

The Bygone Bestiary™



A WORLD OF DARKNESS® SOURCEBOOK

The Bygone Bestiary™

*And out of the ground the Lord God formed
every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air—
— Genesis II:19*

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WORDS FROM THE WOLF

By the time you read this, two monumental events in the **Mage** cosmos will have come to pass:

- **Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade**, will have been released. A swashbuckling, backstabbing, dragon-riding look at the Renaissance World of Darkness, **Crusade** presents the culmination of five years of Mage backstory and 3000 years of history.

- **Mage** developer Phil Brucato will have married Wendy Blacksin, his longtime partner. Having tied the knot, the merry twosome will have scoured the English and Scottish countrysides, looking for good food, good friends and good ale.

Salutations to all of you. A new era has begun!

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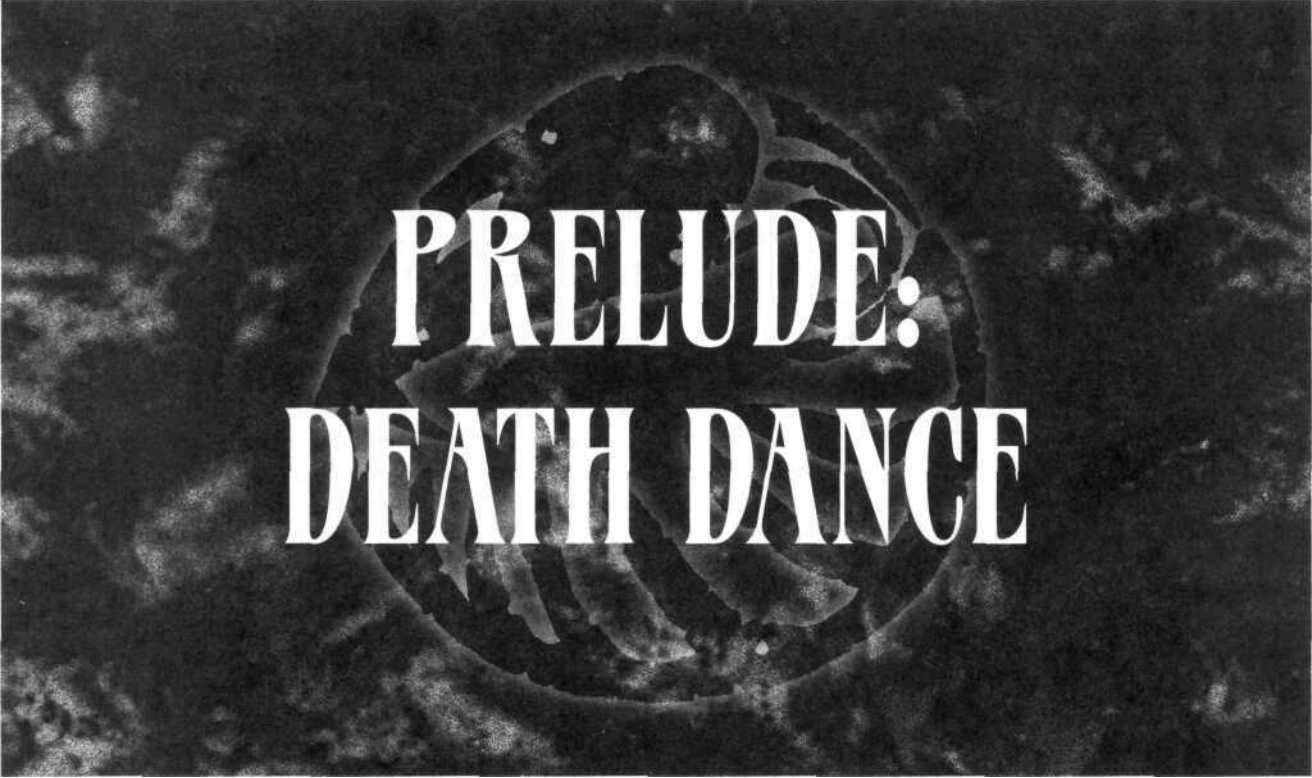
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PRELUDE: DEATH DANCE

BYSIANKINGSTONE

The stoat wove a fearsome death dance. Even from her niche in the branches, Mary could see it. As the creature slid, twisted and rippled down the grassy bank to the river, its glossy coat caught the light. That dance was said to mesmerize the creature's prey. Some folk said the stoat even drank the blood of its victims.

Mary Prior did not believe the tales, of course. After all, Charnwood was filled with God's creatures, and one preyed on the other, even outside her hermitage. Today, however, she saw the world through a veil of blood, and her skin bristled as if at the coming of a storm.

She dropped down from the tree, then adjusted the gray cowl she wore in honor of Saint Francis. Almost immediately, Longshanks was by her side. She pulled a wayward strand of corn silk hair from her face and ruffled the old wolf's thick fur. Longshanks huffed through his nostrils and his ears pricked up. Mary stilled her hand.

"What is it?" she whispered, and not for the first time. Things were wrong, somehow. She was so close to Saint Winifred's shrine that the virgin martyr's presence should have filled her with blessed peace. Instead, the wolf's restlessness sparked a feeling of unease within her. He paced the river bank, staring into the trees while the air stretched tight as a bowstring around them both.

He huffed again. This time Mary sensed it too. Now a cry, far too soft and low for any human to hear, rippled out toward them. The forest crowded in. The air stilled. A part of Mary reached out and merged with the forest. Human perceptions fell away, and she saw like an animal — or a magus.

A black tide of fear washed over her, but it was not her own. She squeezed her eyes closed. The stoat was long gone. What she sensed now was a creature of a very different nature. It cried again, and in her mind she saw arrows, nets, swords and the flashing teeth of dogs.

"Hold on!" she cried, "I'm coming!" Almost as one, wolf and girl plunged deeper into Charnwood.

They stopped some time later by a knot of hawthorn to wait. Even while her lungs cried *Breathe! Breathe!* Mary stayed tree-trunk still as the sun inched by.

Then the images came to her.

Her mind whirled as, through another creature's eyes and ears, she sensed a new danger closing in. She had expected to hear the hungry cries of man and dog, but this threat was not the hunt. The ground trembled at its coming. Leaves rustled. Twigs snapped. The air crackled with power. Then a dazzling, shimmering ring of flames sprang from the earth: something moved in its heart. Long-tailed, ember-

scaled.... Brigid, the Queen of Fire, led her minions in their dance. Their demonic bodies coiled like serpents in the flames. As their quarry shuddered, Mary did likewise. Mary felt sharp hooves lash out at the coiling salamanders, as if those hooves graced her own legs. Then the forest lurched as the elementals' prey leapt for freedom.

In an eyeblink, the image disappeared. She waited, but the cry did not come again. There were other fleeting calls — a fish raked by an otter's claws, a stag startled by the blare of a hunting horn — but nothing from Mary's sense-mate. Like a flat pebble skimming a pool, her mind searched for the creature who had reached out to her. Silence. In the forest, Death always led the dance. Sometimes he did not let go. She was afraid the ring of fire may have won.

Where are you now, poor beast? she thought.

A breeze gently brushed Mary's cheeks, a warm caress... like breath. She opened her eyes. A white shape loomed over her, its nostrils flared, its amber eyes bright and wild. The beast had the body of a horse, the tail of a lion and a narrow head like a goat's. From its brow stood a long, twisted horn. Mary offered a hand to the creature, palm upwards.

"I heard you call," she whispered.

At a sound from her right, Mary looked up. A girl stepped into the clearing and froze wide-eyed. The unicorn reared, its whinny almost a squeal, and Mary felt the heat of the flames once more as its fear swept through her. She barely threw herself aside in time. The beast's cloven hooves thumped down by her head. Before she could pick herself up again, the unicorn fled.

Mary stood up angrily. "I almost had him, then," she hissed at the intruder. "Thanks to you, I'll be lucky if I even get near him again."

The other girl was about her age; about her height, too, although she still seemed to be looking down at Mary somehow. Barefoot and tatter-skirted, she stepped forward, swaying like a stoat, her eyes crackling with green fire. Nettle-sharp, she spoke: "If you hadn't been so jumpy, it wouldn't have run off. I had summoned flames to drive him to me."

Mary did not need the unicorn's fear to tell her a mantle of smoke and sulfur clung to this girl — she could smell it — and from the silver tree and circular knots on her broach, it was clear this woman dabbled in things no God-fearing mortal had a right to.

The heat of anger forged a sharper edge to Mary's tongue. "And what of you? Didn't Mother tell you never to play with fire?"

The girl raised an eyebrow. "Oh, so you know the Way of Wyrd, do you, Wolf Girl?" She laughed and tossed her hair over her shoulder.

Red hair, Mary thought. *Judas hair.*

"I know the Devil's own when I see them!" she hissed.

The other girl's eyes narrowed. "That creature is my responsibility. It's my job to deliver him to safety."

"That 'creature,' as you called him, is God's creature, and therefore *my* responsibility."

"Really?" The girl's tone held a mocking edge. "And exactly *what* did you plan to do with him? At least I know where to find the gate to Hrossheim."

Mary recognized the name. As far as she could recall, Hrossheim was an Otherworldly sanctuary of some kind. "Well, you can't know much," she shot back, "not when you tried to catch a creature of earth by using fire. And you're obviously no virgin, otherwise you'd have caught him long ago."

Judas Hair smoothed her patchwork skirts. "The same could be said of you. Truthfully, Wolf Girl, neither of us has had much success." The witch stepped forward, hands open and wide. No fool, she; Longshanks eyed her like a prize pheasant, just waiting for some aggressive move. "Look," she sighed, "I haven't got time for this. If I don't find the unicorn, he will die."

Mary's stomach sank. "What do you mean?"

"Haven't you heard the hunt?" She turned away. Mary impulsively grabbed the girl's arm, and the witch spun, baring her teeth like a cornered fox.

"Hrossheim is his home," she rasped. "He slipped out somehow. My friends are going to seal the gate so that no more unicorns end up in this place. I have until sunset to take him back. Now let me go!"

With that, the girl shook herself free and followed the path the unicorn had taken.

Mary eyed the disappearing figure a moment. There was truth in what she said. What *would* Mary do with the creature? The beast wasn't exactly inconspicuous. She would be saving it from one hunt only to set it free in the countryside, wandering at the mercy of yet another overlord with a taste for trophies.

She shook her head at the idea beginning to form there. Then, with a low whistle to Longshanks, she ran after the girl with Judas hair. She only hoped the Good Lord would forgive her.

At the edge of a small glade, Mary caught up with the witch. "Hold!" she cried. Then softer: "I won't pretend I like what you do, but I don't want to see the unicorn die either."

The girl snorted, but Mary persisted. "Listen to me! There's only one way to catch a unicorn. Not even your magick can get around that."

A thoughtful look crossed the girl's eyes and she stopped. "And you think you can do it?"

Mary nodded. An uneasy silence passed, then the girl sighed heavily and muttered something about fools and pride. "As you wish, Wolf Girl."

"Mary."

The witch smiled slightly. "Mary, then. At least until I have a better idea."

"And I should call you...?"

Judas Hair shrugged. "Kestral is as good a name as any."

Mary stooped low to whisper in Longshanks' ears. The wolf sniffed the ground where the girls stood, then criss-crossed the glade. At a puddle by an oak tree, he stopped and gave a low growl.

Mary frowned. The mud was embossed with the tracks of many animals. She sat on her haunches and flicked a leaf out of one hollow. This print was intact.

"Riders," she said, pointing to the nail-marks in the mud.

Kestral grimaced. "Then the hunt has been this way already. It may even be ahead of us."

A black wave swept over Mary. Cold. Sharp. Fear again. The bowstring cry resounded in her head. The other girl did not seem to hear it, but Longshanks barked once and dashed into the shadows.

"That was him," Mary said. "Make haste!"

Kestral regarded her a moment, her green eyes curious. Mary did not wait. Following Longshanks, she felt rather than heard Judas Hair behind her. As they ran, the girls heard the first cries of a hunting horn.

Fisherman's Gorge rose up before the women, its majestic towers of black rock thrusting upwards through the trees like the turrets of a fearsome keep. A river gushed from between these dark pillars, bursting free of the keep, then gurgling happily over the lesser rocks.

As the women approached, Mary felt sure the cracked and wrinkled cliffs were frowning down on them. The steep walls stretched away in front of her, drawing closer and closer together until they met at the far end, split by a churning waterfall. Dampness seeped into her boots. Standing there, Mary felt like a fish at the opening of a wicker funnel, blind to the fisherman's barbs within.

A white shape stood at the mouth of the gorge, its outline etched in silver phosphorescence. The unicorn paced the rocky river bank, puzzled, terrified, kicking restlessly at the current. Though no one else had appeared as yet, the forest pounded with the beat and thrash of the hunt.

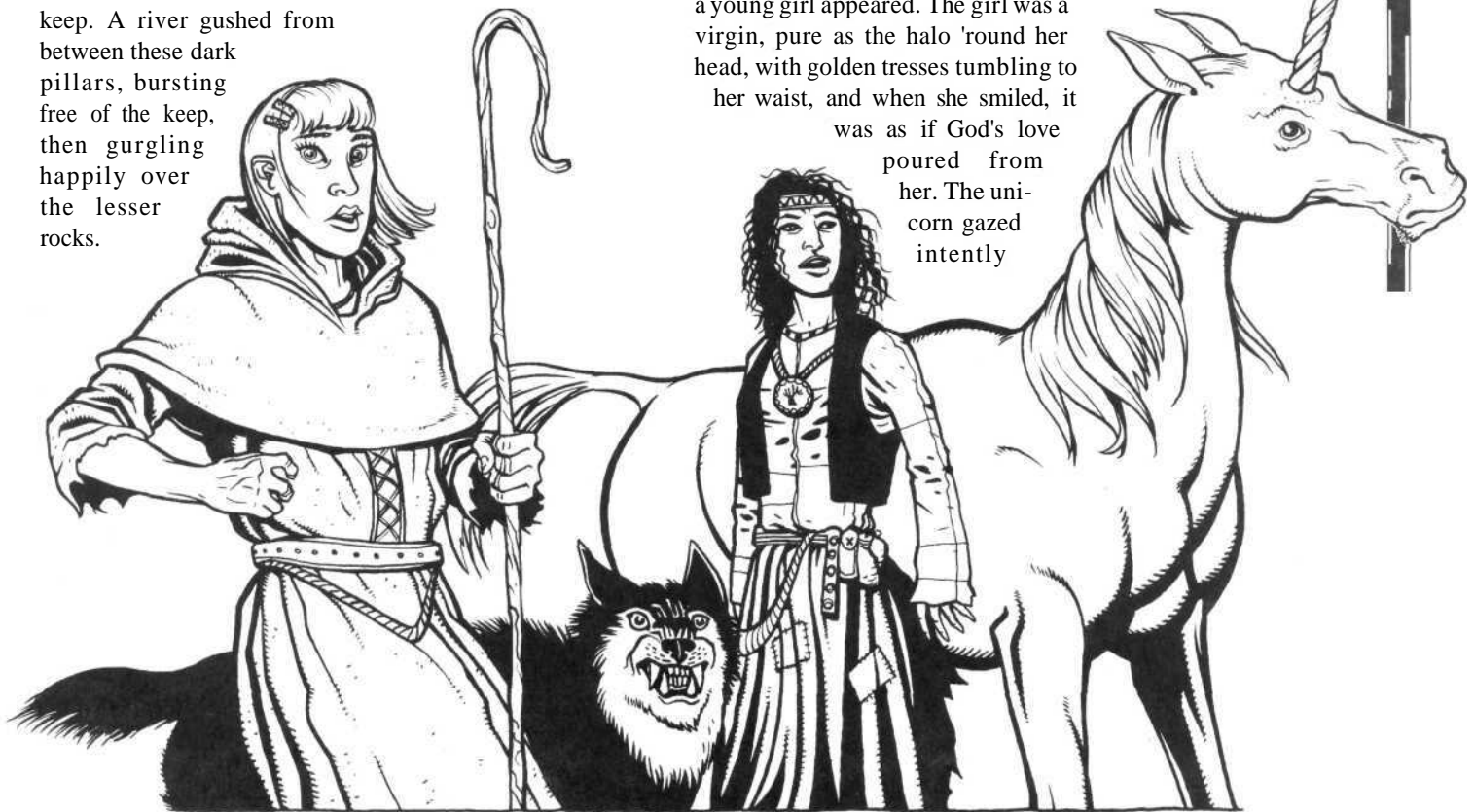
Mary shuddered with the animal's fear. It would not take much to startle him into running down that rocky funnel. She lowered her gaze and drew in her breath. If she could just get close enough, if she could tempt him out of the gorge, they might all escape.

Kestral's voice quivered as the woodland echoed with the eager shouts of men. "The whole village must be out." Then, at the distant sound of yelping, her eyes widened. "Oh, gods! They're using dogs!"

The unicorn bolted, his cloven hooves slipping on the wet stones.

Mary began to sing softly. What words she used she did not know, but her heart cried out in anguish to the one whom she knew could help her protect this creature.

As Mary sang, the shimmering figure of a young girl appeared. The girl was a virgin, pure as the halo 'round her head, with golden tresses tumbling to her waist, and when she smiled, it was as if God's love poured from her. The unicorn gazed intently



at the ghostly figure. She raised a hand to welcome him. He shied. She stood. At last his fear subsided. Mary's voice fell quiet, and as the final echoes of her song shimmered and faded, the spirit dissolved.

The unicorn nuzzled Mary's hand. She reached up and stroked the creature's misty mane, wet with water-spill. Above them, the river cascaded over high black rocks, crashing down to swirl in a foaming pool at their feet. They had reached the end of the funnel. There was nowhere else to go.

"Who was that apparition?" Kestral's voice was hushed, as if she were afraid she might break the spell. Beneath the waterfall roar, the words were all but lost.

Mary had not even noticed Judas Hair's approach. "Saint Winifred," she replied uneasily as she stroked the unicorn's mane.

"Oh, the chieftain's daughter who spurned Prince Caradoc? Interesting."

Mary did not care for the witch's half-mocking tone. "He murdered her."

"Yes, I know." Kestral's voice took a bitter turn. She gathered her wet skirts above her knees. "Cut off her head, didn't he? But another of your saints brought her back to life. Then, when she finally did die, they couldn't let her rest in her Welsh homeland. Oh, no. They squabbled over the virgin's bones, finally taking the 'sacred relics' across the border to Shrewsbury." Kestral shook her head. "And you think *my* ways are strange."

Mary turned away from the girl, refusing to rise to the scorn. She took hold of the unicorn's mane, being careful not to touch his horn. It was time to go. She shook moist hair from her eyes and looked up at the waterfall.

"We'll never get up there. We'd better move or...."

Longshanks growled. A horn blast from above cut her short. Faces peered over the edge of the cliff. Pink mouths yelled and squealed. Dogs howled to be loose. The girls turned to run, but at the mouth of the gorge, a man stood upright in the saddle of his mount. Twenty men stood behind him, their clubs, torches and swords raised. Someone even had an ax.

Five archers stepped in front of the mounted man and notched their arrows. Behind them, the other men fanned out across the mouth of the gorge. The man on horseback raised his arm, his voice lost in the water-roar. The men advanced.

From the nets many of the men carried, Mary guessed that they intended to take the unicorn alive. The girls could expect a harsher fate. "Lord help us," Mary whispered.

Insults and stones rained down from above. Mary moved away from the rock face. The unicorn whinnied, but did not bolt. Mary gripped his mane. Longshanks bristled, sparkling with droplets. The forester turned to her companion and saw the excitement flickering across her face. There was an intensity about those green eyes that frightened Mary, as if the witch actually relished their predicament.

Kestral stepped up onto a boulder. "Keep him still," she said, gripping with her toes. "We don't want to spook him now."

"What are you going to do?"

"There might yet be a way out of this."

It was Mary's turn to mock. "Oh, yes? And I suppose we're going to walk right through them?"

Kestral cast a sideways glance. "It's time for some *real* magick, now. A spot of mist should suffice."

"Are ye *daft*?" Mary nearly shouted. "Do you want the hunt to catch us and burn us *both* for witches?"

Green eyes bored into her. "What do *you* propose, Wolf Girl?"

Mary fell silent, confounded and furious.

Kestral ignored the forester and cast her eyes toward the cloud-laden sky. A breeze flipped the wet edges of her skirt. As she turned to the mouth of the gorge, the witch raised her hands above her head and filled her lungs. In a rich ritual voice, she declared, "I call Niska, King of the West. Bring forth your ondines, your spirits of water, to aid me in my task."

Mary shivered. She did not have to face the men advancing up the gorge to know they saw what was happening. She could hear the frenzy in their voices. Cries of "Witch!" and "Harlot!" rose above the waterfall. A shaft hummed past and splintered on the cliff. More immediately followed, buzzing like angry hornets, but none found their mark.

The top end of the gorge darkened, as if a lid had slowly settled over the world. Kestral faced those shadows, head held high: "Spirits of the East, I call the elementals of Air." The breeze tugged harder at her skirt. "Sylphs come forth and aid me in my task."

A stone hit Kestral's leg. She ignored it. Her whole body stretched and trembled, as if she tried to grasp the sky itself.

Clouds boiled overhead. Wind lashed the treetops and sliced through Mary's clothing. Any moment now, the girls would hear the horn right beside them, she was sure of it — closely followed by the breath of the hunting dogs. Her lids snapped shut and, with one hand still on the unicorn's mane, she knelt down on the sharp rocks. *There'll be blood today*, she thought. She felt she ought to pray to Saint Francis, but the only words she found were *Lord help us! Lord help us! Lord help us!* whistling 'round in her head like leaves in a storm.

As she knelt there, something cold and wet landed on her nose. Were the dogs drooling over her already? She screwed her eyes tighter still. Another spot came. Another and another, more and more. Then suddenly the air filled with a tremendous roar. A cascade of water soaked Mary through and through. She opened her eyes to a wall of rain.

Kestral, standing beside her, looked bemused and somewhat annoyed. Over the storm and waterfall, Mary heard the witch mutter something about the King of Air having a head full of the same.

Mary frowned. "What? What do you mean?"

"Paralda." Kestral shook her sopping red hair. "King of Air. You know, air, mist? Oh, you don't know anything."

Mary squinted up into the pregnant clouds and wondered whether her prayers or Kestral's magick had summoned them. Perhaps it was neither. After all, there had been some clouds before any of this had started.

Rain pummeled Mary's face. Thunder and water-wash deafened her. She could hear and see nothing of the hunters, she realized. How close would they be now? Should she run?

Longshanks paced in front of her, shaking his shaggy fur, eager to lead the way.

Kestral wiped sodden strands of hair from her face, and made to follow the wolf. "Let's away," she said. "I have seen enough of this gorge to last my lifetime."

Gingerly, Mary stepped across the wet rocks, leading the unicorn after her. She wondered that they could breathe, the rain came down so hard. Longshanks had no trouble finding a safe passage, however. Strange lights lined up ahead as the group pressed on. Mary was sure they must be the hunters' torches, but the phantom lights flickered and died, flickered and died.

Will-o'-the-wisps, she thought.

The women soon left the gorge behind them, although once or twice Mary felt sure she had brushed against someone. Now, as trees surrounded them again, a cold rivulet of water ran down Mary's spine. She concentrated on the path ahead and soon found herself mesmerized by a white fire. It seemed to arc across the grass and trees, from blade to blade, leaf to leaf. Wherever the unicorn trod, the forest came alive with his magic. Several times, Mary thought she saw silver figures from out of the corner of her eye, but when she turned, there was only the rain. Silently she prayed to Saint Francis, not for protection from heathen magick, but from the hunt behind them. Presently, her mind's eye watched the Saint's wild boars herding hunters over the gorge's edge. Saint Francis had answered her prayers.

As Mary remembered Kestral's invocation in the gorge, the distance between the two girls suddenly seemed to vanish. Had Mary's prayer had been a spell, too? She blinked. Was that her own face she saw under Kestral's red hair?

She stumbled on a tree root, only to find it hadn't been a root at all. A hand clutched at her boots, then fell back to earth. A wild-eyed face stared up at her, its mouth open in a mute scream. Even as she looked, it became a vanishing hole in the voracious mud. After that, Mary kept her eyes on the trees.

The sight of that face, and of the falling hunters, weighed on Mary like her rain-heavy cloak long after she had left them behind.

When it came, the break in the forest brought a break in the rain. The company's pace did not diminish, however, for the light was already fading. A bloody sun broke through its cloudy veil, but it was a fleeting relief. Soon the land around them would be dark again. Over a small rise, beyond a copse, and into the next valley the company fled. Only when they saw the keep did they slow down.

Mary's heart still danced to the rhythm of the rain. Her hand seemed reluctant to loose its grip of the unicorn's mane. She looked at the tower, rising from a hill, caressed by two arms of a river. She could feel the energy pulsating from that tower, and a low hum seemed to fill her ears. She wondered if the witch sensed it, too.

Kestral stopped and turned. Gently, she laid a hand on Mary's own. "You can let go now," she said, her harsh voice softer now. "I'll take him from here. Unless you want to come to Hrossheim...."

The unicorn tugged himself free and trotted toward the tower as if he knew he was almost home. His hooves stirred the underbrush, tossing small sparkles of fae-fire in the coming dusk.

Mary shook her head. "I belong in this world," she replied. "If anywhere at all."

Kestral shrugged and followed the unicorn. After a while, the girl with Judas hair turned and waved. Still Mary did not move. While the sun stained the land crimson and black, Mary watched the figures approach the tower. It looked lonely and abandoned. Strange how cold stone could inspire sympathy, she thought. Or was it kinship?

Somewhere in the forest, perhaps during the flight to safety, a part of her had died. The disappearing figures tugged at the wound, and as they shut the gates of the keep behind them, Mary suddenly wondered what it was like on the other side. She stroked Longshanks' wet fur, but her companion offered little comfort. She was a cup that was only half full.

Behind her, in a lone oak tree, a blackbird trilled its evening song. Then for one brief moment, light flared from the tower — like the ascension of a small sun — and Mary felt a new flame begin to burn within the ashes of her old self.





INTRODUCTION

There were giants in the earth in those days.
— Genesis 6:4

The world is full of monsters — or so folklore would have us believe.

As the sun disappears, the sky becomes a dark cathedral. From their catacombs, nightmares rise into cool open air and shamble off to break their fasts—preferably on innocent flesh and souls. If the old tales are to be believed, the earth trembles beneath a monstrous cavalcade as dusk fades into evening and evening deepens into night. On the far shores of Christendom, the monsters play all day long, creeping across desert wastes and leaping from mountain peaks in pagan celebration of the Devil's triumph.

This is what we are told. This is what the people believe. This is the world of the Dark Fantastic, where wonder and terror shadow-dance 'til morning.

How true is the image?

How true do you want it to be?

TRUTH, PHANTASY AND MONSTERS

Dark as it may seem, this world is not awash with monsters. Not really. Although the mountains, rivers, seas and deserts of this mythic era teem with strange and wonderful creatures, the ultimate monster is the human imagination.

To a human audience, monsters are as real as their legends. An explorer visiting a distant land is not content to spin a tale of large deer with odd coloring — his audience would never stand for such a dull account! No, the explorer must people his journeys with one-legged men, talking mountains and razor-fanged rabbits. The strange deer thus become herds of blood-red demon-steeds, thundering across an infernal landscape of boiling pitch. The explorer has never seen such things, of course, but he'd like his listeners to believe that he has.

Consequently, the man of reason says, strange beasts do not exist. They're simple fables, myths and travelers' tales designed to thrill a listener, to make her pray for Heaven's mercy and forsake the Devil's touch while secretly wishing that *she'd* been the one to see those demonic herds. This is the truth. Correct?

Wrong.

There *are* such things. Perhaps not in the profusion and variety that legends would claim, but they do exist.

This won't be the case much longer, though.

Never common to begin with, the creatures of legend are dying. Disbelief, crowding, a loss of space and food and the ever-swelling tide of humanity are driving the wild things away. It will be decades, even centuries, before the last gryphon soars into the dimming sky, but in time, his kind will be gone. Even in the Dark Fantastic era, however, most of the greater beasts have fallen to the ultimate monster. Hunted by dragon-slayers, starved by diminishing habitats, employed as war-beasts by battling magi or simply driven nearly mad by human encroachment and the Scourge of God, magical creatures pass beyond the Mists. Soon they'll be fantasies, pale ghosts of their former selves, embroidered with folk tales and bastardized by a world that craves monsters but cannot bear to sustain them.

The ultimate beast has another face, however: that of the Shaper. Folk who walk the wild side of the fence have noted an alarming — if controversial — trend over the last several centuries. As folklore grows darker, as tales of wondrous creatures become tales of homicidal monsters, the real beasts begin to reflect those tales. New monsters emerge from the night, thirsty for blood in ways their older cousins rarely were. The occasional hydra or the sleeping Leviathan give way to voracious ghuls, village-wrecking drakes and ship-eating krakens. If, as some magi maintain, man's will shapes God's Creation, his will has stirred up a viper's nest of ungodly things. No one is fool enough to suggest that human imagination alone has sired this deadly breed of monsters — many of them predate Eden — but there's little doubt that the great beasts have acquired dark hungers and more aggressive temperaments than they once displayed. As humanity pushes further and further into the hidden places and disturbs more and more of Nature's secrets, the monsters emerge from the shadows, hungrier and angrier than they've ever been before.

The Dark Fantastic world, in many ways, is the monsters' last stand. If the world passes into an Age of Reason, beasts of magical descent will cease to exist; if Reason fails and the mysteries triumph, a new breed of monsters — bred in desperation and nurtured by human fear — might rise in the night to overwhelm the world.

Let us go into that night and meet the monsters face to face.

We might even find that those monsters are us.

MAGICAL BEASTS AND YOUR CHRONICLE

So the six-million-dollar question is: Do mythological monsters like harpies and dragons exist in the World of Darkness?

Yes. And no. Yes, the shadows *do* hold hungry beasts that seem more appropriate to a herald's gallery than to a 20th-century zoo. The existence of the Kindred, Awakened, Changing Breeds and the like attest to that. Even so, the creatures of mythology have never been as prevalent as the tales about them have been, and the "truth" has always been obscured by the observers who carry back those tales. If, as Mage insists, human belief shapes Creation in its image, certain things may be brought into being just because people expect to see them — or are banished because people *don't* see them anymore.

The supernatural is alive and well in the World of Darkness. How alive and how well depend on what you and your troupe want from your chronicle. Some mythic beasts, like harpies or celestial dragons, are far too fantastic for many "downtoearth" games. A really wild Horizon-Realms-and-forbidden-islands-type game, on the other hand, practically screams for a magical beast or two. The ultimate monster — in this case your imagination — declares how true the legends are.

In short, these creatures are as real as you want them to be.

The Bygone Bestiary is a book of options. In it, many of the grandest creatures of human legend emerge from their hiding places and present themselves at your door — not as objects to be slain but as beasts of living imagination. Not as "monsters," but as characters. Such characters offer plenty of possibilities to a Dark Ages, Mage, Sorcerers Crusade, Werewolf or Changeling chronicle. The gryphon, for instance, can be much more than a simple pile of experience points to list at the bottom of your character sheet. In a world of magic, a magical creature deserves to stand on his own as an individual, as a creature of instinct and intellect. Who knows? If the game is fantastic enough, you might even take that gryphon as your character, forsaking the path of the magus or the mien of the changeling for the wings of a great beast.

Stranger things have happened.

OFFICIAL WORD ABOUT BEASTIES

Before we begin....

According to legend, strange creatures roam the earth. As the sidebar in The Sorcerers Crusade (page 74) implies, you might want to offer players the option of playing of them. However, the entire existence of magical beasts in the World of Darkness is just that — an *option*. It is perfectly reasonable to forbid it at any time, as these creatures are based on legends people once considered gospel truth. In the modern world, they seem quaint at best, laughable at worst.

This goes double for character-beasts. Many chronicles would be unbalanced, spoiled or rendered ridiculous by the mere *appearance* of a Bygone, let alone the presence of a one as a player's character. Let the tone, power level and setting of your game dictate whether or not such a creature is desirable. While a dragon might seem perfectly appropriate for a wild Changeling or Sorcerers Crusade chronicle, you've got to admit it would look pretty damned silly in a gritty Vampire tale. (A prince has enough problems already, thank you.)

We repeat, for the sake of the terminally dense: This book and its suggestions are cool for some games and ruinous for others. The option to include magical beasts is not automatic, nor is their existence "canon." In the modern world, such creatures are only legends — no "real" dragon would subject herself to the ravages of skepticism and hostility, assuming she exists at all. If you, the player or Storyteller, do not want Bygones running around in your world,

DO
NOT
USE
THEM.

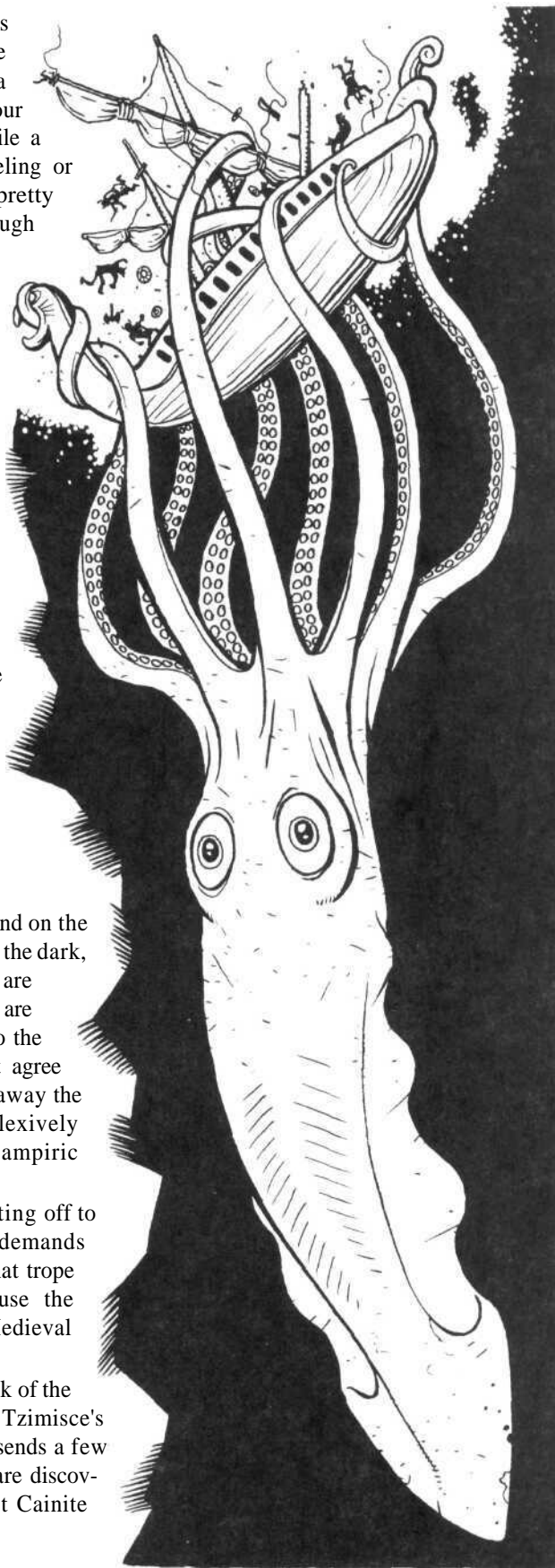
The following information is provided about Bygones in regard to some of the World of Darkness games to which the creatures have application. The monsters have plenty of natural opportunities in Mage and Sorcerers Crusade, so no direction is required there. Other game lines are little more "thematically delicate" in regard to these beasts, though. Use these thoughts as the basis for introducing fantastic animals to your game.

BYGONES AND VAMPIRE: THE DARK AGES

Look at a map of the Dark Medieval world. In the corners and on the edges you find legends like "Here Be Dragons." These regions — the dark, unknown swaths of real estate far from light and civilization — are precisely the sorts of places that most Cainites avoid. Vampires are creatures of cities and the throng of humanity — journeys into the deepest wild to seek out dragons or hippogryphs simply don't agree with vampiric temperament. For one thing, such travels strip away the protective layers of custom and intrigue with which Cainites reflexively surround themselves. For another, the logistics of feeding on a vampiric expedition into the hinterlands are nigh-unworkable.

So the idea of a brave party of vampiric adventurers setting off to beard the chimera in its lair doesn't necessarily jibe with the demands of a Vampire: The Dark Ages game. However, just because that trope doesn't always make sense doesn't mean that you can't use the creatures here to spice up the species diversity of your Dark Medieval world. Consider the following options:

- Something large and predatory is feeding on the livestock of the cotters at the edge of a *voivode's* domain. This is an affront to the Tzimisce's sovereignty, even if he could care less about the peasants. He sends a few of his ghouls out to investigate. When their shredded corpses are discovered a few days later, the situation suddenly demands direct Cainite involvement....



- A Tremere uncovers a scroll containing a ritual that calls for the still-beating heart of an unnatural beast. The benefits of the ritual are incalculable, but so too may be the risks of obtaining the necessary ingredient. That's why the Tremere brings the rest of his coterie along....

- A Gangrel of the northern forests finds some strange tracks and stalks the maker, whatever it may be. It isn't too long before she realizes that the monster is tracking her instead....

- A traveling band of jongleurs brings a chained pegasus into a Cainite-controlled city, to be displayed for coin before the mobs. The Toreador of the city are taken by the creature's beauty and immediately start maneuvering to obtain the gorgeous animal for their own.

- A young Ventrue has displeased his liege-lord and must make amends by fetching a monster of some sort, the putative mission being to bring back the creature so that it might be ghoulled and used as a guardian. Alas, there are other plots afoot, and not everyone in the prince's court wants the neonate to return. Mayhap there are perils arranged along the way — or the beast itself has been warned.

So long as you don't turn your chronicle into a mythological menagerie, there are plenty of ways to use fantastic creatures to spice things up. Even the rumor of a dragon or a hippogryph should be enough to stir up the local Cainites — there's no need to bring the beast itself onto the scene. Remember, most fantastic creatures have heraldic and prophetic associations as well. So when stories spread of a dragon tearing up the borderlands, and the flag of the greedy prince two duchies over sports a blood-red drake, you have all the ingredients of a chronicle without introducing a single scale or claw into the proceedings.

Mundane creatures are easier to coincide with Cainites — cattle serve as food for particularly squeamish or desperate vampires, wolves and bats heed the call of Animalism, cats and rats serve as cunning spies when given sufficient vitae to bind them — the list is endless. The innumerable superstitions about animals native to the period — cats serving as witches' familiars, for one — also segue nicely into using "normal" creatures as vital players in a Dark Ages chronicle.

BYGONES AND WEREWOLF: THE APOCALYPSE

A Werewolf Storyteller with any experience doesn't need to be told how animals can add to the texture of the game. As beings who run as animals themselves, the Changing Breeds have a much more vital interaction with the animal kingdom than do humans. Animals are prey, threats, potential mates and creatures to be honored by the Garou and their Changing Kin; a Werewolf game without wild animals is like a Vampire game without humans.

Using monsters in a Werewolf game, however, requires a fairly different approach. In straight-up Werewolf cosmology, most creatures of myth and legend are denizens of the spirit world, not creatures of flesh forced out of the world by unbelief. As such, the creatures presented here have less to do with ecology and fantasy than they do with symbolism and the spiritual. Griffins are spirits of anger and ferocity, not once-naturally occurring aberrations of nature. Similarly, unicorns are spirits in service to the totem Incarna of the Children of Gaia, instead of "bygones" (a word unfamiliar to the Garou). The monsters that do exist in the physical realm remain hidden for self-preservation's sake, and are healthier when humans *don't* believe in them (as humans then make easier prey). The statistics for fantastic beasts here are very appropriate for stocking the Legendary Realm or Arcadia Gateway, but you probably shouldn't stock the local Children of Gaia sept with unicorns. It's a little much.

BYGONES AND CHANGELING: THE DREAMING

The Shattering marked the end of existence for most magical beasts. They faded into the Mists, surviving only in memory. Chimera are the last vestiges of these lost creatures, faded reflections of the wonders that once roamed the Earth, created and fueled by the powerful imaginations and Glamour of the last remnants of the faerie races — the changelings. Bygones still exist but only to those who are of faerie blood or those who are welcomed into this enchanted world. Chimera exist just beyond the realm of mundane perception, and though some can make themselves real for a short time they prefer the safety and comfort of the Dreaming, the realm of dreams and imagination that exists somewhere beyond our own. Here, these creature are able to exist freely without fear of wounding disbelief. In the Dreaming all things are possible.

The Bygone Bestiary is an excellent resource for Storytellers who wish to include fantastic creatures in their Changeling chronicles. Most often, magical beasts that are encountered are of the chimerical variety, though it's always possible that a surviving Bygone could still exist somewhere out there, waiting to be discovered by adventurous changelings. The search for a surviving Bygone, perhaps a dragon or a gryphon — the symbol of the High King's court — could be the focus of a story or even an entire chronicle.

Surviving Bygones should be exceedingly rare, and Storytellers should carefully weigh the consequences of allowing one of these into a chronicle. Even the hint of the surviving magical beast could be enough to inspire a group of Kithain to undergo great quests in an attempt to locate or capture the beast. Perhaps once they finally do discover it, they learn that like the True Fae, who are limited in where they can exist, the beast cannot be

taken from its abode because it would die. Or worse yet, maybe the characters don't know this and the creature they thought they were trying to save dies because of their actions.

It's also possible to make a chimerical Bygone a player's character, though this should always be monitored closely by the Storyteller. Additional guidelines for creating chimerical characters are provided in Chapter Three.

USING THE BOOK

The Bygone Bestiary is fairly straightforward. For the record, though, each creature is covered in the following fashion:

- **Legendry:** A myth or collection of myths about the beast in question. While they may or may not be "true" in the objective sense, these tales are associated, in folklore and bestiaries, with the beast described.
- **Description:** Just what it says.

- **Future Fate:** For the most part, the magical creatures in this book are approached from the perspective of a 12th- to 15th-century observer. By the modern era, such beasts are long gone, at least on the material side of the Gauntlet. Many of them have gone on to other places — Horizon Realms and such — by the dawn of the Technological Era. Like the Future Fate sections **in *The Sorcerers Crusade***, these headings describe what "officially" happens to a creature between the Renaissance and the modern age. Things may happen differently in your chronicle... especially if the struggle between magick, faith and science takes a different turn.

- **Image:** How the beast in question appears to an observer.

- **Roleplaying Hints:** A brief guide to behavior for a "typical" member of the species. As always, some creature are exceptions to the rule. By and large, however, a beast acts pretty true to his nature.

It's the *humans* who get everything confused.
Enjoy!







CHAPTER I: THE GREATER BEASTS

*I am become as it were a monster unto many;
but my sure trust is in thee.*

— English prayer book

Mythological creatures. Legendary animals. Flights of fancy. Abominations. Monsters. The greater beasts, the animals and creatures of the fabled past and present, are all of these things and more. They are living creatures that have faded almost completely from the world, or are complete fiction dreamed up by over-imaginative tale-tellers — or both.

Humanity has sought to identify and understand the animal kingdom throughout history. Our imaginative interpretations, exaggerations and unflinching lies about nature's creatures have created legends of all sorts of amazing and impossible animals and demons. Yet what is the truth about a beast when assumptions about it are believed? If manticores are the products of human sins unchecked, or the seas are alive with races similar to humankind, who can claim these legends are false when no proof exists to say so?

The medieval and mythic ages are rife with tales of monsters and magical creatures. Legend and tale holds that these creatures are real, and whether anyone has ever actually *seen* one doesn't matter. To the common citizen or peasant whose life is confined by four walls or four fields, who's to say what lurks in the wilds or over the next hill? Monsters and great beasts are just as plausible as God, angels and the Devil — because so many people believe in them.

Even in the modern information age, communication, data and reports do not necessarily convey truth or insight. Information can be shared about only what we know, what we've discovered and what we theorize. Unless we have categorical proof that unicorns do not exist, how can we truly say they do not? We haven't discovered the pegasus, but not long ago, we hadn't discovered atomic energy, either. Before that discovery, how would expecting to harness the building

blocks of reality have been any different from expecting to find a winged horse? And as for theories, modern man can insist that gryphons are not real, but that claim is no more valid than our conviction centuries ago that gryphons did indeed soar the skies.

So where did the great beasts come from? They all have their origins and backgrounds. Ultimately, where they came from is less important than that we have believed in them and, in some cases, still do. As long as people have faith in the krakens, dragons and hippocampi of the world, those creatures originate from us and we can find them anywhere we look closely enough.

As characters, great beasts are much like normal humans. Many of them are intelligent, creative, caring, vengeful and insightful — or more so than any person could ever hope to be. These fantastic creatures offer a chance to explore roleplaying realms that normal characters simply cannot tread. What does time mean to a centuries-old drake? What is wealth to a unicorn who seeks only peace? What is love to a mantichore who seeks seclusion and a full belly?

Imagine the character conflicts that arise when a sea bishop has to choose whether to save a drowning man or the hippocampus that the man sought to capture. The sea-horse's freedom may mean much more to the bishop than any landlubber's life, even if that human is another player's character. Playing an inhuman character, therefore, forces you to ask questions of your character that playing a human never would.

Great beasts also allow you to throw off human trappings and bring new insights to the stories you tell. Whereas humans might pursue a goal to attain power, a hippogryph might scoff at that agenda when revenge is to be had. What then, is more important in life — self-glorification or self-fulfillment? Is there even any difference? These questions and more will take your roleplaying to new heights as you question human values through bestial eyes.

Remember that the beasts presented here are simply representative of their kind. Not all gryphons seek respect through accomplishments and names. Not all harpies are women who have hidden their sins. Feel free to alter these creatures' powers and natures for your own purposes, as long as the Storyteller approves. Perhaps a gryphon would deign to cooperate with humans in order to help them understand their hubris. Perhaps the grand names that he would normally take might encourage pride rather than teach humility. Maybe a harpy was not a murderer but was grief-stricken in human life, and her despair drove her mad and caused her to assume her monstrous form. Her predation of humanity might therefore be directed against those who would harm innocents, rather than against any living thing.

Ultimately, a great beast should be as fully developed and fulfilled as any human character. After all, these creatures are the stuff of legends.

COCKATRICE

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den.

—Isaiah 11:8

LEGENDRY

Amidst the desert's shifting sands, there lived a serpent most foul, whose breath and gaze killed many a valiant warrior. It slithered into tents to poison children at play and chased crocodiles from riverbeds in pursuit of their eggs. The people called it basilisk. Its legend spread across the Middle East, and from it came the cockatrice.

Evil of the most malignant kind lurked in the basilisk's heart. Such a vile soul could not merely die but sought out a new host through which to continue its fetid practices. During the dark days of the Djinni Plague, when evil spirits fed on the land, the basilisk spawned 39 times, each time creating another like itself. Together they created a great desert, and 10,000 men died before them. Finally, the great courage of warriors, the Arts of sacred wizardry and the favor of Allah (blessed is He!) brought an end to the plague.

The great rooster, bearer of the sun and messenger of God's will and mercy, was blessed with the power to overcome the creature. In time, the crowing of a cock signaled the death of a basilisk, and the people rejoiced. Each day, the great rooster went forth as the sun rose, searching for the evil serpents. His crow held his victim like stone, and there the blessed light of Allah turned the monster to ash. Thus, when the last of the basilisks heard the cock's crow, it froze. Knowing that its blasphemous pleasures were at an end, it pleaded with its underworld gods for mercy.

The apothic powers saw what transpired and understood the basilisk's despair. They granted the creature one last chance to strike so that it could eat the cock. So blessed, the basilisk writhed and squirmed on the ground. The movements enticed the hungry rooster, and he sought his morning meal. But, like all gifts granted by the Adversary, its blessing did not prove as fortuitous as the basilisk hoped. The basilisk's writhing exhausted him. The cock, too clever to stand still, pecked and poked at his meal, evading viperous tail and poisonous breath until the basilisk's blood thickened like pitch on the earth.

Yet vengeance was the Evil One's. As the cock consumed the basilisk, so the basilisk's soul consumed the cock. In one horrible moment, the creature's body was transformed, and the great rooster, corrupted, changed to suit his new soul. Thus was the cockatrice born.

DESCRIPTION

Basilisks roamed Libya in ancient times. Foot-long snakes whose bite, tail and look could kill, the creatures scoured the land. A basilisk's breath scorched plants and burst rocks, creating the Libyan desert. With each man, woman or child

it victimized, the creature's evil reputation grew. Only two enemies threatened the basilisk: The weasel could overcome it with its stench and bite, and the rooster could paralyze it with its dawn-bringing crow.

An ill-fated cock ate the last known basilisk long ago. Crawling away into the weeds, the doomed bird transformed to suit the soul it now bore. The newly born cockatrice could kill with a glance or with vaporous breath, and it could strike with the poison that oozed from its snakelike tail.

Unmitigated malice lurks in the heart of a cockatrice, and its venom has no antidote. The poison boils through veins and sears flesh. When this vile brew reaches the heart or brain, the victim dies. Until then, he falls into spasms and screams in torment, his eyes wide and white. Even after Death drapes his merciful veil across the victim, the body twitches and flails, thrashing with seizures and turmoil within.

All cockatrice are neuters, neither male nor female. The cockatrice reproduces by stinging a mundane rooster. When one does so, the venom pools in the cock's body and forms an egg, which the bird then lays from the pits of its bowels.

As magic faded from the world, the cockatrice began to choose hosts for its offspring with less care. Although the abomination still prefers to find roosters to bear its eggs, it has been known to sting other animals — even humans -- with its egg-spawning barb.

While the egg grows in the victim's body, the host becomes quite ill. Once the egg is laid (often through the bowels, but sometimes through other orifices or even fresh wounds), the host returns to health. However, it is tainted forever after, stained by its incubation of evil and haunted by terrible dreams. If, by bad fortune, the egg bursts inside its host, the poisonous embryo spills throughout the body. No mortal fate could be worse than that agony....

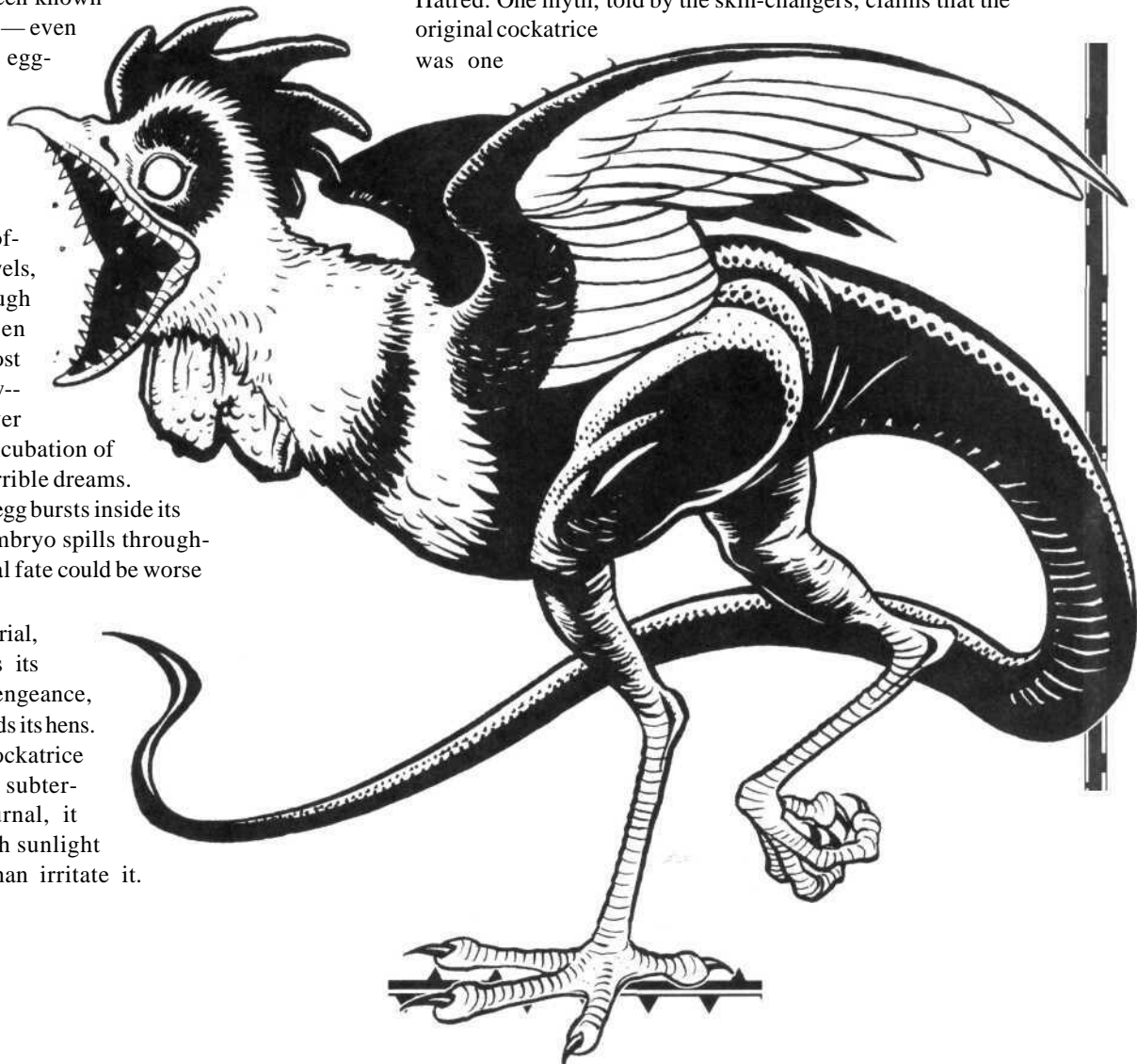
Extremely territorial, the cockatrice guards its chosen host with a vengeance, just as the rooster guards its hens. Once hatched, a cockatrice seeks out dark, damp, subterranean places. Nocturnal, it abhors the sun, though sunlight does nothing more than irritate it.

The vitriolic creature lurks around farms and pastoral spirit Realms, plaguing magi in their sanctuaries and hidden places. A young cockatrice must range out and find its own den or challenge its sire for ownership of its birthplace. A hatchling has little chance of winning such a challenge until maturity, unless the reigning cockatrice is old and dying.

Despite its foul nature, a cockatrice rarely attacks unless it is cornered or its territory is threatened. An intruder hears a sharp rattle-hiss warning; anyone who recognizes the sound should flee immediately. Like a snake, the cockatrice prefers to swallow its prey whole and digest it slowly. A hungry creature pecks at carrion, but only when it can find no other sustenance.

Much to mankind's chagrin, the cockatrice can speak. Its squawking voice is harsh and dissonant, and it gleefully profanes anyone or anything nearby. Scatological humor, multilingual insults, lewd innuendo, crudity and vitriol of all sorts are the preferred banter of cockatrices. The only benefit in speaking to them is that they never lie — though most would rather not know the truths a cockatrice is likely to tell! If the creature does not know the truth, it states so loudly and insults the questioner in the most foul ways.

Werewolves are familiar with cockatrices as spirits of poison and blight, Banes in the service of the Urge Wyrms of Hatred. One myth, told by the skin-changers, claims that the original cockatrice was one



of Chimera's brood. The rude creature unwisely told its totem-mother something that ought not to have been spoken. Chimera cursed the cockatrice for its perversion of the spoken riddle, and the creature fled into the Wyrms' own coils out of spite.

FUTURE FATE

The last public record of a cockatrice occurs in a Church document of births and deaths in Warsaw, dated 1587. Written by monks, the entry states that two young sisters died when exposed to the breath of a cockatrice in their cellar. The document calls for God to bless the girls' family and to keep it from the evil that takes innocents. Of course, the eventual disappearance of the cockatrice from mortal sight does not mean that the creatures are extinct — simply that they've been forced to hide from mankind because they're too dangerous to be allowed to live. In later days, these monsters can be found in Otherworldly places - unsettled Realms and rural Chantries that provide the cockatrice with hosts, food and warm places to hide.

IMAGE

Strutting and pecking, slithering and swallowing, the cockatrice has a frightful appearance. When startled, it shakes ochre-yellow feathers and stretches its wide, thorny wings. The beast's bottom jaw unhinges, dropping to display the black interior of its beak. When calm, a cockatrice struts on its odd chicken legs — wrinkled and gray, dappled with spots like the hands of an old woman. Slithering out from its hind end, the cockatrice's tail has serpentine skin, shiny and smooth like liquid ebony and tipped with a poison-dripping hook. Eyes of centuries-old amber shine cold and wicked, darting this way and that. One look at a cockatrice is enough to make a person flee — or freeze in terror while the monster lays its egg.

Making its lair, as it does, in foul, hidden places, the average cockatrice is invariably covered with dung or a greasy film of fat from its last meal, which makes it easy to smell well before it becomes visible. A cockatrice's strange build renders it clumsy, but the beast is no less dangerous for its lack of grace.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You are your own bird. If others don't like it, they can fuck themselves — preferably with a sword. You won't be told what to do by Saracens, whores, fops, blackguards, hermits, syphilitics, simpletons, dandies, Moors, buggers, lack-wits, wenches, scrofulous beast-men, leeches, troglodytes, lepers, princes or kings, and you haven't the slightest intention of mitigating a single goddamned word for their timid little ears.

They won't suffer you? There's always room in the world for one more cockatrice...

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 3, Charisma 0, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Elusion 2, Expression (Profanity) 4, Foraging 2, Intimidation 3, Stealth 3

Element: Earth (Base curmudgeon)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: -1, -3 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Claws for 4 dice, stinger for 2 dice; Hazardous Breath (25; 5 Health Levels, normal), Human Speech, Mesmerism (6), Venom (1 aggravated Health Level of damage every other turn; no antidote), Wings (3)

DRAGON

O to be a dragon

a symbol of the power of Heaven.

— Marianne Moore, "O to be a Dragon"

LEGENDRY

In the time before time, long before the light of civilization fell across the land, most of the world was wild and formless. At that time, a now-forgotten power held sway — a potent force of chaos whose very passing scattered the golden fruits of knowledge and power that nurtured our kind through its infancy.

This power was called "Modus" and he reigned for ages in his Courts of Silence before ever a creature walked the face of the Earth. And his children attended him, and were to him a great comfort.

Certainly no one could have foreseen the tragic consequences when Ellisere, the daughter of Modus, Goddess of Inspiration and Invention, brought her latest plaything into the Courts of Silence. She called this strange device "the Necronome." Its eternal ticking seemed to echo the beat of her heart. In it she found the subtle hints of a pattern that opened up great vistas of inspiration. Unfortunately, the infernal ticking drove everyone else to distraction and the Courts of Silence were no longer a place of refuge.

Something had to be done. After much deliberation, Modus banished the object from the courts. After that, Ellisere was seen less and less. She sequestered herself on a remote mountain in the midst of swirling creation to pursue her vision and the new art — music — that was taking shape with the aid of her Necronome.

The strange and wondrous sounds of her emerging art called forth many and varied creatures from the crucible of creation. They came to her and loved her, and she taught them her way.

The Firstborn were the great wyrms, masters of air and flame. The raw, primitive tones of the newly discovered art formed their magic and might. In time, all creatures who now know music, and

many different races—including those who are now known only through ancient songs—came to sit at Ellisere's feet and receive her gift. At last, man overcame his fear of the wild things that haunted the world's end and came to Ellisere to learn from her.

By this time, the Art had changed. Music was no longer a simple means of expressing Ellisere's vision of harmony. In each successive teaching, it swelled to encompass new emotions. The great wyrms, for instance, eagerly gathered shining notes of power and crafted them into scales—of hoarding, of greed, of snares for those who would steal their treasures. The arrival of men also wove many complex emotions into the score, not the least of which was jealousy.

It is doubtful that even Ellisere herself knew who it was that stole into her chambers one day. Some gossips speculate that the trespasser's motive may have been jealousy for the single-minded devotion a lover paid to the goddess. Others suggest that the intruder acted out of fear—that some other race might learn a more complete form of the Art than man himself had. All that is known for certain is that on that day, someone reached up to the Necronome and stopped its swinging arm midcourse.

The silence that followed was complete. No scream sounded the moment the Necronome and the goddess' heart ceased to beat. In their sorrow, the great wyrms gathered their treasures, music and precious scales, wrapped them in grand and leathery wings and took flight. They passed over the Earth on mournful winds, landing when fatigue claimed them, and dug titanic burrows into the mountainsides.

There, it is said, they listen for the echoes of Ellisere's art in never-ending caves. In the heart of the Earth, the dragons claim, you can still hear refrains of the first songs in mournful rhythm with the final ticking of the goddess' Necronome.

DESCRIPTION

Here be dragons. The inscription inevitably marks the farthest, most inaccessible, least hospitable corner of the map. The wise navigator never reads the phrase aloud, although he might tap ominously at it with the tip of his spy glass. A certain power clings to the very syllables—not only fuel for mutiny, but something more grand—words to conjure with. Their very whispering evokes nightmare images of primal fury, avarice, cunning, chaos and destruction.

The Illuminated, however, must learn to see beyond the nightmare. The first step in penetrating the veil of secrecy surrounding the great wyrms is to realize that a dragon is a paradoxical creature. The arcana handed down across the generations reveals a very different side to these complex beings. The mystic writings return constantly to the dragon's unrivaled majesty, wisdom, sophistication and artistry.

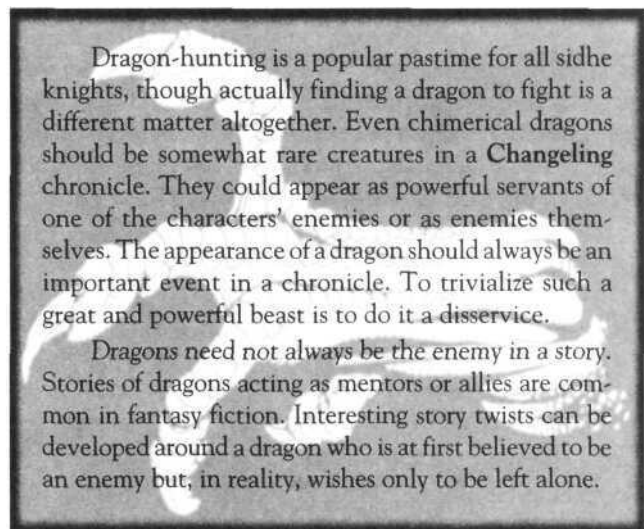
The great wyrms embody all the terrible beauty that nature has to offer. In the dragon, we find reflected all that is darkest within the breast of man. The dragon is pure desire run amok. Our lusts, our greed, our ravenous hungers find their ultimate expression in these grand beasts.

There are probably as many stories about the creation of dragonkind as there are dragons themselves. Each of the great wyrms is a veritable force of nature with a life span stretching back into the dim reaches of time. Only the very foolish or presumptuous would even think to question a dragon's account of its own origins. The fact of the matter is that each of these legendary beings has the longevity, power and conviction to craft history in his own image. Most of the great wyrms, should they feel moved to give any account of themselves whatsoever, would recount tales of how their race arose directly from the Primal Chaos. This assertion may not fall far from the truth.

Even the legends of mankind's own devising tend to recognize dragons as the Firstborn. Some scholars suggest that dragons are not, in fact, mortal creatures at all, but incarnations of Creation's own passion, harnessed by intellect and glowing with the power of the elements unbound. It's possible that the great wyrms are creatures of pure Quintessence, loose threads of the Tellurian's Tapestry crackling with raw, undifferentiated power. One myth goes so far as to claim that dragons are not of the Tapestry at all, but rather arise directly from the dark spaces between the weft and warp, where the hidden chaos of the universe is exposed.

