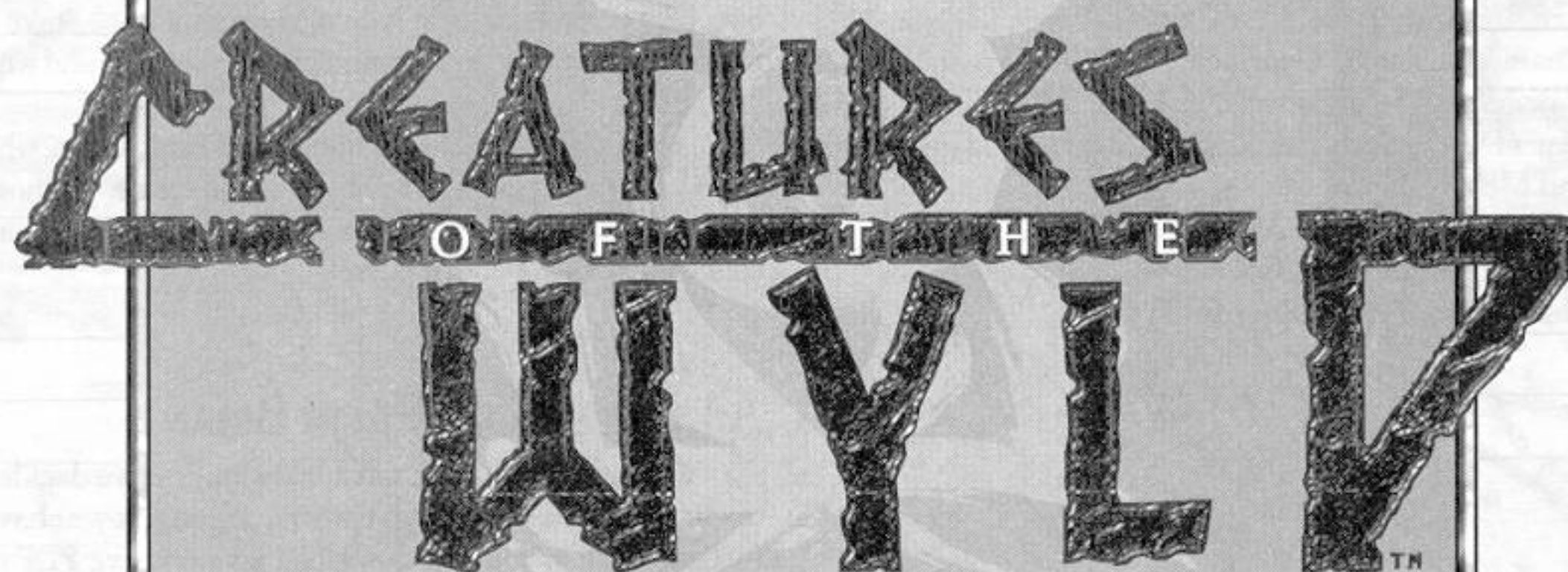


A Bestiary of the Second Age for

EXALTED



CREATURES OF THE WYLDTM

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SPECIAL THANKS

To all the fans who've made *Exalted*'s first year such a successful one. None of this would have been possible without your support. You asked for a book of beasts, we listened. Peace out, y'all.

Also, to all the writers and artists who filled in the skeletons of outlines and art notes and made a complete and involving setting far more beautiful, imaginative and richly detailed than anything I could have created on my own. Fans, the next time you're reading a book, take a minute to look at the credits and see who wrote it and who drew the art.

And, finally, to John Chambers and Brian Glass, who do so much of the work for so little of the credit. Without them, *Exalted* would be far less than it is. Thanks for all your long hours of effort, guys.

A LITTLE NOTE FROM BRIAN

Well, gang, the book ran a little long, so we decided to cut some creatures. Don't worry, as long as you have Internet access, you can download an exclusive PDF of the cut critters. Just go to <http://www.white-wolf.com/download/creature.pdf>.

I'd like to offer my sincere apologies to all the great artists and writers who had their work cut from this book.



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CREATURES OF THE WYLD™



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| INTRODUCTION | 4 |
| CHAPTER ONE: THE NORTH | 6 |
| Arctic Demitaur • Great-Terror • Horned Snow Hunter • The Hushed Ones • Ice Hollow • Lodestar • The Mice of the Sun • Mount Mostath • Snow Lion • Undercoat • White Devineko • Winter Rose | |
| CHAPTER TWO: THE EAST | 25 |
| Chakra Orchid • The Chaun • Claw Strider • The Devil Tiger of Larjyn • Forest Mimic • Gravehound • Heart Wasp • Helgrifnir, the Fen-Hound • Ink Monkey • Komodo Rat • No Key, the Mushroom King • Panic Monkey • Piney • The Redwood Mantis • Strangler's Serpent • Tree-Singer | |
| CHAPTER THREE: THE SOUTH | 52 |
| Abacasteri • Ash Devourer • Desert Basilisc • Eight-Tailed Mole Hound • The Five-Metal Shrike • Furnace Rhino • Hound of Autochthon • Mukade, the Black-Iron Centipede • Rapace • Sandswimmer • Sayla, the Yellow Wym • Sleeper in the Sand • The Zukuluka | |
| CHAPTER FOUR: THE WEST | 75 |
| Air Kraken • The Brass Leviathan • Earth-Shattering Worm • Fire Ant • Great Sea Elk • Kaigani Berg Rider • Mokrelus, the Many-Handed • Nymph's Blood • Oliphem, Watcher of the Sea • Pelagial • Rock-Roller • Singer of the Deep • Spring-Belly • The Thousand Hungry Wings | |
| CHAPTER FIVE: THE SCAVENGER LANDS | 100 |
| Arad, the Hunter • Brass Legionnaire • Chillikin • Five Days Darkness • Flesh Pet • Giant Rat and Emperor Rat • Grate Monkey • The Harvester of Poisons • Illuthrita • Karmeus • Mother Bog • Proto Puma Prime • Snakebud Tree • Thousand-Forged Dragon • The Tree of the Inchoate | |



INTRODUCTION

After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet.

—Daniel 7:7

The Second Age of Man is a time profoundly unlike our own, and the primal forces of magic run much more strongly in this time than in the diminished modern world. Just as heroes walk the face of Creation in the sunset of the Age of Heroes, so to do great beasts. Survivors of Creation's first days, immortal living weapons from the Primordial War, constructs of the First Age, the Wyld-twisted offspring of the Contagion—all of them and also beasts that have no place in the natural order, and who are now long-vanished from our own history.

These beasts are the subject of **Creatures of the Wyld**. From the most ancient survivors of the time before history to mad horrors newly sprung from the chaos of the Wyld, this book details some of Creation's deadliest and most insidious inhabitants. Some might be allies or familiars, others enemies, while many are simply the mindless hazards of a darkening world, creeping ever closer to the borders of civilization with each passing year.

OTHER CREATURES

Creation is a vast and hostile place. The beasts in this book are merely a sampling of many of the Second Age's more famous hazards. There is hardly a village that does not have its own famous local terror, at least in legend if not in fact. Storytellers should feel free to add their own creations

to the panoply of monsters that haunt the Second Age's countless ruins and wildernesses.

In addition, this tome covers only those creatures that are perilous and fell. The Second Age contains a vast number of creatures that are merely beautiful, unique or enchanting. They do not, as a rule, appear within these pages. Such beasts may be beautiful, but they are not the stuff of epic legends or terrible battles. Storytellers should feel free to lace their descriptions with the colorful and exotic flora and fauna that fill the Second Age of Man. There is no need to give statistics to small game and beautiful flowers—your imagination will make your description of flowering desert coral touch your players far more deeply than its soak score and the number of health levels required to shatter a man-sized patch of it.

FAUNA OF THE BLESSED ISLE

Notably absent from this book are the dangerous inhabitants of the Blessed Isle. That is because there mostly are none. Civilization has laid its hand across the Isle for thousands of years with little interruption, and those wilderness areas that remain, however vast, are owned and tended as private wildernesses, game preserves or government reservations that the Empress did not lease for reasons she generally did not choose to reveal. The dangerous animals that remain on the Blessed Isle are stocked in these wild areas to provide sport for Dragon-Blooded hunters, to deter trespassers or to

create an artificial preserve for elder Dynasts who wish to have "untamed wilderness" around their Manses, depending on the desires of the individuals who held the lease on the land.

In addition, not long after the Unbroken Rushes Rebellion in RY 465, the Empress undertook a program of stocking the wilderness areas under her direct control with dangerous animals, in deliberate conjunction with her policy of keeping the Realm's peasantry disarmed. She believed that by seeding these deserted areas with dangerous predators, mainly wolves, claw striders and tigers, she could engender a fear of the wilderness, reduce the problems of bandit and squatter camps and reinforce the population's dependence on protection by the Dragon-Blooded and their soldiers. The true danger was to be well-supplemented by a lurid popular mythology spread by the All-Seeing Eye's agents, and in all of these matters, she was quite successful. The result is that most of the Realm's peasants have a terror of civil disorder and a certainty that any disruption in government function will result in their immediate consumption by wild beasts.

In fact, there are not a terribly large number of wolves, tigers or claw striders on the Blessed Isle because such beasts must claim large stretches of territory in order to hunt without decimating the local prey animal population. Even the rudimentary patrols the Great Houses mount have kept these hazards at bay. Even with the Realm in decline, the Dragon-Blooded and their hirelings continue their long tradition of hunting down some man-eater or another with a great show of pageantry after it has claimed enough victims that the peasantry is appropriately terrified.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is divided into five chapters, one for each of the four directions and a final one that covers the strange and unique creatures that inhabit the Scavenger Lands region. In some cases, especially for unique or highly intelligent creatures, their region is only a guideline, suggestion or place of origin. Self-aware individuals may choose to cross the face of Creation to pursue their goals, to aid their allies, to destroy their enemies or to seek safer environments.

Creatures of the Wyld is useful not only to Storytellers seeking new enemies for their players or players looking for an exotic and improbable familiar. It is also a valuable setting resource, for many of the creatures have a great impact on the world around them. Even if the Exalts of a particular series will never encounter them, these beasts will still occupy the minds and pepper the lingo of those who live near them. Likewise, most of these creatures are well known to naturalist-savants, and a player whose character has a high Lore could certainly mine this book to good effect, especially if the character is a sorcerer and hunts them for their trinkets of power or for use as servants or sorcerously bound slaves.

Chapter One: The North details the inhabitants of the frozen North, from the ice floes of the Northwest through the harsh tundra of the Central North and extending to the icy pine forests of the Far Northeast.

Chapter Two: The East describes the creatures of the primeval woodlands in Creation's East, from the endless

A WORD ON POWER LEVEL

The material in this book is intended for use by Storytellers running **Exalted** games of any power level from heroic mortal to experienced Solars. It is also meant to provide background material for the world. As a result, some of the beings in this book are of extremely high power levels. At least one of them, the Five-Metal Shrike, can casually annihilate cities. Others are colorful but not terribly dangerous, certainly not to an Exalt armed with a powerbow or a daiklave. Storytellers should carefully consider the statistics of a creature before introducing it to their games.

At the same time, there will undoubtedly be groups who find Arad the Hunter, Mother Bog or the Five-Metal Shrike very underpowered. These statistics were set with the assumption that Storytellers and players developed their characters for roleplaying and not purely for combat. Storytellers who have very statistic-centered games or who run games for highly experienced Solars with many powerful Combos and custom Charms may find these numbers to be too low. The alternative was to assign every creature Traits that assumed a min-maxed Solar as the opponent. This seemed unfair to characters who didn't focus solely on combat, especially as it's easier for Storytellers to adjust Traits upward than to lower them. If the creatures seem too weak, simply increase the statistics using the power level indicated by the description as a guideline for your numbers.

redwoods of the Northeast to the vast and perilous jungle of the Southeast. Creatures of the Central East, from the area around Larjyn and Thorns, are detailed, but creatures from the Scavenger Lands are detailed separately in Chapter Five.

Chapter Three: The South shows the fauna of the fiery South, from the grassy savannas of the Southeast across the burning deserts of the Central South and into the sweltering jungle of the Southwest.

Chapter Four: The West details the inhabitants of the Western Ocean, from the strange denizens of the benthic depths to the weird fauna of its many isolated islands.

Chapter Five: The Scavenger Lands describes the inhabitants of the Yanaze River Basin, a land of full of First Age automata and strange patchwork creatures created by the area's many Wyld zones, outcast sorcerers and ruined Manses.

OTHER BOOKS

Creatures of the Wyld is not the only book to detail the creatures that inhabit Creation at the dawn of the Age of Sorrows. Storytellers who wish an encyclopedic knowledge of the material released to date should also see **Savage Seas**, which details extensively many aquatic creatures of various sorts. Also useful is **Games of Divinity**, which details the gods, demons and elementals who walk Creation in the Second Age of Man.





CHAPTER ONE THE NORTH

Arctic Demitaur • Great-Terror • Horned Snow Hunter • The Hushed Ones • Ice Hollow • Lodestar • The Mice of the Sun • Mount Mostath • Snow Lion • Undercoat • White Devineko • Winter Rose

A land of short summers and long, frigid winters, of frigid unpredictable winds and endless rolling tundra, the North is a place of grave danger. Creatures of terrible darkness lurk there, amid the sparsely populated desolation of the snows and the endless winter night. But the dangers of the North lie not only in dark and unnatural beasts, but in the wildlife as well. Some of Creation's deadliest natural predators roam the North, and a wise traveler goes well armed and prepared to defend herself.

ARCTIC DEMITAUR

Description: Terrors of the North, arctic demitaurs travel in loose packs. They are wild and unpredictable. Some packs of demitaurs have been known to destroy entire villages without taking prey. Other packs have reportedly selectively hunted and slain individual men, women and children from Northern tribes, like wolves culling the weak from the edges of a herd of sheep. The arctic demitaur has the body of a large

squat horse, the torso and arms of a massive man, the head of a bull ox and a mouth filled with massive fangs. The creatures are covered in thick white fur from head to hoof. They are omnivorous but show a preference for meat. Arctic demitaur are as chaotic as the Wyld that spawned them. Neither imperial savants nor native hunters have been able to predict the behavior of these creatures.

Arctic demitaur are all but mindless. They are creatures of instinct, not logic. Though they have been known sometimes to carry crude clubs as weapons, this is more by accident than by design. They most often attempt instead to smash their opponents with their meaty fists or crush them beneath their rugged hooves. Those same hooves have been known to crush weapons, though there is no evidence that demitaur knowingly aim for weapons in combat.

Demitaur packs seem to be patriarchal, though hunters claim that the females of the species are no less dangerous than the male. While incredibly violent when encountered in or near human settlement, these creatures can be found natively in isolated valleys, dwelling peacefully with their young. There, they graze and frolic. But even there, when disturbed by outsiders, they are quickly roused to murderous frenzy.

The demitaur are the stuff of nightmares, threats made by parents to Northern children who misbehave. Rebellious youths are warned to behave lest the demitaur take them away (or in some regions, lest they become mindless demitaur themselves).

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 5

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Endurance 2, Melee 1, Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Survival 5

Supernatural Powers: Weapon-Crushing Hooves

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Punch: Speed 6 Accuracy 7 Damage 6B Defense 5

Trample: Speed 3 Accuracy 6 Damage 8B Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 5/3 Soak: 8L/13B (Tough hide, 6L/6B)

Willpower: 5 Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None



WEAPON-CRUSHING HOOVES

If a demitaur achieves three or more successes on a trample attack, then, in addition to damaging the target, the beast strikes any weapon the target is holding. The damage inflicted upon the target after soak is compared to the feats of strength table on page 252 of the Exalted rulebook. If the damage exceeds the Strength + Athletics level needed to break the weapon (generally 8), the weapon shatters. In addition, the wielder's player must make a successful reflexive difficulty 1 Strength + Melee check, or his character is disarmed even of the fragments. If the victim is not holding a weapon, then weapon-crushing hooves has no effect. This effect does not work on items made of the Five Magical Materials.

GREAT-TERROR

Description: The great-terror, also called the Northern titan, is one of the largest land carnivores ever sighted in the Threshold — certainly the largest carnivorous mammal. There are several diverse breeds of great-terrors, and while some are more wolf-like, others seem similar to hyenas. Regardless of breed, all are twice as tall as a man and typically measure over 16 feet long. A

great terror's skull is twice the size of a saber-toothed cat's, and its jaws are capable of crushing a grown man's head between its teeth. Great-terrors are strict carnivores, unable to digest anything other than meat and bone. Those Northerners unlucky enough to get close to titan in good light see that its fur is matted and sticks up along its back like a crest. The pelt is typically a dark brown or black and marked with jagged stripes, although there is a breed with fur of white and silver in the extreme North. A great-terror's paws have rough pads that allow it to scurry over most of the icy terrain in the North. The creatures are nocturnal, and in the darkness, a great-terror's eyes will catch the bare light of the moon and glow with hunger. During a hunt, it will growl, bark and whinny as it runs down prey, and when one finally kills a beast or a man, its lips pull back into a rictus while wild laughter emanates from its throat. The cry is so chilling that gifted mimics among the Northern tribes use a call similar to a great-terror's laugh to ward off predators if trapped.

The great-terrors prey almost exclusively on cattle and mammoths, although they are not averse to attacking the men of the North, especially those icewalkers that follow the great prey animals and adore them as totem beasts. The most powerful females of a titan pack control the whole group, and the females hunt together. The males usually travel alone, far on the outskirts of a pack, and are solitary unless a harsh winter drives them to cooperate. During those particularly bad seasons, the great-terrors will happily attack villages and even smaller cities.

Because of the size and ferocity of a great-terror, few men can stand against a single male, let alone a pack of females. Even the innovative hunters of Icehome are able to pick them off only from gliders, since the cunning beasts can run as fast as a snowboat unless the wind is very, very good — and few ice-sailors are willing to rely on the fickle Northern winds. The animals resist any kind of training, but 100 years ago, the Fair Folk raider White Harper used his glamour to gain control over a pack of great-terrors, a feat that enabled him to gather slaves and jade in abundance until the Wyld Hunt slew him several years later.

There is little call to capture great-terrors. Their oily, matted pelts have a unique and pungent scent, so few desire fur from the coat of the beasts. However, man will always find a use for things, and the savage demeanor, sheer size and deadliness of the titans mean that many Dynasts enjoy hunting them whenever the

chance arises. A trophy skull from one of the great carnivores on the wall of an estate back in the Realm is a cause for much praise.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 5, Stamina 10, Charisma 1, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Presence 4 (Intimidation +3), Stealth 2, Survival 3

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 13L Defense 8

Claw: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 10L Defense 8

Dodge Pool: 6 Soak: 5L/8B (None)

Willpower: 2 Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: None



HORNED SNOW HUNTER

Description: Stalking the frozen tundras of the North-east, the horned snow hunter (often known as the snow devil) is a fearsome predator that hunts in packs of 10 to 15 adults. Snow hunters normally avoid direct contact with humans, but occasionally, they will stalk the woods and tundras outside a human settlement, preying on other creatures drawn by the human presence. Snow hunters will fall upon human prey as readily as any other when starving, however, so they are seen by most towns and tribes as something of a mixed blessing; while they often feed upon a variety of different predators that hunt mankind, they also kill many of the same creatures that Northern tribes depend on for food and fur. Luckily, the fur of the horned snow hunter is soft and warm, its meat is sweet and flavorful, its sinews are sturdy and strong, and its bones are easily turned into tools and weapons, so they aren't quite as devastating as they could be.

Still, while some tribes maintain wary truces with their local packs of snow hunters, many others hunt them mercilessly, if not always successfully; it is the rare fight between snow hunters and man that does not result in serious injuries to at least one human. Although few snow hunters have ever been domesticated, they have, on occasion, consented to an odd sort of partnership with certain mortals and, much more infrequently, Exalted as well. This partnership is most commonly made between a human who spends much of her time alone and a lesser member of a snow hunter pack, and generally, it brings good fortune to both. The snow hunter gains a trusted friend in the local human community, and the mortal gains a powerful defender and hunting partner.

Snow hunters typically stand three to four feet at the shoulder and may weigh as much as 300 pounds. Their fur is silky, white and thick, providing excellent protection against the frigid climate they inhabit. Snow hunters are pure carnivores. Their blunt-jawed snout is almost dog-like, but the sharp teeth that fill it are like those of a cat. A pair

of spear-like horns point forward from the top of their long-eared skulls. Their fur effortlessly blends into the snow that surrounds them, and they can make short dashes of tremendous speed; as a result, their normal hunting pattern includes both ambushes and short-run chases, although they are

smart enough to alter tactics and adapt to the local terrain and prey as needed.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 3 (Hearing +2, Sight +1), Brawl 3 (Bite +1, Gore +1), Dodge 3, Endurance 4, Presence 1 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Stealth 4 (Ambush +2)

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 6

Damage 9L Defense 6

Claw: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 7L Defense 7

Gore: Speed 7 Accuracy 6

Damage 9L Defense 6

Dodge Pool: 6
fur, 1L/3B)

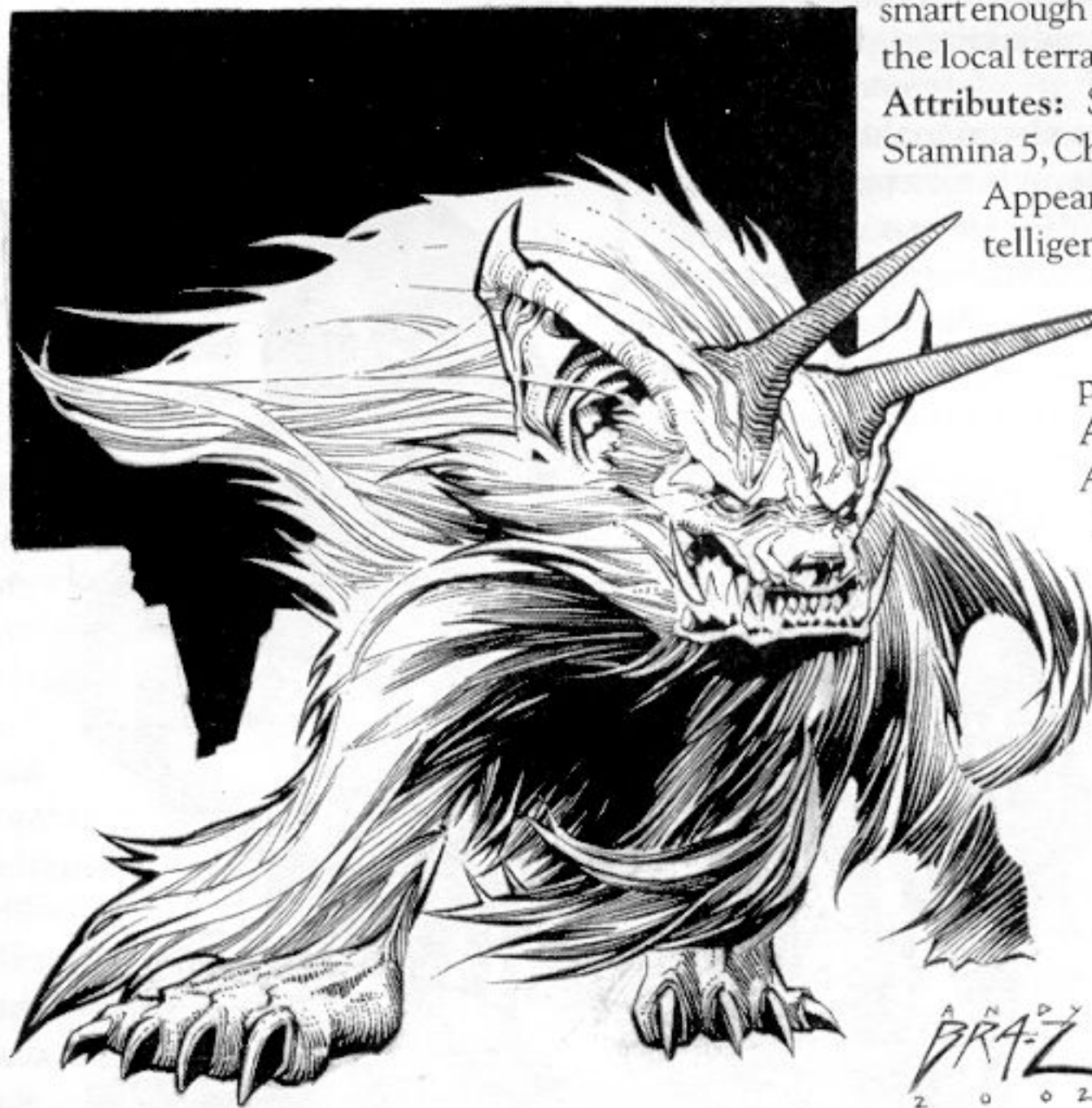
Willpower: 5
4/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Soak: 3L/6B (Tough skin and thick

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-

Other Notes: Snow hunters are creatures of the North and fare poorly in warmer climes, taking 1 automatic die of bashing damage each day they reside in a non-arctic environment. This damage cannot be soaked and will not heal until the snow hunter is once again in freezing temperatures. Snow hunters are not easily tamed (control rating of 5), but they can become partners to a mortal or Exalt in some occasions (a horned snow hunter partner is a Familiar •••••). Snow hunters cannot speak, but they can be trained to understand human speech. The only supernatural ability the horned snow hunters possess is an immunity to the powers of the White Terror (see the *Exalted Storyteller's Companion*, p. 64), apparently a gift from some ancient little god. (Snow hunters still take damage from the Terror's bite, but do not suffer the agonizing pain others do). Because of this, White Terrors hate snow hunters with a fierce passion and will do much for those who discomfit or kill them.



THE HUSHED ONES

Description: They are the distant scream in the wind, the razor cold that cuts all the way to the marrow and the white billowing cloud that obscures all vision and leaves men lost in the cold. They never close their eyes in sleep; they stare unblinkingly into the sun and never go blind.

The hushed ones are predators in the cold. They run over the softest snow but never leave a mark. They never make a single sound until they are upon their prey.

On the surface, these Wyld-corrupted people look like ordinary men or women, but there is nothing ordinary about them. They run naked through the white landscapes and never, ever utter a word.

They communicate through a strange group mind that enables all of them to do exactly what is required to help the group as a whole.

On some rare occasions, they've even been known to wear clothes and sneak into encampments to scout the places out. Even then, they can be recognized for what they are by the coldness of their skin and their icy and empty stare, which chills the soul of all who look into their un-

blinking eyes. All of the hushed ones have long black hair on their head, but their skin is otherwise very smooth and devoid of hair, scars or other marks. Injured hushed ones always heal very quickly, and their wounds never leave a trace on their skins.

There are pockets of Wyld all over the Northern lands, and the hushed ones spend most of their free time in them, until it's necessary to embark on another food-gathering run to feed their young. They rut among themselves and produce more of their kind — more mouths to feed, more hunters on the loose. They rarely let themselves be seen, and they never, ever engage anyone in a fair fight. Instead, the hushed ones prefer to

pick suitable spots for ambush. They have even been known to cause avalanches to bury travelers, then dig them out at their leisure. Humans always attract them; they have no need for treasure, but a group of humans and their beasts of burden offer a stock of food that will last these carnivores a long time.

The hushed ones always run in packs; if one of them sneaks into a human encampment, the rest of the pack

is very close by. The hushed ones are intelligent and can use weapons if need be, but that intelligence is a cold, inhuman and alien one; one can no more reason, bargain or negotiate with them than one could do so with a fly. In fights,

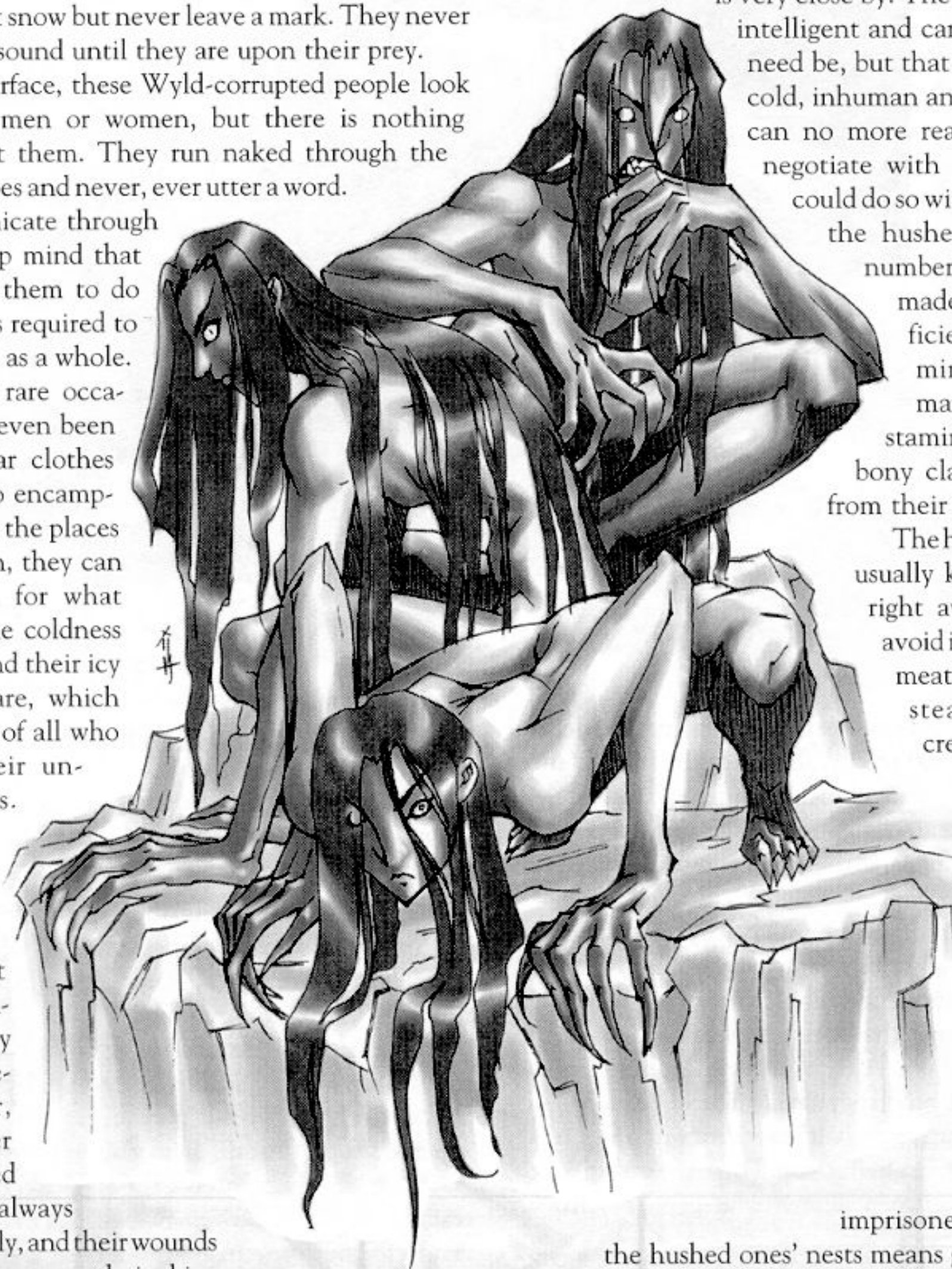
the hushed ones rely on numbers, group tactics made all the more efficient by their hive mind, their inhuman strength and stamina and the sharp, bony claws that extend from their fingertips.

The hushed ones don't usually kill their victims right away if they can avoid it, preferring their meat to be fresh; instead, the pale creatures drag their

victims off into their nests for later consumption. The hushed ones have been known to break their victims' limbs to prevent escape.

Rescuing imprisoned victims from

the hushed ones' nests means going after them into a pocket of Wyld, which is no simple feat. Even if the would-be rescuers survive without being affected by the Wyld or torn apart by the hushed ones themselves, there's no guarantee that the victims are in any condition to be rescued. There is a good chance that the Wyld has turned them into something rescuers no longer particularly want to bring back — supposing that they haven't already ended up as dinner.



Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 0, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Endurance 2, Medicine 3, Melee 5, Presence 2, Resistance 2, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Base Initiative: 9

Attack:

Claw: Speed 9 Accuracy 9 Damage 7L Defense 9 (Can be used to parry melee weapons)

Kick: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 7B Defense 8

Slashing Sword: Speed 12 Accuracy 10 Damage 8L Defense 10

Long Bow: Speed 9 Accuracy 8 Damage 8L (Rate 3, Range 200)

Dodge Pool: 8 **Soak:** 3L/9B (Thick skin, 3L/3B. Hushed ones rarely wear mortal armor but can do so.)

Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Due to their hive mind, anything a single hushed one learns is instantly learned by other members of the pack. Thus, they are all tremendously homogenous in their abilities; whenever one of them improves his skills with a weapon, so do the others. This means that a pack that has been around for a while often becomes very strong in several different ways. The hushed ones prefer to single out the strongest member of a group of enemies and kill him first, then mop up the others at their leisure. The hushed ones have the following Wyld mutations: Eye Color (icy blue, allows them to see in the dark), Claws (only on their hands) and Thick Skin. They also heal a level of lethal damage every 30 minutes or a level of bashing damage every 15 minutes, but only if they are in the Bordermarches or deeper in the Wyld.

COLD ALLIES

The hushed ones and ice hollows share certain traits: They are quick, efficient, deadly and very, very quiet. It is not very surprising that there is no hostility between the two. The hushed ones are of no interest to ice hollows, as their cold blood cannot lend any warmth to the insects. The opposite is equally true; the hushed ones crave fresh flesh to support themselves and their packs, not slivers of ice. What is surprising, however, is that there is evidence of cooperation between the two species.

Nobody knows for certain whether or not the two groups of creatures are actually somehow formally allied. It has been theorized by some that the hushed ones' cold, alien intelligence makes their thoughts very similar to those of the ice hollows. Perhaps they are able to communicate, or perhaps they keep the ice insects as pets — their equivalent of trained hunting dogs.

What is known for certain is this: The two occasionally work together. The ice hollows' ability to blend nearly perfectly into the white landscape and the hushed ones' terrifying appearance work well together; the latter have been witnessed on several occasions herding groups of human directly into an ambush prepared by ice hollows. The resulting battles were desperate and bloody, with only a handful survivors. Those survivors indicated that the hushed ones were clearly very much at ease with ice hollows and vice versa, and while it wasn't clear that either party followed the other's orders, there was no visible conflict of any kind about the division of the spoils of war.



ICE HOLLOW

Description: These giant insects wander the rivers and lakes of the frozen North, moving silently across the ice and snow, like huge frozen water striders, their long thin legs and swollen bodies as clear and transparent as crystal. Spawned from the Wyld in some moment of horror, they seek out warm flesh and blood to sate their hunger, seizing their prey in their giant mandibles and sucking out blood and bodily fluids through their long proboscis. Once they have fed, they are far more obvious, for their bodies and legs are threaded crimson with the blood of their prey.

It is difficult to spot ice hollows from a distance, as their frozen nature makes them near-impossible to distinguish from the surrounding snow and ice. They often lie down in the snow while waiting for prey; while they only have an animal intelligence, they are capable of stalking possible victims or lying in wait at some spot where warm-blooded animals (or humans) are known to pass by. They can pursue prey with surprising speed, almost seeming to glide over the surface of the snow and ice in long fluid strides. However, the insects dislike crossing running water if it is not covered firmly by ice. Several travelers have reported escaping from these creatures by crossing some of the wilder rivers in the

deep North, after having thrown themselves into the water or jumped onto floating pieces of ice in desperation. This is because the ice hollows cannot judge the depth of running water; they therefore avoid it, as it is far too easy for them to drown if they misjudge the speed and depth of a river.

These creatures reproduce by mating and then laying pearly eggs the size of a man's head in clutches of 20 to 30, which they bury deep underneath the snow in isolated places. When the eggs hatch, the baby ice hollows feed off each other and off any nearby warm-blooded creatures — usually only three or four survive to grow to maturity. The ice hollows will not attack large groups of humans (more than 20 or 30), but they do not have the intelligence to recognize sorcerers, Exalted or similarly powerful beings. They do recognize Fair Folk and avoid them; it is said that some groups of Fair Folk have captured ice hollows and use them as steeds in hunts.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Abilities: Awareness 4, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Presence 2, Resistance 3 (Cold +2), Stealth 5

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6
Damage 5L Defense 6

Dodge Pool: 6 Soak: 4L/
5B (Crystalline exoskeleton, 3L/3B)

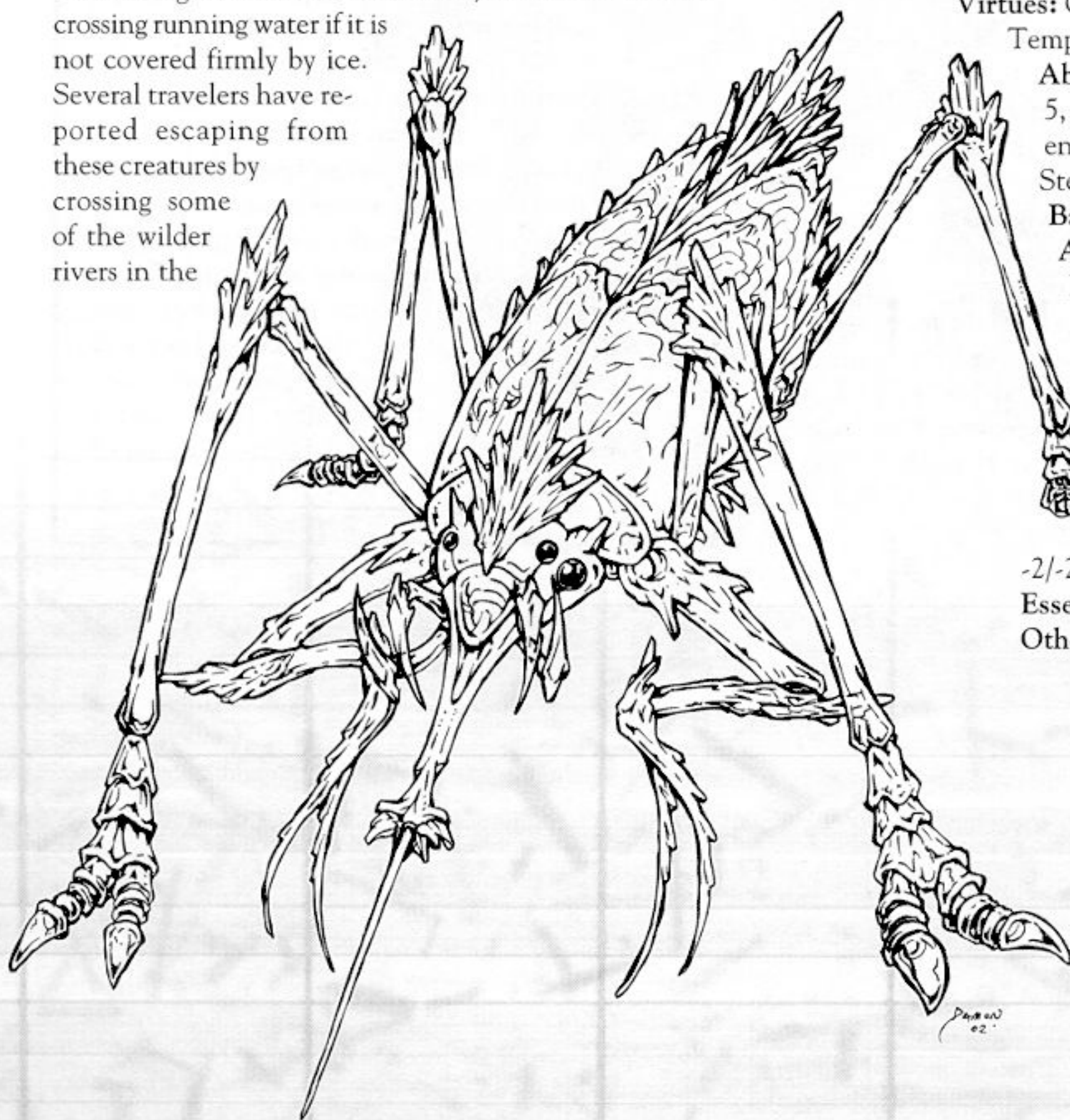
Willpower: 3

Health Levels: -0/-
0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-

-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

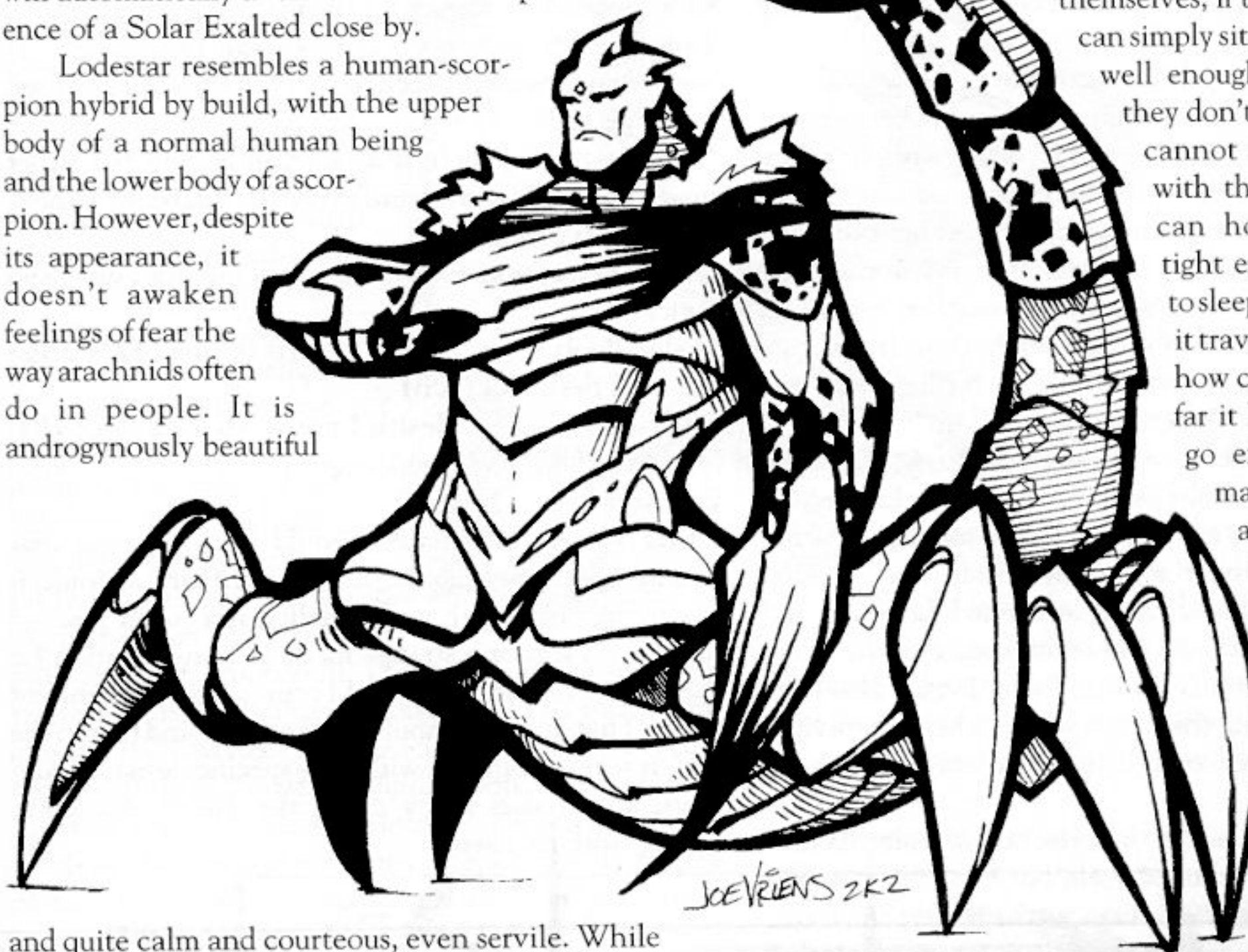
Other Notes: None



LODESTAR

Description: Even the Exalted often have trouble moving in the frozen North, when the wind picks up and the temperatures plummet. The cold may not easily kill them, but it will certainly slow them down. That was kept in mind when Lodestar was designed a thousand years ago, before the treachery of the Dragon-Blooded. It has the singular purpose of assisting the Solar Exalted in their travels in the North. Currently, it is buried under ice and snow, where it has lain since the Solar Exalted were murdered, but it will automatically awaken if it feels the presence of a Solar Exalted close by.

Lodestar resembles a human-scorpion hybrid by build, with the upper body of a normal human being and the lower body of a scorpion. However, despite its appearance, it doesn't awaken feelings of fear the way arachnids often do in people. It is androgynously beautiful



and quite calm and courteous, even servile. While its eight legs resemble those of an arachnid, they are made of what appears to be soft, bone-like material that merges seamlessly with the soft, human-like flesh of its torso.

Its long tail has a cluster of sensory organs at the end that enables it to see extremely far and scout ahead without actually leaving its masters. It is also the source of brilliant and comforting sunlight that makes the coldest and darkest night feel like a warm, sunny day. This light can also be focused into a searing beam of heat that can be used to ignite fires, to melt massive amounts of snow and ice or to torch enemies where they stand. Both the warmth and the light radiate from its tail.

Lodestar always knows exactly where it is and cannot get lost. It is somewhat out of date on the Northern geography, having been inactive for such a long time, but if shown maps or otherwise educated, it can quickly

reorient itself. It can work as a snowplough, using its tireless body to clear a path in the snow for those who follow, thus making travel far easier for normal (or at least normal-sized) humans. It can carry tremendous amounts of cargo (up to 1,600 pounds) if need be or bear up to six people on its back.


Lodestar has a complicated system of automated leathery straps that independently wrap themselves around anything placed on its back, keeping it held gently but firmly in place.

Human beings are given the chance to hold on to the rein-like straps themselves, if they wish, or they can simply sit and be tied down well enough to ensure that they don't fall off. Lodestar cannot damage anyone with these straps, but it can hold them down tight enough for people to sleep on its back while it travels. It doesn't care how cold it gets or how far it has to move; it'll go exactly where its masters want it to go and do exactly what its masters want it to do.

Despite its rather subservient outlook on life, Lodestar is definitely sentient, intelligent and alive. Its personality is that

of a polite upper-class personal servant who knows his duties and expects (but never asks for) a certain degree of respect for its services. It understands jokes and laughs politely at them, cooks an excellent dinner even if the supplies are meager and tells impressive and entertaining stories from the ancient days. If supplies start to run low, it can gather and hunt food from the wilderness. It quite likes animals and children and has no problems with taking care of either, if it is asked to do so. It lives to serve and is designed to derive pleasure from that, but it is also a social creature with the capability to dislike its masters. It cannot, nor does it even want to disobey, but it can become sad or angry if it is mistreated or its masters turn out to be unpleasant people.

Lodestar will defend any Solar Exalted, their companions and beasts of burden from attack, unless the attacker is another Exalt, in which case, it will simply try



to calm the situation down by talking. It will only obey Solar Exalted, but it will take a respectful and helpful attitude toward any other type of Exalt. The Abyssal Exalted are an exception to this rule, as it has never seen their kind before and doesn't recognize them to be Exalted. Thus, it will have no qualms about battling them if ordered to do so or if attacked by them.

Lodestar is a guardian and a guide, but it's not built to be a war machine; despite its power, it is likely to fall, should it ever face powerful enemies without assistance, especially if those enemies are Exalted. In such an eventuality, Lodestar will attempt to escape, but it will never do harm to an Exalted being if it can possibly avoid it.

It should be stressed that, while Lodestar will certainly do what it is told, even at obvious risk to its own existence, it won't simply go to its death without polite protest. For example, if ordered to jump into a volcano, it might say, "If that is your wish, sir, but might this one humbly stress this one's extreme apprehension toward leaping into this active volcano, as such an act would certainly terminate this one's already considerable life span and render this one unable to further serve the chosen warriors of the Unconquered Sun?"

Although Lodestar is currently dormant under the ice, it will automatically awaken when Solar Exalted are nearby and quickly melt its way to the surface. Alternatively, the Storyteller may well decide that another group of Exalts has already awakened Lodestar and presumably briefed it on the current state of the world and that it is currently serving them. It may also have been left wandering the frozen wastes when its previous masters were killed or ordered it to stay behind, for whatever reason.

Lodestar can detect the presence of Solar Exalted within a 10-mile radius of itself, but it cannot pinpoint their exact location or how many of them there are. It can, however, easily determine the direction toward which it should head to meet the Solar(s) it senses. Lodestar is incapable of detecting any other types of Exalted.

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 7, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 6, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 5, Temperance 3, Valor 5

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Endurance 5, Lore 3 (Ancient History +1), Medicine 3, Melee 5, Presence 2, Resistance 2, Stealth 2, Survival 4 (Subzero Environments +3)

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 9 Damage 8B Defense 9*

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 8 Damage 10B Defense 8*

Tail: Speed 8 Accuracy 9 Damage 15B Defense 9*

Sun Beam: Speed 10 Accuracy 11** Damage 12L (Rate 1, Range 100)

* Lodestar can punch or kick at an enemy *and* either smash an enemy with its tail or use the sun beam without splitting its dice pool.

** Roll Perception + Awareness for Lodestar's sun beam attack.

Dodge Pool: 9 **Soak:** 10L/17B (Unnaturally dense skin and flesh, 10L/10B)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 4

Other Notes: Storytellers should keep in mind that despite Lodestar's humble and self-sacrificing attitude, it is a living being with a personality, not just a piece of luggage on legs or a strange mode of transportation for the player characters. It should come across as a sentient being. That said, one should still keep in mind that in the end, it is an automaton with very specific design parameters, and it *does* enjoy doing the player characters' boring work for them.

THE MICE OF THE SUN

Description: High in the mountains west of White-wall sits a long-forgotten temple of the First Age. The ancient fane stands slowly crumbling to dust at the edge of a mighty crevasse. Its precinct is silent, disturbed only by the wind and the snow that occasionally falls here during Water season. A mighty statue of a man, clad in priestly robes, stands over the altar at the temple's heart, and the circular mark carved into the colossus' forehead clearly identifies it as the image of a powerful Zenith Caste hierophant. The iconography is standard, marking the temple as a center of the Unconquered Sun's worship, albeit one abandoned well before the fall of the Solars.

But even a learned scholar of First Age temple decoration would be surprised by what the statue holds in the palm of its outstretched right hand. The stone priest bears no sacred relic or holy weapon. Instead, he presents a gilt mouse for inspection. The statue, mouse and all, is unprecedented. There is a motto inscribed in the language of the Old Realm at the sculpture's feet, but it too provides little in the way of illumination. It simply reads, "Let him who looks upon me learn to fear the gods." The words of the message are easily grasped, but its subject proves elusive. Who is the stony figure that his offering up a golden rodent should cause such terror?

The answer is that it is the rodent, and not the man, who is memorialized. The mountain shrine commemorates one of the strangest victories in the annals of the First Age. Caught off guard by a Fair Folk assault, the Exalts of this region fell back in disarray. Defeat seemed imminent, and a Zenith acolyte turned to prayer as a last line of defense. The Unconquered Sun recognized the faith of the acolyte and sent him a vision promising him new allies. All the young priest had to do was to stand firm in the face of the Wyld onslaught. When he told the other Exalts of his vision, they laughed at him in despair and retreated to their Manses to wait out the storm.

Filled with shame for his people, the Zenith nevertheless kept his promise and rode forth to face the Fair Folk cataphracts. But he was not entirely alone. Many of the mortal inhabitants of the region stood with him. These humble men and women had no arcane redoubt in

which to hide — the battle would be fought on their fields and in their towns. They heard the words of the young priest and offered him their assistance, weak as it was.

Bravery such as this did not go unrewarded.

Convinced of their victory on the morrow, the Fair Folk host indulged itself into a stupor. Drunk, drugged or unconscious, they took no notice as the mice of the fields crept into their camp and ate up their quivers and their bowstrings. Nor did they hear the sound of countless tiny teeth chewing through the handles of their shields and the straps of their armor. When

Creation's army issued the call to battle at daybreak, the Fair Folk awoke to find themselves defenseless. The slaughter that followed was almost total, and the region enjoyed peace from any Wyld incursions for many generations to come.

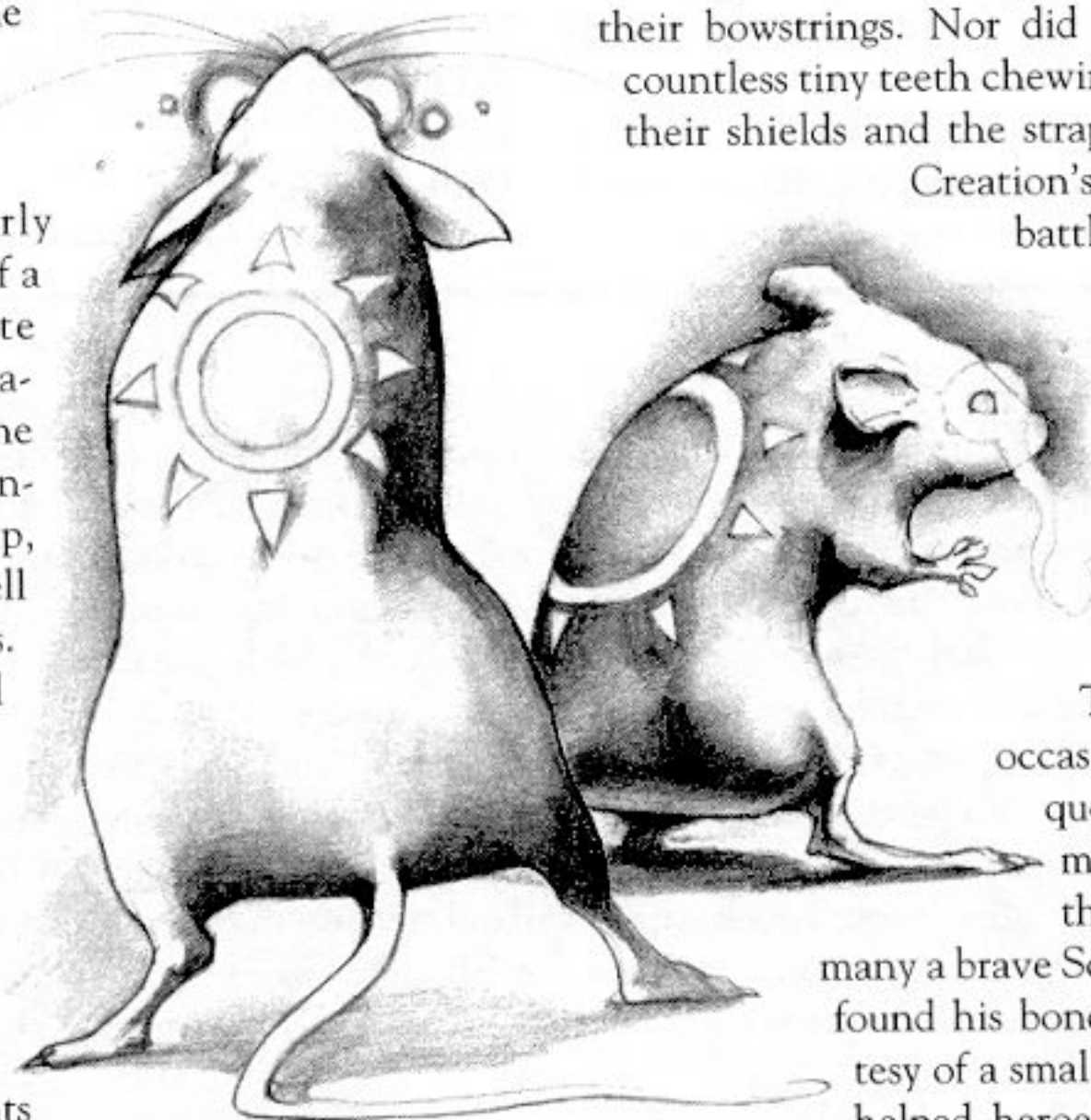
This battle was not the first occasion on which the Unconquered Sun made use of his mice of the sun, nor was it the last. Over the centuries,


many a brave Solar hero in dire straits has found his bonds nibbled through, courtesy of a small white mouse. They have helped heroes escape from labyrinths,

delivered messages in the nick of time and so on — a most innocuous weapon, as well as a constant lesson that the strong have a great deal to gain from the friendship of the weak.

The mice of the sun have a more sinister task as well. There are times when the nations of Creation ignore the Unconquered Sun's precepts, turn away from his worship and engage in unrighteous behavior. At other times, they commit bestial acts that demand Celestial retribution. At moments such as these, small white mice creep into the palaces of apostasy and the dens of criminal behavior. They are invariably followed by death — a hideous disease known as the Solar Plague that spares no one guilty of crimes against the Unconquered Sun or the Celestial Order. Only those who have remained true to the path of virtue go unpunished — a clear sign of the Unconquered Sun's pleasure and an indication to the sick and dying that repentance is still possible.

Entire cities have fallen victim in this manner, undone by their own blasphemous deeds. The mice of the sun are like their master, capable of both the greatest mercy and the severest justice. No one who encounters them can be entirely sure which side of the god he is on at that moment. And that is exactly what the Unconquered Sun wants.





The mice of the sun are larger, stronger and quicker than ordinary mice. They are also far more intelligent. Like the Solar Exalted, they bear the mark of the god: a sunburst-shaped patch of golden fur on their backs. Some legends claim that they can talk, while others, far more fanciful in character, have them walking about on their hind legs like men. Whatever their specific abilities, their blessed nature is clear. Any mortal or Exalt who willingly slays a mouse of the sun risks the Unconquered Sun's wrath.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 5*, Temperance 3, Valor 5*

* Cannot fail Valor or Conviction rolls.

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Endurance 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 5

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 5 Damage 2L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 8 **Soak:** 0L/2B (None)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: None

VECTORS OF VENGEANCE

The disease the mice of the sun carry resembles the plague in terms of its symptoms and in-game behavior—use the bubonic plague values provided on page 321 of *Exalted* to simulate the basic characteristics of the Solar Plague. Nevertheless, there are still some crucial differences between the two contagions. First of all, as mentioned above, innocence in the eyes of the Unconquered Sun is a powerful protection against the Solar Plague. The righteous are immune to the fatal effects of the disease: At its worst, it will give them a bad cold for a week or so, and that is only for those who dwell on the borderline of righteousness.

Second, Solar Exalted exposed to the Solar Plague in a state of iniquity lack the usual Exalted immunity to disease. The Unconquered Sun takes it personally when one of his chosen servants goes astray: Any Solar Exalt who catches the Solar Plague responds to the disease as if she were a mortal human. The character faces death, not discomfort. The Contagion Curing Touch Charm will not work on the Solar Plague for a similar reason: The Unconquered Sun does not allow for his gifts to be used on behalf of those who merit his disfavor. Any character that catches the Solar Plague will have to face the disease with her own resources or those of mortal physicians and savants.

Finally, Morbidity rolls only delay the inevitable, for this is a supernatural plague. If an individual has caught the disease as a result of his disobedience to the Unconquered Sun, then he will suffer from the contagion until he is dead. A successful Morbidity roll does not cure the victim of Solar Plague, it simply allows the character to live for a number of days equal to the number of successes on the Morbidity roll. Once that grace period is up, the character's player must roll again.

The Solar Plague would be an inescapable plague to slay all who catch it, but the Unconquered Sun is not wholly without mercy: There are two ways for a guilty person to cure herself of the Solar Plague. The first is the most drastic: The infected individual must seek out the Unconquered Sun and prostrate herself before him. If her repentance is sincere, then the Unconquered Sun will offer her an appropriate penance, effectively geasing the character with some sort of quest or mission. The geas in question will almost always suit the crime for which the Solar Plague was levied in the first place. The successful completion of the geas will eradicate the plague from the offending character's system. Her cure will be total.

The other option is easier to endure but more or less temporary in practice. An infected individual may seek out an advocate to plead his case before the Unconquered Sun. This advocate must be a person or being entirely innocent of any offense against the Celestial Order—in the First Age, the advocate was usually a Zenith Caste in good standing. If the advocate agreed to intercede for the plague victim, then the progress of the Solar Plague is momentarily stopped in its tracks. The disease does not go away: The victim is still infected. But he will not die so long as he works to amend his life. This is the advocate's task: to help the victim correct the unrighteous behavior that caused the Solar Plague to target him in the first place. Of course, the victim needs to keep his intercessor happy: Should the advocate ever revoke her protection, the Solar Plague resumes its course toward death.

It is unknown why the mice of the sun have not been deployed against the Dragon-Blooded. Either the mice of the sun went into hibernation when their master turned his face away from Creation, or perhaps, they were corrupted for some darker end, or maybe, it is that someone, somewhere, is serving as an advocate for the entire Dragon-Blooded people. The level of innocence such an advocacy would require is unprecedented: Who might this individual be?

MOUNT MOSTATH

Description: On the Northern edges of Creation, beyond Diamond Hearth and Crystal, the world gives way to a seemingly endless realm of ice and snow. Gigantic glaciers creep southward, crossing the land like a ponderous ark laden with a cargo of exotic winter wonders. Wandering tribes of icewalkers note the deliberate pace of the mountains of ice, each of which can advance a mile or so in the course of a year. Generations of tribesmen come to know the glaciers, naming them and even honoring their gods. Of all the moving mountains, none is so mysterious and well known to the icewalker shamans as Mount Mostath.

Barely peeking above a deep bed of fog, the enigmatic mountain travels as much as 100 miles a year, and unlike its fellow glaciers, it travels erratically. Sometimes, Mount Mostath's grinding trail even turns northward again. Young tribesmen have repeatedly braved the thick clouds surrounding the mountain, but every time, they have been repulsed by the unnatural cold that radiates from the wandering peak. Some say the peak is a sign of ill fortune, for the Wyld-twisted barbarians of the North sometimes course in from beyond its wake like an avalanche devouring an alpine village.

Few beings other than the Wyld barbarians of the North know the truth about Mount Mostath. The mighty mountain is not a mountain after all — it is one of the greatest of behemoths still walking upon the

earth, a mammoth creature as large as a glacier and nearly as slow. Why Mostath wanders the Northern reaches of Creation is unknown to those outside the spirit courts of air, and most spirits content themselves only with the knowledge that the great beast sometimes meets with one of the mighty glaciers of the north and changes its path forever. Certainly, various songs of the Wyld barbarians refer to Mostath as the Herder of Mountains, but it is not hard to imagine other reasons they might have arrived at the name.


Even should a foolhardy hero pierce the veil of frozen fog surrounding Mostath and avoid the atten-

tions of the Wyld northern barbarians who follow it, she is unlikely to alter the course of the behemoth. Northern shamans learn potent rituals that turn Mount Mostath against other wandering mountains; whether they use this power to save their own villages or threaten the settlements of their foes varies. A glacier's slow pace can spell eventual doom for the town upon which it is turned, while the holy hunting grounds of the icewalkers lie safe from its crushing path.

Mostath is not a beast of war. He moves so slowly that only

the stupid or the desperate might stand in his way, while his nearly unstoppable strength can shove mountains aside. If some unfortunate creature falls beneath his lumbering pace, it will surely die. Those who are not so foolish as to stand beneath his feet can sometimes drive him to attack, and he does so with a mighty trunk whose





sleek muscles can tear the greatest redwood trees from the earth and shatter boulders. Normally, the Herder of Mountains is peaceful and happy to travel undisturbed by friend or foe. His only concern seems to be the great mountains of ice and the pathways they follow as they encroach upon Creation.

Attributes: Strength Immeasurable, Dexterity 1, Stamina Immeasurable, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 1, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Presence 6

Supernatural Powers: Frozen Fog, Herder of Mountains

Base Initiative: 1

Attack:

Trample: Speed 1 Accuracy 1 Damage Special* Defense 0

Trunk: Speed 1 Accuracy 1 Damage 50L Defense 0

* Anyone who somehow remains below the deathly slow descent of Mostath's gigantic foot is crushed to death. Should a Storyteller truly desire statistics for this attack, simply assign 100 aggravated health levels of damage to represent the victim being smashed utterly flat.

