuriens, and a powerful Insatiable could have up to seven Esuriens.

Choose Nightmares for the Insatiable, again based on how powerful the creature is. Only choose Atavisms for an Insatiable who has already Subverted a Beast's Lair. Otherwise, Atavisms must be gained in play through the Esuriens Your Power is Mine.

An Insatiable gains all of the bonuses that a Beast gains during the Merger (**Beast: The Primordial** p. 239) except they do not gain the bonus to detecting ambushes.

SPECIAL MECHANICS

In addition to the use of Esuriens and Beast Nightmares and Atavisms, the Insatiable have access to a few additional advantages.

HORRIBLE FORM

An Insatiable can manifest the form she holds in the Primordial Dream in the same way a Beast can manifest his Horror after the Merger, but with different results. An Insatiable manifests as a completely alien creature that is more a feral, sentient concept than an amalgamation of pieces of folklore. They rarely appear as the werewolves and dragons of legend but instead appear as the nightmares those creatures may have once had. An Insatiable may appear as a swarm of fanged spheres, constantly gnawing at everything in sight, or as a gaunt giant with no orifices or features save for a black hole located in their sternum.

The human mind is unable to process the forms of the Insatiable because it has no previous memories or dreams to compare them to. When a mortal views an Insatiable in her Horrible Form, he feels the compulsion to flee from the sight of the creature, and immediately rationalizes it upon leaving the Scene. Humans who spend at least a scene or longer in the presence of an Insatiable in her Horrible Form gain the Shaken Condition. A supernatural creature may roll her Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance to resist gaining this condition.

IMPOSSIBLE ANATOMY

Due to their impossible anatomy, as all Insatiable do not conform to rational concepts of biology, all powers that affect their body do not gain the benefits of an extraordinary success when used against them. This is due to the fact that an Insatiable's organs tend to be in different parts of the body, or her body is made from living bedrock or similar, and that makes it difficult to affect them as one can other creatures.

LAIR SUBVERSION

The Insatiable start with 0 in Lair, and can only increase it by stealing access to a Beast's Lair. This process is Subversion, where an Insatiable takes over the Beast's Lair and steals its power for themselves. The Subversion lasts as long as the Insatiable can maintain control over the Beast or the Lair, and when control over the Lair is broken her Lair diminishes at the cost of one point of Lair per day. The Insatiable may steal Atavisms from a Beast after subverting her Lair, and retains access to the use of those Atavisms until the Lair degrades to 0. The different types of Subversions and how an Insatiable accomplishes each one are listed below.

LAIR VS DEN

Insatiable only have points in Lair if they have subsumed a Beast's Lair. This may be a plot point, or something that happens in play. The Lair they take retains most of its usual features, but gains a taint based on the Insatiable's Moment. While it's good practice to describe an Insatiable's Den, there are no special mechanics associated with the location.

An Insatiable may spend points of Satiety to temporarily boost her Lair rating, and in this way is capable of drawing nightmare realms out of nothing. These Lairs are always temporary, and though some Insatiable find these places to be their true homes, these temporary Lairs only last one day per point of Satiety spent. Some Insatiable become obsessed with the thought of upkeeping their Lairs, and begin to devour mortals at a frightening rate, using their fears to keep the Insatiable's dream alive. A true Lair is an embodiment of the Primordial Dream, and even the Insatiable prefer to sleep in a true Lair than the cold, savage constructs that are Dens.

UNSEEN PRESENCE

An Insatiable also does not show up in the Primordial Dream and leaves no lasting residue of his appearance apart from the Schism (see below). To Beasts, Insatiable appear as faint ripples in the Primordial Dream, but do not stand out among the other dreams and fears. A Beast or supernatural creature using a power to detect an Insatiable suffers a -2 penalty to any dice rolls associated with searching, though an Insatiable who uses any of its powers becomes immediately noticeable as a foreign presence that feels wrong and damaging to the world. Heroes cannot sense Insatiable the way they do Beasts due to this phenomenon, and even Schisms do not necessarily alert a Hero to an Insatiable's presence, making them a threat only Beasts are equipped to deal with.

THE ACT OF SUBVERSION

The Insatiable cannot build their own Lairs. Like owls, they instead steal the nests built by others and make them their own. An Insatiable is a covetous creature, stealing Lairs away from its victims and then tossing them aside when it encounters an even greater Lair. Like most things, it's the thrill of the hunt and of devouring that appeals to the Insatiable, not the actual conquest. That does not mean they are looking only to borrow a nest. The Insatiable aim not only to take control of the Lair and the Hive it is bonded to, but to gorge themselves upon the Beast and the things that make up his existence. An Insatiable, once it has targeted a Beast, will aim to devour everything about that Beast until there is nothing left.

The Insatiable waits quietly, slowly taking in everything he can about his target. He is able to sense when a Beast is near, though the Beast cannot sense that something horrific and unnatural is nearby. She may experience déjà vu, or strange tingles running down her spine, but the Insatiable does not emit an aura that is easily perceptible to her. The Insatiable learns to understand his potential prey and how she hunts so that he may know how best to attack his target.

When an Insatiable chooses to begin Subversion, he has two equally sinister methods at his disposal. It is possible for an Insatiable to subvert the Beast's lack of Hunger, and strike when she is most Satiated and unable to defend herself. Their second method is to subvert the Beast's Lair and steal it for

PLAYING WITH POWER

The Insatiable are predators who feed off of Beasts and do their best to steal their powers and ruin the Beast's life, and a chronicle may see a player's character at the mercy of an Insatiable who has taken over her body. While this can open the character to numerous opportunities for roleplay, remember that overstepping boundaries while in control of a character may not only be disastrous for the chronicle, but could be damaging and alienating to the player.

When using this particular power, the Storyteller should work with the player to create a scene both are comfortable with. While the Insatiable may be a soulless abomination who forces the Beast to take actions to murder or kill, the player involved should be consulted as to what she is comfortable with.

Anything an Insatiable does with the Subverted Beast must benefit the story and make the chronicle more interesting without sacrificing decency for the players. Remember that while Insatiable are horrid monsters, you and your players are most likely not.

himself. Like an owl who moves into another bird's nest, he feeds off the nightmarish memories there and makes the Lair his own. These Insatiable prefer to strike when a Beast is at its most ravenous, as the flavor of the Lair as the Beast's Hunger grows attracts their own appetites.

SUBVERSION OF CONTENTMENT

Insatiable hate Beasts but are obsessed with them, seeking them out to feed and to steal their Lairs. They feel that their cousins never accepted them, and the Dark Mother purposefully abandoned the Primogenitor. They feel no sympathy towards Beasts when they strike. Insatiable desire to inflict fear and suffering upon a world that does not realize they exist, and feel the need to inflict the horrors that make up their Moments upon others. The Insatiable seeks out a Beast whose own hunger is abated, and push their Horrors aside, possessing the Beast for a short time.

While an Insatiable who Subverts a Beast in this way has control over the Beast, in many ways she is at her most vulnerable. Bereft of her own abilities, she instead acts out in ways that make life harder for the Beast. While the Insatiable is in charge, she uses her body to give in to her hunger and unleash her wrath upon the world. The Insatiable makes the Beast search out prey to stalk, hunt, and kill in a physical way while denying the Beast the taste of the victim's terror as she murders innocents.

When attempting to Subvert a Beast, the Insatiable must make skin contact with them. This can be accomplished by simply passing by and touching the Beast with her hand or by crushing

him in her tentacles. The Storyteller then makes an extended and contested roll using the Insatiable's Strength + Satiety versus the Beast's Composure + Willpower. For each point of Satiety above 5 the Beast has, her player receives a -1 penalty to her roll, and for each point below 5, he receives a +1 bonus. For each success the Insatiable achieves, they move the Beast's Composure or Presence down by 1. When both Attributes reach zero, the Insatiable successfully subverts the Beast's consciousness and gains control for one hour for each point of Satiety the Beast has.

Attempting to Subvert a Beast's mind is an immediately recognizable act, as the Horror feels an intruder attempting to push it beyond simple Satiety and out of the Beast's mind altogether.

SUBVERSION OF HUNGER

While an Insatiable can temporarily manifest a Lair by expending her power, these Lairs pale in comparison to the real places Beasts construct for themselves. The Den an Insatiable makes is a hollow echo of a Beast's Lair, betraying a desperate need to have a place to call her own. Her constant hunger is so visceral that it pervades everything she does; she not only hungers for flesh and terror, but power and dominance. The only true way to have everything is to take everything from her prey.

An Insatiable follows a Beast, watching which Primordial pathways he takes to get into his Lair, taking note of favored entrances and exits. She then lies in wait until the Beast leaves his Lair before making her move. She must pierce through the layers of the Primordial Dream to enter the Lair. If she is entering from the material world, she spends 3 points of Satiety, but if she enters from another Lair connected through a Hive, she only has to spend 1 point.

To begin the Subversion, the Insatiable must touch an object within the Lair associated with its theme. To Subvert a Lair dedicated to a hydra that dwells in toxic swamps, the Insatiable must touch the swamp water. To Subvert a Lair to a harpy living on a crag jutting forth from the ocean, the Insatiable must touch the bones of her victims or the walls of the inside of the cave. The Storyteller then makes an extended and contested roll against the Lair's owner, using the Insatiable's Satiety + Presence versus the Beast's Willpower + Lair, and each roll requires 30 minutes of time. If the Insatiable has made it all the way to the Heart of the Lair, the Storyteller gains a +2 bonus to the roll. A Beast always knows when an Insatiable is undertaking the Subversion, and acts to save her Lair.

After each roll, if the Insatiable has more successes than the Beast, she works to reshape the Lair to better suit her needs. Each additional success causes the Beast to lose 1 point of Lair, temporarily weakening him as the Lair transfers to the Insatiable. If the Beast has more successes, the Insatiable loses control and gained Lair dots revert back to the Beast. If the Insatiable gains no successes, her attempt fails, and she cannot try again for a full day. When the Beast has no more points of Lair, his home is transformed into the ideal representation of the Insatiable who is now in the driver's seat. The Insatiable then becomes the primary owner of the Lair until driven out by the Beast or until she relinquishes control of it. The Insatiable must enter the Lair daily to maintain control, as the Primordial Dream itself balks at this subversion.

When an Insatiable relinquishes control, or is forced from a Lair, the Lair degrades by 1 each day she remains away. Conversely, the Beast who once owned to Lair regains dots in Lair, 1 a day until the dots are fully restored.

The thought of an Insatiable stealing a Lair is frightening, and many Beasts are quick to call upon her Brood to help. A smart Insatiable knows when it is outmatched and flees the Lair, content with what it has, and doing its best to avoid facing the Beasts again. Some Insatiable find that where they have succeeded once, they can succeed again, and continue Subverting Lairs belonging to the same Brood. The most effective means of keeping an Insatiable out is by showing him that a Beast is willing to kill him for her lair; barring teaching the Insatiable a lesson, most Beasts prefer to kill them so they do not have to deal with them again. In rare cases, an Insatiable does not steal the Lair after it has gained entry, and instead walks its halls and takes notes of what it sees. Why an Insatiable does this is unknowable to the Beasts, but the creepiness of having a stranger walking around their sacred places while they are not there is a violation of their homes.

THE SCHISM

A Beast knows that eventually either her Hunger will win out over her or she will fall to a Hero. Everything between those moments is what she makes of it, often a life of teaching lessons and survival. She seeks to balance her Hunger and her Horror with her own personal desires, and the only thing grounding her is her family. Though some might consider life tedious, the Beasts do not fear her own deaths. They know that they will either be reborn through the Primordial Dream or they will survive as they always have. That is not to say that Beasts have grown arrogant and prideful. They know that in order to survive they must maintain anonymity in the world, and that though they haunt the dreams of man they need to do their best to avoid discovery.

The Insatiable care little for the world of man and see it as nothing more than a fleeting moment in the history of the planet. They consider all that currently exists to be transitory, and that someday this world will end just as the Moments they identify with came to a close. Insatiable do not care if they kill one man or 20 men, as long as they can sate their Hunger. The strange nature of the Insatiable causes them to interact with the Primordial Dream negatively, and these ripples affect the places in the real world where they have set up their Dens.

