

*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

# RULES OF PLAY

**Hyperborean Mice** is a game of grim and gritty swords and sorcery action... as performed by talking rodents. The decaying kingdoms of the tiny valley of Hyperborea are ruled by the inbred albino *Royal Mice* whose magical powers are great... but her many kingdoms have been decaying for generations and her rulers amuse themselves with decadent revels and petty political struggles rather than face the dangers that threaten their civilization.

## CHARACTER CREATION

**Stats:** Split 7 points between the following stats. One stat can be set as low as -1; 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 these and can push you above or below these limits.

- **AGILITY:** speed, balance and physical coordination
- **BRAWN:** size, 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, 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).
- **WHITE MICE:** upper-class mice with some Royal Mouse blood but not enough to be albinos. They tend to be magically potent and 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 the Royal Mice, White Rats are large but mild-mannered and are usually found in the service of a particular family of Royals.
- **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:** the larger and fiercer offspring of a Common Rat and one of 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. For mages, most of these will generally go towards purchasing Spells and other Magical Powers, whereas non-mages will take more mundane abilities.

**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.

**Flaws:** These are "Powers" with a negative point cost. They represent some inherent weakness or flaw. You can take at most 3 different Flaws.

**Skills:** Spend 14 points on your starting skills, with a maximum rating of +3 on each (+6 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
- **THROWING:** 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; weapons hurled directly are covered under *Throwing*. 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 a skill test, invoke special powers, trigger critical successes or prevent botches. You can also spend them in the place of Fatigue on a 1-for-1 basis.

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

Minor NPCs only receive Brawn+5 Hit Points and so may well fall unconscious or start dying from any decent hit.

**Fatigue:** Each 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.

## BASIC RULES

**Resolution System:** The standard resolution system in *Hyperborean Mice* is to roll 2d6 + modifiers and compare the total to the target number. Exactly matching the target number is a *Tie*, while beating it is a *Success*. Beating the target number by 5 points or more is a *Critical Success*.

Rolling less than the target number is a *Failure*, while failing by 5 points or more is a *Critical Failure*.

**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.
- **NIGH IMPOSSIBLE (20):** even the very best require a lucky roll to succeed.

**Natural Twelves (Potential Crits):** When your 2d6 roll is a 12, you can spend a Hero Point to turn it into a *Critical Success* where you perform exceptionally well and receive some sort of additional benefit. If it was already a Critical Success (which isn't uncommon since 12 is such a high roll), then spending a Hero Point turns it into a *Double Critical* (basically two Critical Successes in one).

**Natural Twos (Potential Botches):** When your 2d6 roll is a 2, 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 rolling badly.

**Skill Checks:** Each standard skill is based on a specific stat. When you roll a regular skill check, you'll roll 2d6+Stat+Skill plus any additional modifiers such as special circumstances or Powers.

**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.

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

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.

**Spending Fatigue:** You can spend 1 Fatigue to instantly acquire Focus, if desired. Some special abilities always cost Fatigue.

The more 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.

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 Fatigue without passing out.

**Resisting Magic:** 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. Also, the resistance roll always includes the target's Magic rating, as characters with a negative Magic rating are actually more vulnerable to magic than normal.

**Size:** Creatures that are larger or smaller than mice may have a Size rating. This adjusts certain rolls and abilities, particularly in combat. It also applies the following adjustments:

Add your Size to the following:

- Your innate *Armor Rating* (which *can* be a negative number for very tiny creatures)
- Any rolls to resist magic
- 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.

### COMMON SIZE RATINGS:

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

# 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 (+6):** 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 ruler should die, they are on the short list of possible successors. Most have at least a handful of bodyguards.
- **Lower Nobility (+4):** families of noble blood but not particularly close to the throne of their homeland tend to occupy this niche. They often own small family estates and have a number of servants who live with them. A non-Royal Mouse can achieve the equivalent of this position only through great wealth and can go no higher.
- **Upper-class (+2):** 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 metal equipment and may loan it to their servants. They may also have riding beetles.
- **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 (-2):** 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 (-4):** 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.

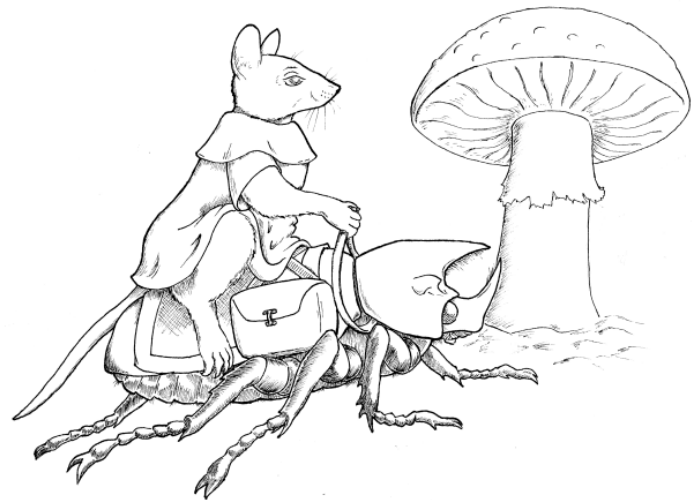
## ITEM COSTS & QUALITIES

**CRUDE:** Crude items are makeshift items that even slaves and outcasts can generally put together, like clubs and sharpened rocks. They are available to anyone, pretty much for free.

**COMMON:** Common items are readily available even to commoners. They generally require a bit of skill to construct, but are composed of inexpensive materials. They require a social status of +0. Only the simplest of metal implements (such as knives) are common items; most are expensive.

**EXPENSIVE:** Expensive items are relatively rare. They often require both skill and expensive materials to construct. They require a social status of +2. Swords and riding beetles are good examples of expensive items; quite useful but hard to come by among the lower classes.

**VERY EXPENSIVE:** Very expensive items require a lot of expertise to make and are often constructed of very pricey 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. They can afford one thing that's above their status by one level (+2 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.

It's not uncommon for wealthier mice to provide additional equipment for their subordinates or poorer kin, but this generally carries with it the obligation to remember just who is paying the bills.

# THE RACES

There are 7 known races of talking rodents in Hyperborea. They are listed below. Note that some are fairly rare.

## ROYAL MICE

Most royals look like normal (if often 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 *Lords* or *Ladies* by those of lesser status.

This careful oversight of the royal bloodlines has minimized the dilution of their magical powers; 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:** +2 to Magic, -2 to Brawn. Their social status starts at Lower Nobility (+4).

Royal mice are quite sensitive to sunlight; they can go blind if their eyes are left 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" category is always considered to be expended and cannot be recovered.

## 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:** +1 to Magic, -1 to Brawn. Their social status starts at Upper-class (+2).

## COMMON MICE

The bulk of the population of Hyperborea are common mice... while descended from the First Ones like the other mice, their bloodline is poor and their magical powers are comparatively 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:** None. Social status starts at Commoner (+0). Due to their lack of special bonuses, common mouse characters receive an extra point with which to buy 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 are much smaller than other rats, being barely twice the weight of the typical mouse.

**ADJUSTMENTS:** -1 Agility, +1 Brawn, a maximum Magic rating of +3. Their social status starts at Upper-class (+2).

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 (see *the Basic Rules* for the various effects this has). 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 +2. Their social status starts at Impoverished (-2).

# POWERS

Powers are special abilities that alter your character's capabilities in some fashion. Some are purely passive, while others only work in special circumstances or may require you to expend Focus or Fatigue. Unless a Power specifically states otherwise, you can only take it once.

## COMBAT POWERS

**ASSASSIN (1 Point):** You are trained to take advantage of a target's vulnerability. If you attack an unsuspecting foe, you can add a bonus 1d6 damage if you hit.

**CAT-SLAYER (1 Point, requires a weapon with the Impale Bonus):** When you attack a creature with a Size of 2+, you can spend Focus to make a more lethal attack. If you hit, you get an *Impale* Combat Bonus for free.

**COMBAT MACHINE (1 Point):** Whenever a fight breaks out, you automatically start with Focus even if surprised.

**DEFENSIVE FIGHTING (1 Point):** When you successfully parry a melee attack, you can spend Focus to send the attacker reeling and cost them their next action. This Power is very popular with staff-wielders, who often seize the opportunity to make a break for it.

**DUCK (1 Point):** If you spend Focus to add to a Dodge roll, it adds a +3 bonus instead of the usual +1.

**EXTRA HIT POINTS (1 Point):** You have 3 extra Hit Points. This Power may be purchased up to 3 times.

**GLORY-SEEKER (1 Point):** When surrounded by foes, they receive no bonuses against you from their numbers.

**QUICKDRAW (1 Point):** You can draw weapons as a free action, as you need them. +2 to all initiative rolls.

**REFLEXIVE CATCH (1 Point):** If you have at least one paw free to catch it, you can defend against reasonably-sized thrown weapons with your own Throwing rating (including a +2 bonus if you have the *Weapon Specialist* power for that weapon) instead of Dodging. If you succeed, you snatch the weapon out of the air.

**RIPOSTE (1 Point):** 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.

**THUNDER-BLOW (1 Point, requires a two-handed melee weapon of some sort):** *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 (1 Point, requires you to be 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.

**WEAPON SPECIALIST (1 Point):** Pick a particular type of weapon (sword, bow, spear, etc.) when you take this power. When you attack with a weapon of that type, you can claim a Bonus 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 (1 Point):** *Before* you roll an attack, you can spend Focus to apply the results of your roll against every foe within reach of your blades. Unlike a regular melee attack, all Ties are treated as Failures.

## THIEVING POWERS

**AGILE SCURRIER (1 Point):** 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 armor. Normal mice must drop everything and cannot be armored.

**APPRAISER (1 Point):** You have an eye for valuables. 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 (1 Point):** You have a knack for blending in to your environment and can find the best possible way to use whatever cover is present. You can roll *Stealth* to hide even in an open area without good cover.

**BUSY HANDS (1 Point):** 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. If you spend Focus, you can make a pick-pocketing attempt as a free action.

**DON'T MIND ME (1 Point):** Whenever you roll *Acting* to try and pretend that you're authorized to be doing something that you really aren't, you receive a +4 bonus.

**ESCAPE ARTIST (1 Point):** You are unusually flexible and skilled at escaping from bonds. You receive a +2 bonus to *Contortionist* checks to wriggle free from grappling holds, ropes, chains or similar restraints. You can also spend 1 Fatigue to retry *any* *Contortionist* check.

**FAST BUT SILENT (1 Point):** No matter how fast you run, you never suffer penalties to your *Stealth* rolls.

**HOLDOUT (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** Whenever you roll *Acting* 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 (1 Point):** You are unusually gifted at mimicry. When you roll *Acting* 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 can incorporate funny noises and other sound effects into your act.

**NATURAL LOCK-PICKER (1 Point):** Lockpicking attempts take just a single round and you can make two attempts before you are forced to give up instead of just one.

**ONE WITH THE NIGHT (1 Point):** In unlit areas at night, you are at +2 to *Stealth* and to *alertness*.

**PERFECT BALANCE (1 Point):** Your climbing checks are at +2 and you never suffer penalties to other rolls due to your awkward position while climbing. You could aim a bow while dangling by one foot and you'd still roll normally.

**VANISHING ACT (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** 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.

**BORN LEADER (1 Point):** Whenever you are leading *by example* you receive a +4 bonus to inspire others to do the same. But your character *must* be rushing forward and doing exactly 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 (1 Point):** Select a narrow specialty in the Performance skill such as dancing or telling stories. You receive a +4 bonus to those rolls.

