# SAMPLE

## The Cursed Hunter

The Personality That Becomes the Thing It Hunts

Aiman Sterling

Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

putrabooks.github.io

**Buy the full book:**

Payhip

Carousell

Lulu

# Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Signature — the Cursed Hunter at a Glance

Chapter 2: The Core — the Engine of the Hunt

Chapter 3: The Instrument — the Tracker's Toolkit, Taken Apart

Chapter 4: The Craft — the Apprenticeship in the Enemy's Language

Chapter 5: The Honest Costs

Chapter 6: The Dark Side — the Completion of the Transformation

Chapter 7: The Cursed Hunter at Work — Career, Teams, and the Boss Relationship

Chapter 8: The Cursed Hunter in Love and Friendship

Chapter 9: The Matchups — Companions, Rivals, and the Other Types

Chapter 10: The Stand-Down — From the Hunt to the Watch

Afterword

This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

# Introduction

You know this person, or you are this person. The one who can explain a manipulator's next three moves before the manipulator has finished the first; the one who reads every room for its exits and its threats before reading it for its people; the one whose calm in a crisis is not peace but aim; the one who took the bully apart at fifteen the way a mechanic takes apart an engine — learned its timing, its levers, its fuel — and has been fluent in the language of predation ever since; the one the family quietly stopped being honest with, because the Hunter's powers of prediction, aimed at the household, work exactly as well on the household as they did on the enemy the Hunter built them for.

And the private tell, the one this whole file turns on: ask what the Hunter hunts now, and there is no answer — the bully is twenty years dead or twenty years gone or twenty years forgiven, and the hunt has never stopped; the tracking that never fails now growls at the wrong moments; and somewhere in the mastery of the enemy's methods, the line between hunter and hunted required a mirror to find, and the mirror was never consulted.

This is a case file on the Cursed Hunter: the personality that becomes the thing it hunts.

The first hunt scene is contamination by the quarry — an enemy whose methods worked. A bully, a tyrant, a manipulator in the house or the schoolyard; a child who could not beat the enemy by any ordinary means, and who discovered, with the cold clarity that children bring to unwinnable wars, the one path still open: study. If it cannot be defeated, it can be learned. And the child learned — the enemy's tactics absorbed like a language, practiced until fluent, mastered until the child could predict the enemy better than the enemy could predict itself. The engine: the pursuit that consumes the pursuer — each victory over the darkness bought with another piece of its currency; every lever learned is a lever the child now owns, and every lever owned is a lever the child has started to pull.

And the hunt file will honor what deserves honoring, because the gift is enormous: the Cursed Hunter is the reason the weak survived. This type stood between the smaller kid and the bully; this type learned the manipulator's grammar and used it to unmake the manipulation; this type protected — with the enemy's own weapons, in the enemy's own language, at costs no one ever invoiced. The world's innocents have been defended for centuries by people who paid for the defense in their own coin, and this book will not call that a mistake.

But the hunt file audits the ledger honestly, and the ledger has a curse on it exactly the shape of the mastery. The enemy is gone; the methods remained. The hunt outlived the quarry. The tracking that never fails now reads the family, the marriage, the colleague — everything a terrain, everyone a potential threat. The shadow, handled with care: indistinguishability — the hunt's logic applied to the household, the beloved treated like prey, and the self, piece by piece, recognized only in the enemy; the moment, late and quiet, when the Hunter realizes the enemy would recognize them instantly now — as a colleague.

And the growth: the hunt ended before the self is spent — the learned darkness converted to protection.

If you are this type, the book's wager is precise: you are not the monster, but you are carrying its toolkit, and the toolkit is not neutral; it wants hands. The hunt can be ended — formally, ritually, with the skill you bring to everything else — and the same mastery re-aimed, from pursuit to protection, costs nothing further and pays better than the hunt ever did. If you love one, your instruction is patient: do not ask them to stop being watchful; ask them who they are watching for — because the answer, held honestly, is the whole book: the enemy is gone, and the watching, unaimed, has started hunting the family.

Turn the page. The mastery is magnificent, and it saved people; this book is about the mirror — and And one note on the evidence before the trail is picked up: this is the volume in the library where the hunt log arrives already excellent — the reads, the foresight, the crisis that never happened because the Cursed Hunter saw it three rooms early — and the chapters do what any honest tracker must do with a trail this clean: they read the tracks backward — from the mastery to the school where it was forged — because the hunt file's whole finding, entered before the first chapter so the reader can watch for it in every hunt ahead: nobody becomes a tracker of danger in a safe house — the craft was built by a child who had something to track — and the question the whole book turns on, asked gently, of the person the whole floor relies on to see trouble coming: what was it, exactly, that the child was watching for — and what, after fifty years of fluent watching, has the watching made of the watcher — because the mastery, the hunt log is emphatic, saved people, is saving people, will save you — and the mirror, which the same mastery built, is the part nobody warned the hunter about.

the hunt's last, best quarry, which is the ending of the hunt itself.

