

Introduction

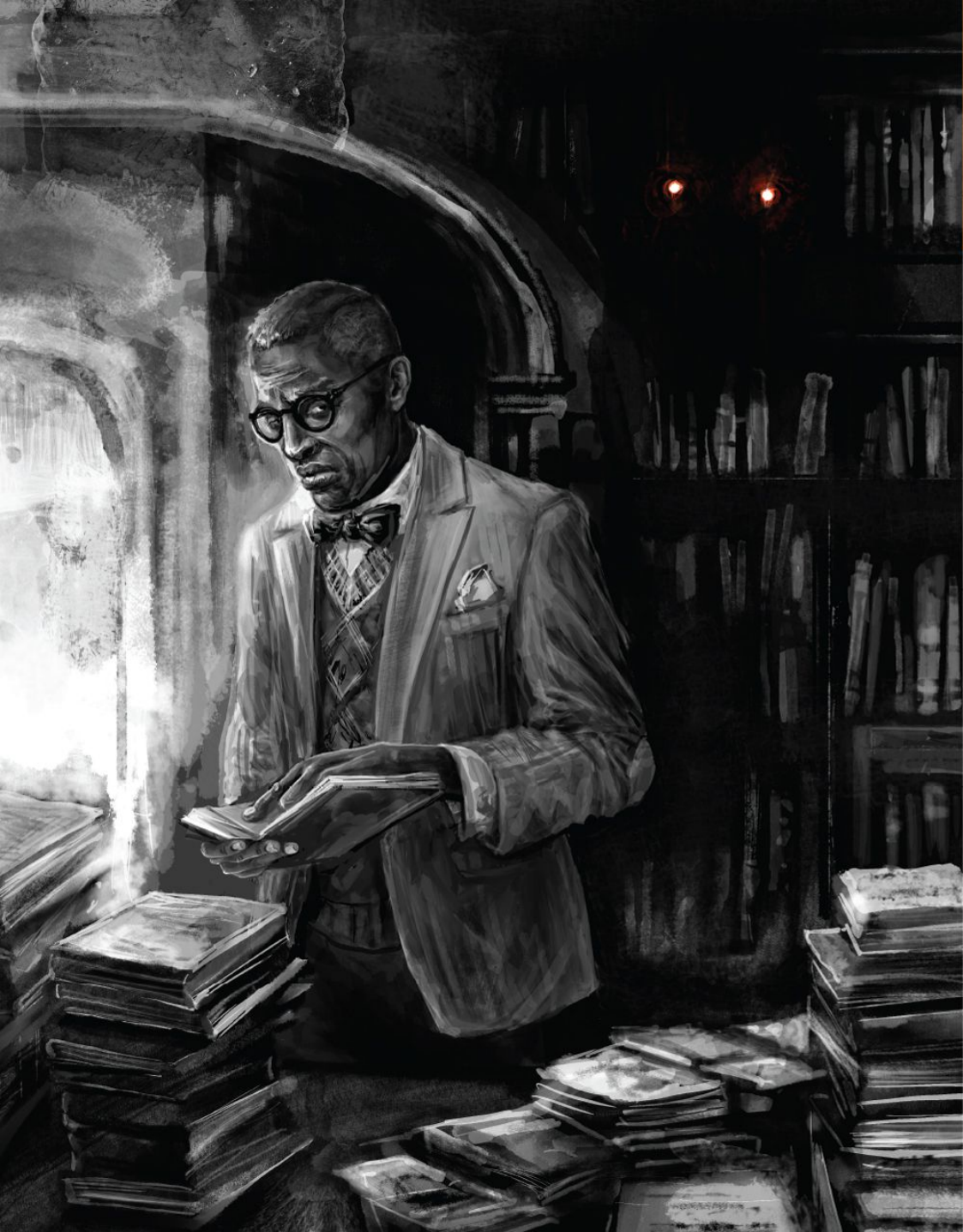
"Knowledge itself is power."

-Francis Bacon

Universities, colleges, and research institutions are repositories of mysteries, secrets, and hidden history. They have their own rituals and social mores. And they're familiar territory for a lot of roleplayers.

In *Alma Maters*, we present *Hunter: The Reckoning* Storytellers with a rich potential source of stories, guiding them through ideas for hunts in a range of academic settings against an array of quarries. We're taking the Hunt off the streets and into the shadowy cloisters of academia.

A college or university campus makes a great central location for a story or chronicle. A variety of locations from libraries to coffee shops to forgotten corners. New buildings with strangely high security. A broad range of people and a cast that changes at the start of every academic year. Academies are also places most players won't associate with violence, which is an opportunity to build on *Hunter: The Reckoning's* message that not every problem is to be solved with bloodshed.