Dodge Pool: 0 **Soak:** 50L/100B (Hide armor, ignores all attacks below 50L)

Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0x50/-1x100/-2x100/-4x50/Incap

Essence: 8

Other Notes: In the extremely unlikely event that someone somehow manages to slay Mostath, she should be very careful to avoid the behemoth's falling body. It would be entirely a matter of primordial irony to be crushed beneath the great beast after defeating him.

MOSTATH'S FROZEN FOG

Mostath is entirely surrounded by a thick fog of unnatural cold. Exposure to the fog is deadly, and every 10 turns, the fog damages anyone not completely wrapped in warm furs for one health level of damage. This damage is automatic for most victims — only those who can soak at least one level of lethal damage may resist. Of course only complete immunity can totally eliminate the threat, as any source of damage always risks at least one die of damage. Inside the fog, visibility is reduced to about 20 feet, and even within that range, all Perception or Awareness based rolls suffer a +2 penalty to difficulty. The cloud of frozen fog surrounds Mostath for a mile or two in every direction and only the pinnacle of his back peeks above its roiling mists. For more details on the frozen fog, see *Scavenger Sons*, page 18. Of course, Mostath is immune to both the unnatural cold and the vision impairing nature of the frozen fog. Mostath is not the only source of frozen fog in the North, but he is the source of that which accompanies the Wyld barbarians on their forays.

HERDER OF MOUNTAINS

Although the behemoth Mostath is not much craftier than any ordinary animal or foolish man, he remains constantly aware of the glaciers he herds across the plains of ice. Every movement of the frozen mountains resonates within his bones, and some ancient instinct drives him to understand just where Creation wishes him to direct his flock. Should some powerful spirit or Exalt manage to upset one of his charges, Mostath will immediately sense the change and travel as fast as his ponderous pace can allow — about 100 miles per year — to ensure the proper execution of the designs of the Northern spirit courts. The Herder inherently senses those who disrupt the course of the Northern ice, and the Wyld barbarians who follow his path often consider it their sacred duty to destroy those who anger Mostath. Unfortunately for their victims, the Northern barbarians do not move so slowly as their hallowed beast.

SNOW LION

Description: In the Far North, the snow lies on the ground all year and piles deeper and deeper every season. A traveler must be careful not to sink into snow banks out of which he can never emerge or to fall into icy caverns hidden beneath a smooth white surface. Such hazards are bad enough when they occur naturally, but they are particularly deadly when they are the sinister traps of a creature the Northerners call a snow lion, a creature not unlike a giant version of the hatra of the East.

Burrowing beneath the endless drifts of the region, these lazy beasts sit silently waiting for a tremor from above. As soon as one detects potential prey, the snow lion collapses the roof of its lair, pouncing upon the victims who fall into the sudden chasm. Typically, the quarry is stunned from the fall or, at the very least, panicked and dazed. Regardless, the strong jaws and powerful burrowing claws of the snow lion make quick work of most unfortunates who fall into their lairs.

The average snow lion is about 10 feet tall at the shoulder, with long, strong forepaws and a wide mouth full of wickedly sharp teeth. Remarkably, snow lion eyes are said to be the most beautiful pale blue, and their fur is a brilliant white, but it is doubtful that their screaming victims appreciate this. Stretching on its hind legs, a snow lion can easily reach over 20 feet upward to capsize the snow and ice canopy above. Snow lions ears are large and upright like those of a hyena and are capable of detecting subtle vibrations from prey walking upon the surface.

More often than not, their victims are elk and reindeer, but many Northern tribes have lost members to the icy traps of a snow lion. In the wilderness, most tribes simply avoid the known hunting areas of the crafty beasts, but when one tunnels near a village or town, young warriors ultimately must stop the predator. Scouts mark the weak ground above a snow lion's lair, and heroic citizens shatter the surface and set upon the snow lion with fire and long spears.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 3, Stamina 8, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 4, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Tunnel Movement +3), Awareness 3 (Tremors +3), Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Stealth 3 (Ambush From Below +3), Survival 3 (Burrowed Traps +3)

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 5
Accuracy 7
Damage 14L
Defense 7
Claw: Speed 6
Accuracy 6
Damage 13L
Defense 6

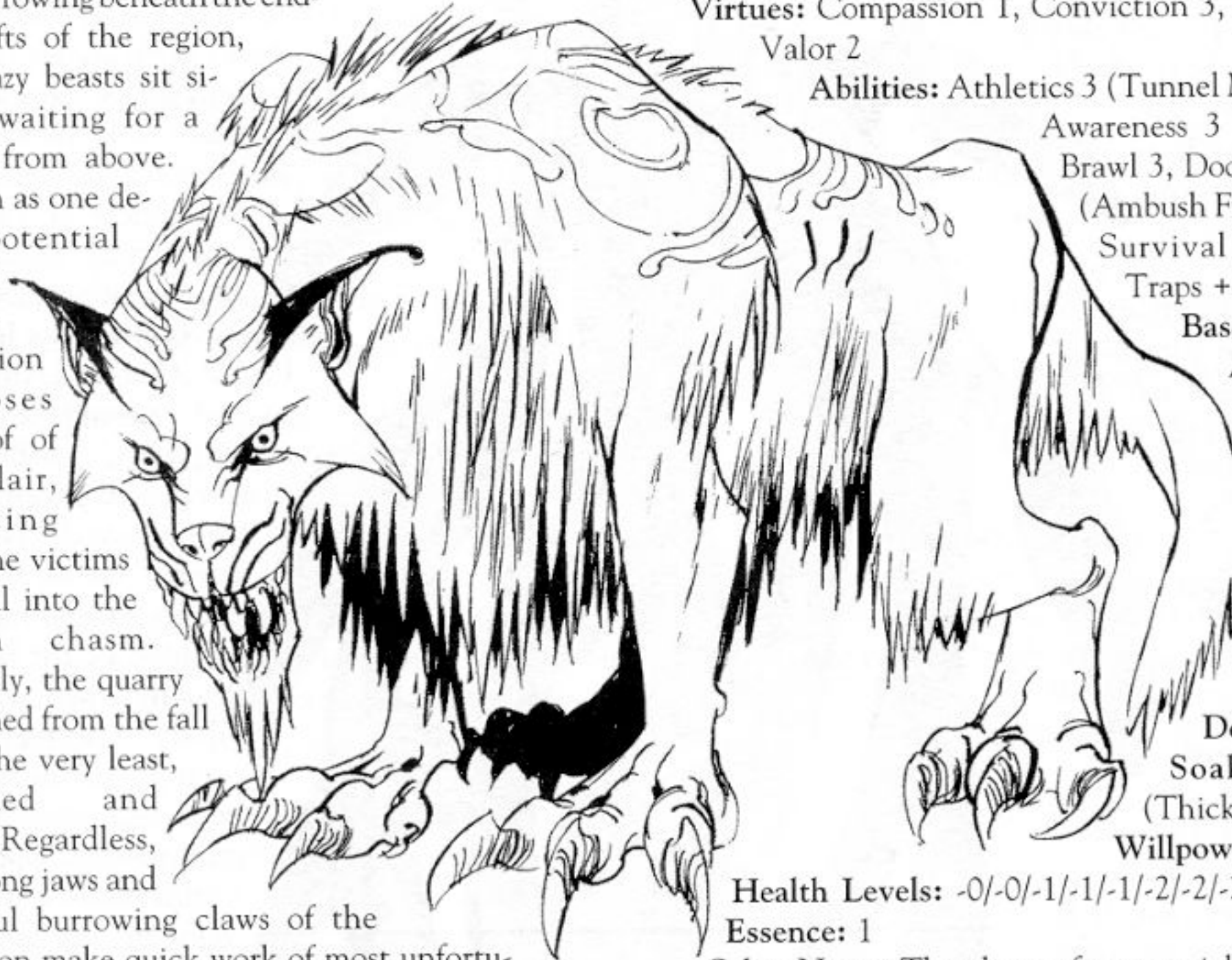
Dodge Pool: 5

Soak: 6L/12B
(Thick fur, 2L/4B)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap
Essence: 1

Other Notes: The player of a potential victim may roll Perception + Survival, difficulty 3, for her character to detect the thin surface above a snow lion's lair. Should the roll fail, the character falls through the surface an average distance of about 25 feet, which normally causes five levels of bashing damage. This may be reduced as normal by a roll of Wits + Athletics (usually difficulty 3 as well) per *Exalted*, page 253, and of course, soak applies as normal. Storytellers may also wish to limit combat maneuvers to the lesser of a character's combat dice pool and Dexterity + Athletics in order to represent the difficulty of fighting while half buried in snow and broken ice.



UNDERCOAT

Description: These creatures are among the most terrifying beasts found in the North, both because of the way they live and hunt and because of the cold intelligence of their plans — no one who's ever encountered an undercoat can consider them merely dumb beasts.

Up close, an undercoat looks like a mass of tentacles, feelers and pincers. The body itself appears roughly insectoid, made up of jointed segments covered in rubbery flesh like that of a squid. But the creature has so many limbs the body is rarely visible, just a jumble of twitching parts and snapping edges. The creature moves by tentacle, in an odd, shambling gait that covers ground with surprising speed and crosses ice as easily as rock. Its eyes are on long stalks that can swivel in any direction, making it impossible to sneak up on.

That would make the undercoat frightening enough. But these creatures are rarely seen — at least, not openly. The undercoat searches for prey, which is always mammalian and always at least its own size, if not larger. Once it locates a likely victim, it waits, usually wrapped around the upper branches of a tree or clinging to the underside of a rocky ledge, until the victim is alone. Then, it attacks. First, its tentacles wrap around the prey, immobilizing it. Then, the undercoat's long, needle-like pincers plunge into the body, ripping the victim open low across the belly or along the underside. Once the skin tears, the undercoat literally climbs inside and begins to tear the body apart from the inside, feeding pieces into its narrow slit mouth. But the undercoat never damages the skin, after that initial cut. Instead, it burrows its way up through the

creature, leaving the skin intact, until its feelers locate the eyes. These are plucked out (or in, to be precise) and devoured, and the undercoat's own eyes take their place. Now, the undercoat has a temporary host.

The undercoat can move about in its shell body, devouring the meat and organs even as it masquerades as the creature — a mature undercoat can consume a small seal in one week and a bull walrus

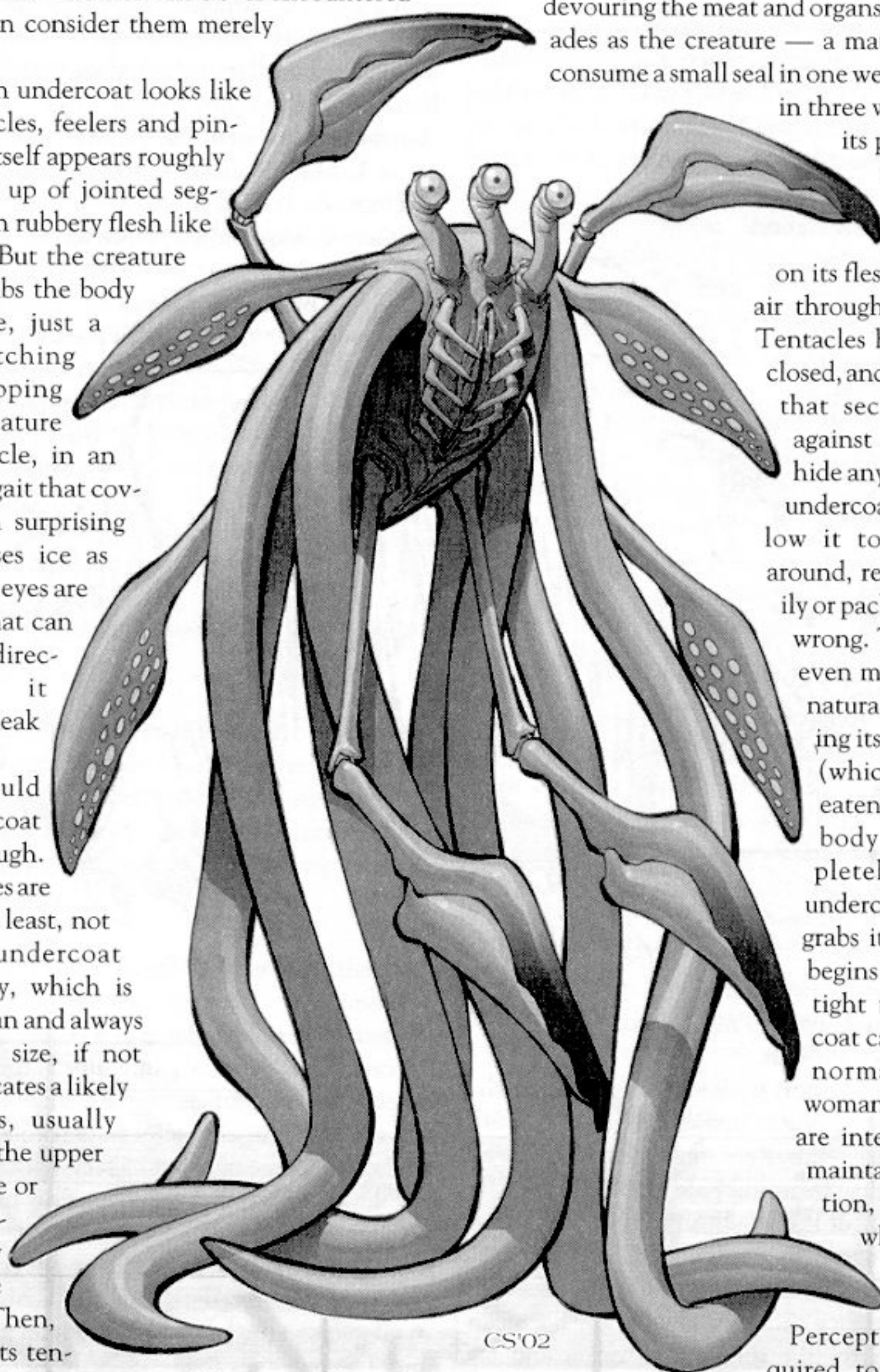
in three weeks. While inside

its prey, the undercoat uses the victim's body to survive, not only feeding on its flesh, but also drawing air through its lungs or gills. Tentacles hold the torn belly closed, and the undercoat rubs that section of the body against snow or lichen to hide any hint of blood. The undercoat's many limbs allow it to move the body around, returning to its family or pack as if nothing were wrong. The undercoat can even mimic the creature's natural sounds by working its tongue and mouth (which are the last parts eaten). Then, when the body has been completely devoured, the undercoat throws it aside, grabs its next victim and begins again. It may be a tight fit, but an undercoat can hide within any normal-sized man or woman, and the creatures are intelligent enough to maintain such a deception, at least for a little while. A successful

Challenging (difficulty 3)

Perception check is required to notice anything

wrong with the person, merely Difficult (difficulty 2) if the person was a close friend or family member. Undercoats who have encountered humans before are capable of creating speech, though it sounds slurred as if the person were drunk. An undercoat with no human experience will need at least three days of listening to decipher human language and another three days to successfully



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manipulate the lips and tongue into a semblance of normal speech.

Perhaps the most terrifying thing about the undercoat is that it often travels and hunts in small groups. A bull walrus or seal can hold two to three undercoats and feed all of them, and thus, a family of undercoats can live off such creatures, devouring one and then moving en masse to another. Undercoats can attack aquatic creatures, provided they can get close enough, and a siaka or whale can house an entire community of undercoats for weeks or more. When the immense creature's flesh is fully consumed, the undercoat colony maneuvers closer to another creature of similar size and attacks, then transfers to its new home. Whalers have occasionally caught whales and drawn them up to the boat, only to have the body split open and a horde of undercoats pour out, seeking shelter and sustenance. If a colony of undercoats were to overcome and "inhabit" an entire ship's crew, they could travel anywhere, and infest whole towns and ports. Anyone entering such a place would be in danger of becoming a replacement body, to carry the creatures into another area.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 0, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Brawl 4 (Clinch +3, Hold +3), Dodge 5, Performance 4 (Disguise +1) (Mimicry +2), Socialize 3, Stealth 4 (Ambush +1), Survival 4

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Bite: Speed 4 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L Defense 6

Pincer: Speed 5 Accuracy 7 Damage 3L Defense 6

Tentacle: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 2L + hold* Defense 5

* If the undercoat does damage on a tentacle attack, it gains an automatic hold attack. However, it can still attack with pincers while holding its prey immobile.

Dodge Pool: 9 **Soak:** 2L/4B (Rubbery flesh, 2L/4B)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/
Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: If an undercoat makes a successful pincer attack and does damage, it has slashed open its prey's flesh. It will then attempt to enter the target, which typically kills the unfortunate through organ damage. Treat this as a clinch (11 dice to maintain, does lethal damage). If the target escapes the clinch, the undercoat is dislodged. If the undercoat succeeds in inflicting at least three health levels, then it is inside the victim. Treat this as a continuing clinch, resisted as normal, but the victim's armor no longer applies, only her natural soak. A target "killed" by the undercoat is made its puppet.

If the victim wins, he or she prevents the undercoat from climbing inside. If the undercoat wins, it gains a free bite attack. Note that this attack is within the victim's body and thus ignores all armor (as are any soaks based on the victim's skin). If the undercoat wins three turns in a row or bites and does damage three times in a row, it succeeds in completely entering the victim's body. At this point, the creature cannot be physically attacked without attacking the victim first. When the victim dies, the undercoat has taken control of the body.



WHITE DEVINEKO

Description: Skin-changing, god-hunting evildoers of the Northern wastes, white devineko are creatures of nightmare. White devineko are not demons, though the Yozi would be proud to have them amongst their legions. They are not spirits, not Wyld-touched, not Exalts. Perhaps that is what makes them the most horrifying, they are unlike anything in Creation, and yet, they are most clearly part of it.

Some savants claim that devineko were the prototypes for Arad the Hunter, discarded when the behemoth proved superior. Others believe that these skin-changers are descended from teodozjia — perhaps from teodozjia and the Queen of Fangs or some feral Lunar. Still other savants postulate that white devineko are the reborn souls of the expeditionary force of Terrestrial Exalted slain by Deret Khan. It is unknown which, if any, of these origin tales reflect the truth of the matter.

What is known is that white devineko are dedicated evildoers who strive continuously to destroy the virtuous. Known from even before the Contagion as god-slayers, these monsters favor the flesh of the virtuous. They can smell a compassionate heart from several hundred yards. White devineko are skin-changers. They wear the skins of their victims to get closer to their next victims. Weapons wielded by mortal men do not harm them. With all these strengths, it is fortunate for the civilized realms that they are dependent on cold to survive.

In game terms, outside any region colored white on the map in the Exalted core book, devineko suffer one automatic health level of bashing damage per day. This damage cannot be soaked or healed until the devineko returns to the farthest North, but it heals normally once the creature is back in its natural hunting grounds.

These supernatural god-hunters hate holy men and Exalts of all types. They gain supreme joy from snatching priests away from their prayers and gobbling them up. Mortals are largely helpless against them and must rely on Exalted or other Essence-wielders to defend them. Thus, the white devineko are both the hunters and the hunted of the Chosen. If a character who is a priest or holy man wanders the Northern wastes, he is likely to draw the attention of at least one devineko.

Characters with a high Compassion are most likely to be targeted. The white-furred skin-changers will not attack directly, but will, instead, attempt to use guile and deception to obtain their prey.

In their natural form, the white devineko look like massive, white-furred cat-goblins. When hungry, the skin-changers appear dirty and near skeletal, with their own skin hanging wrinkled on protruding bones. When sated, they are white as fresh snow, and their skin is stretched across impossibly swollen bellies. (Neither of these extremes is apparent when they are wearing the skins of others.) At all times, they are malignant felinoids with twisted limbs and bulbous joints. They tend to dwell among the places of the dead, cemeteries and the like. When not in their homes, white devineko attempt to maintain the disguise of humanity at all costs. They will wear their stolen skins and attempt to lure

new victims away to isolated locations where they can be killed conveniently. If desperate for sustenance or sufficiently irritated by the presence of high virtue, the creatures will seek to attack by surprise, boldly snatching away and slaying a victim before any potential defenders can react. If pressed to fight, they will shred their borrowed skins and attack viciously. Their backward-turned claws leave jagged white scars, which can be attested to only by those who have hunted a devineko successfully.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 4



Abilities: Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Craft (Skin-Changing) 4, Dodge 4, Endurance 4, Investigation 4, Larceny 4, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Airtongue, High Realm, Low Realm, Riverspeak) 4, Performance 4, Presence 4, Survival 5 (Hunt +3), Socialize 4, Stealth 4

Supernatural Powers: Damage Immunity, Feed on Virtue, Skin-Changer, Smell Virtue

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 8L Defense 8

Rend: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 6L Defense 10

Dodge Pool: 8/4 **Soak:** 8L/8B (coarse fur, 6L/4B) + special

Willpower: 8 **Heath Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None



DAMAGE IMMUNITY

Attacks made by beings with less than Essence 2 simply have no effect on devineko. Attacks made by beings of Essence 2 have their damage halved (rounded up) after soak. This power has no effect on attacks made by beings with an Essence of three or greater. Damage Immunity only affects direct sources of damage. Indirect attacks or non-damage attacks affect the devineko normally.

FEED ON VIRTUE

White devineko may heal rapidly by devouring beings of great virtue. The devineko gets one health level back for each Virtue the victim possessed at four or above. The devineko gets an additional health level if one of those Virtues was Compassion. A being devoured in this manner cannot be used for skin-changing, nor can a creature whose skin the devineko has worn or intends to wear be fed upon for healing.

SKIN-CHANGER

After a white devineko incapacitates an individual, make a difficulty 3 Dexterity + Craft check for it to remove the skin of its victim. If successful, the devineko can don the skin and appear to be the person in question. The physical disguise is perfect. No non-magical means of detection can identify the devineko as such. All magical means suffer a penalty of one die for each success beyond three on the Dexterity + Craft roll to identify the devineko as a skin-changer. Next, make a difficulty 3 Manipulation + Performance check for the devineko. Again, if successful, it can masquerade as the victim perfectly, mimicking personality, voice and memories. Non-magical means cannot pierce the disguise, and magical methods suffer a one-die penalty for each success beyond the necessary three on the Performance check.

While wearing the skin of another being, the devineko effectively uses the character sheet of the being in question. The devineko can use its own Mental Attributes but must make a new Performance check if observed doing so. Use of its Physical Attributes automatically voids the disguise. The ability to smell virtue can always be used without penalty, and damage done while wearing another person's skin does not affect the devineko.

This disguise will last until the next full moon, until the devineko first suffers lethal or aggravated damage or until the devineko chooses to cast off the disguise. Once a skin is cast off, it may not be used again.

SMELL VIRTUE

A devineko can attempt to detect beings of virtuous character within a one mile radius. This is a standard Perception + Awareness check, and success simply indicates the presence of one or more such beings. Each extra success can provide one of the following bits of information: detect the number of such beings, detect the direction of a particular being of great virtue or detect the distance of a particular being with high virtue. Add one automatic success if the target being's Compassion is 3 or higher.

WINTER ROSE

Description: These crystalline roses charm their victims into approaching and cutting themselves on their razor-sharp petals and thorns and then grow and increase on the blood which is shed. They were created by an ancient Solar who desired to give his Lunar beloved roses that would bloom throughout the winter, but the flowers were drenched in his blood when the Dragon-Blooded arose and slew him, and now, they seek more blood unceasingly.

A bush of winter roses seems to be a normal rosebush that has been carved out of clear crystal by a master sculptor; every detail, from petal to thorn to root, is perfect. When someone comes within 50 yards of them, the leaves begin to brush together as though from a gentle breeze, creating a soft chiming noise and sparkling hypnotically. Players of all those who can both see and hear the roses must make a Willpower roll with a difficulty of 1, +1 for each turn of exposure. Players of those who block their ears with wax or clay need only roll once, at a difficulty of 1, and players of those who both avoid looking at the roses and cover their ears need not roll at all. Victims who fail the roll will find themselves drawn to the roses and will press themselves against the crystal thorns, fondling the razor-edged flowers in fascination. Each turn of such action will cause a level of lethal damage to the victim. For each level of

damage that the victim takes, the patch of roses will grow a foot in diameter, as the blood runs from the victim's gashes and feeds it. When the victim dies, his body falls to dust, leaving only clothes and weapons behind.

Winter roses may be destroyed by smashing the bush, though if any blood is spilled on the shards and dust for up to a year after the roses have been destroyed, they

will reconstitute and reform. If the roses are not fed with blood, the bush will shrink by a foot in diameter for each month that it goes hungry, though never to less than a yard across. The entire patch of roses can move, though extremely slowly (only up to 50 yards per day), and it leaves a large track in the earth behind it. The roses have no real intelligence and live only to drink blood and grow. They travel in a random direction and may as easily wander into barren wilderness as toward a town.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 1, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 0, Appearance 5, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Construct. Never fails Valor rolls, never succeeds at any other rolls.

Abilities: Awareness 1, Endurance 5, Presence 2, Resistance 3

Base Initiative: 3

Attack:

Edges: Speed 0 Accuracy 5 Damage 1L
Defense 0

Dodge Pool: 0

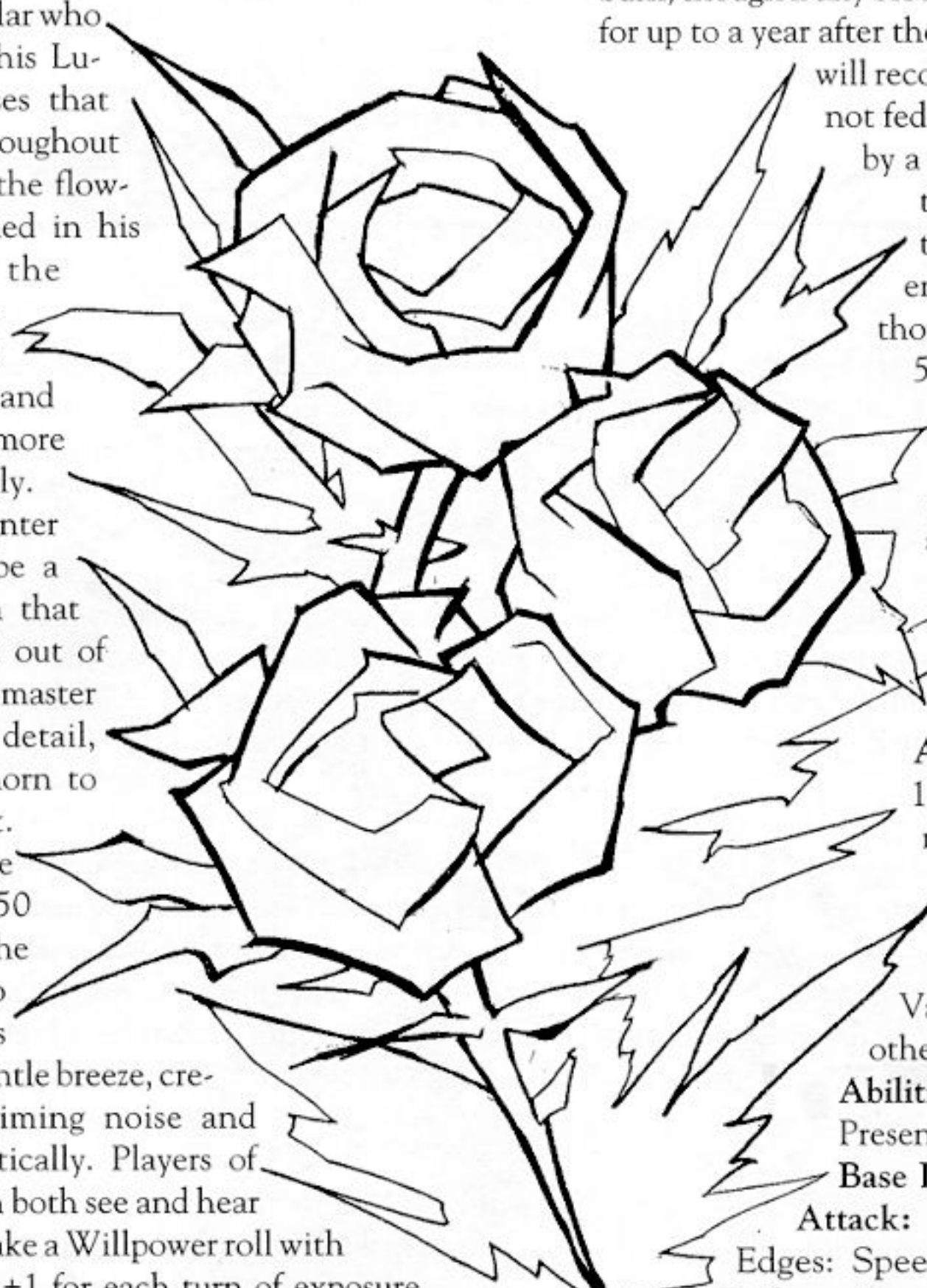
Soak: 5L/7B

Willpower: 1

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/ Incap (for the entire bush)

Essence: 2

Other Notes: This creature is not an object for the purposes of effects that damage objects, nor is it a plant. It should be treated as a construct or automata for the purposes of effects that do or do not affect such creatures.





CHAPTER TWO THE EAST



Chakra Orchid • The Chaun • Claw Strider • The Devil Tiger of Larjyn • Forest Mimic • Gravehound • Heart Wasp • Helgrifnir, the Fen-Hound • Ink Monkey • Komodo Rat • No Key, the Mushroom King • Panic Monkey • Piney • The Redwood Mantis • Strangler's Serpent • Tree-Singer

A land of dense forests and fertile fields, the East teems with life — and with danger. It spans the distance from the farthest Northeastern pine forests all the way to the lush and deadly jungles of the Southeast, from the once-gentle fields of the coast near Thorns to the tree-cathedral of the farthest East. Life thrives all through the

green lands near the Elemental Pole, and even Exalted travelers must be wary, lest they play host to it. If the creatures acrawl through the East's backwoods and Wyld zones are not so dangerous as the beasts that infest the old heartland of the First Realm, then the often-infectious nature of these beasts makes up for it.



CHAKRA ORCHID

Description: A blight from the deepest forests of the East, chakra orchid clusters are now being found with increasing frequency in the more civilized regions of the East. These deceptively beautiful flowers feed on the living creatures of the forest and form colonies from which they spread their seeds ever closer to the seat of Creation.

The chakra orchid is a parasite that requires living creatures in which to gestate to an adult state. Any reptile, mammal or human is susceptible to infestation by the chakra orchids' insidious seeds. Only birds and water creatures seem to be immune, and chakra orchids cannot tolerate either type of animal in their domain. Neither will a chakra orchid allow other plant life to exist within its boundaries. Worker blooms are most often found clearing out undergrowth or slowly digging up trees near the central bloom.

There are five types of chakra orchid, which some savants speculate to be five life stages. This is much disputed, as the numbers of each bloom are not evenly distributed. Few savants have been able to study the chakra orchid at all, though, for infection means death. Each of the five known types are of a different color and are called blooms and blossoms.

COBALT BLOOM (WORKER)

Blue flowers at the base of the neck of an infected creature indicate a worker drone, an infested creature with only rudimentary intelligence able to undertake simple tasks and not capable of communication. Cobalt blooms are known for their strength and for how slowly they move. Other signs of the infestation include enlarged extremities and a greenish tinge to the sufferer's veins. Cobalt blooms only live a month or two before the victim finally succumbs to the infection, and then, other blooms gather the corpse and take it to the central stem, where golden flowers soon sprout from the body. Cobalt blooms infect humans primarily, though any large animal can fall victim.

Attributes: Strength 4 (+2), Dexterity 1 (-1), Stamina 3 (+1), Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 1

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Craft (Farming) 1, Dodge 2, Endurance 4, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Survival 1

Base Initiative: 2*

* This is variable depending on the original creature's Dexterity.

Attack:

Punch: Speed 3 Accuracy 4 Damage 4B Defense 3

Dodge Pool: 3 **Soak:** 3L/6B (Skin toughened by plant material, 2L/3B)

Willpower: 1 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: The Traits listed above reflect how a normal human (Physical Attributes 2/2/2) is affected by infestation. Physical Traits are modifications of an original creature, and the modification is listed in parentheses after the Attribute. Infection of other creatures may be simulated by modifying the Physical Attributes as suggested in the parenthetical comments, above.

Cobalt blooms are usually extras, when they fight at all. Their favored method of attack is by mobbing single targets.

ALABASTER BLOOM (WARRIOR)

White flowers are warrior blooms, with enough cunning to follow orders, attack in groups and use tactics. Some infected creatures utter discernable battle cries and can sound terrifyingly similar to the voices of the infested. Once a flower has blossomed on the back of the neck of a victim, however, little can be done to rescue her or save her from her doom, no matter how lucid she may seem. Victims of the warrior blooms are agile and covered in a natural bark-like armor. They often have elongated claws of wood or extra teeth. Alabaster blooms can have up to a year lifespan before the body succumbs to the infestation.

Attributes: Strength 3 (+1), Dexterity 4 (+2), Stamina 5 (+3), Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Endurance 3, Presence 2, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Base Initiative: 7*

* This is variable depending on the original creature's Dexterity.

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L Defense 4

Claw: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 5L Defense 6

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 5L/11B (Hide toughened by bark, 3L/6B)

Willpower: 3 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: The Physical Traits above reflect a normal human infected by the bloom. Infection of other creatures may be simulated by modifying the Physical Attributes as suggested in the parenthetical comments, above. If the infected creature's attacks are greater than the ones listed, adjust accordingly. Alabaster blooms only attack in groups of five or more, unless caught by surprise. They are often extras.



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ARGENT BLOSSOM (EMISSARY)

Silver flowers crown the heads of what are termed emissary blossoms, and their faces and extremities have qualities resembling plant stems. Creatures infected by these orchids are quite intelligent. However, the intelligence comes solely from the plant within the creature, and the being does not retain any memories of the victim's prior life. These flowers are usually only found infecting intelligent prey. Emissary blossoms are rare and are used to negotiate with human settlements near orchid habitations. They are honey tongued and offer many boons to humans who will help or deal with the chakra orchids, but most of these are lies. Such promises are only kept until the chakra orchid feels strong enough to mount an attack against the settlement. The argent emissaries are so insidious that several small cults of orchid worshipers have developed. Though most societies are adept at spotting and disposing of cultists, these groups pose a danger nonetheless. Cultists are rabidly fanatic about protecting the central stems and give their lives willingly to infestation. Indeed, they believe this to be the culmination of their lives.

Argent blossoms do not seem to succumb to the same life cycle as the other chakra orchid infections, though they do die from violence or misfortune.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Bureaucracy 3, Dodge 3, Linguistics (Native: Woodtongue; Low Realm, Riverspeak) 2, Performance 2, Presence 3, Resistance 1, Socialize 2

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Claw: Speed 5 Accuracy 3 Damage 3L Defense 6

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 2L/5B (Skin toughened by plant matter, 1L/2B)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Argent blossoms always run away when confronted with violence and can call as many alabaster or cobalt blooms as are nearby to their aid. To do so, an



argent blossom emits a high-pitched wail that will cause all workers and warriors within half a mile to come to defend it.

Unlike the cobalt and alabaster blooms, creatures infected with the argent blossom do not have their Physical Attributes modified. All argent blossoms replace the creatures' Attributes with their own.

SCARLET BLOOM (INVADER)

Attacks on neighboring settlements are sometimes made by bands of warrior flowers, but most often, the chakra orchid sends creatures infected by red blooms. These are the most insidious tools of the chakra orchid because the blossom happens only after death. Until then, the infested creature retains most of its memories and intelligence, though it is driven increasingly insane by the infection. Many villages in the East have fallen to chakra orchids because one of their members, thought lost in the forest or eaten by monsters, returns to them, memory blank of her exploits but insatiably thirsty and devoid of common sense. Eventually, such victims turn violent, attacking their friends and families. Finally, the victims begin to foam at the mouth and gibber. Their bodies bulge in odd places as they go into seizure and, eventually, die.

When this happens, the body must be burned within an hour, or red flowers will erupt violently from the corpse, bud, bloom and go to seed within the span of a night. Once the seed pods form, they explode, sending tiny spores into the air. These spores actually seek the breath of the living and, most often, find sleeping people and plant themselves within the throat. There, they burrow into the neck and root themselves in the spine. Victims of these seeds wake the following morning with a cough, and as the day proceeds, they develop a fever, a sore throat and, eventually, severe pain throughout the body as the seeds root in the spine. Within several hours, the victims are bedridden and incapacitated, delirious and in the most agonizing pain. They turn silent a few hours later, and their fever vanishes. Eventually, they arise, with tiny buds at the base of the neck. Most commonly, these are the blue buds of a cobalt bloom worker. Rarely will the blooms climb up the neck to form the argent wreath of the emissary.

Attributes: As infected creature

Virtues: As infected creature

Abilities: As infected creature

Base Initiative: As infected creature

Attack: As infected creature

Dodge Pool: As infected creature **Soak:** As infected creature

Willpower: As infected creature **Health Levels:** As infected creature

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Scarlet blooms do not augment an infested creature's Traits at all. The creature has an

SEED INFESTATION

This attack used by the scarlet bloom and the auric blossom is treated as a disease.

Symptoms: Victims of these seeds start with a cough, and as the day proceeds, they develop a fever, a sore throat and, eventually, severe pain throughout the body as the seeds root in the spine. Within several hours, the victims are bedridden and incapacitated, delirious and most often screaming incessantly. They turn silent a few hours later, and their fever vanishes. Eventually they arise, with tiny buds at the base of the neck. Most commonly these are the blue buds of a cobalt bloom worker. Rarely will the bloom climb up the neck to form the argent wreath of the emissary.

Duration: Infestation manifests almost immediately, and it only takes about a day before the victim succumbs to the chakra orchid. A flower always blooms within 24 hours unless treated.

Vector: Seeds can be ingested accidentally or on purpose. The auric blossoms produce a number of different seeds that can be carried by scarlet blooms, the wind or cultists. The seeds produced by the scarlet bloom are always tiny and airborne.

Treatment: There is no known mundane method for curing infestation by the chakra orchid, though many have been tried. Normal treatments may aid the victim in resisting the chakra orchid, however, even beyond the 24-hour point. The difficulties listed below reflect this. Sorcery and the intervention of a powerful spirit may cure an afflicted individual. The Charms Bodily Regeneration Prana and Healing Trance Meditation will halt the advance of the disease. The use of Contagion-Curing Touch requires five successes on an Intelligence + Medicine roll to eliminate the chakra orchid, though if the orchid has already flowered, this results in the swift death of the victim.

Virulence: 6

Untreated Morbidity: 7

Treated Morbidity: 5

Difficulty to Treat: 5

inexplicable urge to get to the nearest settlement, however, and is often driven by this desire for many miles, well past her fatigue point. For dramatic purposes, scarlet blooms should not succumb to fatigue until they are at a place where they will be discovered.

AURIC BLOSSOM (CENTRAL STEM)

The last known type of the chakra orchid is the golden flower of the auric blossom. This is also called the central stem, though it is a misnomer, as the golden flowers can be found covering most of the ground around the initial infestation site. Indeed, the presence of these flowers makes for an idyllic scene.

The auric blossoms do not infest the living, but feed on the dead corpses brought to it by cobalt blooms. These fist-sized flowers line vines that climb up any available structures. The vines will completely destroy the huts and houses in a small village, and often, the cobalt blooms will bring felled trees back to the central stem to be used as additional support. Cobalt and alabaster blooms can be found wandering among this lattice as villagers would their home. The auric blooms have an unusual shared intelligence that grows as the whole plant grows and can communicate their wishes telepathically to the other types of blooms and blossoms. Blooms and blossoms can also share their knowledge with the central stem when they are within 20 yards of it. This more than anything else is what makes the chakra orchid so dangerous.

Auric blossoms may produce seeds at will, generating the spores necessary to infest a victim with whatever subservient flower type that the central stem chooses. Cultists are given a fruit to eat that will infest them more easily and less painfully than unwilling hosts, who have seeds forcibly implanted into their throats.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 1 Stamina 1, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 3

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 2 (Wrestling +3), Bureaucracy 2, Endurance 3, Lore 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 5

Attack:

Clinch: Speed 7 Accuracy 6 Damage 5B Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 0 Soak: 1L/1B (None)

Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-0/incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: The statistics above are for an average specimen of auric blossom about the size of a small village. For larger central stems, double the number of -0 health levels.

Auric blossoms do not suffer wound penalties.

The central stem may take five actions in a turn but cannot split its die pool. Auric blossoms will always summon aid from all blooms nearby. This usually means 20 to 30 cobalt blooms and 15 to 25 alabaster blooms. The summons is telepathic, but it can be noticed with a Perception + Awareness roll with five successes.

If an auric blossom reduces a character in a clinch to Incapacitated, it will use its seed infestation attack on that character.

If an auric blossom is reduced to Incapacitated, it must still have its entire root system dug up and destroyed, or it will grow back in a week. Auric blossoms heal three health levels per day.



THE CHAUN

Description: It is a sad truth of nature that the smallest of blossoms often bears the most potent poison, and nowhere is that more apparent than in the case of the chaun, the “Devils of the Wood” of the Eastern rainforests. The chaun appear to be nothing less than wizened, beautiful children, standing three to four feet high. They are slender and muscular, their skin usually a dark chestnut in color. They stiffen their long, smooth hair using the sap of the tolembi tree, molding it into wild crests and dyeing it myriad colors and hues. When they speak to one another, the chaun gesture using their delicate hands, their deep, quickly murmuring voices almost impossible to understand. At least one fingernail on their off hand is usually lacquered to incredible hardness and then dipped in a batch of poison before battle.

Little is known of their origins, although some sources claim that they began as the offspring of a village punished by a vengeful forest-spirit. The chaun themselves have no tale of their origin — they believe they have always lived beneath the canopy of the forest, existing in a state of nature.

The chaun run and leap through the forest with preternatural quickness, sometimes on all fours. They are nomadic, resting in an area only until the food supply has dwindled due to their predations. Both men and women hunt, although the men use spears and the women small bows. All spear tips and arrowheads are dipped in one of the many potent venoms and poisons to be manufactured from the bounty of the forest. The leaders and elders of a tribe use iron and steel weapons. Sometimes, these weapons are exchanged for toxic poisons and healing herbs. But more often, such weapons are taken from the bodies of hunters and explorers who made their way too far into the interior.

The chaun are especially proud of their teeth, which they sharpen with shards of rock and then shellac with the same chemical they use on their nails, produced from a mixture of boiled leaves and tolembi sap. When the shellac hardens, the teeth are nearly unbreakable. According to experienced guides and traders in the region, the bite of a chaun is able to snap bone in two. Typically, a pair of chaun will immobilize a foe's arms or legs with their teeth, while the others fire arrows and throw spears to finish the victim off.

The Devils of the Wood are masters of camouflage and stealthy movement through the jungle. They love to sneak up on bands of travelers unawares, using their poisoned nails and primitive weapons to pick off the members of a group one

by one. Although the chaun's poisons kill quickly and silently, there is a brief moment of searing pain before the victim expires that leaves a rictus of intense agony across the deceased's face. Once their victims have spotted the chaun, the Devils of the Wood stop hiding and attack en masse — their small size is more than compensated for by their numbers and ferocity, and few beings can stand up to three dozen chaun biting, scratching and mauling them at once. Once the victims have fallen, the chaun will usually eat their kills on the spot.

While the chaun are usually found only in the deep interior of the forests of the East, the Dynasts of the Realm pay well for specimens to use in gladiatorial games, and the Guild is always interested in samples of the chaun's healing draughts and toxic poisons. Because of this, many make the dangerous trek into the forests' interior at great risk to their own lives.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Archery 4, Athletics 3 (Jump +3), Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 4, Medicine 2 (Deep Forest Herbs +2), Melee 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Thrown 3

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 4 Damage 5L

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 5B Defense 5

Poisoned Nail: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage*

Javelin (hand-to-hand): Speed 8 Accuracy 7 Damage 4L Defense 5

Bow: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 4L (Rate 2, Range 100)

Javelin (thrown): Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 5L (Rate 2, Range 30)

*As poison. See “Other Notes,” below.

Dodge Pool: 7

Soak: 0L/3B (None)

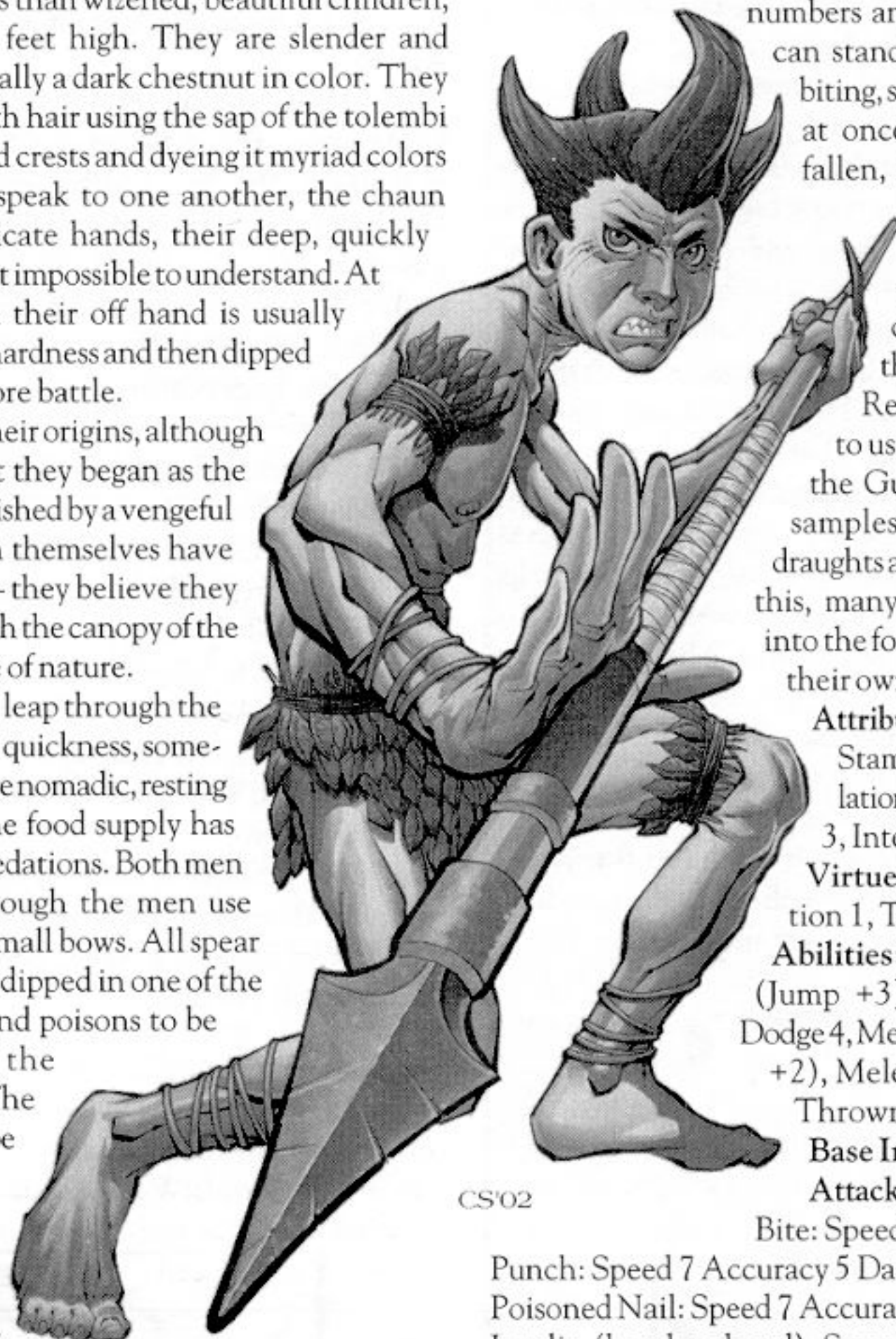
Willpower: 2

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Chaun are almost always extras. The chaun frequently use arrow frog venom (see *Exalted*, p. 243) or death sap on their weapons. Death sap means certain death for mortals, but for Exalted, it has the following statistics when applied to weapons:

Death Sap: Difficulty: 4 Success: 5L Failure: 10L Duration/ Penalty: 1 minute/-1



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CLAW STRIDER

Description: The claw striders are sometimes called savanna striders, although they can be found from the edges of the Scavenger Lands, where they are a constant worry for the horselords of the Marukani, to the swamps of the Silent Crescent in the Southwest. These ancient predators are small relatives of the fearsome tyrant lizards. Standing about six feet tall at the shoulder and about 20 feet long from snout to tail-tip, these bipedal horrors are fast moving predators and pack hunters, using their sharp fore claws and powerful jaws to take down and kill almost anything that moves; in numbers, they can even take down a tyrant lizard or other great hunter.

Several barbarian tribes (and a few of the smaller settlements and cities) in the Southeast have partially domesticated packs of local claw striders, turning them into hunting and war mounts. Fierce, independent and hard to control, these monsters are terrible dangers to those not strong of will and equally fierce of temperament,

killing, capturing or taking their target, they leave with comparatively little collateral damage. Other stories speak only of disaster and ruination, of entire villages destroyed by the beasts. It is as yet unknown if they are the tool of some power or if these are simply wild rumors.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 4, Stamina 7, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 5

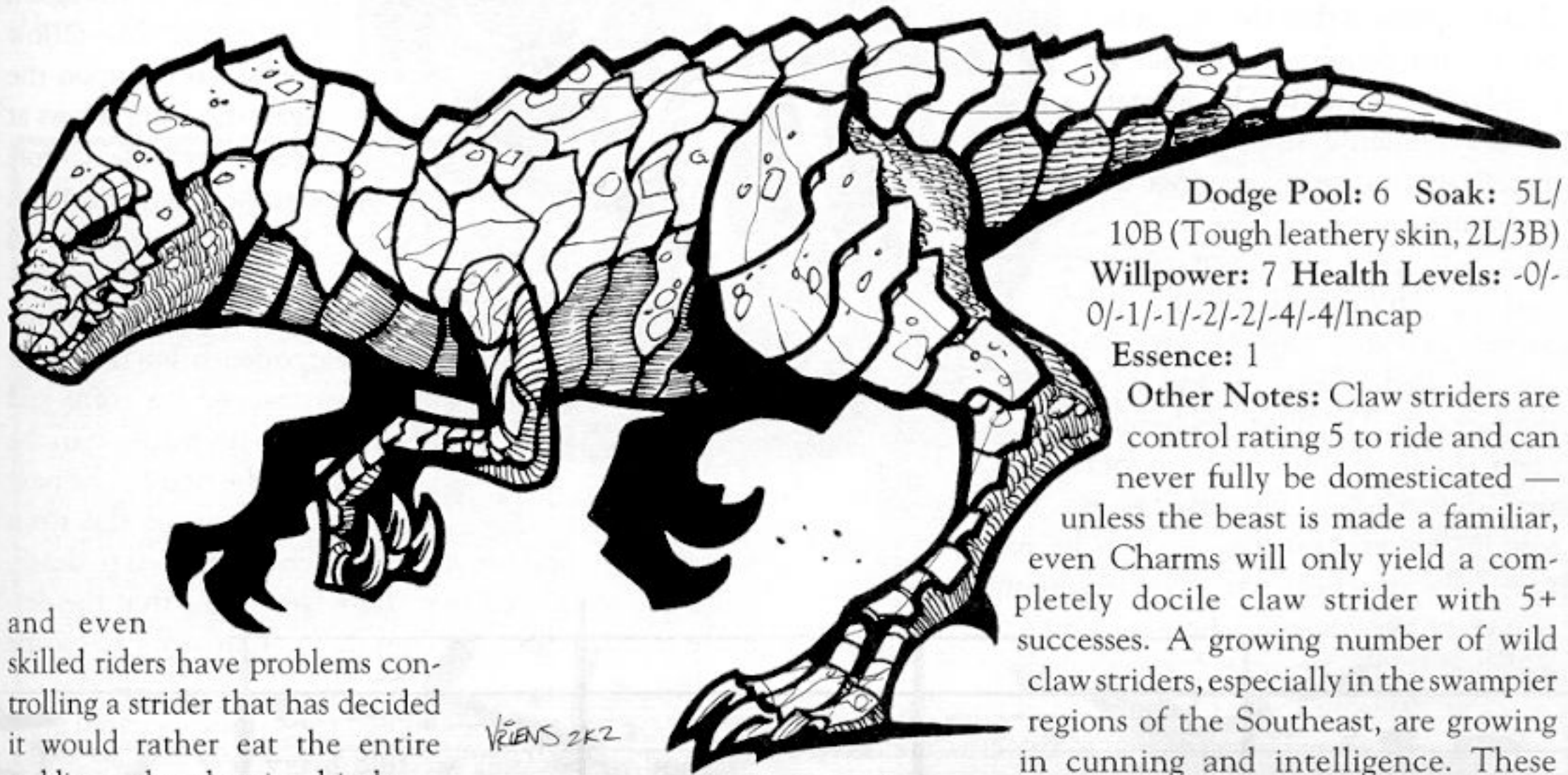
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Sprinting +1), Awareness 3 (Sharp Sight +1, Spot Ambush +1, Track +1), Brawl 3 (Bite +1, Claw +1), Dodge 2, Endurance 1, Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 2, Stealth 3 (Ambush +2, Hide in Plain Sight +1)

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 6 Damage 9L Defense 6

Claw: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 7L Defense 7



and even skilled riders have problems controlling a strider that has decided it would rather eat the entire yeddim, rather than just his share.

For decades, reports have filtered to more civilized parts of the world, strange tales of claw striders that are unusually cunning. Stories circulate of small Guild caravans deliberately ambushed, unimportant villages raided and other strange events. In some stories, the striders seem unnaturally focused on a single item or person; after

beasts have Perception 4, Intelligence 2 and often have rudimentary skills such as Craft (Traps) 1 (Crude Traps +2). Some are even learning to domesticate creatures themselves. These claw striders are the origins of the strange tales.

Dodge Pool: 6 Soak: 5L/
10B (Tough leathery skin, 2L/3B)
Willpower: 7 Health Levels: -0/-
0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap
Essence: 1

Other Notes: Claw striders are control rating 5 to ride and can never fully be domesticated — unless the beast is made a familiar, even Charms will only yield a completely docile claw strider with 5+ successes. A growing number of wild claw striders, especially in the swampier regions of the Southeast, are growing in cunning and intelligence. These

THE DEVIL TIGER OF LARJYN

Description: Tales of man-eating tigers are not uncommon in the Southeast, but none are as persistent as that of the Devil Tiger of Larjyn. Typically, a man-eater stalks the weak, targeting children or the decrepit, but it would appear that the weakness sought by this beast lies in the soul. Ancient stories say a representative of Chaya named Talnir loved his wife Oyena so dearly that he denied her nothing. One day, while walking through the marketplace of Larjyn, she spied an unusual tiger cub, whose fur was red-striped instead of orange and begged her devoted husband for it. Talnir went to the owner of the ruby-banded cub, determined to make his wife happy. The merchant explained that the tiger was a pet for his daughter and that he could not part with it. The delegate offered immense sums but, ultimately, was unable to convince the tradesman to sell.

The wicked Talnir was incensed that he could not satisfy his wife's desires, and in a rage, he attacked the merchant, slew him and stole the rare cub. The dying tradesman cried out in anguish and foretold that the delegate of Larjyn would lose his life and his love even as he had taken that of others, while the representative crept away leaving the merchant's tiny daughter sobbing over her father's body.

The delegate's wife Oyena was delighted with the gift and grew incredibly attached to the creature, keeping it in her bed and taking it everywhere with her. People whispered that the creature was unnatural and said it brought nothing but tragedy in its wake, but Oyena would hear nothing of it. Eventually, the beast was to prove her undoing, however. Whether through the will of the gods or the merchant's curse, the words of the tradesman ran true — the young wife's eye wandered, and she betrayed her husband for a secret lover.

The delegate learned of her trysts, and his heart turned to poison. Talnir hatched a terrible plan, convincing his wife that her beloved pet needed to hunt in order to grow healthy and strong. He took the tiger into the borders of the Southeastern jungle to teach it to hunt and instructed his master trainer to teach the young beast to defend Oyena from harm. As the animal learned to contest against man, the delegate introduced a stolen

bit of clothing from his wife's lover, placing it among the mock enemies with whom the creature fought.

When Talnir finally returned the tiger to his wife, she was delighted to see how sleek and grand it had grown in a few months. The tiger returned to her side as though it had never left. The next night, the wife's lover came to her bed, and the representative's scheme bore sanguine fruit. The tiger tore the handsome youth apart, and drunken upon the blood of the young man, it slaughtered Oyena as well. Called home by the cries of the dying, Talnir found his wife slain and cried out in dismay. He set his guards upon the red-striped beast, but the great cat escaped into the forest.

Years later, when the representative had taken another wife, he was hunting in the Southeastern jungle when he came upon the red-striped beast again. Talnir and his fellow huntsmen set upon the tiger, shooting arrows at it from every side. Unfortunately, their frenzied attack led to Talnir being struck by a stray arrow. The delegate retired to Larjyn, wounded near to death, but the clever tiger tracked his scent and crept into his mansion in the middle of the night. The next day, the people of the town

found Talnir and his entire household mauled to death, but some whispered that there were signs that the delegate sacrificed his own family in an attempt to escape the beast.

Time has not yet claimed the crimson-coated great cat, and new stories are told every year or two of the beast's predations. The governors of the Republic of Chaya have offered a large bounty to any hero who can catch and slay the so-called Devil Tiger of Larjyn, but more than a century has passed without anyone claiming it. Curious hunters seeking the elusive Devil Tiger rarely manage to find the beast, and those who do rarely return. Survivors tell tales of treacherous men destroying one another before the tiger even appeared. Rumors of the scarlet tiger float through the towns of Chaya, and villagers say the beast is the justice of the gods visited upon the wicked.

Over the decades, the Devil Tiger of Larjyn has grown into a clever hunter, more sentient than the average man, with a bestial sense of duty. Its sleek and powerful build hides a crafty mind, while its scarlet-



striped coat exudes a potent intoxicant, which drives men and beasts mad. Despite the somewhat unpredictable effects of its powerful musk, the creature puts it to terrible use, lurking in the brush while it watches its foes as their inner demons take control. The beast has come to believe its own legend, and its attacks never target those it sees as innocent, yet strive to strike terror into the hearts of those who hunt it or do evil to their own kind. The lunatic misdeeds of those in the creature's path remind the people of the darkness found within their own souls, and the Devil Tiger thus feels it contributes to the moral development of the race of man.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Investigation 1, Linguistics (Native: Woodtongue; Riverspeak) 1, Presence 4 (Intimidation +2), Socialize 1 (Detect Wickedness +2), Stealth 4, Survival 4

Supernatural Powers: Overwhelming Musk of the Scarlet Tiger

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 7 Damage 7L Defense 5

Claw: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L Defense 8

Dodge Pool: 6 **Soak:** 5L/8B (Tough hide, 3L/3B)

Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3

Other Notes: The natural coloration of the Devil Tiger is such that during the month of Resplendent Fire all difficulties to spot it are increased by 1. As a creature of virtue, the Devil Tiger can activate its Virtue dice pools as normal with a Willpower point. It is worth noting that while it feels itself to be quite able in these matters, the Devil Tiger does not possess any supernatural ability to discern innocence from evil, and it can make mistakes, typically with deadly consequence.



OVERWHELMING MUSK OF THE SCARLET TIGER

The Devil Tiger of Larjyn is somehow connect to the darker side of the madness that consumes Chayans during the month of Resplendent Fire. The creature exudes a powerful intoxicant causing the darker urges of its victims to overcome them. The havoc and treachery wrought only reflect the personal evils of those that hunt or are hunted by the monstrous cat. A subtle yet overwhelming musk surrounds the crimson striped beast at all times, and its effects are potent at ranges of approximately 30 yards. In a closed environment, this range may increase as the musk slowly fills the enclosure, while a brisk wind may reduce the musk's range to 10 yards or less. It is very difficult to detect the scent of the scarlet tiger requiring a Perception + Awareness roll with a difficulty of 3 (5 during the month of Resplendent Fire, when the fire trees fill the air with their pollen). If a victim should sense the smell of the musk, she may choose to hold her breath as per page 243 of *Exalted*, though she will still suffer at least one turn of exposure.

Any creature breathing the musk of the tiger must roll to resist its potent effects *every* turn of exposure. Avoiding the effects requires a reflexive Stamina + Resistance roll with a difficulty of 3 when one's character comes within approximately 10 yards of the devil tiger, 2 within 20 yards, and 1 within 30 yards. Again, these distances may vary, as a thick cloud of musk trapped in a forest cave is potent indeed, while scattered wind-borne wisps are fairly weak.

Success means that the victim loses only a single temporary Willpower point — note that if Willpower was spent to gain automatic resistance for the turn, the victim suffers a total loss of two points. Intelligent creatures reduced to zero Willpower will revert to their basic nature, giving in to deep compulsions, as per page 147 of *Exalted*. Animals reduced to zero Willpower generally become abnormally passive and placid, accepting their fate without complaint.

Failure means that the victim loses a temporary Willpower point and immediately suffers a Limit Break Flaw per the rules on page 131 of *Exalted*. Should the victim normally not suffer a Limit Break, use her highest Virtue, and choose one that fits her personality. For creatures without assigned Virtue ratings, use Heart of Tears if they are essentially herbivorous or normally peaceful or Berserk Anger if they are normally aggressive.

FOREST MIMIC

Description: Enigmatic pranksters and vicious killers, forest mimics dwell in the primeval forests of the Eastern lands. Forest mimics are solitary creatures, never encountered in the presence of others of their kind. They have incredible natural camouflage and can accurately mimic any sound they have ever heard. Natives of forests where these creatures dwell give the mimic's hunting grounds a wide berth, fearing to even speak lest their own voices be used against their loved ones. Forest mimics are green-furred, cyclopean simians with the legs of a goat and the spiral horns of a ram. They have only crude intelligence, but they are master mimics. The forest mimics grow throughout their lifetimes, as do their massive horns. Fortunately, this growth slows as they grow older. The oldest forest mimics are as large as the trees of the wooded areas they dwell in. Forest mimics seem to have a natural affinity for rodents. They are often found in the company of squirrels or bug-winged mice. Older forest mimics often have several colonies of rodents living in their fur.

Forest mimics have a finely developed taste for human flesh. However, they seem to be very particular. They seem to prefer old, tough flesh. They also seem to honestly care for small things, children included. A forest mimic that devours a village's old women and mightiest hunters will deliver a lost child safely to the edge of the same village. In combat, forest mimics are crude warriors, seeking first to grab and throw their opponents, if their relative sizes allow. If a forest mimic cannot grab its opponent, it will instead lash out and attempt to smash her. Once an opponent has been incapacitated, a forest mimic will then rip and tear at her with its massive teeth. It often leaves scraps of flesh for the vermin that live in its fur, which it cares for just as carefully as the children it saves.

Humans are most likely to encounter a forest mimic when they wander too deeply into virgin forests. The mimic's tactic is to use the victims' own voices to confuse and separate them. If hungry, the giant creature will devour one or more human victims, if able. Otherwise, the mimic will attempt to keep the creatures lost and confused in the forest, so that it can dine on them later.

Beyond providing meals for themselves and their tiny tenants, the forest mimics' motivations are unclear. Some claim that the mimics are physical manifestations of the

capricious whims of the forest or otherwise related to forest walkers, Kings of the Wood and other forest divinities, but no evidence has been found to support this theory.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Endurance 3, Performance 5, Presence 1, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 5, Thrown 1

Supernatural Powers: Vocal Mimicry

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Grab: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 5L Defense 5

Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 6L Defense 6

Dodge Pool: 5/2

Soak: 2L/5B (None)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: The above Attributes are for man-size forest mimics, the smallest sort encountered. As the creatures age, they continue to grow. For every man's height of growth (approximately six feet), they gain one dot each of Strength and

Stamina and an additional -0 health level. To date, no one has recorded an encounter with a forest mimic with more than 10 dots of Strength.

