The Burning Wheel

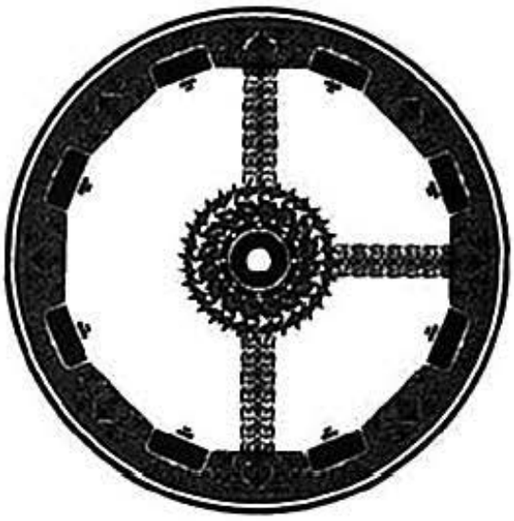


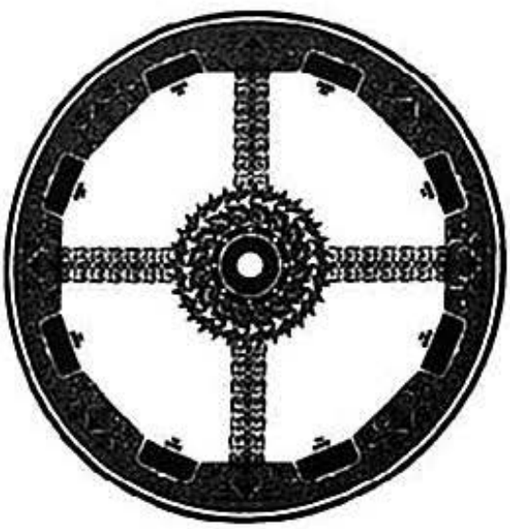


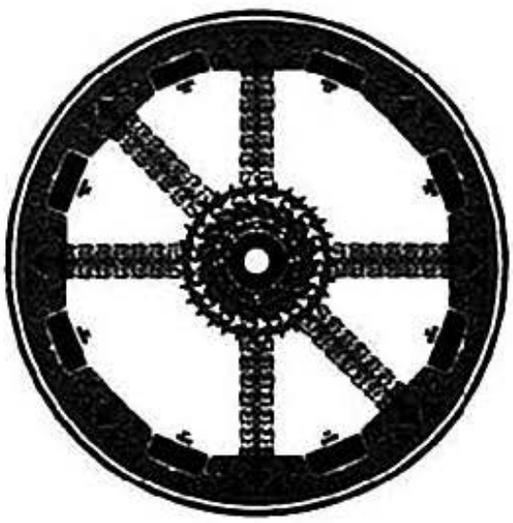


CODEX

the Burning Wheel







CODEX

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In Memoriam

Bob Doherty

Extra Rotam Nulla Salus



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Foreword

The origins of its name shrouded by the mists of time, *the Burning Wheel* is a perfect analogy for the experience of playing the game. It won't allow you to sit idly by, taking turns only as the cold stare of the GM falls upon you. There is no engaging the wheel partway. The game doesn't give quarter; it doesn't grant mercy. It burns. Though you may often be given cause for reflection, it is not a game of stillness, but one of action. A wheel is crafted to move, to turn. This is a game about momentum.

In the eleven years since I first set eyes on the Burning Wheel, I've played countless other roleplaying games. I've seen trends emerge from the game-design zeitgeist only to fall back into the churning sea of "What if we made a game about..." Through all that, Burning Wheel has remained a fixture of not just my gaming shelf, but my gaming mind. It is a book I've taken down, time and again, to turn over in my hands, wondering what tales it would wring from me next. I think this is what Luke and company intended, particularly when they published the Gold edition—a physical object weighty enough to match the heavy brand the wheel burns onto its disciples, those who feel its constant turning in their minds.

I've heard Burning Wheel dubbed the Swiss watch of roleplaying games—not just for the intricate impossibility of reassembling it if viewed as merely individual pieces, but because of the intimate and slightly mad way each piece fits together into the larger whole. A thing whose surface is precise and beautiful but whose insides—whose elements—require devotion and time to fully understand. Luke describes the main mechanisms as a hub—the core around which the rules are crafted—with the systems that expand on that hub and give the wheel motion as its spokes. We're given discrete systems such as Resources, Circles and the Duel of Wits. We're challenged to master Fight and take on the back-and-forth engagements of Range and Cover. As we play, our Steel is tested with each new spoke crafted to expand on the hub and support the wheel.

What you're holding now is potent fuel for your campaign's inner fire. More ways and means to turn the wheel. New spokes to build onto the hub. Every time I start a new roleplaying game (Burning Wheel or otherwise), I pull the Adventure Burner from my shelves and drink from the fountain of wisdom that its essays contain. I've lost count of the many times a page from the Magic Burner lifepaths of the creatures of the Monster Burner, looking both for adversaries and allies. Now and

here, in the Codex, we are granted access to that strange library anew, revised and reformed. These are gears whose teeth have been carefully filed to fit the intricate clockwork of Gold.

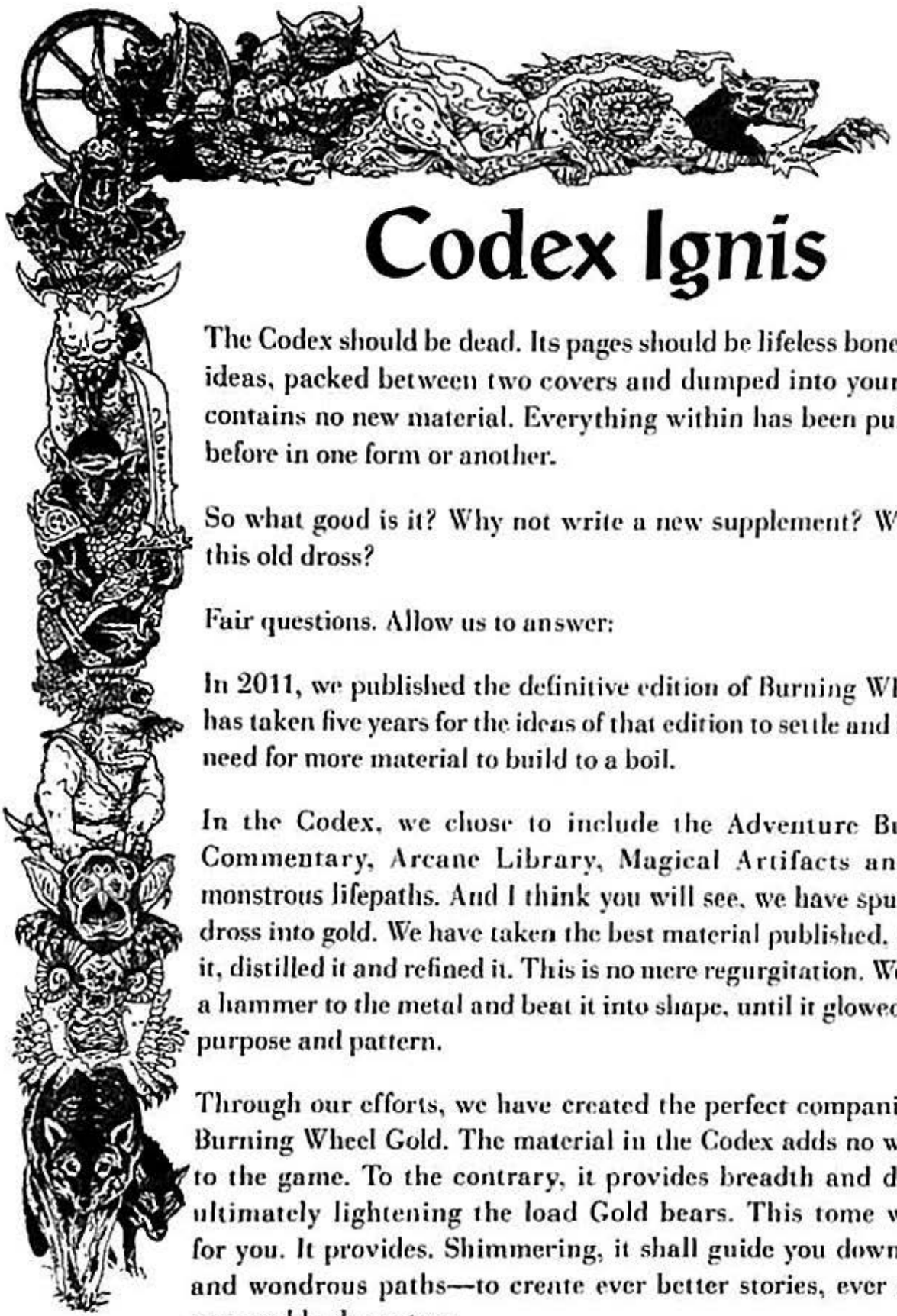
I hope this book imparts momentum in a strange direction, no matter what your campaign might look like. I hope it kindles something in you and your fellow players. As it has for me, I hope it sets you aflame.

Adam Koebel
Spring 2016

Adam Koebel is codesigner of the award-winning Dungeon World roleplaying game. He's a pioneering member of the Twitch.tv live actual-play community and spends most of his time in Vancouver, British Columbia, either ranting about fictional positioning to Starcraft players or half-designing games.

the Codex





Codex Ignis

The Codex should be dead. Its pages should be lifeless bones of old ideas, packed between two covers and dumped into your lap. It contains no new material. Everything within has been published before in one form or another.

So what good is it? Why not write a new supplement? Why use this old dross?

Fair questions. Allow us to answer:

In 2011, we published the definitive edition of Burning Wheel. It has taken five years for the ideas of that edition to settle and for the need for more material to build to a boil.

In the Codex, we chose to include the Adventure Burner, Commentary, Arcane Library, Magical Artifacts and the monstrous lifepaths. And I think you will see, we have spun this dross into gold. We have taken the best material published, tested it, distilled it and refined it. This is no mere regurgitation. We took a hammer to the metal and beat it into shape, until it glowed with purpose and pattern.

Through our efforts, we have created the perfect companion to Burning Wheel Gold. The material in the Codex adds no weight to the game. To the contrary, it provides breadth and depth, ultimately lightening the load Gold bears. This tome works for you. It provides. Shimmering, it shall guide you down new and wondrous paths—to create ever better stories, ever more memorable characters.

This Codex is stamped with the mark of more than ten years of our blood and sweat. We are proud to put it in your hands, and hope it brings light into your life.

the Burning Wheel



Adventure Burner



Looking from on High



Introductions out of the way, the Codex begins with the Burning Philosophy section, in which we look at the principles behind the Burning Wheel system. This introduction presents a perspective for both players and game masters.

In the eponymous Adventurer Burner, we provide a framework for creating your own worlds and situations, plus a few new rules to enhance long-term play.

Two Things

Rules Mastery

Burning Wheel is very much a game. It's meant to be played skillfully and mastered over time. To gain maximum enjoyment from a session of Burning Wheel, it is important to have some facility with the rules. The rules are deep enough that one is rewarded for exploring them and invoking them. The more you play, the more you learn about the game and how the various pieces fit together. The better you play, the richer the results.

Buy-In

Burning Wheel is not your standard fantasy RPG. It is more character-focused and player-driven than your traditional fantasy fare, although it uses more intense rules than other nontraditional alternatives.

Some folks grok Burning Wheel at a glance—it is the game they always hoped for. For everyone else, Burning Wheel asks only for an open, honest desire to try it out and see how it works. Sometimes, players will be reluctant to try a new game or they'll be skeptical of a new style of play. That's perfectly natural, but for Burning Wheel to have a hope of working with your group, everyone at the table—including the doubters—has to say, "Let's give this a fair shot."



How do you create this basic level of buy-in? That's a tough question. We've found that it's best to place some limits on the game the first time you play. Burning Wheel is a deep game, meant for long-term play. It's not possible to take it all in at once. You'll be overwhelmed. To have the best chance of convincing skeptical or wary players to give it a shot, we recommend playing our starter scenario, Trouble in Hochen (contained in the Twilight in the Duchy Verdorben PDF). Don't modify it or hack it to suit your group's needs. Make your group step up and come to Burning Wheel as it is. Ask them to give it their best shot. Ask them to really get in there and play the game. Ask them to use the mechanics and try out stuff they wouldn't normally try otherwise. It is a test, after all.

Afterward, if it didn't work, you can say you gave it your best shot. But if you had a reasonably good experience, you can talk about starting a more involved game.

How Long Does It Take?

Burning Wheel can be run as a single session, an adventure or a campaign. In a single session, you generally resolve one problem in the course of play—usually about four to six hours.





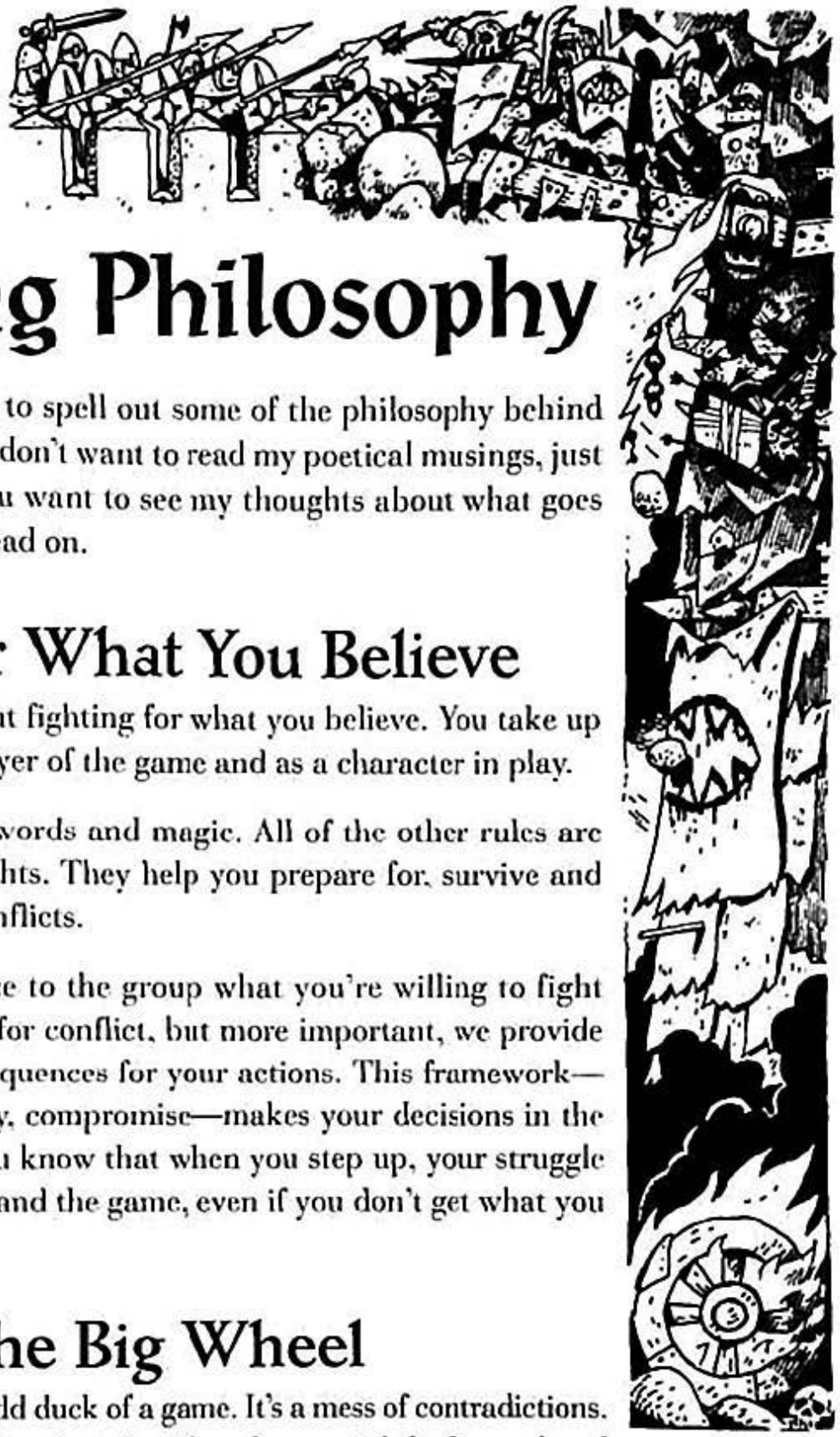


An adventure is a term we use for a cycle of play lasting two to six sessions. An adventure contains an overarching goal, a subordinate goal or two and an unexpected twist.

A campaign is a series of interconnected adventures.

We talk about the differences between each type of game in the Running the Game chapter in the Commentary section. For now, it's enough for you to know that Burning Wheel plays slightly differently—using different mechanics—depending on how long you play it.





Burning Philosophy

This chapter attempts to spell out some of the philosophy behind Burning Wheel. If you don't want to read my poetical musings, just skip this section. If you want to see my thoughts about what goes on behind the rules, read on.

Fight for What You Believe

Burning Wheel is about fighting for what you believe. You take up the fight both as a player of the game and as a character in play.

You fight with steel, words and magic. All of the other rules are incidental to those fights. They help you prepare for, survive and recover from those conflicts.

Your Beliefs announce to the group what you're willing to fight for. We provide rules for conflict, but more important, we provide a framework of consequences for your actions. This framework—success, failure, injury, compromise—makes your decisions in the game meaningful. You know that when you step up, your struggle is going to affect you and the game, even if you don't get what you want in the end.

The Big Wheel

Burning Wheel is an odd duck of a game. It's a mess of contradictions. It doesn't have a setting, but the lifepaths are tightly focused and impose a culture and perspective on the characters. Play is open-ended—there's no fixed structure like those found in our other games. And the system itself is modular—chunks can be added or replaced with ease—but if you tweak the core mechanics, it falls apart.

We often hear questions like "Why are there so many fiddly bits? Why so many skills? So many traits?" The short answer is: Because the game needs it. The long answer is: Setting in Burning Wheel is primarily presented to the players in the form of skills and traits. It's not enough for us to say that a culture has a particular feel.

The game needs to represent that culture mechanically. New settings and cultures require new system elements, because the system is what enforces meaningful decisions in play.

But there's more to it than that. The range of options in the game creates the spaces in which we play. Skills can be used creatively. Advancement requires dedication and focus. Fight, Range and Cover, and Duel of Wits allow the player to make important decisions on multiple levels. These decisions bring the player deeper into the game and open up new perspectives that can be further explored through the mechanics.

We Think Life Should Be Hard

You know those little bits of the game that don't make sense, are a pain in the ass or seem broken? Those are hooks that we built into the game. Sure, it's a drag to be an indigent sorcerer with B0 Resources. So now you have to earn your bread by summoning someone's dead loved one, banishing an angry spirit or going on ridiculously dangerous quests. Fight is difficult and scary on purpose. You're supposed to prepare for it, be smart about it. Tools and shoes seem like mundane, pointless details. But in this game, they are a chance to get into trouble over something innocuous—elements that ground us in the "reality" of the fiction. And because most characters start lacking something—or burdened with something they don't want—the characters are in motion with an energy that propels them right into the story.

Burning Currency Cycle

The currency cycle of a game encompasses a player's operation of the system, the feedback the system produces and the reward presented to the player as a result of the operation.

Burning Wheel has a long, complex and downright baroque currency cycle. In its most basic form, the currency cycle is "Belief, Action, Reward." Let's break that down.

You're a player in the game; you state a Belief for your character. The GM presents an obstacle or challenge to that Belief. You state an intent for overcoming that obstacle. You and the GM determine the appropriate task for the intent to overcome that obstacle and select the appropriate stat, skill or attribute to test. After gathering help, spending artha and using other advantages, you roll against the obstacle. In most cases, the test earns you (and those who helped) advancement, regardless of success. If successful, you achieve your intent in the manner you described. If you fail the test, the GM controls the outcome and can have the task fail outright or twist your intent into unforeseen consequences.





Burning Philosophy





This process also produces a result in the shared fiction of the game: Something happens in the story. This result—a vivid description, a thrilling performance—provides context for new Beliefs.

Successful tests lead to fulfilled Beliefs—accomplishing goals and earning artha. Failed attempts lead to more, unexpected challenges to Beliefs, which engage the cycle anew, allowing the player to earn more advancements. Failed attempts earn artha as well.

Advancements increase the size of the dice pool. This means you can take greater and greater risks while attempting to act on your Belief. Trait votes reflect how the other players view your portrayal of your character. Artha invested in your stats and skills can cause a heroic shift in power for your character. But it all comes back to testing to try to fulfill a Belief.

Collaboration and Sportsmanship

Burning Wheel is not a collaborative game. Not all opinions have equal weight. Not every suggestion should be considered and included.

Burning Wheel is a game of strong opinion, vision and zeal. To excel, you must advocate your position. However, it is also a thoughtful and civil game. You are expected to play at your absolute best within the scope of the written rules and the unwritten spirit of the game. But to be good players you must be courteous to one another. You must ensure that the other players understand the rules as well as you do. If they don't, explain what is unclear so they can make the best decision possible at the time. Do not cheat, grief or spam. Help each other and the game will prosper—even when you're fighting for your beliefs.



Some Advice for the Players

Some advice for players of Burning Wheel: Dare the GM to hurt you. Hurl your character into danger. You must take risks with your character while maintaining the civil attitude described above.

Why take risks? Why not sit back and be safe? Risk-taking is dramatic and exciting. You push your limits and lay everything on the line for your Beliefs. Furthermore, playing it safe in Burning Wheel won't get you the resources you need to succeed.

This is a novel way to play roleplaying games for some. You set out your own priorities. The GM challenges them. You plunge into the challenge wholeheartedly, no matter the danger. You don't hide or evade.





Don't Be a Wet Blanket

When another player wants to do something dangerous or risky, don't smother him with suggestions about "the right way to do it." Play dumb and pretend you don't understand the risks. Or play along and encourage the bad behavior. Of course, you still need to be considerate and thoughtful in your actions.

Too often I see players use so much caution and care that they stifle good, energetic ideas. Don't do that. Make bad decisions and enjoy the fallout and encourage good risk-taking in fellow players.

Inherent Dramatic Irony

Burning Wheel demands a deep investment in your character. To make a good character for this game, you must commit yourself—commit to your gamesmanship in the numbers and your sense of drama in the Beliefs and Instincts. The more you throw yourself into this enterprise, the more engrossing and exciting the results will be.

Conversely, Burning Wheel acknowledges an immutable divide between player and character. The character is a fictional element only alive in our imaginations. It is only in action when we all sit around the gaming table. It is not the player; it has no life of its own. The player is not the character, but the character cannot exist without the player.

The system provides a safe environment and many opportunities for the player to set up his character to fail—not because the player wishes his character ill, or even because he is incompetent, but because failure is interesting. It shows frailty, vulnerability, courage and heart in the character. It lets us sympathize with him. Failure creates narrative tension: He fails now, but one day he will overcome.

Are these failures purely mechanical? Are we suggesting that you gimp yourself for a test to deliberately fail? Not at all. Numbers-wise, it's always possible to place your character at risk. After all, you know how many dice you roll, you know the obstacle. The math isn't that hard. But I am suggesting a different kind of failure.

You can set your character up to fall with clever use of Beliefs, Instincts and traits. You can make him believe in something that's *wrong*. You know it's wrong, but he doesn't. He pursues this goal with all of the vigor we expect of the righteous, but ultimately, we know he's not doing the right thing. Or he's doing the right things for the wrong reasons.





Or he is at war with his heart. One Belief tells him to go in one direction, another pushes him down the opposite path. Which will he choose? The decision is engaging for you as a player, but it is also engrossing for the audience—the other players—to see the internal conflict played out before their eyes. Certainly, you might want your character to do the right thing, to go where you would, but that's the easy answer. Choose the wrong direction. Do the misguided, selfish, unrighteous thing. Let your experiences at the table, not your own personal beliefs, shape your transformation.

Burning Wheel is a character-driven game. When we set out on the wrong path, we create tension and exciting opportunity to do the right thing. This sounds backward, but remember that the premise of this game is to fight for what you believe. So if you believe in the right thing, then the GM must challenge or oppose that belief with the wrong thing. That means if your character changes, he'll fall—he'll fight for the wrong thing. It's a good choice, but a hard one! If you believe passionately in the wrong thing, then the GM has a chance to challenge and oppose you with the right thing. If your character changes under these circumstances, then he rises—he can learn from his mistakes and turn to the right path. And this is the stuff that heroes are made of.

Directing your character toward this kind of transformation needs a cleverly worded Belief or two to acknowledge that what you and your character want might be different. Explore that conflict of interest; show the rest of us the internal struggle. It makes for a satisfying game.



Some Advice for the GM

Being the GM in Burning Wheel is different from being a player. We mostly don't have to worry about tracking advancement, artha, epiphanies or trait votes. We have an overall vision of a world, a handful of problems in that world and a host of characters to embody those problems. We balance our vision and our will to persevere with an accommodating, cooperative attitude.

We are never rude. We never react out of anger. Our role is to present unexpected challenges to the players that make perfect sense in the context of the setting and the action.



Secrecy Impulse

Try not to hide or protect your ideas. Try your best to place them in harm's way—in the path of the players. When the players want to know something, test them. When the players want to confront and change something, test them. When they want to fight something, test them.

When you feel that tightening in your gut, "No, I can't let them...," that's a sign that you need to set an obstacle and call for a test. Give the players a shot at your villains, your organizations, your tricks and traps. Let them try to succeed. Let them risk failure. This staccato rhythm of challenges—some overcome and others failed—is what creates the story in Burning Wheel.

Emergent Properties

Burning Wheel has many moving parts. It is unlikely that one can interpret the entire range of possible results by looking at the individual pieces. In the course of operation, it is very likely that this system of interlocking gears produces unexpected results. Properties of the game emerge only through exploration. No amount of study or presumption will illuminate all of the possibilities.

This phenomenon is due in part to the complexity of the currency cycle and in part to the nature of a roleplaying game.

Let's look at some emergent play involving one Belief. Let's say you have a Belief that states, "I will liberate Dro from his burdens." You're going to steal Dro's stuff, because you think he's a bastard and you need to eat and pay rent. So, you use Circles and wises to get close to him. Later, you meet him and realize that he's got troubles, too. You sympathize. You use Persuasion and Falsehood to tease his problems out of him. But as you're getting to know him, you discover that he's a terrible person. One of his burdens is, in fact, that he was the one who had your family killed. He feels deeply guilty about it, but it doesn't change the fact that your mom, dad and little sister are gone—dispatched on the execution block for being seditionists. You've still got that Belief about him: "I will liberate Dro from his burdens." Yet...something has shifted. Now you use your wises and Circles to learn about his shadowy past. You begin to marshal allies against him. Then you decide to use your Persuasion and Falsehood to lure him out alone.



At the last, you—a peaceful person at heart—decide to assassinate Dro with your own hand. You play your Belief to its final iteration: You will remove his ultimate burden—his cold, dead soul. Everything has



changed now for you. You began simply wanting to survive, even if it meant stealing from another. But you're not who you once were. When you pick up the dice, survival is the furthest thing from your mind. Only revenge weighs heavy in your heart and your hand as you roll the dice to finish what you started.

You used the system to accomplish a very different aim than that with which you started.

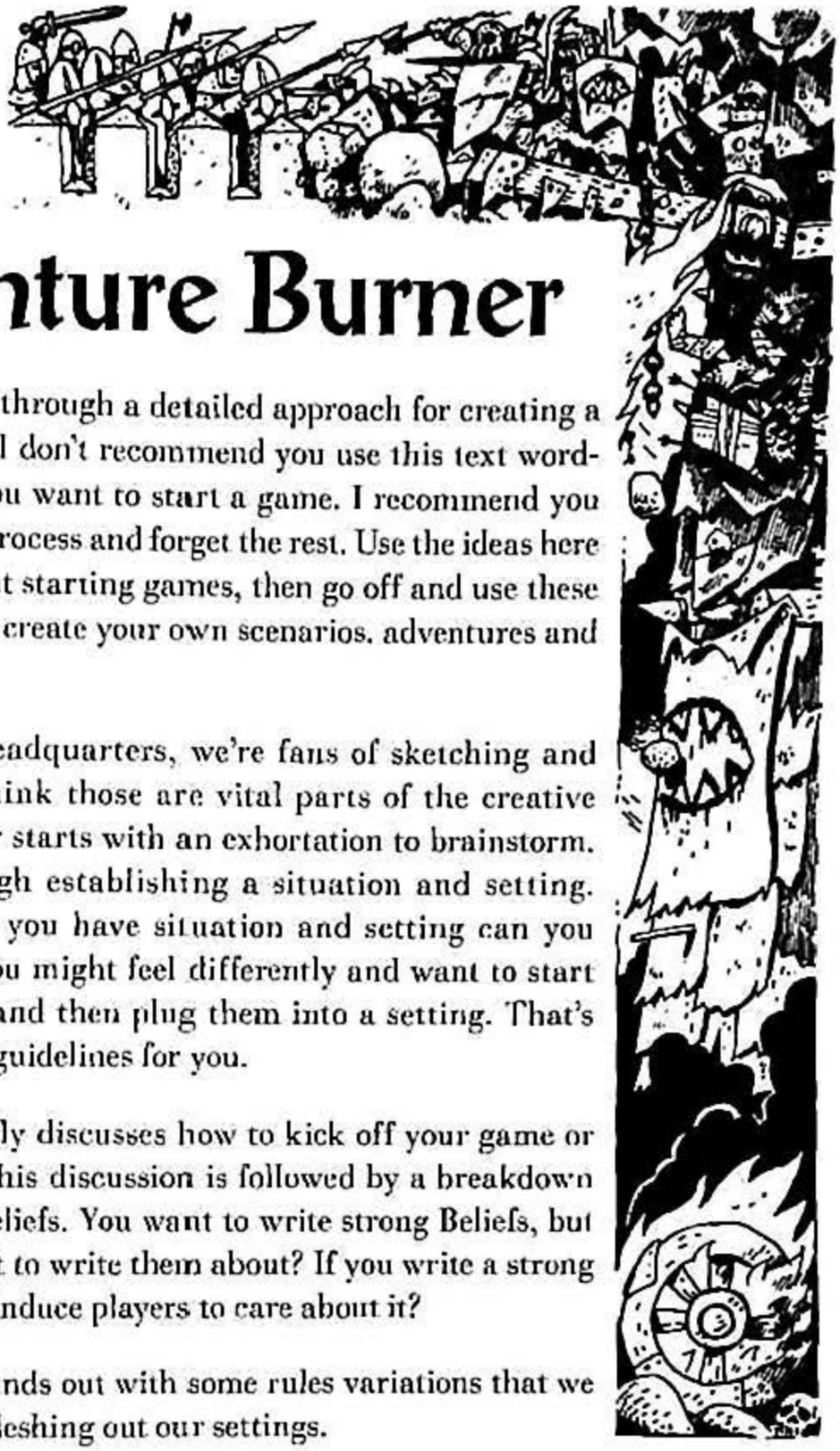
Now imagine this in three layers. You have three Beliefs. All of them create a context like this. Each Belief colors how and why you engage the system. In a virtuous cycle, each engagement casts new light on your Beliefs.

Thus, what seems straightforward at the start—player priorities, skill tests, advancements, rewards—grows around you in rich, complex and unpredictable patterns.

Dive into a Demo

That's enough philosophizing. Before you head for the Commentary section, I recommend you download the Twilight in the Duchy Verdorben from burningwheel.com and run it for some friends. Make the game fresh in your mind as you read and our further ramblings will make much more sense.





Adventure Burner

This section takes you through a detailed approach for creating a Burning Wheel game. I don't recommend you use this text word-for-word every time you want to start a game. I recommend you adopt the spirit of the process and forget the rest. Use the ideas here to get you excited about starting games, then go off and use these mystical techniques to create your own scenarios, adventures and campaigns.

At Burning Wheel Headquarters, we're fans of sketching and brainstorming. We think those are vital parts of the creative process, so the chapter starts with an exhortation to brainstorm. Then we walk through establishing a situation and setting. I feel that only after you have situation and setting can you develop characters. You might feel differently and want to start with characters first and then plug them into a setting. That's acceptable. These are guidelines for you.

The chapter also briefly discusses how to kick off your game or session with action. This discussion is followed by a breakdown of how to challenge Beliefs. You want to write strong Beliefs, but how do you know what to write them about? If you write a strong situation, how do you induce players to care about it?

Lastly, the chapter rounds out with some rules variations that we like to consider when fleshing out our settings.

Definition of Terms

Here are some terms that we're going to lean on throughout the Adventure Burner chapter:

Characters

In this chapter, we talk about characters that the players have burned up, relationship characters that the players have named during character burning and straight-up GM-controlled NPCs.

Setting

The setting is the overarching container of play—the place, the age, the atmosphere. But setting in Burning Wheel is represented primarily by stocks, traits, skills and gear. It's more than just geography; it's culture and people. The geographical aspect—the places—are just sketched out.

Situation

Situation is a problem in the setting to which the characters are inextricably bound. In Burning Wheel, characters must fight their way through these problems. There's no other option.

Action

Action is the thing that's happening right now. It's the immediate, in-your-face problem that is merely a part of a bigger problem as represented by the situation.

Chicken or Egg

To play this game effectively, you must create a situation. To have a situation, you must have setting and characters. But setting doesn't matter unless you have a compelling situation. And characters must be firmly entwined with both setting and situation. So which comes first? Chicken? Egg? Setting? Situation?

Sketching and Brainstorming



To set up a game of Burning Wheel and create compelling characters, setting and situation, you and your group must toss around some ideas to narrow your options and find a general aspect of the fantasy genre that interests everyone.

We usually spend a session to set up a game and create characters. Although we also sometimes do prep through email, we find it much more productive to make time to do it all face-to-face.

Draw on any source of inspiration at your disposal. If you recently read J. Gregory Keyes' *The Waterborn* and were inspired by the gods and mythology, don't hesitate to propose pulling those gods into your game. If you recently watched Peter Jackson's film of *The Return of the King* and were inspired by Theoden's speech at Pelennor Fields, tell your friends why you love it and why you want cataclysmic wars between the forces of light and darkness in your game. If you just finished Mark



Smylie's *Artesia* comics and love the flavor of his world—the intrigue, the politics, the culture—you should propose using similar ideas in your game.

Find a land, a place or a time that interests everyone in the group. Work with it a bit—adding or adopting ideas. Get everyone involved.

GM's Big Picture

To begin a game of Burning Wheel, one of the players has to have a strong opinion—a vision. That player takes on the role of the game master.

As the game master, your job is to approach the game with the fire of inspiration in your gut. You have an idea that excites you. You want to share it. I call that idea the Big Picture.

When you present that Big Picture to the players, you weave their feedback into it. You want them to interact with this idea. You want them to have a stake in the fate of this nascent thing. So we bend and stretch it as best we can to accommodate the players' needs. Some ideas don't fit and are discarded from the start. Some will wash out during play. While the process is not an equitable collaboration, there is give and take.

However, as you brainstorm, remember this dictum: Limitations make things interesting. Don't try to include everything in your Big Picture. Limit it; pare it down. When you decide not to include an element, devise a reason or logic behind the decision. Likewise, when you expand the Big Picture to include input from a player, share the logic of your decision. Why do these elements exist (or not) in your schema?



The Big Picture is your world, but the term "world" is too big. The word world makes you think you need to design an ecology and economy right off the bat—the whole fantasy milieu. You don't. You need only sketch rough lines. Create a loose structure with indistinct borders that you can detail in play. As you fill in each area, you learn how it works. When you return to a place you established, it feels comforting, fostering a sense of space and time.

Tone

Set a tone for your game. Tone is often tied directly to the setting. Some examples include: straight historical (Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror*), mythological or mystical (*The Tale of the Heike*, which is sort of historical but with magic and heroes), fairy tale (William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*), grim dark fantasy (Stephen R. Donaldson's *The Mirror of Her Dreams* or Glen Cook's *The Black Company*) and



adventurous in the vein of classic Dungeons & Dragons fantasy (Terry Brooks' *The Sword of Shannara*).



Loose Character Concepts

Toss around some loose character ideas. The GM's Big Picture is a large circle encompassing appropriate character concepts. Players state what type of character they'd like to play, but they should also be ready to adapt as details get firmed up. There will likely have to be some negotiation between the GM's concept of the setting and the players' character concepts. Try to accommodate all of the ideas that make sense. Throw out everything that's disruptive or nonsensical. Actually, keep one thing that doesn't make sense. You might be able to make the anomaly compelling as play develops.

A word to the wise: Consider the lifepaths. Try to mold your concepts to the existing lifepaths. Creating new lifepaths is possible, but it should be your option of last resort, not your first.



One-Sentence Setting

At this point, you should have at least one sentence to describe the type of setting in which you want to play. You should not have more than three bullet points.

An ancient kingdom in which a prophesied king ruled justly, leaving it all to his son upon his death.

The last Elven citadel, still a shining example of all that the First Folk can accomplish, a place of wisdom and grace.

A broken land to which the Orcs were exiled after their dark lord was defeated.

The primordial forest that links to all forests.





A tapestry of Dwarven princes vying for fame and glory from their palatial halls scattered along the mountains.

A land walked by gods who do not have the best interests of humans and beasts at heart.

Burning Situation

Burning Wheel doesn't care about the topography, population, climate, cosmology or creation myths of your world unless—*unless*—it matters. What matters in Burning Wheel? Stuff that challenges the players' Beliefs.

How Do You Challenge a Belief?

To successfully challenge a Belief, you first need to create believable context. You need to draw the players into the world so that they care about their characters and these challenges; *then* you confront them.

Bloodshed in the name of violence is irreligious; I shall not raise my hand to strike another.

A Belief like that speaks of pacifism. You cannot challenge it simply by saying, "You're in a fight!" Or even, "Some guy picks a fight with you. What do you do?"

You need to create a situation in which the player can make a choice about how he will engage that Belief.

In this case, the owner of that pacifist Belief is a doctor. What will he do when one of his patients is attacked while convalescing? Will he intervene? Will he stand idly by? Run for help?

A situation is something that contains choices. What are these choices? They are potential actions a player can take with his character. It's not enough to have the option to refuse or to walk away. In the context of the game, you must have the option to cut your own path.

These choices lead to actions. Actions are tests of a character's abilities. Resolution of an action produces a result that changes the situation, even if only slightly.

Building a situation is tricky business. Note its many qualifications:

- A well-wrought situation is interesting to everyone at the table.



- It is a conflict that encompasses many fictional people, making it easy for the players to burn characters that are central to this long-term conflict.

- It gives players room for input and interpretation through their Beliefs, Instincts, reputations, affiliations and relationships.

- And perhaps most important, a situation is not easily resolved, nor is it solved through any one straightforward path. In fact, there is no correct solution—only action.

All that is certain is that the situation must be confronted through adventure and conflict. When the situation stops burning, when players can no longer find conflicts to which they can attach Beliefs and Instincts, you know your game has come to a conclusion.

How Does One Create a Well Wrought Situation?

Creating a situation requires a measure of passion, a slice of inspiration, a helping of determination and a good amount of patience.

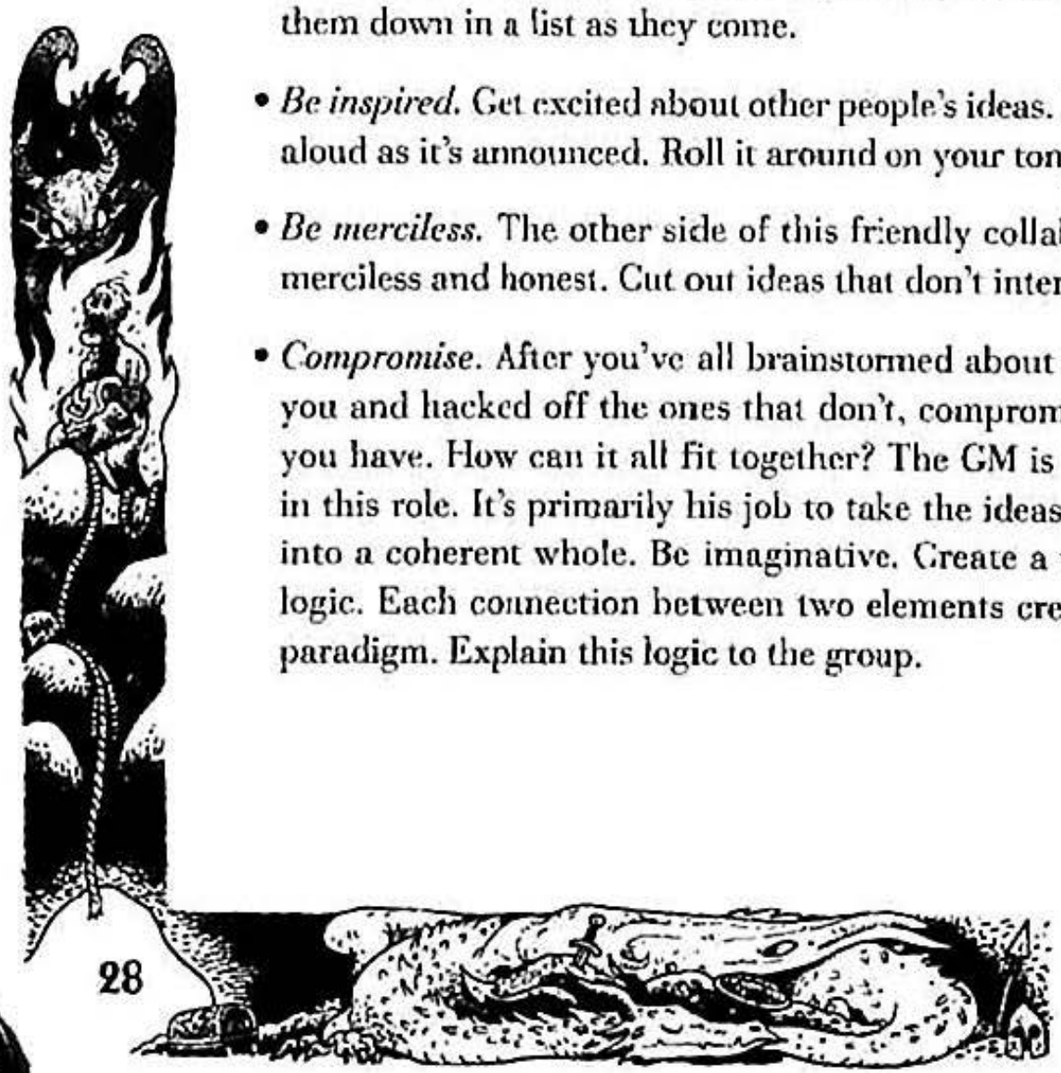
- *Think.* Come to the table with an idea that excites you about Burning Wheel or fantasy gaming or literature. It could be a character or even a situation borrowed from another story.

- *Brainstorm.* Everyone has an idea they're excited about. Get it all out on the table. I like to have everyone pop off an idea, and I write them down in a list as they come.

- *Be inspired.* Get excited about other people's ideas. Repeat each idea aloud as it's announced. Roll it around on your tongue.

- *Be merciless.* The other side of this friendly collaboration is to be merciless and honest. Cut out ideas that don't interest you.

- *Compromise.* After you've all brainstormed about ideas that excite you and hacked off the ones that don't, compromise. Merge what you have. How can it all fit together? The GM is the main player in this role. It's primarily his job to take the ideas and build them into a coherent whole. Be imaginative. Create a warped internal logic. Each connection between two elements creates a reason or paradigm. Explain this logic to the group.





Use the following questions to get you started and talking. Again, the GM should take a strong role in this, but needs to honor reasonable requests, especially for including character types. Try not to break the setting, but rather flesh it out.

- *What's the conflict?* What are the characters involved in? What are the sides? What problem do they face?
    - *Who opposes the goals of the characters?* Who are the antagonists? What is the relationship between the antagonists and the characters?
    - *What are the antagonists' goals?* Why are the characters in their way?
- *Imagine a scene in which all of the characters are standing in a room with the antagonists or their minions.* What do the antagonists want from that meeting? What do the characters want? Parley, redress, slaughter?
- *Alternately, imagine the characters standing at the scene of some great disaster or calamity clearly caused by one of the antagonists.* What's the disaster? How did it happen? What are the characters going to do about it right now?
- And lastly, what's the *raison d'etre*: Why are the characters together as an inseparable group? What is the glue that binds them? Are they family, neighbors, friends or fellow employees?

The situation for one of our campaigns was as follows: An ice age arrived because Death gained control of the God of Fire's lantern, which heats the world. The lantern now guttered in Death's care. Mysteriously, the group was dispatched on a journey by Death herself to find the lantern and decide whether or not to rekindle it.

The conflict was two-fold. First, the players had to successfully complete their journey. Second, they would have to convince Death in regard to the fate of the Lantern.

Their opposition was frightening. When I considered the setting of walking gods, it struck me that their enemies would be the two gods who wished to see light and fire extinguished eternally: Night and Cold. Those are powerful enemies.



From the outset, I planned to have the God of Cold pursuing them, turning all in their path to ice. The God of Night would then offer to aid them in their quest...if they would only perform a small service for him.

Those were my big setting villains. More immediately, I planned to oppose them with tribes of humans who believed themselves to be the Chosen (not the players), goblins who sought to cause mischief and lesser gods who simply wanted to get their way despite the end times!

This was a rather esoteric but high-stakes game.

The last element of the situation was the most important by far: Why were the characters together? What bound them? We decided that they ardently believed they were Chosen of Death. Each had their own reason, but essentially they were zealots for the god. I'll talk more about the characters in the Burning Characters section.

Burning Setting

When creating a setting for Burning Wheel, it's important to acknowledge the game's limits. Versatile though the game may be, you cannot "do whatever you want."

Burning Wheel doesn't provide you with a map, geography or other setting details, but there is a setting to this game. The lifepaths, traits and game rules themselves create the setting. The atmosphere of this setting is passionate and violent. It's fraught with volatile emotions like faith, greed, grief and hatred. The people of this setting are trying to escape the grind of their daily life, looking for something better. They are a colorful, quirky people—but often scarred or crippled by their experiences.



Look over the lifepaths and traits. Try to fit these ideas into your setting. If you can make it work, your game will go smoothly. If you can't make your ideas fit with our intrinsic setting, you need to rethink your game.

Technologically, Burning Wheel favors fourteenth-century France and twelfth-century China. The poor are very poor but surviving. The wealthy are very wealthy but also teetering on the edge of ruin. Magic is extremely potent, armor is effective and injury from a sword or bow is calamitous for the victim.



By default, there are peasants, villagers and townsfolk. There is a noble ruling class and an elite class of magicians and priests. The age of the professional soldier—mercenaries—has just dawned. Slavery and bondage are not uncommon, and society casts out those who don't fit or obey tradition: criminals, vagabonds, insurrectionists and sorcerers.

In addition to humans, there are all manner of fantastic peoples. The most robust are Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, Trolls, Great Wolves and Roden. Each people has its own distinct culture that governs its abilities and outlook. These peoples are heterogeneous—their cultures exist separately within the setting.

All of these elements exist in the default Burning Wheel setting. You can and should pare down the default settings to what's absolutely necessary to get your setting off the ground.

Use the following questions for inspiration. Let the world-builders in your group go to town—the GM should take an especially strong role—but be sure to accept input from all interested players. Try to answer these questions as succinctly as possible and don't spend more than a half hour or so on this part!

- *What's the Big Picture?* What's going on in this setting that makes it ripe for adventure? What's changing, evolving or declining?
- *What's the culture?* What are the cultural analogs? Analogs can be taken from history, current events or fantasy works.
- *What is the environment or atmosphere like?* Is it a sunlit realm of contrasts or a dour, grim country?
- *What's the name of the most important place in this setting?* Not the capital per se, but the place where all the action goes down.
- *What's the name of a faraway place?* A place that folks talk about, dream about or mutter about under their breath.
- *What types of magic exists in this setting?* How is it viewed by the various cultures?
- *Which character stocks are in play in this setting?* Which are restricted and why?
- *Who are the monsters of this setting?* Are they outcasts, or are they a part of everyday life?
- *How does the economy work?* What's the currency? Who collects the taxes? What do people do for work? What's the major trade?





I'm going to run down the answers for some of these questions for an example campaign:

Big Picture: We played in this world in a previous game. We wanted to explore more of it, but we didn't want to rehash what we'd done. On the other hand, the results of our last campaign were rather catastrophic: Fox God tricked Forest God, Mountain God and Fire God into war with one another. This resulted in Fire God's lantern being doused and stolen. We decided that in the aftermath of that divine cataclysm, Death had come into possession of the lantern and an ice age had set in. The question overhanging this world now was: Will Death extinguish the lantern for good and plunge the world into eternal darkness or would she rekindle it and bring an age of rebirth?

Culture: We decided that some time had passed since Death had gained the lantern. In that time, glaciers crept down from the north. Human civilization crumbled into itinerant tribes, slowly fleeing before the inexorable cold. But in addition to these tribes, great furry trolls now walked the earth, protected from the sun by the pall of gloom that preceded the ice.

Environment: The ice age wasn't complete. I decided that the campaign would start on the ice and move south and west, into verdant, still-living lands. But if the group delayed, the weather would turn cold and the clouds would blot out the sun.



The Most Important Place: This campaign didn't necessarily have a central location. It was a journey, a quest that traversed the world. In fact, I made certain that the location of each session was markedly different than the last: a great cave, a rushing river, a hidden glade, a goblin grotto, a mountain town, a rotting valley and windswept plains.

Faraway Place: There were two faraway places in this world: the Land of Death and home. One was at the end of their journey and the other was the beginning.

Magic: Thor decided he wanted to play a summoner, so the world had Summoning. Danny decided that his brother was a spirit binder, thus there was also Spirit Binding. And, despite the fact that gods trod the earth in many forms, there was no Faith magic present in the world. If you wished to entreat a god, either you bound it with Summoning or encountered it through your Circles or relationships.



Burning Characters

Character Concepts

When you're burning up your characters, weave in the details you've created for your game. Review questions. Tie characters into setting and situation.

Continuing my example from the Setting and Situation headings, we had four characters joined together by a love of Death—the power, not the practice.

Thor decided that he wanted to play a medicine man who treated with the dead. He claimed that he had received his powers when he died and was thrust back into life by Death herself.

Dro decided that he wanted to play a simple hunter who wished to guide his companions safely to the Land of the Dead.

Group Burning

When you make characters, try to make them together as a group. There's a certain energy and camaraderie that only comes when all heads are bent to rule books and pencils can be heard scritching on worksheets.

Making characters together is pretty straightforward. Take turns announcing your concepts and check to make sure everyone is still on the same page. Then tuck into the Burner. Choose your lifepaths. Divide stat, trait, resource and skill points. Buy your gear. Write Instincts. Read off the Steel, Health, Grief, Greed and Hatred questions. Hold off on relationships and Beliefs for a moment.



Hacking Lifepaths

If you're stuck on finding the right lifepath to represent your setting, you may use the following options. However, the modifications must be approved by the other players first and then the GM gets final say. He can make suggestions to modify or tailor your changes to the setting. This is his job: to ensure the setting creates adequate adversity for your little guy.

Change the Names First

This method is by far the simplest, best option for modifying lifepaths to suit your setting. Change a "knight" to "janissary," for example. Sometimes that's the difference you need to make





something fit. If that's not enough, add a wise or skill to the path. Don't change anything else. If that's still not enough, change one skill to something more appropriate to your setting. For example, if playing in a Renaissance setting, you might need to change Bow or Crossbow to Firearms or something similar.

Sometimes the culture of your setting just doesn't fit the lifepaths. To accommodate the culture, consider changing *one* of the lifepath's requirements—a trait or skill.



Traits are a major part of the Burning Wheel ethos, but it's tempting to cut them out in favor of your new awesome setting. I urge you not to. Believe it or not, behind each lifepath trait is a careful decision about game balance. So, it's cool to change the names of traits to suit the flavor of your game, but try not to change their substance.

New Lifepaths

Sometimes your setting will encourage inventive twists that aren't included in our lifepaths. Create a new lifepath that suits your requirements. Try to look in the various settings in the Codex for an analogous lifepath and base your new path on that.

Use this option sparingly.

Of Men and Monsters

Sometimes, a player is going to devise a character concept that simply cannot be burned up using the existing lifepaths. There are a couple of ways to go about this. You can simply rough in the appropriate abilities and traits for the creature or you can burn it from one of the extant lifepath sets and then just toss on some additional traits to make it into a monster.

Danny wanted to play a half-troll, half-yeti. We used the Troll lifepaths to create the skeleton of the character. Then we replaced some of his Trollish traits with traits from the Monstrous Trait List: Rather than being scaly, he was hairy. He replaced his Claws and Fangs with the Aura of Fear, and his Night Eyes with Keen Sight.

Cultural Traits

What cultural traits apply to the characters of this game world? Pick one to three character traits for each culture (see the Burning Wheel, page 198).

Material World

Take a look at your material world. Can you make your setting more interesting by imposing limits or restrictions? What weapons and armor are available? Are some weapons and armor restricted to certain cultures or character stocks? What property is available? Are resources and gear otherwise restricted?





Burning Action



You've got a setting, a situation and characters, so you're good to go, right? Almost, but not quite. You need an immediate problem in the setting to kick you off. You need action. To create action, the GM makes a strong statement about how the antagonists, their minions and the general forces of the setting are out to make the lives of the characters difficult.

These forces can attack the characters directly, attack their relationships and property, or even try to destabilize the setting itself. The GM sets up a scenario and lays it out for the players.

Alternately, the action can consist of a mission for the player characters—an act they must undertake. The direction for the mission comes from one of their relationships. The goal of the mission entangles them with their enemies. It shouldn't topple or directly confront the enemy. Build up to that.

Two tribes—one of furry trolls, one of humans—meet at the prophesied place, the mouth of a great cave. Both claim to be Chosen of Death to undertake this quest. You are members of both tribes. You must strike an accord so that the tribes do not slaughter each other and fail to complete Death's quest before it is begun.

In our game, a contest between the champions of each tribe was declared. The winners would go on the quest.

Once the contests were decided, the group of Chosen was led into a great cave by Bat God. He led them to a chasm from which they had to leap in darkness into River God and be swept away. They had to make Forte tests to stay conscious once they hit the freezing, rushing river...and then they were away on their quest.





Burning Beliefs and Relationships

Now that you have setting, situation, characters and action on the table, the players finalize any relationships their characters have and write Beliefs.

The action as described by the GM should grab you by the throat. If your enemies are acting against you, you should be narrowing your eyes and saying "No way" after hearing the description of their actions. If you've been sent on a mission, you should be staring at the GM with conviction, announcing, "Nothing can stop me!"

The following bullet points give you some pointers:

- Write a Belief about the action. This Belief must be goal oriented.
- Write a goal-oriented Belief about helping, hindering or learning about another player's character.
- Write a non-goal-oriented ethical statement about the situation—you oppose the situation on moral grounds, you'll do the right thing no matter what or you'll follow your code despite the situation.
- Write a goal-oriented Belief about one of your relationships.
- Write an ethical statement about something you want to explore in the setting.

Chris wrote the following Beliefs for his furry troll who loved Death:

- *I must find a guide to aid me on this journey (or I will get lost).*
- *I must rescue the lantern and keep it burning.*
- *I love Death. I will prove to her my prowess and serve at her side.*

The situation in of our first session was a direct challenge to his last Belief: to prove his love for Death and win his place on this quest at all costs.



Burning Mechanical Details

There are a handful of mechanical details that the GM and interested players can fiddle with to better customize the game for the setting.

- What optional or new rules from this book are you using? Make sure all of the players are aware that these rules are in play.



- What's your Resources cycle? One month, seasonal, six months, annual?
- If traditional Sorcery is used, what's its idiom? Does it require speech? Gestures?
- If traditional Sorcery is used, what spells are available? Which spells are inappropriate to the game world? If Summoning is used, which orders are in play? If Art Magic, what schools? If Death Art, which creatures are appropriate? If Spirit Binding, which domains?
- If Faith is used, what is the Faith idiom? What are the religions? Is Faith universal or does it only affect believers?

Resources Hacks

Are there special conditions on your world that necessitate characters beginning with certain resources, gear or relationships? If necessary, distribute 5, 10 or 15 resource points to each character, so they may begin the game in line with the vision of your world. Don't take this one lightly. It can break the game. Err on the conservative side.

Does your world necessitate certain traits for survival? Is it an apocalyptic wasteland, an undersea kingdom, a realm of cloud castles? If so, assign appropriate traits to the characters so that everything fits and makes sense. These traits should mostly be character traits, but low-end die traits are acceptable, too.

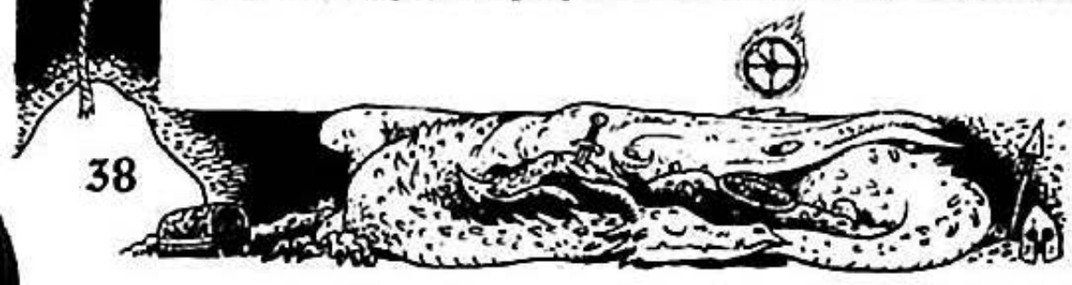


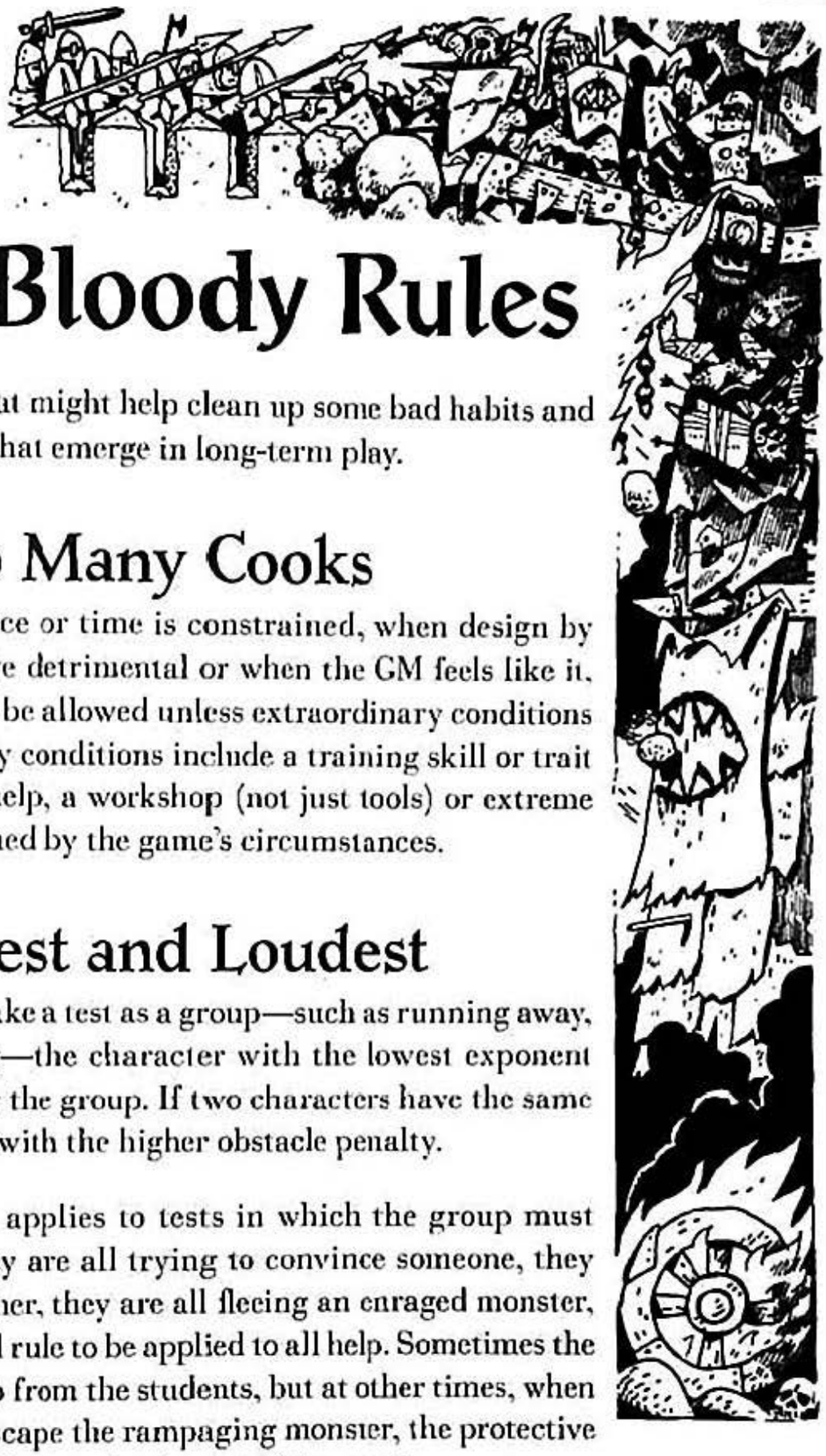
Burning Starting Artha

For games with a more heroic feel, start your players with a larger pool of artha—up to three fate and three persona. To encourage your players to really dive into their Beliefs, start them with the bare minimum of one fate and one persona.

Wrapping Up

The questions and bullet points in this chapter should have you primed to develop a functional situation and setting for a Burning Wheel game. This chapter is little more than a sketch. For a more in-depth look at the individual mechanics and how to use them in your games, check out the rather extensive Commentary section. Beliefs, setting and situation all have individual Commentary chapters; building a long-running game is discussed in the Running the Game chapter; and collaborating and being a good, supportive player is discussed in the Table Behavior chapter.





More Bloody Rules

Here are some rules that might help clean up some bad habits and soft spots in the rules that emerge in long-term play.

Too Many Cooks

For tests in which space or time is constrained, when design by committee would prove detrimental or when the GM feels like it, only one helper should be allowed unless extraordinary conditions are met. Extraordinary conditions include a training skill or trait that allows for extra help, a workshop (not just tools) or extreme conditions as determined by the game's circumstances.

Slowest and Loudest

When using help to make a test as a group—such as running away, sneaking or climbing—the character with the lowest exponent must make the test for the group. If two characters have the same exponent, use the one with the higher obstacle penalty.

Slowest and Loudest applies to tests in which the group must succeed together: They are all trying to convince someone, they are all sneaking together, they are all fleeing an enraged monster, etc. It is not a universal rule to be applied to all help. Sometimes the master can accept help from the students, but at other times, when the students have to escape the rampaging monster, the protective master can only go as fast as the slowest of the pupils.

Fight Action Variants

Counterstrike Variants

There are two variants to the Counterstrike action that we use at Burning Wheel Headquarters: Counter-Lock and Counter-Disarm.

They use the same basic mechanics as the Counterstrike—the same action interactions. You divide your dice between defense and attack.

The attack portion of the Counter-Lock acts as a Lock action. Check the interaction against your opponent's current action. If you meet your obstacle or win the versus test, apply a Lock according to the standard rules. This also indicates you've won advantage at hands fighting distance.

The attack portion of the Counter-Disarm acts as a Disarm action. Check the interactions against your opponent's current action. If you're successful, you knock your opponent's weapon away, as per the standard rules.

I only recommend incorporating these variant actions if you're looking to add more martial flavor to your game. I also recommend limiting them to specific skills or even individual characters who can teach them. A simple instruction cycle can be used for teaching this new technique.

Damaging Locks

After you incapacitate your opponent with a Lock action, you may continue to apply the Lock action even though your opponent cannot resist any further. Each subsequent unopposed Lock action counts as a bare-fisted Strike. You may not uses any weapons for this Strike except claws or teeth. The grappled victim may not defend in any way. Armor does not protect against this attack.

If you wish to incapacitate someone and knife them, you use a regular Strike action and all the normal rules for that action apply.



Stature

Stature gets short shrift in Burning Wheel. Let's see if we can make up for that. There are five statures: tiny, diminutive, middling, massive and gigantic.

Middle of the Road

Humans, Elves, Orcs and Wolves all count as middling stature, neither diminutive nor massive. And due to their Stout trait, we'll count Dwarves as middling stature for the purposes of this rule. Roden, alas, are diminutive.

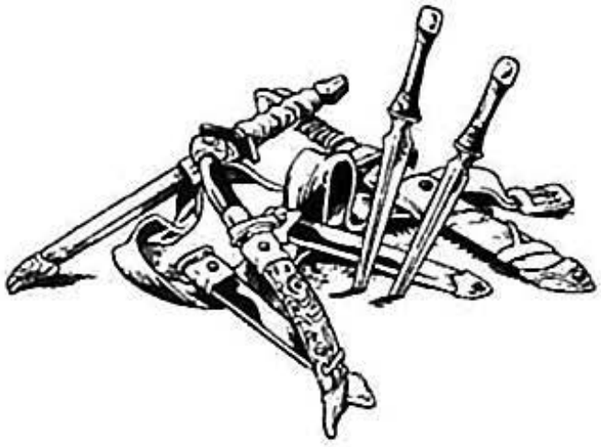
Grabbing the Big Guys

Add a +1 Ob penalty for each step of difference in stature when a smaller character is attempting to Lock, Charge or Push a character of bigger stature.

Thus, a Dwarf or human has +1 Ob to Push, Charge or Lock a Troll (massive stature). They would have +2 Ob to Push, Charge or Lock a Dragon (gigantic stature).

Faith Hindrance Against Stature

When attempting to use the Faith Hindrance miracle against creatures of larger than middling stature, use the following modifications: massive stature counts as two people (Ob 5); gigantic stature counts as three people (Ob 6).



Free Shots

Take all the free shots owed to you on a maneuver in Range and Cover (instead of being limited to one as described in the standard rules). Don't say I never gave you anything.

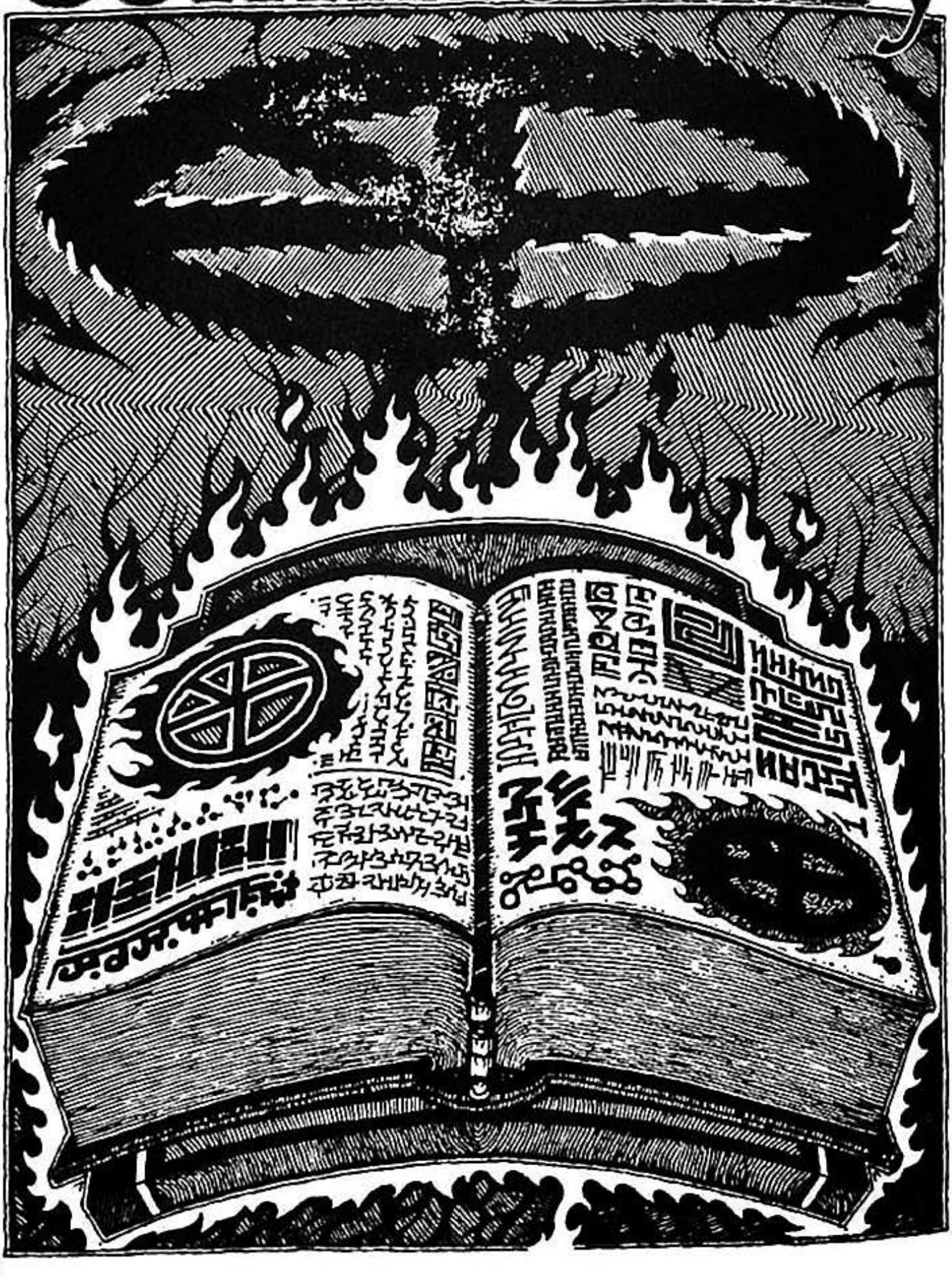
Instinct Timing

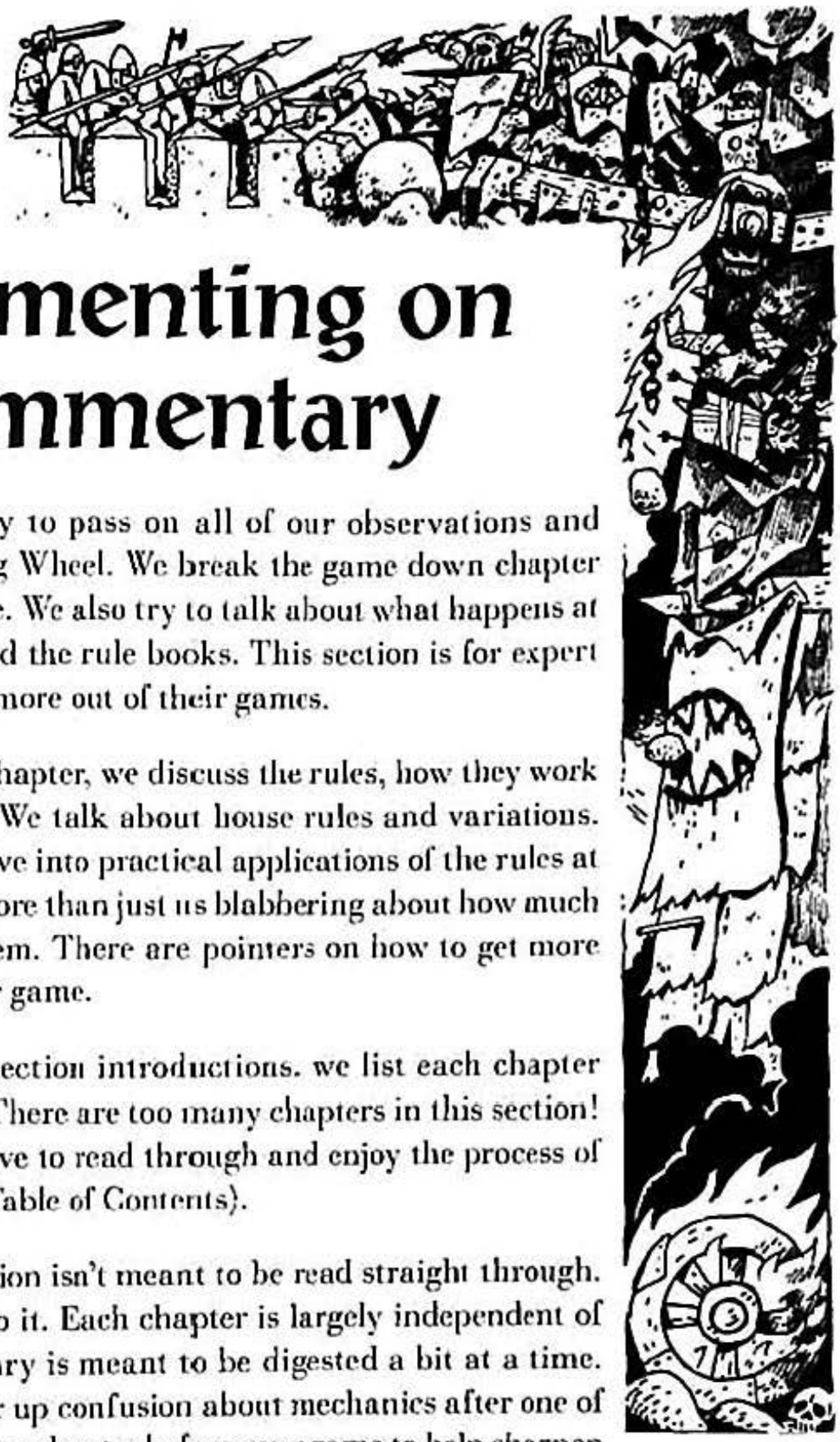
How much time does an Instinct provide? The core rules are intentionally silent on the matter. I want players and GMs to decide what feels right. Instincts are a way to edit the story so it fits better with our conception of what is heroic.

But if I had to put a number on it, I'd say 2-3 actions before a conflict are reasonable for an Instinct. But don't get too picayune with this definition. If you have an "Always practice..." Instinct, then you practiced the last time there was a good moment for it. But this doesn't mean you can squeeze in one last practice session right now before your big fight.



Commentary





Commenting on Commentary

In this section, we try to pass on all of our observations and insights about Burning Wheel. We break the game down chapter by chapter, rule by rule. We also try to talk about what happens at the table—stuff beyond the rule books. This section is for expert users who want to get more out of their games.

In each commentary chapter, we discuss the rules, how they work and what they mean. We talk about house rules and variations. And then we try to delve into practical applications of the rules at the table. So, there's more than just us blabbering about how much we like the Fight system. There are pointers on how to get more from the rules for your game.

Traditionally in our section introductions, we list each chapter and give a summary. There are too many chapters in this section! You're just going to have to read through and enjoy the process of discovery (or use the Table of Contents).

The Commentary section isn't meant to be read straight through. There's no narrative to it. Each chapter is largely independent of the others. Commentary is meant to be digested a bit at a time. Read a chapter to clear up confusion about mechanics after one of your games. Or consult a chapter before your game to help sharpen your situation. We feel these essays are all useful, but there's too much information to absorb in one pass.

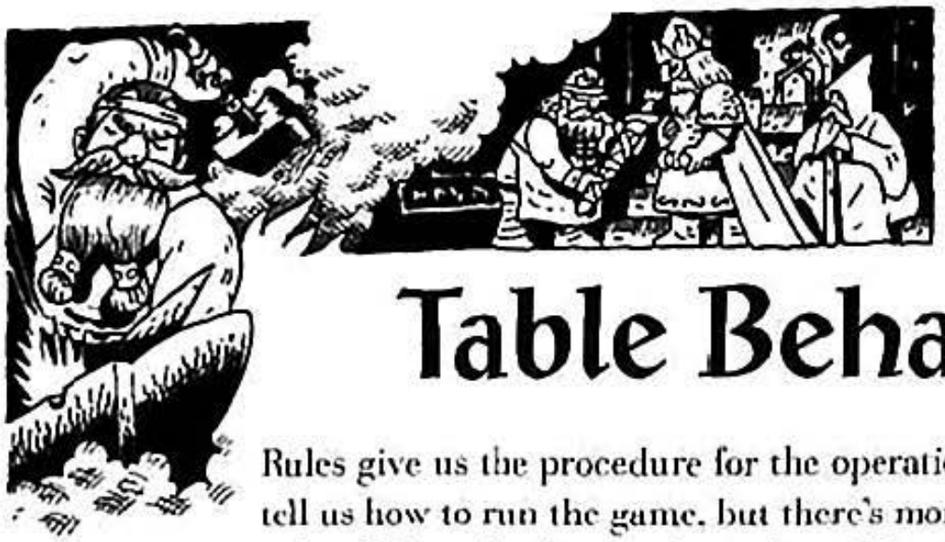


Table Behavior



Rules give us the procedure for the operation of the system. They tell us how to run the game, but there's more to how we play than rules. What do players do at the table when playing Burning Wheel? In this chapter, we highlight some important habits at our table: referencing the rules, logging tests and artha, supporting the other players in pursuit of their goals, passing the spotlight and taking notes.

Referencing the Rules

There's a certain ebb and flow to the intensity of play in a roleplaying game. Sometimes we're all talking in funny voices, deeply engrossed in the situation. Sometimes we're slinging dice and crying victory or howling defeat. Sometimes we're an interested member of the audience. Sometimes we zone out. And sometimes we need to reference the rules.

There is no secret knowledge in the Burning Wheel rules. Everyone is encouraged to know the rules of the game. Some players will have a better handle on the rules than others. That's only natural. But when a rules question arises, we reference the rules: What's that obstacle? What's the practice time? What's the appropriate skill? Sometimes we all go to the rules at the same time. Sometimes the referrer is the GM, but more often it is a player not directly involved in the action who reaches for a book and reads aloud the relevant passage. It helps us all become more familiar with the system. Our memories are subjective, faulty and unreliable. By relying on the rules, we ensure that calls are as fair and consistent as they can be.

It deserves mention that if there's a dispute to be settled or interpretation to be made about the rules, the GM is the lead player in the matter. We can each cite rules, but the final call is the GM's.

Master Your Role

Players are responsible for knowing their part. If you're playing a knight, familiarize yourself with Fight. If you're playing a courtier, learn the Duel of Wits chapter. If you're playing a priest, read up on Faith. If you're playing a sorcerer, learn what your magics do and how to perform them.



If you're playing a Dark Elf, make sure you know your Spite.

It's considered very bad form at our table to not know the specialized rules for a character you're playing. You might not have mastered them, but make a reasonable attempt to absorb them. It's the polite thing to do.

One way to learn these specialized rules is to help refer to them during play. We don't expect you to memorize everything beforehand. We learn much better by doing and referring in play.

Logging Tests and Artha

The best practice for logging a test for advancement is to wait until the moment has passed, the test is resolved and the performance has ended. The spotlight will inevitably pass to another player or the GM. Use that moment to quickly check off your advancement. If you don't know what the difficulty was, look it up—either on page 41 of the Burning Wheel or on your character sheet.

Do not be rude and interrupt the GM and other players by asking for the difficulty. If I could go back and make this a rule, I would: "If you interrupt another player or the GM with a question about advancement, you lose the test for advancement that you are trying to log." The interruptions drive me crazy, especially since they're unnecessary.

On the other hand, when first starting out with Burning Wheel, for the first few sessions you should stop play momentarily after a test or scene and walk everyone through logging tests.

When you spend artha, the situation is different. You must announce the expenditure to the group and mark it off your sheet (and mark the progress toward epiphany) as you spend it.



Supporting Other Players

Supporting other players in pursuit of their goals is a more nuanced behavior than referring to rules or logging tests, but it is an important habit at the table. It requires measures of sensitivity, humility, fair play and a sense of drama.

Support goes beyond passing a helping die, but it can start there. If a player is in pursuit of a Belief, don't jump on the test simply because you have a better chance of succeeding. Offer to help the other player accomplish this goal. Roleplay the mentorship and support.



On the other hand, if you're gunning for a goal, but you don't need this test for advancement, take a moment to roleplay your character asking for help. Make an impassioned plea. Let another player step up and share in your moment. Help them help you accomplish your goal.

Another great way to support another player is to include his character in one of your Beliefs. Write a Belief about helping, hindering or convincing another player's character. It's guaranteed to benefit you both, and you'll get to share the spotlight to resolve the situation.

Passing the Spotlight

Sometimes you have to take center stage when a Belief is challenged. However, after you've accomplished a goal, think about how you can help your fellow players accomplish theirs. Don't be selfish in the spotlight. They've helped you. Now, what can you do to help them? We've found that a session of Burning Wheel play often revolves around one or two players driving the action while other players, who aren't as invested, play supporting roles. It's a perfectly natural state, and these roles change from session to session. We can't all be in the spotlight all the time.

As the GM, you must be conscious of this phenomenon as well. It doesn't pay to focus too heavily on one character—challenging only that character's Beliefs. This will stymie the growth of the group. When I'm running a campaign, I try to pick one Belief from two different characters to challenge in a session. During the session, I set up the challenges for those Beliefs. Everyone else is expected to help or support those players. Hopefully they have Beliefs about doing just that. Next session, I set up challenges for two different Beliefs. This way, in our ongoing games, I work to ensure the spotlight is shared over the long term.

Note Taking

At BWHQ we like extended campaigns. We like story lines that span sessions, campaigns, characters and even groups! We foster this type of play by keeping notes on our play. Usually a couple of players will note down the names of characters met, places visited and items found. The GM logs Duel of Wits compromises and winning statements. And sometimes a player will keep an obsessive log of all of his character's accomplishments.





After playing this way for many years, we have a sprawling archive of material from multiple campaigns. Honestly, it's a bit daunting. Since it's all scribbled in notebooks, it can be hard to find a particular piece of information. However, it's incredibly inspiring. I can grab a notebook, flip through it and not only remember some good times, but find inspiration for other stories for those characters—stat blocks, scrawled notes, careful plans and lists of names.

There's plenty of downtime in a game when the spotlight is on another player or the GM is in the bathroom. Instead of rewriting your equipment list (again), checking your email or tuning out, take some notes. Jot down what you're thinking about the campaign. Write down your friend's hilarious in-character outburst. Record the name of the fortress you just conquered. The notes will pay dividends in the long run. We use notebooks and a folder full of notes for each campaign. Some folks like to use online documents and wikis, too. These can be shared around the group to allow everyone to contribute and collaborate.









Running a Game

The Burning Wheel provides procedures for creating a character, enumerating player goals, resolving conflicts and changing characters over time. Yet the text does not provide instructions on how to combine those elements and run a session, adventure or campaign. This chapter contains loose commentary on how to run a game of Burning Wheel. We'll get into specifics in the individual commentary chapters.



One-Off

A complete game of Burning Wheel can be played in one sitting. In this case, the situation must be a one-act story with one goal to push toward. Complications in attaining the goal and the resolution of the goal make up the action for the session. Burning Wheel sessions of this type run from two to six hours.

Here are some of the one-offs I've run: A tribe of Orcs attempts to overthrow its leader; a delegation of Elves comes to congratulate a Dwarven prince upon his coronation, but they forget to bring a gift; four adventurers find a magical sword and debate who keeps the treasure; four Elves journey to a lost island to end their kin who have become Dark Elves; a family gathers to cremate their deceased grandfather and divide his patrimony; and a ragtag group of adventurers must aid a town plagued by a violent demon.

During a one-off session, don't worry about tracking advancement. Don't track artha for epiphanies. Most players will focus on one Belief in a one-off session. Once they've made a statement about that Belief, challenge it. You're not going to get a second chance. If a player is struggling with a Belief, try to push for a climax that threatens or changes that Belief. Otherwise, don't worry about challenging each Belief in a one-off. Drive toward the action with players who are interested and focused. Other players with tangential Beliefs need to dive into the action and participate—encourage them, but don't coddle them.

When starting a one-off session, it's vital that the GM be explicit about the situation. Before characters are chosen or burned, the GM tells the players what the goal of the session will be. He's not



obligated to reveal any secrets or spell it out, but he must tell the players what's going on. Doing so allows the players to make more directly applicable choices for their characters—Beliefs, skills, wises, gear—and thus get right to the action.

Single-Session Goals

If you were to tackle a dungeon in a single session of play, the GM might give a goal like, "retrieve the orb." He then notes about four obstacles that lead to one fight. How the players handle the obstacles determines the state of the fight. They can walk into it fresh and smart, or they can wash up bedraggled and in trouble. The results of the action in the dungeon might lead to a Duel of Wits about the fate of the aforementioned orb. If everything goes well, we might play out a return trip through some of the obstacles.

Short Campaign

To run a short campaign of Burning Wheel, you'll need a setting and a situation with two goals. One goal should be obvious and explicit, similar to a one-off session goal. The second goal should be occluded and emergent. It presents itself after the first goal has been accomplished or failed to be accomplished.

How long is short? We recommend 4-15 sessions. In four sessions, you can accomplish quite a bit, but don't have room to advance many abilities. In 15 sessions, you can usually see one full cycle from a starting character through a trait vote or two, with plenty of advancements.

You have more time to stretch your legs in a short campaign. You can afford to more broadly address individual Beliefs. However, you still need to stay tightly focused on the resolution of the situation at hand.

Plan on confronting the first goal at the end of the second session or the beginning of the third. However, don't start slow. Start off the first session of the short campaign with action—a confrontation, a fight, a dispute, an argument, a ceremony or a mystery revealed. Use this action to engage the players; challenge a Belief or two right out of the gate.

Once you've accomplished that first goal, the players will have new ideas about their Beliefs. Encourage the players to change them. Prepare to be taken by surprise. Prepare to have to scramble to challenge them.





Your second goal is a twist or revelation presented at the conclusion of the first. It is not an unconnected surprise. It's a natural outgrowth from the action thus far. This twist is revealed in the action of completing that first goal. You topple the duke, but you learn that your wife is pregnant by him. You gain a pup from an opposing wolf pack, but now you're embroiled in a war with the gods, and so on.

Long-Term Mechanics for Short-Term Play

In a short campaign, it's possible for the players to accomplish micro-goals from session to session—changing a Belief at the top of each session to reflect their immediate goal. This is perfectly acceptable. Also, encourage them to track advancement. You'll probably see advancements in session three or four. Don't worry about tracking epiphany artha—unless you plan to return to these characters in the future. An epiphany typically requires 30-50 sessions of play to accomplish.

Lifestyle maintenance cycles depend on the pace and passage of time in the fiction. If you're playing a taut, thriller-like story that happens over the course of a week, then you won't need the lifestyle maintenance rules. If you're playing a short campaign about a war that spans a year—with significant downtime between the battles—then you'll want to agree on a maintenance cycle.

Also, at the end of a short campaign, take time to perform a trait vote. It is an excellent way to reflect on the game and cement the characters in the group's imagination. It is also a nice reward for all of your hard work. Or, you can accelerate the pace even further and allow a trait vote after the first short campaign goal is accomplished. That way, you get to play the changed characters—which is its own reward.



Long Campaign

Burning Wheel is designed to be run as a long campaign. The system creates growth and change in the character—Beliefs and Instincts change, abilities advance, injuries reduce your abilities, new traits are earned and old ones lost. In a long campaign, these events happen inevitably and repeatedly. Thus the character changes not once, but gradually, constantly, as the story progresses. I find this style of play immensely satisfying.

How long is long? To us, a long campaign is just getting rolling around session 12. At this point, all of the original Beliefs are resolved and now we're really digging into the setting.



For a long game, it's important to have a big, loose setting. The GM and the players need to have an idea of the culture, the customs, the mores and even the prejudices of the people they are playing.

However, the pregnant situation that kicks off a one-shot or short-term game is also vital to the success of a long-term game. You must jump into a long-term game with action and you must move from action to action. When a goal is accomplished, it reveals new information, a new situation that changes the players' perspectives. Players must modify their Beliefs to accommodate this new information. If you reach a point in which the action is resolved and players don't wish to modify their Beliefs, you've reached the end of your game.

In a long-term game, track advancement and log artha expenditures for epiphanies. Keep a practice journal. At least one player should take notes on important NPCs met, compromises reached and other important events. Perform a trait vote every 6-12 sessions.

Reincorporate NPCs. Old characters encountered in the early days of the game return with a new perspective and new goals.

Revisit locations. Recurring locations help create a sense of place in the game. You can indicate progress or change in the setting with descriptions of how certain locations have changed during the course of the story. The players can also directly change these places—buying them, ruling over them, destroying them or liberating them. This in turn creates a sense of ownership, which translates to ownership of the story itself.

Engage with the practice and lifestyle maintenance cycles. When a character absolutely must recover from an injury, use this downtime to allow the other characters to accomplish long-term aims. Their progress is described in terms of practice cycles—intriguing at court? Practice Etiquette. Scouting a city? Practice Streetwise. Imprisoned? Time to do pushups for two hours a day and practice your Power.

When you reach a lull in the game, don't be afraid to set it aside for a while. Talk about the setting, the characters and the events. Find out what parts of the setting interest the group. Pick up the game again and address those interests. Or play from a different perspective—same setting, but different characters. We've used one of our settings to play out a dozen campaigns from a variety of perspectives. From adventure to adventure, some characters recur, some are new. This practice truly gives the setting a feeling of life and depth.





One-on-One Games

Some of my favorite campaigns have been one-on-one: one player and myself as the GM. These games are intense. You have to be very focused. There's no way to turn aside to another player and get a break while your brain chews on a thorny problem.

In my experience, this intensity makes the sessions shorter than they would be for a larger group. My one-player sessions last between two and three hours. Never longer. They're exhausting, since you can't pass the spotlight and rest or reflect.

Mechanically, the game works fine in this mode except for three aspects: help, artha and trait votes. Help is a problem since there is only one player—and help is a vital aspect of the system that ties deeply to advancement and learning new skills. To remedy this, play strong NPCs and use them as surrogate PCs. Build close relationships. Let the NPCs help and be helped during play.

The artha awards for MVP, Workhorse and Embodiment are tricky. They are derived from a group vote. It's too easy for the GM and player to lazily agree that all awards are deserved. Or too easy for the player to sit back and let the GM hand out the awards at will. Neither of these scenarios is acceptable. Both player and GM must be open, honest and critical of the session. They both need to look at the session with dispassion. Be harsh critics. Your play will benefit greatly from it.



Traits votes are difficult in a manner similar to group-determined artha awards. It's too easy to be lazy and just toss on benefits. The player and GM must be critical of the play and look at it with an open mind. Procedurally, the GM plays a dual role in the trait vote, acting both as the group and as the GM. It's quite a bit of power. He judges the player's performance and determines what trait is appropriate or what traits are valid to be removed. It's a bit stressful, but also very refreshing. It's a tremendous venue for deeply changing a character. A one-on-one game will transform you and the way you play.

A group game is like a little party, but a one-on-one game is more like a date. The intimacy, for lack of a better word, can be intimidating. There's nowhere to hide! Still, the experience is very rewarding. Try it out.



Practical Action

Burning Wheel is a game about action. Characters take action in service of their Beliefs to accomplish their ends.

Options and Questions

To keep action interesting, there can be no set outcome to the situation. Both player and GM must be prepared for a beneficial or harmful outcome, but the GM holds the greater responsibility in this process.

When the GM presents an obstacle for you to overcome, there must be an explicit question about its resolution. Your nemesis, the cardinal, visits your cell. You've been condemned. He represents your only possibility of redress, yet you hate him. Will you treat with him or will you go stoically to your fate? If you treat with him, will you plead, bribe or spell your way out of this situation?

If there's no question, consider Saying Yes to this action and moving on.

Fights and arguments in Burning Wheel have uncertain outcomes. They present their own inherent questions: Will you survive? How much will this cost you? But again, if there's no question—if an opponent is unassailable—don't play out the action. Move the story along to the point at which there is a question with uncertain outcomes. You can't defeat the giant in single combat; you'll be destroyed in a single blow. But can you outwit him? Can you escape his dungeons? Those are questions whose outcomes we don't know. Their resolution will provide us with interesting play.

Practical Situation

Simple Motivations

When devising problems to be solved in fantasy roleplaying games, it's easy to run away with complicated, outsized ideas. The classic example: We must save the world! Why? Because the forces of ancient chaos have arrived to annihilate it! Great. Who cares?

Such situations are tempting, because they are full of awe and imply heroic deeds. However, Burning Wheel operates best with simple, human motivations: greed, jealousy, grief, hatred, zealotry, love, despair, fraternity, etc. Drill down to these base motivations and you can give the impending doom of the world more gravity.





Place these themes at the core of your situation and build out from there. Give your characters motivations based on these simple emotions and Burning Wheel will sing.

Even if you're conducting an old-school dungeon crawl, make your dungeoneer hateful and bigoted or motivate him with loyalty and friendship. The Goblin King at the center of this hellish pit might be motivated by unrequited love for the noble knight's beautiful sister. Motivations like these help the actions make sense. They give structure around which you can easily wrap Beliefs and Instincts. And most important, they allow you to start from a believable center and grow out into the realm of the fantastic.

The key to creating an epic game in Burning Wheel isn't in the shade of the villain's abilities, but the motivations. These motivations must be made comprehensible, even sympathetic. Make the core of the story small and set it against a large backdrop. Your game will take on an epic scope.

Practical Situation in Continuing Games

It's one thing to set up a neat world and have an interesting starting point, but how do you continue that game?

Last Time...



You can pick up right where you left off. Briefly recap the last session. Drop the players right back into the action. This is a basic technique that works well for resolving cliff-hangers and other unfinished action. It's easy for the GM because he doesn't have to do a lot of new work for the next scene.

The GM can and should use the break between sessions to add a new twist or dimension to the situation. Bring in a relationship to help or an enemy to hinder, or use a previous failure result to add a new twist. Be sure to add this new obstacle to the end of the recap of last session.

The players are welcome to modify or change Beliefs to suit developments in this ongoing problem.

Our Intrepid Adventurers Recently Discovered...

You can use a recap method that takes the last bit of action and restates it as a kind of prologue for the coming session. This works well with big revelations. Restate the discovery. Rattle off a number of the players'



options for dealing with the situation. Give them a few minutes to discuss. Then hit them with a new twist: A relationship comes to see them with more information; an antagonist makes a move against an ally; or an antagonist makes a move directly against the group.

This technique is most easily used at the top of the session, but it's quite effective during a session, too. If the players lack direction, you can stop the bickering and say, "You recently discovered that the twelfth daughter of the Queen Mother of the city is a sorceress and in love with Ian's character. What are you going to do about it?"

Meanwhile...

If your group is split up, you must switch the spotlight between the two segments. I find it effective to start the session with a "Meanwhile...," focusing on the group that was inactive at the end of the last session.

Describe the situation of both groups. Let the players write or modify Beliefs. Focus the action on one part of the group. Allow them to overcome or resolve one obstacle. Cut back to the other group and do the same. Try to keep each cut to five to 10 minutes. Don't make the other group sit so long that they get bored. Try to make the cuts back and forth with die rolls. Sometimes you can even intertwine tests between two separated groups. Set up a test and have one group throw the dice. Cut to the other group before narrating the results. Have the second group roll for their test, but then cut back to the first group and determine their results. And then finally jump back to the second group for their results. It can be a nice tension-building technique.

Once the action is resolved, narrate the groups rejoining. "After your harrowing experiences, you meet again on the far side of the marsh." Or, "Later, back at your apartments in the city, you discuss what happened."



Of course, if one group is in great danger, the other players may have to come to the rescue. If this is the case, don't make the captured or dangling group wait too long. Frame an obstacle to the rescue and resolve it. Dig right into the real action of the situation—players helping one another in a heroic fashion.

You can also use Meanwhile situations to demonstrate what the antagonists are doing or to show off a piece of the Big Picture. Once the players have resolved a situation—especially one that transpired over a long period of game time—hit them with a Meanwhile: "Meanwhile, the Society of Professional Mourners has set up an office in the funerary district. You hear about it from some of your clients." Or, "Meanwhile, while you were out traipsing around the countryside, the Council has passed a law restricting the practice of magic in the city." You can use these to showcase the effects of the players' actions in the setting and foreshadow the next situation.

Born from your setting and situation, such simple statements can galvanize a group and spur them to creative action—especially if they challenge Beliefs.

Later...

The GM controls the pacing of the game. If he feels the game is stalled or dragging, he must reframe the action. He briefly narrates a jump in time and then describes the current, more pressing situation to the players. It's the perfect opportunity to grab one of the player's Beliefs and confront him about it.



Don't say, "You finish that and wait." Put the players right into the throat of a problem they can't ignore. Tell them, "Your hearing goes poorly. You're conducted back to your cell to await the verdict. After an interminable, undefinable amount of time, the cardinal—your nemesis—is admitted to your cell to give you absolution." What will you say to the cardinal? Will you try to escape judgment?

This technique is very powerful, but take care in using it. Players will often want to interject some action or detail, "Oh, before that I wanted to go shopping." Say no. Tell them there was no time. This is a GM superpower. You control pacing. You get to set the scenes. Of course, if you honestly forgot a pending request, you should honor it. Don't be a dick, but don't let players dither.



When Do You Back Off and Let the Players Take the Reins?

It's important to keep the action moving, to keep the players interested and engaged. After a good, strong run, players will be exhausted and out of ideas. Their characters will be beat up, in need of rest and recuperation.

You do not want to rest up the characters before every dramatic situation. The whole point of being wounded or suffering similar penalties is that these modifications make the next action more dangerous, more challenging. If the players are allowed to gather their strength before every encounter, then the penalties lose their value, which causes success and failure themselves to lose their value.

Thus, you must strike a balance. You must push the players and threaten their characters. You must harry them, work them. But once they have accomplished that great goal in their Beliefs, you must back off. Once the situation has been resolved or substantially changed, you must give the reins to the players. You must frame the action so they can rest and consider their options.

Even so, unless you're ending a campaign, you must constrain their choices. Give them a set amount of time or resources to use. Give them a month to rest and practice, for example. During that time, they can make Resources tests. At the end of the rest period, something happens: An event transpires that challenges their Beliefs in an unexpected way.

Certain savvy players will build rest, recuperation and refitting into their Beliefs. They'll create personal goals that seem to dodge the situation and create room for them to lessen the impact of injury, tax or loss. Don't get flustered by this tactic. It's a beautiful thing and perfectly valid within the scope of Burning Wheel play. Don't forget: Your job, as GM, is to challenge their Beliefs, whatever they may be. So if the players write Beliefs about replenishing lost gear or recovering from wounds, run with it. Challenge them: Pester them as they recover; tax them as they save; summon them for duty when they practice. The story will spin in unexpected directions with this action. The players will gain a new perspective, you'll generate hooks for future developments and resting won't be quite so easy.

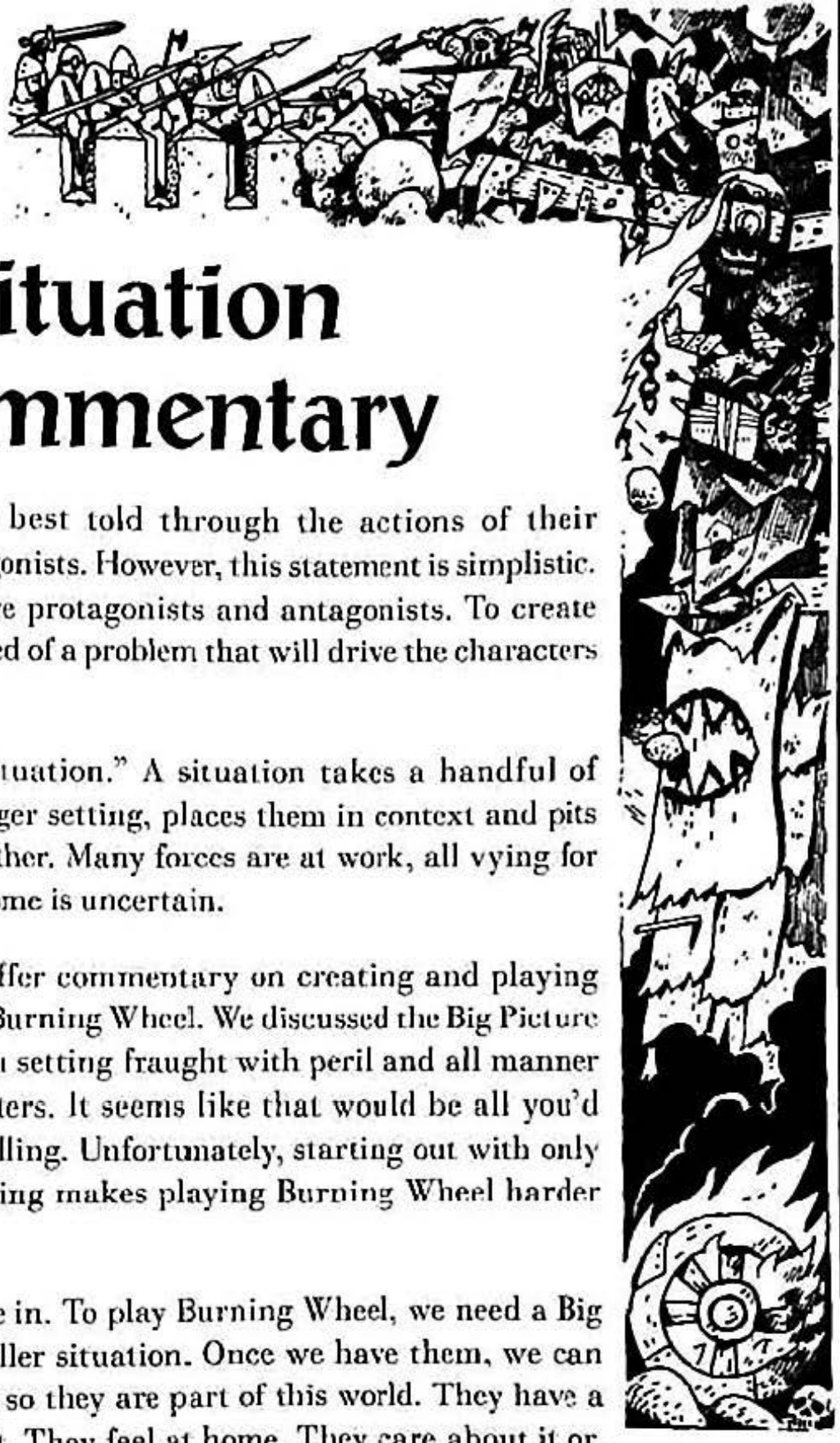


Of course, if they resolve these Beliefs, they should be given time to rest and refit as per their goals. As they recover, hit them with a Meanwhile situation. Or when they're done, frame the action with a Later situation. Keep things moving!



If there's truly no action or situation to be resolved, then don't play out the rest and downtime at all. Simply set a length of time and allow players to log practice, recovery and jobs as appropriate. Don't forget those lifestyle maintenance tests!





Situation Commentary

I believe stories are best told through the actions of their protagonists and antagonists. However, this statement is simplistic. It's not enough to have protagonists and antagonists. To create drama, we need the seed of a problem that will drive the characters into conflict.

We call this seed "situation." A situation takes a handful of elements from the bigger setting, places them in context and pits them against one another. Many forces are at work, all vying for dominance. The outcome is uncertain.

In this chapter, we offer commentary on creating and playing through situations in Burning Wheel. We discussed the Big Picture in the introduction—a setting fraught with peril and all manner of interesting characters. It seems like that would be all you'd need to get a game rolling. Unfortunately, starting out with only characters and a setting makes playing Burning Wheel harder than it needs to be.

That's where we come in. To play Burning Wheel, we need a Big Picture and this smaller situation. Once we have them, we can design our characters so they are part of this world. They have a role in it, a stake in it. They feel at home. They care about it or, conversely, hate it.

We need to wind your character up and launch him or her into the situation. You know the forces at play. You know your role. Write Beliefs that thrust you into action. They tell us that you're going to enter this space and do something. We don't know the outcome, but something is going to change. In the course of this action, other unanticipated elements will be revealed and create new situations. New Beliefs will be written to address new situations. Action will spin off into unforeseen directions. Play will be interesting and exciting.

Three General Situations

Broadly speaking, there are three general types of situation in fantasy roleplaying: the quest, the struggle and intrigue. They are not mutually exclusive to one story, but they exist discretely within a narrative.

For example, you must recover an artifact and confront a supernatural evil. Heroes risk their lives in this quest. Meanwhile, the armies of evil swarm over the land in an overwhelming tide. A small band of heroes must rally their beleaguered allies and stand against evil at any cost. While in the halls of power, the struggle and the quest have unearthed ugly truths about the ruling class. These revelations must be carefully navigated lest they topple the very order that all now fight to uphold.

That example outlines an epic campaign. However, your game does not need to be nearly so involved, especially at the outset.

It's best to pick one of the archetypes and work from there. Flesh out the situation at hand, and perhaps leave hooks for the other tropes to tie in later, if appropriate. In general, a campaign will be mostly of one situation type, with flourishes from the other two types.

Quest

A quest is a journey to a foreign, lost or exotic place to recover or destroy a person, artifact or piece of knowledge. Quests can be epic in scale—to Mount Doom—or local—to the attic above or to the sewers beneath your home.



Quests contain stories of self-discovery, mastery and coming-of-age.

If we're aiming for a quest story, then one of your Beliefs might be about:

- Seeking the missing item
- Learning something about the object of the quest, ideally from someone unwilling to hand over that information
- Beating others who seek the same thing

Struggle

In a struggle, our protagonists face overwhelming odds against which they must fight. While at first it may seem the protagonists fight for survival or self-interest, ultimately they fight to change the established order. Revolutions, wars of succession and wars of resistance are all classic struggles.





Struggles often include stories of self-sacrifice, coming of age, justice and other loaded values.

If we're struggling for a cause, one of your Beliefs should contain:

- An idealistic (perhaps even naive) statement about the politics, religion or philosophy of the setting
- Sacrificing something you care about for an ideal
- A defiant declaration about overthrowing (or safeguarding) the powers that be

Intrigue

Intrigue is perhaps the most subtle and least glamorous of the three archetypes. An intrigue unfolds within a social or cultural structure. Protagonists must operate within that structure—playing by its rules, both overt and covert—to achieve their ends. Courts, guilds and clans all make perfect backdrops for intrigues.

Intrigues often involve power, revenge, benign tyranny, despotism and the lofty battle to uphold the rights of protagonists. Protagonists of intrigues are reformers, whistle-blowers, ambitious social climbers and the power hungry. Antagonists include the established order or forces that would turn the order to evil.





To set up an intrigue, establish a strong social order in the setting and then upset the balance: The duke dies without an heir; an impoverished nobility desperately tries to retain power in the face of wealthy merchant families; the king has gone mad and is in love with a chambermaid; your guild is being undermined by its former allies. Each of these situations creates many hooks for conflicts about intrigue.

If we're aiming for an intrigue story, then one of your Beliefs might require:

- Getting information from someone
- Setting someone up for failure or success
- Covering up a secret
- Establishing an alliance or friendship
- Ruining an enemy

Choosing an Overall Situation

The initial situation is a broad template. It should be easy to insert yourself into it.

Let's play a band of doughty adventurers dispatched to aid a town beset by a demon. Struggle or quest? The GM decides that the demon will possess secrets that will lead to further adventures, so it's a quest. The GM doesn't have to reveal his secrets to the players, but he should tell them that he's interested in running a quest.



Place yourself in the framework. Can you imagine playing a character in this situation? Are you inspired by it? Do you have ideas for other characters, places or artifacts?

If you're not inspired, ask your fellow players for help. Ask them to pitch you ideas. Keep an open mind. If you absolutely can't be moved to play in this situation, then perhaps you and your friends need to talk about why you're playing this game.

Buying Into a Situation

Situation is something that all of the players agree to buy into before the game begins. If the players aren't excited about immersing themselves in the situation, then there's a problem. The uninterested are either going to get left behind or, if there's no interest at all, the game is going to grind to a halt.



So right at the beginning, everyone must explicitly agree to the situation. Do not move on from situation generation until you've heard everyone say, "Yes, I want to play that." Tie their characters into this idea using Beliefs, Instincts, traits, relationships and property!

Build Tension

Build up tension. Don't destroy the world in a day. Threaten it. Build toward its eventual demise. In doing so, you provide solid anchors on which players can hook their Beliefs. As the game progresses, those Beliefs will guide you in how to continue to challenge the players.

Relationships, Affiliations, Property and Situation

Once the players have burned up their characters, it is the GM's job to take the relationships, affiliations, property and anything else within reach and bind it to the situation. Put relationships in power. Put them in jeopardy. Threaten them. Undermine or attack affiliations. Covet property. Work to change the laws of the Big Picture so you can own it.

When setting up the situation, use the game elements provided in character burning as fodder for Beliefs.

Reincorporate

Reincorporation is a technique for building a situation from parts of a previous scenario. You take characters and places and use them again in a new way. A personality the players met in the past has now changed—she's been promoted or perhaps lost everything. She has a new perspective.

Places are powerful tools for reincorporation. It's a simple trick to have action in the game transpire in a set of locations. This trick lends the game a sense of time and space. Players can come to know the places in their world.







Setting

We need a place for our fantasies to inhabit. We need bounds and limits, for these embellish and highlight our characters and their actions. But we don't want to overburden ourselves. We want to use the barest description and minimal details to evoke the greatest range of possibilities.



Burning Wheel's setting is an abstraction, an agglomeration of fantasy tropes represented by lifepaths, traits, skills and gear. It's not a place, but an idea or aesthetic. In this setting, the world is rough, harsh. There is a great divide between wealthy and poor. The poor are downtrodden, sickly and harried. The wealthy are powerful and aloof. People of all types fight for what they believe with words, swords and sorcery.

The cities, the lands, the seas and the people are for you to decide. Those names, qualities and details fall to you to design—pulled from your knowledge of the fantasy genre. These places and cultures contain inherent inequities that one must struggle against or quest to overcome.

Devil in the Details

A setting for Burning Wheel is broad, composed of brush strokes and vague pronouncements, punctuated by a handful of details. The items that get listed on each character sheet—traits, skills and gear—are the only setting details that truly matter. They are the most vital elements of any setting. Population, geography and culture are all secondary.

Setting Over Time

Don't fill in your setting all at once. Don't front-load. Sketch out the broad lines—some geographical, some political, some cultural—but leave the precise details to be filled in later as needed. Focus on the immediate details. Flesh out the space that's directly in the path of the players' Beliefs and relationships.

Make some notes about possible contingencies, but I strongly urge you to refrain from "world building."



Why? World building can be great fun, an exciting exercise for the imagination, but in Burning Wheel, it often creates an impediment to thoroughly and accurately challenging Beliefs.

This isn't to say that you shouldn't have a deep or compelling setting. Your setting should be amazing and exciting. But it's third in the list of things important to a Burning Wheel game: player priorities, situation and setting, in that order.

So as you test for Circles, note the NPCs found. Build a list of contacts over time. As you explore each new place, give it a culture and a climate. Make it memorable and inspiring. Present fresh ideas. Each new culture encountered should receive traits appropriate to the situation. Don't just make the culture exotic, make it challenging.

Culture

Creating a fantasy culture is a delicate, prolonged process. It cannot be done in a single night. Certainly, fascinating facets can emerge and be explored in a session of play, but a culture is too vast and complex to be exhausted by one such look.

When introducing a culture into my games, I start with a cultural analog, whether from history or fiction. I modify it to suit my needs—in fact, I strive to make it only barely recognizable.

Using the analog, we can describe a mode of dress, architecture, accent and even climate. I also like to include one element of the culture that is different from ours and offensive to our modern sensibilities—something that jars the modern player. In a recent game, victims of human sacrifice went willingly to the slaughter and, in fact, resisted attempts at rescue.



Conversely, I like to include a custom that's different from, but pleasing to our sensibilities. I often make the food and diet of the setting different from our own, but perhaps more delicious.

Added to the core of the cultural analog, these two accents are usually enough to create a convincing model. Of course, when you're deciding on the content of the society's customs, you should seek to intersect with and contravene as many Beliefs and Instincts as possible.

Cultural Traits

Page 198 of the Burning Wheel briefly describes cultural traits. On the surface, it may seem that cultural traits create a one-dimensional or possibly even bigoted view of culture.



Cultural traits do carry this risk. But they are designed to blend into all of a character's other traits. You carry a *piece* of your culture with you among all of the other traits you've acquired from your family, your life and your work. We *hope* this creates a nuanced view of character, rather than a stereotype.

Names

Names are magical. And they are potent tools in your hands. When you name an element in a roleplaying game, whether a character, a house or inn, a city or a sword, you make it just a little more real, more substantial, to everyone else. A sword found in a tomb? Big deal. The Sword of Seven Shadows found in the tomb of Aras-Ekbar? That's special.

When you introduce something new to your group, name it! It will create a connection between the others at the table and the fictional element.

You can do some pretty neat tricks if you get creative with your naming. For instance, you can assign different earthly languages to cultures in a fantasy game. For one of our games, we kept a Mongolian-to-English dictionary at the table. Any time we needed a name for a character, a ship or an island, we dove into the dictionary and pulled one out.

Assigning different cultures to different languages creates auditory differentiation between the two cultures in a recognizable but subtle way.



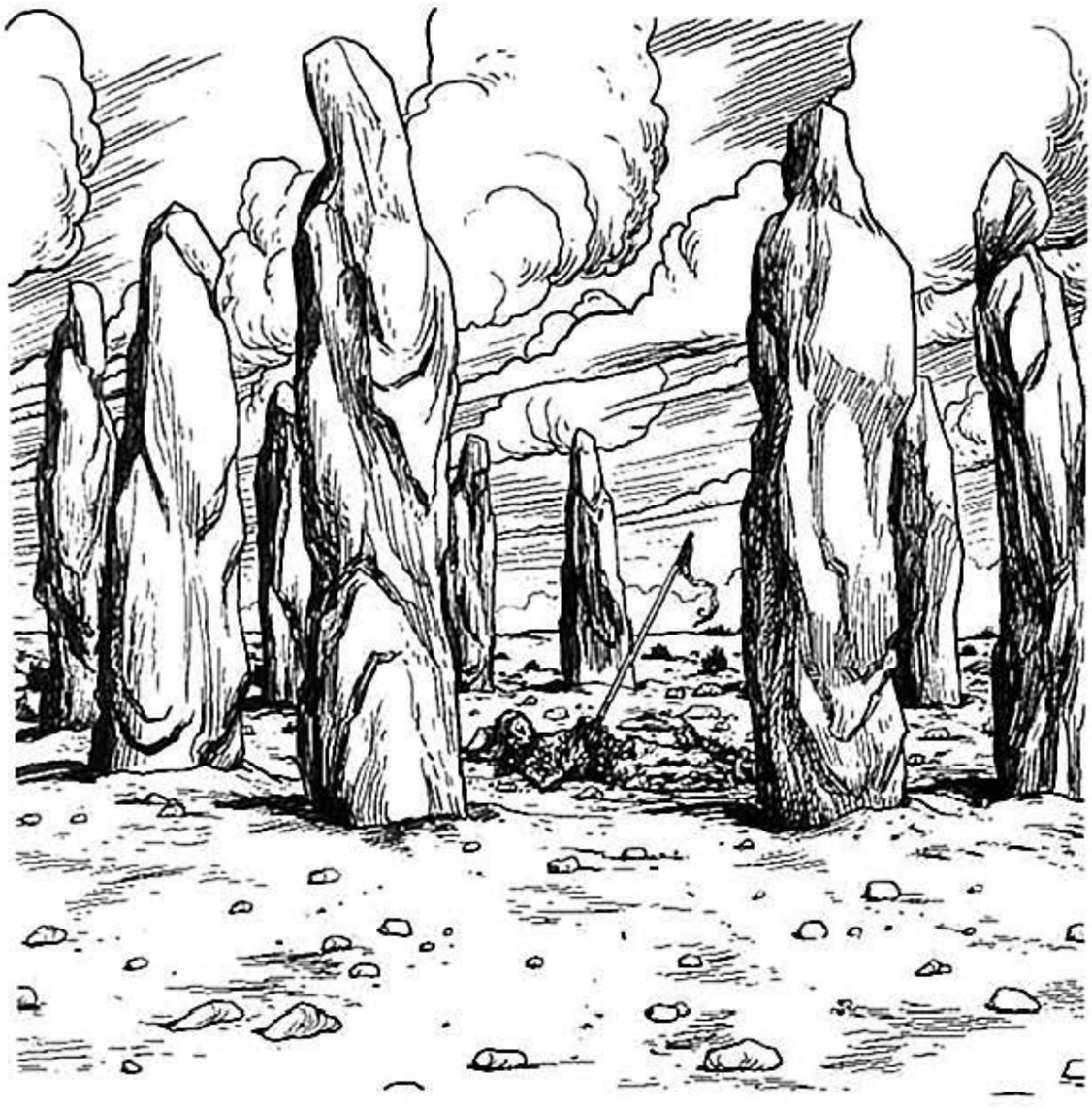
Monsters

When choosing monsters for your setting, use folktales and mythology to inspire you. A little research can pay huge dividends. Rather than having a kitchen-sink setting, you can pare down your choices to a few important entities and really focus on how they're a part of the setting.

Gear

Restrict or add gear as appropriate for the setting, having different stuff available in different places. Even better, price Resources differently depending on where the players are.





Playing Burning Wheel in an Established Setting

On occasion, it can be fun playing someone else's world. Whether it's Hârn, Earthsea or the Old World, it's possible to take a different look at these settings through the lens of Burning Wheel.

I'm not going to relate a step-by-step conversion here, but I will say that you want to look for settings with a particular tech level and societal structure. Even more than that, you want to make sure that this is a world in which characters struggle against great odds to make changes in themselves and the society.

Once you have a world you think fits the mold of Burning Wheel, you need to completely redesign the game to match it, right? No. Don't rewrite the game. Resist the urge with all strength available to you. Instead, look for one or two characteristics in the world that really matter and write up the rules for them. It could be a small set of lifepaths for all the players





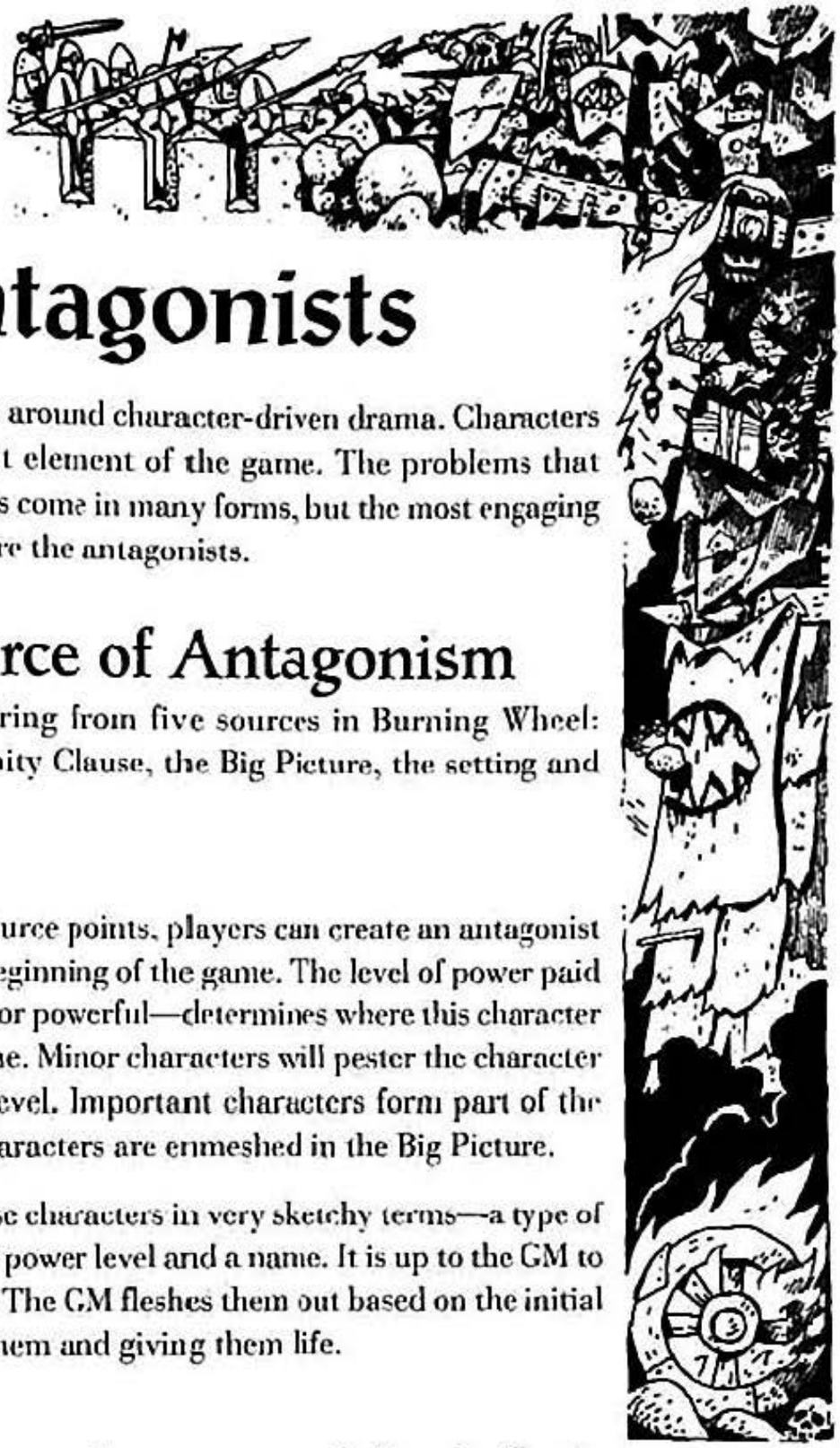
to draw from. a magic system, or a new piece of technology. But the most important aspect to remember is: Keep it simple. Enjoy the setting through play, not by tinkering hopelessly with rules.

When picking and choosing from elements of Burning Wheel, be sure to establish the rules and emphasize the feel and atmosphere of the setting. It could be as simple as saying "We're all playing knights." Or "Magic is rare and dangerous in this world. You can't start with any spells and we'll use Corruption."

The characters and places of these worlds draw us to them. But once you're playing in an established world, treat canon lightly. Consider all of those familiar places and fascinating backstories as toys for you to play with. They're a source to draw from, but also exist to be changed.

And finally, steer clear of "the plot." Where the plot and main characters are, start somewhere else. Start in a different time or on a different continent. This will help you make the world your own, and avoid any feeling of "Oh, Ced would never say that."





Antagonists

Burning Wheel revolves around character-driven drama. Characters are the most important element of the game. The problems that confront your characters come in many forms, but the most engaging and memorable ones are the antagonists.

The Source of Antagonism

An antagonist can spring from five sources in Burning Wheel: relationships, the Enmity Clause, the Big Picture, the setting and the situation.

Relationships

By spending a few resource points, players can create an antagonist for themselves at the beginning of the game. The level of power paid for—minor, important or powerful—determines where this character falls in the GM's scheme. Minor characters will pester the character at a local or tactical level. Important characters form part of the situation. Powerful characters are enmeshed in the Big Picture.

The players create these characters in very sketchy terms—a type of relationship, a relative power level and a name. It is up to the GM to place them in context. The GM fleshes them out based on the initial sketch, personifying them and giving them life.

Enmity Clause

Antagonists can be generated extemporaneously from the Enmity Clause rule (Burning Wheel page 382). As a result of the failed roll, the GM can introduce a character who opposes the players' goals. These characters are often minor, but due to the scale of the Circles rules, they can be as powerful as they come. If you try to use Circles to contact the king and you fail the test, then you've made a powerful enemy.

Keep that in mind. The higher the obstacle for the Circles test, the more the character should be plugged into the situation, the setting and, ultimately, the Big Picture.

The Situation

Situations demand antagonists. To adequately challenge the players' Beliefs, they must be opposed by the actions of other characters.

Important relationships and enemies from failed Circles tests can both emerge as antagonists in the situation: the captain of the guard with whom you must fight; the courtier who is jealous of your love; or your brother who has turned to evil.

Those examples tie directly back to the characters. However, sometimes the situation demands a villain who stands apart from and in direct opposition to the characters. Sometimes you need a bad-ass Orc summoner who's razing towns and villages. Sometimes you need a rebel leader who's inadvertently undermining the character's machinations. Sometimes you need a staunch conservative minister who opposes the characters purely because they are outsiders.

Where do antagonists like that come from? They are born by intuiting the best way to challenge the players and by personifying that challenge in the form of an engaging character. They aren't created by the players. They are purely the province of the GM in the role of chief adversary.

Situation-based antagonists can also emerge from allies who are turned against the characters by their actions during play—from a Duel of Wits, a failed test or just fallout from play.

The Setting

I try to create the seeming of a living, breathing world in my games. Therefore, in addition to all of the characters who are tied into and opposed to the characters, I always create characters and groups who exist outside of the immediate action, but who are nevertheless opposed to the players.

These antagonists are connected to the structure of the setting. They are members of important groups with their own agendas. They do not directly or actively oppose the players, but their very nature is inherently opposed.

A dragon decimated your people in ancient times. He's not part of the situation; he doesn't care about you or your petty aims. Though someday you might find him and confront him. Or the king: He's not interested in your trials and travails, but he certainly doesn't want you going around killing his men and upsetting the status quo. He doesn't oppose you



because he cares about you. He stands in your way because it's his job to keep punks like you in their places.

Where do these characters come from? Extrapolate them from all of the bits and pieces on the characters' sheets—particularly their lifepaths, reputations, affiliations and relationships.

If a player has created a knight, that means there are other knights in the setting. There are probably cadres of them. Who do they work for? How do they get paid? Who's their boss's boss? Who's his boss? What's his name? What's his rank and title? That's a setting-based NPC right there.

If a player buys an affiliation with a group of mages, he's implying a whole ecosystem. First, the group itself: Who leads them? How are the members ranked? Are there rivals in the group? Who are they? What are their names? What do they want? Does the group itself have any rivals? Are the rivals publicly known or do they plot in secret? Who leads the rival group? What's his name? Where is he from? Just a few questions like those can produce a proper antagonist that you can keep in your back pocket until the time is right.

I am not advocating that you build out every NPC in your setting. The key here is to pluck these personalities from the character sheet and then drop them into the background. When the characters start moving in larger, grander circles, you'll be ready with some thoughtful, powerful antagonists.

The Big Picture

Finally, when I run a game, I ensure that beyond the situation and the setting, something Big is happening in the background—the wheels of change are grinding on. The players might never directly encounter this change, but even just mentioning it enriches the game—traders arrive from heretofore unheard of kingdoms, wars erupt in distant provinces, wizards brood in towers for generations, gods grow angry and throw plagues upon the land.

There are two keys to making these events meaningful. First, they should be scary. If the players were involved, they would certainly be put to the test. In this way, these rumblings are a way for the GM to indicate that Beliefs are being challenged whether you're there or not. Second, these events need faces: heroes, gods and wizards whom the players later meet, only to find out, "Oh, you're the one who leveled that city..." These faces are all potential antagonists or allies. They go about their business,





but they are not allied or in sync with the players' goals. They are not necessarily directly opposed—at least not to start—but if pressed they will fight for their own goals.

The Face of Antagonism

So how do you successfully antagonize someone? Well, the weaker the antagonist, the more direct his interactions must be. If you're on the outs with your local hostler, he's only going to bug you when you come into his stable.

If you're at odds with the local guard captain, well, that's a slightly different matter. She's going to ride you when she sees you, but she's also going to instruct her soldiers to keep an eye on you. Thus, her reach is extended beyond her immediate presence. She has agents to do her dirty work.

At the level above that—the evil wizard who controls the wasteland—you never see him until the final confrontation. You are vexed and plagued by his minions, but he is out of reach until the very last.

Finally, there are antagonists whom you might never directly confront—at least in the way that you want. Gods, kings and other powers beyond our ken remain aloof. You defeat their minions and their agents, you ruin their works, but you never strike at them directly. Those antagonists can be frustrating to deal with since the game is so character driven, but when used sparingly, they can add to the tension and create the feeling of a natural order in your world.



An Antagonist Is an Empty Vessel

How many lifepaths do you choose for your villains? Do you write Beliefs for them? What skills and spells do you choose?

An antagonist begins life as an empty vessel, a container that will hold a conflict. The shape of that vessel is determined by his place in the game—his purpose, his name, his power level. Its contents are added only as necessary, but once they're in, they remain and evolve.

Thus, if you have an Orc summoner leading a horde, rampaging across the countryside, you'll ultimately need to know his stats, skills, traits, spells and gear. But when you first introduce him, what do you need? If he remains in the background, then you don't need his stats or skills. You want to hold off in creating those stats because you want to ensure



the summoner is the right kind of challenge for the players. If you planned on using a five-lifepath character with a horde of goblins, but your players are ripping through their opponents, then you want to give him a few more lifepaths and some better minions.

This isn't cheating. Your job as GM is to create adversity. If your villains get bowled over without any sort of a fight, then it's no fun for the players.

So keep your villains empty until the time comes when you need hard numbers. Once you have those numbers, though, stick to them.

Motivating Antagonists

There are villains who directly oppose you because it is their nature to want what you do not. An Orc summoner exists to destroy all that you stand for. Why? Because he is o'erbrimming with hatred. He needs no other motivation to send him into conflict with the group. But such motivation is poor and thin. Even the most wrathful villains must have a deeper motivation.

There are villains who believe what you do. They stand for what you stand for, but they achieve their goals in a vile, destructive manner.

For example, a despotic king sits on the throne. You want to depose him, as does a rather dark, unsettling wizard. You wish to restore justice to the kingdom. The wizard wishes to punish it—its rulers, its ministers and even its people—for allowing itself to be so corrupted.



How do you oppose this wizard? When do you oppose her? Do you work with her to topple the despot and then confront her? Or do you stand up for what you believe in from the outset and make a true enemy of the wizard? She is the best type of villain because your relationship is complex. There is no one way to deal with her. You must, in fact, confront yourself before you can confront her.

As you place your antagonists onto your palette, be sure to create some who are simply opposed, and others who share the same goals, but for different reasons.

Antagonist Beliefs

Small-fry antagonists don't need Beliefs. The thugs and angry shopkeepers don't require that much attention. But all the rest of them do.

Write a Belief that describes this villain's world view.



Villains need a goal-oriented Belief as well. This goal should be to accomplish an act that intersects with as many of the players' Beliefs as possible. If the players all have a Belief about their patron, the villain must act against him. If the players all have a Belief about an orphanage and its staff, then he's got to burn it down. Write a goal-oriented Belief about what the villain must accomplish.

An antagonist doesn't need to have all Belief slots filled. You should fill them as appropriate. Focus on the best way to challenge the players. And you should change them as you need until he finally appears on stage and meets the players. Until then, he remains an empty vessel. His contents are determined by necessity.

Additional Beliefs can focus on tying his goals and philosophy together. Or you can write a Belief about another character in the game. Writing Beliefs about characters is tough because you don't necessarily want to focus your main antagonist on just one character. You want him to tie together as many of the players' characters as possible.





Typically, a game of Burning Wheel has only one or two real antagonists at a time. You play against them and ultimately confront them. In the confrontation, they are changed: They are defeated; changed from antagonist to ally; or they are magnified and elevated. Thus, there's not too much to keep track of, only a handful of Beliefs.

The Evolution of an Antagonist

What follows is an extended example about one of the best and most unlikely villains I've ever created, Wizard Librarian Xu, the Storm King.

Throughout our long-running campaign, a cabal of sorcerers has plagued the characters. For all intents, using a couple of generations of characters, the players have been at war with a group of 20 or so wizards for about 10 years. In the course of play an empire was toppled, cities were destroyed, factions were crushed, demons were summoned, minds broken, lives were lost. We felt it was rather epic.

Now there's only one surviving member of that cabal.

There's also a giant magical storm engulfing the capital city. The storm delivers vicious lightning strikes that either immolate the target or imbue it with magic. Mutants roam the wastes. It's a fantasy apocalypse caused by my friend Chris' young wizard years ago in a previous campaign.

In his last encounter with our heroes, Wizard Librarian Xu was poisoned and grievously injured. He fled the chaos to the relative safety of the storm and the now-abandoned capital city. There he recuperated and took command of the place. He became the Storm King.

I explicitly told the players this last bit when I pitched the game to them. It was the Big Picture and the situation coming together for the game. I also told them that their characters had heard rumors of the Storm King in the Tower. Previously, Danny, Chris and I had played an abortive short campaign in which they gained knowledge of the situation we were now in. When we were setting up this new game, they helped me fill in the details about the situation—the storm, the monsters, the wasteland.

I presented their mission to them: They were charged by the recently reinstated emperor to go forth and slay the Storm King, thus ending the storm so that the emperor could return to his rightful throne.





The group wrote strong beliefs about destroying the vile Storm King and all of his works.

My initial concept for this game was to have a puissant, despotic villain ruling like Sauron over an army of magically corrupted mutants. I imagined the players would swarm his tower and there would be a giant fight. I envisaged my Storm King in ornate, heirloom armor, wielding a deadly halberd, shouting spells behind red lips and ivory teeth. I kept that image in my head for the first few sessions, but I didn't detail it any further.

Once the players began their approach to the storm, I had to know more about this putative Storm King and his mutant army. I thought about him for a bit. Who was he really? He was a product of the cabal. Therefore, he knew "red wizardry" as we call it: fire spells and mind-affecting spells. He also knew a handful of battle spells such as Turn Aside the Blade and the Fear. I dug through my old (old) notes. I couldn't remember which of the red wizards he really was. Was he Kwok? Mosu? Fou? No, they were all slain. Well, if that was the case. then his name was Xu, he was a northerner from a remote port and was a...researcher. Suddenly, my fearsome concept lost a bit of his stature. Well, I could just change him to make him what I wanted, right? No one really knew what was contained in my voluminous notebooks. I decided against it. It would defile the purity of our ongoing game. He was who he was. I was prepared to work with the concept.



I set to work. What was my raw material? He was a powerful, sorcerous researcher. I could use that. Hell, I could set him up with lifepaths and then just have him practice and train to get all of the martial stuff that I wanted. Yeah!

So I burned up a headmaster-sorcerer-researcher with the College of Magic lifepaths. An eight-lifepath bad-ass! Woohoo. 64 years old. Ouch. Based on the campaign timeline, he'd have two-and-a-half to three years to practice after his last meeting with the players.

I pondered his spell list, his skill list, his resources. It became clear that three years wasn't enough time for him to become a martial master and do all of the magical research he needed to do at the tower to create player-killing enchantments. Hrm. I could have just fudged it, but my gut told me not to. My gut told me to leave him be. My conscience, on the other hand, was screaming at me: "He's going to die like a sucker!" Well. we would see.



I did give him three (rough) Beliefs to give energy and direction to his nefarious plans:

- All of the secrets of this land [meaning the ruined capital] must be mine.
- I will found a new [magical] order and city in this tower.
- The Gifted must be protected and instructed.

I did not reveal these Beliefs (until the very last moment of the last session).

During play, I always referred to Xu as the Storm King, implying he was more like my original concept. I never revealed his actual nature. Until, of course, my friend Chris—playing his disguised wizard—passed a brilliant Sorcerer-wise test to discover who Xu truly was. I informed the group that he wasn't a mass murderer, but a librarian. Still, I tried to present him as a mysterious, remote, brooding presence. This came across especially when they interrogated mutants who served him. To them, the Storm King was aloof and powerful.

As the campaign progressed, the group discovered the Storm King was kidnapping children from their parents and taking them to the tower. How ghoulish!

Later, the group was attempting to find a safe place to hide in the Storm King's half-ruined citadel. They made a Slaver-wise test to find an old, disused slaver safehouse. They failed and instead found one of the Storm King's schools, run by ex-slavers. Six children were being trained there, guarded by former slavers and mercenaries. It was obvious then, especially to Chris' disguised wizard, that the Storm King was culling Gifted children from the surrounding wasteland and instructing them on how to use their power. The children were attentive, intelligent and curious. They were not abused, enslaved or manipulated.

This revelation challenged many Beliefs about toppling the Storm King. Here was evidence of his good works. Would they still crush him? Was he still a tyrant?

When the time came to confront the wizard, the players were deeply divided. One group wanted vengeance, the other reconciliation. I pounced on the divisive atmosphere in the group. I had the Storm King raise a flag of truce so they could discuss the situation. Were they at war or was something else afoot?



Just prior to that scene, my understanding of Xu had crystallized. He was a survivor, not a visionary or a savant. He wanted to ensure that he was protected and fed, so he could practice his art unopposed. Over a decade ago, he'd been summoned to a war council of sorcerers, where he was made a soldier. He wanted to return to his roots and study the wondrous secrets at his feet. He'd seen all of his friends, colleagues and rivals die. Even his own secret library was razed in the fighting. The lands that supported him revolted. Every ploy and aim was crushed. He was tired. He didn't want to die like the rest, but neither did he want to fight.

I also decided that he would cop to all of the evil acts he'd committed. In doing so, I knew that I could destroy some illusions—he didn't create the Storm; and he never summoned demons. The players themselves did those things. He merely profited from these events.

In the final moments of the campaign, this villain manifested before me. He was not the swaggering automaton of destruction I had originally envisaged. He was a small, tired man, radiating power. His old battle robes long lost, he dressed in finery. His fingers, ears and neck were laden with enchanted jewelry. He carried no weapon, nor wore any armor.

He met the characters alone in a wheel-shaped chamber in a vast, abandoned citadel tower—a crossroads, literal and metaphorical.



They demanded that Xu come and stand trial for his crimes. He scoffed. They wanted a Duel of Wits, but I declined the stakes. I would accept a Duel, but not under those terms. I made it clear in the ensuing conversation that he was not trying to end the Storm. He even said, "Why would I do that? It protects me." This was a shocking revelation for the players.

However, I also made it clear that I would accept from them a statement of purpose about the storm rather than about his own fate. In doing so, I was careful to challenge Beliefs across every character on the table. Some wanted justice, so I mocked justice. Some wanted the storm to end, so I embraced the storm. And, due to a previous Duel of Wits among the players, they couldn't just murder the wizard where he stood. They had agreed that he would either be taken to justice or would work to end the storm.

Rather than a cataclysmic fight, we ended the campaign with a Duel of Wits: Their statement of purpose was "You will work to end the Storm with Yang [Chris's character]." Mine was, "There is no empire, no justice. The citadel was abandoned and I claim it as mine own."