# Chapter 1: The Signature — the Cursed Hunter

## at a Glance

The tell, before a word is spoken, is the scan — and the hunt file's first finding is that the Hunter enters every room twice: once with the eyes, once with the self. The eyes do the quartering sweep — doors, windows, sight lines, who is standing where, whose hands are doing what, the exits counted in the first four seconds — and only then does the rest of the person arrive, as if permission had to be granted by the perimeter first. They sit where they can see the entrance; they know what is behind them; the hunt file's margin note, dry: the Hunter is the only type on this shelf whose comfortable is everyone else's tactical.

Their conversation has a listening style that unnerves the uninitiated: questions that feel like interviews, silences that feel like measurements, and the strange, still attention of a person who is not waiting for their turn to talk but cataloging yours — leverage points, weak spots, the sentence that revealed the flank. They speak in strategies: every problem is a campaign, every rival a map, every plan has a contingency, and they are almost never wrong, which is precisely the problem the hunt file will spend the book auditing.

The second tell is the fluency in predation. Ask the Hunter about manipulators, and what comes back is not opinion but grammar — the taxonomy delivered with the flat competence of a native speaker: the guilt- lever, the love-bomb, the long game, the isolation play; who runs which con, how each one opens, what it wants from the mark, where it always, always leaves its fingerprints. The Hunter can predict a manipulator's next three moves because the Hunter has the manipulator's playbook memorized — and the hunt file's finding, entered gently because it is the whole curse in one observation: nobody memorizes a language that well without speaking it. The depth is beautiful and diagnostic in equal measure; the perfect understanding of the predator is the type's signature and the type's bill, and the tell inside the tell is the casualness — the Hunter explains predation the way a farmer explains weather, without noting that most people have to look it up.

The third tell is the one the household sees, and the hunt file flags it as the type's shadow worn openly: the growl at the wrong moments. The instincts, built for enemies and sharpened for decades, are still running — but the enemy is gone, so the tracking system reads whatever moves: the hunting partner's late night at the office becomes a pattern to be run down; the teenager's secrecy becomes concealment with a motive; the new neighbor's friendliness becomes an approach with an objective; the colleague's small ambition becomes a flank to be watched.

The Hunter's questions arrive with one extra step in them — the step where an innocent answer is cross-referenced against a theory of the answerer — and the family's private name for the experience, gathered across a hundred files: the interrogation that doesn't know it is one. The instincts growling at the wrong moments is the curse, stated plainly: equipment built for one enemy, still on, still hot, sweeping the household for a quarry that retired twenty years ago.

The signature in the past is the enemy whose methods worked — and the first hunt, assembled across the case files, arrives in two versions that converge on the same origin moment. The first version is the schoolyard enemy: the bully, the clique, the older kid with the casual cruelty — a child on the receiving end who discovered, in the middle of the war, that losing was teaching them more than winning was teaching anyone: the bully's timing, the bully's escalation patterns, the exact moment fear appeared in the bully's own eyes. The child began, deliberately, to study the weapon that was being used on them — and one afternoon, years into the fluency, the child turned it around: used the bully's own playbook, predicted the ambush, took the ground, and walked out of the schoolyard with a trophy nobody could see, which was the enemy's own mastery, transferred.

The second version is the household enemy: the volatile parent, the scheming relative, the manipulator at the kitchen table — and the child raised as the quarry, day after day, season after season, who learned the tyrant's moods the way sailors learn weather: the pre-storm silence, the escalation ladder, which subjects detonate, which calm is fake. Here the study was survival, not strategy; the child could not defeat the enemy, so the child became the world's leading expert on the enemy — and discovered, at some unrecorded hour, that expertise was protection: the predicted blow lands softer than the surprise one.

And the origin moment, in both versions, is the discovery of what the enemy's methods are worth. They worked. That is the sentence that founds the type, and the hunt file holds it carefully, because it is true and it is terrible: the enemy's tactics outperformed everything else the child had tried — honesty, appeal, obedience, endurance — and a child in a war does not get to prefer cleaner weapons. The convergence point is the quiet contract, signed in a child's grammar and never once revised: I will never be prey again — at any price.

