



Legend of the Five Rings™

The Way of the Ratling



Wulf, Carman,
Mason & Raven

Legend of the Five Rings™



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"Tthicha m'atch-tek per tr-fooa fatch-tek."

– Ipakak, Third Whisker Tribe

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Special thanks to **Carol Turrietta, the Rat Queen**, for being an inspiration to **Ratlings** everywhere.

Shawn Carman:

To my loving wife **Julie** for tolerating a workaholic rat like me, and to the **Rat Pack (Rich, Seth, Rick and Dan)** for making the job more fun than a barrel of vermin.

Rich Wulf:

Rich would like to take this chance to openly mock his friend, **Dan Moenster** - who always said there was no possible way to fill an entire book with stuff about **Ratlings** and has now been forced by the **Kharmic Wheel** to draw them for this book. He also wants to thank the **Ratling Abomination** and of course his parents, who are always there to lend a hand.

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Introduction: Blood and Bones

Hikapi Longsnout moved through the underbrush like a shadow. Only a whisper of rustling leaves and the tiniest hint of a moving branch betrayed his presence. He passed within feet of a trio of feeding goblins, although they never knew he was there. Hikapi turned up his nose at the decayed stench coming from their meal. There were some things that not even the Nezumi would eat.

It was uncommon for the Tattered Ear tribe to move into the dark-dark lands. Their normal territory included a migrating pattern through the Big Forest and into the lands of one of the small human tribes. The Lean Time had been difficult, though, and the constant fighting among the human tribes had made it difficult for the chieftain, Stikak, to feed the tribe's young. The final straw had come when the big-big snakes had started coming out of the forest.

Hikapi shuddered. He didn't want to think about them.

But the Shadowlands were not foreign to the Tattered Ear by any means. There had often been scouting trips during the Lean Time to check on their tribe's territories. Hikapi liked slinking about through the shadows, surrounded on all sides by danger. It had always made him feel like one of the dark-dark humans called "Scorpions." He admired the human samurai tribe, and had in his youth hoped to learn from them at one of their big mounds.

The Nezumi scout stopped short in the brush, every muscle as motionless as stone. There was a new smell, one he did not recognize. It was the scent of another Ratling's pheromones, but not from any of the tribes he knew. It was a strange, pungent scent that burned his nostrils with its fierce aroma and hint of bitter ashes. Hikapi crept forward cautiously, his insatiable curiosity spurring him on to find the source of this mysterious new smell.

Topping a small rise, Hikapi looked down from his hidden perch to see a young Ratling with black fur moving slowly along the bank of a large, stagnant pond. The Nezumi seemed to be moving slowly, as if injured, and was paying little attention to its surroundings. A fatal mistake in the dark-dark lands. Before Hikapi could call to the Ratling, he saw the water near the edge of the pond rippling.

"Ugly-stink-water-woman," the scout hissed under his breath.

The bog hag moved swiftly and silently up the bank toward the injured Ratling. At the last minute, the creature noticed her approach and shrieked loudly. Backpedaling furiously, it tried to reach the edge of the clearing and escape into the rocky surroundings. It was obvious the hag would reach the Ratling before it could escape. Hikapi gnashed his teeth in great frustration. He could not hope to survive an attack upon one of the powerful bog hags, but if he did not the black-furred Ratling would be torn apart by the hag's talons. With his tail twitching with fear and anticipation, Hikapi tensed himself to dart from the bushes and strike the hideous creature from behind.

Suddenly, the black-furred Ratling stood upright and withdrew a jagged stone knife from within the tattered rags it wore. With a look of unabashed glee upon its face, the Nezumi issued a shrill, high-pitched whistle and darted to the right on two very uninjured legs. The hag snarled in confusion, turning to follow the Ratling's path—

Which left her completely vulnerable to attack from the three young Ratlings who erupted from their hiding places among the rocks behind the hag. All three carried sharpened sticks with fire-blackened tips. Even as the hag turned back around to investigate this new sound, the three struck in unison. Two of the sticks glanced off the hag's filthy, wrinkled armor, but one took her low in the back of the leg and punched through. The hag shrieked in agony and lashed out with her claws, but the Ratlings had all darted well out of reach.

The four young Nezumi formed a ring around the hag, keeping her separated from the water. They constantly circled her, looking for an opening to attack. But Hikapi knew the dangerous cunning of the bog hag, and she carefully guarded herself from their attacks. Cackling darkly, the hag began chanting in low tones. Hikapi's whiskers twitched in disbelief. These strange Nezumi were fighting the hag instead of running. And now she was calling for the dark-hurt-pain to strike them down and still they stayed.

A shout from his left nearly caused Hikapi to leap up and give away his hiding place. Another Ratling had emerged from



concealment. Although very small, the new Nezumi had eyes that shone bright-bright with anger and power. The Ratling chanted back at the hag. Hikapi recognized some things this new Ratling said as the words of a Conjurer. The new Nezumi was a Nameseeker, a powerful shaman. The hag's growing powers faded, and the look of amusement on her face disappeared.

Hikapi saw fear in the ugly-stink-water-woman's eyes. The others saw it as well, and the four young Ratlings began a relentless assault, darting in from two directions at once and striking the hag's armor again and again. She tore at their flesh, but they would not yield. Within moments, they were covered in gore, both their own and the hag's. Finally, the young Ratlings pulled back into their circle around the bloodied, panting hag.

"Skintaker." The voice came from the edge of the clearing. Yet another new Ratling had appeared on the scene while Hikapi had focused on the combat. This Nezumi was older, with white fur and a stocky build. A long goatee trailed from his chin and a crude leather eye-patch covered his right eye. He wore a hodge-podge of the hard-skin that human warriors wore and carried a long stick with a sharp blade on the end, what the Crab humans called an "o-no." "I Mat'tck, warlord of Crippled Bone tribe. We take-take this land for tribe. You send-send message to other dark things. Crippled Bone kill-kill any who come-come here."

The hag panted in crude laughter. A foul mix of Ratling and human speech slurred from her bloodied snout. "No take I message for you, animal!"

The grizzled Ratling snorted in disgust. "No take message, Skintaker. You are message. We mark-mark territory with your head."

The hag shrieked in outrage and lunged across the clearing, knocking one of the other Ratlings sprawling in her haste. Mat'tck moved forward to meet her at a careful, measured pace. Meeting her halfway through her mindless charge, the warrior lashed out with the staff of his weapon and struck the hag directly above the eye, snapping her head back with considerable force and flooding her vision with foul, viscous blood. Lashing out blindly in fear and rage, the hag was caught unaware by the Ratling's second staff strike, which took her directly in the throat and dropped her to the ground gasping and hacking.

Mat'tck regarded the hag on the ground before him with evident disdain. "Weak-soft-dark thing. All die to Crippled Bone." A single, brutal strike with the "o-no" ended the hag's misery. Her head rolled across the clearing and came to rest against the rocks. One of the other, younger Ratlings casually speared the head with a long, sharpened stick and held it aloft in victory.

Hikapi crouched stunned within the bushes. These new Ratlings were dangerous warriors with no fear of the dark things. He felt eyes

upon him and turned to find the Nameseeker staring across the clearing directly at him. Hikapi knew that his scent could not be detected at this range and that the shaman could not see him, yet he knew he was there.

Fear filled the young scout. He quickly darted away from the clearing and crashed through the bushes with little thought of stealth. Only escape mattered. The tribe must be warned about these new Ratlings in their territory.

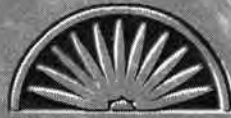


Three Nezumi sat within the dark confines of a rotted tree stump. The remnant of the gargantuan plant was rich in Name according to Tch'orr'tkk, the Tattered Ear tribe's oldest and most venerated Rememberer. The old one sat within the dark chamber with Stikak, the tribe's chieftain, and Tikuku, the tribe's foremost shaman. They had all been present when the scout Hikapi had told his story. Many in the tribe were greatly agitated, and Stikak had called for the elders to meet and try to discover more.

Tch'orr'tkk's chattering had faded, and the old Ratling had ceased his rocking. Stikak knew from experience that this meant the Rememberer had summoned a memory from their race's history. He leaned forward, nose twitching in anticipation of the tale.

"In the Before Time, some Ratlings rule over others. Our great empire have leaders, those who aid the Chief-of-chiefs and make-make decisions for the One Tribe. After the Terrible Day happen, those leaders who survive no want-want leave the place of Before Time. They no wander like other Nezumi. They make-make old place theirs again, and go-go south where Heaven fell. Many many days they travel, much farther than now tribes go toward Heaven's Grave. No one see lost Ratlings for many, many years."

"Then, in time of Kipttch, chieftain of Tattered Ear, three Ratlings come from far-far south of dark lands. Tell Kipttch that leaders need more Ratlings to make new Tribe of One. Tell Kipttch that he must bring Tattered Ear to Heaven's Grave to serve leaders. Kipttch think funny, tell Ratlings to leave. They get-get mad, fight with Tattered Ear warriors. Ratlings driven off, but many Tattered Ear hurt bad by fight. Kipttch take tribe north, past big rock cliff and into land of humans. There, Tattered Ear tribe live for many-many years without trouble."



Tch'orr'tkk opened his eyes and stared at Stikak. "Crippled Bone tribe come north now, far from Heaven's Gate. They want-want land for hunting. Crippled Bone very angry with other Ratlings, think-think they abandon them. They ready to fight over small morsel when much food found somewhere else."

Stikak's whiskers shivered with dread. He did not want the Tattered Ear to fight other Ratlings. Too many other things in the dark lands wanted to kill the Nezumi for the Nezumi to fight among themselves. "No. No fight Crippled Bone. Tattered Ear go back to big-big forest. Fight bad snakes. Better than fight other Nezumi!" Tikuku and Tch'orr'tkk nodded in agreement with Stikak's practical wisdom. "Tell-tell others get ready. Go soon."



Te'tik'kir watched from a hill overlooking the valley as the Tattered Ear tribe departed north toward the edge of the dark-dark lands. He gnashed his teeth in frustration at their departure. He had hoped the Crippled Bone could crush them, eliminating the annoying upstart Stikak and his followers. The other Ratling tribes looked to Stikak and the Tattered Ear during those rare times when the tribes made decisions that affected the whole race. Though definitely not the leaders of the race, Stikak and his pack were respected.

Te'tik'kir wanted to hurt them, just to make the others see what fools they all were. They had abandoned their true chieftains long, long ago, leaving them to deal with the horrible things that destroyed the Nezumi's great empire near Heaven's Grave. They had fought the dark things ever since, until the great shaman of the dark lands had met and made the land come alive to attack the Crippled Bone. Not even his magic or Mat'tck's battle rage could stop the walking dark land.

Now the Crippled Bone would do here what they could not in the deep dark lands: they would bring back the Tribe of One. All tribes would join together, and the Crippled Bone would rule them all. Then the dark things and the pink walkers would all learn that the Crippled Bone tribe could not be stopped.

Te'tik'kir's tail thrashed from side to side as he thought about it.

How to Use This Book

Welcome to the thirteenth book in the *Way of the Clans* series. *Way of the Ratling* is intended to bring more depth to the misunderstood Ratlings. Even more despised than ronin, Ratlings huddle in the shadows of the Empire. They survive by scavenging. At worst, they are hunted as monsters. At best, they are reluctantly tolerated.

The Nezumi are much more than giant rats. They are an ancient and powerful race reduced to barbarism by tragedy. Despite all that has happened, the Nezumi not only survive, but thrive, even in the barren wastes of the Shadowlands.

Though the Nezumi have been touched upon in other products, *Way of the Ratling* is intended to show a glimpse of Nezumi culture from the inside. Using the information in this book, you can create detailed Nezumi NPCs or even player characters.

The first chapter contains correspondence from those who have encountered Nezumi, as well as tales told by the Nezumi as they struggle to understand the strange world of Rokugan.

The second chapter contains cultural and historical information on the Nezumi race. Their abilities and limitations are explained in detail, as well as their philosophy and relationships with the clans. You will also find information on the Nezumi empire that existed before the Fu Leng's fall, as well as details on many of the great tribes that survive in the Empire today.

The third chapter contains extensive rules for creating Nezumi characters. A number of new Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages are provided. In addition, you will discover mechanics for major tribes, Schools, magic, and even rules for creating your own Nezumi tribe.

The fourth chapter describes a number of significant Nezumi personalities. While a good number of these are characters were introduced in the Legend of the Five Rings CCG, a few have never been seen before. You will also find rules for using the Transcendent, strange spirits that watch over Nezumi from their dreams.

The fifth chapter contains character templates. These include five ready-to-play Nezumi and one human character very close to the Nezumi. These templates can be used as starting characters, or adapted as NPCs.

Finally, the Appendix contains a variety of miscellaneous information. The strange language and technology of the Nezumi are introduced in some detail. Rules for using the Nezumi world of dreams are presented in this section, as is a detailed description of a large Nezumi warren.

If you are ready to see the Empire through the eyes of a Ratling, read on...

Chapter One: The Wily Nezumi



After The Terrible Day

**A report penned by interim provincial governor
Shiba Akihisa**

Lord Ujimitsu:

Certainly you have heard the rumors. Rumor flies faster than birds and I have a reputation for eccentricity. Nonetheless, I beg you to listen. I am not mad, as others have said. I did not hallucinate what I saw in the forests. I beg you, in your wisdom, to grant me stewardship of my late brother's provinces. Ignore the snide comments of my detractors and send the troops that I require to eliminate the menace dwelling along our northern borders.

I realize that before you can consider such outrageous demands I must present to you my version of the tale.

It begins with a hunt. Many find it odd that I enjoy hunting deer. It is an eccentricity I inherit from my grandfather, who spent some time among the Unicorn. My father taught the art to my brother and me. True, Shinsei condemned the consumption of meat, but I suspect that the little prophet never sampled venison.

But I digress.

I rode into the forest beside my dear brother, Jakuchu. We had ridden through the morning with no luck. Just when we had decided to return home, Jakuchu saw it – a white stag with antlers as broad

as a man's arms. I had never seen its like. My brother was stunned, but my wits were quicker. My arrow struck the great animal in the broad patch of white fur along its throat. It was an incredible shot. The animal staggered, knelt, and died.

Jakuchu turned to congratulate me, but his smile died as a bestial cry tore the air. We looked about for its source, but saw nothing. A crude ax whirled past from above, burying itself in the trunk of a tree beside me. I turned to the sky, and saw them. Green-cloaked Spirits soared from branch to branch with the grace of flickering flames. Their long fingers and curling tails clutched at the trees like snow monkeys. I could not see their faces, but noticed long fangs protruding from their hoods. Though they seemed quite bestial, these were demons of startling intellect. They hissed and chattered as they leapt about, hurling crude missiles of wood and stone.

I aimed again and let fly, taking two with three arrows. I warned Jakuchu to flee – I was prepared to die for him! The brave fool would not abandon me. There were too many. One of their crude weapons buried itself in my noble brother's chest. Though it pains me to recall, I abandoned his body. I knew that one must survive so that word of this danger could be passed on to those with the power to stop it.

Such as yourself, Immortal Phoenix.

There are dark spirits in the woods who feed upon men. When I returned with a platoon, only bloodstains remained of my brother. The creatures had taken him, and cleverly hidden their tracks. Many doubt my tale. Some accuse me of abandoning my brother so that I could usurp his position. If I were not busy attending to my brother's duties, I would challenge the offending parties to a duel of honor.

My personal problems are not your concern, of course. Your concern, no doubt, is the smooth management of the province. With these strange beasts in the forest, are any of us safe? My lord, I beg you to listen to reason. Send me the troops I require.

Your Servant,
Shiba Akihisa



A Tale told by Rtch-chi'chek, Hunter of the Green-Green-White

Fools!

Pink-skins are fools, and fools they ever be.

Pink-skins ignore signs. Pink-skins ignore warnings. Pink-skins think-think they own whole world. Maybe they right most of time. This time they dead wrong-wrong.

Woods be ours.

Now we prove it.

Rtch-chi'chek tell you what happen in woods. Pink-skin samurai learn woods be no place for them. Had been lean-lean winter. Much cold, much snow. Not much hunting, and more Lean Times coming when tomorrow came stalking. I be hunter long enough know Lean Time coming worse than most. When tomorrow came, would take many pups and elders with it.

Then came special day. Snows parted like smoke in wind. Fine day for hunt, maybe only chance to find food. I take pack out, hunt food for pups, food for brothers, food for elders. Everyone know my pack greatest hunters in shining-green-green-white-forest-land. Everyone know. We leave-leave with promise to find much food for tribe. We promise find enough food to race tomorrow. Tomorrow take no pups. Tomorrow take no elders. Tomorrow take nothing but scraps.

When we begin hunt, my promise look bigger than my paws. Not much meat we find. Not much nothing we find. We ready give up. Look like tomorrow always win.

Then we see it. M-at'jak point out tracks of great wood-beast. We hunt with much-much excitement. Pack barely keep itself quiet as we run-run through trees. Then we see it. Great tree-branch-wood-beast. Big as three Nezumi and pups. Big-biggest we ever see. Much meat for pups. Much fur for warm blankets. Much muscle for bow-string. Much bone for arrow-heads.

Wood-beast wander near beaten-road. Beaten-road built by pink-skins long yesterday ago, but not use road anymore. Most prefer tall-great-fire-built-burrows, especially when winter comes. Pink-skins fear forest, fear what they might find. Make sense. If they come here, they find us.

K'ree'tek call to southern path, point to open patch between trees. See two pink-skin warriors riding their strange big-dogs. Then one shoot at our wood-beast. He miss. Same one fire again. Hit tree. Wood-beast get scared and run.

Stupid humans scare food away! Now tomorrow take Green-Green-White Tribe away for sure. Good thing M-at'jak throw as fast as he eat. M-at'jak throw hatchet, kill wood-beast with one hit. Good throw. Bad timing. Pink-skins yell and point. Pink-skins see M-at'jak hiding in tree.

Should have run away then, but I not about to give winter meat to stupid pink-skin, especially when they such bad shots. I fire arrow, hit bad-archer's big-dog in head. Bad-archer's dog fall down. I tell pack hide-hide, wait-wait. Figure dead big-dog be enough scare pink-skins away.

Then funny thing happen. Bad-archer draw sword and knock other pink-skin off his dog. Bad-archer jump into saddle and ride-away screaming like tomorrow was chasing. We sneak down to road, find bad-archer's friend dead in snow, sharp-sharp knife sticking out of stomach.

Sometimes world a strange place, but I not ask questions when food rain from sky. And armor, good as new! And swords, arrows, knife! Good hunt! I keep swords.

Now pink-skins know forest no place for them.

I think we scare them good.

From Legend of Zel'ch, Tattered Ear Bushi

We learn much today.

Zel'ch and brothers leave Tattered Ear long yesterday ago. Went out on great quest to hone warrior instinct. Idea came during harsh day of bitter sun, while Tattered Ear sleep, wandering world of dreams. Powerful spirit visit in dream, spirit of long-gone shaman who wander into dream. Chieftain call spirit Wikki'thich-hie, dead shaman made of magic.

Spirit told me the way. Spirit told me the secret. Tattered Ear need-need learn what other tribes not want to know, must learn from samurai. Samurai not get so far on luck. Tattered Ear need know their secret. Tattered Ear need learn-learn way of the samurai.

We wander through forest trail in big-deep-forest humans call Shinomen. Not eat for many days. Not rest for many days. Not enough food to hunt. Quest too important to go home. I hide-hide in bushes, wait for food.

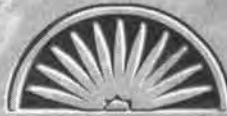
Instead, see human walking with bag over shoulder. Him no carry weapon. He no have any hair, bald as mountain-top. He sing to himself, though his song not make much sense to me.

"Him alone," said The'ch, my pack brother. "He no samurai. Should kill-kill human. No one miss."

I look at The'ch and shake whiskers. The'ch not look happy, but no disagree. We settle down and wait for bald-man go away. But bald-man not go away. He stop. Look around. Leave bag on the ground. Laugh. Walk away.

After he gone, I quick-quick run, poke bag with spear. I expect trap.

Nothing in bag but rice. Enough for whole pack! I shout to brothers, they scamper from bushes. Best food we eat in days. So hungry we not even stop to cook. Eat bag too. Hunger make worst



food taste-taste like best. We only halfway done when I notice bald-man in road, watching. Did not even hear him!

"Ratlings," him say, spreading mouth to show teeth.

Thel'ch point spear at bald-man, but I tell brother no. Bald-man say he traveler, name Sodaisa. Sodaisa say travel long way to find enlightenment. I guess he some kind of shaman, him say that close enough to truth. I laugh, tell him need no bother. I tell him go sleep, dreams be only enlightenment he need. Sodaisa thought about that long time, then show teeth again. Thel'ch point spear and growl.

(Me learn later pink-skins show teeth when happy. Wish I know that then - Thel'ch get pretty scared.)

Sodaisa ask where we from, I tell him we Tattered Ear looking to learn way of the samurai. Sodaisa laugh, tell us we come to right place. He say he be samurai long yesterday ago. That make no sense. I tell him he be liar. No can be warrior and be shaman at same time. Life not long enough.

Sodaisa laugh at that, and say life plenty long enough if keep things simple. Life long enough for anything. I ask him if life long enough to teach Tattered Ear Way of Bushido. Sodaisa laugh again (Sodaisa laugh-laugh a lot), tell us there nothing to it. Just need remember seven things, Sodaisa call them Vrr'chus.

I give seven things now. I give Vrr'chus of Bu'ch-do.

Listen close. This complicated.

Gee - Samurai not say things that not true. This one confusing. How samurai know what not true? Must be very wise for that. To me, this most difficult part to be samurai. Maybe samurai no talk?

Yoo - Samurai must be brave-brave. This easy! Me plenty brave enough. Tattered Ear all brave enough to run away instead of fight.

Jinn - Samurai help those that need help. This surprise me. Tattered Ear already help-help each other all the time. Nothing special in that. Lot of samurai me see not do this at all. Maybe all samurai not know Vrr'chus? Lucky thing we find Sodaisa! He know the secrets, yes?

Ray - Samurai treat people like he like them, even if he not mean it. Not understand this one. How do samurai never say things that not true, but treat people like he like them? Must be a trick. Me figure it out.

M-yo - Samurai must act with "hon-or." When ask Sodaisa what hon-or is, he say "good question." Samurai need be judge of himself, while whole world judges him. Rules inside of rules! It harder to be samurai than we thought.

Makoto - If a samurai say he do something, he do it. That pretty simple, especially if samurai never talk like me guess.

Ch-go - Samurai never fail those who need him. Every Nezumi know that! Samurai need-need learn this? Maybe me missing something. Hmmm...

Anyway, that what we learn. Sodaisa say we visit him at burrow (him call it "monastery") and ask him more questions if we want. Me want-want ask lot of questions. Need understand more...

From the letters of Daidoji Imoto to his cousin Jinwa

Nothing we try seems to work. Every time I think that we have eliminated them, they sprout up again somewhere else. They are the bane of my existence.

Ratlings.

When we demand that the Hida deal with the matter, our requests are met with eerie silence. Can our Crab cousins claim that they defend the wall when they have already allowed the worst sort of vermin to escape their borders? These creatures are a terror. They steal food, sabotage equipment, desecrate tombs, and spread disease. I am quite certain that these Tainted monsters will stop at nothing less than the total destruction of all that we consider pure. I have sworn to stop at nothing less than their destruction, but the path has not been easy.

I began by setting traps, devious traps designed by my best engineers, baited with food and the shiny bits





of glass these demons favor. When I returned, not only did I find the bait stolen, but the *traps* were gone as well! The Ratlings had disassembled each one and carted the pieces away!

Next, I attempted poison. I set my new traps, but laced the bait with the strongest Shosuro narcotics. At first, this was a success. We found a few of the beasts, dead. The rest of the traps were empty, the bait and poison stolen. A week later, disaster hit the village of Tonro. Many villagers sickened and three perished. Their well had been poisoned – the same poison the Ratlings had stolen! These creatures are not only cunning, but vengeful. I must not underestimate them again.

For my third attempt, I hired Kitsune Konguro, a Fox tracker of some renown. I told him of our problem, and asked him if he could help me destroy the vermin that plagued us. He looked uncertain, and asked several more questions about the demons. When I admitted the demons were Ratlings, he was greatly offended. He not only refused to help us, but had the nerve to demand I cease my hunt!

I refused! Surely any fool can see the link between the sudden increase in Ratling activity and the spread of the Wasting Disease. These vermin are to blame! Konguro countered that Ratlings are peaceful, intelligent creatures. The man is obviously mad. I had my soldiers bind him and escort him to a monastery where he would be well treated.

The monks reported that Konguro escaped a week later. I did not find it surprising, as Konguro was a wily sort. What shocked me was one monk's claim that he saw the Fox climb out the sixth floor window, assisted by giant rats. Luckily no one believed such a wild tale. It is obvious that someone wishes to paint me a fool. It comes as no surprise. A samurai with the reputation I have cultivated must expect to engender jealousy. I shall endure.

I write you now to request advice. What tactic should I attempt next? If only I knew where these Ratlings nested, the matter would be easily dealt with. I would take four of my finest warriors and burn their home, kill the entire pack. Cunning they may be, but I doubt if the whole tribe would be a match for five Crane samurai. Fortunately for the beasts, they have covered their trail well.

If you have any advice, I would greatly appreciate it, my cousin.

In the meantime, I shall continue my search. If these pitiful animals should dare show themselves, I shall show them the strength of Crane steel.

(This was Imoto's final letter. He disappeared in the northern foothills of the Daidoji provinces shortly after this letter was written.)

A letter from Hiruma Yoshi to his nephew, Kage

These are troubling times, my son. I do not know why the Hida have departed the Wall to wage war upon the Empire. Kisada's reasons are his own. At least he left the Carpenter in the most capable hands. If anyone can direct the war against the darkness in the Great Bear's absence, it is you, my son. I regret that my health has taken a turn for the worse in recent months, or you know that I would be beside you. Still, you may turn my experience to your advantage. I know the Shadowlands like few others. My body is weak, but my wits are still sharp.

I have heard a few of my fellow retired bushi discuss the situation. Some say that the Wall cannot be held, that too few soldiers remain. If the Shadowlands should choose to attack, the skeleton crew upon the Carpenter would be destroyed. They are a pack of doomsaying old men, but when one errs on the side of caution, one's errors seldom cost lives. I know that you would agree that the Wall's defenses need to be fortified as quickly as possible, using whatever means necessary.

Which brings me to the subject of Nezumi.

I know you are familiar with them. No scout wanders the Shadowlands for long before making a few Ratling allies. They know the Shadowlands like none other. They have dwelt within it for eternity. While a Nezumi's code of honor is different from ours, it is reliable enough. My primary piece of advice in these troubling times is to gather as many Nezumi as you can.

I do not mean to imply that you man the Wall with Ratlings. Lord Kisada would not approve, and the Nezumi would be loath to leave their tribes. Rather, employ them in scouting the lands they know well. They can journey deeper into the Tainted lands than the hardest scout, and return to tell the tale. Pay them whatever they desire to search out growing menaces. A single clever Nezumi could sniff out a problem before it grows serious enough to threaten the Wall.

In addition, I advise you to send Nezumi deep into the Shadowlands in search of other tribes. The Ratlings of the Third Whisker – those who dwell nearest the Wall – claim that at least one lost tribe lives near the Festering Pit. If this tribe truly exists, then these Nezumi must know information about the Shadowlands that we could never learn on our own. Peaceful contact with this lost tribe would be a potent weapon against the Dark Lord.

In the meantime, I entreat those brave enough to remain to be strong. Since Kuni Osaku gave her life so that the Carpenter Wall could be built, not once has it fallen. It will not fall now, not while a single Crab lives to draw a blade against the darkness.

Together, we shall triumph.

Your father,
Yoshi



The Mara, addressing Mirumoto Daini on the subject of the Nezumi

You wish to know why the Naga hate Nezumi?

The Nezumi are food.

Simple answers bring more questions. I see that my words have shocked you, for you have been taught that Naga are a peaceful race. We seek no conflict. We do not shed blood without need. Even yet, nothing is ever as simple as it appears. We do not hate the Nezumi. We do not feed upon them for pleasure. We are not monsters. The world has changed during our sleep. Many of us refuse to acknowledge what has changed, and thus we treat the Ratlings as we have always treated them.

In the world before the Great Sleep, Nezumi were not as they are now. They were no more cunning than a dog or a cat. They had no language. They had no organization outside of a rough pack structure. They were mere animals. My people began to trap them and breed them for food. They were our primary source of meat for generations. With such a quality food resource, the Akasha flourished. In time, a few Nezumi came to be kept as pets, trained as hunters or guardians. Though the Naga and Nezumi were inextricably linked, we were hardly equals.

Then the Great Sleep came.

Now we have awakened, and time itself has changed. Humans – creatures like yourself who did not exist in our time – rule the land. The Foul boils from the earth and the world is hardly recognizable. The Nezumi have evolved from the creatures they once were. They have built, and lost, a civilization that some say rivaled our own. They have their own language, culture, tools, and magic! You cannot understand how difficult it is to adjust to such a change. Imagine that you have left your horse unattended for a few moments while you slumber in the forest. When you awaken, you find your steed walking upright with weapons and armor of his own. When you try to saddle him, he insults you. Perhaps he demands that you wear the saddle.

How do you react to that?

I do not know.

Unfortunately, some of my kin see the world as it was, not as it is. They continue to hunt Nezumi, to kill them, to eat them. They do not see the intelligence of these creatures. Perhaps they do not wish to see it. Perhaps we are responsible for their evolution. If so, we should embrace them as lost children, not devour them.

We are never quite so blind as when we do not wish to see. Saddening.

I do not know how we can hope to defeat the Foul when some among us perpetrate evil upon an innocent race.

You wish to know why the Naga hate the Nezumi?

So do I.

From the Ravings of Yogo Junzo

Ratlings are a curse, a living reminder that the world can never be ours until every vestige of flesh is wiped away. The Moto corrupt and befoul, laughing about how valuable an honorable samurai twisted to evil can be.

Nonsense.

Corrupt a man and he may break free. Kill a man and he stays dead forever. Those who march under the banner of the Dark Lord need not fear death. We must only destroy all that lies in our path, demolishing the Emerald Empire until not one stone lies atop another.

What do Ratlings have to do with these glorious dreams? Why do they cause me to stir with hatred? Because they cannot be corrupted. Our best efforts have come to nothing. Their existence proves that Tsume's desires are merely dreams. What's more, they dare scamper about beneath the Dark Lord's nose, making their home in the Shadowlands!

Abominable.

How can we rule the cosmos when we cannot dispose of vermin in our own home? Ratlings are a curse, reminding us how far we have to go before we are free. We call ourselves masters of darkness, but Ratlings hide in our shadows, laughing.

We must make an example of them.

We could deal with them easily, had we the motivation. None of us have had any true reason to destroy the Ratlings. They make the battle not worth fighting. They are unpredictable and unreasoning. Sometimes they slip through our fingers like smoke. Other times they fight with startling ferocity. They are mad beasts, not worthy of our time.

That is our fallacy, and that is our weakness. We do not *need* a purpose to destroy! We are the Shadowlands! Destruction is our nature. The Ratlings are *no exception!*

Though I am occupied by my sacred quest, I shall make the time to deal with these pests. While I serve the Dark Lord, no creature shall defy Him. Already I have put plans into motion that will see to their extinction. Jigoku heeds my words, and agrees with me.

The Ratlings will die. I swear this by Fu Leng's name.





Chapter Two: The History of the Nezumi



M'thack'thach

"The Path Into Once Bright Yesterday"

Although many humans consider them little more than simple beasts or even vermin, the Nezumi are an ancient and civilized people who walked the earth when the Kami were not yet conceived. They created an empire that reached from the southern reaches of Rokugan all the way to what is now the deep Shadowlands. While it is easy to look upon their meager existence now and dismiss them as primitives, in truth the story of their people is older than that of humanity itself.

The Nezumi view of history is very different from that of humans. To the Ratlings, the entirety of their race's history is like a memory, a recollection from which vague impressions can be gained, but which is ultimately far less important than the present. History is only important to the Nezumi as a means of aiding them in solving a current and pressing problem. For this reason, each tribe has among their elders at least one member of the most academic of Nezumi castes, the Rememberers.

The Before Time

Once, Nezumi have great-great territory. No dark things crawl in shadows, no those-who-walk-in-pink-skin. Our territory like the

Dream realm, with much-much food everywhere and Nezumi camps all across land. We not have to fight-fight every day, not hunted by dark things. No hiding and running. Tutkwauwer serve us, not steal our things. Chief-of-chiefs rule all the One Tribe, and all Nezumi happy-happy.

All gone-gone now.

– Kch'tik, Rememberer of the Grasping Paw

The Nezumi Rememberers speak of a period known only as "the Before Time." This refers to the existence of their society prior to the fall of Heaven to earth and the destruction of the vast civilization they once knew. Even the greatest of Rememberers know little of this time, and can speak of it only in vague, sweeping terms that lack certainty. It seems that the cataclysm that once nearly drove the Nezumi race into extinction also destroyed virtually every record of their history to that point. Only a crude oral version remains, kept alive by the Rememberers.

What little information is available on the Before Time is a result of the efforts of the First Rememberer, the only true Nezumi scholar to survive the Terrible Day. This individual gathered what little lore remained of the once-great Nezumi culture and began teaching it to others. When he finally passed on into the Realm of Dream, others continued his mission. These were the Rememberers, those charged with the great memories of their race.

Some of the most ancient, venerated memories summoned by the Rememberers allude to a time when the Nezumi carved out their empire, conquering the lesser races of the land. If these legends are to be believed, then it would seem that at one point in Rokugan's pre-history, the ogre, goblin and troll races were enslaved by the Nezumi. This would only be possible if the Nezumi existed in great numbers with very organized and structured society, something that seems at odds with the present status of their race.

Nezumi legend holds that once a great leader united their entire race. This leader, known only as the Chief-of-Chiefs, was responsible



for the subjugation of the Nezumi's enemies as well as the founding of a single kingdom as the One Tribe.

An interesting note about the long-disappeared Nezumi civilization is that no known ruins still exist except for one of questionable origin. The Naga race left behind numerous cities and structures that over the years degenerated into ruins that would one day be discovered by mankind. The Nezumi, however, appear to have left no such structures behind. While the vast majority were destroyed on or following the Terrible Day, some Nezumi scholars believe that some underground remnants of their empire may still exist. Unfortunately, none have yet been found. If such holdovers from the Before Time are ever discovered, it will be a great triumph for the Nezumi, as they will be able to rediscover many great memories of their past.



History and Dreams

Comparisons between the history of the Nezumi and dreams or memories are very accurate. The Nezumi, with the exception of the Rememberers, view the past in broad, glorified terms. Accounts of something already passed are often embellished and exaggerated to make them more meaningful to others. With that in mind, the average Ratling has very little concept of the events described in this section, and will give a rather inaccurate account if asked to describe the events of his race's history.

The Terrible Day

If there is a defining moment in the history of the Nezumi race, it is that of the great cataclysm they refer to as "The Terrible Day When Air Became Fire and Heaven Fell From Its Perch to Crush Our Glorious Home Beneath Its Blackened Corpse." Virtually every trace of the great civilization the Nezumi race had established was eliminated. As much as three-quarters of their race was wiped out in a single day. Many more died in the aftermath of the nightmarish event.

While few memories of the Before Time remain, it is widely accepted by the Nezumi that their greatest city, where the Chief-of-Chiefs ruled, was very near the site of Heaven's Fall, today known as Heaven's Grave. The devastation of Heaven's Fall wiped their great city from the face of the world, destroying it in an instant. The Nezumi Rememberers speak with great fear about the impact that destroyed everything for miles. They gnash their teeth in agony over the screaming deaths of millions of Nezumi. They wail in horror over the following days, when the dark things came from Heaven's Grave to hunt the remaining Nezumi. Starvation, exposure to the elements, wounds received in battle with unknown enemies – the deaths were more than could be counted.

It is a testament to the incredible adaptability of the Nezumi that any of them survived. Somehow they adjusted to the wretched conditions and overcame the obstacles in their paths. The Rememberers speak of others who did not survive the cataclysm. At times this seems to refer to the Nezumi who perished, but at other times it seems almost as if they are referring to other races lost in the disaster. If there were other races existing in the same territory as the Nezumi, they surely would have been lost without the inherent abilities the Ratlings possess. The Rememberers know nothing of these "others" save that they were killed during Heaven's Fall. No trace remains of their existence.

The Great Lean Time

The decades following the Terrible Day were devastating to the Nezumi. The hardships they faced continued to diminish their numbers until it seemed that their race would surely become extinct in the aftermath of the cataclysm. They traveled north to escape the poisoning of the land, but found a new creature inhabiting the land north of the mountains: pink-skinned walkers who called themselves "humans." Early misunderstandings between the two races convinced the Nezumi to remain south of the great mountains that once defined the northern border of their empire.

Even as their numbers continued to decrease, the Nezumi began to adapt to their new environment. A new generation was born into this scavenging lifestyle of day-to-day survival, and these pups showed an even greater aptitude for adaptation and improvisation than their parents. Very gradually, the Ratling population in the Shadowlands began to stabilize.

This new generation faced great problems as well. With the surviving Nezumi disorganized and scattered, some areas of the Shadowlands became overpopulated, causing food shortages and presenting a large target that the dark things from Heaven's Grave were all too eager to attack. Other areas went completely unused by the Ratlings. These areas quickly degenerated into the hunting



grounds of unthinkable creatures with no natural enemies to thwart their predations. Once again, the Nezumi faced a bleak situation with few options available.

Finally, the young leaders of the various bands of Nezumi came together to find a solution. Some insisted that the only choice was to return to their home near Heaven's Grave and battle the dark things there, destroying their corrupting influence and retaking what was rightfully theirs. Few among the Nezumi found this an attractive option. Others favored traveling north into the lands of the humans. Some wished to take what they needed, while others believed that forming an alliance with the pink-walkers was the only way to survive against the dark things. The debate raged for days.

In the end, no consensus could be reached. Instead, the most capable and charismatic of the younger Nezumi each chose to follow their own path, taking those who believed as they did with them. The leaders did agree, however, that each band needed their own lands, and as such they each chose a large territory for their own groups. The other groups would respect these boundaries and keep to their own lands, but aid each other when necessary. The one unanimous truth that came from this meeting was simple: the Nezumi must survive.

And so the age of the Nezumi tribes was born. Some bands headed north into the lands of the humans. Many stayed within the lands they once called their own. One even marched south toward Heaven's Gate, vowing to reclaim their home. Over the centuries these tribes would come and go, but the Nezumi way of life was altered forever.

Alliance with the Crab

A crucial event in the history of the Nezumi has been the forging of an alliance with the tribe of humans called the Crab. This pivotal event came about centuries ago after many of the Nezumi tribes united to help a lone Hiruma scout foil the treacherous plans of a corrupted Kuni shugenja. If not for the intervention of the Ratlings, the surprise attack could have overwhelmed and destroyed the large warren called Hiruma Castle, a blow from which the young Crab tribe might never have recovered.

The majority of interaction the Nezumi have with the Crab is through the sub-tribe called the Hiruma. These are the humans most who most often journey into the Shadowlands and interact with the tribes. The alliance has been extremely beneficial to the Nezumi. The Hiruma understand the needs of the tribes and offer food, crude supplies, or even broken weapons in exchange for the aid of their scouts. Most often the Hiruma wish for guides to steer them safely through the Nezumi territories into the Shadowlands, or for the Taint-resistant Nezumi to perform scouting missions near the deeper portions of the land, where the Taint quickly overwhelms and consumes the humans. The Nezumi are baffled by the reaction the humans have to the Taint, but recognize that it works to their advantage.

The alliance with the Crab, oddly enough, is also responsible for one of the most significant schisms ever to occur within the Nezumi race. Several generations after the alliance was formed the elders of the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe, the largest





Rokugan's View of Nezumi History

Although few in Rokugan have any knowledge of Nezumi history, there are some who have studied with the Kuni of the Crab Clan and, in the course of such things, have been exposed to the supposed events of the Ratlings' history. The Kuni, while largely unconcerned with such trivial matters themselves, seem to take great delight in the offense taken by others toward the Nezumi's colorful past. To put it bluntly, Rokugani historians consider the history of the Nezumi to be full of ridiculous assertions that border upon blasphemy. The most offensive element to them is the suggestion that the so-called "dark races" of the Shadowlands, the goblins, trolls, and ogres, existed prior to the fall of Fu Leng. Believing otherwise is simply another sign that the Nezumi are little more than vermin, a dirty yet amusing race of animals with some foul mockery of a society. It goes without saying that the notion of a Nezumi civilization is almost universally rejected.

existing tribe at the time, had a major disagreement as to how to best serve the interests of the Nezumi race. Three major factions developed from this disagreement. One, led by the tribe's chieftain, wished to forge closer ties with the humans by moving north into their lands. A second faction led by the tribe's most prominent shaman felt that the humans would bring them all to ruin and advocated severing all ties. Finally, a half-demented, self-proclaimed "prophet" wished to remain in the Shadowlands and continue to live as they always had.

Eventually these philosophical differences grew too great to ignore. Rather than risk open hostility within the tribes, the elders chose to go their separate ways, taking their followers with them. The chieftain took a large portion of the tribe and traveled north past the great wall of the Crab. In time, these Nezumi became the Tattered Ear tribe. The shaman, on the other hand, took a much smaller portion of the tribe and traveled farther west into the Shadowlands, away from the wall. Eventually, they became the Crooked Tail tribe. Finally, the so-called prophet and his small band

of followers remained. They repeatedly attempted to convince the others to reunite as the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe to fulfill some obscure prophecy the prophet believed was essential to the survival of the Nezumi race. These Ratlings became the Third Whisker tribe, a nihilistic group of doom-sayers who eventually occupied the tunnels beneath the great Carpenter Wall.

A'fatch'tek – The Nezumi Today

After centuries of relative stability, the Nezumi find themselves in tumultuous times. The largest of the tribes, the Tattered Ear, has been forced from its territory in the Shinomen forest by a horrible race of snake-warriors that feast upon the Nezumi like Skintakers feast on the unwary in the Shadowlands. What's more, a new tribe has appeared and claimed a large territory that up until then had been shared among the tribes. The Nezumi of the Crippled Bone are intense, violent warriors who show open hostility toward the other tribes for some memory that the others have all but forgotten.

Perhaps the single greatest dilemma facing the Nezumi tribes in this modern age is the very recent action taken by their allies in the Crab Clan. Scouts from many different tribes have reported the Crab forces moving north side-by-side with creatures from the Shadowlands. The Hiruma who remain on duty upon the Wall will not discuss this matter with the tribes, saying only that they may not question the word of their chieftain.

The Nezumi do not understand this. The chieftain of a tribe exists to serve the needs of the tribe. While individual members follow the chieftain's leadership, they do not bow to wishes that obviously damage the tribe as a whole. Many tribal elders have met to discuss this most troubling situation. The Tattered Ear tribe has very vigorously insisted that while some humans may have sided with the Shadowlands, their allies among the Hiruma clearly have not, as they remain upon the Wall as they always have. The Third Whisker tribe asserts similar things regarding the Kaiu, and the Chipped Tooth seem certain that the Yasuki are largely unaffected. The Crippled Bone tribe, however, asserts that all humans are weak and unreliable, insisting that all ties be severed with the Crab immediately in light of their obvious betrayal of the Nezumi. It is unlikely that a consensus on a solution to this dilemma will be reached any time soon.

Also of great concern to the tribes is the Crippled Bone chieftain's report that the forces of the Shadowlands are amassing into huge hordes south of the Black Finger River. The horrifying accounts of these dark warriors, if true, indicate that an army the likes of which have not been seen since the days of the Maw will soon be marching



northward toward the human lands – and directly through the territories of the Nezumi tribes. The other tribes are scrambling to confirm these reports and making plans to flee from the army's path if necessary. The Nezumi will not fight a battle if they cannot win.

Battles Involving the Nezumi

The scattered status of the Nezumi race combined with their nomadic lifestyle ensures that large battles involving significant numbers of Ratlings are exceptionally rare. Survival is far too important and time-consuming for the tribes to consider a massive attack on any foe, regardless of how dangerous. The Nezumi are more likely to engage in small skirmishes or, even more likely, guerrilla tactics against their foes.

However rare they may be, there have been occasions in the long history of the Nezumi where they have united against a common foe. Some of the more prominent battles and skirmishes known to the Rememberers of the tribes are detailed below.

The Tribes Aid Hiruma Kazuma

One of the very few times that the Nezumi tribes have come together in opposition to a single foe, this incident is also responsible for the beginning of their relationship with the Crab Clan that continues to this day. Many, many years ago, the Nezumi did not share the mutually beneficial relationship they now enjoy with humans. The pink-walkers looked upon the Ratlings with scorn and dismay, often forcing them from territories that they had held for centuries. The only humans who would deal with the Nezumi as equals were those who were outcasts themselves.

Bitter and resentful at their treatment by the Crab, one pack of Nezumi from the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe made an arrangement with a corrupt Kuni to hunt and kill a lone scout traveling through the Shadowlands. The pack, whose tribe is a point

of contention among Rememberers, eagerly stalked and confronted the young Hiruma with the intent to cut him down and leave his remains to become a walking-thing-that-was-dead. Just as the pack began to move in for the kill, a Rememberer traveling with them called out for them to stop. The Rememberer spent long minutes scrutinizing the scout. Finally, he asked in butchered Rokugani for the man's name. The scout replied "Ksoo'ma."

The pack recoiled in shock. Rememberers of every tribe had told the tale of the Ksoo'ma, the Peace-Bringer, for centuries. Sometime after the Terrible Day, a great Nezumi shaman had prophesied that one would come who would bring peace to the Nezumi race once more. It had always been assumed that the Ksoo'ma would be a Ratling, but here he stood before them, one of they-who-walk-with-pink-skin. Wary of the human, yet unwilling to slay him, the pack took Kazuma prisoner.

The tribe's elders decided that Kazuma must be given a test to determine his worth. He was to compete against the tribe's greatest warrior in a contest of strength and speed. While Kazuma acquitted himself well, he had no chance against the physically superior Nezumi. Gleefully, the pack leader who captured Kazuma prepared to kill the scout and fulfill his pact with the Kuni.

The execution was interrupted when a trio of ogres burst into the tribe's camp. Sent by the Kuni to eliminate all traces of his treachery, the ogres began killing everything in sight. Always prepared, the Nezumi scattered like leaves to the wind. Left alone for a moment, Kazuma saw the ogres crush a female Nezumi desperately trying to defend her litter. Her mate, the warrior against whom Kazuma had competed, leapt to the pup's defense, but the ogres were simply too powerful.

Despite his desire to complete his mission to Hiruma Castle, Kazuma's hatred for the Shadowlands overwhelmed him. He grabbed his daisho from the ground and ferociously attacked the ogres from behind. Back to back, the two warriors desperately fought against inhuman foes to save the lives of the children. Short, bloody moments later, Kazuma fled the camp clutching three Nezumi pups. Their father bought them the time they needed to escape with his life. When Kazuma returned the children to the Nezumi, he was declared a hero and a member of the tribe. He was the Ksoo'ma, the Peace Bringer.

Word spread through the tribes like fire through the woods during the Lean Time. Those Nezumi who could speak to the humans told the others that a dark-magic human allied with the dark-dark things of the Shadowlands was trying to kill the Ksoo'ma so that he would not reveal the corrupted human's treachery. Unanimously, the tribes chose to send their finest warriors to accompany the Ksoo'ma to his destination.



With the aid of the tribes, the Ksoo'ma defeated the Kuni's forces and revealed his betrayal to the Crab Clan, the great tribe to which the Ksoo'ma belonged. Although the war against the dark things did not come to an end, the Ksoo'ma did help to bring the tribes and the Crab closer together. The trade between the two has enabled many more Ratlings to survive the Lean Times than ever before, and the Ksoo'ma is remembered fondly to this day by all the major tribes.



The War of the Lost Pups

One of the few things that the Nezumi are passionate enough to fight over is their offspring. The parental instinct is a dominating influence for the Nezumi, and can lead to conflict over even the slightest perceived threat or insult. Centuries after the coming of Hiruma Kazuma to the tribes, one of the bloodiest inter-tribal conflicts in the history of the Nezumi took place over just such an incident.

It began when scouts from the Squeaky Eyeball tribe found a pair of dead Nezumi in the wilderness of the Shadowlands, apparently the victims of goblins. Beneath the corpses the scavengers discovered a quartet of newborn Ratling pups, no more than a few weeks old at most. With both parents dead, the little ones would have perished within hours, but had clung to life by burrowing into the satchel of food carried by their mother.

The tribe took in the pups, as their dead father had been a member before he was exiled for hoarding food. Within a few short weeks, however, the chieftain of the Squeaky Eyeball was given a

message from the Tattered Ear tribe, who claimed that the pups were the children of an exile of their tribe and should be returned to them. The chieftain refused. Soon, the strong parental instincts of the Nezumi caused tempers to flare in both tribes. Squabbling between scouting parties quickly degenerated into open fighting, and soon the two tribes were at war.

The fighting between the two tribes was scattered but extremely intense. Over the period of two months, dozens of Nezumi on either side were killed senselessly. Finally the Hiruma stepped in, as the war was greatly inhibiting their ability to move through either tribe's territory unmolested. With the aid of a mediator, the tribal elders agreed to place two of the pups with each tribe, thereby continuing their parents' lineage and assuaging both tribes. In later years, these pups would go on to serve as elders in each tribe, and were responsible for healing the rift between the two caused by the conflict they inspired when still infants. Ochi'kir of the Tattered Ear and Min'kir of the Squeaky Eyeball are remembered by both tribes for their wisdom, and both are among the ranks of the mysterious Transcendent.

The Crippled Bone versus the Elemental Terrors

A more recent battle, this skirmish is important because it heralded the return of the Crippled Bone tribe to the northern reaches of the Shadowlands, after centuries battling the dark-dark things of the deep Shadowlands near Heaven's Grave. Fortunately, the tribe was in the process of moving to their secondary camp at the time, and casualties were relatively light.

The chieftain of the Crippled Bone, Mat'tck, had been conducting scouting missions to a nearby fire mountain. A warren deep inside the mountain had been the meeting place of several dark-magic humans who had come from all across the Shadowlands. Somehow the humans discovered not only that the Nezumi were investigating them, but where their camp was as well. While the last few warriors were preparing to move to the new camp, the humans' creations exploded from the earth and went berserk, killing several warriors and their mates.

The attackers were huge beasts created from the elements themselves. Despite their bravery and vicious fighting style, the Crippled Bone had no choice but to flee from the indestructible creatures. The beasts pursued the tribe north for days until finally they crossed the Black Finger River, at which point their followers broke off and returned south. Scouting parties revealed that the horrid beasts were lurking not far to the south, however, and the tribe was unable to return to their territory. Instead, they turned



north toward the lands of the other great tribes, where they have carved out their own territory and dominated it for several months now. The brutal destruction of any Shadowlands beast within their new territory has sent a strong message to the other Nezumi: the Crippled Bone will not be trifled with.

The Tattered Ear versus the Naga

Another recent conflict of considerable importance, the scattered fighting between the Tattered Ear tribe and the reawakened Naga forces has caused the former to at least temporarily abandon their territories in the great Shinomen forest. When Stikak, the shrewd chieftain of the Tattered Ear, began to hear reports from his scouts of terrifying snake-like monsters, he assumed that the dark things of the Shadowlands had finally found a way to follow his tribe north. Preparing for the worse, he sent hunting parties out to find and kill the trespassers.

The first encounters between the two were disastrous for the tribe. Confronted with the gigantic serpentine warriors, the Ratlings were crippled by an instinctive terror that nearly paralyzed them. Several scouts were lost to the Naga before the tribe managed to retreat. Even the sternest of the tribe's warriors were horrified by the Naga and the grisly aftermath of their clashes: more often than not, the victorious serpents devoured any Nezumi slain in battle.



