

GLOSSARY

An introductory listing of some common game and setting terms which readers might find confusing.

BALANCED TRAITS: Special character traits which have both positive and negative aspects.

COMBAT BONUSES: special benefits earned in combat by rolling well. Often called Critical Hits in other games. Which ones you can claim depends on the weapon used.

COMBAT RATING: one of six special, double-cost skills that are based on two stats apiece. They are **Melee Combat, Grab/Throw, Ranged Combat, Dodge, Bravery** and **Leadership**.

CRIT: short for Critical Success. Really impressive rolls can result in multiple crits.

DARK GODS: collective term for the malign spirits sometimes worshiped by depraved cults. They can work powerful magic in return for terrible sacrifices.

EMPIRE OF MUSCALA: the most powerful and influential of the various kingdoms of the *Fallows*.

ENCHANTMENT: a spell bound into a physical object. It still penalizes the caster's spellcasting in a small way because of the drain on their magical energies. If maintained long enough, an enchantment will become independent of its creator, but this takes *seasons*.

EXHAUSTED: completely out of *Fatigue* points. An exhausted character is at -2 to all actions and cannot spend any additional *Fatigue* without falling unconscious.

FALLOWS: The *Fallows* is the most fertile part of the valley of *Hyperborea* and where most of the mice and rats live. The *Fallows* are divided up into several kingdoms, the most powerful of which is the *Empire of Muscala*.

FASHAR: A faraway realm similar to the *Fallows* on the other side of *Greatwater* Lake.

FATIGUE: *Fatigue* points represent a character's reserves of energy. When you have spent all of your *Fatigue*, you are *exhausted* and at -2 to all actions. If forced to spend another *Fatigue* while exhausted, you fall unconscious at the end of the round. See also *Winded*.

FERAL: refers to an ordinary, unintelligent mouse or rat. Feral rodents instinctively fear the intelligent, talking sort.

FIRST ONES: the first royal mice to come to *Hyperborea* long ago, fleeing from the *Titans*. They founded the various kingdoms of the valley and then ascended to godhood. They are worshiped by modern mice and rats. The most famous ones are **Luciel, Lumierre, Duvain, Canduss, Magellian, Jandara, Zakarvus** and **Quickpaw**.

FLAWS: personal weaknesses or other traits with a negative point cost, enabling characters who take them to purchase additional *Powers*.

FOCUS: when a character is calm, collected and ready to act, they are said to possess *Focus*. *Focus* can be expended to trigger many abilities. It takes a *Primary Action* or spending a *Fatigue* to recover *Focus*. *Focus* can only be expended once per turn, although it may be recovered again instantly by spending *Fatigue*.

FOCUS ACTION: a *Primary Action* which can be turned into a *Free Action* by spending *Focus*.

FORBIDDEN LANDS: a realm to the south of the *Fallows* where the dreaded *Titans* are rumored to dwell.

FORSAKEN: those mice and rats whose mental and magical capabilities are so weak that they often revert to the behavior of their feral kin. Any children that they have may be completely feral.

FREE ACTION: a minor action which takes little time. Characters can perform several free actions in the same turn, as long as they are all different.

GREATWATER: the huge lake which splits the valley.

HERO POINTS: player characters have Hero Points which can be spent to reroll tests or otherwise aid the character. Characters can only hold a certain number of Hero Points at one time and more are awarded at the end of each session.

HIT POINTS: **Hyperborean Mice** uses a basic Hit Point system to represent how healthy a character is. When your character is injured, they will lose Hit Points. If their Hit Points drop to a negative number, they may die.

HYPERBOREA: the sheltered valley in which the game is set. Most of the inhabitants live in the *Fallows*.

MAGIC RESISTANCE: a rating that is added to any attempt by a character to resist hostile magic. It is based on the character's own magical ability and their *Size*. The larger a creature is, the harder it is to work magic on it.

PACE: A common measure of distance. A pace is about 3 inches on a human scale.

POWERS: Powers are special abilities or talents that characters can purchase. In other games, they are often called things like Advantages, Gifts or Feats.

PRIMARY ACTION: an action which takes up most of your turn. You can only perform one Primary Action per turn.

SCURRY: to run on all fours, like a feral rodent, generally in a blind panic. Regarded as shameful and embarrassing.

SEASONS: the mice of the *Fallows* track time in seasons, rather than years.

SIZE: a rating representing a creature's size, with a mouse being Size 0. Larger numbers indicate larger creatures.

SOCIAL STATUS: a rating representing a character's wealth and social position in *Fallows* society. A rating of +0 represents the typical commoner.

TITAN: one of a race of terrible giants that created and enslaved the *First Ones*.

TZARCHUL: an extinct race of rodents that once ruled *Hyperborea*. The ruins of their cities and temples dot the landscape. They worshiped the *dark gods*.

WHITE LORDS: refers to royal mice and, to a lesser extent, any white mouse in a position of rulership.

WINDED: when a character has spent exactly one *Fatigue* (and no more), they are *winded*. A *winded* character can recover that point of *Fatigue* after 15 minutes of rest. A character currently down two or more points of *Fatigue* takes a full hour of rest to recover one point. Some characters (such as royal mice) don't have a "winded" level. They always take a full hour to recover *Fatigue*.

TASK RESOLUTION

BASIC SYSTEM

The standard resolution system in *Hyperborean Mice* is to roll two six-sided dice (abbreviated 2d6), add any modifiers and compare the total to a target number.

- Exactly matching the target number is a *Tie*
- Beating it is a *Success*.
- Beating the target number by 5 points or more is a *Critical Success*.
- Beating it by 10 or more is a *Double Critical*. Every additional 5 points adds another Critical.
- Rolling less than the target is a *Failure*.
- Failing by 5 points or more is a *Critical Failure*. Failing by 10+ has no additional game effect (but see *Natural Twos*, below).

TARGET NUMBERS

In an *Opposed Test* (also known as a *Resisted Test*), your target number will be whatever your opponent rolled. In an *Unopposed Test*, the target number depends on how difficult the task in question is.

- **EASY (8)**: so simple that the typical mouse can usually succeed without any special skill or talent.
- **TYPICAL (11)**: the "average" difficulty of a typical adventuring task.
- **HARD (14)**: a starting PC can readily perform this if it's in their specialty, otherwise it's quite difficult.
- **VERY HARD (17)**: it takes an experienced, well-prepared or lucky PC to succeed at this task.
- **NIGH IMPOSSIBLE (20)**: even the very best require a lucky roll to succeed.

Often, the GM will tell the players what skill their characters need to roll in order to accomplish something and how hard the task is. For example, they might call for a TYPICAL *Alertness* check, meaning that the character's total must be at least 11 to succeed.

When the GM doesn't want the players to know how difficult something is ahead of time, he can just call for a roll without declaring a particular difficulty and then compare it to the target number afterward.

SPECIAL ROLLS

Natural Twelves (Potential Crits): When your 2d6 roll is a 12, you can spend a Hero Point to add another +5 to your roll. This will turn a Tie or regular Success into a Critical Success or a single Critical into a Double.

Natural Twos (Potential Botches): When your 2d6 roll is a 2 and your action fails, you can spend a Hero Point to prevent the GM from declaring it a *Botch*. Otherwise, the GM is free to inflict some sort of additional penalty on your character above and beyond merely failing.

SKILL ROLLS

Each standard skill is based upon a single stat.

When the GM calls for a skill roll, you roll 2d6 and then add that stat plus your own rating in the skill itself.

For example, if the GM asked a character to roll *Insight* and they had an *Insight* skill rating of +4 and a *Perception* attribute of +1, they would roll 2d6+5 and compare it to the difficulty.

COMBAT RATING ROLLS

Combat Ratings are special, double-cost skills that are based upon two stats.

When the GM calls for you to roll against a Combat Rating, you'll roll 2d6 and add both stats, plus your score in the rating itself.

For example, if you need to roll *Melee Combat* (which is based upon both Agility and Brawn) and had an Agility of +1, a Brawn of +3 and a skill in *Melee Combat* of +2, you'd roll a total of 2d6+6.

OPPOSED ROLLS

When two characters match their skills against each other, it's typically handled as an opposed roll. Both characters roll the appropriate skill and then whoever initiated the action compares their roll to a Target Number equal to their foe's total.

For example, one character might roll their *Bluff* against another character's *Insight* to try and deceive them. The total result of the *Insight* roll is treated as the Target Number for the *Bluff* roll. If the *Insight* roll were 11 and the *Bluff* roll was only 4, that would be a Critical Failure because they fell at least 5 points short of the target.

