Elfinfolk

Roleplaying Game

Adam Baffoni

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Contributors

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Chapter I

The Elfinfolk

For centuries, stories have existed about the Elfinfolk— tiny people that live among humans. They reside in our towns and cities, under our floorboards, and inside the walls of our houses. They leave their hidden domiciles when our backs are turned, and forage food from our gardens and our kitchens. They take small items, using our discarded belongings and scraps as raw material for their communities. If ever a spool of thread, small length of cloth, or a handful of sugar cubes goes missing, you can be sure it is the work of the Elfinfolk.

These days, of course, people aren't so superstitious. We know better than to believe in tales of tiny thieves. When a spool of thread goes missing, it was the work of the cat knocking it under the furniture. And those sugar cubes? Well maybe someone had been drinking their tea a little extra sweet lately. But Elfinfolk? Those stories are just that: Stories, and nothing more… Right?

What is Elfinfolk?

Elfinfolk is a tabletop role-playing game, or TTRPG. 2-8 players will work together, using pencils, paper, and dice, to weave tales of the Elfinfolk: A minuscule people whose lives are awash with adventure, heroism, and even romance. One player will take the role of Game Master, or GM. The rest of the players will each become one of the Elfinfolk Explorers. The stories these Explorers live, under the guidance of the GM, are the core of the experience. Players, acting as their characters, will take decisive action to shape their lives in any way they can imagine, while the GM will use the tools at his disposal to craft a world suited to their ambitions.

What You'll Need to Play

To play Elfinfolk, each player will need a pencil, a ten sided die (or d10), and a copy of the Elfinfolk character sheet. You can download and print a copy of the character sheet at www.adambaffonirpgs.com/elfinfolk. It will also help for players to have some lined paper or a notebook for writing down useful information.

Who Are the Elfinfolk?

Elfinfolk are tiny creatures with an anatomy and appearance identical to that of humans, with the exception of their size. An average Elfinfolk adult is between 4 and 5 inches tall. To humans, the Elfinfolk are only a myth; a fairy tale told to children to help them sleep. To the Elfinfolk, however, the humans are the giants upon which their very existence relies.

Elfinfolk Society

Like humans, Elfinfolk are social creatures. Elfinfolk are incredibly vulnerable to the dangers of the world, so in order to hide their existence from humans, they limit their small villages to between 25 and 50 individuals. It is incredibly rare for a single Elfinfolk community to have

over a few hundred members. Most Elfinfolk communities are secluded from one another, with the exception of an occasional meeting of leaders or a visit from a messenger.

Due to the lack of trade between Elfinfolk communities and their inability to use large plots of open, visible land as farmland, they rely on humans for many of their needs. Simple items, like flour and fabrics, that would be nearly impossible for Elfinfolk to grow or craft themselves, are readily available within every human home. Many Elfinfolk communities exist within the homes of humans—hidden inside crawl spaces, underneath floorboards, or within the insulated walls.
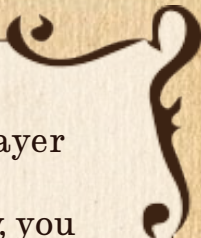
Explorers

The world is a very dangerous place for creatures as small as Elfinfolk, so the majority of their kind remain hidden inside the homes of giants or deep in secluded forests. However, they cannot survive without gathering resources from the outside world, and for that, the Elfinfolk count on their Explorers. An Explorer is an Elfinfolk who takes on the dangerous job of venturing to the outside world for the good of their clan. Each player in a session or campaign of Elfinfolk will be playing the part of an Explorer.
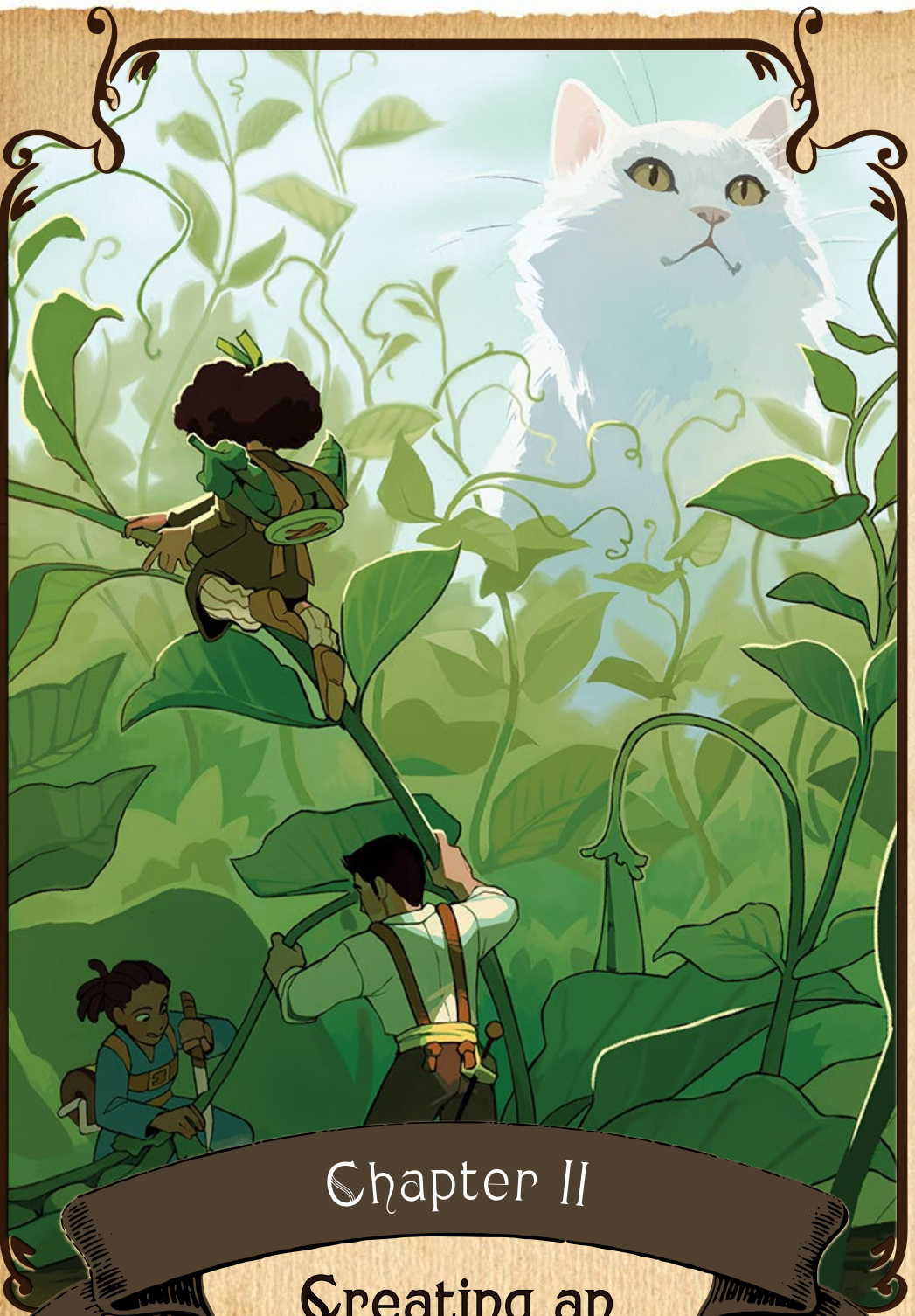
Chapter II