As the Insatiable feeds in an area, ripples begin to slowly warp how mortal humans interact with each other. It starts slowly, and people often overlook the effects as just outbreaks of seemingly-bizarre behavior. A Little League game at the park may turn into a shouting match between the parents of both sides, where previously they had all been friends. In a church, a previously-quiet pastor may suddenly begin to shout and scream at his flock, calling them out on their sins, that he seems to possess secret knowledge of. As the Insatiable's effects fade, these incidents disappear from people's minds as random acts not worth remembering.

As the Schism begins to grow, these strange behaviors start to heighten the emotions and paranoia of those who spend more than an hour in the area affected by the Insatiable's presence.

People begin to act more impulsively, and some begin to suffer from delusions. Many begin to suspect their neighbors of harboring violent thoughts against them, and others begin to abandon long-held ideals for beliefs that offer them some comfort. Many Insatiable take advantage of the people's paranoia and use it to form cults to help feed their Hunger.

As the Schism reaches its peak, conflict overwhelms the area as the people begin to give in to violent thoughts and destructive impulses. Mob rule sets in and those perceived as threats to the community are driven out or destroyed, while the community itself falls under the sway of some grand delusion. The Insatiable whose Schism is affecting the area always plays some part in the delusion, and many find that her Moment bleeds through into the real world and begins to twist at the perceptions of others. An Insatiable of the Molten Earth may see a community burn under the actions of a dozen arsonists who see flames as the only way to stop an infectious disease from spreading, while an Insatiable of the Void may cause a community to begin burying living people beneath the earth in order to stop them from rising as zombies.

If an Insatiable dies or leaves the area, her Schism slowly fades as the Primordial Dream repairs the divide between itself and reality. Slowly, people come to their senses and regain rational thought, and many wonder what drove them to such strange behavior. For most, they choose to believe simple explanations to their actions: tainted water sources, a polarizing news story, or having it simply described as a daily occurrence depending on the location of the incident, such as "Well, that's Florida for you."

The Insatiable can manipulate the effect her Schism has on an area by offering suggestions to people as to what is happening, thus fueling their fears. She is the stranger at the back of the crowd crying that Communists are manipulating things or that the government is trying to steal their children's futures. She subtly suggests how the water they drink is contaminated with poison or the walls of their homes are lined with listening devices for the NSA. It only takes a few nudges, and then the Schism takes hold and people become willing to believe anything.

The power of the Schism increases each time the Insatiable feeds in an area. A Schism is rated 1 to 10 and after each month of constant feeding, the Schism rating increases by 1. All Social rolls made within the affected area suffer a penalty equal to the

THE INSATIABLE AND THE EPHEMERAL

The Schism produced by the Insatiable's touch upon an area makes the area more vulnerable to manifestations by Ephemeral beings. They are drawn to the sorrow and carnage of the area, as the ghosts of those who have been devoured attract other ghosts, and the strange creatures that lurk in the Shadow see the area as ripe for plundering. For each point of Schism an area has the Gauntlet rating is reduced by 1 to a minimum of 1, and Ephemeral beings can sense the presence of the area.

STORY HOOKS

- The local gas station comes under new management, and the sweet old couple who used to run it have disappeared. The new owner, who introduces himself as James Johansson Jeremiah Johnson, always talks to customers as they come in. He sells everything at 50% off, and the gas station has become popular among local teens and those seeking late-night snacks. But, those who visit the gas station notice how cold the owner keeps the air conditioning, and people have started to disappear. The police dragged a teenager from the lot behind the gas station who complained that she was deathly afraid the avalanche would get her.
- Fairpoints Mall, once a regal and upscale shopping center, has fallen on hard times in the past 10 years. Lately, the mall has gained a reputation for violence and small riots as customers turn on each other viciously in order to get items that are on sale. Footage of the riots shows a woman walking in the background, whose dark eyes sit above a knowing smile. The Insatiable is encouraging the customers to give in to their needs for survival and supremacy and has turned the mall from a battleground of economic survival to a trap to bring out the worst natures in people so she may feed.
- Mycroft Park has become a rental complex that caters to those who prefer their privacy and do not wish to associate with others. They have banned any form of public events and have built large fences and walls around the units. The isolation has led to many renters refusing to leave their homes at all, as many feel a predatory nature surrounding the area. The Insatiable of the Void prefers for his victims to stay where he can watch them, and the high Schism of the area has led to the inhabitants fully believing that if they try to leave they will die.
- Dr. Leonardo Trent, a local philanthropist, has moved into one of the neighborhoods off Ritter Street that has been all but abandoned by the city. The people love Dr. Trent, whose radical landscape designs and powerful speeches have made the people believe anything he says. Those who look up his name online find he has moved from neighborhood to neighborhood over the years, and that he always leaves once the previous neighborhood burns itself to the ground. Dr. Trent has encouraged the people in the neighborhood to begin hoarding gas in drums in their garages.

Schism's rating, including those made by the Insatiable. A Beast is instantly able to determine the effects of a Schism, and with a successful Occult + Intelligence roll the player can determine how high the local Schism rating is. A Schism's radius affects an area equal to one mile per point of Schism.

ESURIENTS

An Insatiable has access to both Atavisms and Nightmares, though she also has access to several of her own powers. These powers come from forgotten aspects of the Primordial Dream and are fueled by the Insatiable's Satiety, which is a heavy sacrifice, as the Insatiable must make herself even more ravenously hungry in order to use her abilities.

CAST ASIDE

The Insatiable's limbs grow suddenly, either becoming massively muscled or bending in ways that maximize his ability to throw others. The Insatiable spends a point of Satiety to let him choose to inflict the Staggered Tilt instead of inflicting damage on a successful melee or brawling attack. The opponent is staggered for one round per damage the Insatiable would have dealt with his attack.

BODY OF MOUTHS

By warping his flesh and bones, the Insatiable manifests tiny snapping mouths all across his body. Each one is fully functional, capable of both speech and biting. While in a grapple, the mouths count as a weapon with a damage rating of 2 lethal, but cannot be controlled by the Insatiable's opponent. Additionally, attempts to hold, restrain, or damage the Insatiable suffer a -2 penalty.

THE BURNING

The Insatiable does not just draw upon monsters and places of legend for her powers but inhospitable and lethal environments. Drawing upon the pneumocystis of the jellyfish, she brutally burns her opponent upon physical contact. By spending a point of Satiety, the Insatiable turns her skin into an electrical conductor, which causes 2 lethal damage to anyone who comes into contact with her. Those afflicted by this touch must make a successful Stamina + Survival roll or gain the Paralyzed Tilt.

CHANNEL THE LIFEblood

The Insatiable challenges the raw elements of the moment of his birth, channeling them through his body and unleashing them upon his victim. After the Insatiable has taken Lethal or Aggravated damage, he can channel that pain into a raw physical attack composed of the elements of his Moment. The Storyteller makes a ranged attack using the Insatiable's Strength + number of Health boxes filled with both Lethal and Aggravated damage; the attack has a rating of 2 lethal.

FOUL MESS

Insatiable who use this power are not concerned with hiding, but are leaving behind a calling card. A bold Insatiable will use this ability to warn Beasts and other Insatiable that she is in the area and that they should leave before she destroys them.

To activate this power, the Insatiable must partially devour a living creature but leave behind their corpse. She then spends a point of Satiety to imbue the corpse with a fetid aura that causes mortals who look at it to become violently ill, and supernatural beings to feel

ill at ease at the violent end the person went through. Mortals who view the corpse suffer a -2 to all Social and Mental rolls for the scene. Supernatural creatures may make a Resolve + Composure roll to resist the effects or suffer the same penalties. A Beast may add her dots in Lair to her roll to resist.

IMPOSSIBLE VISTA

The Insatiable come from moments in time that no living creature has ever seen, and for a brief time they can trap their opponents in these vistas. Once affected by this power, the target actually believes he is in another time and place, and he cannot help but struggle against the primordial elements he sees there. The vista is different from one Insatiable to the next, but it is as grand and awe inspiring as it is brutal and terrifying.

The Insatiable must first spend a point of Lair to access this power and, once she does, she can use it for the rest of the scene. She must spend 2 points of Satiety to target a victim with this power, and the Storyteller then rolls the Insatiable's Satiety + Strength versus the target's Resolve + Stamina. If the Insatiable gains more successes, the target is plunged into an illusion in which he sees his environment change into a wild landscape of the Insatiable's own design. He becomes lost in the delusion, and acts as if he is living in another time and space. He hears voices as faint echoes and may be too afraid to move from his spot, as he believes the environment will hurt him. For onlookers, he appears unaffected other than his change in mannerisms. He thrashes about as if he is drowning, though to others it looks like he is flailing his arms around wildly on the pavement while screaming that he is underwater.

Those trapped in this state can attempt to break free from it by spending a point of Willpower and making a Resolve + Composure roll. If they do not succeed, the player must succeed on a Stamina + Survival roll or suffer 2 lethal damage each round, as the character believes the environment is attacking him. Victims brought out of this delusion often show signs of having been in another world, such as having frozen skin or being soaked in seawater, though they have not left this plane.

INTRUDER

Those who possess the mark of the Intruder leave no trace of themselves behind and are difficult to track, even with supernatural powers. An Insatiable may spend 2 points of Satiety to temporarily give her a +1 bonus to Stealth and allow her to project an image onto herself to fool the senses of others. She can specify a particular person or a general category. For example, she could appear as "the Beast she is hunting" or "a person milling about in the crowd." The image cannot be subjective based on other people's perceptions, so it cannot be "the woman this man is expecting," but it can be "a mail carrier with a package."

LAWS OF MAN NO LONGER APPLY

Remembering a time when the universe was young and the laws that chain existence together were still easily moldable, the Insatiable focuses his Hunger to manipulate the reality around him. Though he is unable to cause massive, sweeping changes to his environment, he

finds he is able to nudge the laws of probability and thermodynamics in his favor.

The player spends a point of Satiety and adds a +2 bonus to rolls in which the Insatiable is dealing with his environment for the rest of the Scene. He is able to manipulate the bullets fired from a gun to better seek their targets or is able to stay warm despite being locked in a freezer. In addition, the Insatiable ignores all penalties due to Environmental Tilts.

OBEDIENCE

Not all Insatiable like to remain hidden, and some are able to adapt and manipulate mortals into serving their needs. An Insatiable knows that if she operates openly, she is at risk — not just from Beasts, but also from other supernatural creatures. The Insatiable has developed a means to manipulate humans and get them to act in her stead. Whether it is by releasing pheromones that manipulate their senses or by direct psychic control, the Insatiable is able to use the effects of her Schism to make humans more loyal to her.

Each week an Insatiable may spend 5 points of Satiety minus the Schism's rating (to a minimum of 1) to force humans who hear her commands to obey her. Humans may roll Resolve + Composure to resist the effects of this power but are at a -1 penalty for each level of the Schism's rating. The effects of this power last for one week per level of the Schism.

TERRIBLE FORM

Though Beasts are able to briefly manifest their guise as a monster from mythology for only brief moments, Insatiable are able to manifest their forms more fully. With Terrible Form, they are able to assume forms that do not conform to any shape that seems possible in our world. An Insatiable of the Void may turn its body into chunks of burning meteorites caught in a swirling tornado and an Insatiable of the Primordial Seas may assume the form of a swarm of stinging tentacles that merge into a knot of corded muscle. These forms are insidious and frightening to behold, and can shatter the minds of those who look at them.

She manifests the terrible form in a show of immediate power, manifesting the effects of her Horrible Form more powerfully than normal. Humans automatically suffer the Shaken Condition when forced to look upon her form, and must attempt to flee the area through any manner, even if that requires a fight or injuring themselves. Supernatural creatures are immune to the fear effect, and roll Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance to resist gaining the Shaken Condition.

WE CAN SEE YOUR INSIDES

A diabolical ability used to disorient and unnerve the Insatiable's victim, though it causes no outward harm. The Insatiable focuses on a target and spends a point of Satiety, turning the victim's skin translucent, revealing his internal organs and terrifying him and those who see him. Anyone who can see the victim affected by this power must make a Resolve + Composure roll or gain the Sickened Tilt for the rest of the scene.

YOUR POWER IS MINE

An Insatiable hungers to fill the void inside her, though it isn't always food she craves to satisfy her needs. An Insatiable can steal an Atavism or Nightmare from a Beast by touching her opponent and spending a point of Satiety. The Storyteller then makes an opposed Satiety + Manipulation roll versus the Beast's Satiety + Lair. If the Insatiable scores more successes, she temporarily steals a single Nightmare or Atavism from the Beast for the remainder of the scene.

