Big Ears, Small Mouse

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BIG EARS, SMALL MOUSE

A rodent is an animal of the order Rodentia, a group of critters with chisel-like incisors that grow continuously through life and are used for gnawing. Rodentia are among the largest and most successful orders of mammals, and one of the few that can coexist with *Homo sapiens.*

This relationship has its down side. As the unwitting carrier of disease-ridden fleas, the Black Norway rat is indirectly responsible for more human deaths than any other animal in nature; most spectacularly with the Black Death. The ancient Egyptians disliked rodents so intensely they deified cats.

Despite all this, American animation has always had a love affair with rodents, spawning the strange genre of *Big Ears, Small Mouse* (*BESMouse*). Mice are small and cute, and it is easy to generate sympathy for them. In the great game called the ecology, mice are the ultimate "underdogs;" when a cat stalks a field mouse, it is hard not to root for the rodent.

Unlike the settings of most adventure fiction, the world of a rodent is our own, seen through different and smaller eyes. Although there are exceptions (such as the *Redwall* series), small animal characters in fiction seem to thrive in superficially mundane settings, which, viewed from their perspective, become places of high adventure. The framework of an average suburban home is as complex a labyrinth that Theseus faced. To a mouse, a housecat is as formidable an opponent as any dragon, while the epic battles of mouse against cat echo the adventures of Ulysses against the Cyclops.

Naturally, when you are a bug, even the mice try to slap you around.

ANIMALS AS SATIRE

There is a long tradition of satire through the use of animal characters. The court family of the Pharaoh Akhenaten was derisively sculpted as monkeys. In the novel, *The Wind in the Willows*, (1908), Mister Toad and Badger symbolized the ongoing conflict between flighty, irresponsible youth and reliable, yet rigid conservatism. The film *An American Tail* (1986) attempted to tell the remarkable story of Eastern European immigration to the United States from the point of view of mice. Their belief that there "are no cats in America" reflects the often exaggerated sense of hope real immigrants possessed for their adopted country. The Fleischer cartoon short *Peace on Earth* (1939) is an antiwar story, made all the more startling since the story of "peace on Earth" is how all the humans killed one another and is delivered by a kindly, grandfatherly mouse on Christmas.

Insects have also served duty as surrogate humans. Aesop's fable of the *Ant and the Grasshopper* is a strong argument for the work ethic. Dreamwork's movie, *Antz* (1998), has a more ambiguous view of the same.

Tongue in Cheek Adventure

Most tales in print and in animation involving four-fingered talking mice are somewhat offbeat adventure stories, with Disney's *Great Mouse Detective* (1986) serving as a good example. A quick summary of the film's plot — a little girl enlists the help of an acerbic detective in finding her kidnapped father — does not sound particularly amusing, yet the movie is extremely funny. The villain is a hilarious send-up of every penny-dreadful megalomaniac who ever lived, and Basil's slow burns are a joy to behold. Disney/Pixar's *A Bug's Life* (1998) essentially has the same plot as Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* (1957), but is played for laughs.

Gamers are an irreverent lot, and often bend adventures into comedies. The average role-playing session feels much like a talking mouse film, with moments of drama interspersed with otherworldly comedy and slapstick. This approach permits the Game Master to bow to the inevitable.

Using This Book

Big Ears, Small Mouse is the first genre sourcebook for *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* that does not focus on Japanese animation. This book provides rules and guidelines for creating intelligent, small animal and insect characters, and for using them in role-playing campaigns. There have been two main types of talking mice in fiction. The first type parallels human life; Disney's Mickey Mouse lives in a suburban home, drives a gas-powered car, and interacts with ducks and dogs who live nearby. Steve Lafler's comic, *BugHouse*, (1998) has a cast of insects, but is really about human jazz musicians and drug abuse. The second approach allows small animals and insects to walk erect and speak languages. For some reason, the humans never notice the parallel civilization literally under their feet. This is the approach of *BESMouse*.

CHAPTER 1:
CHARACTER CREATION
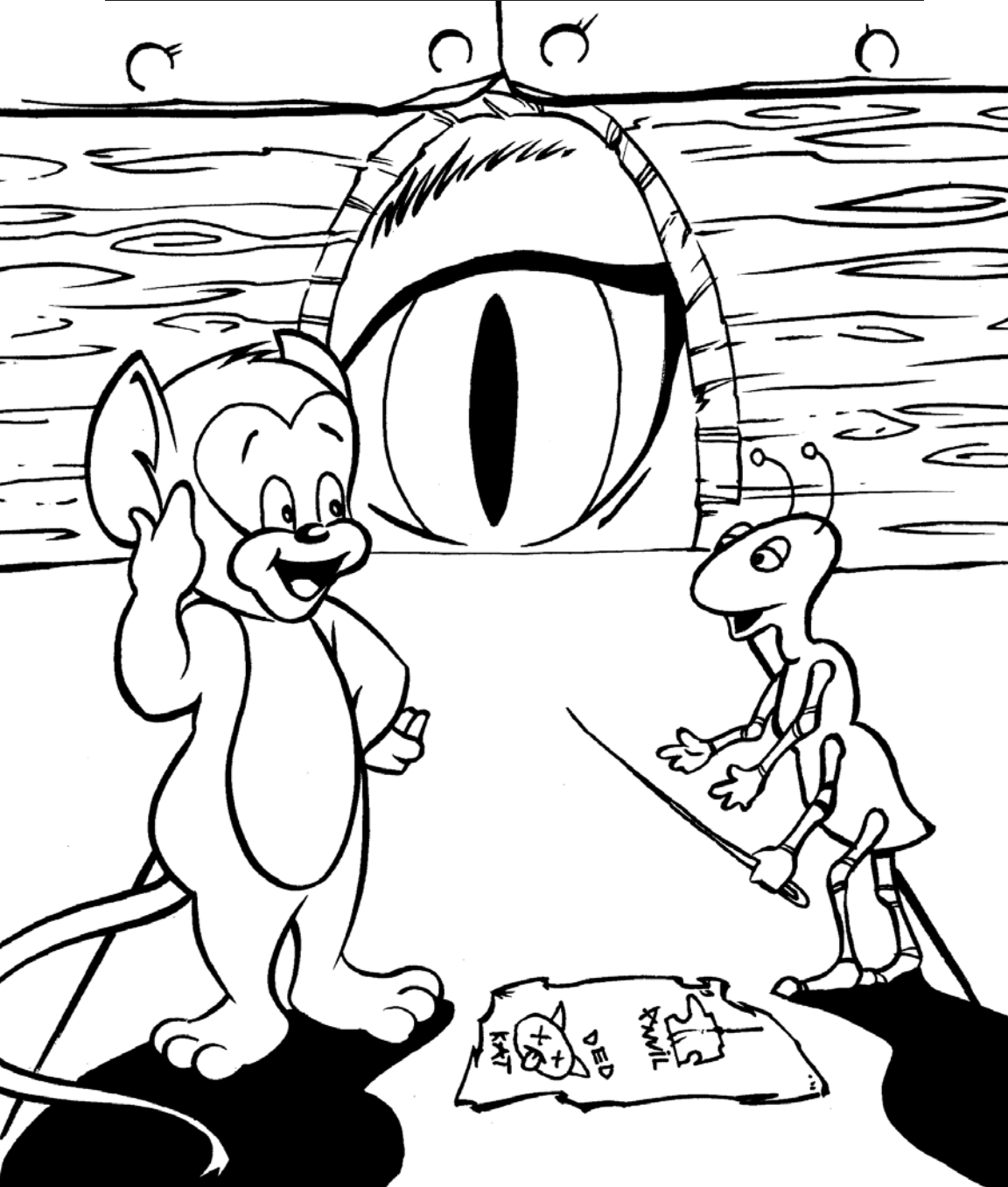
This chapter offers guidelines for creating *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* characters suitable for a *Big Ears, Small Mouse* campaign. Neither the Game Master nor the players should feel limited by these suggestions — plenty of other character types are possible.

Use of the Skill System (see *BESM*, page 57) is recommended, since it can be used to represent certain inbred abilities of different animals, such as the Stealth Skill for a cat. Most works in this genre take place in a contemporary setting, and thus the Modern Military campaign type Skill point costs (see *BESM*, page 60) are the default for templates and examples.

Character Creation Flowchart

➤ Step 1: GM Discussion

Talk to the GM about the nature of the upcoming game. Address issues such as duration of the game, scheduled play time, setting, thematic intensity, and, most importantly, what species you wish to play. See page 8.

➤ Step 2: Character Outline

Use the game boundaries established during your talk with the GM to sketch a rough character outline. See page 8.

➤ Step 2A: Species Templates

In order to facilitate character creation, some species templates are provided that can be used as a basis for your characters. See page 12

➤ Step 3: Assign Stats

Use Character Points to give your character Body, Mind, and Soul Stats, making sure each Stat is not lower than 1 nor higher than 12. See page 36.

➤ Step 4: Character Attributes

Any remaining Character Points may be used to acquire Character Attributes, which are rated from Level 1 to 6. See page 36.

➤ Step 5: Character Defects

You are encouraged to take a maximum of eight Defects appropriate to your character outline. These Defects will provide you with more role-playing opportunities and give you Bonus Points you can use to raise Stats or acquire additional Character Attributes. See page 37.

➤ Step 6: Skills

Your character receives 20 starting Skill Points with which to acquire Skills and Specializations relevant to your character outline. See page 38.

➤ Step 7: Derived Values

After modifying your character's Stats through Attributes and Defects, you can calculate his or her Derived Values, with modifications based on the Diminutive Defect. Pep Points replace Health Points, while damage is rated in Scratch Points. See page 38.

➤ Step 8: Background Points

You can earn 1-3 extra Character Points by providing the GM with background material about your character. See page 39.

Step 1: GM Discussion

In this step, you should discuss with the GM and other players what sort of campaign to run. A few campaign types are described in Chapter 4 (page 64), but the GM should not feel restricted to those.

A key decision you must make concerns the species you wish to play. This affects your character's abilities and, depending on the GM's campaign world, may influence the way Non-Player Characters (NPCs) react to your character.

In some world designs, for example, bats may suffer from the same undeserved reputation among small animals that they do among most humans. NPC mosquitoes and moths will likely look askance at someone who might have them for dinner. On the other hand, NPC cats may have more respect for a fellow predator and could treat a typical herbivorous rodent as mere food. The GM should discuss such possible social ramifications with the players, bearing in mind that customs may be very different in the next forest over. For more details on different species and their gaming statistics, see Step 2A: Species Templates (page 12-35).

Role-playing games usually work best if the player characters strive towards a common goal. If your GM intends to run a co-operative game, be prepared to take guidance from the GM and other players during character generation to insure your character fits the group dynamic. For example, you might be dying to play Nick Gill, Catfish Private Eye ("Long Island Sound is a filthy beat. I do my best to clean it up.") or Freiherr Flieger von Racketen, leader of an acrobatic flying squirrel troupe. The GM, however, wishes to run a campaign based on a small group of animal vigilantes who fight human and animal criminals. With the stroke of a pen, Nick Gill becomes Nick "The Chitter" Chipmunk, the detective of the team while Flieger von Racketen becomes their flamboyant and frequently airborne leader. The sooner you discuss your options with the GM the better (since there will be less work to undo).

EXAMPLE: Mary wishes to GM a BESMouse game where the player characters are part of Force Acorn, a loosely-knit organization of small animals who defend the world against alien invaders. Mary decides that players in her game will start with 35 Character Points and 20 Skill Points. Bill realizes that a master mechanic would be helpful to the team, so he decides he will play Albert Einklein, Mouse Engineer.

Step 2: Character Outline

Certain character archetypes are appropriate for a *BESMouse* campaign. The short list below may give you ideas to incorporate into your character. You may choose to combine elements of several archetypes: a Homebody Sage forced by circumstances to become an Adventuring Prodigy, for example.

EXAMPLE: As a young, orphaned mouse, Albert's interest in technology lured him into a suburban home, where Monica Talbot, a clever high school student, captured him. Monica was working on a project for the annual Science Fair, trying to increase the intelligence of mice through the use of viral DNA techniques. After some experimentation, she was convinced she had raised Albert's intelligence to the point where he could speak. Actually,

her treatment had no effect on Albert whatsoever, apart from turning his fur a bright purple, and rendering his metabolism unstable. The truth is that Monica was a Speaker (page 10), and after working with Albert for a while, she found she could understand him.

Excited by this, she took her "talking mouse" to the Science Fair, convinced she would win first prize. All she earned was ridicule and lengthy psychoanalysis, which turned her towards evil. Wisely, Albert decided to leave for the nearby city, where he joined Force Acorn after a terrifying encounter with the Greys.

Archetypes

These entries are broad suggestions for your character's base personality. They are not exhaustive and you should not feel obliged to pigeonhole your character to fit one of the descriptions exactly.

➢ Homebody

The cornerstone of society, the Homebody is primarily concerned with his or her family, and the source of the next meal. Most animals (and people) are Homebodies. Since they are reluctant to go off adventuring, a Homebody is usually an NPC.

➢ Mimic

Mimics are animals who adopt local human customs, exaggerating them to the level of a stereotype. Texan cowpoke bats talk like Gabby Hayes and shout "Yeehaw;" German army rats have waxed moustaches, feldgrau greatcoats, and spiked helmets; beavers are Canadian hockey players or Mounties. Mimics are remarkably common in the source material, and a mimic from a culture distant from the campaign setting is easily integrated by making the character a traveller. It is more fun to play with a Mimic of a culture with which you are familiar, rather than resorting to ethnic stereotypes that might offend fellow players.
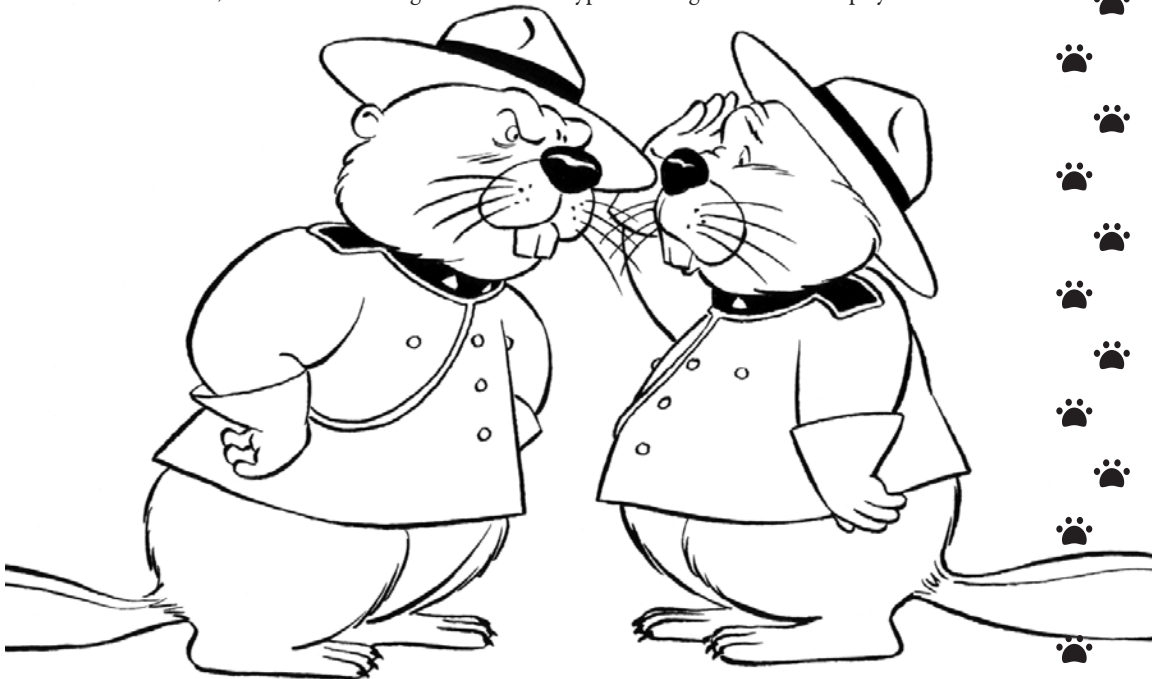
➢ Prodigy

The Prodigy is anyone with a set of unique skills that are useful in extraordinary situations. Depending on the campaign world, the character may be a mechanical genius, a skilled healer, a computer hacker, or a mage.

➢ Sage

The Sage has mysterious sources of information and is willing to share them, perhaps for a price, perhaps for friendship. He or she could be the wise old owl, a (literal) bookworm in the local library, the snake bartender, or a mouse with Internet access. Typically, a Sage is an NPC plot device within an adventure, whose existence allows the GM to give players background information through role-playing. GMs should take care not to turn the Sage into an advisor as opposed to a source of information. Players and the GM should remember that the Sage may not know everything, may be unwilling to share everything, or may have incorrect information.

➢ Scrapper

A Scrapper is a character designed primarily for combat. In a *BESMouse* campaign, "combat" can be problematic. Even a feline who has devoted his or her life to the mastery of Meowlin kat-fu will be at a serious disadvantage when going to-to-toe with a human adult. It is entirely possible that a shrew with a quick wit and savage sense of humour, however, will prevail where a more conventional "combat monster" failed.

Scrappers tend to be boring if solely focused on combat abilities. You should flesh them out with some unexpected Skills and personality quirks, or you and the other players are likely to lose interest in the character.

➢ Speaker

In most of the genre's source material, animals and humans can barely communicate. A one-sided language barrier is often in place: animals can understand humans, but humans cannot understand animals.

A character with the Speaker Attribute (see page 50) bridges this gap. Speakers are humans who can talk to animals (like Hugh Lofting's *Doctor Dolittle*) or, rarely, animals who can make themselves understood by humans (like the title character in *Stuart Little*, or Polly, the parrot who taught Doctor Dolittle how to speak animal languages).

The way the Speaker Attribute works depends heavily on the GM's world, and it is highly recommended players discuss this with the GM before generating a character with this Attribute.

Background

Where did your character originate? The bodies of work that make up the *BESMouse* genre suggest several options listed here, but a unique background is fun to play as well.

➢ Feral

A Feral animal is one raised with only limited human contact. Feral animals tend to walk on four legs, wear very basic clothing, and avoid humans as much as possible. Feral types typically have the Wilderness Survival Skill. It is common for Feral types to regard their more citified cousins as fops.

➤ Urban

An Urban animal is more comfortable living with humans in a town or city. Typically, they wear clothes and walk on their hind legs; most Mimics are Urbans. These creatures usually have the Urban Survival Skill. It is common for Urbans to treat their rural cousins like rubes.

➤ Colonist

A Colonist is an animal who lives in an animal society. In real life, social creatures like ants, bees, and naked mole rats build colonies and divide labour among different individuals. In the *BESMouse* genre, it is common for animals to live in little animal cities. Colonists do not need a Survival Skill, since they live within a society that protects them.

➤ Pet

A Pet is an animal who has lived so closely with humans that they regard the Pet as part of the family. Pets do not often fear humans. A player character with an active relationship with a human can be a serious problem for a GM, since Pet owners can be very defensive of their charges.

Pets may have the Organizational Ties Attribute (see *BESM*, page 36) and the Owned by a Human Defect (see *BESM*, page 51). Cats who are Pets may even have humans as Servants (see *BESM*, page 134).

Motivation

Motivation is what brings a character to life. Characters who exist as a string of numbers and abilities pale against those with well-defined reasons for undertaking the dangerous and even foolish things that player characters attempt. A character's motivation may be a combination of the following elements.

➤ Adventurer

An Adventurer thrives primarily on excitement, and on the strange pleasure they derive from confronting impossible odds and winning. Adventurers grow bored quickly and are unlikely to go for an average campaign hook, but it is easy to involve them in really desperate situations.

➤ Avenger

Revenge is a powerful motivator and the Avenger is slave to it. The character suffered some actual or perceived wrong in the past, and he or she is dedicated to placating the wild, hungry gods of retribution. It is easy to involve an Avenger in a game, but a key problem may be sustaining him or her through a campaign. An Avenger who never actually quenches the thirsty throat of the Furies with the tears of his or her foe may be faintly ridiculous, but an Avenger who has won has no obvious reason for staying in the campaign. It is common for an Avenger to take a liberal view of the object of revenge. The mysterious crime-fighting bat who dresses as a human to terrify evil doers, for example, may elect to avenge the murder of his parents against all criminals, thereby "avenging" himself against rodents who have no idea who he is, or why he is in such a bad mood. In this sort of case, the Avenger segues to a Hero.

Prepare some melodramatic rants before each gaming session. They add immeasurably to the richness of the experience.

➤ Hero

A Hero is motivated by a genuine concern for the common good. His or her reward is the knowledge that he or she made the world a better place. Heroes are easy to motivate, but they can be tedious if handled carelessly, or if there are too many in a group. A common sub-archetype is a Hero who maintains a gruff exterior and refuses to let people know they are Heroes.

➤ Mercenary

Mercenaries, a fine option for a role-playing campaign, are not well represented in the source material for a *BESMouse* game. One key issue is how your character gets paid, since your GM may decide that there is no such thing as "animal money." It is common in the genre for mice, at least, to barter using cheese.

Alternately, you can take the broad view and consider a Mercenary to be anyone who fights to earn something not directly related to the fruits of the battle. A detective primarily motivated by a personal rivalry against the Napoleon of Crime might be considered a "Mercenary" of a sort, as is someone interested only in public adulation.

➤ Service

Service to friends, family, or perhaps nation is another common motivation. It differs slightly from the Hero since only a few individuals or entities are being served: a mother who risks her life for her children alone is in Service, as is a loyal soldier of the wise and powerful Rat King. The Owned by a Megacorp Defect (see *BESM*, page 51) is common for characters in Service.

Step 2A: Species Templates

Animals vary widely in their abilities and lifestyles. This section describes some interesting or typical animals found in a *BESMouse* campaign and includes their gaming statistics as well as some suggestions for their campaign use. These are useable as "average" characters for minor NPCs, as a bestiary (to make it unnecessary for GMs to generate the gaming statistics for a cat on the fly) or as a basis of comparison. Additionally, these templates can serve as a basis for player characters, or to help extrapolate other potential animal types.

Each base template has an associated Character Point Cost and a Skill Point Cost. The players can spend any remaining points to increase Attributes or Skills. Gaining extra points by decreasing something in the template or through buying off Defects can only be done with GM approval; the GM may decide that buying off Defects in a template is either impossible or costs double. Mary, for example, has decided that in her campaign it costs a mouse two Character Points to rid him or herself of the one Character Point Defect, Easily Distracted (Cheese). This is because the cheese obsession is a critical part of any cartoon mouse. Stat values in these templates are simply species averages, thus PCs and significant NPCs should normally spend additional Character Points to acquire higher Stats.

➤ Scratch and Pep Points

To properly scale combat to include PCs who are bugs, mice, and other small creatures, animals in *BESMouse* inflict damage using Scratch Points and suffer damage in Pep Points. This concept (and how it converts to Damage and Health Points) is fully described on page 38 in Chapter 1 and page 41 in Chapter 2.

Some Character Creation rules work slightly differently in the *BESMouse* genre — for example, certain species may have both Awkward Size and Diminutive; these exceptions are covered in Chapter 3.

EXAMPLE: Bill's character, Albert, is a mouse. This costs 5 Character Points and 7 Skill Points. Albert possesses starting mouse Stats, Defects, and Attributes, and has 30 Character Points and 13 Skill Points left.

ANT

As an ant, you live for the Colony, or at least this is what is expected. Renegade, solitary ants seem a contradiction in terms. Specializing in a single function, your life is bounded by the needs of the Colony. As a cell in a superorganism, you do only one thing, but you do it well. Ants usually possess a few Skills centred on their life roles. They live in a Kafka-esque nightmare of shifting priorities and incomprehensible orders from above. Ants are the best vehicle for bitter little campaigns of social satire. It costs 6 Character Points to be an ant. You must also spend Skill Points on your Hive Function Skill as described below.