Creating an Explorer

B efore playing Elfinfolk, each player (except the GM) will create an Elfinfolk Explorer. During play, you will make all of your Explorer's decisions, from what they say to how they react in a dangerous situation. Creating your Explorer is a simple process, but you should take some time beforehand to think about who you want them to be. Elfinfolk is a narrative, character-driven game, so the history, personality, and motivations of your Explorer will be important.

Seven Steps of Explorer Creation

Step 1 - Name and Simple Details: Before you can determine your Explorer's connections to the rest of their Elfinfolk community and what their abilities are, you'll need to know a bit about them.

How old are they? What is their gender? Do they have any defining characteristics? Your Explorer will also need a good name. During the game, the Game Master and other characters will refer to you by the name of your Explorer, so make sure you choose something that you won't get tired of hearing.

Step 2 - Personality and Background: What is your Explorer like? Take a bit to think about where they fit within the society of Elfinfolk. What was life like for them growing up? How did their early experiences lead to them becoming the person they are today? Do they have any quirks or personality traits that stand out?

You don't need every detail of your Explorer's past fleshed out before playing, but a few poignant details written on paper can help spark your creativity if you begin to struggle with how your character might react in a particular situation. As you play, you'll likely learn quite a bit more about your Explorer, and these new experiences can go on to inform further decisions.

Step 3 - Connections: Connections represent your Explorer's relationships with some of the non-player characters, or NPCs, that live in your Elfinfolk community.

You should come up with two or three connections for your Explorer. These connections could include childhood friends, family members, mentors, or even rivals. You do not need to go through all 7 of the character creation steps for each of these connections, but a few strong details will introduce new opportunities to make these characters important to your story. The connections that you define will affect who you turn to for assistance and news throughout the game. This is an opportunity for you to think up additional unique and charming members of the Elfinfolk community and add them into the game!

Step 4 - Motivations: What drives your Explorer to make the decisions they do? Do they have a rival within the clan that they want to outshine? Or possibly a proud family that they are compelled to honor? Before deciding on your Explorer's motivations, consider their background and connections. What is important to them? Do they have any goals or relationships that drive them to success?

During character creation, you may choose two or three motivations for your Explorer. A motivation should be a sentence that reflects what drives your Explorer to make the decisions they do. Some examples of motivations include: "Keep my family safe," "See as much of the world as I can," or "Find another community of Elfinfolk."

Step 5 - Attributes: On your character sheet, there are six attributes listed. Each attribute represents how skilled your Explorer is in a particular area.

- **Agility:** Represents how quick and acrobatic your Explorer is. Agile Explorers like to run, climb, jump, and otherwise maneuver around problems. An Explorer might use Agility to run away from an animal or climb up onto a countertop.

- **Power:** Represents how strong and tenacious your Explorer is. Powerful Explorers like to push, smash, lift, and otherwise employ brute force to overcome problems. An Explorer might use Power to push something heavy out of their way or make a physical attack against an enemy.

- **Slyness:** Represents how sneaky and quiet your Explorer is. Sly Explorers like to skirt around problems unnoticed. An Explorer might use Slyness to quietly sneak around an animal or carefully pluck something out of a sleeping human's hand or pocket.

- **Charm:** Represents how socially magnetic your Explorer is. Charming Explorers like to talk their way out of problematic situations. An Explorer might use Charm to convince a fellow Elfinfolk to give them some useful information or calm an anxious animal.

- **Vigilance:** Represents how perceptive and observant your Explorer is. Vigilant Explorers like to observe a situation before entering, preventing problems from arising. An Explorer might use Vigilance to scan an area for potential threats or spot a weak spot in an opponent's defense during combat.

- **Wit:** Represents how intelligent and cunning your Explorer is. Witty Explorers like to outsmart their problems. An Explorer might use Wit to recall uncommon knowledge that could be useful in solving a problem or execute a complex plan.

Each attribute can have a value between 4 and 8. The higher your value in an attribute, the more often you will succeed at tasks which use that attribute. Take some time to consider your Explorer's motivations and history and use that to decide what sort of activities they should excel at. Then, allocate the following values to your attributes: 7, 7, 6, 6, 5, 4. This will allow your Explorer to be skilled in two attributes, proficient in two, and below average in two.

