



THE STRANGE™

OHUNKAKAN: THE LIVING MYTHS

BY ALINA PETE AND ANTHONY PASTORES



OHUNKAKAN: THE LIVING MYTHS

The name “Ohunkakan” derives from *Ohúnkakan*, a Lakota word meaning “myth” or “story of the remote past.”

Ohunkakan is pronounced o-HOON-ka-kan: “o” like oh, “HOON” like soon, “ka” like spa, and “kan” like khan.

Ohunkakan was seeded through a genesis quest, but when or by whom is unknown.



Genesis quest, page 138

Ohunkakan spirit, typical: level 3, tasks related to telling and creating stories as level 5



Throughout this book, you’ll see page references to various items accompanied by this symbol. These are page references to *The Strange* corebook, where you can find additional details about that item, place, creature, or concept. It isn’t necessary to look up the referenced items in the corebook, but doing so will provide useful information for character creation and gameplay.

In Ohunkakan, the old stories still live. Tale-tellers practice their art throughout the recursion, the constant flux of their tellings and retellings weaving an ever-changing tapestry of myth that shapes the fabric of reality. Landmarks, villages, and even the patterns of stars shift across the landscape, the familiar freely mixes with the mythic, and elements of dim ages stubbornly persist alongside images pulled from modern Earth. Even today, a tale told powerfully enough might just become true.

The terrain of Ohunkakan is vivid and changeable; every object seems to shudder and breathe with life as if freshly imagined. Throughout the plains, old men repair even older cars with parts dug up from middens deep in the hills intermixed with ancient serpent bones, and then they trade stories with far-ranging hunters beside towering tipis of shimmering hides. Towns of stocky whitewashed houses by day transform into rings of hoodoos by night, the townsfolk whispering from within the stones. Grandmothers watch sitcoms on flickering screens of painted hide while their

grandsons wrestle giants in the wilderness. Locals find nothing odd or out of place in this. Though Ohunkakan was spun from the traditional stories of the Lakota people, the ever-shifting flood of modern anachronisms shows these traditions continue to change and evolve.

Arrival: First-time recursors arrive atop the flattened, quartz-littered crown of Fallen Star Butte, which offers a sweeping view of the plains.

SPIRITS AND ELDER SPIRITS

The inhabitants of Ohunkakan are as variable and inscrutable as the land. Birthed by the stories themselves, each was cast out into the world when their tale was finished with them. Most take human shape, but others are animals, plants, or inanimate objects: delicate men whose stag antlers show only in shadow, sparrow-eyed old women who reveal a flash of wing when they dance, and dirty, heavy-footed men with faces like granite are all possible. As they are already trained to understand the part their lives play in the continuing cycle of myth, the incidence of the spark among them is unusually high.

CREDITS

Writers/Designers

Alina Pete
Anthony Pastores

Developer

Monte Cook

Creative Director

Shanna Germain

Editor/Proofreader

Ray Vallese

Artist

Winona Nelson

Graphic Designer

Bear Weiter

Monte Cook Games

Editorial Board

Scott C. Bourgeois
David Wilson Brown
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Mila Irek
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OHUNKAKAN ATTRIBUTES

Level: 6

Laws: Magic

Playable Races: Humans

Foci: Carries a Quiver, Entertains, Leads, Lives in the Wilderness, Shepherds the Dead, Works Miracles

Skills: Ohunkakan storytelling

Connection to Strange: Where the wills of elder spirits collide, occasional tears in reality rip directly through to the Strange. The battlefields of the Thunderer and the Horned Serpent are particularly known for this.

Connection to Earth: Various gates, all located at the sites of deeds celebrated in story.

Size: Exact size unknown due to malleable nature, but approximately as large as the Great Plains of North America

Spark: 80%

Trait: Strange. The difficulty of tasks to recognize and understand the Strange and its denizens (including identifying translated visitors from alternate recursions, as well as identifying and understanding cyphers) is reduced by one step.

The oldest and greatest of these figures are truly legendary. These elders—Coyote, Iktomi, the Stone Child, the Blood-Clot Man, and many others—carry with them a pocket of warped reality in which the logic of their own particular story dominates. Within these bubbles of myth-time, ancient dramas spring up naturally, incorporating unsuspecting wanderers as fresh actors in living stories. Often escape is impossible until the individual tale is brought to a satisfactory conclusion, though clever victims often find ways to spin new endings onto old tales.