STATS

Body 3, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

ATTRIBUTES

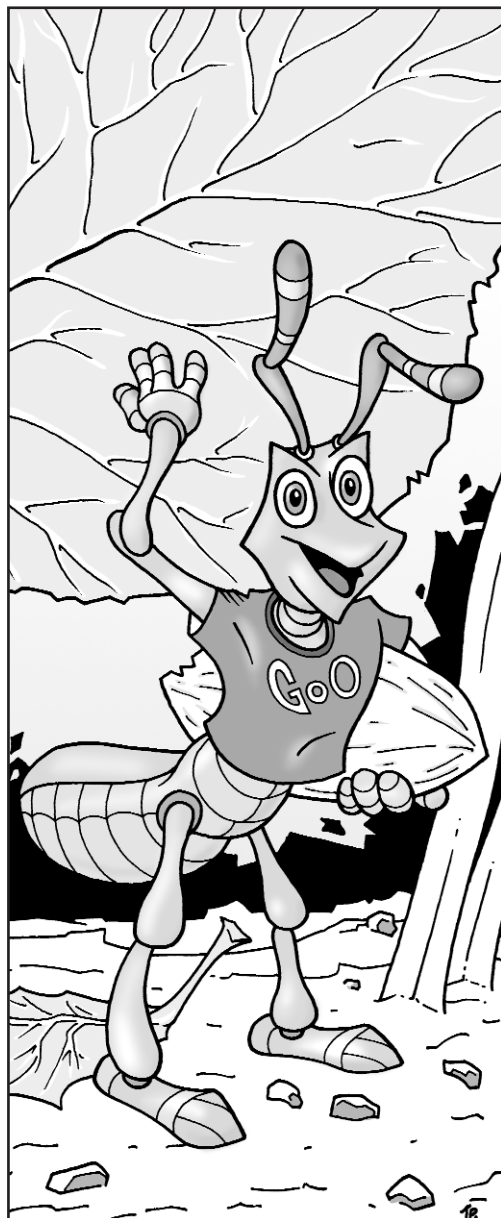**Special Movement Level 1** (Wall Crawling; 1 point)
Tunnelling Level 1 (2 points)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (6 BP)

SKILLS

Minimum of Level 3 in a Skill justified as your Hive Function — Architecture if you plan tunnel construction, Combat Skills if you are a soldier ant, etc.

Bat

Bats are flying mammals common throughout the world, except in the coldest regions. They are not rodents, and resent being called "flying mice." Highly social animals, they sleep and eat in large colonies. They are frequently and cruelly maligned in human popular culture. In genre, most bats are evil, slippery thugs or manipulators, but there is no particular reason to cling to this outmoded stereotype of a bygone era (unless, of course, you are a bug). In that case, a bat is probably your greatest nightmare.

Bats are among the most fascinating and diverse mammals in nature, hence the four outlined types.
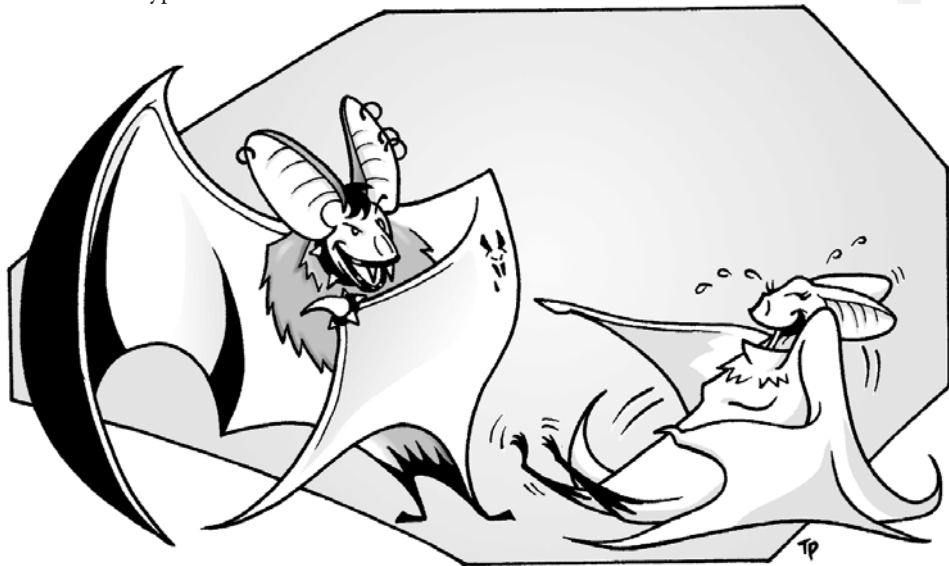
➤ Predatory bat

An insectivorous nocturnal predator with a dazzling array of low-light senses, the predatory bat is actually a more charming critter. Certain species produce the loudest noises created by animals, although these are too high-pitched for humans to hear. It costs 12 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a Predatory Bat.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Flight Level 1 (many bats can hover, and do not need a runway; 4 points)
Heightened Senses Level 3 (Active Sonar, Hearing, Low-light vision; 3 points)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP)
One Hand (Cartoon bats do not actually have only one hand — instead, their hands are substantially more awkward than those of other small animals; 1 BP)

SKILLS

Unarmed Attack Level 1 (Grapple, to catch flies and mosquitoes; 4 Skill Points)
Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

➤ FRUIT BAT

Also known as "flying foxes," the fruit bat is larger than their distant predatory cousins and they lack sonar. *Pteropus vampyrus* is a flying fox with a wingspan of two metres but the one described here is much smaller.

The gaming statistics are the same as a Predatory Bat, except the Body Stat is 4, the Active Sonar Heightened Sense is replaced by Smell, and they do not start with the Unarmed Attack (Grapple) Skill. It costs 13 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a Fruit bat.

➤ VAMPIRE BAT

Realistically, the vampire bat is a mild-mannered, predominantly South American parasite that feeds primarily on cattle. It is more like a large mosquito than anything particularly ominous. In fact, they are known to adopt orphans of their species, and individuals will risk their lives to save other vampire bats. These creatures are actually quite noble.

Hollywood does make its influence felt in strange ways, and vampire bat society is presently split in a stylistic war between the followers of the Old Ways, which primarily involve pretending to be Hungarian, and the New, which pretend to be laden with existential despair. About the only thing that keeps these factions together is the arguable assumption that everyone looks good in black.

This template assumes that vampire bats are perfectly natural creatures without any paranormal abilities or vulnerabilities whatsoever. There is no reason the GM must follow this belief, however.

It costs 15 Character Points and 13 Skill Points to be a Vampire Bat. The gaming statistics of a Vampire Bat are the same as a Predatory Bat, except for the following additions:

ATTRIBUTES

Special Attack Level 1 (Vampiric Bite: 15 Scratch Points Damage, Vampiric, Fangs, Melee Only; 4 points). This attack behaves like a Natural Weapon Fangs Attack (see *BESM,* page 122).

SKILLS (THESE REFLECT A VAMPIRE'S SENSE OF STYLE)

Intimidation Level 1 (3 Skill Points)
Seduction Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

DEFECT

Unique Defect: Only Eats Blood (The character loses 5 Pep Points on waking up every day. These points can only be healed by using the Vampiric Special Attack; 1 BP)

➤ BUMBLEBEE BAT

The smallest mammal in the world, the Thai bumblebee bat (*Craseonycteris thonglongyai*) weighs less than three grams. It is an insect-sized bat that feeds on insects. Its gaming Stats are the same as the Predatory Bat, except that the animal has Diminutive at 6 Bonus Points instead of 3, and Awkward Size for 1 BP. It costs 8 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a bumblebee bat.

BEE

The bee is essentially a flying ant with a stinger: its social order is strikingly similar, as is its common use in genre. One of the curious adaptations of the bee is a barbed stinger that causes the bee to disembowel itself after a successful attack. Talking mouse fiction rarely mentions this tidbit, perhaps because ugly facts of biology make for depressing tales. Therefore, two versions of the stinger are described below: the realistic barbed stinger, and a smooth stinger that bees can pull safely out of the victim. It costs 12 Character Points to be a bee. You must also spend Skill Points on your Hive Function Skill as described below.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Flight Level 1 (4 points)

Special Attack Level 1 (Bee Sting: either: 15 Scratch Points, Melee, Self-Destruct, Incapacitating (Target must make a Soul or Body check or retreat because of pain.); or 8 Scratch Points, Melee, Drain Energy; 4 points)
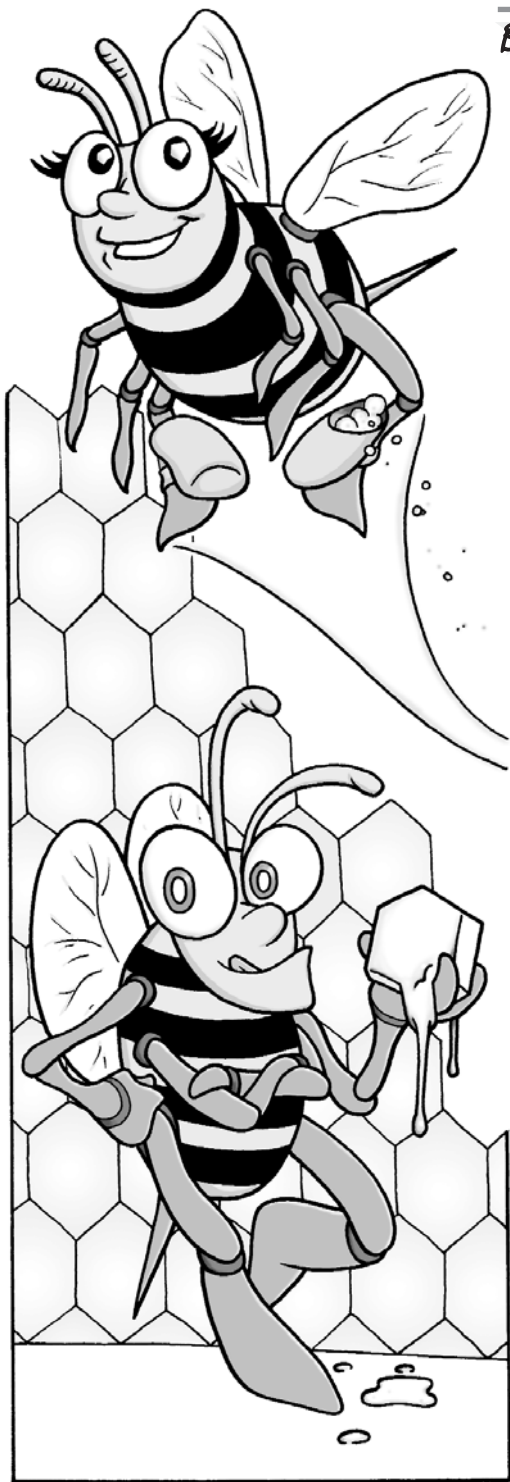
Special Movement Level 1 (Wall-Crawling; 1 point)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (6 BP)

SKILLS

Bees are less specialized than ants. You must take at least Level 2 in a Skill justified as your Hive Function — Artisan if you make honeycombs, Combat Skills if you are a guard bee, etc.

BEETLE

Earth is unquestionably the Planet of the Beetles. Not only do various beetle species outnumber all other animals combined, but they even outweigh them. Lacking the conformist designs of the ant and bee, beetles have an incredible variety of natural abilities. Just about any Attribute, from tunnelling to flight to spitting flames, are present in one or more of the many types of beetles.

Light Armour Level 2 or 3 is typical, but not mandatory. When a player purchases Light Armour for a character with Diminutive, the points of protection are Scratch Points rather than normal damage points. It costs 4 points and 3 Skill Points to play a typical beetle.

STATS

> Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

> Special Movement Level 1 (Wall-Crawling; 1 point)

DEFECTS

> Diminutive (6 BP)

SKILLS

> Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

➢ ## GOLIATH

The Goliath beetle is the largest insect, dwarfing mice and able to battle rats in a paw-to-mandible fight. It uses the same template as the Beetle, with Diminutive (3 BP) instead of Diminutive (6 BP), and Light Armour Level 3 (Thick Exoskeleton, 3 points) which provides 7 Scratch Points of protection. It costs 10 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a Goliath beetle.

Bird

Both songbirds and raptors are mostly predators; smaller birds generally hunt insects, while larger ones prey upon small rodents. For reasons that have something to do with wings, many cartoon birds lack hands, so these templates take that Defect into account. If this seems too limiting, the GM may allow bird characters to buy off this Defect during character creation.

➤ Raptor

Arguably the coolest wild animals in North America, raptors are the class of birds that include owls, eagles, and hawks. Owls have a reputation of being sages. Falcons are often trained by humans to bring back prey; they lack Survival Skill and have the Owned by a Human Defect. It is not uncommon for Peregrines to live in large cities; hence Urban Survival is an option. It costs 11 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a raptor.

Stats

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

Attributes

Flight Level 1 (Some raptors can hover; 4 points.)

Focused Damage Level 1 (Beak, +25 Scratch Points; 1 point)

Heightened Senses Level 1 (Hearing or Vision; 1 point)

Defects

No Arms (2 BP)

Not So Strong (1 BP)

Not So Tough (1 BP)

Skills

Unarmed Attack 1 (Grapple; 4 Skill Points.)

Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

➤ SONGBIRD

Long admired for their ability of flight and cultured warbles, songbirds are as universally loved by humanity as bats are feared. It is highly possible that many songbirds take much pride in this, although it varies from bird to bird whether they act in a snooty or humble manner due to their talents. Some experts have suggested that cats pursue songbirds with such glee because birds are even more vain than they are. It costs 9 Character Points and 8 Skill Points to be a song bird.

STATS

Body 3, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

ATTRIBUTES

Flight Level 1 (4 points)
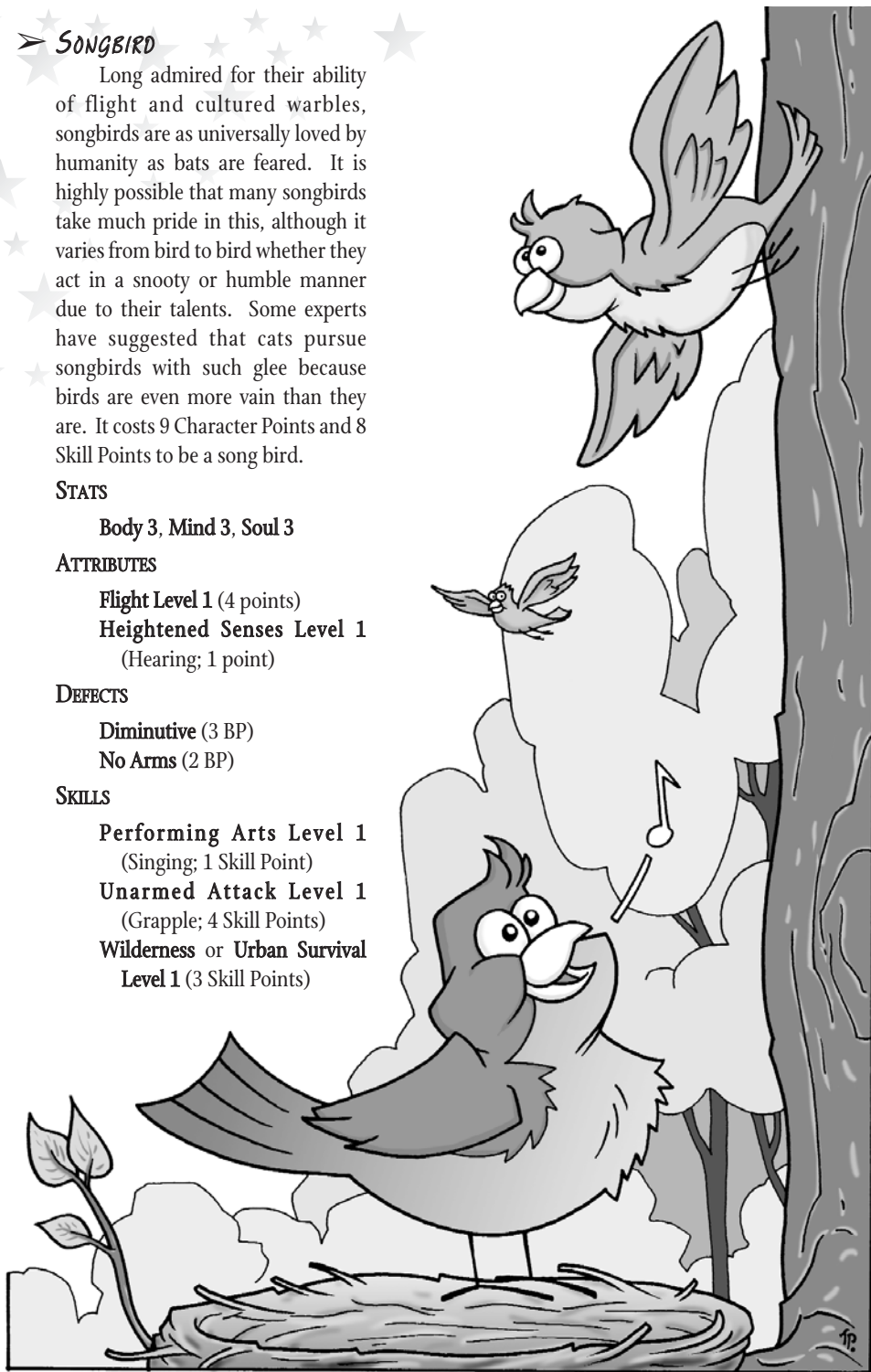**Heightened Senses Level 1** (Hearing; 1 point)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP)
No Arms (2 BP)

SKILLS

Performing Arts Level 1 (Singing; 1 Skill Point)
Unarmed Attack Level 1 (Grapple; 4 Skill Points)
Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

Cat

Sleek, powerful (in context), and deadly, the cat is traditionally the most feared predator in a *BESMouse* universe. Unlike the completely undeserved reputation of the bat, the ferocity of the cat is more than just hype; a battle between a mouse and a cat is even more an unfair match than one between a lion and an antelope. There are other animals out there far more dangerous than cats, but there are few better adapted to the slaughtering of mice and other small animals, and none that hunt with such relentless gusto.

Although real cats have both claws and fangs, the way they use their claws corresponds more closely with the way the Attribute, Natural Weapons (Fangs), works in *BESM*. For game purposes, cats fight as though they had Fangs and not claws.

Cats often permit humans to feed them, but the term "pet" seems inappropriate. It is common for cats to have the Human Friendship Attribute (see page 42) — humans feed them by day, while they unleash their murderous terror upon small things at night.

Black cats may purchase a special variation of Divine Relationship which, instead of allowing the player with the Attribute to re-roll failed rolls, can force opponents to re-roll their successes. It costs 13 Character Points and 16 Skill Points to be a cat.

Stats

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 3

Attributes

Heightened Senses Level 2 (Night Vision and Hearing; 2 points.)

Jumping Level 1 (1 point)

Natural Weapons Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)

Special Movement Level 2 (Cat-Like, Balance; 2 points)

Defects

Not So Strong (1 BP)

Not So Tough (2 BP)

Skills

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)

Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Grappling; 8 Skill Points)

Unique Skill: Cats climb upwards as though they had Climbing Skill at Level 2. They do not get this bonus while climbing downwards. This costs 1 Skill Point.

Dogs (Domestic & Wild)

No animal has a longer association with mankind than the dog. This extended partnership has allowed humans time to warp a large, wolf-like pack predator into a bewildering variety of species, some of which are practical working animals, and some of which appear to exist to annoy everyone except their owners.

The typical role of a dog in a *BESMouse* genre story is to trump the cat. If a dog is not a mouse's friend, it is at least the enemy of an enemy. Still, GMs should note that terriers and other breeds of dogs have reputations as rat-killers.

➤ Guard Dog

The Guard Dog is either a very big animal, or a specially trained member of a smaller breed, such as a police dog or sentry dog. They are typically German Shepherds or Dobermans. It costs 15 Character Points and 8 Skill Points to be a Guard Dog.

Stats

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 4

Attributes

Focused Damage Level 1 (Fangs, +25 Scratch Points; 1 point)

Heightened Awareness Level 1 (1 point — Speciality. Typically, humans train Guard Dogs to respond to only one stimulus: controlled materials like drugs or explosives, or people that the handler cannot see but the dog can smell. Guard Dogs receive a -4 Bonus to detect this stimulus.)

Heightened Senses Level 2 (Smell and Hearing; 2 points)

Natural Weapons Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)

Speed Level 1 (1 point)

Defects

Owned by a Human (2 BP)

Skills

Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Grappling; 8 Skill Points)

➤ Standard Dog

The Standard Dog is pretty much any breed that is neither a Guard Dog or a Toy Dog. One common variant is the bulldog, which starts with Unarmed Attack 2 instead of 1. The bulldog is the symbol of tenacity, because of its resemblance to a certain wartime British Prime Minister and because it was originally bred to fight full-grown bulls. Cartoon bulldogs are almost invariably named "Spike."

The distinction between a Standard and Guard Dog is not just a matter of breed; it is a matter of training. A German Shepherd raised as a family pet is a Standard Dog; a German Shepherd raised by the Army is a Guard Dog. It costs 14 Character Points and 4 Skill Points to be a Standard Dog.

STATS

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 4

ATTRIBUTES

Heightened Senses Level 2 (Smell and Hearing; 2 points)
Natural Weapons Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)
Speed Level 1 (1 points)

DEFECTS

Not So Strong (1 BP)

SKILLS

Unarmed Attack Level 1 (Grappling; 4 Skill Points)

➤ Toy Dog

The typical Toy Dog has a reputation as an annoying yap-generator who is constantly getting in over his or her head. A non-player character toy dog, whom the PCs must keep alive for some reason, could be an intriguing adventure hook. It costs 9 Character Points and 4 Skill Points to be a toy dog.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 2

ATTRIBUTES

Heightened Senses Level 2 (Smell and Hearing; 2 points)
Speed Level 1 (1 point)

DEFECTS

Not So Strong (1 BP)
Not So Tough (1 BP)

SKILLS

Taunt Level 1 (4 Skill Points)

➤ FOX

The fox is a traditional trickster, and not above eating the occasional rodent. In contrast to the more pragmatic cats, a good con is more important to a typical fox than a good meal. All else being equal, they would much rather bamboozle their prey than eat it after a crude, yet successful, hunt. It costs 12 Character Points and 10 Skill Points to be a fox.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 4

ATTRIBUTES

Art of Distraction Level 1 (1 point)
Heightened Senses Level 2 (Smell and Hearing; 2 points)
Speed Level 1 (1 point)

DEFECTS

Not So Strong (1 BP)

Not So Tough (1 BP)

SKILLS

Disguise Level 1 (2 Skill Points)
Stealth Level 1 (1 Skill Point)
Taunt Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Wilderness Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

➤ WOLF

In the majority of genre fiction, the wolf is a solitary, and deadly opponent. In reality, wolves are team players, cheerfully subordinating their own wants and needs to those of their pack. A pack is run by the Alpha pair — a male and female — who are usually the parents of most pack members, and the only breeding pair. There are often one or two pack Betas who assist the Alpha pair. It costs 17 Character Points and 14 Skill Points to be a wolf.

