

Welcome Behind the Scenes of Amalgus

Due either to ego, luck of the draw, or simply a great story that you know your friends are going to love playing through, you've become the GM. You have the toughest job of anyone playing in the game, but also the most influence over what happens in the story.

If You're a Player...

...and reading this because you're curious, bored, or want in on the "secrets", you're welcome to it. Knowing what goes on "behind the scenes" can help you understand the system better, give you more ideas for how to play your character, and possibly help you work better with the GM to create a fun and entertaining story. The "secrets" are here too, but one of the first things you'll learn is that the GM is encouraged to completely change them all. If you like surprises, skip the monster listings, and certainly skip the sample adventures at the end of the book. The rest of this section, however, can be quite educational.

Before diving into your side of the rules, here are a few basic fundamentals that will help you immensely as a GM.

1. The Players Are Brilliant

If the players must retrieve four keys from opposite corners of the world to open the door to a castle, they'll probably just break in through a window. Of course, as the GM most things are "at your discretion", so you're free to tell them "there are no windows" or "the window shatters, then immediately closes back up again. Good thing you hadn't started through yet or you'd be cut in half." On the other hand, if the players do something completely unforeseen that makes perfect sense and/or that they can justify using their skills, then let them; they'll end up happy that they used their wits to find a shortcut, and you'll have one more contingency to plan against the next time a similar situation comes up. You can even let your players' cleverness work for you; if you can't come up with a good solution to a challenge the players are facing, then don't. Let them figure it out on their own. Just as your planned events contribute to your planned plot, the unplanned events that your players create can contribute to and expand the plot in completely different ways, creating numerous twists and sub-plots that can keep the adventure rolling through sessions when you run out of ideas.

2. The Players Are Stupid

Just as the players will find the most genius of shortcuts through your carefully laid plans, they will also completely pass by the obvious, either through their own obliviousness, or simply through bad luck. If your plot hinges entirely on any one of the players finding the cave behind the waterfall that leads to the subterranean world you've spent the last three months mapping out, rest assured that every single one of them will fail her Awareness skill check to find it. If your plot hinges on the players taking the mysterious necklace from the statue at the center of the forgotten shrine, make sure that every other person they pass on the way to the shrine mentions the necklace, describe in detail the way the sunlight glints beautifully and strangely off the necklace when they get to the shrine, and then have a contingency planned for when the players say "Hey, neat necklace" and then leave it there as they continue on their way. Likewise, your players can't read your mind, and they're probably not master detectives; if they're not following the subtle clues you've left them,

drop more clues, involve them more directly in important events, and repeat as necessary until they “accidentally” stumble into solving the mystery. They will, inevitably, pick up some of the clues along the way, and even though more or less handing them the solution isn’t nearly as rewarding as leading them through the intricate maze of intrigue and deception that your genius has concocted, it at least advances the plot, whereas leaving your players to wallow in frustration and confusion does not. Of course, if your players are having fun trying to make the connections, puzzling it all out on their own, and knowing that the solution is just beyond their grasp, then steeple your fingers, laugh maniacally, and keep them guessing all the way.

3. The Players are Heroes

Nothing is as boring for players as becoming “tag-alongs” while your NPCs do all the work. Every time there’s a fight in your story, the players should be in the middle of it. If there’s a mystery to be solved, an assassination to be foiled, or a daring rescue to be made, your players should be the ones doing it. Even in situations where another NPC is infinitely more qualified, it’s sometimes nice to have him not quite able to put all the pieces together until the players put their minds to the task as well. Likewise, even if the players are travelling with an NPC many levels higher than they are, he should stay in the background in combat, only stepping in to help them out of a pinch or otherwise make them look good. Of course, this assumes that you intend to have the mystery solved, the assassination foiled, or the rescue made. If an assassination or kidnapping or any other plot device **must** go through to keep the story moving, then make sure that the players are in no way involved, and make it clear from the circumstances that there’s nothing they could have done to intervene.

Similarly, if your over-balanced NPC travelling with the party is an egomaniac who can’t stand to be upstaged by pipsqueaks, then he should be doing all the fighting, leaving the players in the dust, taking all the glory (and jools) for himself and creating a wonderfully horrible character who the players can’t wait to get rid of.

If you feel your players are good enough roleplayers to pull it off, you can even involve them in scenes that don’t include their characters at all. For example, if your lead villain has been vanquished and his lackeys are all vying for his throne, you can let your players roleplay the lackeys for a scene, letting their actions guide the story in ways that their usual characters have nothing to do with. Be careful with these kinds of scenes however, since it’s quite likely that “less mature” players will try to somehow skew even the briefest and most distant of these scenes to their characters’ advantage. Of course, if this does happen, there’s nothing stopping you from doing a little fiddling after the scene is over. (*“Yeah, you did have a strange, unexplainable feeling that Doctor Gruesome left the DoomStorm Sword inside that barrel, but it’s not there now. As a matter of fact, remember that airship captain who nearly defeated you before you knocked him over the railing on the way here? Well, he’s standing right in front of you, and it looks like he found the sword first.”*)

4. You Are Not Playing Against the Players

Put simply, if all of the players’ characters are dead, bedridden, turned to stone, sent back to their home planet, or otherwise unplayable, the story stops. This is fine if you and the players all agree that it’s time to wrap up the campaign and retire all of the characters. It doesn’t work at all if everyone still wants to play. Remember that as the GM, your job is to challenge the players, not punish them. If one of your players just ate the last jelly donut after the ninth time you explicitly told him not to, don’t punish him in the game. Not only will it ruin his experience, but it will ruin the game for everyone else as your plot falls apart. If he’s done something bad enough that you know it will affect your judgement in the game, kick him out

for a session. If he's done something really bad, kick him out permanently. If you're not getting along with most of the players, or if you're just plain burnt out on running the game, talk to them about it. You'll either solve the problem and continue right where you left off, hand over the game to someone else (and perhaps become a player using one of your favorite NPCs), or just decide that none of you want to play anymore and drop the game completely.

5. You Are Not God

Yes, most things are "at the GM's discretion", but if that were the cardinal law of Amalgus this book would be one page thick. The rules here exist to create a cohesive system that, despite its incredibly flexible and crazy nature, at least has some basic constants. "The GM's discretion" is meant only to cover the details that were overlooked, could be exploited by the players, or simply aren't important. Also remember that if all of the players object to "your discretion" on a certain topic, you should probably rethink it. You're not obligated to change your ruling, but if nobody agrees with you they probably have a good reason. If the players do change your mind, there's certainly nothing stopping you from rewinding the action or changing something in the plot. Every story goes through revisions. In addition to the numerous things that are "at the GM's discretion", the entire game of Amalgus is "at the group's discretion". If nobody likes the way a certain rule works, then change it; just be sure to decide as a group exactly how the rule works in your game and write it down, so no-one will forget the new rule and get frustrated when it doesn't work the way they think it should.

6. The "Maybe" System

A fairly common problem in all RPGs is "out of character knowledge". Reading through a FAQ for a console RPG so you know exactly where to find something without having to go through talking to a dozen different villagers for the same information, inventing an airplane in a medieval RPG because you know how they work despite the fact that your character doesn't even know how to read, or making a decision based on something you read in the GM's section of an RPG despite the fact that it makes no sense for your character are all examples of out of character knowledge. Amalgus's solution to out of character knowledge is called the "Maybe" system. For example, maybe there really are 12 more classes of Zodians based on Earth's eastern zodiac, just waiting to be unearthed from the rubble of the Great War. Maybe they were all destroyed, or only a few remain. Maybe they were just a line of popular action figures. You're free to come up with your own "Maybe"s for anything, beyond just the ones that are suggested. The "Maybe" system keeps the players from using out of character knowledge, not only because they don't know which possibility is the truth, but also because once they've gathered enough clues to guess the "Maybe" you've chosen, you can always switch it out for another one if the players start using it as out of character knowledge. Belief in a "Maybe" is not the same as out of character knowledge, however, and a character convinced that all 12 Eastern Zodians exist and who has devoted his life to finding them can make for a great adventure in and of himself, and you're free to keep the players guessing, not even deciding for yourself which is the truth until you determine what would be best for the story. Future supplements for Amalgus (the upcoming book that includes the skills and descriptions for all of the Eastern Zodians, for instance) may contradict the "Maybe"s you've chosen; it's up to you whether to stick with your choice or bring in the new material despite all in-game evidence to the contrary -- after all, on Amalgus, impossible things happen all the time.

Out of character knowledge that occurs during the game (one player gets in a fight, so another player who wants to help him out "just happens to decide to go for a walk in the area", for instance) is still unavoidable. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, however; most

stories are full of odd coincidences and “gut feelings”, and if a player can give you a fairly believable justification for his actions there’s no reason he can’t happen to be in just the right place at just the right time.

Play Styles

“Console” and “Heavy” are the two extremes of how you can run a game of Amalgus. They each have their own merits, and each will create a very different game, even if applied to the exact same scenario. The Console style is recommended for players who are used to playing video games, and is designed to focus more on Amalgus’s mechanics and give everything a very video-game-like feel. The Heavy style, on the other hand, is recommended for players who have more experience in live-action roleplaying and improvisational drama, and is designed to focus more on character development and interaction, creating the kinds of stories that one finds in good anime and manga. Put very simply, Heavy style is about the “roleplaying” and Console style is about the “game”.

Keep in mind that there are very few groups of players for whom one extreme or the other is the best fit; you’ll need to mix and match elements from both to find the right balance for your players and your story.

<i>Console</i>	<i>Heavy</i>
Console style plays most like a video game, as players hop from combat to combat, exploring labyrinthine castles and ruins, getting cool stuff and leveling up. Friendly NPCs exist solely as plot devices (“ <i>Thanks for freeing me from the level boss. Here’s the key to the next section of the castle!</i> ”), and little to no time is spent on character development.	Combat takes a back-seat to socializing and intrigue. The setting of Amalgus becomes much more important than the mechanics, as players explore their characters’ histories, personalities, and quirks. Major NPCs each have their own personalities, loyalties, agendas and opinions. Entire sessions can go by without anyone ever rolling a die.
Give or take a few quirks, the players are all heroes and their enemies are all villains. The heroes always do “good” things, and the villains always do “bad” things, but nothing “bad” enough to garner more than a PG-13 rating if it happened in a movie.	Every hero has a dark side, and every villain thinks he’s actually a hero (“ <i>They hate me now, but someday they’ll all thank me!!</i> ”). Sometimes the obvious villains aren’t really the villains, or sometimes the villains’ plots seem rational enough that the players question their own motivations.
V jools not only keep you from feeling the effects of any damage you suffer, but will also heal any wound perfectly, and being resurrected at a Save Bank is a fairly minor inconvenience, on par with being really sick for a couple of weeks. Afterwards you’re back on your feet in no time, none the worse for wear.	Taking damage in combat hurts just as much as it would in the real world, and using skills that consume V jools drain you emotionally and spiritually as well as physically. Attacks that do significant damage can leave permanent scars. Resurrection via Save Bank is a long, painful, and nightmarish process that pulls you back over the threshold of death into the world of the living and can result in memory loss and severe psychological trauma.

Adventure goals are very linear (*“Fight your way from the bottom of the tower to the top, and defeat the dragon who lives there”*), and campaigns are usually “item quests”, wherein the players must either collect all of a certain thing (like special cards or the pieces of a powerful item) or perpetually trade rare items for rarer items (*“I’ll give you the Silver Shell if you find my lost dog for me.”*) until they achieve their final goal.