Nezumi and Battle

Like their attitude toward history, the Nezumi view of large-scale battles is different from that of humans. To a samurai, a battle is a chance to reap glory and honor for oneself and one's lord. To a Ratling, a large-scale battle is a good way to get killed. Samurai look back upon battles to remember the glorious deeds of their clan and ancestors. Nezumi remember battles to try and find a solution to a current problem. Any Ratling warrior who goes out looking for large battles to participate in is clearly insane and will be shunned by others of his race.

Ratling Psychology

The Nezumi are apparently some sort of odd mix between rodents and primates, highly evolved creatures possessing racial traits of both. Some more notable physiological differences between Nezumi and humans are as follows. Much of the following is intended for the reader's understanding, and draws upon modern terminology of which the Rokugani would be unaware.

Body Structure

Nezumi have an upright, bipedal structure, but their posture is more hunched than humans. Ratlings walk with a stoop, and move about on all four limbs without difficulty. Their skeleton is covered with a supple, flexible musculature stronger than a human's. They have pink skin covered in a shaggy coat in a myriad of colors. The fur along the scalp tends to grow in a longer, sometimes darker mane.

Nezumi paws have digits similar to human fingers but with long, sharp claws. The hind paws have a recessive fifth digit (a stunted toe) while the forepaws have opposable thumbs. A strange evolutionary quirk has appeared among Nezumi, causing certain bloodlines to have three fingers on each forepaw instead of four. Nezumi skeletons indicate that all Nezumi at one time had a fourth digit, though for some reason the fourth digit on the forepaw has vanished on many Ratlings.

The Nezumi skeleton contains a large amount of cartilage, making all Nezumi double-jointed and extremely flexible. The pelvis and shoulder girdle can be dislocated, allowing a Nezumi to crawl through any space large enough to accommodate the skull. This accounts for many Nezumi's reputations as escape artists. There are few barriers that can obstruct a determined Ratling.

There is considerable variety in Nezumi height and weight from tribe to tribe. The diminutive Third Whisker Nezumi are as little as four feet tall and seventy pounds when fully grown. The powerfully

built Crippled Bone occasionally reach six and a half feet tall, and weigh in at an impressive four hundred pounds. Most Nezumi are somewhere between these extremes.

Teeth

The incisors of Nezumi are extremely sharp and always growing. A Nezumi must gnaw constantly to keep their growth in check. The incisors are hard enough to chew wood, fired clay, and soft metal. Certain Nezumi are able to condition themselves so that their teeth can bite tougher metals such as steel. While gnawing, a Nezumi's lips fold behind the incisors to seal the rest of the mouth and prevent the swallowing of foreign substances.

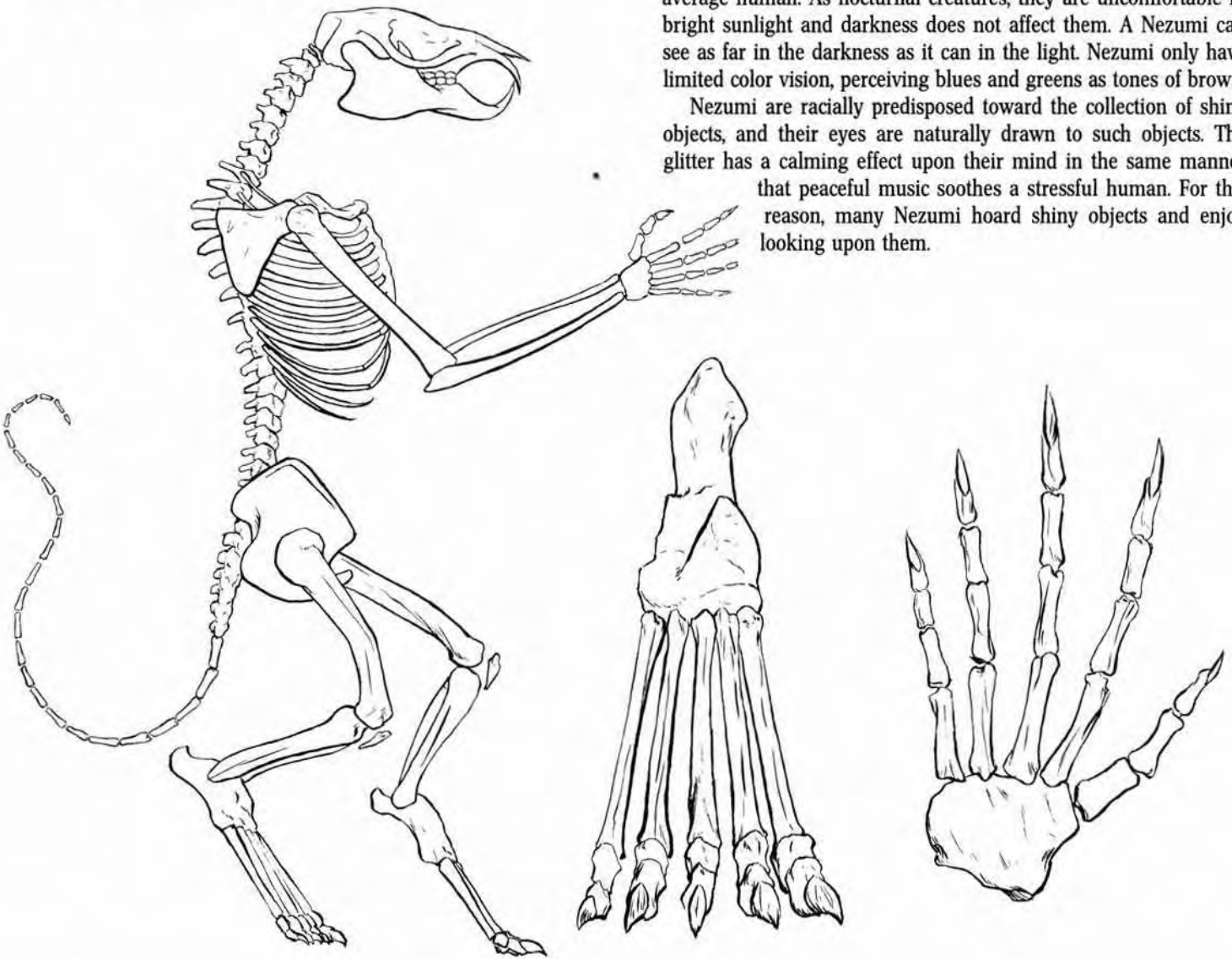
Tail

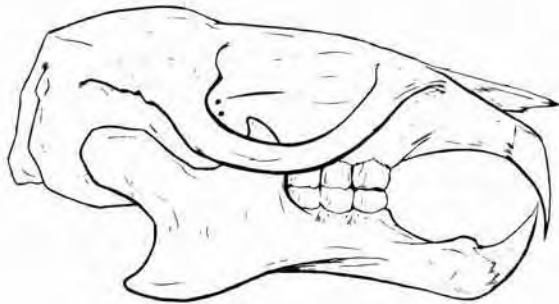
The tail of a Ratling is long, slender, and flexible. A Ratling's tail is roughly three-quarters its height, and serves a variety of purposes. When climbing, the tail is wrapped around a stable surface to provide balance. When running, the tail is thrown out as a counterweight. The tail is not intended as a prehensile manipulating limb, but many Nezumi have learned to use it as such. Some have even learned to use their tails as a weapon, gaining a distinct advantage over opponents without such an extra limb.

Sight

Nezumi have poor vision. They can only see half as far as the average human. As nocturnal creatures, they are uncomfortable in bright sunlight and darkness does not affect them. A Nezumi can see as far in the darkness as it can in the light. Nezumi only have limited color vision, perceiving blues and greens as tones of brown.

Nezumi are racially predisposed toward the collection of shiny objects, and their eyes are naturally drawn to such objects. The glitter has a calming effect upon their mind in the same manner that peaceful music soothes a stressful human. For this reason, many Nezumi hoard shiny objects and enjoy looking upon them.





Scent

A Ratling's sense of scent is acute, and is particularly adapted to detect pheromones left by other Nezumi. A select few Ratlings are able to hone their sense of scent to track prey or find their way through the wilderness.

Hearing

Nezumi are able to perceive a high register of sound inaudible to humans, but cannot hear low, bass tones. They might perceive the vibrations left by such a sound, but cannot hear the sound itself. While the highest registers of sound are useless for meaningful speech, many tribes have developed codes of high-pitched squeaks which they use to transmit signals in human and Naga territory.

Pheromones

All Nezumi have glands near their tail used to leave chemical messages. Some of these pheromones are odorless. Some have a raw, musky odor. In general, human sense of scent is too poor to distinguish one pheromone from another. There are at least six chemicals produced by Nezumi glands, and the mixture dictates the nature of the message. Different tribes have developed different chemical codes, as well as a few universal signals used between tribes. Most Nezumi only have enough control to leave simple messages. Again, certain Nezumi focus on this ability and use their glands to leave complex messages.

Nezumi pheromones have a peculiar effect on certain animals. Dogs react with extreme aggression, as do many horses. Even normally mild-tempered horses have been known to attack Ratlings.

Eating Habits

A Nezumi's sharp teeth and powerful two-stomached digestive system allow them to survive as omnivores and scavengers, thriving on substances that a human or Naga could not tolerate. Nezumi can eat grass, leather, and even wood if desperate. They prefer more nutritious fare, such as rice, berries, fish, seeds, nuts, and meat.

Tribes who live in the Shadowlands are capable of digesting the flesh of Tainted creatures.

Adaptability

Ratlings can adapt to nearly any environment. Their supple musculature and light bone structure allow them to run swiftly. Their claws and tail bestow prodigious climbing abilities. Their body fat makes them buoyant, granting all Nezumi the ability to swim. Their fur and fat interact to provide insulation, keeping a Ratling warm in winter and cool in summer. Some bloodlines change color each season, becoming dark brown during summer and pure white in winter, providing camouflage to match the season. A Nezumi can store enough body fat to survive long periods without food; a Nezumi who eats twice its normal nutritional requirements can then go without eating for twice as long as usual.

Disease and Corruption

Nezumi are highly resistant to infection. Even when a Ratling becomes ill there is little chance it will succumb to the same disease again. Immunity is passed down to the next generation; thus many Nezumi are immune to the plague and other diseases. The Nezumi are also immune to the Wasting Disease, suggesting to some that this plague may either be a relic of a time before mankind was created or a variant of the Shadowlands Taint.

Nezumi are entirely immune to the Shadowlands Taint, and their immunity extends beyond invulnerability to corruption. Wounded Nezumi in the Shadowlands do not become infected as humans do, and their wounds heal normally. Ratling immunity to the Taint has been an enigma since the Crab discovered the phenomenon long ago. Unlike the Naga, who gain their resistance through magical ritual, Ratlings are naturally immune. Even the Nezumi are unable to explain this phenomenon, and some tribes embrace their immunity as a sign of their superiority over other races.

Ratling Thought and Behavior

A Nezumi's rapid metabolism leaves it in a near-constant state of excitement. Ratlings can't sit still for long and have a notoriously short attention span. A human might describe the average Ratling as hyperactive or extremely nervous. The truth is, a Ratling's mind is focused on the moment, with little attention paid to past and future. Many Ratlings have a bad memory, and tend to forget events save those of great importance.

While Nezumi seem unfocused, it would be more accurate to say that their minds operate quickly. If something does not hold their



Nezumi and the Taint

Why are the Nezumi immune to Taint? This is a mystery that may never be answered, but here are a few suggestions. If you're the GM, feel free to institute any or none of these as the "real" reason for Ratling immunity.

The Nezumi's inability to focus upon Void leaves their soul closed to Fu Leng's corruption. If they learned to use Void as humans can, Fu Leng could corrupt them.

Those Nezumi who were not immune died off in the wake of the Terrible Day. The rest evolved. Perhaps the gene that dictates a lack of Shadowlands immunity lingers in the tribes that outside the Shadowlands. Perhaps there are Nezumi alive today who could be Tainted.

Amaterasu was so shocked by her son's destruction of the Nezumi Empire that she gave her tears to the First Rememberer. The First Rememberer used the magic to protect her people from Fu Leng's grasp. Humans cannot be affected by this magic as they have already received a blessing from Amaterasu's tears – life.

When Fu Leng fell, he attempted to corrupt the Ratlings first. He wanted to hide their Taint so that they would be the perfect spies. Somehow, the Dark Lord made a mistake he could not undo and the Ratlings became immune to the Taint. Fu Leng has searched for a way to correct this error ever since.

The Nezumi are not of this world, but from another very similar. As they are outside of the Celestial Order, they can no more be affected by the Dark Lord's Taint than an oni can be affected by a sword. How they became trapped here is yet another mystery...

attention, they move on. While this makes Ratlings prone to snap judgments, it also grants them the ability to analyze situations quickly. Nowhere is this more obvious than their approach to technology. While most Ratlings are too impatient to invent tools, they have an extraordinary ability to repair, restore, and adapt the discarded tools of others. Nezumi are not skilled innovators, but learn quickly and adapt existing resources in surprising ways. The Kaiu have noted with astonishment how Nezumi scroungers display the ability to fashion weapons and armor after watching a Crab weaponsmith do the same thing only once. If human innovation and Nezumi adaptation were paired, the possibilities would be endless.

Reproduction

Nezumi females produce litters of six to eight pups after six months of gestation. For the first two weeks, the pups are hairless and cannot open their eyes or ears. The pups are helpless for the first year, during which time they ride upon a parent's back by grasping their fur with tiny paws. Nezumi parents are comfortable with this, and can operate normally while carrying full litter.

After one year, a Ratling is grown enough to stop nursing and walk on its own. One year after giving birth, the mother becomes fertile again. Many females bear another litter as soon as possible. Until they mature, Ratling children are small and vulnerable. During the first few years, half of all pups are killed by predators or disease. This is not due to lack of vigilance by the Nezumi. Every Ratling possesses a powerful parental instinct leading them to care for and protect pups, even those who are not their own.

Their rapid rate of reproduction accounts in a large way for racial diversity among Ratlings. They bear so many children so quickly that mutations abound. Those variations that assist in survival endure, leading to astonishing differences between one tribe and another.

Life Cycle

During the first five years of life, a Ratling is intensely curious. It strives to learn as much as it can, and is capable of absorbing extraordinary amounts of information. At six years, a Nezumi's mind and body reach the peak of development, and the Nezumi becomes a full-fledged member of the tribe.

A Nezumi's metabolism causes it to age rapidly. A Ratling reaches middle age at twenty, and begins to show the signs of old age at thirty. Barring disease or mishap, the oldest Nezumi can live to be up to forty-five. Due to their dangerous lifestyle, many never live to see the age of ten.



Ratling Philosophy

Thor'chezz see more samurai than he can count, lined from both ends of sky. They line up with sharp-sharp sticks and sharp-sharp swords and big-long bows to put fire in the sky. They surrounding city; I guess they want something inside. Samurai from the city line up and hit-hit fight. Not one run away. Not one surrender. Not one survive.

Kill-kill-kill, till everyone dead.

Samurai call that brave-brave.

Thor'chezz call that stupid.

The Nezumi outlook on life is different from that of the Rokugani. Nezumi philosophy has been influenced by their nomadic lifestyle, the bleakness of the Shadowlands, and the scattered remnants of the great culture that existed before the Terrible Day. Some of the most interesting aspects of Nezumi philosophy are enumerated below.

Name

Name (*"thich"*) is the driving force behind much of Nezumi behavior. A Nezumi would have great difficulty explaining Name, in much the same way that a samurai would have difficulty explaining his soul. Name is a Nezumi's sense of identity, strength of character, and the role it fulfills within the tribe. A Nezumi's Name is all that remains after its death. One's identity and one's behavior are inextricably linked in the Nezumi way of thought.

A Nezumi with strong Name (*"charathathich"*) is successful at being a Nezumi. They will be remembered, their name given to pups in hopes that the next generation will be great. A Nezumi who practices bad Name (*"m'thrthich"*) is to be avoided because it is destructive, wasteful, clumsy, stupid, or troublesome. The name is bad, because the Nezumi was bad. Nezumi with bad Name are remembered so their shame will not repeat itself.

Like honor, Name represents a Nezumi's strength of character, but it is influenced by how others view the Nezumi. Like honor, a Nezumi's strength of Name determines his or her code of behavior. However, the actions of a Nezumi with strong Name are very different from those of an honorable samurai.

Name is also used to describe the world. Anything which is beautiful, powerful, or useful is said to have great Name. A deep, ancient burrow filled with countless treasures has strong Name. A tribe who lives in such a place is lucky, for their own names are strengthened by such a burrow. A place which is dangerous has bad Name. A burrow which has been consumed by the Taint or invaded by bandits has bad Name and should be avoided.

Niche

Ratling society is stratified via a system called Tach-cht. This term translates as "One's-Important-Place-in-the-World-and-How-One-Fills-It," but is more frequently called Niche. Every Ratling has a Niche, whether it is hunter, scrounger, Rememberer, or chief. While certain Nezumi have a "higher" Niche, it is not necessarily a bad thing to have low Niche. Higher Niche bestows more responsibilities, a concept not all Nezumi find desirable. Nezumi who tend to get themselves into trouble from excessive ambition are said to "have climbed into a Niche," or are "a Niche too high for their tail," implying they've climbed so high that a single mistake could make them fall.

Survival

A Nezumi's primary instinct is to survive. This tendency extends to the survival of one's family, tribe, and race. Given the choice between conflict and escape, a Nezumi will almost exclusively choose the latter. This causes Nezumi to appear cowardly by the samurai's way of thinking, but Nezumi are not cowards. They simply don't place value on unnecessary combat. If given no other choice, a Nezumi will defend itself with startling tenacity.

Nezumi fighting in defense of tribe or burrow often fight till the last breath, or until the rest of the tribe can escape. Nezumi fervently believe that discretion is the better part of valor, and rarely enter combat without an escape route. Nezumi endure a great deal of harassment in their attempts to avoid conflict, but can only be pushed so far. Cornered Nezumi *always* fight to the death, attempting to kill as many enemies as possible. By doing so, potential threats to the tribe are eliminated and the Nezumi's life has not been wasted. The beasts of the Shadowlands have learned the price of fighting a cornered Nezumi, and avoid such confrontations unless the odds are greatly in their favor.

Death

Nezumi have no concept of an afterlife. They believe that the spirit of their dead live on in their Name, and in dreams. So long as your name is remembered, you never truly die. Those with strong Name are remembered for their greatness, so the best parts live on. Those with bad Name are remembered for their mistakes, so only the mistakes live on. For this reason, many Nezumi with bad Name embark upon wild quests in an attempt to redeem themselves, taking on a wild ferocity to match the Akodo Deathseekers.

Seppuku bewilders most Nezumi. To destroy oneself for any reason is a sign of pitifully weak Name. An individual who does such a thing will be remembered only so that others don't follow his example. Even those Nezumi who attempt to learn the Code of



Bushido have great difficulty understanding the purpose behind ritual suicide.

Time

Nezumi have a rather strange view of time. They are aware of days and seasons, but do not keep strict track of their passage. Anything that has already occurred happened “yesterday” (*k'thatch*). All that occurred “yesterday” is held in more or less equal regard, though certain events long past may be described as “long yesterday ago.” A warrior who died centuries ago might be referred to with the same warmth and familiarity as a comrade with whom one went out hunting last week. This ties strongly into Nezumi views of death – those who have died are gone only if they are forgotten. If the dead are kept close, then they are never further away than a memory.

Unfortunately, Nezumi have a poor memory for events, especially events they have not personally experienced. A few rare Nezumi are born with photographic memories, and are able to recall the history of their race with extraordinary detail. These Nezumi are called Rememberers (*Tch'tch*). Rememberers hold important advisory positions within the tribe, but are never chiefs. Carrying the past is a heavy burden, and a Rememberer cannot afford to be distracted. The exception to this rule is the Squeaky Eyeball Tribe, an entire tribe born with the potential to be Rememberers.

Nezumi view the future with a fatalistic approach. Anything yet to occur happens “tomorrow,” and “tomorrow” (*m'atch-tek*) is synonymous with “death.” Tomorrow is referred to as a living, tangible being, as powerful as a god. The Nezumi believe that tomorrow hates them. Tomorrow is hunting the Nezumi, and even the fastest runner cannot escape. Even when tomorrow does not catch you it leaves change and uncertainty.

It is a long held belief that tomorrow will eventually catch the last Nezumi, and a great battle will begin. If the last Nezumi kills tomorrow, he will steal tomorrow's power and create the race anew. If the last Nezumi dies, their legacy will vanish into dreams. Many Nezumi embrace an ideal called “racing tomorrow” (*kufl-m'atch-tek*). According to this philosophy life must be lived to the fullest. If you want something, take it. If you have a problem, deal with it or run away. Never hesitate, never stop to dwell on something, for you may waste your last few moments. Do what you must now; tomorrow won't give you the chance. Balancing this carefree lifestyle with the needs of the tribe is not always possible; those who race tomorrow often find themselves at odds with more practical Nezumi.

The Tribe

A Nezumi rarely thinks of itself before the tribe. Nezumi instinctively recognize that they have a greater chance of survival

with higher numbers, so the tribe must survive. Everything a Nezumi does must benefit the tribe. Everything a Nezumi owns belongs to the tribe. The worst punishment a Nezumi can endure is exile, and it is reserved for the greatest crimes, including murder, betrayal of tribal secrets, or the death of a child. By the Ratling way of thinking, there is no difference between murdering another Nezumi and causing their death through your mistakes. Both demand exile.

Life is difficult for an exile. Most die within months without the support and companionship of their kin. A small proportion survive on their own; a few band with other exiles to build new tribes.

Children

All Nezumi have a powerful instinct to protect the young. Nezumi believe it is the height of cowardice to harm a child, and will gladly die fighting in the defense of their young. All Nezumi learn the basics of pup care, and nurturing the next generation is a duty all members of the tribe share. During the rare conflicts between tribes, it has always been an unspoken rule that children are never involved in fighting.

It is always the tribe's first order of business to hide the pups when strangers are about. Permission to interact with the tribe's children is the purest gesture of friendship and trust. Outsiders who save the life of a pup are often adopted as a member of the tribe, regardless of whether they already belong to another tribe. Even a few humans have been become honorary members of tribes after saving the lives of pups. A Nezumi will adopt any abandoned pup without question. Tales exist of human children rescued and returned to their parents by Ratlings. A few legends even speak of humans raised by Ratlings.

Fear

The Nezumi have no word for “coward,” and see fear as a symbol of strength. While it is good to be brave, it is also good to be afraid. A warrior who feels fear in the face of a superior foe knows his limitations. A warrior who is afraid can act bravely if he can handle his fear. A Nezumi who acknowledges fear but acts bravely has powerful Name. While Nezumi see the willingness to flee in the face of unnecessary combat as common sense, they have a strong respect for bravery and do not see fear and bravery as mutually exclusive. To defend the tribe when seeing to one's own survival would be easier is brave. To risk one's life for the sake of a pup is extraordinarily brave.

A warrior with no fear does not recognize danger, and can bring greater danger to the tribe through foolishness. Some Ratlings are born with no fear instinct, but these unfortunate creatures are not ostracized. Instead, they are trained as Chitatchikkan (“brave-bold-



fearless-sunlit-warriors-with-great-skill”), berserkers who never surrender and never retreat. They are the Nezumi’s most powerful weapon, and even samurai are often surprised by their fearless rage.

The Chitatchikkan are often assigned duty as nest guards, protecting pups while the hunters are away. This places these berserkers where their fearlessness will be a benefit, but keeps them away from opportunities to start unnecessary fights. Chitatchikkan guards have been known to snatch poisonous snakes in their bare hands or charge through open flame to rescue a pup. When enemies foolishly threaten, the Chitatchikkan charge fearlessly while the rest of the tribe gather the young and escape.

During times of war these mad berserkers are used with great discretion. More sensible Ratlings are dispatched first to subtly scout the enemy and determine whether unleashing the Chitatchikkan would only cause greater trouble. The Crippled Bone is notorious for its unusually high number of Chitatchikkan, and their eagerness to dispatch the berserkers in swift surgical strikes. Some believe that the *entire* Crippled Bone tribe is born Chitatchikkan. Only the Crippled Bone know the truth.

Leadership

Leadership of a tribe is a complex thing. Leadership does not follow bloodlines. Tribal consensus is the most important factor. Those who are best suited gravitate toward the position of chief. Chiefs of large tribes are advised by “bosses” or “pack chiefs” who lead sub-groups within the tribe and help the chief make important decisions. The Rememberers claim that once, when all the Ratling tribes lived together as one, there was a Chief-of-Chiefs (*Tchickchuk’chek*) who ruled all the tribes without question. Some prophets claim that a Chief-of-Chiefs will soon be born to unite the tribes again.

The chief is usually chosen by a combination of wisdom, skill, and popularity. When the chief no longer seems to be doing a good job, the tribe stops listening and elects someone else. This makes leadership tricky, as the chief’s educated reasoning may appear impractical or difficult to the tribe. The best chiefs maintain their position by listening to the tribe, and subtly convincing others that their own ideas are best. If another Nezumi gains favor, the chief must immediately gain the tribe’s favor back, even if it means stealing the competitor’s ideas. Occasionally, a chief quietly finds a way to discredit the opponent, proving the weakness of the upstart’s Name before he becomes a threat. Crabs who have had an opportunity to watch Ratling politics in action claim that the best chiefs display subtlety, guile, and ruthlessness to match any Scorpion.

One unique position in a tribe is the *s’tch-chuk* (favored-pup-of-the-chief). Bribing or flattering a chief is not done. It is seen as a

waste of the chief’s time, and thus an act of weak Name (especially if the chief allows it). Instead, Nezumi gain favor by showering gifts upon the chief’s favorite pup. A *s’tch-chuk* can count on a great deal of popularity, but will lose friends rapidly if the chief falls from grace.

Very rarely, a tribe is led by a shaman. Nezumi shamans rule with unquestioned authority, as other Nezumi have a great deal of fear, awe, and respect for magic. In truth, the only political threat to a shaman is another shaman of greater power. Ironically, the strong code of ethics required to use Nezumi magic does not mesh well with the underhanded political tactics needed to run a tribe



“Ratling”

“Ratling” is a term coined by Rokugani to describe Nezumi, and is synonymous with “vermin.” Some Nezumi don’t mind being called Ratlings. The Tattered Ear couldn’t care less; they realize that humans can be set in their ways and don’t mind the name. Other Nezumi, such as the Crippled Bone, are greatly offended at being called vermin, and may become violent if insulted with such a derogatory term as “Ratling.”

“Nezumi” is a technical term devised by Kuni and Isawa scholars. This name is considered to be far more acceptable by most tribes. In fact, given the Nezumi respect for names, many Nezumi take it as a compliment that the humans invented this name just for them.

The Nezumi’s word for their kind is “Chi’ch-tch.” As this is somewhat difficult to pronounce, most Nezumi grudgingly accept being referred to by a human name.

“Krtichik” (the term Nezumi use for humans) translates as “no-hair-pink-skin.” It is an interesting linguistic coincidence that Krtichik is pronounced very much like “K-tich’k,” the Nezumi word for “monkey.”



efficiently. Thus, most Ratling shamans do not seek political power and instead serve merely as advisors.

Old Age

Whether living in the Shadowlands or under the nose of the Great Clans, the life of a Nezumi is short, brutal, and dangerous. Those few Nezumi who are clever enough to survive to old age are considered a valuable tribal resource. A tribe's success can be judged by its number of elders, and old age is synonymous with strong Name. Elders are always allowed to speak their opinion in any situation concerning the welfare of the tribe. Only the acknowledged chief, boss or shaman has a greater say in the tribe's actions, but to ignore an elder's advice is considered reckless.

Elders too feeble to travel are carried in improvised litters. An elder chooses his or her own bearers, and to be chosen is a matter of great pride. Those who bear an elder are, to a degree, sharing that Elder's Name. The litter of elder chieftains are usually borne by bosses. The litters of elder shamans are often carried by their apprentices.

Property

Nezumi place no value on personal possessions. Ratlings of the same tribe borrow each other's possessions without asking or requiring permission. Everything belongs to the tribe, and benefits everyone. Hoarding items for personal gain occurs from time to time, but is viewed with distaste. Any Nezumi who steals from the tribe or refuses to share risks punishment, possibly exile if their hoarding endangers the tribe.

Many humans mistakenly assume that Nezumi have no concept of theft. Ratlings are aware that certain things belong to other people. However, they have no qualms about stealing from outsiders. To Nezumi, stealing is not a crime. Getting caught for stealing is a crime. Nezumi are notorious for robbing graves, shrines, and storehouses. In their mind, anything left behind at a grave or shrine is wasted. The gods don't need food; the dead don't need weapons. If the humans don't eat all their food, they must not want it.

There are limits to this behavior, of course. Nezumi are practical creatures, and have a good instinct for when they have worn out their welcome. After they have scrounged a bit from one area, they move on. Nezumi rarely steal from allies, as friendship benefits the tribe more than a few bolts of cloth or a bushel of rice. If a Nezumi openly steals from a friend or ally, it is a signal that the friendship is at an end.

The Shadowlands

The Shadowlands is a deadly place, but to many Nezumi it is home. Though they are immune to the Taint, Nezumi are not

immune to the many dangers posed by the Tainted lands. Over a thousand years, the Ratlings have simply learned to survive. The Nezumi know how to read the mood of the land. They know where to find food, when to fight, and when to make tracks. The Crab find their expertise indispensable, and have come to rely upon the Nezumi for assistance and information.

One might ask why the Nezumi bother to live in the Shadowlands. Aren't there plenty of other places to live in the Empire? Some tribes, such as the Tattered Ear and the Green-Green-White, have indeed staked out territories beyond the Wall. What causes other tribes, such as the Crippled Bone, to linger in such a dangerous place? This is a question that even the Nezumi cannot adequately answer. The Shadowlands was once the home of their great empire, and some tribes are too proud to give up their last link to the past. Perhaps, if they wait long enough, they will find a way to steal the land back. The Shadowlands may throb with the power of bad Name, but it is still their home.

Magic

Nezumi shamans do not practice magic as Rokugani shugenja recognize it. Shamans do not rely upon the kami or Fortunes. Instead, their magic extends from the power of Name. Simply put, a shaman is a Nezumi whose sense of identity is so powerfully focused that he can influence the world around him through sheer force of will. By changing subtle aspects of his own identity, he becomes capable of extraordinary feats. By altering the way he perceives the world and forcing his perceptions outward, a shaman can change reality.

To work their magic, shamans must become intimately familiar with the "True Names" of a variety of creatures, objects, and natural phenomenon. For this reason, shamans are often called Nameseekers, Namefinders, Namebinders, or Nametakers. A shaman of low rank is called a Conjuror – though they do not yet know enough names to have great power, they can yet work some minor effects.

A shaman must maintain the power of his Name, or his magic will fail. A shaman who acts irresponsibly risks corrupting himself with self-deception. Wicked shamans force their skewed vision of the world outward, twisting and perverting the world while all the while remaining convinced that their magic is pure. Such evil shamans are incredibly dangerous, as their deluded magic threatens to rewrite reality itself.

The Transcendent

The most powerful shamans never die; they simply leave their mortal vessels and become beings of pure Name. These Nezumi are known as Transcendent ("Wikki'thich-hie"). The Transcendent exist



in the Realm of Dreams (*I'thich*), and can only be contacted if they allow it. Because they live in dreams, they can see the future, the past, and the present simultaneously.

Occasionally, the Transcendent make contact with living Nezumi, always for murky purposes of their own. The guidance of a Transcendent is a mixed blessing at best. In becoming immortal, the Transcendent forget much of what it means to be mortal. They demand the impossible and offer little help besides confusing prophetic dreams. Though many Nezumi become great heroes under the guidance of Transcendent, just as many are driven to ignominious doom. The lucky are merely prophets – mouthpieces of these powerful spirits.

Though Transcendent are very much like gods, the Nezumi do not worship them as much as fear them. The interference of a Transcendent usually bodes ill, and most Nezumi fulfill the spirit's requests as quickly as possible so that they can encourage the spirit to go away.

Affection

Nezumi are extraordinarily affectionate toward one another. They communicate much through body language and touch. Close friends touch each other often, grasping one another's paws or standing close enough that their whiskers brush. Spouses and children are publicly affectionate, embracing one another, rubbing noses, or scratching and petting one another. Pups love to be scratched on the stomach, and often vie for their parents' attention to receive such affection. Though many Rokugani view this as another example of uncouth Nezumi barbarism, the Nezumi see no reason why they should not display the feelings they have for one another.

Dreams

Dreams carry power. The Nezumi believe that the raw, creative power of the universe flows through dreams. All that exists comes from dreams, and all that no longer is returns to dreams. Nezumi are taught to pay particular attention to their





dreams, and share them with others in an attempt to learn what they mean. Dreams are a popular object of discussion. A young Nezumi will describe a dream with the same excitement and zeal as a samurai bragging of his first battle.

Dreams are Name.

Many Ratlings believe that the lost empire of the Nezumi has not been truly lost, but exists in the Realm of Dreams ("Tthich"). If it could be found, it could be built again in the waking world. All that the Nezumi have lost would be recovered. Many shamans occupy themselves questing through Tthich, searching for any sign of the lost Empire. Such shamans know first hand that the Realm of Dreams is a dangerous and unpredictable place, and warn against meddling with its power.

Luck

The idea that things happen by chance is an astonishing new concept that had simply never occurred to Nezumi, and appeals

greatly to many. Nezumi stand in awe of people or things that appear to be lucky.

As humans first introduced the idea of luck, they are thought to be extremely lucky. Obviously it is luck that has given the humans their power and wealth. Luck allows humans to live a long time, makes their steel sharper, and makes spirits obey their will. Everything that a humans do that a Nezumi cannot is often attributed to luck. A few Nezumi have embarked on quests to find the source of luck, to steal it or destroy it, with no success. The xenophobic Green-Green-White Tribe has taken a more direct approach, and carry the skulls of dead humans as good luck charms.

Nezumi Life

"As the seasons turn, so the Nezumi live."

—Yasuki Garou

In many ways, the life of a Nezumi has the same ups and downs as that of a human, although they lead a much harder life. Most tribes never stay in one place for very long, moving from one encampment to the next in order to survive. Due to their limited technology and lack of civilization, the Ratlings are very much at the mercy of their surroundings. So it is that their life has cycles that mimic the seasons. It is this fluctuation that is the crux of their unique society.

Spring

"The weight of the world is held-held by the young."

—Ropp'tch'tch

The first Rememberer said that the world formed in spring, the Walking Time, which has become the most important season to the Nezumi for that reason and many others. When winter thaws, that is when the newly born pups are allowed to see Lord Moon's light for the first time. As in the Emerald Empire, life resumes a steady pace as paths between warrens are heavily traveled again.

The foremost of all celebrations held at this time is the Rite of Naming. Those Ratlings that are in their second Spring are the center of this ceremony, presented by their mothers. All tribes consider this the most important event over the course of the year, and every Nezumi that can attend does so. Ratling philosophy puts the most importance on children and names – this ceremony brings both to the focus. When the days begin to grow a little warmer, a shaman from each tribe awaits the first morning when no frost touches the ground. Each Ratling mother begins a silent vigil with the chosen shaman, preparing her children for the day that they will stand before the shaman and be given meaning in their lives.





Also included in this rite are the Nezumi that have proven themselves worthy of adding a title to their names. Such an honor is neither granted nor accepted lightly. Only the greatest of the Paths are distinguished this way, and are treated as heroes and elders for the rest of their lives. After the ritual, the adult Nezumi who have been Named often are invited into position of great prominence, leading groups of other Ratlings as teachers or commanders.

Once a Ratling is declared to have a new name, he is bound to it forever and expected to maintain the reputation the name holds. For Ratling pups, the name-giver takes care in giving the youth's first name, as the power of Name greatly influences destiny. While a name may have many implications, it is rare that recipients will not manifest their destiny in relationship to the name in some way. For centuries, the greatest shamans have debated whether destiny stems from the name, or the name dictates the destiny. Many consider it a moot point, because none will deny the power that Name has.

Though it is rare, shamans have been known to bestow ancient names of heroes or legends from Nezumi history on children during this ritual. This is both a blessing and curse, as the Ratling will be treated with awe and respect by his tribe for the rest of his life, as long as he can live up to the name given. To fail in such a charge is one of the greatest shames in the Nezumi culture, but has happened only twice to date.

Shortly after the Rite of Naming, the new elders and leaders of the Ratling tribes begin to organize for the Walking Time. Winter supplies are running out at this time, and no time can be wasted finding new sources of food and materials. Those who were just Named as leaders find their first test now as the tribe tends to be a little slow and settled from the winter. The younger Ratlings begin their learning now as well, watching the scouts as they prepare for their journeys in the camp, and observing workers and others in their daily duties.

The encampment a tribe has made for the Lean Time is struck slowly. Though the Nezumi do not place a great value on material goods' durability, they are not wasteful. If a tribe has constructed structures to keep out the cold of the winter, they are taken apart carefully, so they may be used again in the next Lean Time. Tribes fortunate enough to have wintered in caves usually have few items important enough to keep.

Two or three days after the Rite of Naming, the first scouts return from their journeys, and report to the Chieftain or bosses in charge of the tribe. When all of the scouts have returned, the leader or leaders of the tribe announce where the tribe will Walk for the season. For many tribes, the camps for the Lean Time and the Growing Time are the same every year. Some years, a newer place has become available either by being abandoned by other tribes or relinquished by something from the Shadowlands.

By this time, those too old to carry themselves have been readied in their litters, and the Walking begins. From then until the Growing Time, when the Nezumi tribe will find a place to settle for the summer, scouts are sent ahead every day to ensure the tribe is following the correct path. Terrain that takes a scout perhaps two days to traverse may take the tribe a week or longer. In addition to the honored elders slowing progress, an entire tribe of Ratlings is a far more obvious target than a lone, nearly invisible scout. Just like the Nezumi, many other creatures have emerged for the spring, and have not eaten very well all winter.

Though all of spring is called the Walking Time, the Nezumi usually only travel for about two weeks to their destination. The rest of the season is spent in different ways by the tribes, though all tribes begin setting up camp in the places that they will spend the summer season.

Summer

"Grow-grow today. Fight-fight tomorrow."

– Tchickchuk

Since Nezumi are largely a nomadic culture, their society conforms to the rhythm of the seasons. Because of this, the Growing Time is when Ratlings are the most active. The youngest of the Ratlings are cared for generally in the center of a tribe's summer encampment. There they are watched over by various members of the tribe, including the Chitatchikkan and others unable to help in any other way. Often the elders of the tribe care for the children, making sure they are reared properly and keeping an eye on the future of their tribe.

Throughout all of the summer, while the elderly tend to the young, the rest of the tribe performs whatever duties are necessary. Specific rituals vary from tribe to tribe, but generally the most important aspects of summer are gathering, hunting, or growing food, storing it, maintaining defenses, and training. No task is demeaning or menial if it helps the tribe. Even the greatest warriors will help gather food if that is what the tribe needs.

Methods of gathering and storing food vary greatly between tribes. The Green-Green-White Tribe do a large amount of farming, whereas the Crippled Bone live almost exclusively on what they can scavenge from the wild. No matter what the method, it is imperative that the tribe has enough food not only to stay alive, but also to maintain them through the Lean Time. For this reason, the bulk of the harvesting is done during the summer.

With rare exceptions, Nezumi life is extremely perilous. With enemies all around them, it is important that each tribe maintain proper defenses. Some tribes are lucky enough to find natural defenses such as high mountain passes or swamps that are



Mokuna and the Nezumi

Those who are familiar with Kuni Mokuna's controversial works have likely read his essay on Nezumi life. While it is an excellent overview, there are minor details that are admittedly hazy or completely untrue. For purposes of fact, this book should be considered more accurate than *the Book of the Shadowlands*.

This doesn't necessarily mean that player characters or NPCs know that.

treacherous to the unwary. Others must rely on their own ingenuity and strength to protect them. Chieftains and warriors confer late in the spring, determining how best to defend the tribe throughout the summer months and put their plans into action as quickly as possible.

The growth and survival of the tribe can happen only with proper training, so Nezumi society places a heavy emphasis on it. Each able member of the tribe partakes in training in one form or another, either learning or teaching. Due to the fact that every member of the tribe has a large number of duties to perform, it might seem difficult to keep up both regular training and day-to-day living, but the Nezumi have become quite adept at it.

Unlike the Rokugani, the Nezumi do not have specific "schools." As a young Ratling shows promise in a particular field, or when the tribe has need for more from a particular profession, the young learn the necessary skills from the older members of the tribe. The Nezumi feel that it is easier to learn how to fight while fighting with an experienced warrior at your side than to have someone explain how to do something. So it is that their training and their testing are primarily done through hands-on experience.

During the week of the shortest nights of the year, the Festival of Jaktcrag (Choosing the Strong from the Weak) takes place. Any member of the tribe that has yet to receive a Second Name is allowed to participate in an effort to show their skill. While it is technically a competition, it is also the most intense training that a Nezumi can go through. Warrior or poet, scout or shaman, all can be sure to find someone to match skills against, thereby both proving worth and honing skills. Many times those who show excellence

during the festival will be watched closely by the shamans, as they show the greatest potential for the tribe's future.

Autumn

"Only the strongest trees maintain their branches. So is it with the tribe's leaders and its children."

— Ak'tok'tuk

In the fall comes the Nezumi's greatest triumph over the will of nature. As the whole of Rokugan begins to lie down and rest and the leaves fall from the trees, the Nezumi leaders rise to power and show their strength. All through the summer, the young of the tribes have been training, and it is this season that serves as their first true test.

Nezumi count the start of the Standing Time when the rise of the sun brings with it the first frost. Toward the end of the Growing Time, frost forms on the grass and ground during the night, but vanishes as the sun rises. When the bulk of a tribe settles in to sleep for the day, and the frost still clings to the ground for a time, all know it is time to prepare for the Lean Time.

The obvious main task in the fall is that of striking the camp that has been made for the summer. Just as in the Walking Time, scouts are sent out to where the tribe normally spends the next season, and tribal elders oversee the deconstruction of their encampment. Before this major move takes place, however, the new leadership of the tribe must be formed.

During the harsh winter months, the Nezumi rely on the strength of their leaders, who must provide the food, shelter and safety that the tribe needs during the most dangerous time of the year. Like so many other things, selection of the leadership varies from tribe to tribe. In the Chipped Tooth Tribe, it is common for the greatest warriors and scouts to become part of the tribal leadership, whereas the Third Whisker place a greater emphasis on powerful shamans. In some cases, the previous leaders choose their own successor, but more often than not, the tribe's wishes as a whole are the deciding factor. Competitions are not uncommon if there is a tough decision to be made, but most choices are quite obvious. Many times there are elaborate ceremonies where new leaders are initiated, although sometimes such extravagance cannot be afforded.

Once chosen, leaders hold their positions until the tribe's needs change. Although it is an act of great Name to be a tribal leader, most Nezumi are willing to give up their position if someone better comes along, for there are few acts more terrible than putting your own pride before the tribe's needs.

Traditionally, a single Nezumi is ultimately in charge of the tribe, although most have advisors to aid them. In fact, the Tattered Ear tribe has formed a small court modeled after the Imperial Court of



the humans. A tribe's Chief generally has at least one advisor from each important "school of thought," from the Warriors to the Builders. These "representatives" are chosen with the utmost care, and it is considered a great honor to be part of the Chief's council.

Once the tribe's leadership has been selected and initiated – a process that can easily take half the season – the tribe begins its second move of the year. Like the Spring move, this traditionally takes only two weeks, leaving the remainder of the season to mate and prepare for the winter, or the Lean Time.

It is during the late fall that the young Nezumi begin to mate. Each autumn the females begin to emit pheromones that indicate that they are looking for a mate. The males do their best to impress the females by bringing them shiny objects, food, and trinkets that they have won in battle or stolen. This "courting period" is short indeed, as the females normally choose a mate within a few weeks. Once she has made her choice, she makes some form of necklace to give to her new mate. Sometimes this will be made of teeth or shiny objects, but when the materials are not available, she may simply use twigs and grasses. That necklace becomes the symbol of their "union."

In yet another oddity that the Rokugani cannot explain, the Nezumi have an interesting outlook on mating. Once a female chooses a mate, she remains with that mate for the entire year. Neither male nor female breaks the union during this time. For that year, they remain truly loyal to one another and the litter that they have together. Each fall however, the female chooses a different mate, never having the same mate more than once. This strange practice makes for strange families, but also provides the Nezumi with the genetic diversity that has kept them alive for over a thousand years.

Winter

"The white snow mirrors the light of dreams. How can one deny that death and winter are the same?"

– Te'tik'kir

Life and Death, Dreams and Snow. These four words sum up the whole of the Lean Time in the Nezumi culture. At a glance, they seem quite grim, and indeed they might be considering the great difficulty that winter brings. With the scarcity of food, the Ratlings must take care not to starve, but more importantly, they must be aware of predators that would find a tasty Nezumi the perfect lining for an empty stomach. These factors, and the harsh weather conditions, make the winter truly a difficult time to be alive. Despite this fact, the long winters are one of the most sacred times for the Nezumi, for winter brings their magics and their lives into focus.

It is during the first part of winter that the elderly of the tribes lie down for the last time. In contrast to the constant violence and

hardship of a Nezumi's life, those who live to advanced age are given a quiet and peaceful passing. Within the first three weeks of winter, all those who have passed their Mit'foo (Time of Life) fall to sleep and simply never wake up. Most elders seem to know when their time has come, sometimes giving last requests or passing on items or wisdom to their families or tribes. Few in Rokugan have witnessed such a ceremony and none have been able to explain it. Indeed, if humans were to learn how to die in such a simple and peaceful manner, the knowledge would be invaluable.

Towards the middle of the season, after all the elders have met tomorrow, the tribe holds the Mrtm'atch-tek (Ceremony of Names that have Gone into the Next Night). During this time, the entire tribe gathers and the greatest Rememberer performs the ceremony. He or she gathers the memory sticks of the past year and recites the name, and accomplishments or failures, of every member of the tribe that died during the previous year. This Rite allows the names of the dead to go on forever in the memories of the tribe. The Rememberer has an enormous responsibility, for if he or she were to forget to recite a name, that name would be lost from the Nezumi forever and that Ratling's life would have been without meaning.



Shelter

Nezumi are first and foremost a race of practical survivalists. There are places and ways they will prefer to live, but if a better opportunity presents itself, most tribes will not hesitate to alter any plans they may have made for the season. For example, Ratlings usually prefer to spend the Lean Time in caves, can make do with warrens (which have usually been built up over the years), and would prefer not to spend the season near humans, as the ones that dress in purple tend to make blankets out of their hides – and the purple humans tend to be everywhere. This doesn't mean they won't spend the winter in a Unicorn stable or Lion temple if they can get away with it, and if there's nowhere better to go.



This process takes anywhere from one to three days, in which no one sleeps. If the Rememberer were to stop, the ceremony would end, leaving many nameless, and if anyone else were to sleep, they would not hear the names that they must remember.

Finally, the last part of winter is given over to life. Those who mated during the previous fall give birth to their litters of young. This is a momentous time for the Nezumi, as it represents the ending of the winter as well as the birth of their tribe's future. For their first several weeks the pups cannot even open their eyes, and are completely dependent upon their parents for food and protection. Those who have litters devote all of their time to their young while the rest of the tribe does their best to see to the day-to-day tasks that must normally be performed.

Nezumi and Rokugan

Nezumi society maintains a tenuous existence. In the Shadowlands, they are mercilessly hunted. In Rokugan, they are often mistaken for Tainted monsters or dangerous spirits. Samurai frequently kill Nezumi rather than bother to sort out their origins. As a result, Nezumi are cautious about revealing their existence, and their warrens are always carefully hidden.

Ratlings require little food, and are talented at gaining undetected entry to castles and homes. Tribes living in Rokugan keep a low profile, hiding their numbers and their very existence whenever possible. The Nezumi population is thus surprisingly large. Exact numbers are difficult to calculate due to the high rates of birth and death, but their population could be as high as 1.6 million in Rokugan and the Shadowlands, roughly one Ratling for every twenty humans.

Not all Ratlings hide out of fear of humans. Many are, in fact, very curious about human society. Those Ratlings who dwell in Rokugan avoid humans out of practicality – they're more trouble than they're worth. Most tribes dwell in or near the Shadowlands, where human contact is out of the question. A handful of tribes avoid human contact because they feel superior to humans and see no reason to interact.

From a Rokugani perspective, most humans disdain Ratlings as barbaric savages. Though associating with Ratlings is seen as dishonorable and unclean, there are many more secret alliances between human and Ratling than one might expect.

The Crab Clan

The Crab have a unique relationship with the Nezumi, who know Fu Leng's territory like none other and can safely scout areas beyond the Black Finger River. The Nezumi fight side by side with Crabs, and the samurai return the favor by defending Nezumi warrens

threatened by Tainted monsters. On more than one occasion a Crab has been granted unofficial membership in a tribe. It is an unconfirmed rumor (which the Crab deny) that a handful of Nezumi over the centuries have been even allowed to refer to themselves by Crab family names. The Crab certainly maintain good relations with the Nezumi at all times, and see that Ratlings are treated well in Crab lands. Killing a Nezumi is not technically a crime, but any samurai who does so can expect swift and brutal retribution from defenders of the Wall.

Outside Crab territory, the alliance between Crab and Nezumi is a moderately well-kept secret. The Crab are aware that other clans do not share their appreciation of these creatures, and deny any official relationship. However, the Crab have been known to act circumspectly to insure fair treatment of Nezumi in other territories, and punish those who harm their secret allies.

The Crane Clan

Most Cranes consider Nezumi barbaric thieves or Tainted monsters. It hardly helps matters that Crane surpluses of rice and wealth attracts Nezumi like moths to flame. Kosaten Shiro has had considerable problems with Ratling thieves, and Daidoji guardsmen in the area have been instructed to kill Ratlings on sight. Even the peaceful Asahina have a strong distaste for Nezumi, as they cannot abide Nezumi tendencies to rob graves and loot shrines.

The Dragon Clan

Wandering *ise zumi* occasionally encounter tribes in the wilderness. Tattooed men do not judge Nezumi, and often adopt some of their customs. The tales of these strange humans have spread from tribe to tribe, leading to a great deal of curiosity regarding *ise zumi*. The Nezumi call these humans *kri'fitchoo* (painted-fire-with-no-hair) and greet them with open arms, if only so see what these strange humans will do next.

Shamans advise their tribes to avoid the mountains where the Dragon clan itself dwells, claiming they are haunted by a "strange, powerful Name."

The Lion Clan

Lions despise Ratlings not only for their thieving ways, but because they view the creatures as cowards. In turn, Nezumi view the Lions as violent maniacs, and flee if confronted by a Lion samurai with the same terror they show when faced by an oni. Sadly, Lion and Nezumi interpretations of bravery are in complete opposition to one another. It is quite possible that the two groups may never come to any sort of understanding.



The Phoenix Clan

The Phoenix's distance from the Shadowlands also separates them from most Nezumi tribes, so most Phoenix know little about Ratlings. The only major tribe in Phoenix territory (the Green-Green-White) is extremely reclusive. The Phoenix Clan as a whole is not even aware of the tribe's existence.

The Scorpion Clan

The Scorpion recognized the cunning and resourcefulness of Nezumi long ago. Nezumi make the perfect spies or disposable assassins, and require little in the form of payment. Though the Scorpion have never needed the Nezumi as the Crab did, they have quietly maintained peaceful relations with a few tribes for centuries. The Crab are not aware that the Scorpions possess their own Ratling allies, as the Scorpion have put on a masterful show of persecuting tribes in the manner of the Crane and Lion (always the enemies of their secret allies).

Now that the Scorpion have fallen from grace, their Nezumi friends have become indispensable. In a number of ways, the Nezumi are more at home in the Empire than the Scorpion. The bitter irony of this fact is not lost on the surviving Scorpions.

The Unicorn Clan

The Unicorn are openly hostile to Nezumi, due mostly to the unnatural hatred horses display for Ratlings and the importance of horses to the Unicorn lifestyle. The Otaku enjoy hunting Nezumi, and the Ratlings avoid mounted Unicorns at all costs. There are few warrens in Unicorn territory, and Ratlings whose migratory routes cross Shinjo or Otaku holdings always keep a very low profile.

