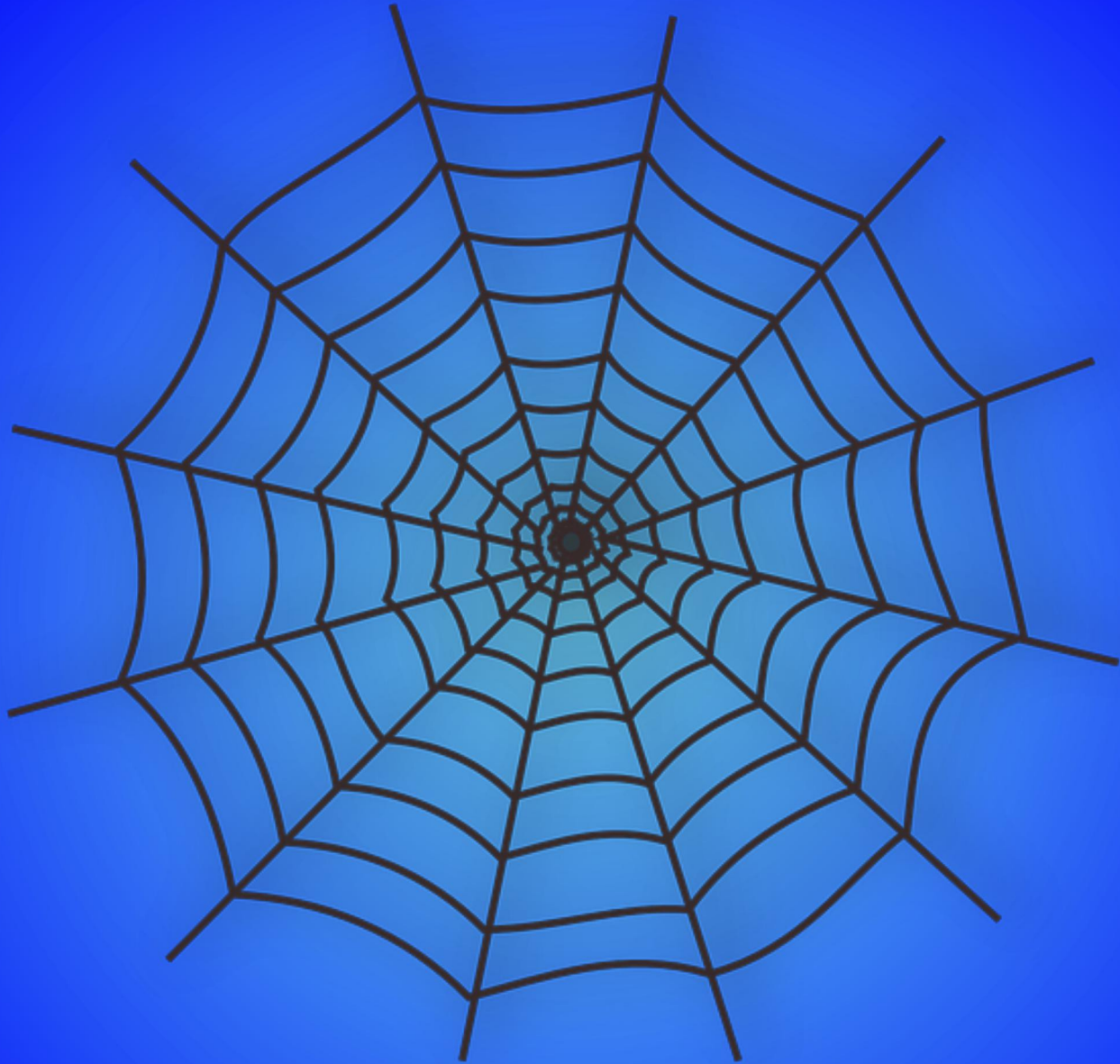


# Character Webs



Thunderegg Productions

**Author**

Jacob DC Ross

**Special Thanks and Shout Outs to Awesome Folks**

Amy Ross

Ella Ross

Matt Sprange

Ryan Chaddock

Andreas Walters

Joe Sweeney

Simon Cogan

Alex Greene

Kevin Crawford

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## **Introduction**

Welcome!