EXAMPLES

The rest of this chapter details six different examples of Insatiable. Feel free to use them as is, or change them to fit your chronicle's themes, mood, and power level. While Insatiable are specifically a problem for Beasts — whom they hunt specifically — these creatures can make an appearance in any Chronicles of Darkness setting.

THE AUTHORITY

"I wouldn't do that...the Authority might be watching."

BACKGROUND

Few know the history of this Insatiable, but it is not a story for the faint of heart. It began with a boy who was picked on through his adolescence and abused by older siblings through most of his life. He dreamed of one day bringing ruin to his oppressors and living a life without hassle. These dreams became reality one afternoon during one of his daily beatings from his brothers, when his skin began to burn as hot as lava, popping and hissing as heat escaped his skin. He finally fought back, for once in his life feeling powerful instead of weak, and could have stopped at horribly disfiguring their fragile bodies as they burned under the weight of his strikes. Carlton, however, continued his assault and left only puddles of blood and viscera on the floor for his parents to find.

Carlton ran away from home that day, and began the regular practice of using his burning fists to rob unlucky innocents he came across, but leaving them to go about their lives. He saved his real aggression for the truly despicable in his city, like thugs and drug pushers. For a while, there was talk of a Robin Hood figure who stole only what he needed to survive in his pursuit of the criminal element. It made the various crime families and gangs quake in their boots, which brought a smile to Carlton's face and a little too much attention in his direction.

It wasn't long before he was face to face with the Forsaken in league with the local drug trade. They warned Carlton to leave the area and told him that his presence adversely affected the surrounding spirits, but he knew this was far from the truth. In honesty, he was just a thorn they wanted out of their paws and they figured placation would be sufficient. Instead, he beat a few of the wolves senseless, leaving the smell of burned fur in the air. When he turned to the remaining Forsaken, he grinned and demanded their loyalty. It was a choice between being

burned by molten hands or following a new leader, since their previous pack leader was now a pile of ash on the ground. This revealed a new aspect of Carlton's power: the ability to control others through fear, without ever having to lay a finger on them.

There is nothing like having a pack of werewolves as your personal guard to earn others' respect. In a short time, Carlton was able to take down all the other drug trades and crime families, leaving him at the head of the only remaining family, which previously belonged to his Forsaken. It was his now. Word of the street vigilante disappeared from public view, but anyone who was anyone in the underground circuit began hearing stories about a mysterious figure called the Authority. The Authority was shorthand for a man who ruled the crime in his city with an iron fist, who people needed to ask for permission to operate, and who had law enforcement on his payroll. No one dared to oppose him, because his hounds were the best at taking down competition or those who disrespected his rules for peaceful cohabitation. Carlton, of course, simply enjoyed the feelings of power and control; something he'd never had in his early days, but also something that would be his undying legacy.

A REPUTATION THAT PRECEDES

That was year ago, and now no one really remembers the Authority as a homeless vigilante. To many, the Authority is an elusive construct, a man who exists only in the shadows. No one knows his true name outside of his closest and most loyal followers, who crush any and all who would oppose him before they can scratch the outer surface of the organization. The organization has risen to great influence due to its corporate atmosphere, where the Authority rules over his city like a CEO, making deals and choosing initiatives for his underlings to make happen.

His close advisors are made up of a number of Lost and

Forsaken, some of whom have taken it on as a job just like any other, while others seek a safe harbor which only someone with the vast wealth and resources like those of the Authority can provide — including protection against others of their own kind. The supernatural community does not see serving the Authority as any kind of great honor. Many assume those who do are traitors to their own kind or out for a quick buck. The Authority, however, has no problem leveraging that to assimilate other supernatural outcasts into his organization. This only makes his ability to enforce his rule that much more concrete.

When someone under his care steps out of line, they are dealt with swiftly, quietly, and usually not by the Authority himself. In the rare case that he takes out the trash himself, Carlton is sure to make it a spectacle to serve as a warning to any other transgressors. The most recent was a rat name Eliot who gave up the location of one of the Authority's chop shops to a nosey detective not under his payroll. The Authority held the snitch in an abandoned construction site for days, and he called all of his available minions to attend his death sentence. Many were green and only knew the rumors of the Authority, so the anticipation was palpable. When the moment came, a molten behemoth stepped out and called to the crowd, "This is what happens to the disloyal!" and with that he punched the ground, splitting it open to reveal a pool of lava, picked Eliot up with one burning hand, and threw the man into the pit to his death. As Eliot's feet and legs melted and crunched, the Authority ordered his guards to riddle him with bullets. It was an excruciating death, and people still talk about it today.

DESCRIPTION

Those who have actually had an audience with the Authority, or Mr. A, as some call him, say he is quite the looker. He is always dressed to the nines in the nicest and most expensive business suits, and his eyes pierce through even the most secure person. There is a slight red light flickering through his pupils at times, belying his supernatural origins. To the uninitiated, it is simply an alluring quality and not something they should rightfully be fearful of. At least four personal bodyguards, two of whom are Forsaken, one of whom is a Lost, and the last of whom is a highly-trained mortal, always surround him.

Carlton, a name he never hears anymore, gets off on power, and displaying that power is important to him. This is why he sows fear into his every action, why he is never without protection, and why he feeds a sense of dread and loyalty into the dreams of those he meets.

His outward demeanor is cold and calculating, which he keeps in check through his weekly

activities. In his mansion, a deliciously sickening Den lies in the basement. Stepping into it is like stepping into a furnace, which is nothing to an Insatiable of the Molten Earth, but to his victims it is akin to standing in hell. The Authority isn't picky about his victims, only that he always has one on whom to take his aggression out. This could be torture at the end of a red hot poker to celebrate a merger with the Russian mafia that moved into town, flaying his victim's skin to mark a special business anniversary, or even someone to beat to a charred and bloody pulp if a deal goes wrong. In the latter, the messenger of the bad news always runs the risk of becoming his new victim. The human body is seldom resistant to heat, so his Den is also the best place to dispose of any remains.

When he takes his Horrific form, the Authority is a creature standing several heads higher than the tallest mortal, and is made of lava that flows from his heart and drips onto the ground. This leaves a trail behind him that burns and scars anyone who interacts with it. Some say there is a faint, fiery skeleton viewable underneath the lava that is just as terrifying to behold. One can only see it as he launches his lava from his body at an enemy to melt them, and only for a second before his heart pumps out more of the unearthly molten rock. On the rare occasion when a Hero or Beast makes their way to him, the collective weight of his empire summarily crushes them.

RUMORS

"I hear the best time to strike is the full moon. That's when his wolves are on a leash, and he can't keep his eyes everywhere. I know a guy who's been running drugs under his nose every full moon, hasn't gotten caught yet."

The consensus of most criminals in his city is the full moon is the only real time to act outside of the Authority's rules. More crimes take place and the police are stretched far too thin, making it perfect for the prepared. Firefights, robberies, looting, assassinations, and several deals go down in the streets without the Authority's approval.

The Authority's criminal empire actually extends much farther than any individual group of supernatural creatures, however, and he has eyes everywhere. It often becomes a situation where avoiding notice just involves casting aspersions onto others to cover oneself. It's only worth the Authority's time to go after the worst offenders in the end, but his officers deal with each one swiftly and destructively.

In truth, the Authority loves to sit back and watch the chaos. He loves the knowledge that without his control everything goes to hell in a hand basket.



STORY HOOKS

- A group of Forsaken approach the characters in hopes of making a deal: They need a certain group of drug pushers taken out and their inventory torched to send a message. The plan should take place during the full moon, the only real time the stash is protected to a lesser extent than normal. If they investigate, the location belongs to the Authority, so the question becomes whether or not to proceed. In either case, the characters find out those same Forsaken committed other crimes that same night. Sending the group was simply to avert blame and to put the characters on the Authority's radar instead of themselves, which warrants another talk with the Forsaken.
- The Beasts' brood begins seeing several new criminal elements around their territory, as well as reluctance for the police to intervene and stop the occurrences. This starts small, with street corner drug sales, until they actually spot a secret deal with the police themselves. A major rezoning takes place that threatens to remove the Beasts from their homes and, more importantly, to tear down the location they use to enter their Hive to put up a shopping mall. Tracking down the source of the terrible changes to their territory is of the utmost importance, and everyone just says the same name...the Authority. Who is this mystery person, and how can the brood stop him?
- The characters recently procured a mystical item on their last adventure, perhaps from a Hero they vanquished. They then receive a call from a person who says they represent Mr. A, a businessman who would like to purchase said item from them for a handsome sum. Showing up to meet with the Insatiable face to face is an interesting prospect. Giving in to their base urges of destroying the Insatiable on first contact is a valid one, but so is hearing him out. Could they possibly be the first Beasts to be hired by the Authority? What if they don't want to sell the item? Have they made a potential ally or a terrible enemy?

Without his hand to guide the city, there is no order, only chaos and destruction. At times, he has gone undercover to tackle rival organizations under the same cover of the full moon, taking the opportunity to stretch his metaphorical legs by burning a few buildings to the ground or dragging his enemies back to his Den.

"I don't know what it is, but they say he's got a thing for redheads. They don't get any kind of special pass or anything, but he seems more interested in them. I'd keep your head covered, or maybe even just dye it. Better to not get noticed, ya know?"

Long ago, someone told a young Carlton that he had no soul. Did these onlookers see into the boy's future to see the abomination he would eventually become? No, they were insulting him due to his red hair and freckled complexion. "At least I'm not a ginger," is something he became too used to hearing at too early an age. This shaped much of his worldview once he discovered his nature as an Insatiable.

This rumor is two pronged. Yes, he sees other redheads as under his protection and goes viciously after anyone showing offense to redheads, even if it's only hearsay. He sent an entire coterie of Kindred to their final deaths after they stalked a redhead and left him to rot, and has also gone as far as to destroy businesses (sometimes quite literally) who discriminate against his kind. Likewise, he sees a kinship with other redheads and often employs them within his organization. Messing with a redhead in the Authority's city sometimes means messing directly with the man in charge.

Legend: Controlling

Life: Indulgent

Moment: Molten Earth

Hunger: Power

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Investigation 3, Occult 2, Politics 4 (Criminal)

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Crush) 5, Larceny 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Expression 2, Intimidation (Reputation) 4, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 3, Streetwise 4

Merits: Allies (Criminals) 5, Allies (Forsaken) 3, Allies (Lost) 2, Contacts (Street), Contacts (Police), Contacts (Criminal), Contacts (Legal), Epic Potential (Strength), Fame 3, Patient

Atavisms: Looming Presence, Titanic Blow

Esurients: Impossible Vista, Intruder, Obedience, Your Power is Mine

Nightmares: Fear is Contagious, You Must Obey

Lair: 3

Health: 9

Willpower: 6

Satiety: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 13

Initiative: 6

Defense: 6

Armor: 2/0 (always wears an armor lining in his suits)

Notes: Fighting the Authority is never a one-on-one battle. It always involves fighting through goons, bodyguards, and eventually his Insatiable might. Be careful who you pick fights with.

THE BLIND MAN

Little Blind Man, We see you've come, So now we've got to run, run, RUN! (screamed)
Old Blind Man, Go on your way, Unless you've come to bid "Good day." (in a deep voice)
The Blind Man, Don't look like that, Eat her instead, SHE'S NICE AND FAT! (shouted)
— The Blind Man, by Anon

BACKGROUND

Beasts speculate as to how much of the Blind Man's legend holds truth. This Insatiable definitely exists, but the duration of his existence, breadth of his ruinous activities, and his motivations all conflict from one tale to the next. The Blind Man is an Insatiable incomprehensible for his alien behavior, even others among his kind fail to comprehend what he's attempting to achieve through his actions.

Legend tells of an elderly Persian who walked the length of the Achaemenid Empire while wearing a fastened blindfold. Wherever his road took him, violence and decay followed in his wake, eventually warping the land itself into vistas beyond anything natural for the region. Whenever someone attempted to aid the old cripple, he stood in place and considered. Factors completely arbitrary to most people determined whether he would either opulently reward or slowly and painfully murder the would-be altruist and his entire family.