Adventures lack clear goals, and are open-ended and interwoven to the point that they are indistinguishable from each other. Developing your character’s personality and rising socially and politically are more important than improving your skills or equipment. Your enemies aren’t the monsters in the wilderness, but the other people you must outwit, out-talk, and out-maneuver on your way to the top.

Other Considerations

Style is just the beginning of how Amalgus can be “tweaked” to work with your group. Here are a few other suggestions:

Multiple Characters and Group Characters

If you have too few players for the kind of game you’d like to run, you always have the option of letting each player play as two or even three characters simultaneously. This method works best with a more Console-style game, and can get a little schizophrenic in a Heavy-style game, but will keep your players engaged in the game and involved in what’s happening even if the group splits up. Another possibility is to let your players have a “group character”, which is someone who mostly stays in the background and is controlled by all of the characters simultaneously (although you’ll have to work out some way to resolve disputes when multiple players want the group character to do completely different things simultaneously). “Healers” make the best group characters; sitting on the outskirts of combat, using Heal and other helpful skills on the players, which is a big benefit but not really something that any single player wants to spend the whole game doing.

Performance

Telling a player across the table *“The count asks you to dance with him”* has a **very** different feel to it than actually standing up, bowing low, and saying *“My dear lady, you look simply ravishing this evening! I’ve been told that you’ve mastered every intricacy of the deadly Black Rose Waltz. May I entreat you to join me on the dancefloor?”* Keep in mind, however, that while some players will love this kind of interaction and characterization, other players will become horribly embarrassed and refuse to participate (or worse, leave the game). One player might want to describe actions with her hands or talk as her character while still rooted firmly in her seat, whereas another player might like to “get into character” before a game just like an actor does before a performance, and assume her character’s personality and mannerisms throughout the entire session. Encourage your players to perform as much or as little as they want, and try to match your performance level to theirs on a player-by-player basis, but never try to force a player to do something she doesn’t want to do.

Monsters & Other Enemies

Here’s a brief list of things for your players to fight. They are listed alphabetically, with monsters from the same “family” listed together. Most of the monsters here are also listed with a range of levels to give you more options when putting together a combat, and to keep your players from guessing their levels from their types. Many monsters have special abilities and/or limitations

that bend the rules of their skills. As with everything else concerning Amalgus's setting, you are free to change these monsters however you want, making the Darkness come from outer space or making Bomblins mechanical, for instance. Not only will these changes help to "personalize" the adventure for your group, but it will also keep your players on their toes by confronting them with monsters that don't behave the ways they expect them to. Except where otherwise specified, all monsters are size 1.

Level 0 Monsters

Level 0 monsters are designed for two purposes: to give lone Level 1 players something they can defeat without much trouble, and to give higher level players and groups of players scores of super-wimpy monsters to wade through. Level 0 monsters all have zero ranks in Vitality, so they usually go down in one hit. Defeated Level 0 monsters each turn into 20 jools after combat is over. The fact that they don't have Vitality ranks also makes them popular with GMs, since you don't have to track how much damage each one has taken. For the purpose of combat balance and skills like Summon that depend on monsters' levels, consider three Level 0 monsters to be equivalent of one Level 1 character.

Monster List:

Air Whale
Aquaphant
Blitz Bat
Blog
Bomblin
Cannon Mouth
Cloud Shark
Darkness
Darkness Generator
Dingoat
Elementling

- Breezling
- Dirtling
- Frostling
- Hotling
- Shockling
- Wetling
- Zombling

Entropede
Float Spider
Forgotten Guardian
Gorg Spawn

- Gorgling
- Gogrr
- Gorgast

Kaiser Snail
Kynde
Magmoose
Mushromp
Mutato

- Mutatoed Bird
- Mutatoed Bunny
- Mutatoed Dog
- Mutatoed Fish
- Mutatoed Insect
- Mutatoed Monkey

- Mutatoed Pig
- Mutatoed Snake

Nocturtle
Owlanche
Rockroach
Rust Rustler
Sandskipper
Shattercat
Shineocerous
Skeeter
Starrhana
Trained Soldier
Tree Anemone
Undertoad
Vermite
Wheeler
Whispin
Wind Rat

Air Whale

Skill	Level		
	5	10	15
Size	3	4	5
Speed	2	4	5
Vitality	4	6	7
Thick Hide (Defend)	5	5	6
Float (Fly)	2	4	5
Protective Parasites (Counterattack)	1	3	3
Cloudmerge (Nature: Hibernate)	-	-	1

Noble, peaceful, and majestic lords of the skies, Air Whales are viewed across Amalgus as symbols of tranquility and good fortune. Slow to anger and incredibly resilient, the enormous Air Whale floats lazily through the clouds, consuming the insects and small flying creatures that fly into its tremendous mouth. Air Whales are size 1 at birth, but grow steadily over the next decade to size 3 adults. At size 3 their growth rate slows drastically, although since their lives span centuries there have been reports of Air Whales growing as big as size 10. The sheer size and general placidity of Air Whales makes them perfect candidates for transports, and Air Whale to airship conversions are common, with gondolas and cabins attached to Air Whales controlled by mighty steering machines, mind-control, or often just good training. When Air Whales die of old age, they gradually sink, leaving tremendous craters where they finally impact with the ground. Most large cities keep a fleet of airships on constant call to divert the course of any large, dying Air Whales headed their way.

Aquaphant (Water)

Skill	Level		
	6	9	12
Size	2	2	2
Speed	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	6
Jet Stream (Elemental Attack: Water)	4	4	5
Streamlined Flippers (Swim)	3	3	4
Sucker-lined Trunk (Grab)	2	3	4
Aqueous (Elemental Resistance: Water)	3	4	4

Although they spend most of their lives in the water, aquaphants can not breathe water, and thus sharp-eyed sailors can sometimes spot their trunks, sticking up out of the water like periscopes, from far away, and regard the sight as a sign of good luck. Aquaphants can hold their breaths for much longer than any of Earth's aquatic mammals, however, and some spend a great deal of their time in the inky darkness of the ocean's furthest depths, only surfacing for air once or twice a month. Other aquaphants live closer to the surface, often climbing out of the water to sun themselves on reefs or glaciers. Aquaphants are omnivorous and eat a great deal, although their diets consist mostly of seaweed and plankton, and they very rarely eat fish larger than a few jools in length. Recently, however, reports have begun to circulate about strange, violent aquaphants capsizing ships and attacking their crews. No evidence has yet surfaced to back these claims, but enough sailors have woken up in save banks with horrifying tales of weird, unnatural trumpeting sounds in the night and ships' masts cut in half by jets of water to warrant an investigation by the navies and harbor commissions of several nations.

Blitz Bat (Electric)

Skill	Level		
	6	9	12
Size	2	2	2
Speed	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	6
Lightning Screech (Elemental Attack: Electric)	4	4	5
Sonar Stun (Mind: Confuse)	3	3	4
Clockwork Wings (Fly)	2	3	4
Galvanized (Elemental Resistance: Electric)	3	4	4

Strange mixtures of organic and mechanical parts, blitz bats build their own young from the corpses of other monsters and random broken pieces of machinery, then fly the offspring into the hearts of storm clouds to electrify them into life. Some scholars have theorized that newly-constructed blitz bats aren't actually given life by the electricity, but merely act as vessels for intangible, invisible creatures that thrive on electricity, a theory that has been tested by catapulting a variety of organic and mechanical creations into low-lying storm clouds with mixed results. Although they are extremely active during thunderstorms, diving and swooping in and out of the clouds, and down to the ground to search for food, blitz bats spend most of their time asleep, hanging upside-down from the bottoms of thunderclouds, patiently waiting for the next storm. Blitz bats are aggressively protective of their clouds, however, and airships have often had to veer days off course to circumvent clouds decorated with sleeping blitz bats.

Blog

Skill	Level			
	1	2	3	4
Speed	1	1	2	3
Vitality	2	3	3	3
Chomp (Melee Attack)	2	3	3	3
Lick (Heal)	1	1	2	2
Mind Sniff (Premonition: Predict)	-	1	2	3

Eyeless, earless, perpetually drooling mouths on legs, Blogs have incredibly refined senses of smell, able to sniff out months-old tracks, and sometimes even scent the thoughts of their opponents. Blogs have a complex means of communication that relies on subtle changes in the scent of their saliva which can be smelled by other Blogs for miles, and although their drool is generally acrid to other creatures, it can have a healing effect on other Blogs, which they can use by licking each other's wounds or even spitting on each other from across a battlefield.

Bomblin

Skill	Level			
	1	2	3	4
Speed	1	2	3	3
Vitality	1	2	3	4
Bang! (Explode)	3	3	2	3
Tick! Tick! Tick! (Dash)	-	2	3	3

Special: A Bomblin can not Explode until at least three rounds after combat begins. Three rounds before the Bomblin explodes, you must loudly announce "Three!". You must also

announce two rounds and one round, after which the Bomblin will Explode. You will probably want to use counters to track each Bomblin's "timer", especially if there are multiple Bomblins in the same combat.

The fruit of a very strange variety of tree, Bomblins in the wild ripen on branches, fall to the ground, and then wander aimlessly for a while before exploding violently, scattering seeds in every direction. During the Great War, specially bred Bomblins were trained to march directly toward enemy troops and explode on command, and were kept suspended in jars of fluid until they were needed, to keep them from exploding prematurely. Modern-day archaeologists must always be very careful not to unearth and accidentally break a Bomblin jar. Unfortunately, enough modern-day archaeologists have failed to be careful to the point that there are now just as many trees that grow war-bred Bomblins as there are trees that grow the Bomblins who wander aimlessly before exploding.

Cannon Mouth

Skill	Level			
	4	6	8	10
Speed	2	2	2	2
Vitality	4	4	5	5
Cannon Mouth (Ranged Attack)	4	6	6	7
Multishot (Ricochet)	2	2	4	4
Dirt Cloud (Elemental Attack: Earth)	-	1	2	3

Perpetually foul-tempered creatures, Cannon Mouths are so named for their ability to eat large quantities of dirt and rocks, digest them into heavy, solid lumps, and then regurgitate those lumps at high speed to attack their prey. Cannon Mouths' bodies are slow and cumbersome, resembling large, stubby mortar cannons with legs in place of wheels, and thus they prefer to fight from a distance, letting their natural ranged weapon do its job, only cautiously approaching to feed when they're certain they've knocked their prey senseless. The Cannon Mouth's body can hold a surprising number of "cannonballs", and they spend a great deal of time eating dirt and rocks to make sure they're fully stocked.

Cloud Shark

Skill	Level		
	4	6	8
Size	2	2	2
Speed	2	3	4
Vitality	2	3	3
Cloudswim (Fly)	5	5	6
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	4	4
Fin Slash (Dash Attack)	-	2	2

Gliding stealthily through cloud banks, using their powerful eyesight to spot their prey and swooping low enough to scrape their mighty airfins on the ground as they snatch up and devour unwary creatures, Cloud Sharks are truly nightmarish monsters, and the reason that many Amalgus cities have roofs. Equally lethal in the air, many Cloud Sharks have been brazen enough to attack small airships, and some have succeeded. Brutal, fearless, and rightfully so; few creatures on land or in the skies can match a Cloud Shark in combat. Fortunately, Cloud Sharks are lone predators, as a whole school of them would be a nearly unstoppable force.