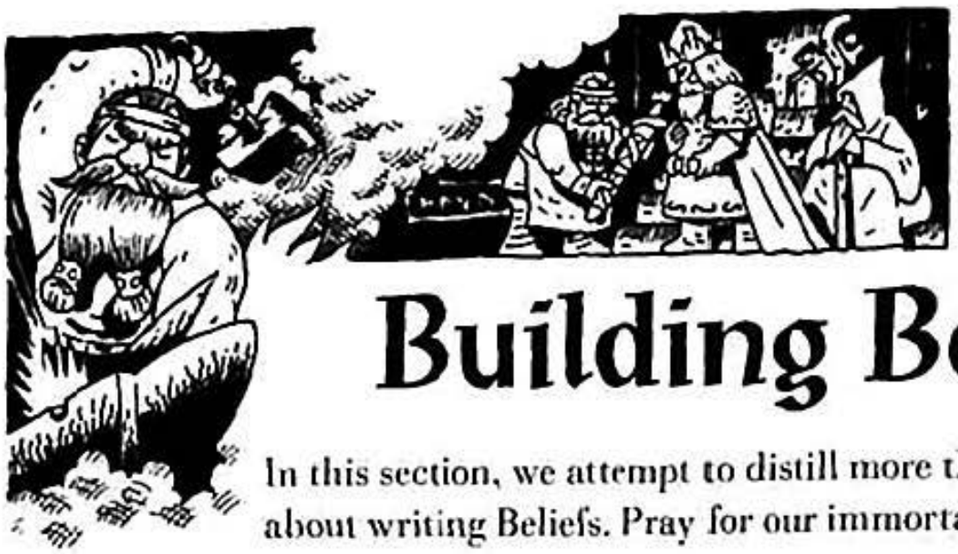
In other words, it was"End the apocalypse" versus "Admit the empire is gone and given over to wizards and mutants." Good stuff!

During the Duel of Wits, I was careful to choose actions that reflected his jaded caution. And when I (narrowly) lost, I made sure to compromise rather than escalate to violence. Xu would do as they asked, provided that he could have his order and be protected—thus fulfilling two of his Beliefs.

As a result, even though I lost the Duel, quite a few of the players were sympathetic to the old villain. They could see it his way.

And that is the greatest possible victory I could ever have hoped to win.





Building Beliefs

In this section, we attempt to distill more than ten years of advice about writing Beliefs. Pray for our immortal souls.



Belief versus Situation

You cannot write Beliefs in a vacuum. Before Beliefs are put to paper, the GM and players agree to the rough action, the situation. Situation includes a bit of the setting, the player characters, antagonists and a problem or two that can't be ignored.

Once you have your situation, the players must bind their characters into it. How are you going to change this situation? What must you do right away? If a player has trouble answering those two questions concretely—including a character, a setting element and a problem—then the situation is lacking. The GM must review the situation, tighten it up and make it more threatening, impossible to ignore (but not so pressing that the game is going to end in the first session).

The cost for ignoring the situation isn't the end of the road; rather it causes the antagonist's plans to evolve. While the players dawdle, the villain gains. The situation becomes more grim. The idea is that if the players fail to stop the initial problem, the antagonist changes the setting to his benefit. He takes over. He ruins lives. He murders loved ones. He steals ancient artifacts. He rewrites law. He enslaves nations. His work is never finished in the first session. If the situation is ignored (or if challenges are failed), the Big Picture is threatened.

Your first Belief always refers to this situation. It describes your view of it and how you're going to tackle it. Are you opposed? Why? What action will you take to stop it?

Intraparty Beliefs

The other players at the table present other opportunities for Beliefs. During play, you interact with them more than anything else in the game. Each of you have your own opinions and methods. Each player has a unique perspective on the history, behavior or actions



of the other players' characters. And each player is taking action in the situation. You may find those actions compelling and want to help. Or you may find their actions offensive and wish to thwart them.

Write your second Belief about another player character. What intrigues you? What offends you? How will you help? How will you hinder them?

One-on-One Games

In one-on-one games, the GM is the "other player" mentioned above. The GM must present a compelling, recurring allied NPC about whom the player cares.

Ethical or Philosophical Stances

Some of my favorite Beliefs contain no goal or opinion, and no action at all. They are philosophical guides. They are the moral underpinning of the character. These are by far the hardest Beliefs to write. Not that you can't come up with a fascinating statement of your philosophy. On the contrary, that's the easy part. The difficulty lies in application. If poorly conceived, these Beliefs are too easy to ignore. And if you're ignoring one of your Beliefs, you're carrying around deadweight.

Make your third Belief an ethical, moral or philosophical statement. For the best effect, write it so that it can be contradicted. It's easy to say that you believe in God or good, but it's not easy to challenge a Belief like that. A slightly more nuanced Belief like, "As a faithful man, I should sacrifice myself for the greater good," tells us more about the character and allows for the statement to be tested. Just how much of yourself will you sacrifice? Try not to have more than one of your Beliefs be an ethical statement.



The Fourth Belief

Loyal, Zealot and other similar traits grant characters a fourth Belief. According to the rules, the Belief must tie into the nature of the trait. The rules for the traits say that if the Belief is changed, the trait is lost.

Some of this might sound contradictory, but you can in fact change the Belief tied to the trait. To clarify: You lose the trait if you use the Belief slot for anything aside from a Belief relating to the trait.

If you're Loyal but your master is killed, you can take on a new master and write a new Loyal Belief about it.



Often players write two-part Beliefs into these slots: "I believe strongly in this thing; therefore I must..." You can keep the declarative statement and change the action to reflect your current situation.





Give and Take

When you start a Burning Wheel game, the GM presents a situation building on the Big Picture and the characters. You write your Beliefs based on those elements. The GM then presents scenes or actions to challenge those Beliefs.

The game proceeds based on your decisions and the results of the tests—pass or fail. Based on your actions, a new circumstance will arise. The situation will change. You will have a new opinion about this situation. Some Beliefs will be fulfilled by the developments of the ongoing game. Write new ones based on the new circumstance.



Some Beliefs will be engaged but left incomplete. Tweak them so they reflect the current situation. Others will lay inactive. Talk to the CM and the other players about these. Is the story headed in that direction? If it is, keep the Belief. If you are clinging to an idea that the game has moved past, change it.

Belief-Building Tips

Beliefs are a principled to-do list. The two most common problems we see with Beliefs are that they either have an ideology but no action, or an action without a driving ideology. Each Belief needs an objective so it's clear when the character is pursuing his Belief and he can earn artha, and each Belief needs an ideology to back it up so the action has context.

Red Flags

If the players don't know what they're supposed to be doing, their Beliefs are broken. The situation and buy-in are probably deficient in this case, too.

If the players aren't earning at least one fate point per session for pursuing their Beliefs, their Beliefs are lacking.

If the players haven't completed a Belief and earned a persona point within a session or two, their Beliefs lack urgency. They're not broken, but potentially stagnant. To earn persona points, try to break your goal-oriented Beliefs down into smaller steps.



Inner Conflict

By design, Beliefs provide an opportunity for you to evoke the inner turmoil of your character. You have three Beliefs rather than one so you can counterpose them. You are supposed to have differing or conflicting opinions about various elements of the game. Your actions in the situation may contravene your philosophy. In play, as the action rises, you get to decide which is more important to you. Play out the turmoil in a dramatic fashion, and you'll earn artha for Moldbreaker as well as for playing your other Belief or accomplishing a goal.

Direction

You can use Beliefs to set your character on an arc—transformation from neophyte to master, from worm to hero, from child to adult and even from hero to something more.



Ethical statements are one tool for setting such directions. You play them now, but you plan on growing past them in future play. In fact, you can make ethical statements now and set yourself to move into direct conflict with that stance later. I can say, "I will never raise my hand in violence." I can play a pacifist in the moment. However, my plan can be for this peaceful man to transform in the course of play into a cold-blooded killer.

Of course, there is a danger in playing your character too rigidly—locking onto a predetermined course. To prevent this, stay open to the possibilities that arise in play. Consider the events of the game and how they affect your character's perception. Be prepared for unexpected change.

I once played a character whom I planned to transform from a pacifist to a martial arts master. But after seeing the woman he loved killed before him—struck down by the curses of an angry god—his goals seemed hollow. I had to readjust and choose another long-term arc for him: Perhaps to devote himself to the faith or to medicine; perhaps his heart broke and he determined never to return home again.

Goal-Oriented Beliefs

It is a good habit to shape one Belief so that you can accomplish it in the current session. It might not happen, but you should try for it. Shooting for the Personal Goals award keeps you active and engaged.

Sometimes we even cross out the "Belief" title for one of our Beliefs and write "Goal" over it.



What's an Appropriate Goal?

Goals are relative things. In game terms, a goal must require action from you—you must risk for this Belief. At minimum, you must make at least one test in pursuit of the goal. It is preferable that you make a series of tests, but there is no hard formula.

Remember, our motto is "Fight for what you believe." If a player isn't fighting, then the game isn't delivering on its promise. Therefore, as a GM, you must place a challenge in the path of each Belief: an opponent to overcome, a confidante to convince, an artifact to rescue, a mystery to solve or even a dangerous cliff to scale.

These elements are born from the Big Picture. They are facets of the setting that you pull from the background and place into the foreground.

It should be feasible to accomplish goals in a session or two.



Reconciling Two-Part Beliefs

Two-part Beliefs are very useful because they allow you to maintain your philosophical stance but to change up what you're going to do about it. When the action portion is invalidated or the goal accomplished, you can keep the ideological statement and change the action or goal. "I am loyal to the king, therefore I will..." has huge potential for play. What will you do for the king? Keep your statement of loyalty and as the situation changes, insert new actions into the Belief. Now you get a fresh persona point from it in play!

The "fourth Beliefs" from Loyal, Zealot and similar traits are often two-part Beliefs and thus fall into this category.

Practical Beliefs

This section breaks down some issues with Beliefs in Burning Wheel: trouble writing Beliefs, writing Beliefs for a campaign, changing Beliefs during a campaign, what to do when you earn Moldbreaker, what to do when you've finished with a Belief, how to play a Belief that can't be accomplished and some practical advice on challenging Beliefs in general.

Trouble Writing Beliefs

If your players are having trouble writing Beliefs, try to get something down on paper, anything that's even close to the concept. Don't worry about getting it perfect out of the gate. Have them write proto-Beliefs, even if you know that they'll need to change.

During the session, confront your players with a handful of decisions. Use your own inspiration and ideas for the situation to prod at half-baked Beliefs. Set up a problem that can't be solved in a single roll. When the players grabs for the dice, pause them. Before any rolls are made, nail down the intent and task for this test and ask what needs to be accomplished by the end of the session. This declaration can often be converted into a Belief on the spot.

At the end of the session, be sure players are given the proper rewards for playing Beliefs. Break down the reward process. Let each player know why he's earning these strange little points. This will close part of the cycle for him—he should understand now that if he acts on his Beliefs, he'll get rewarded in a way that will allow him to act more effectively next time.



Writing Beliefs for a Campaign

You want to topple the duke, but it's going to take many sessions of play to get there. You can write a Belief that states, "I must overthrow the duke, no matter the cost." This is a nice, strong Belief, but it's very hard to earn rewards for it. In the short term, you've got to constantly push against the duke or his works. This will probably get you a handful of fate points. Ultimately, after many sessions of work, you'll accomplish this goal (or die trying). That'll net you one persona point—not an adequate reward for all your effort.

It's best to break that long-term goal into bits that you can accomplish in the short term: "I will rob the duke's treasury of every penny;" or, "I will kidnap the duke's brother, Baron Evil Crown the Bad, and hold him for ransom;" or, "I will embarrass the duke at court when the prince comes." Assume, for the sake of argument, that these instances are not long-term, campaign-spanning goals, but scenarios that you can accomplish in a session or two of play.

Writing strong, goal-oriented Beliefs allows you to stay on track for your larger aims, earn lots of artha (to be saved for that final confrontation, of course) and have many exciting sessions en route to your goal.

Changing Beliefs During a Campaign

When do you change a Belief? In the rules as written, you can change one at any point as long as the GM approves the timing. However, we rarely change Beliefs during a session. We prefer to let them be challenged in the course of the session. If we can't challenge a Belief in a session, we reexamine it. At BWHQ, we change Beliefs at the start of a session. We review what happened last time we played. We state where we are now and what we plan on doing. If goal-oriented Beliefs were accomplished in the previous session, we change or update them. If ideologies were challenged or crushed, we change them to suit our new outlooks. If we have a Belief that's not being challenged, we try to rework it so it can be more rewarding.



On rare occasions, an earth-shattering event will rock one of the players. Something snaps. He's got to make a change right now. This moment is perhaps one of the most powerful in all of Burning Wheel. By all means, go with inspired changes of Beliefs!

Sometimes, a Belief needs to sit in reserve for a session or two before you can really dig into it. That's perfectly acceptable. It's rare that a single session challenges all of a player's Beliefs. Yet, if a couple of sessions pass without the Belief being touched, then you need to change it.



In campaign play, if you're playing hard with goal-oriented Beliefs, you'll probably also have far-reaching goals that aren't appropriate for a Belief. Or you'll agree to accept a side mission to help a friend—to help accomplish another player's goal. You need to write a Belief about this goal. so what do you do with the Belief that you're replacing? We keep notes on the backs of our character sheets about long-term goals (and any artha we've invested in them). So if we need to clear a Belief slot for a short-term goal, we can do so without fear of forgetting our big plans.

When the immediate situation is resolved, we refer to the notes. make sure they're still germane and then write new Beliefs for them.

When to Say No to Changing a Belief

It's possible, in the course of a session, for the GM to have an unrevealed obstacle waiting to challenge a Belief. If this is the case, and a player asks to change the Belief that is about to be challenged, the GM can and should advise him to wait. Only delay the change of the Belief if you can challenge it this session. If you can't get to it this session, let the player change it.

Moldbreaker

The Moldbreaker reward is a powerful tool in long-term play. You can earn this reward in a very self-conscious way. You are in control of when you play into or when you break a Belief. Breaking a Belief isn't the same as disregarding it for convenience's sake. You must dive into the drama, and play against yourself. For your troubles, you earn a nice persona point.



What do you do with the Belief after you've broken it? Do you discard it? No. You keep it. Breaking it convincingly shows how much you truly care about that ideal. You return to the Belief and play it earnestly, like one shamed by one's own actions who resolves stalwartly to do good from now on. Your transgression reaffirms your Belief.

We talk about Moldbreaker a bit more in the Artha chapter, but to briefly summarize what's said there: If you find yourself breaking a Belief three times in a row, then it's time to change it.

Finishing a Belief

When we accomplish a goal related to a Belief in a game, we have a short conversation. The GM asks, "Are you done with that? Do you want to push that further?" Remember, the GM's job is to challenge Beliefs. Even



if a situation is resolved, it's possible that the Belief isn't resolved with it. A Belief may take on new meaning in the resolution of the action. It's up the player to decide.

On the other hand, as the GM, you have to be honest. If you have inspiration for more action behind a Belief, then you should say so. And if you don't, you should tell the player, "I feel like you're done with that. I don't have anything else. Do you agree?"

If the player and GM don't agree, discuss the problem and work out an appropriate direction. You can modify the situation or create a new one to accommodate the Belief.

Guiding Light Beliefs

A guiding light Belief is one that is not accomplishable by any means. It provides an ethical rule upon which the player can measure his character's actions. At BWHQ, we try to discourage these Beliefs in new players. They're hard to play and hard to challenge. However, for a skilled Burning Wheel player, they're a lot of fun. Guiding light Beliefs help you "get into character." They encourage you to offer a different perspective on the situation. If you have a Belief that says "I must never raise my hand in violence again, since I have been forced to slay mine own brother," how are you going to topple the duke?

Guiding light Beliefs that subscribe to an ideology—"I will abide by the precepts of Nergal's Temple," for example—are colorful but difficult to play. Behind these Beliefs sits an ideological system. The player must keep this ideology in mind while he plays and be ready to spout those precepts and abide by them! On the other hand, as the GM, you must also know these principles. You must be ready to offer situations that directly contradict them or present options in which one way contravenes the ideology and the other venerates it. This is quite a challenge to bring out during gameplay.



As the GM, I find that not only do I have to present nuanced situations, but I often have to remind players of their own ideologies! "Really, you're going to do that? I thought that was against your religion." So take care with these Beliefs. It's okay for each player to have one, but no more. When getting started with the game, try to focus on goal-oriented Beliefs. You can develop these deeper, more nuanced Beliefs in play.

Practical Advice on Challenging Beliefs

Here are some practical perspectives on challenging Beliefs. They were presented to us by Michael Prescott on our forums.



A player has the Belief "I must kill that bastard Mordock." Here are a number of ways you can challenge that one Belief using different perspectives on the character Mordock.

- *Validation.* Make Mordock super villainous, mean to children, etc. to validate the worthiness of the Belief.
- *Undermining.* Make Mordock a super nice guy, someone nobody in their right mind would want to kill. The player has a chance to define his character by the unreasonable pursuit of his goal.
- *Flip.* Switch from validating to undermining, or vice versa. Have the villain repent and beg for mercy; now the long-validated player has to risk looking murderous to complete his goal.
- *Opposition.* Make Mordock hard to kill in logistical terms. He has henchmen, powerful allies, etc. so that once he's dead, it feels like a big accomplishment.
- *Catch-22.* Make gunning for Mordock costly in terms of the player's other Beliefs. For example, if the player has a Belief about curing his sister's terminal illness, Mordock is the only guy who can cure her.
- *Divide and Conquer.* Like Catch-22, but you cause interplayer friction by getting the other players to oppose the player with the belief to bring down Mordock. For example, Mordock is the only person who can teach the players the secrets of Enchanting.
- *Merge.* Create harmony in the group by making Mordock's death a means of accomplishing other goals. Perhaps Mordock also has the Black Chalice, an item that another player needs.



Try to imagine your players' Beliefs in this scheme. What's the common goal they share? What are their secondary goals? How can you tie the secondary goals back into the common goal? Can you use the secondary goals as obstacles to accomplishing the common goal?

What's the mood at the table? Do the players universally hate one of the antagonists? Can you turn him into a sympathetic villain and thereby challenge all of their Beliefs by causing them to question their goals?

Michael's simple scheme for challenging Beliefs helps frame matters into a pattern of easily executed actions. How do your group's goals fit into this scheme?







Instincts

Instincts are a tricky part of the game. A good Instinct is harder to write than a good Belief. And often, a bad Instinct is harder to apply than a bad Belief. To write a good Belief, you need a situation, a character and a sense of drama. To write a good Instinct, you need a character, a sense of drama and a bit of system mastery. Instincts game the system, so to use them best you need to know how the system works.



The rules mention two types of Instincts: those that add characterization and those that grant a mechanical benefit. There's a third type that we describe in this chapter—Instincts born from the situation. We also discuss what makes a good characterization Instinct and how you get the most mechanical benefit from an Instinct.

Characterization Instincts

A characterization Instinct is a reminder to you about how to play your character through a situation. It offers little or no mechanical benefit, but it tells you "what your character would do." It's helpful when overwhelmed by choices to be able to refer to your Instinct list and be nudged in a direction.

The best characterization Instincts remind you to do something with your character that you, the player, are bad at or uncomfortable with. They remind you to push against comfortable behavior. They remind you to be cool when you always blow up; they remind you to lie when you always tell the truth; they remind you to be cold-blooded when you're usually sanguine.

Mechanical Instincts

A mechanical Instinct is one that gains you some mechanical advantage in the game. Typically, you are allowed to make a free roll to cover your ass when trouble arises or to trigger a condition that bypasses a penalty.

Instincts work best in the looser framework of independent and versus tests made in the course of play.



As it says in the Burning Wheel (page 56), Instincts let you make a test when triggered by a situation or obstacle. Essentially, play stops advancing for a moment and you step back in time to allow the player with the appropriate Instinct to make a test. If you have an Instinct such as, "Always remember to bring a gift when visiting," and you arrive at court in play but you forgot a gift, you get to make a Resources test on the side for an appropriate gift. No questions asked.

Instincts can also provide the pretext to turn a situation into a versus test—rather than a standard test or an outright declaration by the GM. You have an Instinct to "Always watch out for an ambush." You're assured of getting to test your Observation against an impending ambush, no matter how distracted your character is.

Finally, an Instinct allows you to take an action in the game that alleviates a penalty. This is the "I forgot to say it, but my guy would totally do that" type of Instinct. "Always sleep with a knife under my pillow." You don't have to talk about that knife, ever. It's always under your pillow when you bed down. "Always lock the door when I leave the vault." That vault is always locked when you leave. You don't leave it ajar unless you specifically state you play against your Instinct.

Instincts in Duel of Wits, Range and Cover and Fight!

Contrary to appearances, Instincts don't work in Duel of Wits, Range and Cover and Fight. They work before you engage these systems and after, but not during. Timing is too important in these instances to let people cheat outright. If Instincts could change actions, these conflicts would rapidly devolve into Instinct wars.

You can write Instincts about being prepared for a Fight, or to always escalate to violence in a Duel of Wits, or to always gather your arrows after a skirmish in Range and Cover, but you can't write anything that interferes with the action sequence. "Always fight in aggressive stance" will allow you to start a fight in aggressive stance, but once you drop out of stance, you don't automatically pop back in. You have to spend the action required.

"If disarmed, draw my knife." This Instinct sounds cool, but it breaks the rules. It costs two actions to draw a knife in Fight. Since there's no way you could have had the knife ready before you were disarmed in the melee, the Instinct can't pay off.







Situational Instincts

Situational Instincts are similar to characterization Instincts, but rather than focusing on the character per se, they relate an action about a specific circumstance in the story.

So instead of, "Always draw my sword at the first sign of trouble," your third Instinct should be something like "When I see my traitorous brother, attack him vigorously!" Or, "When I see the night watch, run." Or, "When Soryu mouths off, try to cover for him."

These Instincts relate to specific circumstances and particular characters you are involved with in the game at hand. Using these Instincts will pay off handsomely in artha and create a pleasant chaos in the game.

Practical Instincts

Let me try to give some advice about common problems with Instincts.

Always Win

I see badly written, poorly conceived Instincts all the time. They go something like this: "Always win;" or "Always do the right thing;" or "Always know [something seemingly prosaic but actually impossible—exits, the truth, your thoughts]."

Bad Instincts are written to shield the character (and player) from danger. That's not what Instincts are for, so don't tolerate Instincts like that.



Make sure Instincts are focused on a physical action that can be accomplished in a single heartbeat or something that you do habitually when you're not under pressure or in danger. Instincts have to make sense in the context of their use! If you have an Instinct "Always assess my opponents for weaknesses," and you get ambushed, there's no time for assessin'! Checking out your opponent seems like such a simple thing, but it's tricky. Weaknesses need to be studied. That Instinct needs to say "Always assess my opponents for weaknesses before a fight." But if you were at court and you met your enemy in passing, that'd be a perfect time to assess her for weaknesses—even if you don't say you did it. When you fight her, you can call back to that moment and say, "Weren't we at court together? I totally assessed her weaknesses then! I want to make a Perception test to have noted where she wears the lightest armor."

Picking Three Good Instincts

Players often struggle to choose three good Instincts. They typically have one sweet Instinct in mind, but lack inspiration for the second or third.

Let us start off this discussion by removing the pressure. The Burning Wheel states, "Characters may have one to three Instincts." You're not required to have all three. If you only have one Instinct, you're fine. You can start playing and worry about adding others as play progresses.

We often use this tactic when we're set with two great Instincts but blanking on a third: In the course of play something usually happens that makes us say "My guy would never do that," or "My guy would always do that!" That becomes our missing Instinct.

We also use these guidelines:

Personal Instinct
Make one Instinct about your character's personality.

"Never let them forget that I'm a noble."
"Never let an Elf insult me."
"Always bait the captive wolves."

Material Instinct
Make one Instinct about your gear or equipment.

"Always mend my armor before I bed down."
"Always sleep with a knife under my pillow."
"Never wear shoes."



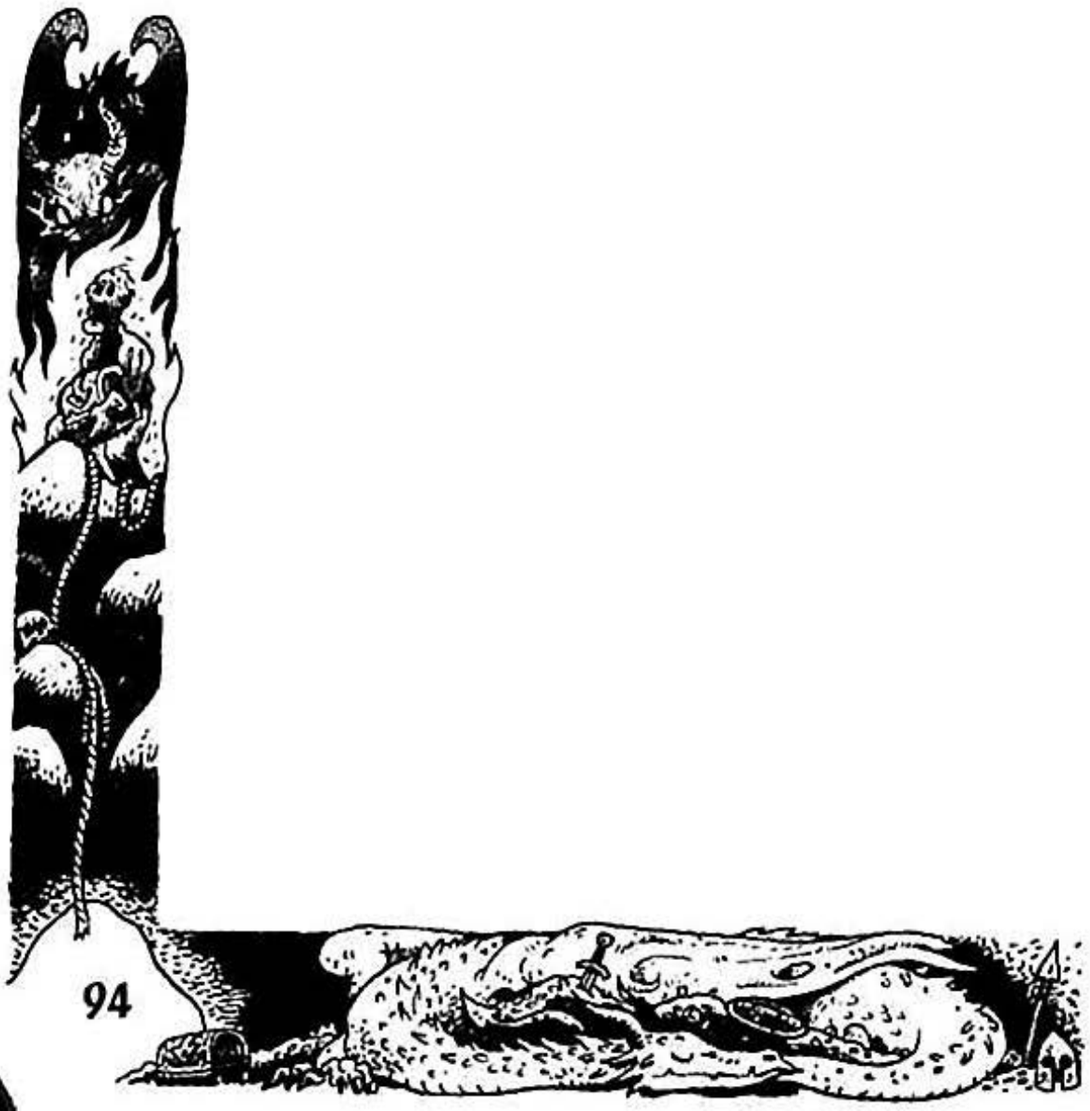
Skill-Based Instinct
Look over your skills. Imagine how they would make your character behave. Write an Instinct about that behavior.

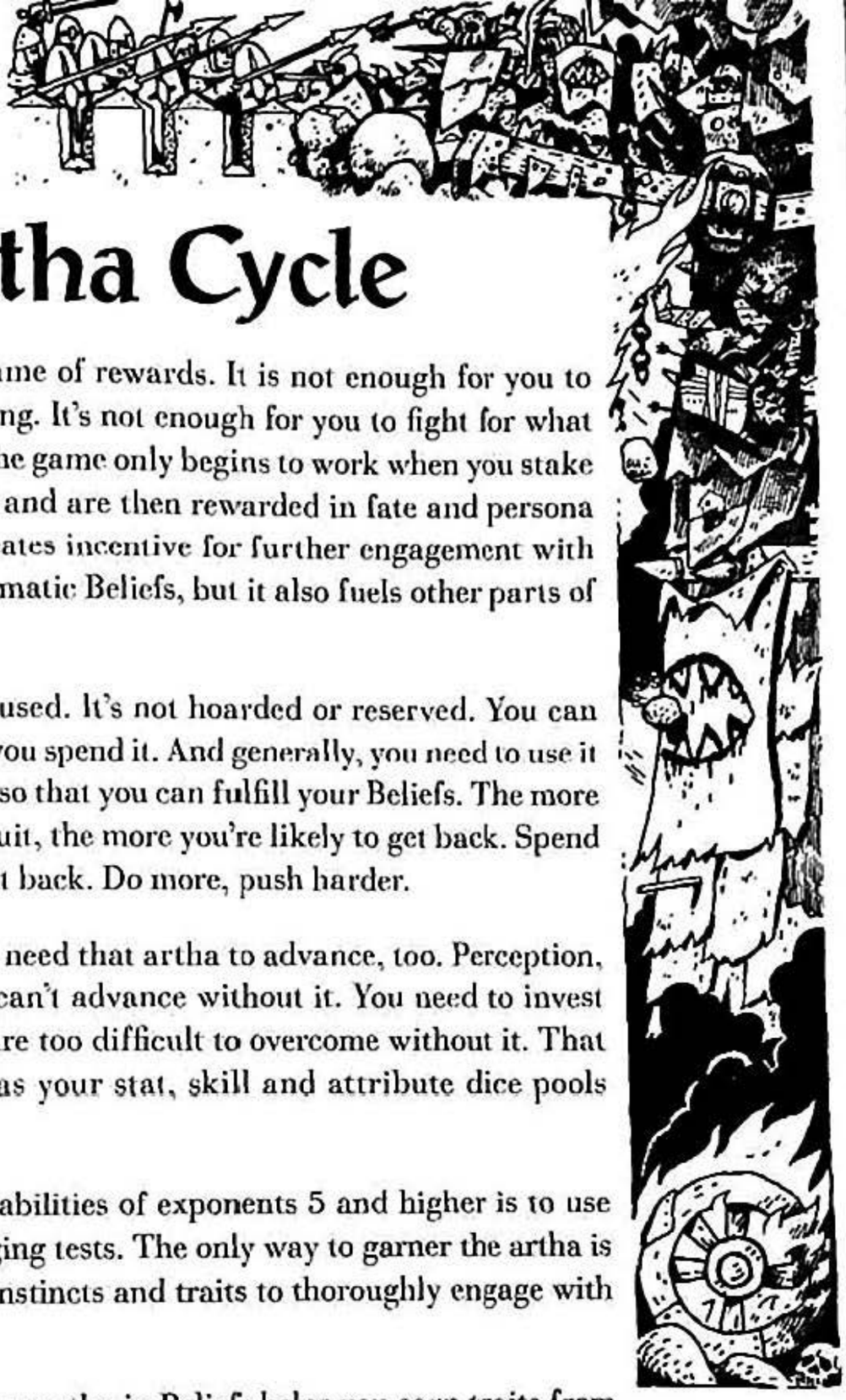
"When I'm in a library, do research."
"Always intimidate people who are shorter than me."
"Always recite a poem for my lover."

Changing Instincts

Instincts can and should be changed as your character grows. Examine your Instincts every few sessions. Are they causing you trouble? Do they really reflect your character's current personality?

If you're not getting into or out of trouble with an Instinct, how can you refine it? Perhaps the intent reflects your character's personality, but in practice it's not coming up. Can you modify the Instinct to reflect your current situation while retaining the heart of it?





Artha Cycle

Burning Wheel is a game of rewards. It is not enough for you to claim to want something. It's not enough for you to fight for what you think you want. The game only begins to work when you stake your claim on a Belief and are then rewarded in fate and persona points. That artha creates incentive for further engagement with even tighter. more dramatic Beliefs, but it also fuels other parts of the system.

Artha is meant to be used. It's not hoarded or reserved. You can only benefit from it if you spend it. And generally, you need to use it to overcome obstacles so that you can fulfill your Beliefs. The more you invest in that circuit, the more you're likely to get back. Spend artha and earn it right back. Do more, push harder.

But that's not all. You need that artha to advance, too. Perception, Faith and Resources can't advance without it. You need to invest it in challenges that are too difficult to overcome without it. That investment pays off as your stat, skill and attribute dice pools increase.

One way to advance abilities of exponents 5 and higher is to use artha to pass challenging tests. The only way to garner the artha is to play your Beliefs, Instincts and traits to thoroughly engage with the game.

Furthermore, investing artha in Beliefs helps you earn traits from trait votes. Those traits codify the aspects of your character that you evoked while fighting for your Beliefs. Spending that artha has helped bring your character closer to your vision of who he is right now.

Lastly, there's the ultimate investment: epiphany. Fighting for your Beliefs, spending, earning and investing make an epiphany inevitable. It takes quite a long time, but it's worth it. A gray-shade ability substantially multiplies your character's effectiveness.

This enormous, beautiful cycle is born from working toward fulfilling one Belief.

Awarding Artha in General

Artha awards are granted at the end of each session. How do we remember if we played a Belief or Instinct? We developed a method that I feel enriches our games. We wrap up 15 minutes earlier than we used to. We each read our Beliefs, Instincts and traits aloud in turn. As we read, we each interject commentary—"I played that when I..." or "This one didn't get touched at all...." Other players also offer insights. Often, one of us will shrug off a Belief, "I didn't play this at all," and the rest of us shout, "Are you kidding?! What the hell else were you doing when you murdered that dude in cold blood?!" or something similar. If the player agrees, he takes the award. If he disagrees, then he doesn't take the point. It's important that the group as a whole remember and parse the session together. It helps us all keep focused on the game.

This works in the other direction, too. If a player isn't earning artha from a Belief, it's obvious. Therefore, when reviewing Beliefs for artha, we can clearly see what's misfiring and what's working.

Earning Fate

Fate is the most common artha currency. It is the easiest to earn and there are more conditions for its acquisition than persona or deeds combined.

Earning Fate for Beliefs

The conditions for earning fate for playing a Belief are very loose. The text says, "serves a purpose or drives the game forward." Ideally, I intended that the player make a test in service of a Belief. I want you to bring your statement into the game—make it manifest with a risk of failure. If not that, then at least a strong performance based on or defending a Belief is necessary for the reward.

Merely restating the Belief to the group or silently handing over a few helping dice during the session is not enough to earn this reward. Beliefs must be actively pursued—there must be some risk—if you wish to be rewarded.

Working Toward...

For most Beliefs, you earn fate points on your way to earning a persona point for personal goals. You don't accomplish the goal this session, but you actively worked toward it. That earns a fate point.







Fate Mines

Some Beliefs are not goals. Either the explicit goal is beyond the scope of the campaign or the Belief is an ideological or philosophical statement. "I will spend my every breath to overthrow this empire" is an example of the former (for argument's sake, let's say the scope of the game doesn't include room for me to actually topple anything so grand as an empire). "Fire is my guide and my succor" is an example of the latter type of Belief.

I can work toward both of those Beliefs. I can attack the imperial tax collectors and drive them from my town. I can defame the emperor in public. I can write manifestos about the downfall of the emperor.

For the fire Belief, I can use fire to light my way. I can build fires to keep us warm when it rains. I can boil water. I can sterilize my medical implements. I can speak in mystical terms about the fire within when I make decisions. All of this counts toward playing a Belief, even though there is nothing to ultimately accomplish.

These are acceptable Beliefs. In fact, I recommend writing one for your character. We call them, rather baldly, *fate mines*. You work them into play to provide characterization and are rewarded with fate points.





Earning Fate for Instincts

Instincts are often their own reward. They can grant a mechanical advantage. If that mechanic is invoked and you benefit from it, you don't get an artha award. If the Instinct mechanic is invoked and you suffer for it, then you're rewarded with a fate point.

No one can trigger your Instincts but you. Good Instinct play requires a proactive player. If you don't invoke the Instinct, you cannot benefit from it. If you don't call for its mechanical aspect to aid you, then the Instinct remains inert. If you don't invoke the Instinct in a problematic circumstance, then you won't be rewarded. This reward is very much dependent on your own behavior at the table.

Earning Fate for Traits

Trait awards are very important, but they are less frequent than rewards for Beliefs. The criteria for the reward is that the story must head in an unexpected direction due to the invocation of the trait.

We've drifted the conditions for this award slightly. We only give out trait awards for character traits. On a rare occasion, we'll grant the award for another type of trait. Why? We feel that using a die or call-on trait is reward enough.

Using a character trait is purely a way to embellish performance and color decisions. This is a noble thing and it should be rewarded.



At the end of the session, we quickly scan our trait lists and make a case for any character traits that were brought into play in a meaningful way. We try to cite the moment of decision or change. If the group agrees, we take the award. In general, you earn one fate per session for playing character traits. Otherwise, play becomes trait-bingo rather than meaningful roleplay.

Earning Fate for Humor

In some of our games, the humor point is a nightly award. In other campaigns, it's rare. Burning Wheel is, by its nature, a rather heavy game. It's an intense experience, fighting for what you believe! But in this context, we value comic relief. If that in-character remark makes us all laugh—from humor, joy or excitement—we want to reward you.

However, comedic moments pass quickly and in the final end-of-session tally, they're easy to forget. To make sure just rewards are distributed, some of us will make a note of what was said if we think it's humor-



worthy. My notebooks and character sheets are littered with incongruous quotes that are just bizarre out of context but were spit-take hilarious in the moment.

Earning Fate for Skills

Right Skill, Right Time is the rarest of the fate point awards. It's meant to award clever character builds or diligent practice. It is only disbursed when the group is at an impasse and the GM calls for an obscure or unlikely skill to bypass the obstacle. A player unexpectedly chimes in, "I have that!" The game rolls on and he's rewarded in the end.

The best example I can remember is a group who needed to sneak into a well-guarded citadel tower. Dro chimed in, "I have Architecture. I want to use my knowledge to find us a secret entrance." Dro was the absolute hero for that session. I think he got MVP and the Right Skill, Right Time award.

You cannot earn this award more than once per skill, ever. Once we know you have that skill, there's no more magic to it. Once we start to rely on your clutch skills, you're in the running for Workhorse, not Right Skill, Right Time.

Earning Persona

There are five distinctions for earning persona points: Embodiment, Moldbreaker, Personal Goals, Workhorse and MVP.



Earning Embodiment

Anyone can nominate another player for the Embodiment award. Just recap the scene or scenes and why you thinks the player deserves an Embodiment point. Everyone has a chance to chime in, for or against. Don't nominate yourself.

We also tend to make Embodiment awards gradually harder to earn. Repeating your stellar performance from session to session will earn you a few persona points in the early games, but later in the campaign, it's just what we expect as your normal behavior. If you want that award, you have to push into new and interesting ground.

Earning Moldbreaker

Moldbreaker is perhaps my favorite award, but it has its problems. It is earned for dramatically playing against a Belief. You can betray a Belief in situations presented to you by the GM or you can set up your own



Moldbreaker by writing conflicting Beliefs. Both are perfectly valid. It's important to note that you don't earn this persona point by *ignoring* a Belief. If a Belief doesn't come into play, or if it's challenged and you take no action, then there is no reward.

To get the Moldbreaker award, you must bring your character's internal struggle into the spotlight. You must show the rest of the group how you are fighting with your own demons. Show us how much this decision costs you.

Sometimes this roleplay results in you serving one Belief while ignoring another. That's perfectly normal. Often, if a great performance or brain-breaking decision doesn't get you Moldbreaker, you are considered for an Embodiment point.

The Moldbreaker Belief Change Warning

As I said above, I love Moldbreaker moments. They're very powerful for me. They represent a point at which many parts of the game come together and present the player with a poignant, meaningful choice. The Moldbreaker moment is part of the classic Burning Wheel question, "Is that what you believe now? Well, what if this happens? Do you still believe that?"

When I GM and a player undergoes a Moldbreaker moment, I ask about the Belief at the end of the session. "Do you still believe that? Do you want to change the Belief?" I am comfortable with the player deciding either way, but I want to make sure that there is still interesting conflict to squeeze from the decision.



Sometimes when you break a Belief, you are changed by the moment. Your character has surprised you. You no longer believe. You know it intuitively. You know you have to change. Powerful stuff.

Other times when you break a Belief, you are using that moment to define the very Belief that you played against. By going against it this one time, you are demonstrating just how committed you are to your ideals. You would prefer to do this another way, but circumstances have forced you to compromise your ideals. However, this doesn't make you callow or disingenuous. In fact, it roots you even more firmly in your ideological stance.

Thus, after you earn the Moldbreaker award, reflect a bit on the Belief and the direction of the character. If you no longer believe, change it. If you care even more, leave it alone.



If a player earns Moldbreaker in multiple sessions, I flag the Belief. After three times, I request that the Belief be changed to reflect the character's new ideology. Generally, the players agree with me. On occasion, the situations in the game are so fraught with chest-tightening, fist-clenched struggles of ideology that it's appropriate to keep the Belief even though it's been broken repeatedly. This is a tough call, though—something to be discussed and verified by both player and GM.



Personal Goals

The persona point for the Personal Goals award is straightforward on the surface. Did you accomplish the goal set out in your Belief or not? If yes, you get a persona point. If not, then you either played it to drive the game forward and earned a fate point or didn't touch on it and didn't benefit.

In practice, this award can get a little muddy. Players can have Beliefs whose meanings change in context. "I will destroy the Red Council and all of its evil works," for example. In the campaign, the Red Council is down to one wizard who maintains lots of evil works. Once that wizard





is destroyed, is that Belief counted as accomplished? What happens if the evil works still exist or the evil works are thwarted but the sole wizard survives? Who decides?

When we read our Beliefs at the end of the session, we'll just ask the player who owns it. "Are you still interested in that Belief? You pretty much fulfilled it, but you could pursue it more if you'd like." If the goal has been nominally accomplished, but contains open-ended possibilities, we let the player decide whether to keep the Belief and take a fate point, or change the Belief and take a persona point.

At our table, when a personal goal is achieved, we strongly encourage the player to write a new Belief to replace that one. It's tacitly understood that the GM is going to move on and challenge other Beliefs.

MVP

To determine the MVP, we review the session. First, we look at the tests made. Was a particular test or conflict crucial to the progress of the story, incredibly influential or vital to the survival of the group? If one player's actions stand out, we award him the MVP award. If there's no test or conflict we can point to, we look for moments of performance in which a player's decision or action drove play in a vital direction.

If the session was mellow, everyone contributed equally or it was a builder, moving toward future action, don't be afraid to withhold this award. It is not obligatory; it is discretionary.



Workhorse

For the Workhorse award, we look at everyone's actions across the session. Who used lots of seemingly mundane skills to keep us going? Who carried us through that fight, soaking up blows that would have killed us all? Who was the unsung hero? He gets the persona point for Workhorse.

Workhorse is a test-based award. It's for rolling lots of dice without hogging the spotlight. However on occasion, a player will slog away behind the scenes without a lot of tests. A player can devise plans, inspire other players to action or play the anchor, supporting the other players with a strong performance and still earn this reward. This includes passing lots of helping dice while not testing much yourself.

This award is not based entirely on success. You can labor behind the scenes, testing to forage and cook for the group, trying to muster a couple of linked dice, but only accruing failure and penalties. In the



rules, you've hurt the group, but in the fiction you've fed and clothed the group so they can carry on the fight—even if you've also made them sick and poor. On occasion, that's also worthy of the Workhorse award!

The Deeds Point

The deeds point is the single most powerful type of artha in the game. It can be spent before the roll or after. It can double your dice or reroll your traitors.

The criteria for earning a deeds point are intentionally vague. In fact, deeds points aren't earned, they're given. Unlike fate or persona points, which are earned by fulfilling player-driven criteria, these points are handed out at the sole discretion of the GM.

The deeds point is bound up in the Big Picture of the game. It's for performing remarkable, unexpected things that the GM thinks are exemplary or even frustrating! These points are earned when the players sacrifice their petty aims for a grand act.

If you feel like you're cruising toward a deeds point, then you're doing it wrong. If you feel as if you've tricked your way into one, then you've done yourself a disservice. If your stomach is in knots and your hands trembling under the intensity of the events that concluded your game, then you might be eligible.

Deeds points can be earned in conjunction with persona points for goals. However, in the quest for that goal, the player must risk his character to unanticipated heights or profound depths. If these great deeds are all part of the plan, then it's worth a persona point. If the situation blows up, gets complicated and you have to take a few deep breaths before you dive in (yet you still manage to persevere) then you might be eligible.

The context of play and the challenges therein are paramount. It's all relative—and, ultimately, up to the GM.



As a GM, I gave out a deeds point to each member of my group for completing the campaign goal of ending the reign of a powerful wizard.

As a player, I earned a deeds point for helping banish a Greater Dæmon who had plagued our party for years. Both events resulted from a lot of hard work, but they both concluded with explosive, unexpected results.



Artha Bloat



If you play Burning Wheel over a long period of time, you may experience artha bloat. An excess of fate and persona builds up. This happens for a number of reasons:

- If you're too lenient awarding fate for Beliefs, Instincts and traits, it's easy to build up a hefty reserve.
- If you're not challenging players with difficult obstacles, they have less incentive to spend artha. Thus if you see players with eight or more fate points, you should be sure to hit them with some steep obstacles.
- If you're not using the extended conflict mechanics enough, players tend to build up a fat reserve.

Conflicts Soak Artha

Duel of Wits, Range and Cover and Fight require lots of little rolls that all carry significant consequences—in these conflicts you're always pushing for just one more success. Thus a player can easily invest a lot of artha in just one conflict. Conversely, if you're not using these systems, players are missing out on an opportunity to invest in their abilities.



The game awards artha at a rate that is not easily modified. The rate of awards assumes that the extended conflict mechanics will be used at least once per session. Thus if you rely solely on versus tests in your game, you're skewing the risk/reward balance of the game. In long-term games, the rate of reward and use can balance over time—you might have a mellow session one week, and a hectic one the next. If you're using versus tests exclusively, then your players will build up ridiculous reservoirs of artha. If players are accumulating stockpiles of artha, that's a red flag that it's time to put the spurs to them. Hit them with conflicts. Set up big moments that require them to completely engage with the system—not just one battle, but a series of conflicts that keeps them on their toes and burning artha.





Artha for NPCs

Don't give your mooks any artha, no matter how bad-ass they are. It's just rude.

If you spent time burning up a creature or character to oppose the group and you don't want to see your villain punked, then provide a fate and a persona point (or two). Otherwise, let your antagonist's dice fall as they may.

Going further, your Big Bads should start with a nice reserve of three fate and three persona.

Allied NPCs and Artha

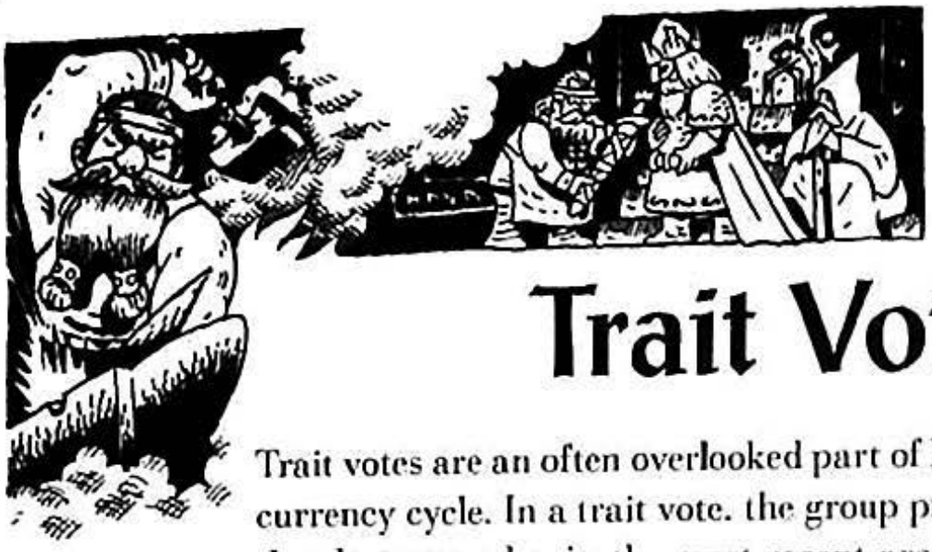
I try to de-emphasize artha for allied NPCs. The players, not the supporting cast, are the focus of the game. On occasion, however, it is appropriate for these characters to start with, earn and spend artha as per the guidelines presented here and in the Burning Wheel.

NPCs Can Earn Artha

Page 63 of the Burning Wheel states that NPCs can earn artha. It's up to the players to nominate the character—for Embodiment, Personal Goals, etc. However, in practice, I've found that this acknowledgement is very rare. Thus I shamelessly pester the players if I feel like I've done a good job with an NPC: "Did you enjoy that performance? Can I have an Embodiment point?" Don't be shy. They're not going to give you anything unless you ask.







Trait Vote

Trait votes are an often overlooked part of Burning Wheel's grand currency cycle. In a trait vote, the group provides feedback about the character play in the most recent arc of the campaign. The vote highlights the evocation of Beliefs, Instincts and traits and the group's own self-perception. The process is both a capstone of the currency cycle and a safety valve for the system—we get final say over the characters after all is said and done.



The basic mechanic of the trait vote is very simple, but the procedure is left rather vague.

When to Trait Vote?

There's no perfect time for a trait vote. Try to perform the vote after a major event or accomplishment in the campaign. I like a vote every six to 12 sessions. The exact timing is up to the events and flow of your game.

If you run a trait vote too soon, the players don't have a sense of each other's characters. The votes are strained. If you wait too long to vote, then the precipitating events of the campaign are forgotten and lots of good trait opportunities are missed.

Trait Vote Procedure

At BWHQ, we've developed a procedure for our trait votes. We devote a whole session to the process, with any extra time put toward smaller "interim" procedures like practice, copying over characters and single-player wrap-up events.

At the start of the vote, we review the period upon which we're voting. We try to recall a major event at the beginning of the eligibility period to mark it in our minds. Then we agree on how many traits we're eligible for in the vote. This usually takes one of three forms: one character trait only; one character trait and one other trait; or two traits of any type. We almost always break this limit, but it's good to set a guideline.



We go around the table in turn and read out our current traits. The GM and the owning player make cases for and against losing traits. We vote to keep or lose any traits that are so identified. Traits are lost if they are unplayed, unused or actively played against. This is a small but vital part of this process. This is your chance to get rid of those humiliating lifepath traits.

Once we've voted off any traits, we then pick a character. Each player in turn nominates that character for a trait. One player takes the role of secretary and notes down the nominations. Trait nominations can be based on traits from the lifepaths, the special list, the general list or traits that you develop on the spot during the vote.

When you nominate, tell the group the name of the trait and why you think the character should have that trait. Don't give a speech, but a short comment is in order.

If we have a group of four players and a GM, at the end of the nomination process, each player should have five possible traits next to his name: one nomination from each player, including himself, and the GM.

Once all of the nominations are in order, starting with the first character nominated, read out the list of traits one at a time. The player who nominated the trait should make a case for the trait and why it is appropriate. Decide on the type of trait—character, die or call-on—at this point. If a question arises about what the trait does, use another trait as a model and create your own. Vote on each nomination according to the procedure in the Burning Wheel.

If you are nominated for more traits than you're eligible, the group should review the deadlocked traits. Make cases for or against them. Revote until a decision is reached or you decide to break the eligibility limitations.

Following this procedure should lead you to shiny new traits in a reasonable amount of time.



Beliefs, Instincts and Trait Voting

The character sheets have a place in which you can note whether you've spent artha using a Belief or Instinct. This note helps to remind us of moments in which we've invested. The amount of investment is a good benchmark for the types of traits for which the character is eligible.



This process is problematic in games with high Belief turnover. It becomes all but impossible to log your investments without keeping another separate record. I do not want to encourage more bookkeeping, so use this rule lightly. Use it to inform your decisions about the trait vote rather than as a strict measure.

Evolving Traits

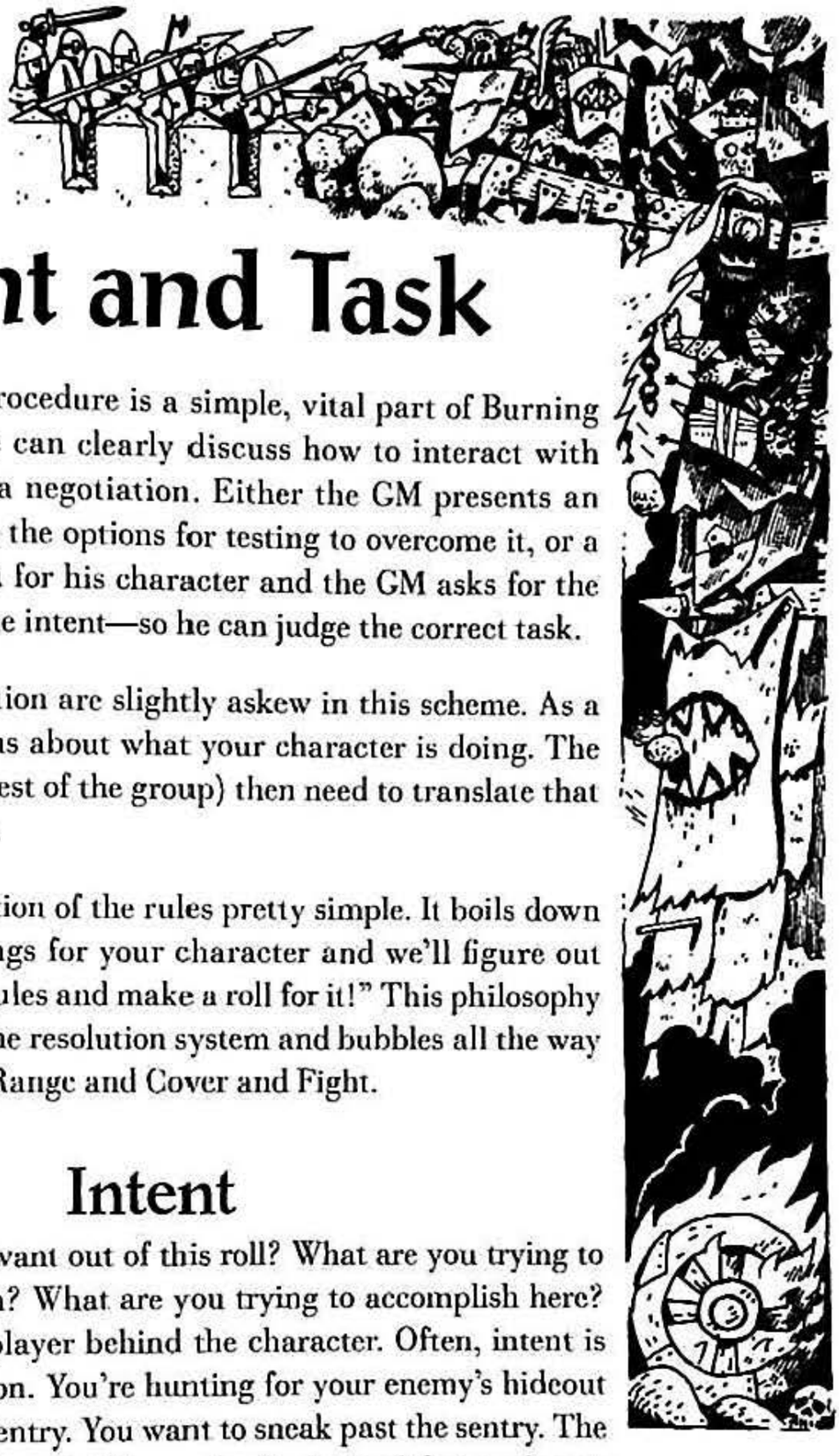
Using the trait vote rules, you can neatly transform a character trait into something more potent and useful—a die or call-on trait. So when you're voting, examine traits that have been played well. Can they evolve into a new form with more benefit to reflect how the character has been played? If so, propose their evolution rather than a whole new trait.

Take care that you don't forget character traits. In our games, sometimes we get so caught up in developing die and call-on traits, we lose our character traits as they get promoted to other levels. As you evolve character traits, be sure to vote on new ones that accurately reflect changes in the character.

Reputation Votes

A trait vote is just one of two ways to vote to change your character in Burning Wheel. You also vote to change, increase, decrease, add or remove reputations. The process is essentially the same as a trait vote, but you're looking at reputations, not traits. Reputation votes can come at the end of any scenario, but they're usually lumped into the trait vote process. Don't overlook the reputation vote. It's very useful!





Intent and Task

The intent-and-task procedure is a simple, vital part of Burning Wheel. It exists so we can clearly discuss how to interact with an obstacle. It is not a negotiation. Either the GM presents an obstacle and describes the options for testing to overcome it, or a player states an action for his character and the GM asks for the underlying reason—the intent—so he can judge the correct task.

Note that task and action are slightly askew in this scheme. As a player, you're telling us about what your character is doing. The GM (and usually the rest of the group) then need to translate that action into the system.

This makes the operation of the rules pretty simple. It boils down to "describe cool things for your character and we'll figure out what it means in the rules and make a roll for it!" This philosophy stands at the core of the resolution system and bubbles all the way up into Duel of Wits, Range and Cover and Fight.

Intent

Intent—what do you want out of this roll? What are you trying to get from this situation? What are you trying to accomplish here? Intent addresses the player behind the character. Often, intent is implied by the situation. You're hunting for your enemy's hideout and you encounter a sentry. You want to sneak past the sentry. The GM calls for a Stealthy test. The underpinnings of that exchange are obvious to us—you want to sneak past; you are going to do it by being quiet and sneaky.

But that's not the only option. You can choose to alter the vector of your intent. You could choose to capture the sentry, trail him back to his observation post or even murder the sentry—three different intents with three different outcomes for one obstacle.

You could also announce that you want to convince the sentry that you're on guard with him. Wait, the obstacle was to sneak past the sentry. You say, "What? You were sneaking through the woods and now you want to saunter up and talk to this guy?"

"Sure!"

"No, way. That's not an appropriate task for this obstacle."

The GM vetoes that intent. Why? Because it is inappropriate for the situation. It doesn't make sense in the fiction. You're not dressed like one of them. You're sneaking through the woods. They're on patrol. You can't just pop up out of nowhere, start a conversation and expect it to go well. That intent is no good for getting past the sentry.

So what happens? Usually, the player reframes his intent to something more appropriate to the situation. Or the player can press his case and describe how he will accomplish his intent—his task.

Task

Task describes how you accomplish your intent both according to the rules and in a fiction:

"I pull off my boots and creep along the rocks quietly."

"Great. Test Stealthy. Do you have any wises you want to FoRK?

"Yes! I used to be a sentry so I know how lazy they are. And I great up playing outside a dangerous forest. Sentry-wise and Forest-wise?"

Task must dovetail with intent. What you're doing must make sense as a way to get what you're after. The GM arbitrates this (usually backed up by the rest of the group). If it doesn't make sense to him, it doesn't fly.

So to return to our previous example, being sneaky and passing the sentry makes sense. What about the other intents?

To capture the sentry: "I sneak up behind him, muzzle him and choke off his windpipe." Test Stealthy plus Brawling (or Martial Arts) plus appropriate wises.

To follow him back to his observation post: "I keep my distance and trail him on his rounds. Where does he go?" Stealthy plus Observation or Tracking, maybe even Hunting.

To murder him: "I hurl my knife into his neck, slicing his windpipe, killing him before he can make a sound." Throwing plus Stealthy, Knives and any appropriate wises.

Note how merging the intent with the task changes what skill is tested and what FoRKs are appropriate.





Divining the implications of intent and task—what abilities can be used—occupies a huge space in the game. You are meant to enter that space creatively and suggest interesting, unexpected combinations. But to do so, you have to back it up in the fiction. The process points right back to the top: It's got to make sense to the people at the table.

Now, what about our waggish actor? He wants to impersonate another sentry to deceive this one. When we squint at the intent, it doesn't seem like that bad of an idea. So we ask him, "How would you do it?"

"Easy. I roll around in the mud and get good and dirty. Then I move off a good hundred yards or so in the direction he came. I call out loudly, 'Damn it!' Then I come staggering down the trail, cursing and muttering. 'Fell in the damned mud! Hey, friend! You're wanted back at the post. Damned mud. I slipped in it. Can you believe it? Anyway, yeah, you're wanted back at the post.'"

Hm. Well, it sounds unlikely, but it certainly is intriguing. The GM can still veto, but the player is clearly onto something. In this case, the GM can grant the test: "Fine, test your Acting, plus FoRK in Disguise and Falsehood. Obstacle is his Will, and I'm going to give you a +1 Ob disadvantage because this is utterly outlandish."

Note that he's changed his intent from the original example. He's not trying to sneak past, per se. He's trying to trick the sentry into leaving his post. The task is appropriate for the outlandish intent. If he succeeds, the player deserves the fruits of his labor. Fortune favors the bold and failure is fun.

By the way, my absolute favorite part of these moments is when the player responds to the GM's outline for the task saying, "Wait, I don't have Acting!" Well, that's why we have rules for Beginner's Luck. Don't let them weasel out of the test.

What Skills or Ability for the Task

Assigning skills for tasks takes some fluency with the game. The best way to learn is to let the player suggest a skill that the character possesses. "I want to bypass this sentry."

"What skill would you use?"

"Falsehood."





Does the suggestion makes sense? If it doesn't, produce your own suggestion. Go with your gut. Don't flip through the book looking for an appropriate skill.

You'll gain an intuitive understanding of the skills after making calls like this during your games.

Tasks are a major part of the setting. They provide information about how this place works. So when you make a call on a skill for a task, be firm and be consistent. That's how it works here!

No Weasels

In Mouse Guard, we wrote a rule called No Weasels. It says that once a GM sets an obstacle, you must engage it. This rule isn't entirely applicable to Burning Wheel, but it's a good guideline. Once you've stated your intent and task, once your character is in motion and the obstacle has been presented, you're expected to roll the dice. Even if it's too hard!

But Weasels...

Part of making a test in Burning Wheel involves a bit of negotiation with the GM and other players. Can I do this? What about this? To my mind, it's equivalent to the characters investigating their environment. Sometimes this poking about will lead down a path. For example:

Player Rich: "We need to get into this fortress. Does it have a courtyard and a curtain wall?"

GM Luke: "Yes it does."

Player Rich: "Oh! Let's climb it! We go climb it. We're good climbers."

GM Luke: "Sure. It's the middle of winter and there's ice on the wall. Also, it's a new construction with a nearly sheer surface. I think Ob 5 is the fairest I can be."

Player Rich: "Oh...we're not that good at climbing. Uh. Maybe we can just knock on the gate? We, um, we go to the gate."



This is perfectly acceptable! However in the fiction of the story, we have to imagine that some time has passed. The characters have at the very least made the initial preparations for the climb and have only given up at the last minute. So they're in a bit of a different situation. Are there consequences? Perhaps mild ones—time advances, along with the machinations of the plot—but it's up to the GM ultimately.



No Fishing

Any negotiation about the appropriateness of the action should be handled when you state your intent. Any rules clarifications and obstacles should be handled before you get to the intent stage. You can ask questions about rules and look up details in the rule books. We want you to be informed when you boldly declare your action. We don't want you fishing, "What's the obstacle to convince him? That's too high. What if I intimidate him? What if I use a wise to know what he knows?"

An obstacle isn't a physical thing. It's a metaphor. Once it's presented, you need to confront it!

Roll the Dice or Say Yes

The Say Yes rule is difficult to adjudicate, yet it's one of the most vital elements of the system. It grants the CM the authorial power to cut right to the important stuff and skip extraneous or tiresome action.

In one campaign, our characters were crossing a narrow span over a chasm. The GM, Pete, described the bridge in vivid detail. One of the players, Rich, described his character hopping up to the railing and capering along. Should Pete have called for a Speed test for Rich's character to keep his balance? No. Never. Why? Certainly "in real life" there's a chance of falling, but in the story, it just didn't matter. Rich was roleplaying. He was embellishing, interacting with Pete's description. Rich made the scene better.

And what would the test have accomplished? He would have succeeded and stayed on the bridge. Success would have kept him at the same point. Or he would have fallen and we would have had to save him. It would have turned out like a false note in a bad action movie. There would have been quick cuts and close ups but nothing really would have happened.

Thus, Pete could Say Yes to this action. Rich wanted his character to look cool crossing the bridge. Great! Move on.

Later, those same characters needed to cross a narrow ledge to gain entry to a lost tomb. Pete described wind whipping along the cliff walls. We would have to make Speed tests to cross and enter. This was a totally legit test. The tomb was the goal of a long quest. Would we get in unscathed? Or would this cost us? In this case, it wasn't about us in particular, but about our gear and an NPC friend. If we failed, we'd lose those precious resources!



In another game, our previous session ended with Thor's summoner making a pact with a revenant to lead the group across endless plains. At the beginning of the next session, I had to resist every bad GM impulse. I wanted to call for Orienteering tests. Survival tests and Foraging tests. I wanted to dig right into that journey and make it real with dice rolls. But it would have been too much and unnecessary—and it'd break the intent of the deal Thor made in the previous session. Instead, I described the arduous journey and cut right to the good stuff—the group of travellers on the banks of the river that borders the Land of the Dead. Though I did not explicitly Say Yes, the idea is the same.

Don't Be a Wet Blanket, Mr. GM

Don't call for a test just to see a character fail. If you feel this impulse–"Well, he's walking down the street, but there's a chance he could fail and get lost!"—resist. Take a deep breath and describe the next obstacle.

If a player asks for a test or describes something simple and cool for his character, don't call for punitive tests. Ask yourself, "Is anything really at stake here?" A good measure for important tests is whether or not they actively challenge or build into a challenge for a Belief or Instinct. If not, just roleplay through it. If they do, negotiate an intent and task and roll some dice!

Success



Success in Burning Wheel is rather straightforward, almost rigid. You get what you ask for. Neither the GM nor the other players can impede or negate that result.

When a successful player has earned his intent, we often turn to him to put the finishing touches on the test. He stated what he wanted and how he was doing it. He gathered dice and rolled. Finally, he picks up the thread again and embellishes a bit on his victory, describing it to us with a detail or two.

This isn't a canon procedure, but neither does it drift the rules. It simply stretches the application of intent and task from before the roll to before and after the roll. It has a pleasant side effect: It helps us keep the thread of the narrative. Occasionally, we'll get bogged down in helping and FoRKing. The post-roll description reminds us where we left off.



Failure

You fail a lot in this game. You roll the dice quite often, and frequently the difficulty is rather steep. This is a design feature. Success isn't a given, it's something to strive for. And failure isn't a roadblock; it's a twist or a complication.

In fact, Burning Wheel advocates that a protagonist must fail en route to the climax. We think that failure makes a character much more interesting. How do you deal with the unexpected? What choices do you make when you don't get what you want? The answers to these questions deepen your character.



Success is the province of the player. He gets to pick a direction in the story and push for it. If he passes his test, he moves in that direction. Failure is the province of the GM. If the player does not overcome that obstacle, then the GM nudges the narrative in a direction of his choice.

Failure isn't a dead stop; it's an opportunity for a new, unexpected turn of events—more penalties, more tests, more conflicts and more situations. Failure also typically provides opportunities for advancement. And it is rewarded with artha when you bring your Beliefs into play. You don't have to be successful: you merely engage with your goals in the fiction and you're rewarded.

Announcing Risk of Failure Before the Roll

According to the Burning Wheel (page 32), when a test is made, the player announces intent and task and the GM states the results of a possible failure. It's a good habit to get into, and a valid rule, but I confess that I do not explicitly announce the terms of each test. Why? Two reasons: I find the results of failure implicit in most tests. If I'm doing my job correctly as the GM, the situation is so charged that the player knows he's going to get dragged into a world of shit if he fails. We project the consequences into the fiction as we're talking in-character and jockeying before the test.

The second reason I don't announce failure results is a bad habit at BWHQ. My players trust me. They know I have a devious GM-brain that will take their interests into heart and screw them gently but firmly. I can't write rules about this kind of trust and, frankly, I think basing a game solely on trust is awful. It leads to all sorts of other bad habits. However, it does have a positive side. Withholding some failure results allows for the game to move a little faster. It varies the monotony of the testing structure and provides room for the occasional inspired surprise.

And you know, sometimes the surprise is on me—sometimes I'm so caught up in my players' successes that I forget they can fail.

When I do announce failures before a roll, it's often after hearing a really important intent and task from the players. Once I give them the failure result, we have everything clear about what's on the line. Even then, I'll keep my failure results vague, "If you fail this, you're going to be lost." If the failure comes up, then I embellish with details. Otherwise, I leave it unspoken.





So why do I have the rule to announce failure conditions prior to the roll in the Burning Wheel? Do I still support it? Announcing the risks of failure before a roll is absolutely a good rule and a worthy practice to follow. It forms good habits. It adds a new dynamic to the game—knowing that failure isn't arbitrary when you roll the dice. I'm a poor role model, so definitely follow what's written in the book.

Protesting Failure Results

On occasion, one of my players will protest a failure result. He'll claim that I've gone too far or even broken a rule. It's perfectly valid for a player to call foul in Burning Wheel if he thinks he's been wronged.

If I've made a call that breaks a rule or is against the spirit of the game, I apologize and offer an alternative. The GM is as bound to the rules as the player. Sometimes I get carried away in the heat of the moment and I honestly appreciate it when my players pull me back down to earth.

If I've made a call that offends, I apologize and retract it. That's not my aim at all.

If I've made a call that seems to go too far—that provokes protest or incredulity—I reconsider it. Is the player turtling up and failing to engage a Belief? If I feel like my failure result appropriately, if forcefully, challenges a Belief, I let it stand. Protests be damned. If I've made a bad call, I attempt to retcon it and take a step back in the narrative.

Separate Intent and Task

When adjudicating the result of a failed test, we find it's a useful exercise to look at the intent and task separately. You wanted to assassinate the duchess quietly in a crowded room and implicate your enemy? A daring plan. The intent is to lay the blame of the duchess's murder upon your enemy's shoulders. The task is her secret murder by stiletto. The obvious failure result is that you do not murder your target and are caught. However, that's a bit of a roadblock and it leads to rather trite situations that lack nuance—fighting your way out or pleading innocence. A less obvious option has you succeed in the assassination, but you are caught. It's certainly much harder to plead innocence when the blood is running down your knife hand. In this circumstance, the action is reframed: The duchess is dead and everyone knows you're guilty. A still less obvious and more devious turn has you succeed, but your dear friend is wrongly blamed for the act and carted off to the gallows. Your actions have dragged an innocent soul down. What will you do?





Which direction to choose? Each is serviceable. The key is in the character's Beliefs (or to a lesser extent, an Instinct). Which option presents an interesting and difficult choice for the player based on his Beliefs? If the player has a Belief about never fighting in the open, then the first option is quite valid. If the player has a Belief about maintaining his pristine reputation, then the second option is a strong challenge to that Belief. If the player has a Belief about using the duchess's murder as pretext to propel his friend to power, then a twist like the third suggestion isn't an option—it's a necessity.

Directing failures is a matter of observation and practice. The best guideline I've found as a GM is that if the option bores, it's going to be boring for the group. But if the imagined turn of events makes me squirm or get butterflies in my stomach, it's probably the way to go. Listen to your gut!

The Light Touch Versus the Heavy Touch

Slamming your players with earth-shattering failures at every turn is exhausting. Your players will burn out, become frustrated or, worse, grow gun-shy. Be sensitive to the situation. Build up from smaller missteps to bigger disasters over the course of a session. It's even better if you can build up from minor inconveniences to true catastrophe across multiple sessions.

If a test isn't directly in service of a Belief or Instinct, use a light touch on the failure. Apply a minor inconvenience and move on. If a linked test, a test to make tools for a job or a test of a similar caliber becomes too onerous, the cost outweighs the benefit and players will quickly disengage from the system.



However, if a test is directly related to a Belief or Instinct, use failure to shock and surprise your players. Change the situation. Turn matters on their head. Shake them up. And then sit back and watch the players scramble. They will care about these twists because their Beliefs are on the line!

Failure Timing

Hold off on applying the results of a failure until dramatically appropriate. Delaying the inevitable can add to the tension. Just be sure not to wait so long that you forget.

If you are handling multiple simultaneous actions, hold off for a beat. Resolve the rolls for as many of the players as plausible and then combine the failure result into a cascade of disaster!



Practical Success

Failure gets a lot of discussion, but what about poor old success? What can it do? In addition to having a noticeable effect on the fiction of your game, success can also be used to generate mechanical benefit.

- *Make stuff.* You can craft items for one use or built to last. You can also make items of a particular quality—poor, run-of-the-mill or superior.
- *Acquire gear.* You can use your skills to acquire useful gear!
- *Find cash.* Success can produce cash dice! This effect isn't just from Resources; you can use a variety of abilities to squeeze cash out of a person or location.
- *Make a friend.* You can use social skills to build temporary alliances and induce NPCs to take action for you.
- *Alleviate the pain.* You can concoct solutions to alleviate penalties—whether medicinal, social, physical or otherwise.

Embellishing Success

The player's intent is made manifest and he describes his character's actions. I turn to my players, "Tell us what happened!" When they complete their inevitably entertaining description, I try to embellish a little. I try to add in reactions or other details. Adding a small detail can really help. It makes great success even more vivid and memorable. There's something special about collaborating to describe a brilliant victory.

If I'm unsure of where a player is going with his description of success, I'll back off and ask a few quick questions. "And then what? What happens next?" Rather than stepping on his victorious toes, I try to create room for him to make a statement.

Honor Success, Challenge Assumptions

Sometimes I react badly to success. "Fine, you get what you want." And play stalls on that point. Don't fall into this bad habit. The player accomplishes his intent. Describe the result. Honor it with an engaging illumination. Make it special.





Once the success is out there, solidly in the minds of the players, it's time to introduce new information and new problems. These aren't failure results. This information is stuff the players can see coming. Unlike a failure result, players get to choose how they'll deal with this new information.

Advantage

Success technically can't produce advantage dice unless the player or GM stated that it was a linked test before the dice were rolled. This is due to the failure condition—+1 Ob—for linked tests. It's bad form to screw players with unforeseen penalties after a die roll. Hence, the reverse is true: It's bad form to give out advantage dice without risk.

Success in a Duel of Wits

Success in a Duel of Wits is one of the most powerful results in the game. Using this system, you can make another character do almost anything! Of course, to get what you want, you need to state your own goal beforehand or incorporate it into your compromise.

However, Duel of Wits results are flexible and versatile: You can get paid, cause people to take your side, gain reputations, add affiliations, cement relationships or push another character into an action he wouldn't otherwise take.

Go ahead: Next time you're in a Duel of Wits, ask for a little bit more than you would have otherwise. Once you have an agreement, you're going to get what you want. Just be careful what you ask for.



Practical Failure

Burning Wheel is an effects-based game (mostly). The system provides a host of mechanical options that one can apply in a variety of situations. This section describes how you can use mechanical effects as failure results.

New Test

The most basic mechanical result of a failure is a new test. Rather than getting what he wants, the player is shunted down another course in which he must make an additional test to get back on track.

A failed Climbing test leaves your character dangling from a precipice—now you must pass an Agility test to scramble to safety.





A failed Persuasion test results in a soldier demanding a bribe, thus necessitating a Resources test.

A failed Orienteering test can lead to a trapped corridor. You must pass a Speed test to avoid the trap.

Full-Blown Conflict

When failure forces a player to make a new test, it can lead to a single test or a full-blown conflict: Duel of Wits, Range and Cover or Fight.

You jump a musketeer and attempt to clout him with a single blow. You fail, so now you must draw swords and duel with him. The Fight rules are then brought into play.

Unexpected Encounter

When a player fails. place a character or monster in the group's path. You now have a new enemy who can be reincorporated into future obstacles.

Traveling through a wild wood, the ranger fails her Orienteering test and inadvertently leads her companions into the lair of the Doom Serpent.

A failed Intimidation test summons forth the peddler's rather large cousin, who is ironically called "Tiny."

Obstacle Penalties

The GM can impose a +1 or +2 obstacle penalty on a future, related test.

You fail to surprise your opponent with a Stealthy test. You're in a bad situation; you now have +1 Ob to your initial positioning test.

During an argument, you so insult your friend that the GM applies a +2 Ob penalty to a future social skill test against him.

Gear Loss

One of my favorite failure results is to apply an effect against gear or property. Gear can be lost so that it's completely gone or so the character must test to recover it. Gear can be damaged—made poor quality or assigned an obstacle penalty until it is repaired. Gear can be broken—made unavailable until repaired. Broken gear can require a Mending test to repair or a more substantial skill like Blacksmith or Carpenter.

Gear loss is best used in physical tests.



Swept away down a river, you fail your Speed test. Not only are you far from shore, but your arrows have spilled from their quiver. They sail off into the current.

You fail to pick that lock and your lockpicks are jammed in the mechanism. It'll take a Mending test to extract them. Failure this time will trigger the trap mechanism for sure.

A failed Seduction test at the ball prompts the young lady to spill her goblet of wine over your finery. Your outfit is ruined and you have an obstacle penalty to any other test at the ball until you change.

Drastic failure results can see gear ruined—destroyed unless refigured with magic.

You jam your steel-gauntleted hand into a doomsday mechanism to halt its progress. You fail your Power test. Your gauntlet and vambrace are sucked into the machine and crushed. The machine rumbles on.

Injury

Failure in physical tasks can result in injury. You can assign a wound grade, rather than a coordinate, or you can assign a wound coordinate using the standard wounding rules.

Assigning a wound grade gives me more control over the effect of the result. "You fall and take a midi wound," rather than "You fall and take a B7."



Using wound coordinates is more abstract, but it's a natural evocation of the system—PTGS coordinates are built into the mechanics! Wound coordinates are generally more fair, as well, since they let players use traits such as Iron Skin to reduce their impact.

Injury is a great failure effect for martial versus tests—you are defeated and you take a wound. Brutal!

Superficial and light wounds are assigned if the pressure is on the characters to succeed in the next scene and there's no time to rest. Typically, players can take care of these wounds rather easily if given a moment's rest; therefore they are of limited value as penalties.

Midi wounds are appropriate results for falls, near-drownings, poisonings, explosives or traps. They're tough to treat, but they're not fatal. They leave a nice, lasting sting.



Severe and traumatic wounds will take out all but the most powerful of characters. These are great results for terrible falls, brutal traps, deadly poisons or bad accidents, but use them sparingly. Only the most dire of failures results in a Severe or Traumatic wound.

I don't like to use mortal wounds as test failure results for anything but fights, and even then only in the most extreme circumstances. You can use the effect as you see fit, but be careful.

Turning a Relationship

The nature of a relationship can change as the result of a failed test. Just like a character can turn from ill-disposed to favorable due to a successful test, a character can turn from friendly to inimical.

A relationship can change temporarily—you're feuding with your lover, so for the time being, he's your enemy. Or the change can be permanent—too much damage has been done to his heart and he swears eternal vengeance upon you.

These changes can come as a result of a Duel of Wits compromise, but they can also emerge as the result of a failed Persuasion test against Will. They are also born of other kinds of failure—losing a fight, stealing something from someone, failing to pay back a loan—but be sure to telegraph these changes to the player. Set up the relationship as volatile. Play the character into the situation. Give the player no doubt as to what's at stake. Not merely because you stated failure consequences but because the character you are portraying is so vivid.

Destroying a Reputation

Page 385 of the Burning Wheel briefly notes that reputations can be destroyed as the result of a failed test. Apply this result to any test in which the character's failure is visible and public: a duel, an argument, a battle or even a comically failed Inconspicuous test. The failure results in a die subtracted from the relevant reputation!

A reputation reduced to zero is lost. It can be re-earned in play.

Damaging an Affiliation

Affiliations can be damaged as the result of a failed test. This is a brilliant failure result for a failed Accounting or Estate Management test. Resources and Circles can be used as well, but they're the obvious choices. A battle lost might prompt supporters to withdraw investments, or poor conduct in court might cause business to dry up.





As in the case of reputations, this effect reduces the affiliation by one die. An affiliation reduced to zero is lost. It must be repurchased in play as described in the rules on pages 383 and 385 of the Burning Wheel.

Apply Traits

You may also apply traits as the result of a failed test. This is a rather drastic condition, so use it sparingly. This result changes a character fundamentally in ways that other failure results do not. Once assigned, a trait is hard to get rid of!

You can assign character traits for a variety of failure conditions: Characters can be scarred, branded or stigmatized. Die traits that add obstacle penalties, reduce stats or skills or lower stat caps are appropriate for tests that carry the risk of dire physical consequences.

Die traits that provide infamous reputations are also excellent devices to tack onto particularly brutal social skill failures.

Do not assign call-on traits as the result of failure since they are solely beneficial.

Use Failure to Trigger Instincts

As we've demonstrated, a failed test provides many opportunities! In addition to all that we've mentioned, you can also use failure results to trigger a player's Instinct.



If you have the Instinct "Never let them forget that you're a noble," and you fail an Etiquette test, I'm going to use this chance to ride you. Your interlocutor responds, "Oh. Yes. I don't mean to be rude, but I don't recognize your name. Or your face. Your family is one of...good breeding, I presume?"

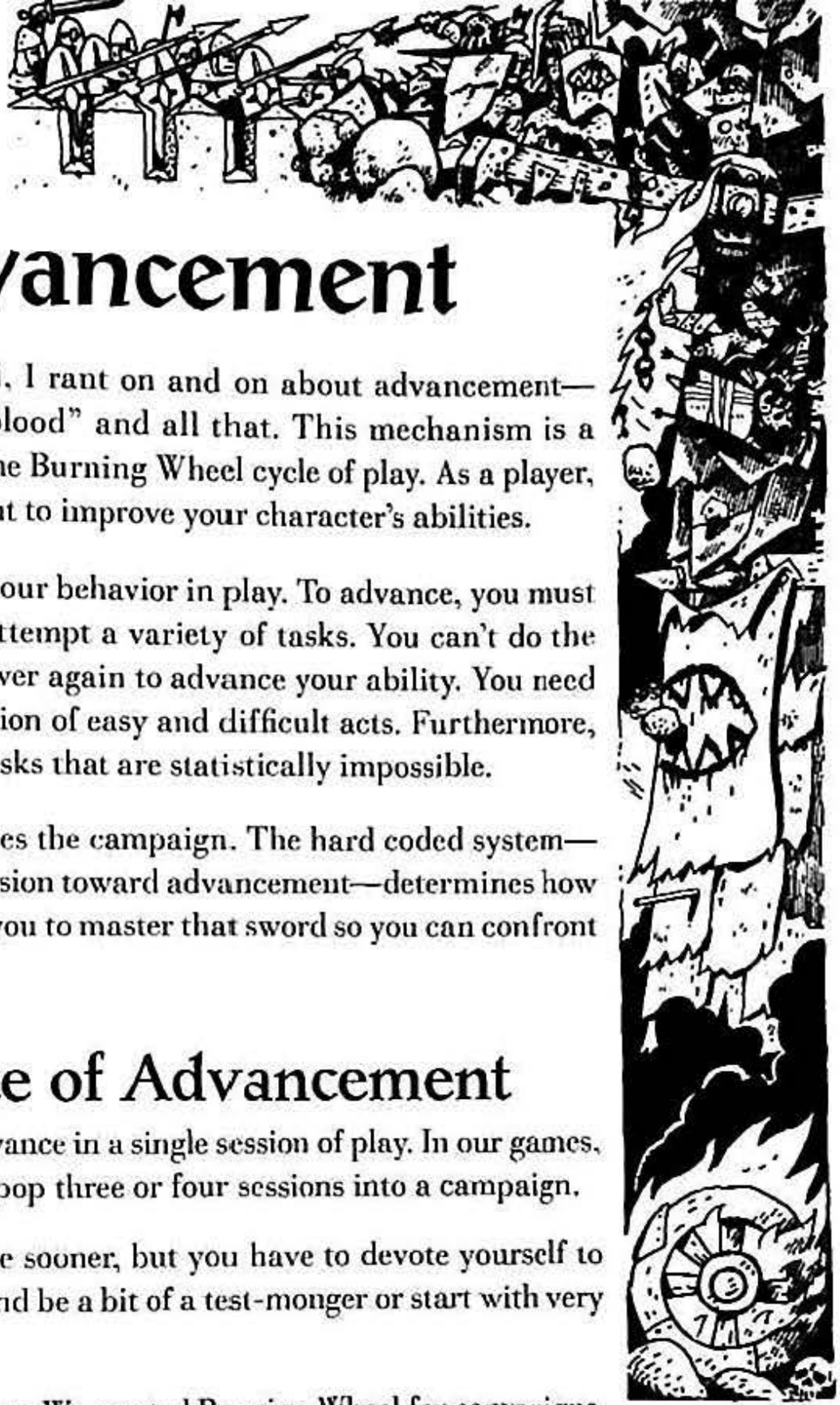
If you have the Instinct "Never accept an insult," I'm going to use nearly every social skill failure result to insult you!

If you have the Instinct "Never wear shoes," a failed Stealthy test is going to land you on some sharp rocks or broken glass.

This may seem mean, but it's not. You're showing the player that you care, that you're paying attention. And you're providing him a chance to earn artha. See what a great GM you are?







Advancement

In the Burning Wheel, I rant on and on about advancement—"Advancement is lifeblood" and all that. This mechanism is a fundamental gear in the Burning Wheel cycle of play. As a player, you're supposed to want to improve your character's abilities.

Advancement shapes your behavior in play. To advance, you must have your character attempt a variety of tasks. You can't do the same thing over and over again to advance your ability. You need to attempt a combination of easy and difficult acts. Furthermore, you need to attempt tasks that are statistically impossible.

Advancement also paces the campaign. The hard coded system—how many rolls per session toward advancement—determines how long it's going to take you to master that sword so you can confront your rival.

The Rate of Advancement

Most abilities don't advance in a single session of play. In our games, we see advancements pop three or four sessions into a campaign.

It's possible to advance sooner, but you have to devote yourself to the ability's progress and be a bit of a test-monger or start with very low exponents.

This is part of the design. We created Burning Wheel for campaigns. It really starts to shine six, eight or even 12 sessions into a campaign.

The Behavior of Routine Tests

When you need a routine test for advancement, you have an incentive to use FoRKs, lobby for advantages, angle for linked tests and, most important, accept help to get as many dice into your hand as possible.

Help for routine tests is key in a group situation. The routine test you are benefitting from is often a difficult or even challenging test for the helper. By helping one another, the group can earn a broad spectrum of advancements in a single session—or even a single roll, if you're clever.

Behavior of Difficult Tests

Difficult tests require a bit of dice optimization. You want to gather the precise number of dice so the test counts as difficult and not routine for advancement. Still, you don't want to take too few dice, either! If you have a skill of B4 for an Ob 4 test, it's difficult to know whether to roll four dice or five. My first impulse in that situation is to get help. If no help is offered, I root around for a FoRK or advantage die. I can afford to take that extra die and still log the difficult test.

Earning Difficult Tests Through Help

You can also earn difficult tests by helping another player. To gain this benefit, you must be attentive to the action. You must involve yourself in your friends' scenes. Place yourself in danger with them. Thus when the time comes for a test, you can justify your help. You give them helping dice to overcome the obstacle while you compare the obstacle of the test to your raw exponent and log the appropriate test for advancement. Using this method, you can ensure that people who need routine tests get them—by piling on helping dice—and people who need difficult tests get them—by providing assistance.



Behavior of Challenging Tests

Challenging tests are a win-win situation. On one hand, you can be confident that you will fail a challenging test. You can grab your dice, toss them down diffidently and grin at the GM, "I fail."

Or, you can dig in, muster your traits, gather your artha, blow on your dice, mutter your imprecations to the gods and roll. You just might get lucky with some 6s and pull it off. It's exhilarating!





Of course, failure isn't an option for Faith and Resources. You must succeed to advance. So spend that artha and get ready to weep.

Earning Challenging Tests Through Help

There's another way to earn challenging tests that isn't quite as invigorating: You can help another player in need. If your friend is making a test that's higher than your exponent, try to devise a way to help. He'll get a test relative to the number of dice rolled. You'll get a challenging test for advancement.

The hitch is that if your friend needs a challenging test for his exponent, he might not be able to accept help. Taking the extra dice will usually change the type of test. Thus you might need to set up the test differently—taking action yourself so your friend can help you and get the test he needs.

Balancing Success Against Advancement

Sometimes you want to succeed. And sometimes you want to hurl yourself against impossible odds and fail. Once you start playing the advancement game, you quickly run into a juicy decision: Do you muster dice and pass the test with little risk of failure and no benefit to advancement, or do you risk failing the test by using fewer dice and logging a needed test for advancement? It's a simple matter to muster enough help from your mates to turn any difficult test to a routine. But without the difficult tests, you won't advance. You must make a decision: Do you opt for short-term gain and pass the test or do you risk failure for a chance at long-term gain?



There's no right answer. Sometimes you'll need to choose one way and sometimes you'll go in the other direction. A goal could be too important to risk failure or you might be one test away from advancing an ability. The best moments are when it is crucial for you to pass a test, but you also need the test for advancement—so you can't add too many dice. The tension between success versus advancement adds a lot to the game. And as always, if you are not sure which path to take, check your Beliefs.

Beginner's Luck

Beginner's Luck imposes a double obstacle penalty on tests by unskilled characters. This is one of my favorite rules in the game. I find it simulates unskilled behavior very well—easy stuff is still accomplishable without



too much fuss; moderate tasks are possible to achieve, but not a sure thing; and difficult feats are all but impossible for the unskilled. Simple, elegant, beautiful.

Of course, this simple, elegant and beautiful rule causes all sorts of headaches. Namely, how do you deal with a double obstacle penalty when you're making a versus test, skilled against unskilled?

Beginner's Luck, Helping and Advancement

Unskilled characters may help one another with a test. The primary character tests using the Beginner's Luck rules. The helping character can earn a difficult or challenging test toward advancing the *stat* used to help, and does not gain a skill test applied to aptitude.

When using Beginner's Luck rules in a versus test against a skilled opponent, it's best to count the unskilled successes as half successes—two unskilled successes equal one skilled success. This makes factoring advancement easier. Discard any remaining half successes.

Factoring Beginner's Luck Obstacles With Disadvantage and Tools

When making a test using Beginner's Luck and disadvantage, the testing obstacle is double the base plus the disadvantage. The advancement obstacle is just the base obstacle plus the disadvantage.

When making a Beginner's Luck test without required tools, the testing obstacle is double the double obstacle! Nonetheless the advancement obstacle is only double the base obstacle—the obstacle for the test without tools.

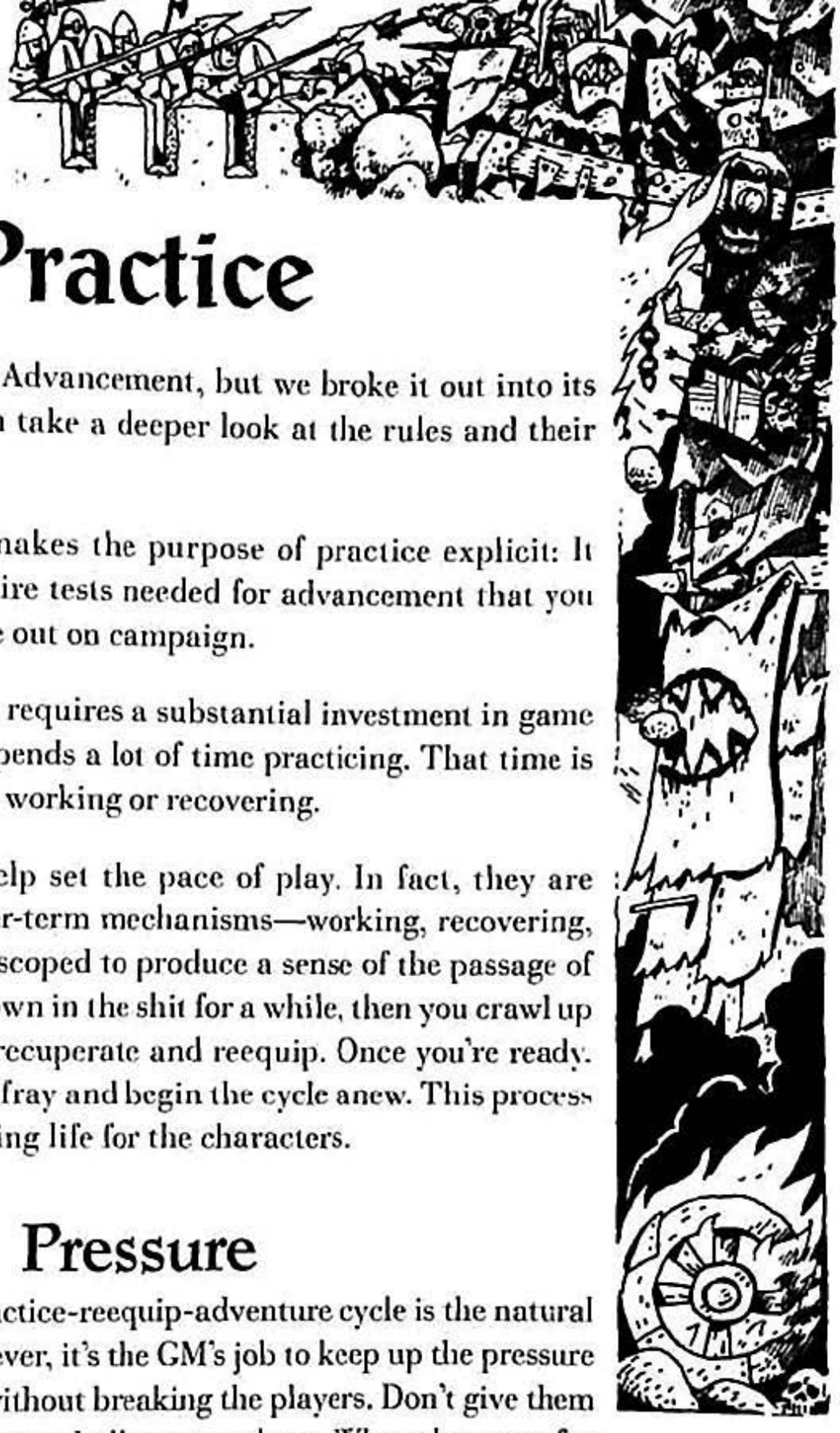


Performing unskilled surgery on your severely wounded friend without tools is not a good idea, even worse if you're superficially wounded as well. In this case, your obstacle would be 3x2 = 6 for the unskilled treatment of a severe wound. 6x2 = 12 for no tools. And +1 Ob on top of that for your superficial wound penalty.

Time to spend that deeds point.







Practice

Practice is a subset of Advancement, but we broke it out into its own chapter so we can take a deeper look at the rules and their application.

The Burning Wheel makes the purpose of practice explicit: It exists so you can acquire tests needed for advancement that you otherwise missed while out on campaign.

However, that practice requires a substantial investment in game time. Your character spends a lot of time practicing. That time is not spent adventuring, working or recovering.

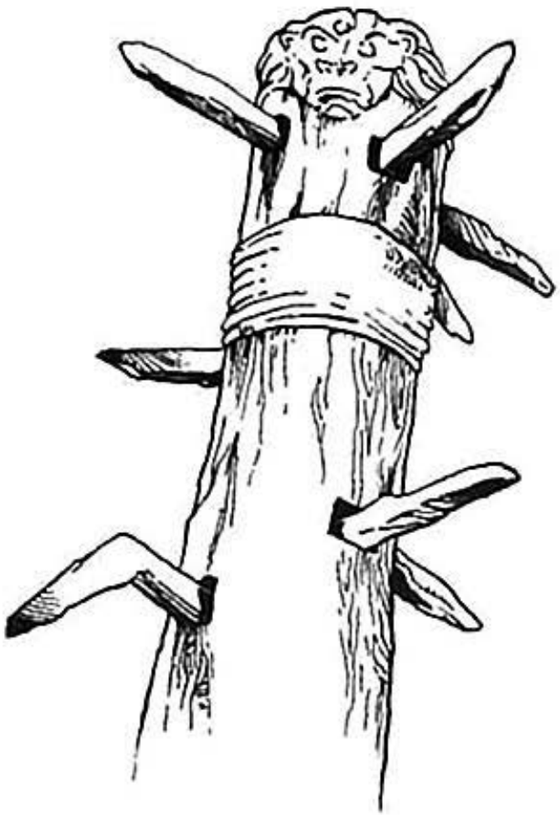
The practice cycles help set the pace of play. In fact, they are part of a suite of longer-term mechanisms—working, recovering, research—that are all scoped to produce a sense of the passage of time. You play hard, down in the shit for a while, then you crawl up out of the muck, rest, recuperate and reequip. Once you're ready, you head back into the fray and begin the cycle anew. This process creates a sense of ongoing life for the characters.

Pressure

The adventure-rest-practice-reequip-adventure cycle is the natural pace of the game. However, it's the GM's job to keep up the pressure for as long as possible without breaking the players. Don't give them a moment of peace. Throw challenges at them. When they stop for rest, move your pieces in the Big Picture. Make them say, "Uh oh...." Force the players to create their peace by accomplishing their goals or by spending themselves utterly. When they're wounded, broke and ragged, let them go to ground but let them know that their enemies will not rest.

Squeezing in Practice

Practice doesn't only have to happen during downtime. Certain elements of campaign life are meant to be noted as practice, rather than tests. You're not supposed to test to forage, cook and mend every night that you're out on the trail, for example. You test when it's important. Otherwise, you note the time spent as practice.



In less adventurous lifestyles, you can practice Reading, Writing, Composition, Doctrine, History, Etiquette and a variety of other skills as part of your daily routine.

I prefer to limit this type of practice to activities you perform when you get up and stuff you do before you bed down for the night. For example, I play an Elf who keeps a journal of his travels. He makes his entries when his companions are resting. I use the journal to practice his Elven Script.

Practice Log

When you're squeezing in practice between other events, it's important to keep a log. You can practice piecemeal—a day here, a day there. For example, I've noted in my Elf's practice log that he has 14 weeks of practice toward his Elven Script skill. Elven Script is an academic skill, so I need six months—24 weeks—before I can notch a test.

Practice Instincts

A great way to squeeze practice into your character's routine is via an Instinct. My aforementioned Elf has an Instinct, "Always keep a journal of my travels." Such an Instinct leaves no doubt as to your character's behavior. You can be confident therefore that when you explain that you've been practicing your Elven Script skill for the past year, your fellow players can see it in your Instinct.



Practice and Recovery

Can you rest and recover while practicing? I once heard a tale of a pneumoniac scholar who refused to rest and subsequently worked himself to death. Was he practicing while recovering?

We play this situationally. If the nature of the injury permits, we allow light practice: routine tests for Read, Research, languages, wises or similar.

However, you can practice while your friends are nursing their wounds. They're laid up in bed, pissing and moaning. You're out in the world, sharpening your skills and preparing for the next adventure.





Practice and Passage of Time

The practice rules are meant to allow for the passage of long stretches of time in your game. Let five years pass! You don't get to practice for all of those five years—you need to eat, sleep and work, too, right? But set aside a portion of that time that you feel is appropriate. Let the players practice and beef up their abilities. And let the setting and situation evolve and change meanwhile!

Practical Limits of Practice

The practice rules are very loose and meant to smooth over wrinkles between the advancement system and the game fiction. However, they can be too loose. The GM can and should impose intent/task limits on the practice cycle. If, for example, a player wants to practice his Sword skill, but he has no sword because he is, in fact, locked in a prison, then he may not practice that ability.

The literal time allotment for practice is too liberal—15 hours of potential practice for a Will of B5 is just too much. No one has that much free time and willpower! The GM can and should also limit the amount of time available. Characters must maintain their lives; they must sleep, eat and pay their bills. If a player wishes to push his character beyond reasonable tolerances, the GM may call for Will and Health tests to maintain his focus and dedication on his travails. Failure not only impedes his practice, but can also make him sick or crazy.

Practical Instruction

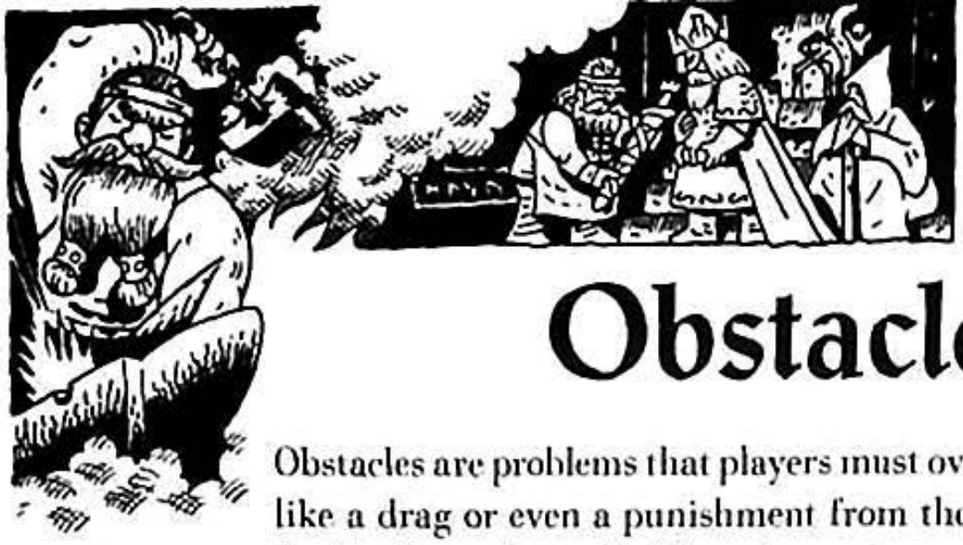
Instruction is a much more efficient way to gain tests for advancement than practice—possibly even more efficient than adventuring. Instructors can typically be found with Circles and hired with Resources. The Circles test obstacle can vary, but the Resources test obstacle is 4. By subjecting the instructor's availability to those two types of tests, you ensure that finding an instructor is also subject to the intent and task rules. Thus if it's not appropriate to search for an instructor, the GM can inform the player that the intent is inappropriate and move on.

Of course, if you have time in your busy schedule, your character can learn Instruction and teach skills to the other members of the party.









Obstacles

Obstacles are problems that players must overcome. They can seem like a drag or even a punishment from the GM. This couldn't be further from the truth. Obstacles are love.



Burning Wheel thrives on its currency cycle. While obstacles may seem like roadblocks, they're actually one of the building blocks of the cycle.

When a player wants to perform a task, the GM is obligated to set an obstacle. The GM can refer to the skill, spell or trait list in most cases. Some tasks are determined systematically—like the base obstacle to Strike in a Fight. Some tasks ask the GM to determine an appropriate obstacle using the rather loose guidelines on page 15 of the Burning Wheel.

Obstacles come in two forms: base and modifiers. Your base obstacle forms the core difficulty of accomplishing your task. Each skill lists a series of base obstacles for certain tasks, for example. And base obstacles are agnostic to your ability exponent. Ob 1 is Ob 1 whether you've got a skill of 2 or 8.

You throw modifiers on top of base obstacles to make a task more difficult. Modifiers come from incidental effects like injury, working conditions, magic and other in-game effects. The system hands out plenty of obstacle penalties on its own, but the GM can distribute disadvantage as appropriate.

What is not obvious behind this system is that these obstacles create setting. When a player acts in the game, he needs a difficulty for his test. The obstacle is the number, but it's also the object of adversity in the fiction. Obstacles, over time, create a sense of space and logic in the game world. When a player repeatedly meets the same obstacle for the same task, he knows what to expect and he knows how to set up his character to best overcome this problem, or he knows enough to find another way around.

If the obstacle for the same task varies each time a player attempts it—with the same intent—it destabilizes the game world. The solidity and consistency of the world distorts. Players struggle to find their footing, to care about what's happening around them. Rolls seem arbitrary.

Conversely, when done right, changing the obstacle for the same intent and task can be a powerful signal that something has changed. It can be a signifier of magic or otherworldly forces at work, but this only works if the obstacle has been used consistently up to a point before the mysterious change is presented.

And sometimes, you can change your task and use a different skill to get a whole different obstacle!

Punishment!

Obstacle modifiers seem punitive, a negative reinforcement. They make it harder for a player to succeed at a task. I know I often flinch when I assess a steep penalty. I don't like punishing players for trying to be heroic. However, there's a massively positive side to obstacle modifiers. In design parlance, they are feedback. You perform an action and the game gives you feedback about that action. In this case, the feedback lets the player know about the difficulties and limits of the environment and the character. This is important. The game exists only as an exchange between our imaginations and the rules. The penalties give us a scale and a structure for our imagination.

Obstacles and Advancement

Furthermore, at a certain level of play, we require obstacle penalties to keep the advancement system running. Tests become too easy. Characters need bigger challenges to advance. Obstacle penalties (among other elements) provide this opportunity. What was punishing with a Stealthy B2 is a nice perk at Stealthy B6. It's a satisfying transformation for both player and GM to watch near-insurmountable problems become mere bumps in the road for our heroes.





Obstacles and Artha

In addition to advancement, obstacles provide opportunities to spend artha (and thereby earn epiphanies) as well as an incentive for other players to help (and earn their own necessary advancements). Obstacles may seem punitive or obstructionist, but they are a vital, productive fundament of the game.

Practical Obstacles

The Hub provides a brief overview of obstacles. The Character Burner skill list provides numerous obstacles for tests. That said, versus tests constitute roughly half of the obstacles in the game. Even the trait list contains a handful of obstacles. And character stats make up the remainder.

Most of those obstacles are purely mechanical executions—you consult the skill, it tells you the difficulty. How do you, as the GM, judge an obstacle on the fly?

My Favorite Obstacle

The GM sets the obstacles for tests. Some players cry foul that the GM can seemingly set an arbitrary difficulty for their goals. Well, tough luck. Someone has got to make these challenges hard. In this game, the GM does that heavy lifting to challenge the players. Setting obstacles is fundamental to that opposition.



My favorite obstacle is 3. It's great. Let me explain why. Ob 2 is easy. Even a character with a skill of 3 is likely to pass an Ob 2 test. On the other hand, obstacles 4 or 5 are just darn hard. It takes a character with six or eight dice available to have a good shot at an Ob 4 or 5. But Ob 3 sits right in the middle there. It's achievable with three, four or five dice, but there's also a reasonable risk of failure even when rolling eight or nine dice. It's a nice, comfy statistical zone in the system. When in doubt, set your obstacle at 3!

Of course you need Ob 2 (or even Ob 1) tests to make the world go round. Not every action is difficult; you need routine tests for advancement. So, if an action is perfunctory or dead easy, don't hesitate to hand out an Ob 1 or 2 test. It's common to think that you should Say Yes to low-obstacle tests. This is not the case! You should Say Yes when there's

nothing at stake, no conflict. You should call for Ob 1 and Ob 2 tests in situations of risk, even if it's small. These tests often produce beautiful, unexpected results.

Obstacle 4 and higher tests are equally vital, but they're dangerous. When setting a high obstacle, you're saying, "Hey, this scenario is important! But you're probably not going to get what you want." High obstacles are the sharp means by which the GM confronts the players. They make players sit up and take notice. Be clear about what the player gets if he succeeds. Let him know just how important the test is. That way he can spend artha, use FoRKs and get help according to his priorities.

Social Skills Against Will

Simple social skill tests are very difficult in Burning Wheel. To use most social skills, you must meet an obstacle equal to the target's Will exponent. For characters with low skills—exponent 2 or 3—or unskilled characters, it makes the test seem impossible.

We designed social skill tests to be difficult to be successful with. Talking your way out of (or into) a situation is a powerful weapon. It's perhaps the easiest thing for us, at the table, to do. But this ease isn't representative of the difficulty of actually convincing or intimidating someone. That's hard to do.

The high obstacle also encourages use of the Duel of Wits system. If you're afraid of outright failure, initiate a Duel of Wits. Not only can you gun for a compromise if you're losing, but you can also log juicy Will and skill tests during the conflict.

Finally, and most importantly, the high obstacle encourages players to invest in the test. Such an obstacle requires the use of FoRKs, help and artha. This additional investment makes the end result—the enhanced roleplay, the more nuanced argument—much more satisfying.

Traps as Obstacles

How do you set a trap in Burning Wheel? First, determine the effect of the trap. What does it do? Does it cause an injury? Does it lock off a section of ye olde dungeon? Does it cast a spell? Release poison? Design an effect for your trap.





Next, set an obstacle to spot or avoid the trap. You can use Observation to spot traps before they're triggered, but too much looking for traps makes for a boring game. You can walk characters into traps and then have the players make Speed tests to dodge out of the way, Agility tests to get their hands free or Power tests to stop the mechanism, etc.

The effect of the trap is the result of the failed test. For easy, not-too-deadly traps, I'll allow a Perception or Observation test to spot the mechanism. If that fails, I'll force a second test to avoid the effects of



the trap. For deadly traps, I describe the trap triggered and call for tests against the trap's obstacle. I make sure the players know the severity of the situation so they can gather help and spend artha appropriately. I try not to fall into spot-then-disarm mode as I find it tedious. It's much more interesting to have characters leaping nimbly from the jaws of death.

Weather

Weather can be an obstacle during play—not just as an obstacle modifier. You can use weather to invoke Navigation, Pilot, Orienteering, Climbing or other skill tests, or Perception, Speed or Forte tests.

The actual obstacle depends on your setting. In one of our home brew settings, winter and summer are calm, while fall and spring are very volatile. Therefore, high weather obstacles are more appropriate in the spring and fall.

Weather makes for an excellent excuse to use outsized obstacles. Obstacles 1 to 3 are too weak for the force of nature. Obstacles 4 to 10 are much more appropriate!

Squalls and storms are good excuses for Navigation, Piloting and Orienteering tests. Rain provides a pretext for a Speed test if you're leaping a precipice. Snow is good grounds for Forte and Speed tests. Ice and wind make fine friends for Climbing tests.

You can frame these tests like so: "Normally, this wouldn't be a problem, but the gods are angry and the weather is blowing. You need to test..."

Failure blows you off course to uncharted lands, causes injury, causes gear to be swept away, etc. There's lots of room for good, adventurey stuff.

Wilderness

Wilderness is similar to weather in certain respects; it's a massive, implacable obstacle. Perhaps not quite so overpowering as weather, wilderness nonetheless provides excellent action. Swamps, steep ravines, rushing rivers, crumbling glaciers, and so on. If your game involves travel, be sure to present interesting terrain features as obstacles that the characters must thread through.

Wilderness obstacles most often test Orienteering and Speed—to stay on the path and to stay out of harm's way. You can use Power to move boulders or debris, or to haul people to safety. Ditch Digging is a fun and useful skill for carving trenches around dangerous terrain. Song of Arbors can be used to safely traverse an ancient forest.





Trapper, Foraging and Hunting tests can often lead to wilderness encounters. A failed test might lead a character into a sucking swamp or entangling vines. Prospecting can precipitate dangerous rock slides or collapsing holes. Animal Husbandry failures can lead to a character chasing his herd through clinging brambles.

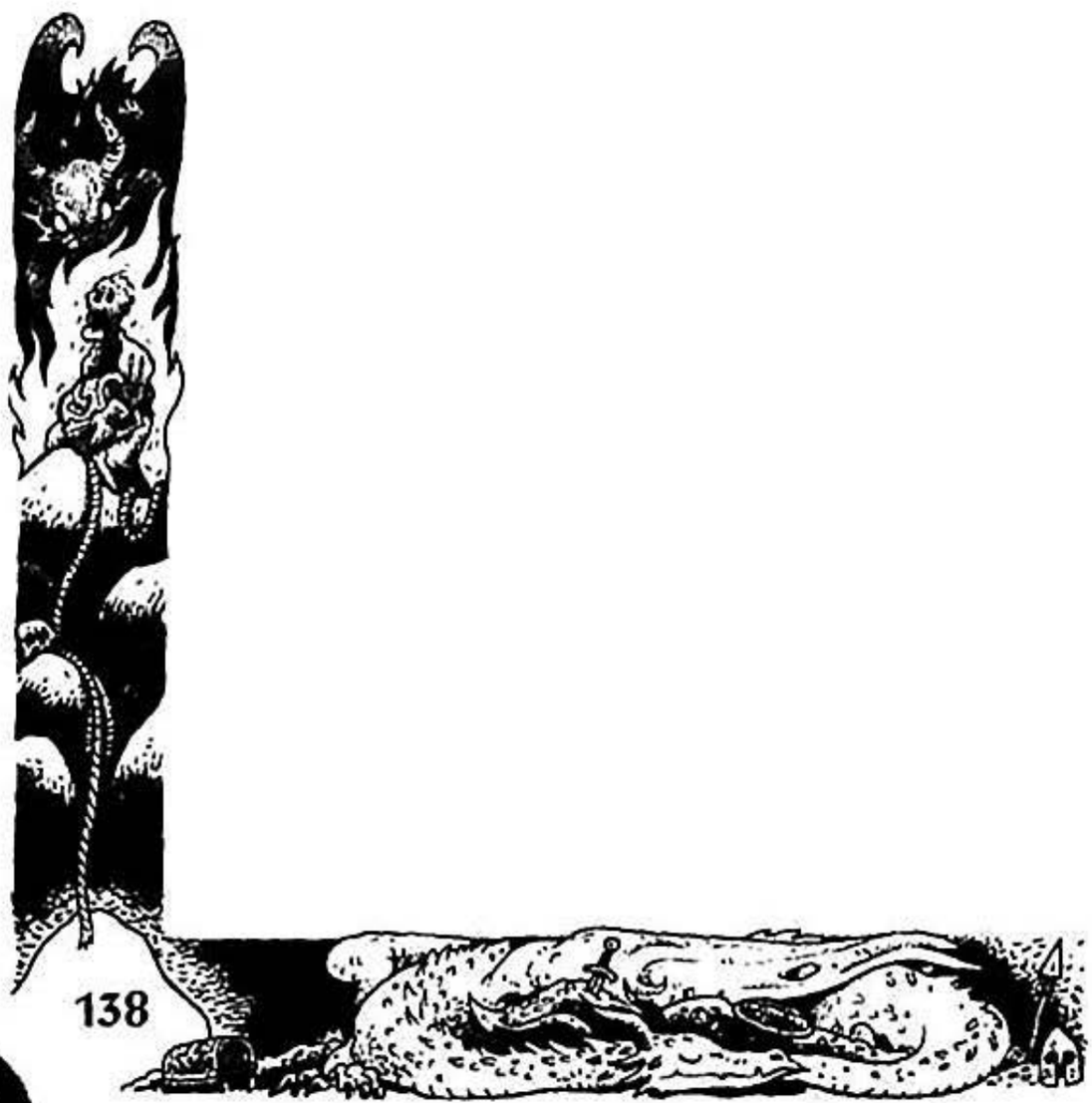
Wilderness obstacles are best set in the range of 2 to 6. The lower the obstacle, the more of a nuisance the challenge is, which helps build the atmosphere. Whereas higher obstacles indicate greater dangers and higher stakes.

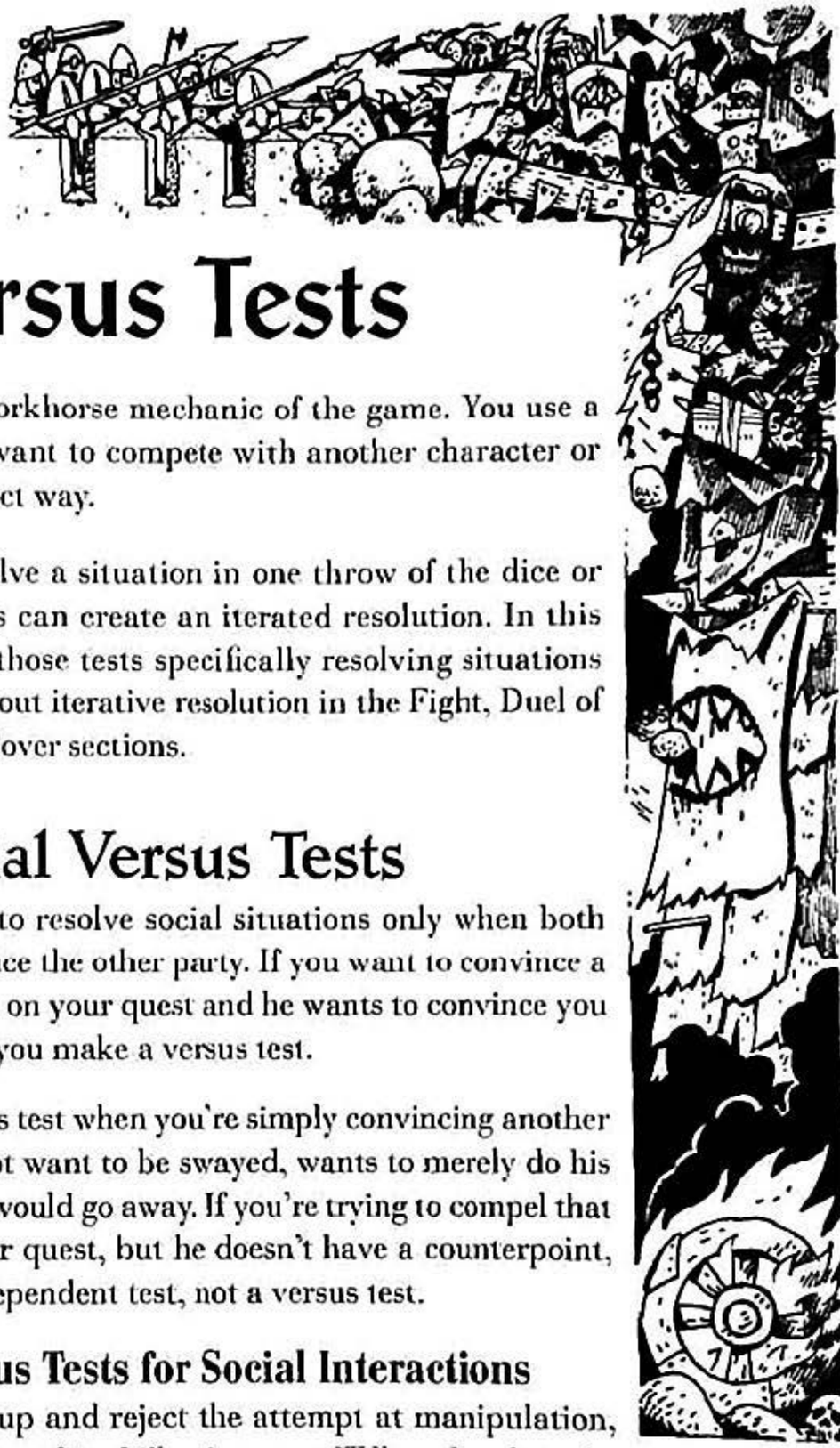
Weather and Wilderness as Obstacle Modifiers

In addition to presenting their own obstacles, weather and wilderness can both act as modifiers for other obstacles.

If it's raining while you're tracking someone, your obstacle should be higher than it would be otherwise.

If you're fighting in a swamp, the obstacles for nearly all of your tests should be higher than they would be if you were fighting on dry land.





Versus Tests

Versus tests are the workhorse mechanic of the game. You use a versus test when you want to compete with another character or entity in a simple, direct way.

A versus test can resolve a situation in one throw of the dice or a series of versus tests can create an iterated resolution. In this chapter. I talk about those tests specifically resolving situations in one roll. I'll talk about iterative resolution in the Fight, Duel of Wits and Range and Cover sections.

Social Versus Tests

Versus tests are used to resolve social situations only when both parties want to influence the other party. If you want to convince a mercenary to help you on your quest and he wants to convince you to change your goals, you make a versus test.

You do not use a versus test when you're simply convincing another character who does not want to be swayed, wants to merely do his job or just wishes you would go away. If you're trying to compel that mercenary to join your quest, but he doesn't have a counterpoint, then the test is an independent test, not a versus test.

When to Use Versus Tests for Social Interactions

If you want to stand up and reject the attempt at manipulation, you let the other guy test his skill using your Will as the obstacle. It's worth noting that Let It Ride will protect you from having to go through it again unless something changes, but Let It Ride also binds you to the result.

If someone wants something from you and you want something from them, you can resolve the stand off using a versus test. One of you is going to get what he wants. The other is not.

You can also escalate to a Duel of Wits, if you want something from the other person but you don't want to risk a black-and-white, win/lose result. Even when unskilled in a Duel of Wits, you can often gain a compromise from a skilled opponent.

Violence in the Versus Test

Violence is serious business in Burning Wheel. Nothing trumps it. You cannot stop a blade with words. In fact, by default, Burning Wheel considers attempting to convince someone who is stabbing you a violation of intent and task.

"I run him through."

"I plead for my life."

There's no contest in these two statements in Burning Wheel. The intent and task system is not intended to make all skills equivalent—just the opposite. Using intent and task, we hope you can clearly delineate appropriate actions in each circumstance. Just know that, by default, words don't counter physical actions. When a punch is thrown, it's time to duck. After the scuffle, you can talk.

Versus Tests for Competition and Physical Altercations

Versus tests are the best and simplest mechanic to resolve a competition between two characters: a race, a test of strength, a display of knowledge, etc. Set the stage, gather help and FoRKs and roll to determine who has won the contest. It's even possible to compete with three or more characters. Everyone rolls and the highest amount of successes wins the day.



For a brawl or a shoving match, use the Simple Martial Conflict rules described on page 425 of the Burning Wheel. The intent of the opponents determines the results.

Wounds in Versus Tests

If this versus test concerns more of a duel or combat, use the rules for the Bloody Versus Tests on pages 426-427 of the Burning Wheel.

Versus Tests with Help

A group can use a versus test to overcome an opponent. One player is designated the primary actor and everyone else helps. The group succeeds or fails together.

This is an excellent method for resolving skirmishes, gang fights and shouting matches.



What Versus What?

Versus tests are versatile. They don't always have to be Power versus Power. Speed versus Speed or Persuasion versus Persuasion. Let the players declare their intent and task. Use the abilities appropriate to the situation. If I want to tackle you but you want to run away, we test Power versus Speed. If I want to convince you but you want to rile the crowd, we test Persuasion versus Oratory.

Also, note that you must obey the skill versus stat paradigm—double obstacle penalty for the stat tested against the skill unless otherwise noted (like Steel tests in Range and Cover).

Abilities Must Be in the Same Realm

There are limits to the feasibility of versus tests. The abilities tested must be in the same realm. In Burning Wheel it is not appropriate to test Persuasion versus Brawling when a scoundrel is pummeling you. Once the punch is thrown, it's too late for words. The words can't physically stop the punch—and the situation is now very physical—so you need to resort to other methods. Stop him with your Power, run away with your Speed. Thwart him and then engage with the Persuasion.

Set My Obstacle

At BWHQ we have a bad habit picked up from playing Mouse Guard and Burning Empires. We make the GM roll first in a versus test so the opposing player can determine how much artha to spend before rolling the dice. This a lazy, cowardly habit. Don't do it!

In a versus test we gather our dice at the same time—everyone knows how many dice the other side is rolling—and then we roll together and count up successes. After the roll we can use our call-ons and spend our fate and deeds points if need be.

Ties

Versus test ties can prove quirky. How do you define the aggressor or defender? What happens when a tie can't be broken?

Aggressor or Defender

Tied versus tests are won by the defender. It's worth noting that the aggressor or defender tags aren't literal. Aggressor is the player who initiated.







Deadlocks

In the case of versus tests like two Orcs trying to kill one another, two monks debating doctrine, etc., a tie deadlocks them.

What page 26 of the Burning Wheel does not say (though it is implied) is that the conflict now moves on from the deadlock to another test in the same situation. Combine the deadlock with the Let It Ride rule and you have a perfectly functioning cycle. Two wrestlers attempt to best each other with their skill. They tie. They cannot overcome each other with technique, so they surge back into the fight and attempt to overpower their opponent—Power tests. This too results in a tie. They are matched in skill and power, now it's a matter of endurance—Forte tests. Who can outlast the other?





That situation calls for three successive tests. What seemed like a simple versus test has turned into a Herculean struggle. The unintended results created tension, escalation and action.

This methodology applies to all similar situations. If you've ever played The Sword demonstration game with me, you'll remember that I often use this technique. Two characters rush for the sword. They tie on a Speed test. They get there at the same time. They both grab for the sword. They tie on an Agility test. They both grab it at the same time. They attempt to wrestle it out of each other's hands. They test Power and...

It's an effective technique and one of my favorite bits of interaction in the game. It does require the GM to be nimble and ready with lightning-quick complications and descriptions so the players stay tightly focused on this immediate, pernicious problem.

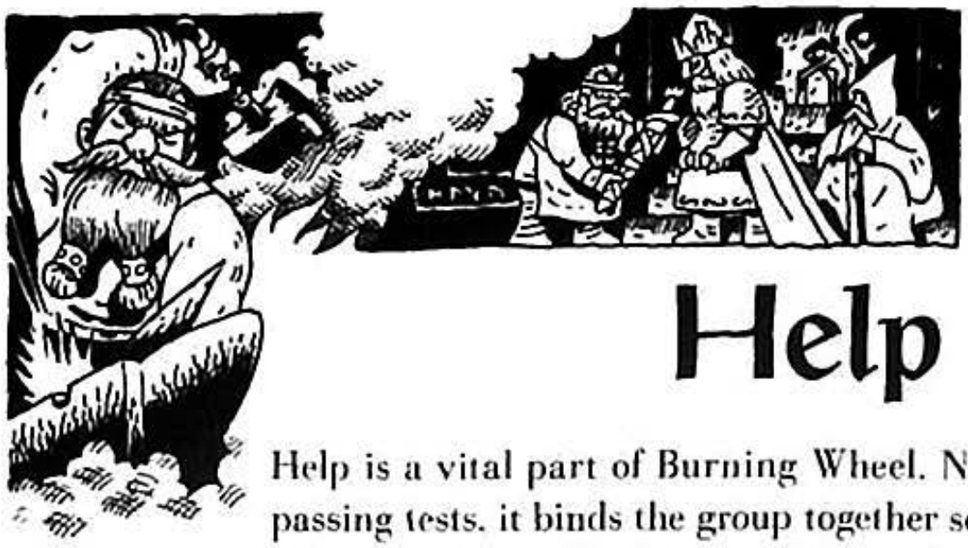
Call-On Traits to Break Ties

You can use a call-on trait to break a tie or reroll failed dice. Doesn't rerolling failed dice break the tie?

Usually you're going to use a call-on for the reroll, but there are instances when you'll simply want to break the tie in your favor rather than reroll: If you've rolled all successes (no failed dice) and the roll is still tied: or if you do not want to risk a reroll in which you might not get even a single success, when all you need is one. Using the call-on to break the tie in this case is a guaranteed win.







Help

Help is a vital part of Burning Wheel. Not only is it useful for passing tests, it binds the group together socially. It can make an otherwise impossible test possible. It enhances the advancement system, providing opportunities for tests too risky to attempt. It lets us resolve potentially complex scenarios involving lots of players with a single roll of the dice.

Burning Wheel is, by its nature, a group-oriented game. Players often act together. Help facilitates this part of the game. Rather than sitting out, players on the sidelines can participate by helping.



When to Use Help

Use help when the group is acting as a unit and failure for one member is the equivalent of failure for the whole group.

Sneaking about is a classic example. The group needs to sneak into a place together. Individual Stealthy tests will result in some getting caught and some going undetected. This is problematic and often renders the successful rolls moot. If the loud, clumsy characters are caught, the sneaky players are going to turn around and help their comrades. So why did they test in the first place? They were successful, but it didn't matter.

In those instances, we find it easier and more efficient to have the group test together using the helping rules. If the test is passed, the group succeeds. If the test is failed, the group fails.

Task of Help

When you help, you're piggybacking onto the primary player's intent—you agree with it and you want it to be successful. However, to pass that helping die, you must state your task—what you're doing and how you're doing it. That task must be appropriate to the intent. If the task doesn't fit, the CM can veto your helping die.

Coloring Help

The skill you use and the task you invoke become part of the test. These elements color the success and failure of the event, just like the primary player's task does.

Accepting Help



In the Advancement commentary, we discussed why you would accept or decline help. You might need a particular type of test to advance, and taking extra dice will change the type of test, etc.

Conditional Help

When we hand over helping dice, we'll often make impromptu agreements: I'll help you now if you'll help me later. They're nonbinding, but they can be deliciously juicy when your fellow player has a Belief that runs counter to yours yet needs your help on a test.

Advancement for Helpers

Helpers earn tests for advancement. You get a test as if you'd used your own raw skill. If your skill is B4 and you helped with an Ob 3 test, you get a difficult test for advancement. It doesn't matter how many dice the primary acting player rolled.

Helping is vital to increasing your abilities. Helping one another pass Beginner's Luck tests is especially fun and useful. The primary acting player will usually get a test toward aptitude (unless the test was really hard), while you can rack up a test for advancing the stat with which you helped.

Sharing the Spotlight with Help

The help rules are an excellent device for sharing the spotlight. Imagine you're the best in the group for a job and everyone knows it. Rather than routinely testing every time your niche arises in the story, you instead extend a hand to another player who is learning or struggling in this area. You roleplay your offer to help him learn. You hand him helping dice and say, "Go ahead, lead us through!"





Maybe you earn a test for advancement, maybe you don't. Maybe your fellow player earns a test. What's more important is that you have used the system to support teamwork and action.

Sharing the spotlight like this takes a conscious decision. I want to demonstrate my skill and expertise, and I want to succeed. But I remind myself to back off. I sacrifice a bit of immediate gain to gain long-term enjoyment and satisfaction with the game and story.

The Many-Headed Beast

Helping fosters a great dynamic at the table. It allows the group to participate in moments dominated by a single player. However, this also engenders a problem when the group acts as a many-headed beast, always helping. The game loses its mechanical punch when the players are tossing helping dice into one pile for every test. How do you prevent that without simply saying "No" all the time?

As the GM, you must accept that not all tests are appropriate for the whole group. Use the following guidelines: To participate in a test, each character must act at the same time. They can act in sequence to provide help—I trigger the mechanism, you run across the bridge—but not help in a test and then wander off into another test saying, "Meanwhile...."

The characters must be physically in the same space or must be occupying the correct place when the test is made. The whole group can sneak through a room together using Stealthy. However, the whole group cannot all fit in the cardinal's cabinet to convince him to take their side.



The characters must be able to conceivably operate on the task at hand. You cannot all make a watch together. One watchmaker, one apprentice; that's it. Five of you can't all fit in the forge. One master smith, one apprentice smith and someone to chop wood; that's all I'd allow. You can't all bend the king's ear. It's rude, so one of you may speak for the rest.

If this problem still persists after applying this wisdom, look at our new rule, Too Many Cooks.

NPC Help

Characters controlled by the GM or even your own bodyguards and aides can provide help for a roll so long as they have the appropriate ability and are not acting mindlessly. They're not help-bots. Like any other



character, they should have a reason to help. That's an important detail because if you fail this test, they're subject to the result as well. And they might not be so happy you dragged them into this mess.

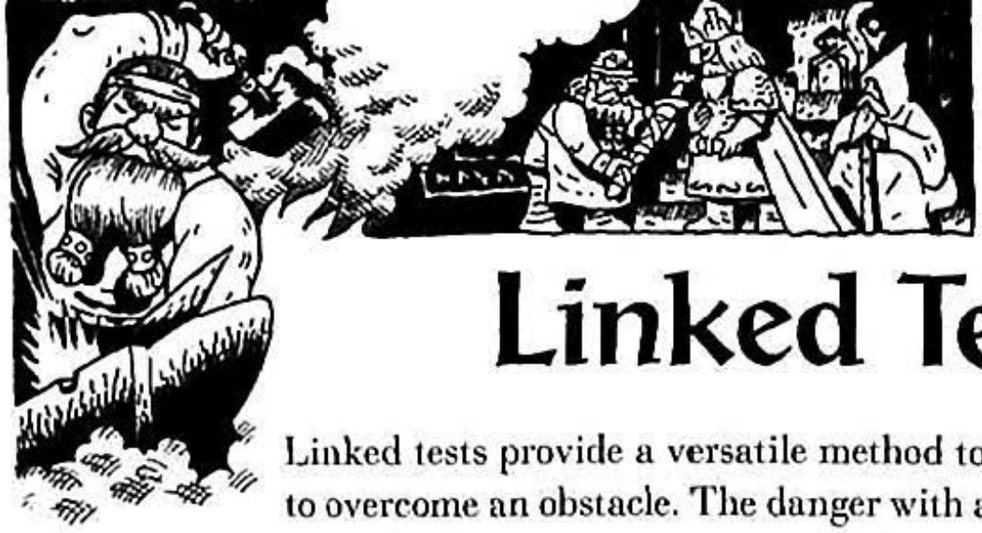
Pass the Dice

When helping, you physically pass your die or dice to the player receiving help. This small gesture creates a visceral connection between you two. You are now both bonded to this test. It seems like an unlikely thing, but you'll have to trust us. It's very powerful.

Also, at BWHQ we each keep dice of an distinct color so that when we hand over helping dice, we can see whether or not we helped in the test. There's no mechanical incentive for this act. It merely adds some fun to the helping rules and creates a nice simple ritual around help. Everyone wants to watch the roll and see how they did!







Linked Tests

Linked tests provide a versatile method to bring players together to overcome an obstacle. The danger with a linked test is that rolls are called for and made purely for the advantage rather than to further the fiction.



To make a test to provide a linked die, the linking player must have both a legitimate task and an intent that generates its own, appropriate result in the fiction. "I want to give him +1D" isn't a valid intent. On the other hand, "I want to help him by sharpening his tools and cleaning the workspace," is a valid intent and an excellent use of the Mending skill.

How Many Links?

How many linked tests should you make? We often hear this question. Unfortunately, our answer is rather lacking: It depends. Generally, we allow one linked test per player, if appropriate.

Descriptively set the scene and then pause the action. Find out who's doing what. Ask each player in turn what they're doing and how they're doing it. If a character is involved in other matters at the time, then he can't participate in a linked test.

Link Intent and Task

It is vital that a linked test have its own intent and task—its own reason to be. A linked test must contribute something more to the fiction than just +1D. If a linked test doesn't mean anything, then you're just rolling to generate a mechanical effect. Boring! Just beg for an advantage die in that case.

There are three possible results for a linked test: failure that passes a penalty on to the linkee; success that creates a result like any other test; and success that creates an exemplary result that grants the linkee +1D to a test.

Link versus Help

Linked tests are mechanically similar to help. Both give advantage dice. When do you use a linked test as opposed to giving help?

If the conditions for help cannot be met or if help is inappropriate, the player may ask the GM if there is an action he can take that will link to the primary test.

When a player wants to perform an action tangential, but possibly helpful to a task at hand, use a linked test.

Linked dice may also be generated far in advance of a test. They do not need to be directly tied to the next test. You can prepare a bolt of cloth with your Weaving skill. This preparation can be used as a linked test to a future Sewing skill test.

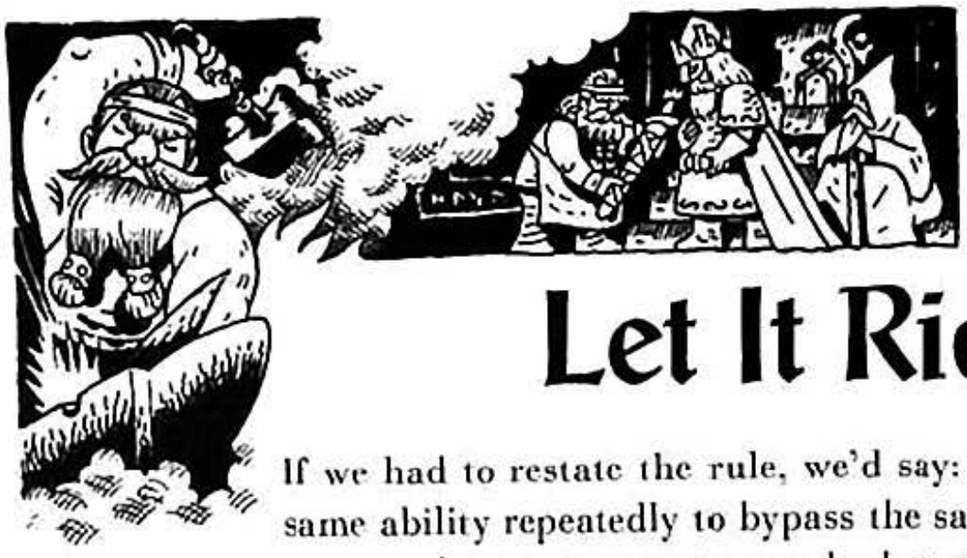
Finally, some situations require the operation of a large social, cultural or physical mechanism: A party, a religious service or managing a caravan can all be set up as a series of linked tests by the GM. Each test affects the next and, ultimately, the fate of the entire operation. In this case, the GM must determine what the final test of the series will be. He then offers the players a handful of possible skills they can use in the series. He tells them how many tests need to be accomplished before the final test is made.

Alternately, the GM can set an obstacle for an important test and invite the players to link into it with tests of their own choosing.

The final test in the series often determines the overall outcome, but that doesn't always need to be the case. Using this method, you can generate a series of results that all color the final outcome.







Let It Ride

If we had to restate the rule, we'd say: You may not test the same ability repeatedly to bypass the same obstacle. You only get one chance to overcome each obstacle. Furthermore, your result—pass or fail—stands for all similar obstacles in your path for the remainder of the session or until the in-game conditions significantly change.



Why Let It Ride?

Let It Ride elevates the game from task resolution to conflict resolution, if those terms mean anything to you. Let It Ride takes us from a fantastic medieval simulation to a game about creating character-driven narratives.

Let It Ride Duration

Let It Ride is meant to last for the remainder of the session. It should bridge sessions only rarely.

If the group is on a long voyage and makes a Navigation test during the first session, they don't have to test again for the voyage as long as the conditions stay the same.

If you fail to convince someone and they vow to never speak to you again, then you might have to deal with that over multiple sessions.

