

In a time beyond imagination,
In an age of fire and sword and claw,
Of decadent nobility and raging barbarian hordes,
The Empire of the White Lords teeters on the brink of utter collapse,
Ready to be Redeemed or Destroyed by the Heroes of the Age...

And the entire country fits in a small field.

This is the age of the...

HYPERBOREAN MICE



A ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF HEROIC RODENTS
BY **FRANK T. SRONCE JR.**

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For Jenn, without whose support this project would have been immeasurably harder.

I love you.

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Welcome To HYPERBOREA

Hyperborean Mice was born from a discussion thread called ***Voles and Sorcery*** started by Erik Sieurin on the RPG.net message board back in 2004. Eight months later, I went back to my own take on the topic and started work on the very first version of the game.

More than five years later, I finally had what I considered a successful playtest, in that I *didn't* feel compelled to rewrite the system from scratch... again.

WHAT SORT OF RPG IS THIS?

Hyperborean Mice is a traditional fantasy pencil-and-paper Role-playing Game that crosses stories like **Conan** with ***The Secret of NIMH*** to create a world of gritty, Swords & Sorcery talking mice.

Cats and Owls take the place of Giants and Dragons. A small stream becomes a perilous river and a lake a tremendous ocean. Mice and rats wield their tiny swords against a gigantic world of fearsome predators.

But, as always, the biggest peril often comes not from without but from conflicts in their own society. Theirs is not a light-hearted world suitable for little children, but a grim and decaying empire filled with social injustice, dark cults, political intrigue and death in a thousand forms.

Welcome to the world of the **Hyperborean Mice**.

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Major RPG.net Contributors

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GLOSSARY

An introductory listing of some common game and setting terms which readers might find confusing.

BALANCED TRAITS: Special character traits which have both positive and negative aspects.

COMBAT BONUSES: special benefits earned in combat by rolling well. Often called Critical Hits in other games. Which ones you can claim depends on the weapon used.

COMBAT RATING: one of six special, double-cost skills that are based on two stats apiece. They are **Melee Combat, Grab/Throw, Ranged Combat, Dodge, Bravery** and **Leadership**.

CRIT: short for Critical Success. Really impressive rolls can result in multiple crits.

DARK GODS: collective term for the malign spirits sometimes worshiped by depraved cults. They can work powerful magic in return for terrible sacrifices.

EMPIRE OF MUSCALA: the most powerful and influential of the various kingdoms of the *Fallows*.

ENCHANTMENT: a spell bound into a physical object. It still penalizes the caster's spellcasting in a small way because of the drain on their magical energies. If maintained long enough, an enchantment will become independent of its creator, but this takes *seasons*.

EXHAUSTED: completely out of *Fatigue* points. An exhausted character is at -2 to all actions and cannot spend any additional *Fatigue* without falling unconscious.

FALLOWS: The *Fallows* is the most fertile part of the valley of *Hyperborea* and where most of the mice and rats live. The *Fallows* are divided up into several kingdoms, the most powerful of which is the *Empire of Muscala*.

FASHAR: A faraway realm similar to the *Fallows* on the other side of *Greatwater Lake*.

FATIGUE: *Fatigue* points represent a character's reserves of energy. When you have spent all of your *Fatigue*, you are *exhausted* and at -2 to all actions. If forced to spend another *Fatigue* while exhausted, you fall unconscious at the end of the round. See also *Winded*.

FERAL: refers to an ordinary, unintelligent mouse or rat. Feral rodents instinctively fear the intelligent, talking sort.

FIRST ONES: the first royal mice to come to *Hyperborea* long ago, fleeing from the *Titans*. They founded the various kingdoms of the valley and then ascended to godhood. They are worshiped by modern mice and rats. The most famous ones are **Luciel, Lumierre, Duvain, Canduss, Magellian, Jandara, Zakarvus** and **Quickpaw**.

FLAWS: personal weaknesses or other traits with a negative point cost, enabling characters who take them to purchase additional *Powers*.

FOCUS: when a character is calm, collected and ready to act, they are said to possess *Focus*. *Focus* can be expended to trigger many abilities. It takes a *Primary Action* or spending a *Fatigue* to recover *Focus*. *Focus* can only be expended once per turn, although it may be recovered again instantly by spending *Fatigue*.

FOCUS ACTION: a *Primary Action* which can be turned into a *Free Action* by spending *Focus*.

FORBIDDEN LANDS: a realm to the south of the *Fallows* where the dreaded *Titans* are rumored to dwell.

FORSAKEN: those mice and rats whose mental and magical capabilities are so weak that they often revert to the behavior of their feral kin. Any children that they have may be completely feral.

FREE ACTION: a minor action which takes little time. Characters can perform several free actions in the same turn, as long as they are all different.

GREATWATER: the huge lake which splits the valley.

HERO POINTS: player characters can spend these to reroll tests or otherwise aid the character. Characters can only hold a certain number of Hero Points at one time and more are awarded at the end of each session.

HIT POINTS: *Hyperborean Mice* uses a basic Hit Point system to represent how healthy a character is. When your character is injured, they will lose Hit Points. If their Hit Points drop to a negative number, they may die.

HYPERBOREA: the sheltered valley in which the game is set. Most of the inhabitants live in the *Fallows*.

MAGIC RESISTANCE: a rating that is added to any attempt by a character to resist hostile magic. It is based on the character's own magical ability and their *Size*. The larger a creature is, the harder it is to work magic on it.

PACE: A common measure of distance. A pace is about 3 inches on a human scale.

POWERS: Powers are special abilities or talents that characters can purchase. In other games, they are often called things like Advantages, Gifts or Feats.

PRIMARY ACTION: an action which takes up most of your turn. You can only perform one Primary Action per turn.

SCURRY: to run on all fours, like a feral rodent, generally in a blind panic. Regarded as shameful and embarrassing.

SEASONS: the mice of the *Fallows* track time in seasons, rather than years.

SIZE: a rating representing a creature's size, with a mouse being Size 0. Larger numbers indicate larger creatures.

SOCIAL STATUS: a rating representing a character's wealth and social position in *Fallows* society. A rating of +0 represents the typical commoner.

TITAN: one of a race of terrible giants that created and enslaved the *First Ones*.

TZARCHUL: an extinct race of rodents that once ruled *Hyperborea*. The ruins of their cities and temples dot the landscape. They worshiped the *dark gods*.

WHITE LORDS: refers to royal mice and, to a lesser extent, any white mouse in a position of rulership.

WINDED: when a character has spent exactly one *Fatigue* (and no more), they are *winded*. A *winded* character can recover that point of *Fatigue* after 15 minutes of rest. A character currently down two or more points of *Fatigue* takes a full hour of rest to recover one point. Some characters (such as royal mice) don't have a "winded" level. They always take a full hour to recover *Fatigue*.

TASK RESOLUTION

BASIC SYSTEM

The standard resolution system in *Hyperborean Mice* is to roll two six-sided dice (abbreviated 2d6), add any modifiers and compare the total to a target number.

- Exactly matching the target number is a *Tie*
- Beating it is a *Success*.
- Beating the target number by 5 points or more is a *Critical Success*.
- Beating it by 10 or more is a *Double Critical*. Every additional 5 points adds another Critical.
- Rolling less than the target is a *Failure*.
- Failing by 5 points or more is a *Critical Failure*. Failing by 10+ has no additional game effect (but see *Natural Twos*, below).

TARGET NUMBERS

In an *Opposed Test* (also known as a *Resisted Test*), your target number will be whatever your opponent rolled. In an *Unopposed Test*, the target number depends on how difficult the task in question is.

- **EASY (8):** so simple that the typical mouse can usually succeed without any special skill or talent.
- **TYPICAL (11):** the "average" difficulty of a typical adventuring task.
- **HARD (14):** a starting PC can readily perform this if it's in their specialty, otherwise it's quite difficult.
- **VERY HARD (17):** it takes an experienced, well-prepared or lucky PC to succeed at this task.
- **HIGH IMPOSSIBLE (20):** even the very best require a lucky roll to succeed.

Often, the GM will tell the players what skill their characters need to roll in order to accomplish something and how hard the task is. For example, they might call for a TYPICAL *Alertness* check, meaning that the character's total must be at least 11 to succeed.

When the GM doesn't want the players to know how difficult something is ahead of time, he can just call for a roll without declaring a particular difficulty and then compare it to the target number afterward.

SPECIAL ROLLS

Natural Twelves (Potential Crits): When your 2d6 roll is a 12, you can spend a Hero Point to add another +5 to your roll. This will turn a Tie or regular Success into a Critical Success or a single Critical into a Double.

Natural Twos (Potential Botches): When your 2d6 roll is a 2 and your action fails, you can spend a Hero Point to prevent the GM from declaring it a *Botch*. Otherwise, the GM is free to inflict some sort of additional penalty on your character above and beyond merely failing.

SKILL ROLLS

Each standard skill is based upon a single stat.

When the GM calls for a skill roll, you roll 2d6 and then add that stat plus your own rating in the skill itself.

For example, if the GM asked a character to roll *Insight* and they had an *Insight* skill rating of +4 and a *Perception* attribute of +1, they would roll 2d6+5 and compare it to the difficulty.

COMBAT RATING ROLLS

Combat Ratings are special, double-cost skills that are based upon two stats.

When the GM calls for you to roll against a Combat Rating, you'll roll 2d6 and add both stats, plus your score in the rating itself.

For example, if you need to roll *Melee Combat* (which is based upon both Agility and Brawn) and had an Agility of +1, a Brawn of +3 and a skill in *Melee Combat* of +2, you'd roll a total of 2d6+6.

OPPOSED ROLLS

When two characters match their skills against each other, it's typically handled as an opposed roll. Both characters roll the appropriate skill and then whoever initiated the action compares their roll to a Target Number equal to their foe's total.

For example, one character might roll their *Bluff* against another character's *Insight* to try and deceive them. The total result of the *Insight* roll is treated as the Target Number for the *Bluff* roll. If the *Insight* roll were 11 and the *Bluff* roll was only 4, that would be a Critical Failure because they fell at least 5 points short of the target.

TYPICAL MODIFIERS

Here are some common, general-use modifiers.

- Expending Focus: +1 (this *can* be added *after* the character rolls)
- Devoting a lot of extra time and attention to the task: +2 (this already includes the Focus bonus)
- Character is exhausted: -2
- Character is busy devoting a lot of time and attention to a *different* task: -2
- Minor circumstantial benefit: +2 (e.g. target of hostile action is distracted, using superior equipment)
- Major circumstantial benefit: +4 (e.g. target of hostile action is completely unaware)
- Minor circumstantial hindrance: -2 (e.g. poor lighting, uncertain footing, running at the same time, foe is alert for hostile action)
- Major circumstantial hindrance: -4 (e.g. working in darkness, partially tied up)
- Trying to use a social skill on a group all at once instead of on individuals: -2
- Effectively assisted by an ally: +1 or more (see the *Combining Effort* section in *Adventuring Tasks*)
- Character expends a Hero Point: reroll

FOCUS

A character who is calm and collected and has a plan ready is considered to be *Focused*. Acquiring Focus requires you to spend at least one round thinking about the current situation and what you intend to do about it; you can defend yourself but not perform any other actions. Once you acquire Focus, you keep it until you use it.

A character who has Focus may "spend" it to add +1 to one of their rolls **after** the results have been determined. Thus, it can turn a failure into a tie or a tie into a success, in the right situation. Many powers also require you to spend Focus. Once it has been used, you must again spend a full combat round mentally composing yourself to reacquire it.

In general, if combat breaks out, anyone who could clearly see the combat coming can be assumed to have already acquired Focus. Characters who were successfully surprised or ambushed won't have it, but their ambushers will.

Outside of combat, the Focus rules are replaced with the standard +2 bonus for taking lots of extra time to perform a task. *Focus can only be spent once per turn.*

FATIGUE

You can spend 1 Fatigue to instantly acquire Focus. This means that any ability which requires you to spend Focus can also be paid for by spending Fatigue instead, provided that you haven't already used up your Focus this turn. Note that the reverse is not true; if a Power actually costs Fatigue, you cannot spend Focus instead.

The more Fatigue you spend, the longer it takes to recover it. If you are only down 1 point of Fatigue, you can recover it in just 15 minutes of rest. This is referred to as being *Winded*. If you go beyond that point, however, it will take a full hour of rest per point recovered. Note that some characters (particularly royal mice) do not receive this benefit and must always spend an entire hour resting to recover even their first point of Fatigue.

If you take a full 5 points of Fatigue, you are now *Exhausted* until you recover at least one point. Exhausted characters are at -2 to all actions and cannot spend any further Fatigue without passing out.

HERO POINTS

Hero Points are a renewable resource that represent the extra good fortune that keeps heroes alive. They can be expended to do a number of things and PCs receive additional ones at the end of each session. Since you can only hold a certain number of Hero Points at a time (normally 5), it's to your advantage to spend them.

Hero Points can be spent to:

- **Reroll any die roll other than a Botch:** reroll all of the dice and apply the new result instead. You *can* spend another Hero Point to reroll *again* if you need to. You *cannot* use this to reroll a Botch.
- **Activate a Natural 12:** when you roll a pair of 6s on a test, you can spend a Hero Point to add a +5 bonus.
- **Prevent a Botch:** when you roll a pair of 1s on a test, you can spend a Hero Point to prevent a *Botch*.

SIZE

A character's Size rating determines how large they are as compared to a typical mouse. A creature that is mouse-sized is considered to be Size 0.

A creature's Size rating applies the following adjustments:

Add your **Size** to the following:

- Your innate *Armor Rating* (which *can* be a negative number for very tiny creatures)
- Your Magic Resistance
- Your Brawn for the purposes of determining the damage done when you strike a foe or want to wield/reload a heavy weapon

Add **twice** your **Size** to the following:

- Certain Brawn-based skills
- Your Hit Points

Subtract **twice** your **Size** from the following:

- Certain Agility-based skills

Your Size rating can also be added to any other tests where your GM agrees that your sheer size and bulk could aid you... or subtracted from ones where your size works against you.

EXAMPLE SIZE RATINGS:

- Size -4: Fleas
- Size -2: Crickets
- Size 0: Mice
- Size 1: Common and White Rats
- Size 2: Wild Rats
- Size 4: Weasels
- Size 6: Cats
- Size 8: Dogs
- Size 10: Titans
- Size 12: Cows, Horses, Deer
- Size 15: Elephants

Note that truly large creatures are thus extremely formidable foes. Not only does the typical cat possess an extra 12 Hit Points, it receives 6 points of innate armor and a bonus of +6 to its Magic Resistance rating. An elephant would probably be effectively immune to any harm that player characters could bring to bear on it.

MAGIC RESISTANCE

Resisted spells are treated as an opposed roll as per normal, except that if the caster fails to at least meet the required difficulty of the spell it simply fails outright.

The target always gets to add their Magic Resistance to their resistance roll.

Your Magic Resistance rating is normally equal to the sum of their Magic stat and Size rating. Creatures with a negative Magic rating or a negative Size are actually more vulnerable to magic than normal.

Note that this means that huge creatures are extremely difficult to affect with hostile magic.

CHARACTER CREATION

Hyperborean Mice is a game of gritty swords and sorcery action... as performed by talking rodents. The kingdoms of the tiny valley of Hyperborea are ruled by the inbred albino *Royal Mice* whose magical powers are great... but her civilization has been in decline for generations and her rulers amuse themselves with decadent revels and petty politics rather than face the true threats to their world.

Stats: Split 7 points between the following stats. One stat can be set as low as -1 to get another stat point to spend elsewhere, but the rest must fall between 0 and +4. A rating of -1 is Terrible, while a rating of 0 is Typical and a rating of +4 is Great (a creature *without* a particular stat is usually assumed to be at -4). Your race may adjust your stats or change these limits.

- **AGILITY:** speed, balance and physical coordination
- **BRAWN:** build, muscle and physical toughness
- **CLEVERNESS:** knowledge, charm and quick wits
- **PERCEPTION:** aim, alertness and insight
- **MAGIC:** your ability to cast spells, resist hostile magic and sensitivity to mystic phenomena. With a rating of 0 or lower, you cannot cast spells at all. Non-mages should generally take a Magic of 0 or less.

Character Species/Race: There are a variety of different kinds of talking rodents available as player characters. Each fits into society differently and changes your character's stats and/or other abilities appropriately.

- **ROYAL MICE:** the rarest of all. Magically-potent but highly inbred albinos. All royal mice are considered nobles by right of birth and are automatically in line for the throne of their homeland (albeit distantly). Their health tends to be poor and they are sensitive to sunlight because of their albinism.
- **WHITE MICE:** upper-class mice with some royal mouse blood but not enough to be albinos. They often make good mages.
- **COMMON MICE:** the most common race. The ordinary brown or gray mice who make up the bulk of the population in any kingdom.
- **JUMPING MICE:** an unrelated species notable for their strong legs and the incredibly long jumps that they are capable of.
- **WHITE RATS:** very rare. The ancestral servants of royal mice, white rats are mild-mannered and small for rats. They are usually found in the service of a particular family of royal mice.
- **COMMON RATS:** ordinary brown or gray rats. Larger and stronger than mice, common rats generally work in jobs that require a lot of unskilled labor and heavy lifting.
- **WILD RATS:** a larger and fiercer throwback to the feral rats that live on the outskirts of the valley of Hyperborea. Rare and generally distrusted by the other races.

Powers: Spend 5 points to purchase Powers (see page 9). For mages, most of these will generally go towards purchasing Spells and other Magical Powers, whereas non-mages will usually take more mundane abilities. *Each Power costs 1 point unless it specifically states otherwise.*

Flaws: These are "Powers" with a negative point cost. They represent some inherent weakness or flaw. You can take at most 3 different Flaws. Each one taken will give you more points to spend on regular Powers.

Balanced Traits: There are special "Balanced" traits available, each of which provides certain advantages and disadvantages that are assumed to roughly balance out, such as membership in a particular priesthood. They are optional. You need GM permission to take more than one.

Skills: Spend 14 points on your starting skills, with a maximum rating of +3 on each (+9 is generally as far as you can increase a skill). There are a variety of standard skills available. Each one has a specific stat that it adds to when you roll it.

Combat Ratings: All player characters are assumed to be well-trained for combat and adventuring; their initial combat ratings are determined by their stat allocation. These are treated as double-cost skills that cannot be increased at character creation, but can be improved later.

- **MELEE COMBAT:** AGILITY + BRAWN
- **GRAB/THROW:** BRAWN + PERCEPTION
- **RANGED COMBAT:** AGILITY + PERCEPTION
- **DODGE:** AGILITY + CLEVERNESS
- **COURAGE:** BRAWN + CLEVERNESS
- **LEADERSHIP:** CLEVERNESS + PERCEPTION

Melee Combat includes bare-handed fighting and is also used when trying to parry melee attacks with a weapon or block them with a shield. *Ranged Combat* refers to missile weapons such as bows and crossbows as well as small hand-thrown missiles like knives. Larger thrown weapons are covered under *Grab/Throw*, which governs grappling and throwing larger weapons. Your *Dodge* rating is used when you aren't fighting back but are just trying to get the heck out of an attack's way; it's most important when facing huge monsters whose attacks can't be parried. *Courage* covers willpower and resisting fear. Finally, *Leadership* is used to take charge of others and to formulate effective combat strategies.

Hero Points: Every PC starts with 3 Hero Points and can hold a maximum of 5. At the end of each session you'll generally receive from 1-3 additional Hero Points, so if you don't use them regularly, you'll soon hit your limit. Hero Points can be spent to re-roll dice (provided that you rolled better than a natural 2), trigger critical successes or prevent botches.

Hit Points: Your Hit Points represent how hard you are to kill. Your basic Hit Points start at your Brawn+10+Size*2. When you drop below 1 Hit Point, you start to fall unconscious. When you drop below -1, you may die.

Fatigue: Each player character has 5 Fatigue Levels that represent especially heavy exertion. The more Fatigue that you've lost, the slower you are to recover it. A character who has run out of Fatigue is considered to be *Exhausted* and is at -2 to all actions.

NPCs generally get less, with important NPCs getting 3 and minor ones just a single point of Fatigue or none at all!

SOCIAL STATUS

The Fallows are, unfortunately, not a particularly egalitarian place, with an ancestral ruling class and a great deal of inter-species prejudice. A character's social status can be applied as a bonus (or penalty) to skill checks in any situation in which one's social strata is extremely important. It also determines what sort of equipment you have readily available to you and what you can carry in public without arousing suspicion.

- **The Emperor (+10):** the ruler of the great Empire of Muscala, he to whom even lesser kings must bow (lest they feel the wrath of the Imperial Legions). There is only a single Emperor and his death often presages a period of civil war as the succession is sorted out.
- **Minor Kings (+8):** the ruler of one of the minor kingdoms of the Fallows. Their word is law in their own land, but they must still be wary of offending other lords or the Emperor, lest they find their throne being usurped by a more popular relative. They have their own palace and military retinue.
- **Greater Nobility (+4):** the Lords of the Fallows, these noble-mice hold powerful positions and generally rule individual towns or counties as their personal fiefdoms. If the current king of their country dies, they are on the short list of possible successors. Most have at least a handful of bodyguards.
- **Lower Nobility (+2):** families of noble blood but not particularly close to the throne of their homeland tend to occupy this niche. They often have the title of Lord or Lady, own small family estates and have a number of servants who live with them. Races other than royal mice can achieve this position only through wealth and political connections and can go no higher.
- **Upper-class (+1):** the rating of the wealthy upper crust of Fallows society. Characters at this level tend to own their own homes and may employ part-time servants to tend to their belongings. They can readily acquire basic metal equipment and may loan it to their servants.
- **Commoner (+0):** the rating of the vast majority of the populace. They tend not to own their own homes or land and must work hard just to stay ahead of the tax collectors. A commoner can generally start with a single metal implement.
- **Impoverished (-1):** the very poor generally can't even *rent* a home of their own but must sleep wherever they can get away with it. If a character at this level is caught with a valuable item, most people will assume that they stole it and punish them accordingly.
- **Slave/Outcast (-2):** at this point, the character is either effectively owned by someone of higher status or they are on the run. Outcasts are generally blamed whenever anything goes wrong in the area and are often run out of town on the slightest of pretexts. Harming them is often not a crime at all, but an outcast defending themselves against a higher ranked citizen *is*. They tend to only own items that they can find or make themselves.

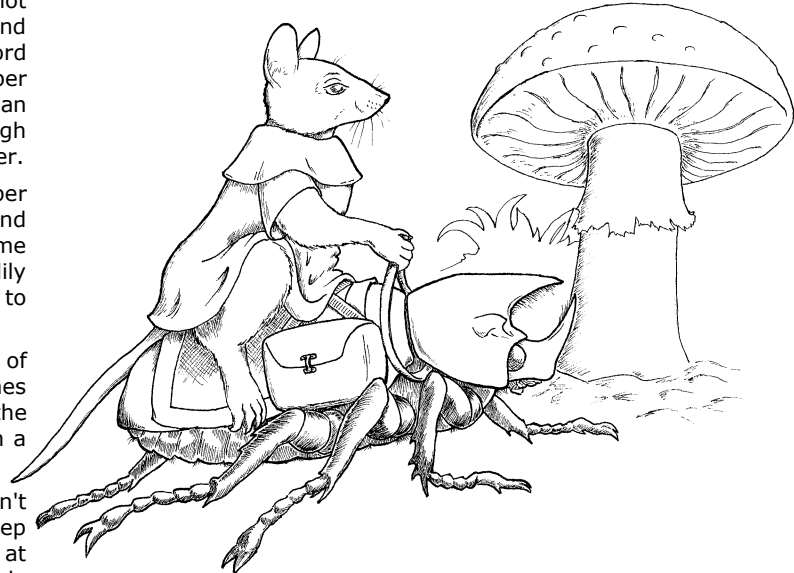
ITEM COSTS & QUALITIES

CRUDE: Makeshift items that even slaves and outcasts can readily create, like clubs and sharpened rocks. Available to anyone, pretty much for free.

COMMON: Common items are easily acquired by commoners. They require skill to construct, but are made from inexpensive materials. They require a social status of +0. Only the simplest of metal implements (such as knives) are common items.

EXPENSIVE: Expensive items are relatively rare. They take both skill and expensive materials to construct. They require a social status of +2. Swords and riding beetles are examples of expensive items; useful but hard to come by.

VERY EXPENSIVE: Very expensive items require a lot of expertise to make and are often made from rare materials. They may require special maintenance, such as regular polishing/repair or animal handlers to keep them healthy. They require a social status of +4. Heavy metal armor and riding pigeons are two examples of very expensive items. A lone mouse simply can't keep them in usable shape; it takes a full-time staff of servants to do so.



STARTING EQUIPMENT

Characters can have any reasonable number of items that require their social status or less (generally up to 10 different items). They can afford one thing that's above their status by one level (+1 social status), but can't replace it if they lose it. Those using gear *below* their status may effectively drop to that level; others are liable to treat you like a commoner if you dress like one.

Wealthier mice *can* provide additional equipment for their subordinates or poorer kin, but this carries with it the obligation to remember just who is paying the bills.

THE RACES

There are 7 known races of talking rodents in the Fallows.

ROYAL MICE

Royals look like normal (if undersized) white mice with pink eyes. These direct descendants of the First Ones have maintained their royal pedigree of albinism through restrictive inbreeding. The rulers of the valley have been albinos for so long that it has come to be known as the *Mark of Royalty*. Royal mice are generally referred to as *White Lords* or *Ladies* by those of lesser status.

The careful oversight of the royal bloodlines has minimized the dilution of their magical abilities; while the powers of the modern royals may pale compared to their ancestors, they are still quite potent. Most, however, never truly realize that potential, considering it beneath their station.

Each royal mouse technically *could* inherit the throne of their homeland but there are often many others between them and that goal. Likely heirs live restricted lives as their sires groom them for power, but younger siblings often go wandering (often with a small crowd of servants) seeking stimulation. Others join a priesthood, removing themselves from the line of succession without losing their high status.

ADJUSTMENTS: +1 to Magic, -1 to Brawn, a maximum Magic of +5. Social Status starts at Lower Nobility (+2).

Royal mice are sensitive to sunlight; they can go blind if their eyes are exposed to direct sunlight for too long. Most carry silken veils that they can wear if forced into the uncomfortable glare. Due to their poor overall health, royal mice only have 4 levels of Fatigue instead of the usual 5... their "winded" level is always considered to be expended.

WHITE MICE

Not all of the descendants of the First Ones were so careful about their bloodlines. Many families have lost their albinism entirely, enjoying generally better health but no longer being considered royalty.

White mice effectively run most towns; while they owe their allegiance to the royals of their homeland, there simply aren't enough royal mice to run everything. White mice occupy the upper social strata of the Fallows.

The purer the sheen of their fur, the more esteemed their bloodline. A mouse is generally considered white by most people only so long as *all* of their fur is white. Those with obviously visible patches of brown or gray are regarded as common mice. It is not unknown for a "white" mouse to conceal a shameful patch of colored fur beneath their garments or to bleach small sections of their fur.

ADJUSTMENTS: A maximum Magic rating of +4. Social Status starts at Upper-class (+1).

COMMON MICE

The bulk of the population of Hyperborea are common mice. While descended from the First Ones like the others, their bloodline is poor and their magical powers are relatively weak. They make up well over half of the population and can be found in practically every town.

Most common mice have light brown fur, although various shades from golden blond to black exist. Some even have multi-colored fur, with patches of this and that. Those with patches of white can at least claim some descent from the upper classes, but will never be able to join them.

ADJUSTMENTS: A maximum Magic rating of +3. Social Status starts at Commoner (+0). Due to their lack of special bonuses, they receive one extra point of Powers.

JUMPING MICE

These gerbil-like mice have long, powerful lower legs that they use to make prodigious jumps. They are a different species from the other mice and their magical ability suffers because of it. It is said that they were granted sentience by the First Ones in return for their service, shortly after the First Ones settled in the Fallows.

ADJUSTMENTS: Superior jumping ability, a maximum Magic rating of +2. Social Status starts at Commoner (+0).

Their jumping distance is normally measured in *feet* rather than inches. If a jumping mouse needs to make a shorter jump, they can claim a +5 bonus to the roll instead.

WHITE RATS

Like jumping mice, it's believed that the First Ones granted intelligence to the rats so that they could better serve them. Since the royals found rats to be more trustworthy servants than other mice, small families of white rats are still found in the service of each royal house.

A preference for light-furred spouses has, over generations, caused these royal servants to acquire white (or at least very light brown) fur. Now white rats are considered the most dutiful and desirable of servants by the upper classes. They tend to be somewhat smaller than other rats, often being barely triple the weight of a common mouse.

ADJUSTMENTS: -1 Agility, Size 1 (see *the Basic Rules* for the various effects this has), a maximum Magic rating of +3. Their Social Status starts at Upper-class (+1).

Most white rat characters have a *Duty* Flaw towards a particular family that their own has served for generations.

COMMON RATS

Common rats are a good bit larger than mice but have very mild temperaments. They tend to be strong, effective workers and are most often found performing jobs that require greater strength than most mice possess.

ADJUSTMENTS: Size 1. A maximum Magic rating of +2. Their social status starts at Commoner (+0).

WILD RATS

Outside of the Fallows live many huge, feral rats. Once in a great while a rat is born who shows kinship to those sort, being larger, stronger and much fiercer than other rats. As such, they are barely tolerated and always distrusted by the other races of the Fallows.

In the Wildlands, there are entire tribes of wild rats, but they are much rarer in more civilized lands.

ADJUSTMENTS: Size 2, -1 Magic. A maximum Magic rating of +1 and a maximum Cleverness of +3. Their social

status starts at Impoverished (-1).

POWERS

Powers are special abilities that alter your character's capabilities in some fashion. Some are passive, while others may require you to expend Focus or Fatigue.

Each Power costs exactly 1 Point unless marked otherwise. Unless stated otherwise, each can only be taken once.

Blessings are special Powers that represent the favor of a deity, possibly due to the date of your birth or some action of your ancestors. A character can only have *one* Blessing. All Blessings have a title like "Blessing of [Deity]".

COMBAT POWERS

AGILE IN ARMOR: Your Armor Penalty for wearing armor is reduced by one point. *See page 42.*

ASSASSIN (2 Points): You are trained to take advantage of a target's vulnerability. Add a free Combat Bonus to any successful attack against an *unsuspecting* foe. If you claim the *Blade to the Throat* Bonus and your target triggers a free attack, add an extra Combat Bonus to that as well.

AVOIDING GIANTS: If you spend Focus to aid a Dodge roll against the attack of a creature larger than you, add the difference between your Size ratings as an extra bonus.

BARE-HANDED PARRY: You suffer no penalties for trying to parry a weapon with your bare hands, even a large one.

BERSERK: In battle, you may choose to become enraged. For the rest of the fight, you are at +1 to hit and damage, but you cannot acquire Focus or cast spells while berserk.

BLESSING OF LUCIEL: If you spend Focus or take extra time to aid a Dodge, Leadership or Courage roll, add an extra +2 bonus.

BLESSING OF LUMIERRE: If you spend Focus or take extra time to aid an attack roll, add +1 to hit and damage.

BLIND-FIGHTING: Ignore darkness penalties for Melee Combat and Grab/Throw, halve them for Ranged Combat.

CAT-SLAYER (only usable with an attack with the Impale Bonus): When you attack a creature with a Size of 4+, you can spend Focus to make a more lethal attack. If you hit, you get an *Impale* Combat Bonus for free.

COMBAT MACHINE: Whenever a fight breaks out, you can react to it instantly, automatically gaining Focus and never losing an action or taking Initiative penalties from surprise.

CROSSBOW MASTER: You can reload a regular crossbow as a free action and a heavy crossbow as a Focus action.

DISARM: You can spend Focus to make a disarm attempt instead of a regular attack. If you succeed, the target drops their weapon. On a critical success, you can either hit them for damage too or end up holding their weapon. Does not work on creatures that more than 1 Size larger than you.

DEFENSIVE FIGHTING: When you successfully parry a melee attack, you can spend Focus to send the attacker reeling and cost them their next action. Very popular with staff-wielders, who often seize the opportunity to flee.

EXTRA HIT POINTS: You have 3 extra Hit Points. This Power may be purchased up to 3 times.

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FEINT: When you tie on an attack roll in melee and have to make a follow-up attack, the second roll receives a +2 bonus to hit and does +1 damage.

GLORY-SEEKER: When surrounded by foes, they receive no bonuses against you from their numbers.

GROUND-FIGHTING: You suffer no penalties to defend from being prone and can stand up as a Free Action.

ICY CALM: Pain clears your head. Whenever you take at least 2 points of damage (after subtracting your armor) in battle, you acquire Focus if you didn't have it already.

KEY-HOLE SHOT: When attacking at range, all penalties due to your target's cover are halved (round down).

LONG-RANGE SHOT: When making a ranged or thrown attack, all penalties due to range are halved (round down).

MOUSE-JITSU: Making an attack with Grab/Throw is a *Focus Action* for you.

MULTI-THROW (2 Points): You can spend Focus when hurling throwing spikes/blades to make up to 3 attacks. You must decide how many attacks you are making before rolling; any range penalties are multiplied by that number.

PARRY ARROWS: If you can see a thrown or missile weapon coming and you have a weapon ready, you can use Parry instead of Dodge. Doesn't work on huge missiles.

QUICKDRAW: You can draw weapons as a free action, as you need them. +1 to Speed for initiative rolls.

QUICKSHOT: You can spend Focus to attack *twice* with a bow in the same round of combat.

REFLEXIVE CATCH: With a free paw, you can roll Grab/Throw to defend against normal-sized thrown weapons. If you succeed, you snatch it out of the air.

RIPOSTE: Whenever you successfully parry a melee attack, you can spend Focus to apply your roll as an attack roll in return. The target defends normally.

SHOT ON THE RUN: Your ranged attacks suffer no penalty for moving around (including dodging attacks) while firing.

SWIFT STRIKE (2 Points): For you, making a melee attack is a *Focus Action*. This can allow you to attack twice.

THUNDER-BLOW (only usable with a two-handed melee weapon): *Before* you roll an attack, you can spend Focus to make this an especially powerful blow. If you hit, your weapon inflicts an extra 1d6 damage.

TWIN-BLADE STRIKE (only usable when wielding twin weapons): *Before* attacking, you can spend Focus to make two attacks this round instead of just one. They may be applied to two foes or the same one.

UNEXPECTED GIFT: You may throw *any* melee weapon as though it were normally allowed to be thrown. If your target is not prepared for this, you receive a +2 to hit.

WEAPON SPECIALIST: Pick a particular type of weapon (sword, bow, spear, etc.). When you attack with it, you can claim a Critical Success for every 4 points that you win by, instead of 5. *This Power can be purchased multiple times but each time you have to choose a different weapon.*

WHIRLWIND STRIKE: *Before* you roll a Melee attack, you can spend Focus to apply the results of your roll against every foe within reach of your weapon. Unlike a regular Melee attack, all Ties are treated as Failures.

THIEVING POWERS

AGILE SCURRIER: You can drop to all fours and scurry (moving at 2x the normal rate) while still keeping items in your paws. You can also scurry in leather or shell armor.

APPRAISER: You receive a +4 bonus to use Streetwise to estimate the market value of an item and can do so with just a glance. You also receive a +2 bonus to attempts to negotiate prices for valuables and services.

BLENDING IN (2 Points): You can roll Stealth to hide even in an open area without good cover.

BLESSING OF QUICKPAW: Whenever you spend Focus to aid an Agility-based skill, you receive an extra +2 bonus. Combat Ratings are not affected.

BUSY HANDS: Your pick-pocketing attempts are not penalized by having an alert foe. You can even attempt to pick-pocket a foe while grappling or in melee combat. For you, a pick-pocketing attempt is a Focus Action.

DON'T MIND ME: Whenever you roll Bluff to try and pretend that you're authorized to be doing something that you really aren't, you receive a +4 bonus.

ESCAPE ARTIST: You can attempt to escape from bonds as a single-round action (instead of taking minutes) and may attempt to escape from a grapple as a Focus Action. You can also spend 1 Fatigue to retry these rolls.

FAST BUT SILENT: No matter how fast you run, you never suffer penalties to your Stealth rolls and never penalize other skills because you are being stealthy.

GIFTED HANDS (2 Points): You can attempt to open a lock or disarm a trap as a single-round action. You can spend Fatigue to reroll any failed attempts.

HOLDOUT: You can conceal small items extremely well. Whenever your belongings are searched, you can roll Thievery with a +4 bonus; if that beats their Alertness roll, they fail to whatever you were hiding. Large or multiple items may penalize this roll.

INNOCENT FACE: Whenever you roll Bluff to deny committing some crime or morally questionable activity that you actually did, you receive a +4 bonus. Note that if you *didn't* do it, you receive no bonus.

MIMIC: You are unusually gifted at mimicry. When you roll Bluff to imitate a voice or a particular noise, you receive a +4 bonus. You can also add a +2 bonus to Perform rolls if you incorporate this ability into your act.

ONE WITH THE NIGHT: In shadowy areas, you are at +2 to Stealth *and* to Alertness.

PERFECT BALANCE (2 Points): You ignore penalties to other rolls due to your awkward position while performing acrobatic maneuvers such as climbing and jumping. You can aim a bow while dangling by one foot and still roll normally. You can spend 1 Fatigue to reroll Acrobatics rolls.

MOUSETRAP EVADER: You can spend Fatigue to reroll attempts to dodge or avoid traps, even magical ones.

VANISHING ACT: If you make a successful Dodge roll against an opponent, you can spend Focus to immediately follow it up by leaping into a hiding spot. If you beat the target's Alertness roll with your Stealth, you will seem to have vanished into thin air.

SOCIAL POWERS

ATTENTION-SEEKER: Whenever you draw the full attention of a large group for a social skill check, you add a +2 bonus to your roll *instead* of taking a -2 penalty.

BLESSING OF JANDARA: You are particularly beautiful or handsome and receive a +2 bonus to friendly social skill checks with those who might find you attractive.

BORN LEADER: When you lead *by example* you are at +4 to inspire others to do the same. But you *must* be rushing forward and doing what you're trying to get the others to do in order to receive this bonus. If you're holding back to see if anyone else follows you first, you receive no benefit.

BORN PERFORMER: Select a narrow specialty in the Performance skill such as dancing or telling stories. You receive a +4 bonus to those rolls.

CONTACTS: You have a large network of allies, business associates and friends-of-a-friend. Even though you may not have met them all in person, you know enough to find them when you need them. You receive a +4 bonus to any attempts to find ready allies in an area.

CROW FRIEND: You are known and trusted by the crows of the Fallows, who are much more inclined to help you than they would others.

FAMILIAR TERRITORY: Pick a specific kingdom or major city (Haven is large enough to merit a separate purchase) that you are especially familiar with. You receive a +2 bonus to any checks that could be aided by your intimate familiarity with her ways, including Common Lore checks for local customs, Charm rolls with locals, Streetwise and even Stealth checks. *This Power can be purchased multiple times; pick a different territory each time.*

GOOD REPUTATION: You have an established reputation due to some previous exploits. You should define what exactly what your reputation *is*. In areas where you are known, you can add a +2 bonus to appropriate social skills. If your reputation is particularly narrow or known only to a small portion of the community, the bonus climbs to +4.

HIGH SOCIAL STANDING: Increase your starting Social Status by +1. Can only be taken at character creation. You should have an explanation for why you have inherited or acquired this improved social station already.

MUSICIAN: You are well versed in the popular songs of the Fallows. Add a +2 bonus to Performance checks when playing music to entertain others. You can also apply that bonus to other social checks when playing music, such as Carousing (entertaining a gathering), Charm (singing an ode to someone), or even Intimidation (singing a song that exaggerates your martial prowess).

SILVER TONGUED: When using flattery to get what you want, add a +2 bonus to Charm rolls. Personal threats inspire great eloquence in you; if failing such a check will endanger you, you can spend 1 Fatigue to re-roll.

SNAPPY PATTERN: You can use social skills like Charm and Bluff in the middle of a fight as Free Actions. The Taunt maneuver is also a Free Action for you.

VOICE OF COMMAND (2 Points): As a Focus Action, you can give advice to a nearby ally, granting them a +1 bonus to their next roll. If you have a higher rating at this kind of roll than them, the bonus rises to +2.

OTHER MUNDANE POWERS

ANIMAL FRIEND: You have a natural gift for making friends with unintelligent animals. Small insects and herbivores will be comfortable in your presence (+2 to Nature and Riding rolls with them) and predators will always halt their *first* attack before you can be harmed (after that, their instincts will take over and you'll be fair game). No effect on intelligent animals or spirit-creatures.

APPLIED INTELLIGENCE: You may substitute Cleverness for Agility/Brawn/Perception when calculating your Digging, Medicine and Thievery skills. Adjustments due to Size are not affected.

BLESSING OF CANDUSS: You are known for your methodical and precise manner of handling things. Whenever you take lots of extra time on any skill roll (but not Combat Ratings), you receive an extra +1 bonus.

BLESSING OF DUVAIN: If you spend Focus or take lots of extra time on a Brawn-based skill, you receive an additional +2 bonus. Combat Ratings are not affected.

BLESSING OF ZAKARVUS: For some reason, you are more resistant to the powers of spirits than normal mice. Spirit foes and monsters such as Ghuls and Rusalka are at -2 to affect you with any attacks or mystical effects.

BORN HERO: You start with one extra Hero Point and can hold a maximum of six at one time. If you have the *Unlucky* Flaw, you must buy it off first.

BORN TO THE WILDS: You may substitute Perception for Agility/Brawn when calculating your Riding, Stealth and Swimming skills. Your Size penalties are not affected.

CAT FEET: If you spend Focus, you can halve (round down) any damage or Fatigue lost due to a fall.

COWARD'S FLIGHT: You receive a +2 bonus to your Dodge, Speed and Endurance rolls when trying to outrun any sort of dangerous pursuit. You may also spend Fatigue to re-roll those checks if you fail the first time.

CRAFTSMAN: You have been specially trained in a narrow specialty of the Craft skill, such as weaving or carpentry. You are able to use that skill on a professional level and may well have membership in some guild of fellow craftsmen. You receive a +4 bonus to all attempts to use Craft to manufacture or repair products within your specialty. *This Power can be purchased multiple times but each time you have to choose a different specialty.*

ENDLESS ENDURANCE: You have an extra "Winded" Fatigue level that can only be used for regular physical exertion, not powering magic.

FAST HEALER: You recover faster from injury. Recover 2 extra points of damage from each night's rest and 1 extra from any other sources of healing.

FEARLESS (2 Points): Your Courage rating (if above +0) is *doubled* versus regular fear but not magical fear or anything associated with your Flaws. Your fearless demeanor gives you a +2 bonus when trying to inspire bravery in others. You can spend 1 Fatigue to reroll any Courage check.

FORCE OF PERSONALITY: You may substitute your Cleverness stat for your Agility or Brawn when calculating your Carousing, Intimidation and Performance skills. Adjustments due to Size are not affected.

INEXHAUSTIBLE: When you need to spend Fatigue, you can choose to take 2 points of damage instead.

INTUITION: When faced with a simple choice, you can ask the GM which option you feel better about. They secretly roll 1d6. On a 4-6, they recommend whichever option they consider best. On a 2-3 (or if the options are all roughly equal anyway) they say that you have no particular feeling one way or the other. On a 1, they recommend a bad option. You can only use this once per circumstance.

IRON CONSTITUTION: You take only half damage from poisons/venoms and receive a +4 bonus to any attempts to resist their effects (and to resist alcohol).

KEEN NOSE: You have such a strong sense of smell that you can actually track things by scent over a short distance. If the odor is significantly different from the others in the area (such as the smell of blood or the scent of the only rat in a town of mice), you can make a Tracking check even on ground that normally wouldn't retain tracks.

LIGHT SLEEPER: You automatically and instantly awaken if something happens in your immediate vicinity that would alarm you if you were awake.

NIGHT VISION: You ignore the first 2 points of penalties from poor lighting. You still cannot see in complete darkness, which is often found in underground tunnels.

NIGHT WORKER: Skills like Thievery, Craft, Medicine and Tracking are not penalized for not being able to see what you are working with as long as you can still touch it.

PREHENSILE TAIL: Your tail is more agile than normal. You can wrap it around an object to hold it or even hang upside by it. This can add +2 to many *Acrobatics* rolls.

SCHOLARLY EXPERTISE: You have a deep understanding of a specific field of study chosen when you take this Power. It gives you a +4 to any skill checks made that could be aided by scholarly knowledge of that field. You can also come up with the sort of details that would normally only be available if you were doing research in a library. *Can be purchased multiple times but each time you must choose a different area of expertise.*

SUPERIOR IMMUNE SYSTEM: You never get sick from normal diseases or illnesses and resist magical ones at +4.

SUPERIOR PET: One of your pets is a superior example of its breed and receives a +2 to all of its stats. It is intensely loyal to you and smart enough to act intelligently when you are in danger. If it dies, you must spend at least a month training a new one before it can replace the original. This Power *can* be applied to a mage's Familiar Animal.

SUPERIOR PHYSIQUE: You may substitute Brawn for Agility/Perception when calculating your Acrobatics, Riding and Sailing skills. Adjustments due to Size are not affected.

SURVIVOR: You can withstand extremes that would kill others. You are at +4 to resist environmental effects such as heat or cold and take ½ damage or other malign effects (round down) from them. Your *Wilderness* rolls to survive in the wilds score Critical Successes for every 4 points you win by, rather than the usual 5.

TOUGH AS NAILS: Your Armor Rating is increased by one.

UNSTOPPABLE (2 Points): Whenever you roll a Death test, roll twice and take the better result. You only pass out after failing a Death test.

MAGIC POWERS

There are six basic magical spells available. These are relatively simple enchantments that a talented mage can perform with minimal training. Each must be purchased separately. Each basic spell has a matching skill with the same name. You'll roll that skill when you cast it.

All of the Basic Spells require that the character have a minimum Magic rating of +1. With a Magic rating of zero or less, you are simply incapable of tapping into your personal magical energies and cannot cast spells. See the [Magical Mice](#) section for more details.

If your Magic rating were ever reduced to +0 or below, you would retain the ability to cast spells that you already knew, but could not learn new ones.

THE SIX BASIC SPELLS

COMPEL (2 Points): You can now cast the *Compel* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Compel* enables you to mentally influence the behavior of other creatures.

GUISE (2 Points): You can now cast the *Guise* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Guise* enables you to cloak an object or person's form in an illusionary disguise.

SHAPING (2 Points): You can now cast the *Shaping* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Shaping* enables the mage to study and alter the interior structure of an object by touching it. They can then repair it or sculpt it into a new form with their mind. It can also be used to magically heal others by closing their wounds.

SPARK (2 Points): You can now cast the *Spark* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Spark* enables the mage to conjure light or flame.

TUG (2 Points): You can now cast the *Tug* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Tug* enables the mage to move nearby objects with the power of their mind.

WHISPERS (2 Points): You can now cast the *Whispers* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Whispers* allows the mage to listen to and interact with the spirit world, enabling them to send mental messages to other people or to probe the world around them with magical senses.

HIGH SORCERIES

High Sorceries are especially complex and powerful spells that must be learned one at a time. Each *Sorcery* must be purchased separately and represents an especially potent or elaborate trick that can be performed using one of the six basic spells. You must already possess the requisite basic spell before you can take Sorceries that rely upon it.

See each magical art section for a list of available High Sorceries that use that basic spell. Most High Sorceries cost either 1 or 2 Points to learn and are *HARD* (14) to cast.

All of the High Sorceries require that the character already possess the corresponding Basic Spell above. Without that basic knowledge, these advanced techniques are impossible to learn or cast.

Beginning characters can only take High Sorceries with special permission from the GM! They are normally something that you must seek out in play.

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OTHER MAGICAL POWERS

These Powers do not require that the character have a high Magic rating, but are associated with your Magic trait or spell-casting in some fashion.

BLESSING OF MAGELLIAN: When you spend Focus or take lots of extra time on a Magic-based skill roll (including all spells), you receive an additional +1 bonus.

CONCENTRATION: You no longer suffer a -2 penalty for being active and moving around while casting.

COUNTER-SPELL: When you cast a spell to try and block or undo another spell, you receive a +4 bonus to your roll.

DEEP DREAMER: Whenever you sleep in an area where something significant has happened or is about to happen, the GM can make a Sixth Sense roll for you. If successful, you will dream about whatever it is that makes the area unusual or important. If you are in danger, you will probably wake up out of a nightmare that gives you at least some idea of what form the danger takes.

This power sometimes takes the form of a dead relative's shade speaking to you from beyond and imparting brief messages and warnings before vanishing again.

EYES UPON YOU: You may roll Sixth Sense vs TYPICAL difficulty to tell whether you are being watched, even if your observer is not hostile and no magic is involved.

MAGICAL RESERVES: You possess an extra "Winded" Fatigue level which can only be spent on spells. This Power can be taken up to 3 times.

MAGICAL TALENT: Pick one of the 6 Basic Spells when you take this power. When casting spells of that type, you are considered to score a Critical Success for every 4 points that you beat the target number by, rather than 5. This Power can be taken once per Basic Spell.

MYSTIC CHANNEL: Ignore the first 3 points of penalties from maintaining other spells whenever you cast new ones.

NATURAL LINK: You have a mystical connection to another person (chosen at the time that you take this Power) that links you to them. You instantly know when they are wounded or in particular emotional distress and can always sense the direction in which they lie. If you use the *Whispers* art to communicate with them, your spell-casting check is at +2. They have to purchase this power for you as well, or else the connection is just one-way.

PERFECT ENERGY FLOW: When you roll a Critical Success on a spell-casting check, you may choose to reduce the Fatigue cost by one instead of the normal benefit.

SUPERIOR MAGIC RESISTANCE: Your magical energies are bound up so tightly that you are very resistant to magic. Your Magic Resistance is increased by 4. Even if you are *trying* not to resist or the spell is not resisted, the caster still suffers a -2 penalty to their roll. *You can never learn to cast spells even if your Magic rating is above zero.*

SUPERIOR RITUALS: When you have time to perform a full-fledged ritual with chanting and mystic diagrams, you receive a further +2 bonus to cast spells.

UNLIMITED EFFORT: You can always spend Fatigue to boost a spell even if you have already succeeded in casting it. Yes, this can enable you to turn a regular success into a critical success or squeeze past a foe's resistance roll.

FLAWS

Flaws are basically Powers with a negative point cost. Taking Flaws allows you to afford more Powers but will weaken or restrict your character in some fashion. Starting characters are allowed to take up to 3 different Flaws to add to their starting Power points.

Some Flaws are difficult to enforce with game rules and instead require you to role-play them properly. If you don't act out your Flaw appropriately, your GM may require you to buy it off or spend a Hero Point to ignore it temporarily.

ADDICTED TO THELARINE (-1 Point, requires Social Status of Upper Class or better): You are addicted to the drug Thelarine. You start each day with 1 point of Fatigue that can only be recovered with a dose of Thelarine. See the *Esoteric Equipment* section. Mice may be addicted to other drugs as well, at GM option.

ALLERGIES (-1 Point): During the Spring and Summer months, you suffer from regular sniffles and sneezes whenever you're in the outdoors. You are at -4 to Stealth when trying to move through a field of flowers or other sources of pollen.

BAD REPUTATION (-1 Point): You have managed to establish a widely known reputation for yourself due to some prior exploit... and it's not a flattering one. You should define the exact nature of what you did and what people have heard about you but it has to regularly cause problems for you (like a -2 to certain social skill checks with anyone who has heard of you) or it's not a true Flaw.

BLIND (-4 Points or -2 Points if you have the Whispers Magical Art): You are blind and must rely on your other senses to get by. Against a sighted foe in the light, you are at -2 to attack and defend in melee and -4 with thrown or ranged weapons. All range penalties are *quadrupled*. You may suffer further -2 or -4 penalties for other actions that would be particularly difficult in the dark. You can only read by tracing your fingers over the letters; fortunately, at this level of technology, it's usually possible to feel the lumpy ink on the page. This Flaw cannot normally be bought off.

If you possess the Magical Art of *Whispers*, then you can use the *See Without Sight* spell to see your surroundings without using your eyes. But you do have to cast and then maintain a Small Magick at all times to get that benefit and you are still completely blind to objects beyond the range of your spell.

Followers of the god Zakarvus consider blindness to be a sacred state and treat the blind with especial reverence. Fanatics sometimes blind themselves deliberately.

COARSE (-1 Point): Your manners are awful for a person of your social standing. You are at -2 to all friendly social skills with people who have a Social Status as high or higher than your own. There is no penalty for dealing with people with a *lower* Social Status. You cannot take the *Effete* Flaw.

COWARD (-1 Point): You are quite reluctant to engage in any unnecessary activity which would put your life in danger. You'll flee from danger whenever reasonable. You cannot spend Focus or Hero Points to aid attack rolls or Courage rolls unless you are cornered.

CURIOUS (-1 Point): You just can't bring yourself to ignore a mystery. You're always poking your nose into dangerous situations just to see what's there.

DARK SECRET (-1 Point): You have a difficult-to-conceal dark secret which will greatly impact your life if it ever gets out. You may be wanted for a terrible crime (and may or may not have committed it), have stolen something valuable or otherwise be wanted by the authorities. Among white mice, a common Dark Secret is that their fur isn't entirely white but has patches of other colors hidden beneath their clothes. If the secret comes out, the character will generally acquire not only the *Low Social Standing* Flaw, but additional retribution from those who feel shocked and betrayed at this revelation.

Note that if there isn't an easy way in which your Dark Secret can be revealed then it doesn't qualify as a Flaw at all, but is instead just a part of their character background. Expect your GM to occasionally set up situation in which you have to think fast to avoid your secret being exposed.

DEBT-RIDDEN (-1 Point): Your Social Status is reduced by 2 for determining what sort of things you can afford. Any time that you acquire a large amount of cash, you must either conceal it or use it to pay off a portion of your debt. If you get caught keeping money yourself, you can be jailed or executed for it.

DRUNKARD (-1 Point): You have a notable weakness for wine, beer and revelry of all sorts. You may have to roll Leadership to *avoid* indulging yourself when the opportunity beckons.

DUTY (-1 Point): You have a sense of loyalty and duty to a person or group who doesn't really give you anything back in return (for a more equitable arrangement, see the *Membership* Trait). This may entail you risking your life to protect them or running errands on their behalf.

EERIE (-1 Point): For one reason or another, you spook other people. You are at -1 to all friendly social skill checks.

EFFETE (-1 Point, requires Social Status of Upper Class or better): You are extremely sensitive to social niceties and take them quite seriously. You are at -2 to all friendly social skills with people who have a social status equal or below your own. You cannot take the *Coarse* Flaw.

FORSAKEN (-2 Points, requires a maximum of Cleverness 0 and Magic -1): Your innate magic is so weak that you are partially feral. You tend to drop back to instinctive, animal-like behaviors under stress. Any children that you have may be completely mindless. -1 to Cleverness, Magic and Social Status, but Brawn is increased by +1. This Flaw cannot normally be bought off.