VOCAL MIMICRY

A forest mimic can reproduce any voice it has heard before. When it attempts to mimic the voice, make a Manipulation + Survival roll. The player of anyone who hears the mimicry can make an opposed Perception + Awareness roll to determine the difference between the mimicked voice and a real vocalization, but this roll is not reflexive; the characters must be alert for misleading sounds for their players to make the roll. The mimic can imitate only one voice per turn. Forest mimics can speak, but only by reproducing words and voices they have heard before. They are clever enough to rearrange words and apply alternative voices to phrases, but they do not have a true language of their own.



GRAVEHOUND

Description: Some say they are the get of Helgrifnir, others say that they began as packs of feral dogs and jackals scavenging the necropoli of Sijan for meals. The matter lies in dispute, but regardless of cause, the creatures known as gravehounds live closer to undeath than just about any other animal species in Creation.

Some of the changes the gravehounds underwent were purely physical in nature. They are lean and cadaverous like the corpses they consume. The hounds' fur is the color of ash, providing them with excellent camouflage in their funeral habitat. As a protection against the approach of hungry ghosts, they developed heightened senses of smell and hearing.

Gravehounds notice the slightest rustling of moldy cements and scent the faintest hint of decay, both from hundreds of yards away. They are trackers with few equals, and they are also something more than natural.

The gravehounds' most basic gift is their immunity to the diseases that riddle the putrefying bodies of the dead. No mundane corpse-rot — whatever its effect upon mortal humans — can affect the hounds.

Stranger still is the gravehounds' ability to pierce the shroud of death with their senses. To a gravehound, a dematerialized ghost is as present as the human victim standing next to it. The gravehound can smell the unclean spirit, see it and hear it. In fact, the beast is also capable of touching and tasting ghosts. A sword will pass right through a disembodied shade, but a gravehound's fangs will close about its throat. According to some necromancers who have observed the packs on their midnight hunts, the gravehounds have recently begun to develop a taste for ghostly flesh. The long-term implications of their hunger for the substance of the dead are still unknown.

The last of the gravehound's powers is also the most bizarre. If a gravehound should happen to consume the flesh of a corpse that has been denied both last rites and a decent burial, it will also ingest that poor unfortunate soul's mind — personality and memory alike. The hungry gravehound has not actually become the dead individual, but it is that person in practice. It will respond to strange humans as long-lost comrades, seek out old haunts miles beyond its former range as a gravehound. It will even take on its meal's unfinished business, doing its canine best to resolve regrets and make last wishes come true.

All this would be creepy enough if the gravehound didn't also manage to acquire the voice of the corpse in question. The animal uses its newfound voice to console and to cajole others, to chastise foes and to reassure loved ones. It

may even seek out assistance in its quest to right old wrongs (after all, paws only take a creature so far in life and death).

The situation becomes more complicated if several gravehounds eat from the same corpse, which results in all of them finishing one another's sentences and working together as a pack to bring about their newly acquired, yet, simultaneously, long-

desired goals. The gravehounds must share their meal for this to occur — it is not enough for several to sneak bites while one dominant dog gulps down the bulk of the available flesh. In mechanical terms, the dead being's consciousness can be shared across a number of gravehounds equal to his Willpower. This effect lasts for several days at least — and sometimes for as long as several weeks.





Abilities such as these make the gravehounds powerful allies in the struggle of the living against the dead. Ordinary dogs will go out of their way to avoid entering a shadowland. If they are forced inside, they will whine and whimper, giving away their masters' position. And there's little reason to bring them into the shadowland in the first place: The interface between death and life is a confusing one, something canine noses were not designed to comprehend. Even the best of bloodhounds may lose a trail in a shadowland.

Such is not the case with gravehounds. Born into an atmosphere of death and decay, they are instinctively accustomed to the sensory distortions of the deadlands. They can bring a nemissary to bay without flinching and tear their way through ghostly bodyguards a human would be powerless to stop. Some of Sijan's morticians have begun training gravehound packs to serve as necropolis guard dogs, and the idea is catching on elsewhere, especially in the refugee settlements on the Nexus side of the boundary with Thorns. Mortal partisans fighting the Mask of Winters use gravehounds as trackers and hunting dogs: The animals can seal a victory against the Deathlord's minions just as easily as they can lead a tired war party back to safety.

One thing all gravehound trainers insist on is that the dogs be kept away from human carrion. It's hard enough for military commanders to control a group of disparate men: Factor in a willful dog who suddenly wants to go home to Rubylak to see his wife, and you have a recipe for disaster. Then there's the danger of letting gravehounds sink their fangs into the remains of the enemy: You're letting a pack of traitors into your midst and effectively cutting your own throat. Reasons such as these force trainers to keep gravehounds well fed prior to missions. The dogs are just too valuable to lose as deserters and turncoats.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Stealth 2, Survival 4 (Tracking +3)

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 4L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 4 **Soak:** 0L/4B (None)

Willpower: 4 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/

Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: The Abilities listed above are common to all gravehounds and may be augmented by the Abilities of an unburied corpse the gravehound eats all or part of. Obviously, those extra Abilities will vary based on precisely whose corpse was on the menu that day. If there are multiple gravehounds involved, then the same set of Abilities will be available to all of the dogs. It goes without saying that, despite their mystical power set, gravehounds are still canine quadrupeds. Eating a thief gives them knowledge of Larceny techniques but not actual lockpicking ability.

The same goes for a Realm-famous minstrel: The hound that feeds on him will recognize the airs of the First Age composer T'shan but will still be totally unable to play a sanxian. The post-meal mindset of a gravehound is a hybrid of man and beast: The human modifies the dog, and vice versa. One additional change that gravehounds undergo in this situation is the substitution of their dead meal's Virtues for their own. A gravehound who eats a coward becomes a coward, no matter what its natural Valor score may be.

HEART WASP

Description: At first glance, the hamlet will appear harmless enough. The villagers are the mulish, sullen peasants the discerning traveler has come to expect on any journey through the forests of the East. One of them may put down the axe he's been using to chop wood and head into the village center, toward what appears to be the house of the local hetman. The rest will ignore you, going about their mundane tasks, humming a low, monotonous tune.

Tired and thirsty, you may approach the town well. You desire water, and the local welcoming committee will surely gather there. When the village elders arrive, you will note that they too are humming like the other villagers — although their tune is perhaps slightly different? Moreover, they are all women. That is hardly a surprise in the Scavenger Lands, however, and so, you may ignore this crucial warning sign.

The largest of the women will respond haltingly to you. Her voice will be raspy, her words broken up by strange coughs and hiccups. The humming will become louder. You may wonder if you've accidentally wandered into a village of lepers or madmen and look behind you to confirm your escape route. You will know something is wrong when you see a passel of beefy young men now stand athwart your path of retreat. Turning back to the headwoman, you will start to protest, fearing murderous bandits, but you will quickly choke off your words: the village elders will have now all opened their mouths, and insects will be crawling out, covering their faces. These are hideously colored bugs — pale creamy wasps banded with scarlet.

Panicking, you will look for a way out, but the creatures will be all around you. As they close in, the first of the wasps lands on your cheek. It will start crawling toward your mouth, buzzing and humming. You will clamp your lips shut, you may plug your nose, but the clever wasps will find their way. One will land in your ear, then a second, then a third — then you will lose count. You will hear their mandibles clicking in your ear canal. Just before they bite through your eardrum, you will hear their voices hiss, "Welcome to the hive."

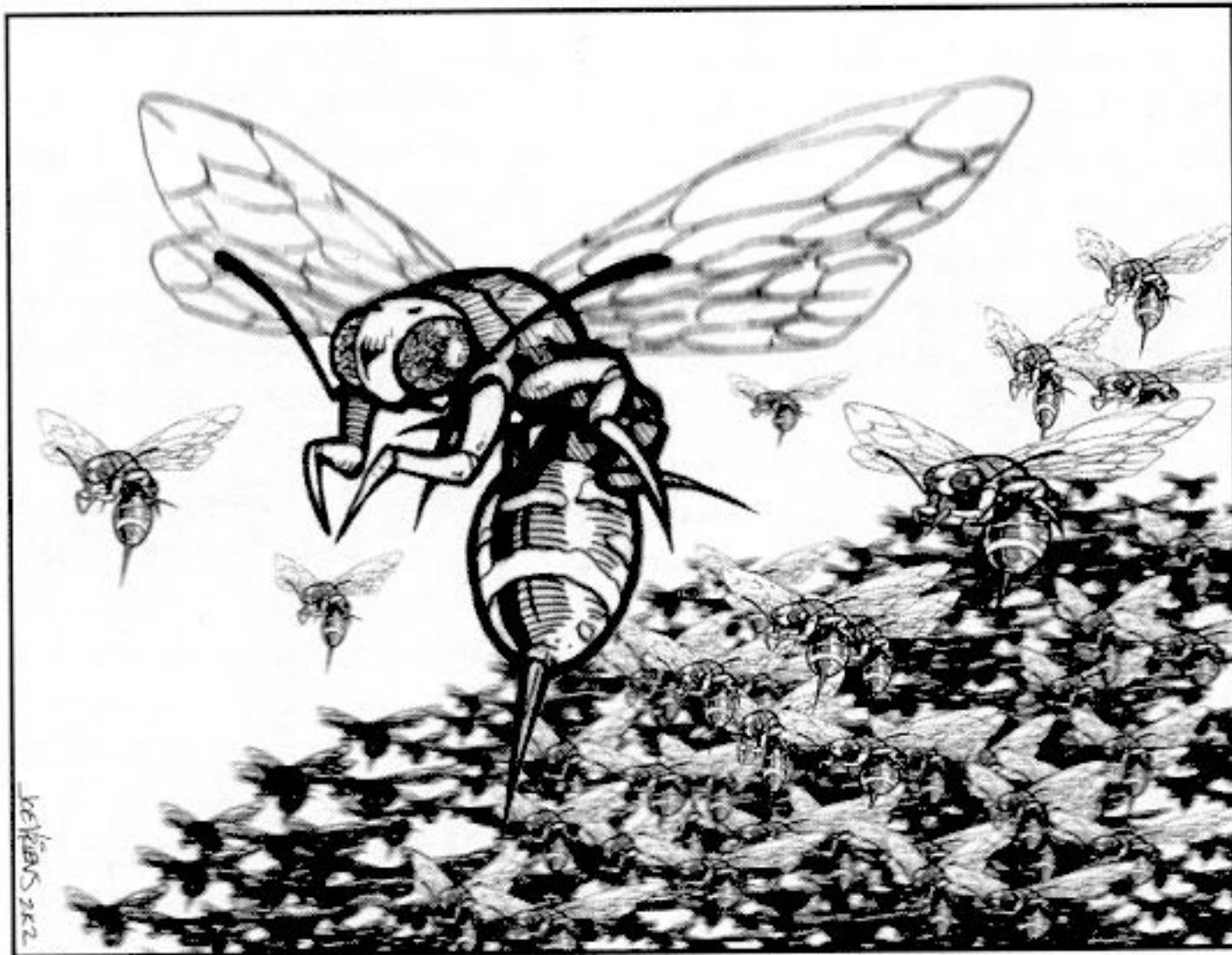
Such will be your fate if you do not heed the warning signs. Avoid strange villages where the inhabitants hum and act confused. Be alert for all-female leadership groups. Be wary of individuals who refuse to make eye contact or communicate. Report any heart-wasp sightings to your hetman. Stay always

vigilant; it is a dangerous world. Only those who are alert, brave and disciplined can hope to survive.

—From "Undeath of a Thousand Stings," an educational circular distributed by Seventh Legion military advisors to Scavenger Lands populations.

The insect swarms known as heart wasps are one of the great plagues of the Eastern woods. Like the ichneumon hunters, they are effectively parasites, using humans as egg cases for their young. Unlike the ichneumon, however, the rest of the heart wasp swarm — queen, drone, worker and warrior — also use humans as shelter and food. They do so by

colonizing the body, seizing control of an individual's Essence flow and bending it to their will. A single wasp isn't enough to dominate an adult human. Unfortunately, the wasps never infest a person singly. They invade the body in droves, forcing their way into any of the Nine Gates of the Flesh — or making new orifices of their own. Multiple round scars and sores signal a heart wasp infestation to



the experienced onlooker, as does a much-feared rippling of the skin caused by wasps moving about inside the body. Some infestations are reported to have started via sexual intercourse, but most are simply overwhelming invasions.

Once the heart wasps take control of a human, they send it about its regular business. The bugs appear to be mildly empathic: Worker wasps seek out farmers, artisans and laborers; warrior wasps, the biggest and strongest members of the community; drones, the shiftless and good-for-nothing; and queens seek out the most prominent females. Some survivors of wasp attacks claim that the swarms infest children as well, as the queens apparently transfer larvae to child hosts via hideous parodies of kisses.

The wasps' pretense at ordinary rural life is a deception designed to keep visitors at ease long enough to infest them. Urban environments tend to be more than their limited intelligence can handle, and wasp swarms infiltrating large towns and cities are usually detected and burned out in short order. However, if the swarm isn't caught in time, it will completely infest a village within a day. A given community can sustain a swarm for many weeks: wasp-infected humans continue to eat, and the wasps appear to be able to share in the energy such meals produce. But a village's resources will eventually run out, the surrounding countryside will only





provide so much sustenance, and a young queen will grow to maturity and desire to establish her own swarm. The wasps will decamp, leaving their hosts by chewing an exit out through the chest. It is this wound over the heart that gives these hideous beasts their name. Only the queens, both young and old, maintain their host bodies until the bitter end: They will often make their way afoot to their new community, leaving the original village behind, littered with desiccated corpses.

Regular combat is of little use against heart wasps. They are too small, too quick and too numerous to defeat with swords and spears. Eastern villagers have developed a number of defenses against heart wasp infestation. Travelers with visible sores are turned (or sometimes beaten) away at the town's edge. Fire can burn a host clean — this is a drastic measure, used as a last-resort defense. Villagers are more likely to use smoke: It affects heart wasps much as it does regular insects, slowing them down or driving them from a host. These insects also avoid water, and many an Easterner has survived a swarm attack by seeking refuge in a pond or stream. Certain rare herbs are repellent to heart wasps and, thus, much sought after by villages. Essence-users attacked by heart wasps have successfully warded off wasp attacks via the judicious use of area-damage sorcery. There have even been reports that the Zenith anima flare will burn the wasps out of a host, disintegrating them and leaving the host in relatively good condition, provided that the infestation is caught early.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Endurance 1, Melee 2, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Punch: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4

Kick: Speed 2 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3

Axe: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 8L Defense 4

Knife: Speed 8 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 2

Dodge Pool: 3 **Soak:** 0L/2B (None)

Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: The statistics provided above are for a warrior-infested human (i.e., the local blacksmith or town bully). Queens, drones and workers will have slightly different abilities and attack forms, often as per the original human host. However, no matter which form of heart wasp infests it, every infested human will take a licking and keep on ticking, hence the high number of health levels.

Wasps who infest Essence-users have limited access to the host's mystical powers: Instinctual abilities such as anima powers and Charms are within their grasp, but their use of such powers should reflect the wasps' rather dim consciousness. Sorcery is beyond their ken.

HEART-WASP INFESTATION

Symptoms: Heart-wasp infestations resemble a disease in terms of the game mechanics used to resolve their effects (see pp. 319-321 of the main *Exalted* rulebook for general guidelines on handling diseases). As described above, an infestation's symptoms include a humming originating deep within the body, an eerie rippling effect located just beneath the skin, and sores or pox marks generally located on or near the cheek bones (wasp hosts can use clothing to conceal most other entry wounds).

Duration: The duration of the infestation can last for several months, depending on how healthy and large the host is in the first place. Hosts with the ability to use and channel Essence can sustain an infestation of wasps for much longer than ordinary humans.

Vector: Vectors have been discussed in the main entry. Heart-wasp infestation is spread by the attacks of heart-wasp swarms and the wasps physically entering the host and assuming control of her body.

Treatment: Treatment is discussed in the main entry and is difficult, usually involving smoking or burning the victim or dosing them with poison, all in an effort to drive out the wasps. Treatment can only successfully be administered during the first several hours after infestation.

It should be noted that any healer treating an infested individual had best take precautions to avoid having a swarm attack him. Heart wasps driven from a host body will often be desperate and ready to seek out the nearest available shelter. For this reason, Eastern physicians often dose themselves with wasp-repelling or —poisoning herbs prior to using these same herbs on their patients. Zenith Caste Solars may use their animas to cleanse one victim per mote spent (they must touch the victim barehanded). Other Exalted may use magic to heal the infestation as if it were a normal illness. Wasp infestations have the following disease statistics:

Virulence: 5*

Untreated Morbidity: 5

Treated Morbidity: 4

Difficulty of Treatment: 4

* A wasp infestation is under the control of the swarm: A given group of wasps can choose whether or not to infect a host (e.g., a dull-witted farmer attacked by warrior-hosts will likely be restrained until a worker-host can be found to infest him). "Death" from a heart wasp infestation means that a host is completely under the swarm's control. Her mind has been subsumed by the hive consciousness of the swarm, and nothing short of magical intervention (such as the aforementioned Zenith anima flare) can restore her to herself.

HELGRIFNIR, THE FEN-HOUND

Description: Deep within the swamps of the East there lurks a hound larger than the healthiest bull, which preys on the living and the dead alike. Helgrifnir is said to have been the favored pet of a long dead Solar Exalted general, but the beast was wounded protecting his master and left to die. Helgrifnir crawled away into the swamps that surround Sijan and what would one day become the Black Chase to nurse his wounds. Now, he claims the lands between Sijan and Rubylak as his hunting grounds and is possibly the most fearsome thing to be found there.

Helgrifnir may have been a normal hound once, before coming under the

der. His head is disproportionately large compared to the rest of his body, and he can fit a person within his mouth easily. His jaws are lined with three rows of chipped and broken teeth. He has two baleful green eyes that glow unnaturally in dim light and shine at night. He is covered with peat moss, and the beast has

a smell that is nearly undistinguishable from the rot of the swamp. Only when he opens his mouth to howl, a sound like a hundred graves opening at once, does one smell anything different —

Helgrifnir's breath is sickly sweet, filled with the stench of gangrene and leprous infection. He moves silently and swiftly through the swamps and forests and is not hindered at all by deep mud or undergrowth.

Helgrifnir is a cunning and deadly



care of his Solar master. The Charms the general used on the dog made

him grow to an unusual size and granted him an endless life. Helgrifnir became the perfect companion for his master, battle hardened in countless fights and skirmishes. After the massacre of the Solars, few were left who remembered Helgrifnir and he was left to his fate. Loneliness and pain twisted Helgrifnir into the monster he is today, though his true evil came only after the shadowland opened up near his hunting grounds. There, Helgrifnir developed a taste for the flesh of the dead, and now, he preys not only on the living, but also on the undead minions of the Deathlords.

Helgrifnir appears as a huge, bristle-haired dog about five yards long and two yards high at the shoul-

der. His head is disproportionately large compared to the rest of his body, and he can fit a person within his mouth easily. His jaws are lined with three rows of chipped and broken teeth. He has two baleful green eyes that glow unnaturally in dim light and shine at night. He is covered with peat moss, and the beast has a smell that is nearly undistinguishable from the rot of the swamp. Only when he opens his mouth to howl, a sound like a hundred graves opening at once, does one smell anything different — Helgrifnir's breath is sickly sweet, filled with the stench of gangrene and leprous infection. He moves silently and swiftly through the swamps and forests and is not hindered at all by deep mud or undergrowth. Helgrifnir is a cunning and deadly hunter, though he cannot speak, nor can he reason. He lives only to hunt, and thousands of years of practice have made him the best there is at what he does. Few dare to travel alone in the swamps, even the highest-ranking minions of the Deathlords. Helgrifnir may track his prey for days before launching any type of attack. His favorite method is to dig pits within the swamp and to cover them with swamp weeds and peat moss. Victims who fall in are then covered by the damp weeds and muck and slowly drown. Helgrifnir will check on them from time to time, waiting for them to die and decompose. Time has taught Helgrifnir patience more than anything, and to him, the sweet taste of rotting flesh is worth the wait.

Helgrifnir is more likely to openly attack undead targets than living ones, solely because the nonliving are already rotting and immediately delectable to him. He rarely attacks groups of more than five living people and

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prefers solitary quarry. He will wait until the fen mist is thickest and dankest, and then, he will pick off the weakest person in a traveling party while it struggles through the worst portions of the swamp. Then, he will crunch down on his prey's legs carefully, to break them so that the victim cannot escape, and carry that person off to a prepared spot, such as a hole or a fallen tree, and stick her in it. A victim may live for days like this, with Helgrifnir checking on her from time to time to see how she is progressing. Helgrifnir may have several such human victims scattered about the swamp, more or less near dying, at any given time, as well as deer or other large prey he might have decided to feast upon.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 5 (Bite +5, Claw +3), Dodge 5, Endurance 5, Presence 3, Stealth 5, Survival 5 (Track By Scent +2)

Base Initiative: 12

Attack:

Bite: Speed 14 Accuracy 18 Damage 23L* Defense 9

Claw: Speed 10 Accuracy 12 Damage 15L* Defense 6

Body Slam: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 15B Defense 4

* These attacks affect dematerialized spirit beings as if they were materialized.

Dodge Pool: 12 **Soak:** 15L/17B (Hide, plus thick fur/swamp weeds/peat moss, 13L/12B)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 5

Other Notes: Helgrifnir will always flee before reaching the first -4 health level.

Helgrifnir suffers no penalties from conditions that inhibit mobility, such as deep water or mud. He also suffers no visibility penalties due to non-magical weather, such as fog. Please refer to pages 236-238 of **Exalted** for information on these conditions.

Helgrifnir devours not only the flesh of his victims, but their souls as well. Spirits and ghosts killed and devoured by Helgrifnir are dead forever, humans slain by him will not be reincarnated, and his victims never leave behind ghosts. The Essence of Exaltation is unaffected by Helgrifnir's appetites, and the power of Celestial Exalted slain by the hound will manifest again normally.

INK MONKEY

Description: These small monkeys are barely a foot tall. They have long, dark-red, silky fur but no tails. Their eyes are as black as ebony and glitter maliciously if the monkey believes it is unobserved by humans. Ink monkeys are frisky creatures, and they enjoy scampering up high trees or jumping between thin branches. While they can live off the fruits of the forest or off of small creatures such as mice or squirrels or little snakes, the monkeys' favorite food is the bones of sorcerers, whether old or fresh. Ink monkeys dwell in swarms of extended families; from time to time, a swarm grows too large to sustain itself on the local available food and splits into two or three groups. Swarms often haunt the ruins of ancient cities or the tombs of long-dead sorcerers, in the hopes of finding more of the bones that they so enjoy devouring.

Ink monkeys were first bred by Borighana, a Twilight Exalted who used to enjoy watching them play while he meditated. However, they took to drinking the ink he used to inscribe spells and enchantments with from his inkwell (crafted from orichalcum, lost with his death and never yet recovered). With the ink, they also drank magic, and they gained a malicious intelligence, a skill for crafting illusions and a taste for the bones of sorcerers. When Borighana was absent from his Manse in the East for several years, the creatures fled into the forests and began to prey on the local tribes. As they are uninterested in normal human beings (or, at least, in humans who do not obviously display signs of supernatural power), many of the local tribes view the ink monkeys as a form of divine punishment inflicted on priests or sorcerers who have offended the local gods. Naturally, local sorcerers disagree.

Ink monkeys are not stupid and would not attack a person who clearly outmatched them (such as an Exalt in full anima banner). Their preferred victims are petty magicians, shamans or similarly low-powered wielders of enchantment. The monkeys like to separate a target from the rest of his group by creating an illusion of an elephant

or a dragon or some similar large and dangerous creature, in order to scatter the group. If the sorcerer is credulous, however, the monkeys may attempt to lure him away from the group by acting like innocent but tame creatures, winning his confidence by their apparent docility. When the target is alone, they attack in a screaming, chittering swarm, clawing at their victim and biting at his eyes, face, neck and genitals. The ink monkeys are aware that sorcerers usually require time and concentration to cast spells, and their tactics focus on not giving the sorcerer the leeway to defend himself or to attack them. Once they have killed a victim, the monkeys promptly tear the flesh apart in order

to get at the bones, and then, the creatures flee into the night, carrying the bloody bones with them and leaving behind a ragged pile of flesh.

It is possible to tame ink monkeys if they are separated from their family while only a few days old — and indeed, some hunters and sorcerers have done so. However, they tend to grow malicious as they age, however docile and friendly their nature was when they were young. They dislike the rain, as it soaks through their fur easily, and are prone to pneumonia and other diseases of the lungs in cold climates such as the North. Their brains, when ground up with certain herbs, can be used to create salves which prevent inflammation of wounds and halt infection.



Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 5, Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Endurance 1, Larceny 2, Resistance 1, Stealth 4, Survival 2

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 4 Damage 1L Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 5 Soak: 0L/1B

Willpower: 2 Health Levels: -1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None

KOMODO RAT

Description: Massive scavengers and meat-eaters of the Eastern forests, komodo rats dwell in the far edges of the wilds, away from inhabited zones. They prefer areas with thick undergrowth and clearings where the sun's light can cut through the vegetation to warm the ground. They tend to live alone, in pairs or in small family groups.

When first encountered, these creatures are easy to mistake for crudely carved, mossy statues of some sort of ancient lizard. Low and flat to the ground and exceeding 10 feet in length, komodo rats are massively built. The rats have gray-green scaly hides that feature erratic patches of fur. They can often be found sunning themselves in clearings that cut through the vegetation of the dense forests where they make their homes. As a result, many an inexperienced hunter has mistaken the komodo rats for slow and lethargic prey, much to their later dismay. These meat-eaters can attack with incredible speed, and though they prefer hooved flesh, from deer or boar, they will happily devour any human (or Exalt) who ventures too near to them. Their massive bone-crushing jaws and heavy tails are not

these creatures' only weapons. Their jagged teeth are breeding grounds for all manner of disease. If potential prey survives the initial attack, they are almost certain to be infected by one or more virulent illnesses. Komodo rats are perfectly happy to eat dead, diseased or rotting flesh and are patient enough to wait for once-bitten prey to die. Komodo rats have never learned to hide food they do not finish, unlike other meat eaters. Their bodies filled with diseases inflicted by the great rodents, unfinished prey can often serve as bait for future meals.

Komodo rats are not lizards, but instead mammals. They are living artifacts, direct descendants of the gigantic proto-rodents that roamed the land when the world was young. Immature komodo rats are noncombatants, but their parents defend their young ferociously. In odd contrast with this behavior, young komodo rats are cannibalistic. Despite being born in litters of up to two dozen, typically only one will survive. The litter preys upon itself, and the weak or injured are eaten by the parents, so that only the strongest of the young survive.

In combat, komodo rats strike quickly and attempt to bite their victims. If possible, a rat will maintain a bite, keeping the prey in its crushing jaws until it stops

struggling. Every turn, the player of a victim trapped in a komodo rat's jaws must make a resisted difficulty 2 Strength + Athletics check against the komodo rat's opposed Strength + Athletics check (which is not difficulty 2). If pressed, the rat will strike opponents at its rear with its mighty tail.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Endurance 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Supernatural Powers: Diseased Bite, Immunity to Disease

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 6L + disease Defense 7

Tail Lash: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 10B Defense 8

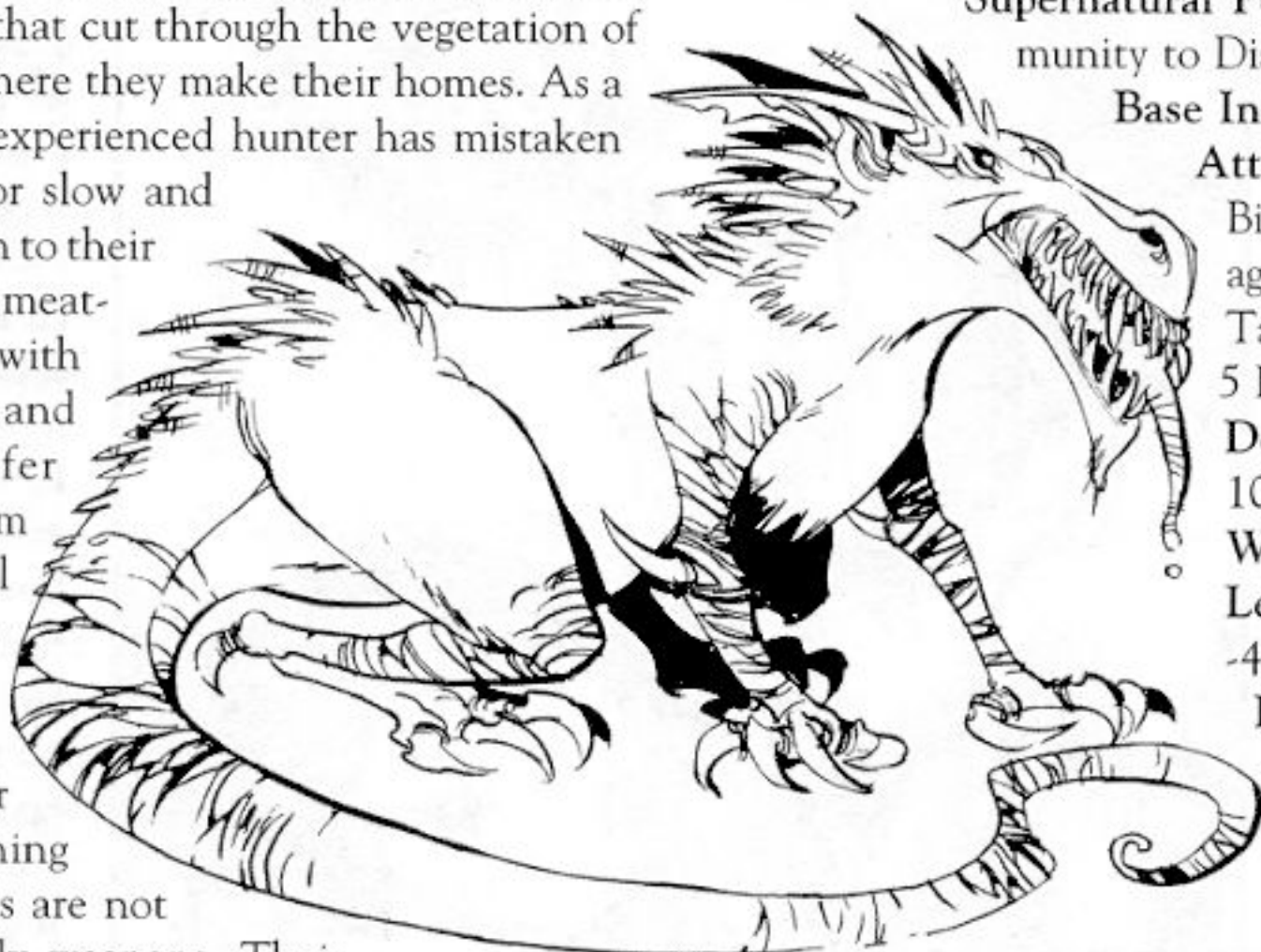
Dodge Pool: 7/3 Soak: 7L/10B (Tough hide, 4L/4B)

Willpower: 5 Health

Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None



DISEASED BITE

On any successful bite attack, whether or not damage is inflicted, there is a possibility that the victim is infected with a disease. However, the diseases the komodo rat carries in its system raises the difficulty of the roll to resist infection. The difficulty to resist infection with no damage is 3, while it is at least difficulty 5 to resist infection if the rat does damage. These diseases are mortal, and Exalted resist them just as if they were any other illness.

IMMUNITY TO DISEASE

Komodo rats have a natural immunity to most diseases. The difficulty of any virulence, untreated morbidity and treated morbidity Stamina + Resistance rolls for any disease the rats are exposed to are reduced by 3. If any difficulty is reduced below 1, success is automatic.

NO KEY, THE MUSHROOM KING

Description: There once was an Eastern kingdom founded in a deep valley, named the Valley of the Golden Needles for the way sun beams speared through the mountain peaks to fall across the valley within. The king there was a wealthy and wise man. He was called No Key because he kept his valley so prosperous that he did not need to lock any part of his castle. He had many allies — mortal, Exalted and even little god. One day, while out hunting, he chanced upon a battle between the river god Lord of Nine Falls and the demon Octavian. King No Key gathered his hunting party about him and charged forward to join the battle with the demon. An offhand blow from the demon killed most of his men. The rest retreated in fear, watching as No Key and Lord of Nine Falls fought Octavian together.

No mortal may stand against a demon prince in battle and hope to survive, but even a mortal who is true of heart may strike a blow that shakes the heavens. So did King No Key raise his sword and thrust at Octavian, distracting him long enough for Lord of Nine Falls to

redouble his attack. Mighty spells were cast, and the Malfean prince was cast back into the living prison from whence he had escaped.

King No Key and his surviving retinue rode back to the Valley of Golden Needles. When the King arrived, he discovered that seven days had passed while he fought beside Lord of Nine Falls. His queen had waited for him

at the castle gates day and night, offering prayers for his safe return. No Key swept her up into his arms and carried her into the castle while he told her of his battle alongside the river god. Overjoyed, the queen declared a festival day to commemorate No Key's valor.

At the festival a year later, a lady of surpassing beauty arrived at the castle in the Valley of Golden Needles. She strode to the center of the courtyard under the bright noon sun in a dress of the

deepest blue, and with a hollow staff, she struck the ground seven times. From that spot, a fountain burst high into the air. She stood tall by the fountain, never speaking or moving until King No Key came to greet her. Then, she explained she was Watercress, the youngest daughter of Lord of Nine Falls. For the King's aid, Lord of Nine Falls decreed that No Key would guard his





daughter and protect her fountain. The fountain was to be a great boon to the world, with incredible healing properties and the ability to grant long life to mortals and Terrestrials alike. So long as No Key guarded the river god's daughter, she would share her healing powers with his people.

For 150 years, the King ruled his valley in unparalleled harmony. Visitors came from all over the world to receive the blessings of the river god's daughter and be healed. Exalted scholars came to study her techniques in hopes of adapting their own Charms to her level of efficacy. The King established a system by which no person who was willing to wait long enough would be denied access to at least a little of the water. Of course, it was not the water but the power of the river god's daughter that healed people. The water had no power beyond the palace and could not be taken away.

The King, though blessed with a queen of remarkable beauty and bravery, was said to have fallen in love with the river god's daughter. He spent at least part of every day with her. He held huge festivities in the palace so that she might mingle and be seen, so she would feel as at home in the Valley of Golden Needles as she did in her father's court.

To one of these occasions, a sorcerer came. He was curious to know of the power of the spring but fell madly in love with the vision of loveliness that was the river god's daughter. The sorcerer asked Watercress to marry him, but the hearts of spirits are not as the hearts of men or Exalted. Her life was bound to the fountain and to the task set before her by her father, so she refused him.

The sorcerer then asked the King to intercede on his behalf, offering great wealth and powerful magics in exchange. When No Key refused, the enraged sorcerer left the valley.

Years later, a horde of demons attacked the kingdom. The sorcerous siege lasted seven months, during which only the strength of the King and the magic of the fountain sustained the people against the horrors of the night. Each night, at dusk, the sorcerer would come and ask for the hand of the river god's daughter. Each night, he was refused. Finally, the horde was pushed back to the nether shadows and defeated.

Years passed, and the sorcerer arrived again and demanded that King No Key relent to allow Watercress to marry him. Again, he refused. The sorcerer laughed then, a sound that echoed across the valley and masked the cries of the earth as Octavian stepped once more from the green light of Malfeas into the Valley of Golden Needles. He strode through the valley, slaying man and beast before him. The armies of King No Key were as sand before a wave to the Living Tower. The people fell back to the palace and barred the gates against the demon, holding it with spell and steel until the King and

the river god's daughter together forged a weapon capable of casting Octavian back. During their battle, many more people of the valley were slain, including No Key's queen. The kingdom was devastated.

Decades passed, while the King rebuilt his kingdom, greater than before. He no longer hid his adoration for Watercress, and indeed, she cared for him like she did no other being. Then, the sorcerer arrived at the palace once again. In a quiet and almost humble voice, he asked once more that the river god's daughter marry him. He was refused once again. Then, the sorcerer uttered the Curse of Unyielding Mist, claiming that until he was wed to Watercress, the Valley of Golden Needles would never see the sun, taste fresh air or feel a warm day again.

The once prosperous kingdom slowly fell into decay from that point on. The entire valley, save for the central palace, was enshrouded in the mist. No Key's people emigrated or died off. The healing waters of the spring kept the mist at bay within the castle — and do so even today. Beyond the castle walls, though, the mist is ever abhorrent, even to those who have received the fount's boon.

Eventually, only No Key and Watercress were left. Maddened by the loss of his kingdom and loneliness, the King ranged through the mist with his great axe, Lentinus, guarding against the eventual return of the sorcerer. He subsists solely on the ministrations of the river god's daughter and the fount. Watercress' life force is bound to the fountain, and she has similarly bound No Key to herself. His eyes have grown milky and vacant. His skin crawls with hundreds of nameless fungi. He sees any characters that come there as allies to the sorcerer and always seeks to slay them. Those who know of him call him the Mushroom King now, for that is all he rules — the horrid fungi that live in the mist.

Characters may perform a rite of supplication to the river god's daughter in order to gain her favor and thereby prevent No Key from attacking them. This ritual is a simple one in which each character who wishes to partake of the fountain sacrifices something important to him or her.

The Mushroom King occasionally leaves the mist to wander the surrounding countryside, observing the people that live there and whispering to his fungal cloak. He has become protective of them, though he seems to know they are not his subjects. He has, in the past, both accosted and even killed townsfolk and rescued them from wild beast attacks or helped lost children find their way home.

Because the Valley of Golden Needles is a First Age kingdom, many First Age relics remain relatively unharmed by the mist's deleterious effects. This makes them prime targets for relic hunters and power mongers. Few have ever survived forays into the mist.

No Key rarely leaves the valley, for too long without the ministrations of the river god's daughter can result in his accelerated aging or death. However, several tales mention this shambling shell of a ruler following survivors out of the mist to slay them, and a few tell of him ranging through the nearby plains, silent and mad, peering into farmstead windows or frightening merchant travelers.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 8, Stamina 6, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 5, Endurance 2, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm, Forest-tongue) 2, Lore 3, Melee 5, Presence 5, Resistance 3, Stealth 5, Survival 3 (Tracking +2)

Base Initiative: 11

Attack:

Punch: Speed 10 Accuracy 11 Damage 6B Defense 8

Axe (Lentinus): Speed 12 Accuracy 16 Damage 14L Defense 5

Slime Spit: Speed 14 Accuracy 9 Damage 2A Defense 8

Dodge Pool: 13 **Soak:** 15L/18B (Fungal skin, 12L/12B)

Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 3

Other Notes: No Key's axe, Lentinus, is not made of a Magical Material but is as imperishable as they are and should be treated as if it were one of those materials. Anyone else trying to use Lentinus suffers a -2 die penalty from the strangeness of it. The axe has another ability in addition to its slaying power and its resistance to damage. If Lentinus strikes a god, elemental or demon, the axe can cause the spirit to dematerialize instantly. Make a willpower roll for the target with a difficulty equal to No Key's Essence Trait plus the number of damage successes. Success means the being may remain materialized. Failure means the being is instantly dematerialized as a reflexive action and must remain immaterial at least until the end of the scene. If the target is an elemental, it must pay the full Essence cost to dematerialize. However, if it does not have sufficient Essence to fuel the Dematerialize Charm, then all of its temporary Essence is expended and it remains materialized. A botch on the Willpower roll means the spirit must remain immaterial for the next lunar month (or until it

no longer has sufficient Essence to support its immaterial state, if an elemental). Lentinus may still strike dematerialized beings as if they were normal material beings. No Key can spit a vitriolic slime mold up to five yards away that deals aggravated damage and ignores armor. The King is not hampered at all by the mist's detrimental effects. The long centuries spent with the river god's daughter has changed him, so that he can see and hear perfectly well within the mists.

WATERCRESS AND THE FOUNTAIN

The healing properties of the water brought forth by the powers of Watercress are nothing short of miraculous. Those who know of the fountain will often pay any price and undertake any task to achieve its boon.

To gain Watercress' favor, a character must perform a ritual sacrifice. This sacrifice may be of physical wealth such as gold or treasure or of more ephemeral wealth such as a fond childhood memory or even a piece of his body. The ritual must be performed at sunrise or sunset, facing the fountain with the sun opposite the character. Whatever is being sacrificed is tossed into the fountain, either physically or symbolically — to sacrifice a memory something significant to that memory would be sacrificed. If Watercress accepts the sacrifice, she appears before the character and bestows a kiss upon his cheek. The character retains a blue mark shaped like lips on his cheek for a week and may move freely throughout the castle and receive boons from the river god's daughter. When the mark fades, the character must have left the mist, or No Key will begin to hunt him again.

The fount's waters can have one of three effects. A single sip will heal a character's Essence Trait in health levels each time one is taken but may do so no more than once per day. Alternatively, a sip will arrest the effects of a poison or disease or remove the effects of one year of aging. Three sips over three days will return a character to full health levels or cure any disease or poisoning, and for a year and a day, he is immune to all infection and all diseases weaker than the Great Contagion.



PANIC MONKEY

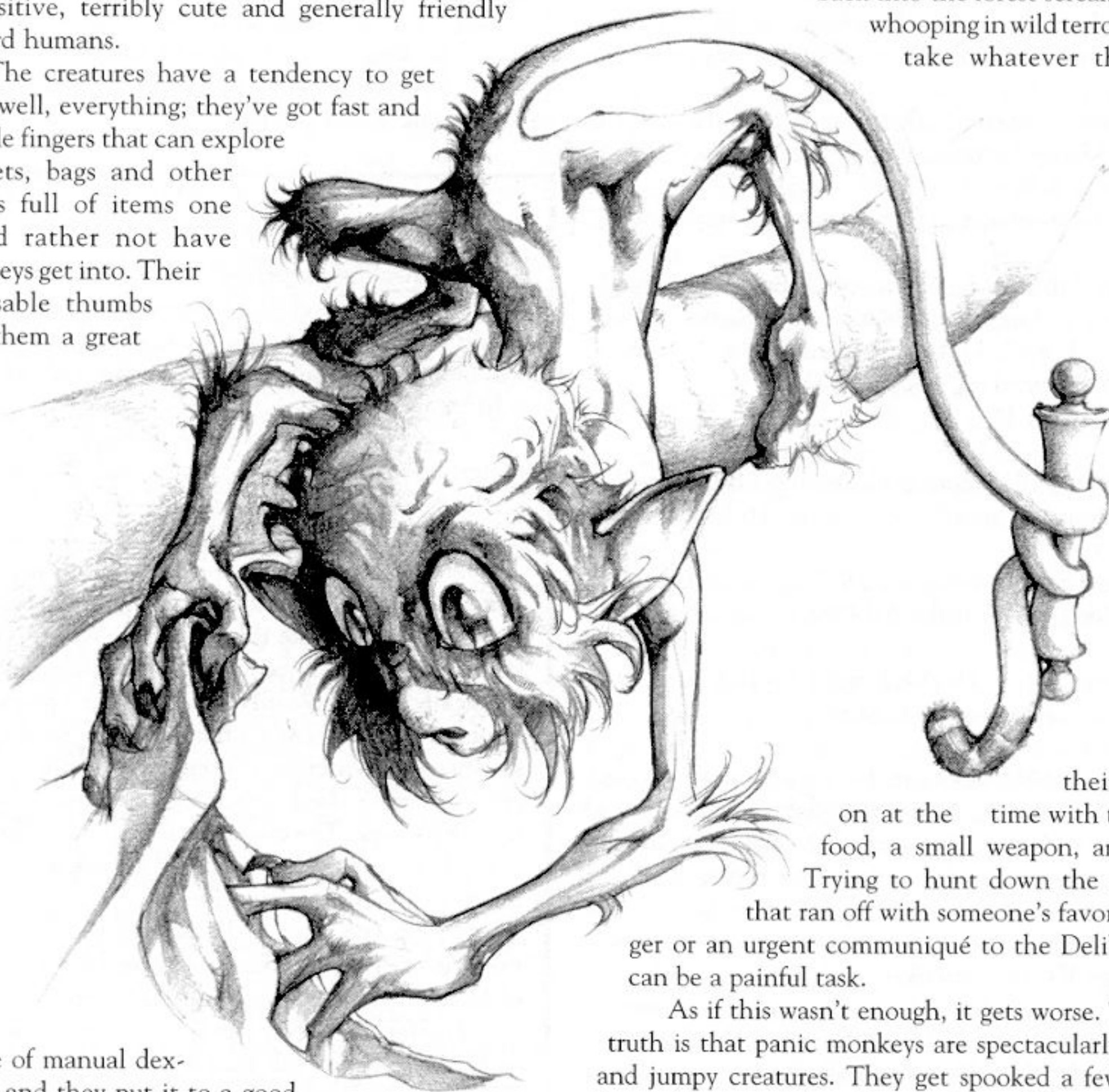
Description: In the Eastern forests, travelers often encounter small, monkeylike creatures with prehensile tails and opposable thumbs. They're a bit shy but very inquisitive, terribly cute and generally friendly toward humans.

The creatures have a tendency to get into, well, everything; they've got fast and nimble fingers that can explore pockets, bags and other places full of items one would rather not have monkeys get into. Their opposable thumbs give them a great

degree of manual dexterity, and they put it to a good use. What's more, they're very good at imitating humans' actions — the panic monkeys usually don't understand the results of what they do, but they can easily operate simple devices such as clasps, switches and levers if they see someone else doing it first or if they have done so before.

However, there is a reason why experienced travelers toss rocks at panic monkeys and bellow at the top of their lungs the moment they spot one. These creatures are easily spooked and can go from overpowering cuteness to raging, mindless panic filled with sharp teeth and claws in no time flat. Shouts, loud noises, fast and threatening movements, sudden flashes of light or anything at all can set them off. Once they get going, they can't be calmed down. A single panic monkey isn't much of a threat even to a mortal traveler, but as they always

travel in swarms of at least 20 and often more, the creatures can bite and rip even careless Exalts to death. Even if they don't happen to go through the travelers themselves, there's a good chance that when they dive back into the forest screaming and whooping in wild terror, they'll take whatever they had



their hands on at the time with them — food, a small weapon, anything. Trying to hunt down the monkey that ran off with someone's favorite dagger or an urgent communiqué to the Deliberative can be a painful task.

As if this wasn't enough, it gets worse. The sad truth is that panic monkeys are spectacularly stupid and jumpy creatures. They get spooked a few dozen times a day, more often than not by nothing at all, and don't really associate their frantic escape or the wounds they suffer during it with the incidents that happened while they were busy screaming and running. If they've been treated nicely in the past — fed, petted, played with or otherwise cared for — they come right back after they've calmed down, quite ready for more attention from the friendly humans. Needless to say, they are also equally ready to start screaming and tearing through things all over again. Wise travelers take this opportunity to take back what the monkeys took with them (supposing that it wasn't dropped somewhere in the woods) as this is a far more efficient way of regaining lost items than chasing the monkeys.

The easiest way to deal with these beasts is to scare them away as soon as they are sighted, before they decide

that they enjoy the travelers' company. Even then, the creatures may end up charging through the characters, but at least they won't be back. If this isn't done, it can be very hard to get rid of them without exterminating the entire swarm.

Panic monkeys have been kept as pets by some of the idle rich, who are always on the lookout for the exotic. In these instances, they are always caged to ensure that no one — including the panic monkeys themselves — gets hurt when something spooks the animal. Their cages must always be equipped with particularly good locks, as the dexterous creatures are quite capable of opening the locks of their cages themselves after witnessing someone else do it. Indeed, apart from their cuteness, their ability to mimic humans is the main reason why they are still sought after as pets, as their antics make them valued entertainers among certain of the leisured classes.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 1

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Brachiation +2), Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1

Base Initiative: 9

Attack:

Bite: Speed 9 Accuracy 7 Damage 1L

Claw: Speed 9 Accuracy 7 Damage 1L

Dodge Pool: 7 Soak: 0L/2B (None)

Willpower: 1 Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: While individual panic monkeys are relatively puny opponents and are almost always treated as extras, a swarm of them can be deadly. Being quick and ambidextrous creatures, panic monkeys may perform two actions per turn without splitting their dice pool. As any successful attack they make still has a chance of doing at least one level of damage, regardless of the target's soak score, they can be effective opponents simply because of their great numbers.

PANIC MONKEY SWARM EFFECTS

A swarm of panic monkeys is extremely distracting — even a seasoned warrior may have a great deal of trouble understanding what's going on when surrounded by dozens of small creatures that scream so loud it hurts. For every five panic monkeys in a swarm, decrease the base initiative of the characters caught in the swarm by two. Naturally, this doesn't apply to characters who are, for example, down the path with a bow, well out of the panic monkeys' way. Any character at least 20 yards away from the nearest panic monkey is considered to be unaffected.

Characters who haven't encountered panic monkeys before are always considered to be ambushed (see *Exalted*, p. 238) when the swarm bolts, surprised as they are by the panic monkeys' sudden change of demeanor. Players roll as normal to see if their characters are able to defend themselves.

Characters who possess Charms such as Surprise Anticipation Method or similar forms of battle prescience are immune to these effects. Also, constructs or other inhuman beings are not likely to panic, though they may still be injured.



PINEY

Description: Creation has many strange inhabitants and many unusual creatures, but perhaps none so strange as the pineys. These creatures appear human, of average height and build, but their skin seems a dull greenish-brown and bristly like a boar. Upon closer inspection, one discovers the pineys' skin is not actually flesh, but long pine needles, just like those of the pine tree (hence the race's name). This is not a costume — pineys are, in fact, sentient plants and grow pine needles as an outer shell. They can use these needles for protection and even for attack, firing one or more of their needles at aggressors.

The truly strange thing about pineys is that the needles make up most of their being — at the center, they are only a head and a narrow little body, perhaps three feet high. The needles are more than mere appendages, for the pineys do not hold their intelligence in their brain, but instead, distribute it all across their bodies, and each needle contains a small portion of the being's consciousness and intellect. Because of this fact, every time a piney shoots a needle, it becomes a little smaller and a little dumber. The needles grow back with time, but slowly. If attacked, a piney could lose as much as a foot of height in a matter of minutes and could go from average human intelligence to the brainpower of a rat. Therefore, pineys are very careful with their needles and don't use them unless absolutely necessary.

Pineys live in small communities deep within the forests, well away from the settlements of man. They live on sunlight and water, the same as most other plants, so there's no need to hunt or make much shelter. Most pineys spend their time conversing, sleeping, raising families and carving deadwood into various weapons, tools and sculptures. Their society is a peaceful one, and pineys only become violent when they are attacked or when something threatens their community. Few predators bother pineys, for they are made of vegetable matter, not meat. They fear only parasitic infestation and the depredations of large herbivores; even the latter are not much of a problem.

A deneedled piney resembles an elongated spider monkey, having a long narrow body with long spindly arms and legs, but the head is human-like and only a little smaller than normal. Regrowth of all its needles takes four months. It begins as a layer of prickly fuzz over the entire body and head and then grows into individual needles. Pineys do shed their needles to grow new ones, a handful at a time, and so, most of them have patches of dull brown mixed with vivid green and the more normal greenish-brown.

The statistics below are for a mature piney at full strength. For every 10 needle attacks, reduce all Attributes by 1 and subtract two health levels.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Archery 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Craft (Carving) 2, Dodge 3, Linguistics (Native: Piney; Forest-tongue, Riverspeak) 2, Melee 3, Socialize 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Thrown 3

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Punch: Speed 4 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B
Defense 4

Spear: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 3L
Defense 4

Sword: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 4L
Defense 5

Needle: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 5L
(Rate 3, Range 15)

Bow: Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L
(Rate 2, Range 150)

Dodge Pool: 5/2 Soak: 6L/10B
(Needles and bark, 6L/6B)

Willpower: 6 Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: Most hunters and wilderness travelers have heard of the pineys, and many have met them. The pineys are friendly unless threatened, and while they don't seek out human company, they won't run from strangers either. Pineys are happy to give or trade their carvings to anyone who likes them, and the creatures make excellent forest guides and scouts.

Rumors claim that the pineys can meld with one another, becoming larger and smarter than any normal person. These rumors are true — bonded pineys (a couple and any children) can combine for up to two hours. During that time, the piney's size doubles, and the creature's Strength, Stamina, Perception, Intelligence and Wits are all equal to (the highest such Attribute of any of the joined individuals + 3). Some say all pineys are part of the same primal forest creature, a mammoth and powerful tree-man that can draw itself back together in time of great need, but no one has ever seen such an event, so it may simply be a myth.

Pineys are particularly vulnerable to fire, as are most plants. Fire-based attacks do double the normal damage, and fire can spread through an entire piney village in a matter of minutes if the forest hasn't gotten any rain in the last day or two. Weapons made by the pineys are carved from hard woods and use vines for any cords or strings. These weapons are as strong as metal, and do the same damage, but they don't rust or tarnish. Fire will destroy them, but they resist cold damage and are not harmed by immersion in water.



THE REDWOOD MANTIS

Description: Those who travel far to the east of the Kingdom of Halta talk of trees that move — not merely branches swaying, but actual tree trunks that shift position as travelers pass by. This is not a mere story or the product of a worried imagination.

The Redwood Mantis is a behemoth, a holdover from the ancient days when the Primordials walked the earth and created beings of vast size and power. After the Primordials were slain, the Mantis lingered still, deep within its beloved forest. It remains there today.

The Redwood Mantis appears as a praying mantis, but one whose limbs are carved from wood and whose body is leafed like a tree. The difference between the Redwood Mantis and other insects is size, for the Redwood Mantis exists on such an enormous scale that its legs rival redwood trees for thickness as well as appearance. The beast's name was based upon that similarity. When it stands in its forest, the Redwood Mantis' legs are indistinguishable from the trees around it, its body and head hidden among the highest foliage. The

Mantis spends most of its time lost in thought and in silent appreciation of its surroundings. But every so often, usually when it's hungry, the Mantis stirs. The Mantis only strikes when a group passes near one of its legs. It feels the vibrations in the forest floor and peers down to locate the creatures in question. If they are sufficient in size and number, it attacks, uprooting its leg and sweeping the victims to the ground, stunning them. Then, its massive head lowers and swallows the prey whole, lifting back into the sky so quickly an observer would swear he had imagined the entire event.

Some behemoths are vicious, but the Redwood Mantis is not among them. It attacks only to eat or to defend its territory — and the latter only if it perceives something as a threat. Otherwise, it stands still and invisible, thinking its deep thoughts and half-asleep from the warm sun on its back and the brush of treetops against its belly.

If someone were to anger the Mantis, it would uproot all of its legs to attack, and would knock down trees to pin the intruders into a small area, so that it could stomp them flat and then swallow them. Fire, great expenditures of Essence and attacking one of its legs are the only things likely to draw the Mantis' full attention and ire. Thus far,

the Mantis has not communicated with anyone, and it may be incapable of doing so.

Attributes: Strength 19, Dexterity 3, Stamina 21, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 8, Perception 3, Intelligence 6, Wits 1

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 4, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 1, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Lore 4, Occult 3, Stealth 2, Survival 4

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 10 Damage 29L Defense 7

Leg: Speed 9 Accuracy 10 Damage 17L Defense 8

Dodge Pool: 7 Soak: 10L/12B (Tough hide, 6L/8B)

Willpower: 10



Health Levels (per leg): -0x2/-1x5/-2x6/-4/Incap

Health Levels (body): -0x8/-1x18/-2x18/-4x14/Incap*

* As a behemoth, it is likely the Redwood Mantis cannot die without meeting certain specific conditions set by the Storyteller.

Essence: 8

Other Notes: The skin of the Redwood Mantis can be treated and cured like leather, to produce armor of unusual strength (+2 to armor bonus). Doing so requires skinning a large section of leg, however, and the Redwood Mantis is not likely to stand still for such treatment. Once removed, the skin must be treated as thick leather and, simultaneously, as bark, and it requires cleaning, soaking and drying before it can be worked. The Redwood Mantis' mandibles can be shaped into spears or swords, which carry an additional +1 to accuracy and do an additional +2 damage. Acquiring a mandible is even more difficult, however, and requires luring the creature into a full attack, so that the head descends for a bite attack, and then severing one of the mandibles without being severed in turn. This is a difficulty 4 attack that must do at least 18L damage including extra successes.

STRANGLER'S SERPENT

Description: The so-called strangler's serpent is not a serpent at all, but a lizard, possessed of a muscular, sinuous body, a long, powerful tail and slender digits on each of its four feet. Each "finger" measures several inches in length, and they can wrap around objects as large as a strong man's throat. A strangler's serpent is typically four to six feet in length, with a red pebbly hide marked with black patterns. In spite of the murderous deeds that man puts the strangler's serpent to, it actually subsists on insects in the wild and finds meat impossible to digest. Although unintelligent, some quirk of the strangler's serpent's vocal cords allow it to imitate a word or two of human language in a raspy voice, a skill that some enterprising trainers have encouraged.

In the wild, the long fingers of the strangler's serpent are used to grip the limbs of the thick cypresses of the Southeastern swamps where they nest. The local tribes train the serpents to fight one another for sport, as the barbarians find it entertaining to watch the lizards rise up on their hind legs and stagger drunkenly toward one another, wrestling until one of them expires. A cutthroat running from the law in the swamps saw other potential in the lizards, and after buying a few from the locals, he began to train them to attack humans. Once he was successful, he began

using them to waylay travelers in the region. He saw frequent success with his cadre of trained killers, but eventually, his luck ran out when he tried to steal from bigger targets. An attack with the strangler's serpents on a Guild convoy left the would-be entrepreneur dead and the Guild in possession of a new species to sell.

Now, the use of strangler's serpents as trained killers has spread, and they've grown so popular that the population in the wild is beginning to be depleted by

Guild safaris. Typically, an assassin trains the animal to attack a target based on its scent, usually through a purloined piece of clothing. The strangler's serpent is then smuggled into a bedroom or bath belonging to the victim, where it tries to find some nook or hole to rest in while it waits for its target. When the victim enters the room and is finally at ease, the lizard strikes. The powerful tail of the creatures wrap around the torso of the prey, squeezing the air out of the target's chest, while the sinuous forefingers reach around the victim's neck and grip with extraordinary strength. The dexterity of these beasts is such that they will use the digits on their hind paws to restrain hands or arms during a particularly violent struggle. After it is finished killing its victim, the strangler's serpent drops to the ground,

where its low profile allows it to waddle toward a window or doorway and slip away unnoticed.

Because of their utility and the prodigious strength found in their small forms, the strangler's



serpent has seen use in the Lap and in Chiaroscuro, in the struggles for the Scarlet Throne and as far away as Nexus.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 3 (Strangle +3), Dodge 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3 (Track by Scent +2)

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 1L Defense 1

Strangle: Speed 6 Accuracy 9 Damage Clinch Defense 9

Dodge Pool: 4 Soak: 4B/2L (Hide, 1B/1L)

Willpower: 2 Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/

Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None

TREE-SINGER

Description: The forests of the East are beautiful and majestic, and travelers often remark upon the way light filters softly down through the layers of leaves to create shifting patterns of brightness and shadow and on how the swaying of the branches sounds almost like a distant symphony, with half-heard music that soothes the mind and relaxes the body. Tree-singers are the embodiment of those elements, the light and sound of the forest coalesced into a single creature. This is not to say that tree-singers are spirits or elementals, but only that they are elementally influenced creatures who exist primarily to enhance the beauty and splendor of the forests.

Tree-singers are similar to monkeys in build, though their limbs are far too long for their bodies and their arms and legs are jointless, more like tails with hands at the ends. Thick fur covers their entire body, so white as to be almost silvery, and they shimmer in even the dimmest light.

These creatures live in small packs, nestled high among the trees. When people or animals pass beneath, the tree-singers swing into action. They dangle from vines and branches, 40 feet or more above the ground, and their coats catch the light, shimmering and adding another layer to the filtered light of the forest. This dazzling effect can hypnotize viewers into immobility. And then, the creatures open their small mouths — and sing.

Their songs have no words, only a melody, and they are less structured songs than rhythms of tone and pitch, but the result is breathtaking. All of the tree-singers' limbs are clutching vines or branches, and as they sing, their hands and feet and tails vibrate to the song, shaking the trees and creating a rustle of accompaniment. Each song is unique and beautiful, so much so that listeners are frequently transfixed, unable to move.

And the tree-singers choose that moment to strike. They swing lower and lower while they sing, until finally their tails wrap around their victims' throats and squeeze, choking the still-frozen prey to death. Then, when every audience member has either died or escaped, the tree-singers feed. Their small mouths have razor-sharp teeth that tear into flesh, and after eating their fill, the creatures toss the bodies against the base of their trees, to decompose and nourish the plants as well. The pile of bones at the base of the trees does indicate the presence of a predator. Unfortunately, most people don't see the bones — or realize that the singers might be responsible for them — until it's too late. Animals are more sensitive, of course, and usually avoid the tree-singers, though sometimes a lone animal will wander too close and be caught.

Tree-singers are not particularly intelligent, but they are smart enough to know when they are outnumbered. They will still sing in such situations, but they won't lower themselves

to the attack — instead, they'll amaze the audience with their song and then stop, hoping that most will leave but a handful will linger to catch the last few notes. If attacked themselves, tree-singers swing back up among the branches, hiding as best they can amidst the leaves and positioning themselves near

gaps so patches of sunlight help to disguise their own bright fur. Most savants believe these beasts were created during the First Age to protect gamelands from poachers and to police parklands for trespassers but managed to survive and breed in the wild following the Great Contagion.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Performance 5 (Singing +1), Presence 4, Stealth 3, Survival 3

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 2L

Tail: Speed 6 Accuracy 3 Damage 1L

Paralytic Song: Wits roll, difficulty 7 or one's character is paralyzed for three turns.*

* Against targets with an Essence higher than 1, failure causes only a -2 die penalty for three turns.

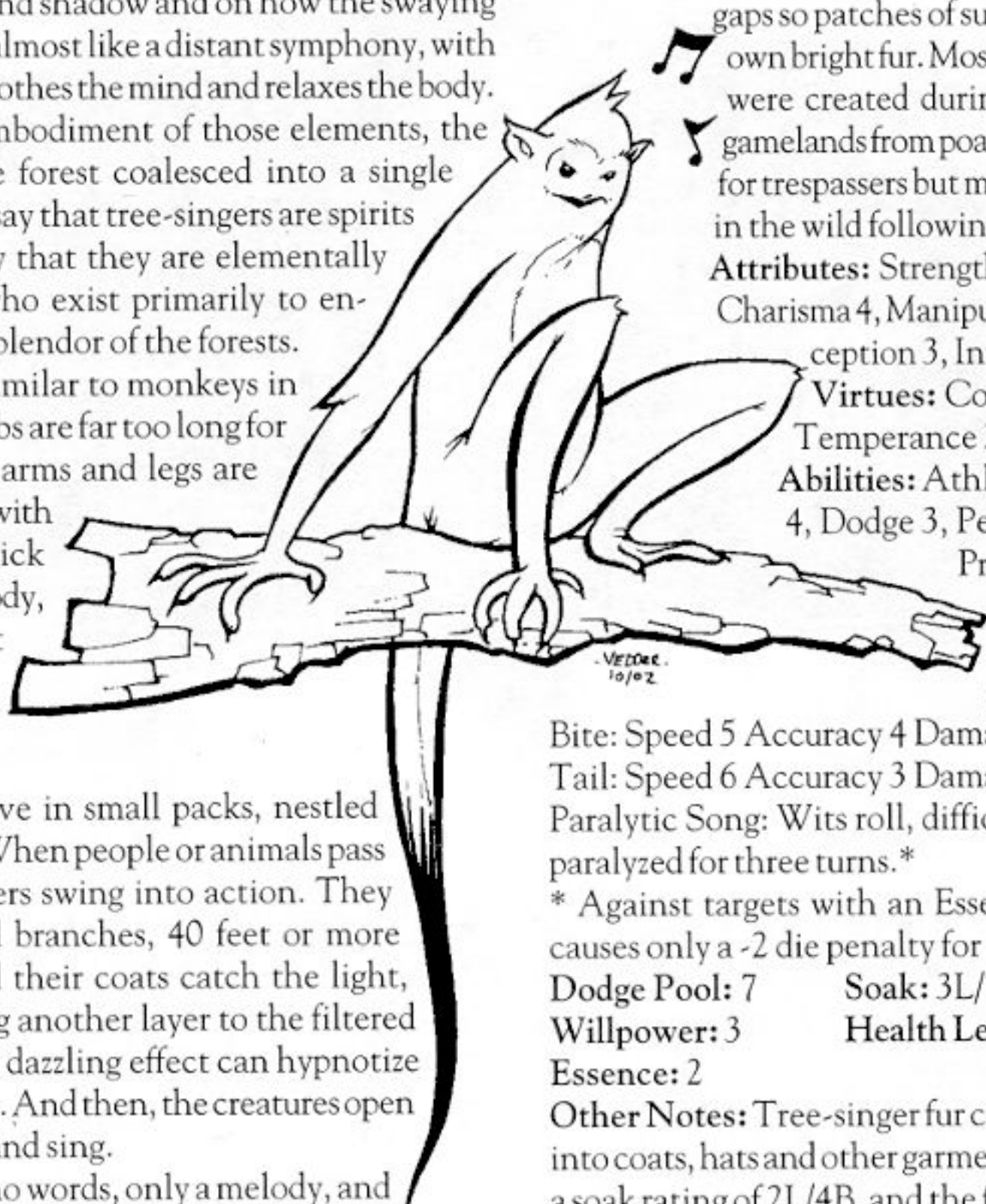
Dodge Pool: 7 Soak: 3L/7B (Tough fur, 2L/4B)

Willpower: 3 Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: Tree-singer fur can be treated and fashioned into coats, hats and other garments. The thick skin provides a soak rating of 2L/4B, and the fur itself produces a dazzling effect, which can blind people in moderate to bright light. It does cause a -2 to any Stealth rolls, however, as the scintillating fur attracts attention. A jacket made of tree-singer fur has a Mobility Penalty of -1 and a Fatigue value of 2.