TYPICAL MODIFIERS

Here are some common, general-use modifiers.

- Expending Focus: +1 (this *can* be added *after* the character rolls)
- Devoting a lot of extra time and attention to the task: +2 (this already includes the Focus bonus)
- Character is exhausted: -2
- Character is busy devoting a lot of time and attention to a *different* task: -2
- Minor circumstantial benefit: +2 (e.g. target of hostile action is distracted, using superior equipment)
- Major circumstantial benefit: +4 (e.g. target of hostile action is completely unaware)
- Minor circumstantial hindrance: -2 (e.g. poor lighting, uncertain footing, running at the same time, foe is alert for hostile action)
- Major circumstantial hindrance: -4 (e.g. working in darkness, partially tied up)
- Trying to use a social skill on a group all at once instead of on individuals: -2
- Effectively assisted by an ally: +1 or more (see the *Combining Effort* section in *Adventuring Tasks*)
- Character expends a Hero Point: reroll

SOCIAL STATUS

The Fallows are, unfortunately, not a particularly egalitarian place, with an ancestral ruling class and a great deal of inter-species prejudice. A character's social status can be applied as a bonus (or penalty) to skill checks in any situation in which one's social strata is extremely important. It also determines what sort of equipment you have readily available to you and what you can carry in public without arousing suspicion.

- **The Emperor (+10):** the ruler of the great Empire of Muscala, he to whom even lesser kings must bow (lest they feel the wrath of the Imperial Legions). There is only a single Emperor and his death often presages a period of civil war as the succession is sorted out.
- **Minor Kings (+8):** the ruler of one of the minor kingdoms of the Fallows. Their word is law in their own land, but they must still be wary of offending other lords or the Emperor, lest they find their throne being usurped by a more popular relative. They have their own palace and military retinue.
- **Greater Nobility (+4):** the Lords of the Fallows, these noble-mice hold powerful positions and generally rule individual towns or counties as their personal fiefdoms. If the current king of their country dies, they are on the short list of possible successors. Most have at least a handful of bodyguards.
- **Lower Nobility (+2):** families of noble blood but not particularly close to the throne of their homeland tend to occupy this niche. They often have the title of Lord or Lady, own small family estates and have a number of servants who live with them. Races other than royal mice can achieve this position only through wealth and political connections and can go no higher.
- **Upper-class (+1):** the rating of the wealthy upper crust of Fallows society. Characters at this level tend to own their own homes and may employ part-time servants to tend to their belongings. They can readily acquire basic metal equipment and may loan it to their servants.
- **Commoner (+0):** the rating of the vast majority of the populace. They tend not to own their own homes or land and must work hard just to stay ahead of the tax collectors. A commoner can generally start with a single metal implement.
- **Impoverished (-1):** the very poor generally can't even *rent* a home of their own but must sleep wherever they can get away with it. If a character at this level is caught with a valuable item, most people will assume that they stole it and punish them accordingly.
- **Slave/Outcast (-2):** at this point, the character is either effectively owned by someone of higher status or they are on the run. Outcasts are generally blamed whenever anything goes wrong in the area and are often run out of town on the slightest of pretexts. Harming them is often not a crime at all, but an outcast defending themselves against a higher ranked citizen *is*. They tend to only own items that they can find or make themselves.

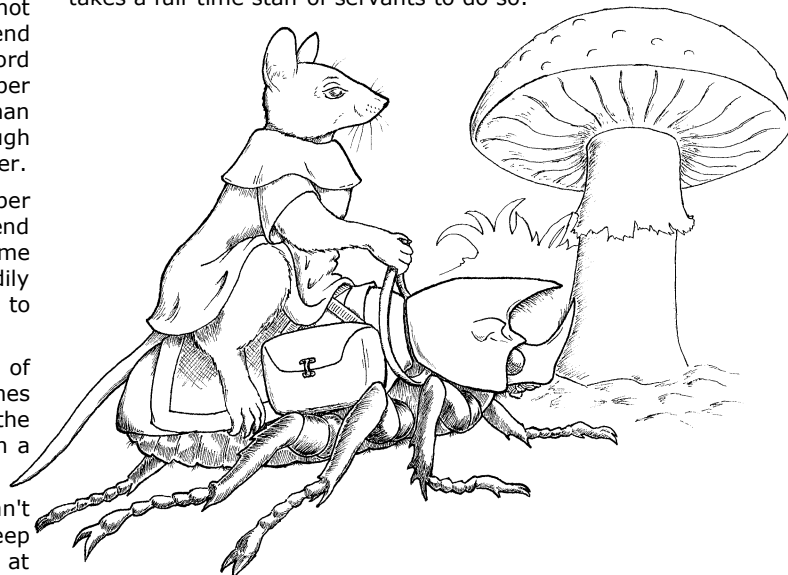
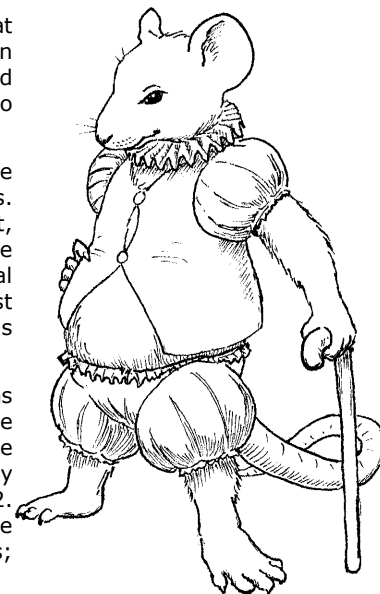
ITEM COSTS & QUALITIES

CRUDE: Makeshift items that even slaves and outcasts can readily create, like clubs and sharpened rocks. Available to anyone, pretty much for free.

COMMON: Common items are easily acquired by commoners. They require skill to construct, but are made from inexpensive materials. They require a social status of +0. Only the simplest of metal implements (such as knives) are common items.

EXPENSIVE: Expensive items are relatively rare. They take both skill and expensive materials to construct. They require a social status of +2. Swords and riding beetles are examples of expensive items; useful but hard to come by.

VERY EXPENSIVE: Very expensive items require a lot of expertise to make and are often made from rare materials. They may require special maintenance, such as regular polishing/repair or animal handlers to keep them healthy. They require a social status of +4. Heavy metal armor and riding pigeons are two examples of very expensive items. A lone mouse simply can't keep them in usable shape; it takes a full-time staff of servants to do so.



STARTING EQUIPMENT

Characters can have any reasonable number of items that require their social status or less (generally up to 10 different items). They can afford one thing that's above their status by one level (+1 social status), but can't replace it if they lose it. Those using gear *below* their status may effectively drop to that level; others are liable to treat you like a commoner if you dress like one.

Wealthier mice *can* provide additional equipment for their subordinates or poorer kin, but this carries with it the obligation to remember just who is paying the bills.

THE RACES

There are 7 known races of talking rodents in the Fallows.

ROYAL MICE

Royals look like normal (if undersized) white mice with pink eyes. These direct descendants of the First Ones have maintained their royal pedigree of albinism through restrictive inbreeding. The rulers of the valley have been albinos for so long that it has come to be known as the *Mark of Royalty*. Royal mice are generally referred to as *White Lords* or *Ladies* by those of lesser status.

The careful oversight of the royal bloodlines has minimized the dilution of their magical abilities; while the powers of the modern royals may pale compared to their ancestors, they are still quite potent. Most, however, never truly realize that potential, considering it beneath their station.

Each royal mouse technically *could* inherit the throne of their homeland but there are often many others between them and that goal. Likely heirs live restricted lives as their sires groom them for power, but younger siblings often go wandering (often with a small crowd of servants) seeking stimulation. Others join a priesthood, removing themselves from the line of succession without losing their high status.

ADJUSTMENTS: +1 to Magic, -1 to Brawn, a maximum Magic of +5. Social Status starts at Lower Nobility (+2).

Royal mice are sensitive to sunlight; they can go blind if their eyes are exposed to direct sunlight for too long. Most carry silken veils that they can wear if forced into the uncomfortable glare. Due to their poor overall health, royal mice only have 4 levels of Fatigue instead of the usual 5... their "winded" level is always considered to be expended.

WHITE MICE

Not all of the descendants of the First Ones were so careful about their bloodlines. Many families have lost their albinism entirely, enjoying generally better health but no longer being considered royalty.

