ODDS

The Tabletop Roleplaying E-Magazine

Issue 1 – October 2008

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Front Cover: *The fight of the City of Satan (Babylon) against the City of God (Syon). From Aurelius Augustinaus' De Trinitate. De Civitate Dei, printed by Johann Amerbach, Basle, 1489.*

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EDITORIAL

It *may* look to the discerning reader that this e-magazine has been simply laid out on Microsoft Word, a few images have been copied in, the font has been messed about with and it's all been converted to an Adobe PDF.

Good spot.

ODDS is an e-magazine set up for free. The format is basic for three reasons - it's simple, so that means faster downloads and clarity; it means I can get issues out regularly and not have to rely on all the usual technical things other magazines rely on; and I'm not that clever with computers so I can just type and print.

I decided to set up ODDS because I've got lots and lots of roleplaying material I've designed and written over the last few years that are sitting on my computer doing nothing. It's either been a long time since it was published, on paper or on other websites, or it's material that I never sent off or forgot about. That, to me, is a shame, so I've decided to collect it all together and release it on a regular basis, hopefully monthly. I've got enough material for perhaps 24 issues and extras. ODDS will also act as a companion publication to the games I'll be releasing through FARSIGHT GAMES, primarily the SKETCH system games. There's more about that at my website:

www.farsightgames.moonfruit.com

How does this aid a regular roleplayer such as you? Well, a lot of my articles are either observations or tips about the roleplaying hobby in general, from spotting problem GMs and players, to hints on how to create worlds and improve the gaming atmosphere. Most of my work appeared in two books I wrote, '*The Book of Roleplaying Hints, Tips and Ideas*' and the sequel, '*Even More Roleplaying Hints, Tips and Ideas*'. There's no doubt that much of what I write about has already been covered – blimey, the hobby has been around for more than thirty years so I'd be very surprised if all the angles of all subject matters had been addressed - but it's always good to get other opinions and viewpoints.

Not only am I giving my work a home, I also want to offer your work one, too. I'm sure that there are other gamers out there who also have lots of work they never got out to the public, so if you have any finished work that you'd like to see put out there – articles, adventures or even artwork – then send it to me and I'll stick it in the magazine. I can't pay you, of course, but you'll retain all the rights of your work and it'll be out there for others to read and perhaps even get you noticed.

So, please enjoy this first issue of ODDS magazine and don't hesitate to email me if you have any questions, queries or stuff for me to use.

Keep on rollin',

JONATHAN HICKS
Editor
Director of FARSIGHT GAMES

AN INTRODUCTION TO FARSIGHT GAMES

FARSIGHT GAMES, home of the SKETCH roleplaying system and your source for short, simple and speedy Roleplaying Games.

FARSIGHT GAMES was originally set up by Jonathan Hicks in 2007 to produce a science fiction roleplaying game called SPIRIT. It was abandoned early 2008 as the game and system were uncompleted and the market simply was not there to support another game system.

In June 2008 it became apparent there was still a lot of unused material in Jonathan's archives, and he set about sorting it all out. In this material he discovered three complete and unused roleplaying systems, two complete settings, the seeds of eight other settings, and copious notes on rules, game types and designs. It was decided that this material would get some use, but there simply was not enough hours in the day or market demand to create and distribute complete games, and support them later on with supplements and adventures.

So the idea came to mind that the games should be made simple, that they should be short and easy to run. Prospective players should be able to download, print off and read and understand the rules within an hour. Not only that, the games should be cheap.

There has been an increasing trend recently in one-shot gaming, the desire to run a simple, one-off game so that minimal effort can be put into creation, a game is needed at a moment's notice or there's a lull between major campaigns. This is where these games come in - initially, they can be downloaded, printed off, learned and be ready to run in an hour. Later adventures can be downloaded, printed off and ready to go in minutes.

So, it was decided that FARSIGHT GAMES should be restarted as a small part-time company, and that it should create and make available fast, easy games for the new gamer and the experienced one, and not only that but get them involved creating their own simple adventures and settings.