GREEDY (-1 Point): You are notoriously greedy. You may have to roll Leadership to pass up on treasure, even if it may be cursed or trapped.

GRIM (-1 Point): You always seems to be in a dark, grim mood. -2 to most Charm and Performance checks and any other skill tests that involve being outgoing. You have trouble making friends.

HAUNTED (-1 Point, requires Magic 1+): In times of stress, you work magic in your sleep. This can start small fires nearby, hurl small objects around like a poltergeist, make nightmares visibly manifest or other disturbing magical effects. This Flaw is common among royal mouse children, but most of them quickly outgrow it.

HONORABLE (-1 Point): You always keep your word and will not lie except in dire circumstances (usually when *other* lives are at stake, not your own). You may only use unscrupulous tactics like ambush against foes that would do the same to you if they could.

Take the *Good Reputation* Power if you want your character to be well-known for their honorable behavior already.

ILLITERATE (-1 Point): While the *typical* inhabitant of Hyperborea is functionally illiterate, the game assumes that typical PCs have at least some ability to read and write. If you take this flaw, then you lack even that. If you want to learn to read in play, you must first buy off this Flaw.

Illiterate is most appropriate for characters with a Social Status of Commoner (+0) or below, but even a member of the upper classes may take it.

LOW SOCIAL STANDING (-1 Point): Your social status has been damaged by some scandal, crime, unpaid debts or bad reputation which you should explain in your background. Your Social Status is reduced by 1.

MAIMED (-1 Point): You are missing an arm (-2 to climbing and *Feats of Strength* rolls and cannot use a two-handed weapon, weapon and shield or anything similar), a leg (-1 to Dodge and attempts to jump or run) or your tail (-2 to all Acrobatics rolls). This Flaw normally cannot be bought off.

NON-COMBATANT (-1 Point): Unlike the typical PC, your combat skills are not yet honed. Your Melee, Ranged and Grab/Throw Combat Ratings are all reduced by 1.

PHOBIA (-1 Point): You have an unnatural fear of something (probably from a traumatic encounter in your past). You must make Courage checks to face it. If the situation would normally call for a Courage check, you have to spend a Hero Point to not automatically fail.

POOR VISION (-1 Point): You may be missing an eye or just be extremely nearsighted, but your ability to see things at long distances is much worse than normal. You suffer a -2 to see things at medium ranges and -4 at long; these penalties apply to your ranged attacks as well, increasing the normal range penalty accordingly.

PROTECTOR OF THE INNOCENT (-1 Point): You may be scum in other ways, but you won't allow an innocent to perish or suffer violence if it is in your power to save them.

PROUD (-1 Point): You are especially proud of your heritage and/or best abilities and are extremely sensitive to any slight or challenge. Turning back from one would just eat you up inside. Proud characters tend to be very vulnerable to bets, dares and challenges.

SHELTERED UPBRINGING (-1 Point, requires Social Status of at least +2): Very common among royal mice, your upbringing was so sheltered that you have never really had to do things for yourself. You are at -4 when performing any kind of menial labor or disgusting task.

SICKLY (-1 Point): You have one fewer Fatigue level than normal. Your first level of Fatigue is always considered to be expended and cannot be recovered by rest. A royal mouse PC with this Flaw only has 3 levels of Fatigue.

SOFT-HEARTED (-1 Point): You are easily moved by the suffering of others. For you, mercy and compassion is a compulsion rather than an option. If someone might be a good person, you'll want to help them out if you can.

SPENDTHRIFT (-1 Point): You may be as greedy as they come when trying to *acquire* money, but once you have it you spend it like there's no tomorrow. Whenever you have an opportunity to blow money on something frivolous, you tend to take it. You cannot put any XP towards improving your Social Status until after you have bought off this Flaw.

SUPERSTITIOUS (-1 Point): You have a natural dread of spirits, places of death and ill-omens. You'll never strike a priest or desecrate a sacred place and will feel uncomfortable just entering ancient ruins. If forced to roll Courage to deal with something frightening that *also* triggers your Superstitious Flaw, you'll be at -2 to the roll.

UNLUCKY (-1 Point): You start with only 2 Hero Points and can only hold a maximum of 4 at a time.

WANTED (-1 Point): You are wanted for crimes in at least one kingdom and are famous enough that people from there are liable to recognize you and regard you with hostility. There are no formal extradition treaties in the Falls- the normal procedure if you capture a wanted criminal is to drag them to where the reward is, so you shouldn't feel safe anywhere in the Falls.

WRATHFUL (-1 Point): You are extremely quick to anger and turn to violence to solve your problems. This can be a serious issue when the problem is something like a shopkeeper in a major city being rude to you; your allies may have to drag you off of him before you end up wanted for murder.

ZEALOT (-1 Point): You are obsessed with a particular religion, nationality or other cause (chosen when you take this Flaw). You miss no opportunity to promote that cause and may give it a bad name through your fanaticism. The most common zealotry is fanatical devotion to a particular one of the First Ones, but you might also be feverishly devoted to your homeland or even a political philosophy.



The most powerful character ever?

BALANCED TRAITS

Balanced Traits are ones which are regarded as neither Powers nor Flaws but a combination of both. Each Balanced Trait has both its positive and negative aspects, which hopefully cancel out. In general, a character should only take a single Balanced Trait, but the GM can allow more if they fit the character's concept well.

DOOMED

If you take a *Doom*, then someone has used magic to reveal the way you are fated to die. This is invariably violent and often horrific... if you received a *pleasant* foretelling, it wouldn't be much of a doom, would it?

However, this also means that you know how you are supposed to die. Whenever you fail a roll that results in your character's death or imminent death, you can re-roll it once as though you had spent a Hero Point, because you know that you are not fated to die *this* way. Take the better of the two rolls as your result.

Unfortunately, this knowledge has its price. If you are in a situation where your Doom could come true, then you can only acquire Focus by spending Fatigue and cannot spend Hero Points at all. Furthermore, the odds of you encountering your *Doom* will increase over time... the longer you go without any risk of it, the more contrived the circumstances that can occur to drive you towards it.

Example: *Valtrun is doomed to be devoured by shrews. If he were to fail a roll to escape from a slaving weasel, he could request a re-roll on the grounds that this violates his predicted destiny. On the other hand, Valtrun will tend to encounter hostile shrews more often than most characters and may find them in strange and unexpected places.*

If you *do* manage to perish in a different fashion, well... congratulations! You managed to cheat fate. Sort of.

Not all Dooms are really suitable for a game of **Hyperborean Mice**. Consider carefully before allowing a character to take an overly specific Doom, such as perishing in a specific place or at the hands of a specific foe. Avoid allowing silly ones or ones that don't provide opportunities for adventure... choking to death on one's food simply isn't interesting enough to be allowed.

As a general rule, as soon as it becomes clear that the character is in no actual danger of falling prey to their Doom (such as a character foretold to perish in the dreaded *Citadel of the Titans* who simply avoids that part of the Fallows entirely), they stop being able to use the benefits of this trait until the situation changes.

Also, remember that when you take a Doom, you are granting the GM the right to work your Doom into the plot-line, even if by contrived circumstances. A character doomed to perish in the Citadel of the Titans who avoids it too strenuously might find themselves captured and drafted into service by a group that intends to head there at once!

MINSTREL

A minstrel is a traveling musician who entertains crowds with their own tunes as well as the traditional songs and ancient ballads of the Fallows. A mouse who follows this calling can expect hospitality almost anywhere, but is expected to entertain his or her hosts with music and song. There are other traveling performers who earn their living by entertaining crowds, but minstrels are the most respected and welcome.

A good performer may receive command performances... literally, where a noblemouse has *commanded* that the minstrel come and perform for them. Such an invitation cannot be refused without endangering a minstrel's special status in the Fallows (and possibly their life, depending upon the nobleman in question). Those who impress their patron often gain wealth and prestige; those who fall short suffer disgrace at the very least.

Being a minstrel requires a Perform skill of +3 or higher. While most are independent, sometimes they are recruited by some organization to act as a representative or spy, but this is unusual and rarely lasts longer than a single mission.

SEER

You are more in tune with the spirit world than most mice. For you, a Critical Success with the *Sixth Sense* skill triggers not vague sensations of danger or magical phenomena, but full-fledged visions and hallucinations. This gives you much more detailed information than normal, but also leaves you somewhat impaired until the vision ends.



You suffer a -1 penalty to other actions for a mild vision such as seeing a ghost, -2 for a seriously distracting one like a wild battle around you and -4 for nightmare visions of death and horror. Particularly intense visions may even cause convulsions and inflict 1d3 Fatigue as well.

If you devote full concentration to it and spend 1 Fatigue, you can also turn a regular success at a *Sixth Sense* roll into a Critical Success, thus triggering a vision. In the grip of such, seers often babble nonsense or fall in a faint and are unable to protect themselves until after the vision ends.

Mice with this trait often take the *Deep Dreamer* Magical Power as well, so that this mystical sensitivity extends even to their dreams. *Whispers* magic can often duplicate the effects of entering a prophetic trance, but such visions never occur spontaneously, as they do for seers.

There are a number of professional seers in the Fallows. They tend to ally themselves with one of the local temples and prophecy in the name of that deity. Since they are often forced to spend Fatigue in order to trigger a vision (or perhaps multiple visions, if the applicant demands more detail and can pay the fee), it can be exhausting work.

MEMBERSHIP

A character who is a *member* of a special organization receives both benefits and hindrances from it. They are expected to live up to the code of behavior expected by that group and to fulfill their responsibilities to it. They can call upon the group's resources, but they'll also be asked to do (or *not* do) specific things, which can be a major source of adventures or a big fat pain, depending on exactly how things go.

This is distinguished from the *Duty* flaw in that the membership carries with it advantages that make up for the responsibilities involved. The most common benefit is support from fellow members.

In general, a PC can only have one membership at a time. Almost all large, formal organizations are picky about their members and want to ensure that you don't have any conflicting goals. Below are listed a selection of the most common organizations that PCs might choose to be members of. This includes all of the major churches of the valley, but there are some others, too.

CHURCHES OF THE FIRST ONES

Membership in a church means more than merely tithing and attending worship; it means being an actual priest or other agent of the church itself. Exactly what an agent of the church might be expected to *do* varies according to the church in question.

In addition to normal priests, each church offers a number of more exotic jobs. Some examples are given below. These kind of jobs are not always restricted to members of the church; PCs could well be hired to undertake missions of this sort as mercenaries.

CANDUSS (goddess of finance): Agents of the church often act as couriers for important documents or deliveries of funds. These runners are often trusted with large amounts of money and so are a regular target for the criminal element.

Another common function is dealing with those who default on loans or hunting down those who have stolen from the church. The church of Canduss takes theft very seriously.

DUVAIN (god of strength): Agents of the church are expected to defend Duvain's Weal (and particularly the temples therein) from any threat or danger. They are also expected to do a lot of charitable work in the area, helping repair homes, rebuild bridges or even harvesting crops.

The church of Duvain is not as wealthy as the other major churches, but in Duvain's Weal they still possess a large amount of influence and many members. Church agents generally have regular careers as well, to pay the bills, but they form a social network where members assist those in need with little or no additional compensation.

JANDARA (goddess of beauty): Maidens of Summer are often sent to act as political emissaries to important people that the church wishes to influence. Others may be sent along as their bodyguards.

The church also employs many artisans to work on and repair their temples and shrines, although this sort of work is usually not appropriate for player characters.

LUCIEL (ruler of the gods): The temple's Inquisitors regularly check up on the other temples to make sure that they are not agitating the populace against the church of Luciel or the social order in general. It is their duty to make sure that any religious laws laid down by the High Priest of Luciel are followed by the other temples. They also root out heretics and banned cults, especially those that worship one of the dark gods.

As the most powerful church, even minor agents have a lot of power and influence behind them. Offending even a minor functionary can result in increased attention from the Inquisitors, so wise mice treat them with especial care.

The Inquisition always needs a few good bodyguards for its agents, lest some minor culprit decide that the easiest way out of their difficulties is for the Inquisitor in question to have a sudden "accident" and fail to report back.

LUMIERRE (queen of swords): Agents of the church are expected to defend her followers, her temples and to protect the empire from any threats, internal or external.

The church of Lumierre employs a number of volunteer warriors (usually female) to protect its members and its temples. Such positions are taken by those who truly believe in the cause, rather than those seeking money; the pay is quite poor and barely covers expenses. Instead, it is seen as a sacred charge from the goddess herself.

MAGELLIAN (god of knowledge): Those priests who have joined the order of *Magellan's Cloak* wander the Fallows seeking out new knowledge and return periodically to record it in the temple archives.

Cloaks can be assigned bodyguards or assistants if the church deems it necessary, but most hire their own rather than depending upon the whims of church functionaries. Some will also take along scribes and personal assistants to better record their discoveries.

Magellan's Cloaks vary quite widely in their style. Some produce only matter-of-fact, professionally sparse but accurate reports, while others regard the order as an opportunity for them to write novels and tales. A few are even given to rampant embellishments and outright lies, knowing that the church rarely has the opportunity to actually verify the reports that they receive.

ZAKARVUS (god of death): Agents of Zakarvus commonly perform important funerals, carry the remains of important personages who died away from home back to their family resting place or act as bodyguards to those who do. Agents of lower rank may handle local funerals for a region, providing the requisite rituals in return for small donations. When a commoner's family chooses to spend the funds for a proper funeral, it is usually performed by one of these minor functionaries.

Characters may also find employment acting as personal assistants to priests, especially those who are truly blind.

QUICKPAW (the trickster): The closest thing that *Quickpaw* has to a formal church are criminal organizations such as the *Gleaners of Haven* or the *Sons of Quickpaw* in Dusar. The nature of their deity causes his worshippers to stick to small, localized groups, as worship of Quickpaw is frowned on in many places and banned in most others.

Any individual can take responsibility for one of its scattered, hidden shrines and effectively become a priest of Quickpaw, but there isn't any formal church to join.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

THE GLEANERS: The *Gleaners* are the "Thieves' Guild" of the city of Haven. Many thieves and burglars are members. Membership is identified through special code phrases and secret signs. PCs who are Gleaners will be expected to harbor and protect any fellow criminals who need help and to obey the commands of the bosses of the guild. Those who become too disobedient may find themselves marked for death by the dreaded *Black Paw*.

While the Gleaners themselves are concentrated in Haven, former Gleaners can be found in other cities, sometimes even running small crime syndicates of their own. It is not possible to retire from the Gleaners... once you become a member, they expect you to consider yourself one for life.

Beyond that, however, there are few rules. So long as a member regularly tithes an appropriate portion of their income (legal or otherwise) to the guild bosses, the Gleaners don't really care what you do for a living.

THE BLACK PAW: The dreaded *Black Paw* are the "Assassins' Guild" of the city of Haven. A character who chooses to be a member of this organization probably won't know much more than the general public does. The Paw is organized into a series of small cells that know how to contact their immediate supervisor, but not much more. A number of carefully memorized symbols and phrases are used to identify valid assignments. Assassins who display a lack of discipline or who let slip the secrets of the guild quickly become the next target for elimination.

Their duties largely consist of eliminating the enemies of the Gleaners, which includes any Gleaners whose lips have proved loose with the secrets of the guild. They also "discourage" independent thieves and robbers from cutting into the Gleaners' own territories.

IMPERIAL CAVALRY: This elite military organization is a troop of pigeon riders who act as the empire of Muscala's most elite fighting force. The riders are themselves all white mice and the officers are all royals. Other races are limited to merely tending the animals or assisting the cavalrymen. The Imperial Cavalry are famed for their mystical and military might, but they are most commonly used as scouts or messengers for the main army.

Their headquarters is the Aviary attached to the Imperial Palace itself and their leaders answer only to the Emperor. Unfortunately, because their activities are quite restricted, Imperial Cavalry generally aren't suitable as player characters unless all of the PCs are members.

IMPERIAL MESSENGERS: A much less elite group than the Imperial Cavalry but probably more important overall, the Imperial Messengers were originally created to deliver messages throughout the empire. However, their current leader, Prince Yulin, has turned the inner core of the messengers into a spy network that brings him news from all over the Fallows.

By law, the lesser kingdoms cannot restrict or interfere with messengers on imperial business (at least not without raising Muscala's ire), which makes them excellent spies. Imperial Messengers carry sealed documents and special papers that mark them as such. In the case where such documents are being used by outsiders to pass themselves off as members, Prince Yulin will go to great lengths to see the documents returned and the perpetrators slain.

GUILDSMEN: Professional artisans often organize themselves into loose guilds in order to exchange knowledge and increase their political influence. Any guild member can expect a friendly reception from other members and most non-members who share the same career. On the other hand, they are expected to extend that courtesy to other members as well.

Furthermore, each guildsmouse is expected to eventually take on and train at least one apprentice so that their skills can be passed on to the next generation. Those who neglect this facet will find themselves under pressure from their peers to rectify this lack as soon as possible.

Full membership generally requires a Craft or Engineering skill total of at least +6. Reaching the rank of master requires at least one serious demonstration of your skill, known as your masterpiece. The piece is judged by the current guildsmasters and, if they find it worthy, you join their number. If not, you can try again in a year.

Guilds are often quite protective of their trade secrets. Rival organizations are to be forced out of business and those who pry into the guild's secret techniques may well be beaten or murdered if caught.

MERCENARY BANDS: Mercenary warriors often form into small guilds of their own. These organizations lie somewhere between military units and regular guilds. When their leaders accept a contract to fight on someone's behalf, all of the members are expected to show up with weapons and armor ready or have a good reason why not.

Rival mercenary guilds *generally* extend professional courtesy to each other. If a member is captured by another guild, it's expected that they will be released unharmed, but will return home rather than attempting to rejoin their unit. Occasionally vicious feuds erupt between rivals instead, but this is the exception instead of the rule. True mercenaries try not to take their battles personally.

Mercenary bands are one of the few organizations that will take wild rats without prejudice; their great strength and fierce natures make them a valuable addition to any fighting group.

Unfortunately for these groups, the use of mercenaries is tightly regulated by law and treaty. Individual lords are prohibited from hiring more than a handful of mercenaries without the permission of a higher ranking noble, lest they build up a large army and use it to stage a coup. Each nation has rules for how many mercenaries may be employed at once, depending upon the person's rank. Even kings can't employ too many, lest the Emperor start to suspect them of rebellion.

Thus, mercenary groups are usually hired for short-term missions and their employer will often wish to keep their own identity secret. Such groups had best be secretly working for the lord of the area that they're operating in if they don't want to be jailed or executed for their actions.

ROYAL AGENTS: While Imperial agents have the most power and prestige, the lesser kings employ their own forces as well. In particular, the White Lords of Lakeshore, Grennendell and Jand employ a lot of spies, messengers, tax collectors and soldiers.

The rulers of Duvain's Weal and Dugar have their own agents as well, but due to their relative poverty employ only a small number, many of whom are relatives of the royal family.

SKILLS

AGILITY SKILLS

ACROBATICS*: Jumping, climbing and general balance. Can also be rolled to reduce falling damage.

CONTORTIONIST*: Squeezing through small openings, escaping bonds, and such. Often important for thieves.

PERFORMANCE: Dancing, juggling and similar displays of grace and poise designed to entertain onlookers.

RIDING: Controlling and staying on a mount. Essential if you ever want to ride a bird. Largely useless for rats unless you work for a nobleman who owns a riding rabbit.

SPEED: Putting on bursts of speed to outrace foes, grab objects before someone else or act first in combat.

STEALTH*: Moving quickly and quietly without attracting unwanted attention as well as picking good hiding spots.

THIEVERY*: Sleight of hand, lock-picking, pick-pocketing and similar acts that require quick and dexterous fingers.

**Subtract twice your Size rating from these skills.*

BRAWN SKILLS

CAROUSING: Resisting the malign effects of alcohol or other mind-altering drugs. Also good for making friends at drunken revels and other festivals without overdoing it.

DIGGING*: Rapidly digging out burrows with your claws. Looked down upon as something only feral rodents do, but a nice ability to have at times.

ENDURANCE*: Used for long-distance travel, engaging in exhausting labor or staying alert without sleep.

FEATS OF STRENGTH*: Used when lifting very heavy objects or trying to pin a foe with sheer muscle power.

INTIMIDATION*: Threatening others and cowing foes.

SWIMMING: Ability to swim and deal with particularly rough water. Note that it can be used without any special training; all of the playable races can instinctively swim.

**Add twice your Size rating to these skills.*

CLEVERNESS SKILLS

BLUFF: Pretending to be something you're not. Often opposed by Insight.

CHARM: Making friends and influencing people in a friendly fashion. Also covers flattery and seduction.

COMMON LORE: Modern kingdoms and their laws and customs as well as general knowledge of the world.

CRAFT: Sculpting, carpentry, weaving and other crafts.

ENGINEERING: General knowledge of mechanisms, locks, traps, construction and architecture.

ESOTERIC LORE: Knowledge of alchemy, legends, history, theology, magic and metaphysics.

NEGOTIATION: Hagglng, bargaining, debating and other struggles for control of a social situation.

PERCEPTION SKILLS

ALERTNESS: Noticing or spotting specific details using any of your senses. Often opposed by Stealth or Thievery.

INSIGHT: Appraising someone's hidden emotions or motivations. Often opposed by Bluff.

MEDICINE: Diagnosing and treating illnesses and injuries.

SAILING: Skill at the various tasks involved in running a ship, navigating waters, maintaining riggings, and such.

STREETWISE: Finding things in a city or town, including illegal services. Also covers valuing and selling goods.

TRACKING: Finding and following tracks. Opposed by Stealth over short distances or Wilderness over long ones. Often used to hunt for prey in the wilds.

WILDERNESS: Moving through the wilderness quickly, avoiding leaving tracks, and finding food and shelter. It also covers general knowledge about the habits and locations of animals and plants.

MAGIC SKILLS

SIXTH SENSE: Your ability to sense impending danger or weird magical effects in your vicinity. Overwhelming danger or particularly powerful magic may prompt the GM to call for a roll, but you can also request one if you want to spend a little while trying to sense lesser threats or magics in your vicinity. The weaker or more subtle the source, the harder the skill check will be.

SPELL SKILLS (MAGIC)

Spells are special Magic-based skills that require you to purchase a matching Magical Power before using or improving them. They cannot be used at all by characters without the appropriate Power.

COMPEL SPELL*: Magic that mentally influences the behavior of others. It can alter someone's mood, blast them with an overwhelming surge of emotion or make them hesitate in fear.

GUISE SPELL*: Magic that conceals and disguises things. It can prevent others from noticing things, cause an object to be mistaken for something else or send an illusion of a horrible predator rushing at your foes.

SHAPING SPELL*: Magic that can reshape or repair objects by touch. Often used to heal wounds, but it can also shatter bones. It cannot be used on targets outside of arm's reach.

SPARK SPELL*: Magic that conjures fire or light. This can set a foe on fire or dazzle them with a burst of bright light.

TUG SPELL*: Magic that moves objects around without touching them. It can also animate flexible objects such as ropes or dolls. Referred to as "Tug" because it's very difficult to move an object with finer control than just tugging on it.

WHISPERS SPELL*: Magic that works through the spirit world. It can send mental messages, detect creatures in your vicinity, peer through an area without needing sight or even predict the future. Mages who specialize in it are often looked upon with suspicion, because it can also be used to bargain with demons or dark gods.

MILITANT MICE

COMBAT RATINGS

Each character starts with six Combat Ratings. These six special skills cannot be increased at character creation without special permission, but can be improved during play by spending XP on them. Each one depends on two separate stats instead of just one and costs twice as much to increase as a normal skill.

The Combat Ratings are balanced so that each possible pair of stats (other than Magic) applies to one aspect of fighting. How you distributed your stats will determine which areas you are good in, and which you should avoid.

MELEE COMBAT (AGILITY+BRAWN): Skill at fighting at close range, whether armed or unarmed, but not wrestling. Covers both attacking and parrying, as well as blocking with a shield. Note that dodging out of the way of an attack is covered by your Dodge rating. Melee is the strength of agile and brawny characters.

GRAB/THROW (BRAWN+PERCEPTION): Skill at hitting a desired location with a hurled item (whether striking a foe with a thrown weapon or tossing an item to an ally) or catching hurled items. Also covers grabbing and throwing foes when wrestling (and can be substituted for Melee Combat when defending against attempted grabs with your bare hands), although pinning a foe is covered under the *Feats of Strength* skill.

Large but not agile creatures can often compensate for their lack of agility by finding a heavy object to throw at an opponent. Thrown weapons can generally only be dodged.

RANGED COMBAT (AGILITY+PERCEPTION): Your skill at using bows, crossbows or similar ranged weapons where a missile is hurled at a foe indirectly rather than by hand. This is a somewhat limited skill, but the increased range and the ability to deal damage from a safe distance makes it a very powerful ability to have.

DODGE (AGILITY+CLEVERNESS): Throwing yourself out of the way of oncoming attacks, particularly ones that are so powerful that they cannot be blocked or parried. Note that wearing armor will penalize this Combat Rating.

COURAGE (BRAWN+CLEVERNESS): Ability to resist fear and pain. You may be called upon to roll it to avoid panicking if you are attacked by a particularly large predator or faced with a magical horror. Yes, larger and stronger characters tend to be braver than people who grew up being small and fragile.

LEADERSHIP (CLEVERNESS+PERCEPTION): Skill at getting others to follow your lead and inspiring them to action. Also used to formulate effective combat tactics. It is often rolled to resist magical effects that attempt to override or influence your judgment.

MAGIC AND COMBAT RATINGS

When a Combat Rating has to be rolled to resist a magical effect, the character's Magic Resistance trait will be added to the roll, exactly the same way that it would be if the character were rolling a regular skill to resist a spell. In this way, it can be said that your Magic trait applies to all of the Combat Ratings, but only under special circumstances.

BASIC COMBAT PROCEDURE

INITIATIVE

Everyone rolls their Speed skill and then acts in that order. If a group is surprised by another group, they generally lose their first action automatically.

On your turn, you can take a single Primary Action and one or more free actions. A *Continued Primary Action* is one that continues in some fashion until you perform a different Primary Action. A *Focus Action* is a Primary Action that can be performed as a Free Action if you expend Focus on it.

EXAMPLE PRIMARY COMBAT ACTIONS:

- Acquire Focus
- Make an attack (melee, thrown or ranged)
- Use a special maneuver
- Stand up (if prone or you were knocked down)
- Cast a spell
- Use a social skill on someone (like Charm to try and convince them not to attack you)
- Draw a weapon
- Recover from being stunned
- Load or fire a crossbow
- Load and fire a bow
- Run at full speed (double speed if you drop all items and scurry on all fours)

EXAMPLE FREE COMBAT ACTIONS:

- Move around a few paces
- Say a couple of short sentences
- Drop a weapon
- Drop prone

MELEE ATTACK PROCEDURE

The current character rolls their Melee skill while their chosen target (who must be within the weapon's reach) rolls either Melee (to parry) or Dodge (to avoid the attack).

After the attack is rolled, the attacker and/or defender might choose to spend Focus to add +1 to their roll. If both do so, they both expend Focus and the roll is unchanged.

On Tied attack rolls, the attacker will get to make a second attack (see the *Attack Results* section).

THROWN WEAPON PROCEDURE

Thrown weapons use the following adjustments:

The attacker uses their Throwing rating instead of Melee. If the defender chooses to parry, they do so at -4 unless they have a shield. On a Tie, the attacker hits for ½ normal damage (round up) instead of making a follow-up attack.

RANGED WEAPON PROCEDURE

Ranged weapons (like bows and crossbows) use similar rules, but with the following adjustments:

The attacker rolls their Ranged skill while the target rolls Dodge. They can only use Parry if equipped with a shield. On a Tie, the attacker hits for ½ normal damage (round up) instead of making a follow-up attack.

COMMON COMBAT MODIFIERS

MELEE ATTACK MODIFIERS:

- Making an extra attack: -4 to both rolls
- Fighting in the dark: -2 to -4, depending on the amount of light available and what other indications of their position there are.
- You are stunned: -2
- You are lying prone: -4

PARRY MODIFIERS:

- Trying to parry a large weapon without a weapon or shield of your own: -4
- Trying to parry a small weapon (like a knife) without a weapon or shield of your own: -2
- Trying to parry a large weapon with a ranged weapon like a bow or crossbow: -2
- Trying to parry with one hand while attempting to grab that foe with the other: -2
- Huge foes: if a Foe is Size 4+, subtract their Size minus yours from any attempt to parry. The more a foe out-masses you, the more difficult it is to parry their blows.
- Devoting your full attention to defense: +1
- Using a shield instead of a weapon to defend: +1
- You are caught completely off guard: -4
- You are lying prone: -2
- You are stunned: -2
- Surrounded by multiple foes working together: -1 per foe after the first (max -4)

DODGE MODIFIERS:

- Rough ground: -2
- No room to retreat: -2
- Trying to use a ranged weapon like a bow or crossbow and still dodging a melee attack: -2
- Trying to grab the same foe whose attacks you are dodging: -2
- You are caught completely off guard: -4
- You are lying prone and are attacked in melee: -2
- You are stunned: -2
- Surrounded by multiple foes working together: -1 per foe after the first (max -4)

THROWN / RANGED ATTACK MODIFIERS:

- Target's Size: added to the attack roll
- Target is under cover: -2 to Impossible
- Target is at long range: -2
- Target is at extreme range: -4
- Trying to hit a target in the dark: -2 to -6, depending on the amount of light available and what other indications of their position there are.

RANGED ATTACK ONLY MODIFIERS:

- Trying to shoot while running or dodging/parrying: -2
- You are lying prone or braced in some fashion: +2

ATTACK RESULTS

Once the attacker and defender have both rolled their opposed rolls, compare them to determine how well the attacker performed.

CRITICAL SUCCESS or Better: As for Success, below, but for every 5 points that the attacker wins by, they get to claim one *Combat Bonus* for their blow. These additional benefits can inflict extra damage, stun foes or otherwise aid you. Which Bonuses you can claim depends on what weapon you are wielding. See the [Combat Bonuses](#) section.

SUCCESS: The target takes appropriate damage (varies by weapon, see page 42), minus Armor Rating.

TIE: On a Tie, your first melee attack misses, but the attacker is allowed to make a second, follow-up attack immediately. The defender *must* use a different defense than the previous one... if they parried the original attack, they must now *dodge* or vice versa.

If you are attacking with a thrown or missile weapon, Ties have a different effect. Instead of getting to make a follow-up attack, you instead hit the target for ½ normal damage (round up).

FAILURE: The attack misses. There is no effect.

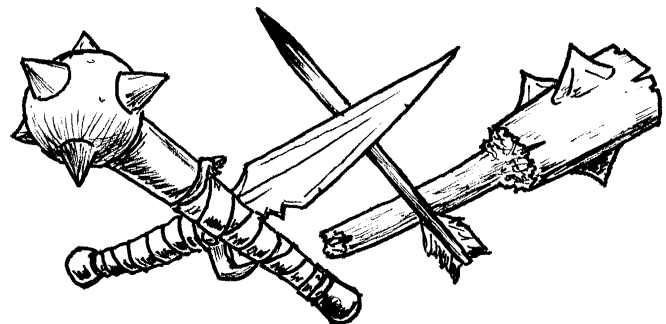
CRITICAL FAILURE: You are left off-balance and lose your next primary action. This penalty only applies to melee combat, not ranged or thrown.

BOTCH: Something goes terribly wrong. You might drop your weapon, strike a friendly target or lose your balance and fall down. Regardless, you are still off-balance and lose your next primary action as well.

DAMAGE

Subtract the target's Armor Rating from the damage rolled. Any remaining points become wounds and reduce their Hit Points. *If their Hit Points drop below 1, they must spend Focus or Fatigue each round to avoid passing out and cannot regain Focus.* Minor NPCs pass out automatically. Thus, once a character drops to 0 or fewer Hit Points, they can remain conscious for a long period only if they concentrate on nothing more than staying awake.

When the target's Hit Points drop below -1, they must make a *Death Check*. They roll 1d6 and compare it to their current Hit Points... if they roll *below* the number of points that they have gone negative, they pass out and are dying. They will perish within a few minutes without medical



attention. If they roll 5 or more points below (indicating that they are at least at -6 Hit Points and possibly much more wounded than that), they are slain outright.

If a dying character gets even one Hit Point back (usually due to magical healing), they can re-roll the Death check and take the better result.

Note that your Armor Rating includes your Size and is combined with any actual armor worn. Creatures with a *negative* Armor Rating (generally from being very small) actually take extra damage from physical attacks. Tiny creatures like crickets and fleas are often quite easy to kill... if you can hit them.

Some kinds of special damage, such as falling or burning may bypass certain types of armor. The GM should use common sense when adjudicating unusual situations.

MILITANT MICE

COMBAT BONUSES

Whenever you score at least one Critical Success on an attack, you can claim as many Combat Bonuses as the number of Critical Successes you rolled.

You cannot claim the same Bonus multiple times in the same attack unless it specifically states so, even if you roll multiple Critical Successes. Furthermore, Bonuses which apply modifiers to rolls are not cumulative; only the largest bonus or penalty applies to a given roll.

So if a mousy warrior were to beat a target's defense roll by 10 points and claim two Combat Bonuses, they could claim both Hit Hard and Hack (for a total damage bonus of +1d6+1d4) but they couldn't take Hack twice.

There are also *Superior* Combat Bonuses, which count as two Combat Bonuses each and thus can only be selected if you beat your opponent's roll by at least 10.

UNIVERSAL BONUSES

These Bonuses are available no matter what weapon you're using. Weapon-specific Bonuses are generally more powerful, but you can always fall back on one of these. You must choose Bonus(es) *before* rolling damage.

BYPASS ARMOR: the target's Armor Rating is reduced by 4 (to a minimum of zero).

DISTRACTING BLOW: this hit is in an especially sensitive spot and will attract the target's immediate attention even if no actual damage gets through. Often useful to distract huge creatures to keep them from devouring allies.

GRAB: rather than inflicting damage with a melee attack, you seize an opportunity to throw an arm around your foe's neck or one of their limbs and start grappling with them.

HIT HARD: the attack does an extra +1d4 damage. This can only be claimed if the attack normally does damage.

STUN: the target is at -2 to any rolls until they spend a Primary Action recovering from being stunned.

SET-UP: if you attack this same target again this round or the next, your next attack roll is at +4.

WEAPON SPECIFIC BONUSES

These Bonus only apply to certain types of weapons. If the weapon you are attacking with doesn't list one, you cannot claim that Bonus in combat, but you can always choose one of the Universal Bonuses above.

If a character attacks someone using an improvised weapon or attack, they can claim any reasonably appropriate bonus. For example, someone hitting a target with a lit torch could reasonably claim Smash (for hitting someone with a blunt object) or On Fire (for hitting them with a flaming object). Common sense should be used when determining which Combat Bonuses are available.

CHILLED: for cold-based attacks. The target begins to shiver and feel chilled and is at -2 to all actions until they spend at least five minutes warming themselves at a fire or an hour just warming up on their own.

GRAPPLE: used when trying to grab a foe. You can
Hyperborean Mice

immediately attempt a Grappling Maneuver (see *Unarmed Combat Procedure*) without using up your next action.

HACK: for edged weapons that can inflict devastating injuries with a carefully placed strike. +1d6 damage.

IMPAIR: for magical attacks that can shatter bones from within. The target is at -2 to all Agility and/or Brawn tasks until they heal all of the damage done by this attack. Tasks using both stats (like Melee Combat) are still at -2, not -4.

IMPALE: for piercing weapons. You inflict a further +4 damage. If used on a creature at least 4 Sizes larger than you, the weapon will remain embedded in their body afterwards. Once they are dead (or at least lying still) you can pull it out with a single action but until then you lose it.

ON FIRE: for fire spells and lit torches. The target's fur or clothing is set on fire, inflicting a further 1d3 points of damage on each successive turn until they spend an entire turn rolling around to beat out the flames. Animals will often panic and run, putting out the fire only by accident.

Wet targets or ones without fur or clothes are immune. Worn armor does not protect against the damage done by being on fire. If a burning target is set on fire again, the per-round damage is increased by a cumulative +1 bonus.

On Fire can be claimed multiple times in a single attack.

SHOCKED: for electrical spells. The target's muscles spasm in a seizure for one round, costing their next action and causing creatures of Size 2 or smaller to fall down.

SHOVE: for brawling attacks and some other blunt weapons. If the target is your Size or smaller, they are shoved 1 pace away and fall down. This Bonus cannot be claimed against foes that are larger than you.

SHOVE (SUPERIOR): for jumping mice kicks and similar blows. The target is shoved as many paces away as the attacker's Brawn rating (minimum 1). If they are exactly 1 Size larger than you, treat this as a standard *Shove* instead. It cannot be claimed against foes larger than that.

SMASH: for blunt weapons. The target takes +1d4 damage and will be knocked down if they are your Size or smaller. If they are at least two Sizes smaller, you can knock them up to your Brawn rating in paces away.

SUPERIOR HOLD: for grab attacks. For as long as you maintain your grip, all grappling rolls are at +2.

SUPERIOR COMBAT BONUSES

These Combat Bonuses actually count as *two* regular Combat Bonuses and thus can only be claimed when you beat a target's roll by at least 10 points or otherwise score at least two bonuses. Naturally, they can only be claimed if circumstances would permit the described action; you can't claim *Blade to the Throat* (for example) against a foe whose throat isn't within reach.

Note that there are some special abilities like *Assassin* that allow you to add a free Combat Bonus under certain circumstances; if your score a regular Combat Bonus and a bonus one, you can still spend both to claim a Superior Combat Bonus instead.

BLADE TO THE THROAT (requires an edged or piercing weapon): You bring your weapon up to the opponent's throat and hold it there in a threatening position. They take *no* damage from this attack now, but you can, as a free action (even on their turn), make a free attack roll against them at +5 to hit and a bonus +1d6 damage. If this attack misses or they live through it, then they have broken away and there are no further effects. Sensible foes will generally surrender if you claim this Bonus against them, in hopes that you'll be merciful and let them go rather than attack.

If you claim *Blade to the Throat* from behind someone, you get to add a further +2 bonus for your superior position.

BLINDING BLOW: You strike the target in the eye, bypassing any worn armor. If they take even 1 point of damage from your strike, they are blinded in that eye (quite possibly permanently; PCs can spend a Hero Point to avoid that fate). Creatures large enough to shrug off the blow will still be blinded in that eye for several minutes and at -4 to fight due to the pain.

DISARM (requires a foe with a held weapon): You strike the target's weapon in such a way that it is knocked out of their hands and goes flying in the direction you choose. You can inflict regular damage or no damage, as you prefer.

KNOCKOUT BLOW (requires a blunt weapon): You strike a blow to their head sending the target reeling. If any damage gets through their armor, roll *Feats of Strength* with a bonus equal to the damage done and resisted by their *Endurance* skill. If you wish, you can reduce the *actual* damage done by half after you roll.

On a success, the target is rendered unconscious for as many rounds as they failed the check by. On a Critical Success or better, the target is rendered unconscious for that many *hours* instead.

PINNING MISSILE (requires a bow, crossbow, spear or similar thrown piercing weapon): Your target is pinned to the wall (or other object) behind them by your shot. They lose their next action and must spend a further action making a HARD *Feats of Strength* or *Contortionist* check to wriggle free. Your shot can do regular damage or no damage, as you prefer. No effect on creatures of Size 5 or greater.

SUPERIOR BYPASS ARMOR (requires a weapon that can claim the Impale bonus): You strike an unarmored spot on the target, bypassing all worn armor and up to 6 points of innate armor.

EXAMPLES OF BASIC COMBAT

ROKO STABS A SHREW: Roko is fighting with a sword in each hand against a vicious shrew wielding a thorn club and a crude shield. They have both already spent their Focus, but so far have failed to injure each other.

Roko's *Speed* roll is an 11, good but not good enough to beat the shrew's 13. So the shrew goes first, rolling its Melee Combat against Roko's. It rolls 2d6 and gets a 7, then adds in its Melee Combat rating of +4 to get an 11.

Roko needs to beat an 11 to remain safe. He decides to parry, rolling his own Melee Combat of +6 but only rolls a 5... for a total of 11, a tie. This means that the shrew's initial attack was stopped, but it would now get a second swing (because of the tie), against which Roko could only

use his Dodge rating of +3. Rather than take that risk, Roko elects to spend a Fatigue to acquire Focus and then spend it to turn his 11 into a 12 and thus a success.

He follows that up with a quick stab of his own, rolling his Melee Combat of +6 vs the shrew's +5 (+4 with an additional +1 for its shield). He gets lucky and rolls a 10, while the shrew only rolls a 6. That gives Roko a 16 vs its 11, a Critical Success! He elects to use the Impale Bonus for a guaranteed +4 damage and rolls a total of 1d6+8 damage, getting a result of 12 points. With the shrew only having 10 hit points, it drops to -2 and has a 1-in-6 chance of dying outright. Furthermore, it must spend 1 Fatigue every round or pass out, so the GM just rules that the shrew is run through and collapses with a squeal.

Note that against a more important foe, the GM could have given it a Fatigue pool of its own and had it spend 1 Fatigue to turn that Critical Success back into a regular one by increasing its own result to 12. Roko might want to spend a Fatigue of his own to counter that, but because he already spent Focus this round he wouldn't be allowed to.

CASSANDRA DODGES A BOLT: A vicious rat raises a heavy crossbow and takes a shot at the mage, rolling a total of 9. Since this particular attack would inflict 1d6+1d4+2 damage if it hit, she really doesn't want to be hit. Without a shield, she can only dodge, rolling 2d6 + her Dodge of +2 and getting a 7. That's a regular hit and even spending Focus wouldn't change the results enough to help. Instead, she elects to spend a Hero Point and hope for a higher roll. This time she gets a total of 10 and the shot misses.

If she'd rolled even one point less, it would have been a tie and the crossbow bolt would have hit her for half damage. Assuming the rat rolled 9 points of damage, Cassandra would have taken 5 points from the blow (9/2 rounded up).

LUCAS TAKES ONE FOR THE TEAM: An assassin sneaks up behind Lucas while a confederate distracts him and the killer's *Stealth* roll is better than Lucas's *Sixth Sense* roll (Lucas used *Sixth Sense* since his rating in that was higher than his *Alertness*). Lucas gets to roll Melee Combat or Dodge (he chooses his Dodge of +2) but at a -4 penalty for being completely off guard. The assassin rolls a total of 11. Lucas rolls a mere 3 on 2d6 for a total of 1. That gives his opponent a double Critical Success *and* he gets to add yet another using his *Assassin* Combat Power.

Claiming *Hack*, *Impale* and *Hit Hard* as his bonuses (remember, he can't claim any Bonus twice), Lucas takes a total of 17 points of damage, putting him at -7 and killing him outright. Alas, poor Lucas, we hardly knew ye.

MILITANT MICE

ADVANCED COMBAT

SPECIAL MANEUVERS

A wily combatant has a variety of options available to them above and beyond merely attacking their foe. Some examples are covered below. Bonuses and penalties from these maneuvers are not cumulative, so if you use All-Out Attack twice in a row, you're only at -2 to defend for 2 rounds, not -2 for the first and -4 for the second.

FOCUS ACTIONS

A *Focus Action* is one that is normally a Primary Action, but you can spend Focus to turn it into a Free Action instead. That is to say, you can either spend your turn performing a Focus Action *or* you can spend Focus to perform it *and* a different Primary Action as well, both in the same turn.

EXAMPLE MANEUVERS

ACROBATIC DODGING (FOCUS ACTION): You duck, weave and tumble around nearby obstacles, trying to confuse your foe. Roll Acrobatics against your foe's Dodge rating. If you succeed, then you are at +2 to defend against their attacks until the end of the next combat round. Add an additional +1 per Critical Success.

This maneuver can only be used if there *are* nearby obstacles to maneuver around, not out in the open.

ALL-OUT ATTACK (PRIMARY ACTION): A normal Melee or Thrown attack, except you are at +1 to hit and damage for this round but -2 to defend yourself until the end of the next combat round. You can also move your full move, provided that you run in a straight line towards your foe.

CALLED SHOT (PRIMARY ACTION): Rather than trying to inflict damage, you can declare that you are trying to score a particular Combat Bonus that you could normally select anyway. In this case, if you roll a regular Success on your attack roll then you receive that Combat Bonus *but* your attack automatically does zero damage (including any damage from your Combat Bonus).

If you roll a *Critical Success*, then you can either claim another Combat Bonus *or* inflict damage normally after all.

COMPLETE DEFENSE (PRIMARY ACTION): You devote your full attention to blocking your opponent's attacks. You are at +2 to parry but -2 to dodge until your next action.

Unlike most Primary Actions, you can declare that you are using a Complete Defense maneuver this turn as soon as you need to roll to parry an attack.

DEFEND ANOTHER (CONTINUED PRIMARY ACTION): You declare who you are protecting (they must be right next to you) and move into a position to defend them from incoming attacks. Until you take a different Primary Action, you can attempt to parry any attempts to attack them as though the attack were targeting you. If you fail, they may still dodge or parry normally.

Warriors will sometimes choose this maneuver in order to enable a mage ally to cast a spell without interference or to protect much weaker characters from dangerous foes.

DIVE FOR COVER (PRIMARY ACTION): You throw yourself prone to escape a powerful attack. You are at +2 to dodge but will be at -2 to parry until your next action.

Unlike most Primary Actions, you can declare that you are using a Dive for Cover maneuver this turn as soon as you need to roll to dodge an attack.

FEIGN WEAKNESS (FOCUS ACTION): You fall back and appear to be near defeat or pretend to surrender and lower your weapon, suckering your foe into dropping their guard. Roll Bluff against their Leadership. On a Success, you are at +2 to attack them until the end of the next combat round. Add an additional +1 per Critical Success.

This maneuver can only be used if your target is actually attacking you; it can't give you a bonus against a foe who is focused on someone else.

INTIMIDATE FOE (FOCUS ACTION): You attempt to force a target into a defensive posture by frightening them. Roll your Intimidation against their Courage. On a Success, they are at -2 to attack you until the end of the next combat round. Add an additional -2 per Critical Success. Foes that are already nervous are likely to break off combat if they can.

TAUNT (FOCUS ACTION): Attempt to goad a foe into attacking you when they probably shouldn't. This is often useful for saving a friend from being finished off by a foe. Roll Insight against the target's Leadership. On a Success, they will strongly want to take a swing at you (although they might not if circumstances prevent them) and will turn away from their current target if necessary.

You should describe what sort of taunt you're using and the target must be able to understand it. If the GM rules that your taunt is inappropriate, you may be penalized on your roll. On the other hand, if you manage to push one of your opponent's buttons, you can get a substantial bonus!



UNARMED COMBAT PROCEDURE

Many predators prefer to first seize or pin their prey, *then* kill it, depending their larger size and strength to ensure that the victim can't escape. Mice themselves are unsophisticated wrestlers and brawlers, but every now and then grappling is the best option available.

ESTABLISHING A HOLD

First, the attacker must make a Grab attack, using their Grab/Throw rating. This requires at least one empty paw to try and seize hold of a foe's limbs, fur or other accessible area. If you succeed, you get a grip on the target with at least one paw and achieved a basic hold. On a Critical Success, you can claim the *Superior Hold* Combat Bonus.

The target may Dodge, Parry with a melee weapon, or roll Grab/Throw themselves to ward you off.

GRAPPLING MANEUVERS

Once you have grabbed a foe, you have access to several new Primary Actions. Most match your *Feats of Strength* against the target's chosen Grappling Defense (see below).

On a successful roll, the attacker gets to apply the effects of their chosen maneuver. On critical successes, you can select any Universal Combat Bonus. On a Tie, you can retain your grip but there is no other benefit. On a Failure or worse, the attacker wins the contest, with the effects depending on the defense they chose.

GRAPPLING MODIFIERS:

- Maintaining a hold with only one hand: -2
- Holding onto a huge creature by an extremity: -4
- Superior Hold: +2

STANDARD GRAPPLING MANEUVERS:

- Attack Held Foe (Primary Action): hit the target with a weapon held in your other hand or bite them. This is a standard Melee attack at +4 to hit.
- Choke (Continued Primary Action): the target starts to choke and cannot speak. You may also inflict 1d3 damage per round if desired. Cannot be performed on foes whose Size is more than 1 larger than your own. After five consecutive rounds, the victim must roll Endurance vs your roll each round or pass out.

A garrote (strangling cord, a Common item) changes the damage done to 1d6+1 instead and allows it to work on foes up to 2 Sizes larger.

- Crush (Continued Primary Action): the target takes 1d3+Brawn damage per round. Does not work on foes whose Size is greater than your own.
- Pin (Continued Primary Action): pin the target down so that they are helpless. You no longer need to roll when they try to break free; instead, you just apply whatever you rolled on the original pin attack.
- Throw (Primary Action): throw the target to the ground. If you slam them down next to you, you can maintain your grip, otherwise you must release it. Does not work on foes whose Size is more than one greater than your own. Typically inflicts 1d3+Brawn damage if you slam them into something hard.

Hitting a desired spot with them may require a separate Grab/Throw roll.

GRAPPLING DEFENSES:

- Reverse the hold (Primary Action): uses up your next action as you struggle for dominance. Roll your own *Feats of Strength* against the attacker's roll. If you win, you break their hold and your roll is treated as though you just made a Grab attack against *them*.
- Break free (Primary Action): uses up your next action as you struggle to break their grip. Roll your choice of *Feats of Strength* or *Contortionist*. If you succeed, you are free. On a Critical Success, treat as a Free Action.
- Ignore them (Free Action): Just ignore them. Roll *Feats of Strength* to oppose their roll; on a Critical Success you break free anyway.

SPECIAL GRAPPLING MANEUVERS:

- Shake off (Primary Action): usable as your action when one or more people have grabbed *you*. Roll *Feats of Strength*. The roll is applied to *all* foes who have grabbed you. On a success, their grip is broken. On a Critical Success, they also fall down if they are your size or one level larger. If they are smaller, they are hurled away too.
- Slam into Wall (Primary Action): slam someone who has grabbed you into a wall or other obstacle. Roll *Feats of Strength* vs their *Feats of Strength* or *Contortionist*. If you succeed, they take 1d3+Brawn/2 damage (modified by the sort of surface they were slammed into). On a critical failure, you'll fall down. On a critical success, they lose their grip too.

GRAPPLING HUGE CREATURES

Creatures of Size 4+ add a few modifiers to the basic rules. First, if you just use a regular grab attack on one, you'll only be able to grab onto one of their legs (or perhaps a tail) and will be at -4 to any *Feats of Strength* rolls. But there are some new maneuvers that only work on particularly large foes.

JUMPING GRAB (Primary Action): You can eliminate the -4 penalty by first making an appropriately difficult *Acrobatics* roll to jump high enough to grab them around the torso or neck. If that roll succeeds (and the check is generally at least HARD difficulty unless you're jumping down on the monster from above), then you can immediately follow up with a regular grab attack and bypass the -4 penalty if you succeed. If either roll fails, however, the entire attack misses.

SCALE FOE (Primary Action): If you have grabbed a huge foe by the ankles, you can roll *Acrobatics* vs their *Feats of Strength* (at the usual -4 penalty) to try and scale the rest of the way up while they try to shake you off.

If you do succeed, you can reach a spot where you are no longer penalized. On a Critical Success, you achieve a superior hold as well.

HIDE ON THEIR BACK (Continued Primary Action): If you manage to achieve a superior hold on a creature's back, you can actually roll *Stealth* vs their *Alertness* to hang on lightly enough that they don't even realize that you're there anymore.

If you achieve this, so long as you don't attract their attention, the creature will think that you have already dropped off. This maneuver only works on creatures that are at *least* 6 Sizes larger than you and it's difficult to perform other actions without giving your location away.

MILITANT MICE

HEALING & DISEASE

NATURAL HEALING

Characters heal a base of 2 Hit Points per night's rest.

HEALING MODIFIERS:

- Someone makes a successful Medicine check vs TYPICAL difficulty to tend your wounds: +2 (add another +2 per crit). You can use the *Combining Effort* rules (see the [Adventuring Tasks](#) section) for to handle everyone's treatment in a single roll.
- You are currently at negative Hit Points: -1
- You were *dying* within the last day: -1
- You are sick or poisoned as well: -1 or worse
- Outdoors during the icy cold winter months: -1
- Terrible conditions (dirty, filthy, little or no rest): -1 and positive modifiers are halved (round down)
- Good conditions (tended by one person, access to hot soup, basic medicines and clean bandages): +1
- Great conditions (tended by servants with access to curatives, perfumes, pillows and other frills): +2
- You spend a Hero Point to aid your recovery: +4
- Using a dose of Healing Salve: +1d6

If modifiers reduce your recovery rate to zero, you don't heal until conditions improve. If they reduce it *below* zero, you actually take damage as your wounds worsen.

MAGICAL HEALING

Shaping magic can repair injuries with healing spells. This is faster than normal healing but can strain both the mage and their patient, removing wounds but costing them Fatigue. Normal magic can't fix poison or disease damage.

Any major city or town will have a healer, a mage specialized in healing magic. Even in small villages there is usually a herbalist with a high Medicine skill.

Wounds are normally treated in order of social status, with the minor wounds of a noblemouse being healed before the critical wounds of a commoner. Those unwelcome in a region (such as wild rats) may find the local healer's door locked against them. In such a case, they must either persuade the doctor to aid them anyway or tough it out.

A herbalist typically only charges a few coppers, but a mage may demand gold. If you cannot pay for your treatment, most can find some dangerous or ignoble task for you to perform instead once your wounds are gone.

Example: *Gersan has Magic +3, Medicine +7 and Shaping +7. He takes lots of time to cast Magical Surgery for a +2 bonus. Rolling a 7, he gets 7+7+2=16, a Critical Success. He then rolls Medicine at +2. Rolling another 7, he gets another Critical Success. He and his patient both lose 1 Fatigue and the patient heals 2d6+3 hit points.*

If he used the less straining Heal Wounds spell instead, he would have only restored 1d3+3 hit points, but he wouldn't have lost any Fatigue himself.

COMMON DISEASES

BLOOD FEVER: this potentially lethal illness causes the victim to feel as though their very blood were on fire. They heal 4 fewer points per day and are at -4 to all actions.

It is produced by infected wounds. Treating blood fever requires at least a day of herbal remedies and a HARD Medicine roll to cure. It is not contagious.

BURROW COUGH: the mousy equivalent of the flu. Anyone forced into tight quarters with someone who has burrow cough must make a TYPICAL Endurance check once per day to avoid catching it. Characters with burrow cough are at -1 to all actions but their healing rate is not affected. Once infected, they may roll Endurance vs TYPICAL difficulty once every three days to try and shake it off.