Mental and Physical Attributes: The six attributes are split into two categories: physical and mental. The first three attributes listed on the character sheet (Agility, Power, and Slyness) are physical attributes because they are typically used when a character is performing some sort of physical activity. The last three attributes listed on the character sheet (Charm, Vigilance, and Wit) are mental attributes because they are typically used in situations that involve quick thinking.

Step 6 - Talents: As opposed to attributes, which are measures of how skilled your Explorer is in general areas, talents are measures of how skilled your Explorer is in specific areas. Whenever you take an action that is directly related to one of your talents, you will have a much better chance of succeeding. Unlike attributes, each Explorer does not have the same talents. Rather, you will choose talents that you feel fit your Explorer's skill set. Create two talents for your character. They can be just about anything you'd like.

Talents should be specific actions or fields of knowledge that your Explorer specializes in, such as: Climbing, Archery, Debates, Sense of Direction, Sword-Fighting, Elfinfolk History, or Stealth. They should not be general like Strength, Knowledge, or Fighting.

Step 7 - Gear: Your Explorer will start with some gear that can aid in their adventures. The amount of gear you are allowed to start with will be left to the GM, but typically you'll be allowed at least a weapon, a bag to hold your gathered belongings, and a few additional items that you may make use of, such as twine, paper clips, or whatever else might be useful to your Explorer.

Let's Create an Explorer!

To demonstrate the seven steps of Explorer creation, let's follow each of the steps to create an Explorer who could be played in a campaign of Elfinfolk.

Step 1 - Name and Simple Details: Our Elfinfolk is going to be a 24 year old woman who is adventurous and spontaneous, which occasionally gets her into troublesome situations. Her name will be Alluin Gale.

Step 2 - Personality and Background: As we decided during our initial details, Alluin is adventurous and spontaneous. Based on that, it's fair to say that she's pretty comfortable with risk and has been around dangerous situations her whole life. Let's say that her father, Andy, was also an Explorer and took her on a few adventures outside of the community at a young age. Since then, her heart was set on becoming an Explorer. Now, at 24, she's a fearless Explorer with as much experience and courage as some other, significantly older Explorers.

Step 3 - Connections: Based on Alluin's background, it seems like she's very close with her father, Andy, so he will be one of her connections. We still need at least one more. Spending so much time in dangerous situations, it is fair to assume that Alluin often wears protective gear. Maybe she has developed a relationship with the leather-worker of her community. Let's name him Gill. We will say that Alluin brings Gill the pelts of animals, like rats and chipmunks, which he uses to cure leather and craft various items.

Step 4 - Motivations: Now that we know a bit about Alluin's past and the people she is close with, we can consider what it is that motivates her. She obviously has a strong connection with her father and learned all about adventuring from him, so it would make sense for one of her motivations to be "Make my father proud." It's a simple motivation, but it is certainly something that has an effect on her decision making process.

For her second motivation, let's add a new element to her backstory. We will say that when she was out on an adventure in the nearby woods, she saw an unknown Elfinfolk running through the forest. Before she had time to react or make herself known, they were gone. Now, Alluin is determined to find out who the mysterious Elfinfolk was, and if they belong to a nearby Elfinfolk community. We can give her the motivation "Find the Elfinfolk I saw in the woods."

Step 5 - Attributes: Based on our background information about Alluin—who she is, and what drives her—we can consider where her strengths lie. For her attributes, we'll use the following spread:

- Agility: 7

- Power: 4

- Slyness: 6

- Charm: 5

- Vigilance: 6

- Wit: 7

As a relatively young explorer, Alluin has had to rely on quick thinking and speed to stay away from dangerous situations, so we've chosen Agility, Wit, Slyness, and Vigilance as her highest attributes. We've chosen Power as her lowest attribute, under Charm, because it doesn't seem integral to the way that she solves problems.

Step 6 - Talents: Next, we'll choose two talents for Alluin. We can use her motivations, background, and attributes as inspiration for her talents. Her motivation, "Find the Elfinfolk I saw in the woods," suggests that she spends quite a bit of time outdoors, and far from the house in which her community lives. Aluin must be pretty good at finding her way around outdoors, so we will make her first talent "Navigation."

But what is it that she spends so much time doing outside? Maybe she has taken on the role of foraging food for the community; venturing out into the garden and woods to gather edible plants and mushrooms.

If that's the case, she's probably quite talented at finding and identifying plants and fungi that are safe to eat, so we'll take "Foraging" as her second talent.

Step 7 - Gear: To finish our character sheet, we need to choose some gear for Alluin. She'll need a backpack for carrying what she forages, so we'll write that down. She also needs something to defend herself, so we'll take a sewing pin, which she uses as a sword. She also would likely wear some sort of protective gear for venturing out into the wild, so we'll take a set of leather armor. After all, Alluin is friends with a leather worker. The GM says that our leather armor will have a score of 2 (the purpose of armor score will be explained in Chapter 3: How to Play). Lastly, Alluin most likely carries a net for setting traps, so we will add "thread net" to our inventory.

And We're Finished! In just a few short steps, we've created a character who fits into our game world with meaningful connections, a role within the community, and useful talents.

Chapter III

How To Play

The Conversation

For anyone that has played a role-playing game in the past, the conversation of Elfinfolk will be very familiar. A session of play will typically start with the Game Master introducing a scene which involves some or all of the Explorers, as well as possibly a few NPCs. The players will then narrate how their Explorers act within that scene, and a story begins to unfold. Typically, the Game Master will introduce some sort of problem that needs to be solved, thus providing the Explorers with a goal to lead them into adventure. Ultimately, however, the players have full control over what it is that their Explorers do during play.