SKETCH games are designed for one-off, single night adventures, for when gaming groups are taking a break between campaigns, or if a few players want to do a fast off-the-cuff adventure with no intention of getting involved in a long campaign. As such, this game does not have a detailed experience system, although there is room to improve PCs if the group wishes to do so. Of course, the rules can be used for long campaigns if you really want, but the simplicity of the rules and character creation is such that a game can be set up in minutes. The rules are simple and easy to use, requiring only the use of two six-sided dice for all aspects of the game.

In the future there will be small adventures designed for the game, each one a tiny scenario that can be downloaded in seconds, printed off, and used for a single night's gaming. We're aiming to get the adventures detailed in a simple 3-4 pages.

FARSIGHT GAMES will be releasing the SKETCH system, a game designed to be adapted to any genre and setting. The aim is simple:

1. Keep the rules down to about 10 pages so that the system can be easily replicated and adapted to different

settings and genres. This way, when a new setting is released the entire ruleset can be reproduced with all the changes and adaptations for that setting contained within.

2. Allow for fast downloads, so that players can get what they need at a moment's notice and can print it off in minutes.

3. MAKE IT CHEAP! – SKETCH games will be designed to be short and sweet, and this means they will be cheap. They will be released as complete 20 to 30 page rules and settings, and we're hoping that they will cost as little as £1 sterling (or about $2) for the game itself and then about 50 pence (or about $1) for the extras, such as one-night 4-page scenarios and other source material that can be purchased, downloaded, printed off and played at a moment's notice.

In the future there will be small adventures designed for the game, each one a tiny scenario that can be downloaded in seconds, printed off, and used for a single night's gaming. We're aiming to get the adventures detailed in a simple 3-4 pages.

So, if you find yourself stuck for an evening's adventure and need something to play at a moment's notice, then a SKETCH game is your answer.

THE BASIC RULES

There are three primary Attributes in the SKETCH roleplaying game. These are Body (physical fitness and agility), Mind (intelligence and knowledge) and Soul (personality and charisma).

Each player rolls 1D3 + 3 for each Attribute, to get a score between 4 and 6. The higher the score, the more competent the character is in that particular Attribute.

Each Attribute has a list of skills under them. Each of these skills are available to the players and are worked out by taking the Attribute number you initially rolled and entering this number at the head of each skill list.

This number at the head of each skill list is the skill level of every one of those skills. So, if your Body Attribute score is 4, all the skills under the Body heading would have a skill level of 4. This number is the number you have to roll on 2D6. Rolling this number or less is a success in the intended action – rolling over this number is a failure.

During initial character creation, these skills can be raised, either through choice or by rolling randomly, depending on how you want to play.

FARSIGHT GAMES will make its games and supplements available through the online publishing company www.lulu.com but we hope to have accounts set up with other distributors as time goes on. It's very easy to set up a LULU account and it is as secure as all major online shopping sites, but you won't have to open an account to download the free material on the site.

Introducing Newcomers to the
Tabletop Roleplaying Hobby

Here's something you might find useful – when someone asks you what roleplaying is all about then hand them a copy of this for them to mull over before they attend their first game. It should help give them an idea of what's involved.

Don't be daunted by rules and tables in the books, which is probably the first thing you've seen regarding roleplaying games – they're designed to be comprehensive, not complicated. In fact, most games are designed with the fledgling roleplayer in mind. New players might want to find other players or a local gaming group and watch what goes into participating in a roleplaying game, as it is most definitely the best way to learn.

A roleplaying game (**RPG**) is a group activity of the imagination. We've all seen films, read books and comics, been exposed to wild and wonderful things and we have always placed ourselves in the position of the lead character, or placed ourselves in the situation the story portrayed. In some cases we have taken what we have seen or read and thought '*what would I do in that situation*' or '*I would have done things differently*'. Well, with the roleplaying hobby those choices and paths untrodden are turned into possibilities.

The game revolves around a group of players, usually between four and six but you can have as few as two or three, with one of the players taking on the role of the **Gamemaster** (**GM**). The **GM** tells the players what they see, what they hear, even what they smell, basically describing the location and situation to the players. Then the players react to the information they have been given and tell the **GM** what they want to do. The rules decide what the players are capable of and if they succeed in their actions.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

The **Player Characters** (**PCs**) in an RPG are the identities and personalities the players of the game occupy. Imagine them as characters in a story with their own personality and abilities, except that in a story the plot is linear and the outcome predetermined whereas in a roleplaying game the **PCs** can influence the outcome of a game with their decisions and actions. Players take on the role of their **PCs**, acting their personalities and demeanour.