The major exception to Unicorn-Nezumi relations is the Ide family. Ever opportunists, the Ide quietly maintain relations with a few small tribes. The Ide's motivations are pragmatic - Ratling speed, stealth, and endurance allows them to cross the open dunes of the Burning Sands easily. In return for weapons and food, the Nezumi assist the Ide in maintaining communications and trade with the Moto and other groups who live in the remote lands outside of Rokugan.

Imperial Families

Official Imperial policy regarding Nezumi dates to Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum. This bloodthirsty Emperor declared Ratlings a dangerous Shadowlands menace, and ordered his Legions to destroy them. Subsequent Emperors have softened this harsh mandate, but Imperial troops still have a definite bias against these creatures. Most Hantei Emperors are unaware of the official policy, or simply do not care to change it. The Seppun and Otomo could certainly not care less, and consider these barbaric creatures beneath





their notice. The Miya occasionally consider trying to open relations with Ratlings, but are unwilling to sacrifice the political capital it would require to change such an ancient Imperial policy.

Ronin

A few desperate ronin take refuge in Nezumi tribes. Some find it more comfortable than living among humans, where their purpose is somewhat nebulous. A tribe of Nezumi can offer a lot of muscle to a lonely ronin, and a ronin offers connections to human society Nezumi can never have. Ronin can enter cities, buy food and weapons, walk about unnoticed, and bribe magistrates. A ronin who thinks he has outsmarted a group of Nezumi by gaining their friendship probably doesn't realize how much the Nezumi are getting out of the deal.

Monks

The Brotherhood is uncertain what to make of Nezumi. As the Nezumi are uncertain of their own origins, it is hard to determine the Ratlings' place in the universe. Some conservative monks believe that as the Nezumi were not born of the Sun's tears and the Moon's blood, they have no place in the Celestial Order and are aberrations to be ignored. Other monks disagree. The Shintao sect in particular believes that Ratlings have proven that they are part of the universe simply through their existence. Their lack of awareness regarding their origins does not make them less suitable for enlightenment. In the end, the Shintao say, it proves the Nezumi are just like humans.

Minor Clans

Regarding Nezumi, most Minor Clans share the opinions of the Great Clans closest to them, with two notable exceptions.

The Sparrow have an implacable hatred of Ratlings stemming from a disastrous attempt to ally with the Tattered Ear Tribe some time ago. The Sparrow not only despise Nezumi, but go out of their way to trap and kill them. Other members of the Three Man Alliance do not share the Sparrow's hatred of Ratlings. The Fox, in fact, disapprove greatly of the Sparrow's uncharacteristic fierceness on the topic.

The Mantis have been indifferent toward Nezumi until recently. Through an arrangement with the Yasuki, the Mantis have invited several Chipped Tooth Ratlings to help crew their vessels. (This relationship is explained more fully later in this chapter.)

The Lying Darkness

Very few Nezumi have encountered the Shadow, and even fewer have any comprehension of what they have experienced. Only powerful shamans have the necessary insight to perceive the nameless nature of the Shadow. Most Nezumi simply recognize that

something is horribly wrong with Shadow-corrupted individuals, and that they are somehow "empty."

Nezumi are not immune to the corruption of the Lying Darkness. Nezumi lost to the Shadow not only lose their face and their Name, but their scent and ability to produce pheromones as well.

The Kolat

The Nezumi are irrelevant. A race of giant rats scavenging for scraps simply doesn't factor into their Masters' Plan. If the Nezumi ever gained status equal to humans, it is uncertain whether the Kolat would embrace them or seek their extermination.

The Kolat would find the existence of creatures who become immortal through sheer strength of will – such as the Transcendent – very interesting indeed.



The Tattered Ear Tribe

The Tattered Ear are the largest of all modern Nezumi tribes. These Nezumi do not live apart from humans, but among them as scavengers. They have mastered the art of adapting human refuse for their own purposes, and flourish off of the scraps of Rokugan. They never remain in one place overlong, and quickly move on before they exhaust resources or draw undue attention. The tribe has prospered from this policy of subtle scavenging, and is now larger than any other in Rokugan today. Rope, cloth, wood, and rice are the items most commonly targeted by Tattered Ear scavengers. Most survive on a mixed diet of rice, foraged berries, and whatever the scroungers turn up.

The Tattered Ear Tribe has grown so large that it has split into independent packs, each led by a pack-chief (*chekchuk*). At least seven packs of Tattered Ears wander the tribe's territory, each consisting of seventy-five to one hundred Nezumi. All of these packs share the Tattered Ear Name, and consider one another family.



Physically, the Tattered Ear are near the norm for Nezumi. They are roughly the same size as humans, with fur ranging from black to light brown. Their ears tend to be larger than most, and are often ritually notched. By reading the notches of a Tattered Ear Nezumi another can immediately discern a number of facts about that individual, including Niche, occupation, and how many litters they have sired.

History

The Tattered Ear are one of three modern-day tribes that once composed the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe. The Tattered Ear were the largest of these splinter groups, composed of Ratlings who sought to coexist with humans rather than continue to struggle in the Shadowlands. The Tattered Ear knew that venturing into a new land would be dangerous, but were willing to take the risk. They were the first Ratlings to learn human speech, and taught it to the other tribes.

The Tattered Ear Tribe like humans, though they are wary around samurai. The Tattered Ear are amazed by the wonders that humans have achieved, and would like nothing more than to publicly join Rokugani society. The tribe nonetheless recognizes that its path is a difficult one, and knows that a single mistake could cause the entire tribe to be wiped out. This ensures that they are very careful about when and where they make human contact. The Crab are their only major allies, but the tribe also has a few contacts within the Scorpion, Falcon, and Hare.

The Tattered Ear often hunt down Shadowlands beasts that threaten humans in their territory, and occasionally kill bandits or guide lost peasants. Many heimin have come to view the Ratlings as benevolent spirits, and leave offerings of food or trinkets in their fields to encourage the tribe's protection. The Tattered Ear appreciates the gift, and never steals from those who leave offerings. They consider their secret friendship with the heimin one more step on the long road to acceptance.

In their search for acceptance, the Tattered Ear have made a few unfortunate mistakes. One regrettable incident involved a possible alliance with the Sparrow, moderated by a Kuni translator. A mistake in translation somehow ended with the shaman creating a fetish from the thighbone of the Sparrow daimyo's dead brother before he could be cremated. (The shaman thought the body was a gift, and items created from the bones of heroes have great Name.) The Sparrow were outraged. The Kuni withdrew, humiliated. The Ratlings fled for their lives and have avoided the Sparrow since. The Sparrow, who have not forgotten the insult, kill Ratlings whenever they are sighted within the Suzume Hills.

Territory

The Tattered Ear have the greatest migratory range of any tribe, covering a broad swath from the southern Unicorn steppes to the Suzume Hills. They have been known to appear in the lands of the Unicorn, Scorpion, Hare, Sparrow, Crab, Crane, Fox, and Falcon. The tribe's enormous migratory range takes three and a half years to circuit, followed by a year and a half of rest.

At the end of their migration pattern, the Tattered Ear packs converge on the Shinomen Forest for a year-long conclave. Deep in the center of the Shinomen, the Tattered Ear have constructed an immense burrow which they refer to as *M-atikfchtr-foo* ("Great-grand-home-in-the-woods-where-all-meet-as-one," or simply the Great Home). This burrow appears small from the surface, but extends as much as two hundred feet straight down, with dozens of chambers where the Ratlings make their home. One small pack of Tattered Ear remains in the Great Home at all times to protect it from invaders. While the Great Home does not contain as much



Why Aren't There Nezumi Ghosts?

As mentioned elsewhere, the Nezumi have no real concept of an afterlife. They believe that once they die, they continue only to exist as a Name. This Name is important, as it plays a role in the racial memories of the Nezumi race, and can be invoked by Rememberers. In this way, the Nezumi spirit continues to exist within its tribe as a being of pure memory and inspiration, driving on others to fulfill their own destinies.

What really happens to a Nezumi's spirit at death? No one knows for sure. Perhaps they are reincarnated in a Ratling version of the great Kharmic Wheel, or perhaps they ascend into the Realm of Dreams to exist in a state of peace and harmony after a lifetime of toil and conflict. Or perhaps as creatures purely born of the mortal realm, they simply cease to exist upon death. It is a mystery for which each Ratling eventually discovers an answer.



wealth as the warrens of the Grasping Paw, their tribe has stockpiled great amounts of food, clothing, and weapons to see them through the Lean Times.

During the meet, Tattered Ear packs share resources, tell tales of what they have seen, and get to know one another again. It is during this time that a new chieftain (*tchickchuk*) is chosen if the old one has died or proven himself unsuitable. The conclave is a joyous time for the entire tribe. The end is a time of celebration mixed with sadness, as the short-lived Nezumi realize that they may never see many of their friends and family again.

A major problem that the Tattered Ear have encountered in recent years is the awakening of the Naga. Many Naga make their home in the Shinomen, uncomfortably close to the Great Home. Since they have returned, many Naga, especially Asps, have begun preying upon Tattered Ear Ratlings. The Nezumi are instinctively terrified by these enormous snakes, and aren't quite certain what to do. Some (including the pack that defends the Great Home) feel that the packs should unify and drive the Naga out of the forest. Others (mostly those packs that have actually faced the Naga) think that the Great Home is not worth the danger and have already abandoned the Shinomen. If a resolution is not found soon, the great tribe could split permanently.

Psychology

The Tattered Ear attribute their success to the fact that they no longer live in the Shadowlands. They do not possess the sentimental connection to the Shadowlands that many other tribes have. Tattered Ear Nezumi nonetheless visit the Shadowlands occasionally, for their experience in dealing with humans makes them excellent diplomats. The Crabs pay the Tattered Ear well for these services, and the Nezumi enjoy the opportunity to make themselves useful.

Some Tattered Ear have attempted to understand humans by emulating them. The Code of Bushido has found particular interest. A few Tattered Ears have attempted to train themselves as "Ratling-Bushi," pseudo-samurai who follow embrace a unique variant of the samurai virtues. While these Ratlings do not fully understand these concepts, it certainly isn't for lack of trying, and these so-called bushi have cultivated a unique sort of nobility.

The Tattered Ear's search for acceptance among humans has damaged its relations with other tribes. Many Ratlings are vaguely distrustful of Tattered Ears, claiming that they have the "stink of humans." The Crippled Bone and Green-Green-White Nezumi are downright hostile, sometimes attacking Tattered Ear Nezumi. The Tattered Ear feel that other tribes are simply jealous of their success, and have a condescending attitude toward "less enlightened" tribes.

The exception to this is the Grasping Paw, for whom the Tattered Ear have a great deal of respect. Though the Tattered Ear are

accomplished scavengers, they favor the more exotic items accumulated by the Grasping Paw. The Tattered Ears gladly trade their surplus food and weapons for the mysterious artifacts collected by their thieving cousins.

The Crippled Bone Tribe

One of the oldest tribes of the Nezumi race, the Crippled Bone is nonetheless an enigma to most other Ratlings. They have only recently appeared in the northern Shadowlands, driven from their territory deep inside the Dark Lord's realm by an unknown force. Their aggressive, combative nature is very different from the Nezumi who dwell near the Wall, and neither the other tribes nor the Crab Clan knows exactly what to make of these strange new additions.

Nezumi of the Crippled Bone tribe are typically larger than other Ratlings, with muscled frames scarred from years of constant fighting. Darker fur patterns are common, with gray and black being the most prevalent. Though omnivorous, the Crippled Bone tribe prefers meat above all other foods.

History

In the Before Time, the great Nezumi civilization was governed by a select few who made the decisions for the race as a whole. The best and brightest of their entire race, this elite caste served the Chief-of-Chiefs and helped to guide an empire that covered all of southern Rokugan.

When the Terrible Day came, the vast majority of the Nezumi race was destroyed by the cataclysm. Of the few that survived, only a small number of the ruling class emerged from the disaster unscathed. These few traveled to the scattered pockets of surviving Ratlings, encouraging them to unite, return to the south, and rebuild their civilization. The survivors refused, having no desire to return to the site where heaven fell to earth.

Angry, the former rulers and their supporters vowed to rebuild the Nezumi civilization without aid. The others would come in time, they predicted, and they would be turned away for their insolence. These Nezumi disappeared to the south, crossing the Black Finger River and vanishing from the affairs of the Nezumi for over a thousand years. There have been occasional contacts over the centuries, but for the most part the Crippled Bone was unknown to the Nezumi.

The past thousand years has been an endless battle. When the Nezumi arrived near Heaven's Grave so many years ago, they found that a gateway had been opened to a dark world of spirits and horrors the likes of which they had never imagined. They managed to eke out a miserable existence by slinking in the deep shadows



and scrounging the barest of meals from the earth. Eventually they learned to fight the dark things that crawled from the great hole in the earth, learned to kill them while avoiding their terrible powers.

But no matter how many they killed, there were always more. Legions of the misshapen beasts constantly assaulted the tribe's meager territory, overwhelming their finest warriors and driving the tribe back. The tribe constantly teetered on the brink of extinction until the ascension of a young Ratling called Ipchtik to the chieftain's position. Ipchtik was large for a Ratling, towering head and shoulders above his tribe-mates. His fury in battle was terrible to behold, and it is said that he could defeat ogres in single combat.

More importantly, however, Ipchtik was fiercely intelligent. He devised new styles of fighting that emphasized the speed and agility of the Nezumi over their foes. Most of all, he instilled in his tribe a sense of confidence that they had long been lacking. When Ipchtik finally died twenty-three years after becoming chieftain, he had transformed a loose conglomeration of defeated Ratlings into a close-knit tribe of warriors.

Territory

Until very recently, the Crippled Bone considered their territory to be the very deepest regions of the Shadowlands. This was the area that housed the seat of Nezumi civilization in the Before Time, and the Crippled Bone consider themselves the heirs to that great legacy even after all these centuries.

The land the Crippled Bone calls home is quite possibly the most inhospitable, hostile environment in existence. The force of the Taint is so great that humans cannot survive there for more than a few moments without being consumed utterly by the Dark Lord's madness. Oni fouler than any human eye has ever seen walk the earth. And yet the Nezumi survive.

Within the last few months the Crippled Bone has laid claim to a stretch of the Shadowlands roughly 50 miles south of the Great Carpenter Wall, almost exactly in the center of the other tribes' lands. They have systematically eliminated all the major Shadowlands creatures within this territory and sent a strong message to the other Nezumi tribes: stay out of our lands. The Hiruma scouts who move through the Crippled Bone's territory find





themselves under intense scrutiny, something that tends to unnerve samurai used to dealing with the much more mild-mannered tribes native to the area.

Psychology

The Nezumi of the Crippled Bone are vicious, angry beings. They are accustomed to fighting for their very existence every day of their lives. Anything that can even remotely be considered a threat is confronted with violence, for it is the only path the Crippled Bone knows.

When encountered in a group, members of the Crippled Bone tend to be antagonistic and insulting, drawing courage from one another. Individually, they are more often sullen and withdrawn, both suspicious and defensive. They do not relate well to Nezumi outside the tribe, and avoid other races completely.

The vast majority of the tribe are warriors, since a young Ratling in the deep Shadowlands either quickly learns to fight or dies. Only those who show the most prodigious ability are taken under the wing of the tribe's few shamans, and they need few Rememberers, as all of the Crippled Bone keenly remembers the loss of their kingdom and their abandonment at the hands of the other tribes.

The Crippled Bone tribe has taken great pains to discreetly involve some of its members in the goings-on of the other tribes. Knowing the activities of the others will make the task of uniting them under the Crippled Bone's leadership much easier.

The Grasping Paw Tribe

The small Grasping Paw tribe is renowned among the Nezumi for its ability to obtain things. The Grasping Paw are exceptionally gifted scavengers and thieves, and while they tend to hoard their treasure, they are willing to trade with the other tribes. They usually trade items for food, as they spend a great deal of their time acquiring more treasure rather than stockpiling supplies for the Lean Time.

The members of the Grasping Paw tribe are slightly smaller than average with lean, athletic frames built for speed and dexterity. Light browns are the most common fur colors, although like all tribes there is a wide range of coloration. While they will eat virtually anything, the Grasping Paw prefer rice and other crops taken from the lands of the humans.

A distinctive sub-group among the Grasping Paw tribe has a strikingly different appearance. Hairless, with large ears, bulging eyes and pronounced fangs, these Nezumi are the descendants of the exiles who joined the tribe in its formative days, saving it from certain destruction. Despite their appearance, they are valued as the most gifted scavengers of the tribe.

History

The Grasping Paw rarely speak of their history with those outside the tribe. The other Nezumi tribes know bits and pieces of it, but the tribe prefers to keep it to itself as much as possible. The Grasping Paw are not ashamed of their past, but they realize that others would view them with suspicion if the truth were known. This could interfere with the trade they conduct with the other tribes, a consequence they would rather avoid.

In the chaotic aftermath of the Terrible Day, a large group of Nezumi fled to the north, away from the horrors of what would become the southern Shadowlands. Eventually they settled in a stretch of land that would one day become part of the Hiruma provinces. Here they eked out a meager existence, scavenging the bare essentials from the land while avoiding the hideous creatures from the south.

Realizing that his tribe was surviving by the thinnest of margins, the chieftain of the tribe decided that he must take a drastic course of action. Creeping out of the tribe's camp in the dead of night, the aging chieftain headed west for several days until he reached a particularly dense patch of forest. Then he waited. Soon other Ratlings emerged from the forest to investigate this strange phenomenon.

During the Before Time, there had occasionally been Nezumi who were so insatiably curious and had such disregard for the property of others that they had been banished from the great Nezumi cities. Living on their own in the wilds for many years, these outcasts were the hardest of scavengers, gifted at deriving sustenance from the land. In desperation, the chieftain had sought them out to aid his tribe.

A bargain was struck that day: the outcasts would join the chieftain's tribe and teach the others how to scavenge. In return, they would receive a much larger portion of the food and supplies that were recovered. Shrewdly realizing that a dozen Nezumi could scavenge in a day more than a single Ratling could in many days, many of the outcasts agreed to the proposal.

Returning to the tribe with these new allies, the chieftain ushered in a new age of prosperity for his tribe. With the former outcasts teaching the tribe the secrets of survival in the wilderness, the tribe quickly adapted to their situation and began to flourish. With hidden caches of treasure secreted all across the Shadowlands, the Grasping Paw tribe quickly became one of the most prominent in Nezumi society.

The past century has seen a significant change for the Grasping Paw tribe. They are the only major Nezumi tribe to have established a permanent warren and maintained it for more than a year or two at most. With so many secret storehouses of supplies scattered throughout their territory, the tribe was constantly suffering losses



The Lost Tribe

The Forever-Racing-Tomorrow were the first Nezumi to make peaceful contact with humans, allying themselves with Hiruma Kazuma against the armies of maho-tsukai Kuni Kaigen. This tribe paved the way for the current alliance between the Crab and the Nezumi.

Though comparing Nezumi records to Rokugani history is difficult, the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow apparently disbanded about eight hundred years ago, at roughly the same time that the Crab-Crane War began. The Rememberers claim that there was a great argument within the tribe. The chief, the tribe Namebinder, and a half-mad prophet each had a different opinion regarding the future of the tribe. The chief wished to go north, leave the Shadowlands, and find a home among humans. The Namebinder felt that they should disassociate themselves from the Crab, head deeper into the Shadowlands, and continue their war against the darkness alone. The prophet felt that they should remain together.

The tribe split itself into three groups, each supporting a different viewpoint. The chief and his followers went north, and became the Tattered Ear. The Namebinder and his followers struck out to the west, where they became the Crooked Tail. The prophet and his small group of followers remained where they were, and named themselves the Third Whisker.

from goblins or even other Nezumi who stumbled across the hiding places. Following orders from the chieftain, a cunning young scout located a large cave at the base of the Twilight Mountains and liberated it from the goblins that lived there. The Grasping Paw tribe has made the caverns its home, and has lived there for nearly fifty years.

Territory

The Grasping Paw tribe operates primarily from their warren, Ch'tppu'kich, which lies on the border between the Twilight Mountains and the Plains Above Evil. (See the Appendix for more information on Ch'tppu'kich.) They range far to the east and north in their scavenging, however, much to the consternation of the Falcon Clan to the north and the Yasuki merchants who move their wares through the western Crab lands.

Prior to the creation of the tribal warren, the Grasping Paws were known to range throughout the northern portions of the Shadowlands, although they seemed to be centered somewhere northwest of the ruins of Hiruma Castle. The lands they once considered their territory have in part been taken over by the Crippled Bone tribe, who arrived from the deep Shadowlands several months ago. If the current chieftain of the Grasping Paws has any qualms over this, he has not made them known. So long as the warren remains secure, the tribe is largely unconcerned with the territorial squabbles of the other tribes.

Psychology

While neither cruel nor rude, members of the Grasping Paw are nonetheless preoccupied with the good of the tribe over all else and, to a lesser extent, their own personal gain. They maintain friendly relations with the other Nezumi tribes, but prefer to remain largely apart from matters of conflict between the various factions. The one exception to this is what passes for commerce among the Ratlings; the Grasping Paw tribe is very interested in conducting trade with the other tribes.

Obviously, the majority of the tribe is composed of scouts and scavengers. There are warriors, of course, but far less than in most other major tribes.

The Green-Green-White Tribe

The most dramatic difference between a Green-Green-White Nezumi and other Nezumi is their fur. During the winter, a Green-Green-White Ratling's fur is pure white, the color of new-fallen snow. During the summer months, their fur becomes the ruddy brown of tree bark. A large number of Green-Green-White are albinos, with blood-red eyes and fur that remains white throughout the year. Green-Green-White Ratlings are shorter and thinner than the average Ratling, but have tails as long as their entire bodies, adapted for climbing.

These Ratlings have become master woodsmen and hunters, as the territory where they dwell can be a harsh and unforgiving place.



Their favored foods are *kt'ch'tem* (roasted deer meat) and *se-ep'tflur* (a paste made of mashed bark, pine needles, honey, and melted snow – a tribal staple totally inedible to humans). They are skilled herbalists, and have discovered many natural medicines in the forests and mountains. Rokugani students of medicine could learn much from these “primitives,” were it not for their strong xenophobic attitude.

The Green-Green-White population numbers about three hundred and fifty, though they hide their numbers well. They take full advantage of their natural camouflage and remain in the trees as much as possible. They make their burrows in tree-tops, masking their tracks so that they are invisible to those on the ground. A human could pass directly through a Green-Green-White warren without ever realizing it was there.

History

The Green-Green-White Tribe proudly traces its history to the Terrible Day, when it was known as the Black Moonset Tribe. They once lived on the southern edge of the Shadowlands, but fled north when the forces of the Maw swept across their territory. In their search for a new home, they were repeatedly attacked by fearful *heimin* or angry samurai. The Tattered Ear Tribe, who were having a particularly lean season at the time, gave the Black Moonset little assistance and politely insisted that the refugees move on. They were forced to continue north until they reached the desolate frozen mountains and forests of northern Rokugan.

Adjusting to the frigid climate changed the Black Moonset mentally and physically. Many died, and the rest were forced to learn new methods of survival. They evolved into a tribe of skilled climbers, naturally camouflaged amid the winter snow. The Tribe changed their name to reflect their new outlook, and became the Green-Green-White Tribe. Incidentally, the Nezumi word “green” is synonymous with their word for “alive.” Their name not only alludes to the green camouflage these Nezumi wear, but the pride they take in the fact that they are a tribe of survivors.

Territory

The Green-Green-White Tribe lives farther from the Shadowlands than any other tribe. Their territory ranges through the northern forests and mountains of the Phoenix and along the eastern coast to the province of the Centipede. They are extremely reclusive, staying well away from human contact. The Phoenix are unaware of their existence, and attribute tales of giant rat-spirits to peasant superstition. In fact, Phoenix peasants have accidentally destroyed the tribe's home several times while harvesting lumber. The Nezumi gather their possessions and move on, but do not forget the insult. The Green-Green-White have no love for humans, and sometimes

kill lone Phoenix wandering the woods in retribution. The Nezumi know that the occasional disappearance of a samurai in the northern lands can be attributed to the elements, and that they could get into a great deal of trouble if they are not careful.

Psychology

Those who pass through Green-Green-White territory without being noticed should count themselves lucky, as this is the most xenophobic of all Nezumi tribes. The Green-Green-White fled the Shadowlands at the same time that the forces of the Maw rose, and have been terrified of anything related to the Taint ever since. They believe that since human beings can be Tainted, they should be avoided or killed. The Green-Green-White tolerate little no contact with outsiders, and are reluctant to reveal themselves to other Nezumi.

Green-Green-White disdain for humans prevents them from relying upon scavenging. Without human technology, the Green-Green-White have been forced to adapt in other ways. Unlike most tribes, the Green-Green-White make their own weapons and clothing. Their most common weapons are a blunt stone throwing hatchet and a compact variant of the *yumi*. These weapons tend to be of lower quality than other tribes, and are mostly used for hunting. The Green-Green-White wear dark green cloaks woven of plant fibers, dyed with herbal preservatives to keep their color from fading.

One factor that sets this tribe apart is their lack of shamans. No shamans are born of the Green-Green-White, and those shamans who breed with members of the tribe produce offspring with no power in magic. Though this trend implies that their tribe is weak in Name, the Green-Green-White argue that they do not require magic to survive. They have concluded that it is those Nezumi that need magic to change the world who are weak.

It is possible that a tribe as secluded as the Green-Green-White could exist anonymously and never have contact with the outside. This is not the case. Several times when the tribe's home was destroyed, emissaries were dispatched to the Tattered Ear or Grasping Paw to trade medicines for food to survive the winter. The Green-Green-White maintain relations with other tribes as a matter of practicality; they grudgingly realize that they may need aid again. Green-Green-White Ratlings tend to be aloof around outsiders, often barely able to hide their rabid dislike of anything not of their own blood.



The Chipped Tooth Tribe

The Chipped Tooth are a secret of the Crab, an experiment begun by the Yasuki generations ago. This small tribe is the perfect example of the extreme adaptability of the Ratlings – they are sailors.

Chipped Tooth Nezumi are several inches shorter on average than most Ratlings. They tend to have sleek, oily black coats that shed water. In the last two generations a handful of Chipped Tooth have developed webs of skin between the digits of their paws, allowing them increased maneuverability underwater. This extraordinary change demonstrates the astonishing racial diversity among Nezumi – that they could physically adapt to life in the water in such a relatively brief time is amazing.

It is not surprising that the Chipped Tooth prefer seafood. Fish and kelp are among their favorite dishes, although like most Nezumi they are not picky eaters. The tribe is small, with only eighty to one hundred members. Their tendency to spread themselves out in packs (or boats) over their territory rather than travel as a tribe makes them appear to be even fewer than they are.

History

The Chipped Tooth are distantly related to the Third Whisker, though they are larger and more aggressive than their cousins. The Chipped Tooth were hunters and gatherers until they were approached by the notorious pirate Yasuki Fumoki in the seventh century. Seeing the potential in these strange creatures, Fumoki offered the Ratlings assorted beads and trinkets if they would join his crew. The Nezumi learned rapidly under the tutelage of Fumoki's crew, and became excellent sailors. Though history has overlooked the Ratling pirates, Fumoki would not have been able to gain his near-legendary reputation without their skilled assistance.

When Fumoki died, his crew scattered to the winds. Intrigued by rumors of Ratling pirates, Yasuki daimyo Yasuki Masami dispatched scouts to search for the Chipped Tooth Ratlings. Like Fumoki, she offered them great rewards if they would continue their careers in the Crab navy. The Nezumi eagerly agreed. The Hida daimyo was reluctant at first, but gave his approval once the Ratlings proved their skill.

Since that day, the Nezumi have been the secret weapon of the Crab navy. Most major Crab vessels have a Chipped Tooth Ratling or two on board, and the great *Koutetsukan* (Iron Turtle) warships always have at least four or five. The Nezumi are skilled, agile sailors and make excellent scouts when Crab ships must drop anchor in the Shadowlands.

In recent times, a secret arrangement between the Mantis and Yasuki has led to a few Chipped Tooth Nezumi taking positions as

crew on Mantis vessels. The Mantis are as yet uncertain what to think about the Ratlings, but cannot dispute the skill these creatures display. A few Mantis are skeptical about the Ratlings, suspecting that the Yasuki would not offer such assistance without ulterior motives. Their suspicions are correct. The Yasuki merchants are paying the Chipped Tooth Ratlings quite well to spy on their Mantis competitors.

Territory

The Chipped Tooth make their homes in the southern portion of Crab lands, in the provinces of the Yasuki and the Hida. In recent times, a handful of Chipped Tooth have ventured to the Islands of Spice and Silk and established small burrows there. The Chipped Tooth have no permanently established warrens, though they do have a pair of small kobune, gifts from their Yasuki allies. These rough little ships have been named *M-atflur-tk'tk* (Big-Sea-Wanderer) and *S'sflur-tk'tk* (Little-Sea-Wanderer). They are the most prized possessions of the tribe. If any place can be considered to be the home of the Chipped Tooth, it is these two modest vessels.

Psychology

The Chipped Tooth are not as clannish as other Nezumi. Though they are quite loyal to one another, Chipped Tooth Nezumi value their independence and individuality. The sea is in their blood, and they love to explore the open water. Even if the Yasuki and Mantis ceased their affiliation with the Chipped Tooth, it is unlikely that they would come ashore for good.

These Nezumi are used to working with human sailors and comfortable with humans in general. Chipped Tooth Ratlings tend to be a surly lot, ready and willing to fight for what's theirs. Though not as brash as humans, Chipped Tooth sailors are less timid and more outspoken than most Nezumi. The Chipped Tooth get along fairly well with other Nezumi tribes. As their true love is the sea, they could not care less about territorial disputes. Their access to the deep bestows resources unavailable to other tribes, so the Grasping Paw are always eager to trade. The Chipped Tooth remember their ties to the Third Whisker, and are protective of their reclusive cousins. The other major tribes are either friendly or indifferent to these strange, sea-going Ratlings.

The Crooked Tail Tribe

The Crooked Tail was one of three large tribes formed when the great Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe, the largest in the history of the Nezumi, fragmented several centuries ago. The circumstances surrounding that schism have left the Crooked Tail a paranoid,



isolated tribe that has only the most guarded relations with outsiders.

Members of the Crooked Tail vary widely in appearance, with very few physical stereotypes applying. As a tribe, however, they are hesitant to deal with humans they do not know and are even cautious around unknown Nezumi of other tribes. This defensive approach even extends to their diet: the Crooked Tail tribe feeds almost exclusively on vegetable matter, as they are all too aware that the flesh can be corrupted.

History

Centuries ago, the ancestors of the Crooked Tail were members of the enormous Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe. The tribe's most prominent shaman was a venerated elder named Rtch't'ok. In addition to being a greatly respected figure in the tribe, Rtch't'ok was a proud father whose eldest son led one of the chieftain's hunting parties. The venerable shaman was certain that his son would one day lead the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe.

Generations after the pact with the Crab Clan was sealed, Rtch't'ok's son Ch'tik returned from a scouting expedition north into the humans' lands greatly disturbed. He immediately asked for an audience with his father and the tribal elders. The warrior recounted a tale of horror involving a small, secluded village in the human lands. The village was entirely devoid of activity during the day, but while the Nezumi watched in the twilight, it came alive. The humans there were somehow empty, full of darkness instead of life. When the light of fire illuminated the villagers, Ch'tik had seen that they had no faces.

The chieftain dismissed this as a fanciful tale of misunderstanding. Were there not among the humans talented magicians with strange ways the Nezumi did not understand? Clearly the scouting party had witnessed some forbidden tribal ritual. Angered by the chieftain's belittling of his son's account, Rtch't'ok vowed to investigate the matter personally. As a Nametaker, the most powerful of all Nezumi shamans, no one dared deny Rtch't'ok this privilege. With Ch'tik by his side, the shaman traveled north toward the human lands.

The experience was a bad-dream made real. The creatures in that village were not human, nor were they anything Rtch't'ok had ever experienced before. His son fell beneath their blackened claws, and when the shaman summoned his most powerful magic to erase their Names from existence, the creatures sneered at him and black whispers bubbled forth from their inhuman throats.

"Foolish beast! You cannot take what we do not have!"



Rtch'ttok survived due thanks only to his powerful magic and a simple crystal talisman he wore around his neck. The wounds he received were great, but he managed to escape to the safety of his tribe's territory in the Shadowlands. All the way he could sense something at the edge of his perception, watching him. Something that might once have been his son.

The tribal chieftain disregarded Rtch'ttok's story. He insisted that the problem was that the Nezumi did not fully understand their allies, the Crab. He proposed to take the clan north into the lands of the humans to forge a closer bond between the two. Horrified, Rtch'ttok refused. When the chieftain and the majority of the tribe left, a small faction remained behind with the shaman.

Rtch'ttok and his followers journeyed across the Shadowlands to the great rock where the shaman had gotten his talisman. The power of this rock could keep the empty-things away, and here the Crooked Tail tribe would dwell.

Territory

The Crooked Tail occupies the region of the Shadowlands that borders the southern edge of the Plains Above Evil. Rtch'ttok chose this particularly desolate area long ago because of a large outcropping of crystal from the rocky ground near the Plain. This outcropping serves as the center of the tribe's territory, the focal point around which they travel in large circles. The tribe spends almost the entire year no more than two days' travel from the crystal, which they refer to as "the Driving-out-Darkness Rock."

The exception to this rule is a result of the tribe's alliance with the ghost-hunters of the Falcon Clan. Each winter the tribe travels north to the Twilight Mountains where the tribal elders meet for several days with delegates from the Falcon lands. Over the centuries, these two small groups have learned to trust each other. The Falcon know much of spirits, and through the Falcon the Crooked Tail realize that not all humans are the danger that Rtch'ttok once feared.

Psychology

The Crooked Tail have never managed to truly overcome the rampant paranoia and xenophobia that overwhelmed the tribe's founders. Although they have an ongoing relationship with humans and the other Nezumi tribes, members of the Crooked Tail never truly feel comfortable anywhere except with their kinsmen. As a whole, they are not overwhelmingly antisocial (although some individuals are very much so), merely the result of generations of isolation.

Duties are spread equally among the Crooked Tail, with an evenly distributed number of warriors, scouts, and scavengers. There are an average number of Rememberers as well, and it is not

unusual for the tribe to have a higher-than-average number of shamans. This could be due to the fact that many members of the tribe can count Rtch'ttok, an extraordinarily powerful shaman, among their ancestors.

The Third Whisker Tribe

The Third Whisker Tribe is a curiosity. They are an extremely small tribe, with only two or three dozen members. These Ratlings have an abnormally large number of prophets and shamans, with a strong link to Transcendent known as Z-ee (the founder of their tribe). The Third Whisker are the oracles of the Nezumi race, and are frequently visited by members of other tribes seeking a glimpse into the future.

Members of this tribe are extremely small, averaging three feet in height. Their coats tend to be mottled gray or spotted. Third Whisker Nezumi born with white fur and a black spot over each eye (like a raccoon's mask) are greatly respected. These black spots are referred to as *nm'atch-tekn* ("tomorrow eyes") and symbolize the vision of prophecy. Once a generation, a Nezumi with *nm'atch-tekn* is pronounced the Chosen Prophet of Z-ee, and becomes the leader of the tribe when the former Chosen Prophet dies.

Third Whisker Ratlings are fond of the trappings of magic. Even those who are not shamans commonly braid beads, feathers, figurines, and other fetishes into their fur. They favor long, dark robes covered with impressive looking pictograms.

These Nezumi are unskilled hunters, but are adept at scavenging. They live mostly off the refuse discarded by the Crab soldiers on the Kaiu Wall, or from offerings of those who come seeking their wisdom. They will eat anything they find, but are fond of fresh fruit – a rarity in their territory.

History

The Third Whisker is the smallest of three tribes into which the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow Tribe fragmented. While the Tattered Ear and Crooked Tail bickered about their place in Rokugan, the founders of the Third Whisker worried for the future. Even then, these Nezumi were very skilled in prophecy, and saw a bleak future approaching. The prophet Z-ee predicted "a bloody beast rising from the night, built of ancient heroes made bloody with vengeance. The bloody beast's hubris will wake the doom of the Nezumi." They pleaded with the other tribes not to disband, as they believe that only a united Forever-Racing-Tomorrow could prevent the terrible future they had foreseen.

Sadly, the prophet Z-ee was generally disliked, and was unable to convince the others of his cause. The prophet and his followers remained in the ancestral territory of the tribe and waited for the



day that they could unite again. They named themselves the Third Whisker, as the Nezumi word “whisker” sounds like “a broken piece left behind.”

When the forces of the Maw attacked, the Third Whisker fled into the Crab lands. Instead of returning to their homes when the Maw’s army was beaten back, the Third Whisker took refuge in the newly built Carpenter Wall. They have lived there since, alone with their terrible dreams of the future.

In modern times, the Third Whisker see Z-ee’s dark prophecy rapidly approaching. They view the returned Crippled Bone as the “bloody beast” of ancient prophecy. If something is not done, if a hero does not rise to reunite the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow, the prophets are convinced that the Nezumi race is doomed.

Territory

The Third Whisker live underneath the central portion of the Kaiu Wall, near Kaiu Shiro. They have lived within the catacombs as long as the Wall has been in place, and know the tunnels better than most Kaiu. The Kaiu have mixed feelings about the presence of the Ratlings. Some are resentful, and attempt to dislodge the Nezumi whenever possible. Others recognize the Third Whisker as useful allies and lookouts within the Wall, and appreciate their presence. The Nezumi are skilled at repairing damaged traps or collapsed tunnels, and do so with no thought of reward. The Wall is, after all, their home.

Psychology

The Third Whisker are a grim lot. They believe that the world is doomed, that they are the only ones who see what is coming, and that no one cares. They remind others at every opportunity of what a terrible burden their prophecy is. Though their wisdom can be a great advantage, having a Third Whisker around can be quite irritating after a while.

As annoying as they may be, no one can dispute the fact that their predictions frequently come true. As a result, other Nezumi often brave a trip into the dangerous catacombs beneath the Wall to seek the guidance of the prophets. The prophets are slightly resentful of outsiders who demand their guidance while ignoring the “real threat” but will gladly swallow their pride in return for some apples or shiny jewels.

The Squeaky Eyeball Tribe

History

“Long-long ago, when the world was small and the sun was close and warm-warm, the Earth asked her children what wished we most. Some chose-chose a great long life, some begged-asked for swift feet or good hunting. But Neek-tai spoke-loud-long with the Earth, and stole for us the gift that was good-most-best. All things pass-pass. Time goes by, swamps drain, forests burn. We, of all the Nezumi-good-kin of the Earth, we remember.

“The Eye will watch, the Eye will see. We know, and we Remember the tale.”

– One of the Many Nezumi Stories of First Beginning

Many of the samurai of the Emerald Empire seek to learn the chattering, squeaking tongue of the humble Nezumi. Those that learn to speak it often wish they hadn’t – particularly when they encounter the gregarious Squeaky Eyeball tribe. Bold, brash, and ‘cultured’ (as much as a Ratling can know culture), the residents of this southern tribe are infatuated with stories, both telling and learning. In fact, it is a common saying in the Kaiu family that the only way to shut one up is to tell him a story.

It is common knowledge within the many tribes of Nezumi that the Rememberers of the Squeaky Eyeball tribe are the finest in all Nezumi culture. They collect stories of all kinds, and they are the receptacles for all Nezumi knowledge. If there is something important that a Ratling knows, it has most likely been compiled and Remembered by a member of the Eye. Looking for some obscure knowledge of distant lands, or of some creature that ravaged Ratling territory three hundred years ago? The Squeaky Eyeball tribe probably knows the truth, or at least remembers a story about what happened.

The Squeaky Eyeball have compiled a great number of stories about how the world ‘began’ (all considered heretical by Rokugani scholars) and even more about the rumored ‘end of All’ that will occur some time in the future. According to one popular Nezumi myth, the Earth Mother lit a candle in order to sew the sky together. The sun is her candle, and the stars are pinpricks of her needle. When she is done, she will blow out the candle and the world will end. Another states that the world was a spitball created by a trickster god, or that the ocean is really the belly of a great whale in which we all reside, floating on bits of meat that the creature swallowed. Not all of the Ratling tales are this fanciful, however, and some hold details that resemble the story of the arrival of Hantei and his Kami siblings. However, all of the Nezumi stories about the



beginning of the world agree on one thing: the Terrible Day. The world, they say, was beautiful and green until something happened that caused the land to boil and the plants to wither. On that day, the Ratlings were cast out of their homes and scattered across the continent, never to reclaim the days of their former glories. Whether that event was Fu Leng's fall, or the Earth Mother placing her candle too near the earth, the results were the same: the world was destroyed, and the Nezumi cursed forever, their homeland destroyed.

Some of the most prized stories of the Squeaky Eyeball tribe are those that concern the time before the Terrible Day. They speak of golden fields, houses made of warm brick and rivers of sweet flowing water. Through all the tales of heroes and legendary Ratlings, the Good Dawns (the term used to refer to the indeterminate time before the Terrible Day) are always referred to as a dreamlike place of beauty, peace, and plenty.

Thereafter, according to most of their stories, the most ancient of Nezumi refused to leave their homeland. Others, who eventually formed the major Nezumi tribes, left the area and went in search of new burrows. The Squeaky Eyeball carried food to the Ancient Ones for many years, and still send a small group of Ratlings deep into the Shadowlands every few years. Those youths leave an offering of food beneath a certain oddly-shaped rock outcropping said to be the entrance to where the Good Dawns had been, before the Terrible Day. Whether this tale is true cannot be verified, but the task is considered a test of maturity for young Ratlings seeking to find their Niche within the tribal structure.

The stories compiled by the Squeaky Eyeball tell tales of heroes and heroic adventures, not about weather, harvests, or other boring incidents. Therefore, even if someone tried to compile a detailed history of pre-Rokugan from the tales of the Nezumi (Kami forbid!), it would be a futile attempt. However, they would hear plenty of stories of twenty-foot-tall Ratlings, war parties that defeated Oni more powerful than the Sun, and clever tricksters that could steal the breath from a sleeping Cloud Princess. Nezumi tales are

fantastic, and although the Squeaky Eyeball swear that they never exaggerate or modify the tales that they Remember, the stories are often nigh-unbelievable.

Travels and Tales of Distant Lands

"You think samurai see-see world? Not so. They see-see only what lies at the top. Real world, true world, lies beneath. You must touch-touch ground to find truth."

– Taki-tiptik, Rememberer-Who-Knows-Dark-Sands

One of the more common type of tale told by the Squeaky Eyeball Tribe concerns their numerous wanderings. Not the wandering of the tribe itself – they remain safely ensconced in their well-built burrows in a large valley just west of the Twilight Mountains. Their tales concern the wanderings of the Torre'chek – Journeymen Rememberers, who must prove their worth before they are considered true tellers of the Ancient tales.

Those Nezumi must go out and find one new tale that is truly worthy of telling, be it one of their own bravery or cunning, or a stolen tale from a distant land. Because the Squeaky Eyeball tribe already know most Rokugani myths, this journey can be a most perilous adventure. Some choose to wander north, through Exile's Pass or toward the distant Yabanjin. Others forage south, into the depths of the Shadowlands and the far-away Ivory Kingdoms. Some, the more daring, set off to the distant West, and journey over the Burning Sands to the cities of the Caliph and the Senpet. All return with many stories to share, and with one great Tale that will hopefully prove them worthy of the title 'Rememberer.'

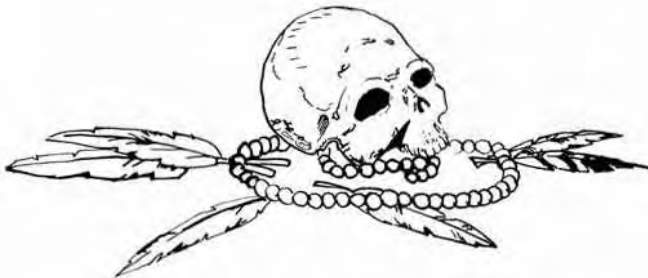
Those Ratlings who have earned the title of Rememberer are revered and treated well by all other clans. Some of the other tribes send their Rememberers to the Squeaky Eyeball for training, knowing that the prestige that comes with such training will reflect well on their burrows. Rememberers trained by the Eye are considered 'true' tale-spinners; all others are simply rats with decent memories and a few stories.

Pleasant Greetings

"There's nothing more annoying, or more dangerous, than a bored Ratling."

– Kaiu Tzuste, Engineer

It's true: the other Nezumi tribes universally like the Ratlings of the Squeaky Eyeball (mostly because they know the best stories). Wanderers from this tribe are considered 'cosmopolitan' and are treated well. Even the members of the Eye that are not Rememberers are usually more adept at telling tales than a commonly-trained Rememberer for another tribe. When a Squeaky





Ferret (S'sith)

Earth: 1

Water: 1

Perception: 3

Fire: 1

Agility: 5

Air: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking: 3k3

Rolls for Damage: 3k1*

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds Per Level: 15: Dead

*(*Ferrets judiciously avoid attacking creatures larger than they are, unless trained specifically to do so. Even then, they tend to flee quickly unless cornered.)*

Ferrets are a small species of weasel, adept at hunting small animals. The Squeaky Eyeball Tribe first discovered these creatures in the lands of the Yabanjin. Finding them intriguing, they learned to domesticate them and brought several back to Rokugan. The ferret has quickly spread across Rokugan and has become a popular pet among nearly every tribe. The Nezumi use these creatures both in hunting and to protect the warren from snakes. Shamans especially favor them, and view them as animals of strong Name.

Ferrets have much in common with Nezumi in that they are intensely curious and playful. They are very adaptable, love to steal and collect small objects, and can slip past almost any sort of obstacle. The Nezumi view ferrets with nearly the same loyalty and admiration with which humans view dogs.

Eyeball traveler arrives at another tribe's burrows, even the angry Crippled Bone offer them food and hospitality in exchange for tales, news of other areas of Rokugan, or information from old legends that may be useful. True Rememberers or questing Torre'chek are

treated with even more reverence, and may be given free supplies and food for their journey.

When a Rememberer dies, some part of Nezumi history dies with them, and all of the tribes of Ratlings are diminished. A Nezumi who has earned the title of Rememberer can expect to be guarded when in danger, and given warnings of any dangers that lie ahead on his path. If he will stay a while and teach new stories and legends to the Rememberers of the other tribe, a Squeaky Eyeball Rememberer could earn allies, weapons, or other useful tools out of appreciation. After all, a tribe can only hear the same stories so many times. New tales are always something to be grateful for.

Even in human lands, the Squeaky Eyeball is usually treated with a modicum of respect. Those familiar with the culture of the Ratlings recognize that the Squeaky Eyeball has a grasp of Rokugani etiquette, and are willing – even eager – to learn more. Unlike their violent cousins in the deep Shadowlands, the Nezumi of the Eye are charismatic, mostly respectful, and know a quite a bit of information concerning a great many things. They make good guides, and pleasant traveling companions... for as long as you can put up with their constant chatter.

The Valley of Stories

The home area of the Squeaky Eyeball tribe is a large valley in the northwestern Twilight Mountains. From above, its shape resembles a large backwards 'c', opening up from the tall cliffs of the mountains onto the far western plains of the Empire. The valley had an 'official' Nezumi name that is unpronounceable and approximately translates to 'Large-go-stone-no-more-find-soft-dark-sleeping-place-to-tell-stories-by-fires', but the Squeaky Eyeball tribal leaders permit the abbreviation – if grudgingly.

The tribe is not a wandering one, and has lived in the valley for centuries. Although other small Squeaky Eyeball "villages" exist throughout the western plains of the Twilight Mountains, the majority live in the Valley. They are primarily hunters and primitive herdsmen, but also have limited agricultural skills that consist of carrying berry-bushes to a single location, and weeding out any other plants from that plain. Their diet consists of these odd berries (known to be poisonous to humans), other foraged plant life, and the occasional animal that has been hunted or raised by the men of the tribe. Male tribe members are responsible for food gathering and preparation.

The Squeaky Eyeball women are primarily responsible for the maintenance of the village, keeping the well's water clean, and caring for the children while the rest of the tribe is gathering food. During the evening, the responsibility for the children reverts to the



males, and the females are free to wash clothing, sew new materials, and other simple chores.

Confirmed Rememberers can be of either gender, any tribe, and any mature age. There are typically 300-400 ratlings in the Valley at a time, and of those as many as 50 are Rememberers, initiates, or Torre'chek who have not yet left on their story-quests. Those Nezumi can be from any tribe in Rokugan, but while they live in the Valley of Stories, they are expected to help the Squeaky Eyeball tribe, perform the usual chores, and also spend the evenings and nights learning tales and studying the histories of the Nezumi. Where a tribe of 100 Ratlings might have a single Rememberer, the Squeaky Eyeball village has many, reflecting the fact that they educate all the Rememberers of the Nezumi race, and have many students.

It is not easy for a young Nezumi to become a Rememberer initiate, and the first step involves finding a confirmed Rememberer to sponsor the prospective initiate to the Council of the Eye. This often happens when an aging Nezumi Rememberer of another tribe travels to the Valley in order to have his replacement trained, or when a Squeaky Eyeball Rememberer sees a youth in his own tribe who has potential to become a Rememberer in his own right.

A Nezumi who has become a Torre'chek has his tail bleached pure white as a sign of his station, and as a mark that the Nezumi is on his quest to become initiated as a full Rememberer of the Nezumi nations. Once they have completed the final stages of their training and been adopted as a Rememberer, their tail is tattooed with red symbols from the most famous Ratling tales and legends. A Rememberer or Torre'chek who dishonors himself, lies to the Council, or abuses his position and duties as a Rememberer is likely to have his tail completely removed, and his position stripped. This is considered a tremendous, irredeemable mark of dishonor. An individual with this marking is shunned by all the tribes of the Nezumi, and is typically left to starve and die in the Shadowlands.

The Council of the Eye

The Squeaky Eyeball tribe is governed by the oldest Rememberers in the nation. There are always at least five Nezumi on the council, and occasionally as many as ten. They are not replaced when they die, but rather, accept a new member into their circle only when that Rememberer has proven himself or herself to be superior in wisdom, number of stories, and knowledge of the world. The Council of the Eye is therefore the single greatest resource of ancient stories, histories, and lost knowledge in all the Nezumi lands.

When a Rememberer becomes a member of the Council, the muzzle of his face is bleached white and covered in red symbols, as was his tail when he became a Rememberer. He is also given a necklace of special plates that represent each of the ten greatest Nezumi heroes, as a mark of his station.

In general, the Council welcomes samurai to the Valley – so long as the human visitors are respectful and courteous. If they act out of line, or refuse to recognize the authority of the Council of the Eye, any such visitors are likely to be carried from the burrow in their sleep and dumped unceremoniously into the river outside the entrance to the Valley.

One of the largest buildings in the Valley of Stories is the chamber of the Council of the Eye. The entire rear hall of the massive hillside burrow is filled with sticks, chewed to tell the stories of the Nezumi race. This chamber is guarded day and night by young Nezumi in training to be Rememberers. Several of the oldest sticks are missing, either rotted away, or used in a horrible incident some hundred years ago when a particularly dense Ratling-in-training used the sacred writings for kindling during a long night's guard duty.





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Chapter Three: Character



Unless noted otherwise, all of the following Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages are available only to Nezumi characters. Some skills may be purchased by taking the Nezumi Culture Advantage, described in greater detail later in this chapter.



Animal Training (Awareness)

Due to horses' natural antipathy for Ratlings, Nezumi are unable to learn Animal Husbandry. This is a special variant which gives the character expertise in breeding typical Nezumi pets – ferrets and cats. Ferrets can be trained to fetch and steal small items, or to hunt small game. Cats can't be trained to do much, but are helpful in keeping small vermin at bay.

Lore (Deep Shadowlands) (Intelligence)

This is a special variant of Lore (Shadowlands) known only to Nezumi. A Nezumi can use this skill to prevent getting lost even in the deep Shadowlands, where chaos reigns. This skill also provides limited knowledge of what lies in the deep Shadowlands. It can also be used to find edible food and safe sleeping quarters in the Shadowlands. This is a High Skill.