There is no cure for the cough; an EASY Medicine roll gives the victim a +2 bonus to their Endurance check (+4 on a Critical Success).

FLEAS: a mouse infested with parasites generally heals 1 or 2 points less per day, depending upon the extent of the infestation. A thorough bath and grooming (to eliminate any remaining flea eggs) can clear it right up, however.

GUT WORMS: these intestinal parasites are commonly acquired by drinking polluted water. If exposed, a character must make a HARD Endurance check to avoid infection.

Characters with gut worms heal 1 fewer point per day. The infestation lasts indefinitely, but can be cured with proper medicinal care. Treating gut worms requires a TYPICAL Medicine roll to cure. It is not infectious.

RED BLINDNESS: this plague causes the victim to bleed from their nose and tear ducts. Victims take 1d3 points of damage per day, heal 4 fewer points per day and are at -2 to most actions and -4 to Perception-based tasks.

Anyone merely around a victim for at least an hour must make a TYPICAL Endurance check or contract the disease themselves. A successful check only protects you for the next 24 hours; victims of the red blindness need to be quarantined immediately.

There is no cure. Every days a victim may make a VERY HARD Endurance check to shrug the disease off on their own. A doctor tending to them can roll a HARD Medicine check to grant a +2 bonus to all victims in their care (on a critical success, the bonus is +4).

TWISTGUT: a debilitating but non-lethal illness caused by drinking dirty water, particularly in the areas immediately downstream from any major mouse community. Anyone who is exposed must make a TYPICAL Endurance check to avoid being infected.

Twistgut causes painful twinges in the stomach and intestines and incurs a -2 penalty for all actions. Characters suffering from it also heal 1 fewer hit point per day. After a week, the character can make an EASY Endurance check each day to try and shake off the disease.

It can also be treated with a mixture of herbs that will kill the parasites living in the victim's gut. It requires a TYPICAL Medicine roll to cure a case of twistgut. It is only mildly contagious; you don't want to drink after or bathe in the same water as an infected mouse. Anyone exposed in this fashion must make a HARD Endurance check or come down with it themselves.

MAGICAL MICE

Every creature possesses some amount of magic, but in most this facility is vestigial and useless. Only those directly descended from the First Ones possess the magical prowess to truly bend the world to their will.

--- Father Durell, *On the Nature of Magic*

MOUSY MAGIC

Magic in **Hyperborean Mice** is intended to convey a distinctive flavor. Mousy magic is *small*. Not for them are spells that command the storm or turn creatures to stone. Instead, their spells are small, practical effects like starting a fire or concealing someone from a predator. Even just holding a monster at bay is a difficult feat; striking it dead is simply beyond their capabilities.

While the First Ones may have had such godlike powers, PCs are rather more limited. Mages are often better at aiding and supporting their fellows rather than acting as magical artillery. In order to emphasize this, the system has been designed so that mages can cast minor spells as often as needed. Even the more straining spells can be cast repeatedly so long as there is time to rest between each.

Modifiers from spells are not cumulative; only apply the strongest positive and negative modifiers when you have overlapping effects. Particularly large creatures will also receive a bonus to resist based on their sheer mass... even mind-affecting spells are difficult to work on a brain that is larger than the mage themselves. *Resistance rolls against spells (of any type) always include the target's Magic Resistance rating.*

OVERVIEW

There are six magical arts available, each of which grants the character a *new* Magic-based skill with which they can interact with their surroundings. Using these powers is referred to as casting spells. The mage whispers or chants magical phrases and makes mystical gestures while focusing their innate magical energies upon their goal. If their power is sufficient to the task, it becomes so.

The first thing to understand is that each magical art *is* a new skill and can be used like one. While specific examples of what each magical art can and can not do are provided, there will be innumerable situations not covered by the rules. The intention here is to give you enough of a framework that it becomes simple to adjudicate new spells on the fly.

SPELL-CASTING

Casting a spell in **Hyperborean Mice** is basically similar to performing a non-magical action. The character states what they're trying to accomplish, the GM confirms that this falls within the range of that skill and sets a difficulty. If the rolls succeeds, the spell works and if the roll succeeds by a lot the spell may work marvelously.

The more complicated the effect being produced, the more difficult the skill check becomes. Furthermore, magic is draining; if the action requires the mage's full efforts then the spell becomes *strenuous* and they must pay at least 1 Fatigue in order to cast it, even if the attempt fails.

MAINTAINING SPELLS

Most spells last as long as you concentrate on maintaining them. This means that some portion of your magical energies is still devoted to that spell even while you perform other actions. Casting new spells while maintaining old ones will incur a penalty to the spell-casting roll.

If a spell requires *complete* concentration, then the mage can only take Free Actions while maintaining it.

If the character falls unconscious, is stunned, sleeps or otherwise loses their concentration, any maintained spells other than *Enchantments* immediately end.

Enchantments are spells which can last until the mage deliberately chooses to end them. Even sleeping or falling unconscious won't end an *Enchantment*. Even if the mage *dies* any *Enchantments* created with a Critical Success or better will continue to function indefinitely. Consciously ending an *enchantment* can be done at any range and requires a single round of complete concentration.

The spell-casting penalty for maintaining *Enchantments* is much lower than that of other spells. If you maintain an *Enchantment* for 1d6 *seasons* (determined secretly by the GM), the spell will become *permanent* and will no longer be connected to you (or controlled by you) at all!

CASTING RANGES

Some spells can only be used on targets that are within arm's reach of the caster. Most can be cast upon any target within 10 paces. For targets further away, there is an additional -1 penalty for each additional 10 paces, with 100 paces (a -10 penalty) being the greatest possible range.

If the caster ever moves more than 100 paces from a maintained spell, that spell will end. *Enchantments* are exempt from this rule.

If a spell strikes multiple targets and then is maintained, any target that wanders out of range is removed from the effects but the spell continues for the others.

COMMON SPELL-CASTING MODIFIERS

- Every additional 10 paces of range: -1
- Taking lots of extra time: +2
- Taking extra time and performing an elaborate rite with drawn sigils and a prepared ritual area: +3
- Using minimal gestures and just whispering the magic words, so that your casting is hidden: -1
- Running, dodging or otherwise being very active: -2
- Expanding a single target spell to affect a small group: +1 Fatigue cost
- Each Small Magick already being maintained: -1
- Each Large Magick/High Sorcery maintained: -2
- Each *Enchantment* maintained: -1 per 2
- The caster wants finer control over the spell than normal or wants to vary its effects in an unusual way: -1 to -6 (beyond that, it's usually impossible)
- The target has the *Magic Resistance* Power: +4 to their resistance rolls, -2 to your casting roll if they are deliberately trying *not* to resist

If the caster fails to reach the necessary total to cast a spell, they may add a further +1 bonus for each additional Fatigue they are willing to spend on the casting, but they cannot increase it above tying the required difficulty.

SPELL CATEGORIES

For each magical art, a number of example spells have been provided. These are broken up into four categories based on their general nature and difficulty. Any Fatigue or Focus cost must be paid whether or not the spell succeeds.

TRIVIAL SPELLS

Simple tricks performed within arm's reach. These spells are difficulty EASY and require no expenditure of Focus or Fatigue. The examples are little utilitarian spells that make the mage's life easier but won't really impress anyone.

SMALL MAGICKS

Spells that require too much skill and finesse to be classified as trivial but not enough power to be strenuous. They have a base difficulty of TYPICAL and require the mage to expend either Focus or 1 Fatigue to cast them. If the mage is not being rushed, they may be cast for free.

LARGE MAGICKS

When the mage must throw their full effort into a spell to make it as strong as possible, they sacrifice all subtlety and most of their control for raw power. These are classified as Large Magicks. They are not necessarily *difficult* spells, but rather ones that require a lot of effort. Large Magicks have a base difficulty of TYPICAL and always require the caster to expend 1 Fatigue to represent the strain involved.

Many Large Magicks are so draining that they cannot actually be maintained and always end in a single round.

HIGH SORCERIES

Beyond these lesser spells lie the *High Sorceries*. These are secret arts which are only known by a select few. Each Sorcery learned gives the character an additional "trick" that they can perform with that spell skill. Mages who have not yet learned a particular Sorcery cannot even attempt it.

Mages guard Sorceries closely, sharing them with only a trusted few. They are so complex that if a mage were to forget part of the rite, they might be unable to perform it... thus, canny mages write down the details just in case.

High Sorceries thus act as a kind of magical treasure; a mage who finds a book that describes one can now spend their experience points to learn it... or find another mage and sell it to *them*. This allows the GM to introduce new spells into the setting without rewriting history.

Most are difficulty HARD and cost 1 Fatigue. Particularly difficult ones may be VERY HARD and/or cost more Fatigue.

Enchantments are special High Sorceries which are easier to maintain. Once an Enchantment is created the mage no longer needs to concentrate on it nor stay within casting range. An object can only have a single active Enchantment at one time.

Advantages are special High Sorceries which expand the *sort* of Trivial, Small and Large Magicks which can be cast, rather than being spells themselves. They generally expand a magical art to include some closely related effects which are normally prohibited. Technically these are a special kind of Magical Power, but because they only affect a single Magical Art they are described in the section covering that art instead.

THE SIX MAGICAL ARTS

Mousy mages divide their powers into six principle areas, each of which is represented with a separate spell-casting skill. Spells in each of these categories can only be cast by characters who have purchased the appropriate Magical Power for that art.

- **COMPEL:** spells which manipulate the emotions of others or instill magical compulsions on them.
- **GUISE:** spells which disguise objects as other things, make things invisible or craft phantasmal illusions which can be seen but not touched.
- **SHAPING:** spells which mold and reshape matter, including those which heal wounds and repair damaged objects. Unlike most magical arts, Shaping magic can only be used on targets within arm's reach.
- **SPARK:** spells which create fire or light. Advanced practitioners can learn to generate electrical charges or reverse the energy flow to make cold and shadows.
- **TUG:** spells which move physical objects, either by animating them from within or by tugging on them with telekinetic force.
- **WHISPERS:** spells which interact with the spirit world. This includes divination magic as well as spells to link the caster's thoughts with those of others.

USING MAGICAL ARTS AS SKILLS

Spells can often be substituted for regular skills under specific circumstances. Each magical art discusses the sort of circumstances where this can occur.

As a general rule, the GM must declare whether the effort is strenuous or rushed. If so, the character must spend 1 Fatigue; otherwise they have the option of spending Focus instead.

Like normal skill use, rolling Critical Successes means that the spell was more powerful or effective than normal. If the spell doesn't specify a particular benefit for a Critical Success, the GM should make up an appropriate one.

RESISTED SPELLS

Many spells turn into a contest between the caster and a target's resistance skill. The exact skill used to resist a spell depends on the circumstances, but the target always includes their *Magic Resistance* as a modifier to the roll.

If the caster rolls less than the base difficulty of the spell, then the spell fails outright and the target does not need to roll a resistance check at all.

CONDITIONAL MODIFIERS

The GM should feel free to adjust the difficulty of a given spell based on the situation. Using *Spark* to generate fire in an extremely humid environment might incur a -2 penalty, while generating fire underwater might well be at -4 or impossible!

Similarly, though, a target's resistance roll might be lessened if they are in a particularly vulnerable state, such as being drunk and hit with mental spells or running in a panic when someone tries to trip them with a *Tug* spell.

MAGICAL MICE

COMPEL

Magically influencing the emotions and actions of others. These spells are invisible to the naked eye, although the caster must still gesture mystically towards the target. Those who fall prey to a subtle effect won't realize that magic was used until it wears off... if even then.

WHAT IT CAN DO

It can produce artificial moods in living targets, including lethargy, anger, fascination and fear. These feelings can be directed towards the caster or left undirected.

WHAT IT CAN'T DO

It can't create complicated, multi-faceted emotions like love, hate or loyalty. It can't overtly force someone to do something, although it can often prevent them from acting. It can't direct emotions away from the caster.

EXAMPLE TRIVIAL SPELLS

These spells only work on the caster or with a cooperative subject, who must be within arm's reach.

CONCENTRATE: The target finds it easier to concentrate on something, eliminating up to 2 points of penalties due to lack of sleep, exhaustion or distraction. It can also allow them to sleep despite stress or noise.

REMEMBER: The target receives a +2 bonus to remember accurate details about a past event.

WAKE UP: The caster touches someone who is asleep and causes them to suddenly awaken, fully alert and aware.

EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

These subtle spells only work on unsuspecting targets. Even then, targets get an Insight resistance roll to realize that this emotional shift is unnatural and overcome it.

These spells can often grant a +2 bonus to social skill rolls (add a further +2 per Critical Success) if used wisely. Those inclined towards that state are at -2 to -4 to resist.

ANGER: Bombards them with anger and frustration. They are likely to lash out at the first outlet for their frustration.

CALM: Keeps the target unusually calm. Especially useful for those trying to tame wild animals.

HESITATION: Fills a target with doubt and nervousness. This usually prevents them from initiating any dangerous actions, but won't stop them from defending themselves.

INTEREST: The target is drawn towards the caster and wants to follow and observe them. This can be used to lure a predator away, if they aren't particularly hungry.

LULL TO SLEEP: The target becomes steadily more and more drowsy as the spell is maintained. On a Critical Success or better, they may well nod off where they are.

SYMPATHY: The target feels unusually soft-hearted.

TRUST: The target feels unusually trusting and more willing to give others the benefit of the doubt.

EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

Invisible effects that are dramatic and obviously unnatural but normally only last one round. On a Critical Success or better, the spell can be maintained at a cost of 1 Fatigue per your Magic rating in additional rounds.

RAGE: Fills the target with sudden, overwhelming and unreasoning rage. They make well take a swing at whatever is in front of them. *Resisted with Leadership.*

FASCINATION: Draws target's full attention to the caster instantly. If they were paying attention elsewhere, this costs them their next action. *Resisted with Leadership.*

FEAR: Blasts a target with sudden feelings of panic. This is often effective at stopping a fight or causing a nervous foe to flee. *Resisted with Courage.*

PAIN: Blasts a target with phantom agony. Useful for torture or causing someone to lose their next action. *Resisted with Courage.*

PARALYSIS: Overwhelms a target with feelings of weakness and lethargy, costing them their next action. *Resisted with Leadership.*

COMPEL HIGH SORCERIES

DIRECTED EMOTIONS (Advantage): You may direct a target's new emotions towards a subject other than yourself. For example, you could make someone fear an ally or become fascinated with a nearby rock.

GEAS (Enchantment, 2 Points): The caster gives the target a verbal command and the spell forces them to obey it as best they can. The command must be simple and easily understood or the spell will fail. *This is a VERY HARD spell that costs 2 Fatigue. Resisted with Leadership.*

Each time that the geas seriously threatens the target's health, honor, family, etc., they get another resistance roll with a +4 bonus for a potential threat and +8 if it is certain. Reasonable geases thus last longer.

FORGET: Befuddles the target so they forget the events of the last few minutes. They'll remember what they're doing right now, but may not remember why. Failed attempts are clearly magical, but successful ones are forgotten along with everything else. *Resisted with Leadership.*

INGESTED EMOTION (Enchantment): Binds a Compel Small Magick of your choice into food or drink, causing the spell to take effect on whoever consumes them. The effects last until they next awaken. Spells of fascination cause the subject to pay attention to nothing else while they eat.

If used with the *Directed Emotions Advantage*, the emotions are focused upon the first reasonable candidate to present itself after they consume the enchanted item. *The spell is resisted with Insight as per the Small Magicks.*

MESMERIZE (2 Points): Lulls the target into a hypnotic trance, making them pliable (+4 to appropriate skill rolls) and vulnerable to post-hypnotic suggestion. *This is a VERY HARD spell that costs 2 Fatigue. Resisted with Leadership.*

This only works on unsuspecting foes who are already calm. They won't remember what they heard or said during it. Hypnotic suggestions can give them strange, unexplained whims, but cannot make them act in a self-destructive manner.

MAGICAL MICE

GUISE

Spells of Illusion, Disguise and Concealment. Any penalties for affecting a group rather than a single target apply to how many things you are disguising, not the number of witnesses.

WHAT IT CAN DO

The art of Guise can disguise an object as something similar, create an illusionary object or creature which can be seen and heard but not touched (touching it generally destroys it) or hide something from being noticed.

These spells cannot truly affect the physical world, but can alter how it is perceived by others; the caster is always able to see through their own Guise spells.

WHAT IT CAN'T DO

It can't disguise an object as something entirely different or create illusions that will fool a sense of touch. It can't make something truly invisible, only encourage onlookers to not notice its presence.

EXAMPLE TRIVIAL SPELLS

PRESTIDIGITATION: You produce small, obviously fake illusions to entertain others. This can entail things like making coins vanish and appear, disguising pebbles as gemstones while you juggle them or making tiny phantasmal figures dance in the palm of your hand.

Such illusions can be very entertaining in the hands of a mage with the Performance skill, but only children are likely to not realize that the images aren't real.

EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

These spells are resisted with Alertness to see through the illusion, but automatically fail if the target has serious reason to expect a magical deception.

CONCEAL ITEM: You conceal a small object with a shroud of invisibility, such that it can be on your person yet hidden from view. This can enable you to smuggle a weapon into an area or a treasure out.

DANCING LIGHTS: You conjure a cloud of shimmering lights which move through the air as you direct. This spell is not normally resisted (it's obviously illusionary) but often makes a good distraction anyway. The lights produce no actual illumination but are visible even in the dark.

DISGUISE: You can disguise a single person or object as something else of similar size and shape. It's much harder if you want to look like a specific person (-4) or disguise the target as something of dissimilar size or shape (-1 or worse). *This illusion can be seen through automatically by anyone who inspects it closely, so watch out.*

HIDE: You throw up a shroud of concealment over yourself such that casual onlookers will not notice you. If you do anything to draw attention (move quickly, interact with unaffected objects, etc.) anyone who saw that will see through the spell from that point forward, but anyone else will not... unless that person points you out to them!

EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

These illusions are more powerful, but less well defined.

ONRUSHING MONSTER: You hurl a giant but ill-defined illusion of a huge predator towards your foes. It lasts only a single round but is quite startling. *Resisted with Courage.*

VANISH: You appear to suddenly vanish in front of everyone's eyes. This stronger version of the *Hide Small* Magick works even on foes that are alert and watching you, but you had best use the opportunity to slip away. Like that spell, if you do something to draw someone's attention to you, they will be able to see through your spell from then on. *Resisted with Alertness.*

GUISE HIGH SORCERIES

HALLUCINATION: You have learned how to craft an ongoing hallucination inside someone else's mind. Once created, the target's own subconscious fills in any missing details in the illusion, allowing it to move and act in a believable fashion... but it's still just inside their head.

You get to decide what sort of hallucinatory creature they see, but all of its behavior after that is governed by what they expect it to do. Unlike most *Guise* spells, this only affects a single target and is invisible to anyone else.

Furthermore, since it's in their head, you don't have to maintain it... the illusion often stalks them until they next sleep, although they may learn to ignore it if they realize that it's a hallucination. *Resisted with Leadership.*

IMAGINARY FAMILIAR (Enchantment): Enables you to craft an ongoing hallucination in your own head to keep you company. This "familiar spirit" is invisible, intangible and inaudible to anyone besides you. It remains at your side, never farther away than arm's reach, invisible to all except for Whispers magic that can detect spirits.

Your imaginary companion *is* aware of its environment and can offer advice or warnings. It can stand guard while you are asleep, waking you up if danger approaches (use your *Guise* skill for its *Alertness*). You can control its appearance and manner but it is an independent creature once summoned. You can only have one imaginary familiar at a time, but it will remain until you dispel it. Technically, you can make your familiar appear to be as many creatures as you like, but it doesn't affect its capabilities.

Mages with this spell benefit from early warnings and rarely get lonely, but are also known for talking to themselves.

INVISIBILITY (2 Points): This powerful spell of concealment works like the *Vanish* spell, but actions which draw someone's attention to you only allow them to see through the spell for a single round.

PERMANENT DISGUISE (Enchantment): This is just a *Disguise* spell that has been turned into an Enchantment so that it can be maintained indefinitely. Anyone who has seen its true nature can see through it automatically after that.

SCATTERING: This spell works like the *Vanish Large* Magick, but it also conjures dozens of illusionary duplicates of the caster that race back and forth to cover your escape.

TRUE DISGUISE: Crafts a *Disguise*-like spell that can stand up to close inspection. *Anyone examining the disguise resists with Alertness. Anyone not seriously examining it merely sees the image crafted.*

MAGICAL MICE

SHAPING

Repair or sculpt matter into new forms, including magical healing. Many of its effects depend upon other skills, as the ability to sculpt flesh like clay isn't much use if you don't know what you're making. Each Critical Success rolled on a Shaping spell adds a +2 bonus to any secondary skill rolls.

WHAT IT CAN DO

Shaping allows the mage to touch an object and slowly reshape it. It's particularly good at repairing damage, whether to living tissue or inanimate objects. It can reshape any solid substance except metals. As soon as the spell ends, the object becomes solid again.

WHAT IT CAN'T DO

It doesn't really work on liquids or gases because they collapse as fast as you shape them. Metals are simply immune. It can't change one sort of matter into another. It can't treat damage from diseases or poisons or cure them.

Unlike most spells, Shaping can only be used on targets within arm's reach and requires that the mage perform no other Primary Actions.

EXAMPLE TRIVIAL SPELLS

STAUNCH BLEEDING: You touch a minor wound and seal it shut with magic. If maintained for 15 minutes, you can roll a VERY HARD Medicine check to convert 1 point of damage into 1 Fatigue (add +1 HP per Crit). It cannot affect a dying character.

MINOR REPAIR: Remove cracks, dents and scratches or magically "glue" a broken object back together. This cannot repair really strong materials, but it could certainly fix a broken teacup.

EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

HEAL WOUNDS: Like *Staunch Bleeding*, but more potent. If maintained for 15 minutes, you can roll a HARD Medicine check to convert 1d3+Magic points of damage into 1 Fatigue (add +1d3 per Crit). It cannot affect a dying character.

SCULPT MATERIAL: By concentrating, you slowly sculpt a target object as though it were clay. Hard materials like rock add a -4 penalty and metal cannot be shaped. You can make any alteration that you could perform with your paws, although a Craft roll may be necessary to make anything pretty or useful.

In Jand, magically sculpted artwork is often considered superior to something made by more mundane means and brings a higher price. Most of the decorations in any temple of Jandara will have been crafted via this spell.

EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

MAGICAL SURGERY: A potent magical healing spell. If maintained for 15 minutes, you can roll a TYPICAL Medicine check to convert 1d6+Magic points of damage (+1d6 per Crit) into 1 Fatigue. A dying character treated with this spell does not perish unless they are still dying afterward.

PROTECT MATERIAL: You can protect an inanimate object from damage by touching it and devoting your concentration to shielding it from harm. It's particularly good for stopping someone from bashing down your door! While you maintain this spell, the target material receives your Magic x2 in armor (+1 multiple per Critical Success).

SHATTER: Attempt to tear a target apart from the inside. This attack inflicts 1d6+Magic damage (the Combat Bonus is *Impair*) on a target, who must still be within arm's reach. Only innate armor protects against this damage. Inanimate objects take double damage. *Living targets can resist with Dodge to avoid your shattering touch.*

SHAPING HIGH SORCERIES

CURE ILLNESS (Advantage): Your healing spells can now be used to treat damage from poisons or illness. As a High Sorcery, you can also remove scars, clear up cataracts and other similar effects (to do so, the mage rolls their Medicine skill against a difficulty set by the GM to see how effective they are). This takes at least an hour and the target suffers 1 Fatigue per attempt. See the *Healing and Disease* section for details.

HEALING GIFT (Advantage): You are a gifted healer. Your healing spells (even the Trivial version) all restore one extra Hit Point whenever they would heal the target at all.

LIFE'S TOUCH: The most potent healing spell. Identical to *Magical Surgery* except that it only takes 5 minutes and it can be used on targets that have been "dead" for up to five minutes before you reach them. It cannot restore life to bodies that were torn asunder.

PROBING TOUCH (Advantage): You can now study an object's internal structure by touching it and using a Small Magick to probe it. A successful casting adds a +2 bonus to any roll (add another +2 per Critical Success) that would be aided by the ability to see the internal structure of the object (such as treating diseases or picking locks).

PROGRAMMED SHAPE (Enchantment): You can sculpt an object into a new shape, then enchant it so that it can reshape itself back and forth between its original form and the new in a single round, as often as desired. This is commonly worked into a stone wall such that a hole can be opened and closed in it at will. Triggering a *Programmed Shape* requires merely touching it and expending Focus while thinking of the alternate form.

PROTECT SELF: By devoting your full concentration to it, you can grant yourself Magic x2 in magical armor (add +1 multiple per Critical Success). Since you can't perform other Primary Actions while maintaining it, the spell remains of somewhat limited use, but can often save you from an injury that you can see coming but can't avoid.

SHAPE METAL: A *Sculpt Material* spell that can reshape metal, a feat normally beyond a shaper's power. Such mages are always in high demand for their ability to craft high quality metal weapons and other implements.

SHAPING GAZE (Advantage, 2 Points): You have learned how to extend the effects of the Shaping spell and can now perform Shaping spells at range.

WATER BREATHING: You can reshape water such that breathable air bubbles out of it. This can enable you to walk around underwater without drowning, although the stream of bubbles is liable to give away your position.

MAGICAL MICE

SPARK

The art of magically conjuring light and fire. Such flames always appear within arm's reach of the mage, but can be made to shoot off in a particular direction afterwards.

WHAT IT CAN DO

Spark allows a mage to conjure fire and mage-light, a shimmering aura of cold light like an Aurora Borealis.

WHAT IT CAN'T DO

Spark cannot snuff out existing fires, nor protect against them. It cannot create darkness nor control existing fires.

EXAMPLE TRIVIAL SPELLS

CANDLE-LIGHT: Creates a small spark of mage-light (about as bright as a candle) that floats in your hand. If placed somewhere, it will float there until the spell ends.

LIGHT CANDLE: With a gesture, you light a candle or other easily ignited object within arm's reach.

EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

GLOWING AURA: Shroud a person or object in mage-light. This removes any penalties for seeing them due to darkness. Since this does not directly affect the target, it can affect unwilling foes. *Resisted with Dodge.*

IGNITE: Slowly heats an immobile object, causing it to burst into flames after a full round of application. Stubborn combustibles (like damp wood) may require that the spell be maintained for several minutes before they catch fire.

MAGE-LIGHT: Conjure a floating sphere of bright mage-light (roughly equivalent to as many torches as the mage's Magic rating). It can be carried in a paw or directed to move around at a walking pace.

EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

BURST: Hurls a concentrated spark that explodes in a loud burst of light and noise. This does no real damage, but is very startling. Anyone within a pace of the detonation point may lose their next Primary Action; nervous foes may flee. *Resisted with Courage to avoid losing your next action.*

The darker the environment, the more effective this is. The resistance check is at -2 (for dim lighting) or -4 (for complete darkness). Prepared foes can claim a +4 to resist.

DAYLIGHT: Conjures a brilliant sphere of mage-light that illuminates the area like the noonday sun. This spell cannot be moved, but can be maintained.

FIRE-DART: The mage hurls a small but concentrated spark of fire that can inflict 1d3+Magic fire damage to a target. Its Combat Bonus is *On Fire*. *Resisted with Dodge.*

WALL OF LIGHT: Raises a shimmering curtain of light that blocks vision. Apply the mage's Magic rating as a penalty (each Critical Success increases the penalty by +Magic) to see or target foes through it. The spell can be maintained and affects the caster the same as anyone else.

SPARK HIGH SORCERIES

ETERNAL LIGHT (Enchantment): Enchant a *Mage-Light* Small Magick into a translucent or transparent object. It glows with mage-light from within for as long as the spell lasts. The oldest sections of the Imperial Palace are lit by ancient glass spheres enchanted with this spell.

EXTINGUISH (Advantage, 2 Points): You can reverse the flow of energy and use *Spark* to snuff out fires, freeze small amounts of water, chill the air or create shadows. *These effects are basically negative versions of normal Spark spells. Their Combat Bonus is Chilled.*

Creating shadows adds +2 to Stealth attempts in the area (+4 for a Large Magick). Icy chills can freeze materials or inflict damage equivalent to a fire-based attack.

FIERY WEAPON: Shrouds a weapon in your hand with an ongoing aura of flame (or electrical charges, if you know the *Lightning* sorcery). This adds a damage bonus equal to the caster's Magic trait and allows the wielder to claim the *On Fire* (or *Shocked*) Combat Bonus, as appropriate. The spell can be maintained, but ends if you drop the weapon.

LIGHTNING (Spell/Advantage): You can now use *Spark* to generate electrical discharges. As a High Sorcery, you can inflict 1d6+Magic damage on a single target. Its Combat Bonus is *Shocked*. *Resisted with Dodge at -4.*

As a Large Magick, it inflicts 1d3+Magic damage and is resisted with Dodge. As a Small Magick it can kill tiny creatures like fleas, but will only startle a mouse-sized foe and cause their fur to stand on end.

This damage bypasses armor other than that from Size.

RAIN OF SPARKS: Conjure a number of burning sparks in the air, which then drift down over a wide area, setting things on fire. This inflicts 1d3+Magic damage to anyone in the area of effect (creatures of Size 4+ take double damage). Its Combat Bonus is *On Fire*. *Anyone in the area of effect can try to resist with Dodge, but a regular success only halves the damage. A Critical Success removes it all.*

The Rain of Sparks sorcery costs 2 Fatigue, plus another for each round that it is maintained after the first. Creatures in the affected area take damage each round and must roll Dodge each turn to try and avoid the burning cinders.

This sorcery can readily start brushfires, making it extremely dangerous to use during the summer. Its use is forbidden in most regions, as even the worst predators don't cause as much destruction as an uncontrolled fire.

THUNDERSTORM'S CURSE (Enchantment, 2 Points, Requires the *Lightning High Sorcery*): The mage has learned how to lay a terrible curse upon an area. It takes an hour of complete concentration, 2 Fatigue and an elaborate ritual to do so, but once it is complete the area will be charged with an unusual amount of static electricity.

Once the curse is in place, whenever a thunderstorm passes through the area there is at least a 50% chance of a bolt of actual lightning being drawn down towards the location of the curse. This bolt rarely strikes the exact spot where the spell was cast, but even a near miss by a lightning bolt can shatter a city wall or wipe out a village.

Once a single bolt of lightning has been successfully called to the area, the enchantment is ended.

MAGICAL MICE

TUG

The art of moving objects without touching them. Called "telekinesis" by some, this lets the mage extend invisible tendrils of energy with which they can exert physical force.

WHAT IT CAN DO

Tug allows a mage to move objects with their mind or to animate a flexible object so that it moves at their command. The mage's control is around the level of tugging on the object with an invisible cord, thus the name.

WHAT IT CAN'T DO

Tug cannot manipulate the interior of an object nor move it in a particularly delicate or finely controlled manner.

EXAMPLE TRIVIAL SPELLS

DANCING DOLL: The mage inserts a telekinetic tendril into a small, flexible object like a doll and makes it move at their command. If it passes out of arm's reach or the mage stops concentrating, the spell ends. This can also be used to make liquids swirl and form shapes at your command.

Some mages use this effect with the Performance skill to put on magically-animated puppet shows for audiences. Animating wine is a particular favorite at many taverns.

FLOATING COIN: Release a small object in mid-air. It floats there until someone grabs it or you drop the spell.

EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

NUDGE: Attract or distract someone's attention by tugging on them with an invisible force. The direction that the nudge comes from can be whatever the mage chooses, so this can distract foes (resist distraction with *Leadership*).

TELEKINESIS: Extend an invisible tendril of energy which can lift and carry small objects without touching them. The tendril has an effective Brawn rating equal to the caster's Magic-5 and a Size of 0; it can be used to perform regular Brawn-based skills. Resisted with *Feats of Strength* at +4 if the caster attempts to grapple someone with it.

ANIMATE ROPE: A more potent version of *Animate Doll*. A common use is to animate a coil of rope and send it snaking up a tree or wall and tie itself in a knot at a secure point. If a struggle occurs, it has effective Agility and Brawn ratings equal to the caster's Magic-3.

EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

HURL: Adds force to an object that the caster throws. If the spell succeeds, add your Magic rating to your Throwing roll and effective Brawn rating for the attack.

SHOVE: Hurl a nearby foe away with a burst of force. Treat the casting roll as a *Feats of Strength* roll to shove the target away. Resisted with the *Feats of Strength* skill.

DEFLECT MISSILE: So long as it is maintained, you can roll Tug to try and deflect incoming missiles instead of using Dodge/Block. It can be used against multiple attacks per round, but each roll after the first is at a cumulative -2. It cannot stop huge projectiles, such as ballista bolts.

OPEN/SEAL: Open or hold shut a door or similar object within range. Treat your spell-casting check as though it were a *Feats of Strength* roll. Can be maintained.

SOFT LANDING: Slow someone's fall (including yours). Subtract your Magic from the falling damage. Each Critical Success adds +Magic to the amount stopped and also prevents 1 point of Fatigue.

TUG HIGH SORCERIES

ANIMATE DOLL (Enchantment): Animate an object (usually a large doll) by binding a "familiar spirit" to control it. This "golem" cannot be larger than Size 0. While the spirit obeys the caster's commands, it also has its own personality. You can decide what general *sort* of personality when the spell is cast, but thereafter cannot control what it does when it isn't acting under orders.

A golem is treated like a new character whose stat points equal the mage's Magic rating. It has no skills or powers, but can acquire XP at ½ the normal rate. It can never speak, cast spells, or acquire most social skills and always has the *Eerie* Flaw. They do not heal, but can be repaired.

DANCING BLADE: This variant of *Telekinesis* lets you control a mouse-sized one-handed weapon with your mind and wield it telekinetically, substituting Magic+Tug for your Melee Combat rating. Your effective Agility for purposes of calculating damage is equal to your Magic rating, while your Brawn is equal to your Magic-5; thus, this spell is more effective with weapons that use Agility in their damage calculation. Foes can target the levitating weapon: if successfully struck, it loses its next action, and if critically struck, the spell is dispelled. The spell can be maintained.

You can perform other actions while fighting with the sword, but at penalties. If devoting your full attention to one blade, it fights at full value. If you are performing other Primary Actions while the blade fights, both rolls are at -2. If the mage is trying to control multiple blades simultaneously, add a further -2 penalty per extra blade. Three blades would all be at -4 if all acting at once (and -6 if the mage was performing a Primary Action as well).

FINE MANIPULATION (Advantage): Your *Telekinesis* Small Magick now has great precision. You can manipulate an object as though touching it with your own hands. If used to help pick a lock or something similar, add a +2 bonus for a regular success and a +4 for a Critical Success.

LETHAL ARROW (Enchantment): Binds an one-use *Hurl* spell into a small weapon so that when it is forcefully thrown or fired the spell will kick in. This also allows it to be used on arrows, crossbow bolts and similar projectile weapons. Add +Magic to the attack roll and to damage. Once used in a single attack, the enchantment ends. This cannot be used on melee weapons or larger projectiles.

LEVITATION: You can use *Tug* to float through the air at a walking pace. Traveling too high is asking to be eaten by a hawk or other predator, so it's best to stay close to cover. If your concentration ends, you will fall. Subtract the caster's Size*2 from their casting roll.

SHIELD (2 Points): This superior form of *Deflect Missile* erects a bubble of invisible force to stop incoming missiles for you or anyone else within arm's reach. You can roll Tug to try and block each missile *in addition* to your normal Dodge/Block. Subtract your Magic rating from any damage done, even from huge projectiles that cannot be deflected.

MAGICAL MICE

WHISPERS

This may be the least understood magical art. It deals with the spirit world and the ways in which it overlaps the mortal realm. It is always invisible to the naked eye.

WHAT IT CAN DO

Whispers magic can sense the world through magic, interact with spirits and communicate with others mentally.

WHAT IT CAN'T DO

Whispers magic cannot actually compel or divine the hidden thoughts of others.

EXAMPLE TRIVIAL SPELLS

MYSTIC MESSAGE: Deliver a short mental message to someone within arm's reach.

SEE SPIRITS: Close your eyes and see into the spirit world instead of the mortal one. The spirit world in a given area generally looks like a barren and colorless version of the real world, but spirits and powerful spells (Large Magicks and High Sorceries) will be visible as blurry glows.

EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

EXAMINE SPELL: Analyze an ongoing spell or magical charm to determine its nature and effects. The better you roll and the longer you study it, the more you can learn.

MENTAL CONVERSATION: Send psychic messages to someone in your line of sight or whose location is otherwise known to you. If you maintain it, they can "think back" if they wish. An unwilling subject can end the spell at will.

SCRY: Close your eyes and project your senses into a nearby area, so that you can study it as though you were there. Obvious things can be sensed automatically, while finding hidden things will require an *Alertness* roll. This can incorporate the *See Spirits* or *See Without Sight* effects. *Sixth Sense* can be used to detect scrying.

SEE WITHOUT SIGHT: Close your eyes and sense your surroundings as though you could see them clearly for as many paces out as the number rolled. This can readily compensate for blindness or complete darkness. The blind priests of Zakarvus often use this spell as a substitute for regular vision. If you open your eyes, your normal vision replaces this mystic vision until you close them again.

SEE THROUGH: The mage touches an opaque object and concentrates on this spell, causing it to become transparent to their eyes. This can even see through solid rock to a distance equal to the mage's Magic rating in paces. Spotting things may still require an *Alertness* roll.

EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

BROADCAST: Shout a mental message heard by everyone in the area (you can restrict it to certain types of people by taking a -2 penalty to your roll). While you can maintain this spell to continue speaking, no one can reply through it and doing so requires your full concentration.

PROPHECY: The mage enters a deep trance and attempts to extract information from the spirit world, usually about someone's future. Such information is rarely of immediate use and is often disquieting (see the *Doom* Balanced Trait). Often the full significance of a prophecy will only become obvious later. The subject must be present for this to work.

SEND DISTANT MESSAGE: This works like the *Mental Conversation* Small Magick, but can contact anyone whom you are familiar with regardless of the distance. Maintaining it requires your full concentration.

BANISH SPIRIT: This mental attack attempts to drive away a hostile spirit. If successful, the spirit will be forced away from the mortal plane for at least 24 hours. On a Critical Success, it may not be able to return to that particular area again. *Resisted with Leadership*.

WHISPER HIGH SORCERIES

ASTRAL JOURNEY (2 Points): Your spirit leaves your body and observes the real world as a ghost. You can travel at a walking speed or teleport to any familiar location or well-known person, but are invisible and intangible to mortal creatures. Magical creatures can harm the caster's mortal flesh as though it were present. If you wish to engage a spirit in combat, their effective Brawn is their Magic rating and their effective Agility is their Cleverness.

Two mages both on an *Astral Journey* may meet and converse and can even harm each other. This is quite dangerous, however, as spilling mortal blood in the spirit world can draw in predatory spirits (treat as bodiless Ghuls on an *Astral Journey* of their own). When the spell ends, the caster's spirit immediately snaps back into their body.

DARK PRAYER (0 Points!): Speak with the dark gods that inhabit the depths of the spirit world. A successfully struck bargain can produce miraculous effects, but always at a terrible cost. This spell is banned everywhere, but there are always spirits willing to whisper the secret to any willing to listen. See the *Forbidden Rites* section.

FAMILIAR ANIMAL (Enchantment): Establish a link with a small, unintelligent and non-hostile animal (small by mousy standards; nothing larger than a dragonfly). It becomes your familiar until it dies or you end the spell.

You have a permanent link with it and require no special effort to borrow its senses or give it commands; it can also send you very simple messages (like "Danger!") whenever it feels a need. Its Cleverness and Perception ratings added together must equal your Magic rating. It cannot talk.

IMMORTAL BLADE (Enchantment): Enchants a weapon or missile such that it adds the caster's Magic rating to any damage done to spirit creatures. There is no additional effect on living foes or inanimate objects. The caster can sense whenever the weapon has struck a spirit creature.

MARK OF MAGELLIAN (Enchantment): Creates a link between the caster and target so that the caster can always identify the target's general location with a Small Magick. *Unwilling targets resist with Leadership*.

MIND-RIDING: Link yourself to a target so that you see and hear using their senses instead of your own. This is easily broken by an uncooperative foe, but is subtle and may not be noticed. Maintaining it requires complete concentration and blocks out all sights and sounds around your real body. *Unwilling targets resist with Leadership*.

MAGICAL MICE

NEW SPELL EFFECTS

Here are some general guidelines to follow when creating or allowing players to create any new effects for the existing spells.

The new effect should meet these criteria:

1. It fits well with the spell's theme or existing spells.
2. It doesn't infringe on a different magical art.
3. It isn't *too* useful. Powers like mind-reading, teleportation or accurate precognition are out of the scope of mousy magic and should be reserved for higher-powered settings.

NEW TRIVIAL SPELLS

As a general rule, an effect is trivial if it doesn't work outside of arm's reach, can be broken by any real attempt to do so, and doesn't have a big game effect. Nothing *really* useful should be this easy; these effects should be both trivial in power and utility.

When a trivial effect starts to become really useful in some fashion, it becomes a Small Magick instead.

NEW SMALL MAGICKS

Small Magicks are often subtle and slow. They represent minor spells that don't consume a lot of energy and don't have a really strong effect. Just make sure that any new Small Magicks fit these criteria:

1. It seems like an action that a mousy mage would not have to throw a lot of energy into. If a mage were to cast it, you would imagine them doing so with an airy wave of a hand.
2. It is readily defeated by any real opposition.
3. If it's hard to explain why the PCs haven't seen other mages using this effect already, you can make it a High Sorcery Advantage instead. That way, you don't have to explain why no one else ever thought of it before.

NEW LARGE MAGICKS

Large Magicks are exhausting and always cost Fatigue. Most cannot be maintained and when they can, it's more draining than maintaining a Small Magick.

They are never *complicated* spells. A Large Magick is the equivalent of a sudden dash or a hay-maker... the mage is throwing all of their energy into a strong but crude effect.

1. Unlike a Small Magick, these spells should require a serious effort. If a mage cast it, you would image them gritting their teeth and obviously throwing everything that they had into it.
2. It isn't complicated or subtle. If so, it should probably be a High Sorcery instead.

NEW HIGH SORCERIES

High Sorceries are advanced techniques. They are difficult to perform, require secret knowledge and always cost Fatigue. They aren't necessarily more *powerful* than Large Magicks, they're just more complex.

ADVANTAGES: These modify your existing spells in some fashion, making them better but not more difficult. They may also add new effects that the mage can perform.

ENCHANTMENTS: Enchantments are a special kind of High Sorcery that lasts until the caster chooses to dispel it, without needing to be maintained. They can also be separated from the caster by any distance if need be. Enchantments are always bound into physical objects.

MAGIC VERSUS MAGIC

You can attempt to stop a spell by using the same skill to unravel it. This is a contest between the roll that created the original spell and the mage who wishes to stop it.

This special anti-spell is known as a Counter-spell. It is always the same class as the spell being attacked. Thus, countering a Small Magick is a Small Magick and countering a Large Magick is a Large Magick.

Countering a High Sorcery requires that the mage actually possess that High Sorcery themselves! If you can't duplicate a spell, you usually can't counter it.

If your first attempt to undo an ongoing spell fails, any further attempts will cost you an extra Fatigue.

MAGIC VERSUS OTHER THINGS

As a general rule, attempts to counter a magical effect that isn't a true spell should be handled as a contest between the mage's spell-casting ability and the magical effect.

Whether a counter-effect is a Trivial Spell, Small Magick, Large Magick or High Sorcery (or even a double-cost High Sorcery) is up to the GM. Consider how much effort it cost to create the effect and how powerful you think it is.

For example, creating heat with *Spark* to ward away the chill of being near a Frostmouse would probably be a Small Magick. It merely makes the mage comfortable in the spirit's vicinity. Creating a barrier that a Frostmouse will not cross, on the other hand, would probably be a Large Magick and require intense concentration to maintain. Thawing out one of their frozen victims safely might well be difficult enough to be treated as a High Sorcery or simply impossible.



EXAMPLES IN PLAY

THE FALLING APPRENTICE

GM: As you return home, you immediately notice that your would-be apprentice has *not* waited in the entryway for your return, as you requested. His stuff is still there, but he has apparently wandered off.

Milton: Ugh... can I find him?

GM: You hear some noises from your study.

Milton: Oh, no! That brat! I rush into the study.

GM: Rushing in, you see that the boy is trying to climb the high bookshelf in the back to get at your books of magic on the top shelf. Your sudden entrance startles him and he falls, clutching at the shelf and managing to pull the entire bookshelf crashing down after him! The fall itself won't do much since he's just a little mouse, but he's liable to be crushed by the heavy shelf if you don't do something to save him.

Milton: Aiigh! That tome with the *Dancing Blade* High Sorcery is up there, isn't it? Can I stop it with Tug?

GM: Sure, but the more you try to do, the harder it'll be. A Small Magick could snatch one book out before it hit the ground, but wouldn't be strong enough to save the kid. You don't have Focus, either, so it'll cost you a Fatigue. A Large Magick would be the same difficulty, but you could pull the kid out from under the falling bookshelf instead of a book.

Milton: Can I blow an extra Fatigue to grab multiple books?

GM: Sure. That would let you save all of the books, but if you use enough control to pull them out safely you won't have enough strength to grab the kid.

Milton: What about pulling him and the books to safety with a Large Magick?

GM: Large Magicks can't be very precise. You'll probably end up shredding the books if you yank them with enough force to pull the kid free too.

Milton: What's the difficulty to telekinetically catch the kid AND the books AND put the shelf back in place?

GM: Let's call that HARD to save the kid and the shelf (but the books still fall) or VERY HARD (and an extra Fatigue) to save everything with your masterful magic.

[Beginning PC] Milton: I've got the *Soft-Hearted* Flaw. I have to save the kid. But I'm going to use a Large Magick to put the *shelf* back into place. The kid can take his lumps from the rest of the fall; maybe he'll learn a lesson. [Rolls vs Difficulty 8 and spends 1 Fatigue.]

[Experienced PC] Milton: He's just lucky I never bought off *Soft-Hearted* or I'd just rescue the books. I want to awe him with my masterful control. I catch him, the books and the shelf in midair, then set him down lightly while I put the shelf back up and stack the books back in place. All while glaring at him *furiously*. [Rolls vs Difficulty 17 and spends 2 Fatigue.]

THE OLD MOUSE IN THE BAR

GM: The old mouse shudders at the mere thought of those shrews and refuses to discuss the ruins any further. It'll take a HARD *Charm* roll to get anything else out of him.

Milton: Bother. And my *Charm* roll is only +4. Hm. Well, if I take lots of time and buy him drinks....

GM: Take a +2 bonus.

Milton: I know... I'll use *Compel* to make him feel more like talking it out. Let's see... with a -1 for not gesturing openly, I got... 13.

GM: He gets an *Insight* roll to see if he realizes that something is up, but I'm giving him a -4 penalty due to drunkenness. Yeah, he failed. In fact, you got a Critical Success, so you get a +4 bonus.

Milton: "Old timer, you sound like you've got a story to tell and it might do you good to tell it." Rolling *Charm* with a total of +10... yeah, got a 17!

GM: "Youngster, you may feel brave here in this warm, snug tavern, but if you'd been with me and my fellows when we finally unblocked the entrance to that old cave and headed into the darkness, well! Let me tell you what we found in there and you'll know why you should stay away from there no matter what you've heard...."

THE BLOODY BONES

GM: In the back of the cave you find some debris and the source of the foul odor- there's a horribly mangled mouse corpse with dried blood all around it. Oddly, though it appears to be at least a week old, there are no maggots or flies around it.

Milton: Can I tell anything about how he died?

GM: He's been sliced up pretty badly, probably with a knife. Make a Typical *Alertness* roll.

Milton: Can I substitute *Medicine*?

GM: Sure.

Milton: Okay, regular success.

GM: It looks like he may have been sliced up as part of some occult ritual. His hands and feet look like they were bound at the time and what's left of his face makes it look like he died in extreme pain. But you can't tell who did it or why.

Milton: That doesn't sound like the sort of thing that would let a spirit rest easy... could I try *Whispers* magic to contact his soul?

GM: All right, that might work. Spend a Fatigue and roll it. The better you roll, the more info you can get.

Milton: Hm... total of 15. That's beats a HARD test at least.

GM: You hear a faint wailing cry and what seem like echoing screams. For a few moments, you can see the last thing that the victim saw- an enormous black rat wearing strange, golden robes standing over him with a knife, clearly chanting. Then it plunges towards your heart... and you wake up from the trance.

Milton: Okay, guys, I have a description at least. Let's go.

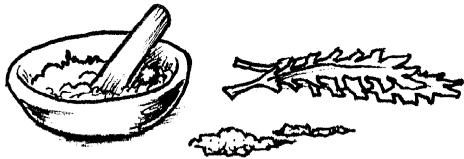
ADVENTURING RULES

This section provides simple rules for resolving some common adventuring tasks and game situations.

AIDING OTHER ROLLS

It's common for someone to want to combine two skills together such that one aids the other. The easiest way to handle this is to declare one skill to be the primary skill and the other the secondary. The character rolls a test against the secondary skill (generally against TYPICAL difficulty) and if they succeed they can then add a +2 bonus (add another +2 per Critical rolled) to the primary roll. On a failure they add nothing, and on a Critical Failure they actually make things worse (-2 to the primary roll).

ALCHEMY



Mousy herbalists have been able to devise many different chemical and medicinal concoctions over the years. Various curatives, healing salves and poisons can be made if one has the proper materials and a bit of training. Finding the materials generally requires a *Wilderness* roll; the most potent herbs only grow in isolated areas. Some common ingredients are poisonous mushrooms, odd fungal growths, the noxious compounds released by annoyed millipedes, and venoms extracted from small centipedes or scorpions.

Even if one knows the proper recipe and has all of the required ingredients (most of which need to be quite fresh), preparing it correctly requires a successful *Esoteric Lore* roll. The difficulty (and any effects of failure) varies according to what you're trying to prepare. With poisons, both Botches and Critical Failures tend to result in the would-be alchemist poisoning themselves. Even the shortest and simplest of alchemical substances generally takes at least an hour to prepare; it's not uncommon for one to require that the ingredients be distilled for *days* before the process is complete.

BOTCHES AND NATURAL TWOS

Whenever a character rolls a natural 2 on a check, they cannot spend a Hero Point to improve the results. Furthermore, if the attempt fails, the GM can declare a Botch. This is an additional mishap such as a minor injury, getting lost, dropping your weapon, et cetera, that is imposed upon the character. Botches should generally be annoying twists above and beyond simply doing badly on the roll.

Note that in the case where the character is so good at the task that even a 2 is still a success, the GM cannot declare a Botch- it's simply an unimpressive roll.

BRUSHFIRES

Large fires are *extremely dangerous* in this setting. A brushfire during the dry season spreads rapidly, burning off the dry grass and weeds and scorching the earth. Such a fire is beyond gigantic from a mousy perspective; it may stretch from horizon to horizon and travel as fast as the wind blows.

The relatively dry underbrush of the western Fallows are particularly vulnerable to fires. Communities there have extensive underground tunnels for the population to evacuate into in case of a wildfire. The town may have to be rebuilt, but at least the populace will survive.

Mice out in the underbrush are in considerably more danger. With no ready burrows and far from the sheltering waters of the lake, they can easily burn to death. Brushfires can burn for days if it doesn't rain.

Outracing a brushfire generally requires an Endurance check vs TYPICAL or even HARD difficulty. Those who fail suffer 1d6 damage (ignoring all armor) from burns, take 1 Fatigue and must repeat the test. If they become Exhausted or fall unconscious, the fire will overtake them and they will die unless rescued by someone else.

An alternative is to dig a shelter and wait out the fire, but it needs to be deep to survive the heat and lack of oxygen. Digging a burrow in time is often a HARD or VERY HARD Digging test, depending on how far away the fire is and how rapidly it is approaching.

Characters familiar with the region may receive bonuses for knowing where to find the nearest shelter. A barren spot without any grass to burn or an abandoned tunnel can be a life-safer, if the characters can reach it in time.

CLIMBING

Scaling a wall, tree or large plant requires an Acrobatics roll against the appropriate difficulty level. Unlike most actions, failures can be re-rolled by spending Fatigue; only a Critical Failure normally means that the character falls (see the *Falling Damage* entry in this section).

Mice and rats are good climbers, so climbing trees and other plants are usually EASY tasks. Mice and rats sometimes build their homes in trees like birds, in order to be better protected from predators.

Some example difficulties are given below:

- Trees and other large plants: EASY or Automatic
- Rocks or thorny plants: TYPICAL
- Riggings of a masted ship during a storm: TYPICAL
- Slick rocks: HARD
- Walls that have been deliberately constructed with spikes and ledges to keep climbers out (very common in fortresses): VERY HARD
- Spider webs: NIGH IMPOSSIBLE

Some common modifiers:

- Ropes and proper climbing equipment: +2
- You've climbed it before: +2
- Light Rain: -2
- Heavy Rain: -4

COMBINING EFFORT

For some tasks, it makes sense that a number of characters working together should get better results than any one of them could alone.

Everyone rolls separately. The highest result is treated as the "real" roll. They then receive a +2 bonus for every other mouse who managed to at least tie the difficulty. Someone who fails by 3 points or less (basically, one difficulty class lower than normal) still adds a +1 bonus.

If anyone botches or critically fails, though, they may end up screwing up the entire attempt, depending on the circumstances. As a general rule, apply a -2 penalty to the highest roll for each Critical Failure that occurred. At some point, it's wisest for characters who don't know what they're doing to just stay out of the way.

Botches on combined efforts generally mean that the character who botched not only added a -2 to the result, they suffered some sort of additional mishap, such as getting separated from the group or injuring themselves.

DIGGING

Both mice and rats are natural diggers and have the instinctive skills necessary to excavate or expand their burrows in times of need. This is looked down upon as a lower-class skill, but even the upper-classes occasionally want their wine cellar expanded. Any construction of this sort uses the Digging skill and no special tools are required (although they might grant bonuses).

As some examples, Digging can be used to aid Stealth by digging shallow holes to lay in, Feats of Strength by loosening the soil around something heavy that needs to be moved, or Wilderness by digging out temporary shelters.

It's also possible to use Digging to construct pit traps or moats to aid in the defense of an area.

DOMESTICATING ANIMALS

As a general rule, training an animal to tolerate rats and mice and obey them requires starting when it is born. The trainer will roll Wilderness to try and instill the desired behaviors in the animal and to overcome its natural instincts. The difficulty is determined by how readily trained the creature is; insects are generally TYPICAL difficulty, small herbivores HARD, birds VERY HARD and anything else NIGH IMPOSSIBLE or simply impossible. Increase the difficulty by a class if the animal is already grown, instead of being raised since birth.