This book is an effort to create a lifepath generator for any RPG, regardless of system. It is completely setting neutral and can be used with any game system. I was inspired to write the lifepath portion of this book by posts on RPG.net where posters claimed that the thing they disliked about lifepath generation was that it could often be wildly unbalanced. There is no fear of that here, as this book is not tied to a system and provides flavor only.

Like a lot of you, I get bored with the same cliché of everyone meeting at the tavern. This book contains a system for establishing preexisting relationships among PCs. There is even a fun section for the GM to throw a wrench into things, but let's not spoil the surprises quite yet.

Lastly, there are the eponymous character webs. Webs are a simple system for tracking who the PC knows and what their relationship is to the PC. The system also has a quick way to resolve if a character knows any NPCs whom he encounters.

I loved writing this book, and I'd love your feedback. Please leave a review at [DrivethruRPG.com](http://DrivethruRPG.com) and let me know any concerns or suggestions at [Thunderegg Productions'](http://ThundereggProductions.com) page at [www.facebook.com/ThundereggProductions](http://www.facebook.com/ThundereggProductions).

There are several more books in the works that expand on this system. We're planning a book for quickly generating species and societies, a book for quick adventure hooks, NPC generation and more. Each mini-book in this series is going to be a pay-what-you-want title. I'd rather have you get this book for free than not get it at all. Of course, I appreciate tips, and so does my family!

Many thanks,  
Jacob DC Ross

P.S. Besides this book, you'll just need 4D6 of different colors and 1D10. I'd use red, green, blue and black for the D6, which not-so-coincidentally happens to match the text colors on the tables. Put all five dice in a cup at once and a single roll gets all the results you need per page!

## Family Background

D6	Parents	D6	Siblings	D6	Surviving Siblings	D6	Nieces/Nephews
1	Orphan	1	0	1	0	1	None
2	Divorced	2	1	2	1	2	1
3	Father Dead	3	2	3	2	3	2
4	Mother Dead	4	3	4	Half	4	D6, spread among all siblings
5	Both Alive	5	4	5	-1	5	Half D6 from each sibling
6	Never Married	6	Roll twice	6	All	6	D6 from each sibling

D10	Special	Result
1	<b>Adopted from unknown family</b>	<b>You</b> were adopted into the family from an unknown source. D6: 1-5: Nothing; 6: Your parents know your true family but won't tell you.
2	<b>Adopted from known family</b>	<b>You</b> were adopted into the family from a known source.
3	<b>Disowned</b>	<b>You</b> have been disowned. D6: 1-2: For a genuine moral failing; 3-4: By a misunderstanding; 5: To protect you from the family's enemies; 6: Framed by an Enemy.
4	<b>Runaway</b>	<b>You</b> ran away from home and haven't been back. D6: 1-2: To escape harsh treatment; 3-4: To escape your family's enemies; 5-6: In search of adventure.
5	<b>Taken in by another family</b>	<b>D6:</b> 1-3 Disowned as above; 4-6 Runaway as above. Another family has taken you in as one of their own.
6	<b>Very happy family</b>	<b>Your</b> familial bonds are exceptional. One relative is a very close Ally. D6: 1-3: Parent or uncle/aunt; 4-6: Sibling or cousin.
7	<b>Enemy from family</b>	<b>One</b> member of your family has it in for you. D6: 1-3: Parent or uncle/aunt; 4-6: Sibling or cousin.
8	<b>Missing sibling</b>	<b>One</b> of your siblings has been missing for some time. You must find them.
9	<b>Family scion</b>	<b>You</b> are to inherit the leadership role of your family
10	<b>Half-sibling</b>	<b>You</b> have a half-sibling. D6: 1: Raised in your household; 2-3: Raised in your household, parentage hidden; 4: Raised in another household; 5-6: Raised in another household, parentage hidden.