Mee-i'thich (Agility)

This is the Nezumi version of Dance. *Mee-i'thich* ("Flying-through-dreams-that-are-yet-to-be") is both ritual and entertainment. Rememberers use dance to aid in storytelling, and dances of shamans are strong in the power of Name. This is considered a High Skill for Nezumi, and a Low Skill for all other characters.

Hand-to-Hand: Mochatchikkan (Agility)

Translated, the name means "Casting-down-the-stalks-of-grass-with great-skill." This is the Nezumi art of unarmed combat, and counts as a Specialized Weapon Skill. *Mochatchikkan* relies on instinct and finesse, using the Nezumi's natural weapons to great affect. Advanced maneuvers (see the section on Mochatchikkan in this chapter) cannot be attempted without this skill. Humans and Naga may never learn this skill, as it depends upon anatomy they do not possess. Mochatchikkan is a Bugei Skill.

Name Lore (Intelligence, Shaman only)

This is the Nezumi equivalent of Spellcraft. This skill grants knowledge of the true power of Name. The Nezumi may roll Name Lore/Intelligence against a TN of 15 to attempt to identify a particular Name magic as it is cast. A successful roll vs. TN 20 can determine if a spell has been cast in the area within the a number of hours equal to the shaman's rank in this skill. With three Raises, the particular spell and its target can be determined as well. A shaman uses this skill when communing with the Transcendent. This is a High Skill.

Remembering (Intelligence)

This is the Nezumi version of History, and indicates that the character remembers the origins of his tribe and race. Typically, only Rememberers have any expertise in Nezumi history. This is a High Skill.



Rokugani Language (Intelligence)

Some Nezumi have no interest in Rokugani culture other than to speak the language. This skill allows understanding of human speech. Roll Rokugani Language/Intelligence vs. TN 10 for simple messages, 20 or more for complex messages. Even with this skill, the Nezumi has a pronounced accent and often says things incorrectly. This is a High Skill.

Scrounging (Perception)

This skill allows quick analysis of an area to find the most useful things to steal. It helps identify items that would be easy to carry away, or how to go about disassembling them so that they can be more easily taken. This does not guarantee that the desired items can be taken, but grants knowledge of which ones appear to be the most valuable. A Nezumi could use this skill, for example, to quickly locate the best armor, weapons, and food remaining on a battlefield. This is considered a Low Skill for humans, but they may learn it if they wish. For Nezumi, Scrounging is a Craft skill.

Th'Kwee (Intelligence)

Translated, this term means "putting-it-down," and refers to the Nezumi art of painting. Nezumi painting is much different from the Rokugani art. It relies on bold colors and thick pigments more suited to the side of a tree or a stone wall than a scrap of silk. Ironically, Nezumi painting is more rooted in realism than stylish Rokugani artwork. A Nezumi who paints another Nezumi does so because he wishes to remember what his friend looks like, not because he wants to create a work of beauty. Even those who believe the Nezumi to be uncultured savages are taken aback by the skill their artists display. It is not truly art, a Crane might say, but it is certainly impressive. This is a High Skill.

Tloo'cha'thrr (Awareness)

Translated, this term means "too-funny-to-be-repeated." The closest counterpart to Rokugani culture is poetry. *Tloo'cha'thrr* is a spontaneous art, in which the poet makes a humorous observation on his own existence. An example composed by the great poet Kee'thrr'thrr: "Sun rose fast today while Kee'thrr'thrr fall asleep-sleep. Sun so mad I not say hello, she burn-burn my nose. Sun not my friend no more."

Though many of the most profound works of *Tloo'cha'thrr* have been recorded by the Rememberers, it is an unspoken rule that a poem is best the first time it is uttered. After the first time, it is no longer poetry. The Nezumi are baffled by Rokugani haiku, as they fail to find the humor in it. Conversely, Rokugani poets are utterly confused by *Tloo'cha'thrr*. This is a High Skill.

Tribal Lore (Perception)

This is the Nezumi version of Heraldry. Though Nezumi do not display their heritage with mon and sashimono, the tribes broadcast their lineage just as boldly. This skill gives knowledge of the totems, fetishes, and pheromones used to mark a particular tribe. Humans who learn this skill have a +10 to TNs due to the fact that they cannot sense pheromones. This is a High Skill.

New Advantages

These Advantages are available only to Nezumi characters unless otherwise noted. Some Advantages have further restrictions.

Fur of Chipped Tooth (5 points, 3 points for Chipped Tooth)

This Advantage is identical to Blood of Osano Wo. It has been renamed because the Nezumi do not worship Osano Wo.

Favored-Pup-of-the-Chief (5 points)

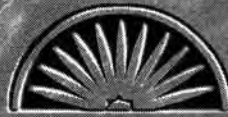
You are a *s'tch-chuk*, favored child of a tribal chieftain. Others often flatter or bribe you in attempts to gain the chief's favor. You may increase your starting Niche by one rank, and can count on political allies within your tribe so long as the chief retains his position.

Forever Memory (5 points, Rememberer only)

The power of memory runs through your veins; you are destined to become a great Rememberer. After each session you gain an extra Experience Point that can only be spent on creating *Tchr* (Memory Sticks).

Great Name (8 points per Rank, Shaman only)

Your Name is above reproach, and is considered to be one Rank higher for all spell-casting effects. You may only purchase one rank of this Advantage during character creation. You may purchase this



Advantage in play for Experience points equal to the new Rank times 8. You can have up to four Ranks of Great Name.

Human Ally (varies)

This is essentially a specialized version of Allies. You cannot spend more points on this Advantage than your Rank in Rokugani Culture, unless the ally is a Crab.

Namebound (3 points, Shaman only)

Select one spell you know. You have achieved complete mastery of this magic, and it no longer counts against the maximum number of spells you may learn. You cast this spell as if your Rank were one higher. This Advantage may be purchased in play for three Experience Points. You may not purchase this Advantage more than once per Rank.

Nezumi Culture (2 points per rank, maximum five ranks, non-Nezumi only)

You are knowledgeable in Nezumi culture. For every two points that you spend, you become increasingly knowledgeable.

Rank 1: You speak a rough, broken version of Nezumi language. Ex. – (Point at self.) “Yoshi.” (Point at Nezumi.) “Stop.” Though you understand that Nezumi are extremely curious and resourceful, you do not grasp the reasons behind what they do.

Rank 2: You can express simple ideas. Ex. – “Me name Yoshi. You stop.” You understand Nezumi survival instinct and their value of identity.

Rank 3: You are fairly fluent in Nezumi language. Ex. – “My name is Hida Yoshi. Stop right there.” You know a great deal about Nezumi culture, though some of the more alien aspects (such as their magic) continue to amaze you.

Rank 4: You are entirely fluent. Ex. – “I am Hida Yoshi, great warrior of the Clan that takes its name from scuttling-tasty-sea-beasts. Come no closer, for there is danger.” You fit in with Nezumi society as well as any human can.

Rank 5: You have reached maximum capacity to speak Nezumi without a tail, whiskers, and pheromone glands. Ex. – “I am Hida Yoshi, scout from the Great Wall that protects against the dark. If you come any closer, then you will also step in quicksand. Please find a stick and pull me out!” You have a sublime understanding of Nezumi society, enough that you recognize that certain aspects of their culture can never be understood.

Special: The Ratling Language skill presented in *Way of the Crab* is separate from this Advantage. It provides fluency in the language for those with no desire to learn Ratling culture.

Nnich'charatha (1-5 points)

This is the Nezumi version of Kharmic Tie. This term means “same name.” Nezumi do not believe in karma, but they believe that some names are connected. It cannot be detected by *sodan-senzo*, though a shaman can sense the link with a Name Lore/Intelligence roll vs. TN 15.

Prophecy (3 points)

You are an *ikak*, a prophet. Sometimes, when you sleep, the Transcendent speak to you. Your dreams may offer muddled warnings or visions of the future. The use of this Advantage is never intentional, but up to the discretion of the GM. You usually have a





prophetic dream at least once per adventure, possibly more if you are on an important quest. You may learn Name Lore as if you were a shaman.

Rememberer Blood (6 points, 3 points for Squeaky Eyeball)

Rememberers are born, not made. Though you are not currently a Rememberer, you have the potential to become one, and can take future Ranks in the Rememberer school. You also gain the effects of the Precise Memory Advantage. (Characters who become Rememberers at Rank 1 do *not* need to purchase this Advantage.)

Rokugani Culture (2 points per rank, maximum five ranks)

You are knowledgeable in Rokugani culture. For every two points that you spend on this Advantage, you become increasingly familiar.

Rank 1: You speak a rough, broken version of Rokugani. Ex. – (Point at self.) “Chack’t’h’witch.” (Point at human.) “Food?” You have no understanding of social mores. However, as Nezumi are have great mechanical cunning, you already have the potential to understand human technology.

Rank 2: You can express simple ideas. Ex. – “Me name Chack’t’h’witch. Give food?” You also have a vague understanding of religion, art, and Bushido.

Rank 3: You are fairly fluent in Rokugani. Ex. – “My name is Chack’t’h’witch. I am hungry.” You are well versed in how the human world functions, though much of the reasoning behind it continues to escape you.

Rank 4: You are entirely fluent. Ex. – “I am Chack’t’h’witch, Rememberer of the Squeaky Eyeball Tribe. If you could spare some of your stew, I would appreciate it.” You understand the society of Rokugan as well as any samurai.

Rank 5: You speak Rokugani with great ability, though some body language (posture, frowning, eyebrows) is impossible. Ex. – “I am Chack’t’h’witch, esteemed representative of the Squeaky Eyeball. That stew would turn out better if you were to marinate the fish before boiling, but what is done is done, hm? Perhaps if you care to share a bit, I could return the favor with an interesting recipe a Mantis sailor once gave me...” You understand enough about Rokugani culture to realize that some elements are beyond your grasp.

Shine-Shiny Eyes (3 points, 2 points for Tattered Ear)

This is Advantage is mechanically identical to Benten’s Blessing, though it has been renamed as the Nezumi do not acknowledge Benten.

Teeth of Stone (5 points)

This Advantage is similar to Hands of Stone, except that it specifically affects damage inflicted by the Nezumi’s bite attack.

Tribal Wanderer (3 points)

This is the Nezumi equivalent of Different School. At some point in your early life, you wandered so far from your home that you met another tribe. For one reason or another, they accepted you and taught you their skills. You may attend any school offered by that tribe. If you wish to learn more Rank Techniques from this school, you must visit a tribe that offers such techniques.



New Disadvantages

These Disadvantages are available only to Nezumi characters.

Kwa’t’hch (2 points)

Translated, this means “ugly as the boiling pit.” This is mechanically identical to Benten’s Curse, but has been renamed as the Nezumi do not acknowledge Benten.

Lost Tail (4 points)

In some grisly accident better forgotten you lost your beloved tail. You gain only one extra die on Climbing checks and cannot run on all fours. The absence of a tail also carries a great stigma in some Nezumi social circles.

No Name (8 points)

You have been cursed by the Take Name spell (see the Magic section). Your Name no longer exists. Your friends and relatives no longer remember you. Your Niche rank is effectively zero and cannot increase unless join a tribe again. You effectively gain a Major Enemy in the Nametaker who destroyed your Name.



Nezumi as Player Characters

The *Game Master's Guide* presents rules for creating Nezumi characters. These rules were created for the sake of simplicity, and work just fine when used for NPCs. However, certain elements of Nezumi NPC creation are not satisfactory for creating player characters. When creating Nezumi player characters, the rules in this book supersede those in the *Game Master's Guide*.

Players who wish to run a Nezumi character must obtain permission from the GM. Nezumi do not fit every campaign, and many parties neither need nor want a six-foot rat. Keep in mind all that playing a Ratling amid human society implies. Though Nezumi and humans are similar in many ways, they are also wildly different. Though misunderstandings between Nezumi and samurai (or Naga!) can create interesting narrative friction, they may distract from the campaign. The GM is quite justified in denying players the right to play a Nezumi character.

Creating a Nezumi Character

Step One – Choose a Tribe

Select one of the eight tribes in this chapter, or follow the rules presented for creating your own. This determines which schools you may choose, your starting Name, and various bonus abilities.

Step Two: Choose a Profession

Select one of the schools offered by your tribe. You gain the Trait Bonus, Skills, starting Niche, and Rank 1 Technique listed under your school.

If you wish to attend a school that is not offered by your tribe, you must purchase the Tribal Wanderer Advantage.

Step Three: Customize Your Character

A Nezumi's Traits and Rings begin at 2. You may spend 30 Character Points to customize your character in the usual manner, and can gain up to 10 Character Points by choosing Disadvantages. When choosing Skills, Traits, Advantages, and Disadvantages pay special attention to the following rules for Nezumi characters. A Nezumi's Starting Outfit is determined by both his Tribe and his school.

Niche – A Nezumi's Place in Society

Nezumi have no place within Rokugani society; their Glory is effectively -10, and can never increase short of the unlikely event that they are allowed to swear fealty to a samurai family. Instead of Glory, Nezumi have a special characteristic called *Tach-cht*, or Niche.

Niche indicates how important the character is within Nezumi society, and along with Name determines how other Ratlings regard him. A starting character's Niche is determined by their school.

Unlike Glory, Niche is never awarded when a Nezumi enters battle or defeats an enemy. Niche only increases with a Nezumi's importance to the tribe. Niche awards are gained when a character proves himself worthy. When a Nezumi increases his School Rank, his importance to the tribe immediately increases as well. Niche ranks are as follows:

- Niche Rank 0 – Outcast
- Niche Rank 1 – Most Rank 1 characters
- Niche Rank 2 – Conjuror (Rank 1 Shaman), Rememberer (Rank 1), most Rank 2 characters
- Niche Rank 3 – Most Rank 3 characters
- Niche Rank 4 – Nameseeker (Rank 2 Shaman) most Rank 4 characters
- Niche Rank 5 – Rememberer (Rank 2)
- Niche Rank 6 – Rememberer (Rank 3), most Rank 5 Characters
- Niche Rank 7 – Namefinder (Rank 3 Shaman), Rememberer (Rank 4), Pack Chief (Chekchuk)
- Niche Rank 8 – Namebinder (Rank 4 Shaman), Rememberer (Rank 5)
- Niche Rank 9 – Tribal Chieftain
- Niche Rank 10 – Nametaker (Rank 5 Shaman)

Other Niche awards

At ten years of age, a Nezumi automatically gains 1 Rank of Niche. Every four years after that, a Nezumi gains another Rank of



Niche. There is no limit to how much Niche can be gained by age, meaning that an extraordinarily old Nezumi will be granted even greater respect and deference than a tribal chieftain or a powerful Nametaker.

Nezumi who prove themselves fertile and produce offspring gain 0.5 Niche the first time they do so (both parents receive this reward). Nezumi who find a substantial resource or subtly eliminate a threat without creating greater trouble gain one point of Niche. Niche is awarded by those of higher rank than the Nezumi, and no Nezumi can grant a higher Niche rank than his own.

Name (Charathathich)

All Nezumi begin with an Honor rank of zero. Nezumi cannot increase their Honor unless they purchase the Rokugani Culture Advantage and behave appropriately. A Nezumi's Honor Rank can never increase higher than their Rank in Rokugani Culture. A starting Nezumi that purchases Rokugani Culture may spend three Character Points to increase their Honor by one rank. Non-Nezumi must obtain the Nezumi Culture Advantage and behave appropriately if they wish to gain Ranks of Name.

Nezumi obey a code of behavior they refer to as Name. Name increases or decreases in the same way Honor does, but depends on different actions. The amount of Name a character begins with depends upon his tribe.

Starting characters may spend three Character Points to raise their Name by one Rank, or gain 2 Character Points by reducing their Name by one Rank. Name may only be increased or decreased by one rank during character creation.

Like Honor, Name is ranked on a scale of one to five, with ten points per Rank.

Differences Between Name and Honor

The values of a Nezumi are very different from the values of the average samurai.

For example, Nezumi value bravery, but a Nezumi considers it braver to run away so that he can live to defend his tribe. Nezumi value survival ahead of valor. Whatever action leads to the survival of the most Nezumi possible is an action of great Name. If cornered with no escape, a Nezumi with strong Name never surrenders, fighting fiercely so that he can kill as many of the tribe's enemies as possible.

Nezumi value any act that increases their quality of life. Treating an ally in a trustworthy manner is an act of great Name. Playing a trick on an enemy is likewise an act of great Name, unless the Nezumi is caught, as this could bring trouble. Acquiring tools, food, or treasure are also acts of great Name. Stealing from one's allies is

a gray area – in the end it depends whether the ally or the item stolen is more valuable.

A sense of identity is very important. A Nezumi who makes quick decisions has performed an act of great Name – so long as his decision was the right one. Making quick but clumsy decisions implies weak Name. Seeking advice from the wise is by no means an act of weak Name, so long as the Nezumi does so quickly. Nezumi are not expected to obey their tribal leaders without question the way samurai are, but are expected to realize that their leaders are the most qualified judges of the tribe's actions. Nezumi walk a fine line between individuality and loyalty, and oftentimes the road is difficult.

Loyalty to other Nezumi is another important part of Name. Choosing one's tribe over one's selfish desires is always an act of great Name. Bearing children is an act of extremely great Name, as this assures the survival the next generation. Saving the life of a child at the risk of your own is perhaps the greatest act of Name. Nezumi tribes rarely fight amongst themselves. If two tribes are on poor terms they prefer to avoid each other than stage a direct confrontation. Starting a fight with other Nezumi is an act of weak Name. Stealing from or tricking a rival tribe is certainly an action of great Name, and happens often.

Name Rank 0: Nameless

You are hardly a Nezumi. Either your actions are foolish and troublesome, or you care nothing for your kind. Perhaps you do not even care about yourself.

Name Rank 1: Soiled Name

You are considered erratic, perhaps a bit touched in the head. Maybe you like to start fights. Maybe you don't work hard enough. Maybe you're just lazy.

Name Rank 2: Good Name

Most Nezumi hover somewhere around this Rank. You usually do what is right for the tribe, but you're sometimes tempted to see to your own needs first or carry out vendettas. Though you fail from time to time, you usually *try* to act appropriately.

Name Rank 3: Great Name

You have great strength of character, and place the needs of the tribe before your own as much as possible. You are not afraid to make sacrifices to better the lives of your people, and will gladly flee before a superior force. You have a highly developed sense of self worth, and know your proper place.



Name Rank 4: Legendary Name

At this rank, you are deep-set in your sense of self and purpose. You *always* put the needs of the tribe before your own, and constantly seek methods to better the quality of life for all Nezumi. You know that it is better to be practical than brave, and have little doubt how to react to a given situation – the needs of the tribe will guide you.

Name Rank 5: Perfect Name

Few Nezumi ascend to this level of identity. You do not follow the rules of Name – you *make* the rules. You *dictate* what is best for tribe and clan, and the rest follow your lead. Your actions are never thoughtless, but are always deeply driven by experience. You seldom lead your tribe astray of the truest path to survival and prosperity.

Sample Name Awards and Losses

Losses and gains are cumulative. Outsmarting an enemy by stealing from him, for example, would gain 2–6 boxes of Name. Causing the death of a Nezumi child would net a loss of 8–12 points.

The GM is the final arbitrator in whether any points are gained or lost.

Tests of Name

Like Honor, a Nezumi may rely upon his strength of character to resist temptation. If a Nezumi is forced to perform an action that he feels is of weak Name, he may choose to make a Name Test. This functions exactly as an Honor Test (see page 169 of the *Player's Guide*) except that Name is used in the place of Honor.

If a character with both Name and Honor finds both are applicable in a given situation, he must use one or the other, not both.

Nezumi and Void

Like all living creatures, Nezumi are composed partially of Void. To reflect this, they have a Void Ring. Unfortunately, the use and focus of Void is a human talent, one that the Nezumi lack. Nezumi cannot spend Void points for any reason, and cannot use any Rank Technique or ability that requires Void.

Action	Name Points Gained or Lost
Killing an enemy	+0 to 1
Running away from an enemy	+1 to 2
Outsmarting an enemy	+1 to 3
Stealing from an enemy	+1 to 3
Making a friend or ally	+2 to 4
Obtaining new food, treasure, weapons, or tools for the tribe	+1 to 2
Inventing a new tool or weapon	+2 to 5
Making quick, correct decisions	+0 to 1
Seeking advice	+0 to 1
Fathering children	+1 to 2
Bearing a litter	+4 to 5
Saving the life of a child at the risk of your own	+4 to 6
Getting into an unnecessary fight	-0 to 1
Stealing from an ally	-1 to 3
Allowing something to be stolen from the tribe	-2 to 4
Stealing from your tribe	-3 to 5
Wasting resources	-0 to 1
Abandoning the tribe	-2 to 5
Making an enemy	-1 to 3
Destroying food	-1 to 2
Making a poor decision when advice was available	-0 to 1
Causing the death of any Nezumi, by action or omission	-3 to 5
Causing the death of any child, by action or omission	-5 to 7





Nezumi and Rokugani Schools

Under most circumstances a Nezumi should not be allowed to attend a samurai school. The dishonor a sensei would accrue for teaching a Ratling is too high with Rokugani prejudices as they are. That being said, sometimes strange things do happen (see Tchickchuk in Chapter Four for an example). The GM should allow whatever he deems appropriate in his own campaign.

Keep in mind that Nezumi cannot use Rank Techniques that require expenditure of Void Points.

Nezumi and Advantages

Nezumi may not purchase Advantages which involve Honor, Glory, extensive political connections, membership in a specific family or clan, any exclusive Advantages (other than those exclusive to Nezumi) or any Advantages which involve the use of Void Points.

Prohibited Advantages include but are not limited to: Balance, Ear of the Emperor, Gentry, Imperial Spouse, *Maho*, *Musha Shugyo*, Patron, Precise Memory, Servant, Social Position, Taint Resistance, Twisted Karma, Wealthy, any Advantage containing the name of a samurai family (Crab Hands is allowed), and any Advantage the GM deems inappropriate.

The following Advantages are altered in regards to Ratling characters:

Allies – See the Human Ally Advantage. Naga allies cost triple.

Blackmail – This Advantage costs double normal cost when applied to humans or Naga. When purchased in regards to other Nezumi, use Niche Rank to determine cost.

Blood of Osano-Wo – See Fur of Chipped Tooth.

Benten's Blessing – See Shine-Shiny-Eyes.

Different School – Nezumi characters may not purchase this Advantage, unless the campaign allows Nezumi to attend Rokugani schools. See the Tribal Wanderer Advantage.

Hands of Stone – This Advantage costs one point less for Crippled Bone Nezumi. It does not affect bite damage.

Kharmic Tie – See Nnich'charatha.

Leadership – If the Nezumi cannot communicate, he cannot lead human or Naga troops. The same applies to non-Nezumi leading Nezumi troops.

Multiple Schools – Nezumi characters may only purchase this Advantage in regards to Nezumi schools, unless the campaign allows Nezumi to attend Rokugani schools.

Ratling Ally – Use the Allies Advantage instead.

Silent – This Advantage costs one point for Green-Green-White Nezumi.

Nezumi and Disadvantages

Nezumi may not purchase Disadvantages which involve Honor, Glory, extensive political connections, membership in a specific family or clan, any exclusive Disadvantages (other than those exclusive to Nezumi) or any Advantages which involve the use of Void Points.

Prohibited Disadvantages include but are not limited to: Ascetic, Adopted Blood, Broken Daisho, Cast Out, Cruel, Curse of the Kami, Disbeliever, Dishonored, Forced Retirement, Forsaken, Haunted, Heimin, Insensitive, Lost Love, *Momoku*, Never Sat On A Horse, Shadowlands Taint, Social Disadvantage, Touch of the Void, True Love, Unhygienic, Victim of Darkness, any Disadvantage containing the name of a samurai family, and any other Advantage the GM deems inappropriate.

The following Disadvantages are altered in regards to Ratling characters:

Benten's Curse – See Kwa'thch.

Black Sheep – Applies to all schools taught by the Nezumi's tribe. The Nezumi could learn school techniques from a different tribe that offers the same school.

Colorblind – All Nezumi technically have this Disadvantage, but receive no points for it.

Coward – For Nezumi, this advantage has nothing to do with Glory, or even Niche. It does, however, apply to *all* samurai and Naga as if they had Fear.

Idealistic – Applies to Name as if it were Honor. If the character has both, it applies to both.

Small – Third Whisker Nezumi receive two extra points for this Advantage.

Nezumi and Skills

Many skills normally available to starting characters are prohibited for Nezumi. The Rokugani Culture Advantage is designed to circumvent this drawback, as Nezumi are extraordinarily



Skill	Rokugani Culture Rank
Astrology	4
Acting	2
Advanced Medicine	5
Animal Husbandry (Horse)	Never
Armorer	1
Artisan	3
Autopsy	5
Bard	4
Calligraphy	1
Cipher	3
Commerce*	1
Courtier*	5
Dance (see Mee-i'thich)*	1
Engineering	1
Etiquette*	2
Explosives	3
Forgery	3
Gambling*	1
Go	1
Hand to Hand (see Mochatchikkan)*	1
Heraldry (see Tribal Lore)*	3
History (see Remembering)*	3
Horse Archery	Never
Horsemanship	Never
Iaijutsu	Never
Law*	5
Locksmith	1
Lore: Ancestors	5
Lore: Bushido	2
Lore: Festivals and Ceremonies	4
Lore: Literature	3
Lore: Nemuranai	4
Lore: Shadowlands (see Lore: Deep Shadowlands)*	1
Lore: Shugenja*	4
Lore: Tropical Fish	3
Manipulation*	5
Music*	2
Oratory*	3
Oratory/Rhetoric*	3
Origami	1
Painting (see Th'Kwee)*	2
Poetry (see Tloo'cha'thrr)*	2
Political Maneuvering*	5
Research*	4
Seduction*	5

Skill	Rokugani Culture Rank
Shintao	2
Sincerity*	4
Spell Research*	Never
Spellcraft (see Name Lore)*	5
Tea Ceremony	Never
Theology*	3
Torture*	2
Weaponsmith*	1
Yomanri	2

adaptive. Those who become familiar with the culture of the samurai may learn their skills.

This table lists skills that are restricted for Nezumi. The prerequisite listed is the rank of Rokugani Culture required in order to learn the skill at any rank. Obtaining Rokugani Culture does not automatically grant expertise in any skills; they must be learned and paid for normally.

Asterisks indicate skills which have an equivalent in both Nezumi and Rokugani society, and may be learned as separate skills for either. For example, any Nezumi can take Etiquette (Nezumi) to behave properly around Nezumi, but must obtain Rokugani Culture and learn Etiquette (Rokugani) to know the proper things to do and say around samurai. Skills with "Never" listed under the prerequisite have a Rokugani version that may not be learned by Nezumi.

A human or Naga wishing to learn the Nezumi version of any asterisk-marked listed skills must purchase the appropriate rank of Nezumi Culture.

Nezumi and Meditation

Nezumi cannot spend Void, but they can learn Meditation normally. This skill is only of use to shamans, who may make a Void/Meditation roll vs. TN of 20 to recover a spell slot after meditating for one hour. Other Nezumi who practice this skill do so merely out of an attempt to understand human behavior.

Nezumi and Craft Skills

Nezumi can learn human or Naga Craft skills with little trouble. Any Nezumi with even one Rank of Rokugani Culture may learn any Craft skill he wishes, though items crafted by Nezumi are often drastically different from Rokugani versions in appearance and function.

Nezumi and Social Skills

Nezumi who purchase social Skills and Advantages gain all the normal benefits. However, the GM can assign whatever penalty he



Nezumi and Skill Groups

Nezumi may purchase any skill groups presented in *Winter Court: Kyuden Asako*, so long as they can legally learn the skills they select. The following are new Skill Groups for Nezumi characters.

Ratling Culture Group

Courtier (Nezumi)
Etiquette (Nezumi)
Mee-i'thich
Name Lore
Remembering
Th'Kwee
Tloo'cha'thrr
Tribal Lore

Ratling Survival Group

Athletics
Defense
Lore (Deep Shadowlands)
Scrounging
Stealth
Hunting

deems fit when a Nezumi character interacts with those prejudiced against Nezumi. The ordinary TN penalty ranges from +20 to +30 or more when dealing with a Naga or other hostile individual. This penalty can be reduced gradually if the Nezumi wins the trust of those with whom he is dealing. These penalties should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and common sense should rule overall. A Nezumi scout attempting to seduce a geisha will face a harsh penalty no matter how well-liked he is.

Non-Nezumi using social skills in Nezumi society face the same penalties.

Interactions between Nezumi and Crab characters usually face no penalty.

Nezumi Racial Abilities

The Nezumi's unique physiology grants them the following abilities:

Burrowing

A Nezumi can burrow through three feet of soft earth per hour, leaving a tunnel if he wishes. Make a Stamina check vs. a TN of 5 plus 5 for each hour of burrowing. When this check fails, the Nezumi

must rest for six hours before burrowing further. The tunnel a Nezumi creates is unstable unless shored with other materials.

Climbing

The long tail and claws of Nezumi make them expert climbers. When climbing, a Nezumi rolls three extra unkept dice as if he were using climbing tools. A Nezumi is never considered to be unskilled when climbing.

Contortion

A Nezumi's spine and skeleton are extremely flexible. Generally, a Nezumi can fit through any opening that accommodates his head. A Nezumi must make a raw Agility roll vs. TN 25 to squeeze through an opening without harm. If he fails, he takes one die of Wounds and does not make it through, but may try again. The TN for contortion is increased by 15 while wearing Light samurai armor, and is impossible in Heavy Armor.

Enhanced Hearing

Nezumi can hear a higher register of sound than humans, but cannot hear low, bass tones.

Enhanced Scent

Nezumi sense of scent is acute. A raw Perception roll vs. an appropriate TN allows a Nezumi to detect a strong scent in the air, and identify it if he has encountered it before. Nezumi cannot track by scent unless the smell is overpowering. All Nezumi are skilled at detecting the subtle odor of pheromones.

Immunity to the Taint

Nezumi cannot contract the Shadowlands Taint by any means, and can heal normally within the Shadowlands with no danger of infection. Name Magic cast in the Shadowlands receives no TN penalty.

Leaping

A Nezumi character can leap a distance equal to his height times his Water from a standing start, and his height times half his Water straight up. Increase either of these distances by half with a running start. The GM may require an Agility or Athletics/Agility roll vs. an appropriate TN for complex leaping maneuvers.

Night Vision

Nezumi are nocturnal, and can see well with little light. A Nezumi ignores TN penalties inflicted by darkness, up to a maximum of +10. Nezumi have only limited color vision (they see



greens and blues as shades of brown) and have only half the visual range of a human, one quarter in bright sunlight.

Pheromones

The average Nezumi can leave a pheromone that indicates his gender, tribe, and the direction in which he is traveling. These pheromones can be detected up to twenty feet away by other Nezumi and linger until washed away. The TN to detect these pheromones by scent is 5, plus 5 for each additional week of age. Creatures with a strong sense of smell (such as dogs and horses) can detect Nezumi pheromones, but do not know what they mean. Some animals become inexplicably aggressive when they encounter Nezumi pheromones.

Speed

A Nezumi may move a number of feet per round equal to his Water x 7, or Water x 10 if running on all fours with nothing in hand. If they wish to run at top speed, they may move twice this distance but may take no other action in that round. Nezumi face no penalty during the round after they run at top speed, as humans do (see page 164, *Player's Guide*).

Teeth

A Nezumi can gnaw through a foot of wood per hour, or an inch of soft metal (gold, lead, etc.). The Nezumi must make a Stamina check vs. a TN of 5 for each hour of gnawing, plus five for each additional hour. When this check fails, the Nezumi's teeth are dulled and he must wait twenty-four hours before he may gnaw again. A Nezumi skilled in Mochatchikkan can use his teeth to bite an opponent, inflicting normal unarmed damage (Strength k1).

Toughness

The strong Nezumi constitution makes them resistant to illness. A Nezumi can eat nearly anything without harm, and has a +10 bonus on all rolls to resist disease, including magical disease.

Wounds

Nezumi can endure more pain than humans, and remain active until knocked out entirely. To reflect this, a Nezumi determines Wounds on each Rank by multiplying Earth by four, rather than two. PC Nezumi are also somewhat harder than the NPC Nezumi described on page 122 of the *GM's Guide*, and have five Wound ranks instead of four: +0, +3, +6, +10, and Dead.





Nezumi Advanced Abilities

The Nezumi race is one of great diversity, and the physical characteristics of different family lines vary wildly. The following advanced abilities are available to all Nezumi characters and are purchased in the same manner as Advantages. These abilities may only be purchased at character creation.

Advanced Pheromones (6 points, free for Rememberers)

You can leave complex messages through the use of pheromones. Any sentence of ten words or less that can be constructed using only the words in the Language section in the Appendix of this book can be left as a chemical message. These pheromones can be detected up to forty feet away by other Nezumi and linger as normal pheromones do.

Bigjump (3 points, 2 points for Chipped Tooth)

You can leap fifty per cent farther and higher than a normal Nezumi. This ability is common among Chipped Tooth Ratlings, who must often leap about in the rigging of ships.

Bignose (5 points)

You can detect pheromones at double the normal range, and gain a +10 to all Perception rolls involving scent. You may make a Hunting/Perception roll vs. TN 25 to track the scent of any creature with whom you are familiar if they have passed through the same area recently.

Black Vision (3 points, 2 points for Crooked Tail)

You can see in almost total darkness, and ignore TN penalties inflicted by darkness, up to a maximum of +50. You have no color vision whatsoever.

Clever Tail (3 points, 2 points for Green-Green-White)

Your tail is almost completely prehensile. It can wrap around protrusions and support your entire weight. Attacks and skill rolls requiring manual dexterity may be made with your tail at a +10 to the TN. The tail does not grant extra attacks nor can it wield weapons. It can, however, lift any item it can reach and place it in your hand or pack.

Digger (3 points, 2 points for Grasping Paw)

You can burrow through six feet of soft earth per hour, or three feet of hard earth (such as the earth beneath a castle wall). If combined with Sharptooth, you can burrow a path through a foot of

stone per hour. Make a Stamina check vs. a TN of 5 each hour, plus five for each additional hour. When this check fails, you must rest for six hours before burrowing further. When burrowing at full speed, you leave no trail, though another Nezumi or human could follow closely before the tunnel collapses. Burrowing at half speed leaves a passable, if unstable, tunnel.

Hardy (2 points, 1 point for Crippled Bone)

You have an extraordinary resistance to disease. Non-magical illnesses do not affect you, though you may become a carrier for disease.

Sharpears (2 points, 1 point for Tattered Ear)

You have larger ears than normal, granting a more highly developed sense of hearing. You receive a +15 bonus to all Perception rolls involving hearing.

Sharptooth (3 points)

Your teeth are as sharp and tough as a katana. You can gnaw materials at twice the normal rate. In addition, you can chew through iron at the rate of one foot per hour and steel at the rate of one inch per hour. You must make a Stamina check vs. a TN of 5 for each hour of gnawing, plus five for each additional hour. When this check fails, your teeth are dulled and you must wait twenty-four hours before you may gnaw again. If your teeth dull while chewing iron or steel, you take one die of Wounds. This ability increases the damage of your bite by one die, rolled and kept.

Softbones (4 points, 3 points for Third Whisker)

You are extremely flexible, and take no damage when failing to squeeze through a tight area. In addition, you can fall up to sixty feet without harm. Falls greater than sixty feet inflict half damage.

Spirit Sight (6 points, 4 points for Shamans)

You can see ghosts, mujina, oni, and hengeyokai in their true form, even when disguised or invisible. Shamans are often chosen because they possess this ability.

Swiftfoot (3 points, 2 points for Squeaky Eyeball)

You are fast, even by Nezumi standards. You may move a number of feet per round equal to your Water x 9, or Water x 12 if running on all fours with nothing in hand. Either of these speeds can be doubled if you do nothing but run during that round, but this imposes a +5 penalty the round immediately after running.



What Nezumi Can't Do

1. Nezumi cannot spend Void Points, nor can they ever use a Rank technique that depends upon Void Points.
2. Nezumi cannot use Rokugani magic or Naga pearl magic. After a few centuries of study the Nezumi may conceivably learn to use other modes of magic, but for the time being their mind-set is too alien to grasp elemental magic.
3. Under no circumstances may Nezumi purchase a human ancestor.
4. Ratlings may not learn *kiho* or receive *ise zumi* tattoos. They can, conceivably, receive Shadow Brands (see *Way of the Scorpion*).
5. Just as they can never have the Taint, Nezumi can never use *maho* or possess Shadowlands Powers.
6. Nezumi have a natural antipathy toward Naga, their natural predators. Even an agreeable Naga will have occasional bloodthirsty urges when a Ratling is about.
7. Horses and dogs cannot stand Nezumi. Dogs bark wildly when they detect a Nezumi's presence. Horses become aggressive, often trying to kick the Nezumi or chase them away. Dogs can sense Nezumi pheromones and can be trained to track Nezumi.
8. Nezumi have a short life span – twenty-five to thirty years. Though this is unlikely to be a factor in most campaigns, it is definitely something to keep in mind when designing a character. Most starting characters have recently come of age and are only six or seven years old.
9. With the exception of Rememberers, Nezumi have a poor memory for events. A Nezumi must make a raw Intelligence check vs. TN 15 to recall the details of any event that happened more than a week ago. If the event is extremely important or personal, no check is necessary.

Ratling Tribes

Chipped Tooth Tribe

The only Nezumi to have ventured onto the seas, the Chipped Tooth are accomplished sailors.

Benefit: Chipped Tooth Nezumi may move their full normal speed in the water, can hold their breath for twice the normal amount of time (see the *Game Master's Guide* for rules on holding your breath), and gain one Rank in the Sailing skill for free (determine other starting skills before adding this bonus). They may purchase Mantis allies for normal cost. Their natural poise and balance allow them to add their Rank in Agility to all Initiative rolls.

Starting Name: 1.5

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Shaman, Scout, Warrior

Starting Outfit: Four Treasures, one weapon, one other piece of equipment (Poor quality)

Crippled Bone Tribe

More savage and warlike than other Nezumi, the Crippled Bone believe that they are the rightful rulers of their race. The terrors they have seen in the deep Shadowlands make the rest of the world's threats seem feeble by comparison.

Benefit: Crippled Bone Ratlings are immune to Fear, and their Earth is considered to be one higher for the purposes of determining Wounds.

Starting Name: 2.0

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Shaman, Warrior, Chieftain, Berserker

Starting Outfit: One extra Scavenging Table roll, and choose one of the following:

1. Two peasant or Nezumi weapons (Average quality)
2. One peasant or Nezumi weapon (Average quality) and one weapon of choice (Poor quality)
3. One weapon of choice (Average quality)
4. Light or Heavy Hide armor (Average quality)

Crooked Tail Tribe

The Crooked Tail see themselves as the only defense against an enemy the other tribes will not even admit exists. These Ratlings look into the eyes of humans and see an evil brewing that they cannot name, a darkness not born of the Shadowlands.

Benefit: The cost of increasing your Void Ring (with experience or Character Points) is four points less for Crooked Tail Ratlings. All Crooked Tail Ratlings gain one Rank in Lore (Lying Darkness) for free (determine other starting skills before adding this bonus).

Starting Name: 2.5

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Shaman, Scout, Warrior, Chieftain, Scrounger

Starting Outfit: Two Treasures, one extra weapon (Average quality), finger of uncut crystal



Grasping Paw Tribe

The Grasping Paw Tribe's reputation as thieves is well deserved. These Ratlings have an unquenchable desire for material wealth, and will scurry off with anything they can lay their hands on.

Benefit: Grasping Paw Ratlings roll additional dice equal to their Rank on any Stealth, Scrounging, or Sleight of Hand rolls. For every Raise they make using any of these skills, they gain the effects of two Raises.

Starting Name: 1.0

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Shaman, Scout, Builder, Scrounger

Starting Outfit: Six Treasures, two pieces of equipment (Average Quality, no weapons), one extra Scavenging Table roll

Green-Green-White Tribe

Members of this tribe may be isolationist xenophobes, but they are also masters of survival. They have no magic to speak of, but their wilderness skills are second to none.

Benefit: Green-Green-White Ratlings roll extra dice equal to their Rank on all Stealth, Hunting, and Climbing rolls in a wilderness setting. All Ratlings from this tribe gain one free Rank in Hunting or Herbalism (determine other starting skills before adding this

bonus). Members of this tribe may not be shamans, not even by purchasing the Tribal Wanderer Advantage. Lore (Deep Shadowlands) is replaced by an additional rank in Hunting or Herbalism in all Green-Green-White schools.

Starting Name: 2.5

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Scout, Builder, Berserker

Starting Outfit: Two Treasures, two pieces of extra equipment (Either or both may be peasant or Nezumi weapons, Average Quality)

Squeaky Eyeball Tribe

Gregarious and charismatic, the Nezumi of the Squeaky Eyeball are treated well by all tribes of Ratlings. Further, because nearly every member of the Squeaky Eyeball has heard the old tales, they are considered to be the most 'educated' Nezumi of the great tribes. They are peaceful, but very talkative, and willing to do nearly anything in order to learn some new story to take back to their tribe. Because they are very good at remembering everything they see and hear, and also because they're just genuinely friendly, they can occasionally be found with the samurai of Rokugan, serving as a guide or traveling companion.



Benefit: Nezumi of the Squeaky Eyeball roll an extra die when trying to convince, coerce, or make friends with any sentient creature. If the object of their persuasion is another Nezumi, they may also keep the extra die. Further, once per adventure, a Nezumi of the Eye may remember some pertinent piece of an ancient tale that may assist them with their dilemma – a new idea of how to attack a foe, a memory of a particularly clever trick, or some random bit of trivia they heard in a story. Your GM will provide the obscure information; it is the Ratling player's task to find a way to put the information to use.

Starting Name: 3.5

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Shaman, Scout, Warrior, Scrounger

Starting Outfit: Three Treasures, two pieces of equipment (no weapons, Poor quality)

Tattered Ear Tribe

The Tattered Ear know humans better than any other tribe. Their long struggle for acceptance has had mixed results, but they will never stop trying to find a place in Rokugan. Their large population grants them a wide diversity of racial abilities and schools.

Benefit: All Tattered Ear Ratlings gain three free Ranks of the Rokugani Culture Advantage. You may purchase one Nezumi Special Ability for two points less than the standard cost. Tattered Ear Ratlings may exchange the Lore (Deep Shadowlands) Skill offered by their school for any other Lore Skill.

Starting Name: 2.5

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Shaman, Scout, Builder, Warrior, Chieftain, Scrounger

Starting Outfit: Four Treasures, two pieces of equipment (Average Quality, no weapons), one extra Scavenging Table roll

Third Whisker Tribe

The Third Whisker's connection to the Transcendent is a blessing and a curse. While their magic is powerful, they are disdained by many Nezumi for their pessimistic doomsaying.

Benefit: If you are a shaman, you gain the Namebound Advantage for free, once. This special bonus does not count against the maximum number of times you may learn the Namebound Advantage. Future purchases of Namebound cost one point less. If you are not a shaman, you may purchase Prophecy or any Transcendent guardian for four points less than the standard cost.

Starting Name: 3.5

Schools Allowed: Rememberer, Shaman, Scout, Scrounger, Chieftain

Starting Outfit: Two Treasures, one piece of extra equipment (Poor Quality, no weapons), one extra Scavenging Table roll

Creating Your Own Ratling Tribe

Though the eight aforementioned tribes are the most prominent in Rokugan, they are by no means the only Nezumi in the Empire. Countless tiny tribes dot the Shadowlands and lie scattered throughout Rokugan, some with as few as a dozen members. If you wish to create one of these small tribes, use the following guidelines.

Name of the Tribe

To determine the name of the tribe, consult the following tables. Either pick one name from Table A and one from Table B, or roll percentile dice to determine a random result.

For example, Dan is creating a tribe, and wants to do so randomly. He gets a roll of 43 on Table A and 10 on Table B: the Foolish Dreamer Tribe. Dan likes that name, so he keeps it.

Table A

01-05	Black
06-10	Blessed
11-15	Bold
16-20	Burnt
21-25	Careless
26-30	Deadly
31-35	Fat
36-40	Flaming
41-45	Foolish
46-50	Hairy
51-55	Morning
56-60	Running
61-65	Sharp
66-70	Silent
71-75	Skinned
76-80	Stinky
81-85	Stone
86-90	Third
91-95	Wee
96-00	Wretched

Table B

01-05	Claw
06-10	Dreamer
11-15	Fang
16-20	Feet
21-25	Fur
26-30	Lightning



31-35	Lip
36-40	Mistake
41-45	Muzzle
46-50	Scar
51-55	Scowl
56-60	Shinbone
61-65	Shout
66-70	Sneeze
71-75	Spear
76-80	Spit
81-85	Splint
86-90	Tear
91-95	Toenail
96-00	Tongue

Racial Diversity

Choose one item from the following table or roll percentile dice randomly. None of these results have any mechanical effect; all are purely flavor.

To continue the earlier example, Dan rolls a 17 indicating* that the Foolish Dreamer Ratlings have a tendency to be born hairless. It isn't quite what he wanted, but Dan decides to take it anyway.

01-05	Extremely high-pitched voices
06-10	Extremely thin
11-15	Flattened tails
16-20	Hairless
21-25	Long, pointy ears (like a hare's)
26-30	No whiskers (have adapted without them)
31-35	Oddly colored eyes
36-40	Pronounced, sharp canines
41-45	Several inches shorter than average
46-50	Several inches taller than average
51-55	Tendency to stutter (more than usual)
56-60	Tendency toward albinism
61-65	Tendency toward obesity
66-70	Tendency toward spotted fur
71-75	Three fingers on the forepaws
76-80	Very long tails (one foot longer)
81-85	Very short tails (one foot shorter)
86-90	Unusual fur color (red, blonde, platinum)
91-95	Roll two times
96-00	Roll three times

Tribal Benefits

Members of your tribe can gain one of the following: a specific Advantage for five points less, or a specific Advantage for four points less and one free Rank in a specific skill (determine other starting skills before adding this bonus). Alternately, your GM may invent a unique tribal benefit, using the tribes presented in this book as a guideline.

Next, select one Nezumi Advanced Ability. Members of your tribe may purchase this ability for one point less.

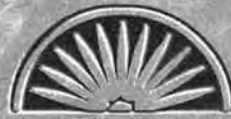
In the above example, Dan decides that the Foolish Dreamers are savage little Ratlings. They may purchase Hands of Stone for no point cost. He also likes the idea of his character being able to bite through a katana, so he picks Sharptooth as the ability his tribe can purchase for one point less.



"Treasure"

Nezumi have no set mode of currency, but they are fond of curious things, pretty jewelry, and shiny objects. The "Treasures" given in one's Starting Outfit may be chosen from the following list of items with little practical use yet high value among Nezumi. Feel free to add whatever items you deem appropriate to this list.

- A large, brightly colored feather
- A shiny string of beads
- A perfectly round stone of a strange color
- An ogre's tooth
- A piece of wood with a perfectly round hole in it
- A live preying mantis on a string
- A steel sewing needle
- A copper ring
- A horse's hoof
- A silver comb to be worn in the hair
(one per starting outfit)
- A katana's tsuba (one per starting outfit)
- A tattered silken obi (one per starting outfit)
- Six inches of chain links (one per starting outfit)



Starting Name

The starting Name of a randomly created tribe is 2.5, the average. If the GM deems that the tribe's adherence to Name is greater or lesser than normal, starting Name can be decreased to 1.0 or increased to 3.0.

In the example of the Foolish Dreamers, Dan admits that his tribe's aggressive behavior suggests a weak sense of Name. The GM agrees, and allows Foolish Dreamers to begin play with 1.0 Name.

Schools Allowed

Choose one from the following list or roll one die to randomly determine which schools are offered by your tribe.

To finish the example of the Foolish Dreamers, Dan rolls a six. Foolish Dreamers may begin play as Scouts, Warriors, or Berserkers. This is almost exactly what Dan had in mind.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Scrounger |
| 2 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Warrior |
| 3 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Builder, Scrounger |
| 4 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Builder, Warrior |
| 5 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Scrounger, Chieftain |
| 6 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Warrior, Berserker |
| 7 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Warrior, Chieftain, Berserker |
| 8 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Warrior, Scrounger, Chieftain |
| 9 | Shaman, Rememberer, Scout, Builder, Scrounger, Warrior, Chieftain |
| 0 | Roll again, but no Shamans. Pick one other school instead. Ignore this result if rolled again. |

Starting Outfit

Have the GM determine a starting outfit he feels is appropriate. If you wish to keep things simple, choose a tribe from this book whose activities and purpose closely resemble the tribe you are creating, and simply copy their tribal Starting Outfit.

Note: Once the name, racial diversity, benefits, starting Name, and schools allowed for a tribe are chosen, they remain the same for all future members of that tribe.

Putting It All Together

Of course these are all just statistics, and statistics don't do a great deal of good without some measure of rationale. Use the random results as a guide for your creativity, not a restriction. Take a look at your results and consider what they mean when creating your tribe's history and purpose. If something doesn't make sense, change it. However, don't immediately throw away rolls that appear strange; sometimes it is the oddities that make a tribe unique.

Consider the Foolish Dreamers. Dan looks over the results offered by the random tables, and uses them to produce an identity for his tribe. Dan decides that the Foolish Dreamers are a small race of Nezumi living in the catacombs under Violence Behind Courtliness City (where the campaign will be taking place). They are quite fierce and militant (indicated by the free Hands of Stone), and have survived a long time without being noticed by tunneling deep into the earth, building their warrens so deep they are unlikely to be found. Lack of exposure to the sun has somehow caused them to mutate into hairless Nezumi. The tribe often has trouble with the creatures and spirits that dwell beneath the city, not to mention the occasional Lion or Crane samurai. Thus, the Foolish Dreamers offer a number of forms of military training including scout, berserker, and warrior. Dan's GM decides to give Dan's tribe the same Starting Outfit as the Crippled Bone Tribe, and the Foolish Dreamers are complete.



Nezumi schools are not schools as the Rokugani understand them. There are no formalized Techniques that are passed down from sensei to student. Rather, the common abilities displayed by Ratlings are instincts that develop over time with age and experience.

Nezumi Warriors ("Ch")

Ratling warriors are a cunning, hardy lot that make the most of their physical abilities. They believe in striking when convenient and fleeing when necessary. Young warriors favor group tactics until they gain enough experience to survive the rigors of solitary combat in the Shadowlands. Veterans have learned to strike quickly and brutally, for the longer the combat lasts the less likely that the Nezumi can win.

Benefit: +1 Agility



Skills: Athletics, Defense, Hand-to-Hand (may choose the Mochatchikkan specialization if desired), Hunting, Lore (Deep Shadowlands), Stealth, any one Weapon skill

Starting Niche: 1.0

Starting Outfit: Any one peasant or Nezumi weapon, Light or Heavy Hide Armor, leather pouch, one Treasure, and one free roll on the Scavenging Table.

Techniques

Rank One: Speed of the Rat

Nezumi are lightning-fast creatures with incredible reflexes. Warriors learn to harness this ability early in life and make the best use of it in combat. A Nezumi warrior may choose to re-roll his Initiative a number of times per day equal to his Rank in this school. The warrior may choose which of the two rolls to keep. The warrior may also add his Athletics Skill rank to all attack rolls.

Rank Two: Strength of the Pack

Young Nezumi warriors always hunt and fight in packs to increase their chances of survival. In time this becomes a carefully orchestrated maneuver where each combatant anticipates his allies' moves and acts accordingly. For each ally in the same melee combat alongside the warrior, he gains a Free Raise for use in that combat (up to a maximum equal to his Void Ring).

Rank Three: Darting Strike

The warrior has learned to use his speed and agility to its fullest advantage. Accustomed to fighting larger, stronger opponents, the warrior has learned to dart into combat, strike, and then withdraw to a safer distance. When the warrior wins initiative, he may add +10 to his TN to be hit for the entire round.

Rank Four: Strike-Strike Fast

The warrior has learned the true lightning speed of the Nezumi. He may now make two attacks per round.