THE GAMEMASTER

The **Gamemaster** (**GM**) is the controller of the game. The **GM** is probably the single most powerful player at the table, with the most responsibility. The **GM** has to create the adventure, tell the players what they see and hear, describe the locations and surroundings, play the roles of all the characters the players come across and allow the plot to unfold through their narrative and descriptions.

This role does not mean the **GM** is 'against' the players, creating an adventure in which the players have to survive, or throwing danger and adventure in huge quantities at the players. The **GM** not only has to bring the adventures to life, but they must provide an entertaining game for the players to enjoy.

THE RULES

Roleplaying games are, by and large, games where the players envision locations, characters and situations in their minds and act them out, a kind of 'let's pretend'. If this were the only requirement of roleplaying games then players would simply talk about what is happening but how does one decide the outcome of an action or a decision? It might be simple enough to say 'you succeed', but surely there is a chance of failure depending on a person's experience and skill? What is required is an arbitrary decision. This where the rules come in.

The rules of roleplaying games have their roots in wargames, where dice are used to determine the outcome of battles. The numbers rolled would decide victory or failure, and roleplaying games have taken this arbitrary system and used it for individual characters instead of battalions or platoons. Now when a players wants to perform an action, be it jumping a gap, bargaining for a better price or swinging a sword, the dice are used to determine as to whether the action was successful or not.

AN EXAMPLE OF ROLEPLAYING

Following is an example of a game, to give you a better idea of what is involved. Imagine you're sitting watching this game, a newcomer to the hobby wanting to get a feel as to what a game is like. In fact, here's your first chance at using some of that imagination…

Imagine that there are four people sat around a table. Three of the people are players - Simon, Mike and Lisa – and Eric, the person sitting at the head of the table, is known as the **GM** (**GM**).

A **GM** runs the game. He is in charge of the story that the players are involved in and he explains what they see, hear and smell, and he also controls all the monsters and other characters in the story the players will come across. Imagine him as a movie screenwriter, director and producer – he controls the plot, the scenery and the characters. Characters the **GM** controls that converse and interact with the players are known as a Non-**PCs** (N**PC**).

The players are the people who are controlling the characters in the story, and they will respond to the **GM**'s descriptions by asking questions about their surroundings, telling him what it is they want to do and talking 'in character' when conversing in-game with other characters. The character a player uses is known as a **PC** (**PC**).

Eric the **GM** (**GM**) is running a game set at a deserted fishing village on the coast. The **PCs** (**PCs**) – Brethnar the Northman played by Simon, Garon the Wynling played by Mike and Silver the Elfkind played by Lisa - have just landed in a small boat and are having a look around.

GM: (Here the GM, Eric, explains the scene to the players, what they see, hear and even smell if it calls for it). The ground is scorched from multiple fires, smoke hangs in the air, and three tents and two wooden huts appear to be the only places that are still intact. But, as you step off the boat, you see several expensive and broken weapons lying abandoned on the ground and blood everywhere. The three tents are torn but till standing. The sand crunches underfoot and the bending trees sway in the wind, and all you can smell is burned wood and salt. What do you want to do?

Brethnar: (Here Brethnar's player, Simon, talks to the others in character, speaking as Brethnar) I don't like the look of this. (*Here Simon talks the GM as himself, explaining to him what it is he wants to do*) I'll walk to the wooden huts, with my sword drawn.

Garon: (Here Garon's player, Mike, also talks the GM, explaining to him what it is he wants to do) I'll check out the tents.

Silver: (Silver, played by Lisa, does the same) I'll go through the discarded weapons.

GM: Brethnar first, then. The huts have been stripped inside, and on the floor you find more blood, with torn sacks and smashed barrels. Garon, the tents are empty, there are no personal effects inside, not even blankets. There's a bit of bread on the ground and it's not stale. Silver, you find that some of the weapons have been rendered useless, but other stuff has just been dropped.

Garon: (To others, in character) This cannot have happened too long ago, if the bread hasn't gone stale.

Brethnar: There was a big fight here.

Silver: And a lot of the equipment has been broken in battle, I think, but the rest of it has been dropped – but where are the bodies?