The very existence of a dragon is an accusation hurled in the face of mankind. Meeting one of the great wyrms is like facing our own reflection in a dark mirror. At the same time, the dragon embodies all the unchecked power of Nature. Throughout the world, dragons are credited with creating storms and lightning, fire and flood, famine and blight, typhoons and hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, maelstroms and tidal waves.

The dragon is the unreasoning enforcer of the natural order. It is quite literally the scourge of the Earth—the lash of Her displeasure with presumptuous humanity. A great wyrm embodies man's relation with nature. Within its glistening coils, we do not find a natural order to be conquered, catalogued and cultivated, but rather the wild fury of nature that must be appeased to ensure survival.



DRAGON LORE

As one of the most promising scholars of his age, it is certain that Ynnis Wythren had more than a passing familiarity with dragon lore before he ever set foot on the Isle of Lamentations. What he found there, however, led him to cast aside the mantle of learning for the sackcloth of mysticism.

Regrettably, no hand has ever recorded Wythren's story in its entirety. Only vague and unsettling hints may be found amongst the mystic's cryptic verse, which is praised mainly for its complex, labyrinthine structure. A volume of his work is often the prized possession in the private library of a well-to-do cryptophile.

In his pivotal *Librium Draconis*, Wythren opens with this startling revelation:

"The Dragon accomplishes the ends of the Earth."

With this simple assertion, Wythren throws down the gauntlet to challenge centuries of established dragon lore. He reveals that the dragon is not merely the hooded executioner of Nature's will, but rather the Earth's champion — the knight who defends Her, the hero who redeems Her, the magus who awakens Her. The dragon is not some generic monster, a potential notch in the belt of the treasure hunter. Rather, each of these magnificent creatures is a fully realized character, a unique being, a force of nature animated by a powerful individual will.

Dragons are fiercely protective of their individuality. Solitary and aloof, they place great value on their independence and privacy. It is said that they cannot long abide even the presence of their own kind — it's a rare occasion when two or more of the beasts deign to share a hunting ground or lair. Ancient sagas, however, do allude to a time when the great wyrms were more populous and were occasionally seen hunting or warring together. Just as we might speak of a *pride* of lions or a *murder* of crows, the magi of old tell of a *desolation* of dragons. Anyone who has witnessed the insatiable appetites of these magnificent terrors can understand why.

Wythren's cryptic assertion, however, establishes much more than the *individuality* of each dragon. It presents the foundation of what has become known as the "Doctrine of Circumference and Center." According to this theory, the dragon "accomplishes" the ends of the Earth in the sense that it "encompasses" them. The dragon's coils encircle the entire world. It is the horizon, the border of the unknown, the Circumference of Creation.

The Vikings understood this mystery perfectly. In Norse mythology, the great wyrm Jormungandr encompasses the entire world (Midgard). This Midgard Orm lies in the frozen depths of the ocean, its own tail clasped firmly in its mouth. The elaborate figureheads on Viking dragon ships pay homage to this terror of the deep.

The serpent swallowing its own tail is one of the mage's most potent symbols — the alchemical sign of infinity. The Midgard Orm is infinite, not only in that it encompasses all

of space, but all of time. It was imprisoned in the icy depths at the dawn of time, and prophecy maintains that the Orm cannot be slain until time itself is unmade.

Thor, god of thunder, once sought to slay the Orm. He accomplished the Herculean task of fishing it from the ocean using a great chain baited with an ox's head. His efforts, however, proved to be in vain as even he, the very incarnation of battle, could not best his rival. It is told that in the final battle, Ragnarok, Jormungandr will rise up and slay his ancient enemy. The great Orm will itself be slain and its death-throes will crack open the world like an egg, destroying all of Creation and closing the circle, once and for all.

The serpent devouring its own tail is a potent symbol of the Great Cycle of life, death and rebirth. Nowhere is this image more apparent than in the steaming jungles of the New World. Here, no life is wasted — the jungle floor is a broiling crucible of creation. From every plant or creature that dies in that crucible there erupts a teeming multitude of new life. This fecund cycle is observed and governed by the plumed serpent of the Aztecs and Toltecs, Quetzalcoatl.

Like the serpent, the dragon sheds its skin, casting off the detritus of its old life and being born anew. While the serpent is "reborn" each year, the dragon's life rhythm encompasses the Great Cycle of 360 years. Each great wyrm, it is written, lives 10 such lifetimes (or 3600 years), unless some disaster or murder cuts that life short. At the end of this perfectly contained cycle, the dragon's soul enters the Great Wheel of Creation to be remade again in fresh, elemental clay as new souls or primal forces.

In Egyptian mythology, the dragon Apep is the Lord of the Underworld, who holds the reigns of life, death and rebirth. His consuming passion is his enmity with the sun god Ra. Each day, Apep does battle with Ra, trying to prevent the sun-boat from rising to its zenith. Each evening, Apep devours the sun, dragging his ancient enemy into his domain, the world of the dead. The battle continues there as the solar disc navigates its way along the Celestial Nile — the very bowels of Apep. Thus, for the Egyptians, each day is a mythic struggle in which the rebirth of the sun and the gods themselves depends on the dragon's gift of life, death and resurrection.

Egyptian dragon lore reinforces and expands on some important points raised in Norse legends. Apep is also a dragon of the Circumference. While Jormungandr coils about the Earth beneath Her mantle of oceans, Apep encompasses the world in two great arcs — one above (the Celestial Nile) and one below (the Underworld). When the Egyptians speak of the Celestial Nile, they refer to the starry swath of the Milky Way that dominates the night sky.

Apep's domain over the night sky is strengthened by its close association with the moon. This link between the dragon and the moon is implicit in Egyptian legend. Just as Apep opposes Ra, the moon opposes the sun — rising when it sets, setting when it rises. Like the dragon, the moon also

sheds its skin every 28 nights. It is the dragon's kinship with the moon, as much as the creature's own prowess, that makes it the uncontested lord of the night sky.

In general, dragon-as-moon holds dominion over all that transpires beneath the cover of darkness. Tales of great wyrms return constantly to the exploits of thieves and lovers. In this role, the dragon is not only a hoarder of fabulous treasures and of virgins, but is also the guardian of spiritual treasures — of secrets, mystery and initiation.

HABITAT

Uncontested masters of land, sea and air, dragons inhabit the four corners of the Earth and have made their presence felt in the heart of the Old World and on the shores of the New. Explorers carry back tales and sightings of the dragon from such far-flung locales as Cathay, the Americas, India, Ethiopia and Arabia. Truly is it said that the dragon encompasses the ends of the Earth.

A dragon's Beysta, or lair, can be found atop (or within) some ancient place of power. These dragonsites are Crays of the greatest kind, focal points of earthmight, the raw unchecked power of Nature — that which mortals call Quintessence. A great wyrm draws on this vast energy reserve to feed his ravening hungers, to fuel the raging furnace within.

In most cases, a Beysta is some remote and forbidding cavern. Such isolated subterranean surroundings appeal to the great wyrms' serpentine nature. These "dragonholes" are private, roomy and easily guarded — important considerations for anyone with the dragon's reputation for vast wealth and equally boundless suspicions. For similar reasons, many dragons, such as the legendary Lambdon Worm, make their lairs in abandoned wells or cisterns.
If the Beysta is convenient

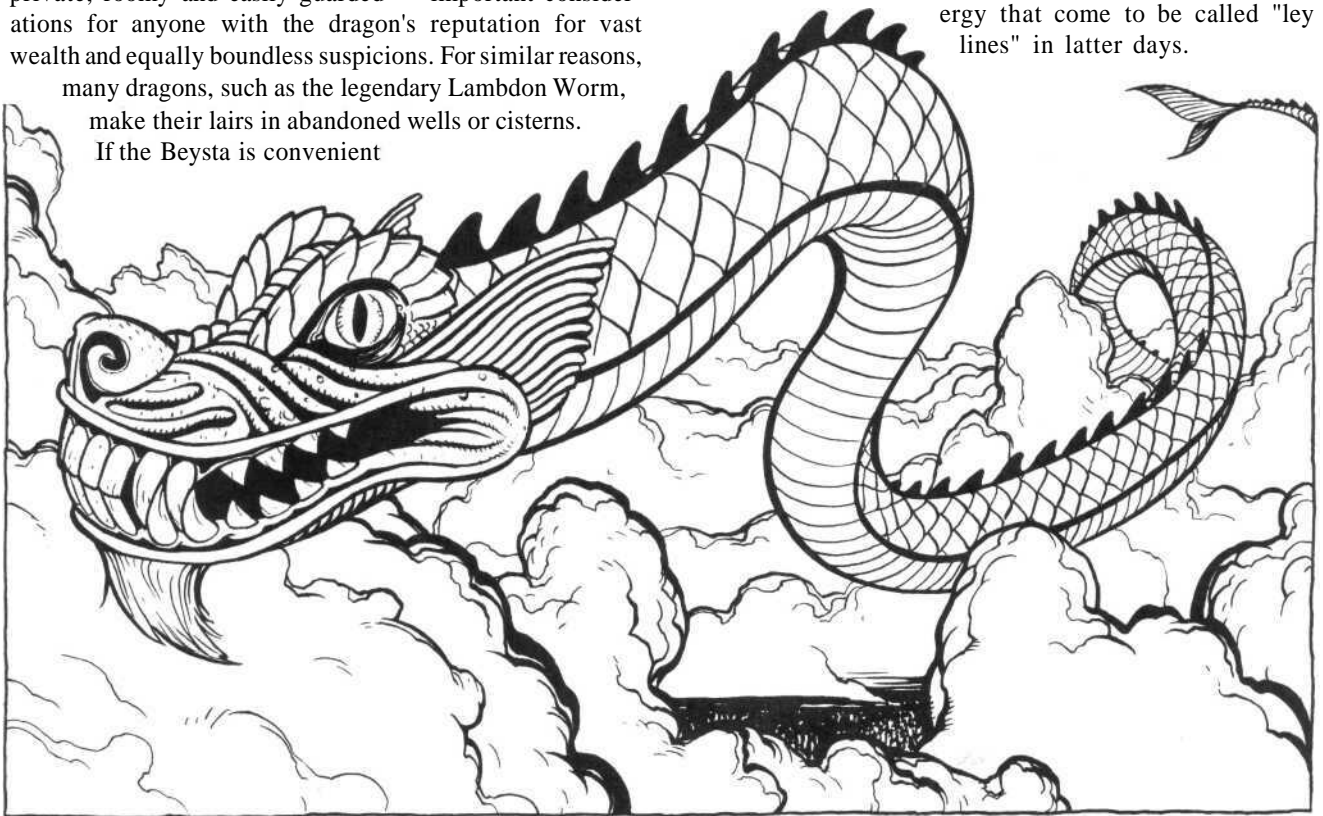
to a nearby town — and thus, a steady source of human prey — so much the better.

Other dragons make their lairs in high mountain eyries. These fierce predators rely on their keen eyesight to pick out prey far below and swoop down for the swift kill. The Tatzlwurm of the Swiss Alps is one such mountain-dweller who considers human children a great delicacy.

Still others prefer aquatic lairs. Seas, lakes and rivers provide a steady diet of fish, while boat traffic serves as an important supplementary food source. Water also provides the ultimate camouflage for the fantastic Bygones, allowing aquatic dragons to take boats or even entire ports unawares. The Gargouille is one such sea dragon who belches forth torrents of water. A titanic creature who preys on medieval mariners, this creature is the inspiration for the waterspout gargoyles that adorn French cathedrals.

Swamps tend to combine the advantages of both the watery and the subterranean lair. Swamp dragons, or knuckers, dwell in reportedly bottomless pits in the heart of great marshes. The presence of such a knuckerhole is often revealed by eerie vapors, incessant bubbling or icy cold waters.

Regardless of their location, all dragonsites are interconnected, linked by a vast network of energy lines. Some of these dragonlines run beneath the Earth's surface like magma. Others surge along the course of the ocean currents. Still others follow the paths of the winds. The great wyrms refer to these ever-flowing conduits of power as the dragonsblood — streams of mystickal energy that come to be called "ley lines" in latter days.



Tending the dragonsblood is an almost religious devotion for the great wyrms, and a dragon often sits for days on end doing nothing but communing with the call of the blood. In its song, they can pick out the soft strains of news from distant lands. They whisper to each other across the miles. They read omens. They often relive memories or share devotions from halfway across the world.

The dragonsblood is also the raw material from which dragons construct their *Proterus*— their inner sanctums. Just as the Beysta is the dragon's physical home, the Proterus is his spiritual dwelling.

Both Beysta and Proterus share the same spatial location. One can be thought of as overlaying the other — separated only by the most tenuous layer of perception. The great wyrms call this invisible membrane the Veil, but magi know it better as the Gauntlet. The master of the lair can part the Veil at will and step directly from the physical into the spiritual realm, passing from Beysta to Proterus. This power, which makes dragons nigh invulnerable on their home ground, is considered one of the greatest gifts the Lady bestowed on dragonkind.

Dragon lore presents some ambiguity about the Veil. On one hand, stepping through it represents the passage between the physical and the spiritual, between life and death. The Lady passed beyond the Veil by dying. In so doing, she made the way clear for her faithful to travel back and forth between the two realms. The great wyrms, however, do not experience the area beyond the Veil as a land of the dead — there are no thronging shades of the deceased awaiting them on the far side. Instead, the dragon's Proterus resembles an exact duplicate of his lair — with one significant difference. In the Proterus, there are no physical objects, only the *shadows* of objects — symbols, meanings, relations, implications. Where a dragon's lair might be filled with physical treasures — fine carpets from the Orient, a mask collection from darkest Africa, brightly colored tapestries, a peerless wine collection, ivory tusks, ancient tomes, delicate scientific apparatus, magnificent bronzes, rare coins, artful clockwork automatons, a chess set fit for an emperor, crates of coffee, sacks of poppy and many other such things — the dragon's Proterus is a spiritual landscape.

A dragon *never* allows visitors, even favored ones, to enter his Proterus. However, magi and fae who have battled wyrms and won have ventured into these holy sanctums and recorded what they found. In the material world, a dragon's lair resembles a gigantic burrow, often wound with elaborate tunnels, trickling with fresh water and seeded with fabulous treasures and gleaming bones. In the Penumbra of the place, the Proterus spins out like a gargantuan web, a luminous weave of interlocking strands. Each line is a link of distance or proximity anchored to the objects on the physical side of the Realm. The more cluttered the cave, the more elaborate the web in the spirit world.

If an intruder were to look closely at the strands, she might notice tiny arcane runes in no known language. Wythren attests that dragons capture their histories, genealogies and poetry in these intricate scribings. According to his chronicles, the runes seem to sing in a tune that transcends human scales — a tune that may well be the echo of the songs composed by the elder wyrms, who first melded the elements together.

NOTED DRAGONSITES

*Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny
Shall here inhabit, and this land be call'd
The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls.*
— William Shakespeare, *Richard II*

THE BONEYARD

Even among dragonsites, some locales have grown so famous (or infamous) that they stand out clearly above the rest. These are the mystic places of dragonkind -- the pilgrimage sites and realms of nightmare that occasionally wind their way into human folklore.

Perhaps no dragonsite has fired the imagination of mystics and treasure-hunters alike as greatly as the Isle of Lamentations. Kingdoms and fortunes have been squandered in the quest for the legendary isle. In the cryptic verse of Ynnis Wythren, the desolate place is called "The Boneyard." Simply put, it is the dragons' graveyard — the place where the most ancient and world-weary of the great wyrms come to die.

No map has ever fixed its location, yet old tales place the isle somewhere in the midst of the Sea of Dust, a vast ocean of rolling breakers that crackle like old parchment as they wash to and fro. Stately funeral barges ply these waters in lieu of fishing boats. The seas are also rife with treasure seekers and ghoulish bloodthirsty pirates, men who have lost their minds and souls trying to find the elusive island.

A traveler who manages to win past the many hazards of the Sea of Dust might beach himself on the Sighing Stones, jagged granite teeth that jut from the waves like a titan's maw. The island rises beyond this reef on gleaming white sea cliffs that are circled by wailing black gulls. The Isle of Lamentations offers neither shore nor harbor. Those who would ascend its cliffs must either fly or climb the dizzying heights.

The bowl of the island is a blinding, bleached, white landscape. Everywhere a visitor turns, she is confronted by the remains of the dead — the entire surface of the isle is a shifting jumble of bones. Jagged spars thrust skyward like obelisks. Vaulted ribs arc overhead like the roof of a cathedral. Wind whistles through the remains with the sound of some vast untuned pipe organ. Otherwise, the isle is grim and silent.

Despite the barren visage it presents to intruders, the island actually teems with life. Millions of unseen scurrying insects — rumored to range in size from that of an ant to that of a wild boar — pick clean the undersides of shifting bones. A trespasser must wind her way across the remains. The slightest misstep is certain to plunge her into the subterranean realm of the insect-creatures.

If a great wyrm is actually present on the isle, it is certain to be found at the very center, coiled around the cairn at the land's heart. This cairn is constructed not of piled stones, but of ancient weathered eggs — all the stillborn children of dragonkind, brought here by bereaved parents throughout the ages. It should be noted that even a dying dragon can be terrible in his rage, and no member of wyrm-kind would suffer the footfalls of another beast — least of all man — on this most sacred island.

THE CITY OF BRASS AND FLAME

The dragon is without a doubt the mightiest of all enchanted creatures. Not all of the great wyrms, however, are allied with the forces of magick in the Great Conflict. Dragons champion each of the three sides in the unceasing battles between faith, science and magick. However, although the Daedaleans openly forswear affiliation with such beasts, desperate men must find allies where they can...

Perhaps the most notorious example of a dragon opposed to magick is a being of legendary power called Caduceus. A titanic spirit of logic and complexity, this dragon sends inspiration-dreams to his chosen: the High Artisans of the Order of Reason.

Where other dragons embody the wild, unappeased forces of Nature, Caduceus is an avatar of civilization. A pervasive worldview radiates outward from him in concentric circles. Just as the very presence of other dragons brings blight, pestilence and devastation to the surrounding countryside, Caduceus is the harbinger of order and logic. Like a gargantuan spider-wyrm, he spins a complex, circular web in his Realm of sublime technology. Unlike the men he favors, this dragon makes no distinction between the works of rational creatures and the works of Nature. To him, a cathedral and a beaver dam are of a single substance — each a perfectly natural construct, envisioned and created by perfectly natural creatures.

There is no conflict between man and Nature in Caduceus' Realm. Anything man might accomplish, he does on the behalf/behest of the Earth that bore him. The epicenter of Caduceus' influence is the City of Brass and Flame — a testament to Nature's ability to feed on itself. Suspended in the center of the dragon's cyclopean web, the city is a pre-industrial nightmare Realm of steam, gears, oil and levers.

This city, like all dragon works, lies within the spirit worlds, separated from mortal lands by the narrow ribbon of belief between this world and the next. The dragon's city is

populated with a stunning variety of elaborate clockwork automatons. These subjects can sometimes be found in the cities of men, carrying out the inscrutable ends of Caduceus' far-reaching agenda. Unknown to most mortals, these beings even serve occasionally in Daedalean ranks as Brethren, Sisters or mechanical creations.

The shrill metallic wailing of the City of Brass and Flame is a siren's song to those mortals unfortunate enough to stand within earshot. Visitors who do not fall under the spell of technology are invariably driven deaf or mad. Those who manage to survive this peril and actually come within sight of the City of the Great Work can be undone, captured or rooted to the spot by a nightmare vision of science gone utterly insane.

The city scrambles heavenward on its own shoulders. New domes, towers, cupolas and minarets, rising from the womb of the city, claw their way into existence before the spectator's very eyes. The cityscape also seems to rush toward the onlooker as it expands concentrically and continually. The towering walls are carried forward in a flurry of levers and scaffolding, all waving madly and independently like dancing spiders' legs. The inhabitants scurry like mites on a dog's ear, rushing in an endless attempt to build things faster, better and bigger than before.

It is said that the heart of the city, Caduceus' palace/factory, is buried beneath the ascending metallic jumble. Supposedly Caduceus himself can be found in the deepest sub-basement, wrapped about the monstrous boiler that drives the ever-expanding city, spinning his endless web of machines and reason.

FUTURE FATE

Oh, dragons are real, even now. The elemental dreams that wove the first wyrms together still flow in the veins of these near-immortal beasts. Dragons are very much alive, as both archetypes and beings of flesh and bone.

Ironically, the "ends of the Earth" gradually leave that Earth for the more accommodating Realms. By the technological age, the material world has become too harsh for their kind. Among the literal dragon-slayers of the Dark Ages and Renaissance, great clashes such as the Battle of Flames and the Concordia War, the darkening of polluted skies and the dimming of the heart of wonder, the mighty wyrms of the First Days have been whittled down. As the Great Wheel spins faster and faster, the souls of dragons have been sucked into the slipstream and transformed into other, lesser things (like people).

Most surviving dragons have settled into Umbral Realms by the Industrial Age. Although some few of them escape to the newer worlds of Africa and the Americas, the unrest that soon tears through those lands feeds the pain spreading across the world. Dragons, like many other magical beasts, feel the burn of

Unbelief as the world becomes a colder, less magical place. By the end of the 19th century, the mortal world is literally painful to visit. Although many wyrms learn to shapeshift themselves into human forms and walk unnoticed through the crowds, the air soon becomes too heavy and stale for any dragon's liking.

In their rage and despair, some dragons bind themselves to the great Celestine Wurm, the force of destruction intent on devouring Creation. In the Umbral Hellholes and the plains of Malfeas, in the hidden depths of earthly seas or the burning heart of the world, angry dragons coil, their souls dripping venom and their jaws glowing with righteous fire. For now, they glut themselves on the spiritual misery passed down from the Wurm itself, and on sacrifices gathered by a handful of dragon-cults in the human lands. Some ally themselves with Mad Ones and Fallen wizards, answering their summons' for short periods of time and spreading havoc when they appear. Meanwhile, the fascination with the dragon as an archetype, the popularity of dinosaurs and giant monsters, and prevailing Millennial tidings have strengthened these monsters. Soon, very soon, they will rise to the mortal world, reveal their power to a skeptical humanity and rain their fire on the cities of man.

TYPES OF DRAGONS: IMAGE AND ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Dragons come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. The smallest are said to be no larger than a house cat, while the largest have been known to coil themselves around mountains. Despite several overall similarities, however, each dragon is an individual. Mated pairs produce children who resemble neither partner, and "litter-mates" born of the same hatch-brood can differ in profound ways. Some are witty and urbane, collecting works of art and crafting grand lairs with fire and claw. Others are simple brutes, as smart as the average human and far less cultured. A handful are little better than animals, living for centuries on nothing more than instinct, and dwelling in filthy, fouled caves.

Innately magical, all dragons possess elemental gifts. Their ties to the spirits of Creation, the powers of the mind and the arts of humanity breed dizzying talents. Some dragons can transform themselves into unassuming guises. Others hypnotize their prey, fly, command the weather or live beneath the sea. Nearly every great wurm possesses some form of vile breath. It is said that the elements themselves boil up from within a dragon's heart. When he rages, the elements spill out in devastating form, manifestations of the universe's anger. The "traditional" dragon trades in fire, but others exhale storms, poisons, water, even rains of hot mud or sand. When the Industrial Age turns skies to ash, some young dragons are born breathing clouds of smog or toxic waste. As the elements rage, the dragons breathe them into form.

In general, dragons can be divided into three main types: celestial dragons, which embody the elements in epic form, grow to amazing size and command vast powers; greater wyrms, the "Classical" dragons, which walk and fly across the land, occasionally brushing their wings against the worlds of man; and lesser dragons, which attain modest size and moderate power, but live for centuries regardless. According to dragon-lore scholars, the dreams of gods, men and the elementals shaped the differences between these creatures and bound them to the lands that they inhabit.

Celestial dragons are best known in the remote corners of the Far East, although titanic creatures such as Jormungandr appear in the tales of other lands. European and African legends resound with the clamor of the greater wyrms, whose taste for cattle, virgins and piles of gold epitomize the word "dragon." Lesser dragons are known worldwide: Fu guardians watch over Buddhist and Taoist shrines, amphipteres coil in African and Mediterranean trees, and sphinxes ambush travelers from the woods of England to the deserts of Arabia. Certain dragons seem to "favor" certain lands, but on the whole, these magnificent beasts are universal.

Dragons typically prefer solitude. Nevertheless, scholars maintain that a "dragon court" exists somewhere in the spirit world. While it is true that, every millennium, all living dragons gather in an Otherworld called Midrealm (see *Beyond the Barriers: The Book of Worlds*), the mortal "dragon courts" are largely fantasy. The exceptions — the mighty councils of great celestial dragons and the more humble meetings of ambitious drakes — occur sporadically, when some issue demands the wyrms' attention. Most times, these elemental creatures prefer isolation or the company of lesser beings. Even mating dragons rarely stay together for long. The fractious natures of wurmkind are simply too diverse for near-immortals to bear.

ELEMENTS INCARNATE: GREAT CELESTIAL DRAGONS

More spirit than matter, great celestial dragons typically grow hundreds of feet in length, and rarely appear before man. The young dragon spends a full 1000 years in its egg before emerging as a small snake. Over the next 2000 years, the dragon wins, in turn, its carplike head, its claws, its horns and finally its wings. As it grows, the dragon attains mastery over shapechanging and the elements. When it reaches adulthood, the creature is assigned certain duties by the celestial powers — some benevolent, others dire. To fulfill its purpose, the dragon ascends to the Otherworlds and functions as an emissary between Heaven and Earth.

(Chronicle Note: These entities are more forces of nature than beasts; while a Storyteller could feature one as a plot device, no player should take one as a character. Celestial dragons might occasionally wear human guise, but even then, they are alien, godlike things.)

• **Celestial (fire) dragons** are majestic creatures with five-taloned legs and scales wrought of purest gold. Vast enough to carry the palaces of the gods on their backs, these dragons are unbearably fierce of countenance and severe of temper. Only meat and coal can feed these beasts, and they are terrible when hungry.

Like the grim sages of Legalistic traditions, these mighty demigods council rigid honor, right action and personal perfection. Patrons of the Akashic Arts, these creatures occasionally manifest in huge storms. During the Dragon River War, three fire dragons reduced an army of minor demons to ash—and boiled the Qui River into steam. A celestial dragon speaks in thunderclaps and displays little patience with humanity. Unless summoned for some great need, he resides in the Heavens or crafts great palaces in the hearts of volcanoes.

• **Weather (air) dragons** shimmer in tones of ever-changing blue and dance across the sky on six pairs of slender legs. The realms of cloud and open sea are playgrounds for these spirit-beasts, who bring both life-giving rain and deadly storms. These dragons fly effortlessly without benefit of wings. Their coming is as swift as the wind and their assault is just as piercing. In contrast to their flaming cousins, these sedate creatures respect harmony and balance over raw force.

When provoked, an air dragon can devastate an entire valley, as happened in Kin Li in the days of the Five Ghost Wizards. More often, however, the divine beast prefers to teach friends humility, song and patience. In her palace of winds, a weather dragon coils about her fountain, listening to the droplets

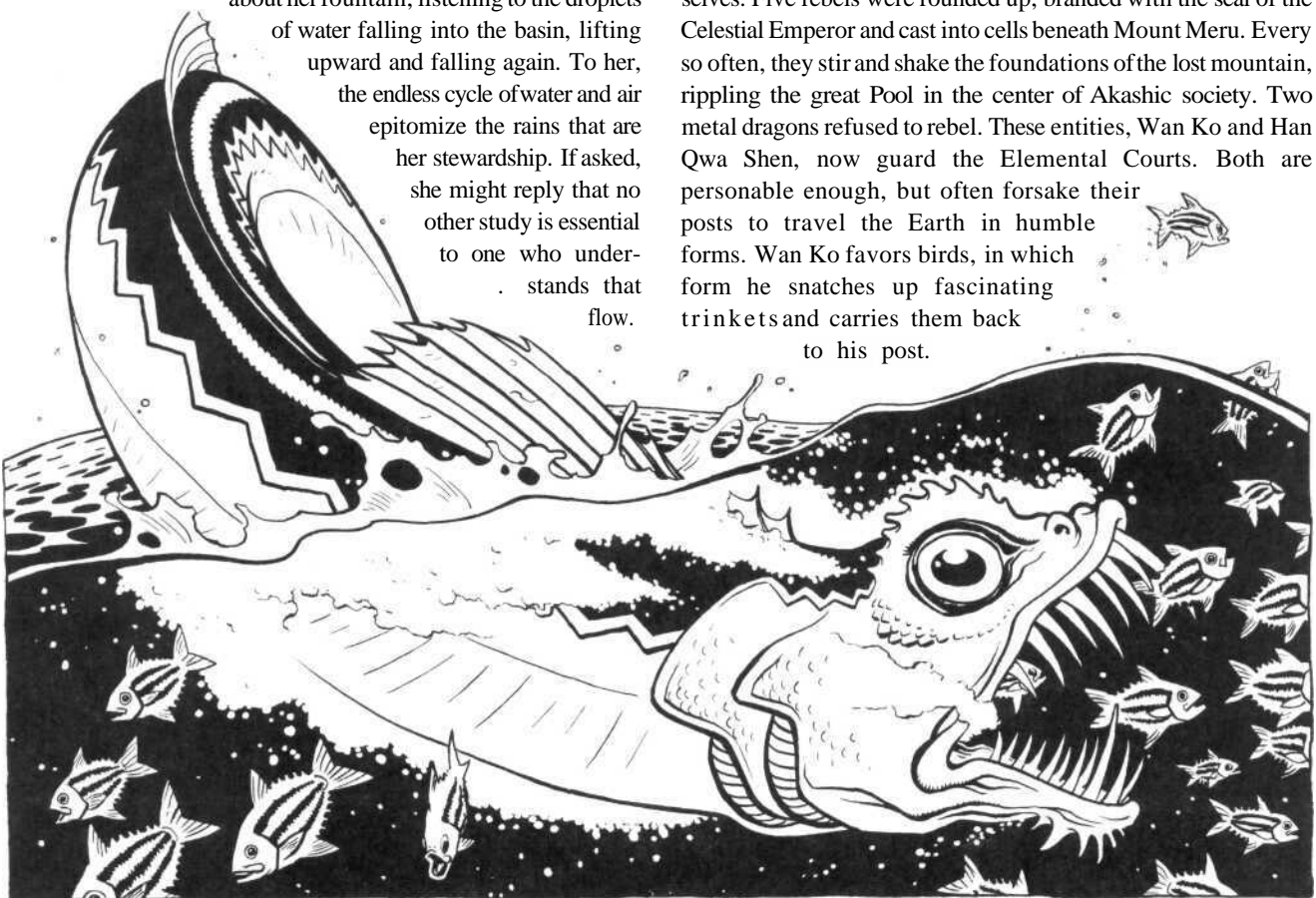
of water falling into the basin, lifting upward and falling again. To her, the endless cycle of water and air epitomize the rains that are her stewardship. If asked, she might reply that no other study is essential to one who understands that flow.

• **Terrestrial (earth) dragons** govern the inland waterways. Their dominion over the earth stems from the gift of fertility they bring to the fields and from their authority to divide the land into separate provinces. Each river has its own dragon-king who rules the waters from his submerged palace. These rulers are terrifying and irresistible in their wrath. Sinuous and muscular, an earth dragon sheds four sets of scales—earth red, mud brown, dull green and bright emerald—as he grows to maturity. He picks his way across the land on six massive legs, feasting on forests and trees.

In his youth, a terrestrial dragon is sturdy, steadfast and conservative. Although not harsh as his fiery cousin, this patron of Taoist mystics is a taskmaster. In human guise, he often wanders the countryside dressed as a monk and offers enigmatic platitudes. For sustenance, this exclusive vegetarian consumes huge amounts of foliage, then raises the plants again with the power of his magic.

• **Subterranean (metal) dragons** are great hoarders, dwelling in the hidden places of the Earth. These entities are guardians of spiritual as well as physical treasures, and are jealous of their Heaven-ordained duty. Poised at the gates of the Elemental Courts of Earth and Metal, these grand beasts can see the greed or generosity in human hearts. A metal dragon glitters like diamonds and walks with a shambling gait on four leonine paws.

Wise in the ways of science and mysticism, metal dragons are nonetheless creatures of caprice and ambition. Once, according to Akashic doctrine, they sought to overthrow the gods themselves. Five rebels were rounded up, branded with the seal of the Celestial Emperor and cast into cells beneath Mount Meru. Every so often, they stir and shake the foundations of the lost mountain, rippling the great Pool in the center of Akashic society. Two metal dragons refused to rebel. These entities, Wan Ko and Han Qwa Shen, now guard the Elemental Courts. Both are personable enough, but often forsake their posts to travel the Earth in humble forms. Wan Ko favors birds, in which form he snatches up fascinating trinkets and carries them back to his post.



Han Qwa Shen takes the form of a woman with golden hair. Seducing mortals and spirits alike, she gathers the gifts they give her, puts them in a basket of reeds and carries them back to the Court of Earth.

- **Great sea dragons** are mottled green and deep blue in color, and they often reach three to four miles in length. Wingless and legless, these enormous serpents travel exclusively by swimming. These are the beasts called Leviathan, Jormungandr, Lung Yu and other, hidden names. In the sunless depths, they hold courts that would drive a mortal man mad. No force on Earth can resist such a beast, for, angered, it raises typhoons, earthquakes and tidal waves. Krakens and whales provide food for these dragons, and huge sea-Realms bleed into their domains.

Every so often, a sea dragon takes a lesser form, swimming among the fish or hauling itself onto dry land to walk among men. If you pass a woman with dripping hair and eyes like a stormy sea, some folk say, you have seen a great sea dragon in the flesh. In later days, when the seas have been sullied and its great beasts slaughtered, sea dragons occasionally come to land to reason with the annoying creatures who dwell there. It is not the will of Heaven that humanity should be expunged, so the dragons forbear their wrath. Still, that woman with tossed-ocean eyes has a hard edge to her smile, and her hands twitch nervously, as if she were poised to strike.

CLASSIC DRAGONS: THE GREATER WYRMS

Greater wyrms, while quite powerful in their own right, are far smaller than their celestial cousins (they're typically several dozen feet long by maturity). Carnivorous and hungry, they embody the wrath of Hell or Heaven, and occasionally appear as agents of a huge Scourge backlash. While intelligent in the human sense, these dragons perceive the world through powerful senses and centuries of experience. Even the young ones are hundreds of years old and can remember when things were quite different — and far simpler. These "Classical" dragons include:

- The **drake** has a heavily armored, serpentine body that is all but impervious to the efforts of bow and sword. A ridge of sharp spines runs along his back, and his four legs boast wicked claws. The drake has membranous, batlike wings and his tail terminates in a venomous barb. A forked tongue darts in and out of his horrible maw — a mouth equally capable of swallowing prey whole or belching forth fiery death. This dragon's eyes are luminous and hypnotic, able to mesmerize or cut through deception at will.

A mountain-dweller of temperate lands, the drake embodies all the raw, unchecked fury of nature. Neither especially wise nor reflective, he's direct, aggressive and often cunning. Humans fascinate him as a rule; in his youth, the drake goes out of his way to examine them. Perhaps he's a fire-drake, devourer of virgins and slayer of knights. Maybe he is a brave wizard-ally, bridled for riding and devoted to his friends. He could take the

role of the treasure-hoarder, secluded and grouchy in his trove of artifacts. Most likely, he's all and more. Drakes play all of these roles in a single lifetime, then join the pile of bones on the Isle of Lamentations and return to the Great Wheel again.

- The **wyrm** (alternately **orm**) lairs in cold climes and closely resembles a giant serpent or eel. This beast is wingless and legless — only her draconian head, bearded and horned, gives outward sign of her true nature. Wyrms are equally at home in the secret places of the earth and in the depths of the sea. Aggressive and spiteful, a wyrm can strike with her deadly fangs or constrict with her coils. The blood of a wyrm is a virulent acid and toxin, capable of eating through the strongest mail and slaying with a touch. Of all dragons, wyrms are by far the least mannered and most malicious. They want nothing to do with humans or their ilk, except perhaps to savor a choice few as meals.

- The wyvern is a coiling, winged serpent whose hunting grounds extend from the very northern reaches of Europe all the way to Greece and Ethiopia. Although he's a huge beast — often 50 feet or more from tip to tail — the wyvern's features are birdlike, right down to a single pair of legs that boast eagle talons. Among dragonkind, these beasts are regarded as the least intelligent (a favorite wyvern tactic involves laying along a riverbank with his mouth open in order to ambush unwary prey). Although a wyvern does not hesitate to eat humans, his favorite dish is elephant flesh. Tales speak of ferocious battles between bull elephants, but it's a rare one that can best a dragon.

SMALL COUSINS: THE LESSER DRAGONS

Creatures of a small world, lesser dragons are rarely considered dragons at all. Hardly larger than a horse or lion, they nevertheless share the magical characteristics of their relatives. Hatched from small, plain eggs, the lesser breed grow to maturity in 100 years or so, and then they remain more or less the same for human ages. As young beasts, many lesser dragons aspire to become greater ones. However, when the ages pass and no change occurs, the poor things slide into disappointment, unless some other dragon takes them in as his charges. Of all wyrmkind, the lesser dragons are the most sociable and most likely to walk beside a human for any length of time (in short, they make ideal monster characters...). These beasts include:

- The elusive **lindworm**, which stalks the barren wastes. Although native to the cold mountains of northern and eastern Europe, these wingless dragons have been seen as far away as the steppes of Central Asia. Incapable of flight, a lindworm achieves incredible speed by running upright, propelled by its two powerful saurian legs. The creature's head, counterbalanced by a thick, lashing tail, snaps forward to breathe a cloud of poison or to gnash its prey between thick, sharp teeth. In later days, it could be said he is a dinosaur. Were it not for his intellect, flaming breath and occasional magic powers, that would be exactly what he is.

- The **amphiptere** is a winged, but legless, serpent that travels exclusively by flying. A greedy, selfish creature, she enjoys spending time in the upper reaches of the frankincense-bearing trees of her homeland, and jealously guards the precious resin from all who would harvest it. The amphiptere has a fierce disposition; her cry alone has been known to fell great warriors. In the *Apocrypha*, these dragons are depicted skimming across the plain, leading the chariots of Arabia into battle.

The amphiptere is clever and insightful in temperament. Her words, while spiteful, often ring true. A prophet of sorts, she adores magi and puts on her best manners to impress them. Although most of her kind are strictly reptilian, several tales speak of amphipteres in human form, striding alongside magi like the proud, sensual creatures they are. Angered, these pretenders explode into dragon form, often laying waste to everyone around them before regaining their shallow tempers.

- A **sphinx** or **dragon-cat** resembles nothing so much as a tiger or panther with membranous wings, huge fangs, serpent's eyes and smoky breath. Some tales place a human head on the sphinx's shoulders, but such beasts are freaks at best. Native to India, the Americas and certain parts of Africa, this small but agile dragon shares the ferocity of its feline cousins and the mystic imagination of the celestial servants. Restless and solitary, she roams the forests, jungles and cliffs. The settled nests of greater beasts are mysteries to her. Why would a dragon wish to settle down?

What she lacks in power, the sphinx makes up for in intellect. Perceptive and curious, she peers into pools of water and silvered glass to see places no mortal cat could. Like a kitten, she plays on the ground — or in the air! — with a predatory gleam in her eye. She occasionally makes friends with shamans or priests who can feed her deep hunger for riddles and lore. If motivated sufficiently, a skillful sphinx might take human form — such secrets are easy to learn if you've mastered the arts she has!

- The **fu guardian** waits at the entrance of Asian temples and Hermetic libraries. A watchdog of order and civility, this minor dragon resembles a cross between a lion, a dragon and a dog. Stocky and thick-maned, he glares at all comers with baleful eyes and solid teeth. His four muscular legs end in massive paws that hide two-inch claws capable of swiping holes in stone walls. Yet despite his fierce mien, this beast is the friendliest of his kind. Charged by the Heavens to safeguard virtuous folk and holy places, he upholds his duty with vigor and good nature.

As bestial as he appears, the fu is quite smart. He lacks the wiles of the dragon-cat or the vision of the celestials, but he learnshuman languages with little effort. Like any good templegoer, he's polite and reserved, quiet unless spoken to. When he replies, the fu's voice thunders deep and resonant, like a drum with a rattle inside. It is said that no fu can break a promise. Such may be folklore, but most mystics consider it fact.

TRAITS

Note: Attribute Traits and Armor Ratings cover hatchlings, young, mature adult and elder dragons, respectively. The listings for Abilities, Willpower, Health Levels, and Attacks/Powers (which covers Merits, Flaws, Backgrounds and Special Advantages) represent a mature adult dragon.

GREAT CELESTIAL DRAGONS

The majesty of great celestial dragons goes far beyond the limitations of Storyteller Traits. Should such a creature appear, assume that he can do more or less whatever he wants, bending the elements to his will like an archmagus. Hundreds of feet (or even several miles!) long, this spirit-titan manifests as a great storm, dragon-shaped clouds or as a humble traveler (sometimes human, sometimes not) with the talents of a god — and the wisdom not to use them.

DRAKE

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 2/6/12/12, Dexterity 4/7/10/9, Stamina 3/5/10/10, Charisma 2/5/5/6, Manipulation 2/4/8/10, Appearance 6, Perception 4, Intelligence 2/4/6/7, Wits 5/5/6/7

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 6, Awareness 2, Brawl 5, Beast Lore (Dragons) 4, Culture 2, Intimidation 9, Wild Hunting 6

Element: Metal (Temperamental warrior)

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK x 7, -1 x 7, -3 x 5, -5 x 3, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1/3/4/4

Attacks/Powers: Bite or claw for Str. + 3 dice, tail-lash for Str. + 2 dice; Acute Senses (1), Alien Appearance (5), Armor (4), Fearlessness (3), Hazardous Breath (fire; 5-10 dice of aggravated damage), Mesmerism (6), Past Life Background (4), Size (10), Spirit Vision, Treasure Background (3), Years Background (3)

WYRM

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 1/5/13/12, Dexterity 4/8/11/10, Stamina 2/6/10/9, Charisma 2/2/1/1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 3/6/7/7, Intelligence 3/4/6/6, Wits 6

Abilities: Alertness 5, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 2, Intimidation 7, Wild Hunting 6

Element: Water (Destructive curmudgeon)

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK x 5, -1 x 6, -3 x 2, -5 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1/3/3/3

Attacks/Powers: Bite for Str. + 3 dice, constrict for 8 dice; Acute Senses (1), Alien Appearance (5), Armor (3), Elemental Touch (15), Fearlessness (3), Flexible, Mesmerism (6), No Dexterous Limbs, Size (10), Venom (acid; 3 aggravated Health Levels of damage per turn of contact), Water-Breathing (5), Years Background (3)

WYVERN

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 1/5/9/9, Dexterity 3/5/9/9, Stamina 2/5/6/7, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3/4/5/8, Perception 2/3/3/4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 5, Brawl 6, Flying 5, Intimidation 6, Wild Hunting 4

Element: Air (Flighty Scatterbrain)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK x 5, -1 x 5, -3 x 3, -5 x 3, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 4

Attacks/Powers: Bite or claw for Str. + 3 dice; Acute Senses (1), Alien Appearance (5), Arcane Background (1), Armor (4), Bizarre Hunger (2; elephant flesh), Fearlessness (3), Homing Instinct (2), Mesmerism (3), Nightsight, Offensive to Animals (a successful Perception + Alertness roll to notice a predatory wyvern causes elephants to stampede), Size (10), Weak Spot (under the scales where a wyvern's neck meets its wing-joints), Wings (5)

LINDWORM

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 2/3/6/5, Dexterity 2/4/7/6, Stamina 2/3/5/5, Charisma 2/4/5/5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Foraging 3, Intimidation 6, Survival 3, Wild Hunting 3

Element: Earth (Resolute loner)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK x 5, -1 x 3, -3 x 3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 2

Attacks/Powers: Bite for Str. + 3 dice; Acute Senses (1), Alien Appearance (4), Armor (2), Extra Speed, Fearlessness (3), Hazardous Breath (poisonous vapor; subtract two dice from all Dice Pools for two turns), Mesmerism (3), Perfect Balance, Size (5), Years Background (3)

AMPHIPTERE

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 1/2/4/5, Dexterity 2/5/7/7, Stamina 1/3/4/4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Flying 5, Intimidation 3, Linguistics 1, Wild Hunting 2

Element: Air (Fleeting dilettante)

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 4, -1 x 3, -3 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1/2/3/3

Attacks/Powers: Bite for Str. + 2 dice; Alien Appearance (4), Armor (3), Compulsion (3; Defend Your Territory), Feast of Nettles (3), Human Speech, Information Font, No Dexterous Limbs, Shapechanger (5), Soul-Sense/Death-Sense, Treasure Background (1), Wings (5)

SPHINX/DRAGON-CAT

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 1/2/3/3, Dexterity 2/5/6/7, Stamina 1/2/3/3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 6, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 3/5/9/10, Wits 6

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Enigmas 6, Foraging 4, Flying 2, Intimidation 4, Lore (Regional) 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Wild Hunting 3

Element: Fire (Flickering wanderer)

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 3, -3 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Bite for Str. + 2 dice, claw for Str. + 3 dice; Acute Senses (1), Alien Appearance (2), Compulsion (2; Collect and Solve Puzzles), Enhancement, Fearlessness (1), Hazardous Breath (4 dice of fire damage), Healing Lick (3), Human Speech, Mesmerism (3), Nightsight, Shapechanger (5), Shy, Size (5), Spirit Vision, Wings (3)

FU GUARDIAN

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 2/4/7/7, Dexterity 2/4/6/6, Stamina 2/3/6/5, Charisma 3/5/6/7, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Culture 1, Intimidation 4, Linguistics 3, Wild Hunting 3

Element: Wood (Stout defender)

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 3, -3 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 3

Attacks/Powers: Bite for Str. + 3 dice, claw for Str. + 2 dice; Acute Senses (3), Acute Smell (2), Alien Appearance (3), Allies Background (5; temple residents), Armor (1), Bond-Sharing (4), Compulsion (4; Uphold Your Word), Enhancement, Healing Lick (3), Human Speech, Mystick Shield (1), Spirit Vision

FENG-HUANG

*One fire burns out another's burning,
One pain is lessen'd by another's anguish.*
— William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

LEGENDARY

The feudal lords had turned their authority over to Emperor Shih Huang Ti. The common people worked on building the Great Wall to keep out invaders from the north. Shih Huang Ti ordered the construction of roads and canals to bring the people together. He was a fair and just ruler — or so it was often said. He was a god among men when even the great Buddha did not yet walk the land.

Shih Huang Ti's people mourned his death deeply. They laid him out on a dais made of jade and gold and wrapped him in the finest silks. That very night, the invaders came. Shih Huang Ti's soldiers, weakened by their wailing grief, let their defenses down. The battle raged all night. Shih Huang Ti watched from behind death-jellied eyes. He listened through frozen ears to the clashes, the cries of fear and pain, and to the death-rattles. His still heart ached.

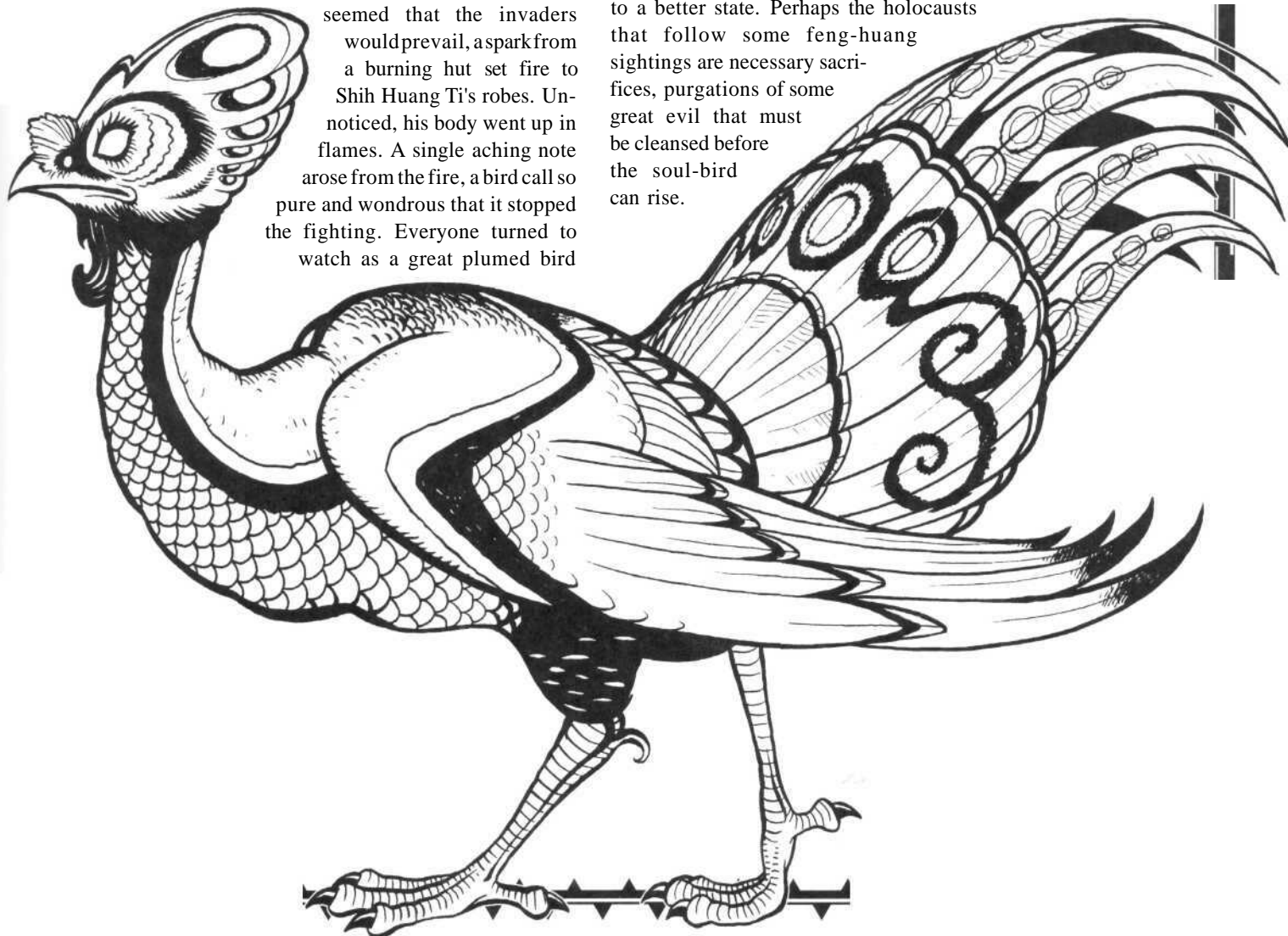
Finally, at dawn, when it seemed that the invaders would prevail, a spark from a burning hut set fire to Shih Huang Ti's robes. Unnoticed, his body went up in flames. A single aching note arose from the fire, a bird call so pure and wondrous that it stopped the fighting. Everyone turned to watch as a great plumed bird

rose from the flames. Blazing like a burning parchment, it flew up on rainbow wings into the morning sky and circled overhead. The invaders fled. As the barbarians were chased down and slaughtered beneath the gaze of Heaven, the feng-huang sang its grief for the fallen soldiers, then disappeared into the clouds to live among the gods.

DESCRIPTION

Like the phoenix of ancient Egypt, the feng-huang arose from the flames, reborn and renewed. Many cultures have similar stories, though all think that their own feng-huang is unique. In truth, several of these wondrous creatures exist, and they continue to be born. Rarely do the proper conditions coincide to create one, however — it takes a special combination of death, extreme human passion and fire to reincarnate the human soul in this fantastic form. The rebirth, it is said, is reward for a life boldly lived. Firebirds occasionally feature in witch-tales, rising from the corpses of executed sorcerers and taking vengeance.

Revenge, however, does not seem to be a feng-huang's calling. Although some stories tell of angry firebirds, the majority of them tell of hope, not horror. By the reckoning of sages, the burning purifies a soul, allowing it to rise upward to a better state. Perhaps the holocausts that follow some feng-huang sightings are necessary sacrifices, purgations of some great evil that must be cleansed before the soul-bird can rise.



By all accounts, a feng-huang is immortal. Nothing can wound it, and few obstacles can keep it from rising to the sky. Firebirds are too exalted to remain earthbound for long. Even those who remain long enough to finish their tasks eventually take flight and disappear. A creature of elements, form and spirit, a feng-huang needs no food. It cannot reproduce, nest or flock with others of its kind, for obvious reasons. Occasionally, though, a human mystic or a seeker of truths forms a short but loving bond with a flaming bird. When that person is inconsolable, trapped or otherwise in need, the feng-huang appears.

When it speaks — which it rarely does — the bird crackles like a hearth-fire or sings like trickling water. Sages who have tried to decipher the words cannot capture their essence. After all, how does one transcribe a flame? Nevertheless, a person who hears these fire-words or water-songs is filled with sudden comfort and peace. The feng-huang has spoken and things will be right in the end.

FUTURE FATE

As the world becomes banal, as its people surrender to passivity, cringe in indecision or while away their lives in front of television sets, the feng-huang becomes a relic of the past. Never common to begin with, this celestial creature is a myth by the modern era. Even so, tales of the firebird continue to surface. According to one rumor, a flaming creature was seen rising from the ruins of the Branch-Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. Perhaps it was only coincidence that three ATF officials died later in fiery "accidents." The FBI assumes domestic terrorism, but no human link to the incidents has ever been found.

IMAGE

Ecstatic color marks the plumage of a feng-huang. A welter of tail feathers ripples behind the bird, glowing like a comet dripping rainbows as it flies. A crest of quills at the back of the firebird's head blazes with scarlet intensity. Its cerulean eyes have no pupils, but motes of gold and silver glitter within. Fans of midnight-blue lashes fringe the feng-huang's eyes, and its wings strike sparks on the empty air. Sleek and long-bodied like the soul, this mystic avian displays a rare grace. On the ground, it flows, bright and liquid, rather than hopping and thrusting like a common bird. Silent save for the crackling of its voice, the fabulous creature regards all things with a wide, encompassing gaze. Each sound it makes carries the passion of a spirit that has glimpsed Heaven and finds it glorious.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You may have seen the shores of perfection, but there are things you must do before leaving this world. In life, you embraced existence with vigor and wonder; now you see what all the fuss was about. As dark as the world can be — and you

have seen how dismal that darkness is — infinity spins promises that no mortal mind can comprehend. Perhaps you speak in elemental sounds because no human thought or word can encompass the truths you have glimpsed. Despair comes from a trapped and narrow view. You have transcended that pit and no disaster can extinguish your flames now.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 6, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 6, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 1, Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Elusion 2, Empathy 2, Flying 4, Intimidation 1

Element: Fire (Blazing reveler)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: N/A

Armor Rating: N/A

Attacks/Powers: Claw for 2 dice, swoop for 3 dice; Alien Appearance (5), Bond-Sharing (4), Elemental Touch (10), Fearlessness (3), Immunity (15; Death), Loyalty (1), Mesmerism (3), Rapid Healing (Instantaneous), Soothing Voice, Soul-Sense, Wings (5)

GHUL (GHILAN)

View yourselves

In the mirror of self-love.

— Philip Massinger, "The Parliament of Love"

LEGENDRY

And so the ghul said goodbye to its father and left the Darkness to wander the world in search of man-flesh. It kept to the lonely places where man's wrath could not find it, and it ventured out only when the hunger became too much to bear.

In time, this eater-of-dirt came on a traveler skirting the green river-land. The ghul could smell his sweat and hear the rumblings of his voice. It followed the scents and sounds and watched from the shadows as the traveler set up his tent. Dressing itself in the raiment of a nubile, perfumed woman, the ghul wept so that the traveler would hear and come out to comfort "her" with caresses and tender words. So perfect was the ghul's disguise that the man did not see its hooves.

Impassioned, the traveler knelt beside the ghul and implored her to cease her tears. The deceiver spoke of dead husbands and lonely, fearful nights. The traveler beseeched God Himself to grant her comfort. At length, the "woman" bent to kiss the man and his heart melted like butter at her caress. As he rose to his feet, the ghul drew the human close in an oaken embrace.

When the ghul returned to its father, there was naught but bones to mark where the traveler had stood.

DESCRIPTION

A mortal and his companions went to the Underworld in search of one they had lost. They foolishly trespassed where the living should never go, and the creatures of the Darkness descended on them. Once they had tasted mortal flesh, the ghilan were no longer satisfied with chewing on the souls of the damned. These children of Iblis, Prince of Darkness, went out among men to tempt and feed. At first, these spirit-things wore the skins of the mortals they had slain. In time those disguises rotted, so the ghilan procured other, finer garments. They roved the land on a killing spree that took many lives. Soon the shah sent his warriors to capture the ghilan, thinking they were merely men with dark hearts. The warriors never returned, but the ghilan learned that they must hide their natures and stalk their victims with secretive care.

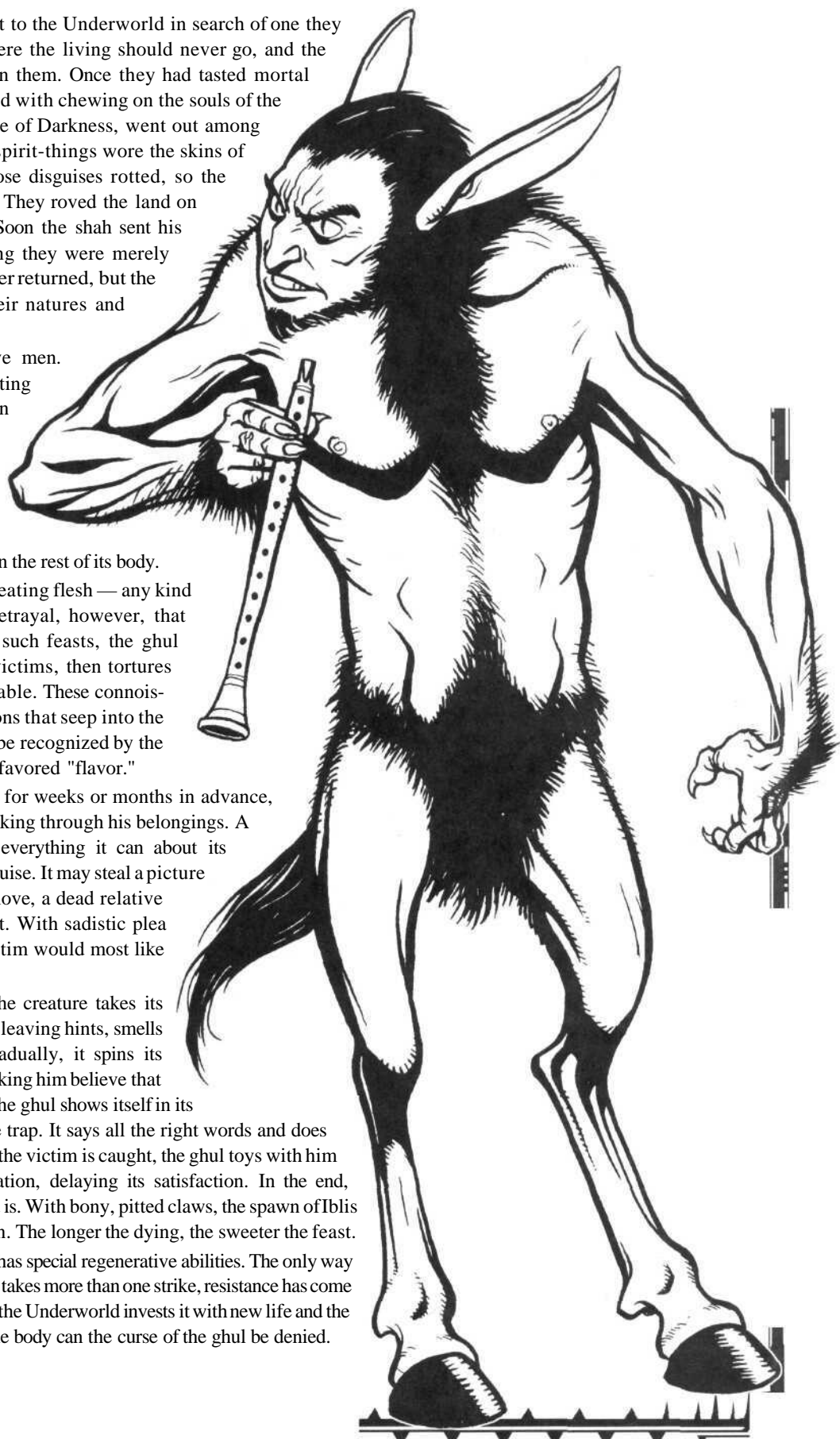
A ghul knows that emotions drive men. With cleverness, it changes its form, creating a disguise that lures a victim by preying on his passions. The creature can become anything, though its body mass remains the same, and it can never transform its mule's hooves. The night-beast cleverly hides them with flowing cloth or strapped-on shoes, but cannot change them as it can the rest of its body.

This pestilential thing survives by eating flesh — any kind of flesh. It is the succulent taste of betrayal, however, that makes the grandest meal. To prepare such feasts, the ghul creates a disguise, fosters trust in its victims, then tortures them when they're at their most vulnerable. These connoisseurs of misery seem to enjoy the emotions that seep into the flesh of their victims. A ghul can often be recognized by the distinctive killings associated with its favored "flavor."

A ghul sometimes stalks its victim for weeks or months in advance, breaking into the victim's home and looking through his belongings. A methodical predator, it seeks to learn everything it can about its target in order to perfect its intended disguise. It may steal a picture of the one it plans to emulate — a lost love, a dead relative and practice until the illusion is perfect. With sadistic pleasure, the ghul chooses the person its victim would most like to see, then begins its dance.

A ghul's patience has no bounds; the creature takes its time, giving its victim glimpses of itself, leaving hints, smells and memories to taunt the victim. Gradually, it spins its betrayer's web, drawing the victim in, making him believe that his beloved has returned. Then one day, the ghul shows itself in its disguise and spins the final strands of the trap. It says all the right words and does all the right things. It has prepared. Once the victim is caught, the ghul toys with him for a while, extending its own anticipation, delaying its satisfaction. In the end, however, the ghul reveals itself for what it is. With bony, pitted claws, the spawn of Iblis turns its web of deceit into a cradle of pain. The longer the dying, the sweeter the feast.

As a creature not of this world, a ghul has special regenerative abilities. The only way to kill one is with a single blow. If the attack takes more than one strike, resistance has come too late. The ghul's powerful connection to the Underworld invests it with new life and the hunt begins again. Only by incinerating the body can the curse of the ghul be denied.



Though originally hailing from the lands of the dead, ghuls have adapted to the demands of survival and expansion in the living world. The foul things procreate by lying with a recently dead woman. In three days, a new ghul emerges from the corpse. Three days after that, the "child" has grown to maturity. Fortunately for the world at large, a single ghul may reproduce only once each century. Allah is merciful indeed.

FUTURE FATE

They're still out there, rare but hungry....

IMAGE

A ghul's shapechanging ability allows it to take any form, though its hooves—symbols of its demonic origin — never change. In its natural demeanor, a ghul has ruddy skin lined with pulsing veins. From the creature's waist down, thick coppery hair covers the legs of an ass; those limbs end in hooves that shine like razor-sharp obsidian. Whether it be male or female, a ghul's sexual organs stand out, bloated and vulgar, in the midst of all that hair. Even the female of the species has a penis of sorts (though smaller than the male's) that it

uses to impregnate dead bodies. Tall, pointed donkey ears frame the creature's sculpted, angular face. Gleaming red eyes, irised

like a cat's, see through the darkness and into the hearts of men.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Stolen back from the edges of Hell, you walk the night feeding on the passions that led you to that realm in the first place. You could call it revenge, I suppose, to feed on the bodies of sinners like yourself, but such pathetic rationalizations make for a poor repast. The fact is, your brief stay in the Underworld taught you of the appetizing banquet to be had from human passions. Like any connoisseur, you have learned that the most savory dishes mingle the spices.

