

Introduction

To you who read this, by choice or chance, greetings. I know not who you are or how you may have come by this text; indeed, as I write it, I have no assurance that I will live to complete it, nor that my words will out-live me long enough to be read by any but their author. In truth, such a statement is true of any work done by the hands of man, for which of us can begin any day with absolute certainty that we will be alive when that day reaches its end? The Almighty has entrances and exits scripted for us all, and rare indeed is the man who knows the hour or nature of his end before it is visited upon him.

Even so, the risk is, I think, greater for this author and this work; but despite the danger, the words must be put to paper and sent out into the world, that those who may glean some value from them have a chance to learn by an easier tutor than the hard experience which has taught me enough to write them. Therefore, let me write, and assume that both I and the work will survive to reach you, the reader, lest I give in to despair and cease writing before I have properly begun.

What is it, then, that I write, which gives me cause for such morbid and fearful musings? That, unknown reader, depends very much on you. It may be that you have come across this book by chance, idly picked up from a book-seller's stall or in an acquaintance's reading-room, or discovered in a forgotten corner of some library, five or fifty years hence - may God grant that the work survive so long, and may He forbid that the need for it will still be present so far in the future! But if you found this book by such chance, I regret to say that it will probably bring you little enough of either wisdom or diversion. It will seem, more likely, to be a child's fairy-story, full of goblins and witches and other non-sense that enlightened men will consider beneath them, and that ignorant men will fail to understand. Moreover, if it is a fairy-tale, it will likely seem to such readers as one that is told in a particularly disjointed and ineffective manner, by an author so ashamed of his work that he will not even sign it with his full name. If such is the case, I offer my regrets, but not my apologies; for you are not the one for whom this work was meant.

Those for whom this book is meant will likely have been given a copy specifically by one who knows already that the story herein, far from being a childish phant'asy, is true; and who knows that this truth must be made known to the recipient as well. If you are such a

one, I ask your patience and forbearance; soon enough this tedious introduction will be done, and the true revelations which are the reason you were given the text will begin.

But there is a possibility - a small one, and for the sake of your sanity, gentle reader, one which I pray to God is not the case - that you who find this manuscript by chance may, by the hands of Providence, be one of the unfortunate few for whom it was written. If you have seen things by Luna's pale and ghostly light that you could not make yourself forget the next day, beneath the warm and comforting light of Sol; if you have seen a nightmare come to life, and been unable to convince yourself that it was only a dream after all; if there is a moment in your past which you shudder to remember, but cannot forget, in which you learned that the world was not as you had been raised to believe, and that evil was a real and tangible thing; if you have unwittingly looked beneath the veil of Nature and glimpsed the face of Lucifer, and stood your ground rather than fled in terror, then you are one of us, whether you know it or not.

If these words strike a chord within you, then may God Almighty bless you with strength of body and of will, for you will need both. Read on, and gather up the kernels of wisdom in these pages, though they are bought with fear and pain. You must know the things that are herein set forth, and you must not turn away, hateful and vile though the revelations herein may be. Once you have glimpsed the face of Lucifer, know that he has seen your face as well; and though you may look away and try to forget, the Adversary will know you, and he will seek you out soon enough, to ensure that you do not share what you have learned. If you are not prepared, you are doomed to damnation, death, or (most likely) both; and while the humble wisdom in this book may not be enough to keep you from such a fate, it is in truth one of the only shields you are ever likely to have. Be assured that the Adversary knows you, and your only hope is to know him as well.

If the passages above mean nothing to you, then this book is not for you; be grateful to God that it is so. Read on, if you will, and believe that all contained herein is phant'asy; by the grace of the Almighty, this may be the closest you ever come to such evil. Those of us who know better will shield you from the truth if we can.

D. G.

Cambridge, Massachusetts Bay Colony
August, 1684

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF WITCH HUNTER!

You now hold the Witch Hunter Core Rulebook. Before you, is a pathway to new worlds of darkest evil and divine light. These pages are a tool kit for you, the Witch Hunters and Grand Masters of the Invisible World to use.