Brethnar: This whole thing stinks.

GM: Hoots and whistles of unknown creatures echo from the swaying trees.

Brethnar: Anyone ever been here before?

The others check their notes, but they both answer in the negative.

GM: You suddenly hear shouts and the sounds of clashing metal to the north. A flash of lightning arcs skyward over the trees and dissipates.

Silver: Well, someone's letting of lightning spells at someone! I'll nock an arrow to my bow and wave the others to follow. Let's go!

Brethnar: I'll run after her, sword ready – but what about the boat?

Garon: Should I stay with the boat? I'll stay with the boat, just in case.

Brethnar: Good idea. Make sure it's ready to go at a moment's notice!

GM: How are you proceeding through the trees? They're pretty thick with undergrowth.

Brethnar: That's handy. I'll move fast but keep low, try to stay out of sight.

Silver: I'll do the same.

GM: Make a sneak roll. Your skill rank is 3, but you get a plus 1 thanks to the undergrowth.

Brethnar: (Here he rolls a dice to determine if the sneaking action was successful or not. He needs to roll a 4 or less on a six-sided die to succeed – he rolls a 2) I passed.

Silver: So did I. What do we see?

GM: The trees are thick and bend like rubber under the wind. Strange creatures with wide eyes scuttle out of your way, but they appear to be running themselves, away from the sounds of battle. You hear more clashes and the sound of a man shouting, but you can't understand the words. You burst through the trees and you see a huge hollow tree where a man with a sword is leaning half out and swinging at three ugly

bony creatures, each one about three to four feet high, with rusting chainmail and swords, long wart-covered noses and greenish skin…

Silver: Goblins!

GM: That's right. They hiss and cackle and have surrounded the tree. Several of the creatures lie dead around the base of the tree. Thanks to your passed sneak rolls, none of them have noticed your approach.

Brethnar: I'll take out a throwing knife and take aim at the closest creature.

Silver: I'll fire an arrow at the one closest to the tree.

GM: Make your rolls. Brethnar, the range gives you a minus 1 modifier to your roll.

Brethnar: Eat this! (*Brethnar has to roll 3 or less on a six-sided die to succeed, but rolls a 5)* Damn! I missed!

GM: They've seen you!

Silver: (*Silver has to roll 4 or less on a six-sided die to hit her target – she rolls a 3)* I hit him!

GM: Roll your damage.

Silver: I roll… (*Silver rolls the six-sided dice and adds other modifiers to determine how badly she had hurt the goblin*) a total of 7.

GM: Well done. The creatures can't be very strong, as your slams into his body with a thump. It falls to the ground, twitches and dies. But the shots draw the attention of the others. Brethnar, the one you shot at leaps through the trees and straight at you.

Brethnar: Damn!

GM: The goblin attacks! *(The **GM** now rolls for the goblin to determine whether it has struck Brethnar with its sword)* I roll a… 5. It misses you.

Brethnar: Yes! I'll hit the thing with my sword!

GM: Alright, no need to shout. Make your roll.

Brethnar: (*Rolls die*) I hit him! Damage is… (*rolls die*) 8.

GM: That's good enough! You strike it across the head and it goes down in a tangle of arms and legs, dead. Silver, here comes the other one, straight at you!

Silver: I'll nock another arrow and take aim as it comes at me, not moving an inch.

GM: Are you sure?

Silver: Trust me. I'll shoot as soon as it's on me.

GM: Make your roll. Remember to add +1 for taking an extra round of aiming.

Silver: A hit. Damage is… 8.

GM: It's down.

Brethnar: How cool was that!

Silver: I'll head over to the man.

GM: He is wearing the armour of a Southman scout, and he has a rough beard with a shaggy head of hair. He's wounded on the head. The slumped body of a woman, half-conscious, lies inside the hollow tree. *(Here, the **GM** talks to the players as the **Non-Player Character (NPC)** of the man they have just saved)* 'Thank you!' he shouts. 'We thought no-one was coming!'

Silver: What happened?

*GM: (As **NPC**)* 'We came here for trade and found the deserted village, and suddenly these goblin things come screaming at us across the beach. An ambush! There were dozens of them. We lost two in the first attack, but the next was so savage we had to abandon the camp. That was an hour ago'.