STATS

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Focused Damage Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)
Heightened Senses Level 2 (Smell and Hearing; 2 points)
Natural Weapons Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)
Organizational Ties Level 1 (Wolf Pack; 1 point)
Speed Level 2 (2 points)

DEFECTS

None

SKILLS

Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Grappling; 8 Skill Points)
Wilderness Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)
Wilderness Tracking Level 1 (3 Skill Points)
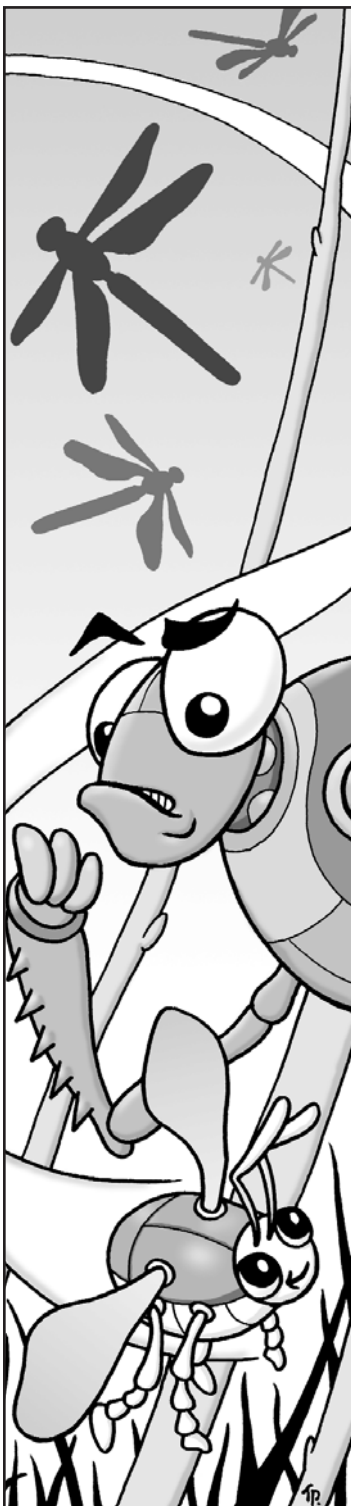
Dragonfly

The beautiful, iridescent wings of the dragonfly evoke the delicate grace of faeriekin, but any mosquito will tell you that these aggressive predators are more akin to an angry attack helicopter. If dragonflies and bats are around, being a bug is not really much fun. It costs 8 Character Points and 11 Skill Points to be a dragonfly.

STATS

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Flight Level 1 (Can Hover; 4 points)
Natural Weapons Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)

DEFECTS

Awkward Size (1 BP)
Diminutive (6 BP)

SKILLS

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Unarmed Attack Level 1 (Grappling; 4 Skill Points)
Wilderness Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

Fly

The common fly is a typical, although admittedly annoying, insect. Its ability to crawl on ceilings and fly make it an excellent scout. It costs 10 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a fly.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Heightened Awareness Level 1 (When looking for "Fly Food" — 1 point)
Heightened Senses Level 1 (Smell; 1 point)
Flight Level 1 (Can Hover; 4 points)
Special Movement Level 1 (Wall Crawling; 1 point)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (6 BP)

SKILLS

Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

GRASSHOPPER

STATS

According to tradition, grasshoppers are the lazy gadabouts of the insect kingdom, singing and lolling about in the sun while the more serious-minded ants busily store food for the coming winter. It costs 5 Character Points and 4 Skill Points to be a grasshopper.

STATS

Body 4, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

ATTRIBUTES

Art of Distraction Level 1 (1 point)
Jumping Level 2 (2 points)

DEFECTS

Awkward Size (1 BP)
Diminutive (6 BP)
Unique Character Defect: Laziness (1 BP)

SKILLS

Performing Arts Level 1 (Banjo; 1 Skill Point)
Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

➤ CRICKET

Symbolic of good luck in many cultures, the cricket is a popular pet. A cricket can grant its Divine Relationship re-rolls to other characters instead of just using them itself. Crickets are cousins of grasshoppers. It costs 9 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a cricket.

STATS

Body 3, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

ATTRIBUTES

Divine Relationship Level 3 (3 points)
Jumping Level 2 (2 points)
Unique Attribute Level 1 (luck is transferable; 1 point)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (6 BP)

SKILLS

Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)
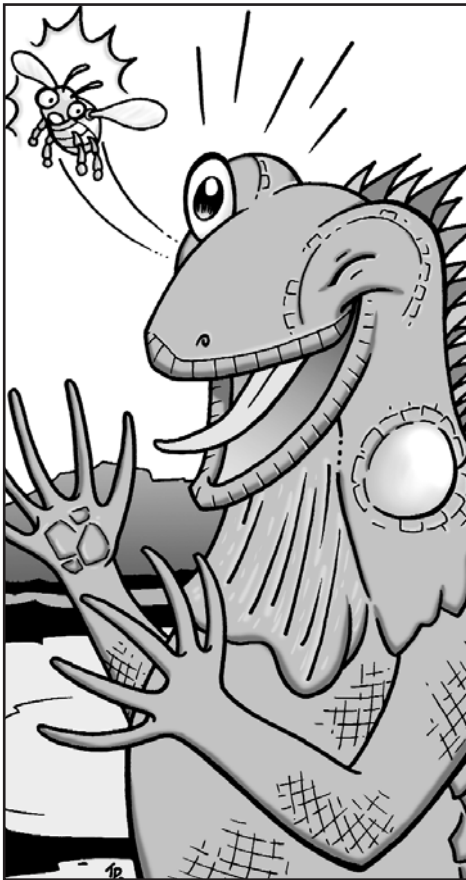
IGUANA

The reptilian iguana's life revolves around eating insects and basking in the sun. Many smaller reptiles (such as newts and salamanders) are available by simply taking an iguana, adding Diminutive and dropping Not So Strong and Not So Tough. It costs 8 Character Points and 15 Skill Points to be an iguana.

STATS

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Elasticity Level 1 (Tongue; 1 point)

DEFECTS

Not So Strong (1 BP)
Not So Tough (2 BP)

SKILLS

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Grappling; 8 Skill Points)
Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

➤ CHAMELEON

A varient of the iguana, the chameleon's famous ability to change skin colour is often exaggerated in *BESMouse* genre stories to total invisibility, which is reflected in its Attribute. For something more realistic, replace Invisibility with Stealth (Visual) at Level 3 and change the Character Point Cost for being a chameleon to 10. It costs 14 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to play this species.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Elasticity Level 1 (Tongue; 1 point)
Invisibility Level 1 (Invisible to vision and infrared; 6 points)
Special Movement Level 1 (Wall Crawling; 1 point)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP)

SKILLS

Unarmed Attack Level 1 (Grappling; 4 Skill Points)
Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

Leech

Like most animals that drink blood, leeches are more than a little jealous of the reputation and style. It is much cooler to be a fearsome terror of the night than an icky thing in the swamp. They frequently ride on the coattails of their larger, mammalian competitors, but have had limited success to date (and rarely earn good roles in *BESMouse* genre fiction). It costs 8 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a leech. GMs can assume that leeches can manipulate objects by extruding pseudopodia.

Stats

Body 3, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

Attributes

Special Attack Level 1 (Vampiric Bite: 15 Scratch Points Damage, Vampiric, Fangs, Melee Only; 4 points). This attack behaves like a Natural Weapon Fangs Attack (see *BESM*, page 122).

Water Speed 1 (Breathes Underwater, Swims 15 kph; 3 points)

Defect

Bane (1 BP, salt)

Diminutive (6 BP)

Unique Defect: Only Eats Blood (The character loses 1 Pep Point on waking up every day. He or she can only heal these points by using the Vampiric Special Attack; 1 BP)

Skills

Unarmed Attack Level 1 (Grappling; 4 Skill Points)

Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

Lightning Bug

The most notable characteristic of a lightning bug is its glowing abdomen, which it uses to signal potential mates. Female lightning bugs are actually glowworms (since only the males can fly), but genre fiction routinely overlooks this point of biology. In a *BESMouse* campaign, of course, characters can use it to illuminate areas, signal Morse Code, and blind enemies. It costs 14 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a lightning bug.

Stats

Body 3, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

Attributes

Environmental Control Level 1 (Abdominal Light: Light, affecting a room; 1 point)

Flight Level 1 (Can Hover; 4 points)

Special Attack Level 1 (Strobe Abdomen: Flare, Area Effect, Melee, No Damage. Body roll to defend made at +2 Penalty; 4 points)

Special Defense Level 2 (Completely immune to own Flare Attack. Since Flare Attacks from others can affect them, the cost is reduced by one point; 1 point)

Special Movement Level 1 (Wall Crawling; 1 point)

Defects

Diminutive (6 BP)

Skills

Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

Mole

The mole is a timid, burrowing insectivore. Despite its reputation, it has excellent night vision; the version below is a typical fictional mole. Most moles in genre fiction are to be solid, respectable citizens, somewhat like the fantasy stereotype of the Halfling. Typical enemies include people who try to grow plants with edible roots (like tulips, potatoes, and carrots) and, of course, cats. It costs 11 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a mole.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Tunnelling Level 3 (6 points)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP)
Sensory Impairment (Near-Sighted; 1 BP)

SKILLS

Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

Mouse

The humble mouse is the "Official Talking Animal" of American animation. This rodent's dominance in the genre remains unchallenged. Mice can be the default animal in a *BESMouse* campaign, and much of what can be called "small animal culture" derives from mice. It costs 5 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a mouse.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP)
Easily Distracted (Cheese; 1 BP)

SKILLS

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

➢ Grasshopper Mouse

The grasshopper mouse is a curious argument for parallel evolution in behaviour. A fierce predator, the grasshopper mouse eats crawling insects and, oddly, behaves much like a wolf when doing so. They will even howl to mark their territory. Although grasshopper mice have not made an appearance in genre entertainment, they seem tailor-made for the role of quasi-nomadic barbarians to raise the Call of the Wild. See the entry for Wolves on page 23 for notes about Grasshopper Mouse social order and Organizational Ties — the same pack structure applies.

A grasshopper mouse has the same gaming statistics as a common mouse, except they must have Organization Ties Level 1 for 1 point, Wilderness Survival Skill at Level 1 (they may purchase Urban Survival in addition to Wilderness Survival), Wilderness Tracking Level 1 for 3 Skill Points, and Unarmed Combat (Grappling) Level 1 for 4 Skill Points. It costs 6 Character Points and 14 Skill Points to be a grasshopper mouse.

Naked Mole Rat

Naked mole rats are, taxonomically, neither moles nor rats. These animals are naked, however, which means they lack hair or fur. Their actual social order echoes that of ants or termites; they dig vast, underground burrows and live in huge colonies with a single fertile female. They seem perfect for the role of a dark, shadowy conspiracy. Give them a good deep voice and a mysterious, manipulative plan, and they are ready to take centre stage in a rodent version of *X-Files*. It costs 12 Character Points to play a naked mole rat. You must also spend Skill Points on your Colony Function Skill as described above.

STATS

Body 3, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

Tunnelling Level 3 (6 points)

DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP)

SKILLS

At least Level 3 in a Skill justified as your Colony Function — Intimidation if you leer at outsiders, etc.

Rabbit

Rabbits live in co-operative warrens, but lack the extreme pack mentality of the social insects. They make good characters for rural adventures; those in urban settings are normally pets. A cat will be wary around an adult rabbit, but dogs are more likely to give chase. It costs 13 Character Points and 11 Skill Points to be a rabbit.

Stats

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 3

Attributes

Heightened Senses Level 1 (Hearing; 1 point)
Jumping Level 1 (1 point)
Natural Weapons Level 1 (Claws; 1 point)
Tunnelling Level 1 (2 points)

Defects

Not So Strong (1 BP)
Not So Tough (1 BP)

Skills

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Unarmed Attack 1 (Striking; 4 Skill Points)
Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

Racoon

Racoons have adapted to a wide variety of environments, and are among the few wild animals that have thrived despite (or because of) expanding human settlements. With their own set of dextrous hands, in fact, they seem custom-made for their reputation as mischievous, and sometimes destructive, pranksters. It costs 11 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a racoon.

Stats

Body 5, Mind 3, Soul 3

Attributes

Heightened Senses Level 1 (Night Vision; 1 point)
Natural Weapons Level 1 (Claws; 1 point)

Defects

Not So Strong (1 BP)
Not So Tough (1 BP)

Skills

Unarmed Attack Level 1 (Grappling; 4 Skill Points)
Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

RAT

Physically larger than their mice cousins, rats have a nastier reputation. In genre material, they play heavies, although both *Secret of NIMH* and *Wind in the Willows* are striking exceptions. Their roles as occasional experimental animals makes them excellent candidates for terrifying experiments in Things-Man-Was-Not-Meant-To-Know. In real life, the rat's career as a vector for disease has made it the most dangerous mammal on the planet to humans statistically. It costs 6 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a rat.

STATS

Body 4, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

DEFECTS

Awkward Size (1 BP)
Diminutive (3 BP)

SKILLS

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

➤ KANGAROO RAT

The Kangaroo Rat is a minor varient of the basic rat that can leap several times its own length. Use the template for rats, but add Jumping Level 2 (2 points). It costs 8 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a Kangaroo Rat.

➤ PACKRAT

Nature's little thief, packrats are likely to grab and make off with just about anything left unattended (especially if said item is shiny) or important to the adventure's plot. Use the template for a mouse (page 28), but change Cheese to Shiney Things and add Unique Defect: Kleptomania for 1 BP. A character with kleptomania must make a successful Soul check whenever there is a chance to steal something shiny. It costs 4 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a packrat.

Shrew

Shrews are effectively small mice, and one of the few mammals with a poisonous bite. It costs 9 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be a shrew.

STATS

>**Body 3**, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

ATTRIBUTES

>**Special Attack Level 1** (Poisonous Bite: 15 Scratch Points, Burning, Accurate, Melee; 4 points)

DEFECTS

>**Diminutive** (3 BP)
>**Not So Strong** (1 BP)

SKILLS

>**Stealth Level 1** (4 Skill Points)
>**Wilderness** or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

Snake

One of the more striking animals because of its limbless body, snakes are highly varied creatures. Certain species can glide like a flying squirrel, or see into the infrared spectrum.

➢ Non-Venomous Snake

There is a wide range of non-venomous snakes, most commonly the Gardener Snake in an urban setting. Non-poisonous snakes cost 7 Character Points and 15 Skill Points.

STATS

>**Body 3**, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

ATTRIBUTES

>**Elasticity Level 2** (2 points)

DEFECTS

>**No Arms** (2 BP)
>**Not So Strong** (1 BP)
>**Not So Tough** (1 BP)

Skills

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Grappling; 8 Skill Points)
Wilderness or Urban Survival Level 1 (3 Skill Points)

➢ Constrictor

The largest snakes are constrictors. Constrictor snakes do not have fangs or tentacles but to represent their uncanny ability to wrestle, the game version assigns them. It costs 12 Character Points and 15 Skill Points to be a constrictor.

Stats

Body 4, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

Attributes

Elasticity Level 2 (2 points)
Natural Weapons Level 2 (Fang, Tentacles; 2 points)

Defects

No Arms (2 BP)

Skills

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Grappling; 8 Skill Points)
Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

➢ Venomous Snake

Many snakes do indeed have the Diminutive Defect, but since some snakes are pretty big, this is not included in their templates. This template is a viper, one of the most venomous snakes in the world. Snakes may not have legs, but they are quite fast. Being very slender, snakes can also slither through holes as though they had the Diminutive Defect at 3 BP. It costs 11 Character Points and 15 Skill Points to be a venomous snake.

Stats

Body 3, **Mind 3**, **Soul 3**

Attributes

Elasticity Level 2 (2 points)
Special Attack Level 1 (Venomous Bite: 150 Scratch Points, Burning (slow burn), Melee; 4 points)

Defects

No Arms (2 BP)
Not So Strong (1 BP)
Not So Tough (1 BP)

Skills

Stealth Level 1 (4 Skill Points)
Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Grappling; 8 Skill Points)
Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

Spider

Spiders are not, technically, insects; they are arachnids. Calling a spider an "insect" is likely to incur its fury. Broadly speaking, spiders fall into two groups: those that spin webs and the somewhat larger spiders that catch their prey from ambush or by running.

➢ Web Spider

In genre fiction, a web spider is typically a conniving, subtle killer, with the major exception of the title character from E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*. It costs 14 Character Points and 8 Skill Points to be a web spider.

Stats

Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 2

Attributes

Natural Attack Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)
Special Attack Level 2 (Web Shooting: 8 Scratch Points Damage, Tangle, Area Effect, Auto Fire, Tangle, No Damage, Short Range, Static; 8 points)
Special Attack Level 2 (Web Trap: 60 Scratch Points Damage, Tangle, Area Effect, Trap, Tangle, No Damage, Melee Only, Slow x 2; 2 points)
Special Movement Level 1 (Wall Crawling; 1 point)

Defects

Awkward Size (1 BP)
Diminutive (6 BP)

Skills

Ranged Attack Level 1 (Webbing; 5 Skill Points)
Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

➢ Ambush Spider

Ambush spiders are generally larger, and they lack webbing. Weapon Attacks can include poisonous bites if the spider is especially venomous; see the venomous snake (page 33) for an example of poison. It costs 6 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be an ambush spider. In tropical areas, some spiders are large enough to hunt for fish. These creatures are ambush spiders except they have Diminutive (3 BP). It costs 9 Character Points and 7 Skill Points to be such a spider. Some naturalists theorize there may be cat-sized spiders somewhere in the Amazon jungle.

Stats

Body 5, Mind 3, Soul 3

Attributes

Natural Attack Level 1 (Fangs; 1 point)
Special Movement Level 1 (Wall Crawling; 1 point)

Defects

Awkward Size (1 BP)
Diminutive (6 BP)

Skills

Unarmed Attack Level 1 (4 Skill Points, Grapple)
Wilderness or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

Squirrel

The squirrel is a surprisingly adaptable creature. Arboreal squirrels live in forests (or cities) and can clamber up trees with incredible speed, but there are other types as well.

➢ Tree Squirrel

These squirrels are the most common in genre fiction. It costs 9 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a tree squirrel.

STATS

> Body 4, Mind 3, Soul 3

ATTRIBUTES

> **Special Movement Level 3** (Wall-Crawling, Balance, Catlike; 3 points)

DEFECTS

> **Awkward Size** (1 BP)
> **Diminutive** (3 BP)

SKILLS

> **Wilderness** or **Urban Survival Level 1** (3 Skill Points)

➢ Ground Squirrel

These include plains-dwelling ground squirrels, and the Arctic ground squirrel — a creature so well adapted to the cold its body temperature actually drops below the freezing point of water while hibernating. A ground squirrel is like a tree squirrel, with Special Movement 1 (Wall Crawling; 1 point) and Tunnelling 2 (4 points) It costs 11 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a ground squirrel.

➢ Flying Squirrel

The flying squirrel cannot truly fly, but it can glide. If it is absolutely necessary that a flying squirrel take off from ground level, consider the use of convenient thermals, rocket packs, or the traditional overhand toss by a friendly moose. Flying squirrels are like tree squirrels, with the addition of Flight Level 1 (Glider; 2 points). It costs 11 Character Points and 3 Skill Points to be a flying squirrel.
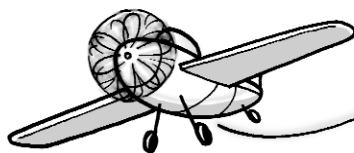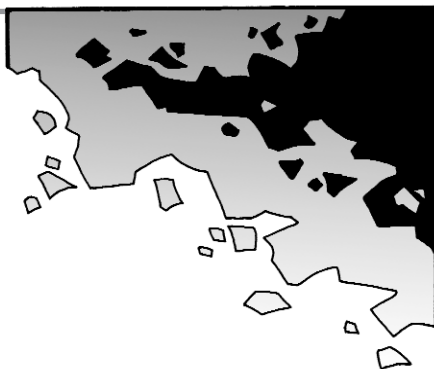
Step 3:
Assign Stats

The GM can place limits on the highest Stats he or she will allow player characters to have in his or her game. Playing a squirrel who is far stronger than the average human and more agile than a cat has its charms, but many GMs may opt not to allow characters who seem just a bit too "far out." In general, PCs should not exceed the template's Body Stat by more than four points without the GM's special permission.

Example: In addition to the starting Stats included with the Mouse species template, Albert buys an extra two points of Body, five points of Mind, and one point of Soul. This costs eight Character Points. Since his Mouse template started with a score of three in each Stat, this gives him the following Stats:

Body 5, Mind 8, Soul 4

He has 22 Character Points and 13 Skill Points remaining.

Step 4:
Character
Attributes

The *BESMouse* genre is, intrinsically, fantasy, but this does not mean player characters can automatically purchase any and all of the Attributes in the game. It is up to the GM to decide which Attributes are "realistic" for starting talking rodent characters, whatever that means. The GM should remember, however, that some Special Attributes are entirely natural for animals.

With permission from the GM, players starting from a template may choose to drop Attributes that come with that template for Character Points. It is possible, therefore, to play a fly who cannot fly. Some GMs may consider this absurd and refuse to allow it; others might see it as a unique and interesting character hook.

Additionally, this does not prevent the GM from unleashing non-player characters with truly paranormal abilities against the players. See *BESM*, page 78.

EXAMPLE: Albert decides to buy the following Attributes:

Divine Relationship Level 2 *(2 points)*

Focused Damage Level 2 *(Mechanical Contrivances; 2 points)*

Bill asks Mary, the GM, if she will allow him to tweak the rules for this Attribute. Instead of specifying one specific attack that does an extra 10 Scratch Points, Bill wants to do an extra 10 Scratch points of damage to all mechanical contrivances, regardless of the attack type. Mary considers; the tweak does match Bill's character concept, and since it is unlikely he will be facing robots in combat, it does not seemingly unbalance the game. She decides to allow it.

Highly Skilled Level 3 *(3 points. This gives him an additional 30 Skill Points)*

Own a Big Mecha Level 3 *(12 points. This gives him 60 Mecha Points)*

Mechanical Genius Level 4 *(8 points)*

Personal Gear Level 2 *(2 points). This gives him two Major and eight Minor items.* Albert elects to take a Wrist Computer (see page 60) and a mouse-sized parachute as his Major items, because the computer matches his character concept and he is well aware that cartoon mice often fall from great heights. For his Minor items, he selects a suction cup line gun, an LED flashlight, a can opener, a gas mask (for visiting skunks), a two-metre coil of fishing line, a spare battery for his computer, a mouse-sized multi-tool, and a six-inch pole.

These cost 29 points. Albert is 7 Character Points over (he needs Defects) and has 43 Skill Points available (after subtracting those points used to acquire his template's Skills).

Step 5: Character Defects

With GM permission, players starting with a template may choose to "buy off" Defects intrinsic to that species. The GM should consider this carefully, however, since these Defects are often integral to the way the species works. A mouse completely indifferent to cheese could be an amusing and valid character, but a mouse the size of human being might not work in the campaign the GM is trying to craft.

EXAMPLE: Albert the mouse already has Easily Distracted 1 at 1 BP (Cheese) and Diminutive at 3 BP, but these are included in the cost of his template, so he needs another 7 points. Bill considers giving his character Significant Other, but decides it would be more amusing if Albert would like to find a mate instead of already having one. Instead, Bill chooses the following Defects:

Marked *(Purple Fur; 2 BP)*

Nemesis *(Monica is trying to hunt Albert down; 1 BP)*

Recurring Nightmares *(While with Monica, Albert saw a picture of a statue of the Egyptian cat goddess, Sekhmet. Since then, the thought of a cat with hands and technology frequently wakes him up screaming; 1 BP)*

Volatile *(Monica's genetic manipulation has made Albert explosive; 1 BP)*

Bill's game plan is to reserve at least one of his die re-rolls from Divine Relationship to re-roll a bad Volatility roll at all times. Bill hopes that Albert's quirky background is worth the other two Character Points he needs.

Step 6: Skills

The Skill Point costs from the Modern Military campaign are the best mesh for the *BESMouse* genre, since mice and similar creatures are often engaged in what amounts to urban commando operations. If the GM chooses a different Skill Point Cost structure, he or she should be sure to alter the Skill Point costs in each template as well.

With GM permission, players starting with a template may choose to remove Skills intrinsic to that species. The GM should consider this carefully, however, since Skills are often integral to the way the species work; a chipmunk who cannot climb does not make much sense.