The Darkness (Decay)

Skill	Level		
	5	7	9
Speed	3	4	5
Vitality	3	4	4
Shred (Melee Attack)	4	5	5
Acid Blood (Counterattack)	4	4	4
Gaseous (Fly)	1	1	3

Oozing up from caverns deep beneath Amalgus's surface, The Darkness are creepy, amorphous black clouds in thin, transparent skins, orbited by flurries of tiny sharpened diamond shards that they use to shred their enemies. The semi-gaseous fluid inside of a Darkness becomes a highly-corrosive and dangerous acid on contact with air, and Darkness' pliable bodies allow them to squeeze through even the tiniest of openings. Fortunately for the surface-dwellers of Amalgus, The Darkness are destroyed by sunlight, so they are rarely seen above-ground, and then only at night. In their sunless subterranean caverns, the Darkness raise a variety of creatures for food. Disturbingly, the traits that allow a person to pass the personality test are the same traits that the Darkness find most delicious, and as their livestock become more and more stupid through inbreeding and the dark drudgery of their confinements, groups of Darkness are sent above-ground to find fresh people to rekindle the spark of intelligence in their feeding pits. These groups of Darkness are aware of how common people are on the surface of Amalgus, and often spend most of their time outside satisfying their own hungers for intelligence, slaughtering entire villages and dragging only a token few people back down into the abyss just before sunrise.

Surprisingly, despite the depths of Taphos's winding catacombs, the Darkness have never been a problem in the Province of Tombs. Some Mortans attribute this safety to the tremendous gates that block-off most of the catacombs from the cities above, but even before the ancient gates were installed the city was free from Darkness attacks. Some postulate that protection methods were installed long ago by Taphos's founders to protect it from the Darkness, while others suggest that perhaps there is an even ghastlier power prowling the depths of the catacombs that wants the Mortans for itself and will not allow the Darkness to pass. The Dergs, unfortunately, are not as blissfully safe from the Darkness, although many Derg elders are trained in ancient methods of banishing the Darkness, most of which involve the use of primitive flares.

Darkness Generator (Decay)

Skill	Level		
	10	15	20
Size	3	3	4
Speed	4	5	5
Vitality	5	5	6
Harden (Defend)	4	4	4
Summon: Darkness	5	7	9
Ray of Darkness (Heal)	3	4	5
Voices in the Mind (Mind: Confuse)	3	4	4
Mental Domination (Mind: Control)	2	2	3

Special: Darkness Generators can not move themselves, but can be moved by other combatants (using **Pull**, **Throw**, **Launch**, and similar skills). Darkness Generators can only use their Summon skills to Summon Darkness; they do not have to pay for the Darkness' V

jools (they are always full when Summoned), and unlike normal Summoned monsters the Darkness Summoned by a Darkness Generator can be turned into jools when combat is over. Often, when the Darkness are chased back underground by heroes who outnumber them or by the rising sun, enormous black spheres are found in the caves where they bubbled up from the bowels of the planet. These fearsome orbs, labeled “Darkness Generators” by the few who have survived encounters with them, produce Darkness and emanate awesome mental powers in equal abundance, throwing their attackers into total chaos as it pits them against each other and sends Darkness in to clean up the survivors. Whether Darkness Generators are living vehicles that the Darkness use to travel quickly to the surface, fortresses that the Darkness build once they reach the surface, or something else entirely is not clear. The Generators themselves lack any means of direct attack, including the acid blood common to Darkness, and even lack the ability to move on their own, but more than make up for it with their wide array of other fiendish skills and abilities. When a Darkness Generator is destroyed, it quickly fades from shiny black to a dull, bone white, then crumbles into dust, leaving a pile of jools behind.

Dingoat

Skill	Level		
	2	3	4
Speed	3	3	4
Vitality	1	2	2
Devour (Melee Attack)	3	4	4
Twitchy (Jump)	1	1	2

Dingoats are about what you’d expect from something halfway between a dingo and a goat; mangy, ravenous pack animals that eat absolutely everything. Dingoat packs have wiped entire small villages off the map, and put significant dents in some larger villages. Although they are kind of cute in a hideous sort of way, dingoat puppies are born hungry, and will merrily devour the hand and arm that feeds them, never sated until they die, often consumed by the rest of their pack when there’s nothing else edible in the immediate vicinity. Kygrus himself admired the simple and brutal tenacity of dingoats, and invested vast amounts of time and jools in an attempt to train them to fight alongside his troops. Absolutely no progress had been made when he died, however, and the project was finally abandoned, although dingoats remained the favorite monster of Kygrin summoners for the rest of the Great War.

Elementlings

Special: Elementlings can use their Elemental Attack skills without having to spend the V jools usually required.

Spawned by points of extreme elemental condition (Hotlings from large fires, Wetlings from floods, etc.), Elementlings make the ideal starting monsters for novice summoners, and otherwise tend to pop up in the most inconvenient places, appearing from raging housefires, torrential floods and the like, and adding to the severity of the situation by attacking anyone nearby. Elementlings can survive for a limited time outside of their favored elemental environment, and usually dissipate after about 12 hours of deprivation.

- Breezling (Air)

Skill	Level		
	0	1	2

Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Sharp Wind (Elemental Attack: Air)	1	2	2
Gaseous (Elemental Resistance: Air)	1	1	2
Float (Fly)	1	1	1

- Dirtling (Earth)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	0	1	2
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Stone Toss (Elemental Attack: Earth)	1	2	2
Rocky (Elemental Resistance: Earth)	2	1	2
Quake (Elemental Effect: Earth)	-	1	1

- Frostling (Ice)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	0	1	2
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Frost Bite (Elemental Attack: Ice)	1	2	2
Cold-Blooded (Elemental Resistance: Ice)	2	1	2
Freeze (Elemental Effect: Ice)	-	1	1

- Hotling (Fire)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	0	1	2
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Burn (Elemental Attack: Fire)	1	2	2
Hot-Blooded (Elemental Resistance: Fire)	2	1	2
Combust (Elemental Effect: Fire)	-	1	1

- Shockling (Electric)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	0	1	2
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Zap (Elemental Attack: Electric)	1	2	2
Ionized (Elemental Resistance: Electric)	2	1	2
Feedback (Counterattack)	-	1	1

- Wetling (Water)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	0	1	2
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Squirt (Elemental Attack: Water)	1	2	2

Dampness (Elemental Resistance: Water)	2	1	2
Douse (Elemental Effect: Water)	-	1	1

- Zombling (Decay)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	0	1	2
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Deadly Touch (Elemental Attack: Decay)	1	2	2
Rotten (Elemental Resistance: Decay)	2	1	2
Age (Elemental Effect: Decay)	-	1	1

Entropede (Decay)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	6	9	12
<i>Size</i>	2	2	2
Speed	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	6
Defile (Elemental Attack: Decay)	4	4	5
Crippling Poison (Hinder)	3	3	4
Withering Blast (Nature: Wilt)	2	3	4
Rotting Aura (Elemental Resistance: Decay)	3	4	4

Scuttling across the landscape, leaving trails of rot and decay in their wake, Entropedes are regarded throughout Amalgus as bad omens and signs of corruption. The Entropede's favored habitats are deep swamps and marshes, preferably ones where thick canopies block out the sunlight and stagnant water chokes out the vegetation and breeds foul things and poisonous fumes in equal abundance. From these dank pits, Entropedes often arise, devastating the surrounding, healthy areas and returning to their dens, or meandering aimlessly for months or years, cutting blackened, barren swathes across otherwise tranquil fields.

Float Spider

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	2	4	6
Speed	3	3	3
Vitality	2	2	3
Skitter (Dash)	1	3	3
Bite (Melee Attack)	2	3	4
Entangle (Hinder)	1	1	3
Traverse (Jump)	1	3	3

Special: Outside of combat, Float Spiders can glide around as if they had **Fly 1**, but gliding requires their full concentration and thus they can not do it during combat.

Spinning their vast, sticky webs between the Skylands, Float Spiders usually make their homes among clusters of floating rocks too small to be built on, but sometimes stray toward the outskirts of civilization, wreaking havoc and eating people and pets until they are driven away or killed. Each Float Spider has dozens of offspring, and they are fiercely territorial, so encroachment has become more and more of a problem as young Float Spiders have fewer places to nest away from the settled areas of the Skylands. Float Spider webs are not

entirely without benefit, however, as they keep Starrhanas and other flying monsters out of the Skylands, and bridge smaller pieces of land to each other, gradually drawing them together into a single large mass that can be used for further settlement as the Skylands' population grows. Unfortunately, they attack other creatures on sight, so the only successful method found to coexist with them is to stay far away from them.

A full-grown Float Spider is the size of a large dog, with thin membranes between its eight segmented legs that allow it to glide between the Skylands as it builds its webs.

Forgotten Guardian

Skill	Level		
	10	15	20
Size	2	3	4
Speed	4	5	6
Vitality	5	6	6
Tremendous Sword (Melee Attack)	4	5	6
Unbreakable Shield (Defend)	5	6	6
Searing Blast (Elemental Attack: Light)	3	4	5
Bide (Charge)	3	4	4
Devastate (Signature Move)	-	-	4

Mechanical giants who guard the Forgotten Ruins from outsiders and from the otherworldly creatures who appear there, Forgotten Guardians do not speak, do not rest, and can not be reasoned with. Crafted from stone, metal, and gems, the appearances of Forgotten Guardians are as diverse as the architectures of the ruins they inhabit, rising from the sandy ground, breaking free from intricately-decorated walls or statues, or materializing from scattered, broken pieces to vanquish any intruders. Although it is widely assumed that the Forgotten Guardians were created by the same people who created the Forgotten Ruins, their true purpose, their methods of construction, and the fates of their creators remain, well, forgotten.

Gorg Spawn

- Gorgling

Skill	Level		
	0	1	2
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	-	1	2
Tough Rind (Defend)	1	1	1
Thorny Club (Melee Attack)	2	2	2
Seed Spit (Ranged Attack)	-	-	2

A failed attempt during the Great War to create soldiers who literally grow on bushes, Gorgling seeds begin to spoil almost before they become ripe, resulting in a vile, bloodthirsty, pumpkin-like monster by the time a Gorgling yanks free of its vine and scurries off in search of mischief. Possessing a very limited intelligence and an even smaller vocabulary, Gorglings occasionally act as foot-soldiers for anyone who can convince them that there will be lots of chaos and bloodshed involved in their employment, and for this reason Gorg plants are often cultivated by those bent on world domination and other nefarious schemes. The Gorg plant itself is a sturdy weed that can take root in virtually any environment, growing to maturity from seed in about one month and producing one battle-

ready Gorgling about every six hours following. A liberal application of fire is enough to destroy a Gorg plant of any size, and many cities employ “fire brigades” to venture into the surrounding countryside on a monthly basis to destroy any Gorg plants that may have cropped up.

- Gogrr

Skill	Level			
	3	4	5	6
Speed	3	3	4	4
Vitality	2	3	3	3
Rind Shield (Defend)	1	2	2	3
Thorny Whip (Melee Attack)	3	3	4	4
Flame Spit (Elemental Attack: Fire)	3	3	2	3
Entangle (Mind: Distract)	-	-	1	1

If a Gorgling manages to survive for a few months without getting smashed to pieces by dogooders or its fellow Gorglings, it will eventually mature into a Gogrr as its rotting insides create an unnatural flame that perpetually burns inside it. Although much stronger and better-armed than their younger brethren, Gogrrs don’t tend to be much brighter. Gogrrs often act as generals for groups of Gorglings, and always carry a few unripe Gorgs with them to plant in strategic locations and grow more Gorg plants. Unless a Gogrr is being commanded by a more intelligent creature, however, they usually consider “strategic locations” to be the first bare patch of ground they see, regardless of climate or proximity to civilization.