WELCOME!

Chapter One: Orientation

"Schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions - to define, classify, control, and regulate people."

-Michel Foucault

In theory, the academic world is one that intersects with the occult. Academia strives to uncover, to catalog, and to understand the unknown. In practice, colleges and universities bend to the demands of patronage, politics, and pettiness. For Hunters, the halls of academia host stacks of ancient knowledge that can aid in a hunt but also cast long shadows that hide their own perils.

Not every institute of higher learning has a monster of its own, but in the World of Darkness, academia still bows to the burdens of a broken, grasping world. Academic circles aren't always safe, and Hunters encounter different perils here: obstinate bureaucrats, addled professors, and early career post-docs hungry to find something they can use to make their reputations. The currency here isn't always money, but rather information, reputation, and access. Even if there's no monster right there on campus, a Hunter's probably only a couple of degrees of separation from one and could draw the attention of an academic buddy's mentor, sponsor, or patron at any point.

For every light that the academic world shines on a mystery, it also casts shadows that conceal terrible truths.

Chapter Two:

Burlington College

"There is an excitement about having nightmares."

-Betsey Johnson

Burlington College is a medium-sized public university in the USA. Psychoactive drug trials in the 1960s made the campus a stalking ground for the Peripheral Man, one of the Fair Folk. When most of those involved in the experiments died in a fire on campus, the threat receded. Now, a major food and drink corporation sunk its claws into the campus, and got hold of the records of the drug trial. They're recreating the drug, this time as part of an energy drink recipe. The dream-eating Peripheral Man is back, and the wider consumption of the drug makes him a much bigger problem: if Hunters can't handle him before the drink goes into mass production, the Peripheral Man might be too powerful to stop.

A Burlington Chronicle

The major threat at Burlington College is the Peripheral Man, an entity that reveals itself slowly, which makes it excellent for a chronicle that runs an entire academic year (or more), slowly building momentum.

The great thing about Burlington is that you don't need an entire Hunter cell to be fully wrapped up in campus life to make it work. Having even one student or staff member in the cell provides good access to the university. The cell can use the campus as a library, or a place to make useful research contacts, at first. They can even enjoy some Thoosi (see p. 42) on a late-night research spree.

Gradually introduce the college's own weird history: as the cell researches other threats or talks to local people, they hear stories of the fire that destroyed a research lab on the campus decades ago and maybe hear some conflicting theories on exactly what was destroyed. They can meet people like Daniel Washington or Dylan Kammerer, who hint at weird experiences they've endured. In parallel, things start to get strange. Friends or connections on campus start having weird dreams or jumping at shadows. Neldner Wellness Group gets pushy, demanding access to campus archives (hoping for documentation on the first round of experiments (see "History")).

In short, the whole time the cell's busy dealing with threats around Burlington (for which you can use locations or small institutions from Chapter Eight), they're getting hints of a greater threat on their own doorstep. Once they've amassed enough hints to have an idea of what they're dealing with, step up the Peripheral Man's actions to things that harm or endanger people around the cell. It's time to face him head-on.

Only now, Burlington College became a safe haven for children of privilege unable to scale the walls of the Ivy League.

History

American education is exemplified by the tier of schools known as the Ivy League. Burlington College is very much not an Ivy League school. For there to be an exclusive club of academic institutions, someone has to be excluded from the ranks. Manfred Weissberg, a first-generation American industrialist trying to land his son in an Ivy League school in the 1940s, was one of the latter group. He felt his family was the victim of anti-German sentiment, and he was probably correct but his son's academic and behavioral record left much to be desired. Fewer schools were willing to take a chance on the boy after each successive expulsion. In 1948, Weissberg decided to solve the problem as many men with his wealth and stature did: he would purchase a solution.

The first building of the newly founded Burlington College was an old 1920s bootlegger mansion Weissberg purchased and refurbished. Most of the surrounding land was undeveloped and cheap. He lured professors from more reputable schools with larger salaries and budgets for whatever esoteric studies interested them. By the 1950s, Burlington had grown into a small but flourishing private college. Weissberg disappeared in 1954, and school leadership passed to the man for whom it was built.

Manfred Weissberg, Jr. had long since changed his name to Fred White. While he didn't have a head for academics, he maintained many of the relationships established during his time bouncing from school to school. Many people who had gotten into trouble alongside Freddy Boy inherited power and wealth of their own. They ran into the same issues Manfred did with their own children and thus Burlington College became a safe haven for children of privilege unable to scale the walls of the Ivy League.

This generation of students brought the power of their names and started to illuminate Burlington