In many parts of the East, the tree-singers are regarded as nature spirits rather than physical creatures. People claim that the forest forms a vast cathedral, filled with majesty and beauty and that the tree-singers are its voice, filling the woods with their melody and enhancing the peace and serenity of the entire area. According to these people, tree-singers are not dangerous in the least, unless you include the risk of standing forever, captivated by their song. They say the creatures have no physical form at all, but are composed entirely of light and sound and survive on sunlight and rain and the strength of the forest. These worshipers maintain a respectful distance from the tree-singers, however, and thus are never close enough to risk themselves. At the same time, they always know the location of any nearby tree-singer groves and the easiest path to and from those spots, which makes the worshipers useful forest guides. They will take offense at anyone who enters into a grove itself, however, and may even become violent if their guardian spirits are disturbed.





CHAPTER THREE

THE SOUTH

Abacasteri • Ash Devourer • Desert Basilisc • Eight-Tailed Mole Hound • The Five-Metal Shrike • Furnace Rhino • Hound of Autochthon • Mukade, the Black-Iron Centipede • Rapace • Sandswimmer • Sayla, the Yellow Wyrn • Sleeper in the Sand • The Zukuluka

The South holds some of Creation's harshest environments, terrible fire-scorched deserts where the eternal burning winds carry no clouds and no relief, only an endless heat that leaches away a traveler's moisture. Here, also, there are the swamps of the Silent Crescent, which themselves crawl with deadly predators, and the lion-trammeled savannas of the Southeast as well. So dangerous is the environment in the South that many creatures here are all or partly made of metal or stone, for flesh cannot easily endure the terrible punishment of the farthest Southern reaches.

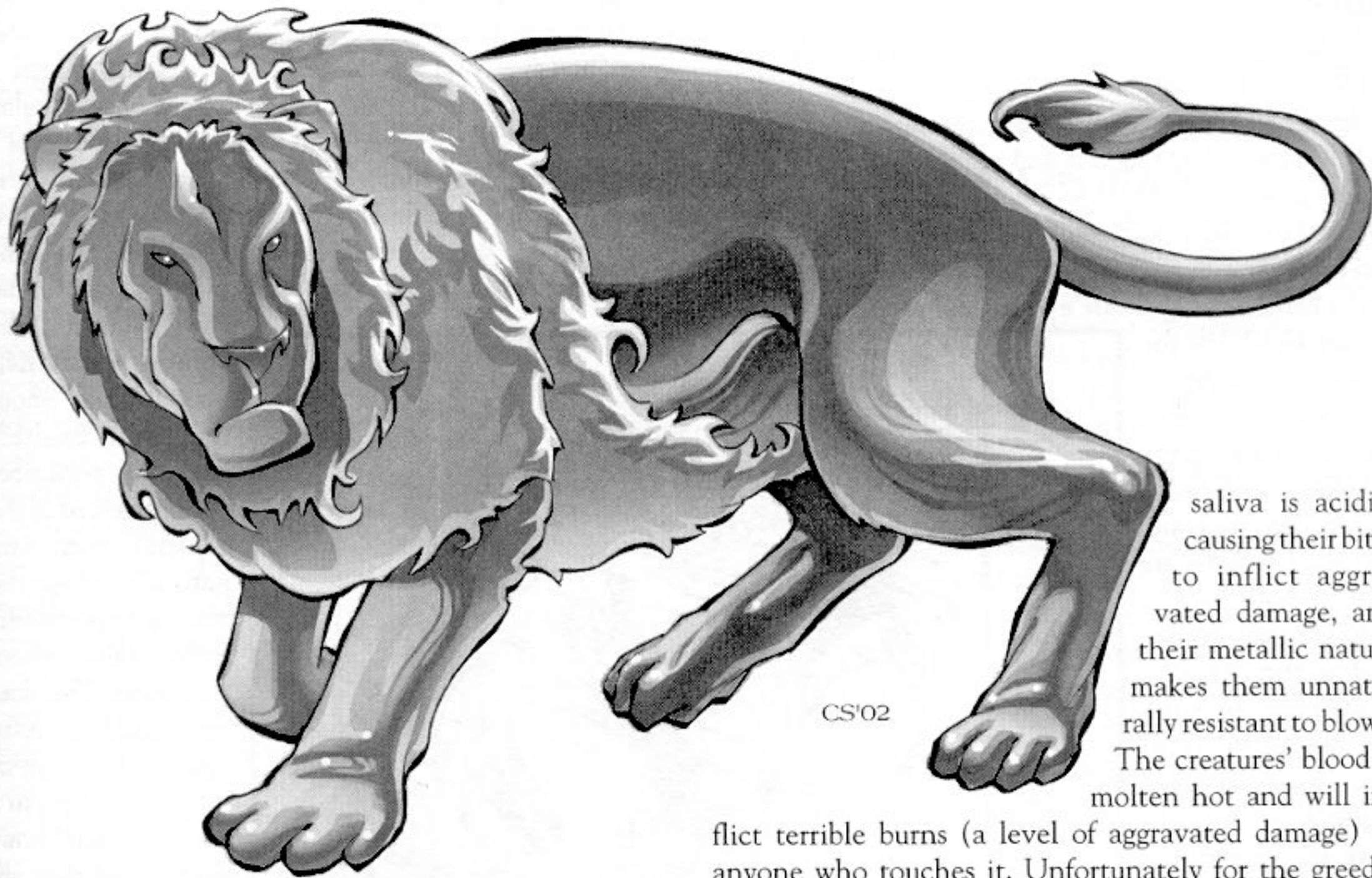
ABACASTERI

Description: These golden cats are creatures of living metal, with blood as hot as lava and muscles as firm as rock. They are sprung from the Wyld and live off of carrion and rotting corpses; their breath smells like the grave, and their saliva is corrosive and burning. The abacasteri seek out graveyards to feed on the bodies buried there and haunt the edges of shadowlands in order to prey on the dead who frequent those dark dominions.

They are a golden affront against the sun in the heavens, scavengers of rotting flesh and defilers of graves.

The abacasteri appear much like normal lions from a distance, although their skins have an unusual sparkle and sheen to them. Once closer, it can be seen that they are not merely golden-furred, but made of actual gold, and that their eyes are topazes. The abacasteri run in prides, imitating real lions, where a pride contains one male lion and several lionesses and possibly some cubs. Abacasteri cubs are born as unformed masses of metallic flesh, which their mothers must lick into a feline shape. If an abacasteri is encountered on its own, then it will either be a young male thrown out of his pride by the ruling male and looking for a new pride or a survivor from a pride that has been otherwise destroyed. Abacasteri are communal creatures and dislike living alone.

Abacasteri have an animal intelligence. As flesh must have been dead and rotting for at least a week to be of interest to them, very few abacasteri have ever connected the concept of killing other animals with that of providing food for themselves: They scavenge for their



food, pure and simple. However, the big cats will fight and kill if necessary to keep themselves safe or in order to reach a source of food (such as a village graveyard). It is possible to train one as a pet, if it is taken from the pride while young, but the abacasteri will always have a certain melancholy, dreaming of others like itself. It will be faithful, however, and will fight for its master.

If abacasteri find an area where there is plentiful food, they will remain in that place till all the potential carrion is gone, and they will couple more frequently in an attempt to birth cubs who can enjoy the largesse. The golden cats can survive for a week on only water, if necessary, and will lick up dirt if there is no rotting flesh available. Many abacasteri have attempted to enter Sijan, but the people of that city mount hunts to discourage such incursions and will kill the abacasteri on sight. They are drawn by large battles, and while they will prey on the corpses rather than on the living, they will attack any that try to drive them from their food. In many cases, they are left to their feeding, for they prevent the rise of hungry ghosts.

If angered, an abacasteri attacks with its bite and claws; a pride of the creatures will react intelligently (for animals) and work together instinctively. The abacasteri's

saliva is acidic, causing their bites to inflict aggravated damage, and their metallic nature makes them unnaturally resistant to blows. The creatures' blood is molten hot and will in-

fllict terrible burns (a level of aggravated damage) to anyone who touches it. Unfortunately for the greedy, when an abacasteri is killed, its body usually falls into yellow dust; the only way to gain a lion's weight in pure gold is to bleed the animal to death, so that it dies when the last drop of blood leaves the body. This is difficult to achieve and is also not widely known.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6, Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Endurance 3, Intimidation 5, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 3 (Desert +1)

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 5A Defense 6

Claw: Speed 6 Accuracy 7 Damage 8L Defense 7

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 7L/10B (Metal body, 4L/4B)

Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-

-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

ASH DEVOURER

Description: These great crocodile-like lizards live in the long gullies of sand that exist in the deep deserts of the South. Their ambient temperature is extremely high: They scorch grass if they touch it and are painfully hot against bare human skin. Their scales are white and gray but streaked with fiery patterns of red and orange. They have three eyes, one on each side of their head and one large one at the center; the two side eyes are colorless as crystal, as though blind, but the central eye is bright yellow. The devourers are six feet high at the shoulders, with heads and bodies to scale, and their mouths are full of crystalline teeth. If they are killed, then their teeth turn to dust in their mouths, but if the teeth can somehow be harvested while they are still alive, they prove to be star topazes.

Ash devourers detest the taste of human flesh, as the blood in it is far too liquid for their taste. They gladly devour gems, crystal and glass, making no distinction on grounds of quality, and will accept such things as offerings or tribute. Their usual food, however, is ashes: They smite wood and vegetation with their tails, causing it to burst into flame, and, then, gulp it down still burning or charred to cinders. The creatures usually confine their depredations to scrubs, cacti and deserted buildings in the deep desert, which causes hardship to tribes and nomads in the vicinity but is of no great concern to the city-dwellers. The ash devourers do not approach too closely to the water at the center of oases, as they have a natural abhorrence for the element.

For most of the year, ash devourers are moderately peaceable creatures that prefer to live in small family groups and discuss the tastes of different types of ash and gossip about particularly exotic flavors of ash that they have enjoyed in the past. The creatures are usually on good terms with their local spirit court and will often carry out missions of the seek-and-recover type for it, in return for payment in gems and crystals. However, at periods of the year when the Maiden of Journeys is in the ascendant, they are driven to seek out great quantities of ash to eat. During these periods (which can be predicted by a good astrologer who knows the pattern), the ash devourers range far afield from their usual haunts and will go so far as to kindle the buildings in small

villages in order to assuage their hunger for ashes. The creatures retain enough sense to avoid large towns and cities, however, and will flee large bodies of armed men.

Ash devourers all speak the low tongue of the Realm, and some of the older ones who have had commerce for a long time with spirit courts know Old Realm. The creatures can live for centuries, though their skins bleach as they grow older, and the very oldest are pure white, with the flame colors on their skin faded to mere indications of their former glory.

The ash devourers have their own legends about the Solar Exalted, who they remember as the Beloved of the Eternal Sun, and naturally show the greatest respect to any Solar Exalted whom they meet. This does not actually extend to fighting for them or supporting them in a confrontation, however, unless they are courted with gifts of ash or gems or cowed by a show of force. When they fight, the ash devourers do so with blows from their



great tails (which set fire to anything flammable that they touch), bites and the outright trampling of anyone unfortunate enough to be prone on the ground. If salt water is poured upon their central eye, it causes them great pain, and they are at a -2 to all dice for the next five turns due to the distraction.

Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 4, Stamina 8, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 3, Endurance 5, Lore 3, Melee 3, Occult 2, Presence 4 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 4, Socialize 4, Stealth 3

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Attack 6 Damage 12L Defense 6

Tail: Speed 5 Attack 6 Damage 7L Defense 6

Trample: Speed 4 Attack 5 Damage 8L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 4 Soak: 6L/8B (Scaly hide, 5L/5B)

Willpower: 6 Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Anything flammable that the ash devourers strike with their tails will catch fire.

DESERT BASILISC

Description: Solitary creatures, desert basiliscs roam the Southern deserts attacking anything that crosses their path. They have the long body of a serpent and the head, legs, wings and iridescent purple coloration of a peacock. Approximately the size of an austrech, they are large enough that some rare, brave fools have attempted to turn them into riding beasts. While heroes of the First Age sometimes kept these wonders as pets or familiars, modern attempts have invariably resulted in the would-be rider's charred corpse rotting in the sand.

Despite their colorful wings, desert basiliscs are flightless. They are, however, nearly tireless runners, second only to austrech. When hungry (and they are nearly always hungry), desert basiliscs will attack any organic matter voraciously. They will hunt and kill man or beast. They will strip a field or orchard clean, if they can. They will even fight over half-rotten corpses for sustenance.

Mounted in the center of each desert basilisc's head is a large stone that some scholars describe as a sort of natural Hearthstone, focusing ambient Essence as if the basilisc itself was a Manse. A striking blood red against the purple and blue hues of the basilisc's hide, this stone is responsible for sheathing the creature in a thin coat of flame. These flames do not harm the winged lizard, but do burn anything it attacks or anything that attacks or even touches it. When properly extracted, the stone can be placed in a standard Hearthstone setting to grant the bearer the same flame effect.

Desert basiliscs are motivated by hunger and a hatred of all other living things. Yet, as much hatred as desert basiliscs show to other living things, the creatures they show the greatest hatred is to each other. So great is this enmity, a basilisc will stop stalking other prey if it detects signs of another of its kind in its territory. If two or more basiliscs share an area, they will hunt each other exclusively until only one remains alive. Modern scholars have no idea how these vicious creatures breed, but clearly, they do.

Desert basiliscs can be found nearly anywhere in the South, stripping and despoiling the land wherever they go. While the savants of the First Age doubtless knew the secrets

of breeding desert basiliscs, if those secrets still exist, they are locked deep within some lost treasure trove of knowledge.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 7, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 6, Perception 2, Intelligence 4, Wits 2



Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Flametongue, High Realm, Low Realm) 3, Presence 2 (Intimidation +2), Socialize 2, Stealth 2

Supernatural Powers: Coat of Flame

Base Initiative: 9

Attack:

Bite: Speed 9 Accuracy 7 Damage 5L + flame* Defense 9

Claw: Speed 9 Accuracy 6 Damage 6L + flame* Defense 8

* 2L damage per turn of contact, see boxed text.

Dodge Pool: 8/4 **Soak:** 3L/4B (Tough hide, 1L/1B)

Willpower: 6 **Heath Levels:** 0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: While the gemstone eye of a desert basilisc can

be placed in a Hearthstone setting to grant the wearer the Coat of Flame ability, the stone is not a true Hearthstone. It is not tied to a Manse or a Demesne, and thus, it does not allow the enhanced recovery of Essence. Desert basiliscs cannot speak, but they understand all the languages their Linguistics score permits.

COAT OF FLAME

While this power is active, anyone striking the basilisc without a weapon or wrestling with it takes 2L damage every turn. If the creature strikes with an unarmed attack or wrestles with a character, its opponent takes a like amount of damage. This power is always active while the "third eye" of the desert basilisc is in the forehead of the beast or set in a Hearthstone setting. The person or creature using this power is immune to damage from it or from other Coats of Flame generated by a basilisc stone. It does not provide immunity to regular or magical fire of other sorts, including the anima flare of Fire-aspected Dragon-Blooded. When used as a Hearthstone, the damage of the Coat of Flame is halved to 1L, but if the user is a Fire-aspected Terrestrial Exalted, this is added to the damage done by her anima banner, rather than being applied separately.

EIGHT-TAILED MOLE HOUND

Description: Feral predators, eight-tailed mole hounds stalk the sands of the Southern deserts in hunting packs. They will run down much larger prey, culling the weakest members of herds. Even man is not safe from these hunters that seem have no fear of even the Essence-wielding Exalted. The strongest member of the pack leads mole hound groups. Male or female doesn't matter, but when the leader shows weakness, there is always at least one more hound ready to rip out its throat and replace it.

Originally bred from domestic wolves, eight-tailed mole hounds have thick skin plates, with coarse fur sprouting from between the plates. The nomenclature "eight-tailed mole hound" is not purely figurative. Each of their eight tails is functional, identical and like those of their original domestic wolf stock. They range in color from dark browns to deep grays. As they age, their fur tufts become tinged with white. Mole hounds have vision roughly equivalent to that of normal humans. They have transparent inner eyelids that automatically close to protect their eyes when burrowing.

Eight-tailed mole hounds were originally bred during the Dragon-Blooded Shogunate to hunt the Dune People. Under the firm hand of their Exalted masters, these burrowing hunters were without peer. Their armored hides protected them from the attacks of their prey, and their eight tails allowed them to move through sand and loose soil like man moves through water. Unfortunately, since the First Age, these loyal hunters have largely become feral predators. Whether or not they can be redomesticated is unknown, but in this current time, they appear to fear and hate humans and are motivated by pure instinct.

Characters are likely to hear mole hounds or see signs of their passage before they encounter them. Their howls form complex harmonies. Savants say that the musical tones were bred into the beasts at the whim of a Dragon-Blooded warlord who was offended by the original's off-key howls.

Other characters may identify them by the tracks that crisscross the sands of the pack's hunting grounds. These raised tracks look like the burrowing of massive worms and form arcane patterns in the soil. Regardless of the first signs encountered, once a pack of mole hounds decides on its prey, the hounds will intelligently stalk their chosen victim until they bring it down. Large expanses of rock prevent the hounds from tunneling, but these beasts are equally able combatants on the surface as they are underground.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3



Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 6, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Dodge 1, Presence 2 (Intimidation +1), Stealth 2, Survival 3 (Tracking +3)

Supernatural Powers: Pack Hunting, Tunnel

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 6 Damage 7L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 4/2 Soak: 5L/8B (Plated skin, 3L/4B)

Willpower: 6 Health Levels: 0/-1/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None

PACK HUNTING

Working as a pack, eight-tailed mole hounds are more dangerous than when working alone. By nipping and harrying at prey, they can discover any weaknesses in its defenses. For every two mole hounds aiding the leader in an attack, the leader's pre-soak damage is increased by one. The leader cannot more than double its base damage (to a maximum base damage of 14) in this way.

TUNNEL

Eight-tailed mole hounds can move through sand or loose soil as if they were moving through air. They can breath freely and without penalty. Any substances with a lethal soak of one or higher are too dense for mole hounds to tunnel through.

Other Notes: None

THE FIVE-METAL SHRIKE

Description: Tribesmen of the great Southern wastes tell tales of a great metal beast with wings of silver that flies out of the desert night, its eyes blazing. Each tribe has a different name for it. Some worship it as a protector spirit. Many fear it as an all-devouring monster. They describe the metal beast as a

50-yard long birdlike creature made from orichalcum and jade, with five large starmetal wings arrayed behind its beak.

Eight smaller wings fit in between each large one and the tail section, like stabilizers. It has a wide, squat body and a three-jawed beak that juts forward. It can fly at great speeds, rotate in midair and hover without ever flapping its wings. Eyes dot its surface, and rays of light shoot from them. When the beak itself opens, light pours forth as bright as the radiance of the sun. It can focus this energy into a beam as wide as a house, and what the light touches turns to fire and heat.

The Five-Metal Shrike was to be the first in a line of weapons to succeed the Thousand Forged Dragons. Created by a trio of sorcerers at the behest of a powerful Solar warlord at the end of the First Age, the Usurpation interrupted its completion. The ship was nearly finished, and it is almost fully functional. It is built primarily of jade and coated with a shell of orichalcum. The five "wings" are sails of starmetal that catch Essence in the air and use it to fuel the ship. Soulsteel was used for the ribs, and moonsilver etches the interior, linking the heart of ship to every part like nerves to a brain. The ship was to be crewed by five Exalted, but the heart of the ship was an urn the size of a small child. This urn is a soul vessel (see Soul Seal on p. 75 of *The Book of Three Circles*), a magical construct that holds the vestigial spirit of one of the three Exalted who helped to create the ship. The captured soul

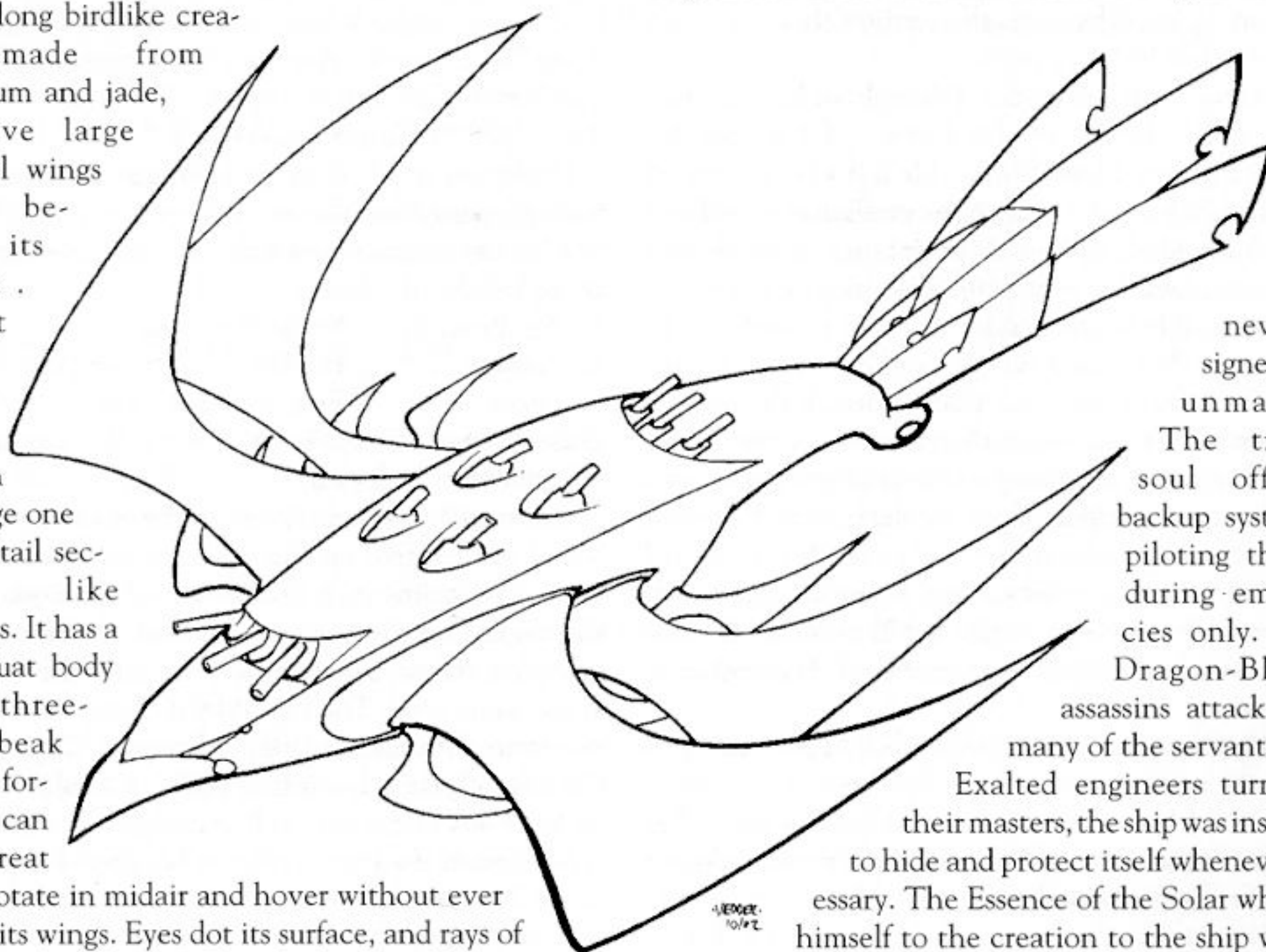
is mounted within a central pillar made of jade and laced with moonsilver that connects it to the rest of the ship. The creators of the Five-Metal Shrike also constructed an engine, located in the aft of the ship, to channel the collected Essence into the weapons, shields and flight capabilities. Two eye turrets protect the central control room, and the engine room is guarded by three turrets.

This magical construct controls the ship and is responsible for its actions. Unfortunately, the ship was

never designed to go unmanned.

The trapped soul offers a backup system for piloting the ship during emergencies only. When Dragon-Blooded assassins attacked and many of the servants of the Exalted engineers turned on their masters, the ship was instructed to hide and protect itself whenever necessary. The Essence of the Solar who gave himself to the creation of the ship was not the complete Essence of that being — by that point, it had become clear that whole beings trapped in soul vessels went mad quite frequently, and so, the Solar within it had sacrificed much of his personality to ensure he would not use his "body" as a weapon in a mad rampage. It did not retain his memories or his faculty for reason. The soul vessel held only a remnant of his power and his will and could only keep to a few simple purposes. Along with these instructions, the soul vessel only knew that it must protect Creation from incursions by the Fair Folk and the minions of the Yozis. These causes are what drive it today.

The ship's actions are unfathomable beyond these facts. It has apparently lain dormant for most of the Second Age, until appearing recently. Only the legends of a few of the desert tribes mention it, and some savants believe that this indicates it has been active infrequently throughout the past centuries. Why it attacks caravans and cities of the South remains a mystery. Perhaps it has gone mad with the passing of time and taint of the Wyld.





Perhaps someone now controls it. Perhaps it discovered something that no one else knows.

Some adventurer-savants speculate that the Five-Metal Shrike hides within the Wyld of the South, in the ever-burning elemental fires that no mortal can brave. Others think that it sleeps within the magma hearts of volcanoes or buries itself deep under the sands. Either way, none have managed to find where it rests or even if it rests at all. The desert wastes are largely unexplored by even the natives there and can yield countless hiding places.

Sorcerer-savant Rosh the Triumphant has outlined a plan, at the behest of the Perfect of Paragon, for disabling the Five-Metal Shrike. He felt a concentrated attack to punch a hole through the orichalcum shell and jade hull would allow himself or another to sneak into the ship and fight his way to the Essence engine, where he might disable it and render the ship powerless. His report stated that, based on the available research, this plan was a more reliable one than to attack the control room — and certainly easier than a full-scale assault. Of course, this means fighting past many of the eye turrets.

Other plans include impairing the sails and masts or invading through holes in the hull to reach the control center to attempt to wrest control from the soul vessel.

Attributes: Strength 25, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues*: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

* Cannot fail Valor tests. Cannot succeed at any other tests. Immune to effects involving Virtue tests or resisted with the target's Virtues.

Abilities: Archery 5, Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 5, Presence 5 (Intimidation +8), Stealth 3

Charms: The Aegis of the Unconquered Sun, Flight of the Shooting Stars, the Godspire of the Five-Metal Shrike, the Grasp of the Maidens, Invisible Statue Spirit, Luna's Magnanimity, Sledgehammer Fist Punch, Solar Spike, Terrifying Apparition of Glory

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Beak Slam: Speed 6 Accuracy 9 Damage 25L Defense 5
Wing Slash: Speed 8 Accuracy 12 Damage 15L Defense 7
Eye Turret: Speed 10 Accuracy 8 Damage 16L* (Rate 1, Range 800,** Cost 8 motes)

* Minimum of 8L damage to Yozis, demons and the undead, regardless of soak.

** Can fire to this maximum range with no penalties or range bands.

Dodge Pool: 7

Soak: See table

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: See table

Essence: 8

Essence Pool: 800

Other Notes: The Five-Metal Shrike has a normal movement of 200 yards.

There are 10 total eye turrets on the outside of the Five-Metal Shrike: five on the port side and five starboard. Three turrets line each side of the belly and two lie along the back. This gives the Five-Metal Shrike a complete firing arc. Any two turrets can be faced at the same target at the same time. The Five-Metal Shrike may fire all of its turrets without splitting its dice pool. The turrets use the Solar Spike Charm (see p.157 of *Exalted*) and can strike at any target within line of sight. In addition, two turrets guard the interior control cockpit located in the

STRUCTURAL STRENGTHS FOR PIECES OF THE FIVE-METAL SHRIKE

| Object | Soak (L/B) | Health Levels | Notes |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|--|
| Orichalcum shell | 15/20 | 100 | to punch a man sized hole |
| Jade portholes | 10/15 | 50 | to destroy |
| Starmetal sail (small) | 12/18 | 50 | to significantly impair |
| Starmetal sail (large) | 12/18 | 80 | to significantly impair |
| Jade hull | 8/12 | 75 | beneath sails, to punch a man sized hole |
| Beak | 18/25 | 150 | to punch a man sized hole |
| Eye turret | 10/15 | 60 | to destroy |
| Soulsteel mast/rib | 15/20 | 200 | to significantly impair |
| Interior jade wall | 8/12 | 60 | to punch a man sized hole |
| Central pillar | 12/12 | 40 | to destroy |
| Essence engine | 8/15 | 250 | to destroy |

The Essence engine may not be targeted until the hull is breached. The hull is not an object for the purposes of Charms that enhance damage against objects.

CHARMS UNIQUE TO THE FIVE-METAL SHRIKE

These Charms are useable only by the Five-Metal Shrike and those who pilot it. They may not be learned or used by Eclipse Caste Solar Exalted or other characters with the ability to learn Charms.

THE AEGIS OF THE UNCONQUERED SUN

Cost: 20 motes per turn

This power may dwarf even the Godspire in might. A shimmering net of chromatic light appears around the Five-Metal Shrike, protecting it from all harm. This effect is similar to the Adamant Skin Technique Charm, but the Five-Metal Shrike can keep it active as long as it has enough Essence to fuel it. However, while the Aegis is in place, the Five-Metal Shrike can take no other actions other than to move at the greatly reduced rate of 10 yards per turn and to collect Essence. The Five-Metal Shrike uses the Aegis of the Unconquered Sun to hide deep within fiery fonts in the Southern wilderness while regaining its Essence.

FLIGHT OF THE SHOOTING STARS

Cost: 20 motes per hour

To be able to span the world in a day, the sorcerers gave the Five-Metal Shrike extraordinary flight speeds. The Five-Metal Shrike folds its wings fully back, closes its beak and shuts its turrets in one turn, and the next turn, it accelerates to 500 miles per hour. Like the Aegis and the Godspire, this ability precludes the use of all other abilities except for Luna's Magnanimity.

THE GODSPEAR OF THE FIVE-METAL SHRIKE

Cost: 100 motes

The starmetal sails on the Five-Metal Shrike collect Essence to power the massive ship's engines and weapons. Once per scene, at the Storyteller's discretion, the Five-Metal Shrike may activate its greatest weapon, a tremendous cannon of blinding energy. It destroys cities. It can level a mountain. Anyone within the area targeted by the Godspire is destroyed utterly unless he has a suitable defense.

The Godspire takes three turns to activate. During that time, it may not use any other Charms, and the use of other Charms precludes the activation of the Godspire. On the first turn, the Five-Metal Shrike deactivates all of its other Charms. On the second turn, the beak opens, and light begins to gather at its mouth. A wide beam of light blasts forth on the third turn.

The Godspire targets an initial radius of 25 yards. Anything within that radius is vaporized. On the turn after the Godspire destroys this initial target area, a shockwave of heat and light bursts forth, dealing 80L damage to everything within 500 yards of the target.

The Godspire's annihilating blast can only be defended against by perfect defenses. Heavenly Guardian Defense can parry the Godspire, but only for the character, and mortal weapons would surely perish from it. Adamant Skin Technique and Bottomless Depths Defense will absorb all damage as usual. Seven Shadow Evasion cannot protect a character, however, since the area of effect is so vast. The shockwave can be defended against by any of the defensive techniques listed above, including Seven Shadow Evasion, or it can be parried conventionally as a 20 success attack. The shockwave cannot be dodged.

No force in Creation can make a counterattack against the Godspire's wrath, except perhaps one of the Celestial Gods or the Five Elemental Dragons. The Godspire cannot target characters closer than 10 yards, and while under autonomous control, the Shrike will not fire the weapon downward.

THE GRASP OF THE MAIDENS

Cost: None

The Five-Metal Shrike spreads its starmetal wings wide, and the Essence that flows through the world is caught in their great span. Each turn that a mainsail is fully extended, it catches 5 motes of Essence. Each turn a lesser sail is extended, it catches 2 motes. There are five mainsails, arrayed evenly about the body just behind the beak, and eight lesser sails toward the tail, for a total Essence gain of 41 motes per turn. Each sail, when at rest, covers a section of jade hull that was not covered by orichalcum.

LUNA'S MAGNANIMITY

Cost: 15 motes per health level

When at rest, the Five-Metal Shrike may regenerate its damaged parts at a rate of five health levels per week. The moonsilver that lines the inside of the Five-Metal Shrike not only connects the soul vessel to the ship, but also channels the healing blessing of Luna. This requires a tremendous amount of time and Essence, however. During such repairs, thin tendrils of moonsilver reach across the damaged region and form a web-like skeleton. Then, the Magical Material that formed the destroyed or damaged piece being regenerated flows like liquid across this webbing, until the structure is fully repaired. The Five-Metal Shrike can only repair one structure at a time, but it can activate this ability along with any other ability save the Aegis of the Unconquered Sun or the Godspire.



CONTROLLING THE FIVE-METAL SHRIKE

The Five-Metal Shrike was constructed to be crewed by five Exalted. To this end, the creators made the ship into a mobile Manse. Each position to be crewed requires a Hearthstone to activate it, except the captain's position. The captain of the Five Metal Shrike attunes himself to the captured soul in the jade pillar at the center of the control room by concentrating on it for 10 minutes and committing 20 motes of Essence. If all five positions are crewed by Exalted, then the soul vessel may be removed and carried with the captain. Otherwise, the soul must remain in place to help the captain control the autonomous functions. For each position left unfilled, the captain must commit an additional 10 motes of Essence during attunement to control the ship, up to a maximum of 60 motes of Essence.

Each Hearthstone required for the four auxiliary positions are located in Manses hidden across the four corners of the world. Anyone attuned to one of these Manses and holding its Hearthstone can sense the presence of the other three Manses, as well as the location of the Five-Metal Shrike. The captain, once attuned to the ship, can instantly locate any of the other four Manses or the holders of the Hearthstones.

SHIP MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR

While the Luna's Magnanimity Charm is potent and keeps the Five-Metal Shrike functioning, it can take years for the ship to heal from one battle. Characters controlling the ship would need to effect repairs and general maintenance if they wished to keep the Five-Metal Shrike out of dry dock for that period.

The costs of maintenance and repair are exorbitant, however. The ship is entirely built of the Five Magical Materials, and it is possible that there is not enough of these in the world to continually repair the ship. The Essence engine is capable of synthesizing its own repair materials, but the presence of the engineer and the Stone of Mechanical Gestalt is required.

Each time the Shrike flies, it requires either a month of regeneration to heal or Resources ••••• just for general maintenance. In addition, an auxiliary crew of at least 10 technicians, each with a Craft, Lore and Occult Ability of 3 or higher, is required. Approximately 1,000 pounds of raw materials — gems and Magical Materials — are needed for each round of maintenance.

Repairs of damage incurred during combat are considerably more expensive. It is a resources •••• effort to repair every health level of damage, plus a total of 10 man-hours from the technicians. Maintenance and repair also require that the captain and engineer positions be filled.

PILOT

The pilot sits at the front-most position within the control center. There is a seat with a waist-high control panel in front of it that has a place for a Hearthstone. When set, the Stone of Aerial Acuity causes this control panel to light up and for two rods to emerge. The pilot steers the Five-Metal Shrike by placing his hands on these rods and concentrating.

The Pilot's Manse is located to the North, in the mountains east of Diamond Hearth. The Stone of Aerial Acuity is a level three Hearthstone and allows the pilot of the Five-Metal Shrike to maneuver the ship using his Dexterity + Sail pool, adding three dice. The bearer of this gem floats with his feet an inch off the ground at all times, placing no weight on the ground. There is no trigger for this auxiliary ability.

GUNNER

The gunner sits to the left and behind the pilot, facing a wall. There is a place to mount the Argus Gem in the wall, and two recesses open up in which the character places his hands. When the character is positioned, he can sense all targets around the ship within 50 yards and aim the external turrets at them. He can also target and fire the Godspire once every scene. The character uses his Thrown or Archery Ability and adds three dice when attacking with the weapons of the Five-Metal Shrike. Each of the weapons attacks at the gunner's full dice pool.

The Gunner's Manse is located in an abandoned mine just south of Gem. It contains a level three hearthstone called the Argus Gem, a cluster of red orbs that each bear a black circle on them. The bearer of the Argus Gem has a preternatural awareness of his surroundings. Add two automatic successes to any Perception + Awareness roll when the gunner is attempting to sense attackers within 20 yards around him.

NAVIGATOR

The navigator of the Five-Metal Shrike sits beside the pilot, at a similar control panel angled to the right and back. The navigator places the Cartic Anaglyph into the control panel to gain access to the most complete maps of Creation in existence. These maps feature every geological and geographical detail imaginable, except for names. The creators of the Five-Metal Shrike devised a way to trace the flow of Essence through the world and used it to fill in the map. Every mountain, city, river, village and forest has a unique flow of Essence that allows it to be identified. The navigator's player can make an Intelligence + Investigation roll for her character to locate familiar features or to discern a location. The difficulty of this roll is based on how familiar the navigator is with the location she is trying to find. Her home, Nexus, the Elemental Poles and the Imperial City would have a difficulty of 1 to find. Villages that have a notable landmark, small cities or common geographical features would have a difficulty of 3. Lost ruins mentioned only in song or legend, the hidden fortress of a Lunar Exalt and moving ships or caravans would have a difficulty of 5. Wyld zones cannot be mapped.

Creation is vast, and making attempts to find locations requires two turns of concentration for every level of difficulty. A failed roll may be retried in another scene, and botches reveal misleading and possibly catastrophic information.

The Navigator's Manse is located in an air-filled sea cave 1,000 miles due West of the Blessed Isle. The Cartic Anaglyph, a level three Hearthstone, is set near the center of a floor mosaic depicting an impressionistic map of Creation, at the exact point that the Manse lies. It is a square, translucent salt crystal with an engraving of a bird on one side and a snake on the other. When held up to the light, the images transpose to form a battle scene. The bearer of the Cartic Anaglyph always knows how far she has traveled in a day and in what direction from the point she started. This ability has no trigger.

ENGINEER

The engineer's position is next to the Essence engine in the rear of the ship. She places the Stone of Mechanical Gestalt into a socket on the wall to activate her position. Once activated, the engineer is aware of the condition of the Five-Metal Shrike and its crew. The engineer can monitor through concentration how many health levels of damage the ship or the crew has taken, how much Essence is available in the engine and where the crew and passengers are located. It takes one turn of concentration to reveal each piece of information.

The Engineer may also direct the automated repair systems of the Five-Metal Shrike. To do this, she concentrates on the damaged portion of the ship and spends 5 motes of her own Essence. The ship matches this expenditure of Essence, and for each turn the Essence is spent, two health levels of damage are removed. As long as the engineer spends Essence in this manner, the targeted portion of the ship will continue to function, even if it has received enough damage to disable or destroy it.

The engineer may also use the Essence engine to synthesize raw materials for the repair of the Five-Metal Shrike. To do so, she must feed the engine 10 pounds of raw, precious, non-magical gems or rare metals to produce one pound of Magical Material. This requires an Intelligence + Craft roll with a difficulty of 5. It takes one day per pound of material synthesized, and the Material must be used to repair the ship or it becomes inert and non-magical after a week. Every pound of Magical Material can repair three health levels of damage.

The Engineer's Manse is located in the unpopulated forests East of Larjyn. The Stone of Mechanical Gestalt is a level four Hearthstone that grows as a trefoil leaf from a shrub in the center of the Manse and is a thin tortoise shell laced with a delicate crosshatch pattern of silver. The bearer of the Stone of Mechanical Gestalt may add three dice to any Craft or Lore roll to understand First Age artifacts and one die to all other Craft rolls. This ability is triggered automatically when any such roll is made.



front of the ship, and three guard the Essence engine in the aft engine room.

FURNACE RHINO

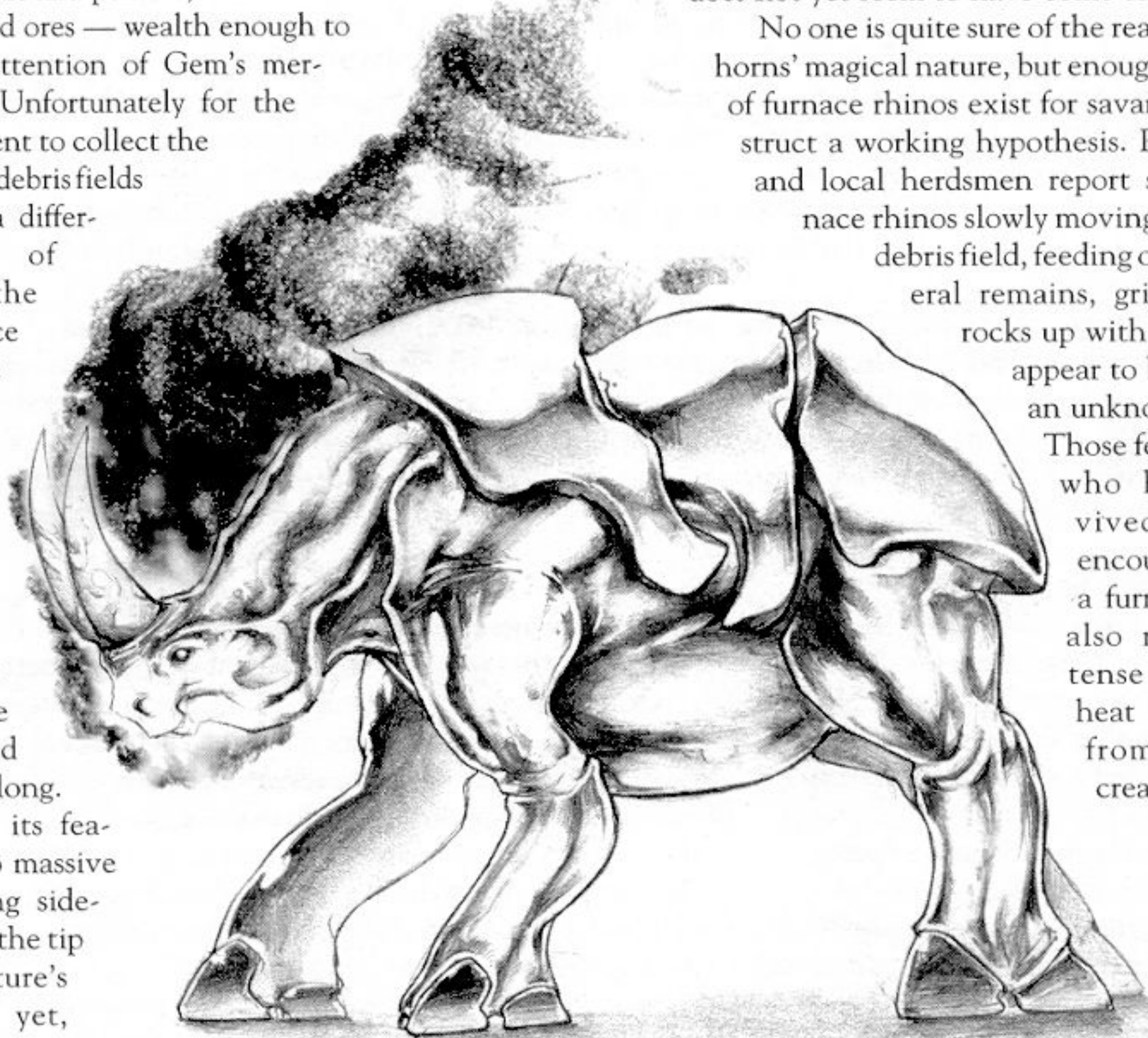
Description: The dry foothills east of Gem are strewn with volcanic debris and ejecta, molten matter cast up from the bowels of Creation and left to cool in the blazing heat of the sun. Among the shards of obsidian, basalt and pumice, one finds rare gemstones and ores — wealth enough to attract the attention of Gem's merchant class. Unfortunately for the prospectors sent to collect the minerals, the debris fields also attract a different sort of consumer: the mighty furnace rhinos of the Southern plains.

A furnace rhino is a huge beast, some seven to eight feet tall at the shoulder and 13 to 15 feet long. Dominating its features are two massive horns, jutting side-by-side from the tip of the creature's snout. And yet, the size of the furnace rhino's horns is not their most impressive feature. Those observers lucky enough not to be on the receiving end of a furnace rhino charge claim that the horns are made, not of bone, but of metal!

Moreover, the horns are not just any metal. A furnace rhino's horns consist of an alloy of steel and one of the Five Magical Materials. The specific Material present in the horns varies from animal to animal, its type largely dependent on the furnace rhino's range and habitat. Since the rhinos prefer volcanic terrain, red and white jade are the two most common horn Materials. Orichalcum is a close third: The furnace rhino is somehow able to internally refine mundane gold into the Sun's chosen metal. Black and green jade are extremely rare possibilities, while blue jade is effec-

tively impossible to find in a rhino's horns (as family units never wander from the lower slopes of Southern mountains). Occasionally, a furnace rhino has been found with moonsilver horns, generally implying that the beast has spent some time grazing in a patch of Wyld. Starmetal is scarcer still, and a set of soulsteel horns would require the domestication of such a beast by one of the Deathlords, an event that does not yet seem to have come to pass.

No one is quite sure of the reason for the horns' magical nature, but enough accounts of furnace rhinos exist for savants to construct a working hypothesis. Prospectors and local herdsmen report seeing furnace rhinos slowly moving through a debris field, feeding on the mineral remains, grinding the rocks up with teeth that appear to be made of an unknown metal. Those few humans who have survived a close encounter with a furnace rhino also report intense waves of heat emanating from the creature's hide.



Scholars surmise that the rhino lives on stone and metal ore, transforming its rocky meals into intensely strong bones, teeth and nails. The mysterious horns appear to stem from trace elements of whatever Magical Material happens to be found within an individual rhino's customary range. The furnace rhino's stomach, it is believed, functions like a massive smelter, reducing its dinner to molten ore and then somehow channeling the relevant minerals to the appropriate organs.

Needless to say, Gem's merchants have not failed to notice the economic opportunities presented by a furnace rhino. Alchemists and sorcerers would pay dearly to uncover the secrets of the beast's digestive tract, and the Dragon-Blooded of the Realm are always looking for new sources of jade. The furnace rhino's ability to transmute

even miniscule amounts of a Magical Material into its giant horns even suggests the possibility of taming a herd and setting them to grazing on otherwise worthless jade mine tailings. Surviving First Age records suggest that the Anathema once did similarly, hunting those rhinos bearing orichalcum horns into near-extinction.

Killing a furnace rhino is no easy task, however. The same process that creates the animal's horns and teeth also affects its skin: The hide of a furnace rhino is laced with metals, easily surpassing the protective capabilities of its more mundane cousins. Ordinary blades and points shatter against a rhino's side. Nor are its small eyes any easier to damage: Archers report that their arrows have been known to bounce off one of a rhino's gem-like eyes. Indeed, the best way to kill a furnace rhino is to fight fire with fire: A weapon made from one of the Five Magical Materials is the only tool capable of reliably piercing the beast's hide and bringing it down.

Provided that the weapon's wielder is able to withstand the attack of an angry furnace rhino, that is.

The species is notoriously bad-tempered, charging nearby humans at the slightest provocation. Most furnace rhino hunts end with massive casualties among the ranks of the hunting party. Gem's merchants prefer to hunt the rhinos with large numbers of slaves: The bounty that comes with the successful capture or kill of a furnace rhino far outweighs the cost of a dozen or so dead slaves. Outcaste Dragon-Bloods who live in Gem sometimes hire themselves out as guides and hunters.

And then, there are the Great Hunts, grand-scale expeditions organized on a yearly basis by Dragon-Blooded notables from the satrapial administrations of the South and even the Blessed Isle. The Great Hunts are an occasion for celebration as entire households travel to Gem and its environs for the hunting season. The rhinos are stalked in the morning, while the temperature is relatively cool. In the evenings, when the hunt is over for the day, the villas of Gem glitter with the light of a hundred parties. During these festivities, deals are made, marriages are arranged, and a great many fates are sealed. In many ways, the annual furnace rhino hunt is part of the glue that binds the Dragon-Blooded elites of the South together.

Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 3, Stamina 8, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Presence 2, Resistance 3

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Gore*: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 18L Defense 6

Trample: Speed 3 Accuracy 8 Damage 12L Defense 4

* Also gains the appropriate Magical Material bonus.

Dodge Pool: 4 **Soak:** 12L/20B (Metallic hide, 12L/12B*)

* Ignores attacks doing less than 6L/12B.

Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3

Other Notes: Bleeds as an Exalt. Is a heroic character, and may perform stunts. Its horn and armor are made of one of the Five Magical Materials for the purposes of effects that require or exclude that material.

HARVESTING FURNACE RHINOS

Once hunters have managed to track down and slay a furnace rhino, they have a veritable cornucopia of mineral resources at their beck and call. Mystical metal horns, fine steel bones, gemstone eyes — the furnace rhino contains them all. Of course, skinning the beast is itself an adventure. Its blood is molten and can burn the skin right off of a careless harvester, and for this reason, the Dragon-Blooded prefer to have slaves handle this step of the process. Asbestos gloves and aprons are required. It's also important that the harvesting be done before the corpse cools: If the hunters wait too long to separate the various organs, they will have a large, rhino-sized lump of inflexible metal at their feet.

Furnace rhino parts most definitely qualify as exotic materials available for use in the construction of wonders. Players will have far more original and twisted ideas for ways to take advantage of their freshly killed furnace rhino than we can provide, and Storytellers should take advantage of their creativity in adjudicating wonder creation. Nevertheless, a few guidelines are worth mentioning. A furnace rhino's plate-like hide can be turned in armor for humans and Exalted alike. A single rhino can provide enough hide for the equivalent of two suits of superheavy plate armor or several flame- and heat-resistant shields (this protection against the elements applies to rhino-hide suits of armor as well). A rhino's horns can be melted down to produce about two daiklaves' worth of Magical Material (the amount roughly corresponds to four levels of Artifact).





HOUND OF AUTOCHTHON

Description: Legends of the origins of Autochthon's hounds differ. One once popular tale (now almost forgotten) speaks of Autochthon finding the hounds as pups in the Wyld, taming them and making them his hunting pack. Believers of this legend say that humans emulated Autochthon with the pups of wolves and omen dogs, creating the first domesticated hunters in tribute to the Maker of Tools, and that every time another beast is domesticated, it is an act of worship to Autochthon. Another tale claims that Autochthon emulated his pupils in this; on seeing a young shepherd and his new pack of herding dogs (tales differ; some claim it was a huntsman's pack or a patrol and their war dogs), Autochthon decided that he needed a hunting pack and set to building himself one. In either case, these great beasts have been associated with Autochthon from time immemorial, and a handful still roam Creation to this day.

The hounds physically resemble great dogs, standing 10 feet or more at the shoulder. There are five distinct "breeds," one for each of the Five Magical Materials, but contrary to some opinion and mythology, they are not made of the Five Materials, save for their eyes, which are spheres of pure Magical Material.

At one time, there were at least five of each breed of hound, but over the centuries, fewer and fewer have been seen with each sighting, and most recent reports of them speak of only nine in the pack, although reports of single hounds or matched pairs cannot be discounted and suggest that more of them may still live. Those that remain have been spotted throughout Creation, hunting after unknown (or unknowable) prey. They have, on occasion, been known to help those in need of assistance against some great foe or threat. Usually, this is some great Wyld beast or ancient behemoth. However, the hounds take no mortal nor little god as a master or owner, and any attempt to keep them prisoner inevitably fails; they can be killed or released but not bound for any appreciable period of time.

Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 3, Stamina 10, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Running +1), Awareness 4 (Sharp Sight +1, Spot Ambush +1, Track +1), Brawl 3 (Biting +1, Claw +1), Dodge 3, Endurance 2, Presence 2 (Intimidate +1), Resistance 3, Stealth 3 (Ambush +2, Hide in Plain Sight +1)



Supernatural Powers: Inevitable Escape, Regeneration, Wyld Resistance

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 6 Damage 11L Defense 6

Claw: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 10L Defense 7

Dodge Pool: 6 **Soak:** 10L/20B (Supernatural skin, 5L/10B)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 6

Other Notes: The hounds of Autochthon are immune to poisons, diseases, small fires, inclement weather and so on. They regenerate 1L per scene (15 to 20 minutes).

THE FIVE BREEDS

Sun Dog:

With glittering eyes of yellow fire, tan coats, lion-like manes and a stocky build, the orichalcum hunters have a howl that can be heard for miles. Sun dogs are agile and tough, having Dexterity 4 and 15L/25B (Golden skin, 10L/15B) soak.

Moon Dog:

Fluid and swift, moon dogs are coursing hounds with dapple-gray coats, long builds and whip-like tails. They can run at double normal speed for days without tiring and flow in and out of combat as if in dreams, adding two dice to their Dodge pool.

Stone Dog:

Smaller than the other breeds, but fast and agile, the stone dogs have thick variegated coats and eyes that shift between the different colors of jade. Their short, powerful bodies emphasize quick movement and reactions over power or endurance, making them fierce battlers. Stone dogs have a base Initiative of 12 (+5 to the Speed of all attacks).

Starhound:

With their thick, dusky gray coats and subtle builds, Autochthon's starmetal hounds are rarely seen. Their attacks are cunning and accurate, doing +2L damage, and they add two dice to their Stealth pool, having an innate ability to be where others aren't looking.

Nighthound:

Pitch black of coat and eye, these powerful mastiffs are clearly related to sun dogs. Silent killers, the nighthounds make no sound at all, even when in pain or on death's door. Their bite is chill and grim, draining 3 motes of Essence from their victim every time they make an attack that deals a level of damage. They have 15L/25B soak (Soulsteel skin, 10L/15B).

INEVITABLE ESCAPE

The Hounds of Autochthon are able to escape from any trap or pen, given time. They can chew through any binding, break down any gate or dig out of any pit. If surrounded by a truly inescapable trap, they simply vanish, with no sign of how they escaped. Even magical bonds will eventually fall away if not kept carefully, although this can take decades or even centuries, rather than days. Rolls the creature's Willpower each time period (as shown below); if it achieves five successes, it manages to free itself.

| Period | Nature of the trap |
|---------|---|
| Day | Simple man-made traps or bindings |
| Week | Extremely sophisticated bindings, or brute force traps (for example, trapping a creature in a box canyon, then collapsing the only entrance) |
| Month | Traps utilizing powerful mortal sorceries, or simple Charms or one-dot artifacts (for example, First Age slave collars or magically enhanced ropes) |
| Year | Bindings made with Terrestrial or Celestial Circle sorceries, or powerful artifacts (Artifact •• or ••••) |
| Decade | Bindings forged with the use of sorceries of the Solar Circle, or the most powerful of artifacts (••••• or •••••• dot) |
| Century | A prison made with the assistance of singular artifacts created solely for the purpose of binding and entrapping, or ancient artifacts of amazing power |





MUKADE, THE BLACK-IRON CENTIPEDE

Description: Deep in the jungles of the Southeast lives the beast known only as Mukade, the Black-Iron Centipede. Although some claim it is a creation of the Yozis, most scholars who have heard of it believe it is a hideous expression of the extents to which the Wyld can taint and warp creatures of Creation.

And warped Mukade certainly is. Stretching nearly 150 feet from the tips of his antennae to the lethal spines in his tail and weighing several tons, Mukade is a centipede of truly mammoth proportions. Its heavy armor plates and features appear to be carved out of polished black iron, but Mukade moves with a speed and silence that belies his massive construction. Most disturbing is the face of the Mukade, which, while indistinct and distorted, is still recognizable as human behind the pincers and the insect eyes.

Mukade is a clever hunter, careful to avoid attracting too much attention from the Wyld Hunt or others who would try to stop him (and might actually have the power to do so). This has worked, so far. His hunger grows ever greater, however, and his control lapses more frequently as the years pass.

Attributes: Strength 14, Dexterity 4, Stamina 20, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 3 (Spit Poison +2), Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Brawl 5 (Bite +2, Claw +1), Dodge 3, Endurance 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Flametongue, Guild Cant, High Realm, Low Realm) 4, Lore 2 (Puzzles +2, Riddles

+1), Presence 5 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 5, Stealth 2 (Rapid Ambush +1)

Supernatural Powers: Mukade's Venom

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 8 Accuracy 7 Damage 18L Defense 6

Claw: Speed 9 Accuracy 9 Damage 14L Defense 7

Sting: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 12L* + venom Defense 6

Acid Spit: Speed 10 Accuracy 11 Damage 24L**

* Halve the lethal soak of the target's armor.

**Mukade can only spit every third turn, out to a maximum range of 80 yards.

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 20L/30B* (Black iron skin, 10L/10B)

* Totally ignores attacks doing 10L/20B or less.

Willpower: 10

Health Levels: -0 x 6/-1 x 6/-2 x 6/-

4 x 4/Incap

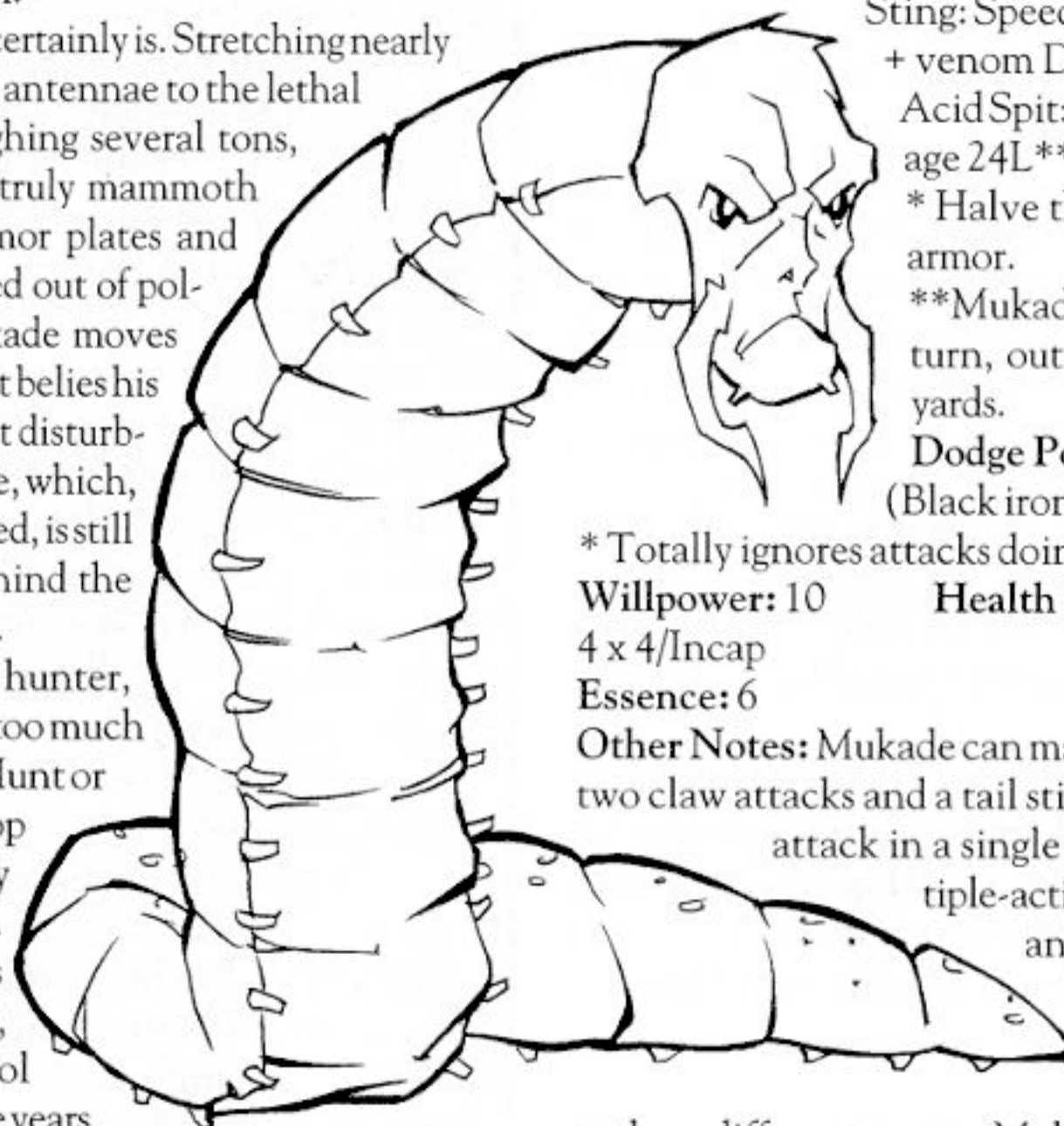
Essence: 6

Other Notes: Mukade can make up to four claw attacks or two claw attacks and a tail sting attack and a bite or a spit attack in a single turn without suffering multiple-action penalties. He can sacrifice

any one of these actions for a full dodge but cannot do so more than once per turn.

These attacks can be on up

to three different targets. Mukade regenerates 1L per turn. Mukade can only remain outside of the Wyld for a week before he must return to the Bordermarches. Otherwise, he will begin taking non-soakable lethal damage at the rate of one health level per day until he has reentered the Wyld. Regeneration does not heal this damage. While normally interested only in feeding his horrendous appetite, Mukade can sometimes be distracted by games of chance, riddles or flattery; typically, the harder or more original the puzzle, the more likely Mukade is to spare the life of the one posing it.



MUKADE'S VENOM

Mukade's tail stinger is hideously toxic; even the stoutest Exalt has reason to worry, and the mightiest of demons quail at the thought of his sting. Even Mukade is cautious with his poison; prey fouled with it is instantly made inedible, and even Mukade is not sure if he is immune to his own venom (although he would never admit this fact). Players of Exalted, God-Blooded and spirits can make a Stamina + Resistance roll against the poison; the difficulty is 5. If successful, the victim still suffers a -4 dice penalty to all actions that lasts for a number of hours equal to 12 - the number of successes rolled. If the roll is failed, the victim suffers three levels of lethal damage each turn for a number of turns equal to the amount the roll was failed by.