- Gorgast

Skill	Level			
	8	10	12	14
Speed	5	5	5	5
Vitality	4	5	5	5
Uncanny Aura (Defend)	4	4	4	4
Thorny Shell (Counterattack)	3	4	4	4
Chilling Flame (Elemental Attack: Decay)	3	3	3	5
Horrify (Mind: Distract)	2	2	3	3
Castle of Thorns (Nature: Grow)	2	2	3	3
Piercing Gaze (Premonition: Scope)	-	1	2	2
Diversify (Nature: Alter)	-	-	3	4

Over the course of several years, a Gogrr’s insides rot away completely, and its outer shell blanches and dries. This condition would spell the end for most creatures, but for the Gogrr it is a metamorphosis into the cruel and deadly Gorgast. The flame inside a Gorgast changes to a chilly blue during the transformation, and at this point the Gorg-spawn truly “awakens”, becoming frightfully intelligent and manifesting terrifying powers over the course of only a few months. Although they are fiercely territorial and will kill other Gorgasts on sight, the Gorgast is revered and respected by Gogrrs and Gorglings, often ruling entire fields of their lesser Gorg-spawned brethren and commanding them to devastating effectiveness in battle and conquest. Creatures who employ Gogrrs as foot-soldiers must constantly cull their troops to make sure that none of them change into Gorgasts and lead a mutiny.

Gorgasts use the “Castle of Thorns” skill defensively, to suddenly turn the Gorg patches that they rule over into towering fortresses that Gorg-spawn can move through freely but which other characters must surmount or hack their way through. You may choose to make the “Castle of Thorns” either an actual castle with rooms, doors, and hallways, or simply a giant block of thorny vines. Gorgasts use the “Diversify” skill to create at least one or two Gorgrrs of each elemental type to act as its personal guard. If it is losing combat, a Gorgast will often try to escape with as many Gorgrrs as it can, and quickly Diversify those Gorgrrs into whatever elemental type has proven most beneficial in combat so far before its enemies catch up and combat continues. A Gorgast’s entire patch usually consists of a number of Gorgrrs equal to twice its level, and a number of Gorglings equal to three times its level, although only a handful of these will be involved in combat at a time.

Kaiser Snail

Skill	Level		
	3	6	9
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	3	4	5
Spine Shot (Ranged Attack)	3	4	5
Spine Roll (Dash Attack)	3	4	5
Spiked Shell (Counterattack)	2	3	3

Bristling with barbed spines, a kaiser snail most closely resembles an aquatic mine with a squat, slimy head and three eyestalks protruding from one end. Omnivorous creatures, kaiser snails spend most of their lives grazing complacently, but switch gears completely when another creature approaches, tucking their delicate heads into their shells and rolling at their prey at surprising speeds. Unlike snails on Earth, a kaiser snail has no set opening to its shell, and can pull any one of its spines in completely and replace it with its head and body, allowing it to upright itself quickly regardless of its orientation, and to easily digest anything it has skewered on its spines.

Kynde

Skill	Level			
	4	6	8	10
Speed	3	3	4	4
Vitality	2	3	3	3
Claw (Melee Attack)	3	4	4	5
Heightened Senses (Awareness)	2	2	3	3
Quick Wits (Dodge)	3	3	4	5
Swiftiness (Dash)	2	2	3	3
Blending Instinct (Sneak)	2	3	3	3

From conversations with the first Kynde who appeared on Amalgus, scientists learned that they were outcasts from their homeworld; exiled to Amalgus because they had contracted a horrible, incurable disease that would gradually reduce them to mindless, bloodthirsty monsters. The uninfected Kynde had been systematically exterminating those who showed signs of the disease for years since it first appeared, but a new Kynde law had given the infected the choice between death and banishment. Those who chose banishment led cold, solitary lives on Amalgus, usually taking their own lives in the last moments before the disease took hold rather than watch themselves turn on the few friends they had. Amalgus’s top doctors tried for years to cure the disease, but found all of the Kynde they studied to be

in peak health, and without an uninfected Kynde for comparison they had no idea what belonged and what didn't. It is still unknown to this day if the Kynde's grisly appearance, like a sinewy werewolf with a skinless head, is a result of the disease or the natural form of their species. It is also unknown how the Kynde deliberately send their diseased to Amalgus, although a mad Kynde scientist who called himself Vivisick died trying to build a machine to reverse the process, killing thousands of innocent people in his race to return to his homeworld before the disease took hold of his mind.

The immigration of diseased Kynde to Amalgus has been a perpetual phenomenon, as they appear at seemingly random locations across the globe, although over the years two gradual changes have taken place. The first change is that the appearances have slowly become more frequent, growing from one every month or two to an estimated four or five appearances a day worldwide. The second change is that each subsequent Kynde has had slightly less and less cognizant time on Amalgus before it succumbs, to the point that now the Kynde that appear have already changed, and begin their lives on Amalgus violent and insane. One can only speculate on the horrific state of affairs on the Kynde homeworld, but many guiltily hope that soon the entire species will succumb to the disease, and no-one will be left to operate whatever machinery sends the diseased to plague Amalgus.

Magmoose (Fire)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	6	8	10
<i>Size</i>	2	2	2
<i>Speed</i>	3	4	4
<i>Vitality</i>	4	5	6
Burning Rack (Elemental Attack: Fire)	4	4	4
Wreathed in Flame (Elemental Resistance: Fire)	2	3	4
Antler Smash (Launch)	4	4	4

Hides the color and strength of obsidian, cracked with veins of molten lava and crowned with a massive rack of fiery antlers, Magmooses can often be seen grazing the molten rock from the edges of volcanoes. In the warm months, Magmooses congregate in tremendous herds, and as the young fight for dominance, the clashing of their mighty antlers creates a spectacular show of fireworks that can be seen and heard for miles. Contrary to their mammalian appearances, Magmooses actually lay eggs in volcanic pools, which sink far beneath Amalgus's surface, incubating in deep magma vents for years until the juvenile Magmoose hatches and swims to the surface, growing to full adulthood on the way.

Mushromp

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>			
	0	1	2	3
<i>Speed</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>Vitality</i>	-	1	1	2
Osmosis (Drain)	1	1	3	3
Snore Spore (Mind: Sleep)	1	2	2	3
Crazy Spore (Mind: Confuse)	-	-	1	2
Pop (Explode)	-	-	1	1

Special: Mushromps can use their Mind: Sleep and Drain skills without having to spend the V jools usually required. Mushromps can only use their Drain skill on enemies who are already asleep, and if their Drain would normally drop an enemy below 0 V jools it drops the

enemy to 0 V jools instead (and the number of V jools the Mushroom gets from the Drain is adjusted accordingly). Level 0 Mushrooms do not have any ranks in Vitality, so the only V jools they will have are those they Drain from enemies during combat. A Level 2 or 3 Mushroom will only pop if it is the last Mushroom left in combat.

Almost as cute as they are annoying, Mushrooms are mushrooms roughly one to two dex tall that range in color from light pink to dark purple. Able to move around on their own, Mushrooms tend to wobble about in dank caves and along the floors of overgrown forests in packs, making intermittent “meep” sounds as they search for food. Upon finding a likely victim, the Mushrooms barrage it with their snore spores, lulling it to sleep, and then proceed to all climb on top of the victim, slowly sapping the jools from its body and barraging it with another flurry of snore spores every time it wakes up. When the victim is finally reduced to zero V jools, the Mushrooms wander off in search of a new victim, leaving their former victim to wake up on its own. Mushrooms reproduce by parthenogenesis; when a Mushroom accumulates about 50 loose jools, it will spontaneously split into two separate Mushrooms over the course of a few minutes, consuming its loose jools in the process.

Mutato

Amalgus’s most devious tuber, the Mutato’s natural form is a harmless, extremely tasty blue potato. If it is eaten by a level 1 or higher creature, that creature is horribly ill for an hour, then is perfectly fine. If it is eaten by a level 0 creature, however, it takes over that creature’s body and mutates it into a horrible, malevolent, carnivorous monster. These “Mutatoed” monsters have no memory of their former selves, and wreak ceaseless havoc and destruction. If a Mutatoed monster is knocked unconscious, however, the Mutato pops from the creature’s mouth, fully intact. At this point the Mutato can be mashed for its jools, and the poor creature can be revived by returning it to zero V jools. Rescuers must be careful not to revive the creature first, however, as most creatures will immediately eat the delicious Mutato again as soon as they awaken.

Here are the skills for a few sample Mutatoed creatures. Feel free to create your own.

- Mutatoed Bird

Skill	Level		
	2	3	4
Speed	3	3	3
Vitality	1	2	3
Peck (Melee Attack)	3	3	4
Fly	1	3	3

- Mutatoed Bunny

Skill	Level		
	2	3	4
Speed	2	3	3
Vitality	2	2	2
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	3	3
Run (Dash)	2	2	3
Hop (Jump)	1	2	3

- Mutatoed Dog

Level

<i>Skill</i>	2	3	4
Speed	3	3	3
Vitality	1	2	3
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	3	4
Keen Senses (Awareness)	1	3	3

- Mutatoed Fish

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	2	3	4
Speed	3	3	3
Vitality	1	2	3
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	3	4
Swim	1	3	3

- Mutatoed Insect

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	2	3	4
Speed	2	3	3
Vitality	2	2	2
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	3	3
Fly	2	2	3
Quick and Tiny (Dodge)	1	2	3

- Mutatoed Monkey

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	2	3	4
Speed	2	3	3
Vitality	2	2	2
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	3	3
Scramble (Climb)	2	2	3
Throw Rocks (Ranged Attack)	1	2	3

- Mutatoed Pig

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	2	3	4
Speed	3	3	3
Vitality	1	2	3
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	3	4
Running Charge (Dash Attack)	1	3	3

- Mutatoed Snake

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	2	3	4
Speed	3	3	3
Vitality	1	2	3
Bite (Melee Attack)	3	3	4
Maddening Venom (Mind: Confuse)	1	3	3

Nocturtle

Skill	Level			
	2	4	6	8
Speed	1	1	1	1
Vitality	3	4	4	5
Moon Shell (Defend)	3	4	5	5
Bite (Melee Attack)	2	3	4	4
Lullabite (Mind: Sleep)	1	1	2	3
Razor Shell (Counterattack)	-	-	-	2

Special: A Nocturtle will always use its “Moon Shell” skill as its first action in combat. *Burrowing into the ground to sleep during the day, Nocturtles prefer to hunt by night, emitting a strange, keening noise that lulls to sleep the already-tired diurnal insects and small animals they feed on. Normally pitch black, at the first sign of danger the Nocturtle’s shell glows a bright white like the light of Earth’s moon, protecting the monster as it tucks its head and legs up inside until the danger passes. When its shell’s defenses fail, however, the Nocturtle will lash out at its enemies, using its powerful jaws and its sleep-inducing song to drive them away or defeat them.*

Owlanche (Ice)

Skill	Level		
	6	9	12
Size	2	2	2
Speed	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	6
Blizzard Wave (Elemental Attack: Ice)	4	4	5
Snow Flurry Wings (Fly)	3	3	4
Icicle Talon (Melee Attack)	2	3	4
Snowflake Feathers (Elemental Resistance: Ice)	3	4	4

Nesting in the gigantic, super-light crystalline structures that form at the centers of snow clouds, owlanches drift wherever the wind carries them and swoop down from the skies when their clouds carry them over potential prey. In leaner times, when travelling over oceans or deserts, for instance, owlanches stockpile food and shiny objects in their nests, which makes owlanche clouds extremely appealing (albeit also extremely dangerous) to treasure hunters with the means to reach them. Owlanches themselves look like tremendous owls with snowy-white feathers and translucent blue beaks and claws. Their bodies are also covered in intricate and beautiful swirling patterns, and Amalgus zoologists hypothesize that, just like snowflakes, no two owlanches are patterned exactly alike.