> **EXAMPLE:** *Being a mouse, Albert starts with the following Skills in his template:*
> **Stealth Level 1** *(4 points)*
> **Wilderness** *or* **Urban Survival Level 1** *(3 Points)*
>
> *He selects* **Urban** *for his Survival Skill, and he selects the following:*
> **Computers Level 2** *(Hacking; 8 Skill Points)*
> **Demolition Level 2** *(Breaching Obstacles; 6 Skill Points)*
> **Driving Level 1** *(Submarines; 4 Skill Points)*
> **Electronics Level 2** *(Computers; free for Mechanical Genius)*
> **Mechanics Level 2** *(Vehicles; free for Mechanical Genius)*
> **Piloting Level 2** *(VTOL Aircraft; 8 Points)*
> **Taunt Level 2** *(8 Points)*
> **Unarmed Defense Level 2** *(Grapple; 8 Skill Points)*
> **Writing Level 1** *(Technical; 1 Skill Point)*
>
> *Albert's Skill Point total now equals 50*

Step 7: Derived Values

Calculate Derived Values for the character using the rules in *BESM* (page 71) with the modifications described below:

The chief difference between basic *BESM* characters and *BESMouse* characters is that *BESM* characters have Health Points and inflict Damage Points when fighting, while *BESMouse* characters have Pep Points and inflict Scratch Points. Five Scratch Points equal one Damage Point; five Pep Points equal one Health Point. This up-scaling allows a better representation of much small creatures.

If a character has both Diminutive and Not So Tough, apply the modifiers for Not So Tough before Diminutive to determine Pep Points.

Without The Diminutive Defect

To calculate Pep Points for a character without the Diminutive Defect, add Body plus Soul, multiply by five, and add any modifiers for Damn Healthy! and Not So Tough to determine the character's Health Points (as in *BESM*). Finally, multiply the result by 5 to determine their Pep Points. **[(Body + Soul) x 5] x 5**

EXAMPLE: Balrog the Cat has Body 6 and Soul 5. He does not have the Diminutive Defect, but does have Not So Tough at 2 BP. Balrog has [(6 + 5) x 5] –20 = 35 Health Points, 175 Pep Points (35 x 5 = 175).

With The Diminutive Defect Level 1

To calculate Pep Points for a character with the Diminutive Defect Level 1, add Body plus Soul, multiply by 5, and then add or subtract any modifiers for Damn Healthy! or Not So Tough. **(Body + Soul) x 5**

EXAMPLE: Albert has (5 + 4) x 5, or 45 Pep Points.

With The Diminutive Defect Level 2

To calculate Pep Points for a character with the Diminutive Defect Level 2, add Body plus Soul, multiply by 5, and then add or subtract any modifiers for Damn Healthy! or Not So Tough. Then divide the results by four, rounding to the nearest whole number. **([Body + Soul] x 5) ÷ 4**

EXAMPLE: Button the Firefly has Body 4 and Soul 6, Diminutive at Level 2, and Damn Healthy! Level 1. Button has ([[(4 + 6) x 5] + 10]÷ 4) = 15 Pep Points.

Combat Value, Energy Points & Shock Value

Combat Value, Energy Points and Shock Value are not modified by the Dimuntive Defect and are calculated normally as indicated in *BESM* (page 71). The only exception to this is the character's Shock Value, which may be measured in Pep Points rather than Health Points. The calculation of the value does not change, however.

EXAMPLE: Albert's Attack Combat Value is (5 + 8 + 4) ÷ 3 = 17÷3 = 5. His Defense Combat Value is two less than that, or 3.

Albert's Energy Points are (5 + 8) x 5 = 65.

Albert's Shock Value is equal to 45 ÷ 5 rounded up, or 9. This Shock Value, however, is in Pep Points, not Health Points.

Step 8: Background Points

Background Points help your character come to life (see *BESM*, page 73).

EXAMPLE: Mary thinks Albert makes an excellent addition to the team, since Bill will generate Albert's previous owner, Monica, as an NPC foe when the battle against the Greys grows tedious. Since Mary finds the idea of an explosive mouse extremely amusing, she gives Albert two Background Points.

Chapter 2: Game Mechanics
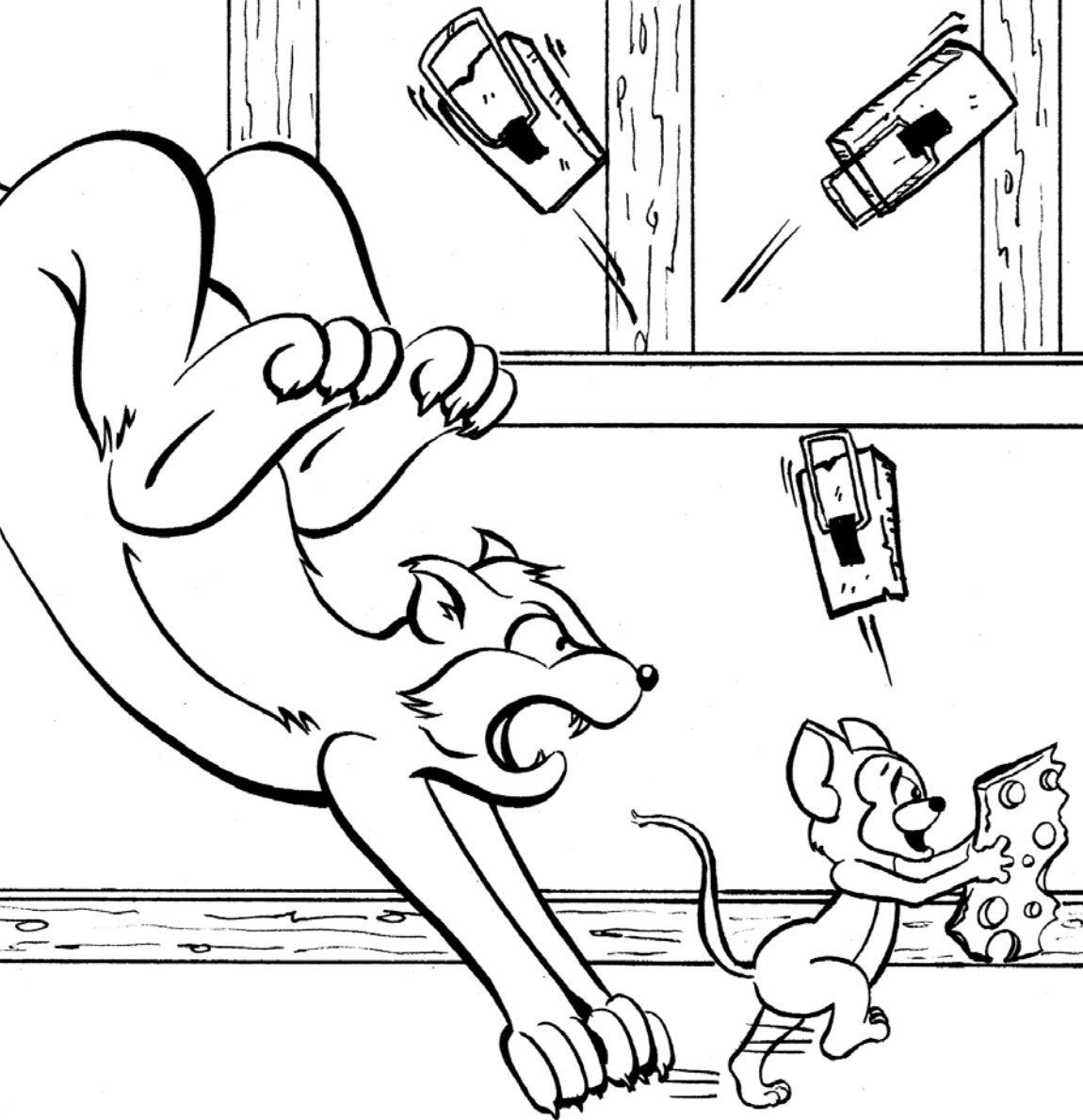
This chapter discusses special rules that apply to the *BESMouse* genre, and explains why some rules, which work well in a human-scale campaign, cause problems when dealing with mice and insects.

Health Points and Damage Points

Blows that a human can ignore will kill a fly or send a mouse reeling. If your game only contains human characters, the fact that rats and mice deliver the same number of Damage points in combat is not important. This can be a problem, however, if you are running a mixed game with mice protagonists (or characters with the Diminutive Defect).

To avoid these scaling difficulties, *BESMouse* uses Pep Points instead of Health Points, and Scratch Points instead of Damage Points. Five Pep Points are equal to one Health Point, and five Scratch Points are equal to one Damage Point. Refer to the rules on page 38-39 concerning Derived Values.

EXAMPLE: *In Mary's campaign, most of the player characters have the Diminutive Defect, and thus her game uses Pep Points and Scratch Points. Albert, the mouse, converts his 9 Health Points into 45 Pep Points. Albert's human Nemesis is Monica; her 40 Health Points become 200 Pep Points.*

➤ Calculating Scratch Point Damage

In a *BESMouse* campaign, attack damage is not less for those characters with the Diminutive Defect (3 BP), as the *BESM* rulebook suggests. Instead, attacks inflict Scratch Points rather than Damage Points. Characters with Diminutive Defect (6 BP) deliver less damage, since they are smaller than mice. To determine the Scratch Points these tiny characters inflict during combat, calculate the attack damage normally and then divide by four, rounding up to the nearest whole number. Characters without the Diminutive Defect inflict Scratch Points equal to their normal damage multiplied by five.

EXAMPLE: *Albert has the Diminutive Defect (3 BP) and an Attack Combat Value of 5. If he attacked someone without a weapon, he would inflict 5 Scratch Points of damage. If he used a mouse-sized sword that had a Damage Value of 5, he would inflict 10 Scratch Points of damage.*

EXAMPLE: *Button the Firefly is a master swordsman who fights with two tiny wakizashi. He has Body 5, Mind 4, Soul 6, Acrobatics Level 3, Chanbara Master Kensei Level 1 (see BESM, page 33), Combat Mastery Level 1, and Diminutive (6 BP). The 6 BP version of Diminutive means he divides his damage by four. He has an Attack Combat Value of 6. Using a wakizashi attack while leaping, Button delivers 6 Scratch Points: 6 (Attack Combat Value) + 10 (Damage bonus for a wakizashi) + 5 (Chanbara bonus) + 3 (for Acrobatics) = 24. 24 ÷ 4 (Diminutive 6 BP) = 6 Scratch Points.*

Since it can be cumbersome calculating the Scratch Points inflicted by an attack in the middle of a game, it is recommended that you determine the damage delivered by your character with a variety of attack Skills before the game actually begins.

Dying

    BESM states that a character must fall to -20 Health Points before he or she dies (*BESM*, page 212). Consequently, a character without the Diminutive Defect consequently does not die until -100 Pep Points. A character with the Diminutive Defect for 3 BP will die at -20 Pep Points, while a character with the Diminutive Defect for 6 BP will die at -5 Pep Points. All characters will fall unconscious upon reaching 0 Pep Points.

Critical Damage

    The critical damage multipliers (see *BESM*, page 211) apply directly to Scratch Points. In a *BESMouse* campaign, the GM should use the "Quadruple Health Point Damage" Critical Hit options rather than "Automatic Kill." When the "Automatic Kill" option is available, a flea bite has the chance of killing a human.

    EXAMPLE: Button the Firefly is attacking Monica with a Chanbara wakizashi attack. Normally, this does 6 Scratch Points, as noted above. Button, however, rolls a Critical Hit, and then rolls a 6 on BESM Table 4-5 to inflict quadruple damage. Monica suffers 6 x 4 = 24 Scratch Points.

Animal Friendship

    Animal Friendship, as defined, only works on creatures with a Mind Stat less than three, and who lack language abilities. GMs can ignore this limitation in a *BESMouse* game, however, since very few animals would qualify. The GM should consider limiting this Attribute to human characters. Animal characters should buy Aura of Command or some similar Attribute instead.

    Non-player human characters may use Animal Friendship on player character animals. The GM should realize that animals will not abandon their friends and most cherished beliefs under the influence of Animal Friendship — they are merely kindly disposed towards the human unless the human acts with hostility.

    The GM may allow animal characters to buy a new Attribute called Human Friendship instead. This Attribute works much like Animal Friendship; if successful, the human thinks the animal is cute and is unlikely to harm it. In this context, stealing a human's food is considered a hostile act, although the human may choose to give the animal a morsel or two while under its influence.

Heavy and Light Armour

The amount of protection provided by the Heavy and Light Armour Attributes is affected if the armoured character has the Diminutive Defect. **Table 3-1: Armour and Diminutive** shows the Scratch Point protection at different levels for both Attributes.

Table 3-1: Armour and Diminutive
Heavy Armour/Light Armour Scratch Point Protection

Level	No Diminutive	Diminutive 3BP	Diminutive 6 BP
1	50/10	10/2	3/1
2	100/25	20/5	5/1
3	150/35	30/7	8/2
4	200/50	40/10	10/3
5	250/60	50/12	13/3
6	300/75	60/15	15/4

Super-Strength

A character with Diminutive and Super-Strength (see *BESM*, page 148) cannot generally carry as heavy a load as someone with Super-Strength but no Diminutive Defect. The genre has several exceptions, however — sometimes a mouse really can carry a motorcycle. For this reason, the GM should consider the following rule options.

➢ Super-Strength with Diminutive 3 BP

Level 1   The character can lift 1/2 kilogram. Close Combat Damage +10 Scratch Points.

Level 2   The character can lift 2 kilograms. Close Combat Damage +20 Scratch Points.

Level 3   The character can lift 10 kilograms. Close Combat Damage +30 Scratch Points.

Level 4   The character can lift 50 kilograms. Close Combat Damage +40 Scratch Points.

Level 5   The character can lift 250 kilograms. Close Combat Damage +50 Scratch Points.

Level 6   The character can lift 1,000 kilograms. Close Combat Damage +60 Scratch Points.

➢ Super-Strength with Diminutive 6 BP

Level 1   The character can lift 10 grams. Close Combat Damage +3 Scratch Points.

Level 2   The character can lift 40 grams. Close Combat Damage +5 Scratch Points.

Level 3   The character can lift 200 grams. Close Combat Damage +8 Scratch Points.

Level 4   The character can lift 1 kilogram. Close Combat Damage +10 Scratch Points.

Level 5   The character can lift 5 kilograms. Close Combat Damage +13 Scratch Points.

Level 6   The character can lift 20 kilograms. Close Combat Damage +15 Scratch Points.

Telekinesis

A character's Diminutive Defect will affect the amount he or she can lift with the Telekinesis Attribute (see *BESM*, page 151).

➢ Telekinesis with Diminutive 3 BP

Level 1 The character can telekinetically lift up to 10 grams.
Level 2 The character can telekinetically lift up to 100 grams.
Level 3 The character can telekinetically lift up to 1 kilogram.
Level 4 The character can telekinetically lift up to 10 kilograms.
Level 5 The character can telekinetically lift up to 100 kilograms.
Level 6 The character can telekinetically lift up to 1000 kilograms.

➢ Telekinesis With Diminutive 6 BP

Level 1 The character can telekinetically lift up to 0.5 grams.
Level 2 The character can telekinetically lift up to 5 grams.
Level 3 The character can telekinetically lift up to 50 grams.
Level 4 The character can telekinetically lift up to 500 grams.
Level 5 The character can telekinetically lift up to 5 kilograms.
Level 6 The character can telekinetically lift up to 50 kilograms.

Awkward Size

The Awkward Size Defect (see *BESM*, page 182) is applicable to both characters and to any mecha they might build, since the two Levels of the Diminutive Defect cover a very wide range of sizes.

Remember that Awkward Size is a Defect and has no effect on damage or Health/Pep Points. If Albert, a mouse with 45 Pep Points, was assigned Awkward Size (3 BP), he would simply be a human-sized mouse with the same 45 Pep points. If the GM wanted to make Albert human-sized with 45 Health Points, the GM would "buy off" Albert's Diminutive Defect instead.

➢ Awkward Size with Diminutive (3 BP)

1 BP Bulky, like a can of soda. Mass: 250 grams. Cannot move through narrow holes that mice normally negotiate with ease.

2 BP Large, like a cat or two-litre soda bottle. Mass: 1-10 kilograms. Cannot pass through mouse-sized doors. A character with arms and two or more BP of Awkward Size cannot use tools designed for the hands of a mouse.

3 BP Very large, like a wolf or human. Mass: 10-100 kilograms.

4 BP Huge, like a compact car or a human's bed. Mass: 100-1000 kilograms. Cannot fit through human-sized doors easily.

5 BP Gigantic, like a large tractor trailer or elephant. Mass: 1-10 tonnes.

6 BP Titanic, like an army tank. Mass: 10-100 tonnes.

➢ Awkward Size with Diminutive (6 BP)

1 BP   Bulky, like an AAA-sized battery. Mass: 1-10 grams. Cannot move through ant tunnels that the builders normally negotiate with ease.

2 BP   Large, like a mouse. Mass: 10-100 grams. A character with arms and two or more BP of Awkward Size cannot use tools designed for ant hands.

3 BP   Very large, like a one-litre bottle of soda. Mass: 100-1000 grams.

4 BP   Huge, like a two-litre bottle of soda, a cat, or a football. Mass: 1-10 kilograms.

5 BP   Gigantic, like a large dog. Mass: 10-50 kilograms.

6 BP   Titanic, like an adult human. Mass: 50-100 kilograms.

Weapon Attack Abilities

Weapon Attack Abilities (see *BESM*, page 160-167) differ slightly when building Mecha at scales smaller than human.

Base Damage

If a character does not possess the Diminutive Defect, multiply the Damage Points delivered by an attack by five to convert into Scratch Points.

EXAMPLE: *Monica the human designs a personal weapon with 5 Levels of damage (personal weapons do 5 Damage Points per Level, not 15). Since Monica does not have the Diminutive Defect, the weapon inflicts 125 Scratch Points. 5 (Level) x 5 (points per Level) x 5 (base damage multiplier for a character without Diminutive) = 125.*

If the character has Diminutive (3 BP), the attack delivers Scratch Points as damage.

EXAMPLE: *Albert the mouse designs a weapon. It is a personal weapon with 5 Levels of damage. Since Albert has Diminutive (3 BP), the weapon inflicts 25 Scratch Points. 5 (Level) x 5 (points per Level) = 25.*

If the character has Diminutive (6 BP), divide the Damage Points delivered by four (round up) to determine the Scratch Points damage that the attack inflicts.

EXAMPLE: *Button the firefly designs a weapon. It is a personal device with 5 Levels of damage. Since Button has Diminutive (6 BP), the weapon inflicts 6 Scratch Points. 5 (Level) x 5 (points per Level) ÷ 4 (Base damage multiplier for a character with 6 BP Diminutive) = 6 Scratch Points.*

Area Effect

Area Effect weapons cover a radius of one metre for every three Damage Points. Since the base damage of weapons built at smaller scales is reduced, the radius of damage is equally less. Weapons with Area Effect cover a radius of 20 centimetres for every three Scratch Points of damage they produce. While this scale does not actually change the radius of effect when compared to the damage, it does make it an easier calculation (conversion to Damage Points is not required).

Drain Energy, Drain Mind, Drain Soul, Flare, Incapacitating, Irritant, Soul Attack

These attacks are equally effective regardless of the Diminutive Defect of the attacker. A human, for example, with a weapon attack with one Level of damage inflicts 15 Damage Points and drains 15 Energy Points, which is 75 Scratch Points and 15 Energy points. A fly with an Energy Drain attack with one Damage Level will inflict 15 ÷ 4 = 4 Scratch Points and drain 15 Energy Points. Both attacks cost the same in Character Points.

The Diminutive Defect reduces the amount of physical damage a character inflicts, but leaves the amount of psychic damage done unchanged. While one Health Point = 5 Scratch Points, one human Energy Point is equal to one mouse's Energy Point or one fly's Energy Point.

Long and Short Range

Table 3-2: Long and Short Ranges summarizes the effects of combining different Levels of Diminutive and the Long and Short Range attack Abilities and Disabilities:

Table 3-2: Long and Short Ranges

	No Diminutive	Diminutive (3 BP)	Diminutive (6 BP)
Short Range	50 m	2.5 m	12.5 cm
Base Range	500 m	25 m	125 cm
Long Range	5000 m	250 m	12.5 m
(In Space)			
Short Range	1 km	50 m	2.5 m
Base Range	10 km	500 m	25 m
Long Range	100 km	5 km	250 m

Drain Body, Quake, Tangle, Stun

The size of the target modifies the effectiveness of these attacks. To Drain one point of Body from a human-scale target, the attack must inflict 75 Scratch Points. To drain one point of Body from a rodent-scale (Diminutive at 3 BP) target, the attack must deliver 15 Scratch Points of damage. To drain one point of Body from a character with Diminutive (6 BP), the attack must inflict 4 Scratch Points.

The GM may allow multiple attacks to have a cumulative effect on larger targets if each attack drains less than one point of Body from the victim. Thus, a mosquito that delivers 4 Scratch Points with a Drain Body attack will reduce a human's Body Stat by one point after inflicting a total of 75 Scratch Points (19 successful hits). The same mosquito reduces a mouse's Body Stat by one after inflicting 15 Scratch Points (4 hits successful hits).

EXAMPLE: An attack with Drain Body that inflicts 150 Scratch Points will drain 2 points of Body from a human, 10 points of Body from a mouse, or 38 points of Body from a glowworm (which is moot since the maximum Body Stat is 12).

To determine the approximate depth of a crevice made by a Quake attack, calculate the depth as though the attack were made in Damage Points, and then divide by five for characters with Diminutive (3 BP), or by 20 for characters with Diminutive (6 BP).

Example: A Quake attack that does 60 Damage Points will make a crevice eight metres deep. If a character does 60 Scratch Points in a Quake attack, the crevice will be 160 cm deep (800 cm ÷ 5 = 160 cm).

Example: An attack that does 60 points of Stun damage to a fly will deliver 15 points of Stun damage to a mouse or 3 points of Stun damage to a human.

Weapon Attack Disabilities

Use the following modifications when assigning Weapon Attack Disabilities (see *BESM*, pages 168 — 171) to small-scale weapons.

Backblast

A weapon built for someone with Diminutive (3 BP) has a backblast range of 10-20 centimetres, or 1-2 centimetres for a weapon built for someone with Diminutive (6 BP).

Uses Energy

Although characters with the Diminutive Defect do less damage with attacks, the Energy Point requirements of these attacks are not reduced.

Diminutive

The Diminutive Defect (see *BESM*, page 184) impacts combat in different ways: small things can gang up on big things; big things are harder for smaller things to affect; smaller targets are harder to hit with a ranged weapon; and smaller things are easier to kill and do less damage than larger things.

A character with the Diminutive Defect for 3 BP is roughly the size of a mouse while a character with the Diminutive Defect for 6 BP is roughly the size of a bee. Since squirrels and grasshoppers are significantly bigger than mice or bees respectively, their templates include the "Awkward Size" Defect in addition to Diminutive. The *BESMouse* genre assumes rodent and insect societies are highly mouse- and ant-centric.

Ganging Up (Optional)

Being small has few advantages, although it is much easier for a bunch of mice to bite a human than it is for a bunch of humans to pounce on a single mouse. The number of characters who can attack another character in melee combat in a single round depends on the size of the attackers and the size of the target. Only two mice can effectively attack an ant in the same round, for example; conversely, thousands of ants can swarm a human in a single attack. Swarming limitations apply only to melee combat, since any number of characters can target a single enemy with ranged weapons.

Armour Against Attacks From Smaller Things (Optional)

Humans have tough skin and a layer of fat, which provides significant protection against insect-sized attacks. The GM may decide that characters without the Diminutive Defect have "armour," which stops two Scratch Points from attackers with Diminutive for 3 BP, and five Scratch Points against characters with Diminutive for 6 BP. Similarly, characters with Diminutive for 3 BP have armour that stops two Scratch Points from characters with Diminutive for 6 BP. Artificial armour may not provide complete protection against insects or rodents, unless the armour is environmentally sealed (such as a spacesuit) or designed specifically against insects (such as a beekeeper's protective gear).

Ranged Attacks

As indicated in *BESM*, ranged attacks made by a human on a target with the Defect Diminutive (3 BP) suffer a +2 penalty, while attacks on a character with Diminutive (6 BP) suffer a +4 penalty. Attackers ignore this penalty if they either use the Spreading or Area Effect abilities, and they only apply when a larger aggressor attacks a smaller target. A penalty does not apply when a fly attacks a fly or a rat assaults a rat. If a rat (3 BP Diminutive) attacks a fly (6 BP Diminutive) however, the rat suffers a +2 attack roll penalty.