Brethnar: Are there of you many left? Who are you?

GM: 'Sorry, I'm Much, and this is Doril, my wife. She's exhausted from all the spells she's been casting.'

Silver: Hold on, did you say there were dozens of these things?

GM: Garon, back to you. What were you doing?

Garon: I'll have got on board the boat and made sure she's ready to cast off.

GM: As you do so, you hear a strange skittering noise in the treeline, and strange cackles.

Garon: Oh, great. I'll draw my sword.

The adventures continue…

THE GM's ROLE

It is the **GM's** job, actually it's their *responsibility,* to create a game that all can become involved in and enjoy.

What does this entail? Hard work, imagination, a flair for the dramatic, the ability to improvise, a working knowledge of the rules, a sharp wit, the ability to arbitrarily interpret the rules and make decisions based on dice rolls and common sense… sounds daunting yes?

Well, yes and no. It's true that, out of all the players sat around the gaming table, the **GM** will have the hardest job, but all the requirements listed above are not a necessity. It's true that **GM**'s need some flair and a lot of imagination, but you wouldn't have this rulebook in your hands if you had none of that, would you?

GM's are the anchor of the game – they design the adventure, talk the players through the game and generally control the events and unfolding plot that are generated by the game. The **GM** will be the one who plays all the other characters and bring them to life.

So, let's have a look at the main requirements of the **GM** and address them one at a time.

*The **GM** must know the rules* – This goes without saying. The rules have been created to decide the outcome of decisions and actions and are the basis of the game. It is the **GM**'s responsibility to know the rules, as well as if not better than the players. This is not an immediate requirement, as there is a learning curve inherent in all new games and pastimes, but at the end of the day the **GM** will need to know the mechanics of the game and how to implement those mechanics. So, read up on the rules, make some test dice rolls to come to grips with the mechanics, and take it from there. Expect stoppages and pauses as you refer to the rulebook during your first few games, as there is a lot of information here and knowing it all off by heart straight away is, whilst fanciful, almost impossible.

*The **GM** must be a storyteller* – This is true also. One reason why **GM**'s take on the role is so that they can express themselves as storytellers, narrators if you will. It is the **GM**'s responsibility to do two major things as far as running the game is concerned:
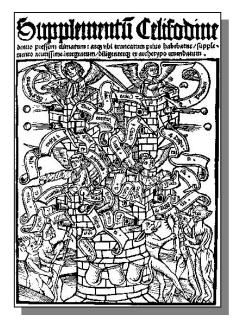
Describe the setting to the players – they must describe the location, what the players can see and smell.

*Play the roles of all the other characters the **PCs** will meet*– There may be a lot of other characters for the **GM** to portray, each with their own personality and visual distinction, which is also part of describing the setting. These characters are controlled by the **GM** and not the **Player Characters**, and are therefore called a **Non-Player Character** (**NPC**). Some **NPCs** may have goals and objectives of their own; others may be bit players and hand over information or help in passing. Think of it as movie billings – there's a lot of major characters who

are important people, whose characters need detailing, then there's the walk-on parts who need little decoration, and then there's the extras who are, for all intents and purposes, background dressing.

Above all, the **GM** is the arbiter of the rules. They decide on the situation and what merits a dice roll and what doesn't. They decide on the difficulty and the nature of the threat but this is not a game where the **GM** designs something to see if the players survive or not. This is a game that tells a story and, even though there will be moments of adventure and suspense, the **GM** should not be 'out to get' the players. Games that revolve around plot enhancement, such as conversations with **NPCs** and situations that do not always require violence to resolve. Their decisions should be balanced and represent the adventurous and creative nature of a roleplaying game.

The Tabletop Roleplaying Hobby is a vast and diverse one, with hundreds of settings, thousands of potential settings, many rules systems and millions of players worldwide. It is more diverse, dynamic and sociable than sitting at a computer playing on-line and it requires much more imagination and energy. Whilst computer games are undoubtedly enjoyable you are fundamentally limited by the rules and parameters of the game you are playing. With Tabletop Roleplaying you are directly interacting with other people who share a similar creative drive and between you all, Players and Gamemasters alike, you are creating a rich world of imagination where anything is possible.