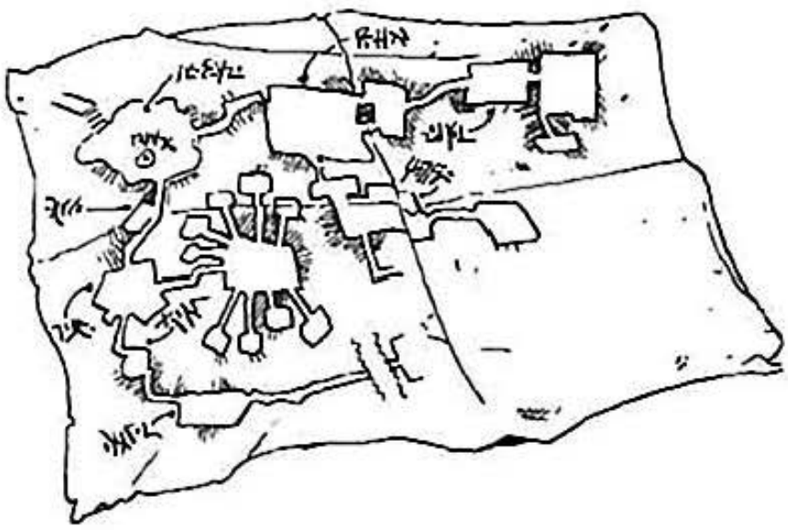
Let It Ride Conditions

The Let It Ride rule states that your success or failure stands until conditions "drastically or significantly change." Here are some examples of changing conditions:

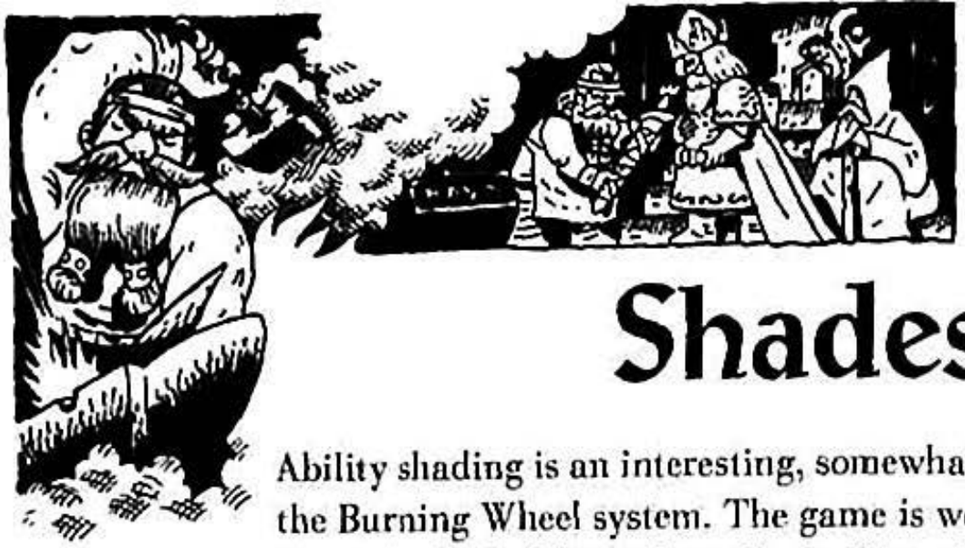
You discover new information; you're deceived or betrayed; you lose your horse/ship/flying carpet; the weather takes a sudden, horrific turn for the worse; you're lost; you're found; your finery is covered in shit/blood/mud; you learn a new spell or school of magic; your precious possessions are stolen; you discover a powerful artifact; you earn a new trait; a miracle happens.

Conditions that don't generally count as significant or drastic: you're superficially or lightly wounded; you change a Belief; you change an Instinct; you ask, "How about now?"; or you fail another test.

If you're wounded so badly that the skill or ability with which you overcame an obstacle is reduced to zero, then Let It Ride doesn't apply. Otherwise, wounds shouldn't count as a change of conditions for Let It Ride.







Shades

Ability shading is an interesting, somewhat problematic aspect of the Burning Wheel system. The game is weighted heavily toward the default black/mundane shade. If used superficially, shading can appear superfluous to the system—perhaps it even looks like cruft.



If you're playing gritty one-offs, you really don't need these rules. However, if you're playing an extended campaign, or a shorter, higher-powered game, then these rules are entertaining and add a lot to the game.

Starting Shades

I'll be frank. At BWHQ, we don't like starting grays. We prefer that a gray be earned in play. We like the sweat, tears and blood that such a feat requires. We like long games.

We do not think it is appropriate to dump a stat down to 2 to purchase a gray shade. Nor do we like to see a wasteland of B2 skills topped with a single C5 Knives or Sword skill. Such play is bad form in our eyes.

Are Starting Grays Ever Acceptable?

Starting grays are appropriate in high-powered games, usually for characters with six or more starting lifepaths. In the point distribution, Elves and Dwarves are most likely to have the points to pull this off. Eight-lifepath Humans and Orcs can pull a starting gray without crippling themselves. Trolls can field a gray Power at five or six lifepaths without too much jiggering. Roden or Wolves don't usually get enough points to comfortably shade shift an ability during character burning.

Starting grays require the approval of the whole group. The person buying the gray should fess up, "I'm power-gaming. Is that okay?"

If the group isn't comfortable with your starting gray shade, then it's fair to break the stat cap for your stock by a point or two in order to make your concept work without rebuilding the whole character.

Shade Shifting in Play

Shade shifting an ability in play is one of my favorite aspects of this system. The process requires discipline, determination and luck, but when you shade shift, it's just about the greatest gaming feeling ever—even better than pulling off a Feint in Fight.

Shade shifting is the longest arc of Burning Wheel's grand currency cycle. It happens far less frequently than trait votes or deeds point awards. In fact, it only happens after you earn multiple deeds points and undertake a series of trait votes. Using the epiphany rules, shade shifting requires 20 fate, 10 persona and 3 deeds points. The shade shift cycle is a beautiful, slow-moving gear that clicks into place with a sublime noise.

Personally, when I start a new character, I don't focus on any one path for him. I let the character's nature emerge in play. After I spend a deeds point or two, I think about graying out a stat or skill. I assess the direction the character has been heading in and where I've been spending artha. Once I see a path, I am as diligent as possible, pushing artha into that ability as often as I can.

On your quest for a gray-shaded ability in play, you must game the system and slavishly focus your artha expenditures on one ability. Invest something in every test you can. Spend a persona point, use fate to open the 6s. And when you have a chance to spend a deeds point, dive into the situation and don't miss your opportunity. Shade shifting takes a long time in play. You don't always get the opportunities you need when you want them, so you need to take what you can when you get it!

Shade shifting can be a bit unnerving. Earning a gray-shaded ability changes the game. Your character's power in the now gray area increases massively. The GM must present new types of obstacles to make them more challenging and must test you more stridently, lest your new power becomes boring.

Shade Shift From Traits

It is possible to earn, via a trait vote, a trait that shade shifts an ability. This doesn't require the artha expense of the epiphany. So long as the character retains the trait, he benefits from the gray or white shade ability.







Shade shifting via traits is controversial in my opinion. I don't like circumventing the epiphany cycle. However, I can see it being appropriate in two cases: For shorter epic campaigns, the trait vote cycle can supplant the epiphany cycle. For truly long-running "challenge the gods" campaigns, trait votes can be used to earn white-shade abilities.

Gray Faith, Sorcery and Other Nightmares

It's very easy to shade shift Faith and Sorcery. Faith and Sorcery almost always need an extra success. Since they are open-ended abilities, you can spend a fate point to throw another die, even if you haven't rolled any 6s.

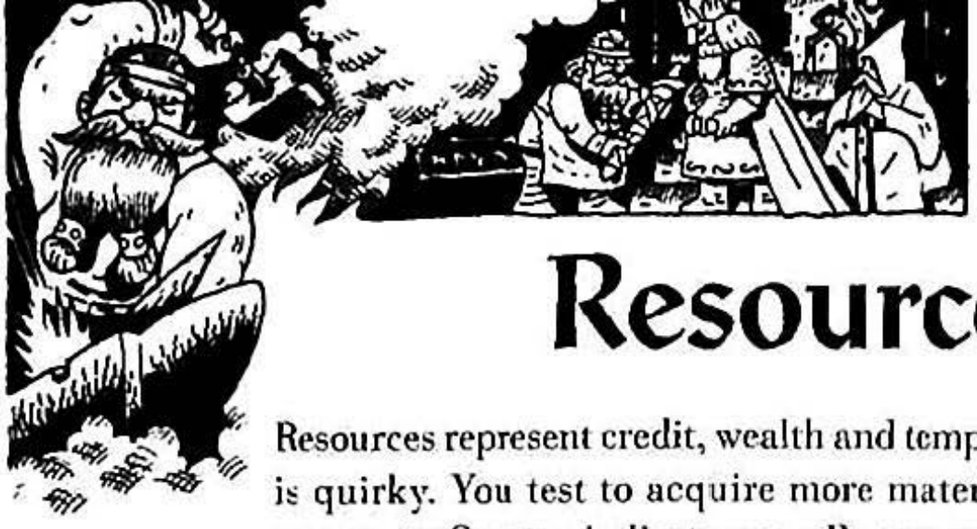


I've found that players like to abuse these loopholes even further by spamming the GM with low-grade, low-risk tests. For Faith or Sorcery, they cast spells without consequence that don't have great impact or risk, but they dump artha into them.

There's an easy tool you can use to curb this bad behavior from the players. As the GM, simply Say Yes to the low-grade, low-risk requests. "I cast Magesense..." Just Say Yes to the spell. "I ask for guidance..." Just provide the holy vision. Am I recommending adversarial behavior? No. I am recommending that the GM use the tools available to challenge the players across the longest arc of the game, so that their grand achievement—the shade shift—is fulfilling and rewarding, not cheap.







Resources

Resources represent credit, wealth and temporal power. The system is quirky. You test to acquire more material wealth or to make payments. Success indicates your Resources remain steady or even improve. Failure indicates your Resources are reduced.



In the fiction, you're managing your assets: asking favors, borrowing on credit, accepting gifts from others and calling in your markers when it's time to pay. Your Resources test indicates whether you manage your assets well, whether your credit holds and your markers get cashed. If you manage these factors well, you don't suffer any penalty. If you manage them poorly (or you're just unlucky), your resources dwindle.

Poverty

Low Resources puts you at risk of descending further into poverty. You have fewer dice to meet obstacles, therefore you're more likely to experience tax. Tax increases your chances of failing tests. The effect of tax is much more dramatic when your B2 is reduced to B1 than when your B5 is reduced to B4. With a low-exponent ability, tax is more likely to reduce you to 0 and permanently knock a point off the exponent. In fact, it's common to bounce between B0 and B2—earning a few advancements and then getting Taxed back to oblivion due to an unlucky roll.

This cycle of poverty exists by design. It is hard to climb out of poverty. The system creates incentive to take risks in venues outside of Resources. It's not enough to throw your Resources dice against every obstacle. You'll be taxed eventually. That tax will prod you to get a job. Once you're working, you're stuck in a cycle of recovering taxed Resources while testing to maintain your lifestyle. It's a downward spiral.

To break the spiral, you need to look outside of Resources: You need to make linked tests into your Resources; you need to get cash from other sources like dungeons, raids, robberies, extortion, gifts and vassalage. These activities all make excellent sources of alternate income.





Gaming the Resources System

When you're poor and it's Resources maintenance time, you have to husband your wealth carefully. Or when you have a B1 Resources and you need to pass a big, expensive test, you should to be cautious. Let me give you some advice born from hard lessons.

Coordinate your Resources: Designate one player to make the big Resources test. If you can't risk being Taxed, don't help. Make linked tests into the Resources test. If you can accept the risk of Tax, help the primary player. You may earn a test for advancement from your help.

Choose one character who can afford the Tax if it hits, who is willing to take the fall, has cash on hand or has a trait like Penny-Wise to mitigate failure.



Adventurer's Income

Life as an adventurer doesn't make you rich. Gear and expeditions are expensive. The services of doctors and armorers aren't cheap. Itinerant wizards and warriors are poor credit risks so you have to pay for everything in cash. And just when you make a penny, it's tax time and you've got to pay up on what little you earned.

When adventuring, take time out to scavenge for loot when the opportunity arises. An Ob 3 test should be enough to net you a die or two of cash. Don't be afraid to take out loans and repay them. When negotiating a Duel of Wits compromise, ask for money!

Courtly Income

When at court, selflessly slaving away for the good of the kingdom, do not neglect your own needs. Secure donations to your cause in the form of cash, property, titles and funds. Persuasion, Intimidation and Extortion make excellent tools for acquiring money. You don't want your finery to become threadbare or fall out of fashion after a season at court, do you? You must think of your own needs at all times, lest you fall behind your rivals.

Noble Income

If you are noble and have vassals under your protection, do not neglect to send forth your bailiff to ensure the dutiful collection of taxes. Your vassals shall make payments from their own funds and produce for you cash for the appropriate, agreed-upon sum. By this method, with the help of just ten vassals, you can collect the funds necessary to raise a mighty fortress.

If ye find yourself in extremity and forced to treat with other wealthy lords for financial gain, ye may countenance to ask them for a loan. Be not fearful of such endeavors! Certainly thine enterprise shall be profitable and ye shall promptly repay all that is owed.

Religious Income

Donations are the bread of religious institutions. Suasion can loosen the purse strings of the most miserly merchant and cause him to proffer cash so that his soul might rest more easily. Such a donation is but a trifle for the rich.

If donations are bread, titles are butter and properties are jam. Do not neglect to secure these temporal artifacts. Though they be burdensome, they are also profitable for the church.





Scoundrel's Income

If ye be a scoundrel, knave or rogue, ye can earn coin by lightening the purse of another through subtle tricks of the trade. Or, perhaps, should secrets be divulged to thine ear, you can trade them, or gather coin for your assurance they never be repeated. Should all of your pride and resources abandon you, you can take to thy knees and prostrate yourself before the mercies of your fellows.

Cash Money

The Burning Wheel touches briefly on using Resources as money in the Currency section of the Resources chapter. To reemphasize this here: Consider your cash dice as bags of silver; your cache is a box full of treasure and gold; your fund is a promissory note that you can draw on, etc.

Loot and Fence

How does loot work in the game? You grabbed a sweet sword and want to sell it? When you sell it, you convert it to cash dice. You don't test or use Resources to sell anything. You test Haggling to agree on a price—an amount of cash dice—or Persuasion to convince your mark to buy.

Linked Resources or Resources Help

A linked test into Resources risks raising the obstacle if the linked test is failed. Help carries no such risk. However, a linked test insulates the assisting character—he won't be taxed if the test is failed, whereas a player who gives a helping die is taxed if the roll is failed.



Lifestyle Maintenance

Every so often in the course of play, at a predetermined juncture, the GM calls for a lifestyle maintenance test. This test pits the expense of the character's day-to-day living conditions against his Resources. For a typical character, it's an Ob 2 test—poor adventurer. But it's important to pay attention to the actual living conditions for the last lifestyle maintenance cycle and assess the obstacle based on that. I've seen players set their characters to living on the street to lower their lifestyle maintenance obstacle to 1. The opposite holds true as well—a profligate, careless lifestyle, living in hotels and eating well should raise the obstacle. Life at court is more expensive than life on the road, and so on.



Lifestyle Maintenance Failure

If you fail this test, you've been living beyond your means. Your lifestyle has overborn your Resources. In the future, you had better bring in more income, get a job or curb your expenses.

This failure isn't drastic, but it is notable. It should be commemorated with a wistful description of all that heavy spending.

Failing and Reduced to Resources 0

Failing your lifestyle maintenance test and being reduced to Resources exponent 0 is bad. You're broke. You've spent it all on this lavish (or not) lifestyle. The rent is due, the piper calls and your pockets are empty.

It's time to go out into the world and earn some ducats.

No Resources for Lifestyle Maintenance

If a character has a B0 Resources and cannot get cash to make the maintenance test, then he automatically fails his lifestyle maintenance. He can't be taxed any further, so failure comes in a different form—he falls sick, his gear breaks down, his toolkits run dry, his animals die, his finery becomes threadbare, his reputation withers, etc.

Injured and Poor

If you're recovering from an injury such as a severe, traumatic or mortal wound, then you'll most likely have to pass a lifestyle maintenance test as you convalesce. If you're poor, this can impose a crushing financial burden. If you have no Resources at all to support yourself, the GM can chip away at your possessions or even your Health.



Characters have is a massive incentive in the system to stay on the road, injured and poor. Keep hunting for that fortune. Don't rest until you know you can pay your expenses. It's harsh, but if you survive, you'll benefit mightily.

Practical Resources

For some games, Resources play only a minor part, but for adventurers in the tradition of Alexandre Dumas or even Glen Cook, Resources are central to the action of the setting.

Setting and Currency

The Resources mechanic is an abstraction. We don't want to count coins or manage books. We want to make a roll, just like we'd make a roll to forge a shirt of mail. However, too much abstraction renders the mechanic



dull. We make an Armorer roll to forge a shirt of mail from steel links, not merely "I make some armor." Likewise, if we reduce Resources to a roll only to get some cash, we do the game a disservice.

Your setting has a currency system: gold, ducats, livres, pounds, talents, etc. Use it to delineate how much a die of cash is worth. You don't have to be too specific. A cash die equates to a small bag of silver, for example. A cache or fund is a talent.

In our games, I use currency to illustrate different locations in the setting. In one land, small-change cash is called "quick," and the gold standard is called an "imperial throne." In another land, the people instituted a currency of "fifths." Five fifths make up *one unit*. The whole unit doesn't even have a name! But five fifths buys a ton of rice, so it's a substantial amount of money.

Industry

Another way to make Resources shine is to link it directly to industry in your setting. Inventing small details like the industry of a city can add a nice sense of depth. Is a city a banking center? Does this province make its money growing and selling sorghum? Is this town known for its silk weavers?

These details then help qualify Resources tests. When you get cash or make a loan, you're tapping into the industry of the place—you're opening an account, buying a bushel of sorghum or six bolts of silk. These all count as Resources tests and cash dice, but the color is important.



Each character has a source of wealth, too. Each player should note the basis of his Resources according to the elements of the setting: rents, allowance, inheritance, industry, cash from wages, credit, property, etc. Most characters start with a little cash, but the wealthier they get, the more nuanced the source of the Resources.

In play, this small detail provides the GM with tremendous opportunity. Let's say you play a young prince of a merchant family who makes its money from a trading fleet. In play, the family's rivals attack and burn one of their cargo-laden ships. This is an excellent excuse for a +1 Ob to Resources tests until the loss can be recovered. If the young prince goes a-raiding and captures a ship, the penalty is alleviated. Even better, if the young prince manages to capture a convoy of treasure-laden ships, you can grant the player a substantial amount of cash dice—+5D to +10D, I think. Thus the color of the source of income provides grist for the adventure mill.





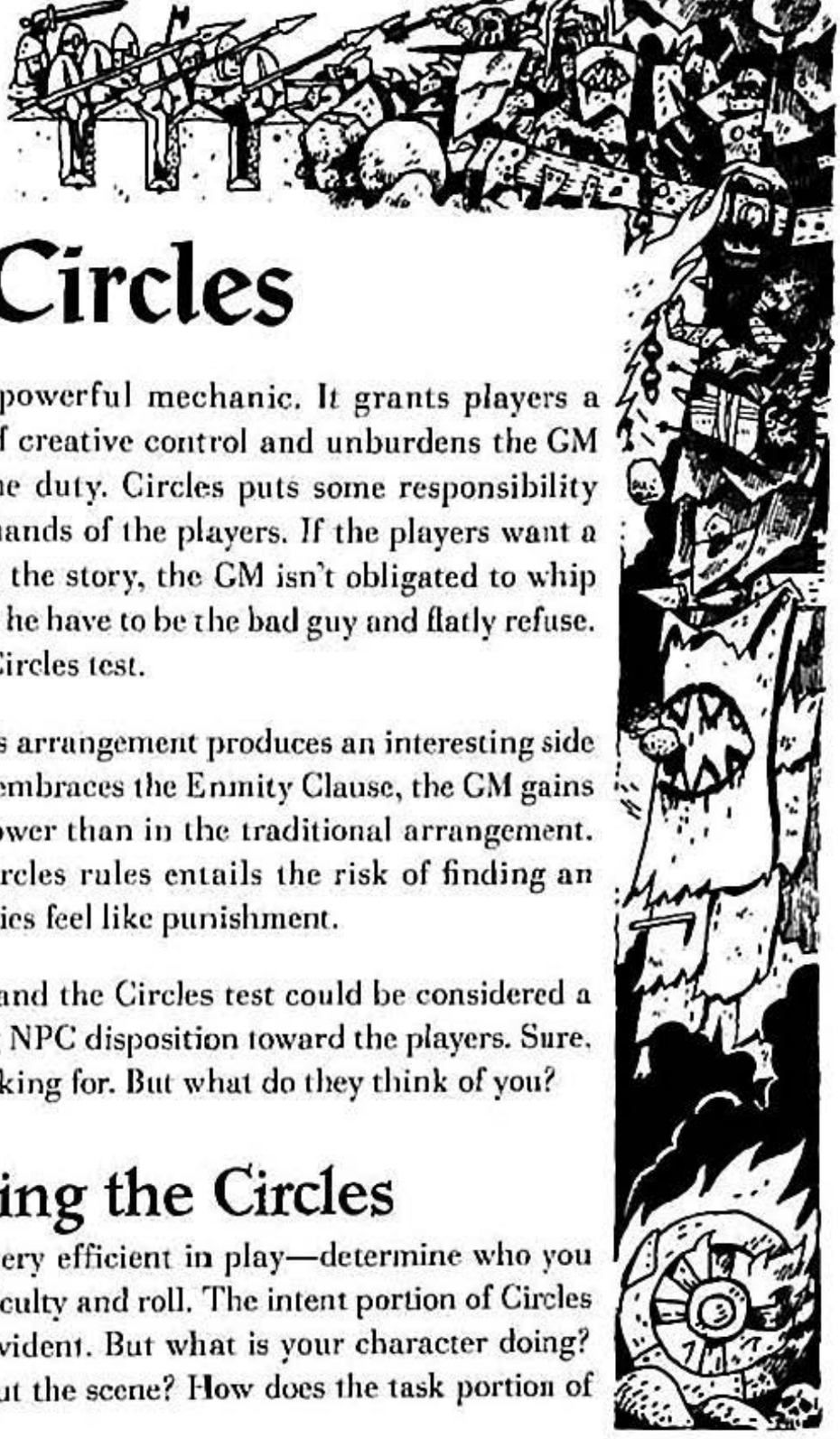
Failure and Maintenance Cycles

Burning Wheel games are meant to play out over longer arcs of game time than one would expect. Some scenes are played in intense detail while others sweep months or years aside with a few words. As time passes in the game, through travel, rest, recuperation and practice, you, the GM, must mercilessly call for lifestyle maintenance tests.

Rent comes due. The tax collector comes. The queen demands her share. Your ship needs repairs. When the players fail their maintenance tests, use the failure options mercilessly. Apply penalties to future rolls. Repossess property. Destroy their gear.

Why be so cruel? Because making money is a time-honored reason to undertake daring adventures!





Circles

Circles is a vibrant, powerful mechanic. It grants players a substantial measure of creative control and unburdens the GM from an often-tiresome duty. Circles puts some responsibility for the setting in the hands of the players. If the players want a character to appear in the story, the GM isn't obligated to whip something up, nor does he have to be the bad guy and flatly refuse. Instead, he calls for a Circles test.

We have found that this arrangement produces an interesting side effect: Once the group embraces the Enmity Clause, the GM gains access to even more power than in the traditional arrangement. Engaging with the Circles rules entails the risk of finding an enemy. Arbitrary enemies feel like punishment.

Turn that on its head and the Circles test could be considered a system for determining NPC disposition toward the players. Sure, you find who you're looking for. But what do they think of you?

Playing the Circles

The Circles rules are very efficient in play—determine who you need, calculate the difficulty and roll. The intent portion of Circles is almost always self-evident. But what is your character doing? How do you roleplay out the scene? How does the task portion of the roll work?

Circles is not an abstract process. Your character is not simply wishing or hoping, summoning another being from the darkness of his or her mind. Circles, as an ability like any other, requires action on your character's part. Admittedly, it's a difficult frame to enter. How do you roleplay out meeting someone for the first time? Or finding an old friend (you never knew you had)?

Play it with a light hand, but do act on the roll: go to the market, talk to your friends at court, dispatch your couriers to fetch that woman, ask your relatives to make a connection.

For me, Circles is very much a "What would I do here?" ability. Asking friends or family is a very natural, almost universally human activity. And it's a great way to launch a Circles test.

Circles Obstacle Modifiers

You're not supposed to use all of the Circles modifiers for every Circles test. Using all of the modifiers for each test renders the tests impossible—the mechanic won't see much use with sky high obstacles. However, use of the mechanic is intended to be a risky proposition, so you should use one or two obstacle modifiers.

Occupation

Occupation is the easiest aspect of Circles to consider. Examine the setting being called upon by the player. Is the character type common to that setting? For example, if a player uses his Born Noble lifepath to bring a knight into the story, we need to ask "Does the character know any knights?" The answer is "Yes, almost definitely." But were those knights common to her circle—with her being a noble child? No. Common to her circle were pages, nurses, governesses and other children. But neither were knights rare. She probably saw them in court quite often. Thus the Born Noble circle imposes the +2 Ob Uncommon Occupation penalty on a Circles test to find a knight. If the character had the Page lifepath, Squires would be common to her circles. If she had the Squire or Knight lifepaths, squires and knights would be common to her paths, whereas little princes and princesses would be much less common.



If the occupation is unimportant to the Circles test, the GM can really offer some surprising twists. For example, "We need to find someone who knows the password for the Thieves' Guild." That's specific information; occupation doesn't matter. Thus the answer could be a disgruntled former guild member or, even better, the constable for this district. "What do you need that information for now, friend?"

Station

The station modifier recognizes class distinctions and social ranking. If you are dipping below or rising above your station, this modifier applies. So yes, it's more difficult for a king to find a servant than it is for him to find another damned courtier.

Time

The time modifier is problematic as written. It implies that the timing of the NPC's arrival is up to the GM. This grinds against the basic intent and task structure: state your intent, and if successful, that's what you get.

Use the time modifier when it is highly improbable that the player meets his acquaintance. For example, your group of thieves and thugs just survived a fight with their rivals, but one of you was wounded badly in the scuffle. It's the dead of night and the Watch is on the look-out for you. You need to find a surgeon right now.

Place

The place modifier has similar problems as the time modifier. There seems to be this implicit idea that you can find your friend, but he's in the next town over. Again, it seems to break the intent and task paradigm.

The thinking behind this modifier is to create a sense of space in the setting, rather than have every NPC bump into you in a bar or at the market. You get word about your cousin, but he lives on a farm: you'll have to ride out there to meet him. The modifier isn't intended as a way to punish or block, but as a way to deepen your setting with a momentary dash of narrative.

You only engage the "specific place/player decides" condition when it's utterly unlikely that the player could know someone here. For example, you're an Elven Wanderer traveling through a Dwarven hold: Your starlight is stolen by greed-mad Dwarves; you make a Circles test to bring into play an Elven Chandler who knows the culture and can help you recover what was lost. I'd apply the local modifier to that test. It's unlikely you'd find such a character here in this Dwarven hold.

Affiliations

Affiliations dice are useful for passing Circles tests as they provide convenient creative bounds for Circles. When a player uses an affiliation with the army in a Circles test. this neatly colors the friend or enemy who might appear as the result of the test.

Going further, affiliations provide an excellent incentive to reinforce setting aspects. Give members of an affiliation distinctive dress, insignia. ceremonial weaponry or even specialized jargon. Taking the time to characterize the affiliation with just one detail pays huge dividends as the game progresses.





In one of our games, members of the Imperial Inspectorate received a jade seal as their badge of office. Over the course of many campaigns, that badge was flashed to invoke the affiliation. But the most powerful use of the seal came the day one of the players quit the office. He passionately described his character ripping the seal from his neck and violently hurling it to the ground. Suddenly, that small piece of colorful description took on the weight of the whole campaign.

Reputations

Reputations are similar to affiliations: they are one-note mechanical representations of broad, fluid aspects of the fiction. The same dangers beset reputations as affiliations—it's too easy to lean on them only as a lever to pull when you want extra dice.

When I GM, I try to have NPCs recognize characters by their reputation without the player having rolled or invoked his reputation. For example, a player introduces himself, "I'm Dvalin..." and I interrupt him, "Not Dvalin the Bandit Slayer, is it?"

Such simple acknowledgements add a surprising amount of depth to the world. It lends an air that the players exist within a living, changing place.

Enmity Clause

The Enmity Clause is among the most powerful mechanical results in Burning Wheel (second only to the Duel of Wits compromise). It is a potent tool for the GM.

The Enmity Clause is a gift for player and GM alike. When you make a Circles test, there is no bad result. Friend or enemy, something is going to happen.

An enemy is not required directly oppose the character, nor are they required to be the evil version of the character being sought. The Enmity Clause provides the GM with the opportunity to introduce an antagonist—someone opposed to the character's goals, directly or indirectly.

Simple Enemies

At its most basic, the Enmity Clause produces antagonists like an angry shopkeeper, a surly drunk, a hostile thug, a stubborn guard, a haughty servant, an insubordinate officer or a jealous cousin. These simple



antagonists oppose the immediate goal of the character. They charge more, obfuscate, provide misinformation or spurn the advances of the character.

They can raise the obstacle of any subsequent interaction—to purchase, persuade or pursue—or force the player to make a test to bypass them—a versus test for a fight, argument or subterfuge. Once they're bypassed, they don't usually play much more of a role in the game. If they reappear, it's usually through another Circles test or via the GM's cheekiness.



Simple enemies can also convey information to major antagonists—ratting the characters out, for example.

Epic Enemies

Epic enemies are characters who recur throughout the story, opposing the players' characters in surprising and escalating ways. Perhaps the epic descriptor overstates their role, as these are the seeming nobodies who pop up in the darnedest places. We hate them, but we can't wait to see where they'll appear next.

To create such a recurring villain—an annoying magistrate, a quarrelsome cousin, a brutal hunter, an unbeatable bully—you need to be dedicated and focused with your Enmity Clauses. Whenever there's an opportunity for an Enmity Clause, you should invoke this character. Either he himself appears on the scene with a "Well, well, we meet again..." or one of the villain's agents or allies acts for the enemy in the scene and reports the encounter back to this burgeoning antagonist.

Unexpected Enemies

Be creative with the Enmity Clause. It's easy to have the NPC arrive as an antagonist, but as I mentioned above, the opposition can also be indirect. The villain could have the same goals as the player and be willing to help, but he has his own nefarious reasons.

You can also use the Enmity Clause to place obstacles between the player and his intended contact. The contact could be captured or waylaid by bandits, pirates or thugs. The contact could have been arrested and now languishes under the eye of a gaoler. Or the potential contact could be dead and inquiries about the deceased arouse the suspicion of the authorities or the ire of his surviving family.



Expanding Circles

One flaw in the Circles mechanic is that after you burn your character, and you enter play, your character doesn't acquire new lifepaths, and his thus circles never expand.

Technically, affiliations and reputations don't grant access to new Circles—they only grant power in existing Circles. If you are City Born and buy a knightly affiliation, you do not get Noble setting circles from it. Your affiliation bonus applies only in your urban home.





It's easy to fudge this rule and we're sure most groups do. It only makes sense that as you increase in reputation and experience, you can use your influence among new and varied social groups.

Traits provide an answer to the problem. During trait votes, bestow traits that not only grant affiliations and reputations, but also allow access to new circles.

An Elven character in one of our games was appointed by a Dwarven king to a post in Dwarven lands. After spending some time serving at his post (and dealing with some high-profile crises), he was subsequently voted for a trait that gave him contacts among the followers of this Dwarven king. He can now use his rather substantial Circles and reputations to call up Axe Bearers, Graybeards and all manner of troublesome Dwarves!

Practical Relationships

A relationships is a character who is tied to a player but controlled by the GM. These characters are vital to presenting a rich, believable world. Relationships, while set up by a player, each need a voice and a perspective supplied by the GM. They need to be imperfectly aligned with the interest of the player who created them. If they are too closely aligned, they become dull and one-dimensional. Giving them their own priorities and attitude imbues them with life and adds energy to your game.

To Burn or Not to Burn

Players often create numerous relationships when starting a game. Once created, the GM then takes control of them. What obligation does the GM have to provide abilities, Beliefs, etc. for these characters?



I am a lazy GM. I treat relationships very lightly to start. If I think a relationship is important, I'll give that character one Belief. If the relationship character needs to test for something, I use the NPC abilities on pages 562-564 of the Burning Wheel. Once play has progressed, and if the relationship has been featured, I'll consider burning up the character. Otherwise, I leave the relationship character as a very rough sketch.

Pick a Lifepath, Any Lifepath

I use a trick to create colorful NPCs off the cuff: I consult the lifepaths. A single lifepath provides an easy, one-dimensional character. I can use the skills and traits from that path at the ratings suggested on pages 562-564 of the Burning Wheel.



If an NPC demands a little more depth, but not a full burn, I'll check his "last" lifepath—the lifepath that best represents who he is now—and then step backward through his requirements. This process takes about two minutes and gives me a useful, short list of traits and skills that I can use in the encounter at hand.

Relationships for a Player

If a player has an intimate relationship who is intended to accompany his character—like a bodyguard or servant—I make the player do a full burn for the character and then remands control to me. I create a voice and personality for the character and play him or her as appropriate. I think I have a bad reputation in my group for playing some very mouthy and disagreeable servants.

If a situation arises in which the player's main character is absent but the servant present. I make the player take over the role of the servant. This a better solution than a player sitting idle as the GM plays with himself.

I make the player log all advancements and artha for the character as well. I have enough to worry about on my end without logging Power advancements for your irascible hobgoblin archer.

Relationships for a GM

If I have created a character in the course of play, I take ownership of that character. Even if that character came about from a Circles test, I'll usually retain complete control. I'll track all numbers and Beliefs. I use these characters to convey information to the players. Rather than issuing facts about a place or people as narration from on high, I provide details and color through the voices of these characters.

The danger of these characters is that you can forget them. Since Burning Wheel is so player-character focused, it's easy to overlook secondary characters who aren't part of Beliefs. To mitigate this problem, both the players and GM need to take responsibility. At the start of the session, a roll call is helpful. Quickly review who is present and where they are.

Unexpected Surprises

Burning up a relationship character does have its benefits. Often, the character grows and changes before your eyes. The choices that you make in character burning add elements that you hadn't anticipated. Suddenly, that simpler gaoler becomes a former knight turned extortionist who somehow landed this sinecure.



Practical Reputations

To render reputations useful and lively, I've found they need to be specific. Reputations designed during character burning are usually looser, since the setting isn't quite fleshed out yet. But those earned in play deserve to be tightly wound around a place and an event in the setting.

If you cleared a nest of bandits from the forest surrounding Verge, your reputation should state: Bandit Slayer of Verge—1D. As your fortunes grow and your reputation increases, you can build on that reputation: Destroyer of Cults in Specularum (and Surrounds)—2D. And finally, when you achieve the ultimate success: Dragonslayer of Karameikos—3D. Each reputation stems from your actions. Each supersedes the last. Each gives the sense of your growing sphere of influence and power.

Reputation Votes

There's a lot going on in a Burning Wheel game, both in the metagame and in the fiction. You can easily overlook reputation votes. Don't do that! Use reputation votes as a way to celebrate events. They're different than trait votes in that they're not about how the other players see you, but about how your character is seen in the setting.

When you accomplish a great deed, or a terrible disaster strikes, take a few moments at the end of the session to discuss how it affects your reputations.

Practical Affiliations

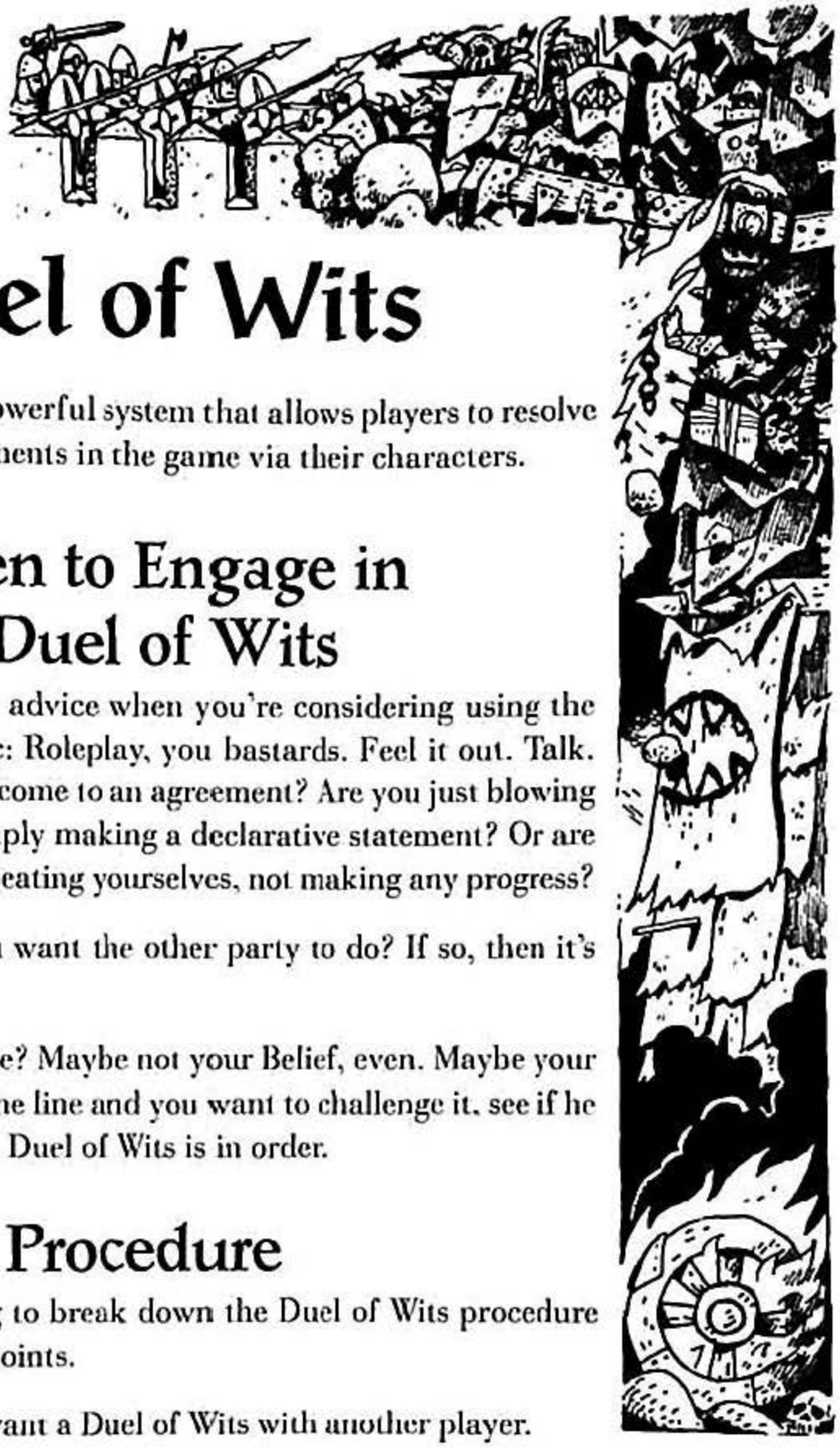
Affiliations are an unassuming but powerful element of the game. Nominally, they're just bonus dice for a Circles test. But let's look at them from a different perspective. An affiliation is a tie to an organization. An organization, as we mentioned earlier in this chapter, has customs. More important, an organization does not exist in a vacuum. An organization has rivals, suppliers, allies and supporters. An organization has disgruntled former members. An organization is a manifestation of power that seeks to ensure its own survival by fighting off attacks while accounting for its needs. Fleshing out just one organization can provide insight into a massive chunk of your setting.

When you have an affiliation, you're privy to some of the aspects discussed above. The more dice, the more you are privy to.



Also, don't forget that according to pages 383 and 384 of the Burning Wheel, you can join and create new affiliations in play. If you join an existing organization, you gain access to people and information. Of course, you need to test your Circles to contact those people—who knows who your friends or enemies are in this new group? If you create a new organization, you give the GM the opportunity to bind you into the setting, and spawn rivals for the upstarts and allies who seek to gain ground in a new order. Creating an affiliation becomes a situation unto itself. It's a small mechanical element, but it can have huge ramifications in play.





Duel of Wits

The Duel of Wits is a powerful system that allows players to resolve disputes and disagreements in the game via their characters.

When to Engage in a Duel of Wits

Let me give you some advice when you're considering using the Duel of Wits mechanic: Roleplay, you bastards. Feel it out. Talk. Poke around. Can you come to an agreement? Are you just blowing off steam? Are you simply making a declarative statement? Or are you at loggerheads, repeating yourselves, not making any progress?

Is there something you want the other party to do? If so, then it's Duel of Wits time.

Is there a Belief at stake? Maybe not your Belief, even. Maybe your friend has a Belief on the line and you want to challenge it, see if he really means it. If so, a Duel of Wits is in order.

Procedure

Just for fun, I'm going to break down the Duel of Wits procedure into a series of bullet points.

- Declare that you want a Duel of Wits with another player.
- The other player can agree or walk away.
- Announce your statement of purpose and then write it down on your Duel of Wits sheet.
- Is this argument a big deal or not a big deal?
- Roll for your body of argument or set it according to the big deal rules.
- Choose your actions in private.
- In each volley, use the three Rs: reveal, roleplay and roll. You must roleplay to roll the dice. And you must roleplay if you're giving a helping die.
- When one side is reduced to zero body of argument, end the Duel of Wits.
- Compromise based on the damage done to the winning side's body of argument.

Everybody Help Every Time

If you help on a body of argument roll, you're bound to the results of the duel of wits. You can fight for the side you helped or aid the other side, that's up to you. But whatever the result, you're bound to it—something to consider before you glibly toss in your Persuasion helping die.

Am I a Big Deal?

The big deal rules allow you to bypass the body of argument roll and simply set a starting level for both parties. The rule is designed to speed up play a bit and to encourage a little buy-in. Does this moment feel critical for both parties? Is this a major moment in the story? Use the rules.

Uneven Importances

Can the moment be a big deal for one side and not the other? This isn't written in the rules themselves, but I think it's acceptable. As a young supplicant you're arguing with the abbot about taking a trip to town. To you, it's life or death. To the abbot, it's just another whiny teenager trying to escape for the weekend to go fornicate. In cases like this, I think it's reasonable to set a big deal on one side, but not the other.

Downsides of Big Deals

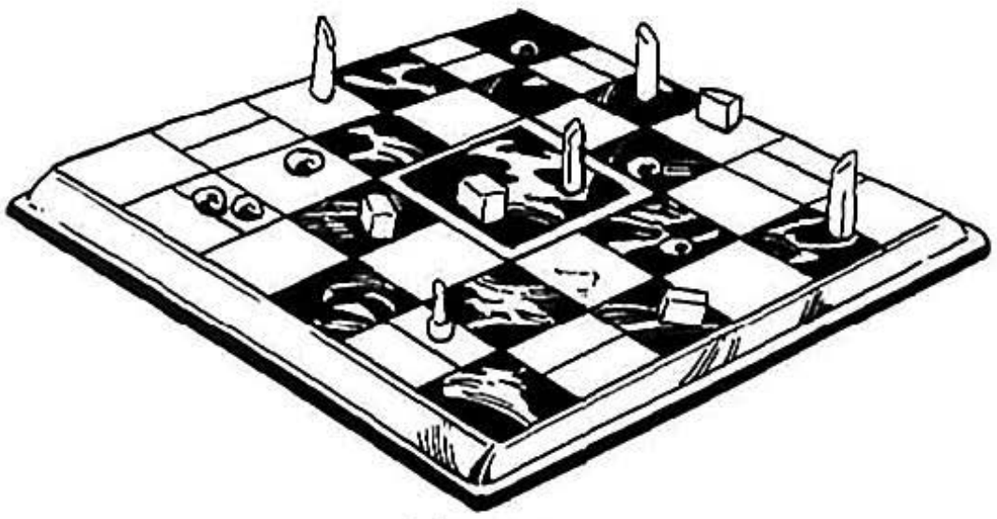
For me, the big deal rules have an obvious problem: in critical moments, you want to muster your dice, spend artha and use traits. Setting a body of argument prevents that. Many cases exist in which investing heavily in a roll can produce more successes than using the big deal rules.

In effect, what the big deal rules do is protect the middle: characters acting on their own, without a lot of resources to toss into a test; or players like me who are simply bad at rolling dice.

Consider this next time you're setting up a duel of wits. For skilled characters with lots of resources, big deals can be limiting. For folks who are bad with dice, it can be boon.







Tactics

Let's talk a bit about setting up your statement of purpose and choosing actions for a Duel of Wits.

Setting Your Statement of Purpose

The best statement of purpose compels another player to action—especially when that action contradicts a Belief. Don't worry about changing someone's mind. Make them do something if you win. That will ratchet up the tension and make your statement of purpose much harder to ignore.

Aiming High

Certain clever players have been known to engage in a Duel of Wits with a compromise already in mind. Knowing that if they lose, they will not get what's included in their statement, they do not mention this potential compromise. Instead, they write a statement that aims higher than what they hope to gain. In the event that they lose, they have a ready compromise—in fact, they achieve what they were after all along. If they win, they gain more than they expected.

Of course, there's a risk in this tactic. Sometimes, you don't really want to aim so high and push so hard. You just might get what you asked for. Be careful.

Choosing Actions

Make decisions based on your performance, your traits and your Instincts. Don't make random decisions and don't make optimal tactical decisions. Use the action choice to say something about your character.

Action Combinations

The following combinations or series of actions have proven useful in play:





- *Incite-Point:* Cause your opponent to hesitate and then attack him without risk of reprisal. Don't follow Incite with Avoid, Obfuscate, Feint or Rebuttal actions.

- *Obfuscate-Rebuttal*: Use Obfuscate to impose a penalty on your opponent in the next volley. This tactic maximizes the effectiveness of Rebuttal, since the dice pools for Rebuttal are smaller than an incoming attack.

- *Obfuscate-Point*: If your opponent is using Point-Rebuttal combinations, use Obfuscate to stop a Point and then reduce the effectiveness of the subsequent Rebuttal with the +1 Ob penalty.

- *Dismiss-Dismiss-Dismiss*: If you need to win in the first volley, you can use this combo, but you'll probably hesitate in the second volley unless you get very lucky. Mathematically, this tactic is less effective than Point-Point-Point. Hesitating an action in the Duel of Wits can prove very costly.

- *Point-Point-Point* or *Point-Point-Dismiss*: Both of these combinations are devastating attacks but neither offers any defense or trickery. This is not the wisest tactic if you care about how your opponent might force you to compromise. And if you think a compromise is a negligible act, then you're playing wrong.

- *Feint*: This action is a dangerous choice, but if used effectively it can pay off. Use this action when your opponent is on the defensive and convinced you're going to attack.

- *Avoid*: Don't use Avoid in the third volley. You're more likely to be Dismissed in the third volley. Use Obfuscate instead.



Compromise

Compromise generated by the Duel of Wits is probably the most important resolution in the game. It's far more significant and powerful than any one test result—even one that results in a Mortal Wound. Mortal Wounds are endings. Compromises are beginnings, sudden shifts and new directions for the game. They are vital and powerful. Even more important, compromises stem from the players. They are bursts of inspiration, born from the fires of a rousing debate and a hard fight.

While you can use standard or versus tests to overcome social obstacles, the simple resolution lacks nuance. That resolution is direct and predictable. Whereas compromise brings acceptable, contextual consensus to the fore-

The actual Duel of Wits—the points, the actions—exist so everyone gets a reasonable chance to say their piece, so we can get a rough measure for how much compromise is necessary. However, the compromise itself forms the most important part and it's vital that the whole group agrees to it. Compromises blow up obstacles and create rubble and ruin in their wake. They are a wild, uncontrollable aspect of the game powered by the group's collective will and cunning.

The rules for compromise are very loose in Burning Wheel. I like it that way, but looking to some of our other games for inspiration, I think there are a few instances in which we can offer further advice.

I think the text in Burning Wheel overlooks a fundamental aspect of a compromise in a Duel of Wits: The goal of the Duel of Wits system is to come to a decision as a group. Compromises are not the sole jurisdiction of the winner or the loser. Traditionally, we allow the loser to propose his compromise first. If it is rejected, it is the winner's responsibility to make a counteroffer. If that is rejected, it is the responsibility of the other players involved in the Duel of Wits to offer suggestions. If those are rejected, you can consult uninvolved players or the GM.

Duel of Wits Results Are New Obstacles

Once a Duel of Wits result—a win, a loss, a compromise, a tie—is determined, it is set in stone. The winner's statement is a hard mechanical fact in the game, like it or not. The loser's statement has been discredited and is unattainable. The story can't go in that direction...unless something dramatic changes.

A compromise, a win or a loss are all new obstacles. They can be broken down and overcome like any other—so long as the group abides by the result of the Duel of Wits.

How? The best way to counteract a Duel of Wits result is with another Duel of Wits. You can't attack the first result directly. You can't contravene the rules. So you must be subtle and clever. You must build your case. You must undermine the opposition.

You present your case to the duke, "Your cousin, the baron, is corrupt and evil. He harbors black magic and plots against you. Arrest him now before it's too late."



The duke demolishes you in a Duel of Wits with a statement like, "Your claims are specious and you will never again speak ill of my cousin in court." So you've been booted from court and you have to stop badgering the duke with what you know to be true. The compromise is of course that you retain your liberty and don't make an enemy of the duke.

So what happens in the game now? You go out and prove the duke wrong, of course! You take the fight to the baron. You rout his army of witches. You exact a confession from him.

The compromise didn't block your actions at all, rather it forced you into action!

When the group confronted the duke, the story reached a juncture. The group ally with the duke and aid him deposing his evil cousin. Or the group could be forced to antagonize the duke by outing his cousin as the evil bastard that he truly is! Either direction is great.

We detailed one possible outcome of the second result above—the players take the fight directly to the baron himself. A classic story of heroic vigilantism: "The halls of power are deaf to our righteous cries. Therefore, we must wage this just war ourselves." Another direction could have lead to the players themselves being hunted or arrested by the duke for slandering a member of his family.

All this from one Duel of Wits compromise!



Walking Away

A Duel of Wits is not mandatory. When challenged to a Duel of Wits you have two options: to accept or to walk away. You do not have to participate, because if you do participate, you're bound to the results—good or bad. Thus, sometimes the situation is such that you don't want to be bound. Sometimes someone will want something from you, but you don't want anything in return. You should never engage in a Duel of Wits out of a sense of obligation. If you don't want something out of it, you should walk away.

If you do choose to walk away, your character must exit the scene. You literally walk away. You do not roleplay out the argument any further. The matter is no longer open for discussion. Essentially, you've ceded the high ground to your interlocutor while preserving your own opinions. It can be very hard to walk away, knowing that your friend has made his point uncontested!





Take Them Away

With influential or potent antagonists, I don't have them exit the scene so much as I send the player characters away. I refuse to discuss the matter and show the characters the door. It's much more appropriate to their rank and station.

It makes a powerful statement when an influential antagonist refuses to engage in a Duel of Wits. If the players challenge you and you refuse, you've essentially ended the scene. Discussion screeches to a halt. In roleplaying terms, I think it's an excellent quirk. Negotiations end for the day. They'll resume on the morrow, when perhaps you're in a more polite frame of mind.

Walking Away from the Group

Our group uses a craven tactic during big moments. If one of our members is dissatisfied with what's at stake, he'll have his character exit the scene while his companions battle it out. Since he's walked out, he's not bound to the results of the Duel of Wits and can act according to his whim.



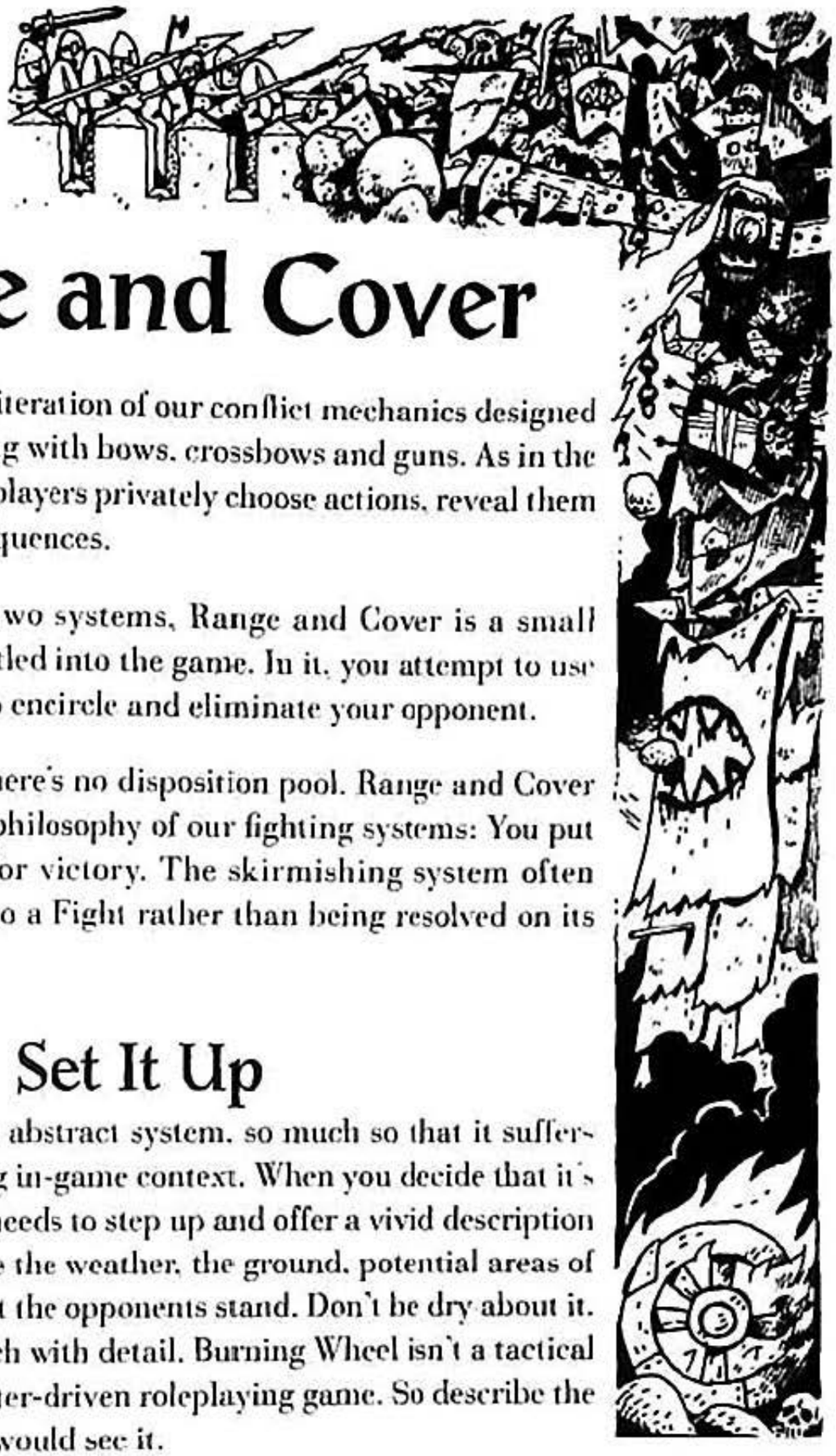
It's a valid character choice, but I find it a rather cowardly game tactic as it provides room for one player to sabotage agreements made by other players. It usually arises when a player is unhappy with both sides. Be a good audience member and stay on hand for the scenes—even if you don't like the potential results. Perhaps it'll change your character in an unexpected way!

Secret Sauce

The Duel of Wits allows a player to take on the role of a social character and carry equal weight in the rules as a combat- or magic-oriented character.

Creating rules for resolving social conflict had an accidental, unintended effect on our games. We found the rules also settled player disputes at the table. Duel of Wits isn't really about character disputes, just like Beliefs aren't really about the character either. It's about the player having a fair chance to voice his thoughts in the context of the game. Presenting a fair system for resolving arguments between players has had a few knock-on effects. It's sped up our games immensely. No more hours of arguments that last until someone gives up due to exhaustion. Now we can just disagree and, if we disagree forcefully enough, jump into a Duel of Wits to resolve it. This speedy resolution has, in turn, created another strange effect: We disagree more now. Not just because we're old and curmudgeonly, but because we know we can have productive disagreements now. We can argue, cajole and plead and we know it'll get resolved in a satisfying manner so we can move on and keep playing.





Range and Cover

Range and Cover is an iteration of our conflict mechanics designed to represent skirmishing with bows, crossbows and guns. As in the other conflict systems, players privately choose actions, reveal them and play out the consequences.

More than the other two systems, Range and Cover is a small abstract war game nestled into the game. In it, you attempt to use strong, smart tactics to encircle and eliminate your opponent.

Unlike Duel of Wits, there's no disposition pool. Range and Cover adheres to the deadly philosophy of our fighting systems: You put your life on the line for victory. The skirmishing system often transitions straight into a Fight rather than being resolved on its own.

Set It Up

Range and Cover is an abstract system, so much so that it suffers greatly without a strong in-game context. When you decide that it's time to let fly, the GM needs to step up and offer a vivid description of the scenery. Describe the weather, the ground, potential areas of cover and how far apart the opponents stand. Don't be dry about it, either! Be florid and rich with detail. Burning Wheel isn't a tactical war game; it's a character-driven roleplaying game. So describe the field as the characters would see it.

Setting Up With Tactics, Fortifications and Wises

In our games at Burning Wheel HQ, we often jockey for advantage in Range and Cover with Tactics, Fortifications and applicable wises.

Tactics Skill in Setting Up Range and Cover

We use Tactics to look for advantageous positions or to set up in prudent formations. These Tactics tests count as linked tests for initial positioning. We also use Tactics to try to set ambushes—Tactics versus Tactics or Observation. If successful, we can cause the enemy to take an obstacle penalty to initial positioning and the first couple of volleys. If we're really lucky and successful, we can force them to make Steel tests and then shoot them down while they flee.



Fortifications Skill in Range and Cover

We use Fortifications if we can choose the field of battle and have time to entrench. We throw up barricades if we only have a few minutes. Sometimes we will even go so far as to use Scavenging to gather materials if there's nothing available. If we have a few hours, we will dig trenches and set up fenced positions. The obstacles and the dice conferred are listed under the Fortifications skill.

Wises in Setting Up Range and Cover

When setting up a battle in Range and Cover, we use wises to ask quick questions about the battlefield. Sometimes, you just have the right skill for the job. An Ob 2 Battlefield-wise test could give you the lay of the land and get you a nice linked die to initial positioning. An Ob 3 Forest-wise test could find you a defensible grotto. An Ob 4 Paths-wise test could lead you to a trail that circles back behind your enemy.

These wise tests aren't always for just a linked die. Tests like these introduce new information about the setting that can change the disposition of the battle. However, results like these are intensely contextual. The new information must make sense. And the GM decides how it affects the conflict at hand.

Describe Your Actions

Range and Cover is abstract so that it can be used in many different circumstances—fields, forests, castles and even ye olde dungeons. If played raw, merely announcing mechanical actions, it can get boring quick.

Take a moment to describe your character's movements. What's he doing? Where's he looking? What does he do when he runs? What does he do when he ducks behind cover? What does he do when he peels off a shot?



Helping players are actually the prime describers in this situation. They must narrate their actions to hand over those helping dice. Without a cool description, they can't help. So if you're helping, step up and inspire everyone else with your great description.

When to Use Range and Cover?

When do you initiate a Range and Cover conflict? Ambushes, hunting parties, raids and skirmishes all come up in play. They offer excellent opportunities to engage these mechanics. However, don't be overzealous. Range and Cover is a big deal. If you can resolve an altercation with a simple versus test and move on to more important matters, do that. But if there's nowhere left to run, and it's time to fight, by all means, these are the rules for you.

Integrating Range and Cover

The Burning Wheel notes that the timing for a Range and Cover volley is plastic, not fixed. If we have multiple conflicts engaged in play, we've found that it's best to bounce back and forth between them, volley to volley. Trying to play an exchange of Fight for every Range and Cover volley isn't a good idea.

Same goes for non-conflict actions: Play a volley of Range and Cover, then cut away to the action elsewhere. Resolve a roll or two and then cut back to the Range and Cover. Keep bouncing back and forth until one situation or the other is resolved.

Range and Cover to Fight

Sometimes, when you're fighting a Range and Cover battle, one character moves into the "too close to shoot" range—in other words, he's charged into melee. At this point, you have two choices. You can bring all participants in the battle into the Fight mechanics. Or you can have the character who charged into melee wait until the Range and Cover has concluded or at least come to a lull.

I prefer to have the whole battle dragged into Fight. It makes the situation more dangerous, more desperate. Those who charged use the Too Close to Shoot and Last Ditch Arrow rules. Everyone else starts outside of striking distance. If they just loosed arrows in this volley or the last, then their weapons are considered unloaded. If they haven't loosed any volleys, their weapons are considered loaded and ready.





Why Can't I Just Shoot Him?

Range and Cover is an abstract system. There's no line of sight and you're not completely in control of your character. This can lead to some frustration, leading players to harumpf, "Why can't I just shoot him?" or "Why do I have to roll to act?"

The system itself makes sense and can answer, but to really get at the problem it's important to build context for your players.

The overarching theme for all Burning Wheel conflicts is that chaos reigns. Your character doesn't have a bird's-eye view, can't see the best course and certainly doesn't know the truth.

To represent that confusion and perspective at the table, we must abstract the situation. More concrete representation like miniatures don't work in Burning Wheel and, in my opinion, they detract from the chaos of battle.

Thus in Range and Cover we don't know your line of sight, what cover is available, the exact position of the enemy or many other battlefield conditions until you roll the dice.

If you stop and think about it, this might be a bit more true to life than staring at a grid or a top down view of miniatures. Stalking through the woods hunting quarry is tense because you don't know when or if you'll come upon your prey: when wading through a pitched battle with arrows raining down you don't what your enemy will do in the moment.

So we make our plans, roll the dice and hope the gods are with us this day.

Tactics

Let's see if we can share some battle-earned wisdom with you.

In general, use the action to which you're best suited. If you have a high Stealthy skill, use Sneak In. If you have a B8 Steel (and some decent armor), by all means cry havoc and Charge.

Of course, this begins to hint at strategy. If you know your opponent is strong in one area, can you play a countertactic? Well, it depends. For example, if your opponent has a high Stealthy skill, you'll want to counter with Tactics- or Observation-based maneuvers like Flank or Hold. But what if you don't have either of the counterskills? Sometimes the middle of a life-or-death struggle isn't the right time to start learning a new skill.



In this case, you can counter Stealthy (and nearly any skill-based maneuver) with a Charge. It uses Steel, but more important it doesn't suffer a double obstacle penalty for stat versus skill tests (because it's an attribute and special). It's risky strategy—you will likely get shot, and you may charge into the wrong location and end up hesitating as you search in vain for your quarry—but it might be the best gamble you have.

When to Maintain

Use the Maintain action when you don't want to give ground, but can't afford to hold a fixed position. Maintain uses Speed, under the assumption that you'll stay mobile, perhaps giving a little ground before counterattacking. Or perhaps you'll sortie out a bit before falling back to your original position.



When to Hold

Hold your ground when you're being rushed or when you simply need to shoot right now. Your opponent will be able to maneuver at will—closing in, retreating or even maintaining distance to get off a good shot. At least with the Hold action, you're guaranteed to shoot.

It's best played against the Sneak In/Out actions and of course against Charge.

When to Close

You close in to improve range or move into hand-to-hand combat. If neither of these work to your advantage, don't use close actions!

When to Withdraw

You use withdraw actions to exit combat. That's obvious. But you can also use withdraw actions to gain an advantageous range. Note that when you maneuver, you do so in range bands of your own weapon. So if your opponent has moved into optimal range for rocks, bombs, knives, pistols, etc. then you should do your level best to withdraw to your extreme range. You can put all of their weapons out of range and then leisurely pick them off.

Take a Position

When you win your first positioning test in a Range and Cover skirmish, don't spend your successes on shots or actions unless you absolutely must. Instead, take up a position. This will get you +1-2D for your next positioning roll.



Fighting Ranges

Fight from extreme range if you have the advantage in skill. Force your opponent to shoot on the move or to take wild, unlikely shots. If your skill isn't up to the task of hitting Ob 3-4 targets, you can also sit out at extreme range as a delaying tactic. Of course, you'd better be delaying for a reason.

Fight from optimal range only if you can afford to absorb a few shots or if you absolutely must close in to reduce your shot obstacles. Otherwise, optimal range usually proves too dangerous.

When closing into melee, try to have your weapons loaded. If you win that close action and get to the "too close to shoot" range, you'll be able to launch into Fight with a deadly, point-blank hail of shot.



Skirmishes

Using the Range and Cover rules, it's possible to run skirmishes involving groups of two to ten fighters.

In its simplest iteration, you run a skirmish by placing all of the players on one team—whether or not they can fight—and allowing them to help one another test for positioning. One character leads, everyone else helps. The leader doles out action dice. On the GM's side, he lumps his villains into one horde, grabs a pile of helping dice and doles out his actions as appropriate.

Alternately, you can break down into multiple groups. The GM divides his forces into an equal number of groups to oppose the characters. Note that the sizes of the groups don't have to be equal. If the players break into two groups, the GM splits his forces into two groups. The groups can be evenly divided or one group can consist of a Troll and an Orc while the other could be 10 Goblins.

When positioning, pair off two opposing teams and run two simultaneous Range and Cover battles: player group A versus the Orc and the Troll, player group B against 10 Goblins. One group will inevitably fall. The remaining group will want to help their companions. Allow them to make positioning tests against another group on the other side. In order to maneuver and gain action, they must beat their target's positioning rolls as per the standard rules. Their target only rolls once to defend itself from the two incoming attacks.

For extra fun, use the Slowest and Loudest rules found in this book in combination with Range and Cover skirmishes. These new rules neatly curb any die bloat from forming teams.

The Battle Space

For skirmishes and groupings of fighters to make sense to everyone at the table, the GM must clearly describe the battle space. He must set up the situation on the ground. Who's where? What are they doing? What are they defending? What are they assaulting?



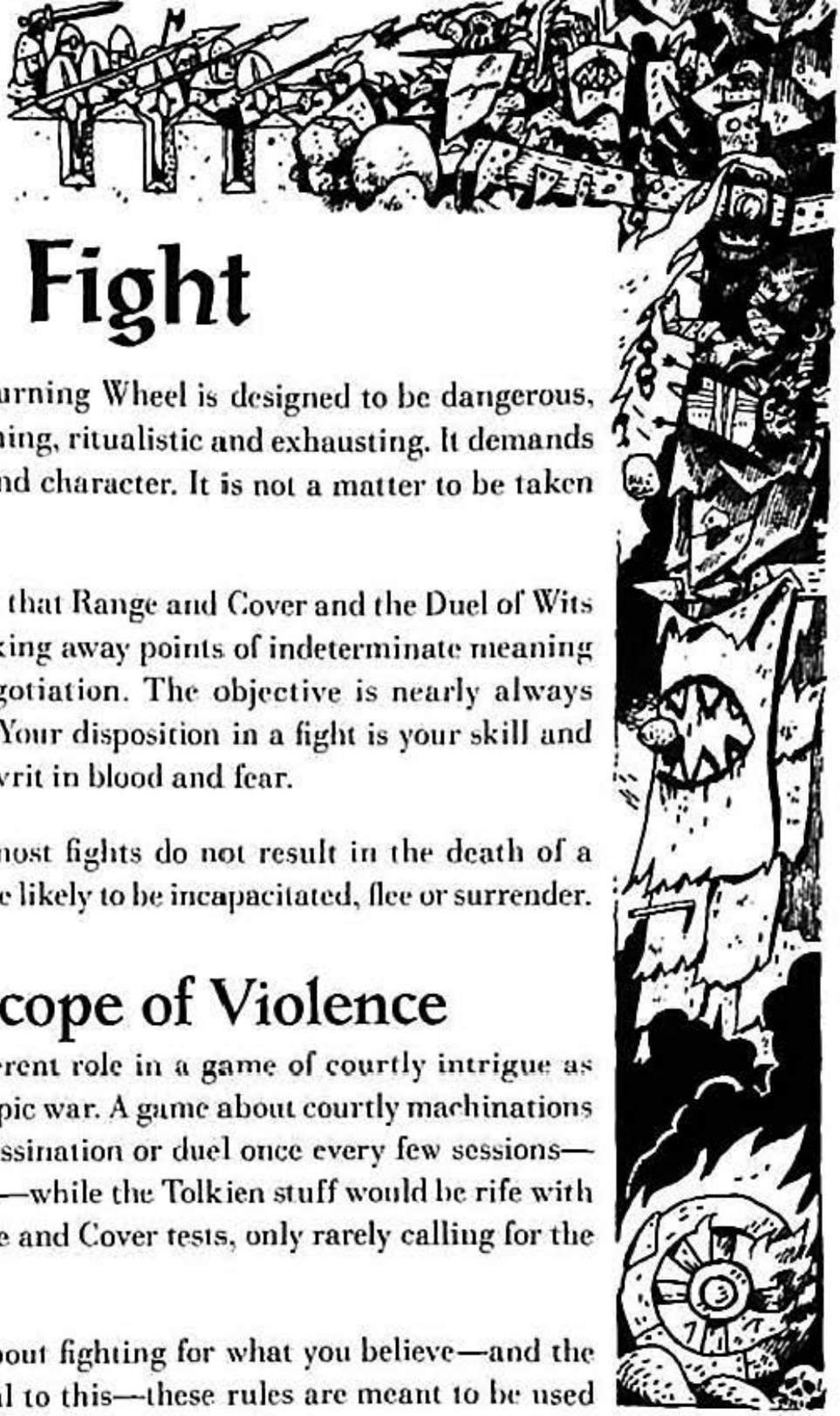


You can sketch a map if necessary, but florid description usually suffices.

We promise you, if you do not describe every maneuver with a short spray of vivid details, the conflict will quickly turn to mush. No one will understand where he is or what he's fighting for. It is a roleplaying game after all; the mechanics exist for you to hang your lovely descriptions on.







Fight

The Fight system in Burning Wheel is designed to be dangerous, unpredictable, frightening, ritualistic and exhausting. It demands much of both player and character. It is not a matter to be taken lightly.

It is much less abstract that Range and Cover and the Duel of Wits rules. You're not knocking away points of indeterminate meaning to be resolved by negotiation. The objective is nearly always murder and survival. Your disposition in a fight is your skill and body. Compromise is writ in blood and fear.

Despite the danger, most fights do not result in the death of a character. You are more likely to be incapacitated, flee or surrender.

The Scope of Violence

Violence plays a different role in a game of courtly intrigue as opposed to a Tolkien epic war. A game about courtly machinations might involve an assassination or duel once every few sessions—perfect Fight material—while the Tolkien stuff would be rife with versus tests and Range and Cover tests, only rarely calling for the full Fight rules.

While this game is about fighting for what you believe—and the Fight system is central to this—these rules are meant to be used at the proper juncture. Overusing them can do just as much harm as underusing them.

Fight as Climax

The Fight rules are best used during climactic events. Fights in Burning Wheel are high-stakes and intense. Fight should not be used to resolve every single physical (or even violent) dispute. If you're engaged in a low-stakes, violent activity like "ye olde dispatch the guard," then use a versus test.

Or if you're on your own and the whole group is waiting for you to finish your scene so they can get on with the big moment of the session, use the versus test mechanics, not Fight.

However, when you're confronting a character described in your Belief—when the plot has reached a climax and death is on the line—then by all means dive into a full-blooded Fight.

Fight as Opening Action Sequence

If your group is Fight friendly, it's a good idea to surprise them once in a while with a jump-start combat at the top of the session. Kick the session off with a sharp exchange or two. It gets the blood pumping. And be prepared to spend the rest of the session dealing with the fallout!

Fighting Smart

The Fight system possesses an internal logic. It rewards players who fight smart. There are optimal and suboptimal strategies. To effect any strategy, you must begin planning before you cross swords with your opponent because, indeed, a sword might not be the right weapon for the job.

Intelligence

Assess your opponents before a battle. Find out how they fight: identify their weapons and armor. If you're fighting heavily armored opponents, you need to develop tactics and use weapons that neutralize their defenses. If your opponent uses longer weapons to keep his enemies at bay, you need to either beat him at his own game or prepare a gambit to close with him.



The system substantially rewards this forethought. Bashing a sword against plated mail armor can be a futile endeavor—better to have your mace or axe ready.

Implicit in these lofty entreaties is the idea that gathering intelligence and learning how to fight differently are integral parts of play. They are not to be glossed over. You are meant to use your Perception, wises, Resources, practice time, instruction and anything else you can think of to gain advantage in the sessions preceding a confrontation. These are significant and important parts of your adventures!

Ambush

For the less scrupulous among us, ambush is a tried-and-true fight-winning tactic. Surprise your enemy and force him to take a Steel test. Use any hesitation to your advantage. If your opponent is only hesitating for a moment, knock him down with a Push or Charge. If he's hesitating for a few beats, try to Lock him up. He can't resist. If he's hesitating for longer than a moment, have at him with a Great Strike or two.



Weapon Speed

Weapon speed is useful for both breaking up your own rhythms and encouraging the use of alternate attacks like Push or Disarm. But your opponent's weapon speed is a clue to help you better plan your attacks. If you predict when your opponent can't Strike, you have an opening that you can exploit.

The Crossbow and the Gun

Another dastardly tactic is to bring a gun to a sword fight. If you can win the engagement test, you can shoot down your opponent like a dog. If you fail to incapacitate him with your shot, draw steel and move in to engage on your terms.

Positioning

Positioning is the mother of Fight. Your weapon length, Speed and stride all combine to put you at an advantageous fighting distance. Your optimal fighting distance might differ from your opponent's. And being caught outside of your optimal fighting distance is a tragedy. So do whatever you can to win that engagement test.

Use the Environment

Unarmed? There's a handful of found weapons described in the weapons list on page 555 of the Burning Wheel. Use your Scavenging skill to produce an improvised weapon before your enemies burst through the door. If you're fighting in the kitchen, use an Assess action in the fight itself and find a boiling pot to grab so you can smash your opponent in the face with it!

You can also spend an Assess action to make a linked test to find an advantage in the fight. You can use physical actions to overturn tables, climb up balconies or slam doors shut. These actions call for Power, Speed or Agility tests respectively. They can completely change the nature of the battle space. You can provide advantage for positioning, escape the fight or cut off retreat respectively.

The key here is to use descriptions of the battle space to spark questions: "Is there a window out of this room?" These questions can lead to the GM Saying Yes or they can lead to one of the tests suggested above.

Of course, these questions and tests must abide by intent and task. If you're fighting in the kitchen, this provides viable intent for an Assess: "Is there a boiling pot on the stove? I want to grab it." If you're fighting in the throne room, it's not. If you use these questions judiciously, your



fights will be richer and more exciting. If you forget about intent and task and use the Assess action to introduce improbable elements, then your fights will become silly and unsatisfying.

Use Your Hands

The Physical Action is often overlooked, too. Spend two actions and you can use your hands (or feet) to get some work done! I mentioned that you can open and close doors using the Physical Action. You could also use this to rip pieces of armor off of your opponent. Of course, you need to have him in at least a 1D Lock to get started, but how shocking would it be if some brute just grabbed you and ripped your helmet off?

Use Power and Agility tests to resolve Physical Actions like that.

Armor

If you're heavily armored against an opponent without an armor-penetrating weapon. be aggressive. Don't defend yourself. Let your armor absorb the blows while you crush your enemy.

If you're lightly armored. use Avoid, Block and Counterstrike to soften incoming blows, so if your armor should fail, you're not at great risk.

If you're fighting a heavily armored opponent and you can't penetrate his defenses, change your tactics. If he has a long weapon, get close. If he has a short weapon, try to hold him at bay. Push him down or Throw him if you can; Lock him up. Tear away his helmet (with a Physical Action and a Power or Agility test) and stab him in the face. But for all that is unholy, don't just stand there and flail away ineffectually.



Retreat

If a fight arrives at a stalemate, don't be afraid to retreat and exit the battle. You can reengage another time on terms more favorable to you.

Surrender

Surrender if you're overmatched. A surrender is an excellent time to push for a Duel of Wits and it can lead to all sorts of fun situations like: capture, prison, ransom or a trial.





Objects in Motion

Fighters are not standing flat-flooted, bashing away. We took out most of the movement rules and measurements from the game, because everyone is in motion. Everyone is vying for position, pushing in, falling back, circling. A strike, for example, doesn't merely entail a movement of the arms—it's a forceful step, a swing of the hips, an extension of the body.

Keep this in mind as you choose your actions and describe what your character is doing.

Everyone Can Fight

Some players will shrug their shoulders, throw up their hands and say, "I can't fight! I'm not a fighter!" This is never true. Everyone can fight in Burning Wheel. Many actions in combat don't require a skill. Avoid, Charge, Lock and Push can all be performed using stats. which means anyone can use them, regardless of training.

And that means that your rogue scholar can help her mercenary buddy out of a scrape. She can tackle an opponent to the ground, push around weaker enemies and maybe get lucky, grabbing someone and holding them down. Of course, this may all get her killed—but there is no reward without risk!



Gain Advantage

Gaining advantage over your opponent is key to winning fights. Advantage represents positioning and reach. Having the advantage over your opponent means they have a disadvantage in acting against you. And this can be the difference between life and death.

How do you gain advantage? You can win it outright through engagement or positioning. This requires you to have a weapon of a different length than your opponent. That weapon can be your sword or even your hands.

You can seize the advantage during the exchange using the Beat, Push and Charge actions. Beat allows you to use your weapon to knock down your opponent's guard and gain advantage for yourself. It's easy to overlook this action, but I can't stress enough its importance in these rules.

Push and Charge require that you use your hands as your weapon for the action (perhaps forcing you to a temporary disadvantage). But if you time the action correctly, you can easily surprise your opponent and gain the advantage—and if you're lucky, knock them down. Also, note the special rule for Push: If you have a shield, you can use the action at short weapon length.

Lock and Throw can also be used to gain advantage, but they are a bit trickier to pull off. They both require you to position yourself at hands fighting distance. Lock entails beating your opponent in a versus test while making yourself vulnerable to attack. Throw demands a martial arts skill, but if you're skilled it's extremely effective.



You Have Me at a Disadvantage, Madame

You're staring down the point of your opponent's halberd, comparing it to the meager length of your mace. You envision what comes next: you flailing away ineffectually while she stabs you to death from a safe distance. Why didn't you bring a spear with you? you idly muse. A question best left for another time. For now, the most pressing question remains how do you get out of this mess? Of course, the answer that leaps to mind is to clear your throat and apologize. However, it seems we're long past the point of apology, given what you did to her brother, the bishop—though he quite had it coming, you admit. Regardless, that





won't help you now. She seems to be taking measure for a swing likely to remove your head's long service to its suffering body. Well then, nothing for it but to dive in.

She leads with a thrust and you block. You suspect she's testing you, but you're also testing her will to end you. She seems quite resolved, you must admit. And you imagine she'll follow that thrust around with a cut to the head, neck or shoulders. Lo and behold, here it comes: You can almost feel bones break in anticipation as you swim into her, counterstriking—pushing the haft of the polearm aside as you lunge to land a blow. Not a bad idea, but it could have used more polish in practice. It seems you were both touched by the effort. You managed to ring her bell before she stepped around, but she certainly removed some skin from your shoulder with the blade of that bloody poleaxe. Well, at least you still have all your limbs.

Now's your chance. She's taking a breath to readjust her grip—is it a trap? Well, only time will tell. You drive at the weapon, brandishing the mace, but with the real aim of grabbing the halberd's shaft with your free hand to buy time to step inside her guard. She works the shaft around in a tight circle to avoid your grab, but your gambit seems to have worked—you're definitely close enough to see the murder in her eyes and the blur of the thick wooden halberd butt wheeling toward your head as she attempts to fend you off...

Bide Your Time

The point being, when confronted with a disadvantage, you must bide your time. You're going to get hit quite a bit, so defend yourself. Block and Avoid are your allies. Both actions mitigate damage, but Block can grant you a tidy bonus to your next action or even a serious penalty to your opponent. And don't neglect Counterstrike. It will help ward off the flurry of blows, and the riposte portion of Counterstrike does not suffer disadvantage for weapon length and positioning. Using it smartly, you can pick your opponent apart with a few cuts that reduce her effectiveness or perhaps even trigger a Steel test.



Timing

You have to consider a lot of timing aspects in Fight, but the one you want focus on is attacking your opponent when they're flat-flooted and don't have an action. Of course, the inverse also hold's true, if you're slower than your opponent, you want to make sure they waste their extra actions on defense. You don't want them attacking you while you're catching your breath.



How Do I Know?

Gauging that timing is tough, but it is possible. The best course of action is to play through an exchange to get a read on your opponent. In what exchange did they put their actions? How are they timing their attacks and defenses? If they seem intent on attacking twice in the first volley, you know that assuming you can survive, you can ding them in the second or third volley.

Of course, if you're fighting a faster opponent, you have to play smart. Telegraph a certain set of actions but choose a different set. If you front-loaded your attacks in the first exchange, perhaps your opponent will defend in the first volley of the next exchange. This opens up opportunities for you to attack later in the exchange, since you don't want to waste attacks against a strong defense.

The Eye of the Storm

The Eye of the Storm rule creates a sense of pacing and space in combat. It's a perk for you dispatching or running off your opponent. You can also plan for it. While you can't affect another group of fighters in this exchange, you can ready a pistol, spell or missile to gain advantage to engage at the top of the next exchange. You can shrug off your wounds, grab an item from your fallen foe or simply take a breath and assess the field to check for reinforcements or escape routes.



Fight Actions Advice

There are 19 actions in Fight not including shooting, throwing and magic. The interactions between all of these are complex, but there are certain optimal combinations.

Avoid

Avoid is a good defense for the unskilled as it relies on Speed and doesn't suffer the stat versus skill penalty.

Beat

The Beat action is vital to master if you want to fence with opponents using a variety of weapons. It allows you to steal advantage midway through a fight—possibly disrupting your opponent's entire script.

Don't neglect the two-handed bonus for using Beat!



Block

Block is seemingly safe and innocuous, but it can be used to set up some grand attacks—granting you bonuses and your opponent penalties. It can even cause your opponent to hesitate. If you are confident in your skill and know when your opponent will attack, you can set up a Block/Strike volley and deliver a powerful blow to your opponent.

Charge/Tackle

Shooting into your opponent's guard with a Charge/Tackle action is a strategy for the bold and the strong. You only want to take this action if you have a high Power and a good stride—especially if you're at a disadvantage. If you have the advantage, you can often catch your opponent flat-footed by using an action to Charge rather than attack. You can knock them down (giving them substantial penalties) and still regain the advantage if successful.

Counterstrike

Counterstrike allows you to fight from a disadvantage but still tag your opponent. Use it, but don't be predictable with it.

Disarm

Disarm is not the action you see in movies—swirl the swords around and one goes flying. Uh oh. It's quite hard to pull off in Burning Wheel (by design) and easy to defend against. It's an action that favors skill and timing. Honestly, the Disarm action is for the master fighter to take a weapon away from a less experienced opponent so that they don't hurt themselves.



Feint

A successful Feint action requires impeccable timing. You need to know when your opponent is going to use one of five actions: Block, Counterstrike, Beat, Disarm or Feint. Feint is most effective against Block and Counterstrike, so if you have the advantage and your opponent seems to be in a defensive posture, use a Feint in your script in place of one of your Strikes—it just might pay off.

Great Strike

Set and strike. This powerful action is both satisfying and useful. The two actions of Great Strike can be separated by the interval between volleys or even between exchanges. You don't have to Set and Great Strike in one volley. You can get clever with it, setting in your second action, baiting your opponent to forfeit and change actions.



Great Strike becomes a necessity when using a weapon with little or no VA against an armored opponent. When fighting an unarmored opponent, use Great Strike to deliver extra damage.

Lock

Lock is perhaps the most powerful attack available. It bypasses the damage circuit and directly, if temporarily, removes dice from the target.

Players should attempt Locks with their characters regardless of their Power. Not only is it a fine opportunity to glean tests for advancement, but it's an easy action to get lucky with.

Push

Push is a workhorse action. Any player can pull off an effective Push, regardless of ability. It's a solid attack, very useful as an offbeat action when using a slow speed weapon: Strike/Push/Strike makes an effective, aggressive combination.

Strike

Ah, good old Strike. What would we do without you? Actually, Strikes aren't necessary. Unlike the Point action in the Duel of Wits, you do not need Strike to win in Fight. You can disable or run off an opponent with Charges, Locks, Pushes and Throws.

If you're heavily armored, use your armor as protection and pound away on your opponent with as many Strikes as you're able. If you're lightly armored and can't absorb a hit, try to time your Strikes and put them in unexpected intervals. Second action, volley 2 is always a nice place to tuck one in.



If your opponent is lightly armored and on the attack, give him a strong poke. Don't let him get the initiative by forcing you on the defensive when he can be struck down with a solid hit. Of course, don't make yourself vulnerable. If you have to take up a defensive posture, try to wear him down as we described above.

Throw

Throw is a devastating attack that requires skill and timing to pull off. It's really not worth attempting unless you're skilled. But if you have the Boxing, Martial Arts or similar skill, you should use this as a main part of your repertoire.

Missiles and Spells



Missiles and spells make great weapons in Fight. They provide hordes of advantage dice to engage or position, and they're often quite injurious. But know that once the bolt is loosed or the spell cast, you're vulnerable. You are, for the moment, effectively fighting with your hands. You haven't suddenly teleported close to the fight, but your position is exposed. Other fighters, should they be so inclined, can roll up on you and tell you what they think of your standoffish techniques.

Mind Games

Fight is a mind game. A fighter of little skill can get into the head of a more dangerous opponent and take them down.

I love this aspect of the system. It's not possible to completely lean on your high numbers or big swords. You must play the game.

To do so, you must watch your opponent. What gear are they carrying? What's their weapon speed? What armor? What actions did they choose? What's their timing? Those are a lot of variables to juggle, but each one offers a bit of information that will make your decisions about actions more accurate.

If you feel like you don't have enough information to make solid decisions, don't go for broke and sell out for a desperate attack. Play for time. Learn your opponent's pattern. Wear the other player down...and then once you get your intuition tuned, make your move.

It's Not Over Until It's Over

Lots of folks look at the wound penalties from injury and despair. One hit and it's over, right? Maybe, but I've seen plenty of characters fight their way through an injury or hesitation and come back to win (or just to escape).





True, once you're injured you'll likely have to change your tactics, perhaps make riskier decisions. But if you're injured, try this: Take a stance that favors your fighting style and play for time. If possible, get to the Eye of the Storm and try to shrug off your wound penalty. If that's not possible (due to Reflexes dropping due to lost dice, for example), you need to disrupt your opponent. Look for a way to knock them down or cause a Steel test.

Never give up. The situation may look bad, but you'd be surprised how inventive desperation makes you.

Stances

Stances comprise an advanced part of the fighting system and are often overlooked. Aggressive Stance provides +2D advantage dice to Strike and Great Strike, while it restricts Avoid completely and penalizes Block and Counterstrike with a +2 Ob. Those advantage dice are often necessary for a character to deliver superb hits. Without them, a character with a B3 skill can only hope to get Mark results with most weapons.

Defensive Stance is the inverse and perhaps more potent version of Aggressive Stance. It provides +2D to Block, Counterstrike and Avoid. Strike and Great Strike are penalized with a +2 Ob penalty while in this stance. Defensive Stance also has the added benefit of acting like a Block action when it is scripted.



The +2D to Counterstrike and Avoid are invaluable in any fight. Using those advantages, you can keep an aggressive opponent at bay while worrying him with counterattacks. The striking portion of Counterstrike is not penalized in Defensive Stance! I've seen swordsmen win whole fights against multiple opponents using just defensive Counterstrike and Push actions.

Crosscutting

Sometimes a Fight happens while other action takes place elsewhere in the story. Do your best to cut between the various scenes of action. Run one exchange of the combat, then jump to another scene—perhaps an exchange of Range and Cover—and so on until everyone has enjoyed an equivalent amount of screen time. Usually you can resolve quite a bit just while combatants are choosing their actions.

GMing Fights

Fights are straightforward to run one on one. But what about when it's time to crash the gates and party with the Count and all his cronies? Here's some advice for the GM:

Prescripts

Use simple prescripted sequences for secondary fighters: Block/Strike/Block/Strike. Don't tell your players. Let them figure out the pattern and break the rhythm themselves. This is a surprisingly effective technique. I've had NPCs using scripts like this for whole fights and the players never even noticed.

Telegraph

Don't choose your actions in brooding silence (unless the players are confronting the Brood Silent Ultimate Boss Opponent. of course). Describe your NPC's reactions. Demonstrate their stances. Annunciate their curses.

You can transmit a host of soft information to players that will enrich their experience but also allow them to make better decisions during the melee.

Don't Be Too Smart

It's possible that, as the GM, you have a lot of advantageous information at your disposal. You know your players' habits, you know your NPC's weaknesses and likely you know the rules best.

Don't use any of that. Forget it all. Roleplay your antagonists. Let them make mistakes, be predictable or overconfident. It adds a lot of character to the game. It tells the players you're willing to put the story ahead of rules mastery, and set aside your own thirst for their blood in service of everyone having a good time.

Having every Orc Follower fight with the utmost cunning and resolve will exhaust the players. Let the players rack up a few solid victories. Save the smart fighting for the characters who deserve that spotlight. It'll make them stand out even more.

Fight Is Complicated

I hear this complaint every day: "Fight is complicated." You bet. If you don't like tactical, technical, involved systems, don't use it. I'm not shy about it being complicated—I like complex games—but it is not broken. clunky. kludgy, crufty or whatever. It works great if you care to use it.



Ending a Fight

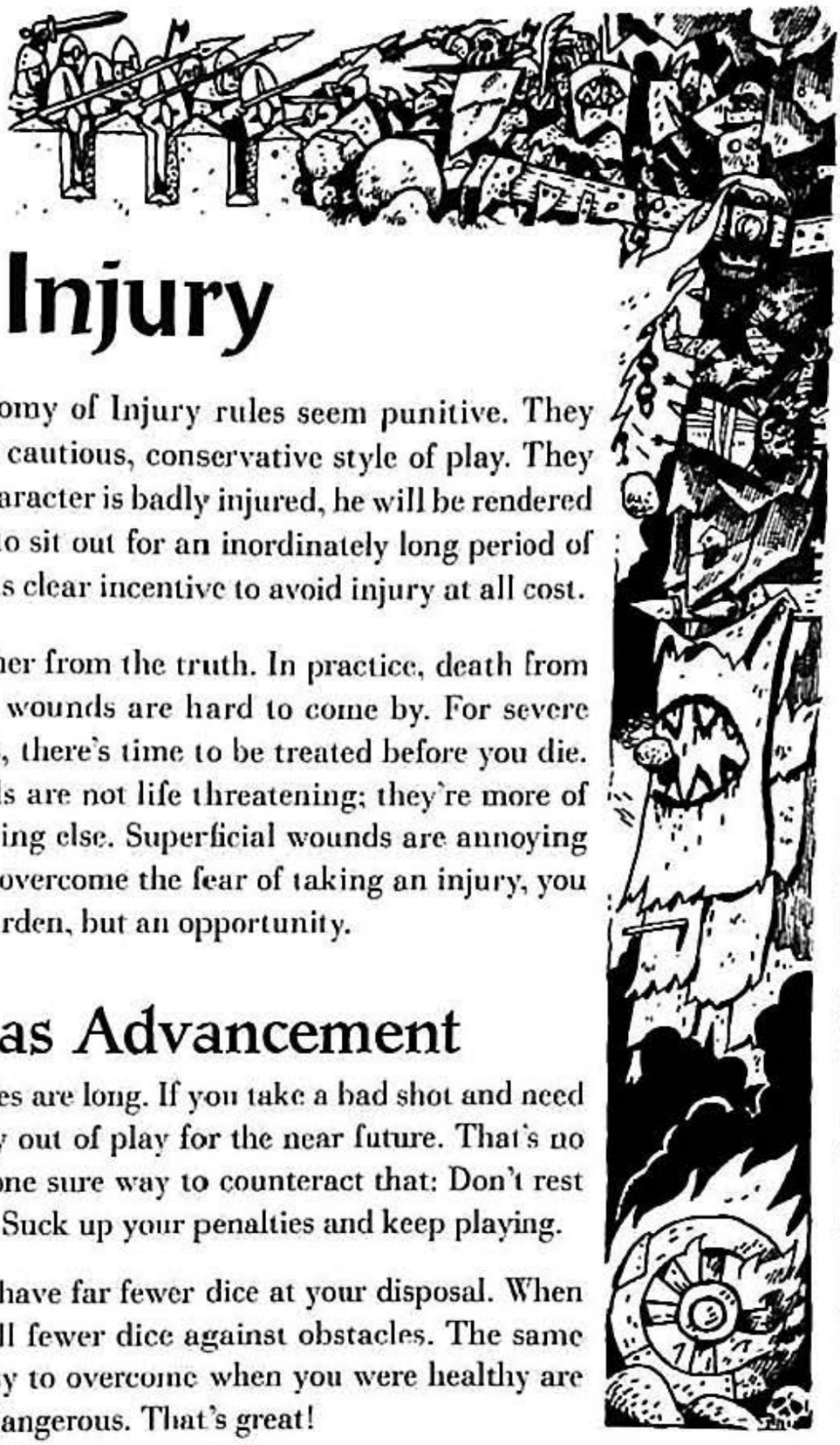
One of the weaknesses of the Fight mechanics is their lack of a clear end point. Not every conflict needs to be played out to the death, but the rules give no direction in this regard. Hopefully I can clear up any confusion.

- You should end a Fight if the other side is killed. That's the obvious one, *right?*
- You should end a Fight if one side is incapacitated. There's no need to stay in the action structure if no one is actually fighting—you're just beating on unconscious soon-to-be-corpses.
- You should end a Fight if one side isn't necessarily incapacitated, but they're incapable of fighting. Your opponents all have B4 skills with -3D/+1 Ob injury penalties? Just end the fight. You don't need to play out the end of this sorry mess action by action.
- You should end a Fight if a shocking or earth-shattering event transpires that commands everyone's attention.
- You should end a Fight if one side wants to quit. That's tantamount to surrender. Pick up the scene there. No more fighting (invoking the Let It Ride paradigm); one side has been defeated.

When a Fight is over, you have two main options as the GM. You can pick up the action right where the Fight leaves off. One side surrenders to the enemy. He offers you terms. Negotiations ensue. Or you can cut away, incorporating the resolution of the combat into the next scene, but in a new situation. You were all incapacitated—you wake up in the duke's dungeons, stripped to the waist. The duke and his torturer mock you as they douse you with water.

The appropriate choice depends on circumstance. If you're unsure which option to choose, focus on the characters' Beliefs. What situation would challenge them the most, a new scene with a new problem or dealing with the fallout here and now?





Injury

At a glance, the Anatomy of Injury rules seem punitive. They appear to encourage a cautious, conservative style of play. They seem to say, "If your character is badly injured, he will be rendered ineffective and forced to sit out for an inordinately long period of game time." That seems clear incentive to avoid injury at all cost.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In practice, death from injury is rare. Mortal wounds are hard to come by. For severe and traumatic wounds, there's time to be treated before you die. Light and midi wounds are not life threatening; they're more of a nuisance than anything else. Superficial wounds are annoying but fleeting. Once you overcome the fear of taking an injury, you realize that it isn't a burden, but an opportunity.

Injury as Advancement

Resting times for injuries are long. If you take a bad shot and need to recover, you're likely out of play for the near future. That's no fun. However, there's one sure way to counteract that: Don't rest until the action is over. Suck up your penalties and keep playing.

Playing injured, you'll have far fewer dice at your disposal. When you're injured, you roll fewer dice against obstacles. The same obstacles that were easy to overcome when you were healthy are now troublesome and dangerous. That's great!

If your B5 Speed is chopped down to B3, Ob 3 tests now count as difficult tests for advancement, whereas with a B5 they don't count for anything. Your listed rating doesn't matter for advancement, only the amount of dice you're rolling. When injured, you're rolling fewer dice against the obstacle and therefore the test carries more value.

Playing injured is an excellent technique for advancing stats and skills of exponent 5 or higher. These require difficult and challenging tests for you to advance. It's much easier to rack up those tests when obstacles 2, 3 and 4 count for advancement.



When playing injured, your character appears clumsy for a good number of sessions. As those advancements accrue, your abilities quickly jump up—particularly your stats. Once you've recovered, you reacquire your injured dice and boosted a few exponents as a bonus. Your increase in power is significant and satisfying.

What Can I Do While I Recover?

Recovery times are long. Technically, according to the rules, resting to recover absorbs all of the character's down time. You don't recover while slogging through a dungeon. You recover while laying up in a hostel, drinking soup.

In general at BWHQ, we allow characters to engage in light practice while they recover. Reading, writing, researching or conversing for a few hours a day are all acceptable. Light travel—aboard a ship, a sedan or carriage—is also permissible. Physical training regimens, whirlwind social activity, hard travel, adventure or intense practice—more than an hour or two a day—are all out of the question.

You cannot get a job and work to recover taxed Resources while recovering from an injury.

What Do My Friends Do While I Recover?

Conversely, while you're laid up, your friends can practice, work, instruct one another, conduct research, pay your bills, etc. Your recovery is their gain!

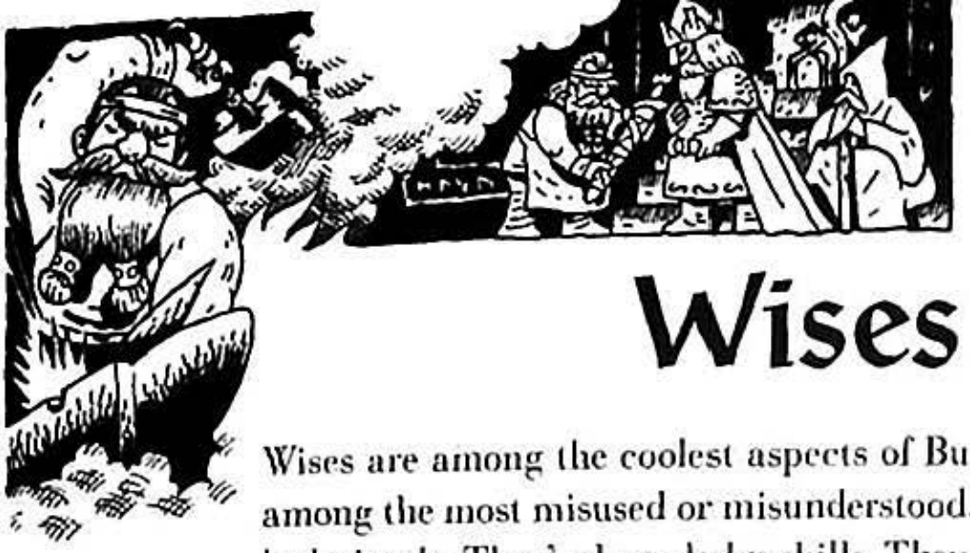
Resources and Recovery

Injury and tax combine to create a downward spiral of poverty and privation in the game. If you're injured, you need to rest. Rest typically takes you through one Resources maintenance cycle. You need to test Resources to maintain your lifestyle. If you fail, you're taxed. Thus your recovery costs you.

Worse, if you're taxed while going into a recovery period, you're going to remain taxed, possibly becoming even more taxed. You can't work while resting, so you have to live off of your current Resources or you need to forgo rest and boost your Resources by working while injured. It's an ugly cycle by design. Infirmity and poverty are disruptive and destructive elements in the system.







Wises

Wises are among the coolest aspects of Burning Wheel, but also among the most misused or misunderstood. On the surface, wises look simple: They're knowledge skills. They represent the little bits and bobs of information that characters pick up over time. But probe a little deeper and they become a lot more complex.



In this chapter, we're going to look at three main questions: Under what circumstances should we use wises in our games? If I'm the GM, when should I call for a wise test? And if I'm a player, when is it appropriate for me to ask to test a wise?

Wises as Information

When a player asks for information on behalf of his character, the first thing you should consider as a GM is whether you have the information or not.

I played in a game in which the Big Picture established that long ago the black dragon descended upon a great Dwarven hall, slew the defenders and took it as his own. One of the players assumed the role of the last scion of that Dwarven house. His long-term goal was to slay the dragon and reclaim his homeland. The rest of the players created characters that wanted to help him for various reasons. The entire campaign revolved around preparing for the goal.

Thor was playing a wizard named Petronax the Hawk. Early in the quest, we were attempting to track down some information about this particular dragon. Trying to come up with a place to start, he asked the GM, "Do I know any stories about the origin of dragons?"

Before answering the question, the first thing Anthony, the GM, had to consider whether he knew the answer or not. When he was preparing this campaign, did he determine where dragons came from?



For argument's sake, let's say that he did. At that point, Anthony would have had to decide whether to simply Say Yes and give Thor the information or call for a Dragon-wise test. Further, he also had to consider these details: Would having the answer allow Thor to circumvent obstacles he had planned? Could he think of an interesting consequence or complication that would result from a failed wise test?

If the answer to either of those questions was "No," he would have just given Thor the answer: "The first dragons were born from the sparks that flew off when the world was forged upon the anvil of the Void. It's a common legend that everyone in these parts knows."

If the answer to either of those questions was "Yes," Anthony would have called for a test. He might even have fished for more details: "Do you want the common legend that is told around hearths on stormy nights? That's Ob 2. Or do you want the story the dragons believe? That's Ob 8.

But what if Anthony hadn't considered the origin of dragons in the game? In that case, he would need a little more information about what Thor was looking for and why. For instance, Thor might tell him he wanted information about where dragons came from so we could go there and hopefully pick up the trail of this particular dragon. Thor might have even suggested they came from a particular remote island known for its monstrous inhabitants—an isle known as Strach.

At that point, Anthony would have had to consider more questions: Does the player's contribution contradict something previously established in the game? Would having the answer allow Thor to circumvent obstacles Anthony had planned? Could he think of an interesting consequence or complication that would result from a failed Wise test?

If the answer to any of the questions was "No," Anthony could have said yes and gone with Thor's suggestion. "Sure, they come from Strach."

If the answer to the first question was "Yes," Anthony would have denied Thor. "You've already been to Strach and there wasn't any evidence of dragons there. Plenty of other big lizards, but not dragons."

If the answer to the latter two questions was "Yes," then Anthony would have considered Thor's contribution and set an obstacle.





In our game, what actually happened is that Anthony had not considered the origin of dragons at first, but he'd been rolling it around in his head as we played and the campaign developed. When I asked the question, he had an idea in mind: "Remember when you were searching for the Lost City of Panax and you fought your way to the Chronicle of Ages in the Hall of the Allfathers to do some research? You recall there was a section dedicated to dragons that you didn't have time to investigate."

And so Thor had to wait for another opportunity to test Dragon-wise. And it would be a bit more time before he learned the awful truth: Dragons are born when a Dwarf advances his Greed to exponent 10.

Information as Setting

It is primarily the GM's job to fill in details setting through play. Most of those important details should be shared with the players in the course of play, as per Roll the Dice or Say Yes. If a detail is essential to helping a player engage with the situation for the game session, just go ahead and share it!

If the session's situation depends upon the players knowing that the prince just murdered the chatelaine in cold blood, then tell the players. After all, everyone's talking about it! The chatelaine's son has demanded a judicial duel, and the prince's uncle—the new king—has agreed!

But if the players hunger more detail and want to draw out more information that will provide a more nuanced understanding of the situation, then a wise is just what the doctor ordered.



Why is the king siding with the chatelaine's son against his own kin? Court Gossip-wise. What are the rules for judicial duels? Trial by Combat-wise. Do any other kingdoms stand to gain from this turmoil? Politics-wise.

The answer to each of those questions, whether the test is successful or failed, has the potential to spin the game in a new direction.

Establishing Setting as a Player

In addition to eliciting more information from the GM, wises are a key way for the players to put their own stamp on the setting. This is implicit in the core Burning Wheel rules but perhaps not quite as apparent as it should be.





Wises, Intent and Task

Like all other skills in the game, wises must be considered in the context of Intent and Task, as well as Roll the Dice or Say Yes. The player states his intent—what he hopes to accomplish—and also his task—the description of how the character goes about achieving that intent. In many cases, the player's intent for a wise matches up with what the GM has in mind for the Big Picture, the setting or the session's situation.

For instance, in the situation described above, the player might declare that his intent is to determine whether any other kingdoms stand to gain from the turmoil at court. He wants to use his familiarity with the court's affairs (the character grew up with the prince) in the form of Politics-wise.

In this case, the GM should already have a pretty firm grasp of the details, as they connect directly to his situation. If the GM does have foreign affairs in mind, he should call for an Ob 1 test, as a list of the country's closest enemies should be common knowledge to anyone with Politics-wise. If the GM knows that no foreign powers stand to gain from the situation, he should just Say Yes and tell the player that no foreign mischief is afoot, to keep everyone focused on the situation at hand.

Sometimes your players will attack a situation from an oblique angle. They'll use wises you never expected to hunt for details you never anticipated. For instance, one of the players has the Poisons skill (not a wise) and is searching for a way to use it to affect the coming duel. He tells the GM that his intent is to determine whether it is customary for the king to offer a cup of wine to each combatant before the duel begins. He fought in a number of duels himself when he was a younger man, and he wants to use Trial by Combat-wise as his task.

In this case, the GM had never considered such a custom before. He doesn't know if this court follows that tradition or not, but the existence of such a custom wouldn't contradict or invalidate the situation he's presented. It's important to keep in mind that the GM's goal is to ensure the players address the situation in some fashion. If they come up with an interesting or novel way to do so, that's fine. The GM then asks the player for more information: Why does the player want to know about this custom? The player explains that he wants to know because it would create an opportunity to attempt to poison one of the combatants. Ah! That presents some very compelling potential complications! The GM tells the player that it will be an Ob 2 Trial





by Combat-wise test for an interesting fact. A character would need to have some passing familiarity with judicial duels to know something like that. And if the player succeeds in the test, then the custom really does exist and the player will have added a new bit of detail about the ceremony surrounding a judicial duel in that court.

The accumulation of such details over time and the richness they bring to a setting are part of what make wises so special. And it's important to note that the facts established with wises in this way need not be minor. For instance, in your setting two nearby barons have been warring with each other for years and their neighbors and allies are being drawn into it as well. Their battles form a backdrop at this point—the real action is elsewhere and the GM hasn't dedicated any thought as to why the two are at each other's throats. Nonetheless you might see an opportunity to use your Feud-wise to establish the cause of their enmity. That test could have far-reaching consequences. Wises allow the GM to paint the setting with broad strokes, knowing that he can either fill in the details later, or allow the players to add the details that interest them through a test.

The players and the GM should take note when such facts are added to the game. They now constitute a true and established part of the world. Record these facts in the same notebook you use for Duel of Wits compromises and other setting details.



Wises and Let It Ride

Recording these details helps ensure that you can recall them when necessary, but just as important, it ensures that the group doesn't contradict itself down the road.

Pete: "I am going to find a secret entrance into the Citadel of the Unconquered Sun."

Thor (as GM): "No way. We already established that this keep is the strongest in the entire kingdom. You failed that Citadel-wise test way back at the start of the campaign. If you want to get in, you are going to have to use diplomacy, trickery, battle or start scaling the walls."

Established information, whether introduced through GM description or via player use of wises, holds a privileged position in Burning Wheel. Once a fact has been established, it stands until the players change it through their actions or until a new situation introduced by the GM changes it.





For example, once it's established that the Citadel of the Unconquered Sun has no secret entrances and the only means of ingress is the front gate, that remains true until the players dig their own tunnel or the GM introduces a situation in which a foreign army lays siege to the place and sends in sappers.

An astute reader will notice that I'm simply restating Let It Ride here.

Wises and Failure

Wises are no different than other abilities in Burning Wheel when it comes to failure. For a GM, it's not enough that a player have an appropriate intent and task. Before you allow the player to proceed with testing a wise, consider the consequences of failure. If you can't think of an appropriate complication or twist, and there are no other contravening facts in play, don't test. Say Yes and move on.

That said, there are always complications and twists to be had.

Are the players using Family Secrets-wise to determine that the duchess is having an affair so they can blackmail her? Well, it's true that she had an affair, but her paramour happens to be a powerful crime lord with all sorts of resources at his disposal to make the characters' lives a hell.

Citadel-wise to determine the location of a secret entrance? Oh, it's there, but the defenders know all about it. It's guarded and well trapped.

Trial by Combat-wise to establish a wine-sharing ceremony beforehand so you can poison someone? The combatants drink from each other's cups, as does the king.

A good failure doesn't lead to a brick wall. It requires the players to make new and interesting choices.



Etiquette of Wises

As you can see, wises accomplish two different goals. On the one hand, they are a method for eliciting more information from the GM. On the other hand, they give players the power to establish facts in the game.



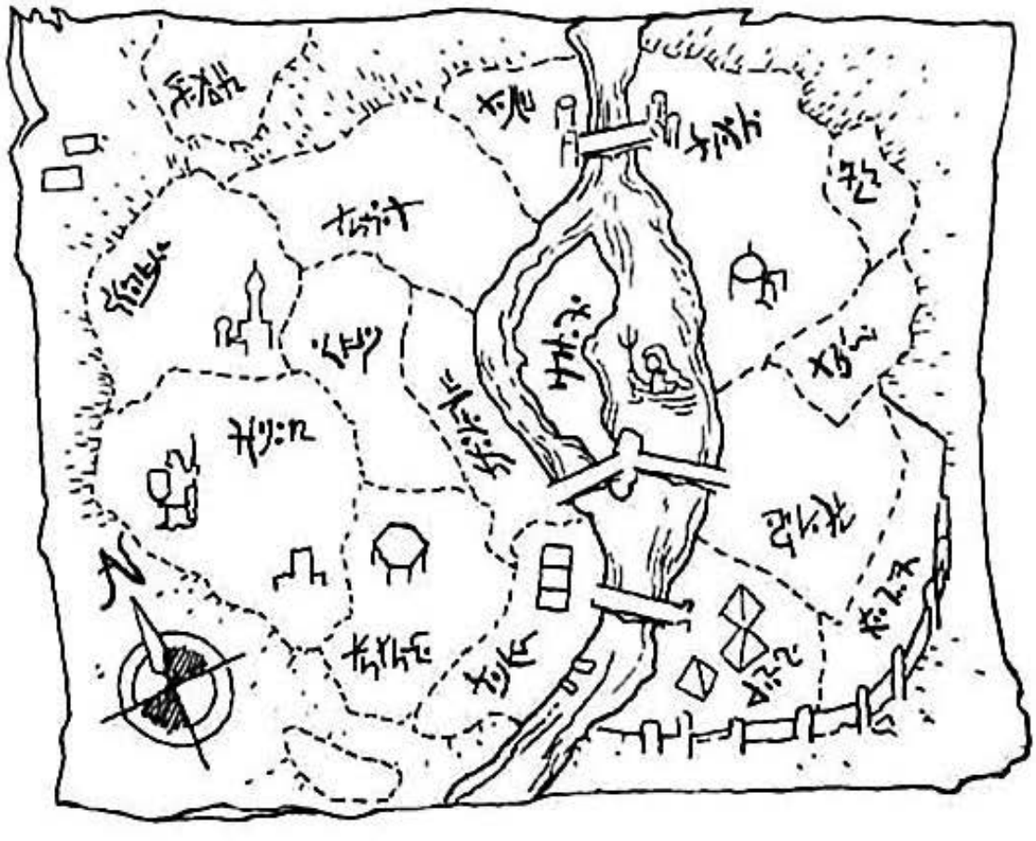
Navigating those two abilities requires a bit of etiquette. It's not polite to demand your GM establish facts as true without first asking if it contradicts what was has planned for the Big Picture, the setting or the situation. Nor should the GM allow the player to do so.

For example, a player has a character with Illness-wise. He wants to use it to establish that everyone he meets has a terminal illness. This is potentially abusive, especially if used upon other players' characters without their consent. What's a GM to do? Use the Say Yes or Roll Dice rule. "Your intent is to determine whether he has a terminal illness or not? No need to test. He doesn't."

As the GM, don't step on players' ideas for using wises out of hand. If you don't have a legitimate reason to prevent the test and the player isn't simply test mongering, allow the player the freedom to add to the setting.

Wises Are Contextual

Roleplaying games are all about context, and Burning Wheel is no exception. By context we mean the details that help us to care about the situation and the way our characters overcome obstacles.





For instance, let's say the situation is that a small band of thieves has just stolen the holy artifacts from the temple of their neighbors. That's interesting on its face, but what's the context? In our game, the neighboring people were making war on and enslaving the thieves' people. In your game, the thieves needed the artifact for a despicable rite. The context casts the situation in a very particular light.

Context is where wises shine. The right wise could tell us about the artifacts and their purpose, or a wise could provide details about the planned rite such as other necessary components or a specific time or location.

But it is important to note that not all wises are equal. Village of Hochen-wise is very different from Village-wise. Village-wise will give you information on villages in general: how they tend to be organized, how their economies work, basic layout, etc. Village of Hochen-wise, on the other hand, will give you much more specific information: who the wójt is, who the lord is, who the most disliked man in the village is and which fields are being left fallow this season.

Broad wises like Village-wise can be useful because they are so widely applicable. A player can probably find a use for his character's Village-wise in any village he happens to pass through. However, it will be difficult to use it for specific details of a particular place. Very specific wises, like Village of Hochen-wise, only apply in certain scenarios but can provide a deep level of detail in those situations. For instance, determining that Martin Ralya is the wójt of Hochen is an Ob 1 test for Village of Hochen-wise. It's common knowledge! But it might be Ob 8—freaky details or specifics—for Village-wise. You might know about villages, but that doesn't mean you know intimate details about this particular one.



Village-wise Example Obstacles

- *The difference between a village and a hamlet, Ob 1*
- *The typical governing body for a village in this province, Ob 2*
- *The composition of the buildings in villages in this area Ob 3*
- *A big holiday that villages in this province all celebrate, Ob 4*
- *Judging by the crops, can I tell what this village's specialty dish is? Ob 5.*



Village of Hochen-wise Example Obstacles

Village of Hochen-wise:

- *Who's the chief of Hochen? Ob 1*
- *What does Hochen produce? Ob 1*
- *Which lord lays claim to Hochen? Ob 2*
- *Where do I find a priest in Hochen? Ob 3*
- *Why is Hochen in such a shambles? Ob 4*
- *Are there any bandit groups that frequent the areas around Hochen? Ob 5*
- *Does Hochen have a history of occultism? Ob 7.*

Nooks and Crannies

Wises are a way for players to comment on the lifepaths their characters have taken. A knight who has Bandit-wise and Ambush-wise has led a different life than a knight who has Court Gossip-wise and Lady-wise. Wises show where the character has been and what they have studied closely or learned from their travels.

They can also make a competent character into an outright brutal killing machine through the use of FoRKs and helping dice. An Orc with Elf Armor-wise is a frightening enemy. able to call on an extra die when confronted with an Elf or aid his fellow Orcs with a well-placed helping die: "Elven helms have a weak point above the nose. Aim high, goblin."



Learning Wises

Wises aren't just the province of Character Burning. Learning wises through play can be incredibly rewarding. Both Practice/Instruction and Beginner's Luck are viable ways to learn wises through play. You aren't limited to the wises listed in the lifepaths. You may create your own, as long as the GM agrees it is legitimate.

Wises learned through play can become skill-based artifacts that shine on the character sheet. The player of the Orc who has acquired Dwarf-wise and Dragon-wise while dealing with the war between the Dwarven kings and the dragon: Spider-wise while slaying the spider goddess: and Elf-wise while dodging Elven patrols in the western forests has



hard-won and tangible evidence on his character sheet, showing where the character has been and a way for the dice to represent what he has learned.

Wises and Beginner's Luck

Players can make wises tests with Beginner's Luck just like other skills. Unskilled use of a wise is subject to a double-obstacle penalty as per the standard unskilled rules.

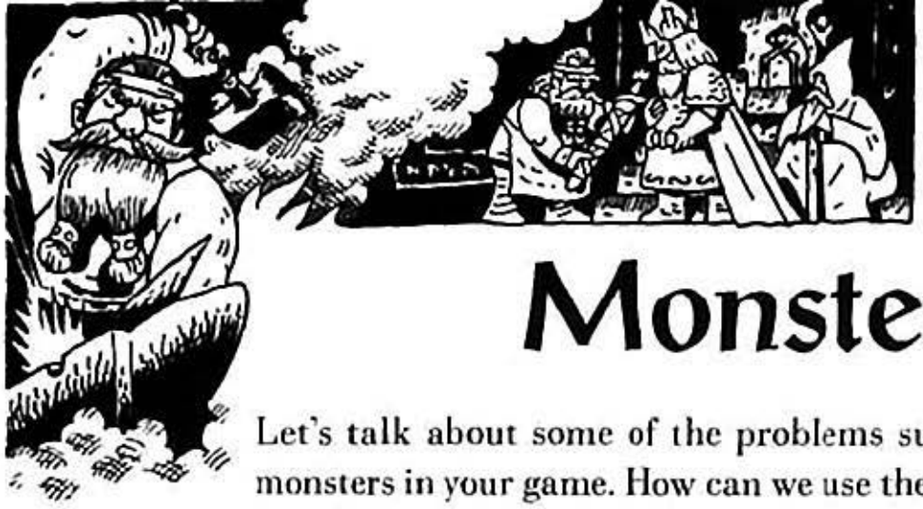
When a player wants to make an unskilled wise test, as the GM you must consider it thoughtfully. First, is it test mongering? If the player is simply testing to open a wise, don't allow the player to test. It's fine that the player is gunning for a test, but he must supply a game-appropriate reason to do so. Furthermore, he must provide a bit of color as to how he came by this knowledge. It's not enough to say that you want to test Trial by Combat-wise to establish the custom for the king to offer duelists a goblet of wine before a judicial duel. You should add, "I know this because I was a hothead in my youth and fought a lot of duels." Remember, wises don't just define the world—they also define your character.

As with other wise tests, when making a Beginner's Luck wise test, the GM needs to balance the equation with a juicy complication or twist that results from a failure. If you can't think of an interesting consequence for failing a Beginner's Luck wise test—or a previously established fact—you should Say Yes and move on.









Monsters

Let's talk about some of the problems surrounding the use of monsters in your game. How can we use them more efficiently and keep them alive long enough to make an impact?



Using Monsters

I find that we fantasy GMs have a tendency to place Big Bads at the end of a story—ye olde boss fight.

We've learned that in Burning Wheel, those single monsters, unless overwhelmingly powerful, will crumble against the onslaught of skills, help and artha that the players pour on. Whether in Range and Cover, Duel of Wits or a Fight, more often than not a group of PCs will conquer any single opponent. Let us GMs pause and have a moment of silence for all our villains lost to a single, abrupt blast of white fire.

Ahem.

Our collective job as GMs is to challenge the players, right? Well, what must we do to have our Big Bads and eat the players too? We must stoop to a little prep work. We must, before placing a powerful villain into the game, consider how it can best challenge the group.

Fighting Monsters

A single monster is going to fall to a rain of blows unless it is either heavily armored or has a mortal wound higher than the characters' weapons shade—usually gray or white.

If you want a big fight against a single creature, try using armored creatures like Trolls, Formians or even B'hemahs. If your group is up for it, you can use gray- or white-shade creatures, but make sure your group has a chance to defend against their attacks. Otherwise, you'll wipe them out—and that's not fun.

If you want to fight with a monster who isn't so heavily armored—an Orc, a great eagle, a great spider or a martikhora, for example—you can try two tactics. One, you can fight smart: Fight from an ambush; hit and run; or stay out of direct battle.



Or you can give the monster help. Look at your group of characters. Build a suite of monsters that will challenge each of them. I'm not saying to unleash six great eagles or five martikhora. But maybe one lead beastie and then some lesser willing thralls who can add to the mix.

Arguing With Monsters

Unless your monster is a master of intrigue and rhetoric, refuse the Duel of Wits! Attack (or run; monsters know no pride)!

If that's not the right path, how do you prevent the players from ganging up on you in a Duel of Wits and wiping you out before you get even a teeny compromise? You need to plan ahead. Try to corner your target character alone. If you can't do that, try to manipulate the group before the Duel of Wits so that some sympathize with your side—so that they'll give you help during the conflict.

It's lame if the group gangs up on and shouts down every opponent they face. If you send a Troll Warlord against them, for example, refuse to talk to anyone but their leader. The lesser worms can't speak in the presence of such greatness. It's unheard of in the Legion!





Shooting at Monsters

Some monsters can be effective in Range and Cover, but some monsters are helpless in such a conflict.

You should gauge the strengths of your adversaries before pitting your monsters against them. Opposing a troop of Elves with a handful of rock-throwing yeti is going to end badly for the yeti. The Elves have range and killing power with their bows.

But one of the most deadly, effective monsters I ever played was a bow-armed flying monkey. I threw a pack of them at a group of Elves. It was a narrow thing for them. They barely survived.

If your monsters aren't suited for a running fight through the forest, don't set up that situation. When framing the action, establish the environment to your monster's advantage. Why? Because you want to challenge the players. It's boring if they just shoot down everything they come across. So ambush them and force them to withdraw or fight at close quarters, or simply don't offer battle unless the players force it.

Monsters and Magic

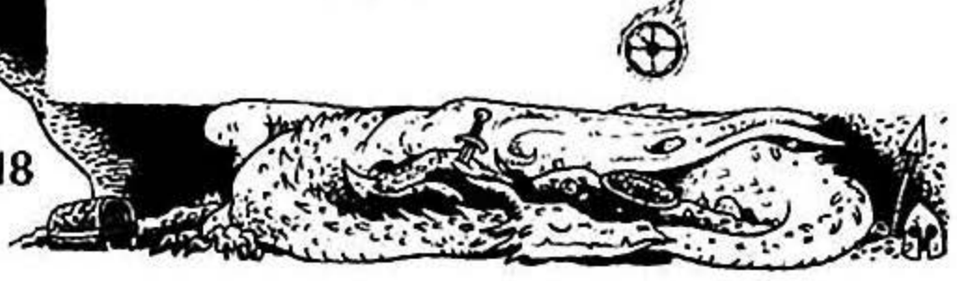
Many monsters are vulnerable to magic. There's not much to be done about it unless you bring in your own sorcerer to counter the characters' magic. You can protect your Big Bads with Eldritch Shield if they have a friend who's a sorcerer! If your players are carving through your monsters with magic, you're obligated to use such tricks to provide a challenge.

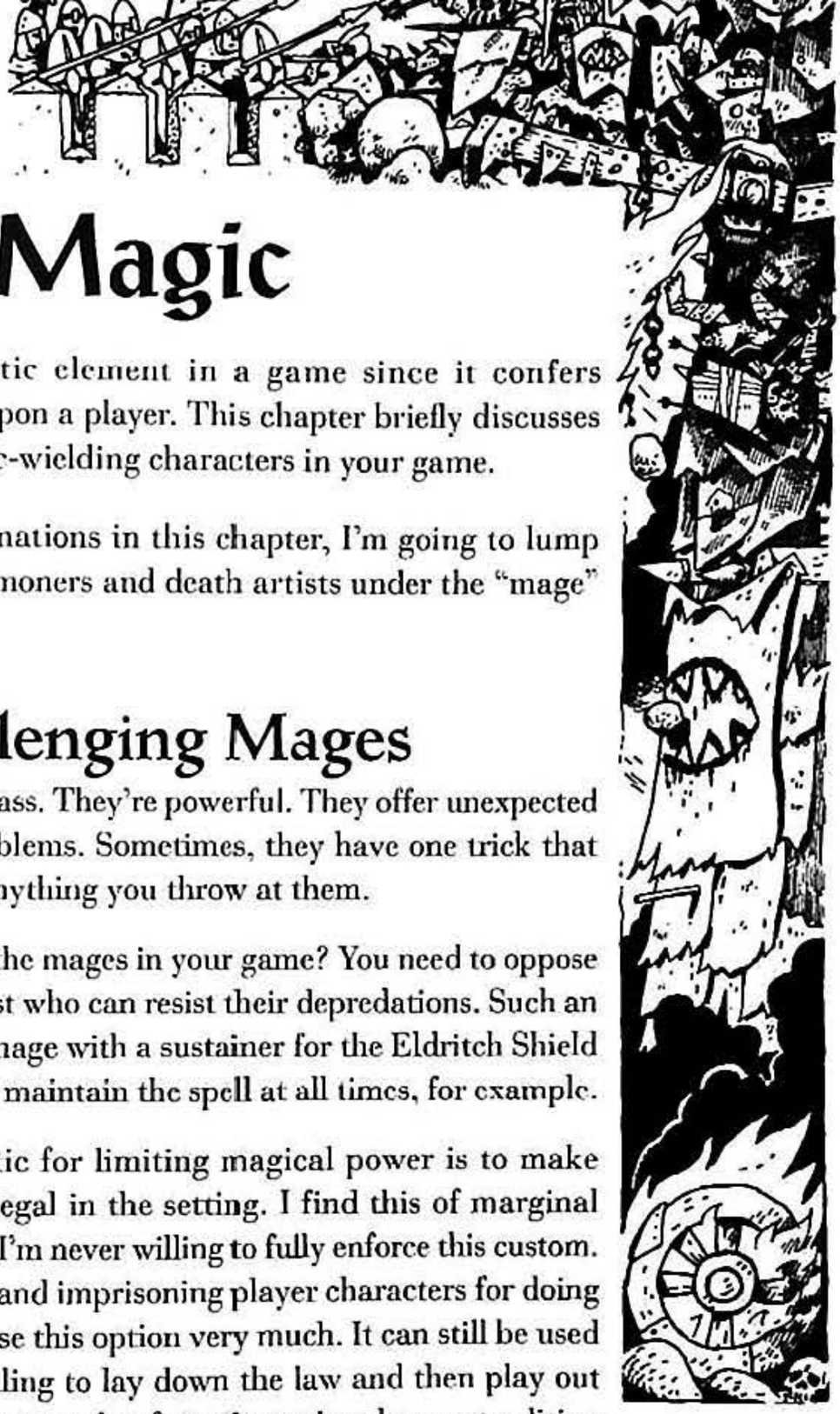


You can also plan ahead and give your monsters protection in the form of enchanted items like the Jade Amulet. That said, whatever you give your monsters will likely end up in the hands of the players. You can assign anti-magic traits to your monsters.

These tweaks are good for stiff challenges, but not good as a regular habit. Too much of it gimps your mage players.

Finally, you can just straight-up target the mages and priests. Take their asses out. Use clever tactics, henchmonsters and dirty tricks. Hit them hard and fast. Use attacks that will make them hesitate. Be unconventional—the Troll Warlord will bounce off the mage's Turn Aside the Blade spell, but monstrous commander can easily knock him over with a well-timed Push, thus interrupting the spell. Your players will sweat it, but when they're ultimately triumphant, they'll thank you for the thrilling fight.





Magic

Magic is a problematic element in a game since it confers extraordinary power upon a player. This chapter briefly discusses how to challenge magic-wielding characters in your game.

To facilitate the explanations in this chapter, I'm going to lump priests, sorcerers, summoners and death artists under the "mage" category.

Challenging Mages

Mages are a pain in the ass. They're powerful. They offer unexpected solutions to lots of problems. Sometimes, they have one trick that they milk to get past anything you throw at them.

How do you challenge the mages in your game? You need to oppose them with an antagonist who can resist their depredations. Such an antagonist could be a mage with a sustainer for the Eldritch Shield spell and an Instinct to maintain the spell at all times, for example.

Another common tactic for limiting magical power is to make magic forbidden or illegal in the setting. I find this of marginal effectiveness. As a GM, I'm never willing to fully enforce this custom. I feel terrible arresting and imprisoning player characters for doing their thing, so I don't use this option very much. It can still be used effectively if you're willing to lay down the law and then play out the ramifications. The struggle of magic against law or tradition could make for a good game, but then that's what the game is going to be about.

Magic Against Obstacles

Set up obstacles that can't be solved with a single spell. For example, pit multiple opponents against a powerful mage or set up observers to interfere with a sneaky mage.

Create encounters that play against the mage's weaknesses. If you're challenging a summoner, press him for time. Don't give him breathing room to draw his circles and call forth powerful allies. If you're dealing with a mage with white fire bolts, use Orcs with crossbows to outrange him and pepper him and his allies with darts.

Make magic inappropriate. In intimate encounters with powerful characters, casting a spell is obvious and perhaps rude or dangerous. When the player inevitably persists with summoning his power before this potentate. stop the action and round on him, "What are you doing? How dare you?!" Make an issue of it. It'll make the setting seem richer, more believable.

Finally, beat up your mages. In fights, attack them with force and vigor. Don't give them a chance to sit back and leisurely cast their spells. Gun for them. Try to hit them so that you interrupt their spells and rituals. They're clearly powerful. It only makes sense that their enemies take them seriously.

I like to build up pressure against them. As a mage's reputation increases, I turn the attention onto him more and more. I make him work for his power. And if he backs off the fire-spewing madness. so much the better.

In a social setting, treat the mage with skepticism and caution. Don't gloss over the fact that he is a powerful freak who treats with demons. He can't be trusted. Let your villains refuse to engage in disadvantageous Duels of Wits. Cite mistrust and superstition as your reasons.

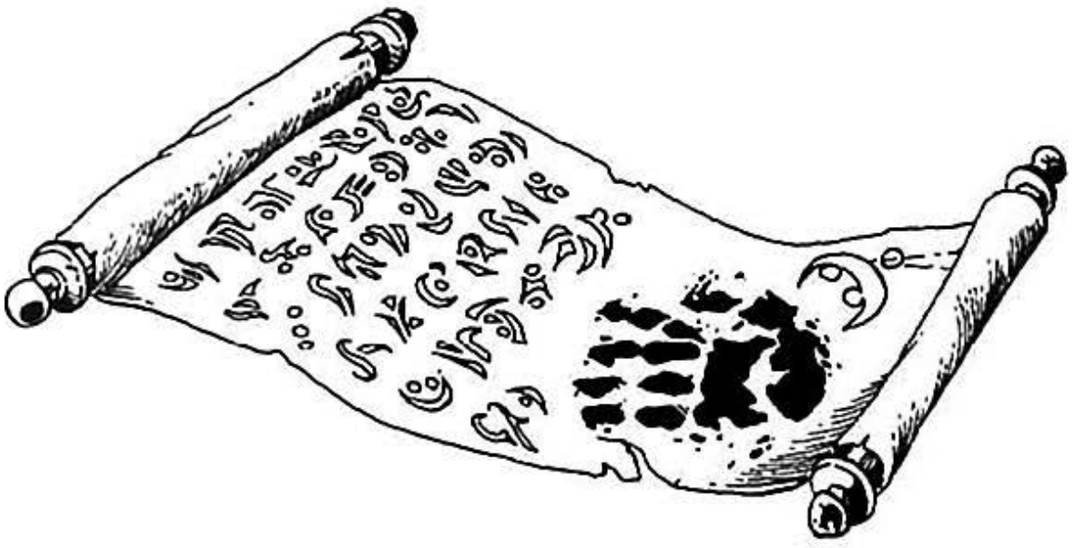
If a mage is known for abusing his power, it makes perfect sense for leaders to exclude him from their dealings. It follows that power-hungry souls will seek out mages and bargain with them. Use Duel of Wits compromises to shape and focus the mage's power. An excellent minor compromise against a mage is "Of course, I'll do as you ask because I know you'll never use your powers against me." Such a small thing to ask, but it makes the compromised character incredibly dangerous to the mage.



The Victimized Mage

In my games, when I introduce challenges directed against magery, I sometimes see a strange phenomenon emerge. The mage player feels victimized. He claims he's being unfairly singled out. My incredibly healthy and productive tripartite response is to roll my eyes, laugh and tell him to get over it.

Perhaps a better response is to remind the mage player that it is your job to challenge him and that you're doing the best you can. If you're making him sweat, then it sounds like you're on the right track. Maybe even ask him for some ideas on how to better challenge him. Give him a little rope and he just might help you fix the noose.



Squishy Faith

Faith is a powerful, versatile ability with one very squishy requirement attached to it—the player must say a prayer. If any rule is abused in Burning Wheel, it's this one. Characters with the Faithful trait either grandstand during a single Fight volley, or they rapidly mutter, "Rubadubdub, thanksforthegrub," and toss the dice before we can all protest.

Faith rules are subject to the intent and task paradigm of the system. The prayer or invocation of the player forms the prime part of the task. And, as we've discussed in this book, the task must be appropriate to the intent. The player must offer an invocation appropriate to the moment and his idiom. If he doesn't, the GM can and should inform him that his task is inappropriate to his intent and stop the Faith dice before they hit the table.

Happy Helping Faith

Helping Faith with Faith is also another very squishy, oft-abused area of the rules. According to the letter of the help rules, Faith can help Faith any old time, right? So gather a pile of priests and pray up some major miracles!

What's a valid way to limit help among the Faithful? In our games, priests from different religions may not help one another unless they pass a Ritual skill test. It's a small restriction, but one that's added a lot of depth to our religion-heavy games. There are some basic obstacles listed with the skill. Extrapolate advantage and disadvantage from there based on how close or far the ritual is from the faithful's core religious beliefs.



We also encourage you to make the truly Faithful rare in your world. If a player tries to use Circles to bring the Faithful into play, impose the +3 Ob Specific Disposition modifier.

Faith in Fight

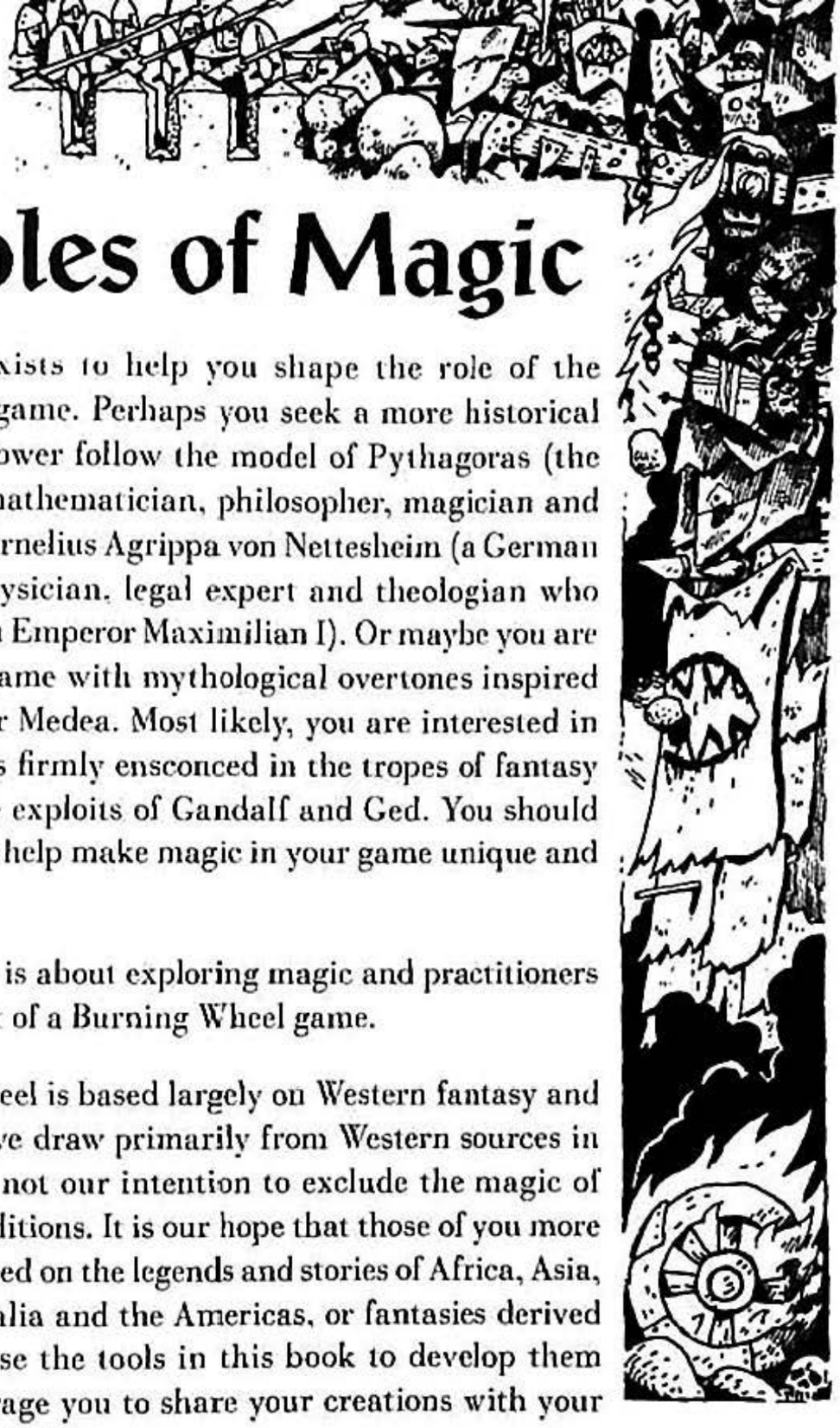
How quickly can you pray? According to the rules, you can pray and fight. We love to see battle priests bashing heads while they invoke divine might. How often can you pray? Each prayer must be a complete idea spoken, sung or invoked in the proper idiom. The spoken prayer is part of the task of this test! If the task doesn't correspond to the intent, disallow the test. Since only a few words can be spoken in each volley, most prayers should take two volleys. More elaborate prayers can take three to six volleys.

Most successful prayer effects ride for the duration of a conflict. If a particular prayer is failed, invoke Let It Ride for the remainder of the conflict.

Prayer in Duel of Wits

Instead of using a Duel of Wits action, faithful characters may use prayers. Most prayers only take one volley in the Duel of Wits. Perhaps crazy stuff like a Major Miracle will take longer. While praying, you may not attack or defend or perform any other action. You are completely vulnerable. Your prayer takes effect on the volley after its successful completion.





The Roles of Magic

The Magic Burner exists to help you shape the role of the supernatural in your game. Perhaps you seek a more historical game where men of power follow the model of Pythagoras (the famed Ionian Greek mathematician, philosopher, magician and mystic) or Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (a German magician, scholar, physician, legal expert and theologian who served the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I). Or maybe you are more interested in a game with mythological overtones inspired by the likes of Odin or Medea. Most likely, you are interested in a game where magic is firmly ensconced in the tropes of fantasy fiction inspired by the exploits of Gandalf and Ged. You should find something here to help make magic in your game unique and exciting.

Specifically, this essay is about exploring magic and practitioners of magic in the context of a Burning Wheel game.

Standard Burning Wheel is based largely on Western fantasy and history, and as such, we draw primarily from Western sources in this supplement. It is not our intention to exclude the magic of other cultures and traditions. It is our hope that those of you more interested in magic based on the legends and stories of Africa, Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia and the Americas, or fantasies derived from these sources, use the tools in this book to develop them yourselves. We encourage you to share your creations with your fellow players at our website.

Further, because we are speaking of Burning Wheel, it should be clear that all magic consists of choices and consequences. Power exacts a great price, both from the person that wields it and from the world itself. But despite the cosmic powers involved, both the choices and the consequences will be fundamentally human in nature, driven by Belief and Instinct.

To this end, we should be clear that while magical powers hold a degree of novelty in themselves, our conceit is that the decision to use power or not, how to apply it and the price to be paid for it is far more interesting than the actual power itself. The best stories of magic are about the choices its use presents.

Finally, it is worth noting that the magic in this book is heavily flavored by the source material we used for inspiration. At Burning Wheel Headquarters, our pole star for matters magical is Ursula K. Le Guin and her stories of Earthsea. It is no coincidence that we return to her stories again and again to illustrate our points. Stephen R. Donaldson's stories of Thomas Covenant are another powerful inspiration, and it should come as no surprise that J. R. R. Tolkien's stories helped to guide us as well. Norse and Greek mythology also play an important role in our thinking, and we have drawn from them heavily.

Magical Magic

Magic is a supernatural power that defies the natural order. It is a force that controls both man and nature. Magic has laws that govern its working, though they are often alien from the laws that describe the working of the natural world. In many cases, only another application of magic or faith is sufficient to guard against it or break its power.

In historical or mythological conceptions of magic, it is generally a power granted by the gods or spirits of some kind.