Falling

Falling damage listed in *BESM* (see Table: 5-1 and 5-2, page 221) only applies to human-sized characters; smaller characters receive less damage (the bigger they are....). When a character without Diminutive falls, multiply the damage by 5 to convert Damage Points into Scratch Points. When a character with Diminutive (3 BP) falls, he or she suffers the listed amount of damage in Scratch Points. When a character with Diminutive (6 BP) falls, apply one-quarter the listed amount in Scratch Points (round up).

EXAMPLE: Albert, a mouse with Diminutive (3 BP), and Monica, a human with no Diminutive Defect, are fighting on the roof of a three story tall building (15 metres). Albert has 45 Pep Points and Monica has 200 Pep Points. During the scuffle, Monica and Albert tumble off the building. When Monica hits the asphalt, she takes 40 x 5 = 200 Scratch Points in damage (40 points of damage as the base (see Falling rules in BESM, page 221) x 5 to convert to Scratch Points). Albert only suffers 40 Scratch Points (the base damage). If an ant with Diminutive (6 BP) fell the same distance, he or she would take 40 ÷ 4 = 10 Scratch Points of damage.
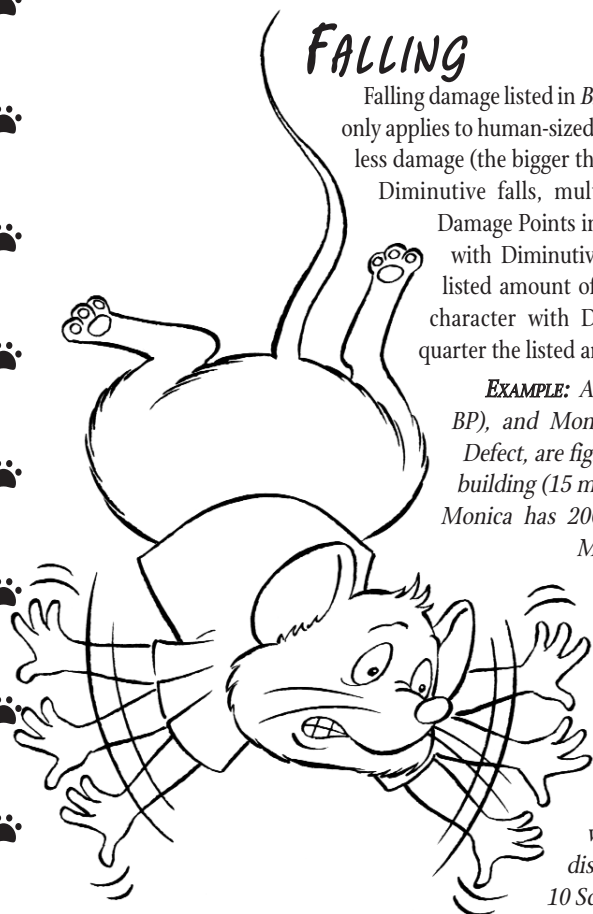
Paranormal Mice

A key assumption in most *BESMouse* campaigns is that animals are just as smart as humans. Attacks that drain Energy Points take no modifier based on the size of the attacker or defender. Magic-using mice or psionic grasshoppers can attack human-scale targets just as easily as they wield their powers against one another. Psionic or magical attacks that drain Energy Points do not suffer the Ranged Weapon penalty based on the Diminutive Defect of the target (page 48).

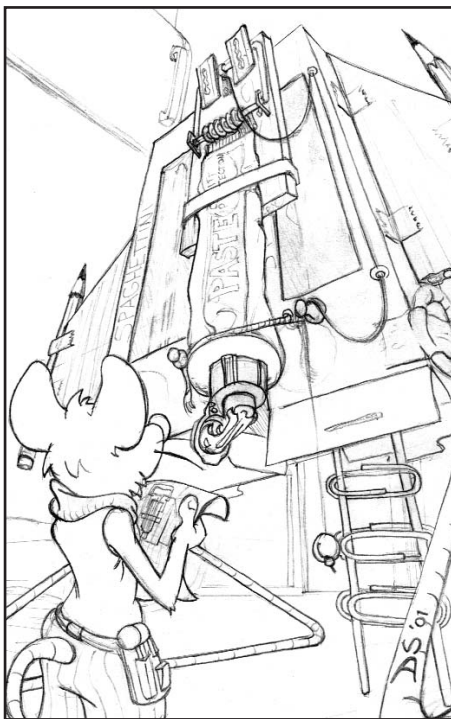# Own a Big Mecha and Mechanical Genius

Technology is a wonderful thing; at three inches tall, every force multiplier comes in handy. In genre material, some small animals and insects show extraordinary skill in seat-of-the-pants engineering, and can build light aircraft, submarines, hypersonic wave riders, or spaceships out of rubbish, glue, twigs, and leaves. The Own a Big Mecha Attribute (see *BESM*, page 123) has been tweaked to allow for "Inventor" style characters in the tradition of Flik from *A Bug's Life*, and Gadget from *Chip 'n' Dale's Rescue Rangers.*

Characters can build a mecha with the Diminutive Defect, with its controls built to scale — a mecha with 3 BP of Diminutive is designed for a crew with 3 BP Diminutive. The Diminutive Defect affects the damage inflicted by any weapons (page 61-62) built into the mecha, Health Points, and Armour (page 43).

Time to Build

It requires approximately 10 mouse-hours per Mecha Point for characters to design, build, and accomplish the bare minimum of safety testing on a new design (assuming they found everything needed). Furthermore, a practical work week cannot exceed fifty productive hours for any length of time. This is incredibly generous at higher Levels, and reflects the inventor-genre pulp fiction and not a serious extrapolation from real engineering projects. The Mechanical Genius Attribute (see *BESM*, page 34) reduces design and construction time considerably.

The GM should use these rules sparingly, and only when it is important to the plot. Normally, big projects are introduced during a game session, and are built between adventures. If a character needed to build or modify a mecha quickly, however, these rules serve as effective guidelines to show what modifications he or she can complete.

New Attributes

Slapstick

Cost:	3 Character Points/Level
Relevant Stat:	None
Type:	Universal

The Slapstick Attribute represents the ability to turn certain death into comedic slapstick. When a character suffers enough damage to die (or is about to explode), the player describes the humorous effects of the killing blow. Instead of dying, the character becomes unconscious with 0 Pep Points remaining.

The GM may disallow this Attribute if he or she intends the campaign to be serious and realistic. Alternately, the GM may automatically assign all player characters Level 1 in this Attribute to reflect the source material.

Level 1 The character may convert one death per game session into a slapstick scene.

Level 2 The character may convert two deaths per game session into slapstick scenes.

Level 3 The character may convert three deaths per game session into slapstick scenes.

Level 4 The character may convert four deaths per game session into slapstick scenes.

Level 5 The character may convert five deaths per game session into slapstick scenes.

Level 6 The character may convert six deaths per game session into slapstick scenes.

EXAMPLE: Monica's flyswatter delivers a killing blow to Button the Firefly, reducing him to -8 Pep Points. The player immediately describes how Button is flattened against the wall. Button then peels off slowly, and drifts in to the trembling hands of his friend, Albert the mouse, who gently re-inflates him like a balloon. The GM rules the "death" negated and Button is now unconscious with 0 Health.

Speaker

Cost:	1 Character Point/Level
Relevant Stat:	None
Type:	Universal

The Speaker Attribute works in a variety of ways, but is usually assigned to human characters only. The GM section (page 79) discusses it in greater detail. Players must talk with their GM about this Attribute before assigning it to their characters.

Level 1 The character can talk to one type or group of animals.

Level 2 The character can talk to two types or groups of animals.

Level 3 The character can talk to three types or groups of animals.

Level 4 The character can talk to four types or groups of animals.

Level 5 The character can talk to five types or groups of animals.

Level 6 The character can talk to six types or groups of animals.

BACKGROUND POINTS FOR MECHA

If players can receive additional Character Points for giving their characters a creative background, it is only fair that players should earn Mecha Points for giving their vehicles an interesting design.

EXAMPLE: Bill realizes that Force Acorn needs a more reliable means of travelling around the city than mass transit and short, stubby legs, so he designs a light utility aircraft for the team — the Umbrellathopter.

He starts with a two-litre plastic soda bottle, noting correctly that the top end has good aerodynamic characteristics. The bottle is left entirely transparent, providing excellent visibility for the pilot, who rides in the nose. As in the original Wright Flier, control surfaces of the aircraft are in front of the fuselage. They poke through the neck of the bottle, in the form of canards and rudders, their nearness to the pilot simplifying the mechanical linkages needed to fly the aircraft. Four furniture casters serve as the landing gear, pinched between rubber erasers used as brakes. He provides propulsion and lift through a small, collapsing and folding umbrella mounted on the top of the aircraft, which pumps up and down during flight. By paddling the rear horizontal stabilizers, Force Acorn even has propulsive power when submerged.

While the Umbrellathopter can land and take off vertically, Albert prefers to use a special runway instead. The Umbrellathopter can retract all protruding parts behind or into the fuselage, allowing the craft to form an airtight seal when placed inside a three-metre length of PVC pipe. The inside of the pipe is regularly lubricated with banana peels, the most slippery substance in this cartoon universe. Once the crew is inside, a container of baking soda is tipped into a beaker of vinegar, generating carbon dioxide gas under high pressure, which fires the Umbrellathopter out like the cork from a popgun. After the launch, the pilot has three chances to succeed in a Piloting (Aircraft) Skill check with a bonus of -3. If all three fail, the Umbrellathopter crashes into a fountain, causing no casualties but forcing repairs. Albert will suggest that because there are no extinct volcanoes in Manhattan's Central Park, they should build one as a launch platform, since he has always wanted to fly out of an extinct volcano.

Submergible aircraft are an interesting idea but an engineering nightmare; designers must build aircrafts as light as possible, while submarines must be heavy enough to sink. Albert wracked his brains for hours trying to come up with a solution to this paradox when it finally hit him; instead of building separate buoyancy tanks, he would simply flood the fuselage and crew compartment. Careful calculations showed that the Umbrellathopter could dive to a depth of 30 metres before the water rises above the passengers' heads. Additionally, by equalizing pressure within and without, he did not need a rigid superstructure to resist crushing. Finally, he provided oxygen and pressurized air for the pilot in case of a mishap. Giving it to the entire crew is too difficult and, as Albert points out, everyone dies if the pilot blacks out anyway.

Mary, the GM, is suitably impressed by this description and gives the Umbrellathopter a two Background Point bonus.

CHAPTER 3: STUFF

This chapter describes some equipment that your characters might have. As the GM, you may modify them to fit your campaign.

Mecha

A quick trip to the rubbish heap, a few tubes of glue and presto ... a mouse scaled intercontinental aircraft is born. It is not clear why humans never seem to notice the hordes of tiny rodent aircraft and other vehicles buzzing about, made from bits of trash and twigs. Perhaps they mistake them for toys or normal sized vehicles that are just far away.

Glue Projector: Personal Weapon (1 Mecha Point)

Designed to quickly incapacitate rodent-sized targets without hurting them, the Glue Projector is a backpack-mounted reservoir of adhesive squirted through a high-pressure nozzle.

➢ Weapon Attributes

Level 1 Weapon (20 Scratch Points, Area Effect, Tangle, Limited Shots (3), No Damage, Short Range, Unreliable; 4 MP)

➢ Defects

Diminutive (3 MBP)

Gyro Stabilized Inline Skate for Two (1 Mecha Point)

This is an inline roller skate modified into a rodent-carrying high-speed motorcycle. The gyroscopes allow the vehicle to remain stable even when left unattended.

➢ Mobility Attributes

Ground Speed Level 3 (6 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus Level 3** (3 MP), **Special Movement Level 1** (Balance; 1 MP)

➢ Other Attributes

Extra Capacity Level (2 MP)

➢ Mecha Defects

Awkward Size (1 MBP), **Diminutive** (3 MBP), **Exposed Occupants** (Completely; 2 MBP), **Mutual Damage** (1 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Not So Tough** (2 MBP)

➢ Derived Values

Pep Points: 20

Big Ears, Small Mouse

Paper Airplane (0 Mecha Points)

This is a carefully folded sheet of paper controlled by body motion. Just about every rodent with skill as a pilot should be able to whip one up, if they can get their paws on a nice, stiff, unfolded sheet of typing paper. A mouse is too small to carry a sheet of paper easily.

➢ **Mobility Attributes**

Flight Level 1 (Cannot hover, Glider; 1 MP)

➢ **Other Attributes**

Extra Capacity Level 1 (1 MP), Stealth Level 1 (Hearing; 1 MP)

➢ **Mecha Defects**

Awkward Size (1 MBP), Diminutive (3 MBP), Exposed Occupants (2 MBP), No Arms (2 MBP), No Ground Movement (2 MBP)

➢ **Derived Values**

Pep Points: 40

A1-B Umbrellathopter (20 Mecha Points)

The utility VTOL aircraft and submarine built by Albert Einklein for Force Acorn (Albert refuses to discuss what happened to the A1-A). The two Mecha Bonus Point History is not included here.

➢ **Structural Attributes**

Heavy Armour Level 1 (4 MP)

➢ **Mobility Attributes**

Flight Level 2 (Can hover; 8 MP), Water Speed Level 2 (6 MP)

➢ **Other Attributes**

Accessories Level 2 (Ejection seats, radio, handheld computer with wireless Internet connection; 2 MP), Extra Capacity Level 2 (5 passengers + pilot; 2 MP), Extra Endurance Level 1 (1 day; 1 MP), Life Support Level 2 (Pilot only; 1 MP), Stealth Level 2 (Visual only; 2 MP)

➢ **Weapon Attributes**

Weapon Attack Level 1: Suction Dart Line Gun (90 Scratch Points, Tangle, Fixed: Forward, Limited Shots x 2: 3 shots, No Damage, Short Range, Slow; 4 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 1: Skunk Juice Shell (60 Damage, Area Effect, Burning, Drain Energy, Fixed, Limited Shots x 2: 3 shots, No Damage, Slow, Toxic; 2 MP)

➢ **Mecha Defects**

Awkward Size (2 MBP), Diminutive (3 MBP), Hangar Queen (1 MBP), No Arms (2 MBP), Restricted Ground Movement (1 MBP), Start-Up Time (1 MBP), Unique Defect: Maximum submerging depth 30 metres (1 MBP), Unique Defect: Submerging makes passengers and pilot wet (1 MBP)

➢ **Derived Values**

Pep Points: 40, Armour: 10 Scratch Points

WIND-UP BATTLESUIT (20 MECHA POINTS)

Many products designed for human amusement have formed the seed of mouse weaponry. Based on a modified toy robot, with sheet metal from cans connected to the plastic, the Wind-Up Battlesuit incorporates powerful electromagnets and an awe-inspiring array of horrifying weaponry. This battlesuit requires great care to keep operating.

➢ STRUCTURAL ATTRIBUTES

Heavy Armour Level 2 (8 MP)

➢ MOBILITY ATTRIBUTES

Flight Level 1 (Emergency Escape Balloon, Cannot Hover, Glider; 1 MP), **Jumping Level 3** (Electromagnet, 25 x normal jumping distance, only when jumping towards a metal object; 2 MP), **Life Support Level 1** (1 MP), **Special Movement Level 1** (Wall-Crawling; 1 MP)

➢ WEAPON ATTRIBUTES

Weapon Attack Level 1: Laser-Pointer Guided Itching Powder Dispensing Rockets (15 Scratch Points, Accurate x 3, Irritant, Limited Shots x 2: 3 shots, No Damage, Toxic; 4 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 1: Laser Pointer Blinding Attack (15 Scratch Points, Flare, No Damage; 2 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 1: Old Sweat Sock Odour Grenades (15 Energy Points Damage, Area Effect, Burning, Drain Energy, Limited Shots: 6 shots, No Damage, Toxic; 2 MP)

➢ OTHER ATTRIBUTES

Force Field Level 1 (Wall, Stops 60 Scratch Points, Shield Only, Only against attacks made with metal weapons; 2 MP), **Super Strength Level 2** (6 MP), **Telekinesis Level 3** (Electromagnet, Metal Only; 3 MP)

➢ MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (1 MP), **Diminutive** (3 MBP), **Hangar Queen** (2 MP), **Limited Endurance 1** (1 MP), **Mutual Damage** (2 MP), **Not So Tough** (MBP 2), **Start-Up Time** (1 MBP)

➢ DERIVED VALUES

Pep Points: 20, Armour: 20 Scratch Points
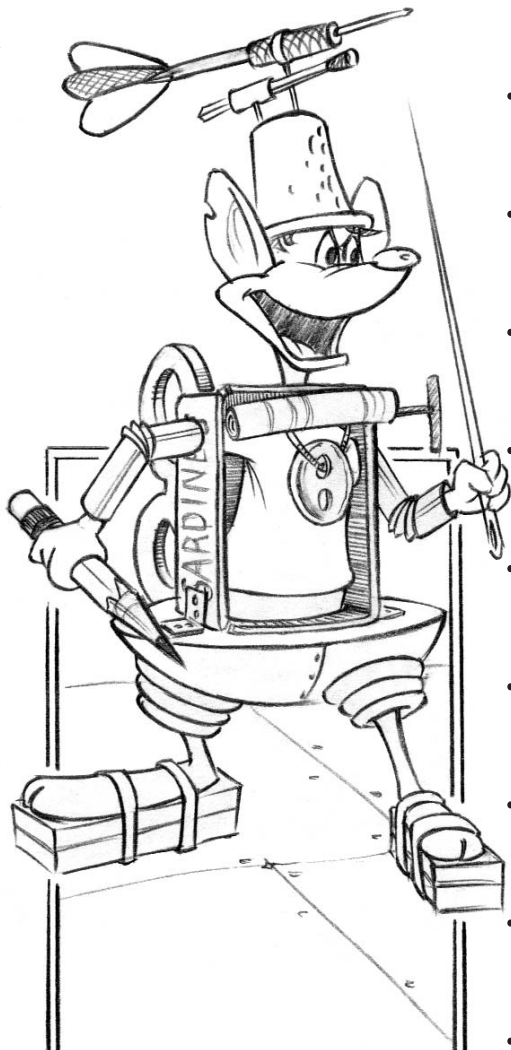
Sailing Ship (4 Mecha Points)

This is a typical mouse-operated sailing ship, built for international trade. Roughly the size of a human-sized kayak, it escapes detection by venturing towards shore only at night.

➤ **Structural Attributes**

Toughness Level 2 (8 MP)

➤ **Mobility Attributes**
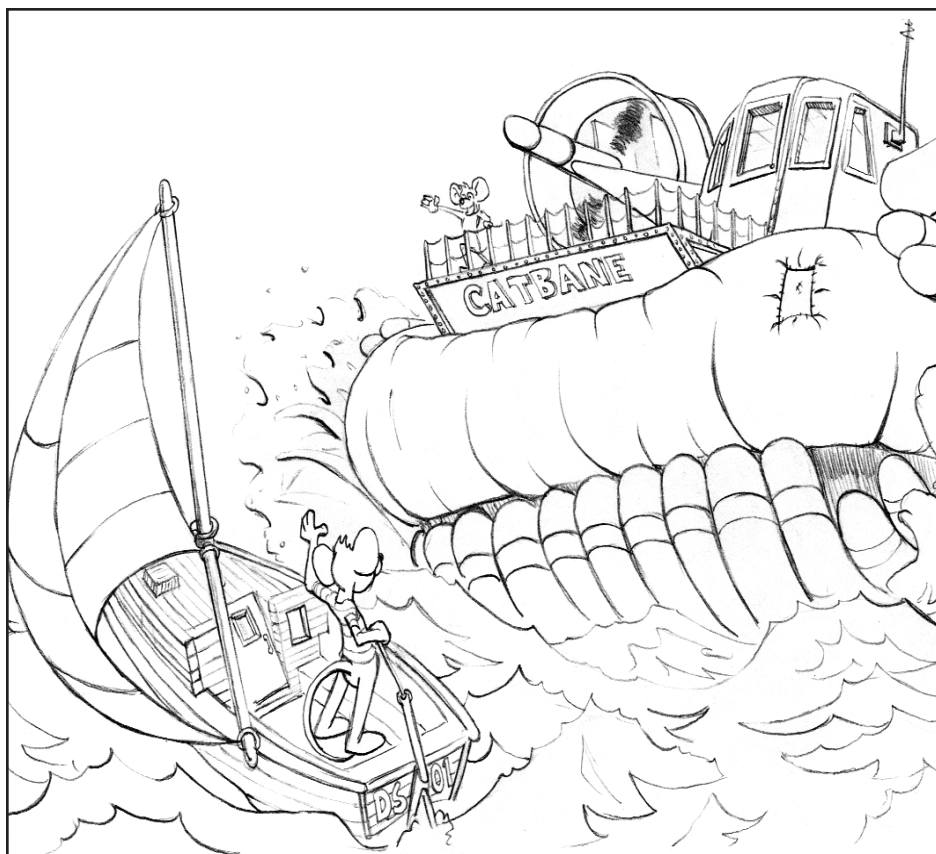
Water Speed Level 2 (4 MP)

➤ **Other Attributes**

Accessories Level 1 (Radio; 1 MP), **Endurance Level 4** (4 MP), **Extra Capacity Level 4** (4 MP)

➤ **Mecha Defects**

Awkward Size (About four metres long, 4 MBP), **Crew Requirement** (3 MBP), **Diminutive** (3 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **No Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Poor Manoeuvrability** (2 MBP), **Wind-Powered** (Has auxiliary engine; 1 MBP)

➤ **Derived Values**

Pep Points: 80

Paladin Class Interceptor Hovercraft (20 Mecha Points)

This is the standard hovercraft used by the Coast Guard of Mousetropolis, built specifically to a budget of 20 Mecha Points. Its chief disadvantage is light armour and short range — it ventures no further than 200 kilometres from Mousetropolis.

The Paladin Class was designed expressly to intercept and sink pirate vessels. Since it can only carry five people in addition to its crew, the Paladin Class is not well suited for rescue work. Most of this is performed by cheaper, slower and unarmed launches, but a Paladin Class hovercraft will respond immediately to any SOS signal.

The MCG currently operates six Paladin Class Hovercrafts: *Lancelot, Galihad, Catbane, Contessa, Siegfried*, and *Squeaky*. They earn their names from legendary members of the Swiss Cheese Guard. One is always kept warmed up and ready for immediate launch; two others are on call to launch under half an hour after the first; and the remaining three can launch within three hours after the first, if necessary.

➤ **Structural Attributes**
> **Heavy Armour Level 2** (8 MP)

➤ **Mobility Attributes**
> **Flight Level 2** (Can Hover; 7 MP).

➤ **Other Attributes**
> **Accessories Level 2** (Radio, Global Positioning System/Compass, Searchlight; 2 MP), **Environmental Control** (Smoke Generator, Total Darkness; 4 MP), **Extra Capacity Level 3** (3 MP), **Sensors Level 1** (1 MP)

➤ **Weapon Attributes**
> **Weapon Attack Level 1: 9 mm Glock 19 auto-loading pistol** (30 Scratch Points, Fixed forward; 4 MBP). This holds 19 rounds of ammunition, and must be fired by the helmsman.

> **Weapon Attack Level 1: Flare Launcher** (45 Scratch Points, Area Effect, Flare, Limited Shots x 2: 3 shots, Low Penetration, No Damage; 2 MBP). This weapon provides light over a modest area, but crews quickly learned that dropping one on a pirate ship serves as a wonderful distraction.

> **Weapon Attack Level 1: 14.5mm Homing Torpedoes** (75 Scratch Points, Armour Penetrating, Homing: Acoustic, Long Range, Exposed, Limited Shots x 2: 3 Shots, Only in Water, Slow, Stoppable, Unreliable; 2 MP). These are the same weapons as those aboard the *Cephalopod*, although they are mounted differently. The weapons officer must leave the protected cabin and unfasten the torpedoes manually while the helmsman steers towards the target. After they splash into the water, the helmsman must veer off and circle behind the torpedo to prevent it from following the noisy hovercraft, which is quite audible underwater. This means that the forward gun cannot fire at a target on the round after a torpedo launch.