Witch Hunter is a role-playing game of swashbuckling horror, in which once-ordinary men and women face and fight against the monstrous forces of evil in a seventeenth-century Earth almost, but not quite, identical to our own. From the crowded streets of Paris and London to the unexplored depths of the North American wilderness, those who have come face-to-face with supernatural evil must face it down with nothing but their flintlocks and their faith.

The world of Witch Hunter is a rich and complex one - this is a pretty big book, as you can see, and there are a lot more secrets we're not ready to reveal just yet! However, let's start out with a few essentials about the game and the world it's set in. The five points on which Witch Hunter is based are Horror, Action, History, Folklore and Faith.

WITCH HUNTER IS A GAME OF HORROR.

"Horror" is a commonly-used word for a genre that includes ghosts and witches, werewolves and vampires; it's an easily-identifiable term that gives people an idea of what they're getting themselves into. But monsters alone don't make a game horrific. Trolls and goblins live in many role-playing worlds, but they're so common that players are jaded about their existence; they're dangerous, but not scary. To make the monsters (and the game) horrific, you need something more. Later in the rulebook, we'll discuss the specifics of running and playing a horror game in detail. For now, just bear in mind that the diverse elements of horror - the dread of an unknown enemy, the fear of a dangerous foe lurking somewhere just out of sight, and the visceral terror of a blood-spattered beast suddenly appearing right next to you - lie at the core of a game of Witch Hunter.

WITCH HUNTER IS A GAME OF SWASHBUCKLING ACTION.

Horror can be built with a slowly-growing sense of dread, as the true wickedness and power of the enemy becomes gradually, terrifyingly clear. But when the enemy is finally revealed, or when innocents are endangered, the heroes of Witch Hunter respond with swashbuckling, bare-knuckled action. Muskets, swords, and courage may not be enough to put the forces of evil down, but that's often all that our heroes have to rely on. Intellect, learning, and deductive reasoning will play central roles in finding and understanding the nature of the enemy, to be sure. But when lives and souls are on the line - when there is only one chance for victory and the alternative is unthinkable - the men and women of action reign supreme.

WITCH HUNTER IS A GAME OF HISTORY.

While Witch Hunter's Earth in the year 1689 is not quite identical to the one found in history books, it is close enough to allow the game to absorb the rich flavor of this extraordinary period of history. In Europe, Isaac Newton and other Natural Philosophers are driving the Age of Reason forward, revolutionizing science and man's knowledge of the natural world. In North and South America, colonists from across Europe are struggling to carve civilization out of the edges of a vast and unknown continent, while some of the native inhabitants, most notably the powerful Aztec Empire, try to expunge their taint from their homeland. Others extend their hand in friendship, which at times is gratefully accepted, while at others is slapped away with prideful arrogance and contempt. Africa is still a dark and unknown land; the edges are a known source for strong but unwilling slaves, but the continent's vast interior is a mystery to "civilized" Europe. Asia is a realm of exotic spices and strange cultures, little-known to the people of the West.

WITCH HUNTER IS A GAME OF FOLKLORE.

Like our own Earth, the world of Witch Hunter is full of myths, legends, and superstitions. The difference is that in Witch Hunter's world, almost all of them are true. Fairies do dance in mushroom circles in the woods, the unhallowed dead do wander the earth as ghosts or the walking dead, and demons and devils do seek to tempt and corrupt humans into mortal sin. Average men and women do not see these beings often (if ever), but they know they're out there. A farmer's wife will always leave milk out to appease the fairies, and a lone traveler returning home late at night will often recite the Lord's Prayer to keep evil spirits from his path. For witch hunters, however, such simple charms rarely work; monsters and spirits are deliberately hunting them, and can only be faced with courage, faith and cold steel.

WITCH HUNTER IS A GAME OF FAITH.

The existence of God is not a theory or a belief in the world of Witch Hunter - it is an accepted fact. Not everyone believes in the same God, of course - Christians of various sects, Jews, Muslims, Native Americans, and many other peoples all have their own faiths. But whatever specific religion they choose, the heroes and heroines of Witch Hunter rely on their faith to give them the courage needed to fight the forces of evil, and to resist temptation and corruption. This should not imply that Witch Hunter is a religious game, nor that all Witch Hunters are pious and holy individuals. But it is important to realize that, for the characters, belief in a benevolent divine power is an essential element. Even those who began their careers without faith soon learn to believe, whether they want to or not.