**CONTACTS (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** When you take this Power, 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. This includes knowledge checks for local customs, charm rolls with locals, streetwise and even stealth checks in that area. *This Power can be purchased multiple times; pick a different territory each time.*

**GOOD REPUTATION:** You have already established a name for yourself due to some previous exploits. You should define what exactly what your reputation *is*. In areas where someone might have heard of you, 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 (1 Point):** Your character comes from an unusually highly-placed family; you should decide exactly how and why they achieved this position. Your effective Social Status is one step higher (+2).

**MUSICIAN (1 Point):** You are a trained musician and well versed in the popular songs of the Fallows. You receive a +2 bonus to Performance checks when using a musical instrument to entertain others, but can also apply that bonus to other social checks when playing music. Some examples are Charm (singing an ode to someone), Carousing (entertaining a gathering) or even Intimidation (singing a song that exaggerates your martial prowess).

**SILVER TONGUED (1 Point):** When you are trying to use flattery to get what you want, you receive a +2 bonus to your Charm rolls. Furthermore, 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 (1 Point):** You can use social skills like Charm and Acting in the middle of a fight at no penalty and without sacrificing actions to do it.

**WELL-FAVORED (1 Point):** You are considered particularly handsome or beautiful and receive a +2 bonus to friendly social skill checks with those who might find you attractive. Worshipers of Jandara will consider you to have

been blessed by their goddess.

## OTHER MUNDANE POWERS

**ANIMAL FRIEND (1 Point):** You have a natural gift for making friends with unintelligent animals. 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.

**CRAFTSMAN (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** You have an extra "Winded" Fatigue level that can only be used for regular physical exertion, not powering magic.

**FAST HEALER (1 Point):** 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 (1 Points, requires Courage of 1+):** Your Courage rating is *doubled* versus mundane fear (such as facing huge foes) but not magical effects or anything associated with your Flaws. Your fearless demeanor gives you a +2 bonus when trying to inspire bravery in others.

**INTUITION (1 Point):** When faced with a 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 (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** You have such a strong sense of smell that you can actually track things by scent over a long 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.

**NIGHT VISION (1 Point):** You ignore the first 2 points of penalties from poor lighting or even complete darkness.

**SCHOLARLY EXPERTISE (1 Point):** 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.*

**SURVIVOR (1 Point):** You can withstand extremes of temperature that would kill others. You are at +4 to resist environmental effects and take ½ damage from them.

**UNSTOPPABLE (1 Point):** 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 the mage 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.**

Note that beginning mages, even if they know a High Sorcery, may require a number of attempts to succeed at it, due to the high difficulties involved.

## OTHER MAGICAL POWERS

These Powers do not require that the character have a high Magic rating, but are considered more mystical in nature than mundane Powers.

**BLESSED (1 Point):** For some reason, you are more resistant to the powers of spirits than normal mice. Spirit foes and monsters such as Ghuls are at -2 to affect you with any attacks or mystical effects.

**CONCENTRATION (1 Point):** You no longer suffer a -2 penalty for being active and moving around while casting.

**COUNTER-SPELL (1 Point):** Whenever you cast a spell to try and block or undo someone else's spell, you receive a +4 bonus to your roll.

**DEEP DREAMER (1 Point):** 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.

**GIFTED MAGE (1 Point):** When you spend Focus to aid a spell-casting roll, you receive a +2 bonus instead of +1.

**MAGICAL RESERVES (1 Point):** You possess an extra "Winded" Fatigue level which can only be spent on spells. This Power can be taken up to 3 times.

**MAGIC RESISTANCE (1 Point):** Your magical energies are bound up so tightly that it's very difficult for others to affect them in any way. The difficulty of any attempt to affect you with magic is increased by 4. Even if you are *trying* not to resist, the caster still suffers a -2 penalty to their roll. *You can never learn to cast spells.*

**MAGICAL TALENT (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** You ignore the first 3 points of penalties from maintaining other spells when you cast new ones.

**NATURAL LINK (1 Point):** You have a mystical connection to another person (chosen at the time that you take this Power) that makes you particularly sensitive to them. You will 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.

**RITUAL MAGIC (1 Point):** 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 (1 Point):** 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.



# 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 likely death, you can re-roll it once 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 you know that your Doom could come true, then you can only acquire Focus by spending Fatigue and cannot spend Hero Points on your rolls. Furthermore, the odds of you encountering the source of your *Doom* are increased by the fact that you are fated to do 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 a little more often than most characters and will not be able to acquire Focus normally or spend Hero Points against them.*

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

## SEER

Your character is more in tune with the spirit world than the typical mouse. 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 1 wound as well.

If you devote your 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 grips of such a vision, the seer often babbles nonsense or falls in a faint and is 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.



## 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 both 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 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 one 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. The most common ones are the major churches of the valley, but there are a few 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):** Act as a courier 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 that of dealing with those who default on their loans or hunting down those who have stolen from the church. The church of Canduss takes theft very seriously.

**DUVAIN (god of strength):** Defend Duvain's Weal (and particularly the temples of Duvain therein) from predators, brigands, and other dangers.

The church of Duvain has less money than the other temples, but in Duvain's Weal they still possess a large amount of influence and many members.

**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.

**LUCIEL (ruler of the gods):** Inquisitors 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.

**LUMIERRE (queen of swords):** Defend followers of the church in need and protect the empire from any threats, internal or external.

The church of Lumierre employs a number of volunteer warriors (often 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.

**MAGELLIAN (god of knowledge):** Those priests who have joined the order of *Magellian'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.

**ZAKARVUS (god of death):** 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.

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

**QUICKPAW (the trickster):** The closest thing that *Quickpaw* has to a formal church is the criminal organization known as the *Gleaners*.

## 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 often be found in other cities, sometimes even running small organized 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.

**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 cavalymen. 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 Imperial Messengers, Prince Yulin will go to great lengths to see the documents returned and the perpetrators slain.

# 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.

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 +2 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. If forced to go without, you are also at -2 to all Brawn checks due to weakness and fatigue.

**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.

**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. Your Courage checks for resisting fear are all at -2. You cannot spend Focus to aid attack rolls unless you are cornered.

**DARK SECRET (-1 Point):** Your character has a difficult-to-conceal dark secret which will greatly impact their life if it ever gets out. They 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.

**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.

**DUTY (-1 Point):** Your character has a sense of loyalty and duty to a person or group who doesn't really give them anything back in return (for a more equitable arrangement, see the *Membership* Balanced Trait). This may entail you having to risk your life to protect them or being sent to run errands on their behalf.

**FORSAKEN (-2 Points, requires stats no better than Cleverness 0 and Magic -1):** Your character's innate magic is so weak that they are already partially feral. They tend to drop back to instinctive, animal-like behaviors when stressed. Any children that they have may well be completely mindless. Your Cleverness, Magic and Social Status ratings are all reduced by another point.

**GREEDY (-1 Point):** You are notoriously avaricious and hate to ever pass up an opportunity for personal gain. You

may be required to make a Courage check to pass up on treasure, even if it may be cursed or trapped.

**GRIM (-1 Point):** Your character rarely shows any cheer or happiness and always seems to be in a dark, grim mood. You are at -2 to most Carousing and Performance checks and any other skill tests that involve being outgoing.

**HONORABLE (-1 Point):** Your character always tries to keep their word and will not lie except in the direst of circumstances (and only when *other* lives are at stake, not your own). You are not prohibited from engaging in questionable behavior like attacking from ambush, but you can only use such dishonorable tactics against foes that you know would do the same thing 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 a minimal ability to read and write. If you take this flaw, then you lack even that.

*Illiterate* is generally not appropriate for characters with a social standing above Commoner but is very appropriate for ones at that level or below.

**LOW SOCIAL STANDING (-1 Point):** Your character's social standing has been seriously damaged by some sort of scandal, crime, unpaid debts or bad reputation which you should explain in your character's background. Your effective social status is always reduced by 2 points.

**NON-COMBATANT (-1 Point):** Unlike the typical PC, your combat skills are not yet honed (and perhaps never will be). Your Melee, Ranged and Thrown combat ratings are all reduced by 1.

**PHOBIA (-1 Point):** Your character has an unnatural fear of something (generally dating back to a traumatic encounter in their past). You have to make Courage checks to face it. If the source of your fear is frightening enough that normal characters have to roll Courage, then you'll have to spend a Hero Point to not automatically fail.

**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.

**SOFT-HEARTED (-1 Point):** Your character is readily moved by the suffering of others. For you, mercy and compassion is a compulsion rather than an option. If a foe might reasonably be a good person, you feel the need to give them the benefit of the doubt.

**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 very uncomfortable just entering ancient ruins. If forced to roll a Courage check to deal with something frightening that *also* triggers your Superstitious Flaw, you'll be at -2 to the roll.

**ZEALOT (-1 Point):** Your character is obsessed with a particular religion, nationality or other cause. They miss no opportunity to promote that cause and may end up giving it a bad name through their fanaticism. Pick your particular obsession when you take this Flaw.

# SKILLS

## AGILITY SKILLS

**ACROBATICS\*:** Jumping, climbing and general balance.

**CONTORTIONIST\*:** Squeezing through small openings, escaping bonds, and such. **Subtract** your *Brawn+Size* from this skill; it's much easier for small characters.

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

**RIDING:** Controlling a mount and staying in place while riding one. Not used very much by most mice, but essential for anyone who ever wants to ride a bird. Useless for rats.

**SAILING:** Skill at the various tasks involved in running a ship, keeping your balance in the riggings, and such.

**SPEED:** Putting on short bursts of speed to outrace foes, grab objects before someone else or seize the initiative.

**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:** Attending drunken revels and other festivals without overdoing it. A good way to make new friends.

**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 rough water.

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

## CLEVERNESS SKILLS

**ACTING:** Pretending to be something you're not. Often opposed by Psychology.

**CHARM:** Making friends and influencing people.

**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.

**NATURE:** Knowledge of animals and plants, their habits and where they are found.

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

**WORLD LORE:** Knowledge of modern kingdoms and their laws, languages and customs.

## PERCEPTION SKILLS

**ALERTNESS:** Noticing things going on around you or spotting specific details. Also used to find your way around in the dark. Often opposed by Stealth or Thievery.

**MEDICINE:** Diagnosing and treating illnesses, poisons and injuries.

**PSYCHOLOGY:** Appraising someone's hidden emotions or motivations. Often opposed by Acting.

**TRACKING:** Finding and following tracks. Opposed by Stealth over short distances or Wilderness over long ones.

**WILDERNESS:** Moving through the wilderness quickly, avoiding leaving tracks and finding food and shelter.

## MAGIC SKILLS

**SIXTH SENSE:** Your ability to sense impending danger or weird magical effects in your vicinity.

**COMPEL SPELL\*:** Magic that mentally influences the behavior of others.

**GUISE SPELL\*:** Magic that conceals and disguises things.

**SHAPING SPELL\*:** Magic that can reshape or repair objects by touch. Often used to heal wounds.

**SPARK SPELL\*:** Magic that conjures fire or light.

**TUG SPELL\*:** Magic that moves objects around without touching them.

**WHISPERS SPELL\*:** Magic that works through the spirit world. It can send mental messages, detect creatures in your vicinity or even predict the future.

**\*Spells are special skills that require you to purchase the matching Magical Power before taking them.**

## COMBAT RATINGS

*These special skills cannot be increased at character creation, but can be raised later. Each one depends on two separate stats instead of just one.*

**MELEE COMBAT (AGILITY+BRAWN):** Skill at fighting at close range, whether armed or unarmed. Covers both attacking and parrying, as well as blocking with a shield.

**THROWING (BRAWN+PERCEPTION):** Your skill at hitting the desired spot with a hurled item, whether trying to strike someone with a thrown weapon or carefully toss them something they need. You'll usually roll Speed when you want to *catch* such an item.

**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.

**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.

**COURAGE (BRAWN+CLEVERNESS):** Ability to resist fear (especially magical fear), as well as general willpower.

**LEADERSHIP (CLEVERNESS+PERCEPTION):** Skill at getting others to follow your lead and inspiring them to action. Also used to formulate effective combat tactics.