➤ **Mecha Defects**
> **Awkward Size** (2 MBP), **Diminutive** (3 MBP), **Crew Requirement** (5 crew; 2 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **No Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Noisy** (1 MBP), **Start-Up Time** (1 MBP)

➤ **Derived Values**
> Pep Points: 40, Armour: 20 Scratch Points

SRV Cephalopod (115 Mecha Points)

The 10 metre-long *Cephalopod* is the Submersible "Research" Vessel built by the somewhat twisted genius of Captain Nemouse. With a pressure hull of milled homogenized aluminium, which Nemouse claims to have "found somewhere," the submarine can dive to depths of 1200 metres. Remarkably armed for a research vessel, *Cephalopod* is perhaps the most deadly weapon at sea commanded by mice. *Cephalopod* is also equipped with manipulator arms that are normally retracted into the hull.

The brilliant Captain Nemouse has tapped the power of caffeine. Capable of cruising for days on a single tall Mocha, *Cephalopod* contains ten pounds of espresso beans, on-board water distillation, and a percolator able to send the mighty ship around the world several times without refuelling. Although *Cephalopod*'s reactor is shielded to prevent the mysterious 'C-Rays' from keeping the crew awake, anyone spending more than a few hours at a time outside the boat and near the reactor will have a tough time falling asleep. The ship's engineer, Mr. Twitch, was exposed to C-Rays in a reactor accident, and has not slept for two years.

Accessories on the *Cephalopod* includes: airlock, gym, library, machine shop, 9-mouse brig, radio, satellite cell phone, searchlight, television, church organ (Captain Nemouse cannot play, but no one tells him that), gourmet kitchen (with rare cheese cabinet), and computer with wireless internet access and DVD drive.

➤ **Structural Attributes**

Heavy Armour Level 5 (20 MP), **Toughness Level 4** (16 MP)

➤ **Mobility Attributes**

Water Speed Level 3 (9 MP)

➤ **Other Attributes**

Accessories Level 4 (12 Minor Accessories; 4 MP), **ECM Level 6** (Bicarbonate of Soda Noisemakers only against Acoustic Homing weapons, only 6 uses; 4 MP), **Extra Capacity Level 4** (Room for 35; 4 MP), **Extra Endurance Level 4** (4 MP), **Life Support Level 2** (2 MP), **Sensors Level 5** (Underwater, Passive and Active sonar, 20 km range; 5 MP), **Special Equipment Level 2** (Science Lab; 4 MP), **Special Equipment Level 1** (Sickbay; 2 MP), **Stealth Level 6** (Acoustic only; 6 MP)

➤ **Weapon Attributes**

Weapon Attack Level 3: Battery of .50 Calibre Machinegun-Round Warhead Unguided Torpedoes (90 Scratch Points, Different Gunner, Armour Penetrating, Long Range, Limited Shots: 6 shots, Only in Water, Slow, Stoppable, Unreliable; 17 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 3: 10-Gauge Shotgun Shell Proximity Warhead Unguided Torpedoes (75 Scratch Points, Different Gunner, Accurate x 2, Long Range, Spreading, Limited Shots: 6 shots, Low Penetration, Only in Water, Slow, Stoppable, Unreliable; 7 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 3: Battery of 14.5mm Machinegun Round Warhead Acoustic Homing Torpedoes (90 Scratch Points, Different Gunner, Armour Penetrating, Homing (Acoustic), Long Range, Limited Shots x 2: 3 shots, Only in Water, Slow, Stoppable, Unreliable; 7 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 3: Battery of Vertical-Launch Anti-Flying-Thing Model Rockets with C6-7 Engines (75 Scratch Points, Different Gunner, Area Effect, Long Range, Limited Shots: 6 shots, Slow, Stoppable, Unreliable; 7 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 3: Battery of Vertical-Launch Anti-Small-Flying-Thing Model Rockets with D12-9 Engines (45 Scratch Points, Different Gunner, Accurate x 2, Area Effect, Long Range, Limited Shots: 6 shots, Slow, Stoppable, Unreliable; 7 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 3: Net Cutting Blades and Bow Ram (75 Scratch Points, Armour Penetrating, Fixed: Forward, Melee; 2 MP)

Weapon Attack Level 3: Shaped Charge Spar Surprise (120 Scratch Points, Armour Penetrating, Fixed: Forward, Limited Shots x 3: 1 shot, Melee; 2 MP)

➤ **Mecha Defects**

Awkward Size (4 MBP), **Crew Requirement** (3 MBP), **Diminutive** (3 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **No Ground Movement** (2 MBP)

➤ **Derived Values**

Pep Points: 120, Armour: 50

Personal Gear

Part of the *BESMouse* genre charm is the use of human-sized technology by rodents. Thimbles make pretty decent tankards and inverted bottle caps double as bowls. For inspiration, search through a junk drawer and imagine how a mouse or ant might use each item.

The genre commonly exaggerates the capabilities of human equipment carried by mice. Matches used as torches by mice, for example, burn for half an hour or more instead of the few seconds of light they actually provide. The following gear descriptions provide other examples as well.

Major Items

➤ Wrist Computer with Modem

This is a 16-bit computer built for a human wrist, but a mouse can carry it about as a backpack or a bulky suitcase. Using a compact cellular modem, roughly the same size as the base unit (a second mouse needs to carry it), the watch can access the internet wirelessly in most cities. The mini-computer also has two megabytes of RAM that enables the owner to store a great deal of reference material. This data may provide the user a -1 bonus to a Mind-based Skill, if the computer stored relevant information. Its main drawback is electrical power, since its batteries only last for a few hours. The watch is not nearly as powerful as a desktop computer, but it is surprisingly useful. This is a rare item.

➤ Desktop Computer with Scaled Screen and Keyboard

For a mouse, there is little difference between a human-scaled laptop computer and a human-scaled desktop computer; either one is big enough to live inside. A stock desktop computer with a tiny one-inch monitor (commercially available for human goggle-mounted displays) and hand-crafted, mouse-sized keyboard is very valuable. Storage is large enough to hold sufficient reference material, providing a -3 bonus to any five pre-selected Mind-based Skills checks.

Minor Items

➤ Palm-sized Computer

At 250 grams, and 10 centimetres long, these devices are too big for a mouse to call truly "mobile," but are compact enough to fit easily into a mouse mecha. With enough memory to hold entire books of information, characters can transport a substantial reference library. Both landline and wireless internet access is available.

➤ LED Flashlight

Although this small device may be hefty for a mouse, an LED flashlight is not unreasonable equipment for a mouse trying to work in darkness. New models have white light instead of the old red bulbs.

➤ Paperclip Grappling Hooks

Variants of this old standby are lines attached to safety pins, or fishhooks. The paperclip is attached to a length of fishing line. A successful Attack Combat roll allows the user to firmly snag a piece of furniture or landscape and climb up the line.

Another version is a hand-held suction dart launcher. In genre, suction cups stick to almost anything, including fur. The user of a suction dart gun receives a bonus from the Gun Combat Skill.

➢ Can Opener

In the hands of a *BESMouse* character, this humble utensil is an amazing device capable of virtually chewing a hole into any flat, metallic surface. Every round a character spends working with the can opener, add his or her base hand-to-hand damage to a cumulative total. When this total exceeds the Armour Value of the surface, the can opener has made a hole large enough for a character with the Diminutive Defect at 3 BP to crawl through. If the goal is creating a hole big enough for a character or object with the Awkward Size Defect to fit through, double the time required for each Level of Awkward Size.

This hole does not inflict Scratch Points on the target, but rather opens a small hole in the surface. Breaches in the hulls of spacecraft or submarines are noticeable and normally repaired long before the vessel is in any risk. The GM may decide that some metallic surfaces are simply too hard to cut, or that characters can use the fearsome powers of the can opener against non-metallic objects as well.

EXAMPLE: Albert wishes to use his can opener to cut a mouse hole into an M1 Abrams tank. The M1 has Armour that stops 40 Damage Points, or 200 Scratch Points. Since Albert has a Combat Value of 5 and can inflict 10 additional Scratch Points of Focused Damage to machines (15 Scratch Points in damage total), he calculates that he can cut through the tank's hull in 14 rounds. The GM rules, however, that this is impossible for a simple can opener.

➢ Six-Inch Pole

This traditional item separates into six one-inch segments that screw together. Three attachable segments can serve as a handy quarterstaff.

Weapons

Real-life human items modified with mouse-sized handles make great weapons. For example, a modelling knife blade might be a good mouse knife, and a human cocktail sword is about the right size for a squirrel's shortsword. The GM may decide that dangerous weapons do not belong in the genre, and thus restrict their use. Other GMs may convert existing descriptions of weapons in *BESM* into mouse- or ant-scale versions.

Non-Firearm Ranged Weapons

For weapons such as bows or slings, modify the Damage Bonus as described above and use the Long and Short Range Table on page 46.

EXAMPLE: Albert, in desperation, grabs a handy mouse-sized long bow. He can shoot to a range of 25 metres, and delivers 10 Scratch Points in the unlikely event he hits anything (5 ACV + 5 for longbow = 10 Scratch Points).

Melee Weapons

Realistically, mouse-sized swords can be deadly when used against mouse-sized targets. For mouse- or ant-sized weapon statistics, use the Melee Weapons chart in *BESM* (page 216). Any Damage Bonuses are modified by the Bonus Points of the Diminutive Defect of the character (see page 47-48).

EXAMPLE: Albert has an Attack Combat Value of 5, and inflicts 5 Scratch Points in hand-to-hand damage. If he uses three segments of his six-inch pole to make a quarterstaff, he delivers a total of 10 Scratch Points — 5 Scratch Points, plus 5 Scratch Points for the staff.

EXAMPLE: Button the firefly has Diminutive (6 BP), an Attack Combat Value of 6, and a pair of wakizashi that add 10 points of damage. This normally allows him to inflict 16 points of damage (6 + 10 = 16), but his size reduces that to 4 Scratch Points (16 ÷ 4 = 4).

Firearms

The two sample weapons described here are "realistic" rodent-scale firearms. They are both Major Items, and their damage is listed in Scratch Points.

➤ .22 Recoilless Rifle

The .22 Recoilless Rifle is a .22 calibre rimfire bullet in a short metal tube. The attacker balances the tube on his or her shoulder, like a bazooka. When fired, the casing shoots out the back, counteracting the recoil. It has two types of shell: birdshot and solid. With a lucky hit and a skilled user, it can stop a cat. Its main disadvantage is that the attacker must manually reload it after each shot, which takes three rounds.

➤ Pneumatic Repeater

The preferred weapon of the famous Major Sharp-Cheddar and his Chosen Vermin, the Pneumatic Repeater is a bolt-action longarm that uses pressurized carbon dioxide from a standard human CO_2 cartridge worn on the back to fire a barbed needle. A hose connects the cartridge to the weapon, and the weapon's magazine only holds six needles. Although it would be easy to increase its supply of ammunition, the expanding gasses cause the barrel to cool rapidly; after six shots under normal conditions, water vapour in the air freezes on the mechanism, disabling it until it is thawed. The barbed needle remains in the wound, inflicting pain similar to Burning damage.

Table 4-1: Weapons

Weapon	Damage	Abilities	Defects	Skill	Item
.22 RR (Bullet)	20	none	Backblast Limited Shots (1) Static	Heavy Weapon (Recoilless)	Major
.22 RR (Shot)	15	Spreading	Backblast Limited Shots (1) Static	Heavy Weapon (Recoilless)	Major
Pneumatic Repeater	10	Burning	Limited Shots (6) Static	Gun Combat (Rifle)	Major

CHAPTER 4: PLACES
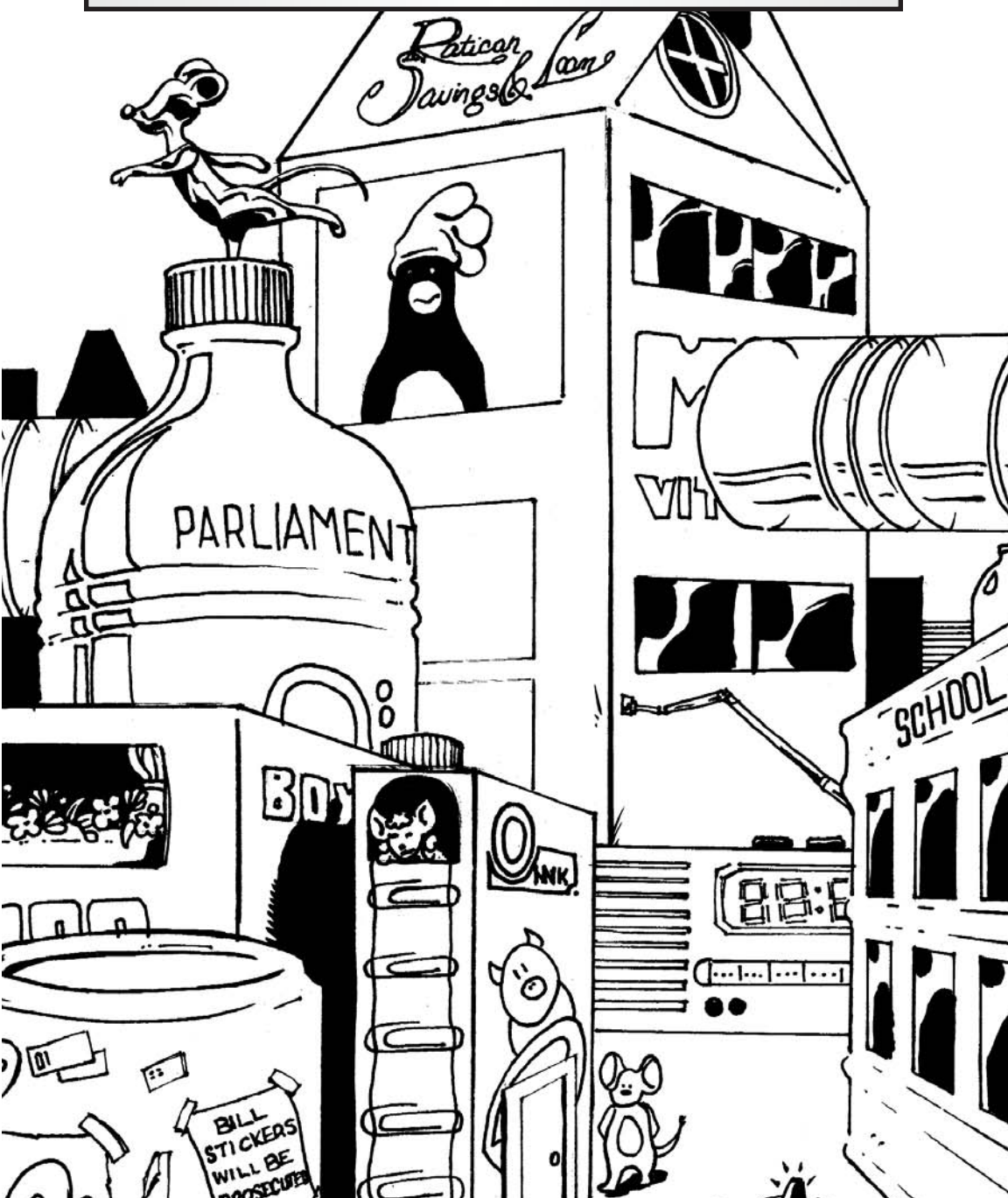
MOUSETROPOLIS

A large, cosmopolitan seaport, Mousetropolis is the queen of rodent cities. Rats, mice, and more exotic small animals from every continent are found here, from tourists to travelling businessmice to diplomats. Every rodent alive dreams of visiting Mousetropolis one day.

LOCATION

GMs should place Mousetropolis near any existing seaport city convenient for their campaign world.

ARCHITECTURE

Mousetropolis is located underground to escape the notice of humans, but it does not follow the pattern of normal rodent burrows. Instead, tunnels up to a metre across, reinforced with sheet metal and illuminated by automobile headlights, form a gridwork of streets, with buildings built into the walls. The city has paved tunnels and ample drainage while wind-up cars, trucks, and taxis whirr their way from destination to destination. Nobody has ever seen all of Mousetropolis except on a map, and even then, the maps are neither complete nor current.

HISTORY

Mousetropolis is one of the oldest rodent cities in existence. A coalition of noble rat families and their mouse servants, founded it in 1630 under the name "Rattenburg" after backing the losing side in a war of succession and fleeing their home country. Over the centuries, the balance of power gradually shifted towards the mice after human urbanization destroyed the great fiefs of the rats, and a trade economy replaced agrarian self-sufficiency. Although the rats maintain some wealth and a shadow of privilege, most of the real political power lies with the mice. They changed the name on the 250th anniversary of the founding, when tensions between the dominant mice and the rats were still great.

GOVERNMENT

Mousetropolis is a constitutional monarchy with power shared between an elected Tribune, a Chief Justice appointed by the Tribune, and the Rat King.

The Tribune's name is Rudolph Asiago, a mouse with a reputation for being tough on crime and a supporter of building local trade and industry. Asiago is presently in his second term. The Tribune serves a six-year term, and each members is only eligible for two such tours. The Tribune's fundamental responsibilities include setting foreign policy and running the Legislative Branch. The Tribune cannot pass a law, but does have the power to veto laws that passed through the Legislature. Asiago firmly believes that Mousetropolis cannot afford to police the wilds beyond its border. Although it helps refugees as long as they remain inside Mousetropolis and foreign aid programs exist, Mousetropolis does not "send in the marines" when an outside community needs help.

Chief Justice Sally Arbor, a squirrel, champions the rights of minority groups in a city dominated by mice and rats. The Chief Justice serves for life; Asiago's predecessor and political opponent appointed Arbor, and she will likely remain in office after Asiago leaves. The Chief Justice is, of course, primarily concerned with running Mousetropolis's court system. Arbor, mother of three, is a formidable woman, and only the most hardened rodents can resist the fearsome power of her "Mom Voice."

The Rat King is both a name and a post. The sole surviving remnant of the old rat feudal society, the Twelve-Who-Are-One are a dozen rats with their tails knotted together. When one dies, it is removed and replaced with an infant chosen from one of the noble rat families. In a manner of speaking the Rat King has been alive since 1630, with its number of component rats varying from a low of six during the Plague of 1809 to the usual twelve.

Local tradition holds that the Rat King is a single entity, whose mind is a synthesis of individuals who have composed it through history. The Rat King rarely speaks apart from courteous, courtly banalities for the long stream of visitors who pay their respects. His silence gives some credence to the democ-rats' view that it is nothing more than a group of tired rats living in mind-numbing tedium as part of an old, barbaric custom. Royalists claim that the Rat King's mind is occupied with great, unsolvable mysteries of existence. Still, the Rat King has been a valuable and insightful monarch in times of crisis. The Rat King is the chief of state, and thus the focus of much patriotism and civil pride, but his powers are strictly limited by the constitution.

Although the Rat King spends the bulk of his time in court, it retains some authority. Specifically, the Rat King is the chief law enforcement official in Mousetropolis, and while anyone it orders arrested must be tried by the Judicial branch, the Rat King can pardon anyone arrested and awaiting trial on the grounds that there is "insufficient evidence." Since there are no law enforcement officials acting independently of the Rat King, this is effectively a "get out of jail free" card.

There is a constant struggle over turf between the elected Tribune and the Rat King. The Rat King is fully aware that of the two offices, the Tribune can easily trump his own power, and is therefore circumspect in exercising his powers. The Rat King favours an interventionist foreign policy while the Tribune is more domestically oriented.

➤ Swiss Cheese Guard

According to tradition, this band of courageous fighters originally formed to protect the Rat King's personal cheese store; members have since performed many legendary deeds such as slaying the cat, Grendel, and battling the mysterious Green Rat. The Guard remains active to this day, and is rumoured to be the Rat King's paw where it cannot act unseen. Although membership had been exclusively rats for centuries, it recruited its first mouse in 1950; today, species is hardly a barrier to joining.

Sights and Attractions

Even rodents who do not want to live in Mousetropolis will concede it is a wonderful place to visit.

➢ Crow and Packrat Museum of Glittery Things

Originally, the Crow Museum of Things and the Packrat Museum of Glitter were separate institutions in adjacent buildings. Over the years, the employees of each museum stole so much from one another than their collections became hopelessly intermingled, leading to the unification of the two. Virtually every item that reflects light is on display here. Headed in alternating months by Dr. Eaton Crow and the former swashbuckling archaeologist Professor Walter "Saskatchewan" Smith, the CPMGT provides support for expeditions that roam the world, hunting for objects of historical significance.

➢ Mole Museum of Packed Dirt

This museum focuses on different types of soil found in different parts of the world. The most striking exhibits are in total darkness, forcing visitors to grope their way through by touch. The museum is run by Liana Glebe, PhD (Topsoil).

➢ Scavenger Bazaar

If a small animal has any object worth trading or a need for anything, chances are he or she will come here. Virtually anything any animal might want is found in one of the hundreds of booths or on carpets spread out by merchants to claim turf.

The police have given up searching the bazaar for contraband decades ago; it has its own set of laws and customs now. There are no formal licenses to sell or buy, but pity the poor merchant who sets up shop in the place held by another.

➢ The Phoenix Society

Most crazed geniuses who have tried toppling the very foundations of human and animal society (or perhaps move the planet a few metres to the right) are motivated by a deep feeling that they and their genius are unappreciated. The Phoenix Society attempts to rehabilitate these troubled minds, and channel their creativity into more palatable directions by supporting their research, and offering the psychological counselling they so desperately need.

A leading figure in this organization is a former mad genius, Doctor Asher Magnuson. Originally a handsome and brilliant genetic scientist at Mousetropolis's prestigious Erasmouse University, Magnuson was responsible for the embarrassing *faux pas* of lighting his pipe in a laboratory with a leaky hydrogen line. The explosion sent Magnuson through the window and down three stories, where a float in the annual "Good Neighbour Parade" ran him over. The tragedy left him horribly scarred and turned his mind to evil, but it convinced him to quit smoking.

In the next twenty-three years, Magnuson attempted no fewer than thirty-six plots aimed at world conquest, including the infamous conversion of a mild-mannered but depressing mouse beatnik poet into the two-metre tall powerhouse of terror and destruction known only as "Gothzilla." Magnuson also tried provoking nuclear war between the United States and Soviet Union by outfitting migratory birds with "raincoats," which made them look like bomber squadrons on radar screens. Force Acorn finally stopped his evil career by capturing Magnuson, and taking him to Mousetropolis to pay for his crimes.

After his capture, Magnuson was offered a choice between prison and the Phoenix Society. He chose Phoenix. At a former mad scientists' singles mixer, he fell in love with Doctor Amity Bernoulli, who had fought for the eradication of all animal life as "The Plant Avenger." Curiously, Amity had also been disfigured in a lab accident involving sodium and a tragically mistimed practical joke with a thimble of water placed over a door. Married after a brief courtship, Asher and Amity now collaborate on a variety of projects, the most important personally are their two-year-old triplets; two sons named Rhesus and Bunsen and a daughter Annethraxe (none of whom have been horribly mutilated in a lab accident as yet). The team is also responsible for the development of carnivorous rice.

➢ The Docks

Although Mousetropolis is a major rodent city, it is relatively small when compared to major human towns. With a population just under one million, only one or two sailing vessels dock or sail each day. Any mouse with a strong back can earn a few scraps of cheese with a day's work as a stevedore. Rumour has it that some captains are not above shanghaiing likely prospects, however.

In the bars, the tensions from hundreds of rodents and their saved pay from months at sea for hundreds of rodents forms an explosive mixture. Awe-inspiring battles erupt without warning, and the police only involve themselves if weapons actually come into play.

The Colony

The world of Ant Colony #85025 is one of conformity and interchangeability, of certain knowledge that one is expendable and one is almost certain to die. It is where poor, ridiculous saps harbour the desperate illusion that the world will be somehow different for their existance, and where they routinely overlook that horrifying truth. In fact, it is the real world.

Location

Ant Colony #85025 is the nearest patch of sandy soil, or the furthest exotic island in the South Pacific. Its location does not really matter, as far as the 2,549,528 inhabitants are concerned.