Book One: The World of Witch Hunter

The Age of Solomon

The Heart of Darkness

Enacting the Seal

The First Witch Hunters

History of the Orders

Witch Hunters in Scripture

The Ten Persecutions

Church and Empire

The Safe Haven

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The Black Plague

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The Accord

The Old World

England

Spain

Portugal

France

The United Provinces

Lands East

Elsewhere

The New World

New England

New Netherland

Pennsylvania

The Five Nations

Southern English Colonies

New France

New Spain

The Aztec Empire

Brasil

The Invisible World

Being a detailed Examination of the World of the Witch Hunter, including Discussions of the diverse States and Nations therein, and the daily Lives of the men and women therein dwelling.

Reader, I know not where you dwell, nor where you were born, nor what land – if any – you now call home. But if you have been called as a Witch Hunter, you will likely find yourself travelling in strange lands more than once, for the duty of the Witch Hunter will oft draw you far from the familiar. Most men and women have the luxury of calling one place their home and knowing it well; even those sailors who travel to distant ports have a ship to call their own, a comforting note of familiarity in a distant place. You, however, may have no such luxury.

Thus, in an effort to ease your transition to unfamiliar places, I have assembled a collection of writings by various Witch Hunters, and occasionally by other knowledgeable persons, which may serve as a general guide to some of the places in which you might find yourself. There are, of course, far more things to know about any one city than could fit in a book ten times this size, but mundane matters can be learned anywhere; therefore, the texts below will focus on the machinations of the Adversary, and other items of which Witch Hunters in particular must be aware. Hopefully, this will be enough to get you started wherever God may lead you, and with luck, you may find other Witch Hunters at your destination that can provide you with further aid and knowledge.

But first, we begin with the history of the Orders of Solomon:

The Orders of Solomon

Part secret societies, part religious brotherhoods, and part divine sanctions, the Orders of Solomon are organizations under which Witch Hunters gather. This term is assumed to be a reference to the biblical character King Solomon, a wise man that bound demons to his service, possessed all manner of magical artifacts, and possibly made use of prophetic foresight. Aside from the overarching name, however, the Orders have little in common. They all have different origins, different methods, different hierarchies, and different geographical, political, professional, and spiritual areas of control. In fact, the only thing

Notable Events in the History of the Orders

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| 1000 BC | <i>The birth of King Solomon</i> |
| 952 BC | <i>The creation of the Seal of Solomon</i> |
| 64–303 AD | <i>The Ten Persecutions</i> |
| 337 | <i>Constantine is baptized, becoming the first Christian Roman Emperor</i> |
| 664 | <i>The Twelve Penitents appear in Northumbria</i> |
| 909 | <i>Monastic movement created by William the Pious</i> |
| 1118 | <i>Knights Templars are founded</i> |
| 1294 | <i>Infestation of 1294 and sacrifice of Pope Sergius V</i> |
| 1347 | <i>The Black Plague sweeps across Europe, killing a disproportionate number of men</i> |
| 1378 | <i>The Great Schism</i> |
| 1394 | <i>Court Magi adopted by European Royalty. Pope orders rite of Purity be performed upon all Magi to verify their souls are free of Damnation</i> |
| 1492 | <i>Columbus sails to the West Indies</i> |
| 1518 | <i>Hernán Cortés is killed by natives in Mexico</i> |
| 1531 | <i>Pizarro's expedition to the Incan Empire meets with disaster</i> |
| 1554 | <i>The Jesuits proclaim total obedience to the Pope, and make the hunting down of Witch Hunters one of their primary, though secret, goals</i> |
| 1666 | <i>The Great Fire of London, and the Accord</i> |

most have in common is their mission: to protect mankind from the dangers of the Invisible World. As you will see, however, even that similarity can be interpreted in many ways, and with varying levels of intensity. Witch Hunter takes place in a time when the light of reason serves only to cast darker shadows, and it is set in lands where allegiance to an earthly lord often contradicts an allegiance to one's Heavenly master. Even within the bonds of brotherhood and common cause, a wise Hunter trusts only himself and his closest comrades.