# MILITANT MICE

## 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.

### MELEE ATTACK ROLLS

The current character rolls their Melee skill while their chosen target rolls either Melee (to parry) or Dodge.

#### 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
- The difference between the attacker's Size and yours, if their Size is greater. Typically, this means that trying to parry the attack of a huge monster is quite difficult.
- 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)

**SUCCESS:** If the attacker rolls higher, the target is hit and takes appropriate damage, minus their armor rating.

**CRITICAL SUCCESS:** 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 the attacker. Which Bonuses you can claim will depend on what sort of weapon you are wielding. See the *Combat Bonuses* section.



**TIE:** On a tie, the first 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.

**FAILURE:** The attack misses. There is no effect.

**CRITICAL FAILURE:** You are left off-balance and lose your next action.

### THROWN WEAPON PROCEDURE

A thrown weapon uses similar rules, but with the following adjustments. The attacker uses their Throwing rating instead of Melee. If the defender chooses to parry, they do so at -4. On a Tie, the attacker hits for ½ normal damage (round up) instead of making a follow-up attack.

### RANGED WEAPON PROCEDURE

The current character rolls their Ranged skill while the target rolls Dodge. Ranged weapons cannot be parried at all. On a Tie, the attacker hits for ½ normal damage (round up) instead of making a follow-up attack.

#### 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
- Target is moving very little and not using cover: +2
- Target is not moving at all and has no cover: +4
- You are moving around a lot (particularly if trying to dodge or parry melee attacks while shooting): -2
- You are lying prone or braced in some fashion: +2, but -2 to Dodge melee attacks
- You take a full round of sitting still and just aiming before you attack: +1

## UNARMED COMBAT PROCEDURE

Mice are unsophisticated wrestlers and brawlers, but there's always the option of simply seizing a nearby foe and trying to overpower them.

### ESTABLISHING A HOLD

First, the attacker must make a Grab attack. This is a standard melee attack using at least one empty paw to try and seize hold of a foe's limbs, fur or other accessible area.

Note that when first attempting to grab a foe, you are at -2 to defend against them. If you try to grab a foe who has already attacked you this turn, you are at -2 to hit instead.

If you succeed, you will have gotten a grip on the target with at least one paw. On a Critical Success, you can grab them in a location where they are at -2 to hit you (if you were in front of them) or -4 (if you were behind them).

If you have grabbed someone and someone else attempts to hit you, you have a choice between taking a -2 to your defense rolls or releasing your hold.

### GRAPPLING MANEUVERS

To make a grappling attack on an already grabbed foe, the attacker spends their action rolling *Feats of Strength* against the target's defense, which will either be their own *Feats of Strength* (to resist with muscle power) or *Contortionist* (to resist by trying to wriggle free). On a successful roll, the attacker can choose a standard Grappling Maneuver to apply (crits can apply Universal Combat Bonuses). On a Tie you can retain your grip but there is no other benefit. On a Failure or worse, the attacker may be able to break free or reverse the hold, depending on what sort of defense they chose to use.

If you are only holding on to the target with one hand (perhaps the other is still holding a weapon) then your *Feats of Strength* rolls are at -2.

#### STANDARD GRAPPLING MANEUVERS

- Choke: the target takes 1d3 damage per round and cannot speak. A garrote changes this to 1d4+1 lethal damage instead. Does not work on foes whose Size is more than one larger than your own.
- Crush: the target takes 1d3+Brawn damage per round as you try to squeeze them to death. Does not work on foes whose Size is greater than your own.
- Pin: you pin the target so that they are momentarily helpless. You no longer need to roll, but can apply your roll for this round over and over again until they succeed in beating it or you choose to release them.
- Throw: 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.

#### DEFENSES

- Attempt to reverse the hold: this uses up your next action as the two of you struggle for dominance. Roll your own *Feats of Strength* against the attacker's roll. If you win, you have now grabbed them as well. Treat it as though you were the original attacker and apply a Grappling Maneuver to *them*.
- Attempt to break free: this uses up your next action as you struggle to break their grip. Roll *Feats of Strength* or *Contortionist*. If you succeed, the

attacker's grip is broken and you are free. If you critically succeed on this roll, you may take a normal action as well.

- Ignore them: if you have higher priorities than dealing with the person who has grabbed you, you can just ignore them. Roll *Feats of Strength* to oppose their roll; on a Critical Success you break free anyway.

#### SPECIAL GRAPPLING ACTIONS

- Attack a grabbed foe with a weapon in your other hand: make a regular melee attack at +2 to hit. If you have successfully grabbed them from behind, this bonus is +4 instead.
- Attempt to shake off attackers: usable as your action when one or more people have grabbed you. Roll *Feats of Strength*. This takes up your action, but 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.
- Attempt to slam a grappler into a wall or other obstacle: roll *Feats of Strength* vs their *Feats of Strength* or *Contortionist*. If you succeed, they take 1d3+Brawn 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.

#### GRAPPLING HUGE CREATURES

If you have grabbed a creature that is at least 2 points bigger than you, you're probably just barely hanging on rather than really hindering them. Using a weapon in your other hand is probably a better bet than trying any of the standard grappling maneuvers.

It may also be impossible to grab such a creature in an effective location unless you are jumping on them from above. Grabbing a huge creature around the ankles will give you a -4 to all *Feats of Strength* rolls... it will be quite simple for them to shake you off.

#### JUMPING ONTO A HUGE CREATURE

Roll Acrobatics (as a Jumping check) instead of Melee and add their Size to your chance to hit. They defend with their Dodge. If you miss you will fall short or go flying past them. If you succeed, you can grab them *or* make a single melee attack at +2 damage if you hit.

If you choose to use a weapon, you will automatically fall off afterwards unless you managed to score the *Impale* combat bonus (in which case you can remain hanging on to the weapon if you desire).

On the other hand, if you manage to jump on a huge creature's back from above, the GM may rule that you automatically get a superior position where they are at -4 to hit you... after all, it's hard to jump on a cat's back and *not* end up in a spot where it's hard for the cat to get you.

#### SCALING A HUGE FOE

If you have grabbed a huge foe by the ankles, tail or a similarly exposed spot, you still have another option. You can roll *Acrobatics* vs their *Feats of Strength* to try and scale the rest of the way up while they try to shake you off.

If you succeed, you can reach a spot where you are no longer penalized. On a Critical Success, you are able to reach their back (or another location of choice) and can hold on there.

## MILITANT MICE

# WEAPONS & ARMOR

## EXAMPLE MELEE WEAPONS

Each is listed with its cost category, standard damage, any special Bonuses it can claim and any additional notes. Melee damage usually includes the user's Brawn as well as a die roll. If a weapon lists something as Stat/Stat, then use the higher of the two stats when calculating damage. Some weapons are available in multiple quality categories.

- **Axe:** Common, Brawn+1d6, can be thrown  
Extra Bonuses: Hack
- **Battle Axe:** Expensive, Brawn+1d6+1, 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:** A thin sliver of metal with a hilt. Common, Agility/Brawn+1d4, +4 to conceal, can be thrown. Sometimes 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
- **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 brawling 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 the user's 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. +1 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 +6, Armor Penalty -4, Very Expensive. Very exhausting for mice to wear; at the end of every stressful activity like fighting or running, the user loses 1 Fatigue.

## EXAMPLE THROWN WEAPONS

Most thrown weapons are really melee weapons that are hurled at an opportune moment, but there are a few that are good for little else besides throwing.

- **Thrown Rock:** Crude, Brawn/Perception+1d3  
Extra Bonuses: Smash
- **Throwing Spike:** Thorn tips, sharpened stones or other small, sharp items that can be hurled at a foe's vitals. Crude, Perception+1d3, +6 to conceal  
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- **Throwing Blade:** Sharpened 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

These weapons fire small projectiles at great speed. The user's aim and ability to perceive small vulnerable spots on the target are more important than the force with which the projectile is hurled.

- **Sling:** Crude, Perception+1d4  
Extra Bonuses: Smash
- **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+1, +2 to hit but only fires every other round, requires Brawn +0 or better to reload  
Extra Bonuses: Impale
- **Heavy Crossbow:** Expensive, Perception+1d6+1d4, +2 to hit but only fires every third round, requires Brawn +3 or better just to crank it back up  
Extra Bonuses: Impale

## MILITANT MICE

# COMBAT BONUSES

## UNIVERSAL BONUSES

These Bonuses are available no matter what weapon you're using. Weapon-specific ones are generally more powerful, but you can always fall back on these. Note that you have to decide which Bonus you want *before* rolling damage.

**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.

**HIT HARD:** the target takes an extra +1d4 damage.

**STUN:** the target is at -2 to attack or defend until they spend an action recovering from being stunned. Stunning blows are not cumulative.

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

## WEAPON SPECIFIC BONUSES

These Bonuses are only available for certain types of weapons. If your chosen weapon doesn't list one of these, you can't claim it.

**GRAPPLE:** used when trying to grab a foe with a paw. You can immediately attempt a Grappling Maneuver (see *Unarmed Combat Procedure*) without using up your next action.

**HACK:** for edged weapons that can inflict devastating injuries. The target takes an extra +1d6 damage.

**IMPALE:** for piercing weapons that can stab right through a foe. Any damage that gets through their armor rating is *doubled*, up to a maximum bonus of +8. If this causes them to die or fall unconscious the weapon will remain stuck in their body, preventing the wielder from using it again until after they spend an action pulling it free.

With particularly large creatures (Size 6+) the weapon will remain stuck in them even if they don't die or pass out.

**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.

## MILITANT MICE

# DAMAGE & HEALING

## DAMAGE

Subtract the target's Armor Rating from the damage rolled. Any remaining points become wounds and reduce their Hit Points accordingly. When the target's Hit Points drop below 1, they must spend Focus or 1 Fatigue each round to avoid passing out and cannot regain Focus. Minor NPCs will pass out automatically.

When the target's Hit Points drop below -1, they must make a Death check. Roll 1d6... if they roll *below* the number of points that they have gone negative, they are dying and 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 and possibly much more wounded than that), they are slain outright.

Note that creatures with a positive Size get to include that with any actual armor worn. Creatures with a *negative* Size actually take extra damage from physical attacks. Tiny creatures like crickets and fleas are often quite easy to kill... if you can hit them.

## HEALING

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

### HEALING MODIFIERS:

- Someone (including you, if you're conscious) makes a successful Medicine check to tend your wounds: +1 (+2 on a Critical Success). If this was done using the *Tend Wounds* spell, add another +1.
- You are currently at negative Hit Points: -1
- You were *dying* or *dead* within the last day: -1
- You are sick or poisoned as well: -1 or worse
- Terrible conditions (dirty, filthy, little or no rest): -1
- Good conditions (closely tended by at least one person, access to hot soup and clean bandages): +1
- Great conditions (tended by lots of dutiful servants with access to curatives, perfumes, fluffy pillows and other pleasant frills): +2
- You spend a Hero Point to aid your recovery: +1d6

If your total 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 get infected and steadily worsen.

## DISEASE AND ILLNESS

**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.

**BLOOD FEVER:** this unpleasant and 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.



# ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

## 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 generally afford a scrap of soiled cloth with a hole for their head. The very wealthy purchase fancy clothes or jewelry that are Expensive items, 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 generally have servants following them to ensure that their silken embroidery does not actually touch the dirty ground and to retrieve any gemstones that happen to work their way free.

## RIDING BEETLES

Any of several breeds of strong and oversized 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. The males have large and ornate horns and are favored as mounts by the upper classes, while the females are smaller, unornamented, and generally used as beasts of burden. Riding beetles are quite strong and almost tireless, but very stupid.

Riding beetles are an Expensive item. They require some 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.