Judging by your foul habits and grotesque appearance, a bystander might call you crude. The truth is quite the opposite. Not ghost, demon or man, you take the best and worst attributes of all three. In the beginning, it's true that you may have been a sewer-rat and a fucker of corpses, but these days you have learned the joys of sophistication. One cannot eat all



the time, and the hunt (and its attendant dance steps) has taught you the joys of masquerade. Oh, some of your kind may leap out and gnaw the faces off their dinners, but you have cultivated a sense of human achievement. It's fascinating what you learn when digging about in the remnants of a human life.

Perhaps the real charm in becoming another person lies in the assumption of identity — in taking on, if only for a little while, the trappings of a new life. Or in submerging your dream-memories of Hell and the horror of your own reflection beneath an endless tide of new faces, stolen passions and fresh, deluded meat.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 7, Charisma 1, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Empathy 1, Subterfuge 5, Survival 2

Element: Earth (Relentless connoisseur)

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 3, -3, -5, Incapacitated (An attack must do all 8 Health Levels of damage at once, after soaking, to Incapacitate a ghul — otherwise, it remains at -5 as long as it continues to consistently take damage. An Incapacitated ghul will rise at the -3 Level once combat is over if it isn't destroyed.)

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 3 dice, kick for 4 dice; Alien Appearance (4), Bizarre Hunger (4; Human flesh), Human Speech, Rapid Healing, Shapechanger (5), Soul-Sense/Death-Sense

GRYPHON

Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see

Men not afraid of God, afraid of me.

— Alexander Pope

LEGENDRY

Bakhati Rugitti Sokto Pathor Rhyane Akkallah Rez, a wealthy and renowned gryphon, guarded his treasure in the mountains, his nest perched on a shelf overlooking the valley where the river carried gold and gems. When he flew, the expanse of his wings would hide the sun and cast a great shadow across the land. In this way, Bakhati reminded thieves of his power and might.

A wealthy woman from Susa, in the ancient kingdom of Elam, brought her young son to Bakhati and bade him to guard the boy, who was to be king one day. She offered the gryphon a golden chalice in exchange for his aid, and Bakhati agreed. For three days and three nights, the gryphon

fought back those who would steal the boy from him. He did not sleep, ever-vigilant and loyal to his promise. Wave after wave of warriors and dark creatures assaulted Bakhati's nest, but the gryphon turned them all away.

In the afternoon of the third day, the attacks stopped and a beautiful young man came up the mountain, calling for an audience with Bakhati. The gryphon met the man and heard his offers of wealth — offers more glorious than any the woman from Susa could ever make. In the end, however, he refused the man's promises of riches in exchange for the boy. Bakhati's loyalty proved greater than even his own greed.

That night, the woman returned and revealed herself to be a messenger of the god Ormuzd, and the boy grew to his full height and maturity so he could speak with Bakhati as a man. The boy-become-man said his name was Ahriman, god of the Underworld. He bowed his head to Bakhati and then sunk down through the earth into his realm. The woman explained that this had been a test to see if Bakhati was a good creature or an evil one. Bakhati had proven his goodness. As reward, Ormuzd proclaimed that Bakhati would never again cast a shadow on the land, and granted him the ability to hide from mortal eyes.

DESCRIPTION

Artifacts pre-dating the glories of Egypt depict the gryphon, the half-lion, half-raptor that soars on the wings of dawn. Many cultures, including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Myceneans, Indo-Iranians, Syrians and Greeks all acknowledged this glorious beast, and granted it suzerainty over the skies. In the 7th century B.C., the Greek chronicler Aristaeus of Proconnesus wrote of the sky-lion. At that time, a gryphon lived in the Ural mountains, guarding rivers believed to bear gold.

The gryphons' attraction to gold and gems causes such beasts to hoard great treasures, which they guard with a vengeance. In their giant nests, built in high places like mountains or the rooftops of tall buildings, these magnificent beasts keep rich caches, collected over the centuries.

Gryphons, being highly intelligent, make excellent companions. When bored, a sky-lion often seeks out magi or other night-folk and engages them in long discussions about morality, divinity, the nature of Creation and other related subjects. Once a gryphon has made a friend or two, his loyalty has no bounds. Like the lions they resemble, these beasts protect their loved ones as readily as they protect their own offspring.

Both male and female gryphons exist. They mate for life and breed every 10 years, producing one egg and one chick each time. A gryphon egg has an incubation period of nine months. Once the egg has hatched, the baby gryphon lives in the nest for a year and a day before it has matured sufficiently to fly on its own. During this time, one of the two parents remains constantly in the nest, protecting the chick. Both

take turns gathering food. The young gryphon requires large quantities of meat to grow to full strength, as much as an entire human (or the equivalent) each day. As it matures, its appetite subsides until it ingests the weight of a horse once or twice each few weeks.

Like birds, gryphons chew food for their young during the first three months, regurgitating partially digested meat for a chick. Once the chick has its feathers and its beak has grown strong, it weans onto solid food and can tear the flesh from its meal by itself. The care that gryphons give their young testifies to their essentially good natures. Mated beasts cuddle and snuggle, cleaning and preening one another. Even after a chick has left the nest, a deep familial affection remains among the gryphons. A chick visit its parents often, and comes to their aid immediately if needed.

Known for their strength and vigilance, gryphons have been called "The Hounds of Zeus." When entrusted with guardianship, they display protectiveness to the point of obsession; as avengers, they pursue their enemy with relentless determination. However, a gryphon's honor is matched (and often exceeded) by its greed. While sky-lions have little use for human currency, they love pretty things like gold, gems, sculpture and even paintings. Any gryphon worth the name has a trove of some size, and hounds a thief endlessly to avenge a trespass.

Gryphons are immensely territorial, even under the best of circumstances. On reaching maturity, a gryphon lays claim to a possession and guards it vigilantly thenceforth. "Mine" is the most popular word in the gryphon vocabulary. A sky-lion's domain typically consists of a large hunting ground that she guards against despoilers; it's not unheard of for one of these beasts to claim a special item, edifice or person as her charge. While it can be relieving to have a huge, ferocious protector, a gryphon's tendency to define protection in the broadest possible terms can be problematic. Overzealous gryphons have been known to kill a charge's suitors or to imprison a charge "for his own good."

A gryphon's name is nothing less than a verbal display of ego. The creature chooses her first name soon after she leaves the nest. Significant events — duels, prizes, great occurrences, even tragedies — add to that name as the gryphon sees fit. Like a magus, a sky-lion considers her name to be an extension of her adult self, a badge of honor among other beings. Like a Hermetic magician, the typical gryphon crafts a name out of a hodgepodge of impressive words in whatever tongues the beast considers "native." Given their limited vocabulary, these creatures consider long, difficult names to be more impressive than short ones. An adult gryphon (15 to 40 years old) often possesses a name of six to eight syllables in length. Elder gryphons (40 to 60 years old), particularly in the Iberian and Mediterranean regions, can have names in excess of 15 syllables. Any gryphon whose name extends more than 20 syllables is likely to be famous among its kind and feared by just about everyone else.

Food — or a lack of— is a gryphon's greatest weakness. A sedentary beast eats less than an active one, but no gryphon can go long without freshly killed meat. No other food suffices. Long ago, gryphons learned that human beings provide the most easily acquired meals for their young. Cattle are missed; many humans are not. A gryphon parent selects and kills mortals for sustenance, and without malice. The gryphon chooses carefully, taking her prey from the underbelly of society or from travelers whose disappearance is attributed to the hazards of the journey. For this reason, many gryphons have migrated near cities, where the food supply is ample. Naturally, a mated pair must defend its territory -- even the largest city can conceal only so many disappearances before the prey looks to the skies. Once a gryphon (or a clutch of them) has established a hunting ground, it defends the area against all others like it. The resulting duels (occasionally waged with help from other creatures who've allied themselves with one or both of the gryphons) have driven the sky-lions to the razor edge of extinction.

The gryphon is the standard of modern changelings' High King David and so gryphons, both real and chimerical, are very important to members of his court. Desperate events could revolve around the discovery of a living, breathing gryphon and the subsequent attempt to save it from destruction. It is claimed that the High King himself is under the protection of a great chimerical gryphon that aids him in times of need.

The *griffin* acknowledged by the Changing Breeds is a very different creature indeed. The spirit servants of the Red Talons' totem are predators among predators, with a fierce pride but no real pompousness. Mighty Griffin himself is a creature of Rage, hunting, war and honor — with minuscule tolerance for homid shapeshifters, and none whatsoever for humans, including magi, vampires and changelings. Naturally, if any Red Talons were to meet the gryphons described previously while in the Legendary Realm, blood would probably be spilled very quickly. The same can be said for magi who, when questing for gryphons, found Griffin-spirits instead___

FUTURE FATE

Lack of food, faith and territory; the depredations of hunters, both mortal and magical; and territorial disputes between gryphons themselves have virtually wiped out or driven off the creatures. By the Age of Exploration, the magnificent sky-lions have surrendered earth for the vastness of the Otherworlds. Although an occasional gryphon braves human lands in the technological era, he's usually young, hungry and desperate enough to risk the hostile atmosphere of a dying world — at least for short time. More often than not, a gryphon must be dragged through the Gauntlet chattering and bellowing.

IMAGE

One of the world's most wondrous creatures, the gryphon has the twitching tail, golden fur, lean haunches and expressive ears of a lion. Its graceful head, taloned front legs and broad wings are those of an eagle, covered with velvety feathers. A gryphon is frighteningly fast for such a huge beast. It can fly or run at speeds of over 40 miles per hour in short bursts. Its claws, huge and thick, can rend steel with little trouble, and some warriors would craft drinking horns from a gryphon's talons in the days when such beasts were plentiful.

Gryphons communicate through an enchanting language of purrs, growls and rumbling consonants. Most of them seem to speak several mortal languages as well, although they tend to use small words and speak with odd, rolling accents. Social and thoughtful, sky-lions prize riddles, histories and debate. Many gryphons, being somewhat philosophical, prize artwork above all things. Human craftsmen can accomplish things that a gryphon, with just beak and talons, can only admire. To many sky-lions, the desecration of art is a killing offense — although other gryphons take the opposite view and demolish artwork for the perverse joy of annihilation.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Neither land nor sky is large enough. You must have them both, and you sweep between them with a rush of wings and a throaty cry. A living incarnation of the crowns of three kings — lion, eagle and man — you strive to be worthy of your birthright. Not that you're concerned with rulership. What does sovereignty matter to a hereditary king? Rather, you prize honor, philosophy, debate and art. Once given, your word is stone, your love is an ocean and your anger is the lightning of a thousand storms.

True, you are what humans would call a "beast," but what do insults from their genocidal kind matter? You are as far above their petty distinctions of "man" and "animal" as a lion is above the peepings of a mouse. Still, Creation is too dangerous a place to allow complacency. Protect what you prize or watch all that you value retreat like the setting sun.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 4, Enigmas 2, Flying 3, Linguistics 2, Wild Hunting 4

Element: Metal (Greedy collector)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 4, -2 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 8 dice, claw for 9 dice; Alien Appearance (5), Arcane Background (5), Armor (1), Compulsion (2; Gather/Defend Treasure), Enhancement, Mystick Shield (2), Offensive to Animals (Horses flee on sight of a gryphon, barring a Willpower roll [difficulty 8]), Size (8), Treasure Background (3), Wings (5)

HARPY

Life is a jest, and all things show it; I thought so once, but now I know it.

— John Gay, "My Own Epitaph"

LEGENDRY

The three harpies swooped down from the sky to terrorize the unsuspecting revelers. Their piercing cries chilled the men's hearts and made the women shudder in fear. Peolos stood at the center of the group, his eyes lifted toward the evil creatures. He alone showed no fear, though he alone was the one who should have.

The harpies descended on him, their target, the one the gods had sent them to retrieve. He waited, sword in hand. Perhaps he knew it would do no good to run, though the others shouted at him to do so. Perhaps he knew his time had come. The harpies howled through the air, trailing a foul stench. Covering their faces in disgust, the revelers fled in all directions. With ragged vulture claws, one harpy took Peolos by the arm, another by the face and the third by the leg. Together they lifted him into the air and carried him away. By the time his feet had left the ground, Peolos had joined the grim ranks at the mouth of Hades' realm.

Some days hence, two travelers found his body. Even maggots had not been hungry enough to touch it. Choking, the two men covered the corpse then retreated to the shrines of their respective gods — and to the bath houses. Both souls and skin were cleansed raw before either man went to bed. Even then, neither one could rest easily. The harpies befouled the travelers' dreams as they had befouled Peolos' body. Trembling at the edge of morning, each man swore he'd never anger his gods again. No sin, no matter how glorious, could be worth the harpies' touch.

DESCRIPTION

Originally documented in Greek lore, harpies were the harbingers of death and the punishers of pride. If they appeared — and they always came in flocks — someone near was sure to die. Originally, chroniclers believed that harpies themselves caused deaths, but priests and philosophers demurred, insisting that harpies *follow* death, rather than bring it.

Living deep in sordid wildlands or barren mountain caves, harpies display more instinct than intelligence. Food and shelter appear to be their only true motivations,

although it is said that the Old Gods still use them on occasional errands. Filthy creatures, harpies allow dirt and excrement to coat their feathers and skin, unlike most animals. The resulting stench is enough to nauseate most mortals and drive away all but the most pestilential beasts. Harpy nests are noxious places strewn with fecal matter, urine and leftover carrion. Flies and beetles are the only things that can tolerate a harpy's presence for long.

Old tales claim that these wretched creatures were once women whose pride, sloth or slovenliness marked them beyond salvation. Rumor claims that each harpy was a secret murderess whose crime was hidden to men but not to God. Rather than dying and descending into the Underworld, these debased wenches attained a sort of foul longevity. Midwives to death itself, harpies now wallow in misery, their minds long since gone. Such madness is preferable, it is said, to truly comprehending what they have become. In its own way, this insanity is a form of God's mercy.

Harpies can sense when a death is imminent, and they often follow armies or perch near places of violence. People who look up once too often spot them circling crossroads as crows do. On more than one occasion, the sighting of a harpy has caused a death. At other times, the sighting has actually averted one. A wise person is one who understands the warning inherent to the harpies' presence and knows to take extreme care.

Like vultures, harpies eat dead meat. A single body can feed three corpse-viragos for a week. They carry it to their nest, leave it there and feed on it for the next few days. Once they have consumed the body, they foul it with droppings, then strike out in search of another. It is part of their curse to be perpetually starved. According to common lore, the wretched things are nearly immortal; they die only if starved to death, burned or hacked to pieces. Desperate harpies can survive on the remains of other animals as well, though they prefer succulent human flesh.

Although they lack even rudimentary social graces, these odd creatures tend to travel in threes. Teamwork, after all, makes it easier to lift heavy bodies. These "weird sisters" share their dinner evenly and never seem to fight amongst themselves. Furthermore, they never attack or kill their own for food, even when they haven't eaten for some time. Harpies are scavengers, as opposed to hunters, and death always provides for them.

FUTURE FATE

Although the occasional "triptych" of harpies can be found near rural wastelands and battlegrounds in the technological age, most of their kind haunt Umbral Hellholes, war-Realms and the Underworld. Every so often a huge mystical conflict draws flocks of the sickening things. The 1998 war in Concordia draws so many harpies that many residents abandon the place for good.



IMAGE

From a distance, flying harpies look just like regular vultures. Once they descend to the ground, the differences become apparent. Larger than most vultures but smaller than most humans, harpies live a birdlike existence. No bird, however, carries the stomach-roiling stench that a harpy does. Even the most shit-bedraggled drunkard is a rose beside a corpse-virago.

Savage and crude, a harpy has the chubby body and long wings of a black and ragged vulture. Sharp, curved claws extend from her feet. All harpies are female, with flaccid breasts and hawkish human faces (usually dirtied and stained with whatever they've been eating). These ties to humanity are the beast's most disconcerting features. It's quite disturbing to see a carrion-bird madwoman with her face in a corpse, tugging out its innards with her craggy yellow teeth.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Where there's death, there's food. And where there's food, there's life — your life. Eat to live. Live to eat. Dead things don't know any better. They're dead. They taste better that way. Death. Food. Life. Nothing else matters.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 0, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Foraging 2, Intimidation 3, Flying 1

Element: Air (Scouring connoisseur)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1, -3 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 1 die, claw for 5 dice; Alien Appearance (3), Bizarre Hunger (4; dead flesh), Compulsion (Vengeance; optional), Homing Instinct (2), Offensive to Animals, Soul-Sense/Death-Sense, Rapid Healing

HIPPOCAMPUS AND KELPIE

If all the creatures of the seas were wondrous as the hippocampus, I would gladly brave the krakens of the deep.

—Niklos Kazantzakis, Sahajiya poet

LEGENDRY

When the world was free of the barriers that now bind it, spirit and matter mingled freely. Horses, running along lakes and oceans, would join with the protean spirits of the waves and water. On occasion, their games would culminate in love-play. The spirits of the water would care for and see to the protection of foals born from such unions.

Hippocampi arose when the sea-kind took their foals into deep currents and hidden caves. There, the fish-kind taught the horse-children to swim and bestowed them gifts of fins and scales. Safe and happy, the hippocampi acquired a good and trusting nature.

Kelpies were spawned when the babes were foaled during storms. In a tempest, angry spirits would take a babe and toss it to and fro until its nature was jangled and its heart was awash with spite. Half-drowned, it would always remember the terror of the sea and desire to show others what it had endured.

DESCRIPTION

Hippocampi love to play and are willing to befriend any creature that doesn't seem hostile. Should the notion amuse them, these creatures may even allow themselves to be ridden. Much to the chagrin of many magi, these animals are just as capricious as they are helpful. Many a magus has been tossed unceremoniously onto a strange beach when she bored or annoyed the hippocampus she was riding. To their credit, hippocampi have never been known to drown a rider deliberately. Those that have killed are kelpie, and riders who can not discern between the temperaments of their would-be mounts deserve the fate they receive.

Hippocampi exert tremendous control over the element of water, and it is simple for them to impart the ability to breathe water to their riders. Likewise, they can remove the ability to breathe water from sea creatures; while they typically reserve this harsh treatment for overly persistent sharks, at least one kraken has died this way after trying to devour an entire herd of hippocampi in one gulp. Kelpie, on the other hand, would deny a fish or finned creature the right to breathe simply because it was "bothersome."

Greatest among the talents of hippocampi and kelpie is their ability to quell (or cause) huge waves. With sufficient motivation, the sea-horses can create tremendous currents of water resembling storm-surges, which they ride onto land. Even a small herd of four or five angry creatures can bring the ocean well inland to destroy structures and drown enemies. Such an event has been observed only once. The subject of the creatures' ire was a butcher in Lyon who had been pouring horse blood from an abattoir directly into the sea.

Land-dwellers are largely ignorant of the existence of hippocampi and kelpie, but seamen see them as a matter of course and spend hours discussing them, competing to tell the most outrageous tales about the creatures. Any crew learns immediately if it passes through a hippocampi habitat; the majestic beasts rise to the surface to play, zigzagging through the crests and troughs of the ship's wake. Alert sailors know kelpie to do the same, but to lure a ship to jagged rocks or far off course.

These beings are creatures of the oceans. While they prefer warm waters, they can be found anywhere. They avoid populated shores or highly traveled seaways, as the water in those places is typically dirty and foul-tasting.

FUTURE FATE

When the barriers rose and the worlds were split, the seaside games came to an end. However, even now a wild horse occasionally gallops along the shore. Maybe, just maybe, a playful spirit could seep through the Mists and join the race, possibly leading to the birth of a foal. Whether the foal will be hippocampus or kelpie—peace or a storm—none can say. Such is the way of the sea, which gives and takes in equal measure.

IMAGE

The fore quarters of a hippocampus or kelpie are like those of a large horse — though a hippocampus has large fins where hooves would be. The hind quarters comprise a long agile, fish tail with which the creature propels itself through the water at spectacular speeds. The beast's equine portions are white, while its piscine remains are iridescent blue and green.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

What a wonderful thing it is to be curious, whether for its own sake or to see what kind of harm you can do! Go where your sense of wonder or frustration takes you! Befriending or biter toward land-dwellers; they have to be absolutely fascinating (or amusing to harm) to hold your attention for long. You fear nothing in the ocean because you can out-swim anything. Besides, life isn't about fear, it's about fun — no matter what form it takes!

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 3/4, Dexterity 7, Stamina 5/6, Charisma 4/3, Manipulation 1/2, Appearance 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Acrobatics (Water) 2, Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 2/3, Dodge 2, Elusion 3

Element: Water (Graceful sensualist)

Willpower: 3/4

Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 2, -2 x 2, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 2 dice, ram for 5 dice; Alien Appearance (2), Armor (1), Bond-Sharing (4), Elemental Touch (15), Spirit Travel (8), Water-Breathing (5)

HIPPOGRYPH

*So saying he caught him up and without wing
Of hippogrif, bore through the aire sublime
O'er the wilderness and o'er the plaine.
—John Milton, Paradise Regained*

LEGENDRY

I speak of the love of Ban'ha Rajmach Ka Hala Ben 'Ibmn Ha, a gryphon of the greatest renown, and Cleophemus, a mare of great beauty and striking spirit. True, these two

were bred of mortal enemies (for it is said that no beast loathes a horse more so than a gryphon, and no creature fears the gryphon as does a horse), but such a love did blossom and prosper despite all. From his great perch on the peak of Amadanthus, Ban'ha brought his beloved trinkets of most extraordinary worth. But she did shun them, not for their giver, but for the dust that made them. Cleophemus was ever the judge of nobility, and gold makes all men fools. "Put such pleasures far from thee," she said in the tongue of the horse-folk. "Give me that which is thyself, not thine vanity."

Forsaking all other company, Ban'ha Rajmach Ka Hala Ben 'Ibmn Ha loved Cleophemus as a mate of his own kind, and she returned the ardor with a passion rare. He brought her to his mountain home and together they watched the waking dawn and the sleepy hand of dusk. In time, she swelled with the seed of their love. But there the spirits played cruel jests, for that seed grew to such size and ferocity that Cleophemus was split from the inside as her child sought its birth. Crying her love to Ban'ha, the mare died a dire end. In his rage and sorrow, Ban'ha threw the child from the top of Mount Amadanthus. As it fell, the matricidal hatchling did unfurl its tiny wings and catch the air. As Ban'ha wept for his beloved and tore the very wind with his howls, the child of their love did ride the gusts of his father's cries. Such was the noble gryphon's sorrow that the hatchling was carried to the distant Mount Kri. There, it grew to a great and vicious size.

Ban'ha Rajmach Ka Hala Ben 'Ibmn Ha perished from grief on Mount Amadanthus. The fruit of his broken love prospered in the faraway hills, breeding more like itself and making war on the people of its father and mother. A horse, it is said, falls dead from fright if the shadow of the hippogryph should catch it unawares. The gryphon, remembering the grief of Ban'ha, slays the thing on sight.

And so the brood of Ban'ha and Cleophemus prospers in the mountains of the desert lands. Hippogryphs often fly to green peaks or nest in deep forests. Many a dark sorcerer or careless witch has chosen such a creature for a mount, and you can still hear the beasts' sadistic laughter from the skies.

And sometimes, if you listen carefully, you might hear the echoing cries of Cleophemus and Ban'ha the gryphon.

DESCRIPTION

Like the dark legends of their origin, the eagle-horses known as hippogryphs possess a melancholic air and a vicious temperament. Less intelligent than either gryphons or mares, these odd beasts ride the winds of distant places, feeding on wild horses, cattle and deer. A magus occasionally seeks a glorious mount and ventures to the craggy habitats of such beasts. He might actually find what he seeks, but, unless he possesses great skill with animals and subtle magicks of command and taming, he might also find that his would-be steed considers him breakfast!

Unlike the gryphon, the hippogryph is a natural animal with no magical qualities or abilities aside from its powerful wings. The beast's rarity ranks him among legendary creatures, but the gods neither created his kind, nor blessed it with special powers.

The hippogryph's ill humor may stem from his birth, during which he is born alive from his mother's womb. Slashing his way free with cruel talons, the beast murders his mother even as he is born. After drinking her blood for sustenance, the newborn flees the site of its nativity. The hatchling feeds on insects and tiny animals until it either grows strong or dies. Survivors are a harsh and hardy breed.

Hippogryphs live on remote mountains and in large valleys, where their wings can stretch unhindered. Although solitary, they gather occasionally to mate or for protection from greater forces. When these creatures meet, males fight wild airborne duels for dominance. While rarely fatal, these fierce contests establish a hierarchy that holds true until the beasts go their separate ways. Hippogryph "herds" number 10 or less and quickly strip the surrounding area of food. Like gryphons and other large beasts, a hippogryph eats a tremendous amount of meat. Although he can sustain himself on carrion, bushes and fruit, the eagle-horse prefers fresh prey — sometimes while it's still alive. Without meat — and lots of it — the beast weakens quickly. It is said that a hippogryph cannot go more than seven days without eating flesh before it dies.

Intractable and belligerent, a hippogryph makes an unruly mount. The struggle for dominance never ends with such a beast. Although a skilled trainer or magus can tame an eagle-horse, the creature's natural aggression, survival instincts and voracious appetite makes him an expensive, difficult and unpredictable pet. Even so, kings and wizards who can tolerate the expense keep small stables of war-mounts. Pity the keeper of such quarters, for his is an endless chore of dominance, feeding and "accidents."

FUTURE FATE

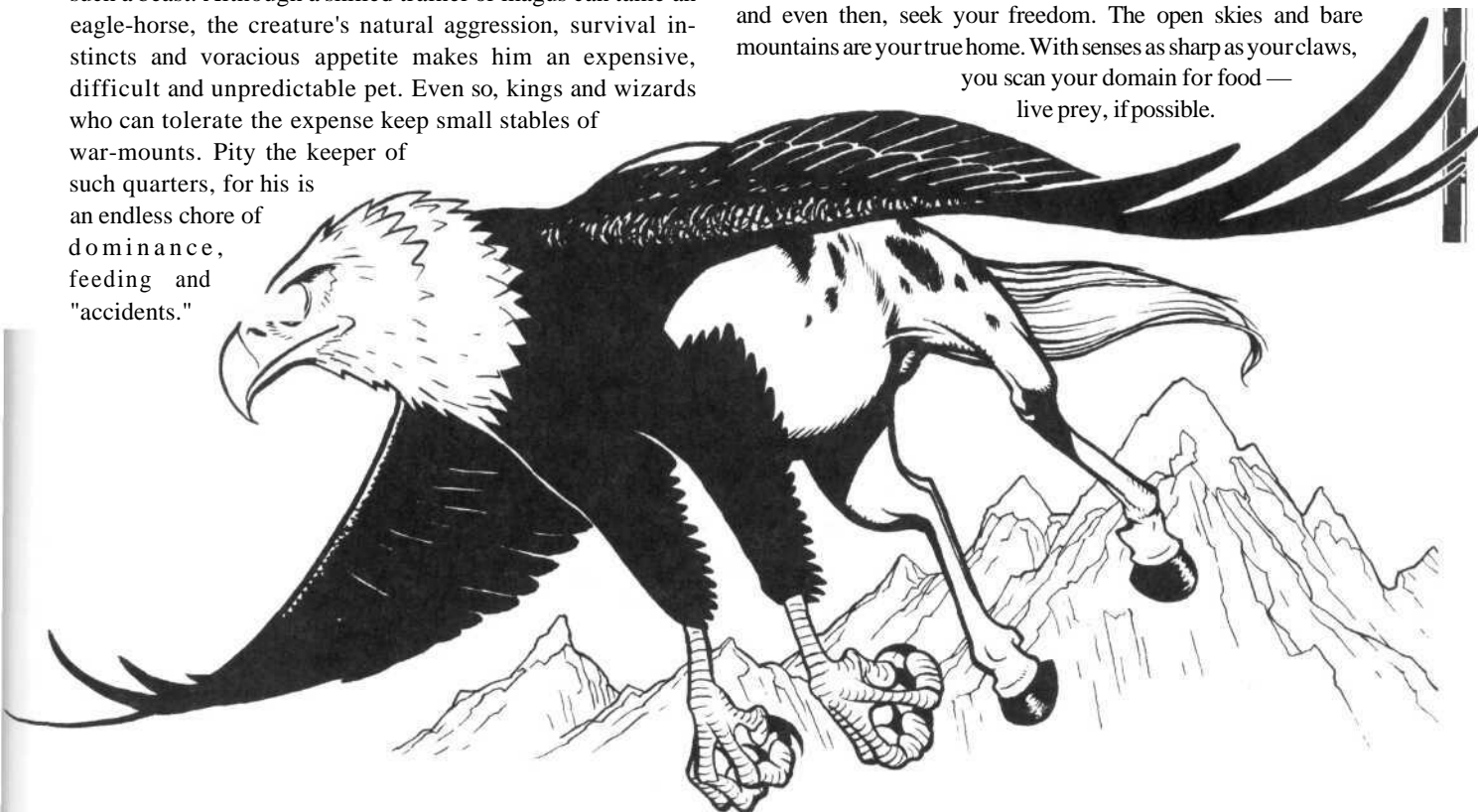
Never common to begin with, hippogryphs disappear from the mortal world by the time of the Renaissance. Although many magicians keep them in Horizon Realms—most notably Doissetep and Horizon—the creatures' hunger keeps them from becoming terribly popular. The Order of Reason, naturally, proscribed such beasts long ago, but Marauds and Infernalists still find them quite useful. One mad magus, Lady Alcina the Enchantress, claimed to have created the first hippogryphs as a present for her lover, Lord Blackwelder. Both of them ride such mounts into battle in the wild days of the second millennium, but neither seems old enough to have created beasts spoken of 3000 years ago. Legends aside, the "true" origins of the hippogryph are as vanished as their kind.

IMAGE

Lifted on the winds by great feathered wings, the hippogryph flies with a graceful ease that belies its bulk. It has the hind quarters of a horse, and the head, forelegs and claws of an eagle. Although it can walk well enough, the eagle-horse prefers to fly, since its short front legs and powerful rear force it to stumble along with an awkward, drunken gait. The beast's cry, an odd combination of a whinny and a raptor-scream, sends any natural creature into a panic. Hippogryph masters train their mounts to shriek as they attack.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

A survivor since the day of your birth, you cannot tolerate confinement. To master you, a beast must defeat you head-on, and even then, seek your freedom. The open skies and bare mountains are your true home. With senses as sharp as your claws, you scan your domain for food — live prey, if possible.



TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 7 (air)/3 (ground), Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Aerobatics 3, Alertness 4, Athletics 5, Brawl 5, Flying 5, Intimidation 6, Wild Hunting 5

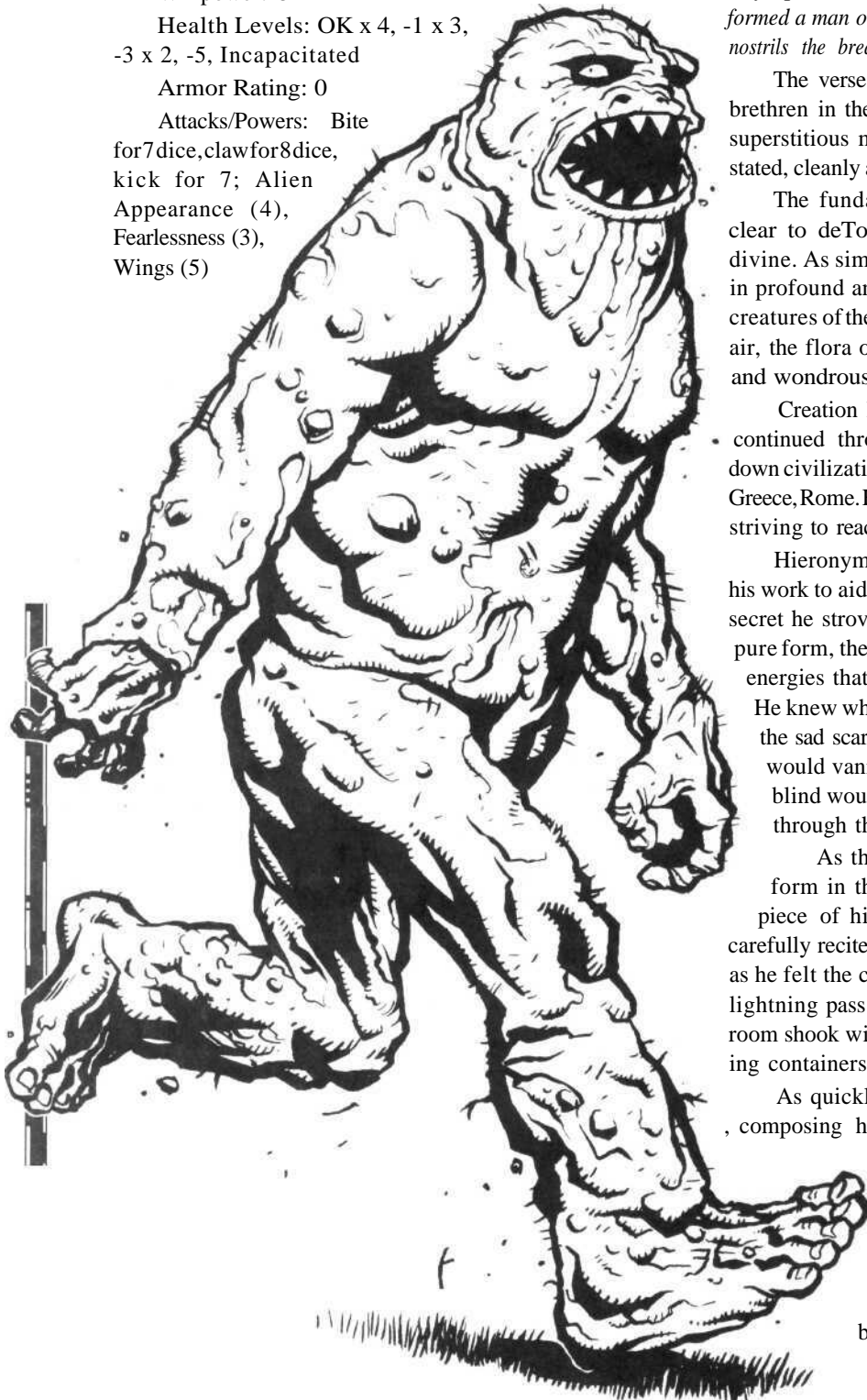
Element: Air (Bitter warrior)

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 4, -1 x 3, -3 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 7 dice, claw for 8 dice, kick for 7; Alien Appearance (4), Fearlessness (3), Wings (5)



HOMUNCULUS

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,
—Genesis 1:26

LEGENDRY

Hieronymous deToit, member of the Cosian House of Olympus, knew the sacred verse by heart: *And the Lord God formed a man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*—

The verse was his guiding star. Of course, many of his brethren in the house chided deToit for his choice of such a superstitious maxim, but he liked the scrap from Genesis. It stated, cleanly and concisely, his life's work up to that moment.

The fundamental pattern of the Creation was always clear to deToit: All species pointed ever upward to the divine. As simple as the words of Genesis were, they laid out in profound and vibrant strokes the nature of Creation. The creatures of the waters, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the flora of the earth — all had their places in the great and wondrous strata of the divine plan.

Creation had not stopped on the seventh day, either. It continued throughout the millennia, building and tearing down civilizations once thought to have been immortal: Egypt, Greece, Rome. Humanity existed as a perpetual work-in-progress, striving to reach the highest and holiest state of being.

Hieronymous deToit pledged the complete spectrum of his work to aiding his species in reaching that highest state. In secret he strove over countless nights to recover humanity's pure form, the uncorrupted and incorruptible compounds and energies that shaped the essence of the first human beings. He knew what success meant — a race of individuals free of the sad scars of a capricious world. Pestilence and plague would vanish, unable to penetrate the pure essences. The blind would see again, the deaf hear, the lame dance... all through the rejuvenating powers of deToit's creation.

As the hour approached, deToit observed the inert form in the human-sized crucible that was the centerpiece of his laboratory. He drew the final sigils and carefully recited the words of the last spell. His body quivered as he felt the current of what seemed like a hundred bolts of lightning pass through him and electrify the crucible. The room shook with a gale's force, shattering flasks and upending containers filled with eldritch compounds....

As quickly as it had come, the storm vanished. Slowly, composing himself, deToit approached the huge basin, half-afraid that the spell had failed. He was almost to the lip of the vessel when a sudden movement within startled him. A hand — a human hand — reached over the edge of the huge crucible. Hieronymous stepped back in awe as his creation pulled itself up from the bottom of the basin.

The human form looked exactly like deToit, for the magicks had been concentrated enough to replicate his features exactly. The creature turned its head stiffly, its eyes taking in the shambles of the laboratory, until it came to the person of deToit himself.

Suddenly the creature began to shake uncontrollably, as if seized by an epileptic fit. Hieronymous felt a wave of intense nausea course through him. Something was very wrong. The creature shook more and more violently, falling over the wall of the crucible and onto the hard stone floor. It dragged itself along the ground toward deToit. Hieronymous wanted to back away, but the feeling of unearthly sickness was far too strong. He too dropped to the ground on all fours, his head spinning with the inescapable realization of crossing some great forbidden line.

Suddenly the creature and deToit were eye-to-eye. The mortal man swallowed painfully as everything in the creature's gaze communicated to him the folly of the experiment. Hieronymous was seized with the same shaking that his creation suffered, his very frame trying to fly apart and end the suffering. It was far too much for him. Hieronymous collapsed to the floor of his laboratory, his lifeless eyes fixed forever on the embodiment of his imperfect experiment. As life left deToit, his creature also collapsed to the cold floor, and dissolved into dust.

DESCRIPTION

Humanity embodies a paradox. Though men and women are drawn from the template of the divine, baseness and vulgarity flow freely underneath the surface. Such dichotomy in the human species has given rise to centuries of debate among both clerical and secular intellectuals. Some accept the present reality of the human condition as God's will. Others question whether humanity truly has reached its ultimate incarnation.

For the Awakened, the paradox of the human species reveals the essence of Creation — that everything in the universe aspires to reach a higher state of existence. The steady but relentless drive to better, to purify and thus to Ascend, forms the core of the mage's world. That drive manifests itself in the initial epiphany that stirs a person from slumber, unfolds before her the vastness of Creation and sets her on the path to enlightenment.

For those dedicated to alchemy, this enlightenment comes in understanding the innermost nature of the *prima materia* — the basic material from which all things are created. The mastery of the element of life, contained in the clay of Divinity that molded man in Eden, permeates the alchemist's quest. To distill the essence of the *prima materia* is to solve humanity's paradox: to rid men and women of disease, deformity and defect.

The quest for the solution of humanity is not confined to one camp. Sorcerers in both the Solificati and the Hippocratic Circle study and experiment tirelessly toward the goal

of human purification. Though each group of mysticks approaches the riddle from a different angle, both camps dabble in the process of creating an ideal specimen of "human" out of the *prima materia* — the homunculus.

Formed from the fusion of compounds and powerful magicks that their respective alchemist creators believe to be the elemental distillation of the *prima materia*, each homunculus ("little man" in Latin) is a signature work of its creator, possessing a real awareness of its creator's goals and wishes, and the magickal theories that have produced it. Yet in addition to such an affinity with their alchemist creators, homunculi exhibit amounts of sentience, intelligence and independent thought which make them beings far removed from simple, manufactured drones.

In a sense, each homunculus is its parent's perfect and prized offspring. Awareness of such status infuses homunculi with a sense of self-worth that might ordinarily approach pride in a human being. Ever eager to prove the soundness of its creator's theories, a homunculus invariably exhibits a fair amount of cleverness and creativity. Depending on the diligence of its creator in "raising" it, a homunculus can be well-versed in literature, poetry, politics and etiquette, comporting itself with a grace equivalent to nobility.

In addition to what its creator deigns to teach it, a homunculus possesses an immense capacity for self-improvement. Homunculi created by the Cosians are known for reading and re-reading their creators' meticulous notes on the *prima materia*, searching for the secrets contained therein in order to find the path to a higher state of being of their own.

The ideal homunculus is able to exist as a completely autonomous being. However, the vagaries of both the science of alchemy and the road to Ascension often result in a finished product that fails to meet its creator's expectations. The historical corruption of the alchemical sciences influences the generation of homunculi, rarely for the best. The infusion of religious misinterpretations and irrelevancies — as well as human greed, megalomania and God complexes — often filters down into the alchemist's creation. Many homunculi, through a combination of their creators' inexperience with the *prima materia* and an arrogant inability to see their creations as anything less than perfect, come into the world flawed. These flaws vary considerably, going so far as to include near-animal bodies and visages.

Even if flaws do not manifest as physical irregularities, the relationship between alchemist and imperfect creation can turn unpleasant. An insensitive or vain mage who creates a homunculus for use as little more than a beast of burden, or who becomes ashamed and resentful of her creation's marred nature, often wounds the sentient being. How the homunculus responds to such abuse varies, but it is not unheard of for a creation to turn on its creator.

FUTURE FATE

Their existence frowned on by both the Church and the more orthodox sects — such as the Hippocratic Circle — homunculi are conceived in the utmost secrecy and often kept hidden. The scandal and arrogance of the famed "alchemist" Paracelsus in creating and displaying a pathetic excuse for a homunculus attracts much unwanted attention to the project. Paracelsus' death under mysterious circumstances (rumor has him being murdered by an extremist offshoot of the House of Olympus) throws up further obstacles to any amount of true, concentrated research.

IMAGE

A homunculus embodies its creator's desire for Ascension. It (for despite the individual form a homunculus takes, it has no real gender to speak of) can be any size from several inches tall to a full-grown human, if its creator's alchemical and magickal prowess is sufficiently advanced. Homunculi generally have very plain, almost unfinished facial features, resembling nothing so much as the busts of ancient Greeks and Romans. An especially deft and focused alchemist can fashion his homunculus' features to look like anyone, even the alchemist himself.

Homunculi may ingest food and drink as a normal human being for purposes of nourishment. However, many alchemists prefer to sustain their creations through the constant power of their spells. Reproduction for homunculi is essentially a non-issue, as many alchemists view sexual congress is an imperfect and impure mechanism and eliminate it from their creations.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You are, as far as you are concerned, the purest form of humanity. Radiate all of the best qualities of the human species. Strive to better yourself physically and mentally. Your progress toward and proximity to the perfect state of being is the utmost goal. Although you represent your creator's rendition of the ultimate human machine, you are still a product of your creator's magick, and thus subject to her use of those forces. You were created to stand alone in your quest for ultimate purity. Do whatever it takes to accomplish that goal, even to the point of going outside your creator's laboratory for knowledge and insight into your condition.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 2-4, Dexterity 1-3, Stamina 1-3, Charisma 1-3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1-2, Perception 2-4, Intelligence 2-4, Wits 1-3

Abilities: Brawl 2, Culture 2, Crafts 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 2, Expression 3, Hiding 4, Linguistics 2, Occult 3, Research 4, Science 4

Element: Earth (Solid guardian)

Willpower: 2

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -2 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Alien Appearance (3-5), Allies Background (2), Bond-Sharing (6), Compulsion (2; gain lore about own potential), Elemental Touch (5), Enhancement (variable), Flexible, Homing Instinct (2), Human Speech, Loyalty, Mystic Shield (4), Rapid Healing (4), Shared Knowledge (7), Shy, Size (variable), Soul-Sense, Spirit Travel (8), Spirit Vision, Unaging

MANTICORE

Fear is sharp-sighted, and can see things under ground, and much more in the skies.

— Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*

LEGENDRY

When God created the world and all its creatures, He put the beast's under Man, and above all animals He placed Lion, the King of the Beasts. And so it was, and so all creatures knew their place. Mouse feared Bird, Boar feared Hound and all creatures feared Lion.

So the order remained until Tiger heard the cold whisper of Serpent, the deceiver. At first Tiger turned a deaf ear, but in time the coiled one's words took on a truthful tone.

"You are a great hunter, perhaps the greatest. Was it not you who ate Bird, so quick are you that he could not escape, and his lilting call was caught in your throat? So brave are you that you ate Scorpion and let her venom course through your blood without harm? So righteous are you that you ate Man who had sinned and fallen from God's favor?

"As you are all of these things, why then are you not God's chosen one? Why are *you* not King of the Beasts?"

Tiger listened and considered Serpent's words. Tiger was fast, brave and righteous, that was true. Lion was, too, but certainly not more so. Why then was Lion God's chosen, rather than Tiger?

Thus Tiger set out in search of Lion to voice his protest. Tiger found the king resting in a copse of trees and pleaded his case: "Lion, I am fast and brave and righteous, just as you. Why then are you King of the Beasts when I am not? Why am I not God's chosen?"

Lion turned his dark gaze on Tiger and spoke the word of the Lord. "You are all these things, it is true, Tiger. But you are also presumptuous. While Christ is the son of God who walks as a Man, I am the son of God who walks as a Beast. The order is ordained and your pride defiles it. As a lesson in temperance, you shall forevermore bear the mark of your sin. You shall speak with the voice of Bird. You shall spit the venom of Scorpion. And you shall show the face of the sinner-Man. You shall be Tiger no more, but a reminder of what others shall become if they fall to pride.

So Tiger was stricken and he hid beneath the earth to escape the mockery and infuriating pity of others. In time, when his hunger could no longer be resisted, he crept out at night in search of food. But now only the taste of the prideful could sate him. Learning Tiger's lesson, the other beasts respected their places in God's order. The only one who did not was Man, whose own sins drove him from God's embrace. Thus, Tiger feasted on the sinner and gained the name Manticore. Those sinners whom Manticore could not catch followed in his footsteps. They were marked by their flaws and became Manticores in turn.

DESCRIPTION

Though the manticore is a legendary creature, it does exist. As each animal has its place in the food chain and the cycle of life, the manticore is a living parody of that order. Comprised of the body of a tiger, a scorpion, a bird and a human, the creature embodies the results of law and penitence lost.

Seemingly shameful of its appearance and crimes, the manticore lives a reclusive existence. It

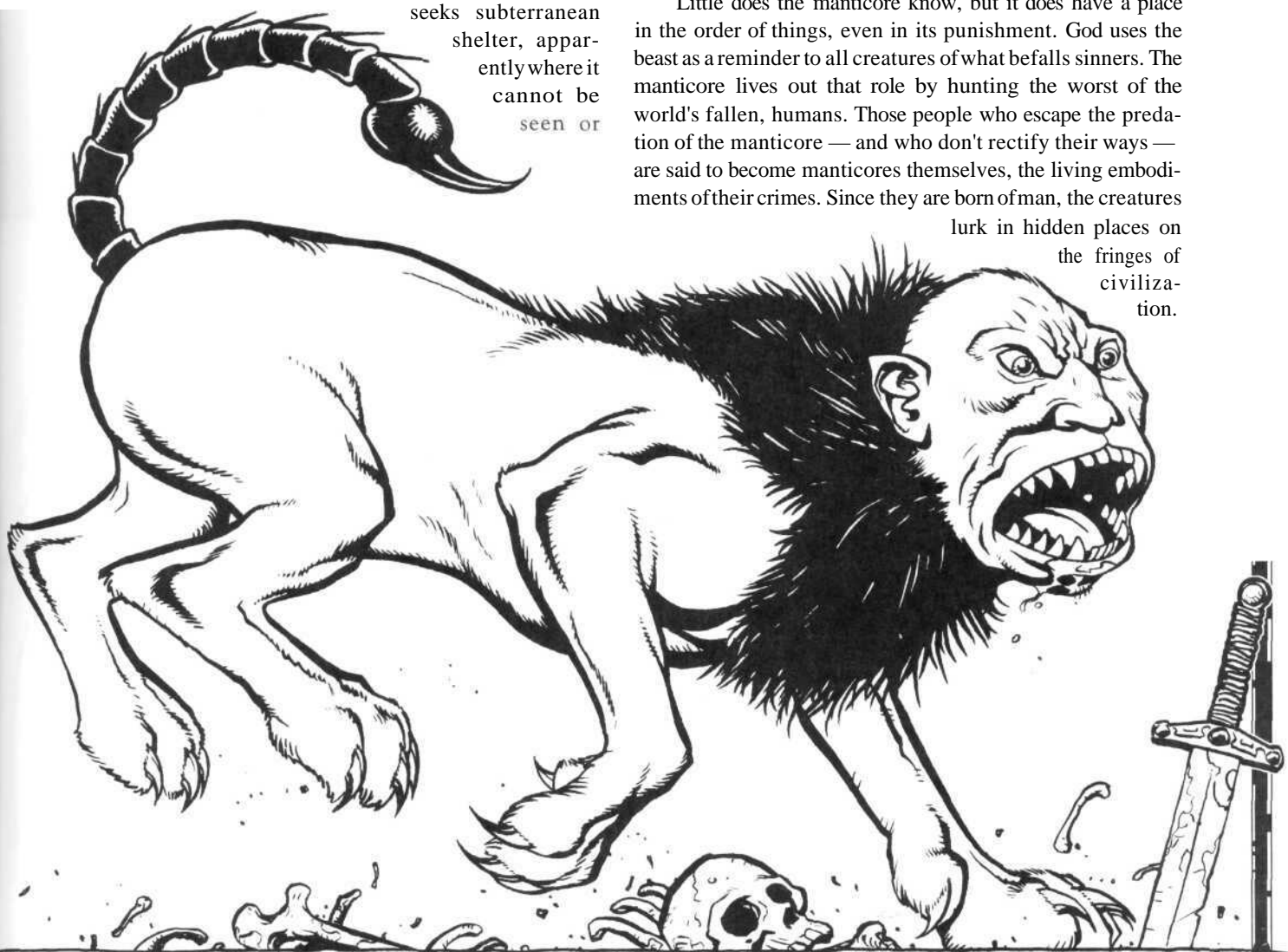
seeks subterranean shelter, apparently where it cannot be seen or

condemned, and perhaps where it can escape its own reflection. Similarly, the creature cannot abide the presence of others of its kind, undoubtedly because each reminds the other of its tragic flaws. The abominations that have come in contact have been known to fight to the death, not so much of the other, but of themselves, perhaps as a desperate and fitting escape from their transgressions in life.

Although the manticore would live out its mortal days in isolation, hunger demands that it go into the world in search of sustenance. Other animals that recognize the manticore mock it if they believe they can escape it, or offer their pity for its plight. The beast seeks neither and is driven into a rage by the jibes and sympathies of the animal kingdom. Ironically, it would sate itself on these very creatures, but the beast finds no nourishment in the humble who mind their place. The manticore finds relief only in the flesh of humans who sin and defy the will of God. Perhaps their meat is closest to the manticore's own, and the beast would consume itself if it could escape its curse.

Little does the manticore know, but it does have a place in the order of things, even in its punishment. God uses the beast as a reminder to all creatures of what befalls sinners. The manticore lives out that role by hunting the worst of the world's fallen, humans. Those people who escape the predation of the manticore — and who don't rectify their ways — are said to become manticores themselves, the living embodiments of their crimes. Since they are born of man, the creatures

lurk in hidden places on the fringes of civilization.



FUTUREFATE

As long as humans commit crimes against each other and the world, manticores continue to prowl and thrive. No mortal has reported seeing a manticore for centuries, however, so there is some speculation among those in the know that the beasts may not have fully learned their lesson. A further pride or jealousy may have stricken them with yet another feature or appearance, making the manticore unrecognizable or all but invisible among humanity's masses.

IMAGE

In the Mythic Age, the manticore bears the reminders of its heritage and its curse. It has the body of a tiger, the tail of a scorpion, the shrill voice of a bird and the face of a human. Its eyes shine with burning anger and frustration, and its three rows of teeth gnash feverishly in anticipation of rending sinners' flesh.

Those who are confronted by a manticore are undoubtedly its intended targets. Those who survive its hunt are doomed to join it. Any others unfortunate enough to witness a manticore's passing are wise to pay penance for their offenses. The creature's appearance may be a warning about dubious practices and their consequences.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

So you wanted power and money. Who doesn't? If you don't get ahead in life, you get shit on. You weren't about to let that happen. Sure, a few people had to pay the price for your success, but it's survival of the fittest, and you survived.

And you still do.

It came for you in the night, when you slept. Your security system alerted you. The guards couldn't stop it, even those who tried. Thankfully your friends at Pentex arrived to save your skin... for what it's worth.

Now you're something you don't understand — and you don't want to. You're still alive, but you're not what you were before. Darkness offers the only escape from what you've become, and excruciating hunger makes you watch and stalk the very people you once knew.

God, what have you become?

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Intimidation 5, Wild Hunting 5

Element: Fire (Smoldering loner)

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -2 x 3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 9 dice, claw for 10 dice; Tail for 8 dice, Acute Senses (3), Alien Appearance (4), Arcane Background (2), Armor (1), Compulsion (4; Hunt the Proudful), Enhancement, Extra Speed, Fearlessness (3), Mesmerism (3), Nightsight, Perfect Balance, Soul-Sense

PEGASUS

*Thus it always is with winged horses,
and with all such wild and solitary creatures.
If you can catch and overcome them,
it is the surest way to win their love.*

— Greek myth

LEGENDRY

Gazing into the flawlessly polished shield of the goddess Athena, Perseus crept on the gorgon Medusa, concentrating furiously on the vile reflection of the sleeping monster. He unsheathed his blade, waiting for the right instant to strike. Around him, Perseus could see the fates of those unfortunates who had tried, and failed, to slay her — horrid, twisted statues of men eternally frozen in their death-throes.

The gorgon stirred and Perseus knew the moment was at hand. His eyes fixed on the visage in the shield, Perseus raised his sword and swung at Medusa's neck. The blade sliced through the monster's scales and veins, separating her putrid head from her shoulders. As the toxic blood of the creature fountained from her torso and spread over the earth, the fluid began to churn and boil like a potion in some infernal cauldron.

Suddenly a form emerged from the roiling, viscous liquid. Out of the foulness of the gorgon's life essence arose a stunning creature: a horse of the purest white, with majestic wings the colors of a storehouse of precious gems. The creature stood to its full height, its jet-black hooves sparking the ground. It unfurled its great wings and leapt into the air, bound for places unknown....

DESCRIPTION

The most familiar derivation of the pegasus legend comes from ancient Greece, though many cultures have reported the existence of winged horses, including the Egyptians, Sumerians, Chinese (*ky-lin*) and certain Native American civilizations. The Japanese hold that their pegasus, the *ki-rin*, visits Earth only at the birth of a *Sesin*, or wise philosopher. Many of these wondrous creatures ceased to exist on Earth at the end of the Mythic Ages. Mages scrambled to save as many of them as possible, drawing them into their care through the various protected dimensions of the Umbra and Horizon Realms.

Frantic activity to preserve such an animal from extinction underscores the value mages place on this impressive beast. The association of the pegasus with wisdom and

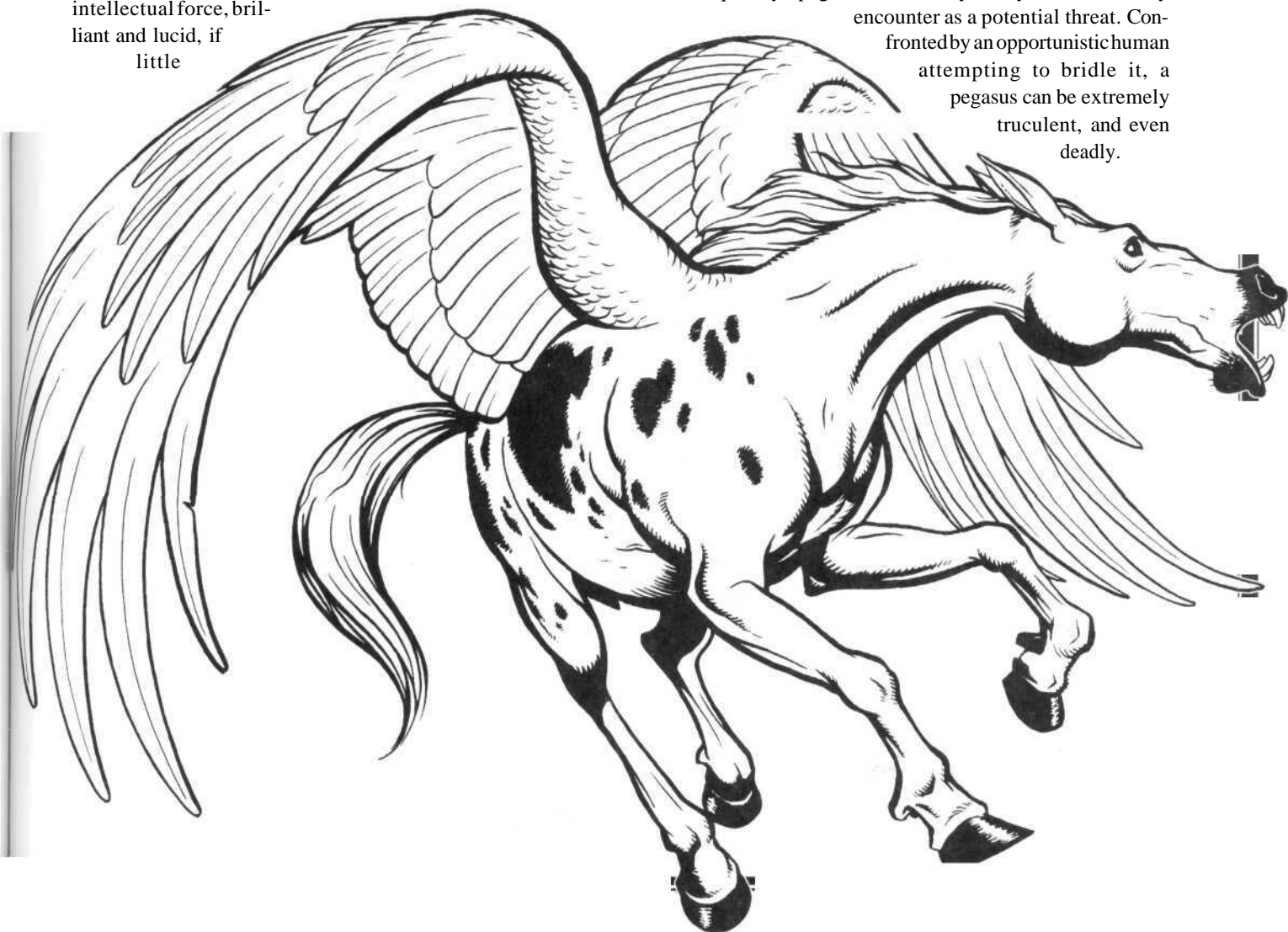
intellect reverberates throughout the panoply of legends surrounding the creature. In the legends from ancient Greece, the pegasus' first deed, striking the ground of Mt. Helicon with its hoof, uncovered a spring that became sacred to the Muses. The pegasus became a favorite animal of the Muses, whose singular doting on the creature imbued it with the grace and wonder characteristic of mankind's highest intellectual achievements. Its soaring flights above the clouds symbolize the limitless nature of the mind and the immortality of the soul. Among mages, the sight of the pegasus inspires thoughts of Ascension as few other experiences do.

Pegasi are, by nature, a mixture of dignity and refinement coupled with mesmerizing physical speed and agility in the air. Creatures of poetry and reason, pegasi are deliberate and patient beings, always seeking to further agreement, compromise and peace. They adore the freedom and inspiration that accompanies flight, and become sullen if denied the air for long. Because of the premium they place on expanding their knowledge, pegasi tend to inhabit remote areas such as mountain tops or secluded woodlands. Despite such ascetic behavior, pegasi have been known to enter into dialogue and debate with those magi who also value such remote areas. Those mysticks fortunate enough to converse with a pegasus fondly recall a creature of dazzling intellectual force, brilliant and lucid, if little

However, those humans who understand and respect the complexity of the pegasus are few and far between. Most see the creature for what its outward appearance betrays: a creature of flight and a potential beast of utility. The name "pegasus" itself derives from the Phoenician *pag sus*, or "bridled horse." Greek myths speak of the goddess Athena providing the hero Bellerophon with a golden bridle to tame the Muses' pegasus, in order that he might use the steed in his quest to slay the chimera. Many other civilizations harnessed the creatures for their warriors to ride, allowing their troops to initiate aerial assaults on the enemy.

The pegasus of Greek myth captivated all who set eyes on her. Even Bellerophon, heady with the rush of riding a creature of such graceful potential, fancied himself able to ride all the way to Olympus. Far less heroic individuals see the act of capturing and breaking one of these aviary steeds as the greatest challenge. To control such a wild and mysterious animal — to ride its winged body above the transitory world of mortal man — remains the ultimate triumph to be cherished by those who would bridle her.

Pegasi are fully aware of such perceptions of their kind. Historically, the tragic impressment of a creature so closely linked to noble pursuits for the base, all-too-human motives of military tactics or personal status colors their outlook. Consequently, pegasi view nearly everyone whom they encounter as a potential threat. Confronted by an opportunistic human attempting to bridle it, a pegasus can be extremely truculent, and even deadly.



(Werewolves are very familiar with *Pegasus-spirits*, who are often found in the company of Black Furies. In fact, the "physical" pegasi in the Legendary Realm are under the protection of Pegasus herself, and woe to the visitor who decides that riding one would be a worthy triumph. Anyone trying to put a bridle and saddle on a spirit-servant of Pegasus stands a good chance of dying from Fury claws.)

FUTURE FATE

The Age of Exploration and the growth of trade in Europe increases human traffic throughout the world, and pilgrims, merchants, troubadours and other wandering types slowly reduce the untrammelled regions that are home to the creatures. Such intrusion on their preferred habitats has forced many pegasi to take to the air for extended journeys into Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East — or, with the aid of mages whom they trust, into the Umbra or Horizon Realms.

IMAGE

As wild and natural as the gems from which its wings draw their coloration — sapphire, ruby, emerald and amethyst — a pegasus is a rare and valuable creature. It glides through the air like quicksilver, gleaming in the sun and executing complicated maneuvers with the utmost facility. A substantial pair of wings spreads out from its shoulders in flight and folds smoothly against its body at rest. Obsidian-black hooves thunder on the ground with the force of the legendary steed that split the crags atop Helicon and unleashed the Muses' sacred waters.



ROLEPLAYING HINTS

The skies and legends are yours—or once were. Now that man has spread across the world and into the air, your favorite places are lost to you. The Otherworlds that you now soar suit your needs, but not your heart. To return to the world once more before you pass on completely would bring one final joy to your fading existence. Perhaps humanity must rekindle its faith in your kind if you are to find your place in the sun again. But then, man would probably seek to bridle you as he did before. Perhaps Bygones are better left Bygones.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 7, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Abilities: Aerobatics 4, Alertness 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Elusion 3, Enigmas 3, Flying 4

Element: Water (Quiet thinker)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK x 4, -1 x 2, -3 x 2, -5 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Trample or kick for 6 dice, bite for 3 dice; Bond-Sharing (5), Elemental Touch (10), Extra Speed (10), Human Speech, Mystick Shield (6), Soul-Sense, Spirit Vision, Wings (5)

PERYTON

If it were possible to heal sorrow by weeping and to raise the dead with tears, gold were less prized than grief.

—Sophocles

LEGENDRY

Sicanus stared transfixed at the young woman's shadow coming from the heavens, growing larger as the creature that cast the silhouette continued its earthward descent. Squinting into the high sun,

Sicanus made out the form of a bird, large as a full-grown person, with the head and legs of a horned stag. Whatever on Earth the creature was, Sicanus thought, it could not possibly cast a shadow of such human form.