White mice effectively run most towns; while they owe their allegiance to the royals of their homeland, there simply aren't enough royal mice to run everything. White mice occupy the upper social strata of the Fallows.

The purer the sheen of their fur, the more esteemed their bloodline. A mouse is generally considered white by most people only so long as *all* of their fur is white. Those with obviously visible patches of brown or gray are regarded as common mice. It is not unknown for a "white" mouse to conceal a shameful patch of colored fur beneath their garments or to bleach small sections of their fur.

ADJUSTMENTS: A maximum Magic rating of +4. Social Status starts at Upper-class (+1).

COMMON MICE

The bulk of the population of Hyperborea are common mice. While descended from the First Ones like the others, their bloodline is poor and their magical powers are relatively weak. They make up well over half of the population and can be found in practically every town.

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Most common mice have light brown fur, although various shades from golden blond to black exist. Some even have multi-colored fur, with patches of this and that. Those with patches of white can at least claim some descent from the upper classes, but will never be able to join them.

ADJUSTMENTS: A maximum Magic rating of +3. Social Status starts at Commoner (+0). Due to their lack of special bonuses, they receive one extra point of Powers.

JUMPING MICE

These gerbil-like mice have long, powerful lower legs that they use to make prodigious jumps. They are a different species from the other mice and their magical ability suffers because of it. It is said that they were granted sentience by the First Ones in return for their service, shortly after the First Ones settled in the Fallows.

ADJUSTMENTS: Superior jumping ability, a maximum Magic rating of +2. Social Status starts at Commoner (+0).

Their jumping distance is normally measured in *feet* rather than inches. If a jumping mouse needs to make a shorter jump, they can claim a +5 bonus to the roll instead.

WHITE RATS

Like jumping mice, it's believed that the First Ones granted intelligence to the rats so that they could better serve them. Since the royals found rats to be more trustworthy servants than other mice, small families of white rats are still found in the service of each royal house.

A preference for light-furred spouses has, over generations, caused these royal servants to acquire white (or at least very light brown) fur. Now white rats are considered the most dutiful and desirable of servants by the upper classes. They tend to be somewhat smaller than other rats, often being barely triple the weight of a common mouse.

ADJUSTMENTS: -1 Agility, Size 1 (see *the Basic Rules* for the various effects this has), a maximum Magic rating of +3. Their Social Status starts at Upper-class (+1).

Most white rat characters have a *Duty* Flaw towards a particular family that their own has served for generations.

COMMON RATS

Common rats are a good bit larger than mice but have very mild temperaments. They tend to be strong, effective workers and are most often found performing jobs that require greater strength than most mice possess.

ADJUSTMENTS: Size 1. A maximum Magic rating of +2. Their social status starts at Commoner (+0).

WILD RATS

Outside of the Fallows live many huge, feral rats. Once in a great while a rat is born who shows kinship to those sort, being larger, stronger and much fiercer than other rats. As such, they are barely tolerated and always distrusted by the other races of the Fallows.

In the Wildlands, there are entire tribes of wild rats, but they are much rarer in more civilized lands.

ADJUSTMENTS: Size 2, -1 Magic. A maximum Magic rating of +1 and a maximum Cleverness of +3. Their social status starts at Impoverished (-1).

MAGIC POWERS

There are six basic magical spells available. These are relatively simple enchantments that a talented mage can perform with minimal training. Each must be purchased separately. Each basic spell has a matching skill with the same name. You'll roll that skill when you cast it.

All of the Basic Spells require that the character have a minimum Magic rating of +1. With a Magic rating of zero or less, you are simply incapable of tapping into your personal magical energies and cannot cast spells. See the [Magical Mice](#) section for more details.

If your Magic rating were ever reduced to +0 or below, you would retain the ability to cast spells that you already knew, but could not learn new ones.

THE SIX BASIC SPELLS

COMPEL (2 Points): You can now cast the *Compel* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Compel* enables you to mentally influence the behavior of other creatures.

GUISE (2 Points): You can now cast the *Guise* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Guise* enables you to cloak an object or person's form in an illusionary disguise.

SHAPING (2 Points): You can now cast the *Shaping* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Shaping* enables the mage to study and alter the interior structure of an object by touching it. They can then repair it or sculpt it into a new form with their mind. It can also be used to magically heal others by closing their wounds.

SPARK (2 Points): You can now cast the *Spark* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Spark* enables the mage to conjure light or flame.

TUG (2 Points): You can now cast the *Tug* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Tug* enables the mage to move nearby objects with the power of their mind.

WHISPERS (2 Points): You can now cast the *Whispers* spell and can put skill points into that skill. *Whispers* allows the mage to listen to and interact with the spirit world, enabling them to send mental messages to other people or to probe the world around them with magical senses.

HIGH SORCERIES

High Sorceries are especially complex and powerful spells that must be learned one at a time. Each *Sorcery* must be purchased separately and represents an especially potent or elaborate trick that can be performed using one of the six basic spells. You must already possess the requisite basic spell before you can take Sorceries that rely upon it.

See each magical art section for a list of available High Sorceries that use that basic spell. Most High Sorceries cost either 1 or 2 Points to learn and are *HARD* (14) to cast.

All of the High Sorceries require that the character already possess the corresponding Basic Spell above. Without that basic knowledge, these advanced techniques are impossible to learn or cast.

Beginning characters can only take High Sorceries with special permission from the GM! They are normally something that you must seek out in play.

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OTHER MAGICAL POWERS

These Powers do not require that the character have a high Magic rating, but are associated with your Magic trait or spell-casting in some fashion.

BLESSING OF MAGELLIAN: When you spend Focus or take lots of extra time on a Magic-based skill roll (including all spells), you receive an additional +1 bonus.

CONCENTRATION: You no longer suffer a -2 penalty for being active and moving around while casting.

COUNTER-SPELL: When you cast a spell to try and block or undo another spell, you receive a +4 bonus to your roll.

DEEP DREAMER: Whenever you sleep in an area where something significant has happened or is about to happen, the GM can make a Sixth Sense roll for you. If successful, you will dream about whatever it is that makes the area unusual or important. If you are in danger, you will probably wake up out of a nightmare that gives you at least some idea of what form the danger takes.

This power sometimes takes the form of a dead relative's shade speaking to you from beyond and imparting brief messages and warnings before vanishing again.

EYES UPON YOU: You may roll Sixth Sense vs TYPICAL difficulty to tell whether you are being watched, even if your observer is not hostile and no magic is involved.

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

MAGICAL TALENT: Pick one of the 6 Basic Spells when you take this power. When casting spells of that type, you are considered to score a Critical Success for every 4 points that you beat the target number by, rather than 5. This Power can be taken once per Basic Spell.

MYSTIC CHANNEL: Ignore the first 3 points of penalties from maintaining other spells whenever you cast new ones.

NATURAL LINK: You have a mystical connection to another person (chosen at the time that you take this Power) that links you to them. You instantly know when they are wounded or in particular emotional distress and can always sense the direction in which they lie. If you use the *Whispers* art to communicate with them, your spell-casting check is at +2. They have to purchase this power for you as well, or else the connection is just one-way.

PERFECT ENERGY FLOW: When you roll a Critical Success on a spell-casting check, you may choose to reduce the Fatigue cost by one instead of the normal benefit.

SUPERIOR MAGIC RESISTANCE: Your magical energies are bound up so tightly that you are very resistant to magic. Your Magic Resistance is increased by 4. Even if you are *trying* not to resist or the spell is not resisted, the caster still suffers a -2 penalty to their roll. *You can never learn to cast spells even if your Magic rating is above zero.*

SUPERIOR RITUALS: When you have time to perform a full-fledged ritual with chanting and mystic diagrams, you receive a further +2 bonus to cast spells.

UNLIMITED EFFORT: You can always spend Fatigue to boost a spell even if you have already succeeded in casting it. Yes, this can enable you to turn a regular success into a critical success or squeeze past a foe's resistance roll.

FLAWS

Flaws are basically Powers with a negative point cost. Taking Flaws allows you to afford more Powers but will weaken or restrict your character in some fashion. Starting characters are allowed to take up to 3 different Flaws to add to their starting Power points.

Some Flaws are difficult to enforce with game rules and instead require you to role-play them properly. If you don't act out your Flaw appropriately, your GM may require you to buy it off or spend a Hero Point to ignore it temporarily.