Example of Play:

GM: *The living room is dark. A bit of moonlight peeks through the curtains, but the room is entirely still. Everyone in the house has gone to bed. One of the outlet covers starts to move a bit, and a screw begins to loosen. It falls to the ground and the outlet cover pops off, revealing the figures of two tiny Elfinfolk. You, the Elfinfolk Explorers, are trying to make your way to the kitchen to retrieve a few cubes of sugar. What would you like to do?*

Player 1: *Well what is in the room here?*

Player 2: *And do we know if there are any pets that live in the house?*

GM: *It's a fairly large room. There are high ceilings and it's connected to the kitchen. An entertainment center towers over you to your right, a coffee table sits directly ahead of you, and a couch to your left. You know that there's a dog that lives in the house. A medium sized dog, but big enough to be very dangerous. And she is loud. If she sees you, she'll either try to use one of you as a chew toy, or bark enough to wake up everyone in the house.*

Player 1: *Oh that's not good. Then we need to stay out of sight. Let's climb onto the couch and see if we can find where she is.*

Player 2: *Good idea! I have a fishing hook and some thread on me, so I'm going to try to throw that hook up to the couch and use the thread to climb up.*

Challenges

What is a Challenge?

Whenever an Explorer attempts something that they could fail at—and face some sort of consequence—the GM will ask the player to roll at least one ten sided dice to determine whether or not they succeed at their goal. This is called a challenge. Some challenges will require multiple rolls, based on how complex the task is.

Steps of a Challenge

When the GM calls for a challenge, there are four steps that will take place. They are:

Step 1 - State Intent:

Before any dice can be rolled, the player, or players, who are taking part in the challenge should clearly state their intent. Your intent is not just what you're doing, but what you are trying to accomplish by doing it. For example, if you are trying to set a trap in order to catch an Elfinfolk from a rival community that is tracking you through the forest, your intent is not just to successfully set a working trap. Your intent is to catch the Elfinfolk who is tracking you in your trap.

This clearly-stated goal serves two purposes within the game. First, it prevents miscommunications. The GM knows *exactly* what it is that you're trying to accomplish, and can set the difficulty accordingly. Second, it acts as an insurance policy for the player. If you succeed on your roll(s) to overcome the challenge, you know that you accomplished your exact intent.

Step 2 - GM Sets Difficulty and Required Successes:

Once the player has stated their intent, the GM can decide just how difficult and complex the challenge is. Then, the GM and the player can work together to determine which of the Explorer's attributes most closely relates to their intended action. This attribute will be used next in calculating the target number for the challenge.

Difficulty - There are three levels of difficulty for challenges in Elfinfolk: standard, difficult, and daunting.

Standard: A standard challenge should be something that can be consistently accomplished by an Explorer who is moderately skilled in the related attribute.

Difficult: A difficult challenge should be something that can be consistently accomplished only by an Explorer who is quite skilled in the related attribute.

Daunting: A daunting challenge should be something that even an Explorer who is quite skilled in the related attribute will have some difficulty with.

Target Numbers - An Explorer succeeds on a roll when the result of rolling a ten-sided die is less than or equal to their target number. For a standard challenge, this target number is the value of the attribute that is most related to the intended action. For more difficult challenges, that target number is reduced, as seen in the chart below.

Difficulty	Target Number for Success
Standard	Attribute Value
Difficult	Attribute Value -1
Daunting	Attribute Value -2

For example, let's say Alluin needs to solve a complex puzzle set out by another character. The GM and the player decide she is making a roll to overcome this challenge using her Wit attribute, and the GM has determined that the challenge is daunting. Alluin has a Wit value of 7, so she would need to roll a 5 or less to succeed.

Required Successes - Each challenge will have a number of required successes, depending on how complex the task is. A simple task, such as scaling a wall or dueling with an unskilled opponent, may only require a single success, while something more complex, like a drawn out battle against a worthy foe, may take two, three, or even more successes.

Step 3 - Rolling the Dice:

Once the player has stated their intent, and the GM has determined the target number and required successes for the challenge, the player will roll a d10 to determine whether they are able to overcome the challenge.

Advantages - Certain circumstances can grant an Explorer an advantage when rolling dice in their challenges.

Talents: If one of the talents of the Explorer who is rolling for a given challenge relates to the task at hand, they can instead roll two d10 and take the more favorable result.

Connections: If you are rolling to overcome a challenge that involves dealing with one of your connections, such as convincing one of your connections to help you out of a difficult situation or trying to get a piece of valuable information from them, you may reduce the difficulty of the challenge by one level. The difficulty of a challenge can never be lowered below standard.

What Attribute is Used for a Challenge?

As the player, you have the ability to choose which attribute you would like to use to overcome a challenge, as long as you can justify what exactly you are doing and how it uses the chosen attribute. Most challenges can be overcome in a number of different ways, and you should feel free to be creative with your Explorer's strengths when deciding what action you will take to overcome a challenge. The GM has the final say over whether the use of any particular attribute is reasonable in a given situation.

Reading the Result: When rolling to overcome a challenge in Elfinfolk, you are aiming to roll as low as possible. There are three possible levels of success:

Less Than TN: If your roll is lower than the target number, that is a success. If the challenge only requires a single success, the challenge is overcome. If the challenge requires multiple successes, you gain one success toward overcoming the challenge.

Equal to TN: If your roll is equal to the target number, that is a success with a complication. You gain one success toward overcoming the challenge, but receive some sort of consequence. You could injure yourself and take a point of physical stress, or you could make a bit more noise than intended and run the risk of giving away your presence.

Higher Than TN: If your roll is higher than the target number, you do not gain a success toward overcoming the challenge and you receive some sort of consequence. The GM will decide what the consequence is and the severity of the consequence may differ depending on your margin of failure.