Tales hold that the same blind wanderer arrived in Béziers during the Albigensian Crusade, having inspired acts of fanatical violence in the people around him during his journey. A layer of metal was folded over his eyes and bolted to his temples, yet somehow he made it to the town despite his lack of sight. The resident Cathars insisted on removing the torturous device on his head, despite his protestations. The town soon fell to the purges of the crusades, chaos and bloodshed reigning. The Blind Man departed to the smell of burning flesh, a chunk of it hanging from his mouth.

The Blind Man patrolled the battlefields of the Napoleonic Wars, clad in the uniforms of the dead, a bloody, scabrous bandage over his eyes. Whenever he rested and was given alms, soldiers' corpses would spring forth with disease enough to eliminate entire regiments from the region. Water grew foul, King Cholera reigned, and he would slowly dance among the choking, dying young men. He helped along those who begged for their mothers as they expired. The tale holds that those who begged for their father received comfort, and sometimes even healing, from the Blind Man.

Wherever the Blind Man treads, ruin stalks closely be-

hind. He does not conform to a single method of delivering pandemonium; his medium and motives are far too abstract for any contemporary Beast to understand. One year he may exalt in plague borne by insects swarming around him, while in another he craves the violent shedding of blood through ritual sacrifice. A generation later, the Blind Man may riddle his victims with nightmares of the world splitting asunder as he stands astride the crack, and later still he may simply instill fear of the wardrobe-dwelling boogeyman, as he stares through the slats at children struggling to sleep.

SPAWNING THE PRIMOGENITOR

The Blind Man is an omen. What sates him more than anything is the fog of portent and doom he produces. When the Blind Man comes, his companions are destruction and loss. He wants irrational fear to consume those who know of him, and make them guess at what hell he may summon forth. The Blind Man wants his legend to spread, and actively plays on the rumors of his unpredictability to visit an occasional drop of kindness in his consuming pool of cruelty. When he produces panic and terror from his victims, he hopes to drive them to suicide, or to kill each other. He then takes his fill of their meat to wash down the thick helpings of despair.

The Blind Man is more than a simple wandering field of destruction. Wherever he travels, he leaves a part of himself. This Insatiable births, oozes, and drops minute eggs on land and at sea. What is born from these eggs is unknown to most, who upon discovering them instinctively react by bringing their boots down to obliterate the wet mess. The Blind Man himself has shared his own belief with the few Beasts and other Insatiable he's come to respect. According to him, he is the carrier of the Primogenitor, who will be reborn once he's wreathed the world in his eggs. He doesn't recognize the primacy of the Dark Mother, or her children. Rather, he knows in his twisted heart that he possesses the essence of the Primogenitor.

Even other Insatiable consider the Blind Man's prophecies unlikely, but he's gained a cult of followers throughout the centuries of his existence. Its membership frequently declines and dies out, due to the Blind Man feeding from his own follow-

ers when he's in a meditative mood, but his legend is such that mortals and Insatiable alike can't help but be drawn to him.

Despite tales of his constant transience, the Blind Man's stolen many a Lair from Beasts or built his own Dens when over-matched by his "lesser" brethren. He makes his appearance in a new city or country an elaborate, festive affair — by his standards — but favors staying in one location while he spreads his seed, marshaling power and followers before eventually readying himself to move on. When Beasts discover the whereabouts of the Blind Man — who doesn't make a massive effort in concealing his location — the Insatiable's known for affecting an air of deference and politeness, even abandoning a stolen Lair in a false show of fear to anyone muscling in. He then returns with his cult in tow, and lays waste to any Beast showing him such disrespect.

According to the followers of the Blind Man, the Primogenitor within him now requires little time before awakening and being nurtured into the nightmares of every creature on Earth. Soon, the Blind Man will arrive in a city of great and grave importance, spill his eggs a final time, and unleash the father of all Insatiable.

DESCRIPTION

The Blind Man's appearance is not static. From tale to tale, he alters slightly in the description: one time being a tall, stooped male bearing deep creases across his kindly Kurdish features, another being a rigid, wiry man, tight of muscle and wearing a perpetual grimace upon his weathered Nordic face. The only constants see him carrying a cane, typically white in color, appearing at least 50 years of age, adorned with something obscuring his eyes — typically shades in the current era, and wearing clothes marked with pink or black blotted stains around the location of his navel and groin.

Known for his cautious, yet gracious, manner, the Blind Man is not a typical Ravager. He certainly lacks compassion for the trifling existences of individuals, thinking even less of their houses and cities, but acts with respect and cordiality even when eating a victim alive. He pauses before speaking, apparently thinking on a polite response to whatever question or offer is posed to him. In fact, the Blind Man always knows how he's going to act. He relishes the silence between sentences, the impatient agony of a conversationalist waiting for the next beat of speech, and makes death a particularly painful ordeal for those not courteous enough to allow him time to respond.

The Blind Man is not truly blind of course. He's not human, and has no requirement for such minor sensory organs to perceive his surroundings. He can see as well with his eye sockets covered as he does with them open to the air, but as the eyes are fabled gateways to the soul, so the Blind Man's sockets give away his true Insatiable nature. When visible, the holes in the Blind Man's head clearly contain tiny, shifting centipedes and earwigs, steadily birthing a thick ring of little white eggs on his eyelids and in his eyelashes. Occasionally a bug will drop from one of these orifices, but the Blind Man pays this no heed.

The Blind Man's blotted clothing is as result of a thick trail of what resemble fish eggs progressively leaking from his navel, urethra, and anus. Particularly around his navel area, a coagulated mass of pink and black eggs comes forth when the Blind Man strains his abdominal muscles. Horrifyingly, the Blind Man has from time to time passed these eggs off as salmon roe or sturgeon caviar, as they bear a sour, fishy odor. Those who consume his "produce" have their fertility dramatically increased, and gradually produce their own eggs in a similar fashion to the Blind Man, the only difference being that mortal-produced eggs possess a coat of thin white



fur. This invariably drives the afflicted unfortunates insane, as they cannot stop the egg production, resulting in self-destructive harm. The Blind Man believes that by participating in the birthing, they increase the speed at which the Primogenitor will be reborn.

It's rare for the Blind Man to reveal his true self, even preferring to remain in the form of an old man when inside a stolen Lair. It typically takes violence and great impoliteness for the Blind Man to appear in his Horrible Form; a wretched, flaky, yonic monstrosity coated in armies of shifting bugs and eggs. These insects and their ovum are constantly belched from a cavernous maw, roughly where the Insatiable's stomach should be, as wispy layers of skin shed off and swirl in the breeze. Two small, button-like eyes are the only mundane elements to this otherwise alien form.

RUMORS

"This Insatiable never lets go of his cane. I hear it's a part of him – some kind of petrified tentacle that paralyzes whatever he touches."

The Blind Man doesn't wield his cane as a weapon, and it's not a tentacle, but he's incredibly sensitive to others touching it. When another creature makes contact with his cane, he's liable to choose that individual for a heavy serving of Nightmares in nights to come.

Though he's not truly blind, support groups for those with impaired sight are a common haunt for the Blind Man. They're among the few he never sates his Hunger on, finding among them a place where he can masquerade as a mortal and play the role he's come to adore for generations. He's even known to protect the blind from those who would take advantage of their condition. Tragically, he also draws many of his cultists from the ranks of the blind.

"I've heard he's occasionally cordial with Beasts, if they're polite to him. He apparently sided with a brood against a notable band of Heroes, shook hands after the fight concluded, and went on his way."

The Blind Man believes entirely that Beasts are a lower form, and that Insatiable – being free from the grip of the Primordial Dream – are the apex nightmare weavers, yet, he doesn't dismiss them completely. They are still cousins, even if their powers are lesser and their attachment to satiety pathetic. When a Beast shows the Blind Man respect, he offers counsel in his foreign, abstract way. Treating the Blind Man with respect is no easy task, as he changes the parameters for styles of address and due deference without warning, and any misinterpretation of his, frankly alien, advice is a huge offense.

If a Beast succeeds in earning the Blind Man's respect, he offers his devastating array of power in war against Beasts' enemies. He's fonder of the Namtaru than any other Family, but only in the sense that he feels they're more comfortable in their monstrosity than their peers. Any sign of weakness on the part of Beast will see him abandon her at a crucial point, or switch sides in a battle – even to his apparent detriment.

STORY HOOKS

- One of the brood's contacts complains frequently of night terrors preventing her from sleeping. She describes the nightmares as altering vividly from night to night, except for one feature — they all contain a man the contact met recently. The contact attempted to help an old, blind man cross the road, taking the gentleman by the arm before gaining his permission to assist. The Blind Man grinned at the contact before wrenching himself away, and since then the dreams have afflicted her to the degree that sleep is now impossible. Unless the characters protect the contact, she goes missing soon after, the only evidence at the scene of the crime a spoor of what appear to be salmon eggs.
- Children in the local school learn a new nursery rhyme they call "The Blind Man," except the Insatiable's not been visiting their dreams. He's been in the minds of their parents. A glasses-wearing child was being bullied at the school, and when the Blind Man inexplicably wrote a letter to each of the bullies' parents asking they stop, the bullying only intensified. Rather than express his alien ire on the children, the Blind Man is now targeting the dreams of each parent he feels should be raising their children in a better way. Such behavior borders on how Beasts attempt to have their prey learn and improve, but the Blind Man has no such mandate. He wishes to torment the parents into acts of suicidal violence, taking any survivors for his next meal.
- A gang of blind adults attacks a Beast known to the brood outside her Lair. They're waiting at the Lair's exit no matter where it appears, each time the Beast leaves. They scream and rant that the Blind Man is requisitioning the Lair for birth of the Primogenitor, and to save the Beast's life she must flee. The cult is immune to the mental infiltration of a Beast's Nightmares, and any Beast who attempts interfering with his followers receives a visit from the Blind Man. The Insatiable is convinced that now is the time for the Primogenitor to rise, and this particular Lair is incalculably important to the birthing process. Some Beasts write the claims off as lunacy, but others take notice. If the Blind Man is correct, a powerful, uncontrollable terror may soon be unleashed on the world.

Legend: Pitiless

Life: Callous

Moment: Void

Hunger: Ruin

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult (Insatiable Lore) 4, Science 3

Physical Skills: Stealth 2, Survival 3, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 4, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Inspiring) 4, Socialize 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Cultists) 3, Contacts (Cult), Danger Sense, Danger Sense (Advanced), Fame 2, Inspiring, Resources 2, Spoor 4

Esurients: Cast Aside, Foul Mess, Obedience, Terrible Form, Your Power is Mine

Nightmares: They Are All Around You, You Are Never Alone, You Must Obey, You Will Never Rest

Lair: 0

Health: 8

Willpower: 10

Satiety: 7

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Initiative: 9

Defense: 4

Notes: The Blind Man is rarely without his shades or white cane. Despite his apparent blindness, he is capable of making eye contact with a victim for the purpose of inflicting Nightmares.

COLETTE THE LOVESICK GIRL

Hold me closer. Hold me tighter. Give me your love, now! Now I said! I need it!
Fine, I'll just take it myself.

BACKGROUND

Colette was never one to have too much confidence in herself. She always looked outside of her own mind, her own thoughts, and latched onto things that made her seem more intelligent than she really was, prettier than she ever could be, and cooler than the collection of nothing she ultimately was. Her father was the typical businessman who saw more benefit to long days at the office or on business trips than time with his family, and her mother was self-involved to the point of neglect. Colette's words bounced off of the self-obsessed walls her parents built around themselves, leaving her with no guidance when her hunger started to show itself.

She woke from visions of the frozen cold surrounding her and chilling her to her soul. In these dreams, Colette was without anyone to keep her warm, without even fire, and was frozen to the point of shattering into a million pieces before she snapped awake. A girl with a stronger will may have come upon a sense of independence she had been lacking her whole life and become determined to change. Instead, Colette sunk deeper into her new state as an Insatiable and sought only to fill the void inside her.

Her mother was the obvious first target of her obsession, as she could always be found downstairs, passed out on the living room couch with a cigarette in her mouth and telenovelas on the TV. She grabbed her mom by the hand and pulled her close for a deep hug, hoping a little physical attention was all she needed to make her complete. What the Lovesick Girl did not notice were her mother's gasps for life, as she drained the warmth quickly from her body. The girl was no more whole

after letting her mother fall to the ground, and she felt no remorse for her action. Instead, she sought only to forcibly take the love she so desperately craved from her father, and anyone else she could, by force.