Creating Basic Character Personalities

A very long time ago I had an unfortunate incident during a short fantasy campaign of my own design that I was GM'ing for my friends. I'd had a stereotypical age-old threat come along from the depths of time to threaten the stability and future of the land and it was up to the PCs to stop it.

After four games of slashing their way through the minions of the Shadow Lord, they finally managed to get into the lair of the threat and face him. Suddenly, in the lull just before the final battle, one of the PCs looked at the evil lord and asked, and I quote, "Why have you done all this? What the hell is wrong with you?" I was gob smacked. Reeling, I stammered for a few moments and blurted out something to do with prophecies and revenge, but this didn't stop the PC from then asking, "But why? What do you hope to gain? You'll slaughter and blast and defile until there is nothing left for you to rule. There must be more to your life than this." Clearly, the player had not realized that motivation was not forefront in my mind when I designed the game but it certainly gave me something to think about.

I had always concentrated on the plot and the action, basically running the game as a sequence of encounters and situations, but had never really gone over the reason why certain people did certain things and what drives them to act the way they do.

In this article, I hope to give you some ideas on motivation based on upbringing, and give a few ideas on what to consider before deciding why a character, NPC and PC, is disposed to act a certain way. It may help to add more depth to the game as whole personalities are revealed, and it helps open up more role-playing opportunities as players start to question their own motives.

What a child is exposed to can have an effect on their personality and perceptions at an older age as incidents throughout childhood mould their character. Their childhood will, in general terms, depend on the environment they were bought up in, with different ideas on how their position in life affected them, both 'positive' and 'negative'.

A 'positive' influence is an indication of how events can improve a character's personality, whereas a 'negative' influence details how events can transpire to make a character a danger to society. All these can be chopped, changed and added together.

Poor/Lower Class Family Background

Social Background
Positive: Perhaps the father of the character was a poor man, but he had pride that made him work hard to improve his situation. Although the family had little, the mother was satisfied to have the love of her family and did not need anything material to make her happy. An upbringing like this might make a character less greedy than most, more patient, or able to weather hardship.

Negative: The father is angry at the ruling body who have allowed him to end up on the bottom rung of the social ladder. He spends his time drinking and working, creating dissent, and taking out his anger on his family. The mother cares very little for children she did not want and sends them out to work and thieve so that the little they earn can go into her pockets. An upbringing like this may make the character violent, angry with peers and institutions, and learning skills that are generally regarded as anti-social.

Peer Teachings
Positive: The friends of the character are enjoyable, well- rounded people with good hearts and friendly attitudes to everyone. They frequently go on trips and small adventures together, and bonds are formed and honoured as the group shares what little they have to improve their lot in life.

Negative: The people the character knows are cheats, liars, and unfriendly. The small social group the character falls in with have a reputation for cruel or anti-social behaviour, and the only way they can get their kicks is by preying on those weaker than them. This often leads to in- fighting and distrust.

Environment
Positive: The location the character hails from is wide open and spacious with plenty of places to lose themselves in and appreciate what they have. Alternatively, it is a well cared for part of a larger town, which, even though it has very little in the way of wealth, makes do with what it does have, and appreciates its existence. This creates a community   spirit.

Negative: The location the character is forced to endure is a dangerous place, with creatures or individuals a constant threat to the people who work and live there. Neighbours distrust and, frankly, hate each other. It's dirty, grimy, and has the atmosphere that if you say or do the wrong thing you'll be found in a shallow grave.

Beliefs
Positive: The character is taught that all things are equal, that good virtues are always a benefit to the individual and those about them. Their religion may take the form of a passive or defensive stance on violence, and they may also believe that, whilst they do not have much in the way of belongings or wealth, money and material goods are no substitute for a good heart and health.

Negative: The character is bought up to believe in 'survival of the fittest.' Those willing to do what they can to get what they want are all that matters because life is one huge battle for supremacy. Friends, family, neighbours, guests - they are all usable, disposable, and crushable. Their religion may revolve around intolerance of other beliefs or cultures, and violence is the only true solution.

Comfortable/Middle Class Family Background

Social Background
Positive: The father of the character is a generous man and he has a pride that makes him work hard and share his fortunes. Alternatively, the mother had the love of her family and acquired material goods for them to make them happy. An upbringing like this might make a character less greedy than most, appreciate what they have and the value of it, and be willing to help those less fortunate.