Rank Five: Tail Sweep

The tail is an often-overlooked advantage of the Nezumi warrior, and at this rank the Ratling has learned to make full use of it. Following a successful weapon strike, the warrior may make a spinning follow-through that sweeps his opponent's legs with his tail. There is no roll; this attack automatically hits if it follows a successful weapon strike. This attack has a DR equal to the Nezumi's Strength. An opponent who takes damage has been knocked to the ground and must spend an action to regain their feet. This knockdown does not work on foes that are more than twice the warrior's size (GM's discretion). If the Nezumi makes two attacks per

his Rank Four Technique, he may only follow one of the two attacks with the Tail Sweep per round.

Nezumi Scout ("Tek")

This school represents a mixed bag of skills which Nezumi need to survive, common to almost every tribe. While Scouts are not as stealthy as Scroungers or as powerful as Warriors, they possess much in common with both. The key traits of a Scout is versatility – those who take advantage of their abilities to the greatest extent survive. Scouts commonly learn one or two Rank Techniques from other Nezumi schools.

Benefit: +1 Agility

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Lore (Deep Shadowlands), Stealth, any two skills

Starting Niche: 1.0

Starting Outfit: Add any one peasant or Nezumi weapon, Light Hide Armor, leather pouch, and one free roll on the Scavenging Table.

Techniques

Rank 1: Clever and Brave

The Scout learns to concentrate by dividing focus among many things. You may add your Rank in this school to all Skill rolls involving the Skills taught by this school. In addition, you may purchase one Advantage or Nezumi Advanced Ability that costs five points or less, free of cost.

Rank 2: The World is One

A Scout who has achieved this level of mastery has begun to realize that it is not important what you do – so long as what you do is important. Select one Skill. From now on, you gain free Raises equal to your Rank when using that skill. In addition, all Rank techniques you have learned (or will learn) from other schools function as if your Rank in that school were one higher. You do *not* gain additional Rank Techniques due to this effect.

Rank 3: Pieces of Everything

The Scout who reaches this level of Insight can achieve nearly anything he puts his mind to. Any Advantages you purchase during play cost two fewer Experience Points, to a minimum of one point.

Rank 4: A Little Knowledge

The Nezumi Scout has now begun to realize the simple truth that all paths are one. Knowledge of one thing gives knowledge of another; all you must do is make the connections. You may now make an extra attack each round.



Rank 5: Grasp-Grasp Tomorrow

The rare Scout who reaches Rank 5 has unraveled the ultimate mastery. In remaining focused, he has become versatile. In cleaving to one path, he has become a master of many. You gain an additional one point discount on Advantages. Also, at the beginning of each day, you may choose any Nezumi school, including schools not normally offered by your tribe, but not including Rememberer or Shaman. For the next twenty-four hours, you gain the Rank 1 Technique of that school.

Nezumi Builders ("Ktch'kirptu")

While a highly adaptive and inventive race, the Nezumi are nonetheless rather primitive. Their nomadic nature and lack of functional tools prevents them from developing any significant technology of their own. However, certain Ratlings are born with an inherent gift for

understanding mechanically oriented tasks. These are rare beings indeed, and are highly valued by their tribes.

The Ktch'kirptu (or "Clever Builders of Great Things") are those responsible for the maintenance of weapons and materials that the scavengers bring to the tribe. Nothing is discarded, for the Builders can find a use for virtually anything, no matter what condition it is in when they get their paws on it.

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Skills: Armorer, Defense, Scrounging, Stealth, Weaponsmith (Nezumi), any one Craft skill, any one Weapon skill.

Starting Niche: 1.5

Starting Outfit: Any one peasant or Nezumi weapon, crude tools, leather pouch, one Treasure, one free roll on the Scavenging Table.

Techniques:

Rank One: Fixed It!

In the hands of a Builder, no item is truly broken. Masters of improvisation, these cunning individuals can utilize even heavily damaged items. With an appropriate Craft skill roll versus a TN of 10, any broken or Poor quality item in the possession of a Builder may be used as if it were in Average condition. This





Ratling Weapons and Armor

Generally, Ratling items can be comparable to a human item. For example, a yari could be imitated by a long pole with a cluster of Nezumi teeth affixed at the end. GMs may either simply use a comparable damage rating for Nezumi weapons, or use the following table. (Many of these items are described in greater detail in the Appendix.)

Nezumi teeth club – 2k2

Bolo – 1k1

Stone Throwing Axe – 3k2 thrown, 2k2 held

Tooth daggers – 1k2

Hide armor, TN +3, Heavy +7

Nezumi bow – as Yumi

includes weapons and armor. The item must be relatively intact for this to work.

Rank Two: Clever Student

A gifted yet primitive engineer, the Builder is constantly gaining new insight into the simple mechanics and physics of primitive construction. The Builder gains a number of Free Raises equal to his Rank in this school per day for use on any roll of the skills taught by the Builder's teacher (the beginning skills of the school).

Rank Three: Master the Basics

By this rank the Builder has mastered the basics of many different skills. He may roll and keep one additional die on any Craft skill roll, and the maximum number of Raises on Craft skill rolls is not limited by the Builder's Void.

Rank Four: Gift of the Nezumi

The Builder has mastered the art of adaptation. When observing the use of any item, be it weapon, tool, or whatever, the Builder can internalize the information and store it for further use. Observing any Craft or Weapon Skill, the Builder may make an Intelligence roll versus a TN equal to 15 minus the target's Skill. If successful, the

Builder gains that skill at Rank 1. If the Builder has the experience points necessary, he may immediately advance that skill up to Rank 3 so long as the Builder's new skill does not match or exceed that of his target (although the Builder may match an observed skill of rank 1).

Rank Five: No Task Too Hard

The wisdom of age and devotion to task bring great success to the Builder. A number of rolls per day equal to the Builder's rank in this school may be considered automatic successes. The Free Raises gained from Rank Two may be applied to these rolls, but no other Raises may be made without rolling for success as normal. If Raises are made and the roll fails, but the original TN is met, the task succeeds without the benefits of the Raises.

Nezumi Scrounger ("Ithith")

The so-called Scroungers are little more than thieves, snatching up anything that isn't nailed down and spiriting it away for the tribe's use. Their subtlety makes them expert spies, as they can easily enter guarded areas unnoticed. They are also masters of defensive combat, adept at confounding and confusing enemies while they make their escape.

Benefit: +1 Perception

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Lore (Deep Shadowlands), Scrounging, Stealth, Sleight of Hand

Starting Niche: 1.0

Starting Outfit: Add any one peasant or Nezumi weapon, Poor quality clothing, one large sack, and two free rolls on the Scavenging Table.

Techniques

Rank 1: Scurry-Scurry Through the Darkness

Even at this early Rank, the Scrounger has developed surprising speed and cunning. You may add double your Rank in this school to your TN to Be Hit. When attacking an opponent who is unaware of your current location (because you are hiding, for example), you may roll an additional number of attack dice equal to your Rank in this school.

Rank 2: Fight and Fly

If you make a successful attack roll against an opponent, you may choose to distract him instead of inflicting Wounds. If there is ample cover, you may immediately hide, making a Stealth roll with free Raises equal to your Rank in this school. Your opponent cannot



attack you until you reveal yourself or he makes an Investigation/Perception roll vs. a TN equal to the result of your Stealth roll.

Rank 3: Yours is Mine

By making three Raises on your attack roll, you gain an additional action which may only be used to try to steal something from your opponent. For this action to be successful, you must make an opposed Sleight of Hand/Agility roll vs. your opponent's Defense/Agility. If successful, you steal a random item from the target's obi, pocket, or other easily accessible place. If you first make a Scrounging/Perception roll vs. your opponent's School Rank x 5 while observing them, you may identify the most valuable item visible. You cannot steal items out of your opponent's hands.

Rank 4: Riding the Shadow

By making a Stealth roll with four Raises, you may hide behind an opponent. Each round thereafter, you may make an opposed Agility roll to remain behind him, out of the reach of his weapons. While in this position, you may use your Rank 1 Technique as if your enemy were unaware of your location. However, if you attack your opponent, this technique is negated and cannot be used again for five rounds. So long as you make your Agility rolls and remain near your opponent's back, you may take any other actions you desire (including attacking other opponents). You may not hide behind more than one opponent at a time.

Rank 5: Hide From Tomorrow

The Scrounger who has reached this level of skill is the master of the quick escape. When using your Rank 2 Technique, you may now inflict normal damage as well as hide.

Nezumi Berserker ("Chitatchikkan")

Berserkers are a rare breed of Nezumi, born without fear. Unlike most Ratlings, Chitatchikkan seldom back down from a fight. They take the skills of the Warrior a step further, discarding stealth and precision for brute force. Other Nezumi are uneasy around these "brave-bold-sunlit-warriors-with-great-skill," but appreciate having them around when the time for battle comes.

Special: Characters who are not immune to Fear cannot enter this school.

Benefit: +1 Strength

Skills: Athletics, Intimidation, Hunting, Lore (Deep Shadowlands), Mochatchikkan 2, any Bugei Skill

Starting Niche: 0.5

Starting Outfit: Add one peasant or Nezumi weapon, Light or Heavy Hide Armor, leather pouch, and one free roll on the Scavenging Table.

Techniques

Rank 1: Mad Fury

The Chitatchikkan has been touched by a power most Nezumi do not understand. You gain the Overconfident and Brash Disadvantages (no additional character points are gained if you already have 10 points of Disadvantages). When the time comes for battle, you become a seething maelstrom of power, rolling an additional damage die on all melee attacks.



Ratlings and Multiple Schools

A Ratling's course through life is not as defined as that of a samurai. While humans and Naga are expected to choose one career and follow it, the same is not so for most Nezumi. Ratlings learn whatever is important to the tribe, and accumulate a variety of skills.

As a result, Nezumi can purchase the Multiple Schools Advantage without cost, so long as they choose another school offered by their tribe. Attending a school not offered by the tribe requires normal purchase of Multiple Schools. This is balanced by the fact that most low-level Nezumi techniques depend upon one's Rank in that school, not total Insight Rank.

The notable exceptions to this rule are Shamans and Rememberers.

Shamans choose one path and follow it until death. As a result, Shamans may never purchase Multiple Schools, nor can Nezumi from other schools later gain ranks as a Shaman.

Rememberers are born Rememberers. Characters created as Rememberers may later attend any school they like. Only characters with the Rememberer Blood may later take ranks of the Rememberer school.



Rank 2: The Price of Pain

The berserker fury becomes more pronounced at this Rank. You may make an extra attack per round, but only on Full Attack.

Rank 3: Rage of the Sun and Moon

The Chitatchikkan who reach this level of skill know that pain is an illusion; as the door to death swings wider it only gives the Berserker more reason to fight. When wounded, you gain a bonus to your melee attack rolls equal to the normal Wound penalty for that level (disregarding effects which reduce Wound Penalties). Wound penalties still apply for non-combat activities. This technique has no effect on the Dead Wound level.

Rank 4: Dance of the Doomed

The Chitatchikkan's fury is fearsome to behold, even for a samurai used to such battle-hardened rage. You may make one extra attack per round, and keep one extra die on melee damage rolls.

Rank 5: Sever Tomorrow

Death is not the end, only failure is the end. For a Chitatchikkan there is no failure. Any attack that reduces you to the Dead level or below triggers an immediate retributive melee attack against that opponent. You make your attack as if you have one Wound

remaining, and then go down normally. If the attack which triggers this technique will kill your character, you gain four Free Raises on your retributive attack.

Ratling Chieftain Generals ("Chuk'tek")

Many chieftains are aided in their efforts by groups of "bosses" that help with the supervision of the tribe's day-to-day activities. It is not uncommon for chieftains to train one or more of these elders in the ways of leadership so that they might one day become chieftain when the need arises.

Benefit: +1 Perception

Skills: Battle, Defense, Hunting, Lore (Deep Shadowlands), Remembering, Tribal Lore, any one Weapon skill.

Starting Niche: 1.5

Starting Outfit: Any one weapon, Light Hide Armor, Poor clothing, two Treasures, one free roll on the Scavenging Table.

Techniques

Rank One: Many Fight Together

An effective leader in small skirmish battles, the chuk'tek has an instinctive grasp of group tactics. Once per combat per Rank in this school, the Nezumi may change his Initiative score to match that of any ally involved in the skirmish. This is done after Initiative is rolled, but before actions are declared.

Rank Two: Leader of the Pack

A chuk'tek thrives when in command, his every instinct leading his pack to victory. When in command of a group with a number of allies equal to or greater than his School Rank, the chuk'tek gains a number of Free Raises equal to his Rank in this school per combat, and may add his Niche to his TN to be hit.

Rank Three: For the Tribe!

A true chuk'tek acts not for himself, but for his tribe. The chuk'tek may choose to re-roll any roll that, if failed, would result in harm for members of his tribe in any way. This may be done a number of times per day equal to his Rank in this school.

Rank Four: Think Fast, Move Faster

The chuk'tek can move with the speed that only certainty can bring. He gains an additional action per round. This additional action may be used for an attack if desired.



Rank Five: Many Fight as One

At this rank the chuk'tek and the warriors he fights alongside truly work as a single fighting entity. So long as the chuk'tek remains in the fight, Wounds suffered by any member of the group may be distributed among the group however he sees fit, representing the constant flurry of warriors attacking the target and defending one another. This ability may only affect a number of allies up to the chuk'tek's Insight Rank x2.

Shamans and Name Magic

Nezumi do not have shugenja, they do not use scrolls, they do not importune the kami, and they do not revere gods or goddesses (though the Transcendent are god-like in the Nezumi's estimation). Nezumi magic is capable of feats impossible for Rokugani magic, but has special limitations of its own.

Shamans and Shugenja

A shaman's power stems from Name. The shaman has such a powerful sense of identity that he is able to consciously alter reality by focusing his will. While this means that a Nezumi can use magic without relying upon scrolls or kami, it also means that a shaman must practice rigid mental discipline. If his Name weakens, his magic weakens. Thus, shamans cannot behave in a way that is out of character for their current level of Name. While this suggests that shamans are infallible, they are not. In many ways they are limited, sometimes left unable to act due to their bonds of name. Worse yet, some shamans fall into a prison of self-deception ("N-kich"), becoming twisted and evil.

Nezumi shamans cannot cast shugenja spells, and vice versa. Likewise, Nezumi cannot learn the pearl magic of the Naga. Naga find Nezumi magic distasteful, as the strong sense of personal identity needed to practice shamanism clashes with the communal mentality of the Akasha.

Definitions

Mechanically, Nezumi magic is similar to shugenja magic. Changes to the standard definitions presented on page 201 of the *Player's Guide* are listed below.

Affinity and Deficiency

Shamans have no Affinity or Deficiency.

Backlash

Certain Nezumi spells are dangerous if cast improperly. If the shaman fails to cast the spell, he takes Wounds equal to the amount by which he failed, multiplied by the Backlash.

For example: Te'tik'kir attempts to cast Name Talent, which has a Backlash of 2x. Te'tik'kir rolls a 8; he needed a 25. He fell short of his TN by 17, so he takes 34 Wounds as his magic backlashes fiercely. Te'tik'kir falls to the ground whimpering.

Bleeding

Casting a spell that requires Bleeding inflicts a number of Wounds to the caster equal to the Bleeding number. Though this practice resembles *maho*, it is not black magic. The caster sheds own his blood as a focus to extend his essence outward. If a spell lists "Bleeding for Raise," than the shaman may *choose* to bleed himself by the listed number of Wounds to gain one free Raise. A shaman cannot gain more free Raises in this manner than his Void.

Dance

Certain Nezumi spells require ritual dance (Mee-i'thich). The Nezumi dances for a number of hours equal to the Mastery Level (this becomes the Casting Time of the spell), then makes a Dance (Mee-i'thich/Agility) roll vs. TN 15. For every Raise made on this roll, the Nezumi gains a free Raise when he casts the spell. If the Dance roll fails, the spell fails. Spells that have an optional Dance requirement may be cast as a dance ritual or as a normal spell.

Memorize

A Nezumi may not memorize spells as shugenja do (all of his spells are already a part of him).

Name

Spells with the range of Name have effectively unlimited range, but the Nezumi must know the True Name of his target.

Raises

Nezumi can make Raises to increase Casting Time and duration, create Special Effects, or Master a spell. Though this is unchanged



from the *Player's Guide*, it is important enough that it bears repeating.

Spell Slots

A shaman has a number of spell slots equal to his Name x 3 (adjusted for the Great Name Advantage). If his Name increases or decreases, his spell slots immediately increase or decrease proportionately. A shaman can recover exhausted spell slots with a full night's sleep, and can recover a single spell slot with an hour of meditation and a Meditation roll vs. TN 20.

Learning a Spell

Nezumi shamans may know up to four spells per Rank. A shaman learns spells by training with other Nezumi shamans, or by communing with Transcendent in the Realm of Dreams. Each time a Nezumi learns a new spell, he must spend Experience equal to its Mastery Level. (If you wish, you may use the optional rules for learning a spell presented on page 203 of the *Player's Guide*.)

When a shaman increases in School Rank, he immediately gains two new spells free of cost.

Casting A Spell

1. If the shaman has spell slots available he may cast any spell he knows. Shamans need to gesture and speak, and occasionally dance to cast a spell, so they may not be restrained or silenced in any way. If a spell requires Bleeding, the shaman must be holding a sharp instrument.
2. Calculate the Spell's Target Number. A spell's basic TN is its Mastery Level x 5. If the target of the spell is unwilling, multiply the target's Void by his School Rank and add this number to the spell's TN. If the shaman knows the True Name of his target (see sidebar), he may ignore this increase in TN.
3. Determine Raises. How many Raises does the caster wish to add to the Target Number of the spell? Will he be attempting to gain free Raises through Dance or Bleeding?
4. Determine the Spell's Effect. Who or what will be affected by the spell?
5. Roll dice equal to the shaman's Name, keeping dice equal to his School Rank. Remember that the Namebound Advantage allows the caster to cast a spell as if his Rank were one higher, and the Great Name Advantage allows him to cast spells as if his Name were higher.
6. Determine the results at the end of the Casting Time (most spells have a Casting Time of one action). If the roll is equal to or higher than the TN, then the spell has been successfully cast. Add the effects of the caster's Raises and determine the final result. If the roll is not greater than the TN, the spell fails. If the spell has Backlash or Bleeding, Wounds are inflicted at this time. A spell slot is exhausted after any successful casting.



Shamans and their Titles

All Ratling shamans have specific titles depending upon Rank, as follows.

Rank	Title (Rokugant)	Title (Nezumi)
1	Conjuror	Rep'chik
2	Nameseekers	Kan'chik
3	Namefinders	Per'ichik
4	Namebinders	Jak'chik
5	Netakers	A'chik

Ratling shamans exhibit a healthy amount of respect for one another, and can sense a fellow shaman with a glance. A shaman of higher Rank can determine the Rank of another shaman with a successful Perception check vs. the target's Rank x 5.

Nezumi Shaman ("Kir")

Benefit: +1 Void

Skills: Defense, Hunting, Lore (Deep Shadowlands), Name Lore, Meditation, Mee-i'thich, Stealth

Starting Niche: 2.0

Starting Outfit: Add a spear or knife, Poor quality clothing, leather pouch, one extra Treasure, and one free roll on the Scavenging Table

Beginning Spells: A starting shaman knows three spells, plus a bonus spell depending upon his tribe.



Bonus Spells by Tribe

Chipped Tooth	Bless Name
Crippled Bone	Name Weapon
Crooked Tail	Smite the Nameless
Grasping Paw	Conjure Smoke
Squeaky Eyeball	Beast Speech
Tattered Ear	Conjure Earth's Bounty
Third Whisker	Importune Transcendent

Shamans of a created tribe gain one additional spell of the GM's choice.

Shaman Spells

Mastery Level 1

Beast Speech

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: Concentration
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Hearing

Similar to the Rokugani spell Heart of Nature, Beast Speech allows the caster to understand and speak the language of normal animals. This spell does not guarantee that the animals will wish to speak to the caster; it simply makes communication possible.

Bend Name

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 5 Rounds
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 100'

Special: Bleeding for Raise (4 Wounds), Backlash (1x)

This spell alters the target's sense of Name slightly, causing him to become disoriented and confused. For the duration of the spell,

the target has a +3 penalty to all skill rolls. For each additional Raise, the target suffers an additional +3 penalty.

Bless Name

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 1 Minute
Area of Effect: 1 Creature
Range: Name

This spell is a new form of conjuring intended to draw on that most mysterious and unpredictable power of humans – luck. At any time during the spell's duration, the target may re-roll one of his die rolls and keep the better result.

Conjure Dream

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 1 Minute
Area of Effect: 1 Creature
Range: 25'

When this spell is cast, the Nezumi reaches into the target's mind and conjures up an illusion of the person or item they desire most. Every detail of the illusion is as perfect as the target remembers. If the target attempts to interact with an illusionary person or item, he may roll his Perception vs. a TN of the caster's School Rank x Void to see through the illusion. If the target fails, his mind causes the illusion to react appropriately and he believes that the illusion is real for the duration. The caster has no control over the illusion, which is controlled by the target's own subconscious mind.

The caster can see the illusion as well, but no one else can.

Conjure Earth's Bounty

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: Food for one Nezumi.
Range: 10'

Special: Dance (optional), Backlash (1x)

This spell causes fresh fruit and ripe grain to burst from the earth, enough nutritious food to satisfy one adult or two pups for one day. The food is tough but edible to humans or Naga, and they will require water (Nezumi can quench their thirst with fruit juice). For each Raise, enough food for an extra Nezumi is produced.





N-kich ("Self-Deception")

Most Nezumi shamans are beings of Great Name, who take the well-being of the entire race to heart. Unfortunately, not all are so. A shaman's sense of identity is so strong that it can sometimes supersede what is truly best for all Nezumi. Some shamans fall into prisons of self-delusion, rationalizing all sorts of evil behavior so long as it falls into their own concept of Name. Such mad shamans cease to gain or lose Name, no matter what their behavior may be.

It is unknown exactly how or why this happens, only that it does happen from time to time. Whenever a shaman begins to act erratically, other shamans see it as their duty to help him regain his sanity or, failing that, destroy him.

Conjure Smoke

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 Minute

Area of Effect: 20' radius

Range: 100'

Special: Bleeding for Raise (2 Wounds), Backlash (1x)

This spell summons a cloud of billowing smoke in a color of the caster's choice. Visibility within the cloud is reduced to five feet. The smoke will roil about in strong wind, but will not disperse until the duration ends, at which time it disperses normally and is gone within ten minutes.

Dream Walk

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 Night

Area of Effect: Self

Range: Self

Special: Dance

This spell allows the sleeping shaman's spirit to enter I'thich, the Nezumi Realm of Dreams. While wandering I'thich, the shaman may have glimpses of the future, meet the Transcendent, or even witness

the dreams of others. More information on what can be done in I'thich can be found in the Appendix.

For each Raise, the Nezumi may take one other willing creature into I'thich with him.

Importune Transcendent

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 Hour

Area of Effect: Self

Range: Self

Special: Dance, Bleeding (5 Wounds), Backlash (2x)

After casting this spell, the shaman falls into a deep sleep from which he cannot be awakened. During this time, he faces the spirit of a Transcendent and may ask it questions (if the shaman has a Transcendent guardian, that Transcendent is always the one who answers). Roll the shaman's Name Lore/Perception vs. a TN of 10. If the roll is successful, the Transcendent will answer one question, plus an additional question per Raise made on the skill roll. While the Transcendent have access to a great deal of information, the answers they give are often phrased in the form of a riddle or another question. When all questions have been asked, the shaman finds that the spell has ended, he has awakened, and an hour has passed. If this spell is cast more than once per week, the Transcendent becomes annoyed and demands a service in return for its aid.

Mend Name

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: Touch

Special: Bleeding for Raise (1 Wound)

This spell can only be cast if the caster knows the target's True Name. It returns a wounded Name to its proper form, healing physical damage. The target immediately heals Wounds equal to the caster's Name.

This spell can be used to repair broken, burnt, or damaged inanimate objects weighing less than one pound.

Name Friend

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 Small Animal

Range: 10'

This spell allows the caster to share his Name with one small animal (usually a ferret or cat). Forever after, this animal and the Nezumi are one. They can understand each other's speech, instantly



sense when the other is in danger, and can sense each other's general distance and direction. The animal also shares the Nezumi's immunity to the Shadowlands Taint.

The animal will be favorably disposed toward the shaman and help him as much as it is able, but will also depend upon him for food and protection. The caster does not control the animal, though he can train it normally. If this animal dies, the caster loses one rank of Name. The caster may have only one Name Friend at a time.

Name Weapon

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 Year

Area of Effect: 1 Weapon

Range: Touch

Special: Dance

By casting this spell, the shaman places a bit of his Name in a weapon, increasing the weapon's strength and durability. The shaman may add his Name + School Rank to all damage rolls with the weapon, and always knows the weapon's location in relation to himself. Other wielders of the weapon do not gain this advantage. If the weapon is destroyed, the Nezumi loses a full rank of Name.

A shaman may only have one Named weapon at a time, typically a spear, bow, or dagger. These weapons are always decorated with feathers, beads, and symbols of their owner's power.

Smite the Nameless

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: 100'

Special: Bleeding for Raise (2 Wounds), Backlash (1x)

This spell summons the purity of the shaman's spirit and sends it forth as a beam of crystal energy. The beam inflicts 3k3 Wounds on creatures corrupted by the Shadowlands Taint or Lying Darkness. If accidentally used upon a target not corrupted by either of these forces, the beam rebounds on the caster and damages him instead.

Raises may be made to affect additional targets, striking one extra target per Raise. Raises may be made to increase damage, allowing you to roll and keep one additional die.



Mastery Level 2

Burn Name

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: 100'

Special: Backlash (2x)

The shaman summons the strength of his Name to unravel the target's sense of identity. Bright energies crackle between the caster and target, inflicting XkX damage where X is the caster's Name.

If used against an inanimate object, this spell starts a fire. If there is no fuel, the flame dies out naturally.

Conjure Animal

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 1 Hour

Area of Effect: 1 Animal

Range: Special

Special: Bleeding (4 Wounds), Backlash (2x)

This spell can be used to transport one animal to the caster's location. The animal must be a native creature within one mile. The spell cannot summon a specific animal (it can summon a horse, but not Shinjo Yasamura's horse). The chosen animal appears at a location within 100' of the caster and behaves normally. Randomly conjured animals are confused by the sudden change in location and either flee or attack the nearest target, depending upon their nature. The summoned animal may not weigh more than two hundred pounds per rank of the shaman.

Conjure Named Weapon

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: Named Weapon

Range: Name

To cast this spell, the shaman needs a Named weapon. This spell conjures the shaman's weapon to his hand. Not only does the shaman's weapon immediately appear, but he may attack with it in the same round. If the shaman intends to summon his weapon and attack, he gains a +5 to his Initiative for that Round.

Conjure Perfect Self

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: Self

Range: Self

**Special: Dance, Backlash (2x)**

By throwing himself into this ritual dance, the Nezumi restores the most perfect version of his own Name. At the end of the spell, all of the Nezumi's current Wounds are healed.

Hide Name**Mastery Level: 2****Duration: Permanent****Area of Effect: 1 Creature****Range: Touch**

This is a subtle protective magic used to protect the tribe from enemy shamans. Its effect is simple – it slightly changes the True Name of the target. Any other shaman who wishes to use magic with a Range of Name against the target must learn the target's True Name again.

Name Talent**Mastery Level: 2****Duration: 1 Hour****Area of Effect: Self****Range: Self****Special: Backlash (2x)**

By conjuring the power of this magic the shaman alters his Name, adding experiences cultivated from the dreams of others. For the duration of this spell, the caster may use any one skill as if he had a Rank in that skill equal to his Name.

Purify Name**Mastery Level: 2****Duration: Permanent****Area of Effect: 1 Target****Range: Touch****Special: Dance (optional)**

This spell can only be cast upon a subject if the caster knows that subject's True Name. It is essentially an improved version of Mend Name, wherein the shaman directs his own strength of Name into the target, returning the target to a truer version of itself. The spell removes all poisons and disease from the target's system, though it does not cure any Wounds already done by these effects.

The GM may raise the TN of this spell as he sees fit for effects which are particularly potent or magical. Certain poisons and diseases cannot be cured at all. If the poison was created by a character (PC or NPC), add that character's Poison Skill x School Rank to the TN to cast this spell. If the shaman knows the True Name of the poisoner, this increase in TN is negated.

Seek Name**Mastery Level: 2****Duration: Instantaneous****Area of Effect: 1 Creature****Range: 100'****Special: Bleeding for Raise (1 Wound)**

This spell allows the shaman to look into the spirit world and discover the True Name of the target.

This spell's TN is always increased by the target's highest Ring x School Rank.

Share Cunning**Mastery Level: 2****Duration: 1 Minute****Area of Effect: 1 Creature****Range: Name**

Using this magic shares a bit of the shaman's Name with the target. The caster selects one of his Skills. For the duration of the spell, the target may use the Skill at the caster's current Skill Rank, and the caster is considered unskilled.

Raises may be made to increase the effect. For every Raise made, an additional Skill can be shared.

Share Name**Mastery Level: 2****Duration: 1 Year****Area of Effect: 1 Willing Creature****Range: Touch****Special: Dance**

By casting this spell, the target shares his name with another living being. For the duration of the spell, the caster knows the target's True Name as well as he knows his own, and can change it as he can change his own. All spells that affect one affect the other, for good or ill. (This happens whether the spells are Name magic or other forms of magic.) The caster and the target always know each other's location and direction in regard to themselves. A shaman's Name may only be shared with one creature at a time.

Mastery Level 3

Bonds of Blood**Mastery Level: 3****Duration: Instantaneous****Area of Effect: 1 Creature****Range: 100'****Special: Bleeding (Special and for Raise)**



This rather ghastly spell has played a large part in Rokugani prejudices against Name Magic, as it is very similar in appearance to *maho*. The shaman slices open his hand and releases a boiling torrent of bloody red energy at the target. This energy inflicts 6k3 Wounds. When rolling damage for this spell, keep track of the unkept dice. This is the number of Wounds the shaman takes from the Bleeding.

Raises may be made to increase the area of effect. For each Raise, an additional target is affected.

Raises may be made to increase the damage. Each Raise allows the shaman to roll and keep an extra dice for damage.

Raises may only be made for this spell via Bleeding, using the number of Wounds inflicted on the caster as the Bleeding number.

Conjure Thoughts

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: 100'

Special: Backlash (3x)

This spell allows the caster to reach into the mind of one creature within range and borrow his, her, or its thoughts for a moment. If the spell is successful, the caster immediately knows what the target was thinking during that round. If used properly, this spell can be used to detect falsehoods or discern motives.

If the caster makes two Raises, the target loses his train of thought, causing a +5 TN penalty for the target's next action within one round.

Conjure Trickster

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 1 Month

Area of Effect: 1 Mujina

Range: 10'

Special: Dance

This spell allows the caster to summon a Mujina from Sakkaku, the World of Mischief (see the *Game Master's Guide* for details on Mujina). The Mujina will demand a gift, usually a small amount of gold, jewels, or an intricately crafted toy. If the Mujina approves of the gift, it serves the caster dutifully for one month. If the Mujina is not satisfied by the gift, it returns to Sakkaku in a puff of smoke and cannot be summoned again for another month. If treated well and given another gift at least once a month, the Mujina remains in the caster's service. The shaman may not have more than one Mujina servant at a time.

Even a loyal Mujina will not enter combat unless it has no other choice. These tricksters are more likely to distract or confound



True Names

Many shaman spells require knowledge of the True Name of the target. The "True Name" is the most defining name of that target. Aliases and assumed names do not count, only the "truest" version of the target's name – how the target views himself and how others who know him view him – will suffice. Inanimate objects must be referred to by their truest name in the Nezumi language.

For the purposes of Name magic, a mere word is not enough. To find something's True Name, the shaman must fully experience it. For living creatures (whose Names tend to fluctuate), the caster must spend at least one week observing them and roll Name Lore/Perception vs. TN 15. For inanimate objects, the caster must touch the object physically or roll Name Lore/Perception vs. TN 15 while studying the object for one minute. A Nezumi is assumed to be familiar with the True Names of commonly encountered objects.

Casting the Seek Name spell successfully will instantly grant knowledge of a True Name. Rank 1 Shamans cannot cast this spell, and are forced to rely on conjuring magics, hence their title: "Conjurors."

Shamans can change their own True Name at will. No one ever knows a shaman's True Name unless the shaman desires it.

Creatures of the Lying Darkness have no True Name, and are thus immune to many of the effects of Name magic.

opponents so that their shaman can escape. A shaman who causes the death of his mujina cannot summon another for at least one year.



Shamans and the Transcendent

Like the Kitsu and the shiryō, shamans share a special bond with the Transcendent. A shaman who wishes to study another Nezumi for at least one round may make a Name Lore/Perception roll vs. the target's School Rank x 5 to determine whether or not that Nezumi is under the guidance of a Transcendent and whether they are a prophet or an aide. With two Raises, the shaman can determine which Transcendent is guiding the Nezumi.

Curse of No-Lips

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 1 Minute

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: Name

Special: Bleeding (5 Wounds), Bleeding for Raise (5 Wounds), Backlash (3x)

This powerful curse is often used to disable enemy shamans and other spell casters. The Nezumi sends forth the power of his Name and steals a bit of the target's Name. The mouth of the target is sealed over with flesh for the duration of the spell, making spell casting or any meaningful verbal communication impossible.

Find Name

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 Target

Range: Name

Special: Bleeding for Raise (2 Wounds), Backlash (3x)

By casting this spell, the shaman gains a momentary mental image of one creature or item of which he knows the True Name. He also receives a vague impression of the target's general direction and distance from himself. If the spell fails, the target gains a mental image of the shaman's location instead.

This spell has a casting time of ten minutes.

With two Raises, this spell's duration is extended to one minute. For each additional Raise after that, the caster can spy on his target for an additional minute.

Name Warren

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 1 Year

Area of Effect: 1 Warren

Range: Name

Special: Dance

By using this spell, the caster extends a bit of his Name into his home, whether that home is a warren, burrow, cave, or castle. While within the Named area, all friendly magic (even non-Nezumi magic) gains a free Raise. All enemy magic, or magic cast with a harmful intent toward the caster or tribe, has its TN increased by 10. A caster may only have one Named Warren at a time. A Warren may only have one of these spells in place at a time.

Shield Name

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 1 minute

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: Name

Special: Bleeding for Raise (3 Wounds)

This simple spell allows the shaman to extend the protection of his Name into the target. While this spell is in effect, the caster's TN to be Hit is reduced by twice his Name. The target's TN to be Hit is increased by the same amount.

Raises can be made to increase the effect. For every Raise, the target's TN to be Hit is again increased by an amount equal to twice the caster's Name. The caster's TN is reduced by an equal amount. The shaman may not grant the target a bonus greater than his own total TN to be Hit.

Strengthen Named Weapon

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 1 Day

Area of Effect: Named Weapon

Range: Touch

Special: Dance

To cast this spell, the caster must have a Named Weapon. This magic allows the caster to temporarily invest a larger amount of energy into his weapon. This energy is offered up in the form of spell slots. For every three spell slots invested in this magic (including the one used to cast this spell) the Named Weapon rolls and keeps an extra die when the shaman wields it. Each of these extra dice must be allotted to either attack or damage rolls when the spell is cast.



Trade Name

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 2 Creatures

Range: 100'

This magic allows the caster to twist the bindings of reality, causing two living creatures within range to instantly switch places. Both targets are disoriented for one round, and can take no action but Full Defense.

This spell can only be cast if the caster knows the True Names of both targets.

Mastery Level 4

Bind Name

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: 1 Hour

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: Name

Special: Dance, Backlash (4x)

This spell binds the caster's Name to the target's temporarily, subverting the target's will. The caster's soul transfers into the target's body and the target's control of himself is suppressed. The caster's body appears to be in a trance for the duration. The caster gains complete control of the target's body, though he cannot use the target's Skills, Techniques, or magic. While possessing the target, the caster's mental Traits remain his own, but he gains the physical Traits of the target. Wounds are unaffected by this change. The target can see and hear everything the caster does during the spell's duration, but is helpless to interfere. If the target dies while the caster is in his body, the caster dies as well.

Close the Door

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 Spirit

Range: 10'

Special: Backlash (4x)

This spell must be cast on one spirit that is not native to Ningen-Do. (Kappa, mujina, oni, yurei, shiryō, hengeyokai, gaki, oni, and baku are all legal targets.) The spell severs the spirit's connection to the mortal world, sending it back to its own realm. The creature cannot return under its own power for a year and a day, though it can try to access the mortal realm through other means (such as the Festering Pit, Voltturnum, or the assistance of a mortal summoner).

This spell cannot be cast unless the caster knows the target's True Name.

Conjure Name

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: Shared Name

Range: Name

The shaman reaches out to distant parts of his Name, and pulls them together once more. This spell can be used to instantly summon a creature who has been targeted by the Share Name, Conjure Trickster, or Name Friend spell or bring a named item (such as a Named Weapon or a Set Blood Aside crystal) to the caster's presence. Alternately, the caster may choose to use the spell to send himself to such an item or creature's location, or to return himself to his Named Warren.

Fracture Name

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: 100'

Special: Bleeding (6 Wounds), Bleeding for Raise (6 Wounds), Backlash (4x)

The caster sends waves of disruptive energy toward the target, breaking off small bits of its Name. This potent spell does (2X)kX



How Conjuring Works

Many Nezumi spells depend upon conjuring, a powerful trick of Name that dates back to before the Terrible Day. The best explanation Nezumi shamans have been able to give to those who cannot perform Name magic is that the conjuror presses his Name against the fabric of reality, causing the thing that he desires to "roll" across the fabric towards him. The Nezumi's powerful Name works like a magnet, drawing what he seeks directly to his presence without appearing to pass through intervening space. Conjuring is a dangerous task that almost always carries a risk of magical backlash as the fabric of reality snaps back into position.



Wounds, where X is the caster's Name. If the caster knows his target's True Name, he keeps two additional dice of damage.

Paint the Name

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: 1 pot of paint

Range: Touch

Special: Dance

This spell summons the power of raw Name Magic from the Realm of Dreams and infuses it into a pot of war paint. This paint must be specially prepared beforehand and may contain rare or unusual ingredients that the shaman must harvest (GM's discretion). The paint's magic lasts until it is smeared upon a living creature, or until the paint spoils (if perishable).

The shaman who created the paint must personally apply it to the target (covering clothing and armor as well as the body), and must paint the target with wild representations of the power of their Name: thus the shaman must know the target's True Name. Once the paint is in place, the target gains a single Nezumi Advanced Ability or a single Advantage that could be purchased in play. This advantage may not have a Character Point cost higher than twice the Target's Name. No more than one application of this war paint may affect a target at a time.

Set Blood Aside

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: Self

Range: Special

Special: Bleeding (Special)

The caster sets some of his own blood aside for future use. Bleeding for this spell can be any amount up to three-quarters of the caster's total Wounds. The blood transforms into pure energy and is stored within a small crystal (which the caster must provide). At any later time, the caster may break this crystal and order the blood into himself or another creature whom he is touching. This instantly heals a number of Wounds equal to the amount bled to cast this spell.

A caster may only have one Set Blood Aside crystal at a time.

Steal Cunning

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: 1 Minute

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: Name

Special: Bleeding (4 Wounds), Bleeding for Raise (4 Wounds), Backlash (4x)

The caster temporarily borrows a bit of the target's Name. Select one skill known by the target. For the duration of the spell, the caster gains that skill at the target's Rank, and the target is considered unskilled. If the target is unwilling, the TN of this spell is increased by the Rank of the skill times two. You must know the True Name of the target for this spell to be effective.

Twist Name

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: 1 Day

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: Name

Special: Dance, Bleeding (20 Wounds)

This potent curse allows the shaman to greatly alter the target's identity, and is among the most feared magics of the Namebinders. For the duration of the spell, the target gains a Disadvantage of the caster's choice. Others automatically react to the target as if they are aware of the Disadvantage. When the spell ends, all effects of the Disadvantage vanishes and those who were affected are left wondering what happened.

In the case of a Disadvantage with variable effects (like Dark Secret) the details are left to the GM. No Disadvantage bestowed may have a point cost greater than the caster's Name.

Example: Te'tik'kir gives Hiruma Yoshi a Dark Secret. The GM decides that for the next day, everyone who knows Yoshi treats him as if he were responsible for the mysterious death of his brother, and his life is miserable. When the day is up, everyone still remembers what they did and said, but they don't know exactly why they did it. Alternately, Te'tik'kir could have chosen to give Yoshi Low Pain Threshold, Epilepsy, or any one of a number of Disadvantages.

Mastery Level 5

Conjure Chitatchikkan's Fury

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: 1 Hour

Area of Effect: Willing Creature

Range: Name

Special: Bleeding (20 Wounds), Bleeding for Raise (20 Wounds), Backlash (5x)

For the duration of this spell the target is enhanced by the berserk fury of the Chitatchikkan. The target rolls and keeps extra dice equal to the caster's Name on all attack rolls. All Wound Penalties (including Down, Out, and Dead) are negated for the duration of the spell. The target is aware of his Wounds, but can remain fighting until he is dead.



Raises can be made to increase the area of effect. For each two Raises made, an additional target is affected.

Conjure Nightmare

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: 1 Minute

Area of Effect: 1 Nightmare

Range: 100'

Special: Backlash (5x)

The Chitatchikkan reaches into the realm of dreams and pulls out a nightmare beast that proceeds to attack everything in sight. Treat this creature as a randomly created "Powerful Oni" (see the *Game Master's Guide*) that has no Shadowlands Taint.

Conjure Storm

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: Special

Area of Effect: 1 Mile Radius

Range: Immediate area

Special: Dance, Bleeding (10 Wounds), Bleeding for Raise (10 Wounds), Backlash (5x)

The shaman claps his hands and summons a terrible thunderstorm from the sky. The storm is centered on the caster but does not harm him or those who remain within twenty feet (though they will get quite wet). Visibility drops to five feet and earth immediately turns into thick mud. Lightning strikes a random object within the area once per minute, inflicting 10k10 Wounds. If the caster stays at the center of the storm, he can direct one lightning bolt at specific targets once every ten minutes.

This spell's duration is equal to the shaman's Name in hours.

Conjure Tribe

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 10 Ratlings

Range: Name

This spell allows the caster to send a mental summons (up to twenty words long) to up to ten other creatures whose True Names he knows. If any of these creatures agree to assist him, they are immediately transported to a place of the caster's choosing within one hundred feet of his current location.

Take Name

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: 1 Creature

Range: Name

Special: Dance, Bleeding (30 Wounds), Backlash (30x)

This is the most feared of all Nezumi magics. The target's name is taken away forever. The target still exists, but no one else remembers him except for the caster. His family is now someone else's family. The deeds he accomplished are remembered as if someone else had done them.

Those who were particularly close to the target may notice discrepancies. ("You say you saved my life at the Battle of Beiden Pass? No you didn't. Matsu Gohei did... Wait a minute. I didn't meet Matsu Gohei till three months after that battle. What's going on?")

It is believed that this magic cannot be undone. The shaman has plucked the target's identity out of the stream of reality, and the waters have smoothed around him.

Each time this spell is cast, the caster's Void is permanently reduced by one. Other shamans do not take use of this spell lightly, and those who use it are likely to be visited by other shamans (who know the signs of its use) curious as to why it was used.

Mastery Level 6

Dream Forever

Mastery Level: 6

Duration: Permanent

Area of Effect: Self

Range: Self

Special: Dance

The caster becomes one of the Transcendent, casting off his mortal form and forever entering the Realm of Dreams.

It is unknown how a Nezumi gains the ability to cast this spell. Only the Transcendent know for sure.





Rememberers

Nezumi Rememberer ("Tch'tch") School

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Skills: Courtier (Nezumi) Etiquette (Nezumi), Lore (Deep Shadowlands), Mee-i'thich, Remembering, Stealth, Tribal Lore

Starting Niche: 2.0

Starting Name: As Tribe, but plus five boxes.

Starting Outfit: Add a peasant or Nezumi weapon, clothing, six wooden sticks (perfect for creating Tchr, or "memory sticks"), one extra Treasure, leather pouch, one free roll on the Scavenging Table, and 5 Experience points worth of Rank 1 Memory Sticks.

Rememberers increase in Insight Rank as normal characters, but they do not have Rank Techniques per se. Instead, they gain a variety of abilities, some of which become more potent as they increase in level.

Rememberer Abilities

1. *Advanced Pheromones* – Rememberers gain this ability free of cost. This ability is used in creating Memory Sticks.
2. *Remembering* – Rememberers gain the Precise Memory Advantage (normally not allowed to Nezumi) free of cost. They face none of the normal penalties when attempting to remember events. For each Rank of Insight a Rememberer obtains, he gains a free Raise on all Remembering skill rolls (including Memory Stick creation).
3. *Increased Life-span* – Rememberers live ten years longer than the average Nezumi.
4. *Create Tchr* – At Rank 1, a Rememberer can make Tchr (Memory Sticks).

Memory Sticks ("Tchr")

These are small wooden sticks (about six inches in length and three inches in diameter) covered with pictograms and varnished strongly with pheromones. A Memory Stick carries a tale of the tribe's history. Memory sticks are the only items of property upon which Nezumi place any sentimental value. Kuni shugenja who have studied *Tchr* claim that the Rememberers have somehow awakened the spirit within a simple piece of wood, transforming it into a minor *nemuranai* by investing it with a tale of their people. The hoard of sticks in the chambers of the Squeaky Eyeball Tribe's Council of the Eye is in actuality a hoard of thousands of Tchr, a priceless treasure in the eyes of any Nezumi.

Creating a Tchr requires four hours of work and an appropriately-sized chunk of wood. At the end of this time, the Rememberer rolls his Remembering/Intelligence vs. a TN determined by the stick he wishes to make. If this roll is successful, the Rememberer must pay the cost of the stick in Experience points. The stick is immediately ready for use. A Rememberer may not create a Tchr of higher level than his School Rank.

When holding a Memory Stick, a Nezumi's mind is filled with the tale it contains. The memories of the past flood the holder's soul and bestow extraordinary abilities. Unless noted otherwise, Memory Sticks can be used once per day and their effects last for five Rounds. A character can hold one Memory Stick in each hand and one in his mouth, activating them all simultaneously (a weapon and a Memory Stick can not be held in the same hand). If a Memory Stick is dropped, broken, or put away its effects immediately fade. Two Memory Sticks of the same kind used at once do not provide cumulative effects.

Human or Naga characters with five Ranks of Nezumi Culture may use Tchr normally.

Raises

A Rememberer may attempt Raises on his Remembering roll when creating a Tchr to increase the item's power. The point cost of the Memory Stick is increased by the number of Raises made. Each of these effects must be purchased separately, although the Rememberer can buy an effect more than once. For instance, a Rememberer making three Raises on his roll could buy an additional die (3 Raises); an additional time increment and an additional charge (1 Raise plus 2 Raises); or three additional increments (three 1-Raise effects).



1 Raise

The stick's duration is increased by an additional increment. (If the duration is rounds, it lasts one extra round; if the duration is hours, it lasts an extra hour, etc.)

2 Raises

The stick may be used one additional time per its normal increment. (If it can normally be used once a week, now it can be used twice, etc.) Sticks which break when used cannot have this ability.

3 Raises

Sticks which allow the carrier to roll and keep an additional die can be made to bestow an additional die.

4 Raises

Two stories may be placed within the same stick, allowing the powers of two Memory Sticks contained in one. The Rememberer must make these five Raises when creating both sticks, and if either roll fails, both fail.

Memory Sticks for New Tribes

If you have created your own Ratling Tribe, ask your GM to select one specific Tchr. Your tribe's Rememberers can create this Tchr for two fewer Experience Points.

Rank 1 Memory Sticks

Ch-tchr (Warrior's Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 4 points

This stick tells the tale of a mighty warrior. While holding this stick, the Nezumi rolls and keeps an extra die with a specific Weapon or Hand-to-Hand Skill.

A'ichtr'foo-tchr (Mother's Stick)

TN to Create: 15

Cost: 3 points

This stick tells the tale of a mother's love. If carried for a full day and held for at least an hour during that day, the stick allows the holder to heal Wounds as if his Stamina were one Rank higher. Raises can be made to increase the power of the stick, increasing the holder's effective Stamina by 1 per two Raises.

Ktch'kirptu-tchr (Builder's Stick)

TN to Create: 10

Cost: 2 points

This stick tells the tale of a clever Builder. While holding this stick, the Nezumi rolls and keeps an extra die on a specific Craft Skill.

Nee'nee-tchr (Digger's Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 2 points

This stick tells the tale of a Builder who dug a huge warren in a single day. For an hour per day, this stick allows the holder to burrow at double his normal rate.

A'op'chtch-tchr (Father's Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 2 points, 1 point for Chipped Tooth Ratlings

This stick tells the tale of a brave father who rescued his kidnapped pup. This stick is attuned to a specific, willing creature (not necessarily a Nezumi) and is usually left behind in the warren. Once per hour, a Nezumi holding the stick can command it to point unerringly toward the creature to whom it is attuned. Chipped Tooth Nezumi frequently use these sticks to find those that have been lost at sea.

Tcha-tchr (Happy Stick)

TN to Create: 15

Cost: 1 point

This stick tells the tale of a good-natured Nezumi who always did the right thing. When held, the Nezumi rolls and keeps an additional die on all tests of Name.

Tek-tchr (Scout's Stick)

TN to Create: 15

Cost: 5 points

This stick tells the tale of a scout skilled in many things. It grants its holder one Rank in all Skills in which he is unskilled.

Tk'tchr (Wanderer Stick)

TN to Create: 10



Cost: 1 point

This stick tells the tale of the founding of the tribe. While holding it, the Nezumi always knows the direction of his home (either the tribe's current location or their largest established warren). It can be used as often as the holder likes.

Rank 2 Memory Sticks

Ch'da-tchr (Food Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 5 points

This stick tells the tale of a time of great abundance, and provides solace during the Lean Times. By holding this stick for one hour, the Nezumi is refreshed as if he had eaten enough food and drunk enough water to satisfy him for the day. It may be used once per week.

F'chtr-foo-tchr (Home Sticks)

TN to Create: 15

Cost: 2 points

The cost and TN involved to create F'chtr-foo-tchr actually creates two sticks, attuned to each other. These paired sticks tell the tale of

a great friendship. Once per hour, each stick can be commanded to unerringly point in the direction of the other. Remember, Rokugani hours are one-twelfth of a day, not one-twenty-fourth.

Ithith-tchr (Scrounger's Stick)

TN to Create: 25

Cost: 4 points

This stick tells the tale of a clever thief. The holder can roll and keep an extra die on Stealth and Sleight of Hand rolls.

Kn'noo'kn'noo-tchr (Lovers' Stick)

TN to Create: 15

Cost: 3 points

This stick tells the tale of a Nezumi who would sacrifice anything for his love. The holder of this stick can heal up to ten Wounds by touch, once per day. The holder takes an equal amount of Wounds whenever the stick is used.

Kufl'kufl-tchr (Runner's Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 3 points

This stick tells the tale of a swift runner. The holder may run and jump as if his Water Ring were two higher. Raises can be made to increase this effect. For each Raise, the runner's effective Water Ring is increased by one.

Rik'rik-tchr (Friend Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 5 points, 4 points for Tattered Ear Rememberers

This stick tells the tale of a Nezumi who had many friends. The holder may roll and keep an extra die on all social skills.

Wau'tchr (Nose Stick)

TN to Create: 25

Cost: 4 points

This stick tells the tale of a tracker with a sharp nose. The holder may add +20 to all Perception rolls involving scent (including tracking, if the holder has Bignose). This ability is permanent, bestowed as long as the stick is held.

Rank 3 Memory Sticks

Chitatchikkan-tchr (Chitatchikkan's Stick)

TN to Create: 25

Cost: 6 points, 4 points for Crippled Bone Rememberers

This stick tells the tale of a ferocious berserker. The holder may roll and keep an extra die on all damage rolls.



I'thich-tchr (Dream Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 4 points, 2 points for Third Whisker Rememberers

This stick tells the tale of a strange dream. Once per week, the holder can enter I'thich (the Realm of Dreams) while sleeping, but remain aware. (See the Appendix for details on I'thich.)

Mat'tch'tr-tchr (Demon Stick)

TN to Create: 30

Cost: 7 points, 5 points for Crooked Tail Rememberers

This stick tells the tale of a great demon defeated by the tribe. The holder can harm Invulnerable creatures with any weapon as if it were a magic, crystal, or jade weapon.