The Age of Solomon

Solomon looked out beyond the kingdom of Israel and despaired.

As described by the ancient texts of the Greeks, Persians, and Egyptians, the Mythic Age was filled with fell creatures, macabre and hoary gods, and acts that would rend a man's soul.

Creatures of shadow and air, beasts from beyond the boundaries of civilization hunted man as the wolf stalked common prey, and within his own lands, news of monstrous beings, who he knew as Nephilim, had reached his ears.

Nephilim akin to the one his father slew; Nephilim like Goliath.

Yet what would befall mankind once one such as David was not able to slay a fiend of Goliath's ilk? Must man then bend knee and don the yoke of servitude to these brutal foes of humanity? Man's future upon the Earth was a precarious one indeed. The wise king was certain that the Almighty would not grant man reign over all the earth knowing that humanity would falter and wither away.

Determined to solve this conundrum, Solomon spent his youth traveling far throughout his father's kingdom and beyond, meeting the wise and the foolish, seeking knowledge forgotten or hidden away. In his travels to distant realms, lands as far away as Assyria and Chaldea, he befriended sorcerers of great power who granted him the solution to his problem.

In 970 BCE Solomon returned to Judea in haste upon hearing of his father's death. His coronation as King presented Solomon with the power and influence required to secure the final details of esoteric knowledge necessary for mankind to fulfill his destiny upon the Earth.

After years of intense research, Solomon put his plan into motion. He summoned to his side the six greatest sorcerers and magi he had met during his travels. Answering his call were Shulmanu the Assyrian, Mitten of Tyre, Joran of Moab, Didanu the Aramaean, Imandaru of Damascus and Alahaz the Edomite. Each concurred with Solomon. For mankind to have a chance at survival, steps must be taken to cast away that which disputed humanity's claim upon the earth.

The fashioning of the Great Seal was the work of a lifetime. As the years passed, the seven wise men toiled, taking care that every line, mark, or rune was perfectly in place and at the proper angle. The tide of years wore on, and each of the seven drew to themselves young and bright persons to assist them in their task, training them to carry on their work after they were dust. As the completion of their great labor drew near, darkness stirred in a distant land determined to undermine their efforts.



The Heart of Darkness

There is a place in the center of Africa that is so corrupt that it is as if one were looking down the maw of Hell itself. Alas, this description is not mere imagery; it is near to the very truth.

After Lucifer's failed rebellion against the Almighty, the faithful hosts of angels cast the Morningstar down from his place, condemning him and his rebels to the darkest pits of Hell. Falling to earth, his lingering presence putrefied the very ground he lay upon, his wounds seeped and festered onto the land, and his spittle caused blight and infestation. After an eternity, the Adversary's body sloughed through earth corrupted by his baleful presence, sinking into the raw, fetid morass until eventually he fell into the flaming pits of damnation.

Yet even within his eternal prison Lucifer did plot to do harm to the children of God. He learned of the great work of Solomon and smiled. His whispers emerged from the Heart of Darkness and called upon those whom he previously favored with gifts and power. Known by some as the Coven of the Dark Canticle or as the Coven of the Horned Moon, these witches were the Adversary's most powerful and cunning minions by far.

Setting these vile creatures upon Solomon's kingdom, he gave them but a single mandate: to corrupt the Great Seal and turn

its power to his benefit. And so did the coven travel across the continent upon the backs of black beasts until they arrived in Judeah. Their leader, Malikedra, realized that Solomon was beyond reproach, but that they needed only look for their enemy's weakest link to accomplish their foul lord's task.

Enacting the Great Seal

Malikedra sent the youngest and fairest of their coven to seduce the Damascan, Imandaru. Blessed with unearthly beauty, unblemished skin, a lithe, supple body and a voracious appetite, Ilianda needed less than an hour to seduce the wizened old man. Each night while her lover slept, the seductress would make the smallest of changes to his portion of the Seal: an additional line here, a shortened line there, an additional crossing line and her master's work was complete.