Only herbivores and insectivores can really be tamed in the setting of **Hyperborean Mice**. Trying to train a predator capable of eating a mouse or rat is generally suicide, and the only way to even partially tame one requires keeping it very well-fed. Even then, you're going to find that your neighbors are petitioning to your social superiors to have the damned thing destroyed before it gets loose and *eats* someone.

FALLING DAMAGE

One side effect of the scale of **Hyperborean Mice** is that falling simply isn't as dangerous for a mouse or rat as it is for a human. A falling mouse or rat takes only 1 point of damage and 1 Fatigue for a "serious" fall (meaning the sort

of fall that would seriously injure a human equivalent, like falling off a roof). Your Armor Rating (including the innate armor for your Size) is *added* to the damage done, rather than subtracted.

If you manage to fall more than 5 feet, the damage becomes 1d4 and 1 Fatigue and is multiplied by the distance of the fall in feet divided by 10 (rounded up), to a maximum of 5d4 and 5 Fatigue for falls of 50 feet or more. Of course, for a mouse to fall more than 10 feet (120 paces), they'll probably have to climb a tree first. A mouse who falls from the tallest tree in the forest may well limp home; a human would probably die.

The damage taken is modified by what you land on. Soft ground and brush could halve or even quarter the damage and the Fatigue taken. Hard surfaces such as rocks add +2 to each die. Sharp spikes or similarly lethal surfaces add appropriate weapon damage.

Characters who are acrobatically inclined may roll Acrobatics to land more gracefully. On a HARD Acrobatics check, subtract 10 feet from the effective distance fallen.

FEAR TESTS

Some creatures are particularly frightening, whether due to their huge size or their magical nature. These tests can also be called for by mundane dangers like walking along a rope or deliberately taking a dangerous fall.

To face a terrifying peril, the character must roll Courage against the assigned difficulty. Someone who fails a fear test involving a monster will be at -2 to all rolls involving it *other* than attempts to flee from it. Those who critically fail will flee in a mindless panic and will be paralyzed with fear if cornered by it. Against inanimate dangers, the character will be at -2 to any rolls (or simply be unable to convince themselves to risk it on a Critical Failure).

A character who has failed a Fear Test may spend a Hero Point (now or at a later point) to try and shake off the fear, granting them another opportunity to roll the test. The new result cannot be worse than the original.

Some specific monsters are so terrifying that they pretty much always require a Courage roll in order to face one in battle, but any serious threat can require a Courage check *if* the danger is easily avoided.

Some examples:

- Jumping over a potentially lethal trap: EASY
- Running into a burning building: TYPICAL
- Offering yourself up to a deadly predator: HARD

The GM should, however, keep mundane Fear Tests to a bare minimum and only apply them when it really seems appropriate. Most players want their characters to be heroic and insisting on a Courage check every time that they want to take a risk makes them seem like cowards.

HUNTING

Hunting for specific prey entails traveling to a region where it is found, then rolling Tracking to find one, Stealth to approach it and Ranged Attack to try and bring it down.

While there is good money in hunting for exotic game to fill the bellies of the upper classes, it also involves leaving the well traveled areas for those with more and more dangerous predators.

JUMPING GAPS

Jumping across a gap is an Acrobatics roll. The difficulty is set by the distances involved. As a general rule, with a running jump a character can cover as a number of paces/inches equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of their roll plus one. For jumping mice, substitute *feet* for inches. In general, if a jumping mouse needs to roll, other races won't be able to make the jump at all and if other races can reasonably jump across it then a jumping mouse can do so without rolling.

On a *Tie* result, the character barely grabs onto the other side and must spend their next action pulling themselves the rest of the way up.

On a *Failure* they fall short and end up barely clinging to the other side by their paws and dangling over whatever danger lies below. They must make a TYPICAL or even HARD *Feats of Strength* or *Acrobatics* check (or receive a helping hand) to scramble the rest of the way up.

On a *Critical Failure* or worse, they fall well short and simply fall. If they have a friend trying to catch them from the other side, you can give that character a single TYPICAL difficulty *Grab/Throw* check to grab their outstretched paw and then a *Feats of Strength* or *Acrobatics* check as per above to pull them to safety.

OPENING LOCKS

Actual locks are rare outside of ancient ruins and the homes of the wealthy. Commoners are much more likely to rely on hiding their valuables rather than locking them up.

Picking a lock is a *Thievery* roll against the difficulty of bypassing the lock, but it's generally at *least* one difficulty class lower than bashing the lock open with a *Feats of Strength* roll. Picking a lock is generally a TYPICAL or HARD roll, whereas bashing open a reinforced door or chest can be VERY HARD or NIGH IMPOSSIBLE. Mice don't have the proper technology to make really secure locks, but making them out of strong metal is easy.

Without actual lock-picks, the character must use makeshift ones and will be at -2 to their roll. Each attempt takes several minutes and if a failure is rolled then the character cannot retry unless something changes.

PICKING POCKETS

Resolved as a contest between the thief's *Thievery* and the victim's *Alertness*. Wise thieves arrange for someone else to distract the victim before they make the attempt, granting them a +2 to +4 bonus. Crowds also help; when people are constantly being jostled by others, the thief gets a +1 bonus to relieve them of their belongings.

Mice and rats generally don't have actual *pockets*, so this generally entails lifting small items hung from belts, particularly coin-purses. Stealing heavy items will alert the target immediately even if the thief succeeds. Solidly attached items may require the use of a knife to cut them free (thus the term "cut-purse").

The legal penalties applied to cut-purses are quite severe. It's generally a case of a commoner stealing from someone of higher social status and the higher the victim's status, the worse the penalty called for. Punishments range from serious beatings to being sold into slavery or executed outright. But even when a pickpocket is publicly executed, there will always be more cut-purses working the crowd.

REPEATING TASKS

As a general rule, characters in **Hyperborean Mice** don't get to re-roll tasks over and over until they succeed. A single attempt is normally all you get (although spending Hero Points to re-roll your dice can help). If you fail, something has to change (a different approach, a new tool, etc.) before you can try again.

If the task is the sort of action where success *is* inevitable, then the GM should use the result rolled to determine how long it takes. For example, if a character is digging a burrow and has effectively unlimited time in which to do it, a failed check may mean that it takes them longer than it should have, and a critically failed check might indicate that the structure is still unstable.

In certain circumstances, the GM may offer you the option of spending a Fatigue in order to press on and try again. And don't forget that Hero Points can be spent to reroll the dice immediately, as part of the same action.

RIDING

Just staying on the back of a riding beetle or a similar easy-going mount is an EASY riding check or automatically successful. One that's upset is a TYPICAL riding check. Staying on the back of a *bird* is generally a HARD or even VERY HARD check.

Unfortunately for rat characters, only riding rabbits are large enough to carry them around and those are generally restricted to the upper nobility. Neither crows nor pigeons are strong enough to carry a rat in the air and the larger birds in the area are all predators.

Each ride-able creature's description in the *Bestiary* sets the difficulties for controlling and staying on the creature's back if it becomes upset. Characters thrown from their mount can roll *Acrobatics* to scramble back to their feet without losing an action. Otherwise they generally suffer at most 1 damage and/or 1 Fatigue from the impact. Since mice and rats are highly resistant to falling damage, landing on a soft surface is generally harmless.

RUNNING AND SCURRYING

As a general rule, a character can run up to 8 paces in a single combat round, where a "pace" is a distance about an inch across. To see if you can outrun a foe, use a contest of *Speed* checks instead.

Mice and rats can both *scurry* if they need to. This means dropping to all fours and running like a feral mouse does. This increases the the distance that you can travel to 16 paces but means that you can't carry anything in your paws and can't be wearing or carrying anything that's seriously encumbering like armor.

Scurrying is seen as a disgraceful and embarrassing act in general, like soiling oneself in fright. It's generally only done by mice who are in an utter panic. Even little children are encouraged to walk upright like a proper mouse instead of scurrying along like some sort of animal.

Forsaken mice are more prone to scurrying than others and are often ashamed of the fact. It's not unknown for a forsaken rodent to suddenly drop to all fours and scurry away when surprised, then just as suddenly run back and beat the snot out of whoever embarrassed them by startling them in that fashion.

SIXTH SENSE

The *Sixth Sense* skill represents a mystical awareness of danger and magic. As such, it depends more upon the character's Magic rating than their Perception.

In the event of an ambush, *Sixth Sense* can be rolled vs TYPICAL difficulty to determine whether or not characters are surprised and lose their first turn of combat. On a Critical Success, they can roll initiative and act normally. On a Success, they do not get to act, but their defense rolls are not penalized for being caught off guard. On a Failure or worse, the character suffers a -4 penalty for being caught completely off guard.

Characters can also *request* a *Sixth Sense* roll if they want to spend a few moments probing their feelings carefully. The difficulty is often TYPICAL, but may be harder for subtler dangers and enchantments.

On a regular Success, the character has a vague feeling about whether or not there are any unseen dangers or invisible magical effects in their vicinity. On a Critical Success, they may be able to narrow the source of the feeling down to a small area, such as a specific corridor, statue or perhaps a direction.

Characters with the *Seer* Balanced Trait have outright visions when they roll a Critical Success on a *Sixth Sense* check (or spend 1 Fatigue on a merely successful one). These out-of-body moments can give more detailed information about potential dangers ("You see a vision of yourself walking down the westward corridor, when you hit a pressure plate in the floor and something horrific happens to you. You snap awake.") but leave the character weak and distracted for the duration of the vision or longer.

SOCIAL COMBAT

Arguments, trials, extensive bouts of haggling and such sometimes deserve more than a single die roll. In such cases, you can have the characters make opposed skill checks and use the following system to determine the results. Usually both characters will roll *Charm*, although the exact skill(s) used will vary according to the situation.

- One character rolls a Critical Success: they win. No further rolls are necessary.
- One character rolls a Success: they are winning, but their opponent can spend 1 Fatigue to extend the contest and draw out the argument, assuming that time permits.
- The opponents Tie: there is no clear victor. Both characters must pay 1 Fatigue to continue the argument, assuming that time permits. If only one pays, they win by default.

Remember that each character will get to add their Social Status to their roll under most circumstances. In a society with strict social rankings, it's hard to argue effectively against your social superiors.

Some exceptions: if a character is successfully pretending to be a member of a lower (or higher) Social Status, they would use that Social Status bonus (or penalty) instead of their own. Also, if characters were, for example, being put on trial by a rebel group that hated the nobility, each character's Social Status might be *subtracted* from their roll instead of added to it.



STEALTH AND AMBUSHES

You can get a substantial combat advantage on a foe by sneaking up on them or laying an ambush.

To sneak up behind a target is a contest between your *Stealth* and their *Alertness* (if their *Sixth Sense* is higher, they can substitute that). If you win, their defense rolls for the first round are at -4 and you get to add a further +2 to your first attack per Critical Success. Anyone who is caught off-guard in this manner loses their first action to surprise.

An ambush is similar, but involves finding a good location and then lying in wait. Roll *Stealth*, often plus a +2 or even +4 bonus for taking lots of time and having lots of cover. A suspicious target can ask for an *Alertness* roll to spot any signs of something amiss. Anyone who doesn't spot you or who didn't think to ask for a roll gets to roll *Sixth Sense* as well. If your *Stealth* roll beat both rolls, then you can act as above; otherwise, they will be warned. You may still get a bonus for a well-chosen spot to attack from (like having the high ground when using missile weapons), though.

SWIMMING

Mice and rats can instinctively swim and the talking mice of the Fallows have not lost this trait. No special training is required to use the *Swimming* skill.

A critically failed *Swimming* check can result in the character starting to drown. A drowning character suffers 1 Fatigue per round. Once Exhausted, they suffer 1d4 drowning damage per round instead. Once they pass out, however, the damage stops and if rescued they can be revived with a HARD *Medicine* check. If washed ashore, have them make *Endurance* checks each hour to wake up.

The difficulty varies depending on conditions. The depth of Greatwater means that swimming there is *never* EASY and in stormy weather may be VERY HARD.

TRACKING

Attempting to follow someone is generally a contest between your *Tracking* and their *Stealth* or *Wilderness*. The better you roll, the more details you can extract from the trail. Increase the difficulty if the tracks are old.

- EASY: Finding tracks in fresh snow or soft earth.
- TYPICAL: Finding tracks in dirt.
- HARD: Finding tracks in rocky terrain or buried amidst many other tracks (such as on a city street).
- VERY HARD: Finding tracks on stone floors.
- IMPOSSIBLE: Tracking a flying creature.

TRAPS

Sixth Sense can be rolled to tell you whether there are any hidden dangers (such as traps) in your vicinity, but won't help you actually find them.

Alertness is used to actually search an area or object for the presence of traps, *Engineering* to analyze how they are triggered and what they do and *Thievery* is used to disarm them. On a critical failure on *Alertness* or *Thievery*, the character may well end up triggering the trap by accident.

SPRING BLADES: a large blade or spike that's been tied back and set to stab forward when something triggers a trip-wire or pressure plate. This is treated as an attack roll matching the designer's *Engineering* skill against the defender's *Dodge* (usually with a +4 bonus for surprise). If the attack hits, it often does 2d6 damage (+1d6 and *pinned* for each Critical Success). Pinned characters have been stabbed through and can't extract themselves without taking another 1d6 damage, although other people can still free them safely.

POISON NEEDLES: a small spike that can't inflict much damage on its own and so instead is coated with a suitably nasty poison. These work like spring blades, but generally don't do more than 1 point of damage themselves. Instead, a victim must make an *Endurance* check against the poison, which can often be quite powerful.

PITFALLS: a section of floor opens up to drop the intruder onto spikes or into a cell. Not all that popular among mice since predators like snakes can generally just slither over the gap unharmed. Someone who triggers a pitfall must make an *Acrobatics* roll against the designer's *Engineering* (usually with a +4 bonus for surprise) or fall in.

ALARMS: triggering a trip-wire or pressure plate rings a bell, drops a bunch of stones onto something hard or otherwise makes a lot of noise and alerts the guards. If a character triggers one of these, there's generally nothing they can do except run for it. Old, poorly maintained traps often turn into alarms when the mechanism jams and just makes a loud, nasty noise instead of killing the intruder.

WARFARE

Sometimes characters will find themselves embroiled in huge battles that would take many hours to play out normally. If you just want a quick summary of how well a character performs in a large battle, here are some possible rules to resolve huge struggles quickly.

The GM sets a difficulty for the battle as a whole, representing how intense the fighting is. Each character then makes 4 separate rolls against that difficulty to sum up how well they did.

1. *Courage* for how well you faced up to the chaos.
2. Your primary attack skill (generally *Melee*, *Thrown*, *Ranged* or an appropriate *Spell*) for how much damage you inflicted on the foe.
3. *Dodge* for how well you avoided enemy attacks.
4. Another skill that the GM agrees would allow you to contribute to the fight, such as *Leadership* (helping with strategy), *Stealth* (sneaking past enemy forces) or even *Perform* (keeping up morale) depending on the situation.

For each failed roll, you suffer a cumulative 1d6 damage, so a character who fails all four suffers 4d6 damage. Your Armor Rating subtracts from this normally; it's treated as a single large attack.

The four rolls can be made in any order that seems sensible. Furthermore, the character can drop out of the fight rather than continuing to roll, if they wish. This entails surrendering to the enemy, retreating behind fortifications, pretending to be unconscious or otherwise abandoning the struggle. Stop rolling there and apply any damage from earlier failures now. There may be other consequences, however, especially if your side loses the overall battle.

Each Success rolled is worth 1 Glory point; each Critical Success or better is worth 2. A Failure subtracts 1 and a Critical Failure subtracts 2. Dropping out of the fight subtracts 2 for each roll that was skipped.

GLORY TOTALS PER INDIVIDUAL:

- **-8:** what, did you run and hide before the fight even started? You may be charged with desertion or other crimes for your actions in battle.
- **-7 to -4:** shame and degradation. Other survivors will probably blame any defeats on you.
- **-3 to 0:** poor. You didn't cost them the battle, but you didn't win it, either.
- **+1 to +3:** serviceable but unimpressive performance.
- **+4 to +8:** increasingly glorious performance! If there are rewards or medals distributed afterwards, you'll be in line.

If a *majority* of the PCs end up dropping out of the fight or are rendered unconscious (or worse) by the damage at the end, the overall battle may well be lost.

WILDERNESS SURVIVAL

The Wilderness skill is the primary skill by which rats and mice can survive out in the wilds. Tracking can assist Wilderness rolls, but mostly by finding prey to hunt and noting the presence of predators.

As a general rule, the difficulty of the roll to find sufficient food, water and shelter when traveling depends heavily on the current **weather conditions**.

- Spring or Summer: EASY
- Fall or Spring/Summer Storm: TYPICAL
- Fall Storm: HARD
- Winter: VERY HARD
- Winter Storm: NIGH IMPOSSIBLE

Most traveling groups will use the Combining Effort rules when navigating the wilderness. Particularly hazardous areas like Murkwater can add +2 or more to the difficulty.

If the roll falls short, all characters take 1 Fatigue and cannot rest or heal naturally that day. Furthermore, they must each roll an *Endurance* test against the same difficulty every 6 hours or take another Fatigue. This test must be repeated until the party manages to find shelter or dies. One characters run out of Fatigue, they start to take 1d4 damage instead; these points of internal damage cannot be treated with magical healing or healing salve, but must be healed naturally... which means first getting to a secure shelter where they actually *can* rest.

COMBAT GEAR

EXAMPLE MELEE WEAPONS

Each is listed with its cost category, damage, any special Bonuses it can claim and any additional notes. Damage is usually a stat plus a die roll. If the damage lists multiple stats, use the *highest* when calculating the results.

- **Axe:** Common, Brawn+1d6, can be thrown
Extra Bonuses: Hack
- **Battle Axe:** Common, Brawn+1d6+2, two-handed
Extra Bonuses: Hack
- **Club:** Crude, Brawn+1d4
Extra Bonuses: Smash
- **Club, Thorn:** Crude, Brawn+1d3, made from thorny bramble and a favorite of many barbarian clans
Extra Bonuses: Hack, Smash
- **Halberd:** Expensive, Brawn+1d6+2, two-handed, extra pace's reach
Extra Bonuses: None
- **Knife, Metal:** Common, Agility/Brawn/Per +1d4, +4 to conceal, can be thrown. Also called a dagger.
Extra Bonuses: Hack, Impale
- **Knife, Thorn:** A make-shift dagger made from a sharpened plant thorn or similar implement. Crude, Agility/Brawn+1d3, +4 to conceal
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- **Mace, Wooden:** Common, Brawn+1d4+1
Extra Bonuses: Smash
- **Mace, Metal:** Expensive, Brawn+1d4+2
Extra Bonuses: Smash
- **Punch or Kick:** Brawn/2*+1d3 or Grab
Extra Bonuses: Shove, Grapple
- **Bite:** Only usable on a grabbed foe. Brawn+1d4
Extra Bonuses: Hack
- **Shield, Wooden:** Common, +1 to parry. A shield slam does Brawn+1d3
Extra Bonuses: Shove
- **Shield, Metal:** Expensive, +1 to parry, +2 vs wooden weapons or unarmed attacks. A shield slam does Brawn+1d4
Extra Bonuses: Shove
- **Spear:** Common, Brawn+1d6, can be thrown, two-handed, extra pace's reach
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- **Staff:** Common, Brawn+1d4, +1 to parry
Extra Bonuses: Smash
- **Sword:** Expensive, Agility/Brawn+1d6+1
Extra Bonuses: Hack, Impale

If your Brawn rating is negative, do not halve it. A jumping mouse's kick does Brawn+1d3 and has the special Combat Bonus of **Superior Shove instead.*

EXAMPLE ARMOR

Mice don't wear much armor and when they do it tends to be more trouble than it's worth. Armor penalizes Dodge and all regular Agility skills. You cannot *scurry* (move on all fours at double speed) while wearing armor.

SHELL ARMOR: Makeshift armor made from lizard scales, beetle shells, and the scutes from dead turtles. +2 Armor Rating, -2 Armor Penalty, Crude.

LEATHER PLATES: Reinforced leather plates strapped to the body. +2 Armor Rating, -1 Armor Penalty, Common.

CHAINMAIL: A chain tunic worn over the body. Armor Rating +3, Armor Penalty -2, Expensive.

PLATEMAIL: Metal plates strapped to the body. Armor Rating +5, Armor Penalty -4, Very Expensive. Very exhausting to wear; at the end of every stressful activity like fighting or running, the user loses 1 Fatigue.

EXAMPLE THROWN WEAPONS

These weapons are intended only for throwing. Thrown weapons are at long range beyond 4 paces, at extreme beyond 8 and cannot go further than 12.

- **Thrown Rock:** Crude, Brawn/Perception+1d3
Extra Bonuses: Smash
- **Throwing Spike:** Thorn tips, sharpened stones or similar items hurled at a foe's vitals. Crude, Perception+1d3, +6 to conceal
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- **Throwing Blade:** Sharp metal disks, often star-shaped. Common, Perception+1d4, +6 to conceal
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- **Throwing Wedge:** A half or full wheel of thin metal with sharpened edges. Similar to a throwing blade, but too large to be readily concealed. Expensive, Brawn/Perception+1d6+1
Extra Bonuses: Hack

EXAMPLE MISSILE WEAPONS

Weapons that fire small projectiles at great speed. Missile weapons are at long range beyond 8 paces, extreme beyond 16 and cannot go further than 24.

- Sling: Crude, Perception+1d4
Extra Bonuses: Smash, Range: 8/16/24
- Light Bow: Common, Perception+1d6
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- Heavy Bow: Expensive, Perception+1d6+2, Requires Brawn of +2 or better
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- Crossbow: Expensive, Perception+1d6+2, +2 to hit but needs Brawn +1 and a Focus Action to reload
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- Heavy Crossbow: Expensive, Perception+2d6, +2 to hit but requires your complete attention for a full turn (no other actions) to reload, requires Brawn +3 or better just to crank it back up
Extra Bonuses: Impale

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

BOOKS AND PAPER

Crude paper and inks are Common items, although most commoners prefer to save their money for more practical things. Actual bound books with relatively high quality paper are Expensive items. More esoteric or high quality tomes may climb to being Very Expensive.

REFERENCE BOOKS

Scholarly treatises which can grant a +2 bonus to appropriate knowledge skills are Expensive items. Since all books are hand-written, many are completely unique. If a tome proves to be particularly valuable, you can pay scribes (often acolytes of Magellian) to make multiple copies of it, but only the most desirable of tomes are regularly copied and reprinted. Using such a tome's bonus requires taking extra time to perform any tasks in question, as you regularly refer back to the volume while doing so.

RELIGIOUS TEXTS

These collections of stories, philosophies and rituals add a +2 bonus to appropriate Esoteric Lore rolls, but they are also commonly embossed, engraved, gilded or otherwise decorated in very elaborate ways. The upper classes often strive to impress each other with their piety by commissioning more and more ostentatious and expensive versions of common religious texts.

Some religious texts have been judged heretical or dangerous and have been banned. Possession of these is often regarded as a crime by the church, with the exact penalties depending upon the text in question.

TOMES OF SORCERY

Advanced magical techniques are particularly valuable. A book containing the necessary information to learn a High Sorcery will be a Very Expensive item, if it is available for sale at all. High Sorceries are quite complex and most volumes can only fit a single one within their pages. A mage with the correct basic spell can identify the nature of a High Sorcery in a tome by rolling their Spell skill vs TYPICAL difficulty. This is vital because there are at least as many fake tomes of magic in existence as genuine ones.

A character who wishes to use a tome of sorcery must first possess the appropriate magical skill that it depends upon. It is impossible to even make sense of a book on Levitation if you don't possess the Tug spell in the first place, although any mage will be able to tell that it involves some sort of advanced magic.

Someone who does possess the Tug power already can tell exactly what High Sorcery is contained therein and can even make some use of it before they've even spent any XP on it. By pouring over the tome intently for an hour and spending two extra Fatigue, they can make a casting check at -2 to try and cast that spell. Critical failures here tend to have bad consequences, though, as the character is dabbling in magical arts that they don't truly understand.

Hyperborean Mice

CANDLES

These simple light sources are made by mixing fuel with beeswax and then adding a wick that controls the rate at which the fuel is consumed. Unfortunately, they tend to burn quite rapidly at a mousy scale and often have to be much larger (in comparison to the character) than a human-scale candle. Ordinary candles are a Common item.

CLIMBING GEAR

Grappling hooks, pitons and other accessories to aid climbers. Wooden versions are Common items and add a +2 to climbing checks, whereas metal ones add a +4 and are Expensive.

CLOTHING

Mice and rats require little in the way of protective clothing (save in the middle of winter, when even the heaviest clothing will not save a mouse from freezing to death outdoors), but popular decorum requires that everyone wear at least one sort of garment or adornment. A "naked" mouse or rat appears to be nothing more than a wild, mindless rodent, a most shameful state indeed!

Garments are available in every price range. Even an Impoverished character can afford a scrap of soiled cloth with a hole for their head. The wealthy buy Expensive clothes or jewelry, but the mark of the truly rich are the enormously elaborate Very Expensive outfits that are so frail that they require constant cleaning and repair to keep them from falling apart. Royal mice with such garb have servants follow them to ensure that their silken embroidery does not actually touch the ground and to retrieve any gemstones that happen to work their way free.

FLINT

Small chunks of flint are mined in Dugar and sold across the Fallows. These shards of rock are prized because they throw sparks when struck against a hard surface.

Flint shards are used to light candles, torches, lanterns and even to start campfires. In fact, the sparks produced are large enough on a mousy scale to inflict painful burns on anyone who manages to set their own fur alight. A simple chunk of flint is a Crude item, while one that comes in a special case or attached to a handle is generally a Common one. The upper classes often use Expensive tinderboxes which have both flint and metal plates to strike it against as well as fancy decorations.

LANTERNS

Metal oil lamps are the most commonly encountered sort of lantern in the Fallows. A reservoir of fish-oil is used as fuel to provide steady light for up to a day's use. Basic lanterns are Common items; they last longer than torches, but cannot be used as weapons without destroying them.

The upper classes often purchase particularly fancy models with inlaid glass and filigree designs. These Expensive items look pretty but don't produce any extra light. The truly wealthy may invest in glass spheres that have been enchanted with the *Eternal Light* spell, but such items are Very Expensive and may cease to work without warning if the mage who crafted them dies or recalls their spell.

LOCK-PICKS

Generally hand-carved pieces of bone shaped a bit like keys. These are used to jimmy open locks. Without them, claws, twigs and other make-shift lock-picks can be used instead at -2. Lock-picks are a Common item. High quality metal lock-picks add a +2 bonus to all attempts to open a lock and are an Expensive item instead.

MAPS

Maps range from Common to Expensive items, depending upon the level of detail and the quality of the workmanship. In general, a good map adds a +4 bonus to Sailing, Streetwise or Wilderness rolls to find your way to a specific location. The problem with maps is that they may become outdated if the area changes significantly. Cities are often constantly being built and rebuilt, while wilderness areas can be surprisingly changeable on a mousy scale. A good rainy season can reroute streams or wash out rocks, removing landmarks and rendering old maps useless.

Travellers can often earn a little cash by updating a cartographer on changes in the roads and landscape.

MIRRORS

Basically a carefully shined and polished disk of soft metal. Useful for signaling people, glancing around corners without exposing yourself or just personal grooming. Mirrors are an Expensive item.

PETS

Pets are most common amongst the upper classes. Keeping an animal that doesn't earn its own keep is a luxury that the poor often simply can't afford. The very wealthy, on the other hand, can hire experts to tend, train or even magically control their prized animals.

Amongst the upper crust of Fallows society, pets are often a status symbol. White Lords in more prosperous regions sometimes strive to impress their guests with their menagerie of exotic or even dangerous creatures.

Crickets and beetles are easily tamed and are so widely owned that most nobles scorn them. They prefer more impressive and exotic creatures such as bumblebees, mantids or small frogs. Many insects can be inured to mousy company by the judicious use of food rewards and *Compel* magic, but they quickly go wild again if allowed to grow too hungry.



RIDING BEETLES

Any of several breeds of over-sized beetles that are bred as beasts of burden and mounts. They are raised in special farms from egg to grub to adult and require several years to reach adulthood. Males have large and ornate horns and are favored as mounts by the upper classes, while females are smaller, hornless, and used as beasts of burden. They are quite strong and almost tireless, but very stupid.

Riding beetles are an Expensive item. They require training to care for and must be fed specially prepared mush to give them enough fortitude to travel long distances. Without proper care they accumulate parasites, sicken, and eventually die. Peasants often scrimp and save to purchase or rent just one to help them plow fields or pull rocks out of the ground. Well treated, a healthy riding beetle can live up to four years, with a few specimens lasting to five.

RIDING PIGEONS

Of all of the birds of the Fallows, only pigeons have been found to make good mounts. Predators are simply too dangerous, crows too willful and smaller birds too weak. But a pigeon, properly trained from birth, can bear the weight of a lightly equipped mouse and his riding gear without too much trouble.

Only Muscala maintains a large force of pigeon riders, quartered at the great Aerie near the Imperial Palace. In other kingdoms, they are generally an toy of the very rich, who maintain one or perhaps two as a demonstration of their wealth. Even then, there is always the risk of a passing hawk devouring both rider and mount.

Riding pigeons are a Very Expensive item. They require regular training supplemented by magic to prevent them from reverting to wildness and their lairs require constant cleaning. Without such diligence, any location where they are kept will quickly become so foul and filthy as to be hazardous to the health of anyone who enters.

A pigeon that is wounded will panic, making it considerably more difficult to control. Reclaiming a run-away pigeon is not as difficult as it sounds, however; the owner generally just needs to go back to its nesting ground and wait for it to return. Their homing instinct is quite strong and a lost pigeon that does not return within a day is probably dead.

RIDING RABBITS

These enormous animals have been imported from Fashar by a handful of nobles more interested in prestige than practicality. They require a lot of special care and are much more difficult to control with magic than other mounts. However, they are also the only mount available that is large enough to carry rat characters.

Elaborate harnesses are strapped to them to allow the pilot to control the animal and other passengers to ride in comfort. However, because of the enormous speeds that they can attain, staying on one can be quite difficult and they tend to panic if wounded or attacked.

Reclaiming a runaway rabbit can be quite difficult, as they can run across entire kingdoms in a few hours and are prone to running off and digging a new burrow somewhere else. A noble who loses a rabbit can be held liable for any damage that it does to the estates or property of other nobles, so reclaiming a runaway is extremely important.

ROPES

Woven from plant fibers, long ropes strong enough to support a rat's weight are not particularly difficult to come by in the Fallows. They are a Common item. Silken cords imported from Fashar are much lighter and actually stronger than regular rope, but are Expensive items.

A character bound by silken cords is at -2 to escape from them, regardless of whether they use *Feats of Strength* or *Contortionist*.

SAILING VESSELS

Ordinary little canoes are an Expensive item, whereas full-fledged boats require an actual crew and are Very Expensive items. A cheap raft (unsuitable for any kind of rough weather) is only a Common item, but is no substitute for a real boat.

Even the best vessels are quite vulnerable to strong gusts of wind, which occur with unsettling frequency out in the open on Greatwater Lake. Keeping a vessel from capsizing or being thrown off of course requires a Sailing roll against an appropriate difficulty. Characters who attempt to help and roll a Critical Failure may be swept overboard; those who cower in the hold are generally safe, but they're depending on others to keep the ship upright. If the ship should capsize, it will generally float unless heavily overloaded.

SIEGE ENGINES

Catapults and ballistae are often found in larger cities and in the fortresses of royals. These enormous weapons are intended for waging war against other military forces or to fight off particularly large predators. The ancient cats that laid waste to Firstholme found no serious defenses; their later kin who tried to do the same to Haven found that many small openings in the walls concealed a loaded ballista behind them!

Loading and aiming a siege engine requires several trained operators and uses the Engineering skill of the person in charge for its attack roll. They often inflict 4d6 damage or more (with a +2d6 bonus per crit) but it can take several minutes to prepare one and several minutes more before an opportunity to fire presents itself. A well-concealed one (such as the hidden ballistae favored by most walled cities) can grant a +4 bonus to hit if the crew waits until the target steps in front of their assigned opening before firing.

While large stones and sharpened harpoons are the normal ammunition for attacking large predators, these are sometimes replaced with hundreds of smaller stones or sharpened thorns in order to attack common soldiers. Characters under fire from such weapons should make a TYPICAL Dodge roll to avoid taking 2d6 damage from oncoming missiles.

SLAVES

In most lands (with the notable exception of Duvain's Weal, where the practice is banned), it is quite possible to purchase the lives of mice and rats (other than royal mice, for whom slavery is strictly prohibited; one can tell who wrote these laws). Once sold, a slave becomes their master's property and responsibility. Anything that they come to possess is legally their master's property. They can be freed by a magnanimous owner, but rarely are.

While on paper an escaped slave is a fugitive, in practice there is no formal system in place to retrieve escaped slaves. Instead, brutal punishments are generally used on would-be escapees to ensure that most feel safer staying in captivity. Their treatment varies enormously, depending on the character of their owner. Some are basically just household servants. Others (particularly mine slaves) have to be kept chained up to keep them from escaping before they are worked to death.

Owning a single slave is an Expensive item. Owning a number of them is a Very Expensive item, as you will also need overseers to keep them in line. A particularly skilled or exceptional slave may command a higher price than normal, whereas one known for attempted escapes or making trouble may actually fall to being a Common item.

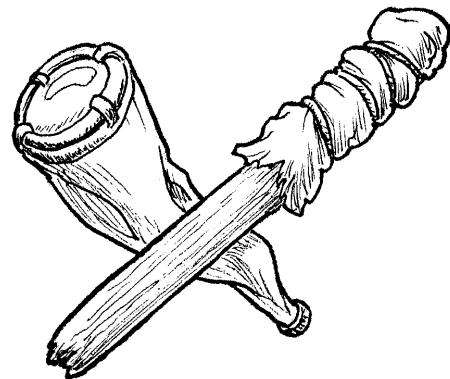
SPICED WOOD

Mice and rats need to regularly gnaw tough materials like wood in order to keep their teeth in good shape, but some kinds of wood taste better than others. Wood that has been soaked in special spices, or exotic woods brought in from Rookwood or Fashar are in high demand amongst the upper classes. Various kinds of spiced wood are available as a treat, ranging from Common items to Expensive ones.

SPYGLASSES

These crude telescopes are sometimes used by the captain of a sailing vessel or by military scouts. They grant a +2 bonus to Alertness rolls when trying to identify things that are a great distance away.

The original design was imported from Fashar. They are typically about the size of a mouse's forearm and have a single focusing lens made from glass held inside a fabric or wooden tube with an eyepiece at the other end. Since the lenses can normally only be created by skilled shaping magic, a spyglass is an Expensive item.



TORCHES

Common torches are just pieces of dry wood with some oil-soaked fabric tied to the end. Once lit, they burn slowly but steadily for several hours before they have to be discarded. Proper torches are Common items, although in a pinch almost any sort of dry wood can be burned as a makeshift torch for at least a little while, provided that you have a decent sized fire to light them with.

In battle, a lit torch can be treated as a crude wooden club that can claim the *On Fire* Combat Bonus.

ESOTERIC EQUIPMENT

ALCHEMICAL APPARATUS

A set of glass tubes, vats and jars that can be used to heat chemicals to relatively precise temperatures. A full set of alchemical apparatus fills a small room and is not really portable, but it adds a +4 bonus to any Esoteric Knowledge rolls involving brewing potions or refining chemical concoctions. Smaller, more portable sets only add a +2 bonus but still require a good bit of room to work.

Both varieties are Expensive items and are extremely fragile. Damaged seals or cracked glass can lead to disaster, particularly when working with acids or poisons.

GULIK ROOT

The Gulik flower is a rare plant, generally only found growing in the mosses at the base of dying trees or other large plants. Eaten in its raw form, the root merely causes strange fever dreams.

Alchemical preparations (a TYPICAL Esoteric Knowledge check) can purify and strengthen its effects. Powdered Gulik root makes the user more sensitive to ethereal influences and grants a +2 bonus to *Sixth Sense* and *Whispers* rolls, but a -2 penalty to just about anything else. This semi-delirious state lasts for a few hours, depending upon one's body weight and the dose.

Massive doses double these modifiers, causing the user to experience an endless stream of waking dreams and provoking visions of the future from the magically inclined. Professional oracles often ingest large amounts of it.

It's not physically addictive, but the psychological effects can be. Over time, it tends to weaken the general constitution and make it difficult for the user to distinguish between dream and reality, but Gulik root addicts generally prefer the world that way. Gulik root is a Common item.

HEALING SALVE

There are a variety of herbal concoctions available to treat wounds and prevent infection. The most potent ones can add +1d6 to the amount that a character heals each night or grant a +4 bonus to resist or throw off diseases.

They are generally carried in heavy, wax-sealed ceramic jars and even then they are only good for a month or so. One that has "gone sour" may actually worsen the patient's condition rather than improving it.

Determining whether or not a given potion or salve is still good requires a TYPICAL Esoteric Knowledge check. Actually making a dose requires a HARD check. A single dose is a Common item but goes bad in mere days. A wax-sealed jar with a dozen doses is an Expensive item.

NIGHTSHADE POISON

This foul toxin is extracted from a particularly deadly variety of mushroom found only in Rookwood. Properly prepared (a HARD Esoteric Knowledge check), it results in

an almost odorless transparent gel that can be lethal if ingested or allowed to enter the bloodstream. Assassins sometimes apply it to arrows or slip it into someone's food.

A character who receives a lethal dose of nightshade poison must make a VERY HARD (17) *Endurance* roll every hour or suffer intense, debilitating pain and 1d6 points of internal damage. Each hour that they survive after the first, they receive a cumulative +1 bonus to the roll; when they finally make a Critical Success, the poison's effects have ended. Since this is poison damage rather than normal wounds, the basic *Heal Wounds* spell (see the *Shaping* section) cannot treat it. Additional doses don't have much additional effect; each additional dose just adds +1 damage to the first hour's effects.

Nightshade poison is not only an Expensive item, it is difficult to come by. Botches in preparing it often result in the preparer being exposed to a potentially lethal dose. Its use on mice or rats (but not predators) is a capital crime.

THELARINE

This exotic drug is very popular amongst royal mice. It takes the form of a small seed which has been soaked in special chemicals and now has a rich, spicy scent and a foul, bitter taste. The plant from which it is made only grows in Fashar and the secrets of preparing it are not known in the Fallows. Thus Thelarine seeds are regularly imported from Fashar at great expense.

It is commonly ground up and served in tea, or snorted through the nose by those who wish a more heady experience. For more practical mice, it can also be eaten straight or ground up and mixed into a potion. Regardless, it has a strong odor and a very recognizable taste.

Thelarine is a potent amphetamine. The first dose taken each day restores one point of Fatigue (immediately in the case of the potion or powder, over the course of a few minutes if ingested as tea). This can even restore a Fatigue level lost due to the Sickly flaw, or the one that all royal mice lose. However, there are limits to its use.

If a second dose is taken the same day, the GM should roll 1d6. On a result of 1-3, it functions normally, restoring a point of Fatigue. On a 4-5, it simply makes the subject more jittery and irritable. On a 6, they take another point of Fatigue *and* 1d4 points of damage. For each additional dose taken, add another +1 to the die roll.

Characters who use Thelarine too regularly may become addicted to it (see the flaw, *Thelarine Addict*). Luckily, since the drug itself is so expensive, this vice is generally limited to the upper classes. Thelarine is an Expensive item.

WHISPERWOOD STAFF

These hand-carved wooden staves possess the curious property of channeling magic. A mage who touches one is similarly considered to be touching anything that the staff touches. This extends "within arm's reach" to mean anything within striking distance of the staff.

Other wooden objects can be made of whisperwood if desired, but the traditional mage's staff is the most common design. The exact means by which this effect is produced is known only to the shapers of Morant Abbey in Jand, who guard the secret jealously. A staff made of whisperwood is an Expensive item.

AN ECONOMY OF GRAIN AND GOLD

TREASURE AND SOCIAL STATUS

Money and social position in **Hyperborean Mice** are handled very abstractly, with a single Social Status rating. However, for some situations (such as acquiring treasure, where a mouse's cash suddenly greatly exceeds that typical for his Social Status), you may want more specific rules.

To keep the system simple, there are 5 levels of coinage, each one ten times as valuable as the one before.

- Copper bits: basically a small chunk of copper. Sometimes made by breaking up a regular copper coin into smaller sections. Ten copper bits is generally the equivalent of a single copper coin.
- Copper coins, silver bits: worth 10 copper bits.
- Silver coins, gold bits: worth 100 copper bits.
- Gold coins, small gemstones: worth 1000 copper bits.
- Large gemstones: worth 10,000 copper bits or more, depending upon size and rarity.

STARTING CASH

The typical cash available to a character is based on their Social Status and is roughly equivalent to a month's income. Note that while cash income slows down at the upper levels, the very wealthy already have the various trappings of their station, such as large homes and family servants, so this doesn't really reflect their full wealth.

The totals below are set so that a starting character could reasonably afford 10 items appropriate to their Social Status and one relatively inexpensive item from the next step up (presumably all purchased on good deals). This gives basically the same results as using the general equipment guidelines in the character creation section.

- Slave/Outcast (-2): 20 copper bits
- Impoverished (-1): 20 copper coins
- Commoner (0): 20 silver coins
- Upper Class (+1): 20 gold coins
- Lower Nobility (+2): 40 gold coins
- Add a further 20 gold per +1 Social Status

BUYING SOCIAL STATUS

Upgrading your Social Status by +1 permanently requires you to first acquire sufficient cash, favors or reputation to pass for a member of the next highest status. That will qualify you to start spending XP on improving your Social Status. If you don't spend XP on it, it's assumed that expenses will eventually eat up all of your extra reserves, leaving you back at your normal level.

However, you are still limited by your race. Money can't buy you into a noble bloodline. Furthermore, the "Slave/Outcast" level can't be improved without first getting a nobleman to absolve you of your crimes.

VARIABLE PRICING

The civilizations in the Fallows are advanced enough to use coinage, but there is no central authority to set prices. Various influences such as its relative rarity, the current finances of the seller and how long they've been trying to sell it will change whether a given item is at the top or bottom of its price range. If you want to establish prices randomly, roll 1d4 for the number of coins it costs.

HAGGLING: A good Charm roll when haggling can lower a price, whereas a failed one might increase it or cause the shopkeeper to become insulted and refuse the sale. This roll is modified by your Social Status minus theirs, so members of the upper classes can often force better prices from their inferiors... if they care to lower themselves so.

CRUDE ITEMS

Crude items are usually purchased with copper coins, smaller chunks of larger coins that have been chopped up (commonly referred to as 'bits') or barter. A large seed or a piece of particularly tasty wood can often be substituted if you are short on cash. Since almost any character can make a crude item for themselves given the correct materials, buying one just saves you the time and effort.

Unskilled labor is generally priced as a Crude item.

Crude items are generally priced at 1 to 4 copper coins (or equivalent). Copper bits can be used for things that aren't worth even a single copper coin, such as a single drink (if you provide your own mug).

COMMON ITEMS

Common items require a bit more skill to make and thus are harder to find. A mouse without the correct training may be completely unable to make a Common item and so must buy it. They are generally purchased with silver coins, bags of copper coins or traded for other Common items.

Skilled labor is generally priced as a Common item. Large numbers of unskilled laborers can be hired at this price.

Common items are generally priced at 1 to 4 silver coins.

EXPENSIVE ITEMS

Expensive items require special skills and special materials and are often in short supply. They often have to be ordered in advance and specially made.

Extremely rare skills (such as ones requiring specific Powers) are generally Expensive. Large groups of skilled laborers are also hired as Expensive items.

Expensive items are generally priced at 1 to 4 gold coins.

VERY EXPENSIVE ITEMS

This category covers items which require you to hire people to maintain them as well as things that are simply extraordinarily valuable. Small towns and villages won't have a single Very Expensive item, much less one for sale.

Hiring large groups of skilled mice, such as mercenary units, are generally priced as Very Expensive items, if they are available at all.

Very Expensive items are generally priced at 10 to 40 gold coins and may cost another 1 to 4 gold coins (or more) per month in support costs.

A Brief History of HYPERBOREA

THE FORGOTTEN AGE

Long ago, the entire valley of Hyperborea was ruled by the mysterious rodents now known as the *Tzarchul*. Great stone cities were raised on both the surface and below ground and enormous trap-filled tombs were made to hold the bones of their hallowed dead. Temples were raised to dark gods and many sacrifices were made, all in vain.

Judging by their works, the Tzarchul were physically like especially furry rats without visible tails. But they became extinct long before the start of recorded history. Now only the ruins of their long-lost civilization remain.

ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST ONES

Many years later, albino mice with incredible magical powers arrived in the pleasant and fertile region of Hyperborea known as the *Fallows* and established their first settlement... the simply named village of *Firstholme*.

According to legends from that era, the First Ones were the slaves and children of the mysterious giants known as *Titans*. But they rose up against their masters and fled to the Falls, bearing with them the Titans' stolen treasure. In the valley they found feral mice and other rodents, some of whom they granted intelligence and took as concubines and slaves. Firstholme rapidly grew into a large and thriving community ruled by these White Lords.

THE WAR AGAINST THE CATS

Predators slew many of the First Ones, as they were woefully ignorant of the dangers of the wilderness. The most dreadful threat was a colony of wild cats which soon manifested magical powers and surprising intelligence themselves... which they turned towards the goal of finding the best way to fill their bellies with the flesh of mice.

The first *organized* attack by the cats destroyed Firstholme and resulted in the deaths of most of the First Ones and their slaves. The few survivors fled and established a well hidden burrow where they could rest and rebuild their strength. In time, this settlement became known as *Haven*.

The First Ones and their slaves forged weapons and trained furiously while the ravenous cats searched the area for any survivors. Finally, the First One named *Luciel* led the others in a series of counter-attacks that eventually destroyed the cats, sending all of them to the grave and restoring the dominance of mice in the Falls.

RISE OF THE GREAT KINGDOMS

With the major threat eliminated, the First Ones found it difficult to retain their unity and fell to squabbling amongst themselves. Without written records, only tiny fragments of knowledge from that period have been retained.

Sethias was slain by his fellows for practicing forbidden rites. Jandara persuaded the others to grant freedom to the rats and jumping mice who had served them in the war, but only at the cost of much resentment among her kinfolk.

In the end, the handful of First Ones who had survived the war went their separate ways, each taking their own followers with them. They constructed mighty fortresses, hidden lairs or luxurious mansions as befitted their personal temperament... and as the original First Ones eventually passed out of history, their estates gradually expanded into kingdoms ruled by their descendants.

Most of the modern nations of the Falls were founded in this period. Luciel and Lumierre wed and founded the land of Muscala. As the only two First Ones to marry, their offspring seemed to retain more of their magical powers than those of her rivals, giving Muscala a powerful edge.

Duvain's sprawling estate eventually became the rolling hills of Duvain's Weal. Canduss founded the trading center known as Dugar. Jandara's many children named their kingdom Jand in her honor.

There are some who believe that the reclusive Zakarvus established a short-lived kingdom in the Wildlands... certainly his name is still held in great reverence by the barbaric tribes of the area.

THE EMPIRE OF MUSCALA

The White Lords of the various lands did not get along well and many wars erupted between them. Generations of open warfare ensued with only brief interludes of peace.

Muscala slowly grew into an empire, warring against and eventually subjugating Duvain's Weal and Dugar. The kingdoms of Lakeshore and Grenndell were established by Muscala to better control troublesome regions, while large portions of the Wildlands were finally brought under Imperial control. Smaller, less militant kingdoms like Jand soon found it preferable to join the **Empire** as valued allies rather than conquered slaves and Muscala eventually unified all of the Falls under her control.

A long period of peace followed, during which the White Lords fell into complacency and the great Imperial Legions grew undisciplined and lax in their training.

THE GREATWATER WAR

Sailors from the Empire who crossed the treacherous currents of Greatwater eventually made contact with the distant land of Fashar. Believed to have been founded by refugees from the fall of Firstholme, she had been out of contact with the rest of the valley for generations and had grown into a loose confederation of sultanates ignorant of even the existence of the Falls.

The Emperor was irked by the stubborn independence of the mice of Fashar. A war of conquest was launched to bring this new land under Muscala's control. But Muscala's decaying and overconfident military forces were not up for the arduous campaign. Overextended and faced with unrelenting resistance from the armies of Fashar, the Empire's power began to crumble. In the end, Muscala sued for peace and withdrew her armies to better quiet her rebellious subject kingdoms, but the damage was done.

THE MODERN AGE

The Empire has entered a period of decline. It has lost all control of the Wildlands and even Jand has been demonstrating increasing independence. Unless something halts this process, the fabled Empire of Muscala may soon collapse entirely. A single mouse could decide her fate.

THE FALLOWS

The valley of Hyperborea is dominated by a stream that pours down from the surrounding hills and empties into a lake overgrown with sunken trees and dotted with small islands. The lake largely divides the valley in two, with fertile fields on the western shore and rockier, harsher soil on the east. The lush fields of the West are known as the Fallows and it is there that **Hyperborean Mice** is set.

THE EMPIRE OF MUSCALA

Founded by the First Ones Luciel and Lumierre, Muscala incorporates the original settlements made by the First Ones and has grown into a great empire to which all other kingdoms must bow.

Its uncontested ruler is Emperor Luciel XXIV, the twenty-fourth emperor to take the name of Muscala's original founder. He often spends days in drug addled contemplation of his realm, delegating every important decision to favored courtiers. His queen, the beautiful Messalina d'Jand, is a former Maiden of Summer and said by many to be the true power behind the throne.

THE IMPERIAL PALACE

This imposing structure rises nearly a dozen stories into the sky and at least twice that into the earth below. Generations of mice and rats have labored to extend it, with each emperor invariably adding some new wing to leave a permanent mark upon their ancestral home.

Inside, the architecture varies from the sturdy stone walls of the early emperors to the ornate vaulted ceilings and opulent works of art favored by modern rulers. The largest part is inhabited by its innumerable servants and slaves; only a small portion is actually used by the royals.

The imperial throne room is a huge and gaudy mess, with every wall and alcove covered with expensive works of art and jewels set into the floor tiles. Great decadent gatherings are held here, where the royals and their guests indulge themselves in an endless stream of exotic dishes and live performances. More secretive gatherings are rumored to occur in a smaller and more restricted hall, where stranger vices are indulged and the air is filled with the fumes of exotic drugs imported from Fashar.

The original throne room is much smaller and dominated by a grim throne made from the skulls of dead cats. The current emperor, Luciel XXIV, considers it suitable only for special occasions, such as the trials of traitors.

Notable People and Places in the Imperial Palace:

- Emperor Luciel XXIV: dissipated and decadent ruler given to strange whims and exotic drugs
- Empress Messalina d'Jand: his beautiful consort; her behavior is above reproach and anyone who spreads rumors the contrary tends to vanish without warning.
- Prince Yulin: head of the Imperial Messengers and responsible for changing them from a mere courier service into imperial espionage agents. Rumored to covet the imperial throne himself.
- Chancellor Ithyl: this white rat bureaucrat deals with most of the non-royal petitions to the emperor.



The Empress Messalina d'Jand, said to be the most beautiful royal mouse of her generation.

THE AVIARY

Behind the spires of the Imperial Palace lies a tall, cylindrical structure of wooden struts and cloth windbreaks in various states of repair. This is the palace aviary, home to the famed Imperial Cavalry, Muscala's own air force.

Within its rather pungent walls, a swarm of slaves and palace servants tend to a small flock of trained pigeons. These are the mounts used by the Cavalry. Each has been raised from a chick to tolerate the presence of mice and to bear the weight of a saddle when necessary.

Each cavalry mouse must be either a white or royal mouse and a trained mage (with emphasis upon the Compel and Whispers arts to better command their mounts) as well as a soldier. White mice make up the bulk of the force, with the royals leading individual squadrons.

While widely feared by the other kingdoms, the true power of Muscala's aerial cavalry does not lie in the arrows or javelins that they drop on enemies below. Rather, it is their sheer speed and mobility that makes them a force to be feared on the battlefield. In times of war, the cavalry eliminates any airborne enemy forces and then acts as overseers of the battle below, passing information to their squires below by magical means.

However, with the dearth of major wars in recent history, discipline has become rather lax. Many cavalymen were appointed to the force as rewards for political savvy and favors done, rather than competence. But there is still a core of true warriors amongst them, although they grow fewer and fewer each year.

Notable People and Places in the Aviary:

- Prince Lumien: the emperor's nephew and head of the Imperial Cavalry. Lazy and indolent, but very prideful.

THE ALABASTER TEMPLES

After the war against the cats was concluded, the surviving First Ones established a shrine commemorating their victory. Over the generations, this was steadily added on to and expanded until it became a small city composed entirely of shrines and temples. The alabaster walls of the temples dominate the area and most mice refer to the entire area collectively as the Alabaster Temples.

This is the home of the church of Luciel, ruler of the gods and patron deity of Muscala. As such, it is a point of imperial pride that his temples be larger and more magnificent than any other in the land. The church bureaucracy is based here as well, where innumerable scribes and accountants keep track of the temple accounts, tithes and offerings, and all official records.

The "lesser" deities all have temples of their own here as well, but none are allowed to approach the splendor of the temple of Luciel. There are also many small shrines and monuments, the meaning of which has sometimes been lost, but the shrines are maintained anyway lest some forgotten First One take offense. The locals are quick to relate colorful tales of the various anonymous monuments and their apocryphal origins.

The Alabaster Temples also provide a neutral setting for the formal education of the upper classes. Young mice of good families are often sent here to study under the priests and the temple libraries here are second only to the secret archives of the temple of Magellian.

FIRSTHOLME

These ancient ruins are a holy site visited by many pilgrims and a small community of common mice has sprung up around them, selling supplies, religious art and sacred "relics" from the ruins. Of Firstholme herself, very little remains.

Her walls were mostly soft brick and were torn asunder during the war. Only a few structures made of actual stone are relatively intact. The most prized site is a great rock wall where pilgrims can actually touch the gouges cut into the soft stone by the claws of some ancient cat.

THE CATACOMBS

In a barren spot between Firstholme and Haven lies the ancestral burial place of the lords of Muscala. Above ground there is only a small, stone ruin, but beneath that marker lies an extensive underground network of catacombs and mortuaries.

Veiled priests prepare the bodies of royal mice for burial and then carefully inhumate them with a great amount of ritual and ceremony. Grim, sonorous chants can be heard from the acolytes as they give praise to Zakarvus and beseech him to guard their work from grave-robbers.

All of those who work in the catacombs are members of the church of Zakarvus and they guard the tombs zealously. Royals often insist on being buried with their greatest treasures, and so the catacombs actually contain a great amount of wealth. To minimize the chances of any successful thefts, some corridors have lethal traps installed. These can, of course, be disabled if one knows the location of the hidden switch, but they are turned on each night when the workers retire to bed.