Architecture

Ant Colony #85025 is a virtual alpha complex of identical twisty little passages. Corridors are wide enough to walk through, if you happen to be an ant, and major thoroughfares can even support two lanes of traffic. From time to time, the tunnels expand into chambers, which as many as fifty ants might share. The fact that other ants think nothing of taking shortcuts through someone's bedroom just adds to the pleasure of living in a colony. Making life at home at least as annoying as life at work supposedly encourages productivity.

Some chambers are blessed with only one entrance. These generally serves as homes and offices for Royalty or their chief executives.

History

Eighty years ago, the honeymoon flight of a beautiful young princess named Myrmida came to an end. She had spent the day dancing in the sunlit-warmed air, laughing with the charming young drone who would become the father of her children, but she would never see him again. Upon landing, she bit her wings off, knowing that she would never again slip the surly bonds of Earth. Slowly and laboriously, she dug herself a home with mandibles that knew only the touch of her nurses and of the husband she had known for a day. Thus, she bid an eternal goodbye to the sun.

After that, life became more depressing.

Government

It may be possible to run a large city without a suffocating, soul-destroying bureaucracy, but the ants are not likely to try. The Queen might play dictator of Ant Colony #85025 if she could keep up with the paperwork; there are days she signs as many documents as she lays eggs. The few dissidents whisper that the overburdened bureaucracy that hampers simple decision-making is actually a brilliantly subtle ploy by Commoners to keep Royalty busy and distracted.

There is little or no overt repression to make the population conform. Most ants like living in an anthill, and it is hard for them to understand anyone who does not like it. It is a mother-run police state; instead of a quick ride to the Ministry of Love, the rebellious earn

a stern lecture on how they have disappointed Mother and let down the entire colony. Of course, outsiders receive no such consideration.

The colony makes no effort to keep in potential emigrants. Rebellious ants are self-exiling.

Life, If You Can Call It That

There are three careers open to an ant, in a manner of speaking. Ants have little or no social mobility, so it is more correct to say ants must follow three basic roles from birth.

➢ Royalty

Traditionally, the prince and princess of a colony grow to adolescence in comfort and luxury, waiting for their one honeymoon flight. For the princess, this is the greatest event of her life; for the prince, it is the last. More recently, however, royalty is taking advantage of their ability to fly, and will sometimes eschew their honeymoon flight to serve the colony as scouts and messengers. Others, however, are smart enough to run away. Royalty makes up 5% of the total population.

➢ Soldiers

One of the more hideous indictments of Ant Colony #85025 is that a career in the military offers free spirits of society a chance at self-expression. Life as an ant infantryman may be relatively short, but it provides variety that most ants can only dream. Soldiers account for 10% of the population.

The ant military, like the professional armies in Europe of 1914, firmly believes that there are no problems that cannot be solved by throwing in more infantry. Since insects have never perfected the machine-gun, they have been right so far.

While one ant infantryman is not a major challenge to a rodent, ants do not fight alone. Ant military tactics focus on mass assaults in pike squares. They achieving victory by sheer volume, and thus a real threat arises with groups of at least 25 ants forming a 5 x 5 square. The soldiers manoeuvre close enough to each other that they all fall within the radius of an Area Effect attack.

Recently, some clever ant officers have hit upon the idea of tunnelling into fortified positions. The ant infantry is indeed a formidable force.
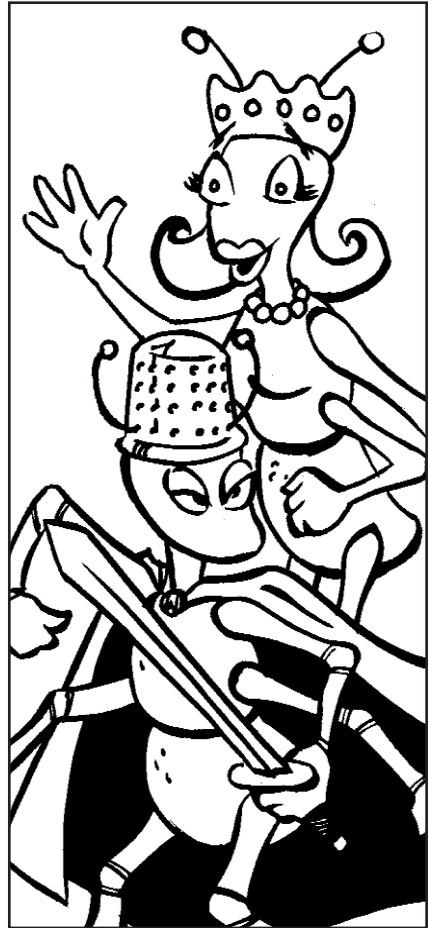
➢ Workers

The majority of workers perform four basic tasks:

1) Run somewhere.

2) Pick something up.

3) Carry it somewhere else.

4) Put it down.

This covers both carving out new tunnels and fetching food.

Elite workers are known as Initiators, and are those who actually find food or begin carving tunnels before others take over. One becomes an Initiator after years of work and a bit of luck, or through the intervention of a patron. A favourite prank among anti-social elements is to pose as an Initiator and see how long the colony will send ants out to pace back and forth between two trees, or dig circular tunnels. Sometimes, particularly clever false Initiators can parlay their bluffs into wealth ("We have to build a new one-entry residential chamber for one of the Royals. Huh? I don't know which one; does it really matter?").

Colonial Cenotaph

Although the colony recycles the dead for protein, one should never assume that ants are unsentimentality. Colonial Cenotaphs are memorials to those who have passed on, including the founder of the colony, Queen Myrmida I, the great architect Imhostep, and the Cenotaph of the 123,884 Unknown Soldiers.

Even common workers are memorialized here, after a fashion. If any ant calls the cenotaph's management in advance with the name of a departed friend, they will print the name on a slip of paper and hang it for the duration of the bereaved's visit, to give the illusion that the dead sometimes leave something behind.

Jenkin's Crossing

Jenkin's Crossing is both the name of a animal settlement and a human town that the settlement resides under, in and around (for simplicity sake, references to Jenkin's Crossing are for the animal town, unless otherwise noted). Situated at the edge of a large patch of rolling hills and dense forest, Jenkin's Crossing is a small, rustic town that sprouted up as a way station for animals moving between the city and country.

Jenkin's Crossing is a quiet, loosely-knit and open community, where everyone knows everyone else, and the local gossip is more important (and interesting) than some far-off war or city news — and some mighty strange rumours have been circulating 'round this seemingly sleepy burg for as long as anyone can remember.

Location

Jenkin's Crossing lies somewhere in the vast Midwest. Similar towns (without the "peculiarities" of this one) can crop up in almost any suitable, out-of-way place convenient for the GM as well.

Architecture

Jenkin's Crossing has no discernible architecture that the animals can really call their own, save for some scrounged-together buildings, underground tunnels, or similarly simple modifications. Nearly all dwellings operate out of existing human homes and businesses, or pre-existing large items like fallen trees, rock clusters, old farm equipment, etc. Though the human Jenkin's Crossing sprawls out over several miles, no maps exist for the animals; visitors must always ask for directions from the townsfolk.

History

First settled in the mid-1700's, Jenkin's Crossing started out as a basic farming community, and has virtually remained unchanged since. The first mice and rat settlers had some brief territorial disputes with the local woodchucks, racoons, and groundhogs, but as time went on, everyone cared less and less. There was plenty of open space, and the human farmers always grew more than enough food to go around for the animals (much to the farmers' aggravation). A few, small animal businesses have sprouted up since, but many original buildings are still standing and in use (although refurbished); the tallest building in town remains the human's two-story Rest-Inn, able to accommodate an astonishing 56 people!

The town has a large mix of animals, both wild and tame, and even a respectable insect population. Animals grumble about each other over morning coffee, but most are neighbourly enough to warn others about upcoming crop spraying, locations of new traps, or similar items of interest. Even cats and dogs are not nearly as pugnacious towards one another as their city kin.

Government

A volunteer-manned Town Council runs Jenkin's Crossing rather than elected officials. A Mayor exists, but his job is to serve as a point of contact for other nearby animal communities — he has no real power. The Council meets once a week to discuss local and regional issues, and deal with any problems developing in the rural community. Most of their meetings are relaxed affairs, held in the mouse-bar, Scurriers, during the early morning hours, with pipe smoking and drinks.

The Council consists of:

Hank Chestnut, a mouse who has served as mayor for as long as anyone can remember. Remarkably spry for his age, Hank is well-known and respected around the town.

Stew Horsefeather, a gopher, is the representative for those living in outlying farming areas. He is distrustful of "city folk," and is never without a sprig of hayseed clamped between his teeth.

Elmo Fieldsworth, a mole, is a retired worker from the old mines. He acts as town historian, and settles disputes over property lines arise.

Mary Grainson, a squirrel, runs Scurriers and plays town clerk. Something of a business entrepreneur, Mary is young, bright, and friendly. Most importantly, for any interested rodents, she is also single and pretty.

Becky Jeans, a chipmunk, works as the town's treasurer. Her main task is ensuring fair trade and barter rates among the businessmice, who might otherwise gouge out-of-towners. A mother of two, Becky is a local matriarch and an excellent cook.

Gossip: How to Make it Work for You at Home and on the Job

On the surface, this small town fits most people's perceptions of life in a rural community: quiet, peaceful, and terribly dull. Anyone visiting the local pubs, however, will learn much about Jenkin's Crossing. The locals are not shy about sharing local lore and legends with travellers; in fact, many of the townsfolk are master storytellers. Whether over toast and jelly with the farmers at the crack of dawn, or during a Friday night Cheese Fry at a pub, speculation is Jenkin's Crossing's most bountiful crop.

Little Billy

Everyone knows Little Billy. He is a short mole who lives out by Lake Woebehealed, in his secluded and secretive underground lair. Soft-spoken, awkward, and snivelling, Little Billy only comes to town a couple of times a week, and even then, almost exclusively to the hardware store. Lately, folks have seen him chatting with the mayor, but Hank refuses to mention details about the conversations. A few birds who have flown near the entrance of Little Billy's lair say they hear loud, grinding mechanical sounds emitting from the depths below, late at night; it is like a furnace churning.

A classic introvert, Little Billy does not welcome visitors. Then again, what harm could the little mole be building?

Crazy ol' Murry

A reclusive coop, this loon (no, he really is a loon) is easy to spot thanks to his amazingly loud proclamations of fortunes lost and stolen. Murry has a large beak, and knows how to use it. Most folks ignore him when he lands nearby since any attempt at even a "How do you do?" only elicites a torrent of how life has cheated him. While he never openly states it, he blames Becky Jeans for his ills. Murry claims (or would, if he had the nerve) that the Treasurer had an unwarranted grudge against him and, by fixing trade rates and bullying others into raising prices for him, forced his small Bait & Lunch Grill out of business.

He is obviously insane, of course.

The Blasé Witch

In the early 1800's, a reclusive, lazy, and highly eccentric hermit squirrel, called George Barkner, was tried for the mysterious disappearance of some local residents. At first, George denied any involvement, claiming that the humans were more likely responsible. Halfway through the trial, however, George apparently had husked one nut too many and snapped like a dry piece of hay. He jumped up on the witness stand and proclaimed that his magical might was a gift from Dark Forces Beyond The Grain Silo; he could "destroy them all" if he was not so apathetic all the time. Not even caring whether George was guilty or not, the town used this incident to kick the Screwy Squirrel out for good, far from town limits. Swearing revenge like a little mad rodent, George vanished into the vast wilderness, and was never seen again.

In years since, folks have spun yarns about the myth of the infamous "Blasé Witch," claiming that old George finally had the gumption to do something with his rumoured powers — except he died after the first winter, putting a crick in his plans. Now he supposedly haunts the wilderness where he was banished, far from the edge of town. Animals take it in stride, a mite proud even, that the small community has its own bonafide ghost story. Of course, some of the animals that have disappeared lately have been blamed on the Blasé Witch; rumors claim he is still alive in some twisted form, but that is just foolishness talking....

Sights and Attractions

Jenkin's Crossing has a number of notable locations.

➢ Scurriers

The hub of the social life in Jenkin's Crossing is indisputably Mary's labour of love, Scurriers. This bar and grill is located in the overgrown fields of a long-abandoned farm. Now in its fourth year of operation, it has become the jewel of the town. Scurriers is open around the clock and all weary travellers, nocturnal or diurnal, are welcome. Built within the old, rusting carcass of a John Deere tractor and an attached trailer, Scurriers has plenty of room for even large animals. It does not restrict clientele by diet, allowing owls, foxes, and even the occasional wolf admittance. It also enforces a very strict No Fighting rule, however, which is backed up by two bouncers, a pair of German Shepherds named Fred and Frank. Trouble rarely breaks out, however, since everyone from the surrounding area knows and respects Mary be disruptive. That, and Scurriers is one of a kind — a treasure to protect.
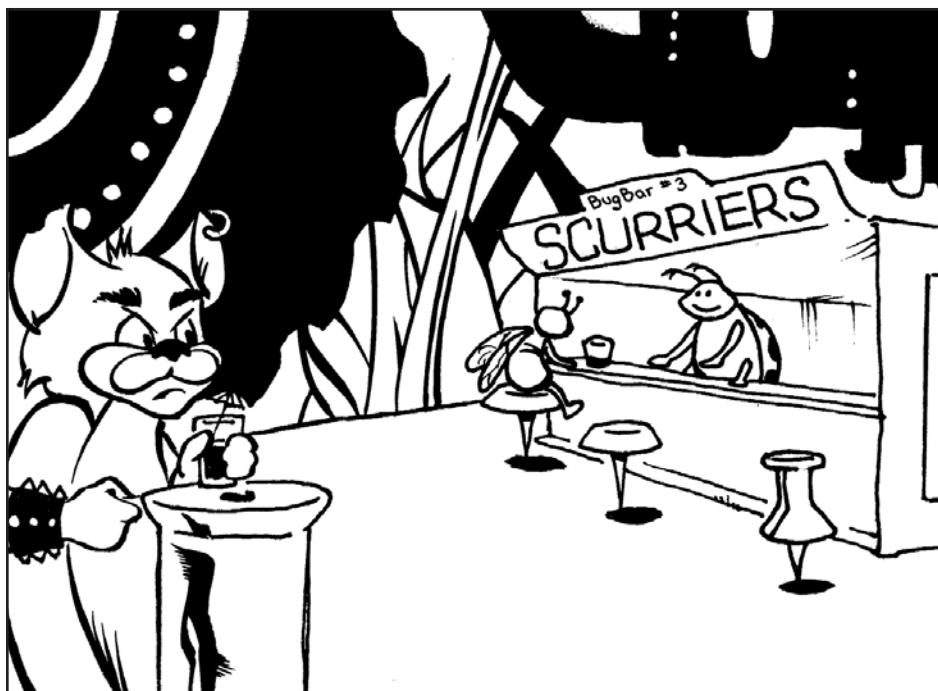
➤ The Abandoned Mine

During the early 1900s, human explorers discovered a small vein of coal only a few miles from town, and established a mine. When it shut down in the late 60s, animals moved into the lower levels, claiming the empty shafts and corridors as their own. One was a mouse by the name of Warren G. Westinghouse, better known as the Cheese King of the North. He moved into the most remote areas of the mine, and rarely ventured into town. As rumour has it, Warren was hiding a king's ransom in fine, imported cheese. After his death, fortune seekers and glory hounds by the truckload came searching for his legendary stock. Accidents and fatalities since curbed the ambitions of many, and most town's folk warn against heading into the mines. Many doubt that such a cache of dairy products ever existed, or even stayed ripe after all this time.

➤ The Lake

A favourite swimming hole for both humans and animals, the lake runs thirty metres deep, allowing the more aquatically-adept animals to enjoy a good swim at depths far below the humans on the surface. Everyone frequents it during the spring and summer months. A few local animals have even been trying to organize extended dives to the very bottom, live deep sea exploration, looking for old mining tools and similar exhibits for their budding local history museum.

➤ The Barren Fields

Miles upon miles of rolling grasslands with sparse copse of trees scattered about, this is where old timers claim that the Blasé Witch was banished, and subsequently died. While animals vanish without a trace often enough in the rural parts of the country, the numerous townsfolk who disappeared when they entered these lonely plains have encouraged many ghost stories and tall tales about this plot of green. Even those who refute the legends steer clear of this area after dark, although they claim it is because this treacherous patch of land contains predators and natural hazards and not some vengeful wraith or witch.

A popular tactic for Jenkin's Crossing parents is to tell their children that they will be left out in the fields if they don't finish their meals, since the Blasé Witch prefers disobedient children for his supper. Naturally, this also means children dare each other to spend the night in the fields, alone, while some gangs use that as a prerequisite for joining.

Chapter 5: GM's Section

BESM Chapter 6: Role-Playing in an Anime World (*BESM,* page 233) provides advice on role-playing in general and anime in particular, but there are still some issues specific for a *BESMouse* game. This chapter offers suggestions on setting up and Game Mastering *BESMouse* campaigns, and provides an adventure seed usable by GMs.

Campaign Types

There are two broad campaign types in *BESMouse* genre fiction: Survival and Troubleshooting.

Survival

In a Survival campaign, the player characters are trying to stay alive despite everything that heartless nature and cruel humans throw at them. Player characters are either eking out a living, or leading citizens in the local community responding to threats from both within and without the community.

Troubleshooting

The latter style of Survival game segues neatly into the more typical Troubleshooting campaign. As troubleshooters, the players are a group of volunteers who take it upon themselves to fight villains (often humans). It is truly amazing how many crimes plucky teams of cartoon mice have solved.

Species

The way different species interact is a key issue that GMs should settle early in the design of their game world. While genre fiction often makes political and ethical divides along racial lines, a more cosmopolitan approach can also work. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Is there a "Bad Guy" species?
- If there is a "Bad Guy" species, are there some decent individuals within that species?
- Can individuals of different species have children?
- How will society react to a cross-species relationship?

Mimics

Mimics are common in much of the genre material, since much of it is animated or written decades ago when various media portrayed ethnic types in broad and often offensive strokes. Animal-based stereotypes are more likely to survive untouched because they do not "hit" quite as hard. Crows with thick Southern American accents still appear in recent releases of Disney's *Dumbo,* but the Bugs Bunny episode which set the rabbit against a black human hunter has been quite properly relegated to the category of historical curiosity.

Stereotypes in gaming have their good and bad points. On the up side, they serve as a handle, making it easier to identify and remember a specific character. On the down side, they might offend a player. If the issue arises during play, it is much better to adjust the portrayal rather than allow it to degenerate into an argument. It is the Game Master's job to make sure every player is having fun and not being offended.

There are steps that GMs can take to make gameable stereotypes more palatable. Since most stereotypes have both positive and negative aspects, it might seem wise to emphasize the positive over the negative, but this can backfire. A more successful approach is to think of stereotypes as superficial. Yes, the Texan mouse wears a ten-gallon hat and frequently yells "Yeehaw," but apart from that, he is no more likely a hero or villain than any other mouse.

Fuzzy Logic

Typically, a *BESMouse* genre tale is an adventure story told for children with sly humour added for the adults who take the kids to the movies. This often produces an odd brand of logic where mice use dynamite to launch themselves into orbit in junk spacecraft, or mad scientists try for world conquest time and time again, when they could instead become multi-billionaires by focusing their talents on something more mundane.

There are two main types of comedy in this genre: sane protagonists in a crazy world, and crazy protagonists in a sane world. Your group may differ, but it is often easier to run a game where the player characters are rational and the world is nuts.

One of the more striking conventions is disguise and wild stories. It seems incredibly easy to disguise oneself in a cartoon universe — all it takes is a hat and a falsetto voice, and just about everyone is fooled. A mouse trying to pass as a shrew is a very difficult undertaking, but this is typical fare for a *BESMouse* disguise artist. Fortunately, this works well in games since players rely on your descriptions of what they see. "Suddenly, you realize that the bat's wings are made out of leaves!" plays better than "Although her story wouldn't fool a child, your character believes her." Good gamers will play along if the dice says their characters were fooled.

When it comes to NPCs fooling PCs, it is better if the players are fooled as well. If you establish crazy things happen in your world, then the players are more likely "fooled" by crazy stories.

Nothing kills a player's loose, light-hearted approach to problems faster than the grim, hard-nosed attitude of the GM. If you disallow the players' characters to dress in drag and pass as mouse nightclub entertainers, do not be surprised if they are annoyed after discovering the damsel-in-distress is actually their archenemy. Players will swallow their disbelief if you do the same.

Animal Society

When designing an animal society, you should consider the following topics:

Human Relations

Humans are stunningly successful animals, and probably the least predictable. The genre, however, invalidates the largest differences between humans and other critters — mice cannot talk, nor maintain a civilized society. How will animals and humans co-exist in your world? The typical answer is humans do not realize mice and other little animals can talk and think. Creatures understand human speech, however. Giving the animals a human friend could be campaign dynamite. Humans are much bigger and stronger than any species in this book, and have access to astonishing resources. A person with a moderately paying job could easily support a huge number of mice in relative comfort. Thus, the GM should handle any friendly relationship with a human with care.

Outlaws

The term "outlaw" implies law exists. Do animals live in anarchy, is there a Mouse King, or does the truth lie somewhere in between? Governments are problematic in a role-playing game. If there is a police force, what stops the player characters from simply asking them for help? On the other hand, police can be useful NPCs because they provide can handle villains once the PCs capture them.

Consider the following dilemmas:

- If you adopt the notion of animal cities and animals living in a state of anarchy, how do they interact? Do they look down on one another?

- How do predator and prey interact? Are there "No Hunting" zones enforced by law or tradition where predators and their usual prey can meet and negotiate without worrying about violence?

- In real life, pets think of humans as parents or siblings. Might more clever beasties (particularly cats) look upon humans as barely-tolerated meal tickets?

- Anti-predator groups seem like a natural development. Nobody wants to be eaten, even if it is part of the natural law. Will player characters join an anti-predator group? What if one of them is a bat and the mosquitoes band together to fight insectivores?

- Since humans are the most dangerous animal on Earth, are anti-human animal groups a logical development in your world?

- Might animal rights groups actually be anti-slavery groups that are run by animals? Do they liberate creatures from pet stores?

Language

In the majority of genre material, there is no concept as "language." Everyone speaks whatever the voice actors speak, although foreigners and other species often have accents. When language issues arise, they are plot devices brushed aside within a few days. GMs trying to reflect this type of "reality" should simply ignore language completely, rather than use the *BESM* Linguistics Skill.

Injury and Death

Despite great battles, killing is very rare in genre material. Heroes do not use poison gas to exterminate their enemies. Criminal masterminds do not kill captured heroes outright: they lock them in elaborate "death traps" that never seem to work.

Despite this, the threat of death is often very real, especially in climactic fight scenes. The death of a player character, or even a villain, should be a rare and shattering event in the game. As long as the character behaves like death is a possibility, the GM should avoid character death.

Humorous events should not have serious results, either. A huge pie fight in a bakery should cause momentary inconvenience, not concussions and crippling injury. Vehicular failures should send players tumbling into ponds, not impaling them on steering wheels.

Speakers

Speakers are humans who can talk to animals. They are traditionally children or other innocents; the onset of puberty often destroys the ability. Since they are often aloof and antisocial, Speakers are unpopular, and thus prefer spending time with their animal friends instead of other people. Speakers are frequently raised by animals (like Tarzan, or Kipling's Mowgli) or they gained the ability unexpectedly. The most notable exception is Hugh Lofting's Doctor Doolittle, who was a middle-aged adult with a medical practice when he became a Speaker.

In most modern genre material, Speakers are children who land in trouble and need rescueing by the animal heroes (the player characters).

Toys That Work

One of the strangest, and yet most common conceits of the genre is that a mouse scrambling into a toy aircraft can almost always fly it. Not only are these toys self-powered, but they also possess functional controls designed for mice. It is not clear why a radio-controlled boat rudder is connected to the tiller as well as a servo motor, but perhaps toy manufacturers have their reasons.