Sicanus glanced back at the darkened shape of the woman, its outline so detailed that he began to search his memory as to who she might be. Then it came to him — the young traveler from the week before. All Sicanus had wanted was her gold-purse. He hadn't meant to strike her with such force, but he had, breaking her neck and killing her instantly. The boy had robbed many people, but he

had never resorted to murder. It was an unfortunate accident. In the past week, he spent not a single coin of his young victim's money. The bloody act had haunted him for seven sleepless nights.

Somehow, Sicanus doubted that the creature cared a damn about his guilt.

The beast glided to the ground, its hart-eyes searing vengeance through Sicanus' body. The shadow of the young victim stretched forward from the creature's hooves and enveloped Sicanus. He leapt away in fear, and his eyes widened in terror as the young woman's shadow grew larger and larger, casting a pall of icy darkness over everything. The creature reared up on its haunches, steam billowing from its nostrils.

Then it charged.

Sicanus ran screaming, the beast close on his heels. He did not get far when the animal lowered its head and thrust Sicanus to the ground. The boy fell and rolled for several yards from the force of the blow. He scrambled to his feet as the stag swiped at him with its antlers, cutting a deep gash in his arm. Sicanus fell again as the winged stag bore down on him, its hooves cracking in the air....

The next morning a passing monk found what was left of the body by the side of the road. The chest had been split open from neck to groin, the vital organs mangled into a repulsive stew. The limbs and head had been trampled. Fragments of bones stuck out at horrifying angles. The monk crossed himself and said a short prayer for the repose of the poor soul who had perished so awfully. He continued down the road, silently invoking St. Christopher's protection from whatever fate had befallen the wretch.

Behind a clump of trees, the creature watched as the monk rushed out of sight. Only then did it take to the air, its own shadow flickering briefly over the remains of Sicanus before disappearing.

DESCRIPTION

Murder leaves a scar on the soul. A person brutally cut down by the hand of another finds only frustration in the afterlife. Some murders occur with such suddenness that the victim's soul bellows for vengeance, refusing to move on until the person who inflicted the wrong is dead. The calls of these souls are heard and answered by the peryton.

Tales of the lost city of Atlantis record the existence of perytons, creatures with the head and legs of a deer and the body and wings of a great bird of prey. Beautiful and lethal, these creatures were born from the chaos caused by the unjust severing of a person's lifeline. Intimately attuned to the anger and sorrow of a victim's soul, a peryton casts the shadow of the person in life as the creature hunts unceasingly for its charge's killer. When a peryton catches its target — and it always does — the end is savage and violent. On dispatching its prey, the peryton is released from its obligation and its shadow reverts to its own.

Perytons reside deep within forests or atop remote mountain plateaus. They subsist mainly on dry earth, but when they hear the anguished cry of the innocent, perytons can go for weeks (or even months) without food, fueling themselves with the fiery single-mindedness of vengeance. The creatures are experts at camouflage. Depending on the environment, a peryton can transform the deer or bird half of itself to match its surroundings.

A peryton speaks for the dead, and in a very specific, pointed manner. The creature acts as the vehicle for a murdered soul's revenge, and its most common interaction with human beings is as a harbinger of wrathful destruction. As a consequence, perytons view human beings warily at best, avoiding the great majority of human contact until a soul calls for service. Rarely is the interaction between a peryton and a human being uneventful. The few individuals who run across a peryton in its deer form on a trek through a forest (or, even more foolishly, on a hunting expedition) are lucky to survive.

FUTURE FATE

Perytons have decreased considerably since the days of the ancient Greeks. Downtrodden humanity has lost its spirit since the old times, and not even tragic deaths inspire a response from liberated souls anymore. Still, many acts of ultimate barbarity — particularly when the victim is an innocent such as a child, maiden or young lover — can create enough outrage to call forth a peryton. There is even rumor among those who feed on humans that something is out there taking revenge, though none can identify what the creature is.

IMAGE

The peryton is strangely compelling for such a lethal animal. Its deer's head has soft black, brown or gray fur. A set of full, saber-sharp antlers sits regally atop the creature's head, and is its main weapon. Two strong deer legs give the peryton unmatched speed on the ground. Its dark hooves have the capacity to shatter bone with a kick. Its avian body, with shadowy gray wings and plumage, allows the peryton to fly and dive with expert agility. The creature's doe-eyes, normally dark brown or jet-black, glow red with rage in the presence of its prey.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Vengeance is yours. Murder is incomprehensible — it remains the highest rejection of the divinely ordained plan of the universe. You must not rest until you restore the balance that has been overturned by another. Let no obstacle defeat you. Take an eye for an eye, then take the other for good measure.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Cosmology 3, Dodge 3, Flying 4, Intimidation 3, Stealth 3, Wild Hunting (Murderers) 4

Element: Air (Bitter warrior)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -3 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Trample for 5 dice, Bite for 6 dice, gore for 6 dice; Alien Appearance (4), Elemental Touch (7), Extra Speed (7), Fearlessness (3), Intangibility (10), Nightsight, Shadow-walking (4), Shapechanger (3), Soul-Sense, Spirit Travel (10), Spirit Vision, Wings (5)

PHOBOROS

All the beasts of the forest are mine; and so are the cattle on a thousand hills.

— English prayer book

LEGENDRY

Beautiful Io, daughter of Inachus the River God, lived in Greece near the river that bore her father's name. Zeus, King of the Gods, was intrigued by tales of her comeliness. To satisfy his curiosity, he changed himself into a bull and spied on her. However, Iynx, daughter of Pan and Echo, caught Zeus in his hiding place. Amused by his voyeurism, she cast a mischievous spell, causing Zeus to fall in love with Io. Soon, word of the passionate coupling between Io and Zeus reached Hera, Zeus' wife. Zeus lied to conceal his activities and turned Io into a cow so that she could not betray him. He then set her free to roam the land, spreading the myth of bovine sanctity.

Io skirted the sea that was later named for her, and then passed through Europe, Asia Minor and India. She later turned back and visited Arabia and Ethiopia as well. Throughout her travels, Zeus visited Io in the form of a bull. At length, he impregnated her with a human child, which she birthed in Ethiopia and carried on her back to Egypt. Io named her son Epaphus, though he later became known as Apis, the divine bull, ruler of Egypt. Besides Epaphus, she also bore six other sons, sired by common bulls.

Jealous Hera cursed both Io and her son. Epaphus was struck impotent — a disaster for a king — and Io was rendered barren. Furthermore, Hera ordered three of Io's calves shackled to the olive trees on Mount Olympus, where the flies would bite them.

Io cried out to Demeter, who took pity on her. To appease Io's mother-grief, the goddess made each of her calves immortal, holding them over a fire to burn away their mortality. As white as their mother, they emerged from the flames as the first phobori and were set free.

DESCRIPTION

Immortality has its price and its rewards. Sentient and undying, the white fear-bulls, or *phobori*, hone their mental abilities constantly. In their solitude, these forlorn creatures dwell in the house of memory. There they weep and their tears corrupt the land wherever they touch. Ages after the deaths of the Old Gods, when it is said Mount Olympus fell to the forces of Reason, the children of Io still nip and chew at their own forelegs, ever reminded of the shackles that bound them to the Mount.

After hundreds of years, near the time of Jesus Christ, the phobori developed a rapport with the creatures around them, learning to experience the thoughts and emotions of others. This new ability frightened, saddened and angered the bulls. The thoughts they heard made the mood-weary creatures cry or laugh, or they sent them into fits of rage. In retribution, the people hunted and slaughtered phobori and other cattle. Three surviving bulls fled to safer territory: One went to India, one to Ethiopia and one to Spain.

By the beginning of the Dark Ages, cattle herds had spread far and wide. E'toro, the phoboros who fled to Spain, used his talents to keep herders from trying to slaughter him. In their minds, he became a grand stud bull, too beautiful to kill and eat. E'toro became king of many herds, which suited him well, but he could never stifle the rages that came on him in the presence of farmers. Each time E'toro met a dishonorable man, he flew into a fury, killed the human and fled, leaving barren fields and strange white calves in his wake. He roamed Madrid hillsides and the Pyrennees for many centuries, spreading the legend of *El Toro Blanco*.

Legends were not all he spread — the immortal white bulls sired lesser, mortal calves. Although these offspring do not share their fathers' immortality, they display the same empathy, lusts and corrosive tears as their forebears, and live several human lifetimes. These "lesser" phobori are extremely rare, but they do sometimes appear. Unlike their sires, these white bulls cannot reproduce; Hera's curse on King Epaphus carries down through his distant relations.

As early as the ninth century, Io's children changed their appetites. Lusty E'toro had always pursued cows with exuberance, but the dull animals meant nothing to him. Now he was attracted to mortal women with their sun-kissed, salty skin, their gleaming eyes, the smooth grace of their long limbs, and most of all, their kind and intelligent thoughts. He pursued them with teasing, erotic fantasies, sending images of himself into their minds as they went about their chores. He tempered guilt with visions of bygone gods and with thoughts of true love and kindness. From the fields, he wooed them with warm-eyed looks and soft, mewling cries. Not all women came to him, but those who did found him a remarkably gentle, if large, lover. Through his emotional bond with them, he made his pleasure theirs.

By the 15th century, men have had enough. Daedalean scholars have traced the legends of *El Toro Blanco* to the wandering white bull and his offspring. Soldiers have been sent across the

land to capture these diabolical beasts. The bulls are burned when caught. However, several accounts claim that one bull cannot be slain. He has been stabbed, hacked and even burned alive, but he has escaped to ravage both the countryside and the young ladies who live there. A plan has been made to ship this creature and his offspring to the fabled lands beyond the seas. There, perhaps, he can fulfill his lusts without violating daughters of Christ.

FUTURE FATE

If the Daedaleans have their way, old E'toro will be shipped to the New World to find new conquests in the buffalo and cattle of the Americas. In other distant lands, E'toro's brothers Chalanda and Ika-hai have taken a similar interest in human women. Chalanda has sired an aristocracy of white bulls across the Hindu lands, much to the ire of the Muslim rulers. Ika-hai wanders the vast African wilderness, choosing lovers both human and bovine. Unlike his brothers, Ika-hai is fairly peaceful. Perhaps his solitude makes the vagaries of human emotion easier to bear.

In all the lands, tales speak of strange white bulls with seductive ways and acidic tears. These beasts, it is said, fall in and out of love like bees flitting from flower to flower, searching out the sweetest nectar but finding only vinegar. Every so often, a bull's union with a woman produces a calf, always pure white, always male. Most such creatures are assumed to be devils, and the locals set on such a calf, bludgeoning or burning it. Although these phobori are not as immortal as their fathers, they do not die easily. More often than not, they flee on weak, newborn legs and wander into the wilderness to weep their bitter tears.

Harsher fates befall human mates. Muslims and Christians brand bull-lovers witches. However, Hindus and some remote tribesmen worship the godly white calves and their mortal mothers. In modern times, tabloids and Fortean journals chronicle a handful of women who have supposedly delivered live cow-children. Those few who believe such stories wonder about the truth behind the Minotaur legends — almost none know the legends of Io and the bull-sons cursed by Hera. Yet in a world where magic is mythology, three immortals still survive.

The phobori (mortal and immortal alike) seek wide-open spaces. Though they require no nourishment to survive, the white bulls gain a certain satisfaction from chewing herbs and grasses. A sure way to win over a fear-bull is to offer him lemon-grass or a fresh mind, both of which he finds quite intoxicating. Beware his tears, though—mildly acidic, they burn grass, wood and bare flesh on contact.

Phobori draw much of their knowledge from the minds of those around them. A white bull may look like he's standing dully chewing his cud, but in truth he's weeding through memories and dreams. Anyone who communicates with a phoboros knows without a doubt that these creatures are brilliant. With genius, however, comes instability, moodiness and apathy. The true immortals are worst of all — to them, the world has forgotten its purity and fallen into degradation and decadence. Although a gentle, honorable person (typically a

woman) can ease a white bull's despair for a time, the cursed son of Io sooner or later runs off in a rage or simply disappears one night, weeping his caustic tears.

IMAGE

A phoboros resembles a small white bull. Many aspects of this creature link it symbolically to the moon, and thus to the waters of the world. Smooth ivory horns thrust out from its head in perfect symmetry reminiscent of a crescent. At night, its white hide captures and reflects moonlight. Large, wet eyes reveal intelligence and compassion.

A white bull's moods change as quickly as the ocean currents, and flow just as strongly. At times, his emotions thunder like a stormy sea, while at others they run deep and calm, as regular as the tides. There is a sensuality to the phoboros, a physical strength barely contained. Just looking at him, a human observer senses the immortal power of the animal's body. The bull has always been a symbol of male virility. A white fear-bull — especially an immortal one — is masculinity personified, tempered by femininity's emotions.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You recall a thousand memories—your own, your lovers', the random thoughts and mental glimpses of passersby. Each year, it seems, thoughts grow louder, more violent and insistent. Although it hurts to listen to them, you're too fascinated—orsimply too bored — to shut them out. Sooner or later, you always dive back into the waters of other minds, or swim in the rivers of memory.

To alleviate the pain and boredom that comes with your long life, you seek out companions with pure (or at least interesting) thoughts and emotions. Every so often an especially stimulating friend leads you out of depression; more often, a trusted companion betrays your empathy with a passion or deception so unworthy that you fly into a rage, destroying everything that reminds you of that person. Human minds are capricious, venomous things. Their stings are euphoria, but they leave you with the taste of ashes. Some day, no matter how safe you might feel, you'll be forced to wander off again, alone and weeping until some new companion comes along.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Empathy 3, Intimidation 4
Element: Earth (Eternal loner)

Willpower: 1

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -3 x 2, Incapacitated
Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 3 dice, gore for 6 dice; Compulsion (3; seek solitude), Immunity (15), Information Font, Shared Knowledge (7), Soothing Voice, Venom (10; 2 aggravated Health Levels on contact), Years Background(4)

ROC

None have traveled more of the Tellurian than I, except perhaps the rocs, but they're stingy with their tales.

— Faruq al-Hadim, Batini Master

LEGENDRY

At high noon the world grew dark.

The ship's crewmen, Sinbad among them, raised their gaze cautiously to the heavens. A pair of enormous white birds circled overhead, their wings blotting out the sun. Sinbad knew instinctively why they were there. At the last port, a tight inlet of some remote island, the men who had gone foraging for supplies had brought back three large, speckled eggs — each the size of a small child. The men had made a meal of them, ignoring Sinbad's admonitions that the feast would have its price.

Now avian parents circled overhead, preparing to attack.

At once, the birds dove at the ship, aiming for the great sails. The creatures' open beaks sliced through the heavy canvas like it was paper. Their heavy feathers turned spears and arrows aside; the birds seemed to have no care for the crew's assaults. The attackers broke off only when the sails were torn asunder, and the birds departed, leaving the ship helpless on a calm sea. The crew rejoiced for having been spared, but Sinbad suspected that the danger was not past.

The great creatures found the ship again quickly, only a few wing beats from where they left it, the foam created by oars marking its course. As the sun grew dim again, the crew lamented their fate and pulled their hair for fear of becoming a meal themselves.

Again, Sinbad knew better. He dove over the rail as the creatures released two boulders carried from land. Both rocks smashed through the deck and straight through the hull. Twin geysers erupted through the gaping holes, catapulting men and supplies high and into the water.

The birds descended again, in one last act of revenge. Sinbad watched in amazement as the creatures grasped the ends of the ship in viselike talons, lifted the boat high into the air and dropped it back into the sea. The broken hull cracked in half. Gushing water poured into the hulk as wood and dead men disappeared into the deep, the taste of their final meal still on their lips.

DESCRIPTION

Rocs are second only to djinn in the lore of the Ahl-I-Batin. The Subtle Ones, when they discuss such things at all, claim that rocs are the only beasts native to the slopes of Mount Qaf, and that they build nests nowhere else. Rocs themselves, being collectors, are concerned with theft, and haven't the slightest intention of telling others where their nests lie.

A roc's life is dedicated to travel and acquisition. Like ravens and certain other birds, a roc prizes well-shaped or otherwise intriguing shiny objects. Of course, a "small" object to a roc can be the size of a camel.

Shrewd and practical birds, rocs understand that baubles exist that they want, but which they cannot procure with their own abilities. In such cases they trade their traveling talents for help from others, most commonly magi. While a wise magus jumps at the opportunity to saddle up a roc that owes him a favor, careful bargaining is required first. Rocs are notoriously stingy with their favors, and many are adept at bargaining with a whole host of Umbrood. A mage with no experience at haggling can expect to be taken advantage of mercilessly.

When physically threatened, a roc flies away; when one does fight, it's to eat or to protect a nest. They use their huge talons to devastating effect, either slashing their enemies to ribbons or dropping boulders on them from miles above.

A roc's environs are typically devoid of large animals. The giant birds eat tremendous quantities of meat, typically herd animals such as elephants, or buffalo, and they can depopulate a region quickly. A starving roc will even eat prey as scrawny as a human, as a few sorry magi have discovered.

No one (alive) has ever found a roc's nest, so the Batini legend that rocs nest only in the crags of Mount Qaf must be believed for now.

The Batini also claim to have learned much of the Arts of Connections and Spirit from studying these huge birds, who are able to soar across the spirit world. Yet the Batini have been telling — and embellishing on — tales of rocs for centuries. As usual with the Subtle Ones, it's difficult to determine what is real and what is image. Rocs' eggs, for example, are fabled to burn with mystickal flame, though some say they are just brilliantly colored and have various magickal properties. Magi are usually wise enough to not try to find out, since an enemy who can go anywhere is an enemy most would rather be without.

FUTURE FATE

The antlike spread of humanity ultimately drives most rocs from the world by the Renaissance. Humans' increasing daring (or stupidity) inevitably threatens rocs' worldly lairs and collections, forcing the birds to flee to the spirit worlds rather than compromise their age-old ways. However, legend claims that the massive birds intend to reclaim their homeland one day, and when they do, what living thing could escape their shadow?

IMAGE

Rocs are gigantic birds resembling brilliant white or speckled golden hawks. A full-grown bird can grasp an elephant in each talon and fly away with its prey. Their feathers are, of course, tremendous, measuring no fewer than 10 paces long. Few things are as dreadful to see as a roc blotting out the sun as it swoops down from above.



ROLEPLAYINGHINTS

You are aloof, intelligent and obsessive about material objects, a collector from a species of collectors. The things you collect are typically shiny, iridescent or magickal, and you pursue only the most beautiful of beautiful objects. Your patience with things that don't further your collection is limited, but on the other claw, you'll put up with a great deal of annoyance to get an especially pretty bauble.

Be inscrutable. Your reasons for collecting are no one's affair but your own, and if they want to know, perhaps they would care to bargain for the information—

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 15, Dexterity 3, Stamina 12, Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4, Perception 8, Intelligence 3, Wits 6

Abilities: Acrobatics (Air) 5, Alertness 7, Bargain 6, Brawl 5, Cosmology 5, Culture 4, Dodge (Air) 4, Etiquette 4, Flying 5, Intimidation 7, Wild Hunting 5

Element: Air (Stormy connoisseur)

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK x5, -1 x5, -3 x3, -5 x3, Incapacitated
Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Beak for 15 dice, claw for 17 dice; Acute Senses (3), Compulsion (2; gather treasure), Extra Speed (10), Homing Instinct (4), Human Speech, Information Font, Size (10), Spirit Travel (8), Treasure Background (5), Unaging, Wings (5), Weak Spot (Fragile skull), Years Background (3)

SEABISHOP

The very deep did rot: O Christ!

That ever this should be!

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs

On the slimy sea.

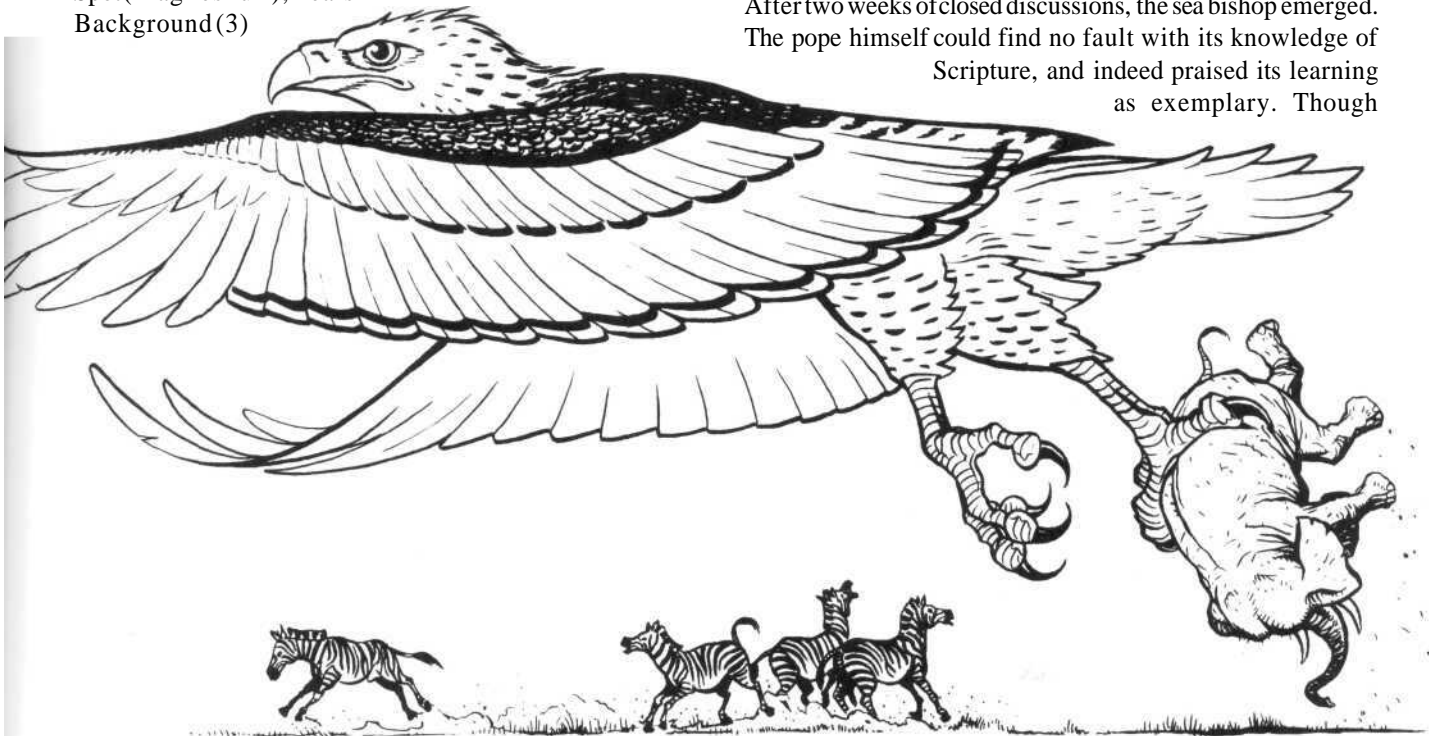
— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

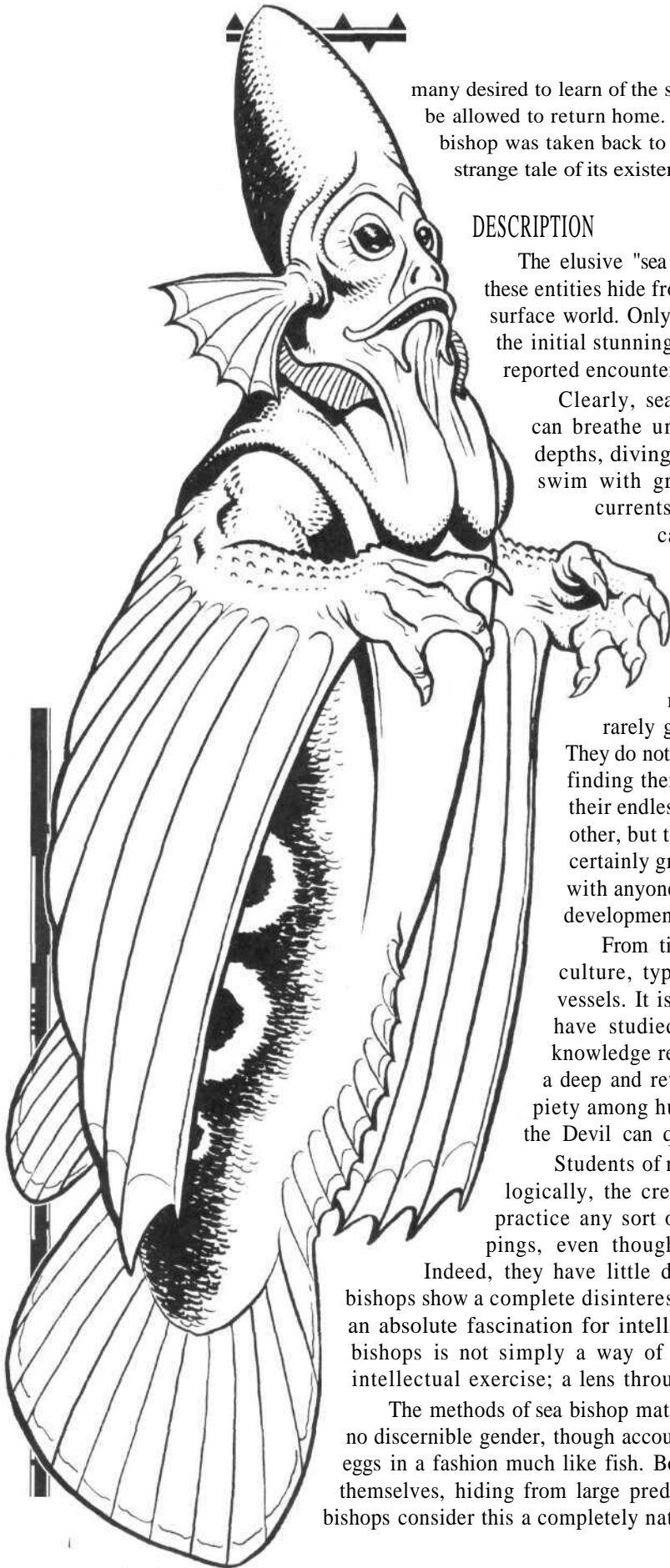
LEGENDRY

In the 12th century, a small group of fishermen discovered a strange being washed up on the shores of Italy. Disturbed by the sight of the humanoid creature with fins and a fishlike crest, they sought to slay it as an aberration — but were stayed when the bizarre entity spoke, reciting Scripture perfectly to the astonished seamen.

Disturbed by the implications of the aquatic entity's existence, the fishermen decided to bring the creature to the attention of the local clergy. The being was quickly dubbed the "sea bishop" for both its extensive knowledge of Scripture and its appearance, which seemed reminiscent of a bishop's robes and miter. Unable to find fault with the sea bishop's interpretations of Scripture, the clergymen sent it to the Vatican to be judged by the pope.

Although discomfited by the prospect of a lengthy overland journey, the sea bishop acceded to these requests. It traveled with one of the fishermen and several suspicious guards and priests, arriving at the Vatican to be questioned intensely by the pope (and, some say, by the Celestial Choristers who had secreted themselves in the Vatican). After two weeks of closed discussions, the sea bishop emerged. The pope himself could find no fault with its knowledge of Scripture, and indeed praised its learning as exemplary. Though





many desired to learn of the sea bishop's ways and uncover its secrets, it requested that it be allowed to return home. Surprisingly, the Vatican agreed to the request, and the sea bishop was taken back to the coast where it slipped into the waters, leaving only the strange tale of its existence behind.

DESCRIPTION

The elusive "sea bishop" is an enigma. Discovered when one was beached, these entities hide from humanity beneath the waves, shunning contact with the surface world. Only chance seems to draw any of them to human lands. Since the initial stunning meeting of a sea bishop with the pope, some sailors have reported encounters with other similar creatures, but such incidents are rare.

Clearly, sea bishops are well-adapted to their watery homes. They can breathe underwater, and have no problems adjusting to various depths, diving further than the best-trained unprotected human. They swim with grace, using long patagia under their arms to glide on currents while kicking with their legs. Their nimble hands are capable of catching and skinning fish with amazing efficiency. They eschew use of tools, as their natural abilities are quite satisfactory for survival.

Some members of the Order of Hermes speculate that sea bishops must have a community of some sort under the sea, as they are clearly intelligent and communicative. The truth, it seems, is that they are individualists, rarely gathering in groups numbering greater than a half-dozen. They do not seem to possess any common goals or organization, instead finding their own ways across the oceans and living on the bounty of their endless home. They occasionally stop to communicate with each other, but there seem to be no meeting practices for the race. They are certainly gregarious creatures when they meet, trading stories eagerly with anyone, but they feel no need to seek out company, most likely a development of living in such a huge and varied realm as the ocean.

From time to time, sea bishops observe and learn from human culture, typically by studying treasures and artworks from sunken vessels. It is thought that the sea bishop that visited the Vatican may have studied the Dead Sea Scrolls, though the true source of its knowledge remains unknown. It is recognized, though, that they have a deep and reverent respect for life, which is easily misinterpreted as piety among humans. Of course, some people point out darkly that even the Devil can quote Scripture.

Students of nature and the occult are puzzled by sea bishops. Cosmologically, the creatures occupy an uncertain niche. They do not seem to practice any sort of magic, nor do they possess technology or social trappings, even though they are otherwise intelligent and communicative.

Indeed, they have little desire to impose themselves on their surroundings. Sea bishops show a complete disinterest in human technology and craftsmanship, yet they have an absolute fascination for intellectual and philosophical concepts. Religion to the sea bishops is not simply a way of justifying existence or forming social castes, it is an intellectual exercise; a lens through which to perceive existence.

The methods of sea bishop mating and reproduction are a mystery. The creatures possess no discernible gender, though accounts of the one widely known sea bishop claim that they lay eggs in a fashion much like fish. Born intelligent and mobile, the young apparently fend for themselves, hiding from large predators while subsisting on what food they can catch. Sea bishops consider this a completely natural existence, and their world is one of ease.

The Order of Hermes theorizes that sea bishops may be related to a mythical race called "tritons," but there is no real evidence of a connection. Ancient documentation of tritons is so sketchy that any observer would be hard-pressed to determine whether descriptions of that race actually correspond to sea bishops. Whatever their origins, sea bishops seem content to remain nomadic, leaving humanity to its own devices and retreating before the incursion of human progress (and pollution).

FUTURE FATE

Encroaching humanity forces the sea bishops deeper into the sea. Yet they realize that this flight does not solve their problem — humans must be taught the errors of their ways, that the oceans must be preserved if life itself, in water or on land, is to continue. Sooner or later, the sea bishops will surface from their hiding places, but will it be to educate through words or actions?

IMAGE

Sea bishops have a vaguely humanoid appearance, leathery-green skin, gill slits on the neck, and wide eyes. A large crest travels up the back and flares out above their heads like a bishop's miter, and the large patagia under their arms give the impression of a flowing robe. The hands and feet of the creature are webbed. Long skinny arms and legs give the creature a light but wiry musculature. Its mouth is wide and thin-lipped, with sharp teeth and a black tongue. It has no ears, only small holes on the sides of its head. The nose is short, wide and flat. Although the sea bishop's hands do not have claws, they do have strong, sharp nails that can be used to scale fish and whittle wood.

Despite their alien appearance, sea bishops have a seemingly regal carriage. Slender, with fluid motions and flowing crests and patagia, they are eerily compelling. They move with grace even on land. They do not have any obvious sexual characteristics, but humans of both sexes find the sea bishops' smooth, clean features alluring.

Sea bishops only rarely adorn themselves with any sort of garb. One of the creatures may carry an interesting item of study, or a particularly challenging puzzle, but they seem to have no need for clothing or possessions.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Why do humans carry such things? The world has all of the bounty one needs to survive. Is it not written that the Lord shall provide? There is no need to despoil the environment — even such a simple creature as you, unused to the ways of the land, can understand this truth. The needs of the body are easily sated. Discuss the needs of learning, the hungers of the mind, instead.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Athletics (Water) 4, Brawl 3, Culture 3, Dodge (Water) 3, Elusion (Water) 4, Enigmas 4, Etiquette 2, Foraging 5, Hiding 3, Survival (Water) 5

Element: Water (Quiet thinker)

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Claw for 6 dice, Alien Appearance (5), Claws (3), Elemental Touch (5; water), Human Speech, Information Font, Water Breathing (2)

SEA SERPENT

And now the storm-blast came, and he

Was tyrannous and strong:

He struck with his o'ertaking wings,

And chased south along.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

LEGENDRY

There are many legends about great reptiles that cruise the sealanes. The old sailors who marked them on the maps were not mistaken, after all. Certainly the serpents lurk beneath uncharted waters, hunting those ships that stray beyond the bounds of mankind's rightful exploration.

One legend tells of the ancient deities of the Prose Edda. It may be true or false — who can say in this age? There are many legends besides. This one is as true as any other.

In the ancient days, when the gods still walked among men, it is said that Thor, the lord of storms, fought mightily against Loki and his offspring. Chief among Thor's rivals was the Midgard Orm, Jormungandr, which bound the Earth tightly in its coils. Spanning all the oceans of the world, the monstrous serpent rose from the depths to hunt, and on these occasions the god of lightning struck at it in fury with Mjolnir. Yet neither could ever defeat the other, for it was ordained that Thor would slay the serpent only at Ragnarok, the Doom of the Gods, and that he would drown in the serpent's poisons.

But for a time, Thor and the serpent strove mightily against each other, battling at such times and places as their paths coincided. In one such contest, the serpent sank its fangs into the god and Thor smote it on the head with a telling blow. The serpent retreated to the depths, its blood and brains, thick and bilious, mingling with the deep sea waters.

From this primal detritus, writhing bits grew slowly, feeding on the beings of the lightless depths. Like their parent, these vile embryos grew to monstrous size, becoming hideous and serpentine, poisonous and hungry. From the

depths these foul offspring rose and bred, always watching from outside the realm of man, preying on those who crossed far-away waters or storm-tossed seas.

Is this tale true? None can say with absolute certainty, but it is a truth of sorts, for, doubtless, these serpents came from the very depths of legend. They are a nuisance to ships that range far beyond the shorelines, even today, especially during great storms. Some even say that a scant few serpents have spread to other bodies of water, trading the ocean depths for mist-shrouded lakes and seas. I know this: The harpoons on my ship are not for whales....

DESCRIPTION

Haunting the deepest parts of the ocean and large seas and bays, sea serpents are the bane of far-traveling ships. With their monstrous appetites and powerful coils, they crush even the sturdiest ocean-going vessels into splinters, and devour the passengers and crew. Not even the most powerful weapons can slow the attacks of the largest of these serpents, and they are difficult to kill indeed, fleeing under the waves when sorely pressed.

Though the origin of sea serpents is lost to antiquity, they have certainly existed since time immemorial. Old pictographs of Greek origin depict even Mediterranean sailors battling these creatures in the days long before Christ. Thankfully, sightings dwindle as the years pass. It is thought that the serpents are dying out slowly, vagaries of nature whose enormity cannot be sustained. The day may come when sea serpents are nothing more than old sailors' tales.

Heralded by a rippling wake, the sea serpent attack is fearsome and devastating. Some varieties close with their heads above the water, but most are crafty enough to show themselves only once within striking distance. When a serpent closes, it typically lashes out at a ship's decks with its fanged maw, spilling crewmen and rigging, carrying off and swallowing anyone unfortunate enough to be bitten. Large serpents constrict entire ships in their massive coils. Worse still, a few varieties are known to secrete acidic venom, which drips from their jaws to burn through hulls and to score unlucky crew members.

Sea serpents tend to attack during heavy storms, though the reason for this behavior is a mystery. Some speculate that the wind-tossed seas awaken the giant creatures from their slumber beneath the waves. Others argue that the ocean depths at which sea serpents must reside would not be affected by surface currents. Still, heavy rains and crashing waves provide opportune cover for the vicious monsters, and the listing of a ship in a heavy storm may well result in capsizing once a serpent thrashes its bulk against the planks.

Serpent procreation is unknown. Their numbers seem to dwindle with each passing decade — the creatures may simply be incapable of normal reproduction. No one ever reports sighting a sea serpent of minuscule size, but that, in itself isn't particularly telling (when was the last time you saw a baby pigeon?). The truth will probably remain submerged in the unexplored pits of the sea.

Chimerical sea serpents are common threats to change-lings who brave treads across the seas. Some of the monsters are purely instinctual and simply try to devour any who pass through their realms. Others are wily and may demand tribute of some kind before travelers are permitted to pass.

Sea serpents are an almost common hazard for change-lings ships that explore the Americas during the Age of Exploration. Though most of these creatures are chimerical in nature, they wreak much devastation on fae explorers and buccaneers of the time.

FUTURE FATE

The sea serpent is all but gone from the modern world, yet humanity's fear of enormous creatures lurking in the deep — waiting for an opportunity to strike at flailing land-dwellers — persists. Perhaps this irrational phobia is a deep-seated, undeniable response to the simple fact the sea serpents are still out there, watching, waiting. Though man claims to be a thinking animal, his "unnecessary" survival instinct cannot be resisted.

IMAGE

Picture an amphibious snake as long as a moderately sized ship. Twenty feet or longer, these scaled reptilian horrors boast terrifying fangs like daggers, and a gullet large enough to hold an entire launch. Some serpents boast spines or razor-sharp crests that offer telltale signs of their approach, but which pose threats of their own. With slick, flexible armored scales, sea serpents are nearly impervious to most conventional weapons, though firearms and artillery can harm them.

Some reports describe serpents boasting multiple heads or great leathery wings, but these monsters are apparently even less common than their "mundane" brethren. Certainly fanciful tales of intelligent, speaking, malevolent serpents are too much to be believed.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You are the king of the waves! None outshines your magnificence in this domain, the waters of furthest Creation. Their pathetic vessels intrude on your kingdom. It is only right that you should destroy them for their presumption — tax them with their lives. The land-dweller sates your hunger.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 10-15, Dexterity 4, Stamina 12, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 5, Intimidation 6, Stealth 3, Wild Hunting 5

Element: Water (Raging curmudgeon)

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 3, -3 x 3, -5 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 4

Attacks/Powers: Constrict for 10 dice, bite for 12 dice; Acute Senses (1), Armor (4), Cast Iron Stomach, Extra Heads (optional), Fearlessness (3), Flexible, No Dexterous Limbs, Size (variable), Venom (optional), Wings (optional)

SHADHAVAR

When Kaiumers heard the news of mourning, he was bowed to the ground. For a year did he weep without ceasing, and his army wept with him; yea, even the savage beasts and the birds of the air joined in the wealing. And sorrow reigned in the land, and all the world was darkened until the Serosch bade the Shah lift his head and think on vengeance.

- Hakim Abol-Ghasem Ferdowsi Toosi, *The Epic of Shaknameh Ferdowsi*

LEGENDRY

In the beginning, the gods Ormuzd and Ahriman shared the world. Ormuzd dwelt in the light and Ahriman shifted through shadow and darkness. They had many conflicts at the border between, but evenly matched, neither could ever overcome the other. Ormuzd created the sky, the waters, the earth, the animals, man and fire. Jealous Ahriman sought to devise a creation of his own. Without inspiration, he chose instead to change Ormuzd's children. He started

with the sky, bringing darkness for half the cycle. He threaded destructive forces throughout the waters and earth. The animals, including man, felt the touch of greed and other dark desires. To fire, the element that coursed through all things, he added smoke and ash.

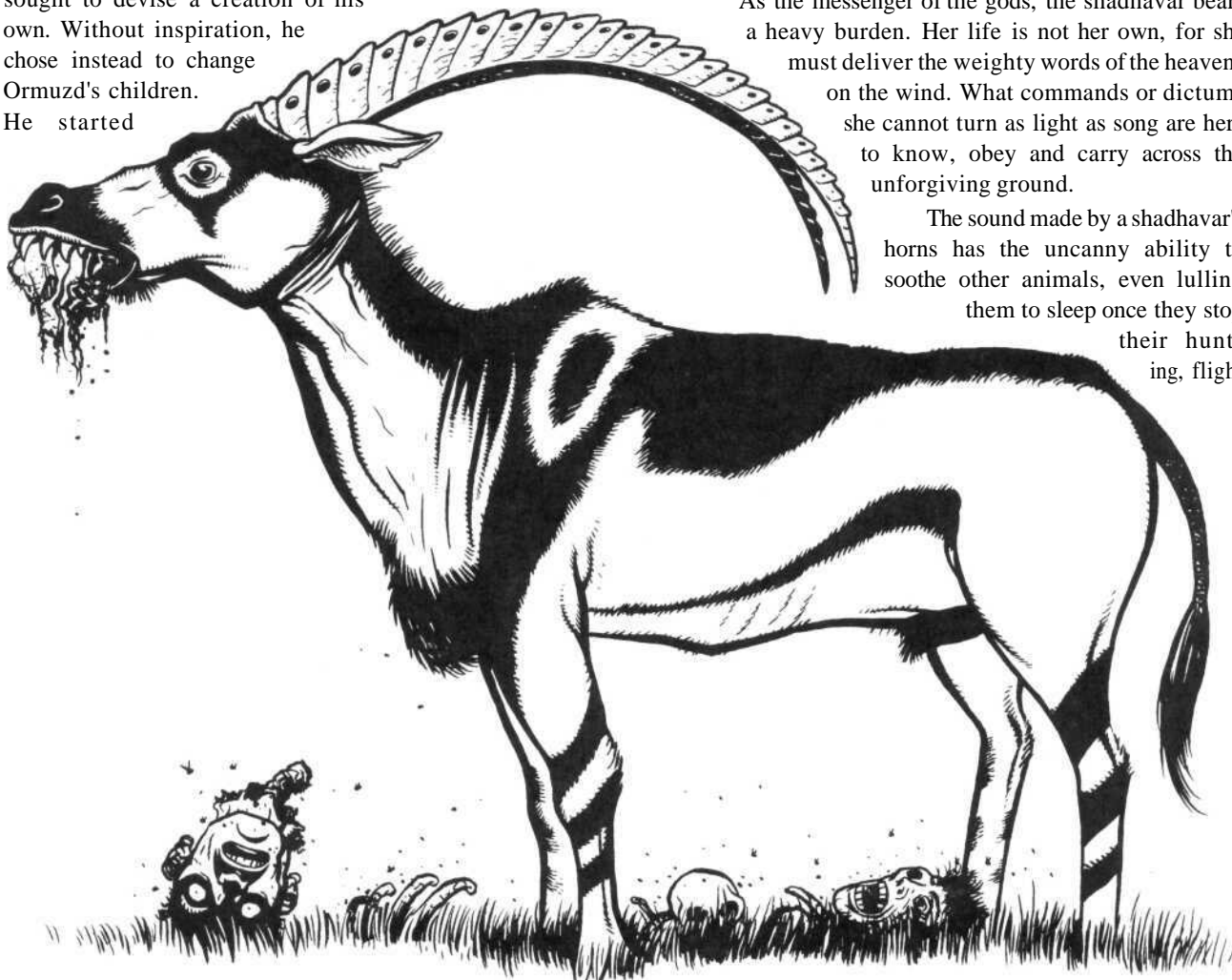
Ormuzd, on seeing his creation tarnished, grew angry. He gathered his creatures into a great army and went in search of Ahriman. The dark god, however, saw the approach of his enemy and had time to prepare. He gathered his own army of the creatures that he had swayed to the shadows. The ensuing clash shook the world. Neither lost and neither won.

At last, after thousands of years, Ormuzd looked down to discover that many of his creatures were dead. He called an end to the war. Ahriman agreed. He too had lost many allies. They decided together that the world would stay as it was, balanced between light and dark. They chose a single creature to cry their compromise to the world. They chose the shadhavar. In his horns they carved orifices that would sing when the wind blew. The bittersweet, melancholy song carried the tale of how the world came to be shared between good and evil.

DESCRIPTION

As the messenger of the gods, the shadhavar bears a heavy burden. Her life is not her own, for she must deliver the weighty words of the heavens on the wind. What commands or dictums she cannot turn as light as song are hers to know, obey and carry across the unforgiving ground.

The sound made by a shadhavar's horns has the uncanny ability to soothe other animals, even lulling them to sleep once they stop their hunting, flight



or burrowing to listen. These are the messages of the gods made manifest. Without touching the ground, these unspoken lyrics bring peace of mind to those at ease enough to hear and understand them. Many creatures, especially birds, are drawn to the shadhavar and gather around her to immerse themselves in the creature's music. It is not uncommon to see a shadhavar with three or four birds perched on her back. The birds, many say, are jealous of the delicate tune and come to learn so that their own songs might carry divinity.

Little do the birds or other creatures know that the shadhavar would gladly share her burden. The unsung words of the gods weigh heavily — indeed, they would plunge birds to the ground, never to fly again, as may have happened to the long-legged, land-bound birds of the plains.

In truth, the shadhavar seeks to escape her burden. She eats very little in order to remain as light as possible, to run when the words of heaven approach. Flee though she might, the gods can never be denied, and she grows tired quickly. That is when the shadhavar lashes out in frustration, killing the very animals that she lulls to sleep with her song. Enraged, she staves in their heads and stomps their bodies into jelly. Many African myths tell of zebra, hyena and even lion heads found with no body, hidden amidst the grasses, perhaps left where the gods will not notice the shadhavar's crimes.

The gods do not approve of the hunting of their heralds, though man is one of the last creatures to heed their will. A shadhavar horn demands a high price among humans. Musicians spend whole lifetimes trying to reproduce the creatures' tunes by blowing across the horns' holes. Little do they realize that divine breath plays those songs. Peri Saiamuk, *bani* Dreamspeaker, once played the shadhavar so purely that animals paused and slept, women ceased their clucking and men laid down their swords. Sadly, the magus awoke from his waking dream and realized that he could never achieve such perfection again until passing from this world.

FUTURE FATE

The shadhavar's song is rarely heard across the plains of Africa or Asia in the modern world, as if the gods no longer whisper their words to the world. Perhaps the shadhavar have been freed of their burden (or passed from the Earth) and some other has taken it up. Then again, animals in the most remote regions of the Americas are often lulled into slumber by night-songs that no human has ever heard.

IMAGE

An antelopelike creature, the shadhavar roams the plains where the wind blows freely. Graceful and a little melancholy, the animal stands approximately six feet tall at the shoulder, but is very thin. The shadhavar has strange hollow horns that grow to enormous size, often as long as three feet. Wind whistles through holes in these bones to create a beautiful and haunting tune that carries for miles.

The color of harvest wheat, the shadhavar's fur grows close to its body, with tufts at the tail and just above its onyx hooves. Dark patches mark its face, dripping down from its eyes — the stains of perpetual tears.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

None can truly know the burden you carry. The words of the gods weigh heavily on your body and spirit; the heavens' crashing tones and gentle notes cannot all be sent aloft and must be heard by you alone. You wonder if the gods refuse to free you of your responsibility for your failure to sing their songs fully. There is only sorrow. Unleashing your wrath on those to whom you sing doesn't release you, but it is the only respite you can find. Perhaps liberation would come if someone were to finally kill the messenger.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Stealth 2

Element: Air (Moody martyr)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -5 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Trample for 6 dice, gore for 8 dice; Death-Sense (3), Extra Speed (7), Musical Influence (4; lash out at any who is lulled by your song), Spirit Vision

SIMURGH

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

— I Corinthians 13:1-2

LEGENDRY

So old is the simurgh that it has seen the world destroyed three times. And three times it hid in the branches of the Tree of Knowledge on Mount Alberz in Ind, watching as the world was renewed. The simurgh knew all things past, present and future. It flew on the winds of change and ate the berries on the Bush of Wisdom.

The simurgh rarely interfered with human trials unless a worthy petitioner came to its mountain for advice. Thus was the case with Feridoun of Iran. During the thousand-year reign of the evil Shah Zohak the Serpent, the people of Iran suffered. Their shah, seduced into darkness by his Deevs, caused vice to walk during the day and virtue to hide in the shadows of night.

Ormuzd, the great god, saw this and took pity on his people. He sent them a hero. Feridoun of Persia, Jemshid's grandson and prophesied nemesis of Zohak the Serpent, had to hide for his life until strong enough in body and mind to fulfill his destiny. He ran to Ind and pleaded for the merciful simurgh to aid him. Bidden by Ormuzd, the simurgh agreed, taking Feridoun under its wing and into its nest. It kept him safe and taught him all he needed to know so that one day he could return to slay Zohak.

But when Feridoun raised his sword to cut Zohak down once and for all, the simurgh descended on jeweled wings to stay Feridoun's hand. Feridoun had won the crown of his grandfather. The people hated Zohak as much as they loved Feridoun; the prince had won. He set the fallen shah free to wander the land in loneliness and sorrow. Iran's most beloved leader had learned much from the simurgh.

DESCRIPTION

The oracle at Delphi, the old man on the mountain and the three Fates in a cave all exemplify the omniscient hermit who secludes him or herself from humankind. They await worthy seekers who survive the perilous journey, and share the secrets of the future with carefully measured words. The simurgh served this purpose for many cultures, including the ancient Persians. Some even believe the simurgh attended the Queen of Sheba's court. It is said to have had orange feathers like metallic scales, a small silver head with a human face, four wings, a vulture's talons and a long peacock's tail.

In truth, it may be that each of the great fortune-tellers (the oracle, the old man and the Fates) were all the simurgh. Different cultures attribute a variety of appearances to the being, including



that of a crow, an owl, a crone, a crooked old man and a beautiful young woman. Steeped in symbolism, these accounts do little justice to the actual splendor of the simurgh. Many were created to frighten foolish seekers away from the omniscient entities.

The simurgh speaks all languages, including those that humankind forgot long ago. It resides in isolated, desolate places, such as mountain peaks and desert plains. Mortal desire to know the future sent the simurgh into hiding long ago. It learned that humans rarely left it satisfied. The simurgh has no desire to become a god, nor does it wish to awaken man before he is ready.

Still, the simurgh has a kind heart. If a seeker manages to find its lair, the truth-speaker offers some aid. However, the simurgh limits the number of questions that can be asked — sometimes only one; sometimes three. No matter how many questions are answered, all come at a price, whether servitude, the sacrifice of an item that the seeker cherishes, or a quest that must be fulfilled in advance.

Nor does the simurgh ever speak plainly — answers are twisted riddles or rhymes. The simurgh uses a seeker's knowledge or perspective as the key to the truths it reveals, but humanity must find its own answers in the end. A good heart understands what it is intended to; an evil heart more than likely arrives at the wrong solution — and ruin. Thus the simurgh seeks to tip the scales in favor of good. Unfortunately, the majority of those who pursue the simurgh for insight do so out of greed.

FUTURE FATE

The simurgh still exists in the modern world, prepared to share its knowledge and wisdom with the world. Sadly, the hubris of rationality makes man think he knows all truths, or that knowledge can be found through dissection, interrogation and force, rather than introspection, attention and consideration. The time for truth has not passed, but the time for humanity to know it may have.

IMAGE

The simurgh has no single form or appearance. It is whatever a culture or individual expects it to be. Sometimes, however, the simurgh descends among humans to bring knowledge to the deserving. On these forays, it assumes forms that the beneficiary does not recognize as wise or conciliatory — a snake, a rat, a babe. Only the keenly insightful realize that truth has no form and can come from any source, no matter how unlikely.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You are an elemental force of the universe. You are what you are, though you may appear in many forms, depending on what seekers expect of you. Form is irrelevant, though. Truth is all that matters. If man only knew to look for it in his heart, he would realize that he does not need you. Until then, you do what you can to coax humanity to true understanding. It's your role in the scheme of things.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5, Perception 10, Intelligence 8, Wits 10

Abilities: Alertness 6, Animal Speech 4, Awareness 10, Cosmology 9, Culture 5, Empathy 8, Enigmas 8, Etiquette 4, Expression 5, Hiding 5, Lore (Any Kind) 6, Metaphysics 5, Occult 8

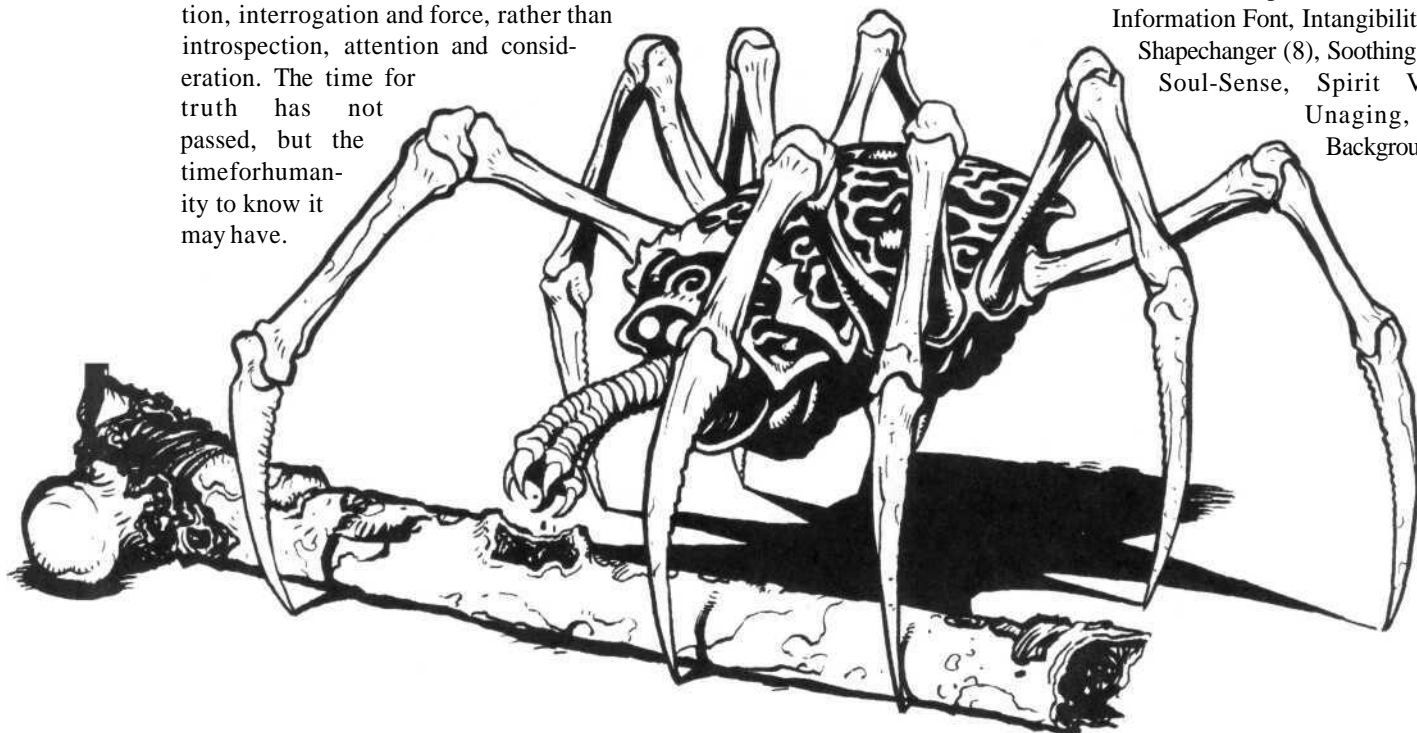
Element: Air (Gentle friend)

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: Unknown

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Arcane Background (5), Cray Background (5), Fearlessness (3), Human Speech, Immunity (15), Information Font, Intangibility (10), Shapechanger (8), Soothing Voice, Soul-Sense, Spirit Vision, Unaging, Years Background (5)



UMKOVU

*The wretched desert takes its form, the jackal proud and tight.
In search of you, I feel my way through the slowest heaving night.*
-Peter Gabriel, "Come Talk to Me"

LEGENDRY

In the time before time, the first creatures crawled from the primordial ooze. Many struggled up the beach, slipping into the protective coverage of shivering ferns and yawning root caves. Others didn't have the strength to ride the wave of evolution ashore. They died and their bodies rotted in the mud, sinking slowly back into the cycle from which they came. They became fodder for the next generation. They nourished the Earth.

Yet other creatures came and picked greedily at the bones of the dead as hungrily as the Earth sought to draw them in. Among these scavengers were the first spiders, clacking their mandibles around cartilage to reach the soft wet meat beyond. They survived. They evolved. And in time, with the division of the continents, they spread throughout the world.

DESCRIPTION

The aboriginal peoples of Eastern Africa first put a name to ancient spiders, calling them *Umkovu*, "Soul Eaters". Early witch doctors of the Bantu tribe discovered that *Umkovu* had special powers that could be directed by man. The lore was passed down through generations, from mentor to student. Only the witch doctors knew how to tame and use the spiders, and they guarded their knowledge greedily. It created their mystique and instilled fear in their fellow tribesmen.

African witch doctors have long kept *Umkovu* as guardians in their homes. They know that paranoia and ignorance of the creatures keep thieves at bay. They have learned that as long as the spiders are well-fed, they do not attack living creatures. Only those foolish enough to neglect the feeding and care of their *Umkovu* become victims themselves.

Umkovu feed on the bone marrow of the dead, preferably the recently dead. If they can't find dead bones, they create them. Their strong mandibles can crack even the largest remains, whether animal or human — the spiders aren't particular so long as the marrow has begun its slow decay.

Umkovu lay their eggs in marrow, too, cracking a bone, implanting their seeds, and then sealing the fissure with thick, hard webbing. The eggs incubate for months, during which time the spiderlings are most vulnerable. Remarkably, only two spiders emerge from each hatching: a large, healthy female and a small, weak male. These two devour their siblings in the nest, the female selfishly hoarding most of the feast. Once emerged, she protects the male as they travel in search of territory of their own. The process then begins again. The male fertilizes the female's eggs, then is consumed

by her, and she never procreates again. *Umkovu* killed through accident or injury cannot be replaced, and the spiders slowly dwindle in number.

When feeding, the *Umkovu* displays bizarre behavior. It trembles and shakes as it sucks in marrow. Its legs clatter and its eyes glow with scarlet intensity. The spider is said to experience the emotions and thoughts of the victim at the moment of death. Sometimes it emits a piercing scream. Other times it sighs with unbearable sorrow. Pigments also shift and change on the broad plate of its carapace. Many believe that the last image witnessed by the deceased can be seen in the spider's ink-blot designs. In some cases, this may be the face of a murderer.

The *Umkovu* feeds until its convulsions become too intense to endure. The spider is most dangerous at this moment. Driven by the pain, fear and horror of the death-moment, the creature thrashes and whirls, a dervish dancing to a tempestuous dirge. If cornered or trapped, it spews volatile venom. Finally sated and exhausted, the spider collapses into a ball, mandibles clacking reflexively.

Umkovu gravitate toward war-torn areas, seeking territory that offers a constant food supply. Many live in the virgin rain forests of Africa and South America, where the natural order remains closest to the spiders' primordial origins. Others find a more peaceful existence in slaughterhouses and meat factories. As long as they remain well-fed, they pose no danger to living beings. Hungry *Umkovu*, however, seek out a victim and use their venomous bite to create food where none existed before. Concentrated *Umkovu* poison is distilled within the creatures from marrow toxins. The spiders' venom has become more virulent with the advent of technology and its corrupt touch.

FUTURE FATE

Umkovu still exist in the modern world, though in few numbers. Modern times have a disturbing effect on the creature: Pesticides and human incursion into natural places destroy the spiders' native lands and slaughter the creatures. Ironically, those that live adapt well to the human world, surviving off the other creatures that people kill — and off people themselves. Indeed, humanity's poisons seem to strengthen the *Umkovu*, and perhaps change it in ways that not even the spider senses....

IMAGE

Terrifying to behold, the *Umkovu* evokes images of the dead. Its carapaced legs and body have the pallor of bone. Like a skeletal, eight-fingered hand, it crouches in dark corners and shadows, always ready to spring. Its furtive movements mingle with quick, racing bolts across open spaces. The *Umkovu* clatter-clacks as it moves across hard surfaces. Small sticky claws at the ends of its legs allow it to climb all but the most slick of surfaces. Its mandibles jut out from its mouth, curling in, ever-grasping, ever-smashing. Most disturbing of all are the *Umkovu*'s eyes. Scarlet orbs

like fresh blood watch everything and never close. They are crystallized into a billion individual blood cells that shine of their own accord. Something human lurks in those eyes, which makes the creature all the more disturbing. One must wonder what lingering hatred or desire for vengeance the Umkovu retains after its death-throes.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

The meat that you feed on — the tall ones—think you eat to survive, that you need nourishment to live. You need sustenance, true, but not of any substance. It's the death-moment that sustains you. You are the embodiment of other creatures' passing. Their fear, hatred, regret and even calm are yours to cherish. Those emotions sate you, but only for a time. They determine your nature, but only for a time. Revenge is sweet when it is achieved posthumously. Yet tranquillity quiets your spirit. Let's see what spirit your next meal will bring.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Cosmology 3, Culture 2, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Hiding 4, Intimidation 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Element: Metal (Greedy collector)

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, -2, -5, Crushed

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Mandibles for 3 dice, whirling attack for 4 dice; Bizarre Hunger (4), Cast Iron Stomach, Death-Sense (sees last image of victim), Extra Speed (3), Flexible, Immunity (10; industrial toxins), Loyalty, Nightsight, Offensive to Animals, Perfect Balance, Shadow-walking (4), Size (8), Venom (3), Wall Crawling, Webbing

UNICORN

One by one in the moonlight there,

Neighing far off on the haunted air

The unicorns come down to the sea.

— Corbin Aiken, "Evening Song"

LEGENDRY

Shadow Tracker darted through the dense undergrowth, feet thudding on the forest floor, sweat running down his face. He wiped it away with a snarl, eyes set on the vague white form ahead of him, barely visible through a maze of trees. Shadow Tracker had trailed his unicorn for five days over hot, harsh terrain. Fatigue cramped his muscles, but he didn't care. Glory did not wait for tired bones.

The unicorn had first appeared to Shadow Tracker over a month ago, after his pack had destroyed that Wyrms abomination. He hadn't been badly hurt in the fight — it was only a scrape — but no one believed what he saw. They said he must have been hallucinating after the Wyrms beast had wounded him. Those that would even listen to him warned that even if he *had* seen a unicorn it was an emissary from the spirit world and should be left alone. At first their words made sense, but as the weather became hot — unnaturally so — he knew the recurring image was taunting him. The only way he could prove what he had seen would be to stalk and kill it—just as he had that Wyrms creature. This was to be his greatest test. What other warrior could brag of taking down a unicorn? The glory would be unimaginable, and his stories would grace the fire-side for generations to come.

Shadow Tracker growled, pushing his muscles to the limit in a last burst of speed. The white shape grew closer, closer — and then disappeared. Shadow Tracker stumbled into a clearing, clawing away branches furiously. His eyes darted around the wooded knoll. Leaves rustled and there it was, drinking from a narrow creek. Shadow Tracker tensed, breath ragged in his chest. *Now*. He raised his spear with a clawed hand, poised to strike a killing blow.

At the moment the unicorn raised its head, the eyes of hunter and prey locked, and Shadow Tracker froze. A soft voice eased into his mind and images washed over him. He saw his tribe waiting as its best hunter selfishly pursued an unattainable waking dream. He saw himself—raving, filthy, mad — pursuing his foolish glory while they waited.

It was then that his fever broke. The spear fell from his hand. The unicorn's obsidian hoofbroke the dirt, and Shadow Tracker's head sunk. He knew he could not meet those dark, knowing eyes again, but, in a breath, the unicorn was gone.

Shadow Tracker returned to his people a moon later, forever changed. He never spoke of the hunt, but devoted himself to serving his tribe. Shadow Tracker's people embraced the change in their great warrior and followed him to righteous glory. Shadow Tracker finally died in battle, a legendary hero, and fire-side storytellers still speak his name today.