THE CITY OF HAVEN

The jewel of civilization, the first and greatest city of the Fallows, the heart of Muscala, the dreamt of destination of every farm-mouse and would-be hero... Haven has as many names as it has buildings and it is the largest city in all of the Fallows. Technically the capital of Muscala, she has become a central hub of trade for the entire valley. An enormous amount of grain and other goods pour into the city every day to keep her engines of commerce running.

To the locals, Haven is also known as a poisonous swamp, a despoiler of maidens and a den of iniquity. The city runs on graft and seems to feed on dreams and naivety, turning innocent mice into hardened and mercenary criminals. Criminal gangs run the streets at night, while law-abiding mice stay locked up inside their homes.

Haven is built up into many levels, with wealthier mice dwelling in the upper ramparts and the poor eking out a living in the reeking tunnels beneath her. The ground level is dominated by innumerable shops and merchants. Raw materials are carted in from all over the Fallows, processed into something more valuable and then shipped out again. The chemicals used to treat and process these goods are often allowed to be washed away into the ground underneath the city, adding to the misery of the very poor.

Crime and corruption are rampant. While the lords of Haven maintain a private army of guardsmen, they primarily exist to protect the nobles from rioting commoners. The true power here lies with the Gleaners, an extended criminal cartel that keeps theft and robbery down to an acceptable level by running it themselves. Those who offend the bosses of the Gleaners may suffer a long, brutal beating at the hands of enforcers or, worse, a quick and terminal visit from a member of the Black Paw.

THE GLEANERS

The *Gleaners* are the "Thieves' Guild" of the city of Haven. They are a very loosely organized group, functioning more as an underworld community than a military unit. Members know all of the best places to hide out from the authorities, sell off stolen goods or buy information. They are expected to look out for each other and *never* betray other members to the authorities. Above all else, they must never draw attention to the guild itself, as it thrives on secrecy.

THE BLACK PAW

The dreaded *Black Paw* are the "Assassins' Guild" of the city of Haven. This secretive organization maintains the grip of the Gleaners on the city by eliminating officials who threaten it. They also act as a control on the Gleaners themselves, silencing any who attract the wrong sort of attention. Fear of the Paw keeps common Gleaners in line.

Their trademark is a black paw-print on the body of the victim, usually across the face. This makes it clear to the world that this unfortunate ran afoul of the Paw, rather than some *ordinary* murderer.

They enforce the dictates of the Gleaner bosses but also act independently. When they must act openly, they travel in small groups, wearing dark cloaks with hoods and veils drawn across their faces. If a target is difficult to find, word goes out that they have been marked for death. After that, no Gleaner will give them aid or shelter, lest they find themselves hunted as well.

Notable People and Places in Haven:

- **Magistrate Took:** Lord Took has the thankless task of acting as the chief of law enforcement in Haven. This white mouse has about two-dozen deputies who patrol the city but mostly just respond to reports of trouble and organize fire-fighting brigades if needed.

His primary duty is to keep the nobles happy. Major crimes committed against the upper classes may be investigated, but for the most part his deputies just try to keep things quiet. Troublemakers (read: Adventurers) are often put to a day's hard labor and then released. Murderers get the headsman's axe. Riots and fires are Took's biggest worries, as he really doesn't have enough people to deal with them alone.

- **Chancellor Nehmos:** this white rat is the Emperor's personal representative in the city, and all communications from the noble classes to his Imperial Majesty must pass through Nehmos's offices. As such, he wields more power in Haven than most royal mice. Of late, he has been engaging in some intrigue of his own amongst the various families of white rats, striving to find the most politically advantageous matches for his three unmarried children. His eldest son is being groomed to one day take Nehmos's place, but chafes at the duties involved.
- **Boss Talon:** a brutal and vicious Gleaner Boss with pretensions of nobility and refinement; one of the richest and most feared common mice in Haven. Talon is a scarred and oversized common mouse who has grown quite overweight but woe to he who underestimates him. People who annoy Talon tend to "disappear" quietly, leaving the locals uncertain as to whether they died or wisely fled the city.
- **Father Shallay:** a particularly charismatic white mouse priest of Luciel, Father Shallay has been assembling a small group of devout believers who make regular forays into the lower city to treat the ill. There are rumors, however, that the group's inner circle holds to heretical beliefs and that not all who go to them for treatment are seen again. The church itself scoffs at such rumors, but her leadership does have qualms about his increasingly large number of followers.
- There is a dark stone structure near the heart of the city known as the Black Tomb. This small, grim edifice has existed as long as Haven has and is tended to by a small cult of white rats. The rats have an Imperial Sanction from some ancient ruler of Muscala that allows them to bar anyone except for the royal family. As a result, there is rampant speculation about exactly what is hidden in the tomb. The rats themselves are quite silent on the matter, refusing to even discuss it. Pilgrims may touch the outside of the building, but are never allowed inside.
- **Mad Muskel:** a demented common mouse mage whose father is rumored to be one of the royal family, or perhaps a leader in the Black Paw. He likes to preach strange and heretical beliefs and claims that doom will soon overtake the city. His petty cruelties and strange whims make him a pariah amongst the locals, but those who act against him often die mysteriously. The town guard wisely ignore him.
- **Nipper:** a burglar who has been on the run from the Gleaners for years. Periodically he returns to stir up trouble with some daring theft and then skip out of town, leaving the Gleaner bosses to deal with it.

- **The Hole in the Wall:** this tavern is one of the most popular hangouts for thieves, brigands, Gleaners and other ne'er-do-wells. "The Hole" as it's commonly known is mostly underground, with little more than an entryway (the aforementioned "hole") and some downward stairs visible on the surface.

Below ground, there are crude tables and small booths and a wide variety of spirits available. The lighting is mostly from small candles and the interior is always smoky and dimly lit. Anyone who visits it had best be ready to defend themselves if accosted; the bar is too far below the surface for any screams to be heard and the patrons prefer to place bets on fights rather than breaking them up.

- **Nestoria Imports:** this shady business is a front for the Gleaners and deals mostly in stolen goods. Nestor, the common mouse proprietor, is an expert at forgetting faces as well as scratching off any identifying marks on his stock. Mice seeking exotic drugs or forbidden books may find that Nestor can arrange a meeting with a supplier even if he doesn't have what they want in stock.
- **Lord Thullen's Gardens:** Lord Thullen, a royal mouse of exquisite taste, maintains an extensive garden attached to his estate in Haven. He collects foreign flowers and herbs, particularly those with odd chemical effects or unpleasant thorns. Rumor has it that some plants only grow when fed on the blood of mice and rats, but it's probably just a rumor.

Thullen regularly hosts extravagant gatherings of royal mice, who get to admire the beautiful arrangements of his flowers and partake of his collection of wines and special herbs. These affairs are also popular places for royal intrigue as the upper classes can mingle in person without attracting too much attention from their fellows. Only royal mice and white rats are normally allowed to attend, although the occasional white mouse servant is tolerated; the presence of the lower races would detract too much from the occasion.

- **Lady Lamyra du Argus:** said by some to be the richest royal mouse in all of Haven, this lady's sumptuous annual gatherings draw the upper crust from all over Muscala. Each is also an opportunity for the attendees to show off their finest jewelry and silks, something that occasionally draws thieves. The Argus family regards money as being just as important as breeding, so white mice of particular means are welcome to attend.
- **The Marketplace:** the marketplace square of Haven is huge, being larger than many small towns all on its own. There are an overwhelming number of booths and shops and innumerable would-be entrepreneurs hawking their wares to any passersby. Traveling entertainers set up little stages and offer performances in return for donations of coin. Goods from all over Hyperborea are available for purchase.

It is also a favorite of thieves, cut-purses and con-artists of all stripes. The locals are familiar with all of the common scams used to separate the naive from their goods, but innocent newcomers regularly fall victim to them. A wise mouse keeps his coin-purse well concealed here, lest it go wandering.

THE KINGDOM OF DUVAIN'S WEAL

Founded by Duvain, a First One warrior of great repute, the sprawling plains of Duvain's Weal are the hub of agriculture in the Fallows. Once fiercely independent, this kingdom was eventually subjugated by Muscala after a long and bloody war. Her wealthiest and most valuable territories (the cities and villages lying on the shore of Greatwater Lake) were stripped away and given to a family of traitorous royal mice... a sore point with the ruling family of Duvain's Weal, but not one that they feel able to contest. Ruinous levies of grain help keep Duvain's Weal largely impoverished but keep the population of Muscala fat and happy. Slavery is banned here, due to an ancient edict credited to Duvain.

OAKENDALE (THE STUMP)

The largest city of Duvain's Weal, Oakendale's nickname comes from the enormous tree stump in which it was carved out. Legend has it that Duvain himself cut down the impossibly huge tree as one of his many feats of strength, but if he did, no one is sure what became of the rest of it. It must have dwarfed even the largest trees of Rookwood.

Farms and small villages surround the city. Almost all non-productive plants have been cut down and the land here is fairly bare other than the fields and berry plants. Keeping weeds and pests out is a constant and unrewarding task.

The locals tend to be hard-working but cheerful folk and her Summer festivals draw attendees from all over the Fallows. The fields surrounding the stump are mainly given over to grape vines, whose fruit is harvested and distilled into wine each year.

Notable People and Places in Oakendale:

- The Breweries: Stump is famous for its breweries, which ferment and distill the local berries into alcohol. It's most commonly bottled in heavy ceramic jugs which bear an engraved picture of the city. The more expensive wines have detailed and intricate pictures that are minor works of art themselves, whereas the cheaper drinks rarely have more than a square carved on the side.
- The Wine Race: At the end of each Summer, Oakendale holds its great wine festival, the climax of which is a race. Each contestant carries a cup in each hand. The judges fill the cups with a deep, red wine of a sort that the area is famous for (the cheap kind, of course, since most of it gets wasted) then the runners have to circle the city twice. When a contestant makes it across the finish line, they have to pour both of their cups into a single cup held by a judge and overflow it... or they are disqualified. The winner of the race is considered the champion of the day and is guest of honor at the night's drunken feast.

PUMPKIN GROVE

Half a day's travel from Oakendale lies the Pumpkin Grove. This landmark is really just a patch of ground where wild pumpkins grow, producing huge yellow and orange gourds that are sometimes harvested for food or dried out and used as building material. Many people believe the area to be haunted, and it is shunned by superstitious folk. Young mice sometimes dare each other to spend the night there under the full moon and more than one wanderer is said to have vanished there during the night.

On each summer solstice, Oakendale sends an expedition to harvest the largest of the gourds (a process that often takes more than a day of hard work) and return with them to their city for the annual harvest festival. There they are hollowed out and decorated and prizes are awarded for the most creative use of one of the gourds.

THE WESTERN WEAL

On the western side of Duvain's Weal, across the southern stream, lies the region known as the Western Weal. This area officially follows the kings of Duvain's Weal, but of late Dusar has had her eye on the territory.

The local rulers there must deal with both raiders from the Wildlands and agents from Dusar hoping to destabilize the area. If a sufficiently large rift can be driven between the rulers of Duvain's Weal and the fiercely independent locals, Dusar might feel free to annex the region entirely.

VAINWALL

Vainwall is the traditional royal seat, but the old keep is slowly decaying for lack of money to make repairs. Already one of the three towers has been closed completely for fear that it might collapse. It's believed that its name was originally Duvain's Wall, but in its current state the corrupted form seems a better fit for the fortress.

Notable People and Places in Vainwall:

- King Beaufort: The current ruler of Duvain's Weal and veteran of several minor wars and uprisings. After the last war against Muscala, the previous king was slain and Beaufort appointed to the position by Emperor Luciel XXII. He is a grim and humorless mouse weighed down by his responsibilities and his relative powerlessness. Duvain's Weal is the poorest part of the Fallows and Beaufort is often hard pressed to collect the taxes that the Imperial Court demands, much less any additional funds to pay his men.

THE NETTLES

This region is heavily overgrown with stinging nettles and thorny bramble, so much so that all attempts to clear it out have failed. The area has long been a refuge for outlaws and other fugitives. The inhabitants are mostly escaped slaves, bandits and violent forsaken. Extended families of outlaws have lived and died in these unpleasant tangles of vines for generations now.

Outsiders had best come armed and ready for trouble. Bandits will happily relieve them of all of their belongings and perhaps their lives, if they can't defend themselves.

Notable People and Places in the Nettles:

- Bartow the Brave: this rather vain one-eyed jumping mouse fancies himself the king of outlaws and has accumulated a number of followers in the Nettles.
- The Bramble Witch: this ancient common mouse is a powerful mage and seer. She lives in a little fortified burrow in the boulders that border the Nettles and casts spells for the inhabitants in return for food or pretty baubles. No one knows exactly how old she is, but she has taken on a number of apprentices over the years and outlived them all. She is skilled at communing with dark spirits and more than one mouse who offended her has simply disappeared during the night.

THE KINGDOM OF GRENNENDELL

Founded by an unknown First One (some cite Magellian as the driving impetus behind its founding, but he seems to have been content to allow others to do the actual ruling), this kingdom runs along beneath the southern edge of Rookswood and acts as a barrier against predators from within the dark depths of the forest.

Towns and villages here tend to be made of stone and heavily fortified... particularly against attack from above. Many possess a single sturdy ballista that they can direct against any owls or other large predators that venture out of the woods. This rarely results in more than spooking the animal back into the trees, but it's a vital component in the defense of the Fallows nevertheless.

FORESTEDGE

This grim fortress city is the largest of the border towns. It was established near Rookswood to provide early warning of monsters emerging from the forest. There hasn't been a serious threat out of the woods for generations though, except for the owls, who generally travel so high and so silently that they slip past unnoticed anyway. So the city's original purpose has largely been forgotten and it now serves as the empire's primary source of lumber.

Physically, Forestedge is built in and around the trunk of an ancient oak that lies near the edge of the woods. It's said that the tree was alive when they started building their community in its branches, but over the years the community expanded inwards, carving out new rooms inside the oak's core. The tree has been dead for generations now. A few more foresighted folks worry about the rot slowly weakening the city's core, but they're regarded as fools by the locals.

The local industry is largely based on gathering and processing fallen branches from the forest's edge. Giant "logs" are dragged back to the city to be stripped of bark and cut into planks using enormous saws that require four rats to use. Rats are very common in the city, numbering nearly as many as the mice themselves. Furthermore, because the city's primary income depends so heavily on their work, the rats here have acquired a level of respect and acceptance that they rarely receive elsewhere.

Notable People and Places in Forestedge:

- General Whiteheart: the current commander of the city's defenses is a grim, muscular black wild rat with a patch of white fur on his chest. Whiteheart was placed in charge after he single-handedly stopped a rat riot. He has become a figure of legend amongst the rats here, with all sorts of wild stories being told about his parentage and exploits. If the rumors can be believed, the over-sized metal sword he carries was liberated from an ancient Tzarchul ruin.
- Morax: this heavily scarred, one-eyed wild rat is a newcomer to Forestedge, but he has already started to make trouble. He believes that the rats could run the city perfectly well without any mice at all and has tried several times to organize the rats into a militia. The local rulers consider him a dangerous upstart, but his popularity among the rats makes arresting him dangerous.
- Nuff the Truffle-Master: this white mouse merchant regularly leads expeditions into Rookswood to dig up truffles. He always needs scouts and guards.

OWLSBANE (GREENDALE)

This small, fortified township was originally called Greendale. Several years ago, one of Hoorooru's most ambitious and foolhardy children besieged this border town at night, tearing down its walls and devouring the mice within. To make an epic tale short, he caught a ballista bolt in the wing for his troubles and fled.

When some crows came the next morning and reported that the wounded owl could no longer fly and was attempting to hop and hobble his way back to Rookswood, the locals assembled a great hunting party and went forth.

Burning arrows and great spears savaged the huge creature until it finally expired from loss of blood. Now its skull is kept in the center of town as a mark of pride and the locals have renamed the town Owlsbane. Its bones and feathers have been incorporated into the town's decorations and are tended to lovingly by the townsfolk.

Some have said that the townsfolk are skirting danger; if word were to reach Hoorooru that the skull of one of his children was being used in such a manner, he might order the owl-worshipping tribes of Rookswood to retrieve it and burn the town to the ground in the bargain. So far, though, there has been no sign that Hoorooru knows or cares.

THE GREAT LIBRARY OF MAGELLIAN

The church of Magellian has its headquarters near the southern border of Grennendell. Its temple is most notable for its Great Library, which is reputed to be the largest collection of knowledge in all of the Fallows.

Rumor has it that there is a further, hidden archive concealed beneath the temple grounds. Therein the church keeps all of its magical lore, including many tomes which have been judged dangerous and banned by the kingdom.

This is also the headquarters of *Magellian's Cloak*, an organization of adventuring scholars. Members of the Cloak travel throughout the land, recording their discoveries in meticulous detail. Each member at large is expected to return to the temple at least once every year to add their journals to the collective knowledge of the library.

Characters who are members of the church can generally access the library for free. Non-members should bring the head librarian a large gift, donation or other incentive if they want access to the tomes and scrolls of the library.

THE SMOKING MOUND

This region in the western expanse of Grennendell is largely uninhabited. Travelers pass through quickly if they can, preferring not to remain there after dark. The region is named for the mound itself, a particularly large ant hill that occasionally emits wisps of smoke.

There are strange stories of unusually aggressive ants that construct cunning pitfalls and other booby traps to capture their prey. Wise travelers stick to the regular roads and don't investigate oddities off of the trail.

The source of the smoke is a mystery. Aramias's *Ode to the Queen* offers one explanation, but most mice discount his elaborate story of an intelligent queen ant capable of speech and the underground furnaces that keep the mound warm in winter. See *the Dark Demons & Legendary Horrors section for more detail.*

THE KINGDOM OF LAKESHORE

The kingdom of Lakeshore was once part of Duvain's Weal, but was split away from them after Muscala subjugated the Weal. A small house of royal mice that had collaborated with Muscala during the war were granted their own realm, consisting of the most valuable real estate in Duvain's Weal... the territories along the border of Greatwater lake.

Her ruler is the elderly and feeble King Leonas Watercrest, a mouse inordinately fond of extraordinarily expensive drugs imported from Fashar. Most major policy decisions are made by his favorite sycophant, the endlessly inventive sadist Duke Ferrik. Even the upper classes fear Ferrik, who uses charges of treason against those who offend him.

While some of the nobles of Muscala regard Ferrik's depredations as uncouth and unbecoming, he also keeps the taxes and levies from Lakeshore flowing steadily to the Imperial Palace and so his "hobbies" are largely ignored. Amongst the common folk of Lakeshore, only a fool does not fear drawing the attention of the upper classes.

MISTMOOR

The capital city of Lakeshore, Mistmoor is a large port community. Ships going to and from Fashar dock here to load and unload their many cargoes. Almost all of the city's income depends on this trade; when pirates manage to cut off the flow of goods, Mistmoor is the first to suffer.

The city is built on a series of raised wooden platforms and sprawls out into the lake itself. The largest and most prestigious houses are on top; whereas the poorest and most destitute are often forced to live on the muddy slopes beneath the lowest platform. Strong winds often cause the water levels to rise alarmingly and homes on the lower levels are regularly damaged or destroyed by floods.

Innumerable small vessels are moored in the city's sprawling dockyards. Almost everyone owns at least a small raft for fishing and much of their diet comes from catching minnows and such in the shallow waters.

Notable People and Places in Mistmoor:

- Duke Ferrik: the overlord of Mistmoor, he lives outside the city in a well-guarded estate. The area nearby is called *Ferrik's Forest* because of the forest of impaled corpses there.
- Hellmaw: offshore lives a fearsome predator, the Hellmaw. If a boat vanishes without a trace, it is often blamed on this creature. Hellmaw rarely troubles larger ships, but devours a few fishermice each season.
- Southridge: south of the city is a boulder carved and shaped to contain many small caves. During heavy rains, the poor retreat here until the water level goes

down. Unfortunately, since hardly anyone uses it during the dry season, the caves are often infested with spiders, shrews or even small snakes.



NEWCASTLE

The royals of Lakeshore are the Watercrest family. After they were placed in control of the kingdom by Muscala, they built a stone fortress in which they could dwell safely. The family is notably paranoid about assassins and peasant uprisings. They often fear that members of the lower classes may remember their betrayal of the old royal family and bear them ill will.

Notable People and Places in Newcastle:

- King Leonas Watercrest: highly inbred and unusually depraved even for a royal mouse, King Leonas fears his own people as much or more than the military might of Muscala. His many sycophants play upon those fears as much as possible, which does little to improve his attitude.
- Princess Melina: the king's pride and joy, his elegant and beautiful daughter has long been sought after as a bride by the nobles of Lakeshore. However, the last few serious suitors (ones who began negotiations for her dowry) died mysteriously, one managing to fall to his death from the battlements (a difficult achievement for a mouse) and two others being poisoned by persons unknown.
- Chancellor Jop: this aristocratic white rat and his family are the ancestral servants of the Watercrest line. Few people realize that the king actually insists upon their receiving extensive combat training so that they can act as bodyguards as well as servants. Several have died in the line of duty as food-tasters; not all of the king's enemies are imaginary.
- Newcastle Prison: those unfortunates sentenced to Newcastle's dungeon are suspected of more extensive crimes than those that they were convicted for. The torturers here are quite skilled at extracting confessions to fit whatever requirements their noble patrons request. Those who are deemed useless, however, may find themselves transferred to Ferrik's tender mercies, a fate worse than death.
- The Red Tower: one of the towers jutting off of the castle proper was made from reddish stone rather than the dull gray that the rest of the fortress is composed of. It is heavily guarded and apparently holds a small number of particularly important prisoners. Their identity is a closely guarded secret and they are allowed no contact with outsiders.

MAIDEN'S ROCK

This is the largest stone visible from Mistmoor and is a major navigation landmark. Its surface is grimy and encrusted with moss and algae, but it can offer shelter from any strong winds. There are even some vines covering the southern side of the stone, which small ships can anchor themselves to if the need arises.

Stories speak of pirate treasures concealed inside the stone itself by ancient pirate mages and along the sheer northern face there are strange runes carved into the rock whose meaning has been forgotten. The most common tale about Maiden's Rock, however, concerns its namesake... a beautiful white mouse who was stranded there by a jealous suitor and starved before she could be rescued. Her ghost still haunts the stone and more than one explorer is said to have followed her off the side of the stone and been lost in the icy waters below.

THE KINGDOM OF JAND

Jand is a small kingdom that has lies nestled against the southern border of Muscala and long ago decided that it was better to act as a loyal subject of the Empire rather than risking war against her vastly superior forces.

Founded by the beautiful First One, Jandara, this realm prizes art, beauty and disarming wit. Her leaders are famed for preferring flattery, negotiation and diplomacy to overt conflict. Her armies are minimal and poorly trained, so her leaders tend to call upon Muscala for aid whenever any real trouble strikes.

PULCHARA, THE CITY OF FLOWERS

The capital city of Jand and the seat of her royal family (the d'Jands), Pulchara is widely regarded as the most beautiful city in the world. It is adorned with innumerable pieces of statuary and practically every stone surface has been painted or engraved with some sort of artwork. There are also many small fountains and gardens where flowers are grown, tended to by acolytes of the church of Jandara.

Even the poorest family maintains at least one flowering plant near their home and local superstition holds that a family's fortunes rise and decline with the health of those flowers. The gardens of the upper classes are filled with beautiful plants and many a mouse makes a living here as a gardener or florist.

Vandalism is looked upon as a high crime here, and more than one mouse has been executed for defacing some piece of art or deliberately damaging some vibrant plant. Amongst the locals, being seen poorly clad or unadorned is thought shameful, so the city imports huge amounts of silk and jewelry. Artisans in lesser cities dream of winning the right to ply their trade in Pulchara.

Outsiders generally feel quite ugly and poorly garbed compared to the locals and are often treated with disdain. Even poor mice here are willing to skip a few meals if it means wearing a tunic with some nice embroidery.

Common and wild rats are practically banned from the city, as is anyone with a visible deformity. They can live in the farm communities around Pulchara that supply her with food, but they will not be welcome in the city proper.

THE APIARY (HONEYDALE)

Near the western edge of Jand lies the oldest and largest honeybee colony in the Fallows. The huge hive has survived dozens of winters and has been there for generations. Nearby, a small community of daring wax and honey-harvesters has sprung up. They bottle and sell the fruit of the bees' labors, although not without personal risk.

The harvesters have to sneak into the hive without alerting the bees, which are not at all tame and will readily sting an intruder to death. This often means working at night or carrying heavy smoke-pots in and out of the hive. While most raids go off without incident, when something does go wrong it often kills most of the would-be honey thieves.

Safer (if less lucrative) employment can be found in Honeydale itself, where the honey is often mixed in boiling vats with various flavoring agents or fermented to make alcohol. Even here there is the risk of fire or an overheated vat bursting, but at least you never lack for something sweet to put on your grain.

Hyperborean Mice

THE PERFUMERY (SKUNKVILLE)

This small community is hard for travelers to miss, because the nose picks it up long before you can see it. The upper classes of Jand pay good money for fancy perfumes and most of them are manufactured here, along with colorful dyes for cloth and fur. Most of the inhabitants keep their muzzles (and sometimes eyes) wrapped with thin cloth to minimize the toxic effects of breathing the local air.

The alchemists who run this town pay high bounties for certain herbs, fungi or animal parts that are useful in the processes of producing these chemicals. The site has been moved twice, both times further away from the capital after a particularly windy day caused the town's odor to trouble the nobles of Pulchara again.

"Skunkville" is notable in one other respect: predator attacks here are very rare. The foul odors seem to keep them at bay.

MORANT ABBEY

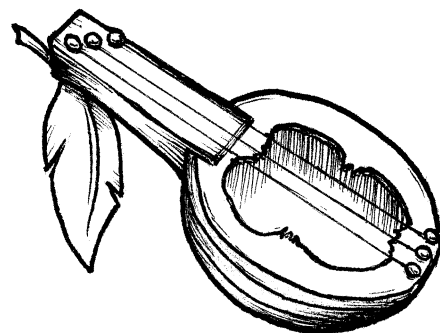
This small abbey is famous for the magical skills of its shapers. While respectful of Jandara, the abbey itself is dedicated to the entire pantheon, granting them some measure of independence from the church proper. They pay their way by selling the wares produced by their more magically inclined members.

In addition to metal items and cunningly formed works of art, the mages here have developed a secret technique for altering the nature of wooden objects so that they can channel spells. Staves made of *whisperwood* are in high demand amongst upper-class mages, who consider them both a status symbol and a useful tool.

Mages who wish to study the art of Shaping sometimes pay high fees to join Morant Abbey as a student, but their secret High Sorceries are reserved for those who have elected to remain there permanently and even then only after years of loyal service.

BELLTOWNE

This town is widely known for hosting a temple of Jandara which has an enormous collection of bells of the highest quality. These are rung on holy days or during festivals and also mark each dawn and dusk.



The locals also hold annual festivals of music and the town hosts a small school run by retired minstrels who train the next generation of musicians in the Fallows. Scholars with a particular interest in the songs of old can be found at the school as well, but most of the students dream of wandering the land or earning a position as an entertainer in some noble household.

THE KINGDOM OF DUSAR

Founded by the First One named Canduss, the kingdom of Dusar has grown into a thriving trading hub dominated by merchant houses. While the royal house of Hederain theoretically rules the nation, here money speaks louder than bloodlines or titles and the royals of Hederain are impoverished.

The true rulers are the merchant houses, while above them stands the current High Priest or Priestess of Canduss. By law, only the church can lend money for interest in Dusar; anyone else can be charged with the crime of usury and may be put to death. This monopoly has turned the church into Dusar's most prominent and powerful bank.

Dusar is a rocky area, with towns often pressed up against the side of a boulder or built on top of a relatively flat stone. Most buildings are made from chiseled stone blocks held in place by mortar.

DUSAR CITY

The capital city of the country and the seat of her government, Dusar is a crowded and somewhat squalid place. Frills and decorations are looked down upon as wasteful here, so most buildings are plain and functional.

Notable People and Places in Dusar City:

- The Sons of Quickpaw: this notorious gang of thieves has been a long-running thorn in the paw of Dusar's government. They are known for seeing well-defended wealth as a challenge and have robbed a number of heavily guarded estates and escaped scott-free. Popular stories say that they then distribute most of this money to the poor of Dusar, but it's hard to find anyone who will actually admit to receiving any of this largess.
- The ruins of the Dusar Mint: most of the coinage in the Fallows was originally minted here using elaborate magical mechanisms constructed by Canduss herself in the early days of the kingdom. However, Dusar's dominance of commerce and control of the money supply came to worry the lords of Muscala and when Dusar was subjugated the mint was destroyed utterly. Little remains besides a few ancient walls and scattered metal gears.
- The Auction House: this great amphitheater was originally built as a place to put on plays and other entertainments, but over the years has come to be primarily dedicated to commerce. The auction house of Dusar will auction off just about anything of great value, including slaves brought in from other lands.
- The Mercenary Hall: Dusar prefers to employ mercenaries rather than maintaining a standing army. There are always warriors looking for work here, and several mercenary bands stay at the hall when they are between missions. This grim stone building has a large training hall, its own weapon-smiths, and occasionally hosts duels or public fights.
- Dusar City Bank: the Church of Canduss maintains a large building full of scribes and bankers here. This is the place where most loans are negotiated in the city. Upper class citizens receive better rates, but no one gets money for free here. Since much of the church's fortune is held in the vaults below, the bank is the most heavily guarded building in the city.

THE HEDERAIN FAMILY ESTATE

This mouldering estate has fallen on hard times. The Hederain royal family may technically rule Dusar, but they are heavily in debt to the Church of Canduss and their ancestral home has suffered for lack of proper maintenance. Still, they continue to host annual balls, pageants and other expensive gatherings. So far the Church has preferred to issue them loans that will never be repaid, rather than throw the country into crisis by bankrupting its official rulers.

Notable People and Places in Dusar City:

- King Tursal Hederain: the figurehead ruler of Dusar, he has slowly descended into madness over the years. He sees the family estate as it was generations ago, full of pomp and glory. He often holds inspections of his non-existent military legions or issues orders for extravagant public projects that are ignored.
- Prince Maddol: Tursal's son and heir, Maddol chafes as his family's decline. He is known to be seeking any means by which the family fortune could be restored. What few funds he manages to scrape up are often lost to con artists.

THE BLACK MINES

In the hills of Dusar is a region where many elaborate mines have been established, exploited and then closed over the years. They dig up coal, plant tubers, stones for building, precious gems or even salt, depending on the location.

Conditions in active mines are quite terrible and most of the work is done by slave labor. Crimes in Dusar are often punished by being sentenced to the mines for a number of years... and most miners do not live long enough to see freedom again. Those seeking their own fortune sometimes explore the abandoned mines, hoping to find something valuable, but generally such mines were stripped of everything even potentially valuable before they were finally shut down.

Most abandoned mines were abandoned because they were no longer profitable, but the ancient mine of Goldbreak was closed for darker reasons. When they dug into a chamber underground, the miners found that it was full of ravenous Ghuls, who slaughtered them. It's said that the miners themselves then rose from the grave as monsters and the owners sealed the entire mine to trap them all inside.

MARKER STONES

There are ancient marker stones scattered throughout Dusar. These are huge rocks where at least a portion of their surface has been carefully marked with strange runes whose meaning has been forgotten. According to ancient records, Canduss herself carved those engravings in the early days of the kingdom, selecting some stones for her purposes and ignoring others. The exact nature of her work was apparently kept secret even from her own servants.

Spell-casters who examine the marker stones say that a subtle enchantment still pervades most of them, but its purpose and nature are inscrutable to modern mages. Local myths about the stones vary wildly. Some communities maintain that sleeping near the closest marker stone invites death and disaster, while other towns believe that it brings good fortune.

OTHER LOCALES

GREATWATER LAKE

This lake divides the valley of Hyperborea in half. To the mice, it is a vast ocean stretching out beyond sight. Sailing across it can take a day if the winds are perfect, or weeks if they are not.

Its waters are filled with ancient, sunken trees and other hazards. Floating debris poses rather more danger to a mouse-sized vessel than it would to a human one, especially because its location changes with every storm. The murky waters hold danger even for swimmers, as some of the fish that live in the deeper parts of the lake are capable of capsizing a vessel or swallowing a mouse whole.

FASHAR

Across Greatwater Lake lies the distant land of Fashar. The ground there is harsh and rocky, with sandy soil. There is little shade and less water. Rain must be collected when it falls, for it all drains down into the lake quite rapidly. All of the major cities lie on the water's edge, but innumerable small clans have spread out throughout the wastes.

Fasharian cities tend to have a somewhat Arabian appearance, with spires and minarets. The locals wrap themselves in loose veils and scarves to keep the ever-present sand out of their fur. Most of the mice have a sandy, light-brown color to their fur and jumping mice are much more common there than in the lands of the Fallows.

Culturally, it is clear that the kingdoms and sultanates of Fashar are kin to those of the Fallows. They speak a dialect of the same language and their religious pantheon is very similar, save that they credit the goddess Jandara as the ruler of the gods and describe all of the others as her children. Historians of the Fallows presume that Fashar was settled by refugees fleeing from Firstholme after its destruction, but no proof of this has ever been found.

The largest and grandest of her cities is Lumia, the city of lights, whose streets are lit at night by thousands of cunningly crafted hanging lights filled with scented oils. Most buildings are constructed from small yellow bricks of baked clay and silken veils are draped from every window. Lumia's silk comes from a vast underground breeding area for silkworms; the techniques for raising them and harvesting the silk are carefully guarded secrets here. The colorfully dyed cloth is valued throughout the Fallows.

THE PIRATE ISLES

It is clear that Greatwater Lake was not always flooded. Her waters are filled with sunken trees and small, rocky islands overgrown with weeds. The more treacherous waters are often referred to collectively as the Pirate Isles, as many of them are inhabited by pirates (also known as water-rovers), shrews or clans of cannibal mice.

Bad weather often forces ships to tie up to sunken trees, lest they be swept away, but it is a risky endeavor. Most of the pirates in Greatwater prefer to attack ships by rowing out in heavily occupied canoes or other small boats under cover of darkness. They pull up to a larger vessel and swarm over the sides, screaming for blood and plunder.

THE FORBIDDEN LANDS

The land beyond the southern border of the Fallows is accursed and avoided by all but the most foolish. The border is marked with wooden posts carved with eerie runes and decorated with the skulls of dead birds. Each post is a warning dating back to the times of the First Ones, marking a barrier beyond which all travel is forbidden under pain of death. Entering this region is prohibited without the express permission of the Emperor, but the military never bothers to enforce this restriction. There is no need. The Titans guard their own secrets.

TITAN'S BRIDGE

The Titan's Bridge is near the northern edge of the Forbidden Lands. The massive, algae-encrusted wooden structure is commonly referred to as a bridge, although a few scholars believe that it more closely resembles a long abandoned wooden dock of titanic scale. It is the most accessible and least dangerous landmark here.

THE CITADEL OF THE TITANS

Ancient traditions disagree over whether the Citadel is the true home of the Titans or merely their closest outpost. It is said to be a huge building, gigantic beyond all comprehension, one that dwarfs the many trees that obscure it. Tales disagree on its appearance, but all agree that it is clearly a building and not some natural structure.

Crow avoid the region around the Citadel and will not speak of it, fearing something they cannot put a name to. A few intrepid souls have claimed to come close enough to see strange lights in vast windows or huge, shadowy figures moving around the outskirts on moonlit nights, but no reputable witnesses have ever returned.

It is clear that either the First Ones or the Titans erected some unspeakable curse over the area. Most expeditions simply vanish without a trace. Divinations reveal nothing and the most potent spells dissolve like mist in its vicinity. Even a troop of pigeon-riders once sent there by the late Emperor Luciel XXII was simply lost. A handful of their trained birds returned to the palace aviary, but not a single one of those elite warrior-mages.

THE WELL OF LOST SOULS

The Well of Lost Souls, on the other hand, is much more approachable. Though behind the pillars that mark the edges of the Forbidden Lands, it is far enough from the Citadel itself that of the many groups that have investigated it, some have returned to tell the tale.

The well is a vast pit lined with red bricks larger than a rat. It drops down into the depths of the earth farther than the eye can see. A keen-eyed mouse with a spyglass can spot a distant glint of water below if the sun is overhead, but otherwise only darkness lies within. An ancient, rotting wooden arch rises over it. It may have once supported a rope and bucket or something similar, but any such contrivances have long ago rotted away.

Some claim to have descended into the depths, reporting that the well opens up into a vast and partially flooded underground cavern. Rumors abound of an underground civilization and its fabulous treasures, but so far no proof has been brought back to the surface. More than one group of explorers has vanished without a trace in its depths.

ROOKSWOOD

The northern expanse of the valley is dominated by the tall, grim trees of Rookswood. The area is haunted by predators and has never been successfully pacified, even when the empire was at its strongest. On its eastern side the trees extend out into the lake, creating the swamp-like region of Murkwater, while to the west the trees slowly become sparser until they merge with the Wildlands. No one is certain exactly how far north the woods extend, but ancient maps claim that it runs all the way into the mountains.

Rookswood is dominated by the great horned owl Hoorooru and his children. These owls are fully intelligent and are capable of both speech and magic. A few snakes, foxes and weasels haunt the woods as well, but the locals fear the owls above all other threats.

There *are* small colonies of mice here, but they are carefully hidden underground or inside of dead trees. The locals are extremely suspicious of outsiders, and with good reason... the mice of the inner woods have turned to the worship of the owls and are always seeking sacrifices to offer up to their winged gods. If a traveler should happen to find a mousy edifice here that *isn't* carefully hidden from view, they should beware. Only those under the protection of the owls can build their homes so openly.

HEKATARE, THE CITY OF BONES

It is said that the owl-worshippers gather in a sprawling city of their own which lies near the northern edge of Rookswood. A great stone ziggurat has been built up by years of endless labor, with an enormous sacrificial altar at the top where Hoorooru himself periodically alights to accept the offerings of his worshippers.

Prisoners seized by the owl-worshippers are commonly brought to Hekatare and imprisoned there until they are needed. Their dark rites are held every full moon and there is always a need for new victims; they know that if the clan's hunters cannot provide enough captives to sate Hoorooru's appetite, some of *them* will be taken as well.

Grotesque totems are used to mark the territories claimed by Hekatare: owl-pellets filled with mouse bones are nailed to the side of trees or displayed on top of wooden stakes. They provide a grim warning of what becomes of intruders.

MURKWATER

On the eastern edge of Rookswood, the forest has been partially flooded by the rising waters of Greatwater Lake. Half-submerged trees and innumerable reeds cover the area, making it into a sheltered but murky swamp.

Murkwater is home to a few outlaws and hermits but is otherwise largely uninhabited. The folks here tend to be very taciturn and unfriendly towards strangers. Perhaps there is something amiss with the water here, as madness is very common amongst the locals. "Mad as a Murkwater rat" is a common expression in Grennendell. Outsiders rarely come here except when seeking valuable herbs and alchemical ingredients, many of which grow nowhere else.

Wise mice stay out of the water here. Not only is the algae-covered murk home to virulent fevers, there are serpents and other dangers. The leeches, in particular, are sometimes unnaturally aggressive, swarming over unwary swimmers like piranha.

Hyperborean Mice

THE WILDLANDS

The hills to the west of the Fallows lie beyond the effective control of any of her kingdoms although many nations claim them. No serious attempts to enforce these claims have been made in generations and the area is now regarded as a land of barbarians, shrews and monsters.

THE BARBARIAN TRIBES

The Wildlands are home to many small tribes of various sorts. The most powerful are probably the wild rat clans, whose strength and ferocity offers them some protection from all but the largest of predators, but they tend to be very superstitious and fearful of any sort of magic.

Nomadic mouse tribes are here as well, although they stick to the underbrush and avoid contact with strangers. The most widely hated clans are those of marauding shrews, whose insatiable hungers sometimes lead them to launch raids across the borders into the Fallows. These hills are commonly thought to be haunted, and ravenous Ghuls roam them on moonless nights.

The locals venerate Zakarvus as the god of war and death and scorn the other gods as weak and feeble. This has led some Fallows historians to speculate that Zakarvus once established a kingdom of his own here back in the ancient days, but all signs of it have been lost to the sands of time.

TZARCHUL RUINS

While the Tzarchul are themselves long extinct, some of their ruined cities and temples still remain. These are generally buried or completely overgrown with plants, but may remain intact below ground. While present all over the valley, most of the examples in the Fallows proper have been thoroughly explored and looted already.

The barbarian clans hold the ruins in their land sacred and say that unspeakable horrors may be unleashed if they are disturbed. Many are inhabited by snakes, making even the least superstitious hesitate to enter. But since there are tales of explorers finding caches of huge jewels in these old ruins, some still come to the Wildlands to disturb them.

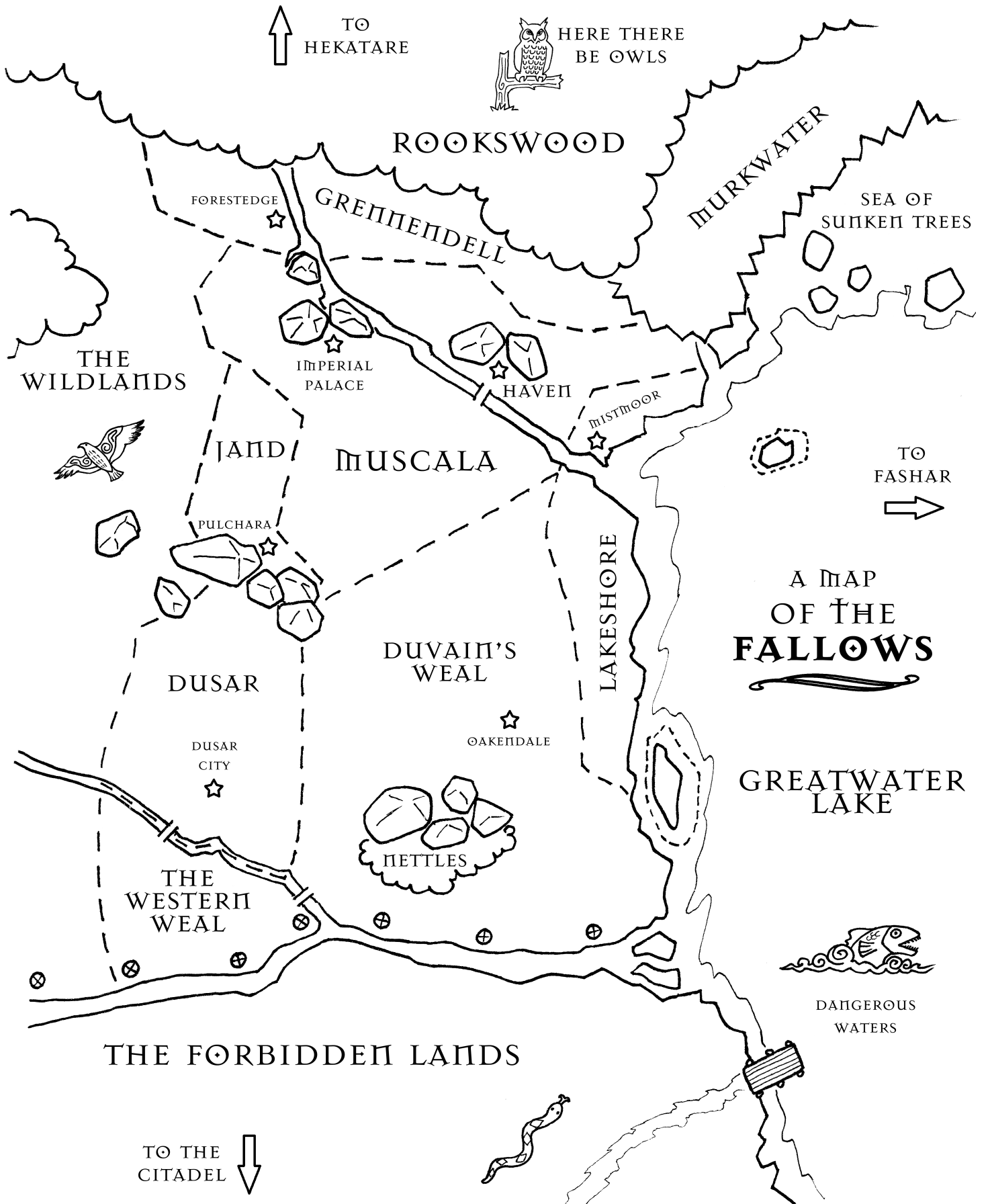
THE UNDERWORLD

While mice dig burrows, these rarely extend more than a few stories into the earth. There are larger and more extensive natural caverns below that. Entrances to these mysterious caves are occasionally exposed by heavy rains or excessively deep excavations. The caverns continue endlessly through the ground beneath the Fallows and are very dangerous. Pockets of bad air, unstable ceilings or even simply getting lost can doom the unwary traveler.

THE LOST CLANS

Old stories say that some First Ones fled from the war on the surface and hid in the underworld. These cowardly mice grew twisted and strange in the depths. Now blind and hairless, they sometimes burrow up to the surface and kidnap little mice who disobey their parents.

The more elaborate stories speak of huge underground cities lit solely by magic, caverns filled with huge, luminescent fungi and a dark bargain struck between the these degenerate mice and the unspeakable creatures known as the *Worms of the Earth*.



GODS AND MICE

THE GODS IN THEORY

There are seven major deities and one minor one commonly worshipped in the Fallows. Ancient custom dictates that the First Ones, rather than perishing of old age like mortal mice, instead ascended into the Void as gods. There they used their incredible magical powers to conquer the spirit world and remake it as they saw fit.

Together they created the kingdom of *Paradise*, where good and dutiful mice could live forever without want or hardship. When a mouse dies, their spirit is conveyed to the gates of Paradise to be judged. If found worthy, one of the First Ones will call out their name and invite them into their household. The truly worthy will receive invitations from all of the gods and may dwell where they choose.

But if they were wicked or slothful or impious, they will be found unworthy and no one will call for them. Then their soul will be given to Zakarvus to be cast into the Outer Darkness, wherein dwell only demons, dark spirits and the lost. That, at least according to the priests, is the fate of *all* those who commit evil acts or blaspheme against the gods.

According to theologians, *all* of the First Ones who survived the war against the Cats became gods, but they are ruled by the mightiest of their number... which happen to include the ones who founded the major surviving kingdoms of the Fallows. Many lesser gods naturally exist, but only those named in the fragmentary ancient texts are regarded as *true* deities. Worship of an "uncredited" First One brings the danger that they might actually be a demon masquerading as a god... or at least that's how the major churches explain why worship of the various locally-honored deities is banned. Woe betide the poor mouse who makes sacrifices in the name of a demon, for they will surely be cast out into the Outer Darkness to join it!

THE GODS IN PRACTICE

If the gods truly exist, then they spend most of their time in Paradise and are loathe to intervene in the affairs of mortal mice. They do not manifest themselves in ways that are open and undeniable... rather they work subtly, or occasionally in disguise, rewarding the dutiful with good fortune and occasionally sending ill times to remind their followers of the importance of tithing to the church.

To the typical mouse, the proof of the gods lies in the great temples raised to them and the services of their many priests. The fact that these priests generally preach subservience to the social order and the giving of generous donations that they can accept in the name of those gods is not often questioned (at least not *twice*). Atheism is certainly present among the inhabitants of the Fallows and there are few mice who could be considered *truly* devout. Mostly simply live their lives from day to day, perhaps making the occasional prayer or offering... just in case.

The political power of the church, on the other hand, is quite considerable. Members of the priesthood are considered to have removed themselves from their families and thus can no longer inherit land or authority. This allows families with "excess" heirs a way to prevent their children from squabbling over their inheritances or spreading the family fortune too thin. Children who are not expected to

inherit can be given over to one of the many temples that dot the land where they will live quite respectable lives outside of the political struggles of the upper classes.

Thus, in theory, priests and priestesses are supposed to be held apart, remaining above the various petty squabbles between their families and concerning themselves with the proper ways to honor the gods. In practice this means that the upper ranks of the priesthoods are all dominated by royal mice from major families and sermons are not always as apolitical as one might hope. It's quite common for a given pulpit to be used as a forum to sway public opinion in favor of, or against, some controversial public edict.

THE MANY TEMPLES

While technically all of the gods of the Fallows are regarded as a single pantheon, in most regions their shrines are maintained by worshippers who have dedicated their lives to serving and glorifying that particular deity. With very few exceptions, each temple is dedicated to a *specific* First One rather than the pantheon as a whole.

Each god has his or her own priesthood, which competes with the others for the attention of the populace. Exactly what role the temple plays in local affairs varies from location to location. In some kingdoms they are practically part of the government and regular attendance and tithing may well be required by law... while in others a given priesthood may consist of only a small shrine and a handful of volunteers that maintain it.

In areas where a particular church is wealthy and powerful one will invariably find enormous and beautiful temples and works of art crafted to honor their patron deity. If more than one church is prosperous, they may even compete for producing the most aesthetically pleasing public works.

Of course, with so much power and money concentrated in one spot, the upper hierarchies of each temple tend to be rife with corruption. It's not uncommon for a high priest to live in sumptuous quarters decorated with gold and jewels... all for the honor of the god they serve. A deity's earthly representative should not live in squalor, surely?

So the corruption of the churches largely matches that of the upper classes from which most of their membership is drawn. Like the royal families themselves, the major churches are slowly decaying from within and innumerable heresies and splinter sects result. As a consequence, all of the major churches *also* employ their own soldiery just in case support from the local government wanes or some insufficiently pious White Lord decides to make some theological alterations by force.

RELIGIOUS PLAYER CHARACTERS

It's not required for a given PC to have a single chosen patron deity or even to declare whether or not they truly believe in the First Ones. Indeed, most Swords & Sorcery characters tend to be relatively impious and rarely tithe a proper share of their riches or devote much thought to the gods. It generally takes a very dangerous situation to even elicit a quick prayer for good fortune from them.

Similarly, PCs who have chosen to be priests need not be truly devout. While many priests *are* mages and many of those claim otherwise, their magical powers do *not* depend upon the favor of the gods.

LUCIEL THE FIRST EMPEROR

Luciel is the First Emperor, the King of the Gods and the ruler of the world. It is said that he led the other First Ones in their rebellion against the Titans and brought them to the Fallows where they could live freely. Some of the other churches dispute his importance, but his preeminent position is ensured by the authority of the Empire of Muscala, which he founded. Even the current Emperor, Luciel XXIV, takes his name from his illustrious ancestor.

Luciel directly controls the weather and the seasons, laying down laws which the very elements must obey. According to doctrine, the other gods are subordinate to his authority and thus the other temples are expected to behave in a subordinate manner to Luciel's church. Other temples often disagree but are careful not to arouse the ire of the armies of Muscala or the inquisitors of the church itself.

Luciel is the patron of the upper classes, the divine symbol of the social order and their superiority over their social inferiors. As such, his temples tend to be huge and grandiose with an enormous amount of ornamentation. It's a point of pride for them to be no smaller than any other temple in the same area, even in locales where another deity is more revered.

Temples of Luciel host large gatherings of the faithful but generally have one hall for the upper classes and a larger one for commoners... with services for each often held on different days as well.

His church holds the most temporal power of any of the priesthoods in the Fallows, yet often only a weak hold on the faith of the general populace. He is most popular amongst the upper classes and those who idolize them but other deities are far more popular with the lower classes. Because the church encourages obedience to one's superiors, in many areas periodic attendance is mandatory for commoners and de rigueur for the upper classes.

Depictions of Luciel show a crowned royal mouse bearing signs of rulership such as the rod and sphere. His head is often further surrounded by a halo of light representing his divine authority over the world. Rather than making him unreasonably tall, most representations place him atop a great throne that raises him above all other figures present. Lesser deities are often shown as well, with only his bride Lumierre being occasionally depicted as an equal.

The church's relationship with other temples is often strained because of the inherent inequality of it, but they maintain strong and friendly ties to the few remaining temples of Lumierre, often aiding them politically and even militarily. Like followers of Lumierre, devout believers in Luciel consider Quickpaw to be a purely fictional deity and generally try to stamp out his worship.

LUCIEL'S DAY: this late winter holiday marks the first day of the new year. Among the lower classes, it is most commonly celebrated by taking the day off of work to attend huge public sermons given by Luciel's priests. The upper classes mostly occupy themselves with elaborate and often especially debauched social gatherings. The restricted nature of winter travel lends itself to these mandatory gatherings of worship.

LUMIERRE QUEEN OF SWORDS

Lumierre is the bride and personal champion of Luciel, the king of the gods. She is normally represented as a royal mouse garbed in flowing robes and holding a sword (sometimes with a sword in each paw).

Her bravery, skill and swordsmanship are legendary and her followers idolize those virtues. There are only a few temples dedicated to Lumierre in the Fallows, but those that exist are sturdy and well-protected.

Almost all acolytes are female and upper-class (white or royal mice, with a handful of common mice). The church trains them in etiquette, weaving, dance, archery and swordsmanship. While a given acolyte will often specialize in one art or another, the best students master them all.

The temples are arranged like nunneries... acolytes and priestesses live on the temple grounds away from outsiders. Public ceremonies are only held on special occasions; in many ways, a temple of Lumierre is like a finishing school for young women with an unusually strong emphasis on combat skills.

Most acolytes leave the temple after their studies are complete (a year of training at a minimum) but maintain close ties with the church. Members are expected to behave in a proper and upstanding manner and not bring scorn upon their order. Romantic entanglements are forbidden for current acolytes and many graduates remain celibate for most of their lives, only marrying when they have grown too old for martial pursuits.

The priestesses stay out of political matters, and even former members are expected to avoid direct conflicts with other followers of Lumierre. Notably, the church does not accept rats and jumping mice as actual acolytes, although they can serve in secondary positions. Exceptions are few and far between. Her followers tend to be staunch traditionalists, and regard non-mice as second-class citizens. Swordsmen of Lumierre have a reputation for being highly skilled but also haughty and intolerant.

Many of her followers believe that Lumierre herself often travels the land disguised as a mortal... righting wrongs, protecting the innocent and defeating monsters. In these stories, her divine nature never becomes apparent until she draws her blade and dispatches her foes.

Strong, independent females idolize Lumierre the most, although she has a respectable following amongst male warriors who prefer precision to raw power.

LUMIERRE'S DAY: a fall holiday that is almost the reverse of Jandara's Day. Dances are held and females are expected to invite a male partner. For younger girls, athletic competitions like races are held instead. Males are not allowed to participate but may watch and cheer.

QUICKPAW: Followers of the deity Quickpaw believe that he is the son of Lumierre and an unknown common mouse. Not surprisingly, the followers of Lumierre discount these stories, believing instead that Quickpaw is merely a fictional folk hero exalted by the ignorant and foolish. In places where worship of Lumierre is strong, worship of Quickpaw will be banned.

DUVAIN THE FEARLESS

Duvain is the god of strength, courage, alcohol and the harvest. He is depicted as a ruggedly handsome and muscular royal mouse (usually about the size of a common rat) who holds an improbably large hammer. Thunderclaps are sometimes said to come from his hammer blows.