These new powers were a mystery, but figuring them out became her new obsession. Maybe they were the key to feeling whole and finally being loved. No one was as alone as her, and she needed to stop that feeling once and for all. Colette visited her father at his office late that night, snuck up behind him and the man he had been cheating on her mother with, reached out, and reveled in the dual thuds of their bodies hitting the ground in a symphony of death. One might think she'd feel a bit of justice for her mother, but she realized she only felt truly alive when draining others of their lives.

Without parents, Colette moved onto the streets and began building her Den in an abandoned building near several nightclubs. It is as much of a home as she feels she deserves, covered with David Bowie and The Cure posters and littered with a special keepsake from each person she has tried to get to love her. Her mother's ashtray and her father's cufflinks are among her favorite of these items, and she guards them against harm above all others.

YOU ARE MY FAMILY

Many people came to Colette's doorstep one after another, each one falling for her act. Ever the injured bird, many a would-be savior saw her as something to be fixed until it's too late and she's drained them of any warmth they can give her. When they show real feelings for her, then it is all the more exquisite.

It wasn't long before she had left enough bodies behind her in her search for love that Beasts began to take notice. Colette immediately felt a kinship to these beings, the kind of connection the movies tell you you're supposed to have with family, even though her parents never made her feel this way.

Her first was with Malik, a Namtaru who fascinated Colette to no end. She followed him home and snuck into his Lair, a place of pure fire that would have kept anyone else at bay. The flames gave way to the Lovesick Girl's steps, however, and allowed her cold heart to pierce their defenses. Each time he returned to his home, she was nowhere to be found, but his flames were dimmer than before. After weeks of attempting to hunt her down, Malik finally found Colette in his Lair trying on several sets of his clothes with a giant smile on her face. "They are a perfect fit!" she exclaimed, even though they hung off her like she was a tiny mannequin in a plus-sized store. When Malik took on his Horror form, hoping to scare her away with the heat of his gaze, she only reached for him, drew him close and kissed him deep. He felt the revulsion he normally inspired in others coursing through his own body, and he pushed her away and demanded she leave. It was too late, though; his power was now hers and she had never felt closer to another being until that day.

Filling the hole in her heart with the love of mortals no longer hit the spot; only Beasts, with whom she felt a kinship, were worth her time now. Of course, the death of a few humans with their fears lost to the Primordial Dream was more than enough to lure a Beast or two from their Lairs to give her a chance at their hearts.

Colette has been at this game for over nine years now, becoming more cunning and devilish with each passing day and with each prey she consumes. Every Beast she encounters reviles her as a monster they must destroy, but she believes it simply takes one to know one. She hopes one day that one of these Beasts will see her as an equal and welcome her into his heart. Only then will her Hunger ever be satiated.

DESCRIPTION

Having received plenty of practice throughout her life, Colette knows exactly how to blend in with any crowd. When on the streets, she wears a nondistinct hoodie as she walks around, carrying the car battery she uses to power her Den with her almost everywhere she goes. When it's time to mingle, her wardrobe includes just about anything she could want. Among the other collectibles she keeps from her victims, Colette has a vast wardrobe with only a few bloodstains, nothing anyone would notice in the dark or in the dimly-lit corners of the nightclubs she frequents.

Every interaction with Colette makes her victim ever more infatuated. The same longing she has held in her soul since she was a little girl now becomes a part of each and every person she encounters, even if they don't realize it at first. They have dreams of her face, her hands, her lips, and wake up shaking and cold with the knowledge that only that girl they met last night could warm them again. Their relationships begin to wane, as they are obsessed only with meeting Colette one more time. They frequent the clubs hoping to bump into her, and either go home alone in despair or go home with a random person to attempt to fill their own void. Colette infects her targets with an intense emptiness, a reflection of the hunger she feels every day.

The Lovesick Girl looks to be like any other girl with dark hair and Latin roots, and knows how to camouflage or stand out based on her clothing choice. Regardless of her garb, however, she always looks sad and in need of help, begging anyone she meets to want to reach out and care for her. Colette is a Venus fly trap for charity, much



STORY HOOKS

- The Beast characters' brood return from their latest conflict or adventure to find their Lair ransacked, and with a weaker connection to the Primordial Dream. Stepping into the area, they immediately notice that nothing except the most superficial of items are missing. Possibly an old jersey the one Beast hasn't worn in weeks or another's favorite candy dish, but anything of real significance or power is left without a scratch. An overwhelming confusion hits the Brood until they find a letter from their intruder reading, "Hello, my love. I have taken only small mementos this time, but the next time I come back I'll show myself to you and you'll love me back." It becomes a puzzle to figure out what she took and why, figuring out which of the brood she is actually targeting, and when she plans to attack again.
- The Lovesick Girl's legend has grown over the last few months, with more bodies turning up and even more mentions of her actions coming through the grapevine. The usual rumor mill isn't even enough to contain the damage she is doing right now and is instead leaking over into the local news coverage with investigations into a possible serial killer. Having this much attention brought in by an Insatiable is the exact reason Beasts are sworn to destroy them practically on sight. This type of story doesn't have a single goal; instead, it is composed of hunting and disposing of the Lovesick Girl, mixed with attempts to quell the public knowledge already surrounding them and hopefully fixing the flow of spirits to the Primordial Dream before too much damage is done. On top of all of that, the other supernatural creatures in the city are sure to blame the brood if they can't handle their business quickly and quietly.
- A local Ventruue of the Invictus approaches the protagonists' brood. He is weakened and needs help. He tells a story of how he can only feed on the saddened and he finds club girls to be the easiest to prey upon, but now this predator has been turned into the prey. He says he's been seeing a beautiful, melancholy girl nightly, despite knowing better, and his inner beast is growling closer to the surface with each meeting. Without the Beasts' help, he is sure to lose his humanity, but there is great favor to be gained with his clan if they can rid him of his succubus.

to the folly of so-called "good" people. In her Horrific form, this becomes even more obvious, as her arms and torso peel away to reveal a gaping vortex, sucking the air out of the area and leaving it chilled. Her legs plant themselves into the ground with black, slightly metallic roots, and the rest of her body becomes wisps of energy grabbing everything it can and throwing it into the black hole. Colette consumes everything she can in this form, leaving nothing but a crater in the ground, swelling whole buildings or city blocks into herself if not stopped.

Beyond that, her aura fills anyone in the area not with dread or panic, but pure apathy. The Lovesick Girl, so desperate for an emotional connection, sucks her victims' emotions out of them to the last drop, and is left unsatisfied in the end. This is her story, and one that has been told again and again through the years.

RUMORS

"You can't go home with just anyone. What if she's the Lovesick Girl? You may never come back again. Be careful, and be aware, she could be anyone, but she's dangerous."

Men on the prowl in nightclubs have heard the stories of the Lovesick Girl, and the rumors of guys going home with her and never being heard from again has spread far and wide. Amidst the flowing alcohol and the thumping bass lines, few people think twice about some superstition if they have the chance to leave with someone on their arm. Colette lures in her prey the same way every time; she draws in others to pretend to be her friends and then either ditches or kills them before appearing again to her prey, alone and in distress. While her aura already gives a feeling of helplessness, the extra theatrics helps her get a small thrill out of her kill. She gives in rather quickly and is taken home, where the passion becomes the closest thing to love she'll ever actually feel.

Despite what some may believe, while it is usually men who circulate this rumor and fear for their fellow bros, the Lovesick Girl preys on women just as often as men. Colette is, after all, hungry for love in any form, regardless of the vessel that can provide it—gender means nothing to this monster.

"I hear the Lovesick Girl only punishes bad people, those people who are mean to her, or put other people down. Be nice and you might survive meeting her."

Some believe that being extra nice and gentle to the Lovesick Girl is the only way to truly get rid of her. When faced with the idea of someone willingly opening their arms and inviting her in, she becomes confused and runs off in fear. No one is ever nice to her; she has to take what she wants with no regard for her victim, right? Everyone who is nice is always out to get something from her, right? Puzzled by this kind of action, she second guesses her life and usually retreats to her Den, where tears guide her way to nightmares of all the worst acts she's committed in her life.

If one is able to follow the Lovesick Girl to her Den, something very possible since she is consumed with escape and nothing else, they have access to the real target—her collectible trinkets. Each one represents one of her kills and she continues to subsist on the memories of each kill to push her forward. If these are destroyed, however, Colette loses the piece of her soul once filled by that victim and is weakened. Only one Beast was even partially successful in this attempt, however, so it is unknown if it will kill the Lovesick Girl or simply piss her off.

Legend: Obsessive

Life: Loneliness

Moment: Frozen Hell

Hunger: Hoard

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3
Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3
Mental Skills: Computers 2, Crafts (Appraisal) 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 3
Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Larceny (Breaking and Entering) 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weapons (Car Battery) 3
Social Skills: Empathy 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 2
Merits: Anonymity 2, Barfly, Killer Instinct 3, Sleight of Hand, Spoor 4,
Esurients: Intruder, Laws of Man No Longer Apply, Obedience, Your Power is Mine
Nightmares: Everything You Do is Useless, You Are

Alone, You Cannot Run

Lair: 0

Health: 10

Willpower: 7

Satiety: 5

Size: 5

Speed: 10

Initiative: 1

Defense: 5

Armor: 0

Notes: Colette usually has a car battery with her, which she uses as a weapon to great effect. Damage: 2B, Initiative Modifier: -2, Size: 1

NULL SNYPER INTERNET SCOURGE

If u can't take criticism, GTFO n00b! LOL

BACKGROUND

Born Maria Figueroa, she was a girl who kept to herself throughout grade school and high school. Other kids teased her about her name, her accent, her dark skin, her family's poverty, and even the fact that she spoke fluent Spanish. As she got older, the bullying became more intense. Some of her classmates would fight her. Others would pretend to be her friend until they got what they wanted, and then she was the outcast again. Somehow, she was the one who always got in trouble. She'd end up in detention or suspended, while the other kids kept on with their perfect little lives.

The only time she ever felt at peace was in the fleeting moments she could escape to the school's library computers. There she could visit the forums and message boards where she wasn't a freak. Her looks didn't matter. Her accent didn't matter. The only thing that mattered there was the content of her posts. Her identity could be whatever she imagined. She reinvented herself a few times on the forums. A different screen name meant an entirely different person. If she didn't like how she was treated, she could shed that self as easily as she shed sweaty, rank clothes.

As soon as she graduated high school and was on her own, she saved up enough to buy an old laptop. She spent every moment of her free time engrossed in it. Her favorite forum was one that criticized people's self-made costumes. Members of the community would take pictures of other people's cosplay and upload them for everyone to ridicule. Maria gleefully joined in savaging the images. One picture turned out to be of a regular poster to the group.

Betrayed and hurting, the girl posted a heartfelt message asking the forum to remove the picture and for everyone to go easy on her. Her pleas only enflamed the forum's response. Maria in particular tore into the girl, unleashing so many years of pent up fury. All the things she wanted to say for so long to her tormentors, all the power she never had before, she now brought to bear on the girl she, only days before, called a friend. When word came that the girl committed suicide, a wave of euphoria washed through Maria like she never felt before.

Suddenly, her eyes were open to senses she never imaged. She could see the void within herself and her empty, hungry tendrils reaching out across the electrons. She could touch any part of the internet she wished. All she had to do was stretch a little bit, and she could snuff out any life she encountered with but a few keystrokes. Maria let the void expand, completely consuming that pathetic person she once was. In its place was Null Snyder, a predator who could be virtually anywhere at once.

THE WEBS SHE WEAVES

Null Snyder got bored of the costuming forum in short order. Egos were too fragile and meals were too easy to come by. She experimented with trolling support groups and various fandoms. She poisoned any community she touched. Emotions would run high, tempers would flare, and a once thriving forum of people coming together in common interests would end in a virtual smoking ruin with at least one person unable to endure the emotional devastation — dead by his own hands. The chaos and betrayal were delicious.