DESCRIPTION

Unicorns have embodied mystery since the birth of myth. The creatures represent the ultimate in the unattainable, always just out of reach, eternally elusive. In short, the horned beasts are the very stuff of legends. Unicorns are perhaps the most renowned of all mythical creatures, and for good reason — their famous spiraled horns are rumored to purify water, nullify poison and even cure the most vile illnesses.

The horned stallion has represented many things over time, from virile ferocity and strength to passivity, purity and benevolence. Modern stories paint these creatures as pacifistic, the embodiments of love and light who shy away from human eyes. Ancient peoples had a different, more visceral

perception of the unicorn. The beasts were believed to be warlike, ferocious protectors, the ideal of "male" virtues. They were treated with a mixture of fear and awe, and respected as defenders of the forests and all wild things.

Masculine attributions to the unicorn may have inspired the idea that only a virgin could approach the beast safely. With its phallic horn and fierce constitution, the unicorn could be counter-balanced only by its complete opposite — feminine innocence, the purity and meekness associated with virgins. Somehow this assumption evolved into "fact" and even altered peoples' perceptions of the beast. Unicorns thus became associated with virginal qualities like peacefulness and purity of heart. Medieval artwork even depicts the unicorn as a representation of Christ, the purifying capabilities of its horn emulating Christ's healing powers.

Perhaps unicorns are all of these things. However, anyone fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to encounter one is likely to see the beast's ferocious aspect. As protector of its forest habitat, a unicorn is hostile to almost all interlopers. Unicorns are intimately bound to the land on which they live, and can sense danger when some area or creature is threatened there. Though unicorns may prize peace, it must be preserved or won through violence.

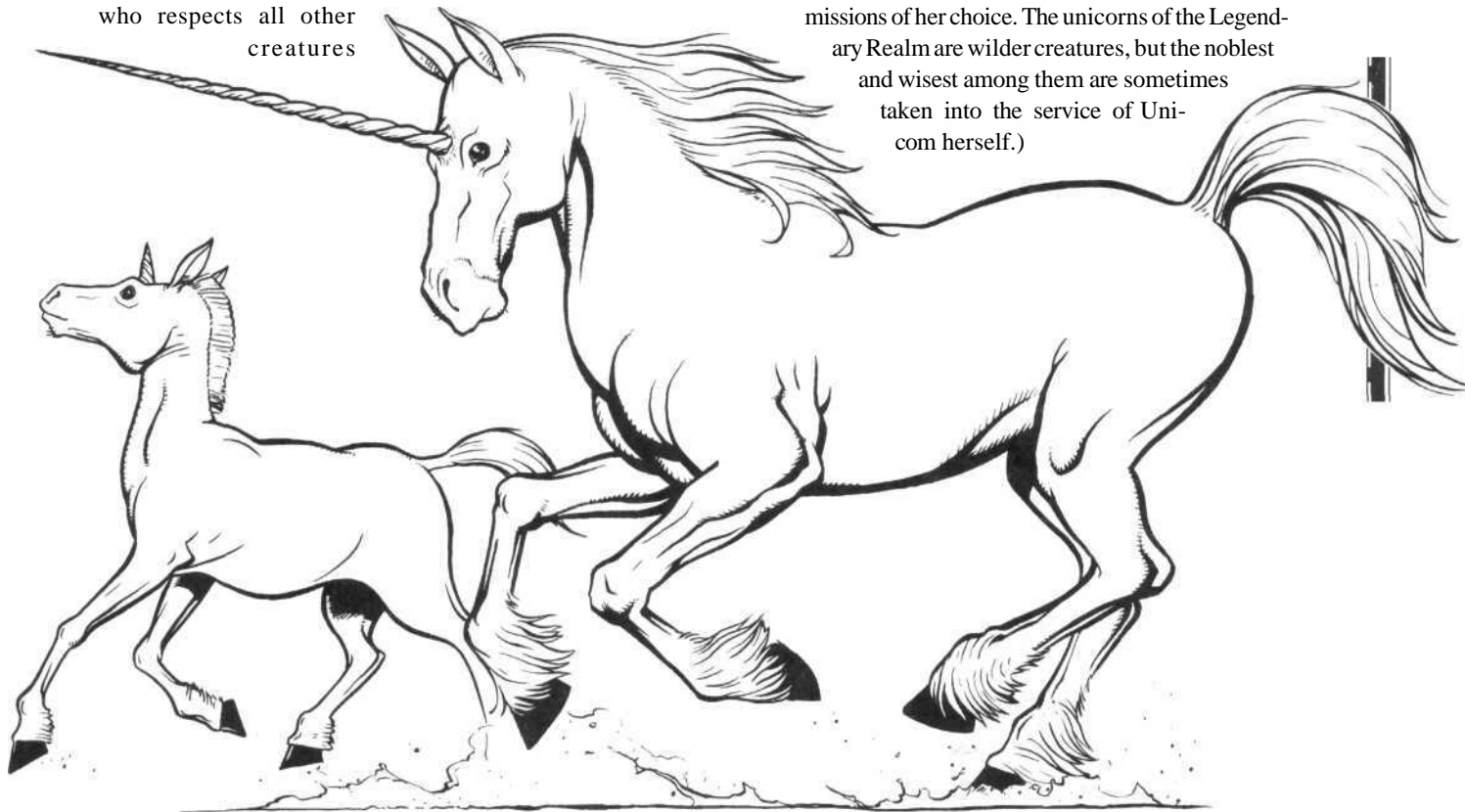
Unicorns are suspicious of humans as a rule. Tales of being conquered by virgins are not altogether true — the creatures are not interested in the chastity of human girls. Rather, they are attracted to any being who possesses purity of heart, soul and mind; anyone who respects all other creatures

and avoids harming living things. A unicorn is drawn irresistibly to such a person, whether it be a child or a middle-aged washerwoman with seven children.

The horned beasts are solitary, each claiming a wide expanse of forest on reaching maturity. They live most of their lives alone, meeting only to mate. The female drops a foal every two years and raises the offspring without the assistance of the male. The foal is vulnerable for its first several years, and the mother fights fearlessly to defend her child. She teaches it to forage and helps it control the magical abilities of its horn before it claims its own range. Unicorns are said to live for a century, barring natural disaster or spear point. Even when wounded, the animals heal quickly and have notoriously enduring constitutions.

The magical properties of unicorn horns are legendary. They're attributed with detecting poison in food and drink and curing an array of ailments, including epilepsy. Kings and bishops, with their acute paranoia, go to great lengths to obtain a horn to ensure their own survival, as do alchemists and magi to unleash the inherent properties of the magical treasures. However, because unicorns are so elusive, many beguilers pass off antelope or goat horns as the real thing. Of course, these charlatans must move on quickly before the local lord falls dead at the dinner table.

(To the Changing Breeds, there is one true Unicorn, the tribal totem of the Children of Gaia. She is a spirit of empathy and peace, although she will not shirk from spilling blood if it proves necessary. The myriad Unicorn-spirits that serve her, from Gafflings to Jagglings, sometimes materialize in the physical world on missions of her choice. The unicorns of the Legendary Realm are wilder creatures, but the noblest and wisest among them are sometimes taken into the service of Unicorn herself.)



FUTURE FATE

Unicorns are virtually nonexistent in the modern world. As vast forests shrink, the majestic animals are left vulnerable to the dangers of the world — namely the depredations of humanity. The animals are chased off the ends of the world, disguise themselves so well that no human can recognize them or seclude themselves so fanatically that no human has survived an encounter. The handful of unicorn horns possessed in the modern world are hidden carefully and guarded vigilantly, whether out of covetousness or to keep the beasts' existence a secret.

IMAGE

Modern lore depicts the unicorn as a magnificent snowy white, long-maned horse with delicate features — with an ivory-colored horn rising from its forehead. In reality, unicorns have little in common with horses save their size. The horned beasts' build and features, particularly their large dark eyes, are similar to a deer's. Their tails are several feet in long and, like that of a lion, tipped with a furry tuft. Covered in soft, off-white hair, a unicorn's streamlined body is built for speed. A unicorn's talon-sharp hooves resemble those of a goat, and are formidable weapons.

The much-fabled horn of an adult unicorn is a smaller than one might imagine — eight to 11 inches long — and typically colored in shades ranging from slate gray to black. The unicorn's horn is little more than a bony nub at birth, which grows slowly throughout the creature's life. The number of spirals along a horn indicate the creature's age.

Unicorns communicate through a mixture of nickers, whinnies and rudimentary telepathic images. All horned beasts possess an innate psychic ability to share simple visions with others, whether intelligent or primal.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You know your duty. You protect the wild lands, the untamed forests and all the creatures that live there. Humans cannot be trusted — greed rots their souls. They seek to harness the power of your horn for their own good, giving no thought to other living beings. Avoid such base creatures. Only the pure of heart are worth your gifts. You value serenity, but understand that action is necessary to protect yourself, your young and your home. If a human proves worthy, try to teach her; otherwise, remain as elusive and solitary as your instincts demand. The Changing Breeds are better than most two-legged creatures — many of them heed your warnings and have proper respect for the wild places. Treat them with care, and bless the worthy ones among them with your knowledge.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Animal Speech 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Cosmology 3, Culture 2, Dodge 4, Elusion 4, Empathy 4, Enigmas 2, Hiding 4, Intimidation 4, Intuition 3, Occult 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Swimming 1, Tracking 4

Element: Water (Graceful sensualist)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 2, -2 x 2, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks/Powers: Trample for 6 dice, gore for 8 dice, bite for 4 dice; Acute Senses (3), Allies Background (3), Arcane Background (4), Armor, Bond-Sharing (4), Cray Background (3), Elemental Touch (10), Extra Speed (10), Human Speech, Information Font, Mystick Shield (6), Shadow-walking (4), Shapechanger (5), Shared Knowledge (5), Shy, Soul-Sense, Spirit Travel (10), Spirit Vision

VODAYANY

Where the streamer runneth smoothest, the water is deepest.

— John Lyly

LEGENDRY

One final, physical frontier on this planet Earth remains to be overcome: the waters. What hides down there, out of sight, out of reach of man's curious delvings? What lurks in the dark depths of the lakes and ponds, the seas and rivers? How is it that humankind has reached such a level of intelligence and enlightenment, yet has not discovered the answers to these questions? Creatures throughout the ages have crawled out from the gloomy surface of still lakes and left their marks on shore for mortals to ponder. They have stolen loved ones, drawing them down into the silt-fogged waters where no one dares to follow. These mysterious monsters do nothing to quell landlubber curiosity. They slip away when looked at directly and keep their secrets selfishly to themselves.

DESCRIPTION

Many myths surround the creatures of the deep, not all of them pleasant. To the Russians, one type of water creature is called "vodayany" (though it has many other names throughout the world). These are the undead trapped in water, just as the living are "trapped" in air. Some cultures relegate their dead to oceans, lakes or rivers with great ceremony and reverence. This ancient tradition has root in the belief that drowning victims never die, but live in secret cities deep in the water's bosom.

Vodayany exist in cold deep lakes, river beds and seas. They build homes for themselves over the centuries, reconstructing their previous environs from the hulls of ships, rusty treasures salvaged from sunken boats, and from the bottles, effluvia and trinkets tossed into the water, forming a mockery of their lost lives. Vodayany aquatic civilizations involve all the complications and intricacies of the world above. They

have nobles and slaves. They love, hate, create and destroy in passionate unives paralleling their breathing days. Yet they have forgotten their former lives in the air. Vodayany have ceased to yearn for the sun's warmth. As the decades and centuries pass, the underwater world becomes their only true home.

The moon imposes its will on vodayany, as it does on the waters themselves. The full moon saps the unliving creatures' strength. They rest during the waning time and arise refreshed as the lunar cycle begins again. Thus these beings measure time by the phases of the moon, by the rise and fall of the tides.

True death comes to the vodayany only when their bodies are destroyed. Air and sun are anathema to them, resuming the normal process of their decay and barring them from the surface for long. Those stupid or stubborn enough to leave their watery "graves" to seek out friends or loved ones dry up and collapse within hours. Vodayany can emerge longer at night, safe from the sun's rays, but most dare not travel far, even in the shelter of darkness. Barring battle wounds and trips to the surface, these beings can exist eternally.

Ancient vodayany established their societal rules, and new arrivals must adapt to the old ways or be destroyed. Slavery to the nobility is common. A caste system as old as the vodayany themselves determines who rules and who serves. Rebellions occur, but rarely succeed, as most new arrivals find their indoctrination complete and thorough. Old vodayany take advantage of "newborn's" confusion to force those citizens to comply.

Vodayany cannot reproduce by themselves, so they often recruit among mortals foolish enough to swim at night. Ancients in need of more slaves send hunters to retrieve air-breathers. Sometimes a vodayany becomes infatuated with a mortal spied ashore. If that mortal then enters the water for a swim, the vodayany seizes the moment to capture her love forever. Thus the vodayany renew their population through quiet kidnapping. As human travelers encroach further on the seas, the vodayany draw in greater numbers while simultaneously retreating to greater depths.

Communication among these creatures has changed over time. Each vodayany culture, isolated from the others by great expanses of air and land, has a unique language based on gestures and touch. Each beautiful and expressive form of sign language has its own complicated "vocabulary," its own dialects and slang. These creatures draw their most common expressions from water-experiences, and they have unique words for things like metal, sunships and fire. The old language of the ancients mingles with concepts brought beneath the waves by the modern dead.

FUTURE FATE

The passage of time makes man no more wise or wary. There are always people foolish enough to explore murky waters or to swim at night, when the submerged hand disappears before the face. Thus the vodayany never fade. Their ages-old culture thrives



even if it must constantly seek darker trenches and deeper pools in which to hide. The intrusions of the living are a perpetual threat, but also a constant rejuvenation. And if the vodany's submerged civilizations are discovered, they have the advantage, for men will have to come for them....

IMAGE

Imagine slipping beneath the surface of a murky lake. Imagine the water pulling you down, the grasping plants tugging at your legs, drawing you deeper into the somber depths. Imagine that moment when you can't hold your breath any longer and you open your mouth wide to suck in the cold. It fills your lungs, relieving the burning emptiness. Your eyes open and your world shifts. Suddenly the water caresses you, its pressure embraces you. The chill slows your racing heart. Everything is quiet. At first you don't understand why there's no pain, but perhaps it's better that way.

Others — their hair flowing, skin oily, bodies bloated, eyes glimmering — come for you. They press swollen fingers to your body in hopes of catching its dying warmth. Perhaps they fight over you, pushing and shoving, tearing away chunks of reedy hair from each other. They move like the water itself, and you, newly conceived in this shadowy womb, start to forget the sun.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

There is a vast, secret world here, but you are not allowed to know it. Harvest fish and plants, you're told. Seek out the clearly defined shadows above, where the air-breathers lurk in their vessels, and report your findings to the hunters. Gather the shells that will become the ancients' palaces.

These tasks are not for you. There is a world to explore, so much different from... something that you struggle to recall. Surely life among all this bounty should not be spent enslaved. You must find your own way, the ancients be damned.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Abilities: Athletics (Swimming) 4, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Elusion 3, Etiquette 2, Foraging 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 3

Element: Water (Stagnant traditionalist)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -2 x 3, -5, Destroyed

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks/Powers: Alien Appearance (4), Hibernation (during waning moon), Loyalty, Nightsight, Unaging, Vulnerability (5 sunlight; 4 air), Vulnerability (4; Strength reduced to 0 during waning of moon), Shadow-walking (4), Years Background (5)

WILDE BEAST

A faithful and good servant is a real godsend; but truly 'tis a rare bird in the land.

— Martin Luther

LEGENDRY

Illuminated manuscripts and tapestries from medieval Europe show many mythical beasts. Among these, the wilde beast romps across the most ancient pages and through the threads of tapestries retrieved from the halls of old.

The creature — a lion and a dog combined, half and half — originated as an alchemical symbol for the synthesis of *aqua regia* ("royal water" — a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acids) and matter, creating a volatile, solid substance that, when excited, would explode. Early alchemists struggled to translate the symbolic language of their predecessors, poring over the drawings that held the secrets of the ancient masters. One such delver into mysteries, a 12th-century Cosian named Feinelli, performed a dangerous experiment. A surgeon dabbling in the secrets of alchemy, Feinelli took the symbolism of alchemy literally and decided to create one of the creatures in the text. Through a blasphemous process of transmutation, he made a living wilde beast. When he tried to cage it, however, the creature disemboweled him, his wife and his children before disappearing into the forest.

It did not remain a single beast for long. Some folk claim it mated with an ass, others, with a stag. Based on the creature's appearance, it seems to have found dogs to its liking. Now the wilde beast has several hundred descendants. Although Cosians swear the original creature is long dead, the legend of the wilde beast thrives.

DESCRIPTION

A wilde beast combines the best predatory skills of the lion with the docile, loyal personality traits of a spaniel. As one might guess, it makes an excellent pet or guardian when treated well. Fiercely proud, the "beest" preens constantly, licking her fur until it shines, and loves nothing more than to strut and perform tricks. Despite its colloquial nickname, the wilde beast seems to prefer domestication to the wilds. A simple creature, it sleeps nearly 18 hours a day, curled in a patch of sunlight or at the foot of a bed, since her awkward ancestry makes her susceptible to weariness and ill humors. Inclined toward the hunt, the wilde beast prefers to stalk and kill her own food, though a fresh carcass does in a pinch.

Like spaniels, these creatures choose one master or family to whom they are perfectly loyal. Unlike spaniels, they can and do kill anyone who threatens those families. Despite domestication, wilde beasts, like their lion siblings, are clever and have a wild streak that can never be tamed completely. A blood-scent, the sight of a weak or injured animal or the aroma of bitch-heat turns these creatures into monsters. When hungry,

they stalk their prey, kill it and eat it. If hungry enough, a beast attacks an adult human. Her favorite prey is small children — they're easy to kill, they don't fight back, and they taste delicious. A wilde beast also keeps her "owner's" yard free of birds, rabbits, squirrels, cats, dogs and nosy neighbors. Needless to say, anyone who owns a wilde beast must take special precautions to ensure that the animal doesn't escape.

FUTURE FATE

Despite wilde beasts' popularity among Cosian alchemists — especially members of the Houses of Fire (who use them as bodyguards), Books (who use them as sentinels at their archives) and Olympus (who breed and experiment with them) — the creatures are put on the Daedalean "proscribed" list in the 1600s. A few escape to the wilds or are hidden by their masters, but the species is largely exterminated by the 1700s.

IMAGE

Lean muscle ripples along the wilde beast's golden shanks as it prowls its habitat. It may pause by an oak tree to stretch and scratch lion-claws in the ragged bark, or it may chase a butterfly playfully across the grass. It may also sit and lean to one hip for a quick scratch behind the ear, its oversized spaniel paw digging with quick jerks at a flea

or dry skin. With a long, lean stretch, it yawns, jaw dropping to reveal wicked teeth and a rough pink tongue. Big cat from the shoulders forward and big dog from there back, the wilde beast is smaller than a male lion and bigger than a spaniel. Its full mane halos a feline face and matches the hair on its feathery spaniel tail. Sharp eyes see every movement and alert ears hear the slightest whisper.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

With the keen senses of two great predators, you stand watch over the landscape before you. Hunting is a joy, but it demands energy that you rarely possess. Sleep often to maintain your strength.

TRAITS

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

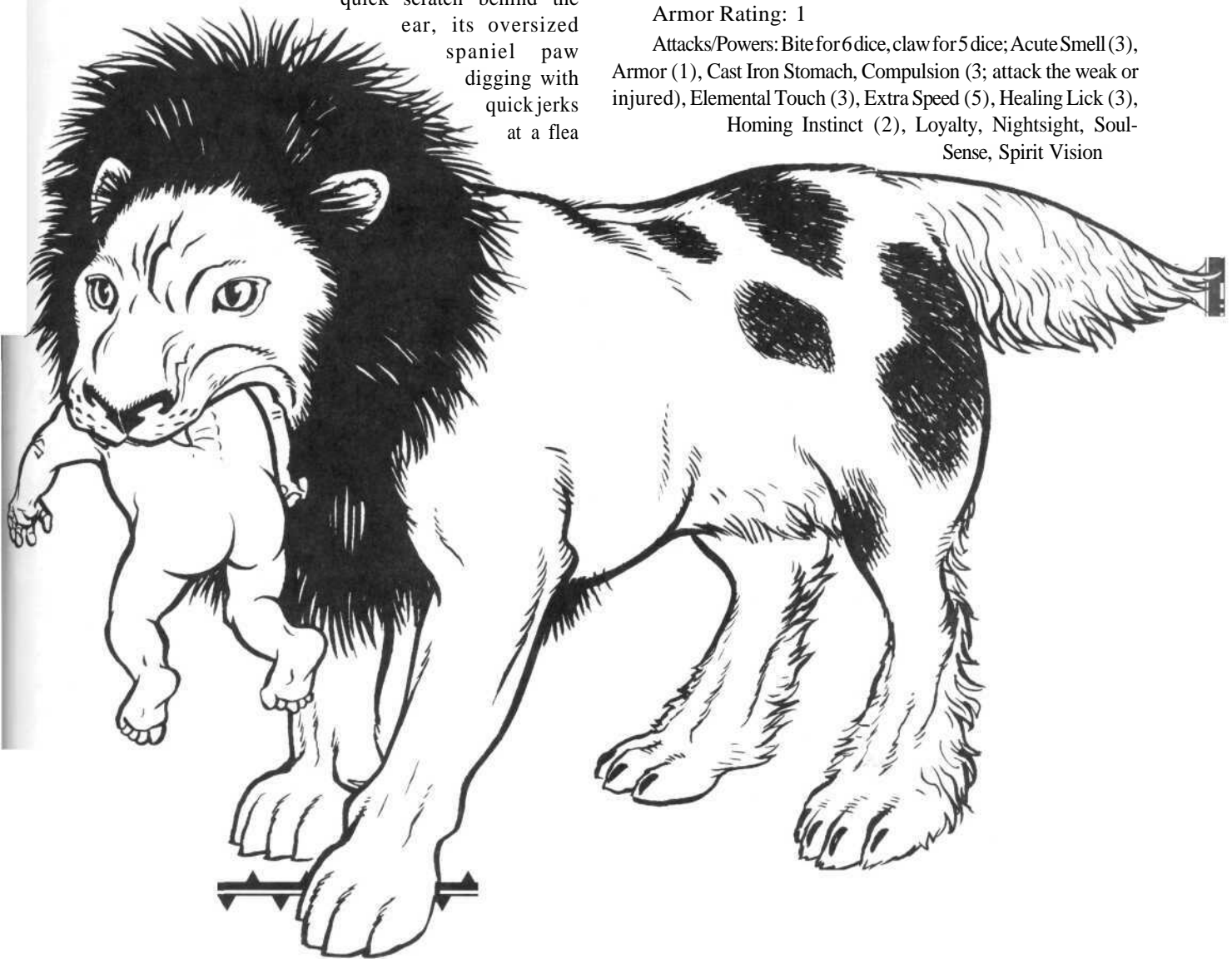
Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 4, Stealth 3, Wild Hunting 3

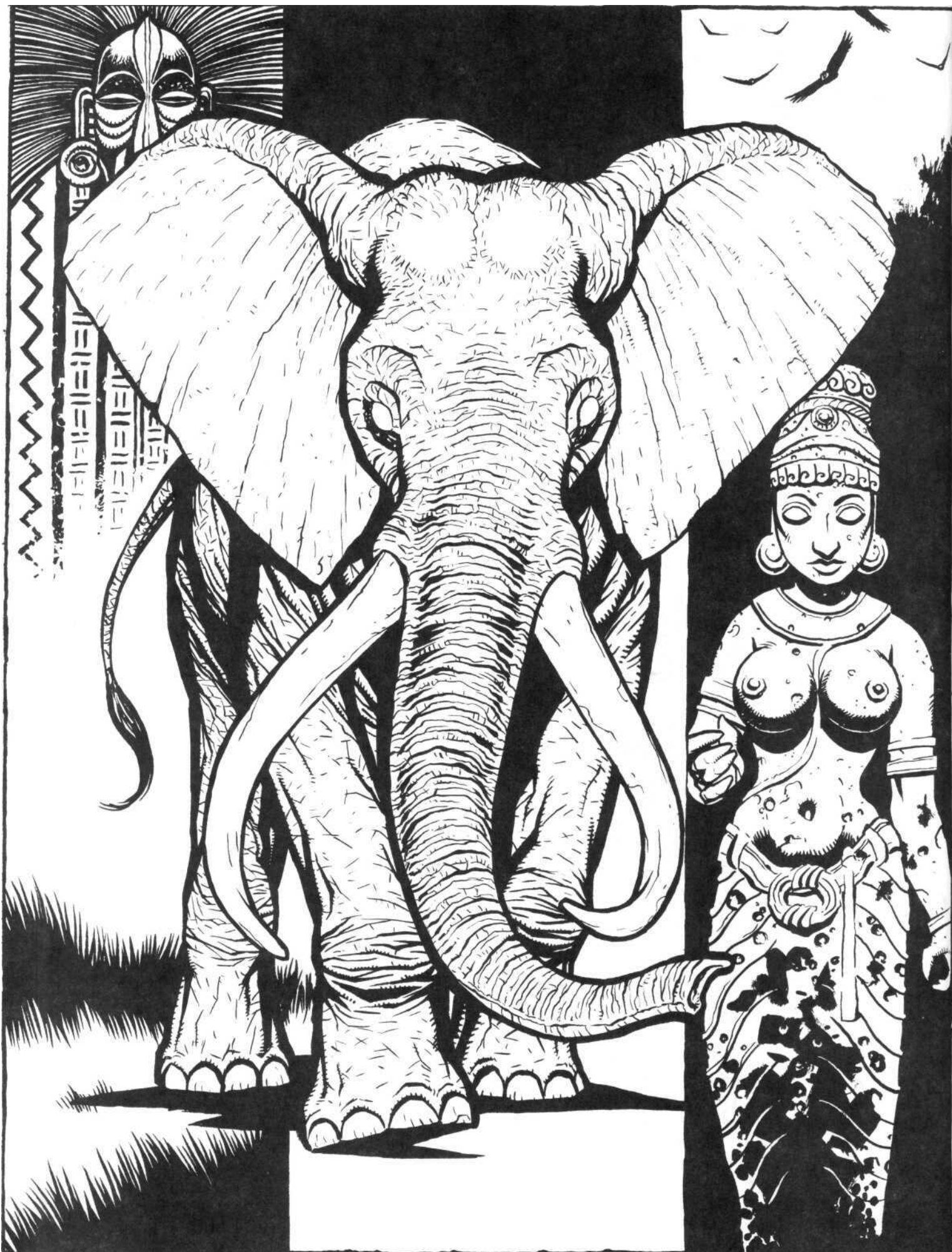
Element: Earth (Solid guardian)

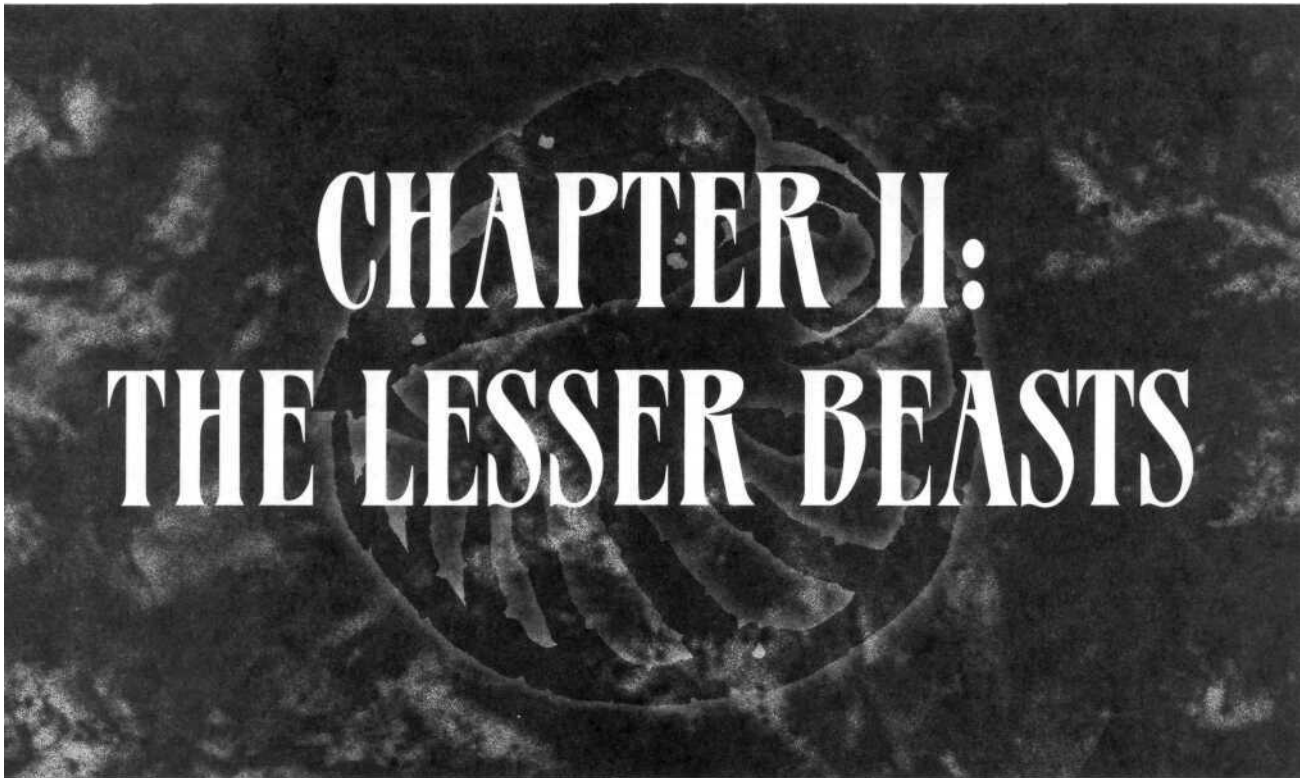
Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -2, -3, -5, Incapacitated
Armor Rating: 1

Attacks/Powers: Bite for 6 dice, claw for 5 dice; Acute Smell (3), Armor (1), Cast Iron Stomach, Compulsion (3; attack the weak or injured), Elemental Touch (3), Extra Speed (5), Healing Lick (3), Homing Instinct (2), Loyalty, Nightsight, Soul-Sense, Spirit Vision







CHAPTER II: THE LESSER BEASTS

I am not ambitious to appear a man of letters: I could be content the world should think I had scarce looked on any other book than that of nature.
- *The Philosophical Works of Robert Boyle, vol. 1*

Unlike the scarce magical beasts, the common "lesser" animals of wood, stream and sky remain within the sight of the common man. Each day, normal farmers, merchants and other folk live with such beasts — the goats in their pens, the sparrows outside their windows, the cats at their feet, the horses beneath their saddles. Even so, it is said that even the lowest of beasts carries magic within it. These are our cousins — lesser things, in some philosophies, but touched by Divinity nonetheless. To shamans and pagans, even the "lesser animals" possess souls, intellect and insight. Just because an animal chooses not to share is no reason to believe she has nothing worth sharing.

Magi and their ilk spend far more time in the company of normal animals than in the presence of the greater beasts; as familiar as they are, it's terribly easy to overlook such creatures. Spend a moment to reflect on it, however, and the magical side of lesser beasts becomes clear. The musings of a cat, the play of a hawk, the fierce maternalism of a she-wolf — even the wisest magi find such behaviors enigmatic. Only the Garou, who share a close kinship with their cousins, can grasp the thoughts behind an animal's eyes. Yet these mysteries walk beside us — as pets, as guardians, as food, occasionally and they are not to be discounted.

From a player perspective, it's a challenge to enter an animal's skin. Beasts do not think as humans do, but glide on instinct, reaction and training. Animals exist in the here and now, not in the abstract realms of human pondering. The more intelligent ones might well contemplate "higher" issues, but they approach them with a much different perspective. If you choose to play an animal, set a clear distinction between your human viewpoint and that of your "host." Try to avoid being silly. Instead, think of yourself with the heightened senses and instinctive reactions of an animal, with the additional wisdom that comes with inner magic. That magic can be seen in the folklore that surrounds each living thing. For every animal, there are tales.... If you choose to "ride the beast," those tales become more than simple myths — they become your pedigree.

The living world is too vast to encompass in one chapter — or even one book! The following animals, however, might play a major part in your chronicle. The "truth" behind the folklore may be literal, or it might simply be inspired by human perceptions of "bestly" ways. No matter how simple they might seem, however, animals are never mere ciphers. Each one has goals, a personality, a temperament...

And a touch of magic.

NOTES ABOUT TRAITS

Mythical animals differ somewhat from their “scientifically defined” counterparts. In legend, even the humblest beasts possess magical talents. To reflect the mythical elements ascribed to animals, the following Trait listings feature an optional “Legendary Powers” heading. The Special Advantages and other Traits mentioned here are appropriate for high-fantasy chronicles, but may seem awkward or silly in “realistic” tales. Perhaps all beasts once possessed such powers, but lost them as humanity took over the world. Perhaps these powers are simply legendary talents that only a few special animals (like familiars and spirit emissaries) truly have. Traits in italics suit “normal” beasts; ones in plain text reflect the fantastic.

It's worth noting that many beasts are also credited with powers (fertility, good fortune, elemental affinities, etc.) that go beyond Traits. If you want to reflect such things in your chronicle, simply consider them “plot elements” rather than powers. Such occurrences manifest in subtle ways when they will (and how they will) at the Storyteller's whim.

To avoid endless redundancy, assume that most beasts possess the following Traits: Mental and Social 1; Perception 2; Survival 4; Wild Hunting 3; Claws, Fangs and/or Horns; and, if appropriate, Size. Exceptions are noted below.

MOVEMENT

Creatures travel at different rates and sometimes in completely different ways. **The Bygone Bestiary** presents movement rates in a standard format: Walk/Run/Other. “Other” typically covers flying or swimming, whatever is appropriate for the animal in question. Movement rates are measured in yards per turn.

ALLIGATOR/CROCODILE

/ do not make war against the dead.

— Homer

Mythology: In the murky, stagnant dampness of the swamps, tree logs sink into slow decay. New life arises from this rotteness — all keen eyes, glittering teeth and long, patient hunger.

He comes to devour the dead, this snap-jawed liar, pretending to weep for the souls he has consumed and hungry for the flesh of sinners. From the Nile currents to the brackish pools of the New World, this scaly horror epitomizes a primal fear of the water and the things beneath its surface.

To many, he is a god — some regard him as the face of immortality, others as the devourer of souls. An eerie wisdom lurks behind his eyes, as if everything dark and hidden has welled up in the form of an all-seeing beast. His jaws shatter boats; his tail cracks bones; his skin deflects all but the sharpest weapons. Despite his intelligence, he's an alien thing — a creature far older than we can imagine.

Description: With their long bodies and rough, bark-like hide, alligators, caimans and crocodiles are easily mistaken for rotting logs — a fatal error. A crocodilian lies silent and unmoving in the water, submerged up to its eyes and nostrils, waiting for an unwary animal to approach. The creature's powerful jaws lie half-open, sometimes picked by the birds which drift down to perch in the crocodile's mouth. Despite its bulk, this predator is fast; on land or in the water, it can bolt to the chase with terrifying speed.

Such beasts are swampland dragons, long and dense with muscle, sharp of tooth and incredibly strong of jaw: They lack only wings and flame. Although not terribly social, they don't seem to mind the presence of others like them. Crocodilians lurk in the steamy waters of swamplands, preying on fish, birds and the occasional hapless human.

Roleplaying Hints: Let other predators scurry around after their prey! All you have to do is lie nearly hidden in the water and wait for dinner to drift right into your jaws. Reserve your strength and speed for the times you really need them. Like the body below the water's surface, these talents are best kept secret.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 3

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -3 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 2

Attacks: Bite for 6 dice; tail lash for 4.

Move: 5/26/10

Legendary Powers: Armor (2), Death-Sense, Mesmerism (6), *Water-Breathing* (3)

APE/MONKEY

I asserted — *and I repeat* — that a man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for his grandfather. If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling it would rather be a man.

- T. H. Huxley

Mythology: From the incarnation of the Egyptian Thoth (god of wisdom and learning) to the shackled baboon at Satan's right hand, the ape and his cousin the monkey have long ties to human legend. In Hindu lore, the noble yet fearsome Hanuman aided Rama on many vital quests. In Africa, the great ape is a dangerous friend — he taught humans how to eat certain plants, but can be wild in his rage. Mayan mysticks looked to the monkey as the teacher of



mathematics and writing, and the Chinese considered the immortal Monkey King a sacrilegious but essential being — the vital spark of chaos in an ordered world, caged by the power of the Buddha, but never truly tamed.

To the Christian, the ape is a sinner with a mirror in his hand, woefully regarding his fallen state. Lust, greed and anger have debased him, and he fiddles with himself as the world slides into Hell. Chained to a master's music-box, the dancing monkey capers to please the crowd, a clever and unruly slave. His resemblance to man raises many disturbing questions in the heads of philosophers and scientists, but no one can doubt the bonds between the human and the ape. If the sagacious simian can rise above his animal nature, the mystics say, surely any human can as well.

Description: From the jungles of Africa and South America to the Asiatic mountains, simians cast a shadow disconcertingly similar to humankind. (On many levels, it may even be said that the apes have the better end of the comparison.) Endowed with powerful senses, physical might and a strong sense of community, simians possess many advantages over the average beast. Gathered into troops or foraging off alone, the apes and their smaller cousins mingle great strength with agility and a surprising degree of intelligence.

In Africa and lower Asia, huge apes reach or exceed the height of a man. The more-widespread monkeys (found in jungles across the world) may be smaller, but can still out-muscle most human beings. In the years before gun technology, few people could hope to best a simian in combat; his combination of skill, dexterity, strength and large teeth make an ape a formidable, if reluctant, warrior.

For the most part, simians choose to mind their own business. They're mischievous, true, and may be counted on to pick apart anything that interests them. With few exceptions, though, they avoid open violence, and live on a steady diet of insects, plants and fruits. Every so often, an ape will go cannibal; according to some legends, bloody-handed gorillas stalk the deepest forests, savaging whatever they happen to catch. Such tales aside, however, the average ape would rather flee than fight — unless his family or supremacy is threatened. Then he becomes a monster. Beating his chest and shaking small trees, he screams his defiance; if an opponent refuses to budge, the ape moves in with rending hands and slashing teeth.

Agile monkeys are masters of the trees. Swinging, climbing and leaping their way through the jungles or forests, they banter and screech like children, tossing stones at their enemies or playing tag with each other. Even more than their larger kin,

these beasts employ simple tools: Rocks become noisemakers or nut-crackers, sticks become levers or fishing tools. Either one can become a weapon, but monkeys rarely need them. Like the ape, the monkey prefers discretion to force.

Often social, primates gather into loose bands of extended family groups. Under the benevolent dictatorship of a dominant male, they forage, groom each other, and practice elaborate social customs. Within the troop, simians take on the roles of scout, spokesman, nurse, entertainer or guardian. Games, challenges and occasional bribes keep the hierarchy within the troop flexible. To an ape, status comes more from what you do than who (or how big) you are.

Simians belong to a diverse collection of families. An "ape" could be a massive gorilla, a wise mandrill, a bright and powerful orangutan, a thoughtful gibbon or a lascivious baboon; a monkey might be the cleverly temperamental chimpanzee, a nervous spider monkey, or any one of dozens of smaller tree-dwellers. Regardless, apes are smart, perceptive and curious, just as their human cousins are.

Many Changing Breeds have a low opinion of apes, holding that the creatures have their place in Gaia's plan, but are all too reminiscent of the humans who have been excreting in drinking water and bending the wilderness to their will for millennia. Red Talons and Balam in particular draw a certain smug pleasure from dining on monkey.

Roleplaying Hints: Sniff the air and wonder what lies just out of sight. Although you may resemble a man, you're quite different. From the tops of trees or the edges of cliffs, you see the world from above. Be patient, loyal and inquisitive, but remain on your guard. The forests are full of enemies.

Attributes: Strength 2-5, Dexterity 2-4, Stamina 3-6
Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Stealth 3 (Acrobatics 4, Dodge 3 for monkeys)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1 (great apes); 0 (monkeys)

Attacks: Bite for 3-5 dice; claw for 2 dice

Move: 7/20/10 (ape); 5/10/10 (monkey)

Legendary Powers: Bond-Sharing (4), *Enhancement*, Human Speech, Information Font, Shared Knowledge (7), Unaging

BAT

For something is *amiss* or *out of place*

When mice with wings can wear a human face.

- Theodore Roethke, "The Bat"

Mythology: The Muskogee Indians speak of a lacrosse game long ago between the birds and the animals.

"Which side shall I choose?" Bat wondered. "I fly, so I could play with the birds; but I have teeth, and my wings are featherless, so I could side with the animals."

He offered himself to the birds and was rejected scornfully. The beasts would have turned him away as well for his tiny size, but in the end they took pity on him.

The game lasted longer than expected, with no victory. Darkness fell, and the players could no longer see. But before a draw could be called, Bat seized the ball and scored the winning



Description: Unearthly and forbidding, bats spend their days sleeping upside down in trees and caves, and their nights flying about in search of meals of insects, fruit and sometimes human blood. The only mammals who fly, bats find their way through the night with a high-pitched cry and the Devil's own senses.

Although vigilant and affectionate (at least to his own kind), the bat is often thought to be Satan's kin and the enemy of light. A spy and consort of witches, this creature often unwillingly finds his way into magic brews. The skin between his fingers mocks the feathered wings of angels, and his grizzled fur recalls the rats who devour the dead. The naturalists may say that such a beast is harmless — an eater of insects and drinker of fruits — but to the common folk, he is surely a creature of Hell.

To the Chinese, however, the night-flier has different connotations. His name, Fu, also reflects good fortune, and his flight mirrors the erratic upward course of the soul. A happy and prosperous creature, the Chinese bat represents the good life and those who live it. Shamans from the New Lands regard him with a skewed perspective. On one hand, he is honest and shy — a hard worker and a messenger — while on the other, he remains caught between worlds — a shapeshifter who falls between the cracks of Grandfather's plans.

The Garou rarely speak of the Children of Bat, one of the Changing Breeds lost forever in the War of Rage. The Uktena mutter that many Bat-spirits turned to the Wyrms in grief and hatred, and thus treat mortal bats with deference but without much trust.

Vampires without Protean don't like bats, and with good reason. Bats' high-pitched squeaking grates on the nerves of Cainites who have exceptional hearing. Insectivorous species that swoop on torch-swarming insects also tend to send jumpy vampires through the roof. Moreover, since bats are small, fast and difficult to catch, they make excellent spies for those Cainites (Nosferatu and Gangrel in particular) willing to domesticate and train them. Wary vampires of the otherclans, therefore, act cautiously in the presence of these creatures.

Roleplaying Hints: Yours is a world of echoes. Sight is a dim thing to you, but your ears are acute enough to hear a buzzing fly at great distances. Are you a pawn for darker powers, or a hungry soul on an unearthly mission? Perhaps that depends on the company you keep....

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 1, Dodge 3

Willpower: 1

Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Bite for 1 die

Move: 1/10

Legendary Powers: Immunity (5; poisons), *Nightsight*, Soul-Sense/Death-Sense, Spirit Vision, Wall-Crawling, *Wings* (3)

BEAR

The tracks disappeared as the bear walked out of the thin snow, as the new snow disappeared into open patches of sun. I thought of how the mild sun must feel on his thick coat... I thought of the sweeping length of his claws. How can the world still have such a wondrous beast in it — just on the edge of surviving, but still here!

— Rick Bass, *Mark of the Bear*

Mythology: The bear, with her long winter's sleep, is a perfect symbol for the death and rebirth of the year, and of the sacrificed god whose rebirth heralds a new day. Like Dionysus or Jack o' the Green, she sinks into apparent death every winter, to rise again when life quickens the land.

The constellations Ursa Major and Minor, the Great and Little Bear, circle the sky year 'round and never rest below the horizon as other constellations do. Ever-present, they provide the original source of life and watch over it even now. Bringing order out of chaos, the mother bear licks her newborn bundles into living creatures; hence, the bear becomes the guardian of Creation, a powerful totem of strength and protection.

Yet she carries a double-edged sword in her massive paws, for, as the bear-sarkers (berserkers) knew, this beast is nearly impossible to kill. When riled, she can crush and rend a dozen men while suffering hardly a scratch. Satan rides in a secret corner of the ursine soul, and when he comes out to play, any sane man would run!

Description: Rearing like a man on her stout legs, the bear dwells in cold, lonely places — heavily forested kingdoms with water (and fish) nearby. Her sweet tooth is rivaled only by the human taste for treats. When she can find them, berries, fruit and honey are her favorite foods. Under less pleasant circumstances, however, she could eat nearly anything — grubs, leaves, fish or sometimes even larger prey.

For such a powerful creature, the bear is unusually shy; unless cornered, sick or annoyed, chances are she'll avoid a fight. Still, few beasts are more unpredictable than this "close cousin of man." Like a human being, she can wake up in a foul mood and turn on an apparent friend, or attack anything in her path.

Although she seems to be a solitary sort, few beasts are as parental as the bear. Her loyalty to mate and cubs is so renowned that the tale-spinners often use bears as symbols of family. Shamans request the aid of spirit-bears when healing must be done. Rolling a patient between their "paws," these bear-men call on the ursine gifts for strength and nurture.

Clothed in a garment of thick fur, the bear commands awesome strength and stamina. Although her eyesight is often poor, her sense of smell is strong enough to pick up the scent of a carcass several miles away. Her bulk makes her a bit ungainly, but disguises surprising speed. When pressed, a bear can run down a human being or lash a fish from running water.

The Changing Breeds are relatively deferent toward bears. A collectively felt shame at the apparent extinction of the Gurahl prevents most tribes from striking against bears. Some Get of Fenris still wrestle with bears as a feat of strength, but avoid drawing the bear's blood — their claws are better used drawing the blood of the Wyrn.

Roleplaying Hints: As ferocious as you seem, you'd really rather be left alone. Life is too precious to waste in needless fights. The rhythms of the earth course through you like a stream, and the power of healing nestles in your paws. Even so, let no man or beast disturb you! Those who refuse to be warned away by your size or ferocity will sleep in a scavenger's belly — or your own!

Attributes: Strength 5-7 (for large species), Dexterity 2, Stamina 5-7

Abilities: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Stealth 1

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK x 3, -1 x 3, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks: Claw for 7 to 9 dice; bite for 5 dice

Move: 5/20

Legendary Powers: *Acute Smell* (3), *Armor* (1), *Bond-Sharing* (4), *Enhancement*, *Healing Lick* (3), *Hibernation*, *Immunity* (15; poisons, death), *Shapechanger* (3), *Unaging*

BOARS AND SWINE

"Even in ritual, the Goddess will have her joke," Morgaine said, "and one of her names is the Great Sow, and we are all her piglets."

— Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon*

Mythology: The Druids of Ireland and Gaul used the wild boar as an image of intellectual and spiritual strength; many even called themselves "boars" to mirror their knowledge of the forest and its secrets. Fierce and strong, the wild swine is a treasured hunting prize; you need courage, speed and a powerful arm to kill a boar. His head makes a fine trophy — his heart an invigorating meal.

In some lands, the pig stands as a symbol of maternity, since her huge litters and nourishing teats make for ideal fertility symbols. Yet her temper — and the ferocity of her wild cousins -- makes the swine a tool of devils, too. Scripture says the Savior sent demons into a herd of pigs, and the Old Laws forbid the eating of pork. Lust, sloth, greed and gluttony crowd at the swine's trough; one of the aspects of the Celtic goddess Cerridwen is a wild sow who devours her own young, and the Lord's own vineyards fall prey to rampaging pigs. Smart, aggressive and greedier than a banker in a house of gold, a swine digs the roots of humanity from the soil of divinity, then feasts on them.

Description: Larger (three to four feet at the shoulder), coarser, and far, far meaner than modern domestic pigs, the wild boar is ill-temper made flesh. Many a hunter has read his death in a boar's tiny, bloodshot eyes — these

feral swine move with surprising speed for their bulk, and their tusks are as sharp and deadly as spears. The female of the species is no less deadly. A sow defending her litter or avenging a slain mate attacks with a savagery practically unmatched in the wild.

Even the domestic variety presents endless headaches for its herder. Filthy, aggressive and voracious, the swine would gladly chase the farmer from his own table! Snuffling low to the ground, the pig appears to be as grossly ignorant as any beast alive; yet there's intelligence behind those small eyes. Trained or befriended, a swine makes an excellent guard — if a disgusting one!

Roleplaying Hints: Fiery and temperamental, you fight with a berserker's rage when cornered. Search the most innocent comments for insult, and charge your foes without stopping to question why. Protect those you consider kin and keep yourself well-fed. After all, the world is harsh and unforgiving. Who's to say what might soon befall you?

Attributes: Strength 3-4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3-4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks: Bite for 4 dice; gore for 5 dice

Move: 7/20

Legendary Powers: *Armor* (1), *Immunity* (5; poisons), *Rapid Healing*

CAT

Aren't I kind to allow you to live in my house?

Aren't I gracious to grant you the use of my chair?

— Mercedes Lackey, "Feline American Princess"

Mythology: No beast marks the flows of magic and passion more clearly than the cat. Playful, ferocious, affectionate and observant, the feline soul defies mortality — to say nothing of gravity! — and spies on dark secrets.

In ancient Egypt, cats were worshipped as personifications of the beloved fertility goddess Bast. Harming or killing a cat was a crime punishable by death, and the divine beasts were mummified with the same reverence and care given to humans. Wild cats gamboled with wine-mad Dionysus, hunted with wise Artemis and pulled the chariot of Freyja, goddess of fertility and lust. Cats have never forgotten this legacy; even the most serene of them seem to be half-flesh, half-spirit. Loving yet sadistic. Affectionate yet aloof. Is it any wonder the cat is such a compelling companion — or so magical a beast?

Description: The feline is a walking enigma, a bit of wildness that has accepted a place by the human hearth. Unlike a dog, she has no master, but remains calmly independent even as she eats our food and sleeps by our fire. For this reason, she is often disliked and distrusted.

Cats have long been symbols of the feminine. Her purring throat and bodily caresses epitomize sensual pleasure; her bristling fur, as well as her slashing claws and teeth, remind one that a savage sleeps within the feline heart.

A cat's watchful eyes peer through darkness; she possesses an affinity for secrets that makes most magi envious. Hence, they summon her to their tables and beds, making the cat a boon companion of the magical kind. Familiar spirits often take the form of cats; whether this is a tribute to the "mortal" cat's prowess or a reflection of some deeper similarity is a truth sorcerers would give a great deal to know....

Like witches, the cat exists outside of human law. She is said to suck the breath from sleeping babies, curse people with her unblinking, slit-pupiled stare, and commune with spirits and faeries. Yet her claws provide the doom of rats and serpents, and her warm affections give solace to lonely folk. The cat is queen of contradictions, and she likes it that way.

Roleplaying Hints: You're cool, tough and independent. Move with calm assurance no matter where you are, and never be caught by surprise. If you are, wash yourself immediately. Be affectionate, but only when it suits you; and always sit on whatever a human may be reading. It can't possibly be as important as you.

Life is a fascinating series of puzzles; explore it as much as possible. No beast can rival your senses, so enjoy the bouquet of sensations that are your birthright. Guard that which is yours with demonic ferocity. Uncover that which is hidden from your sight. Play often, but never give the game away. You are the vessel of divinity and companion to the gods.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 3, Intimidation 2, Climbing 3, Stealth 4

Willpower: 3

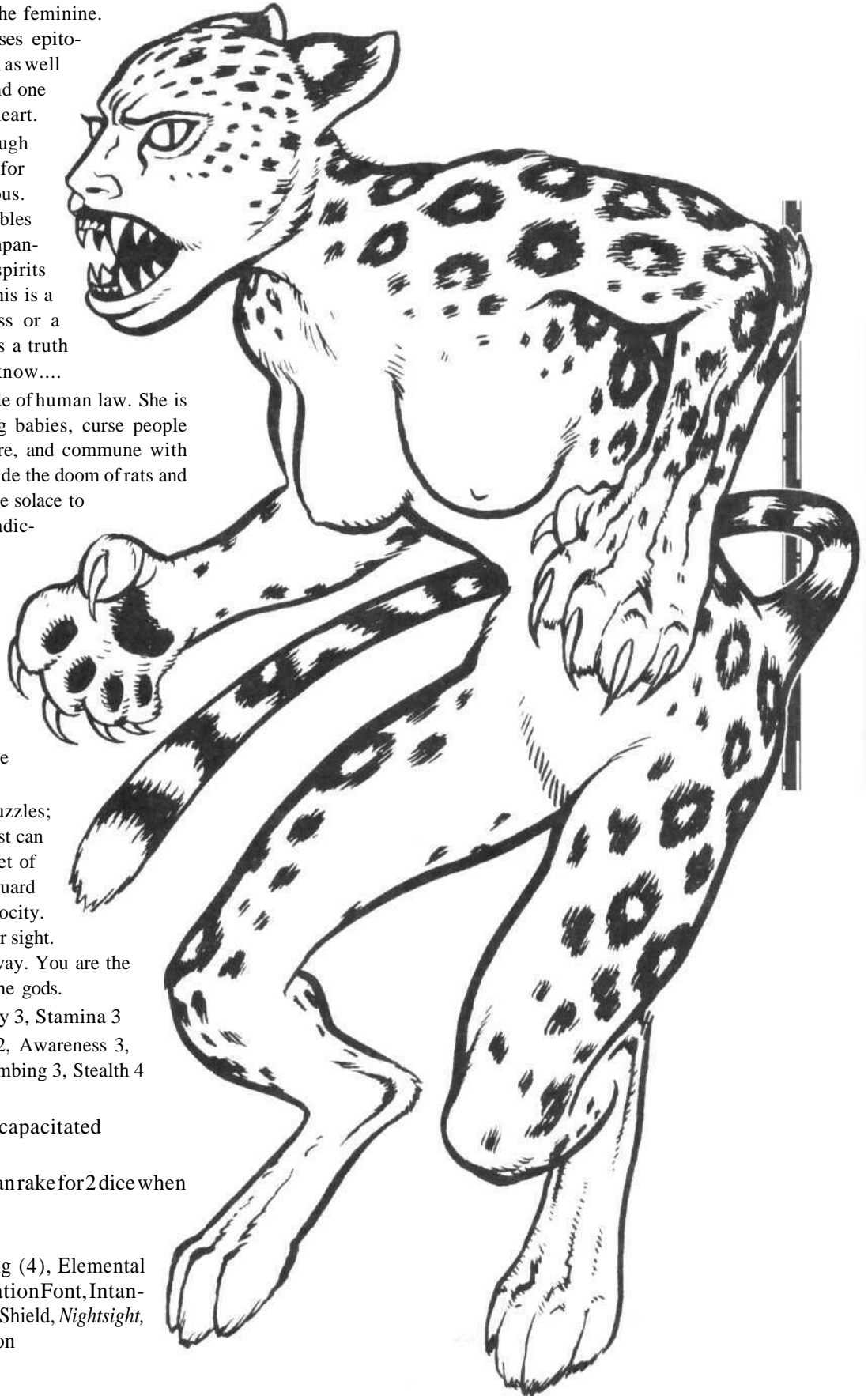
Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Claw or bite for 1 die (can rake for 2 dice when cornered)

Move: 5/20

Legendary Powers: Bond-Sharing (4), Elemental Touch (10), Human Speech, Information Font, Intangibility (10), Mesmerism (3), Mystick Shield, *Nightsight*, Soul-Sense/Death-Sense, Spirit Vision



COW/BULL

This is the seventh level of earth, named Rasatala, where Surabhi dwells, the mother of the cows who was bom from the Elixir and is always flowing with milk, which is the source of all good things on earth....

- *The Mahabharata*

Mythology: Surabhi was bom of the churning of the Milk Sea. In the world's morning, demons tormented the Hindu gods, threatening to undo all Creation. Desperate, the gods begged the supreme Lord Brahma for a potion to help them defeat the demons.

"If you churn the Milk Sea," Brahma told them, "you will gain the nectar you seek."

The churning (using a giant snake, and tricking aid from the demons) did in fact produce this Elixir, but the Milk Sea also gave rise to many fabulous beings, including the spirit of the Ganges River, and Sri, goddess of beauty. But first to emerge from the seething milk was Surabhi, mother of cows. From that day, she and her kind were as sacred things, providers of the sacred elixir of life and the banes of corruption.

Description: Cattle have played a crucial role in the history of human civilization, and accordingly, in its mythology. The Egyptian goddess Hathor wore a bovine head. Wealth was measured by cattle in ancient Ireland and Mediterranean lands. Hebrews considered bulls to be the greatest of sacrifices, and the Celtic goddess Brigit kept two heifers whose milk filled a lake every day.

According to Norse mythology, the first living thing was a cow, formed from the shifting mists above the ice-field that was earth. This cow licked at the ice until her tongue shaped it into the first Frost Giants, whom she then suckled; later these giants fought the Norse gods for control of the world. The Hindus consider bovines holy and are

forbidden to harm them, while the Greeks sacrificed them to their gods, choosing only the fairest and most unblemished.

Cows, with the milk they give, are symbols of domesticity; in the Old World, a home without its own cow is a poor home indeed. Bulls, on the other hand, represent virility, masculine brute strength and power. To honor the gods, dancer-acrobats leapt across the backs of charging bulls—a custom some magickal societies (notably the Euthanatoi and Ecstatic Seers) still practice. Despite the smell of her hide and the clumsiness of her gait, the cow is a welcome family companion; the bull, however, often finds himself gelded or sent to stud if he remains in human company for long; his aggressive temperament makes him too great a threat otherwise. In the wild, cattle of all kinds wander in groups, grazing from the open lands. Though their slow reflexes suggest stupidity, it could be that the kine are simply more at peace with the world than other, more frantic beasts — like man.

Roleplaying Hints: You are generous, patient, and long-suffering. Let insults roll off your back, and keep your mind focused on your task — up to a point. If harassed, you're perfectly capable of trampling most annoying creatures underfoot, or goring them with long, sturdy horns.

Attributes: Strength 3/5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3/5

Abilities: Alertness 2 (Brawl 2, Intimidation 3 for bull)

Willpower: 2

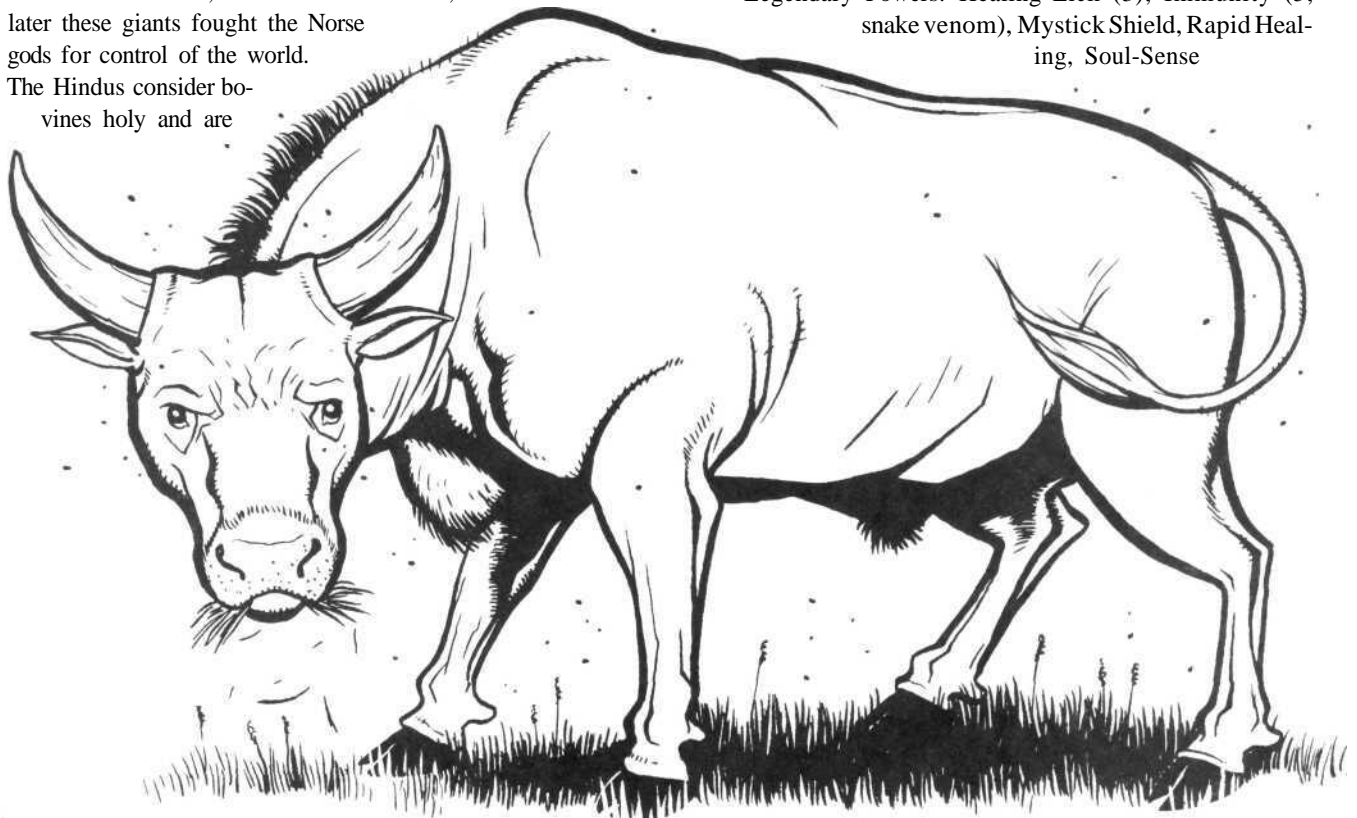
Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -3 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Bite for 3 dice (bulls gore for 4 or 6 dice)

Move: 10/25

Legendary Powers: Healing Lick (3), Immunity (5; snake venom), Mystick Shield, Rapid Healing, Soul-Sense



CROW/RAVEN

It is *very* wrong to *believe* that God entrusts His secrets to crows.

- T. H. White, *The Bestiary*

Mythology: With their black wings, harsh voices and voracious hunger, these birds carry deep, traditional connections to death. To the people of the Cross, crows and their ilk are omens of battle and ill fortune. In Celtic folklore, they're minions of the Morrigan, a triune goddess whose screams froze soldiers' blood. Picking at the corpses of slain men, these eerie creatures gossip back and forth about coming feasts. People who can understand their cackled speech are often said to be a little mad. How could one hear such terrible news and stay sane?

Yet the raven and his brother carry important tidings. To the shamans of the far north, Raven came from the primeval darkness and remain behind to teach humans how to survive. To the spirit-magi of the Americas, Raven is a lusty trickster, clever enough to outwit his enemies yet proud enough to tangle himself in his own lies. In the far east, crows and ravens are said to have fallen from the sun. Their blackened feathers bear testimony to the heat of their original home. In all lands, however, men speak of the prophetic powers and uncanny intelligence of crows and ravens. Perhaps, from their vantage point in the sky, these birds see the horizon between life and death.

Description: Much of the crow's bad reputation stems from circular logic — because he's a carrion-eater, he flies to scenes of battle and death, and is therefore associated with suffering and death — yet no one can deny the uncanny power of the crow or his raven cousins.

The larger bird, the raven, spreads his wings like a graceful yet ominous cloak. His unwavering stare picks apart whatever he happens to gaze on. Many Seers believe he can see the near future, and they take his kind as familiar companions. Such insight may explain the raven's selfishness. Knowing what the future holds, he takes what he can while the taking's good.