ADDICTED TO THELARINE (-1 Point, requires Social Status of Upper Class or better): You are addicted to the drug Thelarine. You start each day with 1 point of Fatigue that can only be recovered with a dose of Thelarine. See the *Esoteric Equipment* section. Mice may be addicted to other drugs as well, at GM option.

ALLERGIES (-1 Point): During the Spring and Summer months, you suffer from regular sniffles and sneezes whenever you're in the outdoors. You are at -4 to Stealth when trying to move through a field of flowers or other sources of pollen.

BAD REPUTATION (-1 Point): You have managed to establish a widely known reputation for yourself due to some prior exploit... and it's not a flattering one. You should define the exact nature of what you did and what people have heard about you but it has to regularly cause problems for you (like a -2 to certain social skill checks with anyone who has heard of you) or it's not a true Flaw.

BLIND (-4 Points or -2 Points if you have the Whispers Magical Art): You are blind and must rely on your other senses to get by. Against a sighted foe in the light, you are at -2 to attack and defend in melee and -4 with thrown or ranged weapons. All range penalties are *quadrupled*. You may suffer further -2 or -4 penalties for other actions that would be particularly difficult in the dark. You can only read by tracing your fingers over the letters; fortunately, at this level of technology, it's usually possible to feel the lumpy ink on the page. This Flaw cannot normally be bought off.

If you possess the Magical Art of *Whispers*, then you can use the *See Without Sight* spell to see your surroundings without using your eyes. But you do have to cast and then maintain a Small Magick at all times to get that benefit and you are still completely blind to objects beyond the range of your spell.

Followers of the god Zakarvus consider blindness to be a sacred state and treat the blind with especial reverence. Fanatics sometimes blind themselves deliberately.

COARSE (-1 Point): Your manners are awful for a person of your social standing. You are at -2 to all friendly social skills with people who have a Social Status as high or higher than your own. There is no penalty for dealing with people with a *lower* Social Status. You cannot take the *Effete* Flaw.

COWARD (-1 Point): You are quite reluctant to engage in any unnecessary activity which would put your life in danger. You'll flee from danger whenever reasonable. You cannot spend Focus or Hero Points to aid attack rolls or Courage rolls unless you are cornered.

CURIOS (-1 Point): You just can't bring yourself to ignore a mystery. You're always poking your nose into dangerous situations just to see what's there.

DARK SECRET (-1 Point): You have a difficult-to-conceal dark secret which will greatly impact your life if it ever gets out. You may be wanted for a terrible crime (and may or may not have committed it), have stolen something valuable or otherwise be wanted by the authorities. Among white mice, a common Dark Secret is that their fur isn't entirely white but has patches of other colors hidden beneath their clothes. If the secret comes out, the character will generally acquire not only the *Low Social Standing* Flaw, but additional retribution from those who feel shocked and betrayed at this revelation.

Note that if there isn't an easy way in which your Dark Secret can be revealed then it doesn't qualify as a Flaw at all, but is instead just a part of their character background. Expect your GM to occasionally set up situation in which you have to think fast to avoid your secret being exposed.

DEBT-RIDDEN (-1 Point): Your Social Status is reduced by 2 for determining what sort of things you can afford. Any time that you acquire a large amount of cash, you must either conceal it or use it to pay off a portion of your debt. If you get caught keeping money yourself, you can be jailed or executed for it.

DRUNKARD (-1 Point): You have a notable weakness for wine, beer and revelry of all sorts. You may have to roll Leadership to *avoid* indulging yourself when the opportunity beckons.

DUTY (-1 Point): You have a sense of loyalty and duty to a person or group who doesn't really give you anything back in return (for a more equitable arrangement, see the *Membership* Trait). This may entail you risking your life to protect them or running errands on their behalf.

EERIE (-1 Point): For one reason or another, you spook other people. You are at -1 to all friendly social skill checks.

EFFETE (-1 Point, requires Social Status of Upper Class or better): You are extremely sensitive to social niceties and take them quite seriously. You are at -2 to all friendly social skills with people who have a social status equal or below your own. You cannot take the *Coarse* Flaw.

FORSAKEN (-2 Points, requires a maximum of Cleverness 0 and Magic -1): Your innate magic is so weak that you are partially feral. You tend to drop back to instinctive, animal-like behaviors under stress. Any children that you have may be completely mindless. -1 to Cleverness, Magic and Social Status, but Brawn is increased by +1. This Flaw cannot normally be bought off.

GREEDY (-1 Point): You are notoriously greedy. You may have to roll Leadership to pass up on treasure, even if it may be cursed or trapped.

GRIM (-1 Point): You always seems to be in a dark, grim mood. -2 to most Charm and Performance checks and any other skill tests that involve being outgoing. You have trouble making friends.

HAUNTED (-1 Point, requires Magic 1+): In times of stress, you work magic in your sleep. This can start small fires nearby, hurl small objects around like a poltergeist, make nightmares visibly manifest or other disturbing magical effects. This Flaw is common among royal mouse children, but most of them quickly outgrow it.

EXAMPLES IN PLAY

THE FALLING APPRENTICE

GM: As you return home, you immediately notice that your would-be apprentice has *not* waited in the entryway for your return, as you requested. His stuff is still there, but he has apparently wandered off.

Milton: Ugh... can I find him?

GM: You hear some noises from your study.

Milton: Oh, no! That brat! I rush into the study.

GM: Rushing in, you see that the boy is trying to climb the high bookshelf in the back to get at your books of magic on the top shelf. Your sudden entrance startles him and he falls, clutching at the shelf and managing to pull the entire bookshelf crashing down after him! The fall itself won't do much since he's just a little mouse, but he's liable to be crushed by the heavy shelf if you don't do something to save him.

Milton: Aiigh! That tome with the *Dancing Blade* High Sorcery is up there, isn't it? Can I stop it with Tug?

GM: Sure, but the more you try to do, the harder it'll be. A Small Magick could snatch one book out before it hit the ground, but wouldn't be strong enough to save the kid. You don't have Focus, either, so it'll cost you a Fatigue. A Large Magick would be the same difficulty, but you could pull the kid out from under the falling bookshelf instead of a book.

Milton: Can I blow an extra Fatigue to grab multiple books?

GM: Sure. That would let you save all of the books, but if you use enough control to pull them out safely you won't have enough strength to grab the kid.

Milton: What about pulling him and the books to safety with a Large Magick?

GM: Large Magicks can't be very precise. You'll probably end up shredding the books if you yank them with enough force to pull the kid free too.

Milton: What's the difficulty to telekinetically catch the kid AND the books AND put the shelf back in place?

GM: Let's call that HARD to save the kid and the shelf (but the books still fall) or VERY HARD (and an extra Fatigue) to save everything with your masterful magic.

[Beginning PC] Milton: I've got the *Soft-Hearted* Flaw. I have to save the kid. But I'm going to use a Large Magick to put the *shelf* back into place. The kid can take his lumps from the rest of the fall; maybe he'll learn a lesson. [Rolls vs Difficulty 8 and spends 1 Fatigue.]

[Experienced PC] Milton: He's just lucky I never bought off *Soft-Hearted* or I'd just rescue the books. I want to awe him with my masterful control. I catch him, the books and the shelf in midair, then set him down lightly while I put the shelf back up and stack the books back in place. All while glaring at him *furiously*. [Rolls vs Difficulty 17 and spends 2 Fatigue.]

THE OLD MOUSE IN THE BAR

GM: The old mouse shudders at the mere thought of those shrews and refuses to discuss the ruins any further. It'll take a HARD *Charm* roll to get anything else out of him.

Milton: Bother. And my *Charm* roll is only +4. Hm. Well, if I take lots of time and buy him drinks...

GM: Take a +2 bonus.

Milton: I know... I'll use *Compel* to make him feel more like talking it out. Let's see... with a -1 for not gesturing openly, I got... 13.

GM: He gets an *Insight* roll to see if he realizes that something is up, but I'm giving him a -4 penalty due to drunkenness. Yeah, he failed. In fact, you got a Critical Success, so you get a +4 bonus.

Milton: "Old timer, you sound like you've got a story to tell and it might do you good to tell it." Rolling *Charm* with a total of +10... yeah, got a 17!

GM: "Youngster, you may feel brave here in this warm, snug tavern, but if you'd been with me and my fellows when we finally unblocked the entrance to that old cave and headed into the darkness, well! Let me tell you what we found in there and you'll know why you should stay away from there no matter what you've heard..."

THE BLOODY BONES

GM: In the back of the cave you find some debris and the source of the foul odor- there's a horribly mangled mouse corpse with dried blood all around it. Oddly, though it appears to be at least a week old, there are no maggots or flies around it.