For example, where **Coyote** walks the world is tinged with absurd humor, and foolishness always leads to comedic consequences. Those passing must be wary of being caught up in his elaborate pranks. Similarly, the **Grandfather of Bears** might force passers-by to hold up a mountain with uncanny strength so he may dig for grubs underneath, becoming angry if they cannot accomplish the task.

Other, less-revered spirits slip across the landscape as well, playing out their own endless retellings in the wilds. In distant and dangerous places, fearsome things stalk—some are well-known figures of story and song, while others are only vague memories of beasts slain long ago in half-forgotten tales. These giants, man-eaters, and double-faced horrors lure uncertain victims down dangerous paths with their trickery, tempting heroes to venture forth and slay them. But as long as they are spoken of, the monsters will return, for killing a story is a difficult thing.

STORYTELLING

A peculiar kind of narrative magic is practiced in Ohunkakan, allowing **storytellers** to alter the world around them with the power of their words. This ability is highly esteemed, and those with powerful stories to tell are welcome in every village. Skilled storytellers might move a village away from an oncoming storm, calm a long-standing feud between families, or produce many other fantastic effects.

Some professional tale-tellers act as healers, collecting curing tales to help the weary fend off magical maladies or curses. Each cure requires participation from the patient to complete the tale. Often this is a simple process—perhaps bathing in cedar smoke or spending a night atop a sacred bluff with a red ribbon tied around one's hands. But more complex curses require more complex

Coyote: level 6, trickery and deception as level 8, resist trickery and deception as level 2; regains 2 points of health each round

Easily fooled despite his swagger, Coyote's frightful resilience allows him to bounce back from any setback.

Grandfather of Bears: level 8; stories ensnare targets within short range and hold them in thrall until the story is concluded; can confer limited supernatural abilities on targets while they are in thrall to a story

Storyteller: level 5, tasks related to telling and creating stories as level 7; can create story bubbles within immediate range

Creating story bubbles is similar to creating recursions, except no nexus is required and a good story, properly told, takes the place of the reality seed.

Rules for Creating Recursions, page 138

WHAT A RECURSOR KNOWS ABOUT OHUNKAKAN

- Ohunkakan operates under the law of Magic and is a place where stories, fears, and dreams are made manifest.
- Though the inhabitants of Ohunkakan appear human, most originate in traditional Lakota narratives, having a deeper nature that, if deduced, might be used to predict their behavior.
- The reality of Ohunkakan is somewhat unstable, and the more powerful beings of the recursion—called elder spirits—warp this reality simply by existing.
- Two of the more powerful elder spirits, the Thunderer and the Horned Serpent, are actively antagonistic toward each other, and their periodic struggles leave great swaths of destruction across the landscape.



The Thunderer: *level 10; attacks with flashes of lightning from his eyes; if killed, reforms in the clouds of the next thunderstorm*

The Thunderer GM intrusions: *Actions near the Thunderer are reversed in target, effect, or intent.*

The Horned Serpent: *level 10; gaze attack causes victim to writhe in pain and vomit black earth; if killed, reforms after one week beneath the nearest lake*

The Horned Serpent GM intrusions: *The area around the Horned Serpent floods with water, hindering the movement of those around it.*

cures, and pity to the recursor whose ailment can be cured only by a scale from the Horned Serpent.

Other tellers specialize in retelling the stories of those who have passed on, calling echoes of departed spirits back into the narrative of the present to take an empty spot around the ritual fire and answer questions for a short time. A rare few even have the ability to create story bubbles of their own, places in which their own sort of story logic reigns, just as the elder spirits do.

A FRACTURED LANDSCAPE

The Thunderer and the Horned Serpent have been at war since time began. Their continuous struggle, as regular and as unavoidable as weather, is terrible and awe-inspiring to behold. Each possesses a will so powerful that the very nature of Ohunkakan cracks as their stories collide, exploding in ribbons of amorphous blackness across land and sky. Near these storms, threads of separate tales freely mix and overlap, birthing new horrors to slink off into the night and terrorize the people. These broken threads must be woven back together by skilled storytellers, lest their nullity spread and open Ohunkakan to the Strange.