## 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 a 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 aided by magic to prevent them from reverting to wildness and their lairs require constant cleaning. Without such cleaning, wherever they are kept will quickly become so foul and filthy as to be hazardous to the health of anyone who enters.

## 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.

## 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. 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 master, 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 slavery. 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 striving to escape 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.

## 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. Since the lenses can normally only be created by skilled shaping magic, a spyglass is an Expensive item.

# 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 fits 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.

## 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 when they cannot finish off the target in person.

A character who receives a lethal dose of nightshade poison must make a VERY HARD (17) Endurance+Size roll every hour or suffer intense, debilitating pain and 1d4 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 *Heal Wounds* spell (see the *Shaping* section) cannot treat it.

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 are known only to the shapers of Morant Abbey in Jand, who guard the secret jealously. A staff made of whisperwood is an Expensive item.

# MAGICAL MICE

*Every truly sentient creature possesses some amount of innate magic, but in most this facility is vestigial and useless. Only those directly descended from the First Ones truly possess the magical prowess sufficient to 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 enchantments tend to be 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 legends claim that the First Ones possessed such godlike powers, PCs are rather more limited. Mages are often better at aiding and supporting their fellow adventurers 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.

Spells are not cumulative; only apply the strongest when you have overlapping or conflicting 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** rating and **Size** (normally zero).*

## TRIVIAL EFFECTS

Each art has a few trivial spells that are in common use. These are actions that require little exertion or skill and are the first things taught to apprentice mages.

Trivial effects are quite limited in both range and power. There are often regarded as mere tricks by actual mages. In play, trivial effects can be cast without rolling.

## SMALL MAGICKS

The next step up are the *Small Magicks*. These are minor magical feats that require some level of concentration and effort, but are not particularly complicated or powerful.

Small Magicks are easy to cast and most last as long as you devote some attention to maintaining them. Each Small Magick already being maintained makes casting additional spells a little harder.

To cast a Small Magick, the mage must roll the correct skill against *EASY* difficulty (8). If the spell affects a person, they may be allowed a resistance roll to notice.

Small Magicks are *always* defeated by direct opposition except against the weakest of foes, but subtle ones may affect a target without being noticed.

## LARGE MAGICKS

When the need is dire, however, a mage can throw the full force of their will into a *Large Magick*. These represent all-out efforts that sacrifice all subtlety and fine control for

overt force. They *can* overcome active resistance and thus can attack others directly, but they are also very draining.

Casting a Large Magick requires that the caster expend a minimum of 1 Fatigue. They are very draining and cannot be maintained unless their description states otherwise.

The basic difficulty of a Large Magick is *TYPICAL* (11) and the amount of power being thrown around makes fine control very difficult (double penalties for fine control).

## 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.

Whereas the basic spells can theoretically be mastered without a tutor or text, High Sorceries are vastly more complex. Without an instructor that already knows the procedure or a text that describes the rite in detail, they are nearly impossible to learn. Mages guard Sorceries closely, sharing them with only a trusted few. They are so complex, in fact, that if a mage were to forget part of the rite, they might find themselves 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.

Some High Sorceries can be maintained like Small Magicks; whereas others are like Large Magicks and require the mage's complete concentration... or simply can't be maintained at all. See each Sorcery's individual description.

High Sorceries are *HARD* tasks (difficulty 14) and always cost at least 1 Fatigue.

**Advantages** are special High Sorceries that alter other spells rather than being cast themselves.

**Enchantments** are spells bound into physical objects, making them largely independent from the caster. They don't require conscious effort to maintain (although having multiple existing at once is still draining) and the energies can be recalled at will at any range, ending the spell. If the caster dies, any Enchantments created with a Critical Success will remain intact; the others all fade away.

## COMMON SPELL-CASTING MODIFIERS

- Extra time and full concentration: +2
- Running, dodging or otherwise being very active: -2
- Affect a small group instead of a single target: -2
- Each Small Magick already being maintained: -1
- Each Large Magick or High Sorcery already being maintained: -2
- Each Enchantment maintained after the first: -1
- The caster wants finer control over the spell than normal or wants to vary its effects in a small way: -1 to -5 (beyond that, it's usually impossible)
- The target has the *Magic Resistance Power*: -4 (-2 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.*

## MAGICAL MICE

# COMPEL

The art of magically influencing the emotions and actions of others. These spells are all invisible to the naked eye, although the caster must generally at least raise a paw in the direction of the target or stare at them intently.

Those who fall prey to a subtle effect won't even realize that magic was used until it wears off... if they ever do.

### EXAMPLE TRIVIAL EFFECTS

**SLEEP TIGHT:** You can calm and soothe someone else's troubles, making it easier for them to calm down or fall asleep. If rolls are involved, this grants a +2 bonus.

**WAKE UP:** You can help a target to snap awake completely and feel refreshed. This can also remove penalties due to dizziness or drunkenness temporarily.

The target must be willing to cooperate with the caster in order to receive any benefit from a trivial Compel effect.

### EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

**ALTER MOOD:** You shift an unsuspecting target's mental state one step. This can do things like making an angry person calm, an alert person drowsy or causing a drowsy person to nod off. If you can maintain the spell for at least a few minutes without them realizing that something is amiss, the mood change tends to become self-sustaining. *Resisted with Leadership. Targets who **also** have appropriate flaws are at -4 to resist.*

This spell can't really force a target to do something that they wouldn't normally do, but it can often guide another character's behavior or grant the caster a +2 bonus to certain social checks.

**HESITATION:** You cause someone to feel unusually cautious and adverse to risk. This is principally used to forestall a fight by making someone who has not yet entered combat hesitate to do so. *Resisted with Courage.*

A target who is *expecting* a mental attack can automatically resist any Compel Small Magick.

### EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

**BACK OFF:** A strong, sudden urge to hold back or back away is forced onto the target. On a success, they spend their next combat action backing away (or running if their morale was already low). Unlike the Hesitation spell, this will work even on foes who are already in combat or are prepared for it. If this succeeds in *stopping* the fight entirely (i.e.- now that they've backed off, no one is fighting nearby), you can now maintain it as though it were the *Hesitation* Small Magick. *Resisted with Courage.*

If the target is within arm's reach when you use this spell on them, they are at -2 to resist.

**SUDDEN RUSH OF EMOTION:** This spell attempts to stagger a foe with an onrush of sudden emotion (your choice as to which emotion you're trying to invoke). If you succeed it generally at least costs them their next action; on a critical success (or a regular success if they were already inclined towards that particular emotion) they may also act irrationally for at least a round. *Resisted with Leadership.*

**LURE PREDATOR:** This spell attempts to convince a nearby predator that you are particularly small and tasty... but also that they should wait to attack you until they are absolutely confident that they'll succeed. It can be used to lead a monster towards or away from a particular spot, but it does leave the caster at risk. It can be maintained. *Resisted with Leadership.*

## COMPEL HIGH SORCERIES

**DIRECTED EMOTION (1 Point):** An improved form of the *Alter Mood* Small Magick that lets you focus the target's emotions towards a particular target (such as feeling anger or affection towards *you* instead of no one in particular).

This spell still just covers moods. You could make someone feel attracted towards you, but if they would normally spurn a person person that they found attractive for other reasons, this spell will not change that.

**MESMERIZE (2 Points):** Use *Alter Mood* not just to make an unsuspecting target drowsy, but to lull them in a light hypnotic trance, making them pliable (+4 to appropriate skill rolls) and vulnerable to post-hypnotic suggestions.

Naturally, this only works on unsuspecting foes who are already calm and unconcerned. They will wake up shortly after the spell ends, or as soon as someone disturbs them, but won't remember what they heard or said during it.

Mesmerism is not a mind-control spell. The target tends to enter into a semi-aware state where events around them simply don't seem important. This makes it relatively easy to get them to talk about subjects that they would normally avoid (+4 to any attempts to pump them for information) but won't make them divulge deeply guarded secrets. Similarly, post hypnotic suggestions can give them strange "whims" that they will tend to indulge unless they have a strong reason not to, but it can't make them go against their own nature.

**PARALYZE (1 Point):** This powerful effect lets the caster attempt to magically restrain a single foe, who must be within arm's reach. It basically establishes a psychic grappling hold on the target. If the spell "hits" then the caster has effectively grabbed the target with their mind. *Resisted with Courage.*

On an overwhelming success, the caster may also inflict damage upon the target by forcing their muscles into unnatural positions (treat this as though their spell-casting roll were a Wrestling attack). Each turn that the caster maintains the spell, the casting and resistance rolls should be remade; on a failure, the target breaks free.

**POTION OF ENCHANTMENT (Enchantment, 1 Point):** The caster has learned how to invest a specially prepared potion or other comestible with a predefined *Alter Mood* spell. The potion is good for a single use and takes effect upon whoever imbibes it, using the caster's original roll as the difficulty of resisting it. The target may resist with Sixth Sense vs the caster's roll to create the potion to realize that there is something wrong with the food that they are about to eat.

## MAGICAL MICE

# GUISE

The art of magically disguising an object's appearance with a shroud of illusion. Illusions are phantasmal auras that trick the mind of the viewer into interpreting whatever they are cast upon as something else, but they have no physical form of their own. If the disguised object changes form in a major way (like a disguised vase shattering), the illusion will be dispelled.

The -2 penalty for affecting a small group rather than a single target applies to exactly how many things you are disguising, not the number of people who witness them. If you do disguise more than one thing (such as wrapping yourself and two nearby friends in a Hide spell), the others must remain within range or the magical guise will fall away from them.

### EXAMPLE TRIVIAL EFFECTS

**PRESTIDIGITATION:** You can produce small, obviously fake illusions to entertain others. This often entails things like plucking coins out of thin air, making pebbles look like gemstones while you juggle them or making tiny 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 be able to tell that the images aren't real.

**DANCING LIGHTS:** You conjure up some small sparkles of illusion and send them wafting around the room as you direct. This can make a useful distraction or attract someone's attention silently, but like all trivial Guise effects, the sparkling lights are obviously not real.

### EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

**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 very different size or shape (-1 or worse). This illusion can be seen through automatically by anyone who inspects it closely, so watch out. *Technically resisted with Alertness, but it automatically fails against anyone who pays it serious attention.*

**HIDE:** You can disguise yourself as part of the landscape. So long as you remain still and do nothing to draw anyone's attention, no one will notice you. If you do make any readily visible movements, anyone watching will be able to perceive you from that point forward, but anyone else will not... unless that person points you out to them! *Resisted with Alertness, but only if they are searching the area. Anyone who knows where you are is immune.*

This spell *does* affect scent. They can track you to your current location, but there the trail will seem to end so long as you maintain this spell.

### EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

**ONRUSHING MONSTER:** You conjure an illusionary image of an onrushing giant predator and send it hurtling towards your foes. It only lasts a few seconds, but the illusion is very large and very fast and can be quite startling. If you succeed, they'll treat it as real for at least one full round. *Resisted with Courage. On a critical failure (or if they were already nervous), they may flee in terror.*

**VANISH:** You appear to vanish right before everyone's eyes, becoming effectively invisible for 3 full rounds. Anyone who fails to resist won't be able to detect you unless you do something to draw their attention (such as attacking them or knocking something over); you're advised to get out of everyone's line-of-sight before the effect ends. Unlike *Hide*, this can affect foes that are looking directly at you already. *Resisted with Alertness.*

## GUISE HIGH SORCERIES

**ENDURING DISGUISE (1 Point):** This spell crafts a *Disguise*-like spell that can stand up to close inspection. *Anyone examining the disguise resists with Alertness. Anyone not seriously examining the disguise merely sees the image that you crafted.*

**IMAGINARY FAMILIAR (1 Point):** 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.

Your imaginary companion *is* aware of its environment and can offer you advice or warnings. It can stand guard while you are asleep, waking you up with a shout if danger approaches. You have a fair bit of control over its appearance and manner, but it is an independent creature once created. You can only have one imaginary familiar at a time, but once successfully cast it will remain at your side until you choose to 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 who use this spell may benefit from a lot of early warnings and rarely get lonely, but they also acquire a reputation for talking to themselves.