As she explored the World Wide Web, she found she had

an instinctual understanding of networks. Information found online easily answered any questions she had about technology. That, combined with the ubiquity of scripts so thoughtfully provided by the world's hacker communities, meant that there was practically no network security that she couldn't bypass. Webcams became her eyes around the globe, microphones her ears, and like-minded internet trolls her hands. With nearly every computer, tablet, and smartphone having a built-in camera, nothing she desired to see could escape her gaze. She used this to get into the heads of targets, making them think she was right behind them when, in reality, she was half a continent away.

Recently, Null Snyder discovered the adolescent man-children that exist where gamers and men's rights activists overlap. She felt nothing but contempt for them, but she decided to try flexing her internet muscles. Instead of driving people to suicide through direct online interaction, she whipped up an angry mob to go after her targets. Through empty rhetoric and carefully coordinated campaigns of doxing and harassment, she terrorized players, game developers, and journalists in the industry who don't share her trolls' views. The first time she saw a man killed by police, live on webcam as a result of a swatting prank, ecstasy, unlike that from any other death she caused, filled her completely. She knew she was on the right track.

Now she maintains a carefully cultivated legion of followers. Certain circles avidly follow Null Snyder's exploits and celebrate her as a master troll. It only takes a word or two from her to unleash the fury of hordes of aspiring trolls longing to make a name for themselves. They'll dox anyone or breach private accounts if it means gaining a small measure of notoriety by attaching themselves to her reputation.

DESCRIPTION

Null Snyder lives alone in a single-room apartment, which she rarely leaves. Thanks to the internet, she rarely needs anything from the outside world. The only time she dares venture out is to acquire new computer hardware to upgrade her setup. She is safe in her Den, surrounded by the glow of computer monitors and the hum of various power supplies and hard drives. Trash and old, discarded computer parts litter the floor like so many skeletons stripped of flesh.

Her physical appearance is unkempt. She dresses slovenly and never bathes. She never interacts with anyone in person, so she sees no reason to bother. For her, the physical is a pointless waste of time that shackles her, preventing her from reaching her full potential. Everything she needs is available to her through the computer. If she had some way to shed her body and exist



entirely as information in the cloud, she would take it without a moment's hesitation. Ironically, since she stopped caring about her appearance, she now looks more like her self-image from her youth. Her face is pimply due to her poor hygiene, and her stench reeks worse than it did even when her family tried to save money by using less water. She has an emaciated frame, bordering on skeletal, from subsisting on mere emotion without tangible flesh.

So far, she has never consciously assumed her Horrible Form. Her Insatiable visage is composed of a knotwork of inky filaments clustered together to form the silhouette of her body, which resembles that of a giant spider, with rending claws and grotesque fangs to drain the life of anyone they pierce. The skin of the strands is that of a black hole, darkening the room as she seems to pull all the light into her. Her uncountable legs extend from her body along the information byways of the internet. At their ends are ravenous maws ready to devour anything in reach.

As an Insatiable, Null Snyder is incredibly young. She hasn't had an opportunity yet to fully explore the extent of her birthright. While her supernatural power is relatively weak, she is a creature supremely suited to the 21st century. Thanks to the reach of the internet, a reach that grows daily as smart devices proliferate and everyday items are increasingly networked together to create an internet of things, her hunting range is nearly limitless. She hunts by emotionally isolating her victims and harassing them until they are broken. Either they take their own lives to end the misery she inflicts upon them, or she engineers their demise at the hands of one of her followers. As long as she has a network connection open to them at the time of their demise, she is able to consume their despair.

Null Snyder hasn't personally killed anyone with her own hands yet. As a result, she is constantly hungry, even by Insatiable standards. She is half starved from feeding only on nightmares and emotions without the necessary sustenance of her victims' flesh. The prospect is tantalizing, and she fantasizes about how satisfying it would be to actually feel the life slowly extinguish from a person, how exquisite human fat and muscle would taste in her gullet. She knows she's feeble and only growing weaker. Her meals so far, while providing a measure of nourishment, are unsustainable in the long term. She must find a way to overcome her fear of the physical world and leave the comfort and safety of her Den. She has the contact information of a target one of her rabble doxed for her. That particular harassment campaign is almost at its end and the victim will soon be dead, one way or another. Every so often, she pulls up the address and stares at it in electric anticipation.

RUMORS

"Null Snyder is so active in the men's rights activists' forums, we're probably looking for a socially awkward male in his teens to early 20s."

Contrary to popular belief among those who know of her online, Null Snyder is not male. She plays the part of a disaffected man to ingratiate herself to the communities she currently manipulates. It's merely one of many identities she's worn over her life online. Still, she thinks of herself as female out of habit more than anything else. She stopped considering herself human shortly after her Moment manifested itself. She doesn't actually care about any of the causes she pretends to champion. They're

simply useful tools for her hunt. Her followers are nothing more than a means to an end. Should they no longer serve their purpose, she'll discard this identity just like all the others.

"Every single one of Null Snyder's victims said that he knew impossible things about them, as though he were watching their every move, but there's no sign he was ever anywhere near the victims."

Her intimate knowledge about her prey may seem supernatural in origin to those she hunts and anyone who investigates her, but Null Snyder gains her insight entirely through mundane means. The rapid adoption of smart devices and the growth of the internet gives her a window into the lives of anyone she cares to hunt. Anything connected to the internet will broadcast information about its usage, and even some lightbulbs can now be given an IP address. These networked devices are becoming ubiquitous far faster than the security included with them advances. It's a simple matter for Null Snyder to collect their

STORY HOOKS

- A Hero has his sights set on the player characters. He always seems to know what the characters are going to do, but they know nothing about him. They need information — who is he, what is he after, and just what is his connection to the characters? After making a number of inquiries, they discover the name Null Snyder, and how to contact her online. She is happy to make a deal with the characters, but is the information worth the price she asks?
- One of the local Begotten is doxed. Now, a coordinated campaign of harassment has begun. Null Snyder had an epiphany on how to use the Primordial Dream to integrate herself more fully into the realm of information, but she needs a Beast's Lair to enact her plan. It's a race against time as the characters attempt to find the source of the harassment before the operation reaches its bloody conclusion.
- There is a dramatic uptick in local police violence. Null Snyder is trolling an online police support group to increase the chances of a fatality during a swatting prank. It has the side effect of raising tensions between the police and the local citizens. Riots are threatening to break out all over the city. It's difficult for Beasts to satiate their Hungers in the middle of a small war zone. Can the characters discover the source of the police brutality and defuse the situation before their own hunting is compromised?
- Null Snyder discovered a solution to her dilemma. She is petrified of leaving her Den, but she must devour to survive. A chance encounter with one of the Begotten on a message board opened her eyes to the Subversion. Now she can finally live her dream. All she needs to do is find an online Beast close to one of her targets, and she will be able to feast while staying safe. Luckily for her, one of the player characters or their allies just happens to fit that criteria.

information. Either she or her devoted trolls can mine the data to produce an incredibly accurate picture of her targets' daily routine. If she needs more, she can always take over the camera inevitably attached to one of her prey's devices.

"Insatiable must be in physical proximity to cause a Schism or use one of their Nightmares. As long as you're not in the same room as Null Snyder, you're safe from any supernatural attack."

While this is normally true, being close and making eye contact with her mean something different in Null Snyder's case. The longer she regularly resides in a forum or chatroom, a virtual Schism grows, twisting anyone else who actively participates in the online community. Likewise, eye contact is necessary for her to use her Nightmares, but she is able to use webcams as an extension of her own eyes. She doesn't realize it, but she's a step toward realizing her dream to slip the bonds of the physical world. Since she doesn't have a point of reference among her kind, she doesn't know how unusual her abilities are. Her prey must die, but unlike most Insatiable, she does not have to physically consume her victims to gain a measure of sustenance. However, the Satiety she receives is only half as fulfilling as devouring her target's flesh.

Legend: Pitiless

Life: Callous

Moment: Void

Hunger: Power

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer (Hacking) 5, Investigation (Identify Patterns) 4, Occult 1, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Larceny 2, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Hiding Emotions) 3

Merits: Allies (Internet Trolls) 5, Area of Expertise (Hacking), Language (Spanish), Library (Computer) 3

Esurients: Terrible Form, Obedience

Nightmares: You Are Alone, You Deserve This

Lair: 0

Health: 7

Willpower: 5

Satiety: 3

Size: 5

Speed: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Notes: Null Snyder can make eye contact through webcams for the purposes of activating her Nightmares. She may cause Schisms in online communities. Finally, she may consume emotion as long as she has an open network connection with her victim at the time of death. However, without physically consuming her victim, her Satiety increases by half.

PETER SLAUGHBAL THE UNRELENTING CLOWN

This circus is an ocean of delights! Dive right in for the night of your life!

BACKGROUND

The circus is place of wonderment. Visitors laugh at the antics of the clowns, stare in wide-eyed amazement at the death-defying feats from acrobats and wild animal tamers, and delightfully scream at the safe terrors of the fun house. At one circus in the 1950s, though, the horrors were anything but safe.

Peter grew up in a traveling carnival, learning the ins and outs of the business – how to walk a tightrope, juggle a knife, and most importantly, work a crowd. As soon as he was old enough, he donned his makeup, put on the wig, and buttoned up his coveralls. He couldn't wait to finally be in the middle of action making the crowd laugh as one of the clowns. That evening, at his first public performance, he caught sight of a young woman all alone. A hunger stirred in him as everything else around him seemed to fade away into nothingness. She

seemed adrift and helpless in the middle of a vast, uncaring sea of people that threatened to erupt into a tempest and devour her at any moment. He became obsessed, unable to bear her being out of his sight for even a moment. Mistaking his obsession for lust, the other circus hands encouraged Peter, telling him which attractions she was visiting and where she was heading next.

At first, she was amused by the clown's antics for her sole benefit, but she quickly became disconcerted to find him awaiting her at every destination. After the first couple of times, she tried to lose him, but he was always ahead of her. Desperate, she ran into the hall of mirrors thinking she could escape in the maze, but Peter knew the maze through and through. He remembered every false turn, he saw through every distorted reflection, and he knew the trick to collapsing the contraption for transport. When she went down a dead end, Peter

closed off the passage behind them, cutting them off from any unwelcome visitors. His teeth cut short her shriek as they sank into her throat.

After that night, Peter established his routine. One night while the circus was in a given town he would pick one guest with no friends or family with them. While everyone else attending the carnival enjoyed a laughter-filled reprieve from their daily grind, that one person experienced a living hell of pure terror with no safe haven. Twisted by their prolonged exposure to him, the circus hands helped Peter as he chased his intended prey throughout the circus grounds. The crowd of visitors would transform into a tempestuous sea of bodies crashing in around Peter's intended victim. Lines formed an unbreakable barrier. Waves of people pushed the prey along desired paths. Tents and booths seemed like safe harbors, but Peter was always there, waiting. The thunderous laughter and squeals of delight only added to the desperate nightmare. Eventually, his victim would be driven, exhausted and ragged, to someplace safely out of sight and sound from the rest of the circus. Only there, when his victims were too spent to resist, did he finally consume their raw terror, seasoned with their trembling flesh.

CATCH AND RELEASE

The years passed. The circus traveled from city to city and country to country. Authorities never made the connection between the circus and missing people since the circus was always long gone before anyone noticed something was wrong, but rumors circulated. By the early 1960s, the talk attracted the attention of a hunter cell who quickly realized the number of disappearances around the circus was probably more than a coincidence. As the group investigated the grounds of the carnival, Peter instinctively realized other predators were on the prowl. Unfortunately for the hunters, the circus as a whole was Peter's Den. Between his ability to manipulate crowds, help from the circus hands, and his overwhelming Horrible Form, the cell never stood a chance.

Only one hunter, Jean Lansberry, managed to escape. Devastated by the loss of her friends, she vowed to put a

stop to the carnival. She called on every contact or informant the cell ever knew to find some way of trapping supernatural creatures. She pored over every tome or manuscript she could get her hands on. Eventually, she learned enough to build a reliquary — a painting depicting her memory of the monstrous horror. With her newly-fashioned weapon in hand, she traveled alone to the latest town hosting the circus. She knew the pattern behind the disappearances and made herself irresistible bait for Peter.

Once she saw the clown, Jean knew she was his target. She played her part, running from one attraction to the next, but the fear was all too real. She had already lived through the grave consequences of a failed hunt. Only the weight of the painting steadied her resolve. When she was finally cornered and Peter moved in for the kill, Jean took out the reliquary. It worked flawlessly. The painting imprisoned the clown, and as far as Jean was concerned, he would never harm anyone again.