Such magic is usually innate in the case of gods (though some, like Odin, must quest or sacrifice for deeper secrets). For men, visions and callings are a common way to discover power, from Moses and the burning bush to the Oglala Lakota medicine man, Black Elk, who received his vision at a young age during an intense, life-threatening fever. Humans, in general, invoke the power—the power does not belong to the humans themselves.

In Western fantastic literature, wizards and witches generally keep the quasi-scientific trappings of the Renaissance- or Enlightenment-era magus. The historical and religious overtones of such magic are usually left behind (a great many Renaissance magicians were monks, like Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella or Abbot Johannes Trithemius).





Practioners of magic usually tap their power through esoteric formulae and incantations. Often—but not always—the one who seeks to control such powers must have been born with a special gift. Others, like Pan Twardowski (a sorcerer from Polish folklore) or Dr. Faust (of German legend and literature), gain access to their powers by bargaining with the Devil.

Archetypes in Magical Fiction

There are three important terms we use in this essay that bear definition: the other, the mistake and the forbidden place. These are three archetypes that appear in fantastic fiction. Let's look at them before we delve too deeply into the roles of magic.

The Other

The other is a person who, although acknowledged by a community, is considered outside it. Wizards stand apart as others because they are different; they wield a power that regular people neither have nor understand, and their names are written in the book of destiny. Communities either fear a wizard's power, revere that power or both.

The Mistake

The mistake is a terrible error committed by a young wizard in hubris or ignorance. The error has far-reaching consequences that threaten doom to the wizard, his loved ones and often the world itself.

The Forbidden Place

The forbidden place appears in story after story. It is a place that the community considers taboo. It appears in many guises: a cave, a haunted forest, a lost temple, a deep mine, a tomb, a labyrinth or even the land of the dead. The forbidden place is fraught with terrible danger. Perhaps most dangerously of all, the forbidden place forces the wizard to examine himself, to face who and what he is.



Sorcerer and the Community

Sorcerers and wizards always exist in relation to a community, whether they are its protector, its outcast or its terrifying adversary. The stories of sorcerous heroes often begin with a pressing need within a community. The community will be threatened, whether by natural disaster, conquest or even more insidious perils, like the weakening of the barrier that separates the living from the dead.



As one who stands apart, the sorcerer is in a unique position to answer the community's need, for he is able to see in ways the community cannot. Further, he has, or can find, the power to act on what he sees.

If the community recognizes its need and reverses sorcery, or at least accepts it, community may view the sorcerer as a savior. Prophecy may identify him as anointed for the role.

Ramon Alonzo, the hero of Lord Dunsany's 1926 fantasy novel *The Charwoman's Shadow*, is a prime example. His father is the Lord of the Tower and Rocky Forest, but the family has fallen on hard times and has no money for the dowry of Ramon's sister, Mirandola. Ramon is sent to study with a nearby magician so as to learn how to turn dross into gold and thus supply his sister's dowry. In this story, the community is small, consisting only of Ramon's family. This is believable because the story remains relentlessly focused on the personal level, even though Ramon's actions ultimately affect all of Spain and one long-suffering charwoman.

Calen Bradwarden provides another example in the film *Dragonslayer*. Calen's community is the whole of the kingdom of Urland. He steps into the role of savior by summoning his master from the dead with an incantation so that he may confront the dreaded dragon Vermithrax Pejorative.



Thomas Covenant, of Stephen R. Donaldson's *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*, is the quintessential antihero. He shows another side of this type of wizard. The White-Gold Wielder, and supposed reincarnation of a great hero of the Land, is recognized as a savior by almost everyone in that place except for himself. He is sent forth in accord with prophecy to use his wild magic to thwart the machinations of the dreaded Lord Foul.

Other times, the need is only hinted at in prophecy, and only a select few recognize the portents. Heroes in such stories are often underestimated and even scorned, for the community does not see its need. Yet when trouble strikes and only a man or woman of power has the ability to face it, it is fortunate indeed that such a person is nearby to hear the call.

Once the need has been identified, the anointed one must step forward as destiny requires—the living embodiment of the mystical other who possesses the power to cure the incurable.

The Light Side

Whether the source of inspiration is historical, mythological or literary, certain themes recur. Magical heroes generally take one of four roles: the Adept, the Bringer of Fire, the Maker or the Oracle. Sometimes a hero is purely one type, while some heroes blend them.

Our examples are far from exhaustive. We've pared them down to our favorites and encourage you to reflect on yours. In some cases, we've left out the most obvious examples because, well, they're very obvious.

The Adept

"Ged, listen to me now. Have you never thought how danger must surround power as shadow does light? This sorcery is not a game we play for pleasure or praise. Think of this: that every word, every act of our Art is said and is done either for good, or for evil. Before you speak or do you must know the price that is to pay!"

—Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*

The Adept is a young wizard or sorceress, flush with power—often beyond that of magical peers—but lacking the wisdom and experience to understand the deeper ramifications of his actions.

The story of the Adept is one of power, error and redemption. The need to redeem himself, to fix an error, is what separates the Adept from the other roles.

The Adept is powerful, but he is also innocent, naïve and vulnerable. In his arrogance or ignorance, the Adept uses his magic to play with powers he does not yet understand and breaks a fundamental law or rule that is beyond his mastery. Often, repeated warnings against the danger of his chosen path go unheeded. The core question of his story is whether he will earn the wisdom to redeem his mistake (and thereby to practice his art as a master), or succumb to corruption and be enveloped by it.

The mistakes of wizards are not small. They threaten the world, a community or a soul, often all three. The Adept—vulnerable and corruptible—must go forth as a savior on a quest to undo what he has wrought.

Such quests generally have three stages, as follows:







First, the Adept must recognize the extent of his mistake and that only he has the ability to fix it. He cannot run from his mistake, nor can a mentor or Oracle resolve it for him.

Second, the Adept must accept that the mistake was the result of a flaw in himself. Outside forces may have played a role in bringing him to his mistake, but he alone is ultimately responsible for his fate.

Finally, the Adept must confront his mistake, usually in a lost or forbidden place, and pay a price (which could be anything from humility to death) to redeem it.

Ged defines the role of the Adept in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, when his arrogance and envy lead him to attempt to summon the dead. Instead, he brings forth a monstrous shadow and must undertake a long and harrowing quest beyond the edge of the world to master both it and himself. Only by vanquishing his pride, learning humility, and accepting the dark things within himself as part of his being, is he able to overcome the shadow that he summoned.

Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever is another Adept. In *Lord Foul's Bane*, his disregard leads him to commit an unforgivable crime that he must struggle to redeem. Somewhat uniquely for an Adept, Thomas Covenant's mistake is not tied to misuse of magical power, but rather to a refusal to acknowledge the world around him and his role in it. Only by accepting the world and his place in it can he draw on the wild and unpredictable magic of his ring to defeat Lord Foul.

John Constantine, too, is an embodiment of the Adept. As a young man, Constantine thought he had the wisdom and power to end a demonic possession. Instead, he damned a little girl's soul and doomed himself and the friends who participated in the ritual. The comic *Hellblazer* is a



long and winding chronicle of his doomed effort to live with his mistake and his addiction to walking the razor's edge between the role of the Adept and the role of the Dark Disciple.

The Bringer of Fire

Prometheus was one of the Titans, a gigantic race, who inhabited the earth before the creation of man. To him and his brother Epimetheus was committed the office of making man, and providing him and all other animals with the faculties necessary for their preservation. Epimetheus undertook to do this, and Prometheus was to overlook his work, when it was done. Epimetheus accordingly proceeded to bestow upon the different animals the various gifts of courage, strength, swiftness, sagacity; wings to one, claws to another, a shelly covering to a third, etc. But when man came to be provided for, who was to be superior to all other animals, Epimetheus had been so prodigal of his resources that he had nothing left to bestow upon him. In his perplexity he resorted to his brother Prometheus, who, with the aid of Minerva, went up to heaven, and lighted his torch at the chariot of the sun and brought down fire to man. With this gift man was more than a match for all other animals. It enabled him to make weapons wherewith to subdue them; tools with which to cultivate the earth; to warm his dwelling, so as to be comparatively independent of climate; and finally to introduce the arts and to coin money, the means of trade and commerce.

—Thomas Bullfinch, *The Age of Fable*



The Bringer of Fire is one who recreates the feat of Prometheus by journeying to lost or forbidden places, to bring forth salvation for the people. It should be noted that this represents two distinct arcs for the Bringer of Fire—the journey to that forbidden place and the return to society with his fire.

Fire represents many things. It is the force of creation, and also destruction. It is a source of protection, and also terror. It transforms, consumes and purifies. It represents technology and man's ability to tame nature, but also nature's ability to reclaim what man has made—civilization and primal forces at once. It allows man to communicate his prayers to the gods in the form of burnt offerings. Fire is magic.

But it comes with a steep price. Man does not steal the power of gods lightly. Ask Crow, who lost his brilliant plumage; or Dr. Frankenstein, who lost everything. A victorious Bringer of Fire will be feted by his people, but the price he pays will forever set him apart.



The Bringer of Fire is both savior and trickster, for power alone is not enough to steal power. Wisdom, cunning, ingenuity and a true heart are required to defeat the challenge of the forbidden place.

The forbidden place can be frighteningly real or sublimely spiritual. The prize can be a physical treasure, eldritch might or lost or forgotten lore.

The Bringer of Fire doesn't always make his journey with the fate of the world at stake. The people can often continue as they are without the Bringer of Fire's intervention, yet he can make their lives better and more meaningful if his quest is successful.

The Bringer of Fire has not erred, as the Adept has. But neither is he perfect. His quest will test and change him. He will have to prove his wisdom, cunning and heart to succeed.

Ged takes on the mantle of the Bringer of Fire when he enters the lightless depths of the Tombs of Atuan and brings forth the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, thus restoring the Bond Rune, the sign of Peace. The ring is a physical treasure, but it also represents forgotten lore. Ged's strength and will are put to the supreme test in the tombs, as he struggles against darkness and the oppressive force of the Nameless powers of the earth. But his true test is discovering Arha, the Eaten One, and kindling the light of her desire for freedom in order to guide her from the belly of the Nameless Ones and allow her to be reborn as Tenar.



Norse mythology gives us yet another example in the form of Odin the Allfather, who takes a more spiritual journey by hanging himself from the World Tree for nine days, a sacrifice to himself, so that he might bring forth the Runes of Power—eldritch might. He learns many things, from spells to stay the weather and extinguish fires to spells for blunting weapons and healing. Odin sacrifices an eye so that he might drink from the Well of Wisdom and so see into the past, present and future. Odin's tests are physical in nature, but also tests of will, requiring the king of the gods to humble himself and suffer for power.

In *Journey to the West*, Tripitaka the monk (also known as Xuanzang) and his disciples become Bringers of Fire when they journey to Vulture Peak in India to bring forth the Buddhist scriptures. Tripitaka's main magical ability is guidance from Buddha himself, though his companions, like Monkey, have flashier abilities, such as transformation or leaping incredibly long distances. Countless evils, both physical and



spiritual, test the companions on their journey along the Silk Road and prove their worthiness to carry the scriptures back to China.



The Maker

In that time were made those things that afterwards were most renowned of all the works of the Elves. For Fëanor, being come to his full might, was filled with a new thought, or it may be that some shadow of foreknowledge came to him of the doom that drew near; and he pondered how the light of the Trees, the glory of the Blessed Realm, might be preserved imperishable. Then he began a long and secret labor, and he summoned all his lore, and his power, and his subtle skills, and at the end of all he made the Silmarils.

—J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*

The Maker is a skilled technician, a craftsman who accepts the gift of fire and tames it so that it becomes a power of creation rather than destruction.



Most frequently it is the product of the Maker's labors that initiates or is the goal of a quest.

Sometimes, this product can lead to more harm than good, as happened with Fëanor and his sons, who became so enamored of his greatest creation that they swore an oath that would lead to great suffering and misery in the world. The stories of such treasures rarely have happy endings.

Other times, the Maker crafts physical treasures of power, like the Finnish god-smith Ilmarinen, who created the mysterious Sampo, a magical artifact that manufactured flour, salt and gold from thin air.

The Maker also exists to mend such treasures, like Elrond Half-Elven taking up the shattered pieces of Narsil—symbolic of the broken kingdom of Arnor and Gondor—and forging them anew as Andúril, the Flame of the West, in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Fellowship of the Ring*.



Rarely, it is the land itself the Maker seeks to mend. Heleth, master of Aihal, who in turn was master to Ged, shows this face of the Maker when he stills the earthquake, mending the fault beneath the Isle of Gont in "The Bones of the Earth."

The Maker's story is primarily one of building and shaping, whether it be an item of power, a destiny, a nation or a person. It requires something broken that a man or woman of power might mend, or a danger that a magician might face by crafting a treasure. The mending is never an easy task, and frequently requires a journey to a forbidden place for the reagents necessary for a making. Invariably, the making requires a sacrifice that is difficult for the magician to bear.

The Oracle

Alas, alas, what misery to be wise
When wisdom profits nothing! This old lore
I had forgotten; else I were not here.

—Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

The Oracle is an advisor and guide, a keeper of secrets and lost lore. His role is to inform, never to act. The Oracle is always a supporting character, great in power but unable to perform the task for which the hero is destined.

Oracles deliver knowledge from unattainable sources—the gods, the future, the past, the dead—and transmit it to the hero so he might continue his quest. Not infrequently, the hero denies the Oracle's wisdom to his misfortune.

The Oracle can appear at the beginning of a tale so that he might commune with the otherworld and relay the hero's destined path—one that is surely filled with misfortune or anguish. But the Oracle can also be a goal of a hero's quest, dwelling in the forbidden place to deliver the otherworld's lore to the Bringer of Fire.

Teiresias the blind seer plays the role of Oracle many times in his appearances in epic poetry and tragedies. In *Oedipus Rex* he reveals the cause of the curse on Thebes to the furious and disbelieving King Oedipus. Even death does not dull the prophet's abilities, for Odysseus ventures into the Underworld itself to learn from the ghost of Teiresias what he must do to assuage the sea god Poseidon's wrath.





Then there is the tragic Cassandra of the *Iliad*, whose sufferings seem endless. She foresaw the destruction of Troy, as well as her own demise and defilement, with the oracular powers inflicted on her by Apollo. Despite this, her brothers Hector and Paris, and her father Priam, thought her mad and imprisoned her, denying her visions.

Dallben and his adoptive mothers, Orddu, Orwen and Orgoch all play the Oracle to the hero Taran in *The Chronicles of Prydain*. As an Oracle, Dallben helps Taran begin his quests. Taran's two journeys into the Marshes of Morva—the forbidden place—to visit Orddu, Orwen and Orgoch mark important turning points in his destiny.

Playing the Light Side

When a player creates a magical character in a Burning Wheel game, it is worth considering which of the roles that character will play. All player characters in Burning Wheel are expected to be dynamic protagonists. It is expected that the story of the game revolves around the characters and that the characters' Beliefs will be challenged and changed in the course of play.

Of the wizardly roles described above, two—the Adept and the Bringer of Fire—lend themselves to the role of protagonist. The Adept, especially, addresses the fundamental question of magic: What is the proper use of magic? When is its price worth paying and when is it not?



The other two roles—the Maker and the Oracle—are rarely protagonists; they are usually supporting characters that aid or guide the protagonist in some way.

The reason comes down to choice. Adepts and Bringers of Fire are in the process of questioning their choices about magic and themselves. Their stories are about answering those questions. Makers and Oracles have typically made their choices and paid their prices. They are not expected to become something else at the end of the story.

Heleth, cited as a Maker, is an example of a rare exception for this type. He is a character who still has a choice to make and a price to pay, and so he is a fit protagonist for a tale.



In any event, when creating a magical character—whether that character uses sorcery, faith, or some other magical power—ask yourself what price and what choice stands before the character. What does the character struggle with? How does that struggle define magic in your game? Write a Belief about that struggle.

The Dark Side

Magical villains generally take one of four roles: the Dark Disciple, the Deceiver, the Bringer of Darkness and the Unmaker.

The Dark Disciple

Then, grotesquely, his laval eyes took on an angle of cunning. Twitching nods over his shoulder, he hissed in a raw voice, "Here—this is fair. Fair. Better than promise. All of them—here. All little Lords and puny Bloodguard—humans. Ready for crushing." He started to laugh, broke into a fit of coughing. "Crush!" he spat when he regained control of himself. "Crush with power." He made a little noise like cracking of bones in his throat. "Power! Little Lords. Mighty Drool. Better than promises."

— Stephen R. Donaldson, *Lord Foul's Bane*

The Dark Disciple is one who walked the path of the Adept but was unable to redeem himself. Instead, he was consumed by his mistake. Redemption might still be possible, but it is outside the Dark Disciple's reach alone. The impetus must come from another.

The *possibility* of redemption is the defining attribute of a Dark Disciple. Whether that redemption comes to fruition or not is another story. The mere possibility gives the character humanity and also makes the character an excellent foil for the protagonist, who should, in turn, recognize that he too might fall as the Dark Disciple has fallen.

In the meantime, the Dark Disciple must serve an evil master and pay for his mistake by spreading suffering and terror. The Dark Disciple is a servant of a greater evil. He must be confronted, and vanquished or redeemed, before the true evil can be faced.

Each Dark Disciple has a weakness, sown from his own arrogance and corresponding to his mistake. The one who discovers that weakness can use it to remind the Dark Disciple of his humanity, or to break his power if the Dark Disciple refuses redemption.






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In general, if the Dark Disciple is the foil of an Adept, the mistake of the Dark Disciple should be the same as the one with which the Adept struggles. A Dark Disciple works best when held up as a mirror to the protagonist.

Dark Disciples are the most human of sorcerous antagonists. Their motives are typically discernible and understandable. We may not feel that we would make a similar mistake, but we should be able to understand the choice that was made.

Dark Disciples are often the servants of Bringers of Darkness and Unmakers, archetypes who rarely interact with the protagonists directly.

Darth Vader is perhaps the most iconic Dark Disciple. His flaws are pride and anger. He is ruled by those passions, as typified by using the mystical powers of the Force to kill subordinates who question his power or fail in their duties. Pride—his desire to overthrow his master—leads him to seek a reunion with his son, leaving the door open for that son to awaken feelings in him that he had long buried. Whereas Darth Vader succumbed to his passions and fell to the Dark Side, his son, though tempted, resists. That resistance proves to be the example Darth Vader needs to struggle anew against his own mistake.

Saruman, chief of the Order of the Istari in *The Lord of the Rings*, represents another face of the Dark Disciple. Like his eventual master, Sauron, Saruman was a servant of the Vala Aulë; like many of Aulë's servants, he was predisposed to covetousness. His lust for ring lore and Sauron's power led him to abandon his original quest in Middle Earth and to become Sauron's accomplice and servant, raising up armies of orcs. His desire for power led to his weakness: His pride blinds him to the anger he arouses in the primal forces of Fangorn. He sends all his armies into Helm's Deep in an effort to conquer Rohan, and leaves his stronghold undefended against the march of the Ents. Gandalf offers Saruman a chance to redeem himself, but Saruman is unwilling, and so Gandalf breaks his staff and his power with it.



Drool Rockworm, in *Lord Foul's Bane*, is a classic Dark Disciple. Thinking that he has captured and mastered the Staff of Law himself, he merely performs Lord Foul's bidding. Lord Foul, potent and cunning, grants Drool power so that the twisted cavewight can lead Thomas Covenant into a trap and further bind the hapless hero to Lord Foul



himself. Drool is a pawn in the game, and though he nearly obliterates Covenant and his companions, it is he who is destroyed by Covenant's wild magic.

The Deceiver

Moreover [the Noldor] were not at peace in their hearts, since they had refused to return into the West, and they desired both to stay in Middle-earth, which indeed they loved, and yet to enjoy the bliss of those that had departed. Therefore they harkened to Sauron, and they learned of him many things, for his knowledge was great. In those days the smiths of Ost-in-Edhil surpassed all that they had contrived before; they took thought, and they made the Rings of Power. But Sauron guided their labors, and he was aware of all that they did; for his desire was to set a bond upon the Elves and bring them under his vigilance.

—J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*

The Deceiver is a dark Oracle, an agent of evil sent to twist the hero's destiny and send him hurtling down the wrong path.

The Deceiver's power stems from his ability to fool and manipulate the protagonist. The Deceiver rarely has the power to stand up to a protagonist in a fair fight once his lies have been revealed. Instead, the Deceiver plays upon the weaknesses of his victims to encourage them to destroy themselves.



Although the Deceiver's methods are often employed by more powerful entities with apocalyptic goals, the Deceiver himself is not seeking the end of the world. He seeks control, like the Bringer of Darkness, but is not strong enough to take it by force. Instead, the Deceiver's enemies must be manipulated into giving up control.

To function, a Deceiver must gain the trust of a person of power and the ability to influence that person. The victim falls under the Deceiver's influence due to the Deceiver's evil power, but also due to a flaw or weakness in the victim's character. The Deceiver guides his victim to wrong actions, but ultimately it is the victim's choice. The Deceiver does not make anyone do anything.

Often, the baleful influence of the Deceiver becomes apparent to those who truly care for the victim, but by the time it does, the victim is too far under the Deceiver's spell. Those who can see the truth are never in a position to act directly against the Deceiver without hurting the victim.



Deceivers most often work on behalf of other powers. They are rarely the main villains and frequently turn on their masters at the end, though it is rarely out of penitence. Their evil and selfishness does not allow them to care for anyone but themselves.

Gríma Wormtongue of *The Two Towers* is one of the most recognizable Deceivers. He uses his arts, learned at the feet of Saruman, to enfeeble and influence Théoden, king of the Rohirrim. Under Wormtongue's influence, Théoden King drives his loyal subjects into exile and forsakes his duties. Gríma works also to poison the mind of the king against Gandalf and the companions. When Wormtongue is undone, he turns upon his master.

Sauron himself, in his guise as Annatar, the Lord of Gifts, shows himself a very potent Deceiver. Sauron takes the role of Annatar at the beginning of the Second Age, befriending the Elven smiths of Eregion and instructing them in ring lore and magic, despite the doubts of Galadriel and Gil-galad. It is under Annatar's direction that the rings of power are made. Later in the Second Age, captured by the king of Númenor, Sauron the Deceiver convinces them to build a temple to the Dark Lord Melkor where human sacrifices are made. Eventually, under his dark guidance, Númenoreans make war upon Valinor itself, and Eru sinks the isle beneath the waves for their presumption. And so Sauron's manipulation and lies ended one of the greatest threats to Melkor's ultimate rule of Middle Earth.

In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, it is Serret, daughter of the lord of Re Albi and Lady of the Court of the Terrenon, who performs the duties of the Deceiver. It is she that goads Ged into making the terrible mistake for which he pays dearly. She senses the weakness in him—his pride and arrogance—and plays upon it. Later she seeks to enslave him to the Terrenon, one of the Old Powers of the Earth, thinking that she had mastered that dread stone and could control Ged through it. Through Serret, the Terrenon promises Ged mastery and rule. By way of much suffering and heartache, Ged is able to see through her wiles to the truth of slavery nestled within her lies. In the end, as is inevitable with a Deceiver, Serret betrays her master.



The Bringer of Darkness

He thought of Yara, the high priest, who worked strange dooms from this jeweled tower, and the Cimmerian's hair prickled as he remembered a tale told by a drunken page of the court—how Yara had laughed in the face of a hostile prince, and held up a glowing, evil gem before him, and how rays shot blindingly from that unholy jewel, to envelop the prince, who screamed and fell down, and shrank to a withered blackened lump that changed to a black spider which scampered wildly about the chamber until Yara set his heel upon it.

—Robert E. Howard, "The Tower of the Elephant"

The Bringer of Darkness is a sorcerer whose mastery is bent to infecting the land with fear and ignorance. The Bringer of Darkness seeks his own aggrandizement and power, temporal or otherwise.

Such sorcerers seek dominion over the earth, and they pursue this goal by employing or making deals with dark powers and by seeking to break the bonds of civilization. They seek to make men ignorant and savage in order to make them easier to rule.

The Bringer of Darkness is not bent on destruction for its own sake. If the world were destroyed, there would be nothing to rule and dominate.

While it is harder to relate to the motives of the Bringer of Darkness than to the motives of the Dark Disciple, the Bringer of Darkness still has recognizably human qualities. The desire for power and domination drives the Bringer of Darkness, though it is not necessarily clear what the Bringer of Darkness hopes to do with this power should he gain it.



Without a clear purpose behind the drive for domination, the Bringer of Darkness can be a bit one-dimensional. It is therefore best to keep him as a menace looming in the background, rather than a force that confronts the protagonists directly. These characters most frequently confront the protagonists through their minions, Deceivers and Dark Disciples in their service.

On the other hand, a Bringer of Darkness with a fully formed motive can become a truly memorable and terrible foe to a group of protagonists.

Arawn Death-Lord, the tyrant that overshadows all of the *Chronicles of Prydain* from his stronghold in Annuvin, is a Bringer of Darkness. Able to take any shape he chooses, he spends years traveling the land of Prydain, stealing enchanted tools and knowledge. Rather than using



them for himself, he locks them in the treasure vaults of Annuvin, where their power can benefit no one. He maintains his power by keeping men ignorant and weak. While he is a looming threat, he most often acts through his servants, like the Horned King, the gwythaints, the Cauldron-Born, the Huntsmen of Annuvin and power-hungry men that flock to his banner.

The Magician, from *The Charwoman's Shadow*, initially seems to be a less menacing Bringer of Darkness but proves to be all the more sinister for it. Dedicated to cultivating his own power and wresting away the secrets of heaven, the Magician tricks his servants into giving away their shadows in exchange for his gifts, but all too soon they discover that doing so has put them deep in his power. The Magician's defeat at Ramon Alonzo's hand, while freeing those who suffered in the Magician's clutches, does not drive back the darkness. Instead, the Magician sets off on a voyage through Spain, drawing all the hidden creatures of magic to him and taking them with him to the Country Beyond the Moon's Rising. The Magician's departure brings an end to all magic and Spain's Golden Age.

Jadis, the White Witch of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, is another Bringer of Darkness. The beautiful Amazon dominates all Narnia with a wand that turns those who oppose her to stone (reminiscent of Circe's wand, which turns victims into swine). The remaining, fearful subjects of her police state suffer a never-ending winter. In addition to her wand and other sorceries, Jadis maintains her power with an army of evil creatures, including wolves, giants, dwarves, werewolves and ogres.



The Unmaker

Fall'n Cherube, to be weak is miserable
Doing or Suffering: but of this be sure,
To do ought good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to his high will
Whom we resist. If then his Providence
Out of our evil seek to bring forth good,
Our labour must be to pervert that end,
And out of good still to find means of evil;
Which oft times may succeed, so as perhaps
Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb
His inmost counsels from their destind aim.

—Satan to Beelzebub upon the Fall, John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

The Unmaker is a sorcerer whose mastery is focused upon bringing destruction. Unlike the Bringer of Darkness, the Unmaker does not concern himself with dominion, nor is power really his ultimate end.

Unmakers seek to bring about the end of the world and the destruction of all things.

Unmakers are not so much characters as plot elements. Their motives are typically inexplicable, their powers vast, and they rarely appear to the protagonists. Instead, they act behind the scenes and through minions, and their actions have widespread consequences.



Because they rarely have motives with which we can sympathize, it is best to leave Unmakers off the stage as much as possible in our games. Instead, the protagonists encounter the Unmaker and his acts through his minions, especially Dark Disciples and Deceivers in his service.

The key to the Unmaker is not his motive, but the methods he employs. They are what give each Unmaker a unique flavor. In a sense, the Unmaker is a metaphor for a fear or darkness in ourselves. Additionally, though powerful, the Unmaker is not without limits. There are certain rules to how he must accomplish his ends, and these rules are almost always tied to the method the Unmaker employs.

Cob, the villain of *The Farthest Shore*, is a symbol of the fear of death. To defeat death, Cob breaches the wall between worlds. This act grants Cob eternal life of a sort, but also slowly strips away all that is good and worthwhile in the world. Without the intervention of Ged and Arren,



Cob would exist forever, but there would be no real life. Cob plays upon the fear of death in those he encounters, convincing them to willingly give up their names in exchange for supposed never-ending existence. But when they do so, they also give up the things inside themselves that allow them to take pleasure in life. Each person who gives up his name to Cob further erodes the wall that separates the world of life from the Dry Land.

Meanwhile, Lord Foul the Despiser, of the Thomas Covenant stories, ultimately seeks to destroy the Arch of Time and thus unmake Creation. Lord Foul works through despair, corruption and seduction. He makes his foes think their fight is hopeless, exposes them to their flaws to make them succumb to despair, and seduces those who do not react in horror when they are confronted with their flaws. Slowly, through his expert manipulation, he subverts all those who would fight him and turns them to his cause. Indeed, it becomes clear that Lord Foul must work this way because there is a fundamental mystic rule which he must obey: The White Gold Ring and its wild magic must be given to him willingly. He cannot take it by force.

Playing the Dark Side

Each film is only as good as its villain. Since the heroes and the gimmicks tend to repeat from film to film, only a great villain can transform a good try into a triumph.

—Roger Ebert, review of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*



Whereas the children of light are protagonists, the children of darkness are intended to be antagonists, plain and simple. Aside from the player characters, antagonists are the most important characters in any Burning Wheel game. To appropriate Mr. Ebert's analysis, a hero is only as good as the villain who makes him interesting.

While each Burning Wheel game is about the player characters, it is the antagonist, the villain, who will provide them with the opportunity to be great. Sorcerous villains are especially fun, as their powers are wide-ranging and they can rarely be countered by anything short of magic or faith.

Your primary sorcerous villains will be Dark Disciples. They are the most human of the villainous types, and therefore the easiest for us to understand. The ability to understand motivations is what separates a villain from a force of nature. Dark Disciples are also reflections of the choices and potential future facing the protagonist.



In addition, Dark Disciples have a personal stake in the defeat or destruction of the protagonists. A Dark Disciple should incorporate his mistake and the protagonist into at least one Belief.

The Deceiver, meanwhile, must get close to the player characters—or someone they care about—in order to do his work. The Deceiver poisons from close up. He, like the Dark Disciple, usually has strong and complex motivations. It is essential that the characters either not recognize him for what he is at first, or not have the political power to confront him directly.

A Deceiver whom the players know about but cannot touch due to his political influence can be one of the best, most maddening villains players will ever face. Such a villain will take great care and cunning on the players' parts to attack.

Deceivers have Beliefs based upon subverting their victims and getting them to do something in the interest of the Deceiver or his master. If the victim is not a player character, he should be a relationship of a player character.

The Bringer of Darkness and Unmaker are more plot elements than villains. They are forces of nature, and the player characters are usually beneath their notice. They seek the destruction of the protagonists in an impersonal way. They are the big picture problem tied inextricably into the fabric of the setting. It just so happens that the protagonists stand in their way. Should the protagonists' actions be brought to their attention, the Bringer of Darkness will take personal interest in their destruction. They will send monstrous minions, Deceivers and their servant Dark Disciples to carry out the task. Because their motivations are typically one-dimensional, it is best to keep Bringers of Darkness and Unmakers in the background. The players should see and feel the results of their actions but shouldn't come face to face with them until the final climactic moments.



Bringers of Darkness and Unmakers should have Beliefs born of their goals and their motivations. They rarely take protagonists into account in their Beliefs. Instead, they obliquely attack the protagonists through the ideological core of protagonists' Beliefs.



Questions, Questions

In order to make the most of magic in your game, you should consider both the nature of magic in the world in which the characters live, and how the characters' communities relate to the power. Review the following questions. Their answers will lend a great deal of depth to the magic in your game and help establish its boundaries.

How does magic take shape in your game? Does it work subtly or blatantly? Are speech and gestures required to use the power?

Does magic come from an external supernatural agency? Is it a gift with which only a select few are born or are study and discipline enough to allow anyone to master the art?

What limitations bind the magic in your game? What can't it do? What does it excel at doing?

How is mastery taught or learned? Do people know about it and, if so, how do they feel about it? Are the men and women who wield these powers revered or hated? What does religion have to say on the matter? What of the law?

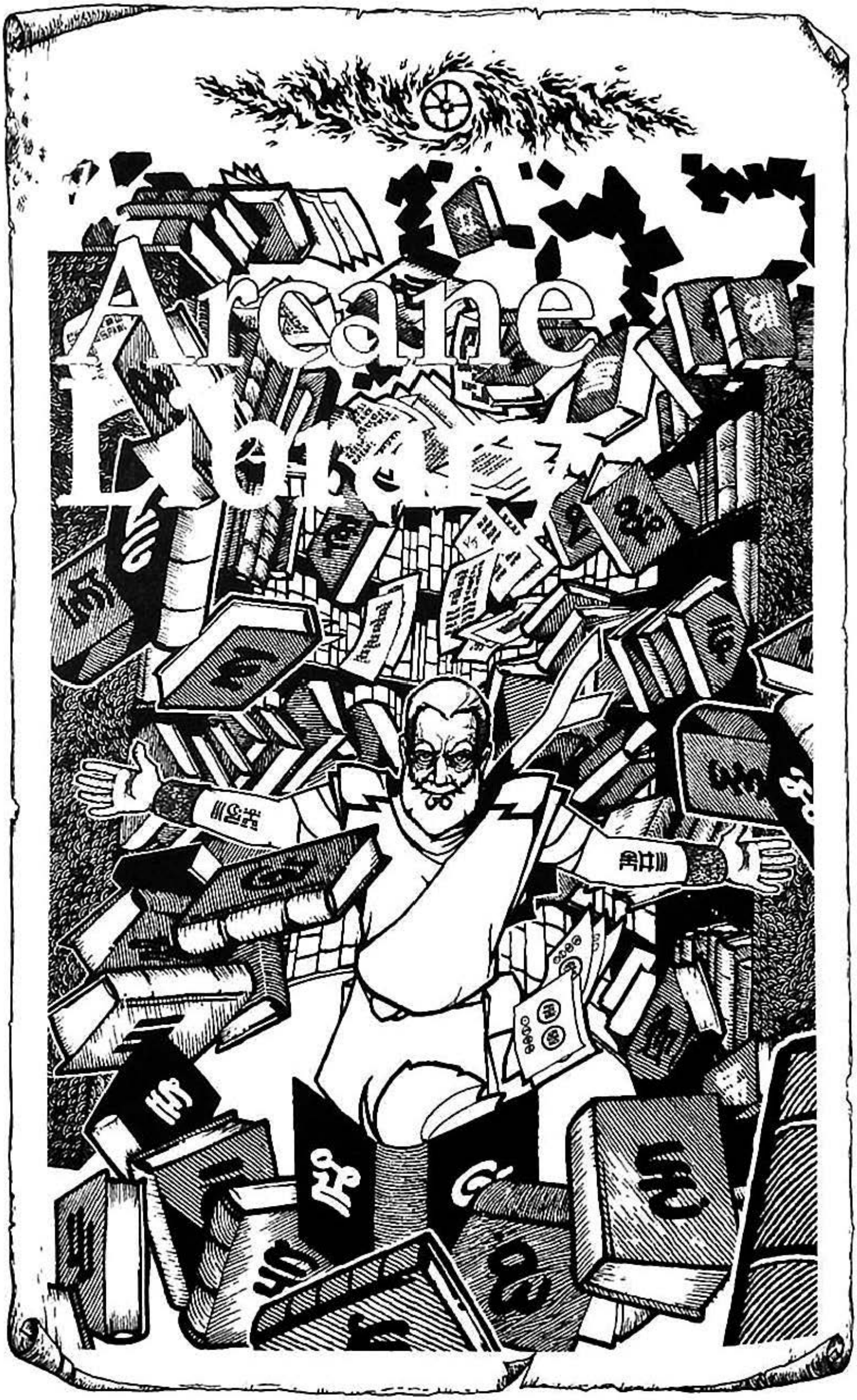
Are there rituals a practitioner must observe? Are certain actions or possessions taboo for sorcerers? Are certain magical actions forbidden or restricted?

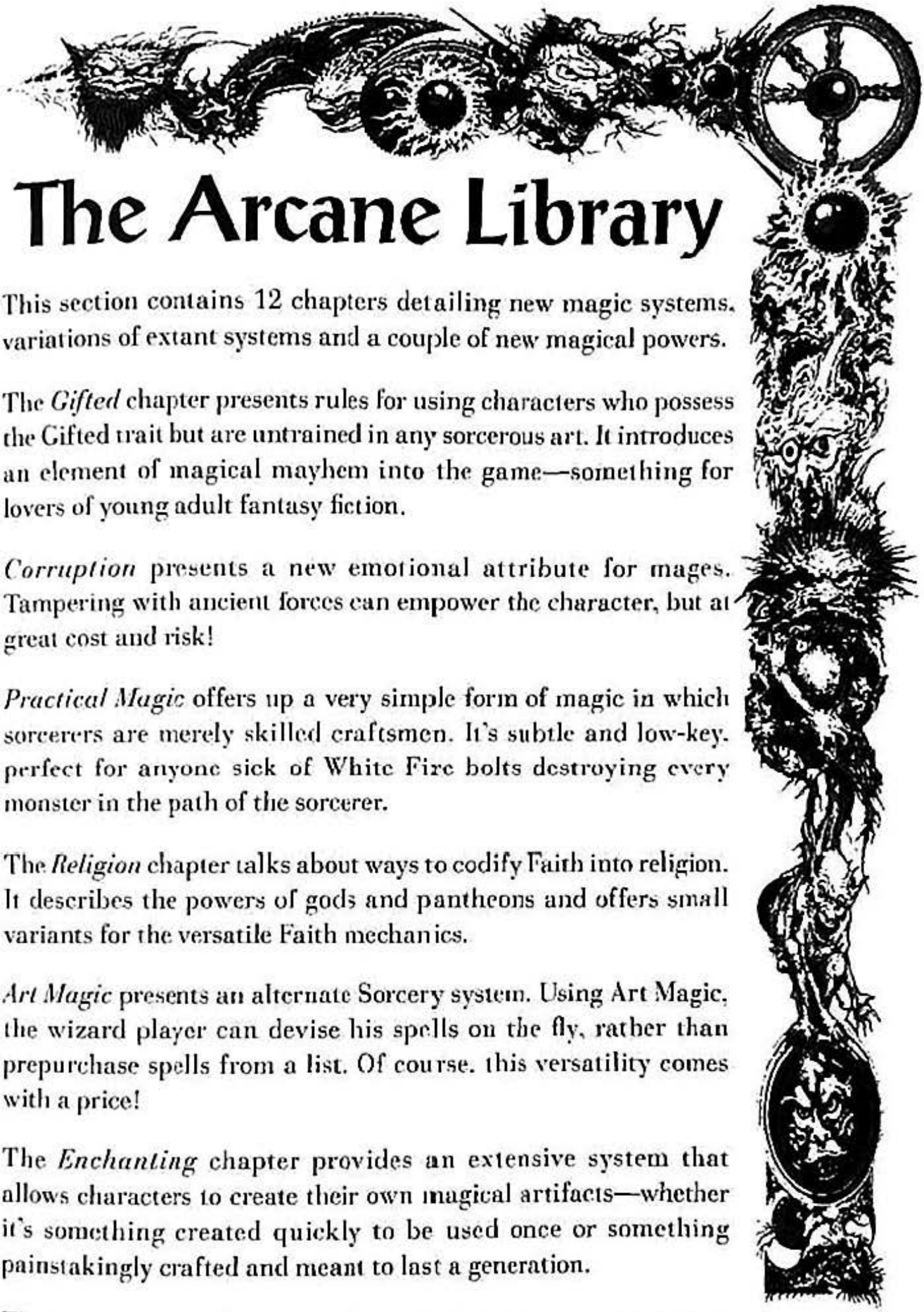
The answers to these questions will enrich your world and help keep magic arcane and mysterious.








Arcane
Ledger



The Arcane Library

This section contains 12 chapters detailing new magic systems, variations of extant systems and a couple of new magical powers.

The *Gifted* chapter presents rules for using characters who possess the Gifted trait but are untrained in any sorcerous art. It introduces an element of magical mayhem into the game—something for lovers of young adult fantasy fiction.

Corruption presents a new emotional attribute for mages. Tampering with ancient forces can empower the character, but at great cost and risk!

Practical Magic offers up a very simple form of magic in which sorcerers are merely skilled craftsmen. It's subtle and low-key, perfect for anyone sick of White Fire bolts destroying every monster in the path of the sorcerer.

The *Religion* chapter talks about ways to codify Faith into religion. It describes the powers of gods and pantheons and offers small variants for the versatile Faith mechanics.

Art Magic presents an alternate Sorcery system. Using Art Magic, the wizard player can devise his spells on the fly, rather than prepurchase spells from a list. Of course, this versatility comes with a price!

The *Enchanting* chapter provides an extensive system that allows characters to create their own magical artifacts—whether it's something created quickly to be used once or something painstakingly crafted and meant to last a generation.

The next chapter, *Spirit Binding*, details the mysterious and dangerous art of calling and binding the very forces of nature.

Summoning is the sister to Spirit Binding, but rather than the implacable forces of nature, the summoner trucks with the dead, demons, angels and gods.

No arcane library would be complete without a treatise on raising the dead. The *Death Art* chapter offers the chilling details of this powerful, obscene art. If you wish to raise corpses from death and have these tormented souls blindly serve you, this is your foul home.

Folklore teaches you when it's time to yoke up the virgins in your village and toss salt at them as they plough furrows in circles to keep out disease.

Blood Magic isn't a full magic system per se. It is an optional subsystem that you can tack on to nearly any of the systems in this book or to canon Burning Wheel. Blood Magic provides the awful details on using ritual torture and murder to fuel your other magics.

Finally, the Arcane Library concludes with a short entry describing new rules for memorizing spells in the *Arsenal Method* for use with the traditional Burning Wheel Sorcery system.

Danger

This book is not a list of pretty new toys to be dumped into your game. Do not toss in all of the options on top of Faith, traditional Sorcery, Elven Songs, Dwarven Art and Orc Rituals!

Individually, each of these systems is dangerous. If you want to use one, introduce it to your campaign with care and caution. Discuss the system with your whole group. Hell, if you can, read the whole section together. Any single one of these can change the face of a game. Therefore, everyone should be aware of the possibilities, even those who aren't playing mages.

So, when starting a new game, pick a couple of magical elements to bring into play. Let each character have access to one—a new system, a new item or a new trait—and go from there.

Another pitfall is the multitalented magic character: the wizard-priest with Faith, Sorcery and Enchanting or the Chaos Lord Munchkin master of Death Art, Summoning and Corruption. To reduce campaign-breaking characters, limit each character to one form of magic until your group gets a feel for the scale of the systems.

After you're comfortable with the new elements, introduce more systems and have fun!



Sorcerous Skills

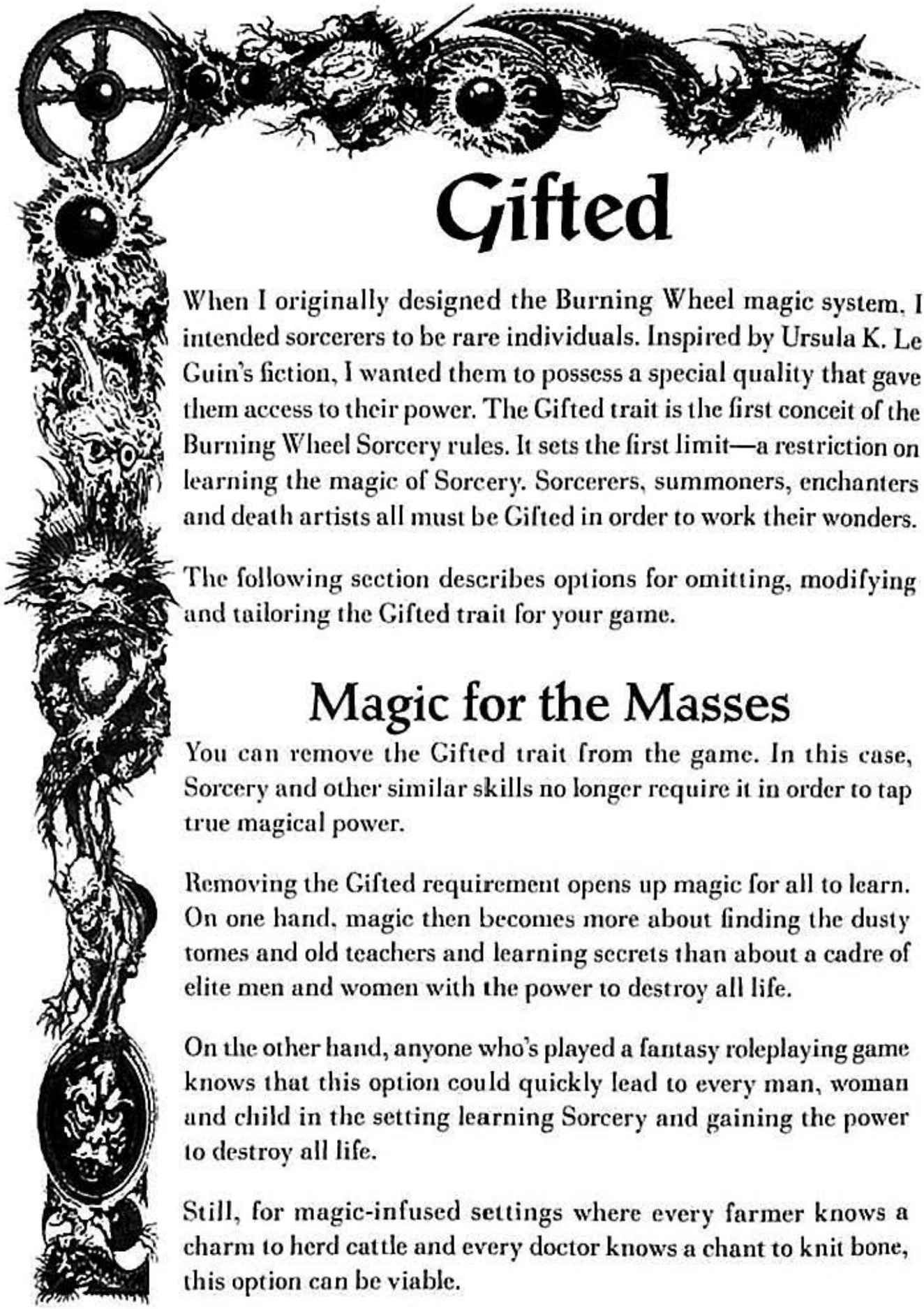
Sorcerous-type skills—Alchemy, Aura Reading, Death Art, Enchanting, Practical Magic, Sorcery, Spirit Binding and Summoning—cannot be learned just by unskilled testing. In order to acquire one of these skills, the first test toward learning the skill must come from Instruction. Thereafter, all other tests needed to learn the skill can come from Beginner's Luck or Instruction.

System Review

Before you can introduce a system into your game, the whole group must have a chance to review it. At least two players should read the chapter and explain the positive and negative aspects of that type of magic. If the group doesn't think the system is a good fit, they may decline to allow the system into the game.







Gifted

When I originally designed the Burning Wheel magic system, I intended sorcerers to be rare individuals. Inspired by Ursula K. Le Guin's fiction, I wanted them to possess a special quality that gave them access to their power. The Gifted trait is the first conceit of the Burning Wheel Sorcery rules. It sets the first limit—a restriction on learning the magic of Sorcery. Sorcerers, summoners, enchanters and death artists all must be Gifted in order to work their wonders.

The following section describes options for omitting, modifying and tailoring the Gifted trait for your game.

Magic for the Masses

You can remove the Gifted trait from the game. In this case, Sorcery and other similar skills no longer require it in order to tap true magical power.

Removing the Gifted requirement opens up magic for all to learn. On one hand, magic then becomes more about finding the dusty tomes and old teachers and learning secrets than about a cadre of elite men and women with the power to destroy all life.

On the other hand, anyone who's played a fantasy roleplaying game knows that this option could quickly lead to every man, woman and child in the setting learning Sorcery and gaining the power to destroy all life.

Still, for magic-infused settings where every farmer knows a charm to herd cattle and every doctor knows a chant to knit bone, this option can be viable.

The key to making this option work is to make learning sorcerous skills arcane and mystical, or at least difficult. If there's an open exchange of information, all spells would be available to everyone and that becomes problematic. But if there's a cult to explore or an economy to navigate, spells will be restricted to those who have access to the mysteries or to those who can afford them.



Raw Talent

It is possible to create a character who is Gifted but untrained in any art. In standard Burning Wheel canon, this condition means that the character possesses untapped potential. He needs a sorcerer to teach him.

There is another way to play this. In this case, the Gifted trait indicates that the character possesses the ability to work great magic, but also a raw talent and wild power.

The following powers—Stress, Concentration and Accident-Prone—manifest in Gifted characters who do not possess any sorcerous skills like Sorcery, Death Art or Aura Reading. As soon as any sorcerous skill is opened, these youthful abilities are no longer available to the character.

Stress

When an unskilled and Gifted character fails a Steel test, his powers manifest in unanticipated ways. Roll on the table below to generate a trait. The trait is applied regardless of whether or not the character would otherwise be eligible for it. The trait is temporary. It lasts until the end of the scene in which the character was stressed.

Gifted Stress Table	
2D6	**Stress Trait**
2	Bottomless Stomach
3	Clumsy
4	Commanding Aura
5	Eldritch Sink
6	Child Prodigy
7	Second Sight
8	Low Speech
9	Lesser Muse
10	Touch of the Devil
11	Lawbreaker
12	Brass Skin





If the player is stressed again in a future scene, he may decide not to roll on the table and let the previous trait manifest again, or he may choose to gamble and roll again on the table.

The specific effects of traits like Child Prodigy or Lesser Muse must be decided upon when the trait is rolled. If the player is stressed again and opts to use the previously generated trait, those modified abilities remain the same as when they first manifested. If the trait is cast off for a new trait, but then later rolled again on the table, the player may assign the benefits to new abilities or the old ones as he sees fit.

Lesser Muse grants +2D to a skill. If I roll it once and choose Cooking, it grants a +2D bonus for the scene. If I'm stressed again and I roll Lesser Muse again, I can choose to apply the muse to a different skill, like Research or whatever I need at the time.

The traits on the Gifted Stress table can be found in the Character Burner and the Monstrous Trait List in this book.

Concentration

The untried hero may spend a persona point to add his Will dice to a Beginner's Luck test.

However, concentrating in such a manner is draining and dangerous. The player must make a Forte test at an obstacle equal to the Beginner's Luck test (using the doubled obstacle). This counts as a standard tax test for Sorcery.

My character is testing his Perception for Beginner's Luck for Aura Reading. It's an Ob 1 test to detect an Aura trait, doubled to 2 since I don't have the skill. After the Perception test, whether I pass or fail, I have to make an Ob 2 Forte test to resist the tax.

Accident-Prone

When Gifted characters fail an attempt at any *skill* test, the results are spectacular. First, the failure results in the worst possible outcome for the situation. It's bad. There are loud, painful crashing sounds. This calamity must affect the people around the character, including his friends and allies. It cannot only affect the mageling.

If he were trying to cast a spell, for example, there could be no harmless dissipation result. It'd have to be either an unwanted summoning or a garbled transmission.



However, this incident is coupled with another unlikely event. Shortly after the catastrophic failure, the young mage-to-be gains a new friend or companion, or an important item. Treat these conditions as either a successful Circles test or Resources test. If you need a value for the person or object, it can be the equivalent Circles or Resources test obstacle equal to the test's margin of failure.

If you fail by two, then the object can be worth up to whatever an Ob 2 Resources test would buy you.

Learning

When using the Raw Talent rules, Gifted characters are subject to the Stress, Concentration and Accident-Prone rules until they open a sorcerous skill. The powers are lost when they open a sorcerous skill. The Gifted trait reverts to its standard manifestation.

Due to their accident-prone nature, learning Sorcery and casting spells with Beginner's Luck is very dangerous. Once given a test for advancement toward Sorcery, Death Art, Summoning or Enchanting, the Gifted child may begin attempting to test these skills. He does so at a double obstacle penalty!

Should an apprentice actually manage to learn a spell for traditional Sorcery prior to opening the skill, he casts with a double obstacle penalty for Beginner's Luck plus a double obstacle penalty for casting a spell during practicals. That's a double double obstacle penalty. Very nasty. To avoid this, he needs to open the Sorcery skill first, then begin casting spells.

Specifically Gifted

Another option for the Gifted trait is to make it specific to one or two sorcerous skills. The character may learn and use skills for which he is Gifted, but not any others.

For example, if a character is Gifted for Sorcery, he may not use Art Magic.

I recommend this option for campaigns which use multiple spell casting variants, like Art Magic, Sorcery, Death Magic and Enchanting.



Corruption

Corruption is a new emotional attribute designed to emphasize the effects of magic upon its users in settings where magical lore is unnatural or forbidden.

The more the sorcerer calls upon his power, the more corrupted he becomes—in body and soul—and the more twisted and vile he grows.

You can combine the Corruption emotional attribute with nearly any of the extant magic systems, but it works especially well with the Death Art, Sorcery, Summoning, Spirit Binding and Faith mechanics.

Inspiration for this system of tampering with dark powers who punish and reward in a whim is taken from H.P. Lovecraft's various tales, Stephen R. Donaldson's Thomas Covenant series and Games Workshop's Warhammer universe.

Starting Corruption

The Corruption emotional attribute starts at B0. Everyone has the potential to travel down this path. Those who wield magic or truck with dark powers hasten the speed at which they travel. Increase the starting Corruption exponent using the following list:

+1 if the character has the Gifted trait.

+1 if the character has the Faithful trait.

+1 if the character has the Chosen One trait.

+1 for each point of Spirit Marks (see Spirit Binding).

+1 for each point of Orders (see Summoning).

+1 if the character has ever prayed alone at night to remote, unholy gods to aid him.

+1 if the character has ever entered into a pact with a demon.

If a character has a starting Corruption value of 10 or more, the player must spend five exponent points to shade shift to gray. He may not begin play with a Corruption exponent greater than 9.

Starting Corruption in Play

If a character meets the conditions for any of the above in play—he earns a trait, prays to bad things at night, gains a Mark or Order—he earns the Corruption emotional attribute at a value appropriate to the starting Corruption conditions. Usually, that'll be B1.

Starting Corruption Traits

A player whose character begins the game with Corruption rolls once on the Corrupted Body and Soul table in this chapter to get a free trait. He may choose whether to take the primary or alternate version, but this affects his future choices.

Using Corruption

The corrupted use their Corruption to aid their actions during play. It works similarly to Greed or Spite in that regard. It may only be called upon when the character is undertaking a vile, dark or corrupt act. This can be due to overt actions or simple intent. The group is the final arbiter of whether an act is degenerate enough to warrant help from the chittering gods who dwell in the shadows of men's dreams.

The Temptation

- For one fate point, a sorcerer may call upon dark powers to help him. Corruption may then *help* any stat or skill test, whether one of the character's own abilities or a comrade's. Help gives 1D for exponent 4 or lower, 2D for exponent 5 and higher. The help is from an outside force, like fallen gods or lurking demons. This bonus is in addition to standard FoRKs and help.

- For one persona point, a sorcerer may substitute his Corruption for any skill or stat in any test.

- For one deeds point, a sorcerer may add his Corruption exponent to any skill or stat test.



Corruption Brings Strength

The corrupted player may always substitute Corruption for Forte to pass tax tests if the player desires. If dice are lost due to a failed test, Forte is reduced, not Corruption. If using the Art Magic or Religion rules in combination with this emotional attribute, Corruption *must* be used to pass tax tests.

Advancing Corruption

Corruption advances like a skill, but like Greed, *routine* tests always count for advancement—even when advancing Corruption from exponents 5 to 10. For exponent 5 and higher, routine tests equal to the exponent count as one category of advancement filled. Therefore, from exponent 5 and higher, the attribute advances if any two of the three categories—routine, difficult or challenging—are filled.

You earn tests for advancement when Corruption itself is rolled (when it replaces a stat or skill), when the attribute is used to help another test and when certain situations arise in the game. The replaced stat or skill does not earn a test for advancement when you spend persona points for replacement or when using the Corruption Brings Strength rules. The aided stat or skill earns a test for advancement as per the standard testing, helping and advancement rules.

If you spend a deeds point to add Corruption to a stat or skill test, the standard artha rules apply—the stat or skill earns a test, but the added dice don't count when factoring the difficulty of the test for advancement. The Corruption attribute does earn a difficult test for advancement in that instance.

When the Corruption attribute advances, the character's body and soul change. See the Corrupted Body and Soul rules below.

We Have Eternity to Know Your Flesh

When Corruption reaches exponent 10, the dark ones, demons or outer gods from whom the character has been granted power come for him. They cruelly grant him one last gift before taking him from this realm into theirs. Roll on the Corrupted Traits table one last time to see what trait the sorcerer has earned by advancing his Corruption. The character is then removed from play.







Situational Tests

Tests for advancing Corruption are also earned through actions in play. If the character meets any of the conditions below, the player must mark down the advancement as if he had passed a test at the appropriate obstacle.

The situations described in the following section only count toward advancement if the Corruption attribute has been opened. The Corruption attribute may not be opened via these situations, only through those described under Starting Corruption.

Obstacle 1 Corruption

Lying or committing a willful falsehood. Casting a spell.

Obstacle 2 Corruption

Learning a new spell. Summoning an imp for any purpose. Physically causing harm to another person.

Obstacle 3 Corruption

Casting a spell that affects another person. Learning a new facet or school of magic. Summoning a greater imp for any purpose. Paying tribute to a demon. Discovering a marked item.

Obstacle 4 Corruption

Mutilating an animal, human, Elf, Orc, Dwarf, etc. Casting a spell with harmful intent. Summoning a lesser demon for any purpose. Commanding a demon to perform a social service (as per Summoning). Owning a marked item (as per Enchanting).

Obstacle 5 Corruption

Murder, by any means. Summoning a demon for any purpose. Commanding a demon to perform a physical service that leads to the injury of a person (as per Summoning). Being Marked by a demon (as per Summoning).

Obstacle 6 Corruption

Torture—to cause physical and emotional pain to a subject so as to extract information or derive pleasure from them. Summoning a greater demon for any purpose. Commanding a demon to perform a physical service that leads to the death of a person (as per Summoning). Paying a physical price for a service (as per Summoning).



Obstacle 7 Corruption
Necrophilia. Commanding a spirit service from a demon (as per Summoning). Owning many marked items (as per Enchanting).

Obstacle 8 Corruption
Necrophagia. Selling the soul of another to an otherworldly power.

Obstacle 9 Corruption
Being possessed by a being with Spirit Nature.

Obstacle 10 Corruption
Selling your own soul to an otherworldly power.

Corrupted Body and Soul

When your Corruption advances in play, roll one die and add the result to your new Corruption exponent. This will generate a number from 2 to 16. Consult the table below. Listed next to the number are two traits, primary and alternate. The first time a player rolls on this chart, he may choose which of these two traits he wants. However, the next time he advances his Corruption, he must choose from the opposite category. The following time, he must take a trait from the other category, and so on.

If I advance my Corruption from 1 to 2 and I roll a 1 on the die, I can choose between Rat Speak (primary) or Lunatic (alternate). Let's say I choose Rat Speak from the primary column. The next time I choose, I must take the alternate trait. And the following time, I have to take the primary. The time after that, I have to take the alternate. And so on, and so forth.

Corruption Traits

The Corruption traits can be found in the Character Burner and the Monstrous Trait list in this book. Some of the traits are not particularly nice. Some are not harmful, nor even useful. The character is stuck with them, though. One set of traits is particularly vicious—Tongueless and Radula. The Gods of Corruption are cruel and mocking. It amuses them that sorcerers would become so corrupt that they could no longer speak the words of their spells but not corrupt enough to ascend into their divine ranks.

If a character already has the trait he's rolled, then tough luck. He's earned no benefit from his debauched ways.



Corrupted Body and Soul Traits Table		
Roll Result	Primary Trait	Alternate Trait
2	Zoophagia	Dissent Parasite
3	Rat Speak	Lunatic
4	Bottomless Stomach	Dreamer
5	Lame	Forked Tongue
6	Palsy	Wolverine
7	Diseased	Tough
8	Blind	Fearless
9	Maimed	Dreadful
10	Aura of Malevolence	Aura of Fear
11	Enlarged Venom Sacs	Cilia
12	Fur	Spines
13	Tongueless	Radula
14	Hermaphrodite	Tentacles
15	Believer	Tough as Nails
16	Amoeboid	Shadow and Dust

Corrupted Life

Corruption draws other souls to its foul light like moths to flame. Corrupted characters are often the focus of the attention of dilettantes and seekers of knowledge, but also of hunters and exterminators.

The Creepy Clause

Failed Circles tests for characters with the Corruption emotional attribute are always interesting. Rather than the standard Enmity Clause, the GM can invoke this rule, which allows him to bring forth unsavory, detestable seekers of knowledge and power. These characters are always mad in some fashion, and murderous. They either seek to gain the power of Corruption from the sorcerer, or wish to elevate the sorcerer to an exalted place of power (and thereby reap a reward for themselves). They may also be unwitting pawns of powers who seek to aid or destroy the sorcerer (sometimes both).



The Mortal Enemy Clause

Instead of bringing in creepy ne'er-do-wells, the GM can choose to use the Enmity Clause in a grand and brutal fashion—rather than those who seek to aid and uplift the corrupted, he can bring forth those who seek to destroy him. Witch hunters (Village Born, Kid, Village Guard, Pilgrim, Zealous Convert) or inquisitors (Born Noble, Religious Acolyte, Priest, Archpriest, Inquisitor) with a pair of zealous knights (Born Noble, Page, Squire, Knight) backing them up make for good times!

The Gift of Corruption

Corruption dwells not just in the hearts of humanity, but also in the fabric of life. When a corrupted soul fails a Resources test and the Gift of Kindness is invoked, the sorcerer has stumbled upon some previously unknown secret of the dark and forbidden forces. Whatever it is that he sought bears the arcane taint of some degenerate power. It is a "marked" item, and just knowing of it, touching it, seeing it, increases the sorcerer's own Corruption. Marked items are described in the Enchanting chapter.

Marked items often possess some magical power of their own. It's more likely a curse than a blessing. Use the Enchanting rules to determine the nature and power of the item. The obstacle of the enchantment cannot exceed the margin of failure of the Resources test. Assume that a proper antecedent was used to create the item.

Note that just seeing such an item counts as a test toward advancing Corruption (Ob 3), and owning one counts even more so (Ob 4).



Practical Magic

In this form of magic, there are no spells, no sustaining, no casting times, no flash, no great effects. It is a simple magic. A sorcerer is less a thunderous god and more a potent, skilled mortal who can overcome tasks that vex and belabor the mundane.

Practical Process

When using the Practical Magic rules, the Sorcery skill may be used as a proxy to test against obstacles that fall under one of the skills in one of the sorcerer's schools of magic. The Sorcery skill rolls are open-ended.

When the player wishes to attempt a test using his Sorcery, he incants an extemporaneous spell and undertakes the task using magic rather than simple, mundane means. Test Sorcery against the obstacle. The standard success and failure rules apply.

There is no "duration" for these spells. They last as long as the skill test would otherwise last. So if you make a pot using Sorcery rather than Blacksmithing, it lasts as long as a pot would last.

Normal skill test rules apply—FoRKs (from other mundane skills), linked tests, help, etc. Time for the Practical Magic test is as the skill for which it is being substituted.

Players may not use the Sorcery skill as a stat or for Beginner's Luck tests.

Weaving Charms

A sorcerer player can earn a 1D advantage to his Sorcery test if he names the spell he is casting and describes the effect. For practical magic, the effects must be simple and low key. This is not the stuff of high-energy magic.

When using Sorcery as the Ritual skill to sanctify a body, I inscribe it with the rune of ending.

Weaver's Balm is a charm to aid using practical magic for Weaving. The charm soothes the fingers of the weaver. The Spring Steel is a charm for practical Sword skill magic. The spell both lightens and strengthens the blade of the caster.



Tools

Tools and raw materials are required for individual tests as per the standard skill rules.

When using Sorcery to count for Blacksmith, you must have tools and metal to work with.



Practical Schools of Magic

In order to gain power in a certain realm, the sorcerer must study a school of magic. Schools of magic provide access to the expertise of certain groups of skills. They are a part of the Sorcery skill.

A school of magic contains the knowledge of a skill category as described in the Advancement chapter of Burning Wheel Gold. When the sorcerer has mastered that school, he may use his Sorcery skill as the equivalent of any skill that falls into the associated skill category.

Practical Magic may be used with general, Mannish and Roden skills only. Skills specific to any other character stocks are not part of this art.

Starting Schools of Magic

The sorcerer begins the game with the Sorcerous skill category for free. He also gains an additional school of magic for each lifepath he took during character burning. *The school of magic is derived from the skill category of the first skill on the lifepath skills list.* If the sorcerer already knows that school of magic from a previous path, he's out of luck. This lifepath doesn't teach him anything new.

The player may purchase additional schools of magic using resource points.

Practical Schools of Magic	RP Cost
Academic	**16 rps**
Artisan	12 rps
Artist	**7 rps**
Craftsman	18 rps
Forester	**15 rps**
Martial	12 rps
Medicinal	**13 rps**
Military	9 rps
Musical	**7 rps**
Peasant	12 rps
Physical	**7 rps**
School of Thought	9 rps
Seafaring	**12 rps**
Social	25 rps
Sorcerous	**free**
Special	18 rps

Wises Restricted

Wises may not be folded into the Sorcery skill. They are not a part of its practical magic application.

Adopting Schools of Magic in Play

Players may have their characters learn new schools of magic in play. Consult the table below and note the Adoption Obstacle for the particular school. The obstacle must be divided into an obstacle for a Will test and an obstacle for a Resources test. The obstacle number may be split in any fashion, with a minimum value of one.

In order to learn a school, the mage must find someone or some*thing* willing to divulge this knowledge. No test need be made by this entity. The player tests his Will to learn the school and Resources to make an offering.

Practical Schools of Magic	Adoption Obstacle
Academic	8
Artisan	6
Artist	4
Craftsman	9
Forester	8
Martial	6
Medicinal	7
Military	5
Musical	4
Peasant	6
Physical	4
School of Thought	5
Seafaring	6
Social	13
Sorcerous	—
Special	9

For example, the Craftsman school is listed with an Adoption Obstacle of 9. This may be split into an Ob 4 Will test and an Ob 5 Resources test or an Ob 2 Will test and an Ob 7 Resources test or in any other fashion the player sees fit.



Adoption Time

Adopting a new school of magic requires one full skill practice cycle for that category. No other skills may be practiced or learned during that time. Both tests must be made during that span of game time.

If I want to adopt the peasant school, I must practice it for three months.

If both tests succeed, the character may now cast spells in this school of magic.

Will Failure

If the Will test is failed, the character cannot adopt this school.

Resources Failure

If the Resources test is failed, the character has researched or uncovered a perverted version of the school. Resources is taxed as normal. In addition, the margin of failure for the test is added as an obstacle penalty when casting spells in the school.

If I fail the Resources test to adopt the Peasant school of magic by one, I have a +1 Ob penalty to all Sorcery tests in that school.

This perversion can only be corrected by completely relearning the school from another practical magician with a higher skill exponent who knows the school.

Being Taught the Right Way

If a practical magician learns a perverted school, another magician may attempt to undo the damage with instruction. The teach must know the school being taught and have a Sorcery exponent higher than the student.

Test Instruction. The obstacle is 3 plus the level of perversion. Each successful test reduces the level of perversion by one.

Tax

When casting a Practical Magic spell, the caster must resist tax equal to the Sorcery skill test obstacle. Test the caster's Forte against the skill test obstacle. In the case of a versus test, the Sorcerer's Forte test obstacle is equal the number of successes rolled by his opponent. If the test is open, then the tax obstacle is 1.



If the Forte test is passed, there is no ill effect. If the test is failed, Forte is temporarily reduced by a number of dice equal to the margin of failure. If Forte reaches zero, the character is incapacitated.

If the Sorcery test is successful, he passes out *after* completing his task. If the test is failed, he passes out *before* completing the task.

If I use my Sorcery to pass an Ob 3 History test, I must also test my Forte against Ob 3. If I roll two successes, my Forte is temporarily reduced by one die.

Use the standard tax recovery rules described in the Sorcery chapter of the Burning Wheel.

No Turning Back

Once you start using magic in place of a given skill for a Duel of Wits, Range and Cover, Fight or any other series test, you cannot return to the mundane for any instance of that skill until the end of the conflict. A sorcerer player can opt not to test if he feels that the tax would be too much for him, but in this case any opponent would get to test against him unopposed for that action.

Practically Gifted

At the outset of your campaign, you may decide if Practical Magic can be used with or without the Gifted trait. If used with the trait, it's a rare art just like Sorcery in standard Burning Wheel. This has the additional effect of making magic very low-key for the campaign world.

If used without the Gifted trait, magic is more easily accessed, but since this isn't a powerful art, it shouldn't be overwhelming. Rather, it has the effect of creating a magic-rich world in which many different types of people know a little sorcery. If you limit the schools of magic available, individual groups will have magical specialties and unique flavor.

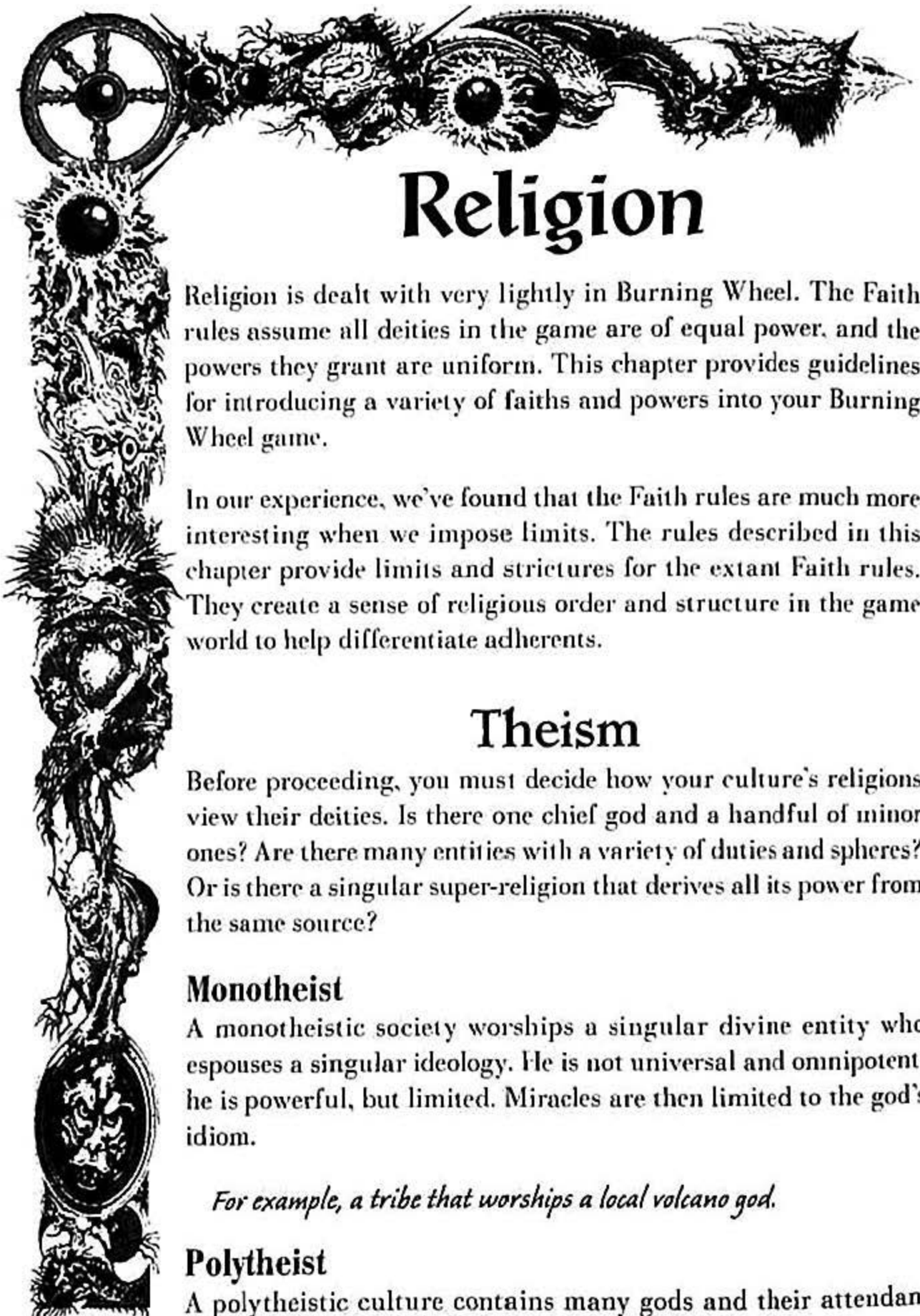
Sorcerous Skill Practical Magic

The sorcerous skill category for Practical Magic is intended to allow the mage to have access to Alchemy, Aura Reading and Circination through his Sorcery skill. It is not intended that the wizard have access to Death Art, Enchanting, Summoning, Art Magic, Spirit Binding or any other full-blown art through Practical Magic. However, we recognize that by

default, the literal description of Practical Magic allows access to all sorcerous skills and hence those arts. Allowing that loophole to remain makes Practical Magic the supreme magical art. Experiment with that loophole at your own risk!

If you use practical magic sorcerous skills, I recommend making all sorcerous tests *not* open-ended. Make truly magical acts hard, requiring time and investment. Whereas magic in the mundane world has a bit of unpredictability to it.





Religion

Religion is dealt with very lightly in Burning Wheel. The Faith rules assume all deities in the game are of equal power, and the powers they grant are uniform. This chapter provides guidelines for introducing a variety of faiths and powers into your Burning Wheel game.

In our experience, we've found that the Faith rules are much more interesting when we impose limits. The rules described in this chapter provide limits and strictures for the extant Faith rules. They create a sense of religious order and structure in the game world to help differentiate adherents.

Theism

Before proceeding, you must decide how your culture's religions view their deities. Is there one chief god and a handful of minor ones? Are there many entities with a variety of duties and spheres? Or is there a singular super-religion that derives all its power from the same source?

Monotheist

A monotheistic society worships a singular divine entity who espouses a singular ideology. He is not universal and omnipotent; he is powerful, but limited. Miracles are then limited to the god's idiom.

For example, a tribe that worships a local volcano god.

Polytheist

A polytheistic culture contains many gods and their attendant religions. Each deity rules over a sphere of power. There are ranks of deities—chief deity, deity, minor deity.

In these cultures, the priest has a patron who favors him, but he may call upon the aid of other powers so long as he performs the proper rituals.



Supertheist

Supertheism describes a single, overarching, all-encompassing ideology. Divine power is universal, and all power is derived from a single source. Using Burning Wheel's unadulterated Faith mechanics produces a supertheistic culture. Even if there are multiple gods in play, all entities have the same power and influence.

The Spheres of Gods

In monotheistic and polytheistic cultures, deific power comes in many forms—gods of war, fire and law.

To simplify the myriad possibilities, we've divided the domains of divine power into three spheres: Nature, the Human Condition and Society. Nature encompasses the natural world outside of humanity's control. The Human Condition describes what we are individually, for good or for ill. Society describes what we, as groups, do. Use these spheres to design deities for your campaign. The list is by no means exhaustive, so feel free to add elements to it.

Nature

Fire, Wind, Oceans, Water, Earth, Sun, Fertility, Time, Volcanoes, Sky, Mountain, Chaos, Ice, Darkness, the Moon, the Underworld, Grain, Spring, Twilight, Dawn, Rain, Storms, Thunder, Earthquakes, Rivers, Hills.

The Human Condition

Love, War, Luck, Betrayal, Revenge, Work, Labor, Marriage, Poetry, Knowledge, Family, Hunger, Famine, Plenty, Death, Birth, Childhood, Adulthood, Illness, Health, Honor, Fear, Courage, Forethought, Order, Discord, Harmony, Justice, Grief, Joy, Sex, Anger.

Society

Contracts, the Written Word, Travel, Trade, Law, Military, Harvest, Protection, Medicine, Augury, Magic, Agriculture, Trade, Temples, Necropoli, Ships, Markets, Roads, Craft, Architecture, Crime.



The Power of Gods

Gods are broken down into three levels of power: chief deities, deities and minor deities.

Chief Deities

These are singular entities who head up a whole pantheon or exist on their own as the sole representatives of their religion. They're powerful. When determining their nature, choose one domain from each sphere, plus at least two more domains from any of the three.

Odin, Zeus and Ahura Mazda are examples of chief deities. Odin's spheres are justice, magic, the sky, death and family (in the form of the All-Father).

Deities

Deities have one domain in each of the three spheres.

Athena, Thor and Angra Mainyu are examples of deities.

For example, the Roman god Vulcan is the god of fire (Nature), the god of smithing (Society) and is tied to the harvest (Human Condition)—both in ripening it with his heat and protecting it from fire.

Minor Deities

Minor deities control one domain in one of the spheres.

Thetis is one of the 50 Nereids, a sea nymph and the mother of Achilles. Her domain is the Aegean Sea.

Dagr is the god of day. He is the son of Delling, the god of twilight. His mother is Nótt, the goddess of night.

Ammit is she who dwells in the Hall of Ma'at. Her domain is divine retribution. When Abubis weighs the hearts of the dead, those who fail are given to her to devour.

Faith in the Nature of God

Once you have a god and his spheres of power delineated, you have also described the sphere of influence for his worshippers' Faith abilities. This doesn't restrict the categories of miracles described on pages 524 and 525 of the Burning Wheel. It does restrict where and how those



miracles can be performed. Gods of oceans are diminished on land; gods of revenge are only empowered when their followers are seeking vengeance and not altruism.

Divine Afflictions

Afflictions are curses and hindrances handed down from the gods for angering them with your mortal concerns. These rules, if used, replace the standard rules for failure for Faith.

If a priest fails a Faith test, the GM has two options. He may give him a pass and inform him that his patron has failed to heed his cries. The failure has no additional adverse effect. Or he may hit him with an affliction! Use one of the following:

Empower Thine Enemies!

Your prayers to your god have angered him/her/it. Your temerity is inexcusable. To teach you a lesson, rather than grant you aid, he empowers one of his more favored, who happens to be your enemy.

The GM grants persona points equal to the Faith test's margin of failure to one character of his choosing. This character must be opposed to the faithful character's goals. He may be a PC or NPC.

Confronting a death artist, I fail a crucial Faith test by three. The GM decides that my cries were heard by the dark gods. He immediately gives the death artist three persona points to use against me.

Tax Thine Allies

How dare you question the power of the gods? Your temerity causes the very vitality to be sapped from your allies. See how you've caused them to suffer! If the spell is failed, the GM may call for an immediate tax test to be made by one of the character's *allies*. This poor soul can be a player character or a GM-controlled character. He must pass a Forte test with an obstacle equal to the obstacle of the Faith test. Margin of failure temporarily reduces Forte. If Forte is reduced to zero, the character is incapacitated. If Forte is reduced below zero, the character also evinces stigmata and suffers wounds. The wound is pips equal to the obstacle multiplied by each die below zero.

So a tax test for a minor miracle (Ob 5) that reduces Forte two below zero knocks him out and does a B10 wound to the character.

Awful Revelation

Your patron stuns you with an awful revelation. The GM may call for the faithful to make a Steel test. The character's hesitation is increased by the margin of failure of the Faith test. If the test is failed, the player may not Run Screaming or Stand and Drool from this revelation. He may only Swoon or Fall Prone (and beg for mercy).

Enmity

Such profane utterances offend the faithful! The GM may turn a relationship or named Circle on the priest character's sheet from favorable to hateful or rivalrous. This invokes the Enmity Clause conditions for Duel of Wits! If no relationship is available, the GM may assign one instead. Failure by one success indicates a minor relationship. Failure by two or three successes indicates a important relationship. Failure by four or more indicates a powerful relationship.

Infamy

Your arrogance defies reason! The deity curses you for having idly called upon his power. The GM assigns you an infamous reputation. The reputation is of a value equal to or less than the margin of failure, at a maximum of 3D.

Isolation

Now you must walk in the desert alone. The worst affliction the deity can impose on his follower is to cut him off from the divine conduit. On the condition of a failed Major Miracle test, the GM may impose *isolation* upon this character or an allied Faithful character. The isolated character may not call upon the powers of this deity again until he has atoned for this sin. He must take the Lost Faith trait until he either performs a ritual of atonement or satisfies the requirements of the Lost Faith trait.

Curses

The Curse is a new Faith miracle. It can be used by any of the faithful on anyone who is opposed to the religion. It cannot be used on other faithful members of your religion, no matter your differences of opinion.

Curse—Ob 3. This miracle summons the power of the gods to hurt or hinder blasphemers! It adds +1 Ob to one of the target's abilities of the player's choosing for the duration of the scene.



Rituals

The faithful may alleviate certain divine afflictions—enmity, infamy and isolation—by performing the proper rituals to propitiate his god.

Test the Rituals skill. The obstacle for the ritual is one less than the Faith test obstacle that got him into trouble in the first place. The player may get help and may use linked tests from Doctrine or Resources.

If you earned your isolation from an attempted major miracle (Ob 10), it is an Ob 9 Rituals test to atone.

If the player does not have the Rituals skill, he may hire a priest to perform the ritual for him. In this case, he must pass a Resources test to fund the ritual. The obstacle to donate to the priest's cause is the same as the failed Faith test obstacle.

Faith in Dead Gods

The gods you follow are long fallen, given way—pushed aside, perhaps even murdered—by the new gods. But even in death, the power of Dead Gods still resonates across time and civilization. A faded echo of power still rumbles through the bowels of humanity, and it is to this frequency the faithful are attuned.

Faith in Dead Gods is a variant of the Faith rules. You may replace the Faithful trait and Faith emotional attribute with the Faith in Dead Gods trait and emotional attribute. This attribute behaves in a manner similar to Faith. Use the following rules for the specific characteristics of the ability.

The power of your dead gods is diminished, and faith in them only grants the faithful miraculous power over himself and other believers. The character may heal the believing sick, and bend the minds of the believing wayward. However, he has no dominion over non-believers and apostates—he cannot affect them with the power of the dead ones.

Starting Faith in Dead Gods

Use the starting Faith questions. The shade of Faith is that of the character's Will.



Faith in Dead Gods in Play

Faith in Dead Gods only affects the character himself and other believers. These believers must have an appropriate Belief that clearly states they adhere to the doctrine that the faithful preaches. It otherwise is tested and advances like Faith.

The Limitations of Faith in Dead Gods

The faithful may call for blessing, curse, aid, boon, guidance, minor miracle and inspiration. He may not call for an intercession, miracle, purification, hindrance or consecration.

The Twists of Faith

The faithful has access to two other miracles of moribund power. Hypnotism may be used on non-believers.

Hypnotism (Ob = Victim's Will)

The faithful may channel the siren call of the dead gods through his eyes and speech. Make a Faith in Dead Gods test at an obstacle equal to the victim's Will. If successful, the victim hesitates for two actions and will obey one simple, direct command from the faithful. This requires a few moments of peace alone with the victim.

Sublime Transformation (Ob 5)

The priest of the Old Ones may assume the form of an animal representative of the physical qualities of his patron. In this form, he retains his own thought and philosophy. Use the appropriate stat block for the animal from the Creature Codex PDF.

Closer to God

As his Faith in the Dead Gods rises, the faithful grows closer to his ancestors. Time seems to fold around him and he begins to exist in the old temple as if it were new. Once his Faith in Dead Gods reaches exponent 10, the faithful joins his strange deities in the void in which they reside.

Dealing with Deities

If a situation ever arises in play in which a character must confront a deity, use the following traits liberally for the divine beings. Minor deities all have the Force of Nature trait. Deities have the Higher Power trait. Chief deities have the I Am God trait.

Force of Nature *Dt* 7 pts

This entity is tied into the very fabric of time and tide. His will is a force of nature. If this entity should ever lose a Duel of Wits against a being of equal or lesser stature, he receives a minor compromise in addition to the compromise determined by the state of his opponent's body of argument.

Higher Power *Dt* 9 pts

This deity governs over spheres of nature, society and humanity. He is potent and revered. If this entity should ever lose a Duel of Wits against a being of equal or lesser stature, he receives a compromise in addition to the compromise determined by the state of his opponent's body of argument.

I Am God *Dt* 12 pts

Chief Deities rule over gods, men and all the creatures of their many spheres. Powerful beyond understanding, they are not to be trifled with. If this entity should ever lose a Duel of Wits against a being of equal or lesser stature, he receives a major compromise in addition to the compromise determined by the state of his opponent's body of argument.



Art Magic

Art Magic is a variant of the standard Sorcery mechanics presented in the Burning Wheel. This system does not use a set spell list. Instead, the sorcerer gathers his art, skill and inspiration together and calls upon the eldritch powers to obey his will and aid him as he requires.

This art can't recreate all of the effects of standard Sorcery. We have omitted certain big effects, and it's not nearly as destructive as Sorcery. However, it is more versatile.

This system is challenging to use. The sorcerer player must think of the outcome of his spell before he can cast. He must envision the result, not only in terms of eldritch and arcana, but in the form of a game-mechanical effect. This takes some practice, but once the player masters it, he may never want to leave the warm embrace of Art Magic.

Sorcerers Use Sorcery

To build a spell using Art Magic, the sorcerer player must first choose the effect, breadth and duration for the spell. Once those facets are chosen, determine if his school of magic applies. Next, the player must either name the spell or speak a bit of the incantation. These steps determine the obstacle for the spell and any advantage dice available. Test Sorcery plus the advantage dice against the obstacle. If the test is successful, then the spell has its intended effect. If failed, the GM may choose the consequences.

Sorcery, not Sorcery

Art Magic is accessed through the standard Sorcery skill. When using Art Magic, the rules for standard Sorcery are replaced with these rules. Do not use any of the rules in the standard Sorcery chapter unless otherwise instructed to do so in this chapter.

We strongly recommend against having Art Magic and Sorcery in your game at the same time.

Gifted

Characters must be Gifted to use Art Magic.

Effects

What does the sorcerer want his spell to do? There are a host of effects to choose from in Art Magic: Hinder, Advantage, Arcane Knowledge, Sorcerous Weapon, Destroy with Sorcerous Fire, Evoke, Arcane Action, Illusion, Trait and Transform. Multiple effects can be combined in a single spell.

Hinder

The magician may hinder one or more of the target's abilities. When using this effect, the player must name which specific ability (or abilities, depending on the breadth of the spell) he is targeting.

Hindrance can manifest as commanding branches to entangle, conjuring illusions to blind, or casting diseases or afflictions on your target.

Hinder Effect	Casting Obstacle
+1 Ob	Ob 2
+2 Ob	Ob 3
+3 Ob	Ob 5

Advantage

The sorcerer may use his art to grant himself and his allies aid. Using this effect, he may add advantage dice to stats, skills, Steel, Resources, Circles or stride (stride is increased by 1 per advantage die added). Multiple abilities may be targeted using the breadth modifier.

Advantage can manifest as a favorable wind in the sails, a burst of strength, a flash of insight, a quickening of the pulse or the blessing of spirits and gods.

Advantage Effect	Casting Obstacle
+1D	Ob 2
+2D	Ob 3
+3D	Ob 4

Recursive Curse

A Sorcerer may not directly or indirectly give advantage dice to Sorcery, Enchanting, Summoning, Spirit Binding, Death Art or any other similar spell casting art.



Arcane Knowledge

The sorcerer may plumb the wells of magic in his search for knowledge. To use the Arcane Knowledge effect, test Sorcery. In this case, Sorcery counts as a proxy for any academic skill in the skill list. The obstacle for the effect is the same as the skill test obstacle for the academic skill, plus breadth and duration.

Sorcerous Weapon

The sorcerer may summon forth an eldritch weapon to wield against his enemies! He may call forth the sorcerous equivalent of a sword, spear, axe or mace. This may be wielded in Fight like a normal weapon—it requires use of a weapon skill or Beginner's Luck. Rather than using Power as a base for the weapon damage, use the sorcerer's Will exponent. Add the weapon power from the appropriate conjured weapon. Also, use the weapon's length, speed, Add and VA categories for the appropriate weapon type.

Burning Spear of Arcane Fury

With an Ob 1 Sorcery test, the wizard may conjure to his hand an eldritch (but run of the mill) spear, sword or mace ringed in arcane fire. The player must choose which weapon he desires before the spell is cast. To make the weapon superior quality, increase the obstacle by +2 Ob. The weapon may also be conjured as a spirit weapon. To do so, increase the casting obstacle by +2 Ob.

Death's Axe

This spell effect summons forth a shimmering silver black axe. The obstacle is 4. Use the stats for the Sweet Axe. The weapon may also be conjured as a spirit weapon at +2 Ob.

Destroy with Sorcerous Fire!

The sorcerer chants violent and profane syllables as white fire jets from his fingertips! Base Ob 4. Must be combined with the One Test Duration if being used to harm characters. Otherwise, any other duration is applicable to set up walls of magic fire. May not be used on Self. Damage as follows: Sorcerer's Will as base Power, VA 2, Die of Fate as a bow. Successes may be used to increase damage (+1 Power per extra success), increase the VA (two successes for +1 VA) or modify the Die of Fate (one success for +1 DoF). Weapon Length: Longest. Range: as hunting bow.



Illusion

A sorcerer may use his magic to create illusions to confuse or deceive. Make a versus test between Sorcery and the victim's Perception (with the attendant double obstacle penalty). Be sure to add obstacle penalties to the Sorcery test for breadth and duration. If the sorcerer wins the versus test, his victim believes the illusion to be true.

This spell cannot be used to harm its victims or create perfect simulacra. It may only be used to frighten, confuse, deceive, bamboozle or otherwise fool them into thinking something is real when it is not. Illusion costs three actions in Fight.

Evoke

Using the Evoke effect, the sorcerer can force a versus test between his Sorcery skill and a target's physical stat, martial or physical skill or the Health attribute. When using this effect, the sorcerer must declare his intent to shove, grab, immobilize, knock down or similar. He may not use this effect to directly injure the target. Any other effects of this spell come from the results of the physical reaction of the target—if he is pushed into a freezing pond, for example.

A wizard could use the Evoke effect to keep a team of Orcs from pulling up a tree: Sorcery versus Tree Pulling. He could stop an enemy sorcerer from being able to draw enough breath to cast a spell himself: Sorcery versus Health. Or he could knock a bird off its perch: Sorcery versus Speed.

To cast the spell, make a versus test between Sorcery and the target. Be sure to add the obstacle modifiers for breadth and duration.

Evoke spells cost two actions to perform in Fight.

Arcane Action

Using the Arcane Action effect, the sorcerer may overcome the material world around him with his arcane power. Sorcery may be used to pass any simple physical test—pushing, leaping, grabbing, thrusting. The obstacle for this effect is 1 plus the obstacle of the test at hand. Success indicates that the wizard has passed the test as if he had been testing the appropriate ability. Failure on the skill test also counts as a failed spell!

Using this, the sorcerer may strike an unsuspecting opponent with a sword or climb a wall.

Trait

Using this spell effect, the sorcerer may grant the target access to a trait from the general Trait List in the Burning Wheel or the Monstrous Trait List from this book. Ob 1 plus the trait point cost for a beneficial effect. Ob 2 plus trait cost for a curse or detrimental effect. Unpriced lifepath traits in the individual character stock chapters are Ob 4. Common traits from the eight existing character stocks are Ob 5. Call-ons may

not be so granted. Neither can you grant Gifted, Faithful, Loathsome and Twisted, Essence of the Earth or any similar defining common trait.

Transform

A wizard may transform himself into an animal. Obstacles are as follows: Mundane, harmless creature (like a bird or a fish), Ob 3. Mundane, effective or threatening creature (like a wolf or a bear), Ob 4. The wizard is completely transformed into that creature. He may not cast other spells while so changed.

To transform another it's Ob 1 plus the victim's Forte, plus a +1 Ob penalty per difference in stature from the original form to the new one.

Changing a Dragon (Gigantic Stature) to a bird (Small Stature) is a base obstacle 13 (1 plus G10 Forte plus 2, assuming our wizard has black shade Sorcery) plus four for the difference in stature: Ob 17, plus breadth and duration. Good luck!

Breadth

Breadth describes how much the spell affects. Does it affect the caster, or the whole town? Choose the breadth of your spell from the list below.

Breadth of Target	Obstacle Modifier
Self (One Ability)	—
Single Target, One Person (One Ability)	+1 Ob
Group, Handful, Two Abilities	+3 Ob
Crowd, Copse, Cluster, Three Abilities	+4 Ob
Village, Pond, Four Abilities	+6 Ob
Town, Countryside, Castle, Five Abilities	+7 Ob
City, Forest, Six Abilities	+8 Ob
Mountain, Plain, All Abilities	+9 Ob
Sky, Ocean	+10 Ob

The parenthetical "(One Ability)" listed with Self and One Person indicates you can affect one ability on yourself for no penalty or one ability on another character for +1 Ob. If you're affecting an object, use the Single Target breadth.

Breadth is cumulative. If you wanted to affect the Faith and Will of an entire city, it would be Two Abilities +3 Ob of a City +8 Ob = 11 Ob.

Duration of Spell

There are five possible durations for an Art Magic spell: one test, conflict, session, adventure and campaign. Choose the duration for your intended effect from the list below.

Duration	Obstacle Modifier
One Test (according to Let It Ride)	—
Conflict (Range and Cover, Fight or Duel of Wits)	**+1 Ob**
Session	**+2 Ob**
Adventure	**+3 Ob**
Campaign	**+4 Ob**

A *one test* duration indicates the effect lasts for a single roll or a series of rolls as per the Let It Ride rule—anything short of a conflict like Fight, Range and Cover or Duel of Wits. One goal, no change of venue, no introduction of new problems.

A *conflict* duration indicates the effect lasts for one Fight, Range and Cover, Duel of Wits, Pursuit or Chase. This is a nice hefty duration, because those mechanics indicate that the character is doing something important.

A *session* duration is the simplest to measure. The effect lasts until the end of the session. That's it.

The *adventure* duration remains in effect until the group has completed some agreed-upon future goal—slay the dragon, rescue the princess, break into the bank.

Campaign durations usually last until the group has accomplished a great goal and then drifts off into retirement. It's not much of a limit at all. Typically the game's over at the end of the campaign. But campaign duration does have a cool flavor, especially if you end up coming back to the game later and pulling those characters out of retirement.

Lasting Effects

The effect may last beyond the duration of the spell if the spell changed the environment in some way. For example, you may conjure a scourging fire to burn a forest. After one scene, the fire is gone, but the forest remains burnt.

Casting Time

The casting time for a spell is a number of actions equal to its obstacle. Spells that cause versus tests have their own rules: Evoke costs two actions to cast, Illusion costs three.

In Fight, use the Cast Spell action. In Range and Cover, A sorcerer may cast up to 20 actions of one spell during one volley instead of performing one of the standard actions. Dangerous!

Casting Under Pressure

A sorcerer must complete a spell uninterrupted and unimpeded. Therefore, a sorcerer may not be locked, injured, knocked off his feet or fail a Steel test while casting. If interrupted, the spell automatically fails at the full margin of failure (and note that tax at this level can possibly kill the sorcerer, so these are serious consequences).

A sorcerer may cast a spell while otherwise on the move, in a fight or argument.

Schools of Magic

Using Art Magic, sorcerers are trained at various schools and taught to favor one form of magic over another. To form your school, select three effects of the ten offered. For example, evocation, illusion and arcane knowledge. These are the areas in which you specialize.

Name your school. Call it something esoteric and wizardly.

Take the seven remaining effects and order them from 1 to 7—from most desired to least desired. These are the magical arts outside of your ability. You may cast spells outside of your school, but the order indicates the obstacle penalty added on top of the spell's obstacle—from +1 to +7 Ob.

Joining Schools of Magic in Play

To join a school of magic during the course of a game, a player must find a member of the school who is willing to instruct him on its theories and methods. To learn from this teacher, the student must forge a mystical connection with him: The student must pass a Will test with an obstacle equal to 10 minus the teacher's Will. If this test is passed, the sorcerer player learns one effect from his mentor's school and now may cast



it without obstacle penalty. Do not reorder or reshuffle the remaining unlearned effects. You can only know a number of effects equal to or less than your current Sorcery skill exponent.

If you fail this test, you cannot learn this art magic effect. Ever.

Founding a New School of Magic

A sorcerer may found his own school of magic. This requires a year of time and an Ob 5 Research test. Symbology, Astrology and Obscure History are acceptable FoRKs.

If you pass the test, after the time allotted, the sorcerer founds a new school of magic and may remove the obstacle penalty from one effect outside of his current school.

If you fail the test, the sorcerer has founded a corrupted or distorted version of the school. All spells in that school are cast at an obstacle penalty equal to the margin of failure of the Research test.

For example, if you're trying to found the School of Brilliant Oratorical Techniques and you fail your Research test by two, all advantage effects cast in that school suffer a +2 Ob on top of the penalty for their being outside of your starting school.

Once a school is founded, all appropriate spells must be cast through that school, even if they come at a penalty.

Learning Art Magic in Play

If your character learns art magic during the course of the campaign, he starts in the school of his mentor (or from the tradition of the text, if taught from a book). Your three starting effects are the same as your mentor.

Incantation

If the sorcerer player names his spell with an appropriately florid name or offers a bit of chant or verse for the spell, then he gains +1D to cast the spell.

Consequences

Art Magic has five possible prices that can be paid for each spell. If the sorcerer fails to properly cast an Art Magic spell, he suffers one of the following consequences: Tax, Hindrance, Enmity, Infamy or an Unintended Effect.

The GM applies the consequences of the Sorcery based on the margin of failure and his judgement of the situation.

Tax

If the spell is failed, the GM may call for a tax test (as per the standard rules). The sorcerer must pass a Forte test with an obstacle equal to the obstacle of the spell. Margin of failure temporarily reduces Forte. If Forte is reduced to zero, the character is incapacitated. If Forte is reduced below zero, the character suffers a wound equal to the obstacle multiplied by each die below zero. Sorcerers recover taxed Forte the rules described in the Sorcery chapter of the Burning Wheel.

Hindrance

The GM may apply an obstacle penalty equal to the margin of failure. The hindrance has the same duration and breadth as the intended spell.

Enmity and Infamy

A spell gone awry causes friends to become enemies! When using this failure condition, the GM must describe how the casting goes wrong. The spell has an effect, but it's not exactly what was planned.

The GM may change a relationship or named Circle on the sorcerer character's sheet from favorable to hateful or rivalrous. This invokes the Enmity Clause conditions for Duel of Wits! If no relationship is present, the GM may assign one. Failure by one success indicates a minor relationship. Failure by two or three successes indicates an important relationship. Failure by four or more indicates a powerful relationship.

Alternately, the sorcerer can gain an infamous reputation among people, spirits or animals. If the spell is failed by one to three successes, the GM may assign the character an infamous reputation of a value equal to or less than the margin of failure in an appropriate sphere of the GM's choice (people, spirits or animals). The GM can also compound any existing infamous reputations or even turn a positive reputation to one of infamy due to the failed spell.



Even the birds have heard about what a bastard you are.

Unintended Effect

The GM twist the intent of the spell so that it has an unintended (and unhappy) effect. The unintended effect could be that the original effect is not what was planned for. or the original spell doesn't activate at all. Instead birds fly from your mouth, or devils peel themselves from the walls or the house catches fire, etc. The only limit here is how evil your GM feels in the moment.

Weaving Magic into the Fiber of My Being

Using this mechanic, a Sorcerer may eventually weave the fabric of spells and incantations into his very being. If he casts a spell successfully a number of times equal to 10 minus his Will, he has "woven" the spell. Thereafter, the player gains an additional +1D when casting the spell. This is in addition to other advantages like +1D for the Incantation rule. Any obstacle penalties for using a particular effect remain.

This rule is optional for Art Magic. It's beneficial to the sorcerer player, but it requires that he do a substantial amount of bookkeeping—he must track the spells he's cast and the number of times he's cast them. If the player doesn't want to do that, don't use this rule!

Versus Sorcery

The GM can call for Art Magic tests to be resolved using simple versus tests. The sorcerer player states the spell he's casting and declares his intent, then he makes the versus test. If he succeeds, he may describe how his magics have overcome his opponents.

This process mirrors the one described on page 425 of the Burning Wheel.

Bloody Sorcery

Sorcery can also be substituted for a martial skill in the Bloody Versus test described on pages 426-427 of the Burning Wheel. Sorcerer counts as using a *longer* length weapon and a shield.



Enchanting

Enchanting is the art of imparting an otherwise mundane object with magical properties. The skill can be used in one of two ways—to temporarily and quickly imbue an extant item with power, or to create and enchant a new item.

Imbuing

Imbuing requires the Enchanting skill, an Enchanting tool kit and another complementary skill.

Complementary Knowledge

When imbuing an item with power, the enchanter must use a complementary store of knowledge (or power) in order to guide his will. The complementary skill provides the spark of magic that the enchanter then blows on like an ember so it blossoms into fire. Complementary skills must be one of the following: Doctrine, Sing (or any other art), Folklore, Ancient History, Obscure History, Ancient Languages, Astrology, Demonology, Symbology or Empyrealia. One or more of these skills must be FoRKed into the Enchanting roll. The item being enhanced or the power being bestowed must relate to or draw from the complementary skill. Enchanting isn't enough. There must be art and knowledge as well.

Imbuing Process

The magician uses the Enchanting skill (plus FoRKs and help) for imbuing. The test is open-ended. Imbuing requires hours equal to the obstacle. The player can reduce time by working quickly or increase it by working carefully. The imbued power lasts for one test or series test. An item may be imbued for multiple effects with multiple rolls, but you must roll for each effect. Let It Ride doesn't count in this case!

Failure indicates that the item cannot hold the power. The time is wasted, but the materials remain.

You may not imbue an item to aid the Enchanting skill.



Imbuing Effects

Choose one of the following effects to imbue into your target object:

- Grant +1D advantage, Ob 3.
- Open-ended test for one ability when using the item, Ob 4.
- Negate a +1 Ob disadvantage when using the item, Ob 3. Use Ob 4 to negate a +2 Ob disadvantage and Ob 5 for a +3 Ob penalty.

Ramne the wizard brews up some special tea for his adventurer friends. When drunk, it negates the +1 Ob penalty for a Superficial wound.

Imbued Duration

In order to create the magical effect while imbuing, the magician must create an object—a concoction, a painted sigil, a delicate scroll, etc. The imbued magic remains until it's used or the item is damaged, destroyed or otherwise corrupted. Once lost, the magic is gone forever. The imbuing process must began again.

Antecedents

True Enchanting requires a core or root substance that possesses a similar nature to the power to be infused into the creation. This root substance is called an *antecedent*. In game terms, an antecedent is a trait extracted from a creature and repurposed for the enchantment.

Alchemy and Taxidermy

You do not use the Enchanting skill itself to extract antecedents. Alchemy or Taxidermy is used instead. Taxidermy requires a carcass; Alchemy requires significant sample portions of the creature. This is a process of extraction and preservation. It is delicate and difficult. If you do not follow the proper procedures (if the test is failed), the inherent power of the substance is lost.

Identifying Traits

The obstacles to identify the traits of a creature or substance using the Alchemy or Taxidermy skills are as follows: Character traits, Ob 1. Call-ons, Ob 2. Die traits, Ob 3.

Aura Reading may be used to identify traits as well. See the Magical Skills section for details on identifying traits using Aura Reading.



Extracting Antecedents

The obstacle to extract a trait for an antecedent is equal to the point cost of the trait. Unpriced lifepath traits are Ob 4 to extract.

Extracting Common Traits

Some creatures have certain traits as part of their body and soul. These are described in the Common Traits listing for each character stock. It is a flat Ob 3 Taxidermy or Alchemy test to extract a common trait.



Specific Antecedent for Each Specific Need

An antecedent is extracted for a specific enchantment. It cannot be used for more than one enchantment, nor can it be used for multiple purposes within the same item. A player must declare his intent—the nature of the enchantment—when extracting an antecedent.

An antecedent cannot be extracted for a Forte-enhancing enchantment and then later be used for an enchantment for rounding the Mortal Wound.

Enchanting

When a sorcerer player wishes to create an item of power, he tests his character's skill plus bonus dice accrued from the following choices: Vessel, Name, Antecedent, Effect, Internal Duration, External Duration, Trigger, Frequency of Use, Target, Side Effects, Recharge and Modularity. It's a big list with many options. A variety of interesting devices can be created!

Enchanting is separate from imbuing. You may not combine the two in a single item.

Enchanting Requirements and Restrictions

Enchanting requires the Enchanting skill, a tool kit, an antecedent and usually a vessel. There is no tax for Enchanting. Enchanting cannot use the Hastily, Carefully and Patiently rules as described in the Burning Wheel Sorcery chapter. It can use the Carefully, Patiently, Quickly rules for skill tests, though.

Choose from the following selections and questions to determine an obstacle and an amount of advantage dice to be used to create the item in question.

Vessels and Name

If the enchantment is designed for a specialized item like a sword or a shield, then that item must be created and infused with the antecedent during the enchantment. The proper skills, materials and tools are required to create this vessel. They can be part of the enchanter's repertoire or be accessed via help. If the item in question is just a mere bauble or trinket, no additional craft or materials are required.

Successfully creating a vessel to be enchanted grant +1D to the Enchanting roll only if you give the vessel a unique name.

Malerauex's Green Boots, the Staff of Heartwood or Dvalin's Bloody Gauntlets.

Antecedent Trait

The enchanter must obtain a trait which represents the source for his enchantment. The trait, separated from its source, is the antecedent. Antecedents are meant to be figurative and metaphorical, not literal. Use the following modifiers for Enchanting using certain antecedents:

- Character trait antecedent, +1 Ob.
- Call-on, no bonus or penalty.
- Die trait antecedent, +1D.

The blood of a character with the Evil trait could be used to make a compass that detects evil in others. The hair from the head of a child with the Aura of Innocence can be woven into a chain that renders the speaker glib. The husk of a B'hemah's Brass Skin can be used to forge some very potent armor!

Basic Enchantment Effects

There are 11 different effects an enchanter can bestow upon an item: make magic, advantage, obstacle, negate penalty, grant skill, grant stat, trait transference, test tweaks, weapon enchantments, magic armor and useful magical device. Multiple effects can be combined in a single enchantment.

Make Magic

An enchanter may invest his work with a dweomer or faerie fire. It casts no light and has no mechanical advantage, but each dweomer is unique to the enchanter who creates it, like a fingerprint. This is an Ob 1 effect.

Advantage

An enchanter may have his item bestow +1-3D advantage dice upon its user: to a stat, a skill, Health, Steel, Circles or Resources. The ability benefitted must be noted at the time of enchanting.

The obstacle is equal to 1 plus the advantage dice to be granted.

An enchanter may not create items which give advantage directly or indirectly to the Enchanting skill.



Obstacle

A magical device can impose an obstacle penalty upon its target. The obstacle penalty can be applied to a stat, a skill, Health, Steel, Circles or Resources. The ability targeted must be determined at the time of enchanting. The Enchanting obstacle is the same as the obstacle to be imposed—Ob 1, 2 or 3.

Rather than a set obstacle penalty, the item can impose a double obstacle penalty on a stat, a skill, Health, Steel, Circles or Resources. This is base Ob 4 for the Enchanting test.

Negate Penalty

An enchanter may negate obstacle penalties like dim light, Superficial Wounds or Obfuscate. The obstacle is 1 plus the value of the penalty.

Grant Skill

This effect allows the enchanted item to grant the bearer a skill he might not otherwise have. The obstacle is equal to the skill exponent to be granted. This skill must be possessed by the creature that was the source of the antecedent. If the bearer of the item already has the skill at a greater exponent, he gains no benefit from the enchantment. If he has the skill at a lesser exponent, he can let the item test or test himself. In this case, if the item tests, he may help it.

An enchanter may not create an item which grants the Enchanting skill.

Grant Stat

The magical object may grant a new stat exponent. The obstacle for this effect is 1 plus the exponent of the stat to be granted. The shade of the stat matches the enchanter's skill. The stat exponent must be represented in the stat line from the creature who was the source of the antecedent. The stat to be granted must be determined during the enchanting process. When used, this effect replaces the wielder's ability with that of the item.

Trait Transference

Use the trait transference enchanting effect for magic like flight, underwater breathing, flaming eyes, etc. Apply a trait's effects to the item, the wielder of the item or the target of the item. The trait must be a part of the antecedent source. Obstacle is equal to the point value of the trait. This may only grant character, cosmetic and die traits. Call-on traits may not be transferred. If a dual-purposed trait is transferred, only the non-call-on part works. If using an unpriced lifepath trait



from one of the existing character stocks, the obstacle is 4. If using a common trait from one of the character stocks, the obstacle is 5.

The Greed, Grief, Spite, Loathsome and Twisted, Gifted, Faithful and Chosen One traits may not be transferred.

Test Tweaks

The enchanter can imbue the item with a bit of fighting spirit stolen from the source creature for the antecedent. Thus you can create doors that resist being opened, pictures that seduce onlookers or gloves that grab things they shouldn't.

When activated, the item causes a versus test between itself and its target. The ability that the item uses comes from the source creature. During the enchanting process, choose a stat, skill, Health or Steel attribute that the item will challenge. This is an Ob 2 Enchanting effect.

Steel tweaks: Steel is not generally used in versus tests. If the enchanter wants to build a Steel tweak, he can use this effect obstacle, but no versus test is made. The item simply causes its target to make a standard Steel test.

Weapon Enhancements

The effectiveness of a weapon can be increased through Enchanting. There are six ways to modify a weapon: increase its VA, increase its weapon power, modify its weapon speed, reduce its add, modify its weapon length and turn it into a spirit weapon. This effect requires a vessel that is a weapon.

- *Increase VA*: Ob 1 plus value of the new VA.
- *Increase weapon power*: Ob 1 plus value of the new Power.
- *Modify weapon speed*: WS 1 to 2, Ob 2. WS 2 to 3, Ob 3. WS 3 to 2, Ob 2. WS 2 to 1, Ob 3.
- *Reduce add*: Ob 4.
- *Modify weapon length*: Magically reduce one weapon length, Ob 1. Magically increase one weapon length, Ob 2.
- *Spirit Weapon*: Make the weapon a spirit weapon so it can harm those of Spirit Nature, Ob 3.

Magic Armor

An item may be enchanted to confer armor protection upon its bearer. There are four body locations in Burning Wheel: head, arms, torso and legs. Use the following obstacles for type and location:



Protects as leather, +1 Ob per location. Plated Leather, +2 Ob per location. Chain, +3 Ob per location. Plated Chain, +4 Ob per location. Full Plate, +5 Ob per location.

The armor is run of the mill and may be damaged when 1s are rolled. The armor may be made Superior Quality for a cost of +2 Ob.

If an armor piece is destroyed, that piece loses any and all enchantments. Armor may be repaired using Enchanting or craftsman skills appropriate to the vessel. Obstacles are 1 plus the standard armor repair obstacles.

If you possess a coronet that provides helmet protection for the head and it is damaged, the Jeweler skill may be used to repair it.

Useful Magical Devices

Tools, Ob 2: Despite its unlikely appearance, this item may be used as *tools* for a specific skill.

Spell Matrix, obstacle equal to spell: Use the item to store a spell that can then be released when the wielder chooses. Once the magic is released, it's as if the spell has been cast at that moment. Use the spell's own effect, breadth, duration and area of effect. If appropriate, the owner of the spell matrix may direct the spell.

The obstacle to create a spell matrix is equal to the spell to be stored. The spell must then be cast into the item. It can be done at any time, not just during the enchanting process. Casting the spell into the item determines the results of the spell when it is finally released—margin of success, etc. Tax or other consequences are dealt with by the caster when the spell is initially cast, not when it is released. To release a spell from a spell matrix, the user must abide by the trigger. See the Trigger heading in this chapter.

Sustained spells may not be placed into a spell matrix unless the item is also a sustainer.

Sustainer, Ob 4: This item sustains one Sorcery spell. You choose its purpose when the sustainer is created or first activated. Thereafter it may only ever sustain that particular spell.

Once cast, the spell is sustained so long as the sustainer remains in contact with the sorcerer's skin. The sorcerer does not have to allocate a Will die to the spell. Also, the sustainer does not protect against tax. The sorcerer *must retest tax* as per the Power Still Flows Through Him rule.





To use a sustainer the mage simply casts a "Duration: Sustained" spell and then states, "I am putting Mage Light in my staff [or pendant, or ring, or whatever]." The spell is then considered maintained by the sustainer. The mage does not have to allocate a Will die to hold the spell.

Multiplier: This item may be used to increase a spell's area of effect, breadth or target of a spell on the following scale: Increase one level, +2 Ob. Increase two levels, +3 Ob. Increase three levels, +4 Ob. Increase four levels, +5 Ob. Increase five levels, +6 Ob. Multipliers must be enchanted with a specific spell in mind. They are not all-purpose devices. For standard Sorcery area of effects, use this list to determine the order: Caster, Single Target, Half Presence, Paces, Presence, Double Presence, Tens of Paces, Hundreds of Paces, Miles, Natural Effect, Tens of Miles. For Art Magic, use the breadth scale. This may not be used to affect the Enchanting skill.

Target

Whom does the effect affect?

Target of Enchantment	Obstacle Modifier
The Item Itself	**+1D**
Wielder of Item, One Ability	**—**
Single Target, One Ability	**+1 Ob**
Group, Handful, Two Abilities	**+3 Ob**
Crowd, Copse, Cluster, Three Abilities	**+4 Ob**
Village, Pond, Four Abilities	**+6 Ob**
Town, Countryside, Castle, Five Abilities	**+7 Ob**
City, Forest, Six Abilities	**+8 Ob**
Mountain, Plain, All Abilities	**+9 Ob**
Sky, Ocean	**+10 Ob**

The target groups are meant to be exclusive. You can affect a crowd of people or three abilities. If you want to bestow three abilities to a crowd of people, that's two separate targets that must be paid for individually: +4 Ob and +4 Ob.

Internal Duration—Enchantment Duration

How long does the item hold the enchantment? Does the enchantment fade over time? Does it have to be used within a certain time frame?



Enchantment Duration	Ob/Dice Modifier
Lasts until used and is then expended	—
Only lasts until the end of the session	+1D
Specific physical condition	+2D
Lasts until failed test	+1 Ob
Multiple uses	+1 Ob
Lasts until the end of the adventure	+2 Ob
Lasts until the end of the campaign	+3 Ob
Lasts forever	+4 Ob

Most of the Internal Durations are self-explanatory. The tricky ones are described below.

Specific Physical Condition

The item's power fails if a specific physical condition is met (or is unmet). Physical conditions are varied—the item can't be wet, the item can never touch the ground, the item must always be held, the owner may never refuse a handshake. This is the most dynamic duration category; it's a lot of fun. These conditions can heavily influence the behavior of the character. The enchanter can develop his own physical condition for his item. It must not be obscure, but neither should it be very common.

Failed Test

This item holds its enchantment until a specific test is failed. The enchanter may determine the nature of the test—what stat, skill or attribute is in question. The test or type of test must relate to the use of the item or to the antecedent. If an ability test of that type is failed while the character possesses the artifact, its power fades. It may not be used again unless it is recharged.

Multiple Uses

Items with the Multiple Uses internal duration hold their enchantment for a variable number of uses. Some may never run out, some expire after only a few uses. Each time the item is used after the first, roll a Die of Fate. If the die comes up a 1, the item's powers have expired. It cannot be used again unless it is recharged.

External Duration—Effect Duration

If the item's effect has an external duration, how long does that last? If your enchantment only affects the item itself—like a weapon or a piece of armor—do not use this category.



In other words, how long are you frozen if I hit you with my freezie wand?

Duration of Effect	Obstacle Modifier
No External Duration	—
One test/instantaneous	+1D
One conflict or series test	—
Session	+1 Ob
Adventure (multiple sessions)	+2 Ob
Campaign	+3 Ob
Forever	+4 Ob

Trigger

What activates or triggers the enchantment? How is the magic evoked from the item? Potions benefit from the somatic component bonus—one must drink them. A magic wand that emits bolts of fire at the caster's mental command requires the Mind Meld penalty. Magic swords merely need to be held, so they don't have a trigger.

Enchantment Trigger	Ob/Dice Modifier
No trigger	—
Mind meld/thought control	+2 Ob
Verbal, somatic or conditional trigger	+1D
Must be touching bearer	+1 Ob
Crazy ritual	+2D

No Trigger

Use this entry for items that don't require triggers, like certain magic swords, magic helmets, sustainers or multipliers. Do not get cheeky with this and create wands of ever-burning-gouts of fire.

Mind Meld or Thought Control

This trigger allows the bearer to merely think his commands and the item will obey. This requires two tandem actions in Fight or Range and Cover to trigger. It's nearly instantaneous!

Verbal, Somatic or Conditional Trigger

The item requires that a command be spoken or gesture performed before it can be used. The creator may determine which is more appropriate. If used in Fight, this trigger requires actions equal to half the Enchanting obstacle. These count as spell casting actions.



Alternately, this trigger can be used for a condition like "when it rains" or "when someone opens the door."

Must Be Touching Bearer
In order for the magic to be active in this item, it must be held in the proper fashion so that it touches the bearer's flesh—either held in the hand, worn as a ring or hung on a pendant around the neck.

Crazy Ritual
The crazy ritual requires that the user perform some lengthy task before the item can be used. The task takes at least its own scene to perform—it cannot be performed in a conflict. The task also requires a successful test of its own using Doctrine, Ritual, Etiquette or something similar. The obstacle for the ritual is 2. If the test is failed, the item may not be used for its intended effect.

The creator of the item may describe the format of the crazy ritual and the skill needed to activate the item.

Recharge!

Most enchanted items lose their power after a period of time or number of uses. The internal duration determines how much power the item has in it. Once that power is used up—once the duration expires—the item is rendered inert.

The enchanter may build a charm into his creation so that, once the internal duration expires, he may recharge it. Adding the recharge option to an item increases the Enchanting obstacle by +1 Ob.

The creator must detail how the item is recharged. This process must require a test of an appropriate ability, a quest for some rare item or a change of ownership.

Modularity

Would you like to design the item so it can be further enchanted and enhanced in the future? If yes, increase the Enchanting obstacle by +1 Ob.

If the modularity option is chosen, further enchantments can be added to the item without having to create a new vessel. However, additional antecedents are required for further enchantments. If modularity is not chosen, the item or vessel is closed off to further enhancements.









Heroic and Supernatural Gear

Creating heroic (gray shade) and supernatural (white shade) enchantments requires heroic and supernatural skill (even if acquired by temporary means) and a heroic or supernatural antecedent.

A device created with a heroic or supernatural skill and antecedent takes on the shade of its creator.

A sword created with a temporary epiphany to gray shade and dragon's blood or giant's sinew is a gray weapon.

Or, you could make an item using a gray Enchanting skill and dæmon's hair, which would grant a G5 Disguise skill.

This grants the skill, stat and tweak abilities as the shade of the skill of the enchanter. Alternately, creating a weapon under these conditions brings forth a heroic or supernatural device, respective to the shade of the enchanter's skill.

Enchanted Failures: Sacrifice, Curses and Perversion

If the Enchanting roll is failed, the GM may choose one of the following results—Sacrifice, Curse or Perversion—appropriate to the item's nature and the margin of failure for the test.

In the case of Sacrifice and Curse, the enchantment counts as having succeeded and the magic has its intended effect in addition to the effects of failure. For Perversion, the GM may decide on a new, twisted effect for the item. It does not count as having succeeded in the intent.

If none of these options tickle the GM's fancy, he may opt to simply have the Enchanting test fail with no further consequences. Consequences can be such fun though.

Sacrifice

These corrupted items require a sacrifice in order to be used. In this case, the sacrifice counts as an additional trigger for the item. This sacrifice can come in a variety of forms: blood, wealth or harvest.





Blood

In order to squeeze an effect from the item, the user must either use it to spill blood or spill blood onto the item itself. Note the margin of failure from the Enchanting test:

Blood must be spilled	Margin of Failure
The user must inflict or sustain a superficial wound with the item	1
The user must inflict or sustain a light wound	2
The user must inflict or sustain a midi wound	3
The user must inflict or sustain a severe wound	4
The user must inflict or sustain a traumatic wound	5
Must inflict or sustain a mortal wound	6

You must inflict this injury on an intelligent being capable of feeling pain and suffering. The wielder may not tend to or shrug off the injury while the item is in use.

Wealth

If the item requires wealth as a sacrifice, the user must offer the item or the appropriate gods a certain amount of gold and gems. Note the margin of failure for the Enchanting test. This is the obstacle for Resources tests to sacrifice wealth to the item (or its patron gods).

Harvest

The enchantment may require an offering of harvest. The margin of failure from the Enchanting test is the obstacle for a Farming or Animal Husbandry test required to activate the item. This represents the necessity to harvest the grain and raise the livestock.

Harvest can be used with a margin of failure of five or less. Blood can be used with a margin of failure of up to six. Wealth can be used with any margin of failure.

Curses

The item can be cursed. A curse makes the item so desirable that it destroys the relationships of those who use it. A cursed item is coveted by its owner, who believes it to be mighty and powerful.

If the player wishes his character to give up the item, a Will test is required. The obstacle is equal to the Enchanting obstacle.

If, during the course of play, another character offers to purchase or trade for the item and is rebuffed by the owner, he too is cursed! He gains the benefit of the Enmity Clause when dealing with the bearer of the cursed item. Cursed items *always* cause a Greed test in Dwarves.

Perversion

A perversion twists the nature of the item. A perverted enchantment's effect changes to the opposite of the intention of the enchanter. If the item was meant to heal, it harms. If it was meant to protect, it makes vulnerable. If it was meant to aid, it hinders.

Corrupted and Marked Items

These sacrifices, curses and perversions all count as marked items as described under the Gift of Corruption heading in the Corruption chapter.

Enchanting Time

Enchanting takes days equal to the obstacle. You may reduce the time by working quickly. If the GM decides to use a straight failure result, the times are as follows: Failure by a margin of one to four successes requires the complete time to manufacture. Failure by five or more requires a day or so of mucking about before you make a complete mess of things.

If an Enchanting test is failed and the GM uses Sacrifice, Curse or Perversion mechanics, the test takes the full required time—days equal to the obstacle.

GM-Created Items

GMs may create items for their campaigns at will. Use the steps described in this chapter, but no Enchanting skill test is necessary. Be creative, but also be *conservative*. Magical artifacts are very potent in Burning Wheel.



Spirit Binding

Spirit Binding is the art of calling forth the spirits that dwell in the earth, sky, rivers, stones, rain, roads and even the homes of Men, Elves, Dwarves and Orcs.

Spirit Binding requires daring on the part of the character, a bit of imagination on the part of the player and a bit of luck on the dice. As you'll see, this form of magic differs substantially from Sorcery in game play. It is subtle and potent, and it comes with a price.

Spirit Binding has no set spells or list of spirits that the summoner can call. Instead, the summoner has a range of locations—determined by his lifepaths—in which he can bind spirits. The skill is as follows:

Spirit Binding Will

Spirits abound. They infuse the world around us, and those who know their secrets call them forth and bind them into service. Using this skill, a summoner binds a spirit and sets it to a task.

To summon and bind, the player totals his dice from Spirit Binding, a domain binding, a spirit mark, summoning circles and any offerings. He tests those dice against an obstacle that combines the spirit's Strength, the task, the summoner's own Immanence, the immediate need for the spirit and the scope of the domain affected. If successful, the summoner can name his task and reduce the amount of retribution the spirit will visit upon him. If failed, the summoner has angered the spirit and will suffer the consequences in either retribution or enmity.

Obstacles: See the Spirit Binding Obstacles and Spirit Services in this chapter.

FoRKs: Astrology. Linked tests are appropriate.

Skill Type: Sorcerous **Tools:** No.

Spirit Binding Process

When a player wishes to call on the spirit world for aid, he undertakes a series of short steps. Determine if the summoner is in one of his domains (see Domain Bindings). Total the dice from Spirit Binding, the appropriate domain binding, spirit marks, summoning circles (see Circination) and offerings (see Offerings). Determine the task the spirit is to perform, then determine the



necessary Strength of the spirit to be summoned. Consult the obstacles for Immanence, Need, Medium and Domain. Total the Strength and obstacle modifiers.

All of the dice rolled for a Spirit Binding test are open-ended.

Retribution, Not Tax

After the dice are cast for a Spirit Binding, whether the result is success or a failure, see the Retribution section. There is no tax for this magic, but there are consequences.

Spirit Binding Terminology

Nameless Spirits

Nameless spirits are entities born from the original elements of creation—the first river, the first sea, the first wind, the first mountain, the first road, the first fire—and have been broken down and spread across the earth through the millennia. They bear no resemblance to life as we know it. They are wild, willful, capricious and unpredictable forces of nature, tied directly to their domains. One who knows their ways can master the very environs.

These entities are not intelligent by human measure; they are not sympathetic and have no desire to befriend living creatures. They are nature. In order to command them—to tap their primordial power—one must use sturdy and clever magics. One must reach into their domains and bind the spirits to one's will!

Spirit Strength

A spirit's Strength determines both how old it is and how potent it will be when it manifests through its medium. Spirit Strength ranges from exponent 1 to 10. Whenever the spirit is tasked to accomplish something, use its Strength dice for the test. Spirit Strength dice are always open-ended.

Domain and Medium

A domain is a conceptual geographic location where a spirit exists. A domain can be: house, field, river, hill, mountain, storm, lake, sea. It is a broad concept—these are not specific houses or seas, but all houses and all seas.

A spirit's medium is the element or object by which it manifests in its domain. A medium is a specific thing: a rock, a branch, a door, a gravestone, a cold current, a wind in the shutters.

Spirit Binding Obstacle

To determine the Spirit Binding obstacle, add the Spirit's Strength to the obstacle modifiers in Immanence, Medium, Domain and Need.

Strength

The base obstacle to bind a spirit is its Strength exponent. The spirit binder player determines the Strength of the spirit that he is attempting to bind and thus sets his base obstacle for the test.

There are a number of considerations to take into account when determining the Strength of a spirit to summon. Certain spirit Strengths are necessary for certain tasks. The following list describes some of the possible tasks for spirits and the recommended Strength for that task. A more in-depth list for spirit tasks is described in the Spirit Tasks section.

Reveal Information
Reveal information about the medium or domain: *Strength 3.*

Service: Hinder
Strength 2 spirits hinder their targets with a +1 Ob penalty. *Strength 4* spirits impose a +2 Ob. *Strength 6* spirits impose +3 Ob. *Strength 8* spirits impose +4 Ob. *Strength 10* spirits impose +5 Ob.

Service: Help
Strength 1 spirits grant 1D of help. *Strength 5* spirits grant 2D of help. *Strength 9* spirits grant 3D of help. A spirit may not help you with a Spirit Binding test.

Service: Harm
Here are a few examples of using a spirit to harm: A *Strength 4* spirit of lightning does IMS: B4, B7, B10 (VA: 8). A *Strength 4* spirit of fire does IMS: B3, B6, B9 (VA: 5). A *Strength 4* spirit of earth, wood or stone does IMS: B3, B5, B7 (VA: 1).

Immanence

Immanence describes how close to the spirit world the character is. Consult the following list of traits and apply the appropriate modifier.



Immanent, +1D

Characters with the following traits contain within them a portion of the spirit world: Spirit Nature, Immortal, Essence of the Earth, Cold Black Blood, Stink of the Ancient.

Pre-Immanent, No Modifier

Pre-Immanence indicates the character contains a sliver of the spirit world in him. He stands firmly between two worlds, the mundane and the divine. Pre-Immanent characters are marked by one of the following traits: Odor of Spirits, Ancestral Taint, Stone's Age, Shaped from Earth and Stone, Second Sight, Touch of Ages, Mark of the Beast, Haunted, Tainted Legacy or Fey Blood.

Mundane and Mortal, +2 Ob

Creatures and characters without any of the above traits suffer a +2 Ob when attempting to use the Spirit Binding skill. Note, though, that they are not restricted from using the skill. There is no required trait like Gifted for Sorcery.

Medium and Domain

The spirit binder player determines how he wants the spirit to manifest: in a specific medium, as a portion of the domain or as the whole domain.

Specific Medium, No Modifier

Examples include: a grave, a single room, a tree, a large stone in a field, the ruts on a road, a wave at sea, a rushing wind (in a storm), a hearth, a well, a door. A spirit summoned in a specific medium can only affect one person or object or a small structure.

Partial Domain or Expansive Medium, +1 Ob

Examples include: a clearing, a pond, the shallows of a great lake, the rapids of a river, the breeze through a house, the stretch of road between two villages, the lightning of a storm, the hallway in a castle, doldrums in a sea, the dunes of a desert, a single rain cloud in a rain storm. A spirit summoned from a partial domain or expansive medium can only affect a few people (up to its spirit Strength), a group of objects or the structure of its domain or medium.

Domains, +3 Ob

Summoning forth the power of the entire domain—the lake, the house, the sea, the castle, the mountain, the road, the caldera, the north wind, the storm, the desert—incurs a +3 Ob penalty. Spirits of the domain may equally affect everyone and everything in their domain.



People and Possessions
People and their possessions are not part of any domain and may not have a spirit evoked from them.

Need
The obstacle for summoning a spirit increases the more and the sooner you need it.

Unhurried, Not in a Conflict, No Modifier
If the spirit binder is unhurried and has a few peaceful moments to conjure, there is no obstacle penalty.

Hurried, +1 Ob
If the spirit is being summoned to aid in a versus test or to overcome an immediate obstacle—the summoner needs aid to overcome an opponent—then apply a +1 Ob penalty.

In Range and Cover or Duel of Wits, +2 Ob
If the summoner is embroiled in Range and Cover or the Duel of Wits and he needs a spirit, apply a +2 Ob modifier to Spirit Binding. This costs an action.

Fight, +3 Ob
If you are in a Fight and need to summon a spirit, add +3 to the Spirit Binding obstacle. This costs two actions.

Spirit Tasks
These spirits are forces of nature, not ghosts, animals or people. They act on a different plane, with different energy and different intent. Understanding them is difficult, mastering them even more so. Once summoned, they may be bound to attempt one of three general types of services: reveal, succor or serve.

Reveal
There are two aspects to the reveal power: Spirits Are Wise and Reveal Unto Me This Fact.

Spirits Are Wise
A spirit tasked to reveal may grant the summoner any wise appropriate to the domain or medium. The summoner may test for the wise as per the normal wise rules. The exponent is equal to the spirit's Strength. The wise counts as open-ended when tested. It may be advanced.



However, when the duration elapses, the entire skill disappears, including any advancements made.

Reveal Unto Me This Fact

Reveal may also be used to have the spirit inform the summoner about a certain game setting fact: directions, the weather, the lay of the land. This is for "no contest" setting stuff—pure info dump of spirit coolness. Game setting facts are established by the GM. This type of reveal requires a Strength 3 spirit.

Succor

Spirits may be called on to protect the summoner (and his companions if a partial domain or full domain is summoned). Succor protects from Natural Effect sorcery and natural phenomena of equivalent force to the ratings on the Natural Effect scale so long as the effect is appropriate to the domain or medium. A spirit cannot protect against any effect higher than its Strength. The Natural Effect list is on page 520 of the Burning Wheel.

Spirit versus Magic

Succor can also be used to protect against damaging and taxing impetus magic. If such protection is appropriate to the spirit's idiom, test the spirit's Strength. The test is open-ended. Successes reduce incoming spell successes. If the spell is reduced below its obstacle, it has no effect on the summoner.

Service

Spirits may be bound to evoke a spooky atmosphere, perform a physical service or induced to hinder, to help or to harm.

Spooky Stuff

A spirit may be tasked to influence its domain in a spooky, supernatural manner. This is an Ob 1 service. This has no in-game mechanical effect.

Eerie silence falls in the forest. A clear pool roils. Fire burns cold.

Like an Ox

Spirits may be induced to perform a physical stat-based task. A spirit's physical stats are equal to the spirit's Strength. This includes Locks, Throws and Pushes, but not Strikes or anything causing direct harm.

Hindrance

Spirits may be induced to hinder. Such hindrance causes it's targets an obstacle penalty to all physical actions or Perception-based actions



(whatever's appropriate to the idiom). Strength 2 spirits hinder their targets with a +1 Ob penalty. Strength 4 spirits impose +2 Ob. Strength 6 spirits impose +3 Ob. Strength 8 spirits impose +4 Ob. Strength 10 spirits impose +5 Ob.

Help

Spirits may be induced to help a character with skill (or stat) tests appropriate to the domain. Help as per the standard rules. Use the Strength as the spirit's skill or stat exponent: Spirits of Strength 1 provide 1D of help, Strength 5 provides 2D of help, Strength 9 provides 3D of help.

A spirit will never help a Spirit Binding test. They're very jealous of the power of the spirit binder and thus it is one thing they simply will not do.

Harm

If appropriate to their idiom, spirits may be forced to harm another character, object or structure. Such an attack must manifest within the spirit's idiom: rock slides, falling branches, lightning strikes and bursts of flame, for example. The Power of such an attack is equal to the spirit's Strength plus the idiomatic material of the attack: water is +0, stone and wood are Power +1, flame is Power +2, lightning is Power +3. Factor the damage just like a melee weapon. Roll the Die of Fate to determine actual damage: 1-2 Incidental, 3-4 Mark, 5-6 Superb.

Retribution

All spirit bindings—whether successful or not—have the potential to bring retribution down upon the summoner. Spirits never forget that they have been bound and commanded. As much as they can be said to show emotion, they despise the summoner for treating them thusly. Hence they will always try to return in kind what was asked of them.

Successful Binding

Binding Meets Obstacle

If the Spirit Binding test meets, but does not exceed, its obstacle, the summoner will suffer retribution. The retribution is doled out at the Strength of the spirit. See Retribution Suitable to the Task below.



Binding Exceeds Obstacle

If the Spirit Binding test exceeds the obstacle, the margin of success reduces the Strength of the spirit for purposes of retribution. See Retribution Suitable to the Task below.

If the margin of success reduces the spirit's Strength to zero, no retribution is suffered (except maybe for a flung plate, banging shutter, groaning foundation or cracked window pane).

Failed Binding

When the spirit binder fails to meet the obstacle of a Spirit Binding test, the GM has three options: He can benignly declare that there is no answer to the call because there are no spirits available. No further retribution is suffered. Or he can determine the player has angered a spirit more powerful than he bargained for—see Anger of Ancients. Or he can decide that the spirit has gone wild and will eternally plague the summoner—see the Enmity Clause.

Anger of the Ancients

The summoner has angered this entity with his prattle. Add the margin of failure of the Spirit Binding to the summoned spirit's Strength for purposes of retribution. This new Strength indicates the true nature of the spirit in the area. The spirit may take one act of retribution. See Retribution Suitable to the Task below.

Enmity Clause

Alternately, the GM may declare that the summoner has raised the permanent ire of his intended victim or driven the spirit of this domain mad. This invokes the Enmity Clause. The spirit may now enact retribution (at its original Strength) whenever the summoner enters its domain until it is imprisoned.

Retribution Suitable to the Task

Spirits who are asked to reveal will later attempt to obscure. Spirits who are asked for succor take retribution in the form of hindrance or may steal from the summoner. Spirits who are asked to serve may obscure, steal, hinder or harm depending on the exact nature of the service asked of them. Invariably, the spirit will wait for the right moment to interfere with the summoner, a crucial or critical juncture come to pass in the spirit's domain. Time unfolds differently for them; they can afford to wait.



Obscure
A spirit bound to reveal will later attempt to obscure. Add its spirit Strength as an obstacle against an appropriate Perception test or Perception-rooted skill test of the GM's choosing.

Hinder
Spirits can add their Strength as an obstacle penalty to an applicable physical task. Spirits of wind can blow in your eyes. Spirits of fire can make campfires refuse to light. Spirits of earth and water can trip up or bog down characters (causing Speed test penalties, for example).

Steal
Spirits previously bound to succor or serve may take retribution by fouling or stealing the summoner's possessions: Wind will carry away unlikely items (like the summoner's staff), a muddy road will suck under a precious boot, clouds will bring a sudden squall down while the summoner is looking at a fragile, ancient map.

These items can only be recovered by a Strength 3 Reveal Unto Me or a Like an Ox service. Alternately, the GM may toss them back into play at his discretion.

Harm
Spirits who are asked to do harm to others will invariably attempt to do harm in return. A hillside spirit will roll a stone down upon the summoner or smash him with a falling branch. Wind will kick up too hard while the summoner is crossing a ledge and toss him off. Water will heave and suck him under.

The Power of such an attack is equal to the spirit's Strength plus the idiomatic material of the attack: stone is Power +1, flame is Power +2, lightning is Power +3. Factor the damage just like a melee weapon. Roll the Die of Fate like a bow to determine actual damage.

Alternately, instead of doing direct harm, spirits may use their Strength to Push, Lock or Throw the summoner at an inopportune time—like when he's crossing a lake or climbing a wall. The summoner may resist with Power or Speed if appropriate.

Scope of Retribution

Everyone who has benefitted from the spirit's service suffers from its retribution. If the Spirit Binding test is failed, the GM determines the targets of the retribution so long as they fall in the limits of the medium and domain obstacles that the summoner player set out for the test.



Timing of Retribution

Retribution rarely comes immediately, but it always arrives at the worst possible moment. If a spirit is determined to kill its tormentor, it is not enough to just murder him in his sleep. The spirit waits until other people are relying on the summoner to save them, then makes its attempt. Spirits detest being bound and commanded; they will demonstrate their ire in the most wicked and vengeful ways possible.

Laws of Service

Listed below are a few limitations to bear in mind when dealing with these nameless spirits.

- *Spirits are limited to their domains.* The spirit of the pond knows nothing of the hills, the wind knows nothing of what dwells beneath the waves, the stone knows little of the birds on the wind, and the fire knows only the taste of air and the fragrance of wood.

- *Spirit memories are long and their senses broad.* They know much of what transpires in their domains—but a fire just lit will only know of the wood it eats and the air it breathes, nothing more. A stone taken from its birthplace and dropped in a new land will only know about himself and its past, nothing about this new place until it has had a good long time to get to know its new neighbors. But a river summoned forth to account for itself will know its length and breadth, from source to mouth.

- *Spirits may only act in their elements.* Wind may rise or fall, brooks may run fast or slow, the earth may yawn, and fires may douse. But branches never instantaneously grow around the enemies of the summoner, rocks never roll across level ground, water never forms into a wall and fire does not speak.

- *Spirits reveal through idiom.* Spirits in general do not speak the tongue of man. Rather, bubbles will rise in water, a path will end abruptly in the forest, fire will flare (vaguely taking shape), wind will blow from a certain direction.

- *Spirits act unseen.* Demanding to be led from the forest while standing still, awaiting a sprite to take you by the hand, will only produce a very long wait. Walk with eyes half-closed while whistling a merry tune and you will find yourself at the forest's edge rather quickly. Watching for ephemera will only serve to delay the act and may anger the spirit further.