Lesser mortals die in writhing agony after a number of turns equal to their Stamina + Resistance; during this time, they are at -6 on all dice pools.

| Venom Type | Diff. | Success | Failure | Duration/Penalty |
|----------------|-------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Mukade's Venom | 5 | 3L | 2L/turn | -4/(12 - successes scored) hours |

RAPACE

Description: These creatures have been described as the land equivalent to sharks; proud, arrogant creatures, ready to respond at the slightest scent of blood. Rapaces are hairless giant apes, with pale skin slicked by the green lichen of their tropical homelands and yellow, slitted feline eyes. They dwell in the swamps along the Southwestern coasts, living in extended clans ruled by the strongest among them. The rapaces live off the flesh of their prey, only eating fruits and roots on the rarest of occasions. In times of true famine, they even turn upon the weakest members of their clan and devour them.

It is uncertain whether the rapaces were originally an inbred group of humans who were warped by the Wyld into something more ferocious and vicious or a type of ape that shed its hair and developed a near-human physique. They go naked and do not use weapons, but they are capable of working together extremely well, and their most cunning warriors can plan simple yet effective strategies when attacking villages. This tendency to abstract thought includes the ability to understand rough numbers (basically, "none," "some" and "lots") and the concept of "you go here, they go there, then attack." While the physically strongest of the clan will invariably be the leader, whether male or female (there is no gender difference in strength or speed), they are willing to allow truly cunning rapaces to plan attacks on human tribes. Such organized raids tend to be isolated incidences, though, only occurring when the rapaces have a driving need for food or to celebrate a solar or lunar eclipse.

The rapaces live in the branches of trees; they dislike spending time at ground level for the practical reason that the marshes are dangerous and that there are many other predators in the area. During winter, they huddle together for warmth and have even been known to spare humans in order to keep them as breeders, caregivers for children and sources of heat. Normally, the children of the clan are cared for by the older members and raised communally in a rough, vicious lifestyle that kills one out of every three young rapaces before they are five years old. Rapaces are not intelligent enough to express any concept of theology, but they recognize the power of forest spirits (or, at least,

acknowledge them as greater predators) and will flee from them or fall down trembling in their presence.

Rapaces are capable of interbreeding with humans and do so when they get the chance, during raids on human tribes or if they catch a human out alone in their territory. They seem to see no real difference between humans and themselves and will even attempt to forcibly "adopt"

human children into their clans — though such children rarely survive for long, as they are unable to adapt to rapace ways unless they are taken at a very young age. A child with rapace blood will be basically human, but he will always

retain something of his parent's bloodlust and ferocity and is likely to be hairless and have oddly colored eyes —

he will certainly have pointed teeth and claws.

Such children are usually exposed at birth by their human mothers. Half-

blood rapace children reared inside a rapace tribe will act like their rapace

parents and may never develop a fully human intelligence, barred from any

chance to interact with normal humans. Nobody has ever attempted (or yet been foolish enough to attempt) to raise a rapace child away from the tribe.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Endurance 3, Medicine 1, Presence 2, Resistance 3, Socialize 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2 (Jungles +1)

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 4L Defense 6

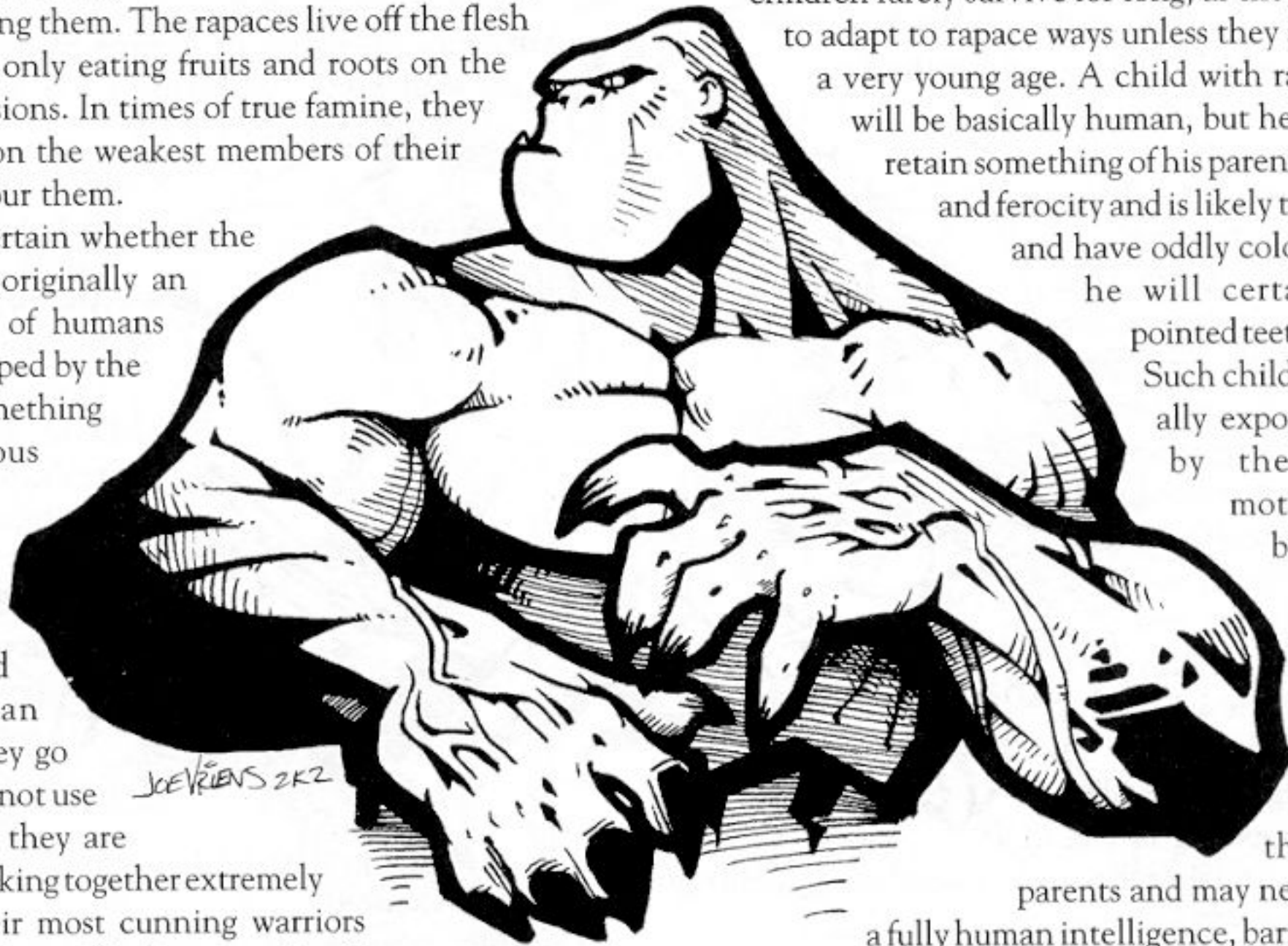
Punch: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 5B Defense 7

Dodge Pool: 5 Soak: 4L/6B

Willpower: 6 Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None



SANDSWIMMER

Description: The Southern deserts support a surprising number of creatures, most of them adapted to life in their harsh conditions. Sandswimmers are one of the region's more unusual denizens and among the best adapted as well. These creatures are seldom seen, both because they live in the deep desert and because they move just beneath the desert sand's surface. Generally, the only hint of their presence is a ripple in the sand itself and a quick flash of spines jutting up in the center of the disturbance and then disappearing again.

Sandswimmers look like an unnatural cross between a crab, a scorpion and a snake. Their long, sinuous bodies are covered in a hard, segmented shell. A row of spines runs from between the eyes, up the triangular, snake-like head to the base of the neck. The sandswimmer has six limbs, the front two equipped with crab-like pincers and the back ones with wide fins — the middle legs have a smaller set of fins, tapering to end in a sharp point. And the tail narrows toward the end and then widens again into a scorpion's sting.

The sandswimmer gets its name because it moves through sand as easily as a fish moves through water, gliding along as if the sand were liquid. Apparently, the creatures can breathe in sand as well, for their heads are often beneath the surface, though they can breathe air and sometimes swim with their heads aboveground, particularly when in battle.

In combat, a sandswimmer is deadly. Its front pincers are fast and sharp, its tail stinger is venomous, and its fanged bite contains poison as well. These creatures travel in small packs, four to twelve creatures in all, and generally circle their prey, attacking from all sides at once. Once subdued, prey are pulled under the surface and suffocated, then torn apart by the pack.

Dune People sometimes seek out sandswimmers for capture and taming. The beasts are as intelligent as horses and can be extremely loyal if handled properly. They make excellent desert mounts, as they are fast (movement of 40 yards, 120 yards for sprinting), dangerous and immune to the desert heat. Also, because they move primarily through the sand, rather than on the surface, sandswimmers can feel vibrations, allowing them to detect the approach of men or beasts from up to a mile away. This ability requires an opposed roll, the sandswimmer's Perception + Awareness + specialty (13 dice) versus the character's Dexterity + Sur-

vival or Stealth. If more than one character is present, each player rolls, and the lowest score is used — this roll is for the sandswimmer to locate the entire group, so the characters of those whose rolls were higher might personally escape notice. Note that this form of detection only works on characters who touch the ground. Within 50 yards, the sandswimmer gains a +4 to these rolls. Characters who cannot be tracked without magic are immune to the sandswimmer's vibration sense.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4 (Vibrations +4), Brawl 3, Dodge 4, Endurance 2, Stealth 4, Survival 4

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 6L + poison* Defense 8

Pincer: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 7L Defense 8

Sting: Speed 10 Accuracy 6 Damage 3L + poison** Defense 4

*Difficulty 2, Success 2L, Failure 4L, Duration/Penalty 4 hours/-3

**Difficulty 1, Success 1L, Failure 3L, Duration/Penalty 3 hours/-2

Dodge Pool: 5

Soak: 5L/7B (Shell, 5L/5B)

Willpower: 5

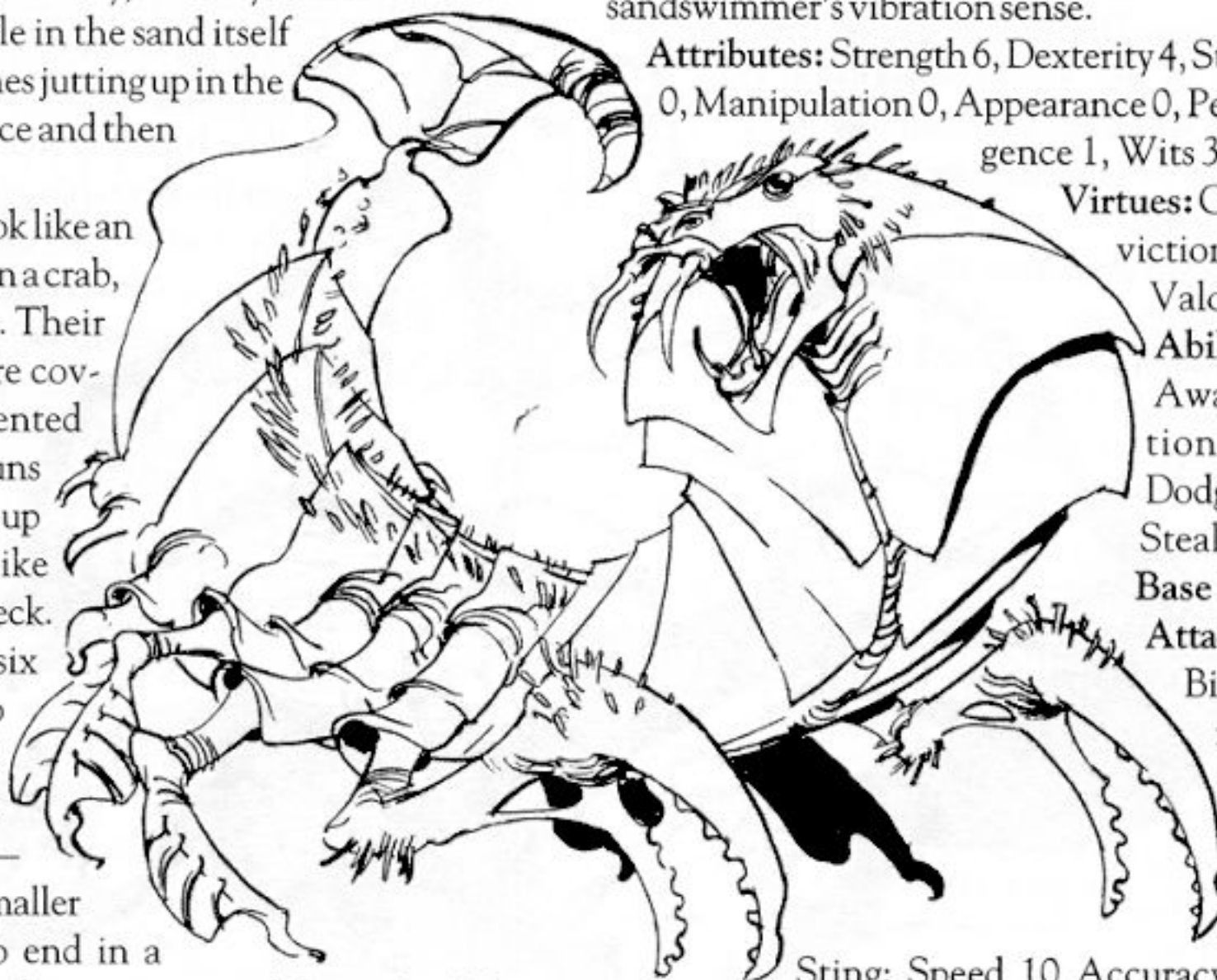
Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/

Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Sandswimmer shells make excellent desert armor, lightweight but durable and the same color as the sand (Soak: 5L/6B, Mobility Penalty: -1, Fatigue: 1). The poison in the creatures' fangs and stingers can be stored and used on weapons (use the values listed above), and the stinger itself makes an excellent natural knife (+1 to damage). Some desert craftsmen can fashion the entire stinger into a dagger, with the poison sac still in the handle (knife damage + 1L + poison), and these weapons are favored by Southern assassins, though the poison lasts only for three strikes.

Sandswimmers cannot actually breathe in sand, but they can hold their breath for five hours at a time. They also cannot see in sand, but their eyes are almost useless even above ground — they rely on their exceptional hearing to locate prey, both through sound and vibration.



SAYLA, THE YELLOW WYRM

Description: Far to the south, the open desert grows unbearably hot, and only the most skilled or crazed gem-seekers hunt for the rare jewels that lie beneath the sands. One of the most treasured stones sold in the markets of Gem and Paragon is the unusual yasal crystal, whose yellow facets have the power to entrap spirits and harness their power. Even the most veteran of jewel hunters must search vast areas to recover only a tiny cache of the incredibly valuable yasal, and the wise keep their favored search areas secret from everyone.

Nevertheless, the excesses of those who find sudden wealth can be great indeed, and rumors say that certain dreamstones circulating about the city of Gem contain visions of a great dustbowl far to the south where yasal crystals lie scattered on the windblown hardpan. Supposedly, those who have died of thirst, accident and foul play haunt the desolate sands, and the jewels customarily return to Gem already filled with gaunt specters. Often, these hungry ghosts babble incessantly of the "Yellow Wym."

A clever treasure seeker who captured the right dreamstones and pierced the secrets of a wealthy gem hunter or who questioned a ghost with a less-than-broken mind might piece together the location of this immense desert crater on the Southern edge of Creation. With great travail, she might even survive the perilous journey to this dusty valley of death, but surely then she would perish under the attentions of the Yellow Wym.

Sayla has lived at the Southern edge of Creation since the First Age. Men have long called her the Yellow Wym, while the spirit courts honor her with her proper name. The serpentine behemoth guards one of the greatest caches of yasal in Creation, buried and

scattered beneath the sands of a vast crater. A handful of minor spirits aid Sayla, at the behest of the spirit courts, determined to help her keep the yellow stones from falling into the hands of mortals.

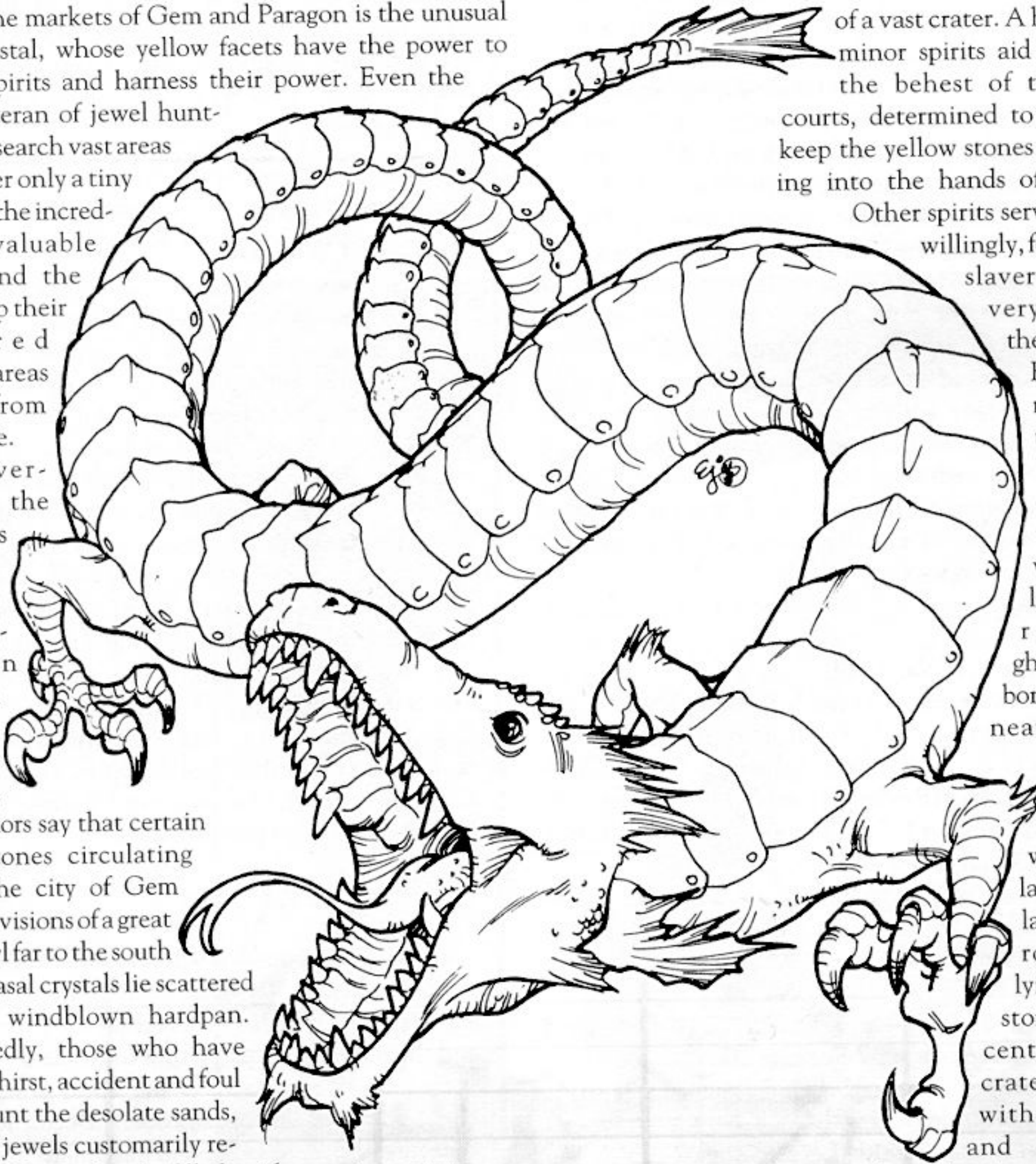
Other spirits serve her less willingly, forced into slavery by the very jewels they protect.

Furthermore, the terrible Wym commands a veritable legion of ragged ghosts whose bones rest beneath the

sands or whose remains lie within her lair. Sayla's lair is a porous low lying mass of stone at the center of the crater riddled with tunnels and chambers

carved by her own claws or at her behest by centuries of spiritual servants.

Sayla is easily 40 feet long, with sand-colored scales as tough as a chain shirt, manipulative, four-taloned feet and a deadly array of yellow fangs. Her claws and teeth are translucent and pale amber in hue like the precious gems over which she watches, and those who find themselves too close to these deadly weapons may catch a glimpse of the souls trapped within. Sayla has little regard for mortals, considering them nothing but greed-filled jewel thieves. Nevertheless, the dusty-scaled behemoth will speak to victims, usually paralyzed in fear





beneath her cavernous yellow eyes, if only to trick them into betraying any compatriots she may have missed. If possible, the Yellow Wyrms will keep a lone victim or two in agony for days in an effort to turn a new hungry ghost to her service.

In combat, Sayla is merciless, attempting to ensure that not a single foe escapes her clutches. Though she is a clumsy flyer, it is easy for her to ride upon the hot desert winds while she waits for a running man or horse to fall prey to exhaustion or dehydration. By day, the relentless desert heat pounds her foes, and by night, the dead stalk them. On the ground, Sayla quickly disables most foes with her superior strength and natural weaponry. In her lair, she will happily allow intruders to stumble into the myriad traps littering the maze of tunnels where she rests. The Yellow Wyrms possess little magic of her own, but she can call upon a deadly array of borrowed spirit Charms. In short, those gem hunters escaping with prized yasal crystals are those who are lucky enough to avoid her notice, whether by fortune or through stealth.

Attributes: Strength 14, Dexterity 2, Stamina 12, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues*: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 4

* Sayla cannot fail Valor rolls.

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Bureaucracy 2 (Negotiate with Spirits +3), Craft (Stone-Carving) 1, Endurance 1, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Flametongue, High Realm) 2, Lore 2 (Lesser Spirits +3), Occult 3 (Ghosts +1, Lesser Spirits +1), Presence 3, Stealth 1, Survival 2 (Deserts +3)

Supernatural Powers: Fangs of Yasal, Principal of Motion, Unending Thirst

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 24L Defense 5

Claw: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 20L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 0 **Soak:** 24L/30B (Hide, 18L/18B)*

* Ignores attacks doing less than 18L.

Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0x8/-1x13/-2x13/-4/Incap

Essence: 9

Essence Pool: 129

Other Notes: Should a Circle of Exalted defeat Sayla, she will bargain for her life. In such a circumstance, she is very likely to truthfully warn them that should they slay her many members of the spirit courts will be quite angry with them. Similarly, Storytellers are encouraged to tailor the spirits at her disposal to ensure that even an Exalted troupe experiences epic danger. See *Scavenger Sons*, page 47 for details on yasal crystals and dreamstones.

FANGS OF YASAL

Cost: 1 Willpower

The claws and teeth of the Yellow Wyrms are like living pieces of the yasal crystal, and should one strike a spirit or ghost, Sayla can imprison it reflexively by spending a single temporary Willpower point. Each of her claws can hold a spirit of up to Essence 3, while each tooth may contain a spirit of maximum Essence 2 to 5, depending upon the size of the tooth. Sayla may communicate with imprisoned spirits and commonly bargains with them for use of their power. She can use any captive spirits' or ghosts' Charms or powers with their permission, and all of them have entered into agreements of some sort or another. As such, at any time, Sayla has access to a wide array of Charms — currently, her favorite imprisoned source of Charms is a mighty zephyr who foolishly assaulted her in a fit of anger. Sayla must pay the Essence cost for these Charms, but this is hardly a problem for her.

UNENDING THIRST

Cost: None

Those unfortunates who die slowly at the talons of the Yellow Wyrms are cursed with a fate even worse than death. If Sayla can prolong the agony and thirst of one of her victims for three days, then the poor soul is reduced to the status of a hungry ghost. Provided an Intelligence + Occult roll succeeds and she retains access to its remains, the ghost is under her command as well. Even those who escape her control are often merely imprisoned within her fangs or claws.

SLEEPER IN THE SAND

Description: The sleepers are large, humanoid creatures that resemble gorillas in build but tower up to nine yards in height. These beasts aren't particularly intelligent and resemble reptiles in that they are cold-blooded and lay eggs. The sleepers are hairless, and their skin is hardened and rocklike, with chameleon-like qualities. Their natural color is light brown, but it changes with the surroundings. While quite pliant when warm, their skin hardens into an inflexible shell when it cools down.

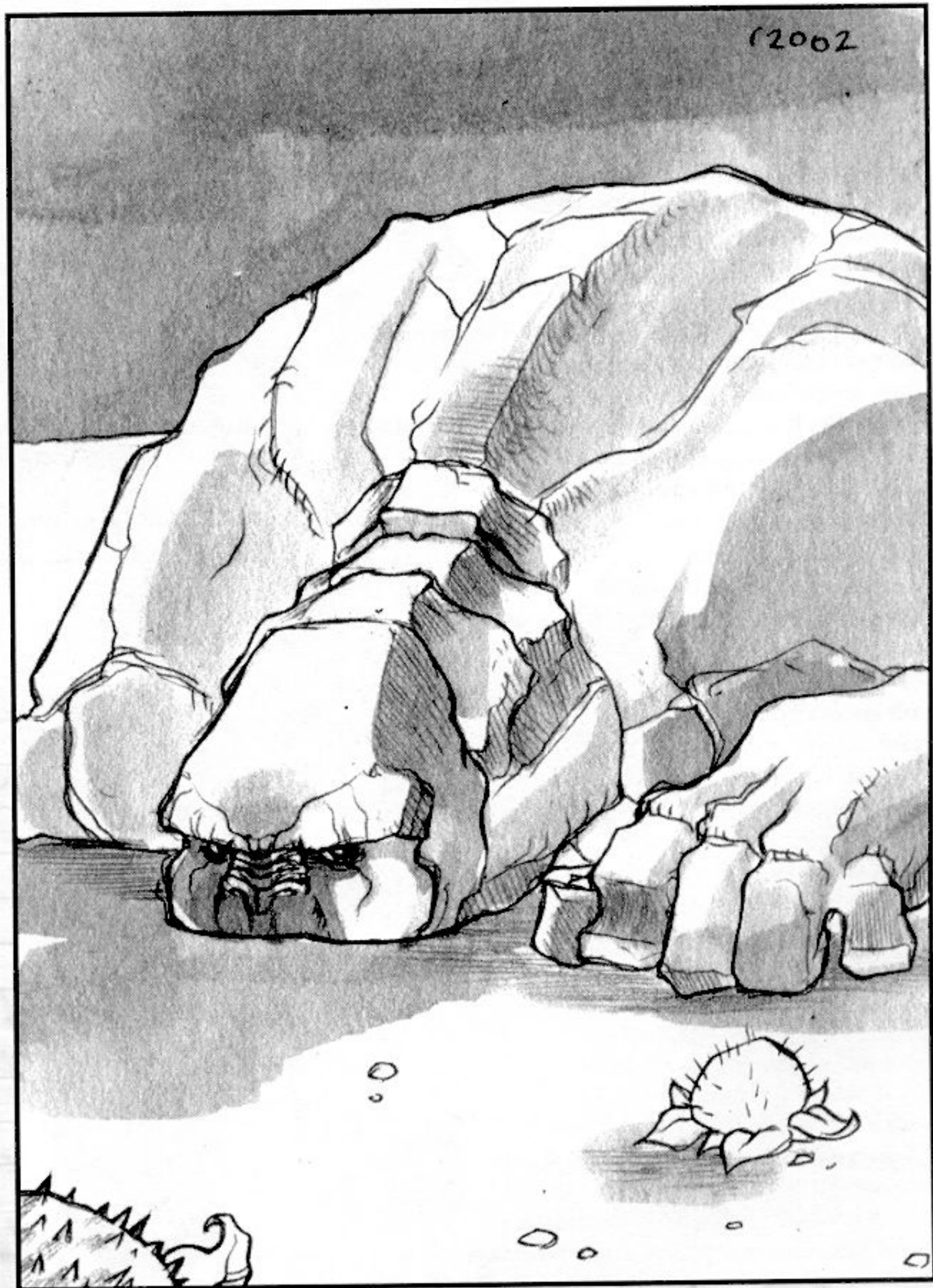
Indeed, heat is what keeps the sleepers going. They can function for limited amounts of time even if it gets cold, so long as their bodies retain heat, but if they're kept away from a source of heat, they become slower and slower and, finally, stop moving altogether. Even their thought processes slow down when it gets cold, and though they display surprising intelligence during the hot seasons, they're rather dull and stupid creatures when the temperature plummets.

This is why they burrow under the sand when the night comes and lie there dormant, until the sun heats the sand up again and they stir in their sleep. Unwary travelers sometimes make the mistake of lighting a fire on the desert sands, only to discover one of these creatures groggily rising from the ground in a burst of sand.

The sleepers are immune to extreme heat — Fiery Arrow Attack, for example, is quite useless against them. They have sturdy natural armor, but this and their immense strength mean they aren't particularly fast. The sleepers aren't very aggressive creatures; they prefer to avoid human company.

While the sleepers are solitary beasts, they do have a mating season during Descending Fire. At that time, they gather together, and travelers would do well to avoid their known rookeries, as the increased heat makes the sleepers smarter and faster, and the presence of newly laid eggs makes them eager to pick fights with anyone who shows up. Sleepers bury their eggs safely into the sands and let the sun take care of the rest.

The sleepers' tough skins can be used to create very flexible armor that is quite rare but in great demand, as it offers protection and camouflage in the same package. It's especially prized up north, where the cold weather causes the creatures' light skin to become tough and durable. Obviously, the Sleepers themselves





aren't overjoyed with the idea of being hunted and thus prefer to stay away from humans who would like to turn them into quality combat clothing.

Hunting the sleepers in the sand is dangerous sport for mortals, as the creatures are tough and can take a terrible beating before actually dying. Thus, the preferred method is to try and find them when they're asleep and helpless in the sands. Cracking the hardened skin requires a fair bit of work, but at least its perfectly safe.

The sleepers don't leave the Southern deserts, as they cannot survive colder Northern climes. That, combined with the lack of soft sand into which they can burrow, makes them sitting ducks.

Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Endurance 4, Resistance 4, Stealth 2, Survival 3 (Deserts +2)

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Punch: Speed 5 Accuracy 6 Damage 9B Defense 6*

* Sand sleepers can parry melee attacks unarmed due to their tough hides.

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 5L/9B (Tough hide, 5L/4B)

Willpower: 4 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Storytellers should feel free to modify the sleepers' statistics, depending on the month. During Resplendent Fire, add two dots to both the sleepers' Dexterity and Intelligence, whereas, during Ascending Water, subtract one dot from the creature's Dexterity. Applying these modifications and others that might be brought on by, for example, characters modifying the local temperature with sorcery, are left to the Storyteller's discretion. While the sleepers aren't Wyld creatures, they still have an ability identical to the Chameleon affliction. This ability gives them +3 bonus dice to all Stealth rolls when they're trying to avoid visual detection. Sleepers in torpor gain 2L/2B to their soak ratings.

SLEEPER ARMOR

Armor made from a sleeper's hide offers 5L/4B soak with no movement penalty in warm climates and 8L/7B soak with a Movement Penalty of only -1 in cold climates. This is because the wearer's body heat keeps the material slightly flexible where it's pressed against the user, making movement easier. Regardless of the temperature, such an armor has a Fatigue Value of 1. In addition to this, the color-shifting properties of the skin give the wearer three bonus dice to Stealth rolls when avoiding visual detection. Sleeper armors are very rare and are a Resources •••• item. (Note that when removed from the sleeper itself, the skin no longer offers protection against Fiery Arrow Attack or other heat-based attacks). Two suits of armor can be manufactured from a single adult sleeper.

THE ZUKULUKA

Description: The zukuluka were once an ordinary Southern tribe. Like most barbarians, they lived off the land and concentrated mostly on farming and hunting, with the occasional ritualized conflict with their neighbors.

Unfortunately, something happened to the tribe's livestock. Some savants theorize that the livestock may have wandered into a small pocket of Wyld left over from the Contagion and been transformed. Others among the educated have suggested that the Zukuluka are the result of an evil trick of the Fair Folk, and a particularly popular explanation is that some of the Zukuluka discovered something from a Wyld area — perhaps food or mutated livestock — and foolishly brought it back into their village. Regardless of the origin, the rest is history. Whatever the truth, none survive to tell the tale.

Whatever the source of the mutation, the end result was that the Wyld took hold of the village and subtly warped everything in it. The humans were left mostly alone, but the farm life was twisted monstrously. The oxen, the chickens and the goats were all warped in small ways, but the pigs were most severely twisted.

Desperate, foolish or perhaps enthralled, the zukuluka ate the beasts.

A pig will eat practically anything you give it — even its own species, given the chance and nothing else to eat. This trait was passed on to the zukuluka. In them, it became a hideous intelligence that allowed the zukuluka to absorb the very souls of the things they ate.

Now, the zukuluka look like huge humanoid pigs with the horns of a goat and the build of an ox — with the occasional chicken beak or wing

thrown in here and there. What's more, they retain the memories and the culture of the zukuluka they have eaten. The end result is a race of violent, quite insane mutants with schizoid tendencies, avoided and feared by all who live in the area. For a few generations, the new zukuluka have farmed their lands, putting their massive strength to good use, but they no longer hunt animals — they prefer to raid neighboring villages to fill their larders. At this point, "neighboring"

means a relatively long trip, as no one is too eager to live close to these terrible creatures.

It is possible for one to have conversations with the zukuluka, but who would want to? They have been known to talk in several voices and with several personalities, with a forceful, evil and overbearing overmind directing the conversation. Negotiating with them isn't wholly impossible, as they do understand tactical advantages and long-term planning; indeed, many of them are very intelligent indeed, having absorbed the minds of several individuals. The individual humans absorbed into these creatures retain their personalities and may even have

some influence on the warped beings, but they're quite subservient to the will of the creature's overmind. What's more, the thing the zukuluka understand best is their own hunger, and they are very much aware of how terribly good it feels to eat people.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

CS'02 Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Endurance 2, Medicine 1, Melee 3 (Spear +1), Presence 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 1, Survival 4

Supernatural Powers: Swallow Body and Soul
Base Initiative: 7



**Attack:**

Claws: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 6L Defense 7

Kick: Speed 4 Accuracy 6 Damage 7B Defense 6

Spear: Speed 10 Accuracy 8 Damage 8L Defense 7

Long Bow: Speed 7 Accuracy 6 Damage 7L (Rate 3, Range 200)

Dodge Pool: 6/5 Soak: 4L/6B (Breastplate, 4L/2B, -1 mobility penalty)

Willpower: 5 Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: The above statistics are meant to represent an average member of the zukuluka tribe. As their actual Attributes, Abilities, health levels and preferences toward weapons (and, indeed, animal traits such as horns or claws) vary wildly depending on who or what they've happened to eat, Storytellers should modify and individualize them as he sees fit. Some zukuluka are weaker but faster, others are more intelligent. It all depends on what they have been eating — one that made its way through a herd of cattle would be particularly strong, whereas one who turned the village council into a buffet would be quite intelligent. All zukuluka suffer from the Shattered Mind and Multiple Personalities derangements and the Swallow Body and Soul mutation unique to them, as well as any other Wyld mutations the Storyteller deems appropriate. Regardless of their Traits, the zukuluka are truly sick and twisted beings, governed by their neverending hunger for meat and memories.

SWALLOW BODY AND SOUL

This abomination-level Wyld trait causes its victims to immediately absorb certain traits of anything they eat. When eating small animals, the changes aren't very noticeable unless many such animals are consumed, but when dealing with, for example, cattle, swine, horses or human beings, the end results are quite spectacular. Within a few hours of consuming an animal (cooked or uncooked, it makes no difference), certain relevant traits start to emerge — horns grow, muscles swell, other personalities begin to emerge, and so on. The mutant doesn't even need to eat the entire animal, just a significant portion of the beast. If the meal happens to be a human being, only the first zukuluka to partake of the meal receives that person's memories and personality, but the physical traits can be shared by all.

Note that the results of this aren't necessarily beneficial, as the resulting hybrid may not be viable. A mutant who ate a fish might end up with gills on dry land. Other mutations make the zukuluka tribesman extremely clumsy or noisy. Those tribesmen who are unable to survive often end up as lunch themselves, which only adds to the zukuluka's famed insanity.

Should a player's character somehow end up eating of the zukuluka — a somewhat unlikely and disgusting possibility, to be sure — he would gain the same mutation and, presumably, the endless problems, as the abomination brings with it an endless hunger (and an inhuman appetite) for living things. Immediately becoming a vegetarian would be the best way to deal with the problem while looking for a cure, as Swallow Body and Soul only absorbs animals, not plant life.

CHAPTER FOUR THE WEST



Air Kraken • The Brass Leviathan • Earth-Shattering Worm • Fire Ant • Great Sea Elk • Kaigani Berg Rider • Mokrelus, the Many-Handed • Nymph's Blood • Oliphem, Watcher of the Sea • Pelagial • Rock-Roller • Singer of the Deep • Spring-Belly • The Thousand Hungry Wings

A land of chaotic tides and savage storms, the West is home to many hostile creatures; not just aquatic beasts, but the many strange and dangerous inhabitants of the world's most isolated and exotic environments. Generations spent exposed to the Sea and to Essence, isolated from the rest of Creation, have rendered many of the Western islands unique and deadly environments, full of fauna not seen elsewhere in Creation.

AIR KRAKEN

Description: A rare inhabitant of some of the stranger islands of the West, the air kraken is a solitary hunter that is apparently more closely related to a spore or fungus than the tentacled aquatic horror it is named after. These vile creatures float seemingly aimlessly in the forests and jungles of the Western islands, searching out prey. Although normally content to attack smaller animals, larger air krakens, or those desperate and hungry enough, have been known to attack humans for food. Additionally, the creatures are occasionally known to go mad and attack anything they see; more than one sailor has reported seeing a dozen or more air krakens all attempting to beat some helpless tree or boulder into submission.

A central oblong body supports a multitude of tentacles (up to 20, in some larger specimens) that can reach up to three yards in length. Some of these tentacles end in pale, lidless eyes, others in envenomed suckers, and some in tiny fanged mouths. Above this fringe of tentacles is a series of equally spaced orifices; these are not mouths, as some think, instead acting as crude jets that allow the air kraken to maneuver. The creature's primary mouth is on its underside, behind a tough set of lips. The creature's structure has no bones and a very spongy composition that makes it difficult to damage; sword blows just batter the air kraken about in the air. Fire is extremely effective against air krakens, however, sometimes explosively so.

Air krakens use their tentacles in combat but have a more insidious weapon at their disposal. When frightened or angry, they can release poisonous spores into the atmosphere surrounding them, affecting all breathing creatures nearby (usually a 20-foot sphere around the creatures, although this varies based on the size of the air kraken, the prevailing winds, and how angered or scared the kraken is). These spores are normally used only against large or "scary" opponents, but air krakens are not noted for their brilliance

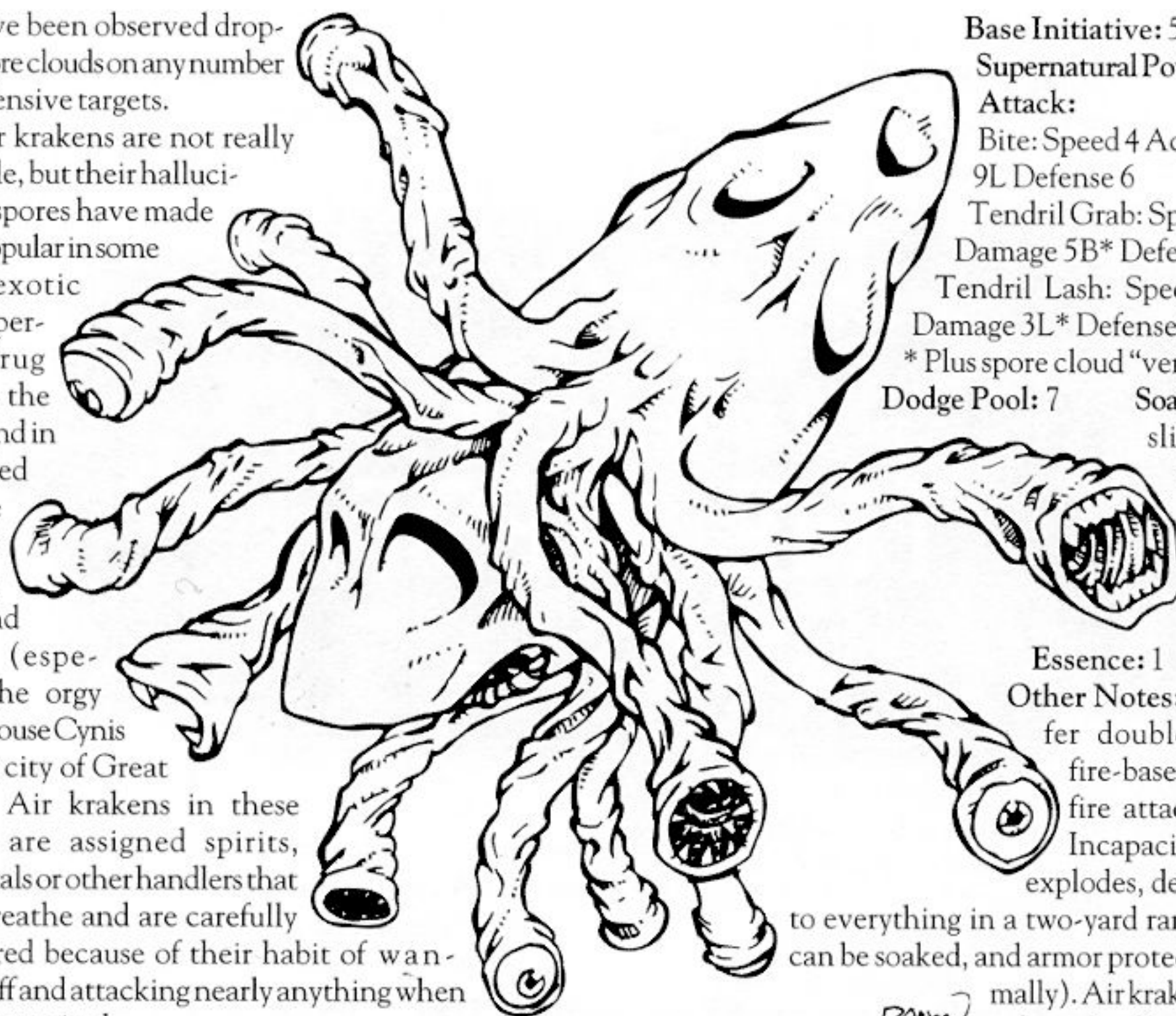
and have been observed dropping spore clouds on any number of inoffensive targets.

Air krakens are not really trainable, but their hallucinatory spores have made them popular in some more exotic (or desperate) drug dens in the West, and in the jaded pleasure palaces of the East and South (especially the orgies of House Cynis and the city of Great Forks). Air krakens in these houses are assigned spirits, elementals or other handlers that don't breathe and are carefully monitored because of their habit of wandering off and attacking nearly anything when left unsupervised.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Brachiate +1, Fly +2), Awareness 3, Brawl 3 (Bite +1, Grab +1), Dodge 3, Endurance 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 2 (Ambush +2, They Never Look Up In Time +1)



Base Initiative: 5

Supernatural Powers: Spore Cloud
Attack:

Bite: Speed 4 Accuracy 6 Damage 9L Defense 6

Tendrils Grab: Speed 5 Accuracy 7 Damage 5B* Defense 7

Tendrils Lash: Speed 6 Accuracy 7 Damage 3L* Defense 7

* Plus spore cloud "venom" poison.

Dodge Pool: 7 Soak: 3L/6B (Spongy, slippery structure, 3L/3B)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels:

-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Air krakens suffer double damage from fire-based attacks, and if a fire attack brings one to Incapacitated or below, it explodes, dealing 6L damage

to everything in a two-yard range (this damage can be soaked, and armor protects against it normally).

Air krakens are too stupid to be trained in the conventional sense and are not domesticable,

but they can, with extreme methods, be rendered manageable. They are Control Rating 4 and can only follow very simple commands with constant supervision. The venom on an air kraken's poisoned tendrils is identical to its spore toxin (see boxed text) and takes effect if the tentacles strike.

SPORE CLOUD

When enraged or terrified, the air kraken can release a cloud of toxic spores that envelops its attackers or prey. These spores are slightly heavier than air and slowly float to the ground, but they remain active for some time (one scene) and are very light and easily kicked back up into the atmosphere. There are three types of spores normally associated with this ability (Storytellers should feel free to create other types): masking, hallucinatory and venom. Masking spores attack their victim's vision; if the victim's player fails his Stamina + Resistance check, the character is rendered near-blind, suffering the penalty listed to all physical Ability checks until he recovers his sight. This attack has no effect on the blind or on those not dependent on sight to maneuver or direct attacks. Hallucinatory spores fill the victim's head with mirages and phantasms; the bashing damage caused by this spore is transitory and is recovered quickly once the spore's effects have passed (once the penalty duration is passed, any bashing damage suffered is recovered at the rate of one level per 10 minutes). The venom spores are a standard toxin.

All of these spores' effects are reinforced with continued contact (roll each turn the victim is in the spore cloud), but most people quickly build up a temporary resistance to their effects. Characters cannot be affected by a given type of spore more than once per day.

| Venom Type | Diff. | Success | Failure | Duration/Penalty |
|---------------|-------|---------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Masking | 2 | none | 2B | 15 minutes (vision-based)/-6 |
| Hallucinatory | 3 | 4B | 6B | (8 - [Stamina + Resistance]) hours/-2 |
| Venom | 3 | 4L | 3B | 2 hours/-3 |

THE BRASS LEVIATHAN

Description: Upon witnessing the destruction of a convoy of four of his family's ships in an attack by the Brass Leviathan, Admiral Peleps Han was quoted by a scribe as lamenting that, "Such is the evil of the Anathema, that it haunts the Realm even now." In the West, nothing is more emblematic to the Realm of the dark legacy of the First Age than the Brass Leviathan, an ancient construct that has harried the Scarlet Empire at sea for centuries.

Those who survive its attacks agree that the Brass Leviathan was forged and not born. The Leviathan is shaped like a vast, stylized metal fish, with two great mirrors where a fish's eyes would be and eight metal fins placed along its length for steering. This mammoth engine of destruction is a full 40 feet in length, with brass and orichalcum armored plating layered beneath many centuries' accumulation of barnacles and coral. Running inside the length of the creature is a massive drive screw that propels it through the water faster than any mundane vessel, and this, combined with the steering fins, allows the leviathan to twist and turn through the water with surprising agility. On the front of the leviathan is a great, studded orichalcum prow, capable of smashing through even the imperishable hulls of

First Age warcraft. Along the sides of its hull are a half dozen ancient Essence cannons capable of blasting a hole through the flimsy vessels of the Second Age. There is room for a single person inside of a small compartment near the bow, designed to hold a Twilight sorcerer, if one saw fit to accompany the machine on its missions.

Unlike warstriders and other machine-relics, the Brass Leviathan needs no pilot and will accept none

unless it is a Solar of the Twilight Caste who knows the command words to open the single portal into the compartment at the bow. Savants who have studied the lore of its creation and the reasons for its endless fury say that when the construction of the massive vessel's frame was complete, a mighty spirit was bound into the heart of it. The god was forced to swear great oaths that it would guard the Old Realm ceaselessly and forever. A cabal of the greatest Twilight smiths and summoners oversaw the

entire construction process. Such was the might and knowledge of these sorcerers that the spirit's binding to the fabric of the vessel was done in such a way that the two were inextricable — the god within the Leviathan can only be freed with the destruction of the Brass Leviathan itself. At the time of the Leviathan's creation, a few island nations in the West had risen up against the rule of the Exalted, and so, the construct was to be both



soldier and deterrent. The very thought of the brass and orichalcum monstrosity was meant to strike terror in the hearts of the enemies of the Deliberative.

When the Leviathan finished the complete destruction the rebel's navy after months of warfare, it returned to the docking facilities near the heart of the Old Realm. For decades, it rested, called forth from its berth only when its Twilight masters decided that the strength of the Realm had to be demonstrated for recalcitrant subjects. One time, however, the Leviathan returned to its facilities to find that the Dragon-Blooded had risen up and slain its creators. Maddened at this betrayal and furious at itself for allowing the Dragon-Blood free use of the seas to hunt the remaining Solars while the Leviathan had been dealing with its mission, the construct vowed revenge.

Since that day all those years ago, the Leviathan has prowled the seas, harassing the shipping of the Realm and assaulting its navy. The spirit that directs the construct is not particularly intelligent, but its cunning is the stuff of legend, and so, it has survived a thousand traps set by the Terrestrial Exalted and their navies. When the Scarlet Empress first took the throne, the Realm directed a massive campaign in the West against the Brass Leviathan. The Dynasts commanded bound demons and elementals to seek out the construct's hidden Manse, but it was to no avail. The Brass Leviathan was clever enough to lie low for years until the Realm gave up the hunt, at which point the mechanical monstrosity's attacks began again in earnest. A vicious cycle was begun, in which constant raids brought forth reprisals, followed by years of silence until the raids began anew. After centuries of this, the Realm has learned to track the disappearances of ships in the West and to steer shipping around where it believes the Leviathan is hunting.

According to legend, there is a mighty Hearthstone set into the heart of the Brass Leviathan. The powerful Essence channeled through this gem keeps the Leviathan running smoothly and supplements the power of the terrible spirit bound into the vessel's frame. It is no secret that the gem's origins lie in the Manse where the spirit and its metal form goes to rest, but the actual location of this undersea retreat has never been discovered. The Realm has offered a massive reward of jade

talents for the location of this Manse, and House Peleps in particular would do anything to destroy or gain control over the Brass Leviathan.

Attributes: Strength 30, Dexterity 8, Stamina 25, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 3 (Swim +3), Awareness 4, Brawl 2 (Ram +3), Endurance 4, Lore 4, Presence 5 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 5

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Ram: Speed 5 Accuracy 12 Damage 20L Defense 10

Essence Cannons (6): Speed 8 Accuracy 2 Damage 60L (Rate 1, Range 1,200*)

* The Leviathan possesses three Essence cannons on the port and starboard sides of its hull. It can fire all six simultaneously if need be, but can only target objects on roughly the same plane as the Leviathan — when surfaced, for instance, it can only fire at surface ships, not airborne targets, and when submerged, it can only fire at submerged targets.

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 50L*

* Ignores attacks of below 20L raw damage

Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** 50/100*

* The first number is the amount of damage needed to breach the Brass Leviathan's ancient hull, the second the amount of damage needed to destroy the Leviathan completely.

Essence: 7

Other Notes: The Brass Leviathan can communicate when surfaced in a raspy, echoing voice, if it chooses to. Due to the procedure that bound the spirit to the Brass Leviathan, it has no access to Charms and is not recognized as a spirit by any of the local courts. Spirits and elementals alike steer clear of the bizarre construct.

The Brass Leviathan is not treated as an object for the purposes of effects that damage or destroy objects. Also, though it is not mindless, it is treated as a construct or automaton for the purposes of effects that have no power over such creatures.

EARTH-SHATTERING WORM

Description: Despite its troubling name, this creature is comparatively small and seems harmless enough; it looks like a normal earthworm but is a yard or so long and apparently made of solid ruby or sapphire. This creature was spawned from gemstones deep in the ground, who saw the beauty of the elementals of earth and wished to imitate their power and might. While these worms are hard to find, they are even harder to keep once found; their particular power is that they can burrow through any earth or stone. They have been known to cause local earthquakes and have collapsed buildings by undermining them.

Earth-shattering worms dislike remaining in a single place; they prefer to keep on moving, boring through solid rock. While they cannot penetrate the Five Magical Materials, they can dig through almost all other substances. They enjoy the taste of mercury, and it seems to intoxicate them; they can drink up to a pint at a time and will then wriggle lazily around in circles for several hours, unable to consciously direct their actions. The only thing that can contain them (beside the Magical Materials) is a barrier of ruby or sapphire, and even then, a worm will be constantly probing at the joints and edges, trying to find a way to escape.

The worms need no food or rest and do not suffer from aging. Certain worms are kept by the Mountain Folk of the Realm and are used to assist in difficult excavations, with mercury lures being employed to persuade the worms to dig in particular areas or directions. They are kept in family heirloom cages of ruby and sapphire and are exhibited on important occasions. Elementals of the earth despise or pity the worms, which they consider to be pathetic imitations of themselves, and will either destroy or release them if they see them kept as prisoners.

A worm has no way to attack humans — and no particular motive for doing so — but is difficult to

destroy, due to its rocklike nature. Worms are unintelligent, but will react to attacks by burrowing in the opposite direction from the attacker. The worms' love for mercury can be used to lure them into traps. An earth-shattering worm leaves distinctive tunnels behind it in the rock that it has burrowed through. These creatures do not spawn young; new earth-shattering worm eggs are formed deep in the earth, amid veins of sapphires and rubies, and hatch when they have grown large enough.

One in every thousand earth-shattering worms has unusually high mental capabilities (Intelligence 4, Wits 4). Such worms are able to lead dozens or even hundreds of their more stupid kindred in great swarms that can topple castles or collapse mines. These highly intelligent worms seek the worship and reverence that humans give to the greater earth-

spirits. However, since they have no real way of communicating this, they tend to choose a town and start undermining buildings — especially temples — until the humans living there start offering sacrifices to whatever power is causing the destruction.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Endurance 5, Resistance 3, Stealth 3

Base Initiative: 5

Attack: None

Dodge Pool: 5

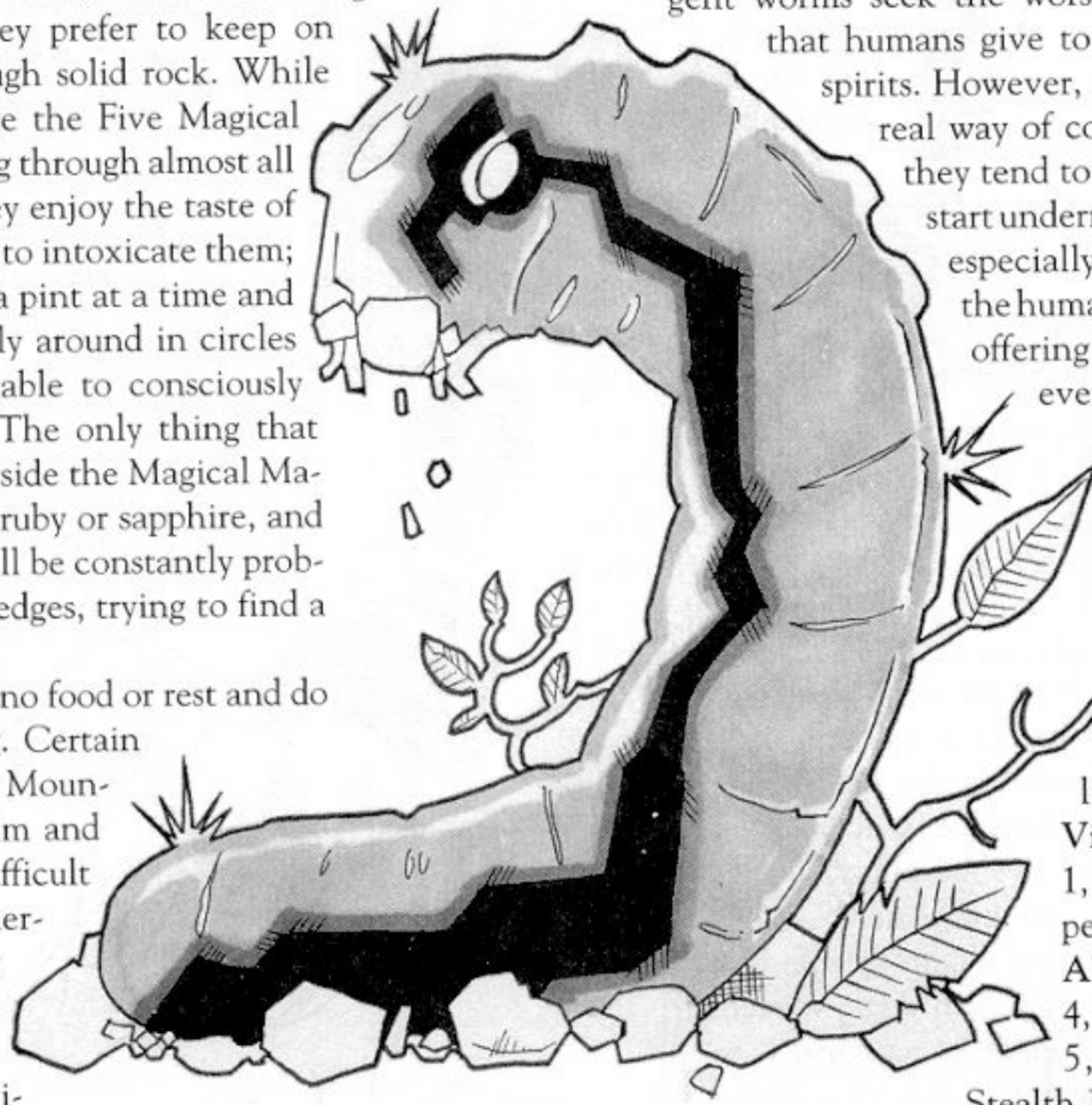
Willpower: 5

Essence: 2

Other Notes: None

Soak: 8L/14B (Carborundum structure, 6L/10B)

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap



FIRE ANT

Description: These hardy creatures certainly suit their name. Fire ants do look like ants, though they are much larger, roughly four inches long, and possess skin that glows the color of a banked fire. Their hind legs are longer, more like crickets, and the front legs have sharp barbs on them, similar to the wicked mandibles beneath their jaw. Fortunately, these creatures are quite rare.

These creatures live in the magma of volcanoes and have lava in their veins — their bodies burn as hot as any fire and cannot be damaged by heat or flame. Fire ants build their nests deep inside a volcano, down in the caldera where the magma pools — the fire ants seek lava a short distance from the main pool where the molten rock is tacky enough to retain its shape while maintaining a comfortable level of heat. And if they stayed in those warrens, the fire ants would merely be a curiosity, instead of an actual danger.

Unfortunately, they leave the nest often and always for the same reason — to gather food. Fire ants are wholly omnivorous, but their favorite food is meat. In order to feed, the ants put together hunting parties of 10 to 30. The majority of the hive makes a vast ant-line from the heart of the caldera to the lip of the crater, ferrying fresh molten rock to the lip. The magma is tossed over the edge, creating a stream of lava that the hunting party climbs into and floats downhill inside until the lava begins to cool, at which point they climb on top and ride the rest of the way. Once the lava flow peters out, the fire ants clamber back onto dry land and begin their search. They hunt mainly by smell, and upon finding a likely target, the entire party will swarm over it. Because the fire ants are creatures of fire, their

bodies are burning hot to the touch, and they cook the victim as they cover it. Then, the ants tear the body apart. When nothing remains, the ants will locate another target and repeat the process. Once the hunting party is full, they carry any leftovers back up the volcano to the nest, to feed their queen and the young.

As with normal ants, fire ants are a good deal stronger than their size suggests and can carry close to 10 times their own body weight.

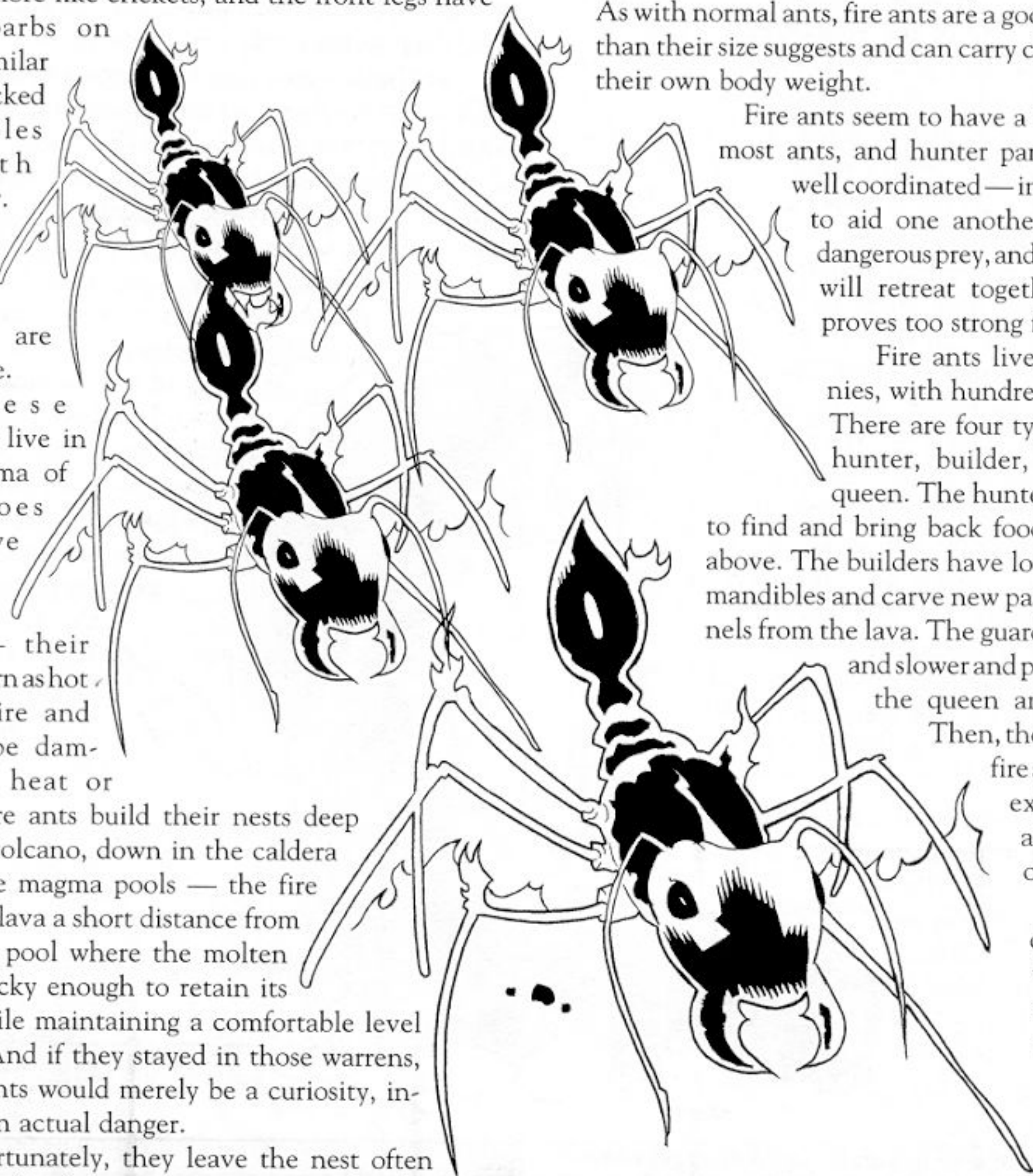
Fire ants seem to have a hive mind, like most ants, and hunter parties are always well coordinated — individuals move to aid one another against more dangerous prey, and the entire party will retreat together if a target proves too strong for it.

Fire ants live in large colonies, with hundreds to a warren. There are four types of fire ant: hunter, builder, guardian and queen. The hunters form parties to find and bring back food, as described above. The builders have longer but duller mandibles and carve new passages and tunnels from the lava. The guardians are larger and slower and protect the nest, the queen and the larvae.

Then, there is the queen fire ant — only one exists per nest, and she is the only female.

The ants do have two weaknesses. First, cold makes them sluggish and clumsy. This isn't much help in the

Southeastern islands, of course, where the days are long and hot, but the ants generally retreat at sunset, either returning home or finding a warm spot to hide until dawn. Their second weakness, however, is far more common — water. Fire ants steam when hit with water and can actually cook themselves as a result. They also lose their footing on wet surfaces and become disoriented. This is why most volcanic islands have communities along the beach, where the fire ants won't go, and traveling tribesmen always carry a gourd or shell of water to cover their retreat should they encounter fire ants.



The statistics below are for an average hunting party of 20 fire ants. For a larger group, add four additional -0 health levels, and increase the Brawl rating by two.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Endurance 4, Resistance 5, Socialize 3, Survival 4

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 3L Defense 5

Claw: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 2L Defense 3

Touch: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 2L Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 6 **Soak:** 3L/4B (Made of fire, 1L/0B)

Willpower: 3 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/
Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Fire ant shells could be made into clothing or footwear resistant to flames — the shells are too thin to make into decent armor.