Nearly 50 years later, age caught up with Jean. Before she could make plans about what to do with the reliquary after her death, Alzheimer's set in. In her addled state, the painting and her entire life as a hunter vanished like a distant, terrible dream. After she succumbed to the affliction, her home and all her possessions passed to her last living relatives, her brother's grandson and his wife. As they cleaned out the house, the young couple stumbled onto the grotesque painting. Unaware of its true nature, they joked about how awful it was while reading the inscriptions engraved in it. The words the two spoke had power and released Peter from his prison. Newly freed, starved, and nearly insane from so long in isolation, that night Peter stalked the couple through the house. Their screams were the most delicious meal he had ever tasted.

DESCRIPTION

After so long gone from this world, Peter is a shadow of his former self. Where once he had the entire circus at his disposal to manipulate and command crowds, now he is all alone — a creature out of time in an unfamiliar world. He skulks from one town to the next, searching for par-



STORY HOOKS

- The wife of Jean's descendant, Elizabeth Marchello, survived her encounter with Peter. Since that night, she's been driven to discover what actually happened. She accepts the reality of the supernatural after unearthing the fact that Jean was an accomplished hunter in her youth. She also knows that the painting was integral to stopping Peter originally. Her investigation into the monster that murdered her husband has led her to the existence of Beasts, specifically the players' characters. Unfortunately, she doesn't know the difference between the Begotten and the Insatiable. She believes the two to be one kind of monster. If they manage to convince her of the difference between the children of the Dark Mother and the children of the Primogenitor, the characters would gain a devoted ally in their struggles against the Insatiable, especially if they assist her in gaining revenge against Peter.
- A circus is in town and the ringleader is a Beast known to the players' characters. The circus contains the entrance to his Lair, but strange accidents have been happening with greater and greater frequency – animals on the loose, causing a guest to be mauled, gunpowder misfiring, causing severe injury to the carnival's daredevil, and ropes snapping resulting in the death of an acrobat. Unknown to the ringleader, the clown troupe recently hired Peter on to join their act. The accidents are the result of the growing Schism caused by his presence. The ringleader needs the characters' aid if he's going to survive having the Insatiable in his midst.
- A hunter turned ripper knows the stories about Jean and Peter. He tracked down the reliquary and now has the Insatiable trapped to do his bidding. Half mad from starvation and being caged like an animal, Peter is frantic and far more lethal than normal. His growing Schism drives his captor to ever greater acts of depravity. Desperate to escape, he'll Subvert any Beast he finds while on assignment for the Slasher, which happens to be targeting a player's character.

ties or other events where a clown might go unnoticed. Once inside, he dutifully plays his part. He may not know current events, but sight gags and slapstick are universal. While everyone laughs, he watches. There's always at least one person who goes home alone at the end of the evening. At least that's his plan. 50 years of starvation have taken their toll. Sometimes his Hunger takes control, forcing him to indulge in the first available meal – be it an individual who wanders away from the main event, or the entire party if it's relatively secluded.

Peter prefers hunting the ones who are alone with no support, no one to lend a helping hand or offer a warning. People who are adrift without the safety of numbers deserve to be hunted and swallowed up by the unseen predators living in

the murky depths beneath life's placid surface. Peter loves to make sure his victims realize just how alone they are by giving them no place to run. He stalks them from one location to another, denying them any reprieve, as though they're being tossed from one wave to the next in a raging tempest. Only when they're exhausted and unable to swim against his implacable current does he kill them. Not all at once, of course; he consumes them slowly, savoring their fear and resignation to the inevitable.

Peter is a greasy, bulbous man, fat from the all the years he was able to feast in his circus. While not apparent at a distance, up close he has a cloying dampness and slight putrid smell reminiscent of rotting fish. He never appears in public or to his prey outside of his clown costume of blues and sea greens, the edges of which are frayed and almost tendril-like. He makes sure his face paint is appropriate to the situation at hand – happy when entertaining, sad when he must look the part, and horrifying when he's on the hunt.

In his Horrible Form, Peter bloats further to monstrous proportions. His skin becomes almost transparent while his fat becomes jelly-like. Slimy ichor drips off him. His mouth reveals rows of razor sharp, flesh rending needles. His limbs multiply and extend into grasping, stinging tentacles with which to immobilize his prey. The air around him thickens, heavy with the stench of decay.

The modern world presents difficulties for Peter beyond his unfamiliarity with current technology. Before his imprisonment, nearly everyone saw clowns as bringers of delight. In the intervening years, popular culture has cast clowns as villains and monsters – exactly what Peter is. What was once a perfect disguise is now a liability. He needs cover now more than ever, but even with his exhaustive searching, he still hasn't found a suitable carnival in which to set up his new Den. Independent traveling circuses aren't as common as they once were.

RUMORS

"I hear he has a weakness to anything that makes an image of him – cameras, mirrors, and the like. He loses some of his power every time he sees himself."

It's true that Peter has an aversion to seeing images of himself. The cause does not stem from any supernatural compulsion, however. In truth, spending so long in isolation traumatized him. The last thing he saw for 50 years was the painting of himself. It burned itself into his memory. When he sees a picture of himself now, he has an immediate and visceral reaction. Sometimes he'll run, desperate to get away before he is captured again. More often though, he'll lash out at the perceived threat, intent on destroying the picture and the person who brandished it at him.

"Whoever has the reliquary can control him. As long as you're holding the painting, he is compelled to do whatever you say."

Peter has no idea what all the reliquary that trapped him is capable of. Even Jean, the painting's creator, wasn't sure about the details. She was working from ancient texts that she only partially understood. The one thing she was certain

about was that it would put an end to Peter's depredations. The painting itself was lost during the ensuing struggle after Peter was set free. Currently, Peter keeps a watchful eye out for any clues to the painting's whereabouts. He doesn't know what someone might be able to do to him if it was wielded against him. It might do nothing, or it might entrap him once more. He's not willing to take that chance. If someone threatens him with it, Peter might be willing to make a deal with that person, at least until he sees an opportunity to kill her and take the reliquary for himself.

"He won't harm a child. Maybe it's because he takes the clown thing seriously or maybe he has a twisted moral code, but children are safe from him."

Peter rarely feasts on children, but not due to any sort of moral code. He has no qualms about killing children or anyone else, for that matter. Loners are his delicacy, and children are seldom alone. Thanks to modern movies and television, most children today have an almost instinctive fear of clowns. When a child sees one, she immediately hides behind her parents or runs to get her friends. The parents, being older and wiser, know that the stereotypes are just silly stories and that a professional entertainer is actually behind the makeup. There are organizations of clowns dedicated to fighting the sinister reputation associated with their craft. Peter supports these as he can, since their success would make hunting easier. To help the cause, he goes out of his way to appear friendly to children. Of course, if his Satiety drops too low, any available meal will suffice.

Legend: Relentless

Life: Entertaining

Moment: Primordial Sea

Hunger: Prey

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Acrobatics) 3, Brawl 2, Larceny 1, Stealth (Shadowing) 4, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Expression 3, Intimidation (Murderous Stare) 3, Persuasion 1, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Anonymity 2, Area of Expertise (Shadowing), Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 3, Striking Looks 2

Esurients: The Burning, Channel the Life Blood, Impossible Vista, Terrible Form

Nightmares: Flying and Falling, You Cannot Run, You Will Never Rest

Lair: 0

Health: 7

Willpower: 4

Satiety: 6

Size: 5

Speed: 11

Initiative: 5

Defense: 6

Armor: —

WILMOT THE BLITZ BOY

Those are sirens. They usually mean rescue's on the way.
Not for you though. Get underneath me now.

BACKGROUND

Some of the cruelest nightmares come wrapped in the most innocent packages. Wilmot — an apparently young, shy boy in a tattered gray school uniform — is the kind of creature few would consider devious. Tragically, for those few, that low estimation is doing this Insatiable a disservice. Wilmot is callous gluttony in a coating of sympathy and sanctuary. Wilmot coaxes the naïve to him, and consumes them, with only a flicker of pleasure. That dim catharsis is enough to make him justify the constant need to sate the rumblings in his stomach.

Wilmot hasn't visibly aged since first manifesting his Hunger. That was back in November 1940, in the English city of Coventry. Coventry was subject to several hundred tons of bombs earlier in the year, as the Luftwaffe demolished it with repeated waves of attacks. The Blitz took a horrendous toll on Coventry families, many of whom fled to neighboring towns and villages. For Wilmot's family, escape was not an option. A hard-nosed matriarch, Wilmot's mother refused to give an inch to the Nazis, steadfast in neither evacuating her children, nor building a shelter in her back garden. Indeed, she proudly claimed the cellar in her house would be enough to withstand anything Göring's Heinkels dropped. Her children were terrified

of the screaming air-raid sirens, threatening roar of the planes, the consuming detonations, and subsequent fires. Yet, mother would not avert her course. She rebuked her children's talk of nightmares. The cellar would be safe.

When the heavy bombing of November 1940 commenced, the sirens blared and Wilmot, his mother, and three siblings carried their gas masks, quilts, and paltry supplies of food into the cellar. The tonnage of explosives dropped on Coventry that month obliterated swathes of the city, and Wilmot's house was not exempt. True to appraisal, the cellar survived. No structure surrounding it shared in its fortitude. A mountain of masonry collapsed atop it and an inferno of flame consumed the neighborhood. The family could hear the dreadful noises beyond their sanctum — the breakdown of centuries-old structures, the weakening cries for help from other entombed neighbors, and the literal sound of fire, as it encroached, closer and closer. By some miracle, his family was uninjured in the devastation, but all — even mother — were petrified.

Then, Wilmot grew hungry.

Wilmot suffocated his mother as she slept. He blamed his younger sister for the act, and convinced his brothers to help in tying her up until rescue came. Wilmot spoiled the perfectly good rations. He blamed his paranoid older brother, and along with his twin, broke the boy's head against the cellar floor. He waited a week, his bound sister begging for release and subject to his torments, his twin swiftly succumbing to lack of food and clean water, his elder brother a drooling mess. As their fear reached a crescendo, Wilmot killed and ate all three of them. By the time the cellar was unearthed, Wilmot had already fled. He knew the drain ran directly beneath the house. They could have escaped at any time.

For years, the mystery of the Coventry Cannibal and the missing boy were the stuff of Reader's Digests and true detective magazines, with the most sensational theory — a story Null Mysteriis sent hunters to investigate — being that a Slasher was hiding in the cellar and his spirit haunts Coventry to this day. Wilmot occasionally returns to Coventry to perpetuate the rumor. It gives him a rush of euphoria to keep the fear strong.

COME AND PLAY

Wilmot made his way around the bombed-out cities of the United Kingdom, pre-

fering to inhabit air-raid shelters, underground railway stations, and other enclosed spaces. The threat of imminent destruction via German bombs was pervasive in such places, and enough to excite him into a frenzy. He would persuade wardens that his mother was in a shelter, and join the huddled civilians within. His level of hunger defined his objectives. If ravenous, he would lure children away from their parents with talk of hidden treasures in the darkness, a place to play, or somewhere safer to hide.

When exerting patience, he would befriend a fellow child his age, draw out the sympathies of their parent with tales of his being an orphan, and go home with the chosen family. Wilmot consumed those who showed him kindness, and swiftly moved on to other towns.

The horrors of the Blitz concealed many of Wilmot's acts. In the years following, Beasts became familiar with the Insatiable's deeds. Suspecting one of their own gone rogue, broods stalked the unassumingly small "boy". Wilmot has refined his game and now plays with a little more subtlety, aware of the Beasts' attention. He joins schools, forging paperwork to allow him entry as a transfer pupil. He diligently attends lessons, befriends fellow schoolchildren, and wins their affection with copious volumes of sweets. Inevitably, his presence forms a chaotic Schism. Teachers grow increasingly abusive to students, and in some cases, vice versa. At this time, he lures his new friends to an old air-raid shelter nearby, or a cellar with only one means of exit — his preferred Den a dark, uncomfortable, enclosed space. With invitations to play a game in safety, he snatches children from the reach of any possible rescue. Separated from the sanctuary of human warmth and home, Wilmot's prey begs and pleads for days and sometimes weeks, before being devoured by the Insatiable in his Horrible Form.