This section exists to show the circumstances of your immediate family. It can be used to generate further lineage. For example, roll on this table once for each of your parents to create your aunts, uncles, cousins and some background for your grandparents, if you so choose. In the case of an event like Taken in by another family you may also create the household that took you in.

Like all tables, this may be used in creating NPCs for further background. You are free to interpret these results as you wish. For instance, the event Half-sibling has outcomes that list "parentage hidden." This can mean that any or all of the parents involved are unaware of the child's true parentage, only you and the half-sibling are unaware, only the half-sibling is unaware or any combination of these. Alternatively, you yourself may be the half-sibling!

## Social Background

D6	Class
1	Fringe
2	Laborers
3	Warriors
4	Scholars
5	Merchants
6	Rulers

D6	Wealth
1	Poorest
2	Poor
3	Livable
4	Comfort
5	Well-off
6	Wealthy

D6	Reputation
1	Mocked
2	Ignored
3	Feared
4	Respected
5	Envied
6	Worshiped

D6	Known for
1	Criminal activity
2	Charity
3	Civic service
4	Curiosity
5	Cunning
6	Devotion

D10	Special	Result
1	<b>Family secret</b>	<b>Your</b> family got to their place in society by treachery. If the truth were known it would devastate them socially and financially.
2	<b>Devoted rivals</b>	<b>Another</b> family has dedicated its resources to taking down your family.
3	<b>Notable home</b>	<b>Your</b> family's home is considered quite beautiful. Folks come from all around to see it.
4	<b>Patrons</b>	<b>Your</b> family has supported a specific educational institution for generations. When rolling for the Education Background you may +/-1 to any one roll.
5	<b>Military family</b>	<b>Despite</b> their class, your family has a tradition of sending its children to war. You may automatically select Military for any work Background.
6	<b>Nomads</b>	<b>Your</b> family does not put down roots but rather moves from area to area.
7	<b>Branch</b>	A larger branch of your family exists in another part of the world and your folk are part of an offshoot that migrated a couple of generations ago.
8	<b>Betrothed</b>	<b>Your</b> family is closely allied with another. This is great for business, but it means that they expect you to marry one of them, and you don't love your betrothed. You are not married when the game starts, but the other family will do all they can to ensure the marriage.
9	<b>Hidden heritage</b>	<b>Your</b> family changed their name to blend in with the ethnic majority when they moved to their current location. You call one another by your "true" name when among members of your ethnic group.
10	<b>Xenophobic</b>	<b>Your</b> family distrusts outsiders, and some of this has rubbed off on you. You don't quite view your friends as family like others might.

This section is for generating your family's social status. Class is what general niche in society your family fills. Wealth is how your family rates compared to others monetarily. Reputation is what others think of your family. Known for is the stereotypical image of a member of your family.

## Education Background

<b>D6</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>D6</b>	<b>Setting</b>	<b>D6</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>D6</b>	<b>Area of study</b>
1	Informal	1	Wilderness	1	Failed	1	Any science, engineering or medicine
2	Poor	2	Urban	2	Dropped out	2	Law or commerce
3	Standard	3	Rural	3	Passed	3	Esoterica, history or theology
4	Private	4	Underground	4	Passed	4	Military tactics
5	University	5	Mobile	5	Passed	5	A trade or the arts
6	Highest	6	Island	6	Passed with honors	6	Crime or forbidden knowledge