The crow is smaller and sleeker than her dark cousin, and more prone to travel in "murders" with others of her kind. Her voice grates like rust, and her feathers shine a glossy black. Death provides her feasting table, and so she follows him everywhere — to the cold northlands, to the deserts, to the forests and fields, even to the cities. Like the raven, the crow is a prophet, gifted (or cursed) with the talent to see impending destruction. Whether she chooses to warn the victims or to feast on them depends on her inclinations. She is, however, an animal, and prone to act in her best interests. So long as things die, crows and ravens will always stay fed.

Naturally, ravens have good reason to be associated with death, given the Corax's role in choosing the slain. There are few shapeshifters willing to kill a raven on its rounds, even when hungry. The goodwill of the Corax is too valuable.

Roleplaying Hints: You live with death, and are very comfortable with it. A sense of humor — grim by human standards, but funny nonetheless -- helps stave off the specter of your own demise. Unlike many beasts, you have a sense of mortality and an affinity for the past and future. This marks you as a bird of ill-omen, even among other animals. No one likes someone who can sense things that they cannot.

By some gift of fate or the gods, you possess a "death-sight": If something near you is bound to die in the next several hours, you can see death hovering nearby, biding its time. In some cases, you can see a doomed creature covered by a pallor or shroud, or smell the decay that waits just below the surface. Such fatalism colors your relationships with other creatures. Sometimes it's best to stick with your own kind — they at least understand.

Practical to a fault, you can eat almost anything. Eyes, however, are your favorite treat — they taste of the experiences they have beheld. The older the prey, the sweeter its eyes. Sometimes, just for a moment, you can almost see your prey's life flash through your mind as you gobble down his eyes....

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -2, -5, Dead

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Claw for 2 dice (bite for 1 die in desperation)

Move: 1/2/20

Legendary Powers: Bond-Sharing (5), Human Speech, Information Font, Nightsight, Shared Knowledge (7), Soul-Sense/Death-Sense, *Wings* (5)

DEER/STAG

Into a tiny green clearing before them stepped the Golden Hind.

She was a color to make wealthy men weep, and misers drown themselves for very heartsickness. Her delicate hoofs touched the earth without a sound; she turned her small graceful head toward the little group of hunters. Her eyes were brown, and for a moment the Princess's eyes met those of this creature of wonder....

— Robin McKinley, "The Hunting of the Hind"

Mythology: For deer, the barrier between this world and the spirit lands has ever been thin. Following a white deer could lead you into the Celtic Otherworld — and then back out, 100 or 1000 years later. Guides of the soul and walkers between the realms of life and death, deer have trotted at the heels of gods since the dawn of Creation. One glimpse of the legendary Golden Hind struck a man blind or mad, and no arrow could pierce her hide. Cernunnos the Horned God wears the antlers of a great stag, and often rides with the great deer — or chases them with his deadly hounds.

With her shy disposition, the deer is the ideal symbol of meditation and peace. The stag, by contrast, is aggressive yet just. His antlers fall and grow again with each passing of the year, symbolizing the immortality of the soul. Fleet and sure-footed, the deer and her kin (impala, gazelles, reindeer, etc.) race between mortality and divinity. Like the trees which they resemble, deer antlers join earth with sky. Gentle yet powerful, these beasts epitomize femininity or masculinity in their purest aspects.

Description: With their slender limbs, improbably small hooves, and large, liquid eyes, it's easy to see how deer got their fey reputation. Hunted by wolves and wildcats for their flesh, and by humans for their meat, hides and antlers, deer move swiftly and silently through their forest homes. Cousins to elk, reindeer and gazelles, these often-peaceful creatures avoid trouble unless backed into a corner. Then, like most beasts, they can turn and remind the hunter just how dangerous his game can still be.

For all her apparent fragility, the deer is heavy and muscular. Her keen senses of smell, taste and hearing keep her one step ahead of the hunters. Her stag mate is far more irritable, and might charge a trespasser simply out of principle. Under most conditions, however, both animals prefer affection to violence. On the whole, deer make good parents; while stags prefer solitude, does nurture their children in ways that would make the Great Mother proud.

Divinities keep deer close at hand. Ancient gods, such as the British Lord of the Hunt, often wore crowns of antlers. Gold-homed stags draw the carriage of Artemis, or carry the body of Christ in their antlers. An Orphic hymn to Dionysus names the stag "Prince of the Mysteries of Night." The touch of his antlers heals any wound, and can even raise the dead. Even so, such beasts are considered great sacrifices. In all cultures, deer are the subjects of sacred and ritual hunts, and their pelts and antlers serve as powerful ritual objects. The Garou hunt stags with great reverence, and the Fianna know many beautiful songs of thanks to sing when the hunt is complete.

Roleplaying Hints: This world is a simple glaze across the truer worlds of spirit, and you can see both worlds through the overlapping colors and sensations that join them together. You know the smell of ghosts, the caress of elementals and the flash of evil spirits — it's said that you can even see the spirit-color auras that surround all living things. This awareness of the elements (earthly and otherwise) makes you seem skittish around strangers, but such insight gives you a respect for the creatures on each side of the divide. While it's true you can be fierce, you would rather respect all living things.

Attributes: Strength 2/3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2/3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Stealth 2

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -5 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Trample for 3 to 4 dice (gore for 3 to 5 dice for stags)

Move: 7/30

Legendary Powers: Awareness 4, Elemental Touch (7), Soul-Sense, Spirit Travel (10), Spirit Vision

DOG

The Wart's own special hound was called Cavall, and he happened to be licking Cavall's nose — not the other way about — when Merlyn came in and found him.

"That will come to be regarded as an insanitary habit," said Merlyn, "though I cannot see it myself. After all, God made the creature's nose just as well as he made your tongue."

- T. H. White, *The Once And Future King*

Mythology: Wild yet faithful, ferocious yet loving—man's oldest companion bears a mixed burden of affection and fear. According to old tales, Dog carried fire in his jaws and gave it to humanity, then laid nearby to ambush demons and evil spirits. Even so, hounds' carnal appetites, unclean habits and slobbering gluttony led saints to brand them as filthy boors. Like his lupine cousins, the dog is social but retains a flush of wildness even in his most tranquil moments. Loyal as he might be, a hound is ultimately his own master.

Canines are the epitome of loyalty — the perfect faithful servants. It is said that a hound, on his master's death, will either slay himself or lie inconsolably on the grave, refusing food or comfort. The gods recognized this loyalty; many of them, from Anubis to Xoltl to Epona, kept canine servants close at hand. Yet the prophets and priests could not overcome a stubborn disdain for the ways of the hound, and despite his loyalty, the dog has been regarded as a symbol of lust and lowliness. Even his detractors, however, must admit that no beast carries a greater love for humanity. Steadfast to a fault, the dog remains sprawled at the hearth of man and god alike.

Description: Dogs come in a bewildering variety of sizes and shapes, from poodles the size of small cats, to hounds the size of small horses. Bred to perform a staggering variety of tasks — from guarding property and hunting, to herding sheep and leading the blind—each dog's appearance generally reflects the task for which he was raised. The first tamed wolves were hunting companions and retrievers; their later cousins became herders, ghost-sniffers, house wardens, pack animals and even corpse-eaters.

No beast is as honest as the hound. His nose sniffs out lies with almost magical acuity, and he could never deceive another creature, even if his life depended on it. This honesty makes the poor beast gullible enough to serve even the cruelest masters. Simple and direct, the dog approaches all things openly. Though he can be stealthy, trickery does not become him.

The dog prefers company to solitude, and considers any creature who will have him to be his pack-mate. Once he has chosen a pack (canine or otherwise), the hound will often defend them unto death. On his own, the dog is intelligent (if easily distracted), confident and usually playful. A carnivore by nature, this beast loves to hunt and chase. Even the smallest, tamest dog harries a ball or chews a stick with the ferocity of a wild hound.

The epithet "dog" is a very serious slight in werewolf society, however. Not even the most naive homid Ragabash is allowed to get away with casually comparing a Garou to one of humanity's inbred slaves.

Roleplaying Hints: The world is just so exciting! Every sense is a treat, every sensation a delicacy! Never walk when you can run, sniff everything and treat every stranger like your new best friend. Be loyal to those who treat you well, and use your teeth on those who don't. And always remember — even the most coddled lapdog is two meals away from becoming a wolf.

Attributes: Strength 1-3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2-3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 1-3, Empathy 2 (Intimidation 2, Stealth 2 for guard and hunting dogs)

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -2 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Bite for 2 to 5 dice; claw for 2 to 4 dice

Move: 7/25

Legendary Powers: *Acute Smell* (3), *Elemental Touch* (5), *Healing Lick* (3), *Soul-Sense*, *Spirit Vision*

DOLPHIN

...I thought of the dolphins returning to the sea, and losing fingers and thumb and the ability to grasp, and...they seemed to me to be bathed in a deep but dazzling darkness.

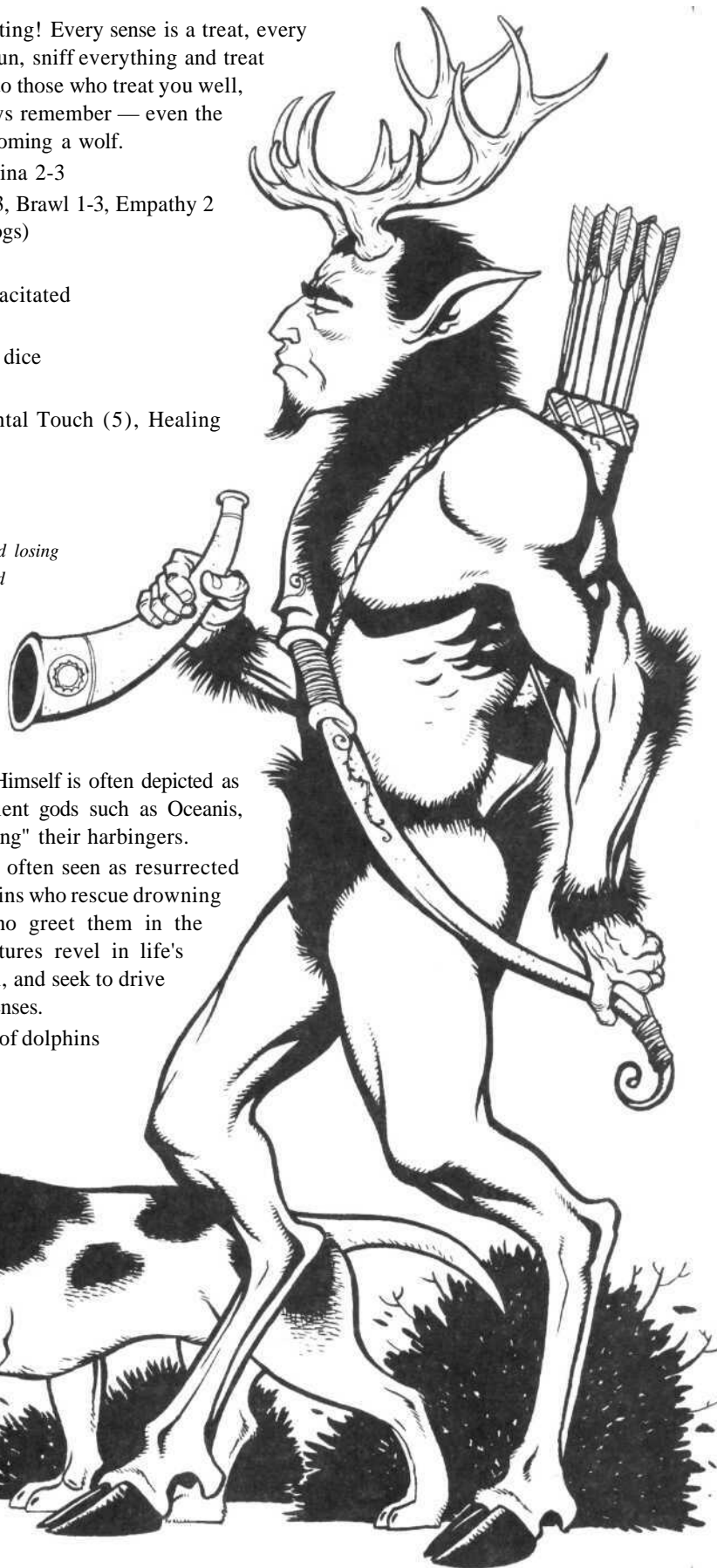
— Madeleine L'Engle, *A Ring of Endless Light*

Mythology: Born in the elemental juncture between Water and Air, dolphins ride the seas between worlds. Spirit couriers and guides for lost souls, these enigmatic, intelligent beings have been friends of man since the earliest days. Christ Himself is often depicted as a dolphin navigating the seas of death, and ancient gods such as Oceanis, Poseidon and Aphrodite made these "singers of song" their harbingers.

Rising from the skyless depths, dolphins are often seen as resurrected souls, joyful in rebirth. Sailors' tales speak of dolphins who rescue drowning men, while fisher-women whisper of lovers who greet them in the moonlit seas. Like children, these playful creatures revel in life's embrace; like adults, they recognize good and evil, and seek to drive away the latter with powerful strikes and keen senses.

Description: No one doubts the intelligence of dolphins

no one who has encountered them, at any rate. Silvery and sleek, these sea mammals can be found in almost any ocean. They travel in groups called pods, and can fling themselves out of the water in dazzling acrobatic displays. Like a whale, a dolphin breathes air through a blowhole on the top of her head; while she can dive to amazing depths without air, she must eventually surface or drown. Like a bat, the dolphin employs sound and



keen hearing to find her way through the sunless ocean depths. Her world, therefore, is a dazzling picture of dancing sounds and deep echoes, forming a living picture few humans could understand.

Deep below the seas, the mundane world gives way to the magical one. The dolphin, therefore, is confidante to a vast kingdom of strange creatures, lost treasures and eerie spirit realms. Occasionally, she'll take some favored human with her on a deep dive, sharing her breath with him through magical powers. In her world, all things are possible. Solitude, gravity, silence, solid ground—such things are illusions. Creation is constantly in motion. This realization breeds a wariness—dolphins are not as reckless as they seem!—and a devotion to the moment. Few creatures are as affectionate or sexual as these "lovers of the sea," and they don't hesitate to make their passions known.

As placid as they seem, these creatures are not to be trifled with. When angered, the dolphin can be amazingly strong, quick and stubborn. Sharks learned long ago to fear these living battering rams, and many a malicious sailor has been dragged to his death by a dolphin whose patience had reached an end....

Roleplaying Hints: Intelligence carries its price: *You* may live in freedom, but the misery of the less fortunate washes over you like ocean waves. Look with sympathy at the poor, land-bound humans, with their frantic, scurrying lives, and try to teach them what they are missing. Keep your distance. Most of them simply aren't ready to learn and can be more dangerous than a frenzied shark.

Your world is carved from sound; you can see and smell well enough, but your echoing cries shape a far more vivid picture than those senses can offer. Sensitive as you are, you're rarely fooled by impressions or deceit. Your kindness or wrath depends on what you read from others. To honest creatures, you're helpful and happy; to malicious or cruel trespassers, you're a scourge. In a constantly changing realm, you understand that nothing is permanent. Like the sea, you never rest. To stop moving is to die.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, All Mental Traits 2

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Ram for 3 dice (see "Body Check" in *The Sorcerers Crusade*)

Move: 0/0/30

Legendary Powers: Bond-Sharing (6), Healing Lick (6), Human Speech, Musical Influence, Shapechanger (5), Soul-Sense, Water-Breathing (2)

FOX

The prince must be a lion, but he must also know how to play the fox.

— Niccolo Macchiavelli, *The Prince*

Mythology: With his fiery fur, sly cunning and lascivious ways, the fox has always stood for the crafty cheat. A trickster rather than a bully, he is the hen-coop thief, the "Jack" figure who bamboozles and steals from those much more powerful than himself, then bounds away, laughing. In China and Japan, he wraps himself in human guise or conducts elaborate rituals to appease his lying gods. A shapeshifter, a prankster, a braggart and a thief, Fox is a wily target and a treacherous friend.

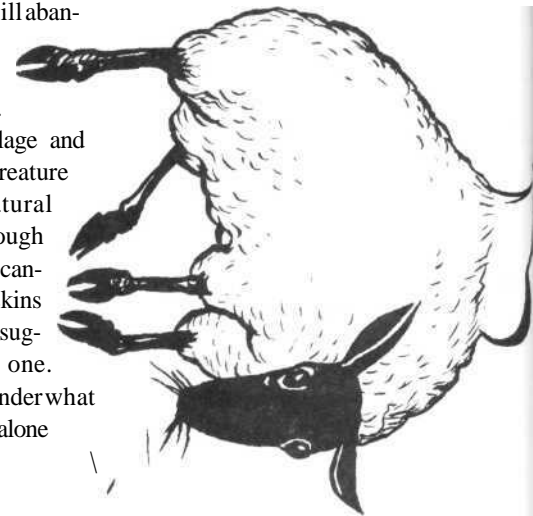
Yet, as many rogues recognize, such traits are not always vices. When stirred to a noble cause, Fox can outwit demons, trick monsters and make fools of evil men. With his blazing coat and narrow face, he's a handsome devil. In some lands, Fox is a "she" instead. Tales portray her as a cunning and dangerous woman, too wild to be held but too refined to be truly bestial. Regardless of gender, Fox is always somewhat admirable, if only for cleverness. So long as one does not trust overmuch in her lies or rely too heavily on his honor, Fox might make a boon companion.

Just watch your valuables—

Description: Foxes are cunning creatures. They get their way not by menace or physical violence, but rather by cunning and quick thinking. Smaller and more solitary than wolves, foxes are nevertheless related to them. Dashing predators, these small cousins make up for what they lack in strength and numbers with cunning and speed.

Families notwithstanding, the fox prefers solitude to company. Perhaps this comes from the mistrust with which other creatures regard him. Even in their small packs, fox and his brood consider their best interests first. When

threatened, a fox will abandon mates or children — sometimes for good. Skilled in camouflage and misdirection, this creature seems like a natural shapeshifter. Although "normal" vulpines cannot change their skins as readily as legends suggest they might, one cannot help but wonder what one might do if left alone for a moment....



Roleplaying Hints: You, a liar and a thief? Nonsense! You're simply making your way in a hostile world. If that entails a bit of snipery, who are other, larger creatures to judge you? Cover your tracks. If caught, protest your innocence loudly, then blame whoever's handy.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Elusion 3, Stealth 3

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Bite for 3 dice

Move: 7/25

Legendary Powers: *Acute Smell* (2), *Hibernation*, *Mesmerism* (3), *Shapechanger* (8), *Soul-Sense*

FROG/TOAD

The toad looked at her expectantly, its buggy little eyes watchful.

"Wait a minute," Cindy said to it. "Fairy godmother — magic shoe — you're in the wrong fairy tale, bud, and I am not about to kiss you."

— Elizabeth Ann Scarborough, *The Godmother*

Mythology: Rising from the primordial ooze, the frog croaks the song of creation. Aligned with the moon, this tiny shapechanger awakens from death each season, shifting his form throughout the hot days of summer until at last he retreats to the cool mud to be reborn.

In the far east, frogs and toads are lucky animals, blessed with secrets of immortality and balanced chi. Europeans see them differently. Decried in the Bible as unclean, these pestilential creatures secrete poison in their warty hides, eagerly passing it along to anyone filthy enough to touch them. Witches, recognizing the toads' link to longevity and rebirth, boil them in stews or use frog limbs in magickal charms.

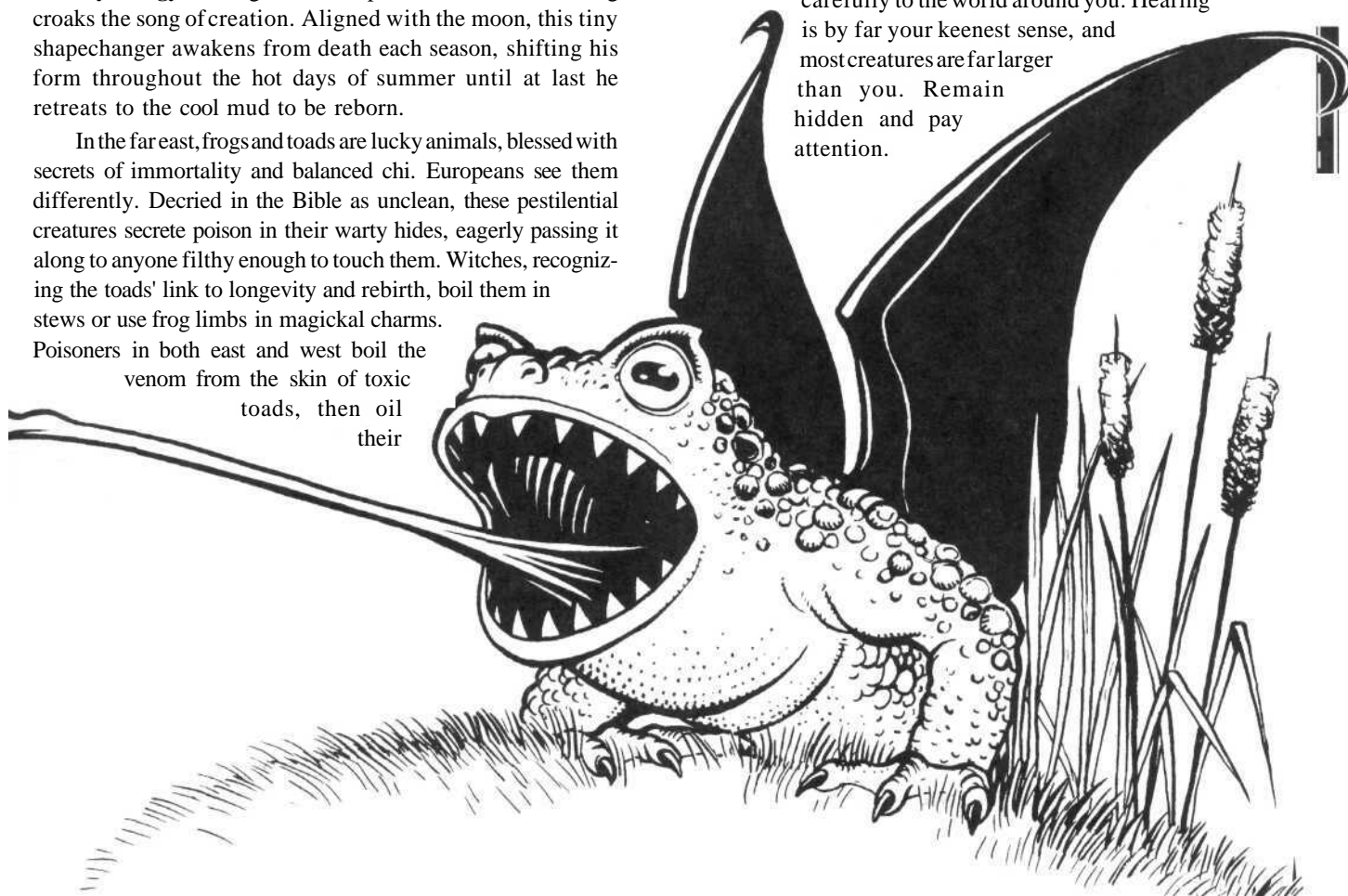
Poisoners in both east and west boil the
venom from the skin of toxic
toads, then oil
their

arrowheads and blades with the stuff. If he's lucky enough to escape human hands, the toad rests in cool, damp places, feasting on the insects that infest the wilds. Perhaps he recalls the kiss of Aphrodite, who once considered him a consort despite his ugliness. When he eats his fill, it is said, he will steal away into the ooze, die, travel to Hell and rise to mortal realms once again.

Description: Frogs and toads were once believed to grow spontaneously out of mud. Their true life cycle, from water-bound tadpole to amphibious adult, is no less magical. From a sac of milky droplets to a squat but limber beast, the frog and his cousin undergo a host of changes in their short but interesting lives. Humble though he may be, the frog is clever — and occasionally poisonous to the touch.

As amphibians, frogs and toads breathe through their skins; thus, they must remain damp, though the thick, bumpy hide of a toad allows him to stay on dry land longer than his aquatic cousin can. Both creatures share long associations with witchcraft and fairy tales. Small and unassuming — even ugly — in appearance, frogs and toads watch over hidden treasures that (according to folklore) can counter poison or make treasure multiply. The familiar tale of the frog prince reminds us to look beyond appearances. Still, a woman who goes from frog to frog hoping to find a prince is going to be kissing a lot of warty hides before she ends her quest!

Roleplaying Hints: Stay wet. Eat flies and listen carefully to the world around you. Hearing is by far your keenest sense, and most creatures are far larger than you. Remain hidden and pay attention.



Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 1
Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Dodge 3, Stealth 3
Willpower: 2

Health Levels: OK, 4, Squished

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: None. (Some have poison that can paralyze a person who fails a Stamina roll [difficulty 7]. To be affected, the victim must either eat the frog or suffer a wound treated with the frog's poison glands.)

Move: 1/1/2

Legendary Powers: *Chameleon Coloration* (6), Deadly Demise, Human Speech, *Regrowth* (4), Shapechanger (3), Spirit Travel (8), *Venom*, *Water Breathing* (2)

GOAT

*What was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?*

— Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "A Musical Instrument"

Mythology: A lusty creature of darkness, the goat epitomizes the horned devil dancing in the heads of Infernalists and Inquisitors alike. Supposedly, fallen angels crafted the first goats out of earth, urine and their own hair and horns. Although useful in his own way, this ugly beast is not trustworthy. He eats his way through almost anything, chases virgins and butts anyone who resists his stubborn whims.

Once, the goat was revered. A she-goat suckled the infant Zeus, the transsexual Pales nurtured the people of Palestine (named for that divinity) and the fertility god Pan consorted with his goat-like kin, the fauns and satyrs. Unfortunately, these pagan nature gods were demoted to Christian devils, and goats' reputations have suffered accordingly. Early Hebrews heaped their community's sins on the head of a scapegoat, who was then driven out into the wilderness. Infernalists take on the hooves and horns of the goat in crude mockery of Pan. While faeries and pagan magi still remember the deities whose curving horns and generous udders bespoke fertility, people of God shun this shameless beast. He may have his uses, true, but no good man dares stare him in the eye....

Description: Leaner and shaggier than wild sheep, goats are incredibly agile. They can bound through treacherous cliffs and rock-strewn gorges with little trouble. Their eyes, which feature disturbing horizontal bars for pupils, reinforce the beasts' demonic reputation.

There's no debating that the goat is a stubborn creature — he goes where he will, when he will. Rank and coarse, this hairy beast can devour almost anything from wooden splinters to rotting meat without getting sick. When roused, he'll butt whatever aggravates him. Although his eyesight is adequate, his keenest sense is — surprisingly enough — smell. Sure-footed as he is, the goat makes an obnoxious but sturdy mount for anyone mad enough to ride him. Gods like Dionysus, Pan and Aphrodite did so once, but mortal humans had best be careful....

Roleplaying Hints: You are a creature of passion, temperamental and hard-headed. Your appetite is endless and your lusts unmannered. To hell with anyone who cannot bear your presence—in your heart, you remember the days when your kind were divine!

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 4, Brawl 2

Willpower: 2

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Bite for 3 dice; gore for 4+ dice

Move: 10/25

Legendary Powers: Immunity (5; poisons), Mesmerism (3)

GOOSE/SWAN

*It doesn't matter if one is born in a duck yard, when one has
lain in a swan's egg.*

— Hans Christian Anderson, "The Ugly Duckling"

Mythology: On spirit wings, the swan and its cousin the goose fly from the Otherworlds into the mortal one. Properly approached and respected, a swan might guide a shaman on an Umbral quest, or walk beside him as a familiar spirit. The goose, meanwhile, chatters to himself, setting off a clamor if someone should happen to intrude on his territory. Like the swan, he frequently flies between worlds and can occasionally be prodded for advice about them.

To humanity, swans represent innocence, purity and grace — or in the case of black swans, innocence twisted into corruption. The early Scandinavians saw swans as an image of the sun, and often drew them carrying it across the sky on their wings. When touched by magic, virtuous people often transform into swans, like the Irish Children of Lir or Anderson's seven swan princes. Sometimes the gods employ the same beautiful form for less virtuous purposes. Zeus seduced Leda while in the shape of a swan, and the twins borne of that union, Clytemnestra and Helen of Troy, hatched from a giant egg.

Some old tales say the world itself hatched from the egg of a goose or swan. Alchemists mirror those stories in their texts, treating this graceful bird as a progenitive creature and a metaphor for the creative process. According to the Greeks, the swan sings a farewell song as it perishes, hence, it becomes a symbol for martyrs and doomed lovers everywhere. In a more positive light, the goose and swan are vigilant creatures, tenders of their children and guides to the wandering soul. Perhaps, as some legends say, these birds are souls themselves — dead people on their way to eternity's reward or returning from some resting place before resuming a mortal incarnation.

Description: In the air or gliding on the water, the swan is the epitome of beauty and grace. On land, however, this waterfowl moves with a clumsy waddle, displaying scrawny legs and large, unattractive feet. Furthermore, with a few exceptions like trumpeter swans, the bird's long, graceful throat produces a harsh, ugly cry. When she lays dying, however she pours forth a song of heartbreaking beauty that reduces all listeners to tears.

As "The Ugly Duckling" suggests, young swans (called "cygnets") are ungainly and awkward. Even when grown to their full size, cygnets sport dirty-gray feathers for their first year. When those feathers molt away, a dazzling white coat grows in its place. Despite its delicate appearance, an adult swan is no weakling. A blow from its wings can break a grown man's leg, and its bite can rip through heavy clothing.

The goose is somewhat more temperate; squawking out her horse cry, she wanders around her pond. Vigilant and maternal, the goose mates for life and tends an orderly home among the rushes. When winter comes, she gathers up her brood and mate and returns to the spirit worlds until the next spring dawns.

Roleplaying Hints: With keen sight and hearing, you watch the hazardous world around you. As a denizen of two worlds, you know that surprises are often lurking nearby! When all is well, you're a generous and graceful creature, a loyal mate and doting parent. When danger arises, you call your family together, defending them with your life if necessary. Loved ones — avian and otherwise — are your anchors in a vast, uncertain world. You form bonds easily and treasure each one. Places are ephemeral, but love is eternal.

Attributes: Strength 1/2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 1

Willpower: 2

Health Levels: OK, -1, -5, Incapacitated (goose); OK, -1 x 2, -2 x 2, -5, Incapacitated (swan)

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Bite for 2 dice (wing buffet for 3 dice for swans)

Move: 3/20

Legendary Powers: Elemental Touch (10), Musical Influence, Shapechanger (3), Spirit Travel (8), *Wings* (3)

HORSE

I rode a grey horse

'Twas called a grey mare

Grey mane and grey tail

Green stripe down her back

Grey mane and grey tail

Green stripe down her back

And not a hair on her that wasn't coal black

- "Nottamun Town" (traditional)

Mythology: According to the ancient Greeks, the wind-gods made love to the Furies. From that union sprang the divine horses who pull the chariot of the sun. Aligned with Water and Fire (and occasionally Earth as well), the horse symbolizes the harnessed power of passion and the elements—useful to he who understands it but fatal to he who presumes to master it.



Tales about magical steeds have existed since the creature's domestication: horses that fly, speak — sometimes even when dead and decapitated — breathe flame, or devour human flesh. In his lighter aspects, a horse is the soul-guide, the steed to gods and men alike who calls to water with a striking of his hoofs. The Greek sea-god Poseidon was associated with horses, as was the Celtic goddess Rhiannon, who could transform herself into a pure white mare. Horses are considered lucky, and their iron shoes hang above doorways to keep ill fortune (and meddling faeries) away.

In his negative aspects, the horse tramples good men beneath his powerful feet, seduces maidens and drags children to their deaths. Water-steeds, called kelpies, lure unsuspecting humans onto their backs, then race into the water to drown their passengers. The demonic Gytrash sometimes takes equine form, and Death is said to "ride a pale horse." Demons and witches sit astride nightmares, hellish horses which breathe fire and smoke, while other beasts of that name take sleeping riders from their beds and gallop away into insane dreamscapes.

The horse, therefore, stands on both sides of darkness and light. Guided by reason and foresight, he is a beast of honor and perseverance; unharnessed, he becomes the crashing force of chaos.

Description: No one can deny that horses are truly noble-looking animals. Tall and muscular, with long, arched necks, intelligent eyes, and flowing manes and tails, these beasts truly seem like the elements in living form. The barely contained power within them is nearly overwhelming in its sexuality, and both mares and stallions carry potent carnal symbolism.

The ultimate beast of burden, the average horse prefers company to solitude. Although she eats a great deal, her needs are simple — grasses, fruits, leaves, the occasional treat and, of course, water. Affectionate and insightful, the horse is very much her own beast, and possesses an almost-human range of personalities. Some are nurturing and kind, others wild and spiteful. A good range of keen senses, excellent balance and a high view of the world give the horse a majestic perception. As might be expected, she'd rather run free in an endless field or forest than be penned in stables or hemmed in by cliffs. As sensitive as she is, the horse spooks easily. She may be trained for shocks and excitement, but such a steed retains a nervous edge, as if expecting a surprise assault. Left to her own devices, a horse will run, graze, then run again. Creation, to her, is as wide and open as her stride can make it.

To the Changing Breeds, the horse is one more example of how humans have taken something of Gaia's and made it something of theirs. Horses are distinctly uncomfortable around werereatures of all kinds, and few shapeshifters can keep a horse still enough to ride it when they feel the need to do so.

Horses are integral to transportation in the Dark Medieval world; if you don't have a horse or access to one, you can't go anywhere. With that in mind, the ingrained fear of the undead that is natural to all equines makes travel by horseback problematic for many Cainites. Normal horses snort and roll their eyes in fear whenever a vampire comes

too close, and some may throw their riders and bolt, making mounting and riding a steed a difficult proposition. Furthermore, there are mortals who keep an eye on their horses' reactions as a method of recognizing Cainites. An unwary vampire can be undone by the fear of a dumb beast.

Several Cainites breed what can best be described as revenant steeds, horses which have vitae in their veins and don't spook in the presence of vampires. Such horses are stronger and faster (an extra dot in all Physical Attributes, and a single dot of Potence, Celerity or Fortitude as well in exceptional cases) than normal, and are handsome steeds of almost pure Arabian stock. Contrary to popular belief, not all are black — cautious Cainites are well aware of the stories of "devil's steeds" and are just as happy to avoid attracting undue attention by virtue of their horses.

There is a tradeoff involved in the breeding of revenant steeds, however. The horses are ill-tempered at best (except when being handled by their owners), vicious, inclined to spit or bite and likely to kick whatever poor stableboy is assigned to them. Cainite steeds also make a point of asserting dominance whenever they can, which leads to some brutal combats if two are stabled together.

Roleplaying Hints: Like yourself, life is too large to be contained. Keep your nose to the breeze and your wits about you. If caught and domesticated, you may be bent to the plow or bridle, but even then, the spirit of the wind lives within you. Always be aware that the smaller, weaker creature on your back rides there only by your consent. If the human who claims to have "broken" you doesn't treat you well, he'll feel the strength of your legs and heavy hooves. Then you'll reclaim your freedom and run like never before.

Attributes: Strength 4-5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 1 (Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Empathy 3 for a trained war-horse)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK x 4, -1, -3 x 2, -5 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Trample or kick for 5 to 6 dice; bite for 3 dice
Move: 10/35

Legendary Powers: Bond-Sharing (5), Elemental Touch (10), Extra Speed (10), Human Speech, Soul-Sense

LION

When the lion sleeps, his eye watches;

In sleep his eyes are open,

Clear and gleaming and awake.

- William of Normandy, *Divine Bestiary*

Mythology: Lions have been the aristocracy of the forest and savanna since the dawn of civilization, and they have faced humanity's greatest heroes since the days of Gilgamesh. The embodiment of justice, courage and nobility, Lion evokes the sun. For good reason, he has stood at the

center of mythologies without number. Even caged, he carries a power beyond human understanding. Steed of some gods (Durga, Venus), incarnation of others (Christ, Sekhmet, Nergal), this beast traps life and death in his great paws.

The first lion descended from the sun, and was captured in flesh by the Mother Goddess. From the day of his creation, he has been appointed the king of beasts, and nearly all animals respect that honor. Born dead, a cub is licked to life by its mother; thus, he symbolizes resurrection in many cultures. In the oldest days, it is said, humans and lions lived in harmony. Each species presented sacrifices to the other, and both guarded each other throughout the demon-infested night. The truce was broken, however, by the arrogance of humanity and the overbearing egos of the lions. When men attempted to usurp the rightful crown of leadership, the offended lions declared war. Although some humans manage to live in peace with their old friends, a river of blood has flowed between the rival kings ever since.

Description: With their golden coats and the long, full manes of the males, lions are magnificent creatures. For all their splendor, though, males rarely hunt. It's the lionesses who bring down prey and keep the pride fed while the males defend their prides and watch the cubs.

Despite their ferocious reputation, most lions avoid violence unless they're hungry or provoked. It is, however, a dangerous thing to presume on an animal's good nature. A "rogue" lion may emerge from the brush every so often, killing everything in its wake for sheer sport. And nothing is deadlier than a wounded lion. Any creature that presumes to battle the king of beasts had best be prepared to kill him quickly or die trying!

As can be imagined, the lion consumes huge amounts of meat — newly dead or carrion, it isn't important. Unlike most big cats, the lion prefers company, although a mature male must seek out a new family when he reaches adulthood.

Both sexes represent the pinnacle of strength and nobility. While the kingly male embodies all that is grand and potent in masculinity, the lioness incarnates feminine power, compassion and rage. Like all cats, the lion is limber, fast and remarkably perceptive — his eyesight is adapted to night-hunting, and his reflexes belie his bulk. For strength and prowess, he's rivaled only by the tiger; for sheer majesty and presence, no creature is his equal.

The lion has unpleasant spiritual connotations to many shapeshifters. It was the totem of the White Howlers, who fell en masse to the Wyrms; it is the patron of the Simba, who may soon follow. Although only the honorless would blame the physical animal for its spirit-kin's luck, many Changing Breeds consider the approach of lions a bad omen nonetheless.

Roleplaying Hints: No other beast — not even man! — can approach you without a feeling of awe. Through a rainbow of senses, you see the world in all its splendor. Remember your part in that splendor, and defend your kin

and territory with the ferocity of gods. Pride is literally part of your name and nature. Let no beast sully your reputation, or challenge it without a fight.

Attributes: Strength 4-5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3-4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 5, Stealth 3

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 3, -2 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks: Claw for 5 to 6 dice; bite for 6 to 7 dice

Move: 10/30

Legendary Powers: *Acute Smell* (2), Armor (1), Healing Lick (6), Human Speech, Mystick Shield, Nightsight, Soul-Sense, Spirit Vision

OWL

The owl's eye shines in the darkness like the glory of a wise man in the midst of the foolish crowd.

— Anonymous, Greek text

Mythology: She comes from the night bearing both wisdom and a threat. To the Hebrews, she is the incarnation of Lilith, the first woman and the mother of demons. To the Greeks, she bespoke Athena, goddess of war and wisdom, and to the shamans of the New World, she represents vigilant darkness. While the intelligence in her huge eyes is undeniable, no true creature of goodness could thrive in the night as the owl does. Her cry is the shout of demons and the howl of ghosts. To hear it is to court death.

Like lightning, the owl illuminates the night. Like a candle, she pierces the gloom of ignorance and strikes at the fleeing mice of cowardice and deceit. In ancient tales, she rises from the carcasses of dead things or plucks her own mother's eyes out to feed her hunger. This connection to death serves her well. The owl is an undisputed prophet, the seeker whose head can look forward and behind with equal ease. For this reason, she is the valued familiar of seers, witches, wizards and academics. As they dwell in night but penetrate darkness, so does the owl hunt by night but see with the clarity of day.

Description: With their soft feathers, which let them fly noiselessly, and huge, sensitive eyes, which allow them to see in almost perfect darkness, owls are masters of the night sky. The downside, of course, is that daylight is painful to them. Thus, owls dare not venture out before dusk, and hide from the rays of the sun.

Owls range in size, from tiny handfuls of down to intimidating spectres with wingspans several feet wide. Often solitary, they lair in tree hollows, rafters and occasionally caves. Though their sight is keen, their hearing is sharper still. Like their raptor kin, owls have cruel beaks and talons, and make the night as terrifying to small creatures as hawks make the day. So swift and noiseless is an owl's attack that her prey has no hint of danger. Suddenly talons come slashing out of the shadows, and all is pain, blood and silence.

The owl represents wisdom and mystery, the dark and secret knowledge of night. Sometimes, she screeches like a banshee torn from Hell; other times, she hoots with a plaintive, haunting cry. Neither call (actually sent out by two different types of owl) is comforting to human ears, for to hear an owl call your name signals the approach of death.

Roleplaying Hints: Keep your own council. Shelter yourself from daylight but hop and fly in the softness of the dark. Listen more than you speak, and when you do speak, make every word important and meaningful. Do not offer simple answers, and give nothing without reward. You have struggled in your life, and other creatures deserve no better.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Abilities: Alertness 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 2

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, 4 x 2, -5, Dead

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Claw for 2 dice, bite for 1 die

Move: 1/2/20

Legendary Powers: Bond-Sharing (6), Hibernation, Human Speech, Information Font, Mesmerism (3), Musical Influence, *Nightsight*, Soul-Sense/Death-Sense, Spirit Travel (8)

RAPTOR (EAGLE, FALCON, HAWK)

How can I do other than thrill to the fact that this creature — this magnificent bundle of fire bound up in wings and talons — will fly away from my hand, and then return?

— Sir Gwalchmai, House Liam, falconer to Queen Mary Elizabeth

Mythology: Falcon-headed Horus, the Egyptian god of life and rebirth, gazes unflinchingly into death even as his living cousins gaze into the sun. He sits in bird-shape on the shoulder of the god-kings, and guides souls through their ordeal of rebirth.

Defender of honor and slayer of unclean things, the raptor represents strength and ferocity. It is said that such birds emerged from the sun, since, like the sun, they see everything that transpires in the light. The falcon's keen vision and keener talons assure the success of his hunt; the eagle's majestic bearing and great strength makes him a banner of kingship. Whether perched on the shoulders of a god or hooded for a noble's chase, the raptor pierces evil with his claws and darkness with his vigilance.

Description: Raptors — hawks, falcons, eagles — are to the birds what lions and tigers are to the beasts. Fierce, regal and just barely tamed, hawks must be handled by people with special training, and even then skilled falconers wear heavy leather gloves to protect themselves from the sharp talons and beaks of "their" birds. Eagles tolerate no such nonsense — a human might claim one as a companion, but never as a "pet!"

In humanity's courts, raptors are marks of status: Only an emperor may hunt with an eagle, a king with a gyrfalcon, an earl with a peregrine, and a lady with a merlin hawk.

Across the world, eagles define rulership and power. In the wild, raptors of all kind live high in trees and on mountains. The eagle is one of the largest and strongest of the "lesser" birds; to claim or kill one, a hunter must be brave and quick. A hawk's eyesight is incredibly keen — she can spot her prey from high in the clouds where she circles and glides — and her flight is swift and sure. A diet of other birds and small beasts keep her taste for blood alive. We may assume that her mind is as sharp as her weaponry; of all birds, the raptors are known for their intelligence and almost-human temperament.

Although fairly solitary, raptors occasionally hunt in flocks. Even then, however, rivalry is common and bonds are short-lived. Like the monarchs who idolize them, raptors ultimately stand — or, more properly, fly — alone.

Roleplaying Hints: You are an explosion of energy constantly held in check. Whatever you do, you do with total commitment and without hesitation. If you live in the wild, that energy carries you soaring above the wind; if "tame," you exist in an uneasy truce with your keepers. There's nothing soft or compassionate about a raptor — you're kept in jesses and hood for a reason!

Attributes: Strength 2 (3 for eagles), Dexterity 3, Stamina 2 (Perception 5 for falcons and hawks)

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Dodge 2, Intimidation 2 (3 for eagles) (Brawl 3, Empathy 4, Intimidation 4, Wild Hunting 4 for trained birds)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -2, -5, Dead

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Claw for 3 to 4 dice; bite for 1 to 2 dice in desperation

Move: 1/2/25 (falcon); 1/2/20 (eagle)

Legendary Powers: Bond-Sharing (4), Human Speech, Information Font, *Nightsight*, Soul-Sense, *Wings* (5)

SHEEP/RAM

Now, it's easy to fall into the trap of looking at the Sleepers and seeing sheep. But if we do that, then we're no better than any other monster preying on humanity.

Besides, even sheep have their uses.

— Professor Emily Hartman, Hermetic Adept

Mythology: Blessed is the lamb; even as he's fed to the gods, he remains passive and docile. Under the direction of a good shepherd, he contentedly grazes until the final day dawns. Held up as a symbol of meekness and piety, a sheep represents the perfect Christian — an interesting extension of his older role as sacrificial victim. As Christianity moves from a militant sect to an established religion, the Lamb replace the Lion as symbol of God. Christ becomes both shepherd and lamb, guiding his flock while offering himself on the altar for the sake of the world.



In older days, the sheep and ram were far less placid. The wool on their backs symbolized wealth and prosperity, and the hard horns of the ram were seen as epitomes of masculine passion and strength. Even now, the horn-headed ram embodies aggression, lust and dull ferocity. As the ram crashes his head against the horns of others like himself, so the sinner butts against the heads of his kind, battering at the truth of God until the skinner — or the slaughterer — comes calling.

Description: Bland-faced and curly-coated creatures, sheep live wherever they can graze. Perhaps the most domestic of herd animals, sheep are not terribly bright — they're easily led and must be constantly watched to prevent them from wandering away. For this reason, the sheep has always been the perfect symbol of mild and unquestioning sacrifice, from the Paschal lamb to the drowsy human masses.

Rams are another matter. While the male of the species tends to be as dull-witted and social as his ewes, he's far more irritable and randy. During mating season, he challenges everything in sight to butting contests, sometimes going so far as to attack rocks, posts or fences. His curving horns lend the ram a sinister aspect, too — many demons are pictured with the thick, bony ridges that characterize the ram's head.

Both male and female sheep feature the luxurious coats that humans use to spin wool. In the wild, this fleece protects the sheep from harsh weather and underbrush. In their native

mountains, wild sheep fend off the elements with their thick fur. As they graze the land around them, these beasts keep their eyes at head-level and bleat plaintively. Social animals, they gather into flocks for protection from predators. Guarded by the rams, the ewes contentedly feed, breed and perish, rarely asking for much more than simple sustenance.

No wonder they often look to a shepherd for guidance and protection. Perhaps sheep and humans are not so very different after all.

Roleplaying Hints: Never ask questions, never look beyond your peaceful green meadow. The world outside is big and terrifying, and there are lots of things out there that want to eat you. Your keepers know what's best. Follow the others in your flock, and do what they do. They can't *all* be wrong, can they?

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Abilities: Alertness 2 (Athletics 3, Brawl 2 for wild rams and mountain sheep)

Willpower: 3

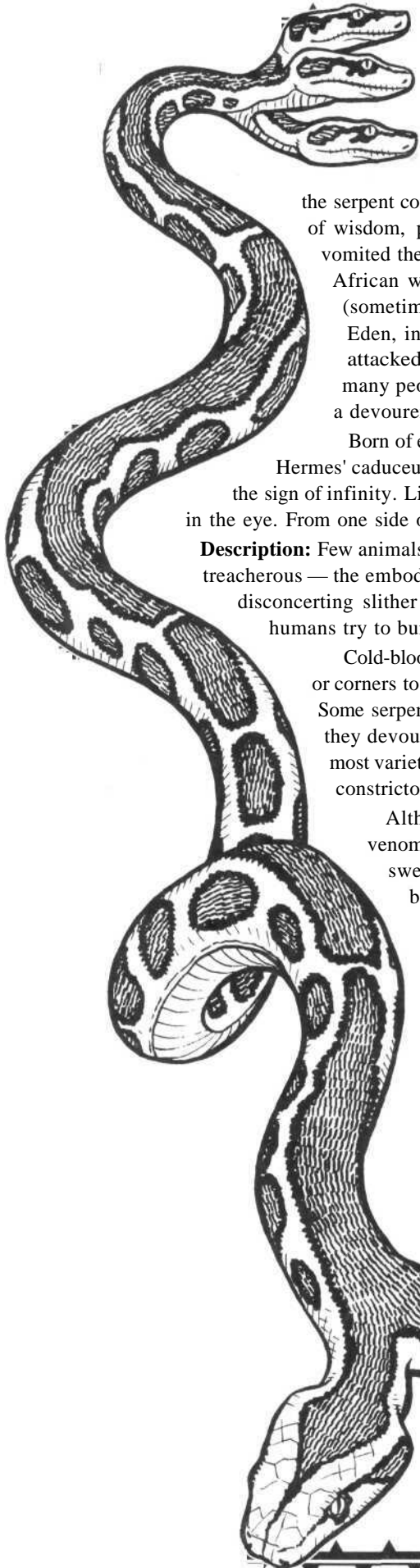
Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: None/Gore for 4 dice

Move: 8/15

Legendary Powers: None



SNAKE

Be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

— Matthew 10:16

Mythology: A tempter, a deceiver, an opener of doors and a poisoner of unwary souls, the serpent coils, slithers and bites her way into the human imagination. To some, she's a personification of wisdom, prophecy and immortality. (Serpents guarded the temples of Greece, Minoa and India, vomited the peoples of Rio onto dry land, provided a bed for Vishnu, and taught secrets of longevity to African wise folk.) According to the Old Testament and Jewish lore, however, the Great Serpent (sometimes seen as the male Satan, other times as the female Lilith) seduced Eve in the garden of Eden, incurring the hatred of God and man. Snakes stole the plant of immortality from Gilgamesh, attacked the infant Herakles and coiled at the roots of the World Tree. Seen as ancestor spirits by many people, the serpent glides between earth and the Underworld, sometimes as a guide, others as a devourer of souls.

Born of earth and fire, the serpent winds her way through human symbolism. Snakes twine around Hermes' caduceus wand (the symbol of medicine); the ouroboros, a snake swallowing her own tail, makes up the sign of infinity. Like dragons, snakes possess the power of hypnosis, and only the foolhardy dare look a snake in the eye. From one side of her forked tongue, the serpent speaks lies; from the other, she speaks the truth.

Description: Few animals share the serpent's dark reputation. In human folklore, the snake is considered evil, sneaky, treacherous — the embodiment of male deceit and feminine guile. With her lidless, unblinking stare, forked tongue, disconcerting slither and occasional poison, the serpent is an unnerving, alien presence in the "safe" world humans try to build for themselves.

Cold-blooded, this creature prefers temperate habitats, often sunning herself or hiding in bed rolls or corners to keep warm. Through a sharp sense of smell, she tastes the world with her flickering tongue. Some serpents prefer fields or forests; others live in deserts or tropical swamps. Formidable predators, they devour eggs or stalk small animals and insects. Despite the horrific image of man-eating snakes, most varieties are far too small to do anything but slither away when confronted by large prey. The huge constrictors of tropical rainforests, however, live up to every horror story ever told...

Although most snakes inflict painful bites, comparatively few are poisonous. Those which *are* venomous inject (or sometimes spit) paralyzing toxins, bringing their victims down with seizures, swelling, respiratory failure and intense pain. Larger snakes wrap themselves into crushing coils, breaking the bones of their prey before engulfing them with wide-open jaws and swallowing them whole.

Serpents never seem to sleep. Their thin-lidded eyes watch constantly, even when at rest. Those flat, emotionless slits bespeak a wisdom far older than humanity. Perhaps the tales are right — the snake does see the future. Knowing her place in it is secure, she observes the mortal world skittering by in its haphazard pace. As it dies, she simply sheds her skin and goes off alone.

Despite some similarities between the Wurm and the serpent, most shapeshifters consider snakes to be good omens, signs of wisdom and healing. The Uktena in particular often keep snakes as pets, as a sign of devotion to their water-serpent totem.

Roleplaying Hints:

Be watchful. Taste the air constantly with your tongue. Speak in riddles and half-truths. Do not grant your wisdom easily — those who would learn from you must earn the privilege. Haste, to you, is a waste of energy. Patience and a good, quick strike are far more worthwhile than endless rushing and worry.

Attributes: Strength 0 (3-4 for constrictors), Dexterity 3, Stamina 1 (2-4 for large serpents)

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 1-2

Willpower: 2

Health Levels: OK, -1, Squished (viper); OK, -1, -2, -3, Dead (large snake); OK x 3, -1 x 3, -2, -3, -5, Incapacitated (constrictor)

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks: Bite for 1 to 2 dice*, or constrict for 4 to 6 dice per turn

Move: 2/5 (viper); 5/10 (constrictor)

Legendary Powers: Acute *Smell* (2), Armor (2), Extra Heads, *Flexible*, Hazardous Breath, hibernation, Human Speech, Immunity (15; death), Information Font, Mesmerism (6), Musical Influence, Nightsight, Regrowth (6), Shared Knowledge (5), Soul-Sense/Death-Sense, Unaging, *Venom*, Water-Breathing, Wings (3)

* Poisonous snakes may inject a toxin into the wound when they bite, causing damage to accumulate at one Health Level per turn or per hour, depending on the snake. Mildly poisonous serpents might inflict only a Health Level or two, while truly deadly ones might do as many as 10. A Stamina roll (difficulty 6 for mild venoms, 7 for strong ones, 8 for powerful ones and 9 for virulent ones) may reduce the damage, but any human-sized victim should still suffer a fair amount of pain even if she resists the worst effects. Most forms of magical healing will purge the venom, but a separate spell is necessary to cure the damage already inflicted. An alternate system for poisoning—based on Storytelling, not rules—may be found in *The Sorcerers Crusade*, pages 201-202.

TIGER

A great, feline, tawny shape whose pelt was barred with a savage geometry of bars the colour of burned wood. His domed, heavy head, so terrible he must hide it. How subtle the muscles, how profound the tread. The annihilating vehemence of his eyes, like twin suns.

I felt my breast ripped apart as if I suffered a marvelous wound.

— Angela Carter, "The Tiger's Bride"

Mythology: Four sages were walking through the Indian jungle when they came on a scattering of white bones.

"These are the bones of a tiger," said one sage. "With my knowledge of science, I can reassemble them." And he did so.

"Impressive," said the second sage, "but still only bones. With my skills of magic, I can restore the beast's flesh and hide." And he did so.

"Most impressive," said the third sage, "but the tiger is still dead. By calling on my faith, I can bring it back to life."

"Before you do that," said the fourth sage, "let me climb this tree." And he did, to the scoffing of the others.

The third sage then began chanting and praying, dancing around the body of the tiger. Suddenly the glowing eyes snapped open. The tiger leaped to his feet, devoured all three sages, then streaked away into the jungle.

"Alas," the fourth sage said, climbing down from his tree and shaking his head sadly. "They forgot to provide him with a full belly."

Description: Huge, sleek and lithe, these beautiful animals move swiftly through the jungle shadows, camouflaged by their striped coats. If the lion is king of the beasts, the tiger is the king's blade. Like the Tigris River, he takes his name from the Greek and Persian word for "arrow," and is every bit as deadly. Like the glowing coals his eyes resemble, he exists to devour.

These smoldering creatures stalk from Siberia to the jungles of the Asian subcontinent. Unlike most cats—large or small—tigers enjoy water, and often soak in streams and ponds to cool off on hot days. With the exception of their cubs, tigers avoid long-term companionship. While certain talented humans have managed to befriend a tiger, such relationships are always a bit strained by the cat's independence and raw power. A voracious eater, the average tiger consumes whole antelopes in one sitting, knowing that the next meal might be long in coming. Despite their deadly reputation, most tigers avoid humans, but a tiger turned man-eater is fearsome indeed.

So great a beast throws a long shadow on folklore, symbolism and magic. The Hindu goddess Durga rode a tiger into battle against the buffalo demon. Raja Yah, the tiger king, is said to inhabit the central pillar of the world. Siberian shamans and Chinese wizards call Tiger's power into themselves, and martial artists copy his staggering blows. Puzzling his way through the dark jungle, the tiger symbolizes the struggle of the questing soul. Ground into powder, his bones give a man incredible sexual potency. In the spirit world, Tiger opposes Dragon, sometimes for good, others for ill. Although he's seen as a devourer of evil men, this beast can endanger even the purest children. Unpredictable, majestic and as deadly as anything on earth, the tiger bums his way through the night. Darkness is no obstacle to his sight, and few beasts dare stand against him.

Roleplaying Hints: You are the jungle's pulse, the living flame at its heart. Intelligent and perceptive, you understand the vagaries of human thought far better than most animals do. Nothing presents much of a threat to you, so relax and enjoy the shade. Your almost preternatural senses will warn you if something important comes around. Thanks to such perceptions, you're keenly aware of your surroundings. Even ghosts know enough to walk carefully around you.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Intimidation 5, Stealth 3

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK x 2, -1 x 2, -2 x 2, -5 x 2, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks: Claw for 6 dice, bite for 7 dice

Move: 10/35

Legendary Powers: Acute *Smell* (3), Extra Speed (10), Healing Lick (6), Human Speech, Mesmerism (3), Mystick Shield, *Nightsight*, Soul-Sense, Spirit Travel (8), Spirit Vision

WOLF

He's mad that trusts in the lameness of a wolf —
— Shakespeare, *King Lear*

Mythology: A teacher and a murderer, the wolf can be both sun and shadow. In his kinder guises, he's associated with the Greek sun-god, Apollo Lyceus; to the Romans, he is the emblem of wise ferocity and mate to the mother of Rome. To New Worlders, he teaches essential (if often cruel) lessons in life. The Lyceum where Aristotle taught takes its name from the word "wolf-skin." Yet even the wolf's defenders concede the danger he presents. Barbarians the world over have idolized but feared this pack-bound predator. In his darker aspects, the wolf represents the worst of Christian vices: greed, anger, gluttony and rapacity. In a faith where the lamb symbolizes God, how can the wolf be seen as anything but an enemy?

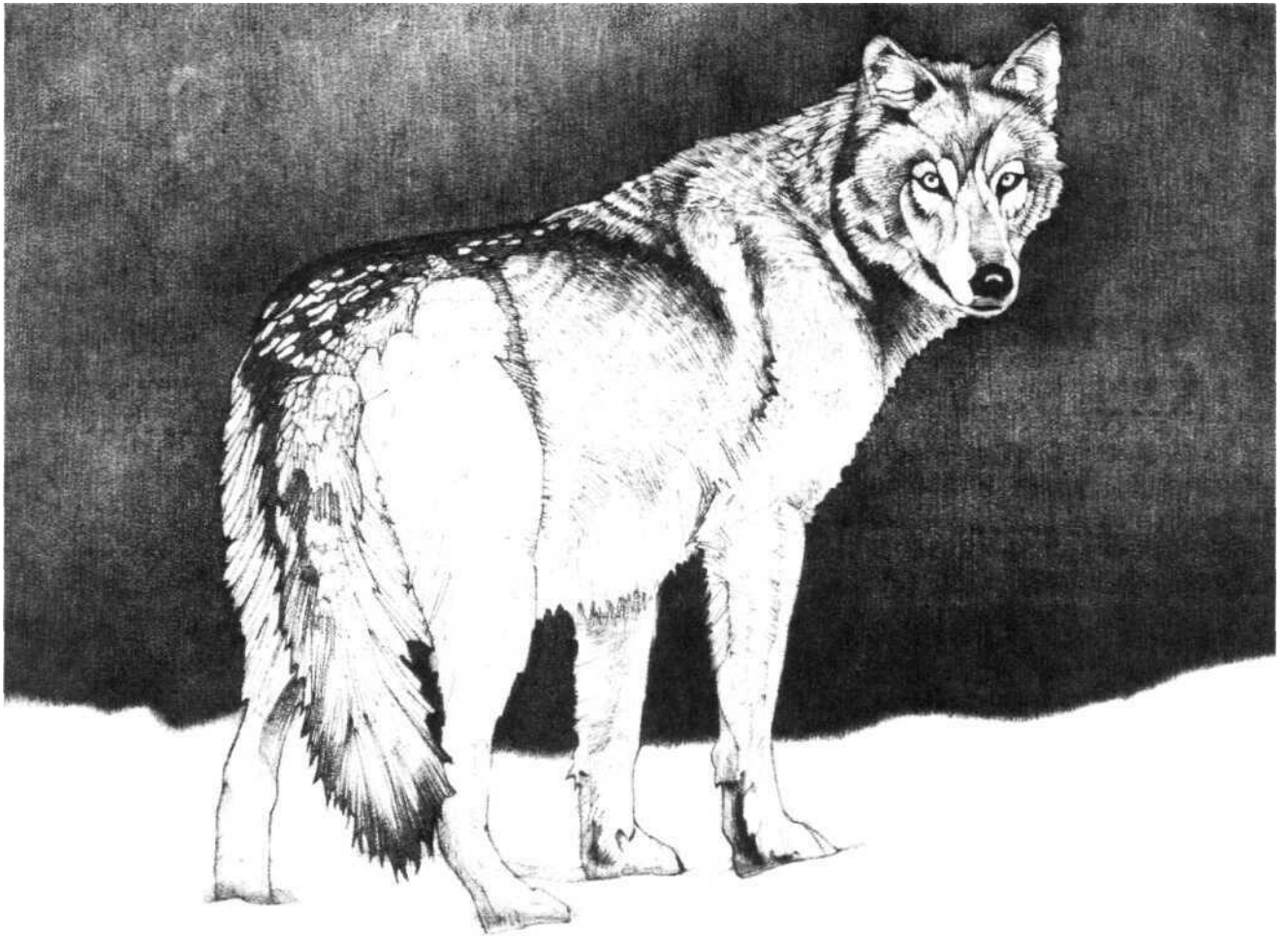
Old tales are full of wolves — wolves in disguise, wolves at the door, wolves guiding the soul from death to the Underworld, and wolves which become men (or vice versa). According to the Norse, the voracious Fenris will be loosed at the end of the world. Until then, his smaller cousins continue to evoke fear around the fire.

Description: Few sounds in nature are more chilling than a wolf's howl. Somehow it encompasses everything humanity fears about the wilderness, as well as everything we ache for. The wolf is everything we have cast aside. When we hear him, we might shiver and huddle around our fires, but not entirely in terror.

Nor is the lupine always cast as a wicked beast — to many Native American tribes, he is a wise and compassionate totem creature. The twin founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were suckled by a she-wolf, and her keen sight and stoicism earned praise from medieval philosophers.

Despite the ominous "lone wolf stalkers of legend, most lupines live together, united by an intricate pack society. This extended family hunts, plays, wanders and rests together. Two leaders dominate the other members through a complex system of postures, glances and vocalizations that convey elaborate messages. A wolf's obvious intelligence and sharp senses make him an obvious teacher; his strong jaws, endurance and ferocious snarls mark him as a deadly opponent.

A wolf exists in a rich world of smells, sights and sounds. Far more perceptive than men (or most other animals, for that matter), he can track prey for miles under very poor conditions. Like dogs and cats, he seems



KOCHAKJI

to revel in his surroundings. He'll roll around or play on a sudden whim, and often sniffs or stares at new things for the sheer pleasure of it. Despite his social nature, though, no wolf is ever truly tamed. When well-fed and confident, he's an energetic companion; when threatened, hurt or hungry, he becomes a danger to everything within reach.

Cainites and wolves have a long, and not entirely honorable, history. Despite the natural antipathy between werewolves and vampires — or perhaps because of it - Cainites have long used packs of wolves as trusted servants. Oftentimes bound packs are allowed to run free within a Cainite's demesnes; the wolves are occasionally kept on manor grounds like hounds.