He is regarded as the bravest of the gods by his followers (and the most fool-hardy by the followers of Lumierre) and his valor in battle is unquestioned. Many incredible feats of strength are credited to him, including cutting down the great tree whose stump would later house the city of Oakendale. He is believed to have invented the art of brewing alcohol.

He is also said to have taken dozens of wives and had hundreds of children, more than any other First One. In the kingdom of Duvain's Weal, practically every family claims descent from him even amongst the lower classes.

Priests of Duvain are almost invariably male and display a lot of contempt for the few females who join. They are allowed to marry and partake of alcohol and are expected to get their paws dirty helping out the community. Some take their deity's legendary love of carousing a bit too far and drink excessively. Rituals almost invariably involve ceremonial wine.

Modern temples tend to be small and homey, not because Duvain is said to hate ornamentation, but because his church has fallen on lean times. Worship of Duvain is now only really common among the lower classes; outside of Duvain's Weal, most nobles regard him as a commoner's deity.

DUVAIN'S DAY: a workman's holiday in the summer. All mice who don't have subordinates of their own are given half a day or the entire day off, depending on the kindness of their master and how readily they can be spared. Truly miserly employers, of course, scorn this holiday and give their workers no time off at all.

Festivals held on Duvain's Day generally involve a lot of revelry and drunkenness and males are invited to participate in tests of strength. Rats are forced to celebrate separately from the mice, largely because the typical rat is considerably stronger than the average mouse and Duvain's mousy followers don't like being outdone.

DUVAIN'S HAMMER: while this term most literally refers to the great warhammer which Duvain is always depicted wielding, the term can also refer to the church's champion.

In many towns, it also means a particularly strong kind of drink made from fermented honey mixed with grain.

ACORNS: acorns are sacred to Duvain, and they are commonly used as symbols by his followers. Drinking cups made from hollowed-out acorns are often used in church rituals.



CANDUSS THE METHODICAL

Canduss is the goddess of planning, finance and commerce. She is depicted as a female royal wearing demure white robes of simple design, always looking forward. She generally holds a quill pen in one hand and an abacus or bag of coins in the other. Sometimes she is shown holding a scale with coins on one side and wheat on the other. Historically, she was credited with the invention of currency and the founding of the kingdom of Dusar.

Her most famous aspect was her intensely detailed and methodical way of attacking any problem. She is admired by those mice who believe in taking care of every detail and never engaging in slipshod work or leaving a task incomplete. She is not so well liked by the less dutiful. In the old tales of the First Ones, Canduss was the one given all of the unglamorous but vital tasks, such as organizing the slaves into armies or overseeing the production of their arms and armor. She was apparently very good at it.

Her temples aspire to be beautifully (and expensively) decorated without becoming gaudy. Naturally, what passes for "gaudy" varies from area to area; the interior of the temple of Canduss in Haven is decorated with so many gems and golden ornaments that it would hurt the eyes of a worshipper from Dusar.

The garments of her priests and priestesses vary similarly. In richer areas, they are often inlaid with gold and silver filigree... elsewhere, they will be plain and white.

Regardless of the location, however, her temples invariably have their fingers in local commerce. Her church remains the richest, if not the most influential, and many bankers and merchants credit their financial success to their generous donations to the church. They are also the most organized of the priesthoods, with the central church in Dusar keeping careful books on the financial dealings of the churches elsewhere. Priests whose temples lose money are felt to have lost the blessing of the goddess.

Her following is most powerful in Dusar. The High Priest or Priestess (Canduss was never one to favor her own gender over the other) is always a relative of the royal family and by law, only the church can loan money for interest in Dusar. Anyone else giving a loan for interest is considered to have committed usury and severely punished. All the financial dealings of the country pass through the church and its favor is *essential* to do business there.

The selling of blessings and indulgences is a time-honored tradition in her worship and those who regularly contribute find that it is much easier to get loans or other aid from the church. Regular worship is not considered as important as tithing; the devout can pray to her perfectly well from a shrine in their home and many temples simply don't have room to hold a great number of worshippers at once.

CANDUSS'S DAY: Not a true holiday, but rather a wry jest. "Canduss's Day" is any day that the tax collector comes calling or a loan must be paid off.

CANDUSS'S FLOWERS: A wry way of referring to gold coins. A common expression amongst commoners who might attract suspicion if they were overheard discussing such large amounts of money.

MAGELLIAN THE FONT OF WISDOM

Magellian is the god of wisdom, knowledge and magic. He is regarded as the most skilled (although not the most *powerful*) worker of magic among the gods. He is credited with granting intelligence to the rats and jumping mice, although certain older records instead cite a less well-known First One named Sethias.

Magellian is generally depicted as a tall but cloaked and cowed royal mouse. His temples are arranged as abbeys with cloistered monks and nuns acting as scribes and librarians for the temple's accumulated knowledge. Texts and maps are meticulously copied by the scribes in return for a small donation to the church coffers.

To most of the inhabitants of the Fallows, that is all that the church of Magellian is... quiet, studious monks and nuns who are happier with an inkwell and a sheaf of papers than they would be with a mug of beer.

THE MYSTERIES: Internally, however, there are several additional layers to the church's structure. Magellian's church is a mystery cult; its inner workings are closed to the public and never spoken of to outsiders. Rank within the church is based on a series of initiations and secret rituals. As an acolyte progresses, they are asked to pass certain tests; those who succeed are informed of new pieces of church lore and theology known as Mysteries.

The Mysteries act as both pass-codes and opportunities for enlightenment. Each is a cryptic fragment of lore that seems rife with hidden meaning. Some are coded discussions of historical events or even advanced feats of magic, but it takes a great deal of insight and knowledge of many Mysteries to put that information together. Taken individually, they appear to be meaningless.

The rites of initiation are cloaked in mystery and are often quite deceptive. For example, an acolyte may be shown a deep pit, then taken away, blindfolded and led back to the pit... into which they are expected to step blindly and trust in Magellian to save them. Of course, those who are administering the test know that the subject is actually standing before a small depression and not the seemingly bottomless hole that they were taken to before. Only those willing to trust the church enough to take that seemingly suicidal blind step are advanced to the next rank. The others are not yet worthy but may try again in a year.

MAGELLIAN'S CLOAK: In the old tales, Magellian wears an enchanted cloak that can render him invisible. When he needs information, moths pour out of its shadows and rush off to corners of the earth... returning to whisper secrets into his ears of the things that they have seen and heard.

In the church, *Magellian's Cloak* refers to those members of the priesthood who travel the countryside and periodically return to record their travels. They also inform the church of any sudden political developments or new discoveries that they come across, which helps this otherwise insular organization keep its knowledge up to date.

THE 12 HOLY DAYS: Magellian has no widely known holy days; rather there are twelve *secret* dates on which private ceremonies are held to celebrate the Mysteries and advance new initiates.

JANDARA THE BEAUTIFUL

Jandara is the goddess of beauty, farming and the arts. She is credited with inventing agriculture and sculpture. She is also the First One who persuaded the others set the rats and jumping mice free after the end of the great war against the children of Ka-Yann (they had always been slaves prior to that). She is depicted as an unusually tall and beautiful royal mouse garbed in swirls of cloth.

Males can enter the priesthood, but will only rarely reach the upper ranks, which are almost entirely female. Physical beauty is greatly prized by this church (such people are commonly said to have been blessed by Jandara) so most of the upper ranks are beautiful female mice.

Her temples host ceremonial dances and sell flowers that are said to carry the blessing of the goddess. Expectant parents offer sacrifices (the temple takes anything valuable as a contribution) in hopes of producing better children. The parents of a deformed child are assumed to have offended Jandara, probably by not offering a large enough sacrifice. Artists also regard Jandara as their patron and often gift the nearest temple with a piece of appropriate artwork... which, of course, also means that their work is then displayed before everyone who visits that temple.

Shrines dedicated to her are surrounded by flowering plants tended by her priesthood. Beautiful statues and other works of art are also common. Larger temples have high stone walls encircling sacred gardens where the most beautiful flowers are carefully tended (since these are mice, some of the larger plants actually tower over the temple and require a good climber to tend them). The attendants are usually *Maidens of Summer*, a prestigious position awarded only to the most beautiful, demure and graceful of acolytes. In the kingdom of Jand, where the church is most powerful, merely touching a Maiden of Summer without her permission is illegal and wounding one a capital crime.

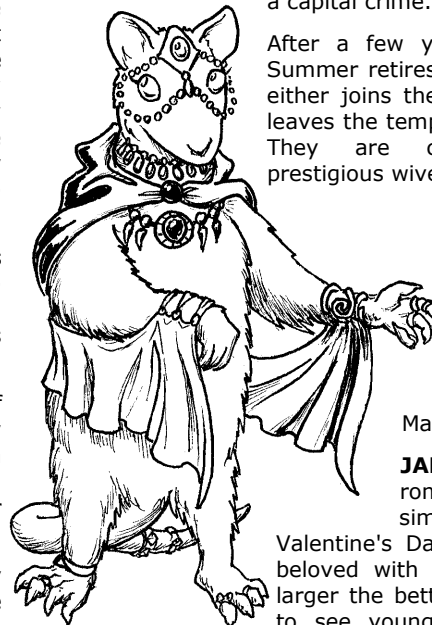
After a few years, each Maiden of Summer retires from her position and either joins the regular priesthood or leaves the temple to seek her fortune. They are considered extremely prestigious wives.

The church stays out of political struggles, but their influence is very strong. Former Maidens often wield great political power. The current Empress of Muscala is a former Maiden of Summer.

JANDARA'S DAY: a romantic spring holiday similar to Saint

Valentine's Day. Males present their beloved with a flower blossom, the larger the better. It's not uncommon to see youngsters carrying blooms

larger than they are, trying to impress the she-mouse of their dreams.



ZAKARVUS GUARDIAN OF THE DEAD

Grim Zakarvus is the blind ruler of the Outer Darkness. He keeps the demons and dark spirits in check and watches over the torments of those lost and unworthy souls who end up in his realm.

He is the god of death, darkness and the spirit world. It is said that he traded his eyes for insight into the nature of the universe. When the First Ones ascended to godhood, Zakarvus was given domain over the great void, the shadowy realm where dwell demons and lost souls.

His priests are often blind and wear heavy hoods that cover all of their faces except for the tip of their muzzle and their ears. Their hood and robe are invariably dark in color. These blind priests are usually assisted by sighted acolytes.

Most of his priests take the title of *Necrolate*. Their duties include performing funeral rites, and embalming and burying the dead. They are considered to be the only priests who can perform a *proper* funeral, although most commoners are buried without sufficient ceremony to require a priest of Zakarvus. Their ceremonies are somber affairs and many of their chants involve baritone murmuring in a forgotten language.

Temples of Zakarvus tend to be grim, unadorned stone buildings, always dark in color. The inner sanctum is kept in complete darkness at all times; bringing a source of light therein is blasphemy. A common rumor has it that each temple stores all of its most valuable donations on the walls of the inner sanctum, which has caused more than one would-be thief to try and smuggle in a light source.

Extensive catacombs often run beneath each temple, wherein nobles of high importance can have their remains stored and safeguarded in family tombs. The bones of those of lesser rank often fill small sepulchers cut into the walls. Rumors tell of paranoid nobles who have also paid to have lethal traps placed to guard their ancestral tombs.

While the common folk believe that all priests of Zakarvus are physically blind, many of them are not but wear the sight-obscuring cowls as proof of their devotion to their deity. In less devout areas, sighted priests will often remove their hoods in private and only deny themselves vision during public rituals. Those priests who are also mages often use magic to compensate for their lack of sight, which is not considered improper; Zakarvus himself is said to see all around him despite his missing eyes.

ZAKARVUS'S NIGHT: Though little celebrated outside the church, the night of the Winter Solstice (the longest night of each year) is believed to be sacred to Zakarvus and his priests often perform long rituals and strike bells that fill the land with deep, stentorian tones from dusk to dawn.

ZAKARVUS IN THE WILDLANDS: In the Wildlands, Zakarvus is considered by most clans to be the supreme ruler of the gods rather than Luciel. Among them, he is the god of strength and courage as well as death and the patron of metal-smiths as well. Some scholars believe that Zakarvus founded a short-lived kingdom in the Wildlands during the age of the First Ones and that this modern reverence dates back to that era.

QUICKPAW THE TRICKSTER

Quickpaw is a "disputed" deity, with some areas regarding him as a fictional folk hero and others as an actual divinity. His followers believe that their mischievous patron finds the doubters amusing rather than offensive.

Quickpaw's mother is always Lumierre. His father varies from teller to teller (and is usually assumed to be have been a resident of their own kingdom) but is always a common mouse. Depictions of Quickpaw generally show him as a golden-furred common mouse with a mischievous grin and a concealing cloak.

He is the patron of thieves, con artists and everyone who lives by their wits, charm or agility. He is also credited with granting good fortune to people that he likes. Many people consider him the patron deity of luck and chance.

There are innumerable tales about his exploits, most of which involve him making a mistake which endangers him, the other gods or just mortals, but which he cleverly resolves with no real harm done but plenty of humiliation handed out to the deserving. Quickpaw is a trickster deity, and as such is respectful of neither tradition nor social standing. Because of this, he is unpopular with the upper classes and his worship is often banned outright in areas where the church of Lumierre is powerful.

No open temples to Quickpaw exist in the Fallows. Instead, small, hidden shrines are secretly maintained by the devout. Knowledge of how to find them is passed by word of mouth. Many worshippers maintain their own small shrines in their homes, often in a hidden area. It's common for folks who believe that Quickpaw has smiled on them to leave a coin or two in a shrine as his part of the "take". If no shrine is available, it's acceptable to drop the coin down a deep crevice, into a gap in a wall or anywhere else where it's assumed that no one but Quickpaw will ever find it.

His abilities vary from tale to tale, but he is always stealthy, agile and cunning. Many stories involve him learning of a treasure so wondrously well-defended that it lures him away from the land of the gods to seek it out. In some, he rewards cunning-but-good-natured behavior by giving the person one of his golden hairs. These are said to become solid gold and bring good fortune to the bearer. Tiny strands of gold are worn by his followers for luck.

It's worth noting that not just his true parentage but the timing of it varies from area to area as well. In most versions, he was born before Lumierre married Luciel and became queen of the gods, but common mice and rats who dislike the upper classes sometimes tell tales of how Quickpaw's father (generally a local folk hero of note) cuckolded the First Emperor.

QUICKPAW'S DAY: Not a true holiday but rather an expression; when a commoner has a day where everything goes right, they often refer to it as Quickpaw's Day.

QUICKPAW'S GAMBIT: An expression referring to any underhanded strategy, such as cheating at a game. Someone who tries Quickpaw's Gambit is no longer playing fair; they are playing to win.

EXPERIENCE AND ADVANCEMENT

END OF SESSION AWARDS

Characters learn from their experiences, whether good or bad. At the end of each session, characters receive 1 to 3 Experience Points (XP) which they can pool and spend when they wish. They'll also receive some replacement Hero Points.

The suggested award levels are:

- Short session: 1 XP, 1 Hero Point
- Normal session: 2 XP, 2 Hero Points
- Marathon session or plot climax:
3 XP, Hero Points refilled to full

STANDARD XP COSTS

- Improving a Standard Skill by +1:
 - 1 XP per level from +1 to +3
 - 2 XP per level from +4 to +6
 - 3 XP per level from +7 to +9
- Improving a Combat Rating by +1:
 - 2 XP per level from +1 to +3
 - 4 XP per level from +4 to +6
 - 6 XP per level from +7 to +9
- Buying a new Power: 5 XP per Power Point
- Buying off a Flaw: 5 XP per Power Point
- Improving a Stat by +1 (stat caps from character creation do not restrict these improvements):
 - The first time to improve that stat: 10 XP
 - The second time: 15 XP
 - The third (and final) time: 20 XP.
- Improving your Social Status by +1:
5 XP per +1 Social Status *and* you must have acquired sufficient money, fame or the gratitude of a kingdom to justify the change.

Social Status cannot be increased above +2 for non-Royals. Above +4 you *must* have a particular area or organization available to rule.

Skills and Combat Ratings can be improved to a maximum rating of +9. Going from +0 to +1 in a skill costs 1 XP, from +1 to +2 costs another 1 XP, et cetera. Above +3, the costs are doubled and above +6 they are tripled. Note that Combat ratings are twice as expensive to improve as regular skills.

Powers such as High Sorceries may (GM option) require you to find a source of knowledge in play before you can purchase them. Similarly, buying off certain Flaws such as *Debt-Ridden* may require an in-character explanation for your change in circumstances.

HERO POINTS

At the end of each session, characters receive some replacement Hero Points. If this would take you above the upper limit of 5 Hero Points, the extra points are lost (this encourages folks to spend them a little more often).

The GM may also wish to award Hero Points for particularly entertaining actions, staying in character under extreme duress or especially creative contributions to the game.

OPTIONAL RULE: 1 XP PER ITEM

In order to simulate more realistic character growth, each session when you spend XP, you cannot allocate more than 1 point to a single skill, power, attribute, et cetera. You can spend points on as many *different* areas as you like, but a maximum of 1 XP can be spent on each item per session.

So purchasing a new Power for 5 XP will require at least 5 sessions before it can be learned. Only once the total cost has been paid does the PC receive the new Power, raise that stat, improve that skill, buy off that Flaw and so forth.

Note that if a player can't find anything that they want to spend their points on now, they're welcome to start stockpiling XP... but they'll still be limited in how they can spend it later. For this reason, most players will allocate each point of XP as soon as they receive it.

If you use this rule, it's reasonable to award one more XP per session, as compensation for the hassle.

OPTIONAL RULE: BONUS XP

Each session, the GM decides that whether or not to award a bonus point of XP for each character. If so, the GM also decides *where it has to be spent*.

This should never be a Combat Rating or even a skill that the party uses all of the time... rather, it represents growth in areas that the players themselves might not ever bother to spend XP on, even though it might be unrealistic for their characters to not get better in that area.

SUGGESTED AWARDS

- Spending at least a week in a new town, city or kingdom: +1 XP in *Common Lore*
- Spending days excavating an old ruin: +1 XP in *Digging* or *Engineering*, depending upon each character's role in the process
- Attending a huge public festival and roleplaying having fun: +1 XP in *Carousing* or *Performance*
- Spending days helping townsfolk repair some part of their city: +1 XP in *Craft*
- Spending weeks traveling cross-country: +1 XP in *Wilderness*
- Working their way across to Fashar on a ship: +1 XP in *Sailing*
- Spending a winter season inside a single city or town: +1 XP towards purchasing the *Familiar Territory* Power for that area
- Spending days crossing a watery area by swimming across each obstacle: +1 XP in *Swimming*



GAME MASTER'S SECTION

The following sections are primarily intended for the Game Master's use, and have a lot of information that isn't necessarily useful for players, like the bestiary. It also has suggestions for game scenarios and adventures, so there's also some material here that players probably *shouldn't* read.

RUNNING A GAME OF (HYPERBOREAN) MICE

Hyperborean Mice is, in many ways, a very traditional Fantasy Role-Playing Game with an unusual setting. It combines the familiar tropes of swordsmen, mages and fearsome dragons with those of cartoon talking mice.

Boulders become huge mountains, gentle streams become raging rivers and cats and owls become fearsome dragons.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE GAME

A CONTRAST OF ABSURDITY AND SERIOUSNESS

There's something inherently wrong with treating a world of talking mice and rats like a grim and gritty fantasy world, but **Hyperborean Mice** tries to embrace the contradiction rather than avoid it.

GRIM FATALISM

The game itself has the potential to be a dark one. The steady decline from the days of old shows no sign of reversing itself and the kingdoms may well be doomed to revert to barbarism and then mindless instinct. The Tzarchul raised great towers and temples and worshiped their gods, but that wasn't enough to save them. The same fate may befall the descendants of the First Ones.

HUMOR

When a mousy minstrel tries to persuade a talking snake not to eat him, or a thief plots to steal a cache of sunflower seeds, the sillier side of the game is liable to shine through.

HIGH ADVENTURE

The rules are written to support a swashbuckling, swords and sorcery campaign and most of them would work just fine with human PCs instead of mice and rats.

A SETTING WITHOUT HUMANS

The exact nature of the world in which **Hyperborean Mice** is set has been left up to the GM. The Titans are obviously humans and their dreaded Citadel doubtless some sort of building, but beyond that it's all up to you.

Do the mice live in a realm of Swords & Sorcery, like Conan's Hyboria? Are they acting out the same kind of grandiose adventures that the humans outside of the valley are? Or is their little mystical realm on the outskirts of some modern farm or research center? Might entire nations be threatened by the unexpected arrival of a bulldozer?

Rather than force a particular relationship between Mice and Men, **Hyperborean Mice** shoves humanity off to the far south and expects that by the time that your PCs are ready to explore that forsaken region, you'll hopefully have some ideas about what they're likely to find.

The basic setting depicts the Titans as mysterious, Lovecraftian giants... dangerous and inexplicable to mortal mice. But set up *your* game however you like!

A MATTER OF SCALE

The characters in **Hyperborean Mice** are *small*. While they may have big adventures, even the largest rat is dwarfed by a major predator like a fox, much less a human being.

Trees are like enormous mountains, towering overhead and dominating the skyline. Common predators like cats, owls or foxes are fearsome monsters, the mousy equivalent of giants or dragons. Even many flowers are large enough for a party to rest comfortably beneath their shade.

ROADS

The roads between major towns are really little more than well-traveled trails. They're unpaved and maintained only by the more dutiful travelers and civic-minded locals.

Each road winds its way under and around innumerable bushes and shrubs, staying under their shade as much as possible. This makes navigation difficult, but it's much more desirable than being visible to the hawks overhead. Wise mice do not cross open terrain if they can help it.

CITIES

Settlements often extend as far underground as they do above. If the undergrowth around the area has been cleared, then spiked fences and sharpened posts will be erected to help keep predators such as hawks and owls away. Mortared stonework is the most durable building material available, but most places make do with wooden frames and earthen floors. Camouflage can be more important than fortifications when it comes to defending against a huge predator.

More permanent settlements like the major cities are generally built near a stream or other water source, but uphill from it. Streams regularly overflow their banks during the spring, so only a fool builds directly upon one.

UNDERBRUSH

A patch of thistle or high grasses may be a minor obstacle to a human, but they can be the equivalent of a dense forest to mice. You can travel through the brush of the Fallows for days without seeing the unobstructed sky... and that's a good thing, because the hawks are watching.

TREES

A true tree, on the other hand, is a gargantuan structure rising into the clouds like the great beanstalk that Jack climbed. Adventurous climbers might even find a mousy settlement nestled in the branches, inhabited by those who prefer the additional security and isolation up there.

BOULDERS

The rocky landscape of the Fallows contains many huge rocks that double as mountains to mice. These enormous landmarks, which rise out of the underbrush, are used as political boundaries by the various kingdoms of the valley. Hermits sometimes carve out stone hideaways within them, but most mice prefer to live in something softer.

STREAMS

What would be a small stream to a human becomes a river to a mouse. A poor swimmer could find themselves swept all the way out into Greatwater if they are not careful.

WEATHER AND SEASONS

The mice of the Fallows count the passage of time in seasons, rather than years. Youngsters refer to their age in "seasons", while the very old count their age by the number of winters that they have survived.

Each season is appropriate for different sort of adventures and so each one is described separately.

SPRING

In the spring, the winter snows are receding and mice are eager to explore the transformed landscape. Months of restricted activity during winter results in an enormous amount of travel among young mice during this season. When a youngster leaves home to seek their fortune, it's generally in the spring.

New political alliances and trade agreements are forged this time of year as foresighted mice work to put the new year into order. Betrothals and other important plans are announced now as well, so that there is plenty of time for word to reach all of those who need to be informed.

Floods are a major danger this time of year. The melting snow causes all of the streams to flood and the lake waters to rise. Towns built too close to the shore may well be washed away and have to be rebuilt on higher ground.

Spring adventures generally involve a lot of travel. The roads are crowded and bandits, grown lean and hungry over the winter months, are becoming active again. Traveling nobles often hire guides or bodyguards. Often adventurers will have sat for months in one town, devising plans that they eagerly put into practice in the spring.

SUMMER

In summer, the new growth is in full swing and the common-folk are busy with their farms and gardens. Pests and predators are especially common this time of year. The amount of travel for pleasure plunges, while the amount of travel by traders and merchants grows.

As each harvest is gathered, small festivals are often held to commemorate it. Most marriages are performed during this season as well. Many flowers dot the landscape and they are constantly being visited by bees and other pollinating insects. Very wealthy mice sometimes dine on fresh bee or wasp, an exotic dish but readily acquired during this time of year.

While the commoners are very busy with the year's crops, adventuring sorts tend to schedule their most ambitious expeditions during this time of year. The roads are clear and the snow has all melted away and ambitious mice have a little while before the arduous task of preparing for winter brings them home again.

Most thunderstorms occur this time of year, but they're rarely a real danger to mice. Usually all that happens is that folks seek cover and wait out the storm (which can easily last most of a day) but there is the off chance of a flash flood or lightning started brushfire.

FALL

Fall is the harvest season, when the last (and usually largest) harvests come in. This time of year the augurs invariably warn of a harsh winter to come and every township tries desperately to gather enough food and other necessities to last the winter months.

The leaves change color and begin to fall, leaving the trees bare but the roads cluttered. There is more of a sense of purpose among the mice now, as every minute spent idle is one less meal stored away against the winter months.

The loss of a food-store during the fall can mean the end of a town or village. Without sufficient time to replace that grain, mass starvation during the winter months becomes quite likely. More than one town in desperate straits has resorted to raiding their neighbors.

Fall adventures tend to involve locating and bringing back some important resource before the first heavy snowfalls cut off travel. A township which has realized that it is short of food or medicine despite the harvests may dispatch adventurous types to locate some additional sources.

These stockpiles also attract a lot of thieves and raiders. All of the food, wine and valuables of a given community tend to be concentrated in one spot during the Fall... making it a tempting target for the ruthless and unscrupulous.

WINTER

During the winter, heavy snows blanket the Fallows, making travel very dangerous. Mice can burrow under the snow for short distances, but longer journeys are largely impossible. There are scattered warmer days when the desperate could strike out across the snows, but if snow begins to fall before they reach their destination they may never be seen again.

For this reason, each winter season tends to be set in a single town: wherever the party happened to be when the first serious snowfall hit. Towns which spent summer and fall accumulating stores of food to last out the winter months now finally get to enjoy the fruit of their labors.

Winter adventures usually involve local intrigue. In tight quarters, theft and murder become more commonplace. Unresolved tensions between different groups can flare up over the winter months. Since no one can leave town safely, the rulers sometimes organize raids to try and ferret out any outlaws hiding within the city proper. Whoever controls the city's larder has enormous power, but even the rumor of shortages or theft can cause riots.

Occasionally, starvation or disease may prompt a desperate journey out into the frozen landscape to seek food or medicinal herbs. What would have been a leisurely journey in a different season becomes a desperate struggle to survive. When starvation has prompted such an expedition, those mice who set out often take no food with them; they will either succeed or perish in the snow.

The elderly and frail perish more often during the winter than any other time of year. The icy months have no mercy for the weak and hungry. This is also the only time of the year when the mysterious demons known as *Frostmice* are truly active. Just seeing one or more of these animate lumps of snow moving through the drifts outside of a city or town is regarded as an ill omen; having them actually approach the city is a very bad sign indeed.

REWARDS

Players enjoy having their characters overcome obstacles and solve puzzles, but they also like receiving rewards for their effort. If every treasure hoard discovered is coincidentally bare and every magical artifact immobile, adventuring may not seem worthwhile anymore. So let's discuss a few things that you can do to reward characters (and, by extension, their players) for a job well done.

TREASURE

The most basic rewards are physical objects that the PCs can find. They may be sealed inside a lost temple or in the back pocket of a defeated enemy, but regardless... the PCs found them and they get to keep them! Usually.

CASH

A chestful of gold, a pile of gemstones... a fortune just waiting for them to spend it! To handle this kind of cash influx in a system that abstracts out wealth into a Social Status, any major windfall can be represented by handing out bonus XP towards purchasing the next highest level of Social Status. Give out 1-3 XP that automatically goes towards purchasing the next highest level of Social Status *or* (if the character is already as high as they can go) towards purchasing some similar social benefit like the *Good Reputation Power*.

For poor characters, this is the process of paying off debts, replacing worn out gear and just plain learning to handle having more money. For the wealthy, it's more of a bragging point- they can increase their prestige and reputation by blowing the extra wealth on a gathering to celebrate how they received it!

Of course, if you prefer to keep track of cash in the traditional fashion, then stealing a thousand gold coins from the Bank of Dugar is its own reward.

ORDINARY ITEMS

Don't begrudge the PCs the ability to acquire ordinary items by taking them from their defeated foes. Even an impoverished wild rat can pick up and use an expensive sword if he finds one (although he may have explaining to do if he's caught in town with one).

If it's reasonable for a downed foe to have a particular item, let the PCs find it if they ask for it. A spare water flask or tinderbox may not be written down in the NPC's equipment list, but it's okay for them to have one anyway.

SUPERIOR ITEMS

This is basically just equipment that is so well made that its value is increased by one class and anyone using it gets a +1 or +2 bonus. This could be a fabulously sharp axe (+1 damage), an enormously detailed tome on the geography of the Fallows (+2 to any *Wilderness* rolls when consulted), a crossbow with a cunning sight that grants it a further +1 to hit, or just about anything that you can imagine.

But the benefits should be small and really just a minor improvement over what the typical item of that type can do. There's nothing really magical about these things- they're just really well made.

MAGICAL ITEMS

While magical items should be rare in **Hyperborean Mice**, the rules do allow for them. In particular, enchantments crafted by a mage sometimes outlive them, so it's not unknown to find an enchanted item still in use several generations after the death of its creator.

In particular, you might find a gem enchanted with *Eternal Light*, an unused potion of *Ingested Emotion*, an object with a *Permanent Disguise* or *Programmed Shape* concealing its true nature, a golem created with *Animate Doll* looking for a new master, an *Immortal Blade* or an unused *Lethal Arrow*.

Furthermore, if you want to drop in a minor magic item like a fiery dagger that does +1d4 fire damage and can use the *On Fire Bonus*, it can be explained away as the product of an little known High Sorcery. If your players seriously pursue the idea of duplicating it themselves, well... write up the spell and let them go on a quest to find it.

MYSTICAL ARTIFACTS

The difference between a mystical artifact and an enchanted item is generally one of origin. A blade enchanted with an ongoing aura of flame is very different from one made out of a strangely glistening green metal that steals life from anything it strikes. They may both just add a little extra damage in combat, but the former is predictable, explainable and probably could be recreated by the PCs with enough effort. The other, though, is mysterious, inexplicable and could be revealed to have other effects or powers at any moment.

Mystical artifacts can be explained away as being created by a dark god or one of the ancient First Ones, but most often they don't have a real explanation and don't need one. Hyperborea has plenty of unexplained mysteries already; a golden head that speaks prophecies or a stone that detects nearby owls really isn't all that out of place.

Avoid the temptation to bring in mystical artifacts that are overly useful. A sword that slays most foes instantly lends itself to being used in every fight and makes each conflict less interesting. Also try to keep some level of mystery- perhaps the item glows at odd intervals or seems to lose power under the full moon. Little touches like that will keep your players interested. When they think that they know everything about how an item works, it becomes mundane; keep some things secret.

HIGH SORCERIES

For mages, there's a special kind of treasure available. An opportunity to learn a new High Sorcery, usually from a magical tome. Furthermore, such a tome can be used to cast that spell even if the character never spends the XP to actually learn the rite, albeit at a greater cost. If the players aren't *interested* in that new spell at all, well... then it's just something else to sell in town for cash.

Still, you may find that, given an unexpected opportunity to acquire a particular High Sorcery, characters who never thought about it before are suddenly determined to learn it. The rarer and more restricted that High Sorceries are in the game you run, the more desirable a tome describing one is.

For this reason, the game recommends not allowing PCs to *start* play knowing any High Sorceries. They're more valuable if you have to acquire them in play.

SOCIAL REWARDS

CONTACTS

Sometimes, rather than cash, the PCs may just receive the gratitude of someone that they've aided. This can be worth more in the long run, if used correctly.

Give the NPC a name and description that the players can write down. Note their general location and habits and bring them back into play when the PCs could reasonably encounter them again. Let the NPC act out their gratitude by helping in ways that don't steal the spotlight- letting PCs hide out in their home, volunteering their special skills for free, presenting a PC with a spontaneous gift to thank them or acting as a source for important information that the PCs might otherwise overlook.

REPUTATION

Allow the characters to write down their accomplishments on their character sheet (that's what the *Great Deeds* section is intended for) and capitalize on them in play. If someone wants to say "You *should* be afraid. We're the ones who slew the black weasel of Grennendell!" give them a bonus to Intimidate. If they want to say "Don't panic! We faced worse odds than this when we fought the black weasel of Grennendell, and that was in the middle of winter!" give them a bonus to Leadership.

Let them use the reputation that they've earned. Having the players write down their character's deeds will help chronicle them but will also help remind the players of ways in which those past successes can be used again.

SOCIAL STATUS

Characters who perform impressive deeds will be sung about and adored by the locals, or at least those that actually benefited from them. This can be translated as a temporary boost in Social Status; a commoner whose fellows are currently idolizing him as though he were an important noble may as well have a temporary Social Status boost that effectively *makes* him a minor noble for awhile. Give him a +2 to his effective Social Status until the shine of his great deeds finally starts to fade.

Such bonuses rarely last long, generally declining at the rate of 1 point per month until the character's Social Status is back where it started. But it's a great opportunity to start spending XP on a permanent Social Status upgrade- if the local ruler is suitably impressed they might decide to bestow various honors and awards on the PC, effectively moving them up in the world permanently.

And yes, this sort of bonus generally applies to purchasing goods as well. Everyone wants the local hero to like them, so they tend to get discount rates and gifts ranging from "Drinks on the house" to presents that they could never afford on their own. Furthermore, such gifts are an exception to the normal restrictions on owning such property. A character gifted with a suit of fine metal armor may still have it years after they have slipped back into the ordinary life of a commoner, but no one who remembers how they got it will question their ownership of it.

Social Status bonuses represent the good will of a grateful populace, so they are generally restricted to a specific area and can be lost quite quickly if you start engaging in destructive behavior.

METAGAME REWARDS

TRAINING

Training generally takes the form of either bonus XP towards purchasing a particular thing or an excuse to spend XP on some special Power that the GM otherwise might not allow.

Bonus XP is simple and easy for the GM. Announce that each character gets an extra point (or even more) towards something you consider related to their recent adventures. The examples in the *Experience and Advancement* section are a good starting spot, but don't feel limited by them. They're just suggestions.

Not all PCs will necessarily get the same bonus, but it's usually best to give everyone *something*. Players who feel that a particular bonus is inappropriate for their character are allowed to simply drop it. For example, if the GM awarded +2 XP for the *Sailing* skill after the PCs spent more than a month on an extended lake voyage, it wouldn't be unthinkable for a proud noblemouse to insist that he or she *didn't* learn anything of the sort!

MAPS, KEYS AND OTHER PLOT HOOKS

You've slain the dark mage leading the shrew raiders and you look through his belongings to find... some sort of strange map with coded entries and a carefully wrapped black key. Is this the true explanation for his vile actions? What on earth was he looking for? What does the key open? How does this tie into the shrew raids he arranged?

On one hand, this is worthless- it's not a treasure at all, just the *potential* for a treasure later. But often from a player's point of view, the opportunity to pursue something new and tantalizing is the biggest reward of all.

COLLECTING ANECDOTES

Let's be honest. One of the biggest and best thrills in any game is simply the opportunity to have something *so cool* happen that you'll be talking about it and sharing it with other gamers for years to come.

While the best of these occur spontaneously, try to make sure that your plots are open to having spectacular things happen if the players are willing. Don't try to force a particular one- a desperate warrior holding off a horde of shrews across a narrow rock-bridge is cool, but if the team's Shaper mage manages to roll awesomely to shatter the bridge and block pursuit then *that works too*.

SETTING IMPACT

Hyperborean Mice describes the general layout of things in the Fallows and the valley as a whole, but your world certainly doesn't have to stay that way.

If the PCs bring down the brutal tyranny of Duke Ferrik or restore the fortunes of the impoverished Hederain family, let it stick. Don't just restore the status quo unless there's a good reason to.

Like acquiring anecdotal material, letting the PCs make permanent changes to the setting of your world lets them have impact that can last long after the character's own death or retirement. As long as the campaign lasts, the PCs will be seeing that impact of those changes and remembering those earlier games because of it.

EXAMPLE MAGIC ITEMS

BARRIER STONES

A series of small stones inlaid with runes and strung together by a silken cord. If laid out upon the ground in a line, they shroud themselves with an aura of fear using Compel magic. Anyone attempting to touch or cross the stones or interfere with them in any way must make a Courage check against 10+Magic difficulty; only the person who laid them down is immune.

As soon as someone touches the barrier stones, the spell is dispelled and they become dormant again.

BLADE BRACELET

A rare example of a *Programmed Shape*, a blade bracelet is a piece of jewelry (usually an ornate and fragile-looking bracelet or armband) that can be transformed at will into the form of a short but extremely sharp dagger. Popular with assassins and royal mice who fear kidnappings.

GHOSTRENDER

This heavy battle axe has magical symbols engraved on the flat of the blade and was enchanted with the *Immortal Blade* Whispers magic effect by some long forgotten mage.

It inflicts +4 damage to any spirit or undead creature struck, including Frostmice, Ghuls, Rusalka and Guardian Skeletons. It has been wielded by a number of famous heroes over the years and also grants a +2 bonus to resist magical fear simply due to its reputation.

MORRIGAN'S ARROWS

Upon her deathbed, the acolyte mouse Morrigan the Swift bequeathed to the temple of Lumierre a number of arrows enchanted with the *Lethal Arrow* High Sorcery. This became a tradition amongst the mages of the church and over the years many such arrows have been donated. It's common for a non-mage swordmaid on a dangerous mission to be granted one or two to be used in case of dire need. Even once the enchantment has been expended, these bolts are looked upon as bringing good fortune.

A typical Morrigan's Arrow is cut from a shaft of white wood and bears a metal head engraved with a prayer to Lumierre. When the enchantment is finally triggered, the arrow is typically +4 to hit and damage, although it can go as low as +1 or as high as +6. Rumor has it that the central temple in Muscala at one point had a dozen arrows of mysterious origin enchanted to such potency that none have ever been fired and failed to slay their target, but few now remain and are brought out only for direst need.

NIGHTMARE STONE

A tiny rock engraved with stylized images of giant predators eating mice. Anyone who tries to sleep within a few paces of one must roll a TYPICAL Courage check or wake up screaming from the nightmares it induces. It is thought that there were other, similar stones created that induce different mental effects, but none have been found.

NECROMANTIC CANDLE

The secret of creating these candles has been lost, but a few are still found from time to time. They appear to be ordinary candles, although normally dark in color. Under their light, all spells and invisible spirits become visible as faint glows in the air. A given candle is generally large enough to produce two hours of light before burning out.

Even when there is no magic to be revealed, the candle's light gives an eerie ambiance to the surrounding area and anyone who tries to sleep in its light is inviting the most terrible of nightmares.

NIVRA'S WHEEL

A metal throwing wedge enchanted with a powerful Tug magic that causes it to return to the thrower's hand the round after it is hurled. It is said that Nivra created six of these potent weapons before her death, but none have been seen for years.

SAFESTONE

A fairly common *Programmed Shape*, a safestone is just a decent-sized rock that has a hollowed-out area inside and an entrance that can be readily opened or closed by anyone who knows where the opening appears and what it looks like. They range in size from small rocks used to hide stolen goods to rat-sized cavities that you can hide out in.

SHADOWCLOAK

The secret of creating these devices has been lost, but they were common back in the days of the First Ones. A shadowcloak is a dark colored cloak which can cast the *Hide* Guise spell upon its wearer. Doing so requires you to pull the cloak very tightly around yourself and expend a Fatigue wishing very hard to be hidden and invisible. The moment that you let up on the cloak or start moving at more than a snail's pace, the spell ends.

SKIR'S COINPURSE

This leather coin-purse is decorated with many strange runes painted onto it and possesses a potent Guise enchantment. The bag casts the *Disguise* Small Magick on anything poured out of it, such that the items appear to be gold coins unless closely examined. Otherwise the illusion remains for up to a day. Only one is believed to exist, but it has passed through many hands over time.

SUMMERCLOAK

This finely woven garment is enchanted such that whenever someone wraps themselves in it, the very cloth generates a pleasant warmth. In addition to simply being a wonderful luxury during the winter months, a summercloak or similar item grants a +2 bonus to resist cold and chill.

While the secret of creating them is only known in Fashar, a few have been brought across Greatwater to the Fallows.

SUNTEAR

A fist-sized teardrop-shaped glass bead enchanted with the *Eternal Light* spell. Suntears or solar tears were very popular with the upper classes a generation ago, but time has shown that they are a bit too readily stolen compared to the larger glass spheres that are more commonly enchanted with *Eternal Light*.

EXAMPLE ARTIFACTS

FROSTMOURNE

Made from a narrow shard of discolored ice harder than steel, the frozen spear known as Frostmourne is a Dread Weapon occasionally granted to a mortal petitioner by the dark god Hartaug. It inflicts $Brawn+Magic+1d6+1$ damage and adds the user's Magic rating to their *Wilderness* rolls. Frostmice can be found in its vicinity on any cold night, even outside of the winter months. However, the spear always returns to Hartaug before midsummer, no matter how the bearer might try to keep it.

See the [Forbidden Rites](#) section for more details about Dread Weapons.

THE GRAY COIN

This ancient Tzarchul coin appears to be made of some worthless gray metal and has the same unknown rune marked on each side. Merely carrying it is enough to alter the bearer's fortune to extremes. All rolls of 11 or 12 add a further +5 bonus as though the bearer had spent a Hero Point to bolster a natural 12. All rolls of 2 and 3 are automatic botches, and Hero Points cannot be spent to stop them. Strange coincidences and wildly improbable events tend to haunt them until they give the coin away to a willing recipient; if lost otherwise, it mysteriously returns.

HORN OF ZAKARVUS

An ancient horn carved from bone and decorated with symbols of Zakarvus, it is believed to be in the possession of a wild rat tribe in the hills west of the Fallows. It is a little cold to the touch and always utterly silent, no matter how hard one blows through it. It is said that it lies partially in the spirit world and that only spirits and those that the user wishes to hear it can do so.

If you focus your mind on a particular person or group of people and expend 1 Fatigue while blowing on it, those people will hear the eerie phantom sound of a horn in their minds but no one else will. Distance seems to be irrelevant.

JAW OF THE SERPENT

This strange artifact appears to be the jaw bone of a dead serpent, rigged with straps so that it can be worn over the head and shoulders of a mouse, or the head of a rat.

Whoever wears it gains the ability to command all manner of snakes and serpents. Whenever they spend Focus and shout a command at a mindless snake, the wearer can roll their Leadership+Magic against TYPICAL difficulty (HARD or VERY HARD for particularly large serpents and NIGH IMPOSSIBLE for intelligent ones). If the roll succeeds, the target will attempt to obey the command as best it can.

While the jaw grants the ability for one's commands to be heard and understood by serpents, it doesn't really make them smart. Anything more complex than "break down that door" or "eat that rat" is liable to result in a confused snake instead. Furthermore, every time that the snake is injured, stunned or falls asleep, its current orders will be forgotten.

MILK OF THE NEVERBORN

The Tzarchul occasionally sealed up small doses of this chalky white alchemical substance inside ornate jars and bottles. These were often buried with their dead.

If poured down the throat of a recently slain character it can revive them. They are immediately brought back to 2d6 Hit Points minus 1 per hour that they have been dead. However, anyone revived in this fashion suffers a prophetic nightmare that reveals to them their own fate. They acquire the *Doomed* Balanced Trait; if they already knew their doom then it will come true within a single year.

THE MIRROR OF VISIONS

This strange shard of reflective metal normally distorts the image of anything reflected in it. But under moonlight, without any other source of light, the depths of the mirror clear and show scenes from all over the Fallows. Robberies, murders, assignations and other unpleasant acts tend to be the thing most commonly revealed.

Distance appears to be irrelevant to the mirror; it has shown brutal murders in the desert north of Fashar, smugglers passing stolen goods in Dugar and even an owl devouring a luckless mouse in the depths of Rookwood.

The priests of Magellian studied it for a time, attempting to glean important information from its revelations, but they eventually came to feel that the mirror itself was bringing these dark events to pass and gratefully sold it to a wealthy collector of ancient artifacts in Dugar.

OWLSHADOW

This tiny onyx gem fits in the palm of a mouse's paw and has a small streak of color said to resemble an owl's eye. The stone itself grows cold and vibrates faintly according to the distance to the nearest owl. This vibration can become quite violent and even rise to an audible clatter if an owl is about to attack the bearer of the gem.

THE PUZZLE-CHEST OF FIRSTHOLME

This ornate metal chest was discovered in the ruins of Firstholme several generations ago. It is covered by embossed designs of people, animals and plants, many of which may be turned in place or slid along a gap. It is believed that the symbols are part of a puzzle that must be defeated to open the box; so far it has been proof against every form of magic or physical force brought against it.

The mouse scholar Westwood stole the chest some years ago, believing that he had figured out the secret to opening it. The chest itself was later discovered in a shabby rented room in Haven, surrounded by Westwood's scattered possessions and a fair bit of blood, but no sign of the luckless scholar was ever found. It is believed the the Puzzle-chest is now in the vaults of the church of Luciel.

THE TORMENTED STATUE

This small stone figurine depicts an unnamed royal mouse garbed in ancient robes and bent over in a paroxysm of grief. Whenever a hideous sin or betrayal occurs nearby (especially one that touches the statue's current owner in some fashion), blood drips from its eyes like tears.

Those who own the statue for too long tend to acquire Flaws like *Grim* or *Haunted*.

SECRETS OF HYPERBOREA

The setting for **Hyperborean Mice** has been left deliberately open in many areas. The basic setting is pretty well described, but there's plenty of room for each GM to incorporate their own ideas. Here are a few secrets and themes that you might want to loot yourself.

MAGIC AND INTELLECT

The divide for what creatures in the setting *can* be intelligent and which ones can't was determined by how believable it was for them to have drunk the blood of talking mice. Thus, pigeons are nearly mindless animals but crows can talk and have a society all their own.

Predators and some scavengers often have intelligent versions... but herbivores never. You may want to change that for your game, but that's how it was set up for the basic setting.

WHAT'S KNOWN IN THE SETTING ITSELF

It's unlikely that a society as developed as the Fallows wouldn't have spent at least a little while investigating the origins of this intelligence. Sages know that predators that regularly devour talking mice and rats gradually acquire some small portion of their intellect and become dangerously clever themselves. Furthermore, the Forsaken are invariably weak at magic and ancient records clearly state that the First Ones used magic to turn feral mice and rats into intelligent ones.

So the link between magic and intellect is clearly established among the wise. Magic doesn't necessarily make a creature smart, but it creates the potential for it. And thus has arisen the curious rumor that devouring the flesh and blood of a royal mouse can turn a Forsaken mouse or rat back into a normal one.

If the blood of royal mice really *can* cure the Forsaken, it's a sure bet that the Church of Magellian knows about it, and probably so do the leaders of the other temples. But it's a potentially deadly secret to the upper classes and they'll go to great lengths to keep it quiet. None of them want to be torn asunder by a ravenous horde of Forsaken mice and rats, whether it works or not!

THE TZARCHUL

The Tzarchul are a warning of what may lie ahead for the Fallows. Long ago, some great magic made them intelligent and they spread out and dominated the valley.... But the magic in their blood grew thin and waned over time and in the end there was nothing that they could do but regress to a bestial nature and eventually die out. Maybe.

There are other explanations for their demise. Certainly they were prone to dark rites honoring the Dark Gods, which is never a good thing for a society's long term prospects. War, disease or famine might have wiped them out. They might not even be completely extinct, having fled underground or up into the mountains. Perhaps the First Ones slaughtered the last few and then hid the truth. It's possible.

Physically speaking, they were talking guinea pigs.

THE TITANS

The Titans are humans, even if the mice and rats in the setting don't know that. The First Ones fled from them and referred to themselves as being both their children and their slaves. Like the famous *Rats of NIMH*, the First Ones may well have been created by human experimentation. The example write-up for the Titans in this book makes them strongly, dangerously anti-magical, but that's just one option. Perhaps the First Ones were created by a magical experiment by a human wizard... one who might want to grind them up for magical power a la Gargamel.

The nature of the Titans was deliberately kept as vague as possible. Their Citadel might be a farmhouse, a wizard's secret lair, a modern day research center or even a radioactive ruin destroyed in a long-ago nuclear war. I wanted it to be a mystery even to the players exactly what lies beyond the Forbidden Lands, so it should be different in every GM's campaign.

THE WORMS OF THE EARTH

The underworld is another huge blank that GMs are encouraged to fill in as they see fit. Myself, I see an extensive society of nearly blind and hairless white mice that have lived down there since the age of the First Ones. Their society being so repressive and stagnant that belief in surface-worlders is punishable by death. Naturally, the arrival of any PCs is going to immediately destabilize everything.

Go to the old pulp stories about underground empires ruled by beautiful queens or subhuman primitives. That's the way that I see the lands of the underworld.

The locals also live in fear of the dreaded Worms of the Earth... who in my head are basically a society of earthworms turned sapient by devouring the soil beneath mouse and rat graveyards. Sightless and utterly alien, yet possessed of strange magical powers, they are enigmatic and utterly malign, practically a Dark God themselves.

Or maybe you prefer the Worms to be a subterranean society of naked mole rats that kidnap surface-worlders to act as their slaves. It's up to you.

FASHAR

To the Fallows, Fashar is an exotic, foreign land of mystery. Riding rabbits are native to that shore but rare in the Fallows. Many exotic drugs and spices are imported from that region, but the passage there is fraught with peril from pirates, predators and unpredictable weather.

The area is divided into multiple small city-states known as Sultanates, but little detail has been provided. If you want to incorporate something that seems slightly out of place in the Fallows into your game, you can often just claim that it was brought there from Fashar.

If you set an adventure in Fashar, think of a weird cross between the mystical Arabia of **A Thousand and One Arabian Nights** inhabited by talking mice. Bands of jumping mouse raiders may assault a township by leaping onto their roofs from hiding and then disappear again. A community may have found a way to coexist inside of an active rabbit burrow. Dark spirits there may act like malign genies, offering to grant wishes that will never quite turn out like their victim wants. And don't forget sandstorms!

BESTIARY

A selection of wild animals that PCs are likely to encounter. It should be noted that while most are completely unintelligent (being non-magical animals), predators that devour enough talking mice sometimes acquire a level of low cunning and crude speech. Such creatures are referred to as "intelligent" versions of the regular creature, although their actual level of intelligence is generally quite low compared to the character races.

Don't confuse intelligence for empathy; to a predator, talking mice and rats are tasty snacks, not potential friends! Any intellect they have will be turned towards finding better ways to catch and devour the PCs.

Ancient predators which devoured one of the ancient *First Ones* sometimes acquired not only impressive levels of intellect, but magical powers. Examples can be found in the **Dark Demons and Legendary Horrors** section.

Most creatures will have a stat block like this one:

Typical Generic Creature:

Agi +0, Brawn +0, Clv +0, Per +0, Magic +0
Hit Points: 10 (no armor) Size 1 (MR+1)
Melee: +3 (1d6 bite) Alertness: +3
Dodge: +3 Speed: +3

Special: Unusual Ability

Any special description or game rules needed to properly describe the unusual ability.

Any Skills, Armor or Combat Ratings shown already include the creature's base stats. Its MR is its Magic Resistance total. These are only *typical* examples of the breed, however, so it's not uncommon to encounter ones that differ in some fashion. In particular, intelligent predators will usually have a higher Cleverness and Magic ratings than the normal sort.

ANTS

Most ants are harmless unless characters openly threaten their mound. However, the ants around the Smoking Mound are a notable exception. They are surprisingly aggressive and tricky and have been known to construct cunning deadfalls and other traps for intruders.

Typical Ant:

Agi +1, Brawn +0, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 6 (armor -2) Size -2 (MR -6)
Melee: +3 (1d4-2 bite) Alertness: +6
Dodge: +0 Speed: +2

Special: Venomous Sting

An ant which successfully grapples a foe can follow up with a sting attack (1d4 damage).

Wise travelers avoid ants when they can. Individually they are small enough that even a mouse could easily crush one or bite it in half, but an enraged swarm is a different thing.

BEEES

Bees generally ignore mice and rats and are normally ignored by them. However, their wax and honey are quite valuable, so sometimes brave or foolish mice will concoct schemes to liberate some of it from a hive.

Harvesting these treasures is a practice fraught with danger. While a single bee sting is no real threat, intruders into a large hive may be stung hundreds of times. Magic can generally keep a small number of bees at bay, but affecting dozens or even hundreds of them simultaneously is a feat worthy of the First Ones! The most effective method found so far is for a lone mage to enter the hive cloaked in a *Guise* spell, but this also means that they will be far from any aid if anything goes wrong.

Typical Bee:

Agi +2, Brawn +0, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 6 (armor -2) Size -2 (MR -6)
Melee: +5 (1d3+poison, Impale) Alertness: +6
Dodge: +0 Speed: +3

Special: Venomous Sting

This does 1d3 damage initially and inflicts another 1d3 poison damage the next round. Many species leave their stinger behind in the target, adding a further +1 to both rolls but dying shortly thereafter.

BETTERES, RIDING

While ordinary beetles may be killed for food or kept as pets, the mice of the Fallows do raise a species of large and powerful insects (physically very similar to rhinoceros or Hercules beetles) that are used as mounts by the upper classes and beasts of burden by commoners. They are enormously strong for their size and, while slow, they can carry a mouse-sized passenger for hours without tiring.

Riding beetles must be acclimated to handling by mice while they are still grubs in order to be tame as adults. Beetle breeders often attempt to breed specific individuals together in order to produce desirable traits. The males tend to have large and ornate horns; the fancier the horn, the more prestigious the animal's bloodline. Some of the most inbred lines have truly impressive horns but must be hand-fed as they have lost all ability to find their own food.

They can climb trees and plants (albeit clumsily) but must be unencumbered to do so.

Typical Riding Beetle:

Agi -2, Brawn +4, Clv -4, Per -2, Magic -4
Hit Points: 14 (armor 4) Size 0 (MR -4)
Melee: +2 (knock target down, no damage)
Endurance: +8 Feats of Strength: +8

Special: Tireless

Riding beetles have been bred to be enormously strong and untiring for their size.

Special: Mount

Staying on an upset riding beetle is an EASY Ride check. A calm one requires no check.