<b>D10</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>Result</b>
1	<b>Relationship with mentor</b>	<b>Your</b> main mentor has remained a friend. They are an Ally.
2	<b>Rival student</b>	<b>Another</b> student tried to upstage you. D6: 1-3: They succeeded, 4-6: They were frustrated. They are an Enemy.
3	<b>Fraternal organization</b>	<b>You</b> were admitted to an organization. You may stay at its houses and will have friendly contacts among members.
4	<b>Continued education</b>	<b>Despite</b> no longer being a student, you still associate with your institution somehow. You are occasionally called upon to assist with research or other projects.
5	<b>Schism</b>	<b>You</b> and your mentors have split. The institution brands you a renegade and wants to silence you.
6	<b>Breakthrough</b>	<b>Your</b> work while studying led to a breakthrough. Folks in your field of study are likely to recognize you and be favorable.
7	<b>Radicalization</b>	<b>Your</b> experience changed you. A mentor or other group showed you things about the world that you never knew. You reject a belief or view that you have held since childhood.
8	<b>Disaster</b>	A project that you on which you helped ended horribly. Anyone in your field likely remembers it and holds it against you.
9	<b>Rubbing elbows</b>	<b>You</b> were able to network with the elite. You have an Ally among the area's rulers, either a fellow student or their parent.
10	<b>True knowledge</b>	<b>You</b> have been taught a shocking secret about the true nature of your society or world. The GM will provide you with this secret. Be careful, as it may lead to your downfall if others become aware of your knowledge.

This section details how you came to know what you know. Type is the type of education that you received. An informal education could be anything from homeschooling to being taught the ways of pickpocketing by vile thief. Setting is where your schooling was mainly located. Result is how you ended your education. Area of study shows what you learned.

## Work Background

D6	Field
1	Ag/industry
2	Trade/labor
3	Military
4	Bureaucracy /commerce
5	Science
6	Arts

D6	Duty
1	Peon
2	Standard
3	Adviser
4	Special duty
5	Support
6	Command

D6	Rank
1	Trainee
2	Standard
3	Trusted
4	Competent
5	Exceptional
6	Utmost

D6	Reputation
1	Pathetic
2	Noble
3	Charitable
4	Sinister
5	Cutthroat
6	Respectable

D10	Special	Result
1	<b>Ethical dilemma</b>	<b>Your</b> superiors ask you to do something that you find questionable. Disobey and you cannot roll a higher Duty or Rank next cycle. Obey and lose a bit of your soul.
2	<b>Takeover</b>	<b>Your</b> outfit is targeted by another for takeover. If you assist the hostile outfit then you have a place in the new order and gain one Duty or Rank next cycle but an ousted cohort is now an Enemy. Resist and D6: 1-4: Failure, take another job next cycle; 5-6: Success, gain a grateful cohort as an Ally.
3	<b>Success</b>	<b>You</b> do your job very well and gain recognition. Anyone in your field will hold you in professional regard.
4	<b>Relocation</b>	<b>Your</b> job takes you far from where you live. You are a fish out of water.
5	<b>Uncovered secret</b>	<b>You</b> stumble upon ruinous information about your employers. You must flee and take new employment next cycle but retain the secret.
6	<b>Striking out</b>	<b>You</b> and a few cohorts strike out on your own to form a new outfit. You automatically have the Command duty. Roll a Reputation for your outfit.
7	<b>Gathering enemies</b>	<b>Your</b> success has attracted haters. You gain an Enemy.
8	<b>Dangerous duty</b>	<b>You</b> are wounded while working. Get a scar and a good story.
9	<b>Disaster</b>	<b>You</b> are responsible for a disaster that causes great harm. Folks in your field now look down on you.
10	<b>Hidden cache</b>	<b>An</b> older cohort tells tales of his hidden stash and dies before he can retrieve it. You know where it is, vaguely.

This section shows what your PC did for a living before the game. First, roll Field, which shows in which sector you work. If you passed an Education Background in an area of study you may choose a Field that matches your area of study. Duty is roughly what you do for the outfit where you work, while Rank is how highly regarded you are within the outfit or specific Duty. Reputation is the esteem in which your outfit is held by the public.

Work Background takes place in cycles. Cycles are periods of a PC's life relative to the PC's lifespan. Starting PCs likely have little experience and should only roll here once or twice unless you want to play an older character at a starting power level. When rolling multiple times you usually only need to roll on Duty and Rank unless you leave a Field. You begin with Duty and Rank 1. This increases by 1 every time you roll over your current Rank or Duty.