Many players will realize this and cleverly head off to the local toy store any time they need transport. If players desperately need to go seafaring and do not have any Mecha Points to spend, it is certainly tempting to give them their free ride. As long as the borrowed item is a means of travelling somewhere as opposed to a solution to the problem, giving it to players will not ruin the game. If, however, you feel the players are taking advantage of your good nature, there are some steps that you can take.

First, there is the question of range. Your players may sneak a model B-25 out of a store in Manhattan, but they cannot us it to cross the continent. A toy airplane or truck can only travel a few kilometres, at most, before running out of fuel or draining its batteries.

Wind-powered toys, such as kites and inflated balloons, have a better chance of making a long trip practical, but they are tricky. They may help the characters out of a tight spot, but is nothing stops you from crashing it down somewhere that advances the plot.

There is also the question of accessories and equipment. A model ship is seaworthy for a crew of mice, but does it have navigation equipment? Is there any food aboard?

Raiding toy stores for minor accessories like clothing is unlikely to hurt a campaign, and transport is only slightly more unbalancing. Things do not become serious until characters find a store that sells toy tanks and arm themselves for war. Although players can point out many instances where toys wreaked havoc in the genre material, the GM should never allow something that potentially disastrous or unballancing. Establish early in the campaign that toy guns and tanks are not actually armed and you will have fewer problems.

You should allow players to use, without restriction, any toys they can design for net zero Mecha Points. Naturally, such crafts are not very elaborate, but like a paper airplane (page 54), have their uses in the right place at the right time.

Adventure Seed: A Cry for Kelp

Short John Tungsten was perhaps the most infamous of the many rodent pirates who plagued the waters by Mousetropolis. The cutters and hovercraft of the Mousetropolis Coast Guard often pursued his sailing ship, the *Sea Rat*, but they never successfully engaged him. The *Sea Rat* was finally burned while docked in Port Plebian, a wretched hive of scum and villainy near Mousetropolis. Rumors allege this was a covert action by the Swiss Cheese Guard, under the orders of the Rat King, but the government of Mousetropolis denies this.

Short John then faced the problem of replacing his ship. His significant other, The Dragonfly Lady, hit upon a plan both brilliant and diabolical. She would land a job in a hotel hosting PromethiCon 2000, the annual convention of scientists known as the Sons of Prometheus. There, she would sneak into the room of Captain Nemouse (master of the *Cephalopod*, page 58), and forge an entry in Nemouse's "Things To Do" list concerning "wreaking a retribution upon Mousetropolis that will cause the bold to shudder in their sleep ten generations hence." Meanwhile, Short John Tungsten would go to Mousetropolis posing as Captain Jezebel, skipper of the late fishing vessel *Peapod*, which was destroyed by a ferocious black dolphin. "Jezebel" is raising money from private subscribers and the government to build a ship specifically for the purpose of hunting down the renegade cetacean.

So far, the nefarious scheme has run like clockwork. Seeing the forged entry, Nemouse is now blockading Mousetropolis by sinking ships until "the beast of retribution has quenched its thirst on the metaphorical blood of those who have wronged him," or until *Cephalopod* runs out of torpedoes. Whichever.

Subscriptions are pouring in for Short John and his warship is being built. Soon, Short John will staff it with his old crew, and ply his trade again. That is, of course, unless the players can cut the knot of deception and expose the lies.

Chapter 6: Sample Adventure

Let Slip the Rats of War!

Setting

This adventure is set in a forest glen, beside a river, nestled in the valley of a mountain range. The GM can situate the mountains anywhere he or she desires; the Rockies, the Appalachians, or elsewhere — it is not vital to the adventure. In this game, rodents are "sentient" while animals such as dogs, cats, insects, and birds are more intelligent than their real-world counterparts, but are not considered "sentient." GMs can, at their discretion, ignore this if a player really wants to play a non-rodent animal.

Story Background

In the vibrant, green countryside of Gracious Glen, life is good. The ground is fertile and the bounty of nuts and berries is plentiful. This has drawn a growing population of mice, rabbits, shrews, squirrels, and other animals who have developed a peaceful society. The centre of the community, located around The Grand Oak, is a steadily growing city that caters to the market. Farmers and artisans alike arrive here to sell and trade their goods with their friends on a regular basis. To the north and west of the glen is a vast mountain range where only the hearty survive. Its rocky slopes and snow-covered heights offer very little food or shelter. To the south and the east bends a wide river that winds its way through the mountain range, southward. On the opposite bank of the river rises another vast mountain range, equally harsh as those to the north and west. Despite the severe conditions of these mountains, a small community reputedly exists in the heights: a collection of monks, known as Falcon-Riders, who have befriended the falcons that soar above the cliffs.

Unbeknownst to the inhabitants of Gracious Glen, another society exists upriver, deeper in the mountain range, known as Base Northern. This rugged terrain is home to an equally harsh society of rats and racoons. They have built a life through plunder and taking what they want. To assist them, they use captured domestic kittens from distant farms, which they have raised to serve as rats steeds, adding additional claws and fangs to their invasions. With the recent addition of their feline mounts, the vicious raiders expanded their raiding patrols. A few weeks ago, one of their scouts uncovered Gracious Glen, a city ripe for plunder. Intent on claiming the rich bounty for themselves, Base Northern has mobilized a large raiding force and moves southward, ready to sweep through the glen and take it over entirely. Will the characters be able to save Gracious Glen from falling to the invaders?

Characters

The characters will play teenage mice, rabbits, shrews, squirrels (see Species Templates in Chapter 1), or any other animal that the GM approves. When the characters are not attending class at the local school, they are often causing trouble like most kids will. Players should not control animals with the Diminutive Defect at 6 BP. Players should have 30 Character Points and 20 Skill points with which to create their characters.

Important NPCs

Allies

The characters can call upon other citizens of Gracious Glen for assistance, though few can offer help in a battle. That is not to say, however, that the people of Gracious Glen cannot provide aid in their own ways. While they may not be fighters, they are more than willing to help defend their home from the northern aggressors in any way possible. Use the templates provided in *Chapter 1: Character Creation* as a base for the animals of Gracious Glen, adding Skills as appropriate to the individual's profession.

Additionally, if the characters decide to confirm the rumours of the Falcon-Riders, they may gain allies from the mountains. Convincing the Falcon-Riders to join the battle, however, will be difficult, as is finding their home in the rugged mountains.

Falcon-Riders

Many years ago, a mouse named Simon rescued a falcon chick from certain death. The chick's mother was grateful and the two became fast friends. Little by little, the friendship between the two grew and other small rodents and falcons joined them, developing bonds of friendship. Soon a society developed in the mountains, based on peace, co-operation, and mutual respect.

Typical (Mouse) Falcon-Rider

Body 3, Mind 4, Soul, 4

Defects

Diminutive (3 BP), **Easily Distracted** (Cheese; 1 BP)

Skills

Animal Training Level 1 (Birds; 1 Skill Point), **Archery Level 1** (Bow; 3 Skill Points), **Melee Attack Level 1** (Polearms; 4 Skill Points), **Navigation Level 1** (Air; 3 Skill Points), **Riding Level 2** (Falcon; 2 Skill Points), **Stealth Level 1** (Silent Movement; 4 Skill Points), **Wilderness Survival Level 2** (Mountains; 6 Skill Points)

Each Falcon-Rider befriends a falcon that it uses as a mount. Use the Stats for a Raptor, page 18 for the falcons. Each rider carries a (mouse-sized) lance that delivers 10 Scratch Points of damage (plus Attack Combat Value).

Enemies

The invaders from the north are prepared for war. The rats and racoons are battle-hardened troops with years of experience in raiding fortified positions. If the scout's reports are accurate, overtaking Gracious Glen should be easy. Roger the Rat leads the army while his commander, General Masque, remains back at Base Northern. Their intent is to quickly sweep down from the mountains, crushing all opposition in their path until they take the Grand Oak and establish their new base. They will use the surviving citizens to harvest the area's resources — why should they do the work when the citizens can do so? Use the Stats for typical Rats (page 31) and Racoons (page 30) but add the Skills Melee Attack Level 1 and Melee Defense Level 1.

Roger the Rat

Roger grew up in the bleak northern mountains, fighting for everything he wanted in life. Despite his small size, Roger quickly established himself as a force of reckoning. As his influence grew, he developed a gang of rat supporters eager to ride his coattails to the top. His horde grew to a size of 50 members, whereupon he met Masque, a newly-arrived racoon who needed to learn his place in the neighbourhood. Over the following weeks, it quickly became apparent that the streetwise racoon was a wily foe who would not roll over without a fight. When Masque approached Roger to join forces and combine their efforts rather than continually butting heads, Roger realized that Masque was a brilliant tactician. Together, the two could become a power in the forest unlike any other. Since then, the two have worked towards their vision of a forest empire to rival Mousetropolis.

Stats

Body 6, Mind 5, Soul 5

Attributes

Aura of Command Level 3, Combat Mastery Level 2, Damn Healthy! Level 2, Organizational Ties (Base Northern Army) Level 4

Defects

Awkward Size (1 BP), Diminutive (3 BP), Unique Defect: Overconfident (1 BP)

Skills

Burglary Level 2 (B&E), Gaming Level 1 (Card Games), Interrogation Level 3 (Physical), Intimidation Level 4 (Street), Melee Attack Level 2 (Spear), Riding Level 2 (Cat), Sleight of Hand Level 2 (Lock Picking), Stealth Level 2 (Silent Movement), Unarmed Attack Level 2 (Strikes), Unarmed Defense Level 2 (Strikes), Wilderness Survival Level 3 (Mountain)

General Masque

General Masque is a massive racoon who survives by both a quick wit and ferocity matching a rabid wolverine. In his youth, Masque lived in a human city, feasting royally off the humans' scraps. The silly humans thought their pet dogs and cats would keep Masque away from their food storage bins. The dogs were all slow and stupid, however, and easily distracted by a thrown stick. The cats were even worse — small and pathetic, they were easy to intimidate. Then, one day, Masque's overconfidence got the better of him. The humans set a devious trap for Masque; a day later, they released Masque in a foreign forest, far from home. Despite the new surroundings, Masque swiftly established a niche for himself and rose in power yet again. Things improved when he met a rugged rat named Roger. Although they initially fought for dominance, they quickly recognized the devious potential in the other. Masque decided to approach Roger and propose an alliance. Since that day, they have built an empire in the surrounding forest and are hoping to expand their domain. This background information on Masque is provided should the GM wish to expand this adventure into a campaign.

Character Goals

1 – Survive

The character's most important goal is surviving the Base Northern army's advance into Gracious Glen. The characters must use smarts and quick wit to avoid the army's brutal sweep through their homeland.

2 – Organize the Resistance

The characters cannot hope to beat back Masque, Roger, and their soldiers without help. They must find help to reclaim their home.

3 – Liberate the Glen

Somehow, the characters must drive the Base Northern aggressors away.

Plot Elements

Due to the nature of this adventure, characters gain Character Points for advancement much faster than normal. After each plot element, characters should earn one Character Point, which they can use for character advancement immediately. This reflects the characters being left in an extreme situation and learning to survive very quickly. GMs must approve all Character Point expenditures.

1 – Setting the Stage

It is recommended GMs play a short period of "normal" life in Gracious Glen. This helps acclimate the characters to their home, acquaint themselves with their neighbours, and generally develop a better feel for the setting. GMs should create a few NPCs with whom the characters can interact and establish relationships. GMs should not devote too much time to this (about 2 hours should suffice for most groups), but it is a vital element. If the players, through their characters, feel empathy for Gracious Glen, then many of the adventure's events will possess emotional impact. GMs should never overlook setting the stage for an adventure.

2 – Base Northern Comes a Knockin'

The day is peaceful, the birds are chirping, the butterflies are fluttering, and the characters are attending class. Suddenly, they hear a scream outside. Riding up to the school are rats, seated atop feline mounts, squashing any resistance they encounter. As eager as the rats are for a fight, Roger has ordered them not to harm too many citizens. Their goal is to take over the glen and force its inhabitants to work for them; it would be in their best interests to not injure too many potential slaves. Masque is confident that the show of overwhelming force will be enough to convince the people of Gracious Glen that resistance is pointless.

The rats quickly swarm over the town. Before they reach the front of St. Peter's School, the characters' teacher, Miss Fluffell, quickly ushers the class to the back exit and tell them to run and hide as fast as they can. She will try to slow down the rats long enough for her students to escape. Just before leaving, she tells them to find help or else Gracious Glen will be destroyed. With that, she heads for the attackers and create a distraction.

If the characters hesitate, they run the risk of the attackers spotting them — the teacher's distraction only lasts for a short moment before a rat knocks her unconscious

with a swift punch. If the characters have not fled by this point, there is a chance of the rats spotting them. The characters have to sneak away if they wish to avoid the rats' attention. If seen, the attackers send a small group of riders after the characters, one rider for every two characters. While the characters outnumber their pursuers, the rats are trained fighters and their cat mounts certainly even things up.

Since the cats are much faster than the un-mounted characters, the rats quickly close the distance. The characters need to rely on quick wits and stealth to escape the attackers. The characters possess a major advantage, however — they know Gracious Glen much better than the rats and can therefore use that knowledge to their advantage. Successful Mind-based Urban Tracking Skill checks will remind the characters about a short-cut over there or a great hiding spot just under those roots. As long as the characters are careful and smart, they should be able to avoid their rat pursuers. They must now find a safe spot where they can figure out what is happening, and plan their next move accordingly.

If the rats catch the characters, they have to find a way to escape. Since the rats will put the characters to work harvesting nuts or berries, it should not be too difficult for them to plan a daring escape.

3 – Circling the Wagons

Once safe, the characters likely want to figure out what exactly occurred. Using stealth, they can probably avoid Base Northern's soldiers long enough to discover that an army of several dozen rats, some racoons, and feline mounts has invaded the glen. Once they deal with the small resistance some citizens put up in defense of their home, the small, but potent invading army forces the citizens to work for them. Farmers must harvest entire crops of berries. Climbers must scale trees to harvest the nuts. Children are put to work preparing the harvests for shipment to the north. Everyone is now slave-labour for the invaders.

The character's scouting missions should not be easy — there are several rats and racoons patrolling the glen looking for anyone who escaped their initial roundup. The characters have to be very careful to avoid detection completely. If they are careless or unlucky, they might again have to flee for their lives.

Eventually, the characters have to find help to drive off the northern army. The most obvious choice for characters is to enlist the aid of the Falcon-Riders. To gain their help, however, the characters must first find them.

4 – A Mountaineer's Life

If the characters attempt to find the Falcon-Riders, they need to cross the river to the opposite side. This is difficult because soldiers from the north are patrolling the riverbank, just in case anyone attempts escape by water. Character need stealth and some ingenuity if they hope to succeed. Additionally, because of the river's width, they need to figure out some other way to cross the water, unless the characters are exceptional swimmers.

Despite the characters' best efforts, they attract the attention of a rat scout once on the opposite bank. The rat reports the escape back to Roger, who is very displeased that some children got away. He orders three rats to join him — he will personally see to the kid's capture! Climbing atop their mounts, the Northern army sends Roger and his men across the river in a hastily crafted raft.

Once on the other side of the river, the characters need to climb the mountains and find the Falcon-Riders. One of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to watch the falcons when they take flight and watch where they land. This is likely be near their home. The players, however, may come up with other ideas on finding the mountain monks. GMs should be open to the players' concepts and grant a chance for success depending on the validity of the idea. During the search, however, Roger and his men harry the characters, intent on bringing them back to Gracious Glen and putting them to work. It is a race against time; will the characters find the Falcon-Riders before Roger finds them?

Assuming the characters successfully find the Falcon-Riders, they need to convince the monks to help them liberate their homes. The characters have to be very diplomatic to successfully enlist the help of the reclusive Falcon-Riders. After all, why should they endanger themselves for the citizens of Gracious Glen?

Once the characters convince the Falcon-Riders to help them, they can return home atop their own falcons and help drive off the invaders. Having survived this long, the characters have earned the right to fight for the liberation of their homes. The Falcon-Riders will not stand in the way of any character's desire to play an integral part in the fight. In fact, a character's desire increases the likelihood that the Falcon-Riders agree to help them.

If Roger is still alive when the characters find the Falcon-Riders, he quickly heads back to Gracious Glen and prepare his men for an attack. That is, unless the characters can stop him before he escapes....

5 – Liberation of Gracious Glen

If Roger successfully returns to Gracious Glen, the invader's army is prepared for the Falcon-Riders' attack. Otherwise, the characters and their new allies have the advantage of surprise when they return home. Even if caught by surprise, the invaders from Base Northern are hardened warriors and their years of experience will serve them well. Their greatest weakness, however, is their overconfidence. They felt believed over Gracious Glen would be a cakewalk and they were right. This has heightened their arrogance and makes them vulnerable to some well-planned manoeuvres. In the end, the characters' best hope involves strategy, planning, wits, and luck to reclaim their home from Roger and his men.

Campaign Expansions

First, if GMs wish to turn this adventure into a campaign, they should alter Character Point awards back to a normal rate (see *BESM*, page 263).

This adventure can easily lead into a campaign. What happens when the characters drive off Base Northern's forces (assuming they are defeated....)? Do they slink off with their tails between their legs, never to return, or do they leave, only to regroup and strike again? What happened to Roger? If he is alive, what is he up to? Does Masque decide to ride out of the north himself? Do the characters take the initiative and try to and stop Masque's reign of terror? What sort of relationship do the characters establish with the Falcon-Riders? Do they owe the mountain monks a favour? What about rebuilding their little community? What damage did the invaders from the north inflict? In addition, the citizens of Gracious Glen have had their eyes opened — there are societies outside their small, little home. Who is out there and what are their goals and agendas?

Big Ears, Small Mouse

While innumerable films, TV shows, and books have been made or written about talking mice, these few might be of particular interest to a *BESMouse* Game Master and players.

Literature

Aesop's Fables
>These contain many themes and plots that the genre material references.

Coyote Stories (Compiled by Mourning Dove)
>These tales have a fairly tenuous connection to the genre, but are well worth reading anyway.

The Wind in the Willows
>Kenneth Grahame, 1908
>The first classic of the genre, with a wide-ranging cast including the unforgettable Mr. Toad. The Riverbank is easily a potential setting for a town the player characters happen to pass through.

Doctor Doolittle
>Hugh Lofting, 1920
>Although this work focuses on a human, the good doctor makes for an interesting non-player character. The original stories are somewhat dated.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
>Robert C. O'Brien, 1971
>Possibly the most "realistic" take on talking mice ever penned, the film version is more over the top. They complement one another well.

Watership Down
>Richard Adams, 1972
>A serious, and very "realistic" look at rabbits, with great depth in the culture and characterizations.

Redwall
>Brian Jacques, 1986
>Unique among the works referenced here, this series takes place in a Medieval rather than contemporary setting.

Stuart Little
>E. B. White, 1945
>This was the basis for the film; in the original, Stuart is the natural son of the Littles.

The Borrowers
>Mary Norton, 1952
>The Borrowers are little people rather than rodents, but they face many of the same problems as talking mice.

Film

Chip 'n' Dale
>Walt Disney Productions, 1947
>The original shorts were an odd post-modern hybrid — two chipmunks pestering a duck (that acted human) and a dog (that acted like a dog). The last in the series, "Two Chips and a Miss," postulates a clothes-wearing animal culture using human rubbish as tools.

Ben and Me
>Walt Disney Productions, 1953

Lady and the Tramp
>Walt Disney Productions, 1955

The Aristocats
>Walt Disney Productions, 1970

The Rescuers
Walt Disney Productions, 1977
The film concerns two mouse agents of an international rescue organization; it is an amusing spoof of the United Nations as well as a good adventure story.

Watership Down
Nepenthe Productions, 1978
The film version of the book was a unique and fascinating experiment, remarkably faithful to the original.

Secret of NIMH
MGM/UA, 1982
This is probably the best film about talking mice ever made. It departs sharply from the book, which was excellent in its own right.

Great Mouse Detective
Walt Disney Productions, 1986
This film captures the light-hearted and serious tone that makes the genre work. Basil is one of the more interesting talking mice in film.

An American Tail
Universal, 1986
1986 was a reasonably good year for talking mice. This provides some interesting "history" for a modern-era talking mouse game.

The Rescuers Down Under
Walt Disney Productions, 1990

Wind in the Willows
Allied Filmmakers, 1996

Antz
Dreamworks, 1998
Featuring Woody Allen in his most heroic role since *Sleeper,* this is a wonderful look at life in a colony.

Special mention should be made of just about every Walt Disney film ever made. Even when the talking mice were not the linchpin of the action, talking little critters seemed to pop up everywhere. In *Cinderella,*(1950) the mice are actually the heroes of the film!

Television

Danger Mouse
Cosgrove-Hall, 1981-1987
A wild spoof of James Bond, Danger Mouse is one of the slyer satires in the genre.

Wind in the Willows
Cosgrove-Hall, 1983
This stop-motion animation series captured the feel of the book so well it is hard to tell when they adapted the book or are doing an original story.

Dirty Pair
Sunrise, 1985
One episode of this classic anime series involved hyper-intelligent rats taking over the Dirty Pair's headquarters.

Chip 'n' Dale's Rescue Rangers
Disney, 1988-89
This cartoon is probably the closest to classic role-playing of most genre entertainment. The Rescue Rangers, a team of two mice, two chipmunks, and a fly, fight a variety of miscreants, both human and animal.

John W. Nowak

John W. Nowak wrote several articles for **Steve Jackson Games** back in the early years of the Reagan Administration, and was then seduced by the Green side of The Force. He presently runs a small software test team for a Silicon Valley company that would probably be surprised he has written several thousand words about talking mice.

Bob McLeod

Bob McLeod was born in Tampa, FL, and now resides in Pennsylvania with his wife and three childen. He has worked mainly as a comic book artist for most of his career, on *Spider-Man*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Star Wars*, *X-Men*, *The New Mutants*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Wonder Woman,* and many other titles. He has also illustrated many projects outside of comics, including some drawings of cartoon spiders for an exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C. in 1994. These and many other examples of his work can be found on his web site: http://www.bobmcleod.com

Su McTeigue

Su McTeigue is a graduate of the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc. in NJ. She has enjoyed a productive freelance career with **Marvel** and **DC Comics**, **McFarlane Toys**, and **Henson Studios**.

Terry Pallot

Terry Pallot thinks it's too difficult to write his own bio in third person. Therefore, we present a typical day for you; wake, draw, eat, draw, music, Everquest, drink, sleep. Not to scale and not necessarily in that order. Check out his previous work on many *Star Trek* comic books and the RPG. Watch the skies for further developments.

Darren Sparling

Born in 1973, Darren has lived on both coasts of Canada and everywhere in between. Darren has studied Fine Arts, worked in the restaurant industry and returned to school in 1999 to study Classical Animation at Sheridan College. He lives in Oakville, Ontario with his wife.

Mike Skanes

Mike Skanes is currently studying Classical Animation at Sheridan College, in Oakville, Ontario. His previous post-secondary studies include English, Film, and Graphic Design. As hobbies go, Mike enjoys scuba diving, water skiing, guitar, reading, and of course, drawing. Despite working many labour jobs, Mike is finally happy with what he has chosen to do — draw pictures.

BIG EARS, SMALL MOUSE

They lurk in the shadows, invisible to the powerful and arrogant eyes of man. Nothing is too small to escape their notice. Silently, they lay their intricate, complex plans. Carefully, they place their rubber-band catapults. Tonight, the cheese will be theirs!

Big Ears, Small Mouse is the American animation and comic supplement for the 2001 Origins Award nominated RPG, **Big Eyes, Small Mouth**. BESMouse introduces players to the strange but familiar world of Mousetropolis — a thriving city that is home to talking rodents, bugs, and other tiny animals. This sourcebook features dozens of player character species templates, guidelines for scaling combat between small and large opponents, customized mecha and personal gear for tiny creatures, and much more!

Written by: John W. Nowak
Artwork by: Bob McLeod, Su McTeigue, Terry Pallot, Mike Skanes, Darren Sparling

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