When the appointed time came to empower the Great Seal, Solomon and the six wise men went down to the deepest level below the First Temple. There they spent the next full cycle of the moon binding powerful spirits, jinn and demons to empower their work. Another month was spent drawing out the complex formulae in exacting detail, each section according to their plan. Finally Solomon intoned the proper words, words of power that sent the full force of will from all seven men into the Seal.

Immediately, he sensed the flaws in the Seal.

Solomon foresaw a fatal flaw within the design. Though the Great Seal would indeed separate the mortal world from all that was supernatural, an act that would in fact forge the Invisible World, this flaw would fail to bar the many minions of Hell, including Fallen Angels, from the Earth; in essence, it would grant them free reign to plague mankind with no opposition save any derived from humanity itself. Acting quickly, Solomon altered his incantation so as to permit some magical essence to escape into the world of man, just enough to enable magicians to continue to practice the art, hopefully safeguarding humanity against the demonic forces of the Adversary. Unfortunately, this meant that creatures from the Invisible World could slip through these cracks and enter the Earth. He took solace in the knowledge that only a small number could do so and his keen mind already worked out a plan to thwart their endeavors.

Nearly spent after such a demanding feat, Solomon sprang upon Imandaru in a rage, knowing full well that it was his section of the formulae from which the imperfection of the Great Seal arose. Imandaru begged the King's mercy, confessing his affair with the young mistress during the final months. With haste she was brought before Solomon.

Made to kneel and confess before the king, Ilianda taunted the ancient Imandaru as a fool for thinking that one as lovely as she would ever consent to bedding him without some other motive. Spitting into the face of the assembled, she declared that their great labor was for naught; her master had his own designs upon humanity and would not rest until mankind either knelt before him or was utterly destroyed. Warned that unless she gave up her sisters she would be put to death, Ilianda mocked them, for the Coven of the Dark Canticle was beyond their reach, she said, and that death would only hasten the journey to her master's side.

THE SEAL OF SOLOMON

While barely a score of learned people know of the Great Seal of Solomon, many of those schooled in the esoteric and occult arts are aware of a more common version of this symbol. Drawn as a six-pointed star, known also as the Star of David, this symbol, when properly blessed, still resonates with the power of the original. It has been sometimes known to keep malignant and other-worldly entities at bay or, when used in a binding ritual, to magnify the power or duration of the ritual.

Solomon meditated on her words. The Great Seal had indeed accomplished much of what he had intended; it had given mankind time to grow powerful as masters of the Earth as the Almighty had intended. Yet due to his hasty alteration of the ritual, it was also weakened. The Great Seal would eventually fail, and the Invisible World, with all its denizens, would flood into this one. In two, perhaps three millennia at the most, the entities bound by his work would break free and undo all he set forth to accomplish.

The king hoped three thousand years was adequate for humanity to learn how to fight back.

The First Witch Hunters

Humiliated, Imandaru left in silence. His apprentices followed him and, by his example, remained silent as well. All that is, but one – Antiochus the younger, his most gifted student. Antiochus turned to the other wise men's apprentices and called upon them to go forth with him to hunt down the witches who worked this evil against their masters.

Though most remained at Solomon's side to organize the first Order of Magi, as was the king's wish, a handful agreed with Antiochus. An aggressive approach was needed. This Coven of the Dark Canticle had sought them out and did them a great wrong. Left unpunished, they would continue to work their dark arts and be as a plague upon the Earth.

These men petitioned Solomon for his blessing, and the wise king gave it. He anointed them as the avenging arm of the Almighty. Galvanized by his blessing, these brave men and women abandoned what few comforts they knew and set out to the far corners of the world to bring the battle to evil's own den, a quest still carried on by the modern inheritors of their task, those known as Witch Hunters.

History of the Orders

Residents of the visible world, meaning those who do not regularly interact with or delve into matters of the supernatural, could fill a thimble with their knowledge of the Witch Hunters and their history. Members of each individual Order have a clearer idea of the history of their own organizations, but even those are shrouded in mysteries and half-truths. After all,