CATS

In ancient times, the settlement of Firstholme was destroyed by a pack of talking cats in what historians consider the first actual war in the Fallows. Since then, sightings of cats have largely been confined to the distant outskirts of the valley. On the rare occasion that one should wander into the Fallows seeking prey, entire armies are often arrayed to hunt them down.

No actually *intelligent* cats have been encountered (at least not by credible witnesses) for at least a dozen generations. Nevertheless, stories persist of a band of talking cats with mystical powers that dwell up in the mountains around the valley, survivors of their great war against the First Ones.

Typical Cat:

Agi +4, Brawn +2, Clv -2, Per +3, Magic -3
Hit Points: 24 (armor rating 6) Size 6 (MR +3)
Melee: +9 (1d6+8 claw) Alertness: +7
Dodge: +4 Speed: +6
Feats of Strength: +15 Stealth: +6

Special: Night Vision

Cats ignore 4 points worth of penalties for dim light.

Cats like to pin prey with a paw, relying on their enormous strength and size to hold the victim helpless. They are not brave fighters and will flee if seriously wounded.

CENTIPEDES

Ordinary centipedes are vicious and aggressive predators with a pair of needle-like claws (right behind the head) that can deliver a potent toxin into their prey. The larger sort can readily kill mice with a single dose of venom, although they would hesitate to attack prey as large as rats.

Most of the common variety have been hunted down and killed. The remaining ones are disturbingly clever predators. They often arrange simple ambushes such as leaving a valuable item (generally taken from a previous victim) out in the open and waiting for someone to stop and pick it up. They are cunning enough to attack foes when they are most vulnerable and will even kill rats if they catch them off guard. Fortunately, they rarely cooperate with other and are usually found alone. They cannot speak.

Typical (Intelligent) Centipede:

Agi +1, Brawn -1, Clv -2, Per +2, Magic -2
Hit Points: 9 (armor rating 4) Size 0 (MR -2)
Melee: +4 (bite 1d3+poison) Alertness: +5
Dodge: +1 Speed: +3
 Stealth: +4

Special: Venomous Bite

Centipedes possess a very dangerous bite. A target who is bitten takes an extra 2d6 damage the round afterwards and is at -2 to all actions for a day. This penalty is cumulative with multiple bites. A successful VERY HARD *Endurance* check reduces the extra damage to 1d6 and eliminates the penalty.

The only fully intelligent, magic-using centipede ever found is the monstrous horror known as **the Mocker**.

Hyperborean Mice

CRICKETS

Crickets are occasionally hunted for food, but are also kept as pets. Males make decent guard animals, as they chirp happily *unless* they sense an intruder. A mouse who is used to the regular chirping of their pet may well awaken at the sudden, unaccustomed silence.

Tame and trained crickets are a **Common** item. They tend to bumble about underfoot and follow their master around like a not-particularly-bright little dog. They are much more intelligent than their wild counterparts, at a cost of weakening their survival instincts.

Typical Fallows Cricket:

Agi +1, Brawn +0, Clv -3, Per +1, Magic -3
Hit Points: 6 (armor rating -2) Size -2 (MR -5)
Dodge: +3 Alertness: +4
Sixth Sense: +5 Speed: +2

CROWS

Crows are rat-sized black birds that are surprisingly intelligent. They can speak a crude, pidgin form of the language of the Fallows, which they use when negotiating for food or shiny objects with which to impress other crows.

They have a reputation as cowardly thieves and most towns won't tolerate them hanging around for very long. Crows often take the blame when something goes missing that was left out in the open. They travel all over the Fallows and can cross the entire valley in a day; thus they are sometimes paid to deliver messages to distant towns.

Crows are large enough to carry a mouse through the air in their claws and can occasionally be persuaded to do so in return for some other favor. A mouse could theoretically ride a crow's back like a pigeon, but this is considered shameful by the crows and would only be permitted in special circumstances.

Typical Crow:

Agi +3, Brawn +1, Clv -1, Per +3, Magic -2
Hit Points: 13 (no armor) Size 1 (MR -1)
Melee: +5 (1d3+1 peck or claw) Alertness: +6
Dodge: +5 Speed: +4

Special: Flight

Crows can fly very long distances (at least on a mousy scale) at great speed. They have a +4 bonus to spot things from the air.

Crows regard mice and rats with wariness and suspicion. They know that it's all too easy for an armed mouse or rat to kill a crow if they catch it off guard and it's never safe for a crow to assume that the local mice aren't mad about *something*. It doesn't help things that crows really are bad about stealing anything that catches their eye, be it food, coins or a shiny metal tool.

Occasionally, though, a mouse manages to win the lasting friendship of the crow community, usually by providing them with vital but unasked-for aid. See the *Crow Friend* Social Power.

DRAGONFLIES

Harmless to mice, these beautiful flying insects are sometimes hunted to make jewelry out of their colorful body segments and beautiful wings. Because of their fragile nature, the dragonfly must be brought down without damaging it, a task that generally requires magic and the good fortune to find one resting on an accessible branch.

Typical Dragonfly:

Agi +5, Brawn +0, Clv -4, Per +2, Magic -4
Hit Points: 10 (no armor) Size -1 (MR -5)
Melee: +6 (1d3-1 bite) Alertness: +6
Dodge: +8 Speed: +12

Special: Flight

Dragonflies are extraordinarily agile flyers. They soar through the air at incredible speeds and can even hover in place when they wish. They spend most of their time flying so far above the ground that it takes a spyglass to even see one.

A dragonfly's undamaged body and wings are generally worth 2d4 gold coins to a jeweler.

FOXES

Foxes are dog-like predators that regularly prey on mice. Their hearing is extraordinarily keen, allowing them to locate a mouse settlement even if it lies underground. If hungry enough (as happens during the winter months) it may even try to dig into an underground burrow to snatch up the inhabitants. Cities generally have wood or stone defenses that will stymie a fox, but smaller towns may not.

A town that is caught off-guard after a heavy snowfall may well be destroyed by a marauding fox. Even if most of the populace manages to scurry into secure shelters, the fox is liable to tear the township apart hunting for them, leaving any survivors exposed to the deadly winter chill.

Mice digging in the snow away from towns are even more vulnerable, as they generally have nothing separating them from the unseen predator but a few feet of snow. During the other seasons, foxes generally hunt by pinning a mouse with their paws, then biting it to death.

Typical Fox:

Agi +3, Brawn +1, Clv -2, Per +5, Magic -3
Hit Points: 27 (armor rating 8) Size 8 (MR +5)
Melee: +7 (pin or 1d6+9 bite) Alertness: +8/+12
Dodge: +4 Speed: +5
Feats of Strength: +17 Stealth: +7
Digging: +20

Special: Keen Ears

Foxes receive a +4 bonus to hear noises and can readily pick up the sound of underground movement.

Special: Non-magical Fear

Facing a Fox requires a TYPICAL Courage check.

In game terms, foxes are the worst sort of huge and terrible giants... the smart kind. A single fox can destroy an entire village and still be hungry for more.

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FROGS AND TOADS

"And then the odd little mound in the mud pit opened its mouth and swallowed our guide whole. We turned back after that."

Aramias, Traveling Minstrel

Frogs and toads tend to simply find a comfortable spot (often sunk into the mud) and then lash out with their sticky tongue at any moving creature that looks to be bite-sized. Most are quite harmless to PCs. Only the largest of bullfrogs pose any sort of threat, and then only to mice.

These bullfrogs mostly dwell in Murkwater, where they remain a minor hazard of the swamp.

Typical Murkwater Bullfrog:

Agi -2, Brawn +2, Clv -4, Per +0, Magic -4
Hit Points: 16 (Armor Rating 2) Size 2 (MR -2)
Melee: +2 (tongue/bite 1d3+4) Alertness: +2
Feats of Strength: +10 Stealth: +4 (+8)
Speed: +1

Special: Sticky Tongue

A frog's sticky tongue acts as a grab attack. The range is poor, generally just within arm's reach, but any target struck is then drawn back into the animal's mouth where it can then bite them. If their prey struggles too much, the frog may leap into the nearest water and attempt to drown it as well.

Bullfrogs will not attack creatures larger than Size 0.

Special: Camouflage

By burying themselves in the muck and remaining perfectly still, a bullfrog can gain a +4 bonus to all Stealth rolls to resist being spotted.

GRASSHOPPERS

"If you think that's a big 'hopper, you should've been with us last Summer. I came within a whisker's width of bringing down a grasshopper that was this big."

Old Farrel, Hunter and Practiced Liar

Grasshoppers are generally hunted for sport. They can be a challenging target, leaping great distances whenever frightened or attacked. It takes careful planning and sure aim to bring one down before it can vanish into the sky, landing who-knows-where. Every now and then they swarm and devour huge areas of crops, but usually they're quite harmless.

Typical Grasshopper:

Agi +0, Brawn -2, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 6 (no armor) Size -1 (MR -5)
Dodge: +3 Alertness: +2
Speed: +2

Special: Leap and Glide

Grasshoppers have no effective attacks. Their only defense against attacks is to leap high into the sky and buzz away, landing in some distant underbrush and leaving any attackers far behind.

HAWKS

"So there I was... chained up with another twenty assorted mice and rats, all being taken to Dusar for the slave pits. Escape seemed impossible. The overseers were heavily armed and eternally watchful. Our slaver captors had thought of everything... except that the underbrush wasn't quite thick enough to hide us from the sky.

The hawk must have seized one of the luckless rats near the end of the line. First there was a horrific shriek, then the chains started to lift....

In moments our entire line was hoisted, screaming, into the sky. The ground falling away from me like that was the second most frightening thing I've ever seen.

The first was when the chain broke."

Aramias, Traveling Minstrel

Hawks are the main reason that mice associate open, exposed areas with death. A mouse crossing a barren spot in the open needs to do so as quickly as possible. Hawks fly so high in the sky that they can only be seen with a spyglass... or when their shadow passes overhead.

There is no warning when a hawk strikes. It moves too swiftly. There will simply be a sudden shadow, a blur of vicious claws and a missing mouse.

Typical Hawk:

Agi +2, Brawn +2, Clv -3, Per +6, Magic -4
Hit Points: 20 (Armor Rating 2) Size 4 (MR +0)
Melee: +10 (grab, 1d6+6 damage, x2 on crit)
Alertness: +16 Speed: +5
Feats of Strength: +12

Special: Death from Above

A stooping hawk drops from the sky and attacks a single target at great speed. If successful, the target takes standard damage and is snatched up. They will continue to take standard damage each round until slain or they manage to escape. On a critical success, the initial attack deals double damage.

Special: Too High to See

A hawk's attack typically comes from such great height as to take the target completely by surprise. Characters being hunted by a hawk may make a *Sixth Sense* check vs TYPICAL (11) difficulty. On a critical success they can seek cover *before* the hawk attacks; on a regular success they can defend normally. On anything lower, they defend at -4.

The eyesight of a hawk is legendary. Even magical spells are often insufficient to keep a hawk from spotting an unwary mouse. Wise travelers stay close to cover at all times. On the other hand, mice and rats who *do* stay under cover are generally completely safe from hawk attacks. These predators are awkward on the ground and do not like to hunt on foot... especially in regions where the rodents sometimes carry sharp pieces of metal with which to defend themselves!

If they do attack and miss their prey, it can take them several minutes to reach sufficient height to strike again.

LEECHES, MURKWATER

There are small leeches living in Greatwater, but they are largely harmless. Something has *changed* the leeches of Murkwater, however, as they are unnaturally aggressive and sometimes surprisingly cunning.

Murkwater leeches swarm in shallow pools where mice or rats have died, hungering for more rodent blood. They like to remain hidden, then suddenly rush any warm-blooded intruders, trying to bring them down before their victim has a chance to climb out of the water. They have been known to hide near half-sunken dead bodies, weapons or even gemstones, waiting for an opportunity to strike. They will not come out of the water to attack, but will cling ferociously to a victim even after they manage to scramble back onto dry land.

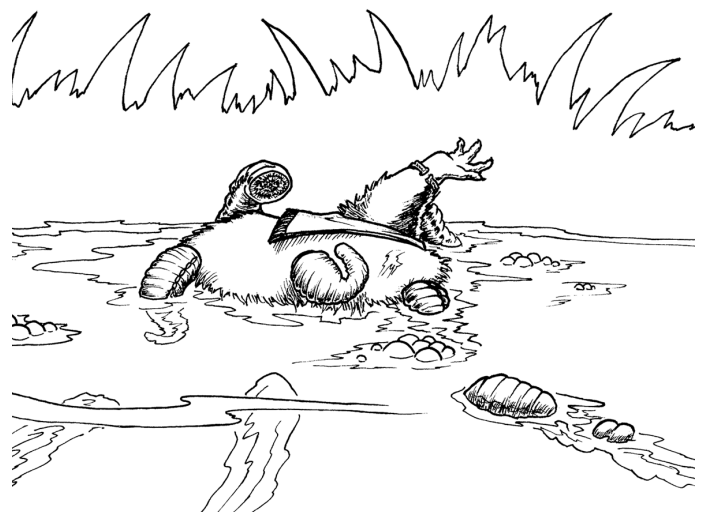
Typical Murkwater Leech:

Agi +0, Brawn +0, Clv -3, Per +2, Magic -1
Hit Points: 6 (armor rating 0) Size -2 (MR -3)
Melee: +3 (bite and adhere) Speed: +0
Dodge: +0 Alertness: +4
Swimming: +4 Stealth: +6
Feats of Strength (for staying adhered): +6

Special: Blood drain

Murkwater leeches drain 1/4 Hit Point worth of blood per round. So a mouse bitten by a single leech loses 1 Hit Point every four rounds. One bitten by two loses 1 Hit Point every two rounds, et cetera. This attack bypasses the target's armor rating. After a leech has drained 5 Hit Points worth of blood, it will be swollen and sated and drop off to wriggle back towards the water.

Leeches like to latch onto foes with their mouth-parts and slowly drain their blood. Their bite contains a number of chemicals to dull pain and prevent coagulation, which means that a mouse may not even notice a stealthy bite at first (roll *Alertness* vs the leech's *Stealth*). However, swarms often consists of *dozens* of these creatures, which drop all attempts at stealth in favor of a massive, overwhelming attack.



OWLS

These avians are perhaps the most feared predators in the entire valley. Unlike hawks, they fly low and are not above fluttering above the ground trying again and again to snatch up a mouse or rat in their lethal claws. They hunt at night, flying on silent wings and devouring those who thought themselves safe in the sheltering darkness.

The supposed lord of all owls is the great horned owl of Rookwood, the dreaded **Hoorooru**. He has systematically exterminated all of the lesser owls of Rookwood until only he and his children remain. Occasionally a regular owl will migrate into the valley (treat it as below, but with Cleverness -3 and Magic -4 and no spell-casting), but such intruders rarely live for long. Hoorooru tolerates no rivals.

Owls are worshipped by some of the mouse clans of Rookwood, who regularly capture outsiders and offer them up as ritual sacrifices to their winged lords. Hoorooru has directed his children to spend most of their time preying upon the mindless feral mice beyond Rookwood, but they regard intelligent rodents as much tastier prey.

Owls regularly regurgitate *owl pellets*... bundles of fur and bone that the owl was unable to digest. These horrific artifacts are a sure sign that an owl lives nearby. Owl-worshippers are also known to collect these and store them in their temples like artwork.

Typical Owl:

Agi +0, Brawn +2, Clv +2, Per +4, Magic +3
Hit Points: 24 (Armor Rating 3) Size 6 (MR +9)
Melee: +8 (grab, 1d6+8 damage, can Impale)
Dodge: +3 Alertness: +8
Speed: +3 Feats of Strength: +14
Stealth: +2(+10*) Intimidate: +14
Spell: +7*

Special: Non-magical Fear

Facing an owl requires a HARD Courage check.

Special: Silent Flight

They can fly almost silently, increasing their *Stealth* rating by +8 when airborne.

Special: Night Vision

Owls prefer to hunt at night and ignore the first 4 points of penalties for darkness.

Special: Spell Caster

Most of the owls in Rookwood are capable of both speech and spell-casting. They prefer the *Compel* and *Guise* spells, which they use to lure prey out into the open. Hoorooru has forbidden the use of *Whispers* magic, lest his children strike some bargain to oust him from his position as the ruler of all owls.

Owls in **Hyperborean Mice** are honestly dragons. They are huge, terrifying, just as intelligent as any character and capable of working magic on their own. Towns in Rookwood offer up sacrifices just to keep them placated.

Furthermore, since their great size and innate magical ability gives them a typical bonus to resist spells of +9, it is very hard to work magic *on* an owl... but they don't share the same problem when casting spells upon rats and mice!

Hyperborean Mice



PIGEONS, RIDING

Pigeons are notable in that they are the only species of bird that the inhabitants of the Fallows have managed to domesticate. The famed Imperial Cavalry are the most famous pigeon-riders, but most kingdoms have a few extremely rich nobles who keep a riding pigeon or two.

The birds only remain tame as long as they are well fed and cared for by skilled bird-handlers. Their nesting sites require constant cleaning and there is always the danger of losing an expensive trained animal to a sudden hawk attack... especially if someone was riding her at the time.

As a result, keeping a riding pigeon requires a number of servants and a lot of expense, but it's the only way that a mouse can truly soar over the Fallows.

Typical Riding Pigeon:

Agi +0, Brawn +0, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 10 (no armor) Size 1 (MR -3)
Melee: +2 (1d3 peck or claw) Alertness: +3
Dodge: +3 Speed: +1

Special: Flight

Pigeons can fly very long distances (at least on a mousy scale) at great speed. They have a +4 bonus to spot things from the air.

Special: Mount

Controlling a calm pigeon in the air is a TYPICAL Ride check. One that is panicking requires a HARD check instead. Add a +3 bonus if you are just a passenger trying to stay on and a -3 penalty if the bird is not wearing the normal specialized harness. A critical failure generally means that the pilot or passenger slips out of their gear and falls.

Rats are too large for a riding pigeon to carry; even carrying two full-grown mice and their gear is enough to slow a pigeon down noticeably.

RABBITS, RIDING

Wild rabbits have been hunted to extinction in the Fallows, but are said to still run free in the more distant parts of Fashar and the Wildlands. They are herbivores, but they are looked upon as destructive pests who often dig into and through mouse burrows without even realizing it.

It is possible to use a combination of training and magical control to turn a rabbit into a docile mount for rats and mice, but this is very much like domesticating an elephant. A rabbit is too strong to be readily restrained, panics easily, and eats a great deal by mousy standards. They can be released to graze on their own, but then they become vulnerable to predators. It is also hard to get them to confine their digging to uninhabited areas.

A riding rabbit requires a trained handler, a lot of special harness and is a *Very Expensive* item. There are probably only a dozen in all of the Fallows, although they are more popular amongst the sultans of Fashar.

Typical Riding Rabbit:

Agi +0, Brawn +0, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 22 (armor rating 6) Size 6 (MR +2)
Melee: +1 (1d3+6 claw) Alertness: +3
Dodge: +3 Speed: +2(+12)

Special: Speed

Rabbits are *fast* on a mousy scale, and can run very rapidly. They get a +10 bonus to outrun foes on the ground.

Special: Mount

Controlling a calm rabbit is a TYPICAL Ride check. One that is panicking requires a VERY HARD check instead. Add a +3 bonus if you are just a passenger trying to stay on and a -3 penalty if the rabbit is not wearing the normal specialized harness. A critical failure generally means that the pilot or passenger slips out of their gear and falls off.

RODENTS, FERAL

Ordinary, non-magical mice and rats are often found on the periphery of the Fallows and are heavily concentrated around the Forbidden Lands. They are *generally* harmless, although hungry rats will occasionally attack wounded mice.

Feral, mindless rodents invariably find the bipedal, talking variety extremely unnerving and will not willingly dwell in an area that contains them. Thus they have slowly been pushed further and further out of the Fallows and are now largely unknown in civilized areas.

Their stats are the same as normal common mice and rats, but they have Cleverness and Magic ratings of -4. They scurry *everywhere* and often panic at the mere sight of a mouse or rat walking upright, much less *talking*.

Scholars believe that the First Ones granted intelligence to selected feral rodents so that they could be their companions and servants. The manner in which this was done has been lost and is widely believed to simply be beyond the capabilities of modern mice.

RODENTS, FORSAKEN

The great tragedy of the Fallows is the way that more and more children are being born Forsaken with each generation. These mice and rats are trapped halfway between civilization and the mindless instincts of their feral kin. Many become violently resentful of their accursed state and are easily antagonized into attacking normal mice.

Forsaken rodents are created like normal characters, but typically have Cleverness and Magic ratings of -2 and a Brawn rating one higher than normal. In times of severe stress, they often lose the ability to speak and may revert to running on all fours and forget how to use tools and weapons. Any children that a Forsaken rodent has are likely to be fully feral and never acquire true intelligence.

There are dark rumors that this condition can be cured by the blood of royal mice, but repeating such nonsense is grounds for execution in most areas. The Forsaken make enough trouble for the rest of the Fallows without people giving them *ideas*.

SCORPIONS

"Curious mice who go looking under strange rocks get stung, idiot. Use a stick."

Vastyr Oakleaf, Rat Outrider

These armored arthropods are reluctant to attack mice and rats except in self-defense. Occasionally one may feel threatened and become aggressive (especially if its lair is invaded), but they are too slow to pursue fleeing prey.

Scorpions are nearly blind but are very sensitive to vibrations in their immediate vicinity. They prefer to squeeze themselves under rocks during the day and hunt for small insects at night.

Their venomous sting varies wildly in potency. As a general rule, scorpions with larger and more powerful claws have a weaker venom and vice versa. The example scorpion is a mid-range species but there are many varieties in the area. Appraising a scorpion's capabilities is a HARD Nature check.

Typical Scorpion:

Agi -2, Brawn +2, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 10 (armor rating 1) Size -1 (MR -5)
Melee: +3 (claw 1d3+2, sting 1d3+poison)
Dodge: +1 Alertness: +0 (+10*)
Speed: -1 Stealth: +2
Contortionist +8

Special: Venomous Sting

Anyone stung by a scorpion takes another 2d6 damage the next round. A successful HARD *Endurance* check reduces this to 1d6 instead.

Special: Sense Vibration

While practically blind, they are extremely sensitive to any movement in their vicinity. Their Alertness is treated as +10 within a few paces of their location.

Special: Slow

Scorpions are slow movers and travel at a quarter of the normal speed of a mouse.

SHREWS

"At first, my captor was just as polite and civil as anyone could wish... but after all, he had just eaten a family of three."

Aramias, Traveling Minstrel

Shrews are a major danger of the valley, particularly in the Wildlands. These small but voracious predators must eat a good portion of their own body weight each day or starve. Their metabolism is in eternal overdrive and many have a potent paralytic venom in their saliva. Feral shrews are easy to dissuade with a show of force. They travel alone and only threaten mice; rats are too large to attack.

Unfortunately, many shrews in the valley have become intelligent to one degree or another. They walk upright and wield crude weapons. Most can even speak, albeit haltingly. While feral shrews don't cooperate, intelligent ones do. They travel in packs or small tribes and work together to bring down large prey. They prefer to nest in abandoned buildings or old ruins and are not above moving in to the home of a family that they have just devoured!



Driven mad by hunger, a voracious shrew bursts forth from the underbrush wielding a thorn club.

Little is known about their religion, save that they believe that they can steal the strength of their enemies by ritually devouring them. They worship Daolotch and try to save their choicest prey for feasts conducted during the new moon. But if hunger presses, they are quite willing to eat sooner rather than wait. Their eternal hunger is the strongest drive in their short lives.

Typical Intelligent Shrew:

Agi +3, Brawn +0, Clv -2, Per +2, Magic -2
 Hit Points: 10 (no armor) Size 0 (MR -2)
 Melee: +4 (bite 1d3 or weapon) Acrobatics: +6
 Dodge: +3 Speed: +6

Special: Venomous Bite

A shrew bite requires the target to make a TYPICAL *Endurance* check or slowly become paralyzed over the next few minutes. This paralysis lasts for one hour per point the check was failed by.

Shrews in **Hyperborean Mice** act like orcs or goblins in other games: a remorseless foe that travels in packs, wields crude weapons, and wants to eat you. No alliance with a shrew outlasts its supply of fresh meat.

SNAKES

Serpents are one of the great enemies of rats and mice. These deadly predators hunt by scent and heat and can quickly slay any rodent that crosses their path. Mice living in an open burrow run the risk of having a huge serpent slide silently in to devour them. However, a well-fortified front door goes a long way to keeping them at bay.

Snakes are not particularly *smart* predators, and the typical wild snake is easily outsmarted by a cunning mouse. It's the rare, more intelligent sort that are truly dangerous. Of these, the most powerful is the legendary Ssaaa, but there are lesser talking snakes out there in the wilderness.

Despite their great size, snakes are actually quite good at squeezing into narrow confines and have been known to invade underground tunnels to hunt for prey. The examples below are merely typical specimens; snakes often range from Size 2 to 6. *Some* snakes have fangs that can deliver a lethal venom into any prey that they bite. Identifying whether a given animal is venomous or not by its scale patterns is a TYPICAL *Nature* check.

Constrictors generally prefer to bite and grab their prey, then coil around it and crush it.

Typical Venomous Snake:

Agi +1, Brawn +1, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
 Hit Points: 19 (armor rating 4) Size 4 (MR +0)
 Melee: +6 (1d6+5 bite*) Alertness: +5
 Dodge: +3 Speed: +3
 Feats of Strength: +8 Stealth: +4
 Contortionist: +4

Special: Venomous Bite

A target bitten by a venomous snake takes another 1d6 damage the next round and must make an *Endurance* check against HARD, VERY HARD or NIGH IMPOSSIBLE difficulty (depending on the species) or become paralyzed. A character who critically fails such a check will have their heart stop and die.

Paralyzed characters remain so for one day for every point that they failed the check by, although a *Medicine* roll against HARD difficulty can purge the poison after a single day of intense care.

Venomous snakes can choose not to inject venom if they feel that it would be wasted and may save it for difficult prey or dangerous threats.

Special: Heat Pits

Many snake species can sense nearby heat sources, enabling them to ignore darkness penalties for nearby mammalian foes.

Typical Constrictor:

Agi +0, Brawn +4, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
 Hit Points: 24 (armor rating 5) Size 5 (MR +1)
 Melee: +7 (1d6+5 bite and grab)
 Dodge: +3 Alertness: +5
 Speed: +2 Contortionist: +2
 Feats of Strength: +15 Stealth: +4

Special: Heat Pits (as per Venomous Snake)

SPIDERS

The majority of spiders in the Fallows are no threat to mice and even aid them by eating small pests. But there are two sorts occasionally encountered that merit further mention.

Typical Deadly Spider:

Agi +3, Brawn -2, Clv -4, Per +0, Magic -4
Hit Points: 4 (no armor) Size -2 (MR -6)
Melee: +2 Speed: +3
Dodge: +0 Stealth: +6

Special: Deadly Bite

These rare web-spinning spiders have a particularly lethal venom, capable of killing a mouse or rat. They will not normally bite such a creature except in self-defense, but more than one rodent has stumbled into a web and received a fatal bite from its defender.

A deadly spider's bite does 1 point of damage immediately, then another 1d6 the round thereafter. One minute after that, the victim must make an *Endurance* test against TYPICAL, HARD or VERY HARD difficulty (depending on the species). On a Tie or worse, they take a final 2d6 damage. On a Success, they only take another 1d6 damage and on a Critical Success they take only 1 point more.

Special: Web

A spider-web is a sticky net intended for catching small insects. A mouse who stumbles into one is at a -2 penalty to all actions until they succeed in a TYPICAL *Contortionist* or *Feats of Strength* check.

Typical Tarantula:

Agi +0, Brawn +3, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 13 (armor rating 1) Size 0 (MR -4)
Melee: +5 (bite 1d6+3) Alertness: +2 (+12)
Speed: +0 Stealth: +4

Special: Sense Vibration

While a blind, they are extremely sensitive to any movement in their vicinity. Their Alertness is treated as +10 within a few paces of their location.

SLUGS

Slugs are quite harmless to mice and rats, although they do sometimes damage their crops. They are usually killed as pests although in desperate times they can also be eaten. They have a truly noisome taste, however, so only a starving rodent would normally eat one. The term "slug-eater" is an insult implying both poverty and poor taste.

Typical Slug:

Agi -2, Brawn -2, Clv -4, Per +0, Magic -4
Hit Points: 4 (no armor) Size -2 (MR -6)

Special: Slimy Coat

Anyone grappling with a slug ends up covered in nasty, sticky mucous that leaves them at -2 to all Agility-based tasks until they can get cleaned up.

WEASELS

"Imagine a shrew twice the length of a rat... but just as fast and just as hungry. I've seen villages and homesteads that were attacked by weasels. There's no mistaking it- the doors not just broken in but torn asunder and the townsfolk... just gone. Blood and torn cloth everywhere, but hardly a body to be found. They kill and kill until they can't find anything left to kill."

Vastyr Oakleaf, Rat Outrider

To a mouse, a weasel is much like a *giant* shrew. These fearless predators are quick and lethal. They may lack a venomous bite, but they hardly need it. They combine speed and a surprising amount of stealth with the ability to squeeze into tiny spaces despite their size. When stressed, they produce a strong, musky odor, which may be the only warning you get that one is nearby.

Their metabolism may be slower than that of a shrew, but their larger size makes them just as voracious. When they do manage to find a large group of mice, they often go into a blood frenzy, killing every last one of them. They then drag as many of the bodies as they can back to their lair for later. They like to seize prey, bite it until it seems dead, and then grab another target.

Semi-intelligent weasels are a recurring threat to the Fallows. Unlike their lesser kin, they tend to attack in small bands and know how to recognize mousy weapons and evaluate the threat that they pose. They can cooperate to bring down a town's defenses and split the spoils (the sundered bodies of the inhabitants) amongst themselves. Some have even been known to speak in crude and guttural but recognizable words, promising to leave the rest of a township alone if enough mice are forced outside to sate their hunger.

Typical Weasel:

Agi +3, Brawn +1, Clv -2, Per +2, Magic -4
Hit Points: 19 (armor rating 4) Size 4 (MR +0)
Melee: +8 (1d6+5 bite) Alertness: +6
Dodge: +3 Speed: +5
Feats of Strength: +10 Stealth: +3
Contortionist: +1

Special: Frenzy

Weasels that draw blood often go into a killing frenzy, making an all-out attack each round against anything that looks small enough to be prey. Intelligent weasels are not proof against this blood rage, which makes driving them off very difficult. Injuries will not dissuade a berserk weasel; it must be slain or escaped from.

Special: Non-magical Fear

Facing a Weasel requires an EASY Courage check.

In the world of **Hyperborean Mice**, weasels often take the role of terrible ogres or giants, threatening to destroy entire towns if the heroes cannot stop them. They are large and powerful enough that a single one can be a serious threat to an entire party, but an experienced and well-equipped group should have no difficulty in taking down a solitary weasel.

DARK DEMONS AND LEGENDARY HORRORS

There are *other* religions in Hyperborea, even in the heart of the Fallows. There are cults that have been banned and pursued and persecuted without mercy, yet which still survive. Their members gather in secret to continue the dark rites which so offended the civilized world.

In some places, deadly predators have themselves become worshiped as gods. Such creatures are commonly offered propitiatory sacrifices that their wrath not be turned upon the locals. Others remain legendary horrors worshiped by none but feared by all. Such terrors are not meant to be fought directly by player characters, but must generally be avoided or escaped from... a direct confrontation without a truly cunning plan should mean certain death! A dark assortment of examples has been assembled below; unique creatures without given stats are probably beyond any harm that PCs can inflict and should be thought of as threats to be avoided rather than foes to be slain.

BLACK FLIES MAGICAL PREDATORS

Physically, these foul creatures are unusually large and noisome horseflies that have been fattened on the flesh of dead mice and rats. They are bred by the followers of Skzentic and will often be found guarding his shrines or obeying one of his priests.

Alone, a single black fly is no real danger and easily dispatched by a trained warrior. In large groups, however (and they are often encountered in swarms of a dozen or more), they become much more dangerous. They emit a strangely disorienting buzz whose effects become more debilitating the more flies are present. At close range, this effect can leave their enemies helpless. It has *no* effect upon those that the flies do not regard as their enemies; followers of Skzentic are said to find the noise comforting.

In addition, anyone who is bitten by one of these noxious vermin and does *not* get their wounds treated within 24 hours will contract *Blood Fever*.

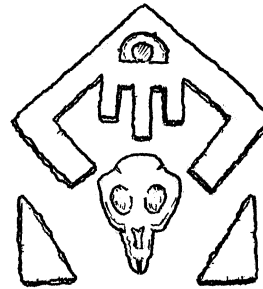
Typical Black Fly:

Agi +4, Brawn -3, Clv -3, Per +2, Magic +2
Hit Points: 7 (-2 armor) Size -2 (MR +0)
Melee: +4 (bite, 1d3 damage) Speed: +5
Dodge: +4

Special: Disorienting buzz (resisted with Leadership)

Those who fail to resist are at a penalty to attack and defend until they spend at least a minute away from the noise. The difficulty to resist and effect varies according to the number of flies present.

- 1-5: EASY (8), Penalty -1
- 6-10: TYPICAL (11), Penalty -2
- 11-15: HARD (14), Penalty -4
- 16+: VERY HARD (17), Penalty -6



DAOLOTCH DARK GOD

The Keeper of the Screaming Dead, the dark god of night, shadow and death, his cult was banned in the early days of the Fallows. Some of their rites and rituals were incorporated into the worship of Zakarvus, but the more repellent practices were banned outright.

Daolotch has power over darkness and the spirits of the restless dead. He can command the Ghuls and place them in a sorcerer's service, if desired. He knows the secret sins of mortal mice, particularly the murders and betrayals. He can even compel the spirit of a dead mouse to return briefly to the mortal world; such a spirit will be screaming in agony and dismay but will answer any questions posed by the bargainer. The interrogation must be swift; it is said that even Daolotch cannot compel the dead for more than a hundred heartbeats, after which they return to the Outer Darkness.

He is commonly depicted as a single burning eye staring out of the dark. Stylized images of mouse and rat skulls generally cover his shrines, along with places for the mounting of *real* skulls. He seems to take pleasure in murders and betrayals and the sacrifices that he requests are often the friends and family of the mage attempting to bargain with him.

Daolotch fulfills his bargains, but not always in the way that the petitioner desired. Stories regularly speak of beloved relatives raised from the dead as horrific monsters, foes slain by a natural disaster that also claims the petitioner's loved ones, or mice transformed into horrible monsters when they asked for too much.

Some tales link him with Ssaaa the tempter, marking that serpent as Daolotch's favored child. Their true relationship, if any, is unknown.

Followers of Daolotch have access to new Powers:

BLESSING OF DAOLOTCH: You are favored by the dark god Daolotch, keeper of the screaming dead. You ignore all penalties for poor lighting and can see in complete darkness. Your eyes tend to glow eerily in the dark, giving you a -2 penalty to any friendly social skill checks with anyone who has seen this effect. You have a +2 bonus to use Whispers magic to bargain with Daolotch, but a -2 penalty to commune with any other dark gods.

SHREW FRIEND: You have earned the respect of the shrews through your shared worship of Daolotch. You know the signs by which you can identify yourself to shrews as a **provider** of food rather than food yourself.

FROSTMICE

DANGEROUS SPIRITS

Known as Withertail's Children (see the entry for *Hartaung*), these icy spirits are only encountered during the winter or in the days immediately preceding or following it. Physically, they appear to be animate clumps of ice and snow that vaguely resemble a mouse standing upright, perhaps garbed in a white robe or cloak.

Some stories claim that Frostmice are the children of the dark god known as Withertail, whereas others believe them to be the vengeful ghosts of mice who died of cold and starvation during a particularly fierce winter. The truth of the matter remains unknown. Mages who create cold magically (using the High Sorcery of **Extinguish**) are sometimes accused of being in league with Frostmice or even of being a Frostmouse in disguise!

Frostmice can travel through ice and snow as though it were air. They bring with them an aura of cold that chills the blood of every living creature in their vicinity and their touch can freeze a mouse solid. At best they are indifferent to the living, but more often they are outright hostile. They dislike warm and dry areas, however, and keep their distance from open flames. They kill like the winter kills... slowly but surely, forcing their prey into a corner and then waiting patiently while their icy aura causes the victim to slowly freeze to death.

If attacked with fire, or faced with a foe who is too well protected from the cold to be harmed, Frostmice have been known to use ice-based spells to slay their enemies. They can conjure icy darts (inflicting 1d3+5 cold damage) or fill an area with an icy mist that makes it difficult to see. But they rarely bother with magic unless they are actually injured, preferring their aura of cold to all other weapons.

Typical Frostmouse:

Agi +2, Brawn -2, Clv +2, Per +2, Magic +5
 Hit Points: 8 (no armor*) Size 0 (MR +5)
 Melee: +5 (icy touch 1d4, ignores armor)
 Dodge: +2 Frost Magic: +8
 Alertness: +5 Speed: +2

Special: Immune to normal damage

Frostmice are animate clumps of snow and ignore all regular damage. Only fire can normally harm them; striking one with a lit torch does 1d4 damage and the user's Brawn is ignored.

Special: Aura of Cold

Unless a Frostmouse deliberately restricts its aura of killing cold, anyone in its vicinity must roll Endurance vs its Frost Magic rating or start to suffer 1 point of damage per round from frostbite. On a critical failure, the character is also Chilled. A successful resistance check only protects the character for a single round, after which they must roll again.

Special: Magical Fear

A character facing a Frostmouse must roll Courage vs EASY (8) difficulty in order to actually fight it. Those who fail must withdraw and those who critically fail will flee in terror.



GHULS

DANGEROUS SPIRITS

A regular danger of accursed regions are the dreadful Ghuls. These shrews died with such hunger in their hearts that even death cannot bring an end to their appetite.

Physically, Ghuls are long-dead and partially rotted shrews. Their claws and teeth have continued to grow despite their obvious decomposition and they often have unnaturally long patches of tangled fur scattered across their body. They switch between scampering on all fours or running upright as needed and are even swifter than living shrews.

While lacking venomous saliva, these undead shrews remain terrifying foes. Only the destruction of the skull can actually slay one, as they no longer use any of their once-vital organs. Even the eyes are completely extraneous and have often dissolved out of their eye sockets; they track prey magically, using the Whispers art instinctively.

Ghuls are normally only found at night, roaming the hills of the Wildlands or other desolate areas, seeking prey. They shun daylight and retire to underground caverns and ancient ruins while the sun is in the sky. They range widest on moonless nights, but do seem to haunt specific areas. There is little more terrifying than a pack of ravenous Ghuls pursuing you on a moonless night.

Brave warriors have slain many Ghuls over the years, but there are always more to be found. Some scholars speculate that "slaying" a Ghul may only banish the spirit back into the Outer Darkness for a time.

Typical Ghul:

Agi +3, Brawn +3, Clv -2, Per +2, Magic +2
 Hit Points: 15 (no armor) Size 0 (MR +2)
 Melee: +6 (bite 1d3+3) Acrobatics: +5
 Dodge: +3 Speed: +7

Special: Magical Fear

Just facing a Ghul instead of running requires a Courage check against TYPICAL (11) difficulty. Facing a swarm is difficulty HARD (14) instead. Those who fail must withdraw and those who critically fail will flee in a mindless panic.

GOLEMS

ANIMATED DOLLS

Golems are animated figures created using the *Animate Doll* enchantment. They are usually made of heavy cloth stuffed with straw. Wooden dolls are tougher but require special joints to enable them to move (+2 armor, -1 Agility). Metal or stone figures are tougher still (+4 armor, -2 Agility) and more expensive to construct.

An alien spirit is bound into the doll, bringing it to life. Only flexible portions can be moved by the spirit, so careful craftsmanship must be used to enable them to move. They obey their creator, but only for a certain number of seasons, after which they become independent creatures and may become rebellious.

Golems can be created like mice, but can only move, not speak or work magic. They always have the *Eerie* Flaw. They do not eat or heal in the normal fashion, but may be repaired with appropriate use of the *Craft* skill.

GUARDIAN SKELETONS

DANGEROUS SPIRITS

The Tzarchul possessed a potent enchantment whereby the animated corpses of the dead could be bound as eternal guardians of a tomb or temple. All of the flesh eventually melts off, but the skeletons remain active, still following the ancient orders that bind them to the locale.

Intruders will often find that these skeletal guardians are all too well preserved and often aided by the corpses of mice and rats who had stumbled upon them before.

Typical Tzarchul Guardian Skeleton:

Agi +1, Brawn +3, Clv -1, Per +3, Magic +3
 Hit Points: 15 (armor rating 1+) Size 1 (MR +4)
 Melee: +7 (mace 1d4+6) Speed: +1
 Feats of Strength: +5 Dodge: +0

Special: Fleshless

With no blood to lose, these undead are immune to pain, poison and Impale Combat Bonuses.

Special: Armed and Armored

Undead Tzarchul are often equipped with chain or plate mail as well as metal weapons of once high quality. They were usually given maces, as these require the least care to maintain and last longest.

Special: Reanimate the Dead

Any intelligent creature slain by a guardian skeleton tends to rise as a new one after a few hours, assuming the same duties that their slayer was bound to. They lose all skills except for Melee Combat, which becomes Agi+Brawn+3.

Special: Magical Fear

A character faced with a guardian skeleton must make an EASY Courage check to face it; if faced by a group, increase the difficulty to TYPICAL.

Guardian Skeletons are invariably found guarding ancient Tzarchul ruins. Modern mages have not yet been able to replicate the enchantment which created these creatures.



HARTAUNG (WITHERTAIL)

DARK GOD

This dark god is called the lord of winter. He is commonly depicted as a huge skeletal mouse or rat shrouded in fog and ice. His worshippers offer him propitiatory sacrifices lest he turn his icy wrath towards them.

He has power over cold weather and can be bargained with to make the winter harsh or mild, or even to bring it early! He knows of every creature that moves through the snow, but is not otherwise versed in the comings and goings of mortal beings. He commands the Frostmice and can place them into a petitioner's service if it suits him. He enjoys creatures starving during the winter months; his petitioners are often commanded to despoil a town's food stores or to force mice out of their homes during a snowstorm.

Common folk call him Withertail. The wise know him by the name Hartaung, which means Frost-bringer. His rune is a stylized eye with icicles forming beneath it. Those slain by frostmice are sometimes found with it burnt into their flesh by the intense cold.

Followers of Hartaung have access to a new Power:

BLESSING OF HARTAUNG: You are unaffected by low temperatures, although you can still starve to death if caught in the winter snows. Your touch is clammy and cold, giving you a -1 penalty to friendly social skill checks with anyone aware of the effect. You have a +2 bonus to use Whispers magic to bargain with Hartaung, but a -2 penalty to commune with any other dark gods.

THE HELLMAW

MAGICAL PREDATOR

Beneath the murky surface of Greatwater lives a huge and terrible predator... a beast capable of swallowing even rats whole and which has pulled more than one vessel beneath the waves. The mice of Mistmoor call it the Hellmaw.

Its exact nature is unknown. It may be a snapping turtle or a huge catfish or even something even stranger. There may be more than one. Whatever it is, it prefers the murky depths, only coming to the surface when something disrupts the water enough to attract its attention, generally during the darkest of nights. Survivors of its attacks report a great maw opening up beneath the vessel and tearing it apart from below, perhaps pausing to pull a few survivors under before vanishing into the depths once more.

In play, the Hellmaw is unlikely to be more than a dark shadow beneath a vessel... one that suddenly and violently tears the ship asunder and then disappears as swiftly as it came, leaving the survivors to paddle their way to the nearest sunken tree or large rock.

HOOROORU UNIQUE MAGICAL PREDATOR

The most terrifying predator in Rookwood, and arguably its ruler, is the dreaded Hoorooru, the great horned owl. He is an ancient monster with many names. The Silent Death. Enemy of the Gods. Father of all Owls.

Hoorooru is said to have fought against the First Ones and devoured several of them. As the story goes, even those mighty mice were not strong enough to slay the great owl, but instead bound him under a geas that forces him to remain in Rookwood, out of sight of the Fallows.

While this has kept the mice and rats of the Fallows safe from his depredations, the inhabitants of Rookwood were not so lucky. Some villages there have taken to worshiping Hoorooru, offering up live sacrifices in his honor. In return, he protects them from predators and his children.

All owls are thought of as Hoorooru's children and in truth, he *has* slain practically every other owl in the Fallows that is not related to him. Even his own children are not safe from his deadly wrath, if he should feel that they are conspiring against his rule. Hoorooru tolerates no rivals.

His magical powers are extraordinary and rival those of the First Ones. He prefers to manipulate the minds of his prey, drawing them out into the open with subtle misdirections, then snatching them away. Luckily, he does seem to be banned from entering the Fallows proper and takes most of his diet from the wild, feral mice north of Rookwood. The ritual sacrifices that he expects from his mousy followers are just that... rituals. Hoorooru glories in their worship and adulation, but doesn't actually *need* them.

The Silent Death is a great and terrible lord to follow. He demands regular sacrifices and public worship. Rites must be held in his honor each night. When Hoorooru attends in person to accept a sacrifice, every mouse or rat in the village will be beating drums and chanting his praises in wild abandon. They know that any who show insufficient enthusiasm may be added to the offering.

The capitol city of the owl-worshippers is dread Hekatare, the city of bones, in the northern reaches of Rookwood.



In a typical fantasy setting, dread Hoorooru would be the *Father of All Dragons* and should be treated appropriately.

KA-YANN'S CHILDREN MAGICAL PREDATORS

The oldest tales speak of a clan of intelligent, spell-casting cats who laid waste to Firstholme. Though the histories say that they were all slain in the war that followed, there have been rumors of survivors and their descendants that fled into the mountains and still crave vengeance.

Ka-Yann was their leader and mother of most of the cats. It was under her guidance that Firstholme was conquered and the First Ones nearly wiped out. Her exact fate is not recorded; presumably she died along with the rest of her clan when Luciel led the other First Ones against them.

If any of her descendants still live, they would be cats with high Cleverness and Magic ratings and a variety of spells.

THE MOCKER UNIQUE MAGICAL PREDATOR

The dreaded Mocker is probably the most lethal predator that still haunts the Fallows proper. Many attempts have been made to find and slay the beast or at least drive it out of civilized regions completely, but so far all have failed.

The mocker is a huge centipede, probably the largest ever seen. But having long ago devoured one of the First Ones, it has become much, much more. It is terrifyingly intelligent and often overtly cruel. Its name comes from its habit of mimicking the voices of its victims and using their own words to lure their surviving kinfolk to their deaths. If the Mocker possesses any ability to speak in its own words, no one has ever lived to report it. The only sounds that it makes are perfect imitations of voices that it has overheard and it has a huge repertoire to call upon.

Its bite is almost invariably lethal. Its ability to conceal itself from magical searches unmatched. And by the time that the locals realize what is devouring travelers and raise an army to destroy it... the Mocker will have already moved on, traveling silently by night to a new territory.

The Mocker:

Agi +4, Brawn +3, Clv +5, Per +4, Magic +5
Hit Points: 24 (armor rating 6) Size 1 (MR 10)
Melee: +12 (bite 1d3+4*) Alertness: +10
Dodge: +12 Speed: +10
Bluff +10 (+20) Stealth: +10

Special: Venomous Bite

A target who is bitten must roll a NIGH IMPOSSIBLE *Endurance* check or suffer 2d6 damage the round afterwards and be at -3 to all actions for a day. A success reduces the damage to 1d6 and the penalty to -1. This penalty is cumulative with multiple bites.

Special: Imitate Voices

The Mocker has a supernatural ability to mimic the voices of other creatures that it has heard. Its Bluff roll is at +10 when imitating someone else's voice.

In personality, the Mocker is cruel, alien and deadly, but it is also extremely cautious. If a foe manages to inflict any actual damage upon it, the Mocker is likely to abandon the conflict and flee. It has not survived for generations by giving battle against heroes.

QUEEN OF THE SMOKING MOUND UNIQUE MAGICAL PREDATOR

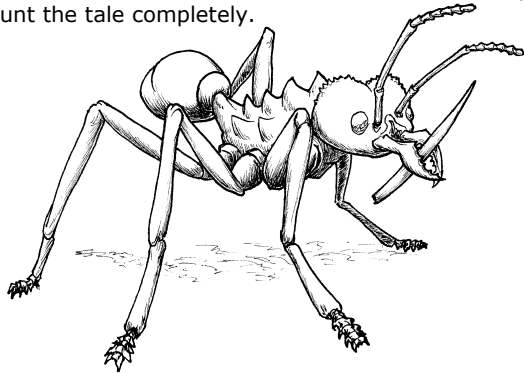
The traveling minstrel Aramias has composed many songs about his adventures, but perhaps the least believable is his ode to the Queen of the Smoking Mound.

He claims to have been captured by black ants which dragged him deep underground. Within the mound, strange mechanisms raised and lowered platforms and the voiceless ants carefully maintained huge furnaces which were the source of the smoke.

He was held for days but was finally taken to the very bottom of the subterranean fortress and presented to their queen. This was a huge and bloated black ant who sat on a throne of mouse and rat bones, surrounded by a brood of thousands of quivering grubs. To his shock, the great queen could speak and seemed to be as intelligent as any mouse, if horribly alien in her viewpoint.

He feared that his own bones were about to be added to the her hoard. However, it turned out that the queen had ordered his capture because of the strange sounds that she heard him make while practicing with his lute.

The minstrel quickly composed a flattering ode to the great queen's chitinous beauty and so impressed her that he was given back his gear and escorted back to the surface. Aramias, of course, is a notorious liar, so most people discount the tale completely.



Typical Soldier of the Smoking Mound:

Agi +1, Brawn +1, Clv -2, Per +2, Magic 0
Hit Points: 7 (no armor) Size -2 (MR -2)
Melee: +5 (1d4 metal spike*) Alertness: +6
Dodge: +1 Speed: +2
Courage: +6 (+12) Feats of Str.: +2

Special: Fearless

Courage rating doubled against mundane threats.

Special: Poisoned Weapons

These ants are masters of venom and have learned to dip their primitive, mouth-held blades into a toxic goop that can paralyze a victim. Anyone taking damage from one of their freshly coated weapons must roll a **HARD Endurance** check or take 1 Fatigue and be at -1 to all rolls for an hour. These penalties are cumulative with multiple blows.

Special: Venomous Sting

An ant which successfully grapples a foe can follow up with a sting attack (1d4 damage).

RUSALKA DANGEROUS SPIRITS

"Don't scoff, lad. That rock is haunted. In summers when the lake-waters recede too far, you'll see her clinging to its side... they say she was a ship-captain's daughter thrown overboard by the crew, but I don't know the truth of it. I just know that if you spot a drowning mouse in the water there, calling for help, you pole your boat away as fast as your arms can move it."

Old Whitewhisker, Fishermouse of Mistmoor

These creatures are the vengeful ghosts of mice and rats that were drowned by their fellows. Their spirits haunt the area where they perished and take their revenge on any living mice or rats which come too close. Physically they appear to be water-logged drowned mice or rats, obviously rotted and decayed but unnaturally animated. Drowned rats are more easily spotted due to their size, but their increased strength makes them much more dangerous.

Rusalka cannot travel far from where their mortal remains lie, but they are naturally gifted at Guise magic. They use illusions to lure victims to the water's edge or to appear to onlookers as they did in life. Once a victim is within arm's reach, the Rusalka drops its spells and attempts to seize them in its black, clawed hands. If it successfully grabs a target, it will next drop down into the water and pull them under, attempting to drown them in its icy embrace.

Physical weapons can slay a Rusalka, but so long as its bones remain in the area it will reform in hours. Digging up those bones and using a difficulty **HARD (14) Whispers** spell to break the spirit's connection to them is the only way to permanently be rid of one of these foul creatures.

Typical Mouse Rusalka:

Agi +0, Brawn +0, Clv +1, Per +1, Magic +4
Hit Points: 10 (no armor) Size 0 (MR +4)
Melee: +6 (grab) Guise Spell: +10
Feats of Strength: +6 Speed: +3
Stealth: +4

Special: Drowning

If a Rusalka succeeds in pinning a foe with a grapple, they are forced under the water and suffer 1 Fatigue per round. If Exhausted, they suffer 1d4 drowning damage per round instead.

Special: Magical Fear

A character faced with a Rusalka's true form must make a **TYPICAL (11) Courage** check in order to face it. Those who critically fail will flee in terror.

Typical Rat Rusalka:

Agi +0, Brawn +2, Clv +0, Per +1, Magic +2
Hit Points: 14 (armor rating 1) Size 1 (MR +3)
Melee: +8 (grab) Guise Spell: +6
Feats of Strength: +10 Speed: +1
Stealth: +2

Special: Drowning (as per Mouse Rusalka)

Special: Magical Fear (as per Mouse Rusalka)

SETHIAS THE BLACK UNIQUE DANGEROUS SPIRIT

The ancient First One named Sethias is notable to scholars for being the one who first proposed the laws banning the use of magic to speak with the dark gods... and the first person to be executed for *breaking* those laws. Any other contributions he might have made were expunged from the histories of the Fallows after his execution. There his story ends, at least in most volumes. But a handful of ancient texts hint at a darker secret.

Some claim that what Sethias bargained for was immortality and that he received it. Though his brothers and sisters inflicted many mortal wounds upon him, Sethias simply would not die.

In the end, the other White Lords imprisoned him in a magically sealed tomb from which he could not escape. His followers were slain and his name expunged from the histories. The location of his tomb has been kept secret to this day.

Long dead, horribly wounded and yet still alive and quite, quite mad, Sethias waits in the darkness and plots his revenge upon his long-dead betrayers.



SKZENTIC DARK GOD

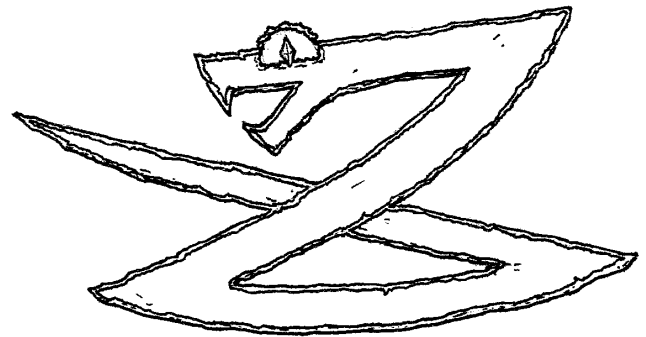
Commonly depicted as a huge and bloated toad, this dark god has power over all manner of parasites and tiny vermin (including the Black Flies) and can cure and cause many diseases. He has been known to blight crops, poison water and generally spread illness and dismay.

His worshipers commonly invoke him in hopes that he will smite their hated enemies, but this is inherently risky even if they succeed. Skzentic's curses are rarely focused on a single individual and are often quite contagious.