Milton: Can I tell anything about how he died?

GM: He's been sliced up pretty badly, probably with a knife. Make a Typical *Alertness* roll.

Milton: Can I substitute *Medicine*?

GM: Sure.

Milton: Okay, regular success.

GM: It looks like he may have been sliced up as part of some occult ritual. His hands and feet look like they were bound at the time and what's left of his face makes it look like he died in extreme pain. But you can't tell who did it or why.

Milton: That doesn't sound like the sort of thing that would let a spirit rest easy... could I try *Whispers* magic to contact his soul?

GM: All right, that might work. Spend a Fatigue and roll it. The better you roll, the more info you can get.

Milton: Hm... total of 15. That's beats a HARD test at least.

GM: You hear a faint wailing cry and what seem like echoing screams. For a few moments, you can see the last thing that the victim saw- an enormous black rat wearing strange, golden robes standing over him with a knife, clearly chanting. Then it plunges towards your heart... and you wake up from the trance.

Milton: Okay, guys, I have a description at least. Let's go.

ADVENTURING RULES

This section provides simple rules for resolving some common adventuring tasks and game situations.

AIDING OTHER ROLLS

It's common for someone to want to combine two skills together such that one aids the other. The easiest way to handle this is to declare one skill to be the primary skill and the other the secondary. The character rolls a test against the secondary skill (generally against TYPICAL difficulty) and if they succeed they can then add a +2 bonus (add another +2 per Critical rolled) to the primary roll. On a failure they add nothing, and on a Critical Failure they actually make things worse (-2 to the primary roll).

ALCHEMY



Mousy herbalists have been able to devise many different chemical and medicinal concoctions over the years. Various curatives, healing salves and poisons can be made if one has the proper materials and a bit of training. Finding the materials generally requires a *Wilderness* roll; the most potent herbs only grow in isolated areas. Some common ingredients are poisonous mushrooms, odd fungal growths, the noxious compounds released by annoyed millipedes, and venoms extracted from small centipedes or scorpions.

Even if one knows the proper recipe and has all of the required ingredients (most of which need to be quite fresh), preparing it correctly requires a successful *Esoteric Lore* roll. The difficulty (and any effects of failure) varies according to what you're trying to prepare. With poisons, both Botches and Critical Failures tend to result in the would-be alchemist poisoning themselves. Even the shortest and simplest of alchemical substances generally takes at least an hour to prepare; it's not uncommon for one to require that the ingredients be distilled for *days* before the process is complete.

BOTCHES AND NATURAL 2s

Whenever a character rolls a natural 2 on a check, they cannot spend a Hero Point to improve the results. Furthermore, if the attempt fails, the GM can declare a Botch. This is an additional mishap such as a minor injury, getting lost, dropping your weapon, et cetera, that is imposed upon the character. Botches should generally be annoying twists above and beyond simply doing badly on the roll.

Note that in the case where the character is so good at the task that even a 2 is still a success, the GM cannot declare a Botch- it's simply an unimpressive roll.

BRUSHFIRES

Large fires are *extremely dangerous* in this setting. A brushfire during the dry season spreads rapidly, burning off the dry grass and weeds and scorching the earth. Such a fire is beyond gigantic from a mousy perspective; it may stretch from horizon to horizon and travel as fast as the wind blows.

The relatively dry underbrush of the western Fallows are particularly vulnerable to fires. Communities there have extensive underground tunnels for the population to evacuate into in case of a wildfire. The town may have to be rebuilt, but at least the populace will survive.

Mice out in the underbrush are in considerably more danger. With no ready burrows and far from the sheltering waters of the lake, they can easily burn to death. Brushfires can burn for days if it doesn't rain.

Outracing a brushfire generally requires an Endurance check vs TYPICAL or even HARD difficulty. Those who fail suffer 1d6 damage (ignoring all armor) from burns, take 1 Fatigue and must repeat the test. If they become Exhausted or fall unconscious, the fire will overtake them and they will die unless rescued by someone else.

An alternative is to dig a shelter and wait out the fire, but it needs to be deep to survive the heat and lack of oxygen. Digging a burrow in time is often a HARD or VERY HARD Digging test, depending on how far away the fire is and how rapidly it is approaching.

Characters familiar with the region may receive bonuses for knowing where to find the nearest shelter. A barren spot without any grass to burn or an abandoned tunnel can be a life-safer, if the characters can reach it in time.

CLIMBING

Scaling a wall, tree or large plant requires an Acrobatics roll against the appropriate difficulty level. Unlike most actions, failures can be re-rolled by spending Fatigue; only a Critical Failure normally means that the character falls (see the *Falling Damage* entry in this section).

Mice and rats are good climbers, so climbing trees and other plants are usually EASY tasks. Mice and rats sometimes build their homes in trees like birds, in order to be better protected from predators.

Some example difficulties are given below:

- Trees and other large plants: EASY or Automatic
- Rocks or thorny plants: TYPICAL
- Riggings of a masted ship during a storm: TYPICAL
- Slick rocks: HARD
- Walls that have been deliberately constructed with spikes and ledges to keep climbers out (very common in fortresses): VERY HARD
- Spider webs: NIGH IMPOSSIBLE

Some common modifiers:

- Ropes and proper climbing equipment: +2
- You've climbed it before: +2
- Light Rain: -2
- Heavy Rain: -4

THE KINGDOM OF LAKESHORE

The kingdom of Lakeshore was once part of Duvain's Weal, but was split away from them after Muscala subjugated the Weal. A small house of royal mice that had collaborated with Muscala during the war were granted their own realm, consisting of the most valuable real estate in Duvain's Weal... the territories along the border of Greatwater lake.

Her ruler is the elderly and feeble King Leonas Watercrest, a mouse inordinately fond of extraordinarily expensive drugs imported from Fashar. Most major policy decisions are made by his favorite sycophant, the endlessly inventive sadist Duke Ferrik. Even the upper classes fear Ferrik, who uses charges of treason against those who offend him.

While some of the nobles of Muscala regard Ferrik's depredations as uncouth and unbecoming, he also keeps the taxes and levies from Lakeshore flowing steadily to the Imperial Palace and so his "hobbies" are largely ignored. Amongst the common folk of Lakeshore, only a fool does not fear drawing the attention of the upper classes.

MISTMOOR

The capital city of Lakeshore, Mistmoor is a large port community. Ships going to and from Fashar dock here to load and unload their many cargoes. Almost all of the city's income depends on this trade; when pirates manage to cut off the flow of goods, Mistmoor is the first to suffer.

The city is built on a series of raised wooden platforms and sprawls out into the lake itself. The largest and most prestigious houses are on top; whereas the poorest and most destitute are often forced to live on the muddy slopes beneath the lowest platform. Strong winds often cause the water levels to rise alarmingly and homes on the lower levels are regularly damaged or destroyed by floods.

Innumerable small vessels are moored in the city's sprawling dockyards. Almost everyone owns at least a small raft for fishing and much of their diet comes from catching minnows and such in the shallow waters.

Notable People and Places in Mistmoor:



- Duke Ferrik: the overlord of Mistmoor, he lives outside the city in a well-guarded estate. The area nearby is called *Ferrik's Forest* because of the forest of impaled corpses there.
- Hellmaw: offshore lives a fearsome predator, the Hellmaw. If a boat vanishes without a trace, it is often blamed on this creature. Hellmaw rarely troubles larger ships, but devours a few fishermice each season.
- Southridge: south of the city is a boulder carved and shaped to contain many small caves. During heavy rains, the poor retreat here until the water level goes

down. Unfortunately, since hardly anyone uses it during the dry season, the caves are often infested with spiders, shrews or even small snakes.

Hyperborean Mice

NEWCASTLE

The royals of Lakeshore are the Watercrest family. After they were placed in control of the kingdom by Muscala, they built a stone fortress in which they could dwell safely. The family is notably paranoid about assassins and peasant uprisings. They often fear that members of the lower classes may remember their betrayal of the old royal family and bear them ill will.