Rockroach (Earth)

Skill	Level		
	6	9	12
Size	2	2	2
Speed	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	6
Dirt Storm (Elemental Attack: Earth)	4	4	5
Landslide Skitter (Dash Attack)	3	3	4
Compress (Defend)	2	3	4
Striated (Elemental Resistance: Earth)	3	4	4

Just as vile as the common cockroach, and each the size of a large car, rockroaches can be found in virtually any environment, scavenging for food either alive or dead and spreading the greasy dirt and gooey eggs they perpetually excrete everywhere. Although a solitary rockroach will try to escape when overpowered, it will almost always return with reinforcements, who it will have convinced in shrill, chittering tones to assist it in turning its attackers into food. Records from before the Great War seem to suggest that rockroaches were actually created by people in an experiment gone horribly awry; an infestation of Earth cockroaches had reached epidemic proportions in several major cities, and a team of geneticists devised a solution that would not wipe them out, but transform them through dominant genes into beautiful and gentle creatures. The result of that solution is the fairy beetle, a lovely insect the size of a human fist that exudes calming sounds and scents, feeds exclusively on nectar, and only reproduces once in its eight-year lifespan. A “bug” in the genetic code, however, also produced rockroaches from a certain strain of cockroaches, who have mutated to become the absolute antithesis of fairy beetles, combining extreme examples of every characteristic that the geneticists strove to remove, all in one very large package.

Rust Rustler (Decay)

Skill	Level		
	3	4	5
Speed	3	3	3
Vitality	3	3	4
Tarnished Gun (Ranged Attack)	3	4	4
Stall (Charge)	2	3	3
Breakdown (Rest)	1	1	1

Miserable outlaws of Junkyard Junction and the surrounding areas, Rust Rustlers are ancient machines that pursue any means necessary to maintain their rapidly-decaying bodies. Although they spend most of their time ambushing caravans bringing fresh metals into the Junction, when times are rough they raid outlying Junction towns, often suffering heavy casualties in the process but making off with more metal and other parts than a dozen ambushes would provide. Although most Rust Rustlers started life as people, their minds have long since rusted through, and now their only motivation is greed for the shiny new parts that will artificially tack another few months onto their horrible, hollow lives. The appearance of each Rust Rustler differs drastically from the next, as they were once a wide variety of machines, but are now so broken-down and kludged-together from loose-fitting parts that even models who were originally identical look nothing alike. The disease that it slowly dissolving them also keeps them together, however, as the Rust Rustlers are a very close-knit group, always travelling in gangs of at least three or four.

Sandskipper

Skill	Level		
	3	6	9
Speed	3	4	5
Vitality	2	3	4
Carapace Slash (Dash Attack)	3	4	5
Burrow (Defend)	2	2	3
Sand Swim (Dash)	2	4	4

Lying in wait for their prey just beneath the surface of beaches, deserts, and other sandy areas, sandskippers can burrow through the soft ground with incredible speed, leaping out

of the sand to slash at prey with the razor-sharp edges and spines that line their trilobite-like bodies. Often travelling in families of three or more to overwhelm other creatures with a deluge of lacerations, once a group of sandskippers has rendered a victim unconscious they drag its body underground to feed, safe from scavengers and other creatures who might try to drive them away or steal it. Severely underdeveloped both biologically and intellectually, sandskippers still remain a very real threat to desert travelers due to their overwhelming physical speed and power.

Shattercat

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	3	6	9
Speed	2	3	4
Vitality	3	4	4
Barbed Claws (Grab)	3	4	5
Shatter (Explode)	2	4	5
Pounce (Dash)	2	2	3

Incredibly beautiful but also incredibly nasty creatures, shattercats appear to be sculpted out of fine china and glass, with a delicate roar that sounds like a French horn. Asexual creatures, shattercats are remarkably tame until they reach maturity, at which point they become frenzied, pounce upon the strongest creature they can find, and then promptly explode. After the explosion, four to eight of the larger pieces gradually coalesce into newborn shattercats, who feed on the jools left behind by their parent's violent end, and the jools left behind by the parent's prey, which is usually also destroyed in the explosion. Due to their beautiful and delicate forms, shattercats were at one time a favorite subject for sculptors, but over the years the numerous statuettes created of them have brought nothing but bad luck to their owners, and subsequently almost all have been destroyed or locked away. On Amalgus, the word "shattercat" has also become a derogatory term for a person who experiences violent mood swings, seeming perfectly content one moment and then "exploding" the next.

Shineocerous (Light)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	6	9	12
<i>Size</i>	2	2	2
Speed	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	6
Radiant Horn (Elemental Attack: Light)	4	4	5
Healing Light (Heal)	3	3	4
Invigorate (Nature: Grow)	2	3	4
Absolute Purity (Elemental Resistance: Light)	3	4	4

Perhaps the most mysterious of all Amalgus's monsters, Shineocerouses appear seemingly out of thin air at the fog-shrouded points where low-passing clouds touch the tops of high mountains, and seem to subsist by grazing on the low-lying mists. The light radiating from a Shineocerous' horn is like a beacon in the fog, increasing dramatically in intensity when the normally-serene creature becomes angered, and is said to have rejuvenating powers. It is assumed that the stunted, feathery wings on a Shineocerous' back are merely vestigial, and couldn't possibly support the beast's weight, but all the same they come and go with the passing of the clouds, leaving behind no traces of their presence.

Skeeter

Skill	Level		
	4	6	8
Speed	2	3	4
Vitality	2	3	3
Nasty Beak (Drain)	5	6	7
Buzzing Wings (Fly)	3	3	3

Somewhere between a giant hummingbird and an even more giant mosquito, skeeters are nasty little monsters roughly the size of basketballs, with long, needle-sharp beaks that they use to suck the jools out of anything from tree trunks to heavily-armored soldiers. Found mostly in swamps and dense forests, skeeters' wings emit an incredibly loud and annoying buzzing noise when they fly, which most creatures have instinctively learned to flee from, since few defenses can withstand the horrible pointed beak of a skeeter. Rather than building nests like most other bird-like creatures, skeeters use their beaks to inject their eggs into the trunks of trees, and the newborn skeeters burrow out in six to eight months. Skeeters also lack legs, and thus rest by jamming their beaks into something immobile and hanging from it while keeping watch in all directions with their large, bulbous eyes.

Starrhana

Skill	Level		
	1	2	3
Speed	2	2	2
Vitality	1	2	3
Cloudswim (Fly)	2	3	3
Bite (Melee Attack)	1	2	3
Feeding Frenzy (Team Attack)	-	1	1

The bane of cloudfishers, since they always get caught in your nets and give you nasty bites while you try to get them out, Starrhanas are tough, hideous little flying things whose mouths take up a good third of their bodies. Starrhanas usually travel in schools of 5 to 20, and feed on the various birds and flying fishes that inhabit cloud banks and high mountain-tops, rarely swooping down to ground-level. Despite the fact that the Skylands would make a prime target for roving schools of Starrhanas, the webs of local Float Spiders tend to keep them at bay. Starrhana reproduction is particularly nasty, as the eggs become stuck to both parents during the fertilization process. When the eggs hatch after a few days of incubation, the newborns immediately devour their parents and grow to full size in a matter of hours.

Trained Soldier

Skill	Level			
	0	1	2	3
Speed	1	2	2	3
Vitality	-	1	1	2
Protect the Leader! (Cover)	1	1	2	2
Bow, Rifle, etc. (Ranged Attack)	1	1	1	2
Sword, Bayonet, etc. (Melee Attack)	1	2	3	3
Defensive Positions! (Defend)	1	1	1	1

There are three ways that trained soldiers come about. The first, and most widely-accepted way is open recruiting; if someone likes the agenda and benefits that an army is promoting, he can sign up, go through some basic training, and become a soldier. The second way is to

grow organic soldiers, or build mechanical ones; this method leads to very loyal but also very stupid soldiers, as the only life-experience they have to go on is their training. Gorglings were originally designed to be this kind of soldier, but they developed personalities of their own and grew out of control. Most zombies and living skeletons are this second kind of soldier also, except the ones created by the third method. The third method of creating soldiers is to attach a “control cap” to a corpse whose jools have recently been extracted. The control cap is a garish contraption that replaces the top half of a corpse’s skull and brings the corpse back to life with almost all of the knowledge and memories that it had before, except that it now thinks that doing the bidding of the cap’s owner is the most important thing in the world. Since a character brought back to life by a control cap is still a corpse, he will continue to rot, gradually becoming too decomposed to continue being useful (at the GM’s discretion), and which point his control cap is usually removed and used on a fresher corpse. Soldiers with control caps tend to be clever, smelly, and insane. Most of the nations of Amalgus frown on the use of control caps, but none have banned them outright yet. Trained soldiers from the first method tend to vary widely from soldier to soldier, soldiers from the second method tend to all look and behave exactly the same, and soldiers from the third method are all humans, human-like, or animals, since the control cap only works on characters with brains in their heads.

The Generic Monster
 Trained Soldiers are designed to be as generic as possible so that you can apply their stats to whatever kinds of Soldiers you throw at the players. Fighting an evil gardener? Then the soldiers can be trees and flowers. A mechanic villain might use robots for soldiers, while a chef’s soldiers would probably be gingerbread men. Feel free to make your own changes to the basic Trained Soldier to fit the situation (giving the robots an electrical type and making the trees weak against fire, for instance). In fact, **all** of the monsters here could just as easily be something completely different, so if you come up with some new nasty on the fly and haven’t given it skills yet before the players leap into combat, just find something similar here and steal the skills from it.

Tree Anemone

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>			
	4	6	8	10
Size	3	3	3	3
Speed	2	3	3	3
Vitality	2	3	3	4
Lashing Branches (Melee Attack)	2	2	3	3
Gravity Flowers (Pull)	3	4	4	5
Wrap (Grab)	3	3	4	4
Constrict (Crush)	3	3	4	4
Just Another Tree (Illusion: Disguise)	2	2	3	3

Special: Tree Anemones are rooted in place and can not move outside of the hexes they occupy. While a Tree Anemone is using its “Wrap” skill on one opponent, it may still freely use its “Lashing Branches” skill against other opponents.

Since Tree Anemones are rooted in place and unable to move around, many foolish travelers assume that they are harmless, only to wake up weeks later in a Save Bank with no idea what happened. Tree Anemones are extremely well adapted to their environments, and more than make up for their inability to move with other skills. Tree Anemone fruits resemble large, fat caterpillars with numerous branch-like tails. When they ripen and fall to the ground, these fruits wriggle away to find a suitable location to root themselves, at which point they sink their tails into the ground and metamorphose into another Tree Anemone over the course of a few weeks. While in this larval state, however, Tree Anemones are

extremely vulnerable and delicious, so they tend not to wander too far from their mothers before taking root.