The Blitz Boy is now an urban legend, so named for his dusty and frayed apparel, the gas-mask satchel he keeps at his side, and the plague of nightmares he inflicts on others, filled with the din of air-raid sirens. He afflicts his prey with the fear of death from above, followed by rapid suffocation, in order to coax them into places he frequents — safe, secure, and underground. Once he has his prey, he toys with them, and then envelops them within his unbearably expansive bulk. Few children escape his attention. Those who do weather the torments better than the adults who escape his Den. They all commit suicide within months of freedom; the constant sound of sirens screaming in their ears, and flashbacks of the Blitz Boy splitting at the seams make death a welcome retreat.

DESCRIPTION

The Blitz Boy takes greater pleasure from the fears and tears of fellow children than those he ekes



from adults, but doesn't discriminate when his Satiety draws low. Wilmot frequents play parks, school corridors, and toy store parking lots in efforts to lure victims to his favored eating stage. By attending a school for a single term, he intrudes into the nightmares of faculty and students alike. It is common for Wilmot to leave a school in a state of carnage while he leads his chosen friends to his Den. Nobody notices anyone is missing, due to their Nightmare-induced mania. By the time they have recovered, Wilmot's prey is already dead.

The Blitz Boy draws Heroes' attention more often than Beasts'. In attempts to trace the victims Wilmot's devoured, Heroic types mistakenly target sex offenders in the region, as well as local Beasts. These acts afford them great renown, while the childlike Insatiable fades into the background. This situation is likely to change. Growing in power and sluggishly consuming an increasing volume of prey, Wilmot has decided to expand his Den. Subverting and claiming a Beast's Lair holds great appeal for this languorous Insatiable. He's weighing up the benefits of different Lair types. Wilmot admires the efforts Beasts go to in making their homes perfect for Insatiabes like him.

Wilmot's favored appearance is that of a boy aged around nine or 10 years. He wears the school uniform of whichever institute he happens to attend, though between schools he wears an old gray jumper, yellowed shirt, gray shorts, and scabby blue tie. He takes pride in continuing to wear his old, tattered uniform from 1940. The school he attended back then no longer exists — bombed flat by the Luftwaffe — but he still wears their badge.

As a war boy, Wilmot looks small, underfed, and timid. In his Horrible Form, the Blitz Boy looks anything but. When Wilmot strikes, his tiny shell bulges and throbs from hundreds of thumb-sized pustules beneath the skin. The rapid inflation of plasma inside him forces all air from his body in a noise that echoes the alternating pitch of an air-raid siren. Within a minute, the boy's skin ruptures down the sides, and a segmented amoeba bearing multiple thin, stiff black hairs from each cell gushes forth at remarkable speed. The Blitz Boy is never more satisfied than when consuming his prey in a confined space, squeezing the oxygen from them, filling every pore and orifice. He enjoys the hopeless struggle of prey and the sudden slowing of their thrashing motions.

When Wilmot is having fun, he retracts from his Horrible Form just as a victim is about to expire. He allows them to recover their breath, and even treats them kindly for a while. Sometimes he kisses them, tells them they are safe, and that he loves them. Then he starts again, the sirens blaring.

RUMORS

"They say he only preys on kids' fears. Squeezes them out and bathes in their misery until it's time to feast."

The Blitz Boy prefers children as prey, if only because he knows the territory intimately. He's not forgotten the fears he felt before the Hunger set in: of his mother smothering him, of being destroyed by the falling night's sky, of being consumed by fire, and being buried alive. He recalls how his siblings cried

STORY HOOKS

- A little girl with a perfectly photogenic face goes missing while on her bike route home from school. She's from a particularly wealthy family, who understandably pays fortunes to have the disappearance of their child publicized. Due to the marketable appearance of the girl and her parents' well-spoken public prayers for aid, the story of her disappearance goes national within days. She isn't a victim of the Blitz Boy. He has been snatching children from less affluent families for months in the same region, and nobody's batted an eyelid. Now the press, police, and public are turning their attentions to all the missing children. The school Wilmot's attending is under the effect of a Schism he's caused: four teachers in as many months suspended for mistreatment of pupils. As the dragnet closes around the Insatiable, he plans for one last meal in the area before planting evidence, and therefore blame, on one of the disbarred faculty.
- A cell of hunters approaches the characters' brood, and makes it clear it's not interested in conflict with the Beasts. Their Conspiracy has been researching the Coventry Cannibal for years, along with the whereabouts of the boy missing from the cellar. Their belief is that the murderer kidnapped the boy, but facial recognition software has turned up a picture of Wilmot in a class photo from a school within the brood's stomping grounds. The hunters want permission to interview the boy — who they suspect is some kind of immortal — so they can find the cannibal. They don't understand the Blitz Boy's true nature, but the Beasts may well do.
- Beasts in the region begin suffering nightmares they cannot shift. A dreadful wailing causes sleep deprivation throughout multiple broods, and tempers flare. Suspicion falls on inter-Family politics, and Beasts hazing one another, before an underground-dwelling Makara falls silent and stops meeting his companions. When his brood attempts to reenter his Lair via the Primordial Dream, they find it more revolting than before: human bones littering the floor, chocolate bar wrappers, and sodden school textbooks. Wilmot decided he didn't like this Lair enough to stay for longer than a night, but he intends to shop around in the same city. The question becomes where he'll strike next.

and screamed, and how he joined them, until something in him awoke. He knows how to evoke such emotions, and delights in feeding from them. He targets children so they experience worse terror than he felt in 1940. Each ounce of distress makes their bodies all the riper for consumption.

When targeting adults, Wilmot's Hunger draws him to the innocent and the stupid. He's not interested in a challenge, or taking on a Beast with an arsenal of powers. If he can feed from a vulnerable homeless man, an ex-convict just released from jail

with nobody to miss her, or a stumbling drunk, he does so. The Blitz Boy has no sense of honor. He wrings every drop of fear from his prey, and unquestioningly moves on to the next.

"He's a territorial little shit, that's for sure. He'll maul anything in his vicinity – Heroes, Beasts, even his fellow Insatiable."

Wilmot is now in the property market, surveying the Lairs of Beasts of all Families for a place to call home. He's not yet abandoned his existing Den, though, and he's defensive when it comes to unwanted intruders making moves on his patch. For a typically indolent Insatiable, the Blitz Boy is spurred to hostile action if he discovers someone has been poring through his Den.

If Beasts knew where Wilmot's Den was, they might make efforts to avoid it and retribution from the disgusting creature living there. The issue is Wilmot moves often. The Blitz Boy never feeds from the same region more than a few times in short order. He prefers to move to a new location, set up his Den in a drainage pipe, abandoned mineshaft, or bomb shelter, make himself comfortable at home until his Satiety begins to drop, and then commence his hunt for prey. While he's nesting, he takes great umbrage against anyone daring to disturb him, fellow Insatiable included. His Den is his, until it is not, at which point he abandons it like the bones of his victims.

Legend: Excessive

Life: Infanile

Moment: Clashing Faults

Hunger: Prey

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 5, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Crafts (Forgery) 3, Investigation 2, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Larceny 2, Stealth (Staying Motionless) 3, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion (Sympathy) 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Lies) 4

Merits: Epic Potential (Stamina), Fame (Missing Child) 2, Fame Advanced (Daunting) 2, Indomitable, Small-Framed, Sympathetic

Atavisms: From the Shadows, Unbreakable

Esurients: Cast Aside, Impossible Vista, Laws of Man No Longer Apply, Obedience, Terrible Form, We Can See Your Insides

Nightmares: Everything you do is Worthless, You Are Alone, You Cannot Run

Lair: 2

Health: 10

Willpower: 6

Satiety: 5

Size: 4

Speed: 12

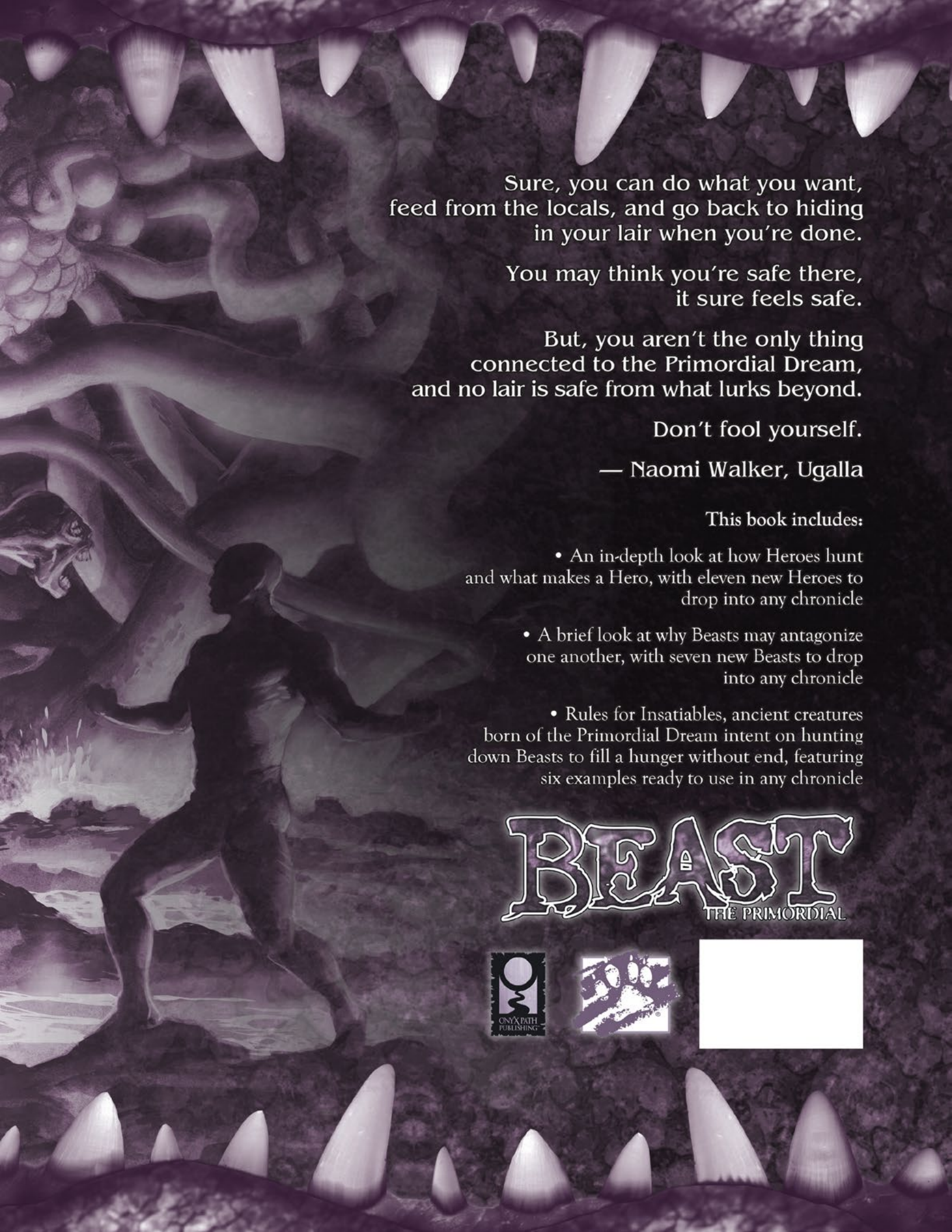
Initiative: 5

Defense: 5

Armor: 2/1

Notes: Wilmot always carries his schoolbag, which is filled with candies and mulched-up fast food.





Sure, you can do what you want,
feed from the locals, and go back to hiding
in your lair when you're done.

You may think you're safe there,
it sure feels safe.

But, you aren't the only thing
connected to the Primordial Dream,
and no lair is safe from what lurks beyond.

Don't fool yourself.

— Naomi Walker, Ugalla

This book includes:

- An in-depth look at how Heroes hunt and what makes a Hero, with eleven new Heroes to drop into any chronicle
- A brief look at why Beasts may antagonize one another, with seven new Beasts to drop into any chronicle
- Rules for Insatiables, ancient creatures born of the Primordial Dream intent on hunting down Beasts to fill a hunger without end, featuring six examples ready to use in any chronicle

BEAST

THE PRIMORDIAL