**HALLUCINATION (1 Point):** 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 once they realize that it's a hallucination. *Resisted with Leadership.*

**INVISIBILITY (2 Points):** This improved version of the *Hide* spell allows you to move without breaking the enchantment. As before, doing something to attract someone's attention will enable them to see through it.

**PERMANENT DISGUISE (Enchantment, 1 Point):** You have learned how to lay a semi-permanent *Disguise* spell over an inanimate object. This is often used on things like doorways to disguise them as blank rock. The caster can see through it automatically, as can anyone else who has been shown its true nature.

## MAGICAL MICE

# SHAPING

*The art of magically sculpting an object into a new form or restoring damaged material to its original state. This is one of the best arts for a mage who wants to make a living at magic; it combines well with craft or medicine skills.*

*Shaping spells often require a separate skill check to produce a useful effect. If you roll a Critical Success on casting the spell, any secondary skill check is at +4. Unlike most spells, Shaping effects only work on targets within arm's reach and often have to be maintained for several minutes to produce their full effect. On the other hand, very few Shaping effects are actually resisted; most will simply work if you manage to cast the spell.*

### EXAMPLE TRIVIAL EFFECTS

**SOOTH PAIN:** You can cause a small wound or sore spot to stop hurting by touching it and concentrating. This is not potent enough to heal even a single hit point, but is good at getting small children to stop crying.

It's also very popular with people who have hangovers. Among many nobles, this is the only magical effect that they'll deign to learn.

**COSMETIC REPAIR:** You can magically repair small dents or scratches in a material, or magically "glue" a small broken object back together.

This cannot repair really strong or badly damaged materials, but it could certainly repair a ceramic teacup or something similar.

### EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

**TEND WOUNDS:** By spending several minutes soothing and restoring the target's wounds, you can make a Medicine check to tend to their wounds *and* increase the number of hit points that they will heal by +1. Don't forget that on a critical success on casting the spell, you'll get a further +4 to that Medicine roll.

**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.

**WATER-DANCING:** By gesturing at a nearby pool of liquid, you make it rise up and dance between various shapes at your command. This is often used with the Performance skill to entertain onlookers.

As soon as you stop maintaining the spell, however, the material reverts to its normal liquid state and loses any shape that you imposed upon it.

### EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

**HEAL WOUNDS:** This spell allows the caster to perform a magical form of surgery upon a living subject. It generally takes at least 5 minutes to perform and can take hours.

Basically, the caster is reaching inside the target's body and restoring it to its proper form with their mind.

Make a Medicine check; a regular success heals 1d6 wounds, a Critical Success 2d6. A failure only heals 1 wound and a botch *inflicts* 1. Dying characters add a -4 penalty to the Medicine check; *dead* characters cannot be healed at all. It cannot repair damage from poison or illness. Maintaining it requires complete concentration.

**SHATTER:** You attempt to tear a target apart from the inside. This inflicts 1d6+Magic damage (2d6+Magic on a Critical Success) on the target, which must be within arm's reach. Living targets subtract their Brawn+Size from the damage done; inanimate objects take double damage. *Living targets can resist with Dodge to avoid your shattering touch.*

**PROTECT MATERIAL:** You can protect an object from damage by touching it and devoting your full concentration to shielding it from harm. The object must be sitting still, making it difficult to use in combat, but it's good for stopping someone from bashing down your door! While you maintain this spell, the target material receives your Magic x 2 in armor (x3 on a Critical Success).

## SHAPING HIGH SORCERIES

**CURE ILLNESS (1 Points):** You have learned how to not just heal visible wounds, but also the subtle damage done by poison or disease. The exact effects vary according to the time of illness that you're trying to treat... in general, if it's the sort of thing that the subject *could* get better from on their own, then you can cure it permanently. Otherwise you generally only reduce the symptoms for a few hours.

**PROTECT SELF (1 Point):** By devoting your full concentration to it, you can now throw the equivalent of a *Protect Material* spell on *yourself*. Since you can't perform other 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.

**REVIVE (Advantage, 1 Point):** You no longer suffer a -4 penalty for trying to heal the dying. You can also attempt to revive someone who has been "dead" for up to a minute. The truly dead, however, are still beyond your power.

**SHAPE METAL (2 Points):** Sculpt metals, 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, 1 Point):** You have learned how to extend the effects of the Shaping spell and can now perform Shaping spells at range.

**WATER BREATHING (1 Point):** You have learned how to 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.

**PHYSICIAN'S TOUCH (Advantage, 1 Point):** You can study an object's internal structure when you use Shaping on it. This can be combined with Medicine to diagnose a problem (add +4 for a regular success, +6 for a Critical), with Thievery for lock-picking attempts, et cetera. If you cast normal healing spells, add +1 to the amount healed.

## 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.*

*Spells that produce pure light do not produce any heat, but rather make a cold light like that of the Aurora Borealis.*

### EXAMPLE TRIVIAL EFFECTS

**LIGHT CANDLE:** With a gesture, you light a candle or similarly easily lit object that is within arm's reach. This may save several minutes of fiddling with flint and tinder, but can't start a fire in anything other than ideal conditions.

**CANDLE-LIGHT:** The mage cups a small spark of mage-light within their hands, about as bright as a single candle-flame. If the mage places the candle-light somewhere, it will sit there until he reclaims it or something snuffs it out.

### EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

**IGNITE FLAME:** Conjure a small ball of fire (about as large as the flame of a small torch) that floats about at your direction. This can provide some light but also igniting any readily flammable materials. Stubborn combustibles (like damp wood) may require that the spell be maintained for several rounds before they catch fire. You can try to set a foe's fur or garments alight but the effect is too slow and weak to harm a moving or alert target.

**MAGE-LIGHT:** Conjure a small, floating sphere of light that glows brightly like a modern light-bulb. This can be carried in a paw or directed to move around at a walking pace. The sphere is normally white, but a specific color can be specified at -2 to the roll.

**GLOWING AURA:** Shroud a person or object in mage-light. This can make them easy to target at night or possibly more intimidating, but doesn't produce any more illumination than a normal mage-light spell.

### EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

**BLINDING FLARE:** The mage conjures a concentrated spark of mage-light which puts all of its energy into a single burst of light brighter than the sun. Anyone who was looking towards the flash may be blinded for the next 1d3 rounds (on a critical failure, 1d3+2 rounds). In areas of darkness where people's eyes have already adjusted to the lack of light the resistance check is at -2 (for dim lighting) or -4 (for complete darkness). *Resisted with Alertness.*

**DAYLIGHT:** The mage conjures a brilliant sphere of mage-light that can light up an area as brightly as the noonday sun. This spell can be maintained.

**FIREBALL:** The mage hurls a concentrated spark of fire which burns brightly for a few moments and then explodes in a burst of flame. Anyone within 2 paces of the target point may be burnt by the searing flame. This inflicts 1d6+Caster's Magic damage (if they critically fail, they take 2d6+Magic instead). On a success, they still take ½ damage from the blast; only on a critical success do they manage to duck the blast entirely. *Resisted with Dodge.*

Anyone who takes at least 3 points of damage from this attack will probably have their fur catch fire and will continue to take 1 point of damage per turn until they

spend an action batting it out. Mindless animals will tend to be terrified by fire and will often flee even if unharmed.

Note that the caster is not in any way immune to their own fireball! If this spell is used in close quarters, the mage may take damage as well. If the caster wants to be especially careful about where the ball explodes, they should also roll Ranged Attack to target the spell correctly.

**WALL OF SPARKS:** The mage raises a wall of mage-light that rushes out from them or dances in the air according to their wishes. These bright lights can be quite distracting and make it very difficult to see what's happening on the other side. This spell can be maintained.

## SPARK HIGH SORCERIES

**ENCHANTED WEAPON (Enchantment, 1 Point):** You can craft an enchantment into a weapon such that it is constantly surrounded by an aura of flame (or electrical charges, if you know the *Lightning* sorcery). This adds a damage bonus equal to the caster's Magic trait.

**EXTENDED SPARK (1 Point):** Craft a maintainable Trivial or Small Magick *Spark* effect that lasts for as many days as your roll without being maintained.

**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.*

Creating shadows adds a +2 bonus to stealth attempts in the effected area. Icy chills can freeze materials or inflict damage equivalent to a fire-based attack.

**LIGHTNING (1 Point):** Conjure a powerful electrical arc that can stun or kill a nearby foe. This inflicts 1d6+Magic damage (2d6+Magic on a Critical Success) on a single target. If they take any damage from this attack, they must also roll Endurance+Magic vs your roll or fall down stunned for 1 round. *Resisted with Dodge at -4.*

If you take this Sorcery, you can also cast a new Small Magick: *Static Charge*. This delivers a strong shock to a target within arm's reach. It can kill extremely small creatures like fleas, but against another mouse it just startles them and makes their fur stand on end. *Resisted with Dodge if they try to avoid being touched.*

**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 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 it 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 location, 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 will be ended.

## MAGICAL MICE

# TUG

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

### EXAMPLE TRIVIAL EFFECTS

**FLOATING COIN:** The mage can take a coin or similarly small object in their hand and let it go in mid-air. It will float there until someone pulls on it or the mage ceases to maintain this spell.

**ANIMATE DOLL:** The mage inserts a telekinetic tendril into a small, flexible object like a doll and makes it move at their command. The object must remain within arm's reach of the caster and they must concentrate to move it, otherwise it falls limp again. It must also be quite small, no larger than doll-sized.

Some mages use this effect with the Performance skill to put on magically-animated puppet shows for audiences, especially amongst the upper classes.

### EXAMPLE SMALL MAGICKS

**NUDGE:** You subtly attract or distract someone's attention by nudging them or tugging on their garments with an invisible force. The direction that they feel the nudge coming from can be whatever the mage chooses, so this spell makes an excellent distraction. Not resisted.

**TELEKINESIS:** Extend an invisible tendril of telekinetic energy which can lift and carry small objects around without touching them. The basic level of control is about the same as if the object were tied to the end of a stick; any control more precise than that will incur hefty penalties to the roll. The object continues to float as long as the spell is maintained, but it takes direct concentration to make it move. The tendril has an effective Brawn rating equal to the caster's Magic-5. Resisted with *Feats of Strength* if the caster attempts to grapple someone with it.

**ANIMATE ROPE:** This version of the *Animate Doll* effect is simply larger and more effective. One common use is to animate a coil of rope and send it slowly snaking up a tree or wall and tie itself in a knot at a secure point. If any kind of struggle occurs, the animated object has an effective Brawn rating equal to the caster's Magic-5. The object animated must still be small enough that the typical mouse could lift it with one hand.

### EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

**HURL:** As part of casting the spell, the caster hurls an object with their paw. If the spell succeeds, they can add their Magic rating to their effective Brawn rating for their to-hit and damage rolls (treat their base Brawn as being zero if it was negative). The spell can also hurl a nearby object without touching it, but in that case their effective Brawn rating is only their Magic rating. The attack is otherwise resolved normally.

**SHOVE:** The caster attempts to shove a foe away from them with a burst of telekinetic force. This shove has an effective Brawn equal to the caster's Magic+5, so it is quite powerful and can often hurl foes backwards. If the target is running or otherwise in an unstable position, this spell can

also be aimed at their feet to trip them... the casting roll is then at -2, but if it still succeeds the target resists at -4 to avoid tripping. *Resisted with the Feats of Strength skill.*

**DEFLECT MISSILE:** The caster prepares a telekinetic tendril with which they can try to bat incoming projectiles out of the air. So long as they maintain this spell, they can roll Tug to try and deflect an incoming missile instead of dodging or blocking it. This defense can be used against multiple missiles in the same round, but each roll after the first is at a cumulative -2 penalty.