## Personal Relationships

D6	Married (+1 per cycle)
1	No
2	No
3	No
4	No
5	No
6	Yes

D6	Children (+1 if married)
1	0
2	0
3	1
4	1
5	2
6	3

D6	Personal Assets
1	Rags
2	Poor goods
3	Standard goods
4	Fine goods
5	Excellent goods
6	Riches

D6	Other PCs known
1	1
2	1
3	2
4	2
5	3
6	4

D10	Relationship (Once per other PC)	Result
1	Family	You are related.
2	Schoolmates	You either attended the same institution or were peers in the same area.
3	Cohorts	You worked in the same outfit or with two outfits that were allied.
4	Tragedy	You met in the face of a tragedy, working together to save something.
5	Triumph	You shared a personal or professional triumph together.
6	Incidental	You literally or figuratively bumped into one another.
7	Correspondence	You are pen pals who have never yet met.
8	Seeking	You have been sent to find the other PC by a third party.
9	Adoring fan	You admire the other PC and have sought them out.
10	Romance	You are (or were) involved with the other PC. Or you are kin to the other PC's current or former love.

This section fleshes out the PC and their group dynamic. Married indicates whether or not you are married, with a +1 mod to the roll for every cycle spent in the Work Background. Children indicates the number of children you have, with a +1 mod to the roll if you are married. Personal assets indicates your personal wealth. This may be different than that of your family from the Family Background. Other PCs known shows how many other PCs in the group have a pre-existing relationship with you. Even if you had a group of 20 players this tables maximum results should never be increased. That helps keep things manageable.

The Relationship table is used to generate the relationships among any PCs who know each other. The players should work together, spending no more than one minute per relationship to get a basic sketch of how the PCs met.



### **Example Background Generation**

Our group, comprised of Jake as GM and Amy, Will and Roxanne as players, are creating PCs for a new campaign of their favorite RPG, **Turtle Lords** (Copyright 1983 Chelonian Press). Amy's PC is a spunky young thing Skilled Brave named el-Hopa, Will's is a macho man Berserk Shell Smasher named Link Logg and Roxanne's is a sly customer Hidden Loremaster named The Silver Mask. Let's peek in as they use *Character Webs* to create deeper backgrounds for their characters.

**Jake:** Amy, roll for your Family Background.

**Amy:** Okay, I got 6, 4, 6, 4 and 3. Let's see, my folks never married, I've got 3 siblings, all of whom have survived. I want one older brother and two younger sisters. I've got some nieces and nephews, let's check [Rolls 2]. Let's say my older brother has one son and my little sister has 1 daughter. I've been disowned!? Why? [Rolls 1] So I have a moral failing, or at least my mother thinks I do. She didn't like the way I acted so independent and booted me. I'm on my own now but maybe I can make it back to their good graces!

[Will and Roxanne roll their Family Backgrounds, Amy rolls her Social Background]

**Jake:** Will, it's your turn to roll Social Background.

**Will:** So it's 3, 5, 1, 5 and 10. My family are warriors who are well-off, mocked and known for our cunning and are xenophobic. Hmm, cunning well-off warriors who are mocked could be unorthodox generals whose most recent cunning scheme backfired, leading to them being a laughingstock. Since they distrust outsiders it's not likely that they'll do anything to shake that reputation any time soon.

[Roxanne rolls her Social Background, Amy and Will roll their Education Backgrounds]

**Jake:** And now Roxanne, you get to finish up the Educational Background.

**Roxanne:** So where did I go to school? So it looks like 1, 5, 6, 3 and 4. An informal education where I passed with honors? Weird. Let's make some sense. Informal and mobile sounds like a caravan-type environment. So let's say that the caravan's loremaster taught me all she knows about turtle esoterica and I was her star pupil. And a 4 on the Special roll means that I still work with them from time to time. I think that The Silver Mask is the information gatherer for the caravan.

**Jake:** Education is finished. Amy, let's do your Work Background.

**Amy:** I've got 4, 1, 5, 1 and 10. So I worked for a merchant as his peon, but he made me a top peon and he has a pathetic reputation. No wonder he could only pay me peon wages despite my awesome skills. Ooh, and I know the general location of some hidden treasure. Let's say that my old boss kicked the bucket and told me what he knew of it, maybe to ease his guilty conscience over my horrible wages!