Worship of Skzentic is rare among the upper classes. His cults are generally composed of the bitter and down-trodden, peasants and outcasts so full of hate for their fellows that they would wish even Skzentic's attentions upon them. His cult is commonly blamed for any outbreaks of disease or illness in an area.

Followers of Skzentic have access to a new Power:

BLESSING OF SKZENTIC: You are favored by the dark god Skzentic, lord of parasites. You can catch and carry diseases and other illnesses but are never penalized by them. Others are at -2 to avoid catching diseases from you. You have a +2 bonus to use Whispers magic to bargain with Skzentic, but a -2 penalty to commune with any other dark gods.



SSAAA UNIQUE MAGICAL PREDATOR

Known as the Whisperer of Secrets, this huge serpent is regarded as a great trickster and tempter. She lurks near the edges of the Fallows seeking new followers. Ssaaa possesses great intelligence and magical abilities beyond those of most modern mages.

She loves to speak to travelers from hiding, often pretending to be some shy and fearful mouse just a little too uncertain to move into view. Her ability to lift secrets from a mouse's mind are unparalleled and those who agree to serve her act as her eyes and ears inside the Fallows proper. She is always looking to expand her cult.

While a true Dark God might wish something into being in response to a request, Ssaaa uses more prosaic means. If a mouse were to bargain with her for wealth, she might tell him to go to a particular spot at midnight two days hence. That gives Ssaaa plenty of time to use Whispers to contact one of her wealthier followers and command *them* to leave a bag of gold at that location.

Ssaaa still eats mice, but she loves manipulating others more than a meal. She is only likely to devour a mouse if she regards them as a threat to her followers. Some scholars mark Ssaaa as the favored child of the dark god Daolotch, but if so, she prefers not to mention it. The only cult that the great serpent is interested in is her own.

Her cult is strongest in Duvain's Weal and Dugar, which are closest to Ssaaa's hunting grounds in the Forbidden Lands. Most of her other followers are in Haven itself, bringing her word about major events in Muscala.

BLESSING OF SSAAA: You have joined the cult of this great serpent. Ssaaa knows you well enough to be able to open a magical link between her and you at any distance. Periodically, her voice will whisper into your mind, asking you for information and possibly bringing new instructions. This power always comes with a *Duty Flaw* to obey Ssaaa.

So long as you continue to follow her orders without question, Ssaaa will look kindly upon requests of your own, which will probably be fulfilled by other members of the cult at her behest. Of course, if you were to dare to disobey her, well... you might well find your fellow cultists coming to kill you and informed of your current location by your serpentine goddess.

While this power is not a true blessing, Ssaaa is unwilling to trespass in the domains of other powers, and will not accept the service of mice or rats who already possess a *Blessing* from some other source.

TITANS

"The oldest records of the First Ones speak of them as refugees... fleeing to the Fallows to escape from the dreaded Titans. The First Ones were their children and their slaves, but they feared and hated their former masters and came here in secret, to build a land of their own. One of their first laws was to establish the boundary of the Forbidden Lands, beyond which no mouse or rat was allowed to stray upon pain of death, lest they draw the gaze of those terrifying giants towards their new home."

Noles duVale, White Mouse Scholar

To the mice of the Fallows, the Titans are a synonym for mystery and doom. These dreadful giants, said to tower as tall as trees, are believed to still inhabit an enormous citadel somewhere to the south, far beyond the border of the Forbidden Lands.

Their true nature and appearance is largely a mystery; the only depictions of them from those days are crude stone carvings of gigantic humanoid figures towering over tiny mice. The First Ones themselves were eternally fearful that their new home would be discovered by the Titans and went to great efforts to ensure that none of their slaves ever crossed the southern border of the Fallows.

What follows is only one possibility of what one of these fearsome creatures might be like. GMs should feel free to substitute their own.

Typical Titan:

Agi +2, Brawn +2, Clv +2, Per +1, Magic +0
Hit Points: 32 (armor rating 10) Size 10 (MR +15)
Melee: +6 (1d6+12 stomp) Alertness: +3
Feats of Strength: +27 Speed: +3
Negate Magic: +15 Stealth: +2

Special: Titan's Curse

The most dreadful power of the Titans is their ability to negate magic without even realizing it. Any Titan who is not prepared to accept the existence of talking mice or rats can transform them back into mindless, feral animals with just a glance.

If a Titan sees an object whose magical nature offends them, they can roll their Negate Magic power against the roll used to create the spell or the target's own Magic+Leadership. If the Titan succeeds, the target must expend 1d3 Hero Points or be permanently stripped of all magical energies. Intelligent animals are transformed into feral versions, losing all ability to talk, work magic or walk upright. This ability can be used once per round.

Similarly, if any kind of spell is successfully worked upon a Titan, their innate Negate Magic power can be applied against it each turn until the spell is finally blotted out of existence.

While most Titans will use this power immediately upon sighting something that they consider impossible, there are a few who will not: the very young, the very drunk, and the demented.

Yes, Titans are basically humans. But scary ones.

Hyperborean Mice

WILL O'WISPS

DANGEROUS SPIRITS(?)

These mysterious lights haunt the dimly lit interior of Murkwater. They can often be seen dancing in the air at a great distance. Sometimes they seem like they are trying to attract the viewer's attention, but stories claim that if you follow one you will inevitably find yourself lost.

A few souls with more common sense than romance say that these are simply an unusually large and bright species of firefly and are harmless. More mystical explanations include restless ghosts and malign spirits.

There may well be several sorts; below is one example.

Typical Will O'Wisp:

Agi +5, Brawn -5, Clv +0, Per +1, Magic +5
Hit Points: 2 (armor rating 10*) Size -3 (MR +5)
Melee: None Compel Spell: +8
Dodge: +11 Speed: +5
Stealth: +5

Special: Intangible

These tiny, flying wisps of magic are almost bodiless and highly resistant to physical harm. Effects that can harm bodiless spirits ignore their Armor Rating.

Special: Lure

Will O'Wisps like to use Compel spells to lure unsuspecting mice away into the swamps. Usually this means leading them into mortal peril, but there is the occasional rumor of one instead using its abilities to lead someone towards something valuable or a friend in peril.

Special: Limited Fatigue

Will O'Wisps prefer to spend Focus on Small Magicks. They have only two Fatigue points to spend, after which they become exhausted.

THE WORMS OF THE EARTH

DANGEROUS SPIRITS(?)

Tales of the underworld always include a single, odd, facet of unknown origin... those ancient mice who fled there could only survive by striking a bargain with the Worms of the Earth, dark and mysterious creatures regarded by some as a collective dark god in their own right.

The stories say that it is not safe to sleep on bare earth on certain nights, for the Worms are active then. Their victims simply disappear before dawn, leaving only a patch of strangely disturbed earth where they had been sleeping. Some hear them whispering on dark nights, especially in caves or near crevices. Bargains struck invariably involve leaving mice and rats tied down on bare soil during dark nights. The victims are gone by morning, fate unknown.

Their powers seem to be very limited, save in one area. The Worms can destabilize the ground below, causing sinkholes or earthquake-like shifts in the soil. This can take days of work, but once the ground has been prepared the actual collapse of the soil can occur in mere seconds, destroying walls and houses as the earth moves beneath them. They tend to be blamed for all such events.

FORBIDDEN RITES

There are depths to the Outer Darkness where swim things darker and more dangerous than mere demons. It is said that there are things there that can be bargained with... if one can find the right words or rituals.

There are an almost unlimited number of magical effects that can be produced by finding the right spirit and convincing it to perform them, but they always want sacrifices in return. Blood is the true currency of the spirit world and murder the best way to provide it.

BARGAINING WITH DARK GODS

There are five basic levels of sacrifice. Minor requests might be performed in return for a level one rite, but more potent acts require increasingly unpleasant acts. Enacting a bargain requires that the character perform a rite of the appropriate *or higher* level and then cast the **Dark Prayer** High Sorcery. If the spell succeeds and the sacrifice was worthy, the dark god desired will hear their supplication and fulfill the bargain... as they see fit. It is common for those who ask for too much to be cheated by dark forces.

If a character is uncertain what sort of sacrifice would be sufficient, they can use the **Dark Prayer** to commune with the spirit world. If cast successfully, they will see a vision of themselves performing whatever sort of action the demon being petitioned might require. Different spirits have different capabilities (see the Dark Gods listed in the *Dark Demons and Legendary Horrors* section).

LEVEL ONE: RITUAL SCARRING

You scratch the holy runes of the dark god (generally nasty looking crosses and curves) into your flesh. If the bargain works, these will leave ugly, hairless scars permanently.

These runes invariably cover a decent portion of the mage's body, but can be confined to the torso if desired. This makes them a little easier to conceal from others.

LEVEL TWO: RITUAL MUTILATION

You sever one of your own major body parts, usually the tail, although a paw or even both ears could work. It's very hard to conceal this, although more mundane explanations could be offered to turn away suspicions.

LEVEL THREE: RITUAL SACRIFICE

You ritually murder several strangers or one innocent kinsman beneath a full moon or in some other propitious manner. The rite itself is quite bloody and can take hours.

LEVEL FOUR: GRAND RITUAL SACRIFICE

You ritually murder people on a monthly basis for a full year, without fail. Other, similarly impressive feats such as creating monsters may work as well, depending on the nature of the dark god being bargained with.

LEVEL FIVE: VESSEL OF THE UNHOLY

Relinquish your free will, letting your dark master guide your every action. Most will only go this far when they've *already* been happily following their patron's commands for some time. This leads them to mistakenly believe that giving themselves over to the powers of the Outer Dark couldn't be any worse than what they've already endured.

In game terms, someone who has become a Vessel of the Unholy must spend a Fatigue to *not* immediately obey their lord's commands and their master may paralyze them at will if they try to disobey.

BOOSTING MAGICAL POWER

Any of the dark gods can be bargained with for magical power. While the exact rituals involved vary, the process always involves a series of increasingly dramatic sacrifices in that god's name. Each one draws down ever more dark and unpleasant energies into the mage's body.

Each level acquired grants the sorcerer a new benefit in the form of increasing magical power, such as a +1 bonus to their Magic rating, a +4 bonus to a specific spell, or 2 points of Magical Powers of their choice.

The sacrifice performed *must* be of a higher level than the total number of levels of magical benefit that you have already acquired or the effort is wasted. Thus, a sorcerer who has already acquired three levels of magical power (perhaps just a +3 to their Magic rating) will never receive any further benefit from a ritual of level three or less.

Mages who acquire too many levels of magical energy take on a dark aura which can be sensed by other mice. This takes the form of a *Sixth Sense* roll against a difficulty determined by the amount of magical energy possessed.

- One level: impossible
- Two levels: VERY HARD (17)
- Three levels: HARD (14)
- Four levels: TYPICAL (11)
- Five levels: no roll required!



Characters who bear occult signs such as ritual scarring or the dark aura had best avoid public attention. Even the most kind-hearted lord will feel justified in having such a threat to their kingdom executed as soon as possible.

OTHER EXAMPLE BARGAINS

CALLING A WINTER STORM

Hartaung can command winter weather and can command it to be mild or harsh. He vastly prefers the latter, however, and it is much more difficult to convince him to *weaken* a winter storm than to worsen it.

In return for even a level 1 sacrifice, Hartaung will plague the entire Fallows with a heavy snowfall, at least during the winter months. Getting him to restrict his wrath to a single city requires a level 3 sacrifice.

Hartaung simply cannot be called upon except during the winter months or the last few weeks before or after them. Invocations at other times will simply fail.

COMMANDING MINIONS OF A DARK GOD

Sometimes a sorcerer wants their patron to provide them with horrific servants to do their bidding. The kind of sacrifice required, and which demon you must bargain with varies according to the circumstances.

Getting the service of one creature (or 1d6+Magic Black Flies) for a day requires a level 1 sacrifice. For a month is level 2. Having them serve you indefinitely is a level 3 sacrifice. Levels 4 and 5 add +1d6 and +2d6 to the number of creatures provided (double that for Black Flies).

The Black Flies obey Skzentic, while Hartaung commands the Frostmice and Daolotch the Ghuls. Most other creatures are not bound to the commands of any particular dark god and must be bargained with directly if you desire their aid.

CREATING UNDEAD

The spirit world is rife with dark entities that have never drawn breath nor felt the warmth of the earth, but which yearn to. To create undead servants, you must first locate an area where the "Waiting Ones" are present in strength.

Then you bring a corpse to that spot and prepare it for their entry using the Whispers art (difficulty HARD, costs 1 Fatigue). If you succeed, one of the Waiting Ones will crawl inside the decaying remains and bring it to un-life.

These foul creatures are good at attacking and devouring enemies, but are slow and stupid at other tasks. They make poor servants overall.

Physically, undead use the stats of the creature whose body they are animating, with the following special traits:

- Immune to fear and poison.
- If skeletal, unaffected by pain and the *Impale* Combat Bonus (but animating skeletal minions costs 2 Fatigue and is difficulty VERY HARD instead).
- Some can actually reanimate the corpses of those they slay as new undead under the control of the same master. This ability raises the difficulty by +6.
- Using a corpse other than an intelligent rodent increases the difficulty by 3+Size*2.

Note that raising the dead in this fashion does not require a sacrifice; rather than calling upon a dark god, the mage is beseeching lesser spirits to inhabit the bodies. On a Critical Failure or worse, the dead rise but are then completely uncontrolled.

DRAWING IN PREDATORS

Dark spirits can also compel a mundane predator such as an unintelligent snake or owl to return to a particular area over and over again to hunt. This sort of curse generally only ends when the monster is slain.

Snakes are the creatures most readily bound in this fashion; the rite requires the petitioner to actually seek out and command the animal in person after performing the sacrifice, then spend 1 Fatigue and make a HARD Whispers spell roll. Failures here leave the mage vulnerable to being eaten. On a tie, the predator attempts to eat the mage and *then* goes forth to obey their command.

EARTHQUAKES

The Worms of the Earth can be bargained with to cause landslides, sinkholes and similar disturbances in the soil. There is generally a delay of up to a week between the bargain and the point where the earth below becomes weak enough to collapse. Mice who spend a lot of time in underground tunnels will sometimes sense something amiss as the damage progresses, especially if they have a good *Sixth Sense* skill.

PLAGUE

Skzentic is the dark god to bargain with if you wish to curse a town with plague or other illnesses. In return for sacrifices and worship, he can bring forth fevers or parasites that spread wildly over the cursed region.

This is, of course, a very dangerous bargain. While a wise bargainer can ensure that they are immune to the curse, it often ends up striking down people that they didn't want hurt. Skzentic does not like to rein his children in.



QUESTIONING THE DEAD

Daolotch can call back a specific spirit and compel it to answer questions that it could have answered in life, but only for the span of a hundred heartbeats.

This is a grim and dire event, for the tormented ghost will be screaming in agony as they do so. Such a rite is not something that a mouse with a conscience is likely to perform twice.

RAISING THE DEAD

Many spirits *claim* the ability to revive a mage's deceased loved ones in return for dreadful sacrifices. Daolotch in particular is known to torment petitioners with visions of them being reunited with their late beloved.

To date, however, no such bargain is known to have been successfully completed, although a number of horrible ghosts or undead have been unleashed upon the world by failed attempts.

DREAD WEAPONS

More martial sorcerers sometimes bargain instead for one of the Dread Weapons, mystical artifacts of great power. These rune-covered blades are generally forged out of oddly colored metal and emanate a quite detectable aura of foul, alien magic.

A *Sixth Sense* check can reveal the presence of one of the Dread Weapons, with the difficulty of the roll being based on how well concealed it is. If one is being wielded openly in battle, its eldritch nature is EASY to sense, one held openly but not in use is TYPICAL, one sheathed is HARD and one that has been deliberately hidden away can still be sensed with a VERY HARD Sixth Sense roll.

A Dread Weapon provides the following benefits:

- Inflicts bonus damage equal to the wielder's Magic rating whenever it strikes a foe. This bonus damage can harm undead and other spirits with physical bodies, but cannot harm immaterial ones.
- Ignores ½ of the target's Armor Rating (round down).
- Heals 1d4 hit points and restores 1 Fatigue to the user whenever used to kill a living intelligent creature.
- Adds the user's Magic rating to any attempt to Intimidate others with it, including spirits.
- Adds the user's Magic rating to one other normal skill or ½ of their Magic rating (round down) to a Combat Rating, or some similar bonus. The exact benefit varies according to the weapon in question.

However, a Dread Weapon, despite its power, is not really a desirable thing. Each has its own malign personality that can influence its owner and those around them. They are a corruptive influence on the mortal world.

- On a botched attack or parry roll, the wielder may (GM option) go into a berserk rage, no longer able to distinguish friend from foe.
- All weak-willed, wrathful or greedy people nearby will come to covet the weapon.
- Foul spirits find it easier to cross over in its vicinity. The area within a day's travel of it will experience a surge of Ghuls, Frostmice and similar creatures.
- Nearby creatures tend to sicken and die over time from its mere presence. Even its owner may suffer if they do not kill with it at least once a month.
- These weapons hunger for the souls of the innocent and often drive their wielders towards dark deeds. If the weapon truly desires to do something, the wielder must spend 1 Fatigue in order to *not* obey.
- The wielder suffers 1 point of Fatigue per battle in which the weapon is actually drawn or wielded. This occurs at the beginning of the fight, so killing someone with it can remove this effect.

To most mice, the Dread Weapons are regarded as mere myths to frighten children. Scholars know of ancient stories that Luciel himself once wielded a rune-covered metal blade cast in the shape of a cat's tooth. Its touch cast lightning into the blood of his foes and many cats were slain by its power. In most versions of the tale, this strange blade, whose name was Thorn, was returned to the Outer Darkness once the war was over.

A few, however, claim that Thorn lies magically sealed in a great vault somewhere in Muscala, hidden away against the possibility that it might be needed again someday.



AUSPICIOUS TIMES AND LOCALES

Communicating with the dark gods is not always easy. There are places where they are strong and the walls between the world and the Outer Darkness are thin indeed. In such spots, forbidden magics may be dangerously easy.

TZARCHUL TEMPLES

The Tzarchul worshiped the gods of the Outer Darkness and some of their temples still have pits filled with the mouldering bones of ancient sacrifices. These places are sacred to the dark gods and their powers are strong there.

Use of dark magic in such places is often much easier, granting a +2 bonus to any spell-casting rolls made. If the temple is dedicated to a particular dark god, attempts to bargain with them there are at +4 instead, while spells to commune with others are at -4.

DEAD TREES

When a temple is not available, a dead tree often works as well. These huge corpses, gigantic on a mousy scale, grant a +1 bonus to any dark magics worked there.

GRAVEYARDS AND TOMBS

These places of death are particularly appropriate for spells involving Daolotch or Ghuls, adding a +2 bonus to them.

MOONLESS NIGHTS

The darkest night of each month is similarly significant, granting a +1 bonus to all dark magics.

SUMMER AND WINTER SOLSTICE

The spirit world is particularly close on the longest day and longest night of each year. All Whispers spells are at +2 on those dates.

OWL-WORSHIPER SHRINES

These dark places erected in the honor of Hoorooru are decorated with dried owl pellets filled with the bones of mice and rats. Whisper magic can be used to communicate with the owl from whose gullet the owl pellet came and the sheer macabre nature of these shrines grants a +1 bonus to contact dark spirits.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

MURKWATER ROSES

It is spring in Haven and a great lady of the city has fallen sick. Her illness is grave and the only known cure is an alchemical concoction made from the petals of a rare flower found only in the Murkwater swamp. Our heroes must travel deep into the treacherous region and seek out a native guide who can guide them to the only area where the plant is known to grow.

Unfortunately, once they find a suitable guide they learn that a clan of shrews is nesting in that very region, making any closer approach very dangerous. Can they find a way to reach the flowers without running afoul of the ever-hungry shrews or will they return to Haven empty-handed?

THE LOST TEMPLE OF JAKARTA

It is midsummer in Duser and a fortune-seeking common mouse named Morgas is hiring mercenaries for a daring expedition. He knows of a buried Tzarchul temple whose riches have been left undisturbed because it has long been guarded by the wild rat clan of Jakartas. Their king, Kuln, maintains that the temple must never be opened and has never permitted outsiders to investigate it.

But the heroes' employer knows that Kuln has gone to war against a shrew clan and led the Jakartan warriors away to battle the shrews. If bold warriors were to move quickly, they could reach Jakartas while the bulk of the clan was still away and dig their way into the temple.

Great treasures were often entombed in such places by the ancient Tzarchul, and their riches are the stuff of legend. But what of great Kuln and his warriors? Does the fearless wild rat king know something that Morgas does not? And why does the entryway appear to have been opened up many long seasons ago and then hurriedly resealed again?

DUCK HUNT

It is fall in the province of Lakeshore, and the king's birthday approaches. Duke Ferrik has given an unlucky merchant the task of providing the king's dinner table with duck meat, but there isn't long left before the ducks all take wing for the South.

He needs a crew to equip and run a hunting vessel- a sturdy ship with a single ballista and enough harpoons to bring down one of the enormous avians. Strong ropes are lashed to each harpoon and secured to the deck to prevent the animal from escaping. Unfortunately, the ducks avoid the waters around Lakeshore, preferring the sunken forests of the Pirate Isles. The objective is to sail forth, avoid any pirates, find a duck, magically lull it into complacency, then kill it with a harpoon and tow the body back to Lakeshore.

Even if things go perfectly, there should be a climactic moment when the dying duck attempts to take wing, dragging the entire vessel along behind it. Do they fire another harpoon despite the danger or cut the line and try to find easier prey?

THE HAUNTED STOREHOUSE

It is early winter in Oakendale and grain is disappearing from one of the city storehouses each night despite all of the locks and bars. Strange noises are heard by the guards outside and bizarre and disturbing footprints have been found amongst the scattered grain when the doors were opened again. And what do the odd symbols left scrawled on the floor after each theft mean?

Two guards were ordered to remain in the storehouse overnight and vanished before dawn. Now the guards are convinced that the storehouse is haunted and refuse to go inside. The town council is locked in a vicious power struggle as various nobles blame each other for the thefts. Can the PCs unravel the mystery before food runs short?

THE SEASON OF THE WHIP

It is spring or summer in Duser, and a great slave auction will soon begin in the capitol. A cloaked traveler from Haven hires the heroes to rescue his captive brother, who will soon be sold at the block. If they fail, he will instead use those funds to bid on his brother's price, but fears that he may be outbid.

Of course, when they start to smuggle the captive out of the slaver prison in Duser City, he pretends to cooperate at first and then makes a break for it. Could it have to do with the fact that he doesn't actually *have* a surviving brother, but he *does* have some former partners in the Gleaners who want him to part with his buried loot?

THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

It is the middle of winter in Mistmoor and the heroes are hired by a desperate young mage. The sudden onset of winter left his master stranded in Muscala and he had agreed to animate an elaborately carved wooden soldier mouse to guard a wealthy nobleman's estate. With his master away and the nobleman's guards breathing down his neck, the apprentice made an ill-fated attempt at animating the wooden soldier himself.

Now it's running amok in the city streets and he can't seem to dispel the enchantment. Can the PCs manage to bring the thing down without damaging it? Can their mage help the apprentice recast the spell correctly? Or, if all else fails, can they smuggle him out of town and across to Muscala despite the snow? Because the nobles of Lakeshore are not exactly forgiving when commoners fail them.

THE FAMILY HOMESTEAD

It is autumn in Duvain's Weal and the first snows will fall soon. In the Western Weal lies the burnt out ruins of a family estate that was destroyed in a wildfire a few years ago. The PCs are hired by a white mouse, the last surviving member of that family, to accompany him there to retrieve a last few goods of "sentimental value".

Of course, when they get there it turns out that he's looking for something buried in the basement *below* the house proper and is very secretive about exactly what he's hunting for. Does it have anything to do with the voracious Ghuls that seem to be haunting the scorched ruins? And from whence come those eerie crying voices that disturb their sleep each night? Is that *scratching* that they hear underground beneath the basement? What is down there?

THE GREAT RABBIT RACE

It's early summer and a wealthy noblemouse from Haven, jaded and bored by the currently available entertainments, has decided to organize a cross-Fallows rabbit race. Upper-class patrons from all over the Fallows have started to recruit riders and crew to represent them in the competition. Since they want to *win* almost none of the nobles intend to be on the rabbit themselves; instead they want professionals to take all of the risks *for* them.

The PCs are hired by a local noble to crew his own beast. They are supposed to care for it, train it and ride it across the rather dangerous trek. The various nobles involved have been repeatedly raising the stakes and extending the planned course to make it more dangerous. By the time that the PCs arrive in Haven for the start, their route has been extended to run across some of the worst parts of the Wildlands and even to the edge of the Forbidden Lands.

Worst of all, one of the more ruthless nobles has decided to sabotage the results by bribing some intelligent predators to slay the other rabbits, while letting his own crew through unharmed. Are the PCs up to the challenge? Can they keep their own obnoxiously willful mount from running wild? And what vast riches and glory will be theirs if they win?

THE MISSING PILOT

It's Spring in Duser and a wealthy merchant with a riding pigeon has gone for a pleasure flight over the Fallows... and never returned. His family wants the PCs to track down his whereabouts and escort him safely back home, or bring back his body to be buried.

But the trail of sightings and witnesses leads out to the Wildlands, where the lost pilot has been captured by a barbaric tribe of rats that's debating how best to execute this trespasser. The PCs will need to use their best diplomats or their most stealthy thieves to get him out alive.

And once they do? Well, it turns out that his bird was poisoned. Someone back home has a vested interest in making sure that the family patriarch doesn't make it back home alive, and they've had plenty of time to hire brigands and mercenaries of their own to ensure it. Can the PCs get the luckless fellow back home in one piece?

THE LOST STATUETTE

It's late winter in Haven and a prosperous art dealer has been murdered and a small statuette of Lumiere stolen from his shop. Now his widow has hired the PCs to track it down and return it before the start of spring, when the thief will be able to leave the snow-bound city and escape.

But as they track it down, they find that there's a lot more interest in this missing trinket than there should be. Even Boss Talon has Gleaners and a trio of Black Paw hunting for it, but hasn't told them why. If the PCs should manage to find it, they'll have to be cunning and clever or risk having it stolen from them in turn.

What makes this little statue so valuable? Is the merchant's widow actually who she claims? And why, when they finally find it, does it sound like the statue is hollow and has something inside of it? Do they break it open to unravel the mystery? Deliver it to their client? Or just turn it into Boss Talon to avoid incurring his wrath?

A PLAGUE OF MADNESS

It's spring and a strange illness plagues a small village in Duvain's Weal. Those afflicted with it develop a mild cough and a slight fever, but its most insidious effect is the way that the disease numbs the sense of fear. Victims receive a +4 bonus to all Courage rolls... followed by an increasingly irresistible urge to seek out danger. Those who contracted the plague first are mostly dead now- having sought out some giant predator and been devoured by it.

Can the PCs bring much needed medicine to the community? Can they treat even those who insist that they're fine and refuse all aid? Is the cult of Skzentic responsible for this bizarre outbreak? And what will happen if their annual expedition to Haven brings the plague to the largest, most populous city in all the Fallows?

FROSTFOLK

It's winter in Jand and a stretch of relatively mild weather has the local children playing outside the city walls, throwing snowballs, building little snow mice and otherwise enjoying the rare pleasure of a mild winter.

But the little snow sculptures outside the walls have attracted the attention of Frostmice, who swarm around the outskirts of the settlement each night, bringing with them a killing chill and deadly frost. Despite the mild weather, the town is suddenly in danger of freezing to death from the cold as temperatures plunge further and further with each passing night.

Can the PCs find a way to drive off the Frostmice before they find a way into the town proper? Will destroying the sculptures drive them off... or just make them angry? Is there some way to convince them to leave peacefully?

A MURDER OF CROWS

It's spring in the Western Weal and a huge flock of angry crows has begun to gather in the area around a little village. The mice are worried by the enormous numbers of birds and fear that they are working themselves up to attack the town. Their fears might be baseless, but those crows are certainly angry about something! The PCs are asked to investigate the issue.

If the PCs are able to make friendly contact with the crow clan, they'll learn that an elderly crow patriarch was found dead nearby from mouse-sized crossbow bolts. As far as the crows are concerned, this is outright murder and they intend to teach the little village a lesson it won't soon forget. Crows are used to being thought of as thieves and driven off, but this is going too far for their patience.

Can the PCs hold off the murderous avians without too much loss of life? Can they figure out exactly who killed the elderly crow and why? Perhaps he saw one of the mice in town committing a crime and was silenced lest he relate the events he saw to others. Regardless, this is a good opportunity for characters with *Crow Friend* to shine and a good opportunity for others to purchase it.

Of course, if the PCs can't find a peaceful solution they may have to choose sides between the justly outraged crows and their own kind. A sufficient show of force could drive the crows away, but at the cost of alienating the entire crow community in the Fallows, especially if they kill more of the birds to make their point.

A HYPERBOREAN MICE ADVENTURE:

PRISONERS OF SKZENTIC

PREMISE

The party is hired by a distraught nobleman to find and rescue his kidnapped children. But there is more to the plot than meets the eye and our heroes may find themselves battling against a secret cult of demon worshippers.

BACKGROUND

The wealthy white mouse merchant *Jargan Oakleaf* recently allowed his eldest son and daughter (*Nolos* and *Imelda*) to travel to Oakendale to attend a public festival. They were accompanied by three bodyguards and some attendants, so it was a shock when they all disappeared somewhere on the way, presumably devoured by some dreadful predator.

Just recently, however, a ransom note was delivered along with some of their personal jewelry. The note claimed that the pair would be returned if he paid a ransom of one thousand gold coins. No one saw it delivered, which makes him suspect that some of his own servants are involved.

Rather than pay a huge fortune and hope that the kidnappers honor their end of the bargain, Jargan has elected to hire a band of adventurers to search for his missing offspring. The PCs get the job.

THE MISSION

He wants our heroes to retrace the route and see if they can find and rescue the youngsters. As adventuring types, they shouldn't attract particular attention traveling through the area, whereas Jargan's own guards might.

He wants the children returned home and their kidnappers punished. He promises to pay the adventurers handsomely if they succeed. He offers 25 gold for each child returned alive and another 25 gold for destroying those who dared seize them, for a total of 75 gold coins. The PCs can distribute those funds as they wish.

Careful haggling can get Jargan to increase the reward, but he'll prefer to offer additional goals rather than increasing the rewards for the existing ones. For example, he might offer another 25 gold if they can identify which of his household servants were involved in the scheme or an additional bonus if the children are unharmed.

If the children (*Luciel* forbid!) are already dead, Jargan will still pay half to have their bodies returned so that they can be properly interred in the family crypt.

SUPPLIES

Jargan will provide the PCs with a map marking the route that the youngsters expected to take and a description of them, their three bodyguards and the three attendants. Anything else the party will have to provide for themselves. He also demands complete secrecy, fearing that if the kidnappers learn that he has employed mercenaries, they may harm the youngsters.

GM INFORMATION

PART I: THE WAGON

As the party travels towards Oakendale, following the same route that Jargan's children took, they pass through several small villages. A TYPICAL *Charm* or *Streetwise* check is sufficient to get confirmation that the missing travelers came through each location.

On the way, the party reaches a small stream that has to be forded... and it looks like someone else is having trouble with it.

A frustrated-looking common mouse is struggling to get a two-wheeled cart full of acorns unstuck from the mud. He has a small riding beetle drawing the cart, but the animal seems to be unable to dislodge the cart on its own, no matter how much he hits it.



This is *Truvale*, an irascible peasant trader who is getting more and more nervous the longer he stays in one spot.

There's a fair bit of cover from the surrounding brush, but he still keeps glancing upwards nervously, worried about hawks. His temper is very short right now but he isn't likely to do more than shout insults if someone antagonizes him.

The cart is quite stuck and mud has been pulled up into the axle joint, jamming it up. It would take a VERY HARD combined *Feats of Strength* test to free it, but a successful TYPICAL *Digging* roll can clean out the mud and lower the difficulty to HARD. He is carrying several dozen collected acorns, each of which is worth about 1/4 of a copper coin as a snack. He has no weapons besides the crude hoe that he uses to motivate his beetle and is carrying only a few basic supplies and a dozen copper coins.

Truvale has not seen the missing party, although his current route takes him along roughly the same path. If befriended, he will tell the party about a traveler's inn to be avoided in *Brisdale*, "because it has fleas like mad," but has little other information to offer.

DEALING WITH TRUVALE: This encounter is largely just an opportunity for the PCs to show their character. Are they heroic types who immediately volunteer to free the cart without charge? Mercenaries who demand a share of the acorns or some cash? Hard-hearted types who abuse or ignore him? Give the PCs a chance to let their true colors show through.

Since he'll be traveling more slowly than the party (in all likelihood), Truvale could also catch up with them later and possibly provide aid... or some sarcastic derision if they abandoned or abused him.

PART II: BRISDALE VILLAGE

Brisdale is a small farming community built up around the roots of a small tree. The town is quite impoverished and the houses there are of low quality. A few dozen small homes surround the town square, and there is a pen for four female riding beetles that are apparently used for plowing and pulling carts.

There is only a single inn, which advertises itself as the *Brisdale Rest*. It has a single common room for all travelers but charges only a single copper bit to stay the night and another for food and drink. As Truvale may have warned them, the inn does indeed have a flea problem and anyone who stays in the common room will acquire fleas.

This is the first town that the PCs encounter where they *can't* find anyone who remembers seeing the children and their entourage pass through (although, if asked, they will recognize the kids as having passed this way the year before, stopping in Brisdale both ways). If the PCs continue further, the trail remains cold and no one further along the path will remember seeing the missing group either. There are several approaches that they could follow at this point.

Alertness (TYPICAL): looking through town for clues, on a regular success the PCs note that a number of the townsfolk are sickly. There seems to be an outbreak of Burrow Cough here.

On a Critical Success, they note that two of the local beetles are actually *male* riding beetles that have had their horns cut off so that they can pass for the more common female beasts of burden. This greatly reduces their value, and would normally only be done to stolen animals. The pen in question belongs to a farmer named Silas, who avoids talking to the PCs unless approached directly. This information can also be discovered with an EASY Wilderness roll if anyone actually asks about local beetles.

Medicine (EASY): kindhearted doctors who note the Burrow Cough outbreak can make a Medicine check to help the locals... on a success, they also find evidence of a variety of parasites and other illnesses, but the locals are strangely reluctant to talk about them. On a Critical Success, they find old scars from sores indicating that this has been going on for years now; the locals regard the illnesses as punishment for their various sins. If asked who told them that, they all cite a hermit priest named Father Strelek, who apparently lives nearby.

Insight or Streetwise (HARD): talking to the locals, characters may note that the healthier townsfolk seem much more reluctant to talk to outsiders. This is the reverse of the way it would normally be.

If the PCs try to get a friendly local (such as the innkeeper) to spill the beans, they must 1) arrange to speak to a local in private and 2) offer them some sort of impressive bribe. If successful, the local will confess that everyone is afraid of a hermit priest named Father Strelek. He doesn't live in town, but they can point to Silas as someone who regularly deals with Strelek and recently received two riding beetles from him as a gift.

If the PCs are asking about when the children passed through the area last year, a successful Streetwise (TYPICAL) roll will reveal that they *did* stay in town for several days talking with Father Strelek while on the homeward trek of their journey.

Tracking (TYPICAL): by retracing the travelers' path
Hyperborean Mice

from the last town, they can look for tracks of interest. A success will locate a little used area off the path where a group with several riding beetles camped for at least a night around the correct time period. A Critical Success will find aged blood splatters near the marks of a bedroll, indicating that the inhabitant of that bedroll may well have been murdered in their sleep. There are no signs of a struggle and if bodies were carried off the trail is too faint to be found. The spot is barely fifteen minutes travel from Brisdale and seems like an odd place to stop.

FATHER STRELEK

The locals (other than Silas) can't tell the PCs much about Strelek. He's a white mouse priest who lives nearby as a hermit and is known to offer spiritual advice and perform minor divinations.

He comes into town periodically and is most friendly with Silas. Brisdale had several Forsaken mice living there, but they all eventually left to stay with Strelek and honestly have not been particularly missed. No one is quite sure where he lives, other than it is nearby.

All of the locals are at least wary of offending the priest, as those who have spoken poorly of him in the past sometimes became sick or were murdered by brigands. It is widely felt that speaking ill of him brings poor fortune, but generally when bad things happened Strelek was in town dealing with other people and clearly couldn't have committed the crime himself.

DEALING WITH SILAS

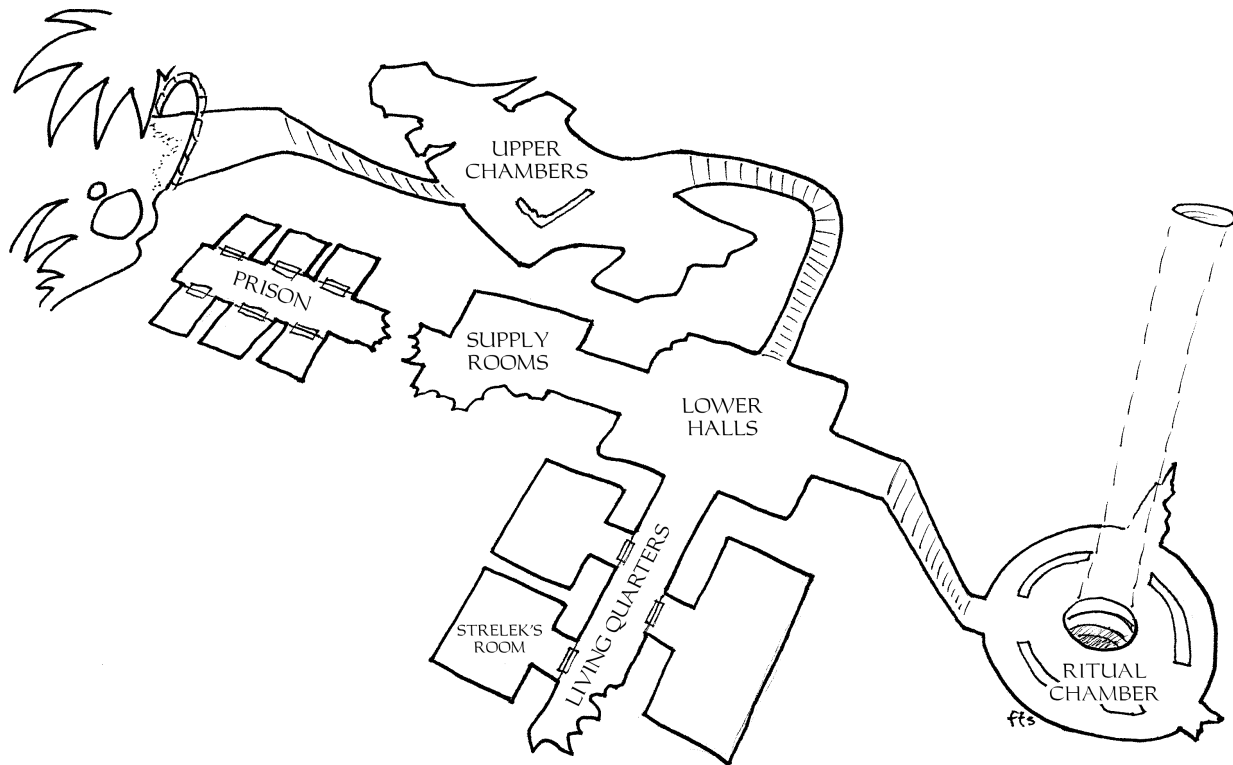
Silas is a decently friendly mouse and obviously highly thought of by the locals. However, whenever outsiders attempt to question him about Strelek or the missing children, he clams up and refuses to engage in "gossip." If pressed, he mutters vaguely about hawks probably carrying off the youngsters and professes ignorance of where Strelek lives.

In fact, once this happens he watches the PCs carefully and seems very interested in where they're going next.

Insight (TYPICAL): If they interrogate Silas, a success indicates that he's nervous whenever the conversation drifts towards the riding beetles, but he claims that they were sold to him by a stranger some months back. He's obviously hiding something. A Critical Success indicates that he doesn't actually know about the missing travelers, but is afraid of some sort of retaliation if he talks. Beyond outright torture, it is hard to get any detailed information out of him, but the more determined the PCs seem to be, the more nervous he gets.

Stealth (EASY) or Tracking (TYPICAL): If the PCs wait until dark, Silas will head out of town towards the Temple, hoping to find Father Strelek and get his advice. The characters can roll Stealth to follow him directly, or Tracking to retrace his path. Stealth is the easier roll, but a bit riskier, since a failure will alert him to their presence.

If the PCs have mystical means to get Silas to talk, he knows about the cult and that Strelek is aided by a spooky animated doll, but only suspects what may have happened to the children. He will still be reluctant to tell them anything beyond how to find Strelek. The hermit priest lives in a long-abandoned Tzarchul ruin about an hour's travel from Brisdale.



PART III: THE TEMPLE

In a rocky area near Brisdale lies an ancient ruin, long ago discovered, scavenged of everything of value, and then left to rot. It was Strelek who was drawn there and who heard the loathsome voice of Skzentic. He restored the temple and has been recruiting more followers for his dark god.

On the surface nothing remains of the temple but a partially collapsed hall with a stairwell at the end descending into the earth. The area has obviously been cleaned up a bit. There are scattered tools and implements as well as innumerable tracks heading in and out of the opening. It is clear that the area is inhabited and that the inhabitants are messy and disorganized.

If the PCs find hiding places to observe, they'll see several large and Forsaken-looking mice come in and out periodically to gather food or water. If Silas has arrived with a warning they will instead be alert and hiding inside.

Strelek has recruited 3 bitter Forsaken mice from the nearby communities to serve as temple guards. These should be minor foes whose stats and skills are set to be a mild challenge to the PCs. If the PCs are experienced or have several strongly capable fighters, the GM should consider increasing their numbers or giving them the *Extra Hit Points* Power.

UPPER CHAMBERS

These rubble-strewn rooms lie just below the surface and are partially collapsed. The dividing walls have largely broken down, so while there is enough cover for an ambush, this whole level can basically be treated as a single large room with some interior dividing walls.

If the temple is on alert, the Forsaken mice will be here behind cover, watching for intruders. If they have merely been warned that the PCs were asking questions, the guards will have their weapons at hand but not be

particularly alert. If the PCs managed to stop Silas from even delivering a warning, most of the Forsaken mice will be elsewhere in the ruins.

Otherwise, there is liable to be a fight. Strelek will wait below, rather than risking himself and Silas (if present) will merely cower and flee, surrendering if cornered. He has no taste for combat.

At one end of the upper chambers is a stairwell down into the dimly lit lower halls.

LOWER HALLS

This ancient stone chamber is the central point of the temple. The walls here have a handful of unlit torches placed in old recesses. Strelek normally carries a lit torch with him and only lights these when more light is needed.

The exit towards the supply chambers will be lit. The one towards the ritual chamber will show only the dimmest reflected light. The walls here are decorated with old carvings of stylized animals. Straight ahead are some clean and well-traveled rooms that appear to have been used by the locals as a living area (see the Living Quarters section).

A TYPICAL Esoteric Knowledge check identifies the carvings as signs honoring Skzentic, Lord of Parasites. Anyone who examines them will also see that they have been recently restored, including repainting them... with blood.

Characters can make a TYPICAL Alertness check here. Those who succeed may be able to hear sounds of motion from the supply area or rooms and/or chanting from the direction of the ritual chamber, depending upon the situation.

Characters who make a TYPICAL Tracking check can tell that mice have been dragged struggling from the direction of the supply rooms to the ritual chamber several times, but there's no sign of them being brought back out again. There are foul odors coming from both directions.

SUPPLY ROOMS

These chambers have apparently been used to store various basic supplies in small barrels, crates and loose piles. This part of the temple has fared less well than the others and several rooms are partially collapsed. If the PCs are following tracks, they lead to the furthest end, a bare chamber whose northern wall is just loose dirt and tumbled building stones as the ceiling long ago gave in. *Nolos Oakleaf* is lying insensible on the dirt here, his garments apparently torn by rough handling.

Nolos is easily revived by any handling and comes to with a moan. He tells the heroes that his sister is dead and that he has been a prisoner for these many weeks, under constant guard. He is eager to depart for home at once and insists that they leave without exploring the temple further.

A TYPICAL Medicine check notes that despite his disheveled state, Nolos isn't actually injured. Nor does he seem to have actually been restrained. A TYPICAL Tracking check will show that a bloody trail that doesn't stop here but continues to the loose dirt along one wall. It's a TYPICAL Digging check to break through into the Prison Chambers proper and an EASY Digging check to tell that this dirt is dug away and packed back into place regularly.

Nolos is carrying a concealed knife (roll Alertness vs his Stealth+4 to spot it, if anyone wants to search him) and is, of course, not a prisoner at all but a guest. He wants to prevent the PCs from reaching the prison chamber and was merely faking an insensible state. A HARD Insight check will reveal that he's hiding something, but only a Critical Success will make it clear that he's trying to distract the PCs from the loose dirt to the north.

He had originally conspired with Strelek to pretend to be held hostage and eventually return home after the ransom was paid, but with the PCs here he wants to try and salvage the situation as best he can. If that means stabbing a PC in the back while they fight Strelek, fine, but he knows that he's not enough of a fighter to take on the PCs directly. He'll settle for being "rescued" if he must.

PRISON CHAMBERS

These ancient cells have heavy wooden doors with bars on the *outside*. They reek of blood, sickness and urine. Only one is still occupied, and it contains Imelda Oakleaf. She has a nasty case of *Blood Fever* and is quite ill. If rescued, she mutters incoherently in a fever dream, often protesting or trying to fend off invisible persecutors and occasionally pleading for Nolos to release her.

Nolos had originally hoped that his sister would see the light and join him in the cult of Skzentic, but so far she has held out against torture, deprivation and their attempts at brainwashing. If she does not convert by the time that the ransom is paid, they plan to sacrifice her to Skzentic and return Nolos home alone. Their bodyguards and attendants were imprisoned in the other chambers (if the PCs investigate they can find their scattered belongings in the various cells) and were dragged out to meet that fate long ago, as were some locals who earned Strelek's ire in one fashion or another.

Digging through the waste and debris in the cells will reveal little of value, but a lot of claw-carved scrawls on the cell walls counting off days or leaving messages for loved ones. The area as a whole is quite disturbing and gruesome.

RITUAL CHAMBER

Here lies the ritual altar where Strelek's victims are sacrificed and where the PCs are most likely to find him if they enter the temple. This room reeks of blood, death and rot and the walls and ceiling are decorated with engraved images of the dead and dying. The rune of Skzentic is scattered repeatedly among them.

The center of the room is dominated by a shallow pit filled with rotting gore. This is the charnel pit where Strelek has tossed the bodies of the dead bodyguards and attendants and is using them to breed Black Flies. He has 6 flies at his command currently. [If the PC group is experienced, feel free to increase the size of the swarm.] There is a tunnel in the roof through which he can send the flies on missions.

He and the flies will attempt to slay any intruders. He will also call out for any surviving guards, but unless the heroes snuck in there aren't likely to be any. The Murder Doll may show up to try and stab someone from behind, though. Strelek is a coward and will lurk to the rear behind the flies, looking for a safe opportunity to strike, but will fall into the berserk rage of a fanatic if it looks like the PCs are going to win. He will not surrender and knows that he'll be executed for his many crimes if captured.

LIVING QUARTERS

These chambers have been used by the temple's occupants as living chambers. They are furnished with crude furniture and have tables with the discarded remains of old meals on them. A search will find that one of the chambers has a box with Nolos's garments and gear in it (that's where he's been staying).

Strelek has taken one of the cell-like chambers down here as his abode and his chamber is the most interesting one. There is paper and ink on a small wooden table as well as a crude bed made from a blanket tossed over some dried grass. The Murder Doll is probably lying limp and seemingly lifeless on a shelf here. A box near the table stores many jumbled pieces of paper where Strelek has kept his notes, journal and other items of value.

Strelek's Notes: if the PCs failed to rescue either child alive, they can still piece together the plot with a TYPICAL Common Lore check here. It's clear that Nolos found Strelek's theology more appealing than his family's religion and arranged for Strelek and his men to capture the travelers while the boy was ostensibly on watch. They plan to collect the ransom, then have the boy return (probably alone, unless the sister finally gives in and converts to the worship of Skzentic) to his family. With this cash, the boy will be able to fund a takeover of his father's business using Strelek's thugs and a number of bribes to make sure that his father's eventual death isn't investigated too closely. Their plans do not seem to have gone much beyond collecting the ransom, as they have only vague schemes for making the boy the new head of the family.

Strelek's Loot: there isn't much here, besides the weapons and gear that belonged to the bodyguards. The total value of all the goods here is about 15 silver coins.

Strelek's Sketchbook: this tome has many hand-drawn diagrams and shows both the design of Strelek's Murder Doll and the secrets of the *Animate Doll* High Sorcery. It is worth around 20 gold coins to a mage interested in this rite, as it can be used to cast this spell or to acquire the High Sorcery itself.

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ROKO, JUMPING MOUSE WARRIOR

AGILITY: +3 **SIZE:** 0
BRAWN: +3 **SOCIAL STATUS:** Commoner
CLEVERNESS: +0 (+0)
PERCEPTION: +1 **HIT POINTS:** 16
MAGIC: +0

COMBAT RATINGS

MELEE: +6 **DODGE:** +3
(base Agi+Brawn) **(base Agi+Clv)**
GRAB/THROW: +4 **COURAGE:** +3
(base Brawn+Per) **(base Brawn+Clv)**
RANGED: +4 **LEADERSHIP:** +1
(base Agi+Per) **(base Clv+Per)**

Powers: Combat Machine, Extra Hit Points, Familiar Territory: Duvain's Weal, Fearless, Keen Nose, One with the Night, Twin-Blade Strike

Balanced Traits: None

Flaws: Duty: Protect Cassandra, Superstitious

<i>Agility Skills</i> (+3) Acrobatics Contortionist Performance Riding Speed +4 Stealth +4 Thievery +4	<i>Clv Skills</i> (+0) Bluff Charm +2 Common Lore +1 Craft Engineering Esoteric Lore Negotiation +1	<i>Magic Skills</i> (+0) Sixth Sense Spell _____ Spell _____ Spell _____ Spell _____ Spell _____
<i>Brawn Skills</i> (+3) Carousing Digging Endurance +4 Feats of Str. +4 Intimidation +4 Swimming	<i>Per Skills</i> (+1) Alertness +2 Insight Medicine Sailing Streetwise +1 Tracking +2 Wilderness +2	<i>Special Modifiers</i> +2 to Alertness/ Stealth in dark +2 familiarity (Duvain's Weal)



LADY CASSANDRA, WHITE MOUSE MAGE

AGILITY: 0 **SIZE:** 0
BRAWN: -1 **SOCIAL STATUS:** Upper
CLEVERNESS: +2 class (+1)
PERCEPTION: +2 **HIT POINTS:** 11
MAGIC: +4

COMBAT RATINGS

MELEE: -1 **DODGE:** 2
(base Agi+Brawn) **(base Agi+Clv)**
GRAB/THROW: +1 **COURAGE:** +1
(base Brawn+Per) **(base Brawn+Clv)**
RANGED: +2 **LEADERSHIP:** +4
(base Agi+Per) **(base Clv+Per)**

Powers: Extra Hit Points, Spell: Tug (2), Tug High Sorcery: Levitation, Spell: Shaping (2), Shaping High Sorcery: Probing Touch

Balanced Traits: Membership: Magellian's Cloak

Flaws: Duty: Defend the Fallows, Grim

<i>Agility Skills</i> (+0) Acrobatics +1 Contortionist Performance Riding Speed Stealth +1 Thievery	<i>Clv Skills</i> (+2) Bluff Charm +3 Common Lore +3 Craft Engineering Esoteric Lore +3 Negotiation	<i>Magic Skills</i> (+4) Sixth Sense Spell Shaping +7 Spell Tug +6 Spell _____ Spell _____ Spell _____
<i>Brawn Skills</i> (-2) Carousing Digging Endurance Feats of Str. Intimidation Swimming	<i>Per Skills</i> (+2) Alertness Insight +3 Medicine +4 Sailing Streetwise +3 Tracking Wilderness	<i>Special Modifiers</i> -2 to cheery social tasks

HYPERBOREAN MICE

Character Record Sheet

NAME:

RACE:

CAREER:

SOCIAL STATUS:

MEMBERSHIP:

SIZE: **MAGIC RESISTANCE:**
(Magic Stat + Size)

HOMELAND:

ARMOR RATING:
(Innate / Worn)

DESCRIPTION:

HIT POINTS:

(10+Brawn+[Size x 2])

FATIGUE:

(4 Regular, 1 Winded)

AGILITY:

Skill	Rating	Total	XP
Acrobatics			
Contortionist			
Performance			
Riding			
Speed			
Stealth			
Thievery			

BRAWN:

Skill	Rating	Total	XP
Carousing			
Digging			
Endurance			
Feats of Strength			
Intimidation			
Swimming			

COMBAT RATINGS

Melee Combat (Agility+Brawn)			
Grab/Throw (Brawn+Perception)			
Ranged Combat (Agility+Perception)			
Dodge (Agility+Cleverness)			
Courage (Brawn+Cleverness)			
Leadership (Cleverness+Perception)			

CLEVERNESS:

Skill	Rating	Total	XP
Bluff			
Charm			
Common Lore			
Craft			
Engineering			
Esoteric Lore			
Negotiation			

PERCEPTION:

Skill	Rating	Total	XP
Alertness			
Insight			
Medicine			
Sailing			
Streetwise			
Tracking			
Wilderness			

MAGIC:

Skill	Rating	Total	XP
Sixth Sense			
Spells (require matching Powers)			
<i>Compel</i>			
<i>Guise</i>			
<i>Shaping</i>			
<i>Spark</i>			
<i>Tug</i>			
<i>Whispers</i>			

POWERS / BALANCED TRAITS / FLAWS:

WELCOME TO HYPERBOREA

The White Lords, albino mice with magical powers, came to the valley of *Hyperborea* long ago. Fleeing from their masters and creators, the Titans, they settled here in secret, raising up great armies of mice and rats and teaching them to use weapons and magic against the predators of the valley.

But that was long ago. The mighty kingdoms that they established have fallen prey to decadence and decay. Their royal descendants are more interested in their revels and political intrigues than preserving civilization.

The barbarian rat clans of the hills grow ever bolder while the numbers of the all-but-feral *Forsaken* increase with each passing season. Terrible predators still threaten the valley and the need for heroes is greater than ever.



HYPERBOREAN MICE is a Role-Playing Game of grim Swords & Sorcery action... as portrayed by talking rodents.

Your heroes must face Owls, Weasels and Shrews as well as unnatural horrors such as Ghuls and Frostmice. It combines a setting inspired by Robert E. Howard and Fritz Leiber with the charm of a world of intelligent mice and rats.