This spell cannot stop truly large projectiles, such as those from siege engines or falling boulders.

**SOFT LANDING:** The mage throws all of their energies into stopping their or someone else nearby's fall. Subtract twice the caster's Magic rating from any falling damage. On a Critical success, subtract three times their Magic rating.

## TUG HIGH SORCERIES

**ANIMATE OBJECT (Enchantment, 1 Point):** You have learned how to animate an object (usually a large doll) by binding a sort of "familiar spirit" to control it. This animated object cannot be larger than mouse-sized.

While the spirit obeys the caster's commands, it also has its own personality. The caster decides what *sort* of personality when the spell is cast, but thereafter cannot control what it does when it isn't acting under orders.

The animated object's Agility and Brawn added together cannot exceed the mage's Magic rating. Similarly, its Cleverness and Perception ratings added together cannot exceed the mage's Magic rating, either.

**FINE MANIPULATION (1 Point):** Telekinetically grasp and move an object with great precision. This works much like the *Telekinesis* Small Magick, but you can manipulate the object as though you were holding it in your paws without penalties. You can theoretically choke or restrain someone with this power, but your effective Brawn rating is still only your Magic-5.

If used to help pick a lock or something similar, add a +4 bonus for a regular success and a +6 for a Critical Success.

**LETHAL ARROW (Enchantment, 1 Point):** The caster binds an enchantment into an arrow, crossbow bolt, dart or similar small projectile. When flung with great force, the spell increases its velocity further. Add the caster's Magic rating to any damage done. Once the item is used once, the enchantment ends. This spell cannot be used on melee weapons or larger projectiles.

**LEVITATION (1 Point):** You have learned how to use *Tug* to float slowly through the air at a walking pace. You must remain near a solid surface that you can transfer your weight to; you cannot move more paces away from a sturdy surface than the number you rolled. *Subtract the caster's own Brawn+Size from their casting roll.*

**SHIELD (2 Points):** This is a superior form of the *Deflect Missile* Large Magick which erects an invisible bubble of magical force to block incoming missiles. There is no cumulative penalty for trying to deflect more than one projectile and any missile that *does* make it through the shield subtracts the caster's Magic rating from the damage done. It still can't deflect very large missiles such as boulders, but the target does still get to subtract the caster's Magic rating from the damage done.



## MAGICAL MICE

# WHISPERS

*The art of interacting with the whispers of magic that fill the world around you. This is probably the broadest and most poorly understood magical art. It deals with the spirit world and the ways in which that world overlaps with the mortal realm. It is always invisible to the naked eye.*

### EXAMPLE TRIVIAL EFFECTS

**MYSTIC MESSAGE:** Whisper a short message to someone in line of sight or whose location is otherwise known. They will hear you as a faint whisper in the air.

**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

**SCRY:** Search your surroundings for anything alive or magical that matches the simple criteria you set. Examples: ongoing spells, a particular person you know, members of a particular race, or anything alive. You can sense the location of anything detected so long as you maintain the spell (even if it moves out of your normal range). *Sixth Sense can tell you if you are being Scried.*

**EXAMINE SPELL:** Analyze an ongoing spell or magical charm to determine its nature and effects.

**SEE WITHOUT SIGHT:** You close your eyes and gain the ability to 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 sometimes use this spell as a substitute for regular vision.

Invisible spirits and powerful spells show up as blurry, glowing images. If you open your eyes, your normal vision replaces this mystic vision until you close them again.

**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.

**SEE THROUGH:** The mage touches an opaque object and concentrates on this spell, causing it to become transparent to the mage's eyes. This can even see through solid rock to a distance equal to the mage's Magic rating in feet.

### EXAMPLE LARGE MAGICKS

**BROADCAST:** Effectively you shout out a mental message that is heard by everyone in the area (you can get pickier and restrict it to certain types of people by taking a -2 penalty to your roll). Unfortunately, while you can maintain this spell to continue speaking, no one can reply through it. Maintaining it 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. *It is resisted with Leadership.* If it succeeds, 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.

## WHISPER HIGH SORCERIES

**ASTRAL JOURNEY (2 Points):** The mage's spirit leaves their body behind and observes the real world from the spirit world as a ghost. They travel at a walking speed but are invisible and intangible to mortal creatures. Magical creatures can harm the caster's mortal flesh as though it were present. If they wish to engage a spirit in combat in the spirit world, their effective Brawn is their Magic rating and their effective Agility is their Cleverness.

If you are very familiar with a location or a person (e.g.- your home or a close friend), you can have your spirit appear in that area or that person's vicinity instead. Two mages both on an *Astral Journey* may meet and converse normally and can even harm each other. Engaging in combat in the spirit world is quite dangerous, however, as spilling blood there draws in predatory spirits.

**DARK PRAYER (Free):** Bargain with the dark gods that inhabit the murky depths of the spirit world. A successful agreement can produce magical effects beyond the power of modern magic, but always at a terrible cost. This kind of Sorcery is banned everywhere, but there are always spirits willing to whisper the secret of doing it to any mage willing to listen. *See the **Forbidden Rites** section.*

It can also bargain with lesser spirits such as Frostmice or Ghuls, which is still quite hazardous. As a general rule, a successful casting will connect you with the entity in question, but a critical success gives you a better bargaining position. Botches result in terrible disasters.

**FAMILIAR SPIRIT (1 Point):** Establish a permanent link with a small, unintelligent animal (small by mousy standards, which generally means nothing larger than a dragonfly). It becomes your familiar until it dies or you choose to end the spell. If you have more than one, you suffer a -1 to all spell-casting checks per additional spell.

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

**IMMORTAL BLADE (Enchantment, 1 Point):** The caster binds magic into a weapon such that it adds the caster's Magic rating to any damage done against spirit creatures. The enchantment has no additional effect on living foes or inanimate objects. The caster can sense whenever the weapon has struck a spirit creature.

**MIND-RIDING (1 Point):** Create a link between you and a living target so that you can see and hear using their senses instead of your own, at will. This is easily broken by an uncooperative foe, but it is subtle and may not be noticed. *Unwilling targets resist with Sixth Sense.*

Maintaining this spell requires complete concentration and blocks out all sights and sounds around your real body.

## 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 in well with the spell's central theme.
2. It doesn't infringe on a different spell.
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 EFFECTS

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 or 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 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 the power is something that *lots* of mages would have been using in the setting if they could, it should probably be a High Sorcery 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.

**ENCHANTMENTS:** Enchantments are a special kind of High Sorcery that last until the caster chooses to dispel them, without needing to be maintained. They can also be separated from the caster by any distance if need be. As a general rule, the first casting of a given enchantment incurs no penalty, but maintaining more than one of them incurs a cumulative -1 penalty to all spell-casting rolls.

**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.

## MAGIC VERSUS MAGIC

A mage can attempt to stop another mage's spell by using the same skill to unravel their spell. This is handled as 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 treated as 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 can't counter it, either.

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 given counter-effect is a Trivial Effect, Small Magick, Large Magick or High Sorcery is up to the GM. Consider how much effort it cost the the creature to create the effect and how powerful you want it to be considered.

For example, creating enough heat 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 of heat that the 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.



# A Brief History of HYPERBOREA

## The Forgotten Age:

The entire valley of Hyperborea was settled and 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 carvings and the buildings that they made, the Tzarchul were physically something 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.

## The Arrival of the First Ones:

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 *Fallows*, 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:

But many dangers abounded. Predators slew many of the First Ones, as they were woefully ignorant of the many 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 and rats.

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 much more 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 almost all of them to the grave and restoring the dominance of mice in the *Fallows*.

## The Founding 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 decided to go 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 *Fallows* 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 *Dusar*. *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 Rise 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 *Dusar*. The kingdoms of *Lakeshore* and *Grennendell* 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 *Fallows* 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 by some 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 *Fallows*.

The Emperor of *Muscala* 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.

## Modern Times

In the end, *Muscala* sued for peace and withdrew her armies to better quiet her rebellious subject kingdoms, but the damage had been done. The Empire has entered a period of decline. They have 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.

# 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 lush, fertile fields on the western shore and rockier, harsher soil on the east. Those lush fields of the West are known as the Fallows and it is there that most adventures in **Hyperborean Mice** are 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 and practical stone walls of the early emperors to the huge and ornate vaulted ceilings and opulent works of art favored by more recent rulers. The largest part of the palace 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. Even more decadent 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 carved 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.
- Prince Lumien: the emperor's nephew and head of the Imperial Cavalry. Lazy and indolent, but very prideful.



*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 cavalrymen 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.

## 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. The locals are quick to invent 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 the wealthier mice dwelling in the upper ramparts and the impoverished eking out a living in the reeking tunnels beneath her. The ground level is dominated by innumerable shops and merchants. Raw materials are carted to her 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 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. They maintain 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 thieves who attract the wrong sort of attention.

The trademark of the Paw is a black paw-print on the body of their victims, usually across the face. This makes it very clear to the world that this unfortunate ran afoul of the Paw, rather than some *ordinary* murderer. Fear of the Paw keeps the common Gleaners in line.

They are a very secretive organization. They enforce the dictates of the bosses of the Gleaners but also operate 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 proves difficult to find, the word goes out that they have been marked for death. From that point forward, 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 city running the way that the nobles like it. 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 and 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 inside of 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 the tree, which must have dwarfed even the enormous trees of Rookwood.

Farms and small villages surround the city. Almost all of the 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.

### TITAN'S BRIDGE

The Titan's Bridge marks the southernmost corner of Duvain's Weal; to the south lies the Forbidden Lands and to the east lies the Greatwater lake. The massive, algae-encrusted wooded structure isn't really a bridge as such, although the locals refer to it as such. Actually, it appears to be a long abandoned wooden dock of titanic scale.

Many locals say that when the fog rises on Greatwater you can reach the mystical city of the Titans by walking out to the end of the dock, but this is probably just superstition.

### 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 sometimes their lives, if they don't seem able to defend themselves.

#### Notable People and Places in the Nettles:

- Bartow: this 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 diviner. She lives in a little fortified burrow in 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 particularly 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 Rookwood 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 Rookwood 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 Rookwood 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 Rookwood, 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-worshiping tribes of Rookwood 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 the Great Library, which is reputed to have 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.

### 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.

The current ruler of the Lakeshore territories is the elderly and feeble King Leonas Watercrest, a mouse inordinately fond of extraordinarily expensive drugs imported from Fashar. Instead, most major policy decisions are made by his favorite sycophant, the endlessly inventive sadist Duke Ferrik. Even the upper classes are not entirely immune to Ferrik's "amusements", as he is not above producing false evidence of treason when someone has offended him.

While some of the nobles of Muscala do 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 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 widely feared overlord of Mistmoor, he lives outside the city in a well-guarded estate. The field in front of his home is known as *Ferrik's Forest* because the many impaled corpses there are numerous enough to seem like a forest grove.
- Hellmaw: the waters near Mistmoor are the realm of a particularly fearsome predator, the mysterious beast known as Hellmaw. If a small boat vanishes without a trace, it is often blamed on the depredations of this dark creature. Hellmaw does not trouble larger ships, but seems to devour a few fishermice each season.
- Southridge: to the south of the city proper is a large boulder that has been carefully carved and shaped over the years to contain many small shelters. During the rainy season, the poorer inhabitants of Mistmoor often retreat there until the water level goes down again. Unfortunately, since hardly anyone uses Southridge during the dry season, the caves are often infested with spiders or even shrews or small snakes by the time that they're needed again.
- Lady Castilla: this elderly white mouse runs the dockyards and collects the various mooring fees. Smugglers often slip her a bribe to avoid inspections.