Undertoad

Skill	Level		
	3	4	5
Speed	2	2	2
Vitality	2	2	3
Weed Net (Grab)	2	3	3
Drown (Crush)	2	3	3
Dunk (Drag)	2	2	2
Bubble Spray (Elemental Attack: Water)	2	2	3
Webbed Feet (Swim)	3	3	3

Special: Undertoads can breathe water naturally, and do not lose V jools for being underwater.

Detestable, filthy amphibians, Undertoads view everything that lives above or below the surface of the water as food. Most Undertoads live in caves they dig at the edges of tide pools, weaving nets out of weeds to drag water creatures out of the water and land creatures into the water to feed their bloated, perpetually groaning bellies. Undertoad society is broken down into a complex caste system, based entirely on the length of an Undertoad's tongue and the size of his air sac.

Vermite

Skill	Level	
	0	2
Speed	1	2
Vitality	0	2
Vicious Mandibles (Melee Attack)	1	3
Oily Fur (Dodge)	1	1
Skitter (Dash)	1	1
Sticky Feet (Climb)	1	1

Special: No more than one Level 2 "king" Vermite will appear with any group of Level 0 "drone" Vermites.

Nasty little insects with furry bodies like rats, Vermites build nests in piles of garbage in the dark, moist, forgotten areas of sewers, caves, and ruins. Surprisingly well-organized for such simple-minded creatures, Vermites can be mercilessly effective when they surround an opponent, although they are on the whole incredibly weak, and even the "kings" of their strangely patriarchal nests are mere annoyances compared to even the most docile of Amalgus's other monsters. Vermite kings are also fiercely territorial, and will immediately devour any of their brood that develop any further than the standard drone. When their kings die, the drones are allowed to mature normally, but subsequently almost wipe out their entire nests fighting and competing to become the next king.

Wheeler

Skill	Level		
	2	3	4
Speed	3	3	4
Vitality	1	2	2

Overrun (Dash Attack)	3	4	4
Skid (Dodge)	1	1	2
Overdrive (SpaceTime: Haste)	-	1	1

Tearing across the landscape in packs, Wheelers are strange juxtapositions of man and machine, with wheels for hands and feet, headlights for eyes, grills for mouths, and exhaust pipes jutting out of their backs at odd angles. Closer to destructive, violent pranksters than hardened enemies of civilization, Wheelers are cognizant enough that a few have passed the first five minutes of the personality test before being driven mad by the tedium of it all and smashing everything in sight. The Wheeler species is subdivided into various gangs, some of whom have tenuous truces and most of whom are bitter enemies, resulting in nasty conflicts when rival gangs cross paths. Little else of Wheeler culture, including whether they are born as Wheelers or metamorphose from some other species, is known, as all biologists who have attempted to study them have either been simply left in the dust or beaten senseless and then left in the dust.

Whispin

Skill	Level		
	5	10	15
Speed	2	3	4
Vitality	1	1	3
Etherealness (Dodge)	6	9	10
Maddening Whispers (Mind: Confuse)	3	3	4
Cutting Remark (Melee Attack)	-	-	3

Special: Whispins can use their Maddening Whispers skill without having to spend the V jools normally required.

Whispins are creatures that live in a strange sideways space between Amalgus and another world entirely. The two most widely held theories are that whispins were either leaving their homeworld en-masse for Amalgus, or were somehow exiled from Amalgus sometime during the Great War, but both theories agree that something went horribly wrong, trapping the whispins in the space between worlds and consequently driving them completely insane. Their physical presence at Amalgus is tentative at best, but their insanity is remarkably contagious, and they delight in nothing more than whispering their crazy ramblings to people and infecting their minds with violent lunatic visions. Generally speaking, whispins resemble very pale, ghostly humans who appear to shimmer in and out of reality, and whose bodies bend and warp in strange ways and at places where there are no joints, so that the same whispin might appear to be a lanky, beautiful figure one moment, and then little more than a large screaming face the next.

Wind Rat (Air)

Skill	Level		
	6	9	12
Size	2	2	2
Speed	3	4	4
Vitality	4	5	6
Tornado Tail (Elemental Attack: Air)	4	4	5
Hurricane Bite (Dash Attack)	3	3	4
Twin Twister (SpaceTime: Split)	2	3	4
Frictionless Fur (Elemental Resistance: Air)	3	4	4

Ripping across the plains and flatlands of Amalgus, wind rats move at such incredible speeds that they leave tremendous gusts of air in their wakes, and even the passing of a single wind rat is enough to brew a fearsome tornado or hurricane. Wind rats can be either social animals or loners, found just as often alone as with a few others or travelling in gigantic packs, and entire prairie cities have been wiped off the map from time to time by the incredible windstorms created by a large pack. Although the winds are viewed mostly as a byproduct of wind rats, some unconfirmed sightings have reported wind rats not only controlling the cyclones they create but actually riding within and on top of them for great distances. These reports might explain how wind rats have managed to populate virtually every continent on Amalgus, if they can ride the winds they create across the seas. Physically, wind rats look somewhat like gigantic rats, and come in as many or more colors and varieties as rats do on Earth. One peculiar difference, however, is that a wind rat's fur is in constant motion, rippling as if being blown by a strong wind even when it is standing still.

Common Fantasy Monsters

Remember that Amalgus snatches creatures from every planet in this universe, and perhaps other universes as well. In addition to the Amalgus-specific monsters listed above, more familiar monsters are just as likely to appear. Here is a list of some of the more common ones; as with any other monster, if you want to use something that you're familiar with but isn't listed here, just steal the skills from another monster or make up your own.

Blob	Goblin / Orc	Siren	Vampire
Dragon	Golem	Skeleton	Werewolf
Ghost	Kraken	Troll	Zombie
Ghoul	Mummy	Unicorn	

Blob (Water)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	3	6	9
Speed	1	2	4
Vitality	3	5	5
Grasping Pseudopod (Grab)	4	5	5
Digest (Crush)	2	3	5

Blobs, puddings, oozes, gelatins, slimes, and giant amoebas are all monsters that are so simple-minded (and simple-bodied) that they can hardly be called monsters at all. Blobs are basically just big piles or puddles of goop, usually found in warm, dark places, that move slowly toward any life-forms they detect and try to digest anything that they touch.

Dragon (X)

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Level</i>		
	10	20	30
<i>Size</i>	3	4	5
Speed	4	6	7
Vitality	4	6	7
Dragon Breath (Elemental Attack: X)	4	6	8
Dragon Breath 2 (Elemental Effect: X)	4	5	7
Massive Jaws (Melee Attack)	4	6	7

Dragon Scales (Dodge)	3	3	4
Mighty Wings (Fly)	4	5	5

Special: The “X”s above must be replaced with an element from the list on page @@.
Virtually every mythology has its own version of the dragon, from the cunning, bloodthirsty giant lizards of Europe to the intelligent, contemplative creatures of Asia. Many RPGs have cast dragons as the ultimate masters of the various elements, and this is the model that is represented here. For a more “generic” dragon, simply make the dragon’s Elemental Attack and Elemental Effect Fire, and remove its elemental type.

Ghost (Decay)

Skill	Level		
	5	10	15
Speed	4	5	6
Vitality	2	3	3
Deathly Touch (Elemental Attack: Decay)	3	4	5
Shadowy Form (Illusion: Invisibility)	3	5	6
Incorporeal (Dodge)	4	5	7

Ghosts usually come into existence because someone died with unfinished business that was extremely important to him or her, and thus any ghost, friendly or unfriendly, can create an entire sub-quest all by itself. Of course, in some cases that unfinished business could just be a desire to kill anyone the ghost encounters, or to guard something the players need, in which case there’s not much to do besides beat the ghost senseless and lay it to rest.

Ghoul (Decay)

Skill	Level		
	3	6	9
Speed	2	3	3
Vitality	3	4	5
Teeth and Claws (Melee Attack)	3	4	6
Burrow (Vanish)	3	4	4
Frenzied Mob (Team Attack)	1	2	2

Depending on your source material, ghouls are either the reincarnations of people who died very hungry, or simply people who have developed a taste for cannibalism and have thus devolved into monsters. In either case, ghouls are vaguely-human pack-animals that dwell in caves and tunnels they’ve dug underneath graveyards, reaching up into the coffins above them to snack on corpses. For the most part, ghouls keep to themselves as long as there’s a steady supply of corpses, but fresh meat is always preferable, and ghouls are fiercely territorial, so intruders don’t tend to last long.

Goblin / Orc

Mean, green, fightin’ machines, goblins and orcs are the generic trained soldiers of numerous fantasy RPGs. So, guess what? They have the same skills as trained soldiers. Both monsters look like ugly, feral, green humans and are almost as stupid as they are vicious; goblins are smaller and weaker, and sometimes have an aversion to Light, while orcs are built like football players after years of steroid abuse. All goblins were at one point people, but have become so cruel, heartless, and sociopathic that they are no longer able to pass the personality test. Orcs, on the other hand, are genetically-engineered “super-goblins”, bred

from the most vicious goblin stock in giant mud pits, born fully-grown and ravenous for destruction.

Golem (Earth)

Skill	Level		
	5	10	15
Size	1	2	3
Speed	1	3	5
Vitality	5	6	7
Smash (Melee Attack)	3	5	6
Harden (Defend)	3	4	5
Power Up (Charge)	3	4	4

Special: Golems can be created by players in the same way that Living Creatures can be created (see page @@).

Although originally all golems were sculpted from clay and brought to life by engraving a secret word upon their foreheads, RPGs have made both the methods of creating a golem and the materials they can be carved from too numerous to list. Golems still tend to be made from a single material element, usually some sort of stone or mineral; weak golems might be made of clay or glass, while the strongest golems would be made from diamond or solid steel. A Golem is the mythological equivalent of a simple robot; when one is created it is usually assigned a basic task (i.e. “guard the city gates against anyone who doesn’t say the password”, “water the garden”, “follow me”, “stand there”, etc.) which it will perform unwaveringly until it is assigned another basic task by its creator.

Kraken

Skill	Level		
	10	20	30
Size	4	7	10
Speed	3	5	7
Vitality	7	8	9
Barbed Tentacles (Melee Attack)	4	8	9
Suckered Tentacles (Grab)	4	5	7
Enormous Beak (Crush)	3	5	6
Swim	1	1	2

Krakens breathe water, and thus don’t lose V jools for staying submerged, but do lose 5 V jools per round that they spend out of the water.

A kraken is a gigantic squid, and the bane of all sailors and submariners. In some tellings, krakens are incredibly intelligent and rule over entire underwater kingdoms, while in others krakens are merely drawn to anything large that might be food. Although krakens can surface for extended periods of time to attack floating prey, they can not survive for long if they leave the water completely.

Mummy (Decay)

Skill	Level		
	5	10	20
Speed	3	4	5
Vitality	4	5	6
Luck	-	-	1

Undying Strength (Melee Attack)	4	5	8
Undying Command (Mind: Control)	2	3	5
Sandstorm (Elemental Attack: Air)	3	5	7

Powerful rulers of long-forgotten kingdoms, entombed in sarcophagi specially designed to bring them back to life a thousand years later, or horrible immortal criminals, sealed away for all eternity (or at least until some meddling fool awakens them), mummies invariably rise from their tombs when disturbed, wrapped in bandages and desperate to avenge themselves on everyone in the immediately vicinity. Mummies are often highly intelligent, and more powerful mummies will be entombed along with legions of their followers, giving them hordes of “lesser mummies” to command (treat these “lesser mummies” as Zomblings).