Mocha'mocha-tchr (Grass-Cutter's Stick)

TN to Create: 30

Cost: 4 points

This stick tells the tale of a mighty master of Mochatchikkan. When using this stick, the holder gains a Free Raise on any Mochatchikkan maneuvers (see the Mochatchikkan section in this chapter). This does not include Mochatchikkan attack rolls, only the Raises needed to perform complex maneuvers. The Free Raises *do* apply to Weapon Bite rolls, unless the stick is being clenched in the teeth.

Raises can be made to increase this effect. For every Raise made during creation, the user gains an additional Free Raise.

Ratch'ratch-tchr (Trader's Stick)

TN to Create: 25

Cost: 6 points

This stick tells the tale of a wily trader. Once per day, it allows the holder to detect whether the last thing he was told was a lie.

Set'tch-tchr (Wisdom Stick)

TN to Create: 25

Cost: 2 points

This stick tells the tale of an unanswered question. By breaking the stick, the holder can ask one question of a Transcendent, and receive an answer.

Rank 4 Memory Sticks

A-tchr (Sunlit Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 5 points

This stick tells a tale of a hero who never lost his way. The holder of the stick can always see clearly regardless of blindness, darkness, or reduced visibility. The stick's effects last for one hour per day.

H-tach-tchr (Poison Stick)

TN to Create: 30

Cost: 6 points, 4 points for Green-Green-White Rememberers

This stick tells the tale of a great herbalist. Once per week, the holder can call upon the stick's power to cure a poison within his body. At the GM's discretion certain poisons may be unaffected.

Kir-tchr (Shaman's Stick)

TN to Create: 30

Cost: 8 points

This stick tells the tale of a mighty shaman. If a shaman holds this stick, he may cast one spell per day without expending a spell slot. Raises can be made to increase the effect. For every two Raises, the shaman may use the stick an additional time per day.

Tich'chik-tchr (Crab Stick)

TN to Create: 30

Cost: 8 points

This stick tells the tale of the Nezumi's friendship with the Crab Clan. When it is held, the holder's TN to be hit is increased by 10 as if he were wearing the heavy armor of a Crab bushi. This bonus is not cumulative with real armor.

Raises may be made to increase this effect. For every Raise made, the TN bonus of the magical armor is increased by 1.

Tr-foo-tchr (Life Stick)

TN to Create: 35

Cost: 8 points

This stick tells the tale of a wounded warrior. The holder of this stick can call upon its power once per day to restore two levels of Wounds to himself or another by touch. Raises can be made to increase this effect. For every two Raises, the stick restores an additional level of Wounds.

Tr'tr-foo-tchr (Spirit Stick)

TN to Create: 20

Cost: 5 points

This stick tells the tale of a terrible spirit that once haunted a warren, and how the tribe freed it from its wandering. For one hour per day, the holder of this stick can understand and be understood by ghosts, including gaki, yurei, and shiryo. At the very least, the holder may be able to divine what causes a haunting spirit to linger, and how to go about helping it free itself.



Rank 5 Memory Sticks

Chuk'tek-tchr (Chieftain's Stick)

TN to Create: 35

Cost: 10 points

This stick tells the tale of a great chieftain. While holding this stick, the holder can bestow three Ranks of any Skill he knows on up to ten others who follow his commands. Raises can be made to increase this effect. For every Raise made, the followers gain an additional Rank of the Skill. Followers cannot gain a Skill at a higher Rank than the holder of the stick.

M'atch-tek-tchr (Tomorrow Stick)

TN to Create: 25

Cost: 5 points

This stick tells the tale of a Nezumi destined to battle Tomorrow – and win. The stick must be attuned to a specific Nezumi, and need not be carried to be effective. The attuned Nezumi gains the Great Destiny Advantage so long as the stick remains intact, even if he is not currently holding the stick. As soon as the stick saves the Nezumi's life once, it breaks. If the stick breaks prematurely, the Nezumi attuned to it dies.

A Rememberer who makes this stick must wait until it is broken before making another.

N-ki-tchr (Evil Stick)

TN to Create: 35

Cost: 15 points

This stick tells the tale of the Terrible Day When Air Became Fire and Heaven Fell From Its Perch to Crush Our Glorious Home Beneath Its Blackened Corpse. The stick's holder cannot be harmed by the beasts of the Shadowlands. Any Shadowlands Tainted creature must succeed at a Willpower roll vs. TN 35 to attack or harm the holder in any way. If the holder attacks a Shadowlands creature, the stick no longer protects him from that creature.

Raises can be made to increase the power of the stick. For each Raise made, the Willpower TN is increased by 5.

Tch'tch'tchr (Rememberer's Stick)

TN to create: 35

Cost: 20 points

This stick tells the tale of a great Rememberer. When held by a Rememberer, the cost of creating any other Tchr is reduced by two points, to a minimum of one. The stick can only be used once per month. Most large tribes have at least one of these sticks, passed down to the most important Rememberer of the tribe as a sign of their office.

Tppu-tchr (Treasure Stick)

TN to Create: 30

Cost: 5 points, 3 points for Grasping Paw Rememberers

This stick tells the tale of a great treasure yet to be found. Once per hour, the stick can be commanded to point to the nearest source of valuable treasure not yet owned by the tribe. This treasure could be food, gold, shiny objects, or any of a variety of things, but it will always be something that the tribe could use and conceivably attain. The stick immediately attunes itself to the treasure and can henceforth be used to find the treasure no matter where it is located, even after the tribe has acquired the treasure.

Mochatchikkan

The unarmed fighting style
of the Nezumi

In hindsight, it was all my fault. My comrade, Sensin, warned me not to taunt the Crippled Bone.

It was amazing... I never saw it coming. As soon as the fight began, the Ratling grabbed my leg with its tail and threw me to the ground. By the time I got up, he was holding my naginata in his hand... and had bitten off the blade.

I have never been so humiliated, but I tell you this... I do not wish to face a Ratling in combat again any time soon.

– Hida Nezu, defender of the Wall

The ancient art known as Mochatchikkan is believed to predate the Terrible Day. Those who have seen a Nezumi use Mochatchikkan describe its movements as frenzied, nearly uncontrolled. Despite its appearance, Mochatchikkan is an extremely precise combat form, taking full advantage of all of a Nezumi's natural weapons.

When using Mochatchikkan, a Nezumi can perform any of the following as an attack. Most of these maneuvers require multiple Raises or Advanced Nezumi Abilities to be effective.

Punch/Kick/Bite – The most basic attack form. This inflicts (Strength)k1 Wounds.



Grapple – This maneuver is identical to the Grappling maneuver described in Kaze-do (page 181, *Player's Guide*).

Rake – A raking attack with the claws. It requires one Raise and allows the Nezumi to add his Strength to the damage roll total. With three additional Raises, the target is blinded for one die of Rounds. Reroll 10s normally. If the target is blinded for more than fifteen rounds, he has lost an eye.

Leap-Over – The Nezumi must make three Raises and roll his Athletics/Agility vs. his opponent's Weapon Skill/Agility (add 10 to the opponent's die roll if he is using a polearm). If the Nezumi succeeds, he leaps over his opponent's head. This increases the Nezumi's Initiative so that it is one higher than his opponent's on future rounds. If the Nezumi makes another attack before his opponent's next action, he can attack from behind.

If the Leap-Over attempt fails, the Nezumi falls to the ground and is considered to be an unmoving target (his TN to be hit is 5 + Armor) until his next action. Nezumi with Bigjump add 5 to their roll when performing a Leap-Over.

Tail Punch – This requires one Raise and inflicts (Strength - 1)k1 damage. This maneuver can be performed while the arms and legs are restrained, or while performing a successful Leap-Over if the Nezumi makes an extra Raise on both his Agility roll and this attack roll. A Nezumi with Clever Tail does normal Hand-to-Hand damage with his tail.

Weapon Bite (*Must have the Sharptooth Ability*) – A Nezumi on Full Defense may attempt to perform a Weapon Bite. In response to an attack, the Nezumi may make an attack roll with two Raises. If the result of this roll is higher than the opponent's attack roll, the Nezumi catches the weapon in his teeth and cancels the attack. Make a raw Strength roll as follows, depending upon the weapon:

Weapon	TN
hand-to-hand attack	10
wooden weapon (bo staff, tonfa, jo)	15
wooden-hafted weapon (naginata, die-tsuchi)	20
small metal weapon (tanto, tessen)	25
metal-bound wooden weapon (tetsubo, sasumata)	30
steel or stone weapon (katana, ogre's club)	35

The preceding assumes that the Nezumi bites the weapon at its weakest point (at the wooden haft of a die-tsuchi, for example).

If the Nezumi's Strength roll is successful, the weapon is destroyed, except for hand-to-hand attacks, in which case the Nezumi inflicts automatic bite damage – (Strength)k1 – on the attacker. If the Nezumi fails his Strength roll or his attack roll, he takes double damage from the attack.

Tail Grab (*Must have the Clever Tail Ability*) – The Nezumi may attempt to make grappling attacks with its tail. (See the rules for Grappling under Kaze-do, on page 181 of the *Player's Guide*.) If the Nezumi succeeds on his grapple, he may attack with his claws, weapons, or teeth on subsequent rounds while maintaining the grapple with his tail. This maneuver requires extreme coordination on the Nezumi's part, and thus the Nezumi must make two Raises on all attacks while maintaining a Tail Grab and cannot declare Full Defense or Full Attack without releasing the grapple.

Alternately, the Nezumi may simply use Tail Grab to assist a normal grapple attack, or to escape a grapple. This adds one unkept die to all such grappling rolls to indicate the assistance of his extra limb.





Ratling Heritage Tables

When creating a Nezumi Character, players are allowed to make a roll on Heritage Table 1. This helps give some background to your character, including what they have done in their travels, and some of the feats of their family and their tribe. The first roll is free, but each additional roll costs 1 character point. You may make up to three total rolls. Characters keep the results of all rolls, further detailing their past. Remember that a Nezumi's life is hard, and not all experiences are good. None of the advantages or disadvantages described on the table take or give any additional CPs.

Heritage Table 1

Roll	Result
1-3	Personal Experience. Roll on Table 2
4-6	Family History. Roll on Table 3
7-9	Dramatic Name. Roll on Table 4
10	Undistinguished. No benefits or penalties

Heritage Table 2 – Personal Experience

Roll	Result
1-3	You once served as an aid to Amit'tek, the greatest scout the tribes had known. He took you deep into the heart of the Shadowlands, and you have seen and experienced many things. You gain one rank of Lore (Deep Shadowlands). Roll on Scavenging Table 2.
4-6	You have fought many battles against your tribal enemies. While it has given you exceptional skill, it has also made you many enemies. You gain one free rank in your primary weapon's Skill and the Nemesis disadvantage.
7	You saved the life of a young Nezumi when you were young, receiving a wound in the process. The one you saved is now a Nameseeker, and has given you great Name. Gain the Major Ally Advantage, 1 point in Name, and the Lost Tail Disadvantage.



Heritage Table 2 – Continued

Roll	Result
8	When you were young, you were attracted to a young Ratling, but later moved on. The young Ratling was heartbroken. Unfortunately for you, the young one's older brother was a great Nameseeker. When hearing what had befallen his younger sister, he turned his anger towards you. He confronted you and cursed you, adding Crag to your name. Anyone who has a familiarity with Nezumi culture will see you as weak and will never treat you with respect until you gain at least two ranks in your Name.
9	While traveling through your tribe's lands, the Tattered Ear Chieftain saw you training and was impressed. If you are not from the Tattered Ear tribe, you gain the Tribal Wanderer Advantage for that tribe for free, a favor that may be called in even years from now.
10	Years ago, you were taken in by a venerable chieftain after your family was killed in the Shadowlands. You and your surrogate father grew very close, so close in fact that you came between him and his actual son. The other son has left the tribe, forsaking both you and his father. You gain the Favored-Pup-of-a-Chief Advantage and the Nemesis Disadvantage.

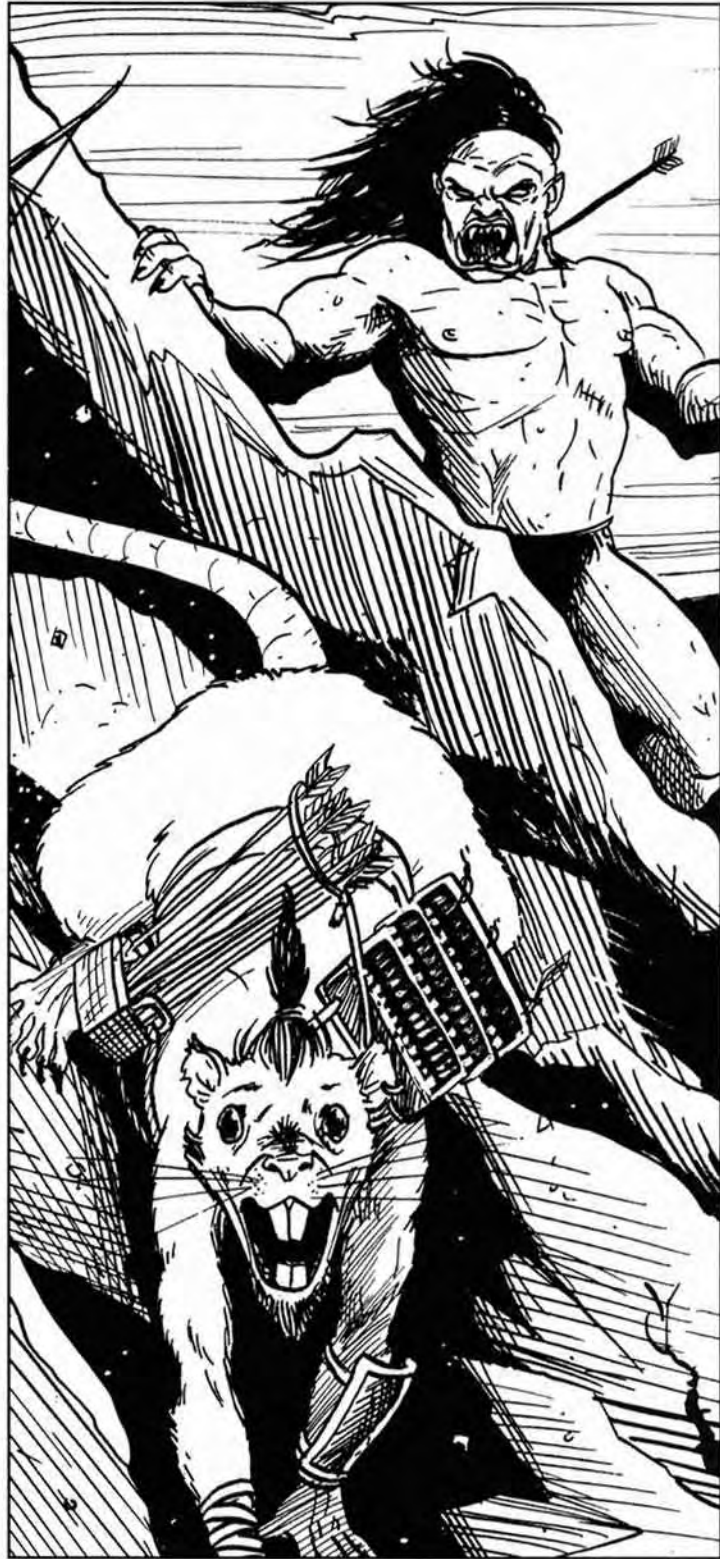
Heritage Table 3 – Family History

Roll	Result
1	In your veins runs the blood of Titchtch'tch, the first Rememberer. Every Nezumi knows his story, so his Name carries a lot of weight. If you are not a Rememberer, you start the game with 2 extra Character Points to spend on Lore and History skills. Rememberers begin the game with 5 extra Insight points.
2	Your family was cast out of your tribe a generation ago. While they managed to do well, it was only a matter of time before your mother and father died. You chose to return to the tribe to plead for the lives of your litter. The tribe took you back; however, since you were not born to the tribe, you begin with no Name (your Name rank is zero, and are given the birth name "S'tch").



Heritage Table 3 – Continued

Roll	Result
3-5	You and your ancestors have maintained good Name and admirable skill over the years, but nothing exceptional. You accrue no bonuses or penalties.
6	A conjurer of your family became close to an Isawa shugenja who was intent upon learning the secrets of Nezumi magic. When the old Nezumi died, the Isawa promised that one of his descendants would be led to greatness. It seems that you are the recipient of that prophecy. The spirit of the Isawa stays close by you at all times urging you to greatness, if somewhat forcefully. Any time you perform an act that would make you lose Name you take enough Wounds to drop you one Wound level. However, once per session you may choose to make any roll twice, keeping the more favorable roll.
7-8	A member of your family was a great thief. Unfortunately, his skill cost him his life. The last thing your relative stole was a priceless heirloom of fine craftsmanship belonging to a samurai somewhere in the Empire, an item which your relative passed on to you. Whether you know it or not, the one who lost the item has lost much face before his family and has vowed to get it back. That samurai may or may not have a good idea where to start looking.
9	Your mother died defending the lives of you and your siblings. Her name is remembered fondly among your tribe, and a shaman took pity on you and made it his personal duty to make sure you were raised correctly. Your bond with the shaman is still strong, and you gain him as a Minor Ally unless you are a member of the Green-Green-White Tribe, in which case you gain no benefit. Life is pain sometimes.
10	A few generations back, your ancestor saved the life of the Hida daimyo's son. As a reward, the Crab ordered the Kaiu to construct an item of her choice. Your ancestor showed him how to make tail claws. What the Kaiu produced is nothing short of amazing, and it has been passed on to you. The slender claw blends jade and steel, and is of exceptional quality. It does 4k2 Wounds, 5k3 against those with the Shadowlands Taint.





Heritage Table 4 – Dramatic Name

Roll	Result
1	On the day of your first Naming, you were to be the last to receive your name. As the Nameseeker opened his mouth to say your name, he fell over and died. Twice since, you have attempted to be named, but each time, tragic death has claimed the giving Nameseeker. You have taken the name "Tuptr," which means "cursed one." You must keep this name until the curse can be removed (GM's discretion). As long as you have the curse your Name may not be increased beyond its starting value.
2-3	Before your birth, your mother left your tribe to see the world. Unfortunately for you, she died in childbirth. You were found by a passing Kuni who took you to a nearby monastery, where you were raised. They gave you a human name and raised you as a human, but you eventually found your way back to your tribe of birth. You start with 0 Name, and all of your School Rank advances cost an additional 5 Insight. You may purchase any non-prohibited human skills as though you were a human during character creation and gain three ranks in Rokugani Culture for free.
4-5	A Nezumi name dictates its destiny, and yours has manifested itself physically. Your name's first syllable is Jak, and you gain +1 Strength.
6-9	Your connection to an ancient Name is powerful, as the shaman who Named you confirmed at the Rite of Naming. You may select any Transcendent that costs 5 points or less for free.
10	Even Ratlings are not immune to the temptations of power, and the shaman that Named you was one such villain. As Nezumi have no name of their own until the shaman gives him one, this shaman gave you a name that bound you to him for life. It was a bizarre twisting of the Name Sharing, and now you are almost completely his slave. The shaman is powerful enough that he does not call upon you often, but when he does, you must comply. You would tell someone in your tribe about this, but they would probably kill you to deprive the shaman of his servant and to end your suffering. There may be a way out of the curse without getting killed, but you haven't found it yet.

Heritage Table 5 – Shadowlands Journeys

Roll	Result
1-2	You were separated from your pack on one of your first trips. As you searched around, you came upon a tunnel. When you followed it to the end, you came out in an ancient castle, inside of which were many ogres and goblins. You then realized that you had found a secret tunnel to the famous Hiruma Castle. You know that some day someone will need to know its location.
3-4	Once you came upon a half-dead oni. You quickly finished it off, but unfortunately many of your pack saw you kill it. Not knowing that it was nearly dead already, they assumed that you slew it and have added "ch" to your name, making you a renowned warrior. Whether you like it or not, a warrior you must now be. You may only attend the Berserker, Warrior, or Scout schools.
5-6	On one of your expeditions, you came upon a group of Hiruma Scouts being besieged by an enormous oni. It was your intervention that allowed them to live and they are very grateful. Gain the Major Allies Advantage.
7-8	You came across a freshly-dead samurai deep in the Shadowlands. You are not sure how he got that far, and he did not live to tell the tale. You gain a katana of Fine quality.
9-10	It was your last trip into Heaven's Grave. Amit'tek led you as he had led you ten-tens of times before. This time, things were different. You were ambushed by over a hundred goblins and a Sanru oni. Your pack fought valiantly, but it was hopeless. You were among the few survivors after the "Sunlit Scout" fell. It will take you years to recover your name. You start with 0 Name.





Ratling Scavenging Tables

A Nezumi character's Tribe and School give him a number of rolls on the Scavenging tables. These rolls also help flesh out the character a little, but emphasize the actual 'stuff' he'll start with. Start on Scavenging Table 1.

Scavenging Table 1

Roll	Result
1-8	Nezumi item. Roll on Table 2.
9-10	Human or other item. Roll on Table 3.

Scavenging Table 2 – Nezumi Item

Roll	Result
1	Your father's cherished bolo, weighed by a rock stolen from the Crane Chief's own garden and an oni bone, was given to you after he was killed.
2	A pair of twin daggers fashioned from the front teeth of a shaman of great Name.
3	You have managed to gain enough koku to make one entire necklace of human coins. You're not going to tell anyone how easy it was to take them from the human that was found dead, since it makes everyone think you stole them the hard way.
4-6	You have not managed to gather anything of real note, a fact that irritates you to no end.
7	A war club made from the leg bone of a human and the teeth of an animal you couldn't quite describe.
8	Your mother, once a great warrior who may still someday be called Sunlit, has become too old to fight, and given her troll-skin armor to you.
9	A necklace of generally worthless trinkets that shines in the light, including some crystal. This wouldn't be so noteworthy if it didn't attract the attention of your tribe's chief, who is most impressed with it. It is no secret your plaything is favored by the chief, who has decided to allow you to keep the necklace. For now, anyway.
10	You have one of the stone throwing axes found almost exclusively in the Green-Green-White tribe (see page 137). If you aren't a member of the Green-Green-White, this could be very bad indeed.



Scavenging Table 3 – Human Item

Roll	Result
1	A few scraps of silk, some sinew and a lot of patience has yielded you a full Rokugani kimono, of sorts.
2	You and your brothers snuck into the stables of a Unicorn family and made off with a well-decorated bridle. Since it was your cunning that kept anyone from being killed in the attempt, your brothers allowed you to keep it, and you wear it around your torso.
3-4	Though it is worn and dull, you possess the kabuto of a Scorpion samurai, including the mask. When wearing it, you gain +3 to your TN.
5-8	You had a Rokugani weapon once, but the tribe decided it was of better use in the hands of a more experienced warrior. You would never go against what the tribe wants, so you handed it over quickly. You have never forgotten that once it was yours.
9	Your story may be told for the rest of Nezumi time. By a combination of luck, daring, and cunning, you now carry the bow of a Naga.
10	One of the most coveted human weapons is yours – a full-size katana.



Chapter Four: Who's Who Among the Nezumi



Tchickchuk

Pack Chief, Tattered Ear Tribe

Earth: 4

Willpower 4

Water: 3

Strength 4

Fire: 2

Agility 5

Air: 2

Awareness 4

Void: 3

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Chieftain (Chuk) 3, Bayushi Courtier 1

Name: 1.7

Honor: 1.7

Niche: 7.3

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Sharptooth, Sharpears, Bigjump, Hardy

Advantages: Favored-Pup-of-the-Chief, Great Destiny (Conqueror), Rokugani Culture (4 ranks), Sensei (Bayushi Kagetoki), Shine-Shiny Eyes

Disadvantages: Brash, Driven (to become a great chief)

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 6, Defense 4, Etiquette (Rokugani) 3, Forgery 5, Hand-to-Hand (Mochatchikkan) 6, Heraldry (Rokugani) 3, Hunting 5, Law (Rokugani) 4, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 4, 6, Seduction (Nezumi) 3, Sincerity (Nezumi) 6, Sincerity (Rokugani) 5, Stealth 6, Tetsubo 6, Tribal Lore 3

When Tchickchuk was born, the shamans were awed by the future they saw in his eyes. He was born with black fur, a pure streak of white along his chin, and blood-red eyes, a handsome and fortuitous combination.

Unfortunately, it appeared later on as if Tchickchuk's destiny had been misread. Though he was a decent warrior and popular with the females, he possessed little of the cunning of a great chieftain. Even

when the elderly Stikak took Tchickchuk under his wing, he learned very little.

The simple truth was that while Tchickchuk had the ambition to become a great chief, the finer points of politics escaped him. Disappointed and convinced that the shamans had been incorrect, Stikak sent Tchickchuk out to join one of the Tattered Ear's remote wandering packs – where Tchickchuk's destiny took a turn.

Two years ago, while scavenging in the human warren called the City-of-Lies, Tchickchuk happened upon a group of samurai shouting





Chieftains of the Nezumi

The current leaders of the major Nezumi tribes and their titles are as follows:

Chipped Tooth	Flurritek, Captain of the Big-Sea-Wanderer
Crippled Bone	Mat'tck, Chieftain
Crooked Tail	Trr'kir, Nametaker
Grasping Paw	Set'tch'ithith, Scrounger Boss
Green-Green-White	Shatishush, Chieftain
Squeaky Eyeball	Ropp'tch'tch, Leader of the Council of the Eye
Tattered Ear Tribe	Stikak, High Chieftain
Third Whisker	P'kak, Chosen Prophet of Z-ee

angrily to one another and waving weapons in the air. Frightened that they might be searching for his pack, Tchickchuk hid in the alleyways and moved closer to listen. Creeping over the mounds of garbage, he nearly stepped on a prone human hidden within it. He was an old man, dressed in fine silken robes and a black porcelain mask. He had been wounded in the shoulder by an arrow, and was bleeding profusely.

Tchickchuk could tell that if the old human's wound was not treated soon, he would die. He also quickly realized that this was the man for whom the angry samurai were searching. Tchickchuk was about to abandon him when he thought of how terrified he had been when he had imagined those samurai were hunting his tribe. He could not abandon this helpless old human. Throwing the man over his shoulder, Tchickchuk slipped through the shadows and made his escape. Once he was safely back with his pack, he treated the old human's wounds and nursed him back to health.

When the old man awoke, he was amazed but grateful to see himself surrounded by Nezumi. Tchickchuk learned that the old human's name was Kagetoki. The other samurai had been hunting him because Kagetoki had been pack-mates with a man named "Shoju," a human who had apparently climbed a niche too high for his tail. The new human chieftain's warriors – the "Legion" – now hunted Shoju's pack-mates endlessly.

Tchickchuk promised his new friend that the Legion would never find him. Kagetoki was grateful. Tchickchuk took the old man's care as his responsibility, and it wasn't long before the old human learned about Tchickchuk's problems. Tchickchuk told Kagetoki that he wanted to be a great chieftain, but had no cunning. Kagetoki said that he could give Tchickchuk cunning, for he had made his career in the human world by cunning. Tchickchuk was dubious at first; after all, even wise Stikak had tried to teach him and failed. Kagetoki replied that he had once been an teacher in his tribe and had trained much poorer students than Tchickchuk.

Under the tutelage of the old human, Tchickchuk became the chieftain of his pack within a year. At nine winters old, he is by far the youngest pack chieftain of the Tattered Ear. He is liked and respected by his pack as well as the other pack chieftains. Even Stikak is impressed by the rapid turnaround of the young Nezumi – one who was once a clumsy and inefficient leader has become a chieftain of great guile, cunning, and potential. Stikak approves heartily of Tchickchuk's rapid development, and is secretly grooming him to be the next chieftain of the entire tribe.

As for Tchickchuk, he is not satisfied. Kagetoki's teachings showed him how boundless his horizons truly are. One day he will be the chieftain of the entire Tattered Ear, that much is obvious.

Now Tchickchuk looks to the lands of the humans and wonders if he could have more.

Mat'tck

Chieftain of the Crippled Bone

Earth: 5

Water: 3

Strength 5

Fire: 4

Air: 3

Reflexes 4

Void: 3

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Chitatchikkan 4

Name: 3.5

Niche: 9.2

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Black Vision, Hardy, Sharptooth

Advantages: Blood of the Crippled Bone, Large

Disadvantages: Missing Eye

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 4, Climbing 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand (Mochatchikkan) 6, Hunting 5, Intimidation 4, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 4, Onojutsu 5, Scrounging 4, Stealth 4

Mat'tck was marked for great things by his tribe very early. While still less than a year old, he slew a goblin that had invaded the tribe's



camp and killed two other members of his litter. Mat'tck's mother found him gnawing busily upon the skull of the dead creature while lying between his siblings' corpses.

This incident set the tone for Mat'tck's entire upbringing. He was groomed for a position as the tribe's chief warrior. Despite the enormous expectations the tribe had of him, he never failed at any task set before him. The tribal elders marveled at his fighting abilities and the cold rage he displayed when battling the creatures of the Shadowlands. When asked why he hated them so, he simply replied, "They take-kill land, food, tribe-mates. Never kill-kill enough."

Upon coming of age, Mat'tck took his rightful place among the tribe's finest warriors. He served his chieftain loyally and without question for several years until the elder Nezumi ordered the tribe to relocate due to the predations of a vicious pack of Oni no Sanru. Mat'tck was enraged at the thought of surrendering the tribe's camp to the foul creatures. He refused, and was cast out of the tribe by the angry chieftain.

Creeping through the volcanic peaks where the oni made their lair, Mat'tck hunted the pack of winged creatures into extinction over a period of several weeks. Returning to the tribe with the wings of

the defeated oni, Mat'tck challenged his chieftain for leadership of the tribe. The elder Nezumi surrendered without conflict, and Mat'tck became the new chieftain of the Crippled Bone.

For years Mat'tck led his tribe to great success in the deep Shadowlands. They preyed upon the beasts that had hunted their tribe for decades, taking what they needed and leaving only corpses in their wake. Under his brutal and effective leadership, the Crippled Bone returned to the glory they had known under the rule of Ipchtik. In time, however, they encountered a foe they could not destroy. Hideous creatures of pure elemental corruption erupted from deep inside a fire mountain near Heaven's Grave. The Crippled Bone stood against these foes as they had every other that they had faced for centuries, but were dealt a crushing defeat. The might of these creatures exceeded even the most powerful shamans and warriors. For the first time in his life Mat'tck faced a foe he could not kill.

Desperate, Mat'tck heeded the wisdom of his advisor, the shaman Te'tik'kir. If the Crippled Bone could not defeat these foes alone, then they must travel north and reunite the Tribe of One. Only then could the Nezumi destroy their enemies and reclaim that which was rightfully theirs. Reluctantly, Mat'tck agreed.

The current dilemma of the tribe is agonizing for the great warrior. He firmly believes that the tribe should never have abandoned their lands in the deep Shadowlands, but he also recognizes that, unaided, the Crippled Bone tribe could never have defeated the creatures that drove them out. He understands the wisdom of Te'tik'kir's plan to unite the other tribes, but wonders if it can be accomplished. Despite his doubts, Mat'tck will never allow others to see the uncertainty he feels. The tribe depends too much upon his strength for him to show weakness.

Mat'tck is very large for a Nezumi. Rarely does another of his race look upon him at eye level, and many humans are startled to find a Ratling their size. His fur is white, an unusual color for the Crippled Bone tribe, which only serves to make Mat'tck stand out even more. Over a decade of near-constant battle has left the chieftain tattered and torn. He lost his right eye and part of the accompanying ear when he was overrun by a swarm of lesser oni whose nest he disrupted; he was wounded, but none of the oni survived the encounter. Scars mar his entire frame, criss-crossing his fur like the symbols the Rememberers scratch into the tribe's memory sticks.



Te'tik'kir

Nameseeker of the Crippled Bone

Earth: 2

Willpower 3

Water: 2

Perception 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence 5

Air: 3

Void: 3

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Shaman 2

Name: 2.8

Niche: 8.1

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Sharpears, Spirit Sight

Spells: Beast Speech, Burn Name, Conjure Named Weapon, Name Weapon, Seek Name, Smite the Nameless

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Nnich'charatha (Mat'tck), Namebound (Name Weapon)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret, Small

Skills: Defense 2, Hunting 3, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 5, Meditation 4, Mee-thich 3, Name Lore 4, Remembering 2, Scrounging 3, Stealth 4

Te'tik'kir was the runt of his litter. His parents did not expect him to survive, and since he was obviously too small to be an effective warrior, perhaps that was for the best. It was a particularly lean time for the Crippled Bone, and the additional burden of a weak Ratling was not easily afforded.

The young Ratling did survive, however, by scrounging for every morsel that he could find. The others of his tribe never neglected or abused him, for the Nezumi place a high value on even the weakest of their young. Nevertheless, Te'tik'kir could sense their disdain even as a young child.

He hated them for it.

When Te'tik'kir displayed the skills necessary to become a shaman, the entire tribe rejoiced. For the Crippled Bone, it was a way to convert a weakness into strength. For Te'tik'kir, it was a way to gain the power he craved. He devoured the secrets of his teacher voraciously, mastering the basics of the shamans at the unheralded age of five years. Although the progression of a shaman is measured in years, Te'tik'kir continues to learn and assimilate new things rapidly. Many in his tribe suspect he will one day be the greatest Nametaker in the history of Crippled Bone.

For a long time, Te'tik'kir was fiercely jealous of the attention his tribe showered upon Mat'tck. He believed the tribe to be ignoring him in favor of the great warrior, when in truth they simply

understood Mat'tck more easily than the reclusive shaman. Surprisingly enough, it was Mat'tck who showed Te'tik'kir the most respect. Each was strong where the other was weak, and they complemented one another well. In time they became great friends, despite the fact that Mat'tck was considerably older. When the warrior ascended to the position of tribal chieftain, Te'tik'kir became his most trusted advisor.

Despite having achieved a venerated position within the tribe, Te'tik'kir's ambitions were not yet fulfilled. He longed for the days when the Nezumi were united under one rule. There was no doubt in his mind that the Tribe of One could overwhelm and ultimately defeat the dark creatures of the Shadowlands. But no matter how strongly he urged Mat'tck, the chieftain refused to move the tribe north and bring the other tribes under their domination.

Frustrated and convinced of his plan's superiority, Te'tik'kir took matters into his own hands: he betrayed the tribe's position to the dark magicians dwelling in the fire mountain near Heaven's Grave. When the magicians sent their hideous beasts after the Crippled Bone tribe, Mat'tck had no choice but to follow Te'tik'kir's plan. The terrors they faced were simply too powerful to be defeated. For the





first time in centuries, the Crippled Bone tribe abandoned their territory and fled north.

Things have not gone as well as Te'tik'kir had hoped they would. The other tribes are giving them a wide berth for the time being, and Mat'tck seems content to let them do so. The Tattered Ear tribe even left the Shadowlands rather than fight with them, something that fills Te'tik'kir with contempt and loathing. Each day he urges his chieftain to move against the other tribes, to deliver the ultimatum: join us or die. Mat'tck resists, but it is only a matter of time now.

Te'tik'kir is a small tan Nezumi with dark, piercing eyes. His stare has a very unnerving effect on others, and he is widely feared by those he encounters. Even his own tribe treats him with a measure of distance and cautious respect, which is exactly how he likes it. The only being he feels a measure of respect and admiration for is his friend Mat'tck. He deeply regrets that it was necessary to betray the tribe to the dark ones, but he knows that in the end it will all be for the good of the Crippled Bone tribe.

Mich'nuk

Thief, Grasping Paw Tribe

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Perception 3

Fire: 3

Air: 4

Void: 2

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Scrounger (Ithith) 2

Name: 1.3

Honor: 0.2

Niche: 2.0

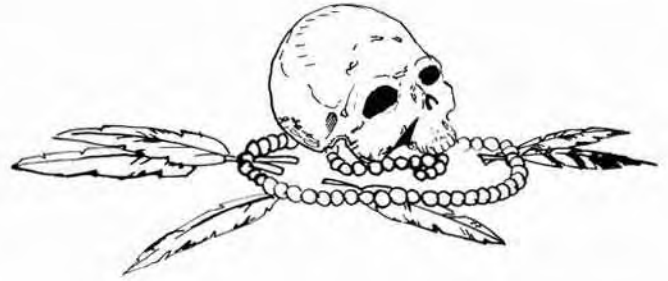
Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Digger, Sharptooth, Black Vision

Advantages: Bland, Daredevil, Luck (2 ranks), Rokugani Culture (2 ranks)

Disadvantages: Fascination (Rokugani cuisine), Greedy (4 ranks), Kwa'thch

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft: Cooking (Rokugani) 2, Defense 4, Hunting 4, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 2, Scrounging 6, Stealth 6, Sleight of Hand 7

The young Ratling trader named Mich'nuk doesn't appear particularly impressive. He is marked by the unfortunate deformities that haunt the bloodline of the Grasping Paw; his skull is large and deformed, his ears long and pointed, and his body is nearly hairless. Despite his hideous appearance, Mich'nuk is a amicable little Ratling who makes friends easily and tries not to get in anyone else's way.



Most Nezumi of other tribes ignore him, or tolerate the foul little scrounger's presence until he completes his business and moves on.

This works to Mich'nuk's advantage, for he is secretly one of the most respected thieves of the Grasping Paw Tribe. Though young and relatively inexperienced, he has an uncanny sense for where the finest treasures can be found, and possesses great talent in extracting said treasures without drawing notice. Already some of Mich'nuk's adventures are legend among his tribe. Once, it is said, he stole a gem from the bowl on the Kappa King's head. Once, it is said, he snuck into the kitchens of Kosaten Shiro and stole the dinner of the Crane chieftain.

Some tribal elders look upon little Mich'nuk and their mouths water as they wonder what he will bring home next. Others claim that the youngster is merely lucky, and hope that his luck will carry him through until he has the skill to back up his actions.

Mich'nuk appreciates the approval of the elders, but actually doesn't care to be a thief. Though he is skilled at stealing, he doesn't like it. He simply does what his tribe needs him to do. It is his job, and he will do it well as long as he must. In the meantime, he takes advantage of his time away from home to pursue his secret dream.

Mich'nuk wishes to become a chef.

Perhaps it is a silly dream, but it is his dream all the same. The tale of his visit to Kosaten Shiro is quite true. Ever since his visit to the luxurious Crane palace, Mich'nuk has been fascinated with Rokugani cuisine. He has learned as much as he can, trading bits of treasure to samurai in return for culinary pointers. His skills are not yet great, but Mich'nuk believes that he is destined to become a great chef. One day, he will learn the secrets of Rokugani cooking. He will steal them all and deliver them to the Grasping Paw.

Though Mich'nuk has served his pack-mates samples of his culinary experiments from time to time, the tribe knows nothing of Mich'nuk's quest, for Mich'nuk believes they would not understand. In reality, the elders would not care so long as it did not interfere with Mich'nuk's thieving and trading.

In the meantime, Mich'nuk prepares excellent nigiri sushi.

Shatishush

Chieftain of the Green-Green-White Tribe

Earth: 5

Water: 2

Strength 4

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 3

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Berserker (Chitatchikkan) 2, Builder 2

Name: 2.5

Honor: 0.9

Niche: 2.8

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Clever Tail, Sharptooth

Advantages: Death Trance, Large, Rokugani Culture (1 Rank), Silent, Strength of the Earth (3 ranks), Tribal Wanderer

Disadvantages: Antisocial (Extreme), Brash, Overconfident

Skills: Armorer 6, Athletics 5, Climbing 5, Club 4, Hand-to-Hand (Mochatchikkan) 6, Herbalism 4, Hunting 5, Intimidation 5, Scrounging 4, Stealth 4, Weaponsmith 4

Shatishush is the current chieftain of the Green-Green-White Tribe. He is a reclusive character, seldom wandering forth from his tribe's hidden warrens to meet outsiders. His rare appearances are something of a folk-legend, for he is an impressive Ratling to say the least. He is larger than the average Green-Green-White Nezumi, though his ghostly white fur and disturbing pink eyes proudly proclaim his heritage. His hide is covered with patchwork scars, and his long incisors have been filed into sharp blades. Some say that he looks as if he was replaced at birth with a Crippled Bone, but of course never within his earshot.

As a child, Shatishush had a difficult life. His father was a violent and unpredictable Chitatchikkan, who raised Shatishush apart from the rest of the tribe and exposed him to great risks so that he would "become strong." The rest of the tribe viewed it as a tragedy; Shatishush's father was clearly mad, though none among the tribe dared oppose him even for the sake of the pup. When Shatishush became strong enough, he slew his father and seized leadership of the Green-Green-White through a combination of physical strength and personal charisma. At first, the tribe feared that their reluctance to help the young Shatishush had created an uncontrollable despot. This is not entirely so.

Shatishush is a complex Nezumi. Those who are close to him say that just when they think they know him, they discover another layer to his personality. There are two distinct sides to Shatishush. At times, Shatishush is a fierce warrior. He possesses the berserker

fire of a Chitatchikkan, and has rarely retreated from combat. His savagery in battle against Phoenix samurai and the rare Tainted monsters that wander into the mountains is terrifying. At other times, Shatishush is a wise chieftain and a clever builder. Under his guidance, the Green-Green-White have improved their standard of living. He has created new medicines and more efficient weapons to allow his tribe to survive.

When he is lost in his berserker madness, Shatishush believes that the only way his tribe can survive is by shutting themselves in the woods forever and killing any outsiders that draw near. When lucid, Shatishush is disgusted by the barbarism and xenophobia that are the trademarks of his tribe. He aspires to something better, and realizes that the Green-Green-White will die out if they continue to hide.

The Nezumi have a word for those who act as Shatishush does – "nni'thich" ("double Name"). They believe that Shatishush was born with two spirits, both equally strong. One is a builder, a nurturer of life. The other is a berserker, a destroyer of the tribe's enemies. In either persona, he symbolizes something his tribe wishes to see in a leader, and has many supporters. The truth is, despite his condition





Shatishush is the Nezumi best qualified to lead the Green-Green-White.

This is hardly comforting to Shatishush. His two personae are in constant conflict with one another, ever trying to assert dominance. If one or the other were to ever banish the other, the destiny of the entire Green-Green-White's tribe might be changed forever. Or perhaps if either were to win out Shatishush would lose favor and be cast down as chieftain. Only time will tell.

Ak'tok'tuk

Diplomat of the Chipped Tooth

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Perception 4

Fire: 3

Air: 4

Void: 2

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Scout 2, Warrior 1

Name: 3.7

Honor: 1.3

Niche: 3.6

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Bigjump, Bignose

Advantages: Allies (many among the tribes), Human Allies (the Yasuki), Rokugani Culture (5 ranks), Transcendent (Ksoo'ma)

Disadvantages: Soft-hearted

Skills: Athletics 3, Climbing 3, Commerce 2, Courtier 1, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Etiquette (Rokugani) 4, Hand-to-Hand (Mochatchikkan) 3, Heraldry 2, Hunting 5, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 4, Oratory 2, Remembering 3, Rokugani Language 4, Scrounging 4, Sincerity 3, Stealth 4, Tribal Lore 3

As a pup, Ak'tok'tuk was notoriously curious. His insatiable nature got him into more trouble than his tribe could have imagined, and very soon he found himself restricted to the camp to avoid more unpleasant incidents. Ak'tok'tuk's problem was very simple: he was fascinated with humans and their strange ways.

At as early an age as his tribe would allow, Ak'tok'tuk became one of the many Nezumi of the Chipped Tooth tribe to serve aboard Yasuki sailing vessels. Working alongside the Crab finally seemed to satisfy his burning curiosity, and he served both his captain and his tribe well for several years. During that time, he learned much of the humans and their ways from the Yasuki merchants who traveled aboard the kobune. Eventually, a particularly unscrupulous merchant asked Ak'tok'tuk to accompany him to his holdings in the Yasuki lands. The young Nezumi eagerly agreed.



The human lands were even more fantastic than Ak'tok'tuk had imagined. Here there were things beyond description, things that his Ratling mind could scarcely comprehend. His merchant friend continually introduced him to new, fascinating things, all the while learning more and more from him about the Nezumi tribes and their culture. As the months progressed, he began to notice more Nezumi items among the merchant's possessions. Somewhat troubled by this, Ak'tok'tuk withdrew to a nearby forest one afternoon to contemplate.

As he dwelled upon the matter, Ak'tok'tuk experienced a vision. He was visited by the Transcendent spirit of Hiruma Kazuma, the Peace-Bringer who brought the Crab and Nezumi together. The terrified Nezumi was paralyzed with fear as he listened to the spirit explain his destiny as a link between the humans and the tribes. More to the point, this destiny was in jeopardy because of the Yasuki merchant, who was using Ak'tok'tuk's knowledge to cheat the Nezumi out of valuable supplies in trade.

Incensed, Ak'tok'tuk immediately committed all his accumulated knowledge of humans and their ways to plotting the merchant's ruin. He fed the Yasuki carefully constructed lies about the desires and possessions of the Nezumi tribes, leading him to commit



resources to trades that yielded only a fraction of what he expected. Much of this even occurred without the merchant's knowledge due to the long distances between his holdings and the locations where his vassals conducted the trades.

Ak'tok'tuk carefully concealed his machinations from the merchant until a gathering of prominent Yasuki at the merchant's home. At the height of the evening's proceedings, Ak'tok'tuk stood up and very carefully and in great detail explained what he had done to the merchant and why. Aghast, the merchant was completely humiliated in front of the other Yasuki. Prepared to flee for his life, Ak'tok'tuk was shocked to discover that the elder Yasuki found the entire incident uproariously hilarious. Many complimented the Nezumi on his shrewd tactics, jokingly referring to him as "sensei."

Ever since that day, Ak'tok'tuk has become a constant guest of the Yasuki family. He has a far greater grasp of human culture than any other Ratling in history, even those among the Tattered Ear tribe. All communications between the Yasuki and the Chipped Tooth tribe go through him at some point, and he has even led the other families of the Crab in negotiations with the other Nezumi tribes on several occasions. Younger Nezumi who share his love of Rokugani culture come to him to learn the basics, and those humans who wish to learn more of the ways of the Nezumi consider him the most approachable authority on the matter. He has become, for all intents and purposes, the liaison between the two races.

As he has matured in years, Ak'tok'tuk recognizes that the humans he admires so much are very different from Nezumi. He does not fully understand this "honor" that humans have, but he does understand that his tribe is more important than any relationship he has formed with the Yasuki.

Z'orr

Crooked Tail Warrior

Earth: 3

Stamina 4

Water: 2

Fire: 3

Intelligence 4

Air: 2

Reflexes 3

Void: 3

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Warrior 2

Name: 1.7

Niche: 2.3

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Black Vision, Clever Tail, Sharptooth

Advantages: Great Destiny, Prophecy



Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand (Mochatchikkan) 2, Hunting 3, Knife 3, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 2, Lore (Lying Darkness) 3, Remembering 4, Scrounging 3, Stealth 4

Z'orr is young, but he is not stupid. Not anymore. He learned early on what happens to the foolish in the ranks of the Crooked Tail Tribe.

In his first year as a scout, Z'orr has seen things that could make a scarred Crippled Bone warrior cringe in horror, and he has done things that even a Grasping Paw would scorn him for. Only once in all this time has his resolve failed, and a dear price was paid.

The Dark Enemy the Crooked Tail fights is quiet, deadly, and cunning. For many summers, the Tribe has hunted the thing that takes Names, stealing face and scent with it. Z'orr's first encounter with it cost him a pack-mate, when he froze in horror while the Dark Enemy pulled its victim away into the shadows. The rest of the pack would not lie for the young Ratling, and his Name was mocked for it for many seasons. He was stupid, then. The things were so horrible – why did no one understand how they had frightened him?



Zorr found his answer soon enough. Two summers had passed when he was standing guard over the small children during the Growing Time. The young scout's eyes were perfect for the duty even in the blackest night, and this was the darkest Zorr had ever seen.

It had not been long before another Ratling could be heard scurrying to the nest. At first, Zorr had thought his eyes failed him, but as the Nezumi drew closer he recognized the face that had been screamed for help years ago. The pack-mate his foolishness had killed was standing before him, whole and well.

The other greeted Zorr as if the fight had never happened. Zorr's lost friend said finally that he had come to visit the pups so he could see how the tribe had been doing while he was gone. They went to the nest of pups, and the young scout was looking upon the youngest ones when he realized something.

The other suddenly had no scent.

Zorr whirled to see his friend's face with no eyes, and an indistinct nose. The abomination sprang to gather up as many of the pups as he could, and Zorr leapt in the way. The Shadow-taken Nezumi bit the scout fiercely in the shoulder – so hard that its teeth came off into the wound. Zorr managed to fight off the other, and none of the pups were harmed. Others had come at the sound of a fight so close to the pups, and found the scout laying in a spreading pool of his own blood, squeaking softly about his lost friend. When one of the elders asked who had attacked, Zorr could not say; he could not remember the other Nezumi's name.

Two days of rest gave Zorr time to think about his place in the world, and how he would fill it. Two nights of restless sleep, as the Transcendent haunted his dreams and spoke to him of blackened skies during the daytime, and empty faces all about. When he finally awoke on the second night, he felt something in his hands. Two long teeth – all that was left of the nameless, scentless, faceless Nezumi that was lost forever because of him. Without knowing why, he chewed on the teeth until they reminded him of his fallen comrade – Jes'kik.

Zorr has spent his time since Remembering the fallen in his own way. Every fallen Nezumi is another pair of chewed teeth in the pouch at his side. Every pair of teeth is another Name that the Darkness can never steal so long as he lives. Every Name is a small salvation from the Shadow that the Transcendent whisper will soon come to cover the world.



I'kak

Chosen Prophet of Z-ee, Third Whisker Tribe

Earth: 2

Willpower 4

Water: 2

Perception 3

Fire: 3

Intelligence 4

Air: 3

Void: 4

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Shaman 3

Name: 4.1

Honor: 2.0

Niche: 7.0

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Softbones, Spirit Sight

Advantages: Ally (Yasuki Garou), Great Name (2 Ranks), Prophecy, Rokugani Culture (2 Ranks), Transcendent Guardian – Z-ee

Disadvantages: Obligation (Chosen Prophet of Z-ee)

Spells: (*Italics* notes a Namebound Spell) Importune Transcendent, Bend Name, *Smite the Nameless*, Mend Name, Name Weapon, Hide Name, *Seek Name*, Conjure Animal, *Burn Name*, Conjure Trickster, *Trade Name*

Skills: Defense 4, Hunting 3, Lore (Deep Shadowlands) 5, Meditation 5, Mee-i'thich 6, Name Lore 6, Spear 5, Stealth 4

I'kak is the current Chosen Prophet of Z-ee. He was born marked with the *nm'atch-tekn* ("tomorrow eyes") and was immediately declared the Chosen Prophet of his generation. He has been the leader of the Third Whisker for three years, ever since the former Chosen Prophet leapt headlong into a spike trap deep in the Kaiu catacombs.

I'kak was shocked to hear of his master's death, but there have been times of late when he has thought the old one knew what he was doing. Being the Chosen Prophet is a thankless task. I'kak's dreams are filled with dark, incomprehensible visions of the future. The Transcendent, Z-ee, is entirely mad and rarely communicates his wishes intelligibly. I'kak has adjusted, somewhat, and has developed a good instinct for when he should pay attention to his dreams and when he should just sigh and settle in for the ride.

Mostly, it's the latter.

His waking hours aren't much easier. As an acknowledged shaman, prophet, and mouthpiece of a Transcendent, he is hounded endlessly by Nezumi seeking a glimpse of their future. I'kak cannot help most of them; Z-ee chooses those whom he wishes to assist. When I'kak can help them, the supplicants often become angry,



don't believe him, or even blame him when things go awry! It has gotten to the point where I'kak refuses to see most of those who come seeking his aid, or charges them a ridiculous fee hoping they will go away.

Despite the pressure of his position, I'kak has remained a rather good-natured Ratling. He is friendly and kind, with a terrific sense of humor and a ready squeak. Occasionally, I'kak tries to break the tension of his job by sneaking away from the tribe and going on adventures in Crab lands. He knows of a secret tunnel within the Wall used only by the Chosen Prophets, and disappears unnoticed through it. His wanderings are the only pastime that brings him any joy, though he knows that he must always return to his responsibilities within the Carpenter.