Because fire ants contain actual lava in their blood, any weapons that pierce their skins run the risk of melting. This will not affect an weapons made of the Five Magical Materials or metal weapons of exceptional workmanship, but roll a die each time a normal weapon strikes an ant. If the roll results in a success, subtract 1 from one of the weapon's values (attacker's choice). Wooden weapons of any quality will burst into flame upon contact with a fire ant, losing 1 point per strike, and characters attacking unarmed will take 2L fire damage per strike.

FIRE ANT QUEEN

Description: Each fire ant warren has a single queen. These regal insects are roughly one foot in size, with elongated back sections like those of a wasp, complete with stinger. The queen's chamber is always at the bottom of the nest, where the magma is near-liquid and the temperatures are at their highest. The queen stays in this chamber at all times, only leaving it if the entire warren is in danger. She produces all the fire ant young, mating with each adult fire ant in turn. The queen also organizes the warren and issues orders to the males. Every male fire ant will die to protect the queen, but she is far from defenseless herself.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Endurance 4, Resistance 5, Socialize 3, Survival 4

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 9 Accuracy 8 Damage 5L Defense 6

Claw: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 2L Defense 4

Stinger: Speed 12 Accuracy 12 Damage 6L Defense 10

Touch: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 4L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 4L/8B (Made of white-hot fire, 2L/4B)

Willpower: 3 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/
-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: None



GREAT SEA ELK

Description: Great sea elk can be found nearly anywhere in the Western Ocean where the waters are deep enough to support their bulk. Large enough to avoid being prey to all but the most desperate and dangerous of aquatic predators (and sometimes man), sea elk that survive the rutting seasons would seem to have long lives assured. Still, the sea floor is dotted with the skeletons of great bulls, carried there by mating combat, their horns still locked together after centuries.

Not really elk, these great beasts are whales. They are among the largest creatures in the sea, with antlers that stretch as wide as the length of a big ship. Mature sea elk have bodies that reach more than 100 feet in length. Scholars estimate that they are nearly as big around as they are long. The skin of the great sea mammals is a mottled light gray and white.

They have proportionately small fore limbs, but their hooves are still bigger than most creatures' skulls. There is a small dorsal fin set far back on their body. Great sea elk produce loud, low-frequency moans that can be heard for hundreds of miles both above and below the deep ocean waters. Great sea elk propel themselves beneath the sea using their incredibly powerful tails. They also use those massive appendages to thrust themselves above the surface of the waves. They appear to breathe air, though they may hold their breath for hours at a time.

Sailors say that there is nothing more magnificent on the sea than the sight of two male sea elk fighting for breeding rights during the creatures' mating season. A favorite tale in sea-town taverns is the description of two of these great beasts leaping out of the ocean with such force that their entire bodies rise above the waves momentarily and crash their massive racks together, before they splash down again into their watery homes. These tales are always told with an air of caution, as it is also said there is nothing more dangerous to observe on the sea. The backwash of these mating rituals can crack ships and send even a strong sailor hurtling from the deck of his

craft and into the waves. Other tales tell of a sea-elk graveyard somewhere in the Western Ocean. More than one merchant house of the Realm has invested in expeditions to locate this reputedly inexhaustible source of great sea elk ivory. A few have returned, empty-handed, but most of these exhibitions have disappeared without a trace.

Great sea elk typically could care less about mortal ships. Such craft are too small to be bothered with. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, and they will destroy a ship that irritates them. Since certain artists of the Realm have taken to carving massive sculptures from the antlers of sea elk, such occurrences have become more frequent of late. In addition, when the moon is full, sea elk become aggressive. Scholars have yet to discover why this might be, but it also seems to be a new phenomenon.

In the last decade, no fewer than three young sea elk have

been seen in the waters around the Blessed Isle. Some scholars warn of what might be driving the massive beasts eastward. Ultimately, it is unclear what motivates the migration and new behavior of these magnificent creatures.

Attributes: Strength 18, Dexterity 4, Stamina 21, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 4 (Swim +2), Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Endurance 4, Presence 5 (Intimidation +3), Resistance 3, Socialize 3, Stealth 2

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Crash: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 26B Defense 7

Gore: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 21L Defense 8

Dodge Pool: 4/2 Soak: 11L/21B

Willpower: 6 Heath Levels: -0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Great sea elk have a swimming rate of 60 miles per hour.



KAIGANI BERG RIDER

Description: Every child in the West knows the story of the pirate warlord Kaigan and his fleet of cutthroats: how they terrorized the sea-lanes of the Wavecrest Archipelago for decades, how they met the imperial navy under the command of Peleps Ursa only to be crushed and, finally, how they vanished into the ice floes of the North, a broken and battered foe, lost to the mists of time and the crushing embrace of the frozen seas. Nothing human could survive such conditions, and Kaigan's armada soon became the stuff of legend and folk tale.


It now seems that the legend has returned to sail once more under the light of the sun. With the withdrawal to the Inland Sea of those few imperial squadrons still on duty in the West, shipping in the Wavecrest Archipelago has once again come under attack — not from the Lintha pirates of the Southwest, but from the unanticipated North. Each year, with the onset of winter, massive icebergs drift south with the current and impinge upon the local sea lanes. Only, now, those icebergs carry a bloodthirsty crew, a horde of Wyld barbarians who call themselves the Kaigani and claim descent from the pirates of old.

They target the settlements and ports of the West, sailing their iceberg "flagships" close to shore and then launching raids via small ice floes they calve off from the main berg and appear to pilot by magic.

The berg riders openly bear the mark of the Wyld: Each Kaigani warrior, male or female, is as translucent as the frozen vessel that carries him across the water's surface. Azure blood flows sluggishly beneath skin like glass, and the dim blue outlines of the internal organs are visible to all who see one. The slow beating of the Kaigani heart is a particularly disturbing sight. All of this is visible for the Kaigani fight in the nude, clad only in a thin mist of chill and cloud and seemingly immune to the cold that accompanies them. Their weapons — fell axes and spears mostly — are made of ice, hardened by black sorcery and stained with gore. And their eyes, pale like the rest of them, show no signs of mercy.

Survivors of Kaigani raids report that the barbarians attack without warning, landing and battling in almost total silence. They do appear to possess their own language, a corrupted version of Seatongue. But no one has had the time or opportunity to study their speech and learn more of their customs. Indeed, the best way to survive a Kaigani raid has generally been to





run or sail as swiftly as possible in the opposite direction. The Kaigani occasionally ride giant polar bears into battle, and these beasts are known for their speed at short distance but have little endurance.

Savants can only guess at the history of the Kaigani between the time of their eponymous ancestor's disappearance centuries ago and their return to plague the West within months of the imperial withdrawal. The most popular theory is that Kaigan and his remaining pirates passed into the Middlemarches or deeper of a Wyld region, underwent a horrifying transformation and emerged only recently. Such a sojourn would account for their frightening physical alteration. However, their command of magic is unprecedented in a Wyld barbarian tribe, and Imperial intelligence suspects that someone — or something — is aiding the Kaigani. Preparations are underway in Wavecrest for a summertime expedition north, both to strike back at the Kaigani (if only for morale's sake) and to acquire more information about conditions in the frozen Northwest. Perhaps the berg riders will prove to be less deadly without the winds of winter to back them up, or perhaps the natural cold of the Northern seas will be enough to strengthen them.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 5

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Endurance 2 (Cold +3), Medicine 1, Melee 2 (Great Axe +1), Performance 1, Presence 1 (Creep Out +1),

Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 2 (Icepack +2), Survival 2 (Icepack +1)

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Punch: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 3B Defense 4

Kick: Speed 2 Accuracy 3 Damage 5B Defense 3

Great Axe: Speed 5 Accuracy 5 Damage 10L Defense 5

Knife: Speed 8 Accuracy 4 Damage 4L Defense 2

Short Spear: Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 6L Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 4 **Soak:** 3L/6B (Skin hardened by ice magic, 2L/3B)

Willpower: 6 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1 (2 for shamans)

Other Notes: The weird mist that surrounds each Kaigani raider is similar to frozen fog and lowers the temperature of the air around them, causing their opponents' joints to stiffen. In game terms, anyone fighting a Kaigani berg rider in hand-to-hand combat suffers a -2 dice pool penalty to his actions in battle. Moreover, the mist is supernatural: Ordinary protections against cold (such as warm furs) fail to stop it. Only a character with innate or magical resistance to cold can ignore the dice pool penalty. Berg riders' polar bear mounts will often fight alongside them. Use the bear statistics on p. 316 of the *Exalted* rulebook in such circumstances.

Kaigani sorcery is a form of mortal magic. Through Intelligence + Occult rolls and ritual under favorable circumstances, the Kaigani can generate fog, propel an iceberg through the water or cloak the tribe and iceberg from the eyes of sentries. Kaigani cryomancers can strengthen their rituals by group participation but usually only do so for invisibility and weather magic; one sorcerer can calve and pilot an iceberg.

MOKRELUS, THE MANY-HANDED

In the time before history, when the Primordials enslaved the gods and toyed with reality, Mokrelus was the favored creation of one of these forgotten beings. Mokrelus is a behemoth who has lived thousands of lives in hundreds of specially created bodies. One mind, one soul, one purpose have guided all of these bodies. And Mokrelus has the ability to shape bodies to his specific purposes.

Mokrelus is a giant being of near-perfect human qualities. His skin is smooth and bronzed, his huge face broad and marked by a noble chin. His smile warms the coldest heart. His voice resonates melodically. His eyes are fatherly and wise. His fingers are long and strong, and his hands wide and friendly. He was a paragon for the mortals he helped rule in all ways except two. Mokrelus is 20 feet tall and has four arms that each branch into two forearms and hands. These allow him to mold his creations swiftly and perfectly.

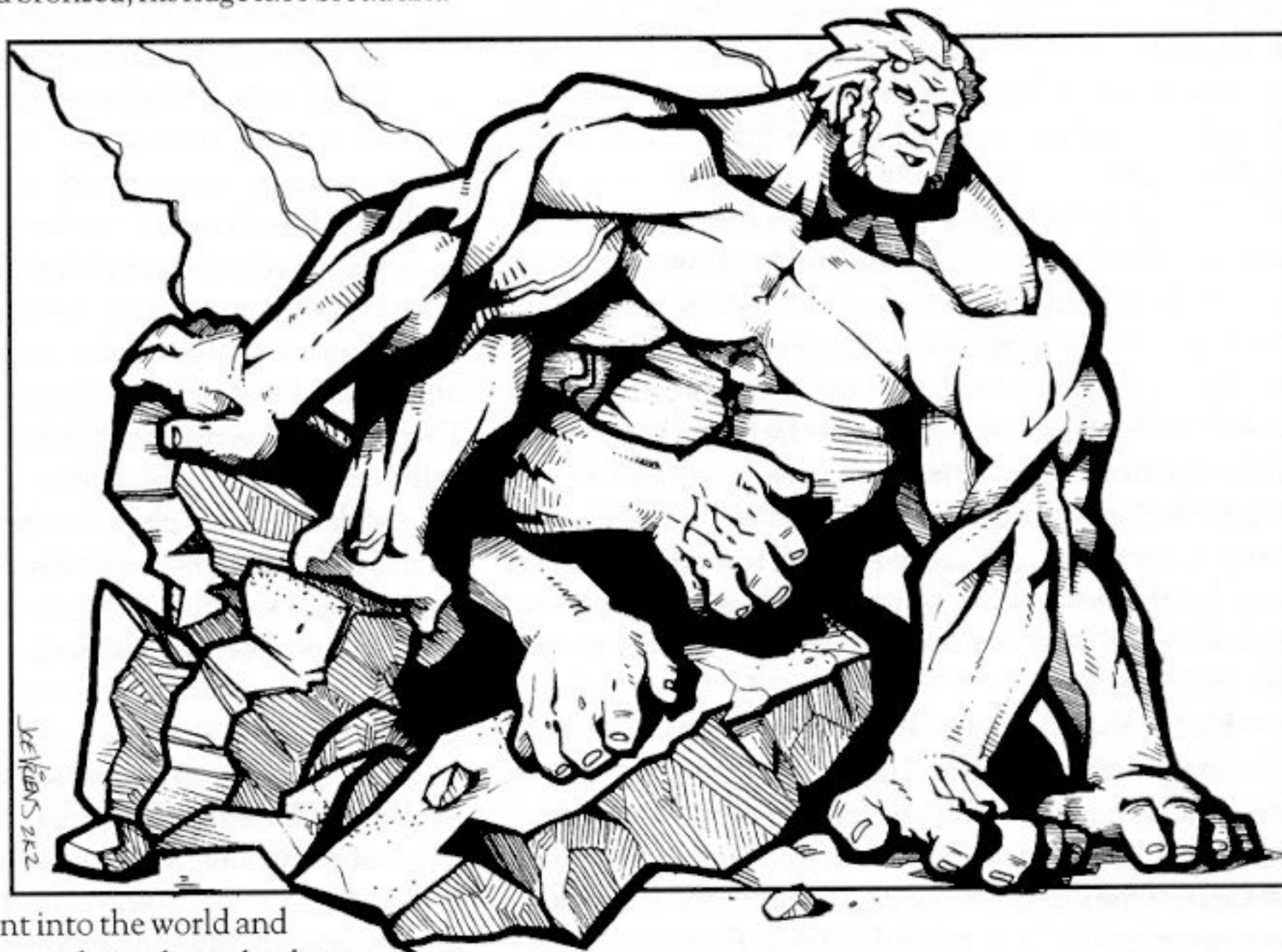
Mokrelus was born to be the guiding force for mortals in the world. The bodies he created went into the world and lived among the mortals, watching them, leading them and enforcing law upon them. Mokrelus was able to police Creation through the powers the Primordials granted him. "Many-handed" described more than his physical shape, as his splinter bodies were extensions of himself. He could reach across the world at a moment's notice to act swiftly and surely, executing justice or bringing peace. Mokrelus was taught to believe in order and law above all else and to impart those beliefs on the chaotic world. He was created perhaps too well, and his desire for order caused him to rebel against his masters.

Mokrelus saw the Primordials as too chaotic a force to govern Creation but viewed the enslaved gods as a promise of a more orderly world. He whispered in the ears of the gods and then in the ears of men, urging them to revolt against the Primordials. When they finally did, Mokrelus rejoiced.

When the Exalted soldiers of the gods struck against the Primordials, Mokrelus failed to lift a hand to aid either his masters or the rebellion. Instead, he took his bodies and filled in the most menial and insignificant roles he could find to play in the fight against the gods. Many times, he purposely failed to act in any capacity or to aid either side when his

influence could easily have shifted the tide of battle in either direction. Though the rebellion was what he desired, he refused to become directly involved. He preferred to wait and see which side won out in the end, having ties to both. If the gods succeeded, then he would take his place among them in the Celestial Hierarchy, but if they failed, he would retain his position as shepherd of the mortals.

After the first few battles, it became obvious that the gods were going to win. The Primordials left were forced to retreat and rebuild their power for a counterstrike. Exalted




soldiers spread across Creation, rooting out pockets of resistance and claiming the world for the gods. It was during one of these swift battles that Mokrelus' treachery was made known to his Primordial masters. His creator, whose name is now lost, was ambushed by a Circle of Solar Exalted. She called out to Mokrelus to aid her, but he only watched as she was slain. The behemoth's creator cursed Mokrelus as she died, shattering his life force and leaving its splinters buried within Mokrelus' remaining bodies.

Broken and dying, Mokrelus' core fled to the farthest reaches of Creation to nurse his wounds. He found a small, uninhabited island far to the West and dug himself a cave within a dormant volcano there. Mokrelus was unable to bear the chaos at the fringes of Creation in his weakened state, so he used the last of his power to entomb himself in a pillar of rough jade, warding it against the effects of the Wyld and against detection by his enemies. In this way, he hoped to eventually regenerate and emerge a whole and formidable force to claim his place among the Chosen of the gods.

Mokrelus was unable to recover his splintered soul from the bodies that he so carefully created. All of these bodies





were virtually immortal constructs designed for specific purposes that wandered the world during the First Age with no memories of their greater purpose or power. They passed as mortals where they walked, bearing no mark of Essence. Bodies created to be spies found homes and settled in as if they were sleeper agents. Bodies created as warriors joined mortal legions or police forces. Those created to share carnal pleasures became whores and lovers. None retained the least recollection of their duty before the Primordial War.

When a splinter of Mokrelus reaches an age to where its mortal life should end, it leaves its life and finds a new one. Its memory fogs about where it has been, and it forms a new memory and a new life around that new memory. In this way, the splinter bodies lived through the halcyon days of the Exalted's rule.

Though immune to aging and disease, even the mightiest of immortal bodies will succumb to the ravages of fate and poor luck. When a splinter died through misfortune, its Essence returned to the husk that was Mokrelus' center, slumbering within its cocoon of jade. It took until nearly the end of the First Age, the sunset of the Solar reign before Mokrelus stirred in his retreat. He awoke weak and angry, a fragile fraction of the being he once was. Worse, his protective jade armor meant to keep him safe from the ravages of the chaotic elements now served as his prison. The curse of his master still was in effect, and he could not contact his servant bodies.

He cried out to the gods for aid, but he received no reply. Whether they heard him and ignored his pleas or could not hear him cry out within his self-forged prison, he could not say. He could only rage against his fate, slamming his eight fists against the interior of the jade sarcophagus, and plot his revenge against the gods that turned away from him, longing to usurp them as they usurped their masters.

The Great Contagion was what finally freed Mokrelus. As that hideous death swept through Creation, the splinter bodies fell as surely as the mortals around them. Though his pawns were immune to mortal disease, this otherworldly plague was something Mokrelus had never encountered and for which he could not prepare his servant bodies. As each of those splinters died, their Essence returned to Mokrelus, bringing him their fragments of memories and power. Eventually, he was able to shatter his jade sarcophagus, but he found himself deep within the Wyld of the West. The volcano he had chosen as his hiding place was barely recognizable. Mokrelus was only able to survive the shock of awakening into madness by lacing what remained of his sarcophagus into his skin. Shards of jade now run along his skin like bulging veins, and at his joints, knobs of colored crystal fuse with bone. Mokrelus' legs are still bound within the remains of the pillar that had been his prison, and he is unable to walk normally.

Once he freed himself and made sure he would survive the Wyld's ravages, Mokrelus sought to move himself back

into Creation. He summoned demons to his aid, had them tow his volcanic island back into the edges of Creation and set them to guard the seas around him while he began enacting his revenge against the gods. Once he was sure of his safety, he began to create new bodies and send them out into the world to gain power and discover what the world was like. In addition to these tasks, he showed them how to find his lost splinters and command them to be slain, so that their Essence might find its way back to him and he could grow.

Since Mokrelus was asleep and imprisoned during the First Age, there is no record of him in the histories of the Dragon-Blooded. Mokrelus seeks weaknesses within the Realm that he might exploit and positions into which he can place his splinters to the most effect. The Realm is Mokrelus' greatest enemy in this world, and he needs to conquer it before looking beyond, but he is wary of the Terrestrials. Mokrelus usually commands his splinters that they stay away from encounters with the champions of the Realm, unless confrontation is inevitable. Then, the splinter will use its allies and followers in a swift and ruthless attack against the Dragon-Blooded, hoping that the victory will strengthen the splinter's power with his allies.

Mokrelus himself is easily a match for any single Dragon-Blooded who might discover his hidden island, and so, he rarely sees them as a threat. In direct encounters, Mokrelus prefers to defeat but not kill Dragon-Blooded, to bind them in chain of soulsteel and keep them alive to torture for information.

The Lunar Exalted pose somewhat more of a threat to Mokrelus. Whereas the Lunars choose to appear as gods to tribes of barbarians, Mokrelus prefers to directly influence them. He creates a splinter to be the advisor to a figurehead leader, one who has power enough to lead. The Lunars' approach is an ideological one, seeking to spread the beliefs of the Silver Pact, while Mokrelus takes a much more orderly view. He plans for an ordered kingdom to rise from his raiders and soldiers. Mokrelus is not above making alliances with bands of Lunar-led barbarians when it suits him, and it often does suit him to have another enemy at the throats of the Threshold kingdoms Mokrelus seeks to conquer. Inevitably, though, Mokrelus' ordered ways and power grabbing will come to odds with the plans of nearby Lunars, and at that point, it will become apparent if Mokrelus' plans are sufficient to blunt the anger of Leviathan and the Lunars of the West.

Mokrelus considers the Sidereal Exalted to be the greatest threat to him. Though the number of Sidereals that have lived since the beginning of the First Age is waning, their knowledge of the past is kept as intact as the change of Ages has allowed. They have the best chance of recalling Mokrelus' name and station, from when he served the Primordials. Also, Sidereal manipulation of power structure and destiny, such as their secret control of the Scarlet Empire and the Immaculate Order, parallel Mokrelus' own methods. Sidereals who deal with Mokrelus and his clan would be

quick to ascertain his role in the rise of power of a local prince or barbarian chieftain. Mokrelus thus avoids encounters with Sidereals whenever possible or plans to destroy them quickly when they discover his machinations, lest they wreck his plans.

Mokrelus knows little of the Solars, other than his memories of them as generals and planners in the wars of the First Age. He knows the Solars have enough raw power to disrupt his plans, and to his memory, their god favors and protects them as few others do. Several of Mokrelus' plans have already been inadvertently wrecked by the Chosen of the Unconquered Sun, and he has had to alter his machinations significantly in the wake of the continuing Solar resurrection.

Mokrelus plans to have his splinters seek the aid of Solars who linger within his sphere of influence. He will seek to ally with them, to aid them with information to help in their quests and to give them magic and small artifacts in order to win their trust. He will hire them to do his work, pay them generously and work to bind them to him as thoroughly as possible with webs of intrigue, bribes or threats. The irony of using the Solar Exalted against the rulers of Creation never escapes Mokrelus, and he can think of no greater revenge on the gods than turning their own Chosen back on them.

Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8, Charisma 5, Manipulation 7, Appearance 3, Perception 6, Intelligence 9, Wits 8

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 5, Temperance 3, Valor 5

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Brawl 5 (Grapple +3), Bureaucracy 5, Craft (Sculpt) 5 (Flesh +3), Dodge 5, Endurance 5, Investigation 3, Larceny 3, Linguistics (all languages) 5, Lore 5 (Prehistory +3), Martial Arts 5, Medicine 3, Melee 3, Occult 5, Performance 3, Presence 5 (Intimidate +3), Resistance 4, Ride 3, Sail 3, Socialize 3, Stealth 2, Survival 5, Thrown 5 (Rock +2)

Base Initiative: 15

Attack:

Bash: Speed 12 Accuracy 13 Damage 13B Defense 7

Grapple: Speed 10 Accuracy 18 Damage 12B Defense 8

Hurled Rock: Speed 14 Accuracy 16 Damage 12L (Rate 2, Range 500)

Dodge Pool: 12 Soak*: 18L/18B (Jade-laced skin, 14L/10B)

* Mokrelus ignores attacks doing less than 14L/10B to him.

Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 220

Other Notes: Mokrelus is immune to all diseases and poisons.

Mokrelus knows all Abilities so that he may impart them to his splinters. Splinters may have abilities higher than Mokrelus because they have learned them in their lifetimes.

Because of his extra arms and hands, Mokrelus may make four actions each turn without splitting his dice pool. If he splits his dice pool, each pool splits normally. He is able to maintain holds or clinches on two opponents at once (two total) without reducing these actions, and he can use one Sorcery Charm a turn at the cost of his dice action. Mokrelus knows all Terrestrial and Celestial Circle spells from the **Exalted** main rulebook and **The Book of Three Circles**. Mokrelus' base movement is six yards per turn because his legs are still bound in his jade sarcophagus. He usually chooses to use spells that grant movement, such as Stormwind Rider.

SPLINTERS OF MOKRELUS

Mokrelus now has several of his mortal bodies out in the world working toward his various goals. Each of these bodies passes for a mortal of surprising skill and wisdom and may even be occasionally mistaken for an Exalt, though anyone with a Lore rating will be able to recognize that it is not such a being. Players may make a Wits + Lore roll with a difficulty of 5 for their characters to recognize that a splinter is neither Exalted nor mortal, but most will conclude it was God-Blooded. To recognize a splinter as a piece of Mokrelus increases that difficulty to 10.

When a splinter is slain, all of Mokrelus' Attributes increase by one, and his Essence Pool increases by 40. He may then create a new splinter and send it into the world by committing 40 Essence and lowering his Attributes by one each. This is done in a powerful ritual that takes one whole week.

Creation:

Splinters are created using the same general rules as for creating a Solar Exalted. Select a character concept, then give the splinter a Nature. Prioritize the Attribute groups, then distribute six dots to the primary group, five dots to the secondary group and four dots to the tertiary group. Select five Favored Abilities, then distribute 30 dots among the Abilities.

Splinters get five dots of Backgrounds, to be chosen from the following list: Allies, Artifact, Backing, Contacts, Followers and Influence. A splinter automatically receives Terrestrial Circle and Celestial Circle Sorcery, regardless of whether or not it meets the requirements for the Charms, then it may choose any five spells from **Exalted** or **The Book of Three Circles**. Give the splinter five dots of Virtues. Next, give the splinter an Essence score of 4, and calculate its Willpower, Essence Pool, movement and health levels (-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/-4/-4/Incap).

Finally, a splinter gets 25 bonus points to spend, according to the chart on page 105 of **Exalted**. As with Solar Exalted, a splinter may not have an Ability, Background or Virtue above a score of 3 without spending bonus points. A splinter may not have an Essence Trait above 4 or an Attribute score above 5. Splinters do not choose castes and,



therefore, do not get Caste Abilities or anima powers. Splinters may get more Sorcery Charms or extra health levels from the Charm list only. They may buy their Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds, Essence and Willpower normally.

Splinters are immune to non-magical disease and infection. They bleed as normal humans but heal as quickly as Exalted. Splinters are heroic characters, able to perform stunts and counting 10s as two successes.

When a splinter casts a spell, its anima flares brightly. Unlike Exalted, the banner of a splinter takes no solid form and flickers red, green and blue. This flare usually lasts for about an hour, though rituals that cost a great deal of Essence will cause the banner to flare for days or weeks — as long as the ritual takes.

Special Powers:

All splinters have the ability to commune with Mokrelus, though only splinters who know their own nature can do so. This is a ritual that takes a full evening, from the setting of the sun until midnight. The ritual may take many forms, including deep meditation, the smoking of potent herbs or a vigorous dance around a bonfire. All rituals have the length of time and the need for absolute concentration in common. Most splinters can avoid minor distractions, but should someone make a concerted effort to disturb the splinter or some major distraction take its attention away from the ritual, the communion is broken.

Information is shared between Mokrelus and his splinters during the communion. The splinter may ask three questions during that time and gain knowledge lost to mortals through the ages. In return, Mokrelus may give its splinters orders, advise on courses of actions and, most importantly, glean knowledge from the splinter. The exchange during a communion is far from equal, as only three questions may be asked and Mokrelus may answer them in any fashion he chooses, while Mokrelus learns from its splinter all of the pawn's experiences since the last communion. Finally, Mokrelus may inflict punishment upon the splinter, by wracking him with a fraction of the torment Mokrelus feels every day. This torment leaves the splinter at a -2 die penalty on all actions for one whole day, but it shows no lingering effects, nor does it inflict health levels of damage.

A splinter may commune with Mokrelus once a week and is usually commanded to allow no more than a month to go between communions, lest Mokrelus be wroth with his minion.

HAMASH RUGANA, SPLINTER OF MOKRELUS

Hamash is a wizened old crow of a man who advises the chief of a tribe of desert nomads. He has three eunuch slaves that follow him almost everywhere: one to guard him, one to clothe and feed him and one to fetch him things. Under his guidance, the tribe has stepped up raids on caravans of the Gemlords. Hamash is also working to unify several smaller tribes under his chief's banner and may, in a few years, become a serious threat to the governments of the South.

Nature: Conniver

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 4, Endurance 3, Linguistics 3, Lore 3, Medicine 2, Occult 5 (ritual +2), Presence 3, Stealth 3, Thrown 3*

*Italic Abilities are favored.

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Influence 2, Followers 2

Charms: Terrestrial Circle Sorcery (Demon of the First Circle, Flight of Separation, Song of Vertigo), Celestial Circle Sorcery (Insidious Tendrils of Hate, The Princes of the Fallen Tower)

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Punch: Speed 8 Accuracy 5 Damage 2B Defense 6

Poison pot: Speed 10 Accuracy 6 Damage 2B* (Rate 1, Range 5)

Dodge Pool: 7 **Soak:** 3B/4L (Hide cloak, 1B/3L, -1 mobility penalty)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0, -0, -1, -1, -2, -2, -4, Incap

Essence: 4 **Essence Pool:** 65

Other Notes:

When forced into combat, Hamash prefers to hurl small clay pots filled with poison or acid. These only do an initial damage of 2B. However, if the attack succeeds, they burst open to smother the victim in their lethal toxins. He prefers to use poison snake venom (see p. 243 of *Exalted*) when he can. The acid deals an additional three health levels of lethal damage to exposed flesh or one health level of lethal damage to armored flesh, and it inflicts severe damage on armor not made of one of the Five Magical Materials. Both types are specifically made to seep through the chinks and cracks in armor.

Hamash always prefers to use his social skills or sorcery rather than his martial skills.

NYMPH'S BLOOD

Description: In the jungles of Creation, many deadly and beautiful creatures exist, but not all of them are animals. Rare plants are gifted with motive power by the energies of the Wyld, and some turn to predatory means of gaining sustenance. One such terror is the unusual flower known as nymph's blood, which scholars suggest must be descended from a variety of exotic vine whose blossoms intoxicate and capture insects.

The common people of the Southwestern jungles tell a different tale. Once, a mighty chieftain, wise in the ways of the beasts, grew lonely and sought a wife. He traveled the length and breadth of his island again and again but could find no woman who caught his fancy. Finally, one silver-mooned night, he came upon a beautiful nymph walking along the shore of a tiny lake and was smitten with desire. Concerned that the maiden would be

frightened should he come upon her at night, he watched without showing himself. As the clouds consumed the moon, he lost sight of her but resolved to look for her again.

Night and day, he searched for the maid, until, finally, he came upon her again. This time, he revealed himself and declared his desire for the lovely nymph. Laughing, the timeless damsel ran from him, but he grew angry and gave chase. The chieftain called to the spirits of the beasts for strength and caught up to his fair quarry. Again, she laughed at him, and he was wroth and forced himself upon her. The powerful nymph fought against him and wounded him terribly, but ultimately, she could not resist. Broken and dying, she cursed him for his lust, and even as he was wracked with forbidden pleasure, the blood-soaked vines strangled the life out of him.





Since that day, the beautiful five-petal flowers of nymph's blood, pearly white with vibrant streaks of red, have heralded both uncontrollable lust and great danger. A man or woman can easily abandon himself or herself to unbridled eroticism, even if he or she is alone, with nothing resembling conscious thought or morality restraining him or her. Meanwhile, the hungry vines of the nymph's blood plant will slowly crush the passion-struck mortal to death while its thirsty roots drink up the blood and then bury the bones to fertilize the earth.

Opportunistic traders are willing to pay handsomely for the flowers of nymph's blood, however, as they can fetch exorbitant prices from the right customer. Lonely matrons of wealth, heartbroken young nobles and degenerate lechers whose tastes are otherwise insatiable sometimes hear of the perfume the flower exudes and wish to put it to use. The vine is illegal to cultivate in the Realm, though few save savants and jurists have actually ever heard of it. Its perfume is similarly prohibited.

In the jungle, the plant is dangerous because it can relocate, and thus, it is difficult to anticipate until the first whiffs of its perfume warn one that it is too late. Typically, the plant's scent renders its victims helpless, writhing in their own carnal pursuits, while its vines slowly kill them. Should a victim fight back, she will generally have to destroy each of five vines a single vine at a time until she can reach the center bulb from which the flowers spring.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 1, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 1

Abilities: Awareness 1, Brawl 2 (Grapple +2), Stealth 1

Supernatural Powers: Perfume of the Nymph's Blood
Base Initiative: 2

Attack:

Vine Grab (up to 5 attacks): Speed 2 Accuracy 5 Damage Clinch Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 1 **Soak:** 1L/2B

Willpower: 1 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Normally, attacks against one of the vines can only cause a single health level of damage as the vine is severed. Only area effects or attacks against the flowering center bulb may cause full damage. Severing a vine ends that particular vine's clinch attack.

PERFUME OF THE NYMPH'S BLOOD

Each turn that a creature breathes the perfume of the nymph's blood flowers, its player must make a Stamina + Resistance roll, difficulty 2. Success indicates that the victim resists the musk, failure means the player must make a Temperance check, difficulty 2, to avoid her character falling prey to the lust that fills her.

Should a victim fail to resist the perfume, uncontrollable passion overtakes the mind and must be satisfied immediately by engaging in erotic stimulation. This urge lasts at least one minute, during which time the victim may do nothing else and has a -6 penalty even should he somehow engage in defense. At the end of a minute, the victim will be required to resist again if the nymph's blood perfume is still present. Should a victim resist the perfume's effect, attempts to do so again during that scene are at -1 difficulty. This does not stack; resisting multiple times still grants only a -1 difficulty to continued resistance.

The plant exudes the perfume over a radius of 10 yards constantly. However, it is possible a victim may simply be exposed to someone using a measure of the perfume. Assume that a normal application lasts for about an hour before it disperses enough that it no longer affects victims. During that time, everyone within 10 feet, including the person wearing the perfume, must resist. Nefarious users who wish to maintain self-control often employ some sort of nose plug soaked in a bitter substance, but this is uncomfortable, and the user could risk suffocation at the hands of an overzealous lover.

OLIPHEN, WATCHER OF THE SEA

Description: Long before the world became what it is now, Oliphem already watched over the waters. It had a purpose — that of guiding friendly ships to safety. It was the master of the seas. To its everlasting shame, this was not to last; the mighty watcher was laid low by Solar deception.

Now, thousands of years later, Oliphem spends its days asleep, buried in the bottom of the ocean. When night falls, it tiredly shakes the mud from its bulk, raises itself up to the surface and walks across all of the Western waters. Oliphem appears to be a huge humanoid creature over 150 yards tall, built of stone and iron, standing lightly on the surface of the water (it only sinks when it wants to rest on the bottom). In place of a face, there is a great lens.

In times past, the lens was used to signal ships far, far away and to help steer them away from danger, but it hasn't seen use in a long time now; there is a crack on the lens. Legends say that a mighty Solar hero named Desus gained Oliphem's trust with offerings of fine foods, exquisite gifts and flattering speeches, then took the watcher by surprise and laid it low with a single blow from his mighty fist, causing his enemies' ships to lose their way. In doing so, he also destroyed Oliphem's ability to observe everything that took place on the seas, causing even more ships to be lost, as Oliphem's bright beam of guiding light was no longer there to warn them of shallow waters and of treacherous rocks that lurked just below the surface.

Nearly blind and in tremendous pain, Oliphem was unable to keep Desus

from escaping in a sailboat. Desus returned to his homeland a great hero, whereas Oliphem was left alone and bitter. Today, things haven't changed much for Oliphem — it is still alone and bitter. It has failed in its duty. There are few ships left for it to guide, and it is

powerless to aid those that remain, for it cannot even find them. It's not completely blinded; it can still see where it is going and spot nearby ships, but compared to its former might, it is certainly crippled. It used to be able to see everything on the waters, to signal faraway ships and to destroy its enemies with a terrible, burning gaze of cold, blue-tinted light that streamed forth from the lens... but that was a long time ago.

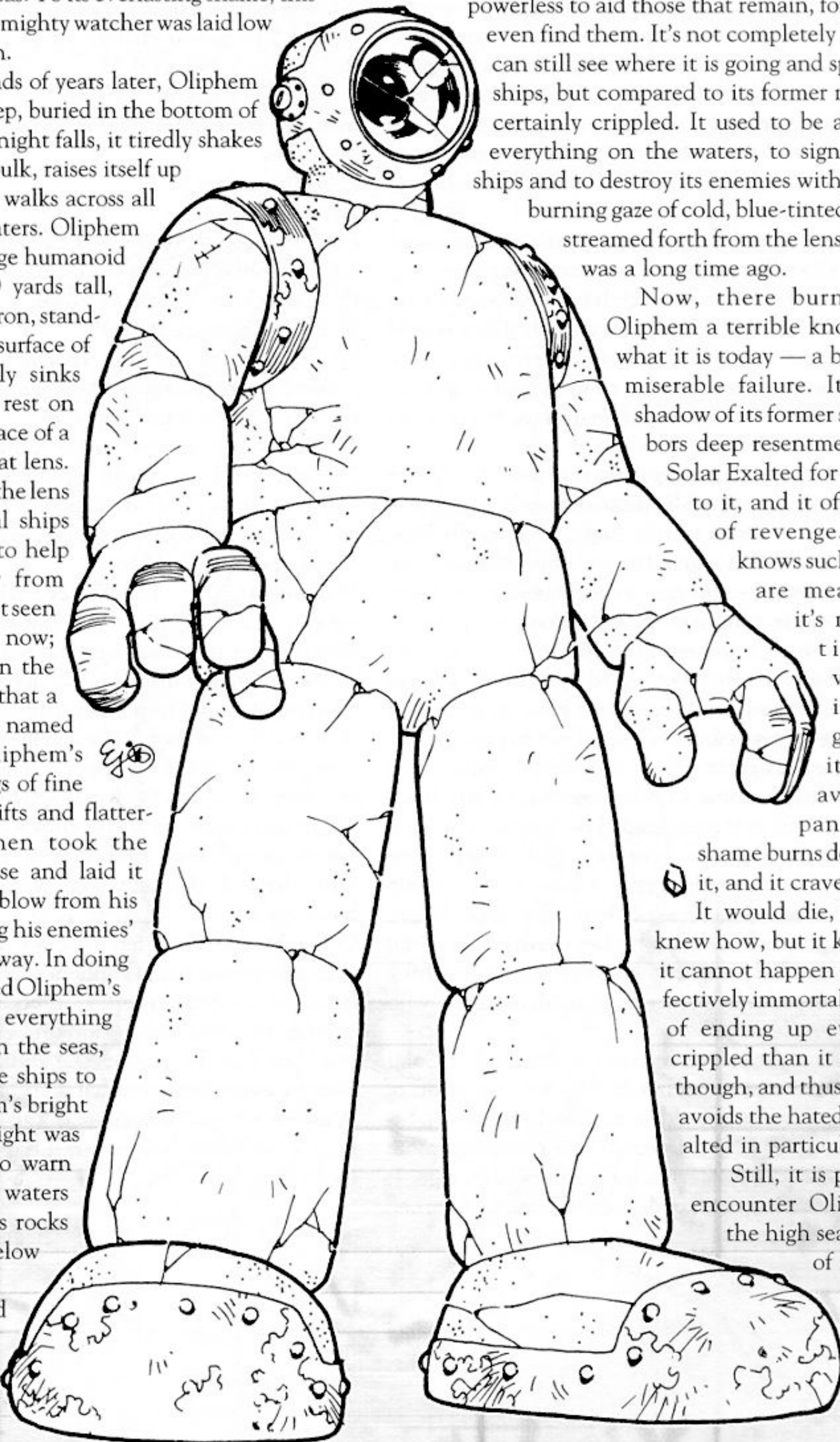
Now, there burns within Oliphem a terrible knowledge of what it is today — a broken and miserable failure. It is but a shadow of its former self. It harbors deep resentment for the Solar Exalted for doing this to it, and it often thinks of revenge. Still, it knows such thoughts are meaningless;

it's not a particularly violent being and goes out of its way to avoid company; its

shame burns deep within it, and it craves solitude.

It would die, if only it knew how, but it knows that it cannot happen — it is effectively immortal. It's afraid of ending up even more crippled than it already is, though, and thus, Oliphem avoids the hated Solar Exalted in particular.

Still, it is possible to encounter Oliphem on the high seas; a figure of its size is





very easy to spot, and Oliphem's limited eyesight makes it difficult for it to notice ships that approach it. Although it is unable to tell Solar Exalted from other passengers without fierce concentration, Solars who have their anima banners flaring obviously stand out.

At times, it has been known to help desperate seamen in storms or other problematic situations — throughout history, there are legends of a strange giant that walked on water and rescued ships from certain destruction. Oliphem itself doesn't really care very much about the lives of the sailors; it helps them out of an ancient and heavy sense of duty to those who are now gone.

Oliphem would like nothing more than for someone to fix the lens and restore it to its former glory, but it knows that those who could do it have perished a long time ago. What Oliphem isn't aware of is that a skilled Solar from the Twilight Caste could certainly fix the lens. This would involve a lot of work and a difficult hunt for truly rare construction materials, but it could be done.

Of course, the actual construction would only be a part of the problem; equally difficult would be the task of talking the Watcher into letting a Solar fix the lens; it has a long memory, and it is bitter beyond belief. Still, this act would have significant consequences, as doing so would cause Oliphem to reevaluate its position toward the Solars in general. The specifics of all this are left up to the Storyteller, but regardless of how Oliphem reacts, a fixed lens would restore it back to its former self, at least in power and abilities, if not in personality.

Despite this great influx of power, Oliphem will not necessarily become a hostile creature; it still has a duty, but the ships it once guided no longer exist, so it will still lead an aimless existence. Still, it will view itself as far less of a failure and is more likely to help ships in distress, regardless of their allegiance. It will still steer clear of battles and other events that would require it to take sides in a conflict it cares nothing about, save perhaps events that involve those who have fixed its lens.

Should a player's character (or some other Solar Exalt who meets it) turn out to be a reincarnation of Desus, the Watcher would immediately recognize his old foe as soon as it inspected the character more closely and fly into a terrible, uncontrollable rage. It would do anything at all to destroy the one who turned it into what it is now.

Attributes: Strength 20, Dexterity 5, Stamina 15, Charisma 5, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 2, Intelligence 7, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Abilities: Awareness 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Lore 5 (Ancient History +3), Occult 2, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Survival 1*

* Being an ancient creature of great power, Oliphem may well have other Abilities as well if the Storyteller so desires.

Base Initiative: 9

Attack:

Punch: Speed 9 Accuracy 9 Damage 15L Defense 9*

Kick: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 18L Defense 8*

Piercing Gaze: Speed 25 Accuracy 20 Damage 25A (Rate 3, Range 10 miles)**

* Oliphem can attempt to parry any attacks as it pleases, even unarmed; its arms and legs are tough enough to deflect most attacks.

** Attack does not work, see "Other Notes" below.

Dodge Pool: 8 **Soak:** 20L/30B (Constructed of stone and iron, 20L/15B. Can only be hurt with sorcery and attacks enhanced with Essence. Oliphem ignores attacks below 20L/15B.)

Willpower: 10 **Health Levels:** Irrelevant. Oliphem cannot die by any means characters have at their disposal, but it knows pain and will sink to safety if it suffers enough. This is largely dependent on how the Storyteller wants to portray Oliphem. A good rule of thumb is that at least 30 health levels worth of damage is required to make Oliphem want to leave the battle, and even then, it is likely to keep fighting if it thinks it might win very soon. 100 would be enough to cripple it, but no matter how injured, it would eventually heal. Only the gods themselves can actually kill Oliphem.

Essence: 9

Other Notes: The Piercing Gaze attack is only available if someone fixes Oliphem's lens, in which case, it becomes terribly powerful. In addition to the attack itself, Oliphem's Perception and Awareness are both raised to 7, and it regains the ability to automatically observe everything that happens on the surface of the Western Ocean. Oliphem is capable of walking on land as well as on water, but it has never been known to do that.

PELAGIAL

Description: In the limitless depths of the Western Ocean, countless civilizations have risen, only to be swallowed whole by the sea. Beneath the surface of the waves, the ruins of cities and temples sit silently while the steady rhythm of the current rocks them in their slumber. The pelagials rule in many of the places that have been lost to the waves — an ancient race of men and women who were swept from the surface of Creation before the coming of the Exalted but lurk now, ages later, beneath the tides.

The pelagials were a race of sailors, say savants, and they fished and traded all across Creation. The ancestors of the pelagials could be found bartering with those who lived on the coasts of every nation, and such was their skill with sail and tiller that others said they bore the blessings of the gods, to be so sure at the helm of a ship. Those were ancient times, and the element of water was a chaotic thing that was often inimical to human existence. The pelagials managed to avoid the wrath of the sea by sacrificing to the elemental powers of water and the spirits of the ocean. With the blessings of these powers, the pelagials founded an island home that's capital was a marvel of expensive stone, rare metals and coral of every shade.

But the pelagial's land could not last, and after centuries, the waters of the ocean began to swallow up their island kingdom of marble and gold. A sea god called Sheen'lish took pity on the people, and as the waves swept the nation from memory, he took the cream of its youth and transformed them into something more suitable to oceanic existence. Willingly, they gave up their humanity and became creatures of the sea — pelagials.

They were still humanoid, after a fashion, although larger than they had been before. Their upper torsos appeared to still be those of a man or woman, albeit dressed in a layer of blubber to protect them from the cold of the sea. Their hair grew long and thick, like kelp, and their eyes became huge and black, the better to see beneath the wine-dark ocean. Their lower halves were transformed into those of a manatee or a bull seal — huge ponderous affairs on land, but able to propel the newly reborn race quickly through the depths. Their skin faded to a pale white, for they became strangers to the sun.

And so, another civilization was built beneath the sea, and the pelagials sacrificed again to their ancient water gods and propitiated the same elementals that they had before the fall. Their kingdoms were crafted from obsidian and coral, and they built their cities on top of undersea Demesnes and constructed Manses there. As the First Age reached its peak, the Exalted opened trade with the pelagials. Pelagial warriors fought Terrestrial Exalted in crowded arenas to demonstrate which race possessed superior fighting prowess, and they guided





the architects of the Exalted in the ways of building beneath the sea. There were other races existing deep beneath the waters that the pelagials knew of, and under the aegis of the Old Realm, trade opened with them as well.

But the Old Realm fell to the Usurpation, and by the end of the Shogunate, none were left who remembered the pelagials except for a few Water-aspected Dragon-Bloods and Lunar Exalted. When the Fair Folk thundered out from the edge of the world and swept across Creation, the pelagials had already slipped into a decline — their numbers were decreasing, and their ancient cities had begun to crumble around them. They had begun to mistake hubris for wisdom and tradition for justification. Yet, despite their slide into degeneracy, they were spared the full indignity of slavery underneath the Fair Folk's heel by their mastery of the ancient artifacts in their care. This protection from danger came with a heavy price, for the savants among the pelagials perished in order to power the ancient devices that bought them peace.

Years passed, and the pelagials grew even more lazy and indolent. They isolated themselves from one another, and because of their failing numbers, they found it easy to hide in their massive, deserted cities. The more degenerate among them developed a taste for human flesh, at first picking off those who fell overboard, but later luring ships to crash on rocky shoals through the use of burning seaweed. Others, aware of their size advantage in relation to the humans, would leap upon the deck of a ship in a storm, grabbing unwary sailors and dragging them beneath the sea to expire and be devoured.

The more cunning among their number coveted devices of human manufacture, impossible for the now-

degenerate pelagials to craft. These erstwhile traders began to explore the deserted outposts of their ancient empire in order to find artifacts and, afterward, made bargains with sea captains — human slaves and iron tools for artifacts and Hearthstones snatched from long abandoned watery Manses. Guild freighters now unload cargoes of slaves into the sea in exchange for ancient devices and long-forgotten texts written upon imperishable materials.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 2 (Swim +3), Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Craft (Masonry) 2 (Coral +2), Dodge 3, Investigation 2 (Search +2), Linguistics (Native: Pelagial; Seatongue) 1, Lore 1, Melee 2, Socialize 4, Stealth 3, Thrown 2,

Backgrounds: Artifact 5, Manse 3, Resources 4

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 4L Defense 6

Claw: Speed 5 Accuracy 6 Damage 6B Defense 6

Coral Spear: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 10L Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 0L/17B (Hide, 0L/12B)

Willpower: 4 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: The high Artifact Background the pelagials possess doesn't indicate artifacts that they are able to access, but instead how many dots in Artifact that they are able to trade. They are unable to put the vast majority of the artifacts in their care to any use, although a rare atavist amongst them with sufficient Lore may operate the items.

ROCK-ROLLER

Description: These unlikely looking creatures are certainly of Wyld origin, for the Elemental Dragons never made anything half so strange. When sitting still, rock-rollers resemble nothing so much as a small totem pole, standing between three and five feet tall and carved from a rough gray rock. Then, they stand up, long spidery legs unfolding on both sides, and tower a good three feet taller. Next, the single thick tentacle uncoils from the top of its head and reaches for prey, its bulbous tip splitting to reveal a wide circular mouth with a double row of small sharp teeth.

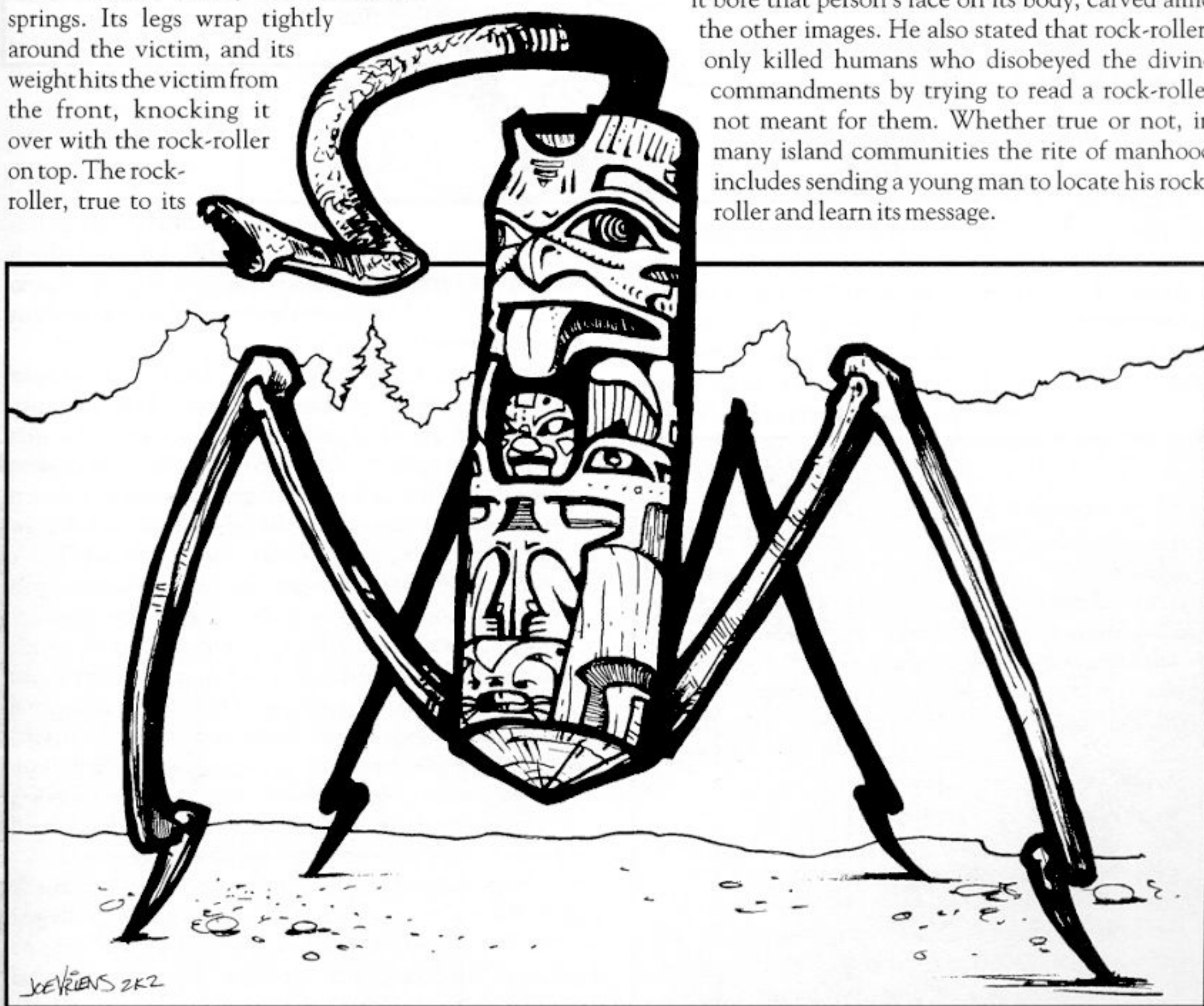
These creatures live on rocky and mountainous islands, along the slopes of their hills and volcanoes. Most are solitary, though every so often a family will be sighted, the babies clinging to their parents' bodies with all six legs. People keep their distance, however, for rock-rollers are known predators.

The rock-roller doesn't bother with subtlety or stealth. It locates prey, animals its own size or smaller, and approaches rapidly. The tentacle lashes out and bites down, holding tight anywhere it can, and pulls the victim closer. Then, the rock-roller springs. Its legs wrap tightly around the victim, and its weight hits the victim from the front, knocking it over with the rock-roller on top. The rock-roller, true to its

name, shifts its weight to the side and forces the two bodies to roll down the hill, grinding its prey to mush between the hard ground and its own body. It then sucks down the remains through its tentacular mouth, rights itself and moves on, either back to its nest or in search of more food.

The most interesting thing about the rock-roller is not its form of attack, but its appearance. The creature's body does resemble a totem pole, and each one bears a slightly different shape, to the point that viewers can actually identify specific rock-rollers. Legends say that the first rock-roller was an actual totem pole, carved on a faraway island to win favor from the gods. But the pole was poorly carved, and the symbols not flattering, and the gods became angry — as revenge, they animated the pole and gave it life, merging it with a spider and a squid and the rocks themselves, and set it loose to wreak havoc on the people nearby.

Island dwellers claim that the creatures' bodies are actually representations of various animals and spirits and that each rock-roller carries a divine message awaiting interpretation. One Western wise man stated that each rock-roller was intended for a single person and that it bore that person's face on its body, carved amid the other images. He also stated that rock-rollers only killed humans who disobeyed the divine commandments by trying to read a rock-roller not meant for them. Whether true or not, in many island communities the rite of manhood includes sending a young man to locate his rock-roller and learn its message.





Rock-rollers have no place in the natural order, for they have no natural predators — nothing large enough to overpower one lives on the islands, and most creatures can't penetrate their rocky hides. The rock-roller's only real enemy is the fire ant, and hunting parties of the small fiery creatures sometimes swarm a rock-roller, which then topples on them, fire versus rock.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Tumbling+4), Awareness 2, Brawl 4 (Hold +4), Endurance 2, Survival 2

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Tentacle: Speed 5 Accuracy 7 Damage 2L + rock-roller hold* Defense 8

*See boxed text.

Dodge Pool: 4 **Soak:** 5L/9B (Rock-roller rock, 5L/5B)

Willpower: 3 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/
Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None

ROCK-ROLLER HOLD

If a tentacle attack does damage, the rock-roller gains an automatic hold attack. Breaking the hold is an opposed roll, the rock-roller's Strength + Brawl + specialty (12 dice) versus its target's Strength + Brawl or Martial Arts. Neither the character nor the tentacle can attack while the character is in the rock-roller hold, but the rock-roller may perform a rock-roller roll attack on the target every turn until it succeeds or until the victim escapes the hold.

ROCK-ROLLER ROLL

This attack can only be made if the rock-roller already has a victim in a rock-roller hold. If that happens, make an opposed roll, the rock-roller's Dexterity + Athletics + specialty versus the held character's Stamina + Athletics. If the attack succeeds, both characters topple to the ground. The held individual is still held and now takes 6B/turn until the hold is broken, the rock-roller is dead or unconscious or another character's stunt stops the stony totem pole from rolling back and forth.

SINGER OF THE DEEP

Description: All seamen fear the terrible, ear-piercing song of these flying creatures, which look like humanoid fish somewhat reminiscent of traditional mermaids. However, they are scaly all over, and their backs sport “wings” that are actually large fins that spread out when the singers take to the air. Their “song” is actually caused by the air whistling through these fins, and it causes paralyzing sensations of fear and uncertainty in those who hear it. The singers of the deep usually hunt in packs.

Despite their appearance and reputation, the singers aren't really creatures of the air, even though they are capable of launching themselves up from the depths with a flick of their powerful, finned tails. They can reach altitudes as high as 100 yards on the initial ascent and cover great distances by gliding and surfing the winds. However, they cannot safely land on anything but water and are quite helpless if they ever end up on dry land or the deck of a ship. What's more, the singers can only stay out of water for up to five minutes; after that, they have to return to water or simply die of asphyxiation.

More often than not, the singers of the deep use two basic tactics in battle after exploding out of the water and gaining a bit of altitude. Either they slap people with their tails while swooping past them (a single blow is easily powerful enough to stun or even kill a grown man) or grab a mariner or two and drag them back down into the depths with them, where air-breathing foes are easily dealt with.

Though agile while in the air, the singers are less of a threat when grounded. A landed singer is still capable of defending itself with its tail and its talons, so approaching one should be done with extreme caution. Still, as it cannot attack anyone who isn't foolish enough to approach it and will die soon unless it manages to flip itself back into water, the safest solution is often to just leave it alone or to launch spears and arrows at it to pass the time. When they no longer have the energy to fight, grounded singers simply glare at their enemies with cold, hateful and alien fish-eyes while desperately gulping the air.

The singers' numbers were formerly kept in check by Water-aspected Dragon-Blooded who had little trouble going after the creatures under the surface, but since the Empress' disappearance, patrols haven't been nearly as regular, and thus, the numbers of singers have increased considerably during the past years.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 1

Abilities: Athletics 4 (Fly +2, Swim +1), Awareness 2, Brawl 5, Dodge 5, Endurance 5, Medicine 3, Stealth 3

Supernatural powers: Fearsome Song

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Tail: Speed 4 Accuracy 8 Damage 11B Defense 9

Talons: Speed 7 Accuracy 9* Damage 5L

* If the singer executes a successful hold maneuver, the target is pulled into the water with it. Singers cannot parry any kind of blows with their talons.

Dodge Pool: 9

Soak: 2L/4B (Scalyskin, 2L/2B)

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: A

successful attack against a flying singer of the deep will cause the singer to cease its song and, unless the Storyteller manages to get at least three successes on a Dexterity + Athletics roll, the attack will also drop the singer from the sky. Even if it manages to stay aloft, a singer with wounded fins can no longer emit the song and suffers a 2 dice penalty to all rolls concerning aerial maneuvers.

FEARSOME SONG

This power allows the singer of the deep to emit a sound that drives fear into the hearts of all who hear it. Players of those who hear the howl must make a Willpower check every turn as long as their characters can hear the song. A successful roll indicates that the character resists the song's effects, a failure means that the character gets a -2 die penalty to all actions, and a botch causes the character to cower in fear until his player succeeds in a Willpower check.

Creatures that have been affected by the Wyld are immune to the ill effects of this power. Instead, they get a +2 bonus to their initiative, and their permanent Willpower and Valor are temporarily increased by one so long as they hear it—the terrible sound makes them feel strong and brave. Note that this bonus does not stack; whether there is one singing creature or a dozen of them present, the bonus remains the same.



SPRING-BELLY

Description: Clawshells prowl the beaches and waters, but for all their size and strength, the aquatic creatures are easy to spot and avoid. Not so their smaller cousins, the spring-bellies. These shellfish grow up to four feet across and have four sets of legs, with pincers on the front and back pair. Their mouth, however, is enormous and hinged and is located on the creature's underside, directly under its belly.

Spring-bellies are trappers, not hunters. They bury themselves in the sand, head down, so that their claws and mouth face up toward the surface. Usually they'll only dig down about a foot, and once comfortably ensconced, they use their claws to pull the sand back down on top of them, hiding their presence. The front and rear legs poke up through the surface, looking like small bits of shell washed up along the beach. Then, the spring-bellies wait, motionless, to conserve their energy.

When someone walks along the beach, the vibrations will wake a spring-belly, and it tenses in preparation. As the footsteps get closer, it becomes fully awake. Then, when the feet are between its four pincers, it strikes, stabbing upward and toward the center with all four legs and hauling its body up afterward. The mouth opens to bite, even as the pincers stab and hold. A spring-belly can swallow a bird whole, engulfing it before the bird can fly out of reach, but the crustacean will also go for larger targets, and if it can't eat the prey all at once, it will chew off a decent hunk. Then, its cover blown, the spring-belly flips over and scuttles away on its middle sets of legs, pincers snapping to discourage pursuit.

Spring-bellies are generally solitary creatures, but they only consider those few feet right around their hiding places as territory, so it is possible to find several spring-bellies on a single stretch of beach. Most of the creatures have a handful of favorite spots and rotate between them to avoid scaring away prey.

When spring-bellies have young, the parents leave the babies anchored to rocks in shallow water while they bring back meat. Island dwellers often hunt the

infant spring-bellies, which are bigger than snippers and have more meat to them. Unfortunately, spring-bellies often prove smarter than anticipated, and many of them have taken to leaving one parent behind in the sand below the babies, to guard them. Anything that tries to catch the smaller spring-bellies may find itself being used as a meal instead.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 0, Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Endurance 2, Stealth 4 (Ambush +2), Survival 2

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 3 Accuracy 5 Damage 4L + poison* Defense 7

Pincer: Speed 6 Accuracy 7 Damage 4L Defense 8

* Spring-belly poison (Diff. 1, Success 0L, Failure 1L, Duration/Penalty 1 hour/-2)

Dodge Pool: 2 **Soak:** 3L/8B (Shell, 3L/6B)

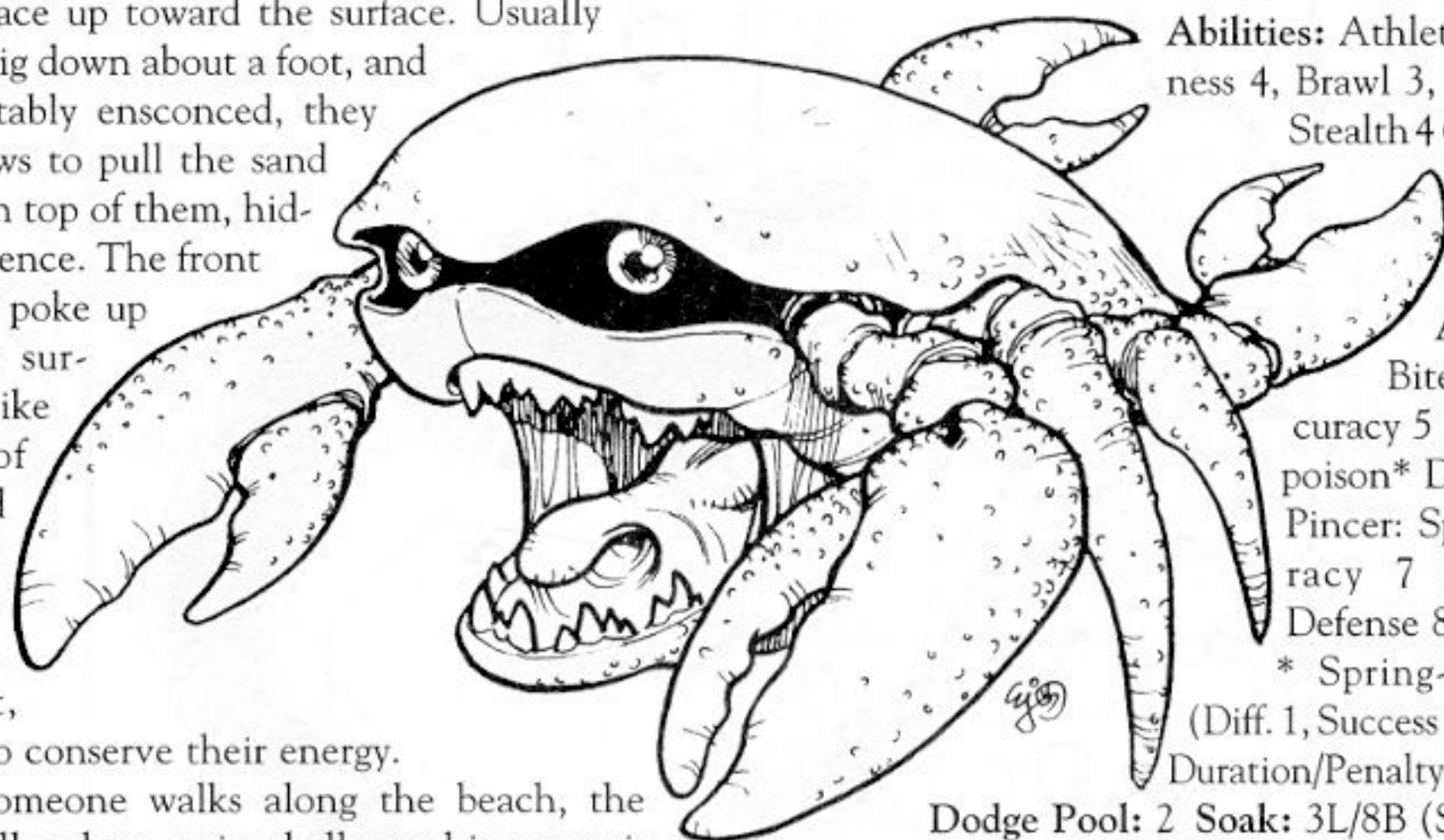
Willpower: 4

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/-4/

Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: In addition to their pincers and their bite, spring-bellies secrete a mild poison from their mouths. This is not enough to kill a person, even a child, but it will slow reflexes and leave the person off-balance and clumsy, easy prey for the voracious spring-belly. Spring-bellies aren't really manhunters, though — it's just that they'll eat any creature that steps over their mouth. Humans are actually problematic as prey, too big to eat quickly and too likely to survive a first attack. Island dwellers sometimes hunt spring-bellies instead of the other way around, poking spears into the sand to stab the creatures right through the belly and then pulling them from the sand and roasting them immediately over a fire. It does take two or three strong men to hoist a spring-belly from its hiding place, but the creatures provide enough meat to feed five or six people for single meal.