Siren

Skill	Level		
	3	6	9
Speed	3	3	4
Vitality	2	3	4
Shark Teeth (Melee Attack)	2	4	5
Alluring Song (Pull)	3	3	4
Maddening Song (Mind: Confuse)	2	3	4
Feeding Frenzy (Team Attack)	1	1	1

Sirens can breathe water, and thus take no damage from being submerged.

Mermaids’ nastier cousins, sirens are half-fish and half-human monsters who lure unsuspecting people to their watery dooms with their “song”, a strange, unearthly, melodic sound that erodes the conscious mind. Some sirens must remain in contact with the sea at all times, while others can assume a more human form and walk the land for extended periods of time. Exactly what causes this distinction is not entirely clear.

Skeleton (Decay)

Skeletons have the same skills as Trained Soldiers, plus the Decay elemental type.

Skeleton warriors are the staple of most undead armies in fantasy RPGs and literature. With very little holding their joints together and even less inside their skulls, skeletons tend to be very fragile and very stupid, but also very cheap and convenient if there’s an abandoned graveyard or battlefield nearby.

Troll

Skill	Level		
	3	6	9
Speed	1	2	3
Vitality	3	4	5
Club (Melee Attack)	3	4	5
Fast Healer (Regenerate)	4	5	6

Huge, stupid, strong and incredibly resilient, trolls in literature run the gamut from extremely shy to downright wicked; trolls in RPGs tend to be the latter. Trolls usually look like giant hairless gorillas with big noses and clubs, and make up for a total lack of common sense with an ability to heal wounds incredibly quickly.

Unicorn (Light)

Unicorns have the same skills as Shineocerouses.

The physical embodiments of purity, nobility, and beauty, a unicorn resembles a sleek white horse with a single, golden horn growing straight out of its forehead. Although extremely difficult to tame, unicorns will often come to the aid of adventurers who are pure of heart and intentions, and can fight ferociously despite their gentle appearances.

Vampire (Decay)

Skill	Level		
	6	9	12
Speed	4	5	5
Vitality	4	4	5
Vampire Bite (Drain)	4	5	5
Deadly Claw (Melee Attack)	3	4	5
Undying Charm (Convince)	1	2	3
Gaseous Form (Defend)	2	2	3
Wings... Like a Bat (Fly)	-	2	2

Rotting, savage, blood-thirsty walking dead, or cultured, charismatic, and intelligent blood-thirsty walking dead, vampires are people who have died either from another vampire's attack, or through some act of horrible violence. Vampires come in a wide variety of styles, but all tend to require a regular dose of the blood of the living, are hurt immensely by sunlight, and can turn themselves into bats or clouds of mist at will. Vampires in modern literature tend to be immensely wealthy, intelligent, and powerful, and rule over large empires of the living or the dead (or both), although the mindless monster type also crops up from time to time.

Werewolf

Werewolves have the same skills as the Kynde in wolf form, and are often simply Level 0 people when they're not in wolf form.

Perfectly human most of the time, most werewolves are completely unaware that they turn into ravenous half-wolf monsters during nights when the moon is full. Some werewolves can learn to control their transformations, and either tame the beast within or corrupt their human side. Over the ages, people who turn into animals have grown beyond just wolves to include other animals like bears, tigers, and boars, and Amalgus even more combinations have appeared, including were-snowlions, were-windrats, and the dreaded were-dingoes.

Zombie (Decay)

Zombies have the same skills as Zomblings.

Mindless corpses brought back to life by voodoo, super-viruses, cosmic rays, atomic radiation, or other means, zombies rise from their graves to feast on the flesh of the living (or sometimes just the brains). Traditional zombies aren't much of a threat to PCs made of metal or wood, but on Amalgus there's nothing stopping zombies from being wooden or metal too.

Unique Enemies

Hacking your way through a sea of goblins is all well and good, but without some real villains the plot rarely goes anywhere. Here's a brief rogues' gallery of suggestions for nasty people to throw in your players' way, either to cross swords or just to cross wits. Some of these characters have particular affiliations or goals, while others are left ambiguous to either fit with your grand scheme or just keep your players guessing. Remember above all that Save Banks were designed for you as well as your players, so if the fiendish super-mastermind that you've spent hours

designing gets only a few seconds of play time before your players drop him with a lucky shot, he can always regenerate in a secret black-market Save Bank and come back next week, prepared in advance for the players to try that same lucky shot again and turn the tables on them. Keep in mind also that, although they all tend to be villains, these characters don't necessarily have to be the players' direct enemies; Emerald Rose is just as likely to desperately need the players' help (although she'd never ask for it outright) as she is to steal the one vital thing they most need and lead them on a wild globe-trotting goose-chase, and Five Ninjas Construction is just as likely to take a job creating or destroying something for the players as it is to be hired to dismantle the players' base of operations. These enemies are also left without skills and levels, so that you can tailor them to your players' levels, and still have them all to choose from regardless of how weak or strong the players currently are.

Black Oak
Captain Bloodbeard

Emerald Rose
Five Ninjas Construction

Kraven Vortov
The Masked Duelist

Black Oak

Almost as mysterious a personality as the Mesmetismian itself, Black Oak has been blamed for countless assassinations, is said to head many of Amalgus's most powerful criminal organizations, and is at the center of numerous conspiracy theories and cover-ups. Despite his notoriety and infamy, few people can quite agree on who, or even what Black Oak is, although popular opinion holds that he's a human from Earth, or a vampire, or perhaps a stag or forest spirit. Some people even swear that Black Oak is, quite literally, a huge Black Oak tree, its trunk studded with iridescent gems each the size of a small house, and with roots that stretch deep deep underground, to a complex latticework of crystals that it used to keep its ancient memories safe from the Smart Bomb. Everyone can agree as to where he is, however; in a dense and untamed forest in Amalgus's far frozen north, which borders on lands controlled by Cathedral, although the Regulators refuses to encroach any further onto his territory for reasons they will not disclose. Those who have gone in search of Black Oak with a kind heart and an open mind have returned with tales of a generous and unassuming old man who lives alone with a Saint Bernard named Stump in a cozy little cabin deep in the forest, and who couldn't possibly be responsible for all the crimes and schemes ascribed to him. Those who search for Black Oak seeking revenge, fame, or power, on the other hand, do not return at all.

Captain Bloodbeard

Just about everyone on Amalgus knows the sordid story of Captain Bloodbeard's origin, although since few people dare speak his terrible name it's a mystery how the story gets around. Born without a name to mine-slave parents on the Gemstone Islands, Bloodbeard worked the mines from the day he was old enough to swing a pickaxe (a few days after his first birthday, if the legends are to be believed), until a blistering hot summer night when, at the age of eight-and-a-half, he made his escape from the mines, killing three guards in the process. Illiterate, uneducated, and completely uncultured, Bloodbeard nonetheless adapted incredibly well to life in the outside world, working his way up from hired muscle at odd jobs to first mate on the legendary pirate ship The Brass Dragon in the span of only a few years. During a raid on the Skylands, the crew stumbled upon a nearly-intact floating fortress of incredible design unparalleled anywhere else on the planet, and never one to miss an opportunity, Bloodbeard staged a mutiny, claimed the fortress as his own, and sank the Brass Dragon. Christening his new vessel the Thunderhead, Bloodbeard immediately began the task of rendering it skyworthy, a feat he completed in record time before setting sail for

his first destination as Captain, the Gemstone Islands. As the slavers' cities laid in ruins, the vast majority of the slaves themselves joined the crew of the Thunderhead, regarding Captain Bloodbeard as a savior. Mining in the Gemstone Islands is now performed only by paid labor, and even they live in constant dread of the Captain's return.

Captain Bloodbeard has lived his life taking what he wants, and has no regard for the sanctity of life, personal property, or any of the other mores and values that bind society together. He has a personal vendetta against slavery, and will wipe any slave-labor camps he learns of off the face of the planet, but there's no sense of altruism in these missions, and he's just as happy slaughtering women and children, plundering treasuries, and razing cities to the ground. He is a young, brilliant strategist and completely sane; he has just never been taught good and bad, right and wrong, and now it's far too late for him to learn.

Bloodbeard's crew have become brutally efficient at performing their nefarious deeds, helped in part by the fact that the Thunderhead, with its multitudes of sails, engines, and grapples, is perfectly designed to lay siege to cities from directly overhead, where they are often the most vulnerable.

Emerald Rose

Her airship, her sunglasses, her outrageous costumes and all of the uniforms of her crew, everything that surrounds Emerald Rose is red, to accentuate the brilliant green of her long, gorgeous hair and sparkling eyes. Almost as reckless as she is vain, Emerald Rose is the typical anti-hero; a sweet-talking, swashbuckling pirate queen, plundering cargo ships, breaking hearts, and drinking and carousing with the most nefarious characters to ever sail the skies. With a lightning wit, a mind like a steel trap, and deadly skill wielding either her trademark double rapiers or the giant anchor that's become her other trademark, Emerald Rose has been able to out think, out race, and out maneuver even the great Captain Bloodbeard the few times their paths have crossed, piloting her sleek airship, "The Last Tomorrow", through impossible odds to escape from certain death and live to fight, drink, and steal another day. Of course, few people know this, but luck is not always on Emerald Rose's side; she's currently on her seventh "Last Tomorrow", and most of the jools she plunders go toward patching up herself, her crew, and her ship. Amassing a fortune is a low priority for Emerald Rose, however, and she's content with the life she has, leaping from adventure to adventure, peril to peril, and never minding that tomorrow, any tomorrow, may indeed be her last. Her greatest thrill is the thrill of the chase, and she will often steal items of little real worth but high emotional value just for the rush of being pursued to the ends of the world by those to whom they mean everything. Some of the members of her crew wonder why she goes to such lengths when she's beautiful enough to be pursued for her loveliness alone, but don't dare mention it to her. Come to think of it, virtually no-one has ever mentioned to Emerald Rose how beautiful she really is... perhaps that's part of her problem.

Five Ninjas Construction

Several years ago, in a forgotten tomb hidden deep underground, five of the Great War's most powerful ninjas awoke from over a thousand years of hibernation to strike a deadly and unexpected blow against a mighty warlord. Unfortunately, the Smart Bomb was not expected by their masters, and they rushed from their tomb to the planet's surface to discover a very different Amalgus from the one they'd left behind; one where no trace of either their masters nor their masters' ancient enemies remained. Bewildered, and with incredible combat skills ingrained in them since birth that were virtually useless in the comparative peace of modern Amalgus, the five ninjas wandered the planet for many months before finally coming to the conclusion that their unique talents could, in fact, be turned toward a lucrative modern

career, and thus the Five Ninjas Construction Company was born. The five ninjas themselves are an incredibly unique find, as not only are they the only known living survivors of the Great War outside of Sikla, but due to some strange quality of their hibernation, they escaped the effects of the Smart Bomb, and thus retain all of their memories. To the complete dismay of historians, however, the ninjas had all taken a vow to never speak of anything that occurred before their hibernation, and although the masters to whom they swore that vow have long since passed on, their allegiance to those masters remains.

The Five Ninjas Construction Company is extremely successful, as the ninjas quickly and satisfactorily complete any job they are assigned for a very reasonable rate. No job is too big or too small, and Five Ninja Construction has been known to build hundred-story skyscrapers or raze previously impenetrable fortresses to the ground practically overnight. This last service has made them extremely popular with certain criminal elements, as the ninjas don't care whether or not their employers actually own the buildings they're hired to destroy, and numerous Save Banks have been quickly and completely dismantled by the company at the request of robbers who retrieve the loot from the rubble. A blind eye is usually turned to this facet of their operations, because the construction work that they do for various cities' public works and private companies is so phenomenal and inexpensive. A lucrative side business for Five Ninjas Construction has become the sale of renewable warranties on the buildings they construct, under which they promise not to accept any contracts to demolish said buildings until the warranties have expired. The ninjas have recently had to hire three full-time secretaries just to track the issuance, expiration, and renewal of their warranties.