During his travels, I'kak has become associated with a young Crab shugenja named Yasuki Garou. The two first met in the Shadowlands. Garou had bitten off a bit more than he could chew with an Oni no Akuma, and I'kak helped the Yasuki make a timely escape. The two have been close friends since, though Garou has sensibly refused to return to the Shadowlands.

To I'kak's surprise, Z-ee has foretold a great destiny in I'kak's Yasuki friend, a destiny linked strongly to the Nezumi people.

Perhaps it is due to Garou's bloodline, for he is distantly related to Hiruma Kazuma. Perhaps it is something else entirely. At any rate, for once Z-ee's rants are not of death, darkness and bloodshed, but of hope. There is a bright future ahead, and it is linked to this Yasuki.

Now I'kak just needs to stay close to him long enough to figure out what that future is.

Ropp'tch'tch

Rememberer, Squeaky Eyeball Tribe

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Perception 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence 5

Air: 2

Void: 5

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Rememberer 5

Name: 4.4

Honor: 2.8

Niche: 8.8

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Advanced Pheromones, Bignose

Advantages: Forever Memory, Human Allies (several in Unicorn Clan), Rokugani Culture (5 ranks), Shine-Shiny Eyes

Skills: Bard 8, Bojutsu 2, Defense 4, Etiquette (Nezumi) 4, Etiquette (Rokugani) 3, Herbalism 4, Lore (Burning Sands) 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Meditation 3, Mee-i'thich 5, Remembering 8, Rokugani Language 8, Tantojutsu 2

Ropp'tch'tch has access to the Squeaky Eyeball's enormous hoard of Tchr, and can lay hands on almost any memory stick at will.

Ropp'tch'tch is the current leader of the Council of the Eye, the guardians of Nezumi knowledge and the *de facto* chieftains of the Tribe of the Squeaky Eyeball. She is said to have traveled beyond the mountains to the Burning Sands on at least one occasion, and has close connections with the samurai of the Unicorn clan, as well as several wandering travelers from many Rokugani houses.

Ropp'tch'tch was born a member of the Squeaky Eyeball tribe, although she was not raised in the Valley of Stories. Her parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents lived in a small valley outside it, raising goats and gathering berries from the nearby forests. They were farmers and herdsman, not fighters, and certainly not Rememberers. She was their only child, and struggled to keep the family fed as her father's strength grew faint with age.

Born with the gift of a flawless memory and a knack for putting disparate pieces of a puzzle together, she was able to take many of the old stories taught to her by her grandfather, and create stories



that logically continued their style, events, and message. Her stories became so popular that other Nezumi would travel to her father's farm just to hear her tell them. However, Ropp'tch'tch claimed that she could not afford to take any time out of her labors. If they wanted to hear her, they would have to work the fields with her, herd the sheep, and pick berries from the woods.

They did. More came, and more. The small farm was overrun by eager hands, and eventually, the Rememberer council sent a Torre'chek to see what on earth was going on. He quizzed Ropp'tch'tch on the stories she created, and soon found that many of them were actually tales from the library of the council. "How do you know these?" he asked, amazed. Ropp'tch'tch shrugged. "Remember-remember, these what make sense," she said.

The Council quickly gathered to see what could be made of a farmer's daughter who could instinctively discern the ancient tales from only the briefest glimpses of Nezumi legends. After a tribal shaman cast many rituals on her, and the Council listened to her stories, it was determined that Ropp'tch'tch was the reborn spirit of an ancient Rememberer whose tales had been lost long ago. It was her duty to bring these tales back to life, and return them to Nezumi culture.

Ropp'tch'tch was in due course accepted into the schools of the Rememberers. Since then, she has become a trusted counselor, educated in all the learnings of the Nezumi. She has also taken several journeys into the samurai lands, but her most remarkable claim is that she has traveled into the lands of the Burning Sands – not once or twice, but many times.

On occasion, Ropp'tch'tch vanishes from her burrow in the Valley of Stories and travels east, to the top of the Twilight Mountains, claiming that it is time for a 'pilgrimage' to the land of stories. The few Torre'chek who have been brave enough to follow her (stealthily, of course) claim that she was met by a strange man with a flapping towel on his head. The two talked in an unusual language, and then he laid a blanket on the ground. Both of them climbed on it, and then – wonder of wonders – the blanket traveled into the sky.

Some weeks later, Ropp'tch'tch would return. She spoke nothing about the towel-man or his flying blanket, but she tells many new tales, and always carries a pouchful of strange sweets for the little Nezumi who love to listen to her strange tales.

Ropp'tch'tch is kind and gentle, and has a masterful imagination. She can speak Rokugani as well as the tongue of the Burning Sands, and she has a perfect memory. She carries with her a small amulet made in the shape of a running horse. It is formed of an unusual red glass, and turns black when it is time for Ropp'tch'tch to take another of her strange 'pilgrimages' into the Twilight Mountains.

Transcendent Guardians (Wikki'thich-hie)

Dead Nezumi return to the place whence they came – to dreams. A few powerful Nametakers have entered I'thich, the Nezumi Realm of Dreams, before their deaths while still retaining their sense of self. These spirits are known as the Transcendent. From I'thich, the Transcendent guide the living and sometimes invite important Nezumi to join them. Sometimes the Transcendent choose mortal aides.

Transcendent are mechanically similar to ancestors. However, members of any Ratling tribe can purchase them and a *sodan-senzo*



cannot sense their presence. Transcendent never choose an aide without reason – all have some particular goal in mind. In addition, any Transcendent purchased after the first cost double the normal amount of points. It is rare for more than one Transcendent to take interest in a mortal.

A Nezumi will be pestered and taunted in his dreams if the Transcendent feels that his aide is not living up to its (often impossibly high) standards. Once the aide fulfills the quest demanded of him, a Transcendent Guardian departs forever, taking with it the abilities granted but giving the aide Experience Points equal to twice the Transcendent's original cost. The motivations of all Transcendent are murky at best. The GM determines when and if the Transcendent ever decides to leave.

A'tck

(6 points, Shaman only)

Among the Transcendent, A'tck is known as The Sunlit-Elder, one of the oldest and most powerful Transcendent. He transcended to I'thich only moments before Fu Leng destroyed the Nezumi Empire, and claims that the unique circumstances of his death have granted him unique insight into the nature of the war against the darkness.

He always refuses to explain exactly what this insight may be.

A'tck's domain is magic. He chooses only shamans as his aides, and is obsessed with accumulating new forms of magical power. He is particularly interested in unlocking the secrets of Rokugani and Akashic magic, but often sends his aides to search for *nemuranai* or dangerous *maho* artifacts as well.

The power of A'tck's protection is great indeed. His mortal aides gain a free Raise on all Name magic they cast, and harmful magic targeting them has its TN increased by 5.

Rtch't'tok

(3 points)

Rtch't'tok was the Crooked Tail who first discovered the strange, unnamable darkness that plagues the humans from within. Rtch't'tok is utterly convinced that this darkness is not connected to Heaven's Grave in any way, and that it is actually a greater threat than the Shadowlands.

Among the Transcendent, he is known as Nothing-Seeker.

Rtch't'tok is a relatively quiet and unobtrusive Transcendent most of the time, but if the powers of the Lying Darkness are nearby he will scream and rant through his mortal aide's dreams until something is done. He is unwilling (or unable) to explain exactly what these creatures are or what they want, but his goal is always

the complete destruction of "the darkness." He will not abandon a mortal aide until this goal is complete.

Nezumi protected by Rtch't'tok are immune to the corrupting effects of the Shadow (see *Way of Shadow*). They cannot gain Shadow Points, Shadow Powers, or Shadow Brands.

Ksoo'ma

(2 points)

Hiruma Kazuma is known as the Peace-Bringer, the human who forged the alliance between Crab and Nezumi. He is the only human who has ever been invited to join the Transcendent, and his spirit exists in I'thich and Yomi simultaneously. Kazuma watches over his Crab descendants and their Nezumi allies, guiding them toward a future where there will be peace and equality among these kindred races.

Kazuma is far less cryptic and unpredictable than other Transcendent. He answers questions in concrete, definable terms and never steers those whom he protects to ruin. Unfortunately, his assistance is more limited than most Transcendent. As Kazuma had no Name magic in life, he cannot read the future and the past as the Nezumi Transcendent can.

He is, for better or worse, the same as any human *shiryo*.

Those Nezumi who are under the Peace-Bringer's protection may purchase human Allies at half cost and receive a free Raise on all social rolls with Humans.

Ochi'kir and Min'kir

(4 points)

Ochi'kir and Min'kir are referred to as the Twins. They were two of the four pups who were at the center of the infamous War of Lost Pups. When the war was ended, the two sisters were split, Ochi'kir going to the Tattered Ear and Min'kir to the Squeaky Eyeball. Both became mighty Nametakers in time, and were reunited in I'thich.

These two Transcendent always appear as one communal being, and share the same desires and goals. In particular, their domain is the maintenance of peace among the Nezumi tribes. They have guided many Nezumi to greatness, but have also sent just as many proud warriors to their doom.

Ochi'kir and Min'kir protect those who pursue the way of peace. Their mortal aides gain a +10 to their TN to Be Hit, but this bonus is lost for the rest of the battle when their aide declares any sort of violent action.



A'chuu'kir

(4 points)

Among the Transcendent, A'chuu'kir is known as the Huntsman. He was the last shaman born to the Green-Green-White Tribe. It is unknown whether A'chuu'kir approves of his former tribe's current disdain for shamans. In fact, not much is known about A'chuu'kir at all save that he is a violent and dangerous Transcendent. Those who are selected as his aides become veterans of great renown or die in battle (usually both). Those who aid him can seldom keep their hands clean of blood.

Most Nezumi fear him.

Those guided by A'chuu'kir are strong in battle. When on Full Attack, his aide's maximum number of Raises is not limited by his Void. While protected by A'chuu'kir, a Nezumi may not declare Full Defense.

Z-ee

(3 points)

Z-ee was born a simple Nezumi among the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow Tribe. A Transcendent chose him to become a prophet, and drove him mad with visions. These visions warned Z-ee of the chaos that would ensue if the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow split, but his madness caused many Nezumi to ignore his ravings.

In time, Z-ee's Transcendent Guardian elevated the demented prophet to I'thich, almost as if in apology.

As a Transcendent, Z-ee's sanity remains questionable. He is tormented by visions of a time when the power of Name will be led astray by a terrible darkness, and neither the Crooked Tail, Tattered Ear, or Third Whisker will be equipped to deal with it alone. The only way to survive is if the three tribes reunite. Though his vision of the future is pure, his madness sometimes causes him to send his aides on quests that seem irrelevant.

It is difficult to say how Z-ee will choose to help. Once per session, one roll that Z-ee's aide makes gains four Free Raises. At the beginning of each session, roll one die. If it is an even number, the player gets to decide which roll gains Z-ee's Raises. If it is an odd number, the GM gets to decide when the Raises occur. If the Raises are the GM's choice, and he does not assign them before the end of the session, the character gains an extra Experience Point.

G'ni'ch

(5 points)

Among the Transcendent, G'ni'ch is known as the Fierce. He hails from no existing tribe, his people having been destroyed by the Shadowlands. He remains an implacable enemy of Fu Leng. Before he transcended, G'ni'ch slew a great number of Tainted beasts, including a spawn of Oni no Akuma, an entire pack of Sanru oni, and the depraved *maho-tsukai* Kuni Yoshimitsu.

G'ni'ch does not demand much from those who serve him, except that they destroy all trace of the Taint. He will not abide any tolerance of the Taint from his aides, and those that befriend Shadowlands creatures are likely to find another one of G'ni'ch's aides hunting *them*. If G'ni'ch departs, it is usually from exasperation because the aide is not destroying enough Tainted creatures (you can never really destroy enough to satisfy G'ni'ch).

G'ni'ch's blessing is simple, but powerful. His aides roll and keep an extra die on attack and damage against all creatures with the Shadowlands Taint, whether the damage they inflict is with a weapon or a spell.

Neelru'kir

(6 points)






Neelru'kir was the great Nametaker whose magic saved the mujina from the Taint. Though the spell killed him, he was able to transcend before his consciousness became the stuff of dreams. The other Transcendent know Neelru'kir as the Trickster, for he shares many traits in common with his mujina friends.

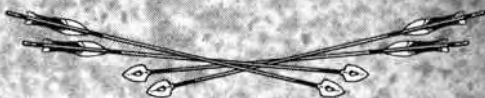
Unusually for a Transcendent, Neelru'kir has no particular goal. He latches on to mortal aides simply so he can experience the mortal world through their eyes. When he is no longer amused, he leaves. In many ways, he is a tragic figure – he feels that his life was cut short and feels a lingering need to see as much of the mortal world as he can.

Those who serve Neelru'kir gain a special advantage. The mujina can feel their savior's presence and will not harm one that serves as his eyes. In addition, the character gains a mujina servant as if he had cast the Summon Trickster spell, except that the character need not reward the mujina so long as Neelru'kir remains. If Neelru'kir departs, it is possible that the mujina could be bribed into sticking around.

Legend of the Five Rings™

Roleplaying

Stamina	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Willpower	<u>2</u>		
Strength	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Perception	<u>2</u>		
Agility	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Intelligence	<u>2</u>		
Reflexes	<u>3</u>		<u>2</u>
Awareness	<u>2</u>		
Void Points Spent	<u> </u>		<u>2</u>



Wounds

<u> </u>	<u>12</u>	<u>+0</u>
<u> </u>	<u>12</u>	<u>+0</u>
<u> </u>	<u>12</u>	<u>+0</u>
<u> </u>	<u>12</u>	<u>+10</u>
<u> </u>	<u>12</u>	<u>Dead</u>

Name: Savage Warrior

Tribes: Crippled Bone

Profession: Chitatchikkan

School: Berserker

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 103



Primary Weapon

Bite 3k1

Roll & keep To Hit

Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility

3k3+3

Roll & keep Damage

Strength + Damage Rating

5k3+5

TN to Be Hit

Reflexes x 5 + armor if any

(Heavy Samurai Armor) 25

Initiative

Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds

2k2

Techniques

Mad Fury

Niche: 0

Name: 1

Skill Level

<u>Athletics</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Intimidation</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Hunting</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Lore (Deep Shadowlands)</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Hand-to-Hand (Mochatchikkan)</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Scrounging</u>	<u>1</u>

Advantages/Disadvantages Points

<u>Teeth of Stone</u>	<u>+5</u>
<u>Strength of the Earth (2)</u>	<u>+4</u>
<u>Large</u>	<u>+3</u>
<u>Overconfident</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u>Brash</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u>Sworn Enemy</u>	<u>-4</u>
<u>Idealistic</u>	<u>-2</u>

Nezumi Abilities Points

<u>Immune to Fear</u>	<u>-</u>
<u>Sharptooth</u>	<u>+3</u>
<u>Hardy</u>	<u>+1</u>
<u>Clever Tail</u>	<u>+3</u>



Savage Warrior

The others fear-fear you. You not know why. Fear makes no sense to you.

So be it. If they be too afraid to fight, you happy to kill-kill the monsters yourself. While they scurry-scurry away from the dark-things-that-hunt, you make sure the dark things hunt-hunt no more. You can handle anything the Shadowlands throw at you, and go-go back for more. If there be more Nezumi like you, maybe there be no more Shadowlands.

One time, you say-say this at a meeting of the pack. You no mean insult anyone, it just a fact! Even so, the pack leader grow quiet. The shaman look at you with a mad-mad eye. The shaman no like your words, no like the way that you stand and fight while he run-run away. You no understand. Why he be jealous of your no-fear? You no jealous of his magic. Most of time his magic be more trouble than it worth. You take your no-fear over magic every time.

Still, the shaman no like you. You know-know this. He no like your no-fear. He no like your strength. He afraid the rest of the tribe follow you and throw their fear away. That be a bad thing? You no think so.

Why he no like you? You only do what you be told. You told to be brave, you be brave. That is all.

It hurt to think-think about it. For now, shaman has pack leader's ear, and pack leader listens. Every time you go out on hunt, it be a little more dangerous than before. You starting to think-think the shaman be trying to get rid-rid of you.

Let him try. Let him send you to Heaven's Grave if he think-think that stop you.

You no afraid.



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Roleplaying

Stamina	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Willpower	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Strength	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Perception	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Agility	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Intelligence	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Reflexes	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Awareness	<u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Void Points Spent	<u> </u>		<u>3</u>



Wounds

<u> </u>	<u>8</u>	<u>+0</u>
<u> </u>	<u>8</u>	<u>+3</u>
<u> </u>	<u>8</u>	<u>+6</u>
<u> </u>	<u>8</u>	<u>+10</u>
<u> </u>	<u>8</u>	<u>Dead</u>

Name: Wandering Shaman

Tribe: Tattered Ear

Profession: Shaman

School: Shaman

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 118



Primary Weapon

Tooth Dagger 1k2

Roll & keep To Hit

Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility

1k1+1

Roll & keep Damage

Strength + Damage Rating

3k2

TN to Be Hit

Reflexes x 5 + armor if any

(Light Troll-skin Armor) 13

Initiative

Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds

2k2 (+5 first round with dagger)

Spells

Spells in *italics* are Namebound

Conjure Earth's Bounty

Name Friend

Smite the Nameless

Importune Transcendent

Niche: 2

Name: 3

Skill

Level

<u>Defense</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Knife</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Hunting</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Lore (Literature)</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Meditation</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Mee-thich</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Name Lore</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Poetry (Rokugani)</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Tloo'cha'thrr</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Stealth</u>	<u>2</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Advantages/Disadvantages

Points

<u>Rokugani Culture (3)</u>	<u>-</u>
<u>Great Name</u>	<u>+8</u>
<u>Namebound</u>	<u>+3</u>
<u>Voice</u>	<u>+2</u>
<u>Minor Ally</u>	<u>+2</u>
<u>Fascination (poetry)</u>	<u>-1</u>
<u>Jealousy (poetry)</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u>Soft Hearted</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u>Meddler</u>	<u>-2</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Nezumi Abilities

Points

<u>Spirit Sight</u>	<u>+2</u>
<u>Sharpears</u>	<u>+1</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>



Wandering Shaman

Dreams are the greatest product of magic. You have always believed that, and that is why you are a shaman.

For many years, you have sought a way to bring the power of dreams to the waking world. There is magic, of course, but not everyone can do magic. Your goal is to find a universal magic, a magic that can fill every living being with the wonder of creation. You believe that you may have found the key to such magic, and that key is poetry.

You learned your first snippets of Rokugani poetry from a kindly Asahina monk who judged you not for your appearance, but for the love of nature you shared. He taught you of the Rokugani arts and literature, and in turn you taught him the customs of your people.

Rokugani poetry is strange. It is short, choppy, and not at all funny. It is very different from the Tloo'cha'thrr preferred by your tribe, yet it has a beauty of its own. Like your people, the humans feel a need to create something lasting, something personal, to leave upon the world. If that is not magic, then you do not know what is.

The humans you have met feel that Nezumi poetry is strange. Some say that it is not even poetry. Some just do not understand.

Sadly, there is something about Rokugani poetry that does not capture the magic that you seek, nor does Tloo'cha'thrr completely satisfy you. No, you are seeking something greater. Perhaps some combination of the two; maybe something else entirely. You will not rest until you find the answer, until you create the perfect combination of word, imagery, and magic.






Sometimes the other Nezumi question your strange fascination with words. They say that is a waste of time better spent searching for magic to help the tribe. They do not understand. They cannot understand. The magic you seek will help more than just the tribe. It will help all living things understand each other a little better.

When you find what you seek, they will all understand.



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Roleplaying

Stamina <u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Willpower <u>2</u>	Earth	
Strength <u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Perception <u>2</u>	Water	
Agility <u>3</u>		<u>3</u>
Intelligence <u>3</u>	Fire	
Reflexes <u>2</u>		<u>2</u>
Awareness <u>2</u>	Air	
Void Points Spent _____		<u>2</u>
	Void	



Wounds

_____	<u>8</u>	+0
_____	<u>8</u>	+3
_____	<u>8</u>	+6
_____	<u>8</u>	+10
_____	<u>8</u>	Dead

Name: Seeker of Yesterday

Tribe: Third Whisker

Profession: Rememberer

School: Rememberer

Rank: 1

Insight: (Rings x 10) + Skills above 1 119



Primary Weapon

Bo 0k2

Roll & keep To Hit

Roll weapon Skill, keep Agility

2k3+2

Roll & keep Damage

Strength + Damage Rating

2k2

TN to Be Hit

Reflexes x 5 + armor if any

(No armor) 10

Initiative

Roll and keep Awareness; subtract Wounds

2k2

Memory Sticks

Nee'nee-tchr (Diggers Stick)

Ktch'kirptu-tchr (Builder's Stick)

Tcha-tchr (Happy Stick)

Niche: 2

Name: 3

Skill Level

<u>Bojutsu</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Courtier (Nezumi)</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Etiquette (Nezumi)</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Lore (Deep Shadowlands)</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Mee-thich</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Remembering</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Scrounging</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Stealth</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Tribal Lore</u>	<u>2</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Advantages/Disadvantages Points

<u>Prophecy</u>	<u>+1</u>
<u>Precise Memory</u>	<u>+0</u>
<u>Rokugani Culture (1)</u>	<u>+2</u>
<u>Small</u>	<u>-4</u>
<u>Driven (Discover the Past)</u>	<u>-3</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Nezumi Abilities Points

<u>Softbones</u>	<u>+3</u>
<u>Advanced Pheromones</u>	<u>+0</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Seeker of Yesterday

How can Nezumi have bright tomorrow when they do not remember yesterday?

The loss of yesterday is the greatest tragedy. Without yesterday, your people are left squeak-squeaking in the shadows and gutters. Without yesterday, your people must eat from garbage while humans rule the land. Without yesterday, the shadow-monsters laugh over Heaven's Grave and feast on Nezumi dead.

If you could win-win back yesterday, all that would change.

You cannot believe that everything of yesterday is lost. An Empire as great-great as the one that is remembered must have left something behind. The Shadowlands are vast, dark, and full of evil. Maybe the thing that lives in Heaven's Grave took what was left of yesterday and hid-hid it away? Maybe the Shadowlands stole-stole the knowledge of the old Nezumi Empire and added it to its power? You hear that some oni steal-steal the name of humans. That sound like Nezumi magic to you. You know you must find-find where the Shadowlands have hidden the secrets of the Nezumi and steal-steal them back.

It will not be easy. After so many great heroes hunt-hunt for so long and find-find nothing it not be easy. That no mean you no try. You have to try. You are a Rememberer! Yesterday belongs to you!

Your mother taught you the skills you need. Your father gave you a bag full of Memory Sticks to help your quest. Both good gifts, but not enough. You must be skilled, clever, and brave. You must scurry-scurry through places where no sane Nezumi ever go. You must face things no one has faced, and you no can do it alone. You need to find others who want to find yesterday as bad as you do, and make them see how important this is.

You must leave today. The sooner you find yesterday, the sooner you find bright tomorrow.





Reckless Scavenger

Whee!

Other Nezumi whine because they got no good-good stuff. They say good-good stuff too hard to find. They say Lean Times harsh, leave nothing for Nezumi. They look at all the good-good stuff you find and you see they jealous.

You say other Nezumi stupid. Everyone know where to find good-good stuff.

Just steal it from the humans. They got plenty.

Other Nezumi say it too dangerous to steal from humans. They say humans too big, too mean. Humans not so mean when you steal their sword. Once they figure out you stole from them, they too slow-slow to catch you. Silly humans.

Tribe say they no approve of you steal-stealing from humans. Ha. They take-take the food you bring just the same, and no ask where you get it. They know where you get it. Rice balls no grow-grow on trees.

Getting away from humans no problem. Want to get away from angry human? Run into Shadowlands. They usually no chase you. If they do, you keep running. Humans that chase you into Shadowlands without jade stop chasing soon enough. If they keep running after that, you know a few nasty places where they no run. Of course there be some nasty things there that eat a Nezumi quick as a human, but so far you been too quick-quick, too clever, to get caught.

Of course, humans not the only ones who have good-good stuff. Sometimes other Nezumi have good-good stuff, too. Stuff too good-good not to take. You know it no right to steal from tribe. Still, sometimes it too hard to resist. You steal from tribe, you hide stuff away in burrow all your own.

Hopefully you not get caught.

If tribe ever catch you, then it be time to learn how fast you can run-run after all...





Nameless Hunter

Since your visit to Crippled Bone, no one remembers you. When you come back to your hut, another Nezumi live-live there. When you try to hold your pups, they cry and scurry-scurry away. Even your brothers no recognize you, and chase you from village at spear-point like a demon from the dark-south-lands. It was like a nightmare, or some terrible poem, only no one laughing. Only one member of tribe dare speak to you, an old one that you no recognize. He scurry from shadows when light was dawning, while rest of tribe asleep. His tail twitch while he watch you eat the meal he bring you. He afraid of you, that clear.

"Did I know you?" he ask with quivering paws. "Were you my pup, before your Name stolen away?"

"My Name?" you answer, afraid. "How can someone steal-steal a Name?"

"Most Nezumi no can steal names," say the old one. "No Green-Green-White can steal Names. We have no shamans. But the Nametakers can steal-steal your name away, throw you out of the world. I think-think this what happen to you."

And then you remember. The shaman's apprentice begging you to stay with Crippled Bone, to stay be her mate and teach secrets of your tribe. You tell her before whole pack you would not, you were loyal to your mate. The Green-Green-White's secrets be their own. When you leave, you see shame in her eyes, see anger in the eyes of the shaman she serve.

Could he be angry enough to steal your Name?

"May-may be," the old one say when you tell him the tale. "Now you have no tribe. No one remember you the Nametaker. Maybe he hope you come back and marry his apprentice, give away secrets of Green-Green-White?"

You laugh at that. You never betray the tribe, even if they no remember you.

"How do I fix this?" you asked. "How do I steal my Name back?"

"No know the answer to that," the old one said. "Only Nametakers know how to find a stolen Name."

And then it all become clear. You will go back to the Crippled Bone shaman, but not to join him, not to beg him for your Name. If shaman so powerful, no reason for him ever agree to what you say.

No. You will go back and *kill* him.





A'op'chtch-tchr

You joined the Sword of Yotsu to provide protection for the helpless.

You never expected anything like this.

It happened four months ago. With the magistrate whom you served as *yoriki*, you were investigating rumors that a group of Scorpion had taken refuge within an abandoned farmhouse to plan vengeance against the local lord. You found no Scorpion, but the house was hardly empty. Inside, a trio of Ratling infants, each the size of a small dog, huddled fearfully on a fur blanket.

"No kill-kill," squeaked one of the little creatures in a strangely human voice. "Mother gone-gone. All alone now. No kill-kill."

What happened next will horrify you forever. The magistrate stepped forth and buried his *yari* in the nearest child.

"What are you doing?" you demanded.

"They are vermin," the magistrate replied in a bored tone. "Allow them to grow, and they will become thieves, like all their kind."

"They are children," you replied, your voice thick.

"They are worthless," the magistrate answered, "Step aside, ronin." With that, he buried his weapon in another.

You could stand no more. In an instant, your blade was free and the magistrate's head rolled from his shoulders. The rest of your party cried out in surprise, but you turned and pointed your blade at them as well. "I am a Yotsu," you proclaimed. "I protect the helpless. Leave me in peace and I have no quarrel with you."

The others backed away; your reputation as a swordsman was already well known. Quickly, you bundled up the terrified Ratling and escaped into the night.

Though the little creature was frightened of you at first, she has slowly come to accept you. She clings to your shoulders as you walk. Sometimes she sleeps there. Though she is a mere child, she is extremely intelligent. The knowledge the Ratling has shared with you about her kind is astonishing. You have trouble speaking her language, so you have named her "Nozomi" for the hope that she

has given you. In turn, she calls you "A'op'chtch-tchr." You do not know what the name means, and she will not explain it.

Life has been hard since the night your life turned. A bounty has been placed upon your head for the death of the magistrate. You have escaped the Wasp twice, and wonder if you will be so lucky a third time.

Not once have you looked into the eyes of little Nozomi and wondered if your sacrifice was worthwhile.

Not once.





Appendix



Using Nezumi

Though this book provides all the information you need for creating a Ratling character, some GMs and players may be left wondering exactly how to use Nezumi within their campaign. Nezumi are hated, feared, and even hunted in some parts of Rokugan. Slipping them into a party of samurai can be a difficult proposition. The following are a few campaign suggestions involving Nezumi.

Shadowlands Campaign

In any campaign based in the Shadowlands, one or more Nezumi would not be out of place. Human characters (at least the practical-minded ones) would rely on Nezumi for advice within the Shadowlands, and follow their lead in a crisis. The Nezumi alliance with the Crab would give an opportunity for a certain degree of political and social interaction. These are the easiest sorts of campaigns to include a Nezumi character.

Ratling Ally

If one or more player characters take the Ratling Ally Advantage, create the character's ally as a Rank 1 character. When the player's human character comes across situations where a Ratling would be more useful (deep Shadowlands missions, theft, spying, etc.) he could make contact with his Nezumi associate and switch player control to the Nezumi for awhile. If the entire party has Ratling Allies, this could give interesting depth to the campaign, exploring two different sides of Rokugan by switching back and forth between human and Ratling characters.

A Kinder, Gentler Rokugan

Just because Nezumi are misunderstood outcasts in canon Rokugan doesn't mean that it has to be so in your game. Perhaps in your Rokugan history veered dramatically. Perhaps the Nezumi proved their worth during a critical juncture such as White Stag, the Battle of Sleeping River, or even the War Against Fu Leng, and since that time Nezumi and humans have lived and worked together.

Even in such a world, it is unlikely that Nezumi would be granted the full respect and privileges of a true samurai. Neither would they face the same fear and suspicion that certain clans have for them in the canon continuity. In a very technical sense, the Nezumi tribes would be considered a separate, allied nation within the boundaries of Rokugan. Most samurai would probably treat Nezumi with a respectful indifference similar to that which the Unicorn endure. Depending upon when the Nezumi gained acceptance, it is possible that certain clans might find them *more* trustworthy than the Unicorn.

With a stronger link to Rokugan, it is possible that Nezumi would have adopted some cultural practices and behavior of Rokugani.



Nezumi who live outside the Shadowlands might become farmers, and would have no further need to scavenge and steal. Nezumi could trade openly, and even own businesses within cities. Overall, the quality of Nezumi life (and starting equipment) would improve. Ktch'kirptu might work beside Kaiu and Kakita artisans to create works of startling complexity. Perhaps Nezumi shamans and Phoenix shugenja could come to understand one another's magic. Some of them may conceivably gain such acceptance that they would be allowed to swear fealty to samurai families (especially the Crab).

In such a world, Nezumi would not be outcasts from the court. Instead, the existence of Nezumi would add a new level to politics. Clans would curry their favor in times of war. The Nezumi would be eager to establish allies, as their existence among humans (who vastly outnumber them) would always hang upon the whim of the Emperor.

In such a setting, the GM may wish to consider increasing the costs of Nezumi Special Abilities by at least two points. These special abilities were designed with the intention of balancing the inherent disadvantages of playing a Nezumi, many of which would not exist in such a world.

All Nezumi

Playing an entire party of Nezumi is an interesting option. The characters could create their characters as a small tribe or sub-pack of a larger tribe. A game of this sort would be very different from a typical game of *Legend of the Five Rings*, as the tribe is forced to understand and experience samurai society from the outside. Depending on the players' actions, the tribe could flourish or die out completely.

Yesterday

Another option for an all-Nezumi campaign is a game set in the Before Time, when Nezumi ruled the Shadowlands. In such a game humans, Fortunes, and the Shadowlands Taint would not yet exist. The Naga would still be asleep. Ogres, trolls, bakemono, kenku, kitsu, hengeyokai, zokujin, kappa, ningyo, and mujina would be more common, and would perhaps be allowable as playable characters. Such a campaign would be so wildly different that in many ways it would hardly resemble *Legend of the Five Rings*. However, it might be a fun change of pace or an interesting prologue for a campaign in which the characters are intended to seek relics of the Before Time.

Chi'chtrf

(Nezumi Communication)

"Titchtch'tch watched as the humans wandered aimlessly across the land, stood vigil as the Kami fell and fought to rule, and remembered the gathering of the Seven Thunders' battle with the Lord of the Dark Lands. He had lived a long time, but it was time for him to pass on his knowledge to a new generation. He knew-knew that the things that he had seen were important not only to his tribe, but to all the Nezumi. With that thought in mind, he set out, to pass what he knew on to the leaders of each of the Five Tribes.

"Early on, he realized that what he proposed was no easy task. For many nights, the Tribes had kept to themselves, each developing their own form of communication. His journey would not only pass along great knowledge, but also bring the Tribes under a unified language."

I have recorded this story as was told to me by Ropp'tch'tch, the wandering Rememberer, in my search to catalog the Nezumi language. I can attest only that the words I have written are the ones he spoke to me.

Throughout my travels, I have learned a great deal about the strange utterances of the various Ratling Tribes. While each maintains some distinct "dialects," much of the basic guidelines are the same. Enclosed are my findings.

—Yasuki Garou

Decades ago, the "cultural leaders" of the Crane conducted what they considered an in-depth look into the Nezumi language. Their so-called research led them to conclude that the Ratling language had no clear structure, and could never hope to integrate with "civilized" Rokugani culture. They could not have been more wrong. While the language of the Nezumi is very different from Rokugani, it has an organized and complex structure. Despite this fact, the Nezumi try and keep things as simple as possible when dealing with



one another. While there are just a few rules that their language follows, there are few exceptions to these rules. The basic guidelines to their language are as follows.

Because of their unique physiology, the Nezumi augment their speech with “clicks” and “squeaks.” By striking the roof of their mouth with their tongue, humans can imitate these “clicks,” a very important aspect of the Ratling language. The squeaks are slightly more difficult, but often the listener will be able to decipher what a human is trying to say.

When writing, “clicks” are indicated by an apostrophe (') and “squeaks” are shown with a dash (-).

Often, Nezumi will use “clicks” and “squeaks” along with body language to indicate emotion. Three “clicks” in a row, for example, shows that the Ratling is interested, while three “squeaks” is a sign of anger. Other common indicators: wrinkling the nose quickly shows attention, baring teeth is aggression, and slapping of the tail indicates importance. It is important to remember these things when speaking to the Nezumi. Many samurai have been assaulted while smiling, a sign of aggression within the Ratling culture.

Repeating an action word indicates performing the action. These words are often separated by a “click.” For example, “Tch” means Remember. “Tch'tch” means Remembering. When used in a name, double uses of a word show a person who performs the action, therefore “Tch'tch” in a Nezumi name would mean a “person-who-remembers” or a Rememberer. This also explains why, when speaking Rokugani, Ratlings often repeat verbs.

Many words in the Nezumi language are simply simple words put together to mean something greater. For example, History, which they describe as “The Path Into Once Bright Yesterday” is M'thach'thach. “M” is simply Path, “Thach” is used to describe Brightness, and “K'thach” is Yesterday. While this may seem confusing, to the Ratlings this is a simple way of expression.

There are very few synonyms in the Nezumi language. To them “to hit” is the same as “to strike,” so why should there be two words for them?

When negating a word, the Nezumi will simply say “no” or “krt” before the word. For example, if they wanted to say “unsafe” they would simply say “Krt'bu'lr” or “not safe.”

Names are very important to the Ratling. A strong name indicates a high position in their society and therefore names are given with the utmost care. Many names include a Nezumi's title following their first name. For example, Te'tik'kir is a Name Seeker. His given name was Te'tik, and Kir is the title of a Name Seeker. This explains why many titles are relatively short.

It is important to note that many words in the Nezumi language have only subtle differences in the form of “squeaks” or “clicks.” This is very important to remember especially when dealing with one's

title. Were you to address Temp'r'tek without the “click” between Temp'r and Tek, you would imply that he were only a scout, a great insult to the Nezumi general.

Many words in the Nezumi language derive their meanings from all or part of many different words. In fact, the words themselves are often combinations of those smaller words. Even when referring to themselves, the Ratlings use combinations. *Ch'ich-tch*, the Ratling word for Nezumi, means Brave-warriors-who-remember, and was drawn from three root words: Chit (Brave), Ch (Warriors), and Tch (Remember). In this example, they dropped the “t” in Chit and added a “click” and a “squeak” in between separate words. This happens quite frequently and learning the common root words can be an immense aid in translating what a Nezumi is saying.

Nezumi do not count in the same way that Rokugani do. The Ratlings only have numbers from zero to ten, but from those, they can count infinitely, although they rarely see the need to use numbers beyond a hundred. When wanting to use a word over ten, one would simply combine numbers. For example, if you wanted to say twenty, you would say “two-tens.” With this knowledge, you can create any number you wish. One-hundred becomes “ten-tens,” thirty-six becomes “three-tens-six.” While this may seem confusing, for the Nezumi it is a very simple and efficient way to use numbers when they need to.

Remember, it would be impossible to catalog every rule and exception in this brief treatment. All languages have their own idiosyncrasies. As long as you keep these rules and vocabulary words in mind, your Ratling speech will seem perfectly authentic.



Nezumi Language Primer

For those samurai who wish to communicate with the Nezumi, the Crab have compiled a list of common words and phrases and their Ratling translations. Be aware that not all words translate directly, and a simple word to a Rokugani may have a deep and complex meaning to a Nezumi and vice versa. Where possible, the Crab have given direct translation of the Nezumi word. The Yasuki family keeps full catalogs of known Nezumi words and phrases. Many Rememberers mentally catalog the human language as well.

Nezumi Names

When creating a Nezumi name, it is important to remember that their name has a great deal of meaning, and often changes as their life progresses. Player should consider these factors when choosing a name for their Ratling character. Traditionally, there are 4 times that a Nezumi's name may change.

Birth: All Ratlings are called S'tch until the second spring after their birth, when the Nezumi hold the Rite of Naming.

Rite of Naming: At this time, the tribe's Name Seeker will bestow the first name upon the youth, often prophesying the Ratling's place in the world. Even the Kuni have been unable to discern whether the name dictates their destiny or vice versa, but there is no denying the power of a Nezumi name. They have determined that even those who have the same name, may have different destinies. For example, Oh-chik means "bringer of words," but Oh-chiks of the past have been known to be messengers, teachers, and Rememberers. Common or important "first names" and their closest meanings are:

Ropp	Scout of destiny
Matt	Large Warrior
Rik	Friend of All
Mack	Seeker of the Way
T'tok	Knowledge of Many
Tchick	Leader
Zorr	Bringer of War
Yoe	Fool
Oh-chik	Bringer of Words
Tmitr	Heart of Wood
S'ctt	Reluctant One
Ksoo'ma	Peace Bringer

Rise of position: When a Nezumi dies, his job is taken over by another. In this way, the Ratlings ensure their survival. When a

Rokugani	Ratling	Closest Translation
<i>Household Living</i>		
Food	Ch'da	
Meat	Ch'tem	
Nuts	Ch'pip	
House	F'chtr-foo	Here I live
Family	Dak	Those who share my food
Male	Op'chtch	One who brings food
Female	Ichtr'foo	One who brings life
Child	S'tch	Small one with no name
Clothing	Gr'ftk	
Tools	Beckr	
Poison	H-tach	
Trade	Ratch	
Hungry	Krt'chda	No food for me
Communicate	Trf	
<i>Descriptions</i>		
Brave	Chit	
Weak	Crag	
Wise	Set'tch	
Strong	Jak	
Friend	Rik	
Enemy	Yu-wer	
Clever	Rtch	
Big	M-at	
Small	S's	
Skill	Kan	
Sunlit/Blessed	A	
Bad	N-ki	
<i>Races</i>		
Human	Krtichik	Those-with-no-hair
Naga	Skurtrfoo	Large-snakes-of-death
Goblins	Tutkwauwer	Ugly-smelly-enemies-of-Nezumi
Ratlings	Chi'ch-tch	Brave-warriors-who-remember
Oni	Mat'tch'tr	Big-scary-spirits
Spirit	Tr'tr-foo	Beings-of-once-life





Rokugani	Ratling	Closest Translation
<i>Human Tribes (Clans)</i>		
Crab	Tich'chik	Humans of the Wall
Unicorn	Jedd'chik	Humans with Horses
Crane	Chi'chik	Humans of Words and Beauty
Lion	Hert'chik	Ferocious Humans
Scorpion	Krt'chik	Invisible Humans
Phoenix*	Jakr'chik	Humans with power of Gods
Dragon*	Jakr'chik	Humans with power of Gods
<p>*Most Nezumi don't acknowledge a difference between the Phoenix and the Dragon due to their close proximity and heavy use of magic.</p>		
<i>Emotions</i>		
Happiness	Tcha	
Sadness	K-m	
Love	Kn'noo	
Anger	Ir'ch	
Excitement	Re''	
Fright	-Tep-	
<i>Measure</i>		
Near	Kt	
Far	Tk	
More	Per	
Less	Rep	
Here	F'ch	
There	Tfch	
Great	lk	
<i>Numbers†</i>		
0	Krt	
1	Ich	
2	Nni	
3	Sin	
4	Ashi	
5	G'o	
6	Rochu	
7	S'chi	
8	H'ch.	
9	Ku	
10	Chu	
<p>† All numbers were created in order to mimic Rokugani, hence their similarity to their Rokugani counterparts.</p>		

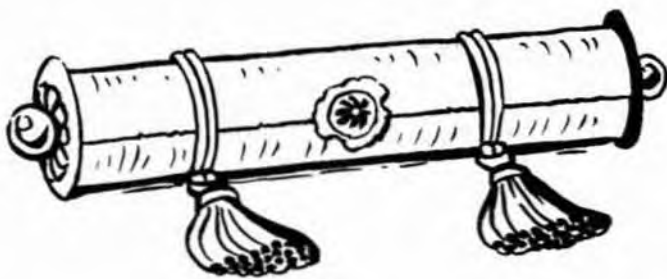
<i>Time</i>		
Night	Fatch-tek	
Day	A'fatch-tek	A sunlit night
Today	Fatch-tek	Night
Tomorrow	M'atch-tek	Path-to-the-next-night
Yesterday	K'thach	Walk against the moon
Rokugani Ratling Closest Translation		
<i>General</i>		
Sleep	A'lun	
Dream	I'thich	
You	Grt	
Me/Name	Mrt	
Yes	Trk	
No	Krt	
Run	Kufl	
Danger	Drsnitsch	Pain is present
Hurt/Pain	Tsch	
Life/Live	Tr-foo	Act of life
Death	M'atch-tek	
Niche	T'ach-cht	One's Place in the World
School	Sh'ch	Teacher is here
Steel	Pep'tr	
Kill	M'krft	Path to death
<i>Nature</i>		
Earth	Er'c	
Fire/Hot	Fitch	
Air	Romit	
Water	Flur	
Forest/Wood	Ep'tr	
Snow/Cold	Se-tr	
Shadowlands/Evil	D'gr	
<i>Important Phrases</i>		
My name is*	Mrt	Me
Hello	Grfit	
Goodbye	Tifrg	
Please†	K'tsai	
Thank you†	Agato	
<p>* This simple phrase encompasses all that a Nezumi is, and should not be taken lightly.</p> <p>† Like the numbers, these words were created in order to mimic Rokugani, hence their similarity to their Rokugani counterparts.</p>		



Nezumi takes over a new position, he or she may be given a Second Name that includes their profession. Realize that although this is part of their name, it is only said when giving respect. Those who achieve high Name (4 or higher) are referred to by their full name in all situations. Nezumi characters should use a second name in the same way that samurai characters would use "-sama" when addressing someone of higher status. Common titles and their translations are:

Guide	Uk
Warrior	Ch
Shaman	Kir
Teacher	Sh'n
General	Tek
Chieftain	Chuk
Scout	Tek
Adventurer	Trr'trr
Rememberer	Tch'tch
Pack Leader	Chek
Thief	Ithith
Artist	D'n

Ascension: Only one in a thousand are ever given the honor of the Ascension. When a Nezumi has achieved a greatness unsurpassed by all others, they are given the honor of adding an "A" to their name, adding Sunlit to their name. The Nametakers of the Tribes gather to bestow the title upon the worthy Nezumi and it is considered the highest honor that a Ratling can receive. It should also be noted that one human, Yasuki Garou, known to the Nezumi as Oh-riktch (Human who brings Name and Friendship to Nezumi) has achieved 4.5 in Name and is being considered for Ascension. He would be the first non-Ratling in history to receive such an honor. If a character wishes to add this title to their name, they must have at least a 4.5 in Name and have performed a feat worthy of the honor (GM's discretion).



Mach'cath

("Important Places To Know of
When the Lean Time Comes")

Nezumi Haunts Throughout Rokugan

Despite being scattered throughout Rokugan, not to mention their highly nomadic lifestyle, Nezumi tribes occasionally discover a site with such deep meaning and significance to their outlook on life that it becomes a focal point of their belief system regardless of the remoteness of its location. Some places are chosen because of their perceived spiritual significance, while others become sacred due to the role they played in the tribe's history. Still others are believed to be a holdover from the Before Time and thus are considered the holiest of all such places.

While these places are considered sacrosanct to the Nezumi, they remain an eminently practical race. They will fight to defend such sites, but if the cause is lost, they will quickly abandon them. The notion of dying to protect a location is entirely alien to the Ratling mind-set.

Big-Green-Rock

A massive lump of jade that rests near the edge of Heaven's Grave, the Big-Green-Rock has become a major philosophical point in the Nezumi view of the world. Over the centuries, the Rememberers who journey to Heaven's Grave on their sacred pilgrimages have noticed the pure and uncorrupted status of the Rock. These tales have been handed down from teacher to student for untold generations, and the Rememberers are very much aware that the Rock has not changed over all this time.

Through the tales of the Rememberers and the interpretations of the shamans, the Nezumi have come to believe that their fate is linked to the Big-Green-Rock. Like the Rock, they have continued to exist despite the horrors that have overtaken their lands. Like the Rock, they have resisted the corrupting influence of the things



within Heaven's Grave. Like the Rock, they believe, they too will outlast the current status of the Shadowlands and live to see it return to its past beauty. So long as the Rock exists, the Nezumi will adapt, overcome, and survive. However, some Ratlings wonder what will become of their race if the Big-Green-Rock falls to the darkened touch of the Grave.

Ch'tppu'kich

The location of the Grasping Paw's tribal warren is a carefully guarded secret. This is the central point from which the tribe sends its scavenging parties out into the lands of the Crab and Falcon clans, and even into the territories of other tribes. The enormous treasure trove of items gathered by the Grasping Paw scavengers is kept in a cavern beneath the warren proper.

The warren is located in the caverns at the base of the Twilight Mountains where the range meets the Plain above Evil. Although the elders of a few other tribes may be aware of its general location, the vast majority of non-Grasping Paw Nezumi are completely unaware of its existence. This is the primary means of the tribe's survival, as there are those in the Crab and Falcon Clans who would gladly hunt down the "thieves" who frequent their lands.

Driving-Out-Darkness Rock

Sacred only to the Crooked Tail, most Nezumi tribes do not even realize this location exists. A massive outcropping of natural crystal formed from some subterranean volcanic event, the Drawing-Out-Darkness Rock is the holiest site in existence so far as the Crooked Tail tribe is concerned. The tribe's founder, a legendary shaman, discovered this place as a young wanderer. A tiny crystal taken as a trinket would save the shaman's life years later. In gratitude, the shaman led his newly formed tribe to the outcropping in the belief that it would protect them from evil in the same way.

The Driving-Out-Darkness Rock serves as one of the distinctive landmarks that separate the desolate piece of the Shadowlands called the Plain above Evil from the more heavily populated regions. The jagged edges of the outcropping ensure that few Shadowlands denizens approach it, as many are susceptible to the elemental purity of crystal. The Crooked Tail tribe allows only a small portion of these points to be harvested, as doing so in large amounts would make the Rock more vulnerable to desecration by the tribe's foes. The small crystal sections that are taken are almost universally used to adorn weaponry or to the fashion simple crystal necklaces that all the Crooked Tail wear.

The Great Tree of Big-Big Forest

Just inside the southern edge of Shinomen Mori is an ancient, gnarled tree with a trunk as wide as three of the largest Hida

warriors standing with their arms spread open. Those who look closely will see that part of the great tree's surface is covered in a bizarre series of gnawed markings. Nezumi immediately recognize this tree as the record of the entire history of the Tattered Ear tribe, from their arrival in the Shinomen forest the first time nearly eight centuries ago to their recent battles against the awakened Naga. Obviously much larger than a Rememberer's memory stick, this enormous tree keeps exquisitely detailed records, including many names, specific events and approximate dates. Periods of conflict are particularly detailed, including the tragic War of the Lost Pups once waged with the Squeaky Eyeball tribe.

In the first decades of the Tattered Ear tribe's existence, short years after the dissolution of the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe, the chieftain led them north from the Shadowlands into the lands of the humans. There, they discovered a forest so vast that it dwarfed anything the Nezumi had known before. The discovery of the Great Tree was taken as a sign by the chieftain, and he declared that the Rememberers of the Tattered Ear would forever keep the tribe's history upon the surface of the ancient tree. Each time the tribe returns from its long migration pattern, the first task upon entering the Shinomen forest is always to update the tribal history upon the Great Tree.

Heaven's Grave

Less sacred than reviled, all Nezumi tribes remember the horror of Heaven's Grave nonetheless. This is the site where Heaven crashed into the earth over a thousand years ago, destroying the vast Nezumi empire and life as the Ratlings once knew it. Most Rememberers journey to this dark pit at least once during their lifetime to fully understand the enormity of what their race has lost.

Until their recent departure from the deep Shadowlands, the Crippled Bone tribe maintained very different rituals involving Heaven's Grave. Having lived near it for centuries and having seen the horrors that spew forth from it, the Crippled Bone views Heaven's Grave as the home of their enemy and a source of eternal hatred. Most of the tribe's warriors have traveled to the site at one point, not to gain insight into their past or gain an understanding of their loss, but rather to spit into the Grave and shriek their eternal hatred of the dark forces that dwell beyond it.

Hiruma Castle

Perhaps the single best-known landmark in the Shadowlands, the ruins of Hiruma Castle are a tragic reminder to the Nezumi of the enormity of the foe they face each day. They mourn the loss of the warren of their allies the Hiruma, although they cannot fully comprehend the ongoing sadness of their human allies. In the mind of the Ratling, such a defeat must be forgotten and one must move



on to new things. That the humans seem so incapable of forgetting their tragedy is a point of continuing confusion for the Nezumi.

Despite their sympathy toward their allies, the Nezumi do not shy away from the ruins. Their inherently practical nature demands that they make the best possible use of the remaining structure. The Grasping Paw tribe, who formerly held the territory near the ruins, actually lived there for lengthy periods on several occasions. While the Hiruma are unaware of this (and would doubtless be unhappy with the truth were it known), they do know that the scouts of the Grasping Paw make the finest guides when excursions to the castle are being planned. The other tribes have had less involvement with the ruins over the years, but hundreds of industrious scouts have scoured the building for useful weapons or tools in the years since its fall to the forces of the Maw.

Ik'tppu'Tutkwauwer ("Place of Great Goblins")

Known to the humans as Haikyo sano Kappa and to the goblins as Big Stink, this bizarre ruin is the one place in all of the Shadowlands where the Nezumi and goblin races will not attack each other on sight. In fact, it is not uncommon for the Ratlings who come to this place to engage in a very crude form of trade with the goblins, often exchanging food or supplies for shiny baubles and netsuke or vice versa. The Grasping Paw tribe in particular enjoys the opportunity for trade, although the distance between Big Stink

and their warren is great enough to prevent them from appearing with any real frequency.

The Kuni who occasionally travel to Big Stink often marvel at the strange, unspoken agreement between the Nezumi and the goblins within this ruined stronghold. Those few who have witnessed members of these two races bickering over the details of a trade gain new appreciation for the far-fetched legends of the Nezumi's empire and their alleged subjugation of the goblin race.