Negative: The father is angry at the fact that he only has so much. Perhaps he has progressed up from a lower social standing but still wants more. He spends his time working (although he shirks his responsibilities), creating problems for those around him, and taking out his anger on neighbours and family. The mother cares very little for the children who are a drain on what she has, so she does all she can to get them to leave home as soon as possible. An upbringing like this may make the character angry at and distrusting of others and create abandonment issues.

Peer Teachings
Positive: The friends of the character are good people with their own lives but with friendly dispositions. They frequently gather at social venues, share trusts and stories, and great friendships are honoured as the group gathers to appreciate each other's company and personalities.

Negative: The people the character knows are shady and always know 'someone' with a finger in the larger pot of trouble. The social group the character joins has a penchant for anti-social behaviour and this often leads to infighting and distrust of others in the group and outsiders to the group. Perhaps the 'gang' builds a reputation that leaves a lasting impression.

Environment
Positive: The location the character comes from is a beautiful, natural place, or a whole estate/quarter of a city that has good security and wealth. This creates a community that enjoys gatherings, social activities and a general atmosphere of well being and safety.

Negative: The character is forced to handle themselves in a dangerous place, with dangers a constant threat to the community who lives there. Because of this danger, maybe in the form of crime or gang problems, neighbours distrust and feud with each other. It's an unsanitary, lawless, and uncared for place. The atmosphere is one of continuous, oppressive danger.

Beliefs

Positive: The character is taught that although all things are equal, hard work and commitment reaps its own rewards. Their religion may be a way of bringing together the community and preaching their non-aggressive stance on life and, whilst they have a comfortable existence, money and material goods are a way of defining your success.

Negative: The character is bought up to believe in 'if you want it, take it.' Those who want to better themselves had better be prepared to fight, cheat, and tread on others to reign supreme. Their religion may incite distrust of other religions and encourage closed ears to other opinions and conflict.

Rich/Noble Family Background

Social Background

Positive: The friends of the character are of their social class and they mix frequently at expensive restaurants and venues. They share their leisure time doing exciting activities and travelling to far places, always under the protection of the security the family needs. Friendships are solid as they all appreciate the lives they lead.

Negative: The people the character mix with are always trying to throw off the 'leash' of their superiors, trying to do things that are the opposite of their position, such as dangerous sports or 'slumming it.' Even though they oppose the rules set by their peers or security, they still use their position as a retreat or an excuse. This makes them spoiled and ignorant of the consequences of their actions.

Peer Teachings

Positive: The father of the character is a hard-working honourable man and his main aim in life is to make sure his family has everything they need to grow up to be good people. Perhaps their mother acquires tutors and materials to help them to grow. An upbringing like this might make a character appreciate their lofty position and the value of helping others less fortunate.

Negative: The father has so much that he become a selfish, uncaring miser. Perhaps he has fallen from a higher standing and hates the fact, or risen from a lower class and still wants more. He might spend his time playing and squandering his money, ignoring his family in pursuit of other distractions. The mother cares little for the welfare of her children and leaves them with nannies and caretakers for the most part. A childhood like this may make the character unemotional and selfish in his actions.

Environment

Positive: The character comes from a beautiful estate that has been taken care of by the family past and present, and the cities they invest in or govern have good security and wealth. This creates a community of good feeling and safety, and so the character appreciates their lot in life and is sympathetic to lesser-privileged people.

Negative: The area the character hails from is a dangerous place, with violence a threat to the ruling, higher- privileged families who live there due to their lack of concern for those less fortunate. This danger causes civil unrest and riot problems. It's

an oppressive place, and the family regards the lower classes as misfits and miscreants.

Beliefs

Positive: The character is taught that hard work and responsibility is the way, no matter how much you have or how much you can delegate. Religious ceremony may be a way of showing the community that the family is not all-powerful and even they answer to a higher power. Whilst they have a comfortable existence, more so than those above them, this brings the higher families and the lower classes together and promotes solidarity.

Negative: The family ideal is '*the power is yours, so you can do what you want.'* Those without power or money are good for nothing but service to the richer or ruling elite. Their religion may incite hoarding and selfish acts, and encourage violence to take whatever makes the family or estate more powerful.