THE THOUSAND HUNGRY WINGS (GRELIDAKA)

Description: In the skies of the West, there are few greater terrors than the cloud of black, screeching, ever-hungry maws that belong to the Wyld-mutated flocks of birds known as the grelidaka. They appear in the gray skies before a storm and descend to devour all creatures below them. Flocks of grelidaka are comprised of several hundred birds of varying size. Some are as small as sparrows, while the largest have wingspans that rival albatrosses. Most are about the size of a goose, with a wingspan of roughly two yards. They are colored gray to black, like the clouds of the storms that hide their approach. Each bird has a long, sharp serrated beak and eyes that shine red with hunger. These birds are forever maddened by the touch of the Wyld and seek only to devour.

The thousand hungry wings are nomadic, moving from one island to the next after stripping their previous residence clean. They nest on cliff sides and coral atolls when not flying or feasting and keep in tight formation even while resting. The thousand hungry wings always seem to work as a single entity. They feed together, fly together, sleep together. Only during their brief, frenzied mating season may they be observed to act as individuals. However, these actions dwarf even the most depraved bacchanalia of House Cynis. A mating flock acts similarly to a hunting flock, except that they appear in a clear sky, and their mating happens during the devouring of their prey. Another taint of the Wyld, grelidaka do not lay eggs or give birth to live young. Instead, during their mating and feeding, the largest of the flock will suddenly split into two, smaller birds. In this way, the flock grows by up to a third of its original size — and equally in ferocity. The few savants who have tried to study the thousand hungry wings have been unable to discover on what type of cycle the birds breed, but it may be years between mating periods for a flock. What is known is that grelidaka who are separated from their flock, either by wounds or by capture, quickly die. They seem to only be able to live in groups of at least 100. No two flocks have ever been seen near one another.

Grelidaka aren't picky about who or what they eat. Any warm flesh will do. Flocks will fall upon the unwary crew of a ship or descend into a village, attack other birds or sweep through an island jungle for boar and other beasts. The sudden attack of a cloud of Hungry Wings can decimate whole villages. Survivors speak in horrified whispers of the red eyes and of the horrible screeching that drowned out the screams of the victims.

Swift ships can outrun the grelidaka, though few land creatures can make it away from a flock when it comes out of the sky. Villagers survive only with plenty of warning, so that they can shutter themselves in their homes, as if battening against a hurricane. Some survivors find respite deep within caves or by hiding under water, but an attack can last longer than a mortal can hold her breath. Town defenders and militias are often trained to assist the rapid evacuation in case of grelidaka attack. They are told that under no circumstances should they fight, for it is known that for every one bird you slay, three will take its place. Some smaller, more remote island dwellers leave sacrifices for the grelidaka, in



hopes that the death of a few will allow the remaining to escape to safety.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 11, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 5*
* Cannot fail Valor checks.

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 8, Presence 3 (Intimidation +3)

Base Initiative: 13

Attack:

Dive Attack: Speed 15 Accuracy 13 Damage 14L Defense 6

Enshroud: Speed 10 Accuracy 9* Damage 8L Defense 9

* Cannot be dodged, only blocked.

Dodge Pool: 19 **Soak:** 2L/4B (None)

Willpower: 2 **Health Levels:** -0x10/-1x10/-2x10/-4x5/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: The statistics above reflect an average grelidaka flock. They are one entity for almost all purposes. To increase the flock size, increase the Physical Attributes by two each, and recalculate attack and defense pools accordingly. Also, add four to each of the -0, -1 and -2 health levels.

Attacks with ranged weapons into a flock of the thousand hungry wings suffer a -3 die environmental penalty from the swirling, chaotic actions of the birds. This does not apply to attacking the flock itself, only to targets within or beyond the grelidaka.

Grelidaka suffer a -2 die penalty to Perception checks when in a feeding frenzy. A grelidaka flock can make an enshroud attack against everyone inside its 100-yard radius every turn but can only make one dive attack or other dice action per turn.





CHAPTER FIVE

THE SCAVENGER LANDS

Arad, the Hunter • Brass Legionnaire • Chillikin • Five Days Darkness • Flesh Pet • Giant Rat and Emperor Rat • Grate Monkey • The Harvester of Poisons • Illuthrita • Karneus • Mother Bog • Proto Puma Prime • Snakebud Tree • Thousand-Forged Dragon • The Tree of the Inchoate

Much that remains of the First Age lies in the Scavenger Lands. It's people sustain, repair and recycle the detritus of the Golden Age to a degree that would astound the inhabitants of the Realm. It is said by many that this reflects the inherent spirit of the land, and the creatures that inhabit it suggest that this may be the case. Many are automata, others are patchwork beings. Regardless of why, the Scavenger Lands region possesses perils and wonders uniquely its own.

ARAD, THE HUNTER

Description: Savants wise in the stories that surround the behemoth called Arad know that he is the first and greatest of all hunters. Arad, whose bow was crafted from the bones and sinew of a dead god and whose spear of iron and jade slew Anathema by the score. On the streets of Nexus, the tale-singers will, for a coin, sing of how Arad drove whole species to extinction during the First Age because they were unlucky enough to provide him with sport. In Chiaroscuro, storytellers will recount the way Arad stalked the Five Elemental Dragons until they granted

him immunity from fire, wood and metal. The story is told differently among the followers of the Immaculate Philosophy, and in their version, the Five Elemental Dragons slew the hunter for his audacity.

Few even among the savants imagine that Arad walks the earth still or that he even now heads toward the heart of Creation. But that is the truth of the matter — Arad has heard of the return of his ancient enemies, the Solar Exalted, and rejoices at the new challenges that the Deathlords and their Abyssal minions present. He has waited a hundred mortal lifetimes to wreak revenge on those who once humbled him. They owe him a debt, and the time has come to collect.

None can say for sure whether Arad was once a mortal man transformed by the abominable craft of the Primordials or whether he was created by them from whole cloth. To see the behemoth is to catch a glimpse of a form only loosely based on the human shape. The hunter stands a dozen feet tall and is half that wide in the chest. Yet, the proportions of Arad's body are terribly wrong — the torso is out of scale with the lower body, the arms are freakishly

large from misplaced muscle, and the face is distorted and wreathed with patient fury. His features are those of a Southerner from the deep desert, his skin black and cross-hatched with pale scar tissue, the broad landscape of his face pierced with ornaments of jade and bone. His hair is always filthy and matted, for he sleeps on the hard ground or in the strongest branches of the great trees. His voice, on the rare occasions when he chooses to speak, is like the growl of a lion.

Arad was created by the Primordials to be the greatest predator to walk the earth, and many argue that they were only too successful. He is patient, relentless and unshakeable. His only joy in life is the hunt, but the drive is corrupted in a way he cannot fathom. Arad has no need of the meat provided by the flesh of his victims or the shelter from the elements that the skin of an animal brings — Arad hunts only for sport. He is not cruel, though, and he has been moved to spare those who were no challenge if they directed him to prey more suiting his skills.

Arad roamed the First Age in a state of nature, stalking game and hunting prey as he pleased. A goddess of the wood once tried to love the hunter, but he slew her and crafted a bow from her remains, for he found that he could only desire her as a trophy. He bent the first elementals to his will by hunting them to exhaustion. As they begged for their lives, Arad forced pacts from them that guaranteed that his spearhead would never dull and that fire and steel would not harm him. Such was his strength that Arad never knew the touch of fear until his creators were slain and the mighty Exalted armies turned their gaze toward him. Singly or in Circles, Arad could slay any Exalt, but as an army, they defeated him — the Solar generals led ranks of Dragon-Bloods toward every refuge the behemoth sought sanctuary in, guided by the unerring senses of the Lunars and the astrology of the Sidereals. Beaten and fearing for his life for the first time, Arad fled to the edges of Creation to lick his wounds. The behemoth was immortal, though, and so, he plotted revenge — time was on his side, and a good hunter is nothing if not patient.

Centuries passed, and the golden empire of the Solar Exalted reached undreamt-of heights before it was brought crashing down in the Dragon-Blooded Usurpation. Some of those Solar Exalted who fled from the Terrestrial search teams ran right into Arad's clutches, and thus, he gained his first taste of revenge. He warred with the Lunars as they began to flock to his territory, and Arad rejoiced in the sport. A Lunar hero named Sorrowful Light trapped

the behemoth beneath a mountain of stone, and when he finally freed himself from the subterranean prison years later, Arad found the walls of Creation falling as the Fair Folk moved inward toward the heart of the Realm. In the tumult, Arad's spear rose and fell over and over again, and he ate the hearts of man and beast alike. But the hunter was driven back again,

this time by the same weapons that broke the advance of the Fair Folk. Wounded, he retreated, wandering the edges of Creation, hunting in Wyld lands, and even once chancing to find a path to Malfeas, where he barely escaped the choking embraces of Cecelyne and Adorjan.

Word has reached Arad of recent goings-on in the Threshold, and he has been made

aware of the reappearance of those who were once audacious enough to hunt *him*. Now, the Solar Exalted are alone, beset on all sides by their former foot soldiers. And the hunter has discovered even more rumors that are to his liking, for the Fair Folk lurk on the edges of Creation, hungering to destroy the Threshold in the chaos of the Scarlet Empress' absence. And there are new threats that Arad has not tried his skill against — the Deathlords who plot the fall of civilization from within their shadowlands. Arad dreams of the day when he can hunt them all, and the world will become one endless field full of prey.

And so, Arad has begun the long walk back to Creation.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 10, Stamina 13, Charisma 5, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 7, Intelligence 4, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 5



Abilities: Archery 7 (Pula's Heart +3), Athletics 5, Awareness 7, Brawl 5, Craft (Hunting Gear and Traps) 1 (Snares +2), Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm, Arad speaks a variety of tribal tongues from the East and the South, some of them extinct) 4, Lore 2, Medicine 2, Melee 7 (Usilk +3), Presence 6, Resistance 6, Stealth 7, Survival 3 (Tracking +5), Thrown 4

Supernatural Powers: Animal Life Eating Technique, Predator's Mien, Rhythm of the Hunt, Unerring Sense of the Hunter

Base Initiative: 16

Attack:

Spear (Usilk): Speed 19 Accuracy 20 Damage 20L* Defense +5

Bow (Pula's Heart): Speed 16 Accuracy 13 Damage 18L (Rate 2, Range**)

* Arad can affect dematerialized spirits as well as material beings with Usilk, as part of the ancient enchantments laid upon it by the first elementals.

** Pula's Heart is enchanted so that it has an effectively unlimited range, firing at least as far as Arad's eyes can see. Arad uses broadhead arrows with Pula's Heart.

Dodge Pool: 14 **Soak:** 24L/31B* (Lion Hide, 18L/18B)

* Arad receives an additional +10L/+10B soak bonus against weapons or attack utilizing wood, metal or fire. elemental attacks linked to water or air bypass this extra soak. Arad ignores attacks doing less than 6L or 13B.

Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0x10/-1x10/-2x10/-4x5/Incap

Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 96

Other Notes: Arad's bow, named Pula's Heart, is crafted from the body of a dead god and is resistant to the touch of mere mortals. Anyone other than a behemoth or powerful magical being (Essence of 6 or greater) is unable to pull back the string.

Usilk, Arad's spear, is crafted from plain iron ornamented with jade. So long as it is on Arad's person, he gains an extra +10L/+10B soak versus attacks utilizing metals, wood or fire. Usilk has been enchanted so that Arad can summon it to his grasp as long as it is within a mile of him, and he is aware of its location so long as it's within 100 miles of him. Despite Arad's power, he avoids combat on any terms but his own. He enjoys splitting a group up and then attacking its members singly or in pairs, and he is also adept at driving them to make mistakes in exhaustion. While Arad takes trophies from all kills he deems "worthy," he is not obsessive about it and is more than willing to find the corpse and take trophies when he isn't directly threatened.

Arad heals one bashing health level every turn and one lethal level every minute, and he regenerates 1 mote of Essence every 10 minutes when not in combat.

ANIMAL LIFE EATING TECHNIQUE

Cost: None

Arad possesses an ancient ability granted to him by the Primordials themselves. By devouring the vital organs of a creature that he has slain, Arad can gain access to a number of the target's Charms equal to the prey's permanent Essence. Arad's power extends to elemental powers as well as Exalted and spirit Charms. Arad can use each of these Charms once, and the cost of the Charm is paid for out of Arad's Essence Pool. Arad does not need to meet the minimum requirements of the Charm, and he can possess multiple "copies" of the same Charm in his repertoire at any one time. Arad usually has access to Principle of Motion, Stoke the Flame, Camouflage and Hoodwink.

PREDATOR'S MIEN

Cost: None

Such is the nature of Arad that his countless years of hunting and killing have given him the aspect of a predator, and so, all who encounter him — beast, human, faerie, demon or Exalt, must look deep within themselves for strength or run shrieking in terror.

Players of any characters who encounter Arad must make a successful Valor roll at difficulty 2 or have their characters run in fear from him. The only exception to this are unintelligent automata and mindless undead, such as zombies — all other creatures instinctively recognize Arad as a killer beyond any of their understanding.

RHYTHM OF THE HUNT

Cost: 10 motes

In the heat of combat, Arad can make himself one with the ebb and flow of the battle. By spending 10 motes of Essence, Arad can add his Essence in dice to every dodge action in a turn. This power is reflexive, not supplementary. Arad may either add the dice to a dodge action or gain a free dodge action with a dice pool equal to his Essence. This power lasts for a scene.

UNERRING SENSES OF THE HUNTER

Cost: 10 motes

Arad is renowned for his ability to track targets across any terrain, even environments normally unsuited for such attempts, such as the Wyld. Arad may spend 10 Essence and be able to find the trail of his target, no matter how well disguised or how difficult the terrain, so long as it is less than a month old, and he will not lose the trail once he has found it. Against those using Charms that cover their tracks, such as Traceless Passage, the two parties resolve the issue as if neither was using magic.

BRASS LEGIONNAIRE

Description: Designed two centuries prior to the Usurpation by a Twilight Caste artificer, the Legion of Brass was constructed as an army utterly loyal to a despotic Southern ruler. Stronger than mortal soldiers, tireless and ever-faithful to their appointed commander, the constructs of the Legion of Brass acted as police, wardens and foot soldiers in the lands under her dominion, securing them from possible attack from without, and betrayal from within. All told, perhaps five legions of these mechanical soldiers were created during the next two centuries, and they served faithfully and brutally until the Usurpation.

Unfortunately, the Southern warlord placed too much faith in her mechanical servitors and in the Dragon-Blooded officers that commanded them. She escaped the initial ambush, but was killed in her sleep by her bodyguard of clock-work soldiers, tricked

by their commanders into believing that the woman sleeping in the Twilight's bed was an impostor. Thereafter, most of the Legion of Brass was disassembled, as too many Twilight Caste constructs were revealing themselves to be carefully hidden booby traps. A number were spared destruction by ambitious Dragon-Blooded who believed the soldiers' utility outweighed the dangers — the exact number of Brass Legionnaires that survived is unknown but is thought to be, at most, a few dragons worth. The secrets of building the Legionnaires died with their creator, so no new Legionnaires have been made in over 1,000 years.

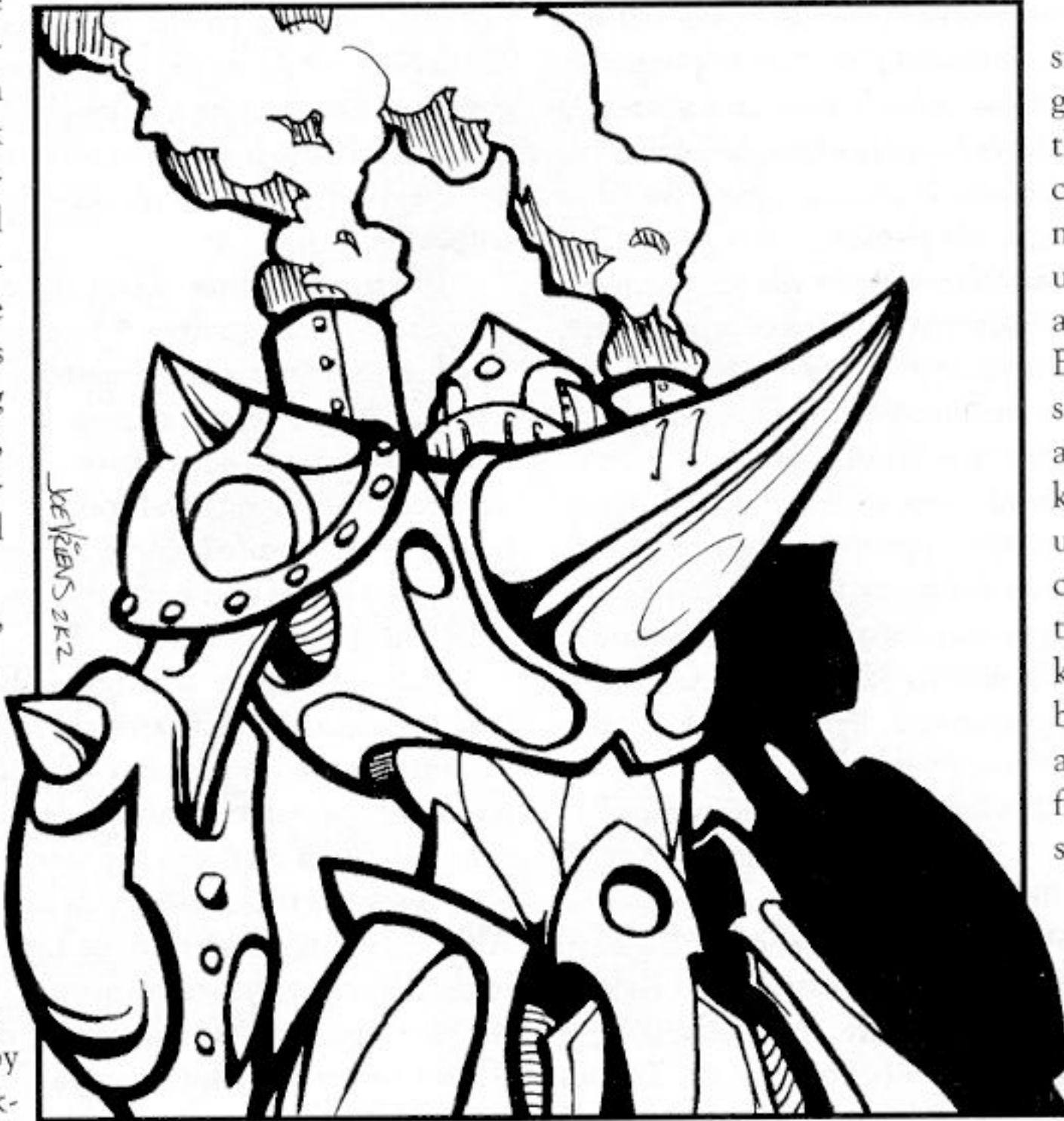
The Legionaries of Brass disappeared from view for centuries, hidden by Dragon-Blooded masters unwilling to destroy the mechanical soldiers but reluctant to reveal them. Small units were sometimes traded for great favors or sent on vital missions, but the majority of them stayed in the South. The remaining Legionaries were deployed during the Contagion; resistant to the effects of the Wyld and immune to the Contagion, the Brass Legion was a


powerful weapon against the Fair Folk. Most were destroyed during the conflict, and the remaining units often found themselves without leadership. Lacking a clear commander, some sought superiors with the appropriate command phrases and codes, others continued at their last task until relieved or ordered to take up another mission, and the remaining units shut themselves down to conserve wear and tear, awaiting rescue and reassignment.

In the present day, small units of Brass Legionnaires (rarely more than a fang's worth) can be found in some major cities, usually under the command of a local Dragon-Blooded sorcerer or satrap. Both Lookshy and the Realm are known to field larger units of these mechanical soldiers, although the exact number is unknown (but generally believed to be less than a wing each). A handful of scale-sized and smaller units operate as de facto mercenaries, trading their services as needed for repairs, equipment and information that might lead them to

a commander with the proper command codes.

The Legion of Brass was designed to be able to operate independent of direct command for short periods of time, and units are capable of adapting standard tactics and field maneuvers to changing situations; they can learn, after a fashion, and will rarely be caught by the same trick twice. Unfortunately, their memory is finite, and so, while competent tacticians and strategists, they are not legends of maneuver and conflict; in some cases, they literally have forgotten more about tactics than the field commanders who lead them, but this does not mean the Legionnaires remember more. They have a preset list of commands and priorities, and they will follow along that set of orders until the objective is fulfilled or clearly becomes non-viable, at which point they will return to their rallying point for further orders if they are permitted to retreat. Altering the orders of a unit of the Brass Legion without the correct command codes is nearly impossible, requiring a Intelligence + Lore roll against a difficulty of 5 (or more, if the character lacks rank or stature in the eyes of the Legion).





Conversely, anyone with the correct command codes anyone can order a unit to do anything. These command codes were designed to be difficult to inadvertently stumble over. The code keys are different for each talon of the Legion and are in Old Realm.

The Brass Legions were built in several series or generations, and while functionally very similar, their appearance was markedly different. The first Legionnaires are akin to the finest statuary; each stands six feet tall and is indistinguishable from a mortal First Age hoplite, save only for the polished brass construction and glittering hematite eyes. Both male and female examples of the first series were constructed. Capable of using mortal weapons and armor, these anatomically perfect soldiers were soon supplanted by less realistic versions; by the 12th generation, they bore no resemblance to a human except for basic form. Humanoid and standing about seven feet tall, the last generation's body form forsakes any pretense of humanity and is a minimalist mechanism for bearing arms. Whether the slow descent from works of art to purely utilitarian devices reflects their creator's slow descent into madness, a growing lack of interest in their design or a desire to make function preeminent over form is unknown.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 7, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4*

* Cannot fail Valor rolls.

Abilities: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Endurance 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; three others that depend on where the automaton is stationed) 3, Lore 2 (First Age +1, Strategy +1, Tactics +1), Medicine 1 (Repairs +2), Melee 3 (Sword +1, Spear +1), Presence 2 (Intimidate +2), Resistance 5, Ride 2, Sail 2, Stealth 2 (Ambush +1, Camouflage +1, Hide in Shadows +1), Survival 1, Thrown 3 (Javelin +1)

Supernatural Powers: Wyld Resistance

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Punch: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 4L Defense 6

Kick: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 4L Defense 6

Fighting Spear: Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 7L Defense 7

Javelin (hand to hand): Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 6L Defense 6

Short Sword: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L Defense 8

Javelin (thrown): Speed 7 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L (Rate 2, Range 30)

Self Bow: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 3L (Rate 2, Range 150)

Dodge Pool: 6 **Soak:** 10L/12B (Brass construction and armor, 7L/5B. Some designs are capable of wearing human armor or have additional armor specially constructed for them. Legionaries of Brass can suffer mobility penalties but do not become fatigued).

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/-4/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: Legionaries of Brass are almost never extras. The Legionnaires do not sleep. They are immune to poisons, toxins, suffocation and disease. They are not an object for the purposes of object damage and are considered an automata for the purposes of effects that do or do not apply to such creatures. Legionaries are designed to self-service while in the field. Every two weeks of campaigning, they require a furlough of one day to repair and maintain themselves. If not allowed to clean themselves up, they suffer a -1 to all dice pools per week they go without refitting.

Refitting requires occult materials and metal goods worth together Resources •• per trooper, and while they can do it themselves, their master must provide them with supplies. Repairing one requires Occult ••, Lore •• and Craft ••• with a craft focus on artifice and metalworking. This requires one day and goods worth Resources •• per health level repaired. Most Legion of Brass units have stockpiled spares and have at least one Legionnaire self-taught at the arts of repair.

Each Legionary will normally speak two to three languages in addition to an archaic form of Old Realm and will often have three to five additional dots in Abilities, reflecting specialized training or experience. These dots can even be in Abilities the stock model Legionaries do not possess, as these constructs can learn, after a fashion. Although imperishable, Brass Legionnaires are not possessed of perfect long-term memory, and their memories of the First Age, especially events not directly related to their service career, are often hazy and incomplete at best. A variety of specialist designs are known to have existed, but relatively few, if any, have survived to the present day. Storytellers may wish to allow players to acquire the command codes for a group of Brass Legionnaires or even to start play with them; this would normally require the Artifact Background at five dots.

WYLD RESISTANCE

The Legionaries are naturally resistant to the Wyld's effects and have been further enchanted to reduce their vulnerability to its effects even more. They are immune to all forms of glamour. They receive extra dice equal to half their Willpower (3) on all dice pools related to resisting the effects of the Wyld. These dice are only added on rolls against the effects of the Wyld itself (such as resisting Wyld mutation, Wyld storms, etc.) as opposed to environmental effects caused by the Wyld or the effects of Wyld creature attack.

CHILLIKIN

Description: A chillikin is a small being, looking something like a toddler-sized gibbon with a blue opal set in the middle of its forehead. The creatures come in several colors, all uniformly bright and loud in hue. While they are capable of frenetic motion, they are also able to flop down in a dark corner of a room for days at a time, never moving or betraying any sign of their animate nature. They speak in a slow high-pitched manner and tend toward child-like vocabularies, and they are most frequently known to use Old Realm as their language of choice.

That curious juxtaposition of learned tongue and infantile babbling stems from the chillikins' First Age origins: Decanted by a long-forgotten sorcerer, the chillikins were designed to be the ultimate snuggly and adorable pet of the Old Realm. To that end, they were given soft fur, squeezable limbs, large black eyes and a sweet disposition. They received the ability to communicate with the children of their owners as well as enough intelligence to watch out for the children's safety and to call for assistance in case of an emergency.

However, their creator didn't stop there. Knowing that the children of Solars were a lonely bunch due to their parents' lofty position, the sorcerer gave the chillikins the mystical ability to manifest the daydreams of their young charges as tangible, "living" illusions. Imaginary friends became visible playmates, endowed with speech and substance. The chillikins generated these living dreams through the gemstones set in their foreheads. Similar in form and function to the dreamstones of the South, these gems absorbed the dreams and nightmares of children as they slept at night, clutching their chillikin to them. Each chillikin was designed to "consume" the nightmares and store the good dreams for replication during playtime.

The chillikin did their job well for centuries — until the Usurpation. The massacre included the children of the Solars: While Solar Exaltation is not hereditary, the Dragon-Blooded didn't want a core around which political resistance could coalesce. Any possibility of revenge was to be squelched. And so, armed warriors burst into nurseries, transforming playrooms into abattoirs. The chillikins were

tossed aside as worthless trash, the screams of their butchered playmates echoing in their fuzzy ears.

That night of terror warped the chillikins for all time. Slaughtered while asleep (whether by jade daiklave or sorcery), the children of the Solars transmitted their dying agonies to the dreamgems of their chillikins. The creatures attempted to eat these hideous, nightmarish experiences as their creator had taught them, but the pain was too real, too powerful. It was poison to the chillikins, driving them insane and contaminating their gems. No longer could a chillikin summon forth pleasant, amiable dream creatures. Instead, the dreamgem's function was reversed:

Through it, the twisted chillikins swallowed good dreams whole and spat forth nightmares into an ill-prepared world.

Ignored in the aftermath of the Dragon-Blooded coup, the bulk of the Old Realm's chillikins fled the palaces of the Solars, seeking refuge wherever they could find it. In the years since then, many of the chillikins have either been destroyed or fallen dormant due to a lack of sufficient dream energy. Unfortunately for the children of the Age of Sorrows, that means that the most cunning, most insane chillikins are the ones still functioning today. These plush abominations lurk in the shadows, creeping into unguarded homes when they require sustenance and feeding on the dreams of the children they find there.

Others, bolder than most, openly maintain their original existence as magical playthings, albeit in Threshold communities far from the influence of the Realm. Nexus has proven particularly hospitable to their kind.

The chillikins hate and loathe the Dragon-Blooded above all other peoples. They routinely set their nightmare creations loose on any Terrestrial who comes within their field of vision. Some chillikins prefer obvious, bloodthirsty assaults; others opt for cunning campaigns of terror. Dragon-Blooded children are their favorite targets, and the chillikin is a familiar bogeyman to most Terrestrial youngsters. Pity the outcaste family so ignorant of its Dragon-Blooded heritage as not recognize a chillikin when it encounters one!

The recent return of the Solars to Creation caught the chillikins off-guard. Solars "smell" right to a chillikin, and their presence has stirred long-repressed memories and emotions. Several chillikins have sought out the newly reborn Exalted, unleashing their stored-up nightmares against the Wyld Hunt and sheltering their former masters



inside their well-hidden lairs. The chillikins are loose cannons in the fight against the Realm, however. Their dreamgems are so poisoned, their minds so consumed with centuries of hatred, that they are difficult to control and paranoid beyond belief. A Solar who wishes to use them runs a terrible risk.

The peculiarities of the chillikin lifecycle bring the little monsters into frequent contact with the Fair Folk. The soul-twisted Shepherds of Dreams and the Wyld Eaters of Dreams share a common source of sustenance, and their interactions often take the form of turf wars, chillikin nightmaresquaring off against hobgoblin hordes. However, unlike Fair Folk, chillikins are constructs, artificial lifeforms that utilize psychic energy for motive and mental power. If they fail to batten themselves on dreams, they do not die: They simply run down like a spring-driven toy. Proximity to a dreaming child is enough to start them up again. In addition, the chillikins were designed with the welfare of dreamers in mind. Their dream-siphoning power has no adverse effects upon the psyches of the

children who serve as their source (aside from those that stem from waking up to face your worst nightmares made flesh and blood).

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Charisma 5, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Riverspeak) 1, Medicine 1, Performance 3, Presence 1, Socialize 2, Stealth 4, Thrown 2

Supernatural Powers: Nightmares of the Fallen Toys

Base Initiative: 8

Attack:

Thrown Rock: Speed 7 Accuracy 7 Damage 4B (Rate 1, Range 3)

Dodge Pool: 9

Soak: 0L/4B (Childproof fur, 0L/2B)

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 4

Other Notes: None

NIGHTMARES OF THE FALLEN TOYS

Cost: None

As its statistics show, an individual chillikin is no match for an Exalted of any type in combat. It tends to rely on trickery and deceit against its enemies. But there does come a time when battle is imminent, and even the dimmest chillikin is capable of mustering a powerful defensive (or even offensive) force via its ability to summon forth creatures of nightmare. Each chillikin dreamgem can store up to five nightmare patterns at a time. A chillikin can cause any or all of these creatures to manifest at a single time. It can also replace an old nightmare with a new terror, provided that it has access to a dreaming child. The absorption process generally harvests one nightmare per night, the absolute maximum replacement rate for nightmares destroyed via accident, combat or magic (the "death" of a manifest nightmare erases its pattern from the chillikin dreamgem). A dreamgem pried from the forehead of a dead chillikin can record no new nightmares, but it can continue to play them back: Like dreamstones (see *Scavenger Sons*, p. 47), chillikin dreamgems can be "read" by a dreaming or meditating mind (assuming that said mind wishes to encounter the horrors contained therein).

Chillikin nightmares are fully substantial beings. They can interact with the material world around them, and they possess a low cunning not to be underestimated. Such creatures are as varied in form and capability as are the minds of the dreamers that spawn them. Storytellers should take the time to shape these beasts to fit the particular circumstances of their individual series: The tangible nightmares reflect the traumas and anxieties of the child whose mind gave birth to them.

However, in the interest of assisting Storytellers, a sample nightmare follows. It is a fairly common one, at least in the areas of the Threshold under the influence of the Immaculate Order. Simply put, it is a child-eye's version of the Wretched (Night Caste Solars). In nightmare form, the Wretched assume the pale, albino-like complexions of Immaculate legend, orichalcum daggers replaced with lurid yellow claws and sharp metallic teeth. As every good child knows, foul demons such as these lurk in closets and under beds, waiting for a succulent young limb to come within their grasp.

NIGHTMARE OF THE WRETCHED

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4 (Smell of Uncovered Feet +2), Brawl 4 (Clinch +3), Dodge 3, Presence 3 (Terrorize Children +2), Stealth 5 (Lurk +3)

Base Initiative: 10

Attack:

Bite: Speed 9 Accuracy 8 Damage 5L

Claw: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 9L Defense 9

Dodge Pool: 8

Soak: 4L/8B (Tough hide, 2L/4B)

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/Incap

Other Notes: Other common nightmares include all of the remaining castes of the Solar Anathema, the maneating Lunars and the brainsucking Fair Folk.

FIVE DAYS DARKNESS

Description: When the Unconquered Sun first burned in all his might and splendor, he cast the first shadow. That shadow fled from his light, creeping down into the dark places of the earth, and sought refuge. After the Yozis were cast down into Hell, Five Days Darkness suckled at the teat of the Ebon Dragon, and all remembrance of light fled from him. He fed on the flesh of newborn stars, and abandoned all dreams of Creation. He drew in upon himself and sought for direction.

He came forth from his seclusion and first sought his creator, but he was driven away by the Unconquered Sun's majesty and power, unable to endure the greatness of his light. Still nameless, he crawled to the feet of Luna and, then, the Five Maidens, but in each case, he could not endure the pure light of their presence. Finally, he sought haven in the bosom of Gaia and resolved to seek worshipers who would honor him as a giver of peace and refuge. He sought for allies among the powers of the year, going to each month's patron spirits in turn and offering them rich rewards and gifts in exchange for alliance and fealty. However, each in turn rejected him. "How can we trust you," they asked, "given that you have fled the Unconquered Sun and cannot abide his

presence? How can we place our faith in one who flees the heart of power and purity?" Bitter and resentful, Five Days Darkness took his name and rose up amid the first Calibration, and he swore that each of them would regret their proud refusals and would, in time, seek him out and beg him to be ruler and governor over them. From that day, he has been bound by his oath.


Since then, Five Days Darkness has enacted many complicated plots designed to place the rulers of the months in his debt or to force them to seek aid from him. He knows many of the secrets of the dark places beneath the earth and can offer great store of gems and power to those who will obey him. He also knows much of human hearts and souls and will often serve as an advisor in order to cause disruption and chaos. His favored tactic, however, is to find heroes who support the spirits of the calendar, or who owe them significant debts, and to ruin them or prevent them from fulfilling their obligations. He is a practitioner of the Immaculate martial arts in human form and delights in slaying Immaculates with their own techniques.

Five Days Darkness appears as a shadow darker than the living void. Sometimes, he takes the form of an animal, sometimes that of an amorphous blob, but most often, he takes the form of a human being, whose features bear an uncanny resemblance to the Unconquered Sun as pictured in ancient temples.

If in human form, his voice is low and persuasive and an echo of the last person to have spoken to him. He has many powers and is rumored to be close to the Ebon Dragon. However, Five Days Darkness dislikes the Abyssals, as they are (to him) a perversion of the Unconquered Sun's light; he may form temporary alliances to use them as tools, but he does not trust them and has no affection or sympathy for them.

Five Days Darkness was engendered by the Unconquered Sun, and thus he has authority and power only during the day and never during the night. He will speak courteously to Solar Exalted who are aware of his nature, feeling a certain sympathy with them as fellow-creations of the Unconquered Sun but will happily deceive those who do not recognize him. At sunset, when the Sun dips below the horizon, he simply vanishes





— none know where to — and at dawn, he appears again in the same place from which he disappeared. This unfortunate hindrance to his powers is one of the main reasons he has not become more powerful or accumulated more influence.

Five Days Darkness is vindictive but not petty; however, should he have good reason to be angered (if, for example, an Exalt has foiled a major plot), then he will seek revenge until the next Calibration. During each Calibration, he pursues his own private ritual, possessing a boy of five years old who must have both parents living. He dwells with the boy's family for five days, acting in every respect like his host, though the learned can recognize him by the fact that the child sleeps between dusk and dawn every night like the dead, that any still water which he touches becomes as black as ink and that, if addressed by name as Five Days Darkness, he must respond. On the last day of Calibration, just before sunset, he slays the child's entire family with hands and teeth before vanishing at sunset, leaving behind his unconscious host.

If Five Days Darkness is ever destroyed, he reforms during the next Calibration in a hidden place deep in the earth, taking the full five days to assume his form and nature. He will remember the circumstances of his death and may well seek revenge.

Attributes: Strength 9, Dexterity 8, Stamina 14, Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 7, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Abilities: Archery 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Brawl 5, Craft (Poetry) 5, Dodge 5, Endurance 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Flametongue, Guild Cant, High Realm, Low Realm, Riverspeak, Seatongue) 5, Lore 5, Martial Arts 5, Occult 7, Presence 5, Resistance 5, Socialize 5, Stealth 5

Backgrounds: Allies 5, Followers 5, Influence 5, Manse 5, Resources 5

Charms: All spirit Charms. Five Days Darkness is also a master of all five Dragon Paths and pays no elemental surcharge.

Cost to Materialize: 80

Base Initiative: 9

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 12 Damage 12L Defense 8

Punch: Speed 9 Accuracy 11 Damage 10L Defense 11

Dodge Pool: 5 **Soak:** 15L/30B (Shadow armor, 8L/16B)

Willpower: 9 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 120

Other Notes: Five Days Darkness is skilled with all known weapons but rarely deigns to use them when disposing of enemies.

FLESH PET

Description: These misshapen monstrosities are the creation of the most twisted of the Fair Folk. A faerie artisan will take some sticks or stones and mud from the world to the madness beyond and craft them into a humanoid skeleton. The artisan sets opals in its eye sockets and seashells in its ears and then fashions a bit of gossamer into the form of a yard-long tongue for the mannekin. The faerie curls this tongue up into the mouth and closes it, then kisses the skeleton on the mouth to breathe life into it. The creature has an insatiable thirst for flesh, though not as a hunger to feed, but to clothe itself in and grow.

Flesh pets are unnaturally silent, able to surprise even the most supernaturally aware creatures. Initially, when their bodies have not yet gained any skin, they blend in perfectly with their surroundings. Thus, they lie in wait until a hapless animal or (if they are perhaps fortunate) human comes near. Then, a flesh pet lashes out with its claws and strips off as much skin as possible from the creature in its initial attack. Against mortals, this damage is aggravated and will never heal properly. The tissue of the Exalted, spirits and the Fair Folk is unusable by the Patchwork People for their skins, but the pets may still attack them to wound for normal lethal damage.

If one can kill its prey quickly, the flesh pet will use its claws to flense the creature clean of skin. Otherwise, it will steal a strip or two of flesh and flee. Flesh pets take these long strips and lick both sides of them, then wind them about their skeleton in a process similar to mummification. The flesh, treated by the magic of a flesh pet's tongue, sticks in place and becomes part of its body. As they gather more flesh, the flesh pets build themselves a patchwork skin out of the hides of their victims. Flesh pets' skins are often marked by tufts of fur side by side with scales or short feathers. Flesh pets try to emulate the human form, hence the nickname "Patchwork People." They never feel complete and will add more strips of flesh over old flesh, and the creatures always seek out human skin over animal hide.

Flesh pets are most common in the Scavenger Lands, but they have also wandered out of the frozen North with fur-covered hides, and some have been found in other parts of the East clothed in bird feathers and in the South with leathery hides and lizard scales. The creatures do not feel temperature extremes, and frostbite seems of little concern to them. They do suffer damage from cold and heat, though never environmental penalties. Sorcerers

loathe to employ stomach bottle bugs sometimes collect flesh pets to use as chirurgeons. An enslaved flesh pet can use its tongue to stop bleeding and to paste dead skin onto living subjects. Captured ones are sometimes used by patrician officers in the legions, who cannot afford the expense of retaining a Exalted sorcerer to bind a sesselja.

Flesh pets have no natural speech. They communicate through gestures and hisses. They can understand the basics of human speech, in any language, possibly by reading the body language of the speaker. An enslaved Patchwork Person must be fed strips of flesh to augment itself, or it becomes surly and reticent, though it will never rebel once captured.

Flesh pets are gifted with unnatural strength and agility, though until they graft enough flesh on themselves to support their skeletons, they are quite fragile. They never bleed and do not suffer from diseases. Their tongues are agile and prehensile and can lift small objects. Flesh pets do not understand the use of weaponry and attempts to teach them fighting techniques have always failed. Flesh pets only die when they have been completely dismembered and their tongues destroyed. So long as the tongue remains, a flesh pet will repair itself in time.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 6, Stamina 2-6*, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Endurance 1, Medicine 3 (Surgery +2), Resistance 1-5*, Stealth 5, Survival 3

Base Initiative: 11

Attack:

Claw: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 5L* Defense 8

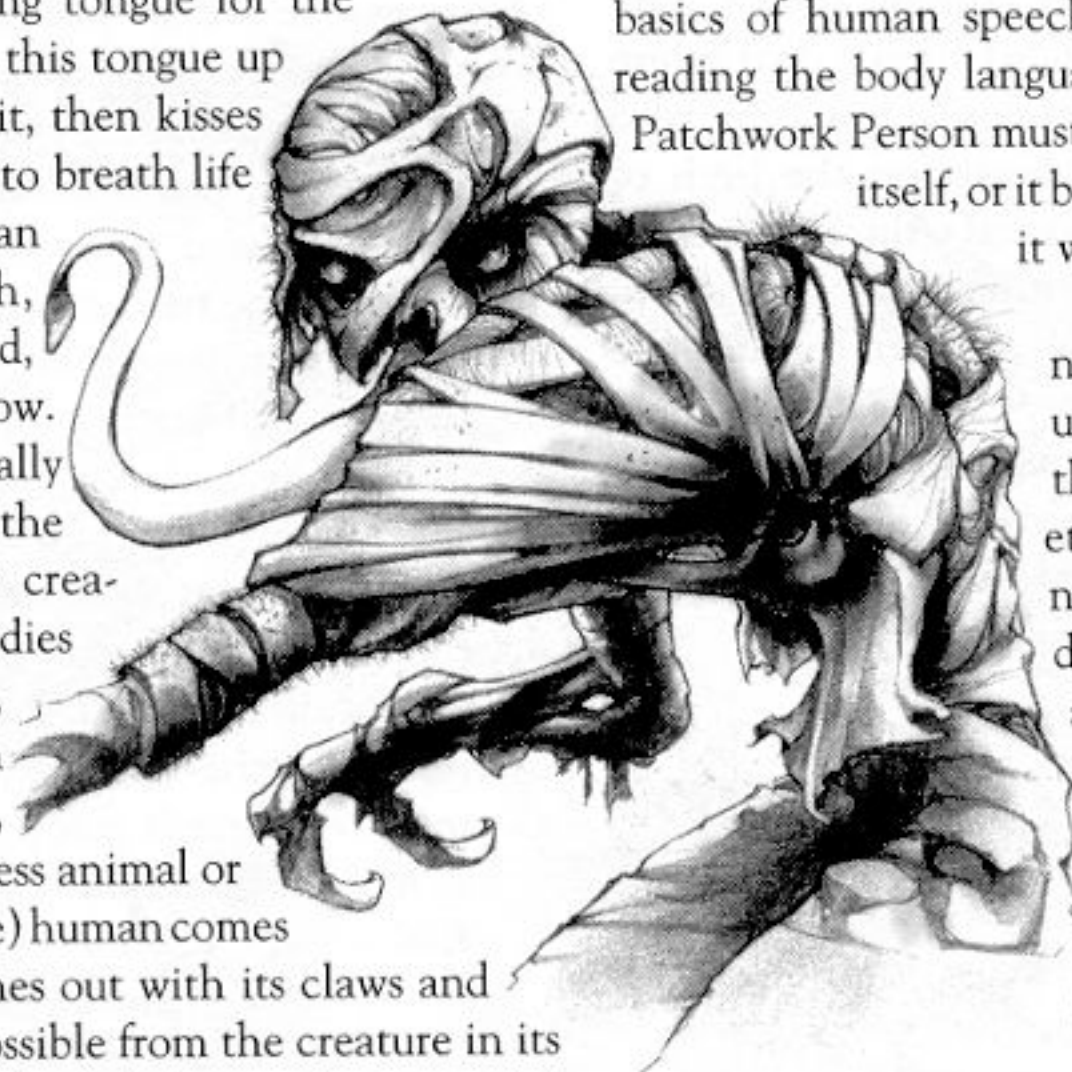
* Damage is aggravated against mortal men and beasts.

Dodge Pool: 11 **Soak:** 1L/2B, up to 3L/6B* (None)

Willpower: 5 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: Attributes and Abilities marked with an * are variable according to how much skin a flesh pet has collected. A flesh pet must collect skin equal to three human's worth to increase its Stamina and Resistance by one each. The creature's soak total should be adjusted accordingly. Health levels are static and do not grow with the creature. Damage from the claw attack is lethal for Exalted, spirits and Fair Folk and aggravated for mortals.



GIANT RAT AND EMPEROR RAT

The Scavenger Lands teem with mutated creatures, twisted by the Wyld and by ancient magics into unnatural shapes and behavior. Giant rats are a ubiquitous example of such animals, and there are an endless variety of them. In Sijan, for instance, cadaverous and death-tainted vermin the size of a greyhound lurk in sunken mausoleums and skitter through antique tombs. The gutters and sewers of Nexus's Nighthammer district are reported to contain massive rodents as large as boar, who have grown huge and terrible dining on the flesh of abandoned children and the chemical effluvia that drips into the sewers. Even Lookshy utilizes special military patrols to eliminate the rats that have been transformed into vicious and cunning carnivores by the ancient First Age relics that the city stores in warehouses and vaults. Assignment to this "Rat Patrol" is meted out as a punishment to those Dragon-Bloods of the Seventh Legion who are deemed to need a little humility.

GIANT RAT

Description: Ancient magic, pollution and Wyld energies are all likely to create a giant rat, and some of them are not just larger than their tiny ancestors — they are also more intelligent. In the village of Teim, famous for a pair of 2,000-year-old Solar tombs that have remained impervious to intrusion, the rats have become terrible and wise in the atmosphere of ancient, dormant sorcery. Some farmers speak of waking in the middle of the night to see the bulk of a giant rat as it stood over their beds, licking its muzzle hungrily, and a few of the locals have taken note of the strange, indecipherable letters that can be found scratched on the lower walls of remote buildings. The villagers of Teim now arm themselves, waiting for the night when their rats are no longer content to live in the shadow of human society.

Attributes: Strength 4 Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 1, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2 (Spot Traps +2), Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidate 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 3L Defense 5

Claw: Speed 5 Accuracy 5 Damage 2L Defense 5

Dodge Pool: 4 Soak: 3L/5B (Mangy hide: 1L/1B)

Willpower: 2 Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/

Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: It is not unknown for giant rats to occasionally transmit diseases, including the bubonic plague (see *Exalted*, p. 321). In Wyld areas or near untapped

Manses and ancient artifacts, giant rats may develop mutations. To simulate such giant rats, give them one or more Wyld mutations (see *Exalted*, p. 280-281 or *Exalted: The Lunars*, p. 208-222).

EMPEROR RAT

Description: Far more fearsome than a giant rat, however, is the legendary emperor rat. The urchins of Dungtown in Nexus call them rat hydras, and tell of how once every generation or so, a nest of baby rats will accidentally tangle their tails together. Bound to their brethren, the rats begin to scratch and claw at one another, and their wounds fuse together. The other rats in the nest inexplicably make sure that the knotted monstrosity is kept fed, perhaps out of some insane animal charity or out of foreknowledge of what it will become.

As the trapped rats grow to adulthood, one of them inevitably becomes dominant and begins to take a larger share of the food brought to the fused creatures. The other rats find their bodies merging and being partially swallowed by the dominant rat's, and soon, a newly whole emperor rat is ready to drag its huge bulk forth, armed with a half dozen or more screaming and hungry mouths, bodies and claws. The other rats in the nest are helpless before such an abomination, and it continues to grow as it takes the king's share of any food.

Emperor rats are known to appear in the giant rat populations of Nexus and Sijan, and they were not unknown in Thorns before the coming of the Mask of Winters. A decade ago, a pair of rat hydras led a massive swarm of giant rats out of the ancient sewers of Nexus in the middle of a plague season, and only the intervention of two companies of mercenaries made it possible to drive them back, and then, only after two day's worth of bloody alley fighting. Only one of the emperor rats was slain in the battle, and urban legend has it that the other rat hydra squats in the mythical center of the sewers that is said to lie in the underground heart of old Hollow, waiting for the day when she and her army of vermin can stream forth into the streets again and claim a bloody revenge in honor of her slain mate.

Let it never be said that the emperor rats are wholly unprofitable to city-dwellers. Soothsayers make a hefty profit warding off the entrances to gutters and drains in areas where an emperor rat is thought to lurk, and the Guild has begun trying to create and sell the many-headed vermin to those who want a novel guardian or entertaining pit fight. Attempts to create them through surgical means have failed, but outcaste sorcerers have used magic to transform a nest of giant rats into an emperor rat for a hefty fee. On occasion, there have been a few mercenary bands who have offered to capture a wild emperor rat by delving into the sewers of Nexus or the necropoli of Sijan, but such hunting parties rarely return,

and those that do come back do so empty-handed. Despite the risks, there are always those willing to try and capture a wild rat hydra. This is because tame, sorcerously bred emperor rats are smaller and less vicious than their naturally occurring counterparts, although exceptions have been known to occur. One slave-trader in Nexus was infamous for the size of his tamed, sorcerously created specimen, which had grown to the size of a bull due

Claw: Speed 5 Accuracy 5 Damage 2L Defense 5
 Dodge Pool: 4 Soak: 4L/6B (Mangy hide, 1L/1B)
 Willpower: 2 Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-0/-0/-4/
 -4/-4/-4/Incap
 Essence: 2
 Other Notes: The emperor rat is a many-headed, verminous hydra, and as such, it is able to fend off many attackers at once. Emperor rats can attack up to six times



to what the trader called a "special diet." Few of the normally fearless gossips of the city dared to discuss the slave-trader's shortage of "stock" that season.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Charisma 1, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 1, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 4 (Spot Traps +2), Brawl 3, Dodge 1, Presence 4 (Intimidate +2), Survival 3

Backgrounds: None.

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite (Dominant Head): Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L Defense 5

Bite (Extra Head): Speed 6 Accuracy 5 Damage 3L Defense 5

in each action without having to split their dice pools, and these attacks can be split between opponents or used on a single enemy. If the emperor rat decides to take a full dodge, it merely loses one of its attacks. Only the dominant rat can dodge, but any of them may parry with their attacks.

The incredible joined nervous system of the emperor rat allows it to take an enormous amount of damage without losing any of its ferocity — assume that it loses one of its free multiple attack actions for every -4 health level it loses, to simulate the emperor rats' joined rats dying as it takes becomes more severely wounded.

GRATE MONKEY

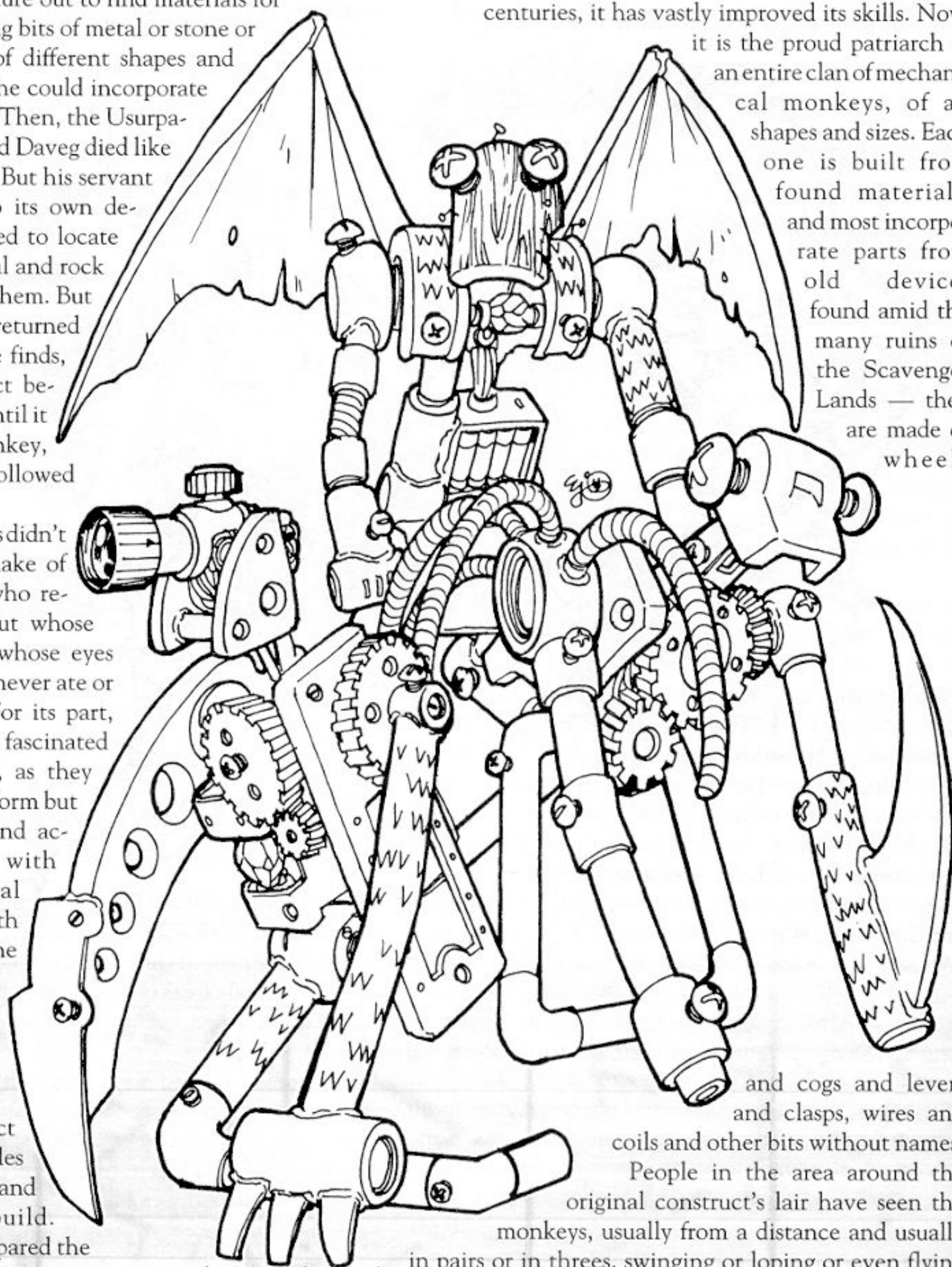
Description: During the First Age, a Solar named Daveg Chlurion desired helpers to aid him in his work. One of his passions was sculpture, and he crafted a creature of metal and stone, shaped like a monkey but gifted with intelligence and a degree of creativity. Then, he sent this creature out to find materials for him — interesting bits of metal or stone or even wood, all of different shapes and textures — that he could incorporate into his artwork. Then, the Usurpation occurred, and Daveg died like most of his kind. But his servant survived. Left to its own devices, it continued to locate loose bits of metal and rock and to stockpile them. But its master never returned to examine these finds, and the construct became lonely — until it saw another monkey, a real one, and followed it home.

The monkeys didn't know what to make of this newcomer who resembled them but whose skin shone and whose eyes glowed and who never ate or drank or slept. For its part, the construct was fascinated by the creatures, as they were so like it in form but soft and warm and active. It stayed with them for several weeks, moving with the pack, until, one day, it watched a female give birth. And then, it knew what it had to do.

The construct returned to its piles of rock and metal and began to build. Chlurion had prepared the creature to be his assistant in several other of his arts as well, and it bore a portion of his talent, though certainly not all of it. Indeed, the servant's creation resembled a monkey in the same way that a child's

drawing resembles a person. But this new creation came to life and moved and acted, and now, the construct was no longer alone. And it began to collect more materials and to plan its next child, which would be even better than the first.

The original construct still exists, for Daveg Chlurion built it well, and in the intervening centuries, it has vastly improved its skills. Now, it is the proud patriarch of an entire clan of mechanical monkeys, of all shapes and sizes. Each one is built from found materials, and most incorporate parts from old devices found amid the many ruins of the Scavenger Lands — they are made of wheels



and cogs and levers and clasps, wires and coils and other bits without names.

People in the area around the original construct's lair have seen the monkeys, usually from a distance and usually in pairs or in threes, swinging or loping or even flying (for some have wings, after a fashion). They have dubbed the creatures "grate monkeys," since the first one sighted had a grating in its chest and some sort of glowing engine behind that, powering the automaton.

The grate monkeys are not dangerous unless crossed. They collect metal and stone, particularly worked metals and gemstones and carry them back to their father, who uses these materials to build more of the monkeys and to improve on existing ones. Because of this, treasure-hunters sometimes seek out the monkeys and try to follow them back to their lair. But the constructs are faster and more agile than men and lose pursuit easily, disappearing among the ruins.

Unfortunately, the grate monkeys have picked their initial home bare and have begun to explore more distant locations for new materials. Human scavengers make easy targets, and the grate monkeys have become excellent thieves, sneaking into tents and camps at night and stealing small objects. Like magpies, grate monkeys are drawn to shiny things, especially metal ones, and will carry off anything they can. Most grate monkeys have compartments for storing small items.

Up close, grate monkeys do look like real monkeys, only made of metal, glass and stone. Several different species are represented, and all of them have skin of metal, usually etched to resemble fur. But Daveg's construct likes to tinker and improve, and so, most of his children have parts no normal monkey possesses — cable-like tentacles sprouting from the shoulders, blades curving back over the hands and arms, eyes that telescope and swivel, wings that flap and so on. Battle was never part of the original's purpose, and so, none of the constructs are built exclusively for combat. However, the constructs are equipped to defend themselves, and their metal skins can resist most normal weapons.

Though the grate monkeys hide from people, some claim they can understand human speech and might even be able to talk. Certainly, the original construct

can understand spoken words, and it may have taught its children as well. It might be possible to trade with the grate monkeys, offering them trinkets in exchange for information about the ruins and what they contain.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 1

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 5, Investigation 2, Larceny 4, Lore 1, Stealth 3, Survival 4

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 4 Accuracy 8 Damage 2L

Claw: Speed 5 Accuracy 6 Damage 3L

Tail: Speed 5 Accuracy 4 Damage 2B

Dodge Pool: 6 **Soak:** 3L/7B (Metal skin, 3L/4B)

Willpower: 7 **Health Levels:** -0/-1/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: Grate monkeys can be used as extras, particularly in larger groups. The statistics provided are more recent constructs and thus have less skill and weaponry than their older and more embellished peers. The original construct himself resembles a golden statue of a strikingly handsome monkey. Just as he is always improving his children, he has made some alterations to himself as well, modifying his own form to honor his creator — by making himself appear more human. The construct's face is now fully human, and his posture is erect like that of a man. He has also crafted a "skin-suit" and sometimes walks among humans in disguise, searching for new materials and ideas and ensuring that his children are still well-hidden.



THE HARVESTER OF POISONS

Description: This terrifying creature was created by Exquisite Blue Jasmine, a Night Caste Exalted of the First Age, to collect and refine poisons for her to use on her targets. It is the size and shape of a bull, with the head of a serpent, and is covered in six-inch-long quills. Its skin is dappled green and black, but the quills that cover it glow like fine beryls, and its eyes are an ominous yellow. When the Harvester of Poisons becomes angry, its hooves grow hot enough to burn the earth on which it treads. It can devour poisonous creatures and plants, suck the venom from them and duplicate the toxins within its own body; it is also capable of mingling poisons to form new and deadly blends.

The Harvester of Poisons is a melancholy creature that prowls Creation in search of new poisons to sample and analyze. At first, while its mistress lived, it did so eagerly, glad to receive her praise each time it brought her a new kind of venom that she could use in her assassinations. However, as time went by, it became harder for the Harvester to find new kinds of poison; Exquisite Blue Jasmine berated it for its tardiness, and it grew to loathe her, though it was bound to her by oaths of loyalty. When she was slain by an army of Terrestrial Exalted at the end of the First Age, the Harvester rejoiced to know that it was free. To this day, its greatest fear is to find that she will somehow manage to return from death and come to claim its allegiance once again.

This creature roams all four quarters of the world, seeking to fulfil its innate purpose by discovering new poisonous creatures and sampling their venom. It often roams the Wyld, as that is a source of new and unnatural animals and plants, confident that the chaos of the place will not affect its Solar-created nature. The Harvester has no need for food or sleep, as its mistress created it not to require such luxuries. When it chooses to rest in order to ponder a conundrum or consider a course of action, it "bleeds off" excess venom through its needles, leaving little puddles of disparate types of poison in a circle around where it has lain. Over the centuries, the Harvester has grown a trifle bored and enjoys having its knowledge tested; more than once, it has provided some particularly rare venom to a sorcerer or warrior who sought it out, or it has told them where to look for certain plants or creatures. However, it requires payment in the form of talismans against poison, which it demands to see destroyed before its eyes. The more powerful the poison sought, the more powerful the item that must be destroyed.

If addressed courteously, the Harvester of Poisons will bow its head and reply in a low-toned hiss, speaking in Old Realm. It knows the powers of the Exalted from its mistress and may well give the newly Exalted more deference than they deserve, fearing the powers that the First Age Solars commanded. The Harvester is aware that the Sidereals turned the Terrestrial Exalted against the Solars and can recount the story, if politely asked to do so. It avoids centers of population; although it could easily deal with a mob of villagers, it has found that this wastes valuable time that could better be spent locating rare lizards. The Harvester is a good conversationalist and enjoys discussing methods of assassination (which Exquisite Blue Jasmine frequently spoke about) or types of poison. Should it be angered or attacked, it will retaliate by spitting poison at opponents, shooting

its poisoned quills at them and trampling them underfoot with its blazing hooves. If it knows that enemies are particularly vulnerable to a certain type of poison, it will use that venom against them.



Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 5, Stamina 8, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 5, Valor 3

Abilities: Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Endurance 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; High Realm, Low Realm, Seatongue) 3, Lore 5, Melee 4, Occult 3, Presence 3 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 5, Socialize 2, Stealth 5

Backgrounds: Resources 3

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 5L Defense 4

Quill: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 5L + venom* Defense 5

Trample: Speed 4 Accuracy 5 Damage 6L Defense 5

Spit: Speed 7 Accuracy 5 Damage 3A** (Rate 1, Range 5)

* Arrow frog venom, see "Other Notes," below.