The Thunderer: He lives in thunder, rumbling in the distant light of the west. The Thunderer appears suddenly, taking the form of a great bird or a horned rider with a blackened face, wrapped in flaming cloud and circled in rainbow, to walk or wing or ride across the heavens, scattering hail in his wake. His realm is the sky, and a great wall of black clouds goes before him. The Thunderer inspires bravery and punishes cowardice, and his presence twists all things backward. Not purely destructive, where he passes life springs up vibrant and renewed.

The Horned Serpent: It lives in lakes and streams, and when it approaches, the water grows choppy and boils with crimson light. The Horned Serpent has been slain many times—the hills are strewn with its bones—and returned in many shapes, both lizardlike and serpentine, but it is always sinuous and crowned with horns. It slides from pool to pool beneath the earth, whispering from deep places to lure people to watery graves and shaking the land with its thrashing. Not always fell and malign, the Horned Serpent accepts offerings floated to its realm to ensure a good bounty each autumn.

OHUNKAKAN ARTIFACTS

FLUTE OF THE ELDER SPIRIT

Level: 1d6 + 1**Form:** A delicate wooden flute with the symbol of an elder spirit carved upon it.**Effect:** There are as many kinds of flutes as there are elder spirits. When played, the flute confers an ability of the elder spirit carved upon it for one hour. The kinds of flutes include (but are not limited to) the following:*Owl:* Flautist's Intellect Edge increases by 1*Wolf:* Flautist's Speed Edge increases by 1*Bear:* Flautist adds 3 points to Might Pool*Hawk:* Difficulty of all perception tasks for the flautist decreases by two steps*Snake:* Flautist deals 2 additional points of venom damage on a successful melee attack**Transformation:** The flute transforms the flautist into an animal of a specified type. The flautist takes on the physical characteristics and abilities of the animal for the duration but retains his own mind.*Love:* Flautist can specify one character. That character falls in love with the flautist for the duration of the flute's song.*Blood:* Flautist can willingly inflict 2 points of damage on himself. His spilled blood coagulates and becomes a tiny man-shaped construct that can communicate a short message to anyone in the recursion whose name the flautist knows.

Sometimes the user of an activated animal flute exhibits some of the behavioral characteristics of the animal carved upon the flute, even for non-transformational flutes.

Depletion: 1 in 1d20

TRICKSTER'S CHARM

Level: 1d6 + 4**Form:** A yellow stone painted with a bestial eye**Effect:** The incidence of foolishness increases dramatically near the trickster's charm. Any d20 rolls the bearer makes provoke GM intrusions on a result that is 1 higher than normal, which usually means 1 or 2 instead of just 1. This effect does not require a depletion roll.

The bearer also gains the ability to get a major effect on any task roll, even a failed roll.

The player and the GM should work out the details, but the consequences of failure can't



TALES ACROSS GENERATIONS

Iktomi's Web: Iktomi, the trickster-spider of many tales, knows of other worlds and desires to travel to them. He struts bandy-legged about Ohunkakan spinning a thousand snares, weaving a web to catch world-walkers so he might pry the secrets of translation from them. Had he access to an *inapposite gate*, he would wreak unpredictable and terrifying havoc on the fabric of other worlds with his narrative powers.**The Spreading Silence:** In the distant east a hole rips across the world, growing as legend and speculation fly to swallow up stories in a star-filled stain of night-blue absence. Around its edges reality devours itself and spits out horrors: trees with serpent branches writhing themselves apart, animals giving birth to monsters, and blood spilled across dust accreting into manlike shapes that sprint off on rabbit legs. The hole will unravel the world if not woven an ending of its own.

be nullified completely. Usage of this ability requires a depletion roll.

Depletion: 1 in 1d10

WIND COCOON

Level: 1d6 + 1**Form:** A fist-sized butterfly cocoon, rattling with potency**Effect:** The wielder activates the cocoon by prying it open manually, releasing the whirlwind trapped inside to manifest at a location the wielder can see within long range. The whirlwind buffets objects and skews passing physical projectiles (modified by two steps in the defender's favor) within an immediate distance of its origin point.