## 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 falling to his death from the battlements 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 beauteous 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 beauteous First One, Jandara, this realm prizes art, beauty and disarming wit. Her leaders are famed for preferring flattery, negotiation and diplomacy to outright 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 generally willing to skip a few meals if it means wearing a tunic with some embroidery instead of being plain.

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.



### 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.

## 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 largesse.
- 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 completely.

Most of the older mines were abandoned because they were no longer profitable, but the ancient gem-mine of Goldbreak was closed for darker reasons. When they dug into a hidden underground chamber, 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 undead 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 carved 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 work 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. Its 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 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 being 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 in this area, lest they be swept away, but it is a risky endeavor. Most of the pirates in this region 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

There is an area in the southern Fallows that is accursed and avoided by all but the most foolish. Its borders are marked with wooden posts carved with eerie runes and the skulls of birds are often strapped to the top. Each post is a warning carved by local mice and marks the first spot from which one can see the distant, looming outline of the dreaded Citadel of the Titans. Entering the Forbidden Lands is illegal and prohibited without the express permission of the Emperor of Muscala, but the military never bothers to enforce this restriction. There is no need. The Citadel of the Titans guards its own secrets.

## 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 a huge building, gigantic behold all comprehension and dwarfs the many trees that obscure it. Physically it appears to be much like the wooden houses of Haven, but on a vastly larger scale.

Pigeons are seen upon its roof on occasion, but crows avoid it, fearing something they cannot put a name to. Strange lights are sometimes seen in the vast windows and some souls claim to have seen vast, shadowy figures moving around it on moonlit nights, but the truth of the matter is unknown. None have approached it closely enough to see for sure and returned to tell of it.

Scribes and historians argue over the specifics, but it is clear that either the First Ones or the Titans themselves erected some unspeakable curse over the region. Most expeditions into the area simply vanish without a trace. Divinations reveal nothing and even the most potent spells are said to dissolve like mist in the vicinity of the Citadel. 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 more approachable. Though well 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 great 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 may be able to spot the distant glint of water in the depths if the sun is overhead, but otherwise the well appears empty of anything save moss and weeds growing on the sides. An ancient, rotting wooden arch rises over it which may have once supported a rope and bucket or something similar, but any such contrivances have long ago fallen into the depths below.

A few souls claim to have climbed down into the depths, reporting that the well opens up into a vast and partially flooded underground cavern. There are rumors of an underground civilization living in those caves, but so far no reliable evidence has ever been brought up back to the surface, but more than one group of intrepid explorers have vanished without a trace in its eerie depths.

## ROOKSWOOD

The northern expanse of the valley is dominated by the tall, grim trees of Rookswood. This region 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 known as Murkwater, while to the west the trees slowly become smaller and sparser until it merges with the Wildlands. No one is certain exactly how far the woods extend to the north, but ancient maps claim that it runs all the way into the mountains.

Today Rookswood is dominated by the dread great horned owl, Hoorooru, and his many children. These owls are fully intelligent and are often capable of both speech and magic. A few foxes and weasels haunt the woods as well, but the locals mostly fear the owls and the snakes which slither through the underbrush.

There *are* small colonies of mice here, but they tend to be 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, 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, sacrificial 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.

Wise mice stay out of the water here. Not only is the algae-covered murk home to virulent fevers, there are many serpents and other dangers. The leeches, in particular, are sometimes unnaturally aggressive, swarming over unwary swimmers like piranha.

## 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 tend to 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 ruins in the Fallows have been thoroughly explored and looted already... except for the ones here.

The barbarian clans hold them as sacred and say that unspeakable horrors may be unleashed if they are disturbed. Many are used as homes by snakes, making even the least superstitious hesitate to enter them. But since there are tales of explorers finding caches of huge jewels or golden ornaments in these old ruins, adventurers still come to the Wildlands seeking 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 fables claim that some of the First Ones fled from the war against the cats and hid in the underworld rather than remain on the surface. 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 and rats 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 eventually 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. There they are judged. If found worthy, one of the First Ones will call out their name and invite them into their household. It is said that 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 most theologians, *all* of the First Ones who survived the war against the Cats became gods, but they are ruled over by the mightiest among their number... which happen to include all of 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 which still exist are regarded as *true* deities. Worship of any "uncredited" First One brings the danger that they might actually be a demon masquerading as a god... or at least that is how the major churches are liable to 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 generally questioned. 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 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 acolytes 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 a luxurious life in sumptuous quarters decorated with gold and jewels... all for the honor of the god they serve. One would not expect a deity's earthly representative to live in squalor, would one?

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 is believed to directly control the weather and the seasons, laying down the laws which the very elements must obey. According to church doctrine, the other gods are also subordinate to his authority and thus the other temples are expected to behave in a subordinate manner to Luciel's church... at least according to the priests of Luciel. Other temples often disagree but are careful not to arouse the ire of the armies of Muscala.

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.

The 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 directing their political and military might on their behalf. 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 tend to 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.

Physically, the temples are arranged like nunneries... the acolytes and priestesses live on the temple grounds away from outsiders. Public worship ceremonies are only held on special occasions, so for the most part they remain undisturbed. In many ways, a temple of Lumierre is more 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 try to 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 acolytes, with exceptions being made only in isolated and far-flung locations. Her followers tend to be staunch traditionalists, and regard non-mice as second-class citizens. Swordsmaids 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 as well.

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.

## CANDUSS THE METHODICAL

Canduss is the goddess of planning, finance and commerce. She is depicted as a female royal mouse 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 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.



## 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 generally arranged as abbeys with cloistered monks and nuns acting as scribes and libraries for the temple's accumulated knowledge. Texts and maps are often 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 to be copied 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 themselves cloaked in mystery and are often designed to be 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 in 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 Cats (they had always been slaves prior to that). Her depictions are always of 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.

The temples often host great ceremonial dances and sell flowers that are said to carry the blessing of the goddess. Expectant parents often 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 in some fashion, 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 Jandara are usually surrounded by flowering plants carefully tended by her priesthood. Beautiful statues and other works of art are also commonplace. 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 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 and often marry quite well.

The church officially tries to stay out of political struggles, always maintaining an appearance of benign neutrality even when they are secretly encouraging one side over the other. Their behind-the-scenes influence is very strong, however, as former Maidens often become the wives of powerful figures or powerful figures in their own right. The current Empress, the beautiful Messalina deJand is a former Maiden of Summer.

**JANDARA'S DAY:** a romantic holiday in the spring season somewhat similar to Saint Valentine's Day. Male mice are expected to 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. Well-off areas host dances or feasts and many betrothals are announced on this date.

## 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 said to be 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. The 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 murmurings 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.

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 generally 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 often worn by his followers for good 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.

# A WORLD OF MICE

## 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.

## FALLING DAMAGE

One side effect of this scale is that falling simply isn't as dangerous for a mouse as it is for a human.

A falling creature takes  $1d3+Size$  damage and 1 Fatigue per 10 feet fallen, to a maximum of  $5d3+Size*5$  (an average of 10 points and 5 Fatigue). Note that rat characters, being larger, are actually in a little more danger, taking  $1d3+1$  damage per 10 feet instead of  $1d3$ . Armor does not apply against this damage; in fact, your Armor Rating is *added* to it.

Naturally, the damage done 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 double the damage done.

It should also be noted that 10 feet is a vastly larger distance for a mouse than for a human. A mouse who falls from the tallest tree in the forest may well limp home; a human would probably die.

## THE CHANGING SEASONS

The mice in the Fallows count the passage of time in seasons, rather than years. Each season is appropriate for a different sort of adventure, so they are 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. Wedding 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.

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 mostly 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 them. Most marriages are performed during this season as well.

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.

### 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 to last the winter months.

The loss of a food-store during the fall can mean the end of a township. Without sufficient time to replace that grain, starvation during the winter months becomes quite possible.

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.

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.

### 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.

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 most of each summer and fall accumulating stores of food to last out the winter months now finally get to eat them.

Winter adventures tend to involve local intrigue. In tight quarters, theft and murder become more commonplace. Any unresolved tensions between different groups tend to 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.

# A MUNDANE 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.

Players should not confuse intelligence for empathy; to a predator, talking mice and rats are tasty snacks, not potential friends! Any intelligence that they have acquired will generally be turned towards finding better ways to catch and devour the PCs.

Predators which have devoured at least one of the ancient *First Ones* sometimes acquired not only impressive levels of intellect, but magical powers. Specific examples of these creatures can be found in the chapter ***Dark Demons and Legendary Horrors***.

## ANTS

Most ants are harmless unless characters openly threaten their mound. However, the ants of 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.

Wise travelers avoid ants when they can. Individually they are generally small enough that even a mouse could 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 honey is actually quite valuable, so sometimes brave or foolish mice will concoct schemes to liberate some of it from a hive.

Harvesting honey 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 something goes wrong.

## BEETLES, RIDING

While ordinary beetles are occasionally killed for food or as pests, 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.

## 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.

## CENTIPEDES

Ordinary centipedes are vicious and aggressive predators with a pair of needle-like claws (right behind the head itself) 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.

Intelligent centipedes are considerably rarer, but vastly more dangerous. They often arrange simple ambushes such as leaving a valuable item (generally taken from a previous victim) out in the open and waiting for a foolish mouse 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.

The only fully intelligent, magic-using centipede ever found is the monstrous horror known as ***the Mocker***.

## 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.

## 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 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 they do pigeons, but this is

considered shameful by crows and it would only be permitted in special circumstances. Occasionally, though, a mouse manages to win the friendship of the crow community, usually by providing them with vital but unasked-for aid. See the *Crow Friend* advantage.

## DRAGONFLIES

Harmless to mice, these beautiful flying insects are sometimes hunted to make jewelry out of their colorful body segments and beautiful wings. Unfortunately, because of their fragile nature, this means that the dragonfly must be brought down without really damaging it, a task that generally requires magic as well as the good fortune to find one near the ground.

## FERAL RODENTS

Ordinary, non-magical mice and rats are often found on the periphery of the Fallows and are heavily concentrated around the Forbidden Lands. These are *generally* harmless, although hungry rats will occasionally attack lone mice.

Feral 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.

## FOXES

Especially dangerous in the winter, when they'll dig up mice tunneling under the snow.

## GRASSHOPPERS

Grasshoppers are generally hunted for sport. It 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.

### Typical Grasshopper:

Agi +0, Brawn -4, Per +1 [No Clv or Magic]

Hit Points: 6 (no armor)

Alertness +2, Speed +2

Grasshoppers have no effective way of fighting against mice, much less rats. Their only defense is to leap high into the sky and buzz away, landing in some distant underbrush and leaving any attackers far behind. They must be incapacitated before they get even a single action or they will surely escape.

## HAWKS

## OWLS

The supposed lord of all owls is the great horned owl of Rookwood, the dreaded **Hoorooru**.

## PIGEONS

## SCORPIONS

## 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 just animals, and are usually easy to dissuade with a show of force. They travel alone and are only a danger to mice; rats will be judged 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 Shrew:

Agi +3, Brawn +0, Clv -2, Per +2, Magic -2

Hit Points: 10 (no armor)

Melee: +4 (bite 1d3 or by weapon)

Dodge: +3

### 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. While you may be able to persuade one to a temporary truce, 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.

## SPIDERS

Web-spinners (harmless) and Tarantulas (not always).

## 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.

## WEASELS

# 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; those 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 +0, Size -2  
Hit Points: 7 (-2 armor)  
Melee: +4 (bite, 1d3 damage)  
Dodge: +4

### Special: Disorienting buzz (resisted with Leadership)

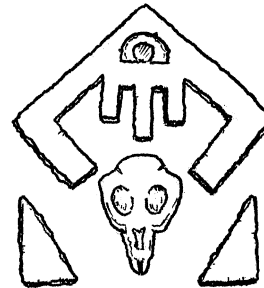
Those who fail to resist are at a penalty to attack and defend until they spend at least a minute away from the noise. The difficulty to resist and effect varies according to the number of flies present.