- *A spirit bound must complete its task.* It cannot delay or deviate from the task given to it. Once its service is complete, then it is released from the summoner's spell.

- *Once it is released from its service the spirit will exact retribution.* Being bound to the summoner and forced to act in his will is a painful and arduous affair for a spirit. Invariably, this arouses a retributive anger in the spirit. When a spirit does so it will take payment in kind for the service stolen from it.

Spirit Task Duration

If the length of a spirit's task is longer than a day or so—if the spirit is asked to guard some location, for example—consult the table below to see exactly how long the spirit sticks around. Spirits will carry out their sentence as quickly as possible, but they know no time. Roll 2D6 and consult the chart below.

Length of Service Table	
2D6	**Length of Service**
2	Mere moments
3	2x Strength in Months
4	Strength in Months
5	10x Strength in Months
6	2x Strength in Days
7	Strength in Days
8	10x Strength in Days
9	2x Strength in Years
10	Strength in Years
11	10x Strength in Years
12	Forever

You can also use the chart to determine when retribution occurs. Spirits have a long memories.

Domain Bindings

Domain bindings are a ritual spiritual bond the summoner has with an archetypal location. They are to Spirit Binding what affiliations are to Circles.

Example domains are: abyssal, alluvial plain, badlands, castle, caldera, coast, desert, doldrums, foothills, forest, house, lake, mountain, oasis, ridge, river, road, sea, taiga, tundra, wadi, north wind, westerlies, storm, forest fire, prairie fire or cold current.

When creating domain bindings, the player may choose from our examples or make up his own.

Starting Domain Bindings

The character starts with one *bound* domain for each lifepath and appropriate trait. You may summon spirits in bound domains, but you are not powerful there. The player describes the most prominent geographic location from each lifepath. The summoner is bound to this domain.

For example, if the summoner grew up on a farm (and has the Farmer lifepath), he takes the domain binding Farms. Whenever he is on a farm, he may conjure its spirits, even if it isn't the farm he grew up on. A character who has never been at sea cannot conjure while at sea. A character who has never been to a mountain prairie cannot call its spirits to him.

Domain Traits

The following traits each grant the spirit binder a bound domain, in addition to any other qualities the individual traits provide. If the trait doesn't specify or connote a geographic location, the player may choose a domain for the trait before play begins:

Adventurer, Back-Breaking Labor, Beespeaker, Black Lung, Bookworm, Claustrophobic, Deep Sense, Down to Earth, Exile, Hiding, I Know This Ship..., Keys to the Church, Landlubber, Lost, Scavenger, Street Smart, Sword of the White Towers and World Weary.

Summoner Must Be Bound to a Domain

A spirit binder must have at least a zero-level domain binding in a particular domain in order to summon there. If a spirit binder does not have a lifepath or a binding associated with a particular domain, he may not conjure spirits from that domain. In character burning, additional 0-level bindings may be purchased for 4 rps each.


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Domain Binding Levels

Additional domain bindings may be bought at levels 0-3 during character burning. Also, the spirit binder's starting domains may be increased in rank in character burning. There are four levels of Domain Bindings:

Domain Binding Level	Rating	Resources Point Cost
Bound	0D	4 rps
Sworn	1D	7 rps
Embodied	2D	25 rps
Mastered	3D	45 rps

Advantage dice from a domain binding may only be used when the summoner is conjuring within the appropriate domain. You may only have one binding per domain.

Embodied in Laval Fire, for example, costs 25 resource points in character burning. This then grants the player +2D to his Spirit Binding skill when he's in or near lava.

Binding Oneself to a Domain

During play, the spirit binder will wish to gain power over a new domain so as to summon spirits within it. Doing so requires that the summoner spend time in the domain, at least a season, but more time if possible, and he must offer a substantial sacrifice—cattle slaughtered, wine poured, harvest offered and burned.

Sacrifice Resources Obstacles

Domain Binding	Rating	Sacrifice Resources Obstacle
Bound	0D	Ob 3
Sworn	1D	Ob 4
Embodied	2D	Ob 5
Mastered	3D	Ob 6

Time Spent in Domain

Time	Resources Bonus/Penalty
Years	+1D
One year	—
A season	+1 Ob

Linking to Domain Binding

Astrology, Spirit Binding, Circination and appropriate wises may be used as *linked tests* toward the Domain Binding Sacrifice Resources test.

Binding Traits

Characters can also earn bindings through traits earned in play. If the group decides a player should earn a die trait related to a binding, then it counts according to these rules. In general, the traits should start at level 0, but if the recipient character already has a binding, definitely increase the level by one when you instantiate it as a trait. Further trait votes (earned by really playing it up) can increase the level as is appropriate.

Spirit Marks

As the spirit binder practices his craft, the spirits start to imprint themselves on him. They leave their mark, and he becomes more spirit-like. This benefits the summoner tremendously—it gives him greater sway over the spirit world—but it is dangerous to his own soul.



Spirit marks apply to a medium, not a domain: Fire Walk With Us, Teeth of Granite, Ghost of Trees, Whispers of Water, Destiny of Wind, Pebble in the Pond. Spirit marks are more versatile than domain bindings. They can be used in a variety of domains, so long as the appropriate medium is present.

The spirit binder player may devise his own spirit marks.

Whenever the element, medium or idiom of the mark is involved in the Spirit Binding test, whether or not the summoner is in one of his domains, he gains the applicable bonus dice to the test. Spirit marks are the equivalent of reputations in Circles. They are more broadly applicable than domain bindings, but not universally so.

There are three levels of spirit marks. A character does not automatically start with any. They must be purchased prior to play.

Spirit Mark Level	Rating	Resources Point Cost
Touched	1D	10 rps
Marked	2D	25 rps
Infused	3D	50 rps



Spirit marks can also be earned in play like reputations. The group votes on them when performing a trait vote.

Spirit Taint

If the total of *all* of the Spirit Binder's spirit mark dice exceeds his *current* Will exponent, he is in grave danger. If he fails his next Spirit Binding test, he suffers retribution, and he gains the Ancestral Taint trait.

The starting exponent for Ancestral Taint is equal to the character's total spirit mark dice.

> *If he has three spirit marks (2D, 1D and 3D), he starts with a B6 Ancestral Taint.*

Thereafter, the Strength of each spirit summoned and bound counts as a test for advancement of Ancestral Taint.

> *If he summons a Strength 4 spirit, it counts as an Ob 4 test for Ancestral Taint.*

When Ancestral Taint advances to exponent 10, the character is absorbed into the spirit world. He is stripped of all intelligence and consciousness and becomes one with the fabric of nature. Nothing and no one can bring him back.

Circination

To the uneducated eye, the summoner is forever scratching in the dirt and wasting time puzzling over sigils and runes. He drags his staff in complex patterns and then cries to the heavens. For what? Nothing ever comes of it! Or so it seems...

Circination Per/Ag

Circination is the art of drawing circles and sigils which aid the spirit binder in his art. There are three types of circles that may be drawn: the summoning circle, the fortress circle and the prison circle. The summoning circle aids in conjuring and binding spirits. The fortress protects the summoner from retribution, and the prison traps unruly spirits. Circination is tested like a regular skill: It is not open-ended and does not get combined with anything special (except help or FoRKs) when tested.

Circles are specific to a spirit or ritual and may not be repurposed for summoning spirits other than the ones they were originally intended for.

Obstacles: Summoning Circle: The spirit binder may set his obstacle. The Fortress obstacle is equal to the Spirit Strength to be deflected. The Prison: obstacle is twice the Spirit Strength to be trapped.

FoRKs: Illuminations, Cartography, Calligraphy, Symbology, Painting, plus appropriate wises

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: For summoning circles, no; for prison and fortress circles, yes.

The Summoning Circle

To draw a viable summoning circle, simply set your obstacle and test your skill. If successful, the Circination obstacle equals advantage dice for the Spirit Binding test. Time to draw a summoning circle is 1 hour per obstacle point. Extra successes reduce time by 10 percent per success.

The Fortress Circle

This circle protects against retribution. The obstacle to draw a fortress is equal to the Strength of the spirit the summoner intends to conjure. The time is two hours per obstacle point. The fortress will avert retribution from a spirit of that Strength or lower. If the summoner is in a fortress when retribution comes, the spirit will "deflect" and forget about it for now. The summoner may exit the domain safely. If he tarries or returns, the retribution is back on!

The Prison Circle

If a spirit is wreaking havoc in a domain, a summoner may bind it to this circle so that it becomes trapped. An imprisoned spirit may not be summoned to serve nor may it enact retribution on anyone outside the prison. The obstacle for a prison is twice the Strength of the spirit to be imprisoned. The time to draw a prison circle is three hours per obstacle point.

If the circle is successfully drawn, the spirit becomes bound and trapped within it. If the Circination fails, the spirit may enact retribution on the spirit binder as if it had been commanded to serve.

Making Offerings

A spirit binder may make offerings to the spirits before he summons them. Offerings must be appropriate to the domain and must be important or vital to the summoner or those who live in the domain: wine poured, harvest proffered and animals sacrificed.

An offering requires a Resources test equal to the Strength of the spirit being summoned. Success grants +1D to the Spirit Binding test. Failure causes Resources to be taxed, and there is no Gift of Kindness for an offering.

Spirit Encounters

Spirits make great encounters, whether or not there's a spirit binder in the group. Here are two suggestions for bringing them into the game.

Wild Spirits

Wild spirits make great adversaries, especially for spirit binders. A wild spirit is one who was summoned or disturbed at some point and now visits harm and hindrance upon all who enter its domain. This is how forests become lost and haunted, seas become unsailable and mountain passes uncrossable. They also make the spirit binders who tame them famous.

Imprisoned Spirits

Though rare, it's possible to stumble across the work of another spirit binder—his circle and an imprisoned spirit within. Perhaps the domain of the spirit has fallen to waste since it has been imprisoned for so long. Freeing it will restore life to the place but might also invite retribution. To free a spirit, you must damage or destroy the prison circle which contains it.

Or perhaps a spirit that contains necessary secrets has been locked away in a remote place. Finding it, freeing it and rebinding it could make for an epic quest.

Spirits Don't Talk or Bargain

Spirits do not talk, bargain or gossip. They will never engage in a Duel of Wits. They cannot be motivated with social skills. If you wish to motivate a spirit of the type described in this chapter, you must use Spirit Binding.



Summoning

This magical art focuses on the summoning of arcane, supernatural, otherworldly and divine entities. Through his art, the summoner sends out a call. An entity responds, the summoner asks a service, the entity asks a price and the two forge a pact.

Summoning Process

Summoning operates similarly to the Circles mechanic described in the Burning Wheel. A summoner has certain supernatural "circles" from which he may call on favors. He uses his knowledge of those circles, his skill in Summoning and his reputations within the supernatural world to bring forth spirits.

Once summoned, the conjurer and entity bargain to form a supernatural pact, an agreement for service and the price of that service.

Decide what type of service is needed, then determine the order of entity to be summoned who can fulfill said service. The summoner must have at least a journeyman level in this order to summon from it. Test summoning plus the gate, orders, reputation and advantage dice from the creature's name against the obstacle.

If the obstacle is met, an entity of the proper order appears before the summoner, willing to perform his service. Failure indicates that the creature fails to appear, appears irritated or enraged by the summoner (as per the Enmity Clause in the Circles rules) or another creature appears in its stead.

Linked Tests for Summoning

Astrology, Demonology, Empyrealia, Folklore, Symbology, Doctrine and Obscure History may be used as linked tests into Summoning. There are no FoRKs other than wises.

Gifted or Not?

Summoning can be used by both the Gifted and the mundane. Gifted characters use the rules as written. If a non-Gifted character

wishes to summon, he must pass á Circination skill test with an obstacle equal to the order of spirit he wishes to summon. Once that circle is drawn, he may summon using the rules as presented. This is separate from any gate, fortress or prison circle he might draw.

A Gifted summoner calls forth spirits of the appropriate order whenever he has a few minutes of peace, whether or not he has drawn a circle.

Service

These spirits are not wish granters. A summoner cannot demand wealth from a demon and expect for gold to instantly appear in piles beneath his feet. A summoned entity must go forth, find and acquire that wealth and return it to the summoner. The creatures described in this chapter are limited by their stats, skills, attributes and traits. They are potent, but not omnipotent. Consider this when asking for a service!

The nature of the service is used to determine the price the spirit asks in return. Use the following guidelines to determine where your service falls in this scheme.

Types of Service

Below is a suggested list of services for summoned spirits. The exact form and degree of service is shaped by the entity that performs it.

A revelation from a ghost may come in the form of a nightmare, whereas a revelation from a deity is a soul-shaking affair—it's not a mere dream!

Physical

This is the simplest form of service a summoner can ask of a spirit. Physical services include: murder, kidnapping, transport (of an item or person), guarding or infesting an area and protecting the summoner.

Economic

A summoner may demand wealth from a spirit. This wealth can come in many forms. It is not always just a pile of gold. If the spirit has Resources, it may grant the summoner loans, cash and funds as per the standard rules. If the summoner is asking for something more, like an item or land, the spirit must go forth and procure it.

Social

A summoner may ask a spirit to go forth and convince another person of something—love, fear, respect, promotion, etc. Love and affection may be earned through the machinations of a spirit. This is a rather

complex and open-ended task, the means of which are left entirely to the spirit. Assassination, bribery, arranged marriages and worse are not out of the question.

Empowerment

Empowerment is a spiritual binding that grants the summoner or a character of his choice one of the spirit's *stats*.

Transference

Transference is the process by which the summoner or a character of his choice may take on one of the entity's *traits*. During the term of service, the creature does not have access to the transferred trait.

Revelation

Revelation is a question answered. If the consulted entity does not know the answer, it returns to its realm and seeks those who might. Asking questions of creatures of this ilk is always unwise, yet some still persist in doing so; the answers are always far worse than ignorance. Revelation may be conveyed in the form of a dream or a vision. The summoner may request the revelation for himself or another person. Revelations always reveal truth. They may be obscure or confusing, but they are never false.

Summoning Obstacles

The player chooses what type of service he requires and a corresponding order that can perform said service. This sets the obstacle for the Summoning skill test and the price for the service.

Summoning Obstacles by Service and Order

Service	Order	Obstacle	Price
Revelation, Transfer, Physical	***Restless Dead***	Ob 3	Tribute
Revelation, Transfer, Social	***Sanctified Dead***	Ob 4	Tribute
Physical, Economic, Social	***Minor Corporal Spirit***	Ob 5	Possession
All but Revelation	***Corporal Spirit***	Ob 8	Physical
All but Social	***Major Corporal Spirit***	Ob 9	Mark plus other soul
Social, Transfer, Revelation, Empower	***Minor Deity***	Ob 10	Mark plus any one except souls
Social, Transfer, Revelation, Empower	***Deity***	Ob 11	Other soul plus tribute
Social, Revelation	***Chief Deity***	Ob 12	Own soul plus other soul



Orders

There are eight orders of supernatural, infernal, celestial and divine beings: restless dead, sanctified dead, minor corporal spirit, corporal spirit, major corporal spirit, minor deity, deity and chief deity.

Restless dead are ghosts of souls who have not been properly buried or who have had their graves disturbed—this includes those disinterred and bound by death artists. Sanctified dead are souls who have been given the proper rites to send them to their final resting place. Corporal spirits are entities that manifest physically before the summoner to do his bidding. This includes imps and querubim who fall into the minor corporal and corporal spirit categories. Dæmonim and seraphim are categorized as corporal and major corporal spirits. Deities are the saints, gods and divinities of this world. They are not tampered with lightly!

Customize the orders to your game world. Minor corporal spirits might be imps in one setting, gebbeths in another or animal companions in still another. When Summoning is introduced into your game, decide what forms these spirits can take.

The Summoned

The creature or spirit that appears before the summoner is a representative of his order. His exact personality, body type and position are up to the GM to decide.

If the summoner player wishes to conjure forth a specific spirit, he must add +1 Ob to his Summoning test. Once a summoner has learned one of a particular creature's names, as per the One Name of the Many rule in this chapter, the summoner no longer suffers this penalty for calling forth this particular creature.

Success and Failure in Summoning

If the summoner passes the test, he has successfully brought an entity before him. This entity will perform a service for him.

Successful Summoning

If he met his obstacle, an entity of the appropriate type and of the GM's choosing appears before the summoner. He announces one of his many names and the price of his help. He agrees to perform the service for the price described for his order. No bargain is possible for this result.

If the summoner exceeds his obstacle, he has skillfully cast his summoning spell and earned some leverage over the entity he has called forth. The creature announces itself with one of its personal names and agrees to perform the service for the price described for his order. However, the summoner may spend his extra successes as follows:

Spending Margin of Success to Bargain

One success may be spent to gain an opportunity to bargain or haggle with the entity. Make a Bargaining or Haggling versus test. If the summoner wins, he may lower the price or increase the duration of the service by one step per success in his margin of success.

If the entity wins the Bargaining test, he raises the price one step. Do not trifle with me, mortal man!

If the summoner loses a round of Bargaining and the price is raised, he may spend one of his remaining extra successes (if any) to continue bargaining to try to lower the price or increase the duration.

The summoner may agree to the current terms before he rolls to bargain or he may attempt to gamble and test himself against the entity. There's no backing out once the Bargaining dice have been rolled, though—even if the terms are now drastically in the creature's favor.

Price and Duration Scale

Use the following scale for prices: mark, tribute, possession, physical, untainted mortal soul, summoner's soul. The maximum price is the summoner's soul plus any number of other prices!

Use the following scale for duration: a single event, a day, a week, a month, a year, many years, a lifetime.

Spending Margin of Success for Advantage

Up to two Summoning successes may be spent to add advantage dice to the Bargaining or Haggling test. Each success adds +1D.

One Name of Many

If the summoner exceeds his obstacle to summon, he also learns one of the creature's names. The advantage of a name is two-fold. The summoner may call on this creature specifically without penalty. And he gains +1D to attempts to summon this creature in the future. This bonus does not increase if he successfully summons the creature multiple times.



Failed Summoning

If the summoner fails his test, there are three possible results. The GM may declare that no spirit heeds his call: that the summoner has angered his intended target or that something unintended has heeded the call and appeared instead.

Angry Spirits

If the GM decides to bring in the intended entity, the creature is angered by the summoner's attempt to bring it forth. It does not have to perform the service asked. It may return from whence it came after berating the erstwhile Faust, or it may stay in the summoner's world and wreak havoc.

It may be convinced to bargain through a Duel of Wits. However, it counts as having the Enmity Clause against the summoner. As such, the creature gains +4s to the body of argument for any Duel of Wits (including bargaining) with the summoner. This penalty lasts until the summoner convinces the creature he is not its enemy. If unconvinced, the spirit can retain its +4s bonus across many encounters and pacts.

Unintended Summoning

The GM may bring in another creature of greater or lesser strength. This is entirely the GM's call. Consult the order list if you're stuck for options. Use a creature one order greater or lesser than the intended target. The creature is not obligated to perform a service or bargain. It may propose its own pact and price to the summoner if the GM has something in mind. Otherwise, unless it is contained by a prison circle, it may either return to whence it came or wander off into the summoner's world, causing chaos.

The Pact

The result of the summoner's spell is a *pact*, a spiritual bond with the spirit. This pact is as binding as a Duel of Wits result.

A spirit must endeavor to do everything in its power to complete the terms of the pact. It will cleave to the exact letter of the agreement, but it will never do more than it is required unless that benefits it.

If it wins, the summoner gets what he asked for. Sometimes this is more than he bargained for.





Breaking a Pact

If one side fails to complete its side of the bargain, the other party is freed from any obligation to the agreement. If it is the summoner who breaks the pact, the spirit is free to remain in the material world for 555 days. During that time, it may take revenge on the summoner for breaking his word, or it may attend to other matters. During this time, it may not be summoned!



If, due to extenuating circumstances, the spirit fails to complete its appointed task, then the summoner is freed from paying the price. The spirit may return to the summoner to attempt to strike up a new bargain; otherwise it returns home.

Price of Service

Each spirit asks for a price dependent on its nature.

Summoner's Soul

The ultimate price for a service is the summoner's mortal soul.

Untainted Mortal Soul

There are times a summoner may bargain with a spirit for the gift of another soul. This soul must be free from taint (and other pacts). By the conclusion of the spirit's part of the bargain, the summoner must proffer and sacrifice the untainted soul. The spirit must be present to receive the offering.

Beings with the Eldritch Sink, Atravieso, Entropic, Tainted Legacy, Corruption or similar traits may not be offered in this manner.

Physical Price

The entity demands a physical sacrifice from the summoner. The eyes, the tongue, a hand, an arm or a leg must be removed as part of the bargain. The character must take an appropriate physical disfigurement trait such as Maimed, One-Eyed or Tongueless.

Possession

The spirit may demand access to the summoner's body and senses as payment for its services. This state lasts for the same period of time as the duration of the original service. The player who accepts this price gains the Possessed trait for the term of the possession.

Tribute

As payment for services rendered, the summoner must build a shrine to the sovereign powers of the spirit, commission a work of art in its name, recover a lost artifact or fund a thousand rites to be spoken to the patron gods. Whatever the final payment is, it is a costly endeavor and must be completed lest the summoner violate the pact. The obstacle of the Resources test is equal to the obstacle of the order of the creature.



Mark

The summoner agrees to wear the insignia or mark of the spirit visible on his person or flesh. For lesser orders like the dead or minor spirits, the mark comes in the form of a symbol worn on the person. For other spirits, the mark appears as a scar or tattoo. The mark can be anywhere at all on the summoner's body. It is immutable, will never fade and will resist all attempts to efface it. The character must take the character trait Marked by X (whatever the spirit's name is). For deities, a mark consists of a character trait as described above plus a reputation with that spirit's order. The reputation is infamous with that spirit's enemies.

Duration of Service

A spirit wishes to serve for as short a span as possible. As such, when the initial service for a price offer is made, the entity agrees to perform a single service or task, or agrees to extend his protection or provenance for the length of a single event.

As per the rules described under the Successful Summoning heading, a summoner may bargain to increase the duration of the service. Bargaining begins with the duration of a single event and progresses up the following scale: a day, a week, a month, a year, many years, a lifetime.

Time of Payment

The time at which the price is to be paid must be negotiated between the summoner and his servant. The player and the GM should work out an appropriate time of payment as part of the Bargaining ritual.

Murder is complete at the death of the subject. When the information is presented, a revelation is ended. When the summoner has bedded his new wife, the spirit's social role is done.

Affiliated Orders and Reputations

Orders are the fundamental element of the summoner's power. An order is an affiliation with the spirit realm. They act like affiliations do in the Circles mechanic. A summoner may only call creatures to him from orders with which he is affiliated.

Summoners may also have reputations among the spirits. His name may ring out in the halls of hell!



Starting Affiliated Orders

All summoners begin the game with the *restless dead* order at journeyman level for free. The value of this order may be increased or additional orders may be bought during character burning using the following prices:

Degree of Order	Rating	RP Cost
Journeyman Order	0D	10 rps base
First Order	1D	20 rps base
Second Order	2D	25 rps base
Third Order	3D	50 rps base

Modify the cost according to the exact order of spirits:

Order Affiliations Cost Modifier	RP Cost
Restless Dead	Free
Sanctified Dead	+4 rps
Minor Corporal Spirit	+5 rps
Corporal Spirit	+6 rps
Major Corporal Spirit	+7 rps
Minor Deity	+8 rps
Deity	+9 rps
Chief Deity	+10 rps

A 2D affiliation with the order of chief deity costs 35 resource points in character burning.

Reputation

Reputations among the spirits may be bought in character burning using resource points, just like buying regular reputations.

Reputations cost 10 rps for 1D, 20 rps for 2D and 30 rps for 3D. The reputation applies to one order of spirits for each die of its rating. So a 1D reputation applies to one order, a 2D applies to two orders and a 3D reputation applies to three orders.

You may be Giver Of Tribute (1D) among the order of the restless dead or Harvester of Souls (2D) among the sanctified dead and the minor corporal spirits.

Reputations among the spirits do not count when factoring Resources in character burning.



Joining New Orders

To join new orders, the summoner must do one of two things: either he must pay the price of the order or submit to a geas.

The Price of the Order

A summoner may submit an offering to the order in order to join its ranks and gain its benefits. The offering is equivalent to the price of a service from a spirit in the order. The GM determines the exact composition of the price.

The summoner gathers the price, pronounces his holy and mystic binding to the order and then makes his payment. No test is required to make the payment. If the price is paid, the summoner gains a journeyman rank in that order. If the order offers multiple price options, start with the lower price.

Before he can join the ranks of the sanctified dead, the summoner must repair his family's tomb as tribute, for example. To be bound to the corporal spirits, he must cut off his hand.

Geas

Rather than pay a price, a summoner may submit himself before the powers of the order and accept a geas. The orders send word through signs and omens that the summoner must complete a quest.

To join an order as a journeyman, he must complete one goal as described by the powers that be.

In order to complete a goal, the player must write it into one of his Beliefs and resolve it, earning a persona point. The GM determines the nature of a goal, but the player may write his Belief as he sees fit. Scale the goals according to the power of the order. A goal for the sanctified dead is less dangerous than what deities demand.

Increasing the Rank of an Order

The rank of an order may be increased by paying a further, more expensive price or by completing a more elaborate, more dangerous geas.

Paying the Price of an Order

If an order has a single price listed, an appropriate iteration of that category must be paid. Each price must be greater than the last. If an order has multiple prices listed, use the first price for the journeyman rank, second price for the first order, etc. If you run out of prices, just keep increasing the value of the last one listed.



Increasing Orders by Geas

To increase the rank of your order, you may also submit to a more arduous geas. The mechanics resemble those described above, but each level requires more goals to be completed.

To become a member of the first order, the summoner must complete two goals as proclaimed by the powers of the order.

To become a member of the second order, he must complete three goals set by the powers.

To become a member of the third order, he must complete four goals determined by the powers that be.

Earning and Increasing Reputations

Reputations are earned and increased according to the mechanics described on pages 384-385 of the Burning Wheel.

Circination

Circination for summoners is slightly different than for spirit binders. Rather than draw a summoning circle, they draw a *gate*. A summoner should have the prison drawn before he summons. If he does not, this willful spirit will take its liberty before striking a bargain. He may draw a fortress circle to protect himself as does the spirit binder.

Gates and prisons are specific to a spirit or ritual and may not be repurposed or used for summoning spirits other than the ones for which they were originally intended. Fortresses, however, may be applied to any spirit or order. They may be reused.

The Summoner's Gate

To draw a viable gate, simply set your obstacle and test your skill. If successful, the Circination obstacle equals advantage dice for the Summoning test. The time required to draw a summoning circle is one hour per obstacle point. Extra successes reduce time by 10 percent per success.

The Prison Circle

The prison circle traps a spirit within it. An entity may not project any of its powers beyond the circle—it may not twist, burn or harm while in the prison. A spirit trapped within a prison may only bargain with its summoner or wait.

The obstacle to draw a prison is equal to the Will exponent of the spirit to be imprisoned. If the creature's Will is gray shade and the imprisoning skill is black shade, increase the obstacle by +2. If the creature's Will is white shade and the imprisoning skill is gray or black shade, increase the obstacle by +3. It takes a number of hours equal to three times the obstacle to draw the prison circle.

If the circle is successfully drawn, the spirit becomes bound and trapped within it until the circle itself is physically damaged or altered.

The Fortress Circle

A summoner may draw a circle to protect himself from harm inflicted by spirits. Any hostile act from a spirit made against those within suffers an obstacle penalty equal to the rating of the circle. If any portion, part or article of the protected passes outside the bounds of the circle, spirit creature may be grasp, attack or ensorcell it.

The obstacle to draw a fortress is 1 plus the obstacle penalty the summoner wishes to apply to otherworldly interlopers. Fortresses may be reused. It takes two hours per obstacle point to draw the fortress circle.

True Names

All creatures have a true name. This fabled moniker grants intense leverage to the summoner. A creature will never under any circumstances give up its own true name. However, it will occasionally give up known true names of its enemies.

Named _____ *Dt* _____

This creature possesses and knows its true name. When its name is spoken. it knows who the speaker is and where he is.

Knowledge of a true name grants the summoner +3D to summon that specific spirit and +3D Bargaining tests or to the body of argument roll for any Duels of Wits conducted against the creature.

Demon, I Abjure Thee!

Faith Versus the Summoned

The Faithful may attempt to banish a spirit entity from this world and send it back to its own side. Banishing restless dead, sanctified dead and minor corporal spirits requires a minor miracle. Banishing anything greater requires a major miracle.



Spirits of the Dead

Spirits of the dead have no corporal form. They are ghosts. As such, they only have Perception and Will for stats; they also have traits and skills. Beliefs and Instincts may be assigned by the GM. In general, use the Beliefs, Instincts, stats, traits and skills the creature had in life. In other words, pick a stat block for a Mannish, Roden, Great Spider or Great Wolf character and drop the physical stats. Elves, Orcs, Dwarves and Trolls may not be summoned as spirits.

There is one exception to this rule. If the spirit of the summoned dead has been bound into his corpse by a death artist, the spirit heeds the summoner's call in the tattered trappings of his rotting flesh. He is mute and in anguish. The GM can use the stats for the Risen Corpse unless he has something worse in mind!

Restless Dead

The restless dead have two additional traits, Spirit Nature and Poltergeist. Spirit Nature is described in the Monstrous Trait List. Poltergeist is described below.

Poltergeist *DI*

This creature is ethereal and may only affect the physical world through an act of Will. If the creature wishes to touch, push, pull, slap, etc., test Will against the obstacle rather than Power or Agility. If a test is failed, Will is reduced by the margin of failure. The creature's physical skills may also be channeled through its Will. Test for the skill as normal. After the test, test the creature's Will against the obstacle. Will is reduced by margin of failure. If Will is reduced to zero, the creature dissipates and may not reform or be summoned for months equal to its Will exponent.

Sanctified Dead

The sanctified dead also have two traits, Spirit Nature and Rest in Peace.

Rest in Peace *DI*

Spirits who have gone peacefully to death and whose bodies were properly sanctified have great difficulty returning to and communicating with the world of the living. They cannot use any physical ability or skill to affect the material world. Those abilities are lost to them. Also, while they will do whatever is in their power to aid the living, they are reluctant to undertake any act that will disturb their peaceful rest or get them kicked out of heaven. When bargaining with a summoner, spirits of the sanctified dead may add +2D to a social skill. When in a Duel of Wits, add +2s to their body of argument if their opponent's request goes against their better judgment.





Relationships with the Supernatural

There's no rule that says a relationship has to be living or flesh and blood. If appropriate to your game, players may have relationships with gods, demons or the restless dead. The standard rules for relationships apply. In general you do not have to summon you ghost friend but extenuating circumstances might apply.

You may also develop a relationship with a summoned entity. Add together the summoner's skill exponent and order rating appropriate to the creature. If the summoner successfully brings forth a creature a number of times equal to 10 minus that number, he may add it as a relationship.

GMing Summoned Creatures

The summoner's art is a solitary and remote one. He conjures forth demons in private and sends them forth to do his bidding. It is not a fast or flashy art, though it is useful.

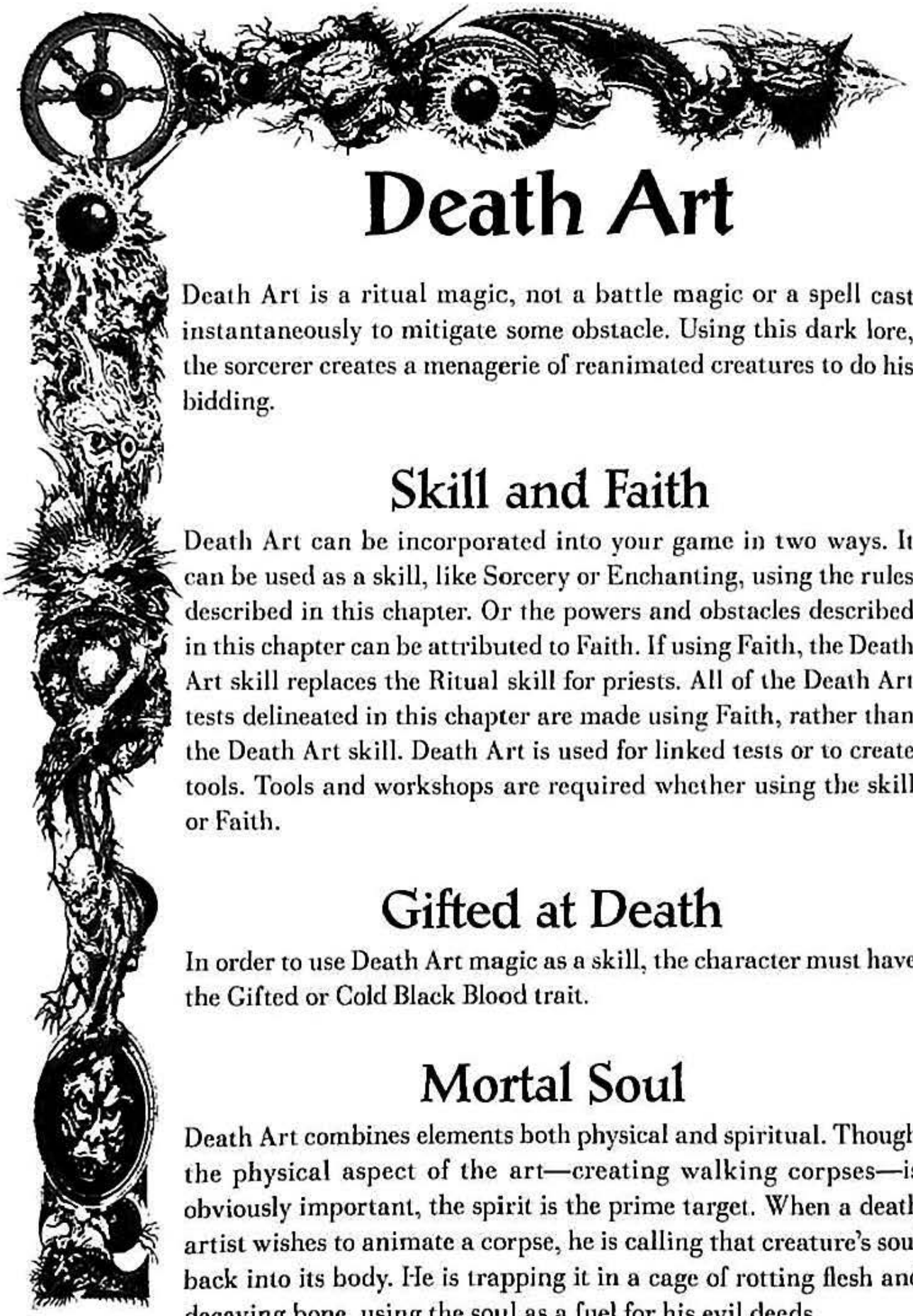
Much of the burden of making Summoning useful is placed on the GM. When the summoner dispatches his minions to topple a king, the GM must arbitrate if the errand is successful or not. There are two ways to play this. First, consider the price. It is the most important element in summoning. If the price is juicy enough fruit, then by all means, have the creature succeed at its ordained task and return with due haste to the summoner to demand payment.

Second, if the completion of the task is in doubt, make a versus test (or series of tests) between the creature and its intended target. Allow the summoner player to act out and roll for his charge.

If a spirit has been commanded to accompany and protect the summoner, or some similar task, allow the summoner player access to the creature's stats. Let him make rolls for the spirit when appropriate. If there is ever a question of conflict between the entity and the summoner, the GM should take on its role.







Death Art

Death Art is a ritual magic, not a battle magic or a spell cast instantaneously to mitigate some obstacle. Using this dark lore, the sorcerer creates a menagerie of reanimated creatures to do his bidding.

Skill and Faith

Death Art can be incorporated into your game in two ways. It can be used as a skill, like Sorcery or Enchanting, using the rules described in this chapter. Or the powers and obstacles described in this chapter can be attributed to Faith. If using Faith, the Death Art skill replaces the Ritual skill for priests. All of the Death Art tests delineated in this chapter are made using Faith, rather than the Death Art skill. Death Art is used for linked tests or to create tools. Tools and workshops are required whether using the skill or Faith.

Gifted at Death

In order to use Death Art magic as a skill, the character must have the Gifted or Cold Black Blood trait.

Mortal Soul

Death Art combines elements both physical and spiritual. Though the physical aspect of the art—creating walking corpses—is obviously important, the spirit is the prime target. When a death artist wishes to animate a corpse, he is calling that creature's soul back into its body. He is trapping it in a cage of rotting flesh and decaying bone, using the soul as a fuel for his evil deeds.

Therefore, this art may only be used on the corpses of those creatures who are mortal and who are considered to have a soul—a soul being defined here as native intelligence, imagination, creativity and the ability to endure suffering. This means no animals or insects and no immortal creatures.



Orcs, Elves and other immortal creatures may not have their corpses so defiled. Dwarves and Trolls, while not truly immortal, are certainly a part of the land in a way that most mortals are not. It's recommended that they be exempt from this as well. And, while it's not listed as a trait, consider Dragons immortal as well.

Death Art Process

Death Art uses three general spells: Rise!, Ritual Reanimation and Death of the Spirit. Rise! is a short spell used to quickly reanimate a corpse and put it under the death artist's control. Ritual Reanimation is a lengthy process that also raises corpses to serve the sorcerer, but using the ritual method, the death artist has much more control of the shape of his servant. The Death of the Spirit spell is a long, complicated and difficult process that enables the sorcerer to slowly transform a living person into a ghoul, shade or lich.

Dead Flesh

Before we dig into the black magic of raising corpses to do your bidding, we must discuss the physical state of the dead body. This is an important consideration for the death artist.

Decomposition

The state of decay affects the obstacles for the Rise! and Ritual Reanimation spells. The obstacle modifiers are listed with each entry below.

3 days dead, no penalty

A corpse remains fresh and viable for up to three days after the time of death. It attracts flies—who come to lay their eggs—but it has yet to become infested. It still looks human but for the flat eyes and waxy skin.

10 days dead, +1 Ob

Up to 10 days after death, the body begins to putrefy and bloat. The pressure of the gases inflates the body cavity and forces fluids to either collect in the cavity or exit from various orifices. It's a messy time.

20 days dead, +2 Ob

At this stage, the bloating ceases and the body collapses in on itself. The fluids drain away and the flesh of the corpse turns to a creamy consistency. Insects—particularly flies and beetles—swarm to the body to consume it. The body is typically covered in a crawling cloak of maggots.



50 days dead, +3 Ob
After 50 days of decomposition, the corpse is a putrescent mass of rotting flesh, inhabited by maggots, flies, wasps and corpse-eating beetles. It is a barely recognizable horror of what it once was.

1 year dead, +4 Ob
After one year of death, the corpse is a ragged collection of dried, leathery skin, hair and bones. It is very difficult to reanimate such debris.

Many years gone
Contrary to popular belief, an ancient desiccated corpse is useless to a death artist. There's not enough material left to reanimate.

Preserving the Corpse

Corpses rot. It's an unfortunate fact of life. Even under the care of a diligent death artist, they fall apart. For about the first year, this can be held off, but after a year of living death, the corpses crumble.

In order to preserve a corpse and gain more life from it, the death artist may use the Taxidermy skill. The obstacle for preservation is 1 plus its current state of decomposition as described above. If the test is successful, the corpse will not fall apart after a year has elapsed. The sorcerer can squeeze another year of life out of it. It continues to age, of course, but the sorcerer may also continue to preserve it after each year by making the Ob 5 Taxidermy test.

If the test is failed, the corpse crumbles to dust at an inopportune time within the next year. The GM may have the corpse disintegrate during play at a point whenever he likes.

Living Traits

If the corpse possessed certain traits during life, the sorcerer gains advantage dice when casting the Rise! or Ritual Reanimation spells on it. Add +1D to the Death Art roll for each of the following traits: Aura of Malevolence, Cold-Blooded, Dreadful, Fearless, Horrific Aura, Lost, Quiescent, Resigned to Death and Weak-Willed. After the corpse is reanimated, all such traits are lost.

Physical traits that represent the creature's form and function remain. However, any trait that requires regeneration or organic manufacture—the Earth's Blood or Venom traits, for example—is lost upon the creature's death.

All Good Children Go to Heaven

Each of the following traits add +1 Ob to the Rise!, Ritual Reanimation or Death of the Spirit obstacle: Aura of Martyrdom, Aura of Holiness, Entropic, Fey Blood, Iron Will, Misplaced Aura. Obscure Aura, Stubborn and Wolverine.

Corpses that bore the Eldritch Sink trait in life may not be reanimated or evoked.

Rise!

The most basic Death Art spell allows the sorcerer to command a corpse to gather itself up, rise to its feet and heed his commands. This ability is inherent in the skill. The obstacle is 4 plus the state of decomposition. Advantage dice to the Rise! test can be gained from the victim's traits (see Living Traits). If performed in Fight, this spell costs one action *per obstacle point*. In Range and Cover or Duel of Wits, Rise! takes one volley to cast.

Success indicates that the monstrosity shambles to its feet, ready to do its master's bidding. See the Risen Corpse stat block.

Failure indicates either that the spell did not take hold or that the creature is reanimated, but it turns on the caster. The GM determines which result is appropriate. If the creature turns on its prospective master, use the Risen Corpse stat block.

Corpses commanded to rise must be in the sorcerer's presence. Unfortunately, this means that interred or entombed corpses may not be so commanded. The necromancer needs to unearth the body to free it so that it might serve him.

The Rise! spell can be cast without tools and without preparation. If the death artist wants more from his corpse servants, he must use the Ritual Reanimation spell.

The Life of the Corpse

A reanimated corpse of a human adult uses the stats, skills, attributes and traits listed in the Risen Corpse stat block.

Reanimated Corpse											
Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	He	Re	Ste	Mw	Res	Cir
B9	B1	B3	B3	B5	B5	—	B2	B7	B11	—	—

	Stride	6				Hesitation	1	

PTGS	Su	Li	Mi	Se	Tr	Mo	Base Rise! Obstacle: 4
	B3	B6	B8	B9	B10	B11	

Traits		
	Char	Hungry Dead, Mute, Clumsy Walker
	Die	Reanimated Corpse, Hideous, Dead to Pain, Night Eyed
Skills		Savage Attack B3

Weapons and Damage	Type/Name	I	M	S	Length	VA	WS	
	Nails/Bite	B3	B5	B7	Shortest	—	2	

Reanimated Corpse *Dt*

This trait grants the reanimated corpse the Wi B9, Pe B1, Ag B3, Sp B3, Po B5, Fo B5 stat line and eliminates the Health, Resources and Circles attributes. These creatures may not recover from injury. However, neither do they bleed to death or suffer from any type of disease or poison. Also, these creatures may advance extant skills, but they may not learn new skills in play.

The Reanimated Corpse trait also gives the creature the mindless ability to act in a mob. Up to five walking corpses may help each other at once with any task, including dragging down their victims and eating them (in other words, positioning and Lock actions). When one corpse helps another, it adds helping dice as per usual, but it may not then act on his own.

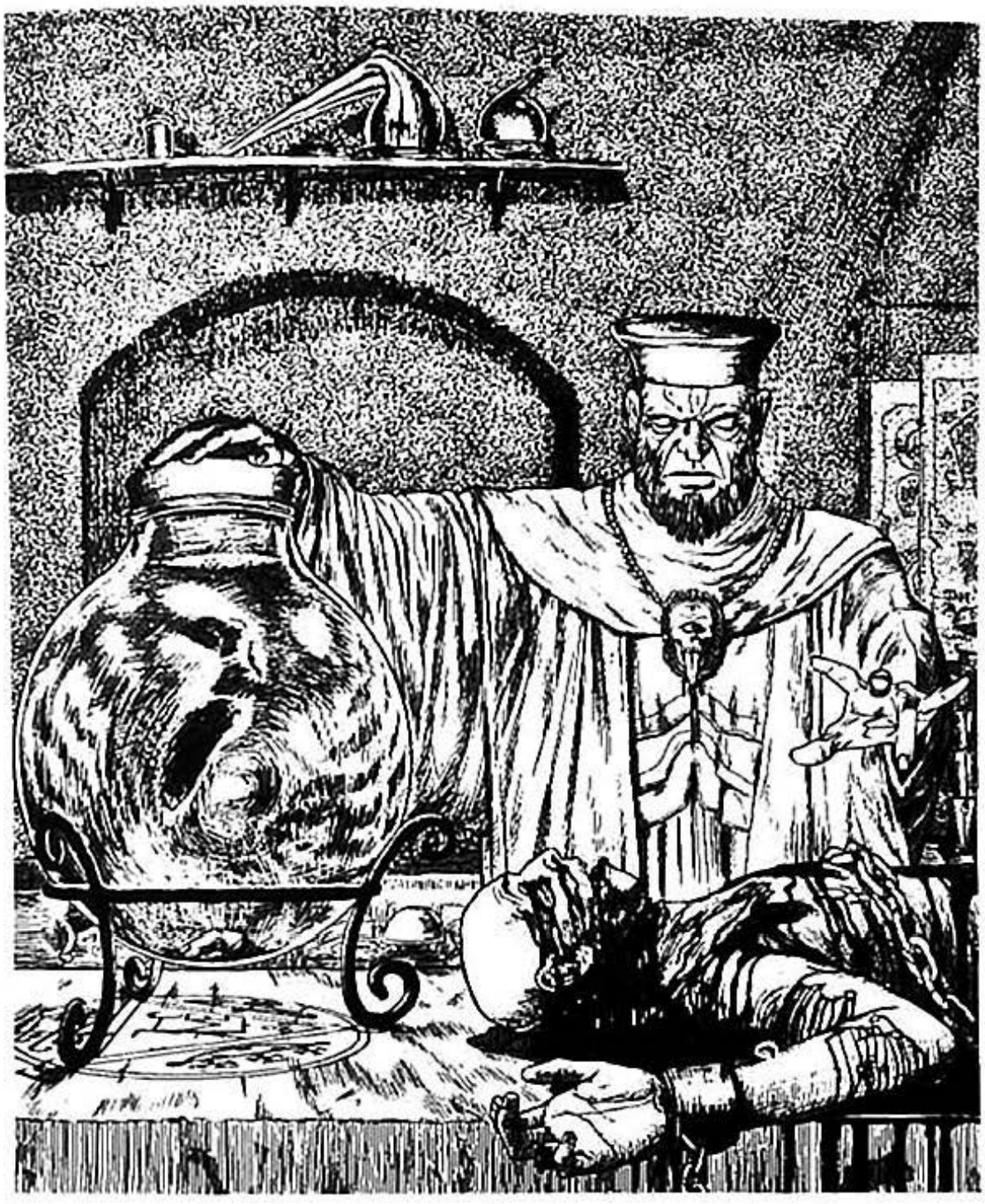
Hungry Dead *Char*

As a side effect of their reanimation, the dead become insatiably hungry. They may consume normal foodstuffs, but the only dish that truly curbs their desire is living human flesh.

Ritual Reanimation

Raising a corpse back to its unsteady feet is not the only feat a death artist may perform. Given time and materials, he can reshape a corpse into a grim horror capable of efficiently carrying out his maleficent will. The base obstacle for Ritual Reanimation is significantly lower than the Rise! spell.

This process requires a workshop for Death Art and a number of hours equal to the obstacle of the spell to be cast to raise the corpse. The sorcerer may work patiently, carefully and quickly as per the standard skill rules.



The Ritual of Reanimation

There are four types of rituals for creating a corpse servant—reanimated corpse, soldier of the damned, abomination and night hunter. Each ritual produces a different body type and a different stat block. The sorcerer must choose which body type he wishes to begin with. Factor the corpse's state of decomposition into the obstacle. The death artist may further modify the body and the obstacle by using the rules described in the Transmogrification section. Finally, the death artist player can grant his character bonus dice to the skill test by imparting his servant with Beliefs and Instincts.

Rituals of Reanimation Obstacles and Advantages

Rituals	
Basic Ritual	Ob 2
Soldier of the Damned	Ob 3
Abomination	Ob 4
Night Hunter	Ob 5
Decomposition	
3 days dead	—
10 days dead	+1 Ob
20 days dead	+2 Ob
50 days dead	+3 Ob
1 year dead	+4 Ob
More than one year	Not possible
Traits of the Living	
Living Traits	+1D per trait
All Good Children Go to Heaven	+1 Ob per trait
Transmogrification	
Enhance stat (2-4)	+1 Ob per point
Enhance stat (5 and up)	+2 Ob per point
Enhance skill (2-4)	+1 Ob per point
Enhance skill (5 and up)	+2 Ob per point
Add skill	+1 Ob per skill
Monstrous corpse trait level 1	+1 Ob per trait
Monstrous corpse trait level 2	+2 Ob per trait
Monstrous corpse trait level 3	+3 Ob per trait
In Morti ad Vivo	
Add Instinct	+1D per Instinct
Add Belief	+2D per Belief (max two)
I Am Night	
Add Night Blooded Trait	+2D

Time of Death, Preferred Corpse

Any corpse that's been dead for a year or less may be so raised. Soldiers of the Damned are best made from fresh kills of strong young men and women. Abominations are often assembled from the outsized bodies of criminals, madmen and lepers. Children on the cusp of coming of age make the best fodder for Night Hunters.



Transmogrification

The sorcerer may tinker with the strength, ability and adaptability of his creation. The modifications and enhancements that may be made to a corpse are listed below. Enjoy!

Enhancing the Body

The sorcerer may concoct solutions and lay wards to increase the physical mettle of his creation. The player may increase physical stats from the base numbers listed with the body. Raising a stat from 2-4 increases the Death Art obstacle by one for each die added. Raising a stat to 5 or higher increases the Death Art obstacle by two for each die added.

The player may increase skill exponents from the base numbers listed with the body. Raising a skill from 1-4 increases the Death Art obstacle by one for each die added. Raising a skill to 5 or higher increases the Death Art obstacle by two for each die added.

Adding Skills

The sorcerer may imbue his creations with additional skills. Each skill added increases the Ritual Reanimation obstacle by +1 Ob. Each skill added opens at *root plus 2*. You may select from the following list:

Weapon skills, Brawling, Throwing, Hauling, Climbing, Riding, Stealthy, Ditch Digging, Armor Training, Shield Training.

Monstrous Corpse Traits Level 1, +1 Ob

The sorcerer may add any of the following traits to his creation. Each trait added increases the obstacle to reanimate by 1: Aggressive, Brute, Claws, Devourer, Fangs, Heaving, Numb, Hideous, Single-Minded or Silent.

Monstrous Corpse Traits Level 2, +2 Ob

The following traits may be bound into a corpse before it's reanimated. They increase the obstacle by 2 each: Berzerker, Dead to Pain, Hammer Hands, Repulsive Blood, Stillness, Unfeeling or Unflinching.

Monstrous Corpse Traits Level 3, +3 Ob

Aura of Fear, Toothy Maw, Iron Hide, Troll Skin.



In Morti ad Vivo

Tinkering with the corpse's composition is primarily a spiritual and magical act. This process changes the nature of the creature. The more qualities the death artist grants to his rotting monster, the more lifelike it becomes. The more lifelike it becomes, the more willful and self-sufficient it becomes, but also the more vulnerable it grows to fear and pain.

Revenge Is a Vulture

Reanimated corpses lose all of the Beliefs and Instincts they had in life. The will and energy required to maintain such things in life are fuel for the bindings which lock the spirit in the fleshy prison and power its foul deeds. The soul is trapped in a hellish place between life and death. It only knows pain, loss and sorrow. But it experiences them without understanding. However, the more power the death artist grants to his creation, the closer to life and remembering it becomes.

The death artist player may grant his creations Instincts and Beliefs in order to gain bonus dice for the reanimation rituals.

- Granting a creature an Instinct gives +1D to the reanimation ritual. A creature may have up to three Instincts.
- Granting a creature a Belief grants +2D to the reanimation ritual. A death artist may allow two Beliefs to resurface in the corpse's bound soul.

The GM writes the Instincts and Beliefs. Even so the creature may not act on its Beliefs until it either earns three Beliefs or is freed from the spiritual bonds that bind it. Creatures with Instincts may use them as they are triggered.

I Am Night

Applying the Night Blooded trait to a corpse—so it is only active at night—grants +2D to the Death Art test to reanimate.

Preserving a Trait from Life

If a death artist wishes to preserve a trait the corpse held in life, he must make a separate Death Art test. The obstacle is 1 plus the trait point cost. You may preserve one trait.

Performing the Ritual

Total the obstacle and bonus from the Reanimation Ritual, Decomposition, Traits of the Living, Transmogrification, In Morti ad Vivo and I Am Night categories. Test Death Art plus advantage dice.



This test requires a Death Art workshop. Success indicates that the corpse rises from the ritual pit, reborn to serve its new master.

Failure indicates that either the spell has failed and the corpse is just rotting flesh, or that the death artist has called back something malevolent and destructive to inhabit the body. In this case, the GM may opt to have the corpse possessed by an imp or dæmon. Roll the Die of Fate if you don't have anything else in mind: 1–Lesser Imp, 2–Imp, 3–Greater Imp, 4–Lesser Dæmon, 5–Dæmon, 6–Greater Dæmon. The possessing spirit transfers the Lawbreaker trait and one other trait of the GM's choosing (except Spirit Nature) into the corpse. The corpse also retains any of the traits that the death artist was trying to impart.

Ritually Reanimated Corpse Stat Blocks

Ritually Reanimated Corpse												
Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	He	Re	Ste	Mw	Res	Cir	
B4	*B1*	*B3*	*B3*	*B5*	*B5*	—	*B2*	*B7*	*B11*	—	—	
Stride		*7*						Hesitation		*1*		
PTGS	Su	Li	Mi	Se	Tr	Mo	Base Reanimation Obstacle: 2					
	B5	*B6*	*B8*	*B9*	*B10*	*B11*						
Traits	Char	*Hungry Dead, Mute, Clumsy Walker*										
	Die	*Reanimated Corpse, Hideous, Dead to Pain, Night Eyed*										
Skills		*Savage Attack B3*										
Weapons and Damage	Type/Name	I	M	S	Length	VA	WS					
	Nails/Bite	*B3*	*B5*	*B7*	*Shortest*	—	*2*					

Soldier of the Damned												
Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	He	Re	Ste	Mw	Res	Cir	
B6	*B2*	*B4*	*B4*	*B4*	*B6*	—	*B3*	*B7*	*B11*	—	—	
Stride		*7*						Hesitation		*4/0*		
PTGS	Su	Li	Mi	Se	Tr	Mo	Base Reanimation Obstacle: 3					
	B4	*B7*	*B8*	*B9*	*B10*	*B11*						
Traits	Char	*Hungry Dead, Mute*										
	Die	*Reanimated Corpse, Hideous, Dead to Pain, Unfeeling, Night Eyed*										
Skills		*Savage Attack B5*										
Weapons and Damage	Type/Name	I	M	S	Length	VA	WS					
	Nails/Bite	*B2*	*B4*	*B6*	*Shortest*	—	*2*					

Abomination											
Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	He	Re	Ste	Mw	Res	Cir
B4	B2	B4	B4	B6	B6	—	B3	B7	B12	—	—

Stride	6						Hesitation	6/0	

PTGS	Su	Li	Mi	Se	Tr	Mo	Base Reanimation Obstacle: 4
	B4	B7	B9	B10	B11	B12	

Traits		
	Char	Hungry Dead, Mute
	Die	Reanimated Corpse, Massive Stature, Hideous, Unfeeling, Brute, Night Eyed
	Call	Back-Breaking Labor, Lifting Heavy Things
Skills		Savage Attack B4, Hauling B4

Weapons and Damage	Type/Name	I	M	S	Length	VA	WS	
	Nails/Bite	B4	B6	B9	Short	—	2	

Night Hunter											
Wi	Pe	Ag	Sp	Po	Fo	He	Re	Ste	Mw	Res	Cir
B3	B5	B6	B6	B3	B3	—	B5	B7	B9	—	—

Stride	8						Hesitation	7/4	

PTGS	Su	Li	Mi	Se	Tr	Mo	Base Reanimation Obstacle: 5
	B2	B4	B6	B7	B8	B9	

Traits		
	Char	Hungry Dead, Mute
	Die	Reanimated Corpse, Hideous, Dead to Pain, Unfeeling, Fearless, Clawed, Nose of the Bloodhound, Night Eyed
Skills		Savage Attack B5, Stealthy B4, Climbing B4

Weapons and Damage	Type/Name	I	M	S	Length	VA	WS	
	Slashing Claws	B2	B4	B6	Short	1	3	

A three-day-old body can be turned into a Reanimated Corpse with an Ob 2 Death Art test. Increasing its Savage Attack skill from 3 to 4 adds +1 Ob. Giving it the Climbing skill adds +1 Ob. Adding Claws and the Single Minded trait are +1 Ob each. The total reanimation obstacle for this creature is then 6. If I give it the Night Blooded trait and an Instinct, I get +3D to the test.

Re-Reanimation

Corpses that are dealt a Mortal Wound in play are once again freed from their mortal coil. They die again and may not receive treatment, recover or heal. They may, however, be rebound by Death Art. Oh hideous fate!



Rebinding a spirit to its corpse requires a Death Art ritual similar to the one that reanimated it in the first place. The death artist gains a +1D advantage to the test. The corpse creature also gains a Belief. It may have up to three Beliefs. If the creature to be brought back already has three Beliefs, the obstacle to control and maintain the creature as described under the Inevitable, Immortal Army is increased by +1.

Repairing the Mortal Coil

Corpses that are damaged but not killed may be repaired using the Taxidermy skill. Use the obstacles for Field Dressing. Only one penalty die per wound may be so repaired. No recovery test is possible.

Death of the Spirit

There is another set of rituals contained in this art. Rather than take that which is dead and give it the semblance of life, the death artist may take the life slowly from the living and give them the semblance of death.

This process is undertaken in three steps—toxification, living death and evocation. The subject may be willing or unwilling. It does not matter. At the end of the process they will either be dead or transformed into a powerful spirit of vengeance.

Toxification

The first step in this process is to begin killing the body. The death artist must introduce toxins and poisons into the victim's system and slowly, but firmly, accelerate his path toward death.

As mentioned above, the victim does not have to be willing or even aware of the process. But he must ingest the concoctions the death artist presents to him—either willingly or by force.

Death Toxins

The victim must consume special alcohol or drugs, or specially prepared meat. Preparing death toxins is an Ob 1 Death Art test. Preparing a meal of poisoned meat is an Ob 2 test. These deadly substances must be ingested. They may not be injected.

Once the poison is ingested, make a versus test between the victim's Forte and Death Art. If Death Art is successful, the process has begun. Apply the margin of success as described under the You Should Be



Dying heading. If the Death Art test fails, the victim falls ill and suffers an injury equal to the exponent of the Death Art skill. But now, the victim may not be taken down this path—he is resistant. He may, of course, be killed and his corpse reanimated.

You Should Be Dying

Successful intoxication grants the victim the Aggressive trait. In addition, each additional success can be spent to grant one of the following traits: Bottomless Stomach, Cannibal or Death Addicted.

The victim is also now primed for further torment from the death artist.

The Living Death

During the second stage of the process, the death artist begins to separate the victim's soul from his body, like prying back fingernails from their moorings.

This phase of the process requires a ritual involving candles, sacrifice and meditation. It must take place in the sorcerer's workshop and the victim must be present.

Test Death Art versus the victim's Will. If Death Art is successful, the victim earns the Silent call-on trait and the Necrophagic character trait. And he is now ready for the final step, evocation.

Soul Twisting

Extra successes may be spent to apply additional traits to the victim from the following list: Dissent Parasite, Blood Lust, Aura of Fear, Single-Minded and Fast Reflexes.

Extra successes may also be applied to eliminating the victim's Beliefs and Instincts. Two successes may be spent to remove an Instinct slot from the character sheet—he had three, now he has two. Three successes may be spent to remove a Belief slot. Multiple Instincts and Beliefs may be lost in one test. The target player may determine which Beliefs are lost.

The time for the test is hours equal to the obstacle of the test plus any extra successes applied for traits.

If you fail the test, something went wrong during the ritual. The victim wakes up and witnesses the horror around him. He may attempt to escape the death artist's lair using speed, stealth or by force, whichever is most appropriate to the situation. He may not be brought further down the path to evocation.



Ghouls

Taking a subject through Toxification and the Living Death effectively transforms him into a ghoul. However, he is not under the sorcerer's direct control. Ghouls are still alive and may think and act as they please. Persuasion, Seduction, Soothing Platitudes and Intimidation tests may be used to motivate them and Duel of Wits used to sway them.

Evocation

In the final stage of the ritual, the death artist rips the very soul from his victim and transforms it into a deadly servant. In order for the soul to be evoked, the victim must be tormented and then ritually murdered.

Make a Death Art test against an obstacle equal to *the victim's current Will exponent plus his current Forte exponent.* Describe your actions in terms of things metaphysical, religious and ritual. Describe how you're transforming your victim into this new monstrous form.

Successful Evocation

If successful, the death artist rips the very soul from his victim and transforms it into a servant of his will, trapped in a living death. The victim earns the following traits: Slave to the Power of Death, Corpse Bound, Luminescent, Stillness and Heartless.

Extra successes from the evocation test may be spent to add traits or to remove Beliefs and Instincts.

- It costs one extra success to remove a Belief or Instinct at this stage.
- The following traits cost one extra success each: Mesmerizing Gaze, Horrific Aura.
- These traits cost two extra successes each: Celestial Sight and Amulet Bound can be used to replace Corpse Bound.
- Gifted and Faithful cost three successes each. But can only be imbued if the servant possessed the trait in life.
- Spirit Nature costs four extra successes.

The victim retains skills he had in life. Die and call-on traits are lost and replaced with those imparted by the Death of the Spirit process (except as noted above). Character traits are retained. The slave's stats are equal to its stats in life, minus any dice from injuries sustained at the time of this death.

If a victim is evoked while suffering from a Traumatic Wound, all of his stats are reduced by four when he transforms from life to unlife.

The victim may not learn new skills unless he has three Beliefs. If he has fewer than three Beliefs, he has no free will and must obey the commands of his creator without hesitation.

Evocation Time

The evocation test takes days equal to the obstacle.

Failed Evocation

If the test is failed, the victim dies.

Slave to the Power of Death Dt

This creature is now the servant of the sorcerer who evoked his soul. He is no longer alive, but neither is he dead. He will not age, grow sick, hunger or sleep. Use the skills the victim had in life. Die and call-on traits are lost and replaced with those imparted by the Death of the Spirit process (except as noted under Evocation). Character traits are retained. The slave's stats



are equal to his stats in life, minus any dice from injuries sustained at the time of this death. This condition overrides conditions from other traits like Corpse Bound.

The Lich

The death artist may perform the Death of the Spirit ritual upon himself. A necromancer who does so is under his own control and begins the game with three Beliefs.

I Am in Command

A successful Death Art test to raise a corpse or spirit puts the sorcerer in command of the creature. Commands must be verbalized, but all implication and subtext is comprehended via the deep bond between the death artist and his creation.

For example, the sorcerer may shout, "Get him!" and the creature will know who "him" is.

Gathering the Materials

Death Art requires a few key ingredients, namely a victim (a corpse or one who will soon be) and a laboratory or ritual chamber.

Workshops

Death Art requires a workshop (20 rps) for the higher-end processes—Ritual Reanimation and Death of the Spirit. This "workshop" consists of either a laboratory or a ritual religious space depending on the idiom of the art in your game. Acquiring the materials for such a setup is an Ob 6 Resources test in play. It's not cheap. It also puts the sorcerer's lifestyle maintenance test at Ob 4 minimum.

Victims and Corpses

Victims are characters in your story. They can be relationships bought before play or characters encountered during the game. Victims may be brought into the game via Circles. If the sorcerer player wishes to do this, use the *specific disposition* modifier—the player is specifically looking for a victim. Also, this Circles test brings in characters whom you've known in the past. No matter who the victim is, he and the sorcerer have crossed paths before.



Corpses can be acquired in a number of ways, none of them pleasant. I recommend calling for a test in order to find a corpse based on the following conditions:

Murders

Murder scenes are an obvious site of fresh corpses. However, it's difficult to predict where they'll happen and thus they're difficult to exploit. Unless, of course, one arranges and performs the murder oneself. Then this can become a most reliable source of fresh meat. To arrange for a victim, use the Victim mechanics.

Murderous sorcerers are an excellent opportunity to bring in the local law enforcement figures. In medieval human kingdoms, bailiffs, constables and justiciars are the officers of the king's law. They'll usually be of a count or baron's rank and have with them a retinue of knights and squires. In a village, most likely the local sergeant will be the first to investigate a crime, interrogating witnesses and searching for physical evidence. Bored officials love to investigate a good crime, especially when it means they'll get to crucify a skeevy necromancer.

Graveyards

Finding a suitable graveyard calls for a Graveyard-wise test. The obstacle should be from 1 to 3, depending on the frequency of such places in your game. The wealthier an area, the more likely it is to have a graveyard.

There is the matter of the digging or tomb-breaking. Digging shouldn't be a test unless there's something else at stake, like a time crunch. Then, by all means, call for a Ditch Digging test.

Unless one is stalking a funeral, finding fresh corpses in a graveyard is difficult. Roll a die of fate to determine the state of decomposition of the corpse you dig up:

Graveyard Corpse Ages	
1	10 days dead
2	20 days dead
3	50 days dead
4	1 year dead
5	1 year dead
6	Many years gone



Gibbets

Gibbets are execution grounds, specifically scaffolding on which criminals are hanged until they die. They're an excellent source of fresh bodies but suffer from being in rather public places.

You can find a gibbet using Roads-wise in the country, or a Streetwise test in the city. Alternately, a Bandit-wise or Criminal-wise test could be used to get directions.

Stealing a body from a gibbet requires an Inconspicuous test (during daylight hours) or a Stealthy test (at night) against an Observation of B3 for small towns, B4 for large towns, B5 for cities. In some situations, an Ob 3 Resources test can be paid to bribe the hangman to look the other way. Success indicates the sorcerer gets away undetected. Just a family member come to collect the body, right? Failure indicates *someone* is up for a new reputation....

Roll the die of fate to determine how old the corpse on the gibbet is:



Gibbet Corpse Ages	
1	Less than 3 days dead
2	Less than 3 days dead
3	10 days dead
4	10 days dead
5	50 days dead
6	1 year dead

Grave Pits

Grave pits are common in poor areas or areas of the countryside with temporarily high mortality rates due to plague or war. Grave pits are open to the air, with the corpses simply wrapped and dropped in and then covered with a shovelful of quicklime. There is typically a grave digger present at the grave pits as a nominal guard, but otherwise these pits are perforce in remote locations.

Finding a grave pit requires a Graveyard-wise test (*details* Ob 3), or a Plague-wise test (*simple facts* Ob 2). Roll a die of fate to determine the state of decomposition of the corpses:

Grave Pit Corpse Ages	
1	Less than 3 days dead
2	10 days dead
3	20 days dead
4	20 days dead
5	50 days dead
6	1 year dead

Battle Sites

Recent battle sites are an excellent source of fresh corpses. Unfortunately, most soldiers tend to be rather emotional about retrieving and burying their dead. Stealing a body from an active battle site requires a Stealthy test versus the force's scouts or, I suppose, an Inconspicuous test to walk into camp and pretend you're a surgeon. Getting caught inevitably involves arrows and swords, so do take care. The upside is that these bodies are always fresh!

Prospecting at an ancient battle site is usually a lost cause. A successful Excavation test will turn up battlefield remains. Roll on the following table to determine the corpse's age:



Battle Sites Corpse Ages	
1	1 year dead
2	1 year dead
3	Many years gone
4	Many years gone
5	Many years gone
6	Many years gone

The Inevitable, Immortal Army

Using the Death Art, a sorcerer can accumulate quite a horde of dead followers. Maintaining a horde is difficult and dangerous, but very rewarding.

Maintaining Your Horde

At the end of each session, before artha is doled out, the necromancer must test Will in order to keep his horde of creations in control: base obstacle is 0, +1 Ob for each risen or ritually reanimated corpse, +2 Ob for each creature with the Slave to the Power of Death trait and +1 Ob for each of these that has three Beliefs.

Success indicates that the sorcerer keeps his children in check. They will obey his commands unfailingly for the next session.

Go Forth and Stalk the Night, My Children

Failing the maintenance test indicates that the death artist's hold over his dead minions is weakening. The sorcerer may do one of two things: He may release creatures from his service. These monsters become independent entities, acting on their own. The sorcerer may not regain control over them (except through Re-Reanimation). The sorcerer must release creatures whose maintenance obstacle penalty equals the margin of failure.

If he failed by three, he's got to release three risen creatures; one spirit and one fleshy creature; or one spirit with three Beliefs.

Tightening the Grip

Alternately, the sorcerer can opt to exert his will and force the creatures to remain in his service. Doing so grants his creations a number of Beliefs equal to the margin of failure. The Beliefs must be assigned to the most valuable creation with the most Beliefs first, then to the next most valuable, etc.



I Can Remember My Wife; You Killed Her, You Bastard!
If a sorcerer fails a maintenance test and has a creature under his control with three Beliefs, he must set it free first before he can decide what else to do with the remainder of his margin of failure.

You may choose to mix these options, releasing members of the horde and tightening your grip on others in order to satisfy the margin of failure for the maintenance test.

Help Me, You Fool!
The sorcerer may get help to maintain his horde from another death artist, so long as his friend has the Death Art skill and is not currently controlling any reanimated corpses or evoked spirits of his own.

Freedom
Creatures who are set free or break free may act on their Beliefs. The GM takes control of them, and generally they are not happy. Their existence is one of torment and slavery. It's not uncommon for them to break free from the sorcerer's control and simply throw themselves upon him in an attempt to take his wretched life. That rarely ends well.

The truly smart ones crawl off to the hills and barrows and plot their revenge. To die again in front of their former master only gives him power over them again!

The GM may choose the best course for these monsters, guided by their Beliefs and Instincts.

Belief Bookkeeping
Don't keep a record of all of the creatures' Beliefs. Simply note how many Beliefs each monster has. When the creature is freed, write up the proper odes to revenge and murder that such Beliefs would encompass.

Instincts Bookkeeping
I do recommend tracking Instincts. They should involve a mix of survival and revenge. For example:

"Always use my Stealthy when on errands for my master."

And, "When the master falters, shove him off the cliff."



Field Life of a Corpse

The corpses do continue to decompose. Death Art does not inherently preserve them. This does not lessen their effectiveness, per se, but after a year or so of death, the creatures crumble to a useless pile of hair and bone. Generally, it's not going to be something you need to worry about. But it is something to keep in mind.

Live in Infamy

Death artists are bad people. In every culture, tampering with the dead and calling souls back to serve you (as slaves) is a great taboo. It's ugly business. These taboos are typically written into civil and religious law. The penalties for breaking these laws are often as harsh as can be—imprisonment or corporal punishment are typical.

The Infamous Lives of Death Artists

At any point in the game, if a death artist is caught performing his works, and news of this spreads, he earns an infamous reputation. If there are one or more surviving witnesses, word spreads. At the end of the session, review the death artist's candidacy for a reputation. The group can vote him a new 1D infamous reputation, increase an extant infamous reputation by one or they may convert one of his other more valuable reputations into an infamous one.

Lay Your Fears to Rest

Death Art is an insidious and powerful art, but it is not without its vulnerabilities. Its base creations may be felled by fire and axe, whereas wraiths and spectres are vulnerable to Faith, Summoning and Folklore.

Faith in Light, Life, Health and Purity

Priests of the religions who have power in spheres of light, life, health or purity have a special options for the blessing, hindrance, purification and intercession miracles.

- The blessing miracle may be used to turn a weapon to a *spirit weapon* against Death Art only or add the standard +1D advantage. Choose before saying the blessing.
- Hindrance stops a number of creatures equal to the priest's Faith exponent, rather than just three creatures.
- Purification unbinds body and spirit and causes a reanimated corpse to crumble before the priest.



Tormented spirits are another matter. These souls require an intercession. The priest must pray for them and their god must reach out and set them free. Successful intercession destroys those under the duress of the Death of the Spirit.

Summoning Against Death

Summoning may be used to call forth the souls who are bound into these creations. Reanimated corpses count as restless dead. Fully evoked spirits count as minor corporal spirits. If the test is successful, the creature will present itself to the summoner. It will not initially harm him when it is summoned. If the creature has Beliefs, it can enter into a pact. If it has none, it may not; the death artist's magic has it trapped. The summoner's magic is not capable of destroying spirits or countering the Death Art magic. The summoner must find another way to free the soul if he so desires.

However, the summoner may trap these spirit creatures in prison circles. See the rules for Circination in the Summoning chapter.

If your uncle's corpse has been raised to serve a death artist and you summon your uncle's spirit, the walking corpse eventually shambles up and heeds your summons.



Folklore

The Folklore skill contains a wealth of knowledge and resources for combatting the creatures of the night. Often, remedies are specific to a particular culture. To allow for a range of possible cultures and game worlds, these expanded rules describe some overarching motifs for Folklore and how to use them to ward off the walking dead and track down evil sorcerers.

For the sake of simplicity, we've broken down this application of Folklore into three categories: charms, wards and remedies.

Charms

A charm imposes a +1 Ob penalty to any activity against the wearer by the target creature.

Charms are small baubles, necklaces and bracelets worn by the superstitious. When created, a charm must be dedicated to protecting against a specific type of creature—walking corpses, ghouls or fully evoked spirits. Also, a charm must be fragile and breakable—there must be the chance that they get ripped, torn, lost or broken.

Wards

A ward is a place, object or symbol that keeps spirits, the living dead and reanimated corpses at bay. These creatures may not approach, attack or otherwise act against characters within the protection of a ward.

Holy groves, churches, temples and running streams can act as wards.

Remedies

A remedy hastens the destruction of a constructed, created or summoned creature. Remedies can also be used to counteract curses or similar magical effects like Toxification in Death Art. Remedies for abominations include things like holy water, silver swords and wooden stakes. A remedy can turn a regular weapon into a spirit weapon, grant an advantage die when fighting these creatures or increase the selected Power of a weapon by 1 when used against a specified product of Death Art.



Creating Charms, Wards and Remedies with Folklore

Customs differ from place to place. What might be effective in one village might not work in the next. The Folklore skill is used to discover the proper charms, wards and remedies for various places.

In order to identify an effective solution to his current problem, the player makes a Folklore skill test. The obstacle is determined by combining a number of factors and conditions. The player and the GM work together to set the obstacle and thereby determine the folklore customs for this particular locale.

The more obscure and difficult to perform, the lower the obstacle for the Folklore. Look through the following list. Choose two to five conditions and criteria that appeal to you and that make sense.

The base Folklore obstacle is 7. Each condition that you choose from the list below reduces the obstacle by one.

If you choose Numbers, Gesture and Day-to-Day Rituals—three items from the list—the obstacle is reduced from 7 to 4.



Before testing against the obstacle, decide if you're going to find a charm, ward or remedy. They're all the same obstacle to discover, but have different effects in play, and each has different conditions of acquisition. Once you've chosen your conditions and set your obstacle, decide how they fit together.

Significant Numbers
Certain numbers have mystical effects: 4 is bad luck in some cultures, 5 is a holy number in others. Choose a significant number.

Significant Metals
Certain metals are better at combatting the supernatural. Iron, silver, gold and lead all have unique properties.

Significant Minerals
Salt, diamonds, quartz and a variety of other minerals are noted for their protective powers.

Significant Herbs or Plants
Garlic, cloves, aniseed and adzuki beans are all renowned for creating potent wards and charms.

Significant Animals or Parts Thereof
A wolf's tooth, rabbit's foot, lamb's blood or honey can aid the knowledgeable in creating wards.

Significant Dates
Holy days, birthdays of saints, equinoxes, solstices, full moons and eclipses all influence the power of supernaturals.

Significant Geometry
Certain symbols—stars, perfect circles, equilateral triangles—contain mystical potential.

Significant Architecture
The manner in which a building is constructed can be so pure and powerful that it adversely affects the spell's ill intent.

Significant Features
A lone tree on a blasted heath, a swiftly running stream, consecrated ground or a mountain shaped like a jagged tooth can all act as powerful wards.



Significant Gestures or Manners
The sign to avert evil, averting the eyes, dancing in circles and reciting ritual phrases are all well-known sources of power against the forces of darkness.

Significant Day-to-Day Rituals
Even everyday rituals like sweeping the stoop with a broom, washing one's hands before a meal or praying to the saints before bed can aid in keeping one's life free and clear of the death artist's dark servants.

If you chose minerals, numbers, dates, architecture and day-to-day rituals, what does that mean? You've got to put them all together: On the morning of the day of the new moon, the stoop of the house must be swept clean and then three perfect piles of salt poured on the lintel. That'd be an Ob 2 Folklore test to bring this into the game. Common knowledge among the midwifery!

Find the Rare Thing

Knowing the Folklore of charms, wards and remedies doesn't necessarily mean these things are easily found. If items need to be acquired, they may be found through an outing or adventure, or perhaps even Resources or Circles tests.

Folkloric Restrictions

These broad rules allow for the players to shape local color. If the GM feels that some of the categories break the mood of the setting, he may restrict them. The first level of restriction is requiring linked wise tests to discover which criteria hold power in this place or culture. The second level of restriction is to cut certain items from the game outright. The culture might not hold animals sacred or have no great architecture, for example.



Blood Magic

Using pain, torture and murder, the sorcerer may gain bonus dice to cast his bloody magics!

Blood Magic is not a complete magic system like Art Magic or Death Art. It's an add-on system meant to be combined with other arts. It can be combined with Sorcery, Art Magic, Death Art, Orc Rituals, Enchanting, Faith, Summoning and Spirit Binding.

If combined with Enchanting, Sorcery or Orc Rituals, test the skill plus bonus dice from Blood Magic. If used with Summoning or Spirit Binding, I recommend replacing the Reputations and Spirit Marks with the Blood Magic rules. For Faith or Death Art, use them in place of the helping rules and prepare for some bloody miracles.

We also recommend adopting the Corruption rules found in this book if you're using Blood Magic in your campaign.

There are two overall methods to Blood Magic: torture and sacrifice. Torture uses the victim's pain and suffering for small gains meted out over a longer period of time. Sacrifice uses the victim's death as a one-time, powerful boost to the spell.

When a player seeks a boost from a blood magic ritual, he must declare before he starts whether he is using torture or sacrifice. Torture uses the Torture skill. Sacrifice uses Rituals or Rituals of Blood.

Torture

If a sorcerer captures a victim, he may torture the victim to fuel his spells. The sorcerer aims to inflict injury—to draw blood—but not to incapacitate or kill the victim. It's the pain, suffering and blood that grant the sorcerer power.

Test the Torture skill. The obstacle is equal to the victim's Will. Success indicates the victim suffers a wound equal to the torturer's shade and exponent. Extra successes reduce or increase the damage, one pip on the PTGS per extra success. If the damage inflicts at

least -1D of wound penalties, the torturer gains a +1D advantage to the next spell he casts. For each -1D of wound penalty inflicted on the victim, the sorcerer gains an additional +1D advantage. Thus a Light wound is worth +1D, a Severe is worth +3D, etc.

If the sorcerer finds his victim's Will too high, he may simply beat him before the actual torture session begins.

The Beatings

Beating a character into submission entails doing injury to him in order to inflict wound penalties to reduce the obstacle for Torture (or any social skill).

Before beginning the torture itself, the sorcerer may dispatch his thugs to beat the piss out of his victim or undertake the task himself. Make an Ob 2 Brawling test. Success indicates you do Mark result damage to your victim. One success over the obstacle means you can choose to do an Incidental or Mark hit. Two successes over means you can choose an Incidental, Mark or Superb hit. Failure indicates you inflict a Superb hit on your victim.

The torturing player may make beating tests as often as he likes, but the results of a test stand: Damage from a beating cannot be reduced or spent. If a victim is killed or becomes too broken to be tortured, that's the sorcerer's problem.

The Victim Must Remain Conscious and Alive

If the victim falls unconscious or is killed during the torture, all bonuses are lost. Swooning from a failed Steel test result does not count as incapacitation in this case. If a stat is reduced to zero or lower, the victim counts as incapacitated.

Victims Must Recover

A victim recovers from his wounds as per the standard rules for recovery. The GM must be sure to track the injuries. A victim of a Midi wound will bleed to Severe if untreated. A victim of a Severe wound will bleed to death if untreated.

Small, Bite-Sized Chunks

It's usually best to just take small chunks out of your victims and let them recover. By maintaining a dungeon full of victims, a sorcerer can keep a rotating stock of healthy chattel. Gruesome, eh?



The Power Remains Until Used

The advantage dice earned through torture remain with the sorcerer until spent. They may be spent individually, *en masse* or in whatever combination the player desires.

Sacrifice

Torture pays out small benefits over time to the sorcerer, whereas ritual murder grants a large one-time boost in power.

To make a sacrifice, the sorcerer must have either the Ritual or Rituals of Blood skill. Make a versus test between the sorcerer's skill and the victim's Forte. This test must take place in a relatively secure environment and definitely requires tools—ritual implements, candles, cups, etc. You may not ritually murder your opponent in a fight.

Altar of Sacrifice

If the sorcerer wins the test, he ritually slaughters his victim and gains a pool of advantage dice equal to the victim's current Will exponent. The sorcerer uses these advantage dice for casting or resisting the tax of a spell. You may allocate them as needed.

Curse of the Damned

If the sorcerer fails to ritually murder his victim the GM should choose one of the following: The victim escapes or struggles with the sorcerer; The victim curses the sorcerer before death causing an obstacle penalty equal to his Will on the tax test for the spell the ritual was intended to aid; or the victim's death warps the spell and the GM may decide a new or additional effect for it.

The Power Fades

Any advantage dice conferred from ritual murder fade over time. The sorcerer player loses one die for each test made for which the dice are spent. When casting a spell, the dice are expended as he chooses. The dice may all be used or used in part and saved for additional spells.

Destruction

A character who is ritually murdered may not be treated for his injuries and may not make a recovery test. He or she is dead.

Perhaps the corpse will be put to some darker use—or his spirit summoned to give testament to his fate.

The Blood of Innocents

Certain qualities enhance the effectiveness of Blood Magic. Traits of purity, holiness or power lend the ritual more power, which is then transferred to the sorcerer. Bad news for the victims.



+1D Victims

Child Prodigy, Aura of Innocence, Faithful, Fey Blood, Gifted, Immortal (in any capacity) or Tainted Legacy traits add +1D to the sorcerer's bonus for murder or torture.

Martyrs and the Holy

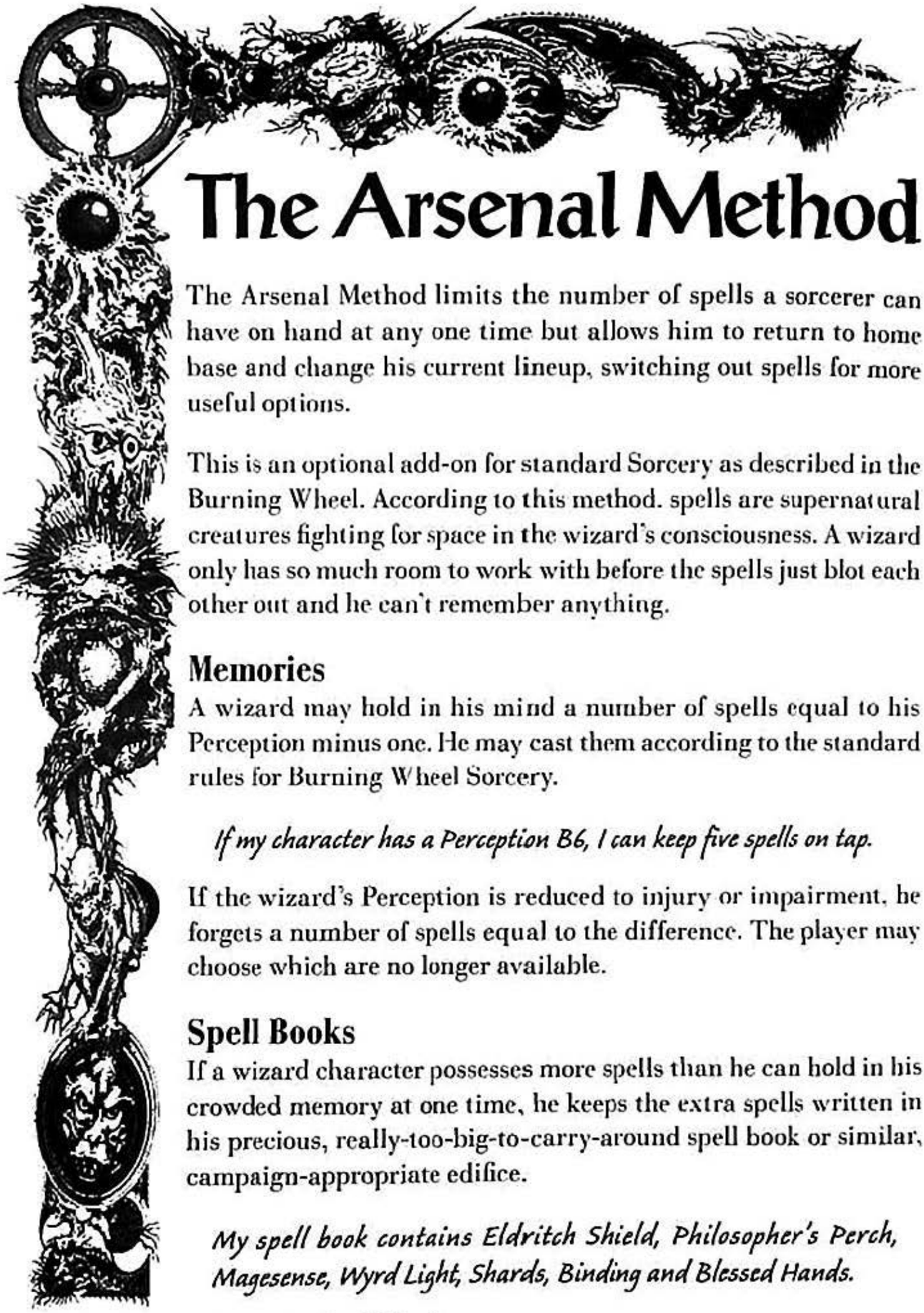
Victims with the Chosen One, Aura of Martyrdom or Aura of Holiness traits *double* any die benefits conferred from torturing or murdering them.

Bad Victims

Characters with Eldritch Sink, Atravieso or Entropic traits are useless for blood sacrifice. They provide no bonus for murder or torture. In fact, involving them in the ritual at all increases the obstacles for the spell to be cast by +2.







The Arsenal Method

The Arsenal Method limits the number of spells a sorcerer can have on hand at any one time but allows him to return to home base and change his current lineup, switching out spells for more useful options.

This is an optional add-on for standard Sorcery as described in the Burning Wheel. According to this method. spells are supernatural creatures fighting for space in the wizard's consciousness. A wizard only has so much room to work with before the spells just blot each other out and he can't remember anything.

Memories

A wizard may hold in his mind a number of spells equal to his Perception minus one. He may cast them according to the standard rules for Burning Wheel Sorcery.

If my character has a Perception B6, I can keep five spells on tap.

If the wizard's Perception is reduced to injury or impairment, he forgets a number of spells equal to the difference. The player may choose which are no longer available.

Spell Books

If a wizard character possesses more spells than he can hold in his crowded memory at one time, he keeps the extra spells written in his precious, really-too-big-to-carry-around spell book or similar, campaign-appropriate edifice.

My spell book contains Eldritch Shield, Philosopher's Perch, Magesense, Wyrd Light, Shards, Binding and Blessed Hands.

Starting Spell Book

The wizard purchases a starting selection of spells according to the standard rules as described in the Character Burner.

Idiomatic Spell Books

The spell book rule is not designed to cut a mage off from the source of his power. It exists only to limit what he has access to right now. Feel free to change the spell book to some other



campaign-appropriate format—a temple, a grove of trees, tattoos, a gaggle of imps, the spirit of your dead father. The rules for accessing it remain the same as those described below under the Changing Spells rules.

Changing Spells

A wizard may trade out spells from his current lineup for ones in his reserve during downtime—while other characters are healing, working or practicing, for example.

My wizard has a Perception of B6; I can keep five spells in his head at once. My must-haves are Eldritch Shield and Magesense. They always come with me. We'll be dungeoneering, so I also choose Wyrd Light, Shards and Blessed Hands. I want to be able to light the way, heal my friends and hurt my enemies. I leave Philosopher's Perch and Binding in the book for now. It's a difficult choice, because I see how useful those spells can be in a dungeon, too.

Spell Changing Options

If you'd like, you may also limit the number of spells that can be changed at one time. I suggest limiting the wizard to one spell changed per night of study. Set this limit with your group before starting play.

The Universal Library Option

Instead of learning spells individually, you may decide that, since spells are creepy, living things, all wizards have access to them. They simply need to call them to mind.

Pick any spell from the spell list and say, "I summon thee!" Using this optional rule, a wizard adds to his arsenal by making a Sorcery test equal to the spell's obstacle. Add +1 Ob if the spell has a ^. Use Ob 5 if the spell uses a target's stat. If the spell uses stat plus obstacle, use 5 plus the obstacle.

If he passes, he may add the spell to his spell book. If he fails, he may never learn that spell. Wizards can learn spells during downtime or at the start of a session. Only one spell may be added per session.

Artifacts



Magical Artifacts

This section describes 27 magical artifacts for use in your Burning Wheel game. The list contains items of varying power, from small items like the Golden Tooth to powerful artifacts like the Burning Wheel itself.

Each item is described in terms of a *hook*, the item's *powers*, the *limits* on the item's powers and the *antecedent* used to create the enchantment.

The hook recounts a bit of the item's history and offers suggestions for placing it in your game. The powers and limits were all built using the Enchanting rules provided in this book. The antecedent described is not a specific trait but a suggestive piece of a monster or character. The antecedent entry is meant to spark the imagination with ideas about the labors and quests necessary to create such an item.

Acquiring Artifacts

A list of magical artifacts in a fantasy roleplaying game is a license for gleeful gift giving. Don't do that in Burning Wheel. Magic is more powerful and more constant in this game than most others. Game masters must restrain their generous impulses. In fact, they must be downright stingy.

There are a number of ways to acquire magical bits in the game. I'll walk you through the top four: the Family Heirloom trait, spending Resource Points, Resources tests and finding one lying around in play.

Family Heirloom

The Family Heirloom trait is an excellent way to begin the game with a nice juicy magical artifact. Certain items are appropriate for the trait; certain others are not. Belt of Flying, Boots of the Hunter, Circle of Wisdom, the Dropping Ring, the Giant's Tunic, the Golden Tooth, the Helm of Protection, the Ivory Shield, Band of Fortitude, Red Spectacles, Ring of Dexterity, Ring of the Prophet, Rod of Iron, Serpent's Spear, Staff of Light and the Wand of Ages are appropriate.

The other items from this list are either not powerful enough for the trait, or much too powerful. For example, Distortion Dust is expendable and therefore not a good candidate for a generational heirloom. And don't even think of taking the Burning Wheel or the Ring of Power as your family heirloom.

Resource Points in Character Burning

You can purchase some items during character burning: Distortion Dust (20 rps). Golden Tooth (20 rps), Ebon Shunt (10 rps), Eldritch Channeler (15 rps), Jade Amulet (10 rps), Silk Armor (60 rps) and a Wizard's Staff (10 rps). Talisman of the Orders: 10x the order obstacle. Talisman of Protection: 5 rps for +1 Ob, 10 rps for +2 Ob or 15 rps for +3 Ob, multiplied by the order obstacle from the Summoning chapter.

If you've made enchanted items and want to make them available for purchase in your game, the simplest way to price them is to compare their abilities with one of our magic items. Find a comparable item and use its price. In general, items that provide a minor effect like a +1D or +1 Ob should be priced from 10 to 20 resource points, depending on how expansive the ability is. The more broad it is, the more expensive. For weapons and armor, pricing should start at 40 rps and climb from there. Any potent item, like the Belt of Flying or the Giant's Tunic, should be priced at 100 rps and up. More truly powerful items simply shouldn't be available through resource points in character burning.

Resource Tests in Game

Certain items could conceivably be purchased on the open market using Resources during the game: Distortion Dust (Ob 6), Ebon Shunt (Ob 4), Eldritch Channeler (Ob 5), Jade Amulet (Ob 5), Serpent's Spear (Ob 7), Silk Armor (Ob 7) and a Wizard's Staff (Ob 6).

This is not a shopping list. It's a list of suggested prices to use should one of the items be available in your game.

Found During Play

All of these items can be found worn by NPCs and in monsters' hoards. They're always more precious if won in a hard-fought battle or clever gambit.

It is acceptable to provide artifacts to the players' adversaries and allies. But note well that any item you give to an NPC is going to end up in the players' possession at some point. It's a law of fantasy gaming: All magic items flow playerward.

Band of Fortitude



Hook

The Band of Fortitude is said to have been formed by a fair young woman whose husband had been falsely accused of a crime. He was to be forced to fight for his life in the gladiatorial pits. Knowing she could not aid him with a weapon or armor, she fashioned this beautiful piece of jewelry to sustain him through his brutal labors.

Powers

When worn on the arm, the Band of Fortitude grants +1D to Forte for any and all tests. If the Forte increase bumps up the average of Power and Forte, increase the Mortal Wound tolerance. The band also increases Health by +1D for tests resisting fatigue, weakness or disorientation.

Antecedent

The heart of a red ox.

Belt of Flying

Hook

This, broad, ornate belt tightens in the front through a beautiful, silver hoop. Its maker is unknown, but rumors speak of a mad wizard who raised an island out at sea to act as his laboratory. He used this belt to shuttle back and forth between his refuge and the mainland.



Powers

The Belt of Flying grants the wearer the power to fly on command. Mechanically, this grants a Stride 13 and all of the abilities that flight implies—being able to traverse obstacles, for example.

Limits

The belt is activated and used by verbal command—up, down, forward, back, left, right, circle left, circle right.

The belt has the Multiple Uses internal duration. It may be recharged after it fails by receiving a blessing from the God of Wind.

Antecedent

The pinion of a great eagle.

Boots of the Hunter



Hook

The Boots of the Hunter were the product of a losing bet made after a long night of gambling between an enchanter and a savvy strider. Unfortunately for the strider, his windfall that night didn't curb his appetite for future bets. The boots have since made their way from owner to owner, used in back room wagers all across the land.

Powers

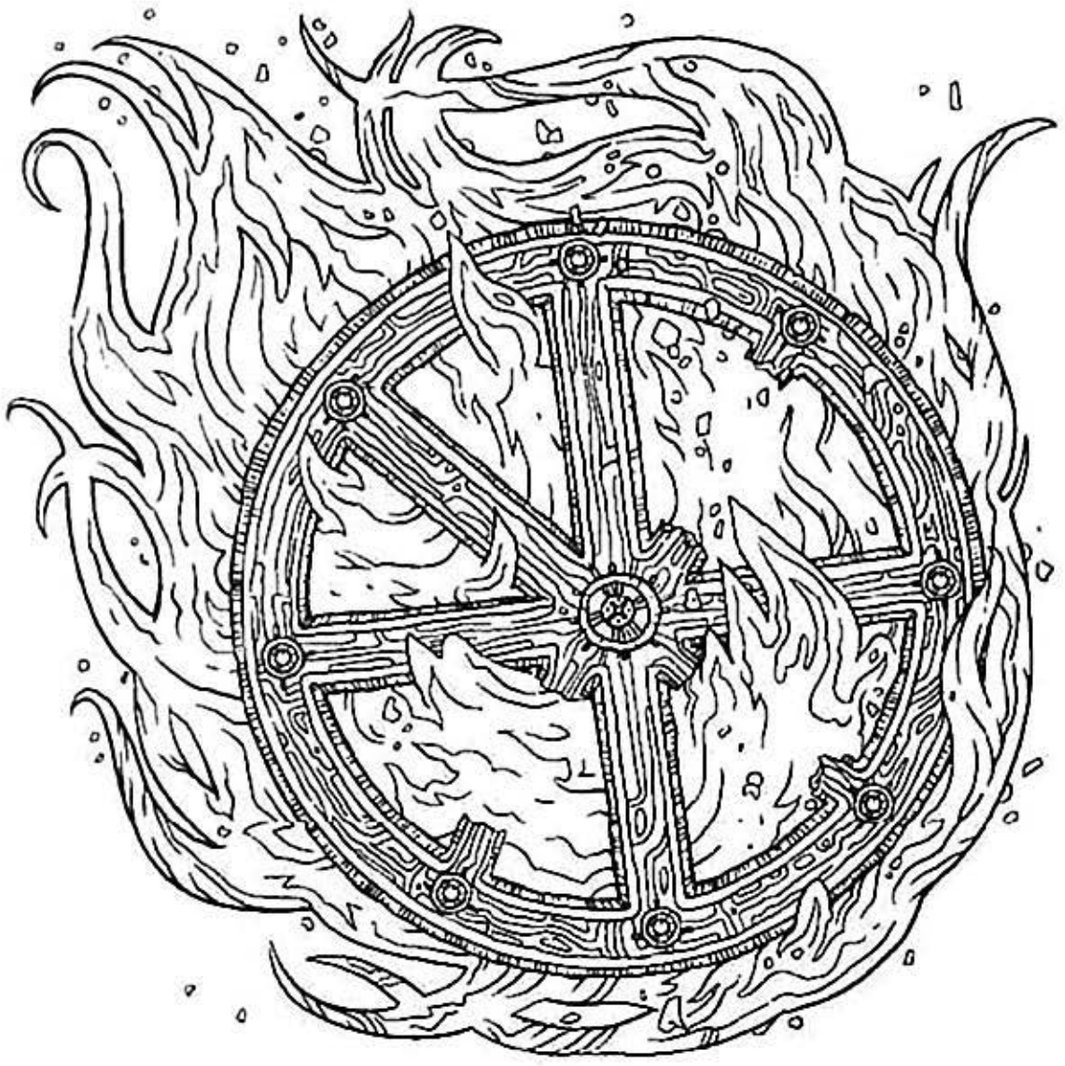
These beautiful, high soft leather boots grant +1D to Speed and increase the Stride of the character by 1 when chasing, stalking or pursuing another character or monster.

Limits

Multiple Uses duration: The power lasts so long as the soles of the boots are intact. Each pursuit after the first, roll a die of fate. On a 1, the boots' soles are worn through and the power vanishes. They may be restored by an Ob 3 Cobbler test.

Antecedent

The hide of a martikhora.



The Burning Wheel

Hook

The Burning Wheel or, more formally, the Wheel of Fire, is one of a set of four god wheels. These wheels were given to the high priests of the great religions by their patron deities to ensure their faiths' primacy. Across the ages, the wheels were lost or locked away, their powers forgotten or feared.

Prophecy states clearly that the Wheel of Fire will come forth once more during a time of epochal change. It will be the light that guides us into the darkness. When the Lord of Fire sleeps, the Wheel will gutter low, ebbing in power—ready to be summoned forth to ignite the hearts of its followers.

Powers

The Burning Wheel is a wood and metal wheel, approximately two hands in diameter. It has five irregular spokes emanating from a central hub out into a hard rim. Blue-orange flames dance across its surface.

The Wheel may douse any burning fire short of the sun, the stars and earth's blood. No test is required. The fire rushes in a gout back into the wheel. If there's ever a question, this counts as a physical action.

The Wheel may be used to ignite fires, from candles to campfires, anywhere in the bearer's presence. This requires only a thought and counts as a tandem speech action in Fight.

In addition, the Wheel contributes +5D to any Faith test or Sorcery spell when conjuring or manipulating fire. It also adds +5D to any Faith test or spell that affects human blood.

When held aloft, the Wheel grants +2D to Conspicuous tests.

Limits

In order to use the Wheel, the bearer must be in contact with the artifact. It must burn him. The Wheel causes a B5 injury every time it is touched, unless the supplicant possesses the Resistant to Fire trait or is protected by a minor miracle or similar spell. If the Wheel is held by one who is not immune to its burning, the pain and heat increases periodically by one damage pip until it is released (applied at intervals as the GM sees fit)—B5, then B6, then B7, etc.

When gripped, the supplicant feels not only his own flesh burning but the pain of all the souls tormented in hell. As such, holding the Wheel, whether or not you are injured, causes a +1 Ob penalty to all actions requiring calm and concentration—like spell casting and prayer. This penalty can be permanently negated by passing an Ob 5 Meditation test while holding the wheel—the +1 Ob penalty has been factored into that number.

The Wheel was set alight by the god of fire, touched off with a sliver of the sun. So long as the god of fire is ascendent, the Wheel thrives and is powerful beyond compare. If the god of fire has been slain or forced from power, using the Wheel brings a great cost. Invoking the advantage dice to Faith and Sorcery causes a tax test. For Faith, the tax is Ob 5. For Sorcery, the tax obstacle is increased by 5.

The Wheel burns. Anyone bearing this burning symbol suffers a +2 Ob penalty to Inconspicuous, Disguise, Stealthy or similar tests. It's fucking on fire.

Antecedent

A piece of the heart of the god of the sun.

Circle of Wisdom

Hook

The story of the Circle of Wisdom states that an elder advisor to a young king knew that he would not live long into the boy's reign. Therefore, he collected all of his wisdom and that of the sages of the land. He imbued this golden circlet with that understanding and bequeathed it to his young charge. Now the Circle of Wisdom is passed from ruler to ruler, a sign of the ruling line's dedication to discernment.



Powers

When worn, this golden circlet opens the bearer's mind to the wise teachings of a thousand scholars and sages. It grants +1D to all Will tests. It increases the body of argument for a Duel of Wits by one.

Antecedent

The beard of the greatest scholar of the age.

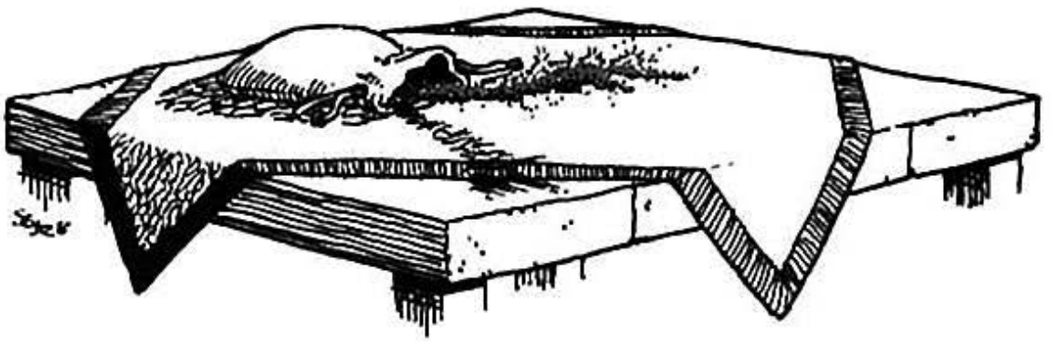
Distortion Dust

Hook

Distortion Dust is a common accoutrement of sorcerers who must cast their spells far and wide. It's a deadly favorite of wizards of war, and a quintessential element of those who communicate with whispers on the wind.

Powers

Distortion Dust is a sorcerous powder that acts as an area of effect multiplier for a spell. When spread before a spell is cast, the dust increases the area of effect or breadth of the spell by one increment as per the multiplier effect described in the Enchanting chapter.



Limits
The dust must be tossed above the sorcerer as he casts the spell. This adds two actions to the casting time. There is a finite amount of dust. Use the Multiple Uses internal duration.

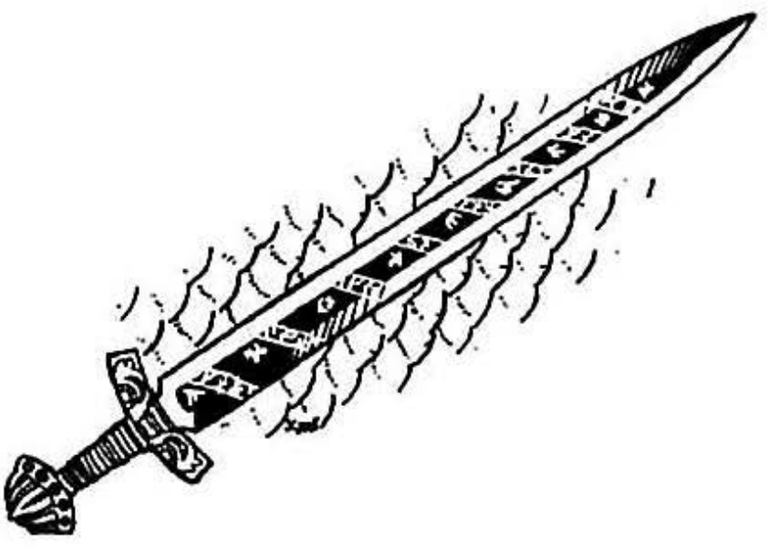
Antecedent
The eyes of an eagle, dried and ground into a fine powder.

Dragon Slaying Sword

Hook
It boggles the mind how easy it is for a young boy to wander into a field, a pond or a cave and find one of these things lying around. When a skilled warrior needs one to take on a rampaging dragon, the only one that can be found is, of course, in the dragon's hoard.

Powers
This is a simple, elegant and effective weapon, wielded by generations of heroes: Power 3, Add 2, VA 1, Long, WS 3, Heroic (gray) shade. It is acceptable to use an alternate weapon form for this item. Use the weapon's superior quality stats and make it gray shade.

Antecedent
The blood of a god, tooth of a dragon or the heart of a dæmon.





The Dropping Ring

Hook

Dwarven artificers cast the Dropping Ring in a wager with the trickster god. The artificers won the wager. Since then, due to its odd limitations, it has been passed from owner to owner down the ages. It has been seen on the arm of a wealthy king, and once it was found by lucky adventurers in the riches of a lost tomb.

Powers

When worn, this golden arm ring produces eight gold replicas of itself every nine days. This grants the wearer a 2D fund for his Resources. The fund is permanent and may not be taxed or lost until the Dropping Ring itself is lost.

Limits

If the owner of this wondrous arm ring ever loses a son, he must lay the ring on his progeny's death bed or funeral pyre. If he does not, the ring loses its magic. If he does, the ring retains its magic, but it may never be owned by that character again. Another character may take up the ring and benefit from it.

Antecedent

A drop of blood from a greedy Dwarf.



Ebon Shunt

Hook

An Ebon Shunt is a piece of jewelry for sorcerers. It is not difficult to make and is useful—a shunt can mean the difference between life and death if something should go awry with a spell.

Powers

The Ebon Shunt is an irregular chunk of ebony, hung on a rough leather cord. When worn around the neck, the shunt adds +1D to a sorcerer's Forte when resisting tax.

Limits

Should the sorcerer ever be taxed to unconsciousness, the ebony shard bursts from the strain, and its power is lost.

Antecedent

The tongue of a black troll.



Eldritch Channeler

Hook

Eldritch Channelers are effective accessories for wealthy wizards. They are simple, useful devices, and pretty, too.

Powers

This silver bracer is engraved with arcane symbols. When worn on the left forearm, it grants +1D to Sorcery (or another appropriate spell casting skill). The silver bracer also acts as heavy mail armor (4D) for the left arm.

Limits

If any of the armor dice fail—come up a 1—then the power of the Eldritch Channeler is broken and lost.

Antecedent

The scale of an Ophidian witch.

Giant's Tunic



Hook

Once, the land was plagued with tyrannical giants. A great hero went forth to the giant's hall and, through guile and bravery, slew the giant king. The hero's friend and companion, an enchanter of some merit, skinned the fallen king and made this tunic. The hero in turn became lord of his domain and, legend says, never refused hospitality to anyone who crossed his threshold.

Powers

The Giant's Tunic grants its wearer strength and toughness beyond compare! While worn, it adds +2D to the user's Power. This is factored into the wearer's weapon damages and Mortal Wound. It also counts as leather armor for the chest and arms.

Limits

Should the owner ever fail to show hospitality when asked, the power of the Giant's Tunic fades.

Antecedent

The skin of a giant.

Golden Tooth



Hook

Back alley enchanters in grimy citadels churn out trinkets and baubles such as these so that they can pay their rent and soothe their failing minds with rotgut.

Powers

Once installed in the character's mouth, the Golden Tooth opens previously closed doors! The tooth increases the character's Circles by +1D. This does not count as a reputation or affiliation.

Limits

The tooth must be implanted in the character's mouth by a surgeon or barber (Ob 2) for its powers to take root.

Antecedent

The tooth of a man with a familiar face.

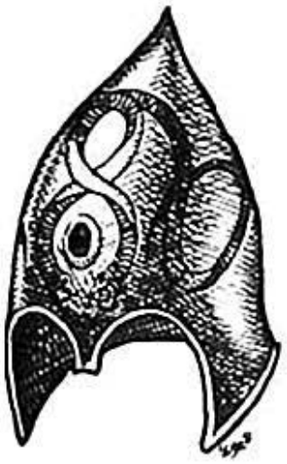
Helm of Protection

Hook

A powerful warlord commissioned his enchanter to forge him a mighty helm to aid him in battle. The farsighted enchanter thought carefully about what would preserve his lord. In the end, he created what he called a Helm of Protection. The warlord asked, "What are its powers?"

"Should you be wounded while wearing it, you will recover quickly."

"Fool! This is useless. No man is a match for me in battle. I have only ever been wounded once, by my fencing master. It was the last lesson he ever gave me!" With that, he tossed the helm back at the enchanter and stormed away.



When the battle was finally joined, the warlord was indeed triumphant, but he was not unwounded. His own generals turned on him at the moment of victory. He bled to death from the injuries inflicted by their knives.

Powers

The Helm of Protection adds +2D to the warrior's Health when recovering from or shrugging off a wound he received in battle (while wearing the helmet). The helmet counts as a superior quality bascinet (4D) and imposes a reduced +1 Ob clumsy weight penalty to Observation and Perception tests.

Limits

Should the helmet be destroyed by armor failure, the powers are lost. Also, should the warrior ever show cowardice in battle—fleeing due to a failed Steel test result—the helmet's protection is lost to him. Another character may take up the helm and be granted its benefits, though.

Antecedent

The bone of a scarred, long-lived hero (with the Healthy trait).

Ivory Shield



Hook

Desperate in the buildup before a great war, a young captain went on his knees to his estranged mother, begging for aid in the coming battles. She was a great enchantress. She agreed to help him and sent him on a quest to retrieve an elephant's bones. Upon his successful return, she carved him this beautiful shield. As she presented it to him, she inveighed her curse, "Never again will you disobey me. If you do, the power of this mighty shield will be lost!"

Powers

This great shield is made of ivory, imported from lands inhabited by massive lumbering creature, carved with scenes of victory, and enchanted by impossible magics. When worn, the shield grants +1D to Command, Oratory and Steel. It grants +1D to Push actions in Fight. It counts as a Power 3, Add 2, VA –, WS: 1, Short weapon when used to shield bash. The shield itself is a great shield (5D) and counts as superior quality.

Limits

Should the owner of this mighty device ever fail to obey his parents' wishes, the shield becomes too heavy for him to bear. Another, more filial son or daughter may come and carry it to battle.

Antecedent

The bones of an elephant.

Jade Amulet

Hook

Jade Amulets are prized artifacts. Found in tombs and graves in certain cultures, these innocuous devices ward off the effects of hurtful magics.



Powers

This graven amulet is worn around the neck. It protects the user against destruction by sorcery. Add +1 Ob to any damaging, harming or hurting spells cast at the character. It does not affect the obstacle of influencing-, controlling- or enhancing-type spells. The Jade Amulet does not affect spirits.

Limits

The amulet protects the character so long as he never eats animal flesh. He may eat fish and honey, but not meat, milk, eggs or cheese.

Antecedent

The fingernail of a saint.

Ring of Dexterity

Hook

Swordsmen, archers, craftsmen and pickpockets alike all covet this precious ring. It is said it will make a master of any man who wears it, but that it will also rob him of his friends.

Powers

When worn on the index finger of the right hand, this ring grants the bearer amazing Agility. Add +2D to any Agility test taken. This bonus affects skill roots for skills learned when wearing the ring; aptitude for Agility-based skills; and Reflexes.

Limits

If the character clasps right hands with another character, the ring loses its power.

Antecedent

The finger of a master juggler missing his right hand.

Ring of Power

Hook

A simple band of gold that contains a reservoir of power, it is seductively potent, but also cursed and corrupt.

The Ring of Power is the final piece in a set of 20. The other rings each contain portions of this ring's power, but none of them contain all of its might.

Powers

The Ring of Power has many, varied abilities. When worn, it grants:

- +3D to Health tests
- The Second Sight trait
- +1D to Resources tests
- +1D to Persuasion, Oratory, Falsehood, Seduction and Ugly Truth when used against another character with a lower Will exponent
- +2D to all Sorcery and Enchanting tests
- Access to the thoughts of those who wear other rings of power created by the same evil that created this ring

- +4 successes to the bearer's body of argument in a Duel of Wits against a character who bears another, lesser ring of power

Lastly, the ring contains a spell matrix for the Elven spell song Threne of the Chameleon. When the ring is worn, the spell is cast with 5 successes over the obstacle.

Otherwise indestructible, the ring can only be unmade in the fires of the forge in which it was created.

Limits

The Ring of Power is a cursed item, as described in the Enchanting rules.

Also, any use of the item requires a Will test of an obstacle equal to the bearer's own Will. If the test is failed, the character earns the Corrupted trait and Corruption emotional attribute. Each subsequent Will test counts as a test for advancement of the Corruption attribute. The maker of the ring knows when it is used. When it is used, he may make an Aura Reading test at Obstacle 10 minus the user's Corruption exponent to locate the user.

Antecedent

The soul of a dark god.

Ring of the Prophet

Hook

Nothing amazes the locals like the ability to walk on water.

Powers

When worn this ring grants its wearer the miraculous ability to walk on water as if it were solid. The ring bearer will not sink, and if submerged, he'll bob to the surface like a cork.

Water, even when solid, is far from stable. Consider smooth water like ice. Rough or wavy water is uneven and difficult ground. Speed tests under these conditions suffer a +1 Ob or greater disadvantage.

Antecedent

The bladder of a Deep One.



Rod of Iron

Hook

This enchanted piece of metal was imbued with power to protect its wizardly creator from ruffians.

Powers

The Rod of Iron grants its bearer the power and force to strike down his enemies. It bestows a B5 Brawling skill. It counts as a weapon—Power 2, Add 2, VA 1, WS 3, Short—and as a +1D shield if used with Shield Training.

Antecedent

A flake of B'hemah flesh.

Serpent's Spear

Hook

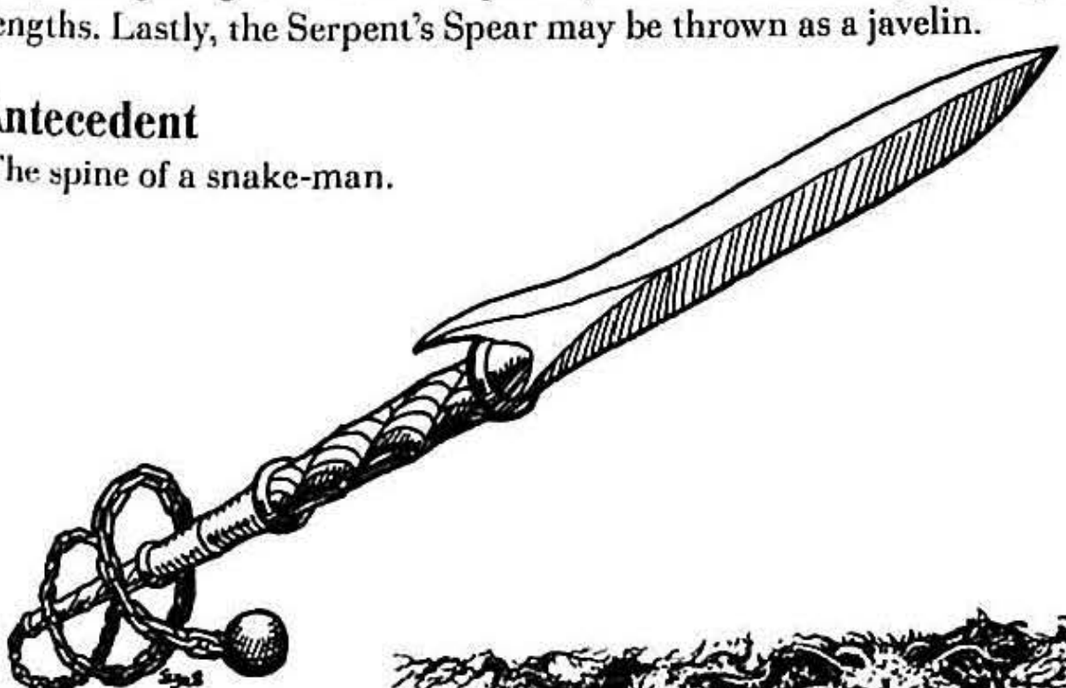
This ancient spear was built by the warrior-smiths of an extinct race of Ophidian men. It is bronze in hue and carved with sinewy symbols. The spear is made of a metal that no metallurgist is able to replicate. It is said to bend and warp in combat, but it always returns to its true shape.

Powers

The Serpent's Spear has the following stats: Power 2, Add 2, VA 2, WS 3, Longer. It grants +1D to Strike against Block or Counterstrike. It contains a concealed hook—a viper's tooth, if you will—that grants +1D to Push. It also contains a concealed whip-chain that may be used to Lock another character when engaged to the spear-bearer's advantage at spear-fighting distance at no penalty and without changing weapon lengths. Lastly, the Serpent's Spear may be thrown as a javelin.

Antecedent

The spine of a snake-man.





Silk Armor

Hook

Silk armor appears to be run of the mill heavy mail, but upon closer examination, one can see that all of the links are forged of lighter gauge wire and interwoven with thick threads of scarlet silk.

Powers

The silk armor counts as superior quality heavy mail for all locations except the head. Clumsy weight penalties for Stealthy and Swimming are negated. Throwing and missile weapon skill penalties are reduced to +1 Ob for full sleeves. There's no penalty for half sleeves. The Speed penalty for leggings is reduced to +1 Ob for full leggings and reduced to nothing for half leggings.

Antecedent

The silk from a giant spider.

Spirit Weapons

Hook

The demon hunter's sword was a deceptively simple device. It looked like a blade of plain manufacture, but for the single rune carved into the blade. Yet when wielded against a demon, no magic could deflect its stroke.

Powers

A spirit weapon is a material weapon of any type—knife, sword, axe—that has been imbued with special power so that it not only affects flesh and bone, but spirits and magical creatures as well.



Specifically, spirit weapons can harm creatures with the Spirit Nature trait, and they are not deflected by the Turn Aside the Blade spell or any other spell that controls or deflects metal. Spirit weapons are considered to be arcane or spirit devices, not material ones.

The spirit weapon doesn't do extra damage or provide bonus dice. Aside from its spirit-harming capability, it counts as a normal weapon.

A spirit weapon can be made using Enchanting, Art Magic's sorcerous weapon effect, a minor miracle in Faith or the Elven spell song Song of the Sword.

Antecedent

Enchanters need the blood, bone or scales of a creature who possesses the Spirit Nature trait in order to create spirit weapons.

Staff of Light

Hook

The Staff of Light is an otherwise normal cedar staff. It may be used as an aid to walking or as a cudgel, if a weapon is needed. The first Staff of Light was reputedly made by an old mage who was tired of casting Mage Light at the behest of his less magically inclined friends.

Powers

This powerful staff contains the Mage Light spell (which will dispel moonlit darkness). The light is triggered by striking the butt of the staff on the ground. Once struck, it slowly wells up to full brightness, so as not to blind the bearer.

The powers of the staff are inexhaustible, so long as it remains unbroken. The light itself will glow brightly, provided that the bearer grasps the staff in his hand.

Limits

Only characters with the Gifted trait may use this item. If the bearer loses his grip on the staff, the light winks out. If the staff is broken, the magic is lost.

Antecedent

The tail of a firefly.



Talismans

Hook

The old man spent his life collecting trinkets, baubles and curios. He wore them around his neck on chains. And though he walked alone through the haunted forest, and dwelt in the ghost-plagued ruins, he was never molested by the spirits.

Powers

There are two types of talismans used by summoners: *Talismans of the Orders* and *Talismans of Protection*.

Talismans of the Orders

Talismans of the Orders grant +1D to summon an entity of a specific spirit order. Each talisman is specific to one type of spirit order (see the Summoning chapter for spirit orders).

Talismans of Protection

Talismans of Protection are also specific to an order of spirits. These devices increase the obstacle of tests made by spirits of that order against the summoner. In a Duel of Wits, this only applies to the body of argument roll.

Talismans of Protection are rated from +1 Ob to +3 Ob.

Antecedent

Talismanic antecedents must come from a being of the approximate power of the spirit in question. A querub's tongue can protect against anything weaker than or equal to it in power. Odin's eye is sufficient to compel even other chief deities.

Thor's Hammer

Hook

Thor's hammer, Mjolnir, is a fabled work of great power. Every so often, it goes missing or is stolen by the giants. Once Thor sobers up, he goes and fetches it and the thieves get a good thrashing.

It is also provided in this list as an example of a powerful, legendary artifact. The only entity Thor can't reliably take on with Mjolnir is a god. Dragons, giants and demons are merely nails to be hammered down.

Powers

Power 1-4, Add 2, VA 2, WS 2, Short. Grants +3D advantage for Hammer and Throwing skills. Mjolnir is a heroic (gray shade) weapon, but the bearer of this awesome power may opt to do mundane (black shade) damage if he so chooses. The wielder may also choose the weapon power for the weapon before he strikes. This requires no time or action on the part of the character. The player may simply state the power and the shade of his strike.

Also, Mjolnir may be thrown. It counts as a great bow for range and positioning. It does damage as a thrown weapon. Once thrown, Mjolnir only requires one action to recover in Fight, no matter the distance it was thrown. The wielder simply reaches down to pick up the weapon and it appears in his hand.

Lastly, the hammer may be slipped inside the bearer's jacket and be concealed. When held inside a jacket, against the chest, the hammer is no bigger than a pendant placed in a pocket. But why would you hide such a magnificent thing?

Limits

There is a flaw in the design, however. Mjolnir may not be used to Great Strike. It is a one-handed weapon. The short, angular haft is too small for both hands.

Antecedent

Blood, sweat and breath from a Master of Forges.

Wand of Ages

Hook

The Wand of Ages is an irregularly shaped, polished switch of yew. Rumors say it was created by an enchanter who was envious of the Elves' ability to commune with trees.

Powers

This wand, when placed against the trunk or branch of a tree, allows the bearer to speak to the ancient spirit and gather its wisdom. When so used, the bearer gains a G5 Forest-wise.

Antecedent

Ancient Seneschal's sap.

Wizard's Staff

Hook

In some cultures, a young neophyte must make his own staff before he is officially given the mantle of wizard. A wizard's staff is no mean thing. It is a magical device that aids in concentration. Making one requires a sturdy sample of good wood, and a curious donation from the young apprentice's master.

Powers

This rugged oak staff acts as a *sustainer* for one spell of the owner's choice. Once a spell is sustained in the staff, the device may only sustain that particular spell.

Antecedent

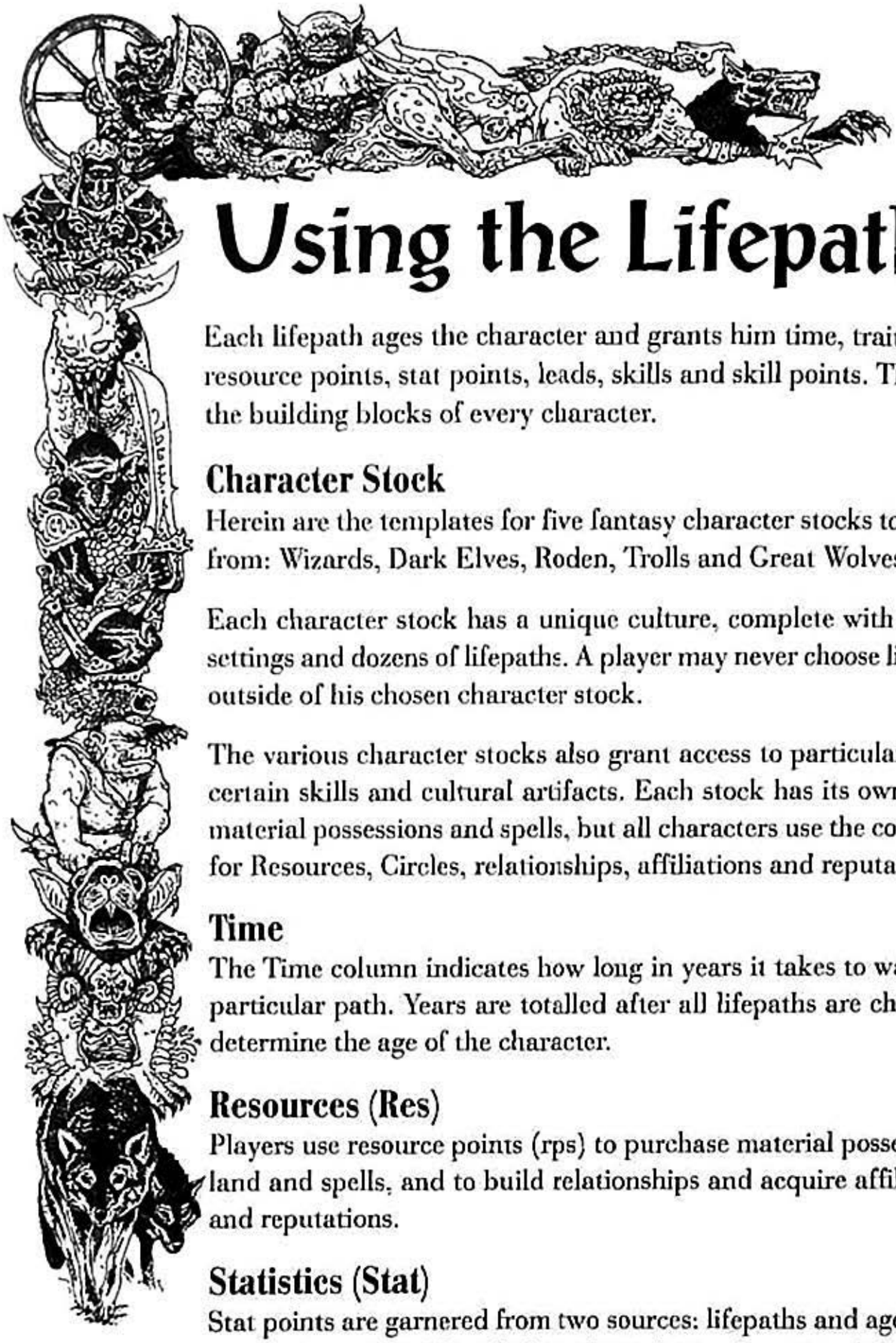
The blood of a patient wizard.





Lifepaths





Using the Lifepaths

Each lifepath ages the character and grants him time, trait points, resource points, stat points, leads, skills and skill points. These are the building blocks of every character.

Character Stock

Herein are the templates for five fantasy character stocks to choose from: Wizards, Dark Elves, Roden, Trolls and Great Wolves.

Each character stock has a unique culture, complete with several settings and dozens of lifepaths. A player may never choose lifepaths outside of his chosen character stock.

The various character stocks also grant access to particular traits, certain skills and cultural artifacts. Each stock has its own list of material possessions and spells, but all characters use the core rules for Resources, Circles, relationships, affiliations and reputations.

Time

The Time column indicates how long in years it takes to walk this particular path. Years are totalled after all lifepaths are chosen to determine the age of the character.

Resources (Res)

Players use resource points (rps) to purchase material possessions, land and spells, and to build relationships and acquire affiliations and reputations.

Statistics (Stat)

Stat points are garnered from two sources: lifepaths and age. Once all of a character's lifepaths have been chosen, his age is determined and used to find his Starting Stat Pool. Also, many lifepaths give the character a bonus point toward either a mental or physical stat.

Leads

A lead indicates a setting that the player may jump to from his current lifepath. If, for example, the current lifepath lists Exile and Society under leads, the player may choose his next lifepath from

the Exile or Society settings, or he may remain in his current setting. For each lead chosen, add one year to the character's age—unless you are a Great Wolf.

Skill

Each lifepath presents a set of skills that may be learned. The player may only choose skills from the lifepaths his character has walked. If a player wants different skills for his character, he has to choose lifepaths that offer those skills.

Skills not described in this book may be found in the Character Burner in the Burning Wheel rulebook.

Trait

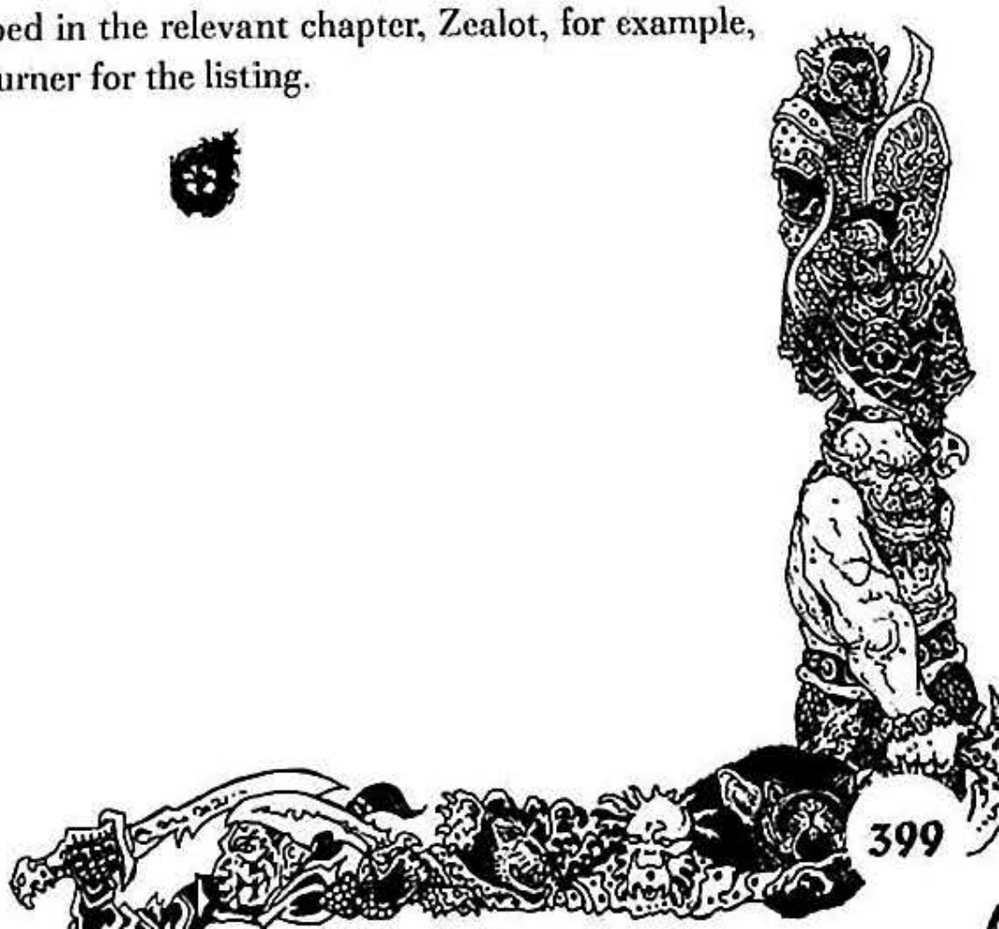
Traits are details that differentiate characters—quirks, affectations and odd abilities. Burning Wheel is designed so that players can take on heroic personae—traits help to give them depth and life.

Dark Elves, Roden, Trolls and Great Wolves have certain traits that all members of their race must take. They are free and mandatory. They are listed in the Common Traits section of each lifepath set.

Traits will affect game play. Some will do so often and drastically; these cost the most points. Others will affect game play infrequently or in subtle ways; these are less expensive.

All traits listed on a lifepath cost one point. The first trait listed with each path is mandatory. Additional traits on the path may be purchased (for one point each) by the player during character burning.

If a trait is not described in the relevant chapter, Zealot, for example, check the Character Burner for the listing.





The Weather Witch

THIRI HTET, 27 year-old, weather witch
Gifted Child (Servitude), Bondswoman (Young Lady), Pirate, Weather Witch

STATS

Will B4	Perception B4	Power B3
Forte B4	Speed B4	Agility B4

ATTRIBUTES

Health B4	Steel B5	Mortal Wound B9	Hesitation 6
Reflexes B4	Circles B2	Resources B1	Stride 7

SKILLS
Astrology B3, Field Dressing B3, Pirate Cove-wise B2, Knives B3, Sea-wise B3, Superstition-wise B2, Summoning B3, Spirit Binding B4, Folklore B3

TRAITS
Misunderstood, Gifted, Spirit Familiar (Cat, Nagarr), Lucky, Problem with Authority, Weather Sense, Nose Ring

GEAR
Clothes, Finery, Traveling Gear, Knife

CIRCLES
Pirate Gang (1D Aff), Spirit-talker (1D Rep w/ pirate gang), Sao Thiha (pirate boss, minor), May Myat Koh (noble lady, minor, forbidden)

SUMMONING ORDERS
Restless Dead (Journeyman)

DOMAIN BINDINGS
Shrines, River, Sea

BELIEFS
One day, I shall be captain of this fleet and we shall be the greatest flotilla ever known.

On our next raid, I shall capture a fine young man and make him serve me.

I must earn the trust of spirits before I demand their favor.

INSTINCTS
Always protect Nagarr.

Keep my finery clean and dry.

Always watch the horizon for weather.



Wizard Burner

The Wizard Burner contains new lifepaths, traits and skills for wizards and other magically inclined characters. You do not have to include everything you see here *in* your game. Pick and choose what is appropriate and effective. For example, you could choose to include the College of Magic and not the Death Cult. Or you might decide to only add the Gifted Child lifepath and exclude all others.

Special Gifted Lifepaths

The Gifted Child and Apt Pupil lifepaths are designed to open up more options for magical characters. Gifted Child can replace the Born lifepath in the Peasant, Village, City, Sea and Servitude settings (but not Born Noble). Apt Pupil can be added as an option to the Noble Court, Religious, Soldier and Outcast subsettings.

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Gifted Child	9 yrs	4	—	*Outcast, Court, Religious*

Skills: 2 pts: General

Traits: 1 pt: Misunderstood, Gifted, Abused, Spirit Familiar

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Apt Pupil	3 yrs	8	—	*Outcast, Soldier, Servitude*

Skills: 3 pts: Obscure History, Ugly Truth, Intimidation

Traits: 1 pt: Believer, Gifted, Tainted Legacy

Restrictions: Must be character's second or third lifepath. It may not be taken twice.

Special: For the purposes of other requirements, this lifepath counts as Neophyte Sorcerer.

Peasant Setting

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Speaker of Names	7 yrs	20	+1 M	*Outcast, Peasant, Village*

Skills: 6 pts: Spirit Binding, Circination, Paths-wise, Spirit-wise, Domain-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Well Traveled, Brook No Fools, Fey Blood

Requires: Augur, Crazy Witch, Neophyte Sorcerer or Elder



Villager Setting

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Wizard's Apprentice	7 yrs	10	+1 M	*Peasant, City, Outcast, Servitude*

Skills: 6 pts: Reading, Foraging, Symbology, Circination, Pig-wise, Bone Headed-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Always in the Way, Atravieso, Gifted, Assistant Pig-Keeper

Special: For the purposes of other requirements, this lifepath counts as Neophyte Sorcerer.

Hedge Wizard	8 yrs	24	+1 M, P	*Peasant, City Dweller, Outcast*

Skills: 7 pts: Sorcery, Enchanting, Alchemy, Obscure History, Pest-wise, Fool-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Low Born, Impressive Hat, Never a Moment of Peace

Requires: Wizard's Apprentice, Neophyte Sorcerer, Apt Pupil or Junior Student. This character may not have the Mark of Privilege.

City Dweller Setting

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Evangelist	3 yrs	6	+1 M/P	*Outcast, Court, Religious*

Skills: 5 pts: Empyrealia, Demonology, Oratory, Cultist-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Believer, Fiery

Requires: Dilettante, or any summoner or religious lifepath

Court Setting

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Court Enchanter	8 yrs	20	+1 M	*Outcast, City Dweller*

Skills: 5 pts: Etiquette, Astrology, Alchemy, Enchanting, Excuses-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Late, Harried

Requires: Senior Student, Neophyte Sorcerer, Apt Pupil or Wizard's Apprentice

Court Summoner	8 yrs	30	+1 M/P	*Outcast, Peasant, Villager*

Skills: 6 pts: Etiquette, Astrology, Summoning, Circination, Bargaining, Inane Request-wise, Promise-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Dismissive, Polite, Arrogant, Frustrated, Faust

Requires: Senior Student, Mad Summoner, Apt Pupil or Wizard's Apprentice



Outcast Setting

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Demented Inventor	7 yrs	15	+1 M	*Peasant, Villager*

Skills: 6 pts: Mad Invention-wise, Mending, Enchanting, Blacksmith, Whitesmith

Traits: 2 pts: Demented, Tinkerer

Requires: Rogue Wizard, Apt Pupil or Wizard's Apprentice

Evil Necromancer	10 yrs	20	+1 M, P	—

Skills: 4 pts: Death Art, Anatomy, Graveyard-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Corrupted, Evil

Requires: Coroner, Death Cultist, Cultist or Apt Pupil

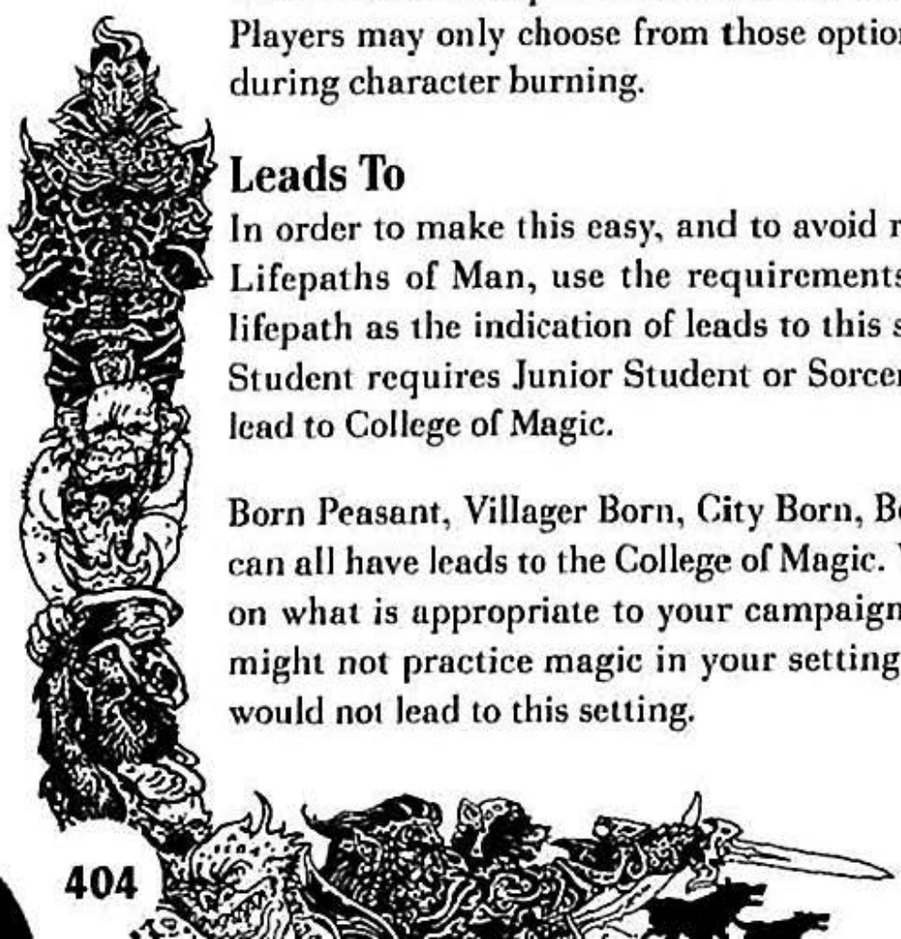
College of Magic

Some cultures are so rife with magic, schools have grown to cull and refine all of the wayward magelings running about. Inevitably, these schools grow into powerful institutions, staffed by a cadre of the most potent men and women in the land.