Rolling a 1 or 10: If you roll a 1 when attempting to overcome a challenge, that counts as a critical success. You gain 2 successes toward overcoming the challenge, plus you get to narrate what your character does that looks extra cool or flashy. If you roll a 10 when attempting to overcome a challenge, that counts as a critical failure. A critical failure should result in a serious consequence, typically in the form of 2 or more points of stress or a threat being increased by 2 or more levels.

Step 4 - Narrating the Outcome:

After a roll has been made, the GM and player will work together to narrate the outcome and what happens to the Explorer. Note that it is up to the GM to decide what the mechanical consequences for a failed roll are (accumulating stress, increasing a threat, etc.), but the player gets a say in exactly what that consequence looks like.

Stress

Stress is a measure of the amount of physical and mental strain on your Explorer at any given time. On your character sheet, there are two stress tracks: One for physical stress and one for mental stress. They both start at 0. As your character faces hardships, they will accumulate stress. The higher your stress becomes, the more difficulty your character will have overcoming challenges.

Physical Stress: Physical stress represents strain on your Explorer's body. It can be caused by injuries or exhaustion. Once you have accumulated 3 points of physical stress, any time you attempt to overcome a challenge using one of your physical attributes (Agility, Power, or Slyness), the target number of the challenge will be lowered by 1. Once you have accumulated 6 points of physical stress, any time you attempt to overcome a challenge using one of your physical attributes, the target number of the challenge will be lowered by 2.

Mental Stress: Mental stress represents strain on your Explorer's mind and emotions. It can be caused by close encounters with deadly threats or situations that put strain on your psyche. Once you have accumulated 3 points of mental stress, any time you attempt to overcome a challenge using one of your mental attributes (Charm, Vigilance, or Wit), the target number of the challenge will be lowered by 1. Once you have accumulated 6 points of mental stress, any time you attempt to overcome a challenge using one of your mental attributes, the target number of the challenge will be lowered by 2.

Incapacitated: If you ever fill one of your stress tracks by accumulating 8 points of physical or mental stress, your Explorer becomes incapacitated. When an Explorer becomes incapacitated, they are injured or traumatized to a point where they cannot take actions for the remainder of the scene. The player and GM work together to narrate what exactly has happened to the Explorer. Maybe they've sustained a severe injury and need to be carried to safety. Maybe they succumb to the immense mental pressure and need to remove themselves from the situation. Perhaps they've even fallen victim to a deadly fate. An Explorer can only die if the player agrees to that happening. Otherwise, they somehow manage to remain alive, whether they find their way to safety or are captured—or spared—by whatever the threat at hand is.

An incapacitated Explorer who has not died returns in the next scene, and their physical or mental stress level (whichever had caused them to become incapacitated) is reduced to 6.

Healing: Explorers naturally recover from stress when they are in a comfortable environment. For each day that your character spends without taking any points of stress, they recover 3 points of physical stress and 3 points of mental stress.

Threats

The world is a very dangerous place for Elfinfolk, and there are potential threats looming around every corner. When there is something in a scene that is a major threat to the characters, the GM should write it down as a threat and give it a level from 1-3. The level represents how immediate the threat is. As players interact with the scene and overcome—or fail to

overcome—challenges, the level of a given threat can increase or decrease. If a threat ever reaches level 5, it becomes an immediate problem for the characters. Threats should always be written down somewhere in plain sight so the players can keep track of them.

For example, if the Explorers are sneaking through a room in which a human woman is sleeping, the GM may write down "Threat: Sleeping Woman Wakes Up, 2" on a piece of paper on the table. If one of the players fails a roll to sneak through the room, the GM may increase the level of the threat to 3. If Explorers continue to fail rolls and the level of the threat continues to rise until it reaches 5, she wakes up while the characters are still in the room, and they run the risk of being seen if they don't think fast and get out of danger ASAP.

Example of Play:

GM: *You've made it to the backyard. It's about 20 feet across to the other side.*

Player 1: *Well we need to get to the woods if we're going to find the healing herbs. Can we see anything that might be a threat to us?*

GM: *There are some threats nearby, but I'll make it a challenge to see if you can spot all of them. It will be standard difficulty.*

Player 1: *Okay I'll use my Vigilance to look around. I have a 6 so that's pretty good. Oh, I rolled a 6 exactly!*

GM: *Alright, that's a success with a complication. You can see that there is something moving about in the bushes close to the woods, but can't make out what it is. You can also see that there is a woman sitting outside in the next yard over, and she has a pretty good view of this area. I'm going to add her as a level 2 threat.*

Player 2: *Okay that's not great, but we need to get to the other side of this yard. So let's try to sneak past.*

GM: *Alright, that is going to be a difficult challenge, and it's going to require two successes to overcome.*

Player 2: *Alright, I'll make the first roll. Can I use Slyness since I'm trying to sneak through the yard without being noticed? I have a 7 in Slyness.*

GM: *Absolutely. Since it's a difficult challenge, you'll need to roll a 6 or less.*

Player 2: *Alright, I got a 5!*

GM: *Great! That's going to add one success. Would you like to narrate what it is you're doing?*

Player 2: *Oh yeah. So I go looking around for a large leaf, big enough for me to hide behind, and I start slowly creeping my way across the yard, stopping every few inches to make sure I haven't been noticed.*

Player 1: *Alright, I'd like to make a roll for this too! My Slyness isn't very good, so I'd like to just try to make a run for it and use Agility.*

GM: *That works!*

Player 1: *Uh oh, I rolled a 10 and needed a 5 to succeed!*

GM: *Okay, that's not good! That's a critical failure, so I'm going to have you take a point of physical stress, and I'm going to increase the threat level of the woman in the next yard over to 3. Would you like to narrate what happens to cause that?*