- 1-5: EASY, Penalty -1
- 6-10: TYPICAL, Penalty -2
- 11-15: HARD, Penalty -4
- 16+: VERY HARD, Penalty -6

## THE CATS OF KA-YANN MAGICAL PREDATORS

The oldest of tales speak of a clan of intelligent, spell-casting cats who laid waste to Firstholme and nearly wiped the White Lords from the face of the Fallows. Though the history books claim that they were all slain in the war that followed, there are always rumors of survivors and the descendants of survivors who have nursed their wounds and come back seeking vengeance.

If any of these legendary beasts still exist, they would be treated as cats with high Cleverness and Magic ratings and a variety of spells.



## 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.

## 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 by the superstitious of being in league with Frostmice or even of being a Frostmouse in disguise themselves!

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.



## 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:

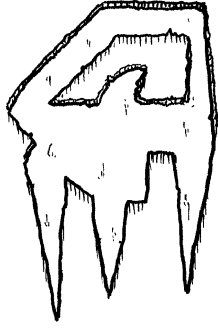
Agi +3, Brawn +3, Clv -2, Per +2, Magic 0  
Hit Points: 15 (no armor)

Melee: +6 (bite 1d3+3)                      Acrobatics: +6  
Dodge: +3    Speed: +6

#### Special: Terrifying

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.





## HARTAUNG (WITHERTAIL) DARK GOD

This dark god is called the lord of winter. He is commonly depicted as a huge skeletal mouse shrouded in fog and ice. His worshippers generally offer him propitiatory sacrifices lest he turn his icy wrath towards them.

Hartaung 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 otherwise not versed in the comings and goings of mortal beings. He also commands the Frostmice and can place a small number of them into a petitioner's service if it suits him.

The wise know him by the name Hartaug, which means Frostbringer. Most common folk refer to him as Withertail.

## 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 never to be seen again.

Its exact nature is unknown. It may be a snapping turtle or some sort of great catfish or even something stranger. There could even be more than one. Whatever it is, it prefers the murky depths, generally only coming to the surface when something disrupts the water enough to attract its attention. Survivors of an attack generally report some sort of great maw that opens up beneath swimming rats or mice and instantly snaps them up with a great splash... and then is gone without a trace.

## HOOROORU UNIQUE MAGICAL PREDATOR

The most terrifying predator in Rookwood, and arguably its ruler, is the dreaded Hoorooru, the great horned owl. Known as the Silent Death and the Enemy of the Gods, Hoorooru is believed to have fought against the First Ones. As the story goes, those mighty mice were not strong enough to slay the great owl, but they could bind him under an enchantment which forces him to remain within the woods, out of sight of the Fallows.

Some villages in Rookwood have taken to worshipping 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.

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 hints and 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 to the north of Rookwood. The ritual sacrifices that he expects from his mousy followers are just that... rituals. He seems to glory in the worship and adulation.

The Silent Death is a great and terrible lord to follow. He demands regular sacrifices and public worship. There are rites held in his honor on brightly moonlit nights. When Hoorooru attends in person to accept a sacrifice, every mouse or rat in the village will be beating drums or chanting his praises in wild abandon. They know that any who chant with insufficient enthusiasm are liable to be added to the offering.

## THE MOCKER UNIQUE MAGICAL PREDATOR

The dreaded Mocker is probably the most lethal predator that still haunts the Fallows. Many attempts have been made to find and slay the beast or at least drive it out of civilized regions, 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 since then. 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 invariably lethal. Its ability to conceal itself from magical searches unmatched. And by the time that the locals in an area realize exactly what sort of predator is devouring travelers and put together an army to destroy it... the Mocker will have already moved on, traveling silently by night to a new territory.

## QUEEN OF THE SMOKING MOUND MAGICAL PREDATOR

The travelling minstrel Aramias has composed many songs about his adventures, but perhaps the least believable is his ode to the Queen of the Smoking Mound.

Aramias claims to have been captured by black ants while traveling through the region. They 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.

Aramias 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 skulls, surrounded by a brood of thousands of quivering grubs. Unlike the others, she could actually speak and seemed to be as intelligent as any mouse. Things looked grim for Aramias, but 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 his tale completely.

## RUSALKA

### DANGEROUS SPIRITS

These creatures appear to be 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 are water-logged drowned mice or rats, obviously partly rotted and decayed but unnaturally animated. Drowned rats are more easily spotted due to their size, but their increased strength makes them that 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 swiftly dissolve and reform. Digging up those bones and using a difficulty HARD Whispers spell to break the spirit's connection to them is the only way to permanently be rid of one of these foul creatures.

## SETHIAS THE BLACK

### UNIQUE DANGEROUS SPIRIT

The First One named Sethias is notable to scholars for being the mouse who 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 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 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.

## SSAAA

### UNIQUE MAGICAL PREDATOR

Known as the Whisperer of Secrets, this huge serpent is regarded as the great trickster and tempter. It is said that he lurks near the edges of the Fallows, seeking prey, but also seeking followers. Having devoured several of the First Ones back in ancient times, Ssaaa now possesses great intelligent and magical abilities well beyond those of most modern mages.

He loves to speak to travelers from hiding, pretending to be some shy and fearful mouse just a little too uncertain to move into view. His ability to lift secrets from a mouse's mind are unparalleled and those who agree to serve him act as his eyes and ears inside the Fallows proper. He controls a great secret cult of worshipers that he always works to expand.

While a true Dark God might be able to wish something into being in response to a request, Ssaaa uses more prosaic means. If a mouse were to bargain with him for wealth, he might tell them to go to a particular spot at midnight two days hence and seek his wealth there. This gives Ssaaa plenty of time to use Whispers to contact one of his wealthier followers and command *them* to leave a bag of gold at that location before the new petitioner could arrive there.

Ssaaa still eats mice, but he loves verbal duels and manipulation more than a meal. He is only likely to emerge from the shadows and devour a mouse if he is certain that they have already realized his true identity and are thus no longer "fun".

## 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 and want to lead him somewhere, but stories claim that if you try to follow one you will inevitably find yourself inescapably 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.

## THE WORMS OF THE EARTH DANGEROUS SPIRITS(?)

Tales of the underworld always include a single, odd, facet of unknown origin... the ancient mice who fled there could only survive by striking a bargain with the Worms, dark and mysterious creatures who are regarded by some as a collective dark god in their own right.

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 mages claim to hear their whispers on dark nights, especially inside of caves or near great cracks and crevices. The bargains that are struck invariably involve leaving mice and rats tied down on bare soil during the darkest of nights. Such sacrifices are always gone by morning, their fate unknown.

The exact powers that the Worms possess seem to be very limited, save in one area. They can destabilize the ground under an area, causing sinkholes or small, earthquake-like shifts in the soil. This is a slow process, often taking days, but once the ground has been prepared the actual shift in the soil can occur quite rapidly, destroying houses and other structures as the earth moves beneath them.

# 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, the desired dark lord will hear their supplication and fulfill the bargain... in the manner that they see fit. It is not unknown for those who ask for too much to be cheated by the 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 dark god 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

You sacrifice your own free will, letting your dark master guide your every action. Generally a sorcerer only goes this far when they've *already* been happily following their dark lord's commands for a long while. This leads them to mistakenly believe that giving themselves over to the powers of the Outer Dark completely 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 Fatigue to *not* immediately obey their lord's commands and their master may freely paralyze them at will if they try to disobey.

## BOOSTING YOUR 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 the weather, at least as far as influencing winter is particularly 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.

### 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 must bring the corpse you desire reanimated to that spot and prepare it for their entry using the Whispers art. 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 their master's enemies, but are slow and stupid at other tasks. They make poor servants overall.

### DRAWING IN PREDATORS

Dark spirits can also lure a mundane predator such as an unintelligent snake or owl, causing it to return to a particular area over and over again to hunt. This sort of curse generally only ends when the monster is slain.

### 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.

### 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 the mage 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 any 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.

### RAISING THE DEAD

Many spirits *claim* to have 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 (8) to sense, one held openly but not in use is TYPICAL (11), one sheathed is HARD (14) and one that has been deliberately hidden away can still be sensed with a VERY HARD (17) 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.
- Heals 1d4 wounds 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 type of benefit depends upon the weapon's nature.

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 enormously easier to cross over into the lands of the living in its vicinity. The whole 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.
- If the weapon truly desires to do something, the wielder must spend 1 Fatigue in order to *not* follow its suggestions. These weapons hunger for the souls of the innocent, so anything that they suggest is going to be unpleasant.
- 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.

According to some legends, Luciel himself 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 was returned to the Outer Darkness once the war was over.

A few, however, claim that the nameless blade 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 and honored 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 often 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.

# EXPERIENCE

## ADVANCEMENT AND HERO POINTS

At the end of each session, characters receive 1 to 3 XP which they can pool and spend when they wish. They'll also receive some replacement Hero Points.

Basically put:

- 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
- Improving a Combat Rating by +1:
  - 2 XP per level from +1 to +3
  - 4 XP per level from +4 to +6
- Buying a new Power: 5 XP per Power Point
- Improving a Stat by +1: 10 XP (once per stat)

Skills and Combat Ratings can be improved to a maximum rating of +6. 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. 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.

Each stat can only be increased once after character creation.

## 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. Just try to avoid favoritism.



ROKO, JUMPING MOUSE WARRIOR

<b>AGILITY:</b> +3	<b>SIZE:</b> 0
<b>BRAWN:</b> +3	<b>SOCIAL STATUS:</b> Commoner (+0)
<b>CLEVERNESS:</b> +0	<b>HIT POINTS:</b> 16
<b>PERCEPTION:</b> +1	<b>MAGIC:</b> +0

**COMBAT RATINGS**

<b>MELEE:</b> +6 (base Agi+Brawn)	<b>DODGE:</b> +3 (base Agi+Clv)
<b>THROWN:</b> +4 (base Brawn+Per)	<b>COURAGE:</b> +3 (base Brawn+Clv)
<b>RANGED:</b> +4 (base Agi+Per)	<b>LEADERSHIP:</b> +1 (base Clv+Per)

**Powers & Balanced Traits:**

- Combat Machine (1)
- Extra Hit Points (1)
- Familiar Territory: Duvain's Weal (1)
- Fearless (1)
- Keen Nose (1)
- One with the Night (1)
- Twin-Blade Strike (1)

**Flaws:**

- Duty: Protect Cassandra (-1)
- Superstitious (-1)



LADY CASSANDRA, WHITE MOUSE MAGE

<b>AGILITY:</b> +1	<b>SIZE:</b> 0
<b>BRAWN:</b> -2	<b>SOCIAL STATUS:</b> Upper class (+2)
<b>CLEVERNESS:</b> +3	<b>HIT POINTS:</b> 11
<b>PERCEPTION:</b> +1	<b>MAGIC:</b> +4

**COMBAT RATINGS**

<b>MELEE:</b> -1 (base Agi+Brawn)	<b>DODGE:</b> +4 (base Agi+Clv)
<b>THROWN:</b> -1 (base Brawn+Per)	<b>COURAGE:</b> +1 (base Brawn+Clv)
<b>RANGED:</b> +2 (base Agi+Per)	<b>LEADERSHIP:</b> +4 (base Clv+Per)

**Powers & Balanced Traits:**

- Extra Hit Points (1)
- Magic Spell: Tug (2)
- Tug High Sorcery: Levitation (1)
- Magic Spell: Shaping (2)
- Shaping High Sorcery: Physician's Touch (1)
- Membership: Magellian's Cloak (0)

**Flaws:**

- Duty: Defend the Fallows (-1)
- Grim (-1)