[Will and Roxanne complete their Work Backgrounds, Amy completes her Personal Relationship section]

**Jake:** You're up, Will.

**Will:** Am I married or a swinging bachelor? The dice say 4, 6, 3 and 3. Swinging bachelor it is! Woohoo!

**Roxanne:** You better not be so enthused about being single in the game or you might be single in real life, too.

**Will:** Uh, yeah. Sorry. So *Link* is a swinging bachelor, but he's got like three kids. I've decided that they aren't his kids, but some war orphans that he's adopted. He's got standard means of living and it looks like Link knows both el-Hopa and The Silver Mask.

[Amy has already rolled her Personal Relationships and has determined that she knows Link Logg because she is an adoring fan of his. Will just has to roll once for his relationship with The Silver Mask. Roxanne won't have to roll for any relationships.]

**Will:** A 1 means that Link Logg is related to The Silver Mask. How about third cousins once removed?

**Jake:** What does that even mean?

[Blank stares all around. Nobody knows. Roxanne finishes her Personal Relationships]

At the end of this session each player now has several inspiration points for their character. One last thing: remember that if any result from this system clashes with either a game rule from your group's system or with your setting, be free to use your imagination to rewrite the result.

## Character Webs

Imagine that the PC is a spider. Picture their home life, their work, their friends and peripheral contacts as the strings of a web. They are parallel or interconnected, but they form a structure that the PC uses to get through life. Here we detail a quick system for placing NPCs in a PC's personal web.

Classify PCs and NPCs that your PC knows as Family, Allies, Contacts and Enemies. A Family member is someone whom you can trust with your life. Allies are much the same, although not related to you. Contacts are simply folks you know with whom you can often arrange deals. Enemies have a grudge against you and will actively seek to harm you.

When an NPC of note is encountered and either the GM or the PC wants to determine whether or not they know the NPC, or whether that NPC is known by any of the PC's contacts, roll D20 with the following rules:

- Add 1 if the PC has had some Special event marking them as famous, or if they have performed many public deeds lately. Subtract 1 if the PC has taken pains to remain low key throughout the campaign.
- Add 1 if the PC and the NPC are from the same area. Subtract 1 if the PC and the NPC are from different areas.
- Add 1 if the PC and the NPC have similar Work Backgrounds. A former military PC meeting a soldier, for instance.
- Add 1 if the PC and the NPC studied similar fields in their Education Backgrounds. A PC who studied the arts meeting an artist, for example.
- Add 1 per NPC already in the PC's character web (max +3) who would have a bonus from one of the above modifiers (fame, same area, same work, same field of study).

If the result is 20 or higher, then the PC knows the NPC. If the result is 20 or higher due to the bonuses granted by an NPC already in your character web, then rather than knowing the NPC whom you are currently meeting, you both have a mutual acquaintance.

If the PC makes a favorable impression then they may end up being able to add the new NPC to their web as an Ally, although this may take quite a bit of doing. Conversely, a negative impression can create a new Enemy. Most often, though, a new NPC will begin as a Contact.

## **GM Section**

If you've been playing RPGs for any length of time you know what to expect next. If you are a player, STOP READING THIS SECTION! This section contains spoilers for an option available to the GM.

This section is designed to give you, the GM, a resource for creating secrets among the party members. After all the players have finished rolling their Backgrounds, roll D10 for each player. A roll of "1" means that that PC knows a secret or has a secret aspect of their relationship with another PC. If any players have a secret, roll on the Secrets table. After this, write down any secrets on a sheet of paper and hand them to the appropriate player. To eliminate suspicion and to build suspense, write something on a slip of paper for every player. For those without secrets it can simply read, "You have no secrets at this time." Do this even if no players have secrets.

For even more fun, write "You know no secrets. One other party member knows a secret." Give this same message to every player. Sit back and watch the paranoia build.