And the price, which the child could not have understood and the adult has not yet audited, is the one this whole book is about: the methods came with the mastery attached; the fluency in predation is not a tool that leaves the hand

unchanged; and the child who learned the enemy's language has been speaking it, with increasing ease, ever since — sometimes to enemies, which was the point, and increasingly to everyone else, which is the curse.

Open the album and the photos are terrain: the child in the schoolyard photograph, positioned — the hunt file's finding — at the edge of every group, near the fence, facing the gate; the class photo where every other child looks at the camera and one child looks slightly, observably, elsewhere; the birthday party the child attended like a sentry, watching who got singled out and why. The recurring figure is the small strategist: the child who knew which route home had sight lines and which had blind corners; who kept the bedroom arranged so the door was visible from the bed; who could tell, from the sound of the car in the drive, which version of the parent was arriving.

The album's most telling photo is the one the family took at the end of the war — the year the enemy was beaten, exposed, or simply survived — and the child's face in it wears something the family read as pride and the hunt file reads as metamorphosis: the calm, flat, adult-in-a-child's-face look of someone who has won a war by becoming its other side. And the closer, written plainly because it is the whole type in one frame: the child at the kitchen table at twelve, homework done, watching the enemy across the table with the patient, unhurried attention of a student at a lecture — taking notes no notebook ever held — and the hunt file's entry, held for the rest of the book: the class was in session, the tuition was the childhood, and the curriculum was the enemy's own.

Energy: Low, flat, coiled — the energy of a system built for ambush and vigilance rather than display; the Hunter's resting state is a watch that never winds down, and the wattage the room feels is not warmth or brightness but attention, the unnerving steadiness of eyes that do not get tired of looking.

Ambition: Mastery-shaped, not wealth-shaped — the Hunter does not primarily want money or applause; the Hunter wants the upper hand: the position from which nothing can be done to them again, the expertise so total that the enemy's whole species becomes legible; and the hunt file's quiet finding: the ambition is defensive in its bones, born in the war, and the Hunter will trade any salary for the seat that faces the door.

Vanity structure: The perfect read — the deep, quiet pride of being the one who saw it coming: the ambush predicted, the manipulation caught at move one, the colleague who tried the flank and found the ground already taken; and beneath it the first hunt's arithmetic, I will never be prey again — which is also the prison, because the person who can never be prey can also never be unarmed, and the vanity and the vigilance are the same garment.

Loyalty: Fierce, total, and terrain-blind — the Hunter is the one who arrives at

2 a.m. when the sibling is in trouble, who takes the call nobody else will take, who stands between the smaller kid and the harm without being asked; and the hunt file's honest finding: the loyalty is real, ancient, and trained on a battlefield — it activates against threat, and strains, visibly, in the calm, where there is nothing to defend and the Hunter's love has no verb to conjugate.

Weakness: The unending hunt — the enemy is gone and the pursuit is still on; the machinery that reads threats reads the family; the expertise that disarms manipulators also runs the household like a campaign; and the blindness riding with it: the Hunter has no idea how much of the fluency is now self rather than tool — has never once checked the mirror — and has quietly become, in the home, the thing the war was fought against: the one whose vigilance the family organizes itself around.

Unspoken need: To put the weapon down — to be, for one hour, in a room with no perimeter to read and no one to out-think, and be safe anyway; and beneath that, the need the curse makes unspeakable: to be loved as the child from before the war — the tender one, the untrained one — rather than admired as the hunting instrument the war produced; and the hunt file's wager, argued to the last chapter: that child is not gone. They are the quarry the hunt has been circling all along.

At a party: the quietest dangerous person in the room — installed in the corner seat with the wall behind and the door in view, watching the whole party move like a board; the hunt file's margin note: the Hunter at a party is never at the party, the way a lifeguard is never at the beach; and the party's honest discovery, available to whoever looks closely: the Hunter has, by midnight, identified the couple that will break up first, the person running a con on the host, and the exact social weather of the room — and has said almost nothing, because none of it was a threat, and the machinery has no setting for just watching without a reason.

In a new job: the instant asset with the unnerving onboarding — the org chart read like a threat map in the first week; the political alliances mapped by Friday; the colleague who runs the small con caught at move one, twice, three times, and never quite able to prove the Hunter had anything to do with their transfer. The boss's honest verdict after six months, uniform across the hunt files: the best analyst I have ever had, and I would not let them run a team. The finding the hunt file attaches: both halves of the verdict are correct — the read is worth a department, and the way the read is held — everyone a map, nobody a person — is the reason it stops exactly there.