Vampires, apart from Gangrel and some of the lesser bloodlines, don't take chances with wolves that aren't wrapped up in a Blood Oath, or at least conditioned through Animalism. There's too great a danger that an unfettered wolf will take up the ways of its Lupine cousins.

Roleplaying Hints: Life is a banquet of sensations, a fresh run through the woods. Each day offers a wealth of new games and chases. (Remember that you're not playing a *werewolf*; but a wholly wild animal.) Unless you're a rare renegade, the pack is all-important to you. Obey your alphas, find your niche in the pack, and know that everyone must work together to survive. Although affectionate and playful, you're still a predator. Don't be too serious, though — the thrill of the hunt is the keenest joy there is.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Stealth 2

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, -1 x 2, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Attacks: Bite for 4 dice; claw for 2 dice

Move: 7/28

Legendary Powers: *Acute Smell* (3), *Healing Lick* (3), *Human Speech*, *Information Font*, *Mesmerism* (3), *Nightsight*, *Shapechanger* (3), *Soul-Sense*, *Spirit Vision*





CHAPTER III: THE BEAST COMES ALIVE

Behold now Behemoth, which I made with thee.
— Job 40:15

Myths and fantasy tales are filled with intelligent beasts, with companions whose importance is not bound to their humanity. Animal or not, these beasts are every bit as important as — if not more so than — their human counterparts.

In certain dark fantasy chronicles, a Storyteller might allow her players the option to play intelligent beasts, as opposed to the traditional human or night-folk characters. While this sort of thing can be badly overdone (we recommend only one such character per chronicle), it can add a new layer to chronicles set in the Mythic Age. With that option in mind, the following chapter offers creation rules and roleplaying suggestions for non-human characters - systems and suggestions that can also be useful for human magi who shapeshift into animal forms.

Although the preceding chapters have offered a selection of beast "templates," Creation is large indeed. Many creatures, especially ones coming from deeply hidden places or Otherworldly Realms, bear little resemblance to "classical" monsters. Many others, being exceptions among their own kind, have talents, traits or aspects that differ from "common" examples of their species. For example, while

dragons are renowned for fiery breath, greed and vicious tempers, some dragons spit acid, renounce wealth and have pleasant (if intractable) dispositions. The following rules allow you (the player and the beast) to be an individual, not a cardboard cut-out.

Again, we repeat: The option of running a magical beast is not desirable for all troupes or chronicles. A serious **Vampire** game could be blown totally to hell by a talking raven with mystical powers, and you can just imagine the damage a dragon or mantichore could do to the atmosphere, believability and power level of such a chronicle! This option is suggested only for Mythic Era and Dark Fantastic tales, not modern ones!

It's also important to play "in character," since a magical beast is not a person, but a different entity altogether. A player who wants to put aside her human skin and portray a beast ought to get a good idea of what she wants to play and how she wants to play it before she whips out a character sheet and starts choosing powers. The "Under the Skin" section at the end of this chapter provides essential advice, cautions and observations for players (and Storytellers) who want to look at the world through the eyes of a beast.

CHARACTER CREATION

It was, however, dear to everyone that Eustace's character had been rather improved by becoming a dragon.

— C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

Bringing forth monsters out of words and numbers sounds almost Cabalistic. Peculiarly enough, that's the easy part. Breathing life into them — now, *that's* hard. These character creation rules for creatures follow the standard Storyteller system model. Keep in mind that, when dealing with any set of game rules, obedience is not always a virtue. Storytellers, look the other way if a player needs an extra freebie point or two to make a great concept work. After all, a terrific monster (and an enthusiastic player) can add a lot of spark to a dark-fantasy chronicle.

Enjoy!

STEP 1: CHARACTER CONCEPT

Like any other character, a beast should have something that makes him special — just being a manticore or a unicorn is not enough. (Would any Storyteller worth her salt allow players to start with only "mage" as a concept?) Look at the possible Concept lists, either in *Changeling*, *The Sorcerer's Crusade* or on the Character Creation Chart (pages 100-101). Once you have the nucleus of a concept, take some time to fill in your beast's background. Did she grow up alone in some magical wasteland? Was he part of a herd of his kind? What did she think of mysticks before meeting them? Did he think humans were a tasty snack, a danger to be avoided or both?

Once you have given your beast a past, give the Storyteller a reason to put her in the present. What does he seek to gain from associating with humans? Does she perhaps fear losing something if she doesn't associate with them? In the words of the method actor, "What's this character's motivation?" The Storyteller may have a hook already planned for your beast, so feel free to put your head in the leash he provides. This makes the chronicle easier for everyone to get involved in together. After all, it's hard to say, "You all meet a manticore in a bar," in a believable fashion.

ELEMENTAL AFFINITIES

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard change his spots?

— Jeremiah 13:23

Beasts, especially magical ones, are more than just fur and claws. Their natures reflect the forces at work on reality — the four (or five, to eastern characters) elements. Elemental Affinities exist for all beasts, whether natural or supernatural, and they influence creature characters in the ways that Archetypes influence human ones. Think of your Affinity as a Nature — it reflects what you are at heart.

In the preceding chapters, we've given each creature a general Affinity, but they are not as restrictive they seem at first glance. All fire-oriented creatures, for instance, do not act the same way, though they do have certain personality traits in common. The beast's general Affinity suggests several inclinations, but the particulars are up to you.



Most creatures *are* what they appear to be; unlike humans, they simply have Natures, not Demeanors. Some sophisticated greater beasts (dragons, unicorns, etc.) might also have Demeanors, however, and cloak their true personalities behind a screen of uncharacteristic behavior". While the majority of magical creatures have Demeanors that mirror their Natures, you could always play one of the exceptions— Even then, the Demeanor still echoes your Elemental Affinity. For example, a tricky siren (affiliated with Water, of course) could pretend to be a "deep thinker" (her Demeanor), while her true Nature is that of the "patient conniver."

Elemental Affinities offer useful guidelines for roleplaying fundamentally inhuman characters. Your Storyteller may also rule that acting in accord with your Elemental Affinity allows you to regain spent Willpower points. On the Character Creation Chart, we've offered a range of possibilities. Feel free to use any one of them as a basis for your creature's general personality; with the Storyteller's blessings, you might even make up a few of your own. Remember that your character is an *individual*, not an illuminated picture in some moldy medieval monster manual. She might be predisposed toward certain traits, but in the end, she is her own being.

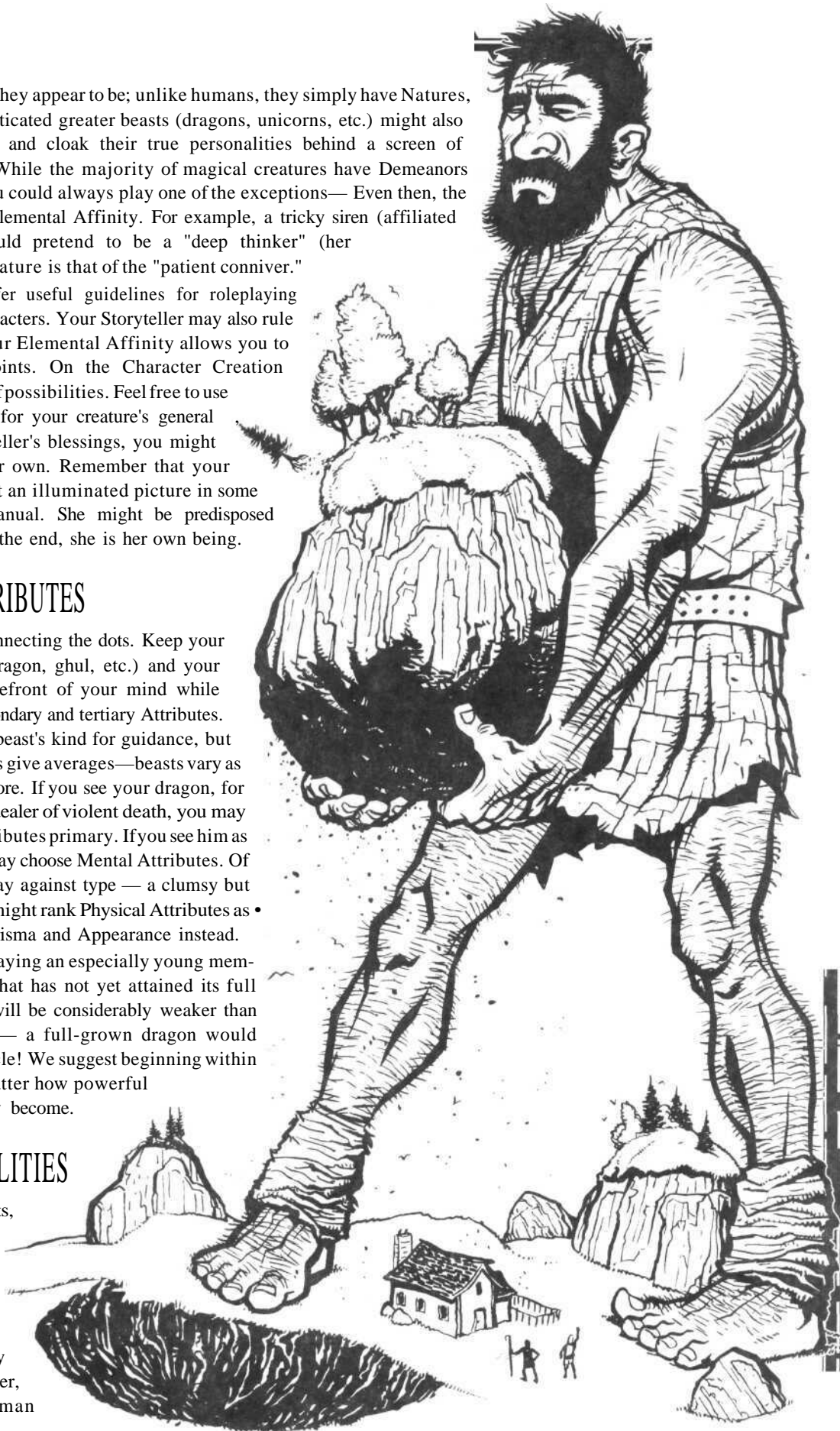
STEP II: SELECT ATTRIBUTES

Now it's time to start connecting the dots. Keep your beast's species (manticore, dragon, ghul, etc.) and your character concept in the forefront of your mind while prioritizing your primary, secondary and tertiary Attributes. Check the template for your beast's kind for guidance, but remember that those templates give averages—beasts vary as much as humans do, if not more. If you see your dragon, for instance, as a fire-breathing dealer of violent death, you may wish to make his Physical Attributes primary. If you see him as a secretive elder wyrm, you may choose Mental Attributes. Of course, you might wish to play against type — a clumsy but charming tiger, for instance, might rank Physical Attributes as tertiary and play up her Charisma and Appearance instead.

Chances are, you'll be playing an especially young member of your species, a beast that has not yet attained its full strength. Thus, your dragon will be considerably weaker than her elders, as it should be — a full-grown dragon would unbalance any normal chronicle! We suggest beginning within the given point levels, no matter how powerful your creature might someday become.

STEP III: SELECT ABILITIES

All beasts possess Talents, often at quite high levels. The individual write-ups for each kind of monster in this Bestiary suggest "standard" talent packages. Even social, sapient, magical beasts rarely train in human Skills, however, and even fewer learn human



STORYTELLER'S NOTE

The most powerful great beasts take decades or even centuries to reach their full potential. A dragon player should not be allowed to dump all of her experience points into Strength, then rationalize her character's sudden progress as a "growth spurt." Instead, counsel her to spread those points out between the various Traits and Advantages, reflecting the dragon's slow, but inexorable, maturity.

In the case of beasts who live for hundreds of years, you might restrict the character's Traits to a certain level. Hopefully, the player will mature alongside her character, so when she does attain incredible Trait levels, she will probably have learned that sheer force is a poor judge of character.

Knowledges. The Storyteller should feel welcome to invent Knowledges for each kind of beast (Dragon Lore, Gryphon Lore, etc.). Unless she plans to have these Knowledges occur frequently in her chronicle, however, it might be easier (and cheaper) to subsume such information under the *Information Font* Special Advantage (page 116).

Many Talents seem tailor-made for beasts. Alertness (especially when combined with a high Perception Attribute) should be common among predators and prey alike. Many beasts sense invisible things more readily than humans — horses shy for no reason, dogs bark and growl, etc. You can capture this with Awareness. Brawl covers unarmed combat, including animal teeth, horns and claws. If predators take Brawl, prey should take Dodge. Large, powerful or ferocious beasts might have innate Intimidation talents, too.

In the realm of Skills, you might consider Stealth, Survival and Wild Hunting essential for your character. Practically no "beast of the field" will possess Knowledges, but your Storyteller might have an aristocracy of dragons or a parliament of rooks (for example) in her chronicle. If so, she can advise you whether the relevant Culture, Law, Lore or Occult Knowledges will be worth the points. If talking, sapient beasts have societies, then Linguistics might come in handy.

Assuming that he's intelligent enough to grasp the concepts, a beast trained by human companions may learn human Skills and Knowledges; conversely, he might pass along a few tricks to the people in his "pack." Naturally, there's a catch: The two parties will probably practice things a bit differently — a hawk and a man use separate skills while hunting, for example. If the gap between the two is severe enough, the Storyteller might rule that the Trait in question cannot be taught or learned. A hawk with a man's intelligence might be able to learn how to read and calculate mathematics, but he won't be able to teach his human friends how to hunt.

STEP IV: SELECT ADVANTAGES AND BACKGROUNDS

Virtually every kind of beast has its own Special Advantages. In most cases, the beast's description in this Bestiary makes those Traits plain. In some cases, however, you might have a selection of Advantages to choose from. Dragons, for example, manifest many different characteristics, and few, if any, possess all of them at once.

Other Special Advantages exist to allow you to customize your character and to build different kinds of beasts (with your Storyteller's approval, of course). Naturally, it's best to stay simple — the more you buy, the less you have to spend. An especially puissant monster (say, a flying, fire-breathing, ancient, gold-hoarding, hypnotic dragon) may cost more points than you have to spend. If you can convince your Storyteller that your character concept absolutely sings as a part of her chronicle (and isn't just a mini-maxed combat monster built to trash it), she might let you buy extra Flaws or grant you a couple of extra freebie points. Don't count on it, though. Pick only those Special Advantages that make or break your character concept, and leave some room to grow.

Backgrounds are more individual — a beast rarely possesses a Background common to its entire species! Although you're given a few Background points to spend, you have three options for them:

- You could use them to buy more Special Advantages.
- You might decide that certain Backgrounds — like Allies to reflect a wolf's pack — make sense for your beast's species.
- You might purchase Backgrounds appropriate for your individual character, differentiating her from "common" members of her kind. The wolf in question might have an Arcane gift, or a Spies network made up of forest creatures.

In addition to the Backgrounds listed in this chapter, your Storyteller may allow others from the main Sorcerers Crusade rulebook, or from other World of Darkness books. Destiny and Mentor both seem reasonable, and a creative Storyteller could work wonders with a bestial Dream or Influence Background.

STEP V: FINISHING TOUCHES

Bears when first born are shapeless masses of white flesh a little larger than mice, their claws alone being prominent. The mother then licks them gradually into proper shape.

— Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*

The last few strokes of your character "portrait" include recording its Willpower (beasts begin with five points) and a final point-spending spree. "Freebie points" are the pigment in which you paint the final lines of your character. As with any other character, you can spend these points on Special Advantages, increased Abilities,

Backgrounds, Willpower and even Attributes. Remember, of course, that freebie points are not spent on a one-for-one basis (see the Character Creation Chart on pages 100-101 for details).

Because the good stuff is always more expensive than you wish (just like in real life), you may take Flaws, which give you a few more precious points. Conversely, you can spend your resources on Merits. No character may have more than seven points worth of Flaws, or spend more than seven points on Merits, without the explicit approval of your Storyteller. Merit and Flaw Traits tend to snowball, and too many of either can rapidly turn a playable, interesting character into a story-crippling morass.

To complete the transformation of your creature into a living, breathing beast, answer a few questions to make sure that your original idea still fits your current character.

As a general rule, you can never know too much about yourself. The answers to most of these queries should be decided during character creation; the rest of them may be answered during a short one-on-one Prelude. If some of the answers you develop seem to contradict your statistics as you have them written down, feel free to change those statistics (as long as you don't change the final cost of your character, of course). This period of "getting to know your beast" is as important as any amount of assigning dots.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

This question seems trivial, but it has great repercussions, not only the chronicle's history, but for its future. A dragon has a far longer life span (and a far longer maturation period) than an intelligent rabbit, and that life span will have an impact on your companions.

Your age matters when you consider maturity, too — others people and beasts will judge you by your apparent youth. If you're a young creature, are you still "wet behind the ears"? If you're an older beast, have you grown grumpy, cynical and set in your ways? What have you seen in your years on Earth? What do you still look forward to seeing?

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?

Did you grow up in an untrammelled steppe? The Papal zoo? An Otherworldly Realm? Was your native land hilly and bleak, or warm and fertile? Do you feel good about your origins? Ashamed? What opportunities were available to you because of where you were born? What potential was denied you? What do you remember about "home," and would you go back if you could? Were you raised by your parents, and *are* your kind raised by their parents as a rule? Are you familiar with your own kind, or have you grown up around other creatures (like humans)?





HOW DO YOU RELATE TO YOUR OWN KIND?

What do you think about other beasts like yourself? How have they treated you in the past? How have you treated them? Is your species solitary, like dragons and unicorns, or gregarious, like ghuls and wolves? Are you a normal member of your kind? If not, how do your pack-mates react to your differences? Do you have a mate? Does she (or he) understand why you're taking off to travel with a bunch of humans?

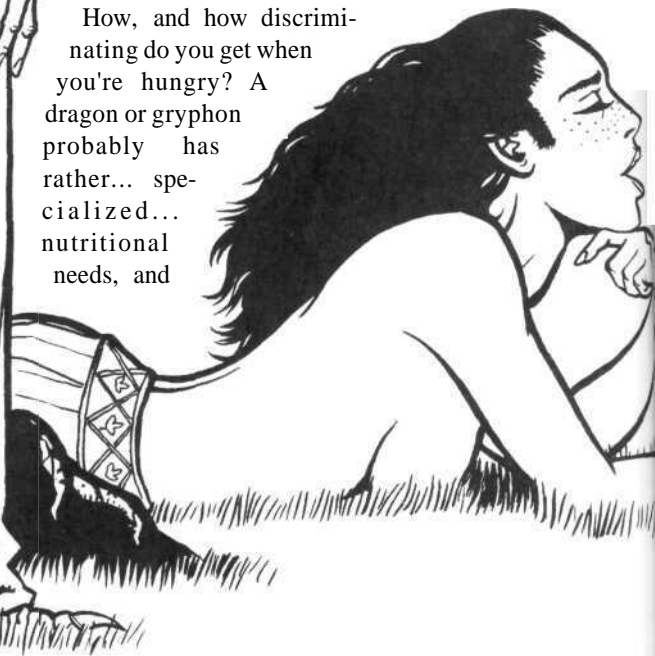
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HUMANS?

If you're a sapient animal, humans may be puzzles, companions, rivals, dinner or all four. If you are sapient and your species is normally brutish, you may feel closer to humans than to your own kind. Do you think that all humans are alike? After all, that's what humans think about *your* kind. Do you have special friends or enemies among humanity? Are you aligned with the fae? Are some humans (Frenchmen, shepherds, women) smarter? More congenial? Deadlier? Tastier?

WHAT DO YOU EAT?

Unlike humans, many beasts are bound to certain types of food. What's yours? Do you have a wide menu, or are you bound to certain kinds of food? How much do you need to eat, and how often? Do you hunt?

How, and how discriminating do you get when you're hungry? A dragon or gryphon probably has rather... specialized... nutritional needs, and



eats a lot of food, besides. Such questions will become pretty important if your diet demands things like live meat, gold or grave dirt. (See the Merit: Cast Iron Stomach and the Flaw: Bizarre Hunger for possible applications.)

WHO'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Some kinds of animals have mother-love and strong family ties. Others are born alone on rocky cliffs or stony beaches. Do you have a family? Do you care? Who would you kill for? Die for? What do humans offer you that your own kind cannot or does not?

By extension, are there certain principles, laws or tenets of faith that you hold sacred? Are your kind known for being honorable (like Chinese dragons) or savage (like harpies), and, if so, are you like them or not? If not, what makes you different? Is it some moral code, faith or curse that makes you what you are, or have you simply decided to be different?

WHAT DO YOU WANT, WHY AND WHAT WILL YOU DO TO GET IT?

Animals, even greater beasts, tend to be very direct, even ruthless, about their desires. Few have any compunctions about killing if it serves a need. What will you do to get what you want? What sorts of things do you want? Where do you draw the line between need and whim, and how easily will you cross it? Will you endanger your friends to get what you want? How about yourself? When will you simply decide that something isn't worth the trouble, and how easily will you back away once you have begun on a course of action?

HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THE WORLD?

Beasts are not people, and their world-view is shaped by instinct and sensory input. Most non-human creatures possess sharp perceptions, and rely on them in different ways; a dog, for instance, relies more heavily on scent and sound than his human master, who relies largely on sight. (See "Under the Skin," pages 121-124.) Even an animal with human intelligence will define his surroundings in different terms, and this difference might mark some profound departures from human thought or philosophy. The dog might shape his opinions of people based on how they smell, rather than by how they look or act. A canine religion, if such exists, would feature a "gospel" couched in scents and sounds rather than on abstract thoughts.

So how do you view this world? What are your dominant senses? How strongly does instinct guide you? How do you judge a situation or encounter? By how things smell? By how they feel? Do you have senses that humans do not recognize at all? If so, how do you explain your reactions to them? How do your senses shape your philosophy toward life, and how do you explain those ideas to those who do not perceive the world as you do?

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER POLITE?

Few animals, even sapient ones, live by human standards of etiquette or hygiene. By the same token, many magical beasts have certain habits or preferences that people might find odd or incomprehensible. A dragon might not think twice about relieving himself on a tavern floor, but would be deeply offended by the tavern keeper's lack of bathing. How do you tend to your bodily needs and functions? What do you consider taboo? Are there certain customs you must observe? Odors you cannot bear? Human habits you find repulsive, or ones that you can't understand no matter how hard you try? What do you do if you offend someone? How about if they offend you?

CHIMERICAL CHARACTERS IN CHANGELING

This chapter can be used by Storytellers and players who wish to include chimerical characters in their stories and chronicles. The Storyteller should carefully consider the possible consequences before he allows a player to create a chimerical character though, since such beings can change the mood and feel of a chronicle tremendously. The Storyteller should also be careful what *kind* of chimerical creatures he allows in his chronicle. Some of the creatures described in this book may work well for your chronicle, while others may not.

There are many options available to a Storyteller who wishes to include chimerical characters in his chronicle. The most likely is for the creature to be a companion of one of the Kithain characters. It is also possible for the chimera to be an orphan whom the characters have encountered. Players who are not able to attend sessions regularly are good candidates for such roles. This allows them to have an enjoyable time when they can make it, but does not interfere with the ongoing story when they are absent. It is even possible for an entire troupe to consist of chimera characters, though this would require a great deal of preparation on the Storyteller's part.

The rules provided in this book are excellent for players who wish to play chimerical characters. The Rules provided in *Changeling: The Dreaming* (see pages 221-223) can be used as Special Advantages, and their point costs can remain unchanged in most cases (simply substitute the Special Advantage cost for the Chimera Point cost). In cases where powers overlap, it is best to use the systems and points provided in this book. In all cases, chimera characters must be approved by the Storyteller. A player should never assume that his concept will be allowed in a chronicle, and should be aware that individual Storytellers may have their own limitations on what powers can be used and what types of chimera are allowed.

CHARACTER CREATION CHART

CREATION OUTLINE

Step I: Concept — Who Are You?

• Choose a Concept: What are you like? How do humans see you? How does your own kind see you?

• Choose a Motivation: Why do you associate with people? What do you hope to accomplish?

• Choose an Elemental Affinity: How do you exemplify the element you embody? What passions reveal your elemental nature to those with eyes to see?

Step II: Attributes — How Are You Formed?

• Prioritize Your Three Categories: Primary 7, Secondary 5, Tertiary 3 (Refer to the listings elsewhere in this Bestiary for guidance, if necessary.)

Step III: Abilities — What Can You Do?

• Prioritize Your Three Categories: Primary 11, Secondary 7, Tertiary 4

Step IV: Advantages — What Makes You What You Are?

• Choose Background Traits: 3 points

• Choose Special Advantages: 6 points. Some of these are required for a given beast, others are more individual. These Advantages may also be purchased with Background or freebie points, but only during character creation.

Step V: Finishing Touches

• Record Willpower: 5 points

• Spend Your Freebie Points: Beasts have 21 freebie points to spend. You may need to spend some for a particular Special Advantage required for a given beast.

• Choose Merits and Flaws (optional): Some beasts may have required Merits or Flaws. Ask your Storyteller for guidance. You spend freebie points to purchase Merits and gain more freebie points for taking Flaws. You may only have up to 7 points in Merits and Flaws.

• Answer the appropriate character questions, and perhaps play out a Prelude.

CONCEPTS

• Companion: Friend, fellow traveler, mate, respectful sidekick, family ally, God-sent helpmate

• Exile: Runt, rebel, lone wolf, forsaken domestic animal, last of a dying breed

• Familiar: Magickally connected to a mage either willingly, unwillingly or grudgingly

• Hunter: Hunting for food, for knowledge, for enemies, for safety

• Leader: Noble beast, pack alpha, intelligent leader of his kind

• Pet: Adoring (dog), loyal (horse), oblivious (snake), selfish (cat)

• Vengeful Beast: Last survivor, disgraced animal, enforcer of a curse, pack-mate of slain beast(s)

ELEMENTAL AFFINITIES

Air

- Blustery curmudgeon
- Bitter warrior
- Cold cynic
- Fleeting dilettante
- Flighty scatterbrain
- Gentle friend
- Stormy fanatic

Earth

- Crystalline idealist
- Fertile procreator
- Flowery bon vivant
- Resolute architect
- Sheltering caregiver
- Solid guardian
- Stony curmudgeon

Fire

- Burning quester
- Fiery rebel
- Glittering dancer
- Illuminated scholar
- Passionate lover
- Lusty reveler
- Warm romantic

Metal

- Bright thinker
- Greedy collector
- Harsh scrapper
- Hot-headed braggart
- Temperamental warrior
- Sharp-witted trickster
- Visionary architect

Water

- Babbling jester
- Erosive revolutionary
- Graceful sensualist
- Quiet thinker
- Stagnant traditionalist
- Patient conniver
- Wise elder

Wood

- Bearer of burdens
- Flexible mediator
- Nurturing parent
- Rooted traditionalist
- Scattered visionary
- Steadfast protector
- Stout defender

ABILITIES

- Talents: Alertness, Athletics, Awareness, Brawl, Dodge, Empathy, Expression, Flying, Intimidation
- Skills: Acrobatics, Elusion, Etiquette, Foraging, Hiding, Melee, Stealth, Survival, Wild Hunting
- Knowledges: Animal Speech, Beast Lore, Cosmology, Culture, Enigmas, Linguistics, Lore, Metaphysics, Occult

BACKGROUNDS

- Allies: Companions (animals or otherwise) who watch your back as you watch theirs.
- Arcane: A mystic talent for hiding in plain sight (see Mage for details).
- Cray: A Thaumivore's dream — your own "private" wellspring of mystic essence (again, see Mage for specifics).
- Treasure: A hoard of shiny things and other goods.
- Years: Essentially immortal, you remember many things....

Cast-Iron Stomach (1)
Loyalty (1)
Acute Senses (1/3)
Fearlessness (1/3)
Homing Instinct (2/4)
Perfect Balance (3)
Soothing Voice (3)

Offensive to Animals (1)
Shy (1)
Speech Impediment (1)
Alien Appearance (1-5)
Bizarre Hunger (2-5)
Compulsion (2-4)
Vulnerability (2-5)
Mute (3)
Weak Spot (3)
No Dexterous Limbs (4)
Thaumivore (5)

SPECIAL ADVANTAGES

Acute Smell (2-3)
Armor (1-4)
Bond-Sharing (4-6)
Chameleon Coloration/ Shadow-walking (4/6/8)
Claws, Fangs or Horns (3/5/7)
Deadly Demise (3)
Elemental Touch (3/5/7/10/15)
Enhancement (variable)

Extra Head(s) (3 per head)
Extra Limb(s) (3 per limb)
Extra Speed (variable)
Feast of Nettles (2-6)
Flexible (2)
Hazardous Breath (variable)
Healing Lick (3/6)
Hibernation (2)
Human Speech (1)
Immunity (2/5/10/15)
Information Font (3)
Intangibility (8/10)
Mesmerism (3/6)
Musical Influence (3)
Mystick Shield (varies)
Nightsight (3)
Rapid Healing (variable)
Regrowth (2/4/6)
Shapechanger (3/5/8)
Shared Knowledge (5/7)
Size (3/5/8/10)
Soul-Sense/Death-Sense (2)
Spirit Travel (8/10/15)
Spirit Vision (3)
Tunneling (3)
Unaging (2)
Venom (variable)
Wall-Crawling (4)
Water-Breathing (2/5)
Webbing (5)
Wings (3/5)

FREEBIE POINTS

Trait	Cost
Attributes	5 per dot
Abilities	2 per dot
Backgrounds	1 per dot
Merits & Flaws	(variable)
Special Advantages	(variable)
Willpower	2 per dot

EXPERIENCE COSTS

Trait	Cost
Attribute	current rating x 3
Knowledges	current rating x 3
New Ability	4
Special Advantages	(cost)
Talents & Skills	current rating x 2
Willpower	current rating

TRAITS

*You can hound me now you've found me
But I'm far more cunning than you
I'm a shy fox I'm a sly fox
And I'll teach you a lesson or two*
— Steeleye Span, "The Fox"

Like any other sort of character, your beast has certain Traits that, for the most part, can be found in the various World of Darkness books. A few new ones, however, are included below, along with variations that reflect the special needs of non-human characters.

NEW TALENTS

Every beast possesses certain inherent Talents. Many of these, such as Brawling or Alertness, are analogous to human Talents, while others — like Flying — are reserved for animals alone.

AWARENESS

Animals, especially the more intelligent ones, rarely rely on surface appearances. Like many of your cousins, you can see to the heart of a person or place, noticing the forces, emotions or hidden natures stirring below a placid cover. You're so sharply attuned to mystic energies and elemental forces that if a spell has been cast or a natural disaster is approaching, you sense it far better than your human allies can. You can (with a good Perception + Awareness roll) pick up subtle clues — a slight vibration, a bad smell, a warm feeling, etc. — that help you decide whether to run, fight or stay around.

- Novice: Your hackles rise around dangerous things.
- Practiced: You get feelings—often accurate ones — about the people and places you encounter.
- Competent: While other, more "intelligent," companions are sitting around trying to make up their minds about something, you've already sensed the truth.
- Master: You might not be able to see the Otherworlds clearly, but you can tell when something's hovering around.
- Legend: Very few things can fool you; you have a nose for the truth.

Possessed by: Cats, Dogs, Gryphons, Dolphins, Dragons
Suggested Specialties: Spirit Presence, Night-folk, Danger, Resonance, Elemental Forces, Magick, Human Nature

EMPATHY

You understand the emotions of others. Perhaps your senses are attuned enough to smell fear or taste happiness; it could be that you're familiar with the pulse of passions, or that you've spent so much time with humans or other

emotional creatures that you can read their feelings. No matter how you define this sensitivity, it helps you figure out what a fellow being needs... even if her words say otherwise.

- Novice: You can tell when a loved one is sad.
- Practiced: Your presence is a comfort to your friends.
- Competent: A stranger's passions are clear to you.
- Master: You can guess a person's true feelings even if he's trying to hide them.
- Legend: What they feel, you feel.

Possessed by: Cats, Dolphins, Ghuls, Hounds, Raptors, Horses

Suggested Specialties: Deception, Comfort, Causing Fear, Guessing Master's Moods, Knowing When to Run

FLYING

Just as humans must learn to use their inherent abilities to brawl or dodge, a flying beast must learn to master her wings. With this Talent (rolled with Dexterity), you can dive, stall, fight in the air, ride the winds and find updrafts. The air is your home, and you are its master.

- Novice: You can land gracefully, and avoid any slower pursuer.
- Practiced: You take the upper hand in casual contests with others in the air, and you're wise to tricks like diving out of the sun, or shifting into a sudden downdraft to escape.
- Competent: Another flier has to work to surprise you with anything. Fighting from the air is as easy as fighting on the ground, regardless of your "natural" state.
- Master: If your kind travels in flocks, you take the lead. Others of your kind see your grace, form and power in the air. The smallest gust under your pinions is an overwhelming advantage. Challenges are rare.
- Legend: The skies are your domain. Anything that anyone can do on land or water, you can do in the air, upside down and backwards.

Possessed by: Birds, Corax, Dragons, Pegasi, Angels, Demons

Suggested Specialties: Aerial Combat, Aerial Hunting, Aerobatics, Power Diving, Wind Lore

NEW SKILLS

An old dog may indeed learn new tricks — or get better at his old ones. Animals can acquire Skills; doing so just takes a bit of effort.... Like beast Talents, these variant Skills are based on an animal's physiology and perspective. A human shapechanger can learn them, but a normal person should not be allowed to.

ELUSION

A smart beast can use her surroundings to confound her enemies. You are such a beast, naturally — anyone who dares to hunt you will have a hard time of it! On your home turf, you're nearly unbeatable. In strange surroundings, you can get your bearings quickly enough to elude pursuit — or to lead your foes into a trap while you race away, laughing. This Trait may be rolled with Intelligence (to puzzle out new surroundings), Manipulation (to confuse pursuers), Perception (to notice prospective traps and hazards) or Wits (to trick your foes into falling for said traps and hazards). Alternatively, it may be used as part of a resisted roll, pitting your Elusion against your hunter's Hunting or Survival Traits.

- Novice: Given a good head start, you can elude casual pursuit.
- Practiced: You can trick most hunters into going the wrong way, or lure neophytes into tight situations.
- Competent: You're clever enough to lead a hunting party into briar patches or deep creeks.
- Master: A wily beast, you can give most pursuers the slip with little difficulty.
- Legend: The greatest

hunters alive *wish* they could catch you!

Possessed by: Foxes, Coyotes, Wolves, Rabbits, Unicorns

Suggested Specialties: Deep Forest, Strange Terrain, Natural Traps, Hunting Parties

FORAGING

When food is scarce, you can still find something to eat -- perhaps not the greatest delicacies, but enough to stay alive. This Trait may be purchased by human characters who have some experience trying to stay alive under bad conditions; even the greatest foragers, however, can only find food in places where there's food to be found. A totally barren landscape will confound anyone.

- Novice: You can scrounge up a few scraps in average surroundings.
- Practiced: You know all the right places to look for chow.
- Competent: Under harsh conditions, you can still survive.
- Master: If it's edible, you can find it.
- Legend: You can find sustenance, even when other creatures are starving.

Possessed by: Raccoons, Rats, Vultures, Hyenas

Suggested Specialties: Urban, Forest, Ruins, Swamp, Desert, Winter, Grasslands

HIDING

You excel at disappearing. Although you haven't been blessed with a changing pelt or natural camouflage, you know where to find cover, how to keep quiet, and when the time has come to move again — all without being spotted. Naturally, you need cover before you can lose yourself in it, but in the wild, a skillful eye can find many hiding places. This Trait may be rolled with Perception (to notice hiding places, including those of your prey) or Wits (to find cover quickly), or as part of a resisted roll (against a tracker's Perception or Hunting roll).



- Novice: You can hide in the forest.
- Practiced: You can hide quickly in woods, city or underbrush.
- Competent: You can hide in most surroundings.
- Master: You can hide just about anywhere.
- Legend: Where'd you go?

Possessed by: Rats, Possums, Hares

Suggested Specialties: Forest, Desert, Urban, Playing Dead

WILDHUNTING

Some beasts live by the hunt. For you, hunting is not an optional skill but the very necessity of life. Tracking, stalking, harrying and bringing down prey are steps in your endless pavan with death, and you perform them with ruthless efficiency. Hunting is what you were designed to do.

- Novice: You know the usual places your traditional prey gathers, like water holes or caravan sites.
- Practiced: You easily make yourself one with any environment, as if it is your normal hunting ground. Animals and men not native to these areas will not notice you until you make your move.
- Competent: You can take any normal game of your acquaintance. Only exceptional animals will notice your presence on your hunting grounds.
- Master: Sleek and confident, you move through your lands with utter self-assurance. You have no problem bringing down prey.
- Legend: Even in lands unknown, you make your mastery felt. You can hunt intelligent game with the ease of normal prey.

Possessed by: Hunting Beasts, Hunting Birds, Natural Predators

Suggested Specialties: Aerial Hunting, Game Birds, Herd Animals, Large Game, Scavenging, Specific Environments (Forests, Mountains, Savannas and Steppes, etc.), Specific Targets (Bears, Elephants, Humans, Quail, etc.)

NEW KNOWLEDGES

For most beasts, "knowledge" as humans understand it is an alien thing. Still, some exceptional creatures master such concepts; a handful of them, mostly greater beasts and familiars, are far more knowledgeable than the average human!

In game terms, an exceptional beast may purchase Knowledges like Cosmology, Culture (to better understand humans), Enigmas, Lore (various types), Metaphysics, Occult and, of course, Linguistics. Additionally, such a character could buy one of the following special Knowledges. Unlike Talents, these Traits represent intellectual prowess rather than physical. Although such skills are unusual among humans, an especially sagacious animal-lover might buy them, too.

ANIMAL SPEECH

Some beasts have languages of their own; how many of them do is a subject for scholars to debate (and Storytellers to decide, based on the level of fantasy one wants to employ). The old tales claim that most beasts have parliaments or councils which meet in the dead of winter, when humans believe the animals are sleeping. According to such tales, beasts speak as readily to each other as humans do; people just don't understand them. To the rationalist, of course, such claims are sheer mythology, but you know better.

Through some circumstance of fortune (to be decided as part of your background), you can speak to and understand animal speech. If you are an animal, you may speak to others of your kind as a "default" language, since this Knowledge reflects an ability to converse with other types of beasts. If you're a human being, you're not assumed to know any animal languages for free — but then, an animal must buy this Knowledge to understand human speech on more than a simply superficial level, too. (See the Merit: Human Speech.)

Animal Speech works just like Linguistics, with the following exceptions:

- To speak to animals, the character must be able to form sounds like those the animal in question makes. A bear, for example, would find bird speech physically impossible to speak, although he might be able to understand it.
- Certain beasts may be able to speak a common language if they share similar physical and social characteristics. A wolf, for instance, could speak to dogs, but not to cats. Also, some things may translate differently — a poodle might sound unbearably prissy to a wild wolf, or a lion might seem bored and condescending to a cheetah.

Animal speech, both in form and topic, is very general. Animals tend to think simply and directly, phrasing things in terms of sensation and impression. (Many also happen to be color-blind. Trying to describe the color violet to a dog or squirrel would be an exercise in futility, since color is not a concept either recognizes.) The Storyteller has the final decision over the existence or utility of this Knowledge; it's appropriate for mythological or high fantasy chronicles but completely wrong for low-level fantasy or horror games.

- Dabbler: One additional language
- Student: Two additional languages
- Scholar: Three additional languages
- Master: Four additional languages
- Virtuoso: Five additional languages

Possessed by: Noble Beasts, Great Serpents, Faeries, Shamans, Witches

Suggested Specialties: Archaisms, Profanity, Prophecy, Songs and Poetry

BEAST LORE

According to legends, all beasts maintain elaborate societies hidden away from man. While those tales exaggerate, the greater beasts (and some of the more intelligent animals) often do have customs, hierarchies, pedigrees and legends of their own. To some degree, you know what they are.

Like other Lores (Tradition, Kindred, etc.), each type of Lore must be purchased separately. The higher your rating, the more you know... or *think* you know. While they contain indisputable truths, Lores can be notoriously inaccurate — *especially* Beast Lores. Such "records" are nearly always rooted in oral traditions and couched in symbolism and myth. It's nearly impossible to know where fantasy ends and "facts" begin. While Beast Lore might be helpful in certain situations, it's folly — and often dangerous — to consider it absolute truth.

- Dabblers: Hey, there's actually a bit of order there—
- Student: By God's command, the beasts are organized into certain hierarchies, and you know essentially what they are.
- Scholar: You know a few secrets.
- Master: The beasts themselves are rarely as informed as you are.
- Virtuoso: You know hidden myths, ranks and histories that only the most learned elders ever learn.

Possessed by: Sages, Witches, Ancient Beasts, Sphinxes, Faeries, Cats, Shapeshifters, Skin-changers, Bestiary Scribes

Variations: Dragons, Birds, Lesser Beasts, Greater Beasts, Sea Creatures, Bestiaries (notoriously inaccurate, but very common), Divine Hierarchies (Oriental, Christian, African, Indian, New World, Hebrew and Muslim are all separate Lores)

BACKGROUNDS

Dragons have generally had a reputation for being anti-social. Liberals may attribute this to a deprived childhood, Conservatives to mere idleness.

— Avram Davidson, *Adventures in Unhistory*

People acquire influence on (and renown in) the surrounding world by birth, experience or luck. This is not only true of humans, however, for many beasts have Backgrounds worthy of exploration (and exploitation) in the course of a chronicle.

ALLIES

Many animals live in packs, herds or flocks. Even solitary monsters may have lesser beasts that dwell under their shadow and live off their kills — as jackals follow a lion, or harpies a gryphon. Unusual beasts may have unusual associates, indeed. The followers of a sapient creature might vary as much as (if not more than) those of a human magus. Remember that Allies, even animal ones, aren't simple sword fodder; they are





creatures (beast or human) in their own right, with their own interests and motivations. To most animals and greater beasts, self-preservation is a major concern — humans, as a rule, show far less of it than beasts do. (Note: Players may not choose each other's characters as Allies.)

- One Ally of moderate power (a bear, a wolf), or several smaller ones (hawks, rats).
- Two Allies, or one more powerful Ally (a lion, a changeling), or a small flock of low-powered beasts.
- Three Allies, or fewer Allies of greater power, or a small herd of smaller ones.
- Four Allies, or fewer powerful Allies, or a pack of moderately powerful creatures.
- Five Allies, or a few useful or strong Allies, or a large number of low-powered animals.

TREASURE

Most beasts live blissfully outside the market economy humans impose upon themselves (and everything else) at every turn. Even so, intelligent, social animals may value things just as humans do, if a bit differently. Sirens collect the curios that sink inside ships, magpies love shiny things and everyone knows the legends of how dragons assemble hoards of treasure—

Those hoards don't just grow themselves, however; they have to be gathered. Treasure is not the exclusive province of beastly aristocrats (although, like their human counterparts, they seem to accumulate more of it). Even the lowliest jackdaw can have a nest of bright, shiny silver, and the despised toad supposedly keeps a fortune in its brow. By the by, it's important to remember that any beast's hoard surely contains piles of what humans consider worthless junk. After all, people place strange values on things and often ignore what's *really* important—

- A few trinkets and gewgaws, notable in a provincial market.
- One very nice piece of something, and a lot of shiny stuff to set it off.
- Lots of pretty things, possibly with holy relics, smallish heaps of gold or gems and maybe even a minor magical treasure.
- A treasure respectable enough to spark a local legend, open a tavern or enter polite society.
- A notable barrow, possibly the result of centuries of collecting; humans give noble titles to bearers of this much wealth.

TEARS

Not all creatures measure years on the human scale. To the most venerable or ancient dragons, centuries pile up nothing but trifling delays in the greater scope of things. Other beasts, though relatively young themselves, may inherit racial memories or traditions dating back to the Flood. Either way, this Trait

allows you to recall things that, by human standards, occurred long ago. This does not grant you total recall of all historical facts — you know only what you have seen and heard. Besides, the older a being is, the harder it is for her to remember specifics. There's just so *much* information to sift through—

The Storyteller should advise you if this Background is likely to prove worthwhile in her chronicle. A wealth of years gives a beast knowledge, respect, experience and enemies in proportion. A creature who lives in the past often dies in the present.

- Decades of life experience are yours to draw upon.
- You have seen human generations come and go, and you might know the origin of some particularly interesting curses, blood feuds, legends or family lines.
- Your knowledge stretches back over centuries. It could be that nothing human has impressed you since the Romans you remember from your youth.
- Millennia are open for your examination.
- You *warned* Eve not to eat it, but no, she had to know *everything*—

MERITS AND FLAWS

*Nevertheless, the fearsome basilisk cannot resist weasels;
This is nature's law: everything has its counterbalance.*
— Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*

Some Merits and Flaws fit particular kinds of beasts just as they fit particular character concepts. A bloodhound, for instance, would hardly be a proper bloodhound without Acute Senses and Loyalty. A cat without Perfect Balance is not a cat at all. In general, however, you can apply Merits and Flaws to any kind of character — subject to your Storyteller's approval, of course. Remember that a given character may use a maximum of 7 points on Merits or Flaws, and that such Traits may be purchased only during character creation, not afterward.

CAST-IRON STOMACH (1 PT MERIT)

Beasts must often forage for sustenance; as a consequence, some have learned to be less picky than others. Like a goat or a shrew, you can eat anything remotely similar to food and gain nourishment from it. Carrion, straw, bones; it's all dinner. As for the smell, well, you get used to it....

LOYALTY (1 PT MERIT)

Pliny the Elder tells of a dolphin in Puteoli who befriended a boy and came to his aid in storms, brought him fish when he hungered and died brokenhearted when the boy fell sick and passed on. The hound of King Lysimachus of Thrace threw himself onto his master's funeral pyre rather than desert him. Like that dolphin or Lysimachus' hound, you are loyal to some other person, group or cause. Temptations to

disloyalty mean nothing. If you face some supernatural persuasion (charms, Mind magick, etc.) to betray your object, your effective Willpower is increased by two.

ACUTE SENSES (1/3 PT MERIT)

The eyes of the eagle, the nose of the hound, the hearing of the rabbit... common speech and poetry alike celebrate these gifts. Either your kind possesses such gifts, or you are exemplary within your species. For one point, reduce the difficulty of any feat involving one sense by three (-3 difficulty); for three points, do the same for rolls involving all physical senses.

The downside of this Merit is sensitivity: Sudden, violent stimuli can run your senses amok. Depending on what happens, you might be temporarily deprived of the affected sense, or driven away in pain or disgust.

FEARLESSNESS (1/3 PT MERIT)

Like the eagle, which stares into the blinding sun rather than back down, you fear nothing and nobody. Yours is the heart of the lion who fights the dragon to a standstill despite his hatred of fire. In game terms, you easily resist all attempts to frighten and intimidate you and yours. Facing supernatural threats or fear-based magick, your effective Willpower is increased by two. For one point, you have one fear that negates this Merit (an elephant's fear of the mouse, for example); for three points, you fear nothing.

HOMING INSTINCT (2/4 PT MERIT)

Like the fabled hound who follows his lost mistress across a kingdom, you have an innate sense of direction when the destination involves home or a loved one. Even when vast distances separate you from your home or friend, you can, with time, find your way there.

This Merit is not a supernatural power, nor is it a medium for transportation — you must cover all distances and surmount all obstacles yourself. Assuming you can do that, the Homing Instinct will lead you to your destination, despite hundreds of miles, bitter weather, even imprisonment. In game terms, you might have to make a Perception + Awareness roll when some major setback or obstacle (a mountain range, a blizzard, a long delay, etc.) blocks your path. The roll's difficulty depends on the obstacle's severity:

Difficulty	Circumstances
6	Normal circumstances
7	Harsh weather or terrain
9	Major obstacles/Erased trail
9	Vast distances (500+ miles)/Supernatural obstacles
+1	Per month of separation

When you choose the Instinct, select one "target," either a location or a character that you've forged a bond with. Such bonds take time and affection to make — they cannot be "set" and "reset" with a simple decision. For two points, this Merit allows you to track your subject anywhere in the mortal world; for four points, you can follow it anywhere, even into the Otherworlds, as long as you have some way to travel there.

PERFECT BALANCE (3 PT MERIT)

No matter how narrow the precipice or how thin the tree limb, you move upon it like it was hard-packed earth. Moving wagons, the blows of enemies, disorienting fogs — nothing can topple you from your perch. If somehow you fall, you land on your feet like a cat. In game terms, you add two dice to all Dexterity rolls involving keeping your balance, and add two dice to any soak roll involving a fall.

SOOTHING VOICE (3 PT MERIT)

Did the serpent in the Garden possess such a voice? Your voice is calm and soothing, almost entrancing. Hot heads and rash tempers are cooled by your liquid oratory. People (and beasts) in earshot will be inclined to trust you. In game terms, add two dice to all rolls that directly include use of your voice to soothe or lull the hearer (Leadership, Manipulation, Singing, etc.).

This Merit differs from the *Musical Influence* Special Advantage (page 117) in that Musical Influence requires musical expression, not speech, and can enrage as well as calm. Musical Influence requires a roll, whereas Storytellers should take Soothing Voice into account even when you aren't actually making a roll to persuade or favorably influence the hearer. (The difference resembles that between Appearance and Seduction.) A mute beast may not possess this Merit, although he might have Musical Influence.

OFFENSIVE TO ANIMALS (1 PT FLAW)

Many magical beasts engender fear and hatred in the lesser beasts. Horses shy at gryphon scent, for example. You cause such fear in other creatures. Unless the Storyteller explicitly rules otherwise, no mundane animal will have anything to do with you, and may startle, cry out or otherwise object to your presence. Even mundane animals may have this Flaw if they've been tainted by the supernatural (or just smell weird). In game terms, you have a two-die penalty for any action involving other animals (except, of course, fighting them), and you cannot interact with one without causing a fuss.

SHY (1 PT FLAW)

Crowds of humans unnerve and distract you. Only in your den or among a small group of trusted companions do you feel comfortable. Most wild creatures share this Flaw, and even magically intelligent beasts can still prefer their

own company and the solitude of nature. In game terms, you take a one-die penalty in any situation involving crowds of people, and a two-die penalty when interacting directly with crowds (unless, of course, you're attacking or fleeing from them, in which case you suffer no penalties).

SPEECH IMPEDIMENT (1 PT FLAW)

It's unusual to hear human speech coming from the mouth of a beast; it must be even more unusual to hear it spoken without lisps, dropped consonants or other maladjustments. Speaking with a forked tongue, a mouthful of fangs or a beak is not conducive to easy understanding. A beast with this Flaw suffers a two-die penalty on any roll that requires intricate spoken communication in a human (or similar) language.

ALIEN APPEARANCE (1-5 PT FLAW)

Like an albino tiger or six-legged gryphon, your appearance is notably different and unsettling. Whispers follow wherever you walk, children stare or look away and enemies can always find people who remember your passing. You are more noticeable, more easily picked out of a crowd and more memorable to strangers. Beasts with a one-point Flaw might only possess a minor blemish (parti-colored eyes or a bright patch of fur). A sky-blue wolf, 800-pound rat or cat with rabbits' ears would earn a five-point Flaw. A bizarre magical beast (celestial dragon, hippogryph, etc.) may take this Flaw even if it doesn't seem especially unusual for its kind. The beast's normal appearance is abnormality enough.

BIZARRE HUNGER (2-5 PT FLAW)

Your daily bread is... odd. Like the gold-eating hen or the ghul, you must consume dangerous, expensive or revolting substances in order to stay healthy. If you cannot satisfy this hunger, you begin losing Health Levels at the rate of one per day after the first day of abstinence. Although you may eat more conventional food, you derive no sustenance from it. In general, the more appalling or inconvenient the substance required, the greater the Flaw. Examples include:

Flaw	Food
2 pts	Manure, fresh eggs, paper
3 pts	Rotten meat, mare's milk, silk
4 pts	Virgin's blood, dead humans, gold
5 pts	Water from the Jordan, live humans, diamonds

COMPULSION (2-4 PT FLAW)

The dragon must gather treasure, the lynx must conceal his urine, the unicorn must submit to a virgin and the eel must return to the ocean to spawn. You have such a Compul-

yourself. In game terms, you must roll your Willpower to resist giving way if an opportunity arises to follow this Compulsion (difficulty 6 + the point value of the Flaw). Your Storyteller may also wish to adjust the point value of this Flaw depending on how difficult, inconvenient or common your Compulsion is. Examples include:

Flaw	Compulsion
2 pts	Gather treasure, spare helpless enemies, return to your birthplace to die.
3 pts	Wash all your food, devour enemies' corpses, go to sleep at cockcrow.
4 pts	Await permission before entering a room, chase any thrown stick, count anything you see.

VULNERABILITY (2-5 PT FLAW)

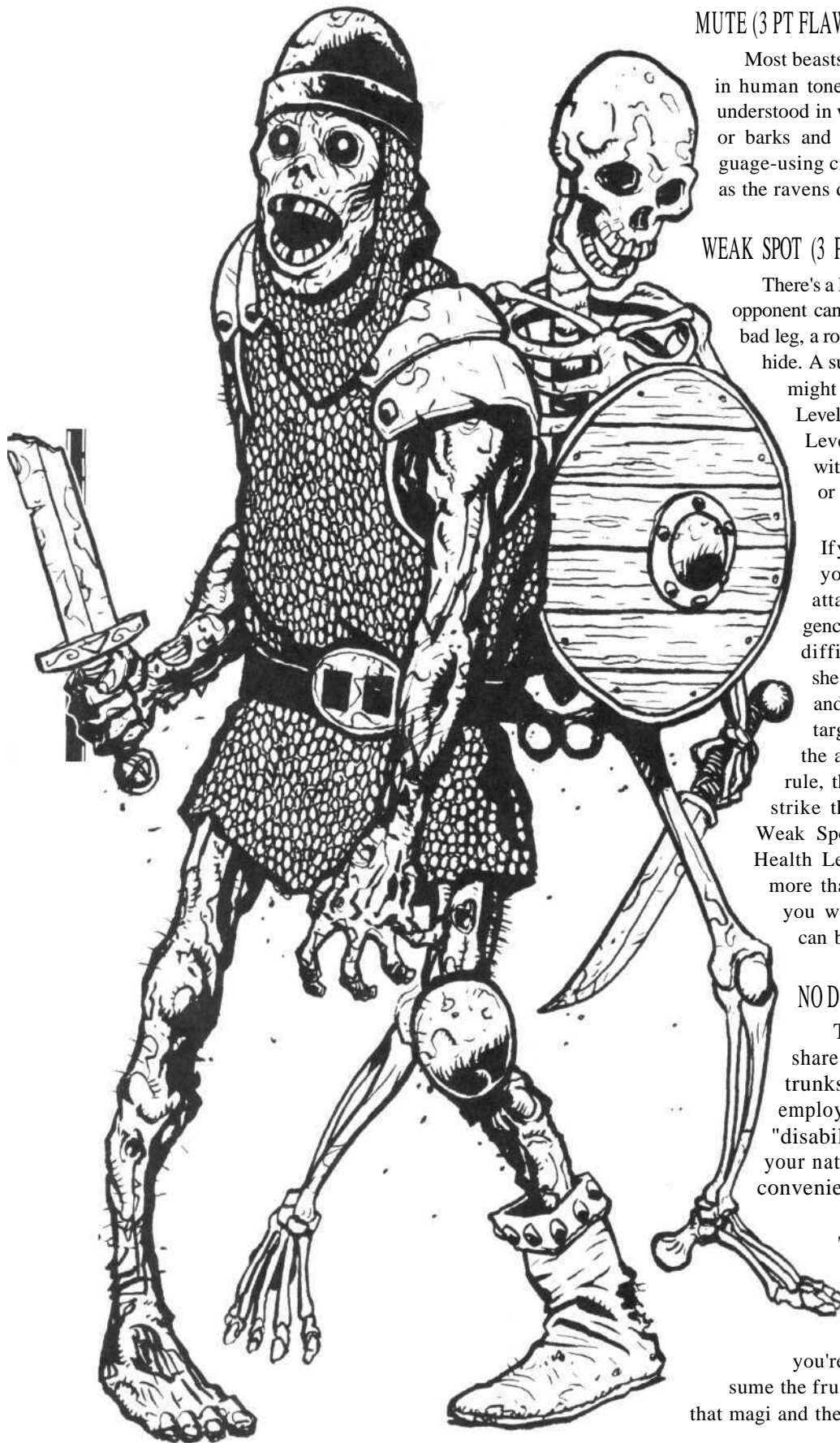
For all their vast powers, many magical or supernatural beasts seem to have one chink in their armor, one bane of their existence. Whether this Flaw is evidence of Divine balance or Infernal incompetence in such beasts' creation is a subject for theologians and philosophers to debate. You only know it's a matter of life and death.

You possess a Vulnerability, a substance, element or power which can harm or even kill you. The level of this Flaw depends on whether your weakness can fatally injure you, or simply weaken you, and on how common the substance is. Damage caused by a Vulnerability cannot be soaked. A normal, weakening Vulnerability causes one Health Level of aggravated damage per turn of contact. A mortal one causes three Health Levels of aggravated damage per turn of contact. Examples:

Flaw	Weakness
2 pts	You can be fatally injured by something that's nearly impossible to acquire (the Holy Lance of Longinus, the perfume of the Emperor of Cathay), or weakened by something very rare (dragon's blood, naphtha, the bite of an Egyptian asp, panthers' breath).
3 pts	You can be fatally injured by something very rare, or weakened by something moderately rare (mistletoe, garlic, a mirror, silver, magick).
4 pts	You can be fatally injured by something moderately rare, or weakened by something common (iron, sunlight, fire).
5 pts	You can be fatally injured by something common.

Note that vampires, werewolves and changelings cannot purchase this Flaw; it's already an inherent part of their natures. Magi use the Flaw. Echoes (Mage: The Sorcerers Crusade, pages 105-106, or The Book of Shadows, pages 39-40) instead of this one. Ghosts cannot buy it for obvious reasons.





MUTE (3 PT FLAW)

Most beasts possess this Flaw — the inability to speak in human tones and accents. You cannot make yourself understood in words, but must rely on dumb-show, magic or barks and whines to communicate with other language-using creatures. If your kind has its own language, as the ravens do, you may speak it without penalty.

WEAK SPOT (3 PT FLAW)

There's a literal chink in your armor, a place where an opponent can badly wound you. This might be a horse's bad leg, a roc's fragile skull, or a vital spot in a wyvern's hide. A successful strike there bypasses any armor you might have and inflicts two unsoakable Health Levels of aggravated damage (or two extra Health Levels if the attack was already aggravated); a hit with which your opponent scores five successes or more inflicts double that amount.

In many cases, your weak spot is a secret. If you're especially notorious or ancient, or if your frailty is inherent to your kind, an attacker with the right information (Intelligence + Hearth Wisdom or your species' Lore, difficulty 8) might have heard about it. Even if she has, however, knowing about the spot and hitting it are two different things. A targeted shot on your vital area adds four to the attacker's usual difficulty. As an optional rule, the Storyteller might decide that a random strike that scores six successes or more hits the Weak Spot for normal (that is, two aggravated Health Levels) damage, while one that hits with more than eight (exceedingly unlikely!) cripples you with four aggravated Health Levels. This can be a deadly Flaw to take.

NO DEXTEROUS LIMBS (4 PT FLAW)

The noble unicorn and the humble pig share this Flaw. Neither has hands, claws, trunks or prehensile tails that it may use to employ tools or grip objects. You have this "disability" and cannot use weapons other than your natural ones, or write in any medium more convenient than wet clay.

THAUMIVORE (5 PT FLAW)

You literally feed on magick. In days past, mystickal sustenance was easy to come by, but now, magic is ebbing and you're left hungry. To survive, you must consume the fruit of the Fifth Essence — the Quintessence that magi and their ilk so value!

In game terms, this Trait resembles the Flaw: Bizarre Hunger, except that your particular food is Tass (see **The Sorcerers Crusade**, pages 10 and 99). "Raw" Quintessence, channeled by Prime magicks, can sustain you, but living on such energies is somewhat akin to a diet of liquid vitamins — nourishing, perhaps, but hardly satisfying. To live, you must consume at least one point of Quintessence per day, or suffer a wasting, terrible hunger. Greater beasts, such as dragons, unicorns, gryphons and krakens, require far more Quintessence (typically five points or more per day). A creature living on the bare minimum will be sick and surly — not things you want, say, a dragon to be!

If food cannot be found, you waste away, growing weaker and weaker — every two days you go without Quintessence or Tass, you lose one Health Level (unsoakable), and suffer from all related Dice Pool penalties. If you pass Incapacitated and remain hungry, you perish. Soon your body will fade to nothing, leaving only bones (if that much) behind. Eating "heals" this hunger damage, but a sudden binge, will leave you wanting more....

As the Mythic Ages end, most Thaumivores retreat to the Otherworlds, driven by hunger and a growing discomfort with humanity. By the 18th century, very few Thaumivores exist full-time on the earthly plane, and even those creatures stick to the most secluded places they can find. By the 20th century, all such beings have either perished or gone away. The combination of hunger and a growing tide of disbelief pushes them to more hospitable Realms. Hence, magical creatures, unless transported here by magickal spells, are almost totally alien to the technological world. If you happen to be one such being, stick close to your magickal allies. Without them, you'd soon starve.

SPECIAL ADVANTAGES

*And the power of their song was twofold:
whenever they chose, they could bring sleep to the living
and they could awaken the dead.*

- *The Tale of Branwen* (traditional)

Now we arrive at the Special Advantages that truly separate man from beast. Some of these special Traits are the province of extraordinary beings, while others might be accessible to mundane animals. None of these Traits are common to humans, although certain folk touched by the mystical could possess one or two.

Like Merits and Flaws, some Special Advantages may be *required* for a given kind of creature (a unicorn, for example, should have a Horn). Also like Merits and Flaws, however, the Storyteller should make sure that a Special Advantage listed here will not unbalance her chronicle. Ultimately, she has right of refusal on any Advantage that seems out of place for her game.

ACUTE SMELL (2-3 PTS)

The symphony of odors, the spectacle of sensation, the rich epics told by every passing breeze or warm surface — humans sense these things but dimly. Virtually every land animal and every creeping thing, however, knows and understands the language of smells.

For two points, you can smell water on the wind, tell the species of an unseen stalker (or target), recognize a familiar smell and find hidden food or aromatic treasure (like spices, wine, potions, etc.). This is the level at which deer, horses and bears smell. The three-point version of this Advantage is the level enjoyed by hounds and wolves. At this level, you can track anyone by scent, recognize individuals by smell (both human and animal), tell who (or what) has been in a room or handling an object, smell powerful emotions on creatures whose kind you know (as dogs can smell fear), find hidden water and predict the weather.

In game terms, two points earn you an additional two dice for Perception rolls involving scent. At three points, you add three dice to your Pool. At this level, smell is your dominant sense, and virtually all Perception, Alertness, Awareness, or similar rolls will involve it.

ARMOR(1-4 PTS)

Whether in fur, leathery hide, scales, spines or even a full-grown shield like the tortoise, beasts must go armored against their enemies. Against a nature red in tooth and claw, no animal has too much protection. In game terms, each level of this Advantage buys another soak die, as listed below:

Points	Armor
1 pt	1 soak die (thick hide or fur)
2 pts	2 soak dice (horny scales, spiny ridges)
3 pts	3 soak dice (shell, thick chitin)
4 pts	4 soak dice (dragonhide, metal plating)

Armor allows a beast to soak aggravated damage. A possible exception (Storyteller's option) would be thick fur soaking fire or acid damage. For most beasts, armor only covers part of the body — like a turtle's shell, for instance.