The Kaiu Tunnels

Although designed by the Kaiu engineers for use by the Crab Clan, the tunnels beneath the Great Carpenter Wall are often co-opted by the Nezumi for their own purposes. The Third Whisker tribe in particular makes extensive use of the tunnels, and many in the tribe live within them. The numerous deadly traps and snares set by the Kaiu and Hiruma to kill Shadowlands creatures that move through the tunnels were very quickly located and identified by the Nezumi using their pheromones. With their innate cunning and dexterity, it is very rare indeed that a Nezumi falls prey to these dangerous obstacles. Fortunately, the few Shadowlands creatures that find their way into the tunnels do not seem capable of detecting Nezumi pheromones and rarely avoid the traps.

For their part, the Kaiu are not certain what to make of the Nezumi who have all but claimed their tunnels for their own. It is a point of embarrassment for some engineers to realize that these creatures are more familiar with their tunnels than those who designed them. Others feel that the presence of the Nezumi within the tunnels only adds an additional level of defense through which the Shadowlands creatures must battle to breach the wall. Generally, the Crab are willing to ignore the Nezumi in the tunnels so long as they do not draw a great deal of attention to themselves.

M'atch-tek'Ksoo'ma ("The Death of the Peace-Bringer")

Following his forging of an alliance between the Crab Clan and the Nezumi tribes, Hiruma Kazuma lived a tragically short life, one that ended too early battling the evil of the Shadowlands. Upon his death, Kazuma requested that his ashes be spread upon the plains of battle where his Nezumi allies had helped the Crab defeat the treacherous *maho-tsukai* Kuni Kaigen. The clan honored his wishes as the descendants of the Nezumi who aided Kazuma looked on





reverently. Upon the completion of the ritual, a Nezumi shaman declared that the Transcendent Ksoo'ma gazed upon this place and his beloved allies with great favor. The tribes rejoiced as the baffled Crabs looked on.

Today, the site of this long-forgotten battle lies within the Shadowlands, many miles south of the Wall. If the Hiruma require the aid of the Nezumi and are unable to contact them through other means, they travel to this place and wait. Most tribes keep a scout in the area at all times, and quickly learn of the Hiruma's presence. In less than a day the tribe will contact the Hiruma to discuss the human's need for the Ratlings. Most often this is how the Crab arrange for scouts to travel deeper into the Shadowlands where humans dare not tread. Despite their gratitude to the Ksoo'ma, the tribes usually require some sort of compensation for these tasks, the type and amount of which varies depending upon the task requested by the humans.

The Meeting Place

Somewhere north and west of the ruins of Hiruma Castle, there is a clearing in the mangled forests of the Shadowlands. On this spot untold years ago, the first chieftains of the Nezumi tribes swore an oath to protect their followers and each other from the denizens of the Shadowlands until their great civilization could be restored, no matter how long the task took. And if ever a conflict arose between the Nezumi, they would come to this place and resolve it. No matter how bitter the disagreement, the Nezumi would stand together against the forces that destroyed their land.

Even today, centuries later, the Meeting Place is still considered a place of peace and cooperation among the Nezumi tribes. Elders from the different tribes meet here whenever there is a conflict between their people or when an outside force threatens their territory or livelihood. The War of the Lost Pups between the Squeaky Eyeball and the Tattered Ear tribes was resolved here, as was the dissolution of the Forever-Racing-Tomorrow tribe before that. Even the Crippled Bone tribe announced their arrival and claimed their territory before the other tribal elders in this spot not so long ago. Any tribal elder may request a meeting in the Meeting Place, and it is generally considered extremely rude and disrespectful not to respond to such a request.

The Sacred Memory

There is no spot more holy to the Nezumi race than the strange ruin they call the Sacred Memory. Despite all the Nezumi scouting of the Shadowlands, no trace of the vast civilization that they once controlled seems to exist – except one. Southwest of Big Stink, near the inlet of the Earthquake Fish Bay, a shattered and overgrown ruin lies hidden within the dense and twisted vegetation of the corrupted

Shadowlands plants. The ruins have not been disturbed for centuries, as the Nezumi who make pilgrimages here are afraid to touch anything lest the creatures of the Shadowlands realize what lies hidden from their view.

The stones of this ruin are covered in pictographs that depict Nezumi engaged in a number of bizarre rituals. Some seem to indicate dancing or fighting, while others clearly indicate some sort of worship rituals. The Rememberers believe that this ruin is all that remains of a shrine to some god or force once worshiped by the Nezumi race, but whose power and faith were lost the day Heaven fell from the sky. Ratling scholars have tried for decades to decipher the meaning of the pictographs, but unfortunately the pheromones that complete the message inscribed within the ruins have long since faded, making a complete translation impossible.



Dreams and the Transcendent

The Transcendent (Wikki'thich-hie)

The term "Transcendent" was coined by a Kuni scholar, who suggested the name as an alternative to the term used by his Third Whisker associate: "Those-Whose-Power-Shines-Brighter-Than-a-Thousand-Torches-and-Whose-Name-Stands-As-a-Great-Wall-Against-Tomorrow." The shaman was impressed by the sound of the Kuni's shorter name and agreed that it was a better translation. Ever since, the translation "Transcendent" has been used almost exclusively when referring to the Wikki'thich-hie.

The Transcendent are the only Nezumi who gain true immortality. These are shamans who have learned the greatest of the Name magics and other important Nezumi chosen by these shamans to join them in I'thich. They exist as beings of pure Name, and possess unimaginable power. They can see the past, present, and future simultaneously and understand all as part of a greater whole. They can reach into the minds of living Nezumi and influence their dreams. Their domain is *I'thich*, "The-Land-of-Once-and-Forever-Name," or the Realm of Dreams.



I'thich and Yume-do

Though Rokugani do not share the Nezumi's belief that dreams are the source of creation, they certainly believe in their power. Yume-do, the World of Dreams, is one of the many "spiritual realms" documented by the Kitsu, Isawa, and Toritaka. Rokugani believe that Yume-do is a realm that links to the mind of every mortal, and is inhabited by an unpredictable race of creatures called the baku. For the most part, Yume-do is a relatively harmless place that often escapes the notice of spirit-hunters and sodan-senzo.

It is unknown exactly how Yume-do relates to I'thich. Some Falcons who have experience with both baku and Nezumi claim that the two realms are the same. Some claim that the two realms were once one, but are now as separate from one another as Jigoku and Ningen-do. It is difficult to say with any certainty whether or not the two realms are indeed related. Dreams are by their nature uncertain.

Though there are many Transcendent (the Rememberers of the Squeaky Eyeball record seventy-eight and believe there may be more), all of these spirits have gathered in a single group that rises above distinctions of pack and tribe. Their goal is to guide the destiny of the entire Nezumi race, a destiny only a Transcendent can understand.

Unfortunately, the transformation into a Transcendent also carries many limitations. The Transcendent cannot affect the physical world. Their minds are altered by the touch of infinity. As they are capable of nearly anything, they often expect the same of mortals. They demand the impossible, and supply only a bare minimum of cryptic advice. For instance, if a Nezumi needs to cross a great mountain range and asks a Transcendent for help, a typical answer would be "Move the mountain."

The Transcendent believe that an occasional prominent failure strengthens the race as much as success, so a Nezumi who gains their aid never knows whether he is intended to become a great hero or a grisly example. One thing is certain – those who are touched by

the Transcendent are always remembered. Even so, many Nezumi fear these spirits and would rather avoid their attention than be "helped." Shamans frown upon those that spurn the Transcendent, but their magic grants them a better understanding of these spirits than most.

Communicating With the Transcendent

The Transcendent if are difficult to find when they do not wish to be found. They dwell only in dreams, and have mastered the power of concealing themselves within that realm. Shamans are more adept at gaining their attention via the Importune Transcendent spell. This magic invites the Transcendent to answer questions, but they do so with the usual cryptic vacillation. If the shaman asks questions regarding matters of little importance, he can expect unhelpful (and occasionally rude) answers. If a shaman seeks something that could benefit the entire race, the Transcendent sometimes offer clearer advice.

To put it bluntly, the Transcendent don't like being bothered without good reason.

Occasionally, these spirits take the opportunity to ask a favor of an importuning shaman, planting the seeds of an important quest or requesting that the shaman guide a reluctant prophet. A shaman who ignores the requests of the Transcendent risks much. The Transcendent are the most powerful spirits of Name magic, and when entering into their realm a mere mortal shaman is at a distinct disadvantage. Though they have no power over the physical realm, they can give a Shaman terrible nightmares, shattering his sense of Name. A defiant shaman might find his Name lowered by a Rank or more, and could find his magic failing in a moment of crisis. Shamans can avoid this fate by avoiding the Transcendent, but by doing so a shaman eliminates all chance of becoming a Transcendent himself.

Occasionally, a Transcendent selects a Nezumi to be its mouthpiece. These Nezumi become prophets, and are visited in their dreams with visions of the future and the past. These dreams are often terrifying, occasionally maddening. Most prophets can barely understand what the Transcendent are trying to tell them, and only carry out the spirits' wishes so that the terrible dreams will stop.

The rare Nezumi who is neither shaman nor prophet and wishes to gain the attention of the Transcendent has no choice but enter I'thich, a difficult task for those without magic.

I'thich (The-Land-of-Once-and-Forever-Name)

To the Nezumi, dreams are the source of everything that is, and the place where that which is no more returns. There is no time in the Realm of Dreams as we recognize it. The past, present, and future exist in equal measure. It is world of pure potential, where the



raw power of thought rules supreme. Dreams are not merely strong in Name, they *are* Name. Literally anything can be accomplished in I'thich, The-Land-of-Once-and-Forever-Name.

When a Nezumi dies, it is said that his spirit returns to I'thich and is lost forever, his spirit returning to the stuff of dreams. The Nezumi also believe that when the body is at rest, the mind is closest to death. Thus, a sleeper can see into the world of I'thich. Those who make the best of their time in the world of dreams stand to learn quite a bit, but remaining aware while dreaming requires a great deal of mental discipline. The slightest lapse in concentration causes the mind to spin a web of illusion, absorbing the dreamer in his own meaningless fears and desires.

Shamans are the acknowledged experts at navigating I'thich. Some spells allow a shaman to pierce the veil of I'thich, and even take others along. The Rememberers possess a less pronounced mastery of dreams, though a few of them are capable of entering by using Memory Sticks connected to tales of past dreams. Prophets enter I'thich, but never voluntarily. A prophet's wanderings in the Realm of Dreams are always due to the meddling of the Transcendent.

Traveling through I'thich

Those who visit I'thich purposefully find it startlingly similar to the real world. I'thich sculpts its landscape from the past, present, and future of its visitors. Certain elements are not parts of any time period, but are things that *could be or might have* been. The sky is often filled with strange and shimmering colors, and animals dwell there that have never existed, or no longer exist. A Nezumi wandering I'thich may find himself in the warren where he dwelled as a pup, except that the warren and everything inside is twice as big as it should be (because it looked that way when he was smaller).

Dangers of I'thich

Though the world of I'thich is not truly "real," things work the same way there as they do in the real world. A Ratling who gets stabbed with a sword feels pain; a Ratling who catches on fire burns. I'thich is constructed of bits of the future, so anything that happens

in the Realm of Dreams has a good chance of happening in the real world as well.

For example, consider a Nezumi bitten on the paw by some strange monster in I'thich. This does not mean that the exact same thing will happen in the waking world. However, it is likely that the same Nezumi will be cut on the paw by a samurai's katana several days later, closely resembling his dream wound. Acting in a careful manner, or avoiding anything remotely related to that which hurt you in the Realm of Dreams sometimes allows one to avoid this fate, but just as often this makes matters worse. If the Nezumi in the above example avoids combat, for example, he may trip and injure his paw even more badly while running away.

Those who die in the Realm of Dreams immediately awaken, and face a terrible fate when they return to the waking world. Death in I'thich is *never* an accident, but always a portent of doom. Those who die in I'thich seldom live more than a year before meeting a grisly demise in the real world. Those who try to avoid their fate only meet it even more swiftly. Only those who turn and meet their fates have the slightest chance of survival. These individuals are said to be "*karm'atch-teK*" ("chasing tomorrow"). Other Nezumi tend to avoid these doomed individuals for fear of sharing their fate.





Why Visit I'thich?

If I'thich is so dangerous, why would anyone want to go there? Some enter I'thich seeking guidance, a vision of their future, or perhaps a meeting with the Transcendent. Some enter seeking to discover the past. The most highly sought region of I'thich is the Before Time. The lands the Nezumi once ruled are now gone, so logically they must exist somewhere in dreams. Some shamans and Rememberers have spent their entire lives searching the Realm of Dreams for some sign of the great lost cities, but no one has found them yet.

Visitors in I'thich occasionally encounter other dreamers, as well. Due to the strange nature of time, some of these dreamers are long dead. Others have not yet been born. On rare occasions, Nezumi visiting I'thich have encountered themselves.

It is possible to enter the dreams of a sleeper through I'thich. Any self-aware visitor (i.e. someone who entered through magic, prophecy, or use of a Memory Stick) can attempt to find the dreams of a specific person. A shaman can find and enter the dreams of any creature of whom he knows the True Name after a few minutes of searching. The shaman and his party simply walk about for a while, turn a corner, and there they are. Anyone else who attempts to find a specific dreamer must travel through the I'thich for an hour and make a Meditation/Awareness roll vs. a TN of 50. If the subject is known very well to the seeker, the TN is merely 25. The roll can be attempted again once per hour.

Normal sleepers who are not self-aware are not vulnerable to the dangers of I'thich. A sleeper who dies in I'thich will not doom himself in the real world, and sustains no injuries to match those he





takes when dreaming. A self-aware visitor in another's dreams, however, could find himself in terrible danger, as the dreams of a sleeper can be wild and chaotic.

Tales of the Nezumi

"What you don't know, samurai, is everything. Big-land goes wider than you think. The dirt path not end at the Dark-dark-lands of Oni. It goes through, to water, to high-high mountains, to low-deep valleys. Golden-furless men, houses that fly, burrows of wine-and-water, all await. You know not them, but we have. Let me tell the tales..."

– Ropp'tch'tch, Rememberer of the Squeaky Eyeball Tribe

The travelers of the Nezumi, both of the Squeaky Eyeball and the more adventurous Tattered Ear tribe, have seen any lands that are unknown to the modern samurai. Able to walk through the Shadowlands without risking Taint or raising the interest of the more dangerous denizens, only the Nezumi know the stories of the lands to the farthest south. However, most Rokugani feel their tales are exaggerated at best, and heretical at worst. Few samurai will bother to listen to the chattering of an 'uneducated Ratling.'

The Ivory Kingdoms

"Chirr-uk big-rat walk far, walk long, keep his tail hidden. Find he the tables of gold-gold-blood, and the stick-thin walk-under-blankets. Run he, Chirr-uk, and come back with life... and tale-tale of blood and fear."

– Tale of Chirr-uk and the Blanket-men

One of the more unusual stories of wandering Ratlings is told of the Tattered Ear chieftain, Chirr-uk. The lands of the Tattered Ear were plagued with drought and Oni wanderers one year, and a number of the warriors of the tribe traveled far and wide across Rokugan, seeking a safer place to build their burrows. Chirr-uk,

braver than most and occasionally clever, decided that because the Oni were wandering through his homeland, that meant it must be safe to journey through theirs – after all, the Oni were somewhere else! He and three of his best warriors went south, beyond the Black Finger River and the twisted moors of Fu Leng. According to the tale, they were gone nearly an entire turn of seasons, and in the end only Chirr-uk returned.

When he returned, Chirr-uk was not the Ratling he had been when he left. Skittish, scarred and forgetful, the Tattered Ear tribe believed that some great evil had gotten under his fur. He told a story that could hardly be believed. A translated excerpt from that tale follows.

Far distant, in the deepest southlands beyond the Edge of the World, there lies a great river and a distant shore. You can swim the river, but if you do, you will find only mountains – and no sand – to crawl upon when you reach the other side. Even south of that, where the tide carries you, there is at last a beach. The sand is like no other – black and smooth, it shines in the light of the sun like a samurai's blade. We stood on that beach, and walked to the tops of the cliffs nearby, searching for a new homeland for the tribe, when we saw Them.

They walked like sticks with blankets thrown over them, thin and cracking when they moved. Many – a tribe of them – stood around a great golden stone at the end of a long path through thick wet trees. We moved closer, to listen to the creatures and see if they were Nezumi or samurai. They were neither, but they were not Oni. We don't know what they were. They had two legs, but many arms under their blankets, and on their forehead shone a single red eye with no lid and no pupil, between their blinking black ones.

They chanted and the words sounded like spit through tree bark. They waved their hands, and golden knives, and the stone screamed like a female giving birth. We crept closer, but too close – the blanket-men captured us!

Now we saw the stone, and the scream came from underneath it. One by one, we were dropped into the dark hole by the blanket-men. Above us, their flapping arms shook like wings, and their bones creaked in the wind. There were women in the hole, human females, and they spoke to us in the same tongue. Then, something stinging was thrown down the hole upon us. It stung, and it burned, and Tutich'hk's face turned to mush. The women's flesh burned. We cowered beneath them, and the stinking, fiery water rained down to drown us as we heard the sound of the blanket-men's chants. I hid under the others, felt their leaking flesh upon me, and knew the stink of their death. Then, the light faded. When I awoke, it was night, and the chanting was gone.



Jewelry and Trophies

As a scavenger race, Nezumi often show off their prowess by wearing some of the things they have gained in their journeys. If something has no immediate use to a tribe it is usually put on a string or otherwise worn by the Ratling that found it, especially if it's shiny. The things a Nezumi could be wearing range from a necklace of koku to the ancestral standard of a great Rokugani family as a cloak. Remember, the emphasis is on trying to show-show how good a thief you are, so the shinier the better.

I climbed on the bodies of my companions, and with a mighty leap, I fled the hole.

I fled the black, filthy beach.

I fled through the water, back into the dark lands of the Oni, and I ran home.

There is no food there, and we will never return.

The Burning Sands

To the farthest west, impassable mountains blockade Rokugan from whatever lies beyond. The only means to get beyond this high barricade is to travel north, through Exile's Pass, or south, through the heart of the Shadowlands. The Ratlings say there is a third way, but it is so ridiculous that not even the most naive samurai would believe them. One of the Rememberers, Ropp'tch'tch, claims that she traveled to the other side of the mountain range not by going through the mountains, but by going over them, with the help of a shugenja from the Burning Sands. Again, this obviously mythical tale has been translated and truncated – in its original form, the story is over 23 hours long.

Over the hilltops, over the trees, over the stones and mountains lies a beach-without-water, a long sand plain where the ground changes features as swiftly as a snake changes its skin. Sometimes

bumpy, sometimes smooth, then a big wind comes and makes it new again.

Cities lie beyond this – cities of samurai not samurai, with round eyes like the moon, who wrap themselves in long towels of woven cloth. They all wear white there, the color of the gods, because they think a real god lives among them in the desert. They have tall pointed buildings there, to hold up the sky, because the sun has burned the land so badly that she must be pushed away.

The city there is made of burrows of mud and sand, with long strips of woven colors stretched between them. When it rains, the buildings melt and the people must huddle under these cloth strips for protection. There are few fires; fire is forbidden because it makes the sun jealous. People live outside the cities as well, and ride horses from puddle to puddle. When it rains, these puddles form, and they last until it rains again.

The men who live here wear the symbol of the Unicorn – but they do not look like Unicorn. They ride thin-footed ponies, and roll in the sand in order to bathe. The city is ruled by a Caleef, whom the horse-riders hate. They war upon each other over nothing more than handfuls of golden sand.

Perhaps they are not so different from the samurai at home, after all.

The Lost Tribe: Clawbiter

The legend of the Clawbiter tribe is considered by some to be nothing more than a parable of Nezumi history, an educational tale of punishment for bad judgment and of a mythical 'holy land' that will one day be granted to the wandering tribes. True or not, the Nezumi believe it, and all Rememberers learn the tale in order to tell it on the coldest autumn nights. It is a fearsome story, but in the end, those few Nezumi who survived are said to have gone to the 'place beyond,' the land of Good Dawns.

Still, the story is told around Ratling fires, so that the young kin can learn, and remember.

The Clawbiters' Tale

Deep in the Shadowlands, somewhere in the shifting mountains to the west, there is said to be a great Ratling city that once housed all the tribes of Nezumi. According to their tales, it was a paradise, filled with every imaginable luxury. When the Terrible Day came, the Nezumi fled their homeland, scattering to the winds and forming the primitive tribal culture that they have today.

However, one tribe refused to believe that their ancient city had been completely lost. The Clawbiters hid in the far western Shadowlands, and searched for anything that would lead them to that most elusive site: their lost home.



One year, long ago, the tribes had gathered for a convocation. Each tribe spoke of its great deeds, and the proud history of its people. They bragged about their warriors, told tales of their cleverness, and gathered to find mates and share, trade, and sell goods. During the ceremonies, Kichtai, chieftain of the Clawbiters, announced that his clan had found a secret pass beneath the high stone cliffs of the farthest south, near the heart of the Deep Shadowlands. When the Clawbiters left the conclave, they were going to head into the depths of the mountains, and discover the lost city.

Kichtai asked the other tribes to send their warriors along, but the other Nezumi called him a dreamer, and reminded him that the tales of the Good Dawn were nothing more than legends. "What we can see, we can kill-kill," he replied. "We will find-find the golden city, and you slow-tail-fear-children will not come to visit us in the land of the Good Dawn." In the end, three warriors of the Crippled Bone tribe agreed to travel with the Clawbiters; only those three, and no one else. When the gathering was over, the entire tribe of Clawbiters vanished into the deep Shadowlands. Kichtai was never heard from again.

Months later, two of the Crippled Bone returned, along with a single pregnant Clawbiter female. They told a horrible tale of a huge chasm and a dreadful Oni that lived within a shrouded city, crumbling and covered in shadows. The Clawbiters had ordered their women and children to remain behind, and gone ahead with the Crippled Bone. There was a fight, a great darkness, and the Crippled Bone fled. Their last sight of the Clawbiters was of red bursting open through Nezumi stomachs, and bones cracking from the pressure of unseen hands. They saw no enemy – only a whirling wind and scattered shadows, laughing at the screams of the terrified Ratlings.

The two warriors found each other outside the battlefield, and the stench of death was heavy through the mountains. Foulness misted the dark sky, and even the stone crevice through which they had crawled to get to the hidden valley was slick with blood. As they fled, panicked, through the secret corridor, the creature behind them gobbled up the slow and aged, feeding on women and children alike. The last three leapt out the hidden opening to the crevice. The two males pushed a heavy, flat boulder over the opening of the passage, and the female cast a sealing spell upon it so that the oni could not get out. When the creature found that it was trapped once more, it howled. Its rage shook the mountains and turned the sky red with blood and fire.

The tale of the golden city still lives within the Crippled Bone tribe, from the stories told by the two warriors who returned. Their tales were considered to be the feverish ramblings of plague-sick Nezumi, but they were written down by the Crippled Bone

Rememberer. They told wild tales of a glorious city, high stone burrows and of writing – stick writing – that had been carved into the stone of the cliffs that sheltered the City of the Good Dawn. Shortly after they found their way home to their tribe, the two died of their festering wounds. Their bodies were burned.

The rest of the Clawbiters are assumed to have been completely destroyed. The female, Chu'kai, and her litter were taken into the Crippled Bone. The Crippled Bone begged Chu'kai to tell them the way back to the city, and to show them the way to open the secret passage that led to the hidden valley. She only turned away.

Chu'kai never spoke again.

Kimyi'thochat ("Resourcefulness")

The entire Empire of Rokugan was built upon the same thing that rules it today – three feet of perfectly forged and maintained steel. Artisans all across the Emerald Empire strive for perfection in their art; the most elaborate painting or a simple haiku on rice paper can be the work of a lifetime, cherished forever. Even those things that are made for menial everyday use are crafted as if the weight of the world rested upon them.

It is no surprise, then, that the Empire views the Nezumi as barbaric and wasteful. If a Ratling has not stolen something he is using, chances are it is improvised or ugly in make. To a Nezumi, something is crafted well if it gets a job done; appearance matters little if at all.

Nezumi view the worth of material objects in a much different way from the Rokugani viewpoint. Something that is truly useful is something that can be crafted many different and simple ways in a pinch. If a Nezumi happens upon a samurai's sword, he will cherish and maintain it as best as he can. However, a Ratling will never become too attached to any item, knowing it could be swallowed up by Tomorrow. This attitude is why Nezumi sometimes come just short of shunning things that are durable and could last many Ratling lifetimes. Among the Nezumi, it is best to rely on a single tool or weapon as little as possible.



To possess a Rokugani-made item is a blessing and curse sometimes. Rokugani steel is far superior to anything the Ratlings are currently capable of making, and other Nezumi may grow jealous of someone who holds such a thing. The only thing that tends to prevent petty fighting over human things is the tribe mentality. Anything that a Nezumi owns belongs to his tribe. Great Ratling warlords and renowned scouts usually carry the best steel a tribe has scavenged. The guards of a tribe's Rememberer are often equally decorated, their charge giving them the status to wield well-crafted weapons such as yari. For these Nezumi, there is no reason to worry about carrying valued items. A Rememberer's guards and a tribe's general have proven their skill and cunning many times over.

Ratling-made items are not generally weak and easily broken, despite their obvious inferiority to human tools. On the average, most tribes simply don't have the resources or time to craft things comparable to a perfectly balanced no-dachi. The Tattered Ear Tribe are perhaps the only consistent exception to this rule – their creations are greatly respected by the other tribes.

Such relatively crude production does create quite a bit of shoddy workmanship. Whenever a Nezumi item is gained for any reason, there's a good chance it's just about to break or become otherwise useless. A good rule of thumb is to roll a die when the item is brought into the game. On a roll of 1 to 5, the item is of Poor quality. A roll of 6–9 means an Average quality item, and a roll of 10 notes a Nezumi item that is of Fine quality.



A Note about Quality

Long ago, Ratling civilization was the equal of what the humans have built today in Rokugan. Some Nezumi still know how to make truly fine tools and weapons, but simply lack the supplies to do so. Keep in mind that Ratlings do not make items the way they do because they are simple or stupid – they just don't have the resources even the poorest Minor Clan can claim.

The Nezumi culture's unique outlook on tools and weapons, combined with Ratling physiology, has spurred them to create quite a few items that are quite different than anything found in Rokugan.

Tail-claws

For many Nezumi, the tail is just another limb. Children learn at a young age how to use it to grasp things, and eventually come to be as coordinated with it as an arm. A Ratling's tail is a bit weaker than his other limbs, and it is unable to wield heavy or long weapons (like a sword). This tool, while not quite a weapon, compensates for that limitation. The tail-claws are usually attached about one-third of the tail's length away from the body, to avoid the claws dragging or throwing off a Nezumi's balance. Primarily this is used to assist a tail's grasp, or to catch on a limb and hang from it. A Ratling equipped with tail-claws rolls two extra unkept dice for any non-combat roll involving his tail. Claws can also serve as a crude weapon, rolling 3k2 for damage with no strength bonuses. A Ratling must be above its target to strike with this tool; this is usually accomplished by leaping. This means the attack may be performed during a Mochatchikkan Leap-Over attack.

Tach'ck (Poison bag)

This item is the epitome of Nezumi resourcefulness – a potentially deadly device crafted of nothing but cast-off and seemingly useless scraps of trash. The outside is loosely stitched out of small pieces of hide, held together by bent bits of metal or even sticks. The fragile nature of these things means they are usually carried close to the body in a bag of some kind. Inside are countless bits and scraps consisting of dirt, metal, bone, leaves, twigs, wood, and anything else the creator felt like stuffing in at the time. The use of the tach'ck is simple and effective; it is thrown into an opponent's face to confuse them long enough for the Ratling to escape. The effect is brief, as the bags are very small, so trying to take advantage of a tach'ck victim is hard indeed. Hitting someone with a tach'ck is an Athletics/Agility roll. The target gains no bonus for armor, but their TN to be hit is raised by 5, as the ball is relatively slow. Any attempt by the target (or anyone else) to swat the ball out of the air will probably be successful, detonating it anyway. Finally, the target may attempt to avoid the poison bag by making a Reflexes check with a TN of the thrower's roll. If the ball hits or explodes close to someone's face, he automatically loses his next action.

Song String

The chattering language Ratlings use to communicate is nearly impossible to understand, but sometimes it is better to use other means to talk. Because Nezumi ears are attuned to hearing high pitches better than Rokugani and many animals, they developed this



tool. The string itself is sinew, notched in such a manner that it emits a high-pitched whine when rubbed against a Nezumi tail. The sound is inaudible to humans, and can be heard effectively for two hundred feet, so this tool is best used when complete stealth is preferred. Only very basic concepts can be conveyed with the song string.

Teeth

Nezumi teeth are among the sharpest in creation. Ratlings can chew through anything, including steel, given enough time and determination. What makes them more of a menace to whatever stands in a Ratling's way is the fact they grow back at astonishing speed. A Nezumi who breaks his teeth can be back terrorizing wood and stone in scant weeks. Early after the Terrible Day, the Ratlings found a way to use this to their advantage. Many tools that require a sharp edge are fashioned simply by plucking out a Ratling's teeth and affixing them onto a weapon. Nezumi daggers, spiked clubs, arrows, axes, and many other things are made in this fashion. Something made with Nezumi teeth is generally considered a Poor quality version of whatever tool or weapon it is mimicking.

Bolo

Hit-and-run tactics aren't the only way the Nezumi know how to fight, but they are the way the Ratlings prefer to handle things. An enemy killed is always best, but Ratlings aspire just to get away with their lives. The Rememberers can't recall exactly who invented this device, but it is without a doubt the most cherished weapon in a Nezumi's arsenal. Much like the tach'ck, the bolo is made from odds and ends in the tribe's hoard; a length of sinew or strong vine about one foot long connecting two heavy fist-sized balls, made of rocks, bits of horn, bone, or anything that gives the bolo a good heft. The bolo has an effective range of 20'. For every extra 10' the bolo travels, it loses one unkept die on the attack roll. The target gets no armor bonus against the attack, which must always be made as a called shot (usually to the legs or arms). The bolo binds its target until another character takes one action to free the victim, or until the victim takes three actions to untie himself or makes a Strength check at a TN of 25 (GMs should feel free to raise or lower this TN as the situation dictates).

Stone Throwing Axe

Primarily used by the Green-Green-White tribe, these stone axes are crude and look as if they would be too heavy for the relatively weak Ratlings to use. However, the Green-Green-White tribe has learned to fashion them in such a way that the balance offsets the natural weight of the stone. Ratlings from other tribes rarely possess one of these axes, as they are made solely by those Ratlings that inhabit the Phoenix Mountains. As the Green-Green-White are such



Other Tools

Ratlings are not confined to the tools and weapons described in this book. The Nezumi can make pretty much any basic item that a Rokugani can possess. Yari, cups, kimono, paintbrushes, and other items are favored Ratling creations. These are generally treated as Poor to Average quality counterparts of their Rokugani versions.

isolationists, they never developed or heard of the other Nezumi's practice of using Ratling teeth as the sharp ends of weapons. These axes are perfectly balanced for throwing, giving an extra unkept die when used as a ranged weapon, causing 2k2 Wounds. The only ways to acquire a stone throwing axe would be to either kill a Green-Green-White Ratling, or to earn the great favor of a Green-Green-White chief – a practical impossibility.

Ogres and Trolls

Tribes that live in the Shadowlands face the never-ending threat from its other inhabitants. One goblin could be the equal of one or two Nezumi, a troll or ogre may take an entire pack to kill, and a wandering oni can destroy an entire tribe. Ratlings who survive encounters with Shadowlands denizens scavenge for spoils afterwards, so most tribes have a stockpile of bones and leather procured from the corpses of their enemies. Of these, ogre and troll remains are the most highly prized for their durability. Goblins are too thin-skinned and small-boned to be as much use, and it is a rare day indeed that a tribe can claim victory over a feared oni instead of running. Whenever possible, Nezumi leather is made out of ogre and troll hides, and the Ratlings fashion tools out of their bones. Nezumi warriors of great Name sometimes use an ogre or troll skull as a helmet-trophy.

Armor

Few Ratlings bother with proper armor, as it constricts their movement and works against their natural ability to squeeze into tight places. Generally, any armor worn by a Nezumi is taken from the Rokugani, either by theft or second-hand from animated corpses



and goblins. Some Nezumi tribes, like the Tattered Ear, wear human armor constantly into battle (especially against other Nezumi), but only then. Nezumi-crafted armor tends to be very simple: rows of bones stitched to ogre hide, for instance. As a rule of thumb, treat these as Poor quality light armor.

Tree resin

Sometimes, Nezumi must craft things that cannot be held together with a simple wrapping of sinew or vines. For such purposes, the Nezumi harvest tree resin as a simple glue. With this resin, Ratlings get use from trash and scraps that have been rendered completely useless to even them. The resin can be used to repair small breaks in wood and bone tools, and takes about ten to twelve hours to dry completely. The resin is not a complete fix, however – things repaired by it usually break again soon when the resin weakens.

Paint

Colors are important to Nezumi. They are a form of communication that Ratling and human alike can comprehend, and chieftains and shamans alike spend hours in ritualistic war-painting ceremonies to prepare for battle. Nezumi employ all manner of ways to create the pigments they use, from simple theft (paint stolen from the Crane and Unicorn lands are highly prized among the Ratlings) to basic mixing of things found in nature to create the stains. The war-paints crafted and carried by shamans are a special blend, demanding the most intricate ingredients and powerful magic to create. With these paints, Shamans can draw blessings down on other Ratlings like the immunity to fear, enhanced hearing, and others. Players and GMs are encouraged to create their own effects for such paints.



Example Warren

It is very rare for a Nezumi tribe to construct a permanent home. They are by nature territorial and nomadic creatures, prone to moving in somewhat regular migratory patterns according to the season. For such a capricious race to commit the time and effort to construct a permanent home, they require a strong sense of security and assurance that the food sources will be adequate and that enemies will be sparse.

Nezumi warrens tend to take the form of large mounds, in relatively remote or defensible locations. The Ratlings' prodigious ability to chew through virtually anything ensures that construction materials are in abundant supply, and their innate cunning means that few of the mounds are obvious in their appearance. One such warren known to the Crab Clan is described below.

Ch'tppu'kich

("Our Glorious-Sanctuary-and-Hiding-Place-of-the-Great-Shining-Hoard")

From the letters of Hiruma Kagemusha:

Brother,

I have seen the most amazing thing. The missions that I undertake in the Shadowlands are so often full of misery and horror. This most recent trip was no different, and yet I saw something that I thought I might perhaps never see.

I saw Ratlings save the life of a samurai.

We had been traveling near the southern reaches of the Twilight Mountains, far to the west of the Wall where the Shadowlands creatures rarely venture. It was a simple mapping mission to investigate reports that a landslide had created a new pass into the



Empire that the Dark Lord's minions might use. We had just located a landslide site when the ogre erupted from the brush.

We were caught totally unawares. Our folly disgraces the Crab and I will not rest until I have atoned for my failure.

The first of the Hida fell instantly, his skull crushed by an enormous stone axe. His body pinned the Kuni to the ground, preventing any hope of magical aid against this monstrous creature. The other two Hida leapt at the beast with a fury born of vengeance and hatred. They attacked without mercy, but the creature was simply too large to be taken down. I myself darted behind the creature, thinking to cut it down from the rear. But it was too cunning, and a backhand strike from its off-hand sent me sprawling.

The damnable creature snapped the neck of another of the bushi attacking it and seized the third in a vise-like grip. With a sinister look of glee, it turned to depart with the still-living samurai held in one of its gigantic hands, surely to be made a meal of later. Totally unconcerned with the rest of our party, it began to climb back to its mountainous lair, climbing over the enormous pile of rock that the landslide had deposited upon the valley floor.

Without warning, a great number of thin, primitive yari jutted out from the cracks between the rocks and pierced the ogre's body in a dozen places. Now it was the creature that had been taken off-guard. From the rock pile that we had mistaken for a landslide, at least a dozen Nezumi burst forth from hidden tunnels. They assaulted the ogre from every direction, hacking at his bulky frame from every direction and with every type of weapon imaginable.

Roaring in pain and anger, the ogre dropped its captive and lashed out at the Ratlings. But they were far too quick for the creature's clumsy strikes. While three of them dragged the samurai away, the rest dove in and out of combat in a blinding fury. Its frame covered in blood, the ogre disappeared back into the brush followed by a hunting party of Nezumi intent on its destruction.

The three Ratlings bore the unconscious samurai to the Kuni and me. While we tended to his wounds, they looked at us expectantly, glancing back and forth between the two fallen samurai and us. The bodies would have to be destroyed, and we could not carry their belongings back to the Wall. As a sign of our gratitude, I allowed the Nezumi to claim the fallen men's armor and gear, although I took care to return their daisho to their families.

I have traveled the Shadowlands for many years, but I have rarely paid attention to the comings and goings of the Nezumi. In truth I considered them little more than vermin. I see now how gravely I misjudged them. They can be great allies to the Crab in our great war, if only we can strengthen the bond between us.

I must try.

—Hiruma Nunori

Nestled inconspicuously against the southern edge of the Twilight Mountains, Ch'tppu'kich is the primary warren for the Grasping Paw tribe. It can accommodate nearly a hundred Nezumi, although it has been several years since the Grasping Paw could boast numbers of that size. Having a central home frees the tribe from the concerns of constant migration and the making and breaking of camp. With these concerns addressed, it makes it far easier for the Grasping Paw to concentrate upon the one goal that seems to permeate their tribe as a whole: thievery.

With the incredible foot speed of their race, the Grasping Paws are able to operate within nearly a fifty-mile radius of their warren, sometimes considerably farther for extended scavenging hunts. This places the Great Wall, several Crab villages, and a few lost structures of the Shadowlands within their reach. Anything that the Ratlings can find, scavenge or steal is taken back to the Glorious Sanctuary. If an immediate use can be found, the item is put into circulation among the tribe. For the dozens or even hundreds of items found each day for which there is no immediate use, a great chamber rests in the tunnels below the warren. The Grasping Paws refer to this enormous junk heap as "the Great Shining Hoard."

West and slightly north of Razor of the Dawn Castle, Ch'tppu'kich lies where the Twilight Mountains meet the Plain of Desperate Evil. This is a barren, empty area where the denizens of the Shadowlands rarely travel. If not for the amazing resiliency of the Nezumi digestive system and the Grasping Paw's infamous ability to scrounge or steal nearly anything, no tribe could survive living in such a desolate area.

The warren itself resembles nothing so much as a large pile of rocks that resulted from an avalanche or landslide of some sort. Resting against a cliff with a very steep grade, the warren rests upon an open stretch of ground with a semicircle of thick scrub brush growing some fifty or sixty feet from the rock pile itself. This brush was deliberately placed there by the Nezumi and serves to screen the warren from the eyes of most passers-by. It is extremely difficult to see the rock pile until you are very close to it.

The Outer Layer

The first layer of the warren is the rock pile itself. It actually is the result of a landslide, as nearly everyone who sees it guesses. The Grasping Paw has, over the years, carefully established a series of stable tunnels through the rocks. These tunnels allow them to dart quickly from one concealed opening to the next, jabbing at enemies with spears or other weapons. The enormous size of many of these boulders prevents attackers from being able to get at the Ratlings



defending the warren, which frustrates and eventually discourages many would-be invaders.

These defensive tunnels weave their way through the entire pile of rocks that makes up the first layer of Ch'tppu'kich. Just over a dozen Nezumi warriors are capable of using these tunnels at one time, presenting a very formidable defense. Several exits exist from these tunnels, all of them concealed. Most require Ratlings within the tunnels to roll away rocks that block any entrance and cannot be opened from outside by any creature smaller than an ogre or oni. Despite their honeycombed, haphazard layout, these tunnels all lead to a single destination: the cave within the cliff face that lies obscured by the rock pile.

The Warren Proper

Although the cave in which Ch'tppu'kich is constructed was once a natural rock formation, the winding tunnels carved by the Nezumi over the years and the clogging of these same tunnels with an endless variety of refuse ensures that it bears little resemblance to its original state. The initial tunnel slopes downward to a large cavern that serves as the tribe's communal room. From here dozens of smaller tunnels lead off into small alcoves that serve as "mounds" for individual Ratling family units.

The individual "mounds" vary considerably in size, although enough have been hollowed out over the years that there is always one of appropriate size to accommodate any new arrivals. These chambers frequently have a sort of privacy screen constructed from cast off bits of wood and debris. These also serve as food if the warren experiences a particularly lean time, and it is not uncommon to find young Ratlings pulling pieces of wood off and gnawing on them.

The Shining Hoard

There is a second cavern within the warren, larger even than the tribe's communal area. A single tunnel that leads straight down from a corner of the communal room is the only means of entry to this chamber. Adult Ratlings are the only beings who are physically capable of descending this tunnel, as it requires considerable strength and dexterity. A single Ratling sentry is always on duty at the tunnel entrance to prevent young Ratlings from falling down the tunnel to their death.

The chamber beneath the warren contains what might be the largest hoard in the history of the Nezumi race. The Grasping Paw tribe are the unparalleled masters of thievery, and the many items they make off with that are not immediately used are placed within this mammoth chamber for safe-keeping until such time as a proper use can be found. The variety of objects found in this pile is simply staggering, as is the sheer size of the pile itself. Broken weapons,

cast-out furniture, torn clothing, various shiny netsuke, pieces of samurai armor, and, inexplicably, the rudder of a Mantis clan kobune are among the pieces of "treasure" that can be found within the heap.

History

The history of the Glorious Sanctuary (as it is abbreviated by most of the Grasping Paw tribe) is irrevocably tied to the legend of one of the tribe's greatest heroes, the scavenger Nezumi named Sktch. The tales of great deeds attributed to Sktch are innumerable. Some of them closely resemble deeds performed by heroes of other tribes, while others are unique unto the Grasping Paw. Although many of the Hiruma who have ties to the tribe insist that the tales must be apocryphal, the Ratlings insist that Sktch was a member of their tribe mere generations ago and was responsible for the founding of the Glorious Sanctuary.

Some decades ago, the Grasping Paw tribe did not have a regular home. They moved about constantly, much in the fashion of other tribes today. Already renowned for their penchant for thievery, the tribe had treasure stores secreted in dozens of hideouts throughout the Shadowlands. Unfortunately, these hideaways were rarely secure, and the tribe was frequently burglarized by goblins or other malicious creatures. This caused a great deal of distress to the chieftain of the Grasping Paw. As he was unable to come up with a solution himself, he ordered his scouts to find a better hiding place.

One of the scouts who answered the chieftain's call was the young scavenger Sktch. Despite his relative youth, Sktch had already developed quite a reputation among his tribe for his bold deeds and cunning nature. Determined to succeed in his mission, Sktch traveled northwest toward a desolate section of the Twilight Mountains. He had encountered cave-dwelling denizens of the Shadowlands before, and had often wondered if a cave might make a good home for Ratlings.

Within a few days, Sktch had located a sizable cave in the mountains. Unfortunately, a sizable force of goblins was occupying this particular cave. Never one to worry about small details, Sktch settled into a hidden spot and watched the goblins for several days. He noticed that every day before the "war party" left the cave they traveled a short distance to a large pool of foul-smelling mud. Here, the goblin warriors would engage in some sort of bizarre, dancing ritual that appeared to be some sort of prayer.

Very soon, Sktch decided upon a plan. One morning when the war party began their ritual, Sktch emerged from the bushes across the bog from the goblins. He had smeared himself with mud and brush and looked like nothing so much as some sort of bizarre nature spirit. Moaning and flailing about, he cavorted on the opposite bank for a few moments before plunging headfirst into the



mud pool. There, he clung near the bottom of the pool while breathing through a long reed he had placed for just such an occasion.

Enraptured by the sight, the goblins stood amazed for several seconds before shrieking and diving headfirst into the pool as well. They stomped about in the shallow portion of the pool for some time before running back to the cave to inform the others. Sktch crawled from the pool into the shadows while they were gone. For a week, this ritual was repeated every morning. Sktch would emerge in disguise and plunge into the noxious mud along with the goblins, always careful to stick to the deeper portions of the bog to avoid detection. Eventually, the entire goblin tribe was participating.

Finally, Sktch emerged one morning before the entire tribe. On this specific occasion, he had smeared himself with mud from elsewhere. The goblins gleefully plunged into the bog while Sktch stood watching. Once the entire tribe was immersed in the foul stuff, he casually tossed a torch into the mix.

Having thus taken care of the former occupants, Sktch led the Grasping Paw tribe to the enormous cave the goblins had been using. Not only was the cave sufficient to meet the tribe's needs, they also gained a substantial quantity of "treasure" taken from the remnants of the goblins' lair. Although already a popular member of the tribe, this incident catapulted Sktch to the rank of a hero, a role he fulfilled for many years before finally becoming the chieftain of the tribe.

The collapsed entrance to the warren's cavern was added to the tribe's defenses several years after they actually moved into the cave. While it is uncommon for Shadowlands beasts to dwell for long in the Plains above Evil, it is not unheard of. An unfortunate incident wherein an ogre bandit wandered into the cave seeking shelter from a storm resulted in the tribe's decision to conceal their lair from the outside. Their efforts have been very successful, and the combination of the warren's remote location and its camouflage have kept the Glorious Sanctuary concealed from the outside world for nearly half a century.

There are a few among the Hiruma family of the Crab who are aware of the Glorious Sanctuary's existence. This was a point of contention among the Grasping Paw tribe for quite some time, but in the end it was decided that the humans would be far better allies than enemies, so some small degree of trust was needed. To that end, the warren's sentries aided a small Crab scouting party when they were beset by an ogre on the warren's doorstep some years ago. This has contributed greatly to an amicable relationship between the two, and if the Crab realize that the Grasping Paw are responsible for some of the petty theft that occurs near the warren, they have never made an issue of it.

Finding the Glorious Sanctuary

Finding Ch'tppu'kich is extraordinarily difficult, even if one knows where it is. The Grasping Paw tribe has taken enormous care to disguise the warren from virtually every angle. To put it simply, the place just looks like another pile of rocks. Those who find themselves near the warren's entrance may notice something is unusual, but only after succeeding on a raw Perception test with a TN of 25.

Locating the warren and gaining entry are two very different tasks. The Nezumi engineers (such as they are) have placed the tunnel openings in places where it is virtually impossible to gain entry without aid from someone within the tunnel. Needless to say, the Ratling sentries are highly unlikely to aid anyone they don't know in entering. To find the hidden tunnels requires an Investigation/Perception roll with a TN of 20. Moving the rocks aside to gain entry without aid requires a raw Strength roll of 25 or more.

Grasping Paw Sentries

Needless to say, the Glorious Sanctuary is amply guarded by the Grasping Paw tribe. No less than a dozen warriors are on sentry duty at any one point, with up to twice that number if the tribe is expecting someone to be in the area of the warren. While the Grasping Paw tribe is hardly renowned for its warriors, these Nezumi are fighting to defend their home as well as their perceived treasure. They will fight to the death unless the tribe has escaped, in which case they will escape to rejoin them.

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Fire: 3

Air: 2

Void: 2

Mi'letch-k'thatch/Rank: Ratling Scrounger 1-3

Niche: 1.5

Name: 2.5

Advanced Nezumi Abilities: Black Vision, Softbones

Advantages: Higher Purpose (protect warren), Way of the Land

Disadvantages: None

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 2, Climbing 3, Scrounging 2, Stealth 4, Yarijutsu 4

Outer Layer

Living Spaces

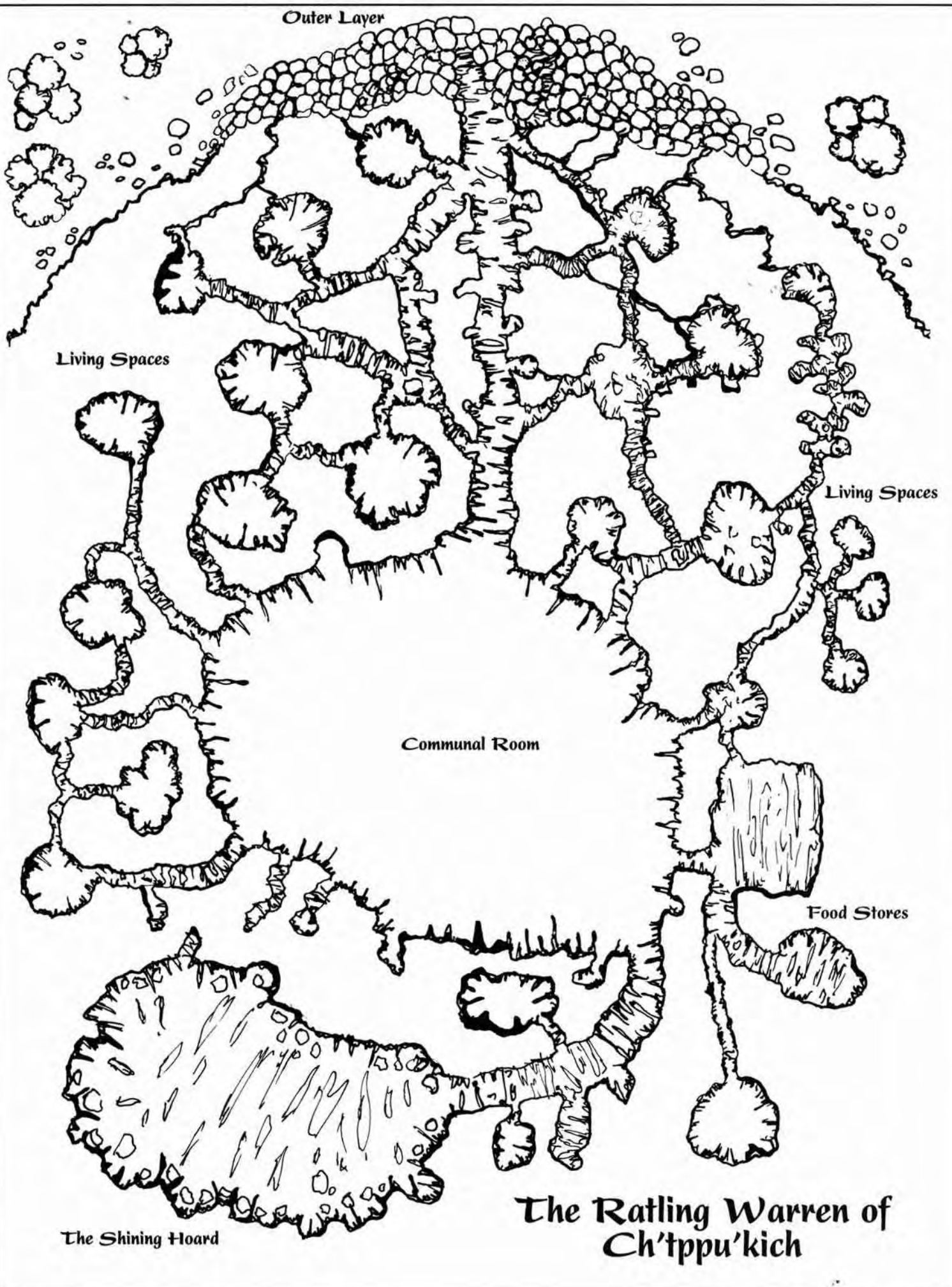
Living Spaces

Communal Room

Food Stores

The Shining Hoard

The Ratling Warren of
Ch'tppu'kich



Legend of the Five Rings™

The Way of the Ratling

They live in the shadows of the Kaiu Wall, in the deep forests of the Shinomen, and in the blasted wastes of the Shadowlands themselves.

The people of Rokugan consider them animals, scavengers, little better than the servants of Fu Leng themselves.

To many, the beasts known as Ratlings are simply vermin.

A handful know better. These creatures are the Nezumi, a once-proud race struggling the best it can to survive.

At the side of their allies the Crab, the Nezumi fight a quiet war against the Tainted beasts that have stolen their lands. Perhaps they cannot win.

But they will never stop fighting.

- *Way of the Ratling* contains new and updated rules for creating Nezumi player characters, including Skills, Advantages, Disadvantages, and all the information you need to create your own Ratling Tribes.
- The proud history of the Nezumi, from their once-great empire of the Before time, through the Terrible Day and the struggle to survive afterward.
- Ratling Magic: the strange power of the Nezumi shamans, who through their mastery of the power of names can twist identity – or even take it away.
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