Notable People and Places in Newcastle:

- King Leonas Watercrest: highly inbred and unusually depraved even for a royal mouse, King Leonas fears his own people as much or more than the military might of Muscala. His many sycophants play upon those fears as much as possible, which does little to improve his attitude.
- Princess Melina: the king's pride and joy, his elegant and beautiful daughter has long been sought after as a bride by the nobles of Lakeshore. However, the last few serious suitors (ones who began negotiations for her dowry) died mysteriously, one managing to fall to his death from the battlements (a difficult achievement for a mouse) and two others being poisoned by persons unknown.
- Chancellor Jop: this aristocratic white rat and his family are the ancestral servants of the Watercrest line. Few people realize that the king actually insists upon their receiving extensive combat training so that they can act as bodyguards as well as servants. Several have died in the line of duty as food-tasters; not all of the king's enemies are imaginary.
- Newcastle Prison: those unfortunates sentenced to Newcastle's dungeon are suspected of more extensive crimes than those that they were convicted for. The torturers here are quite skilled at extracting confessions to fit whatever requirements their noble patrons request. Those who are deemed useless, however, may find themselves transferred to Ferrik's tender mercies, a fate worse than death.
- The Red Tower: one of the towers jutting off of the castle proper was made from reddish stone rather than the dull gray that the rest of the fortress is composed of. It is heavily guarded and apparently holds a small number of particularly important prisoners. Their identity is a closely guarded secret and they are allowed no contact with outsiders.

MAIDEN'S ROCK

This is the largest stone visible from Mistmoor and is a major navigation landmark. Its surface is grimy and encrusted with moss and algae, but it can offer shelter from any strong winds. There are even some vines covering the southern side of the stone, which small ships can anchor themselves to if the need arises.

Stories speak of pirate treasures concealed inside the stone itself by ancient pirate mages and along the sheer northern face there are strange runes carved into the rock whose meaning has been forgotten. The most common tale about Maiden's Rock, however, concerns its namesake... a beautiful white mouse who was stranded there by a jealous suitor and starved before she could be rescued. Her ghost still haunts the stone and more than one explorer is said to have followed her off the side of the stone and been lost in the icy waters below.

THE KINGDOM OF JAND

Jand is a small kingdom that has lies nestled against the southern border of Muscala and long ago decided that it was better to act as a loyal subject of the Empire rather than risking war against her vastly superior forces.

Founded by the beauteous First One, Jandara, this realm prizes art, beauty and disarming wit. Her leaders are famed for preferring flattery, negotiation and diplomacy to overt conflict. Her armies are minimal and poorly trained, so her leaders tend to call upon Muscala for aid whenever any real trouble strikes.

PULCHARA, THE CITY OF FLOWERS

The capital city of Jand and the seat of her royal family (the d'Jands), Pulchara is widely regarded as the most beautiful city in the world. It is adorned with innumerable pieces of statuary and practically every stone surface has been painted or engraved with some sort of artwork. There are also many small fountains and gardens where flowers are grown, tended to by acolytes of the church of Jandara.

Even the poorest family maintains at least one flowering plant near their home and local superstition holds that a family's fortunes rise and decline with the health of those flowers. The gardens of the upper classes are filled with beautiful plants and many a mouse makes a living here as a gardener or florist.

Vandalism is looked upon as a high crime here, and more than one mouse has been executed for defacing some piece of art or deliberately damaging some vibrant plant. Amongst the locals, being seen poorly clad or unadorned is thought shameful, so the city imports huge amounts of silk and jewelry. Artisans in lesser cities dream of winning the right to ply their trade in Pulchara.

Outsiders generally feel quite ugly and poorly garbed compared to the locals and are often treated with disdain. Even poor mice here are willing to skip a few meals if it means wearing a tunic with some nice embroidery.

Common and wild rats are practically banned from the city, as is anyone with a visible deformity. They can live in the farm communities around Pulchara that supply her with food, but they will not be welcome in the city proper.

THE APIARY (HONEYDALE)

Near the western edge of Jand lies the oldest and largest honeybee colony in the Fallows. The huge hive has survived dozens of winters and has been there for generations. Nearby, a small community of daring wax and honey-harvesters has sprung up. They bottle and sell the fruit of the bees' labors, although not without personal risk.

The harvesters have to sneak into the hive without alerting the bees, which are not at all tame and will readily sting an intruder to death. This often means working at night or carrying heavy smoke-pots in and out of the hive. While most raids go off without incident, when something does go wrong it often kills most of the would-be honey thieves.

Safer (if less lucrative) employment can be found in Honeydale itself, where the honey is often mixed in boiling vats with various flavoring agents or fermented to make alcohol. Even here there is the risk of fire or an overheated vat bursting, but at least you never lack for something sweet to put on your grain.

THE PERFUMERY (SKUNKVILLE)

This small community is hard for travelers to miss, because the nose picks it up long before you can see it. The upper classes of Jand pay good money for fancy perfumes and most of them are manufactured here, along with colorful dyes for cloth and fur. Most of the inhabitants keep their muzzles (and sometimes eyes) wrapped with thin cloth to minimize the toxic effects of breathing the local air.

The alchemists who run this town pay high bounties for certain herbs, fungi or animal parts that are useful in the processes of producing these chemicals. The site has been moved twice, both times further away from the capital after a particularly windy day caused the town's odor to trouble the nobles of Pulchara again.

"Skunkville" is notable in one other respect: predator attacks here are very rare. The foul odors seem to keep them at bay.

MORANT ABBEY

This small abbey is famous for the magical skills of its shapers. While respectful of Jandara, the abbey itself is dedicated to the entire pantheon, granting them some measure of independence from the church proper. They pay their way by selling the wares produced by their more magically inclined members.

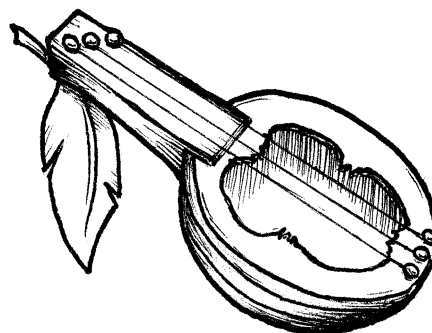
In addition to metal items and cunningly formed works of art, the mages here have developed a secret technique for altering the nature of wooden objects so that they can channel spells. Staves made of *whisperwood* are in high demand amongst upper-class mages, who consider them both a status symbol and a useful tool.

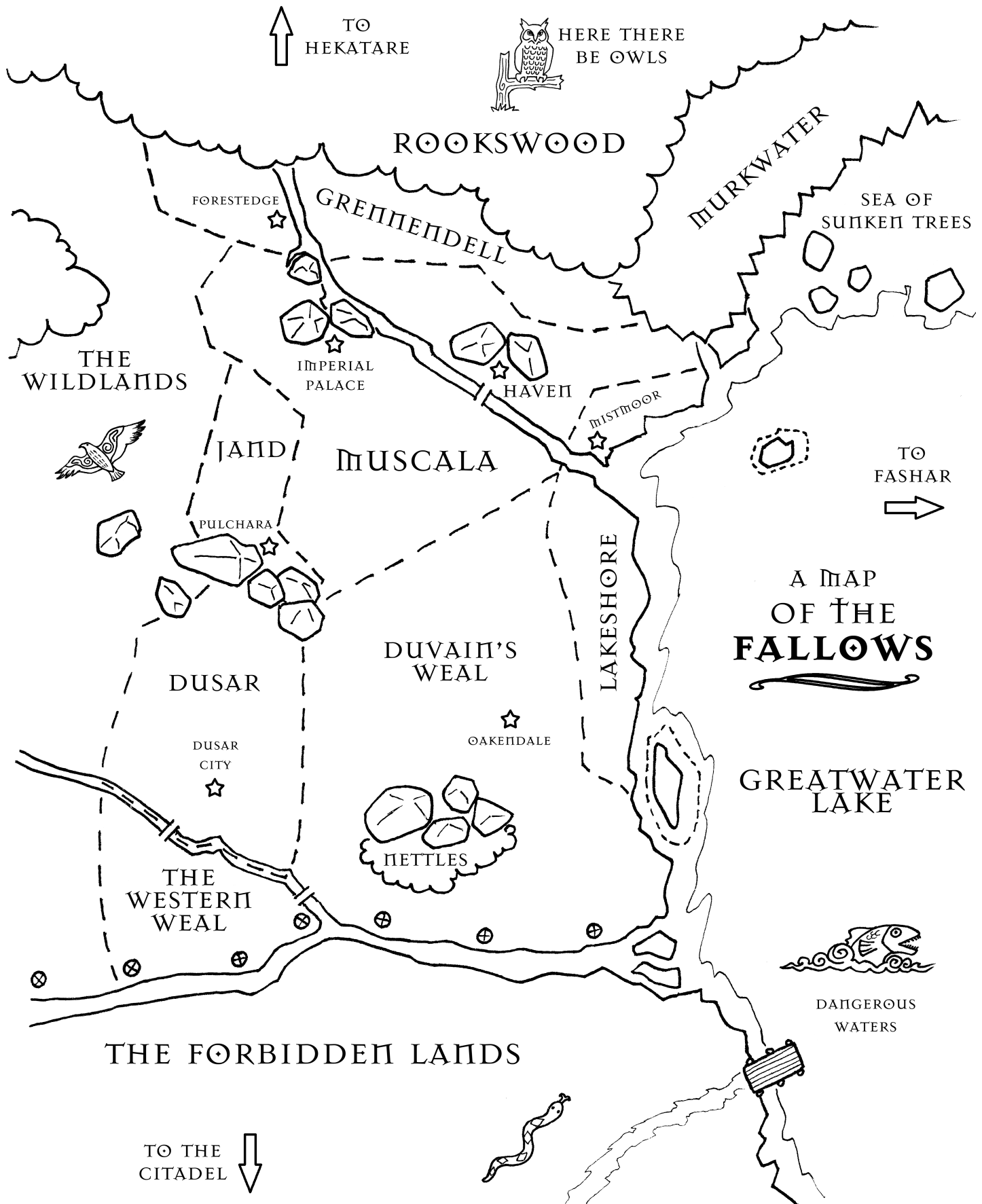
Mages who wish to study the art of Shaping sometimes pay high fees to join Morant Abbey as a student, but their secret High Sorceries are reserved for those who have elected to remain there permanently and even then only after years of loyal service.