An optional rule allows a well-aimed blow to bypass the protection. Three successes or more (or +3 difficulty to the attack roll) can get around armor which covers a large portion of the body, while five successes or more (or +4 difficulty) can subvert armor which protects an extensive part of the body. This option adds a bit of complication, but keeps an armored creature from dominating the game. Remember that natural armor is fairly easy to notice, and that absurd combinations (a sheep with metal plating) are not allowed.

BOND-SHARING (4-6 PTS)

Sea-folk tales tell of the shark who gave his breath to a young pearl-diver. Magicians speak of the familiar-bond which allows them to commune with their "pets." Like those creatures, you can pass along certain natural sensations or faculties

to a character you favor. With a bit of concentration, you could help a person see in the dark, breathe underwater or withstand weather that would kill a normal human being.

In game terms, this Advantage lets you share a sense or physical adaptation with someone who doesn't normally have it. For four points, your friend can use one of your senses, or withstand one environment (fire, water, cold, heat, etc.) to which you're native. For five points, she can go anywhere you can go, or feel anything you can feel. For six points, she can do both at once.

To use the bond, both of your characters must have established a lasting and profound relationship; casual contact, even simple companionship, is not enough. You may establish only one such bond at a time, and breaking it is traumatic for both parties. Death on either side is almost physically devastating to the survivor. The Advantage does not work over distances, unless both of you are within half a mile or less. Sharing requires an act of will, and you must decide to "send" your senses to your partner, since she's not linked to you at all times. Each time you bond, a powerful almost sexual current passes between both partners, deepening both the bond and the feelings which ride through it. Your bond-mate need not be human, by the way — a shark may befriend a dog. Stranger things have happened....

CHAMELEON COLORATION/SHADOW-WALKING (4/6/8 PTS)

The leopard may not be able to change his spots, but the Aethiopian parandrus-deer can change his skin. Similarly, the chameleon blends into his background, and the ptarmigan disappears against either sky or snow. Some magical beasts may darken their pelts to blend in with shadows; this so-called Shadow-walking talent costs four points. For six points, you may change hues within the range of a single color (green, red, brown, etc.); for eight points, you may change to fit any color background. Perceiving a creature the same color as its background requires a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 7).

CLAWS, FANGS OR HORNS (3/5/7 PTS)

Nature grants weapons to her favored warriors: great maces in the shape of claws to the bear, mighty daggers in the guise of lions' teeth, and chivalric lances on the brows of unicorns. Even the lowly scorpion has a poniard in its tail. You have such weapons, and wield them with pride and skill (or, at least, desperate valor). For three points, you may buy one type of attack; for five points, two. Seven points allows you to buy three.

Some creatures (usually beasts of exceptional puissance like dragons, lions or gryphons) may do aggravated damage with their natural weapons. If the Storyteller allows it, you may purchase the ability to do aggravated damage for double the usual cost (6/10/14).

Maneuver	Difficulty	Damage
Bite	5	Strength + 1
Claw	6	Strength + 2
Gore	7	Strength + 2 (Strength + 4 after a charge if you have just moved 10 yards or more)
Tail Strike	6	Strength (possible bonuses for a spiked or poisonous tail)

DEADLY DEMISE (3 PTS)

*What though the Moor the basilisk has slain
And pinned him lifeless to the sandy plain,
Up through the spear the subtle venom flies,
The hand imbibes it, and the victor dies.*
— Lucan, *Pharsalia*

Your death means death to your attacker, as the mandrake's scream kills the dog that hunts it. As a player, you must explain the mechanism that enables your posthumous revenge — a death scream, phoenix fire, corrosive blood, deadly flowing venom, etc. — and define, by extension, how someone might avoid it. An attacker taking extraordinary precautions may be able to circumvent your postmortem *coup de grace*, but those precautions might encumber him enough that his blow never lands.

It's worth noting that creatures who have already died (vampires, zombies, skeletal warriors, etc.), or ones that exist on the spiritual plane (ghosts, elementals, demons and angels, etc.) are totally immune to this power. Unless several creatures share a direct hand in your demise, this Advantage slays only your killer, not his associates, your allies or innocent bystanders.

ELEMENTAL TOUCH (3/5/7/10/15 PTS)

Beasts (greater and lesser alike) share deep ties to the elements, ties humans can only envy. A horse is said to bring forth water from dry ground by tapping his hoof until a spring rises; geese are linked to the coming of winter and spring; the mighty air dragon calls down lightning, while the feng-huang dances in fire. While the links between animals and the elements have been exaggerated by folklore — few beasts can call up storms from nothing — you do possess a notable bond with your element.

In story terms, the strength of this talent varies, from the dog's ability to sniff out water holes, to the goose's penchant for laying golden eggs, to the dragons' command of storms. It takes time and effort to use the talent — the more dramatic the effect, the longer it takes and the more energy it consumes — but you can, given both, invoke the element that you're aligned with. Once invoked, the element is usually beyond your control. (Fire goes where it will, and few creatures can demand otherwise....) Although you're not in

any way immune to the phenomena, the signs of your Elemental Touch follow you everywhere — the mane of a storm-mare always seems to be blowing in the wind, and a feng-huang glows with an inner fire.

In game terms, this Advantage allows you to use varying degrees of control over weather or other elements. Depending on the cost of the Advantage, you can perform the following feats:

Cost	Feat
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3	Sense the presence of a large quantity of your chosen element within a half-mile or so. Requires a successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6-9, depending on the amount of the element and the obstacles between it and you).
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5	Sniff out concentrations of your chosen element (fires; water holes or springs; gold; forests; approaching storms, etc.). Roll as above.
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7	Exert some small amount of command (making fire flicker from a distance; making water flow a certain direction; causing dirt to shift; rippling thin metal or wood; turning a breeze in your direction) over your chosen element. Requires a Manipulation + Awareness roll (difficulty as above) and a point of Willpower.
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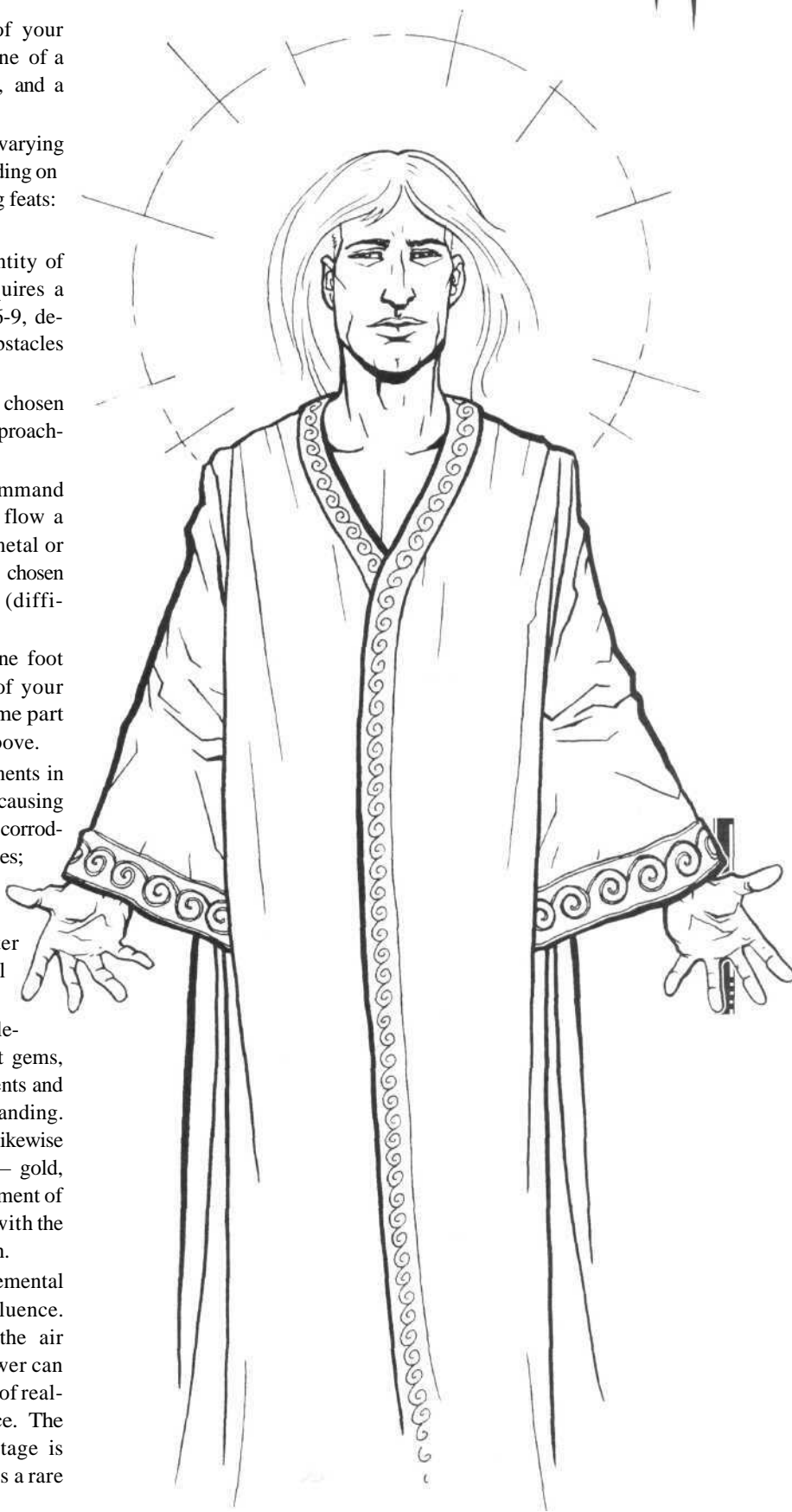
10	Bring a small amount (roughly one foot square; five pounds or gallons; or a strong gust) of your element into being. You must touch the area with some part of your body. Requires roll and Willpower cost as above.
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15	Shift large amounts of existing elements in some unusual way (spreading fires; raising waters or causing riptides; creating small-scale earth tremors; warping or corroding several pounds of metal; twisting plants or small trees; calling up a wind or drastically dropping temperature). Requires roll as above, and costs two Willpower points.
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Truly godlike creatures can perform even greater feats, but such talents are the providence of immortal god-servants, not humble creatures like yourself.

This Advantage works only with "pure" simple elements; complex compounds like uranium, cobalt, cut gems, alloys, plastics, radiation and other technological elements and concoctions are totally beyond an animal's understanding. Biological elements — venom, blood, bone, etc. — are likewise beyond this talent. However, pure precious metals — gold, silver, copper and such — fall reasonably within the element of Earth (or metal, for celestial dragons), hence, the goose with the golden eggs or the mule who paws silver from the earth.

Each beast is attuned to a single element (see "Elemental Affinities"), and that Affinity is the sphere of your influence. The golden goose cannot command fire, nor can the air dragon command the seas. In its higher levels, this power can be deeply magical, defying scientific preconceptions of reality and many troupes' conceptions of game balance. The Storyteller who wishes to limit or deny this Advantage is within his rights to do so. Even in a fantasy setting, it's a rare creature who can boast such abilities.



ENHANCEMENT (VARIABLE)

Elephants are tougher than humans, apes stronger, cats more agile, dragons more intelligent. If your kind is superior to humanity in any way (or many ways), you will want this Advantage. For each five points spent, you may buy another dot (above five) for any Attribute, or add one more Health Level (above eight) to your total.

Storytellers beware: here lurk monsters. This Advantage can get out of control. It might be a good idea to enforce a maximum cap of eight total dots for Attributes and three extra Health Levels.

EXTRA HEAD(S) (3 PTS PER HEAD)

Beasts that exceed the traditional number of heads are not common, but they do exist, at least in the Mythic Ages. The amphibiaena has two heads, the chimera three, and the hydra an extravagant nine!

Having extra heads makes you harder to surprise (roll two extra dice on Alertness rolls against surprise for each extra head). It also makes you harder to kill, and can have other advantages in combat. For each head, you may add two dice to your Dexterity + Brawl attack Dice Pool. To attack with more than one head at a time, divide the Pool by the number of heads.

Example: *Jess triple-headed dragon could choose to bite with all three heads. If Jess wants him to do so, the player would add four dice to the dragons usual Dice Pool. If that Pool was originally seven dice, Jess would have a total of 11 dice to divide three ways. Jess can attack three different magi in one turn, so long as they're all within reach.*

This option only applies to biting attacks which include more than one head. If Jess's dragon attacked with one head and had the others watch, he would roll only seven dice, not 11. If the extra heads are severed, the bonus is lost. If all heads are destroyed, the creature dies.

EXTRA LIMB(S) (3 PTS PER LIMB)

Travelers bring tales out of India of men with more than one pair of arms, and sailors have stories of krakens and other beasts with eight, 10 or even 20 grasping tentacles. Like these far-flung beasts, you have more than two grasping limbs (the human standard). This extra limb might be a trunk, a prehensile tail, or an actual extra arm.

Each extra limb costs three points, and allows you to make one additional melee attack each turn (by splitting your Dice Pools). This Advantage applies only to limbs which can be used to grab and hold things. Extra legs are either purely cosmetic, or should be bought as Extra Speed.

EXTRA SPEED (VARIABLE)

The race is not always to the swift, but it often seems that way. The leopard among beasts, the hawk among birds and the dolphin among sea creatures can outdistance any of their fellows. For each five points, you may take one additional

action per turn without splitting your Dice Pool. When moving, this Advantage allows you to multiply a normal human's speed by 1.5 for each five points spent. Fast-swimming beasts need not purchase this Advantage, but fast-flying beasts should. Check the description of your character's kind elsewhere in *The Bygone Bestiary* to find the appropriate level at which to purchase this Advantage.

Points	Walk	Run	Fly
0 pts	(Human)	7/20	NA
3 pts	9/25	25	
5 pts	11/30	30	
7 pts	12/33	35	
9 pts	13/37	40	
10 pts	14/40	45	

FEAST OF NETTLES (2-6 PTS)

As an agent of Divine (or Infernal) will, you can absorb and redirect the energies that manifest around magical weaveries. The Scourge (known in later days as Paradox; see *The Sorcerers Crusade*, pages 231-237, or *Mage: The Ascension*, pages 176-179) is a strange fruit to you, and with this mystical ability, you can swallow it even as it swirls into being. Naturally, the Scourge tastes bitter and sharp — this favor isn't called "the Feast of Nettles" for nothing! — but there is a certain refreshing tang to it. And the magi in your presence are so grateful for your help....

In story terms, you see the Scourge as a dark, flickering cloud — much like a bush of thorns lit by fireflies. As magi employ their Arts, this cloud swells. Although it usually remains invisible to your compatriots, you can smell and see it plainly. To take it into yourself, open your mouth and inhale until your lungs come close to bursting, close your mouth upon the "nettles," swallow, then sleep it off. Eating God's own anger takes a great deal out of you. After a Feast, you must either rest for a day or two, or stagger around in a daze until you fall over.

In game terms, you cancel out several points of Scourge before they manifest as a backlash. No roll is necessary — simply concentrate for two to four turns, inhale and swallow. However, a beast that takes in more Scourge than his rating allows will burst like a Daedalean's balloon-ship! Such a shock kills your character instantly, scattering his innards like falling leaves.

The amount of Scourge you can absorb depends on the cost of the Trait:

Cost	Scourge Amount
2 pts	Three points per week
3 pts	Five points per week
4 pts	10 points per week
5 pts	15 points per week
6 pts	20 points per week

Exceeding this amount by so much as a single Scourge point is fatal, so keep track of what you eat! Ingesting part of a larger backlash requires a Wits + Awareness roll (difficulty 8). A failed or botched roll results in overfeeding, with all the mess that entails.

FLEXIBLE (2 PTS)

The serpent twists and coils like a rhetorician's argument. You, too, can bend your body double, loop around limbs and squeeze your opponents until their breath leaves them. You add one die to Dodge rolls, and add two dice to Grapple attacks.

HAZARDOUS BREATH (VARIABLE)

Dealing death from a distance is not the exclusive province of the bestial elite. The dragon's flames, the basilisk's breath and the gorgon's gaze fascinate tellers of tales, surely. However, the quills of the porpentine and the fiery excrement of the bonnacon can injure an enemy just as certainly.

Whatever the means (breath, gaze, spittle, quills), you can blast out something (fire, poison gas, caustic acid) deadly, or at least dangerous, at range and at will. The exact mechanics and specifications of the attack will vary depending on its nature, as the Storyteller should determine.

For every five points spent, you inflict one Health Level of damage with your attack on a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll (difficulty 7). For seven points per Health Level, the damage can be caustic (Greek fire, acid, clouds of gas) and inflict an additional Health Level per turn until washed off. For double the cost, damage can be aggravated. Your target can soak any of these types of damage.

You can use this weapon once per scene for every point of Stamina that you possess. If your attack could conceivably affect multiple targets (like the basilisk's poison clouds), assume that each success above the first allows an additional victim to be hurt if he is within range of the attack. Your Storyteller will determine these ranges. Area weapons are usually effective at a shorter range than "pinpoint" attacks. A gas cloud will affect a large area, but at shorter range than hurled lightning, for example.

HEALING LICK (3/6 PTS)

As penance cleanses the wounds of the soul, the tongue of certain hounds heals wounds to the body. You have the gift of healing, whether by tongue (as the hound), breath (as the panther) or some other means. For three points, you may restore one Health Level per turn to either yourself or to another creature. For six points, you may heal one Health Level of an aggravated wound per turn. This Advantage heals only wounds and burns, not poison, broken bones, damaged organs or other traumas.

HIBERNATION (2 PTS)

Toads may sleep in mud for centuries and awaken as though only a morning had passed. Bears take to their caves for the winter, and consume no food therein. Like these somnolent beasts, you can go to sleep, needing no food or water until you awaken. Like the fox, you may even seem dead to others — it takes magic of some kind to notice signs of life. You need only buy this Advantage if your hibernation is completely voluntary. Automatic or mandatory -hibernation falls under the Flaw: Compulsion (pages 108-109).

HUMAN SPEECH (1 PT)

In Russian legend, all animals can speak in human tongues (or at least in Russian) on Christmas Eve. You may wish to speak to humans more often than that, however. If so, this Advantage grants both the ability to speak in a recognizably human voice, and facility in one human language of your choice. Additional languages should be bought as the Linguistics Ability, of course.

Humans, needless to say, have no reason to purchase this Advantage, and, at the Storyteller's discretion, some magical beasts (such as dragons or gryphons) may also automatically possess this Advantage without paying points. Beasts with Musical Influence may also be able to communicate with humans without using this Advantage, although the "conversation" will be limited and one-sided.

IMMUNITY (2/5/10/15 PTS)

As the cock withstands the searing poison of the basilisk, you can ignore the effect of some dangerous (or at least unpleasant) thing. Some Immunities are part and parcel of a beast's nature; others, like Mithradites' immunity to poison, accrue over a long period of conditioning. Immunities vary in price, depending on their lethality and their frequency, much as Vulnerabilities do (page 109). You must buy each Immunity separately, although the Storyteller may allow a number of similar Immunities (basilisks, snakes, toadstools, iocaine powder) to be packaged as one more common Immunity (poisons). Examples:

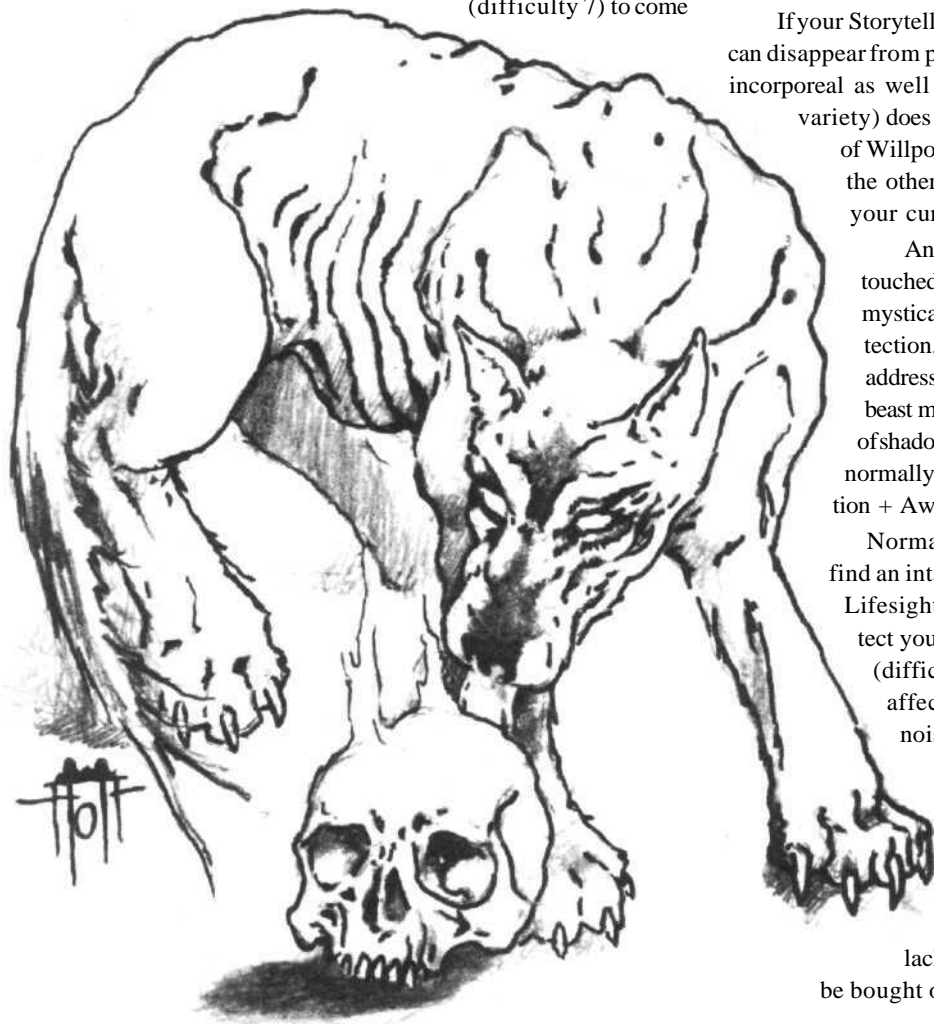
- 2 pts A minor nuisance (poison oak, common cold), or a very rare threat (basilisks).
- 5 pts A major threat (disease, hunger), or a moderately rare threat (poisons, extreme heat or cold).
- 10 pts A terminal threat (fire, drowning), or a common threat (fire, metals).
- 15 pts Death. You're essentially immortal, but can be hurt or even crippled. The Storyteller may decide that one thing (or combination of things) can still kill you, though he may or may not tell you what that thing is.

INFORMATIONFONT (3 PTS)

Augurs have always known that hidden information is revealed by animals. Magical creatures may have access to even more esoteric lore. For the human mystic, such communions serve as conduits between the world of humanity and the hidden hearts of nature. To the beast, it might simply serve as a new way to earn food and shelter, or perhaps as a bond between friends or allies.

Magical beasts, especially familiars, come up with seemingly bizarre yet often helpful information at unpredictable intervals. These fragments of lore, forgotten songs or helpful rumors seem fairly cryptic to humans, and the human concepts necessary to explain them are often completely foreign to you, the beast. You feel that this wisdom should be instantly comprehensible, and you find humans, used to different ways of thought and feeling, frustratingly slow on the uptake.

This complex trade of insights, concepts and misunderstandings makes for enjoyably off-the-wall roleplaying. As a player, feel free to make cryptic remarks and weird allusions; the humans around you can figure out what you mean if they're so damned smart! If and when a system is called for, the Storyteller can allow you to attempt a Perception + Ability roll (difficulty 7) to come



suitably obscure revelation. The specific Ability may be matched to the situation (Fairy Lore in a situation involving the Good Folk), analogous (Hunting while observing the Borgia Papal court), or seemingly irrelevant (Intimidation while trying to decipher a mysterious inscription). The better your roll, the more accurate your observation.

To understand you, the puzzled human's player should roll her Intelligence + Enigmas Dice Pool — her difficulty could range from 6 to 10, depending on how weird the observation was. Both players may roll only once per situation.

INTANGIBILITY (8/10 PTS)

This time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

— Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*

Vanishing cats, intangible ghosts and disappearing beasts of all kinds have been with us for centuries. They may be with us right now — after all, how could you tell? This annoying habit of appearing at bad times may be why many Storytellers forbid this Advantage entirely, for it can play hob with many plot threads in a chronicle.

If your Storyteller allows you to have this Advantage, you can disappear from plain sight (eight points) or become totally incorporeal as well (10 points). Going intangible (in either variety) does not require a roll, but it does cost one point of Willpower whenever you shift from one state to the other. Running out of Willpower traps you in your current state until you can recover.

An incorporeal beast cannot be physically touched or harmed; True Faith, magick and other mystical attacks and forces can transcend this protection, however. Before he can orient himself to address (or attack) a physical being, the incorporeal beast must "fade in" for a turn or so, achieving a sort of shadowy half-physical state which can be touched normally, but which proves difficult to see (Perception + Awareness or Alertness, difficulty 8).

Normal human observers will have no way to find an intangible target, although vampiric Auspex, Lifesight and sensing Gifts and magicks will detect you on a normal Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7). If you remain corporeal, you still affect your surroundings and perhaps make noise, and a sharp observer can locate you from these disturbances with a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 9). More importantly, this Advantage does not mask your smell, thus dogs, for instance, will barely notice the difference between visible and invisible prey. A

lack of scent is worth three points, and can be bought on its own or in addition to Intangibility.

MESMERISM (3/6 PTS)

The lamps of the wolf's eyes paralyze the hunter, striking him dumb with terror. Serpents and their draconian cousins can actually cause prey to walk into their jaws. Even humans can be so affected — Artemidorus the Grammarian was driven mad by the gaze of a crocodile.

With this Advantage, you can freeze a creature in your gaze (3 points) or actually draw it slowly closer to you with its defenses down (6 points). Either form of this Advantage requires you to roll Charisma + Intimidation (difficulty 6) and collect successes equal to the target's Willpower. A botch means that the target has shaken off your influence, and cannot be hypnotized this way again. Although most folklore speaks of creatures with hypnotic eyes, the Mesmerism Advantage might work through sound (siren songs), scent (a panther's breath) or even taste (the honeyed touch of a Venus flytrap's nectar).

MUSICAL INFLUENCE (3 PTS)

You have the song of the siren, the wail of the banshee or even the laugh of the hyena. Be it howl, wail, hum, hiss or actual song, you can create a powerful miasma of emotion with which to ensnare the unwary, inspire the timid or enrage the mob. You can charm, cheer, terrify or depress anyone within hearing. These feelings are surface emotions, not soul-altering magicks, but they can have powerful effects nonetheless.

To use this talent, you must make a successful Social Attribute + Ability roll (difficulty is the target's Willpower, and extra successes allow additional victims to be influenced). The specific Attributes and Abilities vary, although Manipulation + Seduction (to lure sailors to their doom), Charisma + Leadership (to inspire warriors to greater success) or Manipulation + Intimidation (to send chills down the spine) make common combinations. Other possible Abilities might include Expression (to convey a specific emotional tale), Ventriloquism (to throw the sound), Mimicry (to imitate the call of another or human voices, as the hyena and djinn both do), Animal Training (to soothe the savage beast) or even Torture (for really unpleasant creatures or attackers).

To shake off the effects of your influence, a target must first realize *why* he feels the way he does. If he can trace his emotions to you, he can dismiss those feelings as witchery. Even so, however, emotions tend to linger in spite of common sense. While this Advantage is not in any way a compulsion, it may not take much to make a person giddy, depressed or infuriated against all reason—

MYSTICK SHIELD (VARIES)

True to its chancy and changeable nature, magick does not affect all beasts equally. Some seem simply insensible to it; spells roll off of others like water off a duck's back. Some beasts can instinctively (or purposely) throw up a sudden

shield against mystical strikes. A few lucky creatures are just, well, lucky — they never seem to be right there, or properly in focus, or out from behind cover. Whatever form your defense takes (you and the Storyteller should agree on its precise nature before the game), it helps keep your fur unsunged in magickal combat.

For every two points spent on this Advantage, you can either get one die of countermagick, or add one to the difficulty of a mystical attack—Gifts, Thaumaturgy, cantrips, etc. — directed at your character (although not both at once). Using this Advantage is like making a magickal Dodge — it must be declared as an action each turn, and take dice away from other tasks. Attempting it while you're doing other things is distracting, so you must subtract the dice in the shield from your normal total.

NIGHTSIGHT (3 PTS)

Like a cat, you can see in the dark as long as even a dim light source (starlight, one candle, etc.) exists. Even in total darkness, a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) reveals the outlines of your surroundings. The Storyteller may also require rolls (at varying difficulties) if you want to see through conditions like fog, smoke, etc. Despite its name, this Advantage reflects all kinds of sensory "mapping," from dolphin calls to cat's whiskers. Depending on the sense and circumstances, you might suffer some additional penalty if that "sight" is blocked. Sharp noises confuse the dolphin, and no cat can sense distant things with his whiskers.

RAPID HEALING (VARIABLE)

Like Antaeus, who sprang back from every blow refreshed, you heal with uncanny speed. For each two points you spend on this Advantage, you recover at the rate appropriate for one Health Level lower. For instance, you only take three days to recover from being Injured (rather than the normal one week), as if you were merely Hurt. If you are Bruised, you regain that Health Level in one (noncombat) turn, rather than one day. For four points, you only take one day to recuperate from being Injured, as if you are merely Bruised, and so on.

REGROWTH (2/4/6 PTS)

The lizard regrows his tail and the hydra regrows her heads. Your powers lie somewhere in this range. For two points, you can regrow a tail, tentacle, horn or similar secondary protrusion. For four points, you can count on severed limbs or gouged eyes being restored. For six points, you must be burned to ash, dissolved in acid or given deadly poison to "stay dead."

This is not an instant or effortless process, however. Regrowing a body part takes at least one day for a tail or horn, three days for severed limbs, a week for a head or

heart and a minimum of two weeks for a combination of minor and severe wounds. All of this is in addition to normal healing times for the Health Levels themselves. The Advantage: Healing Lick can speed normal healing and stop the pain of your injuries, but will not help regrow severed parts. Furthermore, fire or acid can cauterize a stump, preventing you from healing the lost piece(s) at all.

SHAPECHANGER(3/5/8 PTS)

Some beasts shift forms even more dramatically than the barnacle goose, which transforms from clam to bird, and that only once. Many of the greater mystical creatures — dragons, unicorns, even some exceptional "normal" animals — can change their forms as easily as humans change their clothes. Although you bear no relation to the so-called "Changing Breeds," you *are* able to shift forms.

In game terms, switching forms usually takes one turn, although the nature of your change may indicate a slower (or faster) change. Barding, weapons, gear and clothing do not shift; if your forms have differing numbers of limbs or different arrangements of them, you'll probably want to transform while naked (not that being naked is an *issue* for beasts...).

This Advantage only grants you the ability to change shape; any extra Advantages or special characteristics of the new form must be purchased separately. An ape who wished to transform into a falcon, for example, must purchase wings, claws and reduced size. Unless your new form dictates otherwise (see Size, and the templates elsewhere in this Bestiary), your Attributes and Abilities remain unchanged. The Storyteller may rule, however, that if a human transforms into a pig, for example, he must purchase Human Speech (page 115) to retain the ability to talk. The Storyteller may allow you to buy Talents, Skills or Knowledges unique to one of your forms; she may even allow you to buy them at a discount if they support an excellent character concept (a celestial dragon who has spent lifetimes walking among men, for example).

To those who notice such things (Perception + Awareness, difficulty 7, or any number of magicks), shapeshifters can be easily seen as the magical beings that they are. Your smell may either shift with your form or remain the same (or you may always smell like all of your forms) at the Storyteller's discretion. The point cost for shapechanging depends on the number of forms you can shift into:

- 3 pts One alternate form (a hawk, woman, lynx, or shark).
- 5 pts You may take any form within a certain range (birds, humans, cats, fish).
- 8 pts You may change into anything, assuming that you have the necessary Advantages.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE (5/7 PTS)

Magi and their familiars often share an intense empathic link; you feel what she feels and even know, in a way, what she knows. Through the same channel, she feels your emotions and shares your knowledge. This is a tremendous feeling when relations are good, although suspicion, secrecy and mistrust can poison this bond even more thoroughly than usual.

Although it's related to Bond-Sharing, this Advantage is a bit different: While Bond-Sharing exchanges sensations, Shared Knowledge passes understanding — you actually see through each other's eyes and access each other's thoughts. While not telepathy in the strictest sense, this mystic bond allows you both to share hunches, gut feelings and instincts.

- At five points, either of you can utilize any Knowledge that the other possesses, so long as you're both in the same room (or within 50 feet or so outdoors). This is intuitive understanding, not formal instruction, so the Ability fades when the channel is closed or broken. You must both make a conscious decision to commune and share wisdom. For especially complex understandings (of dragon politics or Talmudic commentary, for example), you might both have to make a Wits + Intuition roll (difficulty = Knowledge rating + 3).

- For seven points, you also gain the ability to literally see through the other's eyes.

Both abilities function up to a distance equal to your Willpower in hundreds of yards, and can be exceedingly disconcerting to use. After all, few creatures can step into another's head and come away undisturbed...

SIZE (3/5/8/10 PTS)

Man occupies the center of creation, not merely theologically but physiologically. Beasts, fishes and birds all range from the incomparably vast (elephant, whale, roc) to the minute (shrew, minnow, bee), with humanity right in the middle. If your size is roughly human (wolf, great ape, leopard), then you need not purchase this Advantage, although you might consider either the Merit: Huge or the Flaw: Short (from *The Book of Shadows*, page 45) to reflect your personal size.

If you're considerably larger or smaller, the following Advantage levels apply:

- 3 pts A bit larger (lion, pony, condor) or smaller (mastiff, cheetah, eagle) than human.
- 5 pts A lot larger (horse, boa, crocodile, bear) or smaller (cat, pike, falcon) than human.
- 8 pts Considerably larger (gryphon, great shark, buffalo) or smaller (pigeon, mouse, carp) than human.
- 10 pts Immensely larger (elephant, roc, whale) or smaller (spider, hummingbird, minnow) than human.

Each size level adds (or subtracts) one Health Level to the amount of damage you can withstand, and gives (or takes) one additional point of either Strength or Stamina. If you have two levels of increased size, subtract one from your opponents' difficulty to spot you (and to hit you); add one to those difficulties for each level of reduced size. At three levels, subtract or add two from those difficulties; at four levels, subtract or add three.

The physical advantages of increased size are at least somewhat negated by the inconvenience of maneuvering in cramped quarters (like buildings, city streets, shipboard or forests), just as the disadvantages of being small are redressed by the ease with which tiny creatures can slip through cracks and spy on unwary prey.

SOUL-SENSE/DEATH-SENSE (2/3 PTS)

Animals are remarkably perceptive; it's hard to trick them, even if you happen to be a magical creature. Dogs can sense the vampire; cats bristle as the dragon walks by; horses shy away from the cockatrice, even if he appears to be a normal man. This Advantage reflects that sensitivity. A Perception + Awareness (or Occult, if you're an exceptionally intelligent beast) reveals the presence of a mystical creature, even if she happens to be hidden or disguised.

Soul-Sense is not limited to sniffing out night-folk, however. Blind as they are, most humans miss powerful spirit-traces. You, however, do not. People and places that are deeply attuned to a particular Resonance, passion or spiritual affiliation give off sensations that a perceptive beast like you can notice. A deeply evil man smells like death; a holy man radiates waves of light; a murder-site sets your skin crawling. While you might not realize what it is that's setting your hackles on end, Soul-Sense allows you to feel the presence of spiritual power or corruption.

A three-point variant, Death-Sense, allows you to see the blazing aura of a powerful life-force or the impending shadow of death. Either vision grants you a momentary prescience: While you cannot see the future, exactly, you can tell when someone is ready to die, or possesses a will strong enough to beat death. This sense is a component of normal sight (or possibly smell) and does not need to be triggered before it works. Chances are, it makes you a rather melancholy companion—

This talent is not an information source, that is, a successful roll betrays the presence of good or evil energies, but not their exact nature. Nor does Soul-Sense "speak" to you. Rather, it sends shivers through you, makes you feel warm and happy, sets your hair bristling, or gives you other distinct sensations. If someone uses magic (Disciplines, Gifts, spells, etc.) to hide his true nature, you may have to roll your Perception Dice Pool in a resisted contest with the creature's Wits + Subterfuge. If you win, the creature's true identity is clear to you. You might not know what it is, but if it isn't human, you can tell.



SPIRIT TRAVEL (8/10/15 PTS)

Like the spirit-kin Changing Breeds, you can "step sideways" into one of the three Otherworlds that surround this mortal one. You may need to peer into a reflection, dive into a pool of water, step through a fire or a cloud of smoke, or use some other method to get across, but you can pass over.

As a player, you should determine your travel method with your Storyteller before play. (It might make sense to link it to your Elemental Affinity.) In systems terms, Spirit Travel requires rolling five dice against the local Gauntlet rating, and spending a point of Willpower.

Successes	Passage
Botch	Failure, lose Willpower point (or get stuck!!)
None	Failure, try again
One	Three turns to pass through
Two	Takes two turns
Three or Four	Takes one turn
Five or more	Instant passage

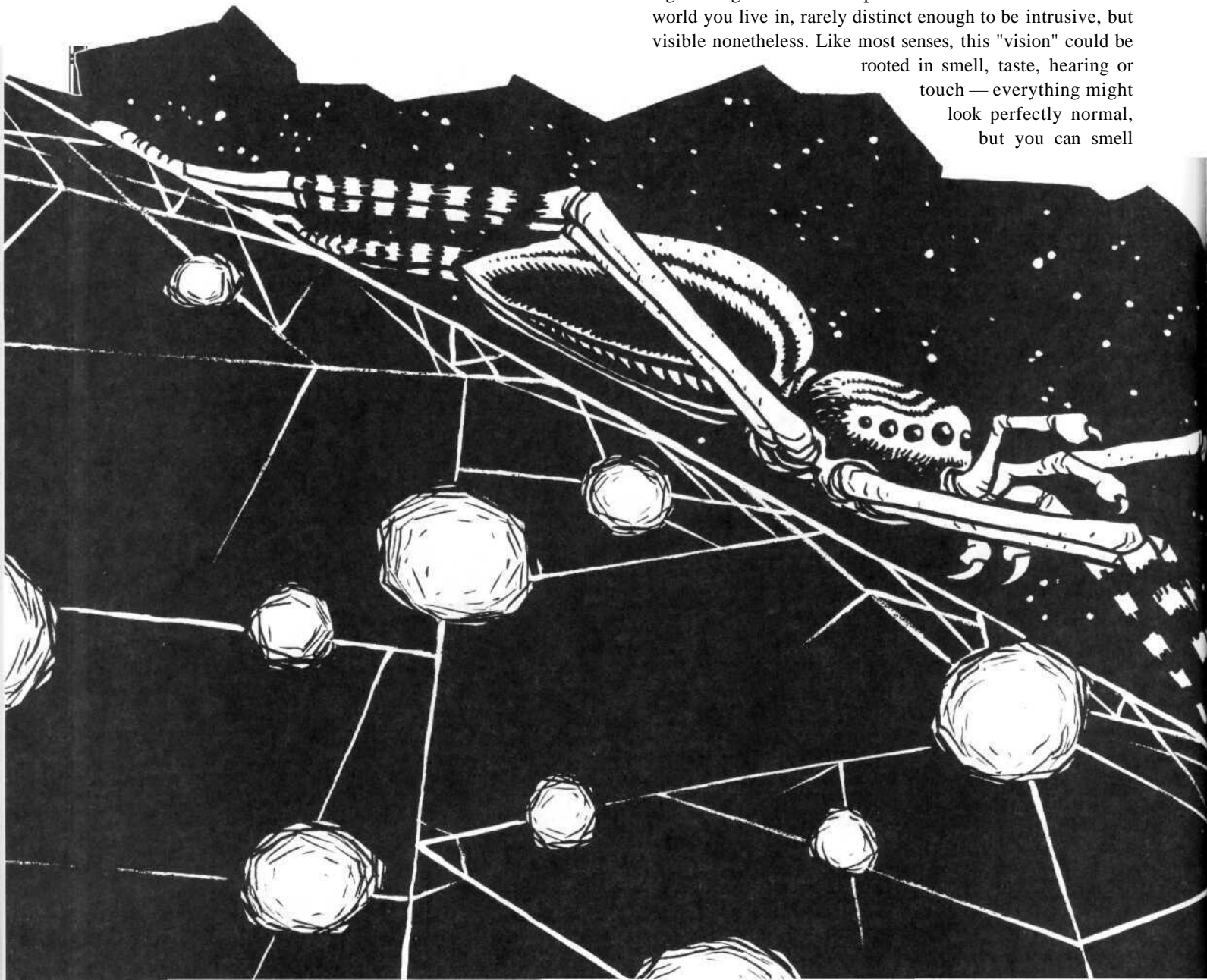
Basic Spirit Travel (8 points) lets you approach one chosen World—the Middle World, the astral lands or the Underworld. The journey begins in the Penumbra and reaches out (or down) from there. To travel into two different Otherworlds, spend 10 points; to align yourself with all three, spend 15.

Spirit worlds being what they are, you'll be able to travel to places that are a lot like you: a venomous cockatrice would gravitate toward the Lands of the Dead; a virtuous stag would bound into the Middle World forests, while an alchemist's homunculus would be drawn into the esoteric astral realms. It's a rare creature that can pass between all three without help. The Storyteller may rule that some realms are off limits to you, or suggest "home worlds" for you with this Advantage.

SPIRITVISION (3 PTS)

Although you cannot pass beyond the Gauntlet between this world and the next, you can see through it. Since such "double vision" would drive you insane, this Penumbra sight is vague at best. The spirit world floats as a haze over the world you live in, rarely distinct enough to be intrusive, but visible nonetheless. Like most senses, this "vision" could be

rooted in smell, taste, hearing or touch — everything might look perfectly normal, but you can smell



the icy rot of a nearby ghost— With a moment of concentration, you can sharpen this sense enough to drown out all other distractions — a useful talent if that ghost is coming closer....

TUNNELING (3 PTS)

Worms burrow in the earth, but they're not alone. The lazy badger and the greedy mole also make their homes hidden away from Nature's pure sunlight. Should you choose to follow their sinful example, you will also have the ability to tunnel through soft earth at half your normal walking speed (if you wish to leave a tunnel behind you), or at walking speed (if you only seek to move through the earth). The tunnel you leave is no larger than you are, of course; moles cannot dig tunnels under walls for men to follow. Exceptionally long tunnels may require a Stamina + Willpower roll to complete without surfacing; sooner or later, however, you'll have to come up for air __

UNAGING (2PTS)

Like the carp, you never show any sign of age or senescence. You will remain in the flower of maturity until cut down by predator, murder or accident. This Advantage may seem useless in day-to-day experience, but can be most useful (and uncanny) in chronicles that sweep across great spans of time.

VENOM (VARIABLE)

All the venom in Satan's jealousy of man is contained in the bite of the serpent; can you wonder that such a wound poisons and festers? You also possess such venom, although it may not spring from such theological origins.

Venom can be delivered in a bite, claw, spur or sting (venomous breath or spittle is considered Hazardous Breath); if damage from the normal attack penetrates your victim's defenses, the poison takes effect as well. For every three points in this Advantage, you inflict one aggravated Health Level of poison damage. Contact poison, delivered by a simple touch, costs five points per Health Level, and inflicts aggravated damage on any victim who touches you with his bare flesh, or ingests your blood or organs.

See "Poison" in the Sorcerers Crusade rulebook (pages 201-202) for other suggestions about venom and poisoning.

WALL-CRAWLING (4 PTS)

Like the spider, you can walk on walls or ceilings as easily as if they were floors (and at normal walking speed). A natural talent, this feat requires no roll unless some force (strong wind, slippery surfaces, grasping hands,

etc.) is trying to separate you from the wall. In the latter case, a successful Strength + Athletics roll (difficulty 7) is enough to secure your footing.

WATER-BREATHING (2/5 PTS)

As fishes and frogs do, you may breathe water as easily as air. For five points, you need not bother to breathe at all. If you cannot breathe air normally, you may buy this Advantage to be able to live as a fish out of water. (Being able to breathe only water costs no points.) This Advantage helps you withstand the rigors of deep or rapid diving, up to a point.

WEBBING (5 PTS)

The spider's web traps the unwary fly — the more it struggles, the more certain is its doom. Like the spider, you can entrap your enemies in webbing, a magical beard, sticky saliva or some other substance.

Although this Advantage is innate, complex web-weaving must be learned; consider Webworking a Skill, one that only silk-spinners can purchase. A good Dexterity + Webworking roll will allow you to:

Difficulty Feat

- 5 Travel up, down or across distances on your web
- 6 Craft large webs
- 7 Snare foes
- 8 Grab objects at a distance, or block entrances

Standard webbing has six soak dice and three Health Levels. To escape your trap, a victim must make three or more successes on a Strength roll with an 8 difficulty (or, for more complexity, make a resisted roll pitting the character's Strength against a Strength 8 web. At the Storyteller's discretion, weaker (or stronger) webbing may lower (or raise) the difficulty of escape.

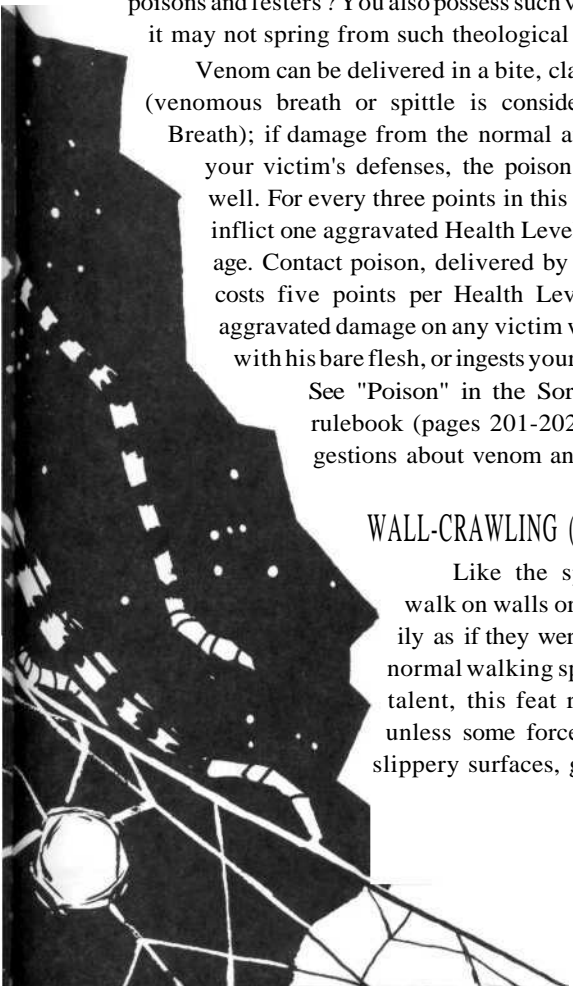
WINGS 13/5rTSI

The simplicity of this Advantage's name is exceeded only by the simplicity of its nature: You may fly. Most flying beasts possess physical wings, although some fabulous creatures need nothing but their own innate magic. For three points, you may fly at up to normal human jogging speed (13 yards/turn); for five points, you may cover 20 yards per turn. To fly faster than human running speed, you must purchase the Advantage: Extra Speed (page 114).

UNDER THE SKIN: PLAYER HINTS

*I call him Orke, because I know no beast,
Nor fish from whence comparison to take
— Ariosto, Orlando Furioso*

At first glance, playing a fabulous beast seems even more difficult than playing a vampire or a cat. After all, vampires were once human, and everybody knows how cats behave, right? Well, it's not that simple. Even a



common housecat is, literally, an alien creature. We can draw analogies to our own motivations, since we spring from branches of the same family tree, but they are crude comparisons at best. Although both cats and humans play, kill, clean and mate (for example), the differences are more stark than the similarities. Cats play sadistically, they kill only other species, they clean themselves instinctively and they mate by fighting. Only the last seems to be standard human behavior. Divergent brain chemistries, hormone balances and billions of years of evolution have populated our planet with not just one such alien race, but tens of millions.

Fortunately, the Mythic Ages do not hold with such newfangled notions. In the old worlds of legend and fantasy, the beasts of fable exist as veritable repositories of human vice and virtue. Wolves are greedy, pigs are lustful, foxes are deceitful and ibises are dissolute. On the positive side of the animal ledger, pelicans are self-sacrificing, camels are obedient (though only to European bestiaries, who didn't see a lot of camels), oxen are patient and unicorns are chaste. On a deeper symbolic level, wolves *are* greed, unicorns *are* chastity, and so forth. The beasts don't merely share qualities, they embody them, and understanding a mystical animal is a matter of understanding its symbolic or component natures. The principles are the same across the board.

This means that, for instance, dragons are not just cranky humans who can breathe fire. (Especially not cranky 20th-century humans who can breathe fire.) On the contrary, dragons are the embodiment (for Westerners, anyway) of pride, fire and subtlety. Playing a character who truly epitomizes those concepts while becoming a recognizable individual can be both a tremendous challenge, and a great opportunity for roleplaying. Give extra thought to your character's Elemental Nature and Demeanor, for these attributes will be essential in keeping you "grounded" in your character's existence.

The key to roleplaying such a mythic beast (even a "mundane" mythic beast like an owl or a rat) is to focus on its symbolic and elemental nature. The sections on specific kinds of animals in this **Bestiary** give you a running start. Books on symbolism and animal folklore will offer you a boost. Comparisons to other beasts of like kind can help as well. A gryphon will have the ferocity and courage of a lion and the pride and terrible anger of the eagle, for example. Feel free to use stereotypes, especially from common cliché and idiom, to get you started. Play your fox as if he were truly "crazy like a fox." Once you get that first angle, play with the details. Why is your wolf greedy? What is she greedy for? Is she really a "lone wolf," or more of a "wolf in the fold"? By the time you've answered those questions in your mind, you've begun to enter the soul of the animals of legend and, more specifically, of your character.

WALK WITH THE ANIMALS: HOW ANIMALS ACT

The Wart found it difficult to be a new kind of creature.
- T.H. White, *The Sword in the Stone*

Once you have a hold on your beast's general nature, it's time for more specific considerations. What, exactly, does it mean to be a wolf? How do you perceive reality? How do wolves work together? How do they deal with other animals? Scholars since Aristotle have put a great deal of thought (and occasionally, some actual observation) into answering these questions. Here are some starting points.

Animals, like humans, want to eat, reproduce and escape being eaten. In humanity, these instincts have produced religions, art forms and systems of government. Animal responses to these urges are no less complex. If your character is a "dumb beast," these drives will typically encourage instinctive behavior. Animals, especially predators, stuff themselves to bursting at every meal, since, in the wild, your next meal is not guaranteed. Some beasts hide extra food against just such an occurrence. Maybe your gryphon takes to keeping an extra horse carcass in the Covenant, just in case. Sex, for most animals, is not the full-time hobby and preoccupation that it is for humankind. The endless game of display, competition and conquest that people call romance is restricted, like most sports, to its season (usually spring). "Out of season," sex might as well not exist. No monk was ever as chaste as a tiger with no nearby females in heat. Roleplaying a being with no interest in sex, even subconsciously, is even harder than it sounds. Of course, some mythological beasts, such as the satyr, or mundane beasts epitomizing lust, such as the rabbit or the mink, might have human (or even superhuman) notions of when it's time for love — and fewer compunctions about satisfying that need.

PERSPECTIVE

Instinct isn't the only difference between man and beast. Animals perceive reality differently, and as all Mage players know by now, that makes a world of difference. The clearest example of this difference is the vast undiscovered country of smell. Look around your room. Look at all the details you can see: the rumpled bedclothes, the computer's brand name, the dirt on your sneakers, the titles on that big pile of game books in the corner. Every nuance of color, shape and distance is available to your eyes. Now look at it from a dog's perspective, or, more accurately, *smell* it from a dog's perspective — animals can smell everything you can see. A dog would know by scent that the bed is unmade, that the computer is new, that you walked through the mud, and that your girlfriend has been using your game books and put them back out of order. All a dog sees is a basically uninteresting bunch of grayish blocks and shapes, just as all you smell

is an indistinguishable mass of dirty clothes and perfume. When playing an animal, reverse your olfactory and visual senses. Smell tells you everything, in four dimensions - smelling something gives you its history as well as its present state. Don't ask the Storyteller "What do I see?" Ask her "What do I smell?"

Size matters, too. People live in a world scaled to their dimensions; few animals relate to that space the same way. In your room, the dog will be looking up at the computer, leaping onto the bed, chewing on the sneakers and possibly licking the game books. A horse, in contrast, would be exceedingly cramped, trampling all the obstacles underfoot and looking down on everything. A parakeet would probably see each item as a potential landing place (or aerial target), and will hop or flutter around the huge land in which it dwells. You get the idea. View the world from the perspective of the animal you've chosen to play, not through the eyes of a knowledgeable human being.

While you're at it (as if this wasn't enough to think about!), remember your character's body, limbs and locomotion. As humans, we tend to think of everything in a linear "I'll walk to here and pick this up" fashion. A dolphin, on the other hand (which she doesn't have, by the way — just an example of that perspective in action), doesn't know what "walking" or "picking something up" are. To her, "down" and "up" are pretty relative — she's accustomed to a floating world of infinite depths and a distinct lack of flat surfaces or gravity. The dolphin thinks "in the round," not "from Point A to Point B," and almost never has any use for material items. A hawk would understand "up" and "down," and she would comprehend the effort of going from one place to another — she has to fly to get there, remember. With her claws and beak, she can even pick things up. But to her, the world is a large flat place filled with things that rise and move around, not a landscape of obstacles and terrain. Chances are, she can get away from anything that annoys her, and thus has very little to worry about unless she encounters something else that can fly. The way we move and interact with our surroundings have a huge impact not only on the way we act, but on the way we think.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Other animal behaviors can make interesting models for your character. For example, herd or pack animals like horses, apes, pigeons and wolves have elaborate systems of dominance and leadership. The "alpha" beast makes decisions for the pack; his decisions can only be questioned by (usually symbolic) combat or by

leaving the pack. Beasts in a mixed party of humans and animals may have a harder time figuring out who the "alpha" member is. Is it the tallest magus? The one with the glossiest coat? Is it the lion, who the other magi consider a consort? If the humans don't know which of them is the "alpha" leader, a beast may either challenge all comers until a proper, "normal" dominance is established, or (at least unconsciously) wish to start a pack of her own.

Symbolic combat determines dominance, and "surrender" signals are an important part of that struggle. If a dog (or wolf) exposes his throat, for example, he surrenders, making it instinctually impossible for another dog (or wolf) to kill him. Even a mantichore might find it hopelessly vulgar and impolite to slaughter an enemy after he yields. If your character is a beast with a surrender signal, you will find it difficult to kill a "surrendered" animal, even if you, the player, know that your foe will only come back to plague you later. Fortunately or unfortunately, humans have no surrender

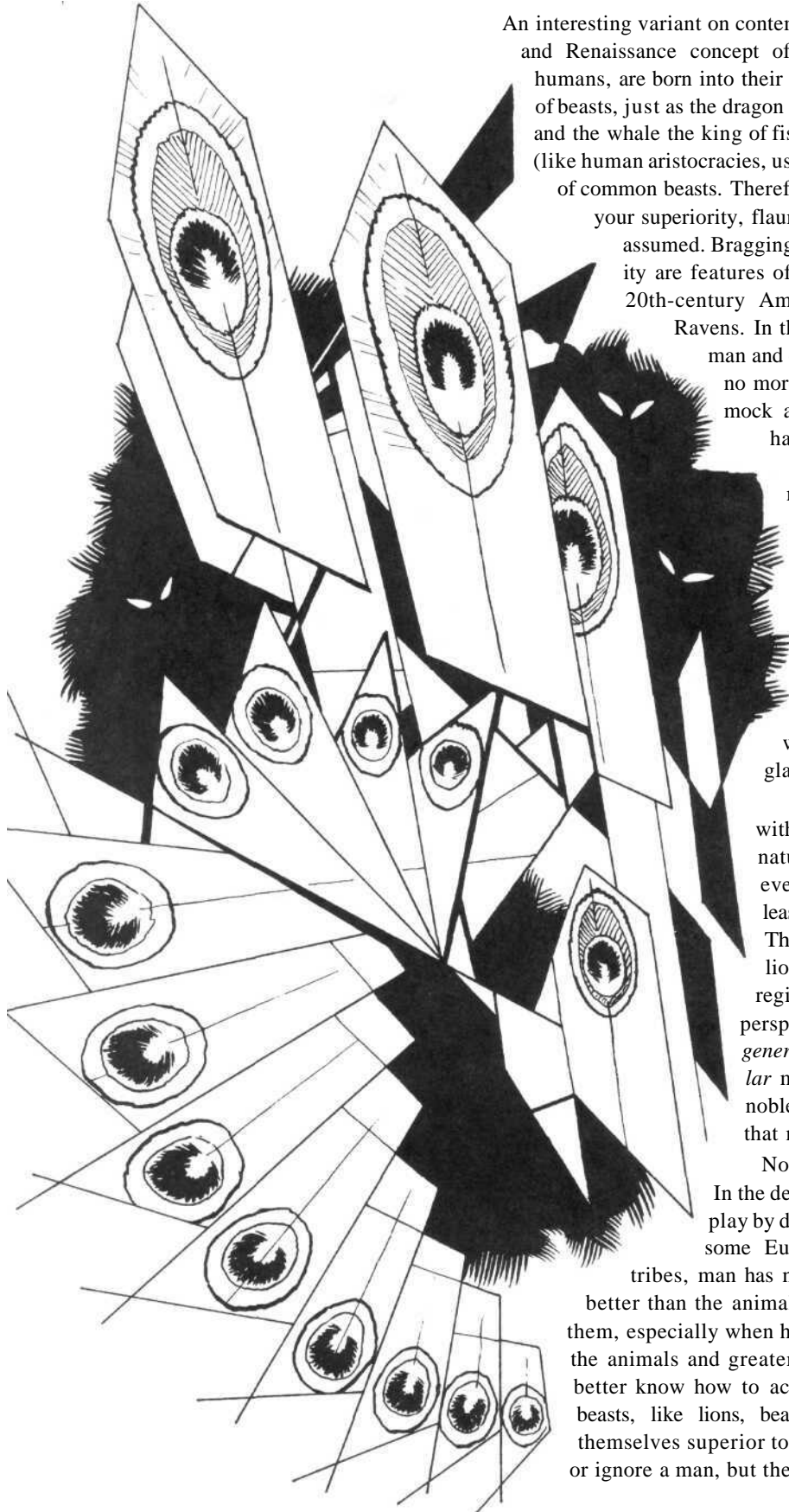
massacring helpless creatures, which might raise those pesky issues of pack dominance again....



An interesting variant on contemporary animal sociobiology is the medieval and Renaissance concept of the great chain of being. Animals, like humans, are born into their social standing on Earth. The lion is the king of beasts, just as the dragon is king of reptiles, the eagle the king of birds and the whale the king of fishes. There is a small aristocracy of animals (like human aristocracies, usually composed of predators) and a peasantry of common beasts. Therefore, if you are a dragon, you do not boast of your superiority, flaunt it or make a great show of it. It is natural, assumed. Bragging, display and loud claims of natural superiority are features of societies where equality is presumed, like 20th-century America or the 15th-century Parliament of Ravens. In the societies of The Sorcerers Crusade, every man and every beast knows his place. A dragon would no more boast of his superior might than you would mock a sheep for its inferior singing voice. This hardly means that class conflict never happens - there were plenty of peasant revolts in medieval times. Those, however, were usually about personalities ("Our baron is bad, give us a good baron") or competing, but equally natural, hierarchies ("We will kill our lord and invite the abbot to rule us"). In bestial terms, bluejays killing a hawk are simply reacting to the hawk's rapacity, not claiming to rule the kingdom of the air themselves. A different hawk would be welcome and honored, and all the jays would gladly serve an eagle.

You can see competing hierarchies at work with a dog, a man and a lioness. The dog should naturally defer to the lioness, his queen. However, he has given his loyalty to the man, who (at least according to *Genesis*) outranks the lioness. Thus, if the man orders the dog to attack the lioness, the dog will do so without committing regicide in his own mind. From the lioness' perspective, of course, while she recognizes that in *general* man has dominion over lions, that *particular* man is not a king and probably not even a nobleman. Therefore, she is socially superior to that man, and mauling him is not improper.

Not that all beasts respect this "order of things." In the deep wilderness of far-off lands, animals often play by different rules. To nature-based cultures, like some European pagans and African or American tribes, man has no special Divine dispensation making him better than the animals. He may, in fact, be inferior to some of them, especially when he acts like a fool. He may be a "brother" to the animals and greater beasts, but like any little sibling, he had better know how to act. Most animals were here first. Powerful beasts, like lions, bears, eagles or wolves, can safely consider themselves superior to human beings. They might befriend, attack or ignore a man, but they'll treat him as an equal or "lesser cousin,"



not as the master of Creation declared in *Genesis*. Shamans and witch-folk understand this family's rules. To deal with the animals, a person must either challenge his "elder brothers" or respect the animal's supremacy. A person who puffs out his chest and declares his majesty in the wild is liable to find his challenge accepted by "brothers" who feel a need to teach the upstart a lesson.

Playing a non-human character offers a set of roleplaying challenges and opportunities beyond the cool powers of a dragon or basilisk. Approached with imagination and a sense

of fun (as opposed to silliness), it can be a fascinating chance to take your "inner beast" for a walk. Even so, the option isn't for everyone. A Storyteller is well within her rights to declare non-human characters off-limits unless a player shows that he can roleplay that beast well. A player who can do that, though, has entered another level of gaming — a realm of pure fantasy. If you look at your beast through the twin lenses of animal psychology and medieval politics, he won't feel like "you in an owl suit" anymore. He will become a different being — a mythic beast in the Mythic Age.



The Bygone Bestiary

MAGICAL BEAST

NAME:

ELEMENT AFFINITY:

SPECIES:

PLAYER:

NATURE:

CONCEPT:

CHRONICLE:

DEMEANOR:

AFFILIATED GROUP:

ATTRIBUTES

PHYSICAL

Strength
 Dexterity
 Stamina

SOCIAL

Charisma
 Manipulation
 Appearance

MENTAL

Perception
 Intelligence
 Wits

ABILITIES

TALENTS

Alertness
 Athletics
 Awareness
 Brawl
 Dodge
 Empathy
 Expression
 Flying
 Intimidation

SKILLS

Acrobatics
 Elusion
 Etiquette
 Foraging
 Hiding
 Melee
 Stealth
 Survival
 Wild Hunting

KNOWLEDGES

Animal Speech
 Beast Lore
 Cosmology
 Culture
 Enigmas
 Linguistics
 Lore
 Metaphysics
 Occult

ADVANTAGES

SPECIAL ADVANTAGES

BACKGROUNDS

MERITS & FLAWS

OTHER TRAITS

WILLPOWER

Combat Manuevers		
Type	Difficulty	Damage

HEALTH (FILL IN AS NEEDED)

EXPERIENCE

ARMOR: _____

Attributes: (7/5/3) Abilities: (11/7/4) Backgrounds: 3 Special Advantages: 6 Freebie Points: 21 (5/2/1/2)

The Bygone Bestiary™

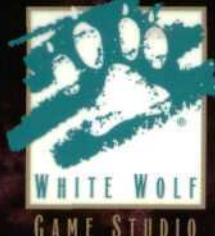
HERE BE DRAGONS!

In the modern world, the walking legends known as Bygones are considered mythology. To those who stand beside them, however, such beasts are very, very real.

...AND UNICORNS AND GRYPHONS AND OTHER, DARKER THINGS.

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