If using the standard Sorcery rules, pick one element and one impetus that the school does not teach. Spells containing either may not be taken in character burning.

Schools of Magic

For games using Art Magic or Practical Magic, the College of Magic should have a set repertoire of two or three schools it teaches its students. Players may only choose from those options when purchasing schools during character burning.



Leads To

In order to make this easy, and to avoid rewriting the entirety of the Lifepaths of Man, use the requirements of each College of Magic lifepath as the indication of leads to this setting. For example, Senior Student requires Junior Student or Sorcerer. Therefore, Sorcerer can lead to College of Magic.

Born Peasant, Villager Born, City Born, Born Noble and Son of a Gun can all have leads to the College of Magic. You may limit this list based on what is appropriate to your campaign. For example, the nobility might not practice magic in your setting, in which case Born Noble would not lead to this setting.



Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Supplicant	1 yr	3	—	*Peasant, Soldier, Servitude*

Skills: 2 pts: Animal Husbandry, Firebuilding

Traits: 2 pts: Broken In, Gifted, Second Sight, Fey Blood

Restriction: Must be second lifepath. May not be taken twice

Junior Student 2 yrs 5 +1 P *Court, City Dweller, Outcast*

Skills: 8 pts: Read, Write, Ancient History, Circination, Illuminations, Astrology, Symbology

Traits: 1 pt: Hazed

Requires: Supplicant, Arcane Devotee, Apt Pupil or Neophyte Sorcerer.

Restrictions: May not be taken twice.

Special: Counts as Arcane Devotee and Neophyte Sorcerer for the purposes of other requirements

Senior Student 2 yrs 10 +1 M *Court, City Dweller, Outcast*

Skills: 7 pts: Calligraphy, Rhetoric, Aura Reading, Empyrealia, Demonology, Doctrine, School of Magic-wise, Junior Student-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Graduate, Bully

Requires: Junior Student or Sorcerer. May not be taken twice

Adjunct 6 yrs 10 +1 M *Religious, Outcast, City Dweller*

Skills: 6 pts: Research, Folklore, Alchemy, Taxidermy, Library-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Overworked, Familiar Face

Requires: Senior Student

Master Sorcerer 8 yrs 30 +1 M, P *Court, City Dweller, Outcast, Sea*

Skills: 5 pts: Sorcery, Instructor, Facet-wise, Aura-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Versatile, Sixth Sense

Requires: Adjunct or Court Sorcerer

Master Enchanter 8 yrs 20 +1 M, P *Court, City Dweller, Outcast*

Skills: 6 pts: Enchanting, Instructor, Carving, Etching, Herbalism, Jeweler, Vessel-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Nimble, Practiced Precision

Requires: Adjunct or Court Enchanter

Master Summoner 8 yrs 20 +1 M, P *Court, City Dweller, Outcast*

Skills: 8 pts: Summoning, Instructor, Bargaining, Ugly Truth, Soothing Platitudes, Rule of Law, Philosophy, Scheme-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Extrovert, Fearless, Obscure Aura

Requires: Adjunct or Court Summoner



Researcher 10 yrs 15 — *Court, Religious, Outcast*

Skills: 12 pts: Research, Composition. Cartography, Cryptography, Doctrine. Apothecary, Ritual. Death Art. Foreign Languages, Dark Arts-wise. Elven Songs-wise, Orc Rituals-wise, Dwarven Art-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Myopic, Bookworm, Speaker of the Secret Language

Requires: Adjunct or Scholar. May only be taken once

Councillor 5 yrs 40 +1 M *Court, City Dweller*

Skills: 6 pts: Administration. Rhetoric, Wine Tasting, Troubled Student-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Council of Mages. Imperious Demeanor

Requires: Master Sorcerer, Master Enchanter or Master Summoner

Headmaster 12 yrs 50 — *Court, Religious*

Skills: 7 pts: Oratory, Etiquette, Poetry, Strategy Games, Vintner, Dark Secret-wise. 1 pt: General

Traits: 3 pts: Stoic, Master of Mages, Domineering Presence

Requires: Councillor

Death Cult Setting

In the forlorn reaches of the world, castoffs, wastrels, vermin and renegades flock to dark callings that promise the downfall of all who have spurned them.

Leads To

Use the requirements on the Death Cult lifepaths as the indication of leads to this setting. For example, Spy requires Cultist; therefore, Cultist can lead to the Death Cult.

Also, Harem Slave, Captive of War, Gaol, Grave Digger, Pillager, Cripple, Deranged, Leper and Insurrectionist all lead to this setting.

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads

Harem Slave 3 yrs 3 — *Outcast, Servitude*

Skills: 4 pts: Creepy Priest-wise, Disgusting Necromancer-wise, Death Cult-wise, Escape Artist

Traits: 2 pts: Numb

Death Cultist 2 yrs 5 — *Outcast, Soldier, Servitude*

Skills: 3 pts: Death-wise, Riot-wise, Secret Cult Worship-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Zealot, Suicidal

Grave Robber 3 yrs 7 — *Outcast, Soldier, Servitude*

Skills: 4 pts: Ditch Digging, Graveyard-wise, Night Watch-wise, Shovel-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Lunatic



Spy 4 yrs 10 +1 M *Outcast, Soldier, City Dweller*

Skills: 7 pts: Inconspicuous, Stealthy, Falsehood, Forgery, Observation, Righteous Priest-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Furtive, Manhunter

Requires: Cultist or Insurrectionist

Factotum 7 yrs 15 +1 M/P *Outcast, Soldier, Servitude, City*

Skills: 7 pts: Haggling, Persuasion, Hauling, Appraisal, Taxidermy, Local Law-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Polite, Efficient, Stoic

Requires: Spy, Tomb Guard, Deranged, Evangelist or Insurrectionist

Tomb Guard 4 yrs 10 +1 P *Outcast, Soldier, Servitude*

Skills: 5 pts: Spear, Knives, Brawling, Walking Corpse-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Disfigured, Loyal

Requires: Cultist, Grave Digger, Freebooter or any soldier lifepath

Death Priest 6 yrs 25 +1 M *Outcast, Soldier, Religious*

Skills: 6 pts: Command, Ritual, God of Death-wise, Death Cult-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Creepy, Invocations of the Damned, Iron Will, Cult Leader

Requires: Venal Priest or Heretic Priest

Death Artist 10 yrs 20 +1 M/P *Outcast, Servitude*

Skills: 8 pts: Death Art, Tomb-wise, Orc Servant-wise, Evil Necromancer-wise, Death Cult-wise

Traits: 3 pts: Cynical, Mind over Matter, Missing Limb, Paranoid Ear, Meticulous, Corrupted

Requires: Evil Necromancer, Apt Pupil or Rogue Wizard

Servant of the Dark Blood Setting

Master of the Weak is a new lifepath for Orc Servants. It is the gateway to all those Orcish necromancers you've always craved.

Name	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Master of the Weak	7 yrs	8	+1 M/P	—

Skills: 5 pts: Death Art, Apocalypse-wise, Graveyard-wise, Murder-wise

Traits: 1 pts: Feared

Requires: Knower of Secrets







Wizard Traits

Abused *Char*

Always in the Way *Char*

Arrogant *Char*

Assistant Pig-Keeper *Char*

Atravieso

Character Burner page 313.

Believer

Character Burner page 315.

Bookworm

Character Burner page 316.

Broken In

Character Burner page 317.

Brook No Fools *Dt* 7 pts

The spirit binder's art is not something to be trifled with! His secrets are well kept because meddling fools will only cause irreparable harm to themselves and the domains with which they tamper. A summoner with this trait receives a fate point every time he rebuffs an offer of help from a potential student (so that character does not earn a test toward learning the skill). He receives a persona point when he actively thwarts another character from learning the secrets of Spirit Binding, Summoning or Circination.

Bully *Char*

Corrupted *Dt* 3 pts

This character has opened his body and soul to the dark powers. He must open the Corrupted emotional attribute. Increase his starting rank by one.

Council of Mages *Dt* 6 pts

The Council of Mages is a small, secretive, yet powerful entity. This trait grants a 1D reputation and a 1D affiliation with this organization. This combines with other appropriate reputations and affiliations.

Creepy *Char*

Cult Leader *Dt* 8 pts

Cult Leaders are charismatic and eccentric. This trait grants a 1D reputation and 1D affiliation with the Death Cult. This combines with other appropriate reputations and affiliations.

Cynical *Char*

Demented *Char*

Disfigured *Dt* 3 pts

This character has led a life of hardship and pain. He's been cut up, broken and beaten down. This trait grants +1D to shrug off or grit teeth for any injury.

Dismissive *Char*

Domineering Presence

Character Burner page 322.

Evil *Char*



Extrovert

Character Burner page 324.

Familiar Face

Character Burner page 325.

Faust *Dt* 3 pts

When bargaining with the higher powers for something pure and innocent like love, gain a bonus persona point for each agreement you strike on the behalf of the one you seek to protect or affect.

Feared *Dt* 5 pts

For good reason or not, this character is feared by all who know him. +1D to Intimidation. Choose a 1D infamous reputation.

Fearless

Character Burner page 326.

Fey Blood

Character Burner page 326.

Fiery *Char*

Frustrated *Char*

Furtive *Char*

Gifted

Character Burner page 327.

Graduate *Dt* 3 pts

This trait grants a 1D affiliation with a College of Magic. This combines with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

Harried *Char*

Hazed *Dt* 2 pts

This character may take a free inimical relationship with another character who was his senior in the College of Magic.

Imperious Demeanor

Character Burner page 330.

Impressive Hat *Dt* 3 pts

This character's hat is mightily impressive. It can be seen for miles! It's so impressive that people often remember the hat more than the person. This gives a 1D Reputation among the people of a given locale as the wearer of the really impressive hat, so long as the hat is being worn, of course. Wearing the hat also gives a +2 Ob to any Disguise or Inconspicuous test.

Invocations of the Damned *C-O* 5 pts

The Dark Priest swears his soul to fell powers. Like other priests, he must have a Belief that ties to his Faith in order to maintain the emotional attribute. If the player writes a second Belief tied to his faith in the dark gods and his service to them, he may use this trait as a call-on for Faith when that Belief comes into question.

Iron Will

Character Burner page 331.

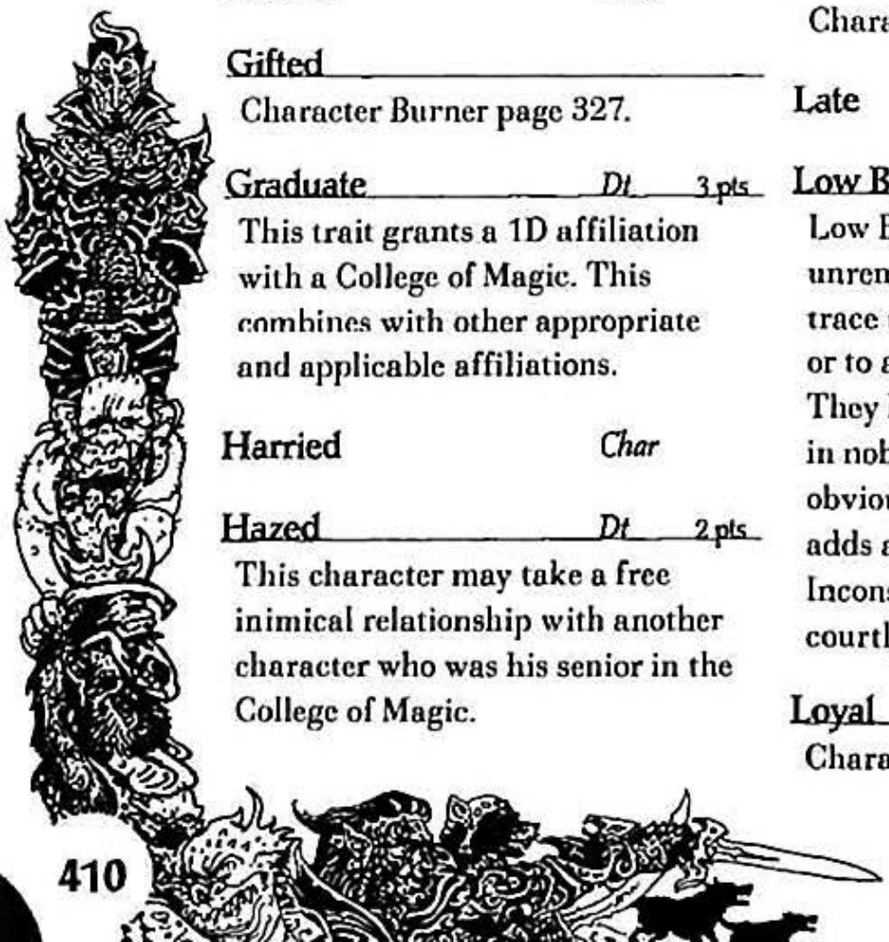
Late *Char*

Low Born *Dt* 2 pts

Low Born characters are born of unremarkable parents. They cannot trace their lineage to any nobility or to any historic or notable figures. They have a 1D infamous reputation in noble or elite circles due to their obvious lack of heritage. It also adds a +1 Ob disadvantage to any Inconspicuous tests in noble or courtly settings.

Loyal

Character Burner page 334.



Lunatic
Character Burner page 334.

Manhunter
Character Burner page 335.

Master of Mages *Dt*
The Headmaster of a College of Magic attained his position by rigorous pursuit of excellence and expertise in sorcery and magic. This trait grants a 2D reputation among mages and the halls of power as a Master of Mages.

Meticulous
Character Burner page 335.

Mind over Matter
Character Burner page 336.

Missing Limb
Character Burner page 336.

Misunderstood *Dt* 2 pts
Choose a 1D infamous reputation. And suffer -1 to your body of argument whenever you're trying to explain your nature, position, meaning or special insight.

Myopic
Character Burner page 336.

Never a Moment of Peace *Dt* 3 pts
This trait grants the character a 5 rps relationship. This relationship must be with a character who is always bothering or interrupting him. If that character is forced out of his life, someone new will come along. This character just attracts these sort of people!

You may invest additional resource points and increase the value of this relationship.

Nimble
Character Burner page 337.

Numb
Character Burner page 337.

Obscure Aura
Character Burner page 338.

Overworked *Char*

Paranoid Ear
Character Burner page 340.

Polite *Char*

Practiced Precision
Character Burner page 341.

Second Sight
Character Burner page 344-345.

Sixth Sense
Character Burner page 346.

Speaker of the Secret Language *Char*

Spirit Familiar *Dt* 5 pts
This character has a familiar whose spirit is linked to his own. He can see through the familiar's eyes using the familiar's Perception stat. However, when using his familiar's eyes, a character with this trait cannot look through his own though other senses may still be employed. It takes two actions of concentration to engage his familiar's eyes, and two more actions to return his sight to his own eyes. This trait *does not* grant Low Speech. However, the creature does understand its companion's wishes and will go where its master directs it to go, look at what its master directs it to look at, etc.



A character with this trait feels the pain of his familiar. If the familiar suffers a light or greater wound, the master suffers a light wound. If the familiar is ever killed, the master suffers a traumatic wound. In the game, the character is physically unharmed, but mentally traumatized. Recovery and Treatment are as per a standard traumatic wound. This wound does not bleed out.

A familiar uses the following stats: Wi C2, Pe C3, Ag B4, Sp B5, Po B3, Fo B3, Hea B4, Ref B4, Ste B5, MW B9

Choose its form: cat, dog, snake, bird, pig, rabbit, fox or similar. No large predators or beasts of burden. The animal must show some mark or quality that indicates it is not entirely of this world. For example, it must be hairless, one-eyed, two-tailed, of large size or even just have a disturbing aura.

Stoic

Character Burner page 347.

Suicidal *Dt* 5 pts

This character (instantly) earns a persona point every time he takes a mortal wound.

Tainted Legacy

Character Burner page 349.

Tinkerer

Character Burner page 350.

Versatile *Dt* 4 pts

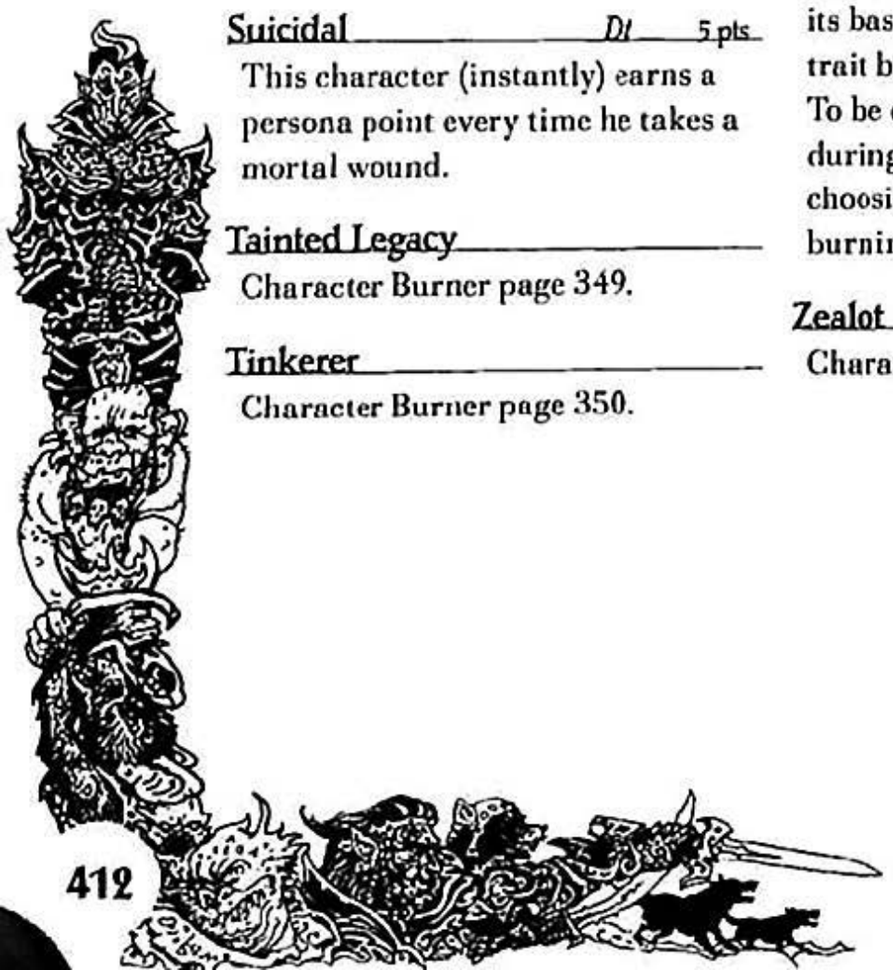
The Master Sorcerer places his confidence in the art of sorcery. It is a versatile and potent art, and he knows it intimately. If using Art Magic, reduce by one the number of tests required for Weaving Magic into the Fiber of my Being. If using the standard Sorcery rules, reduce his practicals aptitude by one. If using Practical Magic, he may take an additional category of magic. In addition, the player earns a persona point for pushing his character's magic in a dangerous or untried direction.

Well Traveled *Dt* 4 pts

The Speaker of Names wanders the lands and seas, communing with the spirits. This trait allows the player to take a new domain when his character travels to a new locale in play. The player may describe a memory his character has of this place or a place like it. He may describe when he traveled here before. The player then adds a new domain to his spirit binder at its base level (0). Once used, this trait becomes a character trait. To be clear, the domain is added during play at a time of the player's choosing, not during character burning.

Zealot

Character Burner page 355.





Magical Skills

This section presents the new skills offered in this book and revisions of the sorcerous skills in the Character Burner. Skills not listed here are either wises or are described in the Character Burner.

Revised Starting Sorcery Skill Exponents

Sorcerous skill exponents may not start the game with an exponent greater than 5 unless all members of the group are playing sorcerer-type characters or you all agree otherwise.

Alchemy — Perception

This entry is an update of Alchemy that incorporates all of the new applications presented in this book. Alchemy is the distillation of materials in order to divine their essence. Alchemists may also create mixtures of arcane substances to generate a specific effect.

Obstacles: Distilling components of earth, Ob 1. Components of water or liquid, Ob 2. Components of metal, Ob 3. Components of blood, Ob 4. Identifying traits from organic samples: Character traits, Ob 1. Call-ons, Ob 2. Die traits, Ob 3.

FoRKs: Enchanting, Herbalism, Apothecary, Munitions, Poisons.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: Yes.

Bargaining — Will/Per

Immortal spirits know the value of ephemeral things like life and a soul. They bring this knowledge to bear against those who wish to strike bargains with them and form pacts. The Bargaining skill is a special social skill designed solely to negotiate pacts between summoner and summoned. It may be used for the bargaining steps described in the Summoning chapter or in a Duel of Wits with an otherworldly entity or another summoner concerning the price or nature of a pact.

Obstacles: Bargaining uses the rules described in the Summoning and the Duel of Wits chapters.

FoRKs: Rhetoric, Ugly Truth, Folklore.

Skill Type: Special

Tools: No.

Circination — Per/Ag

Circination is the art of drawing circles and sigils that aid the spirit binder and summoner. There are three types of circles that may be drawn: the summoning circle or gate, the fortress circle and the prison circle. The summoning circle aids in conjuring and binding spirits. The fortress protects the summoner from spirits. The prison circle traps unruly spirits. Circination is tested like a regular skill: It is not open-ended and does not get combined with anything special (except help or FoRKs) when tested. Circination is used to aid Spirit Binding and Summoning. Please consult those chapters for further nuances of the skill.

If a circle is physically damaged—erased, marred, smudged—then it loses its powers.





Obstacles: *Summoning Circle or Gate*: The player sets his obstacle according to how many advantage dice he hopes to earn. If successful, the test grants advantage dice for Spirit Binding or Summoning equal to the obstacle. *Fortress*: For Spirit Binding, the obstacle is equal to the spirit Strength to be deflected. For Summoning, the obstacle is 1 plus the obstacle penalty the sorcerer wishes to imposes on the spirit. *Prison*: For Spirit Binding, the obstacle is twice the spirit's Strength. For Summoning, the obstacle is equal to the Will exponent of the creature to be imprisoned (plus any penalties for shade differences).

FoRKs: Illuminations, Cartography, Symbology, Ritual and appropriate wises.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.

Death Art — Will/Forte

Death Art is a black practice that teaches the sorcerer how to animate corpses and turn them into walking abominations.

Obstacles: See the Death Art chapter.

FoRKs: Summoning, Folklore and appropriate wises.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: Yes and no. See the chapter.

Enchanting — Per/Ag

Enchanting is a school of sorcery that focuses on imparting magic to inert, physical things. There are two sides to Enchanting: imbuing and full-blown enchanting. Imbuing allows the mage to temporarily infuse an item with a small amount of power. Enchanting allows the mage to create powerful, enduring artifacts.

Obstacles: See the Enchanting chapter.

FoRKs: A craft skill appropriate to what's being created. Linked tests are appropriate.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: Yes and no. See the chapter.

Sorcery — Perception

This is not a revision of Sorcery but an expansion. In your game, the Sorcery skill can count for the standard version of the Sorcery skill described in the Burning Wheel or count for Art Magic or Practical Magic described in this book. Pick one form that the skill represents in your game. All iterations of the Sorcery skill, no matter what lifepath they are earned from, count as this form.

Obstacles: See the Art Magic or Practical Magic chapters in this book or the Sorcery chapter in the Burning Wheel.

FoRKs: Aura Reading, Astrology, Empyrealia, Demonology and appropriate wises.

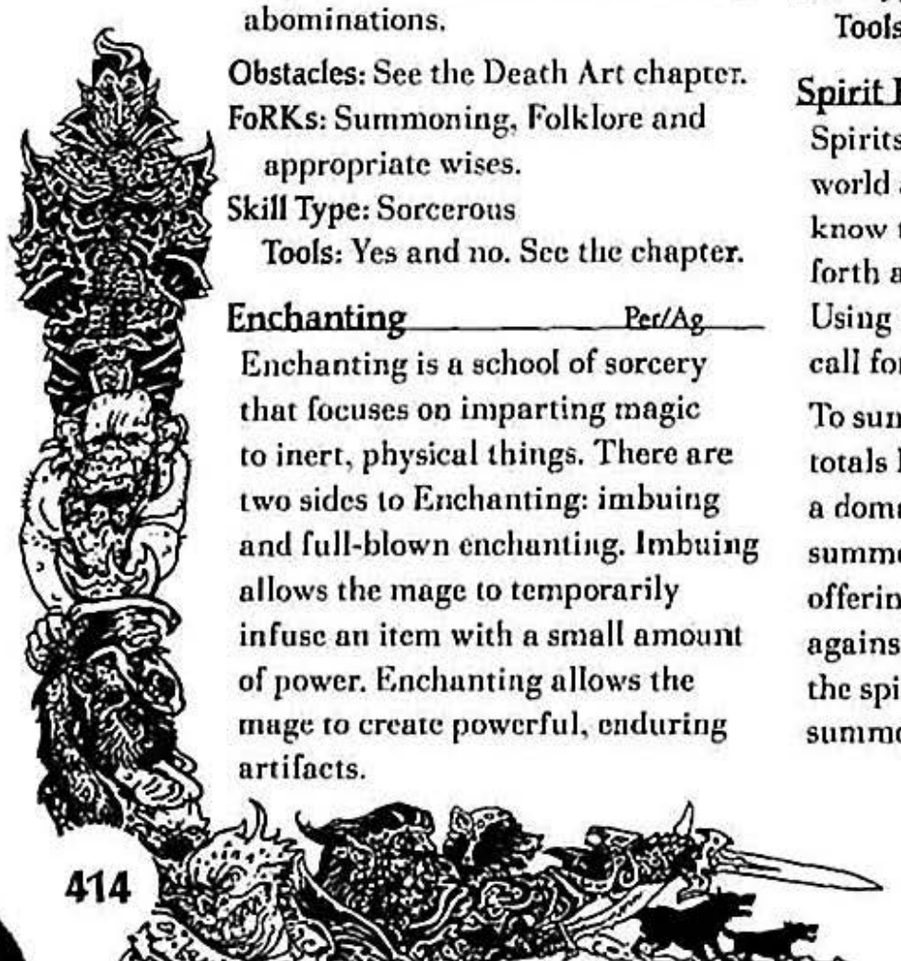
Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.

Spirit Binding — Will

Spirits abound. They infuse the world around us, and those who know their secrets may call them forth and bind them into service. Using this skill, a summoner may call forth a spirit and set it to a task.

To summon and bind, the player totals his dice from Spirit Binding, a domain binding, a spirit mark, summoning circles and any offerings. He tests those dice against an obstacle that combines the spirit's Strength, the task, the summoner's own Immanence, the



immediate need for the spirit and the scope of the domain affected. If successful, the summoner can name his task and reduce the amount of retribution the spirit will visit upon him. If failed, the summoner has angered the spirit and will suffer the consequences in either retribution or enmity.

Obstacles: See the Spirit Binding chapter.

FoRKs: Astrology. Linked tests are appropriate.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.

Summoning — Perception

The Summoning skill allows the character to call spirits of the dead, demons, angels and gods to discuss matters of faith, life and philosophy, and perhaps to reach a bargain for service. This skill uses the rules found in the Summoning chapter of this book.

Obstacles: See the Summoning chapter.

FoRKs: Astrology, Folklore, Empyrealia, Demonology and appropriate wises.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.





The Bladesmith

DUVAINEL, 175-year-old Dark Elven Bladesmith
Born Citadel, Novice, Shaper, Bladesmith, Griever, Liar

STATS

Will B6	Perception B5	Agility B6
Speed B4	Power B4	Forte B6

ATTRIBUTES

Health B8	Steel B6	Mortal Wound B11	Hesitation 4
Reflexes B5	Resources B3	Circles B4	Stride 8
Spite B5			

SKILLS
Elven Script B2, Etching B3, Mending B2, Elven Artifact-wise B2, Craft-wise B2, Woodcraft B3, Smithcraft B3, Riddle of Steel B5, Sorrow of Truth B5, Falsehood B4, Soothing Platitudes B4, Persuasion B3, The Twisted Tongue B4, Song of the Sword B4, Antiphon Union Training

TRAITS
Born Under the Silver Stars, Essence of the Earth, Fair and Statuesque, First Born, Grief, Keen Sight, Loyal, Long Fingered, Acute, Spite, Dark and Imposing, Compulsive Liar, Glib

GEAR
Elven Smithy, Elven Clothes, Elven Shoes

RELATIONSHIPS
Thanguron (Romantic, Hateful), Morfinnor (Family, Hateful)

BELIEFS
I must create a weapon for Thanguron to use against my father, Morfinnor.

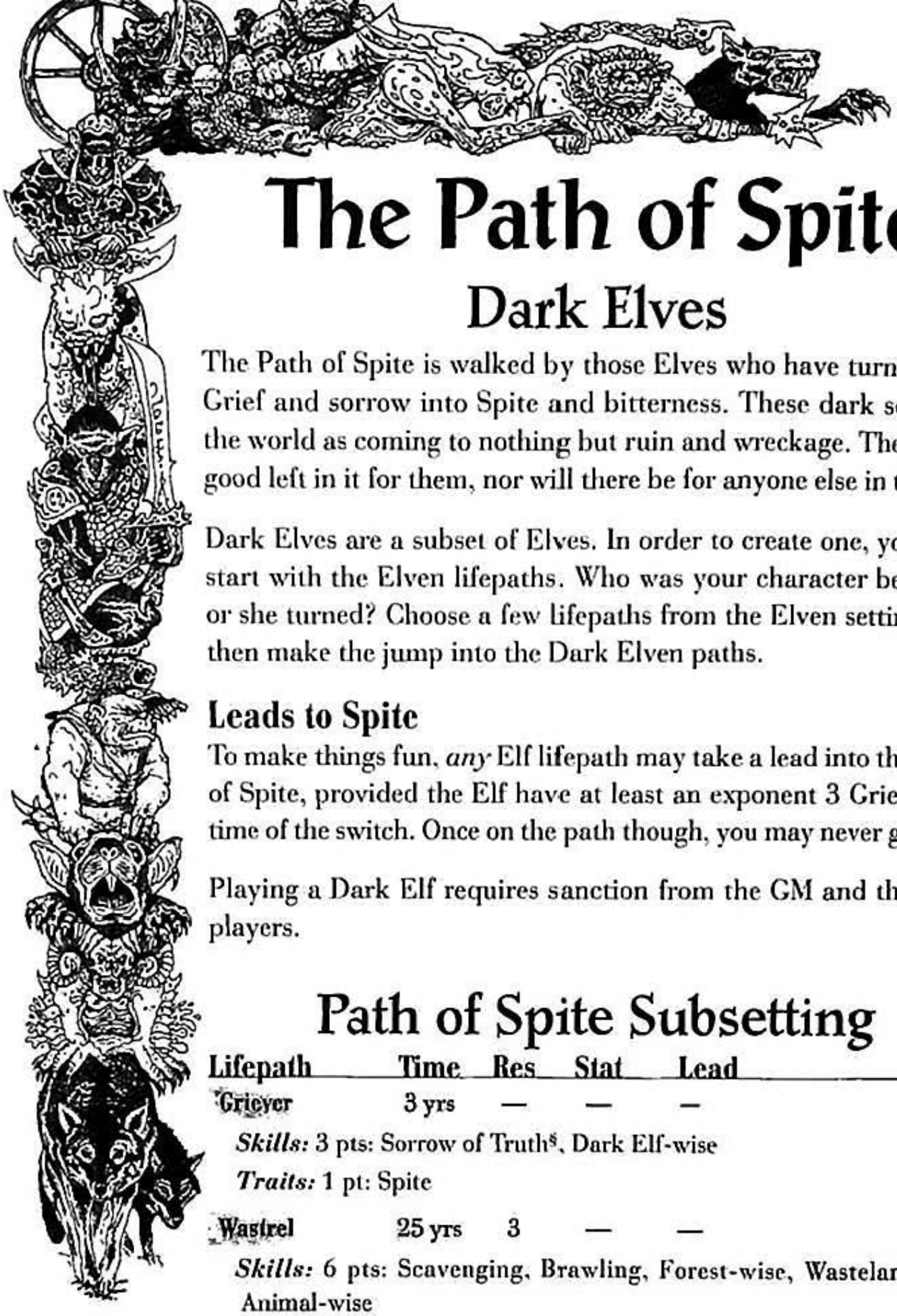
I will build my reputation as the finest weaponsmith in the citadel—enough so that every etharch will desire my blades.

My weapon will teach my client the truth: A blade's sole purpose is to bring misery to its wielder and all those around him.

INSTINCTS
Always take my time when crafting.

Always create items of the highest quality.

Sing the Sorrow of Truth into all blades that I forge.



The Path of Spite

Dark Elves

The Path of Spite is walked by those Elves who have turned their Grief and sorrow into Spite and bitterness. These dark souls see the world as coming to nothing but ruin and wreckage. There is no good left in it for them, nor will there be for anyone else in the end.

Dark Elves are a subset of Elves. In order to create one, you must start with the Elven lifepaths. Who was your character before he or she turned? Choose a few lifepaths from the Elven settings and then make the jump into the Dark Elven paths.

Leads to Spite

To make things fun, *any* Elf lifepath may take a lead into the Paths of Spite, provided the Elf have at least an exponent 3 Grief at the time of the switch. Once on the path though, you may never go back.

Playing a Dark Elf requires sanction from the GM and the other players.

Path of Spite Subsetting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Lead
Griever	3 yrs	—	—	—

Skills: 3 pts: Sorrow of Truth[§], Dark Elf-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Spite

Wastrel	25 yrs	3	—	—

Skills: 6 pts: Scavenging, Brawling, Forest-wise, Wasteland-wise. Animal-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Filthy, Feral

Requires: Griever

Thief	18 yrs	6	+1 M/P	—

Skills: 6 pts: Lock Pick, Stealthy, Climbing, Sleight of Hand, Dirge of Night[§]

Traits: 1 pt: Thief

Requires: Griever

Assassin 15 yrs 6 +1 P —

Skills: 7 pts: Intimidation, Poisons, Escape Artist, Knives, Garrote, Keen of Terror§

Traits: 1 pt: Murderous, Callous, Cold Blooded

Requires: Griever

Stalker 20 yrs 8 — —

Skills: 8 pts: Hunting, Elf-wise, Tracking, Trapper, Observation, Stealthy, Throwing, Javelin, Supplication to Shadows§

Traits: 1 pt: Saturnine

Requires: Griever

Deceiver 35 yrs 10 +1 M —

Skills: 7 pts: Sleight of Hand, Disguise, Inconspicuous, Rhyme of the Unraveller§

Traits: 1 pt: Deceptive

Requires: Griever

Liar 25 yrs 8 +1 M —

Skills: 6 pts: Falsehood, Soothing Platitudes, Persuasion, Twisted Tongue§

Traits: 1 pt: Compulsive Liar

Requires: Griever

Siren 55 yrs 20 +1 M/P —

Skills: 9 pts: Seduction, Etiquette, Persuasion, Soothing Platitudes, Gossip-wise, Fugue of Discord§, Litany of Fools§

Traits: 2 pts: Charismatic, Femme Fatale/Homme Fatal

Requires: Assassin, Deceiver or Liar

Eremite 150 yrs 15 +1 M *Servant to the Dark*

Skills: 12 pts: Philosophy, Ugly Truth, Obscure History, Symbology, Strategy, Elf-wise, Orc-wise, Dwarf-wise, Man-wise, Paean to the Dark Fire§

Traits: 2 pts: Remote, Cold

Requires: Siren, Wastrel or Stalker

Recluse 225 yrs 25 +1 P —

Skills: 2 pts: Ancient History, Dwarf-wise, Elven Politics-wise, Cut of the Quickened Mind§; 5 pts General

Traits: 1 pt: Vengeful

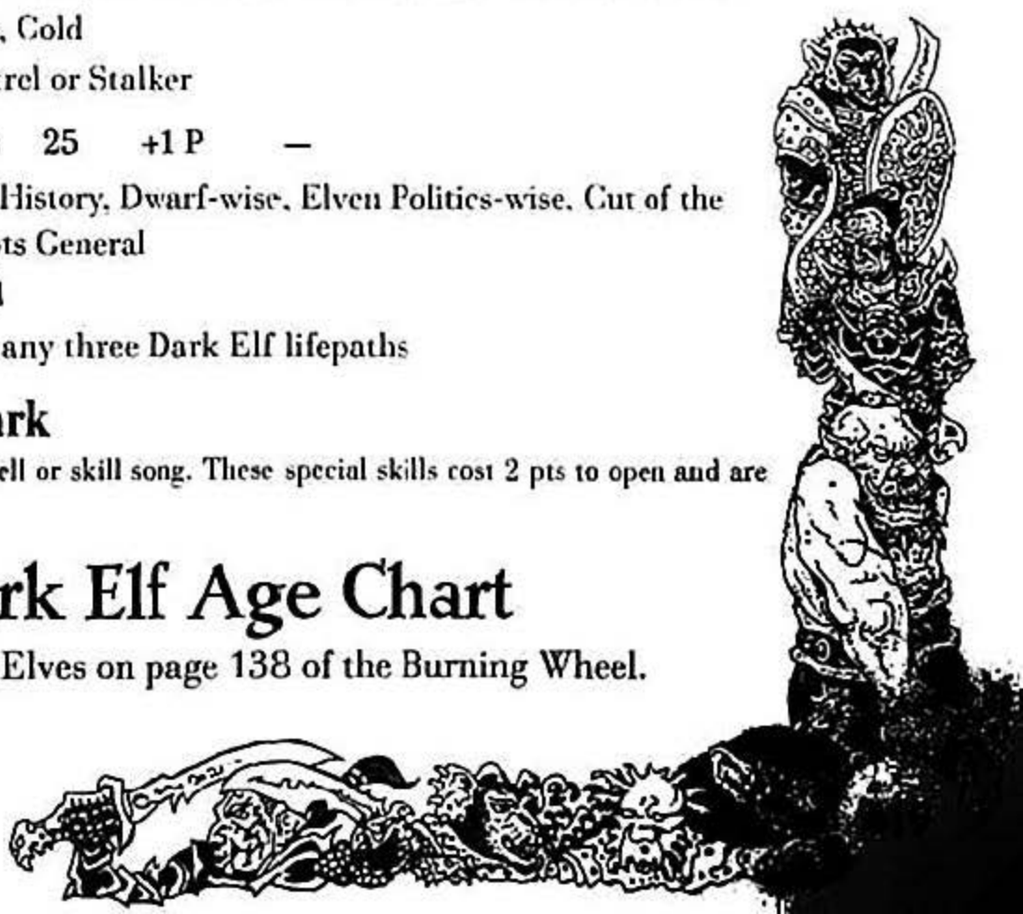
Requires: Eremite or any three Dark Elf lifepaths

Notes from the Dark

§: Indicates a Dark Elven spell or skill song. These special skills cost 2 pts to open and are advanced as normal.

Dark Elf Age Chart

Use the Age Chart for Elves on page 138 of the Burning Wheel.



Dark Elf Common Traits

Dark Elves share common traits with Elves with the following modifications: Change Grief to Spite and you may, if you so choose, change the Fair and Statuesque trait to the Dark and Imposing character trait.

Dark Elf Lifepath Traits

Callous *Char*

Charismatic

Burning Wheel page 318.

Cold *Dt*

In a Duel of Wits where kindness, compassion, Grief or passion are involved, the Eremite may double his Will for the purposes of the body of argument. This effect can be triggered mid-conflict, increasing the Eremite's body of argument immediately.

Cold Blooded

Burning Wheel page 319.

Compulsive Liar *Char*

Deceptive *C-O/Dt*

The Deceptive trait acts as a call-on for Sleight of Hand and Falsehood. However this trait so infuses the liar, he has a hard time telling the truth. Deceptive also incurs a +1 Ob penalty to all Oratory, Command tests and +2 Ob to Ugly Truth or Litany of Fools.

Femme Fatale/Homme Fatal *C-O*

Call-on for Seduction.

Feral *Dt*

Wastrels lose themselves to their animal instincts, living for decades at a time without contact with civilization—living as animals do. The Feral trait reduces overall hesitation by one, but adds +1 Ob to all social skill tests. Also, Feral negates the bonus to Circles from any Elven lifepath trait such as Etharchal, Lord of Ages, etc.

Filthy *Char*

Murderous *Char*

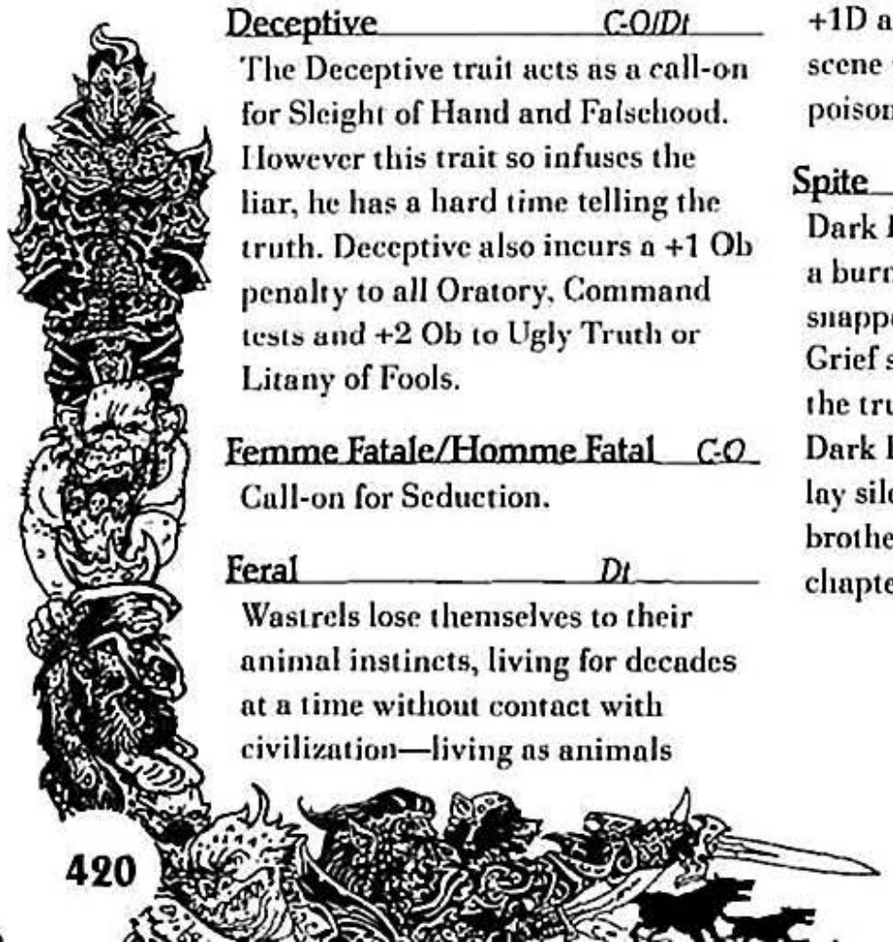
Remote *Char*

Saturnine *Dt*

If any other player attempts to influence a character with the Saturnine trait with passion, motivation, joy or love, the Saturnine Dark Elf player gets a +1D advantage to all tests for one scene when confronting, hunting or poisoning that character.

Spite *Dt*

Dark Elves trade their Grief for a burning Spite. Something has snapped inside the Dark Elf's soul—Grief seems folly to him. Whatever the truth of an immortal life is, Dark Elves know that it does not lay silently grieving with his Elven brothers. See the Spite section of this chapter for more details on the rules.



Thief C-O

The Thief trait requires that the player note a mandatory theft-related Instinct: "When visiting home, always steal Mother's valuables," for example. So long as that Instinct is in play, it acts a call-on for Sleight of Hand.

Vengeful Dt

If the Dark Elf character is defeated in a Duel of Wits or a Fight and lives to tell the tale, he may FoRK his Spite into all rolls bent on avenging himself against his enemy. Humiliating or murdering the enemy—getting revenge upon them—immediately earns the player a bonus persona point, for a total of two: one for a personal goal and one for Vengeful.

The Vengeful trait also requires that the Dark Elf have a close relationship with a non-spiteful Elf or a mortal human. It can be familial, romantic or fraternal in nature—but it must be close. It must rankle the Dark Elf that they still live that way.

Dark Elf Skill Songs

Litany of Fools Will

The song Litany of Fools speaks gently of the terrible fate of those who don't see the truth in what the Dark Elf is saying. This song counts as Ugly Truth or Intimidation—choose which before testing the skill. The Dark Elf player must incorporate a barbed rhyme of verse into his roleplay.

FoRKs: Falsehood
Skill Type: Social **Tools:** No.

Dark Elven Spell Songs

Unless otherwise noted, Dark Elf spell songs follow the rules for Elven spell songs.

Choosing Dark Elf Songs Versus Elven Songs

When picking spell songs, if the player is presented with two similar songs—one Elven, one Dark Elven—the player must pick the Dark Elven song.

For example, Threne of the Chameleon is similar to Supplication of Shadows. If a player has both songs on his list, he may not choose Threne. Or Twisted Tongue weighed against Voice of Ages—Twisted Tongue would be the preferred song.

Song Roots

Dark Elf songs are rooted in Will like Elven songs with a few exceptions. Sorrow of Truth, Paean to the Dark Fire, Fugue of Discord and the Twisted Tongue are rooted in Spite.



Cut of the Quickened Mind Ob See Below

It is all but impossible to argue with a Dark Elf. They turn each argument against their interlocutor, proving their point with each denial and reproach.

This song allows the Dark Elf to switch the function of social skills. He can switch from a skill he has to one he doesn't: Falsehood becomes Persuasion, Ugly Truth becomes Oratory, etc.

Obstacles: To turn a skill to Falsehood, Soothing Platitudes or Ugly Truth, Ob 2. To turn a skill to Intimidation or Seduction, Ob 3. To turn a skill to Persuasion or Oratory, Ob 4. To turn a skill to Rhetoric, Ob 5. This effect lasts for one scene.

Special: The Cut can also be used to temporarily epiphany any one social skill. The obstacle is 10 minus Spite. The epiphany lasts for one scene. This effect can only be used once against a single particular opposing character. It may not be used with the switched skill ability above. It is only used on skills you possess.

Actions: Obstacle x 10

Dirge of Night Ob 3

Shadows lengthen and deepen to an impossible shade of darkness. This spell counteracts any sight-boosting trait or spell like Keen Sight or Eye of the Eagle. In addition, anyone searching the shadows or darkness suffers a +1 Ob penalty. Dirge of Night can only be sung at night or a place of shadows—an ancient forest, indoors, etc.

Duration: The Dirge of Night fades come morning or if bright light floods the area it affects.

Actions: 8

Fugue of Discord Ob 5

When sung this song interrupts spells and songs being cast. It acts as a distraction to any song or spell currently being sustained. The area of effect is the Dark Elf's presence. If a character attempts to sing or cast while a Fugue of Discord is in effect, they must add the Dark Elf's extra successes from the Fugue of Discord to their obstacle.

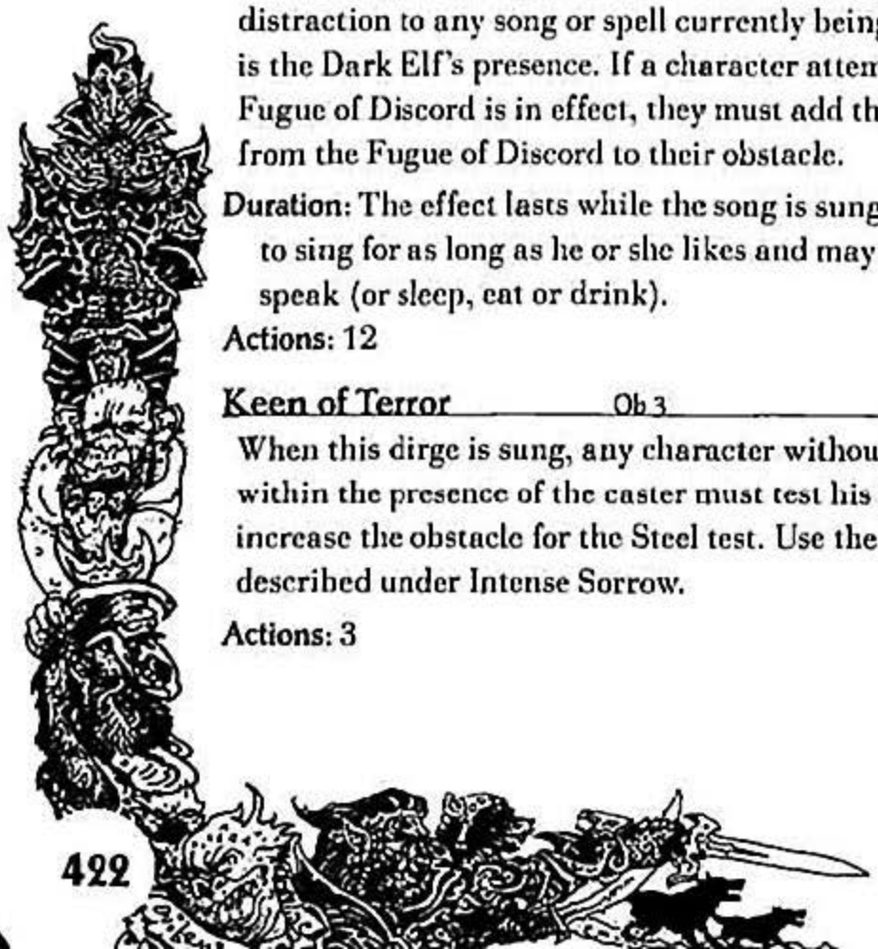
Duration: The effect lasts while the song is sung. The Dark Elf may continue to sing for as long as he or she likes and may act but may not otherwise speak (or sleep, eat or drink).

Actions: 12

Keen of Terror Ob 3

When this dirge is sung, any character without the Spite or Hatred attribute within the presence of the caster must test his Steel. Extra song successes increase the obstacle for the Steel test. Use the hesitation options as described under Intense Sorrow.

Actions: 3





Paean to the Dark Fire Ob 10 minus Spite

When sung properly this terrible song shows the singer's true form—a shifting and distorted visage that none can look upon without growing dizzy or faint. At its base level, the spell gives all who look upon the Dark Elf +1 Ob to any act directed against him—attacking him, intimidating him, convincing him, etc. Extra successes over the spell obstacle add to the obstacle penalty.

Duration: Effect lasts while sung. Dark Elf may continue to sing for as long as he or she likes, and may act, but may not otherwise speak.

Actions: 4

Rhyme of the Unraveler Ob See Below

This devilish song causes havoc around the singer: Knots untie, wax cracks, mortar loosens, thread unwinds and seams unravel.

Obstacles: Knots or belts, Ob 1. Rope, Ob 2. In addition, you can use the equivalent obstacle of the Raw Power Obstacles Against Materials table on Burning Wheel page 542 to cause fences, doors, walls or even structures to fall apart.

Actions: Obstacle x2

Sorrow of Truth Ob 10 minus Target's Grief

This mournful song speaks of leaving sorrow behind, putting it to sleep and waking a new fire within—a flame of spite.

Elves who are confronted with this song (if it is successfully sung), may choose to change their Grief to Spite. Their eyes are open to this new truth.

Actions: 3000 (about 30 minutes)

Supplication to Shadows Ob 4

The shadows hold no secrets or sorrows from us. This supplication adds +1D to Stealthy. Successes over the obstacle count as additional advantage dice. It can only be sung and used in an area of shadow or darkness.

Duration: Until the character steps into direct sunlight.

Actions: 4

Twisted Tongue Ob See Below

When singing into the ear of an unwitting victim, the Dark Elf bends him to his will. This song is used to enhance the Dark Elf's social prowess.

Obstacles: Using the following obstacles to make a social skill open-ended for the duration of the scene: Falsehood and Intimidation, Ob 1. Soothing Platitudes and Ugly Truth, Ob 2. Persuasion, Ob 3. Oratory, Ob 4. Rhetoric, Ob 5.

Special: In addition, the Twisted Tongue can be sung to grant the Dark Elf a reputation for use in Circles tests. Use the following obstacles: 1D reputation, Ob 2. 2D reputation, Ob 4. 3D reputation, Ob 6. Make the roll before you test Circles. Failure indicates the Dark Elf has an enemy in these circles, regardless if you pass the Circles test or not.

Duration: One test or series test.

Actions: 6

Rules of Spite

Spite is complex. It is a dangerous mixture of indignation, self-righteousness and fury. Whether right or wrong, the spiteful prove themselves with a point: They are not above revenge, deceit or even murder to ensure that they get what they believe is their's by right.





Starting Spite

In order to take the Griever lifepath and earn the Spite trait, the Elf must *first* have at least a B3 Grief attribute. Before taking the lead to the Path of Spite, factor all of the criteria for starting Grief as per the normal rules for Elves. If the character qualifies for a B3 Grief, he may walk the path.



Once the Elf character takes the Griever lifepath, Grief is transmuted to Spite.

Add one to starting Spite for each of the following traits: Slayer, Exile, Feral, Murderous, Saturnine, Femme/Homme Fatal, Cold and Bitter.

If the character has taken Bitter Reminders, each 10 rps spent adds one to starting Spite.

Also, read and answer the following questions:

- —Has the character been betrayed by his friends? If so, add one to the starting Spite exponent.
- —Is the character lovesick or broken hearted? If so, add one.
- —Has the character been abandoned by those he held dear? If so, add one.
- —Has the character been abused or tortured? If so, add one.
- —Does the character still respect or admire someone on the other side? If so, subtract one from the starting exponent.
- —Does the character still love someone on the other side? If so, subtract two from the starting exponent.

Spite may not start above exponent 9. This emotional attribute obeys all of the limitations described in the Setting Your Game's Starting Power Level on page 104 of Burning Wheel.

Five points of Spite may be spent to shade shift from black to gray shade during character burning. This may only be done at the GM's discretion.



Limits of Spite

At exponent 10 Spite, the Dark Elf commits suicide.

Sever All Ties

When a player chooses the Griever lifepath and acquires the Spite lifepath trait, he may choose to sever his ties and obligations to his old life. The player may remove any required lifepath trait in this vein: Fealty to the Fêa, Servant of the Citadel, Sworn to Protect and Sworn to the Lord Protector.

He may also choose to take any reputation gained via his lifepath traits as an infamous one or he can choose to keep these traits and reputations as they are. There are a lot of options for playing Dark Elves who still live among their brethren and are therefore still bound to all their obligations.

Intense Sorrow

As Elven songs cause Wonderment, Dark Elven dirges cause *Intense Sorrow* in the listener's heart. Intense Sorrow only affects characters who understand high speech and who do not have the Spite or Hatred attributes.

Characters within the presence of a Dark Elf singing must pass a Steel test. If in Fight, the effect takes hold after a number of exchanges equal their Will exponent. In Range and Cover or Duel of Wits, the effect is triggered at the start of the second volley of singing. Outside of conflict, the effect grips its listeners after a few moments. If the listener fails the Steel test, he hesitates, as per the standard rules, but with some interesting choices: Stand and Drool, *Exact Revenge* or *Weep Bitterly*.

New Steel Test Result Option: Exact Revenge

If you choose to exact revenge while hesitating, you lash out at one of your companions who you believe has slighted or betrayed you. You leap upon your betrayer with a scream and attempt to kill him. The target of the attack must be a friend or an enemy whose death will hasten the character's own death (it cannot be the Dark Elf who induced the test).

New Steel Test Result Option: Weep Bitterly

Rather than Fall Prone and Beg for Mercy, you may have your character fall to his knees and begin to weep and sob—remorseful for all his past actions, because they have all come to naught and will eternally come to nothing.

In Spite of Grief

Dark Elves may use traditional Elven spell songs and skill songs that they learned in their previous life. However, *they may never use any song rooted in Grief.* These characters no longer possess that attribute and therefore can no longer use abilities based on it. And, of course, they may no longer sing laments (except under one specific condition; see the Spite to Grief heading). Those who have died received the payment they deserved!

Deeds of Spite

Like Elves, Dark Elves may use deeds points to channel their emotion into their actions. A deeds point can be used to add the Spite exponent dice to a roll. This counts as a difficult test for advancement for Spite.



Situational Spite Obstacles

Like Grief and Hatred, Spite is generally not rolled. However, conditions arise in play that act as tests and count as a test for advancing the attribute.

Obstacle 1 Spite
Being lied to. Betraying an Instinct. Being interrupted while at work.

Obstacle 2 Spite
Being robbed. Going against a Belief. Suffering incompetence. Reflecting on the bitter reminders of your old life.

Obstacle 3 Spite
Being accused of a crime you did not commit. Being maliciously attacked or wounded (midi wound or less). Navigating bureaucracy.

Obstacle 4 Spite
Having your home destroyed or ruined. Being personally betrayed. Suffering a severe wound.

Obstacle 5 Spite
Fighting in a bloody battle. Being captured by your enemies. Suffering a traumatic wound.

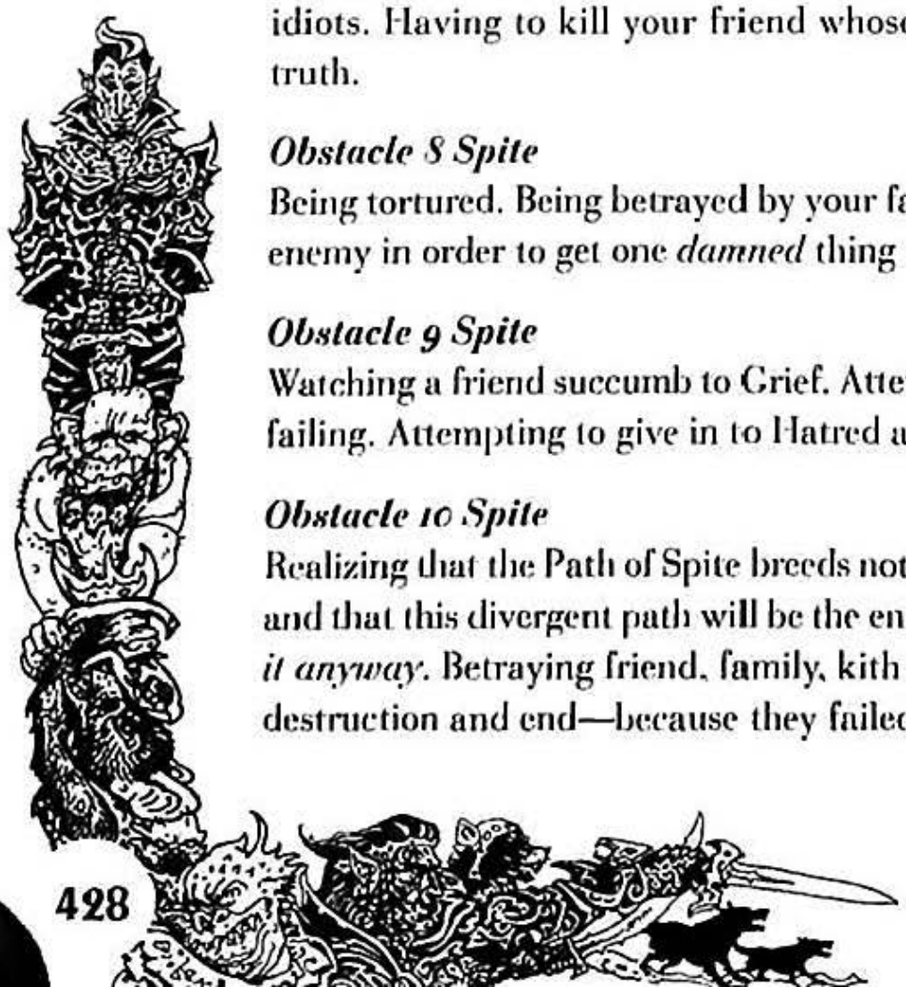
Obstacle 6 Spite
Being imprisoned for a crime you did not commit. Losing a bloody battle. Being mortally wounded.

Obstacle 7 Spite
Being forced to flee your homeland by incursions of interlopers and idiots. Having to kill your friend whose mind has failed to see the truth.

Obstacle 8 Spite
Being tortured. Being betrayed by your family. Forced to ally with the enemy in order to get one *damned* thing done.

Obstacle 9 Spite
Watching a friend succumb to Grief. Attempting a great endeavor and failing. Attempting to give in to Hatred and failing.

Obstacle 10 Spite
Realizing that the Path of Spite breeds nothing but hatred and division, and that this divergent path will be the end of Elvendom—*but walking it anyway*. Betraying friend, family, kith and kin—precipitating their destruction and end—because they failed to see matters your way.





Spite to Hatred

A Dark Elf player may attempt to turn his boiling spite into blazing hate. At an appropriate or dramatic time in the story, he may make a challenging Spite test to turn Spite irrevocably to Hatred. This is the only time Spite is ever rolled directly. Pass or fail, this counts as a challenging Spite test for advancement! If done in Fight, it requires two actions. In Range and Cover or Duel of Wits, it costs one action. Otherwise, it occupies a short scene on its own.

You may spend artha, but FoRKs are not available. Other Hateful creatures present and attuned to the Elf's anguish can help.

If successful. Spite becomes Hatred. The Fair and Statuesque or the Dark and Imposing trait is instantly lost and replaced with Twisted and Loathsome. The player may also choose one additional Orc Common trait to replace one of his remaining Elven Common traits.

Any Elven songs possessed by the character are now forgotten. Dark Elven songs are kept and are now rooted in Hatred or Will (rather than Spite or Will). The Dark Elf may learn Hatred-based skills. He uses the rules for advancing Hatred on page 240 of the Character Burner. If the character should ever earn the Void Embrace trait, he may turn his Hatred to Blasphemous Hatred.

Spite to Grief

In play. Spite may be turned back to Grief. To do so, the Dark Elf player must learn a lament from another Elf character whom he has hurt in the course of play. He must then pass a test for the Lament of Mourning at an obstacle equal to his Spite plus one. He may spend artha as per the standard rules. but he also must have at least one helping die from an Elven character whom he has hurt in the course of play. If the Lament is successful. the Spite exponent is transformed to Grief. Mark a challenging test for Grief. If the test is failed. mark a challenging test for Spite.

Spite and Antiphon Union

A sword crafted by a Dark Elf will have an evil legacy and lead to death and loss. A Dark Elven smith can use Antiphon Union to imbue items with the Sorrow of Truth, so that those who use them eventually fall from Grief to Spite.



Even worse, these enchanted items tend to bear ill will to their masters. GMs should embrace this and ensure that failure results involving the items are the most tragic. most sorrowful outcomes possible.

Dark Elf Resources

Dark Elves may purchase one or two heirlooms of their past (as per Bitter Reminders). Everything else has been thrown into the sea or a chasm in spite of its worth.



Resources	Rp Cost
Bitter Reminder	see below
Bitter	10
Spiteful Poison	20
Lock Picks	10
Long Knife	5
Barbed Javelins	3
Garrote	3
Caltrops	3
Tools of the Trade	9
Cloak of Darkness	30
Climbing Claws	5
Remote Refuge	10
Morlîn Armor	Special
Morlîn Weapons	15

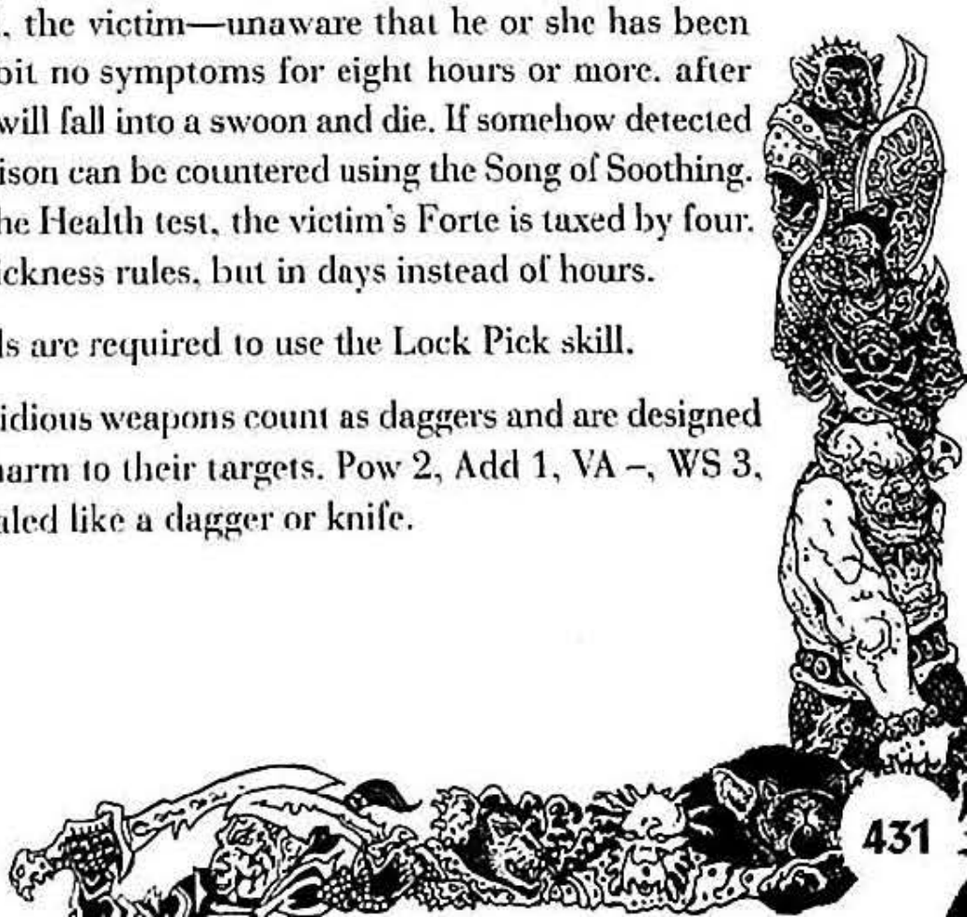
Bitter Reminder— Dark Elf characters may purchase items from the Elven Resources list on page 156 of the Burning Wheel. Each 10 rps spent on these items adds +1D to starting Spite.

Bitter Poison— One dose of this ingested poison causes the victim to lose 1D of Health per day for five days. If Health drops to zero, the victim dies. If not, the victim recovers his Health at 1D per week.

Spiteful Poison— One small cut from a needle or blade so poisoned is enough to kill. If an Incidental hit is delivered from a blade or barb with this poison, roll a die of fate. On a 1-2, the victim is poisoned. If a Mark hit is delivered, the victim is poisoned on a 1-4. Superb hits always deliver the poison. If poisoned, the victim must pass an Ob 5 Health test. If failed, the victim—unaware that he or she has been poisoned—will exhibit no symptoms for eight hours or more, after which time he or she will fall into a swoon and die. If somehow detected in the interim, the poison can be countered using the Song of Soothing. If the victim passes the Health test, the victim's Forte is taxed by four. Recover as per the Sickness rules, but in days instead of hours.

Lock Picks— These tools are required to use the Lock Pick skill.

Long Knives— These insidious weapons count as daggers and are designed to cause maximum harm to their targets. Pow 2, Add 1, VA –, WS 3, Short. Can be concealed like a dagger or knife.



Barbed Javelins— Barbed Javelins are designed to cause their victims grievous harm even after impact. If a Superb hit is scored, the javelin has embedded itself in the victim. All medicinal skill rolls to stop bleeding or begin recovery suffer +2 Ob penalty due to the javelin's ugly barbs that must be extracted before the victim can heal.

Garrote— A garrote is a two- to three-foot length of cord strung between two small wooden handles. It is used to throttle victims to death. To use this weapon, a character must win positioning at hands fighting distance. Once there, a 2D or greater Lock must be established around the neck with the garrote. If such a Lock is achieved, the victim loses 1D Forte every volley thereafter. If Forte reaches zero, the victim falls unconscious.

Caltrops— Caltrops are sharp barbs scattered on the ground to interfere with a creature's movement. If approached while moving quickly or if simply walking into the trap unawares, make an Ob 3 Speed test to avoid. Failure indicates damage. Roll the Die of Fate: **1:** B7: **2-4:** B5; **5-6:** B4.

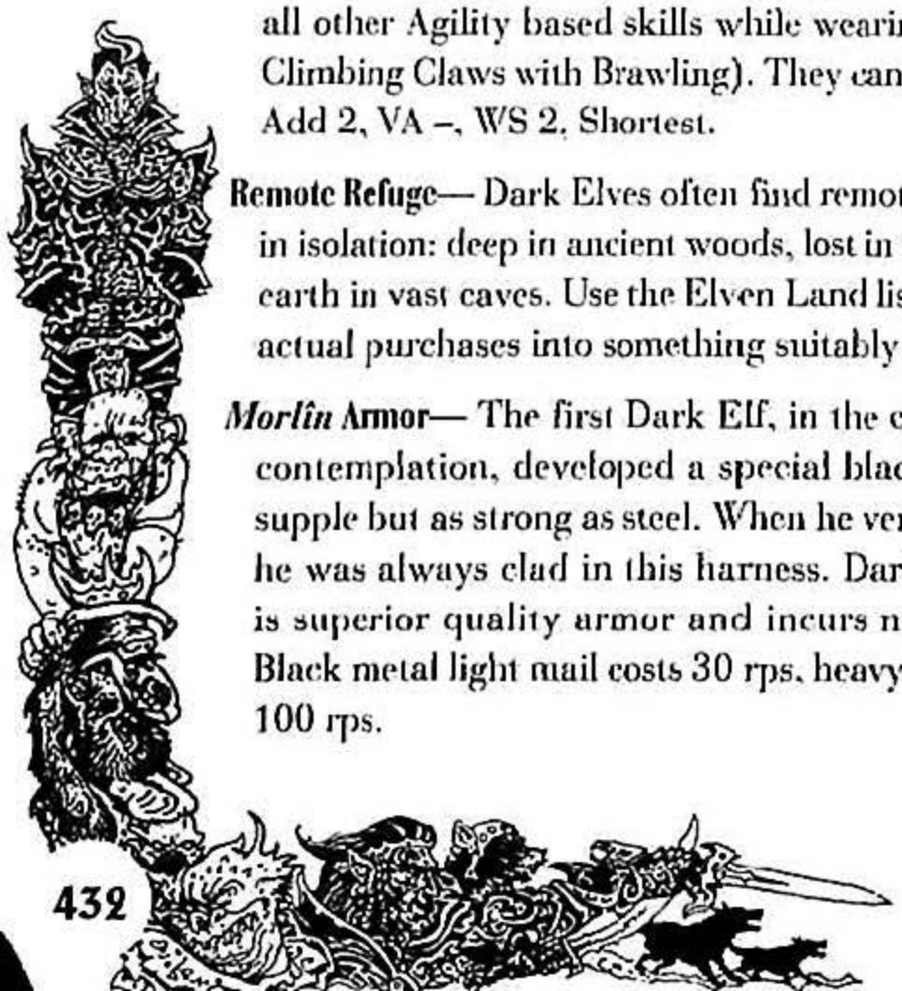
Tools of the Trade— Skill kits for Disguise, Poisons or any other kit the Dark Elf may need.

Cloak of Darkness— Adds +4D of open-ended helping dice to the Stealthy skill. If you have no Stealthy skill, roll the cloak's own four dice to create the Observation obstacle.

Climbing Claws— These odd devices help the Dark Elf thieves in their second-story operations. Add +1D to the Climbing Skill, but +1 Ob to all other Agility based skills while wearing them (except when using Climbing Claws with Brawling). They can also act as a weapon: Pow 1, Add 2, VA –, WS 2, Shortest.

Remote Refuge— Dark Elves often find remote refuges where they can live in isolation: deep in ancient woods, lost in wastelands or even under the earth in vast caves. Use the Elven Land list for prices and translate the actual purchases into something suitably dark and forlorn.

***Morlin* Armor**— The first Dark Elf, in the centuries of his isolation and contemplation, developed a special black metal that was light and supple but as strong as steel. When he ventured forth from his refuge, he was always clad in this harness. Dark Elven black metal armor is superior quality armor and incurs no clumsy weight penalties. Black metal light mail costs 30 rps, heavy mail 40 rps and plated mail 100 rps.





***Morlin* Weapons**— Weapons made of the Dark Elven black metal count as superior quality. You may modify the weapon thusly:

- For an additional +15 rps, you may add an additional point of weapon speed or VA to the weapon's stats.
- For +30 rps, you may add +1 Power to the weapon.

However, to qualify for this bonus, you must name the weapon and it must be unique in your campaign. For example, if you take a black metal dagger with VA 2, it can be the only one of its type.

Dark Elves in Play

Our Dark Elves don't follow extant archetypes of dark elves in gaming. They are neither those who are intrinsically evil, nor are they underground-dwelling, spider-worshipping sorcerers.

These individuals have made a choice and believe in it with the utmost conviction. Having turned away from mourning and sadness, they have focused on rage, hatred and malice. To them such a transformation represents a natural evolution of an eternal life lived in an endlessly decaying world.

Dark Elves work well as NPC villains and as an element in an Orc or Troll cohort. However, playing a Dark Elf in a group of otherwise innocent player characters can be very risky. I recommend outing the Dark Elf during character burning. You can incorporate them into Elven society: having just gone over to Spite, how do they cut their ties? Or make them a disguised element in an adventuring group who is destined to betray his friends—but only so long as everyone is in on and agrees with the ultimate reveal.

When playing with Spite, try to walk the line between the Grief of the Elves and the outright Hatred of the Orcs. It's not easy, but the best path that I have seen is a kind of seething, righteous anger. Dark Elves aren't like the Orcs yet. They still care. They still want the world to be right. Yet it drives them mad to watch the fools ruin it—over and over again.

Oh, and it's not just Elves whom they despise; it's everyone. Including you.





The Missionary

Pedri of the Tighearnach nest, 28-year-old Roden Missionary
Born to the Fields, Sister, Hermit, Missionary

STATS

Will B5	Perception B5 (B6)†	Agility B4
Speed B4	Power B3	Forte B4

ATTRIBUTES

Health B4	Steel B6	Mortal Wound B9	Hesitation 5
Reflexes B4	Resources B0	Circles B2	Stride 8
Faith B5 (Harvest Vow)			

SKILLS

Philosophy B2, Suasion B3, Doctrine B2, Read B2, Write B2, Meditation B2, Shrine-Wise B2, Prayer-Wise B2, Preaching B4, Foreign Languages B2, Below-wise B2, Brawling B2, Man-wise B2, Astrology B2, Rhetoric B2, Oratory B2, Foraging B4*, Books-wise B2, Lost Secrets-Wise B2, Field Dressing B4*, Herbalism B3*, Field Dressing B3*

TRAITS

Aecer's Likeness, Coat of Fur, Communal, Enlarged Incisors, Tail, Large Ears, Skittish, Thoughtful, Zealot, Vegetarian, Ordained, Faithful, Boring, Graceful

GEAR

Traveling Gear, Robes of the Ordained or Clothes, Honeyed Oatcakes, Blood Blossom

RELATIONSHIPS

Tighearnach (Powerful, Father, Hateful)

REPUTATIONS

Wound Mender 1D

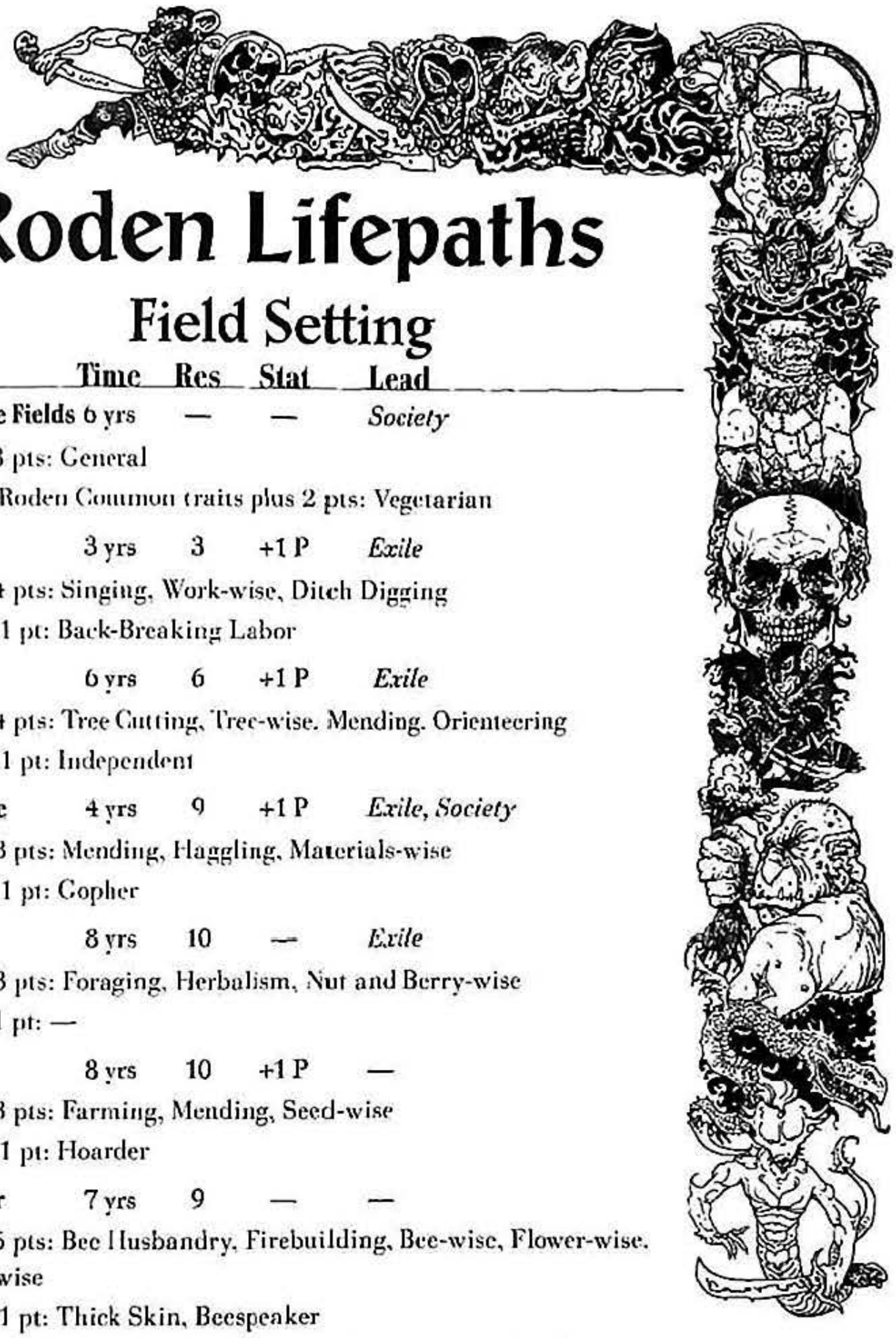
BELIEFS

My father is keeping me from my calling; I will change his mind.
I will spread the word of Aecer to those Below; they shall hear or be destroyed.
I will learn the language of the people to whom I'm preaching.
I must protect Aecer's fields and forests from the encroaching human settlements.

INSTINCTS

When preaching, always repeat my points until they get it.
Always read any new religious texts I find.
Never leave an injured creature without care.

† +1D due to Large Ears trait. *+1D due to Harvest Vow.



Roden Lifepaths

Field Setting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Lead
Born to the Fields	6 yrs	—	—	*Society*

Skills: 3 pts: General

Traits: Roden Common traits plus 2 pts: Vegetarian

Hand	3 yrs	3	+1 P	*Exile*

Skills: 4 pts: Singing, Work-wise, Ditch Digging

Traits: 1 pt: Back-Breaking Labor

Woodsen	6 yrs	6	+1 P	*Exile*

Skills: 4 pts: Tree Cutting, Tree-wise. Mending. Orienteering

Traits: 1 pt: Independent

Apprentice	4 yrs	9	+1 P	*Exile, Society*

Skills: 3 pts: Mending, Haggling, Materials-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Gopher

Gatherer	8 yrs	10	—	*Exile*

Skills: 3 pts: Foraging, Herbalism, Nut and Berry-wise

Traits 1 pt: —

Farmer	8 yrs	10	+1 P	—

Skills: 3 pts: Farming, Mending, Seed-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Hoarder

Beekeeper	7 yrs	9	—	—

Skills: 5 pts: Bee Husbandry, Firebuilding, Bee-wise, Flower-wise. Honey-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Thick Skin, Beespeaker

Requires: Woodsen, Gatherer, Farmer, Apprentice or Hand

Miller	9 yrs	15	+1M/P	—

Skills: 5 pts: Miller, Grain-wise, Haggling

Traits: 1 pt: Industrious

Requires: Woodsen, Gatherer, Farmer, Apprentice or Hand

Meadmaker	9 yrs	14	—	—

Skills: 5 pts: Brewer, Mead-wise, Haggling, Cooper

Traits: 1 pt: —

Requires: Meadmaker requires Beekeeper

Baker 7 yrs 12 — —

Skills: 4 pts: Baking, Firebuilding, Bread-wise, Cooking

Traits: 1 pt: Fragrant, Sweet Tooth

Requires: Hand, Miller or Beekeeper

Weaver 8 yrs 15 —

Skills: 6 pts: Weaving, Sewing, Embroidery, Soothing Platitudes, Singing

Traits: 1 pt: Calloused

Requires: Apprentice

Crafter 10 yrs 20 +1M/P —

Skills: 5 pts: Jargon, Instruction, Apprentice-wise, Blacksmith, Carpenter, Potter, Mason

Traits: 1 pt: Diligent

Requires: Apprentice

Healer 8 yrs 10 +1 M —

Skills: 6 pts: Herbalism, Field Dressing, Apothecary, Ugly Truth, Hurt-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Compassionate, Bedside Manner

Requires: Philosopher, Albino, Sawbones, Hand, Woodsen, Farmer or Beekeeper

Trader 8 yrs 16 — *Exile*

Skills: 6 pts: Haggling, Appraisal, Accounting, Conspicuous, Village-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Opportunist

Requires: Trader may not be your second lifepath.

Deputy 4 yrs 6 +1 P *Exile, Society*

Skills: 6 pts: Conspicuous, Spear, Bow, Brawling, Shield Training[1], Trouble-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Alarmist

Requires: Deputy may not be your second lifepath.

Sheriff 8 yrs 8 +1M/P —

Skills: 6 pts: Command, Intimidation, Interrogation, Sword

Traits: 1 pt: —

Requires: Deputy, Bandit King, Bruiser or Mastermind

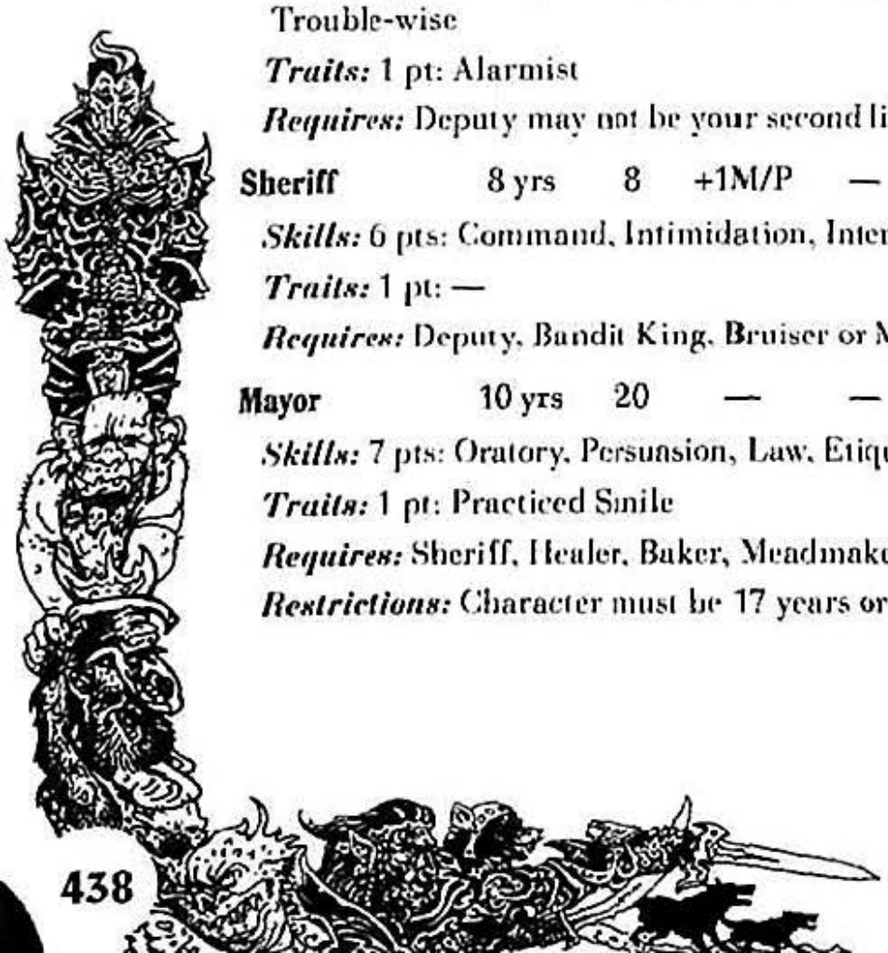
Mayor 10 yrs 20 — —

Skills: 7 pts: Oratory, Persuasion, Law, Etiquette, Haggling, Petitioner-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Practiced Smile

Requires: Sheriff, Healer, Baker, Meadmaker, Negotiator or Philosopher

Restrictions: Character must be 17 years or older to take this lifepath.



Brother/Sister 5 yrs 14 +1 M *Exile, Society*

Skills: 6 pts: Doctrine, Read, Write, Meditation, Shrine-wise, Prayer-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Ordained, Faithful

Missionary 5 yrs 5 +1 M, P *Exile, Society*

Skills: 5 pts: Suasion, Preaching, Foreign Languages, Intimidation, Below-wise, Brawling, Man-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Zealot, Righteous

Requires: Brother/Sister

Father/Mother 7 yrs 15 +1 M —

Skills: 6 pts: Aeer-wise, Oratory, Illuminations, Calligraphy, Singing, History, Research, Cartography, Poetry

Traits: 2 pts: Portly, Patient

Requires: Brother/Sister

Abbot/Abbess 10 yrs 30 +1 M —

Skills: 5 pts: Administration, Accounting, Conspicuous, Etiquette

Traits: 1 pt: Revered

Requires: Father/Mother

† This skill is a training skill. It costs 2 points to open and may not be advanced.

Below Setting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Lead
Born Below	6 yrs	—	—	*Society*

Skills: 3 pts: General

Traits: Roden Common traits plus 2 pts: Tunnel Vision

Pinky 2 yrs 2 –1 M —

Skills: 3 pts: Soothing Platitudes, Below-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Confusing Rant, Distracted, Clumsy, Lucky

Scavenger 4 yrs 3 — *Exile, Society*

Skills: 5 pts: Inconspicuous, Scavenging, Survival, Appraisal, Junk-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Acquisitive

Scratcher 6 yrs 4 +1 P —

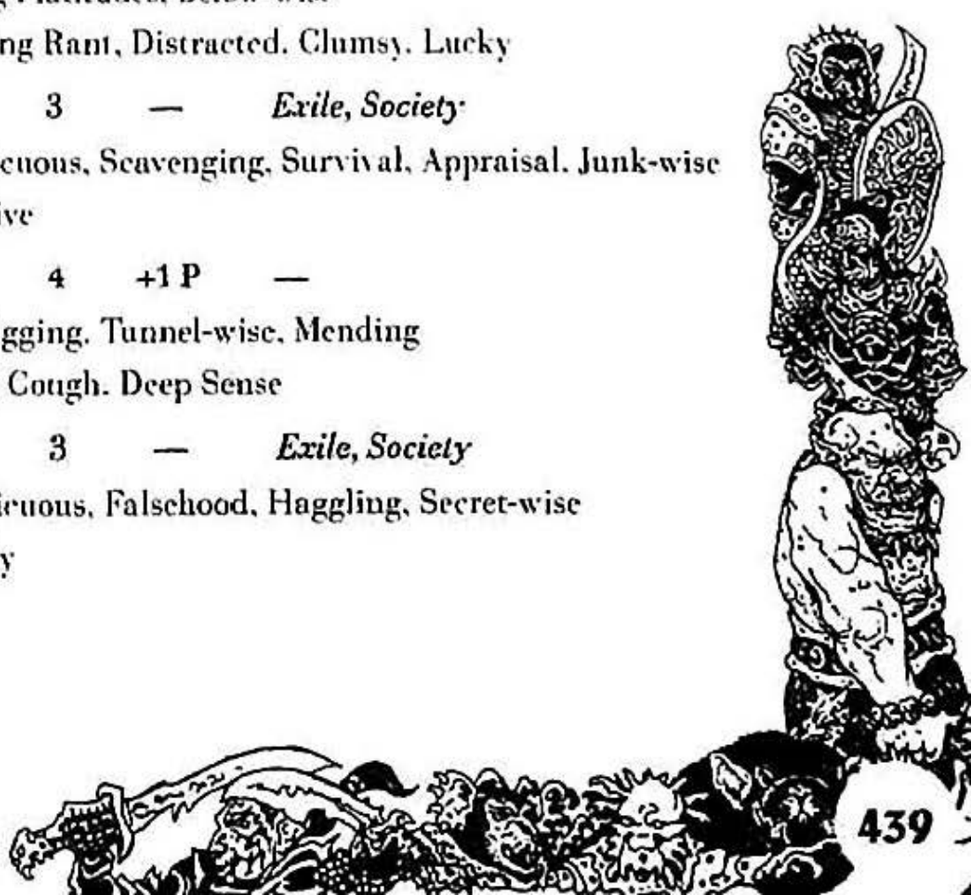
Skills: 4 pts: Ditch Digging, Tunnel-wise, Mending

Traits: 1 pt: Hacking Cough, Deep Sense

Snitch 4 yrs 3 — *Exile, Society*

Skills: 4 pts: Inconspicuous, Falsehood, Haggling, Secret-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Cowardly



The Gauntlet 1 yrs 4 +1 P *Society*

Skills: 5 pts: Brawling, Soothing Platitudes, Hazing-wise, Pecking Order-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Victim

Apprentice 6 yrs 5 +1 P *Exile, Society*

Skills: 3 pts: Mending, Blacksmith, Bribe-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Gopher

Requires: The Gauntlet

Kidnapper 7 yrs 10 +1 M *Exile, Society*

Skills: 7 pts: Inconspicuous, Knots, Haggling, Cudgel, Intimidation, Child-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Ruthless

Requires: The Gauntlet

Fingers 6 yrs 5 +1 P *Exile, Society*

Skills: 4 pts: Sleight of Hand, Inconspicuous, Knives, Streetwise

Traits: 1 pt: Light Touch, Cocky

Requires: The Gauntlet

Sneak Thief 7 yrs 6 — —

Skills: 5 pts: Stealthy, Lock Pick, Knives, Roof-wise, Window-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Cool Headed, Soft Step

Requires: The Gauntlet

Bladesmith 8 yrs 20 +1M/P *Society*

Skills: 7 pts: Haggling, Instruction, Weaponsmith, Knife-wise, Sword-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Secretive

Requires: Apprentice

Burglar 8 yrs 10 +1 M/P —

Skills: 7 pts: Observation, Climbing, Throwing, Locksmith, Loot-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Quiet, Confident

Requires: Fingers, Sneak Thief, Shadow, Corsair or Bushwhacker

Bruiser 6 yrs 8 +1 P *Exile, Society*

Skills: 7 pts: Appropriate Weapons, Intimidation, Extortion, Shield Training†

Traits: 1 pt: Mean, Dumb

Requires: The Gauntlet

Fence 7 yrs 20 +1 M —

Skills: 7 pts: Appraisal, Haggling, Falsehood, Antique-wise, Fake-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Poker Face

Requires: Scavenger, Snitch or Sneak-Thief



Sawbones 8 yrs 15 — *Exile*

Skills: 5 pts: Field Dressing, Apothecary, Poisons, Haggling

Traits: 1 pt: Practical, Impersonal

Requires: Poisoner, Albino, Healer or Pinky

Negotiator 8 yrs 15 +1 M *Society*

Skills: 6 pts: Persuasion, Deal-wise, Haggling, Intimidation, Ugly Truth

Traits: 1 pt: Calm Demeanor, Good Listener

Requires: Kidnapper, Deputy, Corsair, Missionary, Fence or Perverter

The Brain 9 yrs 13 +1 M *Society*

Skills: 13 pts: Soothing Platitudes, Read, Write, Research, Astrology, Strategy, Logistics, Falsehood, History, Obscure History, World Domination-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Genius, Condescending, Frustrated

Requires: Hermit, Mayor or Scratcher

Restrictions: The Brain cannot take the Pinky lifepath.

Mastermind 10 yrs 30 +1 M, P —

Skills: 11 pts: Intimidation, Persuasion, Oratory, Falsehood, Command, Below-wise, Sword, Clique-wise, Nest-wise, Traitor-wise

Traits: 3 pts: Ambitious, Ruthless

Requires: Negotiator, The Brain, Bandit King or Abbot/Abbess

The Pope 11 yrs 75 +1 M, P —

Skills: 9 pts: Extortion, Intimidation, Read, Write, Composition, Church-wise, Papal Bull-wise, Pope Joke-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Most Holy, Faithful

Requires: Father/Mother or Visionary

† This is a training skill. It costs two points to open and may not be advanced.

Exile Subsetting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Lead
Carnivore	4 yrs	5	+1 P	*Below, Society*

Skills: 5 pts: Hunting, Tracking, Trapper, Bow, Forest-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Gnawing Hunger, Blood Thirsty

Requires: Born to the Fields

Scrub 3 yrs 3 –1 M, P *Field, Society*

Skills: 5 pts: Inconspicuous, Soothing Platitudes, Kick Me-wise, Bully-wise, Nest-wise, Below-wise, Village-wise, Cat-wise

Traits: 3 pts: Abused, Pack Rat

Requires: Born Below



Hermit 10 yrs 2 — *Field, Society*

Skills: 8 pts: Philosophy, Astrology, Rhetoric, Oratory, Foraging, Books-wise, Lost Secret-wise

Traits: 3 pts: Thoughtful, Pack Rat, Boring, Farts

Bushwhacker 5 yrs 5 +1 P *Field, Below, Society*

Skills: 4 pts: Appropriate Weapons, Intimidation, Stealthy, Ambush-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Desperate

Corsair 7 yrs 15 +1M/P *Field, Below, Society*

Skills: 8 pts: Pilot, Rigging, Knots, Navigation, Mending, Ship-wise, Bay-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Ruthless, Sea Legs

Requires: Bushwhacker, Sheriff, Bandit King, Trader, Negotiator or Bruiser

Bandit King 7 yrs 15 +1 M/P *Field, Below, Society*

Skills: 6 pts: Intimidation, Command, Sword, Bandit-wise, Caravan-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Scheming, Daring

Requires: Bushwhacker, Sheriff or Bruiser

Albino 10 yrs 25 +1 M —

Skills: 7 pts: Astrology, Ugly Truth, Read, Write; either Sorcery or Spirit Binding

Traits: 2 pts: Albino, Gifted, Misunderstood

† This skill is a training skill. It costs 2 points to open and may not be advanced.

Society Subsetting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Lead

Initiate 3 yrs 2 — *Exile*

Skills: 3 pts: Doctrine, Society-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Broken

Cultist 4 yrs 4 +1 M —

Skills: 5 pts: Rhetoric, Suasion, Cudgel, Conversion-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Zealot, Defensive

Requires: Initiate

Shadow 6 yrs 6 +1 P —

Skills: 6 pts: Stealthy, Observation, Inconspicuous, Climbing, Tail-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Cautious

Requires: Initiate

Arsonist 6 yrs 6 — —

Skills: 6 pts: Arson, Firebuilding, Inconspicuous, Firebombs, Arson-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Pyromaniac

Requires: Initiate



Murderer 6 yrs 7 +1 P —

Skills: 5 pts: Knives, Stealthy, Intimidation, Inconspicuous, Garrote

Traits: 1 pt: Murderous, Single-Minded

Requires: Initiate

Willard 5 yrs 5 — —

Skills: 4 pts: Animal Husbandry, Inconspicuous, Ratiquette

Traits: 2 pts: Rat Speak, Bitter, Weird

Requires: Initiate

Perverter 8 yrs 10 +1 M *Field, Below, Exile*

Skills: 6 pts: Disguise, Preaching, Inconspicuous, Falsehood, Dupe-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Scheming

Requires: The Brain, Cultist or Missionary

Poisoner 6 yrs 7 — —

Skills: 5 pts: Poisons, Inconspicuous, Apothecary, Toxin-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Nauseous

Requires: Initiate

Guardian 6 yrs 9 +1 P —

Skills: 8 pts: Appropriate Weapons, Brawling, Armor Training†, Shield Training†, Intimidation

Traits: 2 pts: Merciless, Loyal

Requires: Murderer, Willard or Perverter

Preacher 8 yrs 15 +1 M —

Skills: 6 pts: Preaching, Conspicuous, Symbology, Obscure History

Traits: 2 pts: Obsessed, Righteous

Requires: Cultist, Missionary or Philosopher

Visionary 10 yrs 30 +1 M *Exile, Below*

Skills: 11 pts: Oratory, Command, Astrology, Research, Interrogation, Torture, Observation, Poetry, Cult-wise, Inner Workings-wise, Undermining-wise

Traits: 4 pts: Megalomaniac, Imperious Demeanor, Visionary Faith, Dreamer

Requires: Albino, Preacher, Abbot/Abbess or Mastermind

† Indicates the skill is a training skill. It costs two points to open and may not be advanced.



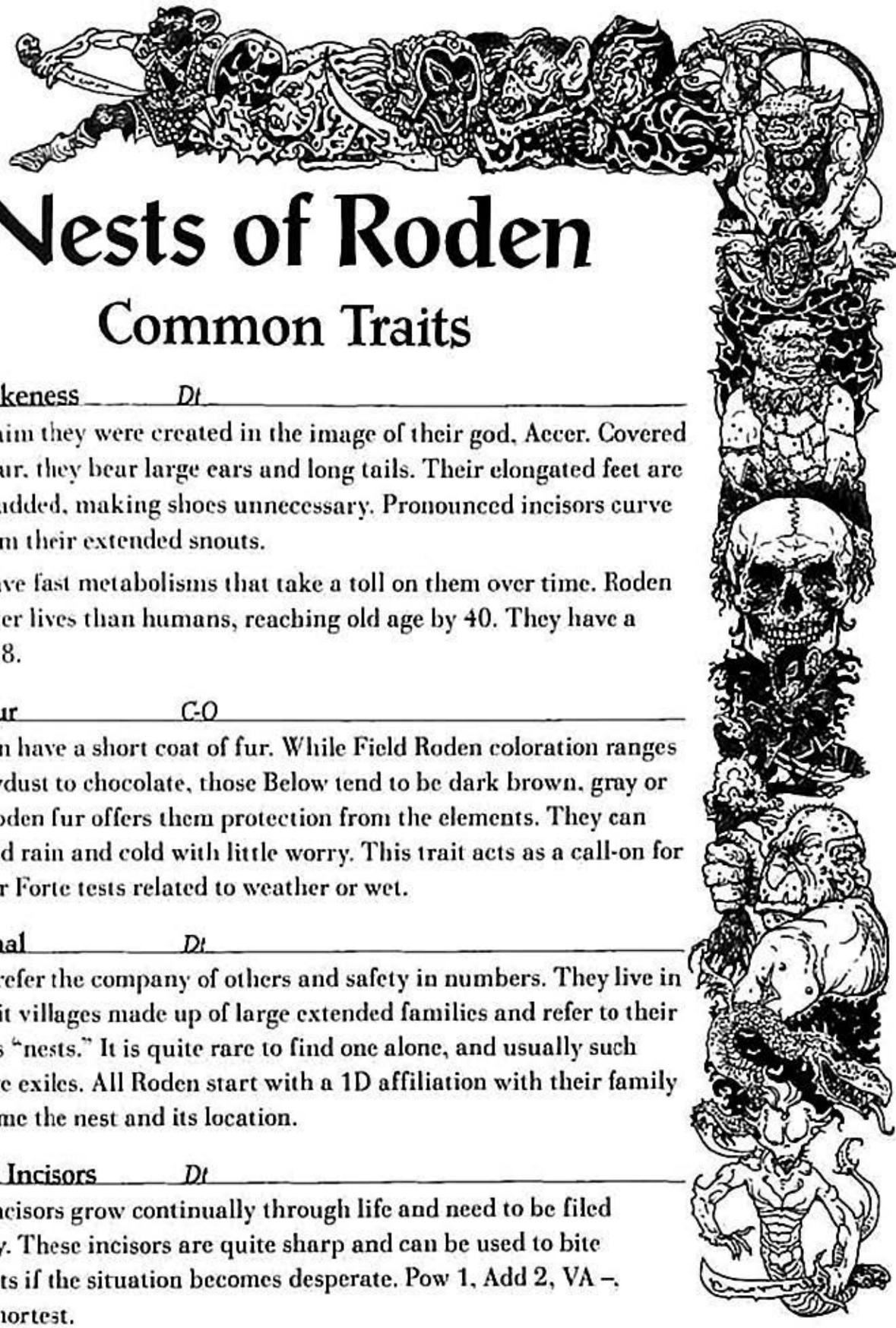
Stat Points for Roden by Age

Starting Age	Mental Pool	Physical Pool
1-5 years	6 pts	10 pts
6-9 years	7 pts	13 pts
10-15 years	7 pts	14 pts
16-24 years	8 pts	15 pts
25-30 years	8 pts	14 pts
31-36 years	7 pts	13 pts
37-40 years	7 pts	12 pts
41-45 years	7 pts	11 pts
46-49 years	6 pts	10 pts

Roden in Brief

- **Enlarged Incisors:** Pow 1, Add 2, VA —, WS 2, Shortest.
- **Large Ears:** +1D to Perception tests. Add this when determining Reflexes.
- **Skittish:** +1 to hesitation. Must flee if hesitating for more than one action.
- **Aecer's Likeness:** Stride 8.
- **Coat of Fur:** Call-on trait for Health and Forte in weather and wet.
- **Communal:** 1D affiliation with home or born nest.





Nests of Roden

Common Traits

Aecer's Likeness — *Dt*

Roden claim they were created in the image of their god, Aecer. Covered in short fur, they bear large ears and long tails. Their elongated feet are thickly padded, making shoes unnecessary. Pronounced incisors curve down from their extended snouts.

Roden have fast metabolisms that take a toll on them over time. Roden live shorter lives than humans, reaching old age by 40. They have a Stride of 8.

Coat of Fur — *C-O*

All Roden have a short coat of fur. While Field Roden coloration ranges from sawdust to chocolate, those Below tend to be dark brown, gray or black. Roden fur offers them protection from the elements. They can withstand rain and cold with little worry. This trait acts as a call-on for Health or Forte tests related to weather or wet.

Communal — *Dt*

Roden prefer the company of others and safety in numbers. They live in close-knit villages made up of large extended families and refer to their homes as "nests." It is quite rare to find one alone, and usually such loners are exiles. All Roden start with a 1D affiliation with their family nest. Name the nest and its location.

Enlarged Incisors — *Dt*

Roden incisors grow continually through life and need to be filed regularly. These incisors are quite sharp and can be used to bite opponents if the situation becomes desperate. Pow 1, Add 2, VA –, WS 2, Shortest.

Tail — *Char*

Roden tails range from 1/2 to 1 pace long. Field Born often have furry tails, while those Below often have bald ones.

Large Ears — *Dt*

Roden have large, sensitive ears that sit atop their heads. These give them excellent hearing: +1D to Perception rolls involving hearing. Factor this bonus into Reflexes.

Skittish — *Dt*

Roden instinctively fear loud noises and surprises. *Increase* hesitation by one for Steel tests caused by fear or surprise. Hesitation for more than one action indicates the Roden must flee.



Lifepath Traits

Abused *Char*

Acquisitive *Char*

Ambitious *Char*

Alarmist *Dt*

Deputies aren't necessarily cowards, but they know the best way to deal with trouble is to bring in reinforcements—fast! "Shout when surprised or hesitating" must be added as an additional fourth Instinct.

Albino *Dt*

This Roden has white fur, pink eyes and is sensitive to sunlight. The Albino suffers +2 Ob to all Inconspicuous tests and carries an infamous reputation among Roden. Combine this infamous reputation with other appropriate similar reputations.

Back-Breaking Labor

Burning Wheel page 314.

Bedside Manner *Char*

Beespeaker

Burning Wheel page 315.

Bitter *Char*

Blood Thirsty *C-O*

A Carnivore's blood runs hot, and he is quick to anger. He relies on confrontation to deal with most problems. Call-on for Intimidation. He must enter combat in aggressive stance.

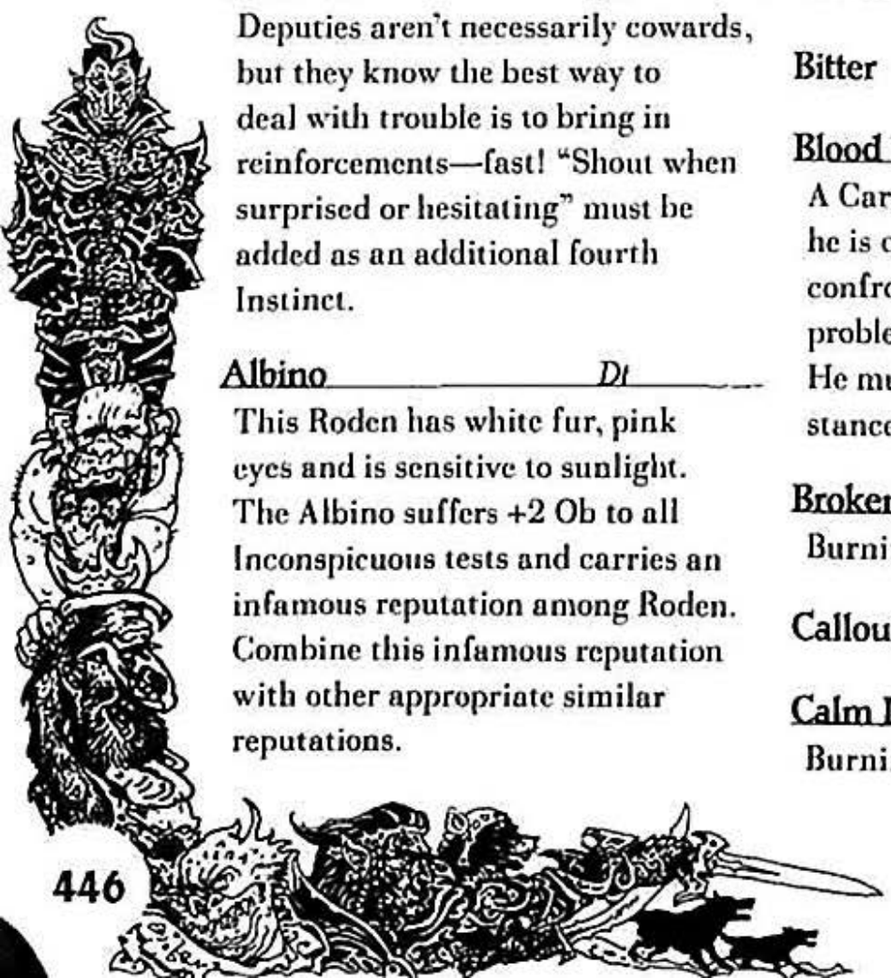
Broken

Burning Wheel page 316.

Calloused *Char*

Calm Demeanor

Burning Wheel page 317.



Cautious *Char*

Clumsy
Burning Wheel page 319.

Cocky *Char*

Compassionate *Char*

Condescending *Char*

Confident *Char*

Confusing Rant *Dt*
Pinkies are a bit "off" in their thinking and tend to be socially awkward. People who speak to one often come away dazed by a bombardment of trivia, non sequiturs and bad jokes. During a Duel of Wits, this trait grants the character +3D to Incite. The only hesitation option is to "Stand and Blink." All attempts to Intimidate or Command a character with Confusing Rant are at +2 Ob. Also, Ranters are at a +2 Ob to all Oratory and Rhetoric tests.

Cool Headed
Burning Wheel page 320.

Cowardly
Burning Wheel page 320.

Daring *Char*

Deep Sense
Burning Wheel page 321.

Defensive *Char*

Desperate *Char*

Diligent *Char*

Distracted *Char*

Dumb *Char*

Dreamer
Burning Wheel page 322.

Faithful
Burning Wheel page 325.

Feared *Dt*
For good reason or not, this character is feared by all who know him. +1D to Intimidation. Choose a 1D infamous reputation.

Fragrant *Char*

Frustrated *Char*

Genius *C-O*
Your every idea is unique and brilliant—every plan sure-fire and flawless. It is only a matter of time before such brilliance is properly recognized and rewarded. Genius is a call-on for one non-martial or athletic skill of the player's choosing.

Gnawing Hunger *Char*

Good Listener *C-O*
The Negotiator seems to pay attention to and understand what people say. This encourages others to continue speaking and open up to him. This trait may be used as a call-on for Haggling, Persuasion and Seduction.

Gopher *Char*

Hacking Cough *Char*

Hoarder *Char*

Humble *Dt*
All are equal before Aecer, and the wise continually remind themselves of this fact. 1D reputation among the faithful as exceptionally humble.



Impersonal *Char*

Imperious Demeanor

Burning Wheel page 330.

Industrious *Char*

Independent *Char*

Light Touch *C-O*

The key to a successful "lift" is in the fingers. May be used as a call-on for Sleight of Hand.

Loyal

Burning Wheel page 334.

Lucky

Burning Wheel page 334.

Mean *Char*

Meek *Char*

Megalomaniac *Dt*

The Visionary is a gift from Aeger to the mortal world. It is his destiny to lead and shape the future in his image. +2D to Conspicuous and always add an extra die when helping or FoRKing with Conspicuous.

Merciless *Char*

Misunderstood *Dt*

Choose a 1D infamous reputation. In addition, suffer -1 to your body of argument whenever you're trying to explain your nature, position, meaning or special insight.

Most Holy *Dt*

This character is the living embodiment of the power divine. He gains +3s to his body of argument in a Duel of Wits involving matters spiritual. However, he has no temporal power. Any other character arguing with him about earthly matters, philosophy, women or money benefits from the Enmity Clause: +4s to his body of argument against Most Holy.

Murderous *Char*

Nauseous *Char*

Obsessed *Char*

Opportunist *Char*

Ordained *Dt*

This Roden is one of Aeger's Ordained. He is responsible for carrying out the rituals and rites. Ordained characters are always treated with respect by the Field Roden. 1D affiliation with the Roden faithful.

Pack Rat *Char*

Patient *Char*

Poker Face

Burning Wheel page 341.

Portly *Char*

Practical *Char*

Practiced Smile *Char*

Pyromaniac *Char*

Quiet

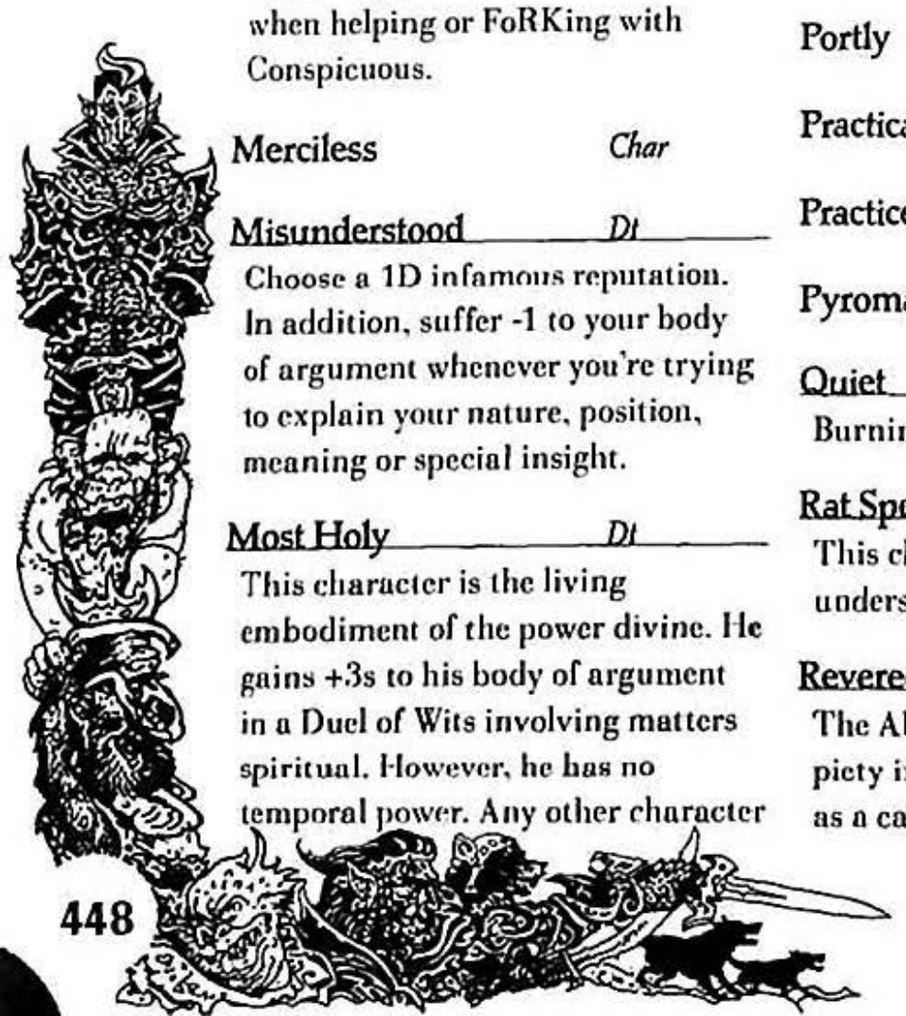
Burning Wheel page 342.

Rat Speak *Dt*

This character can talk to and understand rats and mice.

Revered *C-O*

The Abbot or Abbess is a pillar of piety in the community. May be used as a call-on for Oratory or Suasion.



Righteous *Char*

Ruthless *Char*

Scheming

Burning Wheel page 344.

Sea Legs

Burning Wheel page 344.

Secretive *Char*

Serious *Char*

Single-Minded *C-O*

Once a Murderer sets his mind, there is very little that can redirect him. Call-on for Steel when "on the job."

Soft Step *C-O*

The Sneak Thief walks in a particular fashion, feeling each step before putting his weight on it. May be used as a call-on for Climbing and Stealthy.

Sweet Tooth *Char*

Thick Skin

Burning Wheel page 350.

Thoughtful *Char*

Toiling *C-O*

Laborers are used to working long hours doing the same mindless, repetitive tasks. Call-on for any skill when doing mindless, repetitive tasks.

Tough

Burning Wheel page 351.

Tunnel Vision *Dt*

The Below is a dark place and those who live there have adapted. Your character can see as normal in low-lit areas but not in complete darkness. Those looking directly into these eyes will see glowing green orbs staring back. Reduces penalties for dim light by one step.

Vegetarian *Char*

Victim *Dt*

This character has suffered sustained abuse designed to get them to conform to a code of behavior. Choose a relationship with one of your abusers. That character has +1D to all social skills used against the victim.

Weird *Char*

Zealot

Burning Wheel page 355.



Special Traits

Clawed *Dt* 3 pts

The Clawed trait produces hard, elongated fingernails that can be used as tools or weapons. Pow 1, Add 2, VA -, WS X, Shortest.

Club Tail *Dt* 2 pts

This tail is thicker and stiffer than most. It can be a surprising weapon during a melee. Pow 2, Add 2, VA – WS 2, Long. May not be combined with Whip Tail.

Coat of Darkness *Dt* 5 pts

Some of those Below have adapted almost supernaturally to the dark. When attempting to move unseen in areas of darkness and shadow, this fur adds +2D to the roll. May not be combined with Fur of the Fields.

Extra-Long Fur *Char*

Fur of the Fields *Dt* 5 pts

Roden with this trait have a wondrous coat of fur that allows them to blend into any field or woodland terrain. When attempting to Stealth in such areas, this fur adds +2D to the roll. May not be combined with Coat of Darkness.

Naked *Char*

Roden with this trait have no fur, and their pink skin is laid bare, though whiskers still poke out from their muzzles. Sunburn is common and clothing is required.

Night Eyed *Dt* 4 pts

With this trait, a Roden is able to see even in complete darkness. However, daylight causes a +1 Ob to all tests.

Pouched Cheeks *Dt* 2 pts

These cheeks are wonderfully elastic and can be used to carry a surprising amount of fruits, nuts and vegetables. Consider it feasible to place up to six apples in each cheek. Knives and other sharp objects are carried at the bearer's own risk!

Sharpened Incisors *Dt* 4 pts

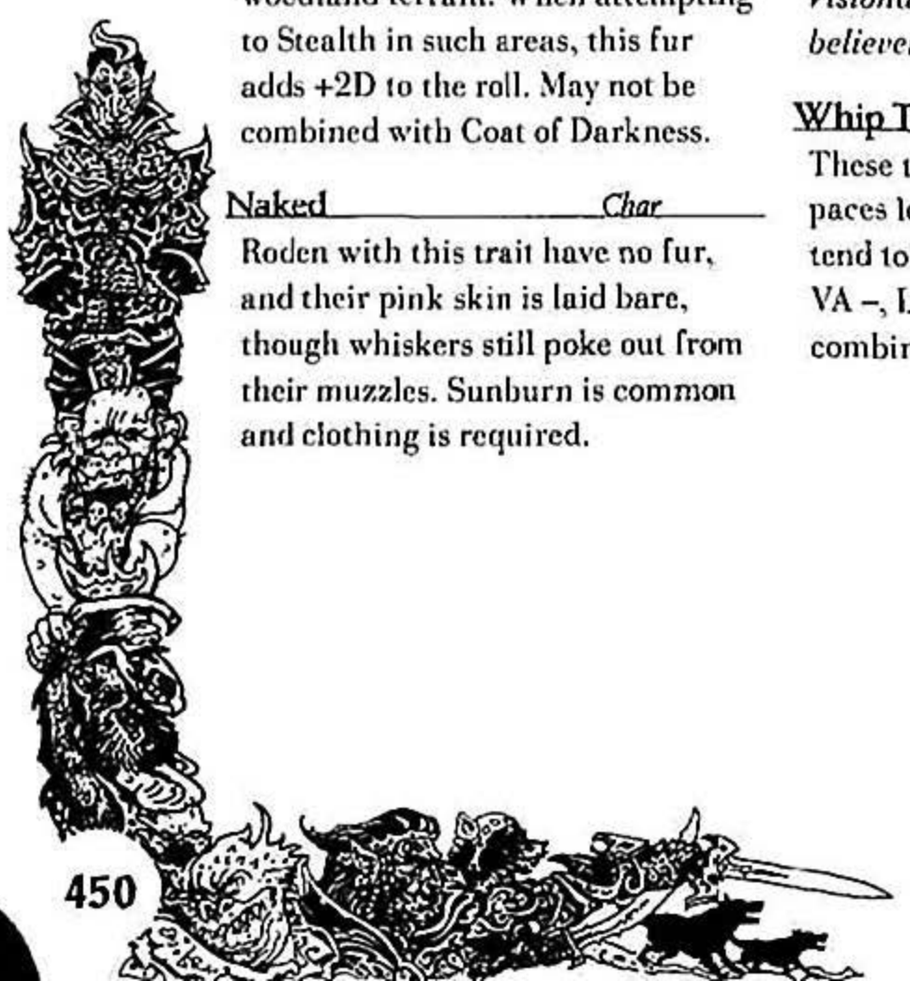
This Roden's teeth are extra sharp. Pow 1, Add 2, VA 1, WS X, Shortest.

Visionary Faith *Dt* 5 pts

Visionaries draw their power from their followers, not divine favor. This trait grants a B3 Faith attribute. The attribute may not be increased with the Faith questions; instead, it is increased by purchasing a Visionary Cult. *Any miracles performed with Visionary Faith only affect the believers and nothing else.*

Whip Tail *Dt* 4 pts

These tails are typically one or two paces longer than most others and tend to be slender. Pow 0, Add 1, VA –, Longer, WS 3.. May not be combined with Club Tail.



Roden Skills

Firebombs — Perception/Agility

The Arsonist learns how to mix ingredients to create incendiary bombs. The Mark result damage is listed with each type. If the explosion hits a character, roll the die of fate to determine IMS (like a spell). This skill does not cover the distribution of such bombs. That would come from Agility, Throwing, Artillery or simply inconspicuous placement. When igniting such a device, roll the die of fate. On a 1, the bomb malfunctions. Roll again immediately: Odd, it detonates; even, it's a dud.

Obstacles: Small, bottle-sized incendiaries (Mark B6), Ob 1. Incendiary bomb (Mark B8), Ob 4. Fat Boy (Mark B10), Ob 6.
FoRKs: Alchemy, Herbalism, Munitions, Arson
Skill Type: Craftsman **Tools:** Yes.

Preaching — Will

Preaching relies upon religious doctrine, real-life anecdotes and folk wisdom.

Obstacles: Most common Will among the audience members. Preaching can also be used in the Duel of Wits for Incite and Dismiss actions.
FoRKs: Intimidation, Falsehood, Doctrine, Soothing Platitudes
Skill Type: Social **Tools:** No.

Garrote — Agility

A garrote is a two- to three-foot length of cord strung between two small wooden handles or leather loops. Roden use it to throttle victims to death. To use this skill, the would-be-murderer must attack from stealth or surprise (or against a victim already in a Lock). Test Garrote versus Power or Agility (victim's choice, but at double obstacle). If the attacker lands a 2D or greater Lock, the victim loses 1D Forte every exchange thereafter. If Forte reaches zero, the victim falls unconscious.

FoRKs: Brawling
Skill Type: Martial **Tools:** Yes.

Fields of Faith

The Great Gatherer, Aecer, is the benevolent deity of the Field Roden. Through her grace and love, the fields are fertile, the children are strong and lives are peaceful. Aecer is the Lady of the Harvest and the Seasons. She maintains the proper cycles of day and night, planting and gathering, and birth and death.

All Field Roden are brought up with a great respect for Aecer. Piety is the greatest virtue, followed by humility and patience. Services are held weekly, and it is very embarrassing to miss one.



Guiding and governing the Field Roden according to Aecer's will are the ordained: Abbots and Abbesses, Fathers and Mothers, and Brothers and Sisters. These are holy vessels blessed directly by the paw of Aecer. To be so honored is a wondrous gift, but with it comes a heavy responsibility for the welfare of all those among the Fields.

Finally, all of the ordained are taught to look forward to the return of the Leavers to Aecer's Nest. Such is their duty to their lost kin that missionaries regularly depart for the human lands, hoping to find and return with those from the Below.

Vows of Aecer

During character burning, any ordained Field Roden may choose one of the following Sacred Vows for free if he has the Faithful trait. Only the most zealous and devout should consider this option. A vow must be written as one of the character's Beliefs. One cannot take another vow of Aecer if he has previously broken a vow. Broken vows result in an immediate loss of any blessings, plus further punishment. See below for the specifics of each Vow:

Vow of the Pacifist

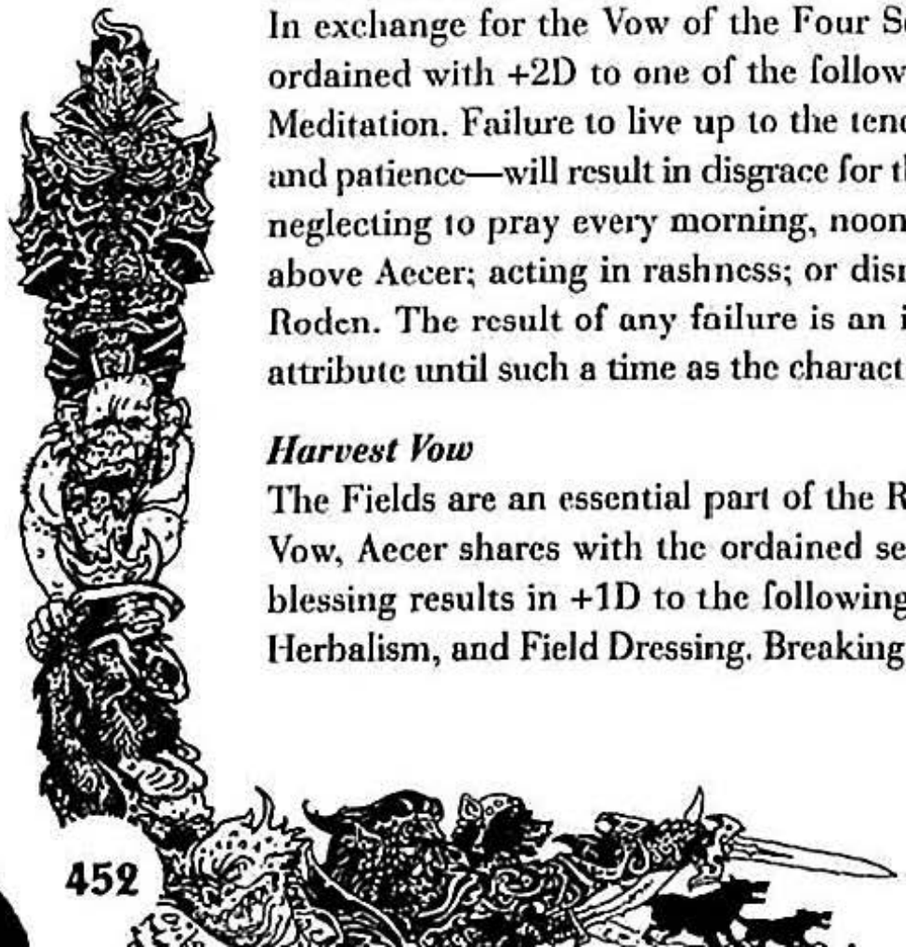
In exchange for the Vow of the Pacifist, Aecer will bless the ordained with +2D to one of the following skills: Persuasion, Suasion or Oratory. However, should the priest participate in violence or knowingly cause injury to others, he will lose this blessing and one point from his Faith attribute.

Vow of the Four Seasons

In exchange for the Vow of the Four Seasons, Aecer will bless the ordained with +2D to one of the following skills: Law, Doctrine or Meditation. Failure to live up to the tenets of Aecer—piety, humility and patience—will result in disgrace for the ordained. Failures include neglecting to pray every morning, noon, and night; putting oneself above Aecer; acting in rashness; or disregarding the welfare of the Roden. The result of any failure is an immediate loss of the Faith attribute until such a time as the character atones to Aecer.

Harvest Vow

The Fields are an essential part of the Roden's Faith. By taking this Vow, Aecer shares with the ordained secrets of life and death. Her blessing results in +1D to the following skills: Farming, Foraging, Herbalism, and Field Dressing. Breaking the cycles of Aecer by either



wantonly destroying fields, forests, or crops; or failing to heal the injured will break this Vow. Punishment includes loss of benefits as well as loss of one point of Faith.

Vow of Poverty
Poverty instills humility, one of the pillars of Aecer. In exchange for the Vow of Poverty, the ordained gains +1D to all Suasion and Oratory tests. However, if the ordained shows signs of greed or avarice, he will find himself shunned by Aecer. The Vow is broken, and he receives both the Suspicious and Greedy character traits.

Missionary's Vow
The role of the missionary is to return the Leavers to Aecer's Nest. Aecer supports those who take the Missionary's Vow by blessing them with an Aura of Holiness trait. In return, the missionary must successfully convert at least two Leavers per season. Should he fail to live up to his end, the missionary will lose this trait and instead be granted the Untrustworthy and Guilty Conscience character traits. In addition, reduce the Faith exponent by one.

The Bitterness Below

Possett was one of the ordained. He preached the will of Aecer and led the Leavers to the Fields of Paradise. All who followed him believed his words to be true and holy, and they felt pity for those who stayed behind. While the Roden of the Fields recall stories of Possett's betrayal, those Below remember and suffer from it each day.

Thus, when the Leavers found themselves forced into the Below, they believed it to be the fault of Aecer. She betrayed and abandoned them for reasons no one ever was able to explain. She sent them a prophet to punish them for a sin they never understood.

Long years in the dark allowed much time for thought. Minds turned in on themselves as those in the Below sought answers to twisted riddles. Yet they only came up with twisted answers. Their faith warped along with their culture.

Those Below no longer have faith. What remain are bitterness, conspiracy and doubt, along with empty souls. They blame Aecer for their misery and wretched condition. Contrary to the beliefs of the Society, those Below blame her for committing them to a vision that they never had a chance of completing.



The Cult of the Visionary: The Society

There are those that still believe fervently in the promise of Aecer, the vision of Possett and the Fields of Paradise. It is talked of constantly among the cultists and leaders of the Society. Guiding them all in their dreams are the Visionaries.

The Visionaries promise that when the Roden recover what was lost to humans, Aecer will welcome them back into her nest and fill them with her love once again.

Thus, the Society works toward the downfall of humankind. They toil in secrecy, fueled by doctrine perpetually spouted by the Preachers. A murdered merchant here, a torched village there—the Society pulls one brick at a time away from the foundations of human civilization.

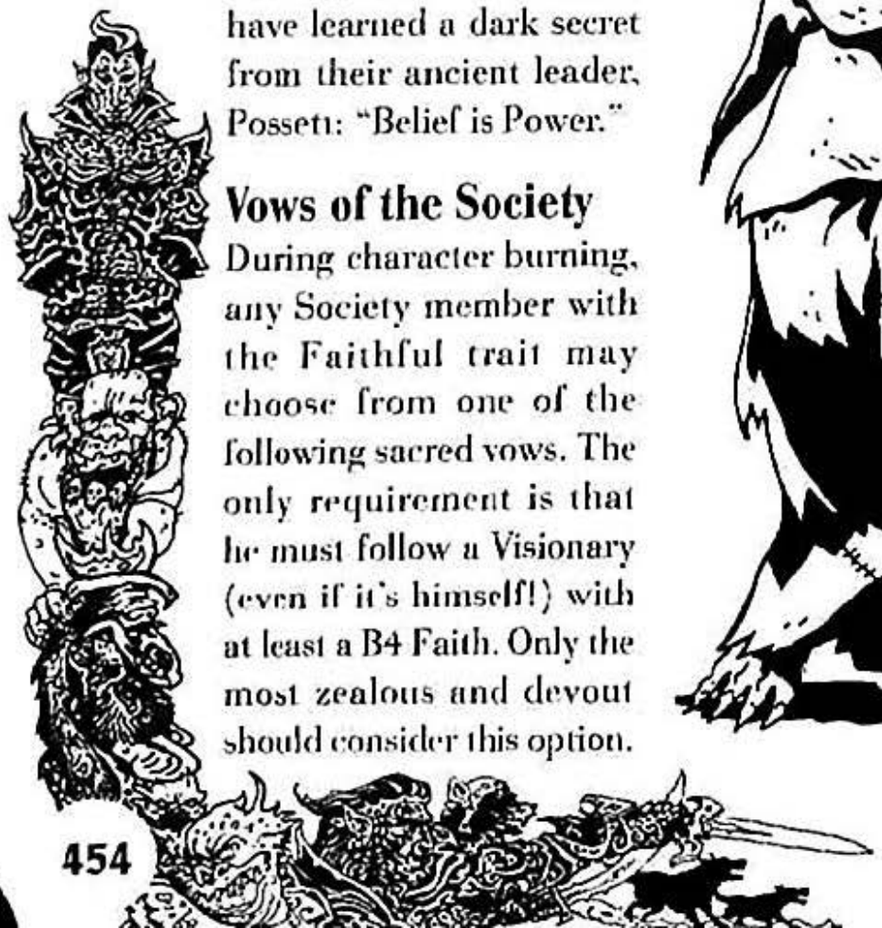
Society members are found throughout the nests of the Roden. While there are exclusive settlements, most of the Society live and work among their kindred in the Fields and especially Below.



The Visionaries gain power with each new initiate. Though they cannot call upon Aecer directly for blessings and miracles, they have learned a dark secret from their ancient leader, Possett: "Belief is Power."

Vows of the Society

During character burning, any Society member with the Faithful trait may choose from one of the following sacred vows. The only requirement is that he must follow a Visionary (even if it's himself!) with at least a B4 Faith. Only the most zealous and devout should consider this option.



A vow must be written as one of the character's Beliefs. One cannot take another Vow of the Society if he has previously broken a vow. Broken vows result in an immediate loss of any blessings, plus further punishment. See below for the specifics of each vow:

The Vow of Darkness

In exchange for plucking out one's eye and promising a life of servitude to the cult, the devotee is granted the Second Sight trait (in exchange for the Missing Eye trait). Such servants suffer +1 Ob to all tests involving depth perception due to their missing eye. The devout must do as the Visionary demands and fulfill his commands without hesitation. Failure to serve the Visionary with absolute loyalty will result in the loss of the Second Sight trait. The Missing Eye trait remains.

The Vow of Secrecy

The completion of Possett's vision requires utmost secrecy. To reveal another Society member to the outside would mean the loss of years of work. To fortify himself against interrogations and suasion, the member may take the Vow of Secrecy. This will add +4 points to the body of argument in a Duel of Wits to interrogate, persuade or otherwise question the member in regards to the Society. Willingly revealing such information will break the Vow, and result in a curse. His tongue will rot and dissolve in a matter of hours, rendering the former devotee mute—take the Mute or Tongueless trait immediately.

The Twisted Vow

Recruiting new members into the Society is essential to the completion of its goals. Thus, the Visionary may bless those who take the Twisted Vow by granting them +1D to any Falsehood or Persuasion tests when trying to recruit new initiates. Should the cultist fail to convert his target, punishment comes swiftly. He with wracked a constant pain for an amount of days equal to his margin of failure from the Persuasion test. This pain equates to a +1 Ob to all tests for the duration of the curse.

A Change of Faith

During character burning, there is the possibility that a devotee of one Faith converts to another Faith. This is certainly a possible outcome among the Roden, especially considering the amount of zealous Missionaries and twisted Perverters who travel abroad.



Should this be part of your character concept, factor the character's starting Faith attribute based on his current belief, no matter how strong his previous Faith might have been. If he was once a Preacher, for instance, who found redemption in the eyes of Aecer, his Faith is determined by the three questions found on page 206 in the Character Burner (+1D of Faith for each correct answer). If he was a Missionary who found his own answers and forsook Aecer in favor of his own "vision," then his Faith is determined by the number of Cultists that he purchased with resource points.

A Roden character may change faiths in play as well. Rewrite the necessary Beliefs. Of course, once the anchor Belief for Faith or Visionary Faith is rewritten, the trait is lost. Faith or Visionary Faith may be earned or transformed in play via a trait vote. Also, beware the penalty of any vows you've taken!

Magic and the Roden

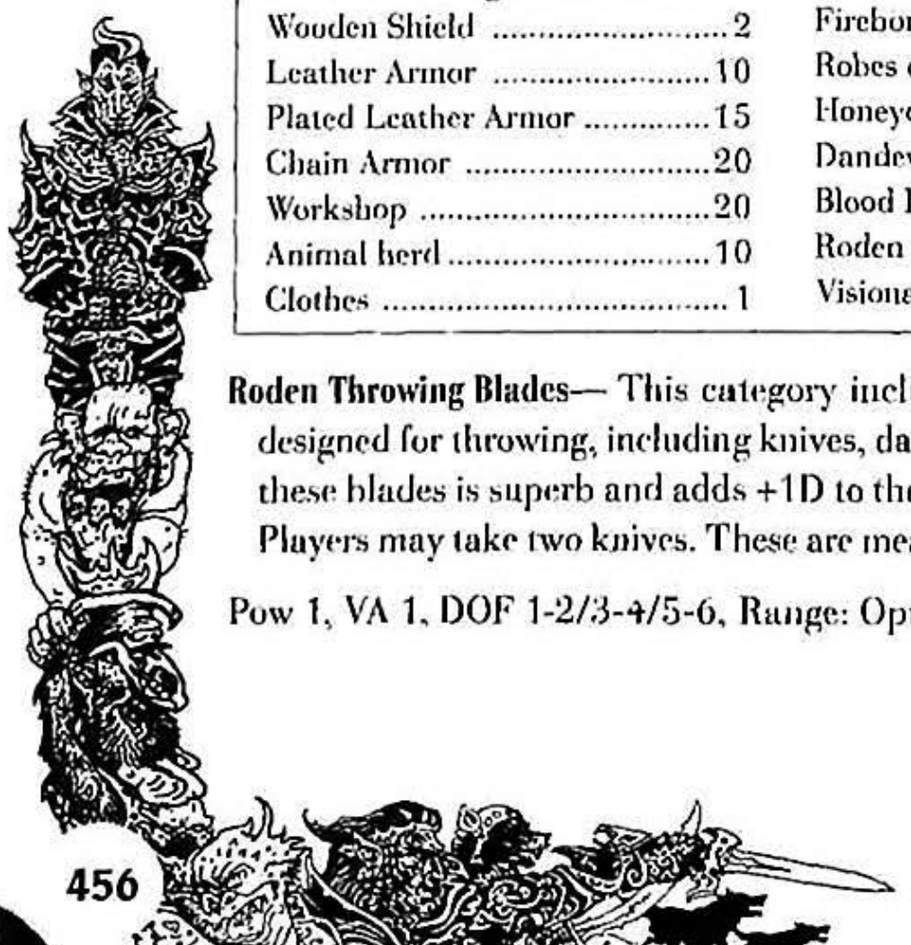
Albinos adapted their magical forms from those of humankind. Gifted Roden who have taken the Albino lifepath may open Sorcery and other magical skills as per the standard rules in the Burning Wheel.

Roden Resources

Resources	Rp Cost
Arms	5
Roden Throwing Blades	15
Wooden Shield	2
Leather Armor	10
Plated Leather Armor	15
Chain Armor	20
Workshop	20
Animal herd	10
Clothes	1
Traveling Gear	1
Shoes	3
Tool Kit	9
Firebombs	20
Robes of the Ordained	1
Honeyed Oatcakes	5
Dandewine	5
Blood Blossom	5
Roden Property	See Description
Visionary Cult	See Description

Roden Throwing Blades— This category includes a number of weapons designed for throwing, including knives, darts and discs. The balance of these blades is superb and adds +1D to the Throwing skill when used. Players may take two knives. These are meant to be rare and expensive.