BELLTOWNE

This town is widely known for hosting a temple of Jandara which has an enormous collection of bells of the highest quality. These are rung on holy days or during festivals and also mark each dawn and dusk.

The locals also hold annual festivals of music and the town hosts a small school run by retired minstrels who train the next generation of musicians in the Fallows. Scholars with a particular interest in the songs of old can be found at the school as well, but most of the students dream of wandering the land or earning a position as an entertainer in some noble household.





↑ TO HEKATARE



ROOKWOOD

MURKWATER

SEA OF SUNKEN TREES

FORESTEDGE

GREPPENDELL

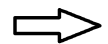
THE WILDLANDS

IMPERIAL PALACE

HAVEN

MISTMOOR

TO FASHAR



JAND

MUSCALA

PULCHARA

A MAP OF THE FALLS

DUSAR

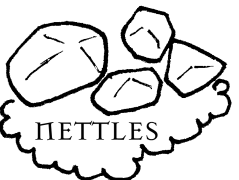
DUVAIN'S WEAL

LAKESHORE

OAKENDALE

GREATWATER LAKE

DUSAR CITY



NETTLES

THE WESTERN WEAL



DAINGERUS WATERS

THE FORBIDDEN LANDS

↓ TO THE CITADEL



LUCIEL THE FIRST EMPEROR

Luciel is the First Emperor, the King of the Gods and the ruler of the world. It is said that he led the other First Ones in their rebellion against the Titans and brought them to the Fallows where they could live freely. Some of the other churches dispute his importance, but his preeminent position is ensured by the authority of the Empire of Muscala, which he founded. Even the current Emperor, Luciel XXIV, takes his name from his illustrious ancestor.

Luciel directly controls the weather and the seasons, laying down laws which the very elements must obey. According to doctrine, the other gods are subordinate to his authority and thus the other temples are expected to behave in a subordinate manner to Luciel's church. Other temples often disagree but are careful not to arouse the ire of the armies of Muscala or the inquisitors of the church itself.

Luciel is the patron of the upper classes, the divine symbol of the social order and their superiority over their social inferiors. As such, his temples tend to be huge and grandiose with an enormous amount of ornamentation. It's a point of pride for them to be no smaller than any other temple in the same area, even in locales where another deity is more revered.

Temples of Luciel host large gatherings of the faithful but generally have one hall for the upper classes and a larger one for commoners... with services for each often held on different days as well.

His church holds the most temporal power of any of the priesthoods in the Fallows, yet often only a weak hold on the faith of the general populace. He is most popular amongst the upper classes and those who idolize them but other deities are far more popular with the lower classes. Because the church encourages obedience to one's superiors, in many areas periodic attendance is mandatory for commoners and de rigueur for the upper classes.

Depictions of Luciel show a crowned royal mouse bearing signs of rulership such as the rod and sphere. His head is often further surrounded by a halo of light representing his divine authority over the world. Rather than making him unreasonably tall, most representations place him atop a great throne that raises him above all other figures present. Lesser deities are often shown as well, with only his bride Lumierre being occasionally depicted as an equal.

The church's relationship with other temples is often strained because of the inherent inequality of it, but they maintain strong and friendly ties to the few remaining temples of Lumierre, often aiding them politically and even militarily. Like followers of Lumierre, devout believers in Luciel consider Quickpaw to be a purely fictional deity and generally try to stamp out his worship.

LUCIEL'S DAY: this late winter holiday marks the first day of the new year. Among the lower classes, it is most commonly celebrated by taking the day off of work to attend huge public sermons given by Luciel's priests. The upper classes mostly occupy themselves with elaborate and often especially debauched social gatherings. The restricted nature of winter travel lends itself to these mandatory gatherings of worship.

LUMIERRE QUEEN OF SWORDS

Lumierre is the bride and personal champion of Luciel, the king of the gods. She is normally represented as a royal mouse garbed in flowing robes and holding a sword (sometimes with a sword in each paw).

Her bravery, skill and swordsmanship are legendary and her followers idolize those virtues. There are only a few temples dedicated to Lumierre in the Fallows, but those that exist are sturdy and well-protected.

Almost all acolytes are female and upper-class (white or royal mice, with a handful of common mice). The church trains them in etiquette, weaving, dance, archery and swordsmanship. While a given acolyte will often specialize in one art or another, the best students master them all.

The temples are arranged like nunneries... acolytes and priestesses live on the temple grounds away from outsiders. Public ceremonies are only held on special occasions; in many ways, a temple of Lumierre is like a finishing school for young women with an unusually strong emphasis on combat skills.

Most acolytes leave the temple after their studies are complete (a year of training at a minimum) but maintain close ties with the church. Members are expected to behave in a proper and upstanding manner and not bring scorn upon their order. Romantic entanglements are forbidden for current acolytes and many graduates remain celibate for most of their lives, only marrying when they have grown too old for martial pursuits.

The priestesses stay out of political matters, and even former members are expected to avoid direct conflicts with other followers of Lumierre. Notably, the church does not accept rats and jumping mice as actual acolytes, although they can serve in secondary positions. Exceptions are few and far between. Her followers tend to be staunch traditionalists, and regard non-mice as second-class citizens. Swordsmen of Lumierre have a reputation for being highly skilled but also haughty and intolerant.

Many of her followers believe that Lumierre herself often travels the land disguised as a mortal... righting wrongs, protecting the innocent and defeating monsters. In these stories, her divine nature never becomes apparent until she draws her blade and dispatches her foes.

Strong, independent females idolize Lumierre the most, although she has a respectable following amongst male warriors who prefer precision to raw power.

LUMIERRE'S DAY: a fall holiday that is almost the reverse of Jandara's Day. Dances are held and females are expected to invite a male partner. For younger girls, athletic competitions like races are held instead. Males are not allowed to participate but may watch and cheer.

QUICKPAW: Followers of the deity Quickpaw believe that he is the son of Lumierre and an unknown common mouse. Not surprisingly, the followers of Lumierre discount these stories, believing instead that Quickpaw is merely a fictional folk hero exalted by the ignorant and foolish. In places where worship of Lumierre is strong, worship of Quickpaw will be banned.

HAWKS

"So there I was... chained up with another twenty assorted mice and rats, all being taken to Dusar to for the slave pits. Escape seemed impossible. The overseers were heavily armed and eternally watchful. Our slaver captors had thought of everything... except that the underbrush wasn't quite thick enough to hide us from the sky.

The hawk must have seized one of the luckless rats near the end of the line. First there was a horrific shriek, then the chains started to lift...

In moments our entire line was hoisted, screaming, into the sky. The ground falling away from me like that was the second most frightening thing I've ever seen.

The first was when the chain broke."

Aramias, Traveling Minstrel

Hawks are the main reason that mice associate open, exposed areas with death. A mouse crossing a barren spot in the open needs to do so as quickly as possible. Hawks fly so high in the sky that they can only be seen with a spyglass... or when their shadow passes overhead.