** Only aggravated against organic targets. See "Other Notes," below.

Dodge Pool: 5

Soak: 6L/9B (Tough hide, 4L/4B)

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3

Other Notes: Immune to all poisons. Its spit causes aggravated damage to living creatures and organic targets such as wooden structures and the walking dead, as it habitually uses a corrosive venom for this attack. In quill attacks, it uses a variant of arrow frog venom (see *Exalted*, p. 243). The Harvester's Resources are old First Age caches and the remains of stores in ancient Manses it knows.

ILLUTHRITA

Description: Possibly related to the chillikins, the illuthritae are the forgotten children of a powerful First Age sorceress. They were once created to form islands of sanity in the maddening chaos beyond the boundaries of Creation. They built temples and retreats for the most powerful Exalted right on the borders of the Fair Folk's realms. Many sorcerers and priests found sanctuary from the rigors of life in the First Age using a few illuthritae to shape the Wyld and hold its effects at bay. The illuthritae cannot work alone, though. Even when they worked together in the First Age, they still had to be fed Essence by their Exalted masters before they could begin to work. The creator of the illuthrita formed a pact between the creature and its Exalted master, allowing them the share Essence and ensuring the safety of both the illuthrita and Exalt. This allowed the illuthrita to make its master's dreams come true, to shape the Wyld into the perfectly imagined sanctuary. Without their creator, illuthritae are no longer able to make such pacts and live like thieves and refugees, taking what they can to fulfill the only purpose they have ever known — to bring order to chaos. They have become a threat as dangerous as any tribe of barbarians or Fair Folk abomination to those who would brave the Wyld.

Illuthritae look like half-formed children, only two feet tall, with golden-green skin that glows softly in darkness. They have only rudimentary features, the hint of a nose and mouth, dimples where eyes would be and mitten-like hands with only thumbs and no fingers. They are lithe and spry and are able to wriggle out of the

grasps of captors with surprising ease. An illuthrita's body is boneless and rubbery. The creatures can squeeze into the tiniest holes and around cracks and hide themselves there for days or weeks.

When the Great Contagion ended, Creation was left weakened and unable to defend itself. The Fair Folk threw open the gates of Creation and stormed forth in such force as to nearly buckle a weakened reality with their dreaming ways. Those illuthritae who had survived the end of the First Age were swept before them as young crabs before a tsunami.

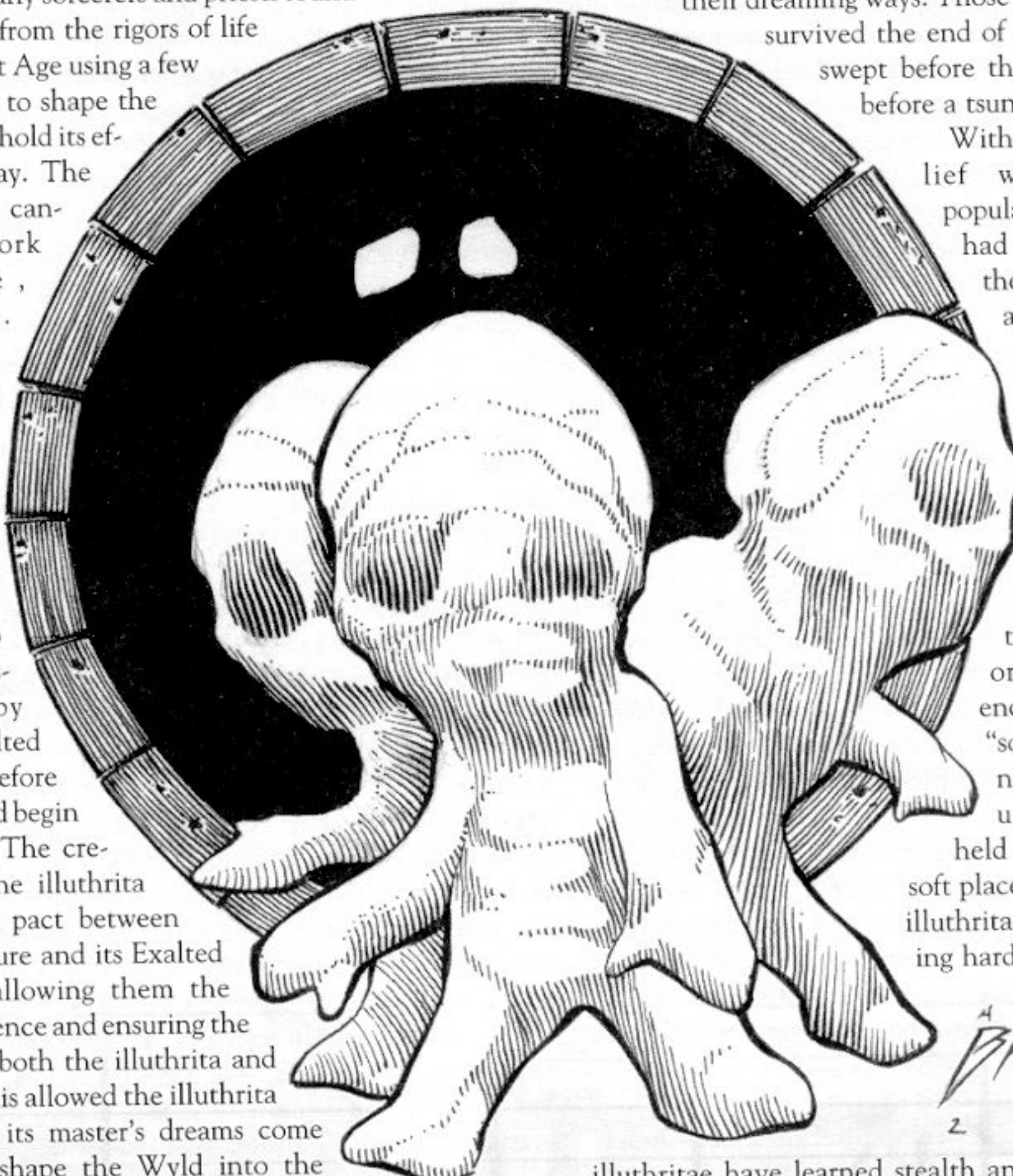
Without the vigorous belief with which the population of the world had supported reality, the Wyld easily spread, as a forest claims a fallow field. Even when the Scarlet Empress cast the Fair Folk back beyond the Elemental Poles, there was no way to restore Creation to its original shape or dimensions. The encroaching Wyld left "soft places" where the normal laws of the universe no longer held sway. It is into these soft places that the surviving illuthritae have nested, working hard to heal the ravages


of the Fair Folk's invasion.

BRÄZ
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The illuthritae have learned stealth and guile in the years following the fall of the First Age. The things of the Wyld swiftly devour these small creatures, and Fair Folk delight in torturing the childlike Wyldsmiths. Illuthritae spook easily and run at the merest hint of danger to themselves. This does not make them any less dangerous however. What they lack in physical prowess the illuthritae make up for in mystical power.

The illuthritae are able to read the minds of those close to them so as to be able to make their desires come to life in the Wyld. They have developed a keen empathy toward the dreamlike subconscious desires of mortals and Exalted alike and have perfected methods by which





they might lure the unwary or the soul-weary into staying within the Wyld. A victim, once ensnared, then begins to gift his Essence to the illuthrita that has seduced him.

The illuthritae use a power similar to the Charm Wyld-Shaping Technique (pp. 186-187 of *Exalted*) that requires more Essence to be spent for larger effects. To completely negate the effects of the Wyld over a great area requires far more essence than an illuthrita possesses itself. Mortals are easy enough for the illuthritae to ensnare, but they cannot share enough Essence to satisfy an illuthrita's sense of duty. Every illuthrita hopes to be able to lure an Exalt into staying in the Wyld with it, and that makes the creatures exceptionally dangerous to the Chosen. The illuthritae have no sense of right and wrong, no conscience, no way to judge what they are doing. They will do whatever it takes to partner with an Exalt and shape the Wyld.

Illuthritae build oases of Creation within the Middlemarches of the Wyld. These oases can be almost as disorienting as the Wyld surrounding them to travelers who have spent hours or days battling against hallucinatory unreality. The laws of Creation, once completely forgotten, are altered or replaced within the illuthritae's domains. Once these rules are set, however, they don't change unless an illuthrita gets a new partner. They are always based on the most recent victim of the resident illuthrita's influence. An illuthrita will rarely allow more than one person to survive within its oasis and will have convinced its charge that he is better off as a hermit, protected within the dream realm created for him. The illuthrita will produce whatever the victim requires — food, libation, lovers — though people created as such are not real and are returned to the primordial Wyld that spawned them once their purpose is served. After a few days, a victim will have forgotten why he came to the Wyld. After weeks, he will forget where he came from. After months, he will forget his old life completely. After years, he may not even remember his own name.

An illuthrita will see to its partner's health as long as it feels it needs to. When an illuthrita senses a more powerful being nearby, it will go to extreme lengths to gain that being's attention. It may create monsters to chase the being or wonders to tempt her, dipping into the

dreams and nightmares of the being in question to build the perfect trap. An illuthrita will lure her into its oasis, where its partner can greet her and show her the perfection of life there. If the new victim is still recalcitrant to its tricks, the illuthrita may even sacrifice its current partner to aid it in seducing the intended. This only applies to beings whom the illuthrita feels can aid it in its purpose. Lesser beings are chased away by frightful creatures, charmed away by haunting visions or blocked by labyrinths and walls.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 1, Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 1

Abilities: Awareness 4, Brawl 1, Craft (Wyld) 5, Dodge 5 (Dive for Cover +2), Medicine 3, Lore 2 (First Age Architecture +1), Occult 5, Stealth 5, Survival 2

Supernatural Powers: Sight of the Waking Dream, Word of Miraculous Order, Word of Unmaking

Base Initiative: 10

Attack:

Bite: Speed 10 Accuracy 6 Damage 1L Defense 6

Wyld Ripple: Speed 10 Accuracy 10 Damage 5L* Defense 8 (Rate 3, Range 5, Cost 2 motes)

* Armor does not apply, natural soak only. Attacker cannot be detected from the attack.

Dodge Pool: 10 **Soak:** 2L/4B (Leathery hide, 2L/3B)

Willpower: 8 **Health Levels:** -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/-4/I

Essence: 4 **Base Essence Pool:** 15*

Other Notes: * The Essence pool of an illuthrita is variable depending on its partner. The Essence pool is recharged once a day, by draining the Personal and Peripheral Essence from the being with which the illuthrita is partnered. The Essence sharing usually takes the form of a ritual, meditation or other devotional activity that the partner participates in zealously. The partnered being is usually unaware what he is doing is giving his Essence to the illuthrita. He is granted a kind of ecstasy during such activities by the illuthrita, as it shares its joy with its partner. The illuthrita will take all but 5 motes of the partner's uncommitted Essence during this exchange.

SIGHT OF THE WAKING DREAM

Cost: 3 motes

An illuthrita may read the surface thoughts and desires of its target through the use of this power. This is how the illuthritae learn what they can manifest to seduce and lure beings into partnership with them. Repeated use of this ability will reveal deeper secrets and desires, until an illuthrita knows everything that its target knows — and many things the being may not realize it knows. Players may make a Perception + Occult roll, difficulty 5, to notice the power being used on their characters. Should the roll succeed, a target's player may then make a Wits + Resistance roll, with the difficulty equal to the Willpower score of the illuthrita using this power, for the character to resist the power's effect. The victim may not resist this power any more that day if the roll fails. The illuthrita is then free to use this effect as often as it wishes until the sun sets and rises again.

The first use of this power allows the illuthrita to see the surface thoughts or desires of the target. The illuthrita sees whatever the victim may be thinking or daydreaming at the time and can then use that to manifest something within the Wyld. On subsequent scenes, the illuthritae can dig deeper into the memories and dreams of the victim. After the first day, the illuthrita may see what has befallen the victim over the past week, either waking or sleeping. If an illuthrita can use this effect for a week, then it may see the victim's lifelong wishes and desires. A month of use provides the illuthritae with the life history of the victim. A season of use reveals the victims most hidden desires, even the subconscious ones.

This power does not work on characters with an Essence higher than 5 unless they consent to it.

WORD OF MIRACULOUS ORDER

Cost: Varies

The illuthritae have their own language, which contains the names of all things under Heaven. By combining these names with the raw stuff of the Wyld and Essence from their partners, the illuthritae may bring anything imaginable to life. The size of the creation is dependant on the amount of Essence spent. Unlike Wyld-Shaping Technique, there is no roll involved to create something — it is always taken from the imagination of the being that is the illuthrita's partner and needs no grounding in reality to exist. A small item, such as a knife or a piece of fruit, would only cost a mote to create. Larger items, such as furniture, or complicated items, such as small creatures, cost 5 motes. A building would cost 10 motes, or 15 if it were a palace or temple. People cost 15 motes as well. Whole landscapes would cost 20 to 30. Forty motes, the maximum an illuthritae can spend at any one time, will create and populate a complete, if small and isolated, world.

Objects created by this power exist only so long as both the illuthrita lives and has a partner. Should the partner die, then there is no one to see and believe in the creations, so the dreams will evaporate back into the Wyld in a matter of days. Should the illuthrita die, then the objects created slowly dissolve away as they are unused or forgotten by its partnered being.

WORD OF UNMAKING

Cost: 5 motes

An illuthrita may utter the name of something it has created in reverse and return it to the madness from which it was formed. This releases the Essence used to create it and adds half that value to the Essence pool of the illuthrita using this power. Objects so unmade dissolve into light mist or simply vanish.



KARMEUS

Description: Karmeus have a wingspan of up to three yards, eyes that flare with emerald fire and a giggling, insane human face visible inside their huge beaks, spewing obscenities from this twisted mouth.

The karmeus are a regrettably familiar sight in Nexus. These creatures occasionally come out of Firewilder and cause quite a commotion in the city when they decide to descend upon the city streets. The guards in the towers of Sentinel's Hill always keep their eye out for flocks of karmeus and often manage to drive them back from the city proper with missile fire. When the creatures come out at night, however, spotting these black-feathered birds is very difficult. After they enter the city proper, the karmeus wait on the roofs of the highest buildings for the sun to rise and for people to fill the streets, like hungry customers waiting for a restaurant to open.

The Council works hard to get rid of the birds, but there is still the occasional ugly incident. Once they get into the city, they're extremely hard to find, and their hit and run tactics mean that by the time the guards get to the scene, the karmeus are usually already gone.

Karmeus make their nests on the roofs of the highest buildings they can find, and it's not uncommon for them to take up residence on the rooftops and in the rafters of the high buildings of Nexus that still survive from the First Age. While asleep, they make a sound not unlike someone chewing on gravel — a soft sound with jagged edges; it is said that one cannot be sure if it's more reminiscent of gravel crunching or teeth cracking, and it sends shivers down the spines of grown men. Attacking the birds in their nests is a dangerous business, as reaching them, let alone fighting them can be extremely difficult, if not impossible. More often than not, hunters are forced to simply wait for the karmeus to make a "food run" and then hope to catch the birds before they fly away.

Karmeus are somewhat intelligent, but not particularly smart. They understand that ranged weapons are bad for them and can handle other basic tactical reasoning, but they can't be reasoned with, and they certainly aren't clever enough to understand complicated maneuvers or their consequences.

On the ground, karmeus can be nasty enemies; their powerful wings can easily swat a man down and their beaks are lightning fast. When in air, they're even worse; they

dodge many attacks with ease, and their clawed feet can tear deep gashes into an enemy's flesh. They are also strong enough to actually grab hold of an enemy and either drag him off for dinner, smash him against a wall or simply let him fall from high enough to reduce a man into a messy splotch on the pavement.

Karmeus are omnivores and often harass fruit-stall

owners, bakers and other merchants, but the birds greatly prefer meat, which they enjoy nicely rotten. Indeed, they have been known to kill their victims and then hang them off of a high, unreachable spot for a few days in the sight of the entire city, before starting the feast. Children in particular are their favorite targets, as they're nice and soft and don't put up much of a fight. Outside of Nexus, stories of the karmeus are used to frighten children. Inside Nexus, children know these creatures are the least of their worries.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 2, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 1

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness

1, Brawl 4, Dodge 5, Stealth 2, Survival 2 (Urban +1)

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Beak: Speed 14 Accuracy 9 Damage 5L*

Buffet: Speed 9 Accuracy 9 Damage 10B*

Claw: Speed 8 Accuracy 8 Damage 6L*

* The karmeus only use the wing and beak attacks when on the ground and the claw attacks when they're in the air. If one executes a successful hold maneuver with its claws, the target is pulled up into the air, where it can be let go at the karmeus' leisure. A karmeus can never parry a blow.

Dodge Pool: 10

Soak: 2L/4B (Thick feather coat, 2L/2B)

Willpower: 2

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: When dealing with the karmeus, keep in mind they have literally pea-sized brains. Also, keep in mind that a character grabbed by a karmeus can always attempt to hang on to the bird to avoid falling. Even if that fails, the good thing about Nexus is that there are a plethora of clotheslines, balconies, banners and other potential handholds that are just dying to be used in a good stunt.



MOTHER BOG

Mother Bog does not recall when she became aware. She recalls being embarrassed by the primordial foxes as they escaped her attempt to make a meal of them. Lest she be embarrassed again, Mother Bog learned the ways of foxes and all animals so that she might dine at her leisure.

Mother Bog does not recall when she discovered her gift of magic. She recalls being humiliated by mere men as they robbed her of her treasures. Lest she be humiliated again, Mother Bog sought to master the ways of magic so that man would bring her treasure, not steal it from her.

Mother Bog does recall the Exalt who sought to slay her. She recalls the pain of his weapon and the agony has flared periodically since. Lest she suffer that pain again, Mother Bog learned the making of champions so that she need never face a foe directly again.

Mother Bog is a leftover from the time before, a primordial force that refuses to be forgotten. A resident of the eastern Scavenger Lands, Mother Bog is a reminder that even the earth itself is alive. This force is a living swamp, capable of reasoning, of movement — and of demanding tribute. Mother Bog commands all that grows or lives within her bounds. Plant and insect and soil make up her flesh and blood and bones. Mother Bog has fashioned children of plant and flesh and mud to do her bidding. Relentless, the living swamp creeps slowly, roaming the land, mistress of all she envelops.

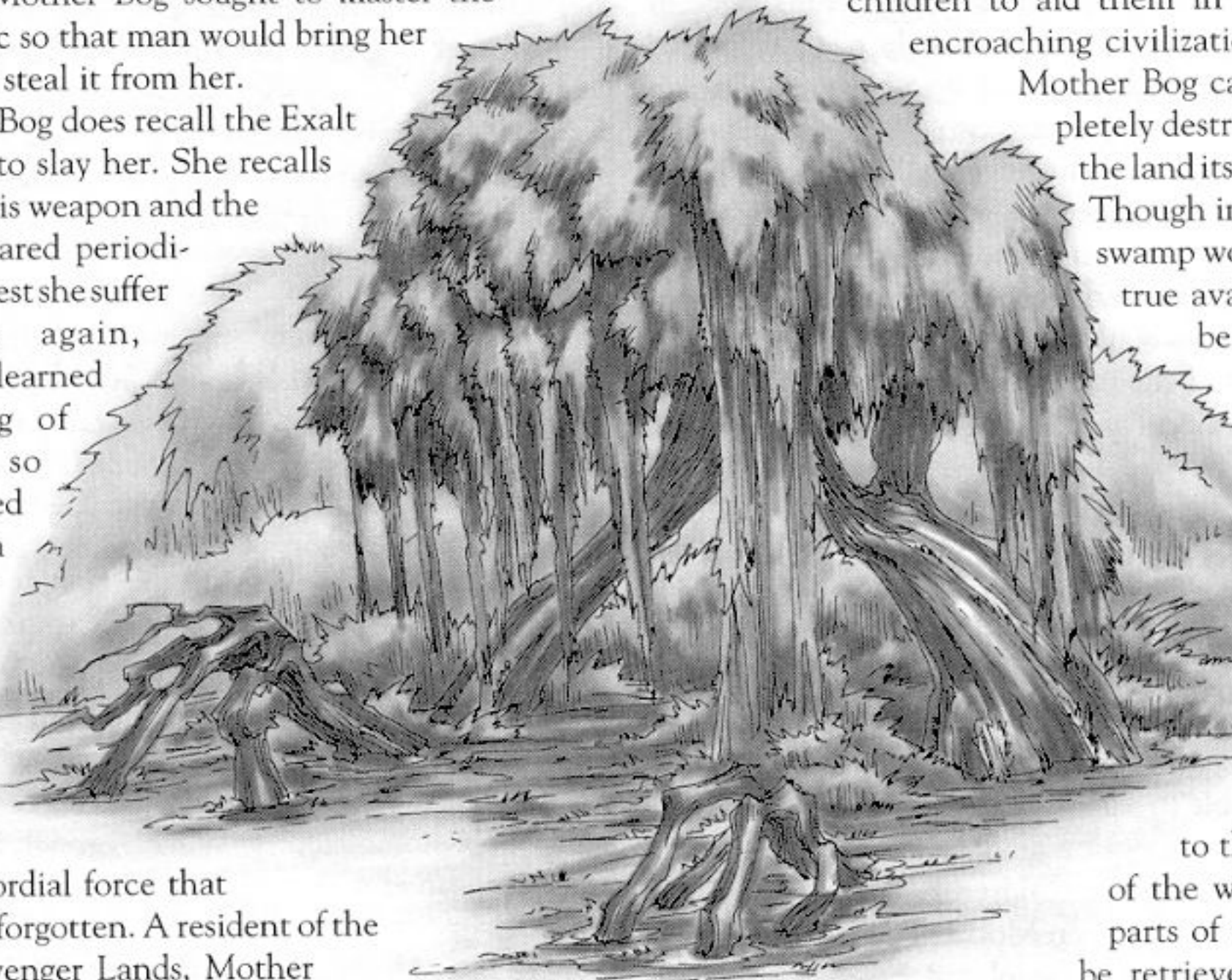
When at rest, Mother Bog is indistinguishable from a normal marsh. Characters are likely to hear rumors of Mother Bog long before they encounter her or one of her children. Villages are warned not to speak of the tribute they have paid to the living swamp, but stories do spread. Mother Bog has forged a grudging truce with the leaders of Lookshy. Over the centuries, both behemoth and man have suffered greatly from conflicts between them. Thus, a precarious peace now exists between them. Mother Bog restricts her movements away from Lookshy's lands. And while the

heroes of Lookshy track her movements, they have chosen not to expend resources against the swamp behemoth. Similarly, the Lunars native to lands surrounding Mother Bog's territory are very much aware of her movements, and she of their presence. Though conflicts flare between the two forces from time to time, the unspoken agreement is that each is better off for the other's presence. Mother Bog finds it convenient that stray Dragon-Bloods must pass through a Lunar gauntlet before stumbling across her. Likewise, the Lunars are happy to allow the swamp mother's children to aid them in battle against encroaching civilization.

Mother Bog cannot be completely destroyed, not until the land itself passes away. Though in ages past, the swamp would manifest a true avatar that could be struck down, she learned from past setback.

Now, Mother Bog has hidden her heart in four parts distributed to the four corners of the world. The four parts of the heart must be retrieved and recombined before they can be harmed. Each segment is

part of a Manse that must be ruined if the segment is to be obtained. Once combined, the heart must be destroyed to have any effect on Mother Bog. The heart cannot be damaged with bashing weapons and has a lethal soak of 20. One hundred health levels must be inflicted to destroy the heart. When the 100th health level is inflicted, two things happen. First, Mother Bog is shattered, her Essence dissipating destructively, turning the land for 100 miles around her into a desert. It will take a millennium for her to reform, and another millennium before she reaches the level of power depicted for her here. In addition, the heart itself explodes in a 100-yard-radius destructive blast. Everyone and everything caught in this explosion suffers 100 levels of bashing damage. Mother Bog is constantly and fully aware of the location and condition of all four heart segments. Naturally, Mother Bog will direct an army of her children against anyone attempting to destroy her,





and she will also assume that any disruption of the Manses that conceal her heart is such an attempt.

Mother Bog is a Celestial Circle sorcerer. She has access to nearly all Terrestrial and Celestial spells. Properly respectful beings might petition Mother Bog to be taught spells. Mother Bog is a fickle instructor and demands a high price, but she has been known to share magical knowledge with those that meet her fee. Just as often, she robs the would-be student or, even more simply, eats him.

Mother Bog demands regular tribute from human settlements that she encounters as she roams through the Scavenger Lands. Villages that do not pay proper tribute find their fields absorbed into her area. Tribute takes the form of sacrifices cast into the bog, never to be seen again. Occasionally, however, Mother Bog chooses to transform certain of the sacrifices made to her into her minions. These minions come in three varieties: shamblers, daughters and creepers. All have the corpses of human sacrifices at their core, but each represents a different aspect of the swamp.

The vegetation-based shamblers are Mother Bog's shock troops. They are the most frequently encountered of the swamp behemoth's children. The flesh-based daughters are the envoys of the living marsh. Few mortals know that these agile and beautiful dancers are merely reanimated corpses. The most rarely encountered of Mother Bog's children are her creepers. Crafted from the skeletons of children and small animals, the mud-based creepers channel Mother Bog's Essence the most directly, able to actually cast any Terrestrial Circle spell that the living swamp grants them.

All of Mother Bog's children have a personal Essence pool and can draw on Mother Bog's own Essence in place of possessing a Peripheral Essence pool. As Mother Bog's Essence is drawn upon, a shadow of her avatar forms above the battlefield, a murky humanoid form growing larger and more distinct as the battle rages on. Assume that Mother Bog has a pool of 1,000 temporary Essence to draw upon. She recovers Essence at a rate of 80 motes an hour. (Her heart is in and is attuned to four level five Manses).

Shamblers are the living swamp's warriors. At least two will accompany a daughter, though perhaps at a distance, when she approaches a village for sacrifices. Mother Bog will also bring forth shamblers from her depths in response to an encounter with Exalted. Regardless of the type of Exalted, Mother Bog will send out at least one shambler for each Exalt encountered.

Though she would not deign to share this knowledge with any creature not her equal (and she considers few, if any, creatures now living her equal), Mother Bog is driven equally by a hunger for survival and a hunger for vengeance. She eats to grow and grows to live. If she

can take over the all of the land, absorbing all of it into her mass, she will. On the other hand, she remembers the Solar Exalted who struck her down in the First Age. She understands that the Exalted are not immortal, but Mother Bog believes whole-heartedly that the offending Exalted will be reborn. She lives for that day, the day when she can return the favor and strike down this being. She seeks to master Solar sorcery so that she can master a spell to permanently trap or destroy the soul of this Exalt. Ultimately, she would like to make the soul her plaything, but sending it to oblivion in return for her suffering would be sufficient vengeance.

Mother Bog does not have statistics as such, however, if it is necessary for rolls to be made on her behalf, her Attributes and Abilities are all rated at a minimum 6 each, meaning she has a dice pool of at least 12 for most rolls. Essence, Occult and Willpower are rated at 8.

SHAMBLER

Description: Shamblers are typically constructed from the freshest and largest of her victims. They are composed of at least as much vegetable matter as flesh and appear to be very large humanoid masses of vines.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 6, Charisma 1, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Virtues: Not applicable. Never fails Valor rolls, never succeeds at other rolls.

Abilities: Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Endurance 5, Resistance 4, Stealth 2, Survival 5

Supernatural Powers: Bark Fist, Creeper Vine Reach, Deep Root Immovability, Walk Through Plants

Base Initiative: 4

Attack:

Punch: Speed 4 Accuracy 6 Damage 6B Defense 1

Dodge Pool: 2 Soak: 3L/6B (None)

Willpower: 2 Heath Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/Incap

Essence: 1 Essence Pool: 10

Other Notes: Once a shambler's Personal Essence pool has been exhausted, it must draw on Mother Bog's Essence. Mother Bog will typically commit $(X + 1) \times 40$ motes of Essence to a particular battle, where X is the number of daughters and creepers involved in the battle. All "children" in the battle share this pool of Essence.

BARK FIST**Cost:** 5 motes

Shamblers can spend 5 motes of Essence to hone their combat prowess. For the rest of the scene, extra successes on brawl attacks are doubled for the purpose of determining damage.

CREEPER VINE REACH**Cost:** 5 motes

By using this power, the shambler can cause its neck or limbs to extend, sending them creeping, vine-like, over walls and around corners. The shambler spends 5 motes of Essence and, for the rest of the scene, can extend its neck or limbs up to six yards, allowing the shambler to see over or around obstacles or to make hand-to-hand attacks at a range of up to six yards. The limbs can be attacked anywhere along their length.

DEEP ROOT IMMOVABILITY**Cost:** None

Whenever a shambler chooses, it may spend 5 motes to become as immovable as a tree. The shambler cannot be picked up, thrown down or knocked back. It must remain motionless while this ability is in effect; if it moves, the effect ends. It will automatically end at the end of the scene if the shambler does not move before then.

WALK THROUGH PLANTS**Cost:** 15 motes

By invoking this power, the ultimate manifestation of the shambler's vegetable nature, the creature can merge with living plants and move through them freely. It takes an investment of 15 motes of Essence and a full turn of concentration for a shambler to activate this power. Then, for the next hour, the creature may merge with or emerge from any living plant. Each transition takes an additional full turn of concentration. The instant a shambler enters a plant, the vegetation balloons up to take on roughly the same size and shape as the shambler. The shambler can then move at walking speed through any connected living plant matter. Once merged with plant life, the shambler can change its proportions at will, but returns to normal proportions upon emerging. A shambler can use this power to follow vines and moss into a building or to cross a grassy field undetected. This power only works with living plant matter. For example, cut logs will not act as a conduit for a shambler using Walk Through Plants.

DAUGHTER

Description: The diplomatic daughters are made entirely from flesh. They are well-preserved corpses, kept whole by the unique properties of the Essence-infused peat that makes up Mother Bog's mass. When reanimated by the living swamp, they gain surprising flexibility and the ability to mask their true nature in a guise of living beauty.

Most villages that encounter the daughters know them as talented, and sometimes deadly, dancers. When a war band of Mother Bog's children is encountered, there will be approximately one daughter for every two shamblers. Daughters are always made from female sacrifices.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 6, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Brawl 1, Dodge 4, Endurance 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Riverspeak, Local Tribal Tongue) 2, Performance 5 (Dance +1), Resistance 3, Socialize 5, Survival 3

Supernatural Powers: Dance of Death, Dance of Influence, Dance of Motion, Illusion of Life

Base Initiative: 5

Attack:

Slap: Speed 5 Accuracy 3 Damage 2B Defense 2

Dodge Pool: 6 Soak: 1L/2B (None)

Willpower: 3 Heath Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/
Incap

Essence: 2 Essence Pool: 20

Other Notes: Once a daughter's Personal Essence pool has been exhausted, it must draw on Mother Bog's Essence. Mother Bog will typically commit no more than $(X + 1) \times 40$ motes of Essence to a particular battle, where X is the number of daughters and creepers involved in the battle. All "children" in the battle share this pool of Essence.

DANCE OF DEATH**Cost:** 15 motes

Through an intense dance and the expenditure of 15 motes of Essence, the daughter enters a battle trance. While in this state, she is capable of impressive combat feats. When she attempts to enter this state, make a Dexterity + Performance check. The number of successes reduces all wound penalties suffered by the creature, to a minimum of -0. In addition, her Brawl Ability is increased by a number of dice equal to the number of successes rolled. Finally, all Brawl damage inflicted by the daughter while she is in this state is lethal. The effects of this power last until the end of the scene or until the daughter leaves combat or is incapacitated.

DANCE OF INFLUENCE**Cost:** 10 motes

The daughter knows how to use her ability to dance to enhance her influence over others. By spending 10 motes of Essence, she gains a bonus to all social interactions until the end of the scene. Upon spending the Essence, make a Dexterity + Performance check. Each success adds to all social rolls for the rest of the scene. The bonus gained through this power cannot exceed the daughter's current effective Appearance.

DANCE OF MOTION**Cost:** 5 motes

Through the use of this power, the daughter uses Essence to enhance her speed. The creature spends 5 motes of Essence and doubles the roll (the result of the 10-sided die roll is doubled and added to her base) for determining her initiative. If she chooses, after initiative is rolled, but before any actions are taken, the daughter may reduce her initiative to gain extra actions that turn. For every 3 points the daughter reduces her initiative, she may get an additional full action that turn. Initiative may not be reduced below one in this manner. This power only remains active for one turn, and any unused actions are wasted.

ILLUSION OF LIFE**Cost:** 10 motes

Daughters can spend 10 motes of Essence to regain the illusion of life and beauty until the next dawn. While the illusion of life is active, no mundane means can tell that they are reanimated corpses, and magical means suffer a +1 difficulty penalty when rolling to detect. In addition, daughters have an Appearance of 5 while this power is in effect.

CREEPER

Description: The secretive creepers are composed almost entirely of swamp ooze. The murky creatures are also known as shadow creepers for their visual similarity to shades. They are the smallest of Mother Bog's children and are typically only a few inches thick. One may secretly accompany a daughter requesting tribute from a particularly resistant village to provide magical support.

Typically, one creeper will also accompany a war band but endeavor to remain hidden for as long as

possible. When traveling with a war band, it will ride on the back of a shambler, slipping off before the battle group's prey detects them. Creepers shun the attention of anyone or anything living. Occasionally, creepers can be found alone, using spells and stealth to assassinate particularly troublesome opponents of Mother Bog.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 3, Valor 1

Abilities: Endurance 5, Lore 2, Occult 5, Resistance 3, Stealth 5, Survival 3

Supernatural Powers: Invoked Circle of the Earth, Spells

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Bite: Speed 7 Accuracy 4 Damage 1L Defense 4

Dodge Pool: 4 Soak: 1L/3B (None)

Willpower: 4 Heath Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-2/
Incap

Essence: 3 Essence Pool: 30

Other Notes: Once a creeper's Personal Essence pool has been exhausted, it must draw on Mother Bog's Essence. Mother Bog will typically commit $(X + 1) \times 40$ motes of Essence to a particular battle, where X is the number of daughters and creepers involved in the battle. All "children" in the battle share this pool of Essence. A typical selection of spells available to a creeper includes Assassin's Fatal Touch, Malediction of the Distorted Compass and Sprouting Shackles of Doom from The Book of Three Circles.

INVOKED CIRCLE OF THE EARTH**Cost:** 15 motes

Creepers may spend 15 motes of Essence as a simple action in order to be able to cast Terrestrial Circle spells for the remainder of the scene. This is normal sorcery, and the Essence, Willpower costs and casting times are as normal for Terrestrial Circle Sorcery. The spells the shadow creepers are able to cast are left to the whims of Mother Bog (and the Storyteller). This power creates a link to Mother Bog's spell-casting ability, rather than representing an innate ability to cast spells

PROTO PUMA PRIME

Description: In the time before time, an Exalt forged by the Unconquered Sun and able to walk among the gods as an equal sought a companion worthy to stand beside him in battle. He searched the land, observing the mammoth bears of the North as they snatched sea serpents from the ice for their dinners. But for all their might, the bears were not worthy. In the East and South, he found mighty tyrant lizards that could swallow cattle whole, but for all their ferocity, these too were unsuitable. Finally, the Exalt came to a grassy plane where the great primordial cat, Proto Puma, ruled. Impressed by the pumas' might and ferocity, the Exalt chose this largest and most cunning of the felines to be his ally. The Sun-Chosen grew to the size of a titan and stalked his chosen pet. But the hunter was also hunted. The primordial puma sprang upon him, and the two levathans grappled. Man and cat, hand to paw, they wrestled until the sun had set and risen three times. Finally, on the morning of the fourth day, both relented simultaneously, each recognizing that they had met their equal.

War-cat and Exalt walked from the plain with an immortal bond forged of respect. Together, they overthrew warlords, crushing the skulls of entire armies beneath their feet. They liberated tribal nations and earned the praise of many. Word of their deeds attracted other heroes to their side. One such, a smith without peer, constructed ornate orichalcum armor for the pair, barding for cat and plate for man. Protected by this armor, the Solar and the puma were able to stand fearlessly against even greater threats to man. Primordials trembled at mention of their names, and the old gods hurled behemoths against them.

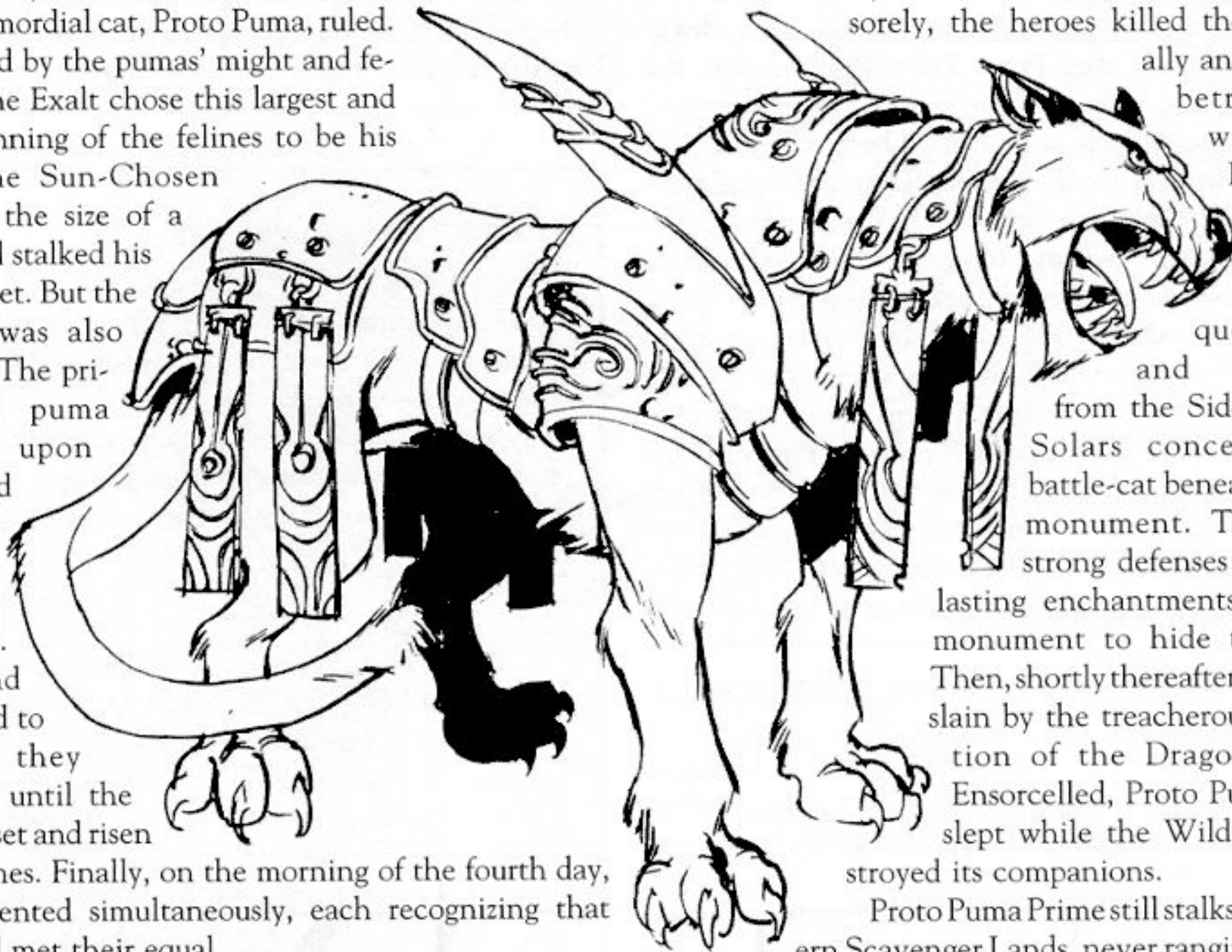
When word came to the pair that the Unconquered Sun's greatest sorceress had been imprisoned, neither man nor cat hesitated to stride forth to do battle with the earthy monster that had her enslaved. Though the murky creature was a more than a match for either man

or cat alone, together, the dark behemoth was reduced to a mere puddle. But this conquest was not without price. The great cat was sorely wounded and lay near death. In gratitude, the rescued sorceress worked her magic to save the beast. But she did even more. The same sorcery that restored health, fused flesh with armor so that the metal could no longer fatigue the puma, nor impede its motion in battle. Thus, Proto Puma was reborn as Proto Puma Prime.

The great cat and its allies triumphed over many more enemies of the Unconquered Sun before one of their own betrayed them. Though it grieved them sorely, the heroes killed their former ally and took his betrayal as warning. Heeding dreams from the Unconquered Sun and prophecy from the Sidereals, the Solars concealed the battle-cat beneath a stone monument. They built strong defenses and long-lasting enchantments into the monument to hide the beast. Then, shortly thereafter, they were slain by the treacherous Usurpation of the Dragon-Bloods. Ensorcelled, Proto Puma Prime slept while the Wild Hunt destroyed its companions.

Proto Puma Prime still stalks the southern Scavenger Lands, never ranging far from the ruins that are rumored to be its home. Of course, "far" for the great golden cat is very different than "far" for lesser beings. Twenty-two feet tall at the shoulder, the creature can run 10 times as fast as smaller creatures with the same abilities and, thus, sprints in excess of 210 miles per hour.

Proto Puma Prime appears to be encased in ornate armor crafted from orichalcum. This is only an artifice. The Magical Material that protects the creature's vulnerable and well-protected points alike is actually part of the beast. As a result, it suffers no penalties for encumbrance or fatigue as a result of the protection. A legendary Perception + Martial Arts check (difficulty 5) halves Proto Puma Prime's bashing soak (to 16B) and its lethal soak (to 14L) for that martial artist only. This benefit can only be gained once per character, only through the use of Martial Arts, and it lasts until the character forgets the





nature of the vulnerability (normally requiring magic) or until she botches an attack against the great cat.

In combat, Proto Puma Prime is relentless opponent. In the defense of its partner or the defenseless, the great war-cat will attack until the threat is eliminated. In peace, Proto Puma Prime is incredibly gentle, almost playful. The beast understands exactly how strong it is, and while its antics may seem threatening, it never causes harm without intending to. Proto Puma Prime is likely to be encountered roaming the Scavenger Lands or in battle, defending an innocent in danger.

The great cat periodically strides forth from its labyrinth to devour some fiend or another. The tales of old women claim that Proto Puma Prime awaits the arrival of its reborn master. The stories claim that in time of greatest need, Exalt and cat shall be reunited to save the world from a terrible beast. Some Sidereals have postulated that when the spirit of the cat's original Solar tamer is reincarnated into living form, the great beast awakens and stalks the land, seeking its partner. While awake, it slays what evil it encounters, only to return to its dusty tomb when the Wyld Hunt dispatches the soul that awakened it. It is unknown if this theory is true, but it may explain why there have been more tales of Puma Prime's activities in recent years when the Realm has fewer resources ready to deal with any given Solar.

Attributes: Strength 16, Dexterity 3, Stamina 8, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 5, Temperance 1, Valor 5

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 2, Endurance 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Riverspeak) 1, Presence 4 (Intimidation +2), Resistance 5, Stealth 3, Survival 5

Supernatural Powers: Emerald Guardian Rake, Metal Hero Crouch

Base Initiative: 6

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 8 Damage 18L Defense 5

Claw: Speed 6 Accuracy 9 Damage 16L Defense 6

Dodge Pool: 5 Soak: 28L/32B (Metal hide, 24L/24B)

Willpower: 6 Heath Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 6 Essence Pool: 60

Other Notes: Proto Puma Prime understands speech in Old Realm and Riverspeak fluently but cannot speak itself. Proto Puma Prime recovers Essence and heals as a Solar Exalted.

The ruined monument under which Proto Puma Prime makes its home was a powerful Solar-aspected Manse during the First Age. Between the enchantments of the great cat's original Circle, the damage inflicted by the Wyld Hunt and the rigors of time, it is barely identifiable as a Demesne. Repairing the monument requires the Abilities normally required for such a task. It will take at least two years of continual work for a skilled team of masons to restore even a single level to this manse. The full details for the design, construction and repair of a Manse can be found in *The Book of Three Circles* (pp. 104–107). The monument of the puma has the potential to be rebuilt into a Manse of level five. The exact type of Hearthstone that the renewed Manse generates is left to the Storyteller.

EMERALD GUARDIAN RAKE

Cost: 3 motes

By spending 3 motes of Essence, Proto Puma Prime generates an emerald field of energy about its already lethal claws. For the remainder of the turn, any extra successes on an attack are doubled for the purposes of determining damage. This power must be invoke before rolling for the great cat's attack.

METAL HERO CROUCH

Cost: 2 motes

Proto Puma Prime may, as its sole action for the turn, spend 2 motes of Essence to invoke the Metal Hero Crouch. The great cat gets no active defense roll to reduce or negate the effects of an attack roll. Instead, the results of the attack are decreased. Against most attacks, the damage (after the attacker has rolled damage) is halved, rounding any fractions up. Against direct attacks made by demons or the Fair Folk, the damage is divided by three, rounding all fractions down. This is made after soak has been applied but before damage is rolled. In the case of direct attacks by demons or the Fair Folk, this means that the number of dice rolled for damage from a successful attack can be reduced to zero, if the post-soak damage is two or less. This power only lasts for the rest of the turn. While the Crouch is active, a crackling nimbus of green energy surrounds Proto Puma Prime.

SNAKEBUD TREE

Description: This creature originally came from the Wyld, but since then, it has spread into the settled areas of the Scavenger Lands. It appears to be a blossoming tree of indistinct type, covered with pink and white flowers. It buds serpents, which grow on the branches until they are able to detach themselves and hunt for nearby prey. While dormant, the serpents coil themselves like unopened buds upon the branches: They are white and pink, patterned into tiny petal-shaped scales, and from up to 20 yards away, the coiled serpents look very like normal buds. (Two successes are necessary on Perception + Awareness check to discern their true nature.)

The trees themselves are intelligent, but their snakes have only a rudimentary animal brain and follow the instructions broadcast by the tree for a radius of up to a mile. Each tree wishes to have human or animal corpses left to rot around it, in order to enrich the earth in which it grows. It arranges this by waiting for prey to walk beneath it and then either dropping serpents directly onto the prey or letting the serpents slither subtly down the trunk to attack from the grass. The tree is also capable of slowly shifting its roots in the soil — not swiftly enough to be effective during combat, but enough to break up the earth and let dead bodies slip into roughly created ditches. While this will not fool any intelligent investigation, it at least prevents skeletons from littering the grass under the tree's spreading branches, which might alert prey that something is amiss.

A typical tree has 100 serpents in its branches, though a young one (less than 30 years old) will have only half that number, and a truly old tree — one that has flourished for centuries — may have 200 or 300. The serpents have no real attack beside their venom, as they are tiny things, only six inches long, and their needle-pointed fangs are mounted in small, frail jaws. However, they attack in swarms of 10, and the tree is intelligent enough to hold its attack in check if it looks as though its prey is preparing to sleep beneath it or to lower its guard. The serpents bleed honey if they are wounded, and this nectar can be used for many ointments and elixirs. The tree itself has no defenses if all its serpents are slain; but it can regrow from its roots unless it is uprooted or utterly destroyed by fire, salt or magic.

Snakebud trees are conscious of the forest spirits around them. On nights of the full moon, they will send their three largest snakes to the nearest gathering spot for tree-spirits, if

it is less than a mile. When they reach the spirit court, the snakes will wind their tails around their necks and strangle each other, making an offering of the honey in their veins. The trees cannot recognize Exalted, however, and will attack them as eagerly as they would any other prey that came within their reach.

The trees detest each other, and will not root less than a mile apart. If a tree is slain, all the remaining serpents that

still live will wriggle off in different directions, and will attempt to root and create new trees. Such trees, however, will take ten years to grow to a sapling's height, and another ten years to bud serpent offspring, and another ten years again to reach full maturity. A serpent can survive for up to three days off the branch without rooting to create a new tree.



SNAKEBUD SWARM

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1, Charisma 0, Manipulation 0, Appearance 1, Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 1

Abilities: Awareness 1, Dodge 1, Martial Arts 3, Presence 0 (Intimidation +2), Stealth 3

Attack:

Bite: Speed 6 Accuracy 6 Damage 1L (+ venom) Defense 6*
* The venom of the bite is as a coral snake. See *Exalted*, page 243.

Dodge Pool: 5

Soak: 0L/1B (None)

Willpower: 2

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/Incap

Essence: 1

Other Notes: None

SNAKEBUD TREE

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 0, Stamina 5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 4, Valor 1

Abilities: Awareness 3, Endurance 5, Lore 2, Presence 3, Resistance 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2 (Local spirit courts)

Attack: None

Dodge Pool: 0

Soak: 2L/5B

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: -0/-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 2

Other Notes: The tree itself cannot dodge, and if the

serpents are dealt with, it may be cut down as easily as any other tree.



THOUSAND-FORGED DRAGON

Description: Even during the First Age, savants recognized the power of Gaia's offspring, the Five Elemental Dragons. The Dragon-Blooded sorcerer-engineers who served the Solar Deliberative created intricate serpentine machines, crafted from magical metals and jades. Expensive, yet deadly beyond belief, these sleek and monstrous clockwork dragons cowed the enemies of the Old Realm, yet their drain upon the Essence of the world was so great that the Deliberative did not utilize them in most conflicts. Designed to be self-sufficient, the dragon-devices fed from the power of Creation, hoarding the energy of their home Manses or ravaging those of their enemies' lands. As the Deliberative gained control of more and more of Creation, the mighty dragon-machines slowly gained in number, yet declined in military usefulness. Their deployment was rarely considered and even more rarely undertaken.

Each Thousand-Forged Dragon was a potent and terrible device commanded by an encoded phrase unique to its manufacture, and when the Dragon-Blooded betrayed their Solar elders, this led to tragedy. Some of the dragon-devices were controlled by Solar commanders, while others remained under the auspices of their creators. At the dawn of the Usurpation, the Dragon-Blooded turned the mechanical dragons against the Solars, while Solar generals responded in kind. Most of the mighty dragon machines were destroyed in the early phases of the conflict, though, to this day, a few of them remain intact. Some of the Thousand-Forged Dragons endlessly destroy the populations of their targeted regions, as they have done again and again for centuries. Others wait in hidden places on the Blessed Isle, carefully maintained trump cards in the Realm's defenses. A few remain inactive, buried in the ruins of the First Age in the Scavenger Lands, awaiting discovery by someone clever enough to learn their secrets. This has happened before, and it is known that the Seventh Legion's arsenal includes at least one of these weapons.

Each of the Thousand-Forged Dragons is a work of art, crafted to be both beautiful and terrifying in order to strike fear into its enemies in battle. Typically, their serpentine forms are 30 feet in length with a wingspan of 20 feet. Five razor-sharp talons grace each claw, honed sharp as the finest grand daiklave, and each tooth is the size of a wavecleaver blade. The creature's interior is a mystery of clockworks and First Age magic, the most notable of which is a compartment in the skull wherein the mechanism can conceal a Hearthstone safely.

Attributes: Strength 20, Dexterity 10, Stamina 24, Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1, Perception 10, Intelligence 2, Wits 10

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 1, Valor 5*

* Cannot fail Valor rolls.

Abilities: Athletics 5 (Flight +3), Awareness 5, Brawl 5 (Claw +3), Endurance 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; speaks all Old Realm military languages and codes) 1, Lore 1 (Theft of Demesne +3), Resistance 5

Supernatural Powers: Conflagration of Doom, Fear-some Mien, Flight of Fire, Principal of Motion, Theft of Demesne

Base Initiative: 20

Attack:

Bite: Speed 18 Accuracy 15 Damage 36L Defense 13

Claw: Speed 20 Accuracy 18 Damage 31L Defense 16

Conflagration of Doom: Speed 20 Accuracy 15* Damage 24L (Rate 5, Range 100, Cost 5 motes)

* Attacks everything in the area of effect. Use one attack roll.

Dodge Pool: 0 **Soak:** 27L/39B* (Superheavy plate skin 15L/15B)

* Thousand Forged Dragons ignore attacks doing 15L/15B or less.

Willpower: 10

Health Levels: -0x6/-1x10/-2x15/-4x18/Incap

Essence: 7

Essence Pool: 100

Other Notes: The Thousand-Forged Dragons were crafted to speak the language of the Old Realm and secret military codes of the time. Those devices active for a long time will usually have learned one or more tongues of more recent times (add one or more additional Linguistics dots to such devices). The mechanical dragons are not living beings and, as such, cannot recover Essence normally — instead, they must rely upon their Theft of



Demesne power. A Thousand-Forged Dragon without any Essence pool goes dormant and inactive, although it might be reactivated if some manner of granting them Essence could be discovered. Theft of Demesne operates reflexively, even in dormancy, so carrying one of the

heavy machines to a Manse or placing a Hearthstone in its mouth is the simplest, if not the easiest, method. The Dragons do not heal any health levels of damage caused to them, and there are few, if any, beings remaining that possess the knowledge necessary to repair them. Thousand-Forged Dragons are never extras.



CONFLAGRATION OF DOOM

Cost: 5 motes

Thousand-Forged Dragons can unleash great bellows of super-heated air formed into fiery plasma by their Essence. The Dragon uses Dexterity + Brawl to direct the terrible blast, with the base damage being 24L, covering a cone-shaped area approximately 100 yards long, 30 yards wide and 10 yards high at the terminus. Their fiery breath damages dematerialized spirits due to its Essence-filled nature and causes aggravated damage to demons and the Fair Folk.

FEARSOME MIEN

Cost: 5 motes

When the Thousand-Forged Dragon enters battle, its Essence swirls about it in a terrifying aura that taps into the human subconscious fears of all that is reptilian and deadly. Similar to the Dawn Caste Solar Exalted's battle mien, targets whose Valor + Essence is lower than the Dragon's Essence (7) suffer a -2 to all dice pools while in combat with it.

THEFT OF DEMESNE

Cost: None

The treacherous craftsmanship of the Thousand-Forged Dragons allows them to seize control of a Manse or Demesne. Unable to actually attune themselves, one of these machines may tap into the energy of a Demesne or Manse by entering its boundaries, thereby temporarily depriving anyone else of that power (and, incidentally, deactivating the Hearthstone if someone other than the Dragon bears it). The Dragon's player rolls Intelligence + Lore, and it requires only one success to drain Essence from an unattended Demesne or Manse. If someone is already attuned to a Demesne or Manse, then the roll must be opposed by a reflexive contested roll of the same Traits on the part of the attuned individual with the highest total pool. Worse yet, if a Thousand-Forged Dragon can clasp a Hearthstone within the coils of its serpentine tongue (requires a difficulty 2 Dexterity + Brawl attack, and will automatically pluck it from any setting), it will hide the gem in a compartment inside its metal skull. A Dragon bearing a Hearthstone automatically succeeds at any contest or rolls required for Theft of Demesne used upon its associated Manse. In any case, a successful roll or contest allows the Thousand-Forged Dragon to draw Essence from the Demesne or Manse as normal, including from a distance if it bears the appropriate Hearthstone. The effects persist so long as the Dragon is in the Manse's immediate vicinity (within 10 miles) and work from a distance for a number of hours equal to the construct's extra successes. The Dragon also gains the other magical benefits of a hijacked hearthstone. Filching a Hearthstone is a regular dice action, as is assuming control of a Manse or Demesne. Confronted with Exalted opponents, the Thousand-Forged Dragons cheerfully strip them of their most crucial Hearthstones in quick succession through the use of Principal of Motion, then bathe them in sun-hot flames repeatedly. The Thousand-Forged Dragons have slots for 25 Hearthstones in their heads. It is unknown how many active stones those fielded by the Realm and Lookshy possess.

FLIGHT OF FIRE

Cost: 1 mote per hour

Certainly, the mechanical wings of a Thousand-Forged Dragon, no matter their beauty, are insufficient to bear the beast's weight against the pull of the earth. Nonetheless, when empowered with the Essence of Creation, they are quite capable of thrusting the clockwork creature into the sky. For a cost of 1 mote per hour, one of these Dragons may fly as slowly and clumsily as a vulture.

PRINCIPAL OF MOTION

Cost: 5 motes, 1 Willpower

As the spirit Charm (see Exalted, p. 292).

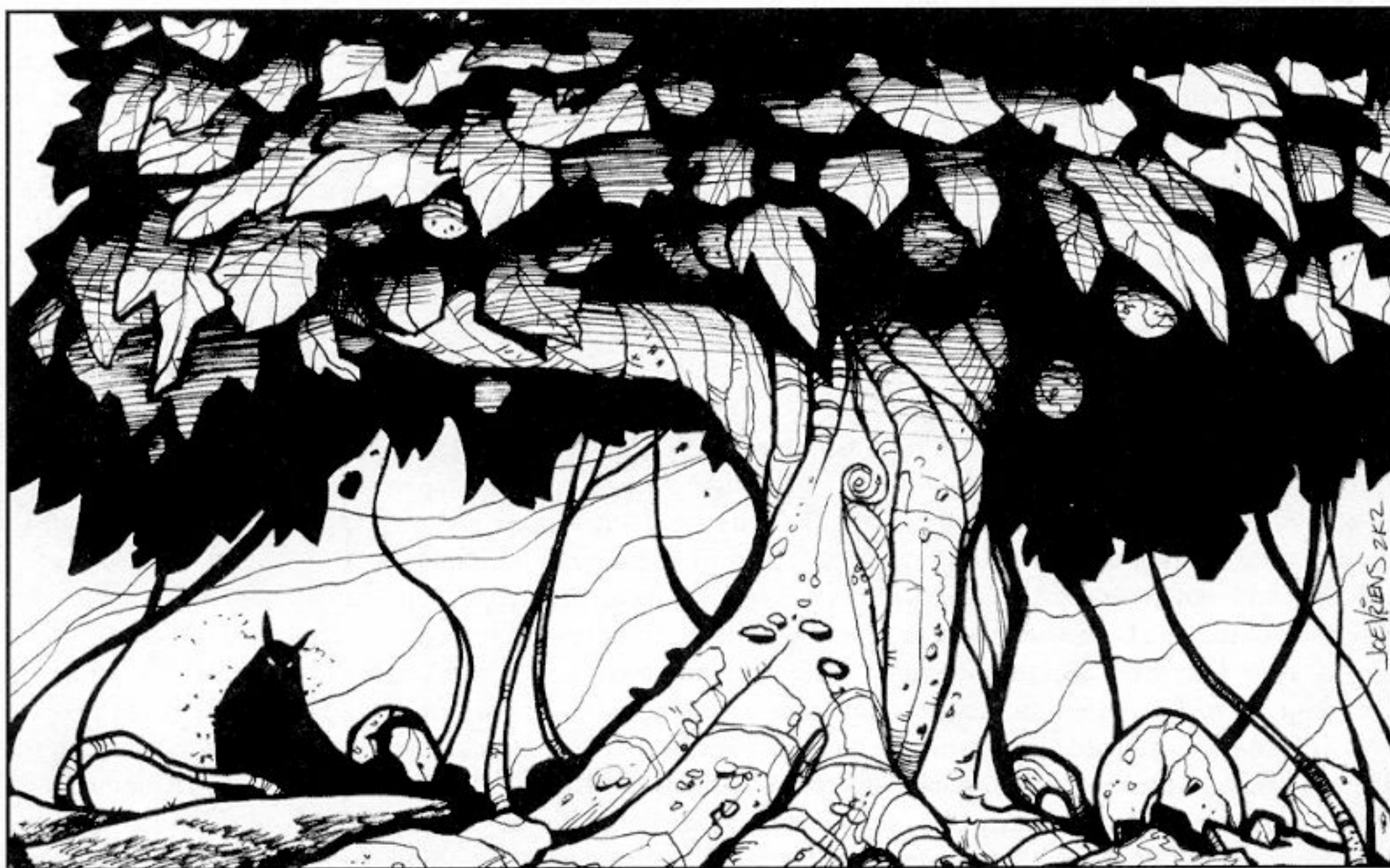
THE TREE OF THE INCHOATE

There are strange and inexplicable things living and breeding underneath Creation's skin, as those who have tunneled underneath Gethamane or visited the deepest mines the Mountain Folk have dug below the Imperial Mountain can attest. Ancient and shapeless evils await those who travel the ancient underways or who dig beneath the skin of the world. Countless threats grow beneath the earth, and one of their many sources is the terrifying Tree of the Inchoate.

The tree thrives in a sunless grove deep within the heart of the world, and the only light in its cavern comes

primitive life, merely reacting to their environment instinctively, out of hunger or fear. Rarely do they climb to the surface and wander Creation during the day, as they hate the golden lamp that blinds and burns them—but they eagerly climb out under moonlight, hungering for the taste of flesh and the cries of the unwary.

Below are statistics for an inchoate that has escaped from a recently unearthed tomb in the Scavenger Lands where it had lurked since spawning from the tree and has begun to search the area for mates and human food. Nicknamed "Skinless" by natives of the area, it has killed over a dozen people in a few scant months.



from luminescent fungi and the glowing eyestalks of the fish that live in nearby fetid black ponds. The bark of the Tree of the Inchoate is black and slick, and its leaves are gray and silky. The tree taints the land above it, and the woods on the surface above the underground cavern look gray and somehow wasted.

Once every few years, the tree's limbs bear forth tumorous fruit, purple and veined. When the fruit drops to the ground beneath the tree and splits open, a shapeless, skinless thing is born, which feeds on the blind fish and drinks the foul mineral-tainted water until it is strong enough to wander out of the cavern of the tree and into the world above.

Each inchoate is different—one is all gelatinous mass, veined red and corrosive to the touch. Another walks upright, with vertebrae of cartilage and raw exposed muscle, wearing the skin of those it has trapped and flayed. Some are possessed of an alien and unspeakable intelligence, while others seem to have the intellect and instincts of the most

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Awareness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 5, Craft (Skinner) 4, Dodge 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Forest-tongue) 1, Stealth 4, Survival 3

Base Initiative: 7

Attack:

Retractable Claws: Speed 7 Accuracy 10 Damage 5L Defense 10

Dodge Pool: 7

Soak: 1L/3B

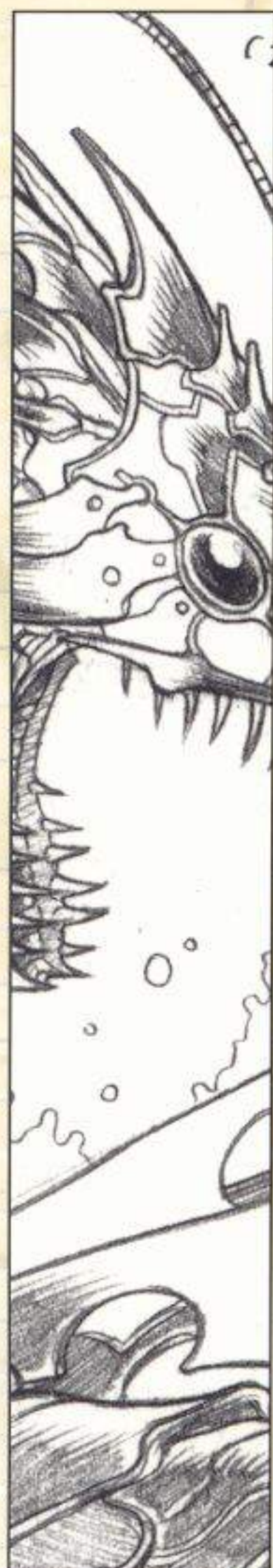
Willpower: 3

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Essence: 3

Other Notes: Sunlight does one level of aggravated damage to Skinless per minute as it boils away its wet exterior. This damage can be avoided if Skinless is wearing an outfit of flayed human skin.

CREATURES OF THE WYLD™



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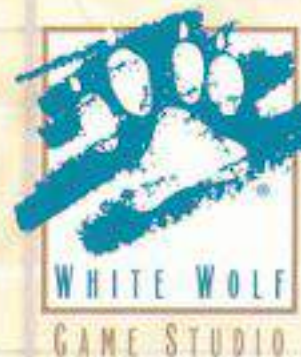
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