Player 1: *Okay, so I wait until her back is turned and just start running as fast as I can, but I'm so focused on making sure she doesn't turn around that I don't see a dip in the ground and I trip and fall, letting out a loud "Oof!" which makes her turn around.*

GM: *Okay, she seems to have heard you but doesn't quite see you and goes back to reading her book, but she's on high alert now.*

Player 2: *When I see that happen, I think I'd like to go get him and try to help him sneak across with me. So I'll roll Slyness again. And that's a 4!*

GM: *Okay, that's going to give you your final success, so you manage to make it across the yard!*

Player 2: *Yeah, so where she tripped and fell is just a short ways away from me. Before she can be noticed, I make my way over to her and hide her behind this leaf with me, and I say "You need to be more careful than that!"*

Player 1: *"I know, sorry. But I could use a little help here."*

Player 2: *"Yeah, just follow me." And I start making my way slowly toward the edge of the yard with her, until we get safely into the bushes.*

GM: *Okay, great! And at that point you remember that you had seen something moving about in these bushes just a short while ago.*

Player 1: *Uh oh…*

Equipment

Explorers are some of the bravest, and most skilled, Elfinfolk, but even with their quick thinking and expertise, they must rely on a number of tools to help them on their adventures. A seemingly average household item, like a paperclip or a length of thread, can be incredibly useful for an Elfinfolk trying to traverse the difficult terrain of a house or the wilderness. Don't shy away from finding creative uses for the items that your character carries with them, as the Elfinfolk are extremely resourceful people who find ways to repurpose nearly everything they can get their hands on. A paperclip, for example, can be unfurled and used as a hook to grab far away items, or it could just as easily be used to set a trap, or even to fling an item across a room, creating a distraction.

Armor

Many Elfinfolk choose to wear some sort of simple armor to help protect themselves from injuries, even though armor can inhibit one's movement, making sneaking around even more difficult than it already is. Elfinfolk most commonly wear leather armor, as it allows for decent movement, and there are many talented leather crafters among the Elfinfolk. Sometimes, however, Elfinfolk will choose to wear armor made from solid materials, giving them great protection at the sacrifice of mobility.

Each piece of armor will have a defensive value, usually ranging from 1-3. Whenever an Explorer would suffer physical stress, they can choose to decrease the defensive value of a piece of armor by 1 to reduce that stress by 1 point. When a piece of armor reaches a defensive value of 0, it cannot be used to reduce stress again until it is repaired by a craftsman. An Explorer who takes Crafting as a talent can repair a piece of armor to its full value, given a day to work on it and the proper tools.

All of the armor that an Explorer is wearing at any given time counts as a single set of armor with a single armor value. For example, if an Explorer is wearing leather armor with a value of 1 and carrying a shield with a value of 1, that counts as a set of 'Leather Armor and Shield' with a value of 2.

If an Explorer is wearing a set of armor with a value of 3 or 4, any time they try to overcome an obstacle using Agility or Slyness, the target number of the challenge is lowered by 1. An Explorer can wear only enough armor to equal a maximum value of 4. Any more would simply be too cumbersome to carry.

Weapons

With threats from bugs, to predatory mammals, and even rival communities of Elfinfolk afoot in the world, it would be foolish to leave the safety of a community without some sort of weapon. Some communities are lucky enough to have blacksmiths who can forge blades, while others must make due with what they can find and repurpose. The most popular choice of weapons for Elfinfolk are small blades that don't take up too much space or weight and can be easily carried such as sewing pins and thumbtacks, as well as simple wooden bows that can be used for hunting and ranged combat.

Weapons alone have no mechanical effect within the game, however, a weapon in the hands of an Explorer with a related talent can do wonders. For example, an Explorer who has taken Archery as a talent can use the benefits of that talent each time they use their bow to overcome a challenge. If you want your Explorer to be particularly skilled in combat, consider giving them a talent related to a specific weapon which they often carry.

Explorer Advancement

Elfinfolk is well suited to one-shots and short campaigns, but could be used to run longer games. Throughout a multi-session campaign of Elfinfolk, the explorers will change and grow, improving their skills and gaining new talents. This is done by accumulating, and spending, experience.

Gaining Experience

There are two ways to gain experience. The first is by attempting to overcome daunting challenges. Each time you roll to overcome a daunting challenge, you gain one point of experience. It doesn't matter if you succeed or fail at the roll. Your Explorer will become more experienced for pushing themselves beyond their comfort zone.

The second method of gaining experience is by acting according to your motivations. During a session, if you make a decision that reflects your Explorer acting upon one of their motivations, check off the box next to that motivation. At the end of the session, you earn 1 point of experience for each motivation that is checked off. You can only check off each motivation once per session.

Gaining or Changing Motivations

On your character sheet, there is enough space to list five motivations. Upon creation of your Explorer, however, you can only write down up to three motivations. Throughout the game, Explorers' motivations will change and new motivations will be gained. At the end of each game session, you are allowed to either change one of your motivations to something different or gain a new motivation based on events that happened during the session. You should discuss with the GM and other players what motivations you are gaining or changing. In an extreme case where events during the session significantly change the way your Explorer views the world, your GM may allow you to change or gain more than one motivation. An Explorer may never have more than a maximum of five motivations.

At the end of each session, you can spend your accumulated experience to improve your Explorer. There are two benefits you can receive from spending experience.