Pow 1, VA 1, DOF 1-2/3-4/5-6, Range: Optimal 1D, Extreme 1D.



Wooden Shield— While armor might be very rare for Roden, they often use shields to protect themselves in battle. These shields are made from strong wood and offer 2D of protection as target shields.

Roden Property— A den for a single Roden, 2 rps; a nest for a small family of Roden, 7 rps; a nest for a large group of Roden, 10 rps. Apiary for the beekeepers, 10 rps. Fields for harvesters, 15 rps.

Visionary Cult— The devotees of the Visionary, they follow his guidance and do his bidding. Most are clever and work inconspicuously among the Field and Below, being very careful to avoid suspicion. Only a Visionary may purchase a Cult. A Cult counts as an affiliation. Each die spent in the affiliation also grants +1D to the Visionary Faith trait. If the cult is lost, destroyed or abandoned, the Visionary loses access to these dice.

Firebombs— In order to purchase firebombs, the character's last lifepath must be in the Society. Players may purchase six bottle-sized bombs or one medium-sized incendiary bomb. If a player's last lifepath was Arsonist, he may purchase the firebombs for 6 rps. See the Firebombs skill description for more information.

Robes of the Ordained— These are the humble wool robes worn by Accer's Ordained. Brothers and Sisters wear brown; Fathers and Mothers wear green; and Abbots and Abbesses wear pumpkin.

Honeyed Oatcakes— These are a delight for any traveler! Sweet and crunchy, filling and healthy, they don't spoil and make for good meals while on the road. They add +1D to any Forte or Health tests made within 1 day of consumption.

Dandewine— Made from dandelions and infused with other secret liquids and spices, dandewine is featured at every Field Roden social event. Surprisingly, it's nonalcoholic, but it has wondrous effects. Reduce hesitation by one and also decrease by one all social skill tests obstacles made against those drunk on the wine.

Blood Blossom— Known in the Fields and Below for its great healing powers, blood blossoms have been the staple of Roden healers for ages. Harvested only at the summer equinox, they are prepared immediately and stay usable for up to a full year. These flowers will add +1D to any Herbalism or Field Dressing tests.

Animal Herd— Although the Field Roden do not keep animals, their kin Below have long known the taste of flesh. A herd may include goats, pigs or chickens. This counts as property for the purposes of factoring Resources.





Roden in Play

Faith makes a good central theme for a Roden campaign. Their history is based upon the tragedy of misplaced belief and a vow that could never be fulfilled. Their various cultures straddle the fracture this deluded promise created. The Field Roden desire to return the wayward and reunite the race; the Society will never look back and won't rest until their prophecy of their savior comes true: those Below have lost all faith and mock those who rely on any power aside from their own.

Use this conflict to fuel your campaign. A theme as strong as faith provides fertile ground for conflict and roleplaying. Of course you can also look to our own history for inspiration: crusades, genocides and terrorist acts. Look also to the examples of missionaries and pacifists.

Incorporating Roden with other races to create a campaign can be great fun as well. A Missionary can join Dwarves in an attempt to reclaim lost mines and convert those Below. A Preacher can recruit humans to help topple an enemy city. A Burglar can join a band of outlaws in an effort to expand their territory. An Albino can quest with a worldly party throughout the lands, looking for an answer to the Roden's dilemma. These are basic campaign goals, and there are surely many more you can imagine.

The reunification of the Roden is, of course, the grandest campaign a Roden could participate in. To reclaim two-thirds of a population scattered across the lands is an epic in the making. Which faction will succeed—if success is even possible—is up to you.

In all cases, Roden lifepaths are designed to produce strong starting characters in three or four lifepaths.





The Brood Mother

HULDRA, 60-year-old Troll Brood Mother
Born Wild, Manhunter, Brute, Brood Mother

STATS

Will B2	Perception B4	Agility B4
Speed B4	Power B7	Forte B6

ATTRIBUTES

Health B4	Steel B6	Mortal Wound B13	Hesitation 8
Reflexes B4	Resources B0	Circles B1	Stride 7

SKILLS
Man-wise B3, Intimidation B3, Brawling B4, Nursing B3, Ugly Truth B2

TRAITS
Massive Stature, Claws, Fangs, Night Blooded, Night Eyed, Tough, Troll Skin, Voracious Carnivore, Brute, Misshapen, Witch Flesh, Hammer Hands

GEAR
Sack, Rags

RELATIONSHIP
Sineon, human father of my child (minor, romantic, forbidden)

PROPERTY
Cave hole

REPUTATIONS
Cruel She-Troll (1D infamous reputation)

BELIEFS
I will bear this child to term and deliver it to Sineon on his wedding night.

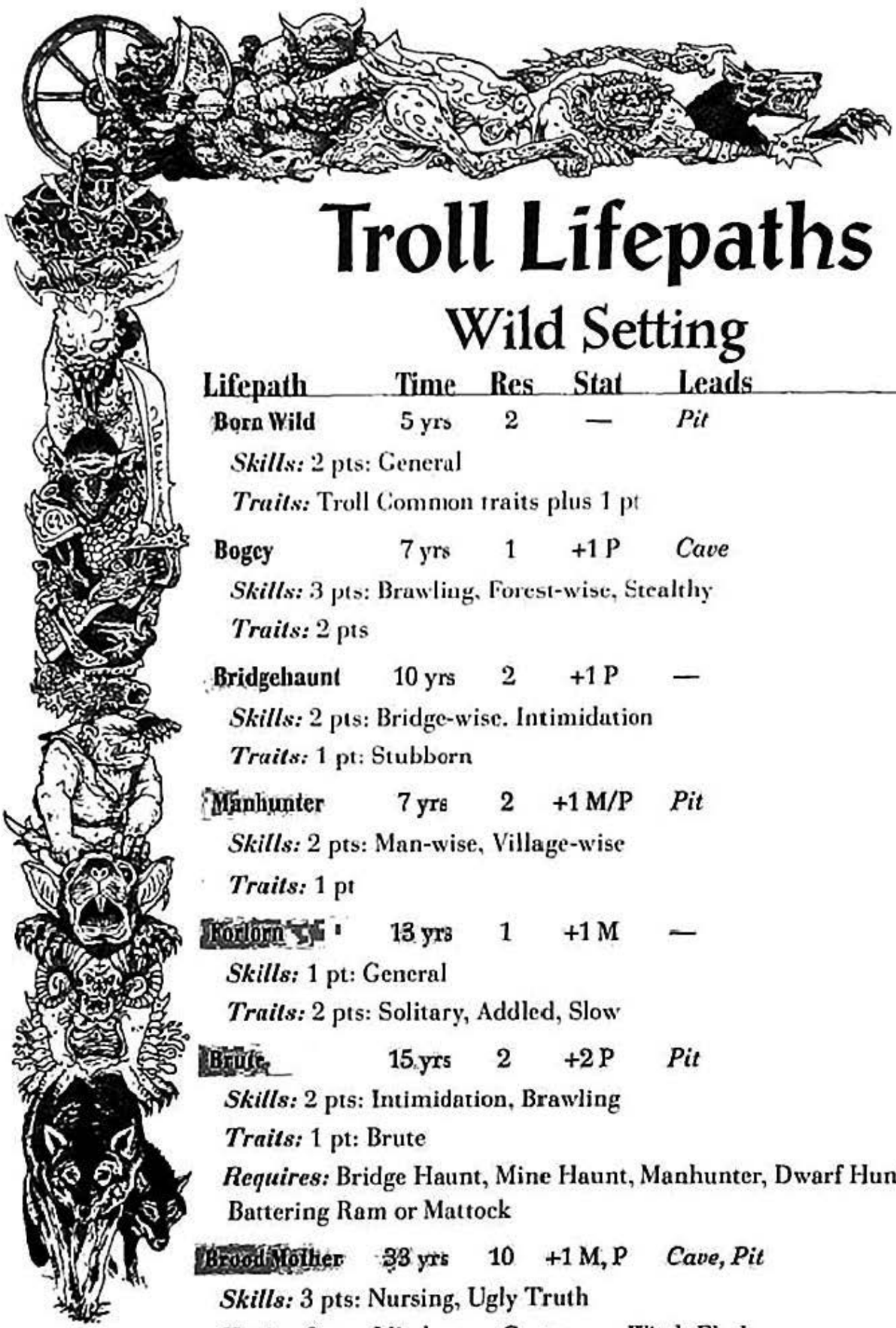
I will not suffer the presence of any trolls near my village.

When in the village, I am Solveig the Fair and no one can resist my charms.

INSTINCTS
Always approach strangers while wearing my Witch Flesh.

Take revenge on those who spurn me.

Keep my sack close at hand.



Troll Lifepaths

Wild Setting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Born Wild	5 yrs	2	—	*Pit*

Skills: 2 pts: General

Traits: Troll Common traits plus 1 pt

Bogey	7 yrs	1	+1 P	*Cave*

Skills: 3 pts: Brawling, Forest-wise, Stealthy

Traits: 2 pts

Bridgehaunt	10 yrs	2	+1 P	—

Skills: 2 pts: Bridge-wise. Intimidation

Traits: 1 pt: Stubborn

Manhunter	7 yrs	2	+1 M/P	*Pit*

Skills: 2 pts: Man-wise, Village-wise

Traits: 1 pt

Forlorn	13 yrs	1	+1 M	—

Skills: 1 pt: General

Traits: 2 pts: Solitary, Addled, Slow

Brute	15 yrs	2	+2 P	*Pit*

Skills: 2 pts: Intimidation, Brawling

Traits: 1 pt: Brute

Requires: Bridge Haunt, Mine Haunt, Manhunter, Dwarf Hunter, Battering Ram or Mattock

Brood Mother	33 yrs	10	+1 M, P	*Cave, Pit*

Skills: 3 pts: Nursing, Ugly Truth

Traits: 2 pts: Misshapen, Grotesque, Witch Flesh

Requires: Brute, Dread Stone or Bellower

Troll	45 yrs	5	+1 M, P	*Pit*

Skills: 3 pts: Torture, Extortion

Traits: 2 pts: Boor

Requires: Brute or Ironshield



Cavedweller Setting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Born to Dark Caves	5 yrs	2	—	*Pit*
Skills: 2 pts: General				
Traits: Troll Common traits plus 2 pts				
Dweller	4 yrs	1	+1 P	*Wild*
Skills: 2 pts: Climbing, Rock-wise, Brawling				
Traits: 2 pts				
Mine Haunt	12 yrs	1	+1 M/P	*Pit, Wild*
Skills: 2 pts: Mine-wise, Brawling				
Traits: 1 pt				
Dwarf Hunter	6 yrs	3	+1 M, P	*Pit*
Skills: 3 pts: Dwarf-wise, Throwing				
Traits: 1 pt: Stubborn				
Dread Stone	30 yrs	4	+2 P	—
Skills: 3 pts: Camouflage, Stealthy				
Traits: 3 pts				
Requires: Mine Haunt or Dwarf Hunter				



Pit Setting

Lifepaths	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Born to the Pit	4 yrs	1	—	*Cave, Pit*

Skills: 1 pt: General

Traits: Troll common traits plus Vile Language and 2 pts

Tortured	3 yrs	—	—	—

Skills: 1 pt: (No skills: skill point must be spent on other lifepath skills)

Traits: 3 pts: Tasting the Lash, Numb

Ox	9 yrs	1	+1 P	—

Skills: 2 pts: Ditch Digging, Hauling, Mining

Traits: 1 pt: Back-Breaking Labor, Tasting the Lash

Battering Ram	6 yrs	1	+1 P	*Wild*

Skills: 2 pts: Brawling, Throwing

Traits: 1 pt: Hardened

Mattock	7 yrs	7	+1 P	*Wild*

Skills: 3 pts: Hammer, Formation Fighting†

Traits: 1 pt: Brutal

Requires: Ox, Battering Ram, Dwarf Hunter, Manhunter or Brute

Ironshield	8 yrs	6	+1 M/P	*Wild*

Skills: 3 pts: Shield Training†, Intimidation

Traits: 1 pt: Unflinching

Requires: Mattock or Brute

Bellower	16 yrs	4	+1 M, P	—

Skills: 3 pts: Torture, Lash (as weapon skill)

Traits: 1 pt: Where There's a Whip, There's a Way; Tough as Nails; Bellowing

Requires: Bull or Ironshield

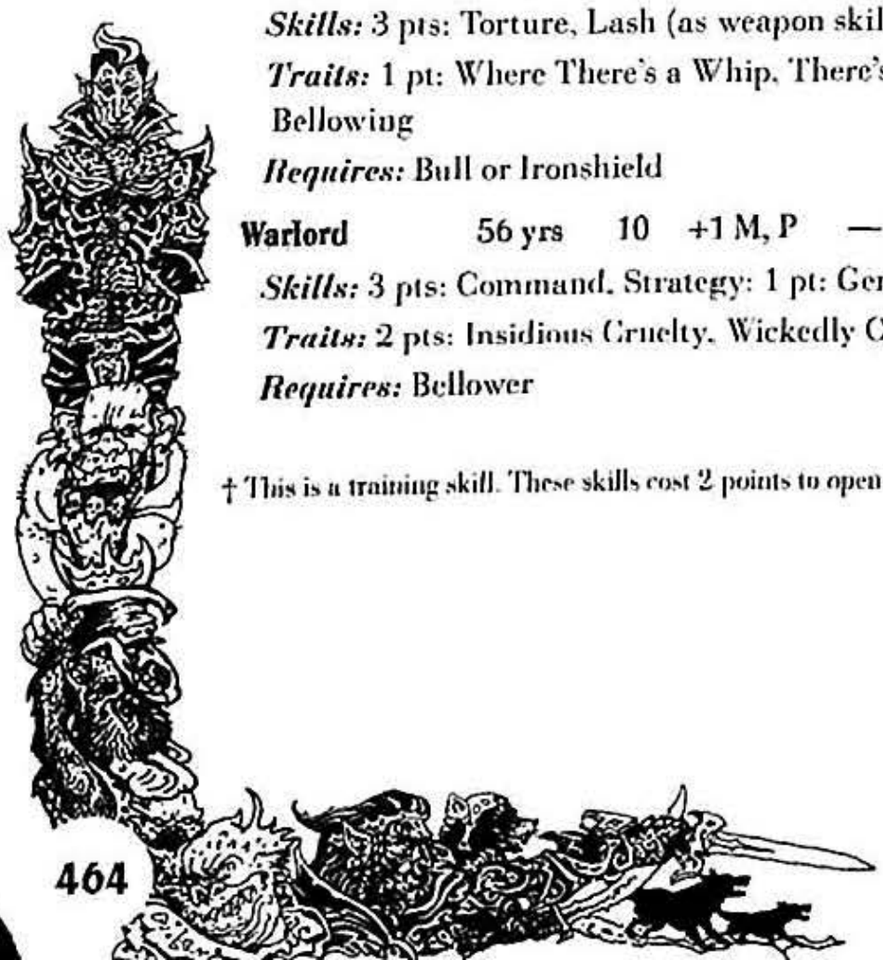
Warlord	56 yrs	10	+1 M, P	—

Skills: 3 pts: Command, Strategy; 1 pt: General

Traits: 2 pts: Insidious Cruelty, Wickedly Clever

Requires: Bellower

† This is a training skill. These skills cost 2 points to open and may not be advanced.





Stat Pools for Trolls by Age

Starting Age	Mental Pool	Physical Pool
1-5 years	3 pts	11 pts
6-12 years	4 pts	14 pts
13-19 years	4 pts	17 pts
20-27 years	4 pts	19 pts
28-57 years	4 pts	20 pts
58-80 years	4 pts	19 pts
81-124 years	4 pts	18 pts
125-213 years	5 pts	17 pts
214-390 years	5 pts	16 pts
391-712 years	6 pts	15 pts

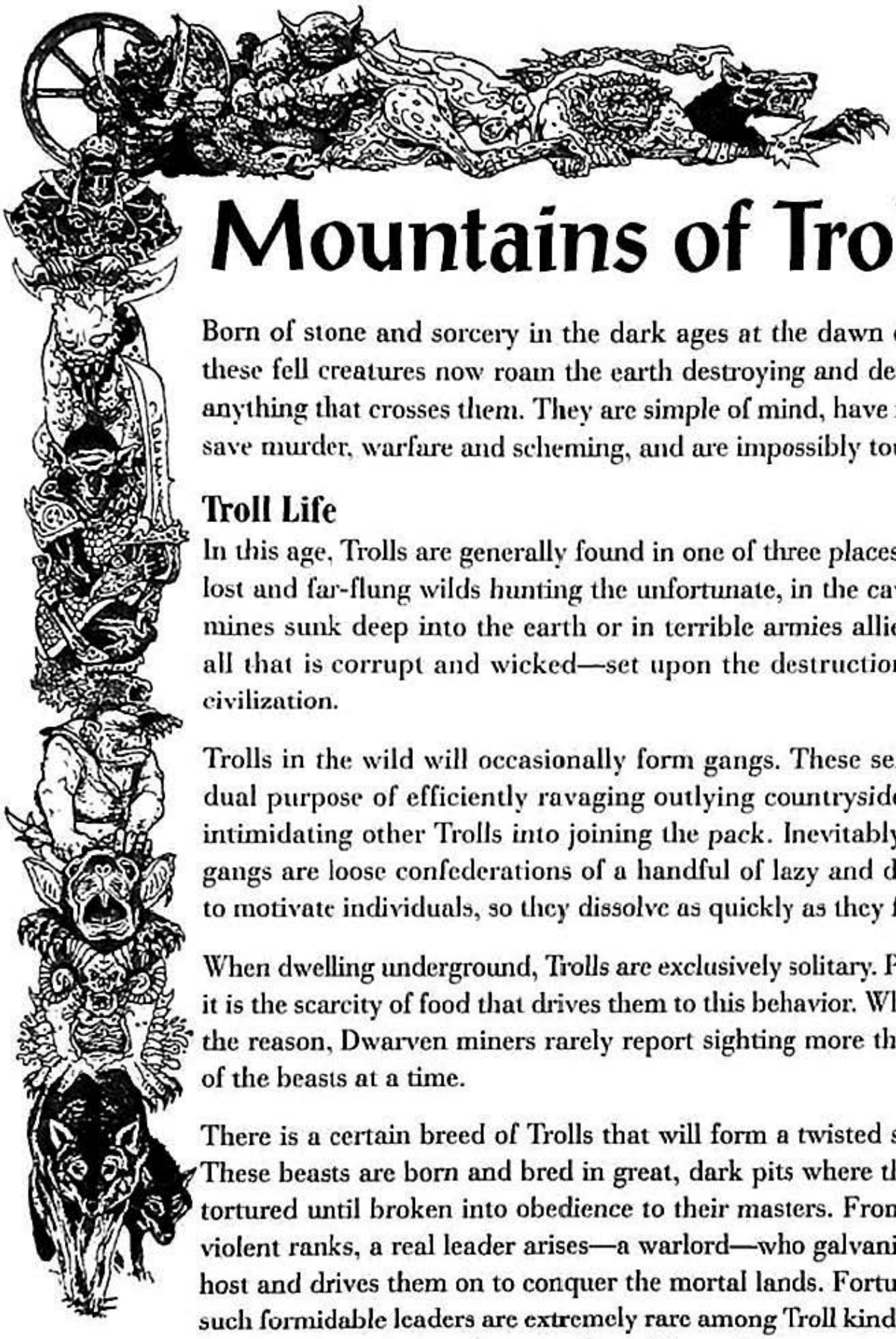
Brawn not Brains

Considering how mentally and physically handicapped Trolls are in their maximum and minimum stat requirements, these characters may ignore the starting character exponent 6 limit for Power and Forte. If desired, a player may start his Troll with its maximums in Power and Forte.

Troll Round Up

- **Massive Stature:** Stat maximum exponents: Will 6, Per 6, Agi 5, Spd 5, Pow 9, For 9. Minimum Power and Forte of 4
- **Claws:** Pow 1 for damaging Locks
- **Fangs:** Pow 1 bite attack at Shortest fighting distance
- **Night Blooded:** Turned to stone by the sun
- **Night Eyed:** No vision penalties for dim light or darkness. +1 Ob in bright light
- **Tough:** Round up for Mortal Wound
- **Troll Skin** provides protection equivalent to full body leather armor





Mountains of Trolls

Born of stone and sorcery in the dark ages at the dawn of time, these fell creatures now roam the earth destroying and devouring anything that crosses them. They are simple of mind, have no craft save murder, warfare and scheming, and are impossibly tough.

Troll Life

In this age, Trolls are generally found in one of three places: in the lost and far-flung wilds hunting the unfortunate, in the caves and mines sunk deep into the earth or in terrible armies allied with all that is corrupt and wicked—set upon the destruction of all civilization.

Trolls in the wild will occasionally form gangs. These serve the dual purpose of efficiently ravaging outlying countryside while intimidating other Trolls into joining the pack. Inevitably, these gangs are loose confederations of a handful of lazy and difficult to motivate individuals, so they dissolve as quickly as they form.

When dwelling underground, Trolls are exclusively solitary. Perhaps it is the scarcity of food that drives them to this behavior. Whatever the reason, Dwarven miners rarely report sighting more than one of the beasts at a time.

There is a certain breed of Trolls that will form a twisted society. These beasts are born and bred in great, dark pits where they are tortured until broken into obedience to their masters. From these violent ranks, a real leader arises—a warlord—who galvanizes his host and drives them on to conquer the mortal lands. Fortunately, such formidable leaders are extremely rare among Troll kind. Often an entire age passes with no word at all from these creatures.



Common Traits

Black Nails *Dt*

Trolls typically have massive, craggy claws used for digging and tearing. They don't often use their claws as a weapon, favoring the use of their stony fists to subdue prey. However if a Troll has another character in a Lock and chooses to do damage (rather than increase the Lock), add +1 Power to the damage of the attack due to the claws gouging into the victim.

Fangs *Dt*

A Troll's mouth is a mass of misshapen teeth and fangs. He may bite. Pow 1, Add 2. VA –, WS: 2, Shortest.

Night Blooded *Dt*

Nocturnal by nature. Trolls typically shun the sunlight, for it will undo the sorcery which gave their night-stalking ancestors life. Exposure to the sun causes the Troll's stony roots to consume him and crush him from within.

Night Eyed *Dt*

Born of the stuff of night, Trolls can see perfectly well in the darkness and suffer no penalties for nighttime conditions. However, rain and haze do affect them like other characters, and bright light imposes a +1 Ob penalty.

Massive Stature *Dt*

Trolls are the definition of Massive Stature: barrel-chested, hulking beasts with long thick limbs and shoulders like towering cliffs. The largest of their number grow twice as tall as humans, but even the smallest adults are rarely less than seven feet in height.

Increase all weapon lengths by one for the Troll.

These great lumbering beasts must have minimum Power and Forte of +4. The maximum exponents for Power and Forte are 9. The maximum exponents for Agility and Speed are 5. Stride is 7.

Stone's Age *Dt*

Trolls were born of stone and sorcery and to these roots they remain closely tied. Though not immortal, these creatures age very slowly and are capable of living for long centuries—if they can survive their own violent tendencies.

However, the weight of granite in their blood has detrimental effects. Their view of the world is dim and ponderous and their ability to intuit or empathize is minimal. A Troll may not have a Perception or Will exponent higher than 6.

Tough *Dt*

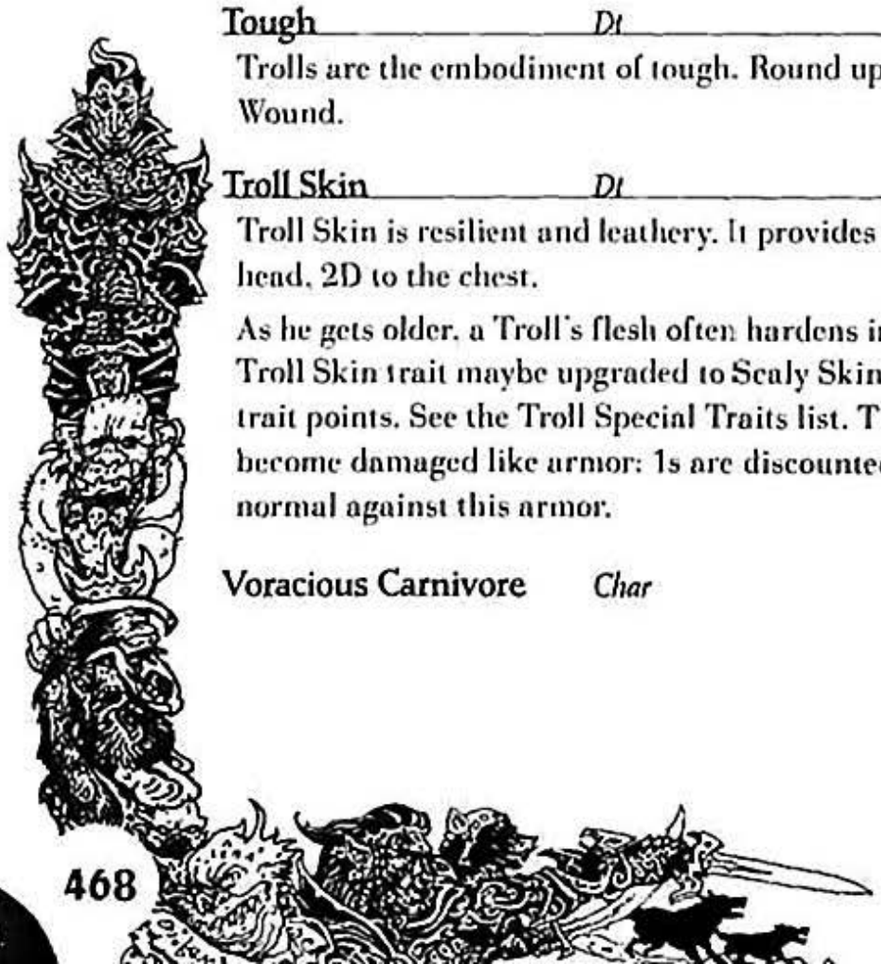
Trolls are the embodiment of tough. Round up when factoring Mortal Wound.

Troll Skin *Dt*

Troll Skin is resilient and leathery. It provides 1D of armor to the limbs and head, 2D to the chest.

As he gets older, a Troll's flesh often hardens into a stony mass. Thus, the Troll Skin trait maybe upgraded to Scaly Skin or Stone Skin for just a few trait points. See the Troll Special Traits list. This skin cannot "fail" and become damaged like armor: 1s are discounted in this case. VA works as normal against this armor.

Voracious Carnivore *Char*





Lifepath Traits

Addled *Char*

Bellowing *C-O*

The sound of this Troll's voice is unimaginably loud. Use as a call-on for Intimidation and Command.

Boor *Char*

Bull Trolls have forceful personalities, perhaps verging on the barest of leadership qualities, but mitigated by ill moods, bad jokes and a predilection for overbearing violence.

Brutal *Char*

Brute *Dt*

This Troll is so tough (or alternately, stupid) that he doesn't know when to give up. When taking die penalties from wounds, mental stats do not count for the purposes of incapacitation.

Grotesque *C-O*

Call-on for Intimidation and Conspicuous when displaying your deformity.

Hardened

Burning Wheel page 329.

Hauling *C-O*

Ox Trolls are the beasts of burden in the Troll legions. They haul impossible loads for interminable journeys. Use this trait as a call-on for Power when pushing, pulling or hauling loads.

Heaving *C-O*

The lowest rung for Troll soldiers in their great legions is that of the Battering Ram. These massive brutes haul forth great war engines to the walls of the citadels of their enemies and even use their own bodies to batter down walls. Use this trait as a call-on for Power when trying to break, smash or knock over something.

Insidious Cruelty *Char*

Mind Numbing Work *Char*

Misshapen *Char*

Numb

Burning Wheel page 337.

Slow

Burning Wheel page 347.

Solitary *Char*

Stubborn

Burning Wheel page 348.

Tasting the Lash

Burning Wheel page 349-350.

Tough as Nails

Burning Wheel page 351.

Unflinching *Dt*

Ironshields are the bodyguards and retinues of the Troll legions. They are trained to stand guard and lay down their lives for their Warlord master. This trait reduces hesitation by +4 for fear and pain.

Vile Language

Burning Wheel page 237.

Wickedly Clever *C-O*

Warlords quickly grow to understand that the world sees Trolls as mindless brutes, good only for absorbing and dealing



devastation. Outsiders forget that Trolls can evince intelligence. Troll Warlords use this prejudice to their advantage—playing the part of the dumb automaton while scheming and plotting behind their thick masks. Call-on for Strategy and Tactics when unveiling a surprising stratagem or ploy.

Witch Flesh *Dt*

The Brood Mother knows a bit of magic, rumored to have been handed down from an old giantess in ages past. This magic, called Witch Flesh, grants the ability to transform into a handsome young man or woman. The disguise is impenetrable. The brood mother retains her stats and attributes, but her character traits are replaced with Beautiful, Wholesome, Apple-Cheeked, etc. Any other traits requiring physical expression (like Horns or Claws) are temporarily lost to the human form. No test is required to transform, but the change requires a full scene, during which the magic slowly takes effect.

Once the Brood Mother reveals her true nature to her victim (or is perhaps accidentally spotted transforming), the victim will never see her the same way again—and can never be fooled by the Witch Flesh of this Brood Mother again.

Where There's a Whip...

Burning Wheel page 354.

Special Traits

Trolls have a host of special traits exclusively available to them. They may also choose from the General Trait list, but they may not take: Aura of Innocence, Cadaverous, Chronologue, Diminutive Stature, Faithful, Family Heirloom, Fleet of Foot, Gifted, Joan of Arc, Quick-Witted, Sight of the Bat or Street Smart.

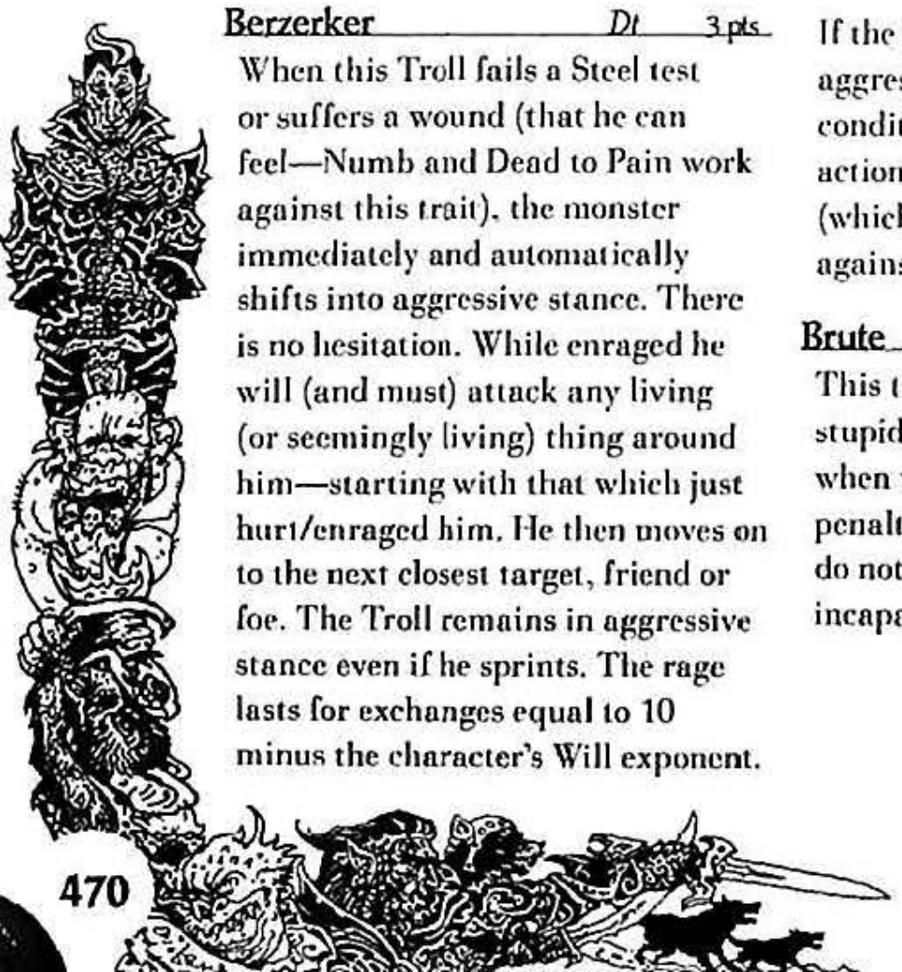
Berzerker *Dt* 3 pts

When this Troll fails a Steel test or suffers a wound (that he can feel—Numb and Dead to Pain work against this trait), the monster immediately and automatically shifts into aggressive stance. There is no hesitation. While enraged he will (and must) attack any living (or seemingly living) thing around him—starting with that which just hurt/enraged him. He then moves on to the next closest target, friend or foe. The Troll remains in aggressive stance even if he sprints. The rage lasts for exchanges equal to 10 minus the character's Will exponent.

If the monster is already in aggressive stance when the above conditions are met, he spends two actions roaring and bellowing (which count as an Intimidation test against his opponents).

Brute *Dt* 4 pts

This troll is so tough (or alternately, stupid) that he doesn't know when to give up. When taking die penalties from wounds, mental stats do not count for the purposes of incapacitation.





Bull-Legged *Dt* 4 pts

In place of his clawed feet, this Troll possesses a pair of bony hooves that give him a kicking weapon (Pow 1, VA 1, WS 1). The Troll also walks with a distinctive gait and makes quite a racket when treading on hard surfaces. Any Speed or Stealthy tests made while on stone, ice or really hard, smooth wood are at a +1 Ob. (May not be combined with Webbed Fingers and Toes.)

Crystalline Spines *Dt* 3 pts

A growth of crystalline spines sprouts from the back and shoulders of this Troll. The spines are sharp to the touch and break off and lodge themselves in the flesh of the unwary, causing great discomfort. Any creature that grapples or otherwise comes into contact with the Troll's spines suffers a +1 Ob to all tests until the spines are removed. This takes effect if the Troll grapples you, too. The penalty is cumulative for each contact.

Spines can be plucked out in about a half hour. If the Surgery or Field Dressing skill is used, they can be treated in the time it takes to tend to a Superficial wound.

If the troll is forced onto his back—if he falls or is pushed—it is possible that the spines are crushed and flattened. Roll the die of fate. On a 1 the spines are crushed and unusable. It takes about a month for the crystals to regrow. (They always regrow.)

Devourer *Dt* 3 pts

This Troll eats anything—soil, stone, wood, metal and flesh. He is indiscriminate in his choices and in fact cannot help himself from sampling his surroundings. Add +1 VA to bite attacks.

Earth Blood *Dt* 3 pts

No matter how badly wounded, this Troll will always heal. Cuts will close, bones will knit and even lost limbs will regrow. This Troll can *never* fail a Health test for Recovery (though he can roll poorly, in which case maximum healing time is required for the wound to close). The only way to destroy this beast is to put him to the fire.

Enemy of the Sun *Dt* 4 pts

The greatest, most fearsome of Trolls have been bred to resist the burning rays of the sun. They may travel by day and not be turned to stone as with the Night Blooded trait. Enemies of the Sun do not suffer penalties for dim or twilit light, but they can no longer see in complete darkness (+4 Ob in pitch dark). This trait replaces the Night Blooded trait.

Hammer Hands *Dt* 2 pts

With hands like great mattocks, this Troll is best suited to brawling and pummeling. Add +1D to the Troll's Brawling skill for purposes of bare-fisted Block, Strike, Beat and Push actions. The Troll suffers a +1 Ob to any other skill that requires manual dexterity (including Throwing and weapons skills).



Hook Hand *Dt* 4 pts

One of this Troll's hands has formed into a massive bony hook. This hook can be used as a weapon: Pow 2. VA 1, WS 2, Short; may Great Strike. In fact, it is really too big and clumsy to be used for anything else.

Horns *Dt* 5 pts

Great stony horns protrude from the Troll's skull. In addition to being terribly intimidating, they also serve a somewhat practical purpose. When the Troll charges *another creature of relatively similar size*, he may choose to add +1D to his Charge Power *or* to do damage on the Charge as if he had been simultaneously Striking. Damage is Pow 2, VA 2, WS 1. The first two successes of the Charge attack count as a superficial wound to the victim. Four successes over equals a Mark hit. Six over is a Superb hit.

Iron Hide *Dt* 6 pts

This skin is as tough as iron and scaled like a shark. All incoming damage is reduced by -1 pip on the PTGS: B8 damage would be reduced to B7, etc.

Malformed *Char*

Mossy Coat *C-O* 2 pts

Covered in a coat of moss and slime, this Troll blends in quite well to forest or earthy surroundings. Call-on for Stealthy or Camouflage in forest or mines.

Oafishly Charming *Char*

Repulsive Blood *Dt* 2 pts

This Troll's blood is noxious and caustic. If the Troll should be bitten for effect, the horrid liquid runs into the mouth of the attacking creature and causes great discomfort and nausea. Any creature that bites the Troll, penetrates his armor and achieves a Mark result, must make an Ob + Forte test. Any successes missed equal an obstacle penalty that lasts for three exchanges.

Ridged Brow *Dt* 3 pts

Protruding out over this Troll's eyes is a stony brow like unto a craggy cliff. This provides +1D of armor to the Troll's head.

Scaly Skin *Dt* 4 pts

Scaly Skin provides 2D of armor to the limbs and head, and 3D to the chest. This skin cannot "fail" and become damaged like normal armor: 1s are ignored in this case. VA works as normal against this armor.

Stone Skin *Dt* 5 pts

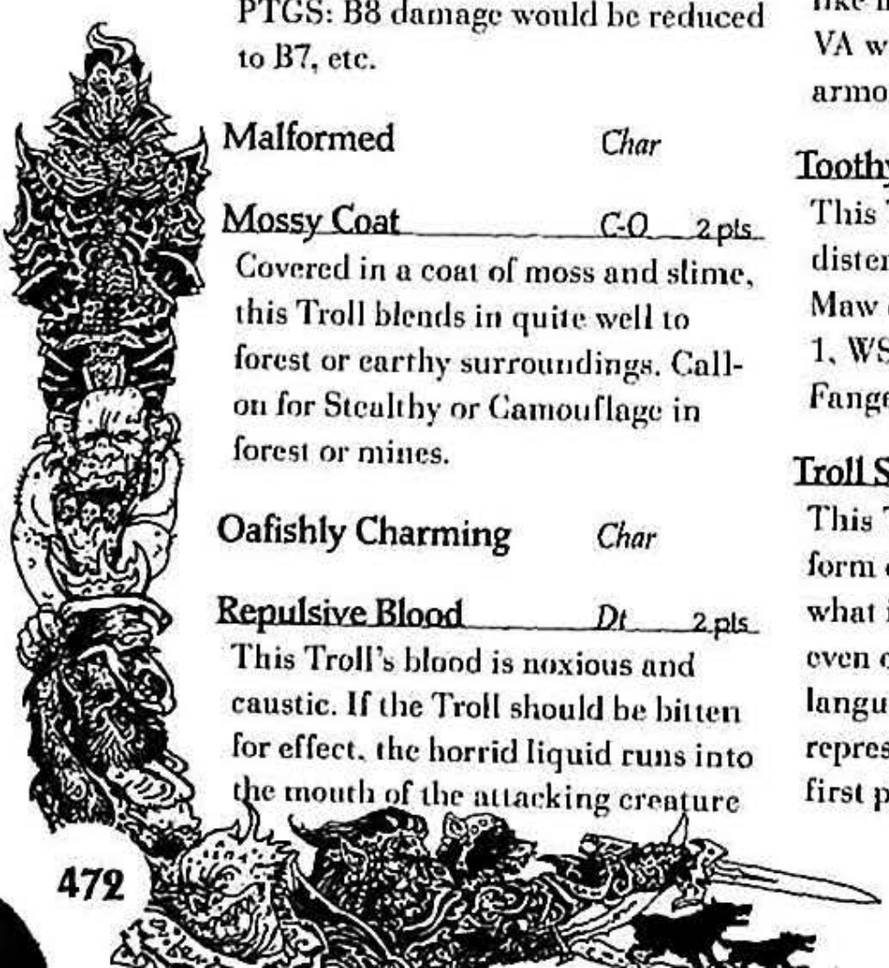
The hide of this creature is impossibly tough and unyielding. Stone Skin provides 3D of armor protection to the head and limbs, and 4D to the chest. This skin cannot "fail" and become damaged like normal armor: 1s are ignored. VA works as normal against this armor.

Toothy Maw *Dt* 3 pts

This Troll's jaws are massive, distended and terrible. The Toothy Maw counts as: Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1, WS 1, Shortest. It replaces the Fanged trait.

Troll Savant *Char*

This Troll has the uncanny ability to form complete sentences, understand what is said to him and possibly even comprehend what a written language, map or glyph could represent—if it were possible in the first place for scratchings on stone





or leather to mean anything. He is a mental giant among his peers and is appropriately hated and feared.

Tusks *Dt* 2 pts

This Troll's lower canine teeth protrude into formidable tusks. The beast may use these sharpened weapons to gore the unwary. Add +1 Power to the Troll's bite attack when it is at hands fighting distance. This trait may be combined with Fangs or Toothy Maw.

Vestigial Wings *Char*

Two small, bat-like wings protrude from the Troll's shoulders. Flap, flap.

Webbed Fingers and Toes *Dt* 1 pt

Stride 5 when swimming.





Choosing Skills

In general, Trolls create nothing except misery and woe. This is reflected in their lifepath lists. However, they are sentient creatures and not inexorably bound to this fate. They may, if given the opportunity, break away from this. Therefore, General skill points may be used to purchase any skills from the skill list except: Enchanting, Sorcery or Summoning.

Troll Skills

Bridge-wise

Camouflage — Perception/Agility

Using this skill, a Troll may take on the appearance of his surroundings and remain hidden. The Dread Stone love to build up false stone walls around themselves and then wait for an unsuspecting passerby to wander into reach.

Using this skill effectively requires that the Troll remain motionless while camouflaged. Test this skill as a Stealthy skill.

Obstacles: Camouflage is used in versus tests against Observation.
FoRKs: Stealthy
Skill Type: Forester **Tools:** No.

Extortion — Will/Perception

Bull Trolls sometimes learn that it is more fruitful to let their victims live to extort food and shiny bits from them over the years. This way they can get more than a single meal out of them!

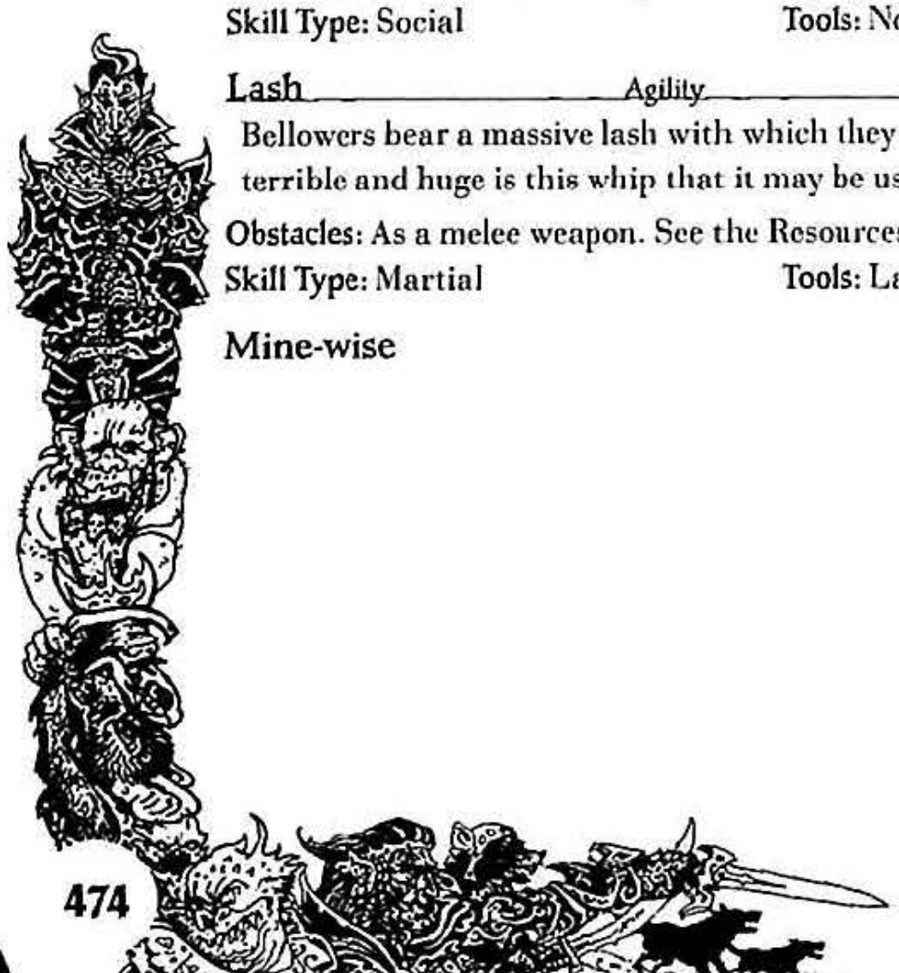
Obstacles: Obstacles are equal to the Will of the victim.
FoRKs: Intimidation, Interrogation, Haggling
Skill Type: Social **Tools:** No.

Lash — Agility

Bellowers bear a massive lash with which they drive on their lessers. So terrible and huge is this whip that it may be used as a weapon.

Obstacles: As a melee weapon. See the Resources section for stats.
Skill Type: Martial **Tools:** Lash.

Mine-wise







Troll Resources

Troll Gear	Rp Cost
Rags	1
Troll Shoes	1
Sack	1
Chest or Footlocker	3
Trophies	3
Shiny Trophies	7
Pile of Rocks	2
Troll Lash	5
Mattock	10
Black Iron Shield	5
Cave Hole	5



Troll Resources

Troll characters may purchase a small range of sundry goods. There's really not much.

Trophies— Trolls love to keep skulls or other keepsakes from their favorite meals. These are then draped across the shoulders or strung from the wrists to let other Trolls know how well he has eaten.

Shiny Trophies— Somewhere along the way, one of the Troll's meals came with some very lovely shiny bits. These are usually worn prominently about the neck or waist.

Troll Lash— This dreaded weapon is used by Bellowers to keep their subordinates in line. Not only does it allow the Troll to use its *Where There's a Whip, There's a Way* trait, but the Troll whip is powerful enough to be used as an actual weapon.

Lash: Base Power = *Lash skill exponent*. Weapon is Pow 2, VA –, Add 2, WS 1, Longest. The lash can only be used by creatures of Massive Stature.

Troll Mattock— A fearsome weapon: Two-handed: Pow 4, VA 2, Add 2, WS 2, Long, may Great Strike. One-handed: Pow 3, VA 2, Add 2, WS 1, Long. This weapon is built to suit the size of a Troll and cannot be wielded by creatures smaller than Massive Stature. Even for Trolls, it is heavy. Characters must have at least a B6 Power to use it properly.

Black Iron Shield— This massive shield provides 3D of protection. Its sharp edge can also be used as a weapon: Pow 2, VA 1, Add 2, WS 2, Short.

Cave Hole— Even a Troll should have a little home somewhere—a nice, romantic, stinking hole in the ground to call its own. This counts as property.



Troll Relationships

Trolls use the standard rules for relationships, reputations and affiliations. I recommend Trolls only have three possible affiliations: the black legion, the troll legions or a bull gang. The first two are military affiliations, and the last is an outcast group.

Trolls In Play

Trolls are, on the surface, straightforward to play: The characters are tough, strong and usually slow. A four-lifepath Troll typically nets enough physical stat points to suck up quite a lot of punishment. But the great thing about Burning Wheel Trolls is that they are not confined to this





stereotype. In character burning, the options are limited but once in play, there is no place for a Troll to go but up. The hardest challenge falls in the realm of social and academic skills—but with enough patience, Trolls can learn anything.

Trolls are not indestructible. They are tough, but I've seen determined or even just well-equipped three- and four-lifepath characters bring them to their knees. Without the Brute trait, Trolls are vulnerable to incapacitation. Mental stats of 2 make getting knocked out a real danger. So, if you must be the indestructible kill machine, either take the Brute trait or choose lifepaths that give mental *and* physical points.

It's easy enough to integrate these characters into an Orc-based game, but they can fit equally well in any game that has a need for nine-foot-tall, anthropomorphic battering rams. The real challenge when playing a Troll is to stay involved in the game. It's too easy to say, "I'm stupid and strong, so I just wait." This is an excuse. I encourage players to develop good Beliefs and Instincts that tie their Troll characters into the core of the situation at hand. If a player takes the "I'm just waiting for combat" approach, then their Troll character will never improve or go beyond the bounds of its starting concept. Breaking down such boundaries is possible and even encouraged in this system!







Dominant Mother

MAYSÁ MATÁ, 4.5-year-old Wild Pack Dominant
Born to the Pack, Yearling, Lone Wolf, Last Wolf, Dominant

STATS

Will B4	Perception B6 (B8)*	Agility B5
Speed B5	Power B4	Forte B5

ATTRIBUTES

Health B5	Steel B6	Mortal Wound B10	Hesitation 6
Reflexes B6	Resources B0	Circles B2	Stride 11

SKILLS
Howling B4, Pack Etiquette B3, Territory-wise B3, Begging B2, Intimidation B3, Stealthy B4, Pack Hunting B3 (B5)*, Scent Tracking B3 (B5)*, Foraging B3, Brawling B3, Pack-wise B3, Scavenging B3, Command B2, Nursing B3, Nature of All Things B2

TRAITS
Crushing Jaws, Deep Fur, Great Lupine Form, Lupine Intellect, Wolf Eyes, Wolf Snout, Woodland Ear, Wanderlust, Submissive, Dominant, Blind Eye, Spirit Marked, Raven-Friend

TERRITORY
Marginal hunting grounds

RELATIONSHIPS
Ukén (pup, 3 pts, minor, immediate family), Nasam-it (pup, 3 pts, minor, immediate family), Alingaas (dominant Spirit-Hunter of the Dagá Pack, free due to Submissive trait)

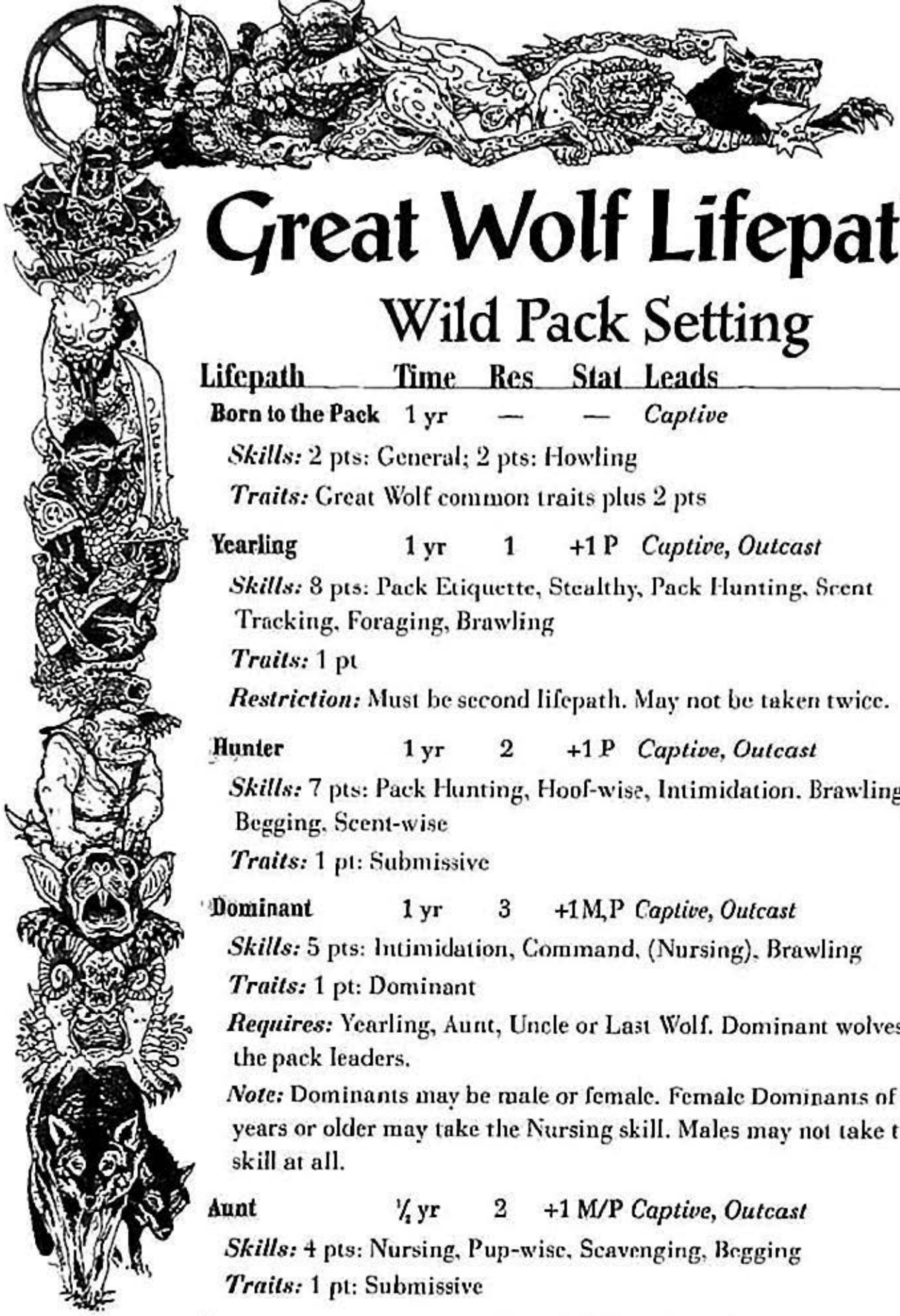
AFFILIATIONS
1D (Balát Pack, free, Dominant trait), 1D (Dagá Pack, Spirit Hunters, free, Spirit Marked trait), 1D (Uwak Conspiracy, ravens, free, Raven-Friend trait)

REPUTATION
1D, Dominant of the Balát Pack

BELIEFS
Ukén and Nasam-it mean everything to me; I will raise them well and strong. The two-legs encroach upon our hunting grounds; Balát must show its dominance or we will be forced into the wastes. Alingaas frightens me, but she knows many secrets; I will convince her to share her wisdom with me.

INSTINCTS
Always know where my pups are. Always defend Balát's territory. Always move stealthily when there are two-legs about.

*+2D due to Wolf Snout and Woodland Ear



Great Wolf Lifepaths

Wild Pack Setting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Born to the Pack	1 yr	—	—	*Captive*

Skills: 2 pts: General; 2 pts: Howling

Traits: Great Wolf common traits plus 2 pts

Yearling	1 yr	1	+1 P	*Captive, Outcast*

Skills: 8 pts: Pack Etiquette, Stealthy, Pack Hunting, Scent Tracking, Foraging, Brawling

Traits: 1 pt

Restriction: Must be second lifepath. May not be taken twice.

Hunter	1 yr	2	+1 P	*Captive, Outcast*

Skills: 7 pts: Pack Hunting, Hoof-wise, Intimidation, Brawling, Begging, Scent-wise

Traits: 1 pt: Submissive

Dominant	1 yr	3	+1 M,P	*Captive, Outcast*

Skills: 5 pts: Intimidation, Command, (Nursing), Brawling

Traits: 1 pt: Dominant

Requires: Yearling, Aunt, Uncle or Last Wolf. Dominant wolves are the pack leaders.

Note: Dominants may be male or female. Female Dominants of three years or older may take the Nursing skill. Males may not take this skill at all.

Aunt	½ yr	2	+1 M/P	*Captive, Outcast*

Skills: 4 pts: Nursing, Pup-wise, Scavenging, Begging

Traits: 1 pt: Submissive

Uncle	½ yr	2	+1 M/P	*Captive, Outcast*

Skills: 4 pts: Rearing, Pup-wise, Scavenging, Begging

Traits: 1 pt: Submissive

Elder	2 yr	1	+1 M	*Outcast*

Skills: 7 pts: Begging, Man-wise, Orc-wise, Forest-wise; 1 pt General

Traits: 1 pt: Submissive

Restrictions: Must be 7 yrs or older to take this lifepath.

Last Wolf	½ yr	1	+1 M	*Captive, Outcast*

Skills: 2 pts: Begging, Pack Etiquette

Traits: 2 pts: Submissive, Stained

Note: Any wolf entering the Wild Pack setting from another setting must take Last Wolf as their first lifepath in the Wild Pack.

Slave to the Legion Setting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Born to the Legion	1 yr	—	—	*Captive*

Skills: 2 pts: General; 2 pts: Howling

Traits: Great Wolf common traits plus 1 pt: Vile Language, Demented

Caged and Beaten	½ yr	1	—	*Captive*

Skills: 3 pts: Pack Etiquette, Begging, Cage-wise

Traits: 2 pts: Submissive, Tasting the Lash, Deranged

Note: Wolves entering the legion from other settings must take Caged and Beaten as their first lifepath in this setting.

Shadow Chaser	1 yr	2	+1 P	—

Skills: 8 pts: Stealthy, Scent Tracking, Trail-wise, Orc-wise, Scavenging, Intimidation, Rider Training†, Begging

Traits: 1 pt: Submissive, Tasting the Lash

Wayward	½ yr	2	+1 M	*Outcast*

Skills: 6 pts: Pack Hunting, Foraging, Brawling, Stealthy, Howling, Escape Artist

Traits: 1 pt

Requires: Shadow Chaser or Caged and Beaten

Bitch	1 yr	4	—	—

Skills: 5 pts: Nursing, Rearing, Pup-wise, Scavenging, Begging

Traits: 1 pt: Submissive

Restrictions: Characters taking this lifepath must be at least two years old.

Howling Beast	1 yr	1	+1 P	—

Skills: 7 pts: Rider Training†, Combat Mount†, Savage Attack, Intimidation

Traits: 1 pt: Howl of Doom

Requires: Shadow Chaser

Black Destroyer	2 yrs	2	+1 M, P	—

Skills: 4 pts: Rider Training†, Combat Mount†, Savage Attack

Traits: 2 pts: Fearsome Beast, Intense Hatred, Fearless, Dominant, Submissive

Requires: Howling Beast or Ebon Tyrant

Ebon Tyrant	2 yrs	5	+1 M, P	—

Skills: 5 pts: Conspicuous, Command, Skirmish Tactics†, Strategy

Traits: 1 pt: Dominant, Great Cunning

Requires: Shadow Chaser or Black Destroyer



Dark Friend 3 yrs 3 +1 M *Outcast*

Skills: 5 pts: Stealthy, Scent Tracking, Brawling, Rituals-wise, Poisons-wise; 1 pt General

Traits: 1 pt: Obedient, Loyal, Fearless

Requires: Caged and Beaten

† This is a training skill. It costs 2 points to open and may not be advanced.

Outcast Wolf Subsetting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Lone Wolf	1 yr	1	+1 M	*Any*

Skills: 4 pts: Territory-wise, Pack-wise, Scavenging

Traits: 1 pt: Wanderlust, Spirit Marked

Requires: Yearling, Last Wolf, Captive, Wandering Lost, Ancient Journeyer, Wayward or Dark Friend

Scavenger	1 yr	2	—	*Legion, Wild Pack, Captive*

Skills: 3 pts: Scent-wise, Village-wise, Dog-wise, Scavenging

Traits: 1 pt: Scavenger

Requires: Lone Wolf, Captive or Caged and Beaten

Captive Subsetting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Captive	½ yr	1	—	*Legion, Outcast*

Skills: 3 pts: Begging, Cage-wise, Man-wise

Traits: 3 pts: Broken, Submissive

Spirit Hunter Subsetting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Spirit Chaser	1 yr	1	+1 P	*Outcast, Captive*

Skills: 5 pts: Primal Bark§, Pack Hunting, The Way of the First Hunter

Traits: 1 pt

Requires: Lone Wolf and the Spirit Marked trait

Spirit Howler	1 yr	2	+1 M/P	—

Skills: 3 pts: Ancestral Jaw§

Traits: 1 pt: Ancestral Taint, Spirit Ears

Requires: Spirit Chaser

Spirit Hunter	2 yrs	3	+1 M, P	*Ghost of the Deeping Wood*

Skills: 3 pts: Grandfather's Song§

Traits: 1 pt: Spirit Nose

Requires: Spirit Howler

§ Indicates that this is a Wolf-Song and costs 2 points to open up.



Ghost of the Deeping Wood Subsetting

Lifepath	Time	Res	Stat	Leads
Wandering Lost	½ yr	—	+1 M	*Spirit Hunter, Outcast*

Skills: 2 pts: Nature of All Things

Traits: 1 pt

Requires: Last Wolf and Lone Wolf

Dire Haunt	1 yr	10	+1 M, P	—

Skills: 3 pts: Tongue of the Ancient One

Traits: 2 pt

Requirement: Wandering Lost

Ancient Journeyer	½ yr	—	+1 M	*Spirit Hunter, Outcast*

Skills: 2 pts: Old World-wise

Traits: 1 pt

Requirement: Wandering Lost

Fell Ancient	2 yrs	15	+1 M, P	—

Skills: 3 pts: Ancient Ways

Traits: 2 pts: Reclusive, Paranoid, Odor of Spirits

Requirement: Ancient Journeyer

Ghost of the Wood	2 yrs	10	+2 M	—

Skills: 6 pts: Wolf-wise, Spirit-Hunter-wise, Legion-wise, Path-wise, River-wise, Pack-wise; 1 pt: General

Traits: 3 pts: Preternaturally Calm, Watchful, Piercing Gaze, Stink of the Ancient

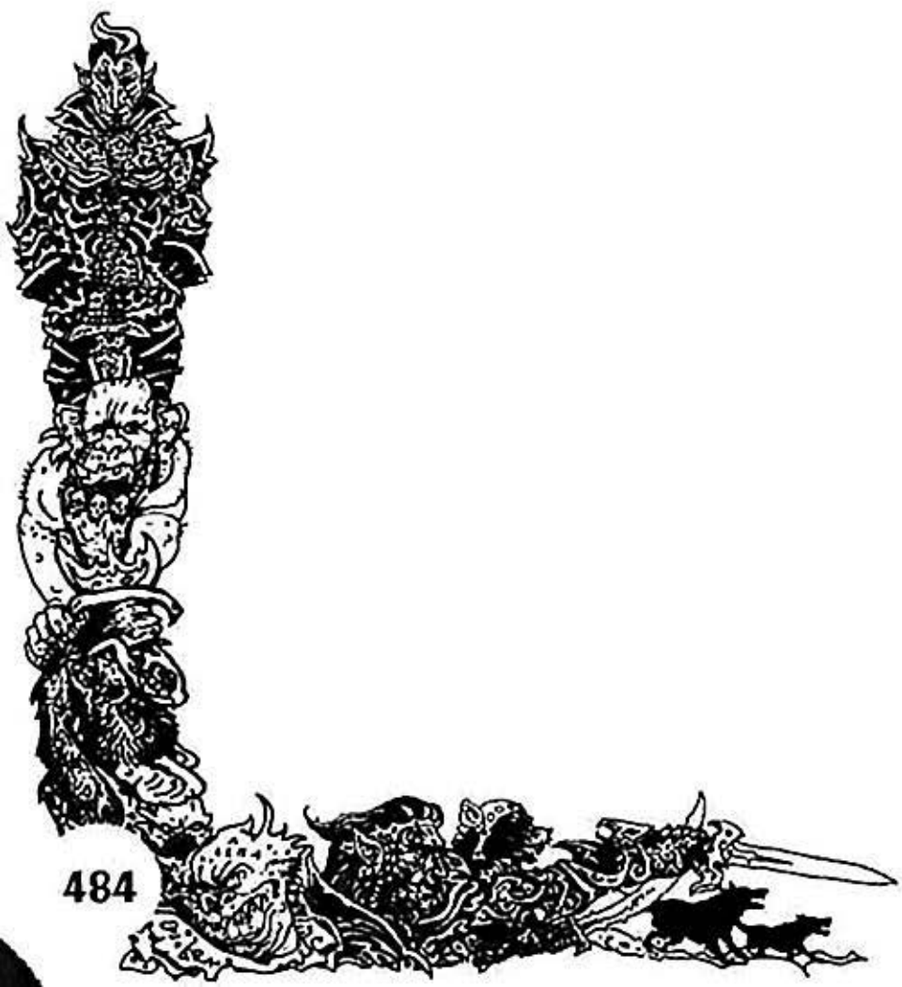
Requires: Dire Haunt and Fell Ancient

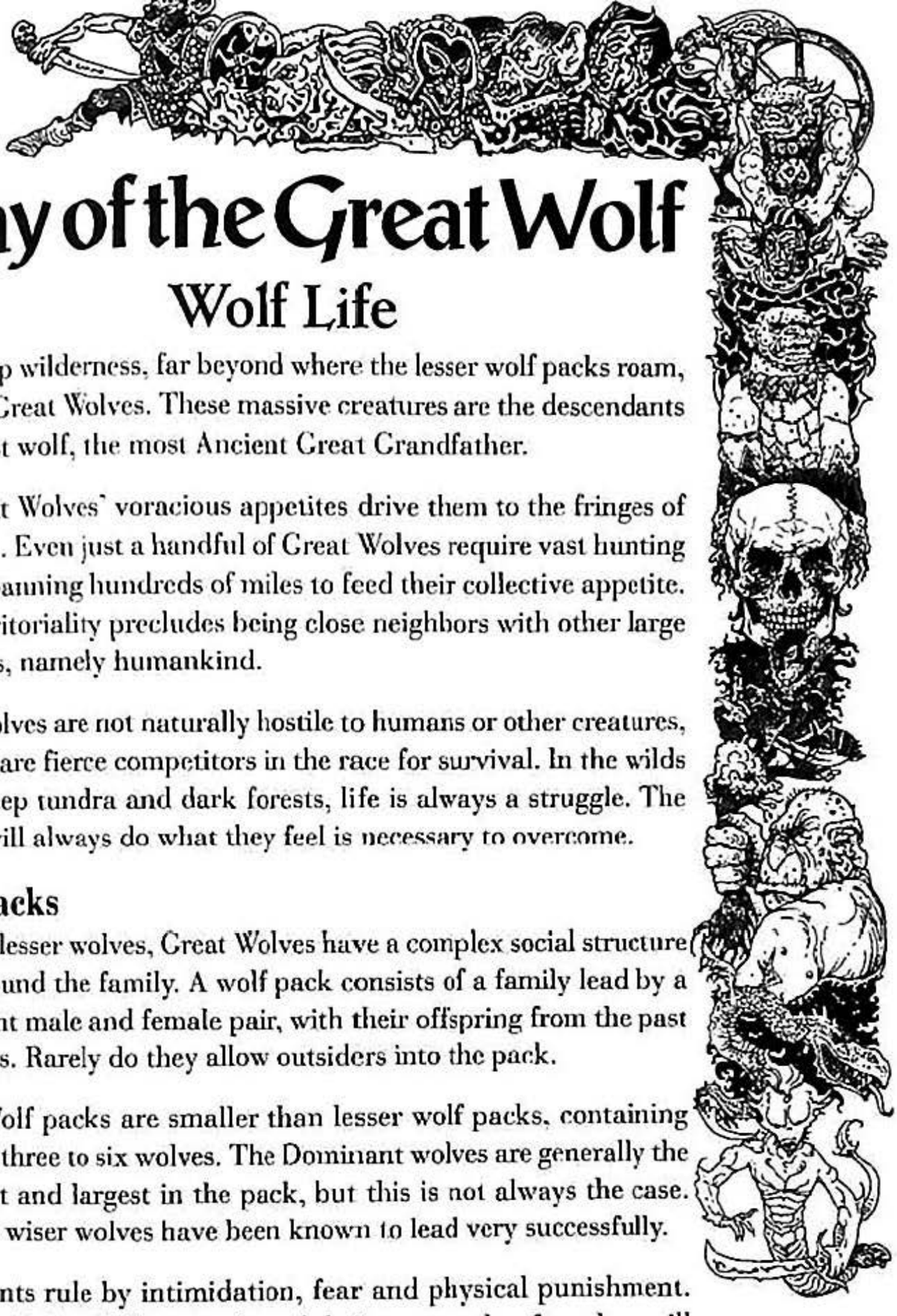
Stat Pools for Wolves by Age

Starting Age	Mental Pool	Physical Pool
1 year	6 pts	12 pts
2-3 years	7 pts	16 pts
4-5 years	7 pts	17 pts
6-7 years	7 pts	16 pts
8-9 years	6 pts	14 pts
10-11 years	6 pts	12 pts
12-15 years	5 pts	10 pts

Wolf Trait Round Up

- **Crushing Jaws:** Pow 3, VA 1, Add 2, WS 3, Short. May Lock and Strike on the same action using the Savage Attack skill
- **Great Lupine Form:** +2D to the Charge action. Stride 11
- **Deep Fur:** No penalties for cold or Health tests for cold. +1 Ob for hot
- **Lupine Intellect:** You're a very big, very smart wolf
- **Wolf Snout:** +1D to Perception tests (counts toward Reflexes), +1D to Pack Hunting and Scent Tracking. Can also detect emotion and determine identity via scent
- **Woodland Ear:** +1D to Perception tests (counts toward Reflexes), +1D to Pack Hunting and Scent Tracking, counts as Observation and allows the wolf to determine a type of animal by its call
- **Wolf Eyes:** Reduce darkness penalties by one





Way of the Great Wolf

Wolf Life

In the deep wilderness, far beyond where the lesser wolf packs roam, hunt the Great Wolves. These massive creatures are the descendants of the first wolf, the most Ancient Great Grandfather.

The Great Wolves' voracious appetites drive them to the fringes of the world. Even just a handful of Great Wolves require vast hunting ranges spanning hundreds of miles to feed their collective appetite. Such territoriality precludes being close neighbors with other large predators, namely humankind.

Great Wolves are not naturally hostile to humans or other creatures, but they are fierce competitors in the race for survival. In the wilds of the deep tundra and dark forests, life is always a struggle. The wolves will always do what they feel is necessary to overcome.

Wolf Packs

Just like lesser wolves, Great Wolves have a complex social structure built around the family. A wolf pack consists of a family lead by a Dominant male and female pair, with their offspring from the past few years. Rarely do they allow outsiders into the pack.

Great Wolf packs are smaller than lesser wolf packs, containing perhaps three to six wolves. The Dominant wolves are generally the strongest and largest in the pack, but this is not always the case. Smaller, wiser wolves have been known to lead very successfully.

Dominants rule by intimidation, fear and physical punishment. Rarely will they kill a member of their own pack; often they will simply wrestle their kin to the ground and force them to submit to their will.

Submitting to the will of the Dominants is a trait that other wolves learn through experience. To attribute human pride to this behavior is to misunderstand. This is never seen as debasement in the pack's eyes; it is a natural thing. Submission is necessary to survive.



Below the Dominants, the pack consists of second-tier wolves who help hunt and raise the pups. Larger packs will also have a "last wolf," an unfortunate beast who is singled out as the scapegoat for the pack's frustration and anger. Also, any "foreign" wolf entering a pack must prove himself as a last wolf before even having the opportunity to aid in other roles in the pack.

Pups

Since life is so precarious in the deep wilds, raising pups is one of the paramount activities in the pack's life—second only to hunting. Dominants mate in the late winter, and the pups are born in the early spring. Usually, the litter of Great Wolves is very small—only one or two pups. Once born, the whole pack then participates in rearing the pups, not just the parents. All contribute to bringing food, minding and playing with the young wolves. Occasionally, a member of the pack will step forward as an aunt or uncle, taking special interest in a pup's upbringing and doing what he or she can to help the mother so that she may better recover from the arduous birth process.

Wolf Leads

Wolves do not add to their age when taking leads from one setting to another.

Common Traits

Crushing Jaws *Dt*

Great Wolves have powerful jaws honed into deadly hunting weapons. Crushing Jaws: Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1, WS 3, Short. When using the Savage Attack skill, the wolf can choose the Lock and Strike action.

Deep Fur *Dt*

Heavy and thick fur protects Great Wolves against the cold of their harsh environment. They can tolerate extremely cold temperatures, whereas extended times of hot weather tend to agitate them. This trait allows the wolf to ignore penalties and tests relating to cold weather. However, extended time in hot weather causes +1 Ob to all tests.

The color of a wolf's pelt can range from pure white to black, from mottled gray to brown, from sandy to even reddish and ochre.

Great Lupine Form *Dt*

Great Wolves possess the basic form common to wolves. They have a rangy, muscular body set on high and powerful legs with large, well-padded feet. They have long snouts and massive, protruding jaws. Their fur is a crown of coarse guard hairs supported by a nigh-impermeable layer of soft underfur. Their most prominent feature is, of course, their massive size. Great wolves stand three to five feet at the shoulder, and can weigh 200-600 lbs.

Great Wolves have a maximum exponent of 6 for Agility (from their lack of hands), while other stat maximums are 8. Their Stride is 11.

Wolves perform the Charge/Tackle action in Fight with a +2D bonus rather than the standard +1D.

Lupine Intellect *Dt*

Without a doubt, Great Wolves are intelligent creatures. They possess a personality and intellect equivalent to that of humans and Orcs. Never assume that just because they don't live in cities, write with pens or eat with knives, wolves are dumb brutes.

Even so, Great Wolves are not tool-using creatures. Though they understand a great many matters, they generally don't use (or even need) tools to accomplish the tasks in their daily lives. Any wolf attempting to use tools like hammers, swords or scissors suffers quadruple obstacle penalties.

Wolf Eyes *Dt*

Wolves possess the advantage of being able to see well in low light. Wolves reduce obstacle penalties for dim light, darkness and haze by one step.



Wolf Snout *Dt*

Wolves benefit from an exceptional sense of smell. Wolf Snout grants +1D to Perception for assesses, and +1D to Scent Tracking and Pack Hunting skill tests. This bonus is also added to Perception for determining Reflexes. This trait counts as Observation when combined with Woodland Ear.

Woodland Ear *Dt*

Wolves have extraordinary hearing. The Woodland Ear allows wolves to distinguish between different animal calls and add +1D to Perception tests for assesses, Scent Tracking and Pack Hunting. This bonus is also added to Perception for determining Reflexes. This trait counts as Observation when combined with Wolf Snout.



Lifepath Traits

Submissive Dominants

The lifepaths can produce a Great Wolf with both the Dominant and Submissive traits. This indicates that you are (or were) dominant in your pack, but you're now submissive to another wolf, or vice versa.

It's also possible to earn the Submissive or Dominant trait twice. Take each trait once; the points earned on subsequent paths can be spent on additional lifepath traits or special traits.

Ancestral Taint *Dt*

Spirit Hunters are said to be the chosen ones of the Great Grandfather—selected to take up his eternal struggle against the spirits, speech-twisters and demons that seek to overcome wolf-kind. Once a wolf begins to sing the howls of the Spirit Hunters, he grows closer to the Great Grandfather; in fact he begins to take on a bit of the ancient wolf's essence. The more the Spirit Howler sings the ancient songs, the more the Taint grows within him. See the Ancestral Taint rules in the Spirit Hunter section for more on this.

Broken

Burning Wheel page 316.

Demented *Char*

Dominant *Dt*

There are only ever two Dominants in a pack: a male and female pair. These two serve as the mother and father of the group, guiding them to new hunting grounds and producing more offspring to strengthen and expand the pack. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with a pack and a 1D reputation within that pack as a Dominant. This trait compounds with other similar, appropriate affiliations and reputations.

Fearless

Burning Wheel page 326.

Great Cunning *C-O*

Ebon Tyrants are the Dominants of the vast Black Destroyer packs. More than just savagery and brutality are required to attain this rank. Great Cunning is a necessity. This trait acts as a call-on for Strategy, Tactics and any wise tested for insight.

Howl of Doom *Dt*

Before the charge, these beasts bombard their opponents with cold fear. This wolf can howl and add +4D to Intimidation. This howl requires two actions to perform and cannot be done on the charge—it must be done beforehand. In Range and Cover, it positions with 2D. In Fight, it counts as the Longest weapon.

Intense Hatred *Char*

Loyal

Burning Wheel page 334.

Obedient *Char*

Wolves who are chosen to become Dark Friends tend to be particularly obedient. While their masters can be extremely generous—feeding their wolves much fresh meat—they are also extremely violent and punishing. Rarely do they hesitate to kill a disobedient wolf. Lastly, a Dark Friend has an intuitive understanding of the powers the Blood Summoners wield—he knows the might of success and the calamity of failure. It is far better to aid the former and prevent the latter.

Odor of Spirits *Dt*

This wolf stinks of spirits. The packs shun him, and the Spirit Hunters harry him. 1D infamous reputation and +1 Ob Inconspicuous among the wild packs and legion. Only the Haunts and Ghosts accept him.

Paranoid *Char*



Piercing Gaze *C-0/Dt*

The eyes of a Ghost of the Deeping Wood burn like glittering coals. This trait is a call-on for Intimidation. Also, characters attempting to deceive the wolf (using Falsehood, Persuasion or Soothing Platitudes) suffer a +1 Ob penalty. Burning flames flash implacably behind his eyes and hint at the terrible fate of liars.

Preternaturally Calm *Dt*

Ghosts of the Deeping Wood possess a calmness that rivals the most serene glade on a starry summer night. Reduce hesitation by two.

Reclusive *Char*

Scavenger

Burning Wheel page 344.

Slave No More *Dt*

After life in the cage, you can't help but act out against the world that has hurt you. Instincts that get you into weird or deep trouble earn a persona point instead of a fate point.

Spirit Ears *Dt*

Spirit Howlers become attuned to the spirit world as their Taint grows. A wolf with this trait has the ability to hear those of the spirit nature. Counts as Observation for detecting the movements of spirits, demons and other creatures of spirit nature. Obstacle to detect spirits is 10 minus their Strength. Wolves may use their Woodland Ear in combination with this trait but not their Wolf Snout.

Spirit Marked *Dt* 3 pts

On certain nights in the dead of winter, the Spirit Hunters will come to the territories and seek out lone wolves. Those who are chosen receive a special scent and are marked to become Spirit Hunters. This trait is required to be able to take the Spirit Chaser lifepath. It grants a 1D affiliation with the Spirit Hunters. It also grants a 1D spirit mark as per the Spirit Binding rules.

Spirit Nose *Dt*

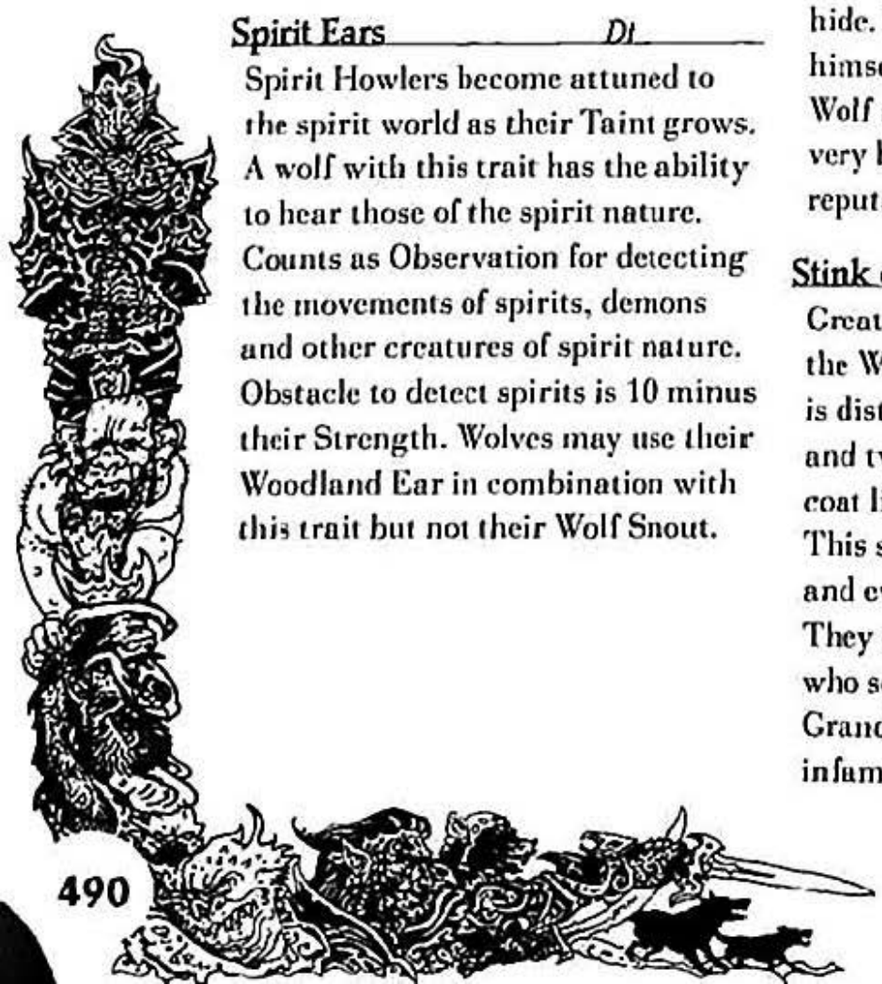
The Taint suffuses the Spirit Hunter. Using his Spirit Nose, he may add his Wolf Snout to detect spirits (as Spirit Ears above). Also, Spirit Nose allows Spirit Hunters to track spirits, even those who leave no marks or do not touch the ground. Use the obstacles listed with the Scent Tracking skill and be creative.

Stained *Dt*

The Last Wolf is the scapegoat of the pack. All of the pack's anger and frustration is taken out on his hide. No matter how he elevates himself throughout his life, the Last Wolf always bears this stain on his very heart. This trait grants a 1D reputation as a Last Wolf.

Stink of the Ancient *Dt*

Great Wolves can smell a Ghost of the Wood when he is near. His scent is distinct, a mix of Ancient Ways and twisted speech that covers his coat like the blood of the hunted. This stink causes fear, trepidation and even hatred in Great Wolves. They do not look kindly upon one who so tampers with the will of the Grandfather. This trait grants a 1D infamous reputation as a Ghost of



the Deeping Wood among the packs. Combine this with other reputations as appropriate.

Submissive *Dt*

Wolves learn to submit to a Dominant wolf at a very young age. Any wolf in the pack who is not part of the Dominant pair is Submissive. These wolves follow the lead of their superiors and often beg for certain permissions, including permission to eat from a kill. Being Submissive in the pack connotes no weakness. It merely shows that the wolf understands the natural order of things. This trait grants a free relationship with a master or dominant character.

Prominent Submissive behaviors include: looking away from the Dominant's gaze, crouching with head to the ground before the Dominant, rolling over and exposing the belly to the Dominant and nibbling or licking the Dominant's chin.

Lastly, wolves may possess both the Dominant and Submissive traits. These wolves will rule their pack as they rightly should, but they might also submit to stronger Dominants—be they wolf, human or Orc.

Tasting the Lash

Burning Wheel page 349-350.

Vile Language

Burning Wheel page 237.

Wanderlust *Char*

Watchful *Char*

Special Wolf Traits

Great Wolves may choose any of the traits listed in the Trait List that are not otherwise restricted *except* Ambidextrous, Aura of Holiness, Aura of Martyrdom, Dexterity of the Cat, Dog-Faced Boy, Joan of Arc, Skin of an Apple and Street Smart.

They may also choose from the following special wolf-only traits. When choosing a trait for the wolf's fur, remember that only one trait may be used to describe this feature. For example, Frost Coat and Changeling Coat cannot be taken together.

Ancient Terror *Dt* 6 pts

Ancient fear rolls off this wolf in waves. Add +2D to Intimidation tests.

Changeling Coat *Dt* 3 pts

This wolf was born to be a trickster. His coat shifts patterns and colors at will. Add +1D to Stealthy and Inconspicuous tests.

Fearsome Beast C-O 2 pts

There is an odd and unsettling air about this wolf—something very old and frightening. Use this trait as a call-on for Intimidation.

Frost Coat C-O 2 pts

The pelt of this wolf is glittering ice. Use this trait as a call-on for Stealthy when stalking the tundra and arctic wastes.



Ghost Coat C-O 4 pts.

This wolf's coat shifts subtly from dark to light, from mottled to plain, depending on what land he stalks and haunts. Use this for a call-on for Stealthy in any terrain.

Mangy Coat *Char*

Mark of the Ancient *Dt* 5 pts.

Some pups are born with the look of the Great Ancient about them. Such rare wolves are descendants from the Ancient, the first wolf who created the world. The packs believe such wolves are cursed and destined for a life of mayhem. This trait is required for using the skills Tongue of the Ancient One and Ancient Ways.

Formidable Bark C-O 2 pts.

The voice of this wolf is strong and clear. It easily pierces the dense woods and cuts through dampening fog. Use this trait as a call-on for Howling and Command.

Raven Friend *Dt* 1 pt.

Wolves and ravens have a special relationship. Not only do they aid one another on the hunt—ravens will circle a herd to mark it for wolves, and wolves will allow ravens to feed at their kills—they are also great friends. Wolves and ravens enjoy taunting each other and playing endless and dangerous games of tag. This trait grants either a free relationship with a raven or a 1D affiliation with a conspiracy of ravens.

This trait signifies a wolf who is especially fond of ravens and well thought of by the birds. While the whole pack may play, he is the only pack member who can understand the quacks and squawks of raven speech.

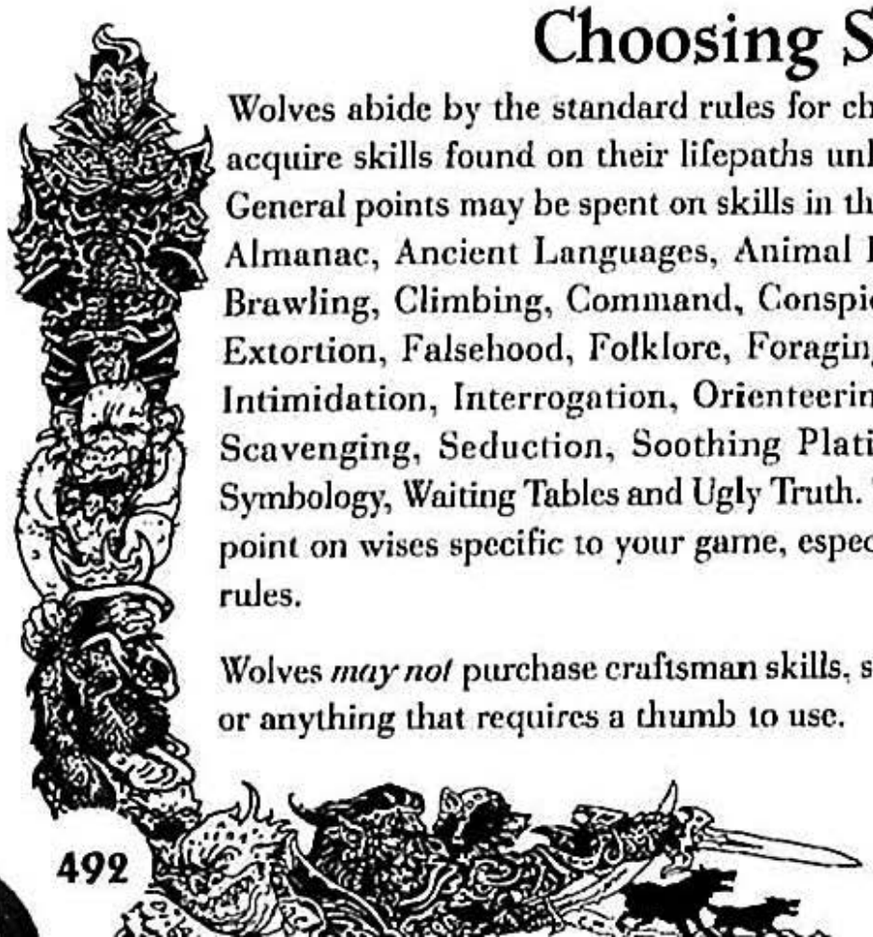
Shadow Coat C-O 2 pts.

The fur of this wolf is perfectly suited to stalking in the shadows of the woods. Use this trait as a call-on for Stealthy when stalking the forests and valleys.

Choosing Skills

Wolves abide by the standard rules for choosing skills. They can only acquire skills found on their lifepaths unless they use General points. General points may be spent on skills in this chapter and the following: Almanac, Ancient Languages, Animal Husbandry, Aura Reading, Brawling, Climbing, Command, Conspicuous, Doctrine, Etiquette, Extortion, Falsehood, Folklore, Foraging, Hauling, Inconspicuous, Intimidation, Interrogation, Orienteering, Philosophy, Ratiquette, Scavenging, Seduction, Soothing Platitudes, Stealthy, Survival, Symbology, Waiting Tables and Ugly Truth. They may also spend General point on wises specific to your game, especially ones not listed in these rules.

Wolves *may not* purchase craftsman skills, sorcerous skills, weapon skills or anything that requires a thumb to use.



Wolf Skills

Ancient Ways Will/Perception

It is said that the Great Ancient spoke the true names of the water, loam, wind and prairie fire. Closely guarded, these powerful names have been passed from generation to generation of Great Wolves descended from the last wolf of the ancestral pack—Fell Ancients who bear the Mark.

This skill is the wolf equivalent of the Spirit Binding skill. Wolves must have the *Mark of the Ancient* trait to use this skill.

Skill Type: Sorcerous **Tools:** No.

Begging Will

Begging is the Wolf's version of the Persuasion skill. This skill may be used as Persuasion in a Duel of Wits between Great Wolves or their friends. When a submissive wolf wants something, whether it be food or permission, he must beg the dominant for it. Begging is not humiliating to a wolf; it is part of their nature. Sometimes the female dominant will even need to beg when she is nursing her pups—she begs the pack to bring them food.

Obstacles: Begging food for pups, Ob 1. Other obstacles are based on the Will of the target wolf.

FoRKs: Pack Etiquette

Skill Type: Social **Tools:** No.

Cage-wise

Combat Mount Will/Power

Carrying a rider on a journey and bearing him into combat are two very different skills. A wolf must be trained to modify his fighting style in order to coordinate with his rider and not roll him or throw him.

Skill Type: Martial Training **Tools:** No.

Dog-wise

Elf-wise

Escape Artist Perception/Agility

Wolves can learn nearly anything. When trapped or caged, they quickly learn the mechanics of their captivity and devise a method of escape.

Obstacles: Collars, Ob 1. Leashes, Ob 2. Traps, Ob 3. Cages, Ob 4 and up.

FoRKs: Cage-wise, Trap-wise

Skill Type: Special **Tools:** No.

Forest-wise

Hoof-wise — Perception

Wolves learn the habits and nature of their prey.

Obstacles: Identifying species (horse, deer or elk), Ob 1. Judging the health of intended prey, Ob 2. Age and gender of prey, Ob 3. Predicting herd location, Ob 4.

Skill Type: Wise **Tools:** No.

Howling — Will

Wolves love to howl, and they do so for many reasons. It is the combination of the Singing, Oratory and Conspicuous skills.

Obstacles: Sing discordantly, Ob 1. Sing for joy, Ob 2. Howl for warning, Ob 3. Howl for the lost, Ob 4.

Skill Type: Social **Tools:** No.

Legion-wise

Man-wise

Nature of All Things — Perception/Will

This wolf knows the history of the trees, the streams, the rocks and brush. He knows why the snow falls and why the sun rises. He understands that the sharp tooth of the wolf lengthens the stride of the hoofed ones. He comprehends, vaguely, the interconnectedness of all things. This skill can be used as a FoRK for nearly any other skill (except martial skills), in a similar fashion to the Astrology skill.

Obstacles: Naming a natural feature, Ob 1. Naming a living creature, Ob 2. Giving cryptic advice, Ob 3. Discerning truth from lies, Ob 4. Interpreting natural omens, Ob 5.

FoRKs: Appropriate wises. May FoRK into any other skill from Wolf skill list.

Skill Type: Academic **Tools:** No.

Nursing — Perception/Will

This is the delicate process of weaning pups off the teat and slowly introducing them to meat and forage. Also, this skill is used like Field Dressing.

Obstacles: as Field Dressing. Or as the Will of the pup, if appropriate

FoRKs: Rearing

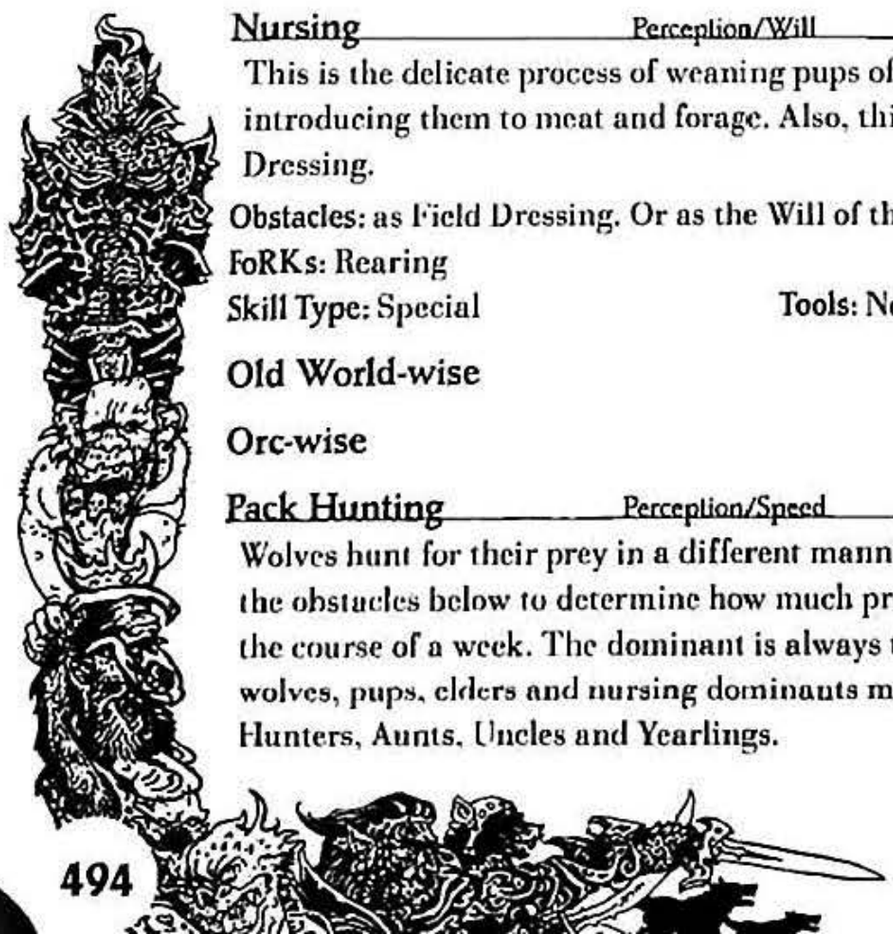
Skill Type: Special **Tools:** No.

Old World-wise

Orc-wise

Pack Hunting — Perception/Speed

Wolves hunt for their prey in a different manner than those on two legs. Use the obstacles below to determine how much prey a pack can bring down over the course of a week. The dominant is always the primary for this test. Last wolves, pups, elders and nursing dominants may not help in this test—only Hunters, Aunts, Uncles and Yearlings.



Obstacles: Adequate kills to feed a pack of up to three, Ob 4. Adequate kills to feed of pack of four or five Great Wolves, Ob 5. Adequate kills for a pack of six to seven. Ob 7. Note the bonuses and penalties for the hunting grounds as described in the Territories section of this chapter.
FoRKs: Scent Tracking, Scent-wise, Territory-wise, Forest-wise
Skill Type: Forester Tools: No.

Pack Etiquette Perception

This is crucial knowledge of the laws of the pack and what behavior is appropriate at what juncture.

Obstacles: Feed order at a kill, Ob 2. Approaching the pack as a foreigner, Ob 4.
FoRKs: Begging
Skill Type: Social Tools: No.

Pack-wise

Path-wise

Poisons-wise

Pup-wise

Rearing Perception/Will

This is the wolf's instructional skill. Good Uncles and Aunts pass on the knowledge of the hunt and the traditions of the pack to the young pups. Use this skill as Instruction for teaching wolves younger than you.

FoRKs: Way of the First Hunter
Skill Type: Social Tools: No.

Rider Training Will

This training teaches a wolf how to subordinate itself and accept commands from a rider.

Skill Type: Physical Training Tools: No.

Rituals-wise

River-wise

Savage Attack Agility/Speed

Orcs train wolves to fight savagely and wildly. Wolves with Savage Attack have access to all of the martial maneuvers, including Lock and Strike when using their Crushing Jaws.

FoRKs: Brawling
Skill Type: Martial Tools: No.

Scent Tracking Perception

Wolves track in a slightly different manner than humans. Elves and Orcs—they rely on scent and sound in addition to sight.

Obstacles: Tracking fresh scent on dry earth, Ob 1. Recognizing a known creature by scent trail, Ob 2. Picking up day-old scent, Ob 3. Following fresh scent from nearby prey on the wind, Ob 4. Tracking fresh scent in new, light rain, Ob 5. Tracking quarry that has crossed through a stream, Ob 6. Tracking after rain, Ob 7.

FoRKs: Scent-wise

Skill Type: Forester **Tools:** No.

Scent-wise

Spirit Hunter-wise

Village-wise

Tongue of the Ancient One Perception

It is said that the Great Ancient whispered his secrets to his last pup before he passed on from this world. He taught his outcast and hated child how to speak the true speech, how to make his words have power beyond understanding.

This skill is the equivalent of Sorcery. Great Wolves with the Mark of the Ancient trait may use this skill to cast spells.

Skill Type: Sorcerous **Tools:** No.

Way of the First Hunter Will/Perception

This is the Spirit Hunter's history of the world. This skill acts as Ancient History.

FoRKs: Old World-wise, Nature of All Things

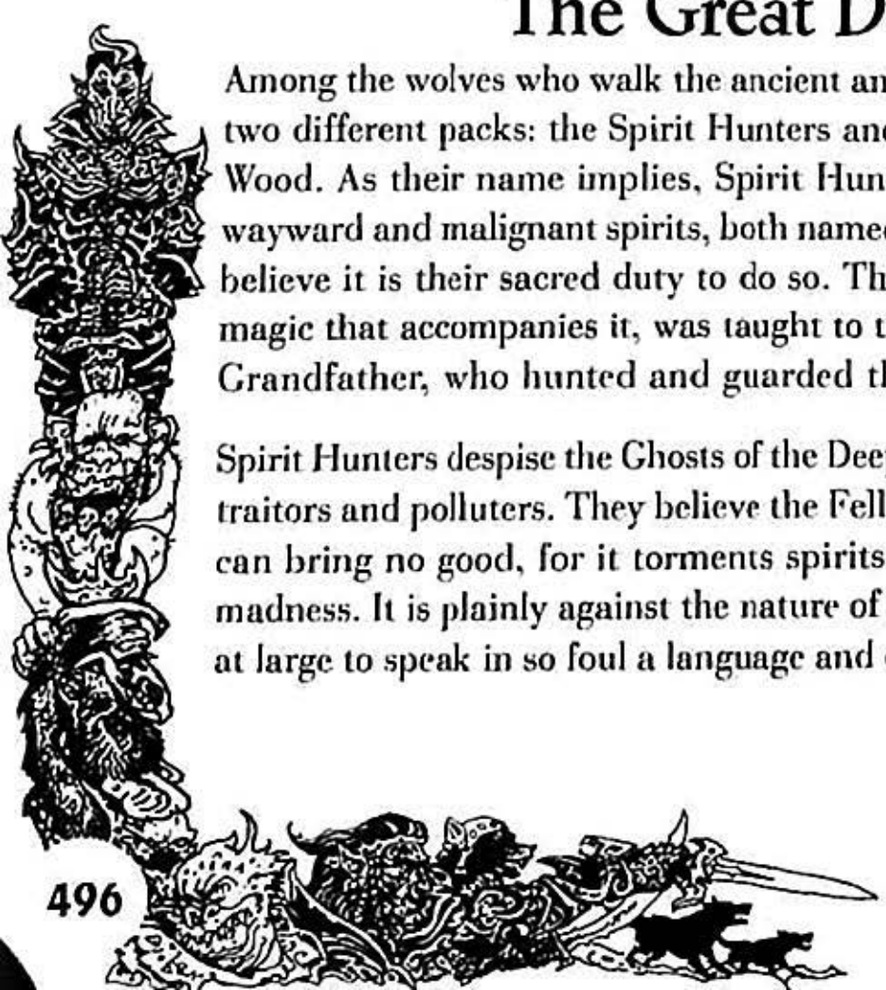
Skill Type: Academic **Tools:** No.

Wolf-wise

The Great Divide

Among the wolves who walk the ancient and forbidden paths, there are two different packs: the Spirit Hunters and the Ghosts of the Deeping Wood. As their name implies, Spirit Hunters guard the forests from wayward and malignant spirits, both named and nameless. In fact, they believe it is their sacred duty to do so. This duty, and the formidable magic that accompanies it, was taught to them by the first wolf, Great Grandfather, who hunted and guarded the first forest of the world.

Spirit Hunters despise the Ghosts of the Deeping Wood. They name them traitors and polluters. They believe the Fell Ancient's art of summoning can bring no good, for it torments spirits and drives them to acts of madness. It is plainly against the nature of both the wolf and the world at large to speak in so foul a language and disregard the natural law.



Ghosts of the Deeping Wood, on the other hand, were taught the true language of creation by the first wolf, whom they call Great Ancient. The Ghosts believe Great Ancient was not merely the first hunter but the *creator* of the world-forest. Before he disappeared into the mists, Great Ancient took his youngest son, the most despised of the pack, on a winding journey across the face of the earth. On the walk, Great Ancient instructed his son on the name of every rock, tree, cloud, river and lightning-sparked fire. Once he had imparted his secrets, Great Ancient told his despised son, the last wolf, to rule and keep the world well, for he would return one day to judge him and all his offspring.

Ghosts, Dire Haunts and Fell Ancients consider the Spirit Hunters blind in their devotion to a misunderstood ancestry. They rightly fear the wrath of the Spirit Hunters and avoid them at all cost, but ultimately they hold them in disdain.

Spirit Hunters

Lone wolves who wander certain paths—lonely winding paths through impenetrable brambles and across cutting shale—might find themselves one night confronted by a wolf of eerie, shining fur. This wolf will nod and lock eyes once with the lone one, yet the visitor neither submits nor dominates. After his assessment, the glittering wolf turns and runs full bore, hurtling along the hidden paths of the forest. If the lone one gives chase, and if he can keep pace—perhaps even catch him before the gray dawn sweeps the night from the sky—then he is deemed chosen and inducted into the Spirit Hunter pack.

Once chosen, he is brought before the great Spirit Hunters and taught to sing the Song of Great Grandfather, which is the history of the wolf, the world and the spirits. Once he has mastered the song, he becomes a Spirit-Chaser and hunts for the spirit-pack. He and the other chasers patrol the woods seeking out wayward spirits or those malignant wolves who torment spirits. On the hunt, his fellow chasers teach the new wolf Grandfather's first bark—a bark so powerful that even spirits fear it. If he can master this spirit bark, he is further embraced by the pack and taught more complex howl-songs so that he might directly combat spirits himself.





Ancestral Taint

Spirit Hunters gain their power from the knowledge passed down from Great Grandfather through the generations. The duty to serve Great Grandfather is an honor and the power granted is mighty, but its end is tragic: No wolf who accepts the power will have a natural death—he shall either be killed by violence or he shall pass on into the spirit realms.

The greater the Spirit Hunter, the closer he comes to succumbing to the great spirit. Once the Ancestral Taint reaches exponent 10, the wolf passes on.

Starting Ancestral Taint

Ancestral Taint is an emotional attribute like Faith or Grief. Wolves with the Spirit Marked trait bear the Taint. The shade of the Taint is the same as the Wolf's Will. The following conditions create the exponent:

—If a wolf has the Ancestral Taint trait, add one.
—If a wolf knows the Primal Bark, add one.
—If a wolf has Spirit Nose, add one.
—If a wolf has learned Ancestral Jaw, add one.
—If a wolf has learned Grandfather's Song, add one.
—If a wolf has the Stink of the Ancients trait, add one.

Advancing Ancestral Taint

Whenever the wolf in question meets one of the criteria listed below, he earns a test toward advancement. Ancestral Taint is never rolled. When a Spirit Hunter finally gives in to the Spirit Nature (advances the attribute to exponent 10), he is no longer playable as a character—he has gone on to join Grandfather.

Note that the actual in-game obstacles of Grandfather's Song are irrelevant for Ancestral Taint tests. Use of these abilities has a fixed obstacle on the scale.

If a player wishes to halt the advancement of his Ancestral Taint, he must make different choices for the character. The conditions are clearly set; can the wolf avoid fulfilling his nature?

Obstacle 1

Howling for *Spirit Jaws* (see Ancestral Jaw). Confronting a lesser (Strength 1-5) nameless spirit.

Obstacle 2

Howling for *Preternatural Jaws* (see Ancestral Jaw). Confronting a Dire Haunt or lesser named spirit. Receiving a superficial or light wound from a nameless spirit.

Obstacle 3

Howling for *Fox-Luck* (see Ancestral Jaw). Howling for *Silent Voice* (see Grandfather's Song below). Confronting a greater nameless spirit (Strength 6-10). Confronting a Fell Ancient. Receiving a superficial or light wound from a lesser named spirit.

Obstacle 4

Howling for *Jaws of Lightning* (see Ancestral Jaw). Confronting a greater named spirit. Receiving a midi, severe or traumatic wound from a nameless spirit.

Obstacle 5

Howling for *Avalanche* (see Ancestral Jaw). Receiving a superficial or light wound from a greater named spirit.

Obstacle 6
Howling for *Spirit Unseen* (see Grandfather's Song). Consuming the corpse of a creature with the Ancestral Taint trait. Slaying a lesser named spirit using Ancestral Jaw.

Obstacle 7
Slaying a greater named spirit with the Ancestral Jaw. Receiving a midi, severe or traumatic wound from a greater named spirit. Consuming a lesser named spirit.

Obstacle 8
Howling for *Celestial Sight* (see Grandfather's Song).

Obstacle 9
Consuming the corpse of a greater demon or angel.

Obstacle 10
Howling for *Spirit Nature* (see Grandfather's Song).

Earning Spirit Ears and Spirit Nose Traits

If a character doesn't start the game with Spirit Ears or Spirit Nose, these traits may be "learned" in play. When a wolf character learns the Ancestral Jaw song, she may add Spirit Ears to her trait list. When a wolf character learns Grandfather's Song, she may add Spirit Nose to her trait list.

Remember, learning these skills and gaining these traits can add to the Spirit Hunter's Ancestral Taint. See above for the mechanics.

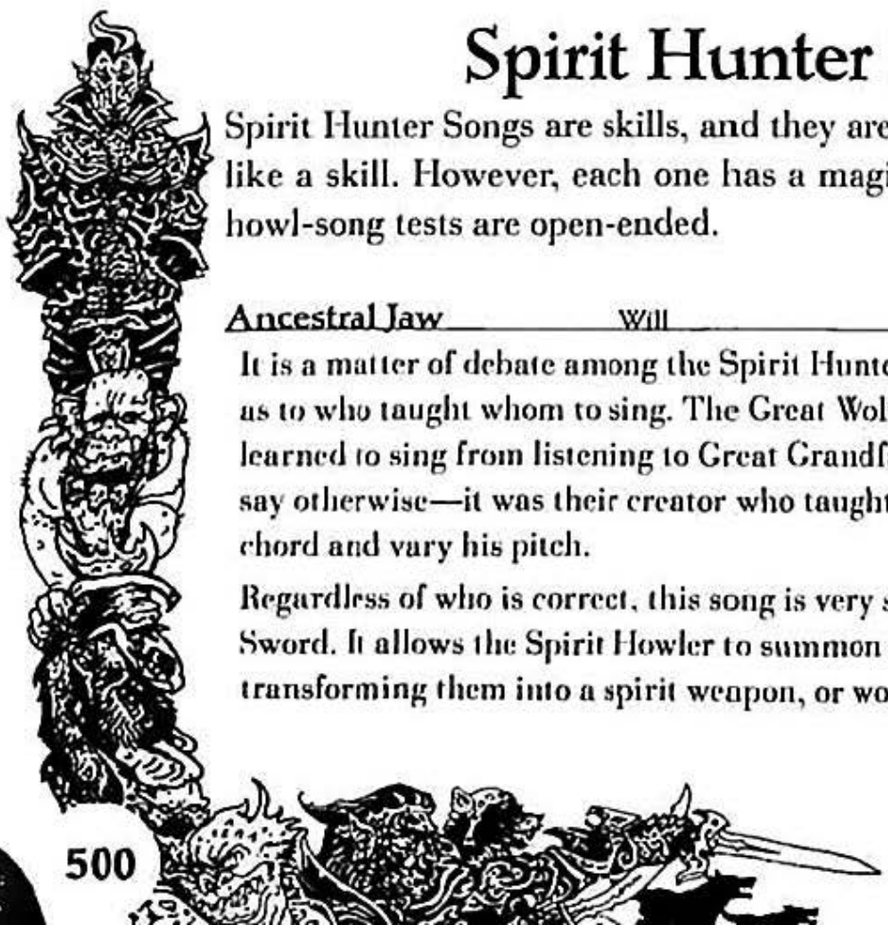
Spirit Hunter Songs

Spirit Hunter Songs are skills, and they are rated, rolled and advanced like a skill. However, each one has a magical effect tied to it, and all howl-song tests are open-ended.

Ancestral Jaw — Will

It is a matter of debate among the Spirit Hunters and the Elven Wanderers as to who taught whom to sing. The Great Wolves attest that the Elves learned to sing from listening to Great Grandfather howl. The Wanderers say otherwise—it was their creator who taught Grandfather how to howl in chord and vary his pitch.

Regardless of who is correct, this song is very similar to the Song of the Sword. It allows the Spirit Howler to summon ancient power into his jaws, transforming them into a spirit weapon, or worse.



Obstacles: Ob 1: *Spirit Jaws*, jaws become a spirit weapon. (This is the most basic form of this howl. All subsequent forms count as Spirit Jaws in addition to the howled for power.) Ob 2: *Preternatural Jaws*, extra successes add dice to the wolf's Brawling or Savage Attack skills. Ob 3: *Fox-Luck*, all Brawling, Savage Attack and Speed dice become open-ended. Ob 4: *Jaws of Lightning*, +1 to Reflexes for the duration of the combat. Ob 5: *Avalanche*, the wolf may double his dice on the Charge.
Duration: Exchanges equal to Will exponent
Actions: 1x obstacle

Grandfather's Song — Ancestral Taint

This powerful and dangerous song allows the wolf to take on the traits of the very spirits he hunts. The danger in this howl is that it brings the wolf closer to joining Great Grandfather in the spirit realms. Grandfather's Song causes the Ancestral Taint to spread more quickly.

This is the most difficult song, and within it there are four separate tones: Silent Voice, Spirit Unseen, Celestial Sight and Spirit Nature.

Howl for Silent Voice
Obstacle: 2 **Actions:** 1 **Duration:** Hours equal to Will
Effect: While under the spell's power, the wolf may speak directly to the minds of those within his presence.

Howl for Spirit Unseen
Obstacle: 3 or 5 **Actions:** 3 **Duration:** Hours equal to Speed
Effect: The Spirit Hunter disappears from mortal sight. This Ob 3 ability grants +1D to Stealthy plus additional advantage dice for each success over the obstacle. The Ob 5 version of Spirit Unseen allows Stealthy to work on normal and magical sight and negates all forms of Observation, imposing unskilled penalties on observers.

Howl for Celestial Sight
Obstacle: 4 **Actions:** 4 **Duration:** Hours equal to Perception
Effect: The Spirit Hunter sees as the spirits do. Combined with his Spirit Ears and Spirit Nose traits, this puts the Spirit Hunter's senses entirely within the realm of the spirits. See the Celestial Sight trait in the Monstrous Trait list.

Howl for Spirit Nature
Obstacle: 7 **Actions:** 5 **Duration:** Hours equal to Forte
Effect: The wolf may walk as the spirits do. Time does not affect him so greatly, nor does gravity or other earthly bonds. Shade shift the wolf's Speed one step to the right. Also, the wolf cannot be burned by mortal fire or cold, and mortal weapons do not harm him.

Primal Bark — Will

This ferocious and formidable bark comes from deep within the wolf. Channeling the essence of his snarls and barks, the wolf speaks as Great Grandfather once did. Roll the wolf's skill versus the Spirit's Strength. If the wolf wins the test, the spirit is abjured and driven off. It will not return

while the wolf remains in its domain. If used against a named spirit, the obstacle is equal to the victim's Will. Success means the creature must pass a Steel test.

If used against a creature of non-Spirit Nature. Primal Bark causes a Steel test. Test the skill against an obstacle equal to the victim's Will. Successes over the obstacle increase hesitation by one each. Any *animal* forced to hesitate from this bark will break and "Run Screaming." Characters may choose their own fate as per the standard Steel test results.

The Primal Bark is impossibly loud and penetrating. It can be heard over a great distance—for dozens of miles on a quiet night. The sound of it will summon forth any Spirit Hunters in the vicinity, who will come to the aid of their brethren.

Duration: Instantaneous
Actions: 2

Ghosts of the Deeping Wood

Ghosts know the truth. What the Spirit Hunters fail to acknowledge is the superiority of their great heritage over all others—humans and Elves included. Great Grandfather was not merely the first hunter to prowl the first forest; it was he who *created* the world and all its forests, rivers and valleys. He is much older than the benighted Spirit Hunters dream—not merely Grandfather, but the one true ancient creator.

The Great Ancient took his most wayward son and gave to him these most precious gifts, which have been passed down from last wolf to last wolf since the dawn of time. It isn't merely a privilege to speak this magic, it is a wolf's right.

In order to become a Ghost of the Deeping Woods, a wolf must forsake the pack and all that it entails. He must go alone into the world and seek not a mate, but empty and forlorn places. He must wander lost and hopeless, listening to the speech of the brook and the song of the wind—the nature of the world and its great history whispered across the backs of snowy pines.

Once he has given himself over to the truth of the world, a shadeling voice comes to him and brings light to his gloaming eyes. Some say it is the Great Ancient himself who comes and teaches his pups. Others say it is the forest and ravens commanded thusly by the Ancient. Still others believe in the power of the unseen Dire Haunt choosing his pupil and imparting him with fevered knowledge.

Dire Haunts

Among wolves. Dire Haunts are seen as tricksters and troublemakers. Among humans, they are considered terrible and frightening creatures who lurk in the deep woods and lure the lost to their graves.

A Dire Haunt learns the skill known as the Tongue of the Ancient One. This is the equivalent of Sorcery and is governed by the same rules.

Wolves who start with the Tongue of the Ancient One skill may choose from the following spells: Ancient Grip (10 rps), Blue-Blooded Heart (8 rps), Chameleon (16 rps), Dark of Night (12 rps), The Fear (6 rps), Grey Cloak (8 rps), High Speech (as Low Speech, replace "Dogs" with humans, Orcs and Elves; 8 rps), Howl Caster (as Voice Caster, 8 rps), Trackless Path (12 rps), Water Walker (10 rps) and Witch Flight (6 rps).

New Dire Haunt Spells

Ancient Grip — Ob 2-5 — Ob x1 Actions

The Ghost of the Woods calls upon the strength of roots, branches, blades and vines to reach forth and pull down the unwary and weak. Ensorcelling grass and brush, Ob 2; vines and hangers, Ob 3; small branches and saplings, Ob 4; large thick branches, Ob 5.

If the spell is successfully cast, the flora will do the bidding of the wolf as best as they are able. They will carry or retrieve objects, close off paths or even subdue an opponent. Test the victim's Power versus that of the spell. The Power of the spell is equal to the caster's Will exponent modified like so: -1D for grass; no bonus/penalty for vines; +1D for branches; +2D for large or thick branches. The weapon length for each type of flora is as follows: Grass is shortest, vines are short, small branches are long, and large branches are longer.

The spell can affect all those in the wolf's presence, should he so desire. Roll separate Power tests for each victim.

Origin: Caster
Element: Earth
Duration: Sustained
Area of Effect: Presence
Impetus: Control
Resource Points: 10

Trackless Path — Ob 3^ — 4 Actions

When ensorcelled with this spell, the traveler leaves no trace of his passage. Success adds a +1 Ob penalty to anyone attempting to track or stalk this wolf. Each success over the obstacle increases the penalty by one.

Origin: Presence
Element: Earth
Duration: Sustained
Area of Effect: Caster or Single Target
Impetus: Influence
Resource Points: 12

Fell Ancients

Fell Ancients know the Great Ancient's deepest secrets. They speak directly to the land and sky, and command it to their will. Fell Ancients are taught the Ancient Ways. This is the equivalent of the Spirit Binding skill in every respect.

Fell Ancients consider themselves the guardians of the packs. Though viewed quite superstitiously by their benighted brethren, they believe it is their duty to aid the packs as the Great Ancient would have. Thus, in this capacity, they calm storms, abate the snow and wind, clear paths and even curb the wildfires that erupt in dry summers—all so that the packs might flourish and another one who bears the mark might journey forth into the deeping wood and take up his ancestral role.

Packs and Pups

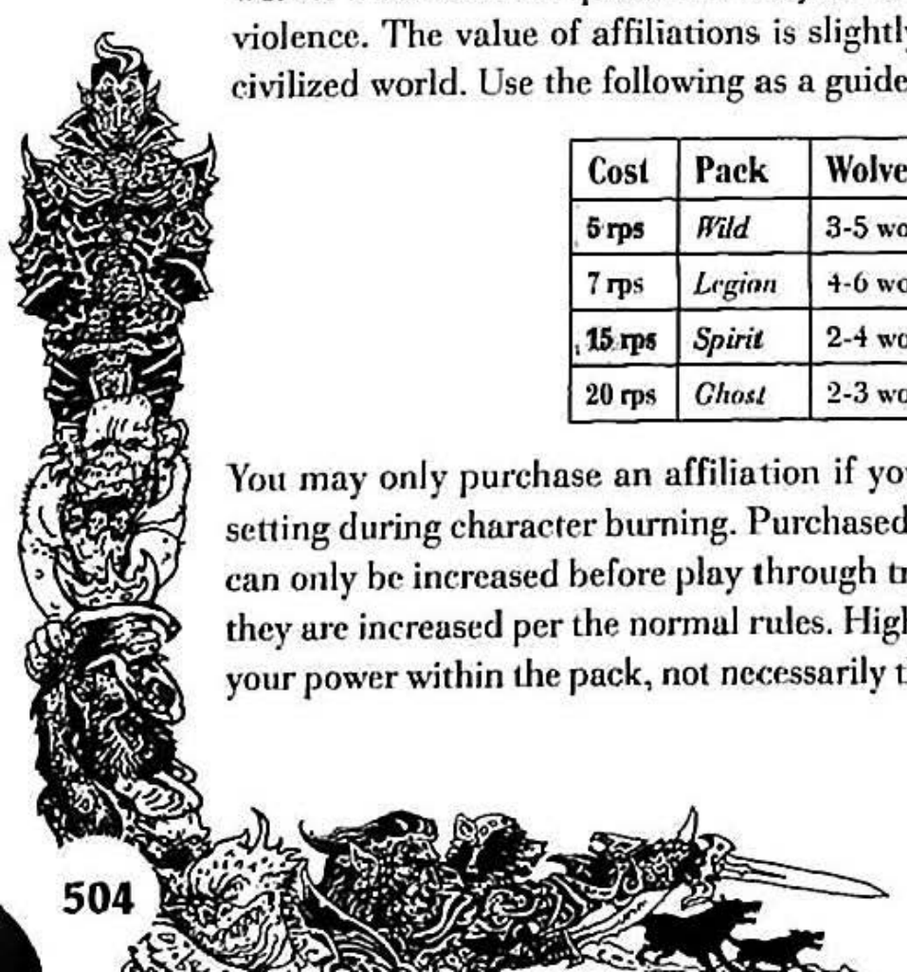
With their limited resources, players may purchase pups, pack mates and friends for their wolf characters. These wolves hunt and travel with the player-character wolf. Additional contacts from outside of the pack may be purchased. Wolf relationships may be powerful, important or minor, as per the rules in the Burning Wheel.

Pack Affiliations

Wolves think in packs. Beyond any other division, this is the most important. Wolves from very different backgrounds can come together in one pack and they'll treat each other as family. On the other hand, wolves from different packs are subject to suspicion, mistrust or even violence. The value of affiliations is slightly different than that of the civilized world. Use the following as a guide:

Cost	Pack	Wolves
5 rps	*Wild*	3-5 wolves
7 rps	*Legion*	4-6 wolves
15 rps	*Spirit*	2-4 wolves
20 rps	*Ghost*	2-3 wolves

You may only purchase an affiliation if you took a lifepath from that setting during character burning. Purchased affiliations start at 1D, and can only be increased before play through traits like Dominant. In play, they are increased per the normal rules. Higher level affiliations indicate your power within the pack, not necessarily the size or power of the pack.



This is different than the standard affiliation rules, as wolf culture is not analogous to human culture.

Pack Mates

A wild pack consists of an Aunt or Uncle, one or two Dominants, a Hunter, a Yearling or two if the pack is healthy and a Last Wolf if the pack is large. But the most important members of the pack are the pups.

Pups

The most precious resource of any pack is the pup. Without pups, the pack cannot survive. When the pups are born in the spring, the entire pack devotes its energies to hunting for them and nursing them to maturity. A Great Wolf pup does not reach full maturity until he is two years old, but by the end of the first year, he is usually strong enough to fend for himself.

A pup is two to eight months old and cannot travel far or hunt for itself. You must take care of it until it reaches adulthood. If it does so, it can become a new pack member, a possible mate or a deadly enemy.

Wolf Friends

Raven

Wolves may purchase a raven as a traveling companion. This is a single raven who travels with the wolf.

Dog or Lesser Wolf

Occasionally a dog or lesser wolf will be inducted into a pack and allowed to hunt with them awhile. Even more rarely, a lone Great Wolf will adopt a lesser wolf or dog to accompany him on his long treks.

Reputation

Certain wolves are known amongst the packs, ravens and herds as prodigious hunters and masters of their realm. Some wolves are so well known that their fame spills even from the lips of humans and Orcs. Certain wolves are utterly infamous among their own kind—Ghosts and Spirit Hunters are especially reviled.

Territory

Great wolves do not own territory in the way that humans, Elves, Orcs, etc. view it. For wolf packs, they occupy territory and hunt on it. They defend good hunting ground from interlopers, but they'll also move on if hunting goes bad or if a bigger, more powerful pack moves in.

To determine your starting territory, roll on the following table, modified by your chosen lifepaths.

Roll	Hunting Ground	Penalty/Bonus
2	*Waste*	+2 Ob Pack Hunting
3-6	*Marginal hunting grounds*	+1 Ob/+1D special
7-9	*Typical hunting grounds*	—
10-11	*Plentiful hunting grounds*	+1D Pack Hunting
12	*Untouched Old World*	See below

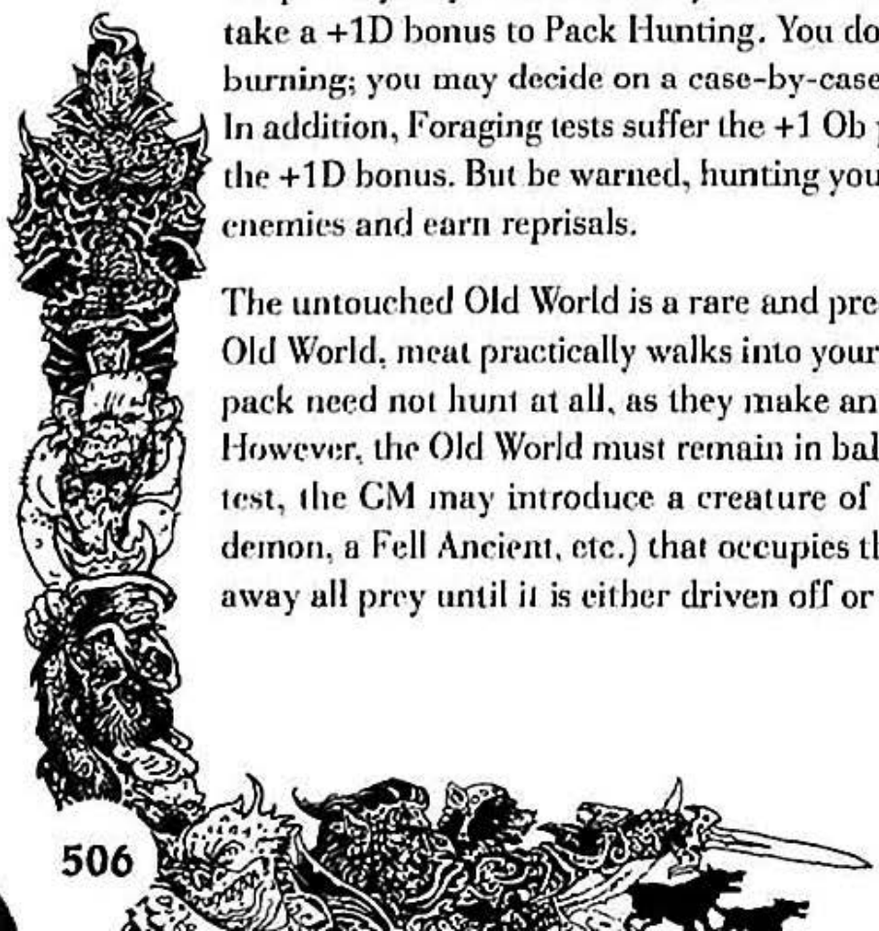
Last Lifepath Setting	Penalty/Bonus
Legion, Captive, Outcast	-1 category
Wild	—
Wild Dominant	+1 to roll
Spirit Hunter	+1 category
Ghost of the Deeping Wood	+2 categories

From the Margins

Waste hunting grounds indicate ill force has befouled the land: a passing army, a polluting city or an ancient curse. There's little to be found there.

Marginal hunting grounds means that your pack hunts on the margins of another culture. Perhaps the Orc Legions are encamped nearby or you're hunting through the farms and forests surrounding a human city. If you respect the boundaries of the other culture, Pack Hunting is done at a +1 Ob penalty. If you do not and you hunt those who share your grounds, take a +1D bonus to Pack Hunting. You do not decide during character burning; you may decide on a case-by-case basis when hunting in play. In addition, Foraging tests suffer the +1 Ob penalty but Scavenging gains the +1D bonus. But be warned, hunting your neighbors is a way to make enemies and earn reprisals.

The untouched Old World is a rare and precious hunting ground. In the Old World, meat practically walks into your mouth. Once per season, the pack need not hunt at all, as they make an easy kill or gorge on forage. However, the Old World must remain in balance. As the result of a failed test, the GM may introduce a creature of the Old World (a dragon, a demon, a Fell Ancient, etc.) that occupies the pack's territory and scares away all prey until it is either driven off or negotiated with.





Hunt the World

Great Wolf territories tend to range for hundreds, if not thousands, of square miles. Obviously, the pack does not occupy that whole territory at all times. They'll range from den to den, making kills and raising pups. Should they find evidence of trespasses—carcasses, spoor, etc.—they'll hunt down the interlopers and see them off.

Sketch the pack's territory onto your world map. Where are its dens? What does it hunt?

The territory rules work best in an all-Great Wolf game, or at least one predominated by wolves. If you're playing wolves from more than one background, roll up the various territories and then choose the one that best suits your situation, campaign and world.

Barding, Collars and Spikes

Wolves or Orcs whose last lifepath is in the Black Legion are allowed to purchase wolf armor and weapons, if they so choose.

Wolf Barding	Locations	Dice	Cost
Leather chanfron	Head and Face	1D	3 rps
Metal chanfron	Head and Face	2D	15 rps
Stiff leather collar	Neck	1D	2 rps
Reinforced leather body armor	Breast, Body, Rump	2D	6 rps
Light mail body armor	Breast, Body, Rump	3D	24 rps
Leather greaves and cuissarts	Fore or Hind Legs	1D	2 rps
Metal greaves and cuissarts	Fore or Hind Legs	2D	15 rps

Clumsy Weight for Wolf Armor

Armor Type	Penalty
Leather chanfron	+1 Ob Perception
Metal chanfron	+1 Ob Perception, hunting, tracking
Stiff leather collar	—
Reinforced leather body armor	+1 Ob Health, Forte and Stealthy
Light mail body armor	+2 Ob Health, Forte and Stealthy
Leather greaves and cuissarts	-1D Speed
Metal greaves and cuissarts	-1D Speed and Agility
Blades and Claws	+1 Ob Speed and Agility



Not-So-Defensive Weapons

These weapons are built into wolf armor. Your wolf must wear the appropriate armor to be fitted with the weapon. The cost of the armor and weapon modification are listed with each entry below.

Spiked Collars

Spiked collars protect the wolf's neck from being grabbed. Increase all obstacles to Lock a wolf wearing a spiked collar by +1 Ob.

Spiked collars are an upgrade to stiff leather collars. They cost 3 rps.

Spiked and Studded Armor

You can fit your wolf barding with spikes and studs. Spiked and studded armor causes a +1 Ob penalty to any bite, claw or bare-fisted attack made against the wolf.



Spikes and studs also make great hand holds. Anyone attempting to Lock, Push or Throw a beast so adorned gains a +1D advantage.

Spiked leather armor costs 8 rps. Spiked mail costs 30 rps.

Blades and Claws

You can fit your greaves and cuissarts with special steel blades. Doing so enables you to slash and cut with your limbs when pressed: Pow 1, Add 1, VA –, WS 1, Shortest weapon. +1D when attacking a Locked opponent or when Locked yourself.

Leather greaves fitted with blades and claws cost 4 rps. Metal greaves mounted with blades and claws costs 20 rps.

Wolf Tactics

Whether they are bringing down hoofed prey, subduing a wayward pack member or killing a stray wolf of an opposing pack, fighting is commonplace in any wolf's life. Great Wolves have a particular way they engage in combat.

They prefer to fight in packs but do not have to do so. If at all possible, a wolf will attempt to gain on his opponent with stealth and attack from surprise. If spotted, the wolf will lock eyes with his enemy and attempt to intimidate him into running. If the quarry does break, the prowling wolf will instantly leap to the pursuit, taking his opponent down with a savage bite to the midriff or head, if possible.

If quarry does not break from intimidation, a pack of wolves will attempt to encircle it and harry its flanks. If it doesn't run, then they are usually at a standoff. Great Wolves hunt massive prey—huge caribou and moose that could easily smash them with their sharp hooves and deadly horns. It is imperative that the wolves catch them on the run, when they are vulnerable.

When fighting against long weapons, a wolf must close quickly and knock its quarry down, preventing use of the blade and shaft. When confronting the bow (or worse, crossbow, gun or spell), a wolf must use cunning and stealth to bring down its opponent. Without armor or range, a wolf is quite vulnerable to the concerted efforts of those loosing shaft and spell. Before risking all on a rush, consider other options. Is this the day for this fight? Can it be conducted at a better time and place of your choosing? Perhaps patience will win the day when strength and speed cannot.

Wolves in Play

When envisioning these wolves, think *The Jungle Book*, *Animal Farm* and *Princess Mononoke*.

The easiest use of a Great Wolf in play is as a mount for an Orc. One player can undertake the role of both characters, or one can play the Orc and the other can play the wolf. It's important to remember that these wolves are not mundane animals. These mounts argue with their masters, offer advice and even kill their riders should they grow enraged or frustrated. So, compromise or a whip is recommended.

Dark Friends also make great additions to an Orc Servant of the Dark Blood campaign. Also, adding a Great Wolf Shadow Chaser to an Orc band can add depth to the group.

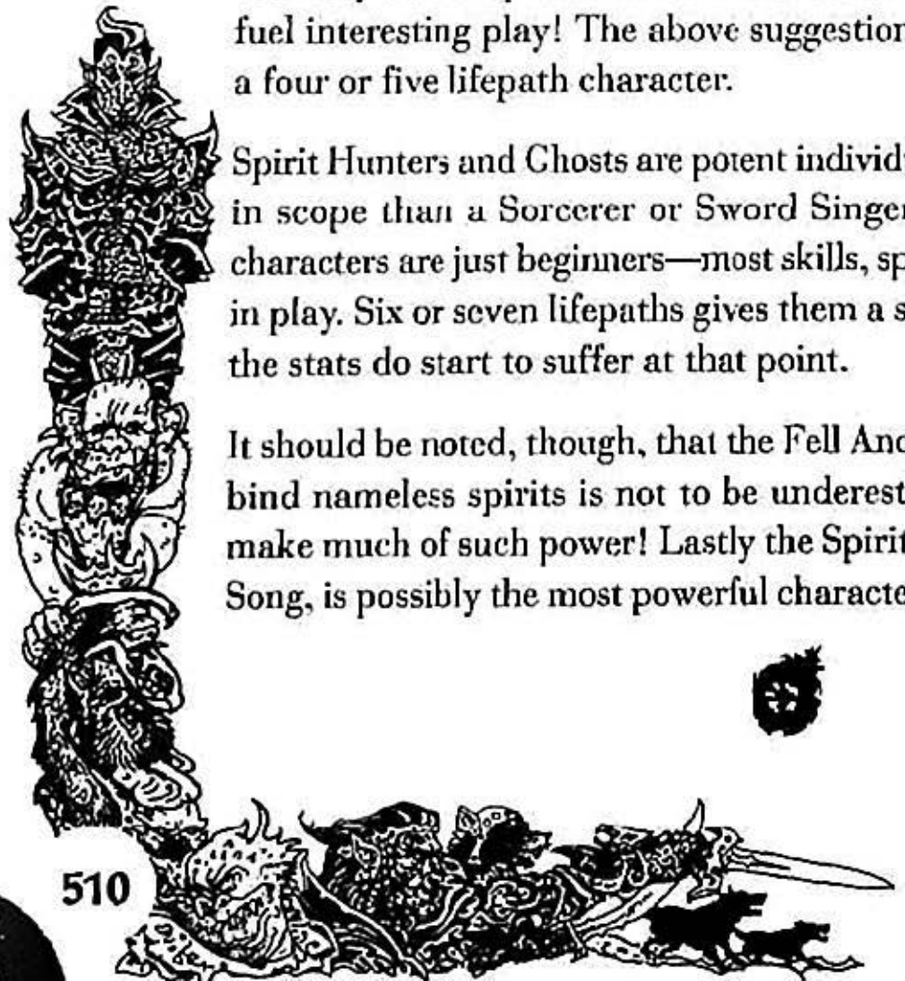
On the non-Orc side of the coin, wolves make full and rich characters. They usually enter play with a goodly amount of skill and stat points, though limited in experience. This strong base allows for fast expansion and development.

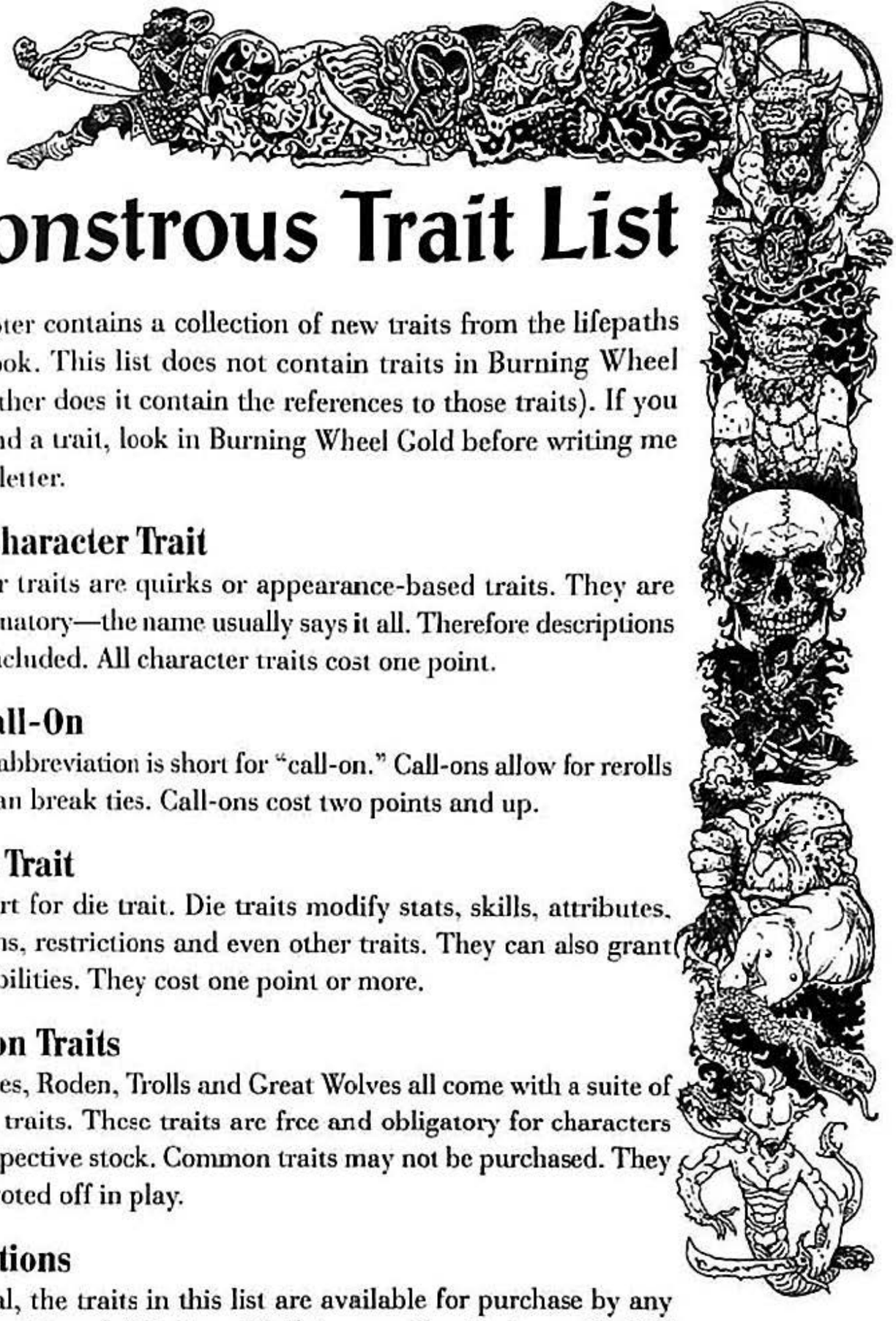
Though not as tough as a heavily armed and armored warrior, a Great Wolf is a terrifying opponent in combat. However, some caution should be taken in this arena. Wolf characters are vulnerable—one good shot usually takes one down. Thus, stealth and cunning are more in order than brute strength.

Lone Wolves and Scavengers make interesting additions to any party and they come replete with dark secrets and back-story—elements that fuel interesting play! The above suggestions usually play out best with a four or five lifepath character.

Spirit Hunters and Ghosts are potent individuals but notably more limited in scope than a Sorcerer or Sword Singer. With five lifepaths, these characters are just beginners—most skills, spells and songs will be learned in play. Six or seven lifepaths gives them a solid foundation of skills, but the stats do start to suffer at that point.