There is no warning when a hawk strikes. It moves too swiftly. There will simply be a sudden shadow, a blur of vicious claws and a missing mouse.

Typical Hawk:

Agi +2, Brawn +2, Clv -3, Per +6, Magic -4
Hit Points: 20 (Armor Rating 2) Size 4 (MR +0)
Melee: +10 (grab, 1d6+6 damage, x2 on crit)
Alertness: +16 Speed: +5
Feats of Strength: +12

Special: Death from Above

A stooping hawk drops from the sky and attacks a single target at great speed. If successful, the target takes standard damage and is snatched up. They will continue to take standard damage each round until slain or they manage to escape. On a critical success, the initial attack deals double damage.

Special: Too High to See

A hawk's attack typically comes from such great height as to take the target completely by surprise. Characters being hunted by a hawk may make a *Sixth Sense* check vs TYPICAL (11) difficulty. On a critical success they can seek cover *before* the hawk attacks; on a regular success they can defend normally. On anything lower, they defend at -4.

The eyesight of a hawk is legendary. Even magical spells are often insufficient to keep a hawk from spotting an unwary mouse. Wise travelers stay close to cover at all times. On the other hand, mice and rats who *do* stay under cover are generally completely safe from hawk attacks. These predators are awkward on the ground and do not like to hunt on foot... especially in regions where the rodents sometimes carry sharp pieces of metal with which to defend themselves!

If they do attack and miss their prey, it can take them several minutes to reach sufficient height to strike again.

LEECHES, MURKWATER

There are small leeches living in Greatwater, but they are largely harmless. Something has *changed* the leeches of Murkwater, however, as they are unnaturally aggressive and sometimes surprisingly cunning.

Murkwater leeches swarm in shallow pools where mice or rats have died, hungering for more rodent blood. They like to remain hidden, then suddenly rush any warm-blooded intruders, trying to bring them down before their victim has a chance to climb out of the water. They have been known to hide near half-sunken dead bodies, weapons or even gemstones, waiting for an opportunity to strike. They will not come out of the water to attack, but will cling ferociously to a victim even after they manage to scramble back onto dry land.

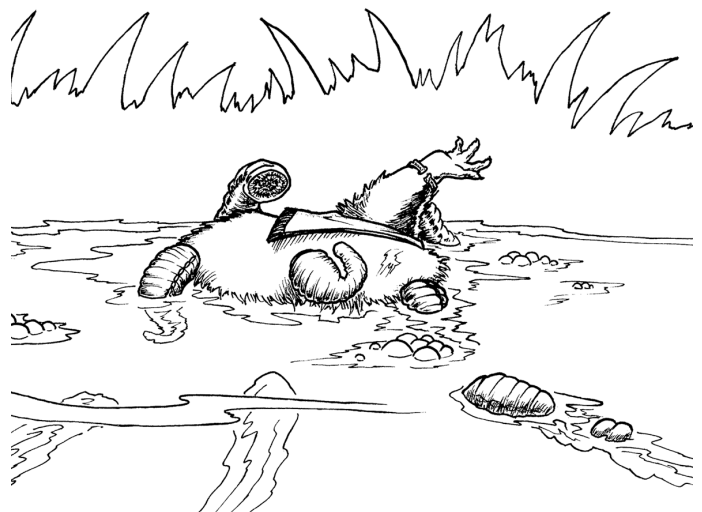
Typical Murkwater Leech:

Agi +0, Brawn +0, Clv -3, Per +2, Magic -1
Hit Points: 6 (armor rating 0) Size -2 (MR -3)
Melee: +3 (bite and adhere) Speed: +0
Dodge: +0 Alertness: +4
Swimming: +4 Stealth: +6
Feats of Strength (for staying adhered): +6

Special: Blood drain

Murkwater leeches drain 1/4 Hit Point worth of blood per round. So a mouse bitten by a single leech loses 1 Hit Point every four rounds. One bitten by two loses 1 Hit Point every two rounds, et cetera. This attack bypasses the target's armor rating. After a leech has drained 5 Hit Points worth of blood, it will be swollen and sated and drop off to wriggle back towards the water.

Leeches like to latch onto foes with their mouth-parts and slowly drain their blood. Their bite contains a number of chemicals to dull pain and prevent coagulation, which means that a mouse may not even notice a stealthy bite at first (roll *Alertness* vs the leech's *Stealth*). However, swarms often consists of *dozens* of these creatures, which drop all attempts at stealth in favor of a massive, overwhelming attack.



OWLS

These avians are perhaps the most feared predators in the entire valley. Unlike hawks, they fly low and are not above fluttering above the ground trying again and again to snatch up a mouse or rat in their lethal claws. They hunt at night, flying on silent wings and devouring those who thought themselves safe in the sheltering darkness.

The supposed lord of all owls is the great horned owl of Rookwood, the dreaded **Hoorooru**. He has systematically exterminated all of the lesser owls of Rookwood until only he and his children remain. Occasionally a regular owl will migrate into the valley (treat it as below, but with Cleverness -3 and Magic -4 and no spell-casting), but such intruders rarely live for long. Hoorooru tolerates no rivals.

Owls are worshipped by some of the mouse clans of Rookwood, who regularly capture outsiders and offer them up as ritual sacrifices to their winged lords. Hoorooru has directed his children to spend most of their time preying upon the mindless feral mice beyond Rookwood, but they regard intelligent rodents as much tastier prey.

Owls regularly regurgitate *owl pellets*... bundles of fur and bone that the owl was unable to digest. These horrific artifacts are a sure sign that an owl lives nearby. Owl-worshippers are also known to collect these and store them in their temples like artwork.



PIGEONS, RIDING

Pigeons are notable in that they are the only species of bird that the inhabitants of the Fallows have managed to domesticate. The famed Imperial Cavalry are the most famous pigeon-riders, but most kingdoms have a few extremely rich nobles who keep a riding pigeon or two.

The birds only remain tame as long as they are well fed and cared for by skilled bird-handlers. Their nesting sites require constant cleaning and there is always the danger of losing an expensive trained animal to a sudden hawk attack... especially if someone was riding her at the time.

As a result, keeping a riding pigeon requires a number of servants and a lot of expense, but it's the only way that a mouse can truly soar over the Fallows.

Typical Owl:

Agi +0, Brawn +2, Clv+2, Per +4, Magic +3
Hit Points: 24 (Armor Rating 3) Size 6 (MR +9)
Melee: +8 (grab, 1d6+8 damage, can Impale)
Dodge: +3 Alertness: +8
Speed: +3 Feats of Strength: +14
Stealth: +2(+10*) Intimidate: +14
Spell: +7*

Special: Non-magical Fear

Facing an owl requires a HARD Courage check.

Special: Silent Flight

They can fly almost silently, increasing their *Stealth* rating by +8 when airborne.

Special: Night Vision

Owls prefer to hunt at night and ignore the first 4 points of penalties for darkness.

Special: Spell Caster

Most of the owls in Rookwood are capable of both speech and spell-casting. They prefer the *Compel* and *Guise* spells, which they use to lure prey out into the open. Hoorooru has forbidden the use of *Whispers* magic, lest his children strike some bargain to oust him from his position as the ruler of all owls.

Owls in **Hyperborean Mice** are honestly dragons. They are huge, terrifying, just as intelligent as any character and capable of working magic on their own. Towns in Rookwood offer up sacrifices just to keep them placated.

Furthermore, since their great size and innate magical ability gives them a typical bonus to resist spells of +9, it is very hard to work magic *on* an owl... but they don't share the same problem when casting spells upon rats and mice!

Hyperborean Mice

Typical Riding Pigeon:

Agi +0, Brawn +0, Clv -4, Per +1, Magic -4
Hit Points: 10 (no armor) Size 1 (MR -3)
Melee: +2 (1d3 peck or claw) Alertness: +3
Dodge: +3 Speed: +1

Special: Flight

Pigeons can fly very long distances (at least on a mousy scale) at great speed. They have a +4 bonus to spot things from the air.

Special: Mount

Controlling a calm pigeon in the air is a TYPICAL Ride check. One that is panicking requires a HARD check instead. Add a +3 bonus if you are just a passenger trying to stay on and a -3 penalty if the bird is not wearing the normal specialized harness. A critical failure generally means that the pilot or passenger slips out of their gear and falls.

Rats are too large for a riding pigeon to carry; even carrying two full-grown mice and their gear is enough to slow a pigeon down noticeably.