Improve Attributes

You can spend experience points to improve one of your attribute values. In order to increase an attribute's value by 1, it costs a number of experience points equal to 3 + the number the value will be increased to. For example, increasing an attribute from 5 to 6 will cost 9 experience points. No attribute can ever be increased beyond a value of 8, and an Explorer may never have more than 3 attributes with a value of 7 or higher.
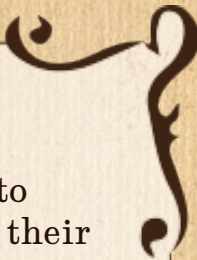
Gain New Talents

As your Explorer becomes more experienced, they will become skilled in various new tasks. You can spend experience points to gain new talents. It will always cost 8 experience points to learn a new talent. An Explorer may never have more than a maximum of five talents. If you would like to replace one of your current talents with a different one, you can do so for 8 experience points.

Chapter IV

The Game Master

The following chapter is meant to help Game Masters understand their role within the game. Being a Game Master is challenging, and often will result in more work than playing an Explorer, but a successfully-run session is also extremely rewarding. As the Game Master, you'll decide many of the specifics of your game setting, creating and introducing adventure hooks for the Explorers, and playing the part of all of the non-player characters. You'll also be the arbiter of the rules; setting the difficulty and required successes for challenges, deciding on the consequences of failed rolls, and controlling the overall pace of the game. It sounds like a lot of roles to fill, and at times it is. As the Game Master, you'll likely be the most active person at the table, as you are involved in every scene and challenge. With a bit of practice, though, it can be incredibly fun.

Before the Game

Prior to playing, you'll want to think a bit about some of the details of the setting and adventure. Elfinfolk requires quite a small amount of preparation compared to some other RPGs, and a lot of the storytelling can be improvised during play. In fact, improvising many of the details is recommended as it will allow you to base your decisions off of what the players are interested in exploring and hearing about. Even so, there are some things that will be helpful to consider beforehand.

Setting Details

While Elfinfolk has an implied setting, there are many details left up to your discretion. What time period will you be playing in? There's no reason you can't set your game in a time period earlier than the modern world, or possibly even in a fantasy world with strange creatures and magic. Altering details about the outside world can have a massive impact on what sort of threats present themselves, the types of adventures Explorers will go on, and what materials will be available for Elfinfolk to repurpose.

In addition to time period and overall setting, also consider how densely populated by humans the region you'll be playing in is. A game that takes place in a dense city will be rife with nearby Elfinfolk communities to trade and communicate with, and will feature adventures through city streets and across rooftops, but it will also make for a very difficult-to-navigate environment where there are always humans and pets around to be avoided. By contrast, a game played in a suburban setting will feature a more isolated community and adventures in outdoor gardens and forested areas.

Building Layout

Most Elfinfolk communities live within, or very close to, a human home or other such building where supplies and food are readily available. You'll likely introduce a number of adventures that take place within the house, such as going into the house to acquire essential goods like food, fabrics, and raw materials. Those adventures will run a lot smoother and be much

easier for players to visualize if you have the layout of the house planned out. Before running an indoor adventure, take a few minutes to sketch the house layout on a piece of graph paper. You can base it on a house you've been in before, or create something completely original, as long as it provides a decent visual representation.

Once you have a basic idea of how the building is laid out and what each room will be, consider some of the obstacles or threats that may be present in each room. You don't need to decide on every detail now. Even basic ideas will go a long way in helping you to create challenges for the Explorers during a session.

Non-Player Characters

During character creation, the players will be adding some NPCs to the game through creating their connections. There could very well be other important characters that are a part of the story you'll tell together. Consider whether there are fellow Elfinfolk that you'll need to have ready ahead of time. This can be anyone from a community leader to a trades-person or outsider. If you need an important NPC to introduce an adventure hook, make sure you have some details about them, like their name and general characteristics, ready to go. Consider also if there are any humans or animals that will be recurring characters. If the game will be taking place inside of a house, for example, decide how many people and pets live there and what each of their appearances, personalities, and schedules are like.

Societal Structure

Every Elfinfolk community is a bit different, and there are a few specifics that you'll want to consider for yours. First, how big is it? A large community will require much more in the way of a governing body and protection than a small one. What type of government or council does the community have, if any? Do they use a system of barter or do they have some sort of currency? The details are all up to your discretion, and will have a significant impact on the way your players interact with the community.

Campaign Length

Role-playing games are often played over multiple sessions, through which the players will play the same characters each session as a continuation of the same story. This is referred to as a campaign. A campaign can range from a couple sessions to dozens, or even longer. Elfinfolk is meant to be played in short campaigns, ranging from 1 to 8 sessions, though you could play a longer campaign if you'd like. A campaign of Elfinfolk should be somewhat episodic. While there will be a single storyline that runs through the campaign, each session should introduce a new adventure that the players can finish over the course of the session. This creates a cycle of play in which each session begins with the characters receiving a new adventure hook, continues to them taking on that adventure, and ends with the adventure being resolved.

Adventure Hooks

Elfinfolk is an adventure game, and part of your role as the GM is to introduce those adventures to the Explorers. If you are planning for a session as part of a running campaign, or if the players have made their Explorers before you begin planning, consider their backgrounds and motivations as part of your adventure hook. Below are a few simple adventure hooks that you can use as inspiration for your campaign.

Gather Essentials: The most common adventure that Elfinfolk Explorers take on is gathering essentials. This can entail anything from traversing the house and gathering resources to foraging in the woods or garden for fungus and edible plants. A gathering adventure is a perfect first adventure for a campaign and will demonstrate the main role of Explorers within their community.

Make Contact with a Nearby Community: Most Elfinfolk communities are relatively solitary, but there are times when one community needs to communicate with another community nearby to trade or ask for help. There are a number of reasons why the Explorers may have to seek out this nearby community, and plenty of challenges to be faced along the way, including weather conditions, difficult terrain, wild animals, bugs, and humans. Perhaps there is an injured Explorer in your community and you need the help of an herbalist in a nearby community who can tell you what plants to gather for medicine. Do the Explorers need to pass through a forested area to reach this nearby community, or even make their way across a busy city street?