It should be noted, though, that the Fell Ancient's ability to summon and bind nameless spirits is not to be underestimated. A clever player can make much of such power! Lastly the Spirit Hunter howl, Grandfather's Song, is possibly the most powerful character-affecting spell in the game.





Monstrous Trait List

This chapter contains a collection of new traits from the lifepaths in this book. This list does not contain traits in Burning Wheel Gold (neither does it contain the references to those traits). If you cannot find a trait, look in Burning Wheel Gold before writing me an angry letter.

Char=Character Trait

Character traits are quirks or appearance-based traits. They are self-explanatory—the name usually says it all. Therefore descriptions are not included. All character traits cost one point.

C-O=Call-On

The *C-O* abbreviation is short for "call-on." Call-ons allow for rerolls or they can break ties. Call-ons cost two points and up.

Dt=Die Trait

Dt is short for die trait. Die traits modify stats, skills, attributes, limitations, restrictions and even other traits. They can also grant special abilities. They cost one point or more.

Common Traits

Dark Elves, Roden, Trolls and Great Wolves all come with a suite of common traits. These traits are free and obligatory for characters of the respective stock. Common traits may not be purchased. They may be voted off in play.

Restrictions

In general, the traits in this list are available for purchase by any character—Dwarf, Elf, Great Wolf, human, Orc, Roden or Troll. If you want your human urchin to have two tentacles, pay the four points and enjoy. Some lifepath traits are made available here for general consumption, but note that these can't be purchased by characters of that stock. Those characters need to get them through the appropriate lifepath. Common traits cannot be purchased.

Certain special traits will be restricted to a specific stock, and may only be purchased if your character is of the correct origin.

Others traits are restricted to their source lifepath only. These traits will list no price and state "X lifepath trait."

A

Acquisitive *Char*

Aecer's Likeness *Dt*

Roden claim they were created in the image of their god, Aecer. Covered in short fur, they bear large ears and long tails. Their elongated feet are thickly padded, making shoes unnecessary. Pronounced incisors curve down from their extended snouts.

Restrictions: Roden common trait

Addled *Char*

Alarmist *Dt* 2 pts

Deputies aren't necessarily cowards, but they know the best way to deal with trouble is to bring in reinforcements—fast! "Shout when surprised or hesitating" must be added as an additional fourth Instinct.

Albino *Dt* 3 pts

This Roden has white fur, pink eyes and is sensitive to sunlight. The Albino suffers +2 Ob to all Inconspicuous tests and carries an infamous reputation among Roden. Combine this infamous reputation with other appropriate similar ones.

Restrictions: Roden only

Always in the Way *Char*

Amoeboid *Dt* 5 pts

Your body has been transformed into a roiling mass of translucent cytoplasm. You no longer have limbs or a mouth. Instead you propel yourself and feed with pseudopods projected from your body. To feed, you surround something with your pseudopods and then liquefy it with fluid-filled vesicles in the walls of your membrane. Your stride is 1.

Amulet Bound *Dt* 8 pts

This creature's spirit resides trapped in an amulet. If its body is destroyed its spirit returns safely to the amulet.

The amulet-bound can inhabit a new body if one is provided. Transferring the spirit requires a Minor Miracle or a body separated from it's soul through the Living Death ritual. Obviously, this may require the assistance of your factotum.

If the amulet is worn while inhabited by the spirit, the spirit may communicate with the bearer.

If the amulet is destroyed while the spirit is inhabiting it, the spirit is also destroyed—unless the amulet-bound possesses the Spirit Nature trait. In that case, the spirit is released from the amulet and becomes a spooky ghost.

Ancestral Taint *Dt*

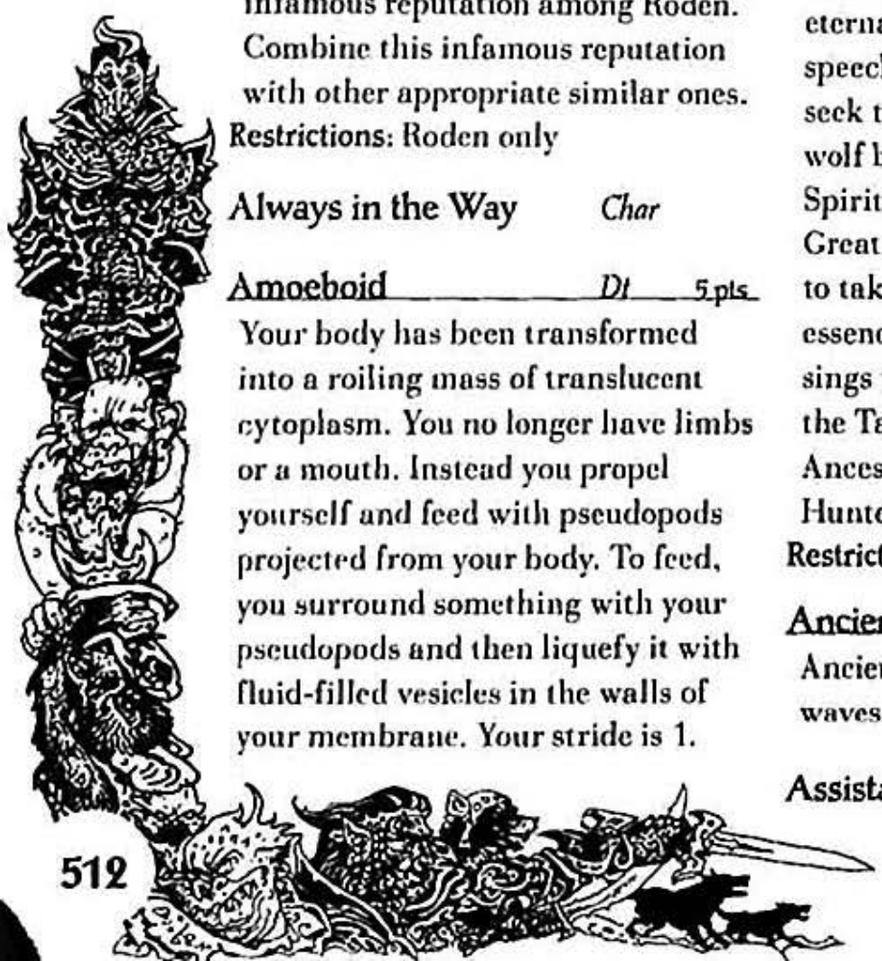
Spirit Hunters are said to be the chosen ones of the Great Grandfather—selected to take up his eternal struggle against the spirits, speech-twisters and demons that seek to overcome wolf-kind. Once a wolf begins to sing the howls of the Spirit Hunters, he grows closer to the Great Grandfather; in fact he begins to take on a bit of the ancient wolf's essence. The more the Spirit Howler sings the ancient songs, the more the Taint grows within him. See the Ancestral Taint rules in the Spirit Hunter section for more on this.

Restrictions: Great Wolfs only

Ancient Terror *Dt* 6 pts

Ancient fear rolls off this wolf in waves. Add +2D to Intimidation tests.

Assistant Pig-Keeper *Char*



B

Bellowing — C-O — 4 pts

The sound of this Troll's voice is unimaginably loud. Use as a call-on for Intimidation and Command.

Berzerker — Dt — 3 pts

When this Troll fails a Steel test or suffers a wound (that he can feel—Numb and Dead to Pain work against this trait), the monster immediately and automatically shifts into aggressive stance. There is no hesitation. While enraged he will (and must) attack any living (or seemingly living) thing around him—starting with that which just hurt/enraged him. He then moves on to the next closest target, friend or foe. The Troll remains in aggressive stance even if he sprints. The rage lasts for exchanges equal to 10 minus the character's Will exponent.

If the monster is already in aggressive stance when the above conditions are met, he spends two actions roaring and bellowing (which count as an Intimidation test against his opponents).

Black Nails — Dt

Trolls typically have massive, craggy claws used for digging and tearing. They don't often use their claws as a weapon, favoring the use of their stony fists to subdue prey. However if a Troll has another character in a Lock and chooses to do damage (rather than increase the Lock), add +1 Power to the damage of the attack due to the claws gouging into the victim.

Restrictions: Troll common trait

Blood Lust — Dt — 3 pts

This creature cannot refrain from feeding when it hungers. It simply must have blood. Blood Lust is transferred to its victims, who will crave blood—in the form of meat—while they live. So powerful is this lust that, when they die, they rise from the grave and walk the earth as revenants in search of blood.

Blood Thirsty — C-O — 2 pts

A Carnivore's blood runs hot, and he is quick to anger. He relies on confrontation to deal with most problems. Call-on for Intimidation. He must enter combat in aggressive stance.

Boor — Char

Bull Trolls have forceful personalities, perhaps verging on the barest of leadership qualities, but mitigated by ill moods, bad jokes and a predilection for overbearing violence.

Brass Skin — Dt — 9 pts

Brass Skin is equivalent to plated mail armor covering the whole body.

Brook No Fools — Dt — 7 pts

The spirit binder's art is not something to be trifled with! His secrets are well kept because meddling fools will only cause irreparable harm to themselves and the domains with which they tamper. A spirit binder with this trait receives a fate point every time he rebuffs an offer of help from a potential student (so that character does not earn a test toward learning the skill). He receives a persona point when he actively thwarts



another character from learning the secrets of Spirit Binding, Summoning or Circination.

Brute *Dt* 4 pts

This troll is so tough (or alternately, stupid) that he doesn't know when to give up. When taking die penalties from wounds, mental stats do not count for the purposes of incapacitation.

Restrictions: Trolls only

Bull-Legged *Dt* 4 pts

In place of his clawed feet, this Troll possesses a pair of bony hooves that give him a kicking weapon (Pow 1, VA 1, WS 1). The Troll also walks with a distinctive gait and makes quite a racket when treading on hard surfaces. Any Speed or Stealthy tests made while on stone, ice or really hard, smooth wood are at a +1 Ob. (May not be combined with Webbed Fingers and Toes.)

Bully *Char*

C

Cautious *Char*

Celestial Sight *Dt* 8 pts

Those with Celestial Sight do not see as mortals do. No visible light affects their eyes. Instead, their vision is confined to the realm of auras. They see the pure auric emanations given off by life, arcana and ephemera.

Celestial Sight is an improved version of Second Sight or the spell Magesense. These abilities show a cloudy, distorted window to the other side, whereas Celestial Sight sees clearly and without impediment.

With this trait, one can see the auras of spellcraft. The obstacle to detect a spell cast is 6 minus the spell obstacle. If the Ob is zero, the spell is seen outright. Celestial Sight grants the ability to use the Aura Reading skill. Lastly, Celestial Sight counts as Observation and suffers no obstacles for darkness. Weather can affect Celestial Sight, though.

Changeling Coat *Dt* 3 pts

This wolf was born to be a trickster. His coat shifts patterns and colors at will. Add +1D to Stealthy and Inconspicuous tests.

Restrictions: Characters with fur

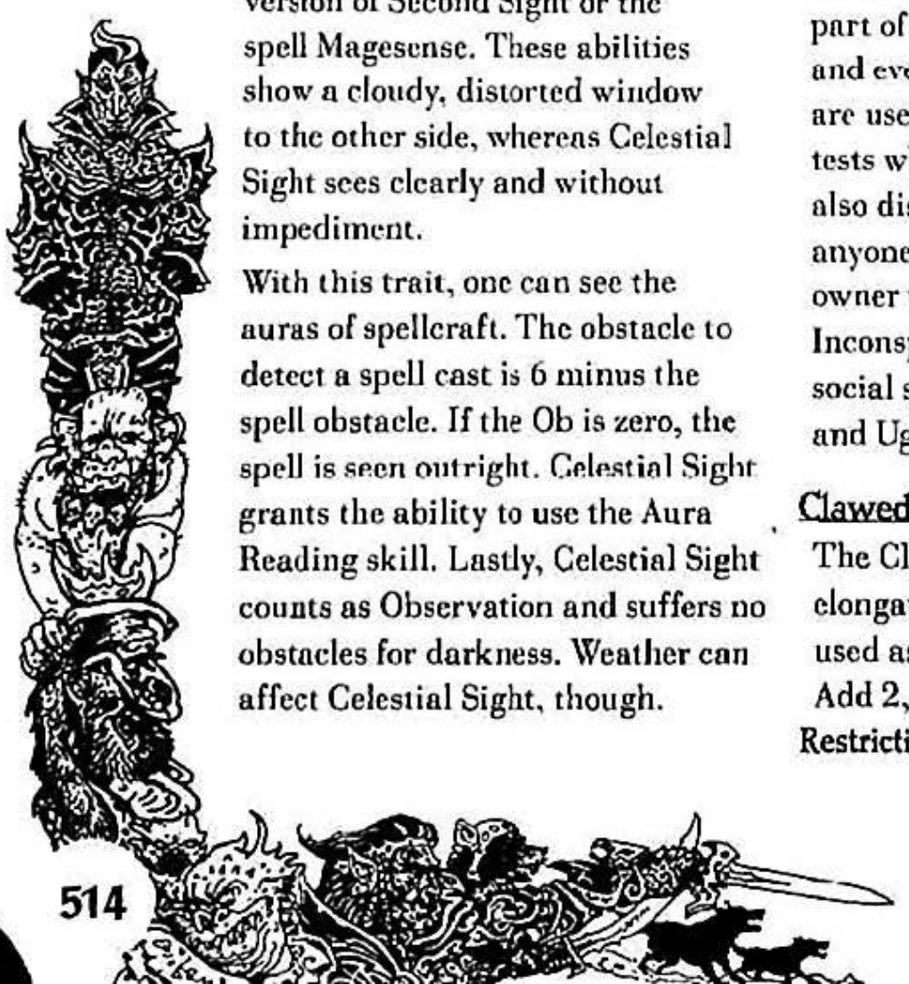
Cilia *Dt/CO* 5 pts

You are covered in a mass of flowing, waving, hair like appendages. These cilia keep you free of debris, move food from one part of your body to your mouth and even aid in swimming. Cilia are used as a call-on for Speed tests when swimming. They are also disgusting and disturbing to anyone without them and cause the owner to always suffer penalties to Inconspicuous and +1 Ob to other social skill tests (except Intimidation and Ugly Truth).

Clawed *Dt* 3 pts

The Clawed trait produces hard, elongated fingernails that can be used as tools or weapons. Pow 1, Add 2, VA -, WS X, Shortest.

Restrictions: Roden and Trolls only



Club Tail *Dt* 2 pts

This tail is thicker and stiffer than most. It can be a surprising weapon during a melee. Pow 2, Add 2, VA – WS 2, Long. May not be combined with Whip Tail.

Restrictions: Characters with tails only

Clumsy Walker *Char*

Coat of Darkness *Dt* 5 pts

Some of those Below have adapted almost supernaturally to the dark. When attempting to move unseen in areas of darkness and shadow, this fur adds +2D to the roll. May not be combined with Fur of the Fields.

Restrictions: Characters with fur

Coat of Fur *C-O*

All Roden have a short coat of fur. While Field Roden coloration ranges from sawdust to chocolate, those Below tend to be dark brown, gray or black. Roden fur offers them protection from the elements. They can withstand rain and cold with little worry. This trait acts as a call-on for Health or Forte tests related to weather or wet.

Restrictions: Roden common trait

Cocky *Char*

Cold *Dt*

In a Duel of Wits where kindness, compassion, Grief or passion are involved, the Eremite may double his Will for the purposes of the body of argument. This effect can be triggered mid-conflict, increasing the Eremite's body of argument immediately.

Restrictions: Dark Elf lifepath trait

Communal *Dt*

Roden prefer the company of others and safety in numbers. They live in close-knit villages made up of large extended families and refer to their homes as "nests." It is quite rare to find one alone, and usually such loners are exiles. All Roden start with a 1D affiliation with their family nest. Name the nest and its location.

Restrictions: Roden common trait

Compassionate *Char*

Confusing Rant *Dt* 9 pt

Pinkies are a bit "off" in their thinking and tend to be socially awkward. People who speak to one often come away dazed by a bombardment of trivia, non sequiturs and bad jokes. During a Duel of Wits, this trait grants the character +3D to Incite. The only hesitation option is to "Stand and Blink." All attempts to Intimidate or Command a character with Confusing Rant are at +2 Ob. Also, Ranters are at a +2 Ob to all Oratory and Rhetoric tests.

Corpse Bound *Dt* 8 pts

This creature is a restless ghost who stalks the lands of the living. It is anchored to this world by its former body. Use the creature's stats as they were in life.

The spirit can be banished, driven off or even wounded but cannot be completely destroyed until its corpse is. If forced to take refuge in its corpse, the spirit will re-emerge in days equal to 10 minus Will exponent.



Destroying the corpse requires either a Minor Miracle or a remedy discovered through Folklore. If the corpse is destroyed the spirit is also destroyed.

Corrupted *Dt* 3 pts

This character has opened his body and soul to the dark powers. He must open the Corrupted emotional attribute. Increase his starting rank by one.

Council of Mages *Dt* 6 pts

The Council of Mages is a small, secretive, yet powerful entity. This trait grants a 1D reputation and a 1D affiliation with this organization. This combines with other appropriate reputations and affiliations.

Creepy *Char*

Crushing Jaws *Dt*

Great Wolves have powerful jaws honed into deadly hunting weapons. Crushing Jaws: Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1, WS 3, Short. When using the Savage Attack skill, the wolf can choose the Lock and Strike action.

Restrictions: Great Wolf common trait

Crystalline Spines *Dt* 3 pts

A growth of crystalline spines sprouts from the back and shoulders of this Troll. The spines are sharp to the touch and break off and lodge themselves in the flesh of the unwary, causing great discomfort. Any creature that grapples or otherwise comes into contact with the Troll's spines suffers +1 Ob to all tests until the spines are removed. This takes effect if the Troll grapples you, too. The penalty is cumulative for each contact.

Spines can be plucked out in about a half hour. If the Surgery or Field Dressing skill is used, they can be treated in the time it takes to tend to a Superficial wound.

If the troll is forced onto his back—if he falls or is pushed—it is possible that the spines are crushed and flattened. Roll the die of fate. On a 1 the spines are crushed and unusable. It takes about a month for the crystals to regrow. (They always regrow.)

Cult Leader *Dt* 8 pts

Cult Leaders are charismatic and eccentric. This trait grants a 1D reputation and 1D affiliation with the Death Cult. This combines with other appropriate reputations and affiliations.

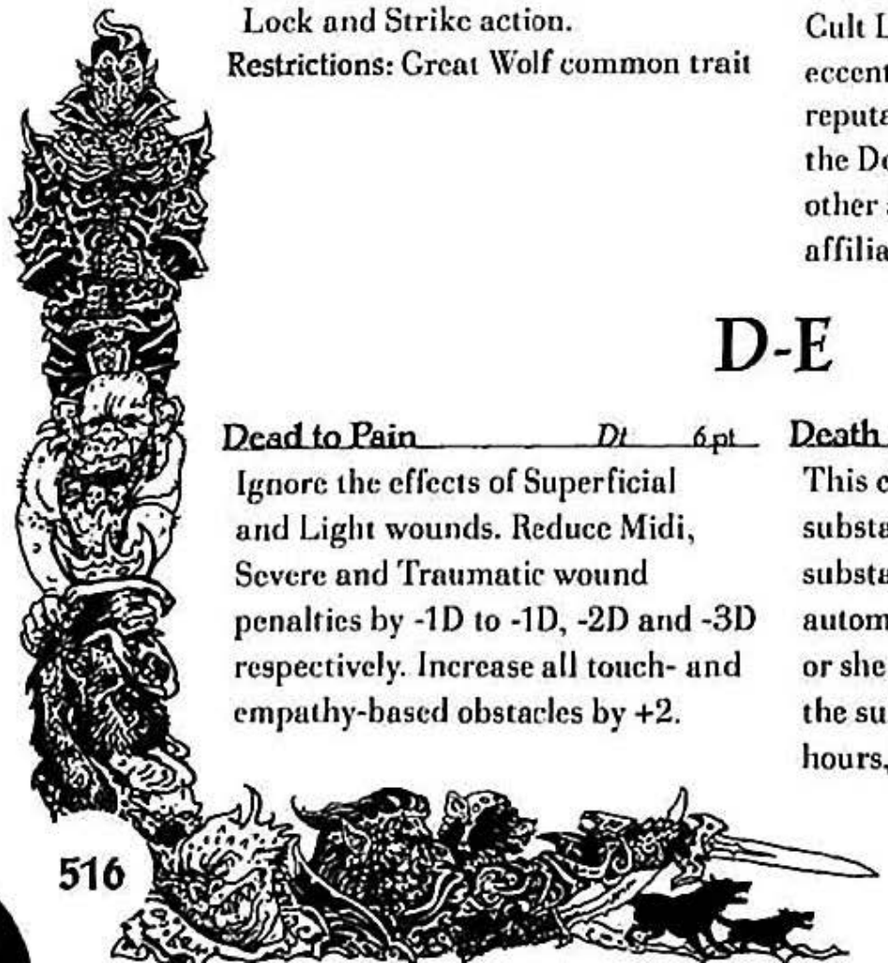
D-E

Dead to Pain *Dt* 6 pt

Ignore the effects of Superficial and Light wounds. Reduce Midi, Severe and Traumatic wound penalties by -1D to -1D, -2D and -3D respectively. Increase all touch- and empathy-based obstacles by +2.

Death Addicted *Dt* 3 pts

This character is addicted to a substance. If presented with the substance, the character will automatically consume it unless he or she passes a Steel test. If denied the substance for more than a few hours, the character suffers a +1



Ob penalty until reacquainted with the source of his or her addiction. If denied for a longer period of time, take a -1D blanket penalty to all stats and skills.

Deceptive *C-O/Dt*

The Deceptive trait acts as a call-on for Sleight of Hand and Falsehood. However this trait so infuses the liar, he has a hard time telling the truth. Deceptive also incurs a +1 Ob penalty to all Oratory, Command tests and +2 Ob to Ugly Truth or Litany of Fools.

Restrictions: Dark Elf common trait

Deep Fur *Dt*

Heavy and thick fur protects Great Wolves against the cold of their harsh environment. They can tolerate extremely cold temperatures, whereas extended times of hot weather tend to agitate them. This trait allows the wolf to ignore penalties and tests relating to cold weather. However, extended time in hot weather causes +1 Ob to all tests.

The color of a wolf's pelt can range from pure white to black, from mottled gray to brown, from sandy to even reddish and ochre.

Restrictions: Great Wolf common trait

Defensive *Char*

Demented *Char*

Devourer *Dt* 3 pts

This Troll eats anything—soil, stone, wood, metal and flesh. He is indiscriminate in his choices and in fact cannot help himself from sampling his surroundings. Add +1 VA to bite attacks.

Disfigured *Dt* 3 pts

This character has led a life of hardship and pain. He's been cut up, broken and beaten down. This trait grants +1D to shrug off or grit teeth for any injury.

Dissent Parasite *Dt* 5 pts

This trait allows its owner to earn one persona point for every conflict that he instigates between ostensible allies.

Dominant *Dt*

There are only ever two Dominants in a pack: a male and female pair. These two serve as the mother and father of the group, guiding them to new hunting grounds and producing more offspring to strengthen and expand the pack. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with a pack and a 1D reputation within that pack as a Dominant. This trait compounds with other similar, appropriate affiliations and reputations.

Restrictions: Great Wolf lifepath trait

Dumb *Char*

Earth Blood *Dt* 3 pts

No matter how badly wounded, this Troll will always heal. Cuts will close, bones will knit and even lost limbs will regrow. This Troll can *never* fail a Health test for Recovery (though he can roll poorly, in which case maximum healing time is required for the wound to close). The only way to destroy this beast is to put him to the fire.

Enemy of the Sun *Dt* 4 pts

The greatest, most fearsome of Trolls have been bred to resist the burning rays of the sun. They may travel by day and not be turned to



stone as with the Night Blooded trait. Enemies of the Sun do not suffer penalties for dim or twilit light, but they can no longer see in complete darkness (+4 Ob in pitch dark). This trait replaces the Night Blooded trait.

Enlarged Incisors *DI*

Roden incisors grow continually through life and need to be filed regularly. These incisors are quite sharp and can be used to bite opponents if the situation becomes desperate. Pow 1, Add 2, VA –, WS 2, Shortest.

Restrictions: Roden common trait

Enlarged Venom Sacs *DI* 2 pts

This creature carries three doses of poison in its venom sacs. The poison refills at the rate of one dose per two days.

Evil *Char*

Extra-Long Fur *Char*

F-G

Fangs *DI*

A Troll's mouth is a mass of misshapen teeth and fangs. He may bite. Pow 1, Add 2, VA –, WS: 2, Shortest.

Restrictions: Troll common trait

Fast Reflexes *DI* 6 pts

Increase Reflexes by one over the normal factoring from stats.

Faust *DI* 3 pts

When bargaining with the higher powers for something pure and innocent like love, gain a bonus persona point for each agreement you strike on the behalf of the one you seek to protect or affect.

Feared *DI* 5 pts

For good reason or not, this character is feared by all who know him. +1D to Intimidation. Choose a 1D infamous reputation.

Fearsome Beast *C-O* 2 pts

There is an odd and unsettling air about this wolf—something very old and frightening. Use this trait as a call-on for Intimidation.

Femme Fatale/ Homme Fatal *C-O* 2 pts

Call-on for Seduction.

Feral *DI* 1 pt

Wastrels lose themselves to their animal instincts, living for decades at a time without contact with civilization—living as animals do. The Feral trait reduces overall hesitation by one, but adds +1 Ob to all social skill tests. Also, Feral negates the bonus to Circles from any Elven lifepath trait such as Etharchal, Lord of Ages, etc.

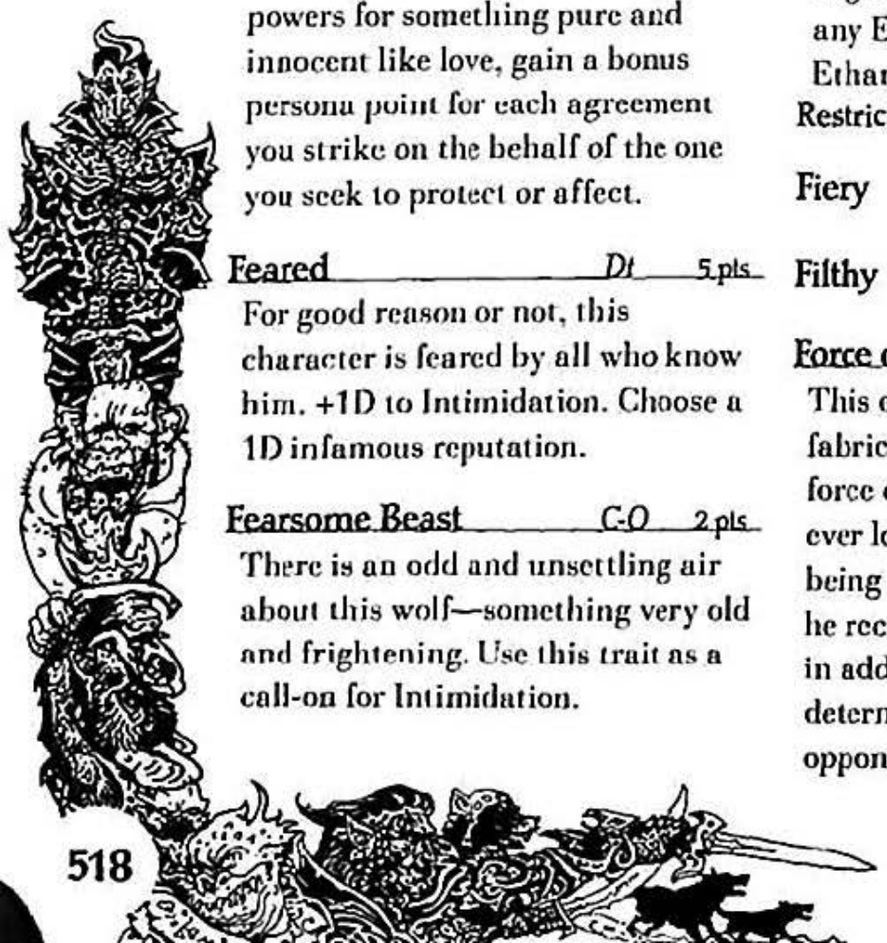
Restrictions: Elves only

Fiery *Char*

Filthy *Char*

Force of Nature *DI* 7 pts

This entity is tied into the very fabric of time and tide. His will is a force of nature. If this entity should ever lose a Duel of Wits against a being of equal or lesser stature, he receives a minor compromise in addition to the compromise determined by the state of his opponent's body of argument.



Formidable Bark C-O 2 pts.
The voice of this wolf is strong and clear. It easily pierces the dense woods and cuts through dampening fog. Use this trait as a call-on for Howling and Command.

Fragrant *Char*

Frost Coat C-O 2 pts.
The pelt of this wolf is glittering ice. Use this trait as a call-on for Stealthy when stalking the tundra and arctic wastes.
Restrictions: Characters with fur

Fur *Char*
A fine, soft fur coat covers the skin.

Frustrated *Char*

Fur of the Fields *Dt* 5 pts.
Roden with this trait have a wondrous coat of fur that allows them to blend into any field or woodland terrain. When attempting to Stealth in such areas, this fur adds +2D to the roll. May not be combined with Coat of Darkness.
Restrictions: Roden only

Furtive *Char*

Genius C-O 3 pts.
Your every idea is unique and brilliant—every plan sure-fire and flawless. It is only a matter of time before such brilliance is properly recognized and rewarded. Genius is a call-on for one non-martial or athletic skill of the player's choosing.

Ghost Coat C-O 4 pts.
This wolf's coat shifts subtly from dark to light, from mottled to plain, depending on what land he stalks and haunts. Use this for a call-on for Stealthy in any terrain.
Restrictions: Characters with fur

Good Listener C-O 5 pts.
This character seems to pay attention to and understand what people say. This encourages others to continue speaking and open up to him. This trait may be used as a call-on for Haggling, Persuasion and Seduction.

Gopher *Char*

Graduate *Dt* 3 pts.
This trait grants a 1D affiliation with a College of Magic. This combines with other appropriate and applicable affiliations.

Great Cunning C-O 5 pts.
Ebon Tyrants are the Dominants of the vast Black Destroyer packs. More than just savagery and brutality are required to attain this rank. Great Cunning is a necessity. This trait acts as a call-on for Strategy, Tactics and any wise tested for insight.
Restrictions: Great Wolf only

Great Lupine Form *Dt*
Great Wolves possess the basic form common to wolves. They have a rangy, muscular body set on high and powerful legs with large, well-padded feet. They have long snouts and massive, protruding jaws. Their fur is a crown of coarse guard hairs supported by a nigh-impermeable layer of soft underfur. Their most prominent feature is, of course, their massive size. Great wolves stand three to five feet at the shoulder, and can weigh 200-600 lbs.

Great Wolves have a maximum exponent of 6 for Agility (from their lack of hands), while other stat maximums are 8. Their Stride is 11.



Wolves perform the Charge/Tackle action in Fight with a +2D bonus rather than the standard +1D.
Restrictions: Great Wolf common trait

Grotesque *C-O* 4 pts
Call-on for Intimidation and Conspicuous when displaying your deformity.

H

Hammer Hands *Dt* 2 pts
With hands like great mattocks, this Troll is best suited to brawling and pummeling. Add +1D to the Troll's Brawling skill for purposes of bare-fisted Block, Strike, Beat and Push actions. The Troll suffers a +1 Ob to any other skill that requires manual dexterity (including Throwing and weapons skills).

Hand-Shaker *C-O* 4 pts
The tools of the politician's trade. May be used as a call-on for Oratory or Persuasion when he's shaking hands.

Harried *Char*

Hauling *C-O* 2 pts
Ox Trolls are the beasts of burden in the Troll legions. They haul impossible loads for interminable journeys. Use this trait as a call-on for Power when pushing, pulling or hauling loads.
Restrictions: Trolls and Great Wolves only

Hazed *Dt* 2 pts
This character may take a free inimical relationship with another character who was his senior in the College of Magic.

Heartless *Dt* 6 pts
Reduces hesitation by three for pain, murder, fear or violence.

Heaving *C-O*
The lowest rung for Troll soldiers in their great legions is that of the Battering Ram. These massive brutes haul forth great war engines to the walls of the citadels of their enemies and even use their own bodies to batter down walls. Use this trait as a call-on for Power when trying to break, smash or knock over something.
Restrictions: Troll lifepath trait

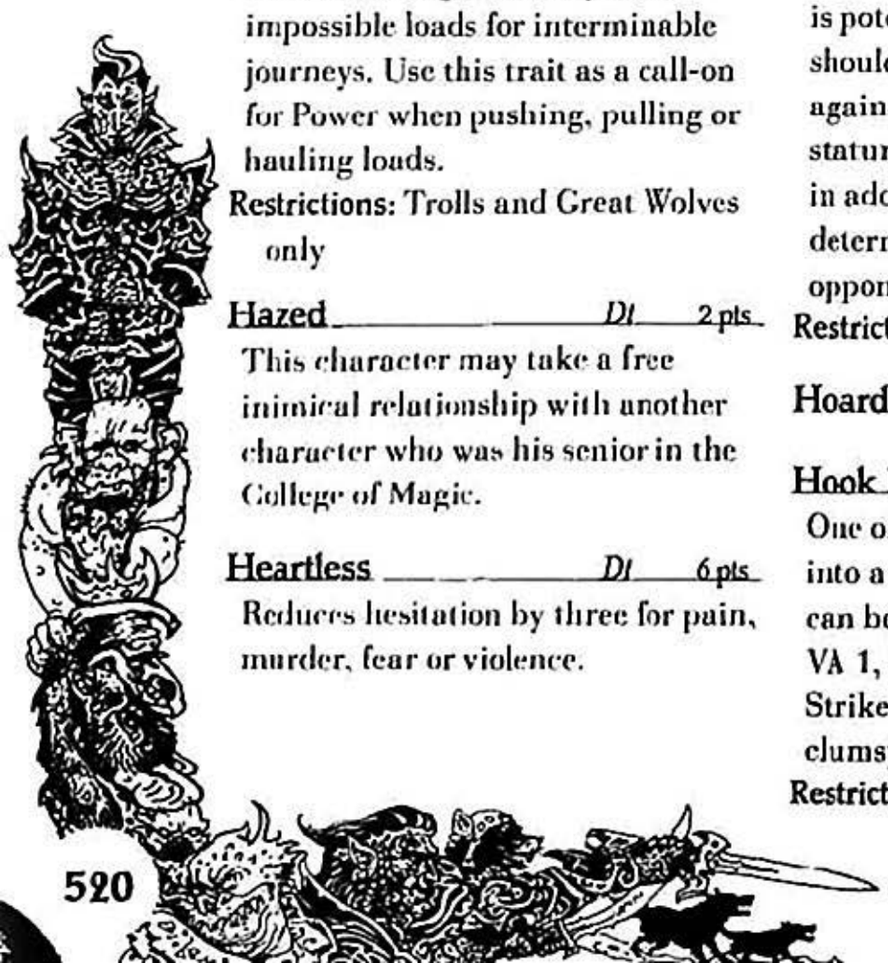
Hermaphrodite *Char*

Hideous! *Dt* 2 pts
Add +1 hesitation to all Steel checks caused by this creature.

Higher Power *Dt* 9 pts
This deity governs over spheres of nature, society and humanity. He is potent and revered. If this entity should ever lose a Duel of Wits against a being of equal or lesser stature, he receives a compromise in addition to the compromise determined by the state of his opponent's body of argument.
Restrictions: Deity only

Hoarder *Char*

Hook Hand *Dt* 4 pts
One of this Troll's hands has formed into a massive bony hook. This hook can be used as a weapon: Pow 2, VA 1, WS 2, Short; may Great Strike. In fact, it is really too big and clumsy to be used for anything else.
Restrictions: Trolls only



Horns *Dt* 5 pts

Great stony horns protrude from the Troll's skull. In addition to being terribly intimidating, they also serve a somewhat practical purpose. When the Troll charges *another creature of relatively similar size,* he may choose to add +1D to his Charge Power *or* to do damage on the Charge as if he had been simultaneously Striking. Damage is Pow 2, VA 2, WS 1. The first two successes of the Charge attack count as a superficial wound to the victim. Four successes over equals a Mark hit. Six over is a Superb hit.

Horrific Aura *Dt* 8 pts

Horrific Aura causes all those within the creature's presence to take a Steel test with an obstacle penalty equal to the creature's Will.

Howl of Doom *Dt*

Before the charge, these beasts bombard their opponents with cold fear. This wolf can howl and add +4D to Intimidation. This howl requires two actions to perform and cannot be done on the charge—it must be done beforehand. In Range and Cover, it positions with 2D. In Fight, it counts as the Longest weapon.

Restrictions: Great Wolf lifepath trait

Humble *Dt* 2 pts

All are equal before Aecer, and the wise continually remind themselves of this fact. 1D reputation among the faithful as exceptionally humble.

Hungry Dead *Char*

I-L

I Am God *Dt* 12 pts

Chief Deities rule over gods, men and all the creatures of their many spheres. Powerful beyond understanding, they are not to be trifled with. If this entity should ever lose a Duel of Wits against a being of equal or lesser stature, he receives a major compromise in addition to the compromise determined by the state of his opponent's body of argument.

Restrictions: Deity only

Impersonal *Char*

Impressive Hat *Dt* 3 pts

This character's hat is mightily impressive. It can be seen for miles! It's so impressive that people often remember the hat more than the person. This gives a 1D Reputation among the people of a given locale as the wearer of the really impressive hat, so long as the hat is being worn, of course. Wearing the hat also gives a +2 Ob to any Disguise or Inconspicuous test.

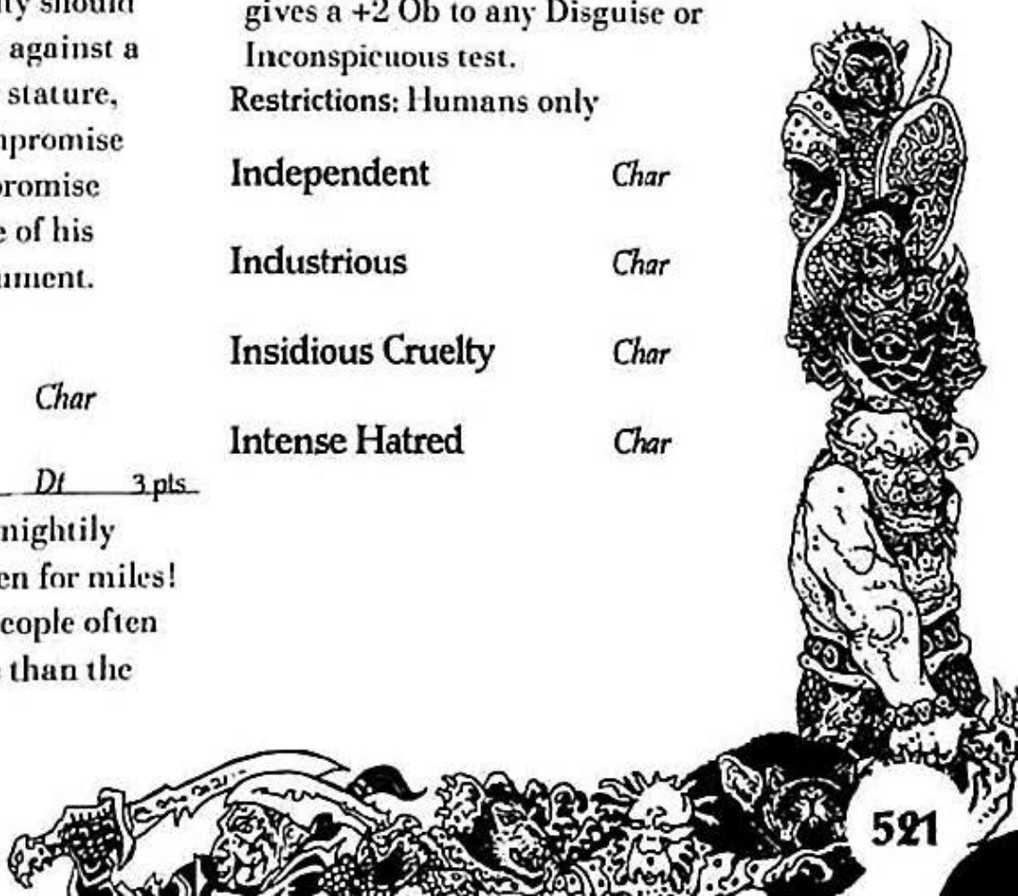
Restrictions: Humans only

Independent *Char*

Industrious *Char*

Insidious Cruelty *Char*

Intense Hatred *Char*



Invocations of the Damned — C-O — 5 pts

The Dark Priest swears his soul to fell powers. Like other priests, he must have a Belief that ties to his Faith in order to maintain the emotional attribute. If the player writes a second Belief tied to his faith in the dark gods and his service to them, he may use this trait as a call-on for Faith when that Belief comes into question.

Iron Hide — Dt — 6 pts

This skin is as tough as iron and scaled like a shark. All incoming damage is reduced by -1 pip on the PTGS: B8 damage would be reduced to B7, etc.

Large Ears — Dt

Roden have large, sensitive ears that sit atop their heads. These give them excellent hearing: +1D to Perception rolls involving hearing. Factor this bonus into Reflexes.

Restrictions: Roden common trait

Late — *Char*

Lawbreaker — Dt — 8 pts

There are strict celestial laws that govern the presence of otherworldly creatures in the mortal realm. When a Spirit-Natured creature crosses over, he is bending those very laws—warping the natural order of things. Thus the creatures are accompanied by all manner of bizarre phenomena as the mortal fabric reacts to their presence: Birds sing backward, windows crack in strange patterns, clocks cease to tick, water fails to boil, strange smells rise from nowhere, noises and knocks are heard in the dark and so on.

The effects of Lawbreaker extend to the limits of the Presence for black shade Will and 10x Presence for gray shade Will.

Light Touch — C-O — 2 pts

The key to a successful "lift" is in the fingers. May be used as a call-on for Sleight of Hand.

Low Born — Dt — 2 pts

Low Born characters are born of unremarkable parents. They cannot trace their lineage to any nobility or to any historic or notable figures. They have a 1D infamous reputation in noble or elite circles due to their obvious lack of heritage. It also adds a +1 Ob disadvantage to any Inconspicuous tests in noble or courtly settings.

Luminescent — Dt — 2 pts

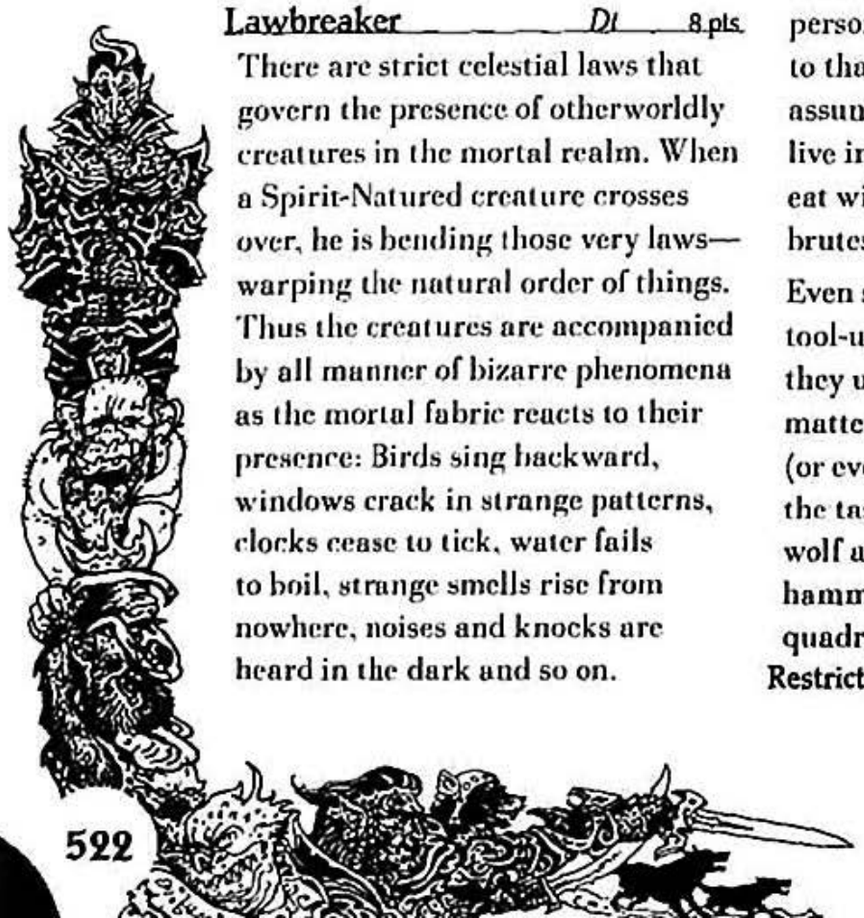
This creature glows with an eerie, otherworldly light. It gives off illumination equivalent to a candle.

Lupine Intellect — Dt

Without a doubt, Great Wolves are intelligent creatures. They possess a personality and intellect equivalent to that of humans and Orcs. Never assume that just because they don't live in cities, write with pens or eat with knives, wolves are dumb brutes.

Even so, Great Wolves are not tool-using creatures. Though they understand a great many matters, they generally don't use (or even need) tools to accomplish the tasks in their daily lives. Any wolf attempting to use tools like hammers, swords or scissors suffers quadruple obstacle penalties.

Restrictions: Great Wolf common trait



M-O

Malformed *Char*

Mangy Coat *Char*

Mark of the Ancient *Dt* 5 pts

Some pups are born with the look of the Great Ancient about them. Such rare wolves are descendants from the Ancient, the first wolf who created the world. The packs believe such wolves are cursed and destined for a life of mayhem. This trait is required for using the skills Tongue of the Ancient One and Ancient Ways.

Restrictions: Great Wolf only

Massive Stature *Dt*

Trolls are the definition of Massive Stature: barrel-chested, hulking beasts with long thick limbs and shoulders like towering cliffs. The largest of their number grow twice as tall as humans, but even the smallest adults are rarely less than seven feet in height.

Increase all weapon lengths by one for the Troll.

These great lumbering beasts must have minimum Power and Forte of 4. The maximum exponents for Power and Forte are 9. The maximum exponents for Agility and Speed are 5. Stride is 7.

Restrictions: Troll common trait

Master of Mages *Dt*

The Headmaster of a College of Magic attained his position by rigorous pursuit of excellence and expertise in sorcery and magic. This trait grants a 2D reputation among mages and the halls of power as a Master of Mages.

Restrictions: Human lifepath trait

Meek *Char*

Megalomaniac *Dt*

The Visionary is a gift from Aeger to the mortal world. It is his destiny to lead and shape the future in his image. +2D to Conspicuous and always add an extra die when helping or FoRKing with Conspicuous.

Restrictions: Roden lifepath trait

Mesmerizing Gaze *Dt* 6 pts

Merely glancing at this creature triggers a Steel test. Fools who lock eyes with the creature must make a versus Will test. If the creature wins, the victim either becomes struck dumb until the gaze turns away or performs one action at the behest of its mesmerizer.

Misshapen *Char*

Misunderstood *Dt* 2 pts

Choose a 1D infamous reputation. And suffer -1 to your body of argument whenever you're trying to explain your nature, position, meaning or special insight.

Mossy Coat *C-O* 2 pts

Covered in a coat of moss and slime, this Troll blends in quite well to forest or earthy surroundings. Call-on for Stealthy or Camouflage in forest or mines.

Restrictions: Trolls and Wolves only



Most Holy *Dt* 5 pts

This character is the living embodiment of the power divine. He gains +3s to his body of argument in a Duel of Wits involving matters spiritual. However, he has no temporal power. Any other character arguing with him about earthly matters, philosophy, relationships or money benefits from the Enmity Clause: +4s to his body of argument against Most Holy.

Naked *Char*

Roden with this trait have no fur, and their pink skin is laid bare, though whiskers still poke out from their muzzles. Sunburn is common and clothing is required.

Named *Dt* 5 pts

This creature possesses and knows its true name. When its name is spoken, it knows who the speaker is and where he is.

Knowledge of a true name grants the summoner +3D to summon that specific spirit and +3D Bargaining tests or to the body of argument roll for any Duels of Wits conducted against the creature.

Nauseous *Char*

Necrophagic *Char*

Necrophobic *Char*

Can't control the paranoia. Scared to die.

Never a Moment of Peace *Dt* 3 pts

This trait grants the character a 5 rps relationship. This relationship must be with a character who is always bothering or interrupting him. If that character is forced out of his life, someone new will come along. This character just attracts these sort of people!

You may invest additional resource points and increase the value of this relationship.

Night Blooded *Dt*

Nocturnal by nature, Trolls typically shun the sunlight, for it will undo the sorcery which gave their night-stalking ancestors life. Exposure to the sun causes the Troll's stony roots to consume him and crush him from within.

Restrictions: Troll common trait

Night Eyed *Dt* 4 pts

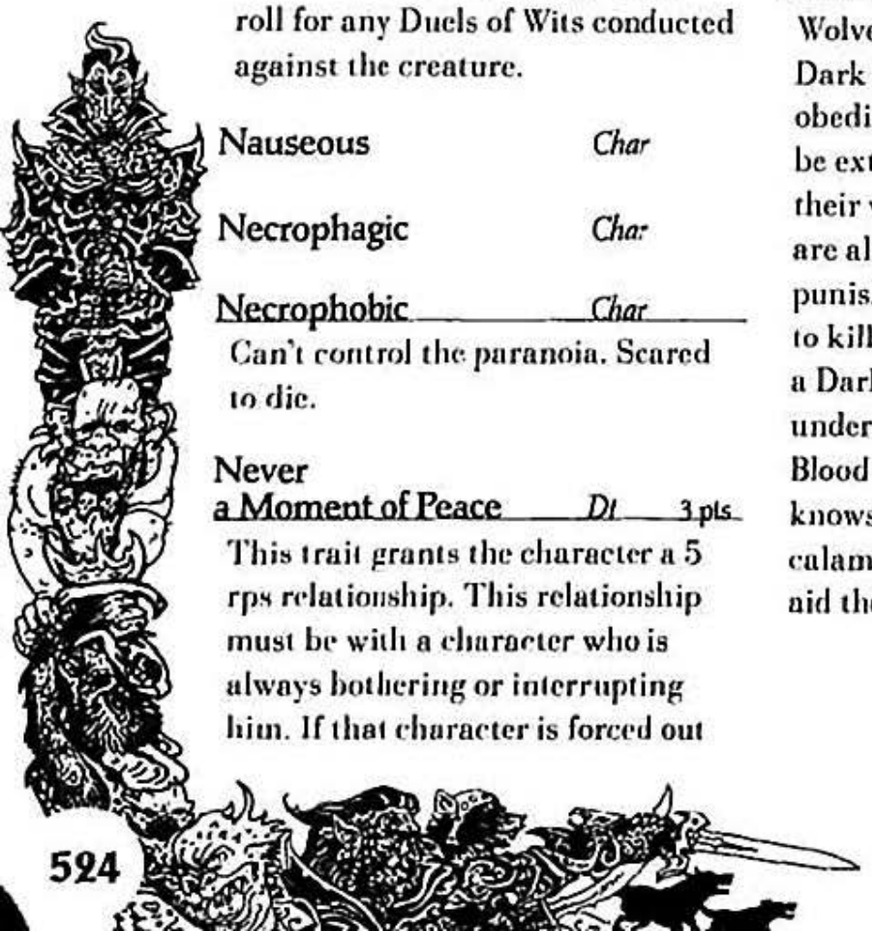
Born of the stuff of night, these creatures can see perfectly well in the darkness and suffer no penalties for nighttime conditions. However, rain and haze do affect them like other characters, and bright light imposes a +1 Ob penalty.

Restrictions: Troll common trait

Oafishly Charming *Char*

Obedient *Char*

Wolves who are chosen to become Dark Friends tend to be particularly obedient. While their masters can be extremely generous—feeding their wolves much fresh meat—they are also extremely violent and punishing. Rarely do they hesitate to kill a disobedient wolf. Lastly, a Dark Friend has an intuitive understanding of the powers the Blood Summoners wield—he knows the might of success and the calamity of failure. It is far better to aid the former and prevent the latter.



Odor of Spirits *Dt* 2 pts

This wolf stinks of spirits. The packs shun him, and the Spirit Hunters harry him. 1D infamous reputation and +1 Ob Inconspicuous among the wild packs and legion. Only the Haunts and Ghosts accept him.

Restrictions: Great Wolves only

Opportunist *Char*

Ordained *Dt* 2 pts

This Roden is one of Aecer's Ordained. He is responsible for carrying out the rituals and rites. Ordained characters are always treated with respect by the Field Roden. 1D affiliation with the Roden faithful.

Restrictions: Roden only

P-R

Pack Rat *Char*

Piercing Gaze *C-O/Dt* 5 pts

The eyes of a Ghost of the Deeping Wood burn like glittering coals. This trait is a call-on for Intimidation. Also, characters attempting to deceive the wolf (using Falsehood, Persuasion or Soothing Platitudes) suffer a +1 Ob penalty. Burning flames flash implacably behind his eyes and hint at the terrible fate of liars.

Polite *Char*

Poltergeist *Dt* 3 pts

This creature is ethereal and may only affect the physical world through an act of Will. If the creature wishes to touch, push, pull, slap, etc., test Will against the obstacle rather than Power or Agility. If a test is failed, Will is reduced by the margin of failure. The creature's physical skills may also be channeled through its Will. Test for the skill as normal. After the test, test the creature's Will against the obstacle. Will is reduced by margin of failure. If Will is reduced to zero, the creature dissipates and may not reform or be summoned for months equal to its Will exponent.

Restrictions: Spooky ghosts only

Portly *Char*

Pouched Cheeks *Dt* 2 pts

These cheeks are wonderfully elastic and can be used to carry a surprising amount of fruits, nuts and vegetables. Consider it feasible to place up to six apples in each cheek. Knives and other sharp objects are carried at the bearer's own risk!

Restrictions: Roden only

Practiced Smile *Char*

Preternaturally Calm *Dt* 3 pts

Ghosts of the Deeping Wood possess a calmness that rivals the most serene glade on a starry summer night. Reduce hesitation by two.

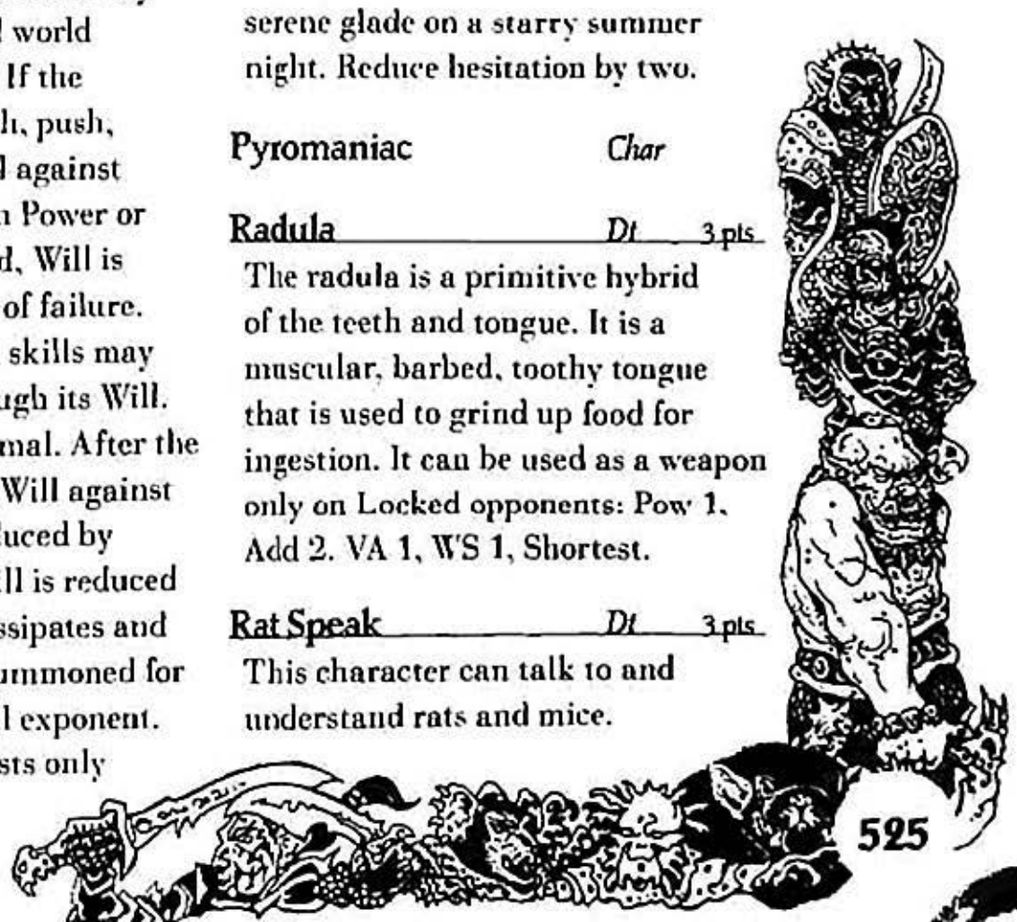
Pyromaniac *Char*

Radula *Dt* 3 pts

The radula is a primitive hybrid of the teeth and tongue. It is a muscular, barbed, toothy tongue that is used to grind up food for ingestion. It can be used as a weapon only on Locked opponents: Pow 1, Add 2. VA 1, WS 1, Shortest.

Rat Speak *Dt* 3 pts

This character can talk to and understand rats and mice.



Raven Friend *Dt* 1 pt

Wolves and ravens have a special relationship. Not only do they aid one another on the hunt—ravens will circle a herd to mark it for wolves, and wolves will allow ravens to feed at their kills—they are also great friends. Wolves and ravens enjoy taunting each other and playing endless and dangerous games of tag. This trait grants either a free relationship with a raven or a 1D affiliation with a conspiracy of ravens.

This trait signifies a wolf who is especially fond of ravens and well thought of by the birds. While the whole pack may play, he is the only pack member who can understand the quacks and squawks of raven speech.

Restrictions: Great Wolves only

Reanimated Corpse *Dt*

This trait grants the reanimated corpse the Wi B9, Pe B1, Ag B3, Sp B3, Po B5, Fo B5 stat line and eliminates the Health, Resources and Circles attributes. These creatures may not recover from injury. However, neither do they bleed to death or suffer from any type of disease or poison. Also, these creatures may advance extant skills, but they may not learn new skills in play.

The Reanimated Corpse trait also gives the creature the mindless ability to act in a mob. Up to five walking corpses may help each other at once with any task, including dragging down their victims and eating them (in other words, positioning and Lock actions). When one corpse helps another, it adds helping dice as per usual, but it may not then act on his own.

Restrictions: Corpses only

Reclusive *Char*

Repulsive Blood *Dt* 2 pts

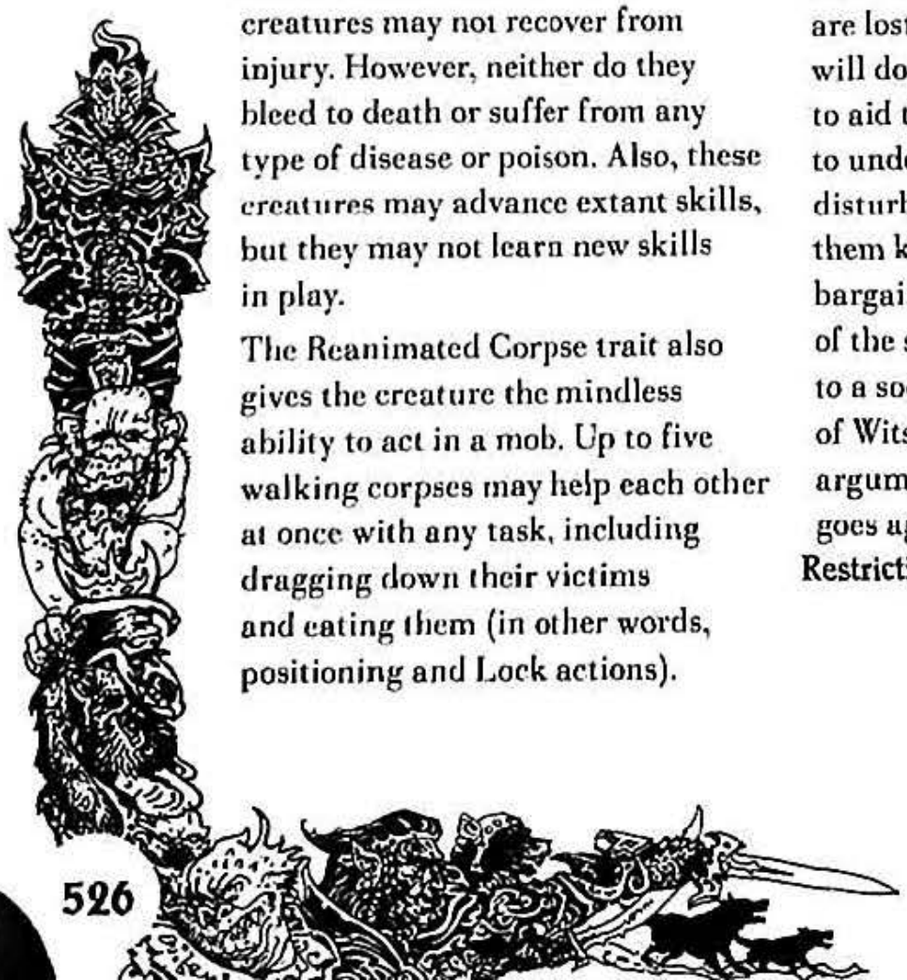
This Troll's blood is noxious and caustic. If the Troll should be bitten for effect, the horrid liquid runs into the mouth of the attacking creature and causes great discomfort and nausea. Any creature that bites the Troll, penetrates his armor and achieves a Mark result, must make an Ob 4 Forte test. Any successes missed equal an obstacle penalty that lasts for three exchanges.

Restrictions: Trolls only

Rest in Peace *Dt*

Spirits who have gone peacefully to death and whose bodies were properly sanctified have great difficulty returning to and communicating with the world of the living. They cannot use any physical ability or skill to affect the material world. Those abilities are lost to them. Also, while they will do whatever is in their power to aid the living, they are reluctant to undertake any act that will disturb their peaceful rest or get them kicked out of heaven. When bargaining with a summoner, spirits of the sanctified dead may add +2D to a social skill. When in a Duel of Wits, add +2s to their body of argument if their opponent's request goes against their better judgment.

Restrictions: Spooky ghosts only





Revered C-O 4 pts

The Abbot or Abbess is a pillar of piety in the community. May be used as a call-on for Oratory or Suasion.

Ridged Brow *Dt* 3 pts

Protruding out over this Troll's eyes is a stony brow like unto a craggy cliff. This provides +1D of armor to the Troll's head.

Restrictions: Trolls only

Ruthless *Char*

S

Sadistic C-O 2 pts

Causing pain and suffering in others is a highly entertaining and enjoyable pastime. May be used as a call-on for Torture.

Saturnine *Dt*

If any other player attempts to influence a character with the Saturnine trait with passion, motivation, joy or love, the Saturnine Dark Elf player gets a +1D advantage to all tests for one scene when confronting, hunting or poisoning that character.

Restrictions: Dark Elf lifepath trait

Scaly Skin *Dt* 4 pts

Scaly Skin provides 2D of armor to the limbs and head, and 3D to the chest. This skin cannot "fail" and become damaged like normal armor: 1s are ignored in this case. VA works as normal against this armor.

Restrictions: Trolls only

Serious *Char*

Shadow and Dust *Dt* 9 pts

Creatures of Shadow and Dust have two distinct aspects—a spirit shadow and some material vestige of their former life. The shadow is its active and "living" half. It is a physical manifestation and can be harmed by steel and fire. However, it cannot be permanently destroyed. If dealt a Mortal Wound or if incapacitated, the shadow dissipates. It reforms near its dust half in days equal to 10 minus Health.

The other aspect of the creature is the dust: a corpse, a vessel of ashes, a skull or some other relic of a life past. In order to completely destroy this creature, the dust must be dragged into the morning sun and a Minor Miracle performed on it.

Shadow Coat C-O 2 pts

The fur of this wolf is perfectly suited to stalking in the shadows of the woods. Use this trait as a call-on for Stealthy when stalking the forests and valleys.

Restrictions: Characters with fur

Sharpened Incisors *Dt* 4 pts

This Roden's teeth are extra sharp. Pow 1, Add 2, VA 1, WS X, Shortest.

Restrictions: Roden only

Silent C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Stealthy. Silent creatures may not speak above a whisper.

Single-Minded C-O 3 pts

Once a Murderer sets his mind, there is very little that can redirect him. Call-on for Steel when "on the job."



Skittish *Dt*

Roden instinctively fear loud noises and surprises. *Increase* hesitation by one for Steel tests caused by fear or surprise. Hesitation for more than one action indicates the Roden must flee.

Restrictions: Roden common trait

Slave No More *Dt* 4 pts

After life in the cage, you can't help but act out against the world that has hurt you. Instincts that get you into weird or deep trouble earn a persona point instead of a fate point.

Restrictions: Former slaves or captives only

Slave to the Power of Death *Dt* 5 pts

This creature is now the servant of the sorcerer who evoked his soul. He is no longer alive, but neither is he dead. He will not age, grow sick, hunger or sleep. Use the skills the victim had in life. Die and call-on traits are lost and replaced with those imparted by the Death of the Spirit process (except as noted under Evocation). Character traits are retained. The slave's stats are equal to his stats in life, minus any dice from injuries sustained at the time of this death. This condition overrides conditions from other traits like Corpse Bound.

Restrictions: You must be an undead slave to a necromancer

Soft Step *C-O* 4 pts

The Sneak Thief walks in a particular fashion, feeling each step before putting his weight on it. May be used as a call-on for Climbing and Stealthy.

Solitary *Char*

Speaker of the Secret Language *Char*

Spines *Dt* 4 pts

Certain hairs on this creature have developed into nettling spines. They are sharp to the touch and can lodge themselves in the flesh of the unwary, causing great discomfort. Any creature that grabs, touches or otherwise comes into bodily contact with the spined creature suffers a +1 Ob to all tests as the spines lodge in its flesh. Armor does not protect against this trait. A character must be covered from head to toe, including eyes and mouth to be protected.

Spines can be plucked out with an Ob 1 Field Dressing or Surgery test.

Restrictions: Trolls only

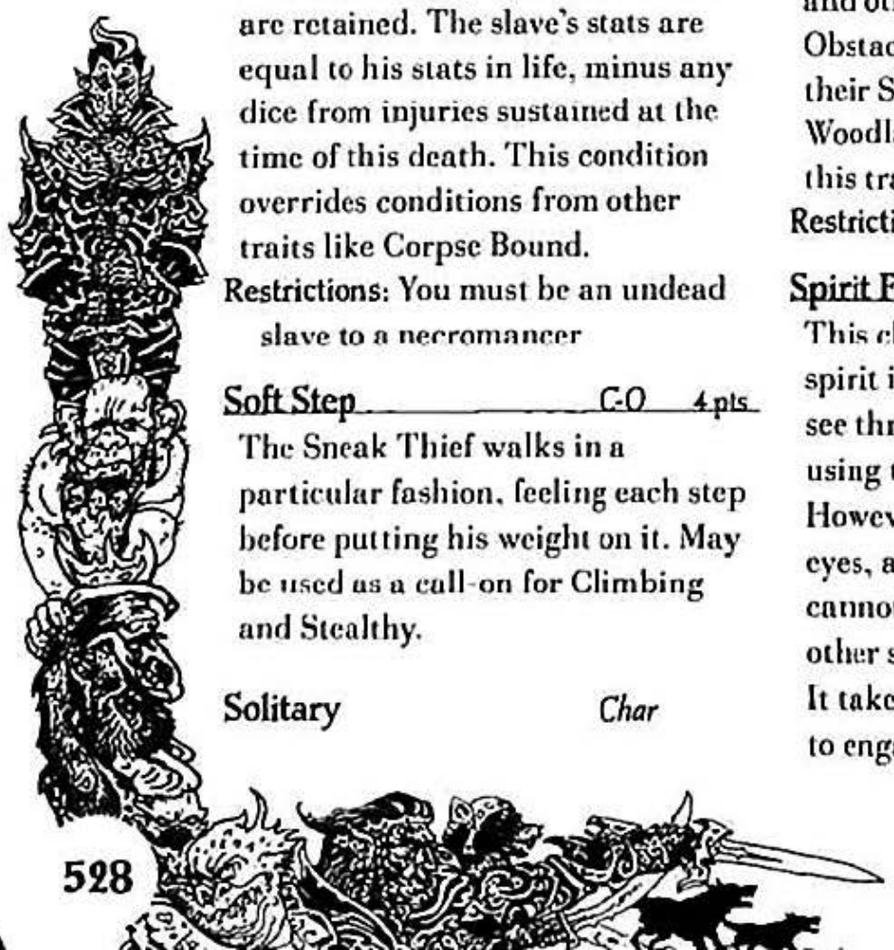
Spirit Ears *Dt* 3 pts

Spirit Howlers become attuned to the spirit world as their Taint grows. A wolf with this trait has the ability to hear those of the spirit nature. Counts as Observation for detecting the movements of spirits, demons and other creatures of spirit nature. Obstacle to detect spirits is 10 minus their Strength. Wolves may use their Woodland Ear in combination with this trait but not their Wolf Snout.

Restrictions: Great Wolves only

Spirit Familiar *Dt* 5 pts

This character has a familiar whose spirit is linked to his own. He can see through the familiar's eyes using the familiar's Perception stat. However, when using his familiar's eyes, a character with this trait cannot look through his own though other senses may still be employed. It takes two actions of concentration to engage his familiar's eyes, and



two more actions to return his sight to his own eyes. This trait *does not* grant Low Speech. However, the creature does understand its companion's wishes and will go where its master directs it to go, look at what its master directs it to look at, etc.

A character with this trait feels the pain of his familiar. If the familiar suffers a light or greater wound, the master suffers a light wound. If the familiar is ever killed, the master suffers a traumatic wound. In the game, the character is physically unharmed, but mentally traumatized. Recovery and Treatment are as per a standard traumatic wound. This wound does not bleed out.

A familiar uses the following stats:

Wi C2, Pe G3, Ag B4, Sp B5, Po B3, Fo B3, Hea B4, Ref B4, Ste B5, MW B9

Choose its form: cat, dog, snake, bird, pig, rabbit, fox or similar. No large predators or beasts of burden. The animal must show some mark or quality that indicates it is not entirely of this world. For example, it must be hairless, one-eyed, two-tailed, of large size or even just have a disturbing aura.

Restrictions: Humans only

Spirit Marked — *Dt* — 3 pts

On certain nights in the dead of winter, the Spirit Hunters will come to the territories and seek out lone wolves. Those who are chosen receive a special scent and are marked to become Spirit Hunters. This trait is required to be able to take the Spirit Chaser lifepath. It grants a 1D affiliation with the Spirit Hunters. It also grants a 1D spirit mark as per the Spirit Binding rules.

Spirit Nature — *Dt* — 17 pts

Creatures with spirit nature are not of our world and not bound by the laws of our realm.

Time, space and the elements affect those with Spirit Nature differently than they do those of mortal nature. All surfaces are stable—they may walk on earth, mud, water or ice without difficulty. Gravity lays a lighter hand on them, and they are able to easily climb (and fly, for those with wings). Give +2D to appropriate skills and stats when the Spirit Natured creature needs them.

The harmful elements of this realm have no effect on them—fire does not burn, cold does not chill, rope does not bind and metal does not harm.

In order to affect, harm or bind a creature of Spirit Nature, one must have tools inscribed with special spirit runes. Only Sorcery, Faith, other spirits and these "spirit weapons" can harm those of Spirit Nature.

Spirit Nose — *Dt* — 3 pts

The Taint suffuses the Spirit Hunter. Using his Spirit Nose, he may add his Wolf Snout to detect spirits (as Spirit Ears above). Also, Spirit Nose allows Spirit Hunters to track spirits, even those who leave no marks or do not touch the ground. Use the obstacles listed with the Scent Tracking skill and be creative.

Restrictions: Great Wolves only



Spite *Dt*

Dark Elves trade their Grief for a burning Spite. Something has snapped inside the Dark Elf's soul—Grief seems folly to him. Whatever the truth of an immortal life is, Dark Elves know that it does not lay silently grieving with his Elven brothers. See the Spite section of this chapter for more details on the rules.

Restrictions: Dark Elf lifepath trait

Stained *Dt*

The Last Wolf is the scapegoat of the pack. All of the pack's anger and frustration is taken out on his hide. No matter how he elevates himself throughout his life, the Last Wolf always bears this stain on his very heart. This trait grants a 1D reputation as a Last Wolf.

Restrictions: Great Wolf lifepath trait

Stillness *C-O* 3 pts.

This creature can remain motionless for unnatural lengths of time. Call-on for any test requiring or benefitting from absolute stillness for long periods of time.

Stink of the Ancient *Dt*

Great Wolves can smell a Ghost of the Wood when he is near. His scent is distinct, a mix of Ancient Ways and twisted speech that covers his coat like the blood of the hunted. This stink causes fear, trepidation and even hatred in Great Wolves. They do not look kindly upon one who so tampers with the will of the Grandfather. This trait grants a 1D infamous reputation as a Ghost of the Deeping Wood among the packs. Combine this with other reputations as appropriate.

Restrictions: Great Wolf lifepath trait

Stone's Age *Dt*

Trolls were born of stone and sorcery and to these roots they remain closely tied. Though not immortal, these creatures age very slowly and are capable of living for long centuries—if they can survive their own violent tendencies.

However, the weight of granite in their blood has detrimental effects. Their view of the world is dim and ponderous and their ability to intuit or empathize is minimal. A Troll may not have a Perception or Will exponent higher than 6.

Restrictions: Troll common trait

Stone Skin *Dt* 5 pts.

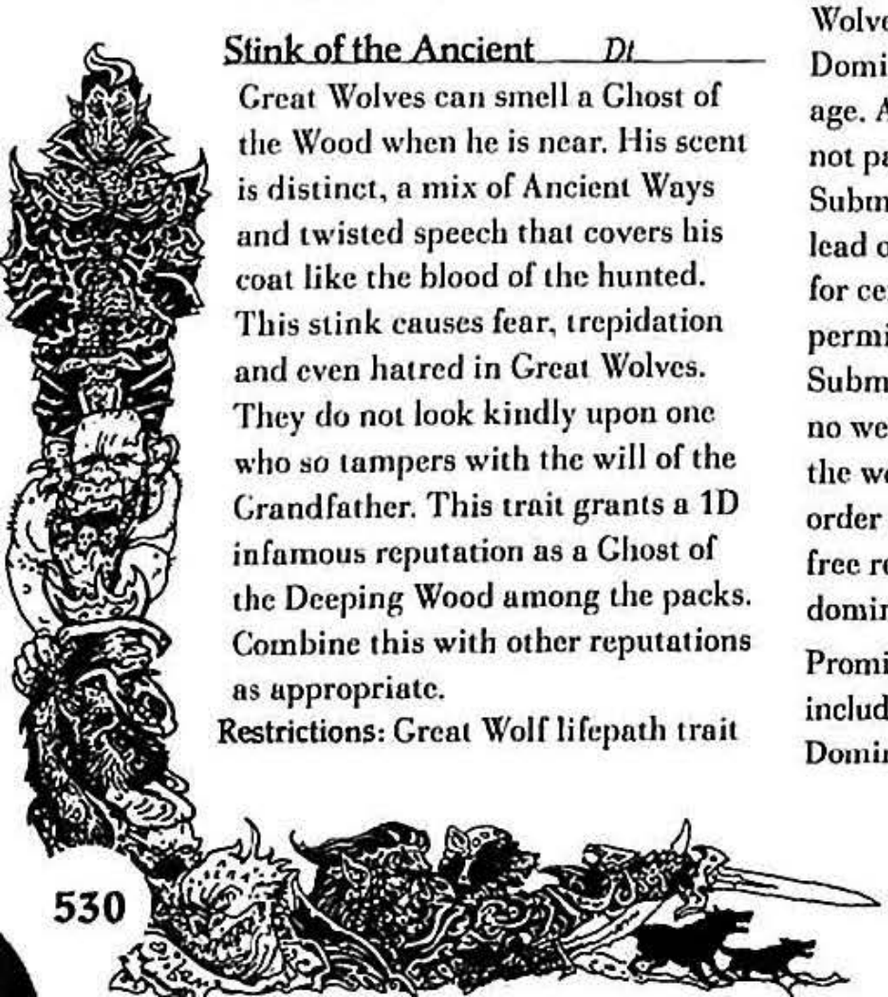
The hide of this creature is impossibly tough and unyielding. Stone Skin provides 3D of armor protection to the head and limbs, and 4D to the chest. This skin cannot "fail" and become damaged like normal armor: 1s are ignored. VA works as normal against this armor.

Restrictions: Trolls only

Submissive *Dt*

Wolves learn to submit to a Dominant wolf at a very young age. Any wolf in the pack who is not part of the Dominant pair is Submissive. These wolves follow the lead of their superiors and often beg for certain permissions, including permission to eat from a kill. Being Submissive in the pack connotes no weakness. It merely shows that the wolf understands the natural order of things. This trait grants a free relationship with a master or dominant character.

Prominent Submissive behaviors include: looking away from the Dominant's gaze, crouching with head



to the ground before the Dominant, rolling over and exposing the belly to the Dominant and nibbling or licking the Dominant's chin.

Lastly, wolves may possess both the Dominant and Submissive traits. These wolves will rule their pack as they rightly should, but they might also submit to stronger Dominants—be they wolf, human or Orc.

Restrictions: Great Wolf lifepath trait

Suicidal *Dt* 5 pts

This character (instantly) earns a persona point every time he takes a mortal wound.

Sweet Tooth *Char*

T-U

Tail *Char*

Roden tails range from 1/2 to 1 pace long. Field Born often have furry tails, while those Below often have bald ones.

Tentacles *Dt* 4/7 pts

Tentacles are supple, strong, sticky and agile additional limbs. This trait comes in two grades: Two tentacles cost 4 pts and give a +1D advantage to all Lock, Push and grabbing related tests. More than two tentacles cost 7 pts and grant +2D advantage to all Lock, Push and grabbing related tests.

These extra limbs cause a +1 Ob and a +2 Ob to Inconspicuous tests respectively.

Thief *C-O* 2 pts

The Thief trait requires that the player note a mandatory theft-related Instinct: "When visiting home, always steal Mother's valuables," for example. So long as that Instinct is in play, it acts a call-on for Sleight of Hand.

Thoughtful *Char*

Toiling *C-O* 2 pts

Laborers are used to working long hours doing the same mindless, repetitive tasks. Call-on for any skill when doing mindless, repetitive tasks.

Toothy Maw *Dt* 4 pts

This Troll's jaws are massive, distended and terrible. The Toothy Maw counts as: Pow 3, Add 2, VA 1, WS 1, Shortest. It replaces the Fanged trait.

Restrictions: Trolls only

Troll Savant *Char*

This Troll has the uncanny ability to form complete sentences, understand what is said to him and possibly even comprehend what a written language, map or glyph could represent—if it were possible in the first place for scratchings on stone or leather to mean anything. He is a mental giant among his peers and is appropriately hated and feared.

Restrictions: Trolls only

Troll Skin *Dt*

Troll Skin is resilient and leathery. It provides 1D of armor to the limbs and head, 2D to the chest.



As he gets older, a Troll's flesh often hardens into a stony mass. Thus, the Troll Skin trait maybe upgraded to Scaly Skin or Stone Skin for just a few trait points. See the Troll Special Traits list. This skin cannot "fail" and become damaged like armor: 1s are discounted in this case. VA works as normal against this armor.
Restrictions: Troll common trait

Tunnel Vision *Dt* 3 pts

The Below is a dark place and those who live there have adapted. Your character can see as normal in low-lit areas but not in complete darkness. Those looking directly into these eyes will see glowing green orbs staring back. Reduces penalties for dim light by one step.

Tusks *Dt* 2 pts

This Troll's lower canine teeth protrude into formidable tusks. The beast may use these sharpened weapons to gore the unwary. Add +1 Power to the Troll's bite attack when it is at hands fighting distance. This trait may be combined with Fangs or Toothy Maw.
Restrictions: Trolls only

Unfeeling *Dt* 8 pts

This creature does not take Steel tests from injury or pain—or fear of suffering harm.

Unflinching *Dt* 6 pts

Ironshields are the bodyguards and retinues of the Troll legions. They are trained to stand guard and lay down their lives for their Warlord master. This trait reduces hesitation by 4 for fear and pain.

V

Vegetarian *Char*

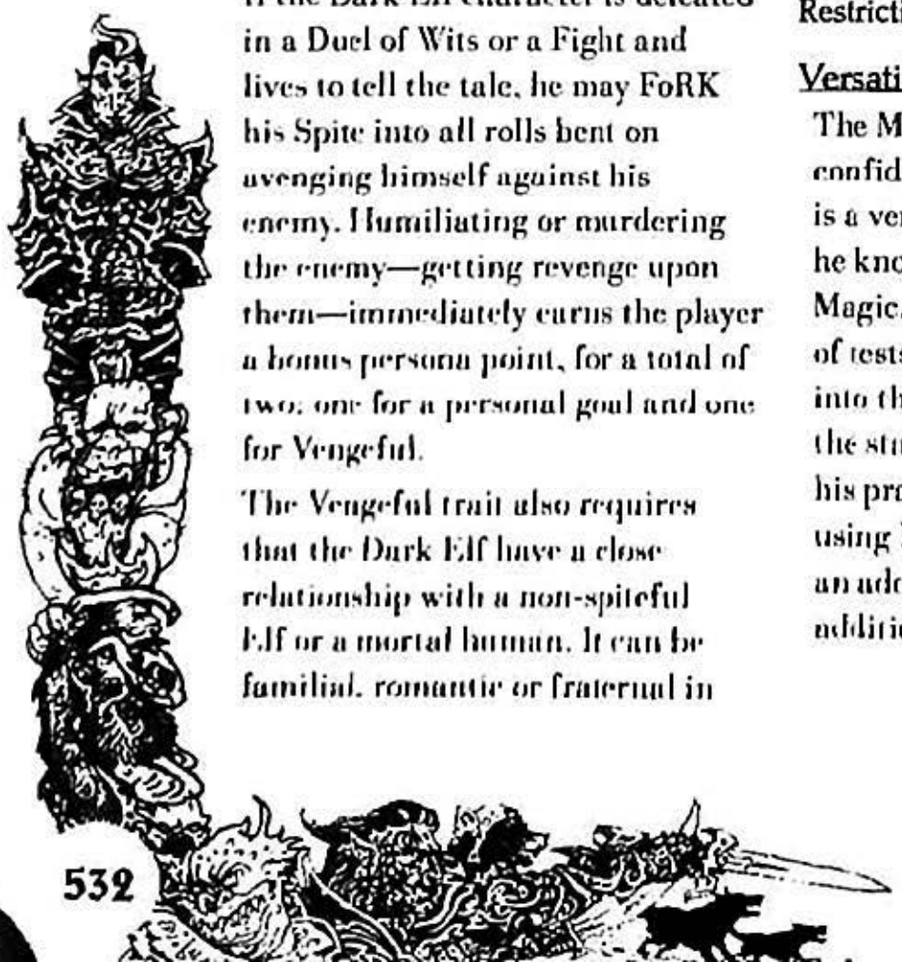
Vengeful *Dt*

If the Dark Elf character is defeated in a Duel of Wits or a Fight and lives to tell the tale, he may FoRK his Spite into all rolls bent on avenging himself against his enemy. Humiliating or murdering the enemy—getting revenge upon them—immediately earns the player a bonus persona point, for a total of two: one for a personal goal and one for Vengeful.

The Vengeful trait also requires that the Dark Elf have a close relationship with a non-spiteful Elf or a mortal human. It can be familial, romantic or fraternal in nature—but it must be close. It must rankle the Dark Elf that they still live that way.
Restrictions: Dark Elf lifepath trait

Versatile *Dt* 4 pts

The Master Sorcerer places his confidence in the art of sorcery. It is a versatile and potent art, and he knows it intimately. If using Art Magic, reduce by one the number of tests required for Weaving Magic into the Fiber of My Being. If using the standard Sorcery rules, reduce his practicals aptitude by one. If using Practical Magic, he may take an additional category of magic. In addition, the player earns a persona



point for pushing his character's magic in a dangerous or untried direction.
Restrictions: Humans only

Vestigial Wings *Char*
Two small, bat-like wings protrude from the Troll's shoulders. Flap, flap.
Restrictions: Trolls only

Victim *Dt* 2 pts
This character has suffered sustained abuse designed to get them to conform to a code of behavior. Choose a relationship with one of your abusers. That character has +1D to all social skills used against the victim.

Visionary Faith *Dt* 5 pts
Visionaries draw their power from their followers, not divine favor. This trait grants a B3 Faith attribute. The attribute may not be increased with the Faith questions; instead, it is increased by purchasing a Visionary Cult. Any miracles performed with Visionary Faith only affect the believers and nothing else.
Restrictions: Roden only

Voracious Carnivore *Char*

W-Z

Wanderlust *Char*

Webbed Fingers and Toes *Dt* 1 pt
Stride 5 when swimming.

Well Traveled *Dt* 4 pts
The Speaker of Names wanders the lands and seas, communing with the spirits. This trait allows the player to take a new domain when his character travels to a new locale in play. The player may describe a memory his character has of this place or a place like it. He may describe when he traveled here before. The player then adds a new domain to his spirit binder at its base level (0). Once used, this trait becomes a character trait. To be clear, the domain is added during play at a time of the player's choosing, not during character burning.

Whip Tail *Dt* 4 pts
These tails are typically one or two paces longer than most others and tend to be slender. Pow 0. Add 1. VA –, Longer. WS 3,. May not be combined with Club Tail.
Restrictions: Roden only

Wickedly Clever *C-O*
Warlords quickly grow to understand that the world sees Trolls as mindless brutes, good only for absorbing and dealing devastation. Outsiders forget that Trolls can evince intelligence. Troll Warlords use this prejudice to their advantage—playing the part of the dumb automaton while scheming and plotting behind their thick masks. Call-on for Strategy and Tactics when unveiling a surprising stratagem or ploy.
Restrictions: Troll lifepath trait



Witch Flesh *Dt* 6 pts

The Brood Mother knows a bit of magic, rumored to have been handed down from an old giantess in ages past. This magic, called Witch Flesh, grants the ability to transform into a handsome young man or woman. The disguise is impenetrable. The brood mother retains her stats and attributes, but her character traits are replaced with Beautiful, Wholesome, Apple-Cheeked, etc. Any other traits requiring physical expression (like Horns or Claws) are temporarily lost to the human form. No test is required to transform, but the change requires a full scene, during which the magic slowly takes effect.

Once the Brood Mother reveals her true nature to her victim (or is perhaps accidentally spotted transforming), the victim will never see her the same way again—and can never be fooled by the Witch Flesh of this Brood Mother again.

Wolf Eyes *Dt*

Wolves possess the advantage of being able to see well in low light. Wolves reduce obstacle penalties for dim light, darkness and haze by one step.

Restrictions: Wolf common trait

Wolf Snout *Dt*

Wolves benefit from an exceptional sense of smell. Wolf Snout grants +1D to Perception for assesses, and +1D to Scent Tracking and Pack Hunting skill tests. This bonus is also added to Perception for determining Reflexes. This trait counts as Observation when combined with Woodland Ear.

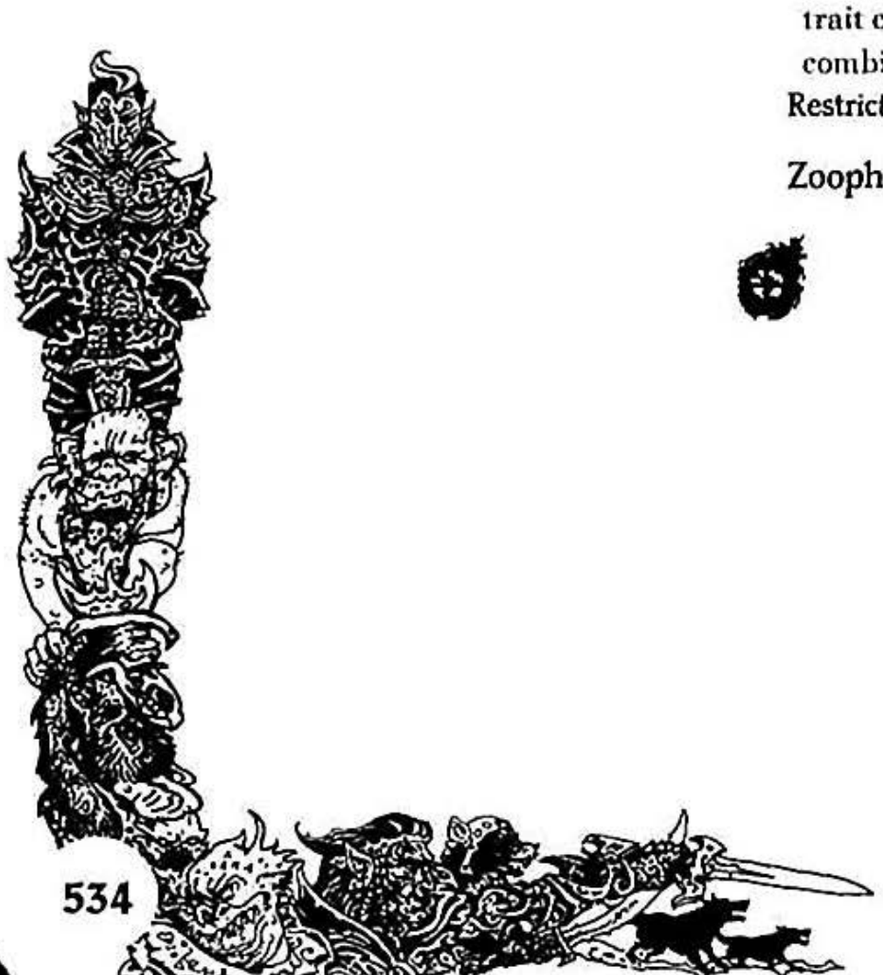
Restrictions: Wolf common trait

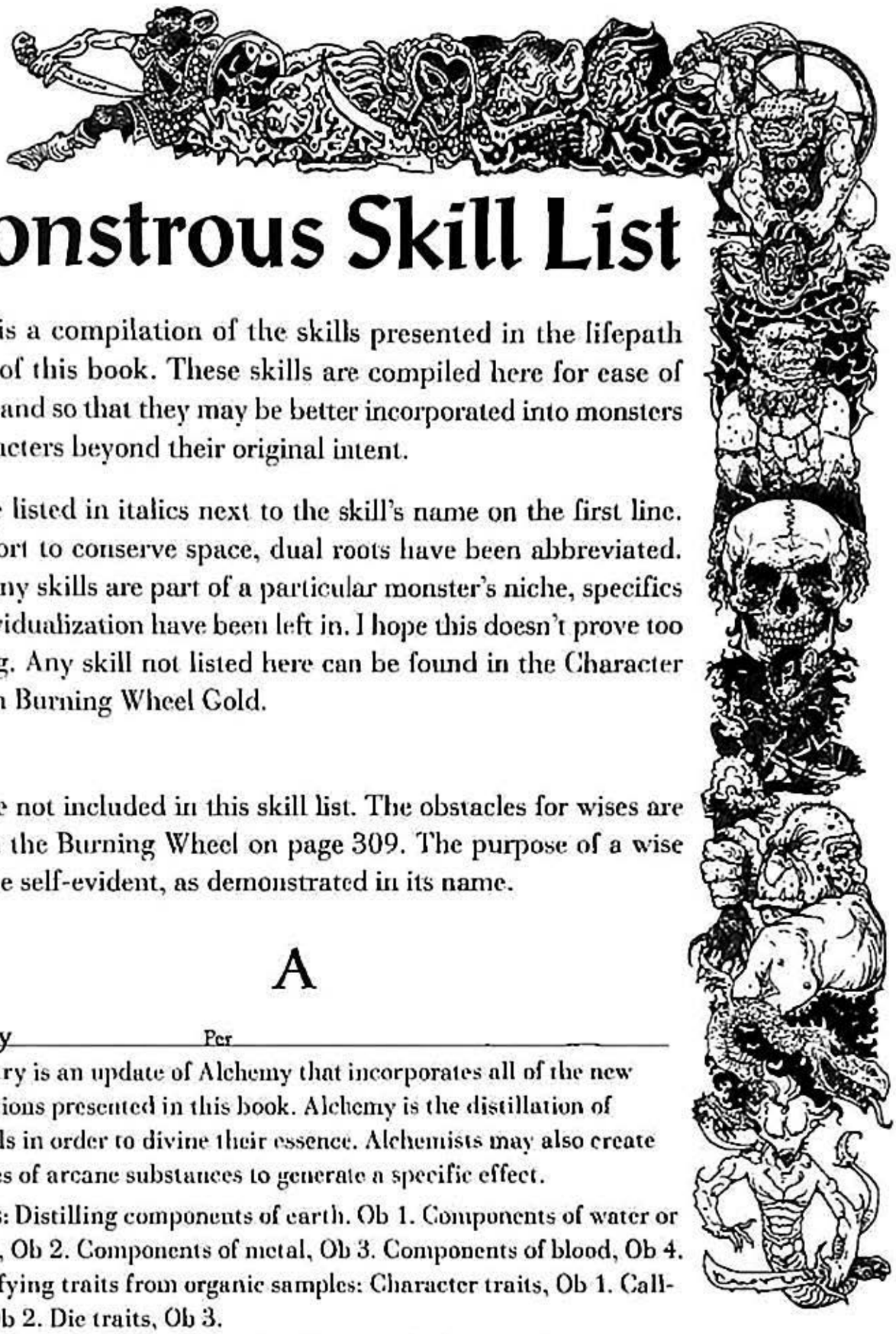
Woodland Ear *Dt*

Wolves have extraordinary hearing. The Woodland Ear allows wolves to distinguish between different animal calls and add +1D to Perception tests for assesses, Scent Tracking and Pack Hunting. This bonus is also added to Perception for determining Reflexes. This trait counts as Observation when combined with Wolf Snout.

Restrictions: Wolf common trait

Zoophagia *Char*





Monstrous Skill List

This list is a compilation of the skills presented in the lifepath chapters of this book. These skills are compiled here for ease of reference and so that they may be better incorporated into monsters and characters beyond their original intent.

Roots are listed in italics next to the skill's name on the first line. In an effort to conserve space, dual roots have been abbreviated. Since many skills are part of a particular monster's niche, specifics and individualization have been left in. I hope this doesn't prove too confusing. Any skill not listed here can be found in the Character Burner in Burning Wheel Gold.

Wises

Wises are not included in this skill list. The obstacles for wises are found in the Burning Wheel on page 309. The purpose of a wise should be self-evident, as demonstrated in its name.

A

Alchemy *Per*

This entry is an update of Alchemy that incorporates all of the new applications presented in this book. Alchemy is the distillation of materials in order to divine their essence. Alchemists may also create mixtures of arcane substances to generate a specific effect.

Obstacles: Distilling components of earth. Ob 1. Components of water or liquid, Ob 2. Components of metal, Ob 3. Components of blood, Ob 4. Identifying traits from organic samples: Character traits, Ob 1. Call-ons, Ob 2. Die traits, Ob 3.

FoRKs: Enchanting, Herbalism, Apothecary, Munitions. Poisons.

Skill Type: Sorcerous **Tools:** Yes.

Ancient Ways *Will/Per*

It is said that the Great Ancient spoke the true names of the water, loam, wind and prairie fire. Closely guarded, these powerful names have been passed from generation to generation of Great Wolves descended from the last wolf of the ancestral pack—Fell Ancients who bear the Mark.

This skill is the wolf equivalent of the Spirit Binding skill. Wolves must have the *Mark of the Ancient* trait to use this skill.

Skill Type: Sorcerous **Tools:** Yes.

B-C

Bargaining — Will/Per

Immortal spirits know the value of ephemeral things like life and a soul. They bring this knowledge to bear against those who wish to strike bargains with them and form pacts. The Bargaining skill is a special social skill designed solely to negotiate pacts between summoner and summoned. It may be used for the bargaining steps described in the Summoning chapter or in a Duel of Wits with an otherworldly entity or another summoner concerning the price or nature of a pact.

Obstacles: Bargaining uses the rules described in the Summoning and the Duel of Wits chapters.

FoRKs: Rhetoric, Ugly Truth, Folklore.

Skill Type: Special

Tools: No.

Begging — Will

Begging is the Wolf's version of the Persuasion skill. This skill may be used as Persuasion in a Duel of Wits between Great Wolves or their friends. When a submissive wolf wants something, whether it be food or permission, he must beg the dominant for it. Begging is not humiliating to a wolf; it is part of their nature. Sometimes the female dominant will even need to beg when she is nursing her pups—she begs the pack to bring them food.

Obstacles: Begging food for pups, Ob 1. Other obstacles are based on the Will of the target wolf.

FoRKs: Pack Etiquette

Skill Type: Social

Tools: No.

Camouflage — Per/Ag

Using this skill, a Troll may take on the appearance of his surroundings and remain hidden. The Dread Stone love to build up false stone walls around themselves and then wait for an unsuspecting passerby to wander into reach.

Using this skill effectively requires that the Troll remain motionless while camouflaged. Test this skill as a Stealthy skill.

Obstacles: Camouflage is used in versus tests against Observation.

FoRKs: Stealthy

Skill Type: Forester

Tools: No.

Circination — Per/Ag

Circination is the art of drawing circles and sigils that aid the spirit binder and summoner. There are three types of circles that may be drawn: the summoning circle or gate, the fortress circle and the prison circle. The summoning circle aids in conjuring and binding spirits. The fortress protects the summoner from spirits. The prison circle traps unruly spirits. Circination is tested like a regular skill: It is not open-ended and does not get combined with anything special (except help or FoRKs) when tested. Circination is used to aid Spirit Binding and Summoning. Please consult those chapters for further nuances of the skill.

If a circle is physically damaged—erased, marred, smudged—then it loses its powers.

Obstacles: *Summoning Circle or Gate*: The player sets his obstacle according to how many advantage dice he hopes to earn. If successful,



the test grants advantage dice for Spirit Binding or Summoning equal to the obstacle. *Fortress*: For Spirit Binding, the obstacle is equal to the spirit Strength to be deflected. For Summoning, the obstacle is 1 plus the obstacle penalty the sorcerer wishes to imposes on the spirit. *Prison*: For Spirit Binding, the obstacle is twice the spirit's Strength. For Summoning, the obstacle is equal to the Will exponent of the creature to be imprisoned (plus any penalties for shade differences).

FoRKs: Illuminations, Cartography, Symbology, Ritual and appropriate wises.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.

Combat Mount — Will/Pow

Carrying a rider on a journey and bearing him into combat are two very different skills. A wolf must be trained to modify his fighting style in order to coordinate with his rider and not roll him or throw him.

Skill Type: Martial Training

Tools: No.

D-E

Death Art — Will/Forte

Death Art is a black practice that teaches the sorcerer how to animate corpses and turn them into walking abominations.

Obstacles: See the Death Art chapter.

FoRKs: Summoning, Folklore and appropriate wises.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: Yes and no. See the chapter.

Enchanting — Per/Ag

Enchanting is a school of sorcery that focuses on imparting magic to inert, physical things. There are two sides to Enchanting: imbuing and full-blown enchanting. Imbuing allows the mage to temporarily infuse an item with a small amount of power. Enchanting allows the mage to create powerful, enduring artifacts.

Obstacles: See the Enchanting chapter.

FoRKs: A craft skill appropriate to what's being created. Linked tests are appropriate.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: Yes and no. See the chapter.

Escape Artist — Per/Ag

Wolves can learn nearly anything. When trapped or caged, they quickly learn the mechanics of their captivity and devise a method of escape.

Obstacles: Collars, Ob 1. Leashes, Ob 2. Traps, Ob 3. Cages, Ob 4 and up.

FoRKs: Cage-wise, Trap-wise

Skill Type: Special

Tools: No.

Extortion — Will/Per

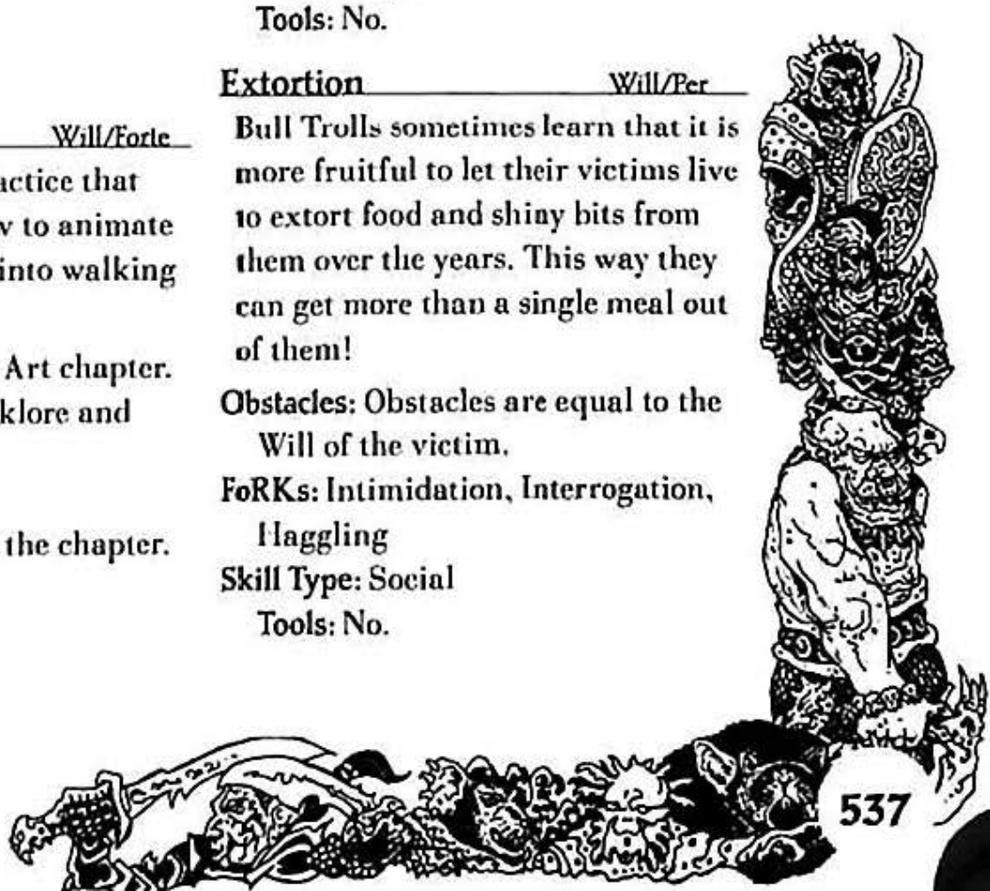
Bull Trolls sometimes learn that it is more fruitful to let their victims live to extort food and shiny bits from them over the years. This way they can get more than a single meal out of them!

Obstacles: Obstacles are equal to the Will of the victim.

FoRKs: Intimidation, Interrogation, Haggling

Skill Type: Social

Tools: No.



F-H

Firebombs — Per/Ag

The Arsonist learns how to mix ingredients to create incendiary bombs. The Mark result damage is listed with each type. If the explosion hits a character, roll the die of fate to determine IMS (like a spell). This skill does not cover the distribution of such bombs. That would come from Agility, Throwing, Artillery or simply inconspicuous placement. When igniting such a device, roll the die of fate. On a 1, the bomb malfunctions. Roll again immediately: Odd, it detonates: even, it's a dud.

Obstacles: Small, bottle-sized incendiaries (Mark B6), Ob 1. Incendiary bomb (Mark B8), Ob 4. Fat Boy (Mark B10), Ob 6.

FoRKs: Alchemy, Herbalism, Munitions, Arson

Skill Type: Craftsman

Tools: Yes.

Garrote — Agility

A garrote is a two- to three-foot length of cord strung between two small wooden handles or leather loops. Roden use it to throttle victims to death. To use this skill, the would-be-murderer must attack from stealth or surprise (or against a victim already in a Lock). Test Garrote versus Power or Agility (victim's choice, but at double obstacle). If the attacker lands a 2D or greater Lock, the victim loses 1D Forte every exchange thereafter. If Forte reaches zero, the victim falls unconscious.

FoRKs: Brawling

Skill Type: Martial

Tools: Yes.

Hoof-wise — Perception

Wolves learn the habits and nature of their prey.

Obstacles: Identifying species (horse, deer or elk), Ob 1. Judging the health of intended prey, Ob 2. Age and gender of prey, Ob 3. Predicting herd location, Ob 4.

Skill Type: Wise

Tools: No.

Howling — Will

Wolves love to howl, and they *do* so for many reasons. It is the combination of the Singing, Oratory and Conspicuous skills.

Obstacles: Sing discordantly, Ob 1. Sing for joy, Ob 2. Howl for warning, Ob 3. Howl for the lost, Ob 4.

Skill Type: Social

Tools: No.

L-P

Lash — Agility

Bellowers bear a massive lash with which they drive on their lessers. So terrible and huge is this whip that it may be used as a weapon.

Obstacles: As a melee weapon. See the Resources section for stats.

Skill Type: Martial

Tools: Lash.

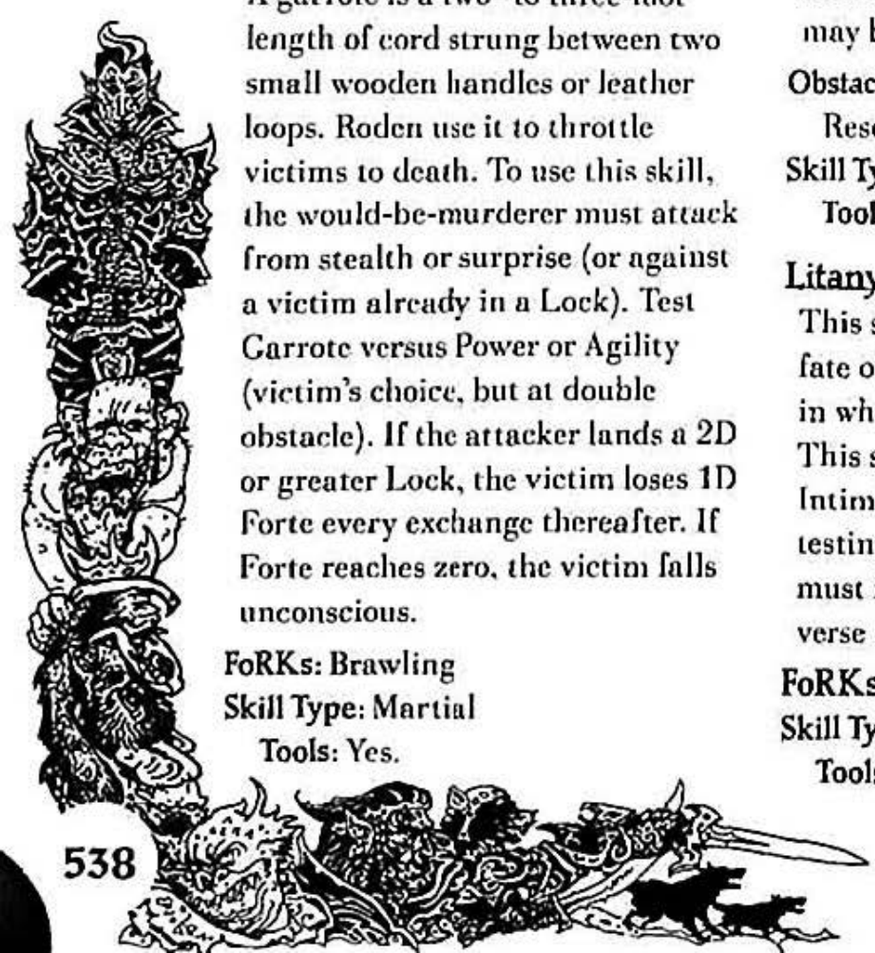
Litany of Fools — Will

This speaks gently of the terrible fate of those who don't see the truth in what the Dark Elf is saying. This song counts as Ugly Truth or Intimidation—choose which before testing the skill. The Dark Elf player must incorporate a barbed rhyme of verse into his roleplay.

FoRKs: Falsehood

Skill Type: Social

Tools: No.



Nature of All Things — Will/Per

This wolf knows the history of the trees, the streams, the rocks and brush. He knows why the snow falls and why the sun rises. He understands that the sharp tooth of the wolf lengthens the stride of the hoofed ones. He comprehends, vaguely, the interconnectedness of all things. This skill can be used as a FoRK for nearly any other skill (except martial skills), in a similar fashion to the Astrology skill.

Obstacles: Naming a natural feature, Ob 1. Naming a living creature, Ob 2. Giving cryptic advice, Ob 3. Discerning truth from lies, Ob 4. Interpreting natural omens, Ob 5.

FoRKs: Appropriate wises. May FoRK into any other skill from Wolf skill list.

Skill Type: Academic

Tools: No.

Nursing — Will/Per

This is the delicate process of weaning pups off the teat and slowly introducing them to meat and forage. Also, this skill is used like Field Dressing.

Obstacles: as Field Dressing. Or as the Will of the pup, if appropriate

FoRKs: Rearing

Skill Type: Special

Tools: No.

Pack Etiquette — Perception

This is crucial knowledge of the laws of the pack and what behavior is appropriate at what juncture.

Obstacles: Feed order at a kill, Ob 2. Approaching the pack as a foreigner, Ob 4.

FoRKs: Begging

Skill Type: Social

Tools: No.

Pack Hunting — Per/Spd

Wolves hunt for their prey in a different manner than those on two legs. Use the obstacles below to determine how much prey a pack can bring down over the course of a week. The dominant is always the primary for this test. Last wolves, pups, elders and nursing dominants may not help in this test—only Hunters, Aunts, Uncles and Yearlings.

Obstacles: Adequate kills to feed a pack of up to three. Ob 4. Adequate kills to feed of pack of four or five Great Wolves, Ob 5. Adequate kills for a pack of six to seven, Ob 7. Note the bonuses and penalties for the hunting grounds as described in the Territories section of this chapter.

FoRKs: Scent Tracking, Scent-wise, Territory-wise, Forest-wise

Skill Type: Forester

Tools: No.

Preaching — Will

Preaching relies upon religious doctrine, real-life anecdotes and folk wisdom.

Obstacles: Most common Will among the audience members. Preaching can also be used in the Duel of Wits for Incite and Dismiss actions.

FoRKs: Intimidation, Falsehood, Doctrine, Soothing Platitudes

Skill Type: Social

Tools: No.



R

Rearing — Will/Per

This is the wolf's instructional skill. Good Uncles and Aunts pass on the knowledge of the hunt and the traditions of the pack to the young pups. Use this skill as Instruction for teaching wolves younger than you.

FoRKs: Way of the First Hunter
Skill Type: Social
Tools: No.

Rider Training — Will

This training teaches a wolf how to subordinate itself and accept commands from a rider.

Skill Type: Physical Training
Tools: No.

S

Savage Attack — Ag/Spd

Orcs train wolves to fight savagely and wildly. Wolves with Savage Attack have access to all of the martial maneuvers, including Lock and Strike when using their Crushing Jaws.

FoRKs: Brawling
Skill Type: Martial
Tools: No.

Scent Tracking — Perception

Wolves track in a slightly different manner than humans, Elves and Orcs—they rely on scent and sound in addition to sight.

Obstacles: Tracking fresh scent on dry earth, Ob 1. Recognizing a known creature by scent trail, Ob 2. Picking up day-old scent, Ob 3. Following fresh scent from nearby prey on the wind, Ob 4. Tracking fresh scent in new, light rain, Ob 5. Tracking quarry that has crossed through a stream, Ob 6. Tracking after rain, Ob 7.

FoRKs: Scent-wise
Skill Type: Forester
Tools: No.

Sorcery — Perception

This is not a revision of Sorcery but an expansion. In your game, the Sorcery skill can count for the standard version of the Sorcery skill described in the Burning Wheel or count for Art Magic or Practical Magic described in this book. Pick one form that the skill represents in your game. All iterations of the Sorcery skill, no matter what lifepath they are earned from, count as this form.

Obstacles: See the Art Magic or Practical Magic chapters in this book or the Sorcery chapter in the Burning Wheel.

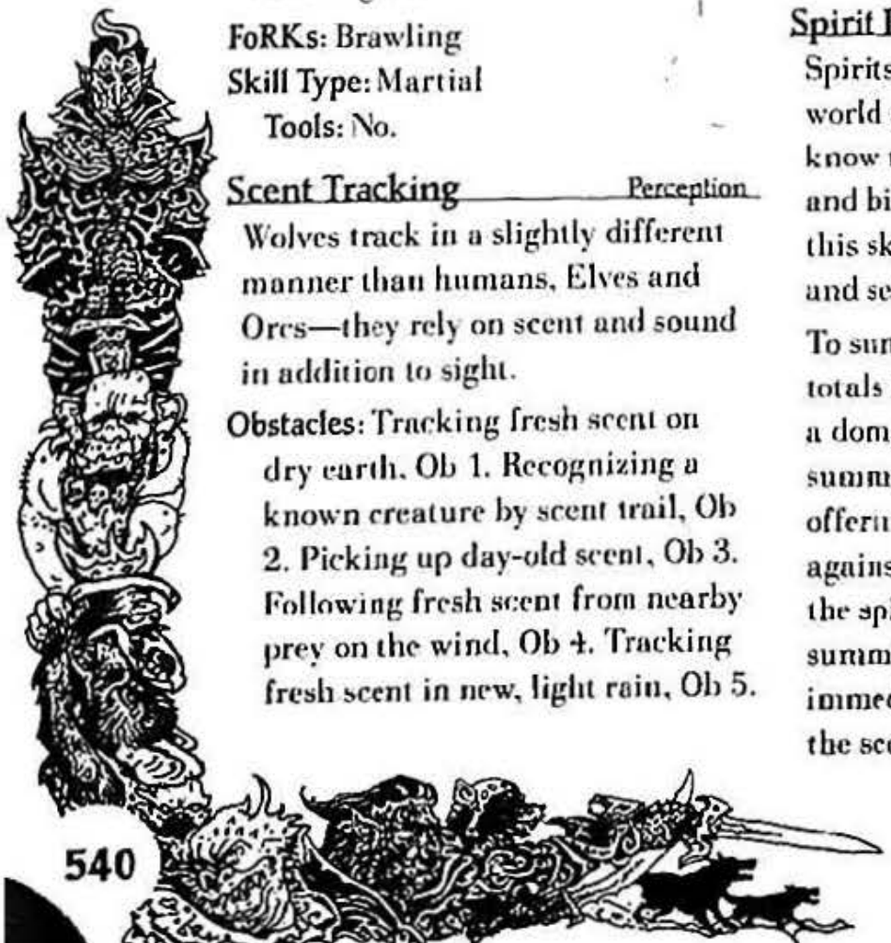
FoRKs: Aura Reading, Astrology, Empyrealia, Demonology and appropriate wises.

Skill Type: Sorcerous
Tools: No.

Spirit Binding — Will

Spirits abound. They infuse the world around us, and those who know their secrets call them forth and bind them into service. Using this skill, a summoner binds a spirit and sets it to a task.

To summon and bind, the player totals his dice from Spirit Binding, a domain binding, a spirit mark, summoning circles and any offerings. He tests those dice against an obstacle that combines the spirit's Strength, the task, the summoner's own Immanence, the immediate need for the spirit and the scope of the domain affected. If





successful, the summoner can name his task and reduce the amount of retribution the spirit will visit upon him. If failed, the summoner has angered the spirit and will suffer the consequences in either retribution or enmity.

Obstacles: See the Spirit Binding Obstacles and Spirit Services in this chapter.

FoRKs: Astrology. Linked tests are appropriate.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.

Summoning — Perception

The Summoning skill allows the character to call spirits of the dead, demons, angels and gods to discuss matters of faith, life and philosophy, and perhaps to reach a bargain for service. This skill uses the rules found in the Summoning chapter of this book.

Obstacles: See the Summoning chapter.

FoRKs: Astrology, Folklore, Empyrealia, Demonology and appropriate wises.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.

T-Z

Tongue of the Ancient One — Perception

It is said that the Great Ancient whispered his secrets to his last pup before he passed on from this world. He taught his outcast and hated child how to speak the true speech, how to make his words have power beyond understanding.

This skill is the equivalent of Sorcery. Great Wolves with the Mark of the Ancient trait may use this skill to cast spells.

Skill Type: Sorcerous

Tools: No.

Way of the First Hunter — Will/Per

This is the Spirit Hunter's history of the world. This skill acts as Ancient History.

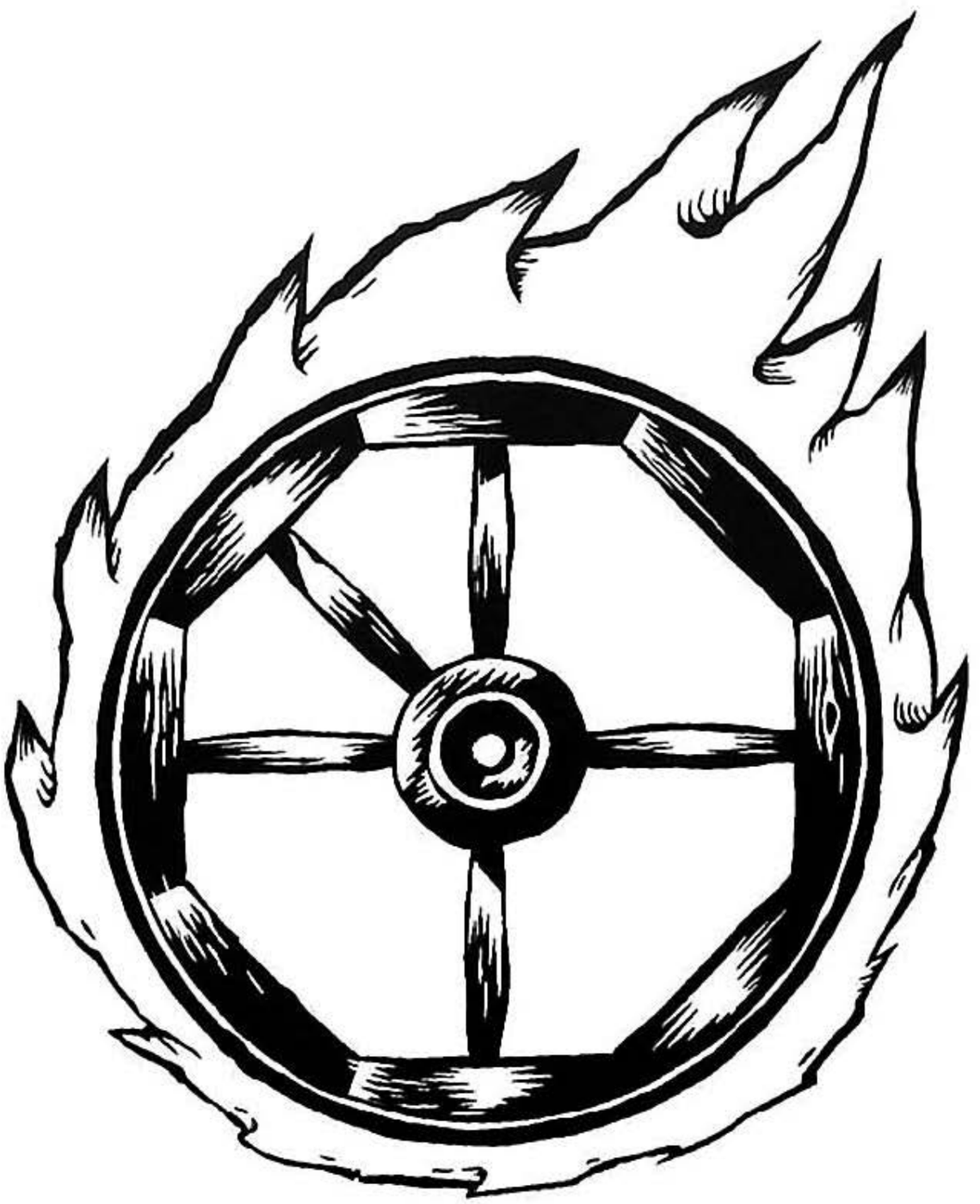
FoRKs: Old World-wise, Nature of All Things

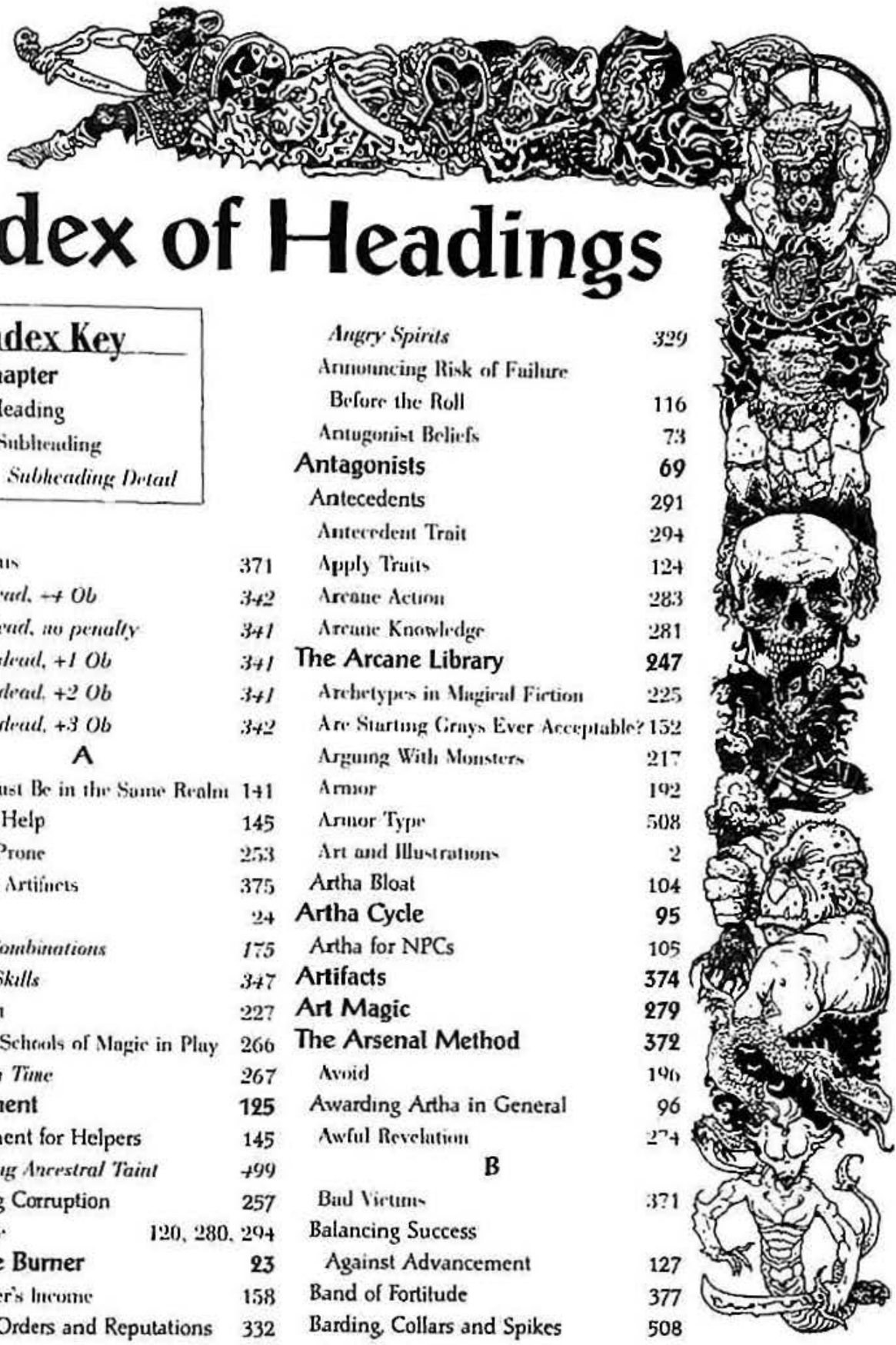
Skill Type: Academic

Tools: No.



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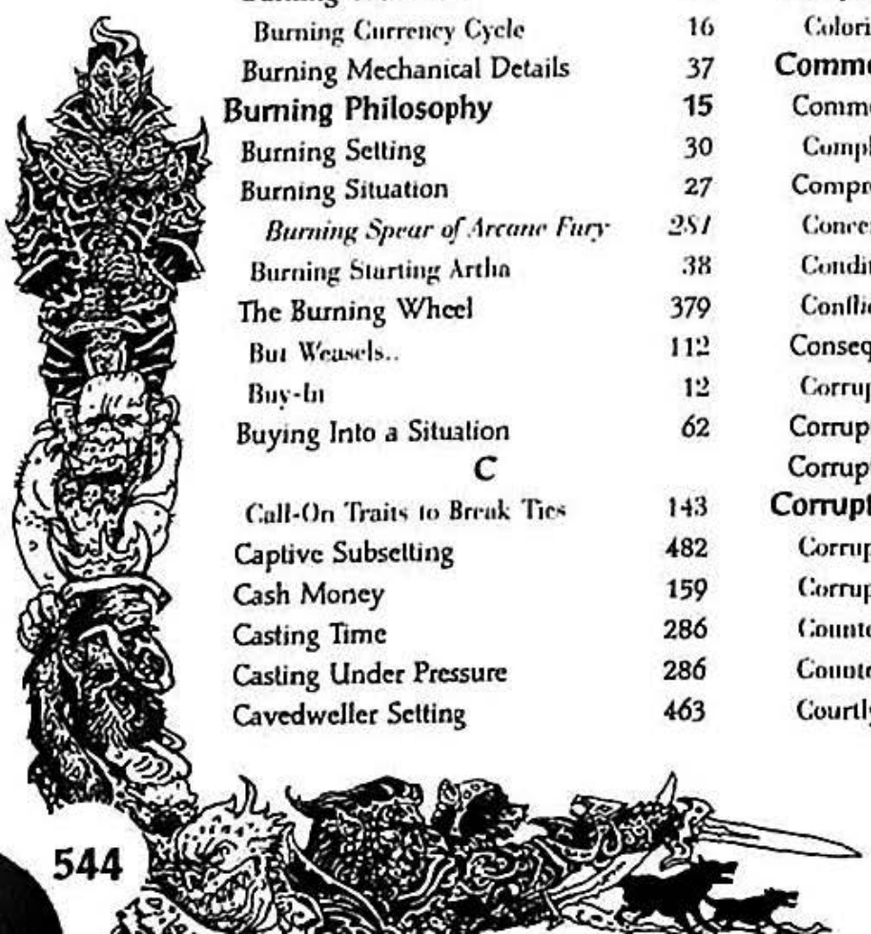
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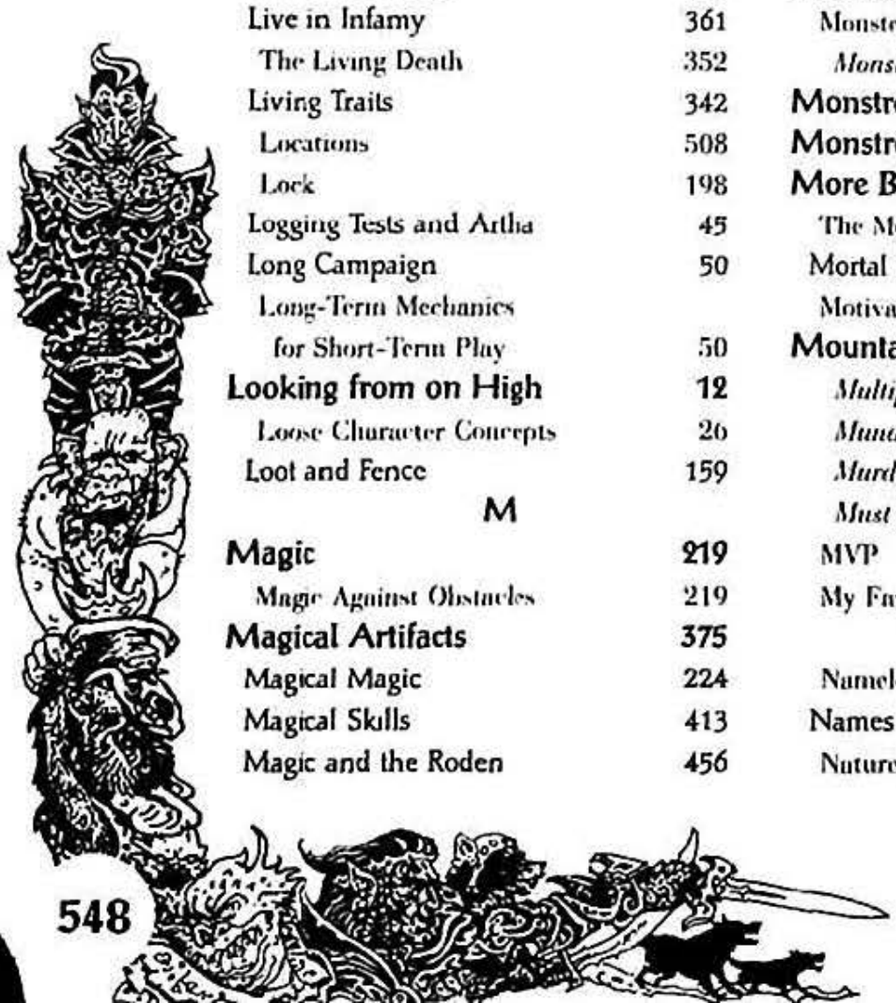
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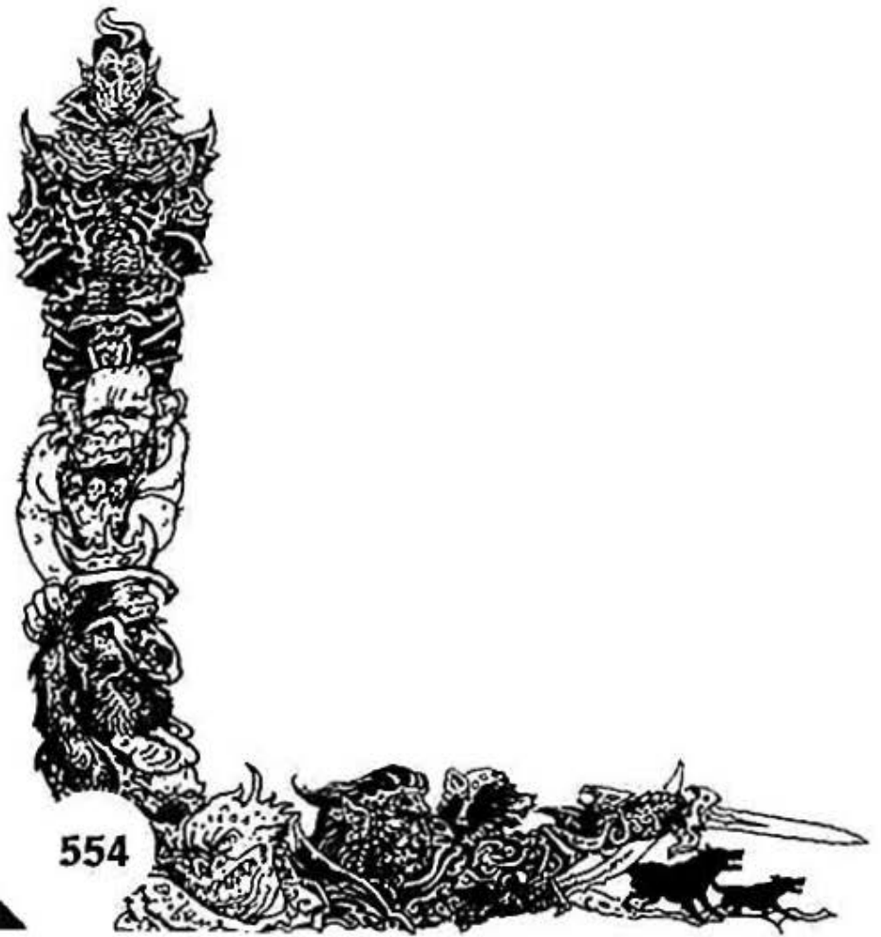
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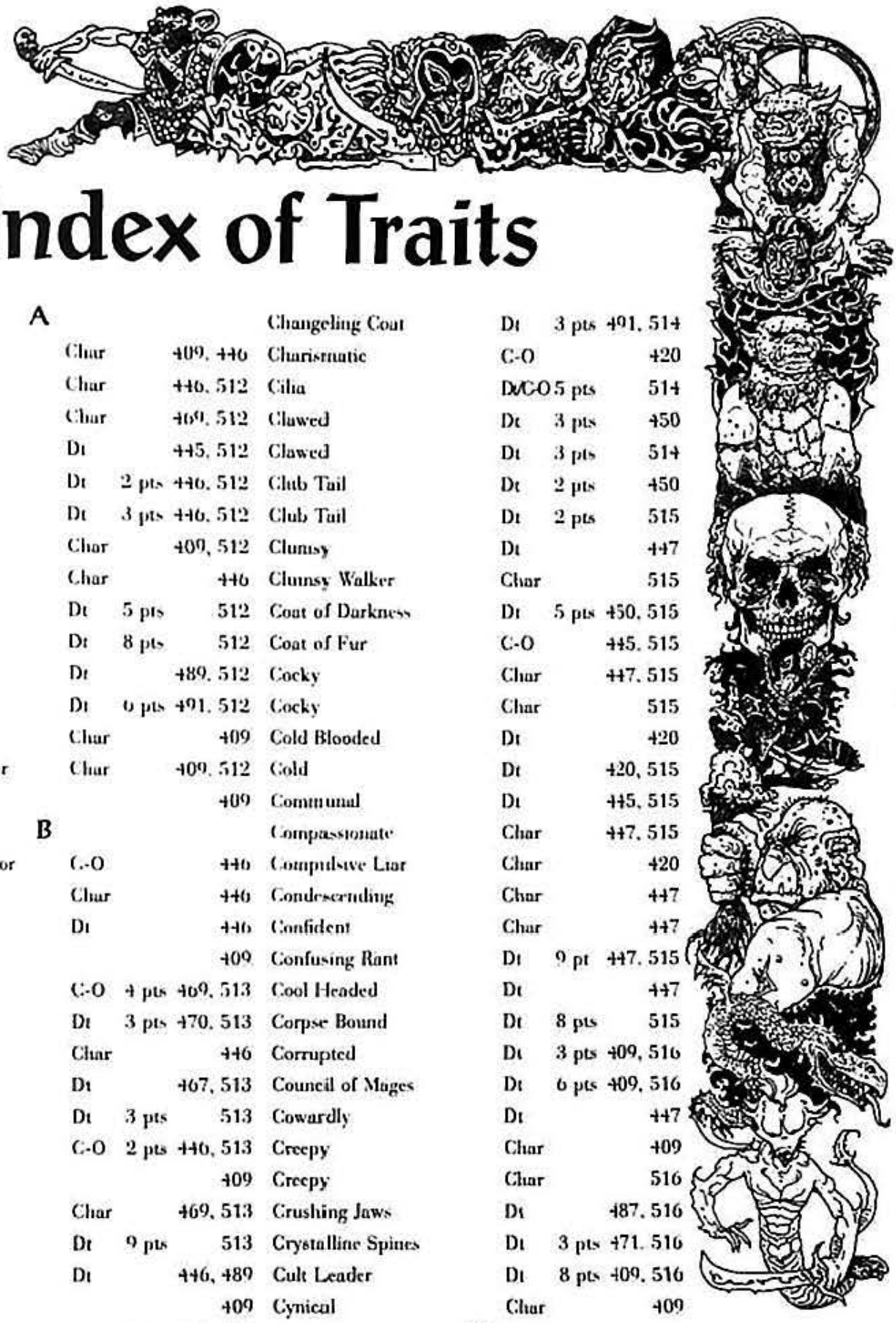


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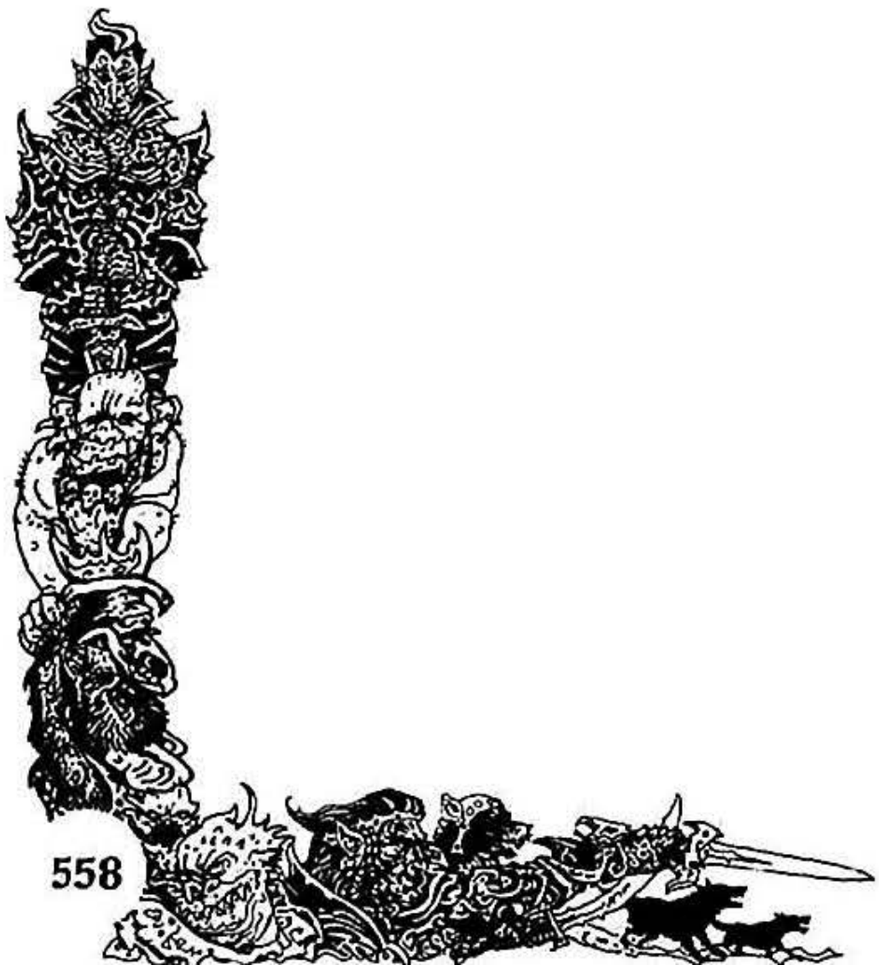
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Colophon

This book was created using an iMac 3.2 GHz Intel Core i5 running OS 10.11.4 and the Adobe Creative Suite 5 (specifically, InDesign CS 5).
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