If used outdoors, the whirlwind also raises a cloud of swirling dust that obscures sight and chokes breath. Living creatures that breathe that are caught in the cloud suffer a fit of coughing that renders them unable to act in the following round.

The whirlwind lingers for a number of rounds equal to the artifact's level. Normally, it then rushes back into its cocoon, but if the depletion roll indicates that the artifact is depleted, the whirlwind instead spins off in a random direction, to wander the world of its own volition.

Depletion: 1–3 in 1d20*Iktomi: level 6, trickery and deception as level 8, resist trickery and deception as level 4; anyone ensnared in a trap woven by Iktomi must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or act as the trickster-spider directs for up to one day after being released from the trap**Inapposite gate, page 135*

DOUBLE FACE

4 (12)

There also exist "manyfaces" with three or more faces swirling about their form, each allowing an additional gaze attack each round.

Two visages mark the double face. One it displays on the front of its head, kindly and calm. The second it hides elsewhere on its body, grimacing, hideous, and hateful. The beast is otherwise well formed and pleasing to look upon, able to conceal its monstrousness behind a human façade. Its loathsome nature becomes apparent only when a second face emerges to gaze into the eyes of its intended victims.

The double face is a creature of human ills. Greed, impatience, lust, and gluttony define it. It lures human prey deep into the wilderness or back to its smoke-stained home to cook them alive in boiling kettles of human gore. Despite the creature's preference for solitary hunting, these dwellings are often home to human relatives and degenerate cohabitants who assist the double face in the preparation of its gruesome meals.

Motive: Hungers for flesh

Environment (Ohunkakan | Magic): Out on the plains, alone and beckoning

Health: 18

Damage Inflicted: 6 points

Movement: Short

Modifications: Trick and deceive as level 6 as it lies from one mouth while smiling with the other.

Combat: The double face strikes with ghastly strength, using fists, claws, or whatever weapons are available.

As part of the same action it uses to strike one creature, the double face can also attempt a gaze attack against another creature within short range of the initial target. Victims must succeed on an Intellect defense roll or become paralyzed for one round and suffer 4 points of Intellect damage (ignores Armor) as their face and limbs twitch in exaggerated paroxysms of fear. The faces of those killed by this attack are frozen in grisly inhuman contortions.

A double face corpse that has been burned, gutted, or rotted away leaves behind many unspoiled tools and treasures. Carrying any of these allows the ghost of the double face a chance to possess the holder's body and drive him to evil if he fails an Intellect defense roll. A possessed victim is eventually distorted into a new double face.

Interaction: A double face will say anything to ensnare its victims, offering food, shelter, flattery, or declarations of eternal love to lure them into a position of vulnerability. The creature displays a gentle teasing manner that slowly gives way to impatience and anger.

Use: The double face appears in the wilderness when the PCs are at their most desperate, offering to lead them to a place of respite.

Loot: A double face's lair is filled with the former possessions of its victims, hidden among their cleaned bones.

GM Intrusion: *The double face's entire body shudders and shrugs as its cackling secondary face swims and stretches across its form, immediately subjecting all within short range to its gaze.*

SUGGESTED READING

STORY ANTHOLOGIES

Stories of the Sioux, New Edition by Luther Standing Bear (Bison Books, 2006)

A go-to for Lakota legends. The language is somewhat dated, but the stories are very traditional.

Old Indian Legends (Zitkála-Ša, 1901)

Another good but dated resource. Includes six Iktomi stories. Difficult to find in print, but archived at: <http://web.archive.org/web/20080907033833/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/ZitLege.html>

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Tasunka: A Lakota Horse Legend by Donald F. Montileaux (South Dakota State Historical, 2014)

A young warrior discovers an entirely new type of animal. Based on a traditional story told by elder Alex White Plume.

The Star People by S. D. Nelson (Harry N. Abrams, 2003)
Somewhat loosely based on the original, but has a surreal vibe that works well as inspiration.

Uncegila's Seventh Spot: A Lakota Legend by Jill Rubalcaba (Clarion Books, 1995)

Twin brothers (one of whom is blind) set off to fight the Horned Serpent.