Under sudden pressure: magnificent — the war's whole training, deployed at last: the crisis arrives and the Hunter's flat calm becomes the room's floor; the panic around them is sorted into targets and assets in real time; the plan has a contingency before anyone else has a plan. And the hunt file's finding, uniform and costly: the Hunter is at their absolute best in the worst hour, which quietly teaches the type to be at their best only in the worst hours, and the family's rueful entry — gathered from a hundred households — that the Hunter they love is warmest during the hurricane and coldest in June.

In a boring meeting: the stand-down that cannot happen — the Hunter in a flat agenda is a weapons system with no target: the eyes run the sweep, the hands need something to hold; the small tells surface, and the hunt file lists them affectionately — the seat chosen first, the exits re-counted twice, the innocent slide deck skimmed for the lie in the numbers; and the newcomer's quick, private verdict: they are waiting for something — and the slower discovery, available to whoever stays: the Hunter is always waiting for something, because the machinery was built for an enemy that is no longer coming, and waiting is the only mode it has.

On holiday: the trip planned like an operation — the hotel chosen for sight lines, the itinerary with contingencies, the beach read twice for currents and once for pleasure; the hunt file's most-quoted entry from the hunting partners of Hunters: "they pack like they expect the trip to attack them." And the tell, uniform across the case files, on the third or fourth day away: the machinery, finding no threats and no quarries, turns on the family — the hunting partner's tone is analyzed, the children's faces are read for concealment, the waiter is profiled — and the hunt file knows what that means, because it is the curse's signature: an idle hunt does not stop; it re-aims, and the nearest moving target is the household, and the Hunter, who would die for every one of them, has started hunting them without ever once, in any file, meaning to.

Not the Elegant Predator, the personality that uses charm as a hunting instrument — the confusion is instant, because both are fluent in predation, both read rooms like maps, and both leave every encounter holding more than they brought. The hinge is origin and appetite. The Predator is a native: born to the hunt, at home in it, hunting because the taking feels good — the manipulation is pleasure, the mask goes on gladly, the Predator's tools were never installed by anyone, and the Predator, under all of it, is calm, because the work is play.

The Hunter is a convert: built in a war, hunting because the study was survival, and the hunt file's sharpest finding — the fluency sits on top of an ordinary, tender person the way a uniform sits on a conscript; the Hunter's

mastery is post-traumatic, and underneath it the appetite is not for the kill but for the end of the fear. The quick test, one scene each: catch each one off guard with an unexpected kindness. The Predator's mask holds; the hunt never stops being a game. The Hunter, offered safety with nothing behind it, softens — visibly, awkwardly, like a soldier handed a sleeping baby — because the whole machinery, underneath, was built to get back to exactly there.

Not the Steadfast Guardian, the personality that protects what it loves — the confusion is subtler and more instructive, because both are vigilant, both read threats, both stand between the weak and the harm, and both are found at the same emergencies. The hinge is which way the attention faces and what it feeds on. The Guardian's vigilance is aimed at the ward — the perimeter is watched because something inside it is loved, the watching feeds the love, and when the threat ends the Guardian puts the tools down and goes inside, warm, to the thing protected.

The Hunter's vigilance is aimed at the quarry — the perimeter is watched because something outside it is hunted, the watching feeds the hunt, and when the threat ends the Hunter has nothing to go inside to, because the watching never re-aimed at the household; it kept facing the enemy that is no longer there. The sharp test: ask each, at the end of a long watch, who is it for? The Guardian answers instantly, with a name. The Hunter answers after a silence — because the answer the machinery has is nobody anymore — and the silence, the hunt file notes, is the whole difference, and the whole door out: the Hunter's toolkit, re-aimed at a name, becomes the Guardian's, and the hunt file has watched the conversion happen in a single honest season.

End of free sample. The full book is available at putrabooks.github.io

# Read the rest

## THE CURSED HUNTER

The full book continues past this sample.

Get it here:
https://ko-fi.com/s/156b471635

Pay what you want, S$1.90 or more. No account needed. Instant PDF + EPUB.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiman Sterling is the author of The Archetype Series -- a library of personality portraits drawn the way literature draws characters: the great types of human temperament, recognized at a glance, understood in depth, and followed from childhood wound to mature strength.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiman Sterling is the author of The Archetype Series -- a library of personality portraits drawn the way literature draws characters: the great types of human temperament, recognized at a glance, understood in depth, and followed from childhood wound to mature strength.