Control an Infestation: Something has begun moving into the house in which your Elfinfolk community lives. It could be rodents, roaches, or any number of things. This could be a big problem for the Elfinfolk. Not only are the critters possibly carnivorous and dangerous, but if the humans realize there is an infestation, they'll start leaving traps or even spraying poison around the house, potentially wiping out the entire community. It is up to the Explorers to keep the problem from getting out of hand by any means possible.

Rescue Mission: While Elfinfolk Explorers are incredibly careful to keep their existence a secret, every once in a while, things don't go so well. An Explorer is trapped somewhere in the house. It could be that they're stuck on the top shelf of a closet or cupboard without any rope to get down, stuck in hiding somewhere and in need of a distraction to get the humans away long enough for them to escape, or perhaps they've even been captured by a human who plans to expose their existence to the world and this Explorer needs to be rescued from captivity.

Find a New Home: The humans have discovered the existence of your Elfinfolk community! What drastic measures will they take to try to expel you from their home? The community leaders aren't willing to wait and find out. It is up to the Explorers to venture out into the world to find a new home for the community, whether that be in a new house or even a hidden place in the wilderness where the community can lay low and assess their situation. What kinds of challenges await the Explorers in the world? These new threats could be anything from poisonous plants to unfriendly communities of Elfinfolk that don't want you trespassing on their land.

During the Game

During the game you will be introducing scenes, communicating and interpreting the rules, and controlling the Explorers' environment. This section will cover some of the things you'll be doing during a session of Elfinfolk as well as suggestions and tips to make your role a bit easier.

Presenting Challenges

It will be up to you to decide when a challenge is necessary, and what the specifics of that challenge will be. A good rule to follow is that a challenge should be presented when the following two statements apply:

> 1. An Explorer is attempting to do something that requires some amount of skill or luck.

> 2. If that Explorer fails an attempt at the action, there will reasonably be some sort of consequence. This can mean that there is limited time and failure will result in either more of a time crunch or a higher threat level, or that the Explorer stands to become injured or stressed upon failure.

Setting Difficulty and Required Successes

Before any dice are rolled to overcome a challenge, you will decide on a difficulty and a number of required successes in order for it to be overcome. When setting the difficulty of a challenge, consider what level of skill would be required to perform the necessary tasks to overcome the challenge. See **Steps of a Challenge** in **Chapter 3** for an explanation of the three levels of difficulty.

When setting required successes for a challenge, you should consider how complex the task is, or how many steps it will take to accomplish. Most challenges will only require a single success. Any time a character is taking a single risky action, it should be represented as a challenge with one required success. Challenges with multiple required successes are a

way of consolidating large goals with multiple obstacles into a single scene that requires multiple rolls. Something more complex, like traversing a meadow with a number of possible threats, may require three or even four successes. As players make rolls toward overcoming the challenge, their progress will slowly increase and they may face consequences depending on whether they succeed or fail on those rolls.

Facilitating Consequences

Throughout the course of the game, bad things will happen to the Explorers. Usually, those will come in the form of consequences from a failed roll. As the GM, the consequences of a failed roll will be up to your discretion. Some suitable consequences for a failed roll would be to give the character a point of physical or mental stress, depending on what type of activity was being performed, or to introduce a new threat or increase the level of an existing threat within the scene. If a roll is failed only slightly, the consequence shouldn't be worse than a single point of stress or single increased threat level, but if a roll is failed by 3 or more, consider more severe consequences, such as 2 points of stress, or a point of stress and an increased threat level.

Remember that consequences do not need to come from failed rolls, and can be the result of narrative scenarios. For example, if an Explorer goes multiple days without sleep or without food or water, that could cause them physical or mental stress—or both.

Combat

Unlike many RPGs, Elfinfolk does not have any system of initiative, or separate rules to be used during combat. Rather, enemies in combat should be treated as challenges. Give each enemy a difficulty and number of required successes. Allow players to narrate what it is they're doing to overcome those challenges and roll to do so. If they succeed, allow them to narrate what it is that gives them the upper hand in combat. If they fail, they should receive consequences like any other challenge, usually in the form of physical stress from being hit by their opponent. When an enemy has had their required successes met, they are defeated.

As the GM, it is up to you to make sure that all of the Explorers have equal spotlight during combat. Since there is no specific turn order, try to make sure everyone has a chance to take an action before anyone acts again.

PvP and Contested Rolls

As you'll notice, there is no form of contested roll between two players within the game rules, and that is because Elfinfolk is a game about characters who work together to overcome challenges. If, however, there absolutely must be a contested roll between two player characters, simply have each of the players roll against the attribute they're using in the situation and whichever player rolls with a greater margin of success wins. If neither of the players roll equal to or less than their attribute Value, they both make a mistake and come out with some sort of consequence. If two players insist on engaging in combat with each other, that can be handled by a series of contested rolls.

It should go without saying that any conflicts between characters should be just that—between characters. If you, at any point, suspect that an in-game conflict is causing players to become upset or frustrated with each other, you should pause the game and talk through the issue at hand.

Rulings

The rules in this book should cover most situations that come up during a session of Elfinfolk, but you may find some situations that aren't explicitly covered in this book. In that case, it is your job as the Game Master to make a ruling. Consider what is fair and fun for all of the players at the table and what makes sense within the game world. At the end of the day, everyone at the table is here to have a good time, so do your best to mediate conflicts and make sure that everyone is allowed their fair share of fun.

Character Sheet

Elfinfolk
Roleplaying Game

Name

Appearance

Experience

Agility

Background

Connections

Power

Talents

Motivations

Slyness

Charm

Mental Stress

Physical Stress

Vigilance

Inventory

Wit

Elfinfolk

Roleplaying Game