This system is designed to work quickly. Each player will really only throw five or six die rolls usually, essentially the same number that they might spend simply rolling up stats for their character. Encourage them to explain their interpretations of their rolls quickly. You'll get some crazy results that will create intriguing roleplaying options.

The goal is not to write a novel-length biography. The idea here is to simply give a little bit more of the story. The minute details can be filled in during actual play, or by a player during down time. I don't want to burden any group with more rolling than is necessary or desired.

Let the players interpret the results as they like. Nothing in here affects the rules of your game. It's all flavor. If the results of a roll really go against a player's concept, let them fudge it, re-roll or be very loose in their interpretations. Nothing in this book should make the game less fun.

## Relationship Secrets

D6	Target	D6	Nature	D6	Source	D6	Holder's disposition
1	Player 1	1	Familial	1	Relative	1	Protective
2	Player 2	2	Professional	2	Boss/cohort	2	Malicious
3	Player 3	3	Political	3	Ally/Enemy	3	Ambivalent
4	Player 4	4	Philosophical	4	Stranger	4	Fearful
5	Player 5	5	Personal	5	Holder	5	Admiring
6	GM's choice	6	Beyond	6	Beyonder	6	Curious

D10	Special	Result
1	<b>Hidden bond</b>	<b>The</b> Holder's relationship to the Target is deeper than the Target knows. They are have a relationship relative to the Nature.
2	<b>Unknown personal secret</b>	<b>The</b> Target has been touched by the Nature of the secret in a way that only the Source and the Holder know.
3	<b>Captured secret</b>	<b>The</b> Source is keeping a person or object relative to the Nature hidden from the Target.
4	<b>False identity</b>	A person, known to the Target, relative to the Nature, is not who they claim to be.
5	<b>Marked for destruction</b>	<b>The</b> Source has targeted a person relative to the Nature for elimination.
6	<b>Revenge</b>	<b>The</b> Target once wronged the Nature, who seeks revenge.
7	<b>Mama bear</b>	<b>The</b> Holder is the guardian of the Nature. The Source alleges that the Target is threatening the Nature.
8	<b>Blackmail</b>	<b>The</b> Source has dirt on the Nature, who is an Ally of the Target.
9	<b>Hidden cache</b>	<b>The</b> Nature, a friend of the Target, knows the location of a great treasure. The Source needs the Target to access the Nature.
10	<b>Fuzzy intel</b>	<b>Roll</b> again, but the information is sketchy; the exact identity of the Nature or Source is unknown.

This is where the GM creates secret links among characters. Target is which player is affected by the secret, not which player knows the secret, that's the Holder. Nature is how the secret relates to the Target. The Nature can be a person, place or thing or even part of the PC. Source is how the Holder knows the secret. Beyond and Beyonder in this table refer to anything of higher tech or other means beyond the capabilities of most characters or societies. Holder's disposition is how the Holder views the information.

We'll finish up this section with a look at our sample play group:

**Jake:** [whistling innocently, rolls behind GM screen] Okay, let me just write you each your note.

The roll came up 4, 7, 1. Roxanne is the third player, so it turns out that there is a secret to one of her relationships. The roll is 2, 5, 2, 2 and 4. Target is Will, Nature is personal, Source is a boss/cohort and the Holder's disposition is malicious. The Special table shows that the secret is a false identity. So Jake takes this as Will's old boss letting The Silver Mask know that Will once operated under a false name for nefarious purposes. The Silver Mask apparently intends to use this maliciously, so she must hold a grudge against her third cousin twice removed.

Jake writes three notes. To Amy: "There is no secret." To Will: "You used to operate under a false name for nefarious purposes. Pass me a note after the session detailing this identity." To Roxanne: "You know that Link Logg used to operate under a false name for evil ends. You are going to use this against him sometime later. Do not divulge this information yet."

This leaves the campaign with several new hooks. For whom did Link Logg work? What was the true nature of his secret identity? What is The Silver Mask going to do about it? Are there other folks who know this secret? What will they try to do with the info?