In person the ninjas are very polite, but also very detached, cold, and emotionless, which is exactly what one would expect from people trained from birth to be perfect killing machines.

- Earth: If there is a limit to the weight that Earth can comfortably lift, it has yet to be reached. Earth not only does most of the heavy lifting for most projects, but can carry entire completed buildings where they need to go if it's more efficient for the company to build them off-site. On destruction contracts, Earth prefers to flip buildings on their sides and then scrape out their insides from the bottom where they're not usually as well-fortified.
- Air: Air's ability to be seemingly everywhere at once makes her the ideal go-between, instantaneously and securely relaying messages between the other ninjas, and running out for supplies and returning in the blink of an eye. Air is particularly good at scrutinizing places that would normally be impossible to access, finding points that need reinforcement on construction jobs, and finding weaknesses to exploit on destruction jobs.
- Fire: Able to both slice cleanly through stone, wood, or metal in a single bare-handed stroke and to instantaneously fuse absolutely any two materials together, Fire is the primary workhorse of the Five Ninjas Construction Company when it comes time to actually put the buildings together, although the other four provide indispensable and flawless assistance to complete the jobs quickly and efficiently. Naturally, her ability to quickly take things apart comes into play on demolition projects more often than her ability to put things together.
- Water: Water is remarkably skilled at sculpting difficult and sometimes even impossible shapes, applying a mysterious technique similar to Joolcrafting to tremendous quantities of stone and metal to create truly amazing and original feats of architecture. Water also handles most of the pre-construction drafting for construction projects, even though he

appears to be the youngest of the five ninjas. On demolition projects Water usually begins by weakening the foundations with his warping technique and working from the inside out so the building collapses in on itself.

- *Void: Void's ability to make considerable chunks of mass completely disappear makes him exceptionally skilled at clearing and leveling building sites and excavating basements. He also works closely with the other four throughout construction to erase any features that looked good on paper but don't live up to expectations when they're actually built. As one would expect, on demolition projects Void prefers to make buildings vanish entirely one large piece at a time, and often cleans up behind the rest of the company.*

Kraven Vortov

Born a quadriplegic, Kraven Vortov has nonetheless risen to become the Crater Arena wrestling champion who everyone loves to hate, pulling every last dirty trick in the book on a regular basis to crush his opponents and retain his dominance. No-one really knows where, when, or how Kraven acquired his gem-encrusted, steam-powered artificial arms and legs, and anyone who has tried to ask him has ended up with his or her head smashed in by Vortov himself and woken up a few weeks later in a Save Bank. It is known that Vortov was once a mercenary for hire, and it's rumored that his ancestors were members of the Kygrin Legion. Numerous other unfounded rumors about Vortov's past abound, most of which he started himself in order to bolster his infamy and renown. One story that he'd like to see disappear, however, is the tale of how he arrived in Omniport, a violent alcoholic without a jool to his name, stumbling through street fight after street fight until he finally wandered into the Crater Arena and found his calling. He hasn't touched a drop since, and it's taken him over ten years to become champion, but he holds onto that title more dearly than life itself, because he knows that if he loses it he loses everything he's worked for, and all that will be waiting for him at the end of that road is an empty bottle.

The Masked Duelist

The Masked Duelist uses the same weapon and fighting style as one of the players (and indeed, often has exactly the same skills), and is constantly showing up at the most inopportune times to demand a one-on-one duel. When defeated, the Duelist will often give his/her opponent a valuable item, but when victorious the Masked Duelist will merely shake his/her head in disappointment and quickly disappear, often rattling off some witticism about how the opponent should better prepare herself for the next time their paths meet. Exactly who the Duelist is can remain a mystery for the entire campaign, or his/her true identity can be obvious from the start, or it can be revealed at a crucial point in the plot. Consider introducing multiple Masked Duelists, each for a different player, either acting individually or all together as a sort of Masked Duelists' League.

Skills

The Easy Four

Whenever you have to roll dice, you may instead choose to automatically make all of those dice 4s. This is called the "easy four", and saves a lot of time, since you only have to multiply the number of dice you're supposed to roll by 4 instead of rolling them and adding them all together. You may only choose to use the easy four before you roll the dice; you can't reset the values of the dice to 4s if you don't like their result. Players can never use the easy four. The easy four

works extremely well for the initiative dice of monsters in combat (using a stack of pennies instead of a cluster of dice for each monster's initiative total is recommended) since it steps all of the monsters' initiatives by multiples of four, making them much easier to keep track of.

Combat Secrets

You thought combat was just about kicking down doors in dungeons, hacking your way through the gruesome monsters on the other side and nabbing their treasure? Think again. For starters, combat is a wonderfully dramatic way to propel your plot, and the perfect place to drop plot devices and bring in new sub-plots:

“Just another band of gorglings. This’ll be cake. But wait, there’s a little girl with them, dressed like a princess, and even though it looks like she’s their prisoner she seems to be commanding them... and these gorglings are tougher than any you’ve fought before!”

“You’ve defeated the commander, but that strange soldier in the purple cloak has disappeared. Something did seem odd while you were fighting him, and now you get the sneaking suspicion that maybe you didn’t win this battle after all...”

“Another well-won victory! The enemies dissipate, leaving behind 1200 jools... and a strange sword that seems to be carved from ivory. A simple gold wedding ring dangles from the pommel, and when the sword is pulled from its sheath it makes a sound like a woman sobbing. Someone will come looking for this sword. You can feel it in your bones.”

Of course, if all your players really want for a session or two is some mindless “let’s go gorg hunting!” action, you should probably indulge them. With virtually no plot, virtually no NPCs, and plenty of opportunities to scrutinize how your players interact with each other and generate plot ideas from there, they’ll be some of the easiest sessions you’ll ever run.

Balance

Monsters’ levels are calculated the same way that players’ levels are. For a fairly balanced fight, match the combined total of the enemies’ levels to the combined total of the players’ levels, and to tip the scales one way or the other, either raise or lower the enemies’ combined levels from there. Balanced and unbalanced fights all have their own specific uses for motivating the plot:

- Fights where the players outmatch their opponents serve to demonstrate how strong the players are. This can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on the circumstances; there’s a fine line between “Wow! You didn’t even break a sweat! How impressive!” and “Hey! You didn’t even break a sweat! How about picking on someone your own size!?”
- Evenly-balanced fights give players a chance to prove themselves. Technically the fights are fifty-fifty win or lose, but the players probably have more items at their disposal, can work together better than their enemies, and are usually smarter than the hungry, drooling monsters they’re fighting.
- Fights where the players are at a disadvantage create tension, and sometimes encourage the players to think of different ways to defeat their enemies besides brute force, or even to beat a hasty retreat and return when they’re better prepared. Like everything else, however, you should never expect the players to realize that they’re severely outmatched and need to consider a different approach until the fourth or fifth time someone directly tells the players “Hey, you’re severely outmatched. Maybe you should consider a different approach.” If the players **do** come up with a different approach, and “overcome the odds” to put the smack down on the enemies, it can be one of the most rewarding experiences they’ve had in the game (both for their prides and for the number of jools they’ll get out of the fight). If they never quite catch on, however, and all go down fighting the futile fight as the super-villain

says “Hey you’re severely outmatched...” for the nineteenth time, it can be one of the worst experiences they’ve had in the game, and they will all blame you.

- Regardless of how the fight is balanced, you should always have a contingency plan in case something goes horribly wrong. If the super-powerful Baron Bloodfiend is just finishing up his preparations to blast the last standing player into oblivion while shouting “Hey, you’re severely outmatched...” and it has just now dawned on the players that they are, indeed, severely outmatched, it’s okay to have a powerful NPC leap into the fray, distract the Baron for a moment and shout “Run, you fools!” This, in and of itself can be a great plot device along the lines of “Wow, I had no idea that hobo was actually Gorthus the Bloodfiend Slayer. Good thing I gave him some spare change this morning or we’d be toast right now.” or simply “I don’t know who that masked woman was, but we owe her our very lives...” Likewise, if the players severely luck out, overcome incredible odds, and beat the tar out of Baron Bloodfiend, despite the fact that it’s absolutely crucial to your plot that the Baron drive the characters away with his overwhelming might and lay waste to the town, there are two things that you should do: First, let the players whack the Baron and collect their well-deserved reward (you can **always** bring your favorite/important villains back later via black-market Save Banks). Second, have someone else (perhaps the Baron’s right-hand man, perhaps someone completely unrelated) lay waste to the town instead, and make whatever subtle changes to your plot are necessary. Of course, if you are suddenly inspired by the surprise turn of events, and come up with an even better plot idea that involves the town not getting wasted, you should certainly go with that instead.

Pacing

- Don’t over-think combat. When you have a dozen different monsters on the combat map it can be tempting to get stuck in chess-mode, stroke your chin thoughtfully, carefully think everything through nine moves in advance, and then finally look up to find that all of your players have fallen asleep because you’ve taken two hours to move. The vast majority of the combatants you’ll throw at players will be bloodthirsty monsters with no concept of strategy beyond running straight toward a player’s character and putting her in its belly. Many of the monsters included in this section also include suggestions for how that monster would behave in combat, and if you have an important character who actually should apply some strategy to fighting the players, then develop that strategy before the combat even begins.
- Don’t let your players over-think combat either. Roleplaying combat should feel as quick and off-the-cuff as the combat itself; if a player is dragging her feet when it’s her turn to act, either because she’s trying to do calculus in her head to figure out the absolute best action for the situation or because she really doesn’t know what to do, start counting down out loud from ten, and tell her that if she hasn’t acted by the time you reach zero she’ll lose her action. Of course, if you ever start over-thinking combat don’t be surprised when your players use the same trick on you.

Enemies’ Loose Jools

On average, each enemy the players fight will be carrying a number of loose jools equal to 10 times its level in dice. (Remember you can use the easy 4 here to cut down on the rolling, or you can roll a number of dice equal to the total levels of all the enemies and **then** multiply by ten.) This means that level 0 monsters usually will not be carrying any loose jools, but this is made up for by the fact that they each become 50 jools after combat. You are encouraged to adjust this number up or down, which gives you the opportunity to reward your players for a very well-played and well-described combat, or present enemies with only a few loose jools or none at all

when the situation calls for it. This also gives you more freedom with enemies who use skills that consume loose jools (like Heal, Metabolize, Rest, etc.), since you don't have to track them, and can decide for yourself how often they'd use such skills, and even have them "run out" at a dramatic moment during combat.

Another option is to "spend" the loose jools enemies are carrying on Special Items you think will be important to the adventure, or needed by the characters. For instance, if you feel that the players will have an especially hard time with the next combat you have planned, an enemy (or group of enemies) who would normally be carrying about 70 loose jools could instead be carrying a 50-charge Healing Salve. The Special Item could also match the enemy defeated; a group of elementlings could leave behind a matching Elemental Bomb, a ninja could leave behind a few Smoke Bombs, a forgotten guardian could leave behind a skill boost, etc. This option subtracts from the number of jools the players will collect from a fight, but it will give them something more immediately useful instead, and they'll still